

Three Generation Life History Study of Metis Women in Alberta
Revised Report

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I must thank my Kokum. She is that great Metis woman who kept telling me how proud she was and how proud my Mosom would be if he were alive. My Kokum and my Mother gave me the pride in being a Metis that made me want to record Metis women's history.

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Introduction

As this is a three generation life history study of Metis women in Alberta conducted using oral history research it is relevant to access the work of other life or oral history researchers. For example Julie Cruikshank and Freda Ahenakew with H.C. Wolfart have gathered and written the life experiences of Native women from the Yukon and Western Canada.¹ These authors discuss the issues related to gathering life histories of Native women. One of these issues which pertains to this life history study is the question of how to arrange the life experiences gathered through oral history research into a written text. In this study the researcher has chosen to present the experiences in a chronological order starting with family history, birth, childhood, teenage years, young adulthood, adulthood and old age. In Julie Cruikshank's book she also chose to use a chronological ordering along with a sectioning of the life experiences. She has sectioned the experiences so that "Odd numbered sections approximate a conventional Western understanding of life history ...Even numbered sections are traditional narratives..."² Cruikshank's method of arrangement reflects what she calls the "bifocal perspective" of the participant's life.³

A second issue which occurs in some life history studies is the issue of language. Language was a consideration in the present study because the first language of the first generation participant is Cree while the first language of the researcher is English. In the interviews with Adele there were events which she could only convey in her first language. For example, when she discussed time spent as a child with her grandmother she wanted to share some of their songs. She sang the Cree songs to the researcher. In the book by Ahenakew and Wolfart they have addressed the language issue by writing the experiences of the women in three forms: Cree syllabics, Cree using Roman orthography and in English. In the present study, the researcher knew enough Cree herself to be able to translate most of the Cree from the interviews into English for the report but at times where English translation was unsatisfactory the researcher has used the Cree words. In addition to this there are phrases in the study like "...it's in the blood" or "...she took sick" these types of phrases occur in the study because they are the words of the participants and as their own words they have a valid place in the text. In Ahenakew and Wolfart's book they too have used the participants' own words as their "...texts...could hardly be more different from the all-too-familiar digests and paraphrases, composed in English of Indian

¹Julie Cruikshank, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith & Annie Ned, Life Lived Like a Story. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992). and Freda Ahenakew & H.C. Wolfart, Kohkominawak Otacimowiniwawa Our Grandmothers' Lives as Told in Their Own Words. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992). Regarding oral history see Julie Cruikshank, Reading Voices Dan Dha Ts'edeninthe Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991).

²Cruikshank, 29.

³Cruikshank, 29.

customs or Indian thought."⁴

A third issue which pertains to this life history study is the relationship of the researcher to the participants. Specifically, it is the question of whether or not it is helpful or hindering for the researcher to be of the same cultural background as the participants. H.C. Wolfart writes that in their research the experiences were shared with "...Freda Ahenakew, who also speaks Cree as her first language; herself a grandmother many times over, most of the women whose life experiences she collected have known her for a long time."⁵ In Wolfart's opinion, this makes the "...reminiscences exceptional: that they were not told to an outsider."⁶ Julie Cruikshank also addresses this as she noted that one of her participants was exceptionally sensitive to the fact that the researcher was of another culture as she writes that Angela Sidney's "...talent lies in her capacity to understand the kind of context a cultural outsider needs to be taught before that person can actually begin to hear what she is saying."⁷

The issue of whether or not the researcher is of the culture in which research is being conducted is relevant to this study because the researcher herself is a Metis woman. One problem with conducting research among ones own people is the problem of defining. That is, one has to be cautious of assuming too much knowledge about the culture on the part of the reader. There can be a danger of forgetting to define and explain aspects of the culture because one is from within that culture and the knowledge is second nature. An example would be simply defining Metis culture. The researcher and the participants have found that people often assume that the participants are part French because they call themselves Metis. It is necessary to provide a definition which embraces the range of people who call themselves Metis. For example, Peterson and Brown address the fact that the Metis are a culture that cannot be simply or narrowly defined as they write that "Left to their own devices, historians might well have missed the changing dimensions of Metis identity over the last several decades."⁸ In the book Canada's Indians Contemporary Conflicts the Metis are defined as "...having mixed ancestry. Initially the title meant a half "mixture" of French and Indian, although it has now been broadened to include almost all people with at least some Indian ancestry."⁹ In this study a capital 'M' has been used to write Metis because the women in this study are those who fit the following definition of big 'M' Metis: "...capital 'M,' Metis is a socio-cultural or political term for those originally of mixed ancestry who evolved into a distinct Indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region of Canada."¹⁰

⁴Ahenakew & Wolfart, 19.

⁵Ahenakew & Wolfart, 17.

⁶Ahenakew & Wolfart, 17.

⁷Cruikshank, 21. Angela Sidney was one of the women who shared her life stories with Julie Cruikshank. She is a Native woman from the Yukon.

⁸Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America. (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 7.

⁹J.S.Frideres, Canada's Indians Contemporary Conflicts. (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1974), 3.

¹⁰Peterson & Brown, 6. The great-grandparents of the first generation participant are listed in

Other works dealing with Metis culture and identity are Maria Campbell's Halfbreed. This is a book about the life of a Metis woman living in Canada. Since it is about a Metis woman from Saskatchewan it could be read for comparison to the lives of Metis women from Alberta. One book that must be considered in any study dealing with Metis people is The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown. This book deals with questions of Metis history, culture and identity. It is a collection of essays by authors who have expertise in varying areas regarding Metis people. One could also look to The Metis People of Canada : A History by The Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements and Daniel and Alda Anderson for information about the history of Metis people in Canada.

A Description of the Research Conducted

The Participants

There were three main participants selected for this study. The first generation participant is a seventy six year old Metis woman who speaks Cree and English. Cree is her first language. She is Roman Catholic. She is a widow, a mother of seven children and a grandmother to two grandchildren. The main second generation participant is forty six years old. Her religious persuasion is Native Spirituality. She is in a common law relationship and has one daughter from a previous marriage. Minor participants from the second generation are the sisters of the main second generation participant. The first sister, Naomi is thirty six years old, divorced and has no children. The second sister, Eleanor is thirty three years old, single and has no children. Both Naomi and Eleanor are Protestant. The third generation participant is twenty five years old, single and has no children. English is the first language of all the participants except the first generation participant.

Data Collection

Data collection was either in the form of interviews or participant observations. All the interviews were at least one hour long and the average interview time was two hours. The participant observation situations usually lasted between six and ten hours. The first premise of the researcher was that there would be continuities and discontinuities in the life experiences of three generations of Alberta Metis women. The data collection process was guided by this premise. The researcher was seeking information about the specific life experiences of each woman so that the researcher could compare the experiences for continuity and discontinuity. The second premise was that information could be culled which related primarily to three main themes: religion, career and family.

All the interview schedules were made up of open ended questions. The participant was always asked to respond in her own words. Since the researcher was gathering life history experiences she chose to ask questions that would encourage the participant to tell a story. At times the participants digressed to other events and situations but the researcher encouraged this as it revealed information to the researcher about how that participant organized her life experiences in her own mind. Digressions allowed the researcher to gain some understanding of how events, people, and places were networked in the mind of the participant. The researcher was seeking factual information like dates, events and places but the researcher was also seeking the feelings, perceptions and personal definitions of the participants' experiences. The researcher hoped that all the information could be gleaned from a narrative told by the participant. The researcher's hopes were fulfilled by the first generation participant whose answers to questions were often a narrative unlike the second generation participant who usually did not volunteer information. Occasionally

her answers turned into stories especially if the question dealt with a subject about which she felt a passion but generally she answered direct questions as concisely as possible.

The interview schedules were created according to a chronological order. The order was based on the life of the first generation participant. The schedules began with questions about her birth and childhood and progressed to the present.

Almost all of the interviews were conducted when the researcher and participant were alone. All the interviews with the first generation participant were conducted in her home and on one occasion her daughter was present for part of the interview. On all of the schedules the questions were grouped by topics of family, religion and career.

Schedule one sought information regarding the family background of each participant because the researcher felt that this information would be helpful for discovering familial patterns that span generations. Information about the family background was sought to discover bilingual capabilities and why they do or why they do not exist. For example the first generation's parents stressed the importance of her Native language while she in turn suppressed the attainment of Native language in her children.

Each interview was tape recorded and the researcher made brief notes during the interview. The brief notes were the basis for the follow up interview schedules. Items that the researcher wanted to pursue were brought up at the beginning of the next interview session. The researcher decided to do this because she felt that it was best to follow up information as close to the original discussion as possible. ¹¹

Sorting and Coding the Data

Sorting began after the first interview. The researcher did a preliminary sorting of information when she reviewed the researcher's notes from each interview. In the notes information was highlighted according to a color code. The data was further sorted in the transcript. The transcripts were color coded with highlighters. Three colors were used to sort the data into three categories: religion, family and career. Once the transcripts were color coded they were further sorted. Using a computer the researcher pulled apart the transcripts and put them back together with all the matching colored sections together.

Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis began early in the study. As soon as data was gathered in the first interviews the researcher was able to begin forming ideas about comparisons across the three generations. During each interview the researcher made notes. These notes were typed after each interview and they were a forum for preliminary analysis. The researcher went over these notes after they were typed and again periodically. When the researcher went over

¹¹Please see Appendix A for a description of the contents of each interview schedule.

the notes she noted similarities and differences between the social and cultural contexts of the three generations. For example when the first generation participant discussed playing with paper dolls as a girl the researcher noted that the first generation's paper dolls were pictures of models cut out of the Hudson Bay catalogue, while the third generation's paper dolls were punch-out Barbie paper dolls from a paper doll book. These were preliminary comparisons but together with other similarities and differences they gave the researcher a coherent image of the situation in life in which the first generation existed as a child.

Some of the participant observations led to comparisons. For example when the researcher and the first generation participant visited the Harrigan family farm the researcher saw that the participant grew up in a three bedroom house with at least eight people living there at all times. The researcher saw similarities between this and the living situation of the second generation participant during her childhood since the second generation participant usually shared her bedroom with two or three others. The researcher compared these experiences to the third generation and saw differences since the third generation lived in a four bedroom house with only three people in the house.

As the preliminary analysis of the data was ongoing through the sorting and coding the methods which were used for the final analysis began to be induced from the data. It became apparent that a comparative analysis would be the way to highlight the continuities and the discontinuities between the life experiences of the three generations.

After the second set of interviews with the second generation participant in July the researcher noted that the participant had a perception of her own Aboriginal identity that was different from the perceptions that her sisters and her mother have of themselves. It seemed to the researcher that since this was a study of Metis women it was an issue worth exploring more fully. The researcher decided to interview the sisters of the second generation participant so that the researcher would be able to compare the differing perceptions of Aboriginal identity among three women of the same generation. There was a second motive for interviewing the sisters. This was that the researcher had received some accounts of the same event from both the first and second generation participants. On occasion the two participants had different perceptions and recollections of the same event. The researcher was anxious to obtain a third or fourth perspective for a more complete account. The schedules for the sisters contained questions regarding the concept of Metis identity and questions to cross-check information.

At the beginning of August the researcher began making wall chart time lines of the first and second generation participants' lives. The wall chart time lines started with the birth of each participant and continued to the present. Material added to the time line was added in three colors. Religious events were recorded in green, career events in yellow and family events were recorded in red. Events ranged from minor to major. An example of a minor event was the first generation hurt her leg dancing when she was fifteen years old. An example of a major event was the date of the first generation's wedding. The wall chart had two purposes. First, it allowed the researcher to watch for

clumping of data. For example, on the wall chart the researcher was able to see that Adele's children were born in clusters. Being able to see the clumping gave the researcher the option of analyzing the data according to natural breaks or periods in the participant's life. The second purpose of the time line wall chart was to provide a chronological analysis of each participant's life. The researcher suspected that the final organization of the data would be in a chronological sequence and the time line would serve as an 'at a glance' reference.

The data was analyzed by theme and organized according to the chronology of the first generation's life. That is, the researcher decided to pull stories, events, remembrances, perceptions, and values directly from the coded transcript material. The material that was extracted from the transcripts was included in the final report as titled themes. The criteria for being included as a theme was that the material pertain to one of the three subcultural systems of religion, family or career. The material within each theme was comparatively analyzed. That is, the researcher looked at the same events and stories as they were recounted by each participant. The researcher used a method of similarity and difference to find continuities and discontinuities and the possible reasons for the differences or similarities. The researcher calls the analysis a chronological thematic comparison of continuities and discontinuities.¹²

The themes were arranged for the final report in a chronological organization. Although they have been sub-divided into categories beyond the family, religion and career categories they are not arranged for the final report according to the sub-categorization. The researcher has chosen to use the first generation as a chronological anchor. All the themes are placed in the order in which they fit into the first generation's life. Thus, the accounts of the second and third generations are not always in chronological order because they have been arranged to follow the order of the first generation participant's life.

In order to assure privacy for the participants the researcher has chosen pseudonyms for all the people included in the accounts of the three generations' life experiences.¹³ The following report is a chronological thematic comparison of the life experiences of three generations of Metis women in Alberta.

¹²For a description of the twenty five themes and the rationale for including each theme, please see Appendix C.

¹³ Please see Appendix B for a family tree made with pseudonyms. This tree is useful for determining the relationship of family members to each other.

A Description of How the Final Product Reflects the Goals and Objectives Set Out in the Research Plan of May 15, 1993

The researcher's main goal in this study was to gather the life experiences of three generations of Metis women in Alberta and record the experiences in a final report for The Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples. The researcher wanted to convey an understanding of these life experiences from the perspective of each participant.

Since the researcher had goals of gathering the life experiences of three generations of Metis women in Alberta and understanding these experiences from the perspective of the participant; the researcher began with an interpretive approach. This entailed use of grounded theory, the researcher planned to focus on the details of the participants' lives and let the theory emerge from the details which were directly related to the researcher from the participants.

Gathering the details through interviews and participant observations was an objective of the project. It was hoped that the details of the participants' lives would reveal their meaning systems, the way they define their experiences, and their understandings of their own lives. Thus, an objective was to attain, through interviews and participant observations, a thorough understanding of the way that the participant feels, communicates, understands and interprets.

Although the researcher began with a thematic framework, the researcher operated from an heuristic approach because the researcher hoped to discover other information beyond the three categories of family, religion and career and to discover information which could be sub-categorized under the three main themes.

It was the researcher's plan to use two research methods: historical research and oral history research. The researcher used a historical research method with the goal of reconstructing the life histories of three women within the context of changing social and cultural situations. In order to attain the goal of reconstruction within the changing contexts the researcher included in the interview schedules questions which dealt with the society and the culture in which the woman representing each generation existed. An objective to reaching the goal of reconstruction within the changing social and cultural context was to use the same questions for each woman so that there would be continuity across the data. The researcher wanted to be able to look at the same experience from three different perspectives. It was hoped that changes in the social and cultural context across generations would be obvious by comparing the experience of one generation to those of the generations before and/or after the one generation.

The oral history approach was utilized to meet the goal of understanding the life experiences from the participant's perspective. The oral history research method allowed the participants to recount their own experiences in their own words which enabled the researcher to hear and understand the participant's perspective.

Oral history was the approach used to gather the primary sources of data. The primary sources were the transcripts of each interview and the notes from each participant observation situation.

The goals that have been listed above are as follows: gathering the life experiences of three generations of Metis women in Alberta, with a particular emphasis on the cultural sub-systems of family, religion and career, helping the reader to gain an understanding of these experiences from an insider's perspective, and placing the experiences within the social and cultural context. It is the opinion of the researcher that the final product reflects these goals.

First, the researcher did discover information related to the thematic framework of religion, family and career. This is reflected in the final product by the fact that all of the experiences included in the final report fit into the thematic framework. All of the experiences contain information relating to family, religion or career and some of the experiences contain information relating to two or three of the themes. Often the three sub-cultural systems of family, religion, and career are inextricably intertwined in the life experiences of the participants.

Second, the goal of reconstructing the life histories within the changing social and cultural contexts is reflected in the final product by the fact that most of the themes contain an exploration of the same experience from three different perspectives. Gathering information about events and experiences common to all three generations allowed the researcher to compare the experiences, and gather information about the social and cultural context surrounding the experience. The differences between the accounts of the three generations are usually a reflection of changing context. There are seven themes included in the final report which do not include accounts from all three generations. These were included because they are family experiences which demonstrate social or cultural context without need for comparison to the other generations.

The final report of this study is a comparative thematic analysis. That is, the final report has been written as individual themes. Each theme contains data which deals with at least one of the three thematic starting points for the study: religion, family, and career. Within each theme there are usually points for comparison between the three generations' perspectives and perceptions of the event.

Theme One

THE FAMILY INTO WHICH EACH GENERATION IS BORN

First Generation

Adele was born into a Metis family on March 17, 1917. Both of her parents were Metis. Adele's father had an Irish/Cree father and a Cree mother.

Adele's paternal grandfather was born to parents who lived at Red River.¹⁴ Adele's mother had a Sioux/Scottish father and a French/Cree/Blackfoot mother. Adele's maternal great-great grandfathers had both come from Europe and married Native women.

Adele's Father and Paternal Grandparents

James - Coralee

Harry

Adele

Adele's father, Harry Harrigan, was born in St. Albert, Alberta on January 1, 1865. He was a twin in a family of ten children. Harry's father, James was an Irish/Cree man who ended up in Western Canada because he had travelled out from the East with the Hudson Bay explorers. When James arrived in the west he met Coralee at Lac Sainte Anne, Alberta. She was a Cree woman who did not speak very much English and James did not speak very much Cree. He knew enough to be able to let her know that he wanted to marry her. James was an Anglican when he met Coralee and he converted to Roman Catholicism in order that he be allowed to marry Coralee. She must have done a good job as a Catholic woman since she converted her husband and together they had a son who was the first Cree-speaking Oblate priest in Western Canada. James and Coralee were married in St. Albert and that is where they made their home after James received scrip land from the Canadian government. The Harrigan estate was established. There they raised their family of ten children.

Both James and Coralee understood and spoke French. Coralee had learned from priests and nuns who lived nearby. Coralee's first language was Cree. James' first language was English.

Adele's memories of her grandmother Coralee are fond and the warmth she feels was evident in her voice when she spoke of Coralee. She described her as a woman who worked hard for her whole family, her children, her husband and all her relatives. The only items that Coralee ever bought from a store were tea, sugar and flour. Everything else she made or processed herself. She snared rabbits and muskrats for meat, raised a garden for vegetables and picked berries for fruits and jams. Adele's favorites were *nipiminanna*. These are high bush cranberries and the jam that was made from them was the favorite

¹⁴They are listed in D.N.Sprague and R.P.Frye. The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement 1820-1900. (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications), 1983.

of Adele and her father. The chokecherries were never used for jam. They were mixed with dry meat and sugar and made into pemmican. Adele also loved the Indian popcorn or cracklings as they are also known. These are made from meat fat.

Adele's Mother and Maternal Grandparents

Edward Rawlins - Marie Petite-Chat

Veronica

Adele

Adele's mother, Veronica was born to Edward Rawlins of Edmonton and Marie Petite-Chat of Fort Pitt, Manitoba. Veronica was one of ten children. She and her sister Amanda married the twins Harry and Frederick Harrigan. Marie Petite-Chat is a woman with an illustrious background. She was born to an Cree/Blackfoot mother and a French father. Her paternal grandparents were immigrants from France. Her mother was named by the missionaries and thus had an ornate French name but she must have lived among her own people at some time because Marie was fluent in French, Cree and Blackfoot, the language she learned from her mother. Stories of Marie still circulate in the family today and the most famous of these is the one that tells of Marie learning her medicines from Big Bear. It is said that her family travelled and they often linked up with Big Bear or Poundmaker. Marie would watch and learn. Adele tells stories of Marie curing venereal disease with roots. Adele always says "that woman could cure anything."

Marie Petite-Chat is also known in the family for her stories about Louis Riel. She would tell the grandchildren about how good-looking he was (something that is not usually mentioned in the history books) and for this she would be teased. The grandchildren would laugh and say that she must have been in love with Riel.

There were two important lessons that Marie passed Adele. She would say to my Adele "*Nosisim* don't ever let your Cree down and don't ever try to hide what you are..."¹⁵ This meant that Adele was never to forget her language and that she was never to pretend that she was anything but a Metis. This was the beginnings of Adele's Metis identity.

Veronica's father was Edward Rawlins. He was born to a Scottish father and a Sioux mother who was from the Saskatchewan/North Dakota border. Edward made a living as a buyer for a trading post. He travelled quite a bit and once made a trip to New York to buy fabric.

Veronica and Harry (Adele's mother and father)

Veronica spoke both French and Cree. She had no education and she had poor eyesight. Veronica worked a while before she got married. She cooked and cleaned for Richard Hardisty who, according to Adele, was a local politician.

¹⁵Nosisim is the Cree word for 'my granddaughter'. Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 21, 1993, Edmonton.

She did not work for too long as she had enough work to do for her own family. When she was twenty five years old she married thirty year old Harry. Harry was an educated Metis man as he attended father LeDuc's college in Saint Albert, Alberta. He studied accounting and business. Veronica and Harry had ten children before the birth of their youngest child Adele. At the time of Adele's birth there were four girls and two boys in the family. Harry and Veronica had already suffered the deaths of four of their children. Two boys died very young. Adele does not know the causes of their deaths. A boy, Francis and a girl, Josephine died as children from whooping cough. Adele is five years younger than the next sibling closest to her age.

Second Generation

Adele's oldest daughter, Georgianna¹⁶ was born on November 19, 1947. She was born to a mother who was thirty years older. Georgianna's mother is a Metis and her late father was a Metis.

Georgianna's Father and Paternal Grandparents

Charles Black - Catherine Konti

George
Georgianna

Georgianna's father George was born April 8, 1917 at Lac Sainte Anne, Alberta. His father was Charles Black and his mother was Catherine Konti. Charles was born to a Scottish/Iroquois father and an Iroquois mother. Catherine was born to a Metis mother and an Iroquois father. Catherine is known among the family for her reputation as a maker of 'bad medicine'. Adele likes to bring out the pictures of Catherine and say "look, you can see that she mixed with the bad medicine by the way her face looks". Charles was a strong Catholic and though they were married in a Catholic church Catherine followed the religious ways of the Iroquois people. George grew up exposed to both the Catholic and the Native religion and though he followed Catholic practices the Native ways also were a part of his life.

Charles and Catherine had ten children. George, like his wife Adele, was the youngest in his family. Charles ran a trading post and when George was a child his family moved from Lac Saint Anne to Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. They lived in Fort Chip for a few years and then they moved to the coal branch west of Edmonton. Eventually they moved into Edmonton and lived in Jasper Place. Charles was a mine worker and Catherine was a homemaker. By the time George was born Charles and Catherine already had five boys and four girls.

George married Adele, the first generation participant of this study. Georgianna was the second child born to George and Adele, their first child was a son, Luke.

Third Generation

The third generation participant in this study is the grand-daughter of the first generation and the daughter of the second generation. Rose was born to Georgianna and her husband Donald on October 18, 1968. Rose was born to an Irish/English father and a Cree/Iroquois mother. Georgianna was twenty years old when Rose was born.

¹⁶Nicknamed Georgie.

Father and Paternal Grandparents

Peter - Agnes

Joseph

Rose

Rose's father, Donald was born in Edmonton, Alberta on April 14, 1948. His parents were Peter and Agnes Finnegan. Agnes was born in England and came to Canada when she was fourteen. Peter was born in Bankhead, Alberta as Donald's grandfather worked in the mines there. Bankhead is located within Banff National Park. Today it is a ghost town. When Peter was nineteen he began teaching in a one room school house at Tomahawk, Alberta. His family lived in Evansburg, Alberta which is not that far by car but in 1927 it was too far to commute. Friday after school when Peter wanted to go home and see his family one of the townspeople would supply him with a horse and he would ride home .

When he was about twenty one he got a position at Sacred Heart school in Edmonton. He was given the position of vice-principal. He was young to obtain such a position but there had been a strike the year before and the archbishop had excommunicated all the male teachers who participated in the strike. The result was that many young men from the rural areas were hired for teaching positions in the city. Since there was no longer the Alberta Teachers Federation Peter joined up with some other men and he became the first president of local 54 of the Alberta Teachers Association.

It was while he was teaching at Sacred Heart that he met Agnes. They soon married and started their family of twelve children. Donald was the ninth child born to Peter and Agnes. Donald married Georgianna in March 1968 and together they had Rose.

Theme Two

THE BIRTH OF EACH PARTICIPANT

First Generation

Adele's family moved to Wabasca, Alberta before she was born. They moved there because her father Harry had gotten a job running the local store. Their home was a log cabin right next to the Desmarais reserve. It is in the log cabin that Adele's birth took place. Her grandmother Marie Petite-Chat was the mid-wife for the birth. Her father was working in the store when she was born.

Adele was her mother Veronica's seventh birth. Adele began life with a physical trauma which resonated throughout the rest of her life. Adele thinks that her birth must have been a breach birth and at some point during the delivery the midwife inadvertently pulled Adele's leg out of its socket while she was trying to pull the baby out. It was because of this that Adele was unable to walk until she was four years old. The fact that she did not walk until age four was something that her sisters teased her about later in her life. She did not realize that the rate at which she learned to walk was different from the rest of her family until one of her sisters told her that she was born a cripple.

Her leg was fixed by a Native woman who used to come to their house each day and massage the leg and push it back in until finally at age four they put Adele in a walker and she was able to learn to walk. Adele has fond memories of this woman who fixed her leg. The woman used to call my Adele *mitsoowastayap* which Adele says does not really have an English equivalent but the closest words would be 'my partner in blue eyes'. She called Adele this because both of them had blue eyes which was a rarity in Adele's family.

Adele's mother did not breast feed her as Veronica had undergone an operation on her breast a few years before Adele's birth and she was unable to breast feed. Instead Adele drank from a bottle. She was given milk or tea with lots of sugar.

Second Generation

In the interview that I conducted with Georgie regarding the details of her birth it was apparent to me that discussing her memories of her birth was not a pleasant experience for Georgie. Of course, she cannot really remember the actual birth, therefore the memories that she was sharing were the memories of what she has been told of her birth.

Georgie was born in Edmonton in 1947 at her parent's home. She has been told that her mother was home alone and that her father was out drinking. She was born in the living room on the couch and there was no one to assist Adele with the birth. Georgie's older brother Luke was one year old and he was asleep at the time. According to Adele her husband was present at the beginning of the birth but he missed the whole labour because he had gone to the pay phone to call an ambulance as they did not have a telephone in their house. In both the accounts from Adele and Georgie of Georgie's birth Adele is alone at

home giving birth, what differs in each of the stories is the role of George in each of the births. In Georgie's version he is absent for the entire event. In Adele's version he is absent only a short time.

Shortly after Georgie was born an ambulance arrived to take them to the Misericordia hospital. Mother and daughter stayed at the hospital for about a week. Adele and George decided to name their daughter after her father.

Third Generation

Unlike the first two generations there is no major trauma surrounding the birth of the third generation. Adele had her leg pulled out of the socket during the birth and Georgie was born to a mother who was alone at home. The birth of the third generation is also different because she was born in a hospital.

On October 16, 1968 Donald took Georgie to the General hospital in Edmonton. Her doctor expected her to go into labour so she was admitted into the hospital before she was in labour. She calmly awaited the birth of her first and only child. On the morning of Friday October eighteen Donald arrived at the hospital to play cards with Georgie while she waited for the birth. Donald and Georgie had been told that the doctor was going to induce labour at about 11:00AM. Donald had been to a class at the University that morning. He went to the hospital after his class. When he got there and asked to see his wife he was told that she was being prepared for labour but that he would be able to see her while she was waiting to deliver. He waited and waited and wondered why he had not yet been able to see Georgie. Finally, at 1:00PM a nurse came to him and told him that he had a daughter. He did not even know that the labour had begun.

The day that Rose was born was the same day as the Canadian Native Friendship Centre's annual all-Native festival. As Adele and George were on their way to the festival they stopped in at the hospital to see their first grandchild. Later, when they were at the festival someone made an announcement that it was a special day for Adele and George because they had become grandparents.

Theme Three

THE FIRST FAMILY RELOCATION OF EACH WOMAN

Early in each participant's life there is a move to a new home.

First Generation

When Adele was four years old her family moved back to St. Albert from Wabasca. This is an unpleasant memory for Adele because the whole family did not move. Her father stayed in Wabasca for several more years. He had a position running the trading post. Her mother worked as well since their home was also the Royal Canadian Mounted Police boarding house. Veronica looked after the house and the boarders while Harry ran the store, the stables and the post office.

When Adele was four years old her parents decided that it was necessary for Veronica and the children to return to St. Albert for the sake of the children. The older children needed more opportunities. Harry and Veronica felt that the children's education needs, career needs, and marriage prospects were limited in Wabasca. Harry and Veronica knew that they would not be in Wabasca forever and they did not want one of their children to marry someone from there because that would mean living far from the rest of the family when they eventually returned to St. Albert. Adele missed her father when he was not with them. It was a few years before he came back to St. Albert. It was not until he took sick with rheumatoid arthritis that he came home.

Second Generation

Georgie moved many more times in her childhood than either of the two other generations. When Georgie was about a year old her family moved to Camp 550. This was an old army barracks housing unit in northwest Edmonton. The thing that Georgie recalls most about Camp 550 is the extended family. For almost the whole time that they lived there they had different relatives staying with them. Most often it was Georgie's first cousins.

There were four or five of Adele's nieces and nephews who lived with them at different times or all at once. All the children shared a room together. There was always Georgie, her older brother Luke, her younger brother Devon who was born in 1949, her other younger brother Rich who was born in 1950 and then usually there were one or two more cousins staying with them in their room. They lived in Camp 550 until 1954, when Georgie was six, they moved to Rossdale, a community in central Edmonton.

The house in Rossdale was a bigger house than the one at Camp 550. Georgie's discomfort was obvious as she described this house during the interviews. When asked if something about the house disturbed her, she answered "the basement"¹⁷. She hated the basement because she was often made to go down there by herself to bring up potatoes or vegetables. When Adele was pregnant she liked to eat the dirt off potatoes. Georgie hated the basement because it was grey, stone and dark. The vegetables were kept in an old refrigerator at the back corner of the basement so not only did she have to go down by herself but she also had to traverse the whole basement. After she got the potatoes she would turn and run back across and up the stairs feeling the hot breath close behind her of whatever evil things were lurking down there. Once she was at the top and in the entrance way of the kitchen she was safe.

It was not only the basement of this house that frightened Georgie. At night when Georgie was supposed to be asleep in the bedroom that she shared with her three brothers she would see things moving around, she would hear footsteps and the door would open and close. In her own words "it was a busy place"¹⁸. Georgie thinks that her perceptiveness to the spirit world is the result of having Native blood. She is not the only one in the family who has this perceptiveness. Both of her sisters, her mother and her daughter all see themselves as being attuned to the spirit world. The difference is how each woman reacts to the awareness¹⁹. Georgie was not the only child who was aware of the goings on in this house. She used to talk about the events with her brother Devon. She tried to talk to her mother about the things she saw and heard but her mother would ask things like "did it look like uncle Frank?"²⁰ Georgie found this too frustrating and gave up trying to talk to her mother.

Sometimes Georgie would see people walking around in the house and

¹⁷Georgianna Black, interviewed by author, 17 May, 1993, Edmonton.

¹⁸Georgianna Black, interviewed by author, 17 May, 1993, Edmonton.

¹⁹ See Theme Twenty two for an explanation.

²⁰Georgianna Black, interviewed by author, 17 May, 1993, Edmonton.

when she would ask her mother "who was that woman?"²¹ Her mother would respond by telling her not to talk like that. When asked why Georgie was the only one who saw anything she replied that it was because she was in tune with herself which allowed her to be attuned with the spirit world. She feels that she has always known herself and that she has always had a strong spirit.

Third Generation

When Rose was born her parents lived in a two bedroom apartment called The Bel Airs. These apartments are located in northwest Edmonton. The Bel Airs are a large apartment complex. In 1968 they were filled with young couples and families. Georgie and Donald picked these apartments because they were located close to both of their families and they were close to the university which Donald was attending at the time. Rose has both good and bad memories of this apartment.

One bad memory is of nightmares. Rose used to have bad dreams and then when she awoke she would often see shapes of people in the darkness of her room. She remembers her Kokum telling her parents that they should have Rose sleep on their bedroom floor for awhile until the nightmares go away. Rose did not like this because from the floor the strange shapes seemed even more large and looming.

Another memory, that cannot really be called bad, was the pussywillow incident. When Rose was very small she was playing outside the apartment and there were many pussywillow trees. Rose loved the pussywillows because they were soft like cat fur and they were pretty. She was playing with them and rubbing their softness on her face and around her nose when suddenly one pussywillow disappeared. Rose had sniffed it up into her nose. It was so far up that her Mom could not get it out. The Charles Camsell Hospital was right across the street from the apartment complex and Georgie scooped Rose up and ran over and had the pussywillow taken out. To this day Rose still loves pussywillows, so much that she is going to have them in her bridal bouquet when she gets married.

When Rose was about four years old her family moved from the Bel Airs to a house. The house was located on the edge of downtown and though the homeowners in the area were responsible and decent there were a lot of transients that passed through the neighborhood when they were going to and from downtown. Rose's family moved to this house because it and the ones surrounding it were owned by Donald's aunt, and she rented the house to Rose's family for a low rent. Donald was still in university at this time and Georgie was working for the provincial government in social services. Most of the money on which the family relied was Georgie's salary. The house on ninety sixth street and the low rent were appreciated by Georgie and Donald even though it was not without drawbacks.

There were problems with living in an area frequented by transients.

²¹Georgianna Black, interviewed by author, 17 May, 1993, Edmonton.

First, the family car was stolen. One night the old white car was stolen from the back yard. A few weeks later the family was notified that it was in Smoky Lake, Alberta waiting to be picked up. It was fine and the family continued driving it.

The second problem with the house was that the garage was repeatedly vandalized. Someone would break in and put graffiti on the walls, the cupboards and the old car that was in there. Rose remembers the day that she was sitting in her room looking out the window and she saw a group of boys go into the garage. She ran and told her dad what she saw. He went out and caught those boys and yelled at them and told them if they ever did this again he would not handle it himself but he would get the police. He let them off easy.

One thing about the house that was both good and bad was the school nearby. The closest Catholic school was Sacred Heart. This is the school that Rose attended for grade one. One of the good things about it was that her two aunts and her uncle attended this school so she could walk home with them after school and one of her aunts could take her home and make lunch for her every day. A bad thing about going to this school was that Rose contracted head lice. This was very unpleasant. She had to have her head washed with medicinal soap and then her Kokum picked out all the eggs. This took forever and she had to sit still while Kokum did this. George had to wash all of Rose's bedding and Rose's Kokum kept checking her head for the rest of the year. Another bad thing about the school was that some of the children were tough street kids. When Rose was in grade one a girl in grade two punched Rose and gave her a black eye. Rose attended this school for grade one only. She had gone to St. Vincent's Convent for kindergarten. The convent was near her grandparents home in the west end. When she started grade two her parents put her in St. Andrew's which is near the kindergarten and it is where the kids she had met in kindergarten were going to school.

A good thing about the house was that it was located a block away from the Italian bakery. Rose's family would go there every Saturday to buy crusty buns and delicate, elaborate desserts to take to Saturday dinner at Kokum's house.

When Rose was about eight years old her family moved again to a house by her grandparents and her school. It is the house she lived in until she moved out when she was twenty three years old.

Theme Four

Garden Delights

First Generation

Adele has two garden experiences in her childhood. One deals with a work memory and the other is a pleasure memory. The one to be discussed here is the latter. When Adele was a little girl her grandmother Marie would take Adele and some of her cousins to the muskeg. It was a treacherous journey for an old woman and a little girl because the trail to the muskeg was dotted with salamanders. They would make the journey fun by skipping, dancing and singing in Cree.

One time that Adele remembers in particular, her Grandma Marie was a little ways back from the children. They were walking along and when they got to a salamander they ran back screaming. They grabbed onto their Grandma and pulled the sleeve right off her dress. Marie killed the salamander so that they could pass. All the children carried little shovels for digging up roots. They used these shovels to dig a hole for the grave of the salamander. Marie pushed the salamander into the hole and they did not take that trail again until the next summer.

When they got to the muskeg they would dig for a variety of roots. Adele recalls that she always dug for the rat root. To find these roots she had to dig in among the cat tails and she took the root and the top of the cat tail. The root was used for healing sore throats. The top was taken because the inside could be mixed with lard and made into a poultice and used on boils or sores. Whenever the children found a root or an herb that they were going to take they had to leave something behind. Marie had taught them that the earth has gifts to give and that they are gifts which help people by healing them but she warned the children that these gifts cannot just be taken randomly. Marie taught them to give something back to the earth to show respect for the earth's power and to show thanks for the gift. Adele always carried a little bit of tea or sugar with her when they went to the muskeg and she left behind a little bit of tea or sugar as her thanks to the earth. At that time tea and sugar were precious goods as they were expensive and they were some of the few store bought items.

Second Generation

The second generation participant in this study has also had garden experiences but they did not happen until she was an adult. When Georgie was in her late thirties she began to study the properties and powers of herbs and roots. She learned from different people. She also learned that the earth has a power and that it can give gifts to certain individuals who understand these gifts and show their respect to the earth. When Georgie began to learn about these things she discovered that the knowledge alone was a gift and she began to give thanks. The way that she did this was to go to the places of her ancestral spirits and offer tobacco to them. The places are like garden places. They are places

of soil, grass, flowers, rivers and trees. Sometimes Georgie goes alone and sometimes she takes her daughter Rose.

Georgie and her partner go to a special place once a year to pick sweetgrass. They pick bundles of sweetgrass which they take home. They say special prayers while they braid the sweetgrass. Georgie likes to pick sage. She calls sage 'the woman's herb'. Both sage and sweetgrass are burned to carry prayers to the Creator in the smoke.

Theme Five

White Liniment Incident

A First Generation Childhood Memory

After Adele recovered from tuberculosis at age 16 in 1933 she was anxious to make up for lost time. She had spent five years lonely and unable to live the carefree life of childhood. The thing she missed most was dancing. Shortly after she recovered there was a dance in St. Albert. She could not wait to get to a square dance so heedless of her mother's warnings and requests that she stay home she went to the dance. When Adele was dancing the square dance she literally felt like she had just come to life. However, when she got home the feeling diminished and she became aware of a throbbing ache in her leg.

It was explained earlier²² that Adele's leg had been pulled out of place during her childbirth. This same leg had given her many growing pains when she was ill with tuberculosis. Her legs were not used to dancing since she had been unable to dance or run for five years. When Adele came home crying with pain her mother was so mad, she yelled, "you should have stayed home"²³. Even though her mother was mad at her she could not let Adele suffer so she went to the pantry and lit a match to find the white liniment. This was a liniment that was always used to rub Adele's leg when she had the growing pains.

Adele's mother massaged the white liniment all over Adele's hip and leg. Adele felt relieved and was able to go to sleep. The next morning she awoke and was surprised to find that her leg was still white. When she rubbed at it nothing happened. The white was stuck there. Adele had been given a shoe polish massage. Her mother grabbed a bottle of white shoe polish instead of the white liniment. Adele had not noticed because the massage itself had provided enough relief for her to fall asleep. They had to scrub Adele's leg for most of the morning to remove the shoe polish.

²²See Theme Two.

²³Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 21, 1993, Edmonton.

Theme Six

Adele's Remedies

Adele's favorite remedies for cough and cold are rat root and muskegees. Whenever one of her children or grandchildren has a cold or a sore throat, Adele advises the sick one to chew on a piece of rat root for relief. She says that the juice of the rat root clears the mucus.

When Adele has a cough she makes her own remedy. She calls it muskegees. She says that it is made from the boughs of a cedar tree. The boughs are boiled and made into a liquid. She keeps this liquid in the fridge and when her lungs are bothering her she drinks the mixture. It tastes terrible and it is supposed to be good for the kidneys as well as the lungs.

A second remedy that Adele likes to use for her lungs is balsam bark. This one is specifically for a cough. She boils the balsam bark with the cones from the balsam and adds some molasses. This is another mixture that she keeps in the refrigerator in a juice pitcher. Her granddaughter Rose has made the mistake of thinking that the medicine was juice. It looks like apple juice but it tastes hideous. It did not take Rose long to learn to ask which pitcher had the juice and which one had the muskegees.

When Adele's granddaughter, Rose was about five years old she had a terrible sore throat and her throat glands were swollen. The family doctor had prescribed penicillin but after weeks she was still not fully recovered. The infection kept recurring. Finally, Adele's husband George said he was going to get a medicine made for his granddaughter. He wrote down a list and a recipe and took it to his friend the pharmacist. The pharmacist checked it over and found that the recipe contained no prescription ingredients and he made the recipe. George came home with a bottle of liquid that was thin, pink and watery. Her dad was told to give her two tablespoons a couple of times a day. In three days her throat was clear and the swelling had gone down. The infection did not recur. Rose's father does not remember what was in the recipe.

The only thing he remembers is that George told him it had rat root in it which served as an astringent. George did not do things like this often because these practices were the ways of his mother and he did not follow the Indian ways. He followed the Catholic ways of his father.

Theme Seven

Cattle Buyers Story

A Childhood Memory from the First Generation

Adele's mother spoke only French and Cree. When Adele was a young child, about eight years old, the cattle buyers used to come to the family farm in St. Albert. If her dad was not home to talk to them Adele would talk to them because her mother was unable to as she did not speak English. One day when her father was away Adele decided that she wanted to see her mother speak English. When the cattle buyers came Adele hid. She watched her mother struggling to talk to them but they could not understand her mix of French and Cree. Finally, Adele came out of hiding and spoke to them for her mother. Her mother did not punish her and to this day Adele thinks that this was the worst thing she has ever done to anyone. She feels that she embarrassed everyone including herself and that she really hurt her mother.

Adele learned a lesson that day. She thinks that it was the cruelest thing she ever did. She learned that cruelty is not funny. She never knew that her mother was embarrassed about her inability to speak English.

Theme Eight

Influence of Grandparents During Childhood

The first and third generation participants both had an abundance of grandparental attention while they were growing up. The second generation was not as fortunate in this respect as most of her grandparents died before she was born or while she was a young child. The role of the grandparent in the Metis culture has always been to have extensive input in the raising of grandchildren.²⁴

First Generation

Adele had two grandmothers who had very active roles in her life when she was growing up. Unfortunately her grandfathers did not live as long as their wives and so they were not as influential in Adele's life. At points in her childhood Adele had the opportunity to live with both of her grandmothers.

When Veronica and the children moved back to St. Albert from Wabasca the first place that they lived was in town with Grandma Marie. She had a little house by the grain elevators and the railroad tracks. After a time they moved to a farm on the Harrigan (the family of Adele's father) estates.

When they moved onto the estate Adele's Grandma Coralee moved in with them. Adele was given a little rocker so that she could sit beside Grandma Coralee who was in her own rocker. They would sit together and rock for hours. This is how Adele learned to sing Cree hymns. Coralee would sit in her rocker and drink endless cups of muskeg tea. She loved to smoke *kinnick kinnick* which Adele says is a certain type of willow. Today Adele yearns to smell the scent of smoking *kinnick kinnick* and says that it is a wonder she does not smoke.

There were times when Adele would have to sit quietly in the rocker. This was on Sundays when Father Joseph Harrigan came out to the farm to say mass for Coralee. Father Harrigan was Adele's uncle and he was the first Cree speaking oblate priest in western Canada. Other relatives would come from nearby to hear the mass and they would bring their children. Adele was so much younger than all her siblings that she was always excited to have playmates and she would not be able to sit quietly. She recalled one time when she said to her grandma "why is Father wearing a dress like an old lady?"²⁵ At that time the priests were still dressing in soutanes. Coralee's influence on Adele was in the area of religion. It was Coralee who started Adele's learning of

²⁴For information about the relationships between Metis grandparents and their grandchildren see Maria Campbell, Halfbreed (Halifax: Goodread Biographies), 1983. Particularly chapter 2. or Chapter Seven in Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart, Our Grandmother's Lives as Told in Their Own Words (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 165 - 203. In this chapter one woman talks about the relationship she had with her grandmother and about the relationship she has as a grandmother with her own grandchildren.

²⁵Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 31, 1993, Edmonton.

the Cree hymns. Coralee's son Joseph, the priest, was always brought up to Adele whenever she went out to a dance. She would be told to remember that she had an uncle who was a priest and to behave in such a way that he could take pride in her behavior. Adele sat through the mass every Sunday at Coralee's side and even though she squirmed and wanted to play with the children who had come for mass, sitting through the mass affected her for the rest of her life. To this day she will not miss mass on Sunday and when she is alone at home she will sit and sing the hymns in her rocker because her grandmother told her that singing a Cree hymn is like saying a prayer.

Adele lived with her other Grandma, Marie, at different times. This grandmother was something of an enigma because she spoke French, Cree, and Blackfoot but no English. Her father was a Frenchman from Montreal and her mother was a Native woman from Alexander, Alberta.

When Adele started school she moved into Marie's home in St. Albert. She had to attend school in the town of St. Albert and it was easier to stay at Marie's than it was to commute from the farm every day. Adele was seven years old when she went to stay at her grandma's house in St. Albert. She did not go alone. Her brother Sean and her sister Beth went as well. Adele's favorite aunt and her cousin already were living at Marie's. Adele recalls that it was a crowded but happy home. It was a log house that was built like a long house. Adele said that it was like a dance hall. Half of the house was partitioned and they had their beds on one side. Beth and Sean slept in homemade beds. Aunt Myrtle and Adele shared a bed and cousin Roy slept in the kitchen on a Winnipeg couch which is a couch in the daytime with a nice cover on it and at night the sides can be pulled down and it becomes a single bed. Grandma Marie had her own bed and at night they would sing Cree hymns together before they went to sleep.

Adele lived with Marie during the school year for five years. Adele attended the public school in Saint Albert for grades one and two. When Adele started grade three the school was overcrowded. To compensate for the overcrowding the school board took some children out of the school and they transferred them to the residential school. Adele was one of those students. She attended the residential school for grade three but she was lucky that her grandmother lived so close because she was able to live at grandmother's instead of the school. Adele recalls that the residential school was run by Catholic nuns.

Adele also recalls that there were some white children at the school whose parents paid for them to board there. She remembers that the Native children at the school were called orphans because the government paid for their stay at the school. When Adele began grade four she was able to go back to the public school. Adele completed grade four and half of grade five at the public school. She was in grade five when she contracted tuberculosis and had to stay home.

Marie was a huge influence in Adele's life. Her biggest contribution was to Adele's cultural identity. It was Marie and Myrtle who taught beadwork to Adele. Adele vividly remembers learning her first woman's craft. For a Metis woman beadwork was an artistic and religious expression. In the patterns each woman beaded there were symbols. Some were religious, but all were an expression of the woman's creativity. They taught Adele on fabric scraps with

old beads. Adele remembers the first time she made a design on the velvet. She used a turkey feather sliced with a razor and dipped in flour and water. The turkey feather made a white line on the fabric. Adele said that the beads came from the Hudson Bay Company and they were bought by the skein. A skein was a long thread with at least a hundred beads on it and it cost ten cents. The best thing Adele made was a velvet beaded bag. This is an art that she continues today. Recently she purchased green and gold bugle beads and four yards of green velvet. She is going to make a dress and a jacket and then put beadwork around the edges.

Marie always gave Adele her footwear. She either made moccasins for Adele herself or she got someone from Wabasca to make them. If she made them herself she would buy the hides from Native people who were passing through on their way to the Lake Saint Anne Pilgrimage. Marie's place was a stopping place for many people passing through to the pilgrimage. If Marie made the moccasins the beadwork was always in flower patterns. Adele always wore the moccasins that were given to her by her grandmother until she got tuberculosis. While she had tuberculosis her doctor told her that she must wear shoes. Her father bought her a pair of lace up boots for the winter. The boots cost just over a dollar. For the summer her father bought her sandals. Adele missed the feel of the soft leather and colorful beaded patterns. Most of Adele's clothes were typical of a Metis female as they were somber and dark. The beads on her moccasins were the only colorful accents she ever had on her outfits.

When Adele was sick with tuberculosis her grandmother used to sneak Native medicines to her because she did not think that the western medicines were any good. She had to sneak the medicines to Adele because Adele's mother did not approve of them.

Marie made sure that Adele knew her language. She always spoke to her in Cree. She would say to Adele "Nosisim, don't ever let your Cree down. Don't ever lose it and don't ever try to hide what you are"²⁶. Adele took these words to her heart and never forgot them even when they led to her being a source of embarrassment to her sisters. Whenever Adele would go to town with one or more of her sisters she would stop to talk to the Native people and she always spoke in Cree. Her sisters did not use the language in public.

Marie taught Adele many things. Adele learned the Cree language, Cree arts like beadwork and herbal healing, and Metis pride.

Second Generation

Georgie's paternal grandfather and her maternal grandmother died long before she was born and her paternal grandmother died while Georgie was a small child. The only grandparent with whom Georgie had a relationship was Harry Harrigan her maternal grandfather, although he was not an everyday presence in her life.

²⁶Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 31, 1993, Edmonton.

Third Generation

Rose was blessed with grandparents who were a daily presence in her life until she started school. Even then she still usually saw at least one of her grandparents daily until she was about fourteen years old. Both of Rose's parents worked so Rose spent all day with either her grandma or her kokum.

There were so many interesting things to do at Rose's grandma's house. Rose could polish the silver, dust the Hummels, or wash the piano keys with milk. There was a basket of decorative eggs on the table at the end of the hallway, it was always fun to hide these and leave them for awhile until their hiding place was forgotten and then they could be searched out. There was a big round tin filled with all kinds of different buttons. This was one of Rose's favorite things. She would dump out the buttons and arrange them and make pictures with them. Sometimes Rose was allowed to sit at her grandpa's desk and pretend that it was her office or her classroom. She could go in the drawers and get paper, pens, or the letter opener. Once in awhile Rose would find a little bag of peanuts in the desk. She knew that her grandpa was not allowed to have them because he was diabetic but she never told on him.

It was Rose's grandma who taught Rose to knit and to sew. On rainy days her grandma would start a row for Rose and then show her how to continue, soon Rose would have knitted a little blanket. If they did not knit then sometimes they would make rag dolls. Rose's grandma would pull out her bags of scrap fabrics and old nylons. They would stuff the nylons with cotton and other nylons and then a body could be formed out of the stocking. They would wrap scraps of fabric on the stuffed stocking for clothes and pull out the button tin to find buttons for eyes and a nose. When Rose was a little older (elementary school age) her grandma began to teach her about sewing on a sewing machine. One of the first things Rose made was pillowcases, she was so proud of them. They were made from an old sheet.

The basement of Rose's grandma's house was another whole world of things to do. There was the pantry shelves in the washing machine area. These shelves were always loaded with interesting looking things. Rose and her favorite cousin often used to go down and take a bottle of olives, pickles or dill carrots. Usually they would consume the whole bottle and pretend that it had never been there. In the same room that the pantry shelves were in there were also cupboards that had interesting things in them. Sometimes there were old clothes in which one could dress up and there was always scrap paper to draw or scribble on. Rose's grandma's house was such that Rose could have spent forever in that house and never missed a thing of the outside world.

The apartment of Rose's Kokum was just as good in different ways. At Kokum's there was Rose's uncle George who was only six years older than Rose, her aunt Eleanor who was eight when Rose was born, and her aunt Naomi who was twelve when Rose was born. Having two aunts and an uncle close to her own age made it fun to go to her Kokum's because there was always somebody to do something with Rose. It was at her Kokum's that Rose learned to dance an old time waltz, play monopoly, and sing Cree songs. There was not a yard as there was at her Grandma's house but there was a river valley right across the

street.

Rose remembers that her relationship with her uncle George was like a brother-sister relationship. They did not like each other at all for years. George Junior used to set traps on his bedroom door just so he would know if Rose had been in his room. One time when Rose was about eight and he was about fourteen he had to baby-sit Rose because everyone else went out. George Junior usually did not baby-sit Rose but this one time it was necessary. In order for the two of them to be able to get along all night Rose stayed in the bedroom. At about eleven that night Rose heard George Junior go out onto the balcony. She ran out of the bedroom and locked the balcony door and then she went to sleep. George Junior was locked outside in the winter for a couple of hours until Adele came home. Rose apologized to George Junior about three years ago. She felt guilty about that incident all those years until she apologized.

Like Adele, Rose too was given all her footwear by her grandparents when she was small as her parents could not afford to buy her nice shoes. Her father was in University while she was a small child and her mother worked for the government, but all Georgie's money went to rent, food and bills. The first time it happened Rose was only a few months old. Her parents had taken her to visit her Kokum and her Mosom. Her Mosom was upset by the fact that she came with no shoes. He went uptown and bought Rose a pair of little satin slippers.

There is continuity between the experiences of Adele and Rose. Both women were parented by grandparents. At times both women had a grandmother as the primary care giver. The discontinuity between the two experiences is the reason behind the experience. Adele's mother was busy as a homemaker, while Rose's mother was busy as a wage earner.

Rose was parented by her grandparents because both of her parents had to work. The family could have survived on one salary but they would not have had any extras or been able to buy a house. Since both of Rose's parents grew up in large families they both experienced home-made clothes, hand me downs and doing with out extras like piano lessons and brand new hockey equipment. They wanted to make a better life for themselves and their daughter. The only way they could do this was by both of them working full-time.

Rose is glad that her parents both worked because she got the best of both worlds. Her parents made a good living so that Rose could have opportunities.

Rose had as her care givers grandparents who were experts, Rose's grandma had mothered twelve children. She had endless patience. Rose has never seen her grandmother mad. Rose's Kokum had raised seven children. She knew how to entertain a little girl.

The influence of Rose's grandmothers in Rose's life was in the area of family. Since Rose was an only child she could have grown up lonely. She did not grow up lonely because her grandmothers provided warm, loving homes away from home for Rose. She was never lonely with her grandmothers because they spent time teaching her, playing with her, talking with her.

Theme Nine

The First Communion, First Confession and the Confirmation of The Three Generations

First Generation

First Communion, Confession and Confirmation are three sacraments administered by the Roman Catholic Church. They are usually given to Roman Catholic children in elementary school.

Adele was eight when she received her first communion. At the same time that she received her first communion she also had her first confession and she was confirmed. In preparation for these sacraments her school class had a nine day retreat. Adele recalls that at the retreat they were preached to and they had a practice confession and communion. The retreat was held in the church basement.

The day set for receipt of these sacraments was Ascension Thursday. The sacraments were administered at the St. Albert Roman Catholic parish. The Bishop came to administer the sacraments. Adele's first confession was about misbehaving when her mother had company. Adele said "if my mother had company, I would behave like a jackrabbit."²⁷ After Adele's confession was heard, she then received her first communion. Finally, after communion, all the children were confirmed. When Roman Catholics receive confirmation one must have a sponsor who is willing to stand up for them. Adele's sponsor was her oldest sister Carrie. Another aspect of confirmation is the taking of a confirmation name. Adele's confirmation name is Anna. The Confirmation name is placed after the middle name.

Adele was eight years old when she received these sacraments. She got a special brand new dress for the occasion. It was a white embroidered dress that her parents bought for her at the James Ramsey store. This was a department store that was later bought out by Eaton's. She was also given new white stockings, white gloves and black shoes to wear for the occasion. The gloves were long ones and there was a white satin ribbon belt. The dress was not full length, it went to just below the knee. On her head she wore a veil and a crown.

When she got the crown it was too small for her head so her aunt made flowers out of satin and velvet to extend the crown. She was given a new rosary with blue glass beads and a prayer book. The prayer book was elaborate with a black cover and gold edging.

Adele's whole family was in attendance to see her receive her sacraments.

Everyone was able to come because at the time, in 1925, Ascension Thursday was a Catholic holiday and none of her family had to go to school or work.

Second Generation

For the second generation account of the three sacraments: communion,

²⁷Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 31, 1993, Edmonton.

confession, and confirmation the researcher will include as much about Georgie as Georgie was willing to share. It should be noted, however, that Georgie does not consider these sacraments at all meaningful any more. She is no longer a Catholic and she is following traditional Native spiritual practices. It is her opinion that Roman Catholicism has damaged Native spiritual beliefs and practices through the missionary activities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As this this is her opinion she did not want to discuss her Roman Catholic past. She had no desire to be associated with the religion and did not want to propagate it through discussion. Therefore, the researcher decided to gather accounts of the three sacraments from Georgie's sisters who are of the same generation as Georgie. Thus, this second generation section will include the accounts of Georgie's sisters' experiences so that the reader may still have the accounts of the three generations.

Naomi

Naomi received her first communion at St. Alphonsus church in northeast Edmonton. When asked what she was wearing for the event, her reply was "oh, that is a big deal."²⁸ The reason that it was a big deal was because her parents did not have a lot of money and they could not afford a crinoline for Naomi's dress. Her dress did not need a crinoline but Naomi was sure that every other girl was going to have one so she wanted to have one. Naomi went to her first communion feeling insecure and out of step because she did not have a crinoline.

She was not entirely happy about her dress either because it was homemade, although she realizes now that the dress was actually beautiful since it was custom made for her by her mother. Naomi's outfit was a straight white brocade skirt and a matching blouse that was also of a simple cut. To go with it she had a veil and a pair of black shoes. She was so unhappy with her outfit that she did not feel special at all. When she talked about this event she expressed concern over the fact that she may have made her mother feel bad by her displeasure over her outfit. She hopes that she did not because in retrospect she realizes how special her outfit really was.

Naomi's was embarrassed at her confirmation because most of the children had an aunt or uncle as a sponsor ²⁹ while Naomi had an ancient old woman who was a friend of Adele's. It was not Naomi's godmother and again she was upset by the fact that she did not have the same things as everyone else. Naomi cannot remember the name of her sponsor but apparently the woman took seriously the honor of being chosen sponsor. She bought Naomi a beautiful bracelet with Holy medals decorating it. Naomi recalls that the bracelet was the best part of the whole event and even that turned out to be a disappointment because that very same night of the confirmation Naomi lost the bracelet. She was simply sick over losing the bracelet and to this day she can describe the bracelet to the smallest detail.

²⁸Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 5, 1993, Edmonton.

²⁹A sponsor is the person who stands up with the one being confirmed

Eleanor

Eleanor's communion experience is different from Naomi's just by the fact that Eleanor had a store bought dress. Like Naomi, Eleanor received her first communion at St. Alphonsus church. Eleanor wore a lace dress with a veil and no gloves. Unlike Naomi, Eleanor's comments about her dress are fond. She said things like "it was a very nice dress. I really liked it."³⁰ None of Eleanor's older siblings attended her communion. There was her mom, dad, Naomi and George Junior.

Eleanor was nine years old when she was confirmed. She recalls that it was a more emotional time than her first communion. She is not sure why but suggests that it may have been simply because she was older and more aware of the milestone she was making. She was affirming her faith in the Catholic church. Her sponsor was one of her mother's nieces. Eleanor wore a homemade dress that she liked. Her mother made her the dress. It had a little lace coat to go over it. It was not really a coat but more like a long, sleeveless vest that was the length of the dress. The vest was light pink and the dress was white. The confirmation took place at St. Andrew's church in Edmonton. She received a few small gifts. She was given a satin card from her sponsor and lollipops from Georgie. The only part of the whole event that Eleanor recalls as a bad memory is her hair. She said that she was dressed beautifully and she liked her sponsor but she had an awful haircut.

Eleanor remembers lying at her first confession. She lied because she did not know what sin was and she did not think that she had ever done anything bad. She lied and told the priest that she had hit her little brother over the head with a frying pan. She hoped that that was a sin. She had to go to confession every week and for the first few months she never knew what to say because she did not understand what sin was so she made something up every time.

Third Generation

Rose's first communion was at St. Andrew's church in Edmonton. She was in grade three. In preparation for this event catechism classes were held at school. There was a practice held at the church before they had the actual Communion.

Rose had a homemade dress for her first communion. It was a simple white dress. It was knee length with capped sleeves and a ruffle at the bottom. There was a matching cape to go over top and the cape had a hood. Rose wore white socks with white sandals and short white gloves.

Unlike the generations before her Rose received many gifts. She was given a rosary of blue glass beads from her Kokum. She received lots of cards from aunts, uncles and friends. She was given jewelry such as earrings that were crosses, a necklace with a cross on it and another necklace that had a dove for a pendant. Like her aunt Naomi, Rose lost most of the jewelry shortly after she received her first communion and she wishes that her parents would have

³⁰Eleanor Black, Interview by Author, August 23, 1993, Edmonton.

taken the jewelry and put it away until she was older.

Rose's first communion was a big event in her family. There was a celebration afterwards which took place at her grandmother's house. Her parents and grandparents were there along with her Kokum, four aunts, and two uncles. There was an outdoor luncheon in the backyard and people visited or played in the yard.

Rose's confirmation was not as big of an event for the family as was her first communion but it was a bigger event for Rose. This is because Rose was making a personal statement of faith in the Catholic Church. There was much more personal preparation involved. Rose was in grade six and her whole class was confirmed together. The class went to St. Vincent's convent for a retreat to prepare to be confirmed. The retreat was one of the highlights of the whole event.

The nuns put on a fantastic retreat. There was singing of hymns and reading of scripture. They had a lunch catered by Kentucky Fried Chicken with ice cream for dessert. The students made confirmation packages for themselves.

These packages contained everything they needed to know about the event. There was a mass agenda and lists of the information that one is to know when one is affirming one's faith and allegiance to the Catholic Church. The students spent some time decorating the outside of the packages in ways that they chose themselves. All the students were given a white prayer book with gold etching.

Rose's mother took her shopping for an outfit to wear for the event. They chose a sophisticated outfit because the event marked Rose's passage to adulthood in the eyes of the church. She wore a suit. It was a navy blue skirt with a white jacket with navy blue buttons. She wore navy blue shoes and had a white flower in her hair. The archbishop confirmed all the students from three schools together. It was at Sunday mass.

Rose remembers her first confession more vividly than the other generations. This may be because hers was different from theirs. Rose had her first confession before she had her first communion. It was about 1976 and by this time Vatican II was being implemented. The Catholic church was changing some of their ways of doing things. The two generations before Rose gave their first confession in a small dark room not in the sight of the priest. They were completely anonymous. Rose had her first confession in full sunlight in the library of St. Andrew's school. She was sitting face to face with the priest not more than a foot apart from him. He held her hand while she confessed. It was very personal. Rose knew the priest and still remembers him today.

Unlike the generations before her, Rose had an understanding of sin or at least she knew what kinds of things were considered to be sins. She confessed to him that she had broken a commandment by not honoring her mother. She told him that she argued with her mother and talked back to her. She was told that she should try not to talk back but rather to discuss things with her parents and she was given a penance of ten Hail Mary prayers. Rose thought that this was great. She was so happy that she could go and talk to a priest and clear her conscience and be forgiven. She was excited to go to the church, sit in the front row when there was no mass going on and say her ten Hail Marys just like she had seen so many old ladies doing.

Theme Ten

Roman Catholic Metis Childhood Experiences

First Generation

Adele had lots of good memories about growing up as a Catholic Metis girl. These memories include such things as going to the Lac Saint Anne pilgrimage, novenas, retreats and practicing religion at home.

Adele's family participated in religious rituals at home on a regular basis. Each night Adele's father led the family in saying the rosary. He would say it loud, slow and in French. The only times that Adele's father did not lead them in the rosary were the times when he was busy doing farm work.

One tradition that was followed during Adele's childhood but not during Rose's is the month of May devotions. Adele describes this as a "...fun time, when you see kids, you go to church and pray all together, it was nice..."³¹ Adele recalls that there were similar rituals in October. These were called October devotions and a Novena to Saint Theresa would take place. Saint Theresa was special to all the little Roman Catholic girls because she was canonized as a little girl. They felt that she was just like them because she was a little girl too. The Novena was nine days of special prayers twice a day in the morning and the evening.

Adele recalls with special fondness a nun named Sister Saint Matthew. Adele always had a little bit of trouble hearing and this nun noticed Adele's hearing deficiency. Sister Saint Matthew taught Adele how to lip read. This made school a little easier for Adele because if she could not hear the teacher she could sit near the front and watch the teacher's lips.

Adele recalls being threatened with the devil. She said that sometimes children were kept in line by telling them that they would go to the devil if they were bad. The bible story which Adele recalls most vividly is the story of Adam and Eve. The serpent in the story terrified Adele and to this day she is terrified of snakes. Adele's granddaughter, Rose recalls one time when when Rose was about eight years old and she knew that her kokum was afraid of snakes. Rose put a string of yarn under her kokum's rocking chair so that when her kokum stood up she stepped on it. Adele screamed in fright when she stepped on the piece of yarn and she thought it was a snake.

One thing Adele loved about being a Catholic child was that there used to be many Catholic holidays. She recalls Ascension Thursday in May and All Saints Day in November. Adele did not have to go to school on these days.

Adele remembers that going to church was the most important outing. The whole family dressed in their best clothes every Sunday to go to church. Adele recalls that even her nicest dresses were plain because that was the style of dress among the Metis women of St. Albert. The colors were usually dark and the dresses were long with a bias cut. Adele recalls that she had a homemade

³¹Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 26, 1993, Edmonton.

brassiere and homemade cotton stockings. Almost all the clothes were homemade. Adele did not usually get new clothes. Most often one of her older sisters got the new things and the sister's old clothes were made over for Adele.

It is Adele's opinion that her life was enriched by the presence of Catholicism especially when it was mixed with her Metis heritage. Adele's favorite childhood memories are singing Cree hymns and saying the rosary in Cree with her grandmothers.

Second Generation

Georgie had both good and bad experiences growing up as a Catholic Metis girl. One experience was taking her brothers to Latin language classes. It bothered Georgie that the boys were taught scholarly pursuits while the girls in the Catholic girls club in which Georgie was a member were taught to bake, sew and darn socks. Georgie did enjoy the activities of the Catholic girls club but she would have liked to participate in some of the more academic interests that the boys were pursuing.

The Nuns let Georgie sit in on the Latin classes and she recalls that she learned Latin quickly and she was better at it than her brothers. The unpleasant side of this memory is that she could never apply the Latin the way that a male could. At that time there were no female acolytes or altar servers in the church and it did not appear that there ever would be. For Georgie it was a depressing accomplishment. She was able to learn the language of the faith but she had no need to learn it beyond that which was used in the mass because there was no place for females in the upper echelons of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, or even in the lower echelons, at that time. Still, it pleased her to know that she was as good at learning Latin as her brothers.

Georgie recalls the memory of practicing religion at home. Her mother used to clang her rosary beads on the arm of her rocking chair. That was the signal to gather around to say the rosary. This was a nightly ritual that the family did together. This is a ritual that Adele brought with her to her own family from her upbringing. Adele's grandmother said her rosary in Cree and Adele's father said it in French and since Adele prayed with both of them she is able now to say the rosary in French, English and Cree. However, Georgie only knows the rosary in English because when Adele was raising the children her husband did not want her to teach them to speak Cree.

Third Generation

Rose had good memories of growing up as a Catholic Metis girl. One opportunity that Rose had which her mother and grandmother did not was serving on the altar. Rose was one of the first altar girls in her church. Adele has expressed a deep regret that there were no women lay people when she was a child or when she was a young woman (1917-1945). She said that she "would have loved to have served on the altar or read in the mass." It was early

in the nineteen eighties that Rose was given the opportunity to be an altar girl. Rose served on the altar for about a year and half and then she began to do readings at the mass. Reading at mass was a great honor. Rose was about thirteen years old when she began reading.

Another experience Rose had from growing up as a Catholic Metis girl is the memory of Native mass. From the time Rose was born until 1984 there was a Native mass once a month. The mass was held at the Cathedral. The Native mass was not like regular mass. It was relaxed, particularly when it was held in the basement of the Cathedral. For a few years the mass was upstairs and the Native mass would be held downstairs only if the church was needed by white people but eventually the Native mass was moved downstairs for good. You could feel the relaxed atmosphere because some people drank coffee or smoked and children who made noise were not shunned.

The Native mass was characterized by things other than its relaxed atmosphere. There were two other things: the hymns were in Cree and there was a tea afterwards at which bannock was always served. Rose used to hang around in the kitchen while the tea was being prepared because her mom, her aunts and her Kokum were all in there doing the preparations. It was their responsibility because it was Rose's grandparents who had started and organized the Native mass. In 1967 Rose's Mosom was approached by the bishop about organizing a Native mass. They took on the responsibility and they got all their children involved.³²

Tea was served because so many people travelled to come to the Native mass. There was always coffee, tea, and juice. At first the sandwiches were made by various friends and family members but eventually there was enough money from the collection for George and Adele to buy sandwich makings. The bannock was always made by the same woman, a friend of Adele's. The tea was a time for people to visit and socialize. After the tea was over Rose's parents, her aunts, uncles and grandparents cleaned up the hall. The women did the dishes and put things away while the males folded up the tables and chairs and put them away.

One thing that is different between Rose and the generations before is that Rose's parents did not practice religion at home. There were religious symbols in the house; like a cross and a painting of Jesus. Rose was taught to say prayers at night but they did not pray together as a family. Unlike Adele who knew her prayers in Cree, French and English, Rose and Georgie only knew prayers in English. Rose was involved in church activities different from the ones in which Georgie and Adele took part. Most of the activities in which Adele took part were community activities. The pilgrimage and retreats involved travelling as a family and camping with other people from the community.

³² For complete details about organizing the Native mass see Theme Twenty two.

Theme Eleven

Learning to Protect Oneself from Native Medicines

First Generation

Adele was taught by her grandmother Marie Petite-Chat the importance of protecting herself. Marie used to say that protecting oneself began with one's attitude. One was not to laugh at another person and one was never to be mean to another person because it inspires vindictiveness and envy. Adele would only tell the researcher that she was taught to use rat root in a protective way but she would not give the details of the procedure. She did tell the researcher that one was to use black ink to paint a cross on oneself. Marie used to say that "...no medicine crosses the cross" and this is one of Adele's beliefs.

Second Generation

Adele taught Georgie, Naomi and Eleanor about the black ink cross. Whenever they were going to be around Native people Adele told them to paint a black ink cross on a certain part of their body. They believed that this would ward away any bad medicines or love medicines. When Georgie was about thirty six years old she began a serious study of the protections and the medicines. She was working in a Native organization and had become aware of the extent to which medicines exist. She found that if one was attuned to Spirit forces one found another whole realm of existence. She decided that she could not simply ignore these forces when they were a part of her everyday work life, so she began to learn. She started off with simply the black ink cross but she found that some of the people around her were using medicine much more sophisticated than the black ink cross. That is not to say that the black ink cross is fallible, it is just to say that the people around Georgie in her place of work had learned more than she knew. Since Georgie had grown up as a Metis she was not exposed to extensive teachings about the medicines. She learned some herbal healing but her parents were Catholic and they rejected most of the Native Spirituality practices of their mothers and grandmothers. Thus she began her own quest for knowledge. Some of the things she learned she passed onto her daughter.

Third Generation

When Rose was twelve years old she started going to dances with her Kokum on Friday and Saturday nights. The dances were held at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. It was located just two blocks from the apartment of Rose's Kokum. Together they would walk to the hall at about nine o'clock. Rose was usually at her Kokum's on Friday and Saturday nights. It was at these dances that Rose learned to fox trot and square dance and she perfected her old time waltz. Before Rose was allowed to go to the dance she had to learn about

the black ink cross. The dances were a mixture of Native and Metis people and the importance of protecting oneself from things unseen was stressed. The black ink cross is the protection that Rose learned from her Kokum.

Theme Twelve

Major Illness

First Generation

When Adele was eleven years old in 1928 she contracted tuberculosis. Adele was in grade five when she had to be taken out of school so that the other children would not contract tuberculosis from her. Adele had her own theory as to where and how she contracted tuberculosis. Adele had just recovered from the German measles. She was playing with other children outside the school in water puddles. Adele got pushed into the water and she got wet. Most of her dried off quickly but her feet stayed wet. She went through the rest of the school day and walked home with wet feet. It was shortly after this incident that she got sick with tuberculosis.

Adele had tuberculosis for five years until 1933 when she was sixteen years old. This illness affected her life in so many ways, both good and bad. From this period of her life she has memories that made her cry when she retold them to the researcher and there are memories that made Adele laugh so hard she had to go and take oxygen from her machine because she could not breathe for laughing. There are also the memories that caused her to just stare off into the distance as if she was somewhere else and not sitting at her dining room table talking with the researcher.

The first thing that she did not like about having tuberculosis was that she had to stop wearing moccasins and start wearing shoes. Luckily, her father was able to afford to buy her shoes. Prior to her having tuberculosis her parents never bought the children shoes. They all wore moccasins made by their grandmothers or their aunts. The doctor told Adele that moccasins did not keep her feet dry and that it was important to keep her feet dry. she had to adjust to wearing hard form fitted leather shoes instead of soft hugging leather moccasins.

When Adele was sick with tuberculosis she usually took two kinds of medicine. She had medicine from her doctor and what she calls "Indian medicine." She had prescriptions from the doctor and she was also to take cod liver oil every day. She said that the oil relaxed her and put oil into her lungs so that she did not have a dry cough. Adele's mother did not want the grandmothers using the Indian medicines on Adele so the old women had to sneak medicines to her.

The things that Adele recalls as being the worst were not the pains and discomforts but the loneliness and ostracisms. As far as she is concerned "the biggest pain was not being able to mix with other children."³³ Sometimes children came to the house with their parents. While the parents visited the children would find Adele and she got incredibly excited. This was hard for her because she wanted to get up and run and play and sing and holler. She could not, these things aggravated her condition and besides the aggravation she was

³³Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 1993. Edmonton.

usually fatigued. She says that fatigue was an aspect of the disease, it was particularly bad in the spring and fall.

Adele was ostracized by her own sisters when she was sick with tuberculosis. At first they did not believe that she was sick. Then when they realized that she really was sick they picked on her for not doing any chores. They believed that she was lazy, they did not think that she could not work because she was sick. Adele thinks that this was because she did not always look sick. At times she seemed fine but the disease was still present. This is something that still pains Adele to this day. She cannot understand why her sisters did not believe she was sick.

For the five years that she was sick Adele's oldest brother was her best friend. He worked hard at keeping her entertained and keeping up her spirits.

They had a gramophone and he would bring her records. She still has those records and she said that when they were brand new they cost seventy five cents.

She grew to love Gene Austin and the late Jimmy Rogers. Her favorite was the 'Missouri Waltz.' Whenever she goes to Edmonton Klondike Days she requests that song and if the piano player is too young to know it she tells them to find someone a little older because they always know the song. Every time Adele gave birth to one of her children that song would be sent out to her on CFRN radio in Edmonton because her husband played with a band at CFRN.

Adele loved to sing. She would sing along with the records. One day Adele was sitting in her tent singing when she saw a shadow and she heard someone say, "cut that out, my girl. Don't try to sing, you're exerting your lungs."³⁴ It was her doctor and she told him that he could have at least told her that she was a good singer. He laughed, she says that he had a great sense of humor.

Adele remembers one record that she was given that her mother broke right away. Jimmy Rogers died of tuberculosis and he composed the song 'Whipping the old T.B.' The boyfriend of Adele's sister gave her the record and her mother broke it because she did not want her to play it. She thought it was inappropriate to give Adele a record with a song about tuberculosis.

There was no radio at the farm until after Adele had moved away to the city. In 1938 they got a radio. Adele remembers visiting home and listening to The Morgan Family from Eagle Pass, Texas on XERA radio. Years later when Adele was married she asked her husband to take her to see Eagle Pass, Texas on one of their holidays. She was always curious about the place since she heard it on the radio.

When Adele eventually left the farm she left behind her gramophone, organ and most of her records. These were all sold and Adele was surprised one day to see her organ in an old fashioned home on the Edmonton exhibition grounds. She asked the owner where he got it and she was able to figure out that it was indeed her old organ. The owner had gotten it from Wabamun church. Adele's brother had traded it with his friend for a horse. His friend heard that the old priest in Wabamun did not have an organ so he donated it to the church. Finally the congregation bought a new organ so the priest sold it to

³⁴Adele Black, Interview by Author, May 31, 1993. Edmonton.

the owner of the old fashioned home on the exhibition grounds.

In addition to records for entertainment Adele also had lots to read. She read mystery magazines. Her brother would buy True Detective, Master Detective and Inside Detective for her to read. Sixty years later she still reads detective magazines and if a detective story comes on television she will drop everything and watch the story. Adele's father received a few magazines every month so she would read those as well. These magazines were: Nor' west Farmer, The Farm and Ranch Review and Western Prairie. These magazines had something for everyone in them. There were fictional stories and songs for Adele to read, there was farm information for Adele's father and there were recipes. Adele cut out the recipes for herself because her mother did not read and everything she cooked was without a written recipe. These magazines cost between thirty five and fifty cents each. Adele says that this was expensive but her family bought them because reading was one of the main forms of entertainment.

Sometimes Adele had to entertain herself without records or books. At these times she turned to nature as a source of entertainment. She recalls watching the geese walking from the chicken coop down to the river to play and bathe. She always thought that they looked like nuns walking in a line. The thought of the nun-like geese still makes her laugh.

Adele was usually in a tent in the backyard while she was sick. She lived in the tent all summer because she needed the fresh air and the sunlight. On hot and sunny days she would lie in the sun on her stomach so that the sun could see her back and she would have her head covered. Usually her mother or her aunt Myrtle would sleep in the tent with her. She moved back and forth between her parent's house and her grandmother's house because her mother could not look after her all the time. Adele's parents, grandparents, her brother and her aunt were very cautious and careful with Adele because one older brother and one older sister had already died from tuberculosis.

Although Adele recovered from her childhood bout with tuberculosis the disease did not simply end when it cleared. It left her lungs scarred and today she has asthma and bronchitis most of the time. She has an oxygen machine in her home and uses it almost daily. She usually can predict the weather based on how her lungs feel and when the weather is bad she does not like to go too far from her home. However, this does not keep her from being active in the community. If she has to travel to meetings or events in other cities she simply takes the oxygen machine with her.

Theme Thirteen

First Awareness of Being Metis

The researcher assumed that the participants in this study came into an awareness of their Metism at some point in their lives and that they did not always understand what Metis was and that they were of the Metis culture.

First Generation

When the first generation was asked about the first time she became aware that she had Native and White ancestry she replied that she had always known. She could not cite an exact incident in which she became aware. It is possible that the reason why Adele always knew is because she grew up with a mother and grandmothers who did not speak English. The second generation can cite a specific memory of the moment in which she knew that she was Metis and that not all other people were Metis. One difference between the generations is that the second generation grew up with parents who spoke English while the first generation grew up immersed in the Cree language. Adele's mother, aunts, grandmother and siblings all spoke Cree. Her mother, aunts and grandmother usually spoke only Cree. The second generation's parents did speak Cree but they did not try to pass the language onto their children, when they spoke to their children they spoke in English. It would seem that this gave the children less of an awareness of their cultural heritage than if one parent spoke only Cree.

Adele had memories of experiencing prejudice in elementary school. Adele attended two schools in St. Albert. One was St. Albert public school and the other was the residential school at the St. Albert convent. Adele attended St. Albert public school for grade one, two and five. It was at this school that she and her Native and Metis cousins were called 'Les Petites Sauvages'. Even though Adele was fair skinned the other children knew she was Metis because the White children's parents told their children which families were Native and Metis. When Adele was in grade one it was obvious that she was Metis despite her fair skin because she spoke only Cree fluently. The English that she spoke was broken English.

Second Generation

Georgie

Georgie's first awareness of her Metis heritage is a negative memory. She was about ten years old and her family was living in Paddle Prairie Metis settlement. This was the first time that Georgie was immersed in a school that was populated predominantly by Aboriginal children. She became aware that her skin was lighter than a lot of the other children's skin and than her own brothers' skin. One night at the dinner table Georgie asked "how come Rich,

Luke, and Devon are dark skinned and I am fair skinned?"³⁵ She was slapped across the face for asking this question. Then she was told "for god's sake you're Metis, that's why!"³⁶ Georgie recalls that she felt shock and that the boys all said that they did not know either. Georgie's mother just kept saying "of course you guys knew."³⁷ The thing that Georgie remembers learning from this incident was not just that she had Metis heritage but she also learned not to ask questions about it. She felt like every time she asked a question she ended up being slapped or told that her question was ridiculous. This incident led Georgie to wonder what it was about being Metis that led to such a vehement reaction from her mother. She thought there must be something bad about being Metis.

Naomi

Naomi is Georgie's younger sister and Naomi recalled a memory that is about being Metis. It is probably not her first awareness of being Metis but it is comparable to the other recollections being discussed here because it takes place at elementary school age and it has negative associations for Naomi.

When Naomi was in grade four the social studies class was studying Canadian history. Part of their work was to put on a play about the fur trade and the explorers. It was decided that all the children in the class would be in the play as either a Indian or a European. The children who were playing Indians were to bring a burlap potato sack from home to serve as the costume. Naomi was selected as one of the children who was to play an Indian. She went home after school and told her mother that she needed a potato sack so that she could be in the play. Adele responded by telling Naomi that she did not need a potato sack because she was a Metis and they had a different style of dressing than did the Indian fur-traders.

Adele was trying to do a good thing. She was trying to let Naomi know that being Metis was something to be proud of and it was something in which one should demonstrate ones pride. Adele prepared Georgie's old brownie dress for Naomi to wear as a costume. It was a long, dark brown, full sleeved, high collared sombre dress. It what a Metis woman would have been wearing during the fur trade era and it was the way that both of Adele's grandmothers had dressed. However, there were no Metis parts in the social studies play.

On the day of the play Naomi went to school with the brownie dress costume and she wore it for the play but this is a terrible memory for her because her recollection of the event is that she stood out from the class because she was the only Metis. None of the class even knew who the Metis were which is a gross ignorance especially in the context of the fur trade. Naomi was horribly ashamed at being so different from the rest of her class. Until that play she had never told any other students that she was Metis. Thus having to wear the long

³⁵Georgie Black, Interview by Author, May, 19, 1993, Edmonton.

³⁶Georgie Black, Interview by Author, May, 19, 1993, Edmonton.

³⁷Georgie Black, Interview by Author, May, 19, 1993, Edmonton.

brown dress also meant that she had to explain why she wearing that dress which meant admitting to people that she was a Metis. No one understood this since they were being taught that everyone in the fur trade was either White or Indian. There was no talk of the people who were the result of unions between the Whites and the Indians.

Naomi recalls that when she was walking to school with that dress in a bag she was filled with fear and dread at the thought of having to dress as a Metis when no one else even knew of the Metis. She recalls thinking "...what can I do with this dress? Where can I go? I do not want to go school and be a Metis."³⁸ Today when Naomi thinks of the incident she is filled with anger at the teacher for not having accurately portrayed Canadian history. She now knows that there were many Metis involved in all aspects of fur trading. She now knows that her own ancestors were *Coureurs de bois*³⁹ or runners of the woods which were Metis middlemen during the fur trade, and it makes her angry at herself for not having worn that dress with Metis pride.

Third Generation

Rose does not recall the exact time at which she realized that she had Metis heritage but she does recall that as a child she had an awareness of differences between her dad's family and her mom's family.

Rose remembers noticing a difference between her grandma and her Kokum. Whenever she had afternoon tea with her grandma they would have earl grey tea and cookies and sweet buns. When Rose had afternoon tea with her Kokum they would have orange pekoe tea and bannock with jam. Rose's grandma spoke with a hint of an English accent while Rose's Kokum spoke a mix of Cree and English to Rose, and when her Kokum talked on the phone she spoke a lot of Cree. Rose's grandma got up early each morning and so did everyone else in the house, but at Rose's Kokum's everyone got up whenever they were finished sleeping. Sleep patterns at her Kokum's were more relaxed. There was no set breakfast for which everyone had to be up. They ate breakfast when they were hungry for breakfast. At Rose's Kokum's individual schedules were not forced to conform to a socially acceptable time structure.

Adele says that she always knew she was Metis, and that no one had to explain it. The women of the second generation came into awareness of their Metis heritage when they were children. Both of the women recall the first awareness as a bad experience which led them to hide and repress their Metis heritage. Rose simply thought she was a part of two different families who had different traditions.

³⁸Naomi Black. Interview by Author, August 5, 1993, Edmonton.

³⁹For more information on the coureurs de bois see John Foster, "The Plains Metis," eds. R. Bruce Morrison & C. Roderick Wilson, Native Peoples The Canadian Experience. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 379.

Theme Fourteen

Household Responsibilities During the Teen Years

There are major differences between the amounts of responsibly held by each of the three generations during their teenage years. There are three reasons for the differences. First, there are social differences. For example, when Adele was a child it was socially acceptable to keep children home from school to work on the farm. When the third generation was a child it was not acceptable to keep a child home from school. Second, the three generations lived in different settings. Adele lived on a farm most of her child and teen years. Georgie lived in towns and in the city. Rose lived in the city. Third, there are differences based on each woman's place in the family. Georgie was the oldest girl. Adele was the youngest and Rose was an only child. Different types of responsibilities were placed on each woman depending on her place in the family.

First Generation

Adele recovered from tuberculosis when she was fifteen years old. It was at this time that she took on more responsibility and chores at the farm. When she was sick with tuberculosis she was not always in bed. She did some jobs but they were irregular and she was never solely responsible for their completion. Adele did not take on responsibilities until she was fifteen because when she contracted tuberculosis she was just approaching the age at which she would have been given regular chores.

The first job for which Adele became responsible was the sweeping of the house. All the floors in the house were made out of wood and they had to be swept everyday. Once a week she helped her mother scrub the wooden floor boards.

Adele was responsible for milking the cows. This had to be done twice a day. Early each morning and each evening before dinner she would go out and get the cows from the pasture and bring them in for milking. Milking the cows is the only time that Adele ever wore pants and even then she only slipped them on over her skirt. The cow milking outfit was made out of old sacks and old overalls. They were big loose pants into which one could tuck ones dress. Other than for milking Adele has never worn pants in her whole life. After she was finished she would have to carry the milk up a hill to the cream separator. The cream separator was a machine that Adele had to learn how to operate. The cream and the milk were separated and the milk was put into the icehouse to be sold later. The separated milk was given to the pigs. The cream was taken from the icehouse and it was carried to the station and put on a train. The cream went to Woodland Dairy and then cheques came in by mail to pay for the cream. Usually the cream was worth about four dollars a week. There were four women who shared the work of milking, preparing and sending the cream. Adele, her mother, her sister-in law and one of her sisters all shared the money from the cream. This meant that Adele got a check for four dollars once a month. According to Adele this was a fair amount of money for the milking

and cream separating that she did each day. She recalls saving her money for a couple of months before Easter and she was able to buy herself a new coat for \$6.95.

When Adele recounted the procedure of preparing the cream she referred to the icehouse. The researcher was not familiar with this term. The icehouse was a little house built outside. It was built out of wood by Adele's father and brother. An icehouse lasted for years and only had to be rebuilt every few years. Each spring they filled it with fresh sawdust and then Adele's brother cut blocks of ice from the river. The blocks were put inside the icehouse and they stayed frozen for months.

A third responsibility that was Adele's was gardening. Every spring Adele's mother planted a vegetable garden. It was Adele's job to haul water from the river to spray the garden. They would plant potatoes, turnips, carrots, peas, cabbage, and squash. For a few years they tried to plant corn but there were always problems with the corn. Adele remembers that the worst vegetable to harvest was the potato. She had to crawl all day to harvest the potatoes because one had to dig them out of the dirt.

There was a flower garden but Adele did not have to tend to this garden as much as she did the vegetable garden. The flower was more of a personal project of Adele's mother. She grew the flowers for the graveyard. When the third generation participant in this study goes to the graveyard to visit her Mosom she stops at a flower store to buy flowers but when the first generation was a teen in the early nineteen thirties there were no flower shops. There were quite a few Harrigans buried in the Harrigan family plot. It was the responsibility of Adele's mother to make sure that the plots were kept clean and free from debris. She grew her own flowers to decorate the graves when they visited the graveyard.

A fourth chore that Adele had to do was pick berries. According to her this job cannot really be called a chore because she loved picking berries. There were a variety of berries that grew on the farm: chokecherries, high bush cranberries, raspberries and gooseberries. Adele would pick the berries and her mother would make desserts and jams out of the berries. Adele helped with the baking of desserts and of bread.

Adele had the job of feeding the chickens, the turkeys and the geese. When they were ready to be eaten Adele used to cut off their heads. Now she can hardly believe that she used to do this job but she explains it by saying that she did what was necessary to have food to eat.

Adele had to baby-sit her sister's children. One of Adele's sisters moved home every time she was due to have a baby. It was Adele's job to look after the first two children while her sister had her third child. Adele's mother and Adele's sister had their children at home with the help of a midwife. Adele did not continue this tradition. Adele planned to have all her children in the hospital.

From the age of fifteen Adele had a lot of chores and jobs to do around the farm. When the researcher found out that Adele did not return to school after she had recovered from tuberculosis she wondered what Adele did with all her time. Adele was helping to run a farm.

Second Generation

The situation for the second generation is different from that of the first because the second did not grow up on a farm, but Georgie did not work any less than Adele. Georgie had a lot of responsibility early in her life. One might even say that Georgie had an excessive amount of responsibility at too young of an age.

When Georgie was four years old she was drying dishes, watching over her little brothers and changing their diapers. As each year passed Georgie became more and more of a mother instead of a sister to her younger siblings, as each year passed there were more and more younger siblings until the last one was born in 1961. Whenever the family went on an outing Georgie was not free to visit or explore because she was to watch over a few of her brothers or sisters. The situations in which Georgie had to look after her siblings were not as simple as watching Naomi for a few minutes or entertaining her brother for an hour. She was, at times, left in charge for the whole day. Her mother was not negligent but she had so many children that she had to rely on Georgie. Usually when Adele went into the hospital to have another baby they tried to have someone come in and stay with the other children but this was not always possible and at those times Georgie would be cooking and cleaning for all the children while her father was at work.

Metis women are known as meticulous house keepers and Adele was no exception. Georgie recalls being kept home from school twice a year for a few days to do heavy housecleaning. Georgie had to wash windows, walls, floors, and ceilings for days. She could not go back to school until everything was finished.

Third Generation

The types of responsibilities Rose had while she was a child and a teen were very different than those of her mother and grandmother. There were some basic reason for the differences. First, Rose was an only child. This means that there were no siblings for Rose to baby-sit. Second, Rose grew up in an urban setting in which there were no heavy chores. Third, Rose was born in 1968 so by the time she was a child there were many more common household appliances and gadgets that made daily chores minimal. For Rose, doing the dishes meant putting them in the dishwasher and turning on the machine. For Adele, doing laundry meant carrying water from the river and scrubbing clothes on a washboard and then hanging them all to dry. For Rose, doing laundry meant putting clothes in the washing machine and then transferring them to the dryer.

There are differences between the experiences of the three women. First, Rose never had to look after small children. Second, neither Georgie nor Rose had to do farm work. Third, neither Adele nor Rose had as much to do as Georgie, and neither Adele nor Rose started work at such an early age as did Georgie.

Theme Fifteen

Teen Activities

First Generation

When Adele was sixteen years old her favorite activity was wading in the river. She loved playing in the river so much that even when she had tuberculosis she would sneak away when her mother was not home and she would go down to the river to wade. The river was the center of Adele's social life. All the children and teenagers converged and played at the river. She loved to go boat riding. Adele's brother and some others had boats that they kept tied up by the pig pen and anyone who wanted to use them could just borrow one for awhile.

When Adele was fourteen her cousin got a monopoly set and they played that game for hours. Adele and her sister would cut pictures of dolls and models out of catalogues and they would cut out pictures of clothes from the catalogues and these were their paper dolls.

Another form of entertainment that was characteristic of Adele's childhood and teen years were dances. The family would all go over to Grandma Marie's house and Adele's cousin would play the mouth organ and her aunt would call a square dance. After the square dance aunt Myrtle would lead everyone in a sing along. This is how Adele learned to call a square dance. As a child she listened to her aunt calling and when she was a teenager she took her turn at trying to call and her aunt helped her along.

They would sing Cree songs but they also got new songs to sing if someone brought them. She remembers one time when they got a new song to sing because her brother had travelled to Montana and while he was there he learned a new song. When he got home he taught the song to everyone. If they sang in Cree they were usually singing hymns and if they sang in English they were usually singing cowboy songs.

Second Generation

For Georgie there were no leisure activities outside of her own home and family. She was not allowed to date, go to parties or dances unless they were ones that her parents were attending. The leisure activities at home included: watching television, listening to records, playing cards or board games, reading, sewing and baking. These were things that Georgie was allowed to do with her brothers and sisters.

Third Generation

Rose's teen activities are miles apart from those of her mother and grandmother. What the river was to Adele the local shopping mall was to Rose. Westmount Mall was the hub of Rose's social life from age eleven to age sixteen. At eleven years old Rose would go to the mall with her parents and she would

bring a friend. While her parent shopped Rose and her friend would walk around the mall, shop, talk, greet people and go for fries and a coke. When Rose was fourteen she began going to the mall without her parents. Many people Rose's age would gather in the cafeteria at the mall. They would hangout, visit, shop, and eat.

Rose had other activities outside of the mall. She went to movies, swimming, ice skating, rollerskating, track & field club and parties. In elementary school the main form of social activity was birthday parties. There was usually one every month and sometimes two or three. There were also lessons to fill Rose's time. She studied piano for a couple of years. She took drawing and painting lessons at the art gallery.

Rose spent a lot of time playing on sports teams. When she was in elementary school and in junior high she played soccer on the community league teams. She always had to play on a boys team because there were no girls soccer teams in her community at that time. There were girls baseball teams but that was not Rose's interest. Rose played ringette, which at the time was considered to be girls hockey. Rose and her friend Ann both wanted to play but their community did not have a team so it was arranged for them to play on a neighboring community league team. When Rose started this sport it was difficult because one had to play in boys skates. This meant that Rose had to learn to skate in boys skates because she only knew how to figure skate.

The leisure and social activities of Adele, Georgie and Rose differ. There are three reasons. One is that they all lived in different setting. Adele was on a farm, Georgie was in and out of the city as her father sometimes had jobs which required that the family move north to small communities and Rose was always in the city.

A second reason for the differences between the three generations is the amount of personal freedom allowed to each woman by her parents. Adele was allowed to do almost anything she wanted on the farm but she was not permitted to go to St. Albert to socialize. It was the belief of her parents that girls should not be in the town without an older responsible escort. Georgie was not allowed to date or socialize outside of school hours because her parents thought that girls should stay at home. Rose was allowed a considerable amount of personal freedom.

There were differences in the amenities available to each of the three generations. For example, when Adele was a teen there was no electricity. This meant that she did not have a lot of leisure time each day because tasks that now take a few minutes would have taken Adele hours. For instance, when Adele did the ironing she had to build a big fire in the stove and set the iron over the fire until it was hot enough to iron. Since there was no electricity this meant chores like cooking, washing, bathing and heating the house took hours each day. When Adele left the farm in 1935 they still did not have electricity. It was not until 1938 that electricity came to the farm. Adele was overwhelmed when she came to the city and found that most things were electric. There was only one thing she missed about not having electricity. That was having to use a lantern when she put on her makeup. She liked the lantern because it meant she could have the light close beside her face. To have a bath was a big procedure

for Adele. They only bathed every one or two weeks on the farm because having a bath meant heating and carrying all the bath water.

All these differences in amenities, personal freedom, and proximity to an urban center had an effect on the amount of leisure time that each woman had while growing up and the difference effected how the leisure time of each girl was spent.

Theme Sixteen

Moving Out from Home for the First Time

First Generation

It was 1935 and Adele was eighteen years old. She had known for years that as soon as she turned eighteen she would leave the farm and move to the city of Edmonton. She had long wanted to get a job, buy lots of clothes, and experience comforts like indoor plumbing and electricity. She worked so much on the farm that she figured she could get just about any job and not have to work any harder than she was used to and she would get paid for her work.

When Adele told her parents that she was leaving her mother was sad because Adele was the youngest and had always been close to her mother. Since Adele had spent five years suffering from tuberculosis she was always kept close to her mother, aunt and grandmother who all looked after her. Adele said that her father's response was to preach to her about morals and values. One thing that he told her surprised the researcher because it seemed unusual for the time. He told her not to rush to get married because she would only be single for a short time but when she got married she would be married for a long time. He told her that she did not need to rush to get married because she had missed out on a few years of her youth while she was ill with tuberculosis. It seems odd that this advice was given in 1935 especially when all of Adele's other sisters had gotten married at seventeen or eighteen years of age. Adele said that the best advice he gave to her was the words "...respect yourself my girl and you will always be respected."⁴⁰

Although Adele's parents were sad that she was leaving Adele recalls that they did not oppose her and she thinks that this was because there were so many people in the house that they could use the extra space. At the time one of Adele's sisters had parted from her husband and she had moved home with her five children. The house only had three bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen.

Adele's parents had their bed in the living room because all the bedrooms were taken up by children. Adele's brother, his wife and their little girl had one bedroom. Adele shared her room with three of her sisters. Her sister with five children had the third bedroom. Adele was always babysitting or doing things to help her sister.

While Adele's parents did not make it difficult to leave and could even be said to be supportive, the same is not true of Adele's sisters. When she had moved to the city they used to send her messages telling her that their mother was sick and she should come home. This caused Adele much distress because there was no telephone at the farm so she could not phone to see if the messages were true. It was not easy to get back to the farm. She either had to hire someone to take her or she had to take the train. Either way it cost more than she could afford so she would have had to wait for more messages from other

⁴⁰Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 4, 1993, Edmonton.

people who went back and forth between St. Albert and Edmonton.

Adele came to the city with about thirty dollars that she had saved from the money she was paid for milking cows. She came to the city in March and she had begun saving money in June the year before. The first place that Adele stayed when she arrived in the city was at the Sisters of Service. The Sisters of Service was an order of nuns who provided lodging and meals for women in the city for a nominal fee. She stayed in a dormitory room with three other women.

Every week she paid six dollars for her room and board. This included an evening meal each night and breakfast on your day off. She also had to help the sisters with housekeeping. Usually she washed windows because this was a job that she liked.

It was while Adele was living at Sisters of Service that she found the job that was the beginning of her career. The word career meant something different in 1935 than it does now in 1993. Now when one thinks of a woman's career it is realistic to think of female managers, executives, engineers and just about any other occupation. However, according to Adele, in 1935 most women did not work and if they did they were nurses, salesclerks, teachers or housekeepers. There were a few women in other occupations and those women were the exception and not the norm. Therefore even though Adele never achieved a high ranking position in her occupation it can still be said that she had a career simply because she worked as a paid employee for ten years from 1935 to 1945.

Adele got her first job at the General Hospital. She worked there for the whole ten years that she worked but she had four different positions in the hospital. Adele got her first job by going to see a priest who was a friend of her family. He telephoned the Sister Superior at the General hospital. The Sister hired Adele to work in the tuberculosis ward. Adele enjoyed working with the tuberculosis patients because she understood their suffering and it was easy for her to empathize with them. However, her parents did not like her working on the tuberculosis ward because they were afraid that she would contract tuberculosis again. After a few months in the tuberculosis ward Adele transferred to the dining room.

While she was working in the tuberculosis ward she moved out of the Sisters of Service and into the General hospital. At that time there were dormitories in which the employees could live. As soon as an opening came up Adele moved into the dormitory. The dorm was in the basement of the hospital and there was no cost for rent or meals as these were included in the wage. There were usually fifteen women living in the dorm. There was a curfew of 9:30 P.M. for women living in the dorm unless they had late leave which allowed them to stay out as late as midnight. Usually one could get a late leave only on Saturday.

Adele worked split shifts in the dining room. Her duties included sweeping and washing the floor, setting the tables and washing the dishes. She did not have to serve the sisters or the patients. Meals were brought down from the kitchen and Adele would put the trays in a warming oven from which people could help themselves. Adele's shifts in the dining room began at six in the morning and went until half past one in the afternoon. She would be given a

half hour to eat lunch during this shift. She had two hours off from 1:30 until 3:30 P.M. Then she worked an evening shift from 3:30 until 7:00 P.M. She worked these shifts six days per week. Adele's wage when she worked in the dining room was twelve dollars a month in addition to which her room and meals were provided.

Adele stayed in the dormitory for a couple of years but when she was about twenty two in 1939 the war broke out and the hospital started building a cafeteria in the dormitory so all the women had to find new homes. From the hospital Adele moved into the Rosary Hall. It was close to the General and it cost twelve dollars a month for a room and meals. Adele was able to afford this because her wages went up when the war began. Adele's wage went from twelve dollars a month plus meals and a bed in the dormitory to fifty dollars a month plus the meals she ate during her shifts. Adele stayed at the Rosary hall for a short time and then she moved to a little suite in a house.

The outbreak of war did not affect Adele's life too much other than her wages going up and a few minor inconveniences, but she had friends who were devastated. She recalls that many friends lost sons and husbands as men and boys went to fight in the war. Adele recalls getting stamps to get sugar and that she had to wear cotton stockings over and over because she could not get new stockings. She said that she knew a few people whose marriages broke up because people had affairs while the war was on. She said some women at home had affairs and some of the men who were away had affairs. The man Adele married was injured in the war but she was not involved with him at the time. It was not until he was sent home with an injury that Adele became involved with him.

Adele moved into a house by the General. She and a girlfriend shared the little suite which was nothing more than a bedroom. The cost for rent in this house was twenty dollars a month. There was no curfew but single women could not have any male visitors in the house. At that time (around 1940) Adele was enjoying life. She was making what she considered to be a good wage and she did not have a lot of costs. Her rent was twenty dollars a month and her only other regular costs were clothes, the street car and cough syrup. The street car cost ten cents or one could purchase four tickets for twenty five cents.

Adele tried not to spend too much of her money on clothes. She preferred to save money so she shopped at rummage sales and sometimes Eaton's or Woodward's. She recalls one dress in particular that she bought at Duncan's Ladies Wear. It was a yellow and brown summer dress that cost \$2.95. This dress was purchased for her holiday trip to the Calgary Stampede. Adele recalls that she felt as if she was dressed up like a queen. She bought yellow hat at the Army & Navy for a dollar and a half and a purse for ninety five cents. She also had yellow earrings which cost thirty cents. Every year that Adele was single and living in the city she took herself to the Calgary Stampede for a holiday.

In the year 1939 Adele did something at the Calgary stampede that she thought extraordinary. She was at the stampede with two girlfriends and they were walking around. They went past a chuckwagon that was short of a singer.

One of the fellows on the chuckwagon recognized Adele and he said "she can sing, that girl. I've heard her."⁴¹ They got Adele up on the chuckwagon and she sang two songs. She sang 'By the Grave of Nobody's Darling' and 'Pete Knights Last Ride'. The songs were broadcast on the radio. For the ten years that Adele was supporting herself she went to the stampede. After she got married she could not go anymore. She did not have her own money to go and her husband did not like rodeos and chuckwagon races. He thought that these events were cruel to animals. Adele says that when she was married a woman had to follow the beliefs of her husband.

There were a few exceptional costs for Adele when she was working at the General Hospital. One of these was dental work. When she was twenty five she had to have her wisdom teeth taken out. She recalls that each one cost three dollars. Entertainment was expensive. Adele could not afford to eat out or go to dances unless she had a date. She says that most of the women were able to go out only if they had a date to pay for them or at least they preferred to have their dates pay so that they could save their money.

After Adele moved out from the General Hospital dormitory she transferred from the dining room to a new position. She began running the elevator. She worked split shifts on the elevator and her wage stayed the same at fifty dollars per month. She recalls enjoying the elevator because she got to wear a nice uniform that was a suit rather than a house dress type of uniform. The standard uniform was made from blue broadcloth with a stiff white collar and white cuffs. They had a band to wear on their heads that said G.H. for General Hospital.

The elevator was always busy. She had to run it for the operating room, x-ray area, visitors and workers. While Adele was running the elevator she was offered a chance to take a course in the pharmacy by a nun who was teaching a group how to work in the pharmacy. Adele took the course in the evenings and she learned how to measure out prescriptions and how to work with the pharmacist. After she finished the course she transferred to the pharmacy and she worked there until 1946 which was a few months after she got married.

Adele recalls that when she was still living on the farm she dreamed of going to the city and getting a job. She exceeded her own expectations by working in the hospital. She had imagined that she would become a waitress which would have been acceptable to her because she liked the white uniforms and the broach that most waitresses wore. Adele told the researcher that she thought she would become a waitress because there were not options for women like there are now. Her options were waitressing, retail sales, housekeeping, becoming a nun or getting a job in the hospital. She could have become a nurse or a teacher if she had the money to go to school but she did not have the opportunity to make enough money for school while she was living on the farm.

She wonders if she would have been accepted if they had known she was Metis.

She recalls that she did not tell people that she was Metis when she was looking for places to live or looking for jobs because she knew Metis people had been

⁴¹Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

turned down if they looked too much like a Native. She recalls that most of the friends she made at the hospital accepted her without concern for her heritage but even they made comments at times that revealed hints of prejudice. Adele recalls one time when she bought a coat and brought it back to the dorm the women laughed about the color of her coat and Adele joked about it saying "...well, the blood comes out."⁴² Adele had bought a red coat because she spent her whole life wanting to wear red only to be told over and over by her mother "red is for Indians."⁴³ Adele's mother was a Metis woman in the way she wore her clothes and dressed her children. They were usually in dark and sombre colors.

Adele usually augmented her hospital income by doing extra work like babysitting or ironing. Some of the nurses or doctors used to hire her to do odd jobs and she saved all the extra money she made. She took pride in the fact that she always had a nest egg. She also prided herself for being able to make her own living and support herself. None of the other women in her family had done this and none of her sisters were doing it. They all married early and had husbands to take care of them. Adele was a bit of an oddity in her family because she remained single until she was twenty eight years old and because she moved away from the farm and supported herself. There were women in her family who never married, like her aunt Myrtle but she never left the farm and she stayed in the security of the family homestead. Myrtle fell in love once but she fell in love with a divorced man. She broke up with him because she knew she could never marry him. Her family would have disowned her if she had married a divorced man.

Second Generation

Georgie could hardly wait to turn eighteen so she could escape the home of her parents. She longed to move out and live alone and buy her own clothes and look after no one but herself. She had for so long been responsible for her siblings that she just wanted time to herself and freedom from housework, invasive parents and children. This was not to be. When Georgie left her parent's home she did not move to a place of her own. She moved into the home of her new in-laws. In 1967 Georgie and Donald conceived a child. Georgie's parents made her get married to Donald. She liked Donald and it was not that she did not want to marry him but that she did not want to marry anyone yet. She just wanted to have a life of her own for awhile.

Georgie and Donald were married in March of 1968. They moved into the home of Donald's parents. They were given the two upstairs bedrooms for themselves. They lived with Donald's parents and his two sisters and one brother for about five months until they got their own apartment. Georgie was working at this time. She got a job with the provincial government in social services as soon as she finished high school. Donald was working for the school

⁴²Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

⁴³Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

board in the warehouse. Donald had applied to the University of Alberta and in June they received notification of Donald's acceptance. Upon receiving this they decided to get their own apartment.

About four months after Georgie and Donald moved into their apartment Georgie became a mother. She gave birth to Rose on October 18, 1968. Georgie returned to work after a few weeks. Since Donald was in university he was able to schedule his classes for the mornings which left him free to look after Rose in the afternoons. At that point in their marriage there were specific gender roles. Georgie did all the things that were considered to be 'woman's work'. This included cooking, cleaning, laundry and in addition to these jobs she was the primary money maker in the household. The only exception to this was that Donald was the primary caregiver for Rose.

The gender roles that Georgie and Donald had in their household were ones that both of them had learned at home. When Georgie's mother got married she quit work, stayed home and had children. Donald's mother was the same. It was difficult for Georgie and Donald to be in a situation in which the woman was the wage earner but it was also a necessity. The gender roles did not last long, they broke down within the first year of the marriage. Georgie was frustrated because she was working hard and she could not spend any of her earnings on herself. Donald was frustrated because he had been raised to believe that the man was the head of the household but it was difficult for him to feel that way when he had to ask his wife for money to pay the rent or to pay the bills. It made sense for Donald to take on more of what at that time was considered the woman's role. He was in class for about twenty hours a week. This left him lots of time to do work at home and still get his studying done. He began to do some of the cooking. He did a little bit more cleaning and he continued to be the primary caregiver for Rose. Georgie's work load was lightened by the changes she and Donald made to the gender roles in their marriage.

Third Generation

Of the three generations in this study Rose lived at home the longest. Rose continued to live with her father when her parents separated in 1983. She was fifteen years old when her mother moved out of the home. She stayed at home with her father until she was twenty three years old. One reason for Rose staying at home longer than her mother or grandmother was that she went on to college two years after she finished high school. It would have been difficult to go to school full time and earn enough money to pay rent. It was more difficult for Rose to move away from home than it was for Adele; if one considers the differing economic milieu. The first monthly rent that Adele paid was twelve dollars per month. The rent for Rose's first apartment is five hundred dollars per month. The cost of living has greatly increased between the generations.

Rose finished a Bachelor degree in Religious Studies in 1991 while living at home with her father. She took this degree at Concordia College in Edmonton. Upon completing this she decided to transfer to the University of Alberta to pursue another degree in Native Studies. At the end of the 1992

school year Rose won two awards. The first was an award for five hundred dollars and the second was a scholarship worth five thousand dollars. Rose decided that it was time to move out since she had come into the financial means which would enable her to be self supporting. In addition to the awards Rose had also secured a lucrative summer job with the Metis Nation of Alberta in Edmonton. From this job she was able to save enough money to pay for tuition and books for the next year of university. Rose moved to an apartment just a few blocks away from her father's home. She wanted her own space but she did not want to move out of her own neighborhood or far away from her family since both her Kokum and her grandparents also lived close to her father's house.

The situations surrounding the first move away from home for each of the three generations have similarities and differences. The first continuity is that all three women began jobs that were stepping stones in their careers when they first moved away from home.

One difference is that Adele was single and lived as a single woman. Georgie was married and moved from her families home into the home of her husband's family. Georgie's first husband was also her first boyfriend. A second difference between the three generations is the way that they set up their homes. Adele did not have any material household goods. She had no dishes or linens and she did not need them because she lived with nuns or in a dormitory. Georgie was able able to furnish her home with the wedding gifts that she and Donald received. It was lucky for Rose that Georgie was unconcerned with material household goods which meant that when Rose moved out twenty three years after her parents wedding there were still unused wedding gifts which she was able to take to furnish her kitchen. Georgie had unused dishes, small appliances, platters, and tea sets. A fourth difference is the age at which each woman left home for the first time. The earlier the generation, the earlier the age. Adele was eighteen, Georgie was nineteen and Rose was twenty three.

Theme Seventeen

The First Date with the Man each Woman Marries

First Generation

Adele had known her husband since she was about twelve years old. Adele's parents were friends with George's parents because Adele's father and George's father had both been raised in St. Albert. Each year the families would meet at the Lac Saint Anne pilgrimage to visit. George and Adele did not spend a lot of time together but they knew each other. While George was a young boy his family moved to Fort Chipewyan and then Fort McMurray. Finally they moved to Edmonton and that is where he was raised. Adele said that back in the nineteen twenties Edmonton was a long way from St. Albert so she only saw him once a year at the pilgrimage.

After Adele moved to the city she did not see George for a few years. Eventually she started to run into him periodically because he played in a band at dances and she used to go out dancing. These meetings were infrequent and inconsequential because they never really talked at the dances since he was busy playing. They met again when Adele was twenty six years old. She had gone with some girlfriends to say goodbye to friends and relatives going out on the troop trains. George was there. He was leaving on one of the trains headed for Camp Gordon in eastern Canada. He and Adele shook hands. Adele knew that this was when he started to get ideas about her because when he shook her hand he told her that he wondered why they had never gone out for a date. At that point Adele was not interested in George. She was not interested in getting married at all because she liked her life the way it was. She remembers that she could come and go as she pleased and she could spend her money on whatever she wanted and she supported herself. She was proud of that.

Their first date was the year after Adele said goodbye at the troop trains. Adele was twenty seven years old and George was twenty eight. Adele was selling dance tickets at the door of the Memorial Hall in Edmonton. Adele worked at dances as a collector at the door on the weekends while she was working at the General Hospital. She was paid three dollars per night to work at the door. George was playing in the band that was providing music for the dance. The dance ended at midnight. When it was over George asked Adele to have supper with him. People often went out to eat after the dances and Adele has always been a night person. They went to a cafe in downtown Edmonton. George's leg was in a cast. He had been injured during the war in an airplane crash and he ended up spending about three years in the hospital to recover from the injury. He was usually in Calgary because Edmonton did not have a veteran's hospital. At the time of this date Adele was five feet and three inches tall and she weighed about one hundred twenty pounds. She was wearing a velvet evening dress and she had her hair in curls like Shirley Temple's.

At the cafe she ate a piece of pie with ice cream for twenty five cents while George had coffee and a hamburger for thirty cents. He paid for their meal. After they had eaten he took her home in a cab. She was living in a boarding

house by the General hospital and she had no curfew. He walked her to the door and he kissed her good night. She says that if she had not known him all her life she would not have let him kiss her. Adele was aware that she was becoming involved in a relationship and part of the reason that she accepted this was because she felt like she was becoming an old maid since she was twenty seven years old and still not married.

After this date George returned to the Veterans Hospital in Calgary. That was in November and after Christmas he was discharged. He returned to Edmonton. They dated frequently when he returned and in April they became engaged. They were in a cafe eating supper when he said, "I guess it is about time I got married"⁴⁴ because he figured he was getting too old to be single. This was not the proposal. It came a few nights later when they were out eating. He lived at home and Adele lived in a house where male guests were not allowed so they spent a lot of time in cafes. George's proposal was "what do you think of us getting married?"⁴⁵ Adele's response was "you know I do not drink and I despise it."⁴⁶ To this he swore that he would not drink. Adele had not seen him drink up to this point but she knew that he did when he was not with her. She wanted to make it clear that she did not want to be the wife of an alcoholic.

He did not give her a ring that night but he gave her one a few nights later. It was a gold ring with an amethyst. Purple was Adele's favorite color and she did not want a diamond because she believes that diamonds bring bad luck. They began to plan their wedding even though there was not much to plan since they could not afford to have a big wedding.

Second Generation

Georgie and Donald consider their first date to have taken place on the night that they met. They were both seventeen. They had both been invited to the same house party. Georgie was already there when Donald arrived. She was sitting on a couch in the living room with the girlfriend with whom she had come to the party. Donald arrived later with his friend Troy. When they walked into the living room they both spotted Georgie immediately. Donald described her as a mysterious woman in purple. Everything she was wearing was purple. He was enchanted. He came from a family of conservative dressers. Donald himself was always dressed in brown. He had to rush across the room to get to her before his friend Troy who was also interested in meeting Georgie. Donald introduced himself and they danced all night long. At the end of the evening Georgie and her friends accepted rides home from Donald and his friends.

Like Adele, Georgie did not have to do a lot of planning because there was not enough money for her to have a big wedding. Georgie did not want to do a lot of planning because she really did not want to be getting married.

⁴⁴Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

⁴⁵Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

⁴⁶Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 8, 1993, Edmonton.

Third Generation

Rose is not yet married but she is engaged to be married in April 1994. She met the man who will become her husband through mutual friends. Rose and Simon were friends for about two years before they began to date. Their first date was on a weekday afternoon. They went to the Edmonton art gallery. They each paid their own entrance fee and they browsed among the artwork for hours while they talked. When they left the art gallery they went for coffee and they talked away the evening hours.

Unlike her mother and grandmother Rose did have a lot of planning to do because she is her father's only daughter and there is to be a bigger wedding than that of either of the two generations before her.

Theme Eighteen

The Weddings

First Generation

According to Adele she and George did not have a wedding. They simply got married at the Cathedral in Edmonton. Adele had called her family to tell them of her engagement and to let them know when she was getting married. Although Adele's family speaks highly of George now, their initial reaction to Adele's announcement was not favorable. They thought that she was making a mistake. They were not the first Harrigan-Black union as George's paternal aunt had married Adele's paternal uncle. The Harrigans liked the Blacks as family friends but they did not want Adele to marry George.

George's family had a mixed reaction. His brothers approved of the marriage but his mother was dead set against it. Adele had known George's mother for most of her life. Adele had always liked the old lady and they got along just fine. It was when Adele started dating George that a tension developed between Adele and her mother-in-law.

The wedding took place on June 22, 1945 and there was almost no family present. One of Adele's cousins was George's best man. He was the only family member from either of George and Adele's families. A girlfriend of George and Adele's was Adele's bridesmaid. Adele and George wore twin suits. They were tailored suits made out of chocolate brown gabardine. Adele's suit had a long fitted jacket with a matching skirt that went below the knee with a kick pleat at the front. A couple of weeks before the wedding they had gone to modern tailors and been measured for these suits. They had the suits made for the wedding because both of them agreed that they should spend their money on outfits that they could get married in and wear for other occasions. The suits cost forty five dollars each. They each paid for their own. Adele bought brown high heels, a velvet flowered hat and a new blouse to go with her suit.

There were no flowers at the wedding. Instead of a bouquet Adele carried a prayer book. They were married late in the day at five in the afternoon. The only guests were some of their co-workers. Adele was working in the pharmacy at the General hospital and George was working for Great West Saddlery as a credit manager.

After the wedding they went for dinner with their attendants. George and Adele spent their wedding night at the Yale Hotel in downtown Edmonton. The next day they returned to Adele's room to start their life. Adele's room mate moved out and George moved in.

Second Generation

Georgie and Donald did not make a lot of the wedding plans. Most things were decided by their parents. Her father arranged a dinner at the Corona Hotel to follow the wedding mass. Georgie and her mother bought her

wedding dress the night before the wedding. It was a knee length white brocade sleeveless sheath with a matching coat that was trimmed with fur on the cuffs and collar. The only thing that Georgie and Donald did together in preparation for their wedding was to go and talk to the priest. A pleasant thing for Georgie was that there were three wedding showers for her. Her mother had one for her and Donald's mother threw one as did the women with whom Georgie worked.

Georgie and Donald were married at St. Andrew's church in March, 1968. It was not a big wedding. Both Georgie and Donald had some friends in attendance. Three of Georgie's siblings attended. Her two younger sisters and her younger brother were there but her three other brothers were working. Some of Donald's siblings were there but not all eleven of them. The dinner afterwards was very small. It was just for Georgie, Donald, Georgie's siblings, Donald's parents and Georgie's parents.

On their wedding night Georgie and Donald drove to Nisku, Alberta and they stayed at a hotel. From there they went south for a couple of days. They went to Calgary and Banff for most of their honeymoon. When they got back to Edmonton they moved into the home of Donald's parents.

Georgie has had two weddings. Her marriage to Donald ended in 1983 after fifteen years. She remarried in 1988 when she was forty years old. Her second husband was ten years younger than herself. They met through the running community. About 1980 Georgie began to run for exercise. In a short time she became an obsessive runner. She trained for marathons and had to run daily. If she was not able to run each day she was bitter. A result of the running was that she looked great and she made many new friends. She grew physically and emotionally. She began to want out of her first marriage. She was thirty three years old and she had always been a mother to someone whether it was her own daughter or her siblings. She felt she had missed her childhood and her teen years. She had never dated anyone other than the husband and she had never slept alone in a house and she had never taken care of herself.

She left her marriage to Donald. She left everything behind. She did not want the house, the furniture, the dishes, the money, or the child. She just wanted out. She got an apartment of her own and all she took from the house to furnish it were a plate, a pot, a frying pan, a few knives and forks, her clothes, her books and her records.

Georgie did not receive any emotional support from her mother. Adele was completely upset with Georgie for leaving the marriage and her child. Georgie shut herself off from her family for awhile as she made the transition from being married to being single. For Georgie it was a major transition. She had never been alone. She had never lived alone. She had never cooked for just one person. She had never had money of her own with which she could do as she pleased.

Since she had pulled away from her family because of their lack of support for her decision she began to rely more on friends from the running community for friendship and emotional support. It was among these people that she met her second husband; Theo. Georgie was married to Theo for about

three years. They lived together for about a year before they got married. During their marriage Theo developed lymphatic cancer. This was difficult for both Georgie and Theo because Theo's reaction to his cancer was anger. He was an angry person to begin with as Georgie found out when she married him. Theo recovered from his cancer but their marriage did not recover.

The leaving of Theo was similar to the leaving of Donald. Georgie did not keep anything for herself. She let Theo keep all the wedding presents that they had been given. He kept all the furniture. All she took was her books, records and clothes. In the ending of her two marriages the only major thing that Georgie insisted on keeping was the car. When she and Donald separated she took the good car and when she and Theo separated she took their only car. In the case of Theo she had made all the payments on the car. When Georgie left Theo she moved into an apartment with a girlfriend and the girlfriend's eleven year old daughter.

Theme Nineteen

The First Five Years of Marriage

First Generation

Adele and George's first home was a housekeeping room on Jasper Avenue and one hundred seventh street in Edmonton. It was one room and it was called a housekeeping room because it had a gas stove in it which meant that one could cook in ones room. There was no sink. If Adele needed water she had to go down the hall. The bathroom was also down the hall. They had to share it with the other boarders on their floor. They took turns paying the rent because they were both working at this time. George worked for Great West Saddlery for the first nine years that they were married. Adele was still working in the General Hospital pharmacy.

Adele had trouble with her mother-in-law during the early years of her marriage. Adele felt that her mother-in-law was angry at Adele for taking away her youngest son. George lived with his mother until he moved into Adele's room after they were married. While George and Adele were living in one room George's mother used to come over to visit almost every night. Adele says that it was a nightmare having to visit in the tiny room with just Adele, George and his mother. They lived in that one room for the first year and a half of their marriage. Their first son was born while they lived there and Adele quit working while she was living there.

There were problems between Adele and her mother-in-law because they had different religious beliefs. When Adele spoke of her mother-in-law in the interviews for this study she always called her mother-in-law the 'old lady'. George's father was what Adele considered to be a strong Catholic but the 'old lady' was a medicine woman and she did not like priests. Priests were a point of contention for the two women. Adele was known and liked by a number of priests and she often had various priests over to the house to visit. Whenever a priest came to visit Adele the 'old lady' would tell Adele "I don't like him coming here."⁴⁷ To this Adele would respond "This is my house, you mind your own affair."⁴⁸ The relationship between Adele and the 'old lady' was characterized by confrontations like the one over the priest being in the house.

Another difference between Adele and the 'old lady' was their Native heritage. Adele was a Cree while the 'old lady' was an Iroquois. This meant that there were differences between them in the ways that they managed their households and did their arts. This was things like the way each woman made bannock or the patterns each woman used for beadwork.

Although Adele did not fear the 'old lady' she recalls that many did fear her. When she got mad at people she used her medicines. Adele says that she could tell that the 'old lady' used bad medicines because she was purple. Adele says that people who use bad medicine turn real dark until they are almost

⁴⁷Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 4, 1993, Edmonton.

⁴⁸Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 4, 1993, Edmonton.

purple. Adele recalls that the 'old lady' looked frightening. Adele was not afraid of her and she tried for the first few years that she was married to George to respect the 'old lady' because she had been taught to respect her elders. It was two or three years before she spoke back to the 'old lady'. Adele did not mind the 'old lady' mixing herbs and roots in Adele's house but when she started to call on spirits Adele did not want her in the house. George was impartial to most of these disputes as he had been raised as a Catholic but he also understood his mother's ways. Although he only drew on the ways of his mother when he felt it was absolutely necessary he did respect her beliefs.⁴⁹ He was able to live with both the Catholic and the Iroquois traditions and beliefs.

The 'old lady' was not all bad. She was known in Canada and in Europe for her beadwork. She did beautiful beadwork and was often commissioned to make pieces. She earned money of her own by doing the beadwork. She passed her sewing skills onto her youngest son. Adele recalls with pride the fact that George could tailor his own suit. The 'old lady' was a good grandmother to some of the grandchildren. Adele recalls that the 'old lady' favored Adele's fourth child and spoiled him with attention. The 'old lady' died when Adele's fourth son was one and half years old in 1952. She was buried in a graveyard in downtown Edmonton. She is all alone because her family are all buried in the cemetery at Lake Saint Anne. After they put her in the ground no one ever went back until two years ago Rose and Georgie went to look for the 'old lady'. It was hard to find her because she had no gravestone and there is nothing marking her burial site. Adele recalls that out of all her children the 'old lady' liked Georgie the least and Adele thinks it ironic that it was Georgie who finally went to visit the 'old lady' after forty years of being alone in the graveyard.

Adele worked for the first eight months of her marriage. She quit her job in March 1946 because she was five months pregnant with their first baby. In June when Adele was nine months pregnant she and George took a taxi to the Misericordia hospital and she was admitted because she was having pains. Luke was born without any complications. Adele was in labour all day and Luke arrived in the evening. George had gone home to await the birth. George did not go back to the hospital until late in the morning the next day. In 1946 he was playing in a band that played for a radio show two mornings a week. It was the morning after Luke's birth that he had to go play before he could go to the hospital. After George saw Luke he called all the family to tell them the news. Adele recalls that she and George did not always have a happy marriage because he liked to drink alcohol to excess but she remembers when they looked at their first born son together there was love between them.

Adele was in the hospital for two weeks with Luke. She said that at that time a woman did not get up after the labour for ten days. She nursed her first baby but that is the only one she nursed. She nursed him for eight months and as soon as stopped she got pregnant again. In February 1948 Adele got pregnant for the second time. Around this time they moved to a bigger place.

⁴⁹ For an example of a time when George drew on the knowledge he had learned from his mother's medicine ways see Theme six.

George's mother tried to convince George to get a place big enough so that she could move in with them but this was one time that Adele stood her ground and said that there was no way his mother could live with them. This was the only family member whom she ever refused a place to live. Adele felt that George's mother did not need them financially because she had two pensions of her own. If George's mother had been unable to support herself then Adele would have taken in her mother-in-law.

They moved to one hundred twenty fifth street in Edmonton. They moved to another boarding house but this time they had three bedrooms. George hired one of Adele's cousins to come and help them move. A few months into her pregnancy Adele knew she was carrying a girl because her face freckled. When she was pregnant with a male she did not get any freckles. The second birth was not as long as Adele's first but it was more frightening because she was home alone.

Adele and George's first daughter; Georgie was born in the living room on the couch. On November 19, 1947, seventeen months after the birth of her first baby, Adele's water broke. George went to the pay phone to call for an ambulance because they did not have a car. George was gone and seventeen month old Luke was asleep in the bedroom when Adele laid down on the couch and gave birth to the tiniest of all her babies. It was a short labour and she was finished by the time George came back from the telephone, although Adele thinks that he took his time because he was scared. Their neighbor across the street was a doctor and he came over to cut the umbilical cord while they waited for the ambulance.

The ambulance took Adele and Georgie to the General Hospital. Adele was concerned about having had the baby at home. None of the women in her family ever had their babies in a hospital and all of them used midwives instead of doctors but Adele wanted to be in the hospital with a doctor. She says that this was because she had worked in a hospital and she was aware of the complications that could arise during childbirth. In addition to that she was also afraid that a midwife would cripple one of her children since her own leg had been pulled out of its socket by a midwife. Adele did not want her children to suffer for lack of a doctor and she did not want anything to happen to herself because she did not want to leave the baby motherless. Adele was in the hospital for three weeks with Georgie. While Adele was in the hospital one of her cousins stayed at their house and looked after Luke. George went to visit Adele everyday and on the day she was released he took her and Georgie home in a taxi.

For one year Adele did not get pregnant. When Georgie was three months old Adele's mother died. Losing her mother was not as traumatic for Adele as it might have been for others in the family. Adele feels some guilt over the fact that she was more upset at the loss of her aunt Myrtle than she was at the loss of her mother. Adele's aunt Myrtle or her grandma Marie were the primary caregivers for much of Adele's childhood. Adele's mother was never negligent but she had lots of work and lots of other children that took her attention.

When Georgie was less than a year old they moved again in 1948 to Camp 550. These were old army barracks in the northwest part of Edmonton. Adele

liked living at camp 550. She and George did not go out often because they had a baby and a small child and they did not have much money. Camp 550 was a nice place to live because there were other families and Adele and George were able to socialize without spending money or leaving the children. They had people in to play cards or just visit.

Adele spent a lot of time sewing. She sewed baby clothes and maternity clothes for herself. In February 1949 Adele got pregnant for the third time. She was due to have another November baby. She knew that she was going to have a boy because her face did not freckle. This birth was more difficult than the first two.

In November 1949 Adele began to have labour pains but she did not go into labour. George took her to the General Hospital in a taxi as they still did not have a car. At the hospital her doctor induced her labour. Her third birth was a breach birth. The baby was unable to turn around. Adele recalls vividly the priest coming to give her the last rites. Eventually, her third child, a son was born. He was born with a veil. Adele took the veil to mean that her son would be gifted with an understanding of the spirit world or the future.

When the Black family was living at camp 550 it was common to have extended family living with them. They had different friends and family live with them at various times at camp 550. Usually it was young people. They did not have extra room but Adele made room because she would never turn away someone who needed a place to stay. They had two bedrooms and three children of their own. Usually they had one or two extra people living with them. Adele had a Winnipeg couch which was a couch that had sides that could be pulled down so it could function as a bed. Adele was used to living with a house full of people because it was always that way at her mother's and her grandmother's homes. George too was used to living with relatives or having relatives come to stay as he had lived with his sister after his father died. George's father died when he was twelve. His mother did not have enough money to support both of them. George moved in with his older sister and her husband because they were the ones who had no children of their own. George learned to cook Italian recipes while living with his sister because she was married to an Italian man. When Adele married George she was charmed to find out that he made excellent spaghetti sauce.

Adele's fourth child, a son, was born while they were living at camp 550. Adele's third and fourth child were born only thirteen months apart. She got pregnant with the fourth only four months after she came home from the hospital. She was sick of being pregnant. She was getting bigger and bigger every time she had another baby. She had been told by doctors that she should not keep having children because her lungs were weak from having had tuberculosis. Doctors told her not to have children but they would not give her birth control and she could not say no to her husband. The doctors expected her to abstain but she was also expected to fulfill what was considered to be her wifely duty.

Adele's fourth baby was born new years eve, 1950. Adele was experiencing pains so she was admitted to the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton. This was the last child that Adele had while they lived at camp 550.

She had two miscarriages before she had another child. It was seven years until Adele had another child.

For the first years of Adele's married life she was spending all her time having and tending children. She hardly got out at all. Any socializing they did took place in their home or the home of a nearby neighbor. They got together to play card games like whist, crib and king pedro. She did not even go out to grocery shop as her husband did the shopping. One good thing about George doing the shopping was that he bought things that he would use to cook.

He cooked several times a week. Adele was unfamiliar with a man doing the cooking but she did not mind because it gave her a break. He always made spaghetti sauce and stew.

When Adele got home after the birth of the fourth child she was wearing a new winter coat because it was January. She says that she did not wear that coat again until March because she did not go out for three months. She had no television at that time. The only electronic entertainment they had in the house was a radio. She stayed home, looked after the children and read many books and magazines. When she recalls this period of her life Adele cannot believe that she passed five years without going dancing once. She taught all the children to dance almost as soon as they learned to walk but for five years she did not go out to a dance. Prior to her marriage Adele had not gone a week, since she was fifteen, without dancing. The only outing that Adele was sure of was her weekly trip to Sunday mass.

She had all the children baptized soon after each was born. The first was baptized at Sacred Heart church in Edmonton. The second and fourth children were baptized at St. Andrew's church in Edmonton. The third child was baptized in the hospital shortly after he was born because he had been a breach birth and whether he would live was uncertain for the first few hours.

Second Generation

Georgie spent the first few months of her married life living with her in laws. She felt that she fit into the family but it was unpleasant living in close quarters with her new in laws while she was pregnant. She had morning sickness for the first three months and there was only one bathroom with seven people in the house. She had longed for a place of her own and living with in laws was not what she had in mind.

After a few months Donald and Georgie moved into their own apartment.

In October 1968 Rose was born to Georgie and Donald. It was a short labour, less than two hours. Rose was baptized a Roman Catholic about two weeks after she was born. She was baptized at St. Andrew's which was the same church in which Georgie had been baptized.

Unlike Adele, who was in the hospital for two to three weeks each time she had a baby, Georgie went home three days after the birth. Georgie stayed home for a few weeks and then she returned to work. Donald did much of the caretaking of the baby. He had more time and more patience than Georgie. Since he was a university student he was able to manipulate his schedule to allow himself more time at home. When he was in class he took Rose over to his

mother or to Georgie's mother.

Rose was the first grandchild born to Georgie's parents. They were thrilled. They were not the best parents to Georgie but they worked hard at making it up to Georgie through their grandchild. They bought shoes, and clothes for Rose and they baby-sat all the time. Georgie's sisters were thrilled at becoming aunts. They did not know that Georgie was pregnant when she moved out and got married. Naomi and Eleanor both recall teaching Rose to walk. They used to hold her arms above her head to walk her. Whenever they did this Adele would tell them to stop because she was afraid that they would stretch Rose's arms.

Georgie's recollections of the first few months of Rose's life are blurred. Georgie was unhappy. She did not want to be a wife and a mother. She wanted to be single and living alone. A result of her yearnings for a different life was that she missed much of what went on in the life she was living. She was physically present in her life situations but she was emotionally absent. Putting emotional distance between herself and everyone around her was her coping mechanism for handling the distress that she suffered at being locked into another life that she did not want.⁵⁰ The types of things that she missed are milestones in Rose's life. When the researcher asked Georgie whether Rose talked or walked first, Georgie's response was that Rose talked first. When the researcher asked Georgie what she felt when her daughter said her first word or took her first step the researcher expected an answer like joy or pride. Georgie said that she did not feel anything. She remembers watching everyone experiencing pride and joy. She listed Rose's father, all her own brothers and sisters, and all the grandparents as being elated when Rose talked or walked but Georgie cannot find any emotion of her own at that time. This is the way that Georgie felt for much of the first five years of her marriage.

Unlike Adele, Georgie was not at home for the first few years when her baby was young. Adele did almost nothing but bear and raise children for the first five years of her marriage. Georgie returned to work shortly after Rose was born. Georgie and Donald went out socializing regularly. They went to bars, cabarets, and university parties. There were many family members who were willing to look after Rose. Usually Rose stayed overnight at her Kokum's place at least on Fridays and sometimes Saturdays as well.

Georgie calls the first years of her marriage her 'drinking days'. She did not drink every day but she drank heavily on the weekends. Every Friday night without fail she had to go out dancing and drinking. She liked to go Saturdays too if she could find a baby-sitter and convince Donald to go out. He liked to go out too but he also liked family outings that did not involve drinking and partying. If Georgie went out Saturday too then she usually slept all day Sunday. Rose recalls her mother sleeping until half past four in the afternoon. She could get up and get ready and make it to the five o'clock mass in a half of an hour.

⁵⁰ The first life that she did not want was the one she had at home with her parents.

Third Generation

Rose does not have a married life yet and she does not have five years of living with someone which she can compare to her mother and grandmother's experiences but she does have one and a half years of common law living that will allow for some comparisons between the three generations.

Rose's situation is different from those of the two generations before her. First, neither Adele nor Georgie would have lived common law. Adele would not have done because she does not agree with the concept of living together without marriage. Georgie would not have because she would have been afraid of her parents reaction.

Another difference between the partnership lifestyles of Adele, Georgie and Rose is the role that each woman had in the relationship. Adele had the role of housewife and mother. All of the housecleaning was considered to be Adele's job. Most of the childcare was considered to be Adele's responsibility. Once Adele and George were married it was expected by him and their families that they would immediately begin to have children. It was assumed by George and by Adele that she would not work once the children were born. It was not only Adele and George who felt that Adele should not work as is evidenced by the fact that Adele recalls that had she wanted to work there were few options open to her. Most of the full time jobs required schooling or training, of which she had neither. She could have worked part time but she had been raised to believe that women who worked when they had children were unfit mothers. It was acceptable to do odd sewing jobs or other work that she could do at home but it was only acceptable as long as it did not interfere with the caretaking of her own home.

A third difference between the partnerships of the three generations is the level of education of each woman and the age at which it was attained. When Rose decided to go to university it was entirely Rose's choice. When Georgie was first married it was not an option for her to go to university. Later, after Donald was finished and had begun to earn a living she could have gone but even then there were other things that they wanted to do that held Georgie back from returning to school. For example, when Donald began teaching they decided to buy a house. This meant mortgage payments which meant that Georgie really could not go back to school because both of their incomes were required for the mortgage, the groceries and all the other costs of a family. Georgie took extension courses but these were courses that would not lead to a degree. Although they helped her to achieve personal development they did not advance her academic standing. Georgie did not return to school to attain a post secondary education until she separated from Donald in 1983. There was never any thought of Adele returning to school because she had only an elementary school education. Both she and her husband were content to leave her education as it was.

Another difference between the situations of Adele and Georgie during the first years of marriage is the expectations placed on a new mother. First, it was expected that Georgie would return to work after her child was born while it was expected that Adele would stay home when she had her first child. Georgie

had to work because Donald was in university.

The gender roles that were present in Adele's marriage were present in Georgie's marriage but only for the first year. After that the roles broke down because they were unrealistic and inefficient. Georgie could not be expected to work all day, come home to cook dinner and clean house all night. Donald took over cooking and childcare in the second year of their marriage.

The first five years of each woman's relationship are different from one another. Adele's primary accomplishments are family related as she has four children. Georgie's accomplishments are career related as she starts climbing the corporate ladder at an early age.

Theme Twenty

Marriage Years Six to Sixteen

First Generation

The sixth year of Adele's marriage was 1951. By this time she had four children and she stayed home and looked after her children to the exclusion of almost everything else in her life. She did not even go out to get groceries because George did the shopping. The only social life she had was visiting with nearby neighbors.

In 1954 Adele and George moved again. They moved to a community called Rossdale which was down the hill from downtown Edmonton. While the family was living in Rossdale Adele took a part time job. She worked for the parish priest. Adele was paid sixty five cents per hour to clean the church a few times a week.

A number of significant family events occurred in Adele's life while she was living in Rossdale. The first of these was a miscarriage. This was the first of two miscarriages. The first miscarriage was difficult for Adele because she carried the child eight months. In her fourth month she fell down and that was when the baby died but the doctor said that her body would naturally eject the baby when it was ready so she had to wait until the eighth month for the baby to come out. She had a period of depression after the first miscarriage. She was in the hospital for three weeks and she felt awful.

The second family event which occurred in Rossdale was the death of Adele's father. Harry did not die suddenly. He lived with Adele for the last few months of his life and he died slowly over the months. Adele's house was what she calls an old fashioned home with a big kitchen. Harry's bed was in the corner of the kitchen so that she was able to have him near her during the day and so that he did not have to walk far to the bathroom. He was ill with cancer in his lungs. Adele used to give him his cough syrup and turn him over periodically. Adele says that the time of Harry dying was a time when she really got to know her father. During the day it was just the two of them as George was at work and the children were at school. It was the first time that Adele had Harry all to herself because none of Adele's sisters were around to distract him. Adele and Harry spent a lot of time talking about the past and catching up. They got to know each other as people instead of just as father and daughter. Adele had always longed for her father's attention and affection. She is grateful that even though she did not get it at sixteen she did get his affection and attention when she was thirty six.

Harry did not die in the house. Eventually he was so sick that he had to be hospitalized. They moved him to the Misericordia hospital and he died a few days later. After Harry's death Adele suffered another trauma. She was pregnant for the last few months that she had Harry staying with her and after he died she miscarried for the second time. The second miscarriage occurred a few months after her father's funeral. She thinks that dealing with the death had something to do with the loss of the baby. Harry was almost ninety years

old when he died. Adele took the death of her father badly. She had grown close to him in the months preceding his death while she was looking after him. This miscarriage was not as disturbing to Adele as the first because she had carried the second baby for half the time that she had the first. She was not as attached because she did not get too far along in her pregnancy.

In 1956 Adele got pregnant again. She was expecting her fifth child. She was cautious during this pregnancy because she was afraid that she might suffer a third miscarriage. Adele knew that she was going to have a girl because she began to get freckles all over her face. With her first girl she got freckles and she did not get any with any of the boys.

Since this was Adele's fifth child Adele could tell when her body was getting ready to give birth. Adele's husband was away in Peace River on business so she called an ambulance and went into the Misericordia hospital. She called a friend of hers to go and stay with the children until George returned.

Naomi was born in May 1957 with no complications. George named Naomi after one of his favorite aunts. Adele is fond of saying that Naomi is named after the Black's and she looks like one too since Naomi definitely took after her father in her physical features.

Adele's other children were pleased to have a little sister. When Adele was leaving for the hospital Georgie told her not to bring the baby home unless it was a girl. Georgie was tired of being the only girl with three brothers. Adele is proud to say that Georgie really knew how to fight. She had to or she would have been picked on to death by her brothers. Naomi was like a little doll to Georgie. At first Georgie enjoyed looking after Naomi but soon it became expected that Georgie would spend most of time looking after Naomi. Georgie was only ten years old and she already had to look after her little brothers and do dishes, wash walls, sweep, help with laundry, peel potatoes and then she had to look after baby Naomi. It was a lot for Georgie and in some ways she resented Naomi even though it was not Naomi's fault. Adele just had so much to do that a lot of responsibility fell on Georgie when she was still just a child.

Shortly after Naomi was born the family moved away from Edmonton. George had been working for Great West Saddlery but in the same year of Naomi's birth he secured employment with the provincial government. George's new job required that the family move to Paddle Prairie, Alberta for six months. They were to live in the middle of the Metis settlement. George was the operator of the Metis branch store in Paddle Prairie. This was a government owned store for Metis people. This was a temporary job. George was waiting for an opening in Social Services. Their new home was the upstairs of the store.

At that time four of the children were in school and Naomi was a baby. Since Adele had to help out in the store they hired a neighbor to come and do the washing, ironing and some of the cooking. Naomi used to sit by the counter in a little rocker so that Adele could watch her while she worked. Adele had more of a social life in Paddle Prairie than she had in the city. Since it was a smaller community they could go out and leave the children at home because they could take turns returning home periodically to check on the children. It was when they were in Paddle Prairie that Adele started to dance again after

about six years of not dancing at all. They went to the dances at the community hall.

They spent one Christmas in Paddle Prairie and it was a memorable occasion. Adele got paid for the work she did in the store and she saved her money so that at Christmas she could buy two geese and two turkeys. On Christmas eve she cooked one of each. The family went to midnight mass. George sang in the choir and Adele watched the children. Naomi was still a baby at this time but they took her to midnight mass anyway. She was one of Adele's funniest children. That year when they took her to mass she was in the habit of imitating dog barks whenever she heard one. On the way to midnight mass she was barking like a dog.

After the midnight mass Adele and George invited all the old Metis people back to their suite above the store for Christmas eve dinner. The people could not get over it because they had never been invited upstairs of the store before because usually the storekeepers were white people. Adele had made a feast. She cooked potato salad, mashed potatoes, gravy, pies, and George baked a fruitcake. They all stayed up and drank tea until four in the morning.

Even though George was working a lot there was still time for family and friends. Adele and George often had the neighbors over to visit and sing Cree hymns. Adele recalls that she and George were more loving in Paddle Prairie than they had been in Edmonton. She remembers that this was a time when they held hands a lot and they were affectionate. Adele thinks that one of the reasons for this was because George had stopped drinking alcohol. Adele hated it when George drank but a little before Naomi's birth he quit. Even though he quit he did still have black moods which Adele attributes to the fact that he was a dry drunk. In Paddle Prairie his moods were infrequent. Adele thinks they were happier because they were living among Metis people.

Adele liked living in Paddle Prairie. She missed the city but she liked living among the Metis people. She was comfortable and she felt at home. She remembers one evening when she was on her front porch watching the sunset. It was Indian summer and an old man was out for a walk. As he went by the porch she said to him in Cree "...it's really beautiful isn't it?"⁵¹ He looked surprised and said to her "...I thought you were a moniyaskwew."⁵² Adele was fair skinned and he thought she was white so her fluency in Cree took him by surprise. She asked him if he knew the Harrigan's in St. Albert. He did know them so she asked him if he knew Harry Harrigan, the interpreter. He said he did so she said "I am his daughter."⁵³ He took Adele's hand and they became friends. Adele's father often served as an interpreter between English and Cree speakers. This is a way in which Adele followed her father as she became an interpreter after her husband passed away in 1975. It was a way for her to make extra money. She interpreted for Native people on trial in the courthouse in Edmonton.

⁵¹Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 14, 1993, Edmonton.

⁵²Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 14, 1993, Edmonton. A moniyaskwew is a white woman.

⁵³Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 14, 1993, Edmonton.

They moved to Paddle Prairie in August of 1954 so the children began a new school year in Paddle Prairie. They were there for six months. Halfway through the school year a job opened for George in Edmonton so they packed up and moved back to the city. The children finished the school year at Saint Basil's in Edmonton.

During the five months that they lived in Edmonton after coming back from Paddle Prairie, George and Adele kept up their social life. At this time George was playing in a different band almost every weekend. The money he made from playing went into a jar and they saved this money for family holidays. Usually he got paid about twenty dollars a night. He usually played both Friday and Saturday nights. Sometimes Adele would go and listen and then they went out after he was finished. If he was not playing then they usually went to visit friends or they had friends over. As soon as the school year finished in June they moved to High Prairie, Alberta. George had been hired to open the first Metis Branch of Alberta Social Services.

George's job consumed most of his time for the first few months in High Prairie because he opened the first welfare office. He was the supervisor but it was a few months before he got a staff. George did not have any training as a social worker but he was given the position because he had a high school diploma and training as an accountant. Other factors that were involved were the facts that he was Aboriginal and that he spoke Cree. At that time (1959) there were almost no Aboriginal people working in social services and there were even fewer who spoke an Aboriginal language.

The first house that they lived in was right next to a grave yard. There are strange stories that circulate through the family about this house. It is a rare occasion for the stories to be told. Rose recalls one that she was told when she was about eight years old. Rose went on a camping trip with her two aunts and two of her uncles. One night while they were all sitting around the fire in the cabin Rose's uncle Rich told the stories. The one that Rose remembers was about the root cellar of that house next to the graveyard. One night the whole family was awakened by the sound of boxes being thrown and glass being broken. The sounds were coming from the root cellar. The root cellar was filled with boxes and jars of preserves. There was only one way into the root cellar and that was through a hatch type of door in the floor of the basement. After hearing the noises George piled furniture on the top of the door and then he called the R.C.M.P.

When the police got to the house the noise had stopped and the family figured that they had trapped a burglar in the root cellar. They moved the furniture and opened the door. There was no one there. The root cellar was empty and there was broken glass and boxes strewn about. There was no way for anyone to get out before the police had arrived. There were other incidents like the root cellar incident and Georgie and her brother Devon used to hear crying in the middle of the night.

This was not the first time that Georgie and Devon had been affected by spiritual goings on. When the family lived in Rosssdale Georgie and Devon shared a bedroom and they often awoke screaming from nightmares. There is a story of Devon being awoken by a brushing sound like something sweeping

across the floor. Then he felt something tugging at the bottom of the bedcovers.

He pulled the covers way over his head and prayed until the tugging stopped. Georgie and Devon seem to have been the two children who were attuned to spiritual energies and forces. Even today it is still Georgie who lives in accordance with the knowledge that there is a spiritual realm active in the physical realm in which we all live.

Adele had a priest come to bless the house several times but it did not make occurrences stop. Georgie thinks that her family experienced incidents caused by spirits because of the family history. Both of Georgie's grandmothers had been medicine women. Georgie thinks that any mistakes they made or harm they might have caused have to be corrected. If the women did not make retribution in their own lifetime then there is an unresolved issue plaguing the spirit world. Sometimes the spirits can try to urge their descendants to resolve the problem but people in the physical realm do not understand the messages and do not know how to resolve the situation. As an adult Georgie listens closely to the messages she receives from the spirit world. The messages can come as signs from the natural world or as direct messages given during a sweat.

Georgie believes that Native people have a duty to fulfill as maintainers of a balance between the spiritual and the physical realms.

The family did not stay in the house by the graveyard for long because there were other problems. One of the other problems was that the house was just off the school bus route so the driver would not pick up Adele's children. They moved closer to the town after a few months. Even when they lived in town there were still problems. One of the biggest problems was that some of the High Prairie children were mean to some of Adele's children. Adele thinks that the children who were mean were that way because George was the welfare officer. Since George was the only welfare officer in the town anyone who needed welfare had to see him and the children who were mean were the children whose parents were on welfare. One of Adele's children was beaten up by his classmates and another time one of Adele's children was tied up and had his jacket taken. Adele was so mad that she was going to call the R.C.M.P but George went to see the parents of the children to straighten out the matter. Adele was unhappy in High Prairie and near the end of their three years there Adele threatened George. She told him that if he did not get a transfer she was going to take the children and go back to Edmonton by herself. She explained to him that they would not be separating and that he could come home anytime but she could not stay in High Prairie any longer.

There were some happy events that took place while they lived in High Prairie. While they were in High Prairie Adele got pregnant again. Adele's sixth child was due in May 1960. While Adele was pregnant with her sixth child they took their first family holiday. They took a car trip to Montana. They were able to afford this holiday because they saved all of the money that George made from playing guitar for different bands. Adele saved any bits of money that she made. Sometimes she did sewing for people and she hoarded the money for years until they took that holiday. She wanted to be able to buy things for herself and the children when they were travelling. Adele was thrilled to travel to the United States. That is one thing she really loved about

her husband. He took her to see all the places about which she had read or heard about on the radio. When they came back from that holiday Adele gave birth to her sixth baby. Adele was forty four years old when her sixth child was born. Adele's oldest son was fourteen years old when Eleanor was born.

Adele went home with her new baby in the middle of May and she got pregnant again about a half year later. By that time she was getting really sick of being pregnant. She had the first four children all in five years. Then she had a break of about seven years in which she had no children. She suspects that her health was not strong enough for her to carry during that seven years because she had two miscarriages and other than those she did not get pregnant during that time and she did not use any birth control. Then she had her last three children between 1957 and 1961.

When Eleanor was a baby they took their second family holiday. They were still living in High Prairie so they travelled to Edmonton to go to Klondike Days and the exhibition. Since the first family holiday Adele had done embroidering for people and she saved all her money so that she could let the children go on rides and play games at the exhibition. When they returned to High Prairie Adele got pregnant with her last baby.

During Adele's last pregnancy she was huge. She recalls that she weighed two hundred one pounds when she went into the hospital to deliver the baby. She was sick during the last pregnancy. She had nausea all the time and was very weak. Despite her own sickness she gave birth to a healthy baby boy in December, 1961. He weighed eleven and a half pounds. This last baby was named George Junior. He was without a name for the first two days of his life because George was away on business when he was born. Adele was taken to the hospital in a police car. Adele was just a few months short of her forty sixth birthday when George Junior was born. She feels blessed because of the fact that George Junior was born with no defects and he turned out to be one of Adele's most naturally healthy children. For instance, George Junior hated brushing his teeth when he was a child. Yet, he always had pearly white teeth and never a cavity.

After the birth of the seventh child Adele did not want anymore children. She thanks God for the fact that she did not have any more. She did not have menopause until after she was fifty years old, she could not get birth control and she could not refuse her husband sexual intercourse. She was afraid that she would get pregnant again but she said that it was not something that most women could discuss with their husbands back then. As long as ones husband made enough money to support his wife and children there was no questioning the number of children people had. Even if a woman's health was poor she was still expected to do her wifely duty and if she happened to get pregnant then she had to deal with it because her husband was doing his share by earning the living. That is why Adele thanks God for her infertility during her final child bearing years. She says that God was merciful to her.

Today, Adele is so glad that she had those last three children as they are the ones who are closest to her. This may be because they had a different childhood than the first four children. When the first four were small George was a heavy drinker but he quit before the birth of the fifth child and he did not

start again. This meant that the first four had some bad experiences that the last three did not have at all. The first four suffered an occasional beating from their father and if not from their father then from their mother who was emotionally distraught from the fights she was having with George. The first four children had all their material needs met but they lacked an emotional closeness to their father who put a bottle of alcohol between himself and his children. Although, ironically it was often when he was drunk that he was most loving. Georgie recalls being hugged and praised when her father had been drinking. His worst moods were in the times that he was not drunk. He finally quit for good in about 1955 and then his moods levelled off and he was usually a nice person. The last three children have positive memories of their father. This may be why they are closer to Adele today than the first four. The last three children enjoyed their childhoods and family more than the first four children.

Adele and George lived in High Prairie for three years. They moved back to Edmonton when George was given a job in the head office of Alberta Social Services. Adele was happy to get back to Edmonton. She had missed the city. For Adele, who had spent her teen years waiting to turn eighteen so she could escape from the country, it was a trying time for her to live in a small town.

When they got back to Edmonton they rented a house on one hundred eleventh avenue and eighty seventh street. George and Adele usually hid the fact that they were Metis when they were trying to rent a home. Landlords did not want to rent to Metis people at that time but since George was a government employee with a permanent job they did not have too much trouble.

Adele's oldest son was in high school. Georgie, Rich, Devon and Naomi all attended St. Alphonsus. It was Naomi's first year of school. Adele's youngest two children stayed at home with Adele. It was 1962, Adele and George had been married for seventeen years. They had seven children and Adele was forty six years old.

Second Generation

Georgie's first marriage lasted fifteen years. She was thirty five years old when she separated from her first husband, Donald. Georgie's first husband was a good husband. He loved Georgie. Their marriage ended because they were too young when they got married. Georgie was twenty years old when she got married. She felt that she had not experienced anything other than cooking, cleaning and mothering her siblings.

For the first eight or ten years of the marriage Georgie made efforts to be a happy wife and mother. She worked hard at her job so that she could contribute to the family's finances and so that she could offer her daughter the things that she herself never had as a child.

The family always went on family holidays every summer. Since Donald

was a teacher he had two months off in the summer. Georgie took her two or three weeks holidays in the summer. Usually they travelled to Vancouver every year. There were relatives in Vancouver, Kamloops and Nanaimo. Georgie and Rose did Rose's back to school shopping in Vancouver and they always went to Chinatown and the wax museum. Georgie would run in Stanley Park while Donald and Rose went to the Zoo. Those were happy family times. Usually the family vacationed together for a week or two and then they would return to Edmonton and Rose would go to summer camp for a week.

Georgie and Donald were happy for part of their marriage. When they were in their late twenties they were both content to have a home of their own, one baby, some spending money and evenings out on the weekends but as the years passed they both began to grow and they both yearned to grow more than their relationship allowed.

Georgie started to want to return to school. Donald wanted to buy a house. They bought a house in about 1977 when Georgie was thirty years old. At that point money and finances became a contentious issue in the marriage. Georgie had become accustomed to spending all her money after Donald became a teacher. For the first few years that they were married, while Donald was in university, all Georgie's money had to be spent on family costs. After he began teaching Donald paid for the family and Georgie's money bought groceries and clothed the family. Georgie liked to eat out several times a week. She was used to shopping every Saturday and buying things for herself and Rose. When they bought a house it was not feasible for Georgie to continue with her spending habits. They needed her money again for family costs. Donald could pay the mortgage but they needed to pay property taxes, furnish the house, pay higher utility bills and look after the landscaping. Georgie did not want to change her spending habits. She would have been content to continue renting homes. She did not see a need to own property as her family had always rented houses or lived in apartments. Donald, on the other hand wanted the permanence and security of being a home owner.

At that point in their marriage they both knew something was wrong but they did not know if it was something irreparable or something that they could work out. They had different priorities. In the past they had always made major decisions together and they supported each other in the implementation of the decisions but on the house issue they did not support each other.

There were other changes going on in Georgie's life. About the same time that they bought the house Georgie settled into what some might call a fanatical fitness routine. She swam each morning before work, she did weight training each day after work, and when she came home she put on her runners and was back out the door to go for a run before she even said hello to Donald or Rose. She ran between five and twenty miles each day with only a day or two off each week. She was in peak physical condition. In 1981

Georgie ran the Vancouver marathon. She just about died. She suffered from exhaustion and hypothermia by the time she was finished but she had never felt better in her whole life. Eventually Georgie's body broke down from the strain and she got very sick for about a year.

When she recovered she slowed down her fitness regimen and her

primary activity became running. To be a runner in Edmonton is to be absorbed by a community. Georgie did not just run each day, she organized road races, joined running clubs, ran road races, travelled for relays and road races, went to carbohydrate stocking-up dinners, running parties and she participated in social conversation that always dealt with five minute miles, running injuries and the latest running shoe technology.

There was a period in which Donald and Rose tried to get Georgie's time and attention by joining her in her obsession but it did not work. Donald and Rose began jogging and even if Donald and Rose were not in the road race they always accompanied Georgie and supported her. Rose remembers driving routes with her mom and dad so that they could count the mileage of a road race. Rose remembers she and Donald standing on the side of roads with water bottles and oranges cut in quarters to give to Georgie as she ran by. Every year for about five years the whole family went to Jasper in the spring for the Jasper-Banff relay. Georgie ran the race and volunteered so Rose and Donald volunteered as well. It did not really work out for Rose and Donald when they tried joining Georgie in her pursuit because for her running was one of those things that she wanted to be her own and not a family activity. Georgie was leaving behind a family, her mother, her years of looking after other people whether it was her brothers and sisters or her own child.

Georgie wanted time just for Georgie. She wanted her own apartment. She wanted to be free to do what she wanted to do when she wanted to do it. During the summer of 1980 Georgie left Donald.

Georgie moved into her own apartment a few blocks away from Donald's house. Rose stayed in the house with Donald. Georgie was building a life of her own. She was doing things she had never before done. She was living completely alone. She was dating. She was enjoying her life for the first time.

Theme Twenty One

Adult Religious Experiences - One (Early Adulthood)

First Generation

Adele has always been a faithful Roman Catholic woman. Only once in her life has she ever questioned the wisdom of the church.⁵⁴ Other than that one time she has always blindly accepted the doctrines and dogma of the church.

She is devout. Statuettes and depictions of the Virgin Mary are placed throughout her home. She says her rosary at least once every day. She tries never to miss mass each week and she likes to attend a Latin mass once a month.

The only regret she has concerning her religious life is that she never got to be a laywoman. Now when she attends church there are almost always women on the altar. They read, sing, serve as acolytes, distribute communion and assist the priest. Adele has a cousin who helps every Sunday and she gets to enter the mass with the priest and she carries the incense. Adele envies her cousin who walks into the mass with the priest. Such things were unheard of when Adele was a young woman. Women began to have more active and leadership roles when Adele was a mother of seven children. At that time she did not feel that she could take an active role in the mass because it was hard enough to keep seven children still and quiet during the mass. She did not feel she could bring her seven children to church and help out in the mass.

Adele came close to devoting her whole life to God and the Catholic church. When Adele was in her mid-twenties and working at the General Hospital she gave serious consideration to entering the convent. She experienced the lifestyle of the nuns when she was working at the hospital and when she lived at the sisters of service dormitory. Adele enjoyed the lifestyle of the nuns. She liked to get up early and go to the chapel to pray with them and she enjoyed working with the sick. Adele was approached by a priest who suggested to her that she would be a suitable candidate for the sisterhood. In 1942 one needed five hundred dollars to become a nun. The money was required to pay for ones habit, a silver cross and a silver ring. One of the doctors at the hospital offered to pay the fee for Adele. Adele pondered for a long time until she decided that she could not become a nun because she could not give up the worldly pleasures that she loved. She had waited all her life to make her own money so she could buy clothes, makeup and go dancing. She was not ready to lose these things. She had spent her life being told by her mother that she ought not to wear bright clothes and to become a nun would have meant wearing black robes for the rest of her life. She could not leave the secular world for the sacred life. Today when she thinks about it she is happy with her decision because if she had become a nun she would not have her children and they are the most important thing in her life.

⁵⁴For a detailed explanation see Theme Twenty two "Adult Religious Experiences - two"

Second Generation

All three of Adele's daughters left the Roman Catholic church. They do not accept Catholic doctrines and dogma. They all left at approximately the same age. Eleanor and Naomi were in their late twenties and Georgie was in her mid thirties. Metis women are spiritual women. Maria Campbell writes that, "Halfbreeds are very superstitious people. They believe in ghosts, spirits and any other kind of spook."⁵⁵ Adele has channeled her spiritual energy into the Roman Catholic faith. Eleanor, Naomi and Georgie tried to channel their spiritual energy into Catholicism but the religion did not satisfy any of the women in this generation. All three women did not experience a sudden disillusionment but rather each had experiences over years that led them to seek out other ways to satisfy themselves spiritually. These are women who wanted to commune directly with the spirit community. They wanted to participate with other people. They did not want to listen quietly and repeat by rote in hushed whispers. They did not want to have approach the Creator through a priest. They wanted to be able to directly approach their creator themselves. All three women of this generation left the church but they did not all take the same path once they were outside.

Eleanor

Since Eleanor was a child she found Roman Catholic mass to be an empty experience. As she got older she felt that it was all form and no substance. The words were repeated but not felt. In her own words she found going to Catholic church to be a "...weird social thing."⁵⁶ When Eleanor was about eighteen she began a search. She did not know exactly what she was looking for but she was looking for a place or a people among which Eleanor could meet her need for a way to express her religious self. She explored the Mormon church. She explored Judaism. She became fascinated by Judaism on her first visit to Israel. She joined a group called EST. With this group she took part in retreats that took her far from home and cost her a lot of money. Rose recalls that Georgie was afraid that Eleanor would never come back from the retreat in California because it was so far away and she was afraid that Eleanor would be brainwashed. Rose also recalls that when Eleanor was in this group she would often be on the streets downtown canvassing for money. Rose remembers coming out of movie theaters and seeing Eleanor on the street. Eleanor explored a variety of religious sects or groups but when she was twenty three she found the one.

When Eleanor was in her early twenties she went to an Easter mass and she cried because she thought about Jesus dying and she felt that it had been in vain because she felt like no one remembered him. Shortly after that Easter mass Eleanor left the country. She went to Israel for a few months.

While Eleanor was in Israel she stayed at many places. She stayed in

⁵⁵Maria Campbell, Halfbreed. (Halifax: Goodread Biographies, 1983), 35.

⁵⁶Eleanor Black, Interview by Author, August 23, 1993, Edmonton.

hostels, motels and on kibbutz'. One place that she stayed was a Christian youth hostel. She recalls that she was sitting in the hostel smoking Israeli cigarettes when one of the men there asked her "What is your relationship with God?"⁵⁷ She remembers thinking that one does not have a relationship with God and that God was a social thing that happened at church. She spent three days at that Christian hostel and while she was there she watched the Christian youth praying and working. She felt dirty among the Christians. She went to the man who had asked her about her relationship with God and she said " I have never felt so far from God."⁵⁸ He asked her if she knew about Paul from the New Testament. Paul had been a murderer and still God accepted Paul. He asked Eleanor if she felt that she was closer to God than a murderer and she responded that she was closer to God than a murderer. They went through some exercises which led Eleanor to her revelation and that was her conversion to evangelical Protestantism. On July 28, 1983 when Eleanor was twenty three years old she left the Catholic church and she never looked back.

Eleanor recalls that when she became a born again Christian the thought crossed her mind that this was going to be another thing she would have to explain to people just like her Metis heritage. Being Metis was always something that made her feel that she was different from others and she thought that being born again was going to be the same. Her religion was not something which she had to bear but she knew it was something she would have to explain and defend.

Naomi

Naomi was in the fourth grade the first time she had a Roman Catholic experience that was unpleasant. She was in a catechism class and they were shown a film about Saint Dominic Savio. According to Naomi this saint was a little boy who wrote a vow that he would never sin again and that if he ever sinned again he would die. He was made a saint after he took the vow. Naomi recalls that this story made a huge impression on her. She went home and wrote a vow like Dominic's. The next day she sinned. She was ten years old when she sinned after writing the vow. She remembers thinking that heaven must be filled with Popes, Nuns and Priests and that she would never be able to get there. She was disappointed in herself because she thought that if a little boy her own age could write a vow to never sin and keep the vow that she should be able to do it too. The story of Dominic and the belief that she would never be able to get into heaven because she was not perfect stayed with her from age ten until age twenty seven.

She lived her whole teen and young adult years wondering what would happen to her when she died. She strove to be sinless and kept disappointing herself because it was an impossible standard. She tried to attend church as often as possible and to do good deeds in the hopes that these things would help her get into heaven. Eleanor recalls Naomi dragging her to church. Naomi liked to go because while she was there she could attain a feeling of peace but as

⁵⁷Eleanor Black, Interview by Author, August 23, 1993, Edmonton.

⁵⁸Eleanor Black, Interview by Author, August 23, 1993, Edmonton.

soon as she was outside the church the nagging doubt returned.

When Naomi was twenty seven years old her sister Eleanor told her that she could get into heaven simply by accepting Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. Naomi left the Catholic church because it was in the context of Catholicism that Naomi had spent seventeen years being afraid to die because she did not know where she would end up. Naomi thinks that if she had never been told the story of Saint Dominic that she would probably still be a Catholic today. His story became her standard, she wanted to be perfect. When Naomi was twenty seven she converted to Protestantism.

Georgie

Georgie left the Catholic church when she left her first husband. She was thirty five years old when she stopped going to church. Unlike Naomi and Eleanor who did not leave Catholicism until they had something to replace it Georgie did not have any other immediate spiritual outlet. It was a few years before she found what she was seeking. It did not happen instantaneously, it was a gradual process. Georgie's break from the Catholic church occurred because Georgie associated the whole life that she was trying to leave behind as wrapped up with Catholicism. She had been raised by a mother who used to clang her rosary beads against the arm of a chair when it was time to pray. Georgie's life with her first husband had always been enriched with Catholicism.

Almost every milestone in their lives was celebrated with or in the church. Any major family event was commemorated by a mass. Georgie wanted to get away from all of that. She simply stopped going and never went back.

Georgie had reasons of her own for leaving the Catholic church. One of these was that she had been beaten by a nun. When she was in grade four at Grandin School in Edmonton she was given the strap by a nun. Georgie's problem was not that she was given the strap but rather it was that she did know why she was hit. According to Adele this incident and others that took place at Grandin school occurred because the nuns did not like Metis children. The same year that Georgie got the strap she also failed the grade along with her older brother. Adele went to the school to discuss this and she was told that her children did not do their work and that they did not know the material sufficiently enough to pass to the next grade. Adele was not satisfied with this answer. Adele knew that the children did their assignments because Adele and George checked their homework every night. Adele did not always know what the answers were supposed to be but George did because he had finished his education and continued beyond high school. Adele also thought that the children failing the year they were at Grandin had to do with their Metis heritage because they had no learning problems prior to that year or after that year.

Georgie had a second experience during her childhood which left her feeling disillusioned towards Catholicism. When Georgie was thirteen she began to menstruate. She went to her mother to tell her that it had begun and to find out what to do. Adele told Georgie to go to the church and to kneel down in front of the Virgin Mary and pray for forgiveness. Georgie could not understand what it was that she did wrong. She knew she was to pray for forgiveness but that implied that she had sinned. The lesson she learned was

that her womanhood and her ability to bear children was sinful. She believed this for a long time. This incident led her to believe that natural body functions and urges were all sinful and she had no idea how she could ever cleanse herself of something that kept coming back month after month. When Georgie was older she got angry about this memory. The traditional Native response to a woman's first menses is positive. When a Native woman began to menstruate she was celebrated because of her natural ability to bring forth life. When Georgie learned this she was angry that she had been taught that she was bad, sinful and dirty because of her ability to give life. She blamed both her mother and Catholicism.

Georgie had reasons that were similar to Naomi and Eleanor's reasons for leaving the Catholic church. Like Naomi, Georgie had learned that the standard for a Catholic girl was perfection. Georgie thought that she was not to feel desirous of anything, whether it was material goods, physical pleasures or emotional satisfaction. She felt that there were standards that were impossible for her to achieve. Like her sister Eleanor, Georgie felt that life in the church was empty. The prayers were simply repetitions which never made Georgie feel close to her Creator. She never had a sense of relationship which meant that she could not take comfort from the church at times when she needed it. She recalls that when her father died she wanted so badly to be able to talk to God so that she could ask Him to take her father straight to heaven. She was frustrated because the only way that she knew how to pray was to say the same prayers that she said for every event in her life. She wondered how the same prayers could be used for everything. She said them at home, at church, at school and now they were the only prayers she knew to say for her dead father. She wanted prayers that were between her and her Creator not ones that have been used for every occasion whether its good or bad and that have been used by millions of people. She wanted a personal relationship between herself and her Creator and she wanted to be responsible for the relationship. Georgie wanted her own connection to the spirit world.

Third Generation

Unlike the second generation, Rose has not abandoned the Catholic church. She has questioned some of its doctrines and dogma and she has questioned whether or not she wants Catholicism to be the main instrument of her religious or spiritual life. Rose has spent a few years studying other religious traditions outside the Catholic and the Christian traditions. She has been in search of a religious body that meets her spiritual needs. So far she has not found anything that has moved her to fully abandon Roman Catholicism.

Unlike the first generation Rose does not possess an unquestioning faith in the traditions of the Catholic church. She does question the relevance to her generation of some of the Catholic views. It is Rose's opinion that the Catholic church could be a larger and stronger body if they updated their position on certain issues like birth control and divorce. Rose has these opinions because her own grandmothers have been near death or severe illness due to too many

childbirths. They were in these positions because they had Catholic doctors who would not give them birth control. Rose has also known women who have lived in abusive situations with abusive husbands because they do not want to divorce for fear of excommunication if they wanted to remarry in the church.

This does not mean that Rose disagrees with everything in the Catholic church. On the contrary, she is unlike her aunts and her mother in that she does not find the Catholic church to be a lifeless religion or a "weird social thing."⁵⁹ Rose is fascinated by the rituals of the Catholic mass. She is intrigued by the writings and scriptural interpretations, and the lives of the Catholic Church fathers like St. Augustine or St. Anselm. The main problem that Rose has in making Catholicism the main outlet for her spiritual expression is that she does not have the same opportunity for advancement that is accorded to men. The Roman Catholic hierarchy does not have women in its uppermost ranks.

Rose grew up surrounded by Roman Catholic parents and grandparents but there were differences between the practices of her father's parents and her mother's parents. Rose's paternal grandparents always ate fish on Fridays and read the Catholic Digest. They usually went to mass on Saturday nights and then they did not have to go on Sunday. Rose's grandparents almost always went to mass at the same time each week. Rose's Kokum and Mosom went to mass every week but they went whenever it was convenient and their kids did not have to go with them. The children had to go but they could go according to their own schedule. Rose's maternal grandparents went to mass on Sundays and once a month it was a Native mass. They did not read the Catholic Digest, instead Rose used to see her Kokum reading a Cree prayer book all the time. The only religious symbol that Rose's grandma and grandpa had displayed in their house was a crucifix and sometimes there were palms leftover from Palm Sunday. Rose's Kokum and Mosom had crucifixes scattered throughout the house and there were statues of Mary all over the place. When Rose's Kokum sang hymns at home she always sang in Cree. The prayers that were said before they ate were always said in Cree. Most of the time Rose's Kokum and Mosom did not follow Native ways but on occasion Rose would see little bundles of sticks or herbs and often there was a pitcher of Native medicine in the fridge. It might seem that the use of Native remedies is a thing separate from one's religious beliefs but Rose learned later in life from her mother that they are not separate. Native people use the natural healing remedies because they believe that the earth can heal them if they respect the earth and its powers. Rose grew up seeing her white grandparents practice a white Catholicism and she saw her Metis grandparents practicing a Metis Catholicism.

Like her Kokum, Rose has attended the Lake Saint Anne pilgrimage at different points in her life. Adele has gone almost every year for seventy five years. Rose has not gone that much but she usually went every few years. This was truly a Native Catholic experience. There are Cree hymns, thousands of Metis and First Nations people from all over. Some of the people walk hundreds of miles to get to the pilgrimage. There are drums beaten throughout the mass. Rose and her Kokum have gone to the pilgrimage together. While

⁵⁹Eleanor Black, Interview by Author, August 23, 1993, Edmonton.

they are there they attend a couple of masses, visit, have lunch, buy Catholic souvenirs and Rose gets to meet relatives that she never knew she had. Rose and her Kokum last attended the pilgrimage in 1993.

When Rose was a teenager she watched her aunt explore various religious traditions. Rose saw Eleanor explore Mormonism, Judaism, EST, out of body experiences and fortune telling. Rose learned from watching her aunt that there were other religious traditions that could be experienced.

As a child Rose was always interested in different religions. Whenever Rose saw Hare Krishnas on the street she stopped to talk and ask questions. She collected the free records and books that the Hare Krishnas gave out. When Rose was about ten years old a group of Hare Krishnas moved into a house near to her house. On Sunday mornings Rose had walk to church to sing in the choir during early morning mass. She used to walk past the Hare Krishnas house and they were banging tambourines and dancing around in circles. Sometimes Rose ran into one or two Hare Krishnas at the corner store. Their flowing orange robes and bald heads fascinated Rose. She was not so fascinated that she wanted to become a Hare Krishna but she wanted to know what they believed and how they expressed the beliefs. That is why she always accepted the books and records. She wanted to understand their religious system.

When Rose was about fifteen her aunt converted from Catholicism. This baffled Rose. Rose thought that it was acceptable to try to learn about other peoples beliefs but she did not realize at that time that one could simply leave behind the religion of ones family. Shortly after Eleanor converted, Naomi followed Eleanor. This was another message to Rose. Rose began to wonder why her aunts left the Catholic church. She knew that something was wrong and they were unsatisfied. Rose's Kokum told Rose that Naomi and Eleanor left the Catholic church because the Natives had been told that they could have their mass in a warehouse and not a church⁶⁰, but Rose knew that there had to be more reasons than just that.

When Rose was about seventeen her mother began her quest for knowledge of Native spirituality. The things that Georgie discovered and began to practice were opposite to the things that Rose had been brought up to believe. When Rose's aunts turned to a new religion it made Rose curious but when Rose's mother turned to a new religion this actually made Rose question her own place in the Catholic church.

Rose began to seek out new religious experiences. About four years ago Rose began to learn some things from her mother about Native Spirituality. Rose learned about sweetgrass, sage, other herbs and roots, ancestor worship, the significance and powers of the four directions and the importance of the woman in Native Spiritual beliefs. Georgie taught Rose that the woman is seen as the power source. It is woman who is connected to the earth. The earth has natural cycles that maintain the order of things and so do women's bodies. Both woman and the earth can give life and nurture life. Rose appreciated the lessons that she learned from Georgie. Rose felt that praying to her ancestors was worthwhile because they are connected to oneself. It seemed logical to

⁶⁰See Theme Twenty two for details.

Rose that a spirit that was linked to her by relation would be inclined to hear her prayers. Georgie taught Rose to live with an awareness of a spiritual realm. Georgie taught Rose that it is best to try to live in harmony with those in the spiritual realm.

Among the three generations the common religious experiences are limited to the child and teen years. During that time all three generations are willing participants in the Roman Catholic church. The three women of the second generation had the common experience of leaving the Catholic church. These are the only similarities. After the second generation women leave the church they all take a separate path. Naomi and Eleanor both become evangelical protestants but they join different churches with different emphases. The path Georgie followed led her back to the religion of her ancestors but it is the opposite of the religion her mother follows. The third generation is somewhere in the middle of the choices of her mother and grandmother. Rose sees beauty and sacrality in the rituals of the Roman Catholic church but she is also seduced by Native Spirituality which emphasizes the woman, the earth, and the ancestors.

Theme Twenty Two

Adult Religious Experiences - Two (Later Adulthood)

First Generation

In 1967 Adele committed herself to one of the most important religious experiences of her life which left her with positive and negative memories. Adele was fifty years old when she accepted the responsibility of organizing a Native mass for the community. In 1967 the Roman Catholic Bishop in Edmonton was looking for people to organize a Native mass. A friend of Adele and George's gave their names to the Bishop as they were two people who were known to be good Catholics, reliable and in touch with the Native community both in and out of Edmonton.

When George and Adele were asked to organize the mass they accepted the responsibility. Catholic Native people were glad to hear the news that there was to be a Native mass. They had longed to be able to sing Cree hymns in church and until 1967 there had been no church in which they could sing in Cree.

One of the first things done by Adele was the organization of a Cree choir for the mass. There had always been groups of people who sang Cree hymns together but not inside the church. Adele and a friend of hers phoned people and told them about the mass and asked them if they would like to sing in the choir. That choir still exists today. They sing at Sacred Heart church in Edmonton and there are still two members of the original choir.

The first Native mass was held in St. Joseph's cathedral in downtown Edmonton. It was in the fall of 1967. It was held in the main hall upstairs. The mass was a success. Large crowds of people attended.

After the first mass they continued to have the Native mass once a month. Sometimes it was held downstairs if the main church upstairs was needed for some other function. Adele and George asked the Native people who attended to make donations for the first few months until they had generated enough money to cover the costs of putting on the mass. The money was used to buy supplies for the luncheon which always followed the mass and to pay for the other costs which were directly related to the mass. They had to pay ten dollars a month for the hall and they paid five dollars a month for candles.

There was always a luncheon following the mass because many people came from out of town to attend the mass and Adele thought that they should eat and have a chance to visit before they returned home. For the first few months people brought in trays of sandwiches but eventually there was enough money so that Adele and George could buy coffee, bread, sugar, cream, and lunch meat. One of Adele's friends always made the bannock for the luncheon and she helped Adele prepare the rest of the food. The whole family helped at the luncheon. Georgie, Naomi, and Eleanor prepared food, served the food and cleaned up the kitchen afterwards. Adele's sons and Georgie's husband put out the chairs and tables and folded them up afterwards.

The luncheon was always held in the basement hall. There was a big

kitchen down there and there was lots of room for people to sit and children to play. Rose was one of the children who played at the luncheon. It did not matter how old Rose got to be she was still never old enough to help out since she was the youngest of the whole family. Rose recalls longing to make sandwiches or pour tea but her kokum always told her to go and play and that she was lucky that she did not have to work.

Adele ran the Native mass for seventeen years until 1984. About 1980 she decided to try to do a midnight mass on Christmas Eve. The midnight mass was well attended, there were always crowds. This mass was always held in the basement because the upstairs church held the midnight mass for white people. Rose recalls the midnight masses. Rose was twelve when they began. She remembers liking the Native midnight mass better than the masses at her usual church because the Native mass was so relaxed. People drank coffee or smoked through the service. Children were allowed to move around. Children could not make noise but they were free to roam from their mother to their aunt and to their grandmother. This kept them from getting bored. Rose recalls the feeling of wanting to cry when she heard the Cree hymns and the awe she felt when she watched her kokum singing the hymns. She remembers missing her mosom at the Native mass after he died in 1975.

Running the Native mass was a big part of Adele's life for seventeen years. She did not want it to end but eventually the Catholic system disappointed her. In 1984 the Bishop told Adele that they could not use the basement hall for the Native mass anymore. The Native people were upset. Native mass had been going on for seventeen years. It was a place for Native people from the country to meet and visit with their city friends and relatives. It was a time when Native people could celebrate their religion in their own language. The priest who said the mass was an Irishman who tried to say the mass in Cree and although Adele used to laugh at his Cree all that mattered was his effort. They were able to sing the hymns in Cree and that was enough. That was all the Native people wanted; a church in which they could sing Cree hymns.

After a short time the bishop decided to give the Native people an alternate location for the Native mass. It was to this new location that Adele would not go and she gave up the Native mass. The Native people were given an old warehouse for their mass. The mass was held in the warehouse for a few years and Adele missed it but she did not think that it was right that people were given a warehouse in which to have their mass. It was around the same time that the mass was moved to a warehouse that Adele's two younger daughters left Roman Catholicism. Even though Naomi and Eleanor have their own reasons for leaving the church Adele still thinks that part of the reason is because of the way that Catholic church treated the Native and Metis people. She thinks that if the Native mass had stayed where it was they would have not had a reason to go find another church.

Eventually the Native people were given a church. The Bishop gave them Sacred Heart church in Edmonton. Adele does not go to mass at Sacred Heart often. She feels that too much of Native Spirituality permeates the masses at Sacred Heart. Although Adele felt that people should be able to use their

Native language in the mass she does think that aspects of Native Spirituality should be mixed with Catholic religion. It is interesting that Georgie holds this same opinion but from the other perspective. Georgie does not think that the Native Spirituality and Catholicism should not mix because Catholicism has damaged Spirituality. While it is Adele's opinion that Spirituality damages Catholicism. For example, Adele does not think that drums belong in a church. She thinks that drums are for pow-wows, Native ceremonies or dance halls but not the church. Georgie thinks that Catholic priests should not use sweetgrass because it belongs to Native Spirituality.

The Native mass experience was one of the best religious experiences of Adele's life. It was the closest she came to her dream of being a laywoman. It was her personal experience of working from within the Roman Catholic system.

She had seventeen years of positive experience. When the disappointment came it was profound. Although she has nothing bad to say about the Catholic church, the ejection of the Natives from the cathedral is one incident that she does not say anything about because she has nothing good to say. She hates to speak against the church so she would rather not say anything at all.

Second Generation

All three of Adele's daughters have given substantial portions of their adult lives to seeking out spiritual or religious communities which meet their individual needs. When each of them found the place they wanted to be they each devoted much time and energy to learning all the traditions, rites, rituals and ceremonies and to making these the focus of their lives. All three women have as the anchor of their lifestyles their religious or spiritual beliefs and practices.

Eleanor

After Eleanor converted from Catholicism religion became the focus of her life. She attended Bible college for years. She studied at colleges in Alberta, British Columbia and Hawaii. When she was finished her studies she volunteered to teach. She would work for a few months to make enough money to be able to pay for her living expenses while she volunteered her time teaching.

She became a missionary. She travelled on a ship around Greenland ministering to isolated people. Eleanor did this because she believed that the end of sin and hatred cannot come until the end of this world. The end of this world cannot come until every person on earth has heard the word of the Lord so that each person has been given the opportunity to make a conscious decision to be with God or not. Eleanor joined the mission to spread the word so that judgement day may come and every person can stand in front of God knowing that they have had the opportunity to let Him into their lives.

It is the belief of Eleanor and Naomi that they were bound by ancestral spirits because they have grandmothers who practiced Indian Medicine.

Georgie sees the practices of her grandmothers as ones that allow Georgie to practice ancestor worship. Naomi and Eleanor see the practices of their grandmothers as binding them to evil. They have to work at liberating themselves from the evil. The theory is that anyone who had ancestors who practiced what the evangelicals consider to be pagan practices is essentially cursed. The ungodly practices of one's family and ancestors taints the whole family. Thus, Eleanor and Naomi both had to make conscious efforts at protecting themselves from the resonant effects of the beliefs and practices of their ancestors and their sister.

Naomi

One of the most awful experiences that Naomi has ever had was a religious experience. It was in the winter about three years ago. Naomi was in her early thirties. She and her husband were living in far southeast Edmonton. She was in what she calls "...a hell marriage."⁶¹ Her husband had a mental disorder and after they were married his condition grew worse. He was fine if he was responsible with his medication but if he missed some or stopped taking it he was not himself. Living with Barry was almost impossible. He kept erratic hours and sometimes he did not sleep at night at all. He used to take their truck and disappear. He would go downtown and mingle with the street people. He was not able to hold a job.

One night Naomi had gone to bed in despair. She felt hopeless because she loved her husband and knew that his disorder was not his fault but if he did not take his medication he was a terrible person. He had valid feelings for why he did not want to take the medication. It made him feel dull, sleepy and lifeless but without it all his behavior was erratic, illogical and uncontrollable. Naomi lay in bed while Barry sat in the living room watching television. Naomi finally fell asleep. In the middle of the night she was awakened suddenly. She does not know what awoke her but she sat right up and felt her heart beating faster than she had ever felt it beat. She opened her eyes and thought to herself '...I'm back'. She recalls thinking that she did not want to be back. The last place she wanted to be was in her home with her husband. She knew that her spirit had gone somewhere. Every part of Naomi did not want to be at home, her body, her mind and spirit wanted to get away. Her spirit tried to escape. While she was sleeping her spirit left her body and travelled away. Naomi and Georgie think that Naomi's spirit must have gone to Georgie because shortly after Naomi awoke, their phone rang and it was Georgie. Georgie had been awakened by a vision of a woman in distress. Her first thought was to call Naomi and sure enough when she phoned Naomi was awake and feeling like she had just returned even though her body had not gone anywhere. Georgie told Naomi that she had been awakened by a woman who was terrified and in a state of panic. Naomi said "...that was me."⁶² Naomi just wanted out of the life she was in so badly that her spirit could not take anymore and it tried to get

⁶¹Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 20, 1993.

⁶²Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 20, 1993.

away.

Naomi was concerned about the incident. She did not like to think about her body existing without a spirit. She believes that if one's body is sitting spiritless that some other spirit, either good or bad, can take it over and then one's spirit is left homeless. A wandering spirit can be displaced from its abode.

Naomi consulted a professional about this matter and she was given instructions to pray each night before she went to sleep. She was to pray special prayers that were designed to keep her spirit from wandering. She also prays for rings of guardian angels to surround her bed at night to keep the evil at bay. The professional also concluded that Naomi was at risk for an evil spiritual invasion because her husband was carrying bad spirits with him and because of her ancestral bondage.

Although Naomi converted from Catholicism when she was twenty seven years old she did not find her religious niche until recently. In the last year Naomi began to attend the Native Alliance church in the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. She loves it there. She has found a place where the two most important parts of her can be celebrated; her Metis heritage and her love for God. Naomi has thrown herself into membership in this church. She is a member of their bible study group and she is a Sunday school teacher.

There is a part of Naomi that believes in things that are non-Christian. Naomi thinks that Metis people have a different soul than white people. She believes they have a Native soul. She believes this because deep down in her heart she feels that everything has a spirit. By everything she means all people, trees, plants, animals and the elements. She tries not to believe this and not to feel it because it goes against the things she has been taught to believe as a born again Christian. Naomi admitted that she feels the presence of the spirit world but she rejects it because her religion dictate that she does so.

Georgie

It is difficult to write about Georgie's religious experiences because Georgie does not believe that the experiences of Native Spirituality should be recorded on paper. All through the interviews with Georgie this view is expressed. She believes that people who do not share her beliefs will not understand why she believes the things that she does and she is unconcerned with whether people understand or not but she felt that sharing her most personal religious experiences to people who may be ignorant of them could be desecrating the experiences. Georgie's experiences cannot be gauged by a Christian context because they are not Christian experiences.

Georgie is someone who practiced the Christian traditions for thirty years and never felt fulfilled. When she looked at her cultural heritage she found that she was from a people who originally had a developed religious system. It is Georgie's opinion that this pre-Christian system of Spirituality was ripped apart by Christian missionaries who came to North America with the explorers. When Georgie began a serious study of the religion of her Native ancestors she found a complex system which was designed to honor the earth so that Native

people could live in harmony with the earth.⁶³ She found that Native people had devised intricate and detailed rituals to show their respect and love of the natural world. They did this so that the earth would look after them and she did. Georgie learned from different elders that there was a time when Native people lived with all their needs being met by the natural earth. Georgie learned that the earth and its elements have energy and that humans and animals have energy. She found that there are rituals and ceremonies designed to bring all the energies together. Each spirit like the earth or the wind or the beaver has powers of its own and a human can pay homage to the spirit in the hope of sharing in that spirit's power. When Georgie learned all these things she rejected Christianity completely. It is her opinion that Christian beliefs pulled her ancestors away from their mother earth and encouraged them to dominate and exploit the earth. She feels it is her calling to return to the old ways and try to make reparation for the damage that has been done. Georgie believes that everyone who is put on earth has a path and one can only find that path by looking at oneself and one's cultural heritage. The Native ways are not for everybody, they are only for people who have a cultural claim to them.

Georgie began to attend sweats and there she learned more about her own place in Creation and her role in relation to the earth. Georgie makes a distinction between religion and spirituality. The distinction is earth based. According to Georgie religion is man made. Religion is social groupings that have been imposed on people by various conquering cultures. For Georgie spirituality is earth based as opposed to religion which is man made. Eleanor also makes a distinction about religion but the distinction she makes is between religion and relationship. Eleanor and Georgie both see religion as man made social groupings. When Eleanor speaks of her own personal religion she calls it a relationship. For Eleanor, religion is the church which she attends and the people with whom she celebrates, but relationship is her personal communion with God.

Although Eleanor, Naomi and Georgie all took separate paths after they left Catholicism some of their beliefs are the same. There are continuities and discontinuities between the the religious or spiritual beliefs of the three women after they left the Catholic church. There is continuity in the above distinctions made by Georgie and Eleanor. They apply the same definition to religion and they both distinguish their personal beliefs as being something separate and apart from organized religion. There is also continuity in their own personal definition of what it is that they believe as both of them define their religion as being a relationship. Georgie defines her spirituality as her being her own relationship with the earth. Eleanor defines her religion as being her relationship with God.

All three women believe in the existence of a spiritual realm in which

⁶³For information on Native religions see Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind Vision and Reality in Indian America. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982). or Elizabeth Tooker, Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands. (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1979). or Christopher Vecsey, ed. Religion in Native North America. (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1990). or John G. Neidhart, Black Elk Speaks. (New York : Washington Square Press, 1972).

spirits and dead ancestors function. The discontinuity is in the way the three women react to the spirits. Eleanor and Naomi believe that the spirits are to be avoided. They work at protecting themselves from the powers of the spirits. Georgie believes that one can work in conjunction with the spirits to attain a better quality of life for oneself and for the earth. The earth is the most important feature of Georgie's religious beliefs.

There are a variety of ceremonies and rituals in which Georgie takes part in order to show her respect for the earth and its components. One of these is the sweatlodge about which the researcher cannot write because Georgie felt that to write about the ceremonies of the sweatlodge would be to desecrate them. Another ceremony which Georgie attends is the Sundance. Georgie and her partner travel to the United States to participate in the Sundance. Again, this is a ceremony of which Georgie was hesitant to speak for fear of desecrating the sacredness of the ritual. Georgie's hesitancy to speak about the most private aspects of her spiritual life was similar to Eleanor's response to the researcher's questions. Eleanor too expressed a fear of desecrating the most sacred parts of her life. This feeling was not unknown to the researcher who has studied other religious systems and has found that many ancient religions were characterized by a secrecy. Rituals were only known to those who had been initiated and if one who had been uninitiated learned of a secret rite it was an offense punishable by death. The mystery religions of ancient Greece are an example of this. Georgie and Eleanor both felt that speaking of their religious and spiritual practices diminished the sacredness of the events. In some circumstances it is acceptable to talk of religious or spiritual practices but Georgie in particular felt that gathering the information for a scholarly study was not appropriate. An example of an appropriate time might be if one approached Georgie and made a full time commitment to learning the practices and beliefs so that one may practice them or if one had knowledge to trade. For example, Georgie and her mate make frequent trips to reservations in the United States. They stay with the people on the reservations and they learn from them about their spiritual practices. Georgie and her partner in turn share their knowledge of plains Cree spiritual practices.

A continuity between the later adult religious experiences of Georgie and Adele are that both women found religious fulfillment in Native communities. Georgie found it in the community of the sweatlodge and Adele found it among Metis Catholics. The women of the first and second generation differ because Adele remained a faithful Roman Catholic while Georgie, Eleanor and Naomi did not.

All the generations acknowledge the existence of a spiritual realm and the presence of spirits in daily life but they react to this acknowledgment differently.

Adele prays Catholic prayers and always has a rosary on her person. Naomi and Eleanor pray prayers specifically made to protect the sayer from spirits. Georgie communicates with the spirits, she seeks to understand them, help them and work with them. It is only in the last few years that Rose has recognized her own abilities to live in harmony with the spirit world and she tends to follow Georgie's example rather than the examples of her aunts or her grandmother.

Theme Twenty Three

Career

First Generation

Adele's first job was working for her cousin on another farm. Adele was seventeen when she got a job working for her cousin whom the family calls 'Queen Mary'. The reason Adele's cousin was called Queen Mary was because she married the chief of Michael's reserve and in 1939 the King and Queen of England came to Edmonton. All the chiefs set up their tents around Victoria school and as the chiefs wife Adele's cousin got to meet the Queen and King. Ever since then her family have all called her Queen Mary. Adele milked cows for her cousin for a wage of ten dollars per month.

Adele worked for wages before she was married.⁶⁴ Once she was married almost all the work she did was on a volunteer basis. Adele's volunteer career became a priority in her life when the family returned to Edmonton from High Prairie in 1962. Her first four children were old enough to leave alone and they could baby-sit the younger children. Therefore Adele had more time to volunteer. There were certain organizations to which Adele had always belonged and done a limited amount of volunteer work. One of these was the Catholic Women's League. As a member of this organization Adele helped out at teas and bazaars.

While Adele's children were still young she joined the John Howard Society. She was asked to join because of the disproportionate number of Natives involved in the justice system.⁶⁵ It was felt that Native input was needed in guiding the John Howard programs. Adele attended meetings and gave input whenever she felt she had something to contribute. Adele stayed with the John Howard Society for about three years in the mid-nineteen sixties.

Adele represented the Native Society for eight years from about 1965 to 1973. This society held dances, dinners, and festivals to raise money for programs for urban Natives.

Adele belonged to the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire. Adele's duties in this organization were to attend members meetings and twice a month she worked in the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire Second Hand Store. The organization owned a thrift shop on the south side of Edmonton. Adele repaired clothing to be sold. Adele's work in the store involved ironing and repairing the clothing that was donated to the store.

At the same time at which Adele joined the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire she also joined the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. This was in the summer of 1962. The Canadian Native Friendship Centre was just

⁶⁴Please see theme entitled "Moving Away from Home for the First Time" for details.

⁶⁵For more information on the subject of Aboriginal people and the justice system see Therese Lajeunesse, "Cross Cultural Issues in the Justice System: The Case of Aboriginal People in Canada." Program on Conflict Resolution. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1991).

starting up when Adele joined. It was brand new organization with little yet established. They had a facility. It was an old brick house on one hundred eighth street and one hundred second avenue. There was a board of directors and a couple who was on the board suggested Adele's name as a possible board member. Adele was contacted and asked if she would like to join the Centre and volunteer as a board member. She joined, accepted the board position and she has been on the board ever since. Adele had to be nominated and re-elected to the board every three years until she became a lifetime member. Thirty one years later she is still on the board of directors and she is a lifetime member of the Friendship Centre in Edmonton and she is a lifetime member with the National Association of Canadian Native Friendship Centres.

In 1962 Adele took up the challenge to get programs established that would appeal to urban Natives and to create programs that would benefit and empower urban Natives. The first program she helped to establish was a women's group. It was the function of the women's group to generate funds for the center. They did this by having teas and bazaars throughout the year. Adele coordinated quite a few of the Centres teas and bazaars.

Adele helped to organize the first All Native Festival. The main organizer of the festival was a cousin of Adele's husband. After the first festival he became sick and he asked Adele and George to take over the organizing of the festival. George and Adele were the organizers until 1974 when George became sick and could not do it anymore. Organizing the festival involved creating a program, finding judges, tabulators, and talent. They had to organize people to sell tickets, coffee and sandwiches. They organized the dance to follow the festival.

The festival was one of Adele's favorite functions of the Centre. The festival is a display of Native talent. There are performers from All over Alberta and some from other parts of Canada. It a showcase for the talents of Metis and Indian jiggers, fiddlers, dancers, singers and callers. It is one of the most pride inspiring events put on by the Centre. It inspires personal pride in each of the performers because the community recognizes them for their talent and it incites cultural pride in Native people because it demonstrates the artistic abilities inherent in Native people. Adele recalls that they used to get huge crowds for the festival. She recalled one year in which she saw thirty jiggers entered in the Red River Jig competition. They had to go through them in couples because there were so many people.

In 1964 Adele's husband George was asked to be Chairman of the board. George had encouraged Adele's involvement as soon as she joined. He supported her efforts at attaining a better quality of life for Metis people. Even though George had a good job he knew that at that time a Metis person with a job like George's was the exception not the norm. Like Adele's sisters, George too was not always comfortable with Adele stopping in the street to talk to Native people. He knew that it was wrong to have any shame about ones Native heritage but the fifties and sixties were not easy times to be a Native. It was hard for Metis people who looked more Native than white to rent apartments or get jobs. Adele wanted to work with the Centre to change this and when George was asked to come on board he accepted.

George was the first Native chairman of the board. At the present time everyone on the board is of Native ancestry but at that time only about half of the board was of Native ancestry. During the two years that Adele was on the board and George was not he was involved as a member of the Centre. He played in a band every weekend for Centre sponsored sober dances. Adele recalls that every Saturday there was a dance practice for the children and when it was over there was a dance for adults. George played guitar and if he wanted to dance for awhile then someone else played guitar. Two months after George's death in 1975 Adele was presented with a painting of George because he was the first Native chairman of the board. The painting was hung in the Centre.

Just as Adele collected at the door of dances when she and George first started dating this is something she did again at the Centre. While George was playing for the dances Adele worked at the door collecting as people came in. Adele collected for years. She did it before her husband died in 1974 for about eight or ten years. After her husband died she continued collecting until the Centre building was condemned about five years ago. The Centre attained office space when the other building was condemned but they did not have space for dances. In 1993 the Centre attained a new facility that is bigger and better than any facility previously used. Adele would like to begin collecting again.

There were a few changes and traumas in Adele's personal life during the time that she has worked with the Centre. The family moved twice after they came back from High Prairie in 1962. Their first home was in Northeast Edmonton. They lived in this house for about six years. It was while they living there that Georgie attended high school, got married and moved out.

In 1968 the family moved to the west end of Edmonton. At that time the west end was by Westmount shopping mall. Adele still had six children at home. Rich was attending the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology while Luke and Devon were working. The youngest three children were attending St. Andrew's school. The family was renting a house near St. Andrew's school. The house was only about two blocks from where Georgie and Donald were living. While they were living in this house Rich moved out. He got a job with social development and he moved north to Slave Lake. Before he moved north Rich got married and Naomi's recollection of the wedding is that it was the most enchanting wedding she has ever attended. Naomi recalls that Rich was married in a little stained glass chapel that was lit completely by candles. It was dark outside because there was a blizzard and the bridesmaids wore purple velvet.

In 1972 George decided that it was time to move again. He selected Riverside Towers apartments. Adele did not even see them until it was time to move in. They still had five children living with them although the oldest son moved out shortly after they moved to the apartment. He and his girlfriend got an apartment and they got married shortly after. Everyone loved the woman Luke had decided to marry. George and Adele liked her because she was from a traditional home in which she had been raised to cook and clean. Naomi and Eleanor loved her because whenever she came for dinner she did all the dishes

and she was good to Naomi and Eleanor. About two years after they moved to Riverside Towers George got sick. He was diagnosed with cancer and he died in 1975.⁶⁶ After her husband died Adele took some time away from her volunteer commitments. About a year after George passed away she joined the Royal Canadian Legion because George was a veteran. She has been with the Legion for seventeen years and she enjoys being a member. Adele is currently on the executive of the ladies auxiliary. Naomi and Rose are also members of the ladies auxiliary. Adele is in charge of the cloakroom. She makes the schedule, organizes the staff and works in the cloakroom. Rose recalls going with Adele to the legion when Rose was between eleven and fourteen years old. Sometimes when neither Naomi or Eleanor could baby-sit Rose she got to go with her Kokum to the Centre to collect at the door or to the legion to work in the cloakroom. It was at the Centre that Rose learned to square dance and to foxtrot. She already knew how to waltz because Adele taught her when Rose was still learning to walk.

At the legion Rose hung coats and she and Adele would have a free dinner because they were working. Rose remembers a lot of old people commenting on how much Rose looked like her Kokum. In addition to her cloak room duties Adele attends an executive meeting once a month, the regular members meeting once a month and she works at teas, bazaars, and helps out with making and serving lunches for the veterans.

In 1984 Adele became a lifetime member of the National Association of Canadian Native Friendship Centres. This is an appointment that is made from the head office in Ottawa. As a lifetime member of the National Association Adele attends the annual meeting of the National Association as a regional representative. This year (1993) Adele went to Saskatchewan for three days to attend meetings. While she was there she was required to report on the Edmonton Friendship Centre's activities for the past year. Adele must prepare her own report and present it to the president of the National Association. At the 1993 meeting Adele was asked to open the meeting with prayers that she said in Cree and in English.

As an elder in the Metis and Indian communities in Edmonton Adele is often called on to pray. Opening prayers characterize almost all Metis business and entertainment functions. Rose has been at various business meetings and seminars put on by the Metis Nation of Alberta and every one was opened with the Catholic Lord's Prayer. Religion permeates every aspect of some Metis peoples lives, even their work life. When Adele says prayers in public she always says them twice. Once in English and once in Cree. In 1990 Adele was appointed as a Senator on the Metis Nation of Alberta's Elders Senate.

Adele had in the past been involved with the Metis Association but after her husband's death she devoted most of her time to the Legion and the Centre. She was glad to reacquaint herself with the Metis Nation of Alberta. The Metis Nation is one organization that regularly keeps her busy. As a Senator she is expected to attend the annual meeting every summer. This usually involves travelling. In 1991 Adele attended the assembly in St. Albert.

⁶⁶See Theme Twenty four for the complete story.

In addition to attending the assembly in 1991 Adele was busy in the summer of 1991 because her son Rich remarried for the second time. In August 1992 Adele went to Slave Lake for a week to attend the Assembly meetings. In 1993 Adele went to Valleyview for a week of meetings. Adele's trips to the annual assembly are not limited to business meetings. As a community leader Adele must attend social functions and this keeps her busy. When she was in Slave Lake she went to meetings all day and then she took a nap after supper so that she could attend at least one or two of the social functions in the evening. Rose also attended the 1992 annual assembly and she was surprised to see her Kokum stopping in at the saloon to say hello to people and listen to the band. She drank ginger ale and visited with people of all ages.

In the last six months Adele has been working for the Metis Nation every couple of weeks sometimes for weeks at a time. The Senate meets regularly to discuss and decide on membership disputes and internal disputes. In addition to these regular meetings Adele has been kept busy for the last few months because 1993 was an election year for the Metis Nation of Alberta. The Senate was often called on for guidance and wisdom in resolving matters and planning the future for Metis people.

Adele recently added a new organization to the list of groups for whom she does volunteer service. The latest in the list is the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. In the spring of 1992 Rose was studying the Cree language in a course at the university. Near the end of the semester Rose asked her Kokum to come to class with her. Adele agreed so Rose asked her teacher if it would be alright and her teacher said that it was acceptable. Rose took her Kokum to class and she was a big hit. The teacher asked Adele to speak to the class and since Adele speaks slowly she was understood by the class of beginner Cree speakers. The teacher liked her so much that she asked Adele to stay and speak to the afternoon class. In the afternoon class Adele spoke again and she sang a Cree hymn. Her speech was a moral lesson on the evils of jealousy and envy.

The Cree teachers were so impressed that they took Adele's phone number and they called her soon after to ask her to come back and speak in the summer Cree classes. That was beginning of a relationship. Since the summer of 1992 Adele has been called regularly to come to the university to say opening prayers at events or to speak to classes. In the fall of 1993 Adele was asked to attend two days of a conference at which Cree speaking representatives from various parts of Alberta got together to discuss Cree vocabulary for the Cree courses offered at the university. Adele was the elder representing the Metis community. They were asked to find Cree equivalents for words of recent technology. For example they were asked to find a Cree equivalent for the word computer. Georgie did not agree with this process. She felt that giving Cree names to white technology was bastardizing the language. Rose did agree with the process because she felt that if the language cannot be used in every day life then it would become obsolete and fall into disuse.

To give an example of the amount of volunteer work done by Adele one can look at October 1993. Adele attended eight days of Senate meetings in addition to two legion meetings, working in the cloakroom at the legion, selling

poppies for the legion, one Centre board meeting, the grand opening of the Centre, and the All Native festival. At each of these events Adele has a role. At both the legion meetings Adele is an executive officer. At the grand opening of the Centre Adele had to give a speech. At one point in the opening a board member was speaking and he paid a tribute to Adele for her long term commitment to the Friendship Centre and she was given a standing ovation from the crowd. At the All Native festival Adele had to give the opening prayers. Adele does not contribute alone as she encourages her children and grandchildren to volunteer. At the Festival in 1992 Rose, Eleanor and Naomi all volunteered at the tabulating table.

Second Generation

Georgie attained employment with the provincial government as soon as she graduated high school. She began as a clerk in Social Services. In fifteen years Georgie moved from clerk one to clerk two and so on until she was a case assessor. The whole time that she worked for the government she wanted to go back to school to obtain a degree in social work. Her father had been a social worker and he was one of the first Cree speaking social workers of the department. He was Georgie's inspiration.

In 1983 when Georgie separated from her first husband one of the first things she did was return to school. She enrolled in Grant MacEwen Community College social work diploma program. It was in the first year of this program that Georgie had the major illness of her adult life. Georgie had to quit the program that year. She returned the next year to college and resumed her studies. Georgie worked hard. She was proving to herself that she was capable of the workload and that she was an intelligent woman. She found it difficult to be an adult student. She was not used to such a meagre budget as she relied on student loans and bursaries. She was not used to having to do the bulk of her work at night. As an office worker she was finished work at 4:30PM and from then on her time was her own but as a student her work really began each night when she got home from classes because she had to study and write papers.

In 1986 Georgie graduated with a diploma in social work. It was the same year that Rose graduated from St. Francis Xavier high school. Rose was proud of Georgie and Georgie was proud of Rose. While Georgie was in the diploma program she did various practicums and Rose was impressed by Georgie's abilities. Georgie worked with drug and alcohol addicted teens, schizophrenics, and battered women.

After Georgie finished her diploma she worked a few years at Native Counselling Services in Edmonton. It was this job which created a need for Georgie to know the ways of Native Spirituality. It was there that Georgie was exposed to spiritual practices. Georgie's job at Native counseling required her to work with Native families who needed counselling assistance in the justice system.

Georgie graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work in 1991. During her

last year of university she did a practicum at the Native Services Unit of social services. When she finished her degree she stayed with the Natives Services Unit. She attained full time employment with the unit. Georgie enjoyed the challenges of this job. It was the department which was responsible for planning and policy for Native social services. Georgie and her supervisor were the only Metis people in the department. Georgie felt that she was in an important position because it was up to her to represent the needs of Native and Metis people. Georgie occasionally had problems with her non-Native supervisors because Georgie operated Native instead of white. For Georgie a priority was networking with the community and its leaders. She liked to take time to go out and talk to people at the grassroots level. She wanted to hear the needs of the people right from the people. This did not always bode well with others in her office because the white ways involved more paperwork and less direct communication with the community.

In the fall of 1992 Georgie took a job with Alberta Social Services in Fort McMurray. Georgie decided to get away from her job which operated at a policy level and go to a job that operated at a people level. Georgie moved to Fort McMurray to work in child welfare. She is great at her job. All the children and young adults she works with like her and trust her. Her department does not always approve of her actions but the Native communities do and that is what matters to her. She is on a healing quest. She is working within the system to heal the Native family unit. Keeping Native and Metis families together is her priority. One of Georgie's strategies for doing this is to network within the family. Georgie makes a point of getting to know the mom, dad, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. She does this so that extended family can be accessed.

Third Generation

Rose began studying for her first degree in 1988 when she was nineteen years old. In 1991 Rose obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Concordia College. In September 1991 Rose enrolled at the University of Alberta in the Native Studies program. Rose worked part-time through her first four years of post-secondary study. During her first year she worked for Sears Canada Incorporated. Rose was a retail salesperson in the ladies sportswear department. From 1988 to 1992 Rose worked for Alberta Social Services as a fee-for-service driver. Rose drove children and parents to appointments or to visit family.

Rose worked at the Metis Nation of Alberta in the summer of 1992. She worked in the research department. It was while Rose was working there that she joined a group called Alberta Metis Women. This is a women's group devoted to advancing the quality of life for Metis women in Alberta.

Rose's career movements are taking her toward a career which would involve her in the Metis community. In this way she is following in the footsteps of her mother and her Kokum.

Theme Twenty Four

The Death of George Black

The death of George affected many lives. Three generations of women shared the experience of George's death. Each recalls a unique experience which when blended give a whole detailed picture of the sorrowful event.

First Generation

Speaking of her husband's death easily moved Adele to tears. The interviews which dealt with George's death were difficult for both participant and researcher. The researcher did not like asking questions that were so disturbing to Adele but after awhile Adele was glad to talk about her husband and his death. Although the death is a bad memory, recalling the details helped Adele to recall some good memories too and discussing the memories helped her to understand the feelings she experienced at the loss.

The family moved to Riverside Towers in 1972. George was working at the head office of Alberta Social Services. There were four children still living at home. Devon was twenty three, Naomi was fifteen, Eleanor was twelve and George Junior was eleven.

In October of 1974 Adele and George were told that George had cancer. They were each told separately. The doctor told Adele that George had cancer and that it had spread through much of his body. George had not incurred any pain or sickness so he had not had a reason to go the doctor which was why the cancer had been able to progress. The reason that George had decided to go the doctor was because he had what he thought was a swollen gland in his neck. The lump got so big that he was unable to button the collar of his shirts. From the day that Adele was told George lived ten months and seven days.

Adele was grateful to the doctor for being straightforward with her even though it was terrible news. She was glad that it was the doctor who told her and not George because she wanted to absorb the news and think about what it meant for George and for herself before she saw George. She wanted to be ready to help him through his pain. Adele's reaction was shock. She did not cry at first. She did not know what to do so she just went home. When George got home that night he mentioned it to Adele and they cried together. George was crying for a lot of reasons. The first reason was that he was going to die and he had not done all things he wanted to do in life. The second reason George was crying was that he knew he had treated Adele poorly during the first eight years of their marriage when he was an alcoholic and he regretted this. He always thought that he had all the time in the world to make amends to Adele. He had in the recent past done nice things and tried to be a good husband but he wanted to do more. George was also upset because Adele had gone through the death of her only brother just four months before George was diagnosed. Adele took the death of her brother badly. She was close to him. In her own words he had been her father, her brother and her friend. When she was sick as a child with tuberculosis he was the one who brought her books and

records. He sat with her to play games and entertain her when she was lonely for other kids. Adele had lived with her brother and his wife. He was the only sibling with whom she had a relationship. George knew that without her brother and without her husband Adele would feel truly alone.

George went into the hospital right away for a biopsy. George had been scheduled to fly to Fort Chipewyan but the hospital called to say that they had a bed for him. George was in the hospital for a few weeks. He went to Fort Chipewyan in November. George continued working until March 1975.

In the last week of November George started taking chemotherapy and cobalt treatments. He was off work until January. During the time of his treatments he never missed a dance. He played every Friday and Saturday with the band. He returned to work in January and he worked until the middle of March. On March twentieth he played for an old time dance. On March twenty first he went into the hospital and he never came back out. A hemorrhage of the mouth precipitated his admittance into the hospital. He went into the Misericordia hospital on Saturday and on Monday he was transferred to the W.W. Cross Cancer Institute. The cancer was so bad in his throat that his throat had closed. He was in the hospital almost six months before he died in August.

It was the first time in Adele's marriage that she had to handle finances. She was terrified. She had never written a cheque and she had no idea how much money her husband made. She had never asked. She did not know how much they paid for rent, car payments or the bills. He handled all of that. Adele says that if she were asked to give advice to young women who are getting married the first thing she would suggest is that women do the finances with their husbands. Adele had no idea about money. She had taken care of herself until she was twenty eight but it was simple finances. All she paid for was her room. Usually she ate at the hospital and did not have to pay because she was an employee. She had no bills because power and water were included in the room rental and she had no credit.

Adele is thankful that she had responsible children as she was at the hospital everyday for the six months that George was dying. She had a routine worked out in which she did cleaning, laundry and some cooking in the mornings. She usually went to the hospital at one in the afternoon. The family took turns driving her when they could or family friends drove her and sometimes she took the bus. Adele usually stayed until nine at night. Rose's father or Adele's eldest son usually picked her up at night to bring her home. George slept most of the time because he was always on painkillers. Adele read books and watched soap operas in the afternoon.

George and Adele talked while he was awake. They planned his funeral. He picked out his own Cree hymns. They planned Adele's finances and he gave her advice. He told her not to lend money. She remembers that when he told her not to lend money, she responded by saying "...as if I have to be told that."⁶⁷ It made him laugh but when he laughed he coughed and that hurt his throat. He told her not to spoil the two youngest children.

⁶⁷Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 15, 1993, Edmonton.

Adele thinks that George thought he would get better for a few years but in July a nurse told Adele that her husband was going down fast and that it would not be long. At first George prayed to God to spare him for five more years because he wanted to finish raising the two youngest children. George Junior was thirteen when George died. This was the same age George had been when his father died. George did not want to leave a son just entering his teens fatherless. In July Adele prayed to God to let George die because he was suffering. He could not eat or drink because his throat no longer functioned.

On Friday August fifteenth George died early in the morning. They had known that he could die anytime so Adele had been staying at the hospital all the time. She slept on a little cot in his room. Adele called Father Vendredi and the four oldest children. Father Vendredi came right away and when he came into the room he said "...George, my altar boy."⁶⁸ George had served mass for years with Father Vendredi and he had been the altar boy when Father Vendredi was ordained. Father Vendredi gave George his last rites. George was unable to take his last communion because his throat was so swollen. Adele talked with him until he died. She remembers him telling her "...you're going to be all alone, just the kids, but don't ever feel alone no matter where you are God is always with you and I'll look after you."⁶⁹ George believed that he was going to heaven and that he would be able to watch over Adele and his children. In the past when they talked about dying Adele had always said "George I'm scared, you have always looked after me and you looked after me well, I am scared to raise Eleanor and George alone"⁷⁰ but she did not say that when he was dying because she did not want him to worry. Right before he died he asked Adele to hum 'My Blue Heaven' which was his favorite song.

George thought that he would go straight to heaven because he believed that his suffering in sickness was his purgatory. Purgatory is the Catholic doctrine which holds that there is a state of being which one enters after death but before going to heaven. Purgatory is the time in which one is cleansed and purified before one approaches heaven. As a good Catholic George believed that he would have to spend some time in purgatory redeeming himself and preparing to go before the Creator before he could go to heaven but since he suffered on earth he felt that was his time of redemption. Adele prayed for his soul anyway just in case he was in purgatory. She wanted to send him prayers to help him get out more quickly. She still prays for him and she prays to him. She said that she talks to him and she asks him to help her make decisions. This seemed to be the thing that frightened Adele the most about being alone, making decisions. She did not have to make decisions when she was married.

George was dead by the time any of the children arrived. Georgie and Donald were the first to get there. Adele recalls that Georgie did not break down at the hospital. Adele was thankful that Georgie was strong. Luke arrived next and Adele recalls that his eyes kept filling with tears. Adele remembers Georgie telling her to take comfort because he was not suffering

⁶⁸Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 15, 1993, Edmonton.

⁶⁹Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 15, 1993, Edmonton.

⁷⁰Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 15, 1993, Edmonton.

anymore.

After the death many family members helped Adele. Her sister-in-law came and stayed with them from Saturday until after the funeral. She brought over a box of groceries and a cooked turkey. One of Adele's second cousins baked bread and casseroles and brought them over.

The funeral arrangements were made by Luke, Rich, Devon, Georgie and Donald. The five of them went with Adele to the funeral parlour to pick out a coffin. The family was notified the next day that the Department of Veteran Affairs wanted to pay for the coffin. Someone had taken word of George's death to the legion. He was known at the legion because he often played guitar for dances at the legion. Since he was a veteran the Department of Veteran affairs paid for the coffin.

He died on a Friday and the prayers were held Tuesday night at the funeral home. The funeral was held Wednesday August twentieth at the Cathedral in Edmonton. Six hundred people attended the funeral of George Black. He had selected the hymns before he died and he had asked the Cree choir to sing. When he was brought in they sang "Near My God to Thee." They sang a hymn about Virgin Mary when they were taking him out. He had decided that his four sons should be honorary pall bearers because the three oldest ones would want to be pall bearers and he did not want George Junior to be left behind. As honorary pall bearers all four of them walked alongside the casket. Georgie and Donald walked behind the casket on either side of Adele. Luke's wife walked with Naomi and Rich's wife walked with Eleanor. Rose did not walk in the procession. She was looked after by Adele's favorite niece. Rose was the only child in the church.

George was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery after the funeral. After the burial everyone returned to the Cathedral for a tea that was held in the basement. Adele's sisters brought cakes and sandwiches to the tea. Adele was grateful for that. Adele's friends served the cakes and sandwiches.

Adele's biggest fear after George's death was taking over the household. She did not know how to pay bills, or pay the rent or do the banking. She says that she had always been a lady of leisure and she was afraid she would have to go to work. Adele was fifty eight when George died and she had not worked since she was twenty eight years old.

After the funeral there was the task of sorting through George's things. He had specified that certain things be given to certain children. Adele kept all his music. She says that she did not need anything else because she had his children and every time she look at one of the children she sees a little bit of George in each of them. Some of them look more like him than the others and some of them act more like him. Last year at a family function one of Adele's nephews looked at Luke and said to Adele "... you know auntie, Uncle George never really died."⁷¹

Adele found it difficult adjusting to life without George. She could not sleep in their bedroom. After he died she did not sleep one night in their bedroom again. She slept on the couch for two weeks and then she moved to a

⁷¹Adele Black, Interview by Author, June 15, 1993, Edmonton.

new suite in the same building. She never slept in the bed again either. She gave the bed to Georgie and Donald and bought herself a single bed. They moved from a three bedroom apartment to a two bedroom apartment. George junior had his own room and Adele shared a bedroom with Eleanor and Naomi. Rose remembers sleeping at her Kokum's when all the women shared a bedroom. The room looked like a dormitory because Adele had her bed by the door and Eleanor's was beside Adele's, Rose would sleep on the floor beside Eleanor and then Naomi had her bed against the wall. The four of them slept all in a row and there no room to walk except at the foot of the beds.

The thing that Adele missed the most was talking with George. He was someone with whom she could speak Cree everyday. None of her children knew Cree because they did not want to teach the children Cree. Adele regrets not passing her language to her children but when they were growing up it seemed like a better idea not to teach them Cree because it was just one more thing that identified them as Native in a world that looked down on Native people. George and Adele had cultural pride but they were realistic and they knew that there was a lot of prejudice. They wanted to give their children a chance to succeed in the white world and at the time when the children were growing up speaking Cree in public was a hindrance. Adele is pleased that one of her progeny has begun to learn the language. In 1991 Rose began to learn the Cree language in a course at the university. Adele was thrilled and she helped Rose all the time. They practiced together a few times a week. Rose gave Adele a big surprise for Adele's seventy fifth birthday. There was a big hall party to celebrate Adele's birthday. There were about one hundred twenty people in the hall. When speeches were being given for Adele Rose gave a speech in Cree and in English. Rose was nervous because she had been learning for only eight months but the people understood her and Adele was proud. Rose wanted to show Adele how helpful Adele had been and she wanted to make her proud.

Adele missed playing crib with George. He was her partner in a lot of things and one of their favorite activities was playing crib. They could play for hours. Adele gave up crib after George died. Adele missed his guitar playing.

He used to sit around the house strumming his guitar and singing songs to Adele. When they were first married their music tastes differed. He liked jazz and she loved country but as time passed they came to enjoy each other's music until finally they started singing together. He played the guitar and they sang country tunes. To this day there are certain songs that make Adele cry because she remembers the two of them sitting together singing.

Adele stayed at Riverside Towers for two years after George's death. She moved because the apartments reminded her of George. He had picked the apartments when they moved into them and she wanted to pick her own apartment. In 1977 she moved to Rideau Apartments which are west of downtown Edmonton. Rose recalls that moving Adele was a terrible chore because Adele is a collector. All her closets are stuffed to overflowing. Adele can never find anything in her apartment because she hides things and then they are lost. Rose remembers Georgie throwing out boxes and boxes of hats. Ornaments and furniture were given away because Adele had too many things.

They simply could not move everything. Adele thinks that she likes to collect things because she lived through the depression and had to do without any luxuries. When Adele moved she still had three children with her. Eleanor had gone travelling overseas. Naomi, George Junior and Devon moved with Adele. They moved to a two bedroom apartment. Naomi and Adele shared a room and Devon and George shared a room. About a year after they moved Devon moved out because he started training as a psychiatric nurse and he lived in residence. When Eleanor returned she moved home with Adele. Eleanor intermittently travelled and worked for a few years and she still lives with Adele now.

Second Generation

Georgie, Naomi and Eleanor each responded differently to the death of their father. Each had a different relationship with him when he was alive. During Georgie's early childhood he was an alcoholic so she had some negative experiences with George but when he reformed she had some positive experiences with him. Georgie always respected his professionalism in his career. He was her role model for her own career. Naomi identified with her father. She was a lot like him. She was the only who could get away with trying his patience. She remembers him as a loving and involved father. Eleanor remembered him as a good father but she also remembers feeling like she always got on his nerves. The experience of George's death for all three women will be included in the second generation.

Georgie

Georgie had been married for seven years when her father died and she was twenty seven years old. It was her second experience with death. The only person whom she had been close to and lost was her grandfather, Harry. Although the younger children were not aware of the impending nature of George's death when he was diagnosed with cancer, Georgie did know. Throughout the cancer treatments Georgie did what she could to ease his pain and suffering. When he started to lose his hair during the chemotherapy Georgie bought him a wig. She spent a lot of time at the hospital. She went to see him almost everyday.

Even though she was at the hospital frequently she and George did not talk a lot. When the researcher asked Georgie if George's death was awful for her she answered "...not really, because I didn't know him."⁷² She thought that she might get to know him during his last months in the hospital but it did not happen. When Georgie got to the hospital after he died she was calm. She was sad because she had lost her father but since she was the oldest girl the duty of calming Adele fell on Georgie's shoulders. Georgie felt that she had to be strong and contain her own emotions so that she could comfort Adele.

⁷² Georgie Black, Interview by Author, July 22, 1993, Edmonton.

The thing that stands out for Georgie about her father's death is her prayers. At the time of George's death Georgie was a practicing Catholic and she remembers being afraid because she was not finding comfort in her prayers. All through George's illness Georgie said prayers for him and when he died she said prayers for him. They were the same prayers over and over again. Now she calls them empty prayers. She says that when she prays now she talks with the earth and she dialogues with the spirits. She knows her prayers are heard. It seems that in the case of the Catholic prayers and in the Native Spirituality prayers the important element is faith. The difference is that Georgie did not have the faith in the Catholic prayers. One type of praying is not better than the other the important thing is which prayers give comfort to the one who is praying. Georgie finds comfort in the prayers she says now. It is Georgie's opinion that Natives are not meant to be Catholics or any denomination of Christianity. She believes that Native people are meant to be the religion of their pre-Christianized ancestors. This may be one reason why she can have faith in prayers to the earth but not in prayers to the Virgin Mary or Jesus.

Naomi

Naomi was seventeen years old when her father died. Naomi was just starting grade twelve when George was diagnosed. He died throughout her grade twelve school year. Naomi was treated like a child the whole time that George was dying. Naomi, Eleanor and George Junior were not regularly updated on George's condition and they had nothing to do with any arrangements for anything. They had no say in funeral arrangements. Naomi recalls that Luke and Georgie did everything.

Naomi finished high school in June and she was working as a junior secretary at Alberta Municipal Affairs. George had gotten her the job. At nine in the morning on August fifteenth Georgie and Devon walked into Naomi's office. When she looked up she started to say "...what are you doing here...?"⁷³ and then she realized what they were doing there and she knew that her dad had passed away. They took Naomi home. Eleanor and George Junior were already at home. Rich came home from Slave Lake which is where he was living at the time. Eventually the whole family converged at home. Naomi remembers thinking that the whole family was one. She recalls that she cried alone but they mourned together. She has pictures of all the children playing monopoly to pass the time until the funeral.

Naomi remembers Adele and Georgie received people at the funeral and both of them were rocks. Naomi was huddled in a corner behind the family. She tried to be part of the receiving line but she quickly broke down and collapsed in a chair. Naomi missed her father because he was the one who always made her feel special. In fact, the only time Naomi felt special in her childhood and teen years was when she was with her father. Her brothers picked on her so when George made her feel like a princess it was the most important thing in her world.

⁷³Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 20, 1993, Edmonton.

After the funeral Naomi could not sleep so she got up to watch television. She remembers that she , Eleanor, George Junior and Rich all stayed up together and watched the late late late show.

Naomi remembers that when George was in the hospital Adele was strong. Naomi does not remember Adele crying at all when George was still alive and in the hospital. Naomi says that Adele was a rock. According to Naomi it was after the funeral that Adele broke down. She cried all the time and she wanted to die too because she did not think she could handle everything by herself. Naomi escaped dealing with Adele by going out all the time. Naomi worked all day and then she went out with her girlfriends and she usually slept over at a girlfriend's house instead of going home.

Naomi is thankful that Georgie and Donald tried to help Adele after the funeral. They started picking her up every Saturday to take her for groceries. Naomi recalls that Georgie and Donald took the younger children out often. Georgie and Donald picked up Naomi, Eleanor, George Junior and Adele and they went for picnics and to the park. Naomi remembers that they went to the graveyard a lot and she thought this was kind of fun because they were going on an outing all together. Naomi remembers that Adele called Georgie and Donald's car 'the breadwagon' because it had no back seat. It was the outings with Georgie, Donald and Rose that helped Naomi through the time right after George's death.

Eleanor

Eleanor was fifteen years old when George died. When asked for her impressions of her father's death she said that it was unreal. She could not believe that her father was dead. She recalls that she did not know how to grieve. Eleanor remembers that when George was in the hospital she, Naomi and George Junior were on there own most of the time because Adele was at the hospital for eight hours each day. Eleanor and Naomi had to make supper everyday and they would pretend that they had a television show called 'The Naomi and Eleanor Cooking Hour' to make it fun. Eleanor remembers that her mother used to catch the number thirty two bus to go to the hospital. Eleanor's recollection of Adele while George was in the hospital are that Adele was in control, she took charge of the household and ran it efficiently.

It was a different situation after George died. Eleanor was told about the death by Luke. He came home from the hospital and told Eleanor and George Junior. Eleanor started high school two weeks after the funeral. Eleanor was impressed by her mother's calm at the death and at the funeral but after the funeral was a different story. According to Eleanor, Adele had an emotional breakdown. She just collapsed. She wanted to die. She was very afraid of being left alone with two teenagers. She thought they would turn rebellious and that she would not be able to handle them. Eleanor could hardly believe that Adele was afraid of being left with two teenagers when Eleanor and George Junior never even raised their voices to Adele. They would never have talked to back to Adele. None of the children ever raised their voice to Adele. They were afraid of her wrath.

Eleanor remembers that Adele had to take a job a few months after the funeral. Adele received various pension checks after George's death. One month all her cheques were stolen from the mailbox so Adele got a job as a switchboard operator. She worked graveyard shifts. Eleanor thinks that the job helped Adele to recuperate from the loss of her husband. The job got her up and out of the house. She was away from the children for awhile each night and making money of her own gave her some control over her destiny. Since she quit her job at the General Hospital in 1946 Adele had been dependent on George.

All three women of the second generation had different relationships with George. Therefore all three responded differently. Georgie felt that she did not know him so her response was practical. She did things like calm her mother, arrange the funeral and look after the family. Naomi was close to her father. He was the one man in the world who made her feel beautiful and precious. She missed him. She reacted with anguish, sorrow and longing. Then she escaped. She just avoided the family until she felt like she could go home without aching to see George there. Eleanor loved her father but she did not feel close to him. Eleanor really could not react to his death because right after the funeral she was the one who was left to deal with Adele all the time. Georgie tried to help look after Adele sometimes but Eleanor is the one who was there everyday living with her. Eleanor is the only one who really saw Adele's breakdown. Eleanor did not have time to mourn because she was looking after her mother. Eleanor's mourning was stunted.

Third Generation

George was different with his only granddaughter than he was with his own children. He was adoring and indulgent. Rose was in awe of her Mosom. He was tall, dark and handsome and he treated her like a princess. When she was a baby he bought her satin shoes. When she was sick he got Indian medicines made for her. If Rose was at the apartment when he got home from work she would sit by the front door waiting for him because he always gave her a dime when he came in the door. When he was at work Rose liked to sit in his closet and look at the rows of shiny shoes. Everything about him was crisp and shiny. His shirts were always cloud white and his pants were creased so sharp one could cut ones finger on the crease. Rose remembers her Mosom watching Rose and Adele old time waltz around the apartment. His smile was so big that all his teeth showed.

When George died it was Rose's first experience with death. Rose was almost seven years old. She was at her Kokum's the morning George passed away. Georgie stopped at the apartment and told Rose that her Mosom had died. Rose recalls not knowing what that meant. She knew that he was sick and she wondered if being dead was like being sick.

Eleanor and Naomi have always been second mothers to Rose. They looked after her all the time when she was young. They were forever babysitting. It is when Rose thinks of times like George's death that she realizes the extent to which Eleanor and Naomi were mother figures for Rose. After

Georgie told Rose that Mosom died Georgie left as she had to go to Naomi's office to pick her up. Rose remembers walking around the apartment feeling like she was a ghost because no one looked at her and no one seemed to see her. It was like everyone was wrapped in a black cloak of mourning out of which they could not see.

Rose went and found Eleanor to ask her what was going on. Eleanor said "...didn't your mom tell you?" Rose said she did not understand what was going on. Eleanor explained to Rose that Mosom would never come home again and he would not be on earth anymore. When Rose thinks of this conversation now it astonishes her that Eleanor was only fifteen years old and she took it upon herself to try to help Rose understand death.

Rose missed her Mosom. She missed sitting by the door and waiting for him to come home from work. The best thing that Rose has of George's are his glasses. When she was a little she used to put them on and think that she was seeing through his eyes.

Theme Twenty Five

Aboriginal Identity As Metis Adults

Each woman from all three generations had some unpleasant incident during her adult life which related to her Metis heritage. Each woman from all three generations has had different experiences relating to being Metis which have led each woman to hold an attitude towards Metism which is different from that of the generations before and after her.

First Generation

All of Adele's childhood experiences are tied together with the thread of Metism. The Metis culture may be apparent through many things such as religion, family patterns or language. All of Adele's stories had something in them that identified them as being Metis. The same is not true for Georgie and Rose. The thread of culture is weakened and strengthened through the generations. For example it is weakened as language abilities were lost. Culture is strengthened through the generations by a greater unification. Organizations like the Metis Nation of Alberta unify Metis people through things like the Metis Anthem and Metis Week.

From Rose's perspective there are a lot of things that characterize her Kokum as being Metis. One of these is the fact that there is always bannock at her apartment. Further to that when Adele eats bannock she butters it with lard. Adele has this habit of always touching Rose's hair and saying "let me cut them." Rose always wondered why her Kokum always spoke of hair in the plural. When Rose started learning Cree she found out that the Cree word for hair is a plural form that has no singular form. That is why when Adele speaks about hair she always calls hair, whether it is one or many, them. Rose remembers trying to watch television while her Kokum was talking on the phone and it was almost impossible to hear the television over Adele's loud Cree. Adele always told Rose to respect her elders. Rose remembers her uncle George teasing her when they were young. He would tell her that she had to respect him because he was her elder even though he was only six years older. It is language, family values and cultural traditions that set Adele apart as a 'Kokum' rather than a 'grandma'.

Adele's first boyfriend wanted her to change her Metis ways. Adele was engaged once before George. She was eighteen years old and the boy to whom she was engaged was a Metis. The boy's father was Irish and his mother was Cree. Like Adele's sisters, he did not want Adele to speak Cree in public and he wanted her to improve her English.

Adele and George had to resolve issues of culture in their marriage. George was almost a full Iroquois who was raised among Cree people but when he married Adele he had white ways and he worked among white people. Adele says that he tried to change her and that he denied this but it did not matter because no one can make her change her Metis ways. Adele says that

George tried to make her follow white ways. He did not want her to stop and talk to Native people on the street. Adele is the kind of person who would never pass by someone she knew no matter what. Sometimes when George and Adele were shopping downtown they would see Native people who were street people and Adele always stopped to say hello and talk. She feels that when one goes to school with people and is raised with people one cannot just pass by them. To this day Adele still talks to anyone she knows. A few years ago Rose, Georgie and Adele were at the greyhound station in Edmonton. They decided to get a cup of coffee. While they were in the restaurant several Native people came up to say hello to Adele. Everywhere she goes she knows and is known by people.

In the summer of 1993 Rose took Adele to Calahoo, Alberta to attend a birthday party. They could not find the hall so Adele told Rose to stop next to a man who was walking on the side of the road. Rose stopped and Adele rolled down her window. When the man looked in the car he called out Auntie Adele.

He turned out to be one of her late husband's nephews. George did not like Adele stopping to talk to Native people all the time and he tried to stop her but she would not. If he tried to keep walking when they saw someone she let him go on and she stopped to talk. She is happy to say that instead of George changing her she changed him. Eventually he stopped and talked to people too.

He also used his Cree more openly. If they were in a store and Adele spoke to him in Cree he did not cringe anymore and he would answer her in Cree. She was proud of him.

George's mother did not like Adele's Metis ways. George's mother was a full Iroquois who could barely speak English. One time when Adele was on television speaking Cree George's mother was furious. It was the Canadian Native Friendship Centre's annual festival and they were serving a dinner with the festival. There was television coverage. They had Adele give the menu in Cree and this was shown on television. George's mother was embarrassed because people were going to see that her son had married a Metis. Adele could not understand her mother-in-law. Catherine Konti spoke only a Native language herself yet she was embarrassed by her daughter in law speaking a Native language. Adele thinks that Catherine wanted her son to have a good life and she thought that he would not have that if people knew he was Native. Adele thinks that Catherine wanted people to think that George was white because she thought that would be the only way he would get a good life. There is some validity to Catherine's fears because it was difficult to get a job if people knew one was Native. It could be difficult to rent a home or obtain credit.

It seems that George struggled with an internal battle for much of his life. It was a battle over Metis pride. There was a part of him that loved Native culture. There were aspects of the culture in which he had great pride. He took pride in things like the medicines, the music and the language but there was another part of him that was ashamed. He had learned that life was difficult if people thought you were Native. Stereotypes were rampant. It did not matter if one was half white as all that meant was that one was half Native. Some Metis were able to find a place in the white world if they were fair skinned.

Adele was like that and she thinks that it was one reason why her sisters were mean to her. It was because they were envious of her fair skin since they had all come out dark skinned.

Adele had her own internal battle. She had been raised to be proud of her language and proud of her heritage but she had also been raised not to be like Native people. Her family was a Metis family and this meant that they were not an Indian family. This was constantly pointed out to Adele even though she did not know it at the time. Adele always wanted red dresses or skirts and every time she asked for one her mother would say "red is for Indians." Adele did not know what this meant but she knew that for her it meant red was not an acceptable color for a St. Albert Metis girl to wear.

George and Adele grew up with a mixture of pride in their heritage. This came through into George and Adele's children. When George and Adele started having children they agreed not to teach the children Cree. They didn't want them to sound 'bushed'. That is, they did not want to

sound like people whose first language is a Native language. Adele was always slightly ashamed of her abilities to speak English which are not noticeably poor but she always worried about her grammar. She was afraid that if she taught the children Cree they would speak broken English.

Even though they did not pass on their language they still attempted to pass on pride in the language and the culture. For example, when Naomi was in her fourth grade play about the Natives and the explorers she was supposed to play a Native but Adele told her that she had to be a Metis because she could not pretend to be something that she was not. Adele wanted Naomi to realize that the Metis had a huge part in the fur trade and that the Metis were successful entrepreneurs.⁷⁴

When Adele identifies herself as a Metis she does not use the word 'Metis'. Adele prefers to be called a halfbreed. She says that her reasons for her preference stem from childhood. She said that as children she and her cousins were always called 'those little halfbreeds'. The reason that she does not like the word Metis is because it sounds like a certain Cree word. Metis is a French word that sounds like *mitisk* (as some Cree people like Adele pronounce Metis as mee-tis) which is the Cree word for 'asshole'. For people who speak Cree the word Metis sounds just like this derogatory Cree word. Adele would prefer to be called *apeetow kosan* which is the Cree word for half breed. According to Adele there are many older Metis people who do not like to be called Metis.

Adele says that her children may carry a little more than half Native blood but that they are Metis because that is how they were raised. She did not raise them to follow Native or White ways because she had not been raised to follow Native or White ways. The results of raising her children Metis have given Adele children who are an assortment of identities. Some identify as white or Metis or Indian.

⁷⁴For more on the Metis in the fur-trade see John Foster, "The Plains Metis," eds. R.B. Morrison & C.R. Wilson. Native Peoples The Canadian Experience. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971).

Second Generation

Adele's three daughters seem to have followed the same pattern in accepting their aboriginal identity. When they were young (ages 8-25) all three hid the fact that they were Metis. Some of them hid it longer than that and one of them is still at times, uncomfortable admitting that she is Metis. All of them have come to accept their Native heritage and each has been able to find things about Metis of which they can be proud. One of them discovered her Native pride much earlier than the other two sisters.

Georgie

If you ask Georgie who she is, she will tell you that she is an Aboriginal woman. She did not always identify herself this way. As a child Georgie did not identify as anything. She did even know what Native was until she was about ten years old. In high school Georgie never told people that she was Metis and they did not ask because she did not look like she was Metis. When Georgie got married Donald knew that Georgie was Metis but it was no more important than the fact that Donald was of Irish/English descent. As far as Donald was concerned both he and Georgie were Canadian.

When Georgie was in her mid-thirties she began her quest for her Aboriginal self. This quest culminated in 1992 when Georgie packed up her car and headed north to live and work among Native people and to be with the Cree man with whom she had fallen in love. For Georgie, the journey which helped her to find her Aboriginal identity was long and all-consuming. It was not a journey that could be done part-time or half-hearted. For years Georgie worked another eight hours after her regular work day. She worked at learning the ways of Native people. She read books, she went into the community to find people who would teach her. She spent many hours travelling long distances to sweats so that she could sweat with a particular person because that person knew something that Georgie could learn. Georgie's learning was characterized by watching quietly. Unlike the white way of learning in which one is considered bright if one asks a lot of questions, the Native way is to watch and learn. One just watches again if one did not understand the first time. In the Native community there is no rushing to learn things. There is no rushing at all.

People do things when they feel like it or when they need too but there is no pressure on people who are learning new things.

When the researcher asked Georgie what it means to her to be an Aboriginal woman, Georgie replied, "...it means knowing my journey, knowing my values, operating from my heart. Balanced with my head."⁷⁵ For Georgie the difference between being white as she considered earlier in her life, and being Native is that as a white person she operated from her head, as a Native person she operates from her heart and she follows a path guided by the spirits.

⁷⁵Georgie Black, Interview by Author, July 22, 1993, Edmonton.

Georgie feels that she has been given a gift. Her gift is that she is a healer. This does not mean that she can cure someone's cancer. What it means is that she brings comfort to people. Those who are emotionally unhealthy are drawn to her calm. People who have pains want her to touch them with her warm hands.

Georgie was given the healing gift because she made the effort to seek out her personal journey and path in life. When she found it the gift was there waiting for her. It is not an automatic thing as she has to work at keeping her healing powers. She has to work hard at staying on her path. She has to pray, make offerings, sweat in the sweatlodge, and she has to help people. She has to use her gift.

Naomi

If one asks Naomi who she is now she will answer " I am a Metis and proud of it,"⁷⁶ but if she were asked that question five years ago she would have dithered and said that she was part English and part Scottish and part Iroquois and part Cree. She says that she was a patchwork of cultures and she had no feelings of wholeness. As she became comfortable with her Metis identity she began to have feelings of wholeness. Instead of being a patchwork of things and not really any one or two things she found that by identifying as a Metis she was one with a distinct community of people. It is only in the last five years that Naomi has discovered Metis pride. Prior to that she felt shame and embarrassment. One of the reasons for Naomi's embarrassment is the mixed message she received from her parents about cultural pride. She knew that her father dressed as a white man (that is, he did not wear his moccasins or his sash to work) and worked in a corporate world but at the same time he used that position to help Native people. George operated in the white world but he used his operations to benefit his own people. This led Naomi to believe that to be successful one had to be white but that one also has to remain a part of ones own culture and community. She was confused for years. George lived white but he had pride in his Native heritage. As an adult this distinction is not so difficult to understand but to a child the distinction between Native pride and white lifestyle would not be clear because pride is intangible whereas Naomi watching her father go off to work in his suit and tie was real and tangible. She could not see his pride but she could see his white lifestyle. She could see the way he lived but not the way he felt.

Naomi had a bad experience when she was working at her first job. She was about eighteen years old and she was working for Alberta Municipal Affairs. She was a junior secretary and she was offered a position as an intermediate secretary. When of the supervisors heard that Naomi had been offered the position his reaction was a prejudice reaction. He said to another supervisor "...but she is an Indian, she will be lazy."⁷⁷ He said this in the presence of another secretary who later told Naomi what the supervisor had

⁷⁶Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 5, 1993, Edmonton.

⁷⁷Naomi Black, Interview by Author, August 5, 1993, Edmonton.

said. Naomi took the promotion even though she had to work for the prejudiced supervisor. Her response was to work hard and never be lazy at work. She wanted so badly to prove him wrong. Naomi recalls the mortification that she felt when the other secretary told her what the supervisor said. She recalls that she showed no emotion. She did not want her shame and embarrassment to show through so she did not let any emotions come out.

Prior to five years ago Naomi hid her Native heritage. She did not lie about it but she never volunteered information about her culture. If she was directly asked about her nationality she answered honestly with her patchwork answer. Her patchwork answer was that she was part this and part that but she would never have said Metis. Naomi actively avoided situations in which she might be asked about her Native heritage. At school as a child and a teenager she avoided making friends because she so dreaded having to talk about being Metis. She feels that she grew up as a loner and with low self esteem because of her Metis heritage. It made her avoid talking to people. Being Metis made her think that people saw her as being all the things that are stereotypically attributed to Native people.

When Naomi was about thirty years old her view of herself as an Aboriginal person began to change. She credits internal and external factors for the change. One of the internal factors is that she worked on improving her self esteem. She participated in individual counselling which helped her to see her own personal worth. She was tired of feeling shame. She realized that being Metis was one thing about herself which was wonderful.

There was an incident with Naomi's mother-in-law that led Naomi to take more pride in being Metis. Naomi and her husband went to Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump in Alberta. When they came back Naomi's husband was telling his mother about some of the things that they learned about Native people and history. Naomi's mother-in-law responded by saying that she was not interested in learning about Indians. Naomi was insulted and for the first time she did not feel shame. Instead, she felt angry. Naomi had spent time learning about her husband's family history and about his culture so she was taken aback by his mother's lack of interest in the Native culture and history. Naomi cultivated her husband's interest in Native culture so that every time he went home he had some new fact or experience related to Native and Metis culture that he wanted to share with his mother.

Naomi credits Georgie and Rose as external factors which helped her to find pride in being Metis. Before Naomi began her quest for Metis pride Georgie had paved a deep path for her sister to follow. Georgie had gotten so entrenched in Native culture that it was to the exclusion of white culture. Georgie's whole lifestyle had changed. She lived with Native people. She worked with Native people. She practiced her Spirituality with Native people. Even Georgie's physical appearance changed. Georgie had always been one to wear makeup, polish her nails and dress elaborately. In fact, Georgie worked part-time as a model for about eight years during her first marriage. She looked like a model. She was beautiful, fashionable and sophisticated when Georgie took up a Native lifestyle Georgie began to look more natural. She wore little makeup, quit polishing her nails and started dressing for comfort rather than

fashion.

Georgie always had some accessory or piece of clothing that was made by a Native artisan. Georgie had become radically Native. She was right wing in her beliefs. She rejected all white culture and its influences. Georgie blames white culture for damaging Native spirituality, Native lifestyles and Native economy. She thinks that whites damaged the religion when they outlawed the potlatch and the Sundance and when they planted Christian missionaries in Native communities.⁷⁸ She thinks that white people damaged the lifestyles and the economy when they participated in the fur trade and put Native people in a position which forced them to exploit the land and the animals. It is Georgie's opinion that the Europeans created a dependence by Native people on European goods. This dependence forced Native people to meet the white need for furs for profit. Georgie's opinions have led her away from the white community. She is immersed completely in Native culture. It was this immersion which demonstrated to Naomi that there was no reason for feeling ashamed of her Native heritage.

Naomi credits Rose because Rose has never been ashamed of being Metis. Rose demonstrated to Naomi some of the things of which could be proud. Rose began to learn to speak Cree and she took her Kokum to university with her one day because she was proud of her Kokum's Cree language abilities. Rose's home evidences her Metis pride. She has a portrait of Louis Riel in her dining room and a Metis sash is displayed. Through Rose, Naomi found the Metis heroes and this helped her to be proud of her heritage.

Eleanor

Eleanor spent most of her life pretending that she was white. Eleanor remembers listening to people tell Indian jokes and make slurs about Native people. It was those jokes and slurs that made her hide the fact that she was Metis. She describes being Metis as something that she had to bear. It was a burden.

When Eleanor was asked if her parents instilled cultural pride in her she replied that she would have to say no. She said that Adele did to a small degree but that Eleanor found that Adele herself was prejudiced at times toward Native people. Eleanor called Adele's Metis pride Jekyll and Hide because there were two sides to Adele's pride. On the one hand Adele never denied her heritage and she uses her Native language anywhere but at the same time she warned her daughters not to marry a Native man.

Adele was not directly prejudiced in that she would never have ignored a Native person and she would not deny that she was Metis and had Native relatives. Her prejudice showed in things that she said around home, like telling her daughters not to marry a Native man. They found this hard to

⁷⁸For more information about the sundance or the potlatch see Hugh Dempsey, "The Blackfoot Indians," eds. R.B.Morrison & C.R.Wilson. Native Peoples The Canadian Experience. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), 404 - 435. and Peter, McNair, "From Kwakiutl to Kwakwakawakw," eds. R.B.Morrison & C.R.Wilson. Native Peoples The Canadian Experience. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), 501 - 519.

understand since Adele herself had married a Native man. The logic behind Adele's exhortation is two-fold. First, she did not want her daughters to marry a Native man because she believes that an Indian man will not respect a woman who is only Metis woman. This is a phenomena which occurs and it is documented by Howard Adams as "...many status Indians consider themselves superior to halfbreeds because they are true Indians and have a noble heritage."⁷⁹ The other reason why Adele admonished her daughters not to marry Native men is because Adele married a Native man who had an alcohol problem for the first eight years of their marriage. Those were eight terrible years for Adele. She suffered verbal and physical abuse. She does not want this for her daughters. She knows logically that not every man is going to abuse alcohol but she is still afraid. It does not make sense since Adele has sons who are Metis and they are not alcoholics but she still fears for her daughters. It is views like this that Eleanor has seen as prejudice. Eleanor was not able to find pride in being something that she was warned against.

Even now Eleanor is not completely comfortable admitting that she is Metis. It is a dilemma because it is difficult to respect oneself and to have faith in ones abilities when one is something for which one has no respect. That is, the things that stand out from Eleanor's childhood are all the bad things she heard about Native people. This led her to believe some of the stereotypes, yet she is of that culture. It is difficult to separate ones own personal identity from the stereotypes associated with ones cultural identity.

Third Generation

Rose has always been proud of her Metis heritage but then she had different experience while she was growing up then both the generations before her. Rose had a Irish father and a Metis mother. This is different from the second and third generations who had Native ancestry from both their parents. Since Rose was a granddaughter she was not as exposed to George and Adele's opinions and beliefs as were Naomi, Eleanor and Georgie.

Rose was never exposed to negative Native role models. She went to Canadian Native Friendship Centre dances with her Kokum every weekend for years. It was at these dances that she learned to dance a square dance and to take pride in Metis cultural dancing. The top Red River Jiggers were treated with respect and that is what Rose learned.

When Rose was a child when she went to Native mass every month and she learned at a young age that many Metis people were God-fearing Christians. This did not give her a negative impression of Metis culture. The only thing that happened to Rose as a child that might be considered negative is that she was occasionally asked if she was part Asian. This always struck Rose as being so strange but it was because Rose had one feature that was distinctly Native and that was her almond shaped eyes. Since Rose was fair skinned people mistook

⁷⁹Howard Adams, Prison of Grass. Toronto: General Publishing, 1975), 168.

the shape of her eyes as being indicative of an Asian heritage rather than Native heritage.

Rose has positive childhood memories relating to being Metis. Rose's Kokum taught Rose to speak Cree and sing Cree songs when Rose was pre-school age. Rose spent many of her days with her Kokum while her parents worked. This gave her the opportunity to learn. This was an opportunity that George and Adele's children did not have. Times had changed from when Georgie was a little girl to when Rose was a little girl and when Rose was little George and Adele were happy to teach her to speak Cree. However, Rose lost most of her Cree ability when she started school because she was not able to practice everyday. Rose retained some of it and she remembers amazing her friends on the playground by saying the names of animals in Cree. Rose was proud of being able to use Cree words and she did not try to hide them rather she tried to show them off.

Rose's favorite Christmas gifts were always the ones from Adele because Adele would get her mukluks or beaded mittens or a beaded purse. Rose cherished those items and was never embarrassed to wear them. Rose remembers using the terms Kokum and Mosom automatically because that is what she called her mother's parents. Usually people did not know what she was saying and she had to explain that those were the Cree words for grandma and grandpa.

Rose's Metis pride deepened when she worked one summer for an organization called the Metis Nation of Alberta. Rose learned about the Metis heroes: Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. It is experiences like these that have given Rose a different attitude toward being Metis than Eleanor and Naomi. When the first and second generations were growing up Louis Riel was still being portrayed as a criminal not a hero.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project is a three generation life history study of Metis women in Alberta. The participants in the study are all currently urban dwellers. The first and second generation participants have at points in their lives lived in rural communities or Metis settlements. The researcher conducted a comparative thematic analysis of data that was gathered in interviews and participant observation situations. The research methods that were employed were historical research and oral history research. The study was guided by an interpretive approach. The study spanned a seven month period. Collecting and analyzing the data for this study has led the researcher to believe that the women who participated in this study had positive and negative experiences related to being Metis.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis the researcher was led to believe that a negative effect of being a Metis woman in Alberta is that being Metis can have stigmatizing effect on the person. The researcher was led to this belief by the stories that she gathered. In particular, it is the second generation who has felt stigmatized. The researcher suggests a few possibilities for why this has occurred. First, this is the generation that was raised by the generation who were the products of assimilation attempts by the Canadian government. The first generation were led to believe that Metis heroes were criminals and rebels. They were led to believe that their religions were pagan and that it was wrong to be pagan. The first generation was led to believe that their social structures like extended family living were abnormal and unhealthy. Since the first generation grew up believing these things it was difficult for them as parents to teach their children otherwise. It is the opinion of the researcher that Adele and George attempted to pass some kind of Metis pride to their children but that it was a difficult task because it seems to have been unsuccessful. The failure to pass on cultural pride is clear in stories like Naomi's account of having to dress up as a Metis woman for a school play. She spoke of the utter shame and embarrassment she felt at having to be a Metis. Naomi preferred to spend her childhood alone rather than make friends. She was so afraid that if she made friends she would have to bring them home where they would hear her mother speak Cree or they would be served bannock. Naomi's biggest fear as a child was the fear of admitting her Metis heritage.

Eleanor had the same feelings as Naomi and for Eleanor it has not been easy to overcome these feelings. As an adult Eleanor still is not comfortable telling people about Metis heritage. At her last place of employment she did not tell her co-workers that she is Metis. She did not tell because there is still a part of her psyche that contains feelings from childhood which warn her not to tell because she thinks that people will not like her if they know she is Metis. Even if they do like her there is still the fear that they will think she is lazy or they will wonder if she is an alcoholic. She has these fears because these are things

she heard people say when she was a child. She heard people tell jokes about Natives and propagate racial attitudes. They are ingrained in her and she has had to enter into individual counselling to try to deal with these feelings and perceptions so that one day she will be able to love herself and her Metis heritage.

It has been easier for the third generation to exist as a Metis woman. There are a few reasons for this which are positive aspects of being Metis. The first reason is that there are established, thriving Metis organizations and Metis women's groups which work at advancing the status of Metis women. There are scholarships specifically allotted for Metis students. A second for the relative ease of Rose to be Metis is that Rose's mother passed to Rose lessons in Native culture. The lessons showed Rose that Indian and Metis people had established religious, political, economic and social systems prior to assimilation.

This allowed Rose to see that Native culture was a developed society. It is easier now to appreciate the beauty and wisdom of Native culture than it was fifty years ago when the social norm was to disparage Native culture. It is like cultural pride is contagious. To see someone else carry the ancestry with pride inspires one to find that pride in oneself.

The researcher found that there are positive experiences related to being Metis. An example of such an experience is the first generation participant's experience of picking herbs and roots with her grandmother. It was Adele's Native heritage which endowed her with grandmothers who practiced Native herbalism. A second example is the Metis arts. Learning to Red River Jig or play the fiddle is a positive experience.

The researcher discovered the Metis women who took part in this study are strong, independent women who have survived, disease, alcoholism, family violence and cultural shame. Despite the negative aspects of being a Metis woman the women who took part in this study had pride in such things as the ability to speak the Cree language, some of them found spiritual fulfillment in the religion of their Native ancestors, and all of the women have been successful in their academic and career endeavors.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is difficult to draw conclusions from this type of qualitative research as the data which have been presented are subjective since they are the experiences of three Metis women. The experiences are not representative of the lives of all Metis people, rather, they represent only the lives of these women and possibly some of the other women in Harrigan or Black families, such as Adele's sisters. One subject that could be further researched is the history of these and other Metis families. The ancestry of Metis people has not been and is not well documented. Metis people could develop a greater sense of Metis identity if they were able to find more information about their own family histories.

Another area that could be further researched is the role of women in Metis history. It is difficult to find written sources about the lives of Metis women in the fur trade and beyond as H.C.Wolfart writes "Outside their own communities, almost nothing has been heard about the life of Indian women.

What little most Canadians have been able to read about Indian life concerns an earlier period and is focussed on the activities of men in the buffalo hunt, in intertribal warfare and the like."⁸⁰. There are still some Metis women alive (like the first generation participant and her sisters) who remember what it was like for Metis women in the past. Beyond their own experiences there are elderly Metis people who have the stories and memories passed to them by their grandparents. These stories and memories could be gathered as sources of information on Metis history, culture and the role of Metis women.

POSSIBLE USES FOR THIS STUDY

This study could be used by anyone who wants to learn more about Metis women. The study demonstrates that Metis identity is personal and dynamic. The women who took part in this study are all Metis women and each has her own definition of her identity.

It is the second generation participant who wishes to remain anonymous in this report. If her sections were to be removed from the study a complete family history of the Harrigan and Black families could be conducted. This could include up to three of the generations preceding Adele's generation.

⁸⁰Ahenakew & Wolfart, 178.

Appendix A

The questions on Schedule Two were family related. Some of the questions dealt with the first generation's childhood and some dealt with her parents lives during her childhood.

Schedule three sought information about the birth and early childhood period of life. The researcher realized that the participants would not have their own memories about their births but that their recollections of what they have been told about their births would be revelatory of their perceptions of their parents feelings. For example, the second generation participant felt guilt for years because she perceived her mother to have suffered during the birth due to what she had been told by her mother. The early childhood questions were designed to discover the perceptions of the participants about their childhood experiences.

Interview schedule four covered the period of life from age six through twelve. Schedule five was designed for the first generation participant only. It contained questions which had arisen during the interview which dealt with her birth and early childhood.

After all the family background information was gathered in the early interviews the researcher made a wall chart family tree of the three generations. The wall chart facilitated quick and easy recognition of family members as they arose in the transcripts and the researcher's notes.

Schedule six was to collect information about the period of life from age twelve to eighteen. This schedule contained questions about school, family, religious activities, career aspirations and early career experiences. Schedule seven was only for the second generation participant. It was to follow up the information gathered from her during the first two interviews and to answer some questions that had arisen during the interviews with the first generation participant. Most of the questions dealt with childhood religious experiences and childhood family memories. Schedule eight covered the period of life from age eighteen to age thirty and it focussed on career and religion experiences. Schedule nine was to follow up questions from schedules four and six which dealt with childhood and adolescence. Schedule ten dealt with young adulthood career and the husband's family background. Schedule eleven sought information about the participants' husbands and their early relationship.

The questions were about the first date, how each woman met her husband, the engagement and the pre-marriage relationship. Schedule twelve followed up information from schedules ten and eleven.

Schedule thirteen contained questions about the lives of the women during the first five years of their marriages. There were factual questions about the location of their home, the number of children that are born in that time and there were also questions about the participant's perceptions of their marriages. For example, there were questions about gender roles, happiness, hopes and dreams. There were questions about the husband's reaction to the Metis cultural background of the woman. The researcher expected that there might be differences between each husband's decision to marry a Metis woman. For example, Adele's husband was part English and part Iroquois while

Georgie's first husband was an Irish Canadian.

Schedule fourteen followed up the questions which were on schedule thirteen. Schedule fifteen was the longest schedule. It was used for several interviews. It contained questions about married life after the first five years of marriage. For the second generation participant married life after year five spanned ten more years from 1974 to 1983. For the first generation participant schedule fifteen covered the period from 1950 to 1975. Schedule fifteen had five sections. These were related to family information, career activities during the married life, religious events, beliefs and rituals during the marriage, personal questions about health and fitness during the marriage and questions about the women's perceptions of love, happiness and personal growth during the marriage.

Round Two Interviews

In the period between the first and second round of interviews the researcher sorted and coded the information from the first round, while at the same time making round two interview schedules. The last interview of round two took place in September.

Schedule one for round two was for the man who was son-in-law to the first generation, ex-husband to the second generation participant and father to the third generation participant. The researcher debated about whether or not to interview this man. She was hesitant because the study was conducted with a feminist approach in that it was a goal of the researcher to give women the opportunity to speak of their own experiences without having those experiences qualified by male input; but it was also important to cross-check some factual information. This man was a source for cross-checking information as he was present for almost all the events of the third generation's life, for about eighteen years of the second generation participant's life, and he is still a part of the first generation's life and he has been since about 1966.

Schedule two contained questions to gather information about the participants' perspectives on their aboriginal identity at different points in life and when and why there were changes to the perspective. For example, when the participant was twenty years old she identified herself as a white person but when she was forty years old she called herself an Aboriginal woman. The researcher was seeking to find the reasons for the change in identity and the definitions of identity.

Schedule three was for the first generation participant. This schedule dealt with the death of the participant's husband and the years surrounding his death (1974-1976). This schedule also contained questions to gather the participant's views and values on such issues as the role of women in marriage, the perpetuation of the Cree language and definitions of Metis heritage.

Schedules were created for the two sisters of the second generation participant. These contained questions about the death of their father, Metis identity and their opinions about a woman's role in relationships.

One thing that the researcher had to develop early in the interviews was a debriefing period following each interview. This was particularly important

with the first generation participant. It was necessary for the researcher to sit with Adele for about half of an hour after each interview drinking tea or eating candy and talking about the present. This participant is a retired woman so she often had ample time for interviews. She looked forward to getting together with the researcher to do the interviews. She was most co-operative as she spoke freely, told long stories and made conscious attempts at memory retrieval after the researcher was gone. It was like she did homework for the interviews. Each day after the researcher went home, the participant would look at old photographs, listen to old records or dig out old documents. Whether she knew it or not she was actively cuing her memory. She did these things often throughout the data collection period which extended from May seventeenth to August twenty fifth.

Appendix C

A Description of Each Theme and the Rationale for its Inclusion

There are twenty five themes included in the final report. All of the themes fit into the thematic framework of religion, family or career. The twenty five themes in the final report were chosen for their relevance to one of nine sub-categories of the thematic framework. The nine sub-categories are: background information, childhood memories, stories from childhood that had a didactic function, influence of family members, career activities, childhood religious experiences, life changing experiences, adult learning experiences, and perceptions of the self.

There are two themes that were included as background information. These are: the family into which each participant was born and the birth and early childhood of each participant. Most of the information included in these themes is not information that was witnessed and recalled by the participants. Rather, it is information which the participants knew from being told by various family members. The family into which participant was born is important for establishing the Metis lineage of each participant. This is done through descriptions of the heritage of each participant's parents and grandparents. This theme is also important for awareness of the participant's place in her family. This is such things as gender and birth order.

The second sub-category is childhood memories. There are five themes which fall under this heading. Some of the stories were shared by the participants in response to questions like "what is your favorite childhood memory?" There are two themes which were discovered as spontaneous memories. These are: themes three and four. These memories are, in the perception of the participants, the paramount childhood memories.

Three of the themes in the category of childhood memories were included because they were natural demonstrations of the changes that occur between the childhoods of three different generations. Themes six, thirteen and fifteen are such natural demonstrations.

The third sub-category is stories from childhood that had a didactic function. There are three of these stories: themes five, seven, and eleven. Themes five and eight are the two themes that contain only a first generation account. They are stories that are didactic because the first generation participant learned lessons. Theme seven is an account of what the first generation participant considers to be one of the hardest lessons of her life. She did what she considered to be a cruel act and she suffered consequences from which she learned a lesson. Theme thirteen is considered a didactic theme because it contains accounts from each of the generations about a lesson that each girl was taught by the generation before her. It is one of the themes which contains elements of two of the main three thematic categories. This theme contains stories that are family and religion related.

The fourth thematic sub-category is the influence of family members. This sub-category was included because the stories of the first and third generation participants were characterized by the presence of grandparents in almost every story. The researcher felt that the first and third generations had

extended family relationships of a significance matching that of the parent-child relationship and for this reason the researcher decided to include a theme devoted to the influence of grandparents. Theme eight is the theme titled 'The Influence of Grandparents'. There is one other theme in this sub-category. This is theme fourteen. Theme fourteen deals with the responsibilities that each participant had at home as a child and as a teen. This theme was included here because the responsibilities that each participant had are directly related to her place in the family and her relation to the other family members. The woman's role in the home of her parents is a reflection of her relationship with her parents.

The fifth sub-category is career activities. This includes one theme, twenty three. This theme contains information about the first paid and volunteer activities of each generation up to the present.

The sixth sub-category is childhood religious experiences. There are two themes: nine and ten. Theme nine explores Roman Catholic experiences common to the three generations. They are comparisons of the same experiences from the perspectives of all three generations. Theme ten looks at individual Roman Catholic experiences of the three generations.

The seventh sub-category is life changing experiences. There are seven themes that fit into this category. These are: themes twelve, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, twenty, twenty one and twenty four. The common factor to all the themes in this category is that in every story there is something that changes the woman's life. For example, theme twelve is an account of the major illness experienced by the first and second generation. Both women view their illness as a turning point in their lives. It is something of which they are survivors and the experience changed them.

The eighth sub-category is didactic experiences from adulthood. There are two themes: nineteen and twenty two. Theme nineteen is an exploration of the first five years of marriage for both the first and second generation participants. The researcher considers this theme to be a didactic theme because both women feel that they learned so much about themselves in the first part of their marriages. They discovered unknown strength and abilities to cope with unhappiness, alcoholism, and captivity. Theme twenty two is included here because it is about the religious experiences which took place later in the participants adult lives. These religious experiences are learning experiences. The second generation in particular made what can be considered amazing spiritual movements. She had to be a student of spirituality for years before her major spiritual growth.

The final sub-category is perceptions of the self. This includes theme twenty five which is an exploration and comparison of the differing views that each generation holds about their own aboriginal identity and the sources from which this identity is derived.

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