

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS
OF ELDERS' INTERVIEWS
BY RICK DANIEL

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PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF ELDERS INTERVIEWS

by Rick Daniel
January 28, 1974

As an initial step in the analysis of elders interviews I have gone through all of the Treaty 8 interviews and indicated the topics under discussion. It will now be possible for each archival researcher to pick out the references to any particular subject area (e.g. education) with little effort. This should help to pose some of the questions which require archival research as well as to indicate to the interviewers some of the shortcomings in the type of questions being asked on that particular subject. I think that further analysis of the interviews will be of great benefit to our archival research and should also suggest changes to our field research methodology in order to capture some of the information which was missed on previous interviews.

After this initial classification by subject areas, I completed the following brief summary and evaluation of the references to mineral rights in the treaty 8 interviews:

Minerals are mentioned in a total of 20 of the interviews. Four of these interviews clearly support the claims that Indians never surrendered mineral rights under any of the land in the Treaty 8 area. The most complete response was given by William Okeymow, age 90, who was quite emphatic

about these rights:

"What was promised is, only six shovels full in depth including white man's land. If anything was discovered it is ours. In the future, things may be found such as gold or something in the rock or iron or useful things such as coal was mentioned. Anything in general, if discovered would be to our benefit. This was promised by the King. This is why I say, the promises sound good at that time. These promises have not been kept. We have lost a lot."

Frank Halcrow, age 59, put it differently:

"The ground surface that we live on in the reserve and outside should be given to us, should oil be discovered."

The other two elders, (ages not recorded) while not referring to minerals specifically, did say, that the land was surrendered only to a depth of 'six inches' or 'a few inches.' The elder who mentioned 6" apparently felt that this was to insure that the whiteman could not even farm the land.

Seven of the twenty interviews would support the claim that Indians have mineral rights only on the reserve, and that the rights outside the reserve were surrendered, although in some of these interviews, the elder was only asked about mineral rights within the reserve. Three other respondents indicated that they were not sure or that mineral rights were never mentioned because the old people never knew what mineral was.

The remaining six interviews are difficult to interpret for a variety of reasons. George Okeymow, age 79, refers to the depth of six shovels full, but it is not clear whether he is saying that Indians own only six shovels full of reserve land, or that white people own only that much non-reserve land or both. Other interviews contain similar ambiguities about whether the respondent is talking about minerals within the reserve or outside.

In conclusion, there is sufficient support for the claim that minerals were not surrendered that the idea should be followed up in archival and field research. Field researchers should become familiar with the elders interview questions which I have prepared and should attempt to pin down the respondent on whether he is referring to minerals within the reserve.

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