

Norm Fleury Interview – Agnes Pelletier

My name was Agnes Poitras when I was going to school.

I was married to George Pelletier.

I was born in Lebret. It was in a bit of a creek, and the place I lived was called Jackrabbit Street.

The person that was the midwife when I was born, her name was Mrs. Isadore Blondeau, and in those days it was mostly women that were involved when babies were born.

I was born on the twelfth month, the second day in 1917. And then I moved to Regina and I've been there ever since.

I started working when I was eleven years old. I worked for a bachelor. I did ironing. I did the clothes. I did the housework. And then when I was fifteen, I start working for farmers. I worked for twenty-five cents a day. I also worked for five dollars a month.

I had my room and board, and I worked there for about a year, and then I went and worked in a seminary. I worked in a seminary where there were priests and nuns, and I, well what I did there was mostly housekeeping. I did some laundry, ironing and I also did some cooking.

My mother's name was Selena Parisien, and my father's name was Russell Brown. My mother was born in Lebret and my dad was from Regina. I didn't know too much about my father. I only saw him two times. I didn't know my grandparent's names on my side of my father. My mother's mother was Melanie Majeur, and her was Fred Majeur. My grandfather Majeur, he came from France, but my grandmother Melanie, she came from Lebret.

Oh my grandparents, they used to dig Seneca root. They also fished, and they used to trade their fish for groceries, for whatever food they could get.

The Métis in Lebret were all Catholic, and they were very proud of their religion. We used to go to Midnight Mass and New Year's was a real fun time for the Métis. We sure had a lot of fun when New Year's came around. We used to eat, have a little bit to drink. We had a lot of fun on New Year's, and we went around visiting, and this was how we celebrated for seven days from January 1st to the 7th. And I don't know where they got all the groceries or all the food, but they seemed to manage.

They used to sing. They used to dance. Ah, people were very proud of themselves and what they did in those days. Today now, there's nothing like that. It seems now people celebrate Christmas. Ah, we don't seem to celebrate New Year's anymore, not like a long time ago.

They used to eat meatballs and they'd make pies. You'd have raison pie, prune pie. They used to also cook the apricots first and then they'd make them in the form of a pie. We used to also eat crushed chokecherries. They used to also make pemmican. They'd take the pork puff or fried pork fat, they'd put berries with this, and this was how

they made the pemmican. And some people would put saskatoons or they would put some raisins in the pemmican. They would dry the saskatoons and that's what they would use in the place of current. When they crushed the chokecherries [in it] they also used to make a pudding. They put flour and water, and this was how they'd thickened it, and this how you made your pudding.

Oh, I still eat the crushed chokecherries. I make fried bannock yet.

I still make my own bannock. I like eating what we call dried meat.

Yeah this is how we used to eat this dried meat. Sometimes we put potatoes in it, some water and some thickening and we'd make ourselves a nice soup, what we call "*robabou*".

I used to love eating rabbit, but now a days you don't feel like eating rabbit or even duck because it seems like they're eating things that maybe could poison you. A lot of these sprays that people use today are very detrimental to wildlife. Even the fish you could see that, it's not even good for them.

With fish, we made soup, or we made some nice fish pies. You'd put some salt and pepper, and make your own pies the way you liked them. I have all these old recipes and I have them all in my head. That's where I keep my recipes.

I learned the Michif language from my mother and from my grandmother. And the only time I started speaking English is (sic) when I started school. My mother and dad also spoke Michif and everybody in the district spoke the language. That was the main language that everybody spoke. Now a days, we speak both languages, if there's mostly people that speak Michif, you speak Michif. If there's mostly people that speak English, you speak English. Otherwise, you have to speak both language to entertain both sides.

My grandmother was good at telling these stories or legends. They used to talk about these stories, they used to call them "*li rougaroo*", which are ware wolves. My grandmother told us the story of this older lady. Her name was Rosalie. She was going to town and she was walking to town. This lady was going to Fort Qu'Appelle. She was going to go to town to buy some stew meat. She had twenty-five cents, and she looked in the window and there she saw this horse coming. This Betty Parisen came in to my grandma's and she said ah, 'put the water on the stove and get it boiling and I'll, I'll bring you some meat'. So [then] she rode this horse to town, and before the water was boiling, there this girl came back. She had road this nice looking horse, and she came back home quickly and they didn't expect her to come in. There she was with the meat. They say that this girl that went to town for the meat used that white horse and came back so quickly. They said she was [a] werewolf, and when she was cutting wood, apparently she would give just one hit to the wood and it would just break in half with just one hit. And this girl she had a baby. She put that baby on the pile of wood and burnt her baby, but I guess she didn't know. It was because the Devil was helping her. You know these are the type of stories that Old People used to tell us and we don't know if these really happened, but we heard a lot of those kind of stories.

Then my father was telling us that he went, he used to call it a " [la] balle", he went to a dance, and it was in wintertime, so he was travelling in what we call a "cutter". That was a form of a vehicle, ah that was pulled by a horse. And then when my father was coming home after the dance, he saw this black dog running beside the cutter. And the horse was running, but the dog wasn't he was walking, and then all of a sudden this dog jumps in the cutter, and that's, the horse just stopped like that. So [then] this dog he soon as [he] jumped off the cutter the horse went again. And what they say years ago is 'you have to draw blood from like this dog, if you drew blood from the dog then you saved a soul'. This is what they used to say, that's how you saved a person's soul, and then when you saved this person's soul, they'd tell you 'thank you'. They really appreciate it.

There's a saying [that] used to go, years ago if you didn't do any praying of any kind, the Devil or a demon would ah, come and live in your home. The Old People were very aware of these kinds of things that happened, and I also remember especially when there were wakes. That's where you heard a lot of these stories.

Years ago when somebody passed away, we were responsible to dig the graves ourselves, and I remember the people, the pallbearers, wore black ribbons on their arms, and that signified the mourning. And also the family, they wore a ribbon that was on their clothing. It was a black ribbon again to signify that they were mourning. They wore it for one whole year. And I remember years ago when you lost a close member of your family, you didn't dance for one whole year. Today, now, people die and they will dance the same night. That tells us that we've lost a lot of our traditions, and especially the respect does not seem [to] be [there] any long(er), there any longer.

Well, I guess that's all and I thank you very much.