
Interview with Isabelle Impey

Date: July 25, 2001

Interviewed by Leah Dorion-Paquin and Maria Campbell

Also present Cheryl Troupe and Louis Dorion

Track Two

0001 Maria: I've never done anything like that. I can bead and I've been doing quite a bit of it this winter because I almost lost it. You have to do it a lot to get it.

0009 Isabelle: Oh, you have to practice.

Maria: Otherwise your tension is...

Isabelle: Oh that's exactly...

0019 Maria: The first piece I did, my tension was, it was just bunched up but the last one I did it was just flowers. But I don't have time to do lots of embroidery.

Track Three

0026 Isabelle: Do you remember Mrs. Carriere used to bead? Ah, this is her style of beading and that...

Louis: [Speaks in Cree]

0038 Isabelle: I haven't seen beadwork done like this in a long, long time.

0040 Isabelle: I am going to try it ...

0043 Louis and Isabelle: [Speak in Cree].

0047 Isabelle: Agnes I think is her name, so I thought I'll...

0050 Louis: [Speaks in Cree]

0053 Isabelle: I'll bead this piece and see how it works with nice bright red.

0057 Louis: [Speaks in Cree]. I remember them by their nicknames.

0100 Isabelle: Yeah.

0103 Louis: [Speaks in Cree]. I knew his last name.

0109 Isabelle: Yeah, you're so used to calling them by their nickname.

0112 Louis: Yeah I know.

[Edit out Leah and Maria]

0212 Leah: So we're in Prince Albert, at the residence of Isabelle and Ernie Impey and we're doing an interview for the Gabriel Dumont Institute Archives.

0221 Leah: Present is Isabelle Impey, Louis Dorion, Cheryl Troupe, Leah Dorion and Maria Campbell.

0229 Leah: I guess first of all let's start the interview with the basic information. Auntie, where were you born and where were you raised?

0235 Isabelle: Okay, I was born in a small northeastern community, Cumberland House, and just a little information, Cumberland is one of the oldest settlements in western Canada. The very first Hudson's Bay Company inland post so it has a rich history and particularly it's rich with the Métis culture.

0256 Leah: Could you tell us about your mother and the names of the family members that you were raised with?

300 Isabelle: Okay, I was raised ah, I was very fortunate I had more than one mother because we had the extended family system. My mother Cecilia, and you can see her picture behind me, but as well in our family the aunts were very much part of the upbringing and so I was very fortunate. I had Maria as well, Ann and Helen, and so I was never without a mother. They all became my moms as I was growing up and then there was a string influence as well by other aunts in the community like Agnes Douchene.

0345 Leah: What do you remember about your mother? What do you remember most about your mother?

0348 Isabelle: My mother was a very strong individual and very determined. She had a lot of aspirations for us when we were young people, things that we would do with our lives and sort of coached us along in terms of where that would lead. Ah, I have to share a little story; I think it's an interesting one in how creative a person should be when you are working with your own children. When I was fourteen I told my mother that I'd had enough school, I didn't want to go back to school. I learnt probably as much as I wanted to learn and she never argued. She never said, "You've got to stay in school" or all these things. She didn't. She said, "Okay." So I went home and when I was home I was probably home about an hour and a half to two hours. All

of a sudden my great uncle, in the Cree language we called him grandpa because there is no such thing as a great uncle in the Cree language, so my grandpa Gabe showed up with his dog team and he said, "Are you ready?" and I said "For what?" and he says, "You're coming to the trap line. You've had enough school, you're gonna come and learn how to work for your living." So I went to the trap line and I spent six weeks there and I skinned muskrats for grandpa Gabe, Pat Sayese, Mr. Douchene. When I got back my fingers looked like little muskrat hands. [Laughter] Ah I worked so hard when I was there. I skinned close to twenty thousand muskrats and I'm now very close to retiring but I haven't quit school since. I take classes whenever the opportunity comes. So the strong influence was very different of course in terms of how she raised us.

544 Leah: Can you tell us about your grandfather?

548 Isabelle: Okay, my grandfather ah, some of the history of my grandfather, as is common in northern communities, the ah, women have had hard lives and actually died early in their life and that's what happened to my grandmother. So my family then, you just shift a little, change positions but you still continue caring and so the siblings take care of each other and finish raising each other and then they took care of grandpa as well. But our grandfather was very strict, in terms of what he expected of us and very kind in other ways. One of the things he always said, "My grand first language is Cree" and he used to tell us [speaks in Cree] meaning "My grandchild, you have to have an edumacation." He couldn't say education but we understood what it meant and so he always reminded us that if we were to survive in the outside world we had to be edumacated. So we all tried to be a little bit educated.

0708 Leah: Speaking of education, one of our questions we are interested in hearing is where did you receive your formal education in the community?

0719 Isabelle: Okay, I went to Charlebois School in Cumberland, you know. I think it is still called Charlebois School. And that's where I went. I've never had other teachers; they're always part of the church, the Catholic Church, and they were always nuns and when I couldn't take any more classes in Cumberland I went to Zenon Park and when I arrived in Zenon Park, my first language was Cree, my second is English and the classes were actually taught in French when I arrived there. So there was a major shift in terms of having to learn a new language as well as take my education.

0757 Isabelle: So, the last year however, I came to Prince Albert, I graduated from the Lady of the Providence, its convent.

0809 Leah: And just to get a few more information items about your

family, who was one of the... can you explain some of the influential people and what they taught you about who you were, your culture, in your family or community?

0825 Isabelle: Okay, well, I think the whole community shapes a person, and certainly Cumberland shaped me in terms of where I was going to go with my life. The other person who's gone and ah spent a lot of time with and taught me many things, ah, that I considered a stepfather was Jim Brady. Jim Brady taught us a lot of things, things that are not normally associated with men. For example, he taught me how to do my Chinese cooking. I didn't know how to do that, nobody in Cumberland actually did. Do you remember that?

911 Louis: Yeah I remember that.

914 Isabelle: And I used to spend a lot of time with him. The other thing he did is that when we were quite young yet, we would sit around and he would give us these big volumes, these books. They were hard covered books and he'd say, "You want to sit down and read something and you don't understand, ask." So he actually introduced us to our reading. Our reading was really important to us and, but as well he was very strong either the Métis he made sure that we had our contact. He had a lot of meetings in our home and there would be a lot of people in our household like Bill Berezowsky, who was with the CCF party. He would be in our home and we would have their political meetings and as young kids we would listen, we were never asked to leave, so we'd sit around and listen to these meetings and there was people like Malcolm Norris. I remember a lot of the strong Métis influential individuals who really shaped the way that I looked at the plight of the Métis. Because they had to bring that information into the community in order for me to understand what was happening outside of the community. At one time we asked grandpa, "You know, we have heard of the battle in Batoche and we heard about the Métis who died there and how were we involved in that battle?" and he jokingly said, "I wasn't a fighter, I was a lover, so we weren't in the battle" but really, he said the people in the northern part where we were living were not close enough to the battle and I think he indicated that if we had been closer we would have been part of it and so all of the people who came into the community as well as the community itself provided them guidance and nurturing and pushing us into what we are today I think as individuals.

1132 Leah: Isabelle, can you tell us how Jim Brady was connected to the family?

1138 Isabelle: Okay Jim Brady was connected to the family through my mother. He was common law spouse to my mom. At the time they first met, Jim came to Cumberland to work for the Department of Natural

Resources, at the time was called. When he came there he met my mother and they started a relationship and he got fired from his employment with DNS for daring to be part of the community in terms of living with a women in that community.

1221 Leah: We just want to get back to remembering your childhood, listening to meetings. As a child what was your role in the family? What was expected of children in the community and your family when you were young?

1239 Isabelle: Well in our family I think I have to explain our family. There's 13 of us. We're the baker's dozen and we all had the task of looking after each other. The ones that you're closer to are the ones you spend the most time with and in terms of age and so there was so many of us, we all had jobs to do, and we all had to do certain things. I remember some of the jobs I did at home to make sure all the burden didn't rest with the adults and although I don't remember it being tough, I don't remember it being difficult to do those things. When I hear the kids today say, "I can't do that. I'm too tired" and it makes me chuckle because we literally went on our knees to scrub floors. We had a big house and we had wooden floors and they had to be white and they had to be really clean so we would put ashes on the floor and we'd take the scrub brush to make sure the floors were white so that when the visitors came and people needed to sit on the floor it was always clean. And if you had a lot of visitors, especially if there was a political meeting, you'd end up with half of the people sitting on the floor because there wouldn't be enough seating space and my aunts were really fussy housekeepers and they always said, you want the place to always look good because when ever the door opened you don't know who is going to come and you want to welcome everyone and you want them to know that they are important to you.

1425 Leah: What types of chores were expected of you daily as young children?

1433 Isabelle: Okay well I always helped with the cooking and it's something I still love to do. When it came to scrubbing and things like that I was part of that. A lot of the outdoor work the boys did; we did the indoor work. Like Louis would end up doing, going out there and sawing the wood for example, or he may end up hauling the water.

1500 – 1600 Isabelle: So the boys in the family would be outside doing Chores, cutting wood, bringing the wood in, hauling the water in, because you have to go get the water from the river; we didn't have wells or running water. And the other things that we were involved in were making sure the kids were always dressed clean and ready for school, so we had a variety of tasks that we had to do. The other chores that we did, I had several responsibilities and they were

wonderful. I think those responsibilities gave me a pretty good understanding of the things we had to do.

1851 Isabelle: Although it wasn't expected of us, we did a number of other things, we did, simply because the need was there. I spend a lot of time in my younger days when I learned to write to go write for the elders in particular. I used to go at least once a week to Mrs. McAuley's who was illiterate but she didn't want people to know she was illiterate. The first few years after that it didn't matter, but I would read her letter out to her that her family would write and then I would respond to the letters on her behalf. I think I gained a real appreciation of the situation when people can't read or write and what needs to be done to help them and I think we still have a lot of people out there that need help but I don't know if that help is there. I gained a friend, she became a wonderful friend, and later in life she adopted my son as her grandchildren. She became an extended family member and a wonderful addition to our family, so I did these little things for her, but in return I often would do things for her husband. I would skin muskrats and then she taught me how to cook as well. She used to make boulets and we enjoyed making boulet soup and right until a few months, the last visit that we had with her she made boulets and bannock. Indian biscuits she called them (2028) for my kids and my kids expected that meal when she came. It was associated with her, and the kids also got their traditional foods because boulets are traditional to Métis and so are Indian biscuits as she called them, bannocks, small bannocks. The other thing that we did and I really enjoyed, Louis would go and snare and just to be outside I'd go with him because we were good friends when we were younger and still are today. I would follow him and go help him with his snares and we used to get a lot of rabbits. Its funny we don't have long ears, eh?

2110 Leah: Yeah.

2113 [Laughter]

2113 Leah: Good food though, eh?

2115 Isabelle: We ate a lot of rabbit in our days and it was fun to do that. So we had other jobs, but I think that the highlight of when I think back is when we had this big circle of people in the kitchen and they'd put all the lights on and they would throw a cloth on the table and we had benches and the women would gather and do you remember when we made that beaded jacket for Pierre?

2146 Leah: Oh yeah, I remember that yeah.

2148 Isabelle: We were quite young then and learning to bead and the

women were showing us, this is how you bead and this is how you make this. It was a moose hide jacket. This is where I started and as soon as I could handle needles, I was allowed to participate and it was such a nice warm place to be and you'd have this, maybe burns lard pail or something with a lamp sitting on top so the light would spread throughout the table so everyone could see their needles and their beads. We would be making these jackets or different garments for the men in the family or else we made moccasins for ourselves.

2238 Leah: Could you tell us about what types of clothes were made in your community and a bit about sewing in general?

2245 Isabelle: A lot of clothing was made in the community and I think it's fair to say there was no affluent people in the community.

2348 Isabelle: So some of the things we made in the community were garments for people to wear, particularly things that you want people to be warm in the winter. We did a lot of the leather work for jackets and shoes to keep your feet warm, so we ended up making a lot of moccasins and the wrap-a-rounds were very common because we had a lot of snow and so you would have these wrap-a-rounds so you could tie them around your leg and keep the snow out so your feet would stay dry. The other things that we made would be blankets. We made a lot of quilts and different kinds of blankets to keep the family members warm during the winter and the cold months.

2433 Leah: Where did you get your material from?

2436 Isabelle: Well quite often the material we would use would be clothes that people didn't want to use. Some of them would be too faded or had rips, so you would cut pieces out and you'd make these, auntie Ann used to call them these "all kinds of blankets."

2453 Louis: That's a quilt yeah, that's the name of them.

2455 Isabelle: You had so many kinds of colours and they were common. Sometimes we used to think that the women had a competition in the community because they all had these long clotheslines and it'd seem like the same day, everybody would wash their "all kinds of blankets" and they'd have twenty of them hanging out there and they were so colourful. It's a shame we never got any pictures of these clotheslines because they were awesome to look at. And the moss bags, the people you knew how loved and how welcomed and how anxious people for this new child that was going to come and you would see this beadwork, would be just intricate and a lot of work for this little baby that was going to come along, so moss bags as well were made.

2551 Leah: Could you tell us when, at what age did you learn to do

beadwork?

2555 Isabelle: You know, I don't think I can tell you the exact age. I think there was influence as soon as I was old enough to handle a needle, because the women were always beading. It was, what was beautiful about it was it was always a social event. They all get together and there would be a big pot of tea and the women would sit around and they would bead and tease each other or tell stories and it was wonderful and it was a nice way of coming together with other women in the community. And there was some real awesome beadworkers in that community. Some of the work that they did, you know, you'd see the work even on the animals. Like you'd see a dog blanket, a beaded dog blanket that, so they weren't just beading for family members but actually beading to decorate another part of their life, which would be their dog team, because that was the common transportation in the wintertime. We didn't have vehicles there. Later in life we had one truck, eh.

2702 Louis: Yeah.

2704 Isabelle: The imperial oil truck, but we never knew on what side of the road he was going to drive.

2712 Leah: Cyril Saboyer?

2712 Isabelle: Yeah.

2714 Leah: Can you tell us a little bit about the beadwork you noticed as a young person? What were the styles like?

2726 Isabelle: The most common style is floral designs, that you see here. These are the most common ones in Cumberland. Everything had beautiful flowers and they were bright colours and bright beads. So we saw a lot of the floral designs in Cumberland and you see some of those floral designs as well of this little child's cradleboard the, but we also had other designs and there was an influence of the Dene in our community. Like the McKenzie's had the Dene background and we also have Dene in our family, our great grandmother came from Lac Brochet and the Dene part of our family compliments Angie's coat because they tend to make more of the pointed flower, not the round flower that the people made in Cumberland but more of the pointed ones and I think it's wonderful to be able to adopt the two cultures, the two beading patterns from those two nations and incorporate them into your own.

2845 Leah: Auntie, how would you describe a Cumberland House beadwork style? What would be representative of something coming from the community, distinct to the community?

2856 Isabelle: Cumberland House beadwork, the style of the beadwork in Cumberland was mainly floral, rarely would you see animals, and I think the beadwork in Cumberland and there's still that strong influence today, is to show beadwork is tedious. If you're not used to doing it and if you're not doing it for the joy, but you want to make something special for someone, it's your way of saying, "You're special. I did all this for you," and generally it would be the floral pattern. Later in years you see the other roses. I've seen the rose style coming out of Cumberland and I don't see this style at all coming out of Cumberland. They've lost some of their old styles as well; they're totally missing from the beadwork, which is unfortunate because that is so beautiful when you can combine all those different designs in that.

3012 Leah: This style, this old style, could you tell me a little bit about this old style right there?

3016 Isabelle: This is probably one of the oldest styles and one person is still alive that does this type of work. It's Mrs. Carriere, and some of the work that she does you don't see anywhere else. You don't even see it in the community. Its, there's no particular I think rhyme to what you're putting together. What you're doing is putting a lot of beadwork with lots of nice colours and you're making sure what you are decorating is going to be fully decorated, it's going to be loved. will complement the person who is going to be wearing the garment or piece of clothing. This is one other example I'm starting to work on; a vamp, this vamp. I haven't seen this beadwork as well. It's from Mrs. Carriere. What I want to do is to bead this and I think I'm going to use a lot of bright red colours and I want to send it to ah, Mrs. Carriere and have her look at it so she can tell me if I did something wrong, or if that's the right way, if that's consistent with the kind of beadwork that she does. So when she looks at it then she's going to give me a lesson to make sure that I'm correct and that's the way to do it.

3145 Leah: Isabelle, could you tell us a little bit about Mrs. Carriere for the GDI archives, what you know about her?

3153 Isabelle: Mrs. Carriere, her first name is Agnes, she has a big family as well. Some of them still live in Cumberland. She was MacKenzie before.

3214 Louis: There's eight in the family. I think there was eight or nine, eight for sure.

3220 Isabelle: She, I believe she learned her bead from her mother as well, because she was so busy you didn't see too many pieces, other work. But you still, some pieces of her work there and they are very traditional, what's she's done. She hasn't modernized her beadwork;

she's stayed with the traditional beadwork. She was married to Pierre Carriere, who was a veteran and was well known in Saskatchewan. And I believe that her son Ken Carriere works for the Department of Northern Education in La Ronge, and when Ken was expecting his first grandchild we told him to get a beaded pattern from his mom and we made him a moss bag, but it was his mother's pattern that we beaded for Ken, and he was so pleased with the results. So you kind of want, if you're going to do something like that, it's so special, you want to get as much information as you can about the person. I would never commercialize beading because it is so special for the person you are making it for; you don't want to just do a whole bunch and not put some meaning to it. I always say that each of the beads that you put on is the spirit of giving or the spirit of caring or the ah, spirit of showing that you think a lot of this person, and you want this person to have a little bit of something that you put together for her.

3409 Leah: Isabelle, what type of colours do you like in your beadwork?

3412 Isabelle: Oh I love all colours. I go to a store where they have beads and I imagine all kinds of flowers and I pick up everything when I'm in there, colours that I don't have and I must have over 200 kinds of colours. I've got beads from northern Saskatchewan, Northern store in PA, I've got beads as far down south as Fort Hall in Idaho. So I've got beads from all over North America, and if I find more, I'll probably buy more. I just love beads.

3452 Leah: In old Métis beadwork in Cumberland, were there colours that the old Métis women preferred?

3501 Isabelle: There's a lot of red and a lot of greens but we didn't have the selection that we have now. I think if we would have had the selection we would have seen just as many colours.

3516 Leah: Isabelle, this is a question Sherry Farrell-Rosette asked me to ask you. When you are beading, what is, are there any special techniques that you use? Do you draw an outline, or do you just go right onto the material without any planned structure ahead of time?

3536 Isabelle: Okay, you do it a variety of ways. If I don't have a pattern of something I would like to bead, I might start it on a piece of material or a piece of leather and I will count the beads. You spend a lot of time counting to make sure that you have the number so that if you are going to do it for two pieces and you want the pieces to match, you know exactly how many beads you used and what colours, so you keep track of the information that way. But quite often what I do is I make a piece, then I trace the back of it so that when you're finished a pair of vamps for example, they are going to be identical,

you're not going to have several different ones. So I use paper in that case, and then at the end, when you're finished, for example, the, you see here, these are identical. I used paper, then when I'm done I just pull the paper off and because you punch so many holes in it with your needle, the paper usually just rips right off; it doesn't stay there, it's easy to come off, but I like experimenting, I like trying something different.

3645 Leah: Do you prefer to bead on any specific material? Do you have any preference?

3650 Isabelle: The best thing I have ever beaded on is that kind of leather right there, the naturally tanned leather. It is the nicest thing to bead on. You have to be careful with cloth because it will bunch up on you if your beads are too tight for example, and you also have to put a backing on it so your beads won't pull through. When you're working with this, you never have to do that. It's so natural it makes so much sense to bead on this kind of leather and then I've done, as you can see, I'm working on a bear foot here. This is commercial leather but it has a smooth finish and it is actually quite easy to bead on. Sometimes these pieces that are split hides are a little harder because they stretch, so as you bead on them you have to be careful how hard you are pulling so it's a little bit more difficult using a split hide.

3758 Leah: I have another technical question. Some elders recall the use of horsehair to outline the vamp on a moccasin. Do you remember any of those techniques in Cumberland?

3811 Isabelle: Absolutely, horsehair was used, that was used to finish off. If you pass me that moccasin Louis, what you see here is, you do the vamp, this flower was done first, and then you do the fill in, then you do the outline, and then you always leave a little piece when you sew this down to the actual moccasin, you always have a little piece. You can see this piece here because it's white, because I did this, it's on wool, and you'd do the horsehair and it's hide this, you wouldn't see any of this in here and you have quite a few strands of the horsehair and you came back and you came around the horsehair with embroidery thread, then you had a beautiful finish around the moccasin, and I remember the horsehair being, like even if some of the thread came off, the horsehair sat there. I think horsehair was really strong, and I think you could have used it for more things but it certainly did a beautiful job in the finish up of a moccasin. I've seen that in Cumberland, I remember grandpa always had his dress up moccasins...

3936 Leah: About the moccasins in Cumberland House, is there a style, could you describe a style that you noticed in the community?

3645 Isabelle: In Cumberland they had several styles, but one was a

pointed toe. It was, I haven't seen that style. This part was pointed, you had all the beadwork, but this was pointed like this and you wouldn't have this down; it would be standing up and those were the dress up ones and you always wore your moccasin rubbers with them. You didn't get those ones dirty; you saved them for good wear and I saw the men wearing that kind of style. These came a little later and when I was growing up, had this style as well with the rounded foot, but the old style I remember Mariam Carriere making those pointed ones, and what intricate work she did on those.

4041 Louis: The pointed ones were great for snowshoes; they worked good for that.

4044 Leah: A little bit more about moccasins. Did you notice a difference between men's and women's styles of moccasins? Were there any gender differences in regards to footwear?

4100 Isabelle: I think the women spent so much time preparing moccasins for everyone else. I always noticed there was a lot of beautiful beadwork on the men's moccasins and sometimes I used to think it was a shame they would hide so much of the beadwork because they had to wear rubbers over them or something else. But the women in the community always had beaded vamps, not solid beading always, sometimes just a flower, but they always had beaded vamps but they didn't wear the ones with the beaded vamps standing up on the moccasin, normally just the regular with...

4145 Louis: You didn't mention the moccasin that we used to wear. They made for hunting with, they were high and you tied the laces around; they were different just straight leather.

4201 Isabelle: That footwear, you didn't necessarily bead those ones.

4208 Louis: No there's no beadwork at all.

4210 Isabelle: The men wore them for days and days, especially if they were out hunting and trapping. They had their moccasins and they were called work moccasins. They were wrap around, and I have to tell you another little story, because it is just so funny. I have a young man that adopted as his aunt and he wanted a pair of wrap arounds so I made him a pair for Christmas. This summer he's working in Fort Walsh in the interpretive center so he wore his wrap arounds and he ties them up and he was so proud of himself. He was going to be in there and explain about the fort for the tourists and he said there was several Kokums that showed up there when he was finished his presentation and when he was finished his presentation one of the grandmas walked up to him and said, "You know what young man? If I was twenty years younger you would have to marry me because you

have your wrap arounds tied up the wrong way!" So he said, "Why didn't you teach me how to tie up my wrap arounds?" I said, "I thought you were looking for a wife!" So there was more than one use for those wrap arounds!

4330 Leah: I want to also ask a question about silk embroidery. Do you remember any of the women doing silk embroidery in Cumberland house?

4343 Isabelle: Silk embroidery was commonly used in those pointed moccasins that I mentioned. There was a lot done in silk embroidery, vests were done in silk embroidery. They were beautifully done. The silk embroidery was just awesome and you would see their dress up clothes with a lot of embroidery. Sometimes somebody would buy a jacket, just a plain jacket from the store, and the next thing you know they'd be walking around with silk embroidery on their jackets. Somebody had decided to fancy up these jackets that were store bought. I remember Mr. Carriere, Adolph Carriere, always had silk embroidery on his moccasins.

4436 Leah: Isabelle, would you tell us a bit about, actually, did you do silk embroidery yourself?

4442 Isabelle: No I have never done silk embroidery.

4451 Leah: The other thing I had a question about is shawls. Do you recall women wearing shawls or do you recall anything about shawl use?

4458 Isabelle: The women in Cumberland wore shawls. They were very important. They wore them for many purposes, but you would never see the elderly women go to the community without their shawl. For example, if they went to church they were always covered. The shawl would cover their hair or their head would be covered, and you'd see the face. They used the shawl for weddings, special events, but all the women had shawls, all the elderly women. If you would visit them you would see the shawl had a special place, a special significance for them. The shawls look a little different today. I do make shawls, in fact, I have made, we had a celebration a couple of weeks ago and I made four shawls for that celebration. One elderly woman and three younger women each got a shawl as a gift for attending our celebration.

4604 Leah: Did the shawls have any beadwork or silk embroidery, do you recall?

4610 Isabelle: I most of them had floral patterns with silk and you saw a variety of patterns but mostly floral with leaves and stems and some of the elderly women just had their plain shawl, they didn't put

anything on their shawl. I never did know why they didn't put anything on their shawl. Mrs. Carriere and Mrs. McAuley never walked anywhere without a shawl.

4638 Louis: That's right.

4643 Leah: What type of material were shawls commonly made out of? Were there preferences?

4649 Isabelle: They had different kinds of shawls. The winter shawls were all wool. You could tell from the unraveling to make the fringe. They would take the wool off and you could see that it was wool. In the summer they had lighter shawls and they were probably blended material, but I don't think the shawls ever wrinkled now that I think about it. So they must have had silk or something that doesn't wrinkle very much, you know they always looked so nice, they always seemed to sit in the same row or rows and they had their shawls and it looked so nice. Such a nice feeling to see them all dressed up for whatever special occasion it was.

4738 Leah: Since we are on the topic of sewing and women's dress, did you ever recall making dresses?

4744 Isabelle: Yes we made dresses.

4748 Leah: Could you tell us about that?

4748 Isabelle: The dresses were always cotton material. Cotton is probably the fabric that was available through the HBC, which is where the material came from, and we never used a pattern but we all ended up looking the same style, so it was obviously something that was taught to us, from generation to generation, because all the dresses except for the colour were all cotton, all looked the same, design anyway.

4820 Leah: How would they look Isabelle? I'm trying to get a picture in my mind.

4825 Isabelle: Last time I saw one made was when Mrs. McAuley came to stay with us and it looked exactly like the one I had seen 30-40 years ago, and she had a skirt with a little bit of material pulled in so it would fill in a little bit more. It wasn't a straight cut skirt, and then she had a top and she always had a v part for hers but I remember some of the dresses being rounded and they all had sleeves about up to here and they were all made in the same design.

4909 Cheryl: What about moosehair tufting? Did you do tufting?

4916 Isabelle: I, no, we didn't do moosehair tufting in Cumberland, but I

don't know why we didn't because we sure had a lot of moose. I was raised on moose meat we could have probably done that over the years. I have seen some really nice moosehair tufting and there's an individual who was raised in Cumberland who later learned to do moosehair tufting, is now quite famous for her work and if you travel in different parts of Canada you'll see her work. Myrtle Demoule, she used to be Myrtle McAuley. You can see her work all over. I've seen it at the airport in Winnipeg for example, and I've seen some in Ottawa and so it's something that she picked up. It's wonderful; her mother was a wonderful beader and she made beautiful beadwork and she made all kinds of leatherwork and fur. Fur of course is not an easy thing to do. You have to know a lot about it to do a good job, but her daughter ended up doing moosehair tufting, which is good to see. It wasn't something she picked up from her mom but she obviously appreciated her mother's talent and so she's got her own now.

5025 Leah: Isabelle, did women ever wear any belts or anything of that nature, for special occasions or every day use? I'm thinking of cummerbunds, Maria.

5040 Isabelle: I think the only time you would have seen them is if they were having a wedding or some kind of special occasion where someone may be receiving some type of special recognition. Would have, it would have been the more dressy part of the, dress everyone wore in the community.

5106 Leah: Another thing we are interested in getting your perspective on is leggings. Were leggings something...?

5117 Isabelle: Yeah, I don't remember leggings being part of the...in fact, most of the older women wore their dresses really long, so you probably wouldn't have seen their legs very often.

5145 Leah: So you've done a lot of mending and sewing. Could you tell us about coats that you recall people making through the winter? Has that influenced your making of coats today?

5200 Isabelle: I think the influence I have is the way the women's coats and men's coats are cut different. For example, if you're going to put fringes on, you put the fringes like hers, kind of rounded but the men have a point to theirs and so, that's something that I learned in the community and you can see a little bit better on the vest with the, if you look at it you'll see it's not rounded, it's actually got a different style or a little bit more of a point to it. The other thing is that men used to wear a lot of wool pants. Do you remember the wool pants men used to wear? They were really nice, especially if you were on a trapline and you got wet they were safer for you. I don't see some of

that, that clothing doesn't exist anymore. We've gone into so many synthetics and these clothes that preserved lives in the cold, harsh winters, don't exist now.

5320 Leah: Do you remember sewing and mending as a young girl?

5325 Isabelle: You know, we had, so many of us, we never threw anything away; you fixed everything as well as you could and we had an aunt in the family who was wonderful. Do you remember Agnes sewing? She was known as a seamstress in the community. She did a lot of sewing for us.

5347 Louis: Yeah, she did for everybody.

5350 Isabelle: And she had one of those sewing machines where you could only have one hand free because you had to turn the handle of the sewing machine. She started off with that and I remember thinking, oh she's really doing well when she got a treadle because now she could use both hands. I don't think she had an electric one, she died before the electric ones came out.

5412 Leah: I'm sorry I didn't catch her name. Agnes...?

5416 Isabelle: Doucene. She used to be a Dorion, so she was our aunt.

5420 Leah: Were there certain times of the year when you did more sewing and more mending?

5424 Isabelle: I think we found more time in the winter to do all of this because the summers were really busy. In the summertime sometimes we'd be out bed by 5 o'clock in the morning because we had so many berries to pick before the heat of the day, and so we'd go out picking berries and canning them for the winter; then we could go out swimming in the afternoon. They had all kinds of good ways of convincing us to do our work. The treat at the end of the day, and we used to go picking sometimes in the winter ah, there's two kinds of berries that were available and we used to go with the horses and sleigh and we'd go with our pillowcases or flour bags and we'd go pick the high bush cranberries and they were really good and we used to have lots of fun. We'd make a big campfire and thaw out our frozen bannock so we could eat.

5528 Louis: The whole town went, most of the young kids. They were all there, they all packed lunches.

5535 Isabelle: And we'd have a big fire so that we could...

5542 Louis: [Speaks in Cree]

- 5544 Isabelle:** And after we brought them back, the women would can and ah, it was always such a treat when you could open one of those jars and enjoy the fruits of your labour.
- 5602 Leah:** Getting back again, moving in a little different direction...rugs. Were there any hooked rugs made that you witnessed, or any types of rugs made for the homes?
- 5616 Isabelle:** They made rugs with old material and they made the round ones, they were braided rugs not hooked rugs.
- 5625 Leah:** Now quilts, were there any quilts in any techniques or styles that you remember making in Cumberland house?
- 5637 Isabelle:** No, but anytime there was a piece of material that probably today a lot of people would throw out, the women would cut the material and they'd put in a box and if the box was ready and you would have a nice quilt you would start sewing the quilt pieces and of course the adults would put the quilts together.
- 5700 Leah:** Were there any designs? You hear sometimes of star patterns and, were there any particular patterns they'd make with these odd pieces, odds and ends?
- 5712 Isabelle:** I, I don't remember so much style, but I think they all tried to make something out of the...so it had some kind of design so it was just combining certain pieces or making diamonds with certain pieces and I think that's why I say it was almost like a competition when one would, was their quilts everybody would have their quilts out and everybody would see how they did their quilts and it was kinda nice. I can almost see those quilts. You'd go out on a summer day and they'd all be waving in the wind and...
- 5750 Leah:** Cheryl, can you think of anymore of the material culture?
- 5756 Cheryl:** What about other household accessories? Did you do beadwork on tea cozies and picture frames and pillows and that type of thing?
- 5808 Isabelle:** No, the only, we only worked on garments and we didn't actually do them on tea cozies or, not table cloths, mostly it was to, you wanted the love of your life to look handsome, so you would do all this nice work to have him dressed. I think the other reason too, because it might not stand as well if you put on something that you wash regularly or if you put it on a

pillowcase for example. You're laying on that or sleeping on that; it might not be good, but I've seen it done on cushions and in fact Mrs. McAuley made some for my grandchildren and they still have their cushions. They treasure the beadwork she did on the cushions.

- 5907 Maria:** What about hides? Did anybody make hides?
- 5912 Leah:** Yes, I have a question about hides. Did anyone, did they prepare their own hides in Cumberland, in our family? Do you remember processing and preparing hides? Could you tell us about that?
- 5926 Isabelle:** The women did the hides in Cumberland. The, it was a job they would get together to do it. Rarely would a person work alone, and they had all the tools to do that for the removal of the hair and all that went into the tanning and I remember saving the brain from a moose, putting it away because they would need it to soften the hide like they, in some cases they would use lard, but the brain of a moose was actually used to make the hide supple, like the piece you saw in that slipper and ah, you'd see hides all over the place in different parts of the hide being done. I think every female that lived in that community learned to do hides and if you didn't do the whole thing, at least you were helping and were part of it.
- 6031 Leah:** I guess one of the things we are trying to do at GDI is to really recognize those elders that did those really artistic works. Again, can you tell us a little about some of the well-recognized women who did the beadwork or silk embroidery?
- 6048 Isabelle:** Well, I can give you some names of the, a lot of the women who have passed on who are still with us in spirit as we do these things because they were our teachers, and because many of the women didn't write this information down, simply because they probably couldn't. Also, following tradition you give these gifts to the younger generation by teaching them how to do it, being part of their lives. Mrs. Margaret McAuley was one of them. If anyone wanted to, she would always be there for them; she loved to visit and she always had a lot of stories to tell and she made it a joy to spend time with her, and as she was doing this, she was actually teaching you other wonderful things. She is certainly one who is gone now, but has been a strong influence in my life and my family, particularly to me with the beadwork as she was getting older she used to drop beads, and I remember the year my mother died, Mrs. McAuley came to spend a lot of time with mom, and my oldest

granddaughter was going to kindergarten and she would come and spend time with the two because she thought it was so nice, to have two great grandmas and after Mrs. McAuley would leave, Chantel would volunteer to vacuum because she just loved to listen to the ping ping ping because she dropped so many beads and Chantel would say, "She didn't drop too many this time," or "She dropped quite a few." So for her it was nice to spend time with them, as well as appreciate what she was able to do. She made necklaces for them and we still have one of the necklaces that Mrs. McAuley made for Chantel. My beads I have sorted all out. I never have a jar of beads that are a hundred different colours; I always sort out my beads and they end up in these little pill bottles, but Mrs. McAuley didn't and what she would do is give them to the kids and she would say, "You can make yourself a pretty necklace with this," and so she would spend time and they would have these beautiful necklaces with all these colours and Chantel was really lucky that way. And Mrs. Carriere with her very strong traditional designs that she has, I hope she has given that to other people and that, I would like to see other people use her designs and carry on her work that she's got and she's getting up there now, she's getting older and some are still very much alive and are wonderful beaders and do very intricate work and live in the community of Cumberland and it's well worth interviewing at sometime. And one is Mrs. Virginia McKay and her husband is Donald. She is well known for the beautiful work she does and she still beads, and the other one is Pierre Dorion's wife Libby. She also beads. Another one that is very particular, if the bead isn't quite shaped the way it should be, she'll throw it out she won't put it in her work and you can see that in the work she does. It is really beautiful and she still beads. She is certainly another one that is worth interviewing. Mrs. Miriam Carriere did the traditional moccasins and it would be nice to talk to her daughter. Maybe they have a piece around as just a keepsake to get a pair if not they can be made. I think they are quite easy to make but I don't know if I would remember well enough how to put the horsehair and she never did a pair without horsehair on the vamp, to make sure she had a nice finish on the moccasin. Oh goodness there are a lot of wonderful beaders who lived in Pemmican Portage side if you were to go into the community of Cumberland and ask how many people still bead. It gives me a nice feeling to know that many of them are still beading. I know of some communities where the entire community has lost the skill of beading and I think it's just a sign of the times. People are busy and this is something that they don't have a whole lot of time to do, and I hope it doesn't get lost because it is fun. Beading is relaxation. For me, I spend

a lot of time beading just so I can enjoy myself. For some it's TV or reading. I like to read as well, but beading is my joy.

6637 Leah: Auntie, why don't we take a break?

[End of interview on Tape One]

Tape Two

0001 Isabelle: They would be done with hide the same as this, and the purses they would have a flap, the flap.

0024 Leah: Silk embroidery and the lack of access?

0025 Isabelle: Yeah, I think it was more lack of access.

0032 Isabelle: There's some of those Métis hats, but more fur.

0036 Maria: This one is hide and fur.

0051 Isabelle: I have never seen a picture where Louis Riel actually wore any beadwork.

0056 Maria: No I haven't either. Gabriel, there's a picture of him.

100 Isabelle: Yeah, I've seen his...

103 Maria: Someone said they saw a picture of Riel with a beaded vest underneath his frock coat, but I've never seen it.

113 Isabelle: These are those woolen shawls, those are the kind they wore at home. The old ladies wore them all the time.

120 Maria: And they would go to church, they would pull them over their heads.

124 Isabelle: And in the summer time they had the different type of, and they wore these too.

129 Maria: Those are more like a blankets, a blanket shawl.

130 Isabelle: Like a blanket, there's some of those done in canvas.

136 Maria: My grandma wore those (Cree word). They were just like this, but she had long skirts, on top of that and it was just to keep them warm I think when they were out in the snow.

- 151 Isabelle:** To keep their legs from getting cold because there was a belief that if you get wet certain times you, it wouldn't be good for you.
- 204 Maria:** That's how my granny looked, but she would have had a scarf on her, but she dressed like that.
- 211 Isabelle:** That's beautiful. I want to find one of those dresses.
- 213 Leah:** Yes, that's what I wanted to find. I have never...
- 217 Isabelle:** I wonder if I could find one?
- 220 Maria:** What do you call it? Sherry has a Cumberland House style, the old style dress because she was gonna let me borrow it for the, when I got the achievement award, but I told her I didn't want to wear it because it's Cumberland House. I don't come from Cumberland House, but it's beautiful. But it's an older style, the one you're talking about, they used to wear that style at home too. That's kind of a regular house dress.
- 255 Isabelle:** That was their every day dresses, and the dress up dresses always had long sleeves, puffy sleeves with tighter wrists.
- 300 Maria:** My grandma, her dress up dress had all these little things, like this all the way through, then a high neck and then she had big sleeves and I've got her, she had three buttons on each side and I've got her, there's six, seven, eight, nine buttons. They're little pearl buttons because, and they took them off when they washed the clothes.
- 322 Isabelle:** There's a dog blanket, with the bells. They always had the bells on them.
- 425 Leah:** You see the horse people, they really do the horses...there wasn't many horses in Cumberland was there? Were there?
- 432 Isabelle:** Yeah there were horses. They would decorate the horses with ribbons.
- 436 Maria:** They'd make ribbons and put them on top of the horses.
- 438 Isabelle:** And they would flow as the horses moved, you'd have these ribbons...

- 450 Louis:** They had the harness over the collar, and two prongs. They used to bring them way up, these two streamers.
- 457 Maria:** And then little bells down the side.
- 502 Isabelle:** And then they used to do some with wool eh? They would cut this wool and they would have different designs on the horse with the wool instead of fringes. You used them, and it depends on the use for, because they would really decorate the horses when they had a wedding, because they used horses...
- 520 Louis:** Because you have to remember, we didn't have cars. We used horses and wagons when there was a wedding party.
- 554 Isabelle:** That was the style of purses back home, the fold over style. And generally it was solid beading on the part that folded over.
- 614 Louis:** Most of the girls her age were really into this beadwork. For boys it was different; we were out in the bush setting snares, cutting pulp and a few different things.
- 745 Louis:** You have to remember, everyone made their own blankets, and quilts were the thing, and the outside of the quilt that was for summer and it, the winter, it was a feather robe.
- 759 Maria:** Or rabbit blankets?
- 805 Leah:** They called it seeseepigo in Cree. The reason they called it that was cause when the women in the fall, when the fall hunt was on, you'd see those hundred pound bags, white flour bags, when they were pulling the feathers, they were saving all the feathers. I bet you've seen that?
- 824 Maria:** I used to do it. That's why I don't eat ducks today.
- 829 Leah:** Then they'd lay the feathers out afterwards, they'd lay out this white sheet, you know, lay the feathers out evenly. Then they'd stitch in between, that's what they did, they'd lay it out this way then they'd stitch it about every four inches or so that way, so the feathers stayed in one spot.
- 850 Maria:** They made them better than they do today.
- 856 Leah:** It was all by hand; it was those long needles, long darning needles.

- 906 Leah:** When you were speaking about moccasins, you know a lot of those moccasins we had? They made them big pointed ones, and they made them big so you could put lots of sock in them?
- 919 Isabelle:** And we also put fur...
- 922 Louis:** Rabbit fur was on the inside.
- 922 Maria:** Yeah, years ago, they wore rabbit fur socks almost. They would wrap it around their feet.
- 930 Leah:** We never froze our feet; we'd have rabbit fur around them.
- 932 Maria:** We used to run to school with those things. I wanted to have felts like everybody else.
- 940 Isabelle:** I remember the felts, and you had to wear moccasins. They were probably wishing they could wear your moccasins.
- 940 Louis:** Your moccasin always had a double sole on it, it wasn't a moccasin like this. They always had a sole sewn on the bottom of it because we wore them when we were out hunting, maybe on a foot of snow. On a foot of snow you wear moccasins, you don't wear snowshoes or anything like that.
- 1002 Maria:** There were so many rabbits. It was cheaper to wear rabbit fur on your feet than it was wool socks.
- 1005 Louis:** Yep, it was warm.
- [Break to eat bannock]
- 1420 Maria:** When you're doing sewing and beading, stories are part of it?
- 1805 Isabelle:** (pointing to fringe on Angie's coat) This is rounded off here. Normally you would start your point from here like that, so, but this one is rounded for women and you'll see the same here with this one. It has, the same with Angie's coat.
- 1950 Isabelle:** (pointing to Angie's coat) I wanted to show you the difference and here's a vest that is done with the more traditional style from Cumberland House, and you'll see the, actually from northern Saskatchewan. That's the design you see but a little further north, particularly from the Dene side and we

have that influence in our family from our ancestors. They have the pointed petals instead as you can see from Angie's coat. These petals are pointed, they are not rounded off like those that are on the vest.

- 2030 Leah:** Thank you. Anything else Maria?
- 2904 Maria:** When you guys were talking about pointed moccasins, and she was talking about them, and you said they wore them because of snow shoes?
- 2915 Louis:** The moccasins I was talking about, the ones they made specially for hunting for people that would be out in the bush, they are made quite differently. There's no beads on them. They're still pointed, but the thing is, they were big. The moccasins themselves were quite large because you put all the bottom with rabbit fur to keep your feet warm. Then you wrapped your feet around with rabbit fur on top of that, with two or three pairs of wool socks and you slipped them on and your feet always stayed nice and warm and the back of them, these same moccasins that I'm talking about, had a double sole stitched on the bottom of them because you're going through rough terrain in the bush through the snow in the winter time, twigs and branches to walk through. They were made very tough for that very reason.
- 3005 Maria:** And you said they were, when Isabelle was saying that they were pointed, you said that for men they worked better on snowshoes?
- 3012 Louis:** I don't know. That was the pattern, the pattern was there when I was a kid and it has always been the way I seen moccasins as a kid. I don't know if that's how we inherited them from the Dene side or it was just traditional Cumberland patterns. I'm not sure, I'll have to ask Isabelle.
- 3029 Maria:** But did they slide in the snowshoe better if they were pointed?
- 3035 Louis:** No, what they did, it would give you a little more free movement with your toes and you could pack a little more fur in the front of it and you had good grip when you were walking through the snow. Not deep snow, deeper snow you have to wear snow shoes. When you're hunting in early fall or late spring you, when you wore those particular moccasins, they were made way up about to about the calf so you can pull them up around and tie them and a lot of the time the top half they used canvas instead of leather, they used canvas which is a

little lighter, lighter than leather because it gets pretty heavy walking through the bush after several miles when you're hunting moose, they were different.

3128 Maria: Okay, that's good. Now this other one, is ah, when Isabelle was talking about picking high bush cranberries and you said the whole town used to go?

3140 Louis: Oh yeah, it was a real outing, a social gathering, and it, that's the way it was until I left Cumberland.

3147 Maria: Tell me what it used to be like? Go back to that time.

3152 Louis: Ok, when I go back to that time, everybody knew when it was berry picking time. The berries were ripe at the portage. We didn't pick them at Cumberland, we picked them along the Saskatchewan River, 3 miles away at the portage, so everybody in the mornings, like Isabelle was saying, they packed up their stuff, we'd have our boiled tea in our sealers in our sock, (talks in Cree) and I'd say we mostly had 25 or 50 pound bags that we tied on at one end and this end here, that's where we picked our berries. We had our little pails, but this is where we kept them; we packed them behind you and it was a real social gathering because the whole community went, everybody went, that's just the way it was, it was time for berry picking. It's like harvest time out in the rural community, everybody comes to some kind of a do; this was ours. And ah, it was beautiful down at the portage that time of year. The weather always seemed to be really nice and we usually picked a weekend, I don't know why, usually a Saturday and I don't know if there was any particular reason, but that's when we went. Maybe they were busy during the week doing other things. And then we all packed our lunches and carried our bannock and a little bit of dried meat or whatever and we always took a few twenty twos along with us for protection, because there was a lot of bears up in that country and we loved to shoot prairie chicken along the way, that's what we roasted and cooked along the way. That was good, you know, everybody, we'd shoot a few on the way, there was always a few that we bagged and they did too because they were plentiful, not like now, because the bush is cut and they've kind of dispersed, but it was tremendous, it was a tremendous outing and even the little kids came along. They'd straggle along; some of them had to be packed. They were more of a burden than anything, but hey, you couldn't leave them behind. It's an outing, everybody's just heading that away, it's like when, it

looked like a migration route only it wasn't, it was berry picking time.

- 3419 Maria:** Thank you. That's a good ending for that. I think that's all the questions I had for you.
- 3507 Maria:** The question is, Isabelle, what I want you to do is talk about how everyone would sit around in a big circle in the evening and do their beadwork and that's where you learned. What else happened around the table? Did you share stories? Just kind of go back there. Imagine you're a little girl and tell me what's happening.
- 3528 Isabelle:** Generally the women would meet in different homes and if they came to our home, for example, it meant we were doing a garment or something that would be for the family. And when we finished that, everybody had a hand in that garment, everyone would share in the joy of making something, so if someone else needed some beading done we would go to their home from different places. It wasn't always in one place and as you were beading, as you were sitting around, the women always told stories; some were pretty outrageous, especially the older women who could get away with some of the stories they told. And I think there was also this really nice feeling; they were teaching you something without really making it look like they were really teaching you. If you made a mistake there was a lot of jokes and laughter about it. They didn't make you feel like you did something really dumb, so they would tell you. I remember auntie Mariah actually having to take a whole piece apart to teach me that you can't take a shortcut when you are doing something and everyone was laughing, "Oh she's in a rush, maybe she's got a boyfriend or something!" I remember the stories that went around the table and they made them up as they went around, and the humour was incredible. The ability to laugh and have a good time at the same time you're making something, and it was a joy to be around that table. I remember that particular time we were making a jacket for my brother because he didn't have a beaded jacket. It was done with moosehide, and he was actually the one that killed the moose and to celebrate his hunt you ended up making a jacket for him from the very hide he brought back from his hunt. And so it was, we knew it was going to be a special jacket and was a special time, there was that significance there. I think the joy of that time and the joy of doing these things are not there now because people can just go and buy, you can go buy a moosehide for example and you can make something for somebody, but the fact that this person

killed the moose and it was his moose hide, some of those gifts were there, which unfortunately are missing today.

3812 Maria: The other thing you were talking about, the women in your family, your mother, your grandmother and your aunties. Tell us a little more about them. I've heard many stories about them. They were quite remarkable women.

3829 Isabelle: Well I think they were remarkable in many, many ways. I think they were remarkable because of the time, when I left Cumberland, people would say things like we were poor and I would wonder, what does that mean? Because in our community, everybody was the same. There was no one well off than we were; everybody lived the same lifestyle and they had to work hard in order to make sure we survived in that community. For example, my mother was a trapper. She had her own trapline and she would go trapping every spring, and she would bring her muskrat home, and we all loved muskrat. That was a real delicacy for us. Even today, if I get a chance to have muskrat, I will. And she would bring it back and the meat was for the family for food and she was able to sell the pelts so we learned fairly early how to skin the muskrat so that it was in good shape. Do that you'd get the top price for it. We couldn't be careless when we were caring for the muskrats.

3946 Maria: Was that common for the women around there?

3950 Isabelle: There was a place called Goose Lake, which was near the community, so the women didn't have to leave their kids overnight, and the women who were inclined to do that outdoor stuff, and my mother tended to do more of that, I think because she was the oldest sibling and they were all girls. The younger ones ended up doing more of the house work and so my mother went, and others went as well, and they shared this place called Goose Lake, where they did their trapping. And one of us would go with her to help her carry the muskrats back because they were pretty heavy. It would either be one of the boys or myself and the first time I went to Goose Lake my mother said, "Just wait here and I'll go and check the traps and you can make some tea," and of course the bannock would be frozen because it was winter and so it was up to me to thaw out the bannock, but I was curious to see how my mother trapped, so I followed after her when she left and I got lost, but I managed to find my way back. And I came back and the tea wasn't made and the bannock wasn't thawed, so my mother was yelling, "Where did she go? She'll get back eventually." And I made it back okay, and, but there was always someone who

helped the women. But there were several women who went out trapping.

4124 Maria: So Goose Lake was the place for women trapping?

4128 Isabelle: It was the women's spot. The men didn't take it because they could go further, they didn't have to leave the children behind, so that was their place.

4138 Leah: The other thing I wanted to ask Isabelle, is the purses. Can you say a little bit about the purses?

4143 Isabelle: The women had a variety of different kinds of purses. Of course the fancier were for very, very special occasions and you rarely saw them. They would be the velvet ones with beadwork, usually with a drawstring. These would be the type of purse for a special occasion, but the normal purses you would see, women didn't carry purses then like they do now. But if there was someone carrying a purse it would be the fold over type and the part that folded over, generally would be beaded solid and they were beautiful purses. But it wasn't common. Generally they had purses more to keep important letters that they didn't want to lose. If you went into someone's house you would usually see this purse hanging, usually from a nail in the wall.

4246 Leah: Another thing we wanted to talk about is the ribbons and bands and how they were incorporated into things.

4255 Isabelle: There was a lot of ribbons used, but also yarn that was cut into sort of a fringe and they were used to decorate horses. Horses were still used for weddings and ceremonies, like if there was a winter wedding, the wedding party would be on the wagon or sleigh and the horses would pull them through the community and of course it was important that there was the feeling of joy and celebration that goes with the wedding, so they would make it so that the animals were also well dressed and the animals would have these ribbons flying in the wind as they were running. A lot of ribbon was used in the community for a variety of reasons.

4349 Leah: Isabelle, why do you think silk embroidery wasn't done on a large scale by women?

4356 Isabelle: I think, some of the women did the silk embroidery, but silk thread was very, very hard to find. It was also very expensive and I think that for the women who did embroidery, they had a hard time getting silk thread.

- 4410 Maria:** Isn't that interesting? Today it's the silk thread that's cheaper than the beads.
- 4415 Isabelle:** That's right. That's how things have changed over the years.
- 4422 Leah:** The other thing that we wanted your comments on are feather robes and rabbit fur, rabbit blankets.
- 4433 Isabelle:** The women saved everything they could in order to make life a little easier for the children, and I remember living in our old house, the two story, and my mattress actually had horsehair. It was a horse hair mattress I slept on and I've never seen one since then, I've never seen a horsehair mattress. And it was made, it was made for that bed and I would think, all those women collected that horsehair for a long, long time just so that I would have something to sleep on and it used to be quite remarkable if you think about it. But now, the other thing they did is actually saved some fur and they would make it into one big piece and so that, for example, traplines where it would be quite cold and they would take this fur, sometimes to lay on sometimes to cover with it, it could be used for a variety of things. But the common winter blanket we had our summer blankets and we always had these flannelette blankets, these were our summer blankets, we never had cottons, we always had flannelette and I think it was probably what was available at that particular time. I remember the women saving the, we pluck all these ducks and geese and they would wash the down and feathers, and then make the feather blankets and I still have feather blankets in my house. We used to have some of them at the lake and we had one redone. It was quite thick; we had to take some of the feathers out. I remember Wellington being quite upset because it came back so thin, the thick feather robes, and I also, we inherited one that belonged to grandma McAuley's deceased husband. We inherited it when he passed away and we still have it.
- 4642 Leah:** Anything else? Thank you auntie. We'll pause it.
- 4647 Isabelle:** I was just going to add one more thing, while I'm here.
- 4650 Leah:** I want to double check your mic because I'm getting some...it's rubbing on your shirt.
- 4707 Leah:** If you can think of anything else, we can always...
- 4728 Isabelle:** So in order to show the appreciation to all the

women that were here before me, and gave me the time where I could learn the things that I like doing and now cherish, my daughter that is here today also does a lot of beadwork, and she does really beautiful work. And I'm hoping the grandkids will also pick that up and that way it's a big thank you to all the women who were the mothers in my life and to Mrs. McAuley especially for her generosity, her patience and her good advice.

4812 Leah: Thank you. That's a beautiful ending.