

# DRYDEN AND DISTRICT MUSEUM

## ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION

### INTERVIEW WITH ALPHONSE ROUSSIN PART 1

Date of Interview: March 3, 2019

Interviewer: Natalie Nachtman [N.N]

Narrator: Alphonse Roussin [A.R]

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N.N: Twentieth, 2019, it's a Wednesday. My name is Natalie Nachtman and I am here with Alphonso Roussin.

Al: Alphonse.

N.N: Alphonse

A.R: Alphonse (French inflection)

N.N: Ooh

A.R: I'm a, I am a French Metis from Manitoba.

N.N: Oooh, that's interesting. So..., um, where exactly where were you born then in Manitoba?

A.R: I was born in St. Jo's de Lac, Manitoba. That's about 180 miles, miles now, I'm still into miles. (both laugh) I convert everything into miles. It's about 180 miles northwest of Winnipeg.

N.N: Hmhmm

A.R: You know, it's close to Dauphin. Towards Dauphin.

N.N: Okay. And how old were you when you first came to Dryden?

A.R: Five years old.

N.N: Oh wow.

Al: But I was turning six in a month or two. We moved up here after the school ended in June. My brother and my sister, my older brother and older sister. They were both going to school. Then, when school was over, my parents had planned on moving to Ontario. So, my, a couple of my uncles, came up with a truck, a big truck and loaded everything up by the end of June. We come up end of June, beginning of July to Dryden.

N.N: Hmmmm. And what were your parent's reasons for moving to Ontario?

A.R: Well... you know, a lot of people were moving at that time. You know, we were on a farm there and my dad was, and my mom, they had some cattle, milk cows, and we were shipping cream. But you know, at that time, we were doing all our work with the horses and, except for the, uh, thrashing, the thrashing machine which belonged to the person that came around and did that work. But you know the machines were coming into play and people were getting into machinery, they needed more land. And my dad had been up here working for a couple of winters, uh, for the company here or contractors, cutting pulpwood. That's what they used to do in the wintertime, even, go up to Riding Mountain and cut logs and firewood to go to Winnipeg. So, you know, a farm just wasn't quite enough eh, but, especially when you wanted to get into machinery, and you needed to get more land. So my dad thought, what the heck, you know, they had been there for, they'd been to Ontario in Quibell in the 30's already, so, but he had been farming there for about 10 years, on his brother's farm and his brother had moved to Winnipeg, so, you know, it was just a matter of making up a choice, do you want to get bigger or do you want let somebody, the neighbour, to take over that property and move on to Ontario. You know at that time, was increasing, there was construction, quite a bit of work, the bush in the winter time and on the hydro, you know, my dad went to work for the hydro and uh, you know, even cutting wood. But his purpose was to get into the mill and work in the mill. For the first few years he worked on construction. And as he was getting a little older, you know, then they gave him a job at the gate, watchman and fire security so he stayed on that until he retired. But we were here for ten years in the fifties and dad bought that house in fifty, in the summer, shortly after we got here. We had to wait a couple of months to get, to move into the house and uh, so, but, my dad always wanted to go back farming. So, in the late, throughout the late fifties, he's looking around for farms, for farms for sale, so in October, in the fall of, of fifty-nine we moved out to Eagle River, he bought a farm there, by, by the Beaver Creek, which is about three miles this side of Eagle River. Now it's on the Roussin Road, they named it the Roussin Road, about the time my mom left there. So, and I'm glad we did go back to farming, because it was, I enjoyed it. I had another brother that really enjoyed farming and

we kept cattle for maybe about fifteen years, for about fifteen years. With my dad and one of my younger brothers. But, you know, things, in, in Dryden, at that time. I remember seeing the sign changed, coming into Dryden from the west from eighteen hundred to twenty-one hundred people. But, so, it was growing, you know, for sure, it grew quite a bit since then, in the whole area of course, like even around Quibell, Amesdale, some, some, and Eagle River as far as that goes. Even in fifty-nine it was quite a going concern little town, with the railroad there. You know they had a, a station agent there twenty-four hours, seven days a week. And there was two section gangs there. And, uh, it was a thriving [?] little uh, and with the tourists in the summertime, it added to the economy. Of course, Dryden with the mill getting up, you know, and everything else mechanizing, even with the CPR, they shut, they shut the station down. And then they, they, when they formed the gangs, they just cut right back on the section there so there was not as much work in those little towns so some them were moving to Dryden. But I was glad that we were moving out there, on the farm, cause a, we were a bunch, we were six boys and three girls, so we were a big family. It was nice to get out and work, right at home when we were younger. Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old, we could go and cut some wood for dad and a, we helped make hay, put up grain. And it was a big help, that's what my dad liked doing, is being a farmer. So a, it changed our way of life, There's no doubt about it. But Dryden was still our centre of attraction eh. We used to shop at the Bay, at the Co-op Store, but we worked, we, we were working here in Dryden, in the mill at first. I worked in the mill until sixty-four, when I was a teenage I started working in the mill, that would have been in sixty-one. I had worked on the railroad for a few months, in Eagle. But as that was dying down, the foreman had said you know, they are cutting back and cutting back. He said if I were you, if you get a chance to get in the mill, do so because the CPR is going downhill. And even you know just a point of interest at that time, in the fifties, there was all kinds of, all kinds of uh, service here the station was here and we had two trains going each direction. One in the afternoon about three o'clock, three thirty in the afternoon and another one at night about the same time and they would meet here most of the time. You could get on, those were passenger trains, and they were hauling a bit of local, local freight. So, even what we thought was really nice was, when we were in Dryden here going to school we could have a paper route out that way, and the papers used to come in, the daily papers used to come in on that afternoon train and there was a guy of course looking after all the papers, and uh, he'd lay our our paper route. If we had twenty papers to deliver, well it was all laid out for us with our name on it. And we would go to the freight shed and pick up our papers and go home. Was a handy way to make a few cents eh. And we all did that uh, and everybody in those days of course there was no TVs in the early 50s so people were reading the papers eh. In the wintertime, especially around Christmas time, and on Saturdays you had a thick paper. You had to have a sleigh to be able to, ha, you couldn't carry it all. But we enjoyed it you know, we made a few extra dollars and the people that worked in the mill, if they got their papers by five o'clock when they came home they were happy so they could read their papers at supper time eh. Even when we first started, if you couldn't get a paper route right

away, because there was a lot of boys trying for that, you could sell papers on the corner, the central corner. And my brother and I, we did that along with some others that did it until you could get a steady paper route. And we liked to get the ones going out towards where we lived eh so you deliver on your way home. And uh, and at that time there was the Winnipeg paper and the Free Press. There was two different paper routes. So, if there was two or three routes going in our direction, you double that and you know, half a dozen kids had a job after school.

N.N: And you had the paper route before you moved back to Eagle River?

A.R: Oh, yeah, you see I'd given up already then

N.N: Ohh, okay.

Al: The older you got, you were looking for something different. I had worked at the it was the Denver inn (?) or the Chalet in, filling the soup, the soup shelves and the chocolates and the candies and the pop, the pop cooler after school. That was another job that I liked doing because it was steady and every night you would go and work one hour. Pay wasn't that could but it was at least as much as, maybe a little more than delivering papers. So, and it was on the way home too eh. So it was very nice, we were fortunate to have that. And at that time, I remember, we could, we'd sell pop bottles too eh. They were right along the railroad track they were, and I remember selling to people there who had garages. They had their cars coming in, in the box cars at the time. And of course they were brand new cars, they were unloading them and they'd have lunch and they were buying pop at dinner time and they'd just throw the bottles away. Well when we were coming back from school, before we had even got to the station for our papers we knew that the signs were there, the cars were on the side. "Oh those guys have been here, let's go get those pop bottles and sell them" [laughter], so we sold them to uh Stanfield, Claus Stanfield, I don't know if it was his dad or himself. He had a bakery shop here by Kuppers Bakery. Was just a little uhm, and you could eat in there too eh all kinds of baking. But we used to go there and that was our treat for the day. Sell our pop bottles and buy a pop for 6 7 cents you could get a pop. Plus you could get a long Johns for 3 cents. [laughter] That made our day. But of course, you know you had to have pop bottles and a lot of times we didn't do it but every time that train would, the box cars were there we knew when, that's when we went and three or four of us would go and collect enough bottles there from the workers to buy us a treat before we take off on our paper route. But, uh, when I was in high school, I went to the Catholic school here by the way, and it started right in the summer, in September of 50. So in 58 I was going to high school. I went to grade 9 and 10 here at the high school. But we got a job, the, the legion hall had burnt down. I don't know if it was that year, anyways. When they were building the legion hall, I just happened to go there with another guy from this side of town, he was a little older than I was. But we asked the carpenters if we could help them around

the job site. They said “yeah, you come back when we start putting the tiles up on the ceiling”. So, we were getting paid, but at Hardy’s at that time, if you went to work at Hardy’s there were some boys after school would go and work an hour or two at Hardy’s, but they were only making about 40, 45 cents an hour. So the guy, the carpenter, gave us a job fixing up these ceiling tiles to uh, get it all set up, and we could make 50 cents an hour so we were happy [laughter]. But that’s the way it went you know, so we’d work and so the other guy gave up after a couple of nights after school he said “the hell with it, I don’t have to do that”. So I would do it, well I’d get to work three or four hours and I was happy because I would make around 50 cents an hour and that was more money than I’d ever seen you know, until then. My paper route didn’t pay that good, [laughter]. But, that was one part of it, that was our school day see. And uh, when we moved to the farm of course you know, there was, at that time there was a lot of work too eh. And uh, you could get a job like, I was very fortunate. I was hanging around with a friend, his dad was a section Forman in Eagle. So he had told, he had told my friend that if I wasn’t going to go back to school that fall he’d give me a job. So I went there and worked, and that sorta gave me a pretty good work record for later. But of course I did get laid off in January, But my uncle who was, his wife was running a boarding house here, and there was somebody there from Winnipeg for Olda Elevator Company (?), was at the hospital putting an elevator in. There was, two floors then in the old ho-, in the..

N.N: In the Red Cross Hospital?

A.R: It was, No, it was up ant the new hospital.

N.N: Oh okay.

A.R: That wing isn’t there now, but there was an elevator getting put up there and so that would have been in, in the winter of ‘59 and, or no ‘60. Winter of ‘60 and anyways, the wages were good because the guy was a little bit stuck because his partner went to a bigger job and they only had about a month left. So my uncle said “well I know my nephew was just getting laid off from the rail road”, cause we were always visiting too with my mom’s brothers, eh. So I ended up getting a good job working there with really good wages for that time. A dollar ninety an hour, [laughter]. But the mill was only paying, the wage at the mill was only about that much too, eh. So anyways after that my friend says “You know, if you want to work for a month for Hooey and McMillan down at Mintaki” he says “there’s a couple guys who are quitting there and you could come right in there”. So I went and worked there for a month eh, cutting wood. But I knew a little bit about cutting wood because I had worked with my dad on the farm and we used to do it here when my dad was here. And we were maybe only twelve, thirteen years old and we still, and we could pile wood and cut wood. My dad fix us up with a bucksaw, in those days we didn’t even have power saws, [laughter]. But he would fix all two or three of us boys up with a buck saw and

an axe. Well we couldn't touch his axe because he'd sharpen it, and his saw too you couldn't touch that one. But we could take those, take any of the other ones. So we'd try and pick one for ourselves, eh. We'd look after it so it wouldn't get dull. But anyways, when I got on with McMillan and it was Fad (?) McMillan, he was an old guy already, when I left there after a month he says, "You know", and there was a couple, four other guys cutting next to us they were living in an old house, an old homestead, an old farm up North up Minitaki, maybe about an hour and a half North. But he says, "You know", he says "anytime you're looking for work", he says "come and work for me any time, you know you cut more wood here than the rest of those guys did, eh, and they're older than you are". But it just so happened, you know, that I was experienced enough at that, at my, at sixteen you know. An then, my friends fore-, uh dad, he come over and he says "you know you're getting laid off on March the fifteenth or, you'll be laid off" and that's the way it worked in the bushes, in those days. When the frost was coming out of the ground they put half load regulations and they didn't want any wood left in the bush over the summer so they'd lay you off for a month and a half or so. He said "you know, there's a steel gang going to BC about the time you're going to be finished here." Well, we said, well put our names down. We'll go. So, [laughter], so we ended up going up on the crows nest pass in BC.

N.N: wow.

A.R: It was good experience, at that age, eh. And the, it was a steel gang from Ontario here, but see the ground was frozen yet and they had to, they were building a, a new mine of some sort. I think it was a gold mine and they wanted to replace the steel on about eighty miles of side-line eh, of uh branch line. So we went and worked there for two weeks, but it had taken us four days to get there cause they stopped in Kenora for one thing. We had went in a freight to Kenora. We ride, we rode in the engine and then from Kenora it was nothing much more than a freight train but it was a bunk car and it had a cook shack. And there was two hundred men working on that gang. So, but they picked up in Winnipeg, Brandon, Regina and.. where else? Another place in Alberta, and then we moved on to BC to the job site. Four days later they put us to work. Work two full weeks and we were getting time and a half. At that time we were just, like I had worked in the section for over three months, so I was what they call the uh, the experienced rail roader [laughter]. So some of the, some of the friends that were, there was seven of us that went from Eagle River, young guys eh. And some of them were older than I was by a few years. They said "how come you're getting thirty cents more an hour than we are", [laughter]. They had never put in enough time to get their uh, er, I dont know if they gave us a ticket or what. But, when I told them I had worked on a section for so long they just gave me the top wage, eh for starting on the steel gang. I was pretty happy about that. So then when we came back we worked in Ignace but we didn't like getting shipped out of town so some of the other guys had already quit when we came by Eagle River. But I was with a friend I had worked on the section with we said we're going to work in Ignace and Ignace was a nice little town at that time too eh.

You could go to the restaurant, and after dinner we used to do that, just go and some girls there from Eagle River were there visiting. And uh, so, we stayed there for a week and when they moved out of town, see the trouble is with those steel gangs, they would be too close to the beer parlour so the men would, after work, go and get drunk, raise trouble and the police didn't like that. Mo, uh, they wanted the company to move them out away from town where there was no beer parlour. So we didn't like being out in the bush all the time so we said the heck with it, we're going back to Eagle River. But, that's when I went back to the same job where the foreman, and I thank him for it too. They wanted to transfer, and they had already started transferring people out of there. Moving them out and cutting back. And he said "you know, if you've got a chance to get in the mill" he said, "there's no future here for you". So I went to the mill and my dad was working at the gate and uh "you know they're, keep it quiet, everybody is keeping it a secret, but they're going to hire a five men on Saturday morning at 8 o'clock". So I got into some of my work clothes, so I would look a little older you know, [laughter], and over to the mill I went. And I got hired on. It was a big secret alright. There was over thirty men there looking for work (Says while laughing). But I was happy that I was chosen to be one of the five, eh. Yeah, that was my experience. And then I worked there three years, and the old guys were saying, it wasn't quite for three full years, but I was still nineteen years old. And I had put in, I think it was only short about two months for three years and the old, the uh old fellas there some of them had been there for thirty. You know all their lives eh. They were saying oh "you're too young to stay here all that long. You've got to see what's going on in the world eh". But he says, they were saying this company here, and that was in the spring of '64, they said "this company is building a mill in Prince George, BC. Go there. You'll make good money on construction and then you can decide after that if you want to stay there or come back or go somewhere else, eh". So, me and a friend, we did that. We just took off. But we were too early when we got there. They hadn't even s-, had eroded the mill eh. We got a job anyways, eh, from a guy, one of our school friends. He was a couple years older than I was and he had went there with his girlfriend and doing the same thing. And he had went up about three or four months before me. So he was all settled in there and he didn't want to go out of town. So, but he says "come to the unemployment office" hey says "they just laid off a whole bunch of guys out of the woodlands here" and there was hundreds of guys on the streets there looking for work, eh. And some of them weren't looking very hard but there were just a bunch on unemployment until they got recalled to work. Holy man, it was so darn busy. I told Ed, I said "you expect me to get a job ahead of all those guys?". He says "ahh," He says "a lot of those guys don't want to work, they're just applying for unemployment". And I could have applied for unemployment too but I wanted a job. I wanted to make my first million, [laughter]. So Ed says, he referred me to a girl that had interviewed him and he didn't want to leave town. So he, he sent me to see her and that's how I got the job. So I ended up working there until my brother got married about four months later. You know, we worked just about, for two months straight through eh. We were rebuilding a plainer mill and they wanted to get it done in a hurry. So they were paying us eleven hours, well they were

working us eleven hours but where we were, we were forty-five miles out of Prince George and they had, there were bunk houses there, a cook house. We were fed just as good as any place, eh. So we didn't mind working. We would work eleven hours a day and then Saturday and Sunday they only wanted us to work nine hours. I guess just to break up the week, or whatever it was, I don't know. So we worked that for, I probably put in about six, seven maybe even eight weeks eh. Every day we worked, every day. So the money wasn't as good as we thought, or we if had got on at the company at the paper mill or construction. It was good just the same. We were pretty happy about it anyways. So when I came back from my brother's wedding I never went back to Prince George. I stayed in Winnipeg and got a job on construction there, on street construction. Of course when I stayed there, it was a good job. Lots of overtime and uh, and I was getting just lucky but the jobs were there too, eh. Then that was in the early '60s. So when I came back here looking for work, steady again it was in '67 and I guess maybe somebody was looking after me because they were starting those mines at Ear Falls and over here North of Ignace those iron ore mines. So the company was looking for men. When I went to the mill to apply, no to the woodlands I wanted to do something different, I didn't want to go back in the mill. They said "yeah we're you know, we're just looking for a couple machines to move up to cap seventeen there. We'll call you in two or three weeks". Oh okay just call, I didn't even have a phone number yet, call my mother's place and she will get a hold of me. So okay, so this other guy says, "you know, Oscar Stiff in Thunder Bay is, they're hiring too". So we just took off and, but I told my mom, "I'm going to Thunder Bay to, to work for Oscar Stiff" and it was on the booms eh, loading, loading ships with pulp wood. Holy man, they would work, when a ship, they'd start working on a ship they'd work about thirteen, fourteen hours a day and it would take two or three, two and a half to four days depending on the size of the ship. And it had to get loaded in a hurry because it would cost the company more money to keep that ship in port eh. Holy man, we were making just as good money as the mill and most of it was, half of it was at time and a half eh. But when they called me to go to the mill to work in the bush, I went, I came back home and went to work at camp seventeen and I stayed there for twelve years.

N.N: wow

A.R: and my back was starting to get sore a little bit so I was offered a job as a business rep for the union, for the lumber and saw mill workers union. So I took it, and I worked at that for ten years.

N.N: So what specific jobs did you do when you were in the woodlands?

Al: In the woodlands? When I went to camp seventeen they set me up with another guy that I knew from the Bay and they said, you know, "You guys, one can run the machine and one run the power saw". The other guy seemed to want to run the power saw more than anything and I had been used to running a farm tractor and we did a little bit of skidding

with the tractors so, I ended up on the skidder and basically stayed on the skidder. And the year after they brought in new skidders and I ended up getting a new skidder. They assigned a skidder to each crew, eh. And I run the same skidder for about ten years.

N.N: Wow

A.R: There was only three of us that had our machines that long but it was a Diesel engine and some of the mechanics would say a lot of it was you greased it and you fuelled it up in the evening when everything was warm. And some of the others would say the hell with it we will do it in the morning, eh. But when everything is cold the grease and even the empty tank, the empty fuel tank is not good with condensation. It causes moisture inside the fuel tank and a diesel motor doesn't, don't like water eh. So there was three of us, and we were the three, they were right the mechanics. That we were, we didn't want to miss the bus going home, we didn't want to be late but we were always ten minutes early and it only took three or four minutes to fuel the machine, we were going right by it before we parked it. So we used to do that, just fuel up the machines. Our machine, eh. So uh, that was a good experience working at something different. But when they, my back started bothering me to because, my hobby was when I was Farming was also when I worked in the bush eh. And I was over doing it eh. So when the union job came along I jus-, some of the guys wanted me to put in a resume too eh. So I did, and I got the job [laughter]. And that was a good experience too eh, to get around. I was f-, I was working, my area was from the Manitoba boarder to Ignace and north. I even went east of Ignace. There was one Abitibi camp I looked after the other side of Ignace. So I had all of the Kenora and Dryden and some of the Great Lakes. There was five camps north of Ignace up towards Savant Lake. A lot of people too. But I sort of enjoyed it too eh, seeing the people. Some of it was a big headache but [laughter], some of it was okay too. [laughter].

N.N: [laughter] Yeah.

A.R: I enjoyed negotiating with the companies. So, I had started that p-, quite early as soon as I started working and they put me on the negotiating committee [laughter]. I-ya, I enjoyed it you know. And I, what made it interesting too was, I was going to high school with some of these guys that ended up on supervision and I was negotiating on opposite sides of the table with some of them [laughter], which made it more, I thought it was quite enjoyable. Yeah.

N.N: So, when you lived around here, where exactly did you live?

A.R: We lived, in the '50's, when my dad bought the house, just across from KK Penners.

N.N: Okay.

A.R: When we left in the fall of '59, we were there for, you know, over nine years but not quite ten years, eh. My dad had the house to my oldest brother in law. He had, he and my oldest sister had just gotten married a couple years before. And that was just handy for them because she worked in a restaurant and there, they were working the uh, where the ford dealer was on the outside of town. It had just opened up and she was running the restaurant for Mrs. Borger. So it was just right for them. He was working in the bush for contractors and, there was, he knew a whole bunch of guys. They ended up having g- uh, boarders, eh. So, they kept the place all along. And then they bought the house next door from Barretts. Barretts was going to build a sports shop over in that area but it was, it wasn't very busy at that time. You know, in the early '60's over there. So, he changed his mind and got his sport shop here right in town and he sold the house to my sister and her husband. So then they changed the old house into a small apartment block. So when we came back my mother, she was widowed by then, she sold her f-, my dad's farm to one of my young brothers and I just sold my place, same year and we were moving into town. We ended up moving back to the old apartment, the old house and now we've been there for twenty years. [laughter], it was a big surprise. My mother's going to be a hundred and two here in a couple of weeks, eh.

N.N: Oh wow.

A.R: yeah, and she still gets around the apartment with her walker just like a [laughter]. Still trying to bake, do, you know she looks after herself real well but the com-care they've got a good set up too, for the old people, to keep them home if they want to stay at home.

N.N: Mhmm.

A.R: And when I, when I moved to town, I was going to buy a house. I had it set up on Wabigoon Drive there was about three or four smaller houses there and I was going buy, one of them was for sale and I knew the guy but something, he wasn't quite sure if he wanted to sell. But he wanted me to rent it at first. So on my way home one n-, one day, I went to see my mom's apartment and my nephews wife was there cleaning up and, and she, there was another vacant apartment on the back end, a smaller one. And she says, "Why don't you move here then, you know, you'd be close to your mom" and you know, and by that time I was separated and that's why I moved into town I, you know I, after my second wife left me I figured "to heck with it" I don't have to be on the farm anymore eh. So, we moved into town the same month and that was in, in '98. October of '98, just over twenty years now. Ha. But my mom says, "you know that would be great if you mo-", it was just across the hallway, like, I'm from here to twenty feet away from her door eh, my door. And uh, she says "we could cook together and" she said "in two or three years", by that time she was eighty one eh. She says, \*movement\*, she says uh "you know uh, in two or

three years time for sure I'll have to go to the old folks home", eh. And they had just started at Princess Court and everything, a lot of people were moving in there. So, okay. So, but as time went on, as you know, okay year after year everything is running good you know. I ended up getting on the counsel for the Métis and it was just enough to keep me occupied, and of course, a few years my cousin, one of my cousin he just passed away here a couple years ago now, he wanted to retire, but he wanted to start, he was a truck driver and he was delivering food for uh, some company on Colonization north to Red Lake but he would go different places and pick up food and on, with a trailer. And when, and he wanted to retire but he wanted to do something different too. So he wanted to start a scrap business and he wanted me to work with him and I says, you know I come to town I don't want to start a business and a scrap business [laughter]. You know I just left farming and that's enough. So he sa-, Isays but I'll help you. He had helped me build my house thirty years before and I had told him I'd help when he builds a new house and he never did. So I say as I'll help you. You know, just when you need help. So he was happy with that and so I did that for about five or six years with him eh. Just working, maybe, one or two days a week eh, and going to Winnipeg every week or two eh. And uh it wa-, but it was a good enough pass time for me that's all I needed to keep me occupied. And it, but I wanted to to a little bit of looking around. And then with the Métis, when mom had said the Métis had got their new charter the winter of '98 and '99 and there was a meeting and my cousins from the Bay, he belonged to the counsel, and he had been talking to my mom. She said "maybe Al should go". So I went, and there was a vacancy. There was two vacancies on the counsel and they wanted to fill them at the meeting. So, somebody nominated me so I too-, so I to- accepted. And I've been there ever since eh. And that's about, well that was twenty years ago this, its twenty years this winter eh.

N.N: Wow.

A.R: Yeah, but I went uh, went to quite a few meetings with them in Ottawa, Toronto and I go to all the AGAs which are held once a year.

N.N: AGAs?

A.R: Annual General Assemblies.

N.N: Okay.

A.R: And that's quite interesting in itself eh. All, they have so many delegates. Usually there's around two or three hundred that show up but there from all over. There is thirty different counsels in the province of Ontario. Like uh, region one is Atikokan, Fort Frances, Dryden and Kenora and we have a counsel and there is some offices here, there is some programs too like health programs, eh. So I make it a point to attend them you know as, and

help out as much as I can. If the president or any of the others on counsel need a hand to uh, you know if there sick and I know we've went through about three or four presidents since I've, I've been asked to take the job over but I, you know I am retired eh. And I, I'm what they call a senator, like an elder and that's good enough for me. And uh, I'll have a meeting to attend next week here uh, with the Ministry of Transportation. And I go to Kenora. Last year we went to Peterborough, the AGA was in Peterborough. And then I went to a meeting for the, the uh, and it was quite interesting too. Somebody asked me to attend a meeting in Kenora. It was the uh, that uh nuclear waste management team. They were having a meeting, an information meeting in Kenora. So, I went. So I, I got talking to the girl there and I knew her from before. And uh, I said what's this list for when I left eh, nobody seemed to sign this list.. "Oh that's to go on a tour in Toronto this summer" that was in May, "they're going to have a couple of tours to show where the, the uh nuclear sites are in and around Toronto". So I said "well, doesn't look like there is many there, I would go if there's room to go". So sure enough I got called to go but I had to be up, my daughter, my youngest daughter was getting married in Calgary, so I couldn't go but in October I told them I'll go when I can, when I can but I can't, I had already said I can't go in July or in August during the AGA, I already made a commitment that I'd be there. So sure enough I got a call to go in October and it was quite an interesting, I was the only one from Dryden too, I'm glad I went. Yeah, and it was in uh, at the uh, Darlington power plant. We learned quite a bit about nuclear waste power, nuclear power. I didn't think there was that many, I think there is five or six in Ontario. Five I think in Ontario, one in Quebec or is there one in Quebec now, and one down east. But, they're quite dangerous stuff to have around for radioactivity but if we want to have the lights on we got to have power. And they, of course, are, they were trying to do away with as much coal plants too, coal burning power plants. And they, it was either that or start damming up some rivers again. So you kind of wonder, what are the best ways to do it, eh? And apparently nuclear waste is one of the more efficient ways and it doesn't waste or damage so much stuff eh, but its awful dangerous stuff eh. And they want to do that, they want to build a-a, a site, a waste site in, in and around Dymont.

N.N: Hmm?

A.R: That's what the meeting was all about in Toronto and at the same time as they brought us there for the meeting, we toured the Darlington nuclear site and where they were storing all that waste eh. They've been operating ever since I think uh 1970 over 40 years and they got big warehouses of that stuff that they eventually have to haul out of there and put somewhere. And They are trying to put it in a place where it is going to be underground and where water doesn't, can't seep in or air. It's got to be solid rock eh. And they go down about, I think they said they start, they go down one kilometre to build something like a big mine, an empty mine is what it is, but they fill it up with this dog on waste eh. And these big bundles about maybe eight by eight by ten feet high and it's actually a smaller bundle but

it's all built in with cement and steel so it can't break eh. Otherwise if it ever broke radioactivity would spread. So.

N.N: And they were looking to build one around Dymment?

A.R: They're doing the bore holes now, they're on the fourth bore hole. To, they drill down to see, to make sure that that rock is solid enough for their purpose. They don't want to be where there is any mining going on or any other activity like uh, you know that could be uh, even, uh there hasn't been very many around, you know, like uh, different floods and you know real rock movements like they have had in other places like the coast where they have all kinds of activity underground, eh. So that's what they're looking for and they're going to be at it for another, that sort of an interesting thing too, we got into it, they had sent us, they wanted one person from each community to join the First Nations in fort franc- in Thunder Bay, on the, at uh, at mount McKay. That was about the first year or two that I was with the Metis. And it was quite interesting. And at that time they wanted to conserve energy instead of building more dams eh. And that sort of went by the way and all of a sudden they wanted to get into nuclear power more and then people haven't conserved energy in the last 20 years, I think they have been using more all the time eh. But that's people for their own, they want the lights on all night [laughter]. It's crazy.

N.N: So while you were sitting on the counsel, did you ever help oversee a huge accomplishment?

A.R: uh Yes, yes. We uh, we uh you know achieved recognition as Métis in Ontario. And we've also, you know, the government has also signed different agreements that we worked together, you know, to promote a better lifestyle for the Métis people. Which also helps all of, all people. You know if we can, you know in a lot of, another thing I found out when I started going to meetings especially with the electri- electrical uh, big companies, some people off the cuff were saying you know, if the Métis and the First Nations could have got their rights like they were supposed to, the rights and the resources uh, for, you know back in the late 18 hundreds eh, it wouldn't be like all of these, uh that these paper companies just leaving, leaving people you know with the pollution. And they were closing down like, in and they were starting already to shut down and cut back eh. And leaving some towns without no work eh. And in some cases, like in Thunder Bay too where they've got all that pollution, they got to clean out of the lake there eh and companies were supposed to keep that clean, but they didn't eh. They did the polluting and they left with all the profits and never left any money behind to clean up their mess eh and the taxpayers have to look after that. Well some of these guys of the cuff, some of these, and I'd say some of the big shots from some of these companies were saying, actually, if the Métis and the First Nations had, you know could have got their rights to some of these resources it would have went to the aboriginal people and the money would have stayed in the uh, in the communities instead

of it going somewhere else to be used up somewhere else eh, by the bigger, bigger multinational corporations. So, slowly but surely, we're achieving a, certain benefits. And even just the recognition that we were here before the white people came in. Well of course we were, the Métis were part white anyways when they come in and mixed in with First Nations women and most, they come in with the fur trade, most of them did eh. So but as long as we get recognition for that eh, because well the two Louis Riel rebellions pretty well tells the story about how, you know people got chased just by other people wanting to take over that land eh where some of them, there was even some white people there from the Hudson Bay, especially Hudson Bay employees or some people they brought over. They were chased off just as much as the Métis and the First Nations eh. Of course the First Nations they negotiated treaties where the Métis wanted to, they wanted to be able to deal the same way as anybody else. Have the same right to the land so they could farm it and harvest the wildlife off of it. You know, some were hunting, and you know some were farming and some were working the land and some were living on it just like anybody else. And they weren't allowed to do it eh, and that's where the trouble started. But, of course Louis Riel is our, is our hero from way back eh. Because he stood up for our rights eh. But at the same time, like I feel quite fortunate in coming here to Dryden and even in Manitoba things were good there. We were working on the land and that was our lifestyle to be a farmer and work the land and make money you know, cutting wood, cutting logs, cutting firewood. And uh, that was our lifestyle along with farming in the summertime and of course keeping livestock. My dad was quite experienced at that, he'd done it as a kid you know, for different farmers in the area. And he learned well to look after animals eh. And uh, even the vets around town they said they were surprised that we didn't need a vet very often on the farm, cause we would look, we would look after our animals so they wouldn't get sick eh, or wouldn't get hurt so they didn't need a vet that often. And then we got on working at the mill here you know, that was just the right ti-, we hit Dryden at the right time. It was either luck, a little bit of luck and a little bit of the right time for, for Dryden to you know, for coming up. You know with the mill there increasing in production like other different areas too, eh. Like even Thunder Bay, Kenora, Fort Frances all those mills, mills were increasing production at that time, were just right for us. Yeah. So we're hoping it works just right for the, for the young kids coming behind. But things are kind of rough when they shut the mills down. Kenora, Fort Frances and different other areas, the mills are down eh, its tough. But, in, one thing that really surprises me is that, like people who are in power don't look after where our bread and butter is really made. You know the farmers, the local farmers here. Like a lot of the farmland is growing back up. It's not being looked after. Of course in, some of those farmers they didn't need the land anymore, they were encouraged to grow trees on the fields, eh. Where, you know, people when they first come here, it was to farm, it was to grow food on the land. Not to, not the trees. There was enough trees as it was. [laughter], you know the last thirty years they have been encouraging, maybe even forty years that people have been encouraged to start planting trees in the fields. That's

nuts. Those fields should be kept there. You know, they are pioneers. They worked hard to clear that land, and grow, grow food and start, start field going.

N.N: So what happened to your farm down at Eagle River, you've always farmed with, is it still there-

A.R: Yeah,

N.N: Or has it grown back?

A.R: See that was my dad's farm.

N.N: Mhmm.

A.R: and in '68 when I was wo-, the second year I worked for the Dryden Paper, I bought a farm North of Minitaki, it was five miles away from my dad's farm, but we still worked together, eh. We used to farm quite a few of the old farms north of Minitaki. And my da-, at my place well I had just sold it to somebody from Dryden here, and I was moving to Dryden I was retrieving. And probably if I wouldn't have had a sore back I would have stayed there maybe longer. But it was time to move on. And my dads place, there's not much going on there either. My young brother still has it and he hasn't done much with it, eh. Maybe cut a little bit of hay, kept some, three or four horses on and that's it eh, riding horses. But he works, he drives trucks for Richie tru-uh, Trucking eh. So he's working steady for him and he hasn't got much time to do any, and he's old enough now anyways, you don't need to have a second job, eh.

N.N: mhmm.

A.R: Yeah.

N.N: So, when you lived at Eagle River were there like spots to like hang out, like restaurants or go like, fun stuff or did you have to come to Dryden for any of that?

A.R: See when we moved to Dry-to Eagle in '59, and for quite a few years after, probably 10 years after, there was a theatre there. Jake had a theatre, it was, it wasn't a big theatre but it sat probably 100, 150 people. And he would have a show there, a different show probably every second night. There was three different shows a week, eh. And there was a hotel there at that time and there was sort of a, you could eat there in the confectionary. There was a store there on the corner it was Jakes corner. He had a grocery store and a hardware store and he had sort of like a restaurant, eh. But you, you'd ha-, you mostly would have hamburgers, you know. Just a light meals, eh. But to eat, they'd serve you a full meal but

most people just were there to have a snack, a coffee or a pop, eh. In those days we used to hang around there, the younger people. Play the jukebox and drink pop and eat a hamburger and chips once in a while. [laughter], and the older people would be in the beer parlour, eh. Then there was a dance hall there. They would have a dance, maybe once a month or something like that. There was enough going on eh, and some of the, in the summertime some of the tourist camps they were quite active there. You know, some of the younger people were working at the camps. So, we'd go there for a little bit of entertainment and then they had ball diamonds and a hockey rink. It wasn't covered but it was good enough to play hockey and have a hockey team. I played for the Eagle River All Timers for quite a few years. [laughter], It was fun too. You know, quite a few of the guys were interested and we bought a bus so we'd go to the tournaments with an old school bus. We went to that was in '84, and we went to a big hockey tournament, old timers hockey tournament in Reno. And we had leased the bus from Thunder Bay. I think it was the Happy Tour Bus, bus line. So, it was the owner's son was one of the bus drivers and then he had a friend and then there was another friend that came along and we drove right through, eh. We left here at the bu-, at the bus depot at midnight and they said, it uh, it uh, that's the best way to go instead of leaving at 6 o'clock in the morning, you leave at midnight. Everybody is there. If you leave at six, half of the people don't like getting up and they're late, eh. So leave at midnight, and so we drove right through to uh, Reno on uh, we never stopped. Except when we broke down. Broke a fan belt in uh, Salt Lake City. And we were down only for like four five hours, that's all. They'd brought parts, eh. And another place we were down was first truck stop in R-in Nevada. See at that time you couldn't gamble. They didn't have casinos like they do now. The only place that was open for gambling was the state of Nevada. So the first truck stop on the other side, holy man the bust driver said he had to walk two, no half a mile to park the bus. It was all full of, and inside there was the truck stop where they fuelled up and we had fuelled the bus there. There was a big restaurant and a casino and a beer parlour eh, a big bar, eh. Well they had those dog on machines all over the place, anyways eh. Well even our own guys they went crazy there. We stopped there for supper and never got to leave there till about two o'clock in the morning. [laughter], that's what gambling does to a good person, eh. It's nuts. And then we had to drive, we were still about three or four hours from Reno. We got to Reno about four o'clock in the morning. We had to check in and our first game was about nine o'clock in the morning so we didn't have that much time. But some people instead of trying to get a couple hours of sleep, they went into the casinos. They were open all night, crazy. That was quite a different tour. And the idea was to get the hockey teams in there. It wasn't mostly for playing it was just to get, get you in there you know, and spend your money on gambling i think more than anything and it was fun anyway. A lot of them didn't over do it and spend too much money gambling. There was uh, thirty-five teams and quite a few of them were from Canada. I think there was one from Edmonton but we played mostly the American teams. We played one from Edmonton. We saw fifteen states, they h- the bus drivers said, you know if you have got a chance in between games, we'll take you into California, its only

about ninety miles from here. So we worked it all into our schedule and uh, we went into California just for a few hours just to say that we went there eh. So then, but in California they couldn't gamble, eh. So the bus driver said we are on our way back do you want to stop for supper on this si-, in California or in Nevada. Well the gamblers said, well we want to go into Nevada again, eh. So we ended up going into Nevada, stopping at one town it was around Lake Tahoe, call it. And there was a casinos, in that little town there was casinos at I don't know how many places. We crossed, and I had went, my two daughters and two of their friends went, and we were, they were actually young, I think they were even underage to drink but I'm not too sure. They were going into the casinos, but anyways, you weren't supposed to take pictures there either, eh. So there was a tunnel underneath the street to go into another casino across from the restaurant where we ate. So we get going there and in the tunnel they have all kinds of games there and I know they had this one game where you could shoot and, at targets. So they, the kids started taking pictures and all of a sudden the securities were in there you know aha. They didn't wa-, you're not supposed to take pictures in the casinos. And they're strict, they wanted those, they didn't want us to take pictures. They just about got, you know took the cameras away but the kids say oh no we forgot all about it, we forgot all about it [laughter]. But it was just, it was just like policemen moving in, eh. You got to.. Like we were really bad people because we were taking pictures of ourselves, eh. Just, just goofing off with, in the, in the casino, in the tunnel. But now, around here its crazy. You know, we, we went to uh, the first year to Dryden, I met a guy and I had went on a tour, I took a bus, bus pass for a month and I went to see my daughter in Calgary, she had just moved there too that, the summer before. She said dad you've got to come and see me. So, I went, she was working at an old folks home, she was nursing at an old folks home. So I went, because she couldn't get away from work to come on a holiday and she hadn't worked a year yet. So I went there and uh, so I says uh when you're working I'm going to, I can jump on the bus at any time I've got a pass. So I went to Vancouver Island, went one week to see my brother there and then I went all the way to Whitehorse in the Yukon. Just to see the country eh. So when I got back after a month, I was having coffee in over across by The Central, where the Robins Donughts was there. And there was a guy, and I'd seen him before lots in town. We were in, when I come to the moose or just to the beer parlour for a social evening. He was talking to the guy I'd went in for coffee with. He says, "I want to go, I've never been to new-to the east coast and I wanna go there. My wife wants to go to Scotland and I was there twice already and I don't want to go back there but she's got cousins there and an aunt and an uncle. She wants to go see them but I don't want to." But it, he says "I don't have a friend to travel with". So he told me, well he says "my partner, my coffee partner over there he just come back from the west coast. Talk to him he likes travelling". So, he come over and talk to me and, he says "I want to go as far as Newfound Land and see Nova Scotia and New Brunswick." And I said, okay when do you want to go? [laughter]. So, in April we took a couple months and we planned to go when the weather was nice, nice before the tourism season started eh. So we left and we were going to go for maybe a month eh. And we did, and it was really a good uh, a good uh-we saw a lot of

country, eh. But talking about the casinos we were at the harbour down there and they were just building casinos. And all of the, more people were going into the darn casinos than they had the big ships there, the tall ships. There was more people going to see, going into the casinos than going any place else. So he says "where, what's so- going on in that place, that big new building over there?" And one of the guys from the tall ship says "that's our competition, that's a casino over there eh". So Guy says "we gotta go in there, just take a look" He says "I'm not a gambler" but he was an alcoholic and, he was a practicing alcoholic and he didn't drink at all eh. I've got to give him credit for quitting like that and I sa-I told him "I'm just a social drinker too and if you don't drink I'm not going to drink, eh". But anyways we went to the casino and holy man people were crazy in there eh. But we went, they had a coffee shop at the e-at the entrance and where you come out eh. Let's go and have a coffee and look around a little bit. So we did. So we started guessing that people, of course the ones that won would move and go and get their money, just opposite of where they would go out, eh. We would see them coming through and we would guess which one was a winner. Ha, it was just a fun thing we were doing. Let's guess who is by their look on their faces who is the happy one that won, eh. So what we'd say well this one in the red coat has got to be a winner. And we could tell, they were going to get their buy out, their money, eh. But most of them, they're probably about ninety percent of them are losers, eh. You could tell by the looks on their faces eh, that they'd lost, some of them had lost quite a bit of money and they'd just be mad, they'd be kicking everything eh [laughter]. Of course, of course Guy would say "well I'm sure glad I don't drink and I don't gamble anymore". But then, that was in Newfoundland at the harbour at St. John's Newfoundland but also at uh in uh Nova Scotia where they built. And of course, you see in '84 I had went to Reno where there was no gambling at the casinos at that time so this was not that long after. See that would have been in '99, the spring of '99. Which is what, fifteen years later. Which was moving, gambling was just taking over in so many places already. Even now I notice, and of course I guess just by talking to people gambling is, lot of people are losing money lots, and of course they don't brag about it but I know, even some, my cousin he was addicted. It was, he was addicted to gambling you know. Once he'd get into the casino he wouldn't come out until he was broke, eh. He'd lose like not just hundreds, if he had it and he could get a hold of it he'd lose thousands of dollars. Crazy. His wife would say, she had a gambling problem too eh, "I like him to hang around with you, you keep him out of the casinos eh". And I don't gamble and I, and I always thought it was foolish to go out and lose a bunch of money so I would never encourage him to do, to go in there, eh. We went in a couple of times, he wanted to stay in there for the afternoon I said "to hell with that, let's get the hell out of here". So, why go and lose a bunch of money, especially when you can't afford it. But the, that's another experience that I'm glad I stayed away from. It's nuts. Yeah.

N.N: So that's our hour.

A.R: An hour has passed?

N.N: Yeah.

A.R: It goes pretty fast.

N.N: Yes.