- Mr. Gladue, aged 86, describes the discovery of Trout Lake, Alberta; the abundance of buffalo in the area; his life as a trapper.
- Gives detailed and graphic account of a winter journey from Wabasca to Yellowknife and back including his attendance at a Chipewyan funeral and feast.

Alfred: Julian Gladue will now tell us about the history of the treaty Indians of Trout Lake and what he knows of it. I want to ask you to tell us your name.

Julian: I already told you may name. It is Julian Gladue.

Alfred: How long have you lived here?

Julian: A long time now, however not too long. I've lived in several places. First I used to live along the Wabasca, I wintered there several times, maybe twice or three times. Then I finally moved to these communities, the lakes surrounding this area. I spent one winter in Long Lake. I spent several winters here at the Narrows (between Trout and Peerless Lake); once I spent three winters and another time four winters, seven winters altogether. Also I spent some time at the place where Paul Powder now lives. A cabin was loaned to me, so that was my first time in this community. From there in the summer I moved over here, not far from this place (where he presently lives). I built a house here, close by this road, on
the east side of the present road. From there I moved to where Vital Letendre now lives, close to that place. I also built a house there; I spent about two or three years there. When I left there I built this house and have lived here ever since. I have lived here for about twenty-four years.

Alfred: What about around the Peerless Lake Community and Trout Lake Community, how would you say Peerless Lake in Cree?

Julian: Mista-he Sa-kuyk-ken Big Lake - Peerless Lake.

Alfred: Yes, altogether, how long would you say you have lived here, would you say about fifty years?

Julian: No, not quite. I'd think about forty-five years, because I lived in different places, maybe forty-eight years. I used to spend winters in different places. I also spent some time along the Wabasca River. But I was raised in Wabasca. On the other side of Wabasca called Sandy Lake that is where I was born. My father was born in Lac la Biche, he came from there when he was young. He met my mother in Wabasca, that was where they married here.

Alfred: Wa-wah-ski-sio Sa-kuyh-ken, is that Lac la Biche?

Julian: Yes, that is Lac la Biche. Last fall I was eighty-six years old, next fall I will be eighty-seven years old. When you mentioned about the old people of long ago, the place where Paul Powder now lives, there are some grave sites there. Samuel Sinclair and his wife are buried there, and also another one. Also my great-grandfather, his name was Ernest. That's where the Augers come from. Auger was my mother's last name. She wasn't baptized.

My mother's father's father was half French, as I heard and was told. He was the one who found this lake, as the story goes. He came by way of the Trout River, he is now buried here close by. He came up the Trout River from Wabasca. There was no one here at that time, not even a sign of anyone having been here. Over here from the mouth of Trout River, he followed the river from the lake on foot, and according to stories told, it was as if people had lived here. It was the wild animals that left those tracks. Other and all kinds of different animals. As the story goes, the next morning after he arrived here, he walked down to the lake, Trout Lake. It was said at one time Trout Lake had sandy beaches around the lake with a lot of grass around the lake. It is true because even today the lake is shallow for many yards out. That was the original waterline, it was only recently that the lake has expanded. When my great-grandfather (my mother's father's father) went down to the lake, he saw in three different places, steam rising out. This steam was evaporating from the animals that we called wood buffalo; they were here. As he walked around this area he saw the trails of the buffalo so plain and so well used. They were wood buffalo, not plains buffalo. Wood buffalo were here too.
I saw the tracks of one wood buffalo around the Fort Vermilion area, about the time the buffalo in Wood Buffalo Park were brought up here. The track I saw was big. It was on the north shore of the Trout River, and it seemed it was following the plains buffalo, because I think those plains buffalo wanted to head back south. The plains buffalo followed the Wabasca River, so they were maybe heading back south. Maybe the wood buffalo was scared to cross the river because it didn't cross. It just followed the herd on the other side of the river. I saw some of the plains buffalo in Fort Vermilion. They were skinny that summer; they had spent the winter around the Fort Vermilion area. We circled the herd and they were skinny. However during the summer I saw the herd again and this time they were fat, so we couldn't get close to them. Finally we chased them, and we had good running horses, but they still left us, as if we were walking on foot. Those plains buffalo are fast runners; we were just chasing them for fun.

I have seen a lot of places around this area, I have seen all of them. But I haven't seen Lac la Biche and also the place they call Sturgeon Lake. The highway passes by close to that lake. I went on a circular trip. I went by way of Whitecourt then to Westlock and finally back to Slave Lake. I was with William (William Beaver); he was attending different meetings. I have seen a lot of people, including further up north. I also saw the place called Yellowknife; that is a long way. We used snowshoes and a dog team I went with Samuel Auger's eldest son. I was with him. That previous spring, we had gone beaver trapping and we didn't know we had trapped on someone's trapping area. There were some people there, a different part of the country, they called it B.C. When we trapped in the wrong area, someone told the R.C.M.P. that we were trapping on someone else's trapping area, the same as stealing. It was after the winter was changing, after Christmas that we heard.

At that time the mailman here he used to bring the mail from Peace River, sometimes it took him one month. The roads, if any, were always icy and he travelled mostly by waterways, frozen lakes and rivers, and contraction of lake ice making it great to impossible to climb back in to land. So I had to write the letters then have him take those letters to Edmonton and I'd have to wait for the answers, so by the time I'd receive the answers it would be mid-summer and I was trapping for beaver. Then we were told the R.C.M.P. were in Yellowknife. A store keeper told us this. His name was George Grass, he was our boss. There were many people there, even from Trout Lake, both treaty and Metis. They went up there and at that time there were no roads. The trails at that time had been used only for the previous winter. It was a trail but had not been used that winter. The snow was four feet deep, somehow that winter the snow seemed to be different. There were eleven dogs that followed me as I cleared the trail and these dogs were very well flat out just to pull the dog sled. For example, in the mornings the frost was in bigger chunks than usual and on the trail it seemed to be very coarse, so we said that was probably why
the dogs had such a hard time. Finally we reached the Sturgeon River and we followed that up North for about one hundred miles. Then we came to a trail and we went up and had a meal on the river bank. Then we left from there and someone had blazed the trail the summer before so it could be easily followed.

These people that had stolen the trapping area, we heard the R.C.M.P. were planning to come and see them. That river that is known as Hay River, about one hundred miles downstream there is a waterfall. However we didn't get to see it. We turned up north six miles before we reached the waterfall. Although we heard the noise of the waterfall, we never saw it. The waterfall seemed to be getting closer because noise carries further at night. There were very few trees, only the old trees.

The place we were travelling is called Caribou Mountain and we were on the north side of this mountain range. We camped two nights on that muskeg, till we finally moved to a little clump of spruce trees that someone had camped before. And there were pieces of wood cut and from these we knew someone else had camped here, though we had already trampled the snow down so we could camp there.

We had been told the size of the muskeg, and we had already travelled two days and two nights and we still didn't see the end of the muskeg, just muskeg, not even any pines. The only piece of wood we saw was the old burnt out wood of long ago, still standing in a few places. The trail that we followed was very dim, the snow in the bush was very deep yet. Finally towards the evening of the third day with the red glow of the sunset, we reached a point where we thought there might be some people living.

At that time the temperature was mostly twenty degrees below zero, this was the winter we spent in the Northwest Territories. Sometimes the temperature went down to eighty below. There was also a Frenchman in that settlement and he had a thermometer, and he was the one that told us of the temperature. Sometimes he came to visit us and sometimes we went to visit him, he was living by a lake that was fairly large.

Those people were different, and we had been told that there might not be any Cree-speaking people there. Although there was one man that had gone to Bear River and got a Cree-speaking woman for a wife. That woman might be there and the man she married perhaps understands Cree.

Also I had a letter the storekeeper in Long Lake had written for me, explaining the purpose of our journey. So I had that letter to prove why we were going to Yellowknife.

When we arrived at the settlement, there were people coming out of their houses. And this settlement was situated close to a lake called Buffalo Lake; some of the people lived
across the lake. There were different people. At the time we arrived, an old man had died the day before and the grave had already been dug, and the burial would be the day after. Because of the death of a person within their group we were invited to stay. However at that time I could understand English a little bit if a person spoke, but over the years I have forgotten what I knew of the English language. So we were invited to stay for the burial and the person we spoke to didn't speak too good. I don't know from what nationality that person was, although he looked like an Indian. We found out he was from across Buffalo Lake, where there were a lot of men.

The next morning they took the body away (to the grave). That was the time I saw people that were very religious, mostly Chipewyan Indians and some other people. There were little boys leading the funeral procession, carrying candles, and in behind them in a white cloak walked a Chipewyan Indian. He wore a cloak a priest wears in a religious service. They carried the body for about one-half mile and they were singing and praying all along the way, and they prayed and sang till the burial was completed; that's how long they prayed. That old man had two children, one was a girl and one boy. The two children only cried for a short while and no one else cried. When we got back to the settlement we found that a feast had been arranged. These people lived in tents. Again these were large; there were two stoves in each tent. In some of these tents there were spruce boughs on the dirt floor, and there were no cupboards or shelves for holding items, they also didn't have any beds. They were a different kind of people. We found that these people did not cry when someone from their community died. When someone dies and his or her relatives cry or mourn, then the spirit cannot leave the body; that was their belief. It was getting on towards dusk now and the man asked us if we ever sang. I said "Yes." Then they started beating up the drums, and at the same time these people were telling stories and laughing. Also these people were having a feast at the same time. There were many people. An old man had just died yet these people didn't mourn. Then they served us to join in the feast at which time one man got up and spoke for a short while, and then another man did the same. While this was going on there was an empty place in front of us and an empty plate was set with food on the plate. We found out later that the custom of those people (from Bistcho Lake) was to have a feast with the deceased person as the guest of the feast. It was also at this time that we were singing and we had sang about twice, when the host's family started clearing the floor and the people started to dance. Even the children of the old man that had died were dancing, and they were bouncing as if nothing had happened. It is unbelievable, isn't it? It is as if nothing had happened. They were laughing and telling stories; it's as if no one had died and no burial had taken place. It was the next morning that we left Bistcho Lake. It was at lakes's end that we were going to cross the lake. I had been told that, "When you see a tree topped you go straight for that tree," so this is what I did.

We noticed that the lakes up north had very little snow.
All through the winter there is hardly any snow, because of the wind blowing it off and across. If there was any snow on the lake it was only in small patches.

When we arrived across the lake, we made a camp at dusk and we had been told we would be approximately fifty miles from our destination. We also made camp one more time, because we did not leave the lake early enough, although from there the trail was visible but it had passed over. Finally the next day we arrived at our destination.

There was only a church (or mission), a store, and an R.C.M.P. Post. There was no one else and nothing else there. There were a few tipis sticking out of the snow and a few old ladies that had been left, across the river, and there was a trail leading to the R.C.M.P. post. The snow was so deep that the tipis barely stood out of the snow, the snow was that deep.

When we saw the R.C.M.P. officer at the post, he told us, we would not go back home the same day. That R.C.M.P. officer had previously been stationed in Peace River for six years. He knew a lot of people from around the Peace River country. I had an uncle who lived in Peace River, his name was Johnny Gladue. That R.C.M.P. officer knew him. So when he told us we would not go home the same day, he told us that an inspector was coming to that post. He said, "That inspector stays seventy miles from here." The inspector was coming from the town seventy miles from Yellowknife. He was coming to ask us if I know of any people that came down to the B.C. area to trap. Someone had told the R.C.M.P. about the illegal trapping.

It was true that before sunset, the R.C.M.P. inspector arrived. The month of February we call (Mik-su-Pee-sim), it was about at the end of that month. The R.C.M.P. came in, and I've never been in jail, the inspector was a big man. After he came in, he just stood there and the other R.C.M.P. officers took off his fur coats, and his mitts, as if he was a child. He was their boss. The R.C.M.P officer told the inspector where I was from and what my purpose was for being there. The inspector asked me right away if any people from my area were trapping in the B.C. forest. I said, "No. I did not see anything because I was not searching for trails and traplines." He really tried to criticize me because he thought I was hiding the people that were trapping in the area in question. He also told me he was going to put me in jail. I just said it didn't matter to me, so he finally left me alone.

It was at that time I first saw dogs so big. They came from seventy miles away and they still were in a playful mood when they arrived there, after a distance of seventy miles. After the inspector had finished, he left again. The inspector had to attend a court case in his home town the day after. That day was the last day of the hearing in which a Dogrib Indian had been charged with rape, that case had been heard three
times already. The sentence was to have been seven years in prison.

That was a long time, wasn't it? This was after three hearings. As for myself and my companion, we were going to leave but the R.C.M.P. officer told us to camp in their sleeping quarters. And he told us "There are some fish available for your dogs to eat." We were well treated and it wasn't until late the next day that we left Yellowknife.

Before we had arrived in Yellowknife there were some people that were following our trail. These were Metis people and they told us that some other people were preparing to come up north. Those were another group of people. So we went and camped off the trail. Then we reached another encampment and the people were the same as these here (Cree) because we were following a different trail, not the trail we had followed to go up north. It was true. As it was getting dark we heard the dogs barking and heard the bells (on dog's harnesses) at a short distance. We were already eighteen people in our group when we finally made camp. Some came in groups of two or three and each had five dogs or more to a team. The people we met were very happy to see us and they showed their happiness. The Indian and the Metis paid seventy-five dollars for trapping licence and traplines, and the white man paid one hundred twenty-five dollars and these included beaver licenses.

There was a lot of money for the agent. There was only one who didn't pay for his trapline because he was born in that area. He had a trapline.

It was not very long ago that William Beaver, my nephew, went to Yellowknife, and he said, it was quite a big town now, in a place where no people had lived. That man sees a lot of country.

There was only one place I didn't see and that place is called Garden River, but these areas below Garden River, I have already seen.

Alfred: That place you call Kis-chi-kan See-Pees, is that Garden River?

Julian: Yes, that is Garden River, that is the only place I haven't seen.

Alfred: Are you a treaty Indian?

Julian: No, I'm not, I took scrip, like I told you. Yes, I took scrip. The scrip was given to five of us. My brother in Wabasca, Paul Gladue, he is still alive, and my father and mother also one sister younger than me, although she died long ago. It was because my father had heard that the scrip was given in Lac la Biche, that he took scrip. They had heard that some people received or sold their scrip for forty dollars and my father demanded more for the scrip and so some received sixty dollars for their scrip. It was later learned that those
scrip were worth a lot more; they were worth one thousand dollars.

Alfred: What about those lands or were the people given land when they took the scrip?

Julian: No, they were not given any land, at that time. It wasn't like that. It was only after that the people started receiving land, that wasn't too long ago. But before, anyone could have lived any place. There were no treaty Indians at the time. It was later in time that treaty Indians were given land, and they were told at that time - and I heard this because I went to listen to the meeting - they were told, that they cannot go and live any place except on the reserve, wherever their reserve land would be. However they, the treaties, could go off the reserve, but they cannot live off the reserve.

Alfred: What about those that took scrip, what were they told?

Julian: I don't know, the only thing I heard was that we (the Metis) could live any place like the whiteman, but the treaty Indians cannot live any place except on the reserve. So today, we (the Metis) live any place we choose to live.

Another thing is the land claim, it is taking so long, though I never say anything about it. The only thing happening right now is people are making money on the land claims. It shouldn't take that long to settle a land claim, just because the government think they own the land.

Alfred: In as far as you know, do these people here come from different areas, is that why some are Metis and some are treaty?

Julian: Yes, some came from a different place. Some took treaty, later than some others. These people weren't all present, that is what I heard.

I also heard the elders of long ago talk with the commissioners. Whoever wanted treaty would be given treaty status. The Metis were told they can live any place. Those elders are all dead now. But the Metis were told they can live anywhere they wanted, just like white man.

Alfred: When the treaty Indians were first given treaty status, how were they paid, were they given money or what else?

Julian: They received five dollars, and it's always been the same ever since. The chiefs were given ten dollars and councillors. It's always been the same. But where these people came from I can't say. The treaty signing wasn't done in one period. It was over a span of time, this was also true of people receiving scrip. For example, Chipewyan Lake was one area that received treaty after many others. The other areas were the same, it wasn't all at the same time. However, the agent used to pass through here. I remember about twice, he was
on horse back. That's when he made the Treaty payments.

Alfred: As far as you can remember where was the first place you witnessed a Treaty day?

Julian: It was in Wabasca, where the Hudson's Bay now stands. At that time we lived close to the Hudson's Bay store, that's how I came to witness the Treaty day.

Alfred: Through your knowledge, the people of Trout and Peerless Lake, were they ever promised land or reserve?

Julian: Yes, they were promised land. I was listening to the treaty agent, that was long ago. That was the first time a plane came here on pontoons in Long Lake. Colin Trindle (cousin) was a councillor then and it was at that time that he requested land set apart for a reserve, and he requested it to be surveyed. I heard him. Some doubt him, but that was long ago, when the plane first landed in Long Lake on pontoons. That old man (Colin) still mentions that promise made to them for a reserve. At that time they were told, wherever there was a large number of Indian people, reserves would be set apart for them.

Alfred: What about the people or agents that were asked for the reserve, did they promise to give them the reserve?

Julian: Yes, they promised to give them the reserve. Whenever many Indians live, reserves are given.

Alfred: What was the name of the agent or commissioner that made that promise? Or was there one at the time?

Julian: Yes, there was one. His name was Laird.

Alfred: That will be all for now. I wish to thank you for the interview and information you have given us. I will tell you the same thing I've told the others. Whatever happens from here, you will be informed because you are the people that provided the information. Again I thank you.

(End of Interview)

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