

## Mary Pelletier Interview by Norman Fleury – English Paraphrase

My name is Mary Pelletier. I was born at Crooked Lake, that is down the valley. I don't have any more relatives there. They are pretty well all gone and passed on. We lived at Crooked Lake. It wasn't a town. There were Métis families and they built houses all over the place. My mother's name was Isabelle Laframboise. My dad was Robert Pelletier. I forget my mother's parent's names. My mother was an adopted child and came from Germany. Her and her brother. They were adopted by the Laframboise family. My dad's parents were Wilfred Pelletier and forget Grandma's name. We were eleven in our family. We were eight sisters and three brothers. Three brothers died and we don't know where our oldest sister is. They live in Saskatchewan and I think one still lives in BC. One lives in Regina, one lives at Pike Lake, and three of us in Yorkton. I was born and raised in the Crooked Lake Valley. Since I was old enough to work out I worked for a farmer in Dubuc, SK. The farmer's wife was in the hospital so I looked after and took care of the children. After his wife got well I came to Yorkton to work.

My dad worked at the mission in Crooked Lake, this is where the residential school was. He looked after the horses, cattle, and pigs, and the farm. My father only knew this kind of work. My dad had polio when he was young and there were only certain things he could do. My mother as long as I remember didn't work away from home. My mother made a big garden. She grew potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, corn, and all other vegetables. She put some in packages and canned a lot. When my brother was home he went hunting, as dad couldn't. My brother and I hunted rabbits and partridges but dad was a good fisherman. We had a big lake called Crooked Lake. The Reserve was on the other side of the lake. Those were Saulteaux people. There was a school on the Reserve. Not far from the big school there was a small school for the Métis and white kids. I went to grade five but they taught to grade eight. My brothers and sisters didn't finish their school. None of us did. My parents didn't talk about too much so I don't know what grade they had in school or if they went to school. I remember my grandparents, but don't remember their names. They lived around Crooked Lake also.

My grandfather had lots of horses. He used his horses for hauling hay and wood. My dad wouldn't let us go to dances. No one taught us how to dance. There was hardly any social life. We didn't play cards. My mother prayed a lot. During lent was a time of penance. They wouldn't do things they normally liked to do for penance. We went to church every Sunday. I made my first communion and confirmation there at Crooked Lake. My godfather was George Flamand and his siter Rose Flamand was my godmother. My godparents were good to me, they would give me money or take me to town and buy me things.

There were nuns where we lived but the priest taught us Catechism. There was a convent where we lived. The Métis got along well with the priests and vice versa and helped each other. There were around 2 or 3 priests and more nuns. They taught at the residential school. We were taught by nuns also. We did get along with some of the Reserve people. If there was no drinking it was fine. Some people would visit each other. There were around 10 Métis families. There were Desjarlais, Pelletiers, Bodins. There aren't any more Métis there anymore. They have all gone.

We spoke like we are talking now, Michif which we called Cree. That is all my mother, dad, grandpa, and grandma spoke was Michif. My grandpa spoke French and English, but I never heard him speak

Saulteaux. The Métis worked for farmers. My dad was one of the only ones that fished. We used only horses for transportation but the priest had a car. The priest took me to Melville hospital when I was sick by car. We did our grocery shopping in Grayson, SK. It wasn't too big a town. There was a store and post office.

We played hide and go seek. I played ball in school. We went to play ball in Grayson. We were mostly Métis and maybe one or two white kids on our team.

I have three children. My son Dale lives in Yorkton. My two girls live in Dunseith, Eleanor and Evaline. They come to visit just about every week. I have a lot of grandchildren. Too many! (laughs) I have eleven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. The older kids play outside when they come to visit but we keep the younger ones in the house. I put them in their place (laughs). I have to watch because they grab at everything. If I don't watch, they might break things. Sometimes I carry the babies (laughs). Our grandchildren sure love us. We like it when our kids come to visit. We play different games with older kids. We play ball, horseshoes and bingo. We also play with the little ones in different ways. I also run with the kids (laughs). When we are alone I always look and find something to do like sewing, ironing, and washing. I like sewing. My mom use to like working and doing the same and also working in her garden. My mom did fancy work, she made patch blankets. People would give her old clothes to use in her work because they knew she liked sewing. My mom made us dresses and blouses. She used flour bags, they had flowers on them. She didn't make the boys clothing, just us girls. I don't remember my grandparents too well. My grandmother dressed in black and had an apron on with a rosary on her neck. My grandma wore her hair long. She wore it in a tuck with bobby pins. The older men dressed the same and wore white shirts and ties for mass. We lived in a log house which my dad built. Our house was one big room. It was all-in-one. Our furniture consisted of table, chairs, benches, stove and beds. We didn't have couches like today and the kind of furniture we have (laughs). My job was to haul wood by hand and my legs. I would climb a hill, cut the wood and pile it and then I would drag it home. I cut my wood with the axe. I didn't use a saw. After I cut and piled it, then I hauled it in the house. I then hauled water for mom to do her washing. My dad made a big wood box and that's where I piled the wood. If the wood was too big then I split it. I used to babysit three of my sisters. When mom and dad went somewhere I babysat. Dad wouldn't let me go anywhere (laughs). I was seemed to be picked on to help babysit and work.

My husband is Gilbert Pelletier. I met him in Yorkton in 1961. I don't like to leave the farm. But the house isn't fixed, then we'll move. I like my big yard and my dogs, cats, and horses and I like my squirrel.