

Marie Jeannette Hansen—Parks Canada Interview, January 6, 2012

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Bradley Brown (BB): Okay Jeanette, I'm just going to say a few things here, and then I'll lead into question one okay.

Marie Jeanette Hansen (JH): Okay.

BB: So this is Bradley Brown conducting an interview on behalf of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, for the southwest Métis project that we are doing with Parks Canada. Now Miss, could you please tell me your name and your home community?

JH: Marie Jeanette Hansen, and I was born in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

BB: Okay. And where were you raised? Were you raised in Willow Bunch at all or you just have family out there.

JH: No, we were raised in the summer months in Willow Bunch and in Medicine Hat.

BB: Okay. Moving onto question two. Who were or are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?

JH: Okay, my mom is Marie Bernadette. She was born a Gosselin, and she was born in Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan.

BB: Okay.

JH: And my father is Leif Eric Hansen and he was born in Calgary. And my grandparents (mothers' side), Emma Lacerte and Raymond Gosselin were from Willow Bunch. Lacerte was my grandmother's maiden name.

BB: Okay.

JH: And then my dad's parents, Hans and Oda Hansen were from Denmark.

BB: Thank you. Question three. Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif or serve in the military? Do you speak Michif?

JH: No, I've taken some lessons, but I wouldn't call myself a Michif speaker, and I think that my mom knows some Michif, as did the grandparents. Mostly she speaks English and French. And that was probably because they went to the convent in Willow Bunch, where it was a French convent.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: But she recalls the grandparents speaking a Native tongue. She figures it was Cree, but I suspect it was more than just Cree, Michif too.

BB: Yeah, Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. Moving onto question four. How were the Métis treated in your community? Did your family encounter racism from the larger community? Do you have specific examples?

JH: I didn't notice it in Willow Bunch. I was, let's see, very young when we were in Willow Bunch. So, I didn't notice it there because there was a lot of extended family so we were all Métis. And we didn't refer to ourselves as Métis back then.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: It wasn't referred to at all. Growing up in Medicine Hat, the word Métis wasn't referenced, it was "Half-Breed." And I never really noticed it growing up. I think my brothers got into fights over it, and especially, my oldest brother. And a teacher took him aside and said not to be ashamed that he had Indian in him because she did too. And my brother told my mom and my mom got on the phone and told that teacher off, that she shouldn't be telling him anything like that because mom was basically trying to fit in, emulate and not want to stand out. The only other thing is from the grandparents (Dad's parents) and my dad referred to, and it wasn't Métis it was Half Breed that they referred to.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: And we had relatives in the area of Medicine Hat called Saratoga Park, but my mom said I was never to go down there. We lived way on the other side of town, away from them. She just didn't want to, I don't know, be associated. But, she went through the convent in Willow Bunch, there was a lot of racism there. Basically, they tried to beat the Native out of the child and make them more French.

BB: Well thank you for sharing that. Moving onto question 5. What other Métis families lived in the vicinity? And were they Michif speakers at all?

JH: Well in Medicine Hat there's quite a few. And I don't know if they were Michif speakers or not. So there was the Gosselins, the Blissés, the Demaris, or Demarais, the Cayennes, the Aakers, the Lawrences, the Brays, now but it goes back to Laframboise, Ouellettes. Gosh, I'm trying to think of more names here, but those are the ones from Medicine Hat.

BB: Okay.

JH: And there was Quesnel [Quesnelle]. Quesnel might be First Nations though. Yeah, that's all I can think of right now. In Willow Bunch, there was a different Métis. You probably have a resource for Willow Bunch.

BB: Yeah, we probably have that. This question is just more or less trying to identify if there was other Métis families in the community and you know?

JH: And Lacerte was another in Medicine Hat, it would be my great-aunt and uncle they lived here for a while, that's why my mom came to live in Medicine Hat.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: And then they moved onto Calgary, but they were in Medicine Hat before I was born anyway.

BB: Okay, awesome thank you.

JH: And I mentioned Gosselin too?

BB: Yes.

JH: They were in Medicine Hat.

BB: Yeah, you threw that one in there. Well, thank you. Moving onto question six, do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs? Would you care to share them?

JH: The only one that I know is "Kispin' [Kisakihin].

BB: Okay.

JH: And we didn't really know any growing up; I didn't really hear the song until later, just the verse and then we got a Michif grant and I worked with a Michif speaker Marie Schoenthal, and we made up verses. I'd write out in English and then she'd transcribe into Michif so we could use it in our program.

BB: Oh wow.

JH: So the only part of the Michif song that was original was the verse, like the chorus. The other stuff we just made up so we could, you know, introduce it to our lessons, learn Michif through music.

BB: Oh wow, that's a wonderful idea. And what was that called, I'm sorry?

JH: "Kishpin Kishakihin."

BB: Okay. Do you have copies of that song at all?

JH: You have it there in *Songs of the Métis*. Is that, just let me look, I don't have it handy, but it's a GDI book, a song book.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: Yeah it's in there.

BB: We must have it in our archives then. Awesome then.

JH: There's a lot of verses in that song. We made up a bunch.

BB: Awesome. Well thank you for sharing that. Moving onto question 7, what sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

JH: Resources, well, berries. Around here it's chokecherries. You had to go farther up to get Saskatoons.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: And we grew up on deer meat, and when we were in Willow Bunch, we went and we got ducks.

BB: Okay.

JH: Sometimes, we took the wagon out and went duck hunting. And I don't recall any medicines. The only medicine I was introduced to was muskeg tea, which is also called Labrador tea.

BB: Okay.

JH: This was later on, by Marlene Lanz and it's used for stomach ailments and women's problems.

BB: Well thank you for sharing. So, yeah that probably covered. I'll ask question eight anyway. What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

JH: Well in Willow Bunch mom says it was Bottineau, one of her grandmothers.

BB: Okay.

JH: But for me we had doctors, you know in Medicine Hat? So that's what we were taken to. So I guess the traditional medicines didn't carry on with mom. But in Willow Bunch grandma Bottineau was the medicine woman.

BB: Question nine. Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?

JH: Well I guess that would be, well Willow Bunch, see we had land up in the hills where they mined coal. My grandpa, Grandpa Gosselin, and I think he mined it with his father. And I'm not sure about the Lacertes, but they had the coal mine in Willow Bunch. And then as they were getting older, Mamère wanted to move into town so she moved into town, and they had a little property at the edge of town that she moved to. Now, I've seen a land title, but I'm thinking that was for the coal mine property. And the property in town, it could have been in their name and mom thinks it was. And my uncle Roch would have inherited it. But, I don't know what happened. Nobody would have lived on it, they considered it abandoned, and the town took that land. So, I don't know how legal that was because mom

assumed that uncle Roch was paying taxes. But nobody lived there for, well probably since the late '60s when uncle Joe he went and moved off the land, and went to work for ranchers so he was the last one on the property.

BB: Okay, thank you. 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?

JH: I don't know about beaded, but I know embroidered. My Mamère, my grandma, made braided rugs, Métis-style braided rugs. And that's basically it, and mom says that Papère played the fiddle. And somewhere, his fiddle is gone to some relative. But that's about all I know.

BB: Okay, thank you. Question 11. How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter or New Years?

JH: I think with the Catholic influence we always went to church and then there was the, my dad's mom and dad. We celebrated on Christmas Eve in the Danish tradition. And then regular Christmas was going to church and turkey on Christmas Day. And with Easter, we had to, you know, do Lent and all of that. Going to church and eating fish and all that sort of thing.

BB: Okay thank you. Question 12. Was anybody in your family involved with the Métis society?

JH: Well I was the first in my immediate family to get involved and that was back in the early '90s. But mom says Papère was involved in Willow Bunch.

BB: Oh, really?

JH: Yes.

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

JH: Well my family, they were interpreters for the North West Mounted Police.

BB: At Fort Walsh, correct?

JH: Yes, they were guides and interpreters. So, that would have been Grandpa Lacerte and Grandpa Gosselin.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: My cousin wrote a book and there's more information in there. That's *The Métis of Willow Bunch*, Ron Rivard wrote that book.

BB: *The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch*.

JH: So it's in there, the involvement of the family, the interpreters.

BB: And that covers a lot of the history at Fort Walsh too?

JH: Yeah.

BB: Okay. Would you say that most of your family's history relates to the Fort Walsh area? Mostly?

JH: Yeah.

BB: Okay. Alright.

JH: And I know there's other people here that are from Battleford like the Inksters, the Inkster sisters. And Darleen Peters and Emilie Landry. But, you've got their names to call them.

BB: Yes, yes. I've contacted Emily. Well, thank you.

JH: And also, after that in the '60s my dad had trail rides from Eastend to Medicine Hat and we went through the Cypress Hills. We always camped at Fort Walsh.

BB: Oh really?

JH: Yeah it was a week-long trail ride in the '60s.

BB: That sounds like fun. Sounds fun.

JH: So we've always kind of stayed connected to the Cypress Hills.

BB: I see. Question 14 we kind of covered already. Who were/are your family involved with Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park? Did you have anyone else you wanted to add or anything like that?

JH: Just to say that we continue to be involved, particularly with Fort Walsh because we have our centre here, we have started a jigging troupe.

BB: Oh. okay.

JH: And we've been out there, and I've played the fiddle, and a group of us from the centre here, we go out when they ask us to for traders day and that sort of thing.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: And we've taken people out, like our elders, they demonstrate how to make a capote, do beadwork, and do sash weaving. And they've been a part of the group when we go out there; we do demonstrations.

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

JH: Well, I consider Fort Walsh to be important because historically, my family were there. And I don't have it but I know that the family had taken scrip in the Cypress Hills.

BB: Oh, really?

JH: Yeah and that document is up at head office so I need to get a copy of that. And that we continue to be involved with Fort Walsh.

BB: Within the Fort Walsh area, is there any particular place that you consider to be important, like a physical place within that area?

JH: Just the fort itself and the whole area.

BB: Okay 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?

JH: The family was divided, so yes they were involved. I am a direct descendant of Joseph Ouellette so he was a great, great, great grandfather. So my mom's grandmother was Seraphine Ouellette, and that was her grandfather.

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: Um, the family was divided because they were trying to influence the young families not to get involved in the Resistance.

BB: Oh, really.

JH: Yes. So and then, I'm not quite sure who was involved with the families. Some were, some weren't.

BB: So some were involved with the resistance and some chose to distance themselves away from it?

JH: Yes.

BB: Do you have any information about Joseph Ouellette that you would like to share in the interview at all?

JH: Just that he was the oldest Métis to take up arms and fight and die for the cause.

BB: Yes.

JH: And I think we were all quite proud of him.

BB: Absolutely, thank you. Question 17, what happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance?

JH: Well a lot of them stayed, well they were in Batoche and Willow Bunch. The immediate family stayed in Willow Bunch, and they mined for coal. And I think, farmed. And mom's family, there was 13, a lot of them raised families there. And some of the kids they moved away to Alberta here.

BB: From Batoche?

JH: From Willow Bunch.

BB: From Willow Bunch. Do you know what happened to any of the family that was in the Batoche area at all?

JH: From what I've read, Joseph Ouellette's wife, she was a Houle, Theresa Houle, I think it was. I think she stayed in the area, and she lived to be 106 I believe.

BB: Wow.

JH: Yeah, but the families spread out all over the place from Manitoba to Alberta, all over.

BB: Absolutely. Moving onto 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?

JH: Well, in Willow Bunch they were there. I think they were part of the founding families. The Gosselins, the Lacertes, the Ouellettes, the Bottineaus. So, they pretty much started the community. And, they were coal miners, interpreters for the North West Mounted Police, and farmers.

BB: And then some of you, some of you moved out west to Alberta, right?

JH: Yeah, my mom.

BB: Your mom did.

JH: And my uncles.

BB: Oh, okay. And that was their generation that moved out right?

JH: Yes, not the grandparents. My grandparents lived and died in Willow Bunch.

BB: Okay, thank you. Question 19. What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at Fort Walsh we'll say?

JH: Well, they had a pretty good relationship, they worked for them. They helped them.

BB: They had a fairly close relationship with Fort Walsh?

JH: They were also involved with taking Sitting Bull back to Montana.

BB: Oh, really?

JH: Yes.

BB: Do you know which ones were involved?

JH: I believe Lacerte, they would be I believe the uncles, great uncles for me.

BB: Oh, okay. Thank you. Question 20. Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police at the Mounted Police posts at Fort Walsh, if so, can you tell us anything about them?

JH: They were, all I know is they were interpreters and guides

BB: Oh, okay.

JH: For the North West Mounted Police.

BB: Thank you. Question 21. Do you know if your ancestors took Métis Scrip at Fort Walsh, did they take it else where?

JH: Yes, but that information is in Edmonton so I'm going to have get a hold of that. I didn't find that out until after the harvesting trial that's been going on here. And when they did the genealogy of all the witnesses, then I found out after that they had added to my file scrip from Cypress Hills.

BB: Oh, wow. So to your knowledge, your family did take up scrip in the Fort Walsh area?

JH: Yep.

BB: Okay, thank you. Question 22. How can Parks Canada make Fort Walsh more inviting for Métis visitors? How might Parks Canada include more information on the Métis history of these areas?

JH: I think to keep that component of Métis, have the interpreters dressed up as Métis because they were quite involved with the fort and helping the North West Mounted Police. So that history should be told at the fort about our ancestors, and how they helped the North West Mounted Police.

BB: And how important their role was at the fort. Absolutely. Thank you. Question 23. Are there specific community groups that you would recommend Parks Canada to contact to improve their interpretation of Métis history and culture at Fort Walsh?

JH: I think if they get a hold of the Willow Bunch Métis local, could probably help with some of that history because the families came from there, from Willow Bunch and Wood Mountain.

BB: Okay, 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 and historically significant?

JH: I don't know where that is, what part that is.

BB: Grasslands, most of your history connects back to Fort Walsh then you might not be in that area as much. It's further east and more, the way I've been describing it is it's closer to being under Swift Current than it is being, you know, Fort Walsh is a little bit more west and ...

JH: That's Lake Pelletier?

BB: Yeah, I think in and around that area. And it's a large, it's not just like, like Fort Walsh is the fort and the area around it, but Grasslands is significant because it's a large, large area of land that has a unique history to it. But it's also known for being very geographically unique. So there's a lot of wild life and different, different geographical aspects that make it really significant. So, if your ... what I've been finding is if most of your history relates to Fort Walsh you might not have as much history relating to that area.

JH: Yeah probably not my own personal history. So no.

BB: I'm just going to ... Debating if I should ... I'll ask the last question and if it doesn't make sense you can say pass too. Question 25. A cultural resource 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? So they're trying to create this statement and where, oh right here, and there's some themes that they'd want to focus on that are important to this statement. And some of the themes that have been identified to kind of involve Métis history and stuff have been things like trading post, relationship with bison, ranching, farming, great depression, governance and administration, creation of the national park, early exploration and surveys and historic use of the area, paleontological and geological features. So are there any of those themes that you find particularly important or any other themes you would like to add I guess is what we are asking.

JH: Well I think they are all important, but I don't know about adding any more.

BB: Okay, that's fine, I guess at this point in the interview it concludes our question portion.
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