

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: CREE ELDERS WORKSHOP 4  
MIKE BEAR, DANIEL  
OCHAPOOWAYS

INFORMANT'S ADDRESS:

INTERVIEW LOCATION:

TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
LANGUAGE:  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 7, 1973  
INTERVIEWER:  
INTERPRETER:  
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD  
SOURCE: SASK. INDIAN CULTURAL COLLEGE  
TAPE NUMBER: IH-433  
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 62  
PAGES: 4  
RESTRICTIONS: NONE

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Loss of Indianism through white education.
- Founding of White Fish Lake Reserve.
- Problems on reserves as a result of electing 'young' chiefs.
- Loss of Indian ceremonies and healing.

CREE ELDERS WORKSHOP

MIKE BEAR 0000-0262

November 7, 1973

He went on to explain how he was brought up by his parents, his grandfather and his dad. They never took treaty, for they were thinking about their Indianism. My grandfather was a very respected man. He was noted for spiritual ceremonies for taking part; he knew how every one of them were performed. And my father, he made eight Sundances. He overdid then, and put two more; this is to show how highly he thought of his Indian culture. I highly respect you people for thinking of me; this is why they came and got me. Me too, I like to see the way mother nature (earth) grows everything nice. This is the way I like to see our Indianism grow, that we do not throw it away.

I did not get much schooling, but my dad always said, "My son, listen to old people. Whatever they have to say, let it sink in your mind and observe what is going around you." And now, my friends, this white society, it is just like a magnet. It is pulling us away from our Indianism. Why? Because we are afraid to lecture our young people. This is why we push our young

people more into school. If a person was to think up ahead, it is going to be pretty tough. This is why I sent my children to school. I have one boy who is finished. This one is going to have a tough time. Also have one boy going to finish.

This is what I have been thinking about, me too. I have strong faith in my Indianism.

I am starting to speak more now for I consider myself of age, for I have six great-grandchildren from my own children, this is why I consider myself of age to speak to other people. I am very thankful to you people for the way you have spoken on Indian culture; it gives me more of a strong faith in Indianism.

#### History of Whitefish Lake

The reserve you call White Fish Lake. This old man came from Athabasca region. His names was, in Cree, "Ota-pe-kwa" means the Braider. You see, how did this old man know about this lake, when he was a long ways from that lake? And he knew this lake. I wonder, maybe his spiritual grandfather brought him over to see this lake. This, of course, would be in his sleep. His spiritual grandfather would be one of the intermediaries, "a tayohkan." And so this old man thought about this lake, that he was going to look for it. So he made a canoe, and one of his relatives said that he was going with him. But the old

man said, "No, I was shown this place myself, therefore, I must go alone." But his brother insisted that he go with him. So the old man agreed and told his brother to make a canoe; so this is what they did.

So they started out from the river which is called Big River. They finally came to where the townsite of Big River is. We call it Crooked Lake. They came there and they came to another river; it was getting towards fall for it took them quite a while. They came to a little lake which we call now the Wooden Keg Lake. From here the old man thought he would go on foot looking for this lake. He went towards where the lake might be in his mind. While he was walking he heard a moose calling so he set out to fill these first. After, he went on again. And now where we are at, Whitefish Lake, there is a big hill which is bald toward the north side. So the old man seen that lake and he knew the lake so he was thankful when he found it. So this was a long time ago. So this is how White Fish Lake reserve came about. He was the first chief. From there on there has been four chiefs as of now. So this is all I can tell you.

DANIEL OCHAPOOWAYS

November 8, 1973

Oh it is true, my friends, the way I have heard you speak. I came here last summer. I was sort of confused but today I can talk like anybody else. Just like my friend was saying about his elders, mine was the same. My grandfather was "Ocha poo oways" - this was my dad's father. Also Loud Voice, "Ka kis wa we." Today we have a very young man who is chief of the

reserve. To tell you the truth things are not like they should be. A long time ago the chiefs had everything running smooth. Just like my friend was saying, there were a lot of people taking reserves at the Fort Qu'Appelle district. The old men were singing spiritual song so that their spiritual parents would tell them which land to take, just like my friend was saying when he talked about Whitefish Lake. We came from Round Lake where there are plenty of fish. We was told by our old people never to leave that lake. Now we own half of the lake and the other half, white society. When my brother-in-law came and got me I could not say no. For this Indian way of living, my father used to tell me all of the different ceremonies. My father performed the Smoking Tipi "pohtwowikamik." There is a lot of handling of the pipe. This goes on all night, the leader crying and saying prayers for people. And when I went home from here last summer.... My father has a smoking bundle. He said if a person has this he gets to be very old and lots of grey hair. And my brother-in-law has that bundle. So I guess he went and hung it someplace in the bush. So I guess he went

to get it - it was gone. A caterpillar had broken up the bush, he lost it. For you know, God gave that bundle to Indian people. So this Smoking Tipi brought us up on account of my father's service to the ceremony. And not very long ago we had a Sundance but we was picked up by police. Also the performer of the Sundance was taken, for at that time they were trying to stop us Indian people from performing spiritual ceremonies. But today it is wide open now and there is nobody who wants to perform such ceremonies. There is no old people. I guess I am the only one that is an old man where I come from. There are all young people. All they talk about is education, and they speak English. Sure I like education for young people for they can defend their own people if he were a lawyer.

There is lots of things I can talk about. Take for instance medicine. My father and his brother knew a few things about medicine. My father knew how to perform the "paske qua kun." This was an instrument used to open a certain vein in the body to let blood run out. This was commonly used in the old days. They had certain people who did this, not anybody could. Now I try to show young people how it is done they turn their faces away, they seem to be scared at the sight of blood. And there is still another thing; my father left me a bundle of medicine which is used for the head. I have used it a number of time on different people and they feel a lot better. From there you can see how effective Indian medicine was at that time. All I have to say is we are to teach one another how to use these different medicines and not hold them to ourselves. There are a lot of different ceremonies performed where there is a lot of pipe ceremonies and burning of sweetgrass and feasts performed, also prayers said. Today you see hardly any of them done. We sure like to get this back, but how are we going to do this?

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