

TRADITIONAL LAND USE STUDY

METIS NATION OF SASK - EASTERN REGION III



NEW THIS MONTH

- Parks Canada - Shirley Johnson - Pages 1-2**
- Metis Foot print Page 3**
- Interview with Margaret Harrison Page 4**
- News and Events Page 5**

WHY I'M INVOLVED

BY SHIRLEY JOHNSON

Thank you for this opportunity to introduce myself in the Newsletter. I am Shirley Johnson and I work as the Site Manager for Motherwell Homestead and Batoche National Historic Sites. I started in this new role just over a year ago and have been honored to be part of the working group for the ERIII Traditional Land use study during this time

When I think of Parks Canada’s role in preserving and presenting the Stories of Canada I am inspired by this study as a wonderful example of how important partnerships are in preserving the history, and ensuring the information is gathered.

We certainly know that many parts of authentic history do not currently exist in books and therefore can so easily be lost.

In this case we are very fortunate that there are still Metis knowledge keepers and Elders with stories that will contribute to the study and to share with future generations an understanding and appreciation of the past. This study is the opportunity to have that traditional land use information documented and preserved. When I think of Parks Canada’s role in preserving and presenting the Stories of Canada I am inspired by this study as a wonderful example of how



General view of the Barn, showing the L-shaped gambrel-roofed structure built of stone and timber, 1988.
Agence Parcs Canada, Homestead Motherwell/ Parks Canada Agency, Motherwell Homestead, 1988.

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As an agency, Parks Canada is seeking to tell broader and more inclusive stories that represent the true diversity and complexity of Canadian history. Preserving and presenting our history can never be done properly unless the oral stories are gathered and shared, adding to the collective of the rich history of Metis people in the Qu'Appelle Valley and south area of Saskatchewan. This is needed both to connect us with the past and help us better understand the present.



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-Shirley Johnson**

At Motherwell Homestead we currently tell the story of European settlers and the story of early western agriculture. This is only one part of the story of homesteading the west; we recognize there are large messaging gaps in what we currently present to the visitors on this part of Canadian history. Parks Canada is proud to work with Metis Nation – Saskatchewan to bring forward Metis stories that reflect the rich history of this land and we very much look forward to sharing the stories at Motherwell Homestead!





METIS FOOTPRINT

A PLACE TO ENJOY SOME TEA AND BANNOCK

HARVESTING BERRIES

By: Calvin Racette

While a young boy, it was common for me to go out with my mother and pick berries. We would pick several types of fruit berries as they ripened. Picking saskatoons was the most important. We would go as a family unit and would go to the saskatoon bluffs and proceed to pick the ripe purple fruit off the branches we could reach. I can remember always trying to stay in the shade and to try and avoid the mosquitoes that always seemed to be around.

It was always a chore for the kids. We would have much preferred to go running about in the hills near the bluffs but my mother would be stern and pressure us to do our share. I remember that we each had our own pint jar full of Freshie. This sweet fruit flavoured drink was our reward and we could have a sip when we covered the bottom of our pick pail. We got additional sips when we got closer to filling the pail.

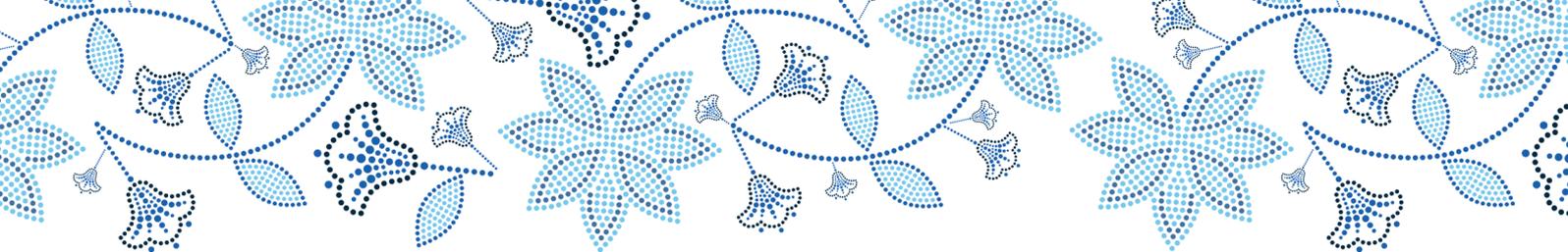
My mother would dump all of our little pails into a bigger pail and carry it home. She would clean them and process them and then preserve them in quart jars as desserts for the winter months. We would be reminded that we would be getting our winter treats gathered and that it was important. This process continued for pin cherries, raspberries, chokecherries, cranberries and for hazelnuts. We called them weasel nuts and I can remember that they had a covering over the nuts that was covered in a fuzzy coating that sometimes punctured your skin and stung.

I can remember going down into the fruit cellar as we called it and picking the fruit for our supper off the shelf.

My mother would also buy cases of peaches, pears, grapes, and apricots from the store and would turn them into preserves as well. We also had many jars of rhubarb that she would pick from the gardens of the ladies she worked for. I can also still remember the other items preserved. Fish and chicken were also put into jars. We did not have a freezer, so this was the method used by my mother and the other mothers to feed their families during the winter.

As an adult, I still go to the Valley and seek out the old spots we used to go. Some of them no longer exist and you are required to look in other spots. What is interesting is that you will meet other families doing exactly what you are doing. They are going picking berries in the same spots that their families have visited for many years. These spots are considered treasures and are kept as family secrets if possible. One of my favourite funny stories is about a tremendous picking spot that I had found. It was a spot that nobody had gone to and the berries were incredible and plentiful. While visiting with my brother one day, I told him about this incredible spot and that it provided me all the berries I needed and I never had to go anywhere else. The following year, I went to my secret spot and realized that it had been picked over pretty good. I stopped by my brother's house for a visit later that day and told him that somebody else found my spot and picked it pretty clean. He laughed at me and said that I never should have told him. He had spent two whole days there before I did. Ever since then, I never tell anybody about my picking spots.





AN INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET HARRISON

BY SHAUNA MCNABB COTE/ EDITED BY VIRGINIA LACROIX

Knowledge Keeper, Margaret Harrison, shares memories of growing up in the valley

What community did you grow up in and what can you tell me about your early years there?

I grew up in the road allowances as people are calling it today, I didn't realize it then. It was around the Katepwa lake area and the Qu'Appelle Valley. I can remember that place and that we were a community. My parents were Adeline Pelletier and Alfred Pelletier. My father moved there because his father and mother Jos   Pelletier and Vitaline Cardinal moved down there and that's how we began.

We lived by the lake, the east end of Katepwa lake right beside the dam that fed into the Qu'Appelle River.

I mean, these spots were very precious to us because at the dam is where they would catch fish and if they had shells they would shoot ducks and gather duck eggs. They would go and sit and watch the water flowing over and watch the fish jumping up to try and get into the lake at spawning time, so it was definitely a landmark.

I went to school at Katepwa school which was 3 miles from where we lived. We had to walk that 3 miles. That school is still there. The site is still there, and I think it was built in 1919 if I'm not mistaken.

So, in that area where you lived, was there a lot of places to pick berries and harvest plants?

Yes, it was plentiful. It started out with the gooseberries, and this is beside the lake. We had all these short shrubs and beautiful big trees there too, but there was a lot of berries between our house and the dam. So we had a gooseberry patch. And there were lots of wild raspberries there.



There wasn't any saskatoons there, or chokecherries. We had to go up to the coulees to pick those berries. They used to pick those li boom, and it's a mint tea.

Li boom, is that by the rivers?

Well, it was by the lake. And maybe it was down by the river as well because it probably grew all along the river, all the way down, all the way to Tantallon for that matter.

Did your mom ever pick any medicines like sage and store it?

I don't know about the sage part of it. I know we had rosehips and we made tea with that and we made this mint tea.

I know they picked a lot of seneca root and they'd have to fill this big bag and it was sold by the pound. They had to dry it and put it in these bags and that's how they sold it. So, they wandered the hills and I guess there was seneca root patches that different people knew. I know mom went with mushum and kookum and they would go pick and they would share the money from what was sold and they would pick a lot of saskatoons and would sell them at B-Say-Tah Point.

It must have been very hard to travel from the valley to the top of the hill in the wintertime.

It was labor intensive, that's for sure. But a lot of times we went to Abernethy to get the shopping done and get groceries because we went in a group and there would be a sleigh full and it wouldn't be so hard.

Do you know of developed towns in the region and some undeveloped fishing areas in the region?

Yes. Well I mentioned the St Patric's Church, which you know anybody that lived down there would know about that, because it was specifically a mission church for M  tis people.

We tried to make is a landmark. The pasture owner of the land just continued using it as pasture. We just know about where it is and that's about it. It would have been nice if more of us would have got together and we could've made it happen but we didn't get enough support for it.

The other area was we had was a clay bed. It was beautiful brown, creamy coloured clay, and that's what my grandma used to plaster her house with every year. She had a log house. We would have to stomp the grass into the clay and that's what she would put on and then they used to wet it and would make it just smooth then they would paint it with white wash. Her house was white, it was beautiful.

That clay, we used to go and sit in there and cover ourselves in it and run to the lake and wash it all off.

I know that other people I interviewed had different family traditions, especially around the holidays and stuff. Do you have any traditions?

Yes, we did.

All of my grandfather's family, they all had to come home at New Years. They all had to come and see their mother. She would give them a blessing. So, the boys - because the girls were always working somewhere away - they got dressed up and on New Years Day they go and see their mother and she would have a meal ready. And you would go at 8:00 am for breakfast. Then it would be like a big New Years dinner because she would have everything on the table. Chicken and turkey- I remember the oranges, there would be a big bowl of Japanese oranges and you could eat as much as you wanted. Nobody was telling you that you couldn't eat. And there was always candies and cookies and pie, whatever you wanted. It was all over the house, the table was full.

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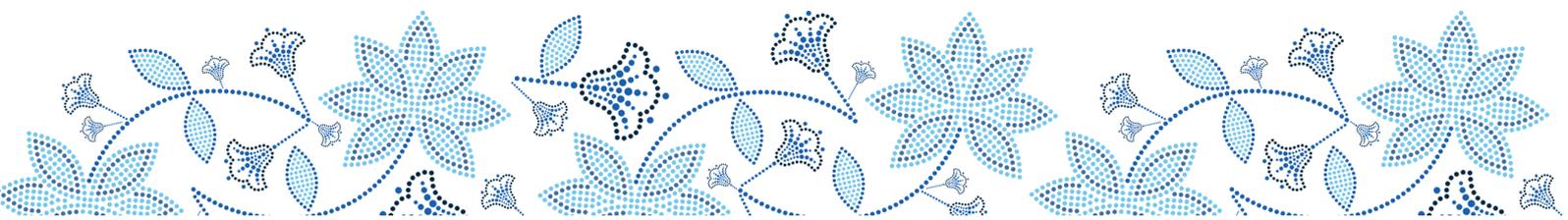
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It was a beautiful banquet and you sat down and grandmother and mom would set the table and you would sit and take turns sitting at the table eating. It was a beautiful meal and then they would pray or she would give her blessing and then we would go to the next house and do the same thing again. So on that that day, you'd have about 3 houses to go to on New Years Day.

So you'd have to save room in your belly and eat at four different places.?

Yes, then would sit and visit. There was lots of stories and lots of visiting and us kids would play and just eat whatever we wanted, by night we'd be just stuffed. But then they would start dancing and there would be dances for a couple of days. There would be a fiddle player. The house would be prepared for the dance and the furniture would go out and they would start dancing and go all night and go all day and oh my god!





EASTERN REGION III

NEWS & EVENTS



**ATTENTION MÉTIS
CITIZENS OF ER III!**

MN-S EASTERN REGION III

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Saturday, July 9, 2022 – 10:30 a.m.

Memorial Hall, Indian Head

423 Grand Avenue

Traditional Land Use Study Presentation

Lunch will be provided

Lebret Farmland Foundation AGM – 1:00 p.m.

Please call 306-695-3425 to confirm your attendance!!



The TLU working group would like to welcome Virginia LaCroix as our new TLU Coordinator. You can reach Virginia at 306-331-8199 or by email at tlus_eriii@sasktel.net



**Have a story?
Contact Us:**

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