

Norm Fleury (NF) Interview – Edna (ENS) and Ed (ES) St. Pierre
Translated from Michif to English

ES. I was born in Crescent Lake, twelve miles north of Yorkton. I was born in a log house in those days the women were the nurses. We didn't have to go to hospitals. My grandmother and her daughters were nurses. They were midwives. They would help when someone was having a baby.

ENS. I was born in a log house also. My mother's name was Alice Boucher, and my dad's name was Jerome Pelletier. My mother was born in Ste. Madeleine, Manitoba. My dad was born in Saskatchewan, in Lestock, I think. I know the Pelletiers were from Saskatchewan. I didn't really know where the Bouchers came from.

ES. My mother's name is Vitaline Flammand. She came from Crooked Lake, Saskatchewan, down in that valley, but my father, he came from the Turtle Mountains on a reserve or what they call a reservation in the States. I think my dad came to Canada in 1914. My dad's sisters were already living here in Canada. And in those days, the Métis people went back and forth from Canada into the States. My dad's parents came from the States around Dunseith Belcourt, North Dakota. My dad came from a big family. I think he had seven sisters and two brothers.

ES. My dad's relatives spoke, just like we are speaking now, the Michif language.

ENS. My parents also spoke the Michif language.

ES. Years ago I recall that the Métis people helped one another. When somebody was short of something somebody helped them. That's the way it was. People really got along well years ago.

ES. I remember [that] we were very poor, but we used to hunt, hunt muskrats, coyotes and all kinds of wild game. Yeah, we ate deer. We ate lots of deer.

NF. This is ah.

ES. I remember my mother, she used to take the hides of wild animals and soak them in a tub with soap. Then she would take that hide out and she would hang it for about three days and then she would take this little, it was like a hoe, and they used deer horn to scrap the hides, to get the hair off the hides.

ES. Oh, no, nobody lives that way today. That's quite a while ago that I'm talking about.

ES. I remember my mother making our clothes. She had to there were about eight of us in our family. And my mother used to make us a lot of our clothes; she was really

good at sewing. And I remember years ago, the Old People used to wear, and people in general, wore a lot of moccasins. They wore moccasins and they used to wear other things made out of leather. My mother patched my clothes but we also wore hand-me-downs. When one got bigger, the other person wore that person's clothes.

ES. I remember people wearing gum rubbers and running shoes a long time ago, in the hard times. Nobody had too many shoes such as Oxfords. And, ah yes, I know something they used to also wear. They would wrap their legs up with what you'd call leggings or a cloth or hide and that would also be something that they would protect their legs up with when they were travelling in the deep snow.

ES. Another thing too, the clothes were very plain. Ah, the Old People didn't put too many decorations such as beads that I remember on the clothes that they made.

ES. My father always had five or six horses. That's what we used for travelling and working with. And my dad worked a lot for the farmers. He used to do thrashing and all kinds of farm labour jobs. My dad was also a good hunter. He hunted and he was trapping. He'd hunt for coyotes and he trapped for different fur bearing animals that were [available] locally.

ES. I remember, this was in about 1950, there was about seven of us that went to the States and worked and... Potato picking. And my dad took us out of school and they all left for the States and went working.

ES. Yes, we worked out there for about two months. Yes, we did make a bit of money, but we spent most of our money over there, but when we got home there were other jobs that we could do.

ES. My dad had his brother there and a lot of sisters, and he had uncles and cousins. So, we were no strangers over there. My dad had a cousin over there that was a farmer. He had a truck so when we'd come home, he'd come over, this cousin used to come and pick us up and we'd go back over there. We'd go stoking and we'd go thrashing. We'd go work for my dad's cousin.

ES. I remember hearing my father say that he drove cars way back when, but I don't remember, I don't remember, I've never seen him drive any vehicle of any kind.

ES. There was some good violin players or fiddlers. Those people lived in Crescent Lake. There was the Pelletiers Flammands, Allarys. Alec Allary's dad, and also his brothers. They were good fiddle players.

ES. People used to have dances in those days from about New Year's on for about seven days, and they'd dance all kind of dances. There were different dances like the Rabbit Dance, Square Dance, Quadrilles, Kerchief Dance, and Sword Dances. People had good times, and we would move around from house to another house. And some of them had big houses, some had small houses, and, they'd, in some places they'd take the stove out and the table out so they could make room so could have a dance.

ES. I think what we have to do in order to regain our culture and our traditions, is that we are going to have to start teaching the young ones so they can learn, and so they in turn can be teaching it also.

ES. We got married in 1963. We got four children. We've got three boys and one daughter. And we have three living in Saskatoon and one in Moose Jaw. We've got... we still have one of our children going to university. And we have two grand children.

ES. I joined the army when I was 17 years old. I was in the army for thirteen and a half years. I was mostly down east, in Ontario, and I was in Germany for three and a half years. I always wanted to come back home to help our people. I knew I was in the army for a short while and that I would gain a lot of experience by working in the army. And I've seen a lot of buddies in the army where they got old so quickly. There was a lot of drinking going on, you could tell their faces were all red from drinking.

ES. When I came back I joined the Métis Society in Saskatchewan, and I also first started the Friendship Centre. And in those days, there were a lot of Métis people around. There weren't as many First Nations living in the urban areas. It was mostly Métis from my recollections. I was the first director of the Friendship Centre. There were a lot of education courses and there were secretary courses. I also started up the carpentry program and I taught them carpentry skills. We also had handicraft programs going on there at the centre. They made wallets, purses, belts and other things that they would do in the handicraft shop.

ES. I can see a way of us regaining our Michif language. We have to [have] the Elders and the youth work together and we have to learn from one another, and we also have to teach the young people. I am very happy to be involved in this organization, in [this] program to try to develop our Michif language, because it's one of the only ways we can regain our language.

ES. I really feel bad that the kids today don't speak their language. I really feel sorry for them. When I have the opportunity, I speak my Michif language. We speak our Michif language at home whenever we can. We speak our language at home. The children hear it, but they speak the English language because their friends are English, and wherever you go English is spoken. And there's also a sad thing to say, but when sometimes our people try to speak their language, ah they're laughed at. So then, they are reluctant to speak their language. Then there are also times when our people are too proud to speak their language, but I can say today that I think that our Métis people would like to speak their language, and regain what they have lost.

ES. Yes, I would like to thank you for taking this time, ah talking about our language and listening to you. Thank you.