

Norma and Joe Welsh, Sherry Farrell-Racette

Video 2

Start 4:44.56 Sherry Farrell-Racette: Did, when you were, when you would pick, would your family have, like, a different area to go into than other people?

Norma Welsh: Yeah.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: People would have their spots, 'cause I notice now people are ...

Norma Welsh: Yeah, we had, especially when we lived up on top of the hill. We, like, our nearest neighbour was, I don't know how far away, but, and we had the whole top of the hill to ourselves, basically, and we had tons of saskatoons. But most people had their own places, Katepwa, Fort Qu'Appelle. Like, people went up in, near the graveyard at the Fort, there's a big patch up there. And there are patches all over the valley, but people won't tell you where they were, they really won't. What is it, a few years ago we went over to Batoche by Maria's ...

Joe Welsh: Oh, jeez, that was [?].

Norma Welsh: I bet we came out of there with about fifty or a hundred gallons.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Holy smokes, you do serious picking.

Joe Welsh: Well, that was a good year. I think it was '95, '95, yeah, and they were like ...

Norma Welsh: Yeah, grapes.

Joe Welsh: ... grapes, yeah, oh, and so, that's best I've had for a long time.

Norma Welsh: Yeah, and I just finished my batch from there about two years ago.

4:46:19 Sherry Farrell-Racette: So you were saying you were, you went out looking for a patch on the golf cart?

Joe Welsh: Well, yeah, that's my Auntie Margaret there, we went picking with her one day. Before that she would never tell me where her berry patch was, so we went to Katepwa where the golf course is. She rented a golf cart and drove over, you know, five or six fairways up this little hill, you know, parks her golf cart ...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: I can just see. I have this visual image ...

Joe Welsh: Well, yeah, dodging golf balls, park the golf cart on a little plateau and she looked at me, "Don't you tell anybody about this." And we walked into the bush about a hundred yards and up a little hill, and there it was—holy Moses, the mother lode. And that's how well you guard that, like, 'cause, well, the saskatoons particular, chokecherries, they're all over the place. I never heard anybody having a, a private chokecherry patch, but the, the saskatoons were, were precious. But this is, all this talk reminds me of a, of another lesson that, that I had to learn. Years ago, when we first started going up north fishing, we used to go and in, raspberry and blueberry season started. And we were going along to the Besnard Lake road towards Beauval, and there were people, you know, on the sides of the road, all these cans of blueberries and stuff for sale. And I made the remark, you know, about the old, you know, these people, they're selling their stuff, but that's not part of the culture. Billie's there, she said, "That's commerce. Culture happens in the berry patch." And just, you know ...

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Keep it straight.

4:48:20 Joe Welsh: ... keep it straight, yeah. And, and then, you know, the implications of that, and it's true, well, and she said, you know, "Before we had schools, you know, we'd go in there and the women would teach the kids, you know, and then there was, you taught 'em patience, you know." You, everybody, yeah, we go picking berries with your kids, oh, and pick six berries. "Oh, my can ain't full yet." So they're, you know, you have to have the patience to learn, learn the patience to pick steady, and then not eat anything, and then there'd be the [?] two pails. You only have to pick five more pails and, you know, and then the stories would, would come out of there. And then they'd talk about, the women would take the children and, and well, the girls, mostly. Well, there was all kinds of separations and all kinds of functions to, to, to that culture, where they talk of the women who teach the girls about growing up and what it meant to be, you know, to become a woman and the duties and responsibilities that they had. Then the men would take the boys over there and, you know, the bigger boys, the women always seemed to take the little children, you know, boys and girls. And that's where the, that's where the school was, in effect, before we had schools, and that's where, that's where our culture is, in the berry patch, on the road is commerce.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Men's world, women's world.

Joe Welsh: Yeah, yeah, right, yeah.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: But I know when a lot of guys talk about berry picking, they often talk about their moms. Because they used to, that's where they used to go with their mothers, eh. [?] pickers, I mean, like, it's just when you, that's where you spend time with your women, you know, your mom and female friends, relatives, like that.

Joe Welsh: Yeah, all [?] relationships, yeah. All kinds of stuff. That, that was a real part, part of the culture. Other things were as a result of what, the learning took place in that activity.

Sherry Farrell-Racette: Culture's in the berry patch.

Joe Welsh: Yeah, I like that, I like that.

End 4:50:25.02