

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: FRANK CARDINAL
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: SUCKER CREEK RESERVE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SUCKER CREEK RESERVE

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DATE OF INTERVIEW:
INTERVIEWER:
INTERPRETER:
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Frank Cardinal, aged 68, is the chief of the Sucker Creek Reserve.

- Treaty #8 and its interpretation.

- Establishment of the reserves around Lesser Slave Lake.

- Problems facing a chief in modern times.

Interviewer: Frank Cardinal is our next speaker, chief of Sucker Creek. He is 68 years old. He will now speak. How old are you Frank?

Answer: I will be 68 on my next birthday in January.

Interviewer: Would you tell us how you heard our treaties were made with our elders and selling of our land? We saw a picture of Kin-noo-shew [Key No Say Oo] at Jean Marie's place. Did you hear about the treaties he made? You have heard a lot of things and noticed a lot of these things. I believe you have a lot of information for us.

Answer: Do you mean from the beginning? At first what I heard. When treaties were first made my grandfather and my father were there to face the first treaty. They listened and from there I will relate what they said. Our elders were taken by surprise and were unaware, not having seen white men before. This type of transaction the bush Cree were not familiar with. What was told to me by my grandfather, when they were paid for the treaties made, they were given two choices. To become Metis and accept money. This was called "taking everything"

(scrip). This was for the Metis. When our elders thought things over carefully at meetings, they finally understood that Indian treaties would last longer. To accept \$5.00 (five) dollars annually. So from there they decided it was to their interests to accept this five dollars which would last longer. What was promised to our elders, the way they were told if they were Indians, land would be given to them as they chose. They would have their own reservations, owned by the Indians. When they accepted the five-dollar treaty, they were told to elect a chief and councillors. The chief to help the councillors.

The reservation of Sucker Creek did not have a chief at first. But there was one councillor here. This person was old enough to see. Many times I went with him, when he went for his nets. I would watch him and see what he did when he was fishing. This is where the old man saw, while he was holding fish in the water, he thought of running his reserve into the water, so the people could make their livelihood on fish. He was promised ducks, that he could kill ducks on the reserve that was given to him. He was given the game in the bush, wild game and whatever there was, as long as the sun shines and the rivers flow and the grass shall grow. When these things stop and nothing runs, and the sun doesn't shine, then the treaties will stop, he was told. This was told to me by my grandfather and my father.

What they thought was best, is what the Indians chose. When it was mentioned who would be chief, Kin-noo-shew [Key No Say Oo] (fish) was elected as chief. He was chief of four reserves surrounding Lesser Slave Lake. I know of these four reserves that he was elected for. In Sucker Creek here, Moostoos [Mustus] was the name of our first councillor. And Go-chee-wee-sis was the name of the councillor that was at Drift Pile. And Ups-chee-nees [Ups Chi Nese] was the councillor that was at Elk River. And Twin was the name of the councillor at the other end of the lake which is called Slave Lake today. And so these people I have seen periodically in the past, sometimes at the chief's house, a councillor from here. I have heard people say about meetings when I was a child, "I wonder what they do when they have meetings?" When my grandfather and father spoke with the other councillors, sometimes when the men go to these meetings, I wondered what did they get at these meetings. I used to hear about these meetings but I didn't know what they were. Later on I found out what meetings were for. And so this lake that I have mentioned, I will revert back to. I mentioned the lake and about fishing, it doesn't matter what happens, year in and year out, they could fish. This is what they had asked for. No fish nets of any size were given. I was old enough to see fishnet webbing issued to us, and my father and mother, grandmother and grandfather, I have seen all them make fish nets. Whatever size of fish they wanted was the size of the nets they made for themselves because they were issued threading.

This type of transaction I thought was very good. Whatever they decided was acted upon. Today, not enough of the white man's treaties exist. Today, we are only allowed a 5 inch mesh net. If an Indian fishes with a smaller net, he will be

punished, it is written. If the fish mesh is too large it will be confiscated. The Indian has to request for a special permit before he can go fishing. If he is allowed, only then can he go fishing. This is what is now law, and has been for a long time. I will also revert back to our previous mention of ducks. Buckshot was promised to them, also gunpowder and caps. Muzzle-loaders were their only possession at first. It didn't matter what month of the summer during duck season, they could hunt ducks with their guns. They didn't have to watch for them first if they wanted to go and kill some. Not just within their reserve, but all over the land, as long as it wasn't inside white man's buildings where he did the shooting. For an example I will say, the Indian is not to go and shoot white man's chickens. But he can shoot ducks anywhere for food. Today, although the chief and councillors and the people, although they have meetings, it is unavoidable; the white man must be consulted. They will subdue us, if we do not react now.

So here you have, Indian survival. Now I will revert back to wild game. Moose, regardless of what season, to be killed when necessary. Today the white man's law that might be forthcoming, wants us only to kill a starving bull. That is what's coming to us. So when an Indian leaves to go hunting, they are watched very closely. I have been stopped several times to check if I were an Indian or not. Now we have to have a tag and proper credentials with a recent picture. Only then will the fish and game wardens and forest rangers believe you. The way I see things when an Indian chose his wild game, he wasn't to make hay or feed them to fatten them. He wasn't to provide shelter for them from the cold. The Indian chose live animals. White man will govern his domestic animals. If he does not make hay for them or give them water, within a corral and if he doesn't shelter them, the animals will starve, freeze and die of thirst. These are the white man's responsibilities, but the wild animal belongs to the Indian. This is my understanding.

This is the story of the Snow Shoe people (people from up north). These people I have a lot of admiration for.

I will revert back to when the treaties were first made. The chief was given a flag to raise, identical to the Queen's flag. This is what he was given. I have seen Chief Fish [Key No Say Oo] wear a gold medallion as a necklace. When shaking hands with him he should be decorated with this medallion because he is chief of the reservation. He will be chief of the Indians and watch over them. He should also help out with other reserves, should the need arise. This is the way I heard it from our former leaders. The chiefs were given uniforms. I did get to see Chief Fish's uniform. Councillors also had uniforms.

More recently Chief Moostoos [Mustus] replaced the other chief. He wore his uniform almost every day, especially when he was on business trips for his fellow Indians. He also wore his uniform when he went to meetings with white people. These old chiefs were very courageous. They didn't give up on any issue

wherever they could. They took their positions very seriously.

Today in my role as chief it is more or less an honorary position which I am not worthy of. I will criticise my fellow chiefs and some councillors for not having courage. If we are not compensated, many of us will not move from our reservations. Here and there this type of an attitude makes an ugly scene. Many of us chiefs are not very courageous as leaders. We cannot keep up with the work load which was previously done by one. There are five of us presently and we do not cover what was done by one in years gone by. Our forefathers had great vision into the future. Everything was given careful consideration. They chose education for their children. They were aware of many things, such as hospitals. Everyone was accounted for and was given proper understanding.

Today if we didn't have Indian organizations, I don't know what we would have done. I don't think there would be very many reservations today; the way we, as chiefs, move at our slow pace. Today, luckily, we chiefs are being supported by Indian organizations and their field workers, who are striving to do their best. May you strive to do the right thing and work diligently. Perhaps we may regain if we work together and not do things haphazardly.

Interviewer: How about farming?

Mr. Cardinal: I will also mention about farming. When the treaties were first made, my grandfather told me, grain could not be taken anywhere, like we can today. But what you should get started on are potatoes. That will be given to us. You will be given a plow and a disc, so you can use them on your fields for a livelihood. If you think about the future in a white man's way of living, you will be given tools, it was said. So today, I have seen this come into being. When we tried develop farming, we find it very difficult to get implements, that were promised. We here, at Sucker Creek, that attempt to do farming, we do not have sufficient machinery and we cannot get a loan with which to buy them. In comparison with today, at the time of treaty, ten dollars was a lot of money. Today a hundred dollars is the equivalent of what ten dollars used to buy. We cannot get machinery even though we would like to. Some of us have to go to the Indian agency to see what can be accomplished. The way I see things, it infuriates me to know that we cannot get anything through the Indian agency.

Perhaps in another 20 years, they will approve of another project, because this is the attitude that they show. They do not follow through with a prospective farmer. There are not very many of us here, just one here and there who are attempting to farm. If we didn't achieve our own source of financing, the Indian agency looks down upon us as only being capable of putting wild meat on our plates. We, who continue to request for implements are disliked. This is the way some of us are looked upon. The way I see things, they are trying to destroy our reserves.

A person who is not very serious about farming will immediately receive assistance. Why this is after he has received assistance, the implements just sit around without being used. This spoils it for everyone else, the one who receives assistance doesn't do anything about it and just sit there. This bad example spoils it for everyone else. The person who received an easy way out and wasn't very serious about farming is always considered before the prospective applicants.

More recently, within the last two or three years, I will say, we have been given a little more assistance, but not to our full expectations. Progress is beginning to show in Sucker Creek. If this type of progress continues, I will say, within a few years, people will be self-sufficient. They will make a good living, but our main stumbling block is lack of implements. We have been attempting to build a road for the last three years. Today they have finished with the grading, but the distance is not too far, only two and a half miles. This will be one of our main roads that leads to our main farming district. Towards our lake front, where Chief Moostoos [Mustus] chose his land, there are plenty of sloughs and hay for cattle grazing. This is where our new road leads to, but it is also for the use of everyone.

Next year I have been promised more assistance to build an additional four miles of road in the opposite direction. I don't know if this will become into being because my chieftainship expires in a year. It is my desire that whoever follows as my successor, if he follows the same pattern will make more progress.

Interviewer: Will that be all?

Answer: Yes, that is all.

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