

Elder Interview of Leon Morin (A:)
Place: Ile-a-la-crosse, Saskatchewan
Date: July 5, 2001
Interviewed by: Wayne Morin (Q:)
Transcribed & translated by: Wayne Morin
Present at interview: Lilah Morin, Anna Ryding, Brenda MacDougal, Clara Morin & Karla Elder
Type of equipment used: 8mm-video recorder c/w cordless microphone

Time

00:00:05

Q: Where were you born and in what year?

A: 1930 at Buffalo. I was once years old when we moved to Sandy Point.

Q: What is the names of your?

A: Mary Jane and Ambrose.

Q: Your ah, mom and dad?

A: Mary Jane and Ambrose Morin.

Q: What to you remember of your early life?

A: When we first moved there, in 1937 when the red measles was going around, I was 7 years old, Father Morrow come to visit, all of us were sick for one week, than a week after we got better. Nobody past away?

Q: What happened?

A: Something like measles, red measles in 1937.

Q: Red measles?

A: A lot of people died. Many died.

00:01:21

Q: How about you guys?

A: Not us, we didn't loss anybody, Father Morrow came to pray for us so we would get better. Even the windows were boarded shut, it was pitch black, its like we were blind. That disease was deadly, in 1937, I was 7 years old.

Q: You were living in?

A: We had not moved yet, we were living by the beach. We moved to Sandy Point later when I was, about, 12. We lived together with the Larivieres.

Q: Where is that?

A: A Crosse from where we are now, the other place.

Q: In Sandy Point?

A: Sandy Point, the other side. The place they called Big Sandy Beach.

Q: Oh!

A: That's where, that's where, that's where we lived.

Q: How many in your Family?

A: The family, all together about, lots died, just the 6 of us alive.

Q: Which?

A: Me, Jules, Frank, Elizabeth, Elise and Christine. There still 6 of us.

Q: How many did they loss?

A: Yes, lots, yes about 3, 3 they lost.

00:02:52

Q: How?

A: They had some sort of disease, Just like Marie Rose she ^{sed} past away over there, my grandmother raise her as the old lady was always sick.

(Checking audio)

00:03:14

Q: What did the girls and the boys do for chores?

A: We did lots, just like our garden, all sorts of vegetables, we butchered cows and stored away things, it was like a store in a basement. We stored everything there. Getting ready for winter. There was no stores back then.

Q: You didn't buy anything?

A: We lived off the land, we never bought meat, we get it from the bush and everything else.

Q: Things like potatoes?

A: Potato, all the vegetables we can use, we had them all, they were all stored, it looked like a store. They would get them there.

Q: Everybody pitched in?

A: Yes, everybody worked. Even when we hayed, Elizabeth and Elise would haul the straw. So we wouldn't run short.

Q: What for, cows?

A: Yes, cows and horses we had many.

Q: How many cows?

A: We had about 12 and about 10 horses, we raised together.

00:04:42

Q: Were you the only ones that lived there?

A: Ah! There was another family a little ways; we lived there just us, where we live now. A log house was build at first, when we lived there.

Q: Who built it?

A: My father, that old man. I help him, I was capable. I was only in school half a year. My father pulled me out because he had nobody to help him. Half a year only.

Q: How old where you?

A: I think 12, when he pulled me out, nobody to help him, that's why.

Q: Oh! How about Frank and Jules, where were they?

A: Frank was there, Jules was there for long, he moved a Crosse the same time I did, frank left sooner.

00:05:43

Q: When did you get married?

A: 1953.

Q: 1953, who did you marry?

A: Clara (laughs) Why did you ask me? You want to know everything.

Q: How many children did you have with Clara?

A: AH, 5 boys and 4 girls, we lost 2.

Q: So 7, no?

A: What?

Q: 9?

A: Altogether 9, yes, 9, 5 boys and 4 girls.

Q: And you lost 2?

A: Yes, 2, one from disease, yes.

Q: Who taught you the most growing up?

Start: 00:06:27:10

00:06:41

A: Probably the elders, they raised us properly, they wouldn't even let us come to town. We stay put, but when we came we wouldn't go home for long. But when we got home they would lecture us not to come to town again.

Q: Did you always no you were a half-breed?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it talked about?

A: Yes, we knew that.

Q: Did you speak the same language we are speaking now?

A: Mostly Cree, yes, but some words we use are French. Even since I can remember it was like that. That's how they spoke, part French.

(Clarifying some questions with Lilah)

00:07:47

Q: When you gathered or visited what did you do?

A: When we gathered we would work together, the men and women. Just like every year we would hay, we had lots of animals.

Q: Just like a farm?

A: Yes, just like a farm. We would haul from a long ways, 7 o'clock in the morning, 2 team horses to Beaver River.

Q: When you gather or visited did you play any games?

A: All sorts of things, like we made little boats to play with in the beach and in winter we made little Ski-doo's with papers, cardboard, and sometimes use sticks. We try everything to keep busy.

Q: They played nothing else?

A: No, there was nothing.

Q: Like ball?

A: Yes, we played rubber ball.

Q: You to?

A: We played hockey too. We would get skates made of board and we used those.

Q: Like a hockey stick?

A: Yes that was made to.

Q: How about a puck?

A: Like a ball or something like that.

Q: Were did you get balls?

A: We made them, we would stuff clothe and then sew it together, we made it, they never sold things like that.

00:09:33

Q: What did you do for holidays?

A: No such thing as holidays

Q: Christmas?

A: Not much, this one time Frank and I went fishing, we stayed there for Christmas and New years.

Q: When you gathered with your mom and dad?

A: We didn't do much, we had a meal together, the family.

Q: What did you eat?

A: All sorts of thing, not turkey, all sorts of things.

00:10:05

Q: Duck?

A: Yes, duck that we stored and meat.

Q: Did you buy anything?

A: We didn't buy anything, no turkey long ago.

Q: Like presents?

A: Nothing like that, that's just recent.

Q: How about a Christmas tree?

A: Nothing like that too, no electricity, there was no power plant too.

Q: Did they pray a lot?

A: There was a lot of prayer.

Q: What did you do for Easter?

A: We would come here to church (points with lips). Even at Christmas with horse, no ski-does that time. All we use was horses and dogs.

Q: So you would come to church for Easter?

A: Easter, Christmas and New years.

Q: You would come to church?

A: Yes, to church.

Q: Did they play music?

A: Yes, they played a lot of music, there was a party at New years. We saw a lot of people from all over. Everybody would come to Sandy Point.

Q: To sandy point?

A: Yes. Today there's nothing like that

Q: Was your dad a good musician?

A: He was good, others would come to.

Q: People would come from all over?

A: People from all over would come, they used horses.

Q: Did they drink?

A: They drank, but not ever week, they worked, only if you deserved it. And liquor was cheap back than.

Q: Today there's a lot of drinking?

A: Only \$6.00 for 24 back than. Today there is too much happening, drugs and things like that. Nothing like that in the past. People would make their own liquor long ago, moonshine. Today nobody does that.

00:12:22

Q: Where did people get married?

A: I think they use to gather.

Q: What did you do when you got married?

A: We ate at Burnolf's café, and there use to be a hall where Raymond Laliberte lives now, we had a dance there.

Q: Did you get married in Church?

A: In church, Yes.

Q: Which priest, do you remember?

A: AH, which priest, Father Wadet. (Pauses) 7 o'clock in the morning.

end: 00:12:20.19

Start: 00:12:21.16

Q: You got married at 7 o'clock in the morning?

A: Yes, 7 o'clock early for the priest.

Q: That's early?

A: Yes, early.

00:13:15

Q: You must love her?

A: (laughs)

Q: When your dad played, what kinds of songs did he play?

A: He played all sorts, he use to say "Don Messer" style.

Q: What?

A: He said he played like "Don Messer", he played mostly his music. Frank would back him up; frank was a good singer.

Q: What did he sing?

A: He liked to sing Hank Williams songs. That's what he would sing.

Q: But your dad played the fiddle?

A: Yes, he played a lot.

Q: Did you square dance?

A: All sorts of dances, they use just the guitar and violan, wouldn't take long to get started. Not like today it takes half hour to get started.

00:14:19

(Audio check)

Q: Who was the best fiddle player of your time?

A: They was many not only one, they had competitions. Like August and the old man. August Durocher.

Q: Who did they speak off?

A: They spoke of another, Pierre Gerard he was good too.

Q: Pierre?

A: Pierre Gerard, relative of Gilbert and Tsigelee (Nickname), other was Latsinut (nickname) husband he was good too.

Q: He was good too?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they teach themselves?

A: They taught themselves.

Q: Could they read?

A: No, they couldn't read, they taught themselves.

End: 00:15:29:29

(Conference between Lilah and Wayne)

00:15:42

Q: Your horses, were they strictly for work?

A: Yes, only for work?

Start: 00:15:41:19

Q: Not for play, horse races?

A: No, we did loggings. We would bring logs, were John Daigneault lives now, Tony Rickson, big guy, had a sawmill there. We would bring the logs to him.

Q: From a Crosse?

A: From a Crosse, yes. We would cut logs all summer than haul in the winter.

Q: With horses?

A: Horses, yes. We had a barge too, we would move to the river to hay. For about a month.

Q: When was that?

A: In august.

Q: In August?

A: yes, yes.

Q: Everybody moved?

A: Everybody moved there.

Q: So you left?

A: Anybody that was capable of working would come with us. Even the girls, my sisters. Even the men, we all help each other, along with the Gardiner family.

Q: They lived up there too?

A: Yes, we would get together to help each other. Even when we build a house we would work together. When we were done one we would build another one for some body else.

00:17:07

Q: Do you see anything like that today?

A: No, nobody will help unless it's for money. People will not help. Nobody offers things today, like meat. Not like in the past if somebody had a good hunt than everybody would benefit. The family, 10 families 1 moose. This way nothing would spoil. Any extra would be boiled and canned for winter, for fishing.

Q: Nobody ran out?

A: nobody ran out of anything, we had all sorts of vegetables. We lived well.

Q: Do you want to go a watch the planes first than will?

A: It doesn't matter, its up to you, lots of time ah!

Q: You ate things like moose?

A: Yes, all sorts of things.

Q: Fish?

A: Fish, caribou, muskrat. We ate beaver too, even bear. There was no garbage long ago, the bear had good meat, all they ate was berries, and they were fat. They made medicine, like bear oil, used for all types of sickness.

Q: That bear?

A: Bear grease, yes. It was good medicine. You don't see that now, too much garbage, sewer,

Q: Not good today?

A: No good, sewer and the mine, coming from the mine, contaminate the animals. Here are the water bombers.

Q: Lets go watch.

A: I'll take this off for now.

00:19:02

(conference)

00:20:23:

Q: You had a farm?

A: Yes, yes.

Start: 00:20:22:17

End: 00:18:58:28

Q: Did your dad every talk about scrip?

A: They wrote it, but a lot of people were cheated, they didn't get anything.

Q: How?

A: They didn't get script, somebody else would sign for it. Just like my Grandfather, what happened to his money. And not long ago I heard that Allan and Louise found something about that, yes, you didn't here?

Q: What?

A: That's what I hear that that money in the bank, the check. They got a piece of paper or a slip.

Q: Could they read?

A: They couldn't read, so they didn't know what was going on.

Q: Your dad never?

A: He never talked about it.

Q: What year was your dad born?

A: 1905.

Q: 1905?

A: Yes.

00:21:33

Q: Your grandfather did he talk about script?

A: He never spoke of this, although we lived with him.

Q: Did you know he wrote Script?

A: Yes, he wrote script, I think they found something.

Q: Yes they do have him on Script?

A: Yes, he was supposed to be given something.

Q: Yes, like land?

A: He never talked about it, maybe his children, didn't know about it.

Q: He had your dad's name listed as a child?

A: Yes, I wonder what happened to that money.

Q: They sold it, but they didn't understand?

A: Yes, Its like they sold their land. Well I heard the land was up south and it was sold there. Up north is all owned by the government.

Q: Yes, in the south?

A: Yes, the south, the south only. The government turn around at takes all of the north, the mines too ah!

00:22:40

Q: The elders, like your grandfather never talked about that?

A: I never heard, we all lived together. I was about 8 12, we lived together for about 10 years, than we moved to Sandy Point. It was all bush; we had to brush cut. We pulled out the stumps with horses so they wouldn't re-grow.

Q: You lived there for long?

A: I lived there long, I was, I was.

Q: When did you move?

A: I was 1930 I was born in buffalo then we moved I was one year old. We moved to sandy Point.

Q: Is Buffalo in the same area as it is now?

A: In Buffalo 1930.

Q: Is it in the same spot?

A: The same spot, they lived right on the point with my Uncle Louie. Right were they built the old folk's home now, that's where they use to live. That's what my dad told me.

Q: Beaver River?

A: Yes, they would paddle, no motors back then, just small ones, they paddled all the way from over there.

Q: With canoes?

A: With canoes, yes.

00:24:06

Q: You fished a lot?

A: Oh yeah, that's was our main survival, all year round, we fished winter and summer.

Q: How about trapping?

A: Trapping sometimes. After we check the nets we would trap. The nets were made of cotton; we didn't get much, like today nylon nets ah. Everything new today.

Q: Did anybody buy?

A: When the buyer would come, 10 cents a fish only white fish, I was about 12 years old, I remember the horses were Clydesdales. They would come down the Beaver River, plowing all the way. That's who my dad and George Gardiner sold the fish to, 10cents a fish. Only white fish they didn't buy pickerel and jackfish.

Q: Where was the buyer from?

A: From Big River, with horses. They would trade for food. If they had enough they would get money.

Q: How about furs?

A: What fur?

Q: Yes.

A: They would buy those too.

Q: How much did they pay for those?

A: Not much, for example a red fox about 12 dollars, silver fox about 15.

Q: When was this?

A: Long ago, it was quite awhile, I was 12 years old we still lived with my grandfather, they would come there. They would stop and camp in Half Way Lake then go on to Patuanak

Q: When would they return home?

A: They return home when they ran out of food, they take the fish home.

00:26:05

Q: Do you know anybody that fought in the war?

A: Just my Uncle Vital.

Q: Just Vital?

A: That's the only one we're related to.

Q: What war?

A: Word War 2 I think.

End: 00:26:01:18

Q: 2 ah!

A: Yes.

Q: Where did they live, did they live with you?

A: When Vital, Harry and Madilta were orphans the old man took them to raise. And Harry went with Father Morrow, they lived from place to place (points with lips), picking berries. Father Morrow wrote to Montreal to get permission for Harry to join the priest hood. For 1 month they moved from place to place, with canoe, no motors back then. They went as far as Buffalo Lake. Then when they arrived back here, he tried to send Harry away to priesthood, but no. Harry tells me today that I would be taking your confession right now.

Q: Harry?

A: Harry, yes. (Laughs)

Q: They were religious?

A: They prayed a lot.

Q: How about you?

A: Yes, especially children in school, all evening.

Q: But you didn't go to school?

A: No I didn't go to school much, just the kids. And she went too until 5.

Q: Who?

A: Clara, until grade 5.

Q: You went for half a year?

A: Yes, half a year than I left because nobody to help my dad.

Q: Where was the school?

A: It was right here (points with lips), right where the AA is somewhere around there. One burned down too. While my children were there.

Q: Was that a Mission school?

A: Mission, Mission school yes. Yes right there.

Q: Who taught?

A: The Grey nuns taught.

Q: Priest?

A: Priest, yes.

Q: Were they mean?

A: People were taught well, they weren't mean but strict. You had certain rules to follow and they followed. Not like today the children don't listen to anything or anybody. Doesn't matter if you talk to them.

Q: Why is it like that?

A: Its like the children want to control us, they thing ^{you're} the bosses. That has changed from the past.

Q: I wonder why?

A: In the past families, we were told what to do, today its different they want to control us. They don't like taking orders today. I don't know, it changed.

Q: Not much work?

00:27:39

Start: 00:27:53:00

00:29:12

A: They don't work, out all night and sleep all day, no work like in the past. They don't have it hard at all, nothing. In the past I stayed in a tent in January.

Q: Do you know how to write in English?

A: No.

Q: To read?

A: No, but I understand English. I can speak for myself.

(Microphone slip off)

A: It fell, probably didn't hear?

Q: When did it fall, while we were pausing?

Lilah: Yes.

Q: Tell us an old story, trapping story?

A: What kind of trapping story do I tell. When we were out on the trap line?

Q: Yes. Did you go with your dad?

A: Yes, all the time in the bush. Like in the fall we trapped muskrat, they sold for 50 cents, 35 cents. We would trap a thousand in one, one month AH!

Q: Where did you stay?

A: On the line, in a tent, that's all we did. When it started to freeze up we would fish and ^{trap} ~~trap~~, mixed. We use dog teams no ski-doo.

Q: Where was the rest of the family, like your mom?

A: She stayed home to look after the children, as they were not old enough to go with us. I was old enough; finally Frank got to come. And then Jules and Frank would come to help me.

Q: How old is Frank?

A: Frank is 64.

Q: And you?

A: And me I am 70.

Q: And Jules?

A: Jules is 66, he had a birthday not long ago, the 28.

00:31:18

Q: They went around helping you?

A: When they were capable of helping, they would come with me. Because my dad didn't do much, I would teach them. Trapping, Fishing we went as far as Elbow Lake.

Q: Just the 3?

A: Yes, In February, we stayed until March, a month and a half.

Q: In a tent?

A: Yes, in a tent, we use dog teams. 3 dogs.

Q: Then you sold that fish?

A: We sold it, they use to buy it here at The Bay for ^{weight} ~~Waite~~. They would come to get the fish.

Q: They would go and haul it?

A: Yes, they would pick it up with Bugs. Pete Hansen drove the Bugs, pulled a sleigh ah! A lot of fish.

Q: I think I got everything, you guys.

00:32:29

Q: Story told by my my, told by his dad? Tell us the story.

A: (laughs) This one time Wesakejack was carry a canvas bag, he was hungry, the ducks asked him, What's in the bag? He told them songs, Blind dance songs. This evening I'll show you my brothers, will dance together. So evening came, Wesakejack blind folded the ducks and called the dance. A curious duck, the fall duck, peeked and saw Wesakejack wringing the necks of his brothers, he yell out, he's going to kill us all. Just than Wesakejack kicked him it the butt that is why to this day the fall duck only has half a tail. Wesakejack did get some ducks the rest flew off. Wesakejack made the ducks and cooked them. Just than a weasel appeared, he made Wesakejack a bet. Lets have a running race, the fastest one will get to keep all the ducks. The weasel pretended to limp, he was losing the race, Wesakejack ask him if he had enough, he told Wesakejack to go a little ways more. In the mean time the weasel hid the ducks and ate them later. Wesakejack was hungry once a gain. He used to tell all sorts of stories.

Q: Who your dad?

A: Yes, yes. Well that's it.

End: 00:34:07:17

00:34:08

END OF INTERVIEW

00:34:09

(Picture of Mary Jane Morin (mother of Leon) and Evangeline Daigneault (Mother of Clara)

00:34:14

(Picture of Felix Morin, grandfather of Leon)

00:34:16

(Picture of ?, grandfather of Clara)