

Bruce Highsaw—Parks Canada Interview, Feb 27, 2012

Bradley Brown: Okay, this is Bradley Brown on February 27th, 2012 conducting an interview on behalf of Gabriel Dumont Institute for the southwest Métis project that is being done in collaboration with Parks Canada. Now sir, can you please tell me your name and home community.

BH: Bruce Highsaw, Mankota.

BB: Thank you. Question two, who were or are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?

BH: My parents?

BB: Yep.

BH: South Dakota.

BB: And is that where your family comes from kind of?

BH: Yes.

BB: Okay. And both your mom and your dad were from there?

BH: Yes.

BB: And moving on to question three, Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif or serve in the military? Do you speak Michif?

BH: No.

BB: Question four, how were the Métis treated in your community? Did your family encounter racism from the larger community? Do you have specific examples?

BH: Pass.

BB: Five, what other Métis families lived in the vicinity? Were they Michif speakers?

BH: Pass.

BB: Six, do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs? Would you care to share them?

BH: No.

BB: Question seven, what sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

BH: On which is that?

BB: Like the question?

BH: Yeah.

BB: I just wanted to know your family's livelihood. What they kind of did, if they harvested any resources for their livelihood.

BH: Farming and ranching.

BB: They're farmers and ranchers?

BH: Yeah.

BB: In the, now is this in the, did you grow up in Mankota or did you grow up in South Dakota?

BH: No. I grew up in Mankota. I was born in Canada.

BB: Oh you were, okay. So you and your family, like your parents were kind of like raised here but your parents have roots in North Dakota, right?

BH: South Dakota not North Dakota.

BB: Sorry. Pardon me. So in the Mankota area your family's occupation were ranchers and harvesters?

BH: Yes.

BB: Okay. Thank you. Question eight, what sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

BH: Pass.

BB: Question nine, did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?

BH: Pass.

BB: Question ten, did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items? Do you know what happened to these artefacts?

BH: Pass.

BB: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter or New Years?

BH: All together.

BB: All together?

BH: Yep.

BB: Question twelve, was anybody in your family involved in the Métis society?

BH: No.

BB: Okay. Question thirteen, how are the local Métis connected to Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

BH: Pass.

BB: Who were, slash are, your family involved with Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

BH: Pass.

BB: Question fifteen. Are there any historically or culturally significant landscapes or historical sites within Fort Battleford and Fort Walsh area which you as a Métis person consider to be important?

BH: Pass.

BB: Question sixteen. Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance at or near Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park? If not, where, were, pardon me were they involved elsewhere?

BH: No. My dad homesteaded in 1913.

BB: 1915?

BH: 1913.

BB: Oh, 13. Thank you. What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance?

BH: They weren't born yet back then.

BB: Yeah. Has your family been in the area for a long time? How did they make a living? Do you know how your ancestors made a living in the region?

BH: You mean my mother and dad?

BB: Yep.

BH: Farming and ranching.

BB: In 1913 right?

BH: They started in 1913.

BB: And that's when they started homesteading in the Mankota area?

BH: Yes.

BB: Do you have any knowledge about what they did in South Dakota before hand?

BH: My dad was an employer. He was employed by a rancher down there.

BB: Oh okay.

BH: And he used to sheer sheep in Montana.

BB: Oh okay. Thank you. Question nineteen. What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park?

BH: Pass.

BB: Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police at—

BH: No.

BB: Okay. Question twenty-one. Do you know if any of your ancestors took Métis scrip at the Forts? Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Wood Mountain? Or did they take it elsewhere?

BH: Pass.

BB: Question twenty-two. How can Parks Canada make Fort Battleford, Fort Walsh and or Grasslands National Park more inviting for Métis visitors? How might Parks Canada include more information on the Métis history of these areas?

BH: I would have to pass that because I really don't know.

BB: Okay. Now question twenty-three goes on to ask, are there specific people or community groups that you would recommend Parks Canada contact to improve Métis history in these areas but would you pass because you don't have much knowledge about these areas?

BH: Uh, yes. I'll pass because I have no knowledge of that area.

BB: Okay. Question twenty- four. Did you or any of your ancestors spend time in the proposed national, or Grasslands National Park or surrounding area? If so, what type of cultural activities did you or they participate in? Are there any particular landscapes or historical sites within the park that you as a Métis person consider culturally and historically significant?

BH: I'll pass that.

BB: Just one more here Bruce. It's a little bit of a lengthy one but I'll ask it and explain it and then we can move on.

BH: Okay.

BB: Question twenty-five. A cultural resources value statement is being developed for Grasslands National Park. The park has identified a number of potential cultural values which may be important to the history of the park. Would any of these identified potential value themes be important to you as a Métis person? If so, which ones and what connections do you see? Are there any other cultural themes which may have connections to Métis people that should be considered? So these are some of the themes being included in the statement: trading post, relationship with the bison, ranching, farming, the Great Depression, governance, governance and administration, creation of the national park, early exploration and surveys, historical use of the area. Now those are some themes that are being considered when they are creating this cultural resource values statement. So what it's asking is would you include any other themes that you think are important or any of the existing themes that they have, do any of them really resonate with you?

BH: Oh well I would think that they got more information from other people in Val Marie that would know more about that than I do because of Indian heritage over there.

BB: Yah, okay.

BH: And the thing over there is that Wood Mountain, land of the people over there, they would know more than I would know.

BB: We have been contacting some people in the Val Marie too so, so we are trying to get that information. Um okay.

BH: Are you still recording me?

BB: Yep, yep we are still recording.

BH: Okay.

BB: We are almost done here. Typically, what I do at the end of the interview Bruce is I just leave us some time for you to leave any last comments or anything you might want to include. So, if you would like to at this time you can add anything that you want. And if not, just say pass and we can move on.

BH: Okay, pass.

BB: Okay, well thanks for doing this Bruce. I really appreciate it.

BH: You're welcome. How did you get my name?

BB: Pardon?

BH: How did you get my name?

BB: Uh, we got it from—I'm not sure how exactly how your name came about but what we did is we have three people working on this project and my colleague Darren Prefontaine had a master list of people to contact and passed it onto us. So Darren must have come across your name somewhere whether Darren knows you or not or I don't know, someone might have mentioned you or something but, that's kind of how the process has been working. So that's how we might have like, another community member might have notified us about you also. So that's—

BH: That's alright. I don't mind.

BB: Okay, thank you. I appreciate that. We're calling a lot of people here and we're appreciating any cooperation no matter what they have to say.

BH: I'll sign this and send it back to you today.

BB: Okay well thank you very much Bruce, we appreciate that. And thanks for taking time out of your day to do this.

BH: Oh that's fine.

BB: Okay I think that's about it.

BH: Okay.

BB: Alright I'll talk to you Bruce. Thank you very much.

BH: Yah, thank you. Bye.

BB: Bye.