

# Remembering My Métis Past:

Reminiscences of Edwin St. Pierre

Michif Translations by Harriet Oaks St. Pierre





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## Early Life

I was born in 1937, south of Yorkton in a Métis community called Crescent Lake. My mother was Vitaline Flamand and my father was Alexandre (Chippawan) St. Pierre. My father was born in the Turtle Mountain Reservation (North Dakota) and moved to Crescent Lake.

My father worked for a farmer in winter and spring, trapped, cut wood for farmers, and harvested grain. My mother worked like a man. She hunted and fed us—usually deer and rabbit—when dad was away working. In spring time, we took eggs from the mudhens in the marshes. We would fill pails of them. Week after week, we would go back and there would be more eggs in the same mudhen nests.



*St. Pierre Family Photo. Back Row: Gerald, Frank, Lawrence, Ed, Laura (Kerr), Lucy (Lafontaine), Stella (Wapemoose), Florence. Front Row: Mary and Alexandre. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

In the early 1940s, there were seven of us children together with our parents living in a small one-room log shack with a dirt floor. Around 1943, we moved into our neighbour's small two-bedroom house after he had fallen into a well and drowned. While it contained more luxuries than we had in our first home, such as a wooden floor, we found out shortly that it had been infested with bed bugs. My parents bought bed bug poison which they put into a pot and placed in our house. We had to stay out for three days while the poison worked. We slept in a tent for a week just to be sure it was safe to go back in the house.

In October 1944, our youngest brother was born. In those days we were never told how we came upon this earth. The only thing we were told was that all babies came to us riding a little rabbit. Shortly before my brother was born, my grandpa dropped off my grandma by wagon, and then continued on his way. Then a couple of my aunts were dropped off. I didn't know at the time, but my grandma and aunts were midwives and were going to deliver my brother. My father took me out to hang snares for rabbits and took along his rifle in case we were able to find a deer. When we were on our way home, we heard dogs barking. We looked around and saw a deer that was distracted by the dogs, so my dad shot and killed it. He told me to stay with the deer while he went to get a horse to drag it home. When he came back, he told me that I had another brother that came by riding a little rabbit.

Growing up in Crescent Lake was a lot of fun. There were many children around, and we would play games, ball, and go to house dances. They would play the fiddle and guitar at the dances, and we would watch the older people to learn how to jig, square dance, and dance waltzes.



## Family Roots in the Turtle Mountain Reservation

Our father Alexandre St. Pierre came from the United States in the 1920s. He was born and raised in the Turtle Mountain Reservation (North Dakota) and was registered with the Chippewa Tribe. He came to Canada with his parents to look for work. They had relatives in Canada, such as the Pelletiers. His family moved back home to Turtle Mountain, but Dad stayed here. He married our mother, Mary Vitaline Flamand in 1930.

My dad very seldom went back to the States. I don't think he even went back to his father's funeral. When someone died, it didn't bother Dad very much it seemed. He'd say, "I haven't seen them for a long time so it's no use going. I don't know them anymore."



*Ed, Lawrence, and Frank St. Pierre.*  
Ed St. Pierre Collection

I didn't know my Dad's father, but I remember my Dad's mother, she was called "la vyeille Li Nurays." She lived around here (Yorkton) and then she married Chi-Jean Tanner. She didn't stay with him too long. She returned home to the Turtle Mountain Reservation. She died there.

I use to go to Turtle Mountain to visit my cousins and my aunts. I had only one uncle. They had the same kind of work in the States as we did here. They would cut fence posts and sell

them to farmers and ranchers.

In 1952, we left from here in a taxi to work in the Turtle Mountains to pick potatoes. We stayed there for two months.

We went with Mom and Dad, three of my

brothers, my little sister, and one of my cousins.



*Threshing 1912 near Duck Lake. Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-A8247*

## Recreational Activities

As children, we kept ourselves active. In the fall after threshing, we'd go to the straw stacks and gather all the short pieces of twine that we could find, and take them home and braid them into ropes for many uses. We used them for pulling our sleighs, tying bundles of stove-length wood to the sleigh, hauling water or snow for water in wintertime, and as reins when playing horse games. They were also handy for tying our horses and cattle when necessary and for a whole lot of other things. Most of what we used was homemade. Very few things were bought back then.

In early summer, we'd walk along the water's edge with bucket in hand looking for duck, crow, and mudhen nests. We would take the eggs from each nest we found for our own use at home.

We'd walk through fields and bushes, checking on young coyotes, wolves, and rabbits for later use. We would

check for different plants for medicinal purposes and would see where berries were plentiful so we'd know where to go come picking time.

Personally, I think due to us being so active in all kinds of weather, we were very seldom sick.

## **Maytawayk Wawchay Pihk**

Ashpee neyanawn lee zawn fawn kaw pay ohpickee yahk, toul tawn gee mishkaynawn kaykwuy chi maytaway yahk. L'autonne de touhtownawn a moushakina mawhk lee pchi marsod twine kaw mishka mahk, apra kaw pawahikahk, gee wayhtahta nawn oma lee twine, dapihkawtay nawn ae oushistaw yuhk lee cabl pekoo eshi deshe apachistaw nawn, chi wehkoupita yahk me pchi slee in nawn. Kaw pipouhk a awataw yahk la neezh pur diloo akwa li bwaa chi poun na mahk daan le pwell daan la mazoun chi keeshe ta puhk, menah lee harnwar pur les s'heayn, akwah o zwal kaw maytaway yahk pur lee ren chi tahkaupitie yahk kook lee zwals akwa lee zeniemoo de la farm. A koushpee mishtawhiw kay kwiy kee oushetaw wuk namo tapway kaykwiy kee a tawaynne one.

Kaw-she-kwahk akwa a L'autonne mishchatwaw gee paw moosta nawn daan lee gra bwaw akwa daan lee shawn a paw waw pahtamahk lee nwayzoo nik akwa lee pchi panachawn, lee pchi l'yayv, lee pchi loo, lee groo loo, lee swiss, lee shikawk akwa lee shou vreu.

Li fayuzh menah a paw wahpahtam mahk menah a paw wahpahtam mahk tanday chi paw munshoow yahk li pour, le gren, li frayz akwa lee frawhmbwayz, ashpee ke muwshoowk.

Neyea a tayhtamawn ekohk kaw a touthkay yahk akwa kay maytaway yahk dahor pekoo ayshikeeshikawk, namoia wawee pech gee awhkoushin nawn.

## Games

Most of the games we played were ones that our Elders used to play. They were games that did not cost anything; most were very active, and we could all play at the same time with no score keeping, which made it much more fun.

Our favorite summer game was called “Blind Man’s Bluff.” We would form a large circle holding hands, and one person stood blindfolded in the middle of the circle. We twirled this person round and round, and this person would point to one of the people in the circle. This person would go in the middle with the blind man, and would start running around, all the while saying things while continually moving. When the blind man caught him or her, he or she in turn would become a blind man. This game would last until everyone had a chance to become a blind man.

Hide and go seek was another great game. Everybody hid while one would seek the others. The first one found became the seeker. This game would go on until everyone was tired.

In the winter, we spent a lot of time sliding down hills in our sleds or tub wagons that Dad or Grandpa made for us, or we’d use flat pieces of tin or parts of a cardboard box.

When we got a little older, we’d play hockey for those of us who could afford skates. For our hockey rink, we’d stake out a large section of snow and then move the snow to the sides by

way of shoveling right to the ground. We did not have running water, so we used whatever kind of water we could, even laundry water which we poured to make the ice. Our hockey sticks were carefully chosen branches much like the shape of a hockey stick with a little whittling here and there. We had our sticks and our puck was frozen cow or horse droppings.

Playing softball was very common in the summer months. Our bats were picked out from bushes, and were carved and shaped with a knife, and our balls were made from stuffing old socks. Our ball diamond was in an open area, with handmade bases of whatever material we could find.



*Ed St. Pierre (Left), with son Gerard (Front Row, second from right). Ed St. Pierre Collection*

## **Maentawayw**

Kaykawt kahkeeyeow lee game kaw key maytaway yeyk,  
lee pleu vyeu mawnah a key maytaway chik ohiw lee game,

namoia kaykway a tukketak kii, kaykawt kahkeeyeow lee game maytohnee a wawchay pihk. Tout gee maw ma weh maytawannawn lee mem tawn namoia kaw tach aweyuk chi ashepayhikkate a kooschi kaw key maw moochihta yawk.

Anema kaw key mamisha maytaway yawk a l'etee, "shinikawtawy," "NAMOO WAWPI NOM KIPWAWPINIWAYHK." Gee mishatin nawn, ouchiminamihk lee maen, a gro roun douchistawn nawn, payak daan lee miljeu neepawiw gipwahpin nah nawn avik en krimonn akwa ne washakapittawn nawn, it wah whyw payak neya nawn kaw wash sha kaw pou wee yawk any hii kaw it wah what wee shkootum pehtikkwaw daan li miljieu akwa washakiyyamou nadow a yah it twat, peyesh namoo wawpiw kawshchitinik koo, we shkotum namoia wawpiw nom shaykihiwayw namoia kaw pooyoo nawn pawtima kahkeeyew we yuk an shawns ayachik kee namoo wawpiw nom shaykihiwayw ewit.

Oma meena la game mistahiw gee maw maytahwawn nawn "KAWSHOO AKWA DO MISHKAW." Hen kipawhchapinneeshoo avik leu mean, akee schikkayw see vaen tout neya nawn daan pash she nawn a do kawshoo yahk, kaw keyshe ah kishichi kaht, "tay pwayw," "touz hoor paree kaymah no bay yawn," bay do nah wik koo nawn, a teeshee mish kow wik ko yawhk bay ho nawn ekohk kahkiyuw wiyek kaw mishkawat, ana li daryeen kaw miskaw wik kaw shoot, weeshkootum kipah chap pinne shoo avik leu mean le meme kom le premyee kaw toutahk. Gee maytawan nawn omach la game ekohk ayeshkoushiyalk, mochekun omah la game, kaw titipishkak akwa den pitche vil a weekey yan misheway chi kawshook, namoia meoshin daan la grawn vil chi maytawayk omah la game.

Daan l'ivayr daan la beut de touhtay nawn a do shooshkwachiway yahk, Bapa kaymah nee moushoom doushistamakoonawn lee pchi slee kaymaw le pchi tubwagoo kaymaw dapachistawn nawn le bwet papee, kaymaw lee pchi marso toul.

Kaw tee mishekite yawh, gee maytaway nawn hockey, ne way paharo kaun na nawn la neezh avik lee besh, de leu shebina nawn la glas a oushehaw yack pur le pchi lak glasee. Do keeshikawthahay nawn awn soul brawnch chi awpachita yahk chi pakama why yack la luk, awka pur un an puk lee zwale badou lee zenemoo sa mard kaw awhkwatihck daan awpachet taw nawn.

O plot meena gee maytawawn nawn, pur an plot le vyeu baa, gee awpacheman manik awn bon brawnch pur awn bat kawkeyuw lee game namakay kwuy kee tahkey tayw.

## **Métis Marriage**

Marriages were celebrated by the whole community. Uniting two young people for life was taken very seriously by the community. There was a lot of planning by both parties. The first step was when the young couple decided to marry: the father and son of the groom, or sometimes an Elder in the community, would visit the bride's parents. They would usually take a bottle of wine, and after a drink and some visiting, the father or Elder would ask the future bride's parents for the approval of the prospective groom to marry their daughter. With their approval, a date would be set and the planning would start. As the Métis in those days were nearly all Roman Catholics, the day would start with the marriage ceremony in

the morning, followed by a dinner at one of the bigger homes in the community. Right after dinner, they would start dancing to the music of local fiddle and guitar players. We would stop for supper, and then would continue dancing until the wee hours of the morning. Most of the food was donated by community people. Most of our houses had just one big room and most of the little amount of furniture was taken outdoors to make more room to dance. Weddings were very enjoyable for the whole community and they were well attended. When I think back to why people enjoyed getting together and having such fun, it seemed that everybody was at the same level, and there was no jealousy. People just got along.



*Lavalley, Wedding Party, Crooked Lake. Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection, GDI.HP.0003*

## **Michif Maryaezh**

La maryaezh key moochikistawkw tout ita a lawntour kawweekihk. Mistahiw aen plawn a oustawchik la parentee lit awn vyaen pur la feey aykwa le nom. Le premee la



zhen maryee aykwa so payr chi douwawpomawchik la feey sa parentee chi kwaychik kaymouhk pur sa meah. Lee michif a touthtakik, de touhtatanawn an boutay de vaen papayhtack minihkway yawk kawpeekishkway tamihk omha le maryaezh. La zhournee kakaykinamwuk aykwa se setlee paree mawchistawwuk kawhkey y uw omha la maryaezh. Kay kat tout lee michif lee katalik a koospee. Le zhournee kaw maw chippieyek la maryaezh sayremonnee le mataen daan li igleez de touchtain nawn daan la grous maezoun ita alawntour kawweekihk pur jinee le maezoun yeak hen groo shawmbr le furniture yiyaweehtatawuk ooshtamawkayk pur la dawns. Kaw pooneh meetshouhk la meusik pe la dawns mawchistawuk pooyou wuk pur soupee kawneemihk meena yeusk nadow le mataen. Le maryaezh may tounee myeuhta mihk, tout ita a lawntour kaw weekihk, miyou-awshin akouta chi-ayawhk. A weechichitouchik a moochikihtachik key miyouweechatouwuk lee Michif.

## **Christmas 1945**

Christmas was always an important day for Métis children. We always hung up our stockings. 1945 was no different. We were told not to make a fire in the kitchen stove after supper and remove all the lids as Santa would have to come down the stove pipes and crawl out through the open lids. We were told to say our prayers and were then sent to bed early so that Santa would come during the night while we were asleep to fill our stockings and bring us gifts.

We lived in a two-room house with three beds: four boys slept in one and four girls slept in one, and Mom and Dad slept in the other. While lying in bed, I was thinking, “How could

that fat white-haired old man come down that small stove with his bright red and white Santa suit and not get dirty?" I was determined to stay awake.

Mom and Dad went to bed. After awhile, I could hear them talking. Dad told Mom, "I think they're all asleep." I could hear them getting up very quietly and then walking by our beds. Once in the kitchen, before they got started, I heard Mom telling Dad, "I do not think boy [my nickname] is sleeping, go check on him go and feel his face." Dad told Mom, "I'll put on gloves." Mom told him, "Don't put on gloves, put mitts on. With gloves he'll know it's you." Dad only had two full fingers and a thumb on his right hand.

He came and checked on me. I could feel his mitt against my face. He went back to the kitchen and told mom that I was fast asleep. I had the most difficult time keeping myself from laughing. I could hear them packing and filling our socks and hanging our gifts.

After they were done, I could hear Dad telling Mom that he had saved a few branches from the Christmas tree. He was going to the barn to spread them along with hay and a bit of oats in front of the barn to make it look like he fed Santa's reindeer. He even left out the hay fork and oat pail.

Dad would always get up first. He made a fire in the kitchen stove and heater. He would then put the kettle on the stove. Then he would wake me, and I helped him do the chores which consisted of feeding the horses, chickens, and pigs.

Mom would get up after we left and would get the rest of the children up. When we were done chores on this Christmas



*Gerard, Rene, and Dale. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

morning, I ran back to the house pretending that I was excited that we tracked where Santa had been feeding his reindeer.

Only lately did I tell some of my brothers and sisters of the stunt that I pulled. I never told my father or my mother.

I guess that was the end of me believing in that jolly old man.

## **New Year's**

New Year's was always a big day because we would visit all the homes, and would eat at everyone's place. The celebration would last two or three days, and in some years, even for a week. The first place we would go to was our Mooshoom's place since he was the oldest. They fed you lii boulette (meatballs) and pie, as well as other things. All of the visiting was like a family reunion as some people lived a long way from each other. People shook hands and hugged, and my grandpa and dad gave us the benediction. It was important to visit with everyone so no one was missed. Sometimes, we would stay overnight when visiting, depending on what season it was, as we travelled by horse and wagon.

## When our Home Caught on Fire

Our parents always told us not to play with fire. In those days, Eddy wooden matches were a must. Our older two-bedroom lumber house would now be considered a fire trap. Our parents always stored matches on top of the cupboard, out of the reach of the children. One winter night, shortly after we went to bed, a fire started above the cupboard. Only later did we find out that mice had started the fire by nibbling on these matches. We were fortunate that we noticed the fire early and managed to put it out by pouring water on it. We were also fortunate that this happened in the winter as we always had a forty-five gallon tub of snow water in the kitchen, and luckily very little damaged was caused.

## How My Little Sister Almost Drowned

In 1945, three of my older sisters were sent to school at the Ituna Convent (boarding school). I was lucky that I was not sent, probably due to me being only eight-years old. That same winter, my father and mother went to Yorkton one Saturday morning, and I was left to care for my younger brothers and sister. Mother prepared some

lunch for us because we lived six miles from town. They told us that they would not be long. We were told to stay indoors as it was quite cold, and not



*Childhood home.* Ed St. Pierre Collection

to make big fires. They also told us what to do in case of a fire. In the kitchen, we had a forty-five gallon steel barrel we used for water. In the winter, we used melted snow. We had a dipper above the barrel that we used for a drink. While the boys were playing, my sister pulled a chair to the barrel to get a drink, but the barrel was only 3/4 full so she slipped in. My young brothers started crying and yelling that she fell in. We managed to pull her out. She looked like a drowned rat: melted snow was sticking to her clothes and hair. She was crying, scared, and she never pulled that stunt again.

## **Baby Swing**

When we were growing up, no one ever told us how a baby was born. It was a surprise to suddenly have a little sibling. We were told that we came into the family by way of riding a little bush rabbit.

In the early 40s, we lived in a one-room log house with a dirt roof and dirt floor. We always had a baby swing fastened to two walls in a corner above our parents' bed. Babies spent a lot of time in their swings especially in the winter time. Mom would always wrap the baby in a blanket and put it into the swing, warm and content. No one had cribs or carriages in those days.

When families went working for farmers, picking berries, or digging seneca root, the baby swing came with us. It was fastened between two trees. Mom had to help work, so the younger children stayed at camp. Mom would regularly check on the children and feed the baby.



*Baby Hammock.* Amy Briley

## Barsoo

Kawpay oh pik kiyalk, namoo oukawt aweeyahk gee weestamawkounawn tanshi a pchi babe kaw she nihtawoukit gee kaushkauhik kaw win nawn gee tik kaw win nawn, a key pay it tauht ta yalk daan la famee a pay poosh she yalk aen pchi l'yayv, namo gee kishkatain tanshi lee babee a shit nihtawouketchik pawtimah naef naw a yeay awn ashpee l'ikol kaw mawchistawyawn.

Gee weekin nawn den pchi t maenzaun log, hen an rom, la taylor pur kouvarcheur akwa e plawnshee yaenk hen a sawsee a barsoo kee shakwa hum wuk daan le kwa awntor deu lee meurawn a layr la parentee so lee, mishtahiw lee babee kee wawway pishoo wuk daan le barsoo awn n'ivayr, maw maw waw waykinaw le babe avik le pchi kovart chi key shoo shik. A koshpeek namoia aweeyuk key ayow lee crib kama le pchi carage.

Ashpee lee fame kaw paw atoushkawwachik lee farmer kay maw kaw paw muwshoowk akwa ka paw moonah hash

kwa chik, maw maw key do weechihw wayw a touth kay  
chik gee pay taw nawn le barsoo, paw paw kayma maw maw  
tahkoupit tum awntor deu le zawbr, lee pchi zawn fawn chi  
pishkay machik lip chi babe, wha weepat maw maw key pay  
waw pumayw lee zawn fawn akwa ashamayt babee.

## **Our Friends and Partners: Our Dogs**

Our dogs were not only our friends; they were also very important in our everyday life. We used our dogs twelve months a year, and they worked every day.

We'd take them along when we'd go skunk hunting in the winter. They would sniff out the holes that the skunks were in, about five feet in the ground, under the snow. Once the dogs located their den, we would start digging through the snow to the hole's opening with a pick and shovel. Skunks sleep in a single file with their bums up, one behind the other. The mom is first in line; then all the little ones with the father in the back. They can have up to ten little ones to a family, and they stay in the family for only one year. That time of the year, skunks grow very thick fur around their rearends right under their tails. These would easily tangle on to a y-shaped six-foot dry chokecherry branch that we shoved in the hole. Once the end hits the skunk's rearend, we'd twist the branch and pull them out one by one, killing each one with a stick. Then we'd lug them all home, skin them, and stretch the skin to dry in preparation to sell the fur to the furriers. Mom would cut off all the fat from the skunk and then render it to make a salve which had many uses.

Our dogs would also track weasels and mink. We would then set out our traps. They would chase partridges up small

bushes for easy shooting. When we got lost in the bushes, the dogs would guide us home.

In spring, they sniffed out where the muskrats and beavers lived, deep under the snow. We would dig out the snow to their housing, set our traps, close the hole again, and check back later.

During summertime, when Dad went shooting ducks, the dogs would swim in to retrieve them one by one. They'd catch ducklings in ponds and in the grass. When old ducks would lose



*Northern dog used for dog team. Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B11125-3*

their feathers and couldn't fly, our dogs would go in after them, kill them, and bring them to shore. All of this was used for food.

We used our dogs for hauling anything through the summer and winter months. Our dogs were very important to us in our every day life.

## **Li Sh'Yaen**

Me namee aqwa me nasasyee enawn me sh'yaen enawn. Kee mishi-akishoo-wuk li sh'yaen akoshpee, tou lee zhour key atoushkay wuk, kaw pipoohk ne weechawik konanik a donahwhy



ahkok li shikawk, pashshowuk lee shikawk it tay kaw nipawchik daan le troo. Kaw mishkawkkik la plase ekoushi ne machee moona hik kawn nawn avik an pik akwa lee bash nandou saen pee araa it tah kawnepawchik chakit te yeashinwuk, neepitahshinwuk le teat awn daryayr lee zoot. Neekawneeshin le mawmaw shay koshshinwuk le pchi akwa le paw paw awn naryayr, ashkow jis lee pchi ayow way wouk den fame pishsheshkaymay wouk lee pchi pur a naw. Kakaykinamwouk it taa key nipawchik, mounahik kay wuk atbor den beut nandou saen pee kaw mishkawkkik la sawbl a koota kaw pimishin wuk ayow wuk maytouné kishpak kak le pwell disoor sa cheu a lawntoor le daryayr, geshkowtahay nawn an gren de tramb, an tramb shesh nawndou sis pee a eshwak, den bout omah lee bwaw secum aen pchi sling shot eshinakwahk, naw dou hen pous-in-me a eshwuk, dahkinanawn omah la brawnch daan lee troo, neekawn enema kum lee pchi sling shot kawshinakwuk toehtipenanawn omah le bwaw mayeow kaw moushe taw yahk kaykwuy akwa chi teehtipia muah omah le bwaw, douchipitan nawn nik lee shikawk, nipawhawn nawn nik avik a bwaw, gee wayhtahawn nawn nik bahkoonawn nanik chi atawwawkayak la poo apra a pawshoot pur larzhawn maw maw manishum tout li graw shawshishum, oushistow le saev miyou-awshin pur kamaenschishaen, kaw manishshaeshayen, lee gall akwa kaw weeshshakeshin ne yeon pekoo isha kitawshe awpachistawn omah le saev.

Li sh'yaen meena mawtawhay wuk le blet akwa lee fautroo, nahwashway wuk lee padre, oh pahhowuk se le pchi bwaw chi meio pawsh kishshwhy ah kohk. Kaw wawnayshineeyhak daan le gra bwaw lee sh'yaen gey way tahikkonanik.

Daan li praentemp, push showuk itah lee raw doo akwa lee kastour kaw weekichik de sour la gra neezh.



*Peter Fuchs trapping skunk, Beauval area, 1914. Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B1135*

A l'etee paw paw kaw pashkishwat li kanawr li sh'yaen  
pimmawtahkaw wuk daan li lak a nawtachik li kanawr,  
kawshchetinawuk le pchi kanawr daan loo awha daan le frony, gee  
wayhtahawnanik pur li mawnzhee. Le vyeu kanawr kaw pushkou  
pie yeu chik namoia kashkitou wak chi pimiheachik le sh'yaen  
kaw do nipahay wok akwa ga patum mak koo nawn nik.

Gee awpache hanawnik chi awataa chik pikou kaykwuy  
a l'etee akwa awn n'ivayr. Me sh'yaen key mishi-akishoo wok  
akooshee.

## Deer

Growing up in the 1940s, we relied on wild game for survival. Deer, along with other wild game, were hunted. Deer were plentiful in our surrounding area. There was lots of bush and

water, and plenty of unoccupied crown land. The few farmers that lived in the area didn't use any fertilizer or pesticides. The animals and birds raised their young in a healthy environment.

In those days, we didn't need permission or a licence to hunt or trap. We were taught to hunt only what we could use, and to only hunt certain species at certain times of the year.

The deer were very important to our survival; for food, and for hides to make clothing. In the late summer and fall, when Dad hunted deer, we would build a gable structure with green poplar rails about six-feet high and would place small rails about a foot apart. Mom would slice the deer meat and would then hang the sliced meat on the rails. We'd make a fire underneath, using a lot of green wood and leaves to produce a lot of smoke. We would continue making fire until the meat was cooked and smoked. We'd store it away for winter. We would eat some as meat jerky, the same as you can buy today. During winter, Mom would boil the meat and then fry it. We had quite a supply of deer meat for the winter.

Dad would not hunt deer in the winter as it was the time when the females were pregnant. They would have their little ones in the spring.

It took a lot of time and hard work to prepare the hides before they could be used for clothing. We soaked the hides in soapy water for days, then stretched and nailed them on the back wall of the house. Dad would grind a piece of antler with a file to make a chisel, which Mom would use. We would beat the hides with the chisel for hours and then re-soak them over and over again, until all of the hair came off. We would then stretch and nail them onto the gable-like structure again, and smoke the

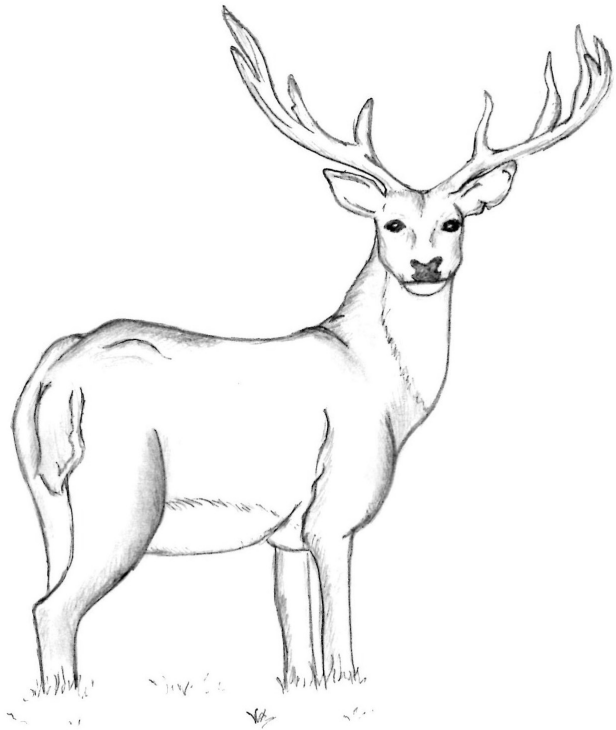
hides on both sides until they were completely smoked. Both of these projects took a lot of time and hard work.

## Le Shouvreu

Kaw pay ohpiki yawn gee ashpay emoun awn le faroush alimael pur la vyawnd peko touwuhk lee shouvreu, lee nariyanl, lee swiss, lee l'yayv, key mischate wuk akoshpee, key mischatin le gra bwaw, diloo akwa le tayr awn fwaen. Lee farmee namou wiya key awpachistawuk le pwaysoon daan le krop de shawn, lee alimael akwa lee nway zoun key miyou mahchihouwuk a oupikihouw washshoochik a pahkuk la tayr.

A koshee namouwiya kawtach la parmisyoon kamaw awn lisawns cha  
yay awk che  
mawchee yuk  
kamah koh pahoum  
mawk lee pyeezh.  
Gee tikouwwin  
nawn chi nipasta  
yawk yaenk  
anema kaw we  
awpachistaw yawk,  
akwa yaenk it  
tiwuhk le shouvreu  
chi nipahi yeakook  
li mem tawn day  
naw.

Lee  
shouvreu key  
mish-akishoowuk



*Deer. Amy Briley*

che pimawchi houk pur le mawzhee akwa la poo pur le bitaen. Weehkawt a l'etee akwa tout l'autonne paw paw key mawcheiw lee shouvreu li tawn ne wawshawhikkaw nawn an piyoon avik le vayr trawmb logs nandow sis pee a ishkwak, dashaw nawn lee pchi log nandow hen pee apawr. Maw maw manishum li griyad la vyawnd de shouvreu, akoutawy ohiw le griyad de vyawnd daw lee pchi log, ponaum deseur, dawpachista nawn mistahiw le vayr bwaw, akwa lee fawy a oushistayouk la boukan, tapit touw poonanawn ekohk la vyawnd chi keeshe take avik la boukan, nawhastawnawn pur awn n'ivayr. Ashkow nee meechn nawn la vyawnd shesh, tapeshkoot it towuk kaw taw wayhk anoush, maw maw ashkow oushum apra shawshishum daan la gres, mishtahiw le shouvreu de vyawnd ge maw meeche nawn awn n'ivayr.

Paw paw namou wiya machiew le shouvreu awn n'ivayr, akoose lee femel lee ptsee we-ayaw way wuk.

Mistahiw le tawn akwa geeshoohkatoushka nawn paree kaw shtawyauk la poo chi aushtawhk kwayesh le bitaen la poo oushee. Daan koustitan nawn daan le savwanawzh pur lee zhour, sheepay kipita nawn shakahay nawn avik lee kloos daan la meur awyn awnaryayr la maezoun maw maw awpachitaw awn morseau korn apra paw paw a key keenipoolawhk omah le morsoo'd korn avik en lim oushistaw an chisel, napakakanastay nawn omah la poo avik le chisel pur lee nour apra la koustitawn nawn kawhkeekt wawm yeusk atawn tout le pwell kee manay piu yek sheepay kipita nawn, shakahay nawn avik lee kloos daan le piyoon, la boukan doushistaw nawn deseur it ta kawakoutayk la boukan akootee la poo yeusk atawn may tounee chi la boukan ewhuk. May tounee keyn woush akwa ke shoohkawtoush kahk may tounee kee iemen che oshistawk ohiw akooshpee.

## Cows and Calves

Spring was very welcoming for us because we didn't have to stockpile wood every night. Heaters were usually taken out of the house and put away until the late fall.



*Cattle. Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B8870*

Everything turned green with plants and flowers beginning to bloom. Animals and birds were starting their families.

A few families in our community owned a cow or two. When a calf was born, the milk that comes out of the cow's udder is cream in colour and very thick for about two or three days. Mom would use this thick milk, bake it in the oven like a cake, and when it was done, she'd cut it in squares. It was very good to eat. This milk in Michif is called "la flem."

We didn't have electricity. Therefore, we didn't have refrigerators, so in the summer, milk would get sour. Mom used to make a lot of cottage cheese. In those days, nothing went to waste. Money was hard to get, but mothers always knew how to persevere. They surely were survivors.

## La Vaesh Akwale Voo

Gee miyeustaen nawn kaw she-kwahk namoea chi peehtikway yawatta yahk le bwaw tou lee swyay, le pwel shoufee key nawhawhay wuk, yeusk atawn l'autonne.

Le fwaen vayr mishshway, lee floer mawchi wawpakwuneeva la alimael akwa lee nwayzoo mawchistawuk lu famee.

Awtist le famee ita alawntour kaw weekihk key tipay may wuk hen bay dou deu lee vaesh aen pchi voo kaw nitawoukit la vaesh anah sa delet maytouni a kishpakahk, pur hen bay dou deu zhour, akwa nawutchikou le zhounne. "La flem" eshineekhawtayw, maw maw keeshishshum daan le fornoo omah dilet tapishkot aen cak kaw keesheshoot, manishwaw a lee pchi kawre, may touni kee weehkawshin. Kaw nupihk (a l'etee) delet kaw wiahkaa seuriwun maw maw ke ma mishe oushistow d'let acoutte. Le manzhee key wahkay punawtun kaw neepihk, le maw maw key nipwahkawuk key kishkayhtamwuk tanshi chi she nahawshtawchik, ayeash namauya awiyek key yow wuk la pouwayr, key kishkayhtumwuk tanshi che she ashamaw-wow shochik, key mischatewuk lee zawnfawn den fame key kakwatakistawkwun akooshpee.

## Chokecherries

Chokecherries were very important to Métis families in the past. I can remember how we relied on these berries for food in the wintertime. We would pick in the summer and grind them up. No one had a meat grinder like they have today, so two stones were used, one larger and one flat for the bottom. You

would put a handful of cherries on the larger stone and smash them with the smaller round stone. Then you would scoop the smashed cherries with your hands and shape them into patties. On a hot sunny day, these patties were put out on a blanket that was laid out on the ground. The patties were left out to bake in the sun for a couple days, and were turned over now and then. Then they would be ready for storage in boxes or sacks.



In wintertime, Mom would use some of these patties. She would boil them in a pot until they were soft and then fry them in a frying pan with lard, sugar and little flour. Sometimes, she'd fry them with salt pork, making a delicious meal with potatoes.

## Lee Gren

Gee miyeustaen nawn lee gren ayayalk chi meechi yalk, gee ashpay muotoutay nawn awn n'ivayr. Ne mouwishshoo nawn a l'etee. No awiyek aen moulain d'vyawnd key ayow pur chi shikoupittumahk ohiw lee gren, deu lee rosh dawpachistanawn



a she kwataha malk choshestawyahk tuk wahumin nana,  
lee pchi pawtee doshestawnawn, nee pit taystan nawn de  
sue awn kovart dahor daan la salay ke pastakiw apra do  
kwashkinahnawn pur mitouni chi pastakiw.

Ne mousha kina nawn a nawhawshtaw yahk den bwet  
kayma den sak pur awn n'ivayr. Awshkouw maw maw oushtow  
den shayayr yeusk chi youshkawk kwi oh hiw lee pchi pawtee  
akwa shawshishwow den pwell avik la gres li seuk akwa a pchi  
la farinn. Awshkouw shawshishwow avik lawr sale. Kee weeh  
kashin omah li mawnzhee avik lee patack.

## **Saskatoon Berry Dessert**

We kids did a lot of berry-picking back then. We picked  
raspberries, strawberries, chokecherries, and saskatoon berries.  
Our favourite was the fried saskatoons that Mom use to make.

To make fried saskatoons, clean and wash the berries in  
a bowl, dust the wet clean berries with flour and sugar in the  
bowl. Then put them into a hot frying pan that has about half  
a cup of hot lard, stirring constantly for about eight minutes.  
Then add about half to one cup of hot water, continuing to stir  
for another couple minutes to make a sweet sauce, which is  
delicious with cream.

## **Lii Pweer Seukraezh**

Niyangwn li zawnfawn gee maw mishi miuwshaounan lee  
frawnawayz, lee frayz, lee grenn akwa lee pouras. Akwawnima  
nawkat kawmayayhta mahk ma ma kaw shawshishwowt lee pouwr.

Payhkih hik, kisheepaykinik den bowl awpisheesh la farenn akwa le seuk ashtaw atayhaw, nandow awpehtouw a bol la gres den pwel shawshisha pur wit minwit papayhtouk atay hik okew lee pouwr daan le pwel awpehtouw an zuest deu minwit pur la sauce, key weekashin avik la cram.

## **Rubaboo**

We were okay as long as we had flour, baking powder, lard, and tea, and a rifle, ammunition, traps, and snare wire. Wild game was plentiful back then.

In springtime, there were a lot of ducks, partridges, prairie chickens, and geese. Around the middle to the end of May, there were a lot of wild bird eggs. We would gather pails of mudhen eggs from nests, and would go back the next week to find the same nests full again.

All of the other wild birds—like partridges, prairie chickens, and geese—laid their eggs only once. With ducks, we would take maybe three or four eggs from each nest, making sure to not touch the eggs that we left behind. If you do, the ducks will reject their eggs and leave. We did this so the birds could reproduce.

Not many people knew that mudhen eggs can be eaten. You cook them like you would chicken eggs. They sure were good.

In the fall, rabbits, deer, and bushy-tail gophers were good to eat back then. Dad used to go out in the evening to hunt for our food for the next day, because that is when the deer would get up and come to drink and graze.

Mom would make bannock and rubaboo, using whatever meat dad would bring home.

To make rubaboo: boil meat until done, whisk in flour with salt in a bowl of water until it has the consistency of syrup. Slowly pour



*Bannock.* Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection

the flour mixture into the pot of boiling meat, stirring constantly for about five minutes. This rubaboo should look like a thick gravy. This was real good with fresh hot bannock.

## La Rababoo

Gee miyou yawnan tabour a yeayalk la farinn, baking powder, la gras akwa lee tea akwa meena a feezee, lee kartoosh, lee peezh akwa le kwalay wawyur. Lee alimael faroush key mischayt tewuk akooshpee.

Kaw-she-kwalk lee zwayzoo faroush key mischayt tewuk, lee zaef de kanawr, di padre, di fazawn prayree akwa li zway gee paw mooshahkinanawn cha awpachistawyuhk neekinawhk akwa lee zaef de pulldo.

Bawpa manah key paw mancheew avawn kapahkishimouk, (akoush pee manah lee shee'vr kaw pashshekoochik a do minihkwaychik akwa apaw

meechshouchik) pur la vyawnd chi meechee yahk lout zhour.

Mawma ka oushihayw la gallet akwa la rababoo avik peko it tewalk la vyawnd bapa kaw paytawt.

La vyawnd ousha, kaw keeshitak, ashtaw la farinn, desel akwa diloo, atay ha zeush secum li seero eshinawkwahk, papay tawk sheekina daan la vyawnd kaw oushtahk tapit tou atay ha pur nandow saenk minwit, omah la rababoo sucum le grayvee che shinna kwak, weehkawshin avik la gallet sho.

## **The Roast Potato**

Another favourite dish was roast potatoes. To make them, we would bury the potatoes in hot ashes. Soon they would develop a thick black crust. They could then be cooked in a kitchen wood stove or on an open outdoor fire. We children use to cook our own. They were very good to eat with lard as butter was eaten only on special days like Christmas or Easter.

## **La Patak Rouchee**

Nawkat kawmiyayhtahmak, a ahiyaakook le patak daan la sawndr shoochi keeshish-shochik, ekohk lee patak poo yeak le nwaenr, akoushi outinik de le sawndr phoo oushchi. Kit taw keeshishwow wok daan la kweezinn pwell de bwaa, kaymah dahor niyanawn lee zawnfawn gee keeshishahawmawshonawn lee patak, see boon avik la gras, le boer yeank pur le zhoor de Nowell, kayma le zhoor di Pawk (kee weehkishin wok le patak.)

## Special Treats

When we were growing up, we were taught safety steps necessary when camping out.

Before we started an open fire, we removed the topsoil a fair distance from the tent and the bush, and made sure that the fire was completely out before leaving.

Springtime was when we trapped muskrats. That is when they are good to eat. Mom would pick the better ones and roast them with onions, then the rest were fed to the pigs. After they were skinned, the hide was stretched and dried for sale. We kept all the muskrat tails, because we would cook them on top of the stove. The young ones really enjoyed this treat.



*Frank and Lawrence St.Pierre. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

Another treat for us was ducks. Mom usually boiled them to make a soup by mixing water with a little flour to make (rubaboo) for us kids. The best part was the small intestines. We would squeeze out the intestines, wash them, then roll them onto small sticks, then cook them over an open fire.

We were always happy to see springtime. We would prepare to go camping for weeks at the time. We dug seneca roots to sell. We would always be going back to the same area every year, with water close by from the spring thaw. The children's job was to haul water with gallon jugs, while Mom prepared to make bannock in the frying pan over the open fire. Sometimes, she would make fried bread (bangs). The children would cook this dough on a stick over the open fire. What a treat!

Another favorite treat was young raspberry plants. When they are about ten inches high, just before they start maturing, the young green stems are very sweet and juicy. They were plentiful as there were a lot of open areas and bushes. They are tasty to chew—just suck the juice out of them.

In the late fall, a few farmers would sometimes take their cattle and pigs to the slaughterhouse to be butchered. Dad would help. He would be given the pig's head and feet. Mom used to make a lot of head cheese from these.

Beef intestines were also given to us. It took a lot of work and a lot of water to clean these for consumption, but they sure were good eating.

Chickens and turkeys were also butchered during this time of the year when the weather started getting a little cooler.

## **En Tret**

Kaw pay oh pikkeeyawk keweestam awkounawn,  
kischipayahtik kawkapayshihk den tawnt avawn chi oushistawk  
aen feud hor, kawshkikawwta lee fawy awlawntor le few,

wawhyuweesh la tawnt aykwa daw li bafoon aykwa certean le feud hor chi awshatawake avawn chi nakataymaehk.

Kaw she kwahk manah kaw tashoochikayhk le rawdoo, a kooshpee key miyou she wuk chi mouwestchik, maw maw kakay kinaw lee bon, keeshishshwaw daw liournoo avik li zayoon, apra kawpuhkunna chik la restawn ashamay wuk lee kwshoon aykwa la poo sheepay kipita mwuk, pawshawmwuk, pur chi atawwawkay chik kenawayhtanawn tout le rawdoo cheu keeshishshanawn desu lee pwell, lee zawfawn key miyauhtam wuk a meechichik ahiw.

Le kanaar mawna maw maw oushwayw, la sup a oushshestat atayha hum deleu aykwa a pchi peu la farren den pchi bol, sheekinaum daan la shayayr avik le kanaar, le rababou a oushshestat. Nawut le pchi trip de kanaar ge miyayhtanawn, neannawn le zawnfawn, kwayeash kisheepay kinanawn teestipinanawn den pchi bawa geeshshanawn de seu la feud hor, key wehkawshin ohiw akoospee.

Gee miyou taanawn a wawphtah mauk kaw-she-kwahk, kakeyuw kaykwiw paree ashtawyahk pur chi paw paw mitch chi yahk pur le semen awn tawnt, a paw moonahashkway yauk donay nawn le mem plas to lee naw araw deleu li praentemp katihkishoowt oshi le zawnfawn chi atoushkawkatahkik a awatawchik deleu avik le galoon kreush, may kwawt maw maw paree ashtaw chi oushiwhat la gallet, den pwel ahiw deseule feud hor chi keeshshwat ashkow le baing maw maw oushihiw le zawnfawn day pchi bwaw a hay wuk ohiw la pat, keeshshway wuk daan lee feud hor, mitauni key miyaytamwuk omah.

Le zhen frwanbwayz de fayuzh nawkat ge may ayhta mawhk ashpee nadow jis pous a eshkooshe chik avawn key

keeshi kichik, le vyayr fayuzh anama mitouni seukree aykwa le plaen'd zheu, key mischaytinwha akous la tayr aykwa le bafoon payhkun mitouni key miyou kewuk akoshpee.

Tawr l'autonne, awtist le farmyee, awshkow touthahay wuk le zinimoo aykwa le kwashoon it taw aen animal kaw nipahiwsichik, paw paw manah key weechihiwaw, key maw miyekawshou le kwashoon'd tet pi lee pyee, maw maw key maw mishi oushitow la tet'd framaezh.

Le baef trip meana gee maw miyikawin nawn, mistahiw deleu aykwa kinwaysh chi atoushkawtamum chi payhkistahk ohiw le trip pur chi meechihk.

Lee poul aykwa lee dand meana ke nipawhik kawshoowuk a kooshpee daw le tawr l'autonne kaw ti kishshinnawk.



*Horses and Wagon.* Saskatchewan Archives Board, S-B8873



## Tin Cups and Plates

The majority of Métis families' dishes were made of tin. They were very durable and had many uses. They were easy to pack, lasted a long time, and they could be placed near a fire, or on top of the kitchen stove.

We moved around a lot during the latter part of spring, all summer, and in early fall by way of wagon and horses. We would move with the whole family. The tent and everything were loaded onto the wagon. The roads were just trails through very rough terrain.

When the farmers took their cattle to the butcher shop for butchering, the local Métis families were given the beef fat. The beef fat was rendered to make lard for many uses. Beef lard gets hard quickly and it doesn't spread on bannock very well. Mom would put a bit on to our tin plates which we'd set on top of the stove to melt. We would warm our plates as needed.

This lard was an important ingredient in making our face soap and laundry soap. This is how Mom used to make these necessities. Mix beef lard, lye, water, finely-crushed piggy puffs, and ashes from the stove, and bake in a pan "like a cake." When done, let it cool and harden, then cut it into squares. Your bars of soap were ready to use.

Mom used to make piggy puffs from pork fat that was also given to us. In those days, they were called "Indian popcorn." They were a treat—good to spread on hot bannock or they were used in making soup. Pork fat made good lard and was easy to spread.

## Toul Bol Akwa Zassyet (Nasyet)

Kawyeash mishtahiw lee Michif fam mee key kishchee tahtym wuk sa visel wow le bol pe le zassyet key oshchekattay waa wishchi toul, key wayhten chi le pakihk namoia chi pekoohk teke.

Kawhk paw yiw gee pamechin nawn awn wagohn maytouney lee shmaa key mawyawtun wah, kaw pay le Praentemp kaw pay Neepin akwa kawpay l'autonne a paw weekiyalk mishiway den tant la visel ohiw key shshkaw wa pekoo eshi gee she awpechistan nawn.

Le farmer kaw it outa hachik le zenimoo de li bucher gee meokow win nawn toul tawn le gra awah lee bucher, gee shawshisha nawm omah li graw pur le gris, la baef gres shamawk mushkawow (le gres jeur) maw maw ashtauw a pcheesh la gres jeur den toul zassyet dashtawnawn deu sue le pweell kamah araa lee feu chi tihkktak le bon mawnzhee avik la gallet.

Maytouni gee kischeetayhta mwuk omah lee graw kaw kee meyokashochik key awpachistawuk pekoe she. Lesavoon kaw oshetahchik oh mesh sheshe la gras avik le pchi gwartoo, lye, diloo, akwa la sawndr daan le pwell ashchi, tout omah atayham mwok she kin na mwok den plaw akwa keesheshamwok daan le fournoo tapishkoot awn cak, kaw keesheshoot shaemawk mannigway wok se lee pchi kawree, pikoueshe key she awpachista wok omah le savoon.

Ma parawntee a pcheesh larzhawn kaw you wachik kaw atowway wok a pchi maro'd lawr a kootee, manisha mwuk omah le gras avik la poo se le pchi kawree an ponce se an ponce. Shawsheshawmwuk ohiw le pchi kawree grad a li fournoo kayma den shayayr de sue le pwell a oshehachik shawshshekanuk, gee

miyeustaenawn a meetchiyahk avik la gallet kayma daan la sup.  
Li gra di li lawr key meoshin pur le saendou, yooshkaw akwa  
wayhten chi shopaykawhamahk daan ma gallet in nawn, moia  
kawtatch chi keshshamahk daan le toul zassyet koom le gres jeur.

## Grease Lamps

Coal oil lamps were mainly used in our log homes, but when we ran out of coal oil (kerosene) or if the lamp globe was broken, then the grease lamp was used. When we went camping, we would take along the grease lamp, as it was easier to pack and there was no need to carry coal oil. Grease lamps were easy to make. Just braid three pieces of cloth about two inches wide and about six inches long, then place this braid on a tin plate,



Ed St. Pierre Collection

raise one end, add lard, light the raised end of the braid, and add beef lard. This would provide enough lighting in the house or the tent; you added grease or braids as needed. A braid would last about three nights. Any kind of lard or rendered fat can be used. We would use beef fat most of the time as it was easy to get at no cost. Nobody had candles or flash lights in those days.

## **En Lawmp de Gres**

Tultawn le wil de lawmp gee awpachistawnan daan lee maze oun'd lug mawka ka nohtay piy yee yawk le wil. Kay maw le chiyow ka peekoupiy yik, la gres lawmp gee awpachist awnan. Kaw pawka paysheyawk, tultawn gee shipouahtatawnan la gres lawmp, kee wayhten chi le pahkik, akwa no katat chi pamohtatayawlk li wil. La gres lawmp ke wayhten choushehtawk, kitapihkawtain traw le morsod laenzh, deu pouse larzh akwa nandow si pouse a eshkwowk. Ashtaw omah la kwet den tol nesyet, oupishta den bout, ashtaw la gres jeur, akwa Schishkawha kaw ouhpishtak it tay omah la kwet. Akouy ikouhk kee wawshayow daan la maezoun bay do daan la twant. Ashtaw la gres akwa la kwet ateeshe dawayestamihk. Peko itiwuhk la gres kamaw le graw kaw ke shawsheshesha mihk ke awpachistawneeone. Toul tawn la gres jeur gee awpachistawnan kee wayhtawn a kawshchitinamihk pour aryaen. No awiyek kee ayow lee shawndel kamah lee flash lite akosepeehek.

## **Beds**

It was normal for Métis people to build their own wooden beds back then. Green poplar trees were plentiful. Straight poles of equal size about three inches in diameter were cut

down, peeled, and left to dry for three or four days. The frame of the bed was of rectangular shape about fifty-four inches wide by six feet long. The peeled and dried rails were then cut in fifty-five inch-long pieces. They were nailed side by side across the width of the frame from side to side.

The mattress was made of gunny sacks that were washed and sewn together with twine, forming a bag the size of the wooden bed. It was then filled with straw; the same was done for pillows.

Sugar bags were handy for making bed sheets and pillow slips, but to wash off the printing was very difficult. You had to soak them in lye, soap, and water overnight then scrub them with lye and soap on the washboard over and over until they were nice and white. You'd then hang them out on the clothesline to dry. Then you'd sew the bags together to fit the mattress and sew up the pillow slips.

## Leu Lee

Lee Michif ke oushtaw mawshoowuk leu lee a kushpee. Lee trawmb vayr kee mischaytaytewuk le dret brawnsh, le mem gyshpeeshchawk ki naandow trwaa poos roon, kee kow watt a whaywuk, ke pooshakinawuk, akwa miyou ashtaw wuk chi pawshstayki pur trwaa baydow kaatr zhour. Li kawtr de lee kayakat ain kawree naandow saenkaart kaatr larzh pee sis pyee a eshkwak ki avik kaatr lee paet. Lee parsh kaw pawshstayk ki manisham wuk naandow saenkaant saent poos a eshkwak ki neepit taashtayw wuk daw la tet oushche se lee pyee, sha kawhum wuk avik le kloo daan li kawtr de lee,

“vawlaa oma to lee.”

Pour li payass lee gwany sak key aw pachistawuk kisheepaykinamwuk key kashkek wattumwuk avik lee twine, a sak a oushtachik chenawhitihk daan li lee, akwa key mooshkinawtawuk avik la pawy. Le mem pur lee tet daryiyee.

Lee seuk de sak key miyou-awshin wah chi oush talk lee draw'd lee akwa lee doubleur tet daryiyee mawaka key awyimen chi menapouwataayen anama ka oush pay hikawn daan lee sak, saprah che akoustitawyen kapaytipish avik li savoon akwa lye akwa diloo, che mamikounamen daan la plawns a lavee ekohk che payhkahk yaenk le blawn apraa ke do akoutaw dahor. Ke kashkikwataen oheh le sak che tapeht tihk daan la payass akwa meena le tet daryiyee.

## **The Social Life of the Métis in the 1940s**

The Métis have always been very caring and sharing, and supportive of one another, especially in the old days. In those days, people got along. Everybody was equal and nobody had more than anybody else. Today, if someone gets ahead people seem to be jealous. Money has caused trouble.

Elders were highly thought of for guidance and advice. People were very close; people always felt comfortable asking for help or advice. In the early 1940s, our local hospital was not something that the Métis used—all children were born at home. The local Métis had midwife teams. If someone was sick, families or Elders would provide care and medication.



*Métis Community. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

If someone passed on, community members would sit up three nights (for the wake) and families would bring food. The Métis people were nearly all of the Catholic faith. Elders would say the rosary, and some of the Elders would build the caskets, and would lead in the recreational activities, and socialize.

In the early '40s, only a very few had battery-operated radios. Radios were only turned on for certain programs, mainly for Friday night Gillette boxing matches. Families would gather together in order to save batteries.

Adults spent a lot of time visiting, telling stories, and playing traditional games. We children also played a lot of games—games that were passed from our parents. Some of the games that were played included Koochuk which was a hiding game. They would gather by the wagons and play. They played with little sticks. Most of the time, they played just for fun and sometimes, they gambled and played for something. We were seldom bored as we were kept busy.

The Métis did a lot of socializing in the winter months, which consisted of visiting and playing cards. Christmas time was for children; we always hung our socks on Christmas Eve. Our socks would be full with candies and nuts along with a small gift. The community always had a Christmas party with a Santa Claus for all the kids. Adults would have dances for several nights at New Years. Dances were held quite regularly during the winter, except for during Lent. No parties or celebrations were held during Lent. Most people made sacrifices and did penance at that time, and most families said the rosary during Lent.

On July 1st, Dominion Day, Métis people gathered in the town of Saltcoats to celebrate. The town had an area for us to camp, and the annual gathering would last for three or four days. Another time, when we would get together annually was during the Yorkton three-day fair. Aboriginal people did



*Jerry Pelletier, Laura, and Ed St. Pierre.*  
Ed St. Pierre Collection

not have to pay at the gate and in the early '40s rations were handed out. The town of Yorkton would give rations to those that camped, such as meat, potatoes, and other things.

People travelled great distances to attend this event annually and they would



camp for one week. There was a big camp of Métis and First Nations. A lot of people didn't even go to the fair: they came to visit and camp. This time was used mostly to visit, tell stories, and tell of the happenings in the past year. As they prepared food, the women gossiped. They cooked the rations that were given to us, or if they saved a little money, they would go to town and buy what they needed. They would also bring their own food like wild meat—deer or ducks. They worked for farmers and prepared themselves for these celebrations. It was so nice to see the women cooking, making fires, and visiting at night. Everyone visited and enjoyed the friendship, and we kept our culture.

The fair was like today: there was a Ferris wheel, kids' games, teeter-totters and other things. However, the fair was smaller then. There were a lot of horse races, and there were sulky races and horseback races. There was what was then called "Indian races" and the First Nations and Métis raced horses bareback, with no saddle.

It is a different way of life today. Everyone has cars, and you can go home every night and don't need to camp. They don't travel with horses anymore, which is a slower mode of travel.

In December 1948, we moved into our house in Crescent Lake. Then, in the spring of 1949, Dad had a contract to scrub fifty acres of bush for local farmers. We would go out and help on the weekends. During the week, we'd drive and we would come home every night. During the summer holidays, the family stayed at the job in a tent, and arrangements were made so that we would take the week off during the fair. We would go and camp at the grounds for the week. Dad had made arrangements with the

farmer for money for the fair. I would go and pick it up. My older sister who had the most education wrote a note for the farmer, and it was supposed to be for one hundred twenty-five dollars, instead she wrote it for one dollar and twenty-five cents. The farmer put it in an envelope that I brought back, and he followed me with the one hundred twenty-five dollars. He laughed because he thought it was pretty funny that one would take a family of eight to the fair with one dollar and twenty-five cents.

In the early '40s, farmers in the area would arrange a picnic for us. After the school was built in Crescent Lake, parents, along with the teachers, organized an annual sports day.

For a pastime, just about all the old people would tell stories and legends. They made big bonfires and sat around in circles and everyone would enjoy their visits. Some people would make up the stories and add to them.

People also had house dances. It was all fiddle music and guitar playing. We watched the older people square dance and jig, and that is how we learned. The dances were jigs, round dances, and other dances like waltzes. The Allarys played the fiddle and my Grandfather played too. There were a lot of square dance callers like the Pelletiers and Flamands.

Years ago, we only spoke Michif amongst ourselves. I learned English when I went to school and when I went with Dad to work for farmers. My dad spoke some English. Some people spoke some English but no French. When we went to town we knew enough English to get by, and if someone would visit we spoke English if we had to. We called our language "Cree" and our nation was "Michif." We called ourselves "Halfbreed" because the whites called us Halfbreeds. I don't

remember calling ourselves Michif. When we moved away from Crescent Lake, we were called Halfbreeds. The teachers said, “Don’t call yourselves Halfbreed, you are Michif. You aren’t half of anything.” I never heard the term Métis until the ‘60s.

## **The Four Seasons of the Crescent Lake Métis**

The Métis in and around Yorkton, Saskatchewan passed the four seasons planning, preparing, and surviving. In the early 1940s, the Métis were spread out in a large geographical area, moving into areas where hunting, water, and firewood was readily available. The large majority of Métis people relied on melting snow in the winter for their water supplies.

In those days, there was no assistance available. The only income they got was from hunting, selling furs and seneca roots, and the bit of work that they did for farmers. Most of the time they were paid with goods, meats, vegetables, milk, and butter, as well as hay and grain for their horses. Some



Ed St. Pierre Collection

of their income came by way of skinning dead animals. They also cut the tails and manes of dead horses and sold the horsehair.

In the mid-40s, during WWII, we would gather dead animal bones by the wagon boxfull to sell. Glue would be made out of these bones. Dad would haul wood to town and he would get three dollars a load.

**Spring**—early spring was when we Métis would earn a good portion of our income. Men and older sons would trap muskrats, and wives and children would skin, stretch, and scrape the fat off the hides. It took a lot of work and practice to be able to prepare these pelts for market. Spring was also the time that we would gather mudhen eggs, and hunt ducks and gophers for consumption. We would also work for farmers scrubbing bush, picking stones, picking roots, and cleaning animal shelters. In those days, everything on the farm was done with horse power to help the farmers get their crops in. After 1945, we put in our own gardens. Before then, we did not put in a garden as we were moving a lot. From then on, we always had a big garden as we were more stable and got plows and discs to work up the soil.

**Summer**—was when two or three families would camp for two or three weeks at a time digging seneca root. At that time, there was a lot of crown land where we could set up camp. No one would bother us, and we would go back to the same areas. Water was easily attained, and there was a lot of game to hunt for consumption. There were also areas where our horses could graze. After about three weeks, we would return home to clean up.

After returning home, our parents would take the seneca root to sell. July was when we would hay for the farmers' with our own horses. Summers were when food was gathered and preserved for the winter. We would pick saskatoon berries and lay them out in the sun to dry. Then we would put them away for the winter. Chokecherries would also be picked, grinded, and dried for the winter. In the late 40s, we would also pick raspberries and our mothers would can them and other berries. Some of the raspberries were sold for ten cents a quart in towns.

**Fall**—was when we would gather wood for the winter.

Families would hunt and kill deer and then dry and smoke the meat for the winter. Families also fixed and plastered log shacks, barns, and outhouses. We would also work for farmers, harvesting and stoking their crops. Men would go on threshing crews, usually for four to six weeks. My mother and us kids would go and pick up the grain spills from the threshing machine. The grains that we worked with included wheat, oats, barley, and rye. We would screen and clean these grains. We did this by throwing the grains up in the air, and only the grains would fall on a blanket while the straw and other matter would blow away as they were lighter. Some of the grains would be kept. After 1946, we raised chickens, turkeys, and we had two cows. We kept most of the grain for feed, and wheat was hauled to town and was exchanged for flour. In late fall, there was some hunting for muskrats, beavers, and minks. These furs would be sent to market, or at times sold to a local fur buyer. Fall was also a time when we gathered plants and a variety of roots which were used as medication. Families would also supply soap for personal use and laundry. This would be made from melting beef fat and mixing it with lye and ashes from a stove. This mixture would be baked and would become quite hard.

**Winter**—after snowfall was when we snared bush rabbits and jack rabbits for food. The hides would be sold. This would go on until the end of February as to let them reproduce. This would last about six months. Winter was also when men would go on coyote and fox chases with horses and dogs. The pelts were sold for good money. We also hunted skunks in their holes. The young that are born in spring stay as a family for one year, and they usually number about ten. It took a lot of hard work to dig them out as they made their winter homes in hills in wooded areas. You would find them about six feet deep. Skunk fur was in very high demand, and we received a good return for

the hides. Women would skin and stretch hides, then the hides would be sold. The fat would be melted and then be used as medicine for burns, cuts, and sores, etc.

Mother was very busy in the winter. She made our clothes, mitts and socks, and mended and patched clothing. She made bed sheets from sugar bags after whitening them first.

We used snow water in the winter; for consumption and cooking and for washing clothes as snow water is very soft. Mom would always tell us to haul old snow, and to get it from underneath the snowbanks as it produces a lot more water. Old snow is very coarse.

We had hard times in winter. I remember Mom had twins and a baby that needed milk. I think Dad worked for a farmer and was paid mostly in milk. We kids hung snares, trapped weasels, and we'd hunt. We caught skunks, mink and other things. Mom and my sister would spin. The furs varied in price, the skunks were a good price, about three dollars. Beaver were hard to skin. They would also dig deep into their dams. Dad hooked them with dry willow branches. Sometimes we'd get ten of them. That was very good. It was also good to do this in to springtime when they looked for food. They were also coming out to get ready to have young ones. The beavers would leave their family at a year old.

## **Crescent Lake School and Tokyo**

In 1946, a one-room school was built in Crescent Lake. The following year, an addition was built, making it a two-room school. Métis people were moving into a quarter section of land



*Ed St. Pierre in front of Crescent Lake School. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

that was bought by Social Services for them, and a few families had purchased land adjacent to Métis land. There must have been about thirty families on this quarter of land. We had over eighty kids going to school and only a handful had attended school previously. It was at this time that I noticed some changes in the way we were living. People were getting some Relief in the winter months, for which they would have to work off in the summer by cutting, clearing, and scrubbing the road allowances for the municipality. Only the families that worked off their Relief would be eligible for assistance the following winter. Our families were given the opportunity to clean the school, and keep it warm in the winter and get its wooden and coal furnace started. In winter, we were paid a small amount. Families hauled wood to the school for which they were paid. The teacher handled all matters pertaining to school operations and payments for the work that was done.

Before the school opened, I can recall and can still picture farmers' kids going to school carrying their lunch kits, walking by where we would be working, and stopping and looking at us. They were probably wondering how come we were out in fields and bushes working with our parents instead of being in school with them. At the time, it didn't bother us children, as education or school was never talked about in our household. Both of our parents never went to school; they weren't able to write their own names.

I don't think Dad realized the long-term impact when he would take me out of school to help him haul wood, to work for farmers, or to go hunting. Unfortunately, my schooling wasn't a priority. He felt that as long as I could hunt and work, I would be able to provide. I thank him greatly for teaching me how to work, how to do a job right, and for telling me that I was the one looking for work and that the farmers and contractors did not come looking for me, and even if I were underpaid, I should always finish the job. In that instance, he told me to be a little more careful the next time that I took on a job, and that I should always learn from my mistakes.



*Crescent Lake School playground. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

In the spring of 1952, I was 15-years-old. A farmer came to our village looking for two men to pick stones for about two weeks. My father sent me along with another man from the village. The



farmer farmed about 25 miles from where we lived. The following morning, he showed us the team of horses and the wagon that we were to use. The site and field were about two miles from the farm yard. The farmer packed us a noon lunch, and we worked from early morning to sundown. After about the third or fourth day, in the mid-afternoon, we noticed a car driving at a very high speed coming across the field straight for us. When they got close to us, we noticed that it was the police. The policeman quickly told me that they were coming for my partner as he did not pay for his hospitalization. When I got back that night, the farmer asked where my partner was. I told him that the police took him to Regina for not paying his hospitalization. He asked if I wanted to finish the job by myself, which I did. It took longer, but I finally finished. I knew this was what I had to do. There were many times that I wondered what I was doing in this big field all by myself.



*Ed St.Pierre. Ed St. Pierre Collection*

When I left to join the army in 1954, the school was still full with children and the same teachers were still teaching. Things were going good. When I came back in the early '60s, families were moving out probably due to economic reasons. A little later, families were relocating to be near potash mines and the Weyburn and Moose Jaw training schools. These schools had a lot of entry positions where our Métis people were easily placed.

Their log and mud homes were knocked down and burned. There was a lot of talk as to why these homes were destroyed. It's not known whether or not there was some agreement or understanding that their vacated homes would be destroyed. Perhaps this was one way of making sure that this settlement would not continue to exist. By the early '70s, the school was closed, and all the families had relocated. I should point out there were a lot of hard feelings as to whether or not they had the authority to destroy our homes.

In the early 1950s we were living in the village known as "Tokyo." In those days, the practice of Métis people gathering and camping during the Yorkton exhibition for a week was disappearing, probably due to more people owning vehicles and holding down full-time jobs. In about 1950, our parents decided to take in only the last day of the exhibition, and only took our three older sisters, being the next oldest child, I was left to babysit. My parents were quite confident that I would be able to care for my younger brothers and sister.



*Ed St. Pierre and Walter Pelletier (Cousin).*  
Ed St. Pierre Collection

My mother used to be our barber, and she used to give us all haircuts, as well as to anyone that wanted one in the village. I used to watch her and paid close attention. I was very interested in cutting hair. I decided to cut my three younger brothers' hair

as I wanted the experience. I can tell you that my brothers didn't need much shampoo, hairspray, or any haircuts in the near future.

One time, my parents told us that they would not be home until late that night, and that we were all to go to bed at the same time. However, that night a big storm developed with lots of rain, thunder, and lightning. Naturally, we were quite scared. We all crawled in one bed. Due to cheap roofing paper, the wind tore some paper off, and we were forced to keep moving our bed, trying to find a dry spot. We were survivors: we survived with no problems, and when we talk about it now, we get a few chuckles.

## **How I Learned to Respect Traditional Spirituality and Medicine**

In the mid-1940s, we were out collecting bones from dead animal carcasses by wagon. We covered a large amount of the Crescent Lake area.

We would, at times, come across sights such as stones placed in a neat uniform circle. Dad said that we had to respect and honour them. He explained to us the traditions and religious practices of these people, including the pain and punishment they would endure in these sweats. In those days, the spiritual healers and medicine people would take part. He told us how powerful they were, and that we should always respect them as we were also part Indian, although we never practiced Indian ways.

In or about 1961 or 1962, during Thanksgiving weekend, my father, uncle, and I went walking through the bushes near town. They found a nice grass opening and we sat down. They

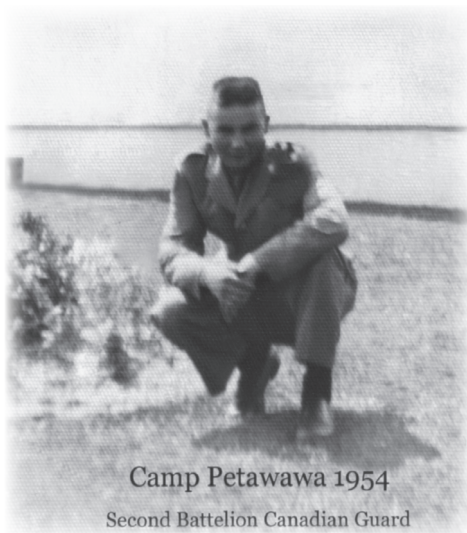
started telling stories, and I got up and went into some thick bushes where I came across a nice bright piece of new cloth stretched out. I tore a piece of it off, and used it, only to find out later that my uncle's wife was an Indian and practiced Indian ways. One of their traditions is to stretch and hang a new cloth in an isolated area every year thereby giving something back to the Earth that we live on. My aunt had placed this cloth out there. I told my father later of what I did, and he told me I should not have done this, but the fact that I did not know any better meant that I may not receive any punishment.

But how wrong we were: some twenty years after that Thanksgiving weekend, I was helping prepare our holiday meal as we were having some family members coming over. I was standing by the sink and I started shaking and felt very weak. I began hallucinating. Some of the thoughts that were going through my head were that I was going to die, that I was going to devote the rest of my life to God, and that I was going to sell all my assets and donate the profits to the church.

I had a great deal of problems coping. My wife drove me to the hospital, but they couldn't find anything wrong. They told me to go home and take it easy and that I would get over it. While I was waiting in the sitting room in the hospital, an Indian guy was there. He noticed that there was something terribly wrong with me. He told me if the doctors couldn't help that I should see a medicine man and that I was probably hit with bad medicine.

We went home. My mother and brother and sister arrived, and they managed to calm me down. We had our priest come over and pray with us. We had dinner and played cards, and I was alright as long as they were there. They left for home in late afternoon as I had to take my oldest son to a hockey game.

Before the hockey game was over, I started to shake. I was scared again due to the same symptoms. I drove home with great difficulty. My son was scared, but he was forced to guide us home as I was all over the road. When we got home, my wife phoned my mother. Mom advised that she should bring me over to her house. Before we left, I can recall telling my three older children to care and protect their baby brother. It was about a two-hour drive so we arranged for a babysitter.



*Ed St. Pierre, Camp Petawawa, 1954.*  
**Ed St. Pierre Collection**

They tried to calm me down, but I wasn't responding. They then called one of my former school friends who was First Nations and who had some connections. He in turn contacted a medicine man. He was told that he wasn't as strong as his brother-in-law who lived on the next reserve, but for us to pick him up and he would take us there. We were to pick him up the next day, and that we should bring four square pieces of new bright cloth and four different cans of fruit along with some beef fat and tobacco.

We picked him up the next day, and when we were close to his brother-in-law's house, I felt really good. I was now back to normal. I told them, "Maybe we should turn around and go back home." He told me that I would have to go and see him, and that if I didn't see him this malady would come back to me. Besides, he was waiting and now we were getting close to his place.

The medicine man took me in his room. He asked if I had done anything wrong to someone that could have caused him or her to use bad medicine against me. He told me to think back, and to take my time to think of what I may have done to cause this. Then I told him about the cloth that I tore off some twenty years back. He told me that if I believed in their culture, I must give a new piece of cloth back to the earth every year.

He told me that he knew what I had done and he worked on me for about half an hour. And then we all shared the fruits and fat. We were all sitting around when he told us that we had to go place these four pieces of cloth in sacred grounds, and that I would have to repeat this for the next four years. If I didn't, chances were that this illness would come back to me. I followed his orders and never had any problems since. It surely confirmed to me how strong these medicine men are.

## **Life After Childhood**

I left Crescent Lake in 1954 to join the army at 17 years of age. My first day was one that I will never forget. I was first met with recruiting personel at the #12 Personel Depot and was advised that I would be there for about a week for testing, conducting my medical, and for other things. I was told where I would sleep, where the mess hall was, the time of meals, and was then given a tin cup, a knife, a fork, and a spoon. I was issued a pair of coveralls, and I was ordered to keep my area clean. When I went for supper, there was a line up where the cooks would put the food of the day on your plate. After I sat down, I noticed people going for tea, coffee, or milk, so I waited until there was no line up. I was very nervous and not comfortable in my new environment. I went up to a five-gallon bucket of milk that had a

flip type tap opener and closer. I opened it and then I couldn't get the tap to close so milk flowed all over the place. One of the cooks came by and closed it. He told me not to worry because it had happened before. I offered to mop up the spilled milk, but he told me in the most friendly way that he would do it. He told me to go and enjoy my meal. He probably noticed that I was very nervous. He sure made me feel good, and at ease.



*Lawrence, Ed, Frank, and Gerald St. Pierre.*  
Ed St. Pierre Collection

While I was serving in the armed forces, I was passed over for different courses and promotions. I failed some courses, at times blaming my instructors and officers, but after a long and careful evaluation, I came to the conclusion that most of my disappointments and struggles were because I lacked the proper amount of education. I never had any problems with the verbal or physical aspects, performing the instructional part, or the theory writing, or writing up assessments and reports.

I married my late wife Edna “la Kanayen” (née Pelletier) St. Pierre in September 1963. Edna worked for most of the years that we were married, mostly in the service industry. We were blessed with four wonderful children and four wonderful grandchildren. We were married for 45 years until her passing on July 22, 2008. We raised our children in Regina, but later moved to Saskatoon in 2001. After my retirement in 2001, my wife and I relocated back home to Yorkton to be close to our families.

Our children’s names are Darrell, Rene, Dale, and Gerard. Darrell was born on October 11, 1965 in Yorkton. He married Lisa Fralick, and has two children and two stepchildren. One child is with his current wife and one is from a previous relationship. He has dedicated himself to a career in the Canadian Forces as a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force as an Aero-Tech. Rene was born on August 25, 1968. She is married to Sean Bulch, and they have one daughter. Rene has been a member of the Canadian Forces since shortly after graduating from high school. She is an administrator in the Army and is currently posted to the Canadian Embassy in New Delhi, India. Dale was born on May 10, 1973 in Regina. He married Rene Semchuk and has one stepdaughter. He attended the University of Saskatchewan to obtain a Bachelor of Arts Degree, and is currently a Human Resources Generalist within the gaming industry. Our youngest boy, Gerard, was born on November 18, 1974. He married Joni Weinbender, and they do not have any children. Gerard obtained his Class 1A license, and has had a successful career as a long haul truck driver. All four of our children completed their high school education and I am proud to say that they are all productive citizens.

I remarried on August 1, 2009 to Harriet Oaks. Harriet was born in Crooked Lake, Saskatchewan on June 9, 1939.



She has been married twice previously, and has eight children. Her children are David, Beverly, Joe, Rob, Pat, Barry, Dean, and Ron. Harriet retired from the Saskatoon Catholic School Board in 2004. Since then, she has been an active member of the Métis community.

## Closing Remarks

For anyone to become productive in life, they must first be proud of who they are, their culture, their language, and their heritage. We should ensure that our young folks achieve a good standard of education. We must take advantage of training that is made available to us and develop a good work ethic in order to become productive citizens. Young folk today are so lucky to have all this opportunity for training and education that's available, not like it was in the past. Education is so very important today. It's important to be proud of your achievements, but always strive for more.



*Daryl, Ed, Renee, Dale, Edna, and Gerard St. Pierre. Ed St. Pierre Collection*







*Ed St. Pierre and Harriet Oaks St. Pierre. Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection*

In this memoir, Ed St. Pierre brings the reader back in time, showcasing how life was lived by the Métis in the road allowance community of Crescent Lake in the 1940s. He shares stories of his early life, including hunting with his father, searching for mudhen eggs, and the games that he played as a youngster. He also describes how the Métis lived with stories about grease lamps, rubaboo, chokecherries, and much more.



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