

Deborah Lloyd Bouvette —Parks Canada Interview, Feb 13, 2012

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Bradley Brown (BB): This is Bradley Brown on February 13th, 2012 conducting an interview on behalf of the Gabriel Dumont Institute for the southwest Métis project that is being done in conjunction with Parks Canada. Now could you please tell me your name and your home community?

Deborah Lloyd (DL): Deborah Lloyd and I live in Medicine Hat, Alberta. My home community is Saddle Lake Reserve.

BB: Okay thank you. Question two. Who were or are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?

DL: My father is Thomas Leo Bouvette and his mother is Nellie House and his father was Charles Emile Bouvette. My mother is Amelia May Steinhauer and her parents were James Arthur Steinhauer and Amelia Mumford.

BB: And where were they from, sorry?

DL: My father and his family were from the central Saskatchewan area. And they moved to central Alberta, just across the border. And my mother is from Saddle Lake Reserve.

BB: Okay.

DL: That would be my home reserve.

BB: Moving onto question three, did or does anyone in your family speak Michif or serve in the military? Do you speak Michif?

DL: No. I speak Cree.

BB: Okay, thank you. Moving onto question four. How were the Métis treated?

DL: Go back to question three. What is the or serve in the military about?

BB: That is just asking if you have any family that has served in the military or has a history of serving in the military.

DL: Yes. My father fought in World War Two.

BB: Did he? Okay. Do you know anymore information about his involvement in World War Two?

DL: Well he was in Italy for five years and he, when he came back to Alberta, after he came back to Alberta he received assistance through the Department of Veterans Affairs to homestead and settled west of Red Deer. And homesteaded out there through the opportunities through the DVA.

BB: Oh okay. Okay well thank you.

DL: He spoke Cree and French, but we never called it Michif at that time.

BB: At that time it was differentiated, at that time. Okay. Question four. How were the Métis treated in your community? Did your family encounter racism from the larger community? Do you have specific examples?

DL: We grew up west of Red Deer in a Scandinavian community. We were the only Aboriginal family in the area. And, I was not aware of any racism to any degree. There was a couple examples in high school but I don't know if it was racism or just silly boys. So I wouldn't call it outward racism no.

BB: Okay. Thank you. Question five; what other Métis families lived in the vicinity? Were they Michif speakers?

DL: We were the only family in that community.

BB: Okay, question six; do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs? Would you care to share them?

DL: No. No and no. I don't know any and I, so I can't share them.

BB: Okay. What sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

DL: Well we, of course harvested everything that we, that we ate in the old day, in our younger years. We had moose and deer and elk and rabbit, prairie chicken, and we trapped for hides and traded for hides all winter long. And, had trap lines and the whole bit. Well in the area that we lived, west of Red Deer.

BB: Okay that was your home area. Okay, thank you. Question eight. What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

DL: We didn't, we just used the normal medicines that I don't know whether, I wouldn't class them as traditional medicines when I look at what traditional medicines are classed as now that I'm an adult. The medicine people in the family were of course our parents and they would tell us which roots and berries, and which were the things we should eat. So, but as far as having like a medicine man or whatever we weren't in that, culture because we lived in a Scandinavian community. We weren't with our people at that time.

BB: Oh okay ... Thank you. Moving onto question nine. Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?

DL: No. Not that I know of.

BB: Okay, question ten. Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items? Do you know what happened to these artefacts?

DL: yes my mother is Cree so she made those kinds of articles and, they wore out mostly and so were replaced.

BB: Oh okay. Did she make a variety of different things too?

DL: Oh Yeah.

BB: Okay. Do you know if she embroidered or beaded more, or did she do both?

DL: She did a lot of, mostly beadwork but she did some embroidery.

BB: Oh okay ... Okay thank you. Question eleven, how did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter or New Year's?

DL: According to the mainstream traditions. With Christian traditions, my mother was raised in a residential school.

BB: Oh okay. Okay thank you. Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis society?

DL: My father was one of the early, Métis, members of the Métis Nation in Alberta.

BB: Oh really?

DL: Yeah, and he was one of the first politicians involved in, when they started the zoning with the Métis movement. So he was the vice president for zone 3 for a number of years. And he was very, very involved with the early days of the Métis Nation. I can remember people coming to visit him on our homestead who were old Métis men at that time asking him to become involved in this new movement that was to become the Métis Society or Nation of Alberta.

BB: Wow.

DL: And I was just a small child then, but I remember those old men coming to see him and then over the years he became increasingly involved with the Métis Nation.

BB: Oh wow.

DL: Of Alberta.

BB: So when would that have been, when he got involved?

DL: Oh that would have been probably 1960ish, somewhere in there.

BB: Oh okay, yep. Yeah that sounds ...

DL: Yeah, I was really young. I was just like, I don't think I was in school yet. Or just starting school in that, you know, that kind of area because I was born in 1954 so I'm sure that it was either between 1958 and 1960 I would say.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: That those people came and talked to dad.

BB: Sounds like your father had a very eventful life.

DL: Mhmm. Oh Yeah, definitely.

BB: Okay thanks. Moving onto question 13, how are the local Métis connected to Fort Benton (*should be Battleford), Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

DL: The local Métis of Medicine Hat now switching from that because I grew up in that Scandinavian community in central Alberta. I moved to Medicine Hat as a teenager.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: And so I've been in Medicine Hat now for 38 years or something ... Yeah, 38, 38 years. So Medicine Hat is now what I'll switch to talking about my community. So, in my community the local Métis are establishing some connections with these general areas now. I don't, I'm not aware of their history outside of Medicine Hat in terms of, in terms of you know what areas they hunted or fished or anything like that. But, I do know that the Native community was in Medicine Hat, of course, it's becoming more and more active in becoming involved in this movement.

BB: This movement of?

DL: Of developing the Fort Walsh, Grasslands National Park, Fort Battleford area.

BB: Oh Yeah, okay.

DL: Because of their, because of their recent involvement with Métis politics, they're becoming more aware of these areas and are joining in, in being involved in developing.

BB: Oh okay. Thank you. Question fourteen, who were or are your family, sorry I'll say that again. Were your family involved with Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

DL: Today?

BB: If you have—

DL: Or in the past?

BB: Both. If you have a connection in the present.

DL: Well my father was raised, all the way in that corridor between Duck Lake over to Hardisty, over in that area.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: You know, there was quite a bit of movement back and forth there, across the Saskatchewan-Alberta border. And my father, my grandfather and my great-uncle moved from that area west over to the Hardisty area. And they began homesteading and, in that area because they both fought in World War, or no uncle George fought in World War One.

BB: Okay.

DL: Grandpa died from a flu at a very young age, and my dad ended up living in the Hardisty area with uncle George.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: And they were related to the Lagimodiere clan. And one of their, I don't know if you know the Howes's connection the, with the Louis Riel connection. That's the connection that my dad had in his family. So he, he traveled that area as a youngster a lot and so he knew all the areas in between those two locations very well. And the stories were always told about their involvement and grandpa's involvement in the battles and that kind of stuff that took place in that area.

BB: Okay. Thank you ... Moving onto question 15. Are there any historically and culturally significant landscapes or historical sites within Fort Battleford and Fort Walsh area which you as a Métis person consider to be important?

DL: Well I know that there's lots of areas like I say from that Duck Lake area over, like its almost like a band, an area all along those reserves and settlement areas. All the way across Alberta and Saskatchewan there that of course had a lot of significance as the people traveled back and forth in that area. But there was a lot of involvement with the Onion Lake area and of course Saddle Lake, down the Alliance, Hardisty, cross over to, into Saskatchewan. From there, there was kind of like a little triangle the family always traveled in I think that made it an important area in my life.

BB: Yeah.

DL: And knowing that there's lots of involvement on there. And my, I got, several cousins and folks from my dad's side of the family who've settled around the Lloydminster area.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: So.

BB: Thank you. Question 16. Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance at or near Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh or Grasslands National Park?

DL: Well the stories go, yes of course, because my father's mother was related to some of the families that were in that general area and the stories go in our family that there's a connection there to Louis Riel in the family. And I don't have the books in front of me but I know that my roots do go all the way back to Louis Riel's.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: Family so.

BB: You have origin to that family bloodline.

DL: Yeah.

BB: Okay. Thank you. What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance? Can you speak to that at all?

DL: Well that's where the migration went. And, my grandfather passed away flu affected, there was a terrible flu around that time that affected a lot of people and my grandfather Charles Bouvette was perished in that. Then my father as a child then moved west to be with Charles' brother George who they had kind of build up a support system of families in that Hardisty area. And so they travelled back and forth between Saskatchewan and Alberta along that route.

BB: Oh okay ... Thank you. Question 18, has your family been in the area for a long time? How did they make a living? Do you know how your ancestors made a living in the region?

DL: I think that in that region, there, excuse me, there was mostly hunting and gathering at that time when my grandfather lived there and my grandmother. And when my dad was a child they did some teamster-type work. You know hauling things back and forth. My grandfather apparently was quite a teamster and that was kind of carried on down with the family. And then once my dad married my mom they kind of moved more northerly towards Saddle Lake because that's where my mom was from. But they had met through relatives and friends in the area like it was kind of like a triangle that went Saddle Lake out into Saskatchewan, Duck Lake, Lloydminster, around in that area, across to Hardisty and back up to Saddle Lake. That was kind of their stomping grounds hey?

BB: Oh okay.

DL: So they, when they kind of moved more northerly towards Saddle Lake then they got into some small lumbering initiatives and then they got involved with, like in that again, with that teamster-type vein that they had running through the family. They moved more into jobs like running the ferry. I know that they ran different ferries across different areas that

dad became quite well schooled in managing that kind of a job. And then they moved, they started following the economic pressures kind of thing. As their family grew and needed to have more security they moved out to Nordegg and worked in the coalmines out there.

BB: Oh okay.

DL: Then they moved back into Rocky Mountain House area, and dad became more of a lumberjack than anything else. So he did whatever he could to keep the family viable, and of course because of our traditional ways and he knowing the traditional ways it was just a way of life. Like, we didn't think of it as anything different or unusual, we just, that was the way we lived right. So we lived off hunting and gathering and you know? Mom always had a big garden and so we stored our vegetables and like we managed. So once dad settled west of Red Deer on the farm, what do you call it, homestead?

BB: Oh Yeah, Yeah.

DL: He started homesteading and that became his base and that's when he became more politically involved when he was more stationary in his life economically and getting more stability in there. So and then he became involved in the whole Métis Nation of Alberta movement.

BB: Okay, thank you for that. Moving onto question 19. What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and/or Grasslands National Park?

DL: I can't comment on that. I don't know.

BB: I think some of these next questions are going to be connected to the forts and stuff like that but I'll ask them anyways and if they don't apply then ...

DL: No, because our family wasn't involved in that. Once we moved out of that area.

BB: Yeah.

DL: Our life took on a different trajectory and it wasn't about us.

BB: Yeah. I'm going to move onto question 20. Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police at the Mounted Police posts at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Wood Mountain? If so, can you tell us anything about them?

DL: No, not applicable.

BB: Twenty-one. Do you know if your ancestors took Métis scrip at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Wood Mountain? Did they take it elsewhere?

DL: No they did not.

BB: How can Parks Canada make Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park more inviting for Métis visitors? How might Parks Canada include more information on the Métis history in these areas?

DL: I'm not sure what's existing. Is Batoche and Duck Lake and those in that same area that you're ...

BB: No. Primarily the ones we are talking about here are in the south west part of the province. And I'll just quickly interject um, the reason why we are kind of doing this research with Parks Canada is because is like the history at Batoche, you can't teach that history without teaching Métis history and Métis culture into it right because it was a Métis community. But uh, what they have been finding is that places like Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh, Grasslands National Park, there is a presence of Métis people in that area and that history and so they are trying to find better ways that they can reflect that in a visitors experience while they are there. So they're, in essence what we are trying to do through the interviews is get different people's opinions on um, things that they can to do make, make it better. So that's kind of the idea behind that. And ...

DL: Well as an educator, I certainly would like to see something closer to Medicine Hat that we could access from a school. Different perspective to inform our students about Métis involvement in this area. So there is a Métis, I can't, in the Cypress Hills there's somewhere I think they've done some research on it. And I think that would be a good place to maybe have some kind of interpretive like that's a huge opportunity for interpretation there.

BB: Yeah.

DL: And I think probably by making sure that Métis involvement is indicated in the Fort Walsh area so that people understand the robust contribution that Métis people would had to obviously made in that trading post and in terms of interpretation and that sort of thing, with fort people that were there they'll know the role that the Métis had in that way. But just making sure that it is seen as Métis involvement so that it's not just Cree or just Blackfoot and the Newcomers right? The western-European cultures. So while that involvement of the First Nations tribes is definitely indicated and it's, you know it's shown in a more, I guess, it's shown more readily than the Métis involvement. So I think that people need to understand how important the Métis were to all those processes in that time period. So they need to, they need to really strengthen that arm of Canadian history.

BB: Absolutely. Thank you. Question twenty-three, are there specific people or community groups that you would recommend Parks Canada contact to improve their interpretation of Métis history and culture at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

DL: So when you're talking about Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and Grasslands National Park, you're talking about what is now existing at Fort Walsh right?

BB: Yeah. We're talking about the interpretive centers there.

DL: Okay. And what about the Fort Battleford, what is that geographically in reference to?

BB: Well there is like a interpretive centre like Fort Walsh at the Battleford's region in Saskatchewan.

DL: Oh okay so that's farther north.

BB: Yeah, Yeah, it's a bit father north. Getting to be a little bit out of the southwest part but.

DL: So Grasslands National Park is a proposed area that covers what piece of land?

BB: Um, Grasslands National Park is further east I would say of ... Well it is further east of Fort Walsh. It's more, this is how I describe it to people, it's more directly under Swift Current, further down a bit more. And the Grasslands National Park is different from the forts because the forts are essentially just the fort and the bit of area around it.

DL: So are you looking at anything at all in the Elk Water, Alberta side? In that, or even travelling in the area from south of Fort Walsh to south of Cypress Hills and Alberta?

BB: Not too much because what the parks, what the park aims to do like is just trying to work on improving history in these areas which are primarily all just in Saskatchewan. But the reason why we went to Medicine Hat, why we went to Alberta is because we know that a large portion of the Métis population in Medicine Hat has connections to the fort, has connections to these areas. So that's kind of our reasoning for that. But I guess you would say, what you are inquiring about is, if we are looking anywhere else in Saskatchewan for purposes ...

DL: In terms of a national park in a national perspective, there's some kind of opportunity don't you think?

BB: Like how so? Can you expand on that a bit more?

DL: Well because Cypress Hills is an inter-provincial park right, at that Métis connection to provincially. This is like a national park right?

BB: Yeah.

DL: So how far east of the Alberta border is the proposed area is my question. Is there any opportunity at all for inclusion of that cross-border issue again or cross border perspective, I guess is a better word?

BB: Well right now the research, like I said it is focussing on these areas, these proposed areas. And that's not to say that it might not help in later projects to expand on what they found out and work on that stuff too like the research that we're doing now can help inform future studies too. And so we are willing to hear anything that might spark someone else or you know, it might spark something that they never knew before right. And so that's kind of what we are doing now, what we are focusing on is focusing on kind of the histories around these areas in which we are talking about.

DL: Oh ... sorry ...that works.

BB: Um, I have two more questions. Um, twenty-four might not apply but 24 is a bit of a long winded one, but I'll do some explaining on that one. Did you or any of your ancestors spend time in the proposed Grasslands National Park or surrounding lands? If so, what type of cultural activities did you or they participate in? Are there any particular landscapes or historical sites within the park, within the park that you as a Métis person consider culturally and historically significant?

DL: Okay, just looking at the map here. The general area that our family originates from of course is that cross border around the Battlefords across over to , between Saskatoon and Red Deer type of thing. So—

BB: And Grasslands is more south there like more closer to the border, more underneath Swift Current type of thing. And by the sounds of the interview so far it doesn't seem like your family was in that area at all.

DL: No, I don't think so at all. No because like I say, if you drew an arrow right from Saskatoon to Red Deer that would be our family area and then north to Saddle Lake. So that kind of be the triangle that I'm talking about. No, I don't think our family was that much involved in that area.

BB: Yeah okay that's fine. Okay twenty-five is referring to Grasslands National Park, but we can still use your opinion on it even though we don't have like a connection to Grasslands. So I'm going to say the question and explain what it is and then I'll ask you what you think of it.

DL: Okay.

BB: A cultural resources values statement is being developed for Grasslands National Park. The Park has identified a number of potential cultural values which may be important to the history of the park. Would any of these identified potential value themes be important to you as a Métis person? If so, which ones and what connections do you see? Are there any other cultural themes which may have connections to Métis people that should be considered? And so some of the themes that they are talking about that they want to include into this cultural resource values statement is um, and these are the themes: trading post, relationship with bison, ranching, farming, Great Depression, governance and administration, creation of the national park, paleontological and geological features, early exploration and surveys and historic use of the area. So essentially, what they are doing is they're creating this cultural resource values statement and they're trying to identify important themes that should be reflected in this statement. So those are some of the themes that they have already thought of so far so is there any of the themes that you particularly really agree with that you like or anything else that you would like to add that you think would be really important to be included in that statement.

DL: Well I think they're all very important. I can't think of any, there's not certainly any one of them that I'd leave out that's for sure.

BB: Yeah.

DL: But I would think that one that you might consider adding would be the entertainment and music part. Which was a huge part of Métis culture in terms of the fiddling contests and you know the jigging and the dancing and the, how that part of life got them through things like the Great Depression, you know. I think that, I think that, and I think given, I come from a large musical family and the music part of our lives was central. It was key to everything we did but it made the directions we went like we would go places to play music right? We would gather with people who were fellow musicians so I think that music and entertainment is really key in determining you know, how people travelled as well. So just an idea. I don't know if you want to add it or not.

BB: No, thank you, thank you. All input is being greatly appreciated at this point so thank you for sharing that.

DL: Alright.

BB: Well that concludes the question portion of the interview. What I usually do now is I just...

DL: Just hang on ... Sorry.

BB: Nope, no problem.

DL: When you work in a school you have to accommodate.

BB: Doors always gotta be open right.

DL: That's right, Yeah.

BB: The last part of the interview is I usually give this last portion to, if you want to leave any last comments or anything or anything you want to share that you didn't get a chance to share through the questions. I usually just leave this part of the interview for you to do that. So if you would like to share anything or comment on anything, now would be the time.

DL: No I can't think of anything other than like I say the music part of it which was huge and central in our family, and still is today so it was fostered by our ancestors, that love of socializing and getting together with family and friends. And just as kind of a footnote there our family was and is non-drinkers so it wasn't always based around the use of alcohol or partying in the colloquial sense.

BB: Okay, awesome.

DL: So it was a genuine social gathering.

BB: It just brought everyone together.

DL: Yeah, Yeah.

BB: Thank you. On that note I am just going to turn the recorder off here.

DL: Okay.