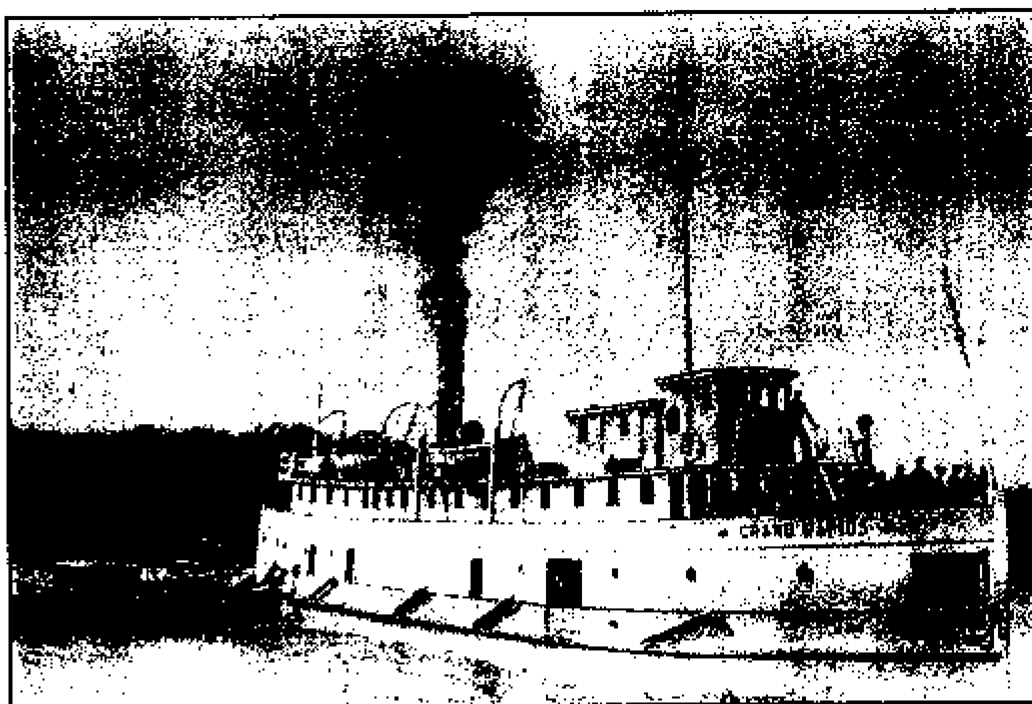
Grand Rapids Stories

Volume I



The *Grand Rapids*, when water transport was king on the northern lakes

Contributed by Bernadette Ballantyne, Betty Calyn, Henry and Edith Chartier, Rosalie Desjarlais, Jon Einarson, and Louise Mercredi

Collected by Jennifer Cook and Allison Mercredi, edited by Raymond M. Beaumont

Frontier School Division No. 48
June 1996

Cover Photograph: **The *Grand Rapids*, freighter on Lake Winnipeg**
(Courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Manitoba Archives,
Transportation, Boat, Grand Rapids 3)

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Volume I

When a person dies, a little bit of history is gone forever, unless someone has taken the time to record it. The following stories are an attempt to capture that history. They invite the reader to open a window into the past, and take a step back in time in order to gain new perspectives on life in Grand Rapids today. Representing only a fraction of the rich resources that are available within the community, they challenge us to record our memories - old stories, major events, and family connections - so that our children may pass on the rich legacy of their forefathers and mothers to the generations to come.

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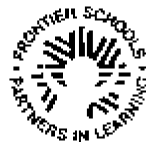

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Acknowledgements

This is the first of two booklets dedicated to the history of Grand Rapids through the voices of its people. As such, it represents a continuation of Frontier School Division's commitment to the creation of community and Native Studies materials, so that by understanding the past, students may be better equipped to face the future.

Many thanks to Liz Pranteau, library specialist, and the Grand Rapids School Committee for providing the initial stimulus to get this project off the ground, and to researchers, Jennifer Cook and Allison Mercredi, for conducting interviews and preparing typed transcripts for editing and inclusion in *Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 1*. Thanks also to Adele LaFrenière and Randy Chartrand for providing editorial advice, Lee Heroux for his photographs of the contributors, and to Raymond Beaumont for editing and layout. Also to Manitoba Education and Training, Compensatory Grant Programme, and Government of Canada, Human Resource Development, for supplying the funds necessary to complete this project.

Finally, a special thank-you to Bernadette Ballantyne, Betty Calyn, Henry and Edith Chartier, Rosalie Desjarlais, Jon Einarson, and Louise Mercredi for kindly sharing their histories and perceptions of life in Grand Rapids. Their stories provide a window on the past which has many lessons for our youth. By learning them, they can set a course for the future with greater confidence and hope of success.

Cam Giavedoni
June, 1996

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Introduction

Grand Rapids is a picturesque community located just above the mouth of the Saskatchewan River where it flows into Lake Winnipeg. It takes its name from a rapids, which for generations dominated the local geography, but which disappeared with the construction of the Hydro dam in the 1960s. The site was first occupied by aboriginal people who came seasonally for many generations, attracted by the fishery and its bounty of sturgeon and whitefish. Apparently, it was just one stop in an annual cycle of travel which took them along rivers and lakes, into the uplands, and out onto the plains in search of food. The first Europeans arrived in the eighteenth century. They included French traders from Montreal, who portaged around the rapids on their journey into Cedar Lake and further up the Saskatchewan in search of furs, as well as British traders from York Factory on Hudson Bay who came for the same purpose.

It was not until the nineteenth century, that Grand Rapids was permanently settled by descendants of those French and British fur traders and their Cree or Saulteaux trading partners. Some of them came from the Red River Colony around Winnipeg, where they had tried their hand at farming, while others came from fur trade settlements on the Saskatchewan and Nelson Rivers or along Hudson and James Bays. Most of them were involved seasonally in the fur trade transportation network, which had involved both the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies prior to 1820, and the Hudson's Bay Company and free traders afterwards. They also took advantage of the local fishery, which provided a reliable subsistence, and some even trapped furs for the company, although Grand Rapids was never a particularly important trapping centre. A few of them even engaged in local trade, which developed as a result of the transportation business, enterprises such as supplying fresh and dried fish and sturgeon oil to the tripmen or cutting firewood for the steamers which replaced the York boats in later years. Eventually, many of them worked for the commercial fishing companies which became prominent on the lakes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

There can be no doubt that many of these people identified closely with their aboriginal roots, and in 1875 families like the Atkinsons, Scotts, Cooks, and Turners "entered into treaty" and settled on the reserve. Others, like the Sinclairs, McKays, Mercredis, Dorions, and Chartiers either did not enter treaty or later gave up their status and settled across the river "on the metis side." Nevertheless, these families were already interrelated, and in spite of treaties and classifications imposed by distant governments, they were one people, who became even more interrelated as the years went by. Other people came and went - Indian agents, fur

traders, merchants, missionaries, and nurses. Then, in the 1960s, Hydro workers arrived and a permanent Hydro community was added to the mix.

Past studies of Grand Rapids have focused on its economic role as a fishery, as a transportation centre, and as a hydroelectric dam site. Local people have been represented as groups, such as Metis or treaty Indian, rather than as individuals, and few details have been provided about them. Moreover, local citizens have not had an opportunity to add their voices. The following interviews, on the other hand, highlight specific people and allow them, as much as possible, to tell their stories in their own words. Supplemental research has centred on finding out more about the origins of these people and the contribution they have made to the history of Grand Rapids and Canada. The result has been this booklet, the first of two volumes, which is designed for a general reading audience and for students interested in history. Its aim is to encourage the reader in the pursuit of community and family history, so as to better appreciate the rich cultural legacy every individual inherits from his roots.

Raymond M. Beaumont
June 1996

H.B.Co. Tramway, Grand Rapids, *c.* 1925 (courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Manitoba Archives, John A. Campbell Album 691, N3310)

Teacher's Guide

A reading must for any teacher planning a community study of Grand Rapids is Martha McCarthy's *Papers in Manitoba History, Report Number 1, Grand Rapids, Manitoba*, Manitoba culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources. An excellent overview of Grand Rapids, it might be assigned selectively to students in the higher grades. The reading level, however, is too difficult for most younger students.

Grand Rapids Stories, Vol. 1 is recommended for use in Social Studies classes from Grades 3 and up. Indexed for ease-of-use, it provides much useful information on Native and northern themes. Below are suggestions for integrating it into the provincial Social Studies curriculum. (See *Social Studies: K-12 Overview*. Manitoba Education 1985.)

Grades 3 Since *Grand Rapids Stories* is about a northern, Native, and hydro community in Manitoba, it supplements Unit 2 of *Communities Today*, which calls for study of a Manitoba Community. *Grand Rapids Stories* supplies the teacher with information relative to history, needs and wants, and cooperation and conflict, all themes emphasized in the provincial curriculum at this level. Selections from the text might also be read to the students.

Grade 5 Unit 3 of *Life in Canada Today* is entitled "The North." *Grand Rapids Stories*, with its emphasis on the impact of the dam, has direct reference to "influences of modern technology and resource development on the people and the region," noted on page 55 of the provincial overview. It provides the teacher with information to deal with 1. Overview of the North and 2. Life Today, pages 55-56.

Grade 6 *Grand Rapids Stories* could be used in Unit 1 of *Life in Canada's Past*, especially Subsection 1, Origins and Settlement Patterns of Native Peoples. It could also be used in Unit IV, Subsection 2, Relocation of Native Peoples onto Reserves, and in Unit V, Life in Canada during the Twentieth Century.

Grade 7 Unit 5 of *Spaceship Earth* deals with "Human Threats to the Natural Balances and Cycles in the Environment." The hydroelectric power development discussed by the contributors to *Grand Rapids Stories* might be useful here.

Grade 8 Unit 4 of *People Through the Ages* deals with life in the modern world. Grand Rapids could be discussed as an example of life in a contemporary western industrial or developing society, depending on whether it is perceived as a first world or third world society. See pages 79-80 in the provincial overview.

Grand Rapids Stories

The following stories are based on taped interviews conducted during the summer of 1995 with Grand Rapids residents, Bernadette Ballantyne, Betty Calyn, Henry Chartier, Edith Chartier, Rosalie Desjarlais, John Einarson, and Louise Mercredi. Although some editing has been required to weave these interviews into a cohesive whole, every effort has been made to retain the 'voice' of each contributor through the inclusion of many direct quotations. The aim has been to record the stories "in their own words" as much as possible.

Bernadette Ballantyne

Bernadette Ballantyne, first woman chief of Grand Rapids First Nation (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Bernadette Ballantyne was born 3 November 1935 in Pine Bluff, Manitoba, the youngest child of Moise Lavallee and Marie Ducharme, who had three other daughters and three sons. She was delivered by a midwife.

> I was the baby of the family, so I got everything. I was spoiled, [because] I was the youngest.

Pine Bluff was located "about seventy miles down [the] Saskatchewan River from the Pas." It was a small and isolated community, with "no road, just a river and no winter road." Twelve to fourteen Métis families lived there, working at trapping and fishing, much the same as people at Grand Rapids years ago.

> When I was a child, when I was brought up in Pine Bluff, what I remember is we had a good life. We had big gardens, oh, I'd say, about the school to the

arena. It was an island in the middle of the river. My dad had a garden out there. We had another garden close to the house. We used to have all kinds of things there, like vegetables, and stuff like that. My mom grew some strawberries and rhubarbs in the other garden we had. And the vegetable seeds that we got, we got from The Pas. We used to have a cellar in our house underneath. That's where we used to keep our potatoes. They put hay around the potatoes, cabbage, and all the other vegetables we didn't can. We canned in jars.

> We [also] had cows, pigs. We used to have cream separators. That's one thing they don't have nowadays. They don't make cream anymore, eh?

Although the people were self-reliant and able to meet most of their physical needs locally, they had to look to people from elsewhere to meet their educational and religious needs. Since Pine Bluff was only a little village, it did not have its own church, but "there was a school that the priest used to come to have a service." The local children went to that one room school. Although she did not go to it herself, Bernadette recalls that the sisters [nuns] were the teachers there. When they left, the children had no place to go to school. This is why many of the families relocated at The Pas. Her own family moved when she was about seven years of age, shortly after her father's death in 1943. Her mother wanted her children to get their schooling. Only the people who had no children stayed in Pine Bluff. Eventually most of them had to leave, too, because the community was flooded. This happened when Hydro started damming up the rivers and caused water to flow back up instead of down the rapids. As Bernadette explains it, the changes were dramatic.

> It's just like a little hill now, just like a little island. It flooded all around. My uncle had a great big garden and that's all flooded. My mom and dad had a big garden plus they had another garden that was...a long island, like, and it was good soil there, and my mom ended up making a garden there, and we used to have plenty of vegetables, rhubarb, strawberries. I think there's not trace of that island now. It's all under the water.

There are only about three houses at Pine Bluff today. The people are "just mostly fishermen," including one of Bernadette's own brothers. Bernadette has only vague memories of the flooding because she was no longer living in that area.

> I don't even know if they were even told. They were working on it but I don't know what. They were trying to get some kind of compensation 'cause we have a little graveyard there, too. It's kind of [flooded], like, it's not quite under the water. Like, we have two of our family members buried there, a brother and a sister, and my uncle has one, I think, one grave there. So the Hydro, like, they got a monument made. Something like a big stone, and it says, "In the memory of the children of my mom and dad and the children of Alex and Florence." I didn't see that yet, and it's fenced in. I saw a picture of it, and it's fenced in. We're going to have some kind of a reunion down there, and we're going to get the priest to come and bless us.

Although her memories of Pine Bluff are quite faint now, she remembers her life at The Pas. There were little resources available in those days for a widow with several children in tow, but Bernadette's mother remarried. Her new husband had been in the army and had an army pension which helped out a great deal. Bernadette was able to attend a day school, located right next to the cathedral in The Pas and run by the Roman Catholic Church. Children came from all over to attend school there.

> That's where I used to go to school. It was kind of strict 'cause the sisters were running it. That's when they used to use the strap. I don't ever remember having one [laughs].

Eventually that building was torn down and replaced by a convent for the sisters, but during its heyday, it educated many children, including Bernadette's brothers and sisters, although none beyond Grade Eight. In those days, it was possible to get a good job with less than a high school education. Her brother Frank, for instance, became a conservation officer.

> He was smart...In that day, he knew what he was doing. At first he was a senior trapper, they used to call them, eh? He looked after the other trappers

> around him - counting their catch and that. Then, he ended up working for the government.

Like her brother, Bernadette did not go to high school. In fact, she only went to Grade Six, quitting "because there was too much pressure from my brothers and sisters to baby-sit for them." Bernadette came from a big family.

> My mom had fourteen kids. Seven died, like, right not too far apart, when they were small. I think some were stillborn. There were seven of us for quite a while, and then that brother Frank died in - I think it was in 1987 or '88; I'm not quite sure. He died in Pine Bluff....He went back there. He fished right until the time he died.

Bernadette never went back. After she left school she went to work at The Pas.

> I started working young. I was about twelve, I guess, or thirteen. For my age, I was big. I remember I worked in the restaurant in The Pas there for $1.35 an hour.

She does not remember the first time she went to Winnipeg, but she went a number of times before moving there to live.

> I had a sister living over there. I went to visit her....Her husband was working for, I can't quite remember. I don't know if it was Winnipeg Supply, or something, or Burns I think it was....I...got a job with Consolidated Fruit...packing fruit and vegetables.

It was shift work, but she was treated well there.

> They were good. No problem with them. People were really friendly. The boss was friendly, too. He used to tell us to take home whatever we wanted, like peaches, bananas, things like that. I couldn't eat those for a while after I went home....I couldn't even look at bananas, I was so sick of them, and potatoes and stuff like that.

While she was in the city, she never went out much.

> I just kept to myself. I went to work and come home. I was too scared. I was scared of the city. I was too scared to walk around.

She did not often go home to The Pas, but used to write her family to keep in touch. One day, she received a letter from Joanne, her brother Frank's wife, asking her to come north.

> She must have had about five or six kids. She was pregnant, and she was going to The Pas to have her baby there and that's why they wanted me to come and baby-sit.

Bernadette asked for a leave of absence from Consolidated, and her boss gave it to her, because she had been working there steadily for two years. Then she headed north to the bush country around Cedar Lake and settled in with her brother Frank and his children, the oldest of whom was past ten and the youngest about three. Frank was a C.O. (Conservation Officer) by this time and living out there with his family, so that he could keep an eye on the trappers. "He had to watch the people, like what they do now - poachers and stuff."

While she was there, her boss at Consolidated telephoned her one day to go back to work in Winnipeg, but she never did go. Instead, she started a new life in Grand Rapids with Solomon Ballantyne. As she describes it, "I found a better life." She came in August of 1955, after she and Solomon were married. Solomon, who was from Grand Rapids, had gone out trapping at Cedar Lake. That's where he captured Bernadette's heart.

> He was trapping out there with his family. Like, his mom and dad were out there, too. His dad was trapping not far from that house where we were staying. They stayed in a tent, and we stayed in a house....That's when the romance started - in the bush!...He used to come and visit me. He was right close....so it wasn't far for him to walk.

In those days, anyone could trap, but they had to buy a license from the conservation officer at the village of Cedar Lake. Her brother Frank didn't issue any permits; he lived away from the community, "closer to the marsh."

They were married at Cedar Lake in the home of her sister, Mrs. Walter Hart [now Mrs. Walter Mink of Easterville], whose husband came originally from Norway House. "We had to get married over there....My mom wouldn't let me come to Grand Rapids without getting married. In those days, they were strict, eh? The parents were strict."

After their marriage, Bernadette and Solomon returned to his home at Grand Rapids.

> Well, we came across the lake, up right through the rapids. My father-in-law wanted me to come down right through the rapids....[He] made sure that I stayed in the boat. He wasn't letting me out. Usually you get off three miles from here [Grand Rapids]. There's a portage, eh? People used to walk, but he didn't want me to get off. He wanted me to shoot the rapids, so that's what I did....It was kind of scary because the water was just bubbling all around me, but I didn't show it. I tried to be brave. My father-in-law was chief at that time - Alfred Ballantyne.

Solomon built their first home with the help of a friend, Alex George Daniels. "It was a board, like, a rough lumber board. They had a saw mill here, and they cut the logs and made the boards at the saw mill." This house was built on the same ground where their son Ronnie lives today. They had a wood stove for heating the house and cooking. There was no electricity then. Water came from the river and was good in those days. They also crossed that river for groceries because the Metis side was the only place with a store at that time.

However, they did not live in Grand Rapids all year round. "When we first got married, like, all the people were kind of poor. My husband started trapping." He and Bernadette spent one more winter at the trapline where he had been living when they first met.

> The last time we went to Cedar Lake, I was pregnant with Ronnie. From Cedar Lake, they took me to The Pas, and Ronnie was born in June, so we came back here, and we didn't go back after that. But we went to Nahapawin Bay...towards Easterville, on Cedar Lake....We'd go there every fall and then

come back in the spring....for about four or five years until Ronnie started going to school....Every fall we used to go down that way. We used to trap there all winter and come home for Christmas. Go back in the Spring..

There was me and Solomon, and his mom and dad. There was Marg and Lawrence Sinclair. They were always with us....We had a little house there. They made little cabins...right in the bay....There was everything there. There was trapping...fishing. There was sturgeon, lots of moose, lots of food, rabbits, deer. They had everything there....I remember my father-in-law got [a sturgeon] - must have been ten feet long, oh, about eight feet, I guess....One thing we never had in those days was welfare.

When they would go out trapping in the fall, they often went by boat using an eight or ten horse power motor. In the winter, they would go by dog team and sleigh. Bernadette does not know what kinds of dogs they used, but there were eight or ten of these "sleigh dogs." The men fished on Cedar Lake to provide food for them and for their own use as well. This supplemented the supplies they brought with them from the store at Grand Rapids.

Bernadette still has vivid memories of those times when she and the two oldest children, Ronnie and Marilyn, went along with Solomon. Later, after they had too many children to haul around, she stayed home.

Marilyn and Ronnie are only like a year apart. I remember once we were coming home for Christmas. It was the twenty-third of December. And we went over at Nahapawin Bay, just me and Solomon and the two kids. Everybody else came home. [People like Solomon's mum and dad, Marg and Lawrence Sinclair and their adopted son Bruce, and sometimes Ernest Ballantyne, Marg's brother would go, too.] We were back there. They came a day before us and we were short of everything. No milk for Marilyn, no cereal. The only thing we had was a piece of bannock and some sugar, not even any tea. So next morning we got up and oh, it was just blowing. It was really windy and snowing. So we took off from over there. Solomon made a trail in the front for the dogs with snowshoes. [Solomon got his snowshoes from his dad. People used to make their own snowshoes, so his dad might have made them himself.] I was on the sleigh, like, in the back, and Marilyn

and Ronnie were inside the carry-all [cariole], it was called. Ronnie started to get restless. We stopped over there and I changed Marilyn's diaper [made out of cloth] there by the fire. And that was in December, eh? Solomon held the blanket behind me so the heat would come where I was sitting, and I changed her diaper there. Then we left there and we ate a little bit of that bannock.

Anyway, we left there. We got to Cross Lake. It stopped snowing. Ronnie was getting restless. He was trying to get mad, like he was only about close to two years old. He started to get mad. He wanted to get out. So Solomon took him out of the sleigh and made him stand out there. He [Solomon] said to him, 'If you're going to get mad, walk.' Oh, you could just see him running [laughs]! I could just clearly see his little green pants. He looked so funny. Well, we weren't planning on leaving him, but just to show that he should be satisfied that he was riding. We left that place [Nahapawin Bay] at about eight o'clock in the morning, and we didn't get here until about ten o'clock that night. Oh, it was rough.

But, funny, we weren't hungry, and Marilyn didn't have milk. When we left there, I put boiling water in her bottle with a little bit of sugar. That's all she had all the way. Just that one bottle. But she didn't even cry or anything. And she didn't even finish that bottle when we got here.

I really enjoyed this part of my life.

Solomon was a fisherman as well as a trapper. Fishermen had big wooden boats then, not like the fibreglass boats they have today. The kinds of nets they used were different back then, too. They had a four and a quarter inch mesh. Today Solomon's sons use a three and three-quarter inch mesh.

Besides the change in fishing equipment, Bernadette has seen other changes. For instance, the price of pickerel has gone up considerably since Hydro dammed up the rapids. Pickerel was sixteen cents a pound then; now it is two dollars and fifty cents a pound. The change in pickerel prices really came fast after the dam was built, a project which had devastating consequences for the local fisheries.

Well, after they closed that river up to put the dam there, the fish went down. The water was so dirty. The fish couldn't come around. Like all that stuff come floating down the rapids...fish died.... The fish used to spawn up the rapids here, eh? There used to be lots of fish. Now, there's none. These fishermen here they're just working for nothing, you know....It's a shame because they have CFED that helps the fishermen get their equipment and all that, eh? And some of these fishermen have a license for only one season, so they work that season, say in the summer. Then there's a fall and winter [season], and right up until next spring that thing [loan] adds up interest, and they owe more than when they started fishing.

Of course, Solomon saw it all. When the dam was under construction, he was a young fisherman with a family which eventually grew to include four boys and two girls. Ron was born in 1956, followed by Marilyn, Gail, Brian, Brent, and Bernell. Solomon and Bernadette tried very hard to raise them in a happy home. Although Solomon was an Anglican, Bernadette had been raised in a church-going family that attended the Catholic church in the Pas. They made sure this caused no friction.

That's one thing we never argued about was our religion....A few years back sometimes, I'd go with him to his church, and he'd come with me to mine.

Most of the time, Bernadette took the children with her to church on Sundays. They had to go to the Metis side of the river where the Catholic Church was located. Solomon would drop them all off by boat, all of them except for Marilyn. She went with her dad. She was the only child of Solomon and Bernadette baptised an Anglican. When she was born, the Catholic Church had no priest at Grand Rapids, and didn't have one for maybe two years longer. So Bernadette baptised Marilyn Anglican, and she went to church with her father.

When her youngest child was four years old, Bernadette became chief of the Grand Rapids Band, as far as she knows, the first woman to do so.

Some ladies asked me if I'd run for chief. The chief we had before, he was kind of old. Norman Chief ran against me, but I won. [Solomon] didn't mind at first, but after [he did], when he had to baby-sit, if I had to go on long trips!

> It was a lot of strain being a chief. I don't think it matters who it is; there's a lot of pressure.

She faced no opposition on account of being a woman, (in fact, one of her councillors was a woman, too), and she served as chief for two years from 1972 to 1974. That was long enough in that job, although she served as a councillor for another two.

> I don't think anybody ever criticized. I had a lot of pressure with repairs and all that. There was just so much money to run the reserve. You had to split that money into little pieces for land and water and all that stuff....I'm glad I did it, [and] I learned never to run again! It's really hard. I feel sorry for Harold [current chief] sometimes.

Bernadette considers the road to Gull Bay the major accomplishment during her time as chief. She and Colin McKay, who was the president of the Fisherman's Co-op at the time, got together to work on that project. The provincial and federal governments were willing to help, too.

> They were really happy to do it for the fishermen's group. They felt sorry for them. They had such a long ways to go to where their fishing camp was.

Local fishermen wanted the road built, so that they could have somewhere to launch their boats. It was often too windy, and the waves much too high out on the lake, to travel by boat all the way around to the bay. Two fellows named Harry and Jim were hired to construct this road. They were known in the community, having run the Superior Store Co-op, and they had the big machinery, like bulldozers.

Over the years, Bernadette has seen other changes besides the road to Gull Bay. Sharing and helping one another is no longer as common as it once was. She remembers that people started to come into the community at the time the bridge was under construction. Once the highway was finished, "That's when people got slack. Alcohol spoiled everything." Bernadette herself never drank. She and Solomon just worked hard to make sure that their family was never in any need and that they were on the better path.

Bernadette's children attended school on the Metis side of the river for high school. There was still the reserve school, but it did not go beyond the lower grades.

When they built the school on the Metis side of the river, they got their funds from both the Metis and treaty people on the reserve. The band paid for half the costs to build and construct this building. Bernadette thinks it might have been Norman Chief or Johnny Turner who made this deal.

Although she believes in modern schooling, Bernadette and her husband both worked to ensure that their children spoke Cree as well.

> I used to speak French when I was small. When I get around my sisters and brothers I talk French mixed up with Cree. I kind of lost my French because there was nobody else for me to talk to here. When I got married there was nobody. So that's when I learned to talk Cree. I never talked Cree before that. Me and Solomon would always talk Cree to the kids. So now they know how to talk Cree.
>
> Like the kids now, they don't talk Cree. You try and teach them. They repeat what you say and the next day they forget. You have to talk to them all the time. Like I spoke Cree with all my kids, so they all know how to talk Cree.

Remarkably Bernadette managed to teach her kids to speak Cree when she was just learning herself.

> I used to swear lots when I first started talking. Some people would tell me to say this, and I would just go ahead and say it. They'd play tricks on me. We laughed about it. It was nothing.

She can remember how Solomon would make toys for his kids to play with. He made little boats for his boys, and other things for his girls. He also made toys for his grandchildren.

Solomon was really good. He was a good provider. He was never mad or anything like that. He was always smiling. I know that when people talk about him, they say that he was a really good-natured man. My husband worked on the S.S. *Keenora* before we were married. Then he fished and trapped. He was a bus driver for twenty-two years, and he had the taxi for fifteen years.

Before Solomon died, he wrote a note. I just found that note. He never showed it to me or anything. He made some kind of will giving his stuff to his kids. He must have knew he was going to die. And he put down there he wanted me to sell my taxi business because he didn't want me to get over tired. I just looked through his papers, and that's what I found, a piece of paper.

Solomon passed away last spring (1994). He was diabetic. Bernadette herself is a diabetic and has been for thirty years. Although she refuses to take insulin injections, she does take pills to help control the disease. Bernadette gets her blood sugar checked frequently and manages to somehow keep it at a decent level. Despite her diabetes, Bernadette looks healthy and has lots of energy. She is sixty years old and her children are all grown up now.

One works as a secretary/bookkeeper. That's Marilyn Hall. Then I have Ronnie. He is a counselor and a court communicator. Then I have my daughter Gail in Easterville. She's married there, and she's a school teacher. Her husband's name is Lawrence [Ledoux, from Camperville]. They also have a taxi business. And then Brian, he's a fisherman, and so is Bernell. And Brent, he works out there. There's machinery out there. [He's a] heavy equipment operator.

Bernadette is the proud grandmother of twenty-one children.

I think I only have six that don't live around here. You get lonesome, you know, when you don't see them around. They're always in and out here. Sometimes, I just get sick of them. I tell them to go home. After that, I want them back right away. People are never satisfied.

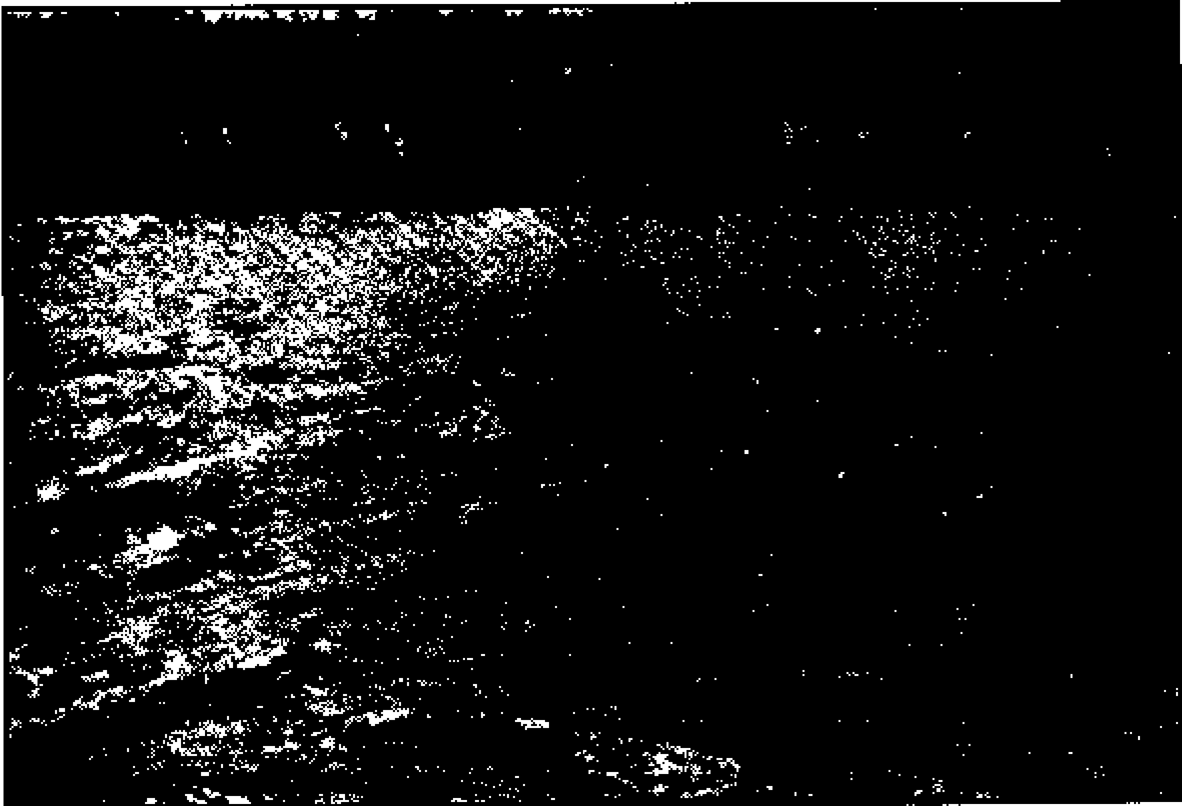
Although she considers herself retired, Bernadette acts as a guard for the R.C.M.P., although she is quitting that job in the near future. Her advice to the youth of Grand Rapids is straightforward.

> To go to school is one thing for sure. To keep out of trouble. That's what I tell my grandchildren. Try and be strong, and don't go after drugs.

As for the revival of Native spirituality, which is being incorporated these days in both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, she is also equally positive

> Getting the old Indian ways back. I wouldn't mind that. I've got nothing against it.

Thoughtful words from a woman who has served her community well. The youth would be wise to listen to her.



The Grand Rapids
(Courtesy Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Betty Calyn

Betty Calyn outside her home at Grand Rapids (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Elizabeth [Betty] Calyn was born 27 September 1927 in Winkler, Manitoba, the eldest daughter of eleven children born to Mennonite parents, Bernard and Lena Hildebrand. She grew up on a farm during the depression, when times were hard and her parents very poor. She remembers once when she had to be hospitalized in Morden for an eye infection. A doctor and nurse came to the farm and took her away in a car, the first time she had ever travelled in one. This was frightening in itself, but she was also only about six or seven years old at the time and didn't know a word of English. Her parents lived just six miles away from Morden, but they were busy and only had a horse and buggy, so it was some time before they came to visit her. Betty recalls how she cried for a long time after they left. Finally, a nurse told her to stop or she would never see her parents again. In Betty's words, "I got under the covers and I tried to hold back the tears."

Betty remembers that the illness delayed her schooling. It wasn't until she was eight that she went with her younger brother to the little school two miles away. She completed Grade Six, but left when she was fourteen because her mother was ill and she was needed at home to look after the younger children. For a time, life looked hopeless for her, and she was often depressed. Then when she was sixteen, her life changed. "I came to know Jesus Christ and He really transformed my whole life...Oh, I was just the happiest person....I came to realize that God had a plan for my life and I prayed about it." Betty came to feel that her mission in life was healing. In spite of opposition, she went back to school. She completed Grade Nine in three months, then went on to complete high school and enter nursing.

After her graduation in 1955, she worked at the Winkler Hospital for two years, then switched to Public Heath and was at Ethelbert from 1957 to 1959. In 1959-1960 she studied Public Health at the University of Manitoba, after which she spent two years at Brandon and two years at Eli, working during the winter and taking university courses in the summer. It was while she was at Eli that she learned of a job in Northern Manitoba, involving nursing services for the communities of Grand Rapids, Moose Lake, and Cedar Lake (Easterville). There was a two-week trial offered, so she went up to The Pas in June 1964 and travelled by plane to see the communities. She took the job and has been in the north ever since.

Betty recalls how hard it was at first. She'd spend a week in each of the three communities of Moose Lake, Cedar Lake, and Grand Rapids, before returning to The Pas for a week. Then the cycle would start all over again. It was very different from nursing in a southern location. She had to do everything without a doctor. There were limited facilities, no running water, and often thirty or forty patients to see at a time, people with sore throats, skin conditions, diabetes, pregnancy, and a host of other health concerns. It was frightening to dispense drugs on her own. She especially felt alone at night when the radio phones weren't working and planes unavailable for emergency cases. Still, although she could not understand Cree, the people trusted her, and somehow she managed.

At Moose Lake, Flora Martin acted as her interpreter and took her to the homes, but at Cedar Lake she had to make her visits alone. In Grand Rapids, the situation

was different. There was a local hospital built by Manitoba Hydro during dam construction, so she did public health work. Betty found it hard commuting from one community to the next, and once in a place she was often on duty for thirty-six hours straight without a break. Pay was the same as in a southern community with a northern allowance of $12.50, no regular hours, no weekends off, no benefits, and no overtime allowed. Finally, after a year of this, she complained. She met with the Minister of Health when he visited The Pas and told him conditions were terrible. Besides suggesting improvements in salaries and living conditions in order to get more nurses in the north, Betty recommended that she be stationed at Grand Rapids.

Manitoba Hydro had closed the hospital with the completion of the dam in 1965, so the provincial government bought and converted a barber shop into a nursing station. It was here Betty set up her nursing station. She continued to be responsible for Moose Lake, and Easterville, a new community built for the people of Cedar Lake when their old home was flooded by the dam. She also had hydro families, now that the hospital was closed. As Betty describes it, "You can imagine a community that was used to a hospital and all of a sudden they just had a nurse and she was in the community only part of the time."

Conditions improved a little, once she was stationed in Grand Rapids, but she still had long hours and little help. Nurse's aides were sent out, but once they had been trained, they often left. The responsibilities were great. Betty delivered many babies, because mothers did not want to go all the way to The Pas with large families at home. The nursing station was administered by Northern Health Services (now Community Health Services), a provincial agency, but was funded in part by Medical Services, a federal agency. Betty explains how this came to be.

> The way I understand, from what people say, a doctor and a nurse...would go to the reserve and more or less go house to house and visit the people to see who was sick....Can you imagine what kind of services came in when a doctor and a nurse would come once in a blue moon?...The non-treaty people said they were more or less left to themselves. They were left to die....And I think because there were so many non-treaty people living in these areas, the provincial government had to get involved. So what happened instead of having a federal station and a provincial station, they more or less combined.

It was often confusing because she had to serve both treaty and non-treaty people.

> I had to differentiate between treaty people, non-treaty people, and those on social services. The treaty paid for the transportation. A treaty number, you could get transportation. And you could have this and you could have that. If you were non-treaty, you couldn't have it, you know, so it was a real mix-up.

After four years, she was exhausted and applied for a transfer. She had everything moved, and there was even a farewell for her, but the people got up a petition and sent it to the department. Before long, two practical nurses arrived, one for Grand Rapids and the other for Easterville. By now, Moose Lake had been transferred to The Pas. With a reduced work load and additional help, Betty decided to stay. Except for when she was out in 1974-1975 to take a Nurse Practitioner Course at the University of Manitoba, she has been here ever since.

Betty has seen a great many changes since she came to Grand Rapids. When she first came here, housing conditions were poor. People did not have running water, and sanitation was a problem. Diseases like impetigo and scabies were common. Houses were heated with wood stoves, hot one moment, cold the next. Children often had ear infections and colds, and infants most often died of vomiting and diarrhea. But Grand Rapids had good mothers.

> I felt their respect. They believed in what I told them. And I looked after their children. But I told them how to give them their medicine and what to do, or else we could not have done it. We didn't have ambulances; we didn't have planes like we do now. And the mothers looked after the babies. And if you look after your baby at home, it gets better. It gets better much faster than in the hospital. And my mothers were very, very good.

Betty advised them to bring their children as soon as they detected a problem, not wait until they had a high fever. They listened to her, and generally looked after their children at home. Betty would send out children, only when all her efforts failed to lower their high temperatures, or when the mothers were sure there was something wrong. In such cases, she relied on the mother's instinct, even though she could find nothing amiss herself. Often, the mother proved right.

The old people were good. They weren't used to many medical services, so they always appreciated any help they received. "And somehow the older people understood my situation far better than anybody else. Because they knew what it was like, and what we were up against. Like to get a plane in here. You know, I'd sit with ten people at the airport, then we'd get word that the plane doesn't fly, and the weather is out."

One thing that changed northern nursing was the telephone. In the early years, Betty recalled receiving visitors late on a cold winter night. They had walked all the way across from the reserve to tell her a woman was in labour. There were no phones at the time. The car had not been driven all the previous day, but it started because it had been plugged in. After they climbed in and set off, they could hear this clunking sound, and one of the men said, "Nurse, you're tire is flat." So they got out and checked to find they had no flat tires, but every one of them was frozen square!

When they got to the other side, there were no lights in the old log house and no fire either. Those were the days before electricity. She took the woman back to the nursing station and delivered her baby there in the reception area. Then she bundled them both up and drove them back home in thirty to forty below zero weather, because she had no room to keep them. The reception area had to be available for other patients.

People had no clocks or calendars in their homes when she first came to Grand Rapids. She had been told that she was to discourage people from coming to the nursing station on Saturday and Sunday, but the people came anyway. People were not so aware of time. Now we are tied to the clock.

There is more English spoken in Grand Rapids now. "I never found that the children expressed themselves very much, but they do more so now. They talk to you. I go anywhere and they talk to me. They ask me questions all the time." Although Betty never learned Cree herself, she never had any trouble communicating. Many of the older ladies of Grand Rapids, like Lydia Sinclair and Christine Beardy, spoke and read English. In Easterville, it was different, but

people there usually brought someone along to translate when they came to the nursing station.

Betty feels the road has made a great difference. She prefers the road to air travel, especially in emergency circumstances. Often with planes, the weather is out, or there is an emergency somewhere else. As for Grand Rapids having its own hospital, she is skeptical because it is so hard to get doctors to locate in rural areas. It disturbs her that they prefer to remain in the city, and can't see why they wouldn't prefer to work in spots like Grand Rapids and Easterville which are such beautiful places. Betty believes both doctors and nurses need to stay in a community for a period of time, so that there is consistency, and people become accustomed to their procedures. In the past, it bothered her, nurses coming and going, so it was refreshing to have Anne Flett come and stay. Anne, a local woman and mother of four at the time, was in New Careers, a programme started by the N.D.P. [New Democratic Party] government, and came to work at the nursing station in about 1973. "She helped me a lot," Betty says, "Whenever she was really really down, I was really up. And whenever I was really really down, she was really up. So, you know, it worked out."

One of the hazards of being a northern nurse is the isolation one may feel. "You can't talk to anybody. In The Pas they don't want to hear about your problems. And there's no nurse and you can't go to somebody in the community to talk about the things that happen in the nursing station...so it was great to have somebody." When she first went to The Pas, Betty heard about people "getting bushed," so she asked her medical director what it meant. He said it happened to people who were up north. You're bushed "Once you start staring at the walls, you don't want to go anywhere, you act very strange, and you don't know what is happening to you." To avoid the problem, Betty would go out every three months to Winnipeg or her home for rest and relaxation. Then she would return to Grand Rapids rejuvenated. Others were not so lucky, and Betty recalled a "crackerjack" nurse from England or Scotland, who committed suicide at The Pas. Things have changed now. Communities are not so isolated, and people are not worked to the point of exhaustion. There is help when people get into trouble.

Betty recalls the changes in diseases over the years. At one time, there were many cases of tuberculosis.

I know that we blame organisms and all that, but poor living conditions have a lot to do with the spread of TB [tuberculosis] and then of course people had to go to sanitariums. They don't do that any more. The treatment has changed so much, but I know a lot of people had only one lung, or had their ribs removed and stuff like that....Sometimes they would have half a lung removed or a part that was infected, but I think [what] the people disliked the most was being taken out of their community and be[ing] put into a sanitarium and just stay[ing] there....Although people didn't like it, I always find that the people that were out in sanitariums, they learned a lot. They were really outspoken.

...But TB patients, oh, they don't like it, and oh, the injections, and the pills and all that. It's a hard routine; it's not easy....I remember the TB van, everybody had to have X-rays. Treaty Day and the TB van was here, and everybody had to have X-rays. Everybody got an X-ray but those who had TB, and they were the ones who were supposed to go! They don't want to go away, and they don't want to be sick.

Pneumonia used to be a problem, especially among infants, but with penicillin it is much less frequent now. Skin infections were also common, but people followed Betty's instructions and got better. Old Gabe Dorion, who lived with his wife near Lover's Point, would say to her, "You hurt me, nurse, but you help me, too." Sometimes that help was no more than reassurance, like the time Gabe's wife Clara came to see her.

They would always go to Moose Lake muskrat hunting, and they used to come back with a thousand muskrats, and Clara would do all the skinning. And then she came to the nursing station and she said, 'Nurse, why is my wrist sore? Why is my hand sore?' I would say, 'Clara, if I had skinned a thousand muskrats, I think my wrist would be sore! Your wrist has a reason to be sore!'

According to Betty, many diseases have come under control because of better sanitation and immunization. Today it is hard to convince people of the need for immunization because they are unaware of diseases such as polio, diphtheria, or lock-jaw. We also have better control of diseases like whooping cough; in the

past, children died of the disease. As for diabetes, Betty is less certain about its cause or cure.

> It's hard to figure out what the cause of it [is]. Maybe it's the change in diet; I don't know. But I know that a lot of people do drink a lot of Pepsi and Coke. I think if we put a sign NO MORE PEPSI AND COKE NORTH OF THE 53RD, we might see a great reduction in diabetes. Because it wasn't unusual for somebody to come in the station and their blood sugar would be high. They didn't know what was wrong with them. I'd say, 'How many Pepsi and Cokes do you drink a day?' Well, seven cans a day. That's a lot of Pepsi and Coke.

Since Betty has nursed in Grand Rapids for so long, it is hardly surprising she has strong views on local health issues. However, she also has opinions on other aspects of life here as well. For instance, she finds the community's approach to death healthier than in places like Winnipeg and elsewhere.

> Children here, they're more aware of death....in the south, you know people never had anything to do with dead people. Some people aren't even allowed to go to the funeral....now we go to undertakers....We don't participate anymore in preparing the dead for burial and stuff like that. But at least here they still have wakes, and people can participate in the healing process of a death.

On the other hand, Betty remembers when locks were a rare sight, and people helped each other more.

> And when you're stuck you go and ask your neighbour to help, too. You share things. We are losing that. We've become so individual. 'This is mine, this is mine.' We don't share like we used to share.

In spite of this quibble, Grand Rapids is her home, and she intends to remain here. Her life has had its challenges, like her marriage to John Calyn, the loss of twins at birth, and the responsibility of paying off debts and mortgages, but Betty is philosophical.

> I guess my faith in God carried me through. He promised when I go to the waters that the river won't over flow me, and that when I go to the fire, the flames won't burn me!

Over the years, Betty has learned about managing a big house and tenants. She has learned about plumbing and electricity, too. When asked why she stays, she says, "I really enjoy it. You know, my tenants are like my family. I have really good tenants. It's an income, and I have a place to live." Even though she is officially retired, she's still nursing. Last year [1994] she worked about half time, because there was a shortage of nurses, but this year, not so much. She also reads, and walks, and studies. Betty speaks High and Low German, and some Ukrainian as well, but three years ago, she added conversational Spanish, so that she could speak with the people of Bolivia and Peru when she travelled there. She also keeps in close contact with her numerous nieces and nephews by letter, telephone, and visits. Last year, she went to Georgia to help baby-sit for relatives involved in a group called Jubilee Partners.

Citing her own educational experience, Betty has a thing or two to say about youth, new ideas, and the shortness of time.

> I've always had to deal with younger people than myself....younger people have so many more ideas than older people. Older People have experience, but young people have new ideas. And children, too, come up with new things. Things that children see, I don't see....I think young people have ideas that are terrific. It's just too bad that life's so short.

Life may be short, but Betty Calyn has packed a great deal of living into it. She has also contributed to the health and well-being of the community of Grand Rapids over many years, years when it was difficult to get nurses to come to the north. For that alone, she has earned a place in its history.

Henry Chartier

Henry Chartier out and about (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Henry Chartier was born 2 February 1926 in Grand Rapids, son of Jonas Chartier and Alice Turner. His sisters were Charlotte (Mrs. Neil Cook), Josephine (Isadore Mercredi), Angelique (Mrs. Dan Cook), and Clara (Mrs. Gabe Dorion). He also had a brother Mac [Maglore].

The Chartier family lived for a while in a log house at Lovers' Point, "where Charlotte had his [her] house." Built by Henry's father, it had a "cottage roof" and was heated with wood. "Of course, there were just coal oil lamps" to provide light.

Henry remembers that home well. He also remembers the one-room school where he started his education in 1932. It was situated where the teachers have their houses now. "It was nice and warm" in the winter, but "not like nowadays you got everything. We had an outside toilet, eh? Now it's different. Waterworks and

everything, eh? I liked going to school when I first started." Since they had no buses at the time, Henry walked every day from their other house, which was where the trailer park is today. It was a different world in those days.

> When I was growing up, I was sleeping seven o'clock at night, not like nowadays, kids, they're walking all night....I got up early, too. Seven o'clock I got up, and when I came down from school I carry wood and water, and after I had supper I went straight to bed. I didn't [go] running around, not like nowadays, the kids...about this high [indicates height of a ten-year old]

Parents were strict in those days, and rules were enforced.

> Even when I went to school, if I fight, sometimes I fight boys, and my sister would tell on me. And then when I got home, I got spanked...with a willow, too. You wouldn't do that [again]. You would do that once.

Perhaps that is why the community was so quiet and peaceful.

> This place long time ago, you can leave your things in here. Nobody will bother. They won't touch it all summer. You can leave your things. And now if you leave out things for five minutes, somebody will steal it....When you going some place to go and visit, you just tie the doors, eh? They tied it; they didn't lock it. Nobody even steal anything. Not like now.

There was very little crime. Henry recalls one incident where a local man altered a cheque and defrauded Baldy Cook of some money. A mountie came from Norway House, arrested him, and he spent three years in jail at Portage la Prairie for his misdeed. Another time four men went to jail for drinking home brew on the reserve. The laws were very strict. Although he did not see it himself, Henry recalls that there were curfews on the reserve in the old days. Visitors had to leave before 9:00 p.m.. The chief and counsellors enforced the rules there. On the non-treaty side, there was little government. The Local Government District was not established until after the road came.

Grand Rapids was a much smaller community then, and lacked facilities, like hospitals, we take for granted today. As a result, people had to rely on themselves to a greater degree.

> I used to get sick, but nobody ever went away to The Pas, if you got sick. They gave you medicine. They used Indian medicine, eh? Indian medicines. They have everything, like, you know, if you have a heart trouble, they have medicine for that. Nobody ever went to The Pas. Well, some people, I guess. Not very many, though, used to go to the Pas. They cured you right here in Grand Rapids.

There were other differences, too. Henry remembers going to dig Seneca Root with his family when he was a boy.

> In June before we get out from school, we used [to] come in the bush and dig the Seneca Root, and it's only ten cents a pound them days....Saturday we walked all day to dig and then in the evening....Mrs. Campbell bought it....Nowadays, they're about $6.50 per pound, and nobody wants to dig it.

Prices were generally lower for everything in the past.

> They didn't pay very much [for] fish them days. Five cents a pound, that's all they pay, five cents a pound. Now, pickeral, they getting over a dollar, eh?, but I guess, it comes to the same thing. Everything is high, eh? Groceries and everything. Them days everything was cheap. You can buy a pair of runners for fifty cents, and cigarettes ten cents. Ten cigarettes. Some tobacco, five cents.

People worked hard to survive in those times, and children had plenty of chores then, too. On Saturdays, for instance, Henry recalls his dad "used to go and cut wood, and I used to haul the wood" using a dog sled. Still, there was some time for play, and Henry did go sliding occasionally, but never at night. He also tried skating, but only once. The children used to skate in a bay at Lovers' Point, before the dam was built, and the ice was smooth and shiny, a great enticement to a ten year old, who had never skated before. So Henry decided to try, with disastrous results. "I put skates on once....I broke my nose and I never put skates on again."

As a boy, Henry attended wedding dances with his parents.

> But you stay with your parents. You didn't play outside either...not like now. All the kids they playing right in the middle of the floor when they're dancing....Them days, you had to stay right there with them [parents]. They won't let you to go outside.

There were times when one of the parents would stay home with the children, while the other went off to a dance.

> Nowadays, the parents don't look after the kids, eh? Like you know, they leave their kids. Kids running around all over. A long time ago, it wasn't like that. Sure your parents went to the dance, but you stay home, too. My mother and my sister would go to the dance. My dad would stay with us. It's the only time we go to the dance when there was a wedding. New Year's, too, sometimes we go to the dance.

If he didn't always attend the dances, Henry did attend church.

> We used to go to [the Anglican] church every Sunday with my mom, because them days, the [Catholic] priest never came, maybe once or twice a year, I guess, to Grand Rapids from Norway House. But...I used to go to the Anglican Church anyway with my mom. They had a minister.

Henry remembers attending Christmas concerts and participating in them. One time he sang a solo "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem."

> One thing, I done that....I was shy when I was going, you know. If you were looking at me like that, I was going down like this [puts his head down], and I still sing that song.

Henry may have been shy when singing, but he wasn't shy about work. Sometimes he worked just to have fun.

Johnny Lucas, he used to buy fish here. They used to use the trucks from Swan River, about three ton, two ton....Well, them days, I went and looked at it when I first saw that truck. All the kids. And we used to go and meet them. One time me and Bunny, and Sam, and Dicky and Raymond McKay, I guess this was Sunday, too, and we knew that truck supposed to be in that day. We used to walk to Cross Lake. Cross Lake, eh? They used to call it Nine Mile Portage, nine miles from Grand Rapids. We met the truck there. We walked nine miles, and they give us a ride anyway. That's a long way to walk, just for a ride....They put us in the caboose. Behind, eh? They lock us up in there. It was dark inside. I don't know why we done that.

Young men often don't know why they do things, but in those days they generally knew why they quit school. It was so they could go out and earn a living. Henry left when he was thirteen, at the time his mother died.

I was out working when I was fourteen years old when I first left home...That's the last time my dad gave me clothes...The first job I had, when I was working in that, uh, Mantag[ao] River south of Dauphin River...A bunch of logs in there along the shore and we put them in a - get them in the water - in a boom, eh? And, they had a boat there, pulled them logs there all the way to Mantag[ao] River.....We got only a dollar a day...and we worked till six o'clock from early in the morning....There was about seventeen of us from Grand Rapids....Sam [Chartier] was there, too. He was young...and Howard Ballantyne, and Frigson McKay, Bunny [Boniface] Packo, Gabe Dorion, my brother-in-law, and Isador Mercredi, and Baptiste Atkinson, and...Ernest Ballantyne, John George Cook and Sidley Turner and Sam Easter. There were seventeen of us from Grand Rapids working there.

We didn't stay very long. We stayed about a month and then we came back. Something happened there. That foreman got mad and then everybody quit...like me and Gabe and Ernest and Sam and Howard and Gordon Flett came back. They lend us a skiff at Dauphin River...not a yawl. It's not like a canoe. They made it with wood, but I can tell you the way they used to call it in Cree....They called it *mis-chig-o-chee-man-is* in Cree.

We row all the way. Some of them went to MacBeth [Point]...some of them went to Black Bear Island. When I got back here, [I] started work for Campbell's, start work for them...That tramway they used to haul cordwood. We used [to] haul cordwood to the dock, eh? The *Keenora* used to burn cordwood....That's a steamer, eh?...They burnt wood all these boats....And winter time I used to fish for them, like working, fishing...I don't know how many years, quite a few years I worked for them. That's the only time I didn't work for them, when I go summer fishing at the landing. That's only two months. Pretty well worked for them the year round, eh?...When Francis drowned, that boy drowned, Francis Campbell....He drowned in the Saskatchewan River about fifteen miles from this side of The Pas. They call it, I don't know, past Wooden Tent there. That's where he drowned....One winter I worked for them after that, but then I went out.

Henry left the community and went south to work.

I was working at Pine Falls cutting pulp...I was there about three winters at Pine Falls, and Seven Sister Falls, and Great Falls. And I was working on the rails, too. I was working in Agnes, Ontario, and then we moved from there to Gladstone [Manitoba]. After you finished at one place, they moved you to another place.

When I was working in Pine Falls, they were paying $6.50 for a cord [of spruce], and they pay Jack Pine, $5.50.

The men used the Swede saw to cut the wood; chain saws weren't available at the time. They would be assigned a strip of forest, cut down the trees, and pile the logs at the site, "not like nowadays, they got skidders. Them days, everything by hand. No machines [laughs]."

When Henry returned to Grand Rapids, he resumed fishing, an occupation which has seen many changes over the years.

When I first start fishing, we used dogs, eh?...And then we start using - some of the fishermen - start using horses, eh?...When I first start fishing, we were staying in a tent out in the lake...That's about twenty miles out....We use hay to

lay down there inside...That's our floor...We sleep in there...sometimes three nights.

Henry recalls that years ago most of the fishermen came from the south, although there were a few from Grand Rapids. Once the fish were caught, teamsters from the south used horses to haul them to various destinations.

They used to go and get them there with the horses, just pack them [the fish] in a box and cover them with covers, eh, and nail them....They used to use a hundred pound box that time, big box, a hundred pounds....When I was a kid, when I was still going to school, the horses they used to come from Mafeking. To come and fish here, eh?....They're big outfits I'm talking about. And sometimes they haul to Riverton from Eagle Island...different freighters. You see, these guys were from Winnipegosis, too. They used to haul to Winnipegosis and sometimes to Mafeking. They used to come and get fish from Riverton, too. They used to go to Eagle Island to get fish, and they used to haul at least a hundred boxes to a load. A team of horses....They had a heavy load. They pile them boxes about four high. They'd be about a hundred boxes to a team. They used to have...at least twelve teams anyway.

I guess nobody will believe me, but I seen it. In them days, they didn't pay much either. Even a married man, a married man with a kid, they was working for fifteen dollars a day. Some of them thirty dollars maybe....That's not very much, eh? But stuff was cheap. If you take about five dollars worth of stuff, you can't carry it, not like now, if you take about fifty dollars, you can carry everything, eh?

Henry cannot remember all the details of fishing in those days, but most of the fishermen came from other places, perhaps fishing for big companies. The freighters contracted to haul the fish elsewhere to be sold. No fish were sold locally at that time, until Mrs. Campbell and John Simpson started to buy them. This probably happened, because more local people started to fish.

If I'm not mistaken, I think Solomon Cook used to fish for himself...but I don't remember, like not very long ago when they start, these guys from here.. I remember anyway...they start fishing for themselves [to sell] here.....If I

remember, when they start summer fishing, they only get, one fisherman only, twenty-five hundred pounds that's all....I don't know which year, but I'll tell you. When I first start fishing on a gas boat; that's 1944. They must start summer fishing around '42 [1942].

Winter fishing, not very much limit either, fifty thousand pounds....That's not very much for all the fishermen. That's all they allowed, fifty thousand for the year in this lake....Now they're getting, each fisherman get about six thousand in the summer and eighty-four hundred in the fall, I think, if I'm not mistaken, and seventeen thousand, I think, in the winter.

Henry fished for many years, and it involved him in adventure from time to time - like shooting the rapids. He describes the experience.

Where you first started there, about half way there, [it was] rough. After you get through that, about half ways, and then from there it was smooth like, eh? But where you first started...the water just boiling, you know. It was rough. I used to shoot the rapids lots of times. But I went once with a guy with a twenty-five [horse power motor] to go up. It took us about forty-five minutes. We went up, but it took us forty-five minutes.

Henry also remembers sturgeon fishing.

We used [to fish for sturgeon] when I was working for Baldy [Cook]. We set a net at [the] south [end of] Cross Lake. They used to get sturgeon there. There used to be trout in this lake, too, but now they disappeared some place or dying out, I don't know.

The sturgeon was big then.

It was about fifty pounds. One time we got one, and it was about fifty pounds [and] probably about four feet [long]. Some of them, they're bigger.

Henry worked on the gas boats for a long time.

When I [was] first working on a gas boat, I was working for Baldy, my brother-in-law, and Saul [Turner] was with us and George Ballantyne. The first time I was on a boat, about sixteen years old, I guess, that time. Since [then], I've been working on them boats twenty years. On the gas boat. Same place, too, at the Landing [Warrens Landing] every summer. That's about twenty-five miles south of Norway House...on the Nelson River....I missed about two summers, but I was there twenty years. I was there, in Lake Winnipegosis, three summers.

It was during the years he was working at the Landing that Henry learned to drive.

After fishing I used to go work in the farm there [at Arnes] at that old man [Ole Einarson]. I used to work for them. I used to drive his truck, eh?...Just [around there]. But I didn't have no license, till I had my first vehicle. Just in the yard there, I used to drive...I got my license about fourteen years [ago]. I tried it about three times before I get my license....but it was slippery that time, too. I don't know why, but at the school yard there, I was slowed down, and that guy told me, 'You shouldn't slow down,' he says, 'You should have the same speed, fifty kilometres per hour.' That's what he told me.

Getting a license was a real accomplishment for someone whose first experiences were with dogs and horses. It proved that Henry kept up with the times, a fact that can surprise the tourist, who naively think Native people still live in teepees or wigwams and make their living by hunting. Henry has hardly hunted at all.

I didn't do much hunting...because I was out working all the time, but I kill one moose, one deer, and one caribou. That's all....But I used to like trapping in the spring time, muskrats. In the fall like, I didn't trap because I was working all the time. I didn't do much of that.

Although he did little hunting and trapping, Henry remembers how much work it was.

I remember I used to go with my dad and my brother Mac trapping in the spring, and they, them days, they didn't wear waders either. They didn't make waders yet them days. You used to go...in the water like that, with all your

clothes on [for musrat and beaver]....It was hard....Nobody will do that nowadays, to go and trap without waders. Nobody will believe it, but I seen this.

Nowadays, these guys, they don't know what work is....And I never seen a guy to say I'm tired. Nowadays, even when they don't do the work, still they say, I'm tired....Me, I never say that yet. I'm sixty-nine years old. I guess my wife can tell you I never say that. And then these guys...they say all the time, they're tired. Standing around and doing nothing, I might as well say....I've seen that. When I work some place...I don't go and hide. But some of them guys, they don't show up till dinner time....'If I was you guys,' I told them lots of times, 'I would be ashamed of myself. To do that, I'd go hide in the bush.'

When asked why there has been a change in people's attitude toward work, Henry has an answer.

Because there were no unions them days. Now if something [is] wrong...these guys, right away, union. That's why - union and welfare. That spoiled the men nowadays.

Henry certainly knows what work is. He has done all kinds of different jobs. Besides pulp cutting and fishing already mentioned, he also worked on construction.

One time I was looking for a job in Winnipeg, and then I went to Thompson. They told me they're gonna send me to school. 'I don't like going to school,' I told them, 'I quit school. I'm not going to start it again.' And then I went to The Pas to get a job. I was working for Comstock.

This was a labouring job, just the kind of work Henry liked.

That's...jobs I like, construction...You know, I was doing labour work all the time. All the place I go...but one thing, all these place I've been working since...I was fourteen...I never got fired once. I quit a few jobs, but not very many. I never got fired.

Besides jobs in construction, Henry did a variety of jobs on the hydroelectric projects: janitor in the power house at Grand Rapids, first a labourer, then a carpenter's helper at Kelsey, and janitor in the bunkhouse at Jenpeg. He also worked as a custodian at Hydro for ten years before his retirement. He's seen plenty of changes as the result of dam construction.

> It changed a lot anyway...It spoiled lots of land, too. Everything...used to be nice before, and now you don't see nothing but logs on the shore piled up....When they start building that dam, they close this lake [to commercial fishing].
>
> [Cross Lake] was narrow, eh? Oh, about thirty miles long, I guess, but it was narrow, the biggest part about four miles or five miles. That's the biggest part south. It wasn't deep....There was lots of fish here. Like you can see the stones on the bottom. It was clear....There's about sixty feet of water in there now....It used to be [a] shallow lake. These islands you see them. They used to be mainland before. Them islands [that] used to be in this lake there [are] under water. You can see them yet, you know. There's that one island is sticking out. It's a high rock. It's sticking out a little bit, that one. But the other one, it's under water, but you can see it. You can see the stones.

Now that he is retired, Henry has plenty of time to think of the past and the changes that have occurred in Grand Rapids over the years. Although asthma prevents much activity during the winter, he has gone back to gathering Seneca Root during the summer, a job he did as a boy.

> I started last summer, working - well, something to do, eh? When we were kids, we used to go out and dig Seneca Root, my Uncle Jacob and all his family. Louise and Johnny, they used to go....You know, we used to camp here at Foot Print Lake, walk all the way from Grand Rapids and dig Seneca Root. It's not far. We used to leave our boat at Sandy Beach there. We used to leave our boats. Maybe we walk about an hour and a half, I guess. About an hour and a half. It's not far.
>
> There's not only us. There's lots of guys. They used to come and dig root.....There's quite a few digging in that place. You gotta do them things,

eh?...There was no fishing in them days, and they didn't start summer fishing yet them days.

When he is not out looking for Seneca Root, Henry occasionally goes fishing. He even went out hunting last fall and saw a couple of moose, but they were too far away to allow him or his fellow hunters to get a shot at them. It really didn't matter, as Henry no longer has to worry about putting meat on the table. It's simply a diversion for one of Grand Rapids' oldtimers, a man who always tries to keep himself occupied doing something.

A view of Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River
(Courtesy of Manitoba Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Edith Chartier

Edith Chartier relaxing in her home (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Edith Chartier was born on December 23, 1937 in Swan River, Manitoba, the daughter of Olaf Alrust and Esther Whitney. Her father came to Canada as a young man from Norway and farmed at Swan River where he met and married Esther. They had two children. A son Robert currently lives at Dauphin, where his eighty-two year old mother, now Mrs. Howard Sherwood, also resides. Olaf spent his last years in Penticton, British Columbia.

As a child, Edith lived for a time at a place about half way between Sherridon and Cold Lake, Manitoba. Her parents moved there during the war when she was five years old. Her father worked at the mine in Sherridon, while her mother stayed home and looked after her family. Esther remembers grocery shopping.

> We either got...groceries at Cold Lake or in Sherridon. That was about a half a mile either way....We didn't have a car....My mom used to take a taxi sometimes or walk to the store. I remember when I was small. That's when the war was on, I guess. But she had rations, like for sugar, and she had those cards, eh? She had to use them at the store to get sugar and butter...I think coffee and tea, too.

Edith enjoyed her stay at Sherridon. She amused herself sliding, playing on the lake, making rafts, and playing baseball with other children. Once she got spanked for going out on the lake with a raft, when she didn't know how to swim. During the summers, she travelled south to Swan River and visited with her mother's sister, Mildred Clyde.

Edith started school in Cold Lake when she was six years old. She recalls it was a one room school house with one teacher. There were about twenty other children in that room between the ages of five and fourteen years. They sat at double desks and were taught subjects like arithmetic, history, and spelling, Edith's favourite subject. Once the children completed Grade Seven or Eight, they moved on to The Pas for further schooling. Edith remembers the Christmas concerts. The children sang carols and participated in plays. She was a shepherd one year and an angel another year, when they acted out the birth of Jesus. Edith enjoyed living in the north. It was difficult for her when they moved.

Her family moved to Dauphin when she was ten years old. Shortly after this move, her parents separated. Her father and brother left for British Columbia, and Edith stayed with her mother. During this time her mother became sick with tuberculosis and had to go to a sanitarium at Ninette, spending two years there all together. In the meantime, Edith stayed with her Aunt Mildred in Dauphin. She went to the Public School there up until she was fifteen and in Grade Seven. She had difficulty in school because she didn't attend much while her mother was away.

When she was sixteen, Edith gave up schooling and went to work as a nurse's aide at the Dauphin hospital, where she remained for about a year. Then one day, she happened to came across an ad in the paper asking for help up north. Since she was anxious for a change, she applied and got the job at the sanitarium at

Clearwater Lake. Just seventeen, she felt nervous about making the move, but she liked the north so much that not knowing anyone didn't bother her. She travelled by bus to The Pas, and then took a taxi out to Clearwater Lake.

Edith enjoyed the work as a nurse's aide there. She recalls most patients were of Native and Inuit ancestry, and they were flown in by plane. There were three doctors on staff and several other workers. Edith has no fear of contacting TB due to her experiences with her mother's illness. As a staff member she was given regular check-ups. They were given x-rays and shots as a means of prevention.

Edith worked at the sanitarium for three years. It was here she met Rose and Nellie Sinclair and in July 1960 she travelled with Rose to Grand Rapids to attend Nellie's wedding. They flew by plane from Clearwater Lake, arriving at Grand Rapids around 7:00 p.m. Edith remembers seeing the river and houses along side of it, from the plane. She felt kind of nervous and she didn't know what to expect on her trip. Still, her impressions were positive. "I liked it. [The homes] were neat and everything."

At first Edith stayed with Rose and her parents. She helped Rose's mom out at the house. She did things like cleaning, scrubbing floors, and washing clothes. Edith remembers having a twelve o'clock curfew. If they stayed out late, somebody made sure they were up early the next morning!

Edith recalls going to square dances, attending church on Sundays, and visiting. It was at this time she started dating Hughie Cook. They got married the following summer in May 1961 and had three children, Jerry, Kim, and Dwayne. They lived in a house close to the school. Hughie did a variety of jobs, like packing fish, and worked as a labourer for Hydro for five years. On and off, for more than ten years, Edith worked out of her home, doing the books for the Fisherman's Co-op. She also did some work at the Gulf Restaurant. Around 1972 or 1973, Edith took an up-grading course at the reserve band hall and received a Grade Ten certificate. She said it was hard, but was happy to have completed it.

When she first came to Grand Rapids, Edith hadn't realized that she was about to see the community change so dramatically. At that time, it had no roads connecting it to the south. There were a few people living in log homes. "Dora

Buck...used to have that log house, and Eleanor Lavallee had a log house." There were no cars yet. There were a few dog teams, but Edith doesn't remember seeing them in use. She recalls Dan Turner still had a couple of horses, which he used for hauling wood. Hydro had just started building the dam. Once the road was built, more people started coming, so that Grand Rapids was no longer the quiet community it once was. There was plenty of work at that time. Before long, there was power and phone service available to the homes. Grand Rapids was a nice community, and Edith liked it. She felt welcomed. The thing she liked the most about Grand Rapids was how close the people were and how they helped each other out. She feels it is still like that today in spite of all the changes she has seen.

Edith has experienced other changes, too, of a more personal nature. She lost Hughie in 1981 because of complications related to diabetes, a disease he contracted a couple of years after their marriage, and one which also contributed to his own mother's death. Two years later, 18 July 1983, she married Henry Chartier, who is from Grand Rapids like her first husband. Edith has seen many changes in her children, too. They are all grown up now. Jerry works for the fish hatchery at Grand Rapids. He is married to Geraldine Mercredi and has five children. Kim, who is a teacher, married Andy Hutchinson, and they have three children. Kim teaches at Skownan, her husband at Waterhen. Dwayne, Edith's youngest child, is the butcher at the Co-op Store in Grand Rapids.

Now retired, Edith and Henry spend their summers out at their cabin. Situated in a natural setting above Cross Lake, and commanding a splendid view of the waters below, the cabin provides them with peace and quiet, occasionally punctuated on summer evenings by the wistful call of a loon or the laughter of grandchildren come to visit. Such a place captures the essence of all that is attractive about northern living. It also stands as proof that Edith was wise indeed to have made the decision as a young woman to return to the north she loved so much. It is hard to imagine her having any regrets at all.

Rosalie Desjarlais

Rosalie Desjarlais, school counsellor (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Rosalie Desjarlais was born 8 March 1941, the daughter of Stanley Sinclair of Grand Rapids and Lydia Queskekapow of Norway House. She has five living brothers and sisters, Hubert, Nellie (Morriseau), Norman, Donald, and Barbara (Shoomski). Several more died, six as babies, and Fred when he was seven years old.

The Sinclairs came originally from Stanley Mission where the Rev. John Sinclair was a missionary for the Anglican Church. He later did the same work at Cedar Lake, where he died in 1897. Catherine, his wife, was related to the Atkinsons, and that may explain why some of the children settled at Grand Rapids. Son Fred Sinclair was Rosalie's grandfather, and his wife Barbara McLeod was the midwife who brought Rosalie into the world.

Besides Stanley, Fred and Barbara Sinclair had other children, too. Rosalie remembers them well.

> My Aunt Catherine was married to Arthur McKay....[She was] a quiet woman, very involved with the Anglican church. She went to church every Sunday. She had a big garden, and she always did her canning. She'd can her vegetables, berries. She always had homemade bread.
>
> Sarah Sinclair was my other aunt. She was a hard worker, a very kind lady. She would go out and cook at camps....There was this big tent, and she cooked for the diamond drillers for Hydro, all these men. It was when the rapids was still there. I remember staying with her there, too, in the summer time. She was a good cook....She was a single parent. She took this little boy with her wherever she went. She went across the lake, across Lake Winnipeg to fish camps. Her son is here, Esau Sinclair. She raised this kid all on her own....She had cows. She milked them...just for her family....She had the machines to make cream....She was the only one who had the machine, a cream separator....She had all that. She had horses...at least two...[and] chickens....They were white, big ones....She always had dogs, [too].
>
> Eleanor Lavallee, married name, [was another aunt]. And that one was very quiet, kind of a loner, but her and my dad were very close. She was also a church goer. My whole family were church goers. Every Sunday they would go to church. She raised two boys because her and her husband split up. She raised these two boys. One lives here, and the other lives in Winnipeg. She just passed away a couple of years ago, but that is the one that spent a lot of time with my dad.
>
> One [other aunt] died earlier. She was twenty one. I think she died of TB. It killed a lot of people.
>
> My Uncle Lawrence is still alive. He's in The Pas. I think that one, too, was kind of a loner. He never went anywhere....If he went to church, it was Christmas or something like that. He's a trapper, likes to have a drink. He used to play the violin....I never really knew my Uncle Lawrence that good until later on, 'cause he was always - he hardly never went anywhere - never

visited. The only time we saw him was when we went to visit him....He had a wife, and he adopted two kids, a boy and a girl. He's eighty-seven.

My dad was a quiet man, but you could joke around [and he was] a good story teller. He was always working at the church.

Rosalie knows little of her mother's family, the Queskekapows of Norway House. Lydia lost both her parents when she was a child. First her father died; then her mother remarried and shortly thereafter died, too. Orphaned, Lydia ended up at the residential school in Norway House. Rosalie's father Stanley probably met her when he was on a fishing trip up to Warren's Landing. After they married, they travelled to Grand Rapids by dog team.

Rosalie was born and raised at Grand Rapids. She grew up on the Metis side of the river around the Sinclair Estate, which was located along the river upstream from the school. Sinclairs still occupy that location.

Rosalie has many memories of her childhood. She can remember her parents' first home. It was a one-story log house consisting of three bedrooms, one long room, a living room, and a kitchen. It was built by her father, but people came from all over the community to help him. Rose thinks that Dolphus Ducharme would have been one of these men, because he was always helping people build their houses at the time. People got along well in those days. They shared, too. If a moose was killed, it was divided up and distributed to the community, each family getting a piece.

Families did things together. Rosalie remembers that her family ate together, three meals a day, around a big, long table. Rose's mom and dad sat at each end, and the children at the sides. She remembers that her brother Hubert would always sit by her sister Nellie. He liked to tease her.

The family worked together, too. As a child and a young teenager, Rose had many chores to do. She did the dishes, made the beds before heading off to school, and carried water from the river. Sometimes in the winter when her dad and brothers were away from home, either fishing or trapping, the girls had to go down and

make holes in the ice to get that water. They also had to chop wood, so that they could cook meals and heat the house.

Rosalie never heard her parents argue. Many years later she asked her mother how they were ever able to do this. Her mother replied that they waited for the children to go to sleep; then, they would whisper to each other. It seems that important matters were left to a time when differing ideas could be aired without the risk of having the children see their parents disagree.

The family had a big garden with "potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, beets, and rhubarb." Her mother used to can rhubarb, and they stored their carrots and potatoes in a cellar under their house. Rosalie remembers berry-picking, too.

> Sometimes we'd go to Eating Point Creek, that point way out on the lake. We'd walk there with my aunt and pick cranberries. We'd walk, and it would be in the spring, and it would be a little ice along the shore. We'd walk along the shore, and we'd go to pick berries. We'd go all day. Or sometimes we'd pick strawberries in June or July....I remember strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, saskatoons, and chokecherries. We make jelly out of chokecherries and preserves for strawberries and raspberries.

People still pick berries, but they are more likely to freeze than can them. People still collect Seneca Root, too, just as her family did when she was young. They used to dig the root with a shovel and hoe.

> [I remember] camping out with my mom and dad. When we were small, we would be anywhere. Before Hydro, it was all bush. There was a lot of it.

Her family used to smoke all kinds of fish, and there is still a smoke house on the Sinclair place. Rosalie thinks her brother Hubert still uses it.

Rosalie's father was a winter trapper, so he was gone a good deal during that season. Her brothers generally accompanied him to help, but Rosalie recalls one time when the whole family went.

> When we were small, we went trapping. My dad went trapping and we went on this, they called it a 'tractor train,' and we left here....It was a [caterpillar] tractor that pulled this caboose and we all stayed in there....It took you to the trapline and dropped everyone off at certain spots....We went out on the lake, and we ended up half way to The Pas....We didn't all stay in one spot. Where we stayed maybe [there were] four families, but some went further up towards The Pas....My mom and dad took enough grub to last us, but [we'd] eat ducks and muskrat [as well]. We left in March, I think it was. It was in the winter time anyway, and we didn't come back until Spring. We were there all winter...somewhere on the river, Saskatchewan River, to trap muskrats...maybe three months we were there. There was other people camped with us in tents. Then we came back by boat. I will always remember that trip because it was so beautiful there. When we took this trip I must have been around seven.

Every year when the trappers went out, the tractor trains would take their supplies and carry the canoes on top of the caboose, because they were used in the spring when they came back to Grand Rapids. Her father and brothers went trapping for many years.

Back in Grand Rapids, Rosalie loved to go sliding in winter. She remembers how much fun they had racing down Campbell's Hill. That was when the river used to freeze over, so they could glide right across the ice. Now it doesn't freeze at all.

She can still picture how they just used to walk onto the frozen river and go across to the reserve. They didn't have a bridge or a road to get anywhere, so the river was what people used at that time to get around.

> I remember going to Laura Guiboche's wedding. I don't know how old I was. The river was open here then from the rapids up to where the bridge is now, so we had to walk all the way. I was with my mom and dad. We were pulling a sleigh. There was Nellie and I; Barb and Donald were on the sleigh...Beardy's Point, we had to cross by, I guess where those boats, where that landing is right now...at Trailer Park, and we had to walk all the way to Turners, just to go to that wedding. We had to come back again at night, and there's open water here.

Rose didn't find this experience frightening at all. She was with her parents, so she felt safe. She trusted that they wouldn't let anything happen to her or their other children.

The wedding was typical of the time. Laura wore a white dress, probably made by some lady in the community, and Larry, the groom, wore a suit. The wedding took place at St. John's Anglican Church, located on the reserve, and afterwards they had a big feast and dance at Laura's parents' home. In those days, whenever somebody went to a wedding celebration, they took their whole family with them. The children even had a chance to dance, too. There was no drinking; everyone just had a good time dancing. Rosalie recalls how she and the other children used to sit and watch their parents dance. Square dancing-was very popular then.

Everyone used to go to church each Sunday. Rev. Donaghy was the minister of the Anglican Church, to which the Sinclairs belonged. As Rosalie recalls, he was a "very gentle man, such a gentle man." Rose's dad was church warden. He used to go each Sunday morning and make the fires to heat the church up in time for morning services. Sometimes her brothers would go with him and help get logs. He also lit the lanterns, too, when occasion demanded it, as they had no electricity at that time. Sunday was an important day in the life of the community, and most people prepared carefully for it.

> Sunday was a very special day in our family. Saturday my mom did all the baking. We couldn't eat whatever she baked, like pies and bread we couldn't eat, 'cause that was for Sunday. So we'd go home after church, and we'd have a big meal, and then we'd visit. Like someone would come and visit my mom and dad, or they go and visit...Lena and John here, or whoever lived next, like those Sinclairs that lived next door to us. And [the] Ferlands, like Johnny and Mary, or Sheila and Bill, Florence McKay on this side. So we were visiting.

Rosalie remembers how much fun it was at Christmas time, how they used to go to church on Christmas Eve, how they took their stockings and hung them up in each one of their relative's houses. There were four families in the area.

> We would go and hang up our stockings in every house, and we'd run around in the morning and just go pick up our stockings. We'd always have

> something, but it wasn't big. It would be maybe one little toy and candy, you know. But it was – like you were so excited....It meant so much, eh?, to go and find it, you know, to go and look in your stocking....My family still does it. My kids they go and hang up their stockings at Shirley's....There's always a stocking at my house. All my grandchildren; there's a stocking that they come and hang them.

At Christmas, there was also a Santa. He would come to the school concert, which was an evening of plays and singing held on the reserve. Rosalie recalls one teacher, Mrs. Donaghy, preparing the children to perform. This lady was the wife of the minister. She was also Rosalie's godmother and a good person, just like her husband. They had a son Frank, who learned how to speak Cree as a boy because his parents stayed at Grand Rapids so long. Mrs. Donaghy taught on the reserve for a number of years.

Christmas concerts were a highlight of the school year, and the arrival of Santa was anticipated with great excitement by all the children. Rosalie recalls a typical Christmas concert.

> It was really neat. They would have this concert, and all of a sudden somebody would deliver a little note to the principal, like to the teacher. There was only one teacher. He would read it out, and he would say, 'I've got a letter from Santa; he's just leaving the North Pole.' Then, next time, all of a sudden, he would get another one. 'Oh,' he says, 'He's over in Churchill.' Then all of a sudden, he's in The Pas, all of a sudden, he's—Oh, he's just coming over the rapids, and all of a sudden he's flying around the community....We would get so excited because Santa was going to be at this thing, you know, at the concert. All of a sudden, you would hear the bells, and this Santa would run in there...all dressed up. And then he'd give out gifts, to all the kids, even if you weren't from the school, you got a gift. Then after that was all over, they would have a dance. The whole community would be there dancing. Oh, it used to be nice. I wish we could go back to that, eh?.

The New Year celebrations were also exciting.

> New Year's Day we all went around. We had our bags, and we went to every house in the community, the whole community, and we got a cookie at every house we went to. And we'd just cross the river. We'd go down to McKays. They lived by where the hatchery is. We had an aunt and uncle lived there. Then, we'd come from there, and we'd go across the river, go start by Turners that time, and we'd go all the way to Beardys, then to Sinclairs across the river.

Sometimes they would meet up with other children on the river; then, together they would all go house to house. It was great fun for everyone. Rose also remembers the special events surrounding Lent and Easter.

> Another thing we celebrated was Lent....You had to give up something...for that whole forty days....I don't know what they would give up, but I remember...Easter Sunday morning...my dad would get up early and he would tell us that Easter morning to look at the sun; it would dance like a cross. And he said that's because you're celebrating Jesus Risen; like that was their belief. Then, he'd go down to the river, and he would get some water. That was our holy water, when that sun was dancing....And that's the way we used to get our holy water. The morning of Easter Sunday, I'll always remember that, thinking...when that sun dances, it's celebrating.
>
> And I think, with Easter...the guys go hunting, and I think the goose was the meal. Easter, I think it was Easter. I remember they had to go hunting. They had this special meal...it was either goose or ducks. That was the spring, so that was Easter then.

Rosalie remembers other highlights from her childhood, too. She attended a one-room school house with one teacher who taught all the grades from One to Eight. Children on the reserve had their own school, but it was run the same way as the school Rose attended. The reserve school was located where St. John's Anglican Church is now. Rose's school was located where the teacherages are today, up river from the present school. Both were run by the churches.

Rose can remember some of the things her teacher taught her. She recalls a dance [or drill] where they each had one end of a ribbon in their hand.

I remember one when we were at the school here, that old school. We had these [ribbons]. I don't know how she had them up. We all had ribbons, and she [the teacher] played music, and there must have been about six of us holding on to this [the ribbons], but we made some kind of design. We kept moving, and this music was playing, and I don't know what...the design was when we finished. Kind of dancing, I guess, kind of walking around. I used to think, 'I wonder what we made? I wonder how that thing turned out when we were finished.' I don't know if it was a braid or...

The teacher, Mrs. Donaghy, was very capable.

One teacher and be able to train all those kids to do something....She had everybody working. Nobody talked. There was not a sound in that school. [She] had from one to eight. That's a big classroom, you know, maybe thirty, forty [students].

Rose also recalls they would sit around a radio at school and listen to stories. The children were not allowed to speak Cree at that time, even at recess. They would be in school from nine to four with a lunch break in between, so that they could all run home and eat. They also had summer holidays which she spent at Grand Rapids with her family. Rose, her brothers, sisters, and cousins would all get together and play games. Sometimes other children would join in, too. As a child, Rose's best friend was Rubina Turner.

Rosalie and Rubina had lots of fun together, especially at picnics and the annual sports day.

We had a sports day....I think it was May 24. Kids from both sides [came], and we'd all go to Lovers' Point. Everybody would take a lunch. You would take this box of food, and you spent all day at Lovers' Point, and they had games. They had all different kinds of games – running, the potato sack, wheel barrow [races] and pillow fights. Just everybody had a good time, but the adults were right in it, too. They had canoe racing. They'd go on that river across from the other point here. That's where they had their canoe racing. And dancing. There was always dancing, celebrating, square dancing.

Rosalie's dad made his own canoe, and she can still remember a little about how he made it. One thing he did was set the wood in boiling water, presumably to make it more supple. He also wrapped and tied pieces of wood around a barrel, so that they would take its shape. Then he would somehow put everything together and end up with a canoe.

Canoe-making, Christmas celebrations, sports' days—these are some of the pleasant memories of childhood that came to an end for Rosalie when she completed Grade Eight. There was no work in the community at that time, so she had to leave.

> There was nothing here, and I knew that I had to work to help my mom and dad, so they won't have to look after me....Also if I made money I could send it back to my mom and dad.

Her first job was on the *S.S. Keenora*, when she was just sixteen. She recalls others from Grand Rapids who worked there, too, people like Winnie and Eileen McKay, Eleanor Lavallee, and Stephen Jones. Eleanor and Stephen eventually got married.

> You met a lot of people, because the people came from the States....and they used to have dances on the deck. There's a place where you could dance. It was fun.

But not always.

> The big waves make you sick. You know it was four decks that boat...Well, those waves they would go on the top deck. That's how big those waves would get on Lake Winnipeg....That's the way it was, and you got sick.

Storms on the lake could be scary, indeed, but Rosalie enjoyed working on that boat and stayed for three months. It was on one of her trips that she saw the big city.

> I'd never been in the city. That's where we ended up in Selkirk with that boat. And coming from here where there's nothing, like there's no highway, no

> vehicles, nothing. And then you end up in Selkirk; then, you go to Winnipeg. That was scary.

Rosalie felt alone in the city and only stayed for about a week at the most. Then she left and joined her sister Nellie at Clearwater Lake to work at the sanitarium. At sixteen, she was too young to be eligible for employment there, but she lied about her age and got the job. The only reason she got away with it was because no one asked for I.D. at that time. She stayed there for three years.

While she was away, there were big changes in the community. The bridge, the highway, the Hydro Generating Station, the hotel/bar were all built.

> I was hardly ever here; I was out working. I didn't see too much, except when I came home on holidays. Very busy place....They built a bar, the hotel, before they even built a hospital here. That was the priority from the government, and we're in a remote community. But the bar was built first....They had one doctor, I think, that was stationed here all the time. I hardly ever lived in Grand Rapids when all this was going on.

Indeed, Rosalie was away from the community for a number of years. While taking upgrading in Winnipeg, she met and married her first husband, whose work took him to many parts of the country.

> We moved like every year, maybe every six months. We'd be in a different province. We never lived here. We were in Ontario. Alberta. He was a mechanic. He'd work for different companies, oil companies. When I moved here I said, 'That's it. I'm not moving anymore.' I didn't even want to move back here because I had a good job in Alberta. I was working for an oil company. We had a little cafeteria, so I'd go there and just warm up their food. That was about it. They'd bring their food. I'd throw it in the microwave and have it ready for them.

Naturally, Rosalie lost that job when the family moved to Grand Rapids, and her husband went to work at the garage. With time on her hands, Rosalie was able to take stock of what had happened while she was away. She recalled that Grand Rapids had been a beautiful little community when she was growing up. Both

sides of the river were united. There was no Treaty side and no Metis side; it was just Grand Rapids, a place everyone called home.

> I don't even remember people arguing. They just did things together. They worked together. There was no mayor and council. There was always a chief on the reserve, but on this side there was nothing. Nobody had to pay taxes. You paid for your land in Brandon, I think.

Campbell's Store was one of the centres where people gathered.

> I just remember mostly Campbells, I guess. People would go there. She [Margaret Campbell Olafson] had a little store there....and she'd have her stuff, and the post office was there, too. People would go there, and they'd visit outside. You'd go to the store and you'd see the people sitting out there. I don't know if there were benches or what, but there was people just visiting. And if a plane came in, everybody was there. You know, cause you hardly ever seen a plane. Everybody would go down to the plane there...just on the river.

Since Grand Rapids was so isolated at the time, a plane once a month was exciting. Supplies also came in by boat or canoe from The Pas in the summer and by dog team and bombardier in the winter. It was a very different life before the road to the outside was built.

Eventually people started working toward establishing an L.G.D. [local government district]. John Morriseau and Rose's brother Hubert also worked to establish a local of the M.M.F. [Manitoba Metis Federation].

> When the M.M.F. started, people really worked hard to get it going, and they got along really good. They worked together. You know, no fighting. And they did things, things for the community like picnics....fundraising, like they bought that building; they bought that land. That was one of their projects, and they had bingos to raise money....There was always something going on with the M.M.F.. I think John Morriseau is the one who started the M.M.F.. Him and Hubert got things going in our community. They were the first. It was always John in our community. He was a chairperson for the M.M.F..

By promoting the L.G.D. and the M.M.F, the Metis community hoped to meet the challenges posed by the road and the Hydro project. It also worked with the reserve to improve education, so that students at Grand Rapids would be more adequately prepared for the changes taking place throughout society. Educational change created opportunities, which Rosalie was quick to recognize.

> There was that training programme came up at New Careers, so I applied. I don't know how many of us applied, and I got in.

That was twelve years ago. After she completed the training, Rosalie became a school counsellor. Her work involves one-on-one counselling with the students either on personal problems or career planning. Her goal for the students is very simple. She wants them

> To feel good about themselves. To be proud of who they are and never be ashamed...of who they are. If you don't feel good about yourself, you're not going to do anything with your life and with education. I think that the teachers should help the students feel good about themselves, and to get their education. They have to get their education.

Like communities everywhere, Grand Rapids has its problems with drugs, and Rosalie is concerned about its effect on the students, who do not function well in school if they have a drug habit. Nevertheless, she feels the future is bright, "If the community can get together and do things and be able to work together, it's going to be okay." Among other things, Rosalie feels a drop-in centre for the teenagers would be a step in the right direction.

As a counsellor, Rosalie has done a good deal of thinking about children and their needs. She feels there are lessons to be learned from the practices of the past, lessons she applied to her son and three daughters.

> The kids were close to their grandparents, too, so the grandparents did a lot of talking to them. The kids respected elders. My kids respected elders. Nowadays, that's not so [common].

Grandparents taught the traditions and the value of respect.

> My children knew their grandparents, and they talked with them. My parents talked with my children and talked about long time ago. They would tell them stories and I guess because I was raised like this, I tried to teach my kids to respect people, to respect things, you know, material things.

Rosalie's parents taught important lessons about respect in matters some people today might consider small and unimportant.

> You don't wear a cap, when you sit down to eat. That was my mom and dad's rule. You have to respect that food, you know, that food on the table.

They also made sure their children were not exposed to too much knowledge too young, a practice Rosalie followed in her own home.

> [When] people came to visit me, my kids wouldn't listen, because you would talk about [adult] things, you know, so you sent them outside. Nowadays, the kids would be sitting there, and they hear a lot of things that maybe they shouldn't hear.

Rosalie feels that bond with the past and the systematic teaching of the old values still has a place. She sees a value in the retention of the Cree language, which is fast being replaced by English. For Rosalie this is a sad development, and one which she has difficulty accepting.

> I always wished they would teach Cree in our school. Like I've always wondered, 'Why aren't we teaching Cree in our school?' We have Native Studies, but what's the use of studying it, if you can't speak the language? I wish there was somebody that could push it...push to have a teacher in our school to teach Cree.

Whether there is any will to save the Cree language in Grand Rapids is a question that will have to await a future answer, but if Rosalie has her way, change in the future will involve an evaluation of what has been lost. It may also involve a plan

to reassert the community culture and values that were once effective in providing the local people with a peaceful and productive life.

Rosalie Desjarlais in front of display promoting higher education (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Jon Einarson

Jon Einarson, local fisherman (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Jon Einarson was born in 1929 at a little town called Nasa in Southern Manitoba, "just six miles south of Riverton...right straight east of Eriksdale, fifty-three miles." His parents were Icelandic.

> My dad came over to this country in 1902. He was two years old when he came from Iceland to this county. He was born in Iceland....A lot of people moved in that period. In fact, he was the latter of it, 'cause the first ones moved in 1870, eh? They moved into the Gimli area there, and then in 1902 they [Jon's grandparents] came to this country.

When his parents were married in 1927, Nasa was quite an isolated place.

> There was actually no roads around there except horse and wagon trails. There was very few cars around. They were farmers, in a way, you could say, only a

quarter section of land, 160 acres. But there was always enough animals on the farm to have your own meat, and your chickens for eggs, and cows for the milk, so pretty well the farm looked after the [needs of the family].

The farm was a good place for a boy to grow up.

It was nice. You could run out in the bush and do whatever you want. You were free, eh? Every day, you had to go out and look for the cows, bring them home, and milk them. And there were sheep there, twenty to forty sheep.

Jon's parents sold the little lambs every year to supplement the family income. They also sheared the sheep to provide his mother with the yarn she needed to make the many socks and mitts she knitted over the years. Jon remembers the old hand carders and spinning wheel she used to turn the wool into yarn. His mother was never idle, nor was anyone else on the farm. However, local agriculture did not represent much of a future for a young man.

Just from growing up, there was no work around that part of the country. You just have to work for farmers or work for fishermen, eh? I started my first job [packing fish for Canadian Fish Company, thirty miles north of Riverton at Goose Island] with fifty dollars a month, so it was a little bit better than a dollar a day....It was hard work. I was only a kid about thirteen-fourteen years old....That was during the war. There wasn't too many men around, so they were after any of the kids that wanted to work....I went to school, but I only finished about half way through Grade Five-Six. Most of the schools at that time only taught to Grade Eight, eh? From there you'd have to go to Winnipeg or something.

From the time of his first job to his retirement a couple of years ago, Jon was a fisherman. That's how he met his wife.

I married a girl from Grand Rapids, Jane McKay....I met her on one of my fishing trips. I came here in the boat one weekend.

They were married at the Lutheran Church at Gimli in 1956.

This was in the spring of the year, and the only way you could get out here was by plane, eh? So she had moved in; she was with her sister Ellen at Nasa. That's where we started going together that spring, eh?

Their wedding reception was at Nasa.

There was about sixty, seventy people there. It was done right at my home. We had a dance and everything right in the house there. It was in the spring of the year. There was a little bit of liquor around, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves, but nobody fell overboard too bad on it. Not like now.

Jon and Jane lived at Nasa for about four years before returning to Grand Rapids. They came by boat at that time, because there was no road into the community.

I came back here in 1960, mostly on account of my wife, she was from this area. To take a woman from the north and take her south, it's like taking someone from here and taking them to Winnipeg and expect them to stay....I've always thought that Grand Rapids was a nice place, always, always did, and still do.

Although the place was new to him, Jon was already familiar with a number of its people, besides his wife, of course. One of them was Egil (prounounced "Ale") Johnson, who was married to Evelyn McKay. Egil worked as a fisherman for a while, then he worked for Campbell's, and finally for Hydro.

Egil Johnson was out here at that time. I knew him from before, eh? And, of course, I knew Herb McKay from being on the lake, and Johnny McKay. I knew them from meetin' them on the lake and stuff.

He soon got to know other people, too, like his father-in-law, who took him to see the rapids.

That was the first place I went when I came here with my father-in-law. He was the one that took me up there, old Lawrence McKay....I didn't shoot the rapids. We just went up past Dog Island there that time. I figured it was too fast water for me!

As he became better acquainted with the McKays, his respect for them increased. "They were pretty hard workers. They had to. They didn't have much...when they were young, and of course they were pickin' Seneca Root." They also picked berries and had a big garden. Most people did. The McKays, Campbells, and others also kept cattle and horses. "Old Gabriel Dorion, I guess, he was about the last one, the last guy, to have a horse here."

The community in those days looked very different from what it does today.

> It was more or less just a path along here that went past the Anglican Church, and that was just a trail that they went with the tractors and stuff, to go out into the bush to get wood, and to the shed, and stuff like that. There was no vehicles here at that time....There was the odd [car] that came after that because I guess Johnny McKay was the first. He had an old Model A. That was shipped out on the *Keenora*. It was brought here, and he ran around a little bit around here. I guess Kjartan Olafson had his truck here first, eh? That 1950 Dodge that he's got. He used to haul all his freight from the Government Dock to his store. I imagine Kjartan Olafson was about the first one who had a vehicle here.
>
> I was here before the bridge was built. I was here in '56, and the bridge wasn't built until '60, '61, I guess, eh? There was just a river here. There was nothing. There was no bridge, and all your transportation was on boat whether you were going across or this side, eh? You went by boat, eh? And the scenery has not changed very much. The water's not as clean as it used to be in them days, we know that for sure, but that's the same all over the lake.
>
> I ran a taxi during the construction of the dam here – had a couple of cars. There was a lot of people here, a lot of people from Norway House and all over, brushing that land all up here, past the rapids. There must have been about a thousand or more people working here, cutting that bush down and burning it where the dike was built.

Running a taxi was a temporary venture. For most of his life, Jon has been a commercial fisherman.

I had men working with me. I worked with just about anybody who wanted to work with me - Bunny Packo and George Scott, Solomon Turner, and a lot of the boys, Colin Packo, and then of course, Walter Pranteau, Russell Cook, and Herby Cook, and I went through them all. Robert Sinclair [Eliza Jane's son] worked with me quite a few winters.

Jon has seen plenty of changes in the industry. Boats, for instance, were different in the past.

They were all wooden boats, made out of wood, eh? We didn't completely make our own, but we repaired our own for a number of years there, until the fibre glass come out. [It was] about '68, or something like that, when the fibre glass ones started to come out, and of course we switched to fibre glass, and then aluminum, then steel boats.

The nets they used to catch the fish have changed as well.

At one time there was cotton, and first actually there was linen twine in them, and you had to take your nets and restock them, so they wouldn't rot on you. Then we had cotton nets which we got a little finer, and of course now we got nylons and glass nets and all that stuff, eh?

The nets were all purchased out of Winnipeg, Midwest Net and Twine, and also Leckie's. [It] is an old company which is still going, but that's about the only net company that's still going in the city now. And most of their nets come from Japan and Korea mostly.

Marketing was done through a variety of companies.

There was many different fish companies at one time till Fresh Water Marketing Board started. And before that, there used to be Canandian Fish, Keystone Fish, Manitoba Fisheries, Selkirk Fisheries, Booth Fisheries, and Armstrong Fisheries. You could sell to any one of those places.

Prices varied over the years.

They were different. There were ups and downs, just depends on the fish the company had. If they wanted to take it off you for nothing, they'd take it off you for nothing. We took low prices a lot of times. And we never did know what we'd get for our fish, until we came home from the season. We used to fish the whole season, and then, well, the companies got together and figured, 'Well we're gonna give them ten cents, or seven cents, or eight cents, a pound for it for this fall.' And you had nothing to say in them days.

It has changed a lot, and at least you know what you get for your fish now. But, I don't know what's happening with our fish. It seems our water is getting polluted. The fish is not running in the same areas it used to run. Nowadays, you get moss and all kinds of debris in your net....I often think about it because we used to fish on boats on the lake and you could throw a little bit of ice on the bottom of your box and then throw some white fish in there. And time you came home in the evening with that white fish in your boat, you could grab it by the head there, and it just laid out stiff, eh? Now you can take that fish and ice it right away, put ice, and when you come over to the shed, you look at it, and you lift it. You'd almost think you had a dish rag in your hand. For some reason, I don't know why, they don't stiffen up. I blame the ice, you know; the ice machine is not nearly as good as the ice we used off the lake all the time, eh?

[That ice] was all put out in the wintertime, and then you used it for the summer months. [It was] kept in a building with big heavy walls on it, with sawdust in the walls. And you'd keep ice there right till the end of October or so. That's what you packed your fish with in the fall season and your summer season.

Like others in the community, Jon feels the dam had an effect on the fishing.

I think it affected [fishing] to a certain extent....I guess it's from all that water it was flooded that there's such terrible debris out there, twenty miles each way out of Grand Rapids here. You can hardly set a net in it, where, you know, you never seen that before. You could set a net by Scott's Point and run the string right across, and your net was clean.

In spite of the difficulties, Jon managed to make a success of fishing.

> I always kept ahead of the game, but I put in a lot of hours some days. In those days, I put in my sixteen hours a day. You didn't think, 'I have so many nets to lift.' I had to get over to them, and that was all there was to it. It was just the way I worked. It probably has something to do with my health now.

His health and age were determining factors, when he decided to retire. As he explains, "I spent fifty years out on the lake. I think that's enough anyway."

Jon has noticed changes in the community over the years, not all of them to his liking.

> They were very, very friendly people when I first came and still are, as far as that goes. The time [now] goes to bingos and partying and stuff like that, which you didn't see in them days, eh? And all the young kids. It didn't matter which family they were from, they were always around their family. Their family was either working on nets or whatever they were doing, their kids were there, too. There was none of this kids running around, you know, eight, ten years old. They were staying home. Their mothers knew where they were, and that was it. That was the old way, pretty well all over, eh? It was no different when I was young. If your dad was a farmer, well, you stayed around the farm. You helped him, and the girls helped their mother. They worked together more, eh? Now they'd rather go for a ride in the car, and the kids get left behind, and they don't know what to do with themselves. They're lost. That is what's hurtin' our young people, eh, [in] my way of thinkin'.

The church is not the same as it once was either.

> It was a lot different. The ministers were all interested in helping to have Sunday schools for the children, and most of them got very little wages. They gave them a house to stay in, and that was about it. Take Mrs. Emerson. I think she got thirty dollars a month, when she was here in 1960, and she had to pay her own light bill out of that, and she travelled everything by foot, eh, so I used to pick her up a lot by taxi. I'd say, 'Well, you can't afford that. Well,

that's okay. I'm going across there anyway.' She was there to help people. If the kids have a cold, she had a little bit of medicine in there, and she'd go and help the women with their kids, if they had a flu or something. Now you go to the nursing station and from there in the taxi [to The Pas].

Other changes have occurred over the years, including the loss of his wife in 1983 to cancer, after twenty-seven years of marriage, but it didn't make him want to leave Grand Rapids.

I just stayed here. I still had three kids who were eighteen years old, the twins were eighteen, I guess, and Dorion was nineteen. I didn't have much choice. I didn't want to take them south, because that would have been changing their lifestyles. I figured I better stick with them, and try and get them to take as much schooling [as they could]. Dorion, she become a nurse, and Wanda become a teacher, and Wayne got a job at Hydro. That was the end of it, but I don't think there's any end to your kids, or there shouldn't be. They come first in my way of thinking.

Jon's concern for his own children is influenced by what he sees as the future of Grand Rapids. Work is hard to come by, and there is little industry available to employ people. Consequently, his advice to the youth of Grand Rapids is clear and to the point.

All I can say is get your education or you haven't got much of a chance.

This is good advice from a man with little formal education himself. Jon suceeded, because there was work available for him to do when he was a young man. Now jobs are becoming fewer as the computer revolution takes over the work place, and it will be the best educated young people who get the job in the future. Like others in the community, who have worked hard all their lives to make a living, Jon is a keen observer who has years of experience to back up what he says. Perhaps some of the youth of Grand Rapids will take his words to heart!

Louise Mercredi

Louise Mercredi at her home in Grand Rapids (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Louise Mercredi was born 8 January 1922 to Jacob and Elizabeth Turner. She was delivered by Barbara Sinclair, a local midwife, who assisted with many births at Grand Rapids. Louise had one brother John, and they lived with their parents on the reserve in a log house typical of the time. Located next to the river, the cabin was built of squared logs and the walls plastered inside and out with a mud made locally from white clay mixed with water. Once this mud had dried, the walls were "lime washed" with a mixture of lime and water often dyed with different colours obtained from Campbell'store. Louise recalls how fresh the house smelled when the job was finished. As she describes it, the mudding was done to "flatten" the walls and "kept out the wind and the rain." Nevertheless, the clay was often washed away in places during thunderstorms, so that repairs had to be made every fall. The cabin was originally just one big room, the beds being off in the corners, but later her dad divided off one part and made it into a bedroom. Wood stoves were used for cooking, and they had "tin stoves" for additional heat.

Her mother had two big gardens beside that log house.

> Potatoes and vegetables. We used to have everything like carrots, red beets, turnips, and tomato. Even my Mom used to have cucumbers. They used to grow, but nobody bothers now. Everybody buy them from the store now, eh? That time all the people used to have gardens.

Louise remembers that people shared their food with others.

> People did that long time ago. Even they used to put their potatoes in one place. I remember that they used to put their potatoes [at] the rapids, somewhere [at] the rapids....I didn't see them myself. My dad used to talk about it....Dig a hole and put their potatoes, [covered with] lots of moss, hay, and whoever want potatoes go and get them. That's what they used to do....And that time when they killed a moose - my Dad anyway - they used to give it to people. It doesn't matter how far he goes for it, sharing with other people. Sometimes they just let the little people help ourselves. That's the way it was back then anyway....But now is different. Nobody will give you anything free.

There were other differences, too.

> When I was younger with my parent, I never used to see them fight. I never used to see them swear, because there was...no liquor. It was quiet. And the people used to visit lots. They would come, eh, all the time. Older people come around. And the children, eh, were never allowed to walk around when people were visiting. That's the way it was because there was only two of us, me and my brother. And before they leave they used to have tea...and before they leave they used to pray. The older people used to do that. That's the way I see it, when I was growing up.

Louise remembers other things when she was growing up, too. Everybody had dogs, which they kept tied in the bush near their houses during the summer months and used to pull sleighs in the winter. Their harness was made of leather or canvass, and Louise remembers her father and grandfather making and repairing

it. Many people kept cattle, too, which meant they had to make hay during the summers at places like Say-go-pee-yak and See-pee-sis Creek.

> That's where they used to make their hay. Even there we used to go and stay there...my dad, eh, my mom helping my dad, preparing for the cows. We used to have sometimes three of them, eh. Two most of the time. But when my father got sick, they killed them because we couldn't handle them ourselves.

They would cut the wild grass, dry and pile it, then go and pick it up as needed. Louise's father often used his dogs to haul hay, but some people used horses, and Peter James Beardy used oxen. Horses and oxen were also used for hauling wood. Everyone worked hard for their living.

> Because if you don't work for your living, you starve. Nothing that time the way it is today. This welfare, there was never anything like that. Like Indian Affairs used to come in once a year to give out money and rationing people a little bit with flour, baking [powder], I don't know what else he gave. That was a year rationing. People could starve if he was waiting for Indian Affairs....
>
> My Dad was a fisherman and a trapper, eh, that's the way of living, and my Mom was a housewife. Used to do all kinds of things. Making moose hides and making moccasins, eh, and everything, and picking berries. We used to sell berries, too. And digging Seneca root. That's how people made their living. Mostly fishing.
>
> I can remember when I was four years old, because we used to go out in the lake all the time. Travel all the way from here to Gull Bay. That's where people used to go in the fall. That's why I didn't have time to go to school, eh. I only had Grade Four, because people go out in September. That's time for school. It was hard, eh? So Gull Bay, we used to go there, dry meat, prepare for winter.

Louise recalls that they travelled by canoe along Long Point or Ki-chi-ni-ak to reach Gull Bay. They did not go around the point because it was a long way, and winds could make that route dangerous. Instead, they made a portage across the

point to the bay, paddled over to the opposite side, and set up camp on a sandy beach at a point where two rivers joined [Two Rivers is called Three Rivers today]. Today the fishermen have their cabins in that area.

> It used to take about maybe five days. If it's not windy, you'll be lucky to get there five days. They camp all the way. They camp, eh....But if it's nice, if it's a fair wind, they would make a sail. They could sail their canoe. And - helps you. But if it's windy, you can't go because of the high waves, eh. They had to camp. I used to like it.

Her parents taught her how to work. She and her brother helped, when her mother tanned hides, but she never tried to make moccasins.

> Boy, they used to do lots of that when we were younger, but I never used to bother learning. But I did do lots of beadwork, eh. But, uh, making moccasins was - I never tried. That time anyway, when I was young.

Louise learned beadwork from a teenage girl named Emma Jane Turner, and later earned money doing it.

> I used to do a little bit of beadwork for Mrs. Campbell, too. She used to sell stuff in the *Keenora*, eh. Used to make these little pouches...and we put a little bit of beadwork, the cover, eh....I never used to make anything for myself, but I did lots for the other people...Mrs. Cook [Angelique] especially, and Florence McKay. And they used to pay me good, eh....Mrs. Cook used to get first prizes [at the Trapper's Festival in The Pas] and if she gets first prizes and win, she would pay me more after....Oh, I did lots of beadwork for her. All winter...I did about five parkas, you know, [but] only the beadwork. She did all the sewing.

In that regard, Mrs. Cook was typical of women at Grand Rapids. Besides making moccasins and knitting mitts and socks, they often sewed their own clothing.

> But sometimes most of the old people made their own dresses, eh....They always wear dresses. They gather them [at the waist] and they make their blouses, too. And long ones, too, eh. Long ones. Most of them old ladies, I

remember my grandparents, they always used to wear black. My mom used to wear shorter dress. But...the old ladies...make their own out of flannelette; their slips, their petticoats, I guess they call them that time. Slip, eh, your slip under your dress and make their own bloomers out of flannelette....And they used to wear moccasins. Well, they had stockings, they wear stockings. Those thick stockings, eh. And rubbers...but my mom used to wear shoes after.

Only a few women had sewing machines. Louise recalls that her mother had one for a while, but then gave it to Mrs. Peter Beardy in exchange for some medicine to heal her son John who was ill at the time.

This lady used to give him medicine. He used to put water in a saucer, eh....I used to watch him; I was young at that time...He used to put it [medicine] in the middle. He said if it spread, that will heal him. And when he put that medicine in the saucer there, it just spread. It just spread on that saucer on that water, you know.

Louise does not know what the medicine was, but she remembers Ishmael Scott's wife Flora gave her medicine when she was sick.

There's lots of people who used to use it, too, eh. Lots of people, most of the time. Like that *wee-kase.* That's what my mom used to give us when we have a cold...The old man used to call it Indian sihnger. George's dad. And this one time this white man ask him what it was...and the old man said, that's Indian sihnger...ginger, I guess he wanted to say. It could be ginger, I guess.

Although they worked hard as children, there was time for play as well.

We used to play together all the time, play ball, play house, us girls. And sliding in the winter time....We used to slide all the time. The river used to be frozen and you go across the ice....We didn't have skates, but they used to make them out of wood. All the kids across the river had them. Lots of us skate there.

Those wooden skates were different from the ones we have today. The children would take a shingle, place it under one foot, then slide along on the ice with it. The "skate" wasn't strapped to the foot, and it didn't need to be sharpened.

Skating was just one thing children did for fun. There were other occasions for fun, too, including Christmas, concerts, dances.

> We used to prepare for a long time. Like get everything ready, eh, for Christmas. And the ladies...that's when they sew so much. Sewing moccasins, making moccasins, mitts and everything, preparing for Christmas.
>
> We had concerts....I used to sing. I used to cry not to go in the play. I was so shy, not to go in to sing, but we did....Everybody [went]. That's the way it was a long time ago. Even if there's dances, eh. All the family, the children went...and weddings, too. Everybody takes his family.

And everyone attended church, either Anglican or Roman Catholic services, as there was no Evangelical Church at Grand Rapids at the time. People did no work on Sunday. "Even they never used to go pick berries...."

Grandparents were a strong influence in Louise's life. Her grandfather used to tell her traditional Cree stories. One of them was about Wisakécáhk.

> He was gathering ducks, goose, all kinds of birds, eh, and he told them there's going to be a dance. And he make something where they could dance, with willows and everything, eh. Like the way you make our sweat lodge, they make one like that. Then they gather all the birds. Then they take them there. So he said to them 'Dance', and I guess he start singing to them and make them to dance. Then he told them to close their eyes and dance, eh. So I guess they listened to him. They were dancing closing their eyes. Then he start killing them. And this one bird I guess opened his eyes. The bird is a loon and he see what is going on, and he yell at the birds, 'Wisakécáhk is killing us!' So they all run out...and the last one was the loon. Wisakécáhk kicked him. That's why he can't walk on the ground. That's why he has to be in the water. Even he lays his eggs right on the shore, eh, close to the water. That's how that loon cannot walk; Wisakécáhk kicked him.

Her Grandfather Albert Turner also sang a song to his grandchildren, one which may have come from his Scottish roots. Louise still knows the words.

Oh dear, what can the matter be?
Oh dear, what can the matter be?
Oh, dear, what can the matter be?
Johnny's so long at the fair.

He promised to buy me a piece of blue ribbon.
He promised to buy me a piece of blue ribbon.
He promised to buy me a piece of blue ribbon.
To tie up my...black hair.

My *bonnie* black hair I was supposed to say...That's the one he used to sing anyway. He used to sing songs in church, too,...in concerts....He must have learned them from some place, but I forgot the last part. Yeah, he used to sing that to us.

Louise didn't learn everything she knows from parents and grandparents. She also attended a small, one room school on the reserve, located along the shore near the bridge, about where the Northern Store is now.

It was okay. There were big, big kids going to school there already when I started. Marge Sinclair was still going to school that time. Bella [Mrs. Gordon Pranteau]. There was lots of them.

It was the ministers that were teaching that time, eh. I remember Mr. Armstrong, Reverend Armstrong. The other one was the Reverend Horsefield. That one used to talk Cree. They were strict the same as other teachers, I guess. The way I remember that, eh, if you looked back you get hit anyway. You can't cheat. You can't copy another person.

Louise only attended school when she was on the reserve. But her brother John went out to residential school at Elkhorn.

He went to school there with my cousin Henry. Henry Ballantyne went to school there, too....These two were supposed to go to St. John's College after they finished there, but they quit....My brother was in Grade Nine....They came home. They were planning to be ministers. That's why they sent them there.

Schooling was a luxury for children whose families lived off the land, and Louise did not have the same opportunity as her brother. "I wasn't let to go," she explains, "And I didn't want to go." In the Fall she was with her parents at Gull Bay. During much of the winter she was with them at the trapline.

After they come back [from Gull Bay] they used to go to the trapline, eh. That's why it was very difficult for us [to go to school]. My brother [John] went to school in Elkhorn, so that's why that one went up to Grade Nine. But we used to live in the winter time in the trapline, too. There were cabins there. We stayed there the whole winter.

The trapline was located along Rabbit Point in the direction of Easterville. When winter came, the Turners and other families, like the Atkinsons, Ballantynes, and McKays, travelled there by dog team and often lived together in one place. Louise remembers their cabin had a fireplace of stone and clay built by her father "It used to be nice," she recalls, "You could see light from there, eh." Her mother used that fireplace for making bannock and boiling the kettle. A little tin stove, was used for making bannock, too, and coal oil lamps provided additional light.

Sturgeon fishing was important during the winter. The fishermen used nets to catch the large fish and stored them in log shacks especially built for the purpose. They would remain there until the buyer came along over the ice and purchased them. Muskrat trapping was important in the spring, and at those times, the family moved away from the cabin and lived out in a tent on the trapline.

Louise only went to the trapline with her parents when she was young. When she was twelve or thirteen years old, she left school and began to do housework. "I used to do lots of housework for people; till I was twenty one, I used to work hard for my living." She worked for Angelique Cook, whose husband was a prosperous fisherman who had more than one boat and men fishing for him. They

had a big two-story cabin located where the school is today. She also worked for Charlotte Cook, when her eldest child Rubina was young.

> They never used to pay me much money, but they used to give me food and clothes, what you need, eh? Not much money, but once in a while they used to give me a little bit. But this is after I was growing up.

As Louise became older, she took a more active role in community events, especially weddings, which was good training for her own. Weddings then were similar to weddings today, but there were some differences.

> They used to make wedding dresses, eh. Long. Angelique Cook is the one that used to do all the sewing when somebody gets married....I remember when my cousin got married. Grace, Grace Ballantyne, she wears white. But us wear peach....that shiny silk. That's the kind, and ours were peach. They were all the same. Bridesmaids, there were eight of us.

> There was an old guy here that time. He used to meet the bride, eh, playing violin. His name was Archie Scott, not this Archie Scott, [but] our uncle [Archie Scott Sr.]. He used to play, coming and meet the bride going to the dance. He used to start the dance. Really nice. That's the way it was.

In those years, parents had more say regarding who their children married. Young men didn't just ask a young woman to marry them. They did what her husband George did, when he decided he wanted to marry her.

> They go to parents and ask for girl, that time. They used to do that, eh. So I guess George asked Gabe Dorion to go with him and ask my Mom and Dad....That's the way they used to do it....Gabe, he used to go with them, eh.

> We got married in December. He come and ask. They knew that Mom didn't like that I used to go out with another boy....Before my father died that year, he told me, you know, listen to your Mom. He told me that, so this is what I did. I listened to my Mom. So, I married him. I didn't regret it. He looks after me good.

Although she listened to her mother's advice, Louise's marriage was not arranged. She went out with George on and off for at least two years before she married him in 1943. She was just twenty-one years of age at the time of her marriage.

> You know, I got married on the 14th and my brother got married on the 13th. But they had their feast across the river, and we had ours here at George's parents. I got married on this side. We got married by a[n] Anglican minister, that Mr. Donaghy.

> I wear a white one [wedding dress]. Yeah, we order it from Eaton's. But my rings never used to come...in time. So I used my cousin Charlotte's ring. Then my ring came later. But I lost it...It was too big. When I wash I guess I used to hang it up and kids must have pick it up. But we got these later.

> I never used to work after that to earn money, after I got married...George was always working for...Mrs. Campbell. He worked there for a long time till he start with Hydro in '59. Then he worked there until he was retired. So we didn't have a hard time.

She and George had a large family.

> We got married in December; I got pregnant in February with Charlotte. She was born in October 11th. She'll be fifty-one this year, my oldest. And my youngest will be thirty-one, Valerie. She'll be thirty-one in October 7th. Same month my last and my first. So the first was a girl, eh, Charlotte. The second one was Ovide, the third one was Gloria, then the fourth one was Norbert, then Leona, and then we had another boy, Leslie, that drown. So, and then it was Sylvia, and then from there it was Albert, and after that I had two girls...Margaret and Valerie.

Her first six children were born at home with the aid of a midwife, the first three by Barbara Sinclair, the same woman who helped deliver her. Sylvia and Albert were born in the hospital at The Pas, while Margaret and Valerie were born at the Hydro hospital located in Grand Rapids during the time the dam was being built.

Louise looked after her children, except for a year when she was out at the sanitarium. That was when Sylvia was small. George's parents helped look after them, and Charlotte, the eldest, did much of the work. As her children grew up, she took a lesson from her own grandparents.

> I raised them the same way I was raised by my grandparents....I never used to force them to do anything. I don't think it's good to force them kids what they don't want to do. They can make up their own minds. Ovide went out, Norbert and Ovide; from there they went to Winnipeg, eh. But they did have a hard time, too, when they were going to school. Lots of times they were starving, eh; we were trying to help them. Because they were lucky, them two boys that went to university because they got help from other places. Like Ovide was getting help from N.I.B. [National Indian Brotherhood] that time, and he was working through Brandon with the BUNTEP [Brandon U. Northern Teachers' Ed. Program] students there....And Norbert used to always have summer job, eh, all the time. And Ovide used to come home and work for Hydro for a while. And Norbert, I think he got twice bursaries from M.M.F., and that's how he keep going. It's difficult for kids sometimes....trying to go to school. They don't get much help. Even now. And they get loans...and after they start working they have to pay back the loans. I remember the first year Norbert start teaching, and he had to pay back. But they didn't have no trouble getting jobs after they finished, eh. Especially Norbert got a job right away.
>
> But I don't know about the girls. Leona went one year, but she got married and never went back. Just this last year she's graduating from that counselling course, eh. She went back to school. There's lots of them that were graduating from different communities. Ovide came, too. Leona asked him to come, but he just made a little speech. He didn't even eat, have time to eat, and he had to go take a plane and leave again. Rush, rush, so I think he just had salad.

The pace of life certainly has changed for her children, a change that possibly started a long time ago when construction started on the dam at Grand Rapids.

> You know, the road came in. It was a rough road, eh, gravel road. And then they start. They first came; they live in tents. That's when it started 1959. He

[George, her husband] used to look after the people, eh,...before they build the power house. He had his own tent. He used to come home once in a while, eh,...he has to stay [there] all night and watch the fires going in the winter time, for the cooks, eh....I don't know what they used, wood stoves, I guess they used that time. Construction started, eh; after that they started building power house. It takes a while, eh? I think it was '61 that bridge was built, when they built the dam.

And there was lots of people came after, eh. Trailers, they live in trailers, and then they start building the houses....And they start building...their staff house, and then they make it into a hospital for a while, eh. They even have a guard, so nobody will go through. They have to know who's coming.

Dam construction brought many other changes to the community.

When the roads first started coming in and people started going out, eh, they start buying cars. There was lots of accidents. Lots of people hurt on that road because the beer parlour came. The beer, that's where the trouble starts. But for me, I always say that you can't blame Hydro, because you take it in yourself, eh? You don't have to take it, if you don't want to, because they don't force you to do it.

Fishing is difficult now, especially when they lost their nets and that. Everything was floating. Trees and stuff like that. That's why it was hard for the people who made their living on fishing. Everything disappearing. Even trapping is not that good, eh. Even the fish now....I asked lots of these men if they caught fish and they said, 'Not much.' It's very difficult now the way people make their living, eh. But for us, George was working there [Hydro]. He make his living there, so now he gets a cheque from there every month. As long as he lives, he will get one...from Hyboard. He gets a superannuation, too. I guess you can call it pension; he earn it.

Louise remembers vividly when the power was turned on and they had electricity. It was 1961, and they were at the church one evening saying the rosary with their children as the priest was in town at the time. The telephone had been installed in the church, and suddenly it began to ring.

> The phone keep ringing. The phone was in already....Nobody touch it, eh,...and then Bill McKay picked it up. 'Oh,' he said, 'the lights. The power's on.' All of them ran out. Everybody was running. They all coming running here, because I had a T.V. Father Bignamy said, 'Oh,' he said, 'I guess we won't finish the rosaries.'

Electricity meant they no longer had to use coal oil lamps, and they could use the black and white T.V. Ovide had purchased for them, but it brought with it new responsibilities, too. Every month, they had a light bill to pay. Later, they added an electric refrigerator and stove, but they have never put in electric heat, although George put in the running water himself before he retired from Hydro. There have been many improvements over the years.

> The first year we moved in here, it was only plywood the flooring, eh, and the girls used to get mad when they had to wash the floors with a brush, because there were no tiles or anything. I think it was a year after we moved in here that we put tiles. It was easier for them to wash floors....But we build [the] kitchen after. Don't know why he [George] extend it. The kids are all going away now....There's only three of us living here now.

The house has been their home now since 1961, and it is quiet now with all of her children away from home, except for one grandchild, Reggie. Louise has plenty of time to think of the past. She has views on many things, like Indian medicine and contemporary diet.

> They gave us Indian medicine for a while anyway...when we were young. They give us that *wee-kase*, and they use lots of that tea, muskeg [tea]....Not the Seneca Root. [It] is the one you dig. We call it *wee-kase*; [it] grows in water, eh. There was that lady here that used to know lots of medicine. She give people that....and if she did you have to pay her if she give you some. They did that before, but now I think some people do still use some of it. I always have *wee-kase* myself. That Reverend Still's wife used to come and get some. 'When I have a sore throat,' she said, 'I suck the *wee-kase*.' After the ministers came, they knew how to give people medicine, eh. That Father Bignamy, he had lots of medicine. He even give kids needles, too.

Most of my kids, they never used to get sick. Just measles maybe. I used to use lots of cod liver oil....I used to give them a teaspoon every day. They eat good food, not junk food. Now they all have this junk food, eh. I don't used to give too much candies. Once in a while I buy, but I never used to give them like that....My brother always used to give me moose meat, ducks, fish sometimes.

Louise would like to see the Cree language spoken more.

That's all we talk - Cree. Those old people used to talk a little bit of English, but not much was used. Even...those Campbells that grow up here; that's all they speak, eh, Cree. And then after 1950, they didn't allow the kids to talk Cree in the school. So that's when it came, losing the Cree from us, eh. And the teacher wouldn't let them talk their language in school....And the children lose their language....After they go out and then they use English....they should learn when they're small; then, they keep it all the time, eh?....My daughter Gloria has been living in Toronto since 1967; she doesn't lose her language. She talks Cree. And the McKay girls, they live all over the place - one in Seattle. They come visit; they talk their language; they don't lose it. It's nice to learn different languages, but still you should keep your history and Cree.

Although she regrets the loss of the Cree language, she is glad for the changes that are occurring in the churches.

The religion was Anglican and Catholic and that time they didn't get along very good. They didn't because some people didn't like Catholics; some people didn't like Anglicans....But it's changing now...they even have joint services now....They're even beginning to believe this Indian way of praying....They had that Aboriginal Catholic Conference in Sandy Bay. The sisters were there, but they used the sweet grass.

I turned Catholic 1956. I was an Anglican before....I wanted to teach my children, take them to the same church, not going back and forth, so that's why I turned Catholic from there.

Louise has had a good marriage. In fact, it has been blessed by the Church three times since her marriage.

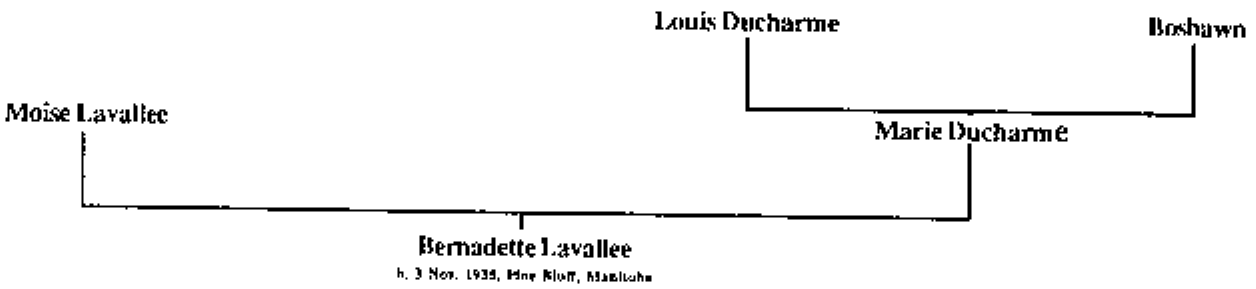
> I guess that's why we're together. That's four times our wedding has been blessed. You know sometimes it's not easy, you know, but I got a good man. He never hit me for these fifty-two years we've been married. Not once. Even when he used to take liquor, too, once in a while, he never hit me. I guess that's why we're stuck together, I guess.

Their children are gone from Grand Rapids now, except for Sylvia, but the pictures of grandchildren and great-grandchildren which grace the walls of Louise and George's home are a reminder that their family tree continues on. Like most aboriginal families in Manitoba, theirs has roots which go back thousands of years in this land and stretch as well across the seas to England, France, and Scotland, too. With such a legacy, it is only fitting that son Ovide should represent all aboriginal peoples at the national level. Indeed, as a product of many cultural threads, he and his brothers and sisters can rightfully take their place at many points of the rich multicultural fabric that is Canada. That's what being a Canadian is all about.

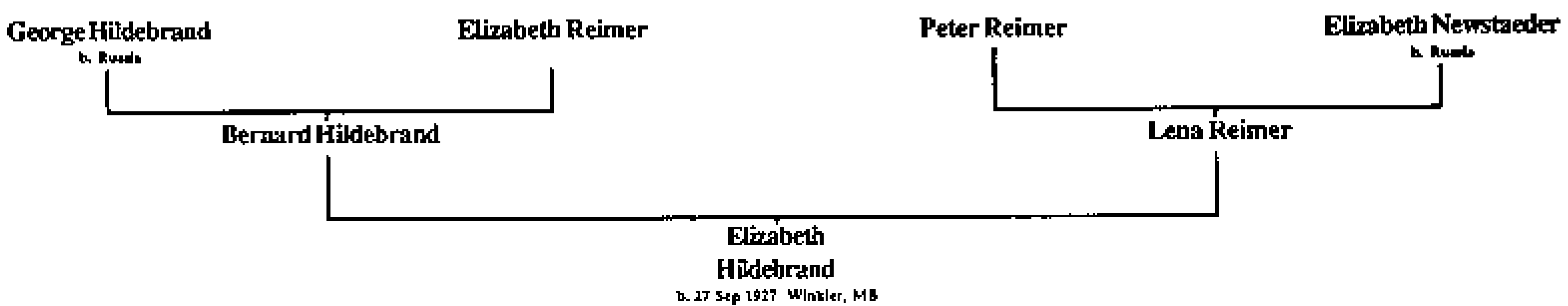
Louise reading *In The Rapids*, the book about her famous son (courtesy Lee Heroux)

Family Trees

On the following pages are family trees for some of the contributors to *Grand Rapids Stories*. They should provide interesting reading for those who share the same ancestry. Note that many of the family trees are incomplete. Perhaps this will encourage local people to so some historical research of their own. Who knows what might turn up!



Family Tree of Bernadette Lavallee, wife of Solomon Ballantyne



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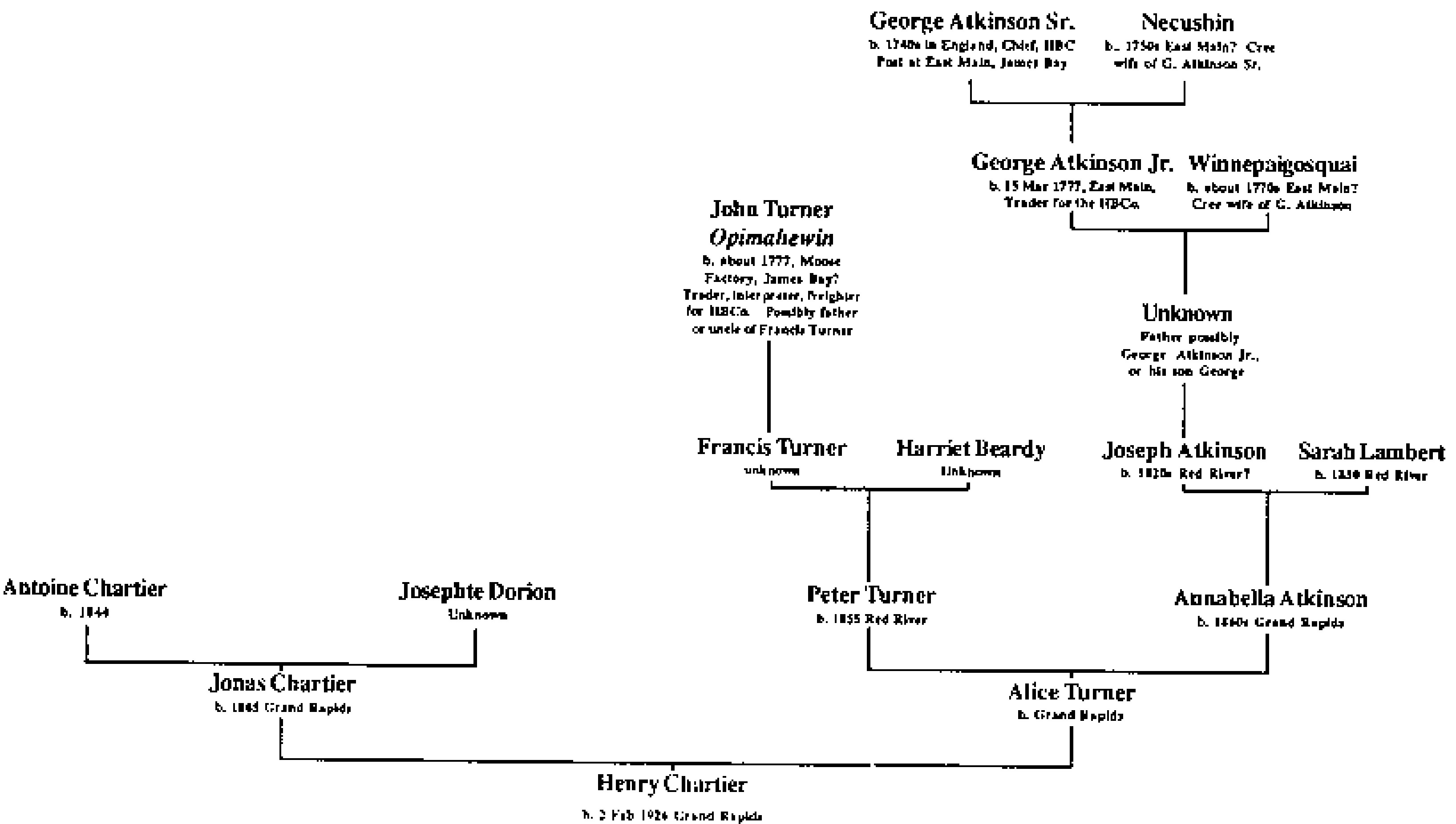
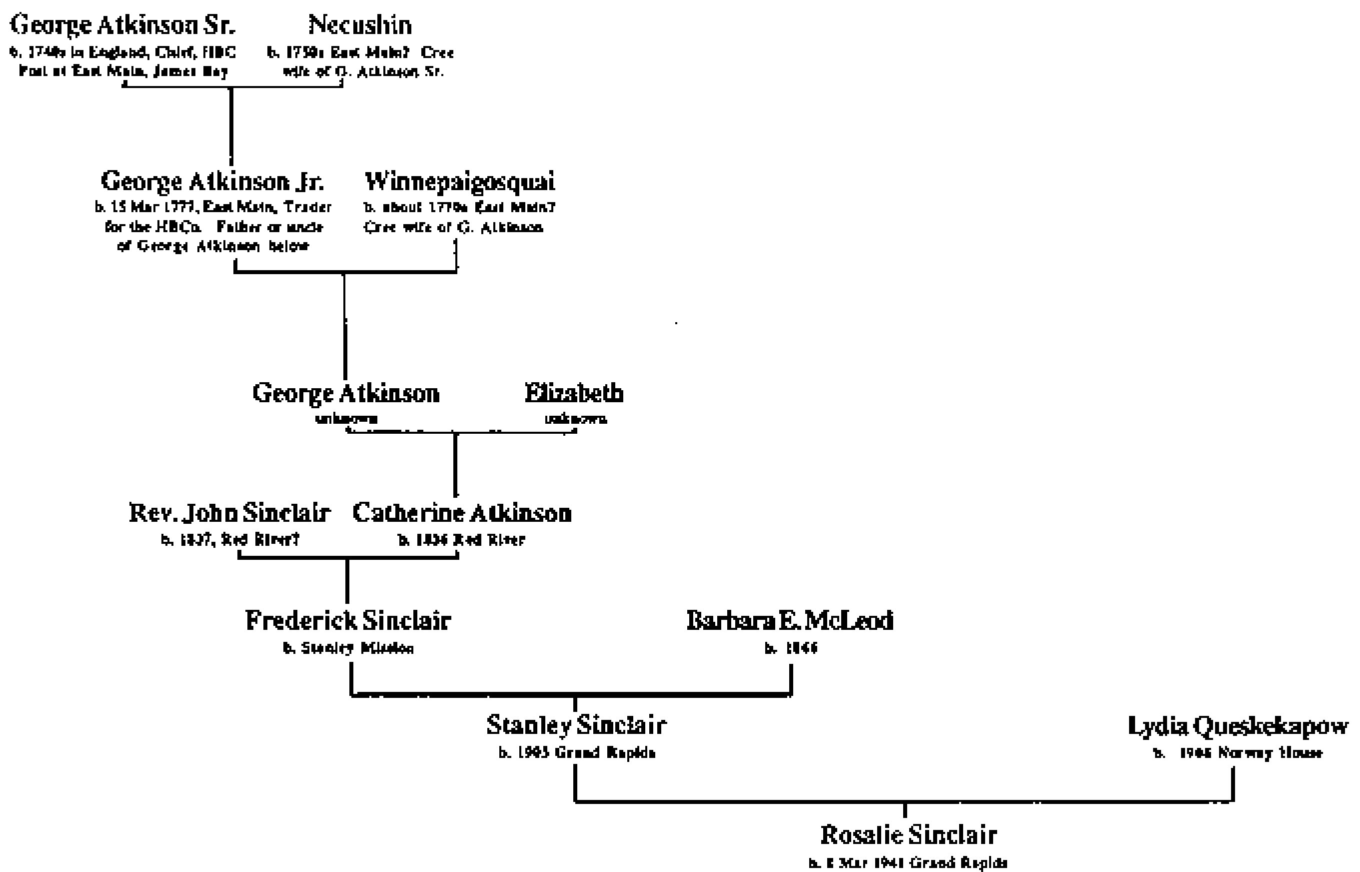
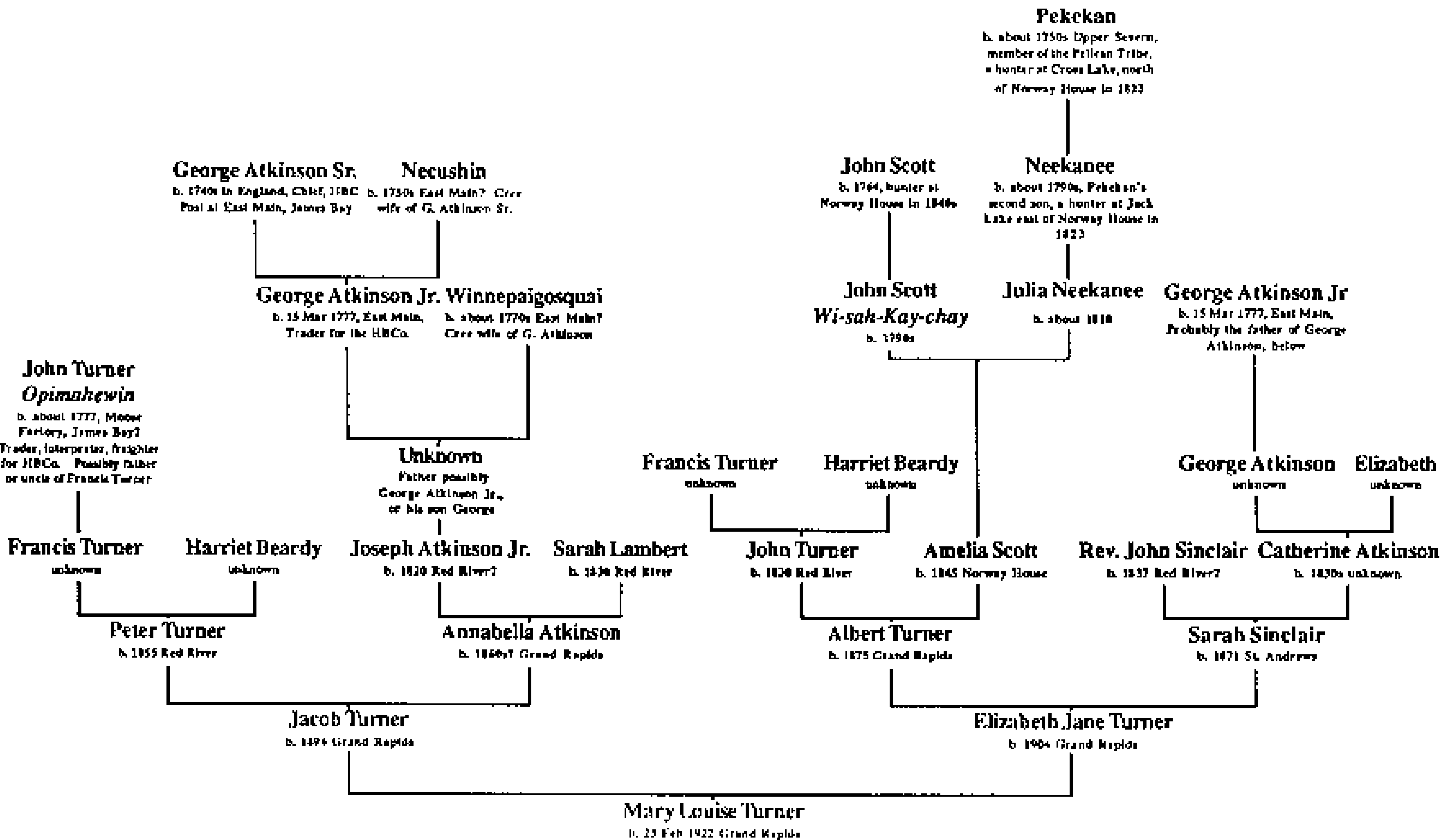


Family Tree of Henry Chartier



Family Tree of Rosalie Sinclair Desjarlais



The Family Tree of Mary Louise Turner Mercredi

Grand Rapids Families

Brief histories follow of a few old families in Grand Rapids. Most people who have lived in the community any length of time should be able to trace their own roots through one or more of these families. Information for the histories was obtained from Anglican Church records (Red River, The Pas, Moose Lake, and Grand Rapids), Grand Rapids Treaty Annuity Pay lists, Norway House Methodist Records, Half-Breed Scrip Applications, and Hudson's Bay Company records. They will help students and community members better appreciate their North American as well as European heritage, and the rich contribution their ancestors have made to the development of Canada. Perhaps they will also encourage further research to find out more about those forebears and the times in which they lived.

Atkinson

The Atkinsons are descended from George Atkinson I, an English officer of the Hudson's Bay Company in the James Bay area, and his Cree wife, Necushin. They had at least three children: George II (Sneppy), Jacob (Shesheep), and Jenny. George II, born 15 March 1777, received some education in England, then returned to Canada to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. He retired to Red River in 1829 and died there in 1830. His will mentions his wife, Winnepaigosquai, and fourteen children. They included sons George III, Samuel, Richard, Henry, Thomas, John, and one other unknown, most of whom worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at one time or the other.

Joseph Atkinson of Grand Rapids was probably either the unnamed son of George Atkinson II or a son of George III. Joseph worked at Fort Chipewyan for the Hudson's Bay Company in the early 1850s, along with Henry Atkinson, Joseph Chartier and Joseph Mercredi, a fact which may account for associations with the Chartiers and Mercredis at Grand Rapids in later years. Since there is no baptismal record for Joseph at Red River, it may be that he was baptised at the Roman Catholic Mission in Fort Chipewyan. Certainly Henry Atkinson was already married to Scholastique Villeneuve, so the family had ties with the Catholic Métis community. Joseph married Sarah Lambert, probably the daughter of Michael Lambert of Red River, and raised a large family, many of whose descendants still live in Grand Rapids today.

Joseph was at Red River in 1855 and remained there for a couple of years before he returned to the fur trade country, settling at Grand Rapids in the early 1860s. After treaty in 1875, Joseph became a member of the Grand Rapids Band, and served as councillor for a number of years. He died of old age in September 1910.

Catherine Atkinson of Grand Rapids, wife of the Reverend John Sinclair, was a daughter of George and Elizabeth Atkinson. Her father was probably George III, so she was either a niece or sister of Joseph Atkinson. She resided at Stanley Mission for a number of years before moving with her husband to Cedar Lake.

After his death, she settled with her family at Grand Rapids, where descendants still live today.

Ballantyne

The Ballantyne family is descended from ***John Ballenden***, who was born at Orphir in the Orkney Islands in about 1765. He came out to work for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1785 and was sent to the Saskatchewan where he served under William Tomison. Eventually, he was assigned to Cumberland House where he worked as a canoe maker, a steersman on the company boats, and as a carpenter until he retired and returned to the Orkneys in 1814. John probably had two wives, Jane the mother of his first four children, and Nancy, the mother of the last two. His four sons, ***John Jr.***, *William*, *James*, and *George*, all worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, daughter *Betsy* was married to a Hudson's Bay Company labourer William Rowland, and daughter *Jane* was married to Chief Factor John Lee Lewes, whose uncle was a famous actor in England.

John Jr., who was born in about 1791, had a long and interesting career. He began to work for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1809 and for many years was the steersman working on the boats which annually made the trip from there down to York Factory and back. During the smallpox epidemic of 1826, John was inoculated at Norway House while travelling back to Cumberland. Arriving there, August 27, he had a large quantity of matter on his arm, which was used to inoculate others, including the people of Moose Lake where he was trapping at the time. Twelve years later, smallpox was again raging on the prairies when John, now postmaster at Moose Lake, made a visit to Cumberland House and was vaccinated along with his men. According to the journal entry for February 27, 1838,

> This morning John Ballendine and those who arrived with him started on their return. John takes with him a supply of provisions to trade with his Indians during the season of rat hunting this spring. The vaccine matter having taken with good effect both on the arms of John and his man, they take with them the means of giving the same to all attached to Moose Lake and to which I have desired John to be careful in doing immediately on his arrival at his post.

John Jr., or Jack Ballandine as he was otherwise known, probably married in the 1820s, and according to the 1828 Census he had two wives and one child, probably also named *John*. He had three more sons in the 1830s, *Peter*, *Robert*, and *George*. His older wife, Betsy Gunn, was probably unable to have children, because his younger wife, Polly Umpherville, was definitely the mother of Peter, Robert, and George, and John, the eldest, was born shortly after John Jr. took her as his second wife. Certainly there were no more children, after Polly left the home and became the wife of Joseph McLellan at Cumberland House.

It was a common practice among the Cree for a man to have more than one wife at the same time, so Jack Ballandine was only following the custom of his mother's people. We cannot assume Polly ran off with another man. It was more likely that pressure from the missionaries prompted Jack to arrange a marriage between her and Joseph McLellan, who had worked at Moose Lake for several years before being transferred to Cumberland House. In any case, the four children remained with Jack and were raised by his older wife Betsy.

Jack's son ***John Ballandine of Moose Lake*** also worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. He married Mary Jebb, and they raised a large family, including *William*, *Richard*, *James*, *Harriet*, *Henry*, *Hardisty*, *Adam*, and *Donald*. Richard, Harriet, and Donald ended up in Grand Rapids, along with their mother, who died there. Donald married Mary Ann McLeod of the Shoal River Reserve, and their son ***Alfred***, b. 10 July 1898, was the father of Solomon Ballantyne, the husband of Bernadette Lavallee, first woman chief of Grand Rapids First Nation.

Beardy

The Beardy Family of Grand Rapids appears to be descended from Beardy, a leading member of the Cumberland House Homeguard Cree in the 1820s. Although it is speculation at this point, Beardy may have had two sons, *James* and *George*, and two daughters *Harriet* and *Mary*, who settled at Red River in the 1830s. They were probably children of his older wife, who was tenting by herself near Cumberland House in December 1818. Although we know nothing more

about the sons, *Harriet* married Francis Turner and *Mary* married William Cook. Both the Turners and the Cooks settled at Grand Rapids. Betsy Beardy, described as a hundred years old when she died at Grand Rapids in 1892, may have been their mother.

On the other hand, she may have been the younger wife of Beardy. In any case, she was the mother of **Peter Beardy**, who was born at Pas Mountain, probably about 1823, and later settled at Grand Rapids, where he became chief when the local band entered treaty in 1875. Peter's first wife was Jane Flett, whom he married at The Pas in 1847. He had a daughter *Annabella* by her. His second wife was Harriet Spence, whom he married in 1855 at Red River. His children by her were *Angelique* in 1857 [wife of Isaiah Cook of Grand Rapids], *Isabella* in 1860 [wife of Isaiah Buck of Birch River], *Mary Ann* in 1865 [wife of Benjamin Sanderson of Grand Rapids], *Elizabeth*, sometime before 1870, *James Henry* in 1868, and *Peter James* in 1870. Peter seems to have married a third time to Mary, but there were no more children. There may have been a *John*, perhaps a child of his first marriage. Although The Beardys were treaty Indians in later years, some of Peter's children claimed scrip, possibly through their mother, Harriet Spence.

Peter Beardy was chief of the Grand Rapids band of Treaty Indians from 1875 until his death of tuberculosis in April 1898.

Chartier

This old family is of Métis origin. **Antoine Chartier** settled at Grand Rapids in the 1860s at about the same time as Joseph Atkinson, with whom he had probably been acquainted in the fur trade up at Fort Chipewyan or at Cumberland House. His wife was Josephte Dorion. He entered treaty in 1875, but withdrew in 1886 and took Half-Breed Scrip. Antoine and Josephte had seven sons and one daughter, *Jonas*, *Joseph*, *Ambroise*, *Edouard*, *Alexandre*, *Solomon*, *Pierre*, and *Rosalie*, but only Jonas, Joseph, and Rosalie survived to adulthood. Married three times, ***Jonas's*** wives were **Eliza**, daughter of Joseph Alphonse Parenteau and Nellie Cook, Sarah, daughter of Jean Baptiste Dorion and Jeanne Arkinson [*sic*

Atkinson], and Alice, daughter of Peter Turner and Annabella Atkinson. ***Henry Chartier of Grand Rapids*** is Jonas and Alice's son.

There was another Chartier at Grand Rapids in later years. Possibly a brother of Antoine, **Joseph Chartier** was married to Christine Robertson, and their daughter *Eliza* was wife to William Mercredi of Grand Rapids.

Chief

The name *Chief* and variant forms *King* and *Akoobus*, is associated in the early nineteenth century with St. Peter's Parish, just outside of Selkirk. According to Fred Sanderson of Duck Bay, the name *Akoobus* may be a corruption of the Saulteaux term for "he is above," which would explain why it was translated into *Chief* or *King* in English. Although the family is of Saulteaux origins, it is not certain whether or not there is a connection to Chief Peguis. That can only be determined by further research. At any rate, an old couple, Andrew Akoobus and Nancy Kipling were married at St. Peter's in 1861. They had a son Thomas baptised in 1860, and perhaps Joseph, married in 1857, was a second son. **William King, alias Chief, alias *Akoobus***, who married Mary Turner in 1855, could have been a third son.

William Chief was at various times a settler at Red River, a trapper in the Cumberland District, and a tripman at St. Peters and Grand Rapids. His first wife was Susan Fidler, and they appear to have had two daughters born at St. Peter's, *Elizabeth*, in 1853, who married John Thomas of Berens River in 1873, and *Mary* or *Maria*, in 1854, who married François Mercredi at Grand Rapids in 1877.

In 1855, William married **Mary Turner**, a daughter of Francis Turner, who was a settler at St. Peter's at that time, but later moved to Grand Rapids. William and Mary had at least six children, included *John*, born in 1860, *Sarah* in 1862, *Richard* in 1866, *Eliza* in 1869, *William Thomas* in 1872, and *Caroline* in 1876. *Caroline*, and possibly *Sarah*, died as infants. *John* married Marguerite Chatelain in 1882 and had at least two sons, John and Ernest. *Richard* married Esther Umpherville of The Pas in 1894 and had at least five children: Elizabeth Mary

1895, William 1897, George 1899, James Henry 1901, and Flora Ann in 1903. It is unknown what became of *William Thomas* and *Eliza*. However, the fate of their parents is known. William Chief died in 1888 in Grand Rapids, and his wife Mary lived on until 1919. She was reputed to have been one hundred years old at the time of her death.

Mercredi

When François Mercredi of Grand Rapids applied for Half-Breed Scrip, he stated that he was born in 1832 at Slave Lake in the North West Territories. His parents were François Mercredi, a French Canadian, and Françoise Maoust, a Métis woman. It is probable that François Sr. worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, and it is certain that his son François was working as a tripman for the company at Fort Chipewyan in the 1850s. A Joseph Mercredi worked there at the same time as an interpreter, and may have been another son of François Sr.

François Mercredi Jr. was associated with the Atkinsons, Chartiers, and Dorions in the North West, and this may have motivated him to settle his family at Grand Rapids. His wife, Geneviève Lamirande was born in 1835, the daughter of Louis Lamirande and Marguerite Davis. François and Geneviève had nine children: *Sophie* birth unknown, *François* born in 1854, *Marguerite* in 1855, *Harriet*, between 1855-1862, *Rosalie* in 1862, *Alexandre* in 1865, *William* in 1869, *Norbert* in 1871, and *Marie* between 1872-1875.

François married Maria Chief, a daughter of William Chief, in 1877. They had two children, James Mercredi, who was born in 1878, and Elizabeth, born in 1880. Elizabeth married George Spence of St. Peter's in 1899, and James married Elizabeth Mary Sanderson of Grand Rapids in 1904.

Marguerite married Maxime Vermette and resided at St. Norbert, on the outskirts of Winnipeg. *Harriet* married Joseph Hourston in 1877 at Grand Rapids, but they later moved away. *Rosalie* married John Moar in 1878 and eventually settled with him at St. Pierre. The Moars had at least three sons, William, Robert, and Alfred. *William* married Eliza, daughter of Joseph Chartier and Christine Robertson.

Norbert married in 1884 at Moose Lake to Charlotte Stove, a daughter of a Scottish labourer for the Hudson's Bay Company named John Stove.

It is interesting to note that the Mercredis took treaty in 1875, but withdrew in 1885. Only Maria Chief, the wife of François Mercredi, retained her status, but in 1887 after her husband's death, her two children, James and Elizabeth, were reinstated. She married again in 1891, this time to a treaty man from Grand Rapids named Isaac Scott.

Scott

The Scott Family is closely related to the Turners, Cooks, and other families of Grand Rapids. The ancestors of the Scotts were in Norway House in 1840. **Old John Scott**, the head of the family was about 78 years old in 1842 when he was baptised into the Methodist Church. His wife, Lucy Kee-ni-kwah-nah-pwi-s-kwa-w, was described by the Rev. James Evans as "John Scott's old woman."

It is uncertain whether Mary Scott, the wife of John Alder, was his daughter or not. According to her baptismal record, she was born in 1816, when he was *circa* fifty-two years of age. On the other hand, she may have been a child by an earlier marriage of the old man's son, John Scott *Wi-sah-kay-cha-y*. At any rate, she and her husband were baptised in 1840 by Robert Rundle at Norway House. They had at least three children: John, Jennet, and Annabella.

John Scott *Wi-sah-kay-cha-y*, the son of Old John Scott, had five children baptised in 1840. They were *Mary Anne*, born *circa* 1827, *John* born *circa* 1832, *Katy* and *Jessy* born in 1838, and *Jane* in 1839. This accords well with the 1838 Census of the Norway House District. *Whiskeesacco* [alias John Scott] had one wife, a son, and three daughters. There is no record of his marriage in 1840, but in 1842 he married Julia Neekanee. She was a daughter of Neekanee, second son of Pekekan, an old hunter north of Norway House and member of the Pelican Tribe, who was probably born in the region of the Upper Severn in the 1750s. John and Julia had three more children: *Abraham* in 1843, *Amelia* in 1845, and *Isaac* in about 1850.

Mary Anne, John's eldest daughter, married Hector Morrison, a Scottish labourer for the Hudson's Bay Company at Norway House. They still have descendants at Norway House today.

John Jr. married Sarah Ah-chee-nih, the daughter of John Pa-pa-sa-ko-nap and Ka-kee-ka-pew, in 1847. Their children included Maggie in 1848, Amis in 1850, Lucy in 1853, Mary Jane 1860, Emily 1862, Jane 1865, and probably Emma in 1867.

Abraham married Catherine Cook, probably a daughter of William Cook and Mary Beardy, who were from Red River, but later settled at Grand Rapids. Catherine's mother, Mary Beardy, was probably a sister or half-sister of Peter Beardy, who became first chief of the Grand Rapids Band. The Scotts seemed to have moved to Grand Rapids between March 1867 and April 1869, and after they entered treaty in 1875, Abraham served as a councillor from 1882 to 1885. He and Catherine had at least thirteen children, eight of whom died young. Archie and Ishmael survived, and three daughters, two of whom married Turners, and one who married Robert Stack of the Lake St. Martin Band. There are still descendants in Grand Rapids today.

Amelia married John Turner at Grand Rapids in 1863, and their descendants are still living in the community.

Isaac also settled in Grand Rapids. He married Elizabeth, and they had eight children, five of whom died before 1900. Thomas, who was born in 1878, attended Immanuel College in Saskatchewan. There were two surviving daughters who married, so there may be descendants in Grand Rapids today.

Turner

There are many unanswered questions about the Turner Family of Grand Rapids. We know they were descended from **Francis Turner**, but we do not as yet know his origins. However, there is a good possibility he was a son of **John Turner**,

Opimahewin, who served the Hudson's Bay Company for many years. In 1815, when he was thirty-eight years of age and had fourteen years' experience in the company, John Turner was appointed acting master of the post at Red Deers River. The Hudson's Bay Company records describe him as six feet 1 inch in height and of fair complexion, and in fact he was described as an Englishman when he was baptised by Rev. Smithurst in 1842, even though he had been born in Hudson Bay and most assuredly had Cree ancestry. In the 1820s, he became a free trader for a time, and in 1833 Captain Back of the Arctic Expedition described his farm just above Cedar Lake on the Saskatchewan River as follows:

> In the River Saskashawan, I was not more suprised to behold, on the right bank, a large farm house, with barns and fenced inclosures, amid which were grazing eight or ten fine cows, and three or four horses. It belonged to a freeman, of the name of Turner, whom I regretted not having an opportunity of seeing.

In 1842, when he and his wife Sally were baptised, John Turner was responsible for Hudson's Bay Company freighting on the Saskatchewan River below Cumberland House.

Although John's origins are unknown at present, it is possible he was a son of Philip Turnor, surveyor for the Hudson's Bay Company in the late eighteenth century. What is certain is that his sister Hannah Turner was married to Thomas Umpherville of Moose Lake. He may have been a brother of Joseph Turner of Moose Factory, whose own son Joseph worked at Cumberland House for many years.

Although his origins are still uncertain, Francis Turner lived at the Red River Settlement during the 1830s. He seems to have married twice. *Mary*, the daughter of Francis and Mary Turner, was baptised in 1834. In 1855, she married William Chief, a tripman, and raised a large family, many of whom settled at Grand Rapids.

After the death of his first wife, Francis married Harriet Beardy in 1835. She was probably either the sister or half-sister of Peter Beardy, first chief of the Grand Rapids First Nation. Francis and Harriet had a large family, which seems to have

included the following: *Charlotte*, born [and died] in 1838, *John* in 1840, *Sally* in 1842, *Cornelius* in 1845, *Harriet* in 1848, *William* in 1851, *James* in 1853, and *Peter* in 1856. These children were born at St. Peter's in the Red River Settlement, with the possible exception of Cornelius and Harriet, who were baptised at The Pas.

Perhaps Francis's eldest children, John and Sally, were named after John and Sally Turner of The Pas. If so, this might be considered evidence that they were indeed the parents of Francis Turner. At any rate, Francis was at The Pas in 1845 and 1848, when Cornelius and Harriet were baptised. Perhaps he was visiting relatives at that time.

Francis must have settled at Grand Rapids in the early 1860s, because his son *John* was married there to Amelia Scott in 1863. John and Amelia had a large family which included John James, Elijah, Albert, Absalom, Cornelius, Annabella, and Maria Elizabeth. John later became chief of the Grand Rapids band.

Francis's son *Cornelius* married Mary Anne Thickfoot, the daughter of a chief on Lake Winnipeg. Their children included Sarah, Maria, Adam, Samuel, Martha, and John George. His son *William* married Mary Annewinak and had two children, Joseph and Elizabeth Anne, before she died. *James* married Mary Anne Alder and had at least one daughter Sarah. *Peter*, the youngest son of Francis and Harriet, married Hannah Bella Atkinson, and they had children Louisa, Jacob, Angeline, and Samuel.

There are many descendants of Francis Turner and Harriet Beardy in Grand Rapids and elsewhere today. If future research establishes that Francis was a son of John Turner of The Pas, then it means the Turners of Grand Rapids are cousins to all the descendants of Thomas Umpherville Sr., whose wife, Hannah, was a sister of John Turner.

Umpherville

The Umpherville Family has long been associated with Moose Lake and The Pas. The common ancestor is **Edward Umfreville**, an Englishman from an old Norman family that arrived in England with William the Conqueror in the 11th Century. Edward was a fur trader and explorer, who came out to York Factory in 1771 to work as a writer for the Hudson's Bay Company. He was there until 1782, when the French admiral, La Pérouse sailed into Hudson Bay and burned the forts at Churchill and York Factory. Edward was taken back to France and locked up in Dinan Castle for a year. After his release, he returned to British North America, this time to work for the North West Company. He traded for four years on the North Saskatchewan, then returned to England in 1789 and wrote a book in 1790 about his adventures.

While he worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, Edward had a son named *Thomas*, born between 1771-1782 at York Factory, who became a trapper for the Hudson's Bay Company. He may also have had a daughter *Sarah*, wife of Dr. John Calder of York Factory. Later, when he went to work for the North West Company, he had at least four other children.

Thomas Umpherville was part of the York Factory Homeguard Cree, who began to move inland in the early nineteenth century. He and a brother [half-brother?] named Wiskeneboo (alternate spellings Wiskenepow or Queskenippawe) were at Norway House by 1813 and had moved into the Cumberland District by 1818. Thomas's wife was Hannah or Ann Turner, whose brother was John Turner of The Pas. They had at least five children. *Catharine*, born *circa* 1808, married Pierre Pambrun, later Chief Trader at Fort Walla Walla (Oregon), and raised a large family in the west. *Thomas Jr.* born *circa* 1810, married a woman named Charlotte and settled at Moose Lake, where he worked as a trapper, labourer, and fisherman for the Hudson's Bay Company. *Mary*, born *circa* 1815, was wife first to Jack Ballandine, then to Joseph Archibald McLellan, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at Cumberland House. She has many Ballendine/Ballantyne and McLellan descendants. *John*, born *circa* 1820, husband of Mary Brass, lived at Moose Lake for many years where he acted as catechist for the Anglican mission. He and Mary raised a large family which later

moved to Saskatchewan. *Sarah*, born *circa* 1822, married Joseph Turner, who may have been her cross-cousin (her mother's brother's son). The Turners raised a large family, too.

Thomas Umpherville Jr. was also known by his Cree name *WahsahKapow*. He worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at Moose Lake. His family included: *Samuel* born in 1842, *Philip* born in 1844, *Peter* in 1846, *Mary* in 1849, *Thomas* in 1852, *John* in 1854, *Isaiah* in 1857, *Charles* in 1859, and *Elizabeth* in 1869.

Thomas's eldest son, *Samuel*, was a fur hunter at The Pas. He and his wife, Sarah, had at least five daughters: Rebecca, Mirah, Sarah, Mary Susan, and Charlotte. His second son, *Philip*, worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at Moose Lake and at Cedar Lake. Philip's wife was Mary Ballendine of Cumberland House. Their children included Zaccheus, Flora, Samuel, Georgina, and Sarah Jane. Thomas's eldest daughter, *Mary*, was married to Jean-Marie Buck and had at least seven children. The Bucks lived at Moose Lake. Thomas's fifth son, *John*, lived at The Pas. He was married to Charlotte Ta-ta-pa-kwa-nep, and they had at least three daughters, Mary, Esther, and Margaret. Thomas's youngest son, *Charles*, also lived at The Pas He was married to Jane Patenoos, and they had at least one living child.

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