

**Denis Lamotte—Parks Canada Interview, February 16, 2012**

Amy Como (AC): So could you please tell me your name and your home community?

Denis Lamotte (DL): Denis Lamotte, and I'm from Val Marie, Saskatchewan.

AC: Okay. And who were and are ...

DL: My home community, I'm actually born and raised in Cadillac.

AC: In Cadillac, okay. And how far is that from ...

DL: Val Marie. It's thirty-five miles north, straight north.

AC: Okay. And who were and are your parents and grandparents? And where were they from?

DL: Okay, my grandparents, on my grandmother's ... Like my grandmother was Cree.

AC: Okay.

DL: And she come from the Lac Pelletier area, which is just half way between here and Swift Current.

AC: Okay.

DL: And my grandfather, he come from Belgium, and I guess my mother from France.

AC: Okay.

DL: A little bit of everything in me.

AC: I think most people are like that now. Did anyone in your family speak Michif?

DL: No ... Speak what?

AC: Michif.

DL: I think my grandmother did.

AC: Okay.

DL: But I was pretty young.

AC: Did anyone serve in the military?

DL: No.

AC: No, okay. How were the Métis treated in your community? Did your family encounter racism?

DL: I don't think so. I don't think you see much of that down here.

AC: Okay, that's awesome. What other Métis families lived in the vicinity?

DL: Trotters.

AC: Trotters.

DL: There is some Legault.

AC: Legault. Okay.

DL: There's quite a few actually. I'm thinking ... I'm not really from here so I don't know, really know, you know.

AC: Okay.

DL: Them I'm sure of though.

AC: Okay. Do you know of any of the traditional Métis stories or songs? And if so, would you care to share them?

DL: No I don't.

AC: Okay ...

DL: Not old enough.

AC: That's good. You're a young man yet. Do you know any ... Sorry, that's question I just did. What sort of resources did your family harvest, if they did any?

DL: They farmed and ranched.

AC: Ranch—cattle, horses?

DL: Yep.

AC: Okay. Has your family and community used any traditional medicines?

DL: No, not to my knowledge.

AC: Did anyone in your family live in the Métis road allowance communities?

DL: No.

AC: No, okay. Do you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other arts?

DL: Well my grandmother used to but ...

AC: Okay. Does your family still have any of these items?

DL: I don't think so.

AC: How did your family celebrate special occasions such as Christmas, Easter?

DL: Oh everybody would get together, eat.

AC: Food always brings everybody together. Was anyone in your family involved in the Métis society?

DL: Yeah, yes. They pretty much all were at one point in time.

AC: And now?

DL: Yeah, I am.

AC: Okay. How are the local Métis connected to the Grasslands National Park?

DL: I really ... Well a lot of them work there. You know with the park.

AC: So employments. And in your family, would it be the same thing? Involved in the Grasslands National Park like ...

DL: My family is here. They are all in Alberta.

AC: So they aren't around.

DL: Rigging or something. Working on the oil fields.

AC: Yeah, it draws a lot of people away. Are there any historical or culturally significant landscapes or sites in the area of the Grasslands national Park that you consider to be important?

DL: Oh yeah. Lots of them.

AC: And could you explain?

DL: They got Seventy-Mile Butte.

AC: Seventy-Mile Butte?

DL: Like do you understand that?

AC: I'm not from the area so ...

DL: Okay, you owe it to yourself to ...

AC: Make a trip out there.

DL: Yes. Actually, what I do is ... Okay, when Custer and Sitting Bull got in trouble, when they had their fight. After that Sitting Bull come up here hey?

AC: Right.

DL: And, you can still see where he was camped.

AC: Oh really? Wow.

DL: Like tipi rings by the thousands.

AC: Really? I think that's really neat. I can say that I often take for granted that the local history is so close but I never take the time to actually look at it. So I will have to make a trip out there for sure.

DL: I run a horse-riding thing.

AC: Oh do you? I sold my last horse when I was ... at the end of high school so it's been a few years since I've been on a horse but I have always enjoyed I,t and had horses when I was younger.

DL: I took some people ... I took a guy last summer, he was on his 90th birthday.

AC: Wow, an old cowboy. So what is your company called?

DL: Just Ride With Lamotte ... Off the Grasslands Park.

AC: Okay, I will have to check it out if I end up in the area.

DL: It's got my name and phone number on there is actually all it's got.

AC: Okay.

DL: What more could I need?

AC: Exactly. Especially with riding a horse in a beautiful area and you are set.

DL: I've had a lot of comments on it.

AC: Oh, that would be nice. Maybe I will have to make the trip and give you a call for sure. Was any of your family involved in the 1885 Resistance in the area or elsewhere?

DL: No.

AC: No, okay. Did the 1885 Resistance affect your family in any way?

DL: I don't think so.

AC: And your family been in the area for a long time?

DL: Uh, yep. 1800.

AC: 1800?

DL: 1900.

AC: 1900, sorry. How did they make a living, do you know?

DL: Farming and ranching.

AC: Farming and ranching.

DL: Trapping.

AC: Okay. What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at the Grasslands National Park area?

DL: Oh, I think it was ... I think it was alright. Don't think there was any ... not that I've heard of.

AC: Nothing negative or it was very good?

DL: Not that I know of.

AC: Well that's good. Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police?

DL: No.

AC: No, okay. Do you know if any of your ancestors took Métis scrip anywhere?

DL: No.

AC: And how can Parks Canada makes Grasslands National Park more inviting for Métis visitors?

DL: Oh that's a ...

AC: It's a deep question.

DL: Yes. I really don't know.

AC: For me, I'm going to say with your business, including traditional knowledge and the simple enjoyment of horse riding. I think that would be a great thing to promote with the park. I think that would be really good.

DL: I also run a cowboy coffee thing. I think they do it once a week or once a month. Everybody gets together, and they go for a little wagon ride in the morning and some coffee and tell some stories.

AC: Okay, that would be nice.

DL: That's seems to go over fairly good.

AC: And that is just in the summer months?

DL: Yep, that would be a little cool this morning.

AC: I was just going to say, today and this week would be a little chilly for that. My car wouldn't start very easily this morning, I forgot to plug it in.

DL: How do you forget to plug your car in?

AC: I was just busy. I'm thinking "I'll do it later, I'll do it later" and my head hit the pillow and forgot about it. But I will have to today for sure.

DL: Work.

AC: Sorry?

DL: How did you get to work?

AC: It started. It was a little tough but it started. I was thinking, you know when you are half crossing your fingers thinking "oh maybe my car won't start and I can just stay home wrapped up in a blanket on the couch." But I made it to work. Alright, we just have a couple more questions here.

DL: Okay.

AC: 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 the site?

DL: Not that I know of.

AC: Okay. Did you or any of your ancestors spend time in the proposed Grass Natio—, Grasslands National Park or surrounding lands?

DL: Oh yeah. Before it was a park?

AC: Yes?

DL: Oh yes for sure.

AC: And did they take part in any cultural activities that you know of?

DL: No.

AC: No ... They just lived in the area?

DL: Well yeah then visited back and forth hey with ranchers here.

AC: And you were telling me about the, sorry, Seventy-Mile Butte?

DL: Yeah.

AC: So that would be a—

DL: Okay that was uh, the highest point here.

AC: Okay.

DL: And it's actually seventy miles from Fort Walsh to ... there used to be a Mounted Police post at Eastend.

AC: Okay, at Eastend.

DL: Are you familiar with the area at all?

AC: Not too much no.

DL: There is an old Mounted Police trail here.

AC: Oh? So it would be kind of similar trail to Carlton Trail maybe?

DL: They called it the Red Coat Trail.

AC: Okay, I will have to do my homework a little more here. A cultural resource values statement is being developed for Grasslands National Park. And 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? And if so, which ones? And if there is any that you would like to add. And I am just going to read a couple of those off this list. And they have the trading post, relationship with the bison, ranching, farming, great depression, governance and administration, creation of the park, early exploration and surveys and historic use of the area. So any of those that you

think are important or if you think we are missing some off of that list that you would like to add.

DL: I don't think so.

AC: Got it pretty much covered? Okay, well that is the end of my survey here.

DL: Oh really.

AC: Yes, we went through it pretty quick. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the park or any other topic you think—

DL: It's a great place to see ... On a horse.

AC: Okay. I like the horse.

DL: I'm too lazy to walk.

AC: Like I said, it's been a few years since I've been on a horse but I ...

DL: How old are you?

AC: Sorry?

DL: How old are you?

AC: I am twenty-five.

DL: Oh cr ...

AC: But I was at my cousins this summer and I jumped on her horse and they say "it's like riding a bike. It's the same thing."

DL: You don't forget.

AC: Yes, it's the same. But I was a bit nervous because it's been like I said, since high school but just relax and it was a nice ride.

DL: Where are you from?

AC: I'm from Duck Lake.

DL: Oh okay.

AC: My family is all in the area, well all my mom's side. My family is all in the area. But I am in Saskatoon area now for school and work.

DL: So how long have you been doing this?



AC: Um, since 2008, I started with Gabriel Dumont Institute. It was nice. I was quite lucky and it's a good job to have.

DL: So what else do they do?

AC: The Gabriel Dumont Institute? We ... there is a publishing department, and there's a training and employment section, and educational things such as SUNTEP and Gabriel Dumont College. And they also have different programs through Dumont Technical Institute.

DL: Oh I see.

AC: It's a big institute. Alright, well Denis thank you again for your interview and taking the time to do so. I really appreciate your answers and all that you have contributed.

DL: Okay.

AC: Alright, have a good Monday.

DL: Now I got to go do chores.

AC: Wow, well stay warm.

DL: Okay.

AC: Bye.