

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: JIMMY MENEEN 2  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: TALL CREE RESERVE  
ALBERTA  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: TALL CREE RESERVE  
ALBERTA  
TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
LANGUAGE: CREE  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: AUGUST, 1978  
INTERVIEWER: ROGER NANOCH  
INTERPRETER: ROGER NANOCH  
TRANSCRIBER: J. GREENWOOD  
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RESTRICTIONS: NONE

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mr. Meneen, aged 83, describes the difficulties of life when he was a child learning to trap in the bush.
- Tells of the Indians' understanding of the treaty.

Roger: What is your name?

Jimmy: Jimmy Meneen.

Roger: What were your parents' names?

Jimmy: My father's name was Joseph; my mother's name was Victoria. I will talk of all the hard times in my life as far back as I can remember. I am eighty-three years old. I don't remember how old I was when I started remembering. When my father died, my grandfather came to get us at Trout Lake and brought us to my grandfather Tall Cree's land. We were children; my brother Paul was three years old. I can't say how old I was. I was not much old than then when we first came to this land. We were so poor. We travelled around living in tipis. There were no houses. We camped just any place; wherever a person shovelled snow away that was where he camped. They camped in tipis. Some people did not even have a tipi. They camped in lean-tos, that's how poor people were. Whatever they killed that was what they ate; there was no store-bought food. No flour or lard, just tea and ammunition. That was all they got at the store. "Mahiskamuk" is what it was called, when they went to the store. That was all they got

at the store - no food, just bullets, hats and tea. Flour - if a person was given three big cups that was a lot. At the store where the managers worked, there were hunters for them. They were called "ontawat ahowok". This was how the managers worked and lived. Dry meat, moose grease and shredded dry meat was made for them. There were also dogs to haul the meat with. The people worked for the store. Life was very poor then.

As I was telling you about when we went travelling around, there were no socks, rubbers, rubber boots. There were moccasins with no socks. The children used to just wrap their feet up with anything. They went out just like that and it wasn't just children, grown-ups too. There couldn't wear anything else. That was how poor they were. There were no real blankets, just poor blanket. There were no "blankets to lay on." That's how poor we were while we were growing up. Finally I was able to do things. People were taught these things, just like now in school children are taught. The people then were taught how to live and survive in the bush. We were not big when we were sent out to try and kill something. I was about sixteen years old when I really started hunting (big game). I was trying to kill something. This was how people were taught then. This was the only kind of living it seemed. It really wasn't the only way of living but that was the way people were living.

Then they were given money. I will tell about that. I went with them. I had an older brother who died before he was grown-up. I went with my uncle and my older brother to go trapping. We had no traps just snares, lynx snares and snares made out of moose hide. This was what people snared with long ago. I snared with them too, as soon as I could. I went with them to get snares. I was going to go snaring too. I was making a lynx snare - grass were tied to both sides. They had left me behind and we used to carry grass with which to use for holding the snare in place. I was trying to tie the snare in place using the grass I had carried but it was too cold and I couldn't tie the snare. I finally cried because I was just a child. It took a while but I finally tied it but first I cried a lot. That's the way it was when somebody's parents were gone. That's when it was hard. It's the way we lived, but soon I began to know how to snare lynx. After that I was sent out to hunt mostly. The children were told to get out of bed before daylight. That's the way they were taught, they're students, not only boys but girls too. Not like today. This reserve, for example, the young people wander around all night and make noise. Then they sleep all day. They don't make any kind of living. That's what I say. It is hard, they overrule, not like us.

About the treaty, when the money was first given. I cannot remember although I am old. I am eighty-three years old. The treaty was a long time before I could start remembering. I could mention it though I wasn't there. But my grandfather who was the chief, his name was Tall Cree, he used to tell us about how they were promised. Like the employees of Indian Affairs, missionaries and the R.C.M.P. were involved.

They promised the people this land. It was like they came to buy it, but the people did not know. They thought they were being just helped out when they were given the five dollars. So they were promised that as long as the sun shone, as long as the river flowed. That was as long as they were promised. My grandfather heard them. This was what he said. I did not see this. When the first treaty was given, there was everything. Nothing was left out, bullets, tea, all kinds of guns and great piles of food. Horses brought all of these things to the treaty at Fort Vermilion. This was given to the treaties. There were people who separated the things. It was given according to the size of the family. More was given to the ones with large families, less to the ones who did not have as many. There was bullets, fish nets and rope. There was nothing left out. This was all the people got. That has all gone now. Even today here on our land, for two years, there has been no ammunition. All they were promised is gone already. The guns and ammunition, they were promised for a time, it is all

gone today. It is clearly shown all ready that the promises are useless. That this was not the truth.

(End of Interview)

#### INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
BOYS				
-training of	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	2,3
CHILDREN				
-hunting by	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	2
CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ADORNMENT				
-pre-European	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	2
EDUCATION				
-traditional	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	2,3
FOOD				
-traditional	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	2
TRANSPORTATION				
-horse	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3
TRAPPING				
-techniques	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3
TREATY #8				
-interpretation of	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3
TREATY #8				
-taking of	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3
WEAPONS				
-ammunition	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3

#### PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
FORT VERMILION, ALTA.	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3
TALL CREE	IH-300B	J. MENEEN2	27A	3