

Crescent Lake Interview – Tape #1

[Seven minutes and thirty seconds of grass, bush, trees and wild mushrooms. 9 min 13 sec starts].

Ed

Oh, oh, oh, its unraveled. That's the way setting camp, sawing wood, starting a fire at...22 men eating boulets and fried bannock. Tripod for boiling water for tea or coffee.

My name is Edward.

What's your name?

Victoria is my name.

Where were you born?

Ste. Madeleine.

When were you born?

1930, I don't know.

How many kids did you have?

Three, three girls, eh, he.

How many grandchildren?

Six and five great, great grandchildren. Yeh, in the corner. In the corner.

What did you live in?

In a log house. We made it ourselves.

Tape #1

Mrs. St. Pierre I am glad we are all sitting here. It is a hard life because people are too envious with one another. They don't help each other. The head men will not be talk into and this is how it is now.

George Pelletier

Last night Gilbert and I were talking. He's good with Michif language. For me, I speak a bit of Michif, Saulteaux, French and Cree all mixed. Me now.

Don't be lying said this guy. I never do. I would have to go to confession to tell.

My name is Norman Fleury. I was born in St. Lazare, Manitoba. Old Fort Ellice at the junction of Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine rivers. That's where they run. That's where I grow up.

The end of tape #1

Tape #2

Is that it now? You're not working anymore?

Yeh. We live in Yorkton. Yeh. I see him now and then at the cemetery. My Dad too. I go see him at the graveyard.

What kind of work did your Dad do?

He cut wood, dug Seneca root, picked rocks.

Did the family go with him?

I don't recall. I was too small. I know when we moved from Crooked Lake. We moved here. I can remember they talked about doing pickets too.

Okay. Thank you.

[Gilbert getting ground ready to teach the young how to play the knife game].

You understand? This you clean like this. It has to stand you now. This way and this way. We have to take turns. Hello. This way. That's good. We'll never get done. We are taking too long and this way. Long ago we use to play Little Knife. These young guys are not very good. Wha poor you wha wha I wonder who taught this guy. Hold it this way. A little higher. You have to hold it to your ear. He's starting to get good. Too hard. Take your time. This way. Look. This way. That's it. That's it. Too high. This way look. Now, this way. Just about. Just about. This first, then this way. You know now. Do you know what to do? We have to do it all. Too much. You guys take too long. This way. This way now. Other side now. This way now. Watch, you might accidentally stab me. You're too far. He beat you. That is the way we use to play Little Knife. My dad showed us how. We use to play lots. A lot of us. We use to play for pennies. That use to be a lot to us. As kids we use to get mad. Dad would take the knife away, so we'd make a ball, but we use to steal Dad's knife. Our parents never played. They would be too tired, cause they worked very hard. Old ladies used to play. They called the game Hands. No. We were very poor. We never had money. All money was for food. I, anything was bought. We couldn't afford

this little knife. It was expensive. No one had fifty cents to buy a knife. My Dad had the little knife. He would not lend us. He use to make us angry. He wouldn't lend it to us. Once he took his knife from us, that's it. He wouldn't lend it to us. When he took his knife, he wouldn't lend us for a month. Only when we steal it from him sometimes when he went hunting.

Tape #2 – All in English

Tape #3 – Sun. 1:50 p.m.

They use to talk about werewolves and Wesakachak and Nanabush. How say in English? We are trying to understand, cause we are like schools or schoolteachers us. We are the ones that know this tongue. We are the ones that are holding this tongue. We were given this to speak in Michif. Our mothers, fathers, grandmas and grandpas. That's how they spoke, but this is a big job that we are trying to do. A long time ago in St. Lazare, that's where I was born, me. They all spoke that way, the old men, eh. When they meet each other in town or shopping or just visiting. That's the way we use to speak. That's way we know, but the kids, they are just like me, my sisters. Even me I am one...I married an English woman. My kids, that's how they started to lose it, cause we didn't speak to them and the boyfriend, girlfriend those that marry English people, they don't speak that way. They have to speak in English to understand one another. Now they are the ones that ask to learn so they can speak Michif now for us today. That is why we are having this meeting. So we can talk about the Michif tongue. If so, I have taped records here. The interview they made there in Duber, Camperville. The old people there were asked to be interviewed in Michif. I have them here if you want to hear them. I will play them for you later so you can hear a little of the interview. They use to talk about a lot of things in these interviews. They were asked, "Where were you born? Did they help fight in the Louis Riel days? Were they able to fight in the war? Were they there helping? And again, the old Michif men use to sing, but now no one knows how. They forget and the young don't know these songs. The old men whenever there was a dance, an old man would stand. He was the headman, the leader. He would sing and when someone got married, they would take the shoes of the woman that was getting married. They would sell the shoe (how do you want to talk to tell stories (Mrs. St. Pierre) (yes that's no more selling the shoe). Yes we lost that. Also the basket social they call. That's when you'd make a lunch at these dances they use to make this too, long ago. I went to a dance in Belscarth. A big dance was going on and Tommy Fleury, he was called. He died him too. Deceased Tommy Fleury. He was a good auctioneer selling the baskets and if anyone like to drink, he would put a little flask in sneakily. Now the basket was expensive. He was real sneaky. So that one for quite a bit of money. They needed to give to their organization if they were going to make another dance, the money was there. And when someone was born, I remember my grandfather would take his gun and shoot up in the air when a little baby was born. When someone was born, that's how. That one too we lost. On New Year's Day too, they

would shoot up in the air, too. They would get drunk. They would sneakily get drunk. They would dance. My grandma's brother, he was called old St. Pierre_____. He was born on Christmas Day and when they started dancing on New Year's Day, they would dance nonstop for seven days. They went all over the place to dance and at Christmas time, they use to say they would give each other gifts, shaking hand they called it, when you meet somebody. I remember John Flammond. He's my godfather. He said when you meet someone and you have nothing to give, you have to give that wristwatch you're wearing. He said that is our way. Even horses and they use to give houses away long ago. You see all this is not known anymore. So we have to tell all. That's why I will use the video. They'll be playing music, they will show they will know that I spoke of this, but we'll have to have translators, the _____is what they use to say. You know what I am saying? Now they will say "That's right what Norman said."

Telling stories, legends, singing, they would teach us, the old men long ago. I remember my grandmother told us this ground here, the Sioux, they use to go over there hunting buffalo. They were mean, they say about the Sioux. They use to talk about them a lot and this priest went along to go hunt buffalo and they called them scouts. They would go ahead on horseback. They are looking to see where the buffalo are and see there was no Indians. There was some things that were ugly such as the epidemic when they would see the Sioux. There was a lot of them, even at night. They wrote about them. I seen this myself and read it. They said, "Sioux are coming. We have to circle the wagons." The priest was amongst us, cause the Métis were good at praying. They thought greatly of Jesus then, because Jesus is the one that helped. They believed in everything the priest was praying. He was walking around with the Sioux coming, but they were the headsmen of the Earth with two other men. The Sioux hid in the bush there. The Sioux grabbed the horses. One of the horses was just like he was dancing and he stood on his hind legs. They caught one, but two ran away. So they went to look for those two horses. They found a pile of meat and here I guess they had cut up a guy. Then they started fighting with the Sioux and they beat the Sioux. They were a lot, like a million, and three or four thousand Métis. Métis had guns. They were called "Buffalo Hunters." They started firing and killing off the Sioux. They said, "We will never fight the Métis again. They've already beat us already. They are strong. Their name is the Wardens of the Plains." That what they say, the animals and the Métis owns the grounds. See it's about the night my grandma use to tell us in, just in Cree, so we'll get scared. I opened the book here and read about it. She was right, so that, the kind of stars we have to try to know about. Also the coont eh the coont and the way they tell legends they say. Boy we use to stay up all night just listening to this guy telling legends. He also talk about the beginning of the Earth, where we live, in Sauteaux. Earth is called "asky." Nanabush, why is it I have red willow? Cause he dropped his scab there in the bush. That's when he burnt his ass. He hunted ducks and killed a lot of duck. He cooked and eat so much, he was just full. Well he said, "What am I going to do with all this leftover meat?" He's talking to his ass. He said, "I am going

to sleep. I am tired. I ate too much. Just about bust." He said "You're great at talking. You can fart and wake me up if Indians or coyotes come to steal" and that's for sure his ass is not gonna wake him. He fell asleep. So sure as heck, someone stole. Either an Indian or somebody came and stole from him when he woke. So he took the little drumsticks and put them on the hot coals. He took a little leg. He said, "There's no meat on these bones. Someone who stole chewed them good. Now my ass, you were too lazy to wake me. You know you have a big mouth. You're supposed to wake me. You made me mad." So he heated a rock. He sat on the rock. Ass said, "Eh eh eh." What a pity for the ass. He doesn't know any better. Then he got a scabby ass. He walked away going through the bushes. He dropped his scab and how red willows came to be. They always told stories and or legends at night. This was long ago. I was just a curious young boy, but I wanted to know everything. That's why today I know a lot. My... usually asks me things. She will be ninety-seven years old. Like how are we related to those people? I said, "All the Fleurys that use to live at St. Madeleine, all the Fleurys come from St. Paule Gezvie, old William Fleury, old Frank Fleury, old John Fleury, old Bazil Fleury. All those brothers and they had sisters; that is where it started. Relatives from there. My grandma. All her relations she thought the world of. She always went visiting all over even though she was old. She asked my uncle to go visiting her aunt, little Marie. All of them she would visit. But that was our fashion back in those days, to think the world of your relatives. Just like her cousins too, she worshipped. Her first girl cousins and her first boy cousins, then her brothers and sisters and her oldest brother, she called Nestais. Her little sister and that how they all related in their family. They call it the relationship in English. We use to have that too, long ago. The way we were related. That is why I say thank you to deceased grandpa and grandma for teaching me. That is why today I am here and I know. We just about lost a lot what they call our culture. We just about lost it. That's why today we have to talk about these things. Well it's you guy's turn to talk. Thank you for meeting me.

George Pelletier

A little bit of Nanabush going away. So he went away, but a little bird was up there and said Nanabush would eat his shit. After again he start to walk away. The bird again said, Nanabush eats his shit again. The third time when Nanabush was leading the bird would say Nanabush eats his shit. Oh man what this I ate sure taste good. After he listen to the little bird then he looks down to see what was on the ground. He started spitting, but it was too late. He had already swallowed it down. After awhile he was going there he said, Nanabush asked who are you? Replied the birds, we are the wake up birds. Oh so that's who you are. When the little birds went to tell their mother, she asked, what did you tell Nanabush? We just told him we were the wake up birds. So he left. He came upon flowing water and mud. Yes, he lifted his pant leg and said, I'll go over there. He would cut across and jump over the water stream so it was that the wake up birds were really

partridges who fluttered with a burr as they flew away and fell out there in the bush. Nanabush said, wait, I'll get a little stick to cook him on. Nanabush thought the partridge had fallen dead into the bushes.

Yes, we use to have a hard time with our language. I didn't speak much Michif. Lucky it was my Dad taught me. We never spoke much Michif until we moved to Belscarth. We didn't know how to speak Michif. Métis live here. Others lived there and some spoke Saulteaux, but you know the way we talk. A little of Saulteaux, a little Cree, a little French. That is what makes our Michif language. That's pure Michif. That's true Métis. That enough.

Ed

When they use to have wakes, it would be two or three days. They would tell stories and try to beat each other as to who can tell the biggest lie. Yeh it use to be two or three days of wake just to see who can tell the biggest lie (Mrs. St. Pierre) will. There was no radio. There was no TV in them days.

Tina

It sure is not like living we made long ago. That's gone now. Eh he.

Ed

Yeh, but we shouldn't give up.

Mrs. St. Pierre

No, don't give up. Just keep trying.

Tina

White people spoiled it. The way we use to live long ago.

Mrs. Pelletier

It's the Indians that has a lot of children instead of us. Instead of us, I don't know why.

Ed

That's because they live in villages all together. Not like us; we live far apart from one another.

Ed

Up north, the Métis are still very strong.

Tina

Even when the children are this small they still speak Michif. Oh I am so proud when I see those kids. It's us that is so poor. They got us beat on this issue.

Tina

Me too. I can't say too much about this, but it's the kids we had to think about. The young women of today, that's their fault. We can't depend on teaching their kids. We can't blame the kids. It's us to blame. They speak just in English to the kids.

Ed

Yeh, but remember when we use to live here. Now we live all over. We are told what to do.

Gilbert

That was a while back.

Mrs. St. Pierre

Our children didn't speak English.

Gilbert

No.