

**Elder Interview of Irene Gardiner (A:)**

**Place: South Bay near Ile-a-la-crosse, Saskatchewan**

**Date: August 17, 2001**

**Interviewed by: Lilah Morin (Q:)**

**Transcribe by: Wayne Morin**

**Present at time of Interview: N/A**

**Type of equipment used: Minidisc recorder c/w attached microphone**

Time

003:00:19

**Q: First your name.**

**A: Irene Gardiner.**

**Q: When were you born?**

**A: March 8, 37.**

**Q: Where?**

**A: Beauval.**

**Q: What is the name of your mom and dad?**

**A: My was Christine Belanger, Thomas Daigneault.**

**Q: Where were they from?**

**A: Ile-a-la-crosse.**

**Q: Both of them? How come you were born in Beauval then?**

**A: My dad was working in Beauval. (Distortion) I was one of the lucky ones I am a survivor, my mom died all the women died with their babies.**

**Q: Yeah, ho lee, so you don't even know her, you mom you never knew her?**

**A: Only by picture.**

**Q: So who raised you than?**

**A: My grandparents, Jonas Daigneault mom and dad.**

**Q: Monique?**

**A: No, Tom Daigneault and Octavia Daigneault, I was adopted, same Yvette.**

**Q: You and Yvette are adopted though.**

**A: No not really just by adoption.**

**Q: Oh, Do you remember anything about your dad?**

**A: Yeah, he was in the army. I was 10 years when he got accident in Buffalo he was working for resources.**

003:02:04

**Q: What kind of accident?**

**A: I don't know he because of the accident he was burnt. He was burnt on his job. Inside his cabin.**

**Q: Ho lee, do you have lots of cousins and uncles and aunties and people like that that use to live with you when you were young?**

**A: No, just my grandparents. Lawrence and Louise are my half brother and sister same dad but not the same mother. My dad got married again after my mom died, 2 years after.**

**Q: To Maggie, when were you married and who did you marry?**

**A: June 53, Albert Gardiner?**

**Q: How many kids did you have?**

**A: Five.**

003:03:01

Q: What are there names?

A: I lost one my oldest, Bobby, drowned.

Q: That's Roberta's dad?

A: Yes, and Louis, Christine, Violet and Joe, but I adopted four, Rhonda, Octavia, Sherry and Eric and now Brendan.

Q: Did you always know you were Metis?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, do you remember any names they use to call us?

A: No.

Q: In CREE, no?

A: Cause my grandparents spoke mostly French ah, CREE and French.

Q: Did you guys have horses?

A: Yes, horses, cows.

Q: Cows to?

A: Yes, my grandparents, my adopted parents.

Q: Where did you guys live?

A: That's where Buckley's trailer is.

Q: Right there, you lived in town all the time, ever since you were born?

A: I guess so, first year after I was born the Belangers, my grandmother Belanger, Leo's mom, kept me for a month and than she couldn't kept me and than I was adopted.

Q: So you're related to Leo?

A: Yes that's my uncle.

003:04:45

Q: What types of food did you eat?

A: Just wild and vegetables gardens, they had a garden and all the vegetables and everything.

Q: You guys had a, they had a big big garden hey Hudson's bay and everybody worked on it and everybody got stuff?

A: They had my grandparents, my adopted parents had their own garden, big garden. They have milk everyday, milk the cows, we well off.

Q: Did your grandma and grandpa ever talk about family, about half ah money script?

A: No.

Q: No you never heard about that?

A: No, except for my, my adopted father, my grandparents he use to stay, he's from Canoe lake Thomas Daigneault, so were trying ah bombing range that's the only thing he use to fish over there, he stayed over there, his sister, brothers live over there.

Q: Are you going through the Ile-a-la-crosse one or?

A: Yes, Ile-a-la-crosse there's only me and Jonas and Yvette beside that and his name.

003:06:14

Q: Did you go to school?

A: Yes, I went to school to grade eight, I studied French.

Q: Yeah, at the residence here?

**A:** Yes with the nuns.

**Q:** You lived there?

**A:** Yes, no just not in the boarding school, just with my parents.

**Q:** You went everyday?

**A:** Yes just straight, you went to school 1 o'clock you didn't get out of there till 4.

**Q:** What kind of things did you learn?

**A:** All kinds of things like French, just about cooking, sewing.

**Q:** To read and write?

**A:** To read and write.

003:07:04

**Q:** And nobody else with to school just the kids around here, there was never any other kind of people from anywhere that came, just bush people?

**A:** No, but there was kids from all over that's the only boarding school that's use to be here.

**Q:** And the church the nuns ran it aye?

**A:** Yes use to go to church 7 o'clock in the morning every morning.

**Q:** Just once a day?

**A:** Every morning you have to go.

**Q:** And that's it?

**A:** You can't go to bed you have to, they use to have mass in the morning then benediction in the evening.

**Q:** What's that?

**A:** That's rosary and everything now they don't have that.

**Q:** Our town was only called Sakitawak hey that's all?

**A:** Yes Sakitawak ever since it's been called that.

**Q:** Did they ever get mad at you at school for speaking our language?

**A:** No, cause our teacher spoke half CREE half French, no, no problems like that nothing.

**Q:** What did they call it did we just always call it CREE?

**A:** Cree, michif that's it michif.

**Q:** Did they always call it michif?

**A:** Yes.

(Laughter)

003:08:53

**Q:** Berry picking did you ever go?

**A:** That's why I am so lazy today, I picked berries to dam much when I was young.

(laughs)

**Q:** So you don't go now?

**A:** No I am lazy to much berry picking.

**Q:** Where did you guys pick berries?

**A:** All over we use to camp out even here in South bay, all over town, across the lake pick berries camp out.

**Q:** Are their berries at Sandy Point?

**A:** Yes.

003:09:23

Albert Gardiner: Its easy picking berries now we got outboard motor long ago only canoe we use to paddle.

A: I know we use to paddle, that's nothing paddling here and we camp, sometimes we sell so much for so much, 5 dollars a 10 pound little box. That's how you make your living long time ago. Berries some odd jobs, fire

Q: Fire Fighting?

A: Yes, they didn't have coppers we just walk there.

Q: Did you ever make moccasins and stuff like that?

A: No I never learnt.

Q: You never learnt how to sew.

A: No, no.

Q: Who use to make the clothes?

A: My grandma. I sew lots I use to sew for my kids, I didn't learnt how to make moccasins and that but clothing I make my own, even for my kids I use to make my own. I still do, I still sew I have a sewing machine. Blankets I make my own, cloths. My grandma showed me how to sew, same with Yvette she she sews lots. Cause my kids when one getting to big the other one has to wear that I have to sew it little bit, hand me downs.

Q: Did you have all of your kids in the hospital?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah all of them were born there? Do you know of any Midwives?

A: No, the only one I remember that use to come and stay with us is that women from Beauval, a Aubichon, she use to come and delivery babies, Issabell's mom, yes.

Q: Somebody was telling me about her before.

A: Yes, she use to come deliver babies in Ile-a-la-crosse. Cause my parents, my mother is related to her.

Q: How about when you were born who delivered you?

A: I don't even know.

Q: No, there was probably no hospital aye?

A: No somebody must have delivered me in Beauval. Cause everybody was sick, measles that year aye.

003:11:59

Q: None of the men died just the?

A: No, lots of men, but the women the pregnant women did, had babies they died with their babies. In coffin with their babies ah. That's what reminded me when I went to Buffalo. When there was that accident in Alberta remember? From Buffalo, there was a women got hit by vehicle from Buffalo, Anderson Raymond Anderson's grandson, grandson's wife. She died with her baby, one month old baby, she laid there with her baby here it reminded me so much of myself. I would have looked like that. I went to that funeral just to see. She died with her two kids, one was 11 years olds and the baby was a month old. The mother died with her baby and her other girl.

Q: And the husband no?

A: No, she, he was home with the other kids. But you should see the baby so tiny laying here her mom; oh I just wanted to go and see her it reminded me so much of myself. I could of looked like that I was thinking.

Q: You're lucky eh?

003:13:26

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of jobs did women and children have?

A: The only place I remember my grandparents ah parents worked were in a café. They use to have cafes ah they use to work there part-time, just off and on, odd jobs getting paid a little that's all, but my real dad, resources, he worked for resources, but I never knew my dad till I was about 8 years old. I didn't know who I taught he was my brother. I didn't he was my parent, my dad.

Q: Did you ever go hunting?

A: No, not with my grandparent, only my husband. We go out sometime hunt, just me and him. We go out trapping, when the kids were out in school, after before I adopted that's what I did. Trap Line, I go trapping with him.

Q: Did you ever shoot anything?

A: No, I am scared of guns. (Laughs) I am scared of guns.

Q: How about traps?

A: Yes traps, I set traps.

Q: Yeah and snares?

A: No not snares, just rabbits. Cause they have different kind of snares I don't want to tangle myself in there.

003:15:06

Q: Was there any ah before a long time ago when you grandpa use to go were there any laws for hunting?

A: No nothing, we were just free, yes.

Q: They went anywhere hey?

A: Kill anything, kill bucks to eat.

Q: The house, the house you lived in over there were Buck's house is did he build it?

A: Yes he built it himself.

Q: What was it made out of?

A: First it was a log house then he built one with plywood after. First we had a log house with a upstairs that's where; we always had one big family everybody was there. She adopted a lot of kids that's why ah I guess there was a lot of adoption in my family. Not adopt them but keep them her and there when there orphans, she was good hearted.

Q: That how Wayne's mom was hey?

A: Yes, that's how it is long time but not today.

Q: Did any of your family members ever go to war?

A: My dad was in the war, Tom Daigneault. My real dad, I have his picture at home. I had his medals but we can't find them nobody ever ask about his him about when he was in the war about his pension and anything, I tried I wrote letters to Saskatoon Veteran affairs they wrote back they said I can't do nothing cause I'm the only child, but when he I was born me and him while he was in the army it was only me and him, I was under his name, no nothing. They told me I don't believe it there's got to be something they wrote me letters I was going to see a lawyer about it to try and find out ah I have all the letters that they wrote me and everything. Just nobody else ever try and find out what happened to my dad ah I even have a picture at home he was in a hospital in Ontario while he was in the army.

Q: You mean he never came home?

003:17:44

A: Yes he came home but after his death it was about pension ah nobody ever, nobody ever asked about it so I wrote letters, that's what they told me I can't do nothing. It's got to be the wife but he wasn't married when he went to war, just me and him. So I'm going to start again, that ah St. Pierre they use to call him he work for Veteran Affairs and that one said that to me but I don't quite believe him. Surely there's something there for my dad, because Leo Belanger and him went to the same war, Vital that the same time.

Q: What are, what are some of your favorite hobbies or activities?

A: Camping (laughs), camping, working, sewing.

Q: They never have feast hey?

A: No but I help lots I volunteer lots even for the elders I cook so much. I am always on the go.

003:19:26

Q: Do you know what some of the Metis holidays, what what holidays like ah New years, Easter and Christmas were called in michif?

A: No, Christmas the only thing they celebrated really.

Q: How about Easter?

A: Easter too and Good Friday.

Q: What did they call it in CREE?

A: I don't know what they called it.

Q: Nobody knows about Easter, what did you guys do for these kind of things?

A: Christmas I hardly remember I didn't know what, we never knew of Christmas there was always Christmas mass that's it, even my kids we they were grow up we didn't know nothing what was Christmas, till years after.

Q: Not till like today eh?

A: Yes not like today you spend so much money and everything and the kids are spoiled now, the kids that didn't have nothing are not spoil.

Q: That's true, what kinds of music did you guys listen to?

A: No music, there use to be no radios till late, we use to have radios with batteries, big batteries, then they come out with flashlight batteries. We use to have those kind of phones just turn them ah record players that's all we listen to.

Q: How about weddings, when you got married what was your wedding like?

A: I don't know, nothing we just got married and that's it.

Q: You just went to Church?

A: To church and my family ate together and that's it. No spending money.

Q: Not like today?

A: Not like today its expensive.

003:21:27

Q: Big fancy weddings?

A: I went across that same day to Sandy Point. (Laughs)

Q: That's where you lived?

A: My honeymoon, 1953.

Q: You guys moved there?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you live there?

003:21:45

A: Still living there since then. In 19, in 2003 our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I'll be 65 next month ah in March.

Q: And him he's 60 what?

A: 68.

Q: Did your dad tell you you had to marry him?

A: Yes, we were in school the next thing we knew all us girls were married. Had to get married.

Q: Like who else?

A: Ah, Vicky Pederson, Hall lake the one that's staying in Hall Lake. There a girl from ah she died though, Clara from Canoe Lake, three of us got married that time. They chose our husbands, which we didn't even know.

Q: You didn't know Albert before you married him, no?

A: No, hardly I use to see him but I didn't think I get married I wanted school. I was so interested in school especially French. My grandparent teach me how to pray in French ah.

Q: You still remember how?

A: Yes, if that happened today oh my goodness.

Q: What about funerals do you remem, how are funerals?

A: They just bury each other the priest was not around somebody else would pray. Bury them all over not in the graveyard, not only in the graveyard, their bodies all over Ile-a-la-crosse. Even a crosse the lake, even half way to Patuanak there places where there rocks ah they had buried people. You died in the bush they bury you there, no funeral mass nothing.

003:23:51

Q: And they put rocks?

A: Yes rocks on top you know where there ah.

Q: So you know?

A: Along the shore you can see some of them. White people use to die drown or something they bury each other not only white people but Indians to.

Q: Did you ever go to dances?

A: Yes, I use to sneak (laughs). We weren't even allowed to go out of the fence ah a long time ago but we use to sneak out when my grandparents fell asleep. (Laughs) Not like today a ordinary little dance and that's it.

Q: They just go dance aye nothing else?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you dance?

A: No I just to look around. Just wanted to see what was that a dance. A lot of things today if it was then I don't know what kids would do ah.

Q: Do you know of any well recognized musicians, fiddlers?

A: Not really only Wayne's and August Durocher.

Q: I don't remember him ever playing, but some people say he did?

A: He was really good to. Christmas they use to have there own music like just play little guitar that's it just to make the kids happy or even organs or that record player. A lot of old people had organs, even pianos a long time ago.

Q: Did you guys ever live anywhere else?

A: No.

003:26:05

**Q:** Just here Ile-a-la-crosse and Sandy Point?

**A:** Yes in Sandy Point we moved to town in 1981 and Albert started working for resources.

**Q:** Now he's done?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Must have been hard aye?

**A:** Yes that why he can't stay home, that's why we spend lot of time a crosse in the winter. I rather be over there.

**Q:** Who else lives around you there?

**A:** Nobody, just us in that island.

**Q:** Just you guys no of your kids have cabins there?

**A:** No we all stay together.

**Q:** In your house?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Is it big?

**A:** That's why were extended it, too small. My family is growing big.

**Q:** You can't walk to where Leon and them are?

**A:** Yes you could in the winter and then if its not to, if the waters not high you can go around it but if the water is high there's just a island there ah you have to use a boat.

**Q:** It not connected?

**A:** No.

**Q:** But in the winter you can just walk?

**A:** Yes, that is where the first out-post the time them guys come to us they wanted to dig cause our yard is so big its all green ah there's thing there where the old out post was, Northern they wanted dig holes I didn't know what did wanted to look for they wanted to pay us what price we put, no I told them I never did let them. I don't know what is buried there; there's three places they even got a big map showing us where they wanted to dig. Near our house there's one place, towards down the lake.

003:27:

**Q:** And they never told you what for?

**A:** No, but Hoffman use to tell Albert you got a rich island there. I had found ah we made a cloths line there we found a shilling there I still have it, under the, just digging a hole ah one shilling.

**Q:** Maybe they buried lots of money there?

**A:** Maybe.

**Q:** Tones?

**A:** I hope (laughs).

**Q:** If you ever look?

**A:** If I ever look but they won't do that for nothing ah, twice. Especially that Northern Hudson's Bay there got to be there something there but I didn't let them I told them no. We'll pay the price they said just for digging. That map three places they showed me and that second out-post was where Robert's house is somewhere in that point than Patuanak. Where I stay that's where they use to buy fur and everything run little store.

003:29:21

**Q:** When did you move there, when did you guys get it?

**A:** Gee that was, we must have stay there now 30 years. Right after, the kids were still small when I moved there. We paid lease were still paying it.

**Q:** Yeah for how long?

**A:** It a 90, it was years ago it was a 99 year lease, but now they change everything it different.

**Q:** But they can't do that to you guys?

**A:** No we pay it all the time.

**Q:** If you signed a 99-year lease than it a 99?

**A:** Yes as long as you pay, like we pay so much every eight years before the ten year is over. Its up to date nobody can touch it; we make sure of that. We had read in the papers that there is some kind of oil in Sandy Point I wonder if ah it was in the papers Northern Pride I think. I wonder who in the hell put it there I don't remember. Some kind of oil.

**Q:** Maybe that what, but why would The Bay want to dig for oil probably looking for those shillings.

**A:** Maybe something else, Hoffman if you ever find something else make sure you keep it its valuable he told us. Why would he say that if he didn't know ah if he didn't know? That's why I am holding on to it.

003:31:09

**Q:** But you don't think you'll ever dig?

**A:** No, maybe my kids will I have no use for it maybe they will, my grandchildren.

003:31:28

**Q:** I think that's it were done.

**A:** Yes ok.

003:31:30

End of Interview