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ALBERTA  
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INTERVIEWER: RICHARD LIGHTNING  
INTERPRETER: RICHARD LIGHTNING  
TRANSCRIBER: J. GREENWOOD  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Negotiations of Treaty 8; promises made.
- Requests for reserve land at Fort MacKay.

I'm a researcher for T.A.R.R. My name is Richard Lightning. I'll be interviewing an elderly gentleman here at Fort MacKay. This interview will relate as to how the treaty was made.

Richard: I will now ask you your name?

William: My name is William MacDonald.

Richard: How old are you?

William: I am 76 years old.

Richard: Where were you born?

William: Right here, I was born here at MacKay.

Richard: Have you lived here all the time?

William: Yes, this was always my home. My wife is from here also. I was raised here.

Richard: Do you know of any information as told by the elders regarding the treaty, and can you tell me about it?

William: Regarding the treaty, I was 2 years old when the treaty was signed. I don't know about it myself, but the old man who was made chief had told me about it. He told me that there were Indians and Chipewyans at Fort McMurray long ago. All the Indians arrived there. They came from here, Whale Lake, Pembina River and other places. That is where the treaty would take place. The Indians weren't willing. They were afraid because during that time, there were no white people in this part of the country. The only non-Indians were from the Hudson's Bay. They were here to start business with their stores. That was the only thing around here, nothing else. The only type of fuel in existence was coal oil. Boats or other things were run by steam. When the commissioner was ready to pay the Indians, they called them together. They talked there all day long. The Indians were going to get paid. They were going to be treated properly. "When you accept the treaty money, it will never end. You will receive it in perpetuity. As the sun walks and this river flows, you will receive treaty. You will receive payment until those two things reverse, go the other way. There will be no harm done to you. Now will you take it?" But the Indians still would not go along with that idea. They were afraid and suspicious. The Indians thought

they would lose their land or get killed and wiped out. That is the reason why they were not willing. The priest then spoke to the Indians telling them to accept the money, that there was no danger and that they were being assisted. The Indians were to become friends with everybody and unite. The non-Indians who were operating the stores and the Indians who lived in the bush, they should be good friends. Finally, after 6 days, the commissioner told the Indians that if they accepted the money (treaty) that they would receive ammunition, tea and tobacco, bread, bacon with other things. Every time you get treaty money, you will receive these commodities too, this is what the Indians were told. Now some of the old people were enthused by this offer. Because they enjoyed tea and tobacco, they regarded these two things highly. But as far as food from the bush was concerned, they weren't worried because that was their living. They never had food from stores. It all came from bush game. They only had matches, tea, tobacco and ammunition. But finally they gave in. They were talked right into it. It was the fault of the priest. He was persistent. So they accepted the money. After the treaty, things began to change. The laws began to change.

As the government people died or were being replaced, the successor again would introduce changes. That wasn't how the treaty and promises were made. The promises made were getting less and less. At the first treaty payment, each person received \$12.00. But it was only for a few years. I'm not certain how long it was, maybe, could be ten years. Then it was reduced to \$5.00. People weren't getting ammunition and other things which were promised.

Finally it got to the point of seeing him only at treaty

time. People would request something and the agent would say, "yes." But we never did receive what we wanted. After some time, we did receive some ammunition again. But as far as food or anything else, we didn't get any. Then this other thing was introduced to us with large families. We just heard the word "welfare man." We didn't know what it was. It was only offered to disabled people. The other people were encouraged to find a job or go to the bush and make a living there. It was the agent who told it to the Indians. Today it is different. Indians are getting better treatment. For example, when one is sick, he can be taken to the hospital, people receive assistance, and some homes are being built for them. They are treated as kings today as compared to long ago. It was difficult. So the people can't complain. Even the elders are getting pensions and they get an increase once in a while. Long ago the old people had to live in poverty if they couldn't help themselves.

Richard: Would you recall the names of the agent or priest who were present at the time of treaty?

William: No, I don't think anybody around here would recall. That was long ago. There are no elders left here today. They are all dead. There would be only one or two of us today. When the treaty was signed, we were too young to know any names.

Richard: Were you ever a councillor or a chief?

William: I was chief for about 6 years, but the people didn't like me. They never said anything in front of me, but just when my back was turned. During that time, it was difficult being a spokesman for the Indians. It took a long time before the Indian agent would agree to anything. He dealt with us through his own accord and his way of thinking. It wasn't easy working with him. The Indians were saying that I wasn't doing my job, so I just quit. They chose someone else but the same thing happened. The agent is not going to say yes to anything at first. He has to be firmly convinced before he would agree.

Richard: Is there a reserve around here which was promised to the Indians at the time of treaty?

William: They were promised one. You see Indians were here long ago. I was born here 76 years ago. Indians were here before that. This land was never surveyed because no white men were around here. After several treaty payments were made, the Indian agent said, "now this land will be surveyed." He already had control of it. That was what he wanted, when he encouraged the Indians to accept money. The chief was asked where he would like some land. He informed the agent that he would like to get land here to an extent where the homes were situated. The chief told an old man who lived across the river that he would have to move to this other side. The old man refused. He wanted an allotment of land for himself too. There is an area about 60 miles from here where the chief thought was choice land. It was plentiful in game and fish. So he requested that land including of each lake on both sides of it. It was

fairly large. So he did get that land. It was the old man's fault across the river that the people didn't get a portion of land here. The agent had made a commitment on this land. He had said, "Yes, you can have it." But when the surveying was carried out he said, "Now you don't own this portion here." Already things were not going right. The agent said, "You already were allotted your land, so you can't have this one." But the chief told him that they won't stay there. He told the agent they were born and raised here and they couldn't leave it. So we have been here ever since. So when the treaty

Indians were to have homes built, it was the government who loaned some land to the Indians here. I don't know for how long a period this will be in effect. It could be 30 or 40 years. So that is where their homes are built. Most of the Indians had homes built. But I don't have one.

Richard: When was that policy made by where, as you said, you were loaned this land?

William: I'm not certain. The chief should know. It took place not too long ago. It must be 10 years or less.

Richard: Which chief was at the signing of the treaty?

William: His name was Adam Boucher.

Richard: Have you given me all the information you know?

William: Yes.

Richard: Thank you for talking to me.

(End of Interview)

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