

## Mary Nora Fleury Interview by Norman Fleury – English Paraphrase

My nickname is Faan Faan. My real name is Mary Nora Fleury. When I applied for my old age it was Mary Nora Ledoux. I had to get a lawyer to verify that I was the same person. So I am Fleury now. I was born in St. Madeleine. I was born in 1940. My dad was Jean Louis, in English, Louis John. My mother was Marie Josephine Ledoux. I don't know where they were born. My parents spoke Cree. I didn't speak English until I went to school. I forgot a lot of my language after my parents died. I seem to want to say things in English. I took classes in the Turtle Mountains and you (Norman) were there, you remember eh? I lived common-law with Lawrence Grandbois. I was never married. He passed away last year. I had nine children with my set of twins. Was supposed to be eight. We lived all over. We lived in the corner.

I worked for farmers, cleaned houses, picked field roots, just whatever. I made money so I could feed my children. When we were young we played a game called the little fire (li pchi feu). My dad would put a nail on a board or log, then tie a string to the nail. He would then take a hot coal from the stove and hook this with a safety pin to the string. We would then take turns blowing this at each other. You in turn did the same. The object was to not get burnt. We also played the cat tail game with bulrushes. We tried to smash the cat tails and not get the fluff on us. We played the three-legged race. You tied your legs and ran. Sometimes you could pee in your pants! (Laughs) We played hide and seek and ante high over. You threw the ball over the roof.

Mrs. Grandbois was good at telling legends. That was one of our pastimes at night. We played card games like La Barouche, 500, la Kochii. A lot of people came to Dad's to play cards after supper. Because Dad was old, he had a lot of visitors. A lot of men came over like Gwajaans and Harry. They use to come to Dad's also to play horseshoes. We had a horseshoe tournament at Salt Lake or Shoal Lake, I don't remember where. Vincent said go play, I said I don't have money. He paid my way in and I won (laughs). I won a trophy but I don't have it anymore since I lost my stuff. My mom would sometimes come to watch us.

When we lived in the Corner, Dad and the late Boyii use to make picnics. We marched from the school with our black and white outfits to where Desiree lived. That was the picnic ground.

We played different children games. They played horseshoes and ball games. My dad and Boyii managed everything. They sold food and other things. There was also ice cream for the kids. There were two schools in the Corner. I went to Fouillard School. I went there and then the school burned. I quit school in grade six. When I came here I went to upgrading school. I forgot a lot since it has been a long time. I have lived here in Brandon for over thirty years. When I came here I stayed with my sister Bayosh and I stayed with Mary Ann Stoney. I then got my own place.

My birthday is on January 13<sup>th</sup>. I remember us dancing 13 nights in a row until my birthday. We would clear the room for the dance. When the dance was over they put things in order again. We would even go across the river to my uncle Damase. Sometimes you had a ride and sometimes you didn't (laughs). We walked there and back. I didn't feel the pain, but I do now. I had to go to school the next day. There were good dances like square dances, waltzes, and jig. My dad was a good dancer and others. Louis and Pauline danced jig also. The kids also had their own entertainment. In the eve of New Years we would

get things ready. We would get lots of wood and water and would clean house and wash the floor. At midnight he would take his rifle and shoot up in the air. Then when dad came in we would kneel down in front of dad and he would give us all the blessing. You could expect a lot of people to come in anytime for Ney Years. You fed the people as they came in. It was the custom to celebrate from January the first to All King's Day, January the 7<sup>th</sup>. We then in turn would also go to all the houses, especially we went first to the older people's homes, our Elders.

My dad hunted and he would kill a lot of rabbits and mom saved all the thighs and legs and then grind them into hamburger to make lii boulette. We had bologne. We also served turnips, potatoes, and carrots from dad's garden. Dad had two big gardens. I suffered from working in the garden. Dad would put holes in the bottom of cans so we could water the garden. This is what I did after school. He had good gardens. My dad would dig the garden up in the fall and dry the vegetables and put them in the cellar for the winter.

Dad would also go to the butcher shop for pork rinds and cut that up with rabbit and can this. Dad was good at canning. Dad also canned deer meat. I remember he went hunting this one time and they brought six deer home. Dad would share with others that didn't have any. Dad built this van pulled by horses. There was a little stove in it and no one got cold riding in there. When dad got home, he would start skinning. Dad also hung snares for rabbits to sell the hides. Mom did the skinning she had to be careful not to tear the hides because dad sold them. Dad also sold other furs when he trapped for beaver, muskrats, weasels, and mink. Dad made his own stretchers and skinned his own furs. When he sold his furs or when dad went threshing and got paid, they would go shopping for the winter supplies and we also had a big garden. He bought tea, flour, sugar, and also bought us clothes for the winter. He also saved for our New Years celebrations.

For Christmas we went to midnight mass. I don't remember too much and I don't think there were any presents. Later on there were Christmas trees and gifts.

We spoke only Cree (Michif) at home. It was very seldom that English was spoken. If the farmers or whoever came over then English was spoken. There were a lot of Métis that couldn't speak English.

Dad made his own medicine. He would make us drink li boulm. We also got Vicks and aspirins. Dad also bought a green coloured buckley and was that very good medicine. You drank it and put a little water.

There are only First Nations where we once lived. My aunty Julie and her husband Alex lived on the Reserve and Chi Louis. My dad on New Years day would hitch his horses to a sleigh and decorate his horses nicely and we would visit on the Reserve.

When the Bishop came to the Corner I was eight years old to make my first communion and confirmation. We ran after the sleigh that had the Bishop and dad and Boyii to Joe Boucher's place. In those days when you went to communion you couldn't drink or eat. Nowadays you eat and you can have communion. I don't know if I should say this (laughs), Bear my brother. My mom was teaching us our prayers in French. We were to pray every night during lent. She imitated Bear who was trying to say

the same as his mom and he misunderstood. He said Papa sii poshe and everyone broke down and laughed. Mom said you little son of a B. He really thought he could pray so he prayed twice as loud.

Just like Mervin, I used to babysit. My dad went working and we were alone. Dad made benches to sit on when we eat. We had mice in our house. My sister Aggie and I set traps for the mice. Mervin was the mom of the house. He said, don't touch them traps, it's no good for women, it kills them (laughs). This is only for men. So he got caught in the trap and he yells and sings out his pain. Oh mama oh laa la (laughs and imitates him), I will never forget that.

I babysat and my mom made a swing. I sure swing him fast and sang little jigger puks puks (laughs). My mom came in and caught me. She slowed the swing. I was upset because I wanted to play outside and couldn't so you could believe I got a little rough. When my mom wasn't watching, I'd start again. I'll tell you he slept when I just about knocked him out (laughs). My mom used to put the rabbits on the roof of the house so they'd freeze. So my mom said Boss, go get the rabbits. He went up singing a song he heard, Clementine. He climbed the ladder and fell off and he started crying (laughs). He fell down with his rabbits. My oldest brother, Jim or I babysat.

My mother had her children in our house. My aunt, Mrs. Jimmy Ledoux was one of the nurses and my grandma. I had two of my kids at home. It is the same as the hospital. The only difference is they give pain killers in the hospital. I had my second oldest and my daughter at home. My nurses were Mrs. Grandbois and my Eleanor Fleury. My kids live all over and I have one in Brandon. He sometimes comes to see me. I have two of my girls in Alberta and one son. I don't remember my grandparents. We were all related in the Corner. I know my uncle Jimmy Ledoux. I know my dad's brother Damase and my Aunt Julie, my Uncle Napoleon Ledoux, and my Aunt Justine. I have my dad's parents' picture and family but Uncle Damase wasn't born yet. We were ten in our family, five boys and five girls. I remember mom lost a little girl and a little boy.

I remember helping Dad on a farm shoveling grain in a bin. I also helped stooking all over in Saskatchewan. I sold a team of horses, the sleigh and the harness. I sold them for a hundred dollars so I could buy food for my children. Dad cried so I told him, give me groceries if you don't have all the money. Dad did have horses in the past. I remember a team Dick and Pearl.

I speak English now and a bit of Cree. My dad spoke French and Saulteaux. I never spoke French. I remember my dad sitting with Harry Pelletier and Uncle Napoleon singing songs. My dad made homemade drink la piquette and they sang and drank for New Years, weddings, and gatherings. This is how I remember making this drink. They use bran, sugar, yeast, and if you have spoiled fruit, over ripened. For every gallon of water, you put a cup of sugar and bran. You use lukewarm water. You leave this sit for awhile. When it starts to work like bubble, you stir it. I know how to make it, I helped my dad. I tried making it one time. I don't know how it turned out like it did. It sure was powerful. Gordon drank some and had a headache. The next day he mixed one cup with water and got drunk. You could also use potatoes or peelings.

I remember for clothing my dad would cut out material and mom would sew little dresses, and little pants for us kids. My mom made us nice dresses with flour bags, that nice floral patterns and she also

made us panties with white flour bags (laughs). Sometimes we were given clothing and mom and dad washed them and we then wore them. We shopped at Wasselen's Store in Binscarth and other stores. When we would go to Russell to see the doctor we sometimes shopped in Russell. We had to hire someone to take us and it was expensive. Later on, my brother Béb  had a car.

I remember people making all homemade things. I remember Koohkoom la fii make homemade soap called la potaas with lye, ashes, and lard. Years ago people helped one another, today it is different. You have to have money handy now before anyone helps you.

We used to pick different kinds of berries like chokecherries, cranberries, strawberries, and raspberries, pincherries, and gooseberries, and other things. My dad was good at canning so he canned the fruit, made jam and he also grew rhubarb and canned that too. This was put away for the winter.

I don't remember anyone making moccasins or sashes.

I always volunteered and was involved with the M tis Federation. I help in different ways like selling tickets, worked in the canteen, bingo. I worked twenty-five years in the bingo hall.

I still do things for a pastime. I make key chains, necklaces, earrings. I help out at M tis Days. I put out my booth and sell things. I used to go to St. Madeleine M tis Days. Since I have been ill and can't walk very well I am in my wheelchair and don't like to bother anyone to push me around. I had surgery on my feet. I have a good doctor and my nurses are good.