

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: 1981 ELDERS' CONFERENCE 1/4  
WITH ERNEST TOOTOOSIS  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: POUNDMAKER RESERVE  
CUTKNIFE  
SASKATCHEWAN  
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ONTARIO  
TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Creation myths: Indian and Christian.
- Reflections on education and religion.
- Comparison of Indian and non-Indian values.
- Loss of traditional values and beliefs and the movement to recover them.
- Role of conferences such as the annual Morley conference and others.

ELDERS:

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\*\* Recorded speakers on the conference tape.

Speaker: ...area of culture and education, and our elders from the west, Ernest, and Jim and John (break in tape)... connected and associated with the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College. Noel from New Brunswick is involved with the Cultural Centre over there. This meeting has come about because of our interest in education. And the first year that our centre started, one of the first things that we did was to hold a conference on education and what we did was we brought in Indian people who were involved in education across Canada. But our main thrust was working with teachers, administrators, school boards, and so on. This was eight years ago. So, through a process, and sort of, I think, starting at the top, this is what we now consider our education conference. Three years ago we had one in Sagamok. It was all elders speaking.

At the first conference that we had, we didn't have any elders talking to the people. But four years ago, that's the direction that we thought we should be going. We talked about the importance of our elders and our different societies and nations but for many years we were just really paying lip service to say that elders were important and not really involving them. So three years ago is when we started, you know, having just the elders speak with the elders from different parts of Canada. We had Cree elders, Mohawk people, our own Ojibway-Odawa and Potawatomi peoples speaking, many of them speaking in their own language. And actually, that was the way that we should have been doing it all along; so this is how this meeting has come about. It is because of our interest

in education and again having the elders involved.

Ronny Wakegijig, the chief of Wikwemikong is coordinating the conference and will be pretty well running the sessions and talking again. Unfortunately, he was called away and will be back this afternoon. So maybe I'll have Ernest say a few words. Ernest has been to our conference for the past four or five years and has seen the change that we've gone through in those years. Our meeting, or meetings, will really depend on the direction of the Jib people will set. So I hope that you'll be thinking about that and we have prepared an agenda which maybe you can look at, but we really prefer to take the direction from you.

Ernest Tootoosis: Well, for the people that are from here, and come from other parts of the country, and American brothers that are here, first of all I'll talk about where we come from, us western people here. I've been involved with the Indian Cultural College right from the beginning, about thirteen, fourteen years ago. And we were only two, three people that started a Cultural Centre then. And our first duty was to bring in elders from various parts of Saskatchewan week after week, keep them for five days, and record whatever they had to talk about.

We have hundreds of recordings at our college today. We can listen to our elders that have passed away ten years ago today. They were made to understand that what they were saying was for the future generations; what they wanted to pass on to the future generation, so as they could learn their cultural, spiritual identity. That has been preserved to a certain extent in our college because our elders have said that it was important that we retain our language and our spiritual beliefs; because that's the very core of Indian identity before the coming of the Europeans. They believe that we have to learn the natural laws of God, of our Creator, our Mother the earth, and the spirit world. These things were created before us.

We were created on the North American continent and it was in that creation that our people were so keen and understood that creation. That's why they survived here in the North American continent for many thousands of years before the Europeans came. And our elders believed that's our duty, that's the command the Creator gave us, that we have to retain that, that we have to learn that and we have to be guided by that law if we're going to survive. So I've been involved in that college from the beginning. We have field workers; we have just laid a big Indian Affairs bureaucracy now. We have over six hundred people working for the Indian Cultural College and Community College, Federated College. But I'm sorry to say that maybe it's not right on top priority. What it should be, though, is the cultural aspect of our identity. If we don't put that top priority, I'm afraid we are going to lose out on the next generation, or even the third generation people. We'll have lost all that and then we will not know who we really are.

I think we have established a belief that the reason why we

have so much problem with our younger generation of people is because they have lost their cultural identity. We have lost our spiritual beliefs. All these things have been replaced by white man's beliefs, white man's spiritual beliefs, because we have forgotten how to understand our spiritual beliefs. We have forgotten how important it is to talk a language. That's a holy, spiritual language, these native languages. The reason why I say that is, when we use our native languages we cannot even swear to our Creator, because the Creator did not want us to disobey him, to disrespect him. That's why he gave us a language that is so spiritual. It's a prayer language. Our language is a prayer language. Mild, soft languages. And that's the wish of our elders; that we relearn that; that we use that language; and at the same time we master the white man's language. The white man's education has to be mastered if we are going to survive today. Our people, before the coming of the Europeans, had a very good education system that fitted into our daily lives. Our education system was all over

the world, all over the earth here. That's where our college was, our universities, our medical schooling was right there, around us; and that's the kind of an education system our ancestors went through and they survived. They mastered that education system. And I believe it's important again as our elders have said, that we relearn that. It's possible to know that and to master that and to master the white man's education system. That's very important today for our survival, for our daily bread, our daily needs. We need to master a job; some kind of profession. There was a span of time when we did not really understand that.

Because the white man dominated us, the religious societies of people, Indian Affairs programs, were geared to destroy us by denying us our language and by denying us our spiritual beliefs and they almost successfully accomplished that. And he will if our generation of people today do not smarten up and relearn the very base of our cultural identity, our spiritual beliefs. Our ceremonies have to be revived, our medicine world has to be revived. You know we have, us native people, have medicines today that our mother earth offers us every spring to cure any disease that we have today. It's there, our mother the earth has shot forth from her breasts the spring, waiting for us to go and pick these medicines to treat our sick. My personal belief is this: modern diseases we have today can be cured by the medicines of our mother the earth. The diseases that we have today, new kinds of diseases that we have today, are produced from our mother the earth by the white man. By putting chemicals together, by treating food with chemicals, he has developed from mother the earth that causes human beings to be sick. Our mother the earth can cure that. We have to relearn and believe and use these medicines and we'll be cured. Our people will have to pray, go and fast so that they will be given visions: what medicines to use to cure incurable diseases that the white man has developed; sugar diabetes that's killing us.

I have a seven year old grandson, one of my grandchildren's little boy. Today he has to be on a controlled diet because he has sugar diabetes. It's not only older people have that. That's because that little boy was raised on garbage food, pop, chips, a lot of sugar content in the foods. That's why he has that sugar. And I believe, and we have, I know native people have, medicines that cure sugar. We had a Navajo man come into my area last week that cures, and takes, literally takes the poison out of human bodies and pukes it out. And spits it out. He has cured me of sugar. I'm negative today. I was very, very bad in sugar one time. But this medicine man has the spiritual powers to literally take that poison out and put it in a paper bag and just puke it out. Now that's what I mean. We have to go back and relearn that. We have to be strong again, not to fear the white man, not to fear our brothers that laugh at us

because we go back and learn that. It can be done, I know it can be done.

One of my nephews back home, a university graduate, a highly educated Indian who got to be an alcoholic, went to the rehabilitation centre and there he relearned the ceremony, the fight ceremony. He fasted and seeked and today he is a great man. He is so busy he hasn't got time for himself any more, for people coming there to get treated for whatever ails them. He didn't lose his education. He's just like a lawyer to us. He's a professional man in that field. Whatever problems we have: we want something done in paperwork; negotiating, the government, the agencies, anybody - that's the boy we go to and he does that. He's got an office just like a white man's business office. And in the evening you see a big fire rising like yesterday evening (the day before, I've travelled all day yesterday.) They were going to have a big sweat, treating sick people ceremony. That's why I say it's possible that we can take the two cultures, the best from each for us to use and to survive. In order to get there, I believe we have to relearn our God's, our Creator's, great law. We have to believe that.

You know what the white man doctor does when people are sick. Like one time I got blood poisoning on this leg, my whole foot turned black, rotting away. They wanted to cut my leg right here. They said, "We should cut it here. But it might not; we may even have to cut it here," he said. They said, "It's better to cut it here now so that you can live. It's going to kill you." I went to an Indian medicine man and he treated me, singing and praying. Spirits cured me. I still got my foot. That's how the white man treats sick people. And us native people in America today, we're sick people, very sick. Especially our young people. Maybe this morning we heard on the news where native people have passed away last night; violent death; accident because they were drinking. That's because we're sick. What we have to do is we have to amputate that. We have to cut these things off. I don't literally say cut them off. I say we have to push them aside. And what we have to push aside is the white man's spiritual beliefs and, literally, the white man's religions have to be done

away with. They don't belong to us. It belongs to the white people. We have to replace that with ours, with the ones that we know were given to us by the Creator. We have to go back, we have to take that back if we're going to survive. Then we'll get cured little by little, we'll get cured. It would save hundreds of Indian young people that are trying to relearn that. They are not drinking, they are not doping today. They are trying to live a better way of life. But where are they going to learn that? The only place they are going to learn that is from the elders. And if the elders don't know it, where are their grandchildren going to learn from? And how are we going to learn that is by getting together like we are

today. All I'm doing is I'm giving you a little bit of what I know, of my ancestor's spiritual beliefs. That's all I'm doing; I don't know anything. I just know maybe half a drop in a bucket. We have lost a lot. But if we do that one by one, we drop one drop in the bucket, some old elders drop what they can, what they have heard from their elders and what they believe in, then we're going to fill that bucket in time. And we're going to relearn and be reborn to our cultural, spiritual beliefs again because we'll have worked together. We will come again as a full circle of people in the North American continent. But it's important that...

(Break in Tape)

Ernest Tootoosis: ...and we've been taken on under the road. We're walking in another road. We have to come back to that. And I'm hoping that these cultural colleges that we have across the country, they promote more gatherings like this. What's the use of giving full education to our children to master a profession when they are dead inside? What will happen is they will stay with the white man, where they are white inside. That's where they'll stay and leave us to suffer, and leave their people to suffer in these communities. They can't - you don't blame them - that's the way they will be because inside, that's what they are; they have white man's beliefs, white man's profession, white man's money, and they will stay over there, which is happening in my area. But the young people that have relearned their spiritual, cultural identity, they get education and they are coming back and working for native people. You know, in the last two years, I've noticed that yesterday one of my nieces, my youngest brother's daughter, was telling us, as she was taking us to the airport, she is going to quit working for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College. She's going back to university and she's going to learn law. She's going to be a lawyer because Indian people need lawyers today. That's what she wants to do. And I know that little girl is raised traditionally, she believes that because her father believes that. She's going to master that profession and she's going to come and help her people when she finishes that education. I believe that's what we need today. Doctors, we need professional doctors, medical doctors, native people to work and treat their own people and to relearn this Indian medicine world and master a white man's medical profession and use them too, to treat their own people.

I think that's what is needed. We need that very badly.

I thought that - Ronny asked me to take over here until he gets back. I thought it would be nice for us just to sit around today, just have a good visit, just a good talk. Get to know each other. You know, we even have lost that, us native

people. I believe I have noticed older people back home, when they had a stranger, another Indian from other part of the country came to visit us, that very quickly they got to talking and they just - just like they knew each other for a long time. That's what used to happen at home when these people come and visit us. I notice that now. I didn't notice it at that time. But now, I remember that, that's the way it happened. But today there are a lot of things have disrupted us. Just like our brothers from the States here; the line has disrupted our relationship. The English, the white man's language has separated us again. Because we called ourselves tribes, called ourselves the Crees, Ojibways, the Mohawk, we have forgotten one word that we all have. We called it (Cree), we say. That's all human, aboriginal human beings on the North American continent. When we say (Cree), they are human beings. That's what we are. I can say (Cree). That's the Cree. (Cree). We called them Mohawk, (Cree). The Sioux (Cree), the Saulteaux (Cree). Sure we can use that, but this other word was always used when we, the people, got together. This is how they are related with that (Cree). We have forgotten that, too. White man's religious societies have really destroyed us and fragmented us today. It's because we don't understand ourselves anymore. Nobody has taught us why God created a world, why he created man. Why did he create the whole world? Why? We have forgotten that. We have forgotten that this island here - that is our tabernacle, that is our church; this whole island.

This morning I'd like to take a little more time. I want to take a lot of your time this morning so that I don't have to take any more of your time the rest of the days I'm going to be here. But if you want to respond to what I believe, especially the young people, I would gladly have a private session with anybody to discuss my beliefs, my philosophy of life, because I have went through the white man's church; four different times I changed religions. Man, I've been baptized four different times and if there is anybody going to make it into heaven by baptism, I think maybe I will. (laughter) And again I've been fortunate to relearn our ceremonial way of life back out west. I've performed ceremonies for people, I practise herbal medicines from the older people. I try to do that. So I compare these two things that I went through and I have a philosophy, I have a belief. This is the way it must be. That's what I'm going to talk about.

First, we'll talk about this hill here, a rock here. They tell me that that's where Nanabush, Wisakedjak, he slept on top that hill when he left us, just prior to the coming of the white man. Back home, about fifteen miles away from home, we have a sliding hill. There is a big hill on the prairie where when

he was coming this way, the last trip he made, this Wisakedjak, he stood on top that hill they claim; that's a legend. And

he put his hands like this and he faced and he walked, and turned around like this. He said, "In the future, my little brothers, when they gather medicine in the vicinity of this hill, whatever ails them, they'll be cured by the medicine. Because," he said, "I have fifty percent of the medicines I have made to grow on the mother earth." And he slipped down that hill. Just the other day, I took two Irish girls that came to visit me from Ireland, I took them on top that hill and I showed them where Nanabush, he slipped down that hill. There is a pile of dirt over there where he slid down like this. And got up and he came east. And legend shall tell you Thunder Bay, Sleeping Giant, Dream Rock, and all the way down east, that was the last trip our brother made. When you learn your legends you will learn that. Nanabush, Wisakedjak that's just like Jesus to us. Jesus went to the white man, Nanabush came here. He was sent here to give us our spiritual beliefs, to repair and rebuild this island from the prehistoric time to this era. And he left signs. In the Northwest Territories in Yellowknife, it's just like this. It's worse than this country for rock up there. It's all solid rock in the Northwest Territories there. And right across the lake from Yellowknife, there is three big footsteps, moccasin feet about this big, about that wide, about this deep, in a rock where he walked like this and he went and drank in the lake. These footprints are there yet. You can see all over North America where he left signs. For us, his little brothers, to see and to believe that he was here with us, this Nanabush, Wisakedjak.

You'll have to compare him with our brother Jesus that went to the white man. Alright, in the beginning, the world was created by the Creator. We talk about the prehistoric time. Our Creator created a prehistoric era where the spirits lived on the earth then. The earth and the universe was different at that time. But in that world, the creation disobeyed the natural law God gave them to guide them. They started to destroy one another. They started to destroy things that God created. They started to eat foreign things. Remember, foreign things, things that were not intended for them to eat. They started eating these, like big ones eating little ones. And the Creator put an end to that era. That's when Wisakedjak came and he remodelled a lot of these animals. He remodelled a top part of this earth, preparing that a Creator was going to create his children, going to create man then. The whole world was created a garden of paradise. We are living in a garden of paradise today. So is the whole world, was a garden of paradise. And our Creator, he created his children on these islands that he created. And he gave them a spiritual belief, he gave them how they were going to communicate with their Creator. You know Adam Cuthand, he just came back from

Australia and he was telling us at a Morley conference this year that there is aboriginal people in Australia believe that they were created there. They believe in the Creator, they believe in the mother earth, and they believe in the medicines

and the spirit world. He said it's really amazing that they do believe the same things that our ancestors believed in Indian. They believe they were created there. And I believe it. So the Creator, he created his children in all parts of the world in the beginning. And he made these beautiful islands with it where they could survive, where these islands would provide for his children, providing those children abide by the natural functions and powers of nature which is the natural law of God. And this is how we had our beginning here.

Now we go back where the white man come from. And all I can talk about is what I have learned from the little black book; that he was created over there, Adam and Eve. They were created in a garden of paradise, didn't have to work, didn't even have to have clothes on there. They lived for the animals in there. God provided them with everything they needed, providing they lived in harmony with nature in there. But they disobeyed in that garden. They disobeyed the Creator. They obeyed another one, remember? Because they listened to another one, they disobeyed the Creator. Their garden was done away with. They were made to work because of disobedience. And ever since that time, the white man is guided by somebody else. Then, the Creator sent him a messenger. Our brother was sent there to give this white man another communication system, another way of life so that he can go to a better place when he's transplanted to the spirit world. And what did he do? They rejected that spiritual messenger, they destroyed him. They thought they did. So the white man has sinned twice against the Creator and the rest you'll know. But us, the North American continent, our people never disobeyed God, always lived the way he wanted us to live, in harmony with nature, to be guided by his natural laws, the natural functions and powers of nature.

Right up to 1492, we were still living in our garden, Lord providing everything for us. We were not working like the white man because we were obedient people. Our messenger that came, Wisakedjak, he left us, he went down east. Said, "The white man is going to come here now," he said. "He is allowed to come here. So I will go down east." According to the legends of my people, there was a big rock down east someplace in the ocean. It's got a big hole in it. That's where Wisakedjak is today. I have heard him come in the ceremonies and talk to us. Sounds just like an old man: talks our language to us. So, what I'm saying, really saying, is this - that the sinner's religion, people that have disobeyed the Creator in their garden, that have destroyed the messenger - that religion, he calls it, does not belong to us, no more than

it belonged to Adam and Eve in the beginning in the garden. Jesus never had to come in their garden of paradise because the people did not sin in that garden, the white people. It was only after they disobeyed that he had to come down to revive those people. So brothers and sisters today, we are descendants of people that have never disobeyed the Creator in the North American garden of paradise. I base that on your

language. For you people that talk the language, people that cannot even swear to their Creator, don't need that sinner's religion, the white man's religion. What we need is this - what we were given to guide us to a better way of life. That's my philosophy; this is what I believe - that we don't belong to that religion. I'm not saying it's not good. It is very good but it belongs to the white people. And this is what he has replaced in us, his spiritual belief by brainwashing, not through because we wanted to learn; through brainwashing. I went through that brainwashing. When I was ten years old, eleven years old, the priest came over and took me away to a boarding school for six years because, they said, I was a Christian, I was baptized when I was a little boy. I didn't know anything about religion. I was brainwashed into it. And that's hard to get out of that brainwashing, you have to, a lot of determination. You have to hear a lot about the alternative. You see, this is what we're doing today, that's what I'm doing is I'm trying to give you an alternative to what you have learned from the white man.

Really, we are, inside, we are mostly all white. We believe in his religion. We believe and talk only his language. It's only our skin that's a little dark. I think we need to replace that thing in here, to relearn this other Indian thing. Make us strong. And I think this is what it takes is gatherings like this and machines like that. Me, I welcome these. Me, I welcome tape recorders to come on for whatever I say because what I say is what I believe in, and you don't have to believe it. But this is what I believe in, this is, because I have lived to experience and to witness a lot of things in my time. Maybe some day, somebody will get a little bit of something out of what I believe in that will make them change to a better way of life, a better understanding about what life is all about. Why were we created on the face of the earth?

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Ernest Tootoosis: We are supposed to be like that. We are supposed to be guided by these things that have never changed. Because we are part of that. But we have been changed. We have been brainwashed I will say, forced to change, to change our beliefs, and we are in trouble today. It's important that

we relearn them for the younger people, a better future. And some here, I'll talk about a little legend about why we call ourselves Naheeo(?). Literally it's supposed to be Naoheo, whole bodies. That's the version of creation, of mankind, from the Cree people. After the world was created and made perfect in this era, the Creator was going to create man. That's why he changed, that's why he created this island the way it is today - because he was going to create his children, the brown people in here. So he created one man they say. His name was Askewein(?); that means earth man. Aske - earth, wein, earth man. And he lived here for four years, four winters he lived here alone. And the Creator used to come and talk with his

creation in that beginning of time, everybody talked one language, everything had a language, communicated with the Creator and with one another. After four times it snowed, four times it had summer, the Creator was here again to talk with his children and Askewein said, "How come I'm alone here? I noticed all my brothers and sisters are together. They are in pairs, male and female and they have little ones. They are already raising little ones," he said. You know that all things are male and female, trees, medicines, everything. It's male and female but he noticed he was not like that. The Creator said, "Now that you have learned my creation, you are ready to have your mate."

(Inaudible conversation in audience)

Ernest Tootoosis: "Now that you have observed my law and learned my law, you are ready to have a mate." And the Creator created three more men they say. There were four men standing there. And the Creator called the four great powers of his creation, four directions he called these spirit powers, to take bodies of mother earth and that's where four women came from. And these four were united to raise little ones. And that's where the Creator told his children why he created them. What was going to happen, how to raise children. And the Creator said, "The reason why I created you, because I need helpers. All my creation is my helpers I created. To perpetuate my creation. And that's what you are going to do for me. You are going to create and perpetuate the human races that I have created, my children. You," he told the woman, "you will bear children. I have made your bodies to raise these children. I have made your bodies for to feed my children right here." He even told them, "You will chew food for that baby as he grows up. You will know when it's time to chew food for that baby so he can swallow it. That's how you are going to work for me," he told the woman. "You're my little helper. And you," he told the man. "You're going to provide for this woman so that she can feed these children that you are raising for me. And you will teach him that natural law you have learned. My creation, all about my creation so that he will respect me and he will respect my creation."

Brothers and sisters, there we are. We have lost respect for our Creator. Our children have lost that Indian respect for their Creator and they don't even respect their parents. They do not respect anything today. That's why we are in trouble today. We have lost that and that's a command that native people got from the Creator - to teach our children to respect the Creator so that they will respect his creation. And I said a while ago, we are descendants of people that never disobeyed the Creator until the white man came, who now, we have learned to disrespect our Creator. Maybe through brainwashing but we surely have forgotten what he created us for. And maybe it's not surprising that we cry every day because we get a backlash; we get a backlash of our ancestor's disobedience and our disobedience, teaching our children a foreign belief that does not really belong to them. It's good to teach them that,

but it's important, top priority has to be our Indian spiritual beliefs because it's important that they learn the white man's beliefs too, so that they will be strong in their belief; so they can compare.

Why do we use a pipe when we pray? They have to relearn that. It's what our ancestors were given by the Creator to use when we are going to pray to our Creator. You know, that stone here, one of the greatest, most powerful creation of the Creator. People have forgotten how great that stone is. He is a messenger, he is a mouthpiece to our Creator. You know, you compare that to the Catholic priest. When he raises that wine and when he communicates with the Creator, he uses that, a shot of wine. And what the heck does wine do to us? We are all alcoholics and it's killing us. But that's the way he believes. That's the way it is with him. It must be true but it belongs to him. So is the stone, to me, that belongs to me. This is what we use. You know, I've got stones at home that have little baby stones. I carry one here. My brother wants to see it. He saw it about two, three years ago, and he's going to see that little stone is growing. That little stone, that little baby stone, it's growing. It's about three, four times as big now as it was then when it first appeared with that little one. But that is God's creation. Indian spiritualism, there is a lot of young people talking about spiritualism and the spiritual way of life. What are they seeking in it, that Indian way of life before that coming of the white man?

Indians lived on the spiritual side of God's creation before the white man came. We are a spiritual creation. Man is a spiritual creation. You know, just look at each other that we are alive and we are just out of mother earth and what are we going to be when we are transplanted to the other life. We'd

be nothing but just like our mother the earth. And today we talk, we hear, we see, we eat, we reproduce, we have little babies, we have grandchildren, we have children, we have brothers, all these things. That's a spiritual creation. Look at the trees that have shed berries, that have leaves, they are alive. Look at the sun that gives us light. Without that sun, if the sun didn't listen to God as it created it, there would be no sun today, we'd all die. That's part of life. So is the air, that's part of life that God created. That is servant. The wind works for God; God wanted it to blow every day. The water is another servant of the Creator to give us life. That's where our people lived, in that space. But where do we live today? We live just exactly where the white man is. We take it for granted, the sun. We don't even know what the sun is all about. What does it tell us, what has the wind told us all morning? What did the water tell us all morning? What did the scenery tell us all morning? We have forgotten that language. We have forgotten to read that language. What all these things has told us today, is to share because we share together the sun, the wind, and the water and the scenery this morning. Most of us must have thought how beautiful it was this morning when people wake you up five o'clock in the

morning, of course. We have forgotten to live in that spiritual life. We live in a materialistic world today. It's like the white man.

When I was a little boy, but I have a little grandson here with me, about that age I guess. And we lived by a little creek, Cutknife Creek. And we used to go and play in that water, all summer long we'd play in there, across the creek and all over. And my father used to say, once in a while he'd corner us and he'd say, "Don't pee in that water now. You are there all day long, don't pee in that water. Go in the bush away from there, don't do that. That's where life comes from," he said. "Don't." And I had to live in harmony with that water in order to survive. Now we live in today's world where we flush that every day into the waters, into the rivers and at one time we were forbidden to do that. No wonder we get sick. This is where we live today in that white man's world. Disrespect for God's creation because we have forgotten to respect our Creator. Let us take a hard look at ourselves. Are we better people today than our grandfathers were? Us people that are my age, eh? I'm 67. Am I a better person than my grandfather that never went to school? I only seen one grandfather, that's my mother's father who chased buffalo in his younger days before the reservation time. Am I living a better life than that old man did? I think I'm not. I think he was a much better man than I am. He had respect because he used to tell us to try and live a different way of life. He had something in here that I haven't got which I have to relearn. So really the white man has never given us anything better than what we

had. But we live in a different world today. We have to make adjustments so that our children can have a better future than we're going through today. And I'm afraid the white man is not the one that's going to smarten things up. I think it's up to us people. And if we stand together, pray together, hold our ceremonies together, we'll be guided again as our ancestors were guided, into a better future. We'll be guided again by dreams and visions, by the messengers of our Creator, the servants, the spirits. These were created to give us a good way of life and to guide us and they will come back because we will have gone back to them to seek for that guidance. The only way you are going to get it is to go and look for it. You are not going to get it where we've been going. We're not going to get it in those churches that are standing on each reservation. You have to go somewhere else. Pray to that same God in our own way, and he'll listen to us as he listened to our ancestors. That's my belief. You know, I'd like to live what I believe in. I try, I try to live what I believe in but it's very hard because sometimes I feel alone. I feel very alone in it.

When I look at the whole nation, North American native nation, what's happening to us, what our people are doing, it looks as if we're not making real sincere desire to have a change. Maybe we talk about it but we're scared to make action because the white man is there to point his finger at us; because our neighbors, they point fingers at us. They call us down. You

know, people have come and laughed at me because I do ceremonies, I go to these kinds of things. They come and laugh at me, you know. Old people, they laugh at themselves because they are native people, too. That's who they are laughing, it's themselves. Not at me. I have nine boys and one girl in my family. That's my second family. I'm looking for a third family of two boys. (laughter) My first woman, full-blooded Cree, passed away, left me with two boys. But my second family was white, their mother was German. Because I lived in a white man's world that time, I even married a white woman. I left my people for eleven years and tried to be a white man. I was successful in a business way, in a cunning, sly way of making a good living. But after a while, I changed my way because I realized I couldn't be a white man. My skin wouldn't change. So I came back and my nine boys and one girl are half. And it was very hard...

(Break in Tape)

Ernest Tootoosis: ...today, they are making real good money. So it's hard, it's the hard way. I have my little grandson here. I trained him to sleep until two o'clock in the afternoon. (chuckles) He's had a hard day travelling for the first time in an airplane. I try to teach him these things, you

know. Sometimes he bugs me. Sometimes I forget to pray when we're going to eat and he'll sit there and say, "You going to pray?" So I have to pray. (chuckles) I'm in a hurry sometimes to grab something to eat and we're going to go someplace. But I trained him like that. I think we have to do that. That's the kind of training. We go to ceremonies. He takes care of us when we sweat you know, the little fellow opens it up and closes it up. Participation I think is very important to teach our young people our ways. Medicines, I try to teach him medicines. He can already start digging medicines for me. He knows, he knows what I'm doing when I handle these things. Sick people, because I want him to know it and I tell him when he asks. When he asks, that's when I tell him. I let him observe to begin with. And it's nice to come back here you know, this lodge here. I've been back here four times now. I feel right at home, you know. And I've been here with these communities many times now. Get to know people.

And as I said I have travelled. I had the opportunity to travel, well, almost all parts of North America, the geographical parts anyway. And talk to different kind of people, different kinds of tribes. And I have asked, I have a habit of asking different people when I meet different tribes, about a language as I said before. I call it a spiritual, prayerful language. I think our people live a prayer life. I think that education system was geared to that because everything you see and hear and feel you were taught that God created that. There is life in that, there is spirit in that. Which say like white man, a soul. The trees are alive. God created them, they tell us a message, they give us medicine. So when we look at a tree, it should remind you of the Creator they tell me. Your body was created to communicate with

feeling, with fury, with tasting, with seeing. That's how you communicate with God's creation. When you feel the wind, you should be thankful God gave you that wind. So it can go in you. You don't breath it in, it's in you they tell us - to give you life; you should be thankful. That should remind you of that. The water, it should remind you of God, the trees, the rock, the sky, the sun, the other human beings should remind you of God. So if we train ourselves as our ancestors did - everything we did reminded us of God - isn't that an Indian way of prayer? You wouldn't have time to do anything wrong against the Creator. That is the spiritual side of creation and that's that part of education system our people had. They taught that to their children. But today we have forgotten that. Nothing reminds us of the Creator. Most of the things we see today and seek today is to have a vision of money. That's why we live today, we live in a white man's world. Whatever he sees and feels and hears, the white man, always reminds him he can do this to make money. Of course, that's his God today, the white man's God is money today.

That's always in his mind and we seem to be going that way. We have to relearn that.

They tell me that some birds were made by the Creator to have a beautiful voice. They sing in the evening to tell you what the weather is going to be. They communicate with the Creator the way they were given. I assume they are not swearing to God when a robin is singing in the evening. He is praising, communicating with the Creator. We hear that beautiful voice. He is supposed to remind us of the Creator, that bird. Others we see with our eyes, the beautiful colored birds; they should remind us God made them so they'd be pleasing to our eyes. We should be thankful for the things we feel, they communicate with us to remind us of that. Others we eat. We have to relearn these things.

I was travelling with a couple of elders from the eastern part of the province and I was taking them to Alberta. I came three hundred miles east and I still had two hundred miles to go west from my place and one of the elders was praying when we were driving away from the house. He even talked to my truck. Not directly like this. He talked to the air. It takes air for the motor to run. Talked to the thunder that the white man has borrowed electricity from, the white man, to get that thing to run. He talked to the water from the earth he said. He called it gas; so that motor will run so that we don't have no problems on the road. That's how he talked to that motor or that truck. That old man is still living and the spiritual side of a modern automobile. But really an automobile comes from mother earth. That's a byproduct of mother earth. Our mother the earth produced all that's needed and used to make an automobile. You can still look at all things, the spiritual side of creation. But we have forgotten that again. We live in the materialistic side. It's like an automobile, there is no life in it. There must be something in there that makes it go, that the white man has put together to make it go. Let us remember where that came from. Who created all that to begin

with. So, that will be all this morning. I'm not here to be what one old guy called me back there one time. He says, "I don't know about that Ernest. Walking encyclopedia of the Cree nation," he called me. Of course, he was a Sioux, you know, but (laughter) wait until I catch a hold of him then I'll scalp him. (laughter) I don't profess I know it all. I have my philosophy as I said. And I have had a chance to listen to different tribes of people across Canada and United States so I have a lot of ideas coming from different - but again I'll talk about the Morley Conference.

Everybody knows it now by Morley Conference that takes place. It started on the 26th of July and ended on the 2nd of August this year. Eight days of gathering west of Calgary, Alberta. The Stoney tribal nation where natives come in from all parts of North America. We've had people come from Germany. We've

had people come from South America, New Zealand, Australia one time or another come and take part in our gathering. We, here, a southwest tribe, the Arizona Navajo people, light a sacred fire on the Sunday afternoon and that fire is lit and keep burning for eight days straight until the following Sunday. They put it out in the afternoon with the ceremony where elders speak to the younger people, where the young people have a chance to talk, to express themselves. We had morning sessions where we go right to the campsite. Mind you, we were not that many people this year as usual, but we had at least three thousand people there all that time - maybe more or less as people come in on the weekends and some stay three or four days and they had to go and so on. But usually in the morning, we got to a Manitoba group. They camp in areas, Manitoban groups there, B.C., different groups, Northwest Territories and they select elders to go and talk to the young people in these campsites early in the morning. And in the afternoon we have general assembly under the arbor where people sit there and listen to the speakers. We had sweats, we had people that treat sick people with herbals, spiritual healers were there to try and help people.

But more and more young people are coming. There are more and more people raising their money all year around in order to make that Morley Conference. We always do, still do have people that come there and drink but it's nothing compared to the first two or three years of that gathering when we literally had to have help to pick up bottles and garbage all over, every morning. But that campsite has changed now. We have young people that came there who were totally lost who have found their spiritual identity, who come there and who bring groups of young people into that camp today. We honored one from Winnipeg. Today she was given an honor because of her participation of our Morley Conference where she came only to dope and drink, have a good place to come and be around, strangers. But the last few years they have brought in band loads of young people from Winnipeg. Uncontrollable kids, kids that are really lost in there. They have gathered those kids, raised money and bring them to the conference so they can hear our ways and she was given a big honor today, this summer, this

girl. We have seen a tremendous change in the conference grounds. There is hardly any garbage left when the camp broke up because everybody pitched in to keep our mother the earth clean. Hardly any drinking around. It's only local people, local young people that come there to tear around. But most of the young people that came there had learned that it's not a place to go and drink. It's a place of spiritual awakening. I think it's through the movement that the Morley Conference... that these cultural things have happened across Canada. All

these cultural colleges, cultural awareness movement, I think, stemmed from that Morley movement.

You know, it started way back in 1969. Our first conference took place at Hardin, Montana during the Crow Agency. We were only about 60 people participated in that. Elders, 60 elders, participated in that conference. But from there it has been hosted by the Stoney band ever since. And we've had about three and four thousand Indians there for the days we have set aside for the conference every year. And that's good enough for us people that have started the movement. That is very true. Even if we have revived a handful of young Indian people, they learned our ways, the better ways of life and be good citizens of this country, holding jobs and learning how to communicate with the Creator in our own ways, I think we have accomplished something. And that's going to take place again next year. It has been confirmed by the people. It will take place from the last Sunday in July to the first Sunday in August at Morley, that Morley campgrounds, Stoney campgrounds. And we'd like to see more young people coming to our area. It's getting harder to raise money to feed the people there. But we had maybe \$30,000 but we know we had \$15,000 to start with. And nobody got hungry. We didn't run short of anything. Because a lot of people come there prepared to stay for eight days and look after themselves now, which I think is only right. When we seek we should look after ourselves and not depend on somebody else to help us to seek.

And we have learned through this conference that there is a lot of different areas in North America where these kind of movements are on the move now. We just found out in Arizona that they have a spiritual camp there about thirty miles out of Gallup, New Mexico, that has been going on for seven years. And it started with just one family of Navajos. The in-laws and the grandchildren got together and they made a little shade there and they had so many days of praying then. And this year it has grown, they have two thousand people come there. And their little arbor is eighty feet long by forty now, where they make a big shade and they light a sacred fire there and they hold their spiritual conference there. We brought in the man that started that to Morley this year. Last year they had two thousand people in there and it never cost them one penny. He said, "I don't have to worry, I don't have to raise money," he said. "People that come to my gathering," he said, "they look after themselves because they are seeking spiritual guidance." And I think that's the way it should be. And other areas in British Columbia, they are having them right now. British

Columbia Indians, I give credit to them, you know. They are the fastest movement, cultural awareness movement in British Columbia, that I know of in Canada. Really fascinating. It's really great how these young people in B.C. are reviving back to a better way of life. Is it because that they have no

reservations like we do in Saskatchewan? They never made treaty in B.C. And the land claims, the white man has taken everything away from them, fighting out of their fishing rights. Maybe that's what's uniting them to go back to their elders for the spiritual guidance and their ceremonies are coming back. I don't think it's quite that strong in Saskatchewan. It's because maybe we still have old people that are in that. It's still being done all over and we don't have to gather everybody to have one big one. Because it's still happening all over. Like our Rain Dances you know, I've seen seven of them this summer, right. Tenth of June, I was on the road, I've been on the road from the 10th of June, just going from one whole day ceremony to another. That many, that kind of ceremonies taking place. And other ceremonies are being done too, besides that.

I live on a reservation with about, pretty near six hundred population. Our reservation is only five by six miles. And we are farmers. Some people raise cattle and we're wheat farmers in my area. But we are more than half of the people that don't live on the reserves. They are working somewhere else. They make their living somewhere else.

(End of Side B)

(End of Conference tape)

#### INDEX

| INDEX TERM                    | IH NUMBER | DOC NAME     | DISC # | PAGE #   |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------|----------|
| AGRICULTURE                   |           |              |        |          |
| -farming                      | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 20       |
| CEREMONIES                    |           |              |        |          |
| -Rain Dance (Cree)            | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 20       |
| CHILDREN                      |           |              |        |          |
| -raising of                   | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 13,16    |
| DISEASE AND ILLNESS           |           |              |        |          |
| -diabetes                     | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 5        |
| EDUCATION                     |           |              |        |          |
| -advanced                     | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 7        |
| EDUCATION                     |           |              |        |          |
| -and cultural suppression     | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 5,11     |
| EDUCATION                     |           |              |        |          |
| -residential schools          | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 11       |
| EDUCATION                     |           |              |        |          |
| -traditional                  | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 3,4,5,16 |
| ELDERS                        |           |              |        |          |
| -as teachers                  | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 3,4,6,7  |
| MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES |           |              |        |          |
| -Western medicine (vs.)       | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 6        |

|                                    |          |              |    |           |  |
|------------------------------------|----------|--------------|----|-----------|--|
| MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES      |          |              |    |           |  |
| -and plant remedies                | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 5,9       |  |
| MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES      |          |              |    |           |  |
| -ingredients, gathering            |          |              |    |           |  |
| and preparation of                 | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 16        |  |
| MEDICINE AND CURING PRACTICES      |          |              |    |           |  |
| -rituals                           | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 5,6       |  |
| NATURE                             |          |              |    |           |  |
| -and spirituality                  | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 14,16,17  |  |
| NATURE                             |          |              |    |           |  |
| -rocks                             | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 13        |  |
| POWER                              |          |              |    |           |  |
| -from fasting                      | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 6         |  |
| RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY            |          |              |    |           |  |
| -Christian religions               | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 6,8,10,   |  |
| (vs.)                              |          |              |    | 11,13,15  |  |
| RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY            |          |              |    |           |  |
| -revival of                        | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 5,6,7,    |  |
|                                    |          |              |    | 11,15,18, |  |
|                                    |          |              |    | 19,20     |  |
| SPIRITS                            |          |              |    |           |  |
| -Nanabush (Ojibway)                | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 8,9       |  |
| SPIRITS                            |          |              |    |           |  |
| -Wisakedjak (Cree)                 | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 8,9,10    |  |
| STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL) |          |              |    |           |  |
| -creation myths                    | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 9,10,12   |  |
| STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL) |          |              |    |           |  |
| -landscape features                | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 8,9       |  |
| STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL) |          |              |    |           |  |
| -tricksters                        | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 8,9       |  |
| VALUES                             |          |              |    |           |  |
| -respect                           | IH-OM.13 | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86 | 13        |  |

PROPER NAME INDEX

| PROPER NAME        | IH NUMBER | DOC NAME     | DISC # | PAGE # |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|--------|--------|
| GALLUP, NEW MEXICO | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 19     |
| HARDIN, MONTANA    | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 19     |
| MORLEY, ALTA.      | IH-OM.13  | 1981 CONF. 1 | 86     | 17-19  |