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HIGHLIGHTS:

- A number of summaries of various aspects of Treaty #8 including trapping, fishing and hunting rights and medicare.

Treaty #8 Interviews

With the interviews that I have done so far, I would like to have them all done, so we could go over them all at one time. I hope it will be on Tuesday, October 16, 1973.

However, so far as treaties are concerned, what is coming out strong in the interviews is hunting, fishing, trapping, education and medicare. Five (5) things that are coming clear from the elders' interviews.

Yesterday and today, I am doing Wabasca and Peerless Lake. Incidentally, yesterday I didn't do too much because I wasn't feeling too well. I spent most of my time in the bathroom.

For Peerless Lake, it is a matter of land question.

I'll do a paper on it when I compile all the interviews from Treaty #8 area.

by Eric Stamp

Treaty #8

by Eric Stamp

In all respect to elders who were interviewed from Treaty #8 concerned with just the hunting, fishing and trapping, based on the forty-three interviews from nine reserves, it is apparent that the Indian people were very concerned about hunting, fishing and trapping during the negotiations, prior to the signing of Treaty 8 in June 1899 at Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta. The Indian people hunted for food and clothing. From the carcass, the food; and the fur was utilized for clothing. Prior to white man coming to Indian territory, the Indian people did not hunt or trap for commercial use. They hunted and fished for their own use. It wasn't until the white traders came in to the territory that the Indians started to trade with the traders commercially. The Indians knew how to trade from the white man. However, prior to that they hunted for their own use.

During the negotiations of Treaty 8 between the Indians and the Queen's representative in June 1899 at Lesser Slave Lake, it is quite clear that the commissioner saw and understood as to how the Indians made their living. And from the Indians' point of view, the Indians wanted to maintain their hunting, fishing and trapping to sustain themselves for that was their only means of survival.

Quoting from some of the interviews, according to the elders recollections of Treaty 8 concerning hunting, fishing and trapping:

Quote: William Okeymow, Sucker Creek, Age 90.

"If he wishes to kill anything, including fish, he was never stopped. Traplines were never mentioned to him or permits. Everything was open to him. In white man's land, it was different. Friendship was to be maintained, which has been long an oversight. If they were to make friends, we too were to make friends is what was promised. The Indian agent had made good promises. He paid treaty money till I grew up. This old man I have seen, before his son took over and Albert Tate was the name of the person who was the interpreter. He was Metis and very dark. He spoke very good Cree so he interpreted for the Indians. The Metis had their own interpreter by the name of Dave Ferguson. He was the head of the Metis and he looked after his fellow people. There was a priest by the name

of Bellacomb (Pere Lacombe). He did a lot of talking. He encouraged the Indians to accept the treaty, 'This is your life line,' he said. 'It will serve you long and well, my children,' he said. 'Accept this,' he said several times. I heard him say this. That is why the Indian accepted treaty, and this part of the land."

Quote: Isadore Willier, Driftpile, Age 107.

"As the week was ending, he was told this, 'Today we're coming to buy your land, Chief. If you don't sell today, never again will they be back to buy your land,' our chief was told.

Also, this is what he was told. 'The way you have been struggling for a livelihood. No one will ever stop that form of livelihood. If you should take treaty, this is the way you will make your livelihood. Moose, caribou, and any other wild bush animals, no one will ever stop you from obtaining these animals anywhere.

'As long as the sun walks and the rivers flow, always and forever always, no one will ever stop you. You will always make your livelihood that way. If you should take treaty, and if that is what you're going to take, nothing

will stop you from fishing and duck hunting. There will be no limitations as to what you want to kill, to continue your livelihood and this manner forever,' the chief was told.

There is only one law pertaining to treaty Indians; not two or three but only one. There is no one that can change that law. Nobody will change that law. The only thing that can change that law is when the sun stops and the rivers run dry, then the treaties will change. That is the only thing that can change our treaties, no one else can. Anyone wishing to challenge our treaties, to change that, he may try, but he will find out how our treaties are. These are our laws and our treaties."

Quote: Leo Mitchell, Sturgeon Lake, Age 80.

"They were allowed to kill any animal. The people were told not to abuse the different shells given to them, but rather to use them to make a livelihood."

Quote: Melanie Hamelin, Sturgeon Lake, Age 70.

"That there wouldn't be any restrictions on the pursuit of their livelihood. There wouldn't be any restrictions on their hunting or the animals they killed. They were promised this. My grandfather was promised this."

Quote: Sylvester Auger, Bigstone Band, Age 64.

"Chief Bigstone when he go up to make a speech, 'As long as the river runs and sun goes around the world, that we are to receive our treaty rights, that is the only way I'll come to terms in letting my land go. That an Indian has the right to go big game hunting, and he is not to be stopped from hunting for he is using it for his food.' That's

what he asked for. That is when my father took treaty. Chief Bigstone made his speech to his people regarding hunting for their land."

Quote: Wally Willier, Bigstone Band.  
"If you take what is been said to you, you will never regret for as long as you live. There will be always food on your plates. Any place you go, you can hunt anywhere you like,' the Indian agent said. The priest was interpreting, 'We will take the treaty,' they said."

Quote: August Sound, Swan River Band.  
"He promised the Indian will live like he always has, hunting and fishing."

Quote: Rosalie Touroungau, Bigstone Band, Age 67.  
"They were all called up and being dressed in rags, stood side by side. My grandmother and one of my uncles were called up and were given guns to take picture. That was a symbol of truth. So that the promises would go on. That no one should be stopped to hunt for we make a living from it."

Quote: Paul Gladue, Sandy Lake, Age 73.  
"That the Indian should not be stuck or deprived of his hunting and everything else. Any creature that lives on the earth, that he should kill for his own use and not to be brought to court if he killed any animal. That is what they were told."

Quote: Scotty Willier, Driftpile, Alberta, Age 67.  
"Hunting, fishing and trapping will always exist as long as the earth exists. No one shall destroy this from us or take them from us. This is why we have released our land to the Queen,' is what was said."

Quote: Frank Halcrow, Freeman Reserve, Age 50.  
"No, they did not give up their hunting rights. There is no such thing for them to give up their hunting rights. It was the Indian who was given hunting privileges."

Quote: Scotty Willier, Sucker Creek, Age 70.  
"Fishing and hunting, that will never be stopped to you people 'cause of the agreement we made for your land. Every fall and spring you will be given nets and ammunition for your livelihood but you will not be allowed to think because you are our children.' We were to be given machinery and farming equipment to farm and 'When you are working on your farm you will be given ration.' That I have seen every year yet."

#### TREATY 8

In all respect to elders who were interviewed in 1972/73,

I must say we were very fortunate to get a few interviews where the individuals were at the signing of treaties, mainly with Treaty number eight (8) which took place at Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta in June, 1899. It is apparent from the interviews that the Indian did in fact negotiate prior to the signing of Treaty number eight (8). In reference to the interviews there was no misunderstanding from the Indians' points of view concerning Medicare.

#### Medicare

At the negotiations the commissioner had with him a doctor. He promised the Indians that the Queen will provide medical services to her said Indians where in fact the doctor treated some Indians for minor things. Dr. A. Jacken during the time of treaty signing in 1899. The Indian people were convinced by the commissioner that the government was going to provide medical services.

Quote: from William Okeymow (Age 90)

"What the King promised to the people was not to spoon-feed them unless they were hard up. Doctors will be provided and everything. 'You will be cared for. You will be helped,' we were promised. The people were willing to accept these promises and give part of our land but not underneath."

Quote: from I. Willier. (Age 107)

"Medication, and medicine you will not pay for. The Queen will pay for all medical expenses. Forever and ever you will not pay for medical services, as treaty Indians, if you should accept treaty, if you don't take scrip."

by Eric Stamp

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