

Interview: Claudia Petit

Claudia is originally from Buffalo Narrows, SK. She now resides in Saskatoon, SK.

Leah: Technical difficulty.

0:00:20 **Lilah:** Starting over.

Claudia: I was born in Ile-a-la crosse on February 17, 1929.
You want my parents.

Lilah: the names of your Mother and Father.

Claudia: Catherine Daigneault and Felix Morin.

Lilah: Were they married?

Claudia: Uh huh.

Lilah: I thought you had told me that they were half brothers only...Vital and them.

Claudia: No no. There's are 14 of us the first family. There are three of us left.

Lilah : O.K.

Claudia: My brother, my sister and I. Then there's two half's Moise and Celena Buffin.

Lilah: Those are halves.

Claudia: uh huh

Lilah: Those are from?

Claudia: his third wife.

0:01:18 **Lilah:** Oh O.K. What do you remember most about your parents?

Claudia: Nothing my real parents, no nothing, I don't even know what my mother looks like cause she died when I was fifteen months old.

Lilah: And your Dad?

Claudia: My Dad died when Mi-Mi...Just turned 48 so 48 years ago. Mi-Mi was a month old when he died. To me he was nothing he didn't mean anything to me cause I never stayed with him.

Lilah: Who raised you then?

Claudia: My Uncle and My Auntie that's the only parents I knew.

Lilah: Which ones?

0:01:52 **Claudia:** Louis Morin and Helen Morin

Lilah: Oh that's the old Louis Morin From Turnor Lake eh
Claudia: No That's my brother that one.
Lilah: That's your brother. So his Dad
Claudia: No that's our uncle.
Lilah: Oh I thought that was a junior that Louis Morin.
Claudia: No Nope that was my brother.
Lilah: So you had fourteen in your family
Claudia: Yah and I was the fourteenth
Lilah: So you were the baby
Claudia: uh uh
Lilah: And you said there were three other ones that are half.
0:02:30 **Claudia:** No two Moses and Celena Buffin.
Lilah: So who's all part of the fourteen
Claudia: Well, half of them I didn't know but I knew Vital,
Harry
Lilah: These ones are older than them
Claudia: and me and Mary Jane
Lilah: Mathilda
Claudia: Yah Mathilda. There were lots of them that passed
away I didn't know them. Well I the first time I met my
0:03:02 **Lilah;** Yah That's when you met Mathilda.
Claudia: And Frenchies 53. Well I didn't know my family I
didn't know I had brothers and sisters. I was never told
anything.
Lilah: No! What were the various roles of your family
members not Mathilda and them but the ones you were raised
with.
Claudia: Yah Maglaire and Marius and What the hell is was
her. I only knew her but they use to call her Cookie. (both
Laughing).
0:03:42 **Lilah:** Yah So she was like a sister
Claudia: Well no not really I know they weren't my brothers
and sisters it didn't feel that way.
Lilah: Uh uh
Claudia: but still they were my mom and dad
Lilah: Uh uh when were you married and to who?
Claudia: I married Joe Petit in 1946.
Lilah: How many children did you have?
0:04:13 **Claudia:** 5

Lilah: and who were they?

Claudia: Richard well uh Frenchie never uses his right name they always call him Frenchie everybody calls him Frenchie, There's Frenchie, and a Muriel, Michael is his name but then nobody ever uses Eric, Mimi and Myles.

Lilah: So what's a Michael's name then what did they call him

Claudia: That's Frenchie

Lilah: That's Frenchie oh and Mimi

Claudia: Richard

Lilah: Who are significant people in your life who helped you to develop your ideas, attitudes and beliefs?

0:05:09 **Claudia:** Myself Nobody ever taught me anything just to wash clothes, wash floors, scrub floors I never went to school you know. Well I went to school but I didn't even pass grade one.

Lilah: Yah

Claudia: I never, never had no education

Lilah: Yah

Claudia: What I know I taught myself

Lilah: Cause you do write eh

Claudia: Yah I read and write.

Lilah: Yah I know that.

0:05:42 **Claudia:** When I was thirteen I didn't understand what yes mean in english

Nothing I use to get mad when they use to laugh at me when I was trying to pronounce the words right and read uh.

Lilah: Uh uh

Claudia: Trying to find out. I made it.

Lilah: Yah So you taught yourself how to read and write.

Claudia: Nods Yes. There was no one around, My mom didn't read but my Dad did but he was too busy he opens. The only way he'd be happy he opens a bottle.

Lilah: Oh . O.K. Did you always identify as Metis.

Claudia: Oh yeah

Lilah: You always knew you were Metis

Claudia: Yeah

0:06:23 **Lilah:** Yeah Are there any, do you know of a what kinds of names they use to call us long long time ago. Remember we were like um halfbreeds or

Claudia: Yah that's.

Lilah: Do you know any other words?

Claudia: No that's what they use to call us then they changed it to Metis.

Lilah: What are some of your favorite hobbies or activities?

Claudia: Bingo-laughing

Lilah: I knew the answer to that one. I met Claudia when I was pregnant with Larissa. 13 years and I met her at Bingo.

Leah: Oh

0:07:02 **Lilah:** Okay Did you participate in social functions such as feasts, playing games and cards.

Claudia: not really not the past few years I used to but not the last few years.

Lilah: long time ago

Claudia: Yah

Lilah: What kinds of things did you do special for New Years, Easter, Christmas Kayas(long time ago)?

0:07:30 **Claudia:** Well I use to do all the cooking and invite the whole family was all together in Buffalo not all seperated.

Lilah: Yah

Claudia: So we all use to get together.

Lilah: Have supper and

Claudia: Yah have supper and dinner I use to be the baker I still am the baker.

Lilah: Yup What did they call those days in Metis language, in michif. What do they call New Years?

Claudia: Ocim Okisikaw

Lilah: Easter is?

Claudia: What is easter I don't think I ever heard that word I'll have to phone that old man in Pine House, He speaks the pure cree, No french in it at all.

Lilah: And Christmas was?

Claudia: Nipa Ayamiha

Lilah: Nipa Ayimaha

Claudia:ah ah

Lilah: Whats Manitou Okisikaw then Is that just Sunday?

Claudia: I think so.

Lilah: Yah All kings Day?

Claudia: Yah that's nima The Kings, They call the kings when Jesus was born.

Lilah: I wonder how you say that in Michif?

Claudia: I don't know I don't remember ever saying that.

Lilah: No me either. What types of music or songs were popular in your community?

0:09:11 **Claudia:** (shrugs her shoulders) I was never interested in music although my kids were. They use to try and teach me to play guitar but I'm so stubborn I didn't know I still don't. laughs

Lilah: That was a good question. What were Metis weddings, Social events and funerals like and how were they organized.

Claudia: Well they had everything was organized by the people everybody helped.

0:09:44 **Leah:** Did they have wakes

Claudia: uh uh

Leah: How long were the wakes?

Claudia: Well it depends. It depends on the family like. Some of them 2 days, 3 days. Sharon Clarke's funeral was a whole week.

Lilah: really

Claudia: Yah I don't know why they had kept it so long.

0:10:12 **Lilah:** And we never ever have funerals on Friday right.

Claudia: No

Lilah: Never

Claudia: No

Lilah: So if

0:10:21 **Claudia:** See when them two died in at the same time in Buffalo and then one in a Where was that? Canoe Narrows. So these two were buried on Thursday and so was that one in Canoe Narrows was buried on Thursday so they would one of them had said they were gonna was gonna get buried on Friday next time I heard they they put it all together. Eh

Lilah: so the priest had to drive cause we only have one for the whole north

Claudia: (Nodding yes) such a little guy to

Lilah: uh uh

0:11:00 **Claudia:** Father Nestor

Lilah: uh uh Did your family or community celebrate New Years if so how?

Claudia: They always did yup. Well they use to go around kissing then this one guy he kissed me I gived him a left hand. (laughing Lilah, Leah and Claudia)I don't like I never use to like New Years I use to hide. Slobbering drunks all over you.

Lilah: Did they always have dances?

Claudia: Yah They use to have a lot of dances but my Mom was too strict I couldn't go to dances.

Lilah: Yah Do you know how to square dance? Did you ever square dance?

Claudia: Nods yes

Lilah: Yah. Did you do the duck dance?

Claudia: Shakes her head no

Lilah: Do you know what that is? What do they do? Is that the one flapping her arms like wings.

Claudia: Yah

0:12:00 **Lilah:** Is it. I done the duck dance then. How about reel light, reel four, drops of brandy.

Claudia: Yah

Lilah: Did you do all of these dances?

Claudia: Yah

Lilah: What do you remember about these dances?

Claudia: Not too much I never when I was young didn't have a chance to go to one. She wouldn't let me.

Lilah: Did your community have any well recognized musicians, dancers, fiddlers, story tellers, elders and spiritual advisors?

0:12:34 **Claudia:** I don't know if they have that kind in Buffalo or up north. I know my brother fiddle and my nephew fiddles and my sons got a fiddle but I don't know if he knows how to play it.

Lilah: which brother.

Claudia: Harry fiddles.

Lilah: Oh Yeah

Claudia: and my nephew they call him Da doo he's a fiddler.

Lilah: What about Bunny he's from Buffalo. He's famous in the north for his fiddle.

0:13:11 **Claudia:** Yah he use to be bad years ago they use to have to argue with him, coax him and ask him over and over again.

Lilah: Before he'd play.

Claudia: before he'd play you had to kiss his ass so many times (laughing) now they don't bother with him anymore.

Lilah: No

Claudia: Everything is different now.

Lilah: Did people in your community race horses?

Claudia: My dad use to.

Lilah: Yah

0:13:39

Claudia: Had sort of a little farm we had couple cows, use to go and milk them they use to slap my face with their shitty tails- Laughing- Thank God I told my Dad I said you got rid of the cows. I won't have to get slapped.

Lilah: what else did they use the horses for?

Claudia: well they go all over the place they use to working horses like eh nothing fancy.

Lilah: Like getting the land ready eh

Claudia:Yah and then we use to (pause) someone outdoors. Where the hell is that saw?

Lilah: That's the lawnmower gut finally here.

Claudia; Oh there here.

Leah: of all the times

Claudia: We use to live about ten miles out of Buffalo my Dad use to go back and forth with his team to pick us up. I use to like riding in a sleigh.

Lilah: What was the name of the place you lived at?

Claudia: Petit's point

Lilah: Petit's point is it

Claudia: It's an Island

Lilah: Are there still people living there today?

Claudia: No but Mimi's got a cabin over there.

Lilah: and that's it.

0:15:04

Claudia: Jackie Woods, Kenny Pederson

Lilah: How do you get there?

Claudia: boat

Lilah: Just boat that's it

Claudia: In the winter you can travel with skidoos or trucks or

Lilah: So you could only go across in the winter with the horse eh.

Claudia: Yah

Lilah: In the summer the horses were trapped there right.

0:15:30 **Claudia:** Yah Well theres was one guy there had an old white horse and our our house the door the cellar door was right there ah the horse walked into the house. It didn't fall through and the floor was(buckling) wasn't solid (laughing). I always of that the kids they ran away they were scared of the horse.

Lilah: What types of food did your family eat day to day?

0:16:16 **Claudia:** All stuff from the bush never had baby food in their life never fed them baby food at all. Well you couldn't run to the store it was ten miles (laughs).
Lilah: So it was all wild stuff.
Claudia: Yah
Lilah: and you guys had to... Did you have a garden?
Claudia: Yah
Lilah: What did you grow in the garden?

0:16:32 **Claudia:** Everything, potatoes, vegetables. Everything use to can everything before winter. Course there was no basements them days just dirt cellars and and stuff use to keep a lot better than they do now. No heat and the dirt cellar is more uh keeps stuff more the longest time eh.
Lilah: uh uh like even when we go camping we bury our meat.
Claudia: yah
Lilah: in dirt that that.

0:17:17 **Claudia:** Stays cold year round Yah he's even got power, tv
Lilah: so it's not camping anymore.
Claudia: No it's not camping he's got lights and everything.
Lilah: What kind of food did you guys have when you had like christmas and.
Claudia: Turkey
Lilah: Always that's all eh even us Turkey every year.
Claudia: And now so tired of turkey I sometimes I don't even buy it in Christmas or any other.
Lilah: uh uh

0:17:52 **Claudia:** You get tired of eating the same thing every year at only once a year but still.
Lilah: yah
Claudia: Then you go for suppers all the time I don't know how many times we went for dinner and supper all over the place. It's always turkey.

0:18:21 **Lilah:** Did any of your parents or kokum or mooshum ever tell you things about Metis people about our history.
Claudia: No! My mom was too busy chasing my dad.

Pause Commotion
Talking about clothing

0:18:45 **Claudia:** It was boughten.
Lilah: Who use to make it?

Claudia: My sister in law the one my brother chooloos wife Remember her.

Lilah: uh uh

Caludia: She use to do the sewing. I was a the last dress she made from me was I ten years old I think.

Leah: So you only had one dress a year.

Claudia: Yah

Leah; It was given to you at Christmas time.

Claudia: yah

Leah: What did the dresses look like Claudia.

0:19:18

Claudia: Oh made out of different kinds of materials use to have all kinds of materials. They use to order all ordered from catalogs eh. Cause we didn't have a store. My Dad had a little store but they wasn't anything fancy in it just stuff that you would normally use and need.

Leah: Did you have a favorite color?

Claudia: Red and then after I grew up green is my favorite color now.

Lilah: mine too

0:19:53

Claudia: Green people we use to go all over the place horses in the winter time by boat in the summer use to go all over to the churches, spend Christmas here and there and pick berries in the summer I could still I could still remember every berry I put in the pail (laughs).

Lilah: Lots of work eh.

Claudia: Two weeks our pay in the evening was a little candy.

Lilah: And you get a handful of berries you picked I remember I use to eat them

0:20:42

Claudia: We couldn't eat them I cause my mom I think she had a hers eyes must have been whats you call there she can see just like superman she can see long ways.

Lilah: So you didn't dare eat the berries eh.

Claudia: No

Leah: What type of berries did you pick?

Claudia: Blueberries, Saskatoons, cranberries there's all kinds of berries up north.

Leah: Did you crush the berries or no?

Claudia: Just can them.

Lilah: minisapoway.

Claudia: uh uh or else the old people use to make jam. I told the kokum's club one day I said I'm still I still when lots of times I said my hand starts moving I said I'm So used to I use to make butter everyday I said my hand use to turn it by hand. I still do sometimes my hand still goes eh. Well we made everything butter, soap.

0:21:55 **Lilah:** How did you make soap?

Claudia: Well my mom use to save every little grease or little oil or something, everything some of them didn't smell too good, but still.

Lilah: But they worked to clean.

Claudia: yeah

0:22:15 Claudia explains what and who are in the pictures on her wall. Close-ups of pictures.

0:25:46 **Claudia:** And old Felix there's ah he, he was my real Dad. But I never knew him.

Lilah: But you saw pictures of him.

Claudia: I use to see him. I saw him when I was growing up but I didn't know that was my Dad. My Mom told me to go in the other room she said somebody came in go and find out who it was. I went in the other room I seen this old coming in this baldhead old man. I went running back into the bedroom And I told my Mom She said who's that I said it's a baldheaded old man. She said that's your Dad that's not my Dad I don't know I never knew him. He died when Richard it's 48 years ago since he died Richard was just a baby. Well I didn't know. Well how would a person know if your not told anything. She didn't want nobody to tell me anything. So I didn't know I had brothers and sisters.

Lilah: And you had lots eh.

Claudia: Yeah there was 14 of us I was the only that had a decent place to stay and raised cause my other ones were going back and forth. I didn't know that though.

Lilah: Oh Really Vital and them.

Claudia: Everybody. They weren't raised sometimes they were at the same place as I was but I didn't know they were my brothers I had no idea no nothing at all.

Lilah: How come their parents were.

Claudia: My Mom died and my Dad was remarried an old hag.

Lilah: Who was she?

Claudia: She was from they use to have they use to be called before they moved them to Turnor Clearlake an old chipweyan women he married didn't have no kids. I don't remember her though.

Lilah: Then he had another wife after that.

Claudia: Yup. My stepmother is still living in Beauval.

Claudia: Sakimis(mosquito)

Lilah: Sakimis that was his wife. Oh!

Claudia: she got married three times and.

Lilah: That's where Moise and

Claudia: Celena come from.

Lilah: So that's the Moise you mean that's your brother.

0:28:14 **Claudia:** Yeah that's my brother yup.

Lilah: See I didn't know that.

Claudia: If you ever. If you ever go to Ile-a-la crosse and you Remember try and see him he's just a dead picture of our real dad he's the only one who really looks like him.

Lilah: Yeah I didn't know that was Sakimis' husband.

Claudia: Yeah

Lilah: She's married to Nap Johnson eh.

Claudia: She was married but three times now this one she married and they don't live together half of the time.

Lilah: moc (no) they don't

Claudia: osam kohkoshowo (piggy)

Lilah: (laughing) you heard the stories.

Lilah: Uh huh She is quite old. Were there any legends or tall tales told in your family or community like in Buffalo they have no stories about strange things that happened.

Claudia: No nothing.

Lilah: Nothing.

Claudia: No nothing at all. I don't remember of any.

Lilah: Do you remember which animals were highly respected by your family or community.

Claudia: Shakes her head no.

Leah: Hunters What was what game was hunted? What animals were hunted and trapped?

0:30:40 **Claudia:** Moose, deer, ducks everything that could be eaten.

Lilah: Did they eat bears?

Claudia: Oh Yeah It's good just like eating pork.

Lilah: Never ate bear.

Claudia: I did long long time ago I barely remember but it was good.

Lilah: Beavers and everything too. I remember the muskrats cooking but not beaver.

Claudia: My great grandson Myles. His name is Myles Crystal's boy and my nephew Ivan brought me some from Turnor Lake. So I froze two and boiled two. So Che-Che(Muriel) said I'll cut it up for you so you can eat after they finish eating Che-Che ask him what are you eating. Chicken he said, rats he didn't know He still doesn't know the difference. Everything was chicken those guys are crazy for wild food.

Lilah: That's good.

Claudia: Yeah they eat anything Myles is a fish eater.

Lilah: Were their any other communities. Did you live anywhere else but Buffalo?

Claudia: No

Lilah: Not even after you were married?

Claudia: Well that's when we moved out Buffalo 10 miles I told you When we lived on the Island.

Lilah: That was with your husband.

Claudia: Yeah

Leah: Making noises interference.

Claudia: Yeah we lived there 22 years before he passed away he was quite a bit older I was 17 he was 50.

Lilah: Your husband was Yeah

0:32:56 **Claudia:** When he died I was 41 he was 72.

Lilah: Did you were you arranged to be married

Claudia: Yeah My Dad

Lilah: Yeah What did he give your Dad for you?

Claudia: Nothing my Dad said you marry him or else you'll never get married and those days your parents were respected not like now you can turn around and swear at them and walk away. Well my kids never do that They never talk back when I tell them something.

Lilah: Did you want to marry him when you were told?

Claudia: I didn't know the guy I had no idea who he was.

Lilah: No when did you meet him?

0:33:46 **Claudia:** I never met him he use to come to the house but I didn't know who he was here my Dad had arranged already.

Lilah: Then you got married in the church. Then that's the first time you saw him or knew who he was.

0:34:02 **Claudia:** I knew who he was a few days before that we were suppose to get married July the first centennial that 46. But my mother said no. So it was cancelled till we went back to Buffalo. We were married on the 15th of July.

Lilah: Then you just left home moved where ever.

Claudia: In the bush.

Lilah: What was that like marrying somebody you didn't even know?

Claudia: Well It was O.K. because he was good natured eh He wasn't a mean person he never bothered talking about anything although he had kids of his own Their was four of them. He was married before his wife died Helen Clarke is one of them and Catherine Sylvester, Hanna and the chicken man four of them Helen was four years old when I married her Dad.

Lilah: so you raised her.

0:35:18 **Claudia:** But she never bothers she doesn't even phone on Mother's Day, Christmas nothing. They never pay any attention to me I don't really It doesn't really bother me I'm so used to it.

Lilah: I didn't know you were arranged.

Claudia: Yeah we were married July 15th 46

Lilah: How did you get to know each other like when you first?

Claudia: Not really. I don't know it didn't bother me cause I respected my Dad. What he said has to go. I didn't really bother my Mom I never listened to her. Because my Mom my dad was such a nice person, sweet person never gets mad at anything. He was easygoing but he had to get away from my mom so my mom use to so jealous that's where the bottle use

to come in Helen was just a little girl the windows use to be right down to the ground and she got a chair and sat put the chair by the window and told Helen come and sit to watch your Grandpa coming My mom described how his face was gonna be with a big red nose and to see if he was drinking eh his face would be just like a tomatoe she said after she left I told Helen don't you dare tell on my dad I said don't tell grandma he went by so a little while after my mom came not yet Helen no Helen said he didn't go by and it must have been at least an hour ago my dad went by I didn't want her to tell my mom I saved him lots of times him and I use to sit in a little corner getting hell for I don't know for what sometimes.

Lilah: Yeah!

Claudia: She was mean She was mean to me when I grew up.

Lilah: Yeah Helen was who his wife?

Claudia: Yeah you remember those old Beatrice ah what the heck was their last names Leo Belanger, Beatrice Belanger that was her they were sisters and ah holy crap (noise outdoors).