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**Interview: Louis Dorion**

**Date:**

**Interviewed by: Leah Dorion-Paquin**

**Side A**

**0.0 Leah:** There we go. I think she's working okay. I'll ask you the questions and we'll just chat and I'll transcribe it later. I guess we should start with the personal history questions. Where were you born and how large was your family? And did they have their own home? Let's start with some of those. So you were born in Cumberland House?

**0.3 Louis:** Yes, 1942. They had a nurse situated there; they had a little hospital, a little log cabin. [all the children in Cumberland were born in the outpost hospital]

**0.5 Leah: What was the name of that hospital?**

**0.6 Louis:** I don't think there was an official name for it Leah; they just called it Cumberland Hospital. [In Cree – Agosigamihk – meaning a place where sick people go to get well, where people are that are sick]

**0.7 Leah: Do you know who ran it, Dad?**

**0.7 Louis:** At the time, the Government of Saskatchewan did. That was one of our outpost hospitals. [Government of Saskatchewan through Health from the Northern Administration District. Head in Regina, Premier Tommy Douglas. It served several communities – Pemmican Portage, Sturgeon Landing, Pine Bluff reserve and Cumberland]

**0.8 Leah: Oh, outpost hospitals.**

[Northern District Hospitals. Cumberland was lucky to have one, probably because of the isolation, no road and lived on island]

**0.9 Louis:** They were all called outpost hospitals, the northern ones, where they had nurses stationed. [they had living quarters in one wing of the hospital, it was self-contained for the nurses and maintenance personnel] [electrician and maintenance repair man Dick Mattock and his wife]

**0.9 Leah: so you were born in that hospital, eh?**

**1.0 Louis:** Yes, everyone in the community was born in that hospital.

**1.0 Leah: Did the sisters or the nuns work in the hospital?**

**1.0 Louis:** Not at all. The nurses were independent, put it that way. They were brought in by the Government of Saskatchewan. It was a hospital.

[they gave medicine and penicillin as required. The nurses were very well trained in medicine. For emergency services only, there were no resident doctors]

**1.2 Leah: You would have been born just in the middle of the war then, eh? No, the end of the war, the end of World War II?**

**1.3 Louis:** No, right in the middle. [born during WWII 1939-1945 – I was born in 1942]

**1.4 Leah: What was the community like when you were a young person growing up?**

**1.5 Louis:** Good old Cumberland House. Cumberland House when I was little was a pretty close-knit community; it was a very close-knit community, not at all like you see today. [we lived collectively in the community, people had to help each other for survival, a system of reciprocity]

**1.7 Leah: Do you know what family names would have been specific to Cumberland in the 1940s, Dad? Who were some of the main families?**

**1.7 Louis:** The main families would be the Dorions, Carrieres, Goulets, Fosseneaves, Mackenzies, [there were many – Sayeses, Duchenes,

Kadachuks, Budds, MacAuleys, McKays, Chaboyers, Fletts, Morins, Thomas, Cooks. Pemmican Portage had families too – Bucks, Fiddlers, McGillverys, Cranes, Pellys, Budds, Cochranes, MacLeods and so on. Pine Bluff families – LaLibertes, Heads, Stewarts, Settees, Ross, Greenleafs]

**2.0 Leah: We've got to keep these names.**

**2.0 Louis: ??? [yes]**

**2.1 Leah: Your sister married into that family right?**

**2.1 Louis:** My sister Doris married Robert McAuley in Cumberland. McAuley's they traced their roots back to the Orkney Islands in Scotland. They came to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. Yeah, and lets see Morins.

**2.2 Leah: Oh yes, lots of Morins. Boy they go everywhere.**

**2.2 Louis:** Yes, they are in almost every community in northern Saskatchewan and let's see, what other main families? There was some Budds. The Budd's also had some of their family at Sturgeon Landing.

**2.3 Leah: Oh, Budds. They were there early because there were some Hudson's Bay Company Budd traders.**

**2.4 Louis:** There was some Thomas. There were several; some lived in Cumberland and at Pemmican Portage.

**2.5 Leah: Thomas and they go into Grand Rapids, hey dad?**

**2.6 Louis:** Yes, some of their relatives live in The Pas, Manitoba called Opaskiyak in Cree, and ah, in Cumberland, the Settees, lots of Settees there and see, what other families are the main families in Cumberland there. Ah, McKays, there was a lot of McKays there. Crates, Deschambeaults, Umpervilles, Youngs...

**2.8 Leah: Right.**

**2.9 Louis:** And ah, let's see, I was just think of.. and there was a lot of small little families. Some lived at Barrier Lake down river from Cumberland on the way to the Pas, Manitoba. Families were Robinsons, Naberses, Heads, Sewaps and others at small jack-knife port community.

**3.0 Leah: And they have been there for many, many years?**

**3.1 Louis:** They have been there for a long time, plus Chaboyers.

**3.2 Leah: They came up a little later, eh?**

**3.2 Louis:** No, I think they've always been a main family. I think they came from Red River, or from the Pas, Manitoba where they had family relations.

**3.3 Leah: Right, I think you're right.**

**3.3 Louis:** With the migrations... let's see, Chaboyers... on the reserve over there is lots of Heads over there. There are Heads on the Pine Bluff Indian reserve, no Chaboyers. Chaboyers lived in Cumberland House.

**3.5 Leah: Yeah, for sure, eh?**

**3.5 Louis:** There isn't really that many, they always seem to, tend to move out. They relocated to the Pas. There isn't that many left. Many moved to mining towns in Manitoba for employment – Flin Flon, Snow Lake, Thompson.

**3.6 Leah: Isn't that something? Yeah, there's a lot of migration shifts, especially because of Indian Affairs, eh, for sure, relocating communities.**

**3.7 Louis:** Yeah, that's where I was born, Cumberland. At the time when I was young, a lot of people, living off the land was pretty good, living off the land was pretty good because the resources were there.

**4.0 Leah: What were your main resources, dad?**

**4.0 Louis:** Trapping was great when the water levels were ideal for furs, fishing for Sturgeon, commercial fishing for pickerel, northern pike, gold-eye and white fish. Our main resources were trapping and fishing... they did a lot of logging too, there was a lot of logging in Cumberland. Winter and summer there was always logging, even had an island there Knudson's Island there, 2 miles up river from Pemmican Portage.

**4.2 Leah: Knudson's. Is that a Cree name? No, it's a name...Oh, probably the owner's name was Knudson.**

**4.3 Louis:** No it's the owner, the owner's name was Ralph Knudson. He was from Archerwill. He had a large farm there. Logging was his winter works project.

**4.3 Leah: Right, right, I think I've seen that.**

**4.4 Louis:** It's K-N-U-D-S-O-N, Knudson. And he had another sawmill down [upstream] past the Saskatchewan River about 25 miles up River. We call that [Natimik] upriver and that's where co-op camp was, they used to log over there too. These were logging areas that The Pas Lumber Company had missed, there were little [large] pockets here and there. They had beautiful timber stands in there, you don't find [anywhere else along the Saskatchewan River] [Co-op camp sawmill was located 3 miles from Knudson's camp; we worked there in a sawmill]

**4.9 Leah: Did a lot of the men work at these logging camps?**

**4.9 Louis:** Yeah, everyone did, everyone had their own little thing that they did. Men worked in the sawmill and planer. Other crews worked in the bush cutting down trees and limbing them, hauling logs with horses from bush to the sawmill.

**5.0 Leah: Did you work in the logging camps?**

**5.0 Louis:** Yes, yeah, I did.

**5.0 Leah: What did you guys do?**

**5.1 Louis:** We used wide flat bobsleighs 7 to 8 feet wide to ride evenly in the rough bush roads. We did everything, we did some logging in the bush, we did some falling, mostly we did the falling and the hauling with horses.

**5.2 Leah: Horses, yeah?**

**5.2 Louis:** Horses, yes, we used horses. And what we did to, we worked right in the sawmill itself some years. I myself worked in the mill piling lumber with a trimmer. Worked in the mill piling lumber on racks from the trimmer and edger. Trucks could back under the piled up racks to load and haul the lumber to the Saskatchewan Timber Board in Nipawin.

**5.5 Leah: Heavy labour, for sure.**

**5.5 Louis:** Some was heavy labour. Around the sawmill there was no easy place to work. Everybody did their share. And we stayed in these log cabins, you know, there was a nice big cook shack. They were warm and cozy but crowded with bunk beds.

**5.8 Leah: Oh, you'd have to, yeah. Lots of guys from Cumberland did that eh...fishing was the other main resource, eh? So did you work at the commercial fishery?**

**6.0 Louis:** Not too much, no. Myself I started school when I was about 7, 1960 we went to Saskatoon. But I used to help out with fishing. As a young lad I was helping out fishing. Grandpa did all the fishing. He did sturgeon fishing and commercial fishing, out on the lake there, fishing for gold eye, pickerel, jackfish, out there in Cumberland Lake...it was well stocked. it was really good fishing grounds. Cumberland fishermen kept the fish nets in the River at Budd's Point. The winter fishing was for food and dog-feed. Dogs had to be fed on a year-round basis.

**6.7 Leah: I wonder what they would get for a wage for commercial fishing?**

**6.7 Louis:** No, all piece work. Fish were sold by weight at the Co-op packing house. It wasn't very much, but it didn't cost that much either. So it was a, if I remember right, the northern pike, we call it jackfish, I think it was 2 cents a pound, it was around two cents a pound...and the others were really high priced, 7 cents a pound, that was for pickerel and saugers, we called them saugers, and then sturgeon was really top notch, that was nearly 10 cents a pound, and then it would go up in rate to 15 cents a pound. Sturgeon is one of those fish they sent to Winnipeg, then they shipped to New York, for a restaurant delicacy.

**7.5 Leah: It was a delicacy, eh? I heard some people made caviar with the fish eggs. Did you guys do any of the caviar?**

**7.6 Louis:** Caviar was always fried for home use. No we never did. It just wasn't part of our meals. We used to cook a little bit of it at home, as the fishermen brought he sturgeon home for food.

**7.8 Leah: Did the rest go to making... yeah for sure.**

**7.8 Louis:** Small fish cakes. They tasted quite bland and tasteless, but edible. We ate a little bit of that caviar, but not too much. I didn't like it. I never did care for it. And fishing was pretty good, and the thing was they had a nice fish house there [Cumberland had a fish packing warehouse there], they were pack boxes and they stored ice there [from the Bigstone River], they took ice there in the winter and stored it there; they covered it up with sawdust from the sawmill to keep it cool. It kept it cool all year. And that was where they would pack the fish [for shipping in spring and summer]

**8.6 Leah: How did they ship the fish to Winnipeg?**

**8.6 Louis:** By barge, owned by Jack Nedum. Ship to Winnipeg, they used to go by, they called it Booth Fisheries, Booth fisheries is the one that used to haul fish from Cumberland House to The Pas Manitoba.

[they were packed in fish boxes full of ice, lined with wax paper supplied by Co-op fisheries]

**8.7 Leah: And into Lake Winnipeg?**

**8.7 Louis:** No, no they just went up to the Pas, they went to, by barge, and then they went by train from there, unless Booth Fisheries took it right to Manitoba, they might have, I don't know. Like I was young. I thought it went by train from there, but maybe it didn't. Maybe Booth Fisheries had a lot of other fisheries going up into northern Manitoba, up Moose Lake, Cedar Lake, all that area in there. They were a big company.

**9.3 Leah: They were a big company, definitely. They hired a lot of people. What was your home like where you lived?**

**9.3 Louis:** We lived in a log cabin, an old log cabin. It used to be an old store, one of the old fur trader stores owned by Bert Howell, an independent trader.

**9.6 Leah: Could it even have been one of the Revellion Freres stores or the Hudson's Bay Company stores?**

**9.7 Louis:** I think it was ?? I think it was Grandpa that said it was Bill and ?? Store.

**9.8 Leah: That would have been two traders?**

[there were three in Cumberland House – Hudson's Bay Company, Co-op Store for Saskatchewan fur market in Regina, and Mike Zibkreski (independent)]

**9.8 Louis:** One of the traders and there was one, two, three, about three or four trading stores back home when I was growing up then, there was just one, Hudson's Bay store, but it used to be a trading store. Grandpa, he bought it. I don't know how much he paid for it, but he bought it. He bought the building from Bert Howell long before I was born. He bought it from money he earned when he worked with Chapuis, the North West Mounted Police, as a guide.

**10.2 Leah: So he must have been close to the traders at one time then?**

**10.2 Louis:** He didn't work with the traders. He did freighting and stuff, they worked on the lines, Grandpa Dorion.

[he worked directly with the fur traders and did the freighting, hauling and portaging of goods and furs along the waterways. They traveled to the Churchill River through Frog Portage just north of Pelican Narrows community. They paddled up river on the sturgeon weir from Sturgeon Landing to Beaver Lake then frog Portage]

**10.3 Leah: Could he speak? How many languages could he speak?**

**10.4 Louis:** Grandpa spoke two. As far as I know he spoke two, Cree and English, the same as me, Cree and English. Ourselves, all us kids we all speak Cree because it was our first language.

**10.6 Leah: You spoke Cree in the home then?**

**10.6 Louis:** Oh yeah, very little English. Everybody from the little kids to the grandparents all spoke Cree, in our household and in the community. It was a Métis settlement.

**10.8 Leah: So the only place you spoke English was at school then?**

**10.8 Louis:** Yes, that's where we learned it. We were taught by Catholic nuns; they spoke with an accent. Between themselves they spoke French.

**11.0 Leah: What was your house made of? It was logs?**

**11.0 Louis:** Log, but the inside was lined with boards. The inside was lined with little one by four fir boards, I guess you can call it, the old lap?? boards you could call it, the same with upstairs, it was two levels.

[the inside was lined with tongue and groove, roofs were lined with 1x8, common roof board from the sawmill, not planed]

### **11.3 Leah: Was that common for houses in Cumberland?**

**11.3 Louis:** It was common; it was pretty common because everybody had an upstairs because the houses themselves weren't that big, square footage size. Ours was probably about 20x30 feet square; then there was a kitchen attached, it was like a lean-to, and that was about 16X20, and then the upstairs was about 20x30 like the main part.

[20x30 built as a trading store]

### **Leah: What were different roles in your household?**

**Louis:** The women did most of the work inside the house; we looked after the supplies, hauling wood, hauling water and in the winter time we'd haul in snow and pour in snow into a 45 gallon water barrel inside the kitchen to melt down for our water supply to the... we'd go down to the river and get take a few pails and haul it along in our sleigh and empty the water, but mostly it was snow in the wintertime and we kept a supply of wood, white poplar trees cut down and hauled home in the spring. They were cut and cured for the summer. Very good firewood.

### **Leah: You didn't own your land, but did you consider it your land?**

**Louis:** Not really. It was everybody's. I think you were given title to it. Just by occupation. Squatter's rights or something like that, or whatever you

called it. Nobody owned land over there. The only ones who owned land was the HBC and a bit of government, the province as Crown land regulated by Regina, and of course the Church owned a lot of land. But the community themselves, heck no, all that pasture area, they just went and cut the grass and took what they needed. Everybody knew that this was where Cyril Chaboyer cut his, this is where Philip McAuley cuts his, an unwritten order, because everyone seemed to have a certain area by mutual understanding where they cut their hay for their cows and horses. Yeah they did, it was a big area over there, Cumberland itself is a big grazing area, it's a nice flat. It's a beautiful ranch area, lots of hay meadows, a natural setting, very beautiful country, left fertile by the glaciers.

**Leah: Did your grandpa ranch at one point?**

**Louis:** No, but his dad did, raised a lot of cattle, but the boys didn't. Grandpa went to work for the RCMP for a while, running dog teams, when he was young and came back from the war, he ran dog teams from Cumberland to the Territories. They were gone 3 months because one trip would be 6 weeks one way and 6 weeks coming back. And they'd be recording births. He went with an RCMP up there on the dog runs with an RCMP called Chappy?? the RCMP's name was Chappy, that was his name C-H-A--P-U-I-S, I think it is, that was his last name, but everybody called him Chappy. He was a guide and assisted Chappy along the way, they went as a group, by dog team. They went from Cumberland all the way in through to toward Pelican

Narrows and end up in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, in that area. It was quite a route. They were gone for a long time and they all had these cabins and stuff... they had a chain, like where the trappers, they never knew when to expect them.

**Leah: He must have been very well known.**

**Louis:** Yes, Jack Dorion was very well known in the north. Another fellow that did that after Grandpa quit that was Semiane Broomfield. He later went onto work with the HBC on the fur lease, and he was there for the better part of 30 years. A fellow by the name of Russell Robertson, he was the manager of the fur lease for the HBC. Russell came to Cumberland as a young man and stayed at the fur lease until he retired. He married the nurse in Cumberland.

**Leah: What is that fur lease?**

**Louis:** The fur lease is that whole entire block area from the Saskatchewan area all the way to the Pasqua Hills all the way to Squaw Rapids all the way to the Manitoba border. It's really rich in furs, muskrats...the HB leased that and I think they got it on a 99 year lease or something like that if I remember right. The lease ran out in the 50s, you know they went from the 1850s-1870 to 1960 somewhere when it ran out. It went out in the 60s

somewhere. It became for the people, more of a co-op, a fur co-op, run by the Government of Saskatchewan.

**Leah: Is that where the Sipanuk Channel is?**

[part of the waterway from the Saskatchewan River in the fur lease]

**Louis:** Yeah, that's the place. They've done muskrat farming to improve the muskrat population; it's all in that same area. That co-op store was there when I was young; it was being built when I was going to school in the 50s. About 1955 they were building that co-op store and that was what was breaking the monopoly, the co-op store, and they set up themselves a fish co-op, then they set up their own co-op sawmill. Jim Brady was a conservation officer at the time, and he really organized all this stuff. He did the fish co-op, the saw-mill, the co-op store, and he got people to be part of the Saskatchewan fur market system for their furs...helping get better prices. He brought some competition back into it. I have to add, that when Jim Brady came into Cumberland he was an employee of the Department of Natural Resources. He was working with what we called the DNR.

**Leah: DNR. They were pretty important to these northern communities. What did the Department of Natural Resources do? What was their role in your community?**

**Louis:** Their role in the community, they did a little of everything. [total control of land and resources – i.e. Crown land] They looked after the social well being of the community, they looked after the environmental part of it, they looked after the health and the welfare, a little of every thing. They issued licenses. When I was a teenager, that was when they started issuing moose licenses, a person, a trapper, they were free licenses, and you were allowed two a year, so a lot of these old people, they were up in their 60s and 70s, they still made a living trapping, but meager, you know they didn't get around to much. They had a few dogs, to pull them around to see their muskrats, and their wives. They'd be old, but they'd still be stretching their hides. But they weren't spry enough to be game hunters to go after the moose, but that's where we'd come in, the younger guys, they'd give us the permit to get their moose. That was perfectly legal in Cumberland. As long as you had a tag for your kill, the DNR officer did not bother anyone.

**Leah: Oh, still cooperative, that's how you got enough meat into the community?**

**Louis:** Yes, during the 50s and 60s yes. Times have changed now, they don't share moose meat anymore. They have their own deepfreezers. Always hunting going on... ...one would go out towards Birch River.

**Leah: Where is Birch River? I've heard of it lots.**

**Louis:** Birch River used to be a community along the Saskatchewan River. It's approximately 20 miles from Cumberland, down River on the way to The Pas. It's a community, and it used to be a community. That's where Gabe Dorion and his family used to live and there's lots of Heads there, and Bucks that migrated into Pemmican Portage. They used to live over in Birch River. There was about 6 or 8 families there when my uncle Gabriel Dorion had his family there.

**Leah: Did they farm?**

**Louis:** No, they just lived there. It was a good area, trap line area. They could trap right from there, they could fish on the river. That's where the bulk of the gold eye fishing was, on the Saskatchewan River, and bulk of the sturgeon fishing was on the Saskatchewan River. They were in a good location. [Gabe is my Grandpa's younger brother. He was the youngest of the four brothers from Henri Dorion.]

**Leah: Who were the four brothers?**

**Louis:** John Dorion, the first one was William Dorion, he was older than Grandpa, he was oldest, then Grandpa, then a fellow called Tatlow Dorion, then Gabriel Dorion. You notice all four had French names. Tatlow Dorion, he was the one Pelican Narrows... he is gone, all, the only one that is left is Gabriel Dorion. [They have all passed away except Gabriel Dorion] He was

quite a few years younger, quite a span there. He is still in Cumberland House, and then there was a sister in between. She's now a Settee. I can't think of her name. We called her Quwaysk, Charlotte Settee. That's her name. That was her funeral we went to three years ago. That's where I ran into Alec and Adam and Hazel and all her children. Charlotte Settee's husband was Douglas Settee; he died maybe fifteen years ago from a heart attack and, but, Douglas Settee is a brother to Chief Pierre Settee in Cumberland reserve. He comes from that same family, so he married into our family, so that he left the reserve. He worked in The Pas for a company called Brown Eyes company. He worked for them for about 30 years, all his life for that one company. He lost his status because he left the reserve, so they [his children] weren't treaty, they weren't then, but he has gone back so they are now. [they regained their status through Bill C-31]

**Leah: Where did you go to school?**

**Louis:** In Cumberland. There was only one school in Cumberland. It was called Charlebois school. It was run by the Church. Charlebois, it was named after Bishop Charlebois, in memory of him. When I was a young fella they called it Charlebois school already, but he was the Bishop that used to come there for confirmations. We started right from grade one, there was no such thing as kindergarten, and we went right to grade eight. That was it, grade eight was the maximum education allowed by Government policy for the Northern Administration District. There was no more. We had nuns for

teachers and the priest was the principal. The school routine was pretty structured. It was pretty orderly, we were a pretty obedient group, because that was the way people lived in their family. You respected your elders, the whole community was like that and I'd say it was... we learned to read and write... they were good teachers.

**Leah: Did they have a hard time teaching English to Cree speakers?**

**Louis:** I think they did a little bit but they really spoke with a real accent because they were French speakers, and we learned a little French from them. The thing with them, they were pretty persistent when they wanted to teach you something they really taught you. One nun would have to teach about two grades per classroom so that meant about ten subjects.

**Leah: Were there a lot of resources in your classrooms?**

**Louis:** There was a bit of books, but not very many...mostly little textbooks, we used to have books on different little topics, country living, a little bit on agriculture, quite selective.

[there was no library in the school. Classrooms all carried their own books for the different grade levels]

**Leah: Not much on Canadian history or community history wasn't really taught?**

**Louis:** Community history or even Canadian history, there was nothing. What we learned was American history, our neighbors, geography of our American neighbors. You learned all about cotton fields, very little Canadian content. The text books were all printed in the United States.

**Leah:** **You must have met a lot of war veterans then, when they came back from the war? Do you remember their experiences?**

**Louis:** One thing, going back to the school experiences, we used to have Catechism every afternoon because the school was shared with the Catholics and Protestants. It was non-denominational, because it had to be a community school, funded by government. And then we used to, we're Catholic so, at 3:30 the Protestants went home and the Catholics had to stay for that extra half hour everyday. 3:30 the Protestants would head out and they'd be smiling, and they'd give a little wave and smirk, proud to be a Protestant. It had its virtues. We had to stay for catechism by the Priest until 4pm.

**Leah:** **The war veterans. Was your community really impacted when the veterans left?**

**Louis:** Oh it was, because in a small community like Cumberland, they lost 6 veterans. They were, I forget their names who they were, but one of them was my dad, Napoleon Morin. The other fellows name was Victor Carriere,

and I forget the names of the others but there was 6 veterans that were lost during the second world war in a small community like Cumberland and to say, 26 of them went to the second world war.

**Leah: So when these men left, the women must have had to do a lot of different work?**

**Louis:** Yeah and they were gone for several years and when they came back, they were badly bruised from the war, wounded and some got, one of them John Cook, got shot in the head and had half of his brain shot off, and a steel plate implanted on the side of his head so he got some government assistance to buy food and whatnot. In later years, he got a bit of help to help him buy a house, but they didn't get very much.

**Leah: Did they get veteran's land?**

**Louis:** A little bit, no they didn't, in later years they did because Simone Bloomfield, the guy I was talking about that was with the RCMP, he went to the Second World War and he went after the DVA to get him a house in later years so he did get a house, but very few of them got much... there was no resources, how to go about, who do you go and approach? You are in an isolated community, the only way you get in was by air, no phones, you are going to go to Regina to talk to somebody or Ottawa? I don't think so, and there was nothing set up, no system to help them. It was really unfortunate.

All these veterans from the First and Second World Wars didn't get any benefits. I'd have to say, didn't get any benefits at all, at least if they would have got a little land or a little house to get them started but no, they didn't get anything at all. And that's the truth. Grandpa, he was wounded pretty badly in the First World War. He took a couple of bullets in the stomach. They were fighting on the front line and he got a couple of bullets when they were up in the front line and they were pulling back but he, this friend of his, this Wellington, who was a friend of his from England, he helped him get back to safety because he couldn't hardly walk. It was Wellington that really saved his life. Wellington dragged him out of the battlefield. Grandpa could hardly move, he was wounded very badly. Simone got his application to build a house through DVA, took several years. But Simone was consistent, he didn't give up. The funding to build his home was approved in 1969, the year I got married. Several veterans received some federal assistance from DVA after they saw that Simone had succeeded with his approach with Ottawa. The Legion members did what they could to help each other. Several got assistance from DVA for housing through the provincial government (Department of Northern Saskatchewan). Several were deaf and lost their hearing from service in artillery. Felix Fosseneauve and Shaggy Young were exceptionally deaf. They were healthy young men when they left for WWII in Europe.

**Leah: So he named our cousin, Wellington after him?**

**Louis:** He never called any of his grandchildren Wellington, but finally did with one of his Great Grandchildren, 40 years later, 40 years later. That's how long it took him to get over it. I used to see him suffer from Lumbago, he used to get cramps, he used to be sick, getting these stomach pains and Grandpa and he used to take these TRC pills, he used to say, "There is nothing I can do, it comes every spring and every fall," the changes of the weather, the cold weather coming or after breakup, we called in Migiskaw [freeze up in Cree] that's the freeze up part in the Cree calendar, and he knew that these pains were going to come, just like clockwork, he knew these pains were going to come, just like the changes of the seasons.

**Leah: Did Grandpa Dorion participate in the reserves or anything?**

**Louis:** No, there was reserves in Cumberland but that was basically empty all the time. They had a flu that went by there, I think in 1918, [1918 Spanish Flu epidemic] just about wiped out that entire reserve. I think there might have been a couple of Sewap families and Miles Head I think. There was every few people there, just a handful of people, like my aunt's husbands Frank McLeod, he was one of the very few people who survived that, that flu. He was just a kid when that flu went by, and he wasn't right from that reserve at Cumberland either, he was from across the lake at Budd's Point. Frank McLeod, that's my uncle Frank, his parents died, he got adopted by the Carrieres, Solomon Carriere. You asked me, did Grandpa do anything at the reserve. No he didn't I don't think anybody did. That reserve

was just a few miles from Cumberland. Along the lake on the other side is sort of a horseshoe bay, in that area toward Tearing River there, and on the other side of Tearing River [the lake across from Tearing River] that's were Budd's Point is. You know those two reserves are just side by side with just the lake water separating them and part of the lake there.

**Leah: So there was no sharing of celebrations then?**

**Louis:** No, not there, no, like the people from the reserves all lived in Pine Bluff. Pine Bluff was the reserve with people left in it. Tom Settee was chief there and they lived 30 miles from Cumberland. You know, that's where Pine Bluff is, 30 miles west of Cumberland, and if I remember right they moved into Cumberland in about 1960 [1963], 63 maybe, 63, 64 maybe. The school burned down in Pine Bluff and instead of building a school there, there was quite a few in Pine Bluff, there had to be about 75 to 100 people, they had quite a few, quite a big population for something way out of the way like that. [Indian Affairs relocated them from Pine Bluff to Cumberland House] So they built houses for them right in the community itself as part of Cumberland. That just didn't work out quite like that so they built, they started building their houses at the reserve where they had been in the first place anyway. I don't know what the government's idea was. Maybe they didn't want them to have that land because boy there was a lot of beautiful, nice beautiful country. They'd want to keep it, and not let them have it. God

it's beautiful up in there. You've got to see those meadows to really appreciate it. It's beautiful country, almost like postcard photos.

**Leah: What were Métis dances and weddings like in Cumberland House?**

**Louis:** Oh yeah, one thing about the Métis people you'll find is they really like to socialize, well the Indian population was the same, but he moved back into the reserves, and they used to come to dances too. We had dances twice a week back home in Cumberland; dances were every weeks, 2 dances a week. One was in Cumberland on, no the one was in Pemmican Portage on Wednesday and the one was in Cumberland on Saturday. And they had a couple of bingos too on top of that. Places to socialize and entertainment because the winters were long. And then the women did a lot of sewing and stuff like that, but these dances were great. We had a little community hall. They built a small community hall by themselves by volunteers and at the Portage too, you know they raised their money by pie socials, box socials, and a few other little things and they built a little community hall. Cumberland did the same thing. [They had a large buck stove inside the building for heat – space heater] We had 2 small community halls, they weren't very big but at least we had someplace to go. They built a little stage on one end, oh it was small, just enough to get a few people standing in there and that was about it. It wasn't very big.

**Leah: And who used to play at the dances?**

**Louis:** Oh we used to take turns. Cumberland had quite a few fiddlers. There was a lot of people, Joe Umperville was one heck of a good fiddler and Louis McKenzie, they called him, Louis McKenzie, his nickname was Louis Soda. Gordon Fosseneauve, Zacharias Head, Joe Umperville were the other popular fiddle players in our community of Cumberland.

End of Side A

Side B

**Louis:** Joe Umperville, Louis McKenzie, Zacharias Head – fiddle players. They loved playing the fiddle. Pierre would cord on guitar for them; they had lots of practice. They took turns playing at wedding dances. They collected 25 cents at the door to pay the fiddle player or the band. Collection would go back into the community. Build up the economy from that little guitar. Two dollars for hours of playing.

**Leah: What kinds of dances?**

**Louis:** Square dances, waltzes, all kinds of dances. There were good dancers that could dance to practically everything. Any one of them in the community, they were good jiggers. Jiggers standing by themselves was not how we did it at home. You always jigged in pairs, a man and a woman,

always in pairs. That's how they got picked for prizes, in teams. Elsie was a good jigger. Weddings had a lunch. They were not like today's weddings. It was an open house, a big party with no invitations. Everybody came, but everybody did their share. They baked pies, cakes and everything they would send a head. The wedding was held in the Church then the dance in the community hall. Funerals were special celebrations. Meeting place was the community hall. There was a meal at the community hall after funerals. They had wakes, when a person dies they take him to his house and pray for him for 2 days and 2 nights – always 2 nights for a wake. Everyone donates to the wake – food, bread, stew, meat, to feed the people. It goes all night, praying and singing. No speeches, but people may say a few words. People were always coming and going. They would go to Church to the cemetery to bury then to a common place after to sing, pray and have lunch. They fed everybody because stuff was donated. It was a community effort, and not a financial burden. It was a community effort – part of the Métis culture – to socialize and gather in groups. They told stories and played games when people gathered, fur trade stories, body language.

**Leah: Do you remember any stories?**

**Louis:** A lot have been lost, migration. 1774 the community was already there. It was a bustling important place. There are not too many myths but characters. Wesajack the trickster, Wetigo the cannibal to scare the kids. You were taught about the land, respect on a practical basis. You were taught to

survive. I have seen a lot of change – road, airport, TV. Education - I left Cumberland House to go to school in Saskatoon in 1960 at 17, to Canadian Vocational training School (Kelsey built 3-4 years later). It was an experimental group of 24 boys and 24 girls from all over the north. I met them from all over the north. Still closely associated with them today. Jim Durocher, Napoleon Larente, I met a lot of people. Other students from Cumberland – Winston McKay, Joe McKay, Raymond Kadachuk who got killed in a car accident in 1965. Girls there was aunt Elsie Dorion now Elsie Roberts, June Dussion – her mom was Agnes Dorion, William's daughter, Cathy McAuley, Antonia Deschambeault, got selected from the community. There are French and Scottish names but not a lot of English names in Cumberland House.

**Leah: Did you have difficulty adjusting?**

**Louis:** No because there was support from other students from small communities. Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Dillon, Uranium City, Foster Lake, Pinehouse, La Ronge, Stanley Mission, La Loche, Molanosa. They came from every northern community, some just one or two students. I met a lot of people. A lot are leaders today, getting back into their community, trained a new generation of leaders. Apprenticeship in January and February, it was seasonal work. It took five years to get a journeyman – 8000 hours. You had to have enough hours or you had to skip a year. In 1965 I went to Moose Jaw in January and February because they tore down buildings that were the

old army barracks. Avenue A and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street in Saskatoon with a Hangar in the back – torn down in 1964 for Kelsey. In 1966 I went to write my journeyman because I had 8000 hours. I went to work in construction from 1966 to 1984 – 22 years. I worked for three major companies: Simpson Construction from Nipawin, Canna, and Graham Construction. I was contracted all over, but did quite a bit of work in town. Laid off a bit, ended up working in mines at Wollaston Lake, at Uranium mine. I had to take work where it came. I worked at Key Lake Uranium Mine in 1981-82, not just 82. I helped build the Herb Bassett home in PA in 1983-84. A lot of seasonal work, as long as the project lasted. A lot of Métis people – generations older, 60s-70s, you'd never get to foster their culture. They never will because they still have in their feeling of colonization. They have felt the abuse, racism, they had to endure in their life. It is worse in the south than in the north. Even here in PA there is a lot of discrimination for Native people here. That was the trend everywhere, but more so in PA because of the population. There is a large native population, both Indian and Métis. None of them spoke the Cree language. A few spoke Cree but it was those that migrated from northern communities that have spoken Cree from the time they were children. PA could be real tough for school kids. Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass* was a real eye opener – concepts, indoctrination is the same, but the means are different. Came through the same as Howard Adams. Many are connected by experience, I can relate to that now, but older generations are so afraid of authority and were taught not to question authority.

When they built Squaw Rapids, it dried up the lake. The fur industry was gone, but who were you going to complain to? The inability to try and express themselves. They didn't like the developments but what could they do about them? People who have grown up with little or no education. It put Cumberland House in a bad position for 15-20 years. Next there was a hotel built with a beer parlor that was a big factor. People would be in the bar while their children were on welfare. The bush economy was gone. There was shock and stress on the whole community. The last five years things have changed. It has got a lot better; the people themselves have turned it around. Virginia McKay and other concerned local citizens tried to turn it around. It is on the mend slowly. Healing will take a long time to mend the damage done. We should be proud of their accomplishments. A small segment of your age group stay here. Always about 100 population. A lot have left in a bad way, self-image, not proud of their heritage. A lot have left for good and never come back, not even for their parents' funerals. They deny their heritage to fit in with the mainstream. Fifth or sixth generation Métis and you can't tell if they are Métis or not.

**Leah: How has Government affected the identity of northerners?**

**Louis:** They try to keep natives in their place. Where does a grade 8 education get you? It doesn't prepare you for anything. You only learn the basics to read and write and some science and math. I would have liked to join the Air Force. In the Pas in 1960, in spring after trapping, they had

recruiting testing questionnaires but I knew I wasn't prepared, it was multiple choice. Could tell them we were a long way from any good education. We could read and write but only on a limited scale. We were far from being alone; we were all the same. Anne Carriere, Pierre's daughter, they wanted her to advance. Her mom and dad got together with relatives and tried to raise money to put her through nursing. Anne had to go to school in Winnipeg. Josephine Goulet, her dad had a store in Cumberland House, got an education and ended up in the Air Force. Joining the military was by choice, not by force. Moise Goulet and Fosseneauve tried, it was a career where you could advance. Moise got in but Pierre hurt his back and failed his medical. Moise was stationed in Germany. A year and a half later he came home for a few days. We all listened to Moise's stories – one about fishing and a fish 150 mm long. It was a culture shock, we had never heard of millimeters before. There was a lot of agriculture in the community. They had their own horses. One tractor owned by Steve Chaboyer. Horses were used to haul wood, get work done. They were quarter horses – workhorses. In later years we had Clydesdales as draft horses. We did our own gardening, we had big gardens. The cellars were lined with hay so they wouldn't freeze. The outside of the house was banked up with dirt so no drafts could get into the cellar where the canned goods, vegetables and potatoes were stored. Our main foods, our staple foods were beans, turnips, red beets, carrots. We had a little bit of everything, a few peas, raspberries etc. Some grew wild like highbush cranberries to make jams and jellies, raspberries and strawberries. Mooseberries and greenberries called ??, not many

chokecherries. Bannock was our number one staple food because there was no bakery. Some bread was brought in once and a while as a novelty. We ate a lot of stew and fried moosemeat. A lot of fish because we had nets in the water year round because every one had sleigh dogs they used as transportation in winter but had to be fed year round. There was always a large supply of fish. We would trade when someone got a moose, trade sugar, tobacco, bannock for a chunk of meat. It was a way of redistributing the meat in the community. It was very important because that is what everyone did. When Grandpa got a moose we'd make sure everyone got a share, even the old ones who couldn't get around. We did it without question. It was a community effort. Tobacco was a big thing. Pipes were common. Some women smoked, but not pipes. They rolled their own cigarettes. The HB store provided everything. We had credit so we charged everything. There were bulk payments after trapping and fishing seasons. Later the Co-op store, you could charge if you became a member. Cumberland was an island. In summer everyone went by canoe. There were a lot of good canoers. A few had motors for their boats. We picked Seneca root at Suggi Lake. We got about 3 dollars a pound for it dried. It didn't cost much to pick. It was shipped to Winnipeg by the HBC; they handled the sale for their local creditors.