

My Story as a Métis Woman

Article by Chris Blondeau Perry and Photograph by J. Columba

When one introduces themselves, I think they should start from their very first impressions of life. I was born on the south edge of Estevan, Saskatchewan on December 17, 1929. My parents were Alexandre Joseph Blondeau (born July 19, 1885 in Estevan) and Marie Beatrix Blondeau—née Desjarlais (born February 5, 1897 in what is now Lebret, Saskatchewan). They were married at Lebret, in the Roman Catholic Church, on April 5, 1921. I had three sisters and two brothers. I have two sons, one daughter, two grandsons, and two granddaughters. My family lived at this site until I was about two-years-old. I have retained some recollections of living there. One that I regard as being really significant in my life was my father putting me on the back of a white mare (named *Wahbee*) and leading her around the yard. That event has lived with me to this very moment, and it has been a great support in my life. It had a profound influence in the way my life evolved. It certainly helped cultivate the sentimentality I now possess and display without reservation. Without which, I may not have been so understanding of the

will and hard work with which my mother and father lived their lives, or to truly see the immense strength and intelligence my parents, grandparents (whom I never met), and earlier ancestors used every day of their lives.

When I started to write about the historic times of my nation, I chose to focus on the daily duties that help in moulding a lifestyle. Much of what is learned about daily duties is learned by example, not by speech. Speech was a constant in our lives although, with five children and two parents, talk was inevitable and constant. My parents accommodated us to as much academic education as was possible. This gave me my ability to write—except for my cartoon book of two hundred plus pages, and five Michif children's books, the majority of my writing has been to news, media, and politicians. I have defined many of the things they say, print and do in stark, realistic, and very understandable language. Most of my children's lives, I have been a single parent, a reality that was brought to the fore of my life. This included knowing how easily the justice system is

used to keep poverty-stricken people in poverty while the rich always win. Of how there can be the rich, but why there are no poor?

I presume if one has read this far, the question will be: where is the sentimentality? Well, Webster's dictionary defines it as: "Affection of fine feeling or exquisite sensibility—proneness to sentiment." Sometimes, I'm sure it governs a great part of my life, I even sometimes wonder if anyone else has that kind of feeling. I have been from Saskatchewan, west to Vancouver Island, north to Uranium City, south to the edge of Oregon, and east to Sudbury, Ontario. I have done many things besides work and caring for three children. While still at home, from the time of our first pony on, I always had a horse. My younger sister Mary and I were my father's cowboys—we looked after our cattle. We rode horses a lot—but we still milked four cows each, looked after the calves, helped with dishes in the house, and fed the cattle. We could sew, manage the house, the garden, the barn, and the chicken house. When we left home we tried rodeo bronc-

busting (we were the ones that got busted) and roping. We practised “trick-riding.” We waited on tables, cooked hamburgers and fries, anything that earned money we did. Our one rule when we worked was: “No one but us would pay our way in life.” In whatever we did, we “loved” doing it. No cat, dog, calf, horse, or wild animal that we came in contact with went by without Mary and me loving it. We also met people that we knew deserved our admiration and sentiment, whom I still love deeply. To try listing them would take more pages than I think I should use.

I must also take the opportunity to refer to reading. From the time I learned to think, I had

“heroes.” My first and forever heroes were my mother and father. They were truly wonderful things that evolved in my life and influenced the way I handled the Euro-inspired bad events. I am forever beholden to them. Then when I could read, there was an avalanche of heroes, including cartoons—“Prince Valiant” and Tim Tyler’s “Luck.” These cartoons were interesting and so superbly drawn.

More heroes came from Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, Marguerite Chapman’s *Black Gold* and *Misty of Chincoteague*, Ernest Thompson Seton’s beautiful animal stories, Albert Terhune Paysen’s lovely dog stories, the poet Bliss Carmen, and Amelia Earhart because she could fly. These

are the earlier ones, from these grew many, many more. I read a lot, I saw a lot, and I heard a lot. With so many heroes, how could I deny my sentimentality? ...

I recently researched, styled, and designed a map of the settlement where I lived my early days. It was as near a “memory lane” for me as a project and article can get. I can visit the places on that map and recall the houses which my ancestors built and lived in. These include where my father was born and the exact location of the house where I was born. There was that vital help on this project which history projects need. It became an activity with which I turned to the start of my life, and turned into my life today.



Duchess and Chris Blondeau Perry