

Introduction:

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Anne Anderson Banquet.

I think when Mr. [Tronson] was saying in his remarks and readings if the city of St. Albert that identity and looking back to our beginnings constitute a very important part of our future and the continuity of St. Albert and tonight as we commemorate Albert Lacombe I think it's also important that we not forget that the history of this area and that the history of this community goes back beyond the time of Albert Lacombe. There was this land and there was a people, and when Albert Lacombe came here the reason he founded a community in Saint Albert was not for the settlers coming in from the east or the south, he founded a community here because there was community here. The land and the people were here. And I think that in our meeting this evening and in our annual celebration we should feel very privileged that one of the people whose ancestors predate many of ours in this land, is here with us tonight. Some people walk the land very tall, and all of her life Anne Anderson has walked tall in preserving the language and the culture of her people. And ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our guest speaker, Anne Anderson.

Anne:

Thanks very much Mr. [Parker] for the wonderful introduction. Yes, I know St. Albert because I was born here. I know many faces tonight. But sometimes I can't remember their names because it's been a long time that I've been in St. Albert. On our way to St. Albert this evening, I had a most wonderful feeling come over me. It was just like coming home and this is the way I feel each time I come north on what we call the St. Albert trail. It's like coming back to my home. This sensation I can't describe. It's a very happy feeling to think that I've been asked to come here and speak at a group such as this. I still feel I'm part of St. Albert, and I always will till my dying day. I love St. Albert and I love Edmonton where I now live. St. Albert, a wonderful, historic city, and when I left it, it was only a town of about 2700 people and I can remember going to meetings, and the word was St. Albert was going to boom. And many said, "well, we've heard that before. St. Albert will never grow because we're too near to the city of Edmonton." But here we are today, a really beautiful little city, and I'm really proud to be part of St. Albert.

I was born on a river lot farm just 4 miles east of here, just beyond where the golf course is. And our dear neighbours the Kennedys were always so helpful in every way. We were a large family and I was the oldest girl, and we really worked hard to live in them days. Memories were happy memories, and there was memories that was very sad too. But happy memories was with our family all together, mum and dad and all the kids, we were all striving to make a living. And in them days, there were many native people here. I was born a metis, my mother was Indian. My father had old country French and Scotch. And I'm very proud of my Indian blood. My Scottish grandfather used to say, "you children should be proud", because I am related to royalty. Somehow or other there was a relation between Queen Victoria and Grandpa [Gardiner]'s people in Scotland. But for some reason or other, I didn't care if I had royal blood or not. But I thought of my poor mother, the Indian people

who were so poor. This is what I thought about. And if you are raised by an Indian mother like my mother was, who was a proud Indian, believe you me, you would not forget to speak her language, because she had a little stick by her side and she would say, "You children must speak your mother's language but you must also have an education the white man's way." My mother had never went to school, my mother couldn't write her name or couldn't even read but yet she was so determined that we speak her language and we also had an education. I can thank her thousands of times for this. This is why I'm here today, ladies and gentlemen. We had a mother that we were very proud of, although on her dying bed she said, "I'm so proud of you children, you were never ashamed of your Indian mother," because this has happened in some families. Children were ashamed of their Indian parents. I was educated in a little country school, the Bellerose School. We walked miles it seemed, no matter how cold, and we got to school and we got an education. How I ever got my education, I often wonder, because it seems like I was at home half of the time. And there was no strict orders from the school board, "Your children has to go to school till a certain age. No, your child can go to school in winter time and catch up to what she's lost during the winter," this is what we were told. And I guess I was pretty fortunate to be able to go to grade 10. Although later on in life I decided to take a typing course, and my husband says, "what in the world does a farmer's wife need typing for?" But for some reason or other, I don't know what it was, I was determined to take a typing course. And if I hadn't've, I wouldn't be here today. I don't think so. I've done all my own typing for my own work that I'm doing today because I couldn't hire anybody. I started right from scratch. It's not so easy but it gives me a great satisfaction today that I was able to do it, and also I did it on my own. It's nice to have money because it takes money to make things grow, but for some reason or other, I've been working along. Only when I wanted to print a dictionary, the Heritage council helped me with a grant and in no time we had a good dictionary out. But each year, as I say, the Cree language was a primitive language and we've had such few words. There was many words that we did not have that could be translated to English, or the English words into Cree. So we were very, today I could add many more words to my dictionary and maybe make a much nicer, or much more understanding dictionary, but, however, we have a dictionary which I'm very proud of.

Like I said I went to school in the country, and many memories in that school about our teacher even. I never forget my first teacher who was a gentleman, an older man, a widowed man with four sons going to university. Every Friday, those boys were there at our little country school to pick up their dad and take him home. And of course they would bring us little treats and I guess this is what we waited for. It was so nice to see these boys. But a Mr. parker was the name of this schoolteacher, he just helped us in every way and he was so kind. If we hurt, fell down and hurt ourselves or skinned our elbows or knees, he was right there to pick us up and doctor us and talk to us. And little children that began school that were very, very lonely, they wanted to go home right away, they didn't want to go to school, he took them out for a walk and he'd say, "Well let's go out for a walk and maybe Bobby will forget about being lonely." I can remember one time we had to take a little fellow, he cried so much, cried all the while. Teacher said to my older brother, "You take over

the classroom. No fooling around anybody. I'm taking Bobby and the rest of the class to a nature study course." Nature study, I don't really know what it meant but we had to go out into a little wooded area where there was a pond and we listened to birds singing and frogs croaking. I don't know what else. But we sat on a hollow tree right by this little pond and Teacher said, "Now everybody listen, there's a bird singing and saying something to you fellas." We all listened. "What is he saying?" We couldn't remember what he was saying. Some said "well, I made a mess, the bird says," the other one said "well I'm hungry," the other one said "well I'm lonesome and want to go home." Bobby just burst out crying again and it brought back memories to him. Everybody was half-crying. This is the way Mr. Parker was, and when he went away we all cried. He said, "You aren't going to cry." I said, "well, I'm not crying but I have tears," but I was on the verge of crying. Wonderful memories I have of Mr. Parker. Then during the First World War was another, something else that I will never forget. And many of our neighbours' boys went to war, some didn't return. And the soldiers used to come marching out on the country roads, come down 127 st and right near our farm, and all we children would walk stiff-legged, marching away, and I still hear that bugle, I still hear it. Just wonderful memories. Then of course there was this flu, the Spanish influenza, which was not a nice thing to remember. There was many deaths. Nobody went to church, nobody went to school, nobody went to the post office. Nobody went to the store. I don't know how we lived. Many, many people, it was a sad year. Then the following year we had [drought], there was not hay. It was terrible. The horses would whinner when my dad would go out of the door. My dad said, "I don't want to go out anymore." The poor horses were starving. But we had a lot of oats and barley and we fed them this. Many things that actually, I can't remember how we lived through it. It was very hard. Another thing I remember is the bells here that hang at St. Albert yet. They hang near the little museum. And those three bells, when I come to see them now and then, I gently strike and they all have a different tone. Those bells were telling us something. Every time there was a death or a fire the bells would ring. Today they hang there as if they had died like a person. They're hanging there but sad, you know, and at one time they were heard across, for many miles they rang beautiful tones, each one at a different tone. And my mother would say, "oh, I wonder who has left us now." As soon as we'd hear a bell, maybe somebody had passed away, generally that's what told us. And the celebration at Christmas, going over to Grandma's, a big sleigh-load of kids all wrapped in rabbit robes. Dressed in our best, going over to Grandma's. Horses trotting along, bells ringing. Wonderful happy memories I have. Then we had a fire one time, and this hall stood just about where the Star of the North retreat house stands. And it burnt to the ground. And many times we gathered in this, I was very young then, but I remember very, very many of our books were lost, many of our records, they were burned. It was very sad. And later on in the years the Star of the North retreat house was built just about in that same area.

When the church was renovated they raised the roof, and all the farmers with teams and wagons all came to help and truly, this is our church in St. Albert. Everybody helped, everybody did their best to help. I can't remember the Father's

name, I thought I would mention his name. I've forgotten. Sorry. And that was the renovation of the church and since we've had a very nice church to be proud of.

I still think of the responsibility that was laid on my shoulders when I was young. Being the oldest girl, it seems like I always, you know. And it never bothered me. I grew up that way. Many times mother would be gone and I would have full responsibility of all my little sisters and brothers, making meals and milking cows and goodness knows what. Tending to the baby, there was always a baby in the house, and I think that's what made our life so happy. I cared for 5 little sisters at a stretch, and when we had two little brothers all of a sudden later on in life, we were just about, we just about went crazy because we had little brothers to look after. And it was, I think we spoiled them really bad though.

I remember the many, many names here in St. Albert. Many French names, storekeepers or hotel owners such as Legault, Marchand, Perron, Lambert, Labelle, Joyal, Benice, Hogan, Lamer, and the Kennedys (our dear neighbours). The Ryans who lived across the river from us, the Arcands also, the Belleroses also. Belleroses were my very dear friends as we grew up together as Metis people. The Berlands and the Cunninghams and Rolands and the Bellecourtes. Fitzgeralds and the Desrochers, the Pepins, the Fraisers, the Swans, the Doobies, and the L'Hirondelles. And of course there was the Gardiner family which was my own family. And the Callihoos. Many, many names, many Scottish names that I knew out towards the Lamieux area, they also came here to St. Albert. It was wonderful. It was wonderful to think, and I still think of their names.

Often times, Mother and Dad would go on blueberry picking time and they would go away and here we would be left alone with all the kids, nothing ever happened to us children, I don't know what was keeping us there but everything went well. We milked cows and fed chickens and fed pigs and watered the horses. Everything just seemed to go good, and there was always a baby in the house to look after. Today I just often think, you know, about the children that don't seem to have no responsibility at all. They seem to wander around and they just, well, they just have so much free time. I didn't have no free time, I'll tell you that. I went to bed and I went to sleep and got up and it was the same thing over and over. Helping mother with canning and gardening, helping with the haying and the harvesting. There was a lot of work, believe you me, on a far. But the saddest of all was when my father died at a very young age, I was only about 13, and I still hear my mother crying at times when I think about it, but I wouldn't cry. No sir. I thought, I've got to be strong and I've got to support her. She had all those little children to support by herself. We lived on the farm even after dad died but it didn't work, the boys were not hold enough. They wanted their father's support yet. It was sad so Mr. Hogan decided we should move to St. Albert, but I worked out for other farmers. I was determined to help my mother some way. And the only thing I knew was to work on a farm. And I fitted in other large families and helped. When I was first married I married on a reserve. And this is what I always wanted to be, I always wanted to be an Indian with a number like my mother. She was such a happy woman. No matter how poor she was, she was happy. And today this is the way it goes. The Indian people, no matter, they have a great sense of humour no matter if they've only got a crust of bread, they still are laughing and joking and laughing. Let's turn to our white

brothers and sisters, if they just had nothing in their cupboard, would they be laughing? I'm sure not. They are a different class of people. Even in schools, they are a different class of people. We must praise them no matter how little they do in school, because my mother used to say, "You don't have to write. You've got to have it up here." My grandmother and my grandfather said the same thing. "There's no need writing. It's against our way. Because, after 14 years, from a child to 14, you've got a degree," Grandpa would say. "You're proud you are an Indian, you've lived your life, your environment, you will know the survival." Because at one time it was only the Indian survival. Believe you me, ladies and gentlemen, no matter how many white people came to St. Albert, they learned the way of survival and that was the Indian survival. There wasn't things like what we have today. And when you live through, you think, believe me, you couldn't go to the store and buy anything you wanted. You had to go out there, you couldn't buy meat in the store, you had to either raise it or go and hunt wild meat. And if you wanted warm clothing you had very well go and kill a moose and tan it and get your warm clothing. And it was hard for native people. Plus being an Indian and being discriminated. It wasn't easy. Discrimination still goes on today and I often wonder why it does, but nothing like that bothers me. I am proud of my Indian blood. I don't care what anybody says about Indians. I am proud, I have the Indian blood in my veins.

When I was first married, I went, as I mentioned, my husband was a wandering Indian (an Indian is a wandering man. He doesn't stay on a farm, no, why should he? He wanders from place to place just like a great big picnic or whatever). So, he says, "We're going to Portland, Oregon," because he'd travelled in his time. I never knew where I was going to land, no fooling, because he just wandered. He was a good farmer, mind you, and we sold number one hard marcus wheat, I think is what they used to say, to the American government, my the carloads, and we had much money and when he had money, he was like an animal, he would want to get out of his corral and get going. He would say, "Anne, pack up the kids and let's go," and I live in Oregon for many years but I wanted to, deep down, I wanted to come back to St. Albert. I was lonely for St. Albert. I was lonely for the snow, for the cold weather. I didn't like the rain and the fog, whatever was going on in Portland. Beautiful city, mind you. And it was a wonderful education for me, a girl that never went anywhere, just in her own environment, in her own surroundings, on a farm, it was like going to school and learning from a book. It was wonderful. I was glad when I came back. Business brought us back here and I was so glad to come back. But as time went on, Mother was left alone, and she always wanted me to care for her. She'd say, "your other sisters have families," so my husband and I cared for her for 8 years. I was glad I was able to do this for her.

But after she left, that was the end of that era. I didn't care if I say St. Albert, that's the way I felt. I just didn't care. And we never spoke Cree because it was her language. But later on, I heard her words, my mother would say, "my language is dying, if no one looks after it or tries to write it, it will die and that will be the end of the native people." She was so true to her own kind, and one day I decided to write the Cree language. It's phonetic, you sound every letter that you write. My husband helped me, supported me in every way at that time. He was good in his language also, and his [outcome?]. So I started to write, and then I started to teach, and I put a

tiny little add an inch square in the Journal for the first time and I said "Will Tutor Cree." And oh my goodness, I had 50 calls. I didn't know what to do because I didn't have a classroom or I didn't have anything, but in no time word spread that there was a Cree course going and we were able to divide our class in half, some went to the Charles council classroom and some went to the University of Alberta, and ever since then I've been teaching Cree.

There's a lot to do yet in the Cree language. There is, it's just the beginning you might say. It's one of the oldest languages spoken, and yet it's the newest language that's being taught today. I've had visitors all over the world, from all over the world come to me and they'll say, "How come you are teaching Cree? Who taught you?" No one taught me, I had to learn myself. I'd ask someone and they didn't know the answer. They'd say, they just didn't know what to say. So I just kept on going, following the symbol, the syllabic symbol chart. Now some of you might be aware of this and some of you might not. Now, those syllabic symbols, one symbol is a consonant and a vowel and it's sounded as it is written. So I used the syllabic symbol chart as the method of correct spelling and it works wonderful. Now, there's many things we could do yet, and ever since then my grades have just been on a climb. I teach all sorts of people, judges, policemen, doctors, lawyers, nurses. Councilors and social workers today. They all want to speak the language because if you can speak to an Indian, just even greet him, he'll open up and speak to you.

I worked for many organizations at the beginning when I first moved to Edmonton but I found myself too pressed so I did not, I do not belong to any organization but I do teach the Cree language. Today I teach the little beginners, the little kindergarten, the little Indian, these are all Indian children that had never been exposed to their own culture or language. Instead they have the English language as their first language, and they just love it. They are coming like fire, they're just coming like mad with their language, they just love it. They love their culture. And they have a grade 1 and we're going to have a grade 2 and a grade 3 this fall. And I think it's just something that's really needed in this country. It is one of the first languages that was here in St. Albert. There was many, many native people in here. I can remember many that my mother and father respected very highly, old people. And I can always remember [Easter] Perron, like the father of the Perrons here, how he respected those elders and how he kept them, it was like a little old folks home that kept them in every way in order for them to survive. And I can always remember an elderly little lady that used to come from Hobemma and she was talking to my mother one day and she said "Mother, how come, you say you're blackfoot and you're here among the Cree people?," because Blackfoot and Cree do not get along too good. She said, "I married a Cree man," she said, "but when I did, I about lost my head," she said, "because they were going to kill me," in her own land. So they ran way and they came to Hobemma, and she stayed there But then Father Lacombe came into the picture. Father Lacombe was out preaching his gospel and she said they didn't have names, their children didn't have names, they were just, like growing like plants, they were just growing and that was all. There was nothing else to think about, she said. And Father Lacombe, and of course this old grandma used to tell us, she found out that she was wife number 5 later on, so this man was practicing polygamy and Father Lacombe didn't like this. He said, "One woman, one

man." And that was it. "What shall we do?" "Don't stay with this man. Find yourself another man," he said, "he'll support you." Which was very true, you know, what else could he say? But she decided to leave, she decided to leave, and she said, all her, what she called her 5 sisters, and these were the other wives, they all had a red river cart, they had a horse, they had a hatchet, and they had kits and a tent. And she said she told her husband, "I'm leaving, I'm going to St. Albert to where the man with the big heart has asked me to come." And that's where she came, from Hobemma she came to St. Albert and she said she cross where the low level bridge is. Oh, not the low level, the high level bridge, and they brought her to St. Albert and she lived here for many, many years, and her name was Grandma Suzette, this is what we all called her was Grandma Suzette. Everybody gave her something to eat, you know, like from the farm, and she had a horse and buggy. She always had a horse. She told us what a hard time she had coming across, can you imagine, you know, coming with 3 little kids and a red river cart, and she said her cart tipped over one day and the kids were all crying, but the old horse I supposed was so tired it just stood there. SO she carried her kids up the top of the hill and away she went, she said, after she righted the red river cart and you know, what hardship that poor old lady went through. But she was the happiest woman you ever saw. When she had her name, she said she came alive, because she never had a name before. Can you imagine what life was in them days, primitive way of living. And she lived in St. Albert until she died and I think she was 102 when she died. Her gravestone still stands in St. Albert right near where my mother was buried. My mother felt sorry for her and asked her many time, gave her something off the farm to eat, butter, milk, eggs, pork, whatever. And also the old horse, she had an old horse which was a gelding but she called it Nellie. Anyway, Nellie used to get a sheaf of grain every so often from the field. Mother would say, "well you go get a sheaf of grain 'cause the horse has to have food." But, you know, everybody helped one another, it was just beautiful to think how nice it was.

And I believe since I started to write Cree, I had to have books so I started to write Cree and I wrote, I think I have about 46 copyrights on from grade 1 to 12 books. When we'll use our grade 12 books I don't know but I'm still looking forward that someday, somebody might use them. And this is the only way that our language might live because my mother used to say that my language was dying. And this keeps me very much alive, no fooling, there's no time for thinking about getting old, no fooling. You've got to keep going, I don't think of birthdays, I don't want to think of birthdays, I just keep going along and working as hard as I can, and there's lots to do but I've enjoyed every moment of it, and I've had a great satisfaction for doing this. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your kind attention.