Rose: My name is Rose Saddleback. I'm here at Frank...

Frank: Sowan.

Rose: Sowan or Sound?

Frank: Sound is what we use.

Rose: Sound.

Frank: Yes, now, that's the way the white people pronounce it and wrote it. The treaty way is Sowan.

Rose: Sowan?

Frank: Yes.
Rose: I'm here at Sandy Lake talking to a Frank Sowan.
Frank: Not Sandy Lake - it's Swan Lake.
Rose: Swan River Band. Right.
Frank: Kinuso.
Rose: At Kinuso, Alberta.
Could you please state your name first?
Frank: Should I talk Cree?
Rose: Yes.
Frank: I am Frank Sowan.
Rose: How old are you?
Frank: Sixty-two (62) years old.
Rose: Sixty-two (62), that means you were born in...
Frank: 1915.
Rose: 1915?
Frank: Or 1914, something like that. I must be around sixty-three (63) years old now.

Rose: Do you know who signed the treaty on your behalf?
Frank: Treaty?
Rose: The first treaty.
Frank: I don't remember about it all too well. There were treaty payments previously given out, as far as I can recall. My grandfather, by the name of Ups chi nese was a councillor at the time.
Rose: What was his English name?
Frank: Felix Giroux. He was my grandfather on my mother's side.
Rose: Was that your mother's father?
Frank: Yeah.
Rose: What was your mother's name?
Frank: Therese.
Rose: Giroux?
Frank: Yeah, that was her maiden name.

Rose: And your dad?

Frank: Samuel Sound.

Rose: Did you know Key no say oo or Kinuso?

Frank: The one known as Key no say oo, I did not personally know him as I was too young. I was only four years old when many people were swept off by the flu epidemic. That was in 1918 and 1919.

Rose: 1918 - 1919.

Frank: Yes, there were two factors that prevented me from knowing that history. One is the distance contained between Swan River and Sucker Creek. They lived at Sucker Creek. The other factor was my age. I was too young.

Rose: Is that where he took reserve land?

Frank: Yeah, he was from Sucker Creek - from a Willier Family.

Rose: Was he a chief or was he....

Frank: He was the chief for all the bands here. There were councillors in all the reserves. He was the only chief.

Rose: He was responsible for those at Swan River, Sawridge...

Frank: Driftpile and Grouard. I can't say if he covered Sturgeon Lake. All I know is that I'm definite he was the only chief for the total area here. I'm not sure of the exact distance he covered.

Rose: You wouldn't know about Sturgeon Lake or Valleyview area?

Frank: No, just this area, there was only one chief. But it is said, they did have a chief at Sturgeon Lake, long time ago. Now, every reserve has a chief and council. That's how it is now.

Rose: How many councillors do you have on this reserve?

Frank: Two councillors.

Rose: And the chief?

Frank: Yeah.

Rose: What are Key no say oo's relatives' names?

Frank: Willier. Everybody knows them as Williers.

Rose: What were their Indian names?
Frank: I don't really know that. Many of them had nicknames; one was Wee chi go, and Mustus, after that, I don't know. Some were called Ok em ow.

Rose: Did you ever hear the name Astachukun?

Frank: Oh yes, Astachukun. He was the one that replaced Key no say oo. He took over the chieftainship including the medals Queen Victoria gave out. They kept them in Driftpile.

Rose: Was he the chief for all the reserves too?

Frank: Yeah, he was the chief.

Rose: Astachukun?

Frank: Yeah, he was a chief for a long period of time until the change was made for all reserves to have their own chiefs at the respective bands.

Rose: Approximately when did that take place?

Frank: Around 1930, I think, or 1935. In the 30s, I think. I was too young, going to school and not bothered to know what was going on.

Rose: Were they all brothers?

Frank: They were all related. I think Astachukun's older brother was Mustus. (No, it was Key no say oo).

Rose: Mustus - who was he? Was that his younger brother?

Frank: He comes from that family. They were related somehow.

Rose: Where did the people from here originally migrate from? What is the Cree name for Swan River?

Frank: Wapso see pee is the Cree name - called after Swan.

Rose: There must have been many swans around here or how did the place derive its name?

Frank: Yeah, I guess so, long time ago. The swans landed at the river regularly eating sand. We still have swans there occasionally.

Rose: Where did all the people from Swan River come from? Did they all used to live here or where did they initially come from? When did they come to take the land here?

Frank: I'm not too certain but I can remember a long time ago when the freight train made it's first run. We also made use of horses during winter (Key ah wa toos so na wha??)
transporting goods. (Boat, freight, horses that brought in the people to Swan River.) They had stopping places for feeding animals and unloading people. That's all I can remember. I can't remember where people went after that. That's what I heard, not what I saw, what I've just told you.

Rose: Astachukun, did he die of old age?

Frank: Yeah, it must have been in the 30s, not in the 40s. It must have been in the 30s I think.

Rose: Did you ever hear the name Pesagunapi?

Frank: Pesagunapi? Yeah. I remember hearing it. That's about all. I never saw anyone by that name. I remember some young people who went by that name. I went to school with them. They used to be called that in school.

Rose: That was their last names?

Frank: Yeah. There used to be some at the mission in Joussard, I think. I'm sure, it seems to me, they used to be called Pesagunapi's. I used to hear that, but I can't really remember who they were.

Rose: Apparently, a long time ago, people of this district firmly believed that this land was one single band. The bands such as Sawridge, Swan River, Driftpile, Sucker Creek, Grouard was supposedly one whole reserve - not separate and distinct.

Frank: As far as I recall, they were always separate from each other - and not one whole tract. But we did only have one chief for the total area. Apparently this was the set-up originally. A person from Driftpile, for instance, can't transfer membership unless we consent to it. That also applies to us. We could go to another reserve temporarily.

If this reserve was a whole tract of land under one authoritative figure I think we would be obliged to move about freely to another neighboring land.

Rose: Did people move about freely a long time ago? Were there restrictions imposed upon them to follow?

Frank: It has always been the same rule.

Rose: Did your parents ever reveal any stories related to this subject - i.e. moving around to neighboring bands?

Frank: No, the bands are all separate, each retaining their same members. For instance, Swan River, Driftpile.

Rose: Do you know the reason behind the separation of bands, given their own reserve allotments?

Frank: I'm not certain. I think they all selected their land
sites. Some lived elsewhere, but nowadays all the people are residing here. You may have relations at Sucker Creek, Driftpile, etc. I think it depended entirely upon the members' discretion whichever band they wished to be registered was carried through likewise.

Rose: Do you know anything about the cemetery site?

Frank: Yeah.

Rose: Did you hear anything about land being set aside for this purpose to be utilized by the Indian people? Was there land set aside?

Frank: There was one not too far away from here which is presently on a private land. There were many people that were buried there during the flu epidemic. I'm presently utilizing a quarter section of land through a lease agreement where a cemetery is situated. I'm using it for a pasture.

The farmer who occupied the other quarter section where the Indian graves were situated has plowed the land over. You can't see them now. The older people from here did not pursue action to oppose to the plowing of land over the cemetery site.

Rose: The white people took the land?

Frank: Yeah. It's next to my place not too far from here. (NOTE: Northeast of Kinuso).

Rose: I wonder why the Indian people did not want that quarter section of land?

Frank: They did want it but the old people were ignorant of the government legislation. They did not have a representative to speak for them. The private occupant informed the people that the quarter section was not Indian land and began working on it immediately. The Indian people who were occupying that land left and relocated elsewhere.

Rose: Who were the residents of that place? Do you know their names?

Frank: One was A yeah stow (a Chalifoux). His parents and older brothers lived there.

Rose: What was his first name?

Frank: August Chalifoux.

Rose: His son is presently the chief of this band. The name is Charlie Chalifoux.
Frank: He deceased years ago. He was a chief here.

Rose: Do you recall the agreement made about the transfer of memberships from Sawridge, (Slave Lake) to Swan River. There were a few people that came into this band.

Frank: There were many outside members. Years ago, we did not follow any regulations as long as a person was a treaty Indian. The Twinn family were originally from there and came into our band. This is what they used to say.

Rose: Who are these people?

Frank: They are Edward Twinn and his family. He deceased.

Rose: What was his wife's name?

Frank: I can't remember.

Rose: Was it Bella?

Frank: Who?

Rose: Isabella.

Frank: No...

Rose: Where did Isabella come from? Did you know her?

Frank: I heard she came from Grande Prairie. From a reserve. Edward Twinn's first wife was from that area too. His second wife was Isabella's sister. That was when they all decided to come to Swan River. They were from Grande Prairie or Rocky Mountain.

Rose: Do you recall any people by the name of Wards?

Frank: Yeah.

Rose: Were they taken into this band?

Frank: Not as far as I know. I don't think they took treaty.

Rose: But they did come here?

Frank: Oh yeah, a few of them were treaties living here.

Rose: Leon or Leonard Ward - do you remember those names?

Frank: Yeah - another was Frank Ward, Dwayne.

Rose: Dwayne.

Frank: Dohane, a nickname. I don't know his real name. Another one was Egbert. He took land here and made a few
improvements but he eventually left the site. All of them left. There were other 'Wards' living in the vicinity. Isabella Twinn lived with one of them by the name of Sam. Sam deceased not too long ago. All of the family are almost gone now. I didn't see them except the boys. They died during the flu epidemic.

Rose: So, the family came to live at Swan River and were taken into the band?

Frank: I don't know if they were legally transferred or just resided here. I think they just lived here.

Rose: Those non-Indian people migrating to the north known as homesteaders, what were the arrangements?

Frank: As far as I can recollect the homesteaders had already farmed even though it was not a great amount of land covered. All over the valley and towards the lake - we have private owners between the reserve lands here. For every section of land of a reserve status, a quarter of it is occupied by a private owner. This is quite common.

Rose: Was this a deliberate arrangement?

Frank: The portions of land occupied by private owners presently, had a reserve status. They took it without any authority.

Rose: What was the name of the surveyor?

Frank: I forgot his name. I can't remember as I was too young when the land was being surveyed.

Rose: Did you ever hear the name McLean?

Frank: Yes, I heard it.

Rose: What did they say about him?

Frank: Not really anything - I just remember hearing that name.

I think the town instigated private ownership of land here. This is why we have private owners between the reserve land (i.e. private owner - section of land.)

Rose: That's Kinuso.

Frank: I remember years ago when the town tried to purchase land off the band - that was from 1919, 1925, 1929. I was a small child at the time. The present private owner surrounded by the reserve land has a first chance of buying the rest of the three quarters which belong to the band. I think that's their strategy. They attempted to purchase the reserve land years ago but the members were unwilling to surrender it.
Rose: Upon completion of the survey, white people started migrating to this territory and took the land which was set aside for the Indian people.

Frank: Sturgeon Lake has a similar set up as us. No one knows the reason. I've even heard Indian agents make that statement as most Indian reserves are whole and occupied exclusively by Indian people.

Rose: Would you recall the names of those white people? Has anyone ever mentioned any names?

Frank: What was his name?

Frank: Sam Coal. Samuel. I kept in close contact with him. He lived next to this quarter - always farming.

Rose: Was that crop?

Frank: Yeah. Wheat, barley, oats and cattle, pigs. It's mixed farming.

Rose: Do you ever hear the name - Mose Cariveau?

Frank: Yeah, he was a Frenchman.

Rose: Jim Posey?

Frank: Yeah.

Rose: Where did he live?

Frank: Quite a distance from here towards the lake.

Rose: What's the name of the Lake? Slave Lake?

Frank: Yeah, Slave Lake. It's about 6 - 7 miles from here.

Rose: Albie Whitman.

Frank: He occupied a quarter right next to Posey.

Rose: It's about 6 or 7 miles north of here.

Frank: Yeah, about that.

Rose: How many square miles is this reserve?

Frank: I've heard people claim it contains about 12,000 acres. We have one at Assineau which belonged to my grandfather.

Rose: Which one?

Frank: Ups chi nese. Felix Giroux. The land was surveyed for
him. He always had a little store and a stopping place. The animals were fed at the stopping place. He was given that piece of land.

Rose: Did he make a formal request?
Frank: Yes, he was given a quarter section of land. 160 acres. It's located to the lake.
Rose: Is it considered part of the reserve?
Frank: Yeah, it's part of Swan River.
Rose: Treaty 8 members had an option to take land in severalty - did you know that?
Frank: No.
Rose: It contains 160 acres - not under the authority of the band?
Frank: It's separate from the reserve - the one at Assineau. It is not connected to the reserve boundary. It's quite a distance away from Swan River Reserve.

Rose: Is that a quarter section or half a section?
Frank: A quarter. He eventually moved to here till he deceased.
Rose: He moved away from Assineau?
Frank: That's right. He had a lot of horses. He bought land off a private owner prior to the survey of this reserve. I fenced that quarter around.

(NOTE: He continued to talk about fencing his quarter but didn't transcribe it. A brother who now is deceased took that piece of land after Ups chi nese passed away. He was adopted by him.)

Rose: What was his name?
Frank: Joseph Sound. He passed away a long time ago. I was about 13-14 years then. As time passed by, A yeah stow (a Cree name) became a chief.
Rose: Who?
Frank: August Chalifoux. At that time I was only 15 or 16 years old trying to seed a few acres of grain. After my brother passed away, he (i.e. August Chalifoux) encouraged me to use that piece of land to seed grain. So I started. After a year, a brother next to Joseph took over that piece of land. Another brother and I were given land elsewhere to farm together. He's never farmed extensively.
Rose: Is he still alive?

Frank: Yeah. He just wanted to take over. He makes lease agreements with outside non-Indian people. It unfortunately did not work out. People began to encroach upon the land and he could no longer farm. A house was built for them in another location but he still figures he has legal ownership of that land. His name is Paul. My son finally bought it off him recently. We have cattle. I had fenced it around to use it for a pasture. We used to utilize the area by the lake but since the flood we can no longer use it.

Rose: Is the reserve land under water? Is it caused by the river or the lake?

Frank: The lake. The river occasionally floods too, especially when it rains, but not all that much. We've had this flood for the past 5-6 years or maybe even more.

Rose: Are the band flexible in the manner land is handled? Are they free to sell land to another band member?

Frank: It should be handled that way, but just to keep him satisfied we paid him.

Rose: So this quarter is on your name?

Frank: It's on my son's name but I help him out. He purchased it.

Rose: What are the Cree names for the following places? Sawridge?

Frank: Kissapikkamak, that means end of the shore or shore edge. I think the correct pronunciation should have been shore edge and not sawridge. No one knows how the place derived its name. A man had informed journalists of this name recently and it was written down. He writes stories regularly in the papers and he's supposed to be the oldest man in Slave Lake.

Rose: What is the name?

Frank: Charlie Sherter. He's always in the papers.

Rose: Is he very old?

Frank: He's about 80 years old.

Rose: Did he always live around here?

Frank: Always.

Rose: He must have a lot of knowledge about the history of this reserve or the territory.

Frank: Oh yeah, he knows a lot.
Rose: Exactly where does he live?

Frank: Right in town. He has a house in town. He's over 80 years old now. When he wrote this version of the name Sawridge, he claimed that a man by the name of Thomson always sawed wood in that vicinity and hence the place, Sawridge, derived it's name. That is incorrect as far as I'm concerned. When the Cree name of the place is correctly translated it would mean a 'shore' or 'shore edge'.

Rose: And Driftpile. Was it originally called Driftpile Point?

Frank: Mostly, it was called Driftpile River although it was at times called Driftpile Point.

Rose: How do you say that in Cree?

Frank: Some people would call it Tipahas Ka neek.

Rose: The people here said it different than that.

Frank: Ka we tak kow See pee. I think. I used to know it.

Rose: What about Sucker Creek?

Frank: That one type of fish called suckers and in Cree translation Na nay pe see peesis.

Rose: Grouard?

Frank: Grouard is just that English name. I think there was a priest by that name. He could have been a bishop too.

Rose: What is your date of birth?

Frank: January 9, 1914-15.

Rose: I think I asked you that previously. I can't seem to think of other questions.

By the way, the place you call Assineau River - was it always Felix Giroux, who utilized that land? Or were there other people living there with him?

Frank: There were many others living there. We used to live there. During the 1930s at the time of the depression a Metis family by the name of L'Hirondelle also lived there. The man's first name was Johnny L'Hirondelle. They were best of friends with the old man - Felix. And he had no objections from them living on an Indian reserve. They were not taken into the treaty.

Rose: What's the Cree name for Lesser Slave Lake?
Frank: A yeah chi ne win Sak ka kon.
Rose: That's the name for Slave.
Frank: Right.
Rose: Why is it called that?
Frank: Originally, according to old stories, this territory was strictly inhabited by the Slave Indians until the Crees pushed them northward to where they now reside. I guess they had intertribal fights i.e. between the Crees and the Slaves.
Rose: You took over after invading the Slaves.
Frank: I heard many elders talk about the olden days and this is what I heard them saying.
Rose: Approximately what year was the survey carried out for the reserve?
Frank: I just don't remember. There was a resurvey done in 1952. That was just to clean the boundary lines.
Rose: You did not lose any land?
Frank: None, as far as I know. There was another private owner who took a quarter section of land not too far away from here. The rest of the 3 quarters belong to the reserve except for that quarter.
Rose: During the resurvey?
Frank: Prior to that period. He's been coming here for ages.
Rose: What was his name?
Frank: Scotty McLean.
Rose: Was he not the person who surveyed the reserve? The surveyor?
Frank: I really don't know.
Rose: Mclean was the name, though?
Frank: Maybe it was McLeal or McNeil...
Rose: Was that McNeil?
Frank: Yeah, McNeil. He took that quarter but there was another owner before him.
Rose: About how far away is that?
Frank: It's about 2 miles.

Rose: North?

Frank: Yeah. One man took land for his own use over there. Then he took additional land - another quarter. Before doing that, he came over to my place.

Rose: Was that Scotty?

Frank: Yeah. He then informed me that in the event the band does not oppose of his intention of taking more land, he will have that extra quarter. "If the band is opposed to my idea, I will not bother with it." - this is what he had told me.

Rose: Does he now have that quarter?

Frank: Oh yeah - he took it because there was no opposition.

Rose: He still has it.

Frank: Yeah. But he deceased and someone else has since bought that land.

Rose: What's his name?

Frank: Antoine.

Rose: Antoine...?

Frank: Antoine Kurtio. I think that's how the last name is spelled.

Rose: Since when did Antoine Kurtio start to occupy that land?

Frank: They took land here.

Rose: At the same location?

Frank: No, about 1 miles. That was not Indian land.

Rose: Are you saying Kurtio is presently occupying part of the reserve land?

Frank: Okay - afterward they bought the Indian land off.

Rose: Who did they purchase the land from? Was it the consent of the band?

Frank: No, from Scotty.

Rose: Scotty McNeil?

Frank: Yeah - McNeilley.
Rose: They bought it off him which was supposedly a reserve land.

Frank: Yeah.

Rose: They're still using it?

Frank: Yeah, it's not presently fully utilized. At the moment it is just sitting idle. He is not a farmer. He is a trucker. It was in the paper for sale. I had informed him recently about the statement Scotty made to me. I don't think he's familiar with the background. I informed him that maybe the band in future would consider purchasing that patch of land back. He said "I don't see why the band should buy it - let the government buy it back. It's your land in the first place." It's been about a year ago when I informed him about the status of the land he's occupying.

Rose: I wonder what arrangements were made at the time when the land had a reserve status?

Frank: This person went there directly just because he's a returned soldier.

Rose: Soldier Settlement Board.

Frank: He went to Peace River submitting a description of the land he wanted which was a reserve land; so the people with that department apparently pointed out to him that as long as the local people did not oppose to the issue he would be authorized to take it. That's the reason he told me this.

Rose: This was a long time ago.

Frank: In the 40s. It would be around 1941, 42, and 43.

Rose: The War began 1939. Was it shortly after that?

Frank: Yeah, you see I got married in 1941. This man was our personal friend. He would stop in all the time, helping us with the farm work. I guess in 1914, he was in the war for a short time. He used to run away from the militia for fear of being sent out to war again.

Rose: So, that probably meant the Soldier Settlement Board gave him the authority...

Frank: Yeah, that's how... He was a heavy drinker. So when he was under the influence of alcohol all the hidden stories or business agreements were brought out. I was about 25 years old at the time when he disclosed the confidential land agreements. At the time I did not think of protesting against the issue. I always have that in mind. I had intended to have that old man make a public statement to disclose all the factual details about the land, to say that the land was in fact part of the reserve initially. Maybe he could have
informed the chief or Indian Affairs perhaps. They would know what to do about it.

Rose: Indian Affairs wouldn't be the people to approach for an issue like this. They could become very biased. If you could tell us the legal description of that portion of land we could perhaps find out the legal title from Edmonton.

Frank: There were a few portions that were cleared probably the cost accrued for brushing were picked up by the Indian Affairs.

Rose: Where is it at?

Frank: You know, at the corner of the road there is a lot of clearing done and that person now wants to use it for farming but he hardly takes it seriously. They don't do anything. They've been lending it out to white people.

Rose: Is that an Indian occupying that land?

Frank: No one lives there but he lives across from that quarter.

Rose: He's profitting from it.

Frank: Yeah, it's been about 6-7 years now. There is also another quarter that is not being used. They're just holding titles to these lands. As for myself, I'm short of hay supply for the animals. I recently bought $800.00 worth of hay from a white farmer who is leasing that Indian land. That Indian person did not spend a nickel out of his own pocket to clear that land. The land was cultivated and ready to seed.

Eventually after no one worked on it for a period the trees began growing back.

Rose: Who is the owner of the quarter now?

Frank: Allen Giroux. He had requested for that land so he could farm it himself.

Rose: All this information about members holding reserve lands is a band affair and it is beyond us to do anything about it. I guess that will be all.

You were in the council?

Frank: I was in the council for 17 years.

Rose: From what year was that?

Frank: That was from the 40s until about 5 years ago.

Rose: That was in 72?

Frank: Yeah, I could have been a chief but I don't wish for
that position.

(End of Interview)

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