
Interview With Randy Gaudry

Date: July 1, 2001

Willow Bunch

Interviewed by Leah Dorion-Paquin

Also present: Herb Lafferty

Tape One: Side A

- 00.5 Leah:** I guess Randy we are going to do an Interview for the GDI archives. We will try to keep it really casual though. Why don't you just tell us a little bit about yourself? So Herb, anytime you think of anything that we might be missing, just jump in. Randy, can you tell us when you were born and a little bit about yourself?
- 00.9 Randy:** I was born in Willow Bunch on September 1, 1951 and in fact within the next few months I will have my 50th birthday. Didn't think I would make it this far but I was raised here in Willow Bunch until I was about 10 and then we moved to Alberta. We moved to several different places and then we settled on a farm just outside of Calgary. Lived around Calgary and did rodeos for a number of years, always was around the horse industry, working at riding stables and different things like that, cattle ranches. When I was done with my rodeo career I moved to Banff and worked as a guide for the outfitters and worked for the warden service itself, worked as a horse packer and wrote _____ for the Canadian government for about five years and in that time I had missed rodeo immensely and we were putting on a rodeo in Canmore, Alberta and they asked me to sit on the committee because I knew about rodeos and come time to start, we had no announcer so they said, "You know all about rodeo, you can take this microphone," and I had never spoke into a microphone in my whole life and I said, "No, I am not doing," this but we had nobody and the crowd was there so I said, "Well somebody has to do it," so I did it and it was the start of a rodeo career where I announced rodeos, so I have been announcing for about 22 years, done a lot of major First Nations rodeos, all-Indian rodeos in Alberta. I have done some here in Saskatchewan and had a radio show about rodeo and that is one of my big loves about sports, is the sport of rodeo. I know quite a bit. Six years ago today in fact, on July 1st, my wife and I purchased a house here in Willow Bunch and moved back here to my roots and we are pretty happy about it. In a lot of ways there has been some ups and downs but, and I never really, I was always proud of my Métis history in a way, but in another way, we never really took it serious and I thought about this awhile back where I understand now, we were put down so much within this community and around here and I

remember a lot of people like my father's age and a little older, instead of being taught to be proud to be Métis or whatever, they never hid it much but they just told funny stories about it and they were kind of laughing at one another all the time instead of taking things quite serious, and I think that was a lot to hide the hurt and be put down all the years. You are a third class citizen and your people are erasable and they had no pride and I had heard stories about my great grandfather a little bit but we were never told the great stories about these people and when I moved back here I noticed that there is a lot of racism in this community with the French and the English community also. When my brother moved back here first, I have another brother who purchased a house here and lives here part time, and lives in Calgary now but he will be coming back and I purchased a house here and a few other Métis started moving back in the area and they were quite resentful of stories that were told of how we run out of Alberta because we had just gotten out of jail and had to come back to our hometown in Willow Bunch and the town had no other choice but to give us houses to live in. Oh it went on and I just kind of let it slide. Then it was brought to my attention that there was even a Métis local here. We didn't even know that there was an active local here. The local here had been dormant for probably thirty years and it was going quite well. There was a fellow by the name of Lucas Art who was the president at the time but things threw, we'll call it political powers, were keeping things down on us here and actually too, and I know I kind of felt, I am built like a mushroom, and I got kind of tired of being treated like one and that is the way they were kind of doing it. Our own political people in the Métis Nation and I said to Luke one day, "You know, there has to be more we can do to get things going around here," and he said, "Well I don't want this job anymore." He said, "Why don't you take it on?" I said, "I never really thought of it," so I gave it a couple of days thought and I said, "I will try." We had a meeting and it just so happened that that is when our Métis hunting rights had come in. Well we had a meeting in the basement of the church and they come out of the woodwork. Everybody was a Métis because it was free hunting rights and we knew a lot of them were Métis but they would hardly ever admit it. Some of them they just wanted their card and we have never seen them since. On the up side of that, we have had people that didn't even know there was an active Métis local. When we got going there was people that lived here and they knew they were Métis but it was not really brought out in the forefront or actively known. They have come on board as members and they are our strong board members and they are very active and they are doing a lot of things and that is the up side of that. We do have some that got their card for hunting rights and they went around and one fellow went around here and shot four deer the first day and paraded them all over town and said, "I got my Métis card. I can do this," and he didn't know the first clue of what a Métis person was or our history or anything, which I am still learning but I knew that was

wrong. I took upon myself to work for our people here and one thing that I did find and was encouraging was through Gabriel Dumont and METSI that there was funding available for students to go to school and further their education. I have a grade seven education. I left home when I was quite young and I was not very learned in school and part of that was the experiences I had in the convent here in Willow Bunch. I hated school and you know it's funny, I was kind of self-taught in some of the things now, but I think an education is so important, and older ones, that is one thing that I really wanted to stress with these kids and that kept me going. The powers would be out of Regina at the time were not doing anything. They really were not helping in any way on different things, just the education component and the inter fighting and the bickering and the political will. So I got in contact, actually we were introduced at a seminar to each other, I knew his family, and I knew of his family, fellow by the name of Ron Rivard. Ron is a consultant, a Métis person and he has helped us immensely as a consultant. He got a couple of programs going for us, he helped us with an economic development plan, and then we heard about the healing foundation, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and he helped us put a program together for it. We got funded for it. We are writing a book on the history of Willow Bunch, which I believe the old book that was wrote by the French priests here in the French community played a big part in getting us funded for this because it is a book that they still sell in our museum. Unfortunately it was the only book and is at this point until we get ours released on the history of Willow Bunch. The stories that are wrote about the Métis are very, very racist and that got me really going and trying to correct a lot of the things that were not done. I was fortunate enough that when we put this thing together I took on the job as the coordinator for the project, so I stepped down as president because I couldn't be my own boss. We have a good board of governors that make sure everything is running right. Everything is above board, it is going well, through fundraisers and Ron Rivard's guidance, we have purchased an older house here in Willow Bunch, right on the highway and right on the price. It was \$4000 for the house and we have converted it into an office and we have our meeting rooms in here and we coordinate the programs. We have a red river cart out here now, we are just in the process of getting our flag pole up so we can fly our Métis flag in Willow Bunch and there is quite a bit of controversy about that. There are people not too happy in town but that is their problem. We are forging ahead, we are trying to do what we can and one reason I am doing it is because the powers of ___ in this community that are in the French Community per say, they still have this perception and want people to believe that their heroes were their heroes and they are just second thoughts so we have to re-educate the people and we have got to do a lot of how to write this book on the prominent Métis people because the stereotypical stuff that is wrote up about the Métis, my God no wonder nobody wanted to admit that they were Métis, the way

that showed them _____(11 mins). What we had in the words, we lacked culture and we are not industrious, we prefer alcoholic beverages and we are just a lazy people and this book is still out there, so I am fighting for our rights. I feel that I owe that to my great grandfather, Andre Gaudry, my great grandparents on my grandmother's side, the Gosselin and Breyers and my grandmother, my grandfather and my dad, my dad married a Scott/Irish woman. Because he married her, she has been more Métis than white because her family disowned her when she married my dad so this was her family type of thing, so I owe it to them people.

12.6 Leah: Randy, I just wanted to get your thoughts...tell us about your family. You mentioned your father and your mother and your grandparents. Can you tell us a bit about this land, where you live, a little bit about what it was like?

12.8 Randy: Well, written and oral history shows that on my grandmother's side, the Gosselin and Breyers were in this area as early as 1824. They came from the Red River in Manitoba. My great grandfather was actually, he did not like the lime light and he did not like things wrote about it, but he was very industrious. His name was Andre Gaudry. Now from the reports that we have, there are a lot of documents from this area, he was fluent in Sioux, Cree, French, and English and apparently he could write in French and English. He was very entrepreneurial. A short man, they gave him a name that he really despised, they called him in French *les boss* meaning "humpy" and what happened was he had a hump on his back by his shoulder blades. When he was a young lad he got run over by a wagon and he broke his back and his back did not heal properly. So in stories or books you see *les boss* meaning humpy and he really did not like that nickname, so in recognition of him I will never use that in documentation. You might see it described as that in different things. When he came over he, with 35 Métis families from the Red River, he was a buffalo hunter. They settled in this area but they went to Wood Mountain first, in the Wood Mountain area and apparently settled over there. He was trading in different goods. We have a contract that hangs in our museum here, the original contract he made with the North West Mounted Police to build the fort in Wood Mountain, the first one. The powers of ___ don't want to give me a copy yet but we will get one for our own archival stuff. This is just one of the things he had done. They moved into the Willow Bunch area, they knew there was an abundance of wood, there was an abundance of water, fresh spring water, grass, and all these types of things. There was a huge grass fire went through Wood Mountain apparently. It destroyed a lot of the grass and everything out that way, so the Wood Mountain area died a little bit and the way the historians have things wrote now is that Jean-Louis Légaré was the founder of Willow Bunch and he was the first one here and that is untrue. It was old man Gaudry and a

couple of the other Métis that were here, encouraged him to come and see this part of the country and start a store down here because they knew it was a very viable place to, for people to make a living at and stay. In the old days, apparently, this was a stop-over place where the Métis, they followed the buffalo and they went from what we call The Big Muddy, that is east of here, like Bengough, they come to Willow Bunch and they would stay around here and then they would go to Wood Mountain and then they would trek to Fort Walsh, over just about on the Alberta border, Cypress Hills is really what it is called. They would winter over there a lot of the times because it is phenomenal over there, that you have the prairie over there, but you have got an elevation that is high. The trees are the same as you would find in Banff National Park and around the mountains they have great Chinook winds that go around there. It is always considerably warmer in that area. In fact, right here in Willow Bunch we find we are always 5 to 10 degrees warmer than Regina and it is almost like a banana belt, if you can call it that, when it is 20 below, but it is a lot warmer right through the system and they stayed in these areas.

17.0 *Brother Kenny shows up*

19.2 Randy: Kenny here, he was the hunter. I never really was the hunter. This is the one that did all of the hunting. He was the sharp shooter, lives to hunt.

23.3 Leah: We were just talking before your brother came in there about the Willow Bunch here and where you grew up and a little bit about that. So I want to hear more about Andre Gaudry. We have to keep going on Andre.

23.8 Randy: Well he apparently then, he was one of the Métis scouts and he was one of the prime interpreters, the main interpreters when they took Sitting Bull back to the United States, when he was around Wood Mountain here. Some of the history books that have been wrote pretty well glorify a fellow by the name of Jean-Louis Légaré here, that he was the be all and end all, but we have heard different stories on this. He couldn't converse with Sitting Bull because he couldn't speak Sioux, so they had these interpreters and they were the ones actually who befriended Sitting Bull and worked with him and that he trusted in a lot of the stories that we got and like I say, we want to correct a bunch of that stuff. The book called The History of Willow Bunch that was wrote in 1922 by Father Rondeau was, he picks Jean-Louis Légaré as a great white savior, like this man was the be all and end all and done everything and the Métis could not hardly go for supper not without his permission but asking how to do it almost, the way they have it depicted. We had stories years ago about this book and it was rewrote, actually it was translated, it was wrote in French and this book unfortunately was translated in English in 1970 with no apologies

or nothing, wrote differently and it is very racist against Métis and they, we published it and distributed it in 1970 in Willow Bunch and it is the only book that they use, like I say, that they have got in the library. We are trying to correct that. We were told at the time when this book was published in the '20s the Métis were very upset at the way it was done. They went to some of the elders like Andre Gaudry, Mr. McGillis, Catchou McGillis, who was about 105 when he passed away. This was about in 1923 I think or '22, the year was published. They went to St. Victor to see some of these fellows and said, "We understand that this book has a lot of inaccuracies in it." They said, "Yes it does," and old Andre apparently had said, "I don't know what he was thinking, he must have lost his mind or else the guys that were doing the interviews embellished things because I can't really see him saying the things that are wrote in this book." They said, "Okay, we want your side of the story, you peoples, we want your side of what actually happened." Now Jean-Louis Légaré had already passed away a few years before this book was published and they said, "Jean-Louis Légaré was a friend of ours that we knew for a long time and he was not just an acquaintance, he was a friend." They said, "He is not here to defend himself on how this book was wrote. I will never call a dead man a liar," he said. "You leave the book the way it is. We don't want nothing to do with it. He is not here to defend himself," and got quite mad apparently, quite agitated with it. He said, "Well no you have got to write your side." He said, "I will never call a dead man a liar. You leave it the way it is." Not knowing through the years how that was going to, the affect.

27.5 Leah: Your grandfather Andre said that?

27.5 Randy: Great grandfather. So they left the book the way it was and they never really took anything out of it because of their honour to a person that was already deceased.

27.7 Leah: Out of respect?

27.7 Randy: Out of respect, and so the book has taken root and very negative images. And I think I owe it to him. I believe that if he had known what was going to happen at that time, they would have tried to correct something. So we want to do it like that. Jean-Louis Légaré, the way they have got it wrote, he was the guy who Sitting Bull believed in and he took him back to the States and he was the be all and end all and in our research it shows that is not right. In fact, Jean-Louis Légaré was one of them that really got a fired, a lot of land in the area from uneducated people through the scrip process and was not the hero that they depict him to be towards the Métis people.

28.6 Leah: Do you have any stories about cases where Métis, where they got tricked?

28.7 Randy: One story that I remember very well is my grandmother used to tell it about their own land. They had homesteaded two quarters of land. My grandfather was named Dumas Gaudry and my grandmother was Rosalie Gosselin and they married when they were in the early years. She passed away seven years ago; she was 98 years old and grandpa passed away I believe it was 1965, but she remembered a lot of things. She was a very religious person and they lived in their coulee here about a mile from town and when church was on, it didn't matter if it was everyday or whatever, that lady in her 80s would walk that mile to church and get a ride maybe back or whatever. She really had no hard words to say about anybody, but when it came to this type of a thing, she really did not mince words on how they got taken on their land. My grandfather, it was a funny way the way they were raised around here. My great grandfather Andre Gaudry was very learned, could read and write and speak different languages, where my grandfather only went to school one day. He never wanted to go to school, some of his brothers didn't, so he could not read or write. So documents that he had signed, he didn't know anything about. There was a fellow by the name of Trefle Bonneau, who was depicted as the cornerstone of the community here and one of the first settlers they call him. He went to, he had quite a bit of money and he was a broker around here you might say. My grandfather apparently signed a note with him for a team of horses and the note was supposed to be that he was using the land as collateral to purchase this team of horses. In fact, a week later Trefle Bonneau showed up and said, "Why are you still on my land?" He had signed a note saying that he had sold the two quarters of land for the team of horses. He had the legal document and he told them he would get the police and whatever and they had to leave. They had to leave their homestead and it was already broke and everything and my grandmother was very bitter about that for a few years. A lot of that stuff happened in this part of the country with uneducated Métis and the way the scrip process worked. In fact, it is starting to be known now that there was eight townships of land between Willow Bunch and Wood Mountain that was set aside for Métis scrip and they never got it, so it was, you know, through different deals. The way history, the history is wrote in this book The History of Willow Bunch is, their quote is, "Once again their total lack of foresight, the Métis had no liking for the land and did not want to work it or do anything with it so they sold it for next to nothing because they didn't know the worth of it." To try and justify their crooked dealings, there is no other way of putting it you know. That was whether it be people that came from Quebec or whatever of the eastern provinces and land speculators to the church. Same thing all the way around and you know, I think we have a few people who are nervous around here, this area, that were going to do a massive land claims or whatever but I really can't see that in the works but they shouldn't have to worry about things that much if they didn't do

anything wrong to begin with, so we kind of look at it that way. Like the one fellow was saying, "My God you guys are getting organized," and I just looked at him and said, "We're back." There was so many Métis that lived around here that were gone. One reason I really became passionate about re-educating the people here about our Métis history was that book, per say that I go back to all the time, but a few years ago there was a lady in town, a French lady, an older lady, that went to the school and we got wind of this. They invited her to the school to talk to the younger students grade 3, 4, and 5 say, about Willow Bunch in the old days, the history, and apparently one young fellow got up and said, "Well if there was so many Métis here years ago, how come they all left?" And her comment was, "Oh the Métis people were too lazy and they wouldn't do nothing around here so the government gave them thousands of dollars to leave Willow Bunch and go to Alberta or the city so they could live on welfare. They didn't want to do anything here anyway, so the government gave them thousands of dollars to leave." Which was totally inaccurate and that is when I became quite passionate about it and I went to the school and I had some words with the principal and a few others and I said, "How dare you even allow this to happen where it is you know, until you get your facts straight and that. These kids are going to go home and this is what they are telling their parents and this is what they are believing, that the lazy Métis here didn't want to do anything here anyway." We got wind of that, these kids came home and said, "Is that right, the Métis were given thousands of tax dollars to leave here?" and so that was the start of me correcting things and really if they didn't want to correct it themselves I guess it is our job to try and correct it. That is the way I look at it anyway.

34.7 Leah: You know we were talking the other day about where the families lived here in Willow Bunch. Can you tell us where the families lived?

34.9 Randy: There was, this is another thing where it's called the hamlet, the Métis hamlet on the side hill over here. There was some twenty or thirty families that lived up there. The story goes that Jean-Louis Légaré had to go to Regina and get this land for them to live on tax free and he was the big saviour once again, which we believe is not true, but that is where they stayed a lot of them, was on that hamlet because they lost their scrip land. They had no where to go and they lived over on that side. And it was on that side of the hill, the whites did not go there and any crime that happened it was blamed on the people of the hamlet and yes, there was some people, some Métis people that lived up there that were not the best people. You get that in every culture, I don't care where, but it was a lot easier to blame a Métis than it was to do a lot of the other things. So it was, the stories I get, I remember some of the older people when I was a kid here and it was a nice place up in there but the stories we get and how it was, it

was probably southern Saskatchewan's early dealings of what you might call a ghetto, almost the way that they were subjected to that over there, their houses were not that good, they had no running water, they had two springs or a well, they fended for themselves a lot of them over there, they didn't have the amenities of other people in town. So the housing was very substandard and, but a lot of them they lived, they were happy, they hunted, they, fishing wasn't done that much in the area. Fife Lake over south of here, it was an abundance of fish in there before it dried up in the 80s and they fished a lot over there apparently, but mainly it was deer and antelope and what have you that they sustained off of. The working was very sparse. They would work thrashing crews, working for different farmers. When there was very hard manual labour to do that is when they hired a lot of the Métis. Ironically they say in one cart, they say the Métis were too lazy and didn't even want to work this land and yet when you look at it, they were doing the hardest work on the land for somebody else and the land had originally been theirs and it had been taken from them, kept them trodden down. My grandfather Dumas Gaudry, one of his jobs that he had done most of the time, he cut a lot of fence posts, a lot of pickets. He would go out to the bush and he would cut pickets all the time and he would take them and trade them with farmers along the way to Moose Jaw. He would trade them for, he would come back with chickens, eggs, pigs, whatever and that is how they sustained a good life in their part. They didn't live very long in the side hill there, what they call the hamlet, they purchased a little bit of land just about a mile from town in a nice little coolie and that is where they raised their family. Big, big gardens. I remember the huge, huge gardens. My grandma she would get up and kokum and she would be up at 4 in the morning working the garden but then at ten or ten thirty when the heat would hit, she was done. She would be in bed at eight o'clock at night. The old wood stoves, my uncle just moved into a senior's home in Assiniboia about two years ago, he lived in that coulee, he is about 81 now, 82. He lived in that coulee all his life and they didn't get electricity in there because they didn't want it. We tried to get them to, we'd even pay for it, but they never had electricity in there until about '84. They had no running water, still they got it from the well and that is the way they lived back then, and the power line went right by, maybe a hundred yards from the door. They tried to get my grandfather to get power when it first went through. They said, "You should have electricity here," and he said, "All I need is my coal oil lamp, leave me alone," he told them in French. But their tongues weren't in their pockets and they had a lot of fun and they were well respected in a lot of ways around here, by some people.

39.6 Leah: Can you tell me about your grandmother? Describe her to me.

39.7 Randy: Well, she was an average height lady and all she knew was hard work, all she knew was hard work and she loved her kids, her grandkids. I think when she passed away there was 56 grandkids and 22 great grandchildren, if I remember right. She had seven or eight children. The first one had passed away. She was very religious, went to church all the time, was a member of the women's church league here, one of the very few Métis that did and she lived a simple life but a very good life. She seen a lot of changes through the years, a lot of heartache, industrial changes, you know until she died. She never believed that they sent a man to the moon, she said that is trickery that they have done and she would never believe that they went to the moon. She accepted everything else but she didn't want to believe that they went to the moon. She said that is some kind of photo trickery that they had done in a movie or whatever and it's funny that some of these tabloids now are trying to say that now too, the way that these photos were taken. Maybe she was right, who knows. But she lived for her family. She was already in her 60s and her one son who was working on the railroad, he had a wife and three daughters and a young boy who was 6 months old and his wife had heart disease of some kind.

Tape One: Side B

00.1 Randy: The young boy Danny, he was 6 months old and she took him right away as an extended family and she raised another one after sixty and he lived with her all the time until he moved away as a young adult. Uncle Joe and my grandma kind of raised him out there, so she was always there for people if need be. She played a mouth organ, she liked to laugh, she played a mouth organ a little bit and she made the best bannock going and deer meat and ____ and boulet soup and you know that women, you could go there and there would be nothing on the stove and you could see her heading for the chicken coup with a knife that was as long as a sword and she was kind of a woman you know and my dad says one time there was a ____ Paquin who was related to us and my dad and them they seen her going to the chicken coup, "Look, there she goes," and the knife was kind of dragging in the snow making a trail to, and sure enough she come back with a chicken a few minutes later. She plucked that chicken, you know, killed it, plucked it, prepared it. All within two hours there was a great big meal of chicken ____ and you know, how fresher can you get than that? They butchered their own animals and that kind of thing and she could certainly and she hated alcohol beverages. Seen a lot of her family deteriorate from it or what have you. She didn't like it around much and yet the old culture, she still made chokecherry wine. That was just brought out at New Year's and I remember as a young kid that was the focal point at my grandma and grandpa's, they would come out there in sleighs and horses and in cars. You would see a big brand new fancy car there and somebody else pulling in with a sleigh

and a horse, stuff like that. My grandpa never did drive; he always had horses and teams and that type of thing so I was fortunate enough to see the last part of the culture like that, and then the wine would come out then. She would have some of her chokecherry wine and give it out in that way so they still had their little quirks. Actually my brother and myself and my cousin, the first time we ever got drunk, we stole this sealer of her chokecherry wine and went to the haystack with it. We were sick enough that they didn't even have to beat us. We just kind of got a lesson that way. Easter time we would come down here and usually at Easter it was nice, the crocuses were out. That woman would get up and there was up to 22 grandkids around there and she would get up in the middle of the night and she would go all the up around the side hills and hide Easter eggs.

03.4 Leah: You were telling me that she was into medicine?

03.5 Randy: Yeah, she was a midwife for a lot of the people here. She brought a lot of the kids into this world. She was never formally trained but she had that knack for healing people. She had different what we called concoctions, but they could take a toothache away, they could heal burns, it was all herbal stuff that she knew from the bush. She was not considered a medicine woman or anything, but she knew about all that stuff and she kept it quite secretive anyway. But in the old days she assisted the doctors quite often and there was no real formal hospital then or whatever I guess, especially as a midwife she didn't want that I guess.

04.4 Leah: On the other end of the story, why don't you tell me about your grandfather?

04.5 Randy: Well grandpa was, see we left here when I was ten and he died when I was 13 I guess, and we were already in Alberta and I never really got to come to his funeral but as a young boy I remember him quit a bit and he was quite quiet and he smoked his cigarettes, rolled his tobacco and as a young boy I remember we didn't go to town that often but we would go for a walk and we would go around the hill where you could see the town and he would stand there and roll a cigarette and he would smoke it and then we would walk back to the house and he kind of liked to go to town sometimes because he was quite a character in his younger days, always horse trading and doing different things, liked his card games and that type of thing and he could tell quite a few stories I guess and do that type of deal, but very low keyed in a lot of ways. He just worked to support his family. That is about all with him. Like I say, he could not read or write, but he just was a hard worker.

06.0 Leah: Now Randy, you have been talking about your own father and his musical background. Tell us a little bit about your father-in-law.

06.2 Randy: Before we get to that I just thought of something about my grandmother. You know how she took care of people? She had an uncle and his name was Joe Briere and we called him old Joe. He was blind. He went blind at about three years old from a fever. He lived with his sisters, I believe it was around, not Lebrét, but north of there, and then they came this way and he stayed with his sister for a while, and nobody could take care of him and she took care of him. He came and stayed, they built a house for him, along their place and she took care of him all the time, that Joe Briere and he was darned near 90 I think when he finally passed away. And he was blind and I remember as a kid he was blind but he heard things all the time and we would be kids trying to sneak into his house to steal sugar cubes. He would be, "Hey, hey, hey!" and he would be there and he would hear you coming and he was kind of a spooky looking old guy for us and we were kind of scared of him in a way, but he was quite harmless and he made, he contributed to the place as much as anybody else did. He cut firewood all summer long and he would stand there and he had one measuring stick and he had the sawhorse and they would have the wood there for him and he would pick it up and he would measure from one side and he would cut with a bucksaw and he would cut firewood all summer long and that was for the winter supply and he contributed to the family as much as anybody did and he was an old, old man at the time. He would sing a little bit and smoke the pipe all the time. He was quite an old gentleman but my grandma took care of him too. Speaking of singing, my dad, that is probably his forte besides raising kids. There was ten kids in our family. As a young man dad, my uncle Joe could race a horse they called Silver. He was not a registered thoroughbred but they called him the Willow Bunch Grey and there are some stories out there. They would literally ride this horse to Wood Mountain and then race him over there and he would beat everybody in the country and they raced him at different races around. They raced him apparently about five years in a row at Assiniboia and then he wouldn't let him run anymore, they said he wasn't a registered thoroughbred so they disqualified him. But there are pictures of my father and he was a jockey with him and raced him and raced him and they hunted coyotes with this horse all winter, this type of thing, they had greyhounds and that is how they made their living. They trapped, they done a lot of that around here. My dad he raised, we around this area he farmed, we had a couple of quarters of land but he raised us on wild meat. He hunted and he was a shot and he could shoot. He would show up with a couple of the other Métis and they would go to these turkey shoots in town and they would say, "Okay here goes the turkeys now. Nobody could beat them at their shooting. So he, like I say, he farmed a little bit and he played in talent contests and it is unfortunate but I think God has a different avenue for people sometimes. It was I believe the late '40s and he was quite talented with the guitar and he sang a lot of the old Jimmy Rogers stuff and he

sounded a lot like him and he wrote a few songs. He went apparently to Old Point, Montana to a talent contest and the story goes that it was either Ernest Tubb or someone like Ernest Tubb. I think they did say it was Ernest Tubb, was one of the judges and dad won the contest and he wanted to take him with him and teach him the ropes and he thought he had it as a singer but grandma said, "No, no, no, you know your place here. You stay here and you have got a small family and you don't have to go and show off like that". That is the way they were raised to, don't go out there and show off type thing, so he didn't do it. He stayed and had nine kids and what have you. He had his bout with alcohol and...

- 11.6 Leah:** We so appreciate your beautiful stories. Healing Randy, it is healing.
- 11.9 Leah:** I know at GDI we are doing some work on looking at Métis experimental farms that were running across Saskatchewan. Can you tell us a bit about what you know about how that was operated down here near Willow Bunch and area?
- 12.1 Randy:** There was a big farm down here called the Co-op branch that I remember it. We were never part of it. The McGillis and the Lesarts and them were a big part of it. I don't really know how many acres it was and how many cattle they ran on. As a kid I remember going over there sometimes and there were two or three houses and the families all lived there and they also had big garden plots and this type of thing. So yes, there was a Métis farm, part of it also, it was out of town here a few miles and the other part was just on the outskirts of town here. There was just two areas in there that were Métis farm apparently and then they had a township I believe that they ran sheep on in the Fort Lack district and that was all Métis land. It was a community farm and the government stepped in at one point in the late '60s I believe it was. Don't quote me on that but I believe it was the late '60s, and they stepped in and took the land and it is now, to this day is a PFRA sheep range for different farmers and that. It is not really right. There is no land base or anything and I would actually like to see something done about that, you know, like the park.
- 13.5 Leah:** Do you know any Métis families from Moose Jaw? A little off topic but do you have any connection with the Métis there?
- 13.6 Randy:** Yes, there is a lot of them that lived here, that are over there. The Klynes, the Gosselins, and my relatives in fact on the Gosselins, and the Gaudry's there. Some admit they have Indian blood and some are no, they're not. They kinda hide it a little. They are the Whites from St. Victor and we are the Indians from Willow Bunch, which is fine with me. From what I have heard about some of them I might not want to be related to them either, so we will leave it at that.

But there are quite a few of the offspring of the Métis that lived around here that moved over there. My great uncles in fact, there was about three or four of them that lived around the Wild Animal Park area, down below there for years. My uncle Alec Gosselin, he actually worked for the Wild Animal Park, feeding the animals and stuff and he trapped a lot all over down there and he made his living. His nickname was "Beaver," Alec, in fact. There was him and another fellow that we heard a few stories. My uncle and my brother can elaborate on them a little bit more maybe. There was a fellow by the name of Jewels Beaupré. He was the youngest brother of the Métis giant, Edward Beaupré. They traveled together and you know, tongue and cheek, and the way people gave each other nicknames and you know they called uncle Alec, he was "Beaver" Alec and the other one, "Muskrat" Jewels. "Beaver" Alec and "Muskrat" Jewels. They were always together these two old bachelors, and they done quite a bit. He contracted, I think Alec contracted with the government and the PFRAs and that quite often to get the beaver at a different river system and different irrigation ditches and muskrats and that type of thing. I remember as a young boy, I mean they can't do nothing to him now he is gone, I went with him and I distinctly remember we were living in Moose Jaw I believe then, we lived there for a little while. He drove an older car like a model A or model T. It had the wooden spokes on it and we went around very secretively in Moose Jaw and the back alleys of down main street and he had little brown bags on the back of his car and he would stop at all the Chinese restaurants and he would go in the back door and it was, I don't know in these bags was gallbladders or whatever they wanted from the beavers or muskrats, beaver tails or whatever, a delicacy to these guys hey. But it was always in the back door and I remember seeing the brown bags and I said to uncle Alec, "What is in those bags?" He said, "You don't ask questions." You know the old guys they were strict and what I didn't know, I couldn't, but it was probably you know, he shouldn't have been doing that, but they made a living. And the Chinese, I remember going to the front, we went into one restaurant there in the front door and we were going to eat something. They treated him royally and everything was just, oh he went to pay and "No, no, no, it's on the house, on the house." I guess he supplied them with some of the herbs that they needed or whatever but most of it was from the beaver and that but I don't know what parts they were. But there is different little deals like that. Then there was Pat Gosselin, my grandma's brother, and he worked for the stockyards for quite a while, the Moose Jaw stockyards, and retired there in fact. Louis traveled around quite a bit and uncle John. There was Pat Gosselin, he lived down there also. They lived down in that area that is all a park now, but there was little small houses kind of uniquely done. Alec especially was a bachelor but I remember my uncle Alec was a very clean man, a bachelor, and that little house of his was spotless all the time and just had everything in order all the time. But you could smell the beaver

hides that were being scraped outside like you wouldn't believe you know. There was just always stuff like that and they had buried right close and everything. Another one was uncle Fred Gosselin, he lived in Moose Jaw and he raised a family there. His daughter still resides there. We have seen her a few times and her husband taught at SIAST there and she worked also at SIAST, not as a teacher but in the administrative field. So there are some of my relatives and a lot of other people. Like I say the Klyne's and there are some Caplets and Gosselins, different people live in the Moose Jaw area.

18.4 Leah: Randy, you were just talking about homes and I did not ask you about your grandparents' home. What were the homes like for the Métis out here, early days?

18.6 Randy: Well, from pictures you see that they sod shacked some of them but a lot of them that the pictures I have seen and the stories it was, there was smaller wood and straw and they mudded them, the outside. You see there was a certain clay around here and they were cool on the summer and they were very warm in the wintertime you know, and they were uniquely done. Some of them were long, some of them were smaller, some were good housekeepers and some were not. My grandmother's house, it was a house they moved in from someplace else and the old house there are remnants of it and pictures of it when they were tearing it down and the one part of it they used as a barn that still stands on the place. The old barn was the original house on the place. The other one has been there since, gosh I would have to say '49 or '50 probably, somewhere in there. They had different kinds but most of them in the early days I think they were mud houses. There was one old fellow, I remember a story they told the old timers, he was quite religious and he kept, he was after the priest here and he said, "You have to come and bless my house in French and you have to come and bless my house," and the priest told him I guess, "I just blessed it about six months ago." "Yeah but you have got to redo it again," he said, "Because we just remudded it." And I guess that is the way they thought of things. Every house, so that is one thing when we get back to religion a little I remember. In any house you saw a cross and religious pictures. There was always a crucifix up and they were very spiritual people that lived around here. I remember the older ladies, they all dressed kind of the same, black dresses and black shawls some of them and you know they all had nicknames, they all had different nicknames. You kind of wonder how they got them or whatever, but everybody had a nickname; it was part of the culture. I say that my father and that they laughed tongue and cheek of some of the heritage, but it was tongue and cheek for some, but by the same token you were taught to be proud of your Métis heritage and if somebody called you anything or put down your Métis heritage, you stood up. We were taught to stand up to it, not to run away from it, but you know it was kind of

tongue and cheek where you, they laughed about the heritage and how they had done things, but by the same token you were taught to be quite proud of it. I think a lot of that has to do with when they tried to assimilate everybody, so you kind of go with the flow you might say, which is unfortunate in one way.

21.7 Leah: Randy can you tell us about that Mr. Catchou McGillis? Did you meet him?

21.9 Randy: Catchou, I did when I was a young boy but I don't really remember him. I really don't remember. I remember vaguely but we went out there a few times in St. Victor and, but my dad knew him good and he was a good friend of my grandma and grandpa. They all knew him. He was a corner stone here. He had some great stories and I wish, you know, a lot of people would have taken more stories. There are some things wrote about him but once again they are wrote by a White author or newspaper interviewer and like other people are saying, well that is not quite true and they know he wouldn't have said it in those terms maybe type thing. But they always have to romanticize something or make it a little bit you know, embellish it a little bit more.

22.8 Leah: Randy you had mentioned assimilation as an issue down here and that extreme pressure to assimilate. Can you tell us about the Michif language down here and the status of it?

23.0 Randy: It is virtually lost. Even my uncle who is 82, he can still talk it a little bit and some of the older people they can talk it but they were more or less taught, not by their parents, but by the school system and other people to be ashamed of it and learn this proper French and speak the proper French and through assimilation and the way they were treated down here that all, that culture is lost. I never really learned French myself. My older brother knows French and there are nine kids in our family now and there is, he is about the only one that can and he speaks it fluently but he was around the older people more than we were, and he was fortunate enough to pick it up more, where we had an English-speaking mother so we never spoke much of it. I can understand different words and I have lost a lot of it now, but I can still understand some and in fact that is how, by understanding it the first day I went to school in the convent here, I seen prejudice where six years old, playing with a French kid and the nun runs over to us and she kind of come over and she said to this young boy and I could understand part of it, "You don't play with *lit ta mittes sow*, you play with your own kind." *Ta mittes sow* meaning "dirty Half-breed" and I went home that evening and I was kind of puzzled about it, a 6 year old kid. And I said to my mother while she was cooking supper I said, "*Mittes sow*, doesn't that mean dirty Half-breed?" and my dad, he was on a chair reading the paper and he said, "Where did you hear

that? And I said, "At school," and I told him the story and he went to the convent and read them the riot act but that didn't help much, but that is the kind of things and that was in '57 so when you take the early '50s, '40s, and '30s it was probably way, way worse.

25.3 Leah: Made it hard to survive. Randy, sorry to change the subject but music, music in this area. Can you tell me the style of the Métis music and your thoughts on that?

25.5 Randy: I never witnessed it myself. It was guitar playing and old country songs and that type of thing, but the stories are, in the hamlet, they had dances and jigs going on and there was several fiddle players in the area and they were the old style, but that culture has all been lost unfortunately.

25.9 Leah: Are there any names that came to mind that were musical families?

25.9 Randy: Oh that were musical, you know at this point I can't really... there were some McGillis some Lesarts that played the fiddle if I remember right. I don't want to say the names because I might be incorrect where some of the older ones will, can remember the exact names because I never seen them play. But I heard that on a Saturday night there in that hamlet, the dust was just a flying boy! They had quite a bit of fun with the different, and they jigged and that up there, but we lost all that. In fact I remember I was in an area around Lac La Biche an I was already thirty some years old and that was the first time I went around a Métis gathering of any kind and went to a deal and watched the jigging and I had never witnessed that culture. And I was in my thirties already and I want to learn a lot of that back and I felt at home around it. I didn't know it but I did know it in a way and I remember one of the greatest things of pride for me was about four or five years ago. The first time I went to an MNLA I was elected as a president here and we were running blind and trying to learn some stuff and I went to an MNLA in Saskatoon and when it started they had them come in with a Métis flag and all the elders and the senators and the veterans were coming ahead of the politicians and that is the first time I heard the Métis national anthem. Boy the pride there was just unbelievable. I have never felt so much of being a part of something. I was always lost before I think, and I felt I really belonged and I guess that is why I am working so hard on this thing, to try and make it work, but I was 46 years old and I hadn't heard the Métis national anthem.

28.2 Leah: Well the national anthem is a recent written piece.

28.3 Randy: Yeah I guess so, but even some of the like, the Métis flag you seen it but you didn't see it, you now what I am saying and now it is a

very big part of us and to understand what it meant and how it came about you know. It is unfortunate we didn't even know what all that stuff meant, but it is coming back and we are going to educate some of the younger ones so that it won't be lost hopefully.

28.8 Leah: Randy is there anything that you want to say about the land or this area that you think the young kids need to know? About the land or your thoughts on this place?

28.9 Randy: This valley holds a great feeling for me. When I travelled all over North America at different times, and every time I lived in different beautiful spaces, I lived in Banff for five years, I lived in Cody, Wyoming for awhile, I was around Yellowstone, Vancouver for cities or whatever, but nice places, but every time and sometimes I hadn't been here in a decade, but when I would come over the hill at the end of this valley there was a feeling that came over me, that I was home and just the most at peace feeling when I came over the hill looking at this valley. Maybe it is because as a kid the school was a, there are some memories there that weren't that good, however, as a child you have very few bad memories, if you have a good family life and the most of my memories of this place as a kid were very good ones so I guess that makes you feel more at home. If you're in a place where there is turmoil or whatever as you are raised as a troubled child or from things that are very dysfunctional, well you don't want to go back there. My mother for instance had a lot of heartache in this town through the years and she doesn't really have much feeling for this town because of the memories she had of it. But yet as a young person we do, and through being taught that be proud of what you are doing and do things from dad and it is time to, what goes around comes around, it is time to stand up for ourselves and I really want to be a big part of that and hopefully I can make a small significant difference and the rest can carry on.

30.8 Leah: That is lovely. Randy I just want to, I am new to the area, I just think before we think of other things we want to say, we don't know much about the other surrounding areas. Where are some other Métis settlements that you know of?

31.1 Randy: St. Victor.

31.1 Leah: Oh, okay. Can you just say a word about that if you don't mind?

31.1 Randy: St. Victor is about 12 miles straight west of here and they used to travel back and forth. It was the two first Métis settlements. There is the petroglyphs are over there and I think there are only three or four of that kind in North America or the world. There was a lot of it. It is in really rolling hills and lots of coulees and bush so they

stayed around there a lot, an abundance of water. French dominated now but it was Métis mainly at one time. Wood Mountain was another one that was one of the first Métis settlements in southern Saskatchewan. They have signs all over, one of the first French settlements, one of the early but they really don't want to say that they were a Métis settlement, which they were to begin with. There is different areas like in the Wood Mountain area, there is a lot of Métis and First Nations and then Romanian. Romanian is a very big part of the European culture, instead of the French. In this area it was the French. They say the French came about because when Jean-Louis Légaré came around he had the store in Wood Mountain. They asked him to start a store here and he seen the opportunity and he seen everything that could happen here as a learned man and he wrote in great detail to people in Quebec, his relatives mainly, and other people, and then they started coming out here and you know settling the land we'll call it, because that is what they call it. But they would take homesteads up and whatever and so it predominantly became a French community. They still spend a considerable amount of time and a considerable amount of money trying to make the rest of the world believe that this is a French community, which it is not. It is bilingual and there is different languages spoken here all the time. It is not a French community. There is French here but not like it was before. At one time apparently there was 2000 people here. I remember as a kid there was two hotels, two or three lumber yards, barber shops, several stores and now we are down to one store and there is a motel, restaurant, one bank, there was two or three banks at that time, and the telephone operator's telephone office was here. We had our own hospital, our own clinic kind of, and now there is a clinic here but he only comes once or twice a week and everything is done mainly out of Assiniboia. You know it is unfortunate that some of the smaller towns are dying, but we have an opportunity here for tourism and history that maybe we can revive this place a little bit more.

34.1 Leah: It is happening in other places. Randy I, just because I know you have the Red River cart out there, do you know of any remnants of any old trails out here? Can you tell us a bit about your ____ ____.

34.2 Randy: There are and in fact, they took a, I happened to be in Calgary and had to stay because of illness in the family. We organized a wagon train from here to go to Moose Jaw and this was during the North West Mounted Police trek and we organized it for them to go from here to Moose Jaw on the freighting trail and that is old man Gaudry too, he used the contract taking the mail and the freight and that. He wasn't much of a freighter. It was mainly the mail with him and they came that way and wagon ruts and Red River cart ruts. I have seen a few. My brother was saying, he said, "You can really see them out in that prairie where they are really deep." And there are

some of the older fellows there that own land and they are very proud of it and they like to show it to people, but they don't want too many to know because they don't want the place trodden and run down and that is where they met, the half-way point where they met the North West Mounted Police ride, and there was a small ceremony down there. So that was part of history being done too. It worked out well.

- 35.5 Leah:** Lots of very new things happening to acknowledge the real hidden history of this area, this community.
- 35.6 Randy:** There was a lot of, see there was very few of them that were here I think that were voyageurs, that were water people. This is the prairies so it was horseback and with wagons and I know the Métis, the area they, the story we heard, they freighted all of the lumber to build the first church here in Willow Bunch and they, it was cedar and the main reason they used cedar in those days was that it was a lighter wood to freight on wagons. They could take more of it on a trip and I went to this church quite often and it used to creek and sound like it was almost ghostly but the reason being, it gets pretty windy down here and that cedar wood, the nails would kind of work there way around because it was soft wood and the whole place would creek like heck. But they built that church and worked on it and done a lot of work on the freighting, building it, donated their time and unfortunately they were still quite poor, most of the Métis, and when the church went to open, the rich people around or people who had money acquired land, they bought pews, they could afford to buy pews in the church, where the majority of the Métis could not afford pews and they were made to stand in the back of the church and at times told by the priests you know you *mittes* in the back there in French he was saying make sure your shoes are clean and we don't need a bunch of mud tracked in here and just treated very poorly. This really upset some of the older people that had worked so hard to build a nice church here. This was one of the nicest in the area and they helped build it. They freighted the wood, all donated time and then to be treated that way you know. But that was the sign of the times.
- 37.6 Leah:** The attitude of the time, yes. Well Herb can you think of anything else? I am glad you raised the church because I know a lot of Métis have built a lot of Western Canada, the first churches, the first roads, the first cleared lands. Were there stories of rock picking? Like I have heard of Métis picking rocks.
- 38.0 Randy:** Lots of, they done all the menial farm work, all the bull work on the farms around here, the threshing, you know, not so much the seeding I heard about, but they picked rock all summer long and picked roots when they would break land up and there is so much of this land that was all broke up that should never have been from the grass and that and for seeding crops and I am told and I know I seen

it at one time so I kind of believe it. There are thousands upon thousands of teepee rings that were just destroyed all over here where they just picked the rocks to break the land and all that culture is just gone. There is some however, some medicine wheels and they thought it was a turtle effigy but they started looking at it and going, "A turtle don't have real claws," or ribs or whatever and then they found out it was a badger the more they looked at it you know, that it was a badger. I remember we heard that story just the other day but I remember hearing it a long time ago too. But there were turtle effigies around here and the reason they say the turtle effigy was for the underground springs. If you found a turtle effigy, you needed water and these springs were quite hidden and if you looked at the turtle's head within a few yards, if you walked directly a few yards from that turtle head, you found the spring where there was water.

39.5 Leah: Markers?

39.5 Randy: Yes.

39.6 Leah: Purpose.

39.6 Randy: Purpose for everything.

39.7 Leah: Purpose for everything, that's right. That is the quote of the day. Well did you have anything?

39.7 Herb: I was thinking of the giant, Edward Beaupré, that they have in front of the church. Can you tell us a little bit about the giant?

39.9 Randy: Yeah, he's in front of the museum there. It used to be the convent. The stories I get was he was born and raised here as a young man. He died very young actually, about 22 years old. He had a pituitary gland problem. That is why he grew so fast and he was 8'3" or 8'4". I can't really remember now. Apparently we have pictures with my great grandfather with him. Old Andre Gaudry took him out of the valley here the first time, took him to Winnipeg, took him to the fair. He ended up working for Barnum & Bailey or these circuses and made good money at it, and sent the money back home to his family here. His love of life, all he ever dreamed of being was a cowboy, but he was so big he couldn't get a horse that he could ride. Most horses would just walk right out from under him when he would stand and my grandmother used to tell us a story about when he was young, he could sit three or four kids on his knee and he would bounce them a little bit and he was kind of not simple in ways, but he enjoyed children sometimes and they would bug him because of his uniqueness and the kids were um... When he had enough of the kids apparently they would follow him around and do things. Finally he had enough of the children and how he got rid of the kids was he would take them

and set them on the roofs of the sawed shacks, the old mud shacks, and then walk away and they'd have to get themselves down. *Ha, ha.*

Tape Two: Side A

00.0 Randy: So that is how he would do things like that I guess and there is some other stories. In fact our elders here, we have some, that was their uncle, was the giant. His father was a Beaupré, Frenchman from Quebec, and his mother was a Piche, a Métis from the Red River apparently. Actually on that note, I would like to say about the giant, where the direct ancestors of, he was the direct ancestor of these boys that were nephews and I think maybe it was just anecdotes that we heard. But he did in fact, when he passed, it is better to have one of them tell the story on the giant, away it was very tragic. What did happen with him, he had his body was on display for awhile in Missouri at the World's Fair of St. Louis and the police came and said, "You can't do that," and then they abandoned his body and some kids found it in a grainery somewhere and the family could not get his remains back here to bury him because they were too poor. Trefle Bonneau, the story is he went to go get him, the body, and bring it back because he had the funds to do it, but he said he couldn't get him back here no way and nobody knew what happened to him for years and years. Then all of a sudden it was brought to life maybe 25 years ago that his body was still on display at the University of Montreal, mummified in a case at the University of Montreal. Ovila Lesperance, who was a nephew of his, and some of the Lesperances here worked very hard, especially Ovila, to get his remains back here to give him a proper burial. That was not until the, in the early '80s that was being able to be done. So here was a Métis who was unique, he was the tallest man ever recorded in Canada, he was the third or fourth tallest man in the world and there was not that much ever wrote about him that was said. There should be a lot more about how his remains were treated, it's very disgraceful really and I would like to see that story maybe on a film sometime and see how it all went. His remains, they burnt his ashes and one reason they said they had to burn his ashes was when they released the body, he was mummified so they wanted to make sure that they couldn't bury him because they were scared of somebody digging him up again, so they had to cremate his ashes and then they brought them here and there was a proper burial for him and a ceremony that was done here in front of the convent not that many years ago. I know that Ovila or Eugene Lesperance can elaborate on the story of the giant.

03.2 Leah: So you recommend that we interview him?

03.2 Randy: Oh yes.

03.3 Leah: Okay, we will do that in our next round, absolutely. Yeah Randy if there is any elders that you think we should talk to we will make a trip down here and do videotape and audiotape interviews. Thank you Randy.

Tape Ends at 03.7
