



GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

of Native Studies and Applied Research

Interview of Elder Dorothy Aubichon

Conducted by David Morin

March 22, 2013

1. Could you please tell me your name and your home community?

Dorothy Aubichon, Saskatoon

2. Where were you born?

Willowfield, Saskatchewan in a homestead, about 40 miles south of Battleford and 40 miles north of Biggar.

3. Where did you grow up?

For the first 19 years of my life, I lived in Willowfield and Baljennie. When I was young we moved to Turtle Lake. Then I moved to Green Lake in 1951. I met my husband there, and we got married up there in 1954. I had ten children and then we moved to Battleford 1958. My husband's name was Arsene Aubichon and he was from Green Lake

4. Where have you lived most of your life?

From North Battleford, I moved to Delmas in 1964. I stayed up there till 1984. I had my own house. I raised my kids there. The school was just next door, but when they got older there were two busses that bussed them, but you could see the busses on just the next block which was nice very nice. Then I moved to North Battleford in 1984 and stayed there until 1989. Then I moved to Lloydminster and stayed there for 15 months. I then moved to Saskatoon to babysit for my daughter, Sheila Pocha.

5. Who were/are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?

My mother's maiden name was Pritchard, Rose Pritchard. Earlier in her life, she was called Rosia, but later on it was Rose. Before she married my father, she met somebody else in 1913, and then she married my father in 1943. However, I was born in 1932. My father was Frank Pambrun. He is buried here in the cemetery. He went to the First World War. On my mother's side my grandpa was Sam (Salomon) Pritchard and my grandma was Rosalie Trottier. On my father's side, my grandparents were Peter Pambrun and my grandmother was a Schmidt. That's her last name. I forgot her first name. I never met them. I was close to

my grandfather Salomon. I have pictures of him. He played violin, so once at my place, before we went away, we asked him to bring his violin and guitar. We had a banjo, and we took turns holding them taking pictures. They had to be taken outside. Since this was in 1949, these pictures were in black and white.

6. How did you spend your life as an adult regarding work, family, or in any other ways you'd like to share?

I had to stay home with my kids for 15 years, and then I went working for my cousins down south. I babysat and then I cooked. I was making bannock at 8:30 in the morning outside. I did that during the summer. I never worked for a cheque. I was just paid in cash. I didn't have very much education. I finished grade 5. I trapped with my husband. We were trapping muskrats in Bresaylor, and that was in the '60s. We walked around this lake, and every time we caught a skunk, I knew right away that we caught a muskrat. Somehow, I knew that. That was quite nice. We didn't have to get welfare because he worked, and he would sell the skins.

7. What do you enjoy about being Métis?

I enjoy having friends and getting to know more people. When I first talked, it was mostly Métis, like French and English, but when I started walking this trail by a coulee, it's just down below from the First Nation Pheasant Reserve, some little girls started talking Cree to me. I didn't understand some of the words, so they'd use sign language for what they were talking about. I also went up the hill that was a First Nation there too. So, I learned some more Cree. That was the best thing that ever happened to me to learn Cree. Now I can talk French and Cree. I don't need to put in any English words. I have to practise on that because I don't talk it now. When I used to say grace at the preschool foundation dinners, if I didn't practise, I mostly used English. "Oh, we miss your language." "Well," I said, "I didn't practise." With Awasis too, I said grace and opening prayers. One time, I was saying grace, and this one guy, he's dead now, he was misstating what I said. "She means Mother Earth," he said. "I didn't mean Mother Earth," I said. He was misusing my words. I don't know why he was doing that. I didn't like that. I like to say my words. I don't talk the high words, just down below, and most people understand. That's why I like making friends. They understand me. When I went to Green Lake, they had different meanings for Cree words. But in 1950, I went to see the place. We were sent there by the Métis Society. They promised things. I met a friend. I had that friend for 50 years. In just the couple of days that I was there, I learned all the new words. So, we moved up there in '51. I knew the words. They got different words. We were invented out for supper at Mrs Durocher's with my aunt and her four-year-old daughter. My aunt started talking about something else. "Well," I said, "she just asked you if your little girl can talk." "Oh," she said, "yes, I didn't understand

that.” And they don’t say, “fish.” For whitefish, they’ll say, “li blanc.” They don’t say whitefish, poisson blanc.

8. What has been the most challenging thing about being Métis?

Just to trying and get by, because there are people out there that they still think they are way better than us. They don’t know any better, but then you have to try and fight your way up you know you have to talk for yourself to survive.

9. What is the most important thing that you want others to know about the Métis?

I want people to know their background, and I want them to be proud to be Métis because it’s a beautiful background. We had to do a lot of work; lots of work by hand. We just did honest work. We survived for the winter, picked berries, made food, canned food in sealers, and dried Saskatoons and chokecherries.

10. If you were advising yourself as a Métis youth, knowing what you know now, what would you tell yourself in a sentence or two?

That’s what I am telling my grandkids. I am telling them to proud of who they are. Just go out there and try your best. Get your schooling and then you won’t have to stay in the back porches. Go out there and get jobs like everybody else. I want them to just be proud of who they are.