

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: MRS. ALEXANDRINE NICOLAS 2
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: DUCK LAKE
SASKATCHEWAN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: DUCK LAKE
SASKATCHEWAN
TRIBE/NATION: METIS
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW: JULY 11, 1973
INTERVIEWER: CAROL PEARLSTONE
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
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NOTE: This a poem. No index required.

MRS. NICOLAS

(Mrs. Alexandrine Nicolas of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan)
(A poem for a summary)
(Paraphrasing her actual wording)
(Interviewed by Carol Pearlstone, July 1973)
(Mrs. Nicolas was born in Duck Lake on October 8, 1887)

* * * * *

She is
someone who does not try and know
what is this and how is that?

When asked
she does not know
what World War I was all about
what World War II was all about
what Korea was all about
even though

her brother came back from the first war wounded
and gassed
and died eight months later
even though
her son Archie came back from the second war
fixed with silver plates
and he limps
he's a farmer
even though
her son Robert came back from Korea in '53
she and her daughter took the train to Saskatoon
to meet him at the airport
with his shoulderblade all mashed
and his arm all open inside
The station agent delivered the telegram
This isn't a sad one, he said
And he came to me smiling the last days of July

And she does not know
who Riel really was or what he was like
why the Rebellion took place in 1885
although her parents talked about it, sure
and she remembers things her mother told her
and she went to Gabriel Dumont's funeral
in 1906 but she doesn't remember
what he was like although
he was her grandfather's brother-in-law
she calls him Old Gabriel
Oh she remembers he lived in France for a time, in Paris
and he worked for Buffalo Bill
and he returned to Batoche before he died.
Oh mercy she remembers the Depression yes
but she does not know
why there was one
only that she could buy
ten pounds of butter for one dollar
from a German woman every Saturday
and instead of selling rye at 11 cents a bushel
that was thrashed at 22 cents a bushel
she and her husband crushed it
to feed the cows before the grass was green
Her husband died in October 45
and she moved here to this little shack in Duck Lake
where she's been living ever since.

What about people on welfare
and do Metis have a tougher time
getting jobs than whites?
Oh she has
got enough of her own affairs
for heaven's sake.

She does
an awful lot of sewing
not fancy but all kinds
quilting embroidery crochet
all those things

and when her daughter got married
she was left alone
but she's never home
she's out visiting her children
or her sisters in Prince Albert
And when she was on the farm
she always had something to do
feed the pigs
look after the chickens
and milk the cows
She had ten children--seven girls and three boys
Later she had three foster children from Green Lake
taking care of them for twelve and a half years.

It is possible
she is going to live a century
(she's 85 already)
and she will not speak of politics
for she has got enough of her own affairs
and does not try to know
other people's business

She is
one that does not go
and bother anybody.

Mick Burrs