

Road Allowance Interview, Roy Pelletier and Gerald St. Pierre

Conducted by Scott Duffee

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SD: Alright, could you please tell me your names and your home community?

RP: My name is Roy Pelletier. Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan.

GSP: My name is Gerald St. Pierre, and I also grew up in Crescent Lake.

SD: Was it a road allowance community?

GSP: We lived by the road allowance.

RP: Yes, it was a road allowance community.

GSP: It was on the road allowance. Well beginning before then.

RP: Yes, because before we were able to get there, we had to live in the road allowance.

GSP: We lived in a road allowance.

SD: What do you mean, before you were able to get there you had to live on the road allowance?

RP: We lived on the road allowance before we found a place where we moved to.

GSP: My parents worked for farmers, and we lived on the road allowance. So, when the community was built, when the government gave this community to the Métis people, it was called Crescent Lake. So, then everybody moved into there, all the Métis people.

It was crown land.

RP: It was crown land in that day.

GSP: So that's how we got to move into this community because everybody lived all over the place, in road allowances and all over the place.

RP: And we made a community there for our own. It was—

GSP: It was a Métis colony, a Métis community.

RP: Yes, a Métis colony

GSP: And that's how it started. I was just small when we moved in there, and I was born outside there. I was born by the road allowance, out on the farm, where my dad used to work.

SD: They just lived on the farmer's land?

GSP: Yes.

RP: We lived in empty granaries that they let us move into when we were working there.

SD: Who were your parents and grandparents?

GSP: Well, mine was Alexander St. Pierre. He was originally from the States, from Dunseith, North Dakota. When he came up to Saskatchewan, he married my mom

who was Mary Flamont. My grandparents were Alec Flamont and what was my grandma's name? I'll think about it.

SD: Okay, if it pops in your head just shout it out.

GSP: Yes, I forgot what I was thinking. But anyway, that was my mom and dad. And they lived in Crooked Lake. At Crooked Lake, there was a reserve there. My mom was originally from the reserve. But my grandpa was in Crooked Lake. That's where he lived. So, when he married my grandma, they lived in Crooked Lake, and that's where I was born.

SD: Where is Crooked Lake?

GSP: It's about 50 miles from Yorkton

RP: About that.

SD: In which direction?

GSP: South.

RP: I'd say about 40 miles.

GSP: About 40 miles from Yorkton. Three quarters of an hour drive. Yes, that's where they came from.

GSP: I was trying to think of my grandma's name. It slipped my mind: Adele. Yes, Adele.

SD: Adele?

GSP: Yes.

SD: Her last name?

GSP: She was an Allary from the reserve up there.

SD: And how about yourself?

RP: My dad was also from the States. He was from Wolf Point, Montana. And my mom was from Saskatchewan. She was a Flamont. My grandfather was Louis Flamont, but when my grandmother passed away, my mother was only three years old herself, so I forget her name, too. And when my dad came and met my mom, well they got married and they stayed in Saskatchewan.

SD: So did your folks always live in Crescent Lake?

RP: No, we moved there in 1958, and we moved into Yorkton. My dad was from the States. He got some land rights from the States. So, they bought a house in town here. That's how we moved in there.

SD: How did he get this money? Land rights money?

GSP: Well, he used to get money every year because of the old land.

RP: And oil rights.

GSP: Oil rights.

SD: Really?

GSP: Yes.

SD: So, your dad was a Métis on the road allowance from the States and he owned land?

GSP: Yes, but they're not called Métis down there.

RP: You see there's no Métis down there. They're all treaty.

GSP: All treaty.

SD: Treaty or white.

RP: Yes, there's no Métis.

GSP: No, Métis, and they all had land.

RP: Both of us, we got relatives down there. But they're considered Indians. And they're Métis.

GSP: They speak the same language.

RP: You go over there and you're considered Indians.

GSP: Like if we go there, you could move there.

RP: Yep, you got dual citizenship you know?

SD: Yes.

GSP: And what was I going to say? I keep forgetting what I'm going to say.

SD: Roy, did your parents always live in Crescent Lake?

RP: As far as I can remember, yes. Yes, well we moved out of there about—

GSP: In the '60s.

RP: When the mine opened, they got everybody a job there. And then they had to move out to work at the—

GSP: At the mine.

RP: Esterhazy Mine because there's no way to get up and down. So, they had to move in. When they did move, they tore all the houses down—every one of them. So, they couldn't move back there.

GSP: It was the only way of getting us out of there, I guess. When we were living in Crescent Lake, this family came from Manitoba, the Brazeaus, and my dad let them use the place since they had no place to live. They had no place to go. We had already moved into Yorkton, so he let them stay there for a while, and they're still staying there matter of fact.

RP: Yes.

GSP: That's a long while.

RP: Yes, they're still there.

GSP: The son is still there.

RP: The old man passed away.

GSP: But then we lost our Crescent Lake lot.

RP: Yes.

GSP: We had a school there. We lost a school there. We had a church there.

RP: They moved the church out.

GSP: How long did we were live there? It must have been about—how long did we live there?

SD: Well, that's the next question.

RP: A lot of years.

SD: What other Métis families lived in Crescent Lake?

GSP: Oh man there was, well they were all related more or less. There were Flamonts, Pelletiers, St. Pierres, Brazeaus, Allarys.

RP: Allarys.

GSP: Allarys. Delormes,

RP: Delormes, Martineaus

GSP: Martineaus. So, anything else? Anybody else that you can think of?

RP: I don't think so.

GSP: There were some, what do you call that fellow who lived in Bercier Bush? The Berciers lived in that bush.

RP: I think so.

GSP: Yes, that fellow used to live there. They used to call that little bush, Bercier Bush. He lived there with quite a few families. Yes, but besides the sons and daughters and families that were there, there were a lot of families out there actually.

SD: Did any non-Métis live in that community?

GSP: Well—

RP: Can't really say.

GSP: Martineau was white, but he was married to—

RP: Yes, to a Métis.

GSP: To a Métis. So, I guess you know he was white. He owned a store there. "Martineau Store," we used to call it, and he owned that store.

RP: And my mom was his auntie.

GSP: Yes.

RP: And she was Métis.

GSP: Yes, that's the only one. Delormes, they were Métis?

RP: Yes.

GSP: That would be the only one I could think of in that community besides the teachers. There were teachers that lived there, too. They had a house built for the teachers.

SD: Did either of you guys live in any other road allowance communities?

RP: Not me. Not a road allowance community.

GSP: Not that I know of.

SD: Did any of the people in your road allowance community own their own property?

GSP: Yes, my uncle George owned his own house and place.

RP: My godmother Azure. Mrs. Azure lived on her own.

GSP: Oh Azures. Yes, that's the one that I forgot because—

RP: My godmother owned her own land there.

GSP: And the Allarys owned their own land there. .

RP: Allarys owned their own. But we didn't really own the place.

GSP: I don't think so.

RP: No.

GSP: Not that I know of.

RP: They signed a lease with the government.

GSP: One hundred years.

RP: Yes, and that—

GSP: As long as you lived there it was yours.

RP: That lease never expired either, but we still had to go.

SD: How did your family and other Métis families make a living?

RP: Hunting, trapping.

GSP: Hunting, trapping. Put gardens in the summertime, a community garden.

RP: Going out to work with farmers.

GSP: They had a community garden where people got together and made a big garden, and they all worked it. And they all shared it at the end.

RP: That's one thing about the Métis people in our community. They helped each other out. Like my dad was a good hunter. He used to go out, kill two, three deer, and then he'd share the meat. He didn't hunt for his own family only. He'd share everything with everybody. They shared. They knew how to share. It's a lot different nowadays.

RP: Nobody shares as much anymore.

GSP: If you were short something, you would go to your neighbour, you don't have to worry if they had it.

RP: Yes, that's right. If you run out of some stuff in the house, you'd go to your neighbour, and they'd give it to you. They help each other out. Nowadays, you can't find that any place.

GSP: Times have changed.

RP: Times really changed, really bad. To this day, I always say we have peace here now maybe, but I'd rather have them days back again than live the way we're living now. Because in them times, there was no such thing as drugs, and there were no suicides like now among our own people. That's why I'd rather be living in that era, in that time than now.

GSP: In them days, families were families. Relatives were relatives. They all got along. Today, you have family, but you don't see them for months, for years.

RP: That's right, they don't—

GSP: They don't visit. They don't. It's just a whole new world from what we lived in.

RP: On New Year's Day, they used to go and visit each other and everything.

Nowadays, none of us does that anymore.

GSP: We lost that. We have one doing that and that's it.

RP: Yes.

GSP: One person. In them days, everybody used to go from house-to-house.

RP: Yes.

GSP: A celebration for a whole week.

RP: Go with sleighs and horses. It was beautiful.

GSP: Sleighs, horses, and people were walking all over. Twelve o'clock at night. They were going from house to house.

RP: Right at midnight, they'd go.

GSP: That was the celebration in them days on Christmas and New Year's.

RP: Heard the bells on the horses, and you knew somebody was coming. It was nice.

GSP: Today, you don't have that. It's a shame actually how things have changed so much. It's all forgotten in the world that we are living in.

RP: I wouldn't say that it changed for the better for us.

GSP: Not for us anyway. The young people don't know any different. Like my son I teach him that because he asks me, about how we lived and what we did. I taught him how to speak a little bit of Michif, and he's really into it. He knows what we went through because he asks me all the time what we went through.

RP: We had hardships that they don't have now. You don't see anybody burning coal oil lamps now and that's what we had to use. And our bathroom was outside. You didn't go in the house, know what I mean?

SD: Yes

RP: Oh man, it's a lot different. Nowadays, you'll tell the kids that, and "They'll tell you are you crazy."

GSP: That's right.

SD: So, you guys would give up an indoor bathroom to have—

GSP: Oh yes.

RP: Oh, for sure. I'd rather be out there any time.

GSP: That was the good life. We didn't know any better then. We didn't know this life that we're in now. So, it didn't matter to us. Like 40 below, we're outside skating. We're outside playing.

RP: Oh yes.

GSP: Forty below, you know? We had a big lake—

RP: We had a big lake.

GSP: —Right beside our house that was right in between our houses.

RP: We'd live across from each other.

GSP: We used to clear it out and we'd skate there all night. How full it was. And we didn't have the proper clothing they do now. And we didn't have the proper skates. I was wearing my brother's skates which were too big. I wore a lot of socks.

RP: That's when we used to melt a lot of snow—

GSP: But it didn't matter to us.

RP: —You know, for water. And we'd go out and cut our wood. Had to cut wood and it was cold and you got the Swede saw, oh man.

GSP: For Christmas, you'd make sure you had enough wood and that water was hauled from snow.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Or ice, whatever, you know? You had to have enough for the whole holidays. Your parents made sure you did all your chores. Then you could go play. But you made sure—

RP: In other words, it was a rougher way of living. But it was a nicer way of living. Nowadays, they couldn't do that.

GSP: They couldn't survive.

RP: No, they wouldn't survive.

GSP: They wouldn't know what to do.

RP: Like you ask them to go hunting or go get something to eat from the bush, they wouldn't be able to. We used to set snares for rabbits. You can't find children now that will try to set snares for rabbits.

GSP: My dad—

RP: A lot of them wouldn't even eat them anymore.

GSP: —For my birthday, I was born October 1st, my dad killed a deer every birthday until I was 17 years old. Yes, every year he went out hunting and he'd kill a deer.

SD: What other kind of resources did your families harvest? Like deer, rabbit?

GSP: Muskrats.

RP: Muskrats, gophers.

GSP: They used to sell it, like sell the fur.

RP: And gophers.

GSP: They used to eat the meat. Like muskrats, they'd sell the fur. They'd bring it to town and would sell the fur. And they'd buy their flour or lard. Things you needed back home. You couldn't make or anything like that.

RP: You ever eat muskrat?

SD: No, I had rabbit.

RP: Oh, that muskrat was good.

GSP: We lived on that through the year when we had nothing else.

RP: Oh, my mom used to boil it.

GSP: Dad used to kill muskrat every day.

RP: Mom used to boil it first until the meat fell off. They used to boil it first and then put it in the oven with onions. Oh man that was good.

GSP: Well, everything was pure in them days, you know? Not like today.

RP: Nowadays—

GSP: They pollute everything.

RP: You tell kids that, and nowadays they just make a face.

GSP: That's right. Yes, it's a whole new world out there.

RP: Oh yes, compared to how we were raised.

GSP: You didn't have computers then. We didn't even have a TV. The only TV we had was—

RP: In school.

GSP: In school or—

RP: We all had to go watch the TV there.

GSP: What do you call it, Barfit.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Yes, a white farmer, an old couple used to live up on the hill.

RP: A white family.

GSP: They used to let us watch TV once in a while. But he was pretty mean. Sometimes he didn't want us, he'd let his bulls out.

RP: There's a guy that used to bring movies out there at one time. He used to bring movies. And put a movie on and everybody would go and ten cents or five cents to watch the movie.

SD: At this farmer's house? Oh, at the school?

RP: No, it was at the school, yes. He used to bring them down.

GSP: I remember seeing my first Abbot and Costello.

RP: Abbott and Costello. It was nice.

GSP: And Sunday in the summertime, everybody used to get together in the afternoon at school and play ball.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Everybody went there.

RP: And make more or less a picnic out of it.

GSP: Yes, and play ball all afternoon.

RP: And the reserve was just on the land next to there. That was reserve land there. And the _____ kids were from there. They're Indians.

GSP: They used to come to our school.

RP: And we used to have dances from house-to-house at different times. This week, one house and next week, a different house. We had dances like that.

GSP: Especially around this time of the year.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Christmas and New Year's.

RP: Oh yes.

GSP: Threw everything out of the house, just the stove.

RP: We had some fairly good fiddlers, too.

GSP: They played the fiddle. That was all they had.

RP: Then you should have been jigging.

GSP: A lot of jiggers. My mom used to jig and her sister.

SD: So, was anything else harvested besides those animals you mentioned, gophers, muskrats, deer, rabbit? Was there any other kind of animal or berries and stuff like that?

RP: Oh yes.

GSP: For canning and stuff like that?

SD: **Anything, everything.**

GSP: Saskatoons.

RP: I remember about 3 or 4 miles from Crescent Lake there was a place there. They called it the "Gravel Pit."

GSP: Gravel Pit

RP: Yes, there used to be Saskatoons there and raspberries. We'd hitch up horses, and we used to go pick up there. You know, we had to go through a little ravine. It was beautiful there. Just for berries, a lot of berries.

GSP: Oh yes. In the summertime

RP: Used to go up there just to go pick berries.

GSP: Hitch up the team of horses.

RP: They used to do a lot of camping, too.

GSP: Camping in different areas, pick some place for the winter.

RP: They did a lot of canning.

GSP: My mom used to can fish.

RP: The time of the year when the ducks start moulting, that's when we used to go out and get a bunch of ducks, and then my mom used to can those for winter, canned duck. Oh, that was lovely.

GSP: That was good.

RP: Yes, we used to get a bunch. We'd take the dog out and he'd run to the edge, where they couldn't fly and the dog would get them.

GSP: The little ducks that couldn't fly yet. He used to chase them all around.

SD: **What time of year was that?**

GSP: That would be—

RP: When they start moulting, they can't fly. The bigger ducks even, some of them can't fly.

SD: **Moulting.**

RP: Yes, they lose their feathers on their—

SD: **Oh, what time of year is that?**

RP: That's in the summer anyways.

GSP: In the summer.

SD: **Okay.**

RP: And we used to go picking eggs, mudhen eggs and duck eggs.

GSP: End of August.

SD: **Okay, what time of year did you—**

GSP: In the fall, about August, September.

RP: Yes.

GSP: It was around that time because the little ducks couldn't fly.

RP: Yes.

GSP: They'd be swimming in the lake, and they'd go in there with just our pants and chase them because they couldn't fly. And then their mom and dad can them.

RP: Yes, the eggs were very good.

SD: Oh, I bet.

RP: We would get duck eggs and mudhen eggs.

GSP: All kinds of eggs. Mudhen eggs and duck eggs. Those were good.

RP: Anything that we could survive with.

SD: Any medicines? Did people pick roots or any kind of medicines?

RP: My dad used to make medicine.

GSP: His dad was a medicine man.

SD: Okay.

GSP: He used to make all kinds of medicine for different things, from roots and different—

RP: I know this is going to sound funny, but I never saw so many guys there after all these bigger guys go to Yorkton to a dance, and then they came back. They'd come and see my dad because they got the dose. And my dad had to make medicine for that. Holy smokes, I never saw so many young fellas coming there to come get that stuff from dad.

SD: Because they drank too much?

RP: No, they got the dose from the lady, you know?

GSP: They got, like herpes, that sickness.

SD: So, they'd catch it, a venereal disease as they call it?

RP: Yes, and then my dad would give them medicine to—

GSP: He used to make all kinds of medicine.

SD: Really?

RP: My dad helped a lot of guys with his medicine.

SD: Wow.

GSP: He had medicine for toothaches.

RP: Like roots and stuff. He used to go get seneca roots.

GSP: Seneca roots. They used to dig seneca roots.

SD: But did you guys use them?

GSP: Yes, oh definitely. That's what we'd dig, 12 miles south, on horses.

SD: How did you use them?

RP: I don't know my dad used to boil them and make some kind of tea.

GSP: Yes, something to drink.

SD: Out of seneca roots?

GSP: Yes, seneca roots. They used to sell them. Yes, that's how they used to sell them.

RP: That's another way they used to make money.

GSP: They used to go just about all summer, camping all over during the summer holidays. You could walk into a farmer's yard, and he wouldn't say anything. You could stay in his yard, and they would give you something to eat. They'd give you chickens or milk or something like that. Today, they'll shoot you if you go in their yard.

RP: But then again, there was lots of work then. The farmers used to come and would get

some guys from Crescent Lake to go and pick roots or pick stones. The farmers used to hire us quite a bit.

SD: So, your dad did a lot of medicine then?

RP: Yes.

SD: You don't quite remember what other plants he used other than seneca root?

RP: I don't know what they call them, big grey plants. La michinn parisonne they call it in our language, but I don't know how to say it in English.

GSP: L'aarbr la denn, too. I remember that. How would you call it in—

SD: What was the other one?

RP: La michinn parisonne.

SD: La michinn parisonne.

RP: Yes.

SD: What is that?

RP: I don't know how to say it in English. It's grey and it comes out from the ground in bundles, and my dad used to pick that. And he'd tie it up and everything. Then he'd boil it. It was for fever, stuff like that.

GSP: Yes, it cures fevers and stomach aches, just about anything.

SD: So, any other medicine people in the community?

GSP: Oh yes, there was—

RP: There was a couple, yes. And he used to use those big leaves from the water, those ones from the slough. He used to pick those if you cut your hand or something whatever. He used to put that and bread down. First, you'd put bread over it, like soaked in milk. Rinse it with milk and then you'd wrap it up. And it would keep the infection out and besides it would suck all the bad stuff out.

GSP: You forgot the Langers used to live there, too. Mrs. Cecile Langan was a medicine woman, too.

RP: But just with her hands. Like if you got a real bad toothache, she'd just come and rub your cheek. She done that to me like she used to just rub her hand over it and your toothache was gone, and it never came back.

SD: And you experienced that hey? She did that?

RP: Yes, she had powers like the 6th—

GSP: 7th girl.

RP: Yes, the 7th girl.

GSP: Or 7th boy has a special power.

RP: She was the 7th daughter. Her mom was the 7th, too. And they got powers from there.

GSP: Yes, special powers.

SD: So, 7th child?

GSP: Yes, right.

SD: Or 7th daughter?

RP: The 7th daughter or son.

GSP: It didn't matter, as long as you're the 7th. You have to be the 7th to have those powers.

RP: And one of the parents had to be the 7th.

GSP: Old Alec Perrault used to be that, too.

RP: Yes, but he didn't live with it. He didn't live in our area.

GSP: He lived there for a while.

RP: Yes, not very long.

GSP: Not very long, but they came and lived there because I know they used to live right behind us over here.

RP: They moved to that road allowance by Esterhazy.

GSP: They lived in a road allowance.

RP: Not far from Esterhazy there was a road allowance, they moved there. They built a house there. And old Grumbo he moved to a road allowance, so he built a house on the road allowance.

SD: What was his name?

GSP: Grumbo.

RP: Yes.

SD: Grumbo.

RP: G-R-U-M-B-O.

SD: Okay, gotcha. Grumbo.

RP: We're all related to him. And I know the old man built a house right on the road allowance. But you notice nowadays they even block off the road allowance? They even fence right across the road allowance. A lot of those road allowances that we hunted on, they put a fence right across them. They're not supposed to do that because that's government land.

SD: You have a lease on that.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Well, that old Perrault used to be good too. He was a 7th son, too. He had special powers.

SD: Of like?

GSP: Medicine.

SD: He'd help a person just by rubbing where they hurt or—

GSP: Yes, by touching you.

RP: For your back and he'd just touch you like that.

SD: So, two people that you know of had that ability.

RP: Yes, that power.

SD: Do you have a name for that at all?

RP: I don't really know.

SD: Just, no name for it?

GSP: Special powers.

SD: Fair enough.

RP: That's what they'd call it.

SD: Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items?

RP: Not really.

GSP: They'd sew a lot. My mom, that's all she did was sew.

RP: My uncle's daughters did it, the older ones. My uncle, Dan Pelletier, was my dad's half-brother. He lived across the road but that was his own land. His daughters used to bead, but they weren't on the crown land. He owned that land.

SD: He owned a piece of land?

RP: Because he was in WWI and WWII. And he bought the land that he lived on.

SD: Okay.

GSP: He was in the reserve area. He belonged there.

RP: He wasn't from the reserve, though. His wife was from there.

GSP: Yes, his wife was from there.

RP: One of those Fort Qu'Appelle reserves. She was from Muscowpetung, yes

SD: Do you want to say anything else about how you celebrated special occasions like Christmas, New Years', Easter?

RP: Well to us, New Year's was a day. That's when everybody saw each other. Well Christmas day, it was different because each family stayed alone. But New Year's Day, that's when everybody would get together. That's why I say that was our day. So New Year's Day—

GSP: Yes, we'd be celebrating.

RP: Yes.

SD: Did anyone speak Michif?

RP: Everybody, everybody.

GSP: Everybody did.

RP: Everybody spoke it.

SD: Do you guys speak Michf?

RP: Oh, yes. I never forgot that. My wife, she's Saulteaux Indian from Kamsack. She understands some of the words I say now because I tell her what they mean, and then when I say something, she'll ask me in English what I said. I say something in my language, and she'll ask me in English what I wanted. (Michif, 31:48) "You know, pass the bread." She takes the bread and passes it to me, she's catching on. She knows what it means, but she can't speak it.

SD: Do either of you know any traditional Métis stories or songs?

RP: Well just the stories my dad told us.

GSP: Our parents used to tell us all these stories.

RP: Like the stories dad told us.

SD: Would you care to share the story?

RP: Well, the one I'll tell you it's not really a story. This happened to him and that happened where we were from, Crescent Lake.

SD: Yes, sure.

RP: Not too far from where we lived there, straight across there was a few little bushes. And my dad went hunting. He was always hunting, my dad. So, he went hunting and, he was coming home. It was getting dark. There was a little willow patch. You know, how little willow grows around the prairies? And he saw a deer. So, he shot the deer. And he said, "I knew I hit him hard. He just went into that little scrub bush. So, I figured I'll go get him and take him home." So, when he got to the bush. All, he said was "the fur, and there were sparks coming out of the fur." He said there was no meat. That's what he said. We were scared to go up there after that. But he told us that was the truth, and that, "It won't happen to you." "It happened to me because of something I did wrong," he said. But he didn't know what. You cannot shoot an animal if you can't find them. You can't leave them like that. You can't do that. He said, "You've got to find the animal no matter how many days in a row you go to look for them as long as you find them." He was never one to leave something that was wounded. That was his belief. And he figured that maybe he done that, and that was why it happened. So, I don't really know if that's why it happened. But he swore up and down. He never lied. My dad never lied. He swore up and down that's what happened. That's why he told us never ever to go up there where he had this happen

SD: How about yourself Gerald? Any stories you can think of?

GSP: I was just trying to think—

RP: Oh, you know anything about they call li roogaroo?

GSP: Li roogaroo, yes that's what I could think of.

SD: I've heard about the roogaroo, yes.

RP: Yes, they've seen those from where we come from.

SD: Do you remember any specific stories?

RP: Yes, well my uncle. Well no, this is a ghost story. My uncle Wilfred had this happen to him. And my grandfather, my momma's dad, saw it too. He saw him too. But I guess my uncle Wilfred went hunting rabbits and there was an old big house. He went by it. He went hunting rabbits. He shot a few rabbits. And he was coming home, and all of a sudden there was a big light on that big house, but there was nobody living there. And he happened to look that way to see what the heck was going on. There was a dance going on, and the people that were dancing were headless. They had no heads, and so he went home right away. He ran fast. He went to my grandfather and told him what he saw. My grandfather didn't believe him. "Nah," he said, "you're just seeing things." "You come with me," he told his dad. My grandpa went with him and as soon as they got by the house the lights came on. My grandfather saw the same thing, the very same thing. There were headless people dancing, and you could hear the music he said and everything.

SD: Wow.

RP: I don't know. It was a great big house.

SD: And that was your dad's brother?

RP: My uncle, my momma's brother, and that happened to their dad. It happened to him. But my grandpa saw it himself when he went. He didn't believe him.

SD: Two people saw it.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Remember Roy, years ago it was on New Year's Day too that this happened when they saw that man walking by the school. We were coming from my grandpa's. Everybody used to meet at my grandpa's place. They used to meet at twelve o'clock, at midnight on New Year's Eve. Everybody used to meet there. Then when people were going home, or going to different places, they saw this man walking. He was big they said. While he walked, they followed him a ways. There were no tracks. I don't think there were tracks. All of a sudden, he just disappeared, and then a lot of people saw it. So, they figured it was a, what do you call it? Trying to think of that name they said—

RP: Whittigoo?

GSP: Yes, I think so, a whittigoo.

RP: Whittigoo.

SD: That's a scary one.

GSP: Yes, but these things used to happen years ago. I remember my dad used to tell us stories. He told us that he used to come home from visiting or playing cards someplace, and he'd be walking or riding his horse, and there'd be somebody following him, all the way. He'd wait for them and he'd stop. He'd race his horse, and that one would just stay up with him. And they got close to the house and then he disappeared. How many times that happened to him, I don't know. He kept that to himself, these stories.

RP: Strange things happened long ago, what they're talking about.

SD: What are your best memories about living in that Métis road allowance community?

GSP: It's the families.

RP: People helping each other.

GSP: Yes, everything as one.

RP: Yes, living in a colony that got along.

GSP: There was no hatred, and there was no greed. There was none of that. If you wanted something, you would go to your neighbour and you'd get it. That attitude.

RP: Yes, you got a lot of help

GSP: And everybody visited. Everybody would visit and would play cards.

RP: Everybody was friends. They got along. That's the thing I liked about it, the togetherness.

GSP: And I guess that's what we older people miss nowadays because we don't have that anymore.

RP: No.

GSP: And we grew up with that sort of living. Families were families. Even your own families nowadays, they're all over the place. They don't talk to one another, and don't see one another. In them days, everybody was together.

RP: We didn't have power or anything like that. No power. No such thing.

GSP: It was the closeness. We had each other as families. And that's the way we were brought up to have that respect for our elders, to have that ability to carry on. They brought us up to have that oneness with ourselves. To be able to associate with our own people, which was good for us because I know that's what I try to do with my family, with my young ones. "You're not alone in this world. You have family." And that respect. You got to have that respect.

RP: Like even now, when I drive by the old school, memories just come flooding back to me.

SD: Are there any bad memories that you'd like to share?

GSP: Well, it's an everyday thing because those memories that we have them today anyway.

RP: They are good memories.

GSP: You have deaths in the families. We didn't have bad memories because everybody got along. If you had a bad memory, I guess the only thing was death in your family, and the sicknesses that went on because, especially in the wintertime, there's no way of getting into town. In them days, you had snow banks that high.

RP: Oh yes.

GSP: I know my dad used to drive a team of horses and the snow was so high that you couldn't get through.

RP: That's where my grandmother, my dad's mother, passed away, Crescent Lake. She was old, about 90 years old.

GSP: Yes, she was pretty old. I can't think of any bad memories. I guess there were some days if you think about it now. All the hardships we went through, no water, no food sometimes.

RP: Oh yes, that was tough.

GSP: But we had, in them days—

RP: Rough times.

GSP: Them days you had no choice. You had to get it. Nobody was going to come give it to you. You had to go out there and get it yourself.

RP: Sometimes, it got really cold in the wintertime, but we still had to go to school.

GSP: Yes, water was frozen.

RP: We were sent to school.

GSP: Your bannock was frozen.

RP: Yes.

GSP: If you ran out of wood, if you didn't bring wood in, at night, you went out there and sawed wood for the morning.

RP: That's right. You had to have everything ready.

GSP: If you didn't get it ready in the morning, you knew whose turn it was. You'd go out there and get it.

SD: So, whose job was that to take care of the—

GSP: We'd all take turns.

RP: That was our job. Me and my older brother Mervin, it was our job. We took turns. Dad made either him or me start a fire in the morning. It was so cold that you could see the frost on the logs.

GSP: You'd go to sleep at night and you could see holes in the roof.

RP: Bad.

SD: Wow.

GSP: And we didn't have electric heat. If that fire went out, it was out. And it was cold. And it used to stay cold like this for about two weeks at a time before you had a break.

RP: Yes.

GSP: And snow! Mervin has some good stories. He can tell some good stories.

RP: And mom, she used to make feather ticks. After we'd kill ducks, she'd save all the feathers. She'd make feather ticks for us for winter. They were warm. They were really warm.

SD: Feather what?

RP: Feather ticks.

GSP: Feather ticks, blankets.

RP: They're like blankets, but they're stuffed with feathers.

GSP: Stuffed with feathers.

SD: Feather ticks, and that's a feather blanket?

RP: Yes.

GSP: Filled with feathers.

RP: Man, they were warm.

GSP: Yes, dad used to get up in the morning, check his traps in the wintertime or get one of the boys. We'd go along with him, check all the traps for muskrats. When he had enough of them, he'd go into town.

SD: How were the Métis treated in your community?

RP: We stuck to ourselves. There was actually—

GSP: In them days, even the farmers got along with the Métis because they needed us to work for them.

RP: Yes.

GSP: Everybody got along. That's what I would say because I didn't see anybody having disagreements or anything.

SD: Did your family encounter racism from the larger community?

RP: Not really.

GSP: We used to play ball in the summertime. We took all over the place to play ball. The teacher used to take us.

RP: And we used to go curling.

GSP: We used to go curling.

RP: Against, the white people. They weren't prejudiced against us

GSP: I didn't find them prejudiced against us

RP: No, we got along good.

GSP: Good. When I moved into town, I found that out.

RP: That was different then.

GSP: It was a whole different story then because I went to school at St. Alphonsus. Catholic School. And I think I was the first Métis student that ever went to school there. I had a rough time, but I played hockey and I played ball. And even my own teammates used to go against me and would call me "Indian.". And I'd keep telling them, "I'm not an Indian." But there was prejudice there and like there is today.

RP: But see what made the difference was that we're okay as long as we're in our own places. But it was okay to play against them, like we got along. But once you move to their places, well—

GSP: Then you get involved.

RP: Then the true colours come out then.

GSP: Then there's racism.

SD: So, can you think of any specific examples of that? Only if you feel comfortable sharing. You don't need to do this.

GSP: Oh yes, I can share a lot with you. From when I first moved into town, I went to school at St. Alphonsus. So, I get on the hockey rink and get called an "Indian." "Look at that Indian go. He's like a savage." They'd piss me off and then I'd get mad. And then look out. I used to be able to skate better than them.

RP: Oh, you could tell whites were prejudiced anyway before that. I took my Grade 9 in Regina. And the government helped me out to take that in Regina for Grade 9. They didn't put me where the white people were renting. There was three Métis and Indians in that class. There were no whites. I knew right there that, well they're prejudiced. They don't want one of us with the white people, so they just stuck us all together.

GSP: Yes, the only time I found it difficult was one time I went into town, and the only actual incident that I had that was really bad was when I first started off in school there. Matter of fact, I only took my Grade 8 there, and I quit because it was getting pretty bad. Racism was bad in those days. So, I quit when I was in Grade 8. I went to work in Alberta. Then I finished off when I came back, I did Grade 10, 11 and 12, through upgrading.

SD: When did people leave your road allowance community and why?

GSP: Well, we left because dad hit the jackpot. We got money, well a cheque. He got money from the States and bought a house in town here. But these people were the ones that were more or less brought out.

RP: Like I said, they got the Métis jobs, pretty well all of them. In Esterhazy, they had a potash mine, and although they didn't know anything about the work, they still took them. And then they had no way of getting to work, so they had to move up there. So, they moved up there. After they moved, they tore all the houses down. So, after that, they didn't really want the Métis there anymore. They tore all the houses down so they couldn't go back there. Even if they wanted to, they couldn't come back. It would have been okay if they stayed, and they didn't listen. They didn't go then. They still would have had a place. But they wanted to work.

GSP: But there must have been a reasoning behind that because the government had to be involved or the church or somebody. Because why would they move them all out and tear the houses down? They wanted that land back, I guess. I don't know what the reasoning was. People never had the opportunity to move back to their homes.

RP: Actually, I don't want to name any names mind you, but actually it was the priest who brought that deal to them, to move to Esterhazy. He got them jobs and everything. So, it was the priest that done it.

GSP: And what I heard, he was the one that went and tore the houses down.

RP: Yes, he was the one who ordered the houses torn down. So why did he do that? Why did he get them jobs and then tear the houses down? I couldn't understand.

GSP: So that's how we lost our land.

SD: What year was this? Like when did this happen?

GSP: Had to be in the '60s.

RP: Oh yes.

SD: Early, late '60s?

RP: Early.

SD: Mid- '60s?

RP: Early '60s.

GSP: Early '60s, I guess because it was '58 when we moved into town.

RP: Oh yes, it was in the '60s.

GSP: Because it was just shortly after that when everybody started moving and working in the mines and moving into town here.

SD: And so, back again to your parents and your grandparents. Your dad was originally from...?

GSP: The States.

SD: The States, and so was yours?

RP: Yes.

SD: But your moms were...

RP: From here.

GSP: From here, Saskatchewan.

SD: Okay, from the Crescent Lake area.

GSP: Well, the Crooked Lake area.

SD: And your grandparents where were they originally from?

GSP: They were from Crooked Lake.

SD: Not your dad's parents?

GSP: My mom and my grandma were from a reserve. My grandfather was from Crooked Lake, Cowessess. Just above Crooked Lake there's a reserve there.

SD: Cowessess.

GSP: Cowessess, yes. That where she was—

RP: My grandma married an American.

SD: Oh okay.

RP: She was from up here too. And actually, she was from Manitoba, my grandma, my dad's mom.

SD: Okay.

RP: And then my grandpa he was from here.

SD: Okay.

RP: In fact, he had a farm between Langenburg and Esterhazy. He was renting a farm there. And mom said he had such a beautiful crop that one year and the hail came down on it and he lost everything. So he was up here for most of his life.

SD: Was either of your families involved in the 1885 Resistance?

GSP: My great-great-grandpa.

SD: Who was he?

GSP: A Flamont. I forget what his first name was.

SD: Where was that he was?

GSP: He was in Batoche. He was with the Batoche people there when they fought. My grandpa remembered it too, but he was too young.

SD: What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance?

GSP: What do you mean what happened to them?

SD: Like your great, great-grandpa was there in the Resistance and then what happened to him?

GSP: Well, I wouldn't say he was in the Resistance. I thought he was. This is what I come to know: he was involved in it because when I was reading up about it, his name was there. And I have a family tree. So, I don't know if he fought with them or whatever. I wouldn't go as far as saying that, but I know he was around at that time.

SD: And yourself?

RP: I don't really know. Once I went to Batoche when it first came out, and that was the last time I went to Batoche. It wasn't that I wasn't interested, it was that I didn't have the money. I didn't have a way to get down there.

GSP: I went to a Michif conference in Abottsford, British Columbia, and I met some relatives over there that I never knew that I had. They had a family tree. This is where they showed me, right down to the 1800s. I think it started from the 1700s matter of fact. They were going to send me a copy of that all the way down. That's where we were connected as relatives, through the Flamonts. Yes, that's a long time ago.

SD: Did or does anyone in your families serve in the military?

RP: Yes, my uncle went to both wars.

SD: Really? Now what was his name?

RP: Dan.

SD: Dan?

RP: Daniel Pelletier.

GSP: When he died, he was about 101.

RP: He was about a 101.

GSP: He was 101 when he passed away.

SD: When about was this?

GSP: Oh, a few years back.

SD: Anyone else that served in the military?

GSP: My brother was in the army, but he wasn't in the war. He was in professional duty. His name is Edwin. I don't know if you know him, he was involved with GDI.

SD: Edwin?

GSP: Edwin, yes.

GSP: Yes, he was in Germany for three years or six years, I think. He was not in the war, I think but he was in professional duty.

SD: Was anybody in your family involved with the Métis Society?

RP: Yes, pretty well all of us.

GSP: Since about 1968.

RP: Pretty well all of us.

GSP: Oh yes, there was a lot of stories about that.

SD: Do you care to share anything about that?

RP: I don't know. I was the president of the Métis Local, and I used to go to meetings there. The only time I happened to be there, all I heard about was arguing, arguing about this and that. And it ended up nowhere. We just ended up with a stalemate.

We didn't end up anywhere. No headway at. It was just a big—

GSP: The '60s.

RP: And some people just went there for the money. They'd just go there. They'd get paid. They wouldn't even stay for the meeting. They'd claim, and they'd go home. And I noticed that a couple times when they went there, they got paid. At least they could've stayed and listened to what the people had to say, to find out what's going on. This way they don't find out what's going on. They just took money and headed back home again. That was ridiculous what the Métis Society was doing. That's the way I look at it at.

GSP: In the '60s when I was involved with the Métis, I was living in Moose Jaw. I was the housing manager there for the Métis Society. And we used to go to sit-ins like when Jim Sinclair was the president. He's passed away, a couple years ago. But he was our president at that time. And we used to have sit-ins. If they didn't have a sit-in at the welfare office, we used to take a bunch of people and go sit. Set up blockades. We used to go way up north and do blockades. And lately, things like that don't happen. People don't get involved. These were the old days when you wanted something done you did it. Nowadays, all they do is like he said. All they do is argue at a meeting. That's all they do. And see who can get the most money out of it. So that's the way I look at it. We had our own little program here like when I was sitting on the GDI (Gabriel Dumont Institute) Board. We used to do some in the Michif language. Everybody used to teach it. We set it up ourselves. We formed a group of our own. We used to get help from GDI. They sent us some money, and we used to have music lessons with fiddles and guitars. Teach the kids their language. We got involved in that without the Métis Society. We did it on our own. That's about it. Well, I belong because I'm a member. I used to be president for quite a long time. I used to be a vice-president too. I sat on housing boards and stuff like that. Lately, that kind of just diminished. They took that away from us, too.

RP: When you see too much of that it turns you off.

GSP: You know things are not going the way they should with the Métis Society. They could do great things. I'll tell you exactly what my grandpa told us when we were smaller. Mushom used to tell us, "Nooshishim," that's what he called us

grandchildren, "one day, you know, money is going to rule this world." That's what he said that money was going to run this world. Not anything else, money he said.

Greed, he said. And today, you just look at it.

RP: Exactly what happened.

GSP: Exactly what happened.

SD: He didn't happen to say what we should do when that happens?

GSP: He didn't say much, but he did say that. But I think it would be a little too late now. People got that in their minds already. It's in the system. I don't think they'd get rid of it now anyways. There's too much out there. There's too much technology, there's too much. Look it, even our government. Look at the Senate. Look at the prime minister. It just goes down, and where do you think our people get it from?

SD: Do you have anything else that you would like to share about living in a Métis road allowance?

GSP: I loved it.

RP: I loved it as well.

GSP: And I wish I was back there.

RP: I'd trade today back for yesterday.

GSP: Especially, this time of the year, it was heavenly. You know, you've got your parents, they were always doing something. Your dad and them were out there hunting and fishing and getting things ready.

RP: While we're sawing wood.

GSP: And your mom is out there cooking and getting everything ready for a big meal. For New Year's. Making enough pies. Making enough everything. Make sure everything is there. And when you come in the house you can just smell, you just couldn't wait.

RP: Everybody ate until they were full.

GSP: You only got this once a year. We don't have it everyday like we do nowadays. Every year, it was a treat for us young kids to eat pie. To eat necessities that are out there everyday nowadays, it's not a treat anymore.

RP: We never had pie everyday.

GSP: And then at night time, there was no booze involved. They'd clear the furniture out and they'd dance from one house to the next for a whole week. You'd be lying underneath the bed looking at people dancing and jigging. How could you trade something like that for nowadays? Sure, we had it rough. We had to go out there and work. We had to go at 40 below zero, and cut wood, chop wood, haul wood, haul snow, haul water. But that was our daily lives.

RP: You send somebody out there now in that cold winter, they'd freeze.

GSP: Yes, it was our daily lives, and we were used to it. Now when I have to work when it's minus 20, I figure I'm going to freeze. But we were used to it, and we got to

enjoy it. We didn't think we enjoyed it in them days. But now looking back, I wish I was there again.

SD: Thank you Gerald and thank you Roy.

GSP: You're welcome. It was good.

P: You're welcome.

SD: I appreciate that.

RP: And I was very pleased to meet you, very nice to meet you.

GSP: Yes, it was very nice to meet you.