Norm Fleury (NF) Interview – Stella (SL) and Jim Lavalley (JL) and Maurice Ledoux (ML).

JL. My name is Jim Lavalley.

SL. And my name is Stella, Stella Lavalley. Before I was married, I was a Flammand. My mom is Alice Pelletier and my dad was Michael Flammand. My parents were born in Crooked Lake.

JL. I remember my grandfather. He used to tell is a lot of things, a lot of stories. He was involved in the Louis Riel Resistance. My grandfather got a leg injury from falling off his horse and he tried to straighten out his leg himself but it healed crooked.

JL. My grandfather was 104 when he died.

JL. In those days, they just traveled with Red River Carts. They didn't have any money so they had to live off of the land. When they traveled some of them were on horseback, and some of them walked, oh and they even used wagons also in those days.

JL. When they were in the, with Louis Riel, they had to run away because they had no more ammunition. When he was running away on horseback, his horse tripped and fell, and fell on him and that's how he broke his leg. And my grandfather with his broken leg crawled into the bush; he was there for three days.

JL. I remember my grandfather really well. I used to stay with my grandfather. He had a bit of hearing problem, but he used to tell us lots of stories. He was telling me those stories that you were talking about.

JL. My grandfather also spoke French. When those French people ["*Kenayaens*" = French Canadians] used to come to ask him to tell them those stories and talk about things that happened a long time ago – also the legends. They'd bring him some tobacco, and when he was presented with [the] tobacco, he knew right away what it was all about. My grandfather would take his pipe and smoke and he'd tell you those stories and those legends and sometimes two stories would take a long time because they were all, all long stories or legends.

JL. There was a story that he also talked about, about this fish that was blind, and, and you probably heard of that story, and there were other stories also.

JL. My grandfather had a brother also. An older brother, he was also good at telling stories and legends.

JL. Those two old people are both buried in Crooked Lake.

JL. I remember when my grandfather died. My dad went to town to buy some lumber, so he could make the coffin for my grandfather. And when they had the wake they would say the rosaries about three or four times in a day, and the wake lasted about two or three days. There was always an elderly gentleman who would lead the prayer or the rosary. He was the one who would always take the rosary and lead and the people would kneel down and say these rosaries, ah when during the wake.

JL. People at the wake would feed the visitors when they came there. In those days, we got along really well. People all were friends they got along well all the time. There was, was no quarreling.

JL. In those days, we dug the graves ourselves, my father and his brother and his brother-in-law. They all got together and there was no money involved. We did this ourselves.

JL. All the relatives were buried in the same cemetery. They might have been maybe not close to one another in the cemetery but we were all in one location. That was the way it was at one time. You tried to go back to where you came from.

JL. My wife's father could really sing those old songs like a long time ago. We'd have a few little drinks and could come out with all those songs, but my father never sang, ah, my father never drank of course, but he didn't sing any of those songs.

JL. We were quite small when my father sang those songs, and I don't think there's many people that could sing those old songs today, now.

JL. My wife had an aunt who lived in the States and they used to come and visit every once and a while. We went to visit my wife's auntie in the States once I retired, but they still communicate. They talk to each other about once a month on the phone.

JL. We got married in 1946. We got married in Crooked Lake. We moved to Regina in 1954. That's where I went to work.

JL. When I was in Crooked Lake, I was a farmer. I used to farm there.

JL. Ah, we didn't have cattle, we just grain farmed, and our house burnt down. My wife was doing her laundry. She was washing clothes by hand and we had three, three of our children already at that time, and then the boards started falling in from the ceiling, so she just had time to take the kids and run out. My wife had nightmares all the time. She never forgot what had happened, because she was so scared that we could have lost our children.

JL. We didn't move away from Crooked Lake right away, we lived there fore another two years, but my wife, like I was saying, still was having nightmares about the whole thing and she was still very scared. So I was starting to worry about my wife, and I was thinking well this might get her worse, it might make her pretty sick, so I figured well, we might as well move. So, that's when we moved to Regina.

JL. It was just like yesterday that I retired, and you know there's times I dreamed that I'm still working and I'm feeling like I'd be getting ready to go to work in the morning. I got along really well with the people I worked with. They're mostly white people, and we sill get along well when we meet, but a lot of those people that I worked with are gone now.

SL. And I also worked. I worked for the Family Services Bureau. I worked for the people, the older people that weren't able to care for themselves. That's whom I cared for.

SL. I was born in 1926, and my husband was born in 1920. That's a long time isn't it?

SL. We had five boys and two girls.

SL. We have all our children living in Regina, and then we have one living in Prince Albert.

SL. We have twelve grandchildren, we have six boys and six girls, and we also have four great grandchildren.

SL. [The] grandchildren love to come and visit their grandfather. They get very lonesome when they don't come to visit us.

JL. We are very proud to see our grandchildren. It was just like I remember, like my grandmother she was like that. She was very good with kids, and she loved her grandchildren very, very much. I always tell my wife about my grandmother.

JS. I remember when I was a kid when my grandmother and grandfather used to come and visit us; they would be coming with a team and the wagon. And as soon as she got to our place she would hug us and kiss us and say 'oh my grandchild, my grandchild'.

J.S. We used to speak Michif all the time. That's all we used to speak was Michif. My mother couldn't understand anything but Michif.

J.S. Two of our children understand Michif, but the rest of the kids don't understand the Michif language. Our grandchildren would like to speak Michif. They, they talk about it a lot. Where they would like [to] be able to speak the Michif language. We gave one of our grandchildren a Cree book but there was no French in it. It was Cree. It wasn't Michif. They'd like to speak that language. Now they would like to speak it. I would like to see my grandchildren speak Michif. I don't know if it's too late for my own children, but I know the grandchildren they always talk about wanting to speak Michif.

J.S. We were talking about New Year's. I remember people would start off about around midnight with their horses, and they'd go around visiting house to house. You could hear the bells on the horses when they were coming. You could hear them from a long ways. You know I'll tell you something. Those people could understand the sounds of the bells, whose bells those were. Isn't that amazing? They would say "so

and so went by here". Just by the sound of those bells, they knew right away. So, that's how close they were to one another.

JS. When somebody come to your door on New Year's you shook hands, you embraced one another and you immediately fed those people.

JS. Oh, we ate all kinds of things. Whatever they were able to afford to feed. There were mostly meatballs. That was one of the main traditions. There might have been pie. There were a few other things, but I don't really know if they served cake. I don't remember if there was any cake. They'd serve these little biscuits to the kids. They were like little bannocks. They would put sugar [in the dough] and they'd have maybe saskatoons or raisons in the [biscuits], and those were the cookies. Another one of the traditions, it was more to do with respect. The older people ate first and then you feed the children afterwards, and the children never made any noise or had any disruption. There was a lot of respect, and if go and tell the children to go outside and play for awhile, they would never answer you back. They would just go out, and go and play and have fun and they would come back afterwards and have something to eat.

JL. Again, I remember on New Year's there was a few people that might sing, but particularly her father used to sing songs. Yeah, I remember my dad used to sing that song "*à Montréal*". And her father used to sing; he'd even dance. He'd jump around and dance up and down.

JL. They used to also have dances. They'd have the jig, the Rabbit Dance; they'd have the Kerchief Dance, or the Sword Dance. I remember my dad was good at dancing the Sword Dance.

JL. I remember when we got married, the Old People – the Old Men and the Old Women – they danced with us. They were teaching us some dances and I remember one of the dances was the Reel Eight, and when you danced the Reel Eight there's no callers, you just make your fancy steps and you dance, and you dance to the tune.

JL. I remember, a long time ago, they used to play the fiddle the same as we did last night when we were dancing the Square Dance, and they would have somebody cord with a guitar. But year's ago, if they didn't have a guitar; they had two fiddles. One played the fiddle and the other one corded with the fiddle and it's called "*la basquette*". That means cording, ah they would take the bow and cord on the fiddle, and then some people used spoons to cord the fiddle.

JL. I remember one of the games I used to play years ago was a hand game. You would use different objects, you might use little sticks stones, and you'd hide the objects and somebody had to find where you hid the objects, and if they missed you'd say *"wahchak"*. And that's when they missed. That was an old game. Then when they played this hand game you also used shells. One object was long, and the other one was short, and that's what you had to try to guess which of the objects [was in your hands]. And sometimes they would use a little drum if they had a little hand drum or they would take a can and beet on this and this was how they kept to the beet. They kept to the tune of this guessing game.

JL. When we lived at the mission [at] Crooked Lake, I remember we used to play card games. We played a game called "*la barroche*", and we would also play a card game called "*pedrôle*", and the priest he used to play. He liked playing cards.

JL. I remember years ago, when I was a kid, you could not talk wrongly about the priests. They were very respected in the community. I remember my father saying "look it, you respect that man because God put that man here to work with us". Oh yes, people years ago practiced their religion. They were Catholics. They had a lot of respect for their religion, and there was a lot of respect generally. When Lent came around that was it, you didn't dance anymore, when it struck midnight that was it. There was no more dancing, but just before Lent time people would make dances, and they'd party up and then they prepared for Lent.

JL. And on Good Fridays, you never ate something. I remember my mother she never ate all day. They made penance and they fasted. I remember years ago Good Friday was the day where you had to do your forms of penance and your fasting. I even remember they would take a blanket, they'd leave the house, they'd go out by themselves, and all day they were alone and they did not talk at all. This was one form of penance. That's how it was very strict years ago. That's how you followed your religion so closely.

JL. And on Fridays, you did not eat any meat. I was a good hunter. Oh yes, I could trap. I hunted deer, and rabbits and partridge. I don't hunt anymore. My legs aren't that good, but we still get some wild meat once in a while. Somebody might bring some rabbit. Wow, we really like that. It's still as good as it used to be.

SL. Yes, the way I cook rabbit, is I boil it and we make a nice soup [which] we call "*li rababoo*" and sometimes I put some salt pork with the rabbit, and it just seems to give the rabbit a nice flavouring.

SL. I'm still very traditional in my cooking. I like boiling the food. I don't much care for things like lasagna, and those other, or, modern foods that the people like eating today. Oh, I still bake. I bake bread. I make bannock and I still like frying my dough. It's called "*li beigne*". I still like doing that yet today.

JL. Yes, it was a very good interview. I thank you very much. I've enjoyed talking.

NF. Now we are going to continue with the interview with Maurice Ledoux.

ML. I was born in Binscarth**.** [In] a small community called Ste. Madeleine. I was born in 1939. I am sixty years old.

ML. My dad's name was Geordy Ledoux. My dad was born in Fort Qu'Appelle. His dad's name was Ambroise Ledoux. I don't remember my grandmother's name. I always wanted to know what my grandmother's last name was. She also came from Lebret. That's where my dad's father met his wife. So ' I guess that is why they went to Fort Qu'Appelle. People went to school in Lebret and I think that's how my grandfather met

his wife. There was ` a lot of people that went to school, a lot of the girls went to school in Lebret.

ML. We moved away from Ste. Madeleine because the people were chased out of their community. So I went to school in Ste. Madeleine, but we moved away and I had to come back in order to go to school. We had to walk three miles.

ML. When we left Ste. Madeleine some of the people lived in a small community called Selby Town, and the other community was a ways from there. And I was only able to go to school in the wintertime because we had to cross the river otherwise to go to school. And another reason why we never went to school very much was because we had to follow our family, we had to follow our father. He used to go out working for farmers and then we used to travel a lot. My father also trapped and he worked for farmers a lot. Besides trapping, my father used to cut posts in the valley. Then he also stoked, he did thrashing, and he also cut some scrub, clearing bush for the farmers.

ML. Oh yes, my dad had horses. He had a team of horses, and that's what I was saying when we travel ` a lot because we used to go working quite a bit, so that kind of interfered with our schooling. And I remember we moved to Angusville, Manitoba. There was a big lake there, and my father and my grandfather they were trapping there.

ML. I have three brothers and a sister, but I also have half brothers and sisters. There're around nine of us I guess, all together in our family.

ML. In those days it seemed like the Métis people weren't allowed to go to school with the white people. It seems that it hasn't been too long ago now that we're [now] starting to mix.

ML. I first started working as a young boy. I helped my father. We used to trap, and then we would work for farmers. We would also cut fence posts. We would travel about ten miles with our posts, about a hundred posts, and we would get about ten dollars for our posts. And we bought mostly food with the monies we made with our posts. We'd buy flour, we'd buy tea, we'd buy salt and we bought the main staples that we needed.

ML. My mother's name was Irene Ducharme and she was from St. Ambroise in Manitoba. My mother had brothers and sisters, but I know a few of them, and I don't remember her parent's names. She had a sister living here in Binscarth at one time. I also had a relative by the name of Pete Ducharme. A lot of those people, from out where my mother came from, used to come out and visit. Some of them stayed and then some of them went back home.

ML. I remember we used to play cards in the evening. That was one of our pastimes. And, I remember my father going to play on the reserve. They used to play hand

games. My father was good at playing hand games. He won a lot of things through playing the hand game. I used to watch them play those hand games, but I never played.

ML. Oh, they'd gamble things. Like they [would] play for tobacco or they'd play for other things. We also went over there to Sundances. My brothers took part in the Sundances. We knew a lot of people from out in that part of the world.

ML. I only have one sister living from the first family. Ah, her name is Adele. She lives on the reserve, on the **Oeysacapo** [Ochapowace?] Reserve, but she's getting old now. I go and visit here once in a while, but my sister still likes her bingo.

ML. My father died in Melville, Saskatchewan. He used to live with one of my younger brothers after my mother passed away. My brother that lives in Langley, Saskatchewan, he, ah, took care of my father also. My father died here in Yorkton. My parents are both buried here in Yorkton.

ML. I was fifteen years old when we moved over here, and then I met my wife. She was from Crescent Lake. My wife was a Flammand.

ML. I've got four daughters and three boys. I've got one girl living in Ontario. I've got two daughters living in B.C. I have got five daughters. One is in Regina. One is in Saskatoon. I have one son in Saskatoon. I also have one son in Regina, and I've got one son in B.C. I've got thirty-six grandchildren, and I [have] got great grandchildren.

ML. Yes, they come and visit me, but they don't all come at once [laughter].

ML. I've a lot of relatives out in Duck Bay, Manitoba. I've a lot of relatives out there too.

ML. I worked for farmers. I worked in Yorkton in a lumberyard, and then I also worked in Regina tying steel. I worked all over the place. I also worked in Thompson, Manitoba. We were tying steal, putting these big buildings together. I worked about twenty years in the steel, but then it got to me and my health couldn't take it anymore. That's how I lost one of brothers, Albert. There was a lot of rust in the steel, and I guess that's what killed him.

ML. As long as I remember, my parents always spoke to me in Michif. They never ever spoke to us in the English language. We always spoke Cree [Michif]. When I first started school that was the only time that I started to learn how to speak English, but my mother use to speak French to my brothers, Albert and Fred. They knew how to speak French. And my father he spoke only Michif, so everybody started to speak Michif, and we all spoke Michif ever since. Oh I can understand French, but I don't speak it that much. I even understand Saulteaux. My father was a good Saulteaux speaker, but my mother couldn't understand it; but he taught her how to speak it, and she was able to understand and speak it after a while. My dad spoke many languages; he spoke Saulteaux, Cree, French, English. Oh my father spoke many languages. Well he worked out for a lot of farmers, and he learned different languages. He even learned

some Ukrainian. Oh my father was a man who that ' couldn't be stumbled at all in any language.

ML. I was talking to some of those women in the meeting room, and I was saying "we should have started these meetings a long time ago and maybe today we would have accomplished more and there would have been more Michif-speaking people". I really think this is something that is needed very, very much, and if we keep working together, I think we would be able to accomplish what we are trying to do.

ML. Well you take, like I am raising two of my grandchildren, a little boy and a little girl. And you take my grandson you couldn't talk about him he understands you very well, and he's started to talk the Michif language. We're trying our best. We talk to them in the Michif language and the little girl she's trying also, but she's not as good, but I think she'll get better as time goes on. I think that it is possible to teach the older people, the adults to learn Michif because there is still a lot of people out here that speak the Michif language, but when they went to school that's when they lost their language. Some people understand the language, they know what your talking about, but they can't speak it, and if I think if we get back our language, and start to live like we lived a long time ago, we could get back a lot of our culture, and our traditions.

ML. I've taught myself how to play the fiddle since I was nine years old, but I'm finding it a little more difficult now because I have arthritis, and it seems to effect my fingers. I never had any problems playing any instrument. I played the harmonica, the mouth organ or I even played [the] accordion. It's been a long time since I played it, but I played all those instruments, and I taught myself how to play these different instruments.

ML. I've never ever played the Jewish Harp. I've never tried it, but I've seen a lot of people play the Jewish harp. I think my Uncle Doug played the Jewish Harp also.

ML. I had my own band. I played seven years in Calgary, and I think I played three years here in Yorkton. We entertained in hotels, we entertained in bars, we entertained for dances, ah, we played all over the place. My boys all play instruments, my daughters are all good singer(s). When we first started, we called our band the "Ledoux Band". My wife sang, my brother Freddie played on the bass, and my son, well, he played on the drum. And I played lead guitar, and I also played fiddle. Then my wife took sick, and she lost her voice. So she wasn't able to participate in our band anymore, and then we'd have different people that were singing in our band.

ML. My wife used to work in the Legion in the truck stop. My wife was cooking in those days.

ML. My wife's name is Vina. She was a Flammand. All her relatives, most of them, are from around here. She was originally from Crescent Lake.

ML. Well, I'm thanking you for the interview. That was good, thank you.