

Gilbert Pelletier, Norman Fleury, Sherry Farrell-Racette

Video 1

Start 11:30.10.21 SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE – One of the things that I'd like to just ask, to start with, just to begin, because most of the time you'll be speaking in Michif. It's just to tell me how it is that you come to be fluent Michif speakers, where you grew up, family. You want to start here. Watch me, you know, watch me point with my lips.

0.6 GILBERT PELLETIER – What are you asking though?

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Well both of you, but who wants to go first?

GILBERT PELLETIER - Go ahead.

0.8 NORMAN FLEURY - Okay. Thanks. Well for myself personally, I've always spoke Michif and I was born with the Michif language. Like when I was in my mother's womb I heard the Michif language because that was essentially our first language.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Right.

NORMAN FLEURY – And it was just a normal thing for me like to just, I didn't know there was any other language.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Until you were how old?

NORMAN FLEURY - Then well we'd have visitors that might come from, like we lived in a community which was predominately French/Métis community, and even if we go to town shopping, you know, there would be French speaking, and a lot of Michif speaking. So we knew there was the French in the community, so I heard French and since, just about 50% of our language, the Michif language, is French. Like the nouns are in French, then,

then I knew, I wasn't lost with, and I, and I got to learn the French language very, very, very easily.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - So you speak French as well.

(Video Time: 11:31.41.05) NORMAN FLEURY - And I also speak French, but not only French because the people back home, the Métis people were known as people that were very diverse in, in, in all languages because it, it was just the normal thing in life because you grew up either in the community where there might have been reserves close by and then you learned those languages also, or they had to speak different languages to survive. And they were known as the interpreters and the translations, translators when Treaties were made.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Right.

NORMAN FLEURY - And when Treaty were signed. So our Métis people were always very diverse in languages. I know some people back home that spoke Lakota which is the Sioux language, they spoke Saulteaux, they spoke Cree, they spoke French French, Métis French, and Michif, and Cree, like Plains Cree, and I speak all those languages and I understand.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Yeah, I know people that spoke French Michif, Cree, Saulteaux, and English, so, you know, they're all related languages but that, you know, except for English but five, yeah.

NORMAN FLEURY – But Michif was our first language.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - That's what you spoke at home.

(Video Time: 11:32.46.21) NORMAN FLEURY – And that's what I spoke at home, and my Mom she lives in Brandon, she'll be a hundred and two in

June, and it, it was our family language. It was also our commercial language, it was also a ceremonial language. When you prayed, you prayed in Michif, so it was no problem for me to...

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Did you have a big family?

NORMAN FLEURY – My Mom would have had, or she did have 13 children but there was nine living.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Nine

NORMAN FLEURY - Yeah, so I grew up in a fair sized family.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Older people living with the family? Grandparents?

NORMAN FLEURY - Well my Grandparents actually lived on the same little farm that we lived on.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE – Oh neighbours.

(Video Time: 11:33.23.20) NORMAN FLEURY - And, and, and my Grandparents were actually more so than my mother, my Grandparents were my teachers. They taught me all their culture, the traditions, the stories, the folklore, the legends. I learned all from my Grandparents, and when, they were the ones that also in that generation spoke highly of Louis Riel and, and the Métis people who were part of the Resistance, part of the movement of the Métis people. And that's where I heard of Louis Riel.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE – Who, who were your grandparents, what were their names?

NORMAN FLEURY - My grandparents, like my maternal grandparents were Jean-Baptiste Leclair and Flora Lepine, that was her maiden name, but she used to say Lepiney. She says my name is Lepiney it's not Lepine, because she felt it was more Francophone when you said Lepine, but it was Lepiney that was more Michif.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - So that's how they pronounced it?

NORMAN FLEURY - That's how she pronounced it and her dad pronounced it Lepiney also.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Oh really?

(Video Time: 11:34.26.15) NORMAN FLEURY - And those were my maternal, my paternal grandparents were John Fleury and my grandmother was a Vermette, Rose-Anna Vermette was her name. And so I also learned genealogy. I was very, very much involved in genealogy. My family today, they all ask me who was Grandpa's parents and who were the relatives and what did they do. And so I was, I guess as a young boy, they used to call me kid that was very curious, but my curiosity led me to where I am today. Where I'm one of the people that know the legends, the stories, the history, and the folklore of our people because I was curious. But then another thing we would talk about is, those kinds of things are, you're gifted, like in, we, we believe that people were gifted with certain things in life, and I was gifted to be a historian or folklorist, or people that knew legends and stuff. And there was people like, we were talking about with Gilbert, like yesterday we were talking and this morning and we were talking about different things about how the people became to be talented and skilled in their areas. Like some people were horse people, some people knew good horses.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - That's a gift. Yeah.

NORMAN FLEURY - Yeah, that's a gift, and some were dog people. The dog, you'd one time you'd use dogs for hunting, for trapping, and they were the means of transportation, so those, those, and those were people. There was also people that were the storytellers, the people that told legends, and, and if, and there was the medicine people. Like if you were sick people would say well go see that individual, that person knows medicines. And, and certain people knew certain medicines for certain ailments. There were herbalists, they knew roots, and they knew the ways of, of healing, and like my Mom's mother, she was one of those people.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - My Grandma too.

NORMAN FLEURY - Yeah, and there was also spirituality involved in, in when you, when you went digging medicine or when you are giving medicine to people, there was spirituality involved, you had to pray. It wasn't the first, my grandma used to say, I'm not the person that's healing you, it's God, it's, it's, it's a spiritual thing. So, so those were the kinds of things that they related, because my grandmother also told us as young people, we were God-given people. And we had a God-given language. And God created us. So those were the kind of things, but like when we're talking in Michif, those kinds of things are, you can highlight more things in Michif, in your own language, and you could, you could be more creative and artistic when you're starting to talk about who you are and what you're all about, and about your way life.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Is that right?

NORMAN FLEURY - And I could just feel it here.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Yeah.

NORMAN FLEURY - I can feel the emotions when I start talking about those things, you kinda feel tight in the throat and you feel the hair going up in the back of your neck and you know you're with it. You know, and those, I think that's, that's the thing about being Michif.

(Video Time: 11:37.36.23) 8.4 GILBERT PELLETIER - Well I'm, I guess the only difference between Norman and I was we were like, more like gypsies, we moved around a lot.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Right.

GILBERT PELLETIER - You know, like my Dad was, worked for farmers mostly, that's all he ever, worked was for farmers. And my grandmother was with us. My grandpa died before I could remember my grandpa, and my Mother's, my Dad's dad. But my grandma was with us. Her name was Helen, and her maiden name was St. Pierre.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - All right, okay.

GILBERT PELLETIER - And my grandfather was Abraham, and on my mother's side, well my Grandpa was Louis Flamont.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Okay.

GILBERT PELLETIER - And Ruth Henry was my grandmother.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Oh Henry?

GILBERT PELLETIER - Henry that was my grandmother.

SHERRY FARRELL-RACETTE - Well it's just Métis history right in these names you know.

End 11.38.30.12