

Franklin Carrière and Anne Acco Carrière Interview August 27, 2010
Transcribed by Amaranta Sokol-Como

A: Frank Delano Carrière ... I am wondering, I wonder how you got your name?

F: I think my dad had something to do with it. He was ... we had a friend of his that ... Actually my real name is Franklin Cotter Carrière. And the Caulder comes from my dad's friend, a good friend ... Been a good friend years and years ... And he named me that. And for some reason I stayed with him because I have also known four other Franklin Carrières.

A: Yah

F: And one of them is always in trouble. So when the cops come and see me at the house, I says "Okay, there's four Franklin Carrières. Which one is which?" "Well I am looking for Franklin Glen Carrière. He is always in trouble, that one. He is from Prince Albert.' I said "okay, yah I know the guy. He is my cousin. I also know his dad, Dave Carrière." Finally, they came and visit us in Cumberland years ago when I was working with him. I was working for the Métis Housing group, years and years ago as an electrician. And that's where I met this family that said we were related. We were from Batoche, that area. I said okay and went along with it and eventually I got the know the family fairly good. But that's how things happen. It's sometimes how things happen ... crazy funny things happen to everybody. How you get to meet your ... your own relatives. I didn't know they were there.

Darren Préfontaine (D): May I interject, was your father a New Deal man? Did he like Roosevelt?

A: Yes he did.

D: He admired him?

A: The one thing that he wanted was to call him "Delano" and mom said "no!" "The New Deal or not, you're not going to name Franklin, Delano, you can name him something else." That's how you got Cotter.

F: Well okay, he decided to say okay I'll name him.

A: And go to Cotter. In 1967, you were in the voyageurs' pageant, canoe pageant. I would like to know how it started, who contacted you and why you decided to enter the race, if you could.

F: It actually started in 1964. We were very young, very eager beavers to go. Because what happens is you want to try and experiment a lot of things. That's my nature, I experiment. If it works out and I make money on it, fine. I'll do that. And in 1960 ...

1965 we were in a canoe race in Flin Flon, Manitoba, but we heard that they were going to be choosing a Saskatchewan team to represent Saskatchewan across Canada [in the] centennial canoe race. So they were going to choose this team in Flin Flon. So we decided, a whole bunch of us from Cumberland. There were very good canoe teams in Cumberland, about five or six teams that wanted to get into this team, but it didn't happen that way because there was a lot of good canoers in the Flin Flon, Creighton area, and Denare Beach. But we came in. I believe we came in, either 4th or 5th in the pro circuit. There was a lot of amateur canoe racers that were right behind us, but good paddlers and they were young. We were in the 18, 19, 20 year-group. And in order for whoever ... was running the Saskatchewan team at that time, I don't remember the people.

A: William.

F: No it wasn't, that was the Manitoba team.

A: Yah, I know but there were the Rhéaume brothers, would have been ... there were two of them.

F: They were instigators of the whole thing.

A: Yes they were.

F: They were the founding ... the two brothers were very instrumental in organizing the centennial canoe race along with other provinces. They got together and they said "oh that's a very good idea. But will it work ... You get a hundred paddlers from across Canada to come in and stay together for three and a half months. Is it gonna work? But if you make it a race, you make it much more interesting." Instead of just canoeing, half way down the stream half of the teams will quit. And then Rhéaume and his brother looked at this. And there was another gentleman from Alberta, he moved to Alberta but he was living in Flin Flon at that time. The three of them got together and they started going ... they went to the premiers, in Manitoba, they started... they called all the premiers of the provinces to see if they could put this team together. Yup, it could work. At that time, I think I was making ... about thirty five cents a muskrat. There was tons of muskrats and beavers, but beavers we couldn't catch. They were closed at that time. I think they were closed for ten years.

A: Something like that, yah.

F: We couldn't trap beavers.

A: Yah.

F: But we could trap muskrats. And I was getting twenty five cents a muskrat and I thought I was a millionaire.

A: Yah.

F: This is what I always think anyway. 'Cause every time I go and catch a bunch of muskrats, catch thirty or forty, it was five or six bucks. At that time, you could buy a lot of groceries for five or six dollars. To go to a show, we had a show in town.

A: Twenty five cents.

F: Twenty five cents.

A: And good ones too, good shows.

F: Oh yes, I remember those shows. So we ... I got ... Napoleon Laliberte was my paddling partner, a two-man team. And him and I, said "okay let's go and race." But his brother, JB Laliberte was the top paddler in Canada, in Cumberland House at that time. And I said "we can beat this team but we have to train. We have to leave early in the morning and paddle back overnight." We did thirty-forty miles. That's how we trained. And all we had was some bannock, and some water, nothing else. We'd paddle all day long. We went all over the place. We explored Cumberland Lake. Everyday we went to different places. We'd paddle right ... the whole lake we would paddle. And these people didn't know what we were doing, they just seen us go and that was it. So every once in a while we would have a race in Cumberland. We would play soccer first. Soccer was big at that time. We set the reserve against Cumberland, reserve against Cumberland. It was always like that. So okay, we would play and we couldn't beat each other on the soccer field, well let's go canoe racing. Okay, we will go five miles that way and make a coulee over there. That's how Cumberland started racing. That's how come we have so many good racers probably in the whole North America. We have the best paddlers come from that area. The other communities there started to catch on. We were having good races, big money races. So the young people are more interested and they are getting smarter too. They're buying better equipment. When we were paddling in 1965 we didn't have good equipment. We had these old canvas canoes and we had the home-made paddles. We had to make our own paddles but we made them to look like the racing paddles. That's how creative some of these guys were. You bring them a paddle and they make exactly the same thing. And it was very interesting. I didn't pay too much attention at that time in '65. Now all of a sudden we made this centennial canoe team. We had our selection team made. We had tryouts in Christopher Lake at Murray Point, they called it. That's where we had our tryouts. They picked the best four teams plus one. And out of those four top teams there were sixty-seven paddlers that come there, come try out for this team. And there was one big wind, you know how windy Cumberland is and can get.

A: Yes.

F: And we were looking across the lake and it was just white. Well we do this all the time in Cumberland. Let's just paddle right across the lake here. If we swam, we

swam, but we made it. We made it across the lake and four other, three other teams came with us. And that's how we made the team. These guys are tough and they're smart and they know how to handle rough water, because that was just the start of it. So in 1965, we made this centennial canoe team. Then in 1966, they said "we are going farther in the training, the trial runs, now we are gonna do the real thing." So they said "we're gonna go from Fort St. John, BC down the Frasier River, across the channel to Victoria. And it's not a race." Now you get a paddler and a good boat, and nine of them, they are going to race.

A: It's in them.

F: It's in the blood.

A: It's in the blood.

F: You've got nine, ten teams here and it's a trial, but it's a race for us guys because we want to beat each other. It's competitive stuff hey? But Manitoba had the best team. In that particular era, these boys like McEacern, Roger, my uncle Roger, Joe Michelin, those guys. These were the guys that were already on the tail end of their career, they were tough. Okay, we want that. And we were the youngest team on the centennial canoe race. Our average was between eighteen, nineteen years old. When the 1967 centennial canoe race happened, we were, there were twenty-two of us that were twenty-one years old. Everybody else was nineteen-years old. So it was very interesting.

A: And you could sleep anywhere under a tarp.

F: Oh, we had ... we were supplied these canoes ... these army jeeps. We would put all our junk in there, all our sleeping bags and tents. We were given army tents. This was a trial run in 1966. So we paddled from Fort Saint John down the Frasier River, oh my goodness what a bit of water there that was a riot. Going down all these rapids, but there was one place they would not let us go down—Hell's Gate. If you have ever seen Hell's Gate, you would know it's Hell's Gate. We walked down there. Bunch of us went down there. We wanted to see why these guys wouldn't let us in there. So we see these trees coming down the rapids, you can see way up there, it's in the mountains. And they are coming down, and a big log went down ... holy smokes. And this guy was a, I don't know what you call it, Douglas fir or whatever, a big pine.

A: Yah.

F: And it was big, it was a big log. Probably a twenty-two diameter, twenty-two inch diameter and probably two or three or fifty feet long. Now this thing came down. "Holy now let's look at this thing" and when it dropped from that Hell's Gate it went in, I don't know how deep that place is. But all of a sudden it came back up. Straight up. The whole tree came up and then it went.

A: That would have been you.

F: That would have been us guys down there. Ten teams. Now I know why, now we understood why they didn't want to let us down there. So we paddled down to Port Hope and came out in Vancouver. Now that was a different story because we never paddled in the ocean. We've never been in the ocean. None of us were. And the first thing that hits you is the salt, in your eyes and in your mouth. We couldn't believe it was burning. We never had that because we were spraying each other. The guy in front of you was spraying you and the guy behind you is spraying him. The guy in the front never got sprayed because he was in the front. But it was very rough in that ocean. Some of the waves were between ten to twelve-foot waves. If it got too rough, then they wouldn't let us go across. We had to wait, and wait until dark then we would go across. We'd follow, ah, the lights, you know the lights. I'm not sure what you call them.

A: Yah, there's lights.

F: Lighthouses, that's what they're called. And we would follow them. They gave us a map to see where to go. Then we would follow a ship, coast guard that was another thing. Follow the coast guard, but my goodness gracious, the waves in the back of that. Made six-foot waves and we're paddling with these twenty-five foot canoes. Well okay boys down there, you're pretty low, you too. And this ship is rocking like this. I'm so glad I'm not on that ship. Rough it up because we are paddling heavy. I guess that's why they, the Saskatchewan boys were very good sailors and I always thought about that. Now I know what they meant to be good sailors. The Saskatchewan people, they made good sailors, they didn't get seasick. Because we would go on the rolling plains there, when we were coming in the sea, it didn't bother me. I didn't get seasick. I never did get seasick. But when we were paddling in that ocean, it was very interesting. And then all our food because of the salt got into our food. It didn't get into our water so we just ... all we had was water to drink and paddle across that. I'm not sure if it's thirty or forty miles across that Georgian Strait, I think is the name that strait. We paddled across there, but we had to zigzag because of the waves, the waves are so wicked out there. Then we paddled into Victoria. Then we walked up to the legislature hey. Man, I couldn't believe how high those, for a ship's anchor. You have to climb up there hey. I thought we were just a flat place, when you're used to, you know, you come and land in the lakes. That really, really opened my eyes when I first seen this. I thought "oh okay, this is the mountains, this is the sea." But I need to stop there. This was only the first ten days. So what they did is they flew us from Victoria ... from Vancouver they flew us to Montreal. "Okay, now you boys are going to paddle from Montreal to New York City." Okay, should be interesting because we didn't know what the hell we were getting into.

A: And you're young.

F: Oh young eager beavers. Try anything. Didn't cost us nothing. They were only paying us eight bucks a day. So we were making a lot of money for a young fellow. Eight bucks a day was a lot of money back then at that time.

A: And food.

F: And we ate good. We ate lots. And so we went from Montreal. We went down a bunch of ... I don't know, I'm not sure what river it was, but it was St. Lawrence. We went up stream. I believe and we got into a locks, a bunch of locks. And then we portaged into Hudson River.

A: Hudson River, yah.

F. Hudson River. There's another, I'm not sure if there was a lake in between there.

A: There was Lake Champlain in between there.

F: Yup, yup there's a lake in between there. We paddled, we portaged into there then we went into that lake. And then we went into the Hudson River. We paddled down that river. Now this was getting very interesting because they told us, they said "you guys make sure you stay together." You know what did that mean? What does he mean here? Now we get into this uh, we get into ... there's a lot of very poor people that live in that area at that time. I never did understand what a ghetto was, never seen it. And the word never meant nothing to me. But if you tell me how poor people are that I understand. But if you tell me what a ghetto is, it doesn't mean anything. I don't understand. Never heard of it. But when we went through that area and we seen how these poor people live, I guess they were river people, fished along the river, and that's how they made their living. I don't know if they had welfare at that time because...

A: No, they didn't.

F: Welfare was very ... There was no welfare in Cumberland at that time.

A: No, they didn't have any.

F: So we lived ... when we were in Cumberland we had to, you had to work. Everybody had to work. If you were going to feed your family, you go and catch that chicken. you go and catch that muskrat. You catch that beaver. That's how we ate. We lived ... we were healthy. Very strong, healthy, strong. We never had colds. We never heard of diabetes. I don't know if you did. But ... heart attacks, nobody had heart attacks there. Someone died and that was it. Or somebody got killed or they drowned. But it was very interesting to see that this area, this Hudson River. How the people were living there. Because I was very curious at that time already, how people lived. And I was only nineteen-years old, between nineteen and twenty-years old. And when I went, when we went through there and I was watching and

watching everything. I wanted to take in the scenery and I wanted to take in all the people there. It was always in the back of my mind, how do people survive in this area? Because you don't see much there. And their shacks are very small. Oh my, it must be tough there in the winter time. I never thought, maybe, I don't know how long the winter weather is in New York.

A: Long enough.

F: But you live in a paper shack, you got to be pretty dogarned tough to live there. Because I was living in a big log cabin and that little heater where we lived in the trap line, we had to open the door because it was too hot.

D: Boy in minus twenty they were ... minus forty here.

F: Minus forty ... Minus forty. I never thought nothing of me going and jumping behind my dog team, and I'd go across the lake, maybe ten, twenty miles to go check my traps. And I'd come back at night. Twenty, forty below. It gets colder as it gets dark. Anyway, we paddled there, down the Hudson River. It's a very wide river. Got wider and wider as we go, and holy smokes then all of a sudden, again that salt! It was getting to your food. It was getting into your eyes and burning. Okay, we just went through the Pacific Ocean, we were in the Pacific. We must be in the Atlantic. It clicked hey. We're in two different oceans here. I've never been, never had that opportunity to see that. But I did in 1966. So we got to the Statue of Liberty. You've probably seen some pictures.

A: Yes, the pictures were beautiful.

F: Yah, and then ...

A: Because they parked together. I mean, the canoes were...

F: Yah we were lined up in front of the Statue of Liberty.

A: Yup.

F: When we did that, they chose one guy from each team to go and put a wreath. So, that's a very big lady there you know. We could see from a long ways. We could see from the other side of New York, Long Island. We came through there. We could see this thing standing there and thinking "oh boy, oh boy ... can't be that big." We were back there, it got bigger and bigger. Finally, we were right in front of it. Then we had to get off the canoes hey.

A: Yup.

F: Then we had to walk up these steps to present that. That was very interesting. I happened to be lucky and I got chosen to go, there was ten of us, each one from the team. And my uncle Roger and myself, and a few other boys that I know we were

lucky to be asked. So all ten of us went up and presented this big wreath to say we were here. And then we went ... they gave us a tour. And we went up that thing. Man, you could see a long ways out there. It's amazing you know because at that time I didn't ... I was never in an air plane. Never even heard of an air plane but we flew ... When we left Vancouver we went up into the clouds and we couldn't see nothing until we landed in Montreal. When you climb that high, I don't remember how high that is.

A: It's high. I can't remember.

F: Three, four-hundred metres up there, I'm not even sure. Maybe it's higher.

A: I don't know.

F: But we get up there and there's a crowd up there and there's a look-out, if I remember correctly. But we looked around and how man, is it ever ... You can see way out into the ocean. You can see these big ships coming. That was something that was very interesting from a guy that came from Cumberland House, from the swamps.

A: Cumberland Lake.

F: From a little lake, this made it look like a swamp there. Then after that they told us: "Okay now you guys go home. Go back to your jobs, get well rested." I'm a hunter hey and I was working for my dad. He had a tourist camp at that time. So I guided for my dad and we finished guiding. And he said "okay we are going trapping," but in order for him to get me out of town, so I wouldn't raise hell, he said "we are going to leave at the end of October and we are going to Suggi Lake. It's about sixty miles away. But we won't get there until the freeze up." We were about thirty, forty miles. Suggi, lose to Pine North. That's where we went and we froze there. We took all the dogs, all our traps, our sleighs and everything. We made a couple trips in our canoe. At that time ... when you're a young fella, you don't think nothing of these things. You don't plan, you just go along with your dad and your dad shows you all the tricks. It never dawned on me that we were going to be there two-and-a half-months. Because we left at the end of October. We were there November. We were there right up to Christmas. The day before Christmas we came into town. Now we were already in the bush for two months. Just him and I. He would do his thing, check his traps over here and I would check my traps over here. Shoot a bunch of squirrels, catch a bunch of rabbits for food and we would have a net to feed our dogs. And that's how we survived in the winter time. You had to survive by your smarts. And you had to know how to travel, where to travel, when to travel. Because a couple of times I was right in the middle of the lake and a storm came in. Now what do I do here? How do I get home? Because now it's a total white out, you don't see nothing. But I had a good leader, my lead dog. He didn't say nothing, he didn't say right, left, go here, go there, that way. He was following a road. And I didn't see the road because I got my parka and my hood down here. I'm just running behind these dogs. I've got all my stuff on the sleigh. If you jump on the sleigh the dogs stop

and look at you hey, "what the hell are you doing on the sleigh? Get off the sleigh." So I am running behind this sleigh, I am not saying nothing to my dogs. And he had to go to that ... we were in the point of Sunny Lake, across the lake and he had to find that point and he missed it by three miles. It's dark and there's a blizzard. So we came ashore but like everything else, your memory and you memorize the shoreline because you've been there a lot of times. And then we came into an old portage. "Okay, I know where this is." They called it Lily, Lily McAuley's Portage. That's the name of that portage. I said "I know where this is." So I turned the team around and we followed the shoreline and that's how I found where we stayed. If it wasn't for that leader, I probably would have froze out there that night. And yet, my dad had a light out there, he had a gas lamp out there at that point and I couldn't see it. That's how ... it was a total white out. So that's what I did. We were waiting for ... 1966 winter. In October, November, December. And I was also a dog racer and I was the perfect weight. I was only one hundred and fifty pounds. I was racing already in 1961 right through. I was racing in the world champions in dog racing in The Pas, Manitoba. So I knew what I was doing. And I knew if I keep running behind the dogs I would be in very good shape for the canoe racing. We used to make a lot of portages. We'd make a portage, "okay we are going to go over there." And I asked my dad, "how far is that "oh, about twelve miles?" Twelve miles alright. It was thirty miles. We were making a portage. Said "twelve miles, three days we'll be there." And here we're still chopping away and cutting trees and making a trail six days later. I said, "This is God awful twelve long miles." Then we got home and seen the map, holy smoke we went thirty miles. "I thought you said twelve miles." "Well if I told you how far it was you wouldn't have made it, you wouldn't have gone with me." But anyway, I got into fairly good shape. My paddling partner, in the mean time, because I lost him, he went back home. He was out on the trap line too. They used to come into town quite a bit. And for some reason he got into trouble. Still today, he said I don't know what I did because he only talked Cree and he didn't understand English at all. He never went to school.

A: Ah-winena Who is that?

F: Napoleon.

A: Laliberte?

F: Yah. He said "they threw me in jail, I don't know why." "Did you steal something?" "No." "Did you kill somebody?" "No." He said "I was standing around there and some guys did something and they rounded all these boys up. And he probably said ... "Well nobody represented him." And uh, he probably said "yep."

A: But he was there.

F: It's a common, common language. When that guy asked him: "were you there?" That's the English language.

A: Yes it is.

F: We talk, we represent ... We don't use that language. We slang our words. Cree is a slang word ... slang a lot of words. Like Michif. Michif, I understand Michif. I could tell what these guys are talking about. I got a friend there, Mike Durocher, Michif ...

A: Speaker.

F: Speaker. And a lot of the times he's telling me "well what the hell are you talking about there?" Oh well, we are talking about the same thing. We're going to make tea. So okay, I get along with these guys and I'm working on Ile-à-la Crosse as an electrician you pick up a lot of those slang words. So I did, I do understand a little of Michif. But my mother taught me Swampy Cree. And that ... Swampy Cree ... because there were so many people that went through that Cumberland area and settled up north and all over the place. And they came west. So all those people stayed in Cumberland and learned that Swampy Cree, especially in The Pas. The Pas, Manitoba is all Swampy Cree. The whole area around the Grand Rapids is Swampy Cree because they live in the swamp. So they learned that language. And when I got a little older and started working for the Saskatchewan government as an economic development worker, I was based in northern Saskatchewan as an economic development worker, and I met a lot of these old timers. And they talked Cree, they talked French, a lot of them talked Michif, Chip ... and what's the political word for it?

A: Dene.

F: Dene. And they talked French. We heard that because we went to Catholic school run by the nuns, and we were at that school. My dad told me, when I was fourteen years old, "I need somebody to quit school." Well there's two of us standing there, my brother John and me. And I know he was lazy so I said "okay I'll do it, I'll sacrifice and I'll quit school," and I stayed with him for six years until my brother finished school and then he could go with him. And then my other brother took over and that's the way it went. But in 1967 when we were training, I was trapping at, they call it Ahtachkan, Bloodsucker Lake, about ten miles west of Cumberland. But I was training already, I was running. I used to run across that lake. It's nine miles across. And I'd run back, it took me two and a half-hours. I wasn't running with running shoes. I'm running with waders, you know those big boots. So I couldn't run very fast, but I knew I was training. And I was chopping wood and I was doing a lot of heavy, heavy work. So when we were called in to go and start training in Flin Flon. This is where we trained. There's a river there, we were talking about that earlier. There's a mist ... Sturgeon Weir. That bridge, well that opens in early April. This was April, the end of April that river opened. They phoned us and then we came in. All the team came in to Creighton. I stayed with my auntie and cousin there.

A: The Dubinaks, yah.

F: Because Glen and I, we made the Saskatchewan team at that time. When we lost our best paddler, we had to leave him and this was, at that time I wasn't thinking, you know. I wish they would have asked me, I would have tried to get him out of jail. I don't know why they threw him in jail. Nobody knew why he was in there. And then, I mean, I started paddling from Rocky Mountain House, Alberta to go across Canada and we were racing, we were racing the whole way. We were paddling ninety miles a day. This was a race. Now we're in a race. This is no more looking around.

A: Sightseeing.

F: Sightseeing. The sightseeing was off because we were river men. I was the sternman, I could read the river. I could read the river, where there's sandbars, rocks and everything. I could see that. Any my eyesight was 20/20 at that time. And I could see three, four miles down that big river. Because it's very big and long. I could see the rapids. When that water is dancing like this, I knew there was a gravel bar there. When it was smooth and fast with whirlpools, I knew its deep there. And if it looks like there's a string, like something dragging it, it's a rock or a stick and you go around. You have to be very smart because you didn't want to break our canoes. So they put me in the stern and we were doing really good. We paddled all the way down the Saskatchewan River and then we went, got to Cumberland. Well I'm home, this is my home territory. And I wanted to see some of the boys just like that. And they told us not to take too long. Well guess what, we caught a moose. We caught ... At that time we were coming down this was already ... we were ... the spring floods were happening and the whole delta was full of marsh. We come down the river and there's a little moose trying to get up on the bank. So the boys said we got to help that little moose. It took us a little while to catch the little guy. Then we had to put him on the bank. In the mean time, all the other paddlers are probably ten miles ahead of us. So we're paddling into Cumberland and all of a sudden this helicopter is right in front of us. "Did you guys get lost?" "No." "Well everybody is waiting for you, we're going to start a canoe race over there, a sprint race" they say. Now we already paddled from E.B. Campbell Dam. That's ninety miles by river. They're waiting for us to have a three-mile sprint. I said "okay." "It's worth at least two thousand dollars between first, second and third" because that's where the money was. I think we came in third. After we paddled ninety miles, we had ...

A: An hour's rest, ten minutes rest.

F: Because we were late, everybody was fresh when we got there. But we had spare paddlers in there. We were resting some of our good paddlers. So we switched some, we switched. We brought in the fresh ones. But I still had to be in the stern because then I know ... I'm the guy that knows how to read that river. So we did alright, we did pretty good.

A: You can take your drink because now, one of the questions I wanted to ask you was, I'll let you think about this because the answer was interesting. For historical,

historical references, you said you saw a lot of historical places and events, et cetera. Then you began to realize the immensity of the history of Canada, at least of the rivers.

F: When we left ... Well the historic places, Rocky Mountain House was a very historic place itself because that's where the three fur trade companies were. David Thompson, Henry Kelsey, all those and there was a French company, Révillon. That's the one. These three forts were there. We toured that place because it's still there. They recreated some of that stuff. You can go in there today and some of it is still there. All that old stuff, like you've got right here in this place. This is history here. Nobody else has this stuff. Like that stuff you've got there. That picture is a really nice one I see (Gabriel Dumont painting). The fiddle, the guy that played that fiddle must have been a very good fiddle player. You know, the guy that crafted this (mini-wooden red river cart replica). The bead work. The bead work is really amazing. I see some of the bead work here like this one, is probably a Cumberland beadwork. This beadwork is a prairie, prairie design. And those are, that's not bead work is it? Some of it is. That's prairie ...

A: Motifs.

F: Probably a French statement of beadwork. Beadwork, I recognize some of it. It's different people that made that. Different tribes, different people, different places. But this is what we ... a lot of the paddlers didn't understand what was going on because all they knew was a race. But our team, we were the very inquisitive type of young people. We are all young fellas. "Boy, you gotta come see this!" Somebody would go over there and take a look at something, and he'd drag all the team over there and they'd go look at it and start reading the history. That's when I started then realizing, hey this is a historic canoe race over here. All this stuff happened, this is where the voyageurs were and we're the modern voyageurs. We're recreating the trail of these people. For two hundred years, they travelled here. They lived here on this trail. This is a trail we're following. We're only doing it a little faster than they did because we didn't have stuff to carry, just ourselves. At that time, I started realizing after we got to a lot of places because the communities welcomed us. They welcomed the paddlers, they had big celebrations. They had big suppers. We didn't have to cook too many suppers, that's one good thing. We were up at five o'clock in the morning to start canoe racing. Then we had to be ... a certain time we had to be in Cumberland because the banquet was going to happen you see. And probably the old voyageurs, "there's nobody waiting for me there, I'm going to take my time." But every place had a race. So ... but they came out with all their stuff, their history so we could see. And I started getting more and more interested in this stuff.

A: And you had two, three months to get all this?

F: Three-and-a half months.

A: Of compressed historical references.

F: And the country, every province is a unique province. And every province has a different terrain, has a different culture. We met so many people.

A: Different languages too.

F: Oh yah, they talk different. A lot of them we didn't understand. But a lot people, some of the canoe racers didn't understand. We're doing re-enacting of history, this is a historic race. And it's not going to happen again, maybe a hundred years time it will happen. That's what we were told. They said because it's so expensive to equip a race like that.

A: To get the right people as well.

F: To get the right sponsors and the right people to sponsor them. Well at that time we were only making eight bucks a day because that's what they were offering us. And some of the guys, like the older guys that had jobs they had to pull them off of their jobs. The companies had to let them go for three-an-a half, four months. So they probably lost quite a bit of money those guys, but they were guaranteed so much money. Each province guaranteed so much money. We were guaranteed eight bucks a day. At that time, when we were nineteen, twenty years old, boy that's a lot of money for me. Especially in 1965, 1967. We paddled all the way down the river. We stayed in Winnipeg for five days. It was a mandatory rest area. And it was very interesting because while I was there in Winnipeg, the Northwest Territory team came to me and said, "where is your partner?" I said "he's sitting in Cumberland over there, he's probably training. He's a canoe racer so he's probably training." "How come you guys kicked him out of the team?" I said, "we didn't kick him out of the team, he was in jail when we left. That's how we left him." So what they, what the Northwest Territories team did was they hired a helicopter and they went and picked him up in Cumberland. You know that, they already knew that this guy was a good paddler and he was tough. Mean, lean and tough. And he could paddle all day the same speed. They got a helicopter and they picked him up in Cumberland. John, my brother John said "all of a sudden this helicopter landed in Cumberland" he said. And uh, after ... just a little while ago, I asked Napoleon, "Napoleon, remember when they came and picked you up in a helicopter?" He said yah, "boy they really scared me you know I thought maybe they were going to throw me in jail again." He said a cop comes up to him and says "you're coming with me."

A: Oh my.

F: "Pick up all your clothes and everything. We're going to fly you to Winnipeg, but they didn't tell him right away that he was going to be a paddler." Finally they told him, "you're joining the Northwest Territories team." Because they lost a couple of paddlers. One of them was, it's in the book, it says he was too short, he's a very fast runner—he can run around circles on anyone but he's too short for the canoe because his partners were a littler taller than him so when they portaged I guess he

was walking like this. And they only had seven or eight paddlers. And that's how Napoleon got into that third party team, from the Saskatchewan team. But these people were smart enough to realize that they left a good paddler. Then from there I know he had a hard time beating that team. You know, they were always dead last. But when that one paddler, that the one voyageur, that's how important I could see in the voyageurs how they chose their paddlers. They have to be all the same size and they had to be lean, and they had to be strong and tough. Mentally tough.

A: Mentally tough that's it.

F: Yah.

D: They weren't very tall men because on a portage you can't be six foot five and carry it across.

F: Yah, but they had to be, I think it was, a hundred and fifty or a hundred and sixty pounds. And you have to be around five-nine, five ten. And that's what I was told anyway. Our team was pretty well five-eight, five-ten.

A: Well if you look at Washington Irving's book, on the Astoria Expedition, where he gives a very good description of a voyageur, this is what he is. As sa' qa'ushskost—which means lean, mean, but strong.

F: Yah you gotta be mean. You gotta be mean out there.

A: You could eat now, or you could eat later. And then the other thing that he described was he could sleep just about anywhere.

F: Well we did that. We trained to do it. We'd set up a tent quick, we'd jump in and sleep. Five o'clock when the head voyageur came and said "boys wake up! Grab your socks," and away we go. "Five minutes we're having a meeting here, where we're going to go today." And in the meantime, while these guys are meeting, all of us are cooking and getting ready. Getting our stuff ready and we'd jump in the canoe and we paddled for eight, nine hours. You know, because we had to meet a deadline over there. This town is waiting for you. They got this big celebration you know? You don't want to disappoint them. That's what we did. When we left Cumberland, it's ninety miles from Cumberland to The Pas, Manitoba. And from there we went ... we followed ... we went from ... when we left Saskatchewan we went into, we portaged into Lake Winnipegosis and we paddled on the west side of Winnipegosis. And then from there we go into Portage la Prairie, from Manitoba, I think that's the name of that place. That's where the voyageurs used to portage through Portage la Prairie. That's why they call it Portage la Prairie, that's what I was made to understand. They had these carts, we had a choice—we could carry our canoe or you could drive these Red River carts. They had a bunch of them. So we said, "We're not a bunch of damn fools. We're not going to portage these canoes." that was nineteen miles. We'll put that canoe ... we stripped that railing there, this thing here (points to railing on

Red River cart replica). We stripped that and we put our canoe on top. And that's how we, the Saskatchewan team portaged. We ran the whole thing. There's about four, five teams, we were racing.

A: Young and racing.

F: You give a canoe to a canoe racer and you race even ... there was five or six that got that cart so now we're racing down the road. Nineteen miles that's a long way.

A: Can you tell us about Lake Superior?

F: Well I'll tell you about Lake of the Woods first. When we left Winnipeg we paddled down that Assiniboine River that goes through Winnipeg hey?

A: Yah there's Assiniboine.

F: We went through that. They've got a park there that's where we stayed.

A: The Forks.

F: Yah. The Forks. We stayed there. We stayed there for five days and we left there and we went down the river then we came into Lake Winnipeg. Then we were on the south shore of Lake Winnipeg. We paddled around Lake Winnipeg for quite a ways then we went up the Winnipeg River. And man, I've never seen so many dams on a river. There's a dam, dam, dam. Finally at the end, we had to portage over those dams; some of them were pretty high. And we had to do this very quick eh? Because we were racing. We got up there then all of a sudden we come to this big lake, Lake of the Woods. I think that's Lake of the Woods hey? And the big river comes in. They didn't tell us how long this lake was. this is a long lake. It goes all the way to the states. Then we got to the end of it, I think it took three or four days to paddle through Lake of the Woods. Because we had little towns we had to go to for celebrations and everything. So we did that and we said oh, "we're going to portage this portage here that's got a staircase in it." I said "I don't know what the hell we're getting into," but I went along with everything. And man, it is a staircase, goes way up. Then we came into this ... After we finished the portage, then everybody just stood there and said, "what the hell are we getting into now?" Lake Superior hey? You look that way, miles, you look that way ... Which way are we going? We're going East. Nineteen days we were on that thing.

D: It's a big lake.

F: Nineteen days. We came into ... where, what's that ...

A: There's Georgian Bay.

F: But in between that.

A: Wait a minute, Sault Ste Marie.

F: Sault Ste. Marie. We had to go through there hey. We're paddling along and it's fog hey. Thicker than hell but we're following the buoys. They told us, they said follow the buoys and then you'll turn left because the ships are coming through there. You could hear this blaring horn, thought maybe it was a lighthouse or something. We're paddling down, paddling down and all of a sudden this ship is right in front of us.

A: It goes on and on.

F: Man, you should have seen ten canoes go like this (moves hands apart). But it took a while for it to go through us. Big freighters. When it went by us we had a great big laugh and said "oh boy that was close." Good thing nothing happened. Then when we came in the fog lifted. Then we went on that, what's the name of that place again? Lake Erie?

D: Huron.

F: Huron yah. We paddled on that lake. I think it took us about four, five days on the north side. Then we went into that French River, the French River. Then we paddled up the French River, there's a very fast river. It was emptying into Lake Huron. We had to make a lot of portages in there. We couldn't paddle it up the river was very swift. We made a lot of portages there then we came into Lake Nipissing. Then we went across that lake. It's a very big lake, I thought it was a little lake, but it's just huge. But they gave us a map and we just follow that. Then we came into ... we had another portage there. It was about three or four miles, but I remember that. Then we came into Lake, the Ottawa River I think that goes along there. We followed that and it was really amazing because I had never smelled a pulp mill before. You could smell it from a long ways. As we got closer and closer, oh man oh man you could really smell it. This was the first time I've ever seen one. And huge, big piles of wood. Oh really amazing. For me it was amazing. Then we paddled through there and we got into Ottawa. When we got to Ottawa, "five minutes and we're having a sprint." There was really good money in that sprint. You're already in good shape hey, because at that time we'd paddle another ten hours and not think nothing of it. But there was in Lake Superior there was one place there we had to paddle for nineteen hours because we had to cross it at night between one community. And we camped close to the community. We had a rest because we got there a day ahead. We had to cross that one thing. We had to go from one lighthouse to another lighthouse across that bay. But oh man, it was a long night. It was the only time we could cross because they said "there was going to be a big rain storm and a great big wind coming up. If you don't cross it tonight you aren't going to cross it for the next three days." So that's what we did, but we got a day ahead to the town we were supposed to be at. So we had a little rest there so the time we were supposed to be there, we timed it. So we had a lot of interesting things that happened to us on that centennial canoe race. But in Ottawa they had a great big thing. We went to the Parliament buildings,

we portaged our canoes up there. Lined them all up there. You've probably seen it in the newspaper? Pearson at that time, Lester Pearson he came up there, he shook our hands, went down the rows of canoes. That was interesting, that was the only time I've ever been to the Parliament Buildings. And I don't think I'd ever want to go back, there's too much confusion going on there.

A: Still is.

F: There's people there yelling at each other and the other guy would yell back. They don't make any sense. As far as I'm concerned I never want to go there.

A: ?

F: So when we went down because that Ottawa River empties into the St...

A: St. Lawrence. Lake of Two Mountains, which goes into St. Louis, Lake St. Louis, St. Lawrence River.

F: Yah, that's the same. Oh man, that's a big river. We paddled down these one rapids, they called it lach...

A: Lachine -.

D: China.

F: Yah. Man we had a lot of fun in there. We had two teams that swam bad, but we didn't. We made it through there, oh man that was fun. There was big waves in there heh?

A: It's still there.

F: Yah probably, it was about seven, eight foot waves in there, we went through that. Then we paddled to Expo because it's in an island eh? Then we got to Expo and we stopped and portaged our canoes up to the ... there's a man made lake in that island.

A: Yah, it's still there.

F: We had our sprint race there. That was our final race. That was September, if I remember correctly, but I think it was September 5th or between 5th and 10th at that time. But we left in May. May 25th I think we left Rocky Mountain House and we got to Expo in September 5th or the 10th. I'm not exactly sure. This is a long time, this is over forty years ago.

A: I phoned them at the Lachine, the Lachine canoe club, I said, "where would I reach him? I don't know. Montreal is big." So I left a message with them and he phoned me back. So we were very lucky. So that was amazing.

F: Well we had good communication because we had the Canadian Army. Their ...

A: Their network.

F: Their network. So that's what we were ... you could reach me there and I could talk to you but Cumberland didn't have any phones at that time.

A: No they didn't.

F: So we couldn't phone home and tell them where we were. So they were lost, they only seen it on TV when we would paddle up there and we were celebrating. We throw our hats over there, throw our canoes; throw our paddles away. We had to round them up later hey because people were all over the place trying to round up our stuff. These are the souvenirs that we have. I still have my original paddles but I made a mistake I used them for other races. I should have put them away, but I still have the original paddles but they were pretty wrecked hey.

D: In the end who won?

A: Manitoba.

F: Manitoba came in first, BC came in second, Alberta came in third, Ontario came in fourth. I'm not sure if New Brunswick or we did, came in fifth.

D: And Quebec was near the bottom.

F: Very bottom and they had the best. At that time those guys were the best paddlers. But they had one flaw; they couldn't get along with each other. Forever and forever they were arguing. You know when a team cannot get along together, that was a perfect example there. They had the best paddlers. Quebec at that time they were number one across Canada because they were beating Manitoba. They'd come and race in Flin Flon. A lot of them would win that canoe race. Manitoba would come in second. Gib MacEachern and Norm Crerar were the top paddlers at that time. And there was a couple of French young fellas. They were number one. So Quebec actually on paper should have won that race, but they couldn't get it all together. A perfect example of a team, you've got ten guys hot-headed, full of vinegar. You have to get along. We see it there. We could beat those guys at any time and we were the youngest team with less experience than they had but we got along fine. We'd have everything up set in the tent when the wrestling started. You've got nine guys wrestling in there everything is upside down but when everyone says "okay that's enough everybody quit."

D: Were most of the canoeists Métis, First Nations or?

F: They were mixed. They were very mixed.

D: Non-Aboriginal, you name it.

A: All kinds.

F: Oh, you name it. Heinz 57 there.

A: Doreen Guilloux has written a book [*Paddling, Portaging and Pagentry. The World's Longest Canoe Race, Rocky Mountain House to Montreal. Stories from the Hearts of the 1967 Voyageurs.*] on it and it's not bad. It's really good for finding out that.

F: There's also a movie that they made but the book I think you've got a copy of that. That woman is from Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. Maybe you could write to that gal. It's the centennial canoe race, a book.

A: It's well documented.

F: It's too bad, I had know I was coming here, there's a book in La Ronge I could have picked it up and brought it with me. But I didn't know I was coming here.

A: No you didn't.

F: No, I thought I was going to drop her off in PA. She said "no, no, no, you've got to go with me to Saskatoon."

A: I have an interview.

F: Okay because I'm retired hey, I don't work. I'm a trapper full time and I compete as a king trapper in the winter festivals and I golf all summer.

A: And you coach, you're forgetting.

F: I'm a coach. And I coach. That's why you'll see my thing there, my paper. I'm an entertainer. I'm an animal and bird caller. That's one of my specialties. I wear a Métis buckskin with a fur hat and everything. If you go to Prince Albert Winter Festival, go into their website you will see us there.

D: So what is your favourite animal call?

F: Pretty well any one of them. But the moose, the elk, bear, beavers, all those animals I really good at calling them because I'm a trapper hey. I'm out there sitting all the time and I could call a moose. I'm a hunter too. But there's just me and the wife at home now, so I don't have to hunt as much as I used to. But I guide. I'm a guide for Eco-lodge is an outfit that I guide for in Wapawekka Lake. And a bull

moose, the only time he calls is about the middle of September to about the end of October. And a bull moose calls like this ... That's how he calls.

D: That's a bull moose.

F: Yep, that's a bull moose.

D: And the elk are coming in too.

F: Yep ... but then you lose your voice.

D: That's an elk.

F: Once you do an elk you lose everything.

D: It's really amazing that skill. You know Gabriel Dumont, that picture there, I guess he called bison. I didn't think you could call a bison but he did.

F: They go like this...

D: That's a bison.

F: And a deer...

D: That's a deer.

F: And then geese, I can do geese. They go like this...

D: That's a Canada goose.

F: I can call ducks ... But I'm a hunter hey, I've got to imitate these. I put my decoys out there and I call.

A: And wait.

F: I learned this skill when I was just a little guy. My dad and my uncles, they were all hunters hey. And they always ... They taught us how to hunt. One thing they taught me, number one was to be quiet. If you're noisy you're not going to eat. If you're quiet ... I could sit there, I could sit beside that beaver house for hours. I'm that patient. And these people, the Métis people were very good hunters.

D: Think that's why when the war came, like World War One and World War Two, when they needed that so that's why snipers, in particular, Métis were the best?

F: They were very good. That's why they...

A: Patient.

F: Patient. They could sit there. I could sit there. I could sit beside that ... some place for hours and just listen to birds. Just listen. And when the moose are calling I could be ... I had to be there just at day break. And then I'll paddle in there and I'll make sure that hunter, or whoever is with me will sit there and be very quiet. One thing about a moose, he's got a big long ear. He can peek you off oh probably about two miles. Two miles distance he could hear you. So, you're in the, you're in a different world. You're not in the human world, you're in the animal world and that's what makes it interesting for a king trapper. To understand, to be very patient. When you're competing you have to be very patient. Grab that big axe and start chopping. You wait your turn, watch your competitors. We have your competitors that don't watch me, what I'm doing. So they didn't learn nothing from me. But I'm sitting there watching everyone of them what they're doing because a young mind, a young person is very creative. If you teach him something, he will create a different thing. He'll figure out how to do it easier because there's things that you can do that are hard if you make it hard. But if you make it simple, that's how you do it is simple. That's what you have to recognize when you're doing things; when you're listening to someone like my sister here. What is she talking about, what language she used. Same with you when you're talking to somebody you have to understand each other. If you don't understand each other then what the hell are you talking about. Somebody will say that. They don't talk the same language. Because I talk Cree, and that was my working language when I was working. I use my Cree language to interpret a lot of the words that the civil servants, service, from the government that was ... Because I was working for the government that's what I was doing. And then I'd tell the people what this guy was saying, what is he offering you. When you come and offer me something, I have to understand what you are offering before I sign it. And everybody is like that but a lot of people don't, they don't even read that thing. The fine print is there. "That vehicle, in three years you gotta pay it off. Well I thought it said five years to pay it off." "No, here's your contract it said three years." See those are the things that a lot of our Native people take for granted. They didn't read the fine print and they didn't understand what that fella was offering them.

A: They didn't ask.

F: Right. "Opps, slow down here. What are you talking about?" A lot of times I did that in the meeting I said ... "these bureaucrats are very smart, very good at tricking you." I listened to them in Ottawa ... in no time they come on there. You know I'm listening to these people, what are the offering, what are they sarcastically saying to each other and when are they serious. When they are serious, then I listen, when they are yelling at each other I don't listen. Same thing in a meeting. When we were in meetings we always have one guy raising hell because he was mad at somebody. He was mad at the resource officer because the guy caught him stealing something or he was poaching something. And that's why he was mad at him. He didn't come there to the meeting, a well organized meeting, he came there to fight. He was fighting mad, and then he disrupt the meeting and everybody went home and they

didn't get it. He chased everybody. And the Native people have to realize, especially the Métis. The Métis have to be even smarter. We've been ... Jim Brady always said "we will get screwed somehow." Because this guy he thinks that me and him are negotiated this when he takes it back he will interpret it different to his bosses. And they did. A lot of them did. There was a lot of good people there, but there was always that one guy that would misinterpret them.

A: Yah.

D: Or the government came and would always buy one person off, you know.

F: Very easily. They're doing it today.

D: For sure they are.

F: Our leaders are good leaders. The ones that are very smart. We've got a lot of smart leaders but they were easily bought off. I see it today it's still happening. They give you a very good offer, job offer, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year and shut up.

D: Or the divide and conquer, say between Métis and First Nations. You come from a community where Métis and First Nations are intermarried, they speak the same language but in the south between Métis and First Nations there's no dialogue really. There's not a lot of interaction, it's in a different world. And our Michif speaker and elder Norman Fleury, he's noticed the differences in the North for the Métis and the South. He says that there are people of are of the boat and his people, southern people are of the buffalo. He says that's how you really have to understand Métis and western Canada, there's the boat, the northern boat people and the southern bison people. And those two things, the boat and the bison really made that world view of each group, I mean both are Métis and are intermarried, share the same ancestors. Because Carrières came from Red River originally.

A: For a short time.

D: For a short time French-Michif speaking Métis then they become Swampy Cree speakers right?

A: Yeh.

D: So it's interesting how that is.

A: They embraced the culture.

D: It's a powerful culture.

A: Yes it is. Very ... its enduring. I always ... when I go to think about it, it's always about the strength and the endurance. That it will wait you out. You're going to give up, they will still be waiting.

F: That's where the patience comes in. We learn that when we are young. We learn that, be patient. Your time is coming. But when that dinner bell said dinner, you better be running. Which all the kids are running.

A: Which reminds me, what time is it now?

F: Time to leave.

A: Time to leave? Okay.

D: Well thank you both very much.

A: Well thank you for having us.

F: Well I never thought I was going to get into this stuff.

D: Thank you Anne.

A: Aren't you glad I brought him.

D: I sure am. I learned a lot today Franklin.