

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: JAMES BULL 1
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HOBBEMA, ALBERTA
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HOBBEMA, ALBERTA
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INTERVIEWER: ABRAHAM BURNSTICK
INTERPRETER: RICK YELLOWBIRD
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Taking of Treaty #6 and the promises made by the government.
- Initial contact with non-Indians. Changes in diet and trade resulting from this contact.

My name is Abraham Burnstick from Hobbema. This is my cousin I am talking to in regard to certain information. My first question is what is your name?

James: James Bull.

Abraham: From Bull Reserve?

James: Yes, from Bull Reserve.

Abraham: Could you tell me who told you of this? What is the name of the elder who told you of this?

James: Jerry Potts was his name, from Pigeon Lake.

Abraham: What I want to know is what transpired when the first treaties were made? What was his story?

James: I will try to tell it as I am able about the time, the first time the government treaty carrier came here. He told us of it but I may have forgotten some of his talks. I will tell it as I am able but I have forgotten some parts. About

how the treaty got its start.

Abraham: That is what we want.

James: The old man who told us of this was present all along when everything first started. He heard and saw all that went along plus all the doings. He saw all that went along with the time the Indian people were first gathered to make the treaty. When his land was to be bought from him. This is what I will attempt to reiterate what was told to me. It was a long time ago this old man spoke to us so therefore I have forgotten some of what he told us. He told us of the promises that were made and by what methods that treaty maker used to cheat the Indian out of his land. The Indian was ignorant of the value of the land and in the beginning at that time he also didn't know the value of money. They did not know what a dollar was as this was not the way they lived. They used what the land had to offer. There was plentiful hunting for them to eat. Therefore as he didn't know the meaning of money he didn't know the value of his land. The Indian was cheated to a great extent as a result of his ignorance of money and its value. He did not know these things. It is as if the Indian was surprised and when he realized what had happened it was too late.

When the government man came, all those who were considered leaders were gathered together to speak. They were called

together to a meeting and discussions were held as to the importance of the treaty agreements and promises. It was a wicked man that was sent here representing the government. He never paid attention when the leaders aired their opinions of the treaty proposed. He would sit with his eyes closed when the Indian leaders spoke. He wouldn't look at the speakers. He did this for many days that the talks went on. The talks weren't properly finished as the government man didn't answer to any questions directed to him in regard to the agreements. This old man saw the government man sitting there with his eyes closed, not saying a word. So the leaders decided as to what they would do with this man. So they gathered to follow ceremony; where logic and talk had failed to move this government man, Indian power would work on him. So they got something to use on him to defeat him. So they made ready with guns. There was one called DA-DOH-TCH who led the gathering at his place. They took out the drums and used the Chicken Dance song as a medium also. From there they came away singing to the other meeting place where the initial talks had taken place. I would sing it but it isn't relevant. The women came along also. They came to where the government man sat and they began to dance. They whooped as they danced. Then they approached him.

Mrs. James Bull: Remember too that they shot close to his feet.

James: Yes, that too. They asked him, "Well, are you going to do what we expect of you to do in our favour? Are you going to uphold your promises?" They asked him this and still he sat

there with his eyes closed. DA DOH TCH took his gun and shot close to his feet. Then the government man opened his eyes he almost ran away in his fright as the Indians actions amazed him. He knew they would kill him if he didn't open his eyes. That old man DA DOH TCH was a warrior as he took it upon himself to do this. The government man then thought it was time to consider his end of the agreement. He spoke then of all the promises. In the beginning he promised \$15.00 treaty money for as long as the sun shone and rivers flowed. There was other things to be given to the Indian. He was to be made available to him a doctor, medicines, a policeman, an administrator and an agricultural man who was referred to also as the one who gave out rations. He was promised food like pork, bacon, flour, rice, all sorts of food as rations. He was also promised oxen, plows, pitchforks and other utensils and grain to plant crops with. In the start people helped each other with planting and harvesting and land breaking. Our grandfather, the elder who passed all this information to us also said that the government man did not buy the animals nor

the lakes for that matter. He didn't buy the water. The land bought was to a depth of one foot below the surface.

The government man said that if anything of value was found under the ground the Indian would benefit by it in the form of money. All the monies gained would the Indian benefit by it. Our grandfather told us all that was bought was one foot below the surface and no more. All the Queen bought was land. As all the treaty promises were agreed upon, the administrator and agricultural man were to remain on the reserve to assist the Indian, the doctor also to distribute medicine and take care of the sick. Today it's not so. The Indian has to go to the city to receive doctor's aid. The doctor was to stay on the reserve to serve the people within the boundaries of said reserves. The administrators who were referred to as money-keaders also moved to the towns. Today there isn't even the agricultural man on the reserve or in the town as well. He too lived in the town. All of the clerks also who were promised take care of the Indians. All of these persons were to be paid by the government to serve the Indian people. The policeman also was to be paid by the government and likewise for the medicine. This is what the Indian asked for in return for his land.

Abraham: When this land was sold did the administrator pressure, in any way, the chiefs to give the land away on the reserve?

James: I'm not sure if that would be later as there were different agents. I've never heard of it. In the beginning, the chiefs did not speak English. They were strong and did not allow white men within the reserve. That was another promise then, the white couldn't come on reserve land. There was many things on that treaty paper and that too was included. In the early days of the Association that law was broken and that was regrettable doing. The Association was responsible for the broken promise concerning that aspect.

I have often heard other people say that the leaders at that time were ignorant and made foolish laws but if those initial laws were followed, the white man wouldn't have any access to reserves such as he does now. You wouldn't see any white men on the reserves.

James: You see the presence of many white boys on the reserve.

Abraham: Then the people never gave up water; lakes and rivers?

James: None. They never gave any as the government never bought them.

Abraham: And mineral rights?

James: They never gave that either, only one foot of earth.

Abraham: Hunting, fishing, and trapping never came under treaty?

James: None as this is what the elder said. That is what he heard, it was just land. The animal was to be the Indian's livelihood and they were his.

Abraham: And what about the mountains?

James: I don't think so.

Mrs. James Bull: The mountains were referred to in the context of, "as long as the mountains stood."

James: There you go, I forgot that. But I think that too was mentioned. The government man said that the treaty was bound in fact by if anyone could move mountains, then the treaty could be broken. He used that concept to illustrate the solidity of the treaty rights and agreements.

Abraham: How did the elders view the mountains? Did they view the mountains in the concept of future benefits from them?

James: I would think so as they spoke of the mountains also. They thought of them as they would hunt in that area. The animals are plentiful in the mountains. There was many things from which a person could draw a sustenance from where the land was open.

James: On that basis they were mentioned.

Abraham: Did our forefathers have any use of what was in the ground? I do know they used the dirt to make mud for houses.

James: They used stones to build fireplaces when they first had houses. They didn't always have houses. They used hide tipis.

Abraham: I can see they used pipes and stone for these pipes.

James: Yes, they did. As many things were taught by our forefathers by the spirit to make life easier and in many ways the spirits taught the Indian how to live on this earth. The Indian was shown how to use stone for pipes. They also used stone for cutting. Bones too were used for cutting.

Abraham: What did they use for tobacco? What did they smoke?

James: Far into the past they smoked; a long, long time ago they found tobacco. Some Indian was told that, also where to find it and how to utilize it. They found where the tobacco grew and also the mixture of certain leaves with the tobacco to smoke in the pipe. The spirit allies of the people were a great contribution as the people were told many things to incorporate into their lives.

The Indian did not know the white man as they came to this area rarely and when they did, it was done. As the Indian didn't know what manner of creature the white man was, they killed him. They thought that it may be human but weren't sure so they killed them when they found the rare one or two. Finally they came to a point where they were viewed differently. They must be human; white men. So they didn't kill them anymore. They found one with a packsack of books on a hill and didn't kill him. They kept him, took him home and fed him. He was a clerk. So in order to live he imitated the Indian in what he did.

Abraham: Was meat the main diet?

James: Before the white man, yes, it was all meat. That was why the Indian was strong like the animal. There wasn't much sickness. They used herbs and roots for the making of soups. He ate many things that gave him strength. They used hide for clothes. They were as hardy as the animals. In the winter when they sometimes got wet they weren't sick as they were a hardy people.

Abraham: All of the treaty promises and agreements; do they exist now?

James: No, they are all gone. They've used up those promises, to us for themselves and now won't give them to us. There is nothing like the original agreements and promises. The administrators and agricultural man have left us as well. The clerks as well have left us. In exchange, as these promises aren't upheld, we have become poor paying for these things and workers that were guaranteed us. I doubt if they keep us even a little bit in the payment of all the workers needed on the reserve. I left out one point to which I will get back to. At the start the promise of \$15.00 treaty payment was upheld for three years. Now today we receive only \$5.00. Ten dollars was to be put aside to mount up for future use was what the government man said. The \$10.00 put aside was to gain interest as time passed. That's what applied to this particular

reserve. When the Indian was first given the money they gambled it on bets such as horse and foot races. They used this money to lay bets on each other. Because it didn't hold the same value to them as it did to the white man.

One particular elder was spoken of as he would take out a dollar and roll it up and use it to light his pipe from the fire. See, they didn't know the value of it. Not too many elders could fathom the significance of the money as this was the first time they'd seen it.

Abraham: I also hear the treaty payments were made close to the town and the people would go to the town and have dances in the stores and such.

James: That would be after Ponoka and Wetaskiwin existed. Edmonton had the biggest store and all the people would travel to it and bring furs also to sell. They'd trade for food; also different utensils such as guns, tea, sugar and flour. Flour was new to the people as well. There is a story of one old lady who gave a dollar for flour. She was given so many pounds which she spread her blanket out to put it in. When they got home they had to cook it. Soon her mouth was all white from flour. She made much laughter when she got home to her place as to her appearance. She didn't know she had to bake it. Somebody taught her what to do and she also taught others. They had pans by then and baked it.

At first they didn't like it as they change to the lifestyle they had before. They used it for a long time. At the start, they didn't use the white man's way of living pertaining to food. Finally they adapted to it as they learned more. They were afraid to eat many things at the start. They referred to apples as "Big Berries." They also referred to them as "White man's berries."

It was said the apples were brought home to the women to eat. "The storeman said they were good to eat so here, try them." One woman bit into it, didn't like it and threw it away. Some boys picked the apples up and put them into hot coals. After they baked them, they cleaned them, ate them and found that they were good. They weren't used to white man's food. It took them a while to adapt to the food. When they were paid they'd travel to the town to buy goods.

The leaders gathered together one time and all the people tied their money to small sticks and they all travelled to Ponoka to a man, a kind white storekeeper referred to as "red rosy cheeks," and danced in front of his store for him. They liked him and gave him the money for nothing. The storekeeper went

inside and gave the people things from his store such as blankets, shirts, etc. Then the people passed these out as far round as they'd go. The money would be collected and the leaders would be bought a cow each to feed his people. These cows would be led to the river where most people lived and

killed, then the meat passed around as far as it would go and a feast would be held. They said they were treated good. The same for Wetaskiwin. Later that too disappeared.

Today there isn't much. We use all of white man's things. Money especially is something we use so much of now. If a person didn't work for the money he will starve. Long ago it wasn't so. The Indian didn't use money and had a very good life. He hunted and ate and paid nothing. Today, we have to pay for the privilege of hunting. What does he do with that money he makes from our animals? I refer to licenses that white men buy. Where does that money go? It would seem we should benefit from that as the animals weren't bought at the writing of the treaty. Fish too. Fishers pay \$151.00 a license to fish and sell them. They are doing more and more to us. The white man never bought the fish or the water. He has no business with them. That's the way it would seem but it isn't. The fish warden catches our people and makes them pay big fines. He shouldn't for he has no business with that. He is the one that should be going to court and paying fines. These are ours. That's the way I think. The Indian doesn't stand up for those rights and soon the white man takes advantage of the fact. If those treaties were as strong now as they were long ago there would be a big difference. The Indian owns all these animals. Even ducks are a law. We can't kill them for ourselves. Even on our reserve there is restrictions. The white man does not have any right to impose these laws on us. He thinks that since he bought the land that the animals are his also. From this wrong thinking he's made laws. The Indian is fined, he's poor, he's only trying to feed himself. The law catches him. These are the injustices we are dealt. They made so many laws without taking us into consideration. That is all I can say now.

Abraham: I thank you for this information. I will take it to our leader to use as argument for those rights that are ours. The elders are being sought out for this kind of information to make one general consensus from all of the talks in order we can speak as one. I thank you again.

(End of Interview)

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