

Nelson Hogg—Parks Canada Interview, January 12, 2012

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Bradley Brown (BB): For the record, my name is Bradley Brown, performing an interview for the southwest Métis project that the Gabriel Dumont Institute is conducting with Parks Canada. Today is January 12th 2012. Now Nelson, could you please tell me your name and home community?

Nelson Hogg (NH): My name is Nelson Daniel Hogg, and I was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. I was born in April 1st 1939.

BB: Thank you. Who were/are your parents and grandparents, where were they from?

NH: My mother was Bertha Laura Anderson Hogg, and my father is Daniel Harry Hogg. Bertha was born in Medicine Hat area, Danny was born, I believe, in England and emigrated to Canada in the early 1900s. My grandfather on my mother's side was James Thomas Anderson, and his father was Charles Thomas Anderson. My grandmother on mother's side was Mary Sanderson Anderson, and she was born at Fort Walsh. On My father's side, his father was Charles William Hogg, and he married Jane Hannah Roberts, and they were from around London, England, Plumstead area. They have no Métis connection, all Métis connection is on my mother's side...

BB: Who was born in the Fort Walsh Area?

NH: My grandmother was born in Fort Walsh area, my mother was born in Medicine Hat.

BB: Question 3: Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif or serve in the military? Do You Speak Michif?

BB: No to all three questions.

BB: Okay. Question 4: How were the Métis treated in your community, did your family encounter racism from the larger community, do you have specific examples?

NH: I suppose. They had some problems. They had to fight once in a while because of their Métis heritage. I didn't have any real problem other than some of my friend's sometimes saying "You're part Indian," or "Indian," and I didn't have a real problem with that.

BB: Okay, we can move on. Question 5: What other Métis families lived in the vicinity? Were they Michif speakers?

NH: There were no other Métis families that lived close to me, there were other Métis families in Medicine Hat, but I'm not sure if they are Michif speakers or not.

BB: Oh, Okay. Growing up Nelson, what vicinity did you live in? Was it right in Medicine Hat, or was it outside?

NH: I lived about a block from downtown Medicine Hat, at 368 2nd St .Southeast

BB: Okay, so you grew up in Medicine Hat for the most part?

NH: Yes.

BB: But your mother, did she grow up in that same setting, or was it a little bit outside of Medicine Hat?

NH: Mother grew up on a farm, about 6 or 7 miles northeast of Medicine Hat, on a farm near Finns Lake, and moved to Medicine Hat, and was married in Medicine Hat, and lived her life in Medicine Hat.

BB: Would you know if there were any other Métis families that were around her, at that farm?

NH: Yes, I think I would, and there weren't. They tended to live like Scottish Whites. They avoided the Métis, and anything to do with Métis, or Half-Breed.

BB: Oh, Okay. Question 6: Do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs, and would you care to share them?

NH: My uncles all played the fiddle, and they would play many, I don't know if they're Métis or Scottish... probably both. But many, many fiddle tunes, which I learned to play with them in the 1950s.

BB: So you're a musician yourself? You play the fiddle?

NH: I play the piano. My uncle, James Anderson, had an orchestra around Medicine Hat area for years in the '30s, '40s and '50s, and he needed a piano player, so he taught me as I was growing up in the 50s, the chord form. I became a musician, and I had my own band in the '70s and '80s, we were called "The Royalles"

BB: Nice. So you learned your musical talents a lot from your uncles, then?

NH: I learned to chord from my uncles. I had two of the best piano teachers in Medicine Hat quit me, because I wouldn't do what they wanted me to do, and I was off the piano for a year. My father said he locked it up, I don't know if he did. But then, I started picking out melodies by ear, and I think that's probably the problem I had with my music teachers. So basically, I learned to play by ear, although I can read music.

BB: So did your uncles all play by ear?

NH: My uncles all played by ear.

BB: Okay, thank you. Moving on. Question 7: What sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

NH: Well, my grandfather farmed out in the Finns Lake area, just as a normal farming family. He did mixed farming, and harvested in the normal way. I don't know that they did a lot of hunting, though they probably did do some in the fall, but I'm not too aware of them doing a lot of harvesting of animals, other than on the farm.

BB: Mostly just agricultural farming, like a lot of other families in the area.

NH: Yeah.

BB: Okay. Moving on to Question 8: What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

NH: I'll pass on that. I don't have any answers to that.

BB: No, that's Okay. Question 9: Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?

NH: None that I know of, no.

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?

NH: I can't remember any of my grandparents, or parents and uncles, making any of those, but my daughter does now. She makes moccasins for my granddaughter.

BB: Nice, and does she do like beading and stuff on them too?

NH: Yeah, she's beading them, yep. We take part in "the Hills are Alive" in June of every year out at Elk Water. They're learning traditional Indian/Métis crafts.

BB: Nice. Moving on to Question 11: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, or New Years?

NH: We always had a nice meal. Always music: always fiddle, piano, and guitars, or whatever anyone happened to play. Both family and friends would gather, and we would have a good time...

BB Was there lots of Dancing?

NH: Some dancing, yeah.

BB: Do you know what type of dancing?

NH: Just regular waltzes, foxtrots, two-steps. The houses weren't all that big, so there wasn't a lot of room to dance. It was more taken up by all the musicians. But, we had a good time, they sang, and my dad always got up and danced.

BB: Nice. Well thank you, moving on to Question 12: Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?

NH: Only Me.

BB: Only you? In what type of capacity were you involved?

NH: Well, I'm just a member and elder right now. They think I'm smart enough to be an elder. I tell 'em I question that, but they consider me an elder. I should maybe say, we had a gal, Amy Cross. Come a number of years ago (5-10), and she was really involved with the Métis Society, and she got me interested in it, and so I did join. But like I said, my family avoided any reference to Métis. It was just kind of the climate they lived in. I don't think they wanted to be identified that way.

BB: Yeah, absolutely, Thank you. Moving on to Question 13: How are the local Métis connected to Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh, and/or Grasslands National Park?

NH: Well, I guess I can speak for my family. My great-grandfather was Edward McKay. Actually, he's my great-great-grandfather, and he had a ranch before Fort Walsh was Fort Walsh. The commander was looking for a location for Fort Walsh. He came across Edward McKay's place, and liked that area. Edward McKay had five daughters, one died. It ended up four, and he was trying to persuade the North West Mounted Police that there was a better spot 5-10 miles up the creek, and he was unsuccessful. I don't know why, but for some reason, Walsh, or whoever was picking the location, picked a location about, as I understand it, that was anywhere from 2-400 feet, about a block maybe, from where the ranch house was. I'm still trying to locate exactly where the ranch house was, we're just guessing now. But, that's my connection to Fort Walsh. James Sanderson, who worked for the Mounties out there, he supplied them with meat and other goods that they needed, and he also ran the bull train from Fort Walsh to Fort Benton for the Mounted police, and there is information of this in the log. I think it was 1886, at the fort. And my Grandmother was born at Fort Walsh, so I have a real connection with Fort Walsh. I love to go out there and just wander.

BB: Do you know how long your grandmother stayed at Fort Walsh?

NH: No I don't, because...No, I can't say how long...

BB: Okay, did she then move out to the Medicine Hat area, is that what happened?

NH: Yes, Her father, I think when they learned that the railroad was crossing the river at Medicine Hat. He was an entrepreneur, James Francis Sanderson, and he traded and did whatever he had to do to survive, and he moved to the Medicine Hat area before Medicine Hat was here, I believe, and he took his family with him in time.

BB: Okay. Thank you for that. Question 14 is who are/were your family involved with at the fort, but we've kind of covered that with your answer, so let's move on. Question 15: Are there any historically and culturally significant landscapes or historic sites within the Fort Walsh/Battleford area which you as a Métis person consider to be important?

NH: Well, like I said in my previous answer, I would love to find the location of Edward McKay's ranch. There doesn't seem to be any pictures available, so were just going from word of mouth, and some old maps that seem to indicate that was, I think southeast of the fort, or to put in another way, the fort built northwest of him. I would love to see maybe some buildings put there as a part of the fort entertainment and cultural area, showing that he was there maybe before the fort. Maybe make it a living, ranching area for visitors. That would be important to me, if we could ever do that.

BB: Okay, sounds good, thank you.

NH: I've hiked around there, looking for basements and pits. There are some low areas that might have been where the buildings were, but nobody knows for sure.

BB: Thank you, we'll move on, question 16: Was your family involved with the 1885 Resistance at or near Fort Walsh? If not, were they involved elsewhere?

NH: I think that my great-grandfather, James Francis Sanderson, was taken prisoner by Riel's men, and later released. I think that happened at Red River Settlement.

BB: Oh Really? Is that in reference to the 1869-70 Resistance, because that the one that happened at Red River. The 1885 Resistance is the one that happened at Batoche. [Nelson indicated in his edit of the transcript that this event happened during the Red River Resistance in Manitoba in 1869-70].

NH: You know, I'm not sure of the dates. I'd have to do some more digging into my archives to locate that.

BB: Okay. Alright, that's fine.

NH: I think it's in the literature somewhere. I'd have to search that out. It's whenever they took, I think around 40 prisoners, one was shot and killed, and then the rest were allowed to go later on. You'll probably have reference to that somewhere in your writings.

BB: Yeah, yeah. Question 17: What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance? So do you know anything that happened afterwards?

NH: I don't know of anything significant that happened after that resistance. I think life went on, and Sanderson, like I said, ended up bringing his family to Medicine Hat, and was a real entrepreneur around here.

BB: Yeah, it sounds like your family was a little bit further away from that. 'Cause what happened with a lot of Batoche families is that they ended up dispersing other places. 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? Can you just quickly touch on that again?

NH: Okay. Well, I would go back to Edward McKay at Fort Walsh, he ranched out there. My grandfather, James Thomas Anderson, came down from North Battleford with his brother Collins, and they went across the US Border, I believe, did survey. They surveyed all along the Alberta/Montana border, for quite a few years. Then Collins remained in Montana, and James Thomas came back and took up farming. Did you want any more?

BB: If you have anything more you would like to share, that'd be alright...

NH: I don't have a lot more. Basically, they farmed; they mixed farmed. [Added by Nelson in his edit: They surveyed in the US Rocky Mountain Foothills as far south as Simpson County and Yellowstone (from Bella—J. J. Anderson's daughter). Colin stayed at Browning and worked for the US government. James Thomas returned to Medicine Hat in 1898 and took up a homestead where the Golden Valley Farm is—east of Medicine Hat on the river.]

BB: Yeah. Just around the Medicine Hat area?

NH: Yeah. Now, My great-grandfather, James Francis Sanderson, when he came to Medicine Hat he did many things: he cut ice out of the river and supplied the railroad with blocks of ice, he gathered buffalo bones and shipped carloads back east to be made into fertilizer. He also brought cattle from England. Imported cattle from England. He ran over-wintered bulls, at a place that he called "Bull Springs" north of Medicine Hat, for ranchers of the area. He did just what he had to do. Many, many things, like I said, he was an entrepreneur. He would drop into the newspaper and share stories that the Indians had told him, and he has a small book out. I think it's called *Indian Tales of the Old West*, or something like that.

BB: Oh, okay. Well, thank you. Moving on to Question 19: What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at Fort Walsh?

NH: I think it was probably, Edward McKay had a pretty good relationship, although he tried to protect his daughters, I guess, from the Mounties, but wasn't completely successful. His son-in-law, James Francis Sanderson, married one of his daughters, Maria McKay. Sanderson, like I said, supplied the North West Mounted Police with many of their needs in that area, and I think I've covered that. He ran bull trains through Fort Benton. It took him twelve days for a return trip.

BB: Wow. Well, thank you. Moving on to 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?

NH: None of my direct relatives did, other than what I've said about Sanderson.

BB: None of them worked specifically for the mounted police, but they did a lot of things to help them in the area?

NH: Yeah.

BB: Okay, moving on to Question 21: Do you know if your ancestors took Métis Scrip at Fort Walsh? Did they take it elsewhere?

NH: No, none that I know of. They registered, but they didn't take scrip. [Nelson added this text in his edit: James Thomas Anderson applied for Scrip in Medicine Hat on July 18, 1900, but I don't know if it was granted.]

BB: They Registered?

NH: Yes.

BB: Okay. Moving on to Question 22: How can Parks Canada make Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh, and Grasslands NP more inviting for Métis visitors? How might Parks Canada include more information on the Métis history of these areas?

NH: I've visited Fort Walsh a fair amount, and I'm real happy with what they're doing, and what they've done out there. The only thing I'd suggest is I would like to see maybe a small mixed ranch where McKay, Edward McKay, had his place out there, tied in with the fort. Just to try to get that feeling of what it might have been like, with Mounted Police, and with the rancher trying to make it. That I would really like to see, and I would work towards that. I would help out.

BB: Okay, thank you. Question 23: Are there specific people or community groups that you would recommend Parks Canada contact to improve their interpretation of Métis history and culture at Fort Walsh?

NH: No, I don't know of anybody, I'll pass on that. Other than myself; If you want to take me up on McKay's ranch, contact me.

BB: Sounds good, and I think we will leave it at that, because the other questions relate to Grasslands National Park, and it sounds like your family doesn't have history in that area, it more in the Fort. Walsh Area, right?

NH: Right.

BB: Okay, well thank you very much Nelson for everything, this concludes the interview.