

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: JEAN MARIE MUSTUS  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: JOUSSARD  
ALBERTA  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: JOUSSARD  
ALBERTA  
TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
LANGUAGE:  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: MARCH 26, 1975  
INTERVIEWER: RICHARD LIGHTNING  
INTERPRETER: RICHARD LIGHTNING  
TRANSCRIBER: J. GREENWOOD  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mr. Mustus, aged 78, is the grandson of Mustus, the first chief of the Sucker Creek Reserve.
- An unusual interview in that he displays fairly positive feelings about the treaty. Also talks of generosity of the H.B.C. storekeeper, sharing problems with white settlers, learning from them, etc. Shows little or no animosity to white society.

Richard: I'm going to talk with this elder from Joussard so he can tell me what he knows or of information he may have regarding the signing of the treaty long ago. I'm referring to Treaty 8. First of all you can give me your name, your age.

Jean Marie: I'm known as Jean Marie Mustus.

Richard: What is your present age?

Jean Marie: I'm 78 years old.

Richard: Where were you born?

Jean Marie: I was born here at Sucker Creek.

Richard: Did you always make your home within this area?

Jean Marie: Yes, I've always lived here at Sucker Creek. There is also another reserve where I spent some time; that is Driftpile. My children attended school here, (Joussard) so I'm back here again. At times I go back to the reserve but I never

receive any assistance from there so I'm back here again.

Richard: Are you a treaty Indian?

Jean Marie: Yes, I receive treaty money.

Richard: You are also related to this man Mustus. He was the one who signed the treaty and also he was the chief when the treaty was made.

Jean Marie: Yes, he was my grandfather. He was the one who sold the land here at first. This side of Grouard that is where he sold it.

Richard: Do you know of any story which is related to that sale of land?

Jean Marie: He used to tell me stories of it. He said it was very difficult during those years - the only foresight he had was only to the end of his extended arm. He also said that he did not read and there was no one to give him advice as to what he should do. "It was difficult for me to communicate. I always had to have an interpreter, that is the only way I could do it. As the promises were made, there were many I overlooked and did not accept. I was very cautious as I was beginning to understand what he was talking about. It was only after I was certain what he was promising me and what he was planning to do that I shook hands with him. What he said was written on a

piece of hide and he made reference to the sun and the water, that is when I shook his hand. They tried to make changes," said my grandfather, "but I would not let them." But since my grandfather died changes have been taking place regarding the land. They received many things. They received hay meadows for raising of cattle and also food. They got hay mowers and everything else. When the Indians became familiar with agriculture, they were given plows for them to grow better crops. But they didn't do the work.

Richard: Was he alone when he negotiated with the commissioners?

Jean Marie: There were two of them, him and his younger brother. His name was Key no say oo. The Metis had another person for a spokesman as well. He went with him while they were having discussions of what terms they would agree upon. There was also a priest. His name was Father Lacombe. He discussed everything with the people. We would not have seen him. He was before our time. He used to live around here. You know the town of St. Albert, there is a house there with different things in it. He made that house.

Richard: What was the name of the Metis fellow which you mentioned earlier?

Jean Marie: His name was Ferguson.

Richard: Was he the interpreter?

Jean Marie: He was the spokesman for the Metis people. He spoke on their behalf as to how they would go about taking scrip. He told them what to do as he also spoke Cree. My grandfather was related to him also. Then it came time the Metis were receiving the papers (scrip). Everybody in a family received them including the children and grandparents. My grandfather figured that the Metis didn't receive treaty money so that is why they were allotted colonies.

Richard: Was it Ferguson who helped the Metis for land?

Jean Marie: Yes, but it was understood that they were not giving up their way of life. They lived in the same manner as the Indians. That is when they took scrip, but they would continue to live with and live like the Indians. Because they hunted as well as the Indians, after the scrip they were the same as the treaty Indians. They hunted wherever they wished. They shot ducks and other animals. I guess they paid \$2.00 for a license.

Today it's easier for the young people to get land. I think there are two around here (colonies). I think there are two others up north. There is another one at Peace River. After that the treaty Indians were given the reserves and surveying was carried out. This particular band of Sucker Creek contains a lot of water. Sucker Creek has a total of 55,000 acres and Driftpile contains 65,000 acres. The reserves are adjacent to the lake and the water takes a large portion of the reserve. The reserve was 25 miles in length when it was given and each band chose to have 12 miles apiece. The Driftpile reserve is quite large, so is Sucker Creek but they have a lot of water. Out of the 55,000 acres much of it is not good for cultivation, so they won't have any use for it.

Richard: When the treaty was first discussed with the Indians, did they understand what they were agreeing to? Did they understand properly?

Jean Marie: Gradually they began to understand; later on they were understanding, that is what my grandfather said. As the white men arrived in the area, they too were travelling on foot. They made friends with the Indians; they cut hay for their animals on the Indian reserves. It is from there that the Indians taught themselves different things. This is a long time ago I'm talking about. The white man also faced hardships in those years, when the treaty was first signed. At times they had to butcher cattle for food, although everything was low priced. The farming was really in bad shape. If the grain was poor quality they received 10 a bushel. If a bag of potatoes were good, you would pay 50 per bag. Finally they went up to \$1.00.

Richard: Do you know how much land was given up or sold to the white man?

Jean Marie: It was written down on paper, as to how much of the land they gave up. I'm wondering whether it was 1 foot underground or more. It was written down but I don't know where the paper would be found.

Richard: And you don't know how much was to be used?

Jean Marie: No, I don't know but whatever they selected for themselves they kept, the rest was taken. I don't recall my grandfather telling me of depth underground.

Richard: Did he ever tell you anything about underground minerals or oil?

Jean Marie: Yes, they were mentioned, even the timber within the reserve were also his and anything underground was the right of the Indians.

Richard: Was that the agreement which they made?

Jean Marie: Yes, it was the agreement.

Richard: Do you recall or know anything about the Indian's way of life before the treaty period?

Jean Marie: Their main source of livelihood was from the bush or from the lakes. When they were in the bush they made tipi shelter made of wood. They hunted and in the fall made food preparations, because there was no other place to go to. There was a Hudson's Bay store here but the supplies were limited. The Indians used to kill moose for the Hudson's Bay storekeeper and he would look after the crippled or sick Indians. He also cared for the young people who were not able to help themselves. He gave them the food preparations. He did help them a great deal. That is how they lived. They didn't have horses but they used dogs. Now after that time the people came back to this area again. In the spring they took their furs to Edmonton. They traveled in a two wheel cart later on, according to my grandfather. They travelled as far as Washington via the Saskatchewan river. They would return with supplies on the boat. These supplies were to provide for many people. That is how the people of long ago made their living.

Richard: Did the Indians ever experience hunger?

Jean Marie: Many times they were in desperate need. They had no other place to go to and there was only the one store that was at Edmonton. I saw it myself in 1912. The train was already in service. There were only 3 or 4 stores. Now today there must be many more.

Richard: Were there any buffalo around here during that period?

Jean Marie: My grandfather told me that there were buffalo around here. We heard stories of buffalo around Grouard and also in the High Prairie area. They were plentiful in these areas. But it wasn't too long when most of them were killed off. They also were at East Prairie. William Okeymaw would also know that buffalo skulls were found around here and also the bones. They would place them between the spruce trees. I saw them myself. They're bleached almost white by now.

Someone must have killed them or they may have died of starvation. This area where the buffalo roamed was all prairie. About 15 years ago you would travel with a wagon through that area. Today you couldn't do that. There are trees and shrubs all over the place. But now there are cutlines all over the place. That is where the exploration crews come in handy, for making cutlines.

(NOTE:

Part of this interview has been deleted because it did not relate to treaty negotiations or interpretations. The complete interview is on file, however, and could be made available to those interested.

Richard Price)

Richard: Did the Indian people want to give up their land?

Jean Marie: They were asked about it. You know of one Blackfoot in the States; his picture was always in the papers. Then the treaty took place at Hobbema I think, with old man Ermineskin signing. After they made treaty there then they came here and asked if they could treat with the people. It was a long time before the people agreed. They just didn't come here and make the treaty right away. It took a few days. Finally they signed. Now there were reserves all over the place after that. There is one up north at Fort Vermilion. There is another one at Wabasca, another at Fort St. John - I think they're Slavey. They were from here at one time but the Crees scared them off long ago. My grandfather was related to them while they lived here before they were frightened away from here. That is another reason why he was able to sell the land. It was like his relatives (Slavey) had left the land for him. The people up north still remember their grandfather who was here (Mustus). There is another reserve by Grand Prairie. I think it is Horse Lake. There was another reserve somewhere in the area of Peace River. I think they're all dead now. His name is Dogan (Duncan). I don't know if there are some Indians on that reserve yet. And there was another reserve close by. I think they were Beaver Indians but they all died off. There are quite a few Indians in the Fort Vermilion area.

Richard: Before your grandfather signed the treaty, did he ever hear of Indians making treaty elsewhere?

Jean Marie: He could have, because there were treaties made already like the one I mentioned earlier which took place at Hobbema. Then there was no treaty until they arrived here and began with the discussions and meetings. They were all together including the halfbreeds. Father Lacombe was also present and spoke a lot to the Indian people on how to live. My grandfather said that he took Father Lacombe's advice as he travelled with him many times. His advice was to take treaty as it would help him and the young generations in the future. "If you don't accept treaty, it won't be long and you will not be able to make a living. If you choose a reserve you'll have a better chance of living longer." So my grandfather took land right up to Grouard for a reserve. They fished in the lake and also killed ducks with no one to bother them. But after my grandfather died, other chiefs lost these things as they were promised at the signing of the treaty. That agreement must still be kept in Ottawa today.

Richard: Did the Indians receive fish nets?

Jean Marie: Yes, they used to get fish net, like I said before they did get plenty of assistance. They were issued with food and nets, black powder and ammunition. Then they received rifle shells; they used to get plenty of supplies.

Richard: Do they still get these supplies today?

Jean Marie: They get some at times. I mean they do, but not me.

Richard: How come you don't make your home on the reserve?

Jean Marie: There is no place for me to live. The far end is not good. They can't grow anything there. I could only live along the highway because I can't work with farming anyway, I'm too old.

Richard: Have the Indians around here lost any of their traplines?

Jean Marie: I don't know. I think some of them have given them up. As for myself I pay for my own permit. I pay \$10.00 for a permit. This permit expires in 1975, but doesn't tell me to what I'm restricted when trapping. I told the warden that I should be informed of what I could trap because I wouldn't be able to sell them. But he told me it was my traplines and I paid for my permit and I could kill whatever I wanted.

Richard: Did you hear of what was promised in education and medical care for the Indians?

Jean Marie: We don't pay for medicines in the hospital. He told me that hospitalization was not to be paid by Indians and also taxes, including land taxes. The children still don't pay for education and hospitalization. The only thing we pay in taxes is on food but the Indians shouldn't mind that because the women receive family allowance and the old people receive

pension.

Richard: In your own mind did your grandfather do the right thing when he gave up the land?

Jean Marie: I don't know, but I think he did the right thing. He wasn't really restricted to anything. He was promised that he could use a hay meadow 15 miles from Sucker Creek. He was given that agreement on paper. I don't know where he lost it. He also could go to East Prairie to put up hay. It was all prairie that time but of course today it's different. He was treated fairly with everything. He could kill anything and also fish, hunt ducks, he wasn't restricted.

Richard: But wasn't this their way of life before?

Jean Marie: Yes, that is how they lived. This also includes the Metis. That was their way of life. But now they are separated, the Indian on one side and Metis on the other. There were some white people there also and some of them married Indian women. The woman didn't lose her rights, but those people are all dead now. The husband was allowed to put his crop within the reserve or he could put up hay on the reserve also. The white man was allowed. But today this is not allowed.

Richard: When were the changes made?

Jean Marie: I don't know but that was my grandfather's idea. He even allowed the white man to bring two bottles of booze so the people could have a social drink. He allowed that much.

Richard: During the time of the treaty, did the Indians realize the value of money and did they know what it was?

Jean Marie: No, my grandfather said they didn't know of money, they didn't know of coins. They used to have paper money from \$1.00, 50 , 25 made out of paper. The 5 piece was made of silver. When they began to know money the Indian had money because he was a trapper. All that I've told you is what happened long ago. The Hudson's Bay helped the poor with meat and if the people were not receiving assistance, they had no place to go, they would have starved to death.

Richard: Thank you for talking to me.

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