

## **Coleen Watson's Response to Fort Walsh, Grassland National Park, and Fort Battleford Questions**

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### **1) Could you please tell me your name and your home community?**

*My name is Colleen Watson-Turner. I grew up in Moose Jaw but spent most of my years near Prince Albert. My Métis ancestry comes from mom's side. They were from the area around the Saskatchewan River Forks (Butler Settlement, Fort a la Corne).*

*I am a graduate from SUNTEP Prince Albert (1990). I taught in several inner-city schools in Prince Albert and Saskatoon. I am not teaching now. I am a painter working in various media.*

*I have spent a good number of years researching my Métis family history including, where applicable, their military service.*

### **2) Who were/are your parents and grandparents? Where were they from?**

*My mother's name was Lillian Watson (Turner). Her parents were Eleanor (Folster) and John Arthur Turner. My mother's parents were both Métis or halfbreeds (it wasn't derogatory then). My father's name is Andrew James Watson. He is not Métis. AJW is second generation English/Scottish.*

*Here is a simple family tree for my mother's father, John Arthur Turner. Please note, for the record, that the women these men married were all Métis/HBs.*

*My mother, Lillian Watson (Turner), daughter of John Arthur Turner (Eleanor Folster), son of John Turner (Susan Agnes Deschambeault), son of Philip Turner (Harriet Anderson), son of Joseph Turner Jr (Sarah Humpherville), son of Joseph Turner Sr (Emma ?), son of Philip Turner\**

*\*Philip Turner, sometime spelled Turnor, was an Englishman who came to the Hudson's Bay in the mid 1700's to map the rivers flowing into the Hudson's Bay. He was employed by the HBC. He taught David Thompson mapmaking skills. Turnor produced many beautiful maps of the river ways that are kept in the HBC archives in Winnipeg. With an unknown Omushkego (Muskeg) Cree woman he also created Joseph Turner Sr.! His journals and documents are included in the Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor. Years ago, I was able to research the Turner family history through the very detailed records that the HBC has maintained.*

*My mother's mother, Eleanor Turner (Folster) was the daughter of Henry Folster. I was told he was from the Orkney Islands and upon immigration to Canada, worked the boats on Lake Winnipeg before he met and married Agnes Tait, a Scottish halfbreed from the Selkirk settlement. They moved from Selkirk to take a homestead near*

Brancepeth, Saskatchewan. I cannot trace Agnes Tait's family history. I was told she was adopted by a Tait family but I cannot verify this claim. She died nine days after giving birth to her thirteenth child. Henry kept the family together but they struggled. My grandmother, Eleanor, was nine years old when her mother died.

### **3) Did/does anyone in your family speak Michif or serve in the military? Do you speak Michif?**

No, I do not speak Michif. No, I am not aware of any of them spoke Michif but Susan Agnes Deschambeault, my grandfather's mother, spoke only Cree. According to the 1901 census my great grandfather's mother tongue was Cree.

**Military Service** (I am still in the process of researching these individuals. I hope to have Sandy's name included on the memorial dedicated to Métis who fought in the wars of the last century).

1. My great uncle, Max Lucier served for 4.5 years WW II.
2. My great uncle, Sandy Folster served in WW II. He was with the Winnipeg Rifles when they landed on the beaches of Normandy on D Day. He survived that day but was wounded by shrapnel when his unit moved inland to take the Caen airport. He came home maimed. I have all of his military records.
3. A cousin of my mother, Wilfred Lawrence Turner, from Coxby, SK., served with the Saskatchewan Regiment in WW II. I do not know the unit or where he served but I have a copy of his draft notice and a lovely photograph of him in uniform wearing a kilt. He is a Métis in a kilt. I haven't yet been able to determine which unit wore kilts. I am still working on this file.
4. One of my ancestors related to my mother was killed in action in the Battle of the Somme, WW 1. His name was Philip Stevens of Fenton, Saskatchewan. He was 29 years old when he was killed. He was with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bn., Canadian Infantry, Manitoba Regiment. I have his attestation paper when he was enlisted - 27 years old, a little over 5 feet tall with a "dark complexion, brown eyes, and black hair." I am still working on his file.

### **4) How were the Métis treated in your community? Did your family encounter racism from the larger community? Do you have specific examples?**

My father's family were not Métis. Some of them, his mother in particular, did not treat my mother very well and she was very cold with both my sister and I. My father's mother would not speak to her and largely ignored us. At one point I distinctly remember my mother telling my father that he could visit his parents and take us with him but she would no longer visit them. He decided he wouldn't visit them either at that point. After he took a stand we were tolerated. Oddly enough, when my sister was born, my dad's mother commented on how dark my sister was as a baby. My sister had blond curly hair! We were not the favoured grandchildren although neither of us LOOK like we have aboriginal ancestry. I wouldn't say that it was easy with my father's family although one of his sisters has always loved us.

In my Métis family there are certainly those that denied our ancestry – not unusual.

Throughout my life I have certainly heard many inappropriate and racist comments that people sometimes feel free to make because they assume that I am not Métis.

### **5) What other Métis families lived in the vicinity? Were they Michif speakers?**

*In the historical records of the Butler Settlement near Prince Albert there are many, many people with Métis names. I am uncertain as to how many of them spoke Mechif. My mother's mother, Eleanor, had many sisters and several of those sisters married Cree men from the Muskoday Reserve. Their offspring, my mom's cousins, spoke Cree and English. So, my mom did not learn Cree because my grandmother did not marry a man from the Muskoday Reserve.*

**6) Do you know any traditional Métis stories or songs? Would you care to share them?**

*I know the traditional Métis songs but they were not part of my upbringing. My Orkney great-grandfather played fiddle and my grandmother played a little squeeze box. They played "Drops of Brandy" among other fiddle tunes. I never heard my grandmother play the squeeze box but she told me that she did. We didn't jig at dances and weddings but we certainly did "old time" dancing.*

**7) What sort of resources did your family harvest? Where and when were these collected?**

*We went berry picking all the time. My mother was an inveterate berry picker. We picked and picked. Saskatoons, chokecherries, and cranberries. We'd take picnics with hot tea kept in pickling jars wrapped in tea towels. They farmed. They gardened. My grandparents hunted. When I was a child, we fished all the time in the Saskatchewan River for goldeyes and pike. My mother and father cut and collected firewood until they turned 80.*

**8) What sort of traditional medicines were used in your community and family? Who were the medicine people in your family and community?**

*In the Butler Settlement area there was a woman, Flora Ballantyne (sp? it could be Ballendyne too), who was the local midwife. She also came by to be with a family when someone was dying. When my mom's little sister died, Flora was there to lay out the body and take care of my grieving grandparents as well as greet people who came to pay their respects. My mom said she was a lovely woman and helped when people became ill or if there were women in childbirth.*

**9) Did anyone in your family live in a Métis road allowance community?**

*No, but my grandfather, John Arthur Turner, went landless for a long time (he finally got a farm when he was quite a bit older). They rented houses, lived on other people's land, and a couple of times they squatted in a little log shack in the bush. He did piecemeal work for other farmers, he cut rails up near Love Siding, he hunted, he fished, he made and sold liquor. He worked really hard. I once did a work history on him for Doug Daniels who was working for GDI and SUNTEP. He loved it. I did a very detailed account of all the work my grandfather had done to support his family when he didn't have a land base. He finally got a farm with the help of his sister Nellie who had married a wealthy Syrian man.*

**10) Did you have anyone in your family that made beaded or embroidered moccasins or other items? Do you know what happened to these artefacts?**

*I make moccasins with tanned moose and bison hide. I often used traditional Métis designs and use fur from reclaimed fur coats.*

*I have a handmade awl that was crafted by my grandfather John Arthur Turner.*

**11) How did your family celebrate special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter or New Year's?**

*Our celebrations looked like any other family celebration or holiday - much fun and laughter, lots of food.*

**12) Was anybody in your family involved with the Métis societies?**

*Yes, I have great uncle, Max Lucier who was very involved with the Métis. Max was married to my mother's aunt, Celia Folster. He worked for the Saskatchewan Native Addictions Council and the Indian and Métis Friendships Centre in PA. He was on the board for the St. Louis Rehabilitation Centre and was a Métis elder for the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, Local #7.*

**13) How are the local Métis connected to FB, FW and/or GLNP?**

*I don't know the answer to this question.*

**14) Who were/are your family involved with FB, FW and/or GLNP?**

*NA*

**15) Are there any historically and culturally significant landscapes or historical sites within FB and FW and area which you as a Métis person consider to be important?**

*NA*

**16) Was your family involved in the 1885 Resistance at or near FB, FW and/or GLNP? If not, where they involved elsewhere?**

*No, they were not involved directly.*

**17) What happened to your family after the 1885 Resistance?**

*They continued with their lives in the way that most Métis did. They were poor. My grandfather, as I mentioned, was landless. It was a hard life.*

**18) Has your family been in the area for a long time? How did they make a living? Do you know how your ancestors made a living in the region?**

*NA – I assume you mean the Métis from around this area.*

**19) What sort of relationship did the Métis have with the Mounted Police at (FB, FW and/or GLNP)?**

*NA. But, where my people lived, the Mounted Police were always looking for my grandfather's still!*

**20) Did any of your ancestors work for the Mounted Police at the Mounted Police posts at FB, FW and/or Wood Mountain? If so, can you tell us anything about them?**

NA

**21) Do you know if your ancestors took Métis scrip at FB, FW and/or Wood Mountain? Did they take it elsewhere?**

*Yes, I have copies of the scripts that were taken by ancestors on the Turner line. For example, my great-grandfather, John Turner, who was born at Fort à la Corne, took scrip in Prince Albert on May 21, 1900.*

**22) How can Parks Canada make FB, FW and/or GLNP more inviting for Métis visitors? How might Parks Canada include more information on the Métis history of these areas?**

*It would be helpful for Parks Canada to take a larger view of any group's history. Parks Canada tends to interpret only the histories of those people who have direct ties to the specific land that Parks Canada has acquired. This creates an artificial dichotomy where some individuals or historic events take on more significance than equivalent events occurring twenty kilometres or more from the park boundary. Parks Canada can get very bound up in local culture/events and quickly lose the larger context of what might be more significant on a national scale. For example, the questions in this survey focus only on whether or not I as a Métis have direct links to Fort Walsh, Grasslands National Park, and Fort Battleford. Because my people were from areas that were not turned into a national park or historic site does my history as a Métis become diminished? I expect that my contribution to the survey results would more heavily weight if I or my ancestors were born here.*

*My suggestion is that Parks Canada start interpreting this history of the Métis on a landscape scale (their activities spread from Green Lake to Willow Bunch to Cumberland House and, after all, they were a people on the move). Very basic information needs to be communicated to the public as to who the Métis are and why they became a people. This is not readily understood.*

*I get very tired of the Métis always being presented only in a historical context as a people from the past. Parks Canada could start to interpret and present the lives of Métis people today. We are, after all, doing some interesting things that deserve some attention.*

**23) Are there specific people or community groups that you would recommend Parks Canada contact to improve their interpretation of Métis history and culture at FB, FW and/or GLNP?**

*I understand that Parks Canada has approached Gabriel Dumont Institute to conduct this survey and has interviewed other Métis individuals and groups.*

**24) Did you or any of your ancestors spend time in the proposed Grasslands National Park or surrounding lands? If so, what type of cultural activities did you or they participate in? Are there any particular landscapes or historical sites within the park that you as a Métis person consider culturally and historically significant?**

*No, my ancestors did not spend time on this particular landscape. They lived in central and northern Saskatchewan. I, however, do live here and I make use of the landscape constantly. I go out walking in the hills almost daily. I paint the grasslands landscape. My husband and I take people out onto the landscape. We share the natural history of the land with our visitors. I would say that I am as active on this grassland landscape as anyone although I have only lived here for five years.*

*There are so many sites on this landscape that have become significant to me. The land is permeated with aboriginal history. For example, there are tipi rings everywhere and other archaeological sites that are simply magical to behold. Clearly, this land was occupied fully for thousands of years prior to the recent activity of cattle ranching.*

*There have been extensive archaeological surveys done within the park. The sites that are very significant are known to those that manage the park.*

*I would dearly love to see the history of First Nations people represented more distinctly but the First Nations people were alienated from this land in a parallel manner to how the Métis were left landless – different mechanism but the same result. Consequently, other than a small Cree reserve to the west and a tiny group of Sioux to the East, First Nations people are rare on this land. I am saddened by this. My experiences in other places where I have lived have always included the faces of people of colour. Here, it is very homogenous.*

*My family cultural activities were related to berry picking, fishing, hunting, farm labour, cutting rails, working in the bush, operating a still and selling the alcohol. As I discussed above, I don't think this should be discounted because the places where my family did these activities were not turned into historic sites or national parks. My Métis history is quite representative of many Métis. Had the Government of Canada turned the Saskatchewan River Forks into a National Park then my history, from Parks Canada's point of view, would gain much currency. I understand that Parks Canada sites occupy discrete portions of the landscape but their thinking and narratives need to move far beyond those boundaries.*

*Most Canadians still do not understand the history of First Nation or Métis people as nation builders. My ancestors go back to Quebec and to Moose and York Factories along the Hudson's Bay. In my family line, traced through my grandfather, my halfbreed ancestors mapped rivers, steered York boats, and tallied and hauled beaver pelts from the Nelson River to Cumberland House to Ile la Cross and all along the Saskatchewan and Churchill River systems. Cree women featured strongly in all aspects of life and survival. However, my particular history, while important to me, is irrelevant in the larger context of the Métis. There are many Métis with similar backgrounds. There is room for local interpretation but it should occur within a larger conceptual context: Who were (are) these people? How do they identify themselves? What are the common threads? Parks Canada could do much to explain these general concepts.*

**25) A Cultural Resource Values statement is being developed for Grasslands National Park. The Park has identified a number of potential cultural values which may be important to the history of the Park. Would any of these identified potential value themes be important to you as a Métis person? If so, which one(s) and what connections do you see? Are there any other cultural themes, which may have connections to Métis people that should be considered?**

*I cannot comment as I do not know what these themes are nor do I understand what Parks Canada might mean by a cultural resource value statement.*