- Leo Mitchell, 80 years old, gives his interpretation of the Treaty 8 promises.

Inter: The name of the person who is about to speak is Leo Mitchell, from Sturgeon Lake Reserve. He is 80 years old.

Leo: He that came to seek land came here. There were two or three of them. They had to promise certain things to Indians for the land. How was he to promise certain things to the Indian for the land. There were also halfbreeds. So that they would have good long life. He promised many things to help the Indian live. They said these things to the Indian:

"This sun that walks the sky, when the sun no longer walks the sky, then what is promised will cease." This is what he said to my father.

The halfbreed had it different. He was paid money and given bullets for his livelihood, thread and nets were all promised. He was told when the rivers no longer run is when his benefits would cease. This river that runs here, no one owns it. No one owns it. It has always been used by the halfbreed and the Indian. They were promised on these things that their right to hunt would never cease. They were allowed to kill any animal. The people were told not to abuse the different shells given
them but rather to use them to make a livelihood. They were
not to be strewn outside and to be taken care of and not played
with.

Inter: And what about medicines? What did he say about them?
Leo: Medicines, yes.

Inter: Doctor?
Leo: And the doctor. The Indian was told he would be given a
doctor as well. There would be a doctor living close by. Oh
the Indian was promised good things.

Inter: And what about the children going to school? Was there
any mention about this?
Leo: I don't know about that. I don't remember.

Inter: What about the land boundaries such as the one dividing
this lake in half. Did they say anything about that?
Leo: No they didn't say anything about it. Just that the
Indians and halfbreeds wouldn't be given the same area to live
on. The Indians were given here and the halfbreeds over there.
No one owns the lake even though the reserve borders on it.

Inter: How much money was promised, was it five dollars for
everyone or what?
Leo: Yes, there was five to be given to every one.

Inter: Forever?
Leo: Yes, forever. The money was to always be given to the
Indian. Food also.

Inter: Rations and food?
Leo: They were to be always given.

Inter: And what about the land. If someone wanted to grow
crops or cattle. Were they promised anything?
Leo: Cattle were promised, the cows for certain were promised
to the Indian so he could make a livelihood. He was promise
lots of these. There were supposed to be horses too.

Inter: Plows and farming implements?
Leo: Those too were promised. They were always to be in access
by the Indian people.

Inter: Was there promises made to anyone who wished to go into
farming, assistance would be given.
Leo: Yes.
Inter: Were rations of food given every haying harvest?
Leo: Yes, he gave food and bought things for people.

Inter: What do you know about the reserve boundary? Does the boundary cover the lake? Does the reserve own the lake?

Leo: No, the reserve does not cover the lake. The reserve boundary starts at the mouth of the river to the east and a ways past the little town to the west.

Inter: Why did they pick this particular area? Was it for the haying grounds?

Leo: Yes, it was; that was the reason for the choice made. Over in the other area of the reserve was the particular choice made by one of the old men for his own land but he don't own it. The reserve and all of it no individual owns it; all of us own it. The land was given to his children and then his grandchildren, but now, everyone owns that land.

Inter: Do you remember if there was a promise made that if in the future, if there was oil or coal found in sufficient quantity, that the people would benefit?

Leo: I am not sure. There was many promises made but I am not sure of all of them.

Inter: You were to own this land and that no one was to ever take it from you?

Leo: Yes, no one was to ever take it from us.

Inter: I see.

Leo: If someone from here wanted to go into another reserve, he could and if someone else wanted to come from another reserve into this reserve, he could. This is what was said. It was Indian land and the Indians owned it. The land set aside for the halfbreeds was for them and the Indians had no business there.

Inter: What about the merchant and the priest? Were they here before the treaty payments?

Leo: Yes, they were here before. The storekeepers.

Inter: Police?

Leo: No, the police weren't around but once in a while one would come by.

Inter: What about the land near Wabasca? Who does it belong to? The land that belonged to Jerry, whose land was it before that?
Leo: Ah.
Inter: Police?
Leo: No, I don't know and I don't remember.
Inter: When the treaty payments were made, there was no police in this area?
Leo: Yes, there wasn't any police.
Inter: That is quite a bit. You have given me a lot.
Leo: Yes.
(End of Interview)

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