

Gary LaPlante—My Métis Family History

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My parents were Joseph Pierre LaPlante (Métis) and Christina Wright/Blackstar (Plains Cree). My father spoke some Michif as well as Plains Cree (“Y” dialect), and English. My mother almost exclusively spoke Plains Cree. There are many memories/stories regarding the lives of Joseph and Christina, but the ones I chose to share are about their funerals. To me, the funerals said a great deal about who they were as individuals and the kind of lives they had led.

My father Joseph passed away on June 24, 1987. Coincidentally at the time of the wake and funeral, there was a Sundance taking place down the road from the wake on the Moosomin First Nation. I recall clearly that my uncles and one of Dad’s best friends, Jimmy Myo, all of whom were pipe carriers and Sundance ceremonial leaders, did not come to the wake. In my ignorance and my lack of understanding of our traditional ways, I was upset with these elders for not coming to the wake knowing that my dad had so much respect for them and had close friendships with them. On the eve of his funeral June 27, my mom got a message from Jimmy Myo that after some deliberations with the other elders in the Sundance Lodge, they had decided to honour and assist my dad in his final journey into the Spirit World by allowing a Plains Cree traditional feast in the Sundance Lodge the day after the funeral. Allowing for a feast in a Sundance Lodge is apparently very rare; many people were astonished by this. What I learned from this was the absolute commitment to the process and protocols leading up to and including the Sundance ceremony by the Plains Cree. The pledge to our Creator is paramount. I was truly humbled by this experience. Being Métis, my family, led by my Cree mother, ensured that my dad’s body was brought to the Catholic Church in the nearby village of Cochin for funeral services and prayers. My mother who was very traditional with the ways of the Cree, was influenced by traditional Métis customs. In this case, after my father’s funeral, she wore black dresses, black scarves, and did not partake in certain ceremonies for about a year.

My mother, Christina (née Blackstar) LaPlante passed away July 16, 2011. The wake was held at the Moosomin First Nation school gym. On the eve of her funeral, a major thunder storm was coming from the west and we were warned that there was potential for a tornado. We saw the storm coming our way from across Jackfish Lake. It would go through the village of Cochin and Murray Lake then onto us. We were right in its path. The storm reached the school gym with a suddenness that took everyone by surprise. The wind blew the dust up and those standing outside rushed inside. My father-in-law lost his cowboy hat. Those in vehicles said the powerful winds rocked and shook them. Thunder, lightning, and rain struck simultaneously. A few minutes later, there was a deafening crash of thunder and the gym was plunged into darkness. Chaos ensued: people were calling out to one another, others were praying, some were saying their Hail Mary prayers while others more were frantically searching for loved ones. Rainwater seeped through the ceiling down the wall next to the coffin. A huge bolt of lightning had struck the top of the school almost directly over my mother’s body.

The following day at the funeral service, four elders were sought out and approached with tobacco to render prayers for my mother's journey. One elder was Maria Linklater from Thunderchild First Nation. She said what many people were thinking, that the Thunderbirds came and got her, to take her to the Spirit World. No one really questioned that, as my mother had committed her life to family, extended family, and Plains Cree traditional ceremonies. All of my life with her, she only spoke in Cree to me. I heard her speak English—a sentence or two—only a few times in my life. Both of my parents are buried at Moosomin First Nation.

This account focuses on my Métis family. My father Joseph was born in 1908 at Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. His parents were Joseph LaPlante and Louise Leveille. My grandfather Joseph's parents were Antoine LaPlante and Josephte (Josette) Roy. My grandmother Louise's parents were Louis Leveille and Marguerite Gervais. My grandparents and great-grandparents were Métis. Approximately in 1912, there was natural phenomena in the night skies which were the Northern Lights. On consecutive nights, the skies would bleed red with the Northern Lights. Indigenous peoples, including the Willow Bunch Métis took notice in a way that this was concerning to them. My grandfather, Joseph LaPlante and other Métis sought out First Nation elders and ceremonial leaders for advice. Undoubtedly, through following proper protocol, these Métis participated in a Shaking Tent ceremony to consult with the ancestors as to what was occurring. Through this ceremony, they were told that there was much bloodshed coming and that they should seek safety in the forests of northern Saskatchewan. My grandparents heeded this advice and soon after, they and a few other Métis families moved north into the forest by Midnight Lake.

One of my father's earliest memories was riding in the back of a wagon with his sisters going up a steep hill and looking back at the home they were leaving by Willow Bunch. World War I would soon start in 1914. Some years later, my grandparents, Joseph and Louise LaPlante moved to the hills east of Cochin. They and other Métis families received Métis Scrip. With their Scrip, my grandparents chose land adjacent to Moosomin First Nation. My great-grandfather, Louis Leveille had known the original chief of Moosomin First Nation, Yellow Sky. During the Northwest Resistance of 1885, Yellow Sky provided a horse and saddle to Louis Leveille. Yellow Sky then sought compensation from the Indian Agent for those provisions. The belief is that they had known one another from the days in which the Plains Cree still camped in the Cypress Hills. Louis was a North-West Mounted Police scout. He is buried in a police cemetery just south of Maple Creek, not far north of the Cypress Hills. My grandparents, Joseph and Louise are buried at Moosomin First Nation.

Laurent Sauvé-LaPlante (1784–1858) and Josephte Tlalam-Tsik (?–1848). Laurent and Josephte, I believe are my great-great-great-grandparents. I found reference to them as my great-great-grandfather Antoine Xavier LaPlante's parents in an online document prepared by the late Dick Garneau entitled "Canadian history: A distinct viewpoint, Indian Territory Alberta 1850 to 1859, aka Northwest Territories and Alberta." On May 18, 1859, Antoine Xavier LaPlante was at Fort Edmonton. The document indicates that he is possibly the son of Laurent and Josephte.

Laurent Sauvé-LaPlante was born in Lower Canada (now Quebec). Initially, his work in the fur trade was with the North West Company (NWC). It is documented that he was still with them in 1820. The Métis were allied with the NWC during what is known as the Pemmican War from 1812 to 1821. Essentially, this conflict, between the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the

NWC, was over free trade. The HBC was led by Lord Selkirk who had established the Red River Colony in 1812. In 1814, he declared the Pemmican Proclamation, which forbid the export of pemmican to NWC posts. As a result of the proclamation, the NWC pushed back and, led by the Métis, it culminated in armed conflict. The Battle of Seven Oaks took place June 19, 1816.

In 1821, the two fur trade companies amalgamated under the name, the Hudson's Bay Company. In the Fort Langley Archives, there is documentation that HBC chief trader James McMillan led a group of 25 men on June 27, 1827 from this fort on the Fraser River to Fort Vancouver, and then to a new post up the Columbia River. Laurent Sauvé dit LaPlante was one of them. Laurent would later manage a dairy farm for the company in the 1830s and 1840s on what was then known as Wappatoo Island. The Island was renamed to Sauvé's (Sauvie) Island, which is its current name. The Island is situated where the Willamette River joins the Columbia River about 10 miles from downtown Portland, Oregon. It is one of the largest inland islands in the United States of America. Laurent is buried at French Prairie, St. Paul, Oregon.

Antoine Xavier LaPlante (1804–1864) and Josephte Gagnon (1810–1845) are my great-great-grandparents. Both clearly identified as Métis and by all accounts they lived their lives in the White Horse Plains, in the settlement of Grantown, which is now known as St. François Xavier, Manitoba. Antoine worked for the HBC during the time. Around 1843, he joined the HBC'S Columbia District and was assigned Saskatchewan and New Caledonia.

On May 18, 1859, he was at Fort Edmonton. Antoine became a freeman in 1864 since he completed his contract with the HBC. That same year in 1864, he passed away. If the François Xavier burial records are accurate, he passed away the same year he became a freeman. A Métis descendant might wonder if it was his passing that set him free. Antoine and Josephte's children were Elise (Fagnant), Isidore, Antoine Jr., Rosalie (Larocque), and Corbert. Antoine and Josephte are buried at the St. François Xavier Catholic Church cemetery.

My great-grandparents were Antoine LaPlante Jr. and Josephte (later spelled Josette) Roy and Louis Leveille and Marguerite Gervais. Josette's parents were Joseph Roy and Henriette Cayen. Josette's father, Joseph Roy was born in Lower Canada (now Quebec). In 1835, he joined the HBC as a middleman. In 1844, Joseph was then transferred to the Mackenzie River District and was stationed at Fort Resolution (1847–1850). He then joined Dr. John Rae's Arctic expedition of 1850-1851. Joseph had a relationship with Henriette Cayen and their daughter Josette was born in 1850 at Fort Resolution. They married soon after in 1852. Josette's siblings were Jean- Baptiste, Marie-Rose, Louis, Caroline, and Henri. The Joseph-Henriette Roy family genealogy is found in the book titled, *The Life and Times of Edward King*. Edward's birth name was William Roy. I had the good fortune of meeting not only Edward, but also his dad Albert Roy, the son of Jean-Baptiste. Albert shared stories with me about my grandfather, Joseph LaPlante and his brother, Louis, who were Albert's first cousins. In the summer of 1990, Edward and I travelled together to Willow Bunch, visiting the sites and the graveyard.

There was one family story I recall regarding Josette. After her husband Antoine was shot and murdered, it seemed that there was some intervention in the custody of their three children, Louis, Joseph and Virginie(?). The children for some reason were under the care of the Catholic Church. From what I gather, there was resistance to give custody to their mother Josette and there are a couple hypothetical scenarios as to why. After being denied custody and care for her children, it was said that Josette and her brother(s) retrieved the children

clandestinely in the middle of the night when the church officials were asleep. After Antoine's death, Josette remarried to Pierre St. Denis, a widower. Both had children from their previous marriages, but went on to also have children together. In the Moose Jaw Métis Scrip Claims, Josette had collected for three of those St. Denis children, Isidore, Jeanne, and Patrice. My father used to speak fondly of Patrice (1893–1980), his uncle. In 1985, by chance I found a cousin (by adoption), Ron Rivard. He had overheard me speaking of my father's uncle, Patrice St. Denis. He told me that he knew who Patrice was, his grandfather by adoption. I went on to learn through my friendship with Ron that Patrice had fought in World War I and World War II. I also learned through Ron that Patrice passed away in 1980. When my father heard this, he deeply regretted that he not made more of an effort to see his uncle.

My great-grandmother Marguerite (Gervais) Leveille's parents were Jean-Baptiste Gervais and Madeleine Bonneau. Marguerite's siblings were Jean-Baptiste, Alexis, Bazile, Madeleine, Joseph, Urbain, Marie, Cuthbert, and Rose de Lima. The Gervais have a very numerous extended family. Marguerite was born in 1827 and passed away in 1900. Marguerite and Louis Leveille married in 1854 at St. François Xavier, White Horse Plains.

The Peacekeeping Era: The white settlement of the western Canadian prairies.

The Peacekeepers: NWMP Métis Scouts/Auxiliaries

Louis Leveille, Antoine LaPlante, Pierre Leveille, Gabriel Leveille, and many other Métis men. Antoine LaPlante was born at St. François Xavier in 1842. My family, including my father, my aunts, uncles, and our relatives from Browning, Montana, did not know exactly when their grandfather Antoine had died. What they did know through oral family history is that their grandfather Antoine had been shot and killed. They did not know where he was buried, only that it was somewhere in northern Montana or southern Saskatchewan. This was always a mystery to the extended family. After many hours and hours of research on the Internet and in history books, I was able to solve the mystery of my great-grandfather Antoine. On March 24, 1947, Geo. Douglas—after interviewing Louis Roy, Josette's brother, Antoine's brother-in-law—wrote that Louis Roy confirmed that the cemetery at the old Legare post had one grave with an iron fence (NWMP grave marker) around it. This was Antoine's grave. Louis went on to say that Antoine was shot and killed in 1882, west of Wood Mountain, near the Frenchman River. Antoine's body was recovered by a Métis buffalo hunter from Lebret, Saskatchewan, by the name of Johnnie Blondeau. This was documented in the obituary of Johnnie Blondeau in the Lebret community history book titled, *Mission to Lebret* in 1944. In the pages of *Golden Memories from Assiniboia and Area*, Mr. John Okute (LeCaine) Sr., states the grave at Jean-Louis Légaré's old trading post, is that of a Métis man, Antoine LaPlante—a point of view that is generally accepted by elders from Wood Mountain.

Antoine was described as a giant of a man, powerful, and by nature a rough character. He had made enemies, and so it was very likely that it wasn't a stray bullet that killed him. Antoine LaPlante and/or Louis Roy were part of the Métis delegation led by Louis Leveille that first saw Sitting Bull and the Lakota Sioux when they entered Canada. After that first peaceful encounter between the NWMP Métis scouts and Sitting Bull, the Métis assured NWMP Major Walsh that the Lakota had come to Canada in peace and were seeking refuge and that it was safe to go meet with them. Thereafter, Major Walsh went to meet with Sitting Bull and the

Lakota. The first encounter took place on a hill by the old Légaré post. An online resource by the Assiniboia and District Historical Museum entitled, "Churches of South Central Saskatchewan, Last Resting Places (Cemeteries)," refers to the grave of a NWMP member who met with foul play and is buried a short distance from where Sitting Bull camped with several thousand followers, between Wood Mountain and Willow Bunch. It includes a photo of the grave with the iron railing which indicated it is on consecrated ground. The grave is that of Antoine LaPlante, my great-grandfather.

Antoine's brother, Isidore LaPlante operated the ferry on the South Saskatchewan River at Saskatchewan Landing until 1906. In 1905, Saskatchewan officially became a province in the Dominion of Canada. Isidore was given one year of work to train his replacement. In the present-day at the Saskatchewan Landing Interpretive Centre there was a reference to who operated the ferry until 1905, "an old Indian chap named Isidore LaPlante." These Métis people were industrious and entrepreneurial.

Antoine LaPlante, Louis Leveille, and Pierre Leveille were part of the Cypress Hills Métis Hunting Brigade Petition of 1878 for a Métis Reserve.

Louis Leveille was born 1828 at St. François Xavier, died May, 1888. He married Marguerite Gervais in 1854 at St. François Xavier.

The main source for the role of Louis Leveille and his brother Pierre is in the writings of the late Lawrence Barkwell, the Louis Riel Institute's director of Métis heritage and history research.

The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) Great March West left Fort Dufferin July 8, 1874 and the trek concluded on October 9, 1874. Commissioner George French was in charge of the cavalcade. An artist/illustrator by the name of Henri Julien accompanied the expedition. Mr. Julien's purpose was to write positive accounts of the NWMP. The expedition was guided by Métis, initially led by Leveille, from Fort Dufferin to Old Wives' Lake. In July 1874, the expedition was met by other Métis, this group led by Louis Leveille. Louis and other Métis were hunting near Fort Benton, Montana. From there, he was traveling to Old Wives' Lake where he met up with his brother Pierre and the NWMP. From there, Louis' group accompanied the NWMP, to the Cypress hills, arriving on August 24, 1874. The NWMP expedition reached Fort Whoop Up, October 9, 1874. It is here that they settled and built Fort MacLeod.

There were different accounts and views of the NWMP's March West. Most writers saw this trek as ill-planned, blaming government authorities for their lack of knowledge and understanding of the prairie terrain and climate. There was some blame directed at the Métis guides, basically asserting that the Métis guides were unprofessional and didn't know what they were doing. With the Métis, through the next couple generations, stories were passed on in the oral tradition, one generation to the next ensuring that their families, descendants knew their experience and perspective of this trek. The Old People had said these Métis men, like Louis and Pierre, felt sorry for the young NWMP recruits, referring to them as "the young ones." It was clear to them that the young ones realized that the trek was not what they were expecting, referring to the hardships they endured on the land.

My Métis grandfathers were referred to as guides, auxiliaries, and scouts. There was virtually no reference to them as emissaries. The Oxford Dictionary, define emissaries as "a person sent on a special mission, usually a diplomatic representative." There are two documented events where Louis and his brother Pierre were clearly the emissaries for the Government of Canada in dealing with politically tense and potentially violent situations with

plains tribes. In Louis' case, it was the first encounter with Sitting Bull and his large following of Lakota Sioux. As Sitting Bull and his followers were coming into Canada from the United States, NWMP Major Walsh sent NWMP scout Louis Leveille and other Métis scouts/auxiliaries to go meet Sitting Bull and the Lakota to determine their intentions. That first encounter between Louis Leveille and the Métis with Sitting Bull and his leadership was peaceful. This took place near the old Légaré post in 1877. Commissioner McLeod and Major Walsh then met Sitting Bull on October 17 at Fort Walsh after they were assured that Sitting Bull and his followers had come in peace. Major Walsh and Sitting Bull became friends.

In the June/July 2015 edition of *Canadian Cowboy Country Magazine*, there was an article titled, "The Murder of Marmaduke Graburn." In the article, they reference a history book published 1989 titled, *From Sage to Timber*, which confirms that Louis Leveille and his two sons, Paul and Gabriel, had accompanied legendary Kainai-Scots scout Jerry Potts to help solve the mystery surrounding the murder of young constable Marmaduke Graburn of the NWMP. It's noted that in other written accounts of this sad chapter of the Fort Walsh NWMP history, no one else is mentioned other than Jerry Potts. In countless visits and interviews, Gabriel Leveille (1866–1959) was adamant that his father Louis found the body and after investigating the crime scene, he determined that it was white men who killed Graburn. Louis surmised that it was not Indians, stating that there were three in this party, they rode side-by-side rather than in single file as Indians did. Further, when they mounted their horses, it was from the left side, whereas Indians got on from the right. He concluded that the riders' horse tracks showed one of them had dropped behind approximately where constable Graburn was shot in the back. There was a speculative thought that Leveille's conclusion was ignored because they had a built-in suspect, an Indian man named Starchild.

When the NWMP were getting established in the prairies around 1874, it took them a long time to get in control of the volatile and violent encounters, which usually involved guns. The warriors had a disregard for the NWMP at that time as law enforcement. They carried on with their own forms of law. A lot of conflicts were resolved by guns. There was another story where Louis accompanied an old policeman to apprehend an Indian for a serious violation. Upon approaching the Indian warrior in the Swift Current area, they were surprised by the individual not going so peacefully. The sergeant grabbed the reins of the Indian's horse, and the Indian drew his gun. Louis put himself in the line of fire and the sergeant told Louis to talk him down. Louis defused the situation and later the old sergeant said he would have shot the warrior if he had shot Louis.

Pierre Leveille (b. 1829 at St. François Xavier d. 1884) was the brother of Louis. Pierre married Genevieve Fagnant, daughter of Jean-Baptiste Fagnant and Josephte Monet dite Belhumeur on September 15, 1856 at St. François Xavier. Pierre became a fur trader in the west: he had his own train of Red River carts. He became familiar with the routes across the prairies prior to 1873. By all accounts, Pierre was an influential Métis of Red River, according to historian Alexander Begg. Pierre had temporarily opposed Riel in 1869-70 and was said to have kept Riel from obtaining the credentials of Donald A. Smith. Begg wrote that Pierre helped negotiate the Treaty # 3 with the Saulteaux at Lake of the Woods in 1873. As noted in the *Canadian Encyclopedia's* entry for Treaty # 3, there was an impasse in concluding the treaty in October 1873. Negotiations were paused as the Saulteaux left the negotiating table to regroup as did Treaty Commissioner Alexander Morris and his delegation. Pierre and three other Métis

joined the Saulteaux leaders. It was not clear if the Métis were instructed by Morris or were invited by the Saulteaux leaders. Upon reconvening the negotiations, there were some compromises, which led to the Saulteaux agreeing to Treaty. The Saulteaux asked Treaty Commissioner Morris if the Métis could be included in the Treaty. This was denied. Although on a later date with the 1874-1875 Adhesions to Treaty #3, the Saulteaux succeeded and the Métis at Rainy Lake and Rainy River were included.

Lawrence Barkwell's Scribd article notes that at the Red River Provisional Government's Convention of 24, on November 16, 1869, Pierre Leveille was a delegate chosen to represent St. François Xavier. Lawrence Barkwell writes that during a memorable episode in the troubles of 1870, Leveille played a role as leader of the opposition to the authority of president Louis Riel. Donald A. Smith had arrived as the HBC's senior officer, when in reality he was the representative of the Canadian government. Riel would have liked to see Smith's letter of credentials and other official papers before their contents were divulged, in order to be able to know what course to take, based on the instructions contained in them. However, Smith had deliberately left the papers at Pembina, outside the Territory of Assiniboia. In an effort to discover if Smith indeed had the power to negotiate, Riel sent one of his men to accompany Smith's messenger to get the papers. But William MacTavish, the HBC Governor, feared that Riel's man would seize the papers for his leader, so he sent Leveille and an Englishman to prevent such a thing from happening.

Returning from Pembina, MacTavish and Riel's representatives arrived at St. Norbert with the precious papers, accompanied by 50 or so Métis whom Leveille and his companion had enlisted enroute. Riel, who had just joined up with them, wanted to take the lead, in order to arrive first at Fort Garry and intercept the dispatches. But Leveille threatened him with a pistol and the president had to keep to the second rank of the procession formed by the sleds. He succeeded, however, in being the first one to enter the fort and the doors immediately closed behind him. After some negotiation, Riel ended up allowing the messengers to enter with Smith's documents, and Leveille wanted to remain there with his friends to assure their security until they were read before the population that had assembled to hear them on 19 and 20 January 1870. Leveille later became one of Riel's most ardent partisans, and to erase the memory of the above-mentioned episode, he gave Riel a rifle that cost \$300. When W. B. O'Donoghue and others launched the so called Fenian Raid into Manitoba in October 1871, Leveille was present at October 5th and 6th meetings at Riel's house in St. Vital to decide whether the Métis were going to support the government against O'Donoghue. Ambroise Lepine, Pierre Leveille, Elzéar de la Gimodiere, François Dauphinais, and Angus Mackay sided with Louis Riel in deciding to convince the Métis people to support the government.

Leading up to and concluding in 1873, Pierre assisted with the treaty making process in Manitoba and elsewhere in the North West. In 1873, it became necessary to maintain law and order in the west due to atrocities caused by the American whiskey traders. The NWMP was organized in 1873. The NWMP March West left Fort Dufferin July 8, 1874, Pierre and other Métis guided the NWMP, which was led by Commissioner George A. French. Pierre stayed with them until they reached Old Wives Lake in late July, where they met Pierre's brother Louis. Louis and other Métis took over from there.

Pierre Leveille signed the Cypress Hills Métis Hunting Brigade Petition of 1878 for a Métis Reserve.

Gabriel Leveille (1866–1959), son of Louis, was born at Whitehorse Plains. He was interviewed in 1955, by Dr. L. H. Thomas, for Assistant Commissioner Kirk, the officer commanding F Division RCMP, Regina. Dr. Thomas noted that Gabriel was probably the last living person who actually saw the NWMP on their March West 1874. Regarding that, Gabriel had remembered some of the police suffering from the sun and wind while they were wearing their old-time pillbox hats. Regarding that era, he spoke about the loose system of governance maintained by the Halfbreed buffalo hunters, working out of Fort Garry in the early days. One rule was not to waste meat, to take only what you need. If anyone violated this rule, the violator was not fined or imprisoned. Instead, they would have to do community service, by providing food for the camp for a period of time. He witnessed the great waste of buffalo meat, once American hunters slaughtered them for their hides.

When it was known that Sitting Bull and the Lakota Sioux came across to Canada, NWMP Major Walsh offered a \$200 reward to any man who found the Sioux camp. Gabriel remembered the day his dad Louis told his mom, Marguerite, “We’ve discovered them.” He goes on to state that the Sioux were starving and a lot of them were wounded. Further, there was not the large numbers of them as expected. After sorting out matters between the NWMP and the Sioux, Walsh and Sitting Bull eventually shook hands. One of the NWMP auxiliaries said that he thought he recognized Crazy Horse in the group. At the time of the understanding between Walsh and Sitting Bull, the warrior who was opposed to this peace offering was the individual they thought was Crazy Horse. He would not give in.

In the 1870s into the 1880s, there was still a lot of horse stealing going on, Gabriel said that everyone did it, white men, halfbreeds, and Indians. He recalled in 1873, when they were at Fort Benton working for gold prospectors, they had a good camp and had forty horses, which were stolen. They blamed the Peigans. There was animosity due to the Peigan being pushed westward. There were gunfights, some over stolen horses and some as reprisals. Gabriel recalled a story where his brother, NWMP scout Paul Leveille and a man named Cavell went to investigate and pursue the group responsible for a shooting. They went westward toward Fort MacLeod, there in the buttes, they located warriors. They were numerous, about 700 of them. They did not pursue. But there were deadly reprisals afterward between that tribe and the NWMP. There was reference to a group of well armed men who had come up from Nevada. It was during this time that many gunfights took place. One other story regarding his brother Paul was when he inadvertently bought a horse that had been previously stolen from the Missouri Territory. Paul ran into the rightful owner of the horse, Paul’s mother said, “Give the horse up. It’s his horse.” Paul did.

In 1877, Gabriel and Paul were breaking horses for the NWMP. The police would take these horses and would further train them. Gabriel said some NWMP were good horsemen. A good horseman was one that didn’t have to use spurs on a horse: a “good cowboy.” Dr. Thomas asked Gabriel if he remembered the incident of Piapot interrupting the survey for the railway. Gabriel said Piapot was a good man and was smart. Major Walsh had said to his dad, Louis, “that man [Piapot] is the smartest man I have ever talked to, and he’s got an education.”

There were some stories/events that stood out in Gabriel’s memory. One of them was the “big fire in the Hills.” The fire was very dangerous, the wind could turn the direction at

anytime. It was the heat or smoke that killed horses, deer, rabbits. Some men were badly burnt or had smoke filled lungs.

Another story from the old days is when they were freighters, which was extremely hard work. Men would wear leather straps on their heads; they would pull that way. He recalls two men to an oar, they'd be singing.

Then there was the story "That time Harry Bettis roped a Bear." This was about the time that 15,000 Texas cattle were brought up to Canada by the S.T.V. Cattle outfit. It took them two years to get them here. Gabriel worked with them. Harry Bettis, a former NWMP member, worked for this cattle company, too. Harry and a man named Bob roped this bear, team roping. Bob roped the head (header) and Harry a leg (heeler). The bear fought back, with ropes on it. It was an awful struggle. One fellow came along with a six shooter, shot it three times and weakened it, and finally they were able to choke it to death. Harry had said, "By golly, they're strong."

It's apparent that the Leveille brothers, Pierre and Louis, along with other likeminded Métis, did not agree with the political strategies of Louis Riel. In 1869-1870, after MacTavish's documents were read out, Pierre was in agreement with Riel and it seems that the Métis were unanimously in agreement that their identity and rights to the land had to be spoken for and protected. Then in 1885, Louis Leveille and likeminded Métis found themselves not on the side of Louis Riel or Gabriel Dumont, Riel's general. After 1885, in a large room at a saloon in Havre, Montana, Gabriel Dumont was in a furious mood. He recognized Gabriel Leveille, and knowing who Louis Leveille was, he said that anyone siding with the NWMP/Canadian Army should be shot. Gabriel Leveille said that Gabriel Dumont was a big powerful man, he thought that he would have to use a weapon against him. Coincidentally, there was a French Canadian there, who had served in a Quebec regiment with the Canadian Army against Riel. The story goes that Gabriel Dumont was going to deal with the other Gabriel, when the French Canadian stabbed Dumont three times in the stomach. That stabbing was later attributed by Leveille and others, which led to the eventual demise of Gabriel Dumont's standing at Batoche.

Métis petitioners/signatories of the Cypress Hills Métis Hunting Brigade Petition of 1878 for a Métis Reserve, included Antoine LaPlante, Pierre Leveille, Louis Leveille, Paul Leveille, and Gabriel Leveille. It is clear that were differences in Métis politics, but its also clear they were all proud Métis.