

Randy Gaudry—Parks Canada Interview, January 18, 2012

Disclaimer: *The views presented in this interview are those of the interviewee and are not the views of the Gabriel Dumont Institute. This interview is copyright of the interviewee and can only be used for reference purposes. It can not be republished and/or repackaged in any way without the written permission of the interviewee and/or his/ her successor.*

...

Darren Prefontaine (DP): It's January the 18th, and this is Darren Prefontaine interviewing Randy Gaudry for the Parks Canada Project. Question 1: Could you please tell me your name and your home community?

Randy Gaudry (RG): My name is Randy Gaudry, and live in Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan.

DP: Who were/are your parents and grandparents, where were they from?

RG: My parents... My father's name was Médéric Gaudry, who was a Métis from Willow Bunch here. My mother's name is B. Crawford, she was of Scots-Irish descent, and was born and raised in Willow Bunch also. My Grandparents, on my father's side, were Damase Gaudry and he was born in Wood Mountain, but raised in around Willow Bunch here for the majority of his life. My grandmother was Rosalie Gosselin, and she was born and raised in Willow Bunch here, and lived, except for a couple of years of her life, one in Debden, and one winter in Calgary, the rest was here. She died about 18 years ago now, and she was 98-years-old when she passed.

DP: Your father's family, the Gaudry, and all of his relatives, they were all Métis?

RG: All Métis. In fact, my great-grandfather, André Gaudry, was one of the first ones that came into this area from St. Agathe, Manitoba. He encouraged the other Métis to settle in Willow Bunch here, and the encouragement from him, and other Métis, encouraged Jean-Louis Légaré to start a store here in Willow Bunch, and they were actually the first settlers in this area. That's on the Gaudry side. On the Gosselin side Alexander Gosselin, and Maria Brière was my great-grandmother. They were around here; it's documented, as early as 1820s. Oh yeah, their roots go very deep in this area.

DP: Did or does anyone in your family speak Michif?

RG: My dad did, my uncle did, on my dad's side. My older brother, he speaks fluent French, and knows a little bit of Michif, but I never learned any if it.

DP: The old people in your family, they spoke Michif, the mix of French and Cree, French, and Cree, or..?

RG: Yes, they did.

DP: So they spoke all three?

RG: All three... They spoke. From what I remember, see, we left here when I was 10-years-old, the family moved to the Calgary area, but from what I remember... I would have to say it would be 70% French, and 30% Michif.

DP: Mostly French?

RG: Yep.

DP: Would you say because most of the local people were French-speaking?

RG: That's right, and it was hammered in their heads to, at school and wherever, that Michif was a dead language, and it was a language that shouldn't be spoken. So they kind of hid it in a way.

DP: So there was a lot of discrimination for speaking Michif?

RG: There was a lot of discrimination for just being a Métis around here for years and years, yep.

DP: Church sponsored racism towards Métis speaking Michif?

RG: Very much so.

DP: Okay. Did anyone in your family serve in the military?

RG: My father, he was in the reserves, and was training at Dundurn when the war ended. On my Grandpa's side, he's got two or three brothers that went overseas and fought in World War II.

DP: World War Two, okay. How were the Métis treated in Willow Bunch, did your family encounter racism from the larger community, do you have specific examples?

RG: Well, yes. As a kid, I remember my first day of school is where I really encountered racism and prejudice by the nuns. My birthday is September 1 and, that was the first day of school. I was 6-years-old on that day, my first day of school. I went to the convent, and I was playing with a French boy from a farm out of town here, and we're still friends to this day. We were playing out at recess time there in the yard, and this one nun come along, very exasperated, and I couldn't speak very good French, but I could understand some of it. She said to this French boy, "You don't play with the *le métis* [may-tis] *sale* over here, you come play with your own kind over here," and she took him away from me, and left me there. That's the first signs of that I saw, but it was rampant here all the time... Little snide remarks and things have happened. A lot of racism in this town if you were not French Canadian and Catholic, you were really beneath them, and the church really emphasized that, and really put that in people's minds.

DP: For the non-French speaking people, *le métis* [may-tis] *sale* means "you dirty Métis"...

RG: Yep, dirty Métis, *le Métis sale*.

DP: Okay.

RG: So anyway, it went on like that, and I think a correction, on my grandpa's brothers. I'm not certain if it was the First World War or the second one, I think it was the First World War they fought in, and it may be the second, but don't quote me on which war it was, I know they were veterans.

DP: Were there a lot of Métis veterans from the Willow Bunch area that were in the wars that you can remember?

RG: Well now it's coming out more and more all the time. There were a lot of them that left here and went overseas, or whatever. Some got land when they came back; there was one uncle, he was kind of educated and know had a go about it, and he got land from being in the war, but there were a lot of other ones who were not given anything.

DP: What other Métis families lived in the vicinity? Were they Michif speakers?

RG: Well, there was Gosselins, McGillises, Lacertes, Lapointes. There were lots of Métis families in this area. For the most part, that I've heard stories orally, and when I listened to them. My grandpa, and great-uncle and great-aunt, they lived in Willow Bunch, but they spoke a lot of Michif too. You'd here the older people speaking a lot more Michif than say my dad's generation.

DP: They spoke more French... So like the generation that settled Willow Bunch, those old Michif people would have spoke it, but going into the 20th century their kids started to speak more French?

RG: That's right, yep. You know, we left here when I was 10, but I remember some of the things, and one of the main reasons my parents said they wanted to leave was because they knew the prejudice here, and we wouldn't have a real good chance here, and the way that we were treated. So they packed up and we moved to Alberta. So we left, and I noticed, maybe it was bigger centres or whatever, but we were a lot more accepted in Alberta than here. Even as a small boy, I had seen that type of thing. So we were always taught to be proud of our Métis heritage and ancestry, a lot of stories. When dad would get with our relatives or other Métis, they talked and they laughed, and one thing I really remember as lad was with the Métis people, when they got together they laughed and joked, and really had a good time, but when they got around other people that were, especially French and that, they kind of clammed up in a way. They didn't feel at home, I don't think doing that. So I've seen prejudice as a young boy when we lived here, and the ones that did live here in the Hamlet, they dispersed. And mainly, it was, we had a piece of land up here where about 35 Métis families lived that Jean-Louis Légaré had supposedly secured it for the Métis so they wouldn't have to pay taxes. Their history books were written so that he wanted to do this for the poor Métis, because he knew they couldn't afford their taxes, and so on. In actuality, that was his workforce, and he wanted to make sure he could keep them around so he got that land set aside for them, but when machinery started coming around and they didn't need the total manual labour, there was no work for a lot of these Métis people, you know?

DP: Didn't the Métis Hamlet... Weren't they forcibly dispersed by the townspeople?

RG: Well you see what happened there was they left, a lot of them, and dispersed and whatever, but there were still a few Métis families living in the Hamlet. Then the town here, in, I believe the early 80s, the reeve and that they just took the land, illegally actually, the 30 acres. So the rest of the families living there, there were only about three living there, but they paid taxes, they just expropriated that land, but with no consultation with Métis peoples at all, the Métis Nation, or anything. Now they've developed it, and put in into lots, and sold lots. It's actually the only land that we really had that we could call our own, and it was taken with no consultation, no nothing. So yeah, that's disheartening too, but a lot of the Métis that left here they had to go to the cities for work. In fact, not that many years ago, a French-speaking lady here in town went to the schools and was talking about the history of Willow Bunch, and this is the mindset still in this town, where some of the children asked, "If there were so many Métis people that were living here to begin with, where did they all go?" It was stated by this French elder that, "Well, the Métis were too lazy to do any work around here, so the government gave them thousands of dollars to go to the cities." She's telling student this at the school! So there kind of taken verbatim, and this is only a few years ago. So that stuff happened quite a bit, there was a lot of racism here, and there still is some, but it's getting better. They're acknowledging some of them a little more; they put me on a couple of committees, and one committee, it took me quite a few years to get them to change the wording on the history of Willow Bunch where they say Jean-Louis Légaré was the founder of Willow Bunch, which is untrue. There were 35 Métis families living here. Like I said before, under the encouragement of my great-grandpa and several other Métis to get Légaré to start a store here. So I told them at this committee, there were a lot of francophones there, and some government people, I said, "You have to quit putting this into the tourism brochures, and in our history. He wasn't the founder, he was a co-founder; there were Métis families already living here. He was one of the first ones around, but he was a co-founder."

DP: Yeah.

RG: And this one French gentleman said, "No Randy you're wrong: he was the founder of Willow Bunch because he was the first civilized one here!"

DP: Hm.

RG: I kind of blew up right there. I pointed at him and kind of hollered at him, "Are you saying that my great-grandparents and my ancestors were uncivilized people?" The government people who were in the boardroom, their jaws just dropped. It was dead silence, "Oh... ah... um... well, I don't ... my English not too good..." and I said, "No, your English is perfect." But I said, "This is the mindset and mentality of people in town here, and this kind of attitude has got to change." I was the first Métis to ever really stand up to the predominate French community on this issue, so I was not very popular in this town by some people. However, a couple of years down the road you see things change in the printed materials they were dispersing out there, where the town was settled by Métis families first, and then Jean-Louis Légaré came along. You know so some of that stuff is starting to change.

DP: That's good.

RG: But it's from people having to really stand up for your rights. Then my uncle said too, Métis were very discriminated against in town, and hated, but he said also that the Métis had a part to play in this also. There were a lot of hard working ones, but there were still some, and it was out of desperation or what have you, there were some Métis who... Some of these people, you couldn't hang clothes out to dry, or keep groceries in their car or whatever, and they'd be stolen, and it could have been stolen by other people, but we were always blamed for it.

DP: Mmhmm.

RG: So in that aspect too, like even my uncle, who passed on a couple years ago at ninety, he said, "Some of the Métis here made bad names for everybody here," which is unfortunate, but that's life I guess.

DP: Yeah. Do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs, and were they shared a lot within your family?

RG: Nope, not any of the songs, and the stories, not really. You know, when I think back at some of the stories, and I think it was the way the school system was, and the way they were taught in school, to kind of hide being proud of what they were. I remember, looking at it back now, there was a lot of negativity told. It was always a criticism about different people or whatever, instead of the good stories. I think a lot of that comes from being our own worst enemy; "You can get ahead, but don't get ahead of me," or else the jealousy. They were taught in school that they were supposed to be inferior, so they kind of acted that way in a way. It's unfortunate, and it's going to take some generations for that to heal, and come out the proper way. So when it comes to stories about people around here, I heard stories like about... And I never paid much credence to it as a young boy, but my great-grandfather and Johnny Chartrand and several Métis in the area here were the ones that actually were the interpreters who accompanied Sitting Bull back to Ft. Buford, North Dakota when he surrendered to the US cavalry. However, the way the history books are written out here it was a French Canadian, Jean-Louis Légaré, who was a great friend of Sitting Bull, and he trusted him, and so on. But Légaré couldn't even speak Sioux, he couldn't speak the language, and he was a merchant, and he was the one that offered the supplies to take them back. Something had to be done; the only thing the government had done to Sitting Bull and his people was starve them into submission.

DP: Okay.

RG: And the oral history on that story that I hear, is my great-grandfather had said it was one of the saddest times of his life, because he had befriended Sitting Bull, and knew him, and Sitting Bull and the rest of these people knew what was waiting for him over that border, that eventually they would probably kill him and they did.

DP: Yeah.

RG: So they played a part in that, and then here's other oral history, when the Riel Resistance was on. That the Métis in the area were hired by police to guard to border, so that no Métis from Montana could cross over and join the resistance. So they got hired and they did it, but it was kind of the fox watching the hen house, you know?

DP: Yeah.

RG: A lot of the stories we here now are that they patrolled it, but their friends they were letting come in, and whatever. So it kind of backfired fired on them there. I remember as a lad, where they'd talk about old stories, and this story has just been coming out in the last few years, I remember them talking about, "Hey you know, tell that story about when they tried to break Riel out of jail, and they had had relay stations all the way to get him to Montana." And these old people would get very nervous, and would say, "Hey, don't talk about that! Don't even mention that thing!" Because they thought that there could still be repercussions from what happened at that time. But apparently, the Métis of the area here had this set of horses and relay stations to break Riel get him into Montana, but somebody squealed in Regina, so they watched him even closer, and they could never execute the plan.

DP: Okay. What sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?

RG: Are you talk my father, or grandfather?

DP: Well, how about both?

RG: Okay. My grandfather, they had a small farm that they were self sufficient, just out of town where they had a few milk cows, a couple of beef cows, a huge garden, chickens, pigs, geese, everything, and they were quite self sufficient. My grandpa apparently, and I remember as young lad seeing him with his team of horses, he'd cut pickets all the time. In the summer, he would go into the bush and cut a bunch of pickets, and then he would take this load of pickets, and he had no education, my grandpa; he went to school one day. So he couldn't read or write, but he could barter and he knew what money was, and how to make a living that way. So he would take the pickets, and he'd go north of Willow Bunch, towards Readlyn, on the way to Moose Jaw. He would barter these pickets to the farmers of the area, and he'd come back with a cow tied to the wagon, and chickens, or pigs or whatever, and he would barter all of this to help make a living, and that's pretty well how he did things. My father, he had four quarters of land out here, but things were tough, and he eventually sold it, when we moved to Alberta. They grew wheat and barley, and that type of thing.

DP: So they were mainly farmers, and ranchers, and that sort of thing?

RG: Farmers mainly, there wasn't much ranching going on in the area... but horses. They were good horsemen. In fact, the one story is of my uncle Joe Gaudry who owned this horse called the "Willow Bunch Grey." It was a thoroughbred but not papered that he got from Sylvan Lake out this way by St. Victor. Traded it for whatever, and they hunted coyotes with this horse in wintertime. He was a Dapple Grey, and they raced him at all the races: Wood Mountain, Assiniboine, all over here.

Nobody could beat this horse. He was called the “Willow Bunch Grey.” They have pictures of my father. He was a jockey when he was young, and they would ride him into Wood Mountain, then race over there, and he’d beat everything, as the stories they tell go. Also, in Assiniboia, he won five races, five years in a row, and the 6th year they entered him, they said he was not qualified because he wasn’t a papered thoroughbred. And that’s how they kept him out then.

DP: Okay.

RG: So he was known quite well. When we lived in Alberta, I heard more stories about Wood Mountain mainly, and Willow Bunch a little bit, but I used to always listen to these, I’d go with my father to, some people had moved to Turner Valley, the Black Diamond area. There was Puncher Thompson, Elmer Lamb, some Ogles, and different people like that. They’d sit around telling stories about the old Wood Mountain Stampedes, and the fun they had in different areas, and what they had done. It was very interesting as a lad hearing a lot of these.

DP: Yeah. The Métis and the Lakota from Wood Mountain visited and got along well?

RG: Oh very well. Some of them were related, through different ways, through marriage and what have you, so they got along very well for the most part.

DP: People also picked berries, and hunted and that sort of thing to make living too?

RG: Not to make a living, more for their own sustenance that I remember. They picked berries for their own use. They might have sold buckets of chokecherries to some people or whatever, but in those days even the farm people, the francophones or whatever were self sufficient. They went and picked their own berries.

DP: Everybody did that.

RG: They done a lot of that here too. No, there was never that I heard of like, a berry industry or anything around here, just for their own use.

DP: Okay. What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and within your family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?

RG: I don’t know any of that, unfortunately. My grandmother was a midwife and knew all of the traditional medicines, and we were young when I left here, and it never really got passed down to us, so ...

DP: So your grandma was the medicine person ...?

RG: Yep.

DP: Okay, she midwived, and she delivered a lot of the other babies too?

RG: All of the babies in the area, whether they be francophone or whatever. She did a lot of that.

DP: And what was her name?

RG: Rosalie Gaudry, but here maiden name was Gosselin; Alexandre Gosselin and Maria Brière were her parents.

DP: Okay. Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community? Your family owned property, so that wouldn't really apply...?

RG: Road allowance people, that didn't happen here because they had the Hamlet that they lived in, okay. So very few if any, I didn't even know what a road allowance was, you know that people lived on that, until I came back and started studying some of the Métis history and that. So I don't remember road allowance people really in this area. They had the Co-op Ranch out of town here...

DP: Yes.

RG: ...and they had the other part of land that was just adjacent to town.

DP: What from your recollection happened with the Métis farm? Was that the Lacerte Co-op?

RG: Yeah, I do not know. We didn't live out there, we really... I remember going out there to visit every once and a while or whatever, but we had really nothing to do with the co-op ranch.

DP: Was there, would you say, class divisions amongst the Métis themselves in Willow Bunch? Like, those that owned property and had things, and those that I guess were hired men, and lived off the land?

RG: No, the majority of them were hired men who lived off of the land; very few owned property, and there were some I guess there were some who were Métis that could hide it, lighter skinned...

DP: Passed themselves off...

RG: ...and they owned land, and they definitely didn't admit being Métis.

DP: So they called themselves French Canadians?

RG: Yeah. You know how some people say they were hypocrites then, but you know something, it was a way of surviving for the time, and if they could make life easier for their kids and their family by denying being Métis to fit into the mainstream here, that's what they had to do to survive.

DP: Well and in a strange way of looking at things too; being a French Canadian didn't mean that you weren't discriminated against themselves, 'cause the Klan was really big at one time down there.

RG: Well, I don't know much about that; predominately around here it was the French in Willow Bunch. The Klan I think was more or less Assiniboia, Woodrow, and Bengough...

DP: Where there were English people?

RG: Yeah, English-speaking people. I know my grandfather on my mom's side, he was an Irishman, and apparently when he came from Ireland he was an Orangeman type thing. But when he saw what was going on here and that, he was dead against any discrimination at all apparently. So there was some of them, when they moved here they wanted freedom and to be able to do... and everybody should have what they wanted. A lot of it was too, in this area, if you were Métis, and it's still to this day, if you're Métis things happen in a certain way. You were denied bank loans, or you couldn't get farm credit, or whatever. You were not given opportunities that people who just got off the boat got.

DP: Yep.

RG: So you were always behind the 8-ball. It's funny some people even here, even last week, a fellow was talking about the Métis Nation; they were of German descent and quite well off, and he's quite racist, and I'll call him that too. He said, "Your special interest groups, like the Métis Nation," and I said "You're calling the Métis Nation a special interest group?" "Well that's all you are, your living off the backs of taxpayers." And I said, "Well wait a minute here now, everybody pays taxes." "No they don't!" That's one thing in the education system, and the media, and government that I would really like to see happen...

DP: ...Explain all that...

RG: ... Explain how the tax system works. Because so many people, and I blame the media and government more than anybody on this, they divide and conquer. They think because you're dark-skinned, or Métis or Aboriginal, you don't pay taxes, and your living off the backs of those people. It's that same old thing with governments to this day, and it sickens me. They divide and conquer, if we can keep these people at bay and fighting with one another, they're gonna leave us alone. They're literally using us aboriginal people as pawns, and I see it more and more in this province.

DP: Yeah. I'm gonna switch gears here a little bit. Question 10: Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items?

RG: My grandmother, I remember her making fur caps.

DP: Fur caps?

RG: Yep. Never moccasins; nobody wore moccasins around here that I remember or anything. They were more the French, not the old northern traditional way. The southern Métis, I think lived a lot different than the northern Métis, where the northern Métis adapted to the land there, how they lived. I remember getting a pair of moccasins when I worked on an oil patch up north, and they were fantastic to wear up there, and how warm they were. But I remember my grandmother mainly making patch quilts, fur caps, and that type of thing.

DP: Okay.

RG: And clothing, like fur coats... and a lot of sewing, and done a lot of work on making clothes. No beading on it or anything.

DP: More of a Euro-Canadian style?

RG: Yep.

DP: How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, or New Years?

RG: Oh, they all got together. There were family gatherings, and years ago... like I'm 60 now, but I still remember New Years, my grandmother would... You know, everybody had their demons with alcohol around here, so we never seen it much at my grandmother's, she despised it. However, she made chokecherry wine, and at New Years she would give everybody some wine. I remember the old cars coming in to her place, just out of town here at what we call the coulee, and then some with wagons, not wagons, I mean sleighs, and they'd all come around, and they'd visit a little bit and talk and socialize and have something to eat and a couple glasses of wine. It was a revolving door there all the time, especially New Years Day.

DP: That's was the big holiday?

RG: Well, Christmas is more spiritual—the midnight mass, and the meal, and the kids opening gifts. It was more of a close family thing more than anything. Easter was the same, big Easter meal, but it was church first, then the Easter meal. My grandmother was a very devout Catholic, and lived about a mile out of town. She walked everyday just about to town and did the Way of the Cross. She was very spiritual in that way.

DP: Just traditional Catholic, no First Nation Spiritualism in any of the family, Just Catholic?

RG: Catholic, yep. I remember hearing stories where it came to First Nations, they didn't really care. My grandmother, and great-grandmother I guess, they did not really care for First Nations people. She told a story where they used to come steal their horses, and they made life quite difficult for them, so they really, really did not... They were Métis, but they did not have much to do with First Nations people. However, the Lakota around Wood Mountain, my grandmother was great friends with a lot of those people there, and they talked and conversed, and she had some great friends over there. But they didn't live in any kind of a First Nations way, we'll call it. I mean, they'd eat bannock all time, and the traditional boulettes and the bouillon. They done a lot of that; that same stuff, but when it comes to beadwork or buckskins and that, not very much of that was ever seen in this area that I remember.

DP: Okay. Was anyone in your family involved with the Métis Society?

RG: I was probably the first one to get politically involved, and that is when I moved here. One reason I decided I had to get involved, there was book here wrote called *The History of Willow Bunch*, and it was written in 1920-21 by a Father Rondeau, a French-Catholic priest. It was republished

during Willow Bunch's 100th anniversary in 1970, and it was funded by the Gravelbourg diocese, and translated into English also. Now when they translated this, they did it verbatim, they didn't put anything in there saying that this book was the view of the times and not thought of that way, and it was verbatim republished in 1970, and it was probably one of the most racist books you would ever read. Where the first sentence about the Métis, it says, "We know what the Métis are; they're of Indian and White blood, but they are superior in all aspects to an Indian," because they had French blood in them. It goes on saying how the Métis of the area had the names of our great people of Quebec; the men from Quebec came out west to civilize this country in bold letters, and had no other choice and other bold letters, but to marry Indian or Métis women so their offspring end up with the great names of Quebec. So for that reason I strongly advise to not despise these poor people. It went on saying how they couldn't do any structured work, they were just a nomadic people that just lived day to day, and really didn't give a care in the world about what happened, which is so untrue and so disgraceful.

DP: Yeah.

RG: So, when I got involved with the Métis local it had been dormant here for 30 years, but it revived. Unfortunately, when I got it revived; was just at the time I got in as president. I think the next week they announced the Métis in Saskatchewan had the hunting rights. Well, so many people were through the door and started coming to meetings right away wanting their Métis card that called us, "dirty Half-Breeds" before. They would never admit to being Métis, they were just there for the opportunity to hunt without a licence, and a lot of them abused it. It was struggle from the get go, we were about four years of just living out of a mailbox doing some of this stuff, and then I ended up chatting with Ron Rivard, who is a consultant out of Saskatoon. His parents and grandparents were born and raised here, he was not. They had moved away by then, but he came along with Dr. Catherine Littlejohn, and working with them they helped us a lot. We got funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and with their help, to write a book called, *The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch* to tell our story and to offset this racist book. So we had a lot of good programs and a lot of good things happening here. So we got going on it, and there were a lot of people in the French and English communities that didn't care for me much for getting things going here, but we stuck to our guns, and got some things going, and its been a good road in some ways, and a rocky road in some ways, but we got established in an office. Unfortunately, at this point, our funding is all dried up, and our political leaders are nowhere to be seen to help in any of this. So we're closing the doors of our office too. But I was actually probably the first one to get involved politically with the Métis, and it opened my eyes in more ways than one; a lot of positive things happened, and a lot of the negative. I can see in some ways, our people, why they were in the position they were in, because a lot of times, we're our own worst enemies. Instead of working together we just divide, and then they conquer, and the governments love that.

DP: How are the local Métis connected to Grasslands National Park? Now you mentioned your great-grandfather André, he made a living in and around what's now Grasslands National Park is that correct?

RG: Well, he made a living around Wood Mountain, where the Wood Mountain Park is.

DP: Okay.

RG: We have copies of the original contracts he made with the North West Mounted Police. He built the horse stables for the North West Mounted Police at the Wood Mountain post. He was also contracted to build the telegraph line from Willow Bunch to Wood Mountain, and he hauled the mail for many years from Moose Jaw to Willow Bunch to Wood Mountain. By dogsled in the wintertime, and by horse and wagon in the summer.

DP: Were there other Métis from the Willow Bunch area that worked around there as well?

RG: Oh yeah, there were other ones that did different jobs. You know, I kept track mainly about our family, the other ones I never really learned too much more about, but they worked for farmers. A lot of these people will say, “Well the Métis didn’t want their farmland ‘cause they were too lazy to work it,” and my take on that is, “If they were so lazy, and didn’t want to work it, how come the farmers of the area hired to Métis to do all the real menial work—manual labour, like picking rocks and that thing; doing the hard work? But, then machinery came along and replaced them. I’m told that years ago that a lot of Métis from here packed up together, and they’d go to Montana and shear sheep all summer, and then come back at harvest time when the threshing crews were all over. They worked all over, for different farmers on threshing crews. So the summertime is where they worked and tried to save money to live on in the winter, but in the wintertime I don’t think there was much activity around here.

DP: Okay. Now you mentioned your great-grandfather [André Gaudry] working with the Mounted Police. He had a good relationship obviously?

RG: With the Mounted Police, yes. He was one of the interpreters, like I say, who accompanied Sitting Bull back to Fort Buford, and that was under the direction of the North West Mounted Police as an interpreter. Yeah, he had a good relationship with the police and other people in the area.

DP: So would you say, historically speaking, Métis had a good relationship with the Mounted Police in the area?

RG: You know, you hear different stories form different things, and... I think they had a good relationship with the North West Mounted Police out of necessity. I think they were picked on quite a bit, a lot more than other ones, and they were blamed for everything that happened in the area. If a calf went missing or whatever, from what I understand, it was always the Métis that were blamed for all that stuff.

DP: Always.

RG: I wouldn’t say they had a good working relationship. If they did, they certainly forgotten when the history books were written with the RCMP. When you talk about the North West Mounted

Police or the RCMP museum, the way they depict the Métis in there is not in a very nice light as far as I'm concerned, and that bothers me. Like, Red River carts were used to haul the freight, and they have a beautiful Red River cart in that museum, and the depiction on the bottom was one of the North West Mounted Police sergeants was describing this as, "A wagon from the stone age," and the squeaking of the wheels just drive you crazy, and the way they described it, it might as well have been a cave man that invented this, and the Métis were still using it, you know?

DP: Yeah.

RG: And just a lot of the way, and maybe its going to get better now, but the way they have written the history, the only time a Métis was ever mentioned was, instead of helping save their lives or teaching them how to live on the land, or working with them, it was more or less that they were chasing them for selling whisky, or stealing something. I have a problem with that. So I don't think that they had that good of a relationship with the North West Mounted Police.

DP: Are there any historically and culturally significant landscapes or historic sites within the area, which you as a Métis person consider important?

RG: Well, yes. But they mainly deal with spirituality and First Nations, the older ones. A lot of the Métis stuff is all gone from here. But you take the St. Victor petroglyphs, they're very historically correct and important.

DP: Yes.

RG: Also, the turtle and buffalo effigies in the Big Muddy Valley, and different effigies and stonework like that. A lot of the farmers really keep these things hid. There were tipi rings all over this country for many, many years, and they took them all and dismantled them for plowing the land. In fact, just a year and a half ago, I clashed with SaskPower, where they have destroyed several tipi rings just north of Willow Bunch. There were about 250-300 tipi rings in one area that was leased by a rancher, and these kind of prejudices are still here, where they went and put this power line right through the middle of all these tipi rings, when they could have gone around them in not even a 1/4 mile. They did it without any consultation or anything. I just happened to be looking up that way and I saw them, and I got to thinking, "Well, that's in the middle of those tipi rings," so I went up there, and sure enough they had destroyed them. So I kind of blew the whistle on them, but I was the only one that would say anything. Even the chief of Wood Mountain wouldn't even acknowledge it really, and SaskPower just went about their way, and kind of dismissed it. I talked to them once on radio, and the one guy from SaskPower said, "You're saying that we put power lines in the middle of a tipi ring?" I said, "I didn't say a tipi ring, it was through the middle of 250-300 tipi rings." Nothing was ever really done about that. The archaeologist, when I talked to her, was like, "Oh my God, yes it did happen Randy, and I'm so sorry..." All they were worried about was compensating the land lessee, the rancher that leased that land for the damage that was done to the grass. Then the fellow that leased the land phones me, me, and this is only a year and a half ago, and he starts cussing me out, calling me names, "Randy, what are you poking your nose in this?" and "these F'ing Indians knew nothing about these tipi rings up here. I've been taking care of them!

Now all I need is a bunch of F'ing Indians up here powwowing around and opening up a casino or something!"

DP: Yeah.

RG: You know, these kinds of comments are just...and there still going around! That's the bad part. So significant sites, they're significant to us, but I tell you what, when they want to they'll hide them, they'll destroy them, and we'll know nothing about them. So I don't know what we can do about that.

DP: Was your family involved with the 1885 Resistance at all, or just neutral?

RG: Not that I've heard of, not at all. They were all in the south here, and didn't go up there. I've never heard of one Gaudry up there.

DP: Did any of your ancestors took Métis Scrip at Wood Mountain or Willow Bunch?

RG: Yes, some uncles I know of did, and then some other ones they didn't even know they did, apparently, from what I hear; they looked later in records, "Well, I never done that." Jean-Louis Légaré and the powers that be around here, they swindled a lot. They didn't even know what scrip was, they just took the land from them, put their mark or whatever. That's all kinda coming out now, you know?

DP: Okay. How can Parks Canada make Grasslands National Park more Métis friendly? Should any improvements be made?

RG: I think there should be more Métis historians brought in to talk about the Métis stuff, and work with agencies like yourself, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, who is so far ahead of everybody else on our Métis history and what we can do, and get a kind of a museum up there. You know, people that work in Parks Canada, like the Wood Mountain/Grasslands, there are some people there that are as racist as anybody, and they're running things. You question them, like "How come? It should be this way or that way..." and they just look at you like you're from outer space. They really don't care about it. They have to get people in there that have a passion for Métis history and Aboriginal history in the Grasslands. For the majority, it has been about the ranchers in the area settling here, but there has to be much more education done, and to do that they have to have information centres, and areas where people can go to, and have Métis and First Nations people talk themselves about their history, not hire somebody from Quebec or Ottawa or something, who got a grant to come and talk about our history when they know nothing about it. Authenticity goes a long way. Museums have a great responsibility to having authenticity in their displays, because a lot of it now is school children going to museums, for their curriculum, to learn about the area, and there are so many things that are not correct—politically, spiritually, or authentic in any way. They've got to take a greater role, and I think Parks Canada, they have a window of opportunity here where they can open the door, and hire these people to do this, and work with researchers like yourself and other people, to get the true story.

DP: Okay. I'm just going to ask you one more question Randy, and it relates to Parks Canada: They have produced a cultural resource value statement for Grasslands National Park. They have identified a number of potential cultural areas which may be important to the history of the park. Now they want to know whether or not any of these cultural values are important to you as a Métis person. Now, I'm going to mention them, and then just indicate if you think they're important:

RG: Okay.

DP: The Trading Post, I guess that would be at Wood Mountain?

RG: Yep, very important.

DP: Big connection to Métis people, your great-grandfather obviously would have...

RG: A lot. My great-grandfather is mentioned there in about three different places, and his name is spelled wrong in all three. I've told them several times that the name is wrong there, and they're just like, "Who cares?" So you've got to be correct on this stuff too. The reason I know about "Old André" is because he's related to me. There's other Métis out there that have done a lot, and they aren't being recognized, and they should be too. I will say about where the ranch museum is, they have a Métis log house there that they worked on with Thelma Poirier, and they've done excellent with that. They've really come a long way with that one, a lot better with that Rodeo Ranch Museum than the old [North West Mounted Police] post.

DP: Relationship with bison, that would be important to you as a Métis person?

RG: Very much so, because it was our lifeline and our economy.

DP: Did any of your ancestors hunt bison, or was that just before you could remember?

RG: Well, great-grandpa Gaudry, I guess that's what he did. He was a buffalo hunter when he came this way.

DP: Ranching?

RG: Yep, there were a lot of good cowboys and good ranchers, yes.

DP: Farming?

RG: Yep, mainly ranching. I don't know if they did much farming. They liked leaving their grass alone, I think.

DP: The Great Depression (1930s)?

RG: I don't know anything about that. I think that it would have affected the Métis as much as the farmers, the settlers, and homesteaders.

DP: Governance and administration of the park?

RG: We need to have a hand in that, and be there to not make trouble or stonewall things, but be consulted and work with one another on it, with respect on all sides.

DP: From what I understand Randy, Kathy Grant—she's a Trottier, Bryan Trottier's sister actually—she's been hired as a special Métis liaison with Parks Canada to work with Métis community people. From your perspective, that would be a good development?

RG: You bet it would, very much so.

DP: Creation of the national park. As a Métis person, do you think it's necessary to have that national park?

RG: The creation of it?

DP: Yeah.

RG: Very much so, because all the grasslands, we have hardly any prairie left that hasn't been broken or had humans doing something to it, and I think it's a real gem, and we really have to take care of it.

DP: Paleontological and geological features, like tipi rings, that sort of thing, even though they may predate Métis...?

RG: No, they're very important.

DP: Early exploration and surveys, now we mentioned your great-grandpa André, but there was also the Boundary Commission, a lot of Métis took part; maybe even your great-grandfather was involved?

RG: I don't think he was involved with the survey so much. I never heard that. But the Boundary Commission, there was a lot that was done, but they're saying now that a lot of those surveys were done incorrect, and they have to try and do them over. But yeah, the Boundary Commission was very important.

DP: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview, anything you thought I missed?

RG: I'd just like to say, when anything is done about the history of the area, they have to start including the people who worked on them, not just a few key people whether they'd be Métis, French Canadian, Americans, or white ranchers that came in. Everybody contributed in so many ways to shape and develop this country. The Métis have really been an afterthought, left behind and not recognized for the contributions they have really made to this part of the world, and making it is what it is today, instead of the perception of them just as a drain on the taxpayer and government. There should be recognition on all sides, the Métis should get their recognition, the other people who had foresight to do this, or be ranchers or whatever. If there are stories out there too about some families or people around, whether they were on my side or whatever, if there were some underhanded things that were done that did not really help... you know, history is history. I don't care if it's positive history or negative, it all has to be told in a real truthful way.

DP: Okay. Well, I think we can conclude the interview. I'd like to thank you on behalf of Gabriel Dumont Institute and Parks Canada Randy.

RG: You're welcome. I hope it helps a little.

DP: Oh, it certainly will. Thank you.