

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: MARIA YELLOWKNEE
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: CHIPEWYAN LAKE
ALBERTA
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ALBERTA
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INTERVIEWER: DAVID STARR
INTERPRETER: FRANCES STARR
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Age 82 years.
- Describes the discovery of Chipewyan Lake by her great-great-grandfather.
- Tells something of the land area covered by the Indians who lived by traditional hunting, trapping and fishing.

My name is David Starr. The reason I'm here is that I'm hired by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Program from Edmonton. I'm looking for old history like, for example, how far people from this area travelled to make their livelihood. So I came to you old people to ask you about these things. I would like to hear it from you so I will ask you questions as we go along. The first thing I would like to know is your name. What is your name?

Maria: Maria Yellowknee.

David: Do you know your age?

Maria: I am 82 years old last fall, the month the children started school (September), the day they call the tenth. I was also born, I also know where I was born.

David: Where was this?

Maria: From here you cross overland to another lake which we

call Mink Lake. It is about four miles long and again overland to another lake which we call Deep Lake. Across that lake there is a big sandy beach, that was where I was born. It's sure pretty there.

David; Then maybe you can tell me, years ago did you move around a lot?

Maria: I guess, or was told, my father and his family was moving around hunting for meat. When we reached Deep Lake this was where I was born then.

David: How far did the old people say they went? When they moved around like this, your father and your grandfather? The old people?

Maria: They used to talk about places far away where they used to go hunting. There is one place they used to call "Where the big clump of poplar are" far from here where they used to go hunting. We used to stay a long time at that place but then we would come home. We used to have five horses but there was no rope in those days and we used to use (shaganapee) rawhide strips for rope. We used these to tie up our horses and also to tie up our packsacks when we moved. A long time ago people never saw rope.

David: Was there ever a time when these people went as far as the mighty river (Athabasca River)?

Maria: No, never.

David: But did they ever go there?

Maria: They just used to move by family here and there for hunting but to the mighty river, that's a long way, the mighty river to travel by foot.

David: But the old people, your grandfather, did they ever went there?

Maria: No, never. Although my father used to go a long way. He used to tell about reaching as far as where the Chipewyans used to come from. (NOTE: Northeast from Chipewyan Lake, around the region of Lake Athabasca.)

He used to say he had seen where the Chipewyans had been by cuttings, and where tipis had been. But he had never seen them or run into them.

David: How about straight across this lake (north). Did they ever talk about how far they went that way?

Maria: Other people from here would go that way like my uncle, my mother's sister's husband. There are other lakes over there. They used to call one Rabbit Lake, Mikkwa River; this river came out at Fort MacKay. They used to tell about going down that river to Fort MacKay.

David: They used to go down that river to MacKay? (East)

Maria: Yes, they used to go down that river. They used to say that they used to have a hard time to go down as there were rapids, especially one big one.

David: These people from here, were they the ones?

Maria: Yes, even not long ago there was some that went down that river from here.

David: Now, this person you said, your mother's sister's husband. What was his name?

Maria: Oh, you mean that old man?

David: Yes.

Maria: Sam. They used to call him Sam. But one time they moved away from here and now they stay at Fox Lake but since

then a lot of them have died but a lot of them are still living. This one here (meaning her husband), his relations are there too. A woman and one man who is my brother-in-law. They called him Ben. Bella is the name of his sister. These two are his brother and sister.

David: Now, where is this place you are talking about, is it Fox Lake?

Maria: Yes, Fox Lake, that's the place. They had moved from this side of Deep Lake (west side), they used to live there, the same lake where I was born.

David: So they left from that place and moved to where they live now?

Maria: Yes, they just moved all of a sudden. They had always lived there and there used to be five houses there altogether. This was a long time ago, they owned those five houses on the west side of Deep Lake.

David: Now do you remember hearing about how people first come to this lake or came to live here?

Maria: Yes, this was what I was telling you about last night, how my grandfather's father first found this lake, how he came down Wabasca River from Wabasca. This was our great-great-grandfather.

David: What was his name?

Maria: I told you last night, Cosas. Yes, that was what they called him. They say he was able to be by himself for a long time alone. When he first came here he built a small log house

at this bay so he started to trap fur from here. He spent the winter there. He had told how there were a lot of wolf dens and bear dens around here and how there were a lot of other animals also.

David: I wonder, would you remember hearing, did he live in Wabasca when he found this place?

Maria: Yes, Wabasca was where he lived.

David: I guess this was before there was any treaty?

Maria: Yes, there was no treaty then. Even myself I remember before there was any treaty and I also remember when they first come to pay treaty, when the Indian agent came down river

(Wabasca River), and how all the men went overland to the river. (Note: About 12 miles west.) This was the first treaty and this was when I was going to have my first baby, he is now the oldest. Only the women were left here, all the men went. Now I hear my brother-in-law also died, my sister Sarah's husband, the one that lives in Wabasca. He died last Saturday, he also came from here. He used to live here.

David: Oh, do you mean the old man that died in Wabasca? His last name is Nanemahoo? Is that the one?

Maria: Yes, that is the one. There is also my other sister's husband, Mary Louise. Her husband Maxlie and the one who died, they were brothers.

David: Now you were saying last night, that you had daughters in MacKay, how many?

Maria: Two.

David: What are their names?

Maria: Isabelle the oldest and her sister, Alice.

David: Have they been there long?

Maria: Yes, a long time. They also used to have houses here too and also married here with men from here.

David: Now about your old man here, has his relations lived here?

Maria: I told you about his relations in Fox Lake but he has one here too. His name is James.

David: Oh, you mean the one James that is here now?

Maria: Yes.

David: Do you know, let's say west of here like toward the

Wabasca River, did you ever hear about the old people going that way? How far west from here?

Maria; No, I don't. Except his grandfather (meaning her husband) used to use horses to go that way for hunting but I don't know how far but they used to come from that direction.

David: How about south of here? Towards Wabasca?

Maria: Yes, there was always people going every summer like my brother-in-law, here Arnold Orr's parents, they used to very often go to Wabasca. They used to go for treaty payments and hunt on the way back using horses and following the Wabasca River back. Sometimes his grandfather used to go with them (meaning her husband) because Wabasca was the only place they paid treaty at first.

David: Well, I suppose there is not much more I can ask you but maybe years ago would you know or remember the headman at that time? Did he ever sign his name to any paper saying he accepts treaty?

Maria: Do you mean the old man who first found this lake?

David: Yes.

Maria: Never. He never did see any treaty only my uncle Sam, he had seen treaty and has been paid.

David: Well, do you remember any taking scrip?

Maria: Do you mean a scrip man?

David: Yes.

Maria: There used to be a man here years ago. They say he was a scrip man but he was the only one. They were taken to Trout Lake, him and his wife years ago and they went and died there. They went by wagon. They had lived here at the bay for a long time and they were the only people who have taken scrip.

David; But did anybody see them take scrip for sure?

Maria; No, nobody.

David; This is why I'm asking to find out if anybody has seen anyone take treaty or scrip but just saying that this man is a scrip man or this man is a treaty and nobody have seen them sign a paper then nobody can be sure.

Maria: One of my aunts when her husband died.

David: What was your aunt's name?

Maria: Marie.

David: Is she still living?

Maria: No, she died a long time ago.

David: Did they also live here?

Maria: Right here. My father's brother's wife but my aunt lived a long time after her husband died but let me try and remember his name, my uncle's name. Oh, I remember his Indian name.

David: Well that's good then, what was it?

Maria: Natakame. That was his name. How after he died my aunt, she took scrip.

David: But did people say she was a scrip woman or did she sign the paper herself?

Marie: Oh, she did! She went to Edmonton to do it.

David: But did they come here then to give out scrip?

Maria: No, they never did.

David: Now, you and your family, how long have you been here in Chipewyan Lake? Have you always been here or did you move here from another area?

Maria: We have always been here except we visited for 13 years in Wabasca but then we came home and ever since then we stayed in this same house.

David: What about your father?

Maria: He always was here, he had lived about a day's travel by dogs from here. He used to have cows at a lake we call Island Lake.

David: I'm sure sorry I can't talk to my grandfather here because he can't hear, but were they always been here too? His name is William Yellowknee, isn't it?

Maria: Yes, that's his name.

David: What about his relations, do you know any of them?

Maria: Yes, my father-in-law, his name was Joe Yellowknee and his mother's name was Julia.

David: Do you know his age?

Maria: He is one winter older than me, he is 83 last summer when the ducks lost their feathers (July) but I don't know what

day.

David: Were his relations always living in this area?

Maria: Yes. All his relations, his grandfather and mother.

David: And you say some of his relations are living in Fox Lake, is that right?

Maria: Yes.

David: Well, that is all and I thank you for telling me these things. You have helped us a lot. Thank you grandmother.

(End of Interview)

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