
Interview With Bob Fitzsimmons
Interviewed by Cheryl Troupe
May 12, 2003
Kinistino, Saskatchewan
Also present Terri Huntley and Betty Fitzsimons

Tape One: Side B

- 0.1 Cheryl:** Today is May 12 and we are at the home of Bob and Betty Fitzsimmons in Kinistino and we are doing an interview with Bob regarding his family history for the Gabriel Dumont Institute archives. Bob do you want to tell us where and when you were born?
- 0.5 Bob:** I was born in rabbit Lake, Saskatchewan on October 20, 1984.
- 0.6 Cheryl:** Okay and what were the names of your mother and father?
- 0.7 Bob:** First names, my mother was Ethel and my dad was Arnold. My mother's maiden name was Boreshenko, she was a Russian girl.
- 0.9 Cheryl:** What do you remember most about our parents?
- 1.0 Bob:** Oh they were great workers and to me there was no lack of variety in what they did. Of course I was just out of my pre-teen during the Second World War and dad was art of the Canadian army with the medics at that time and mother and I looked after the farm and homestead. As far as my Métis history it was late Native history was kept down at that time. So dad was telling something about it but only very little until later in my life. I found out for myself on my great grandmother's side my dad's side and my dad's mother's side was a Sioux Indian down East. Later friends from Muskoday reserve were visiting us just a few years ago and we were looking at some old photographs albums that had been handed down to me. There is this one picture (inaudible because of voices in background) that is all I know about my Native history. So what we did was very ___ farming and dad was in the military and store keeping or something or other. Myself I was farming, mostly farming and mechanics, I am a mechanic by trade. Whatever work they got done.
- 3.3 Cheryl:** So how large was your family did you have a lot of brothers and sister's?
- 3.3 Bob:** No, I was the only one, I guess I scared them when I came.
- 3.4 Cheryl:** What about extended family like aunts and uncles were they around and their families?
- 3.5 Bob:** well aunts and uncles there was quit a few of them around and quit a few cousins but we were never that close. Mainly because I think we were spread all

over Canada and the United States and during the early years transportation wasn't that easy to come by.

- 4.0 Cheryl:** You were saying that your family didn't always identify as Métis can you think of any terms or phrases that were used to identify people who were Métis?
- 4.2 Bob:** Well, half-breed and stuff like that we used to call them it was kind of derogatory in some respects I don't like to say it but on my mother's side the Indians like there were many people that were Indians and the term Indian was it really put people down and that is why it wasn't really brought out. When I got older made a point to bring it out because I was proud of t.
- 5.0 Cheryl:** When you were growing up what types of activities like how did you celebrate your holidays like did you have big feasts or big celebrations of any kind?
- 5.2 Bob:** Well it was we weren't really in a Métis community we every body was just there and everybody got together at Christmas' it would be a neighborly gesture I guess you could say and I think it was a great thing to get us mixed you know and my engagement as I look back now was I lived in ____ my education in Picton, BC and in one class alone you find a native Canadian, Indian, Métis you find Greek, Jewish people and we all got along. We took ____ apple where the world should be.
- 6.2 Cheryl:** What about did you have dances or what types of music did you listen to?
- 6.3 Bob:** Depends on who you were I always preferred the country and western but some other dances at the time would be...modern dances another time and rock and roll pardon me but Elvis Presley and I are about the same age.
- 6.9 Cheryl:** What about New Year's, how did your family celebrate New Year's?
- 7.0 Bob:** Well it was much the same as I was saying, the neighbors used to get together and we weren't really in a Métis community but it was in a sense people were not strictly English or strictly German, they were mixed. There was very little Native here originally it was different myself.
- 7.6 Cheryl:** What about in the community the people were mostly farmers so did they have agriculture days or anything?
- 7.7 Bob:** Not in those days. See when I was young the area we lived in say when I was five years old and older was homesteading area and each family had one quarter section of land. Some stayed for a while and some left the area and some

more land was available some of it was there was a wartime there. Community the men were away fighting war so it is no different than _____ by a long ways.

8.6 Cheryl: What about school, where did you go to school?

8.6 Bob: Well some of Saskatchewan here, country school except for Penticton that was a when we were there it was a large town or small city I guess and that was a big, there were several _____ and (Inaudible – a lot of background noise). I came back here and I got my grade eight education in Penticton there and never went back over and after that was farming and logging for a few years and then I worked in a garage when I was twenty. Where I was you couldn't do much else anyway and later on went back into cattle working general agriculture work and logging and stuff like that. Later in the years I went into mechanics and not so much because it was a city job but because it was all that needed work and there wasn't much else. Other than that _____ for farming I really like farming but it didn't always pay so good.

10.4 Cheryl: What about when you got married when did you and Betty get married?

10.5 Bob: Well that was 1989 it was the second round for both of us. I was first married in 1967 and my first wife passed away in 1985. I was working in Melfort as a mechanic at the time and later on I was working _____ till I came to the reserve working as an apprentice a mechanic apprentice because I had my journeymen's, ticket _____ years for that.

11.4 Cheryl: So when did you move here then?

11.4 Bob: 1989. We had actually a few months before that we lived in Prince Albert but because I was working on a _____ we thought it was a good place to move so we bought the property we are at now.

11.9 Cheryl: You were mentioning that your family is of Sioux decent right.

11.9 Bob: Well my that is where the native came from yeah.

12.0 Cheryl: Was there anybody that ever spoke the language?

12.3 Bob: No, not that I know of.

12.3 Cheryl: What about religion, did religion play a role in your life?

12.3 Bob: Not a lot no, not a lot. We had when I was younger say after I was five years old and dad settled on his homestead there was no church close by so the minister would come by in the summer and we would have church in the school and every denomination in the area would go to the same service, it was quite good, they had Sunday school there too.

- 13.0 **Cheryl:** A little bit more about when you went to school, what kind of subject do you remember taking and what was your favorite?
- 13.2 **Bob:** I don't know, my favorite I suppose would be mathematics and we had social studies which covered geography and a few other things and people generally. Of course writing and art, music a little bit of course I was never very good at music or art.
- 13.8 **Cheryl:** What about growing up in the home, what kind of chores did you have to do?
- 13.9 **Bob:** Okay there was some I suppose, ___ you go out and you might help milk the cows, clean the barn, what else ___ very similar sometimes if it wasn't a school day it would be watering the cattle and maybe hauling in the feed and it would be we needed wood and there would be wood to cut and that. You don't really think about it because in today's situation there isn't anything and you think those days were better.
- 15.1 **Cheryl:** What about hunting or trapping did any of your family do any hunting or trapping?
- 15.4 **Bob:** Yes, I did, my mother did and my dad wasn't into it that much he set a few traps and stuff but I was right into it.
- 15.6 **Cheryl:** What about your mother?
- 15.7 **Bob:** Oh she wasn't big up by ___ she was trapping she had to get out f the house -_____.
- 15.7 **Cheryl:** So what kinds of foods would she make?
- 15.7 **Bob:** Well you might find most places ___ but with her Russian heritage there were some recipes that were brought over from another country, from different countries. This was one we eat not only English Canadians, Canadian food I guess.
- 16.1 **Cheryl:** Did she do lots of berry picking and canning and that type of thing?
- 16.2 **Bob:** Oh yes, yes.
- 16.3 **Cheryl:** And did she have a large garden?
- 16.4 **Bob:** Usually yes, I remember weeding the darn thing. Yeah there was a lot of berry picking, especially wild berries, strawberries, raspberries. ___ of different kinds I guess we tried to ___ with berries on it.

16.9 Cheryl: Do you remember any types foods that were made just for any special occasions?

17.0 Bob: Not really as far as ___ you would have cakes at Christmas time and stuff like that as far as special foods there wasn't anything that was special from one day to the next or one time of the year to the next. You would have a turkey with dressing and stuff like that it didn't matter what time of the year it was.

17.8 Cheryl: Was there anything else that you wanted to mention about growing up or your family or anything.

18.0 Bob: Not really being that I was the only one of the family there without relatives we are not, it is not relatives that go by it is mostly you would invite over was good neighbors hey and there were times that the closest neighbour might be three or four years from my age but you just have to know how to get along.

18.6 Cheryl: Well thank you.

18.7 Bob: Oh your welcome I don't know if that was to your liking or not but.

Tape One Side B Ends at 18.9

Note: The first four minutes of this interview was recorded over therefore the first four minutes of this interview is at the end from 19.0 to 23.0
