

Leon Morin

Summary

I was born in 1930 at Buffalo Narrows. I was one year old when we moved to Sandy Point. My parents' names were Marie Jeanne and Ambrose. I remember 1937, there was a measles epidemic. I was seven years old. Father Morrow came to visit. We were all sick for a week, but nobody died. Many people died from red measles. Nobody died in our family. Father Morrow came to pray for us so we would get better. The windows were boarded up, because the light hurt our eyes. The disease was deadly. That was in 1937. We were living with the Lariviere's grandparents (maternal). We moved to Sandy Point when I was twelve years old. (Same area). There were many of us, but there's still six of us alive. There's me, Jules, Frank, Elise, Elizabeth and Christine. There was about three of us that passed away. (died) They had some sort of disease, for instance, Marie Rose passed away in Sandy Point. My grandmother raised her. The grandmother kept her because she was always sick. We did lots of work, because we had a big garden. We stored the butchered cows and stored things for winter. Getting ready for winter. There were no stores then. We lived off the land. We didn't buy anything. Yes everybody worked. They would haul hay so we wouldn't run short. We had twelve cows and ten horses. We raised them together. There was another family a little ways. We were the only ones that lived on that one area. A log house was built first and that's where we lived. The old man (my father) built it. I helped him. I was capable. I was in school for only half a year and my dad took me out of school because he didn't have anyone to help him. I think I was twelve years old then.

Question: When did you get married? Answer: 1953. Clara. Why so you ask? You want to know everything. We had five boys and four girls. We lost two. Yes, they died from some disease. The elders, they raised us properly. They were strict. They would not let us come to town. When we did come to town, we didn't go home for a long time so we'd get lectured when we'd get home. We spoke mostly Cree, but some words were French. Ever since I can remember it was like that. When we gathered we would work together, the men and women, for instance, every year we would hay. We had a lot of animals. Yes. It was like on a farm. In winter we would haul hay. Beaver River. We'd start at 7:00 a.m. in the morning. They did all sorts of things. We made little boats to play with on the beach and in the winter, we made bombardier with papers or sticks. We try to keep busy. Yes, we had a rubber ball. We played hockey too. We would make skates out of a board because we did not have a blade and that's what we used. We made balls out of clothing and then sew them together. They never sold things like that. This one time Frank and I went fishing. We stayed out there through Christmas and New Year's. We didn't do much. We had a meal together, the family. We didn't have turkey, but we had all sorts of other things. We had ducks, meat that we had stored. We went to church at Easter. At Christmas we'd use horses to come across, no skidoos at that time. All we used were

horses and dogs. Yes, they played a lot of music. There was a party on New Year's. We saw a lot of people. They would come to Sandy Point. They drank, but it was not an every day occurrence and liquor was cheaper then. Father Beaudet married us at 7:00 a.m. in the morning. Referring to dad: He played all kinds of tunes. He would say, "Don Messer's style." Frank used to sing along. He would sing Hank William tunes. All sorts of dances. They would play violin and guitar. It didn't take long to get started. There were many good fiddlers. Not just one of them. There was August Durocher. He was very good. They spoke of another named Pierre Gerard. He was good too. Pierre Gerard was Gilbert McCallum's grandfather who was Madeline's husband (Cecile's) and another one was Gilbert's grandfather, (Lacincort) Eliza Gerard's husband. He was a very good fiddle player. They taught themselves. Our horses were used strictly for work. We would haul logs to where Johnny Daigneault's house is now. There used to be a mill there owned by Tony. Pierre Gerard was Gilbert McCallum's grandfather, who was Madeline's (Cecile's) husband. Another one was (Lacincort) Eliza Gerard's husband. He was also a good fiddle player. They were self-taught. (Change of venue) We used the horses just for work. We did logging. We'd haul logs to where Johnny Daigneault's house is situated. There used to be a sawmill there owned by Tony Erickson. We would bring logs to him. From across the lake, we would cut logs all summer and haul them in the winter. We also had a barge. We would go to the Beaver to make hay. We'd stay about a month. Everybody would move the whole family, including the Gardiner family. We'd work together. We all worked together even when we'd build houses. When we were done one house, we'd then build another for someone else. Nowadays, nobody will help each other unless they get paid. Back then if someone killed a moose, we'd share the meat. That way nothing was spoiled. They can any remaining meat and fish when we caught some. We ate fish, caribou, muskrat. We also ate beaver and bear. There was no garbage back then. The bear had good meat, because it only ate berries and they were fat. They would render bear fat and use it for any kind of illness. They didn't get the scrip. Somebody else would sign for it, for example, my grandfather, I don't know what happened to his scrip. Yes, we fished in summer and winter. That was one means of survival. We would check our traps after we've checked the nets. The nets were made of cotton and easier to tear, not like today, they're made of nylon. The buyers would go down the Beaver River. I remember the horses were Clydesdales. They would plow all the way. That's who my dad and George Gardiner sold their fish to. They would buy only white fish and they pay ten cents a fish. The buyers were from Big River. They would trade for food. Whatever was not spent on food, they would get money. They never paid much for furs, for example, a red fox was twelve dollars and a silver fox was fifteen dollars. This was when I was twelve years old and we were still living with my grandfather. The buyers would stop there on their way to Patuanak. When they ran out of food, they would return home, hauling fish. When Vital, Harry, Louis, Matilda were orphaned, my dad raised them. Harry went with Father Morrow. They moved from place to place, picking berries. Father Morrow wrote to Montreal. He wanted Harry to join the priesthood, but it

didn't come to light. Yes, we were in a bush at the time. For instance, we'd trap muskrats. We'd trap a thousand in one month. We stayed on the trap line in a tent. When it would freeze, we'd then fish and trap. We used dog teams. My mom stayed home, Sandy Point, to look after the little ones. When Frank and Jules were of age, then they would come with us. When they were capable of helping, they would come with me. By that time, my dad didn't go on the trap line too much, so it was up to me to teach them to fish and trap. We went as far as Elbow Lake. Just the three of us. We went in February and stayed till March, a month and a half. We lived in a tent and used dog teams. We sold the fish. The Bay bought it for Waite. They would come for the fish. They would pick it up by bombardier. Pete Hansen drove the bugs. He pulled a sleigh, because there was a lot of fish. This one time, Wesahkecak was carrying a burlap canvas bag over his shoulder. He was hungry. The ducks asked him, "What's in the bag?" Wesahkecak told them he had songs in the bag. Blind dance songs. "This evening I will show you my brothers. We will dance together." So when evening comes, Wesahkecak blindfolded the ducks and called the dance, but one duck was curious, the fall duck. So he peeked and saw Wesahkecak wringing the necks of his brothers. The fall duck yelled out, "He's going to kill us all!" Wesahkecak kicked the fall duck on the butt. That is why the fall duck has only half a tail. So Wesahkecak cleaned and cooked the ducks he killed. Just then a weasel appeared. He made Wesahkecak a bet. "Let's have a race. The fastest one gets to keep the ducks." The weasel pretended to limp and Wesahkecak asked him if he'd had enough. The weasel said, "You go a little further." In the process, the weasel hid the ducks and ate them later. Wesahkecak was still hungry. Picture of Marie Jean Morin and Evangeline Daigneault (Clara's mom). Picture of Felix Morin (Leon's paternal grandfather). Picture of Evangeline's husband.