Willard Dumont--Parks Canada Interview, October 11, 2011

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Willard Dumont (WD): My name and what home?

Karon Shmon (KS): Yeah, your home community, like where were you born and where did you come from.

WD: Oh, I see. My name is Willard Dumont, and I was born and raised in the Cypress Hills on my dad's homestead at 26-28 west of the third meridian.

KS: And how were your, who were your parents and grandparents?

WD: Well my grandparents were two different ones. We have my dad's side, of course, the Dumonts, Henri Dumont and Madeleine Dumont. And then my mother's side was Belanger, and then she was…

KS: Do you know where they were from?

WD: Well they were originally, started out I guess in Montana then they moved to the Cypress Hills after my grandpa and grandma, a whole bunch of them moved from the Cypress Hills, from Sweet Grass Hills after they were working on the railroad over there. So a whole bunch of them moved to the Cypress Hills at the same time. So, my mother was with that group when they were working out there.

KS: Do you know what year that was?

WD: In what, what?

KS: What year or range?

WD: No, I don't know exactly what year that was.

KS: Was she just a little girl?

WD: Yeah, she was fairly small because she was married when she was … yeah she was very young because I think she was married when she was 15-years-old or something like that so she was married very young. And, I remember asking her how come she got married so young, and she said well I wanted to leave home. But anyway, her parents never stayed in the Fort Walsh area. They went to Battleford. So my folks, like grandma and grandpa Dumont, they stayed there by Fort Walsh.

KS: I think people married young in those days too because they were so grown up by then. Who was keeping your grandfather's ranch going?

WD: My grandfather stayed at his place only when they first came to settle in the Cypress Hills. They came from, what do they call it, Saskatchewan, I'm getting mixed up here, Swift Current. They came from Swift Current to Cypress Hills. And that's where they settled and built their first cabin. And they weren't getting enough food there so that's when they left there and they went to Bear Paw Mountains. And they worked for a (inaudible) outfit there for a long time. And then, they started work for the railroad, my grandpa, because they were paying more money on the railroad than on the ranch so he started to work for them. And he spent a couple of years on the railroad building the great northern railroad from Havre to the mountains. Then after that, they moved back to Canada at a place called Black Butte. I took Royce there. And they built some cabins, more than one cabin. They had about 20 little cabins that they built around some water there. And, they stayed there for 2, 3 years. And then grandpa said, "Well let's go back to our old homestead in the hills. I think it's better. We can find a little bit of food there, there's a little bit more hunting there." And so they did, when they went back there, and they did a little bit more, they ploughed up a piece of land there. They were able to put up a lot of potatoes and vegetables like that. So, they repaired their old house that they had there before. And, they must have stayed there until 1910 when the Forest Reserve said, "You got to get out of here, this is going to be a forest reserve." So they had to agree with it because the people that didn't agree with it were hauled out anyway. So the Métis people, some of them, were taken out by the RCMP and were put on the train and taken to Qu'Appelle. The ones that stayed around there were offered land on the outside of the park if they wanted to stay. Or, they could take $35 or $30, whatever they wanted and get out. So they had a choice, so grandpa took the land on the outside of the park. The land was joined to the park. So he got half a section there. And that's where he settled down and he got a few cows, three, four head of cows. Milk cows and then he started, tore up some land, put some oats for the cattle for the winter, and then a big garden of vegetables. He had a whole acre of land that he tore up for vegetables. So he would have a lot of vegetables for the wintertime. Anyway, that's where they made their home right up until he passed away.

KS: Was your dad born on that homestead or on the previous one?

WD: No, my dad was born in Saskatchewan in what's that, Swift Current. Somewhere out there, that's where he was born.

KS: So he had to go through all this moving around too?

WD: Yeah, he followed them there then he followed them to Montana because he was just a kid, when he got to Montana he was 9-years-old. So they sent him to Fort Shaw to a Catholic school. It's a full boarding school. They had their own milk cows and their own irrigation system. They had vegetables and all that.

KS: Was that by force? Was he forced to go there or did he … ?

WD: Yeah, he didn't have much choice. The government on that side in Montana didn't want all these kids to be educated so they give them that choice of putting the kids over

there. He stayed there for several years then he got fed up with the way they handled it. If you didn't behave he said, you would have to roll up your pant legs and you were whipped with a buggy whip to make you, just to make you sure that who was the boss. And he got tired of that. Finally, him and two other boys decided to run away. So they did run away from there.

KS: Did he learn how to read and write? Was he able to read and write?

WD: Oh yeah, dad got a pretty good education. Yeah, he could write pretty good and read.

KS: Was it from that place or did he know how?

WD: From that place. No, he never went to another school. But, he had what, nine, I think he was 14 when he left there, just about 5 years I guess. Anyway, when he got back he was old enough to start riding so he could work for several ranchers. Then finally, he went to work for the Spencers. Yeah, he started to work for the Spencers. Then he worked for the Spencers for 12 years. Then that's when he got married. Found out he had to quit that so he moved to the Cypress Hills too but 15 miles away from my grandpa's place.

KS: One thing, I don't know the year of, but it's a pretty famous story is the buffalo herd that got taken to Montana. And a lot of the cowboys were Métis. These two men from Montana could see that the buffalo were getting decimated, killed off so they took a herd down to Montana to try to keep one herd alive so that the buffalo could sustain. Do you know anything about that story?

WD: No.

KS: I think it was before this time.

WD: See that was a long time ago because I don't know what year it was. I got it in here what year it was that the buffalo disappeared. It's in there somewhere, but I can't tell you by heart. That was before even my dad was born, and they were gone before my grandpa moved into Cypress Hills. The buffalo was gone before that.

Royce Pettyjohn (RP): You had a story that your grandfather told you about buffalo robes at Fort Benton.

WD: Yes, when he was down there with his dad. Buffalo hides all packed up in bundles along side the riverbank. And I guess the river boat used to pull, what are they called, tug boats or something like that. And they used to load them full of hides and other hides that they'd buy and like bull hides and coyote hides and that would be all. But, he said these buffalo hides when he was there the market fell, nobody was buying them. So, they all rotted, a whole bunch of them along the river. That was the last he ever saw of buffalo hides.

KS: He would have been an adult when he saw that?

WD: My grandpa was only a kid when he was there. Just a kid, yeah.

KS: What did your dad do after he got married, for a living?

WD: He worked for Parks Canada a lot. Well Royce knows the place. It's called Head Quarters I guess. Of course, the park was all one park at that time. What you call, I don't know what they call them nowadays, where the park is on one side and Saskatchewan and then Fort Walsh and then Elkwater. It was all one, and it was all managed by one outfit and the Saskatchewan outfit that managed the whole thing was in Alberta. And dad's pay cheque was always Saskatchewan, paid by Saskatchewan. And he worked for them for many years. But, he kept his homestead going by going back there in the wintertime, and on Sundays he would go home and do the garden work, and then go back to the park and work again. He built the first log cabin in Elkwater in 1926, I think, 20 something.

Royce: And that was the tourist cabin?

WD: Yeah, tourist cabin he built, yeah. He built one big cabin, long, and divided it in half so it could have two families.

KS: I was privileged to be able to go to where my mom was raised at Chitek Lake, Saskatchewan. I don't know if you know where that is. It's by, I guess, Spiritwood and Leoville, anyways it's northwest Saskatchewan. And, she was raised in a one-room log cabin, it was only 20 by 20, and had a big wood stove in the middle, and we had to use coal oil lamps, and it had an outhouse, of course, because there's no running water. And her granny was so short that the windows were only about this high off the ground. And after she passed away, they raised up the cabin four logs to put the windows higher up. But, for us, I'm a city kid, born and raised in Saskatoon so when we used to go there it was like a big adventure because it almost felt like you were camping. And so we loved it because my mom and dad and six kids were just wall to wall kids all around the cabin sleeping in sleeping bags. And we'd go and pick berries and go and run and jump in the lake as soon as we got up while my mom and dad were making breakfast. And I can't imagine jumping in a lake at 8 AM nowadays.

WD: Well that was your best shower in the summertime was going into the creek or lake or something and taking a good bath, hey?

KS: Yeah, a lot more fun too.

WD: Well most of the cabins in them days were all one-room cabins to start. I don't really know any of them that really started with two rooms. They got divided later when they were big enough for rooms. My dad's first place, it was long enough that in later years, they divided it with two bedrooms. But just about all of the cabins was just one room. Right where we were Isidore Montour and Bap. Montour and Johnny Bird and dad, and what was his name … But anyway they were all one-room cabins.

KS: Did any of those other folks from Black Butte move over to Cypress Hills as well?

WD: Which ones?

KS: When you said there was 20 cabins at Black Butte, did those people move to Cypress Hills as well?

WD: Yeah, quite a few of them did. Like Labarges, I know and Enos and Degeurres, who else moved in there …?

RP: Was Adams one of them?

WD: Yeah, Adams too. And, what was the other guy? I know his dad and his partner used to have moved in there too. But, anyways quite a few of them did. I can't remember all of the names right now but …

KS: When your dad worked for Parks Canada where did you grow up and go to school?

WD: I didn't. I did correspondence school for a long time.

KS: So you taught yourself to read and write?

WD: Yep.

KS: Wow, that's amazing.

WD: Well, I had problems with that, but I got by anyway.

KS: It must have been hard to discipline yourself to study.

WD: Well with other kids around you know, the smaller kids tearing around when you're trying to write. They'd run around the table. Yeah, that's mighty hard. And, I did try to read everything I could get a hold of and anyway. If I was reading that I would have to read it about ten times to make sense of what it was. So you just had to keep on doing things like that, finally made it anyway.

KS: Well that's pretty remarkable that you also became an author.

WD: Yeah, I became a sergeant in the army so that was a pretty good step.

KS: Was that your first job? Going into the army then or?

WD: No, we didn't go into the army until 1940, when I joined the army. The same year in December 1940, I landed in England, doing home defence there for the army.

KS: Did you know any of those Trottier boys from Val Marie?

WD: I knew who they were. I never did get well acquainted with them. I knew that they were in the Cypress Hills too. I got to know some of them.

KS: We just heard a story last week that they organized a rodeo over there in England.

WD: Oh that's the rodeo that Royce knows all about that rodeo. What did they call it …

RP: The Wimbley Rodeo. The Rodeo of Wimbley.

WD: Yeah, Eddie Leveille was supposed to go to that, and Alec Laframboise was supposed to go to that too, and I guess they got dumped by some other. Anyway, that's another story too so ...

KS: What kind of work were you doing before you enlisted?

WD: Before I left for England?

KS: Yeah.

WD: Ranch work. I was working for the, I worked for Mitchell Brothers in Maple Creek before I left.

KS: What was a typical day like for being a ranch hand?

WD: Well, I liked ranching because everything was all set by the day. You worked from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night. It was a pretty standard thing. Dinner was always at twelve. Breakfast at six. Supper at six. Most of it was pretty good. You did different things you know, putting in the crops and taking the hay off, cattle and branding, all kinds of stuff. I think ranching is lots of fun. I grew up on most of the prairie. I bought my own place in, I forget what year it was, in the Eagle Butte valley just up here. We bought three sections of land. It was good grass cutter because we had the forest reserve to put the cattle in. We ran a hundred head of cattle. We had a hundred head of yearlings, hundred head of calves. Then we put in a half section of crop, wheat.

KS: Did you have to hire help?

WD: Sometimes, I did, yeah. Haying time, I needed help because everything had to go one thing right after the other, cut the hay, rake the hay, bale the hay. So yeah, I used to have help. During the other times, it doesn't really matter, but haying time was really … Sometimes, I hired somebody in the spring for putting the crop in, but not very often.

KS: Last night when we met with the folks down at the Miywasin Centre, we were all saying how, even though, you know you have Métis ancestry for a lot of the time during our day, even in modern life, we're not wearing that ancestry as the only thing that we do. Like sometimes we're teachers, sometimes we're ranchers, Parks Canada employee, whatever. Was being Métis very much a part of your identity or was it just something that was there?

WD: No, I think it was just something that was there. I didn't fall into that line. Sometimes, you'd get teased about it, but it didn't really bother me, it wasn't pushed onto me so it didn't bother me that much.

KS: Did it ever go beyond teasing?

WD: No, it never got bad. People wouldn't insult me enough to bring me into a fight like that. I just thought I know what I wanted to do, what I wanted to be, and just kept on.

KS: What about for other Métis? How were they treated?

WD: Well yeah, it's all different in different places. South of the border, some places, you were not even hired at all. I think I had a fall back too, there in getting hired because after the war, when I came here to Medicine Hat, when I'd go to the unemployment office and they'd look at me and they'd say, "No, there's no work." But, I could find work by myself by just going out to look for it. So I knew very well what was happening. They just took one look at me and they'd say, "No, no work." That's why it didn't matter in the ranches, you know, as long as you could do the work it didn't matter on the ranches. But, when I come back, I had a wife so I didn't want to go out on the ranches. Couldn't very well go unless you had the right outfit to go there. I did take the wife out there after a while, but I was pretty well set by that time. I had my own house trailer and my own saddles and bridles and all that stuff, so it didn't really matter if I went down south working for the ranchers for a while until I was able to buy my own.

KS: Did you get any veterans benefits?

WD: Oh yeah, yep. I think they've been pretty fair to me, the Veterans [Affiars]. A lot better than ordinary people would do for Métis. They were pretty fair. I get a pension and they give Vera a little small pension too, the army does, on her marrying me. And ,they give you a few things like I don't have to pay for my medicine, my pills, the army pays for that. So, I think the army is good. They're doing good. I asked them for a scooter so I could get around and they said, "What kind do you want?" So I picked out a good one. It was 3,700 dollars. I said, "I want good tires on it, I want to tear around the hills with the thing." And it goes 12 miles an hour. And I said, "I want it in red." So they filled up the whole thing, I got my scooter in red and it's a good one.

KS: It's nice to hear of a Métis veteran that got the benefits that he should have. Unfortunately, there were a number who weren't treated so well.

WD: See there's a lot of the Métis towards the north, they didn't give them anything. They said, "You're getting some money from the Métis Association," or something like that so we're not going to give you an army one. So yeah, I know they've had tougher times. No, I got along good with the army.

KS: And did you meet Vera in England is that? Is Vera from England?

WD: My wife's from England.

KS: So she had quite an adjustment coming to Canada then?

WD: Quite. Well she had a choice.

KS: You don't have a choice when you're in love.

WD: Okay, thank you.

KS: So what I'm finding out about Métis customs or Métis, even just I don't know, like harvesting, hunting and fishing for your food, and that. When you're raised that way you don't think of it as being Métis because you just think that's normal. And so what kind of things did you find that was done by more Métis than not? Like was there any fiddling or jigging or bannock making in your family?

WD: No, I don't know. No, they never, most of my family never to the Métis side, they all went to the white side. Like all my brothers and sisters, they all married into the white side.

KS: Did you have any family that was affected by the 1885 Resistance?

WD: I don't know. I don't think so really.

RP: You were talking about jigging a little while ago. You were telling the story one time about the New Years parties that they would have and the jigging, the sound of the moccasins on the floorboards.

WD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that makes quite a sound because when they jig they kind of slid their feet.

KS: So who was at those parties? Who was at the parties?

WD: Oh, I don't know who the people were because they were the local people around the Cypress Hills there, you know?

KS: Was that a pretty big celebration then, New Years?

WD: Well, we'd all call it big because there would be about 10 families so we figured that's big.

KS: And did they shoot any guns off?

WD: No, no. Well, they'd have booze, but we never brought guns to shoot like that at our party.

KS: So where does Louis fit in with the family?

WD: Who?

KS: Louis Dumont.

Royce: Oh, that's his uncle.

KS: Okay because I was reading on one book that we bought at the fort, and I got a little chuckle out of this because it said that he could play the violin and he could tap dance well.

WD: Right.

KS: And I thought it was fiddle and jigging myself.

WD: Well, yeah that's the jig.

KS: Yeah and whoever is telling the story is describing it the best they could.

WD: They called it jigging in the old days, and nowadays it's tap dancing. That's the difference.

KS: But I've heard that sound of those moccasins at John Arcand *Fiddle Fest*. He has two kinds of jigging and two kinds of fiddling because for the traditional … it's a different beat for the fiddling and for the traditional jigging, you don't move, like you're not clomping your feet down and your upper body isn't supposed to move that much. Like you don't wave your arms around when you're jigging. And just your feet come up and down right, like really at the hips they should be at the same level and it's your legs. Then for the modern, people put those clickers on their shoes, and they sound like their tap dancing.

WD: Yeah, but you can put the clickers on at the toe part and at the heel part so when they hit they get that noise.

KS: I like watching square dancing too.

WD: Yeah that's very popular with the Métis, is square dancing. They love that.

KS: Did you get into rodeo too when you were younger?

WD: I tried it for one year. I never got good enough, and it's too expensive because your entry fee was a dollar a head. So I used to enter in the saddle bronc, bareback (inaudible). I did that for one year, but it cost too much money, and I wasn't making that much.

KS: My dad was a railroader and so was my grandpa and my uncle but, he thought he was making a really good salary and he actually was for that day. Ten dollars a day.

WD: Yeah that's good, very good.

KS: That probably would have been around probably 1950 or something like that, or 1940s, 48.

WD: Yeah times were getting a little better then.

KS: And they went through the Depression too, but he was too young to be enlisted so he didn't have to serve, but I think what I've observed from my parents generation of people that went through the Depression, it's really hard for them to spend money and it's really hard for them to waste anything.

WD: Yeah, you don't want to waste nothing.

KS: Because if you have a plastic bag off bread then you clean that bag and you use that bag.

WD: Use it again.

KS: You know, use everything over again, or if you have old clothes you would make rugs or something out of them. Like it's a shame to waste things.

WD: Yeah, that's one thing about the Métis, they used everything, even for butchering, whether it's an antelope or a deer or a cow, it doesn't matter. They never wasted nothing. Used all the hide and everything else. I can remember my grandma having a bone and she put a bone blade on the end that she'd scrape the hide with. I forget what bone it is, it's a bone about that long. I don't know what part it comes off of, somewhere. But that one part she could fit that one blade on there with rawhide and she'd scrape the hide.

KS: And did she smoke those hides too? Did she smoke the hides, like to cure them?

WD: Oh yeah after a while. But, there were very few hides when I was growing up. They'd kill all the deer and everything else was gone. You got the odd one, but not a lot.

KS: After the, well I guess when they had that Forest Reserve they considered all the Métis to be squatting there right?

WD: In the Forest Reserve, like up here?

KS: Yeah.

WD: Yeah, it was full of everything.

KS: So did any of them settle on road allowances after that? Or, was there such a thing as road allowances then?

WD: Oh yeah, there was road allowances, but no, I never heard of them settling on them, unless it was a mistake and not knowing the exact boundary.

KS: You mentioned some of them got sent to Fort Qu'Appelle. We knew about the First Nations people that got moved there, but I didn't know the Métis were moved there too.

WD: From Fort Qu'Appelle? Well yeah, I think so.

KS: Or the Qu'Appelle valley I guess?

WD: Qu'Appelle valley, yeah, there were quite a few of them. Right from Cypress Hills. They moved a whole trainload out of Cypress right to Qu'Appelle.

KS: So they moved the Métis with those folks?

WD: No, I don't think any of the Métis went. I think they were more of the Crees that stayed in there. They didn't want to move out, but they moved them out. That was a surprise at (inaudible), you know? They left them in there, they never bothered them. And they gave them a reserve, but they wouldn't' do that on this side.

KS: Is that kinnikinnick?

RP: One of the stories that you talked about was the summer gatherings at the fort there when they'd come with their tents and picnic. There's that picture that you gave me of maybe your grandmother or somebody there in a tent. They'd all come together and gather at the fort site there.

WD: Yeah, they always had a do once a year at least at the fort. Just the Métis people around there mostly. Some of the other people did too that were close by. Like the Faulkners, they would come there. Some of the people from Merryflat, they were the closest ones. And have a real field day, usually on the first of July, if anything.

KS: So did you get to go to some of those?

WD: Yep. When I was little, I'd go with my grandpa and grandma on the hills.

KS: What kind of activities would happen at these gatherings?

WD: Well it was getting more modern, they had dances in the evening. During the day was playing horseshoes and baseball, and what else? Oh yeah, they had some target shooting. Now, I can't remember. Oh yeah, they had a couple horses that they rode too, bucking horses. They had a corral there where the old barn used to be at Fort Walsh, they had a corral in the back of it.

KS: Almost like you're describing *Back to Batoche* days because they do most of those activities at *Back to Batoche* in Saskatchewan. It's close to Batoche historical site. It's Batoche fair grounds and they have a big celebration, and it's in July, they call them *Back to Batoche* days. And they have all this, they have dances, horseshoe, baseball, target shooting. But, I mean they just do it with a hammer or an axe or a knife. And then, they do, they have a rodeo at the same time. And then, they have these cooking, outdoor cooking, and bannock making contests. And they just have a low fire and a cast iron frying pan and they make their bannock right there. Like they have to make it on the spot. And I guess, the judges decides who makes the best bannock. But, it lasts about three or four days and every night there's some kind of entertainment. They have fiddling and jigging contests so I would think this is probably common gathering idea here that they said, "That's what Métis do when they get together for these summer gatherings." And made it into a modern festival.

WD: Yeah, right.

KS: But it's nice that it's kept going.

WD: Well, I guess that's something that the Métis people used to do years ago. The Blackfoot or even down at Eagle Butte road down here, they had a couple places where they used to do that.

KS: Did they ever do any flour packing? Flour packing to see how much they could carry?

WD: We did that at Cypress Park. I never entered it though.

KS: Was it actually flour or something else?

WD: No, I don't know what it was in the bags. It looked like 100 pounds of flour. You would start with 50 and keep going up. All kinds of, it was different things. I don't think it was flour all the time, there was different things you had to carry.

KS: My mom took me to, she was, lived part of her life in The Pas. That's where she met my dad, and they have one called the *Trappers' Festival.* And she took me there. Twice, I went there, and we watched those flour-packing contests. And women were packing 500 pounds and the king trapper could lift 750 pounds. They had to put it on their back, and they had to go so far without stopping or falling down. And we went down to the river, and my mom was talking to people that she knew, and I heard her ask if she could borrow their snowshoes. And I'm thinking what's my mom doing, and here she's going to go in the ladies snowshoe race. And they started the race and my mom was just flying across that snow and she won, and I went, "My mom can run and she's so old, she's 32." But, I didn't even know that she knew how to do that because she learned that when she was a girl up at Chitek Lake because one of the things she prided herself on was hunting with her 22. She'd go get rabbits for supper and was very proud of herself for being a good shot.

WD: That's something we never did do, snowshoes in Cypress.

KS: Yeah, I guess you don't get that much snow either. I noticed your flowers outside are a lot more alive than the ones in Saskatoon.

WD: Oh, are they?

KS: We've had a few frosts already.

WD: Oh boy. Yeah, we did good last year too. Late frost.

KS: Royce, do you want to ask any more specific to the plans that you have in terms of what kind of features might enhance the Métis story there at Fort Walsh?

RP: The only other story that might be good for you to tell is going out with your grandfather collecting pinecones.

WD: Oh yeah, well he, it's the Parks itself. They get their orders from somewhere, and they wanted somebody to pick up pinecones. So grandpa said, "You go do it, collect pinecones." He picked up his tent and took grandma with him. So he pitched up the tent in the coulee straight west of where the homestead is. And they picked pinecones there, a gunnysack full

at a time. When they got about five or six gunnysacks, they would deliver it to the fort, not the fort, but headquarters. Oh, we must have been there two months at least in that valley picking up the pinecones. So anyway, these pinecones, the seed was to go to Australia and New Zealand. In return, Australia and New Zealand sent some pinecones, not cones but seed over. And just north of where the headquarters building is now, you'll see some tall pines there. They're very tall and they're in rows. You can go look at one row this way and you can turn and look over here, and there's another row because they're set so there's different rows. So dad got, put them in the, what do you call it? The nursery where he started that, them little things got so high, then they planted them out in that place just north of where headquarters is. That's what them trees are. I don't think anybody knows that. It's just a bygone thing. It's just pine trees to anybody else.

KS: Do you know what that stand is?

Royce: No.

WD: Just north of the house. Big square, there's a lot of pine trees.

Royce: I'll have to go look.

KS: It would be interesting to see where the Cypress Hills trees ended up in Australia and New Zealand.

WD: It might be too. But, I wouldn't know that, you'd have to ask. Well no, they would have people there yet in their own, what do you call it? Whatever they, forest or what, they would have or park where they put. And then you could still find it, yeah.

KS: So did you ranch all your life or did you change careers after a certain point?

WD: No, I don't think I changed until I come to town. When I first got back from the army, I didn't have nothing. I was back on my back. I went to Redcliff and worked in the shale pit there making brick, the brickyard. I spent, I don't know, two, three years there. Then I ended up trying to get into the ranching business. I wanted to buy a place. I didn't want to work for somebody all my life. So anyway, when I finally bought this place in Eagle Butte then I had the Veterans Affairs. I went to them and told them I wanted to buy that place, and well of course, they'd lend you money. Well two different things: they lend you money at six per cent and eight per cent. They don't give you anything there, but they'll lend you the money to start. So anyway, I borrowed it from Veterans Affairs and I'd keep paying them back every year. Finally, got the place paid for. Then after I got it paid for, I think I was there seven years then I got an enlarged heart. Then I sold it. Then I moved into Dunmore, up here, built a little shop.

KS: Oh yeah, we heard last night about all your furniture, you made it?

WD: Yeah, all of it. The stand behind, all those, lots of coffee tables.

KS: Do you know Mr. Potvein, a guy named Potvein? Vi and Gary Potvein?

WD: Potband?

KS: Potvein, P-O-T-V-E-I-N … Anyway, he said, "Oh you will have to try and see if you can meet Mr. Dumont." He said, "He's also such an excellent carpenter, he's made all his own furniture." And we said, " Well we are pretty lucky, we are going to meet him today." Very nice.

RP: Basically everything that isn't the upholstered furniture he built.

KS: Wow, even these chairs?

RP: Not these chairs, no. Cabinets and the coffee tables, clock.

KS: Very nice job.

RP: He was also a wheelwright in his retirement for the old Red River carts as well.

KS: Oh wow. So there's one of your carts in Maple Creek right?

RP: Fort Walsh.

KS: Fort Walsh.

RP: How many Red River carts did you build?

WD: I only built two to give away. That one at Fort Walsh and that one at, over here by Manyberries. So I took a cart up there. But, that cart is not going to last because it's sitting outside.

KS: Did you have to make those hubs, too?

WD: Yep yep.

KS: What's the hardest part of making a cart?

WD: I think the hub. You got to drill a straight hole through. You got to get it the right size so you can get the axel in there. Then you drill the holes for the spokes.

KS: Did you have to bend the wood for the, how did you bend that wood for the wheels?

WD: You cut it. You get a big piece of wood, about like that, and there's a big piece of wood, and you cut it about like that.

KS: So did they ever try them out? Did they ever hook up an animal to it?

WD: No, I don't think they ever did at Fort Walsh. I don't know about the other one, but they're made to hook up.

KS: Well congratulations. That's quite a feat. So were people contracting you to make furniture, is that how you made your living when you moved here?

WD: Yeah, I sold a lot of it. I made kitchen cabinets. I didn't build these, but I built a lot of kitchen cabinets.

KS: Do you want to tell us about your books?

WD: Well, I don't know what to tell, but I got pieces out of it if you want or wanted to talk about anything.

KS: Well you probably know the overview too right? Like how did you pick what you were going to put in it?

WD: How did I know what I wanted to put in it? It took me about 20 years. I started by writing just a little bit. I'd scribble a bit, I'd take a page with me and write what I thought I wanted, and that was all because something came up in my head. Then I'd take it and write another page. So it took a long, long time to write, to put it all together again. It's a good thing I had a daughter that said she didn't have anything to do with it, so I bought her a laptop and I bought her a printer, and then she went to work. But she helped make a book in the church before she made this one. She helped to make a book. So I'm well pleased how it's put together because that's a lot of work. You got to match up the picture with the story.

KS: Yeah I know. she did a great job.

WD: That was my uncle in the war too. They were in First World War. So I have lots of …

KS: Did they all make it back?

WD: That one's killed, buried in France. I guess I don't have it there. There's a picture of his grave somewhere here. That's my old homestead. That's where dad worked at the park, that's where he stayed. This is the first, no that's dad's second home. That's the one I said he put a partition across the back and made two bedrooms at the back.

KS: A mansion.

WD: That's dad's (inaudible). That's my dad in there too. These are just about all relatives. That's the school where dad went.

KS: Well I understand that you initially put this together as a family project. But I think other people would find it very interesting and if you were interested in having it published, I know the Institute would be interested in you know we would get it printed up, more copies of the book and probably sell them at a nominal fee because we want the Métis community to be able to afford the books that we make. And also, there's an author royalty that, where you would get 10% of whatever the retail price of the book is times the number of copies. And you would also always have the intellectual properties. So the copyright would be yours, we would just be the publisher. I don't know if you would like to give that some thought, but I mean this, you've got a lot of pictures in there too. I think people are really interested

in that. The other thing we're doing is we're trying to identify who the Métis veterans were and where their gravesites are. And also the ones who made it back because you can't always tell by the name that they were a Métis person.

WD: No, you can't. I've got a whole section here on the soldiers that were in my outfit that got killed, wounded …

KS: Were they from all over Canada?

WD: All over Canada. Oh there they are. You wouldn't know there were that many killed and wounded.

KS: Well one, this lady, she just went to France last April to go and look at the cemeteries. And she knew that my Métis name is Adams and there was an Adams there, but they had put him in the English cemetery and he was really a Métis. Yes, Adams, part of his name was English but he was my mom's uncle. And I was glad that she found his gravesite and she put –Brad, have you got that bag handy? or—she put one of these little sashes on each, like this one here. All the ones she could identify she went and put one of these on each of their gravesites.

WD: Oh yeah.

KS: So she's doing a book about where there are Métis veterans from Saskatchewan buried in different parts of Europe.

WD: That's a big project there.

KS: It is, but I mean it's an important one. We made one book called *Remembrances*, and it was telling about, how many are in there, what, maybe 20, veterans stories? And after we made that book, a lot of families came forward and they said, "Oh we sure wish we knew you were making this book because our father, uncle, grandfather was a veteran and it would be nice to see him put in a book." So I think we're going to be, we'll make another book, but we'll also have on Internet, on computer, we can put information up there because it costs a lot to make a book. So we put a lot of information up there that people can go and look at, and they can see information about their family or pictures. And we actually have some of the interviews up there so after you give us the go ahead, we'll likely put a lot of the interview on the Virtual Museum. Most people use a computer like a TV now only you get to turn on your show whenever you want it.

WD: Yeah right.

KS: So that's a 20-year project. Did you have to organize all the little stories you wrote after, or you, went okay these ones are about ranching or did you do chronological order, like the order it happened?

WD: Well no, I didn't do it in the order it happened, but Donna picked it out to put it as close as she could to the way life went. Yeah, that was her job so … And then we had three

different people proofreading it to see that the spelling was right and stuff like that. So this is just a rough thing, I got the …

RP: Where is the bound one?

WD: It's up there. Every book up on that shelf there. I'm in every book.

KS: Oh nice.

RP: This is what the bound copy looks like.

KS: Beautiful.

WD: That's the book itself.

KS: And that's the title?

WD: That's the title.

KS: *Country Life*.

WD: See, I don't fool around with that book because Donna made me this one to show people because I could just go through it without wrecking a good book because after a while you break, a book breaks here you know when you keep opening it like that. Eventually, they break so we got this one.

KS: That's beautiful. We have an antique book collection at work and to get them on the Internet, I'll just show you with my paper instead of bending this one. This photographer that we work with, he made a thing that goes like this so you never have to open the book the full way. He goes like this, and he'll photograph this page, and then he goes like this and he photographs this page. Because he knows if he goes like this, it's going to crack the spine.

WD: It will break the back.

KS: And some of them, like I think we have some that are like 200-years-old, and they're rare too because I mean even if it's not that old, even if it's 60-years-old, if there's only one or two left then you got to take good care of it.

WD: Yeah, you do, be very careful.

KS: On our cabinets, we have a Métis carpenter making our display cases. And he knew that he couldn't put any varnish or oil in there because the chemical might go into the books and wreck the pages. So he had to make it all with nothing like that. And when he put the, we've got some with glass in them, he said, "I didn't even glue the glass, there's screws on the back so that it holds the glass forward." And he said, "There's no glue in the cabinet at all." Which I thought was pretty amazing that he could make it that way because he knew we didn't want chemicals, fumes to get on the, because beside books we have beadwork, hide and beadwork and fur, and if it goes in there it might make it break down and fall apart. So

all of these artefacts we try to take good care of them. We got donated one collection that's from the Batoche battlefield. And so it's things like, not just about the battle, but people who lived there, like there might be broken dishes that they threw out. We actually got a couple of those Red River cart hubs. Those steel hubs. That's why I was asking if you made that, that must be a hard thing to make.

WD: Yeah, they are.

KS: So we are trying to make sure we use museum-standard practices so that everything gets taken care of there because we don't want it to break down. And also, it might be good now, but in a hundred years, if it's not taken care of properly what shape will it be in?

WD: Yeah. Yeah, I got the Red River cart in here on a break down. I don't know where, but in here and I got the plans from Regina. And they said, "That's original plans that they were using when they started out with the Red River carts."

KS: Wow.

WD: So actually, I got it printed in here so it will be in here for a lifetime, wherever it is.

KS: There's a young, well I call him young, anyone younger than me is young, anyways his name is Fayant. George Fayant. F-A-Y-A-N-T.

WD: That's Fayant?

KS: Fayant. He is making carts now. And the whole cart comes apart. Like there's no screws or anything.

WD: Right, right.

KS: And so now he makes half carts and quarter sized carts. He would make a full one, but where are you going to put it right? So we got this cart. Brad's actually been one of the people that's taken it apart and put it together. When we first got it, I said, "Brad let's try this to see if it's easy or not because even though Fayant says it's easy we didn't know if it was easy." And you guys did it in what about 15 minutes?

Brad Brown (BB): A little bit less.

KS: A little bit less. And so, when we take it somewhere it's just the long boards and the rest of the stuff we just put in a, like a duffel bag. And we don't take the wheels apart, he said they would come apart but we don't want to put a lot of wear and tear on them. And then, it's a really neat thing to show classes of how that cart looks and how it's made entirely of wood.

RP: His grandmother was a Fayant. This is her and some of the Fayant family.

KS: Oh wow, that's cool. Now did some of them get moved over to Qu'Appelle?

WD: No, no. They're the ones that stayed.

KS: Because that's where that George is from. He lives in Regina, but he's originally from Fort Qu'Appelle and Lebret there. So that's your relatives too? See and we're Adams, that's my family, is Adams.

WD: That Adams, yeah, what's his name?

KS: Jeremiah.

WD: Yeah Jerry.

KS: And probably from the Red River, it's probably the same Adams family.

WD: Oh, it likely is yeah. His son decided to live in Medicine Hat. Charlie Adams.

KS: So this lady, Marie, Marie Fayant, is that your …?

WD: Yeah.

KS: She looks like a musician there. Is that an accordion or what did they call it, squeezebox?

WD: Yeah. Yeah, her name is right there I think.

KS: Well Brad got to represent Saskatchewan at the Olympics as a Métis youth. And they said, "Well make sure you send your delegates in traditional clothing." So we were trying to get period clothing for him and it was hard. We had to commission some beaded things and a special kind of shirt, and special pants, and that and everything. And they kept saying, "O h no, that's not traditional clothing. No, that's not traditional clothing." Finally, I said, " Would you look at the old pictures of the Métis and see that they had to wear whatever was their best clothes?" Like, I mean it wasn't this dress up stuff that they wanted at the Olympics. And I said, "You know you're risking creating a myth about what the dress was at the time." When I saw old pictures of my grandparents, they're in black clothing. Like those ladies wear a lot of black dresses. Those button up dresses right up to the top. And this kind of clothes on the men, and I mean if you went to church or to a party, you're going to wear whatever your best thing was, but it might not be really fancy.

WD: Right. I remember Royce asking me one time what kind of shoes my grandma wore. I said well you never could see her shoes, her dress always dragged on the ground, never see it.

KS: That's a nice picture.

RP: There's lots of nice pictures in there.

WD: Yeah, it took a lot of research, you know, trying to get all the pictures I could. As I said, when you're doing something like this, you start too late in life, you know, you should start when you're real young. There's more pictures around the country. Yeah, I just saved

that, that guy made a little write up about the book. Yeah, about that book. I thought he made a good little write up.

KS: This is about this one?

WD: Yeah that's the write up he made for this book. Oh, I'd like to do a lot more in writing you know but, Donna doesn't want to do it anymore.

KS: Did you ever meet that woman named Louise Moine?

WD: Which one?

KS: Louise Moine from Val Marie.

WD: No.

KS: Anyway, she did a history over there and she actually lived until she was a hundred and two.

WD: Oh, is that right?

KS: And most of their Métis history that they have of that area, you see because that's the other side of the park, Grasslands Park. They're lucky that she is the one that documented it. So I mean, what we're thinking of is if we had her story and your story, we'd have a pretty good history of southern Saskatchewan.

WD: Oh yeah, okay.

KS: Another woman, Cecile Blanke. Did you meet her? Blank I think they say.

WD: Blanke?

KS: Well her husband is a German actually, it's B-L-A-N-K-E

WD: I was going to say that's French.

KS: Do you remember her Métis name? Anyway, there's a place called Lac Pelletier. Lac Pelletier is, I guess south of Swift Current, and there was a big Métis community there, but everybody has moved away since then. But, she was raised there, and she's hoping to get Lac Pelletier some kind of care there that shows that there was a Métis community there. And they did a lot of rodeo and horse riding. And she said when they'd have these rodeos they'd get all these wagons, would make the corral. And then, they would have the rodeo inside. Yeah, that would be another interesting addition to the archives. Do you want to tell us about anything else?

WD: I don't know.

KS: This place name ones, there's some places that you can mention that are in the …

WD: In this one?

KS: Yeah.

WD: No, I don't think there's that really because this, that is like roads and names of the places because a lot of people didn't even know the name of the places, and this is every one, it's got the place. The maps are drawn. They're just all … And how the names, how did the names come up. Like the Black Tail Ranch, they wanted to know how come the Black Tail Ranch, well there was a lot of black tail deer there so they called it the black tail ranch. And then right at the Black Tail Ranch, the road ran right from there about five miles west from there to Wild Horse, past there and they called it the Black Tail Road, you know? So one of those things that people want to know is how those names come about.

KS: Mrs Blanke told us about three different stories about how Lac Pelletier had three different names. Because in First Nations it was called the Spirit Lake, and it got a name from a priest called Feather Lake, and by the Métis it was called Lac Pelletier. So I guess it depends on who lives there, what they decide to call it.

WD: Yeah, I wondered a lot of them names, how did they come about.

KS: I think it's getting pretty bad there where now all these places are getting renamed like Credit Union or Sasktel or something like that, and they're taking away the people's names that were there. Like there used to be, well there still is, like they had like Gordie Howe Bowl, they'll probably change that to Credit Union something. And I think it's too bad when they take away the people names from places.

WD: What about Onion Lake, where is that?

KS: Well that's by Lloyd right, Lloydminster?

WD: Oh, okay.

KS: Did you ever go there?

WD: Just a memory of something. There's a lot of that stuff where the name should be kept because they're not kept. When the English make the map like that, they're all picked by their own name.

KS: We helped, we feel, we keep being told that if it wasn't for Gabriel Dumont Institute being involved they could not have repatriated the name of Fish Creek to Tourond's Coulee. When the Resistance was on, the family that, right at where the battle happened they were called the Touronds. That was their last name. It was right in the middle of their farm and that's where this battle happened, but the English called it "Fish Creek." So in their documents and everything and on their maps it was called Fish Creek and the Battle of Fish Creek. And then one of the things we're trying to do is that the story of the people that were there, because it isn't just about land that they were fighting over, it's about an community being disrupted and people's families being changed forever by those events. And so we got

it repatriated and they've got to use both. Battle of Tourond's Coulee/Fish Creek is what it's called. But Mrs Tourond was a very feisty Métis lady, and General Middleton took her horse and wagon and she went up there, and I think they blew up her house too. And she went up there and said, "I would like you to pay me for these things you took from me, here's how much you owe me." And she got the money.

WD: Did she?!

KS: Yeah.

WD: That's what they did with Gabriel's stuff, Gabriel Dumont. They burned all his stuff down when the army came, just to make sure he didn't come back there.

KS: And the other part of the story again is because it's all these stories aren't flushed out. After the Resistance, the Métis were so poor because they lost their land and their homes, a lot of men had been killed, and they were the bread winners in the family. So here's all these widows trying to look after their families with not enough men around right, to do the work and make the money. Those days, they didn't hire women for much. And a lot of them got sick because they were so poor. They didn't have the proper nutrition, and didn't have their houses heated properly. And then a lot of people, they signed these affidavits just to save their own skin which probably all of us would do too. Where you would say," No, I didn't know anything about that, and I wasn't involved," and then they'd sign so that they wouldn't get picked on. And I think at that time, if you had another name like Adams, you would say, well we're English, we're not Métis. And people would say they were French and other names, and only like in about the last 10-15 years are people finally coming forward saying, "Yes, we were Métis or we have Métis ancestry and now we're proud of it." But, you couldn't get a job. You said you had trouble getting a job there too. I know you when you came back. I think your name is a give away. When my mom was very visible too, and I think she couldn't get jobs because she was so dark. And then people kind of made comments to her about our family because of her being dark. It was not very nice.

WD: Yeah well, you see the government really made it so they aren't supposed to turn down anybody, but that didn't help. They'd just look at you and say, "No, we haven't gotten anything." So they're not going by nationality at all, they're just saying no.

KS: Now, we would certainly like you to keep sharing more of your stories if you would like, but we also brought you a little present. One of the things we would like to leave with you. Since we knew you were an author we were hoping you would like this. This is a brand new book that we made at the Institute.

WD: Oh jeepers, it's heavy.

KS: It's every known image of Gabriel Dumont and tells where those images came from and a little write up of who the artist is and if it's a drawing or where did it the picture come. And you want to tell him about the newspaper articles.

BB: Yeah there's a section on it, on newspaper articles written about Gabriel Dumont. And they range from, like the newspapers that portray him are like Fort Benton, and then there's

newspaper sections from Montreal and Toronto. And there's even sections from the *New York Times* that were written on him. So it's really interesting reading all these newspaper clippings, everyone talks about him differently. Like the French really liked him in Montreal because they were supportive of the Métis. But then you read the sections from Toronto, and they didn't like him at all. So it's really neat to go through all the newspaper clippings and take a gander at how he was portrayed. So yeah …

KS: One of the things that we try to get across to students is when you look at the word history, the last five letters are "story" because it depends on who gets to tell it right. And you can still stay with the facts, but you can downplay or emphasize something that may make people get a certain picture in their mind depending on how you're telling it. So we want to show through these newspaper articles how that's different. The other thing, that's in here, we thought maybe you would like a sash. That one has got the Métis flag on it.

WD: Wow.

KS: So if you go to any veterans' events or celebrations, that's there. And we put in our magazine because we think it's interesting. This is our magazine about what we do and we send out four times a year. And that just has articles about different events that we are involved in. Here's an old picture from long ago, well not that long because there's modern clothes. But it's probably at least 50years-old. Shows kind of some of the things that we involve ourselves in. And then this is an article about a new book that we've published. And then of course, we put that cover on there because we're hoping people will say oh I'd like to get that book. And lastly, this is a CD of the Métis national anthem, "Proud to be Métis." And I don't know if you've ever heard of Donny Parenteau or Andrea Menard but they are two Métis singers who do a pretty good job of that.

WD: Do they?

KS: So I really want to thank you for sharing your information with us today. If you like …

WD: Well how much do you want for the book first of all?

KS: That's a gift. This is all a gift.

WD: Oh so thank you very much.

KS: You're welcome. There's the rest of it here too.

WD: I don't know ,I was always interested in that one part, Louis Riel named Manitoba. He named it the Lord Speaks or something like that and that name is still, translated into Manitoba.

KS: Yeah because the word for the Lord is "Manitou."

WD: Yeah, okay. I found that so funny what you can find when you start fooling around.

KS: Well, we didn't want to tucker you out either because, of course, we could sit here all day, and we appreciate that amount of time. If you want to think about which parts of this, if there's any part of this that you would like us to have. Or if you would like us to republish the whole book and make something like this we would do that. And I guess Royce could probably give us a hand with that if we go ahead with the publication and at least getting the particulars.

KS: … Well thanks very much.

WD: Well thank you.

KS: Thanks Royce for facilitating.

RP: No problem.