

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: ELIE DUMONT  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: CRUTWELL  
SASKATCHEWAN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: CRUTWELL  
SASKATCHEWAN

TRIBE/NATION: METIS  
LANGUAGE: FRENCH AND ENGLISH (transl)  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: JULY 17, 1973  
INTERVIEWER: CAROL PEARLSTONE

INTERPRETER:  
TRANSCRIBER: J. GREENWOOD  
SOURCE: SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD  
TAPE NUMBER: IH-129  
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 21  
PAGES: 11

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Elie Dumont, the nephew of Gabriel, was born at St. Laurent in 1886.
  - Worked as farmer and later cut brush. Now retired.
  - Family relationships.
  - Schooling at Batoche and Duck Lake.
  - Account of his friendship with his Uncle Gabriel.
- Carol: Okay, you were born in St. Laurent in 1886 and what did your parents do there in St. Laurent?

Elie: My parents, oh, well they was farming, you know.

Carol: And how much land did they have?

Elie: About 160 acres.

Carol: One river lot?

Elie: Yeah, yeah, one river lot.

Carol: What were their names?

Elie: My dad you see, I was raised here in St. Laurent, that is my dad. Talking about when I was small, I was born there in St. Laurent.

Carol: What was your father's name?

Elie: Elie, he had the same name.

Carol: And he was Gabriel Dumont's brother?

Elie: That is his brother, yeah.

Carol: And your mother's name was?

Elie: Francoise Ouellette.

Carol: I see. And when did you, how long did you live in St. Laurent?

Elie: Oh, about - I stayed there, I would say, about ten years, you see. Then after, my dad moved to, close to Wakaw there. He used to keep raising cattle, a ranch, you know.

Carol: He sold the land at St. Laurent?

Elie: Yes, and after, he moved to Bellevue, when he take a homestead there. And after I take a homestead myself, you see. I was about, when I take a homestead I was about 22 years old.

Carol: And why did your dad move from St. Laurent to Wakaw, you said?

Elie: Yes, Sokal they called it. Between Batoche and Wakaw, that is a Ukranian settlement in there, you know. I was there, fourteen years there.

(Some French)

Translator: He said the reason is because that their piece of land, their river lot, wasn't very good land and at Sokal, the land was good there.

Carol: And how much land did he have at Sokal?

Elie: We had three quarters of land there. My dad.

Carol: Three quarter sections?

Elie: Three quarter sections, yeah.

(Some French)

Translator: He said the land there was more expensive. The taxes were higher too.

Carol: At Sokal?

Translator: At Sokal, yeah.

Carol: Then where did you go from there?

Elie: From there? Well, uh...

Carol: You had land at...?

Elie: Yes, I sold my land there, you know.

Carol: At Bellevue?

Elie: At Bellevue. Then I come in here to Duck Lake.

Carol: When was that?

Elie: Oh, that is long ago now. Fifty years ago.

Carol: About fifty years ago?

Elie: I am talking about, yeah.

Carol: And why did you sell the land at Bellevue?

Elie: I sold that land for holdings. They bought my land then.

(Some French)

Elie: I bought four horses. (French)

Translator: He said he just got tired. For one thing he said he had four horses and he said they got swamp fever and died. And then after that he just had nothing to work with so he sold his land and gave up.

Carol: And came to Duck Lake?

Elie: Yeah, then I come to stay in Duck Lake.

Carol: And that was when? About fifty years ago that you came to Duck Lake?

Elie: Yeah.

Carol: And what did you do when you came to Duck Lake?

Elie: Oh, I was working out with farmers.

Carol: Working for farmers?

Elie: Yeah, working for farmers.

Carol: And then, after that?

Elie: And then, after, I went to Crutwell.

Carol: When was that?

(Some French)

Translator: He went back to Crutwell about fifteen years ago to work and then...

Carol: Was that because there was a better job, there was no work here or...?

Translator: No, it had to do with... you see, as a brush cutter, he went all over the place. His main coming back place was Duck Lake but he worked all his life, he said. Even went to Le Pas and all over Saskatchewan. He would get a job with the company, and so he worked at Crutwell, he said, as a worker. But now he is back there since four years to stay. He has got a little house.

Carol: Oh, the last four years.

Elie: I don't work now, you know. I stay at Crutwell in the summer and then in the wintertime I stay in P.A. I pay my board.

Carol: So this is right now there? You stay in somebody's house in P.A. or...?

Elie: I rented a storekeeper's house, I rented that house. That is not my house. Crutwell is.

Translator: Did you want to find out about his grandparents or where his parents were from or...?

Carol: Okay, yeah. Where were your parents from?

Elie: Manitoba, Winnipeg.

Carol: And were they both Metis?

(Some French)

Translator: He said that they came to take lands. And he said that they were buffalo eaters and the prairie had buffalo so...

Elie: I don't know that, I am too young.

Carol: Does he know anything about his grandparents?

(Some French)

Carol: What about his grandmother?

Translator: His grandmother was a Laframboise and he said his grandfather came from Quebec and he must have been a French Canadian.

(French)

Carol: And what about his grandmother, was she Metis?

(French)

Elie: Yes.

Carol: Do you know anything about your great-grandmother?

(French)

Elie: That is far back. I don't know.

Translator: I asked him if he knew where there was a direct Indian in his family and he doesn't know.

Carol: The town of Crutwell, is it um - oh, let me ask you this, did you go to school?

Elie: (translated) I went to school at Batoche and Duck Lake. In all, about four years. I have read and that since, on my own. I would like to read and to write.

Carol: Did you learn English or French or both or...?

Elie: (translated) I learned English as a young boy because our teacher could not speak French. I went to school in Duck Lake to a man called Dwyer who was a first rate teacher; and for the little while I went to school to him, I learned more than with the others. The other teacher was French but we did a lot of singing and things like that. I didn't learn much at all from her. But this Dwyer was a good teacher and because he could only speak English, we learned English.

Carol: Do you read now in English or French or both?

Elie: (translated) I read in English.

Carol: The town of Crutwell, why was it born? Why are people living in Crutwell?

Elie: (translated) It really started years ago when a man was located there. He was cutting poles and selling them and he had about thirty men working for him there, so they started a store and ever since then... It is because of these fence posts, you know. You just cut the fence posts and since then people have lived there. There is farmers around there too and we used to have two elevators but now it is down to one.

Carol: How long ago was it established?

Elie: (translated) The people who have bunched there, the reason they have come there is because the taxes are very low. They pay five dollars a year. Everybody is on relief there and mostly Indian non-treaty, I would think.

Carol: There is no work around there any more?

Elie: No, no more. Well, on the other side of the highway, but everybody wants to cut posts, you know. It's okay, but not Crutwell, not on this side.

Carol: There is nothing to do for the people?

Elie: It was nothing. That time when I worked about fifteen years ago, twenty years, there was only small, small ones about that big. But now they are about that big. Nice, nice bush there. You see that when you...

Carol: Yeah.

Elie: Yes, nice now.

Carol: So, it is a nice place to live, anyways?

Elie: Yes, well lots of berries, that is why, you see.

(French)

Translator: I asked him what the people did all day and he said mostly nothing. He said he doesn't do anything because he is too old and the rest of the people are there and do what he does even though they are younger.

Carol: Do you have any pension?

Elie: (translated) No, oh no. I get \$170.00 a month and that is the old age pension.

Carol: What about pension from your job?

Elie: (translated) No, no, no. No pension plan there, not from my job, no.

Carol: Okay, I am going to ask now, what you know about the Rebellion.

Elie: (translated) I was fourteen when Gabriel died. I used to go hunting with my Uncle Gabriel and I was a young boy. I was always astonished. Well, we used to go hunting prairie chicken and partridges and I was always surprised what a great shot my uncle was because he never missed and even he would shoot them on the fly. And I would ask my uncle, "How come you never miss?" And he would say, "The trick is to know how to place your gun when you are shooting. You have to put the barrel of the gun a little higher than most people. That is the trick, is knowing where to put the barrel of the gun as you shoot."

Carol: Did he talk much about the Rebellion?

Elie: (translated) It is a little incident that happened. My uncle really didn't say much about the Rebellion but he told me one of the things that happened to him. In those days it was always dangerous days because the Blackfoot Indians would come and try and steal horses from this area in which they...

Carol: When you were a boy?

Elie: (translated) No, when Gabriel was telling me this story, when he was a boy. And they were always on the watch for these guys. And one day, Gabriel was going to where there was a high hill. In those days the old-timers never climbed the hill straight up and around because they never knew what was waiting for them on top, so Gabriel surrounded and went from the back of the hill and he climbed to the top. It was a Blackfoot Indian lying down sleeping with his head on his hands there. So Gabriel realized that he wasn't a guy from around here, that he must have been a Blackfoot probably waiting for the night to steal horses. So Gabriel was on horseback, got off his horse and he had his horse whip so he just whipped him from the back. The guy woke up and Gabriel told him, "What the heck are you doing here?" They must have understood each other somehow. They spoke different languages. And he told him, "If you stick around to steal horses you are going to get killed because there is an Indian camp not too far from here." So they sat and they smoked and he told him, "You better get back home." And then the Indian decided that would be the best thing so he took off and he saved his life. Later on, when Gabriel was running away after the Riel Rebellion, he went across the lines that way and he came to a Blackfoot camp and he asked them if they knew of this guy who had been whipped when he came to Saskatchewan. And the Indian said, "Yeah, he is over there in the tent." So Gabriel went to see him and the Blackfoot Indian hugged him and was really glad to see him because he realized that Gabriel had saved his life by sending him back. So they called each other "brother" and made up.

Carol: Where was Gabriel living around then. Was this when Gabriel, this incident with the Blackfoot Indian on the hill, was this around here or was it in another area?

Elie: (translated) It was south of Battleford. There is a name to that hill but I don't remember the name of the hill but he was already a man, Gabriel. He had been married before the Rebellion. Long before the Rebellion this happened.

Every morning Gabriel used to take off with his horse and he used to make rounds. This was antelope country where he was there, and he knew... He was a great hunter and he knew exactly how animals behaved and he would be at the pass at the right time and he knew about the wind and all this, because antelopes are very smart animals. And every day he would go and hunt them.

Carol: This was after the Rebellion?

Elie: Yeah.

Carol: Was he a good man?

Elie: (translated) He had a good temper and was always good humored. After the Rebellion, he travelled all over because he couldn't stay in Saskatchewan. But in those days as soon as you left the area where you had committed your crime, you were safe. And he went to see the Queen and all this, and the Queen signed the paper that said that he was a free man. Therefore he was free to come back to Saskatchewan after.

Carol: Which Queen?

Elie: Queen Victoria.

Carol: Did people like him?

Elie: (translated) He was a good man. Everybody liked him.

Carol: Was he religious?

Elie: (translated) He was a good man and he was a charitable man. He was always ready to help other people. Gabriel's Crossing got the name after him because he kept a ferry there. In those days there were no cables or motors for the ferry, they just had to use oars to push it back and forth.

Carol: Did he have his own house and farm when he homesteaded?

Elie: Gabriel did. That is his homestead.

Carol: When he came back after going to the States...?

Elie: He stayed there, yes.

Carol: After he came back?

(French)

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Translator: I asked him what Gabriel did when he came back and he said that the war was over and that he didn't talk about it any more. I also asked about the funeral and he didn't know the number of people that came to the funeral but to him, maybe 300. But he said it was a big funeral for those days because everybody knew that he was important and that... he believed he died from a heart attack. He said he was talking to people and then he just fell over and died.

He said that when he came back from the States, he didn't seem to take part in too much, he just lived. But he said,



before the Riel Rebellion, he was an active person. In fact, it was him that went to get Riel to come to help them out here in Saskatchewan. And the main reason, he figures, is because they couldn't get scrip, they couldn't get land.

Carol: Did he talk about Riel much?

Elie: (translated) I got the impression maybe it was the Queen that told him to forget about everything because when he came back, he hardly talked about that at all. He didn't talk about Louis Riel or - maybe the Queen had told him to.

Carol: Did anybody else in those days, when you were a boy, did you hear anybody else talk about it?

Elie: (translated) From what I make of it, they talked a little bit about it and it seemed to be the main thing was because of land that they would talk about all the time.

The first battle was at Carlton there and that is where he got shot but he just took his handkerchief and tied it up and then continued fighting.

Carol: This is Gabriel?

Elie: Yeah, Gabriel.

Carol: How do you know that?

Elie: (translated) Gabriel's brother got killed right there at that time. And one of his cousins too. The reason I know that Gabriel tied his head with a handkerchief was because Gabriel told me.

Carol: So he did tell you a bit about the battle, eh?

Elie: (translated) Oh yeah, sometimes. He did talk a little bit about it but I never questioned him about it. I was young, I didn't bother with such things. I wasn't interested in who got killed and how the battle went or anything. I didn't bother with that.

Carol: Do you think it was a just cause?

Elie: (translated) Whether the cause was just or not, it was a dumb thing. They should have known that there was a big bunch out there that would clean them out. They were just a small group here and Riel was the leader and he should have known better than to start a war whether the cause had been just or not.

Carol: Do you think the Metis were fairly treated in those days before the rebellion?

Elie: (translated) I don't know.

Carol: What about today, do you think they are mistreated by

people today?

Elie: (translated) Today the Metis are probably better treated than they were at the time of the Riel Rebellion.

Carol: Are they treated the same as whites by the RCMP?

Elie: (translated) To me, the Metis today are on equal terms with the whites. Some get good jobs; in the olden days they didn't.

Carol: Are the whites wealthier?

Elie: (translated) To me in general, it is about the same now. To me, they have the same chance.

Carol: What about the Indians?

Elie: (translated) One thing is that the Indians are supported by the government but it all depends. I don't see that they are lower than the white.

Carol: Like, in Prince Albert, the Metis and the Indians live in a different part of the town. Why do you think that is?

Elie: (translated) I don't see why Indians don't stay on their reserves. Some of them get two cheques a month and then just come to Prince Albert. I don't know why Prince Albert allows Indians to come and live in the city. Because most of them are coming in there and taking homes at \$40.00 a month, that other people - Metis also - would have to pay over \$100.00. They are ruining these houses that they're renting. You go to public places and all you see is a bunch of Indians; most of them are drunk. They should stay on the reserve.

Carol: Why do the Metis live in a different part of town than the whites?

Elie: (translated) I guess it's up to them, it's their reason. I feel that they are mixing up much more now. You go to the west end and now you have all kinds of people there and you go to the east end where I live, there you find these and you find those.

Carol: Okay, good.

(End of Side B)  
(End of Interview)

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