



# **GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE**

of Native Studies and Applied Research

Interview of Elder Ed St. Pierre  
Conducted by Darren Préfontaine  
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**1. Could you please tell me your name and your home community?**

Ed St. Pierre, Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

**2. Where were you born and is that where you grew up?**

I was born and raised in Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan.

**3. So, was that on the road allowance?**

It was on a road allowance or wherever we could pitch a tent.

**4. So, here were several road allowance communities that you lived in?**

Yes, and on crown land in around Crescent Lake.

**5. Where have you lived most of your life?**

Well, I was 17 years old when I joined the military and I lived in many places. In the 1960s, I came back to the Yorkton area. However, I lived there very briefly. I worked for many organizations. I was a carpenter for awhile. I worked for the government in staffing, and then I transferred out of Veteran Affairs and worked for counselling services. I retired from the workforce in 2001 when I turned 65. I spent a total of 55 years in the work force.

**6. Who were your parents and grandparents and where were they from?**

My grandparents both came from Crooked Lake. My grandfather, on my mom's side, came from the Red River settlement of Manitoba. My grandmother, on my mom's side, came from Crooked Lake and my mom came from Crooked Lake, and my dad came from the Turtle Mountain reservation.

**7. So, what were the family names?**

Adèle Henry was grandma and my grandfather was Alexandre Flamont. My mother was Vitaline and my dad was Alex[andre] St. Pierre.

**8. How did spend your life as an adult regarding work family and other ways you would like to share, you mentioned what you've done professionally, maybe like the shared family or cultural values of how you lived your life?**

When I left as a young fellow, we lived off the land and we worked for farmers. When I turned 15, I worked in the bush camp doing all the rough and tumble work. I did a lot of trapping and a lot of hunting muskrats and that kind of stuff. The lakes and the bushes were disappearing, and the farmers were getting equipment, tractors, combines etc. I knew that this work wasn't going to last. The bushes were shrinking, and the animals, such as muskrats were dying. So I felt that at a very young age, I had to leave and learn something. This is the reason that I got into military because I only had a grade 7 education when I left. The only reason that I didn't have more than a grade 7 education was because I lived in a farming community working for farmers, and while we had a school within walking distance, they wouldn't let us go because my parents didn't pay taxes. They lived on the road allowance, so they fought over the right to go to school. And my older sisters, they went to Ituna. There was a boarding school there, and I was only ten years old, so I didn't go. I only started school when I was ten years old when T.C. Douglas and the CCF built a school for us in Crescent Lake. That was our school. We were all allowed to go then.

**9. What do you enjoy about being Métis?**

Our culture, language, and the one thing I always work on is that I know we can always do better. You know, I'm the guy who has always taught people to work. I've hired a lot of people in my days and worked with a lot of Métis and non-Métis. I'm a great believer that we can do better, and that we can't keep looking in the past and say, "Look what happened to us." That won't get us anywhere. We have to be more positive. Our Métis people can do the work that other people do. I'm always preaching that stuff to our young folks. "Get an education. That's what's going to get you what you want and open more doors than I've had. It will give you an opportunity." It's a struggle now and it was a struggle then. We can go behind the eight ball, but as long as we get a good education and prove ourselves, we can do it. We are a good people, but sometimes our record doesn't show that, but we are all painted with the same brush. So, we all have to change those attitudes and change our thinking. I never forgot one thing. There was a very intelligent man that I heard through a speech when I was just a young fellow. I really enjoyed listening to President John Kennedy, and in one of his speeches, he said: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." That always stayed with me and always will, you know? You can't just take everything and not give anything back. We have to realize that we have to be the same community to be successful. It's impossible to isolate yourself. You have to go where the work is. I think our people, especially our elders talk to our young people about this, and that's a stressed point that sometimes you have to move. That's just the way life is; you gotta be successful. That's the way that I looked at it right through my life. Wherever the good job was I went.

**10. You always carried your Métis spirit with you even let's say even when you were in Germany or wherever.**

I always believed that you help those who need it. Give them an opportunity and give them a break. Even when I was the military, when I was an instructor, some people didn't fare well, eh? I always gave them the benefit of the doubt and helped those who needed help

**11. What has been the most challenging thing about being Métis?**

Well, like I was saying before, the most challenging thing is the way that we were looked upon. Things are changing now, but once upon a time, we were not considered very trustworthy. We were quiet, and we were not people that you could trust to always be to work at 8 o'clock. We were all painted with the same brush. And that is changing, but we got a lot of work to do yet. But I think with institutions such as GDI and other places, I think that's slowly changing. Our young people are starting to realize now that they need an education, and that they sometimes need to leave their community and go to work. I think that, sometimes, we are homebound so to speak. People don't like farewells, but you can go somewhere else and make a good living, and you don't have to stay in your home community.

**12. What is the most important thing you want others to know about the Métis? If you could tell the world about being a Métis person, what is the most important thing the world should know?**

I think we [the Métis] are just as good as anyone else on this earth, all we need is an opportunity.

**13. If you were advising yourself as a Métis youth, like looking back say when you were a boy or young man knowing what you know now what would you tell yourself in a sentence or two?**

I think we learned a lot from our folks. Even though all you may do is work with farmers, my father always said, "If you take a job, do it well, even if you don't like it. Keep in mind that you came there looking for a job. They didn't come looking for you."

So that's going to stay with you. Once you do a good job, no matter where you go, you're going to have that in your system, eh? I think that's the trouble sometimes, people lose track of us. Just because you got laid off someplace and you get mad, and say, "Well, that's not good enough." Next time, do a good job. People will recognize that. Once you're successful in the workforce, you will be successful in life. Yeah, it's good incentive. "I can do better." You know sometimes we feel like we've done good work, but we should never be just good enough. People should realize we can always do a little better each day. We have to strive to do better. While I'm on the earth, I want to do as much as I can to help our people to be self-productive, self-providing, and fit in the world like anybody else. That's my goal. That's my mission.