

Tape Transcript

Title: Isador Pelletier

Media: DAT **Interviewer:**

John Arcand and Maria
Campbell

Location: Regina, SK

Text

Isador: It really stick in my mind and I used to wonder why it happened. My dad would go hunting deer all the time. That's what we lived on; it was one of our staple foods. What we lived on was mostly rabbits and chickens and deer and I remember my dad got caught for hunting deer and he went to jail for six months. Six months straight he went to jail and I think he got five or six days for good time—no parole—no nothing. He did his whole time.

John: Just to feed his family?

Isador: Yeah, just to feed his family, and one time the RCMP came to our house (inaudible) and these policemen came to the house and said, "We got a search warrant to search your house" they told the old man, my old grandfather, and he couldn't really understand English that good, eh, because all he spoke was French. He said, "Ah, come on in. Come on in," he said, "Don't need no warrant," and they turned the whole house upside down. "Do you have a cellar here?" he said. And he said, "Uh huh, it's right there." (inaudible) So, the RCMP went right down and that's where we had our potatoes and our turnips and all that. They were just a few minutes. Fleas! There were so many fleas down in there. They were brushing their pants. Oh jeez, I'll never forget that old man pretty near died laughing after that. There was nothing there. That was my uncle—they blamed my uncle for stealing a saddle. That wasn't very often you seen the policemen there. The only time there was lots of policemen come was when they would go AWOL—they didn't want to go back to the army.

Maria: Were there many people joining the army?

Isador: Oh (inaudible), they drafted. Some of them joined, but they drafted so many of them. My dad was drafted but he had had something wrong with his leg so they never took him. And then, of course, there was Fred Keller (inaudible). He was a (inaudible). He was married to my aunt. And then there was Paul Pelletier. Those guys went in '42 they went and then again—they went twice. They went twice to the front line. You know, when there was anything to do like that, always our people joined in, but the way the government treats us. I sat on the board with the NDP and when they asked me if I wanted to say something I said, "Yeah, I want to say something." I started telling them about what they did to us in Green Lake. Not in depth as I did to you, but I told them about what our illustrious leader, Tommy Douglas, done to us.

John: What did they say to you then?

Isador: You know, some of them didn't believe. Some of them didn't believe. That guy said, "You know, I've been an NDP for a long time and I never, ever heard of that." See, I say they're kind of denying it, eh. And I said, "You know if you go to the archives in Regina here, you'll see a lot of it. Even pictures of the people that were on that train. They had those, I remember.

Maria: Did they have pictures there?

Isador: Yeah, they took a picture of these young people in a kind of like a little—it wasn't a party car—but it was a place where they could go play, you know, these kids.

Maria: A recreation car?

Isador: Yeah, kind of like that. And the women did their own cooking on that train. They had kitchens and my mom would go and cook food for us and it was fun for us going. But I felt bad about our houses. And I was saying to my mom, "Where are we going to go now? All our houses burnt down." "Oh, don't worry" she said, "We'll find a place." And there was a guy by the name of Ben Campeau (inaudible) that's the one who was Alvin's (inaudible). He tried to start another one down north of Lestock.

Maria: Another Road Allowance?

Isador: Yeah, another one. There was a big road around there and the old man built a house there. He built a house there and again, working, going out and working—he went out and worked. And I'll be a son of a gun if those (inaudible) came there with bulldozers and while he was gone, they bulldozed his house down. So that was the end of that Chicago Line thing. Boy, there was so many talented people—singers and violin players. At one time, I remember them bringing a banjo in along with the guitars and the fiddles. Oh boy, that sound good.

John: What about jiggers?

Isador: Oh, there were so many there. There was one woman who was called Jeanne Sayer. She was a Pelletier, Joe Harry Pelletier's daughter. Wow, just like that woman was floating on the floor. They had three girls and all of them danced. It took a good person to be able to beat them. They knew all kinds of steps, you know. They learned from other people, I guess.

John: Are some of them still alive?

Isador: (inaudible) No, the only one I know that's still around here is Freddy Desjarlais. I haven't seen him for years but apparently, he's still living in town here.

Maria: And he knows those old dances?

Isador: Oh, you know, that guy could be jigging and he'd take a match and light that match with his sole and be still jigging.

Maria: Who would his family be to try to find him in town?

Isador: His family—gee whiz you know, I don't think there's very many of those people living any more. One of his brothers lived in Calgary but I forget that guy's first name. But he was a little bald headed guy. I remember one time he was wanted by the policemen and they went to that house a few times but he had a little hiding spot and they couldn't find him. So, one day we were downtown at the Met Hotel and geez, I seen this little woman walking, little fat little legs. Here it was this crazy little bugger dressed up as a woman. Had a wig on and everything.

John: They must have danced all kinds of different dances?

Isador: Oh, God yeah. They even had the Hungarians. That was our neighbours, all Hungarians. Them Hungarians would come over when they heard there was going to be a dance. Them too, and you know what kind of music they played? Even those guys were playing and the people still danced to those things. Yup, all kinds.

John: Did you ever hear about the Rabbit Dance and stuff like that?

John: (inaudible) Le dance de Cartier?

Isador: No, I never heard of those ones. I guess I was just a kid then and they wouldn't take me to them. Just when my uncle had dancing in his house and I remember going on the reserve there. They had a big house, these people before. I don't know how that flooring was. But I'll tell ya when they started dancing it was just dusty. Nobody paid no attention. They would be going outside just to cool off and have a drink of water.

Maria: Was there good storytelling?

Isador: Oh God. You know, we'd all sit around. I'd go and get a cool cup of tea and then I'd fill my old Grampa's pipe up and then I'd set it down. Right away he'd know what I wanted. Then we'd all sit around by his bed there and that old man would sit there. One, two o'clock in the morning we'd be still, that old man would still be telling stories and my God, some of the stories he told. "You know," he said, "We could have beat, Louis Riel could have beat those police men like crazy." He said, "They were green, like they didn't know nothing about fighting." He said, I remember, "I was just a little boy. I seen these guys come riding in and he had, our people were on each side of them. On each side of that place where they were coming in." He said, "Gabriel Dumont wanted him to shoot at these people but he wouldn't. Riel said "No, we don't want to start no fight." They ended up fighting anyway. But he said, "We could have beat them." They let them through, but to hear them tell the story that they were, what they did to our people. He told the story about, he said, one time the Métis always travelled in a band. They were down in this deep slope and there was hills on the side and all of a sudden he heard things hitting the water. There was some Indians on the top of the hill, were shooting bow and arrows at them. Then they ran away. They ran to the main camp and went and told their people. Just in a few minutes, he said, those guys were all ready and they just took right off after those Indians. I don't know what happened he said, but we heard a lot of shooting going on. They must have killed them all.

Maria: That was Sioux Indians?

Isador: Yeah, Sioux Indians. That's the ones they always had trouble with.
(inaudible)

Maria: (inaudible)

Isador: (inaudible) Flathead (inaudible) The Snake Eaters, you know the ones that ate snakes.

Maria: (inaudible)

Isador: Yeah, something like that. He said, "We pulled in and all over the place you'd see those old ladies sitting around waiting for these snakes, I guess." He said, "It looked like really white meat, just like they had it dried. Just like chicken," he said. They wouldn't eat them though.

Maria: Did you guys have stories of rogaroos (inaudible)?

Isador: Oh yeah. My old grandfather had those stories. One of the stories that stuck in my mind was a story that was told by my mom. We had a white family that came and asked the old man if they could build a house and they wanted to have a small garden and stuff like that. The old man said, "Yeah go ahead, you can live over there in that corner." And we had a great big lake there and it ran for maybe about 2 miles, 2 miles long. Just the other day I was telling my wife that story. And (inaudible) was walking along the beach (inaudible). It looked like a big log had fell toward the water and he wondered what that was and he got a little closer. And all of a sudden he seen the head. That big head like this, and just pure silver, the snake his head. And he said his gut started backing out. It almost got him, like it was drawing him you know. But he backed away, he got away from there somehow and he took off. So, the next morning I guess he thought well, I'm going to go check and see if that thing is still there. But it looked like somebody dragged something you know and went back into the water that thing. About 3 or 4 days later, I guess the thunder, I guess, was really low and just really constant and all of a sudden, I guess this guy was looking outside, and all of a sudden you could see that big snake. Them thunderbirds took that snake. It was just wiggling around, wiggling around. It went right into the clouds. And that was the morning after I told my mom that story. Good old stories like that you know. I remember too we had a

place down by Fishing Lake and these two old guys, one was Joe Desjarlais and the other one was my old uncle Tom Pelletier. I was wondering what they were doing. They were giving tobacco. So they started, they were having a contest to see who could tell the best story or the biggest lie or what. All damn night, I remember it was just coming daylight, that's when they had to stop because it was daylight. Holy God I never heard so many stories in my life. I wouldn't mind if I was sitting there with a recorder.

Maria: It was something. They always, you know, like you read it in books and stuff but I remember when I was a kid, you observed it. What was the relations like between men and women, like the work and stuff? How was that divided? You know, like history says that we were egalitarian which meant that our lives were pretty equal. Do you remember that, when you said that your mother used to ride horseback to go looking for (inaudible) which was kind of considered men's work. Did women do those kinds of things?

Isador: Oh yeah. They picked stones and stoked and you know, worked right along side of us. My mom was always there. She'd have to go and cook dinner but then she was there piling brush and stuff like that. When we had a job to do we done it. The whole family pitched in and that was one of the things that women, in them days, I don't know, they were so strong, they were just like men. They could do anything and it was, well of course, it was a hard life we had there and we had to try to make a living the best we could. There was so many, and all women, there was one woman I know that, and the women used to say well she's lazy. But I don't know if she was lazy or sick or what was wrong with her but anyways that one hardly worked, hardly did anything.

Maria: What about midwifery? You said that you were born at home. Were there midwives?

Isador: Oh, there was so many of them. Any old lady that lived on that land, they knew how to do that. And no problems, never ever lost a child.

Maria: Was there any one in particular that you remember, that people talked about?

Isador: Yeah, there was one old lady that was kind of the, what would you call her, the expert at things that if there's one old lady couldn't do something, you know, they'd run and go get that other one.

Maria: Kind of like the teacher?

Isador: Yeah, and I forget what the heck her name was. Margaret Pelletier? Joe (inaudible) his wife. That's the one. She was, what the heck was her last name? Genaille? She was Margaret Genaille and fair, they didn't look, they looked like a Métis. I remember that old lady was kinda the boss of that clan. She looked after everybody, the men and everything.

Maria: Did she pick medicines too? And did the rest of them pick?

Isador: They knew medicines, not extensively, but they knew what they needed.

Maria: You didn't have to run to the doctor all the time?

Isador: No, I only remember going to the doctor one time. I was in the hospital and I have a scar along side of my head here. I got run over by a wagon. It wasn't a hit and run. It was around here and it just took the skin right off and it was hanging down here so I had to go to the hospital and get 72 stitches that time, I remember. So anyways, going to the doctor, most of things that they went to the doctor or to the hospital for was the appendix. I remember my mom, she was so scared of horses and my uncle left his team of horses there hitched up on the wagon and me I was always, always, wherever horses were, that's where I was. So, I climbed up, I was sitting on top of the seat and a nice (inaudible) seat and my mom comes running out of the house and grabbed me and pulled me off and I jumped right on this bottle and landed, this orange crush bottle, you know how thick they

used to be? Well, I stepped right on that damn thing, right across my foot. They were having a hell of a time stopping, it must have hit the main vein. Tobacco, they used a whole can of tobacco and it wouldn't stop it. Came home, my aunt Liza there, in this picture there, she said, "You go and get me some bark, poplar bark." So, had all these kids chewing this bark and they filled that cut up with that thing and it stopped like that. Saved my life, I guess, because otherwise I would have been dead. I'd have bled to death. They wouldn't take me to the doctor. I crawled around there for I don't know, it must have been damn near a month, I guess and finally I got better but the things we went through. I remember this one time my Mooshum had a buggy and he said, "I want to go to town," and he said, "I need you to haul the groceries for me," so I went along. He pulled into town by the elevators there and we were crossing the track and that damn horse stopped. That old man was whipping that horse and whipping that horse and he wouldn't move. The train was coming. You could see them little flags, you know they were coming like this, and I was going to jump off and that old man wouldn't let me jump off. We would have been stone dead. Finally that damn horse, I don't know what he done to him but he made him go. The train just "whoop" right by us. That was another close call I got.

Maria: In those days people (inaudible)

Isador: Oh yeah. I remember that flyer. The one they called the flyer that was a fastest thing that they had around here. And that thing would be going 70 miles an hour. Right down that main line there, that (inaudible) line there. That was one of the main lines. Holy God, you see that things going by and the noise it would make. You know, they'd be pulling the whistle and the horses would be rearing up.

Maria: What did you think when you used to watch that flyer go by?

Isador: God, I had so many mixed feelings I didn't, you know, I always wanted to ride one and I never did. I never did ride one. I always wanted to ride one and I used to, you know I would think, ah well, that's just for the white people, you know, that's not for us. But, I remember also, you know, going to town and I think those five cent cokes and an ice cream cone. Holy God, I was in heaven. Yeah, things like that, you know that made me happy that I was living anyway.

Maria: I would like to ask you before we finish up here about your grandparents. You said they had scrip? What was your grandfather's name and where was he from?

Isador: His name was Frank Pelletier and they had come, the story that was told to me that they had one of those little pieces of land that ran into the water, you know.

Maria: River lots?

Isador: Yeah, they had one like that.

Maria: (inaudible) In Batoche?

Isador: No, around St. Boniface.

Maria: Around North Battleford?

Isador: Yeah, around there but I don't know how true that is because we never found nothing. We have everything, death certificate and all that stuff, but he was from that Manitoba area, where there's a lot of the Métis came from that area. Well, the Métis went wherever there was a village or something like that. That's where they would live, them too they would all go there you know. It was just kind of like a place to go to.

Maria: What was his father's name? Do you know?

Isador: No, I don't know.

Maria: What was your grandmother's name, her maiden name?

Isador: Her maiden name was Genaille.

Maria: And her first name?

Isador: It was Emily. No, no that's my other kohkum.

Maria: This is your dad's side we're talking about.

Isador: Yeah, Emily I think her name is.

Maria: And where was she from, Manitoba?

Isador: No, she was from the northern area, over there, down by Algrove, in that area but you see I had three kohkums. One was (inaudible) De la Fontaine's sister.

Maria: Your grandfather had three wives?

Isador: Yeah.

Maria: Okay. Who was the first one?

Isador: The first one was the De la Fontaine. That was the first one and then he had another one and I don't know that one's name but I'm going to try to find out all these things. And he had one boy with that woman.

Maria: The first one?

Isador: Yeah. No. The first one he had, let me see, there was my aunt and uncle (inaudible) and Albert. I think there was about four kids.

Maria: From the first marriage?

Isador: Yeah, from the first marriage. The next one, this man had had a load of wood and I guess it must have been logs or whatever, but he was tightening the thing and all that wood came over on top of him and killed him and then the old man took over that family. And that was Thomas, the one that they had out of that family was Thomas Pelletier. And then this last one was just the three children, two boys and a girl.

Maria: And that was the Genaille?

Isador: Yeah. One of my uncles from the first family, his name was Albert Pelletier and he never, I never seen him. He never came or lived around here at all because he had gotten into a fight with (inaudible) and he killed him and he ran into the States and that's where he stayed.

Maria: Where in the States was this?

Isador: He was in Chinook, Montana. That was one of the places that he lived in but I don't know really. I tried to find out about them but I couldn't. There's a lot of Pelletiers in the States so we kind of gave up on that. We got a hold of a cousin of ours that was in the States and they said there was two brothers, two Pelletiers that came in the 1700s. One of them settled in Montreal and the other one came west. The one that settled in Montreal was involved with that big uprising that they had, you know that Métis had an uprising. I don't know if you know about that. Well, they had an uprising there and what they did is they shipped a whole bunch of them to Maine in the States and my old uncle, or my grandfather, was one of them that went over there.

John: Oh, you're probably talking about in the civil war days?

Isador: Yeah, yeah that's it.

Maria: The war between the French and the English?

Isador: Yeah, something...

John: They shipped a whole bunch of French people from there.

Maria: Okay. That was the war between the French and the English.

Isador: Well, anyways that's when the old guy got sent over there. And before my dad passed away he got a letter from those people down there and they told him we're having a big round up of all the Pelletiers and we'd like you to come but he couldn't make it.

Maria: So, he married a Native woman when he came here? **Isador:** Yeah, he married a Sioux Indian. She was from that, where all the Métis are, not Belcourt. The Turtle Mountain area there. He married a Sioux woman from there. Now I'm telling you who my, she was a Sioux Indian and he married her and then I guess that's where all these other kids start coming from.

John: Okay, well, we've got 25 minutes to kill.

Maria: Do you have any other questions John?

John: Well, I think we're doing really good here. So, your dad and (inaudible) and I guess you guys too did a lot of trapping?

Isador: Oh yeah, he learnt us all how to trap and I had all his traps here until last summer. I gave them to my cousin who is at (inaudible), you know the (inaudible) we were talking about there. I don't know if you know Alvin. I gave them all to Alvin. I told him, "This is your uncle's stuff and I can't use it here."

Maria: Is it possible that you can get one trap back from him?

Isador: Well, yeah.

Maria: That way it could go into the museum with your pictures and stuff of your old people.

Isador: Yeah, I have a couple in my shed.

John: That's another thing we're looking for is artifacts, you know.

Maria: If you don't want to keep them, they'll keep them there for you but they'll be on display.

John: Even beadwork, like moccasins or anything that used to be around a long time ago.

Maria: And if you don't want to let them go then for us to get pictures of them and then that way, you know maybe if people come in that stuff is like our own archives.

Isador: Yeah, yeah. That would be good. That would be really good but you know I don't have really nothing.

Maria: But the traps would be good.

Isador: Yeah. Yeah, I could give you one of those traps I have.

Maria: (inaudible) put there with the pictures.

Isador: It's so good that you people are doing this.

John: Another thing that I'm looking for is an old Métis violin.

Isador: Oh God, me too. I had an old uncle by the name of (inaudible). I don't know if you know him. He's Henry Pelletier, his name was but they call him (inaudible) and boy, I was after that old man's fiddle but he gave it to his daughter. Oh boy, that thing sounded good. I don't know what he must have had in there, maybe he had that piece of...

John: A snake rattle?

Isador: Yeah, I think that's what he must have had because oh that thing it was just sound.

John: I've seen a few of them.

Isador: Yeah.

Maria: A real snake rattle in there?

John: Yeah.

Isador: Yeah.

John: I've seen one in the States, believe it or not.

Isador: Yeah.

Maria: I'll get you some snake rattles.

John: I don't need them. It's just that people used to do that for sound you know.

Isador: Yeah, because it vibrates in there. Another one is Jim Pelletier, him too he's a fiddler. Those were two brothers but Jim is still living but I don't know where the heck he is. In town here somewhere.

John: I wonder if it's possible to find him?

Maria: Maybe if you asked, what's his name, that lived in (inaudible)

Lady: That's his father-in law. He's always at Métis (inaudible)

Maria: What's his name? (inaudible)

Maria: Well, see if you can remember before we're finished.

Isador: Oh, Dave McKay.

Maria: Oh, I know Dave McKay. I think that old Jim, he's staying in that Gabriel Dumont old folks home.

Isador: Oh yeah.

Maria: There's a Jim Pelletier there, an old man.

Isador: Oh yeah, kind of a little short guy?

Maria: (inaudible) Does he drink? Did he used to drink?

Isador: Well, he tried to stop but yeah he used to.

Maria: The old ladies talk about him quite a bit.

Isador: Yeah, yeah, he's a lady's man. You know, he's about 80 years old.
(inaudible)

Lady: A lot of the people there, they see an old man, (inaudible) they couldn't go to school.

Isador: Yeah, I have about equivalent to, must be about grade 5 I think. But, you know I can read but I have one hell of a time to write something down. I write it down the way it sounds.

Maria: That's how we were taught to (inaudible) years ago.

John: Your family, what kind of language did they speak? Was it mixed French and Cree?

Isador: Yeah. My mom knew French, Saulteaux, Cree and English. She talked a whole four languages. She was taught, just all at once, just like if she was talking here she would be just talking that you know. A person pretty near went crazy once you first hear that old lady.

Lady: You know, I know a good bit of French but not that great.

Maria: She must have been talking Michif?

Isador: Oh yeah.

Maria: A different brand of Michif, some of them (inaudible).

Isador: Yeah, just Cree and French.

Maria: I've heard that with Saulteaux.

Isador: We talked it, we all talked it. We all spoke it and you know now I'm forgetting it. I used to know how to talk Saulteaux fluently but I forgot that.
(inaudible) Cree, I didn't know how to talk that one fluently. Her dad gave me a pipe and he said, "Don't ever talk English when you're using the pipe." I had to learn. I used to walk, I would walk all the way around this way, you know. It didn't matter how stormy it was. You know, saying my prayer, saying my prayer, saying my prayer. Now, I can pray for two hours at one time. But I used to say don't pray too long cause we're hungry. There's one old man that came from the south and he was my (inaudible). I'm not saying it right. I'm saying it the white man way. It means holy bird and this old guy would get up and oh no, you'd hear, that old man is gonna pray again. Boy, about how long was that (inaudible).

Lady: About 45 minutes I think. 45 minutes straight and he wouldn't have stopped but people were starting to eat.

Maria: What language did your dad talk?

Isador: He talked Michif mostly and then he talked Cree. You know Cree is, because we live, there was Muskowekwan reserve on this side right along the road and on this side was the Gordon reserve. So, we were right in between those places and oh, you're friends with everybody you know.

Maria: You were saying (inaudible). That was your nickname?

Isador: Yeah, (inaudible)

Maria: Were there a lot of nicknames like that? Can you remember some of them?

John: What was yours?

Isador: Sonny, but now I have Indian names.

Maria: But years ago them old Métis they had a lot of nicknames and they were really beautiful names like (inaudible). Can you think of any others?

Isador: Chigaloo, Chigalik. There was a woman that was called Chigalik and then there was her daughter was named and her other daughter, the oldest one was named Peepeep. Chigaroot, that was that family, them people. That was their name. They gave nicknames to these kids and then there were some other ones and we used to laugh. Some of them were just ordinary names like cowboy, they'd call him cause they were always riding and stuff like that and you know they kind of put a name to that person that, as to what he did, you know. Those kind of things and that one guy they called him Kamoochinas. You know, there's so many of them, like my brother's name is Coyotes because my dad used to hunt coyote all the time.

John: With hounds?

Isador: No, on horseback and so this little guy got this name of Coyotes and then my other brother, I don't know if you know my other brother, his name is Bones.

Maria: Is that Albert?

Isador: No, that's Alfred. Elmer is Coyotes. So, that's kind of a dual name. It acted as a nickname to him and then an Indian name on top of it.

Maria: What about around where you lived? Did you have Michif names or Cree names for a river or a lake or little hill? You know, like usually where people live they have a name. It might have an English name but they had their own names for them.

Isador: Oh yeah, they had names. One thing that stuck in my mind was Putna. Putna, they tell me is a hill, a high hill. That's their name but they shortened it down. (inaudible)

Maria: Were there any little creeks that had any names of the people who called them their own names or a slough or a hill? Not the people's names but the names of a place.

Lady: Where you lived was called Chicago Land.

Maria: Now is that Chicago like Chicago city?

Isador: Yeah.

John: Why did they thought of that?

Isador: I don't know. Those people didn't know nothing about Chicago. I remember this one slough and it was called, my old grandfather used to call it (inaudible). That's (inaudible). That was the old chief's name (inaudible). That was his Indian name and that's where all these other things (inaudible). Pitiful man, bony man, almost anything, but you know one day I was sitting and I was thinking, "You know mom," I said, "Did you ever sit down and think of what that name really means?" "No," she said. So I started telling her. "You know," she said, "I used to say that name of that lake all the time and I never figured that name out." But you know you kinda figure like Mississippi, (inaudible), big water you know. (inaudible) that means Saskatchewan.

Maria: You know where I come from there's a lot of old names that got changed. But, some of the old people still call them that so that's why I always like to know where Métis people lived. What did they call their landscape, or their lake. Sometimes it tells you a story about the people. You said that (inaudible) if that slough was called that there has to be a story about that.

Isador: Yeah, there's so many things and I can't remember them all.

Maria: Well, if you ever run into any old people that you know you ask them. (inaudible)

Isador: Oh yeah, I ask.

Maria: That would be really good. I know my dad, I got him to do a map up with a couple of old guys and they'd write down all those old names and I never realized how many old names there were.

Isador: Yeah, there was so many things and at the time you know they didn't mean nothing to me but now when I sit around and I'm getting in my old age, now I start remembering these things and it's amazing. It makes me feel good to think of those old things. That's why when you phoned I said, "Oh yeah sure I'll help, come on down."

Maria: I just wanted to ask you about a couple of things. What, when you're sitting around thinking about stuff like this, what do you think about when people talk about self-government? You know you mentioned a little bit, we were self-governing when we lived off the land. Like when you think of that word, what do you think of? Never mind how we think of it as educated or as political people but what does that mean to you? Homeland?

Isador: You know, the word self-government entails all kinds of things. You can use different impressions on those things. If I say, me like self-government, if they keep the same people that are running, say chief in council. If that money that they are going to get to be a self-government is not going to do any good to anybody. You know, I often think about that, me and him, you know we sit here, and I say the way we live, there was no one person, say that's the chief, that wasn't like that. You see, if you have a group of people who are responsible people looking after self-government that's a different story.

Maria: Yeah but what I'm trying to get at is when you talk about, like if you think about self-government the way we were long ago. That's what I want to know, like our own old ways. When I say that word and you think about the way you grew up, you know, in just a few words what was self-government? The people going out and working for themselves, being independent?

Isador: Yeah, well the people that we, I guess chose as our leaders, were people who were well respected by everybody. You know they weren't drunks and they weren't crooks and they were good people. There was so many of those people who could fit that role in that community where we lived. That's why I say you know self-government, how far does self-government go? If my neighbour's dog is barking all damn night and I go out there with a shotgun and shoot that dog, you know, what am I breaking the law or is that kind of a law that's untold and not to be there. But, when you have a group of people who are looking after everything, anything that happens, any little thing that happens. A lot of the little things that happened were resolved by our own people, like by the family.

Maria: Like you said if somebody stole from you everybody talks about it?

Isador: Or somebody in the old days the way we were if somebody started bothering a girl and they'd say well, that girl is too young, you have to go and talk to the heads or somebody to stop this guy from doing that and they'd stop him, no problem. It wasn't, they never didn't want to hurt his feelings or anything like that or they didn't want to go.

Maria: I guess that's what I'm trying to find out, like there was rules and laws.

Isador: There was rules and laws.

John: Unwritten.

Isador: Unwritten laws and those unwritten laws went a long ways because we never had nobody, we never heard of anybody getting raped. You know, it was things like that and white laws, white people ask me, "What did you guys do with someone that raped another person?" I said, "We never had that problem. People respected one another because respect is something that will carry you through life

and if you live by those laws, those laws that we know, you'll never go wrong." You know, it's so hard to define what self-government is.

Maria: Well, you just did a couple by saying that unwritten laws.

Isador: You see, we're spread out all over the place. Métis live here, I don't know how many hundred live in this city of ours. (inaudible) in the North, there's lots of people but you know, I guess maybe one of these days the Métis will have a place and it would be easy for them to get back into that role of looking after one another, looking after themselves, having a head person. It would be easy for them because they kind of, they know they respect all of those kind of things.

Maria: What about something like you know, that we never had no land and most of our people didn't own land. But I can remember when I was a kid old people saying in Cree, they'd say (inaudible). You know, and that meant I'm thinking about you guys getting chased out of that place, going to Green Lake and then you came back to it. Even if you didn't have a place, your sense of homeland. That's a big question. What was it, what did you miss?

Isador: We missed all of the way we lived, you know the freedom that we had as people and the things that we used to do and the fun that we used to have, pie socials and you know, dances and Christmas parties. You know, all of those things they mean something. There's something that we look forward to and I sit here and sometimes I try to tell them I'm scared but you know, they don't know that. They don't know how hard we lived. But, you know it's a thing that I guess if you wanted to fix it, if you wanted it to be a no problem place, like say, if you had a big village with Métis looking after one another, I guess you'll never get it. I guess there's some people that want to use their people to get ahead. (inaudible) that's what happened there you know, but they got ahead you know and they still ended up in (inaudible) and we're over here.

End of Interview.