

Wally Garrioch—Parks Canada Interview, January 23, 2012

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Bradley Brown (BB): This is Bradley Brown on January 23rd, 2012. I am 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 sir, could you please tell me your name and your home community?

Wally Garrioch (WG): My name is Walter Patrick Garrioch, G-A-R-R-I-O-C-H. I live in Medicine Hat, and I'm originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

BB: Thank you Wally. Moving onto question two, who were or are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?

WG: Albert and Terri Garrioch, Theresa Garrioch are my father and mother. And Walter and Philomène Garrioch were my grandmother and grandfather. They're from Langry, Manitoba.

BB: Okay, and do you know how long your family has been located in that area?

WG: As long as I know. My dad was born at Amaranth, pretty close to Langry. And we went there looking at gravesites and all that and there's lots of Garriochs buried in the burial sites out there in Landry and Amaranth.

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

WG: No, I don't speak Michif, my grandmother did I think. She spoke French and Cree too, she probably spoke Michif too because it's a mixture of the two. But, she was quite the lady.

BB: I don't doubt it. It's likely that she did speak it, it was just called something different.

WG: My father was in World War Two. He was in the military.

BB: Oh your father or your grandfather?

WG: My father.

BB: He fought in World War Two?

WG: Yep.

BB: 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?

WG: Yeah, I was called a “Half-Breed” by white kids and sometimes by Indian kids, you know because I wasn’t an Indian either. But, I don’t think everybody treated my dad bad either because he was kind of a big guy and tough and they’d look up to anybody so you know. He was a foreman in construction for many, many years so he had a lot of respect that way. Respect from people because he was the boss man, eh? My mother was white, she was Irish so she didn’t get that, I don’t remember her saying she got treated any different because she was married to you know, a Breed.

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

WG: No, Michif speakers that I know of, but, there were many families around us that were Métis families, the Charrettes, Fletts, Andersons, Lavallées, Fontaines, Champagnes, Ducharmes, Beaulieus. In fact, I’m related to Beaulieus. There was lots of Michif, Métis families there. I never heard any Michif being spoken when I was a kid.

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

WG: Yeah, I do know a couple. I won’t sing, thanks, but I will tell you a story of Whiitago. It’s a Métis-Indian story. I was at a Métis gathering and it stuck in my head. Do you want to hear it?

BB: Absolutely, if you want to share it.

WG: Sure. There’s an Indian village, and they had this Whiitago in the woods, and he was always eating their people. You know catching their people and eating them? So, they sent hunters to get him and kill him, and they didn’t return after a few days, and heard the Whiitago howling in the woods, and they knew he probably had gotten their hunters and killed them. Now the chief says, “What are we going to do? If we send more hunters he will probably kill them too, we have to come up with a better plan.” They decided they were going to build a trap, and they dug a big hole, and they put big pointy sticks in the bottom of the hole and covered the hole with sticks and leaves and branches and stuff, and they said, “Now we got to set out a bait.” They tied this kid out to a tree because they knew he wouldn’t come for an animal, but would for people so they tied a kid to a tree and said to the kid, “Well now you got to cry.” And the kid said, “Well, I don’t want to cry.” The chief gave him a little slap and the kid started crying, “Mommy, daddy, mommy.” And the Whiitago was in the woods, and had one ear rolled out, one long greasy dirty ear, and then his other ear rolled out, and he heard this crying so he come through the woods. Just like a ghost travelling through the woods. And he saw this kid in the clearing, and looked around, didn’t see anybody and took a mighty big jump to the kid. And of course, he landed right on this trap and he went down the hole and people from the village came around and started throwing wood down the hole and throwing fire down there and burning him. And, he was saying, “Let me out, let me out, or I’ll come back and I’ll kill you.” And, they wouldn’t listen, they just kept burning all night long. They burned him, and they fell asleep around the hole. And, middle of the night you couldn’t see nothing but a big cloud coming out of the hole, next thing you know all you heard was “slap, slap, slap.” And, it was the Whiitago, he had

come back as mosquitoes and started biting people. So that's how the Whiitago came to be mosquitoes.

BB: I like that one. Haven't heard that one before. Well thank you for sharing that. I appreciate that.

WG: For Métis songs, I do know a little Michif in one song but I don't know all the words to it. It's called "Kispin' [Kisakihin].

BB: Okay.

WG: To the tune of "Heel and Toe Polka". (Singing in Michif). That's how it goes. There's kind of repetition but ...

BB: Okay, well thank you for sharing that.

WG: I don't know actually.

BB: I haven't heard too many songs before so that was nice. Is there anything else you would like to add?

WG: No, that's about it there.

BB: Okay. That's fine. Question seven, what sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

WG: Okay, deer, moose, rabbit, geese, ducks, fish, prairie chicken, berries. That was all in Manitoba when I was growing up ,and it was close to my grandpa's farm.

BB: Okay. Did you harvest any resources in the Medicine Hat area where you're at right now or ?

WG: I did when I was younger. I haven't hunted in 24 years.

BB: Okay.

WG: Still fish, go fishing and once in a while. Go shoot a rabbit or something like that with my cousin Gary. I'm not much for hunting anymore, big game any more, but I have shot deer and antelope.

BB: Okay, thank you. Question 8. What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

WG: My grandmother was, and she taught my mom how to make poultices if you got an infection or something like that. Put it on hot bread and mustard I think, she told my mom what to do for anything like that. She was quite knowledgeable with remedies, home remedies.

BB: Oh really? Wow.

WG: Yeah, I imagine they didn't have doctors close by so she was the one to help people, and according to my family she was the one they brought people to when they were sick, they brought them to her.

BB: And she had a variety of different things to offer them?

WG: She knew how to fix them just by stuff that was wrong. You know, roots and stuff like that? She knew what was good and what wasn't good, and the Métis knew how to make poultices and stuff like that and she was pretty good.

BB: Wow, well thank you. Question 9. Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?

WG: Not that I know of.

BB: Okay. Question 10. Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items? Do you know what happened to these artefacts?

WG: Yeah, my aunt and my sister did beading and, stuff and I don't know what happened to them, though.

BB: What type of beadwork was it? Do you know?

WG: Moccasins, like flowered beadwork. Traditional Métis beading.

BB: Okay.

WG: Flowers and nice colours.

BB: And they made moccasins and different things?

WG: Moccasins and mitts.

BB: Oh okay, and gauntlets.

WG: And they learned that from my grandmother.

BB: Alright, well thank you. Eleven, how did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter or New Years?

WG: Big parties, guitar, fiddle sometimes, lots of drinking, and telling jokes. And then usually fighting. My dad's side of the family usually got into a fight with somebody.

BB: Okay, well thank you. Question 12, was anybody in your family involved with the Métis Society?

WG: No.

BB: Okay, question 13. How are the local Métis connected to Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and, or Grasslands National Park?

WG: I think some of our members are from those areas and their families. An example, Nelson Hogg, his grandfather ran a mule train or buffalo train down in the States, used to haul stuff down there, the big wagons used to hauls stuff on the trail,

BB: Yeah.

WG: That was his grandfather, raised right by Fort Walsh, I think. Their ranch was right beside Fort Walsh.

BB: Yeah that's where Nelson's family was from. With some of these questions we're just trying to figure out how local families were connected to the forts in the area so, and with you being from Manitoba originally, like they might not apply to you as much as others, but we'll just go through them anyway. Question 14. Who were or are your family involved with Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

WG: None of them.

BB: None of them were involved, okay.

WG: Not in my family.

BB: Question 15. Are there any historical and culturally significant landscapes or historical sites within the Fort Battleford and Fort Walsh and area which you as a Métis person consider to be important?

WG: Oh yeah, Fort Walsh, it's like going back in time. It's great to see the landscape and everything else. It's pretty great, it goes back in history.

BB: Is there anything about Fort Walsh that you think could be better? Or, any significant landscapes or historical areas that you think, within Fort Walsh that should be recognized but aren't really?

WG: Well something about the ranch, but Nelson [Hogg]'s father never mentioned. If Nelson hadn't mentioned anything about it, I wouldn't know anything about it. I never heard anything about it at the fort from the interpretive guides there. They could have mentioned it you know? That this was a Métis farm, and you know, some of his daughters married, his daughters married some of the soldiers or North West Mounted Police.

BB: Yeah absolutely there's a ...

WG: Be nice to include in the history of the fort.

BB: Okay, well thank you. Question 16. Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance at or near Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park? If not, were they involved elsewhere?

WG: My great-great-grandfather was a member of Louis Riel's Provisional Government in the Red River Settlement back in the 1870s in what they called the Red River valley. But, I don't know if he was a Métis because he, I found out he was a white man, he was Scottish but he was married to a Métis woman.

BB: Okay, what was your great-great-grandfather's name?

WG: Walter Garrioch.

BB: Walter Garrioch?

WG: Yeah. Actually no, Albert. William was my great-grandfather. It was William Garrioch. Walter was my grandfather. Yeah it'd be William. I'm not sure if he was part of it, but he had, in his Provisional Government, he had people from both sides, not just Métis in there. He had, you know ...

BB: He had the Provisional Government in '69-70.

WG: A mixture, yeah.

BB: It was a mixture of a variety of different citizens. What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance?

WG: Nothing, I don't know.

BB: Okay, do you know what happened to your family after the 69-70 Resistance?

WG: No, but I know that they are mentioned as being Métis or Half-Breed, and it was never even talked about. It was kind of hush-hush. I think that's why you didn't want people to know you were a Half-Breed. Because I don't know how you could hide it because my dad looked part Native, you know? So did I, but my brother and sister, they could get away with passing for white. Yeah, they never talked about it. In fact, my dad's family would never talk about it. My one aunt who died just a couple years ago she would never discuss anything about, you know, our ... didn't want to talk about it. Kind of was told to shut up about it, I guess.

BB: 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?

WG: Not applicable.

BB: Pardon me, sorry?

WG: We're not from this area, so.

BB: Yeah, can you just for the purpose of the interview can you explain your family's history and how long you've been in each region kind of?

WG: Okay, my family, my immediate family, father, mother and so on, before this area they were in the Manitoba area around the Interlake Region and I came here in '73, and I've been here ever since. And, my family were farmers, dad's family. They farmed.

BB: Farming in Manitoba?

WG: Yeah, yeah, and they raised cattle and chickens and pigs too.

BB: And what type of living did you have when you moved to Medicine Hat, sorry?

WG: Oh, I did many jobs. Construction, I worked at Redcliff, dry wall, and I worked in a plant. I worked in a feed mill for 7 years, but my last job was in a plant. I was a shipper/receiver at the newer place then I retired. And I play music, traditional.

BB: Okay.

WG: Like guitar and sing.

BB: And what are some of the other things you do because you do? Are you in the Louis Riel play?

WG: I do, yeah, my wife and I did a play in Medicine Hat in 1996. We did it again in 1997 in Calgary in high school theatre. And then the following year we did it in Batoche in '98 in Batoche, and also in Elkwater. And that's just *The Last Testimony of Louis Riel*, Métis gatherings, functions and Métisfest in Manitoba for two years now. And I'm going to BC here in the last part of February and the first of March, doing some high schools there. And, I'll do it in Fort Mc, Fort McMurray, in November to do the high schools up there. *The Last Testimony of Louis Riel*. It takes about 10 minutes, 12, 13 minutes to set it up. It's quite moving. For me too, not just the people there. When I do it, I get right into the part.

BB: That's good, thank you for sharing that. Question 19. What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

WG: I think it was more, in my mind it was authoritarian. Like they didn't have much to do with them if they didn't have too. I think the Métis were, especially after what happened in 1885 and the 1870s, because they were the enemy, not much your friend you know? (Inaudible). But, I don't think this carried on and carried to this day. Our people don't have too much to do with the police. I don't imagine that they would want to anyway. They'd call them when they'd need them. I don't think they see them as their friends too much.

BB: Okay thanks. Question 20. Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police at the Mounted Police posts in Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Wood Mountain? If so, can you tell us anything about that?

WG: Not applicable.

BB: Okay, question 21. Do you know if any of your ancestors took Métis Scrip at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Wood Mountain? Did they take it elsewhere?

WG: Okay, elsewhere my grandmother might have. My cousin's saying that he thought my grandmother took ...

BB: Back in Manitoba?

WG: Yep.

BB: Alright, thank you. Question 22. 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 of these areas?

WG: Well, they should make a distinction between Métis and First Nations so as not to be lumped into one bracket. Say, "This is where the Indians were, this is where the Métis settlements were." And, who the Métis were, maybe name certain Métis that probably helped them when they were first there, the Métis that helped them when they first came around.

BB: And one thing you touched on earlier, is maybe talking about people like Nelson Hogg, you know?

WG: Nelson Hogg's family, yeah.

BB: And how they had a ranch there before it came along.

WG: They could thank them, you know? It wasn't just a bunch of Indians here, and the white man came along and settled, there was Métis families here before. They were doing quite well themselves.

BB: Okay, thank you. Are there any 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?

WG: Yeah, the only guy I can think of is Dr. David Carter. I was looking high and low for his book here, and I finally realized I took it to the Métis local. They have the book there. They'd have to look in their library to find it again now. But, that Dr. David Carter he wrote several books on the history of the Métis and the North West Mounted Police. He's quite a historian. To get a hold of him, he's in Elkwater and all that. He's not a doctor of medicine, he's a doctor of history or something like that. A doctor, like PhD but not a doctor of medicine.

BB: Okay, yeah. Okay, well thank you. Question 24. 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 that you as a Métis person consider culturally or historically significant?

WG: I'm not sure if the Sand Hills are in that area?

BB: I don't think they reach it.

WG: If they're not there they don't reach it. I'm not sure where the park is actually going to be, the national park.

BB: It's more out east because I did look at a map. It's more out east and I'm finding that it's more, too far east in Saskatchewan that it doesn't relate to a lot of the families that are in Medicine Hat and stuff.

WG: So like around Cree Lake, around there?

BB: Yeah kind of, right underneath Val Marie kind of.

WG: Okay.

BB: And more underneath Swift Current.

WG: I haven't been to that area at all.

BB: Yeah its ...

WG: Been through, but never stopped in that area.

BB: I'm just going to, question 24 and 25 more or less relate to Grasslands National Park, so I'm just going to void those two questions from the interview because they won't apply to you.

WG: Okay that sounds good.

BB: That concludes the question part of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to add?

WG: Well one thing, like I told you I had done this Louis Riel thing, and I talked to several teachers, and there's one teacher she has a story that she does with her students, and it's kind of interesting. She tells me students in her grade 9 class, they're going to have to leave the classroom because the grade 8s are taking over her classroom, and they can't take anything with them, no pencils, pens, and everything. Their books, they have to leave everything in the classroom. And there's nothing they can do about it really, and she said students we will beat them up, well no you can't beat them up. So what can you do? Well go to the principal and now she says, she was making it real for them, try and figure out why the resistance happened. This was what happened to the Métis in that area. They were told they couldn't have their farms they've been farming for years, that they'd have to move, that they couldn't stay on this land, that they couldn't you know? And they tried writing to the government and

they got no recourse except the soldiers come and said, "Get offl," you know? That's why the resistance happened. You had your hands tied, you couldn't do anything about this injustice. They got Riel to write letters and appeals, and petitions and stuff like that, and what good did it do, the government didn't want to listen. They were playing with them you know? That's how she made the kids realize what's happening. They were going to loss their classroom and their books and everything that belonged to them in the class. That's kind of neat. A take on that for the kids to get a feel for what happened to the Métis in the area.

BB: Yeah, that seems like a very powerful stimulation. It's good to see people doing stuff like that.

WG: That's how the Métis felt too I guess. They wanted to beat up the grade 8s. Well they wanted to beat up the soldiers when you're told you got to leave your land.

BB: Yeah, exactly hey.

WG: Yeah, it was working good.

BB: Yeah. I know. Okay Wally if you don't have anything else, I'm going to turn the transcriber off and conclude the interview. Is that fine?

WG: Yeah that's fine.

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