

## Road Allowance Interview, Dora Morin

Conducted by Scott Duffee

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**SD: Please tell me your name and your home community.**

DM: My name is Dora Morin, and I'm from Green Lake. We were very, very poor.

**SD: So was Green Lake, a road allowance community do you know?**

DM: No, it was just a little community. It wasn't much in there, just a couple of stores and one cafe, and that's it.

**SD: Who were your parents and grandparents?**

DM: Helen Flamant and my dad's name was Albert Aubichon.

**SD: Did your parents always live in Green Lake?**

DM: No, my dad did, but my mom, I can't say because her parents were killed when she was just a little girl. There were three of them: a boy and two girls. When her parents were killed somebody adopted them. So, they brought my mom to Meadow Lake, and the Flamants adopted her. That's why she had that Flamant name. Her name was Theresa Houle.

**SD: So, you don't know where your mom was from before her parents?**

DM: They were in Rocky Boy.

**SD: In Montana?**

DM: Yeah, and then they moved to St. Paul.

**SD: St. Paul, Alberta?**

DM: Yeah, so that's where I think she lost her parents. No, she lost her parents in Rocky Boy, and they took her to Meadow Lake, and the Flamants adopted her, and my uncle was raised in St. Paul, Alberta. The girl passed away when she was a little girl. There were only two of them.

**SD: So, your mom was originally from Rocky Boy, Montana?**

DM: Yes, that's where she was from.

**SD: But you can't think of her last name before it turned into Flamant?**

DM: It started with an L. I can't think of it.

**SD: That's fair enough you can think of it and let me know. Your dad was always from Green Lake?**

DM: Green Lake, yeah

**SD: Did your mom and dad always live in Green Lake?**

DM: After they got married. My mom was living in Meadow Lake, and my dad was living in Green Lake. My dad was engaged to a girl there and my mom had a boyfriend in Meadow Lake. My dad's parents went and saw my mom's foster parents, the ones that adopted her, and asked them for her hand to marry their son. So, a

long time ago, they used to give their daughters to a different man. That's what mom used to tell me anyway.

**SD: Even though she had a boyfriend?**

DM: Yeah, they didn't care. So anyway, mom was only 16 that time. She was training horses back then. So anyway, they gave her to my dad. They got married, but it was wrong to give her away to him because they didn't love each other yet. They had 11 kids, but my dad was never home, so mom never saw her boyfriend, but I think dad used to sneak his girlfriends

**SD: What other Métis families lived in Green Lake?**

DM: Métis families? There used to be Bishops, Kennedys and Sinclairs, Morins, and Aubichons. There are a lot of Aubichons down there

**SD: Were there any non-Métis that lived in Green Lake?**

DM: They were Métis, yeah.

**SD: Everyone was Métis there?**

DM: Yeah, it was just a little community.

**SD: Did you live in any other road allowance communities?**

DM: No, that's the only one.

**SD: Did any of the people in Green Lake own their own property?**

DM: Some of them. Bishops did and the Kennedys, but they just had little shacks; not what you call rich people.

**SD: But they had title?**

DM: Oh, that's right Carl Fuge lived there with his family, too, but they were white. He owned a store.

SD: Carl who?

DM: Fuge.

**SD: How do you spell that?**

DM: I don't know. So anyway, they were there for a long, long time 'till I was about 17 when I left home. They were still there. So anyway, they moved away or maybe they moved away from there. There were no stores after that. Now there's only a little store down there, and no cafe and a garage. There's nothing down there now. It's more or less a ghost town now.

**SD: So, as far as you know, some of those people did own the land that they built their houses on.**

DM: Yeah.

**SD: So, they had a piece of paper that said that was their piece of land?**

DM: That I can't tell you 'cause they never really used to talk on anything like that. Yeah,

I don't even know if they bought or owned the land or anything. Maybe they just built a house or something there.

**SD:** Did you ever hear the term, "They're squatting there?" Did you ever hear anyone say that?

**DM:** No.

**SD:** Did you ever hear the term road allowance community?

**DM:** What is that?

**SD:** That's a community built on the side of a road where people live. Have you ever heard the term scrip? "Got land through scrip?"

**DM:** Nothing at all.

**SD:** How did your family and other Métis families make a living in Green Lake?

**DM:** Well, dad used to hunt a lot, and my brother used to go out with dad. Mom and dad used to have a big garden, and we used to all get together and clean it up and get it. We used to have a lovely garden, and we used to all haul the water from down in the river. We chopped wood. We used to take turns to chop wood.

**SD:** Which river?

**DM:** Green Lake River. Dad was always working a little, not much, but he was always making money. At that time, everything was cheap.

**SD:** Were the houses built along the river usually?

**DM:** No, not really.

**SD:** So how would people get water, by hand or horses?

**DM:** By hand. Me and my sisters or my brothers, we used to haul water by hand. Two pails I used to carry.

**SD:** Long walk?

**DM:** Not really a long walk.

**SD:** But close enough?

**DM:** Close enough, yeah.

**SD:** How about the other houses? Same thing or?

**DM:** The same thing. There was no running water. There were outside toilettes.

**SD:** How else did your family or the other families make a living?

**DM:** The other families, the same thing.

**SD:** How did your dad make a living?

**DM:** Fishing, hunting, and he used to work for Jim Elliott. He used to work there and made a little bit of money. That's what I'm wondering: "How in the hell did they ever make a living with us?" Because I never saw my dad have a job or anything, and he used to bring in a little bit of money. They all used to curl.

**SD:** Curling?

**DM:** Yeah, curling. My dad and all my brothers even two of my sisters. You must know Maurice Aubichon?

**SD:** No, I don't think I do.

**DM:** What about Eugene?

**SD:** I don't really know any Aubichons except for a few kids I might have gone to school with in Saskatoon.

**DM:** Yeah, all the boys used to go curling, and they used to win a lot, too 'till they got old, and couldn't curl anymore. Maurice and Gordon Aubichon are not my real brothers. Mom took them. They are my sisters' kids.

**SD:** So, your dad did a lot of hunting, trapping, and fishing?

**DM:** My dad's dead now. My mom's dead. Yeah, we lost quite a few. Of my sisters and my brothers, there are only three of us sisters alive and two brothers out of the eleven.

**SD:** But for your dad to make a living, he had to do some hunting, trapping,

**DM:** Oh yeah, rabbits and everything he used to go and kill for us.

**SD:** But you don't know what he did for a job?

**DM:** No, I never know what he did for a job.

**SD:** What kind of resources did your family harvest? Like what kind of animals, plants and berries?

**DM:** Oh, that's right we used to go berry picking a lot, too. Mom used to make jam and everything. She used to bake all the time, every day for all those kids, but we were poor. We weren't rich. We didn't even have enough money for anything, but we had cattle. So, mom used to milk cows for milk.

**SD:** So, you just had one cow?

**DM:** We had two cows, and we used to have two horses that I could remember anyway.

**SD:** Do you remember all what kind of berries?

**DM:** Blueberries, Saskatoons, raspberries, strawberries, and chokecherries. We used to pick all of them. I used to love picking blueberries, and then they used to come and buy them. We used to sell blueberries.

**SD:** Who used to buy them?

**DM:** People who came around there. They came and bought blueberries.

**SD:** Other Métis?

**DM:** Nope, they were white people.

**SD:** They would come all the way to Green Lake to buy them?

**DM:** Yeah, they would come from Meadow Lake to buy blueberries, or the truck would get there and would buy blueberries so they could sell them in the stores.

**SD:** Made a little bit of money or decent money?

**DM:** Oh yeah, it made a little bit of money for mom. I never kept the money. I went to work in Hay River when I was old enough. That must have been when I was about 16 because when I went to school, we had a log school, and there used to be a heater there. They didn't teach us anything at all. All we learned was how to pray and sing and nothing else. When you turned 15, they kicked you out. This was the convent. These were the sisters. They were mean sisters.

**SD: What was your house made of?**

DM: Well, to tell you the truth, it was all boards. It had no linoleum, no nothing. What the hell do they put in between the logs?

**SD: So it was a log house?**

DM: A log house, yeah.

**SD: How many of lived in there?**

DM: Like I said, there were eleven of us, and mom took over two.

**SD: How big was that log house?**

DM: It only had two-bedrooms. It wasn't that big.

**SD: What kind of animals did you guys harvest?**

DM: What do you mean what kind of animals?

**SD: Like what kind of animals did you eat, from hunting?**

DM: Moose meat, deer meat and rabbits and fish. We used to eat all kinds of fish there, whitefish and the other kind. What the hell do you call them? It's been quite a while. I don't remember them. Yeah, we used to eat all kinds of things. Well, a lot of things. Now if I had to eat them, I wouldn't eat them.

**SD: Like what would be an example?**

DM: Like what do you call them? Not skunks, the other one. They used to have black tail. I don't think you'd know.

**SD: Skunk? No not a skunk?**

DM: Yeah.

**SD: Oh, you can eat that kind?**

DM: Yeah, we used to fight for that tail to cook. Now, I wouldn't.

**SD: Is there anything else you can think of that you ate then that you wouldn't eat now?**

DM: Rabbits. I wouldn't eat them now 'cause when I was married, and I went to town and saw a big truck loaded with rabbits, I asked them, "What are they doing with those rabbits?" "They got some kind of sickness, so they were going to throw them in the dump." So, after that, I wouldn't eat rabbits. Even right now, if they make stew or soup with rabbit, I wouldn't eat it. I would eat soup, but not rabbits.

**SD: When did you see these diseased rabbits in the truck?**

DM: I was about 22 years old. I was with my husband already.

**SD: What year was this?**

DM: I can't tell you the year, '74?

**SD: Okay.**

DM: He was in the army then. He had come home from the army.

**SD: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and in your family?**

DM: Indian medicine, but I can't name them. But if we got sick, that's what we used to use, and those were better than what we are using now.

**SD: How come you can't name them?**

DM: Because they never told me the name of them. Mom died without telling me.

**SD: Is it a special name or was it just hers to know?**

DM: I know there's tea you can use. I boiled the leaves, and I make myself tea sometimes. Then when I go to Green Lake, they give me some. I make some tea out of it. It's good if you have a cold. You just drink that tea and that's it. The tea was named rat root.

**SD: What does that mean "Indian medicine?"**

DM: That I can't tell you because I just don't know the name of that.

**SD: Who were the medicine people in your family and in your community?**

DM: Mom and there used to be an old lady there. They called her "midwife" because all of us weren't born in hospital. We were born at our house. The midwife used to go and get some medicine with mom. They knew how to, but they would never tell us. I don't know why. Probably, I would've forgotten about it anyways. It's been so damn long.

**SD: Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins?**

DM: Mom did and my sister did, too, but she died.

**SD: Do you know what happen to these items?**

DM: Mom used to sell them to whoever wanted them. They used to come and buy them.

**SD: What was the leather made out of? Was it tanned hide or did they buy it?**

DM: No, they made it when they killed a moose or something like that.

**SD: Did your mom do that?**

DM: My mom and my dad. My dad used to clean it, but my mom made moccasins, and that, but you know half those things, I don't even remember what they did. There were too many of us mom to teach it to.

**SD: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays?**

DM: They didn't celebrate at all.

**SD: Christmas? New Year's?**

DM: Christmas, they did, yeah. But New Year's was better a long time ago than right now because every place you went to, there were lots of people for you to go and see. The houses were wide open. The tables were set. You could just walk in and eat, and say, "Hi." People used to sit around it, and you went around, and said, "Happy New Year!"

**SD: How did they say, "Happy New Year!" in the language that you guys spoke?**

DM: I don't know how you say, "Happy New Year!"

**SD: You just said it in English?**

DM: Yeah, I'll tell you one thing, when I went to school, I didn't know anything about English. All of us spoke Cree. The sisters told my mom, "Try and talk English because

they don't want them to talk Cree in school." They more or less took away our language. We had to talk English in school because if we didn't speak English, if we got caught talking Cree, we used to get a spanking. So, we more or less lost our language. There are some things I don't even know in Cree. But on Christmas, we didn't get what the kids are getting now. We used to get nuts, candies, an apple, an orange, but no toys. Our stockings were hung, and we were satisfied with it. We went to midnight mass. We come home. Oh, we were so happy to open those, and then after my dad had to go across the lake to go and see his dad. We used to go and kneel down in front of his dad, and that's what we done after we opened those socks. So, we all got dressed, and we went across the lake to go and kneel in front of his dad. That's what we used to do every year. Now today, if kids had that, they would throw it at you.

**SD: Any other holidays that you celebrated?**

DM: Never took any holidays. We couldn't afford it.

**SD: Did anyone in your family speak Michif?**

DM: Oh yeah, my dad and my mom and all their kids, but in my family my kids don't speak it. All they speak is English. A lot of times, I talk Cree to them, and they'd look at me and say, "What are you talking about?" I forgot they don't talk Cree.

**SD: Do you speak Michif?**

DM: Yeah.

**SD: So that's Cree with some French?**

DM: Cree, Cree.

**SD: Straight Cree?**

DM: Yeah.

**SD: Any French words in there?**

DM: French was in there, yeah. Mom used to call it "French," but they never used to talk to us. They never talked to us like that. If somebody speaks French, I can understand a few things, and that's it.

**SD: So, Michif with a lot of Cree in it?**

DM: Yeah, a lot of Cree.

**SD: Do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs?**

DM: Nothing.

**SD: What are your best memories about living in Green Lake?**

DM: The way I was brought up. I was so poor, and a lot of times I used to wish I had money to buy stuff, but the thing that I wish for is to live the way I did as a kid.

**SD: How are you now?**

DM: Well at least I got money all the time, and at the end of every month, I get money, and then I have nice stuff. Not when I was living with mom and them, I didn't get any nice stuff, just second-hand things. That's how I wish my little house is. Then

when I married my husband, he was a truck driver, and he was making good money. I was working all the time.

**SD: How were the Métis treated in your community?**

DM: Not too good. Not good at all.

**SD: When did people start leaving that community?**

DM: Well, I don't know when they started leaving, but I left when I was 17. I never went back. I just go to visit sometimes. I still have relatives up there.

**SD: Are there any bad memories that you would like to share?**

DM: Lots.

**SD: Did your family encounter racism from the larger community?**

DM: Oh yeah, there was a lot of that going on. When we were going to school, we were called all kinds of names.

**SD: Can you give me a specific example of when that would have happened?**

DM: Well, they call us all kind of names. They'd say, "Oh, you guys stink" and every damn thing, and yet we had to wash every goddamn night before we got into bed in the morning.

**SD: And this was at the school you mentioned?**

DM: This was at the school, even the teachers and even the sisters.

**SD: What would they say?**

DM: I used to have blond, reddish hair in front and rosy cheeks. Every morning, I used to go to school and Sister \_\_\_\_\_ used to pull my hair and put snow and dirt on my cheeks. She figured I put on rouge and dyed my hair. So anyway, every day, I used to go and tell mom about it. Finally, I said, "I'm not going to school." "You got to go to school," she said before she forced me to go to school. I went to school, and I didn't know that she followed me. Anyway, when I went there, the sister did the same thing, and my mom saw it. So, she came walking and the sister saw her. She said, "So she was telling the truth when told me what you have been doing to her every day." She said, "How the hell could I afford to buy dye? I can barely feed our kids, and to buy dye to dye her hair and to put rouge on her cheeks." She told mom, "Don't tell anybody. If you do, I'll take your kids away from you."

**SD: Who said that?**

DM: The sister. I used to tell that sister, "Wait 'till I'm old enough, you are going to be the sorriest sister ever!" But she died before I grew up.

**SD: What school was this?**

DM: That was in Green Lake. What the hell was the name of the school? There was a fire at that school, and they built a log school for us, and that's where we were going. They were mean, and they she used to tell the kids to hit us with rulers and things like that.

**SD: What grades was this?**

DM: I was 15 when I when I quit. I was only in grade 6. They never taught us anything.

**SD: How old were you when you started going to school there?**

DM: I was five- or six-year-old, but you know I trained myself on everything because when my kids were small, I had a babysitter. I used to go to work. I used to do house work. That's how I started, and I trained myself to learn everything.

**SD: Any other examples of when had experienced racism?**

DM: I don't know.

**SD: Sounds like school was the biggest example of it**

DM: Yeah, I just more or less blocked it out of my mind.

**SD: Where were your grandparents originally from?**

DM: My grandparents, let's see Green Lake that's all I know.

**SD: That's the Aubichons?**

DM: Yeah, that's the Aubichons. I don't know about mom's side because I never met them.

**SD: Probably from Rocky Boy?**

DM: Yeah probably. That's where they were from.

**SD: You know that's a reserve?**

DM: Yeah, that's a reserve, but you know we can't get our Indian card? We tried. We can't do it because apparently, my daughter was the one that was working on it. She is living in Prince Edward Island.

**SD: Your daughter is?**

DM: Yeah, she married down there. So anyway, she was working on this, and apparently a long time ago, the old people sold their share of it. "Scrip" they called it. So, we couldn't get our Indian card.

**SD: Did you say scrip?**

DM: Yeah.

**SD: They sold their scrip?**

DM: Yeah, apparently that's what they did, our grandparents.

**SD: Do you know any of your grandparents' names?**

DM: No.

**SD: Do you know if any of your family was involved in the 1885 Resistance in Batoche?**

DM: No, I don't. My husband's family did.

**SD: Did anyone in your family serve in the military, in the army?**

DM: Yeah, my husband and my brothers, there were two of them.

**SD: Did they go over seas?**

DM: I think they went to a different country, but it seems like my husband went overseas or something. When the war was all over, and they needed "clean up."

DM: How old are you?

**SD: 37.**

DM: I'm 79. I'll be 80 in March.

SD: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis society?

DM: My nephew and my brothers. In fact, they were working at the friendship centre for that.

SD: This was in Green Lake?

DM: No, right here in Regina.

SD: Do you have anything else that you would like to share about living in Green Lake?

DM: No.

SD: Okay good. Thank you very much could I offer you a fiddle CD? You like fiddle music?

DM: Sure

SD: Good.