

Elder Profile: Fred & Leda McLeod

Previously published - Fred and Leda's life together has been anything but quiet. Leda Couchie was born to John Couchie Sr. and Edna Laronde in Duchesnay on February 19, 1917. She has three brothers and six sisters.

Her family stayed in Duchesnay. She attended the residential school in Spanish and considers it a privilege to have attended the school. The walk to school in the winter was three miles one way. Leda fondly remembers playing baseball with her dad almost every night with other children in the village.

Fred McLeod Sr. was born January 15, 1910, to Peter McLeod and Nancy Dechesno in Garden Village. He has three brother and three sisters. Fred's favourite sport was boxing.

Fred and Leda married in Beaucage and have had a good life. They have always lived in Garden Village except for the short time they spent in Meadowside at the beginning of their marriage. Setting up their home in Garden Village back then, they remember their neighbours as: Joe and Maggie Beaucage; William and Marian McLeod; Norman McLeod; Alex Goulais; and Peter McLeod.

There was no hydro and no roads for school bus to pick up the children.

Fred has always been self-employed. At first, building and working lumbercamps was his work and later logging year round. During his days in the lumbercamps, Leda would prepare the meals for the 42 men that worked there. Good practice for the amount of children they were later to have.

For years, the McLeod's were known for their large vegetable gardens and farming. There was a fairly large pasure that helf the 13 horses they had at one time. There were also cows and chickens. Leda says, "now all we have is little skipper for a pet - our little dog."

Fred and Leda raised 18 children together. Leda says, You take it one day at a time and depend a lot on the Lord."

Education has always been their main goal and they have managed to put almost all of their children through high school.



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Leda ran a small confectionary from her home to pay for figure skating lessons for her two youngest daughters. She finally had to close up shop because she lovingly remarks that her young grandchildren started to help themselves to all the goodies.

Leda has been one of the most involved community members Nipissing Reserve has ever known.

She is known for her strong input into the Separate school board and their bid to have a native trustee on board' her continuous encouragement to see paved roads to Garden Village and to build the new church that stands there today.

She has always been a member of the local Homemaker's club and was once the president of the Northern Ontario Homemaker's Club. She also served two terms as a band councillor, to name but a few.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. In both 1979 and 1986, she received two awards from the Nipissing Band for her community spirit and dedication to community life; the Centennial medal on Canada's 100th birthday in recognition of her valuable service to the nation; and in 1982 received a silver medal from Bishop Carter for leadership in the diocese. Leda stresses, "if my hearing was good, would I ever have a dandy time in politics. That's the only thing holding me back."

Life, they feel, is certainly easier. People do not have to carry water to wash the children before school. But, raising children is tougher now than it was then. Children used to obey when they were told - now they have their own minds made up earlier.

Children do not experience enough religion and have a hard time knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Leda's favourite hobbies are quilting and babysitting and Fred enjoys playing pool, making wood crafts and furniture and loves to watch news and politics on TV. They have spent a lot of time over the past 20 years watching their grandsons play hockey and did a lot of travelling to enjoy this sport.

Needless to say, the family continues to grow at a steady rate. There are now 48 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren [and more, since the time this profile was originally published].

