

Norma and Joe Welsh, Sherry Farrell-Racette
Video 1

Start 2:14.04.29 Norma Welsh: Well, my name is Norma Welsh and I'm from Lebret. Born and brought up there. My father was Joseph Welsh, my mother was Eleanor Amyotte, and we grew up several places in Lebret. Several areas, I guess I should say—we lived in, on the road allowance and on the Métis Farm, and went to school and had lots of fun.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Where'd you go to school?

Norma Welsh: Lebret.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, Lebret.

Norma Welsh: And my mother died when I was fifteen. I quit school at that time. I was in Grade Eight and a couple years later the kids went to Prince Albert Orphanage. St., St. Pat's. And they were there for, I'm not sure how many years, but I hung around Lebret for a while and ended going to Regina, got married and moved to BC for a few years. I've lived all over the place. Yeah, I'll let Joey tell you his side.

Joe Welsh: Well, I'm Joe Welsh. I'm Norma's, one of Norma's little brothers. Well, we got the same family history as she has except in, in, when her mother died there was Norma and the other older sister, Billie, and her sister Polly, who were all teenagers at the time, they looked after us for a couple years. And then the seven youngest of us were shipped to St. Pat's Orphanage in Prince Albert. I spent eight years there and during that time, well, we didn't lose all contact with our family, but, but it was such that we're made to feel that we were lucky to be there, that we had nobody except them, you know, to be thankful for, for education, food, and clothing and shelter, and all that kind of stuff, but we're fortunate enough that we didn't forget our family and, and where, you know, we came from. But in that eight

years we can appreciate that we lost a lot of where we come from and who we were. And then in June 16th, 1961 I jumped the fence and I hitchhiked back to Regina.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: You remember?

Joe Welsh: Yes, yeah, they, yeah, I was in high school and they had a rule that if you failed a grade in high school that you couldn't come back. So I failed Grade Nine on purpose and went back to Regina, and there my father and a couple of sisters—Norma was in BC at the time—that I would re-establish as a family. I, I didn't finish high school. I quit after Grade Eleven and I done everything from working in an eviscerating plant and working for farmers to being in the army, to being a social worker, to being a bum, everything. And I've worked all over the place, too, and I'm still a bum.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Did you know your grandparents?

Norma Welsh: Oh, yeah, and I knew my great grandfather, Johnny Blondeau.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh really?

Norma Welsh: Yeah. He was, he used to live with, with my grandparents, and he was very ill and was bedridden for quite a few years, but my grandmother looked after him until he died, but we used to, yeah, visit them and we had to go by their place when we were going to school. We would walk up the hill from the school there, up, what side of the, the valley is that? Where the seminary was?

Joe Welsh: South.

Norma Welsh: South side. So we did that and we had also, we used to walk across the lake in, in wintertime, and we had this old grandpa, we used to call him Mooshum St. Pierre, and he was married to my dad's aunt, and we always stopped there on the way back. And we always had bannock and tea from Grandma and she was just a wonderful bannock maker, you know. I never ever learned to make bannock like that, and then Mooshum would be sitting in the, in his chair, his rocking chair, and he had this spittoon about a mile away. He used to sit there and smoke his pipe and spit—never miss it. We always thought that was so disgusting.

Joe Welsh: Isn't that what they call [?]?

Norma Welsh: I don't know, but we used to call [?] that black stuff you pick off the trees. Oh, I'll be something that will poop there. Was part of learning the stuff we were growing up with, but, yeah, we, but we lived at the Métis Farm, too. We were there for eight years and I believe that's where I started school. I didn't start school till I was eight. The reason being is that there wasn't any room in the school.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Oh, right.

Norma Welsh: Yeah. And I think a lot of kids my age didn't start till they were eight for that reason.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Yeah, that happened, I think, in a few places.

Norma Welsh: Yeah, so some of us were unfortunate that we, we couldn't start earlier, you know, but as a result I quit school when I was fifteen and just went, went to work in different places, looked after the kids for a couple years, and moved to Regina. And first place I worked was at Sears, which I think everybody in Regina worked at Sears at one time. Then like I say, from there I got married and moved to BC.

End 2:20.30.22