

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: ADAM SOLWAY
re: TREATY #7

INFORMANT'S ADDRESS:

INTERVIEW LOCATION:

TRIBE/NATION: CROWFOOT
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
DATE OF INTERVIEW:
INTERVIEWER:
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: HEATHER YAWORSKI
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses Crowfoot and the signing of Treaty #7.
(Native language) drums and singing.

Adam: Ladies and gentlemen, I have often watched the political system of our reservation. The problem is the conflict between governments and the Crown. I often wonder if the Crown was a security to hold our land in trust with the Crown as far as our treaties were concerned. We understand, as Indian people, that the Crown that we used in the wording of the treaties was seal of our agreement, which we used the sun, the river, and the grass as the incorporated seal. Just to prove that, I hope the minister and the political heads of the country will hear what our great chief, Crowfoot said before the signing of the treaty. He knew everything was going to go, if he did surrender. But to be honored by his people, and bring peace between the white settlers and the Indian people, he had to make his decisions and this wasn't a very easy thing to make -- a decision over land.

We love our land, we take our land as our mother and our home. Our reserve provides us of hunting. And as far as the treaties are concerned, we are confined within our reserves and we can't go elsewhere, unless with a special permission of white settlers -- permission to go out hunting. And if we don't ask

permission to trespass these Crown lands, then we are charged with trespassing.

As I have stated earlier I have often watched political system, transactions of government, the movements of government. And now I'm heading my people, and I'd like to refer you back to our great chief, who was key man to sign the treaties between Her Majesty's representatives. I know it hurt the old man to sign treaty and give up his country. It is the same feeling

which swells the hearts of the French Americans, whose hearts beat the music strains. English Americans, whose hearts beat a little faster when his country's flag is raised on high. Vice versa of the Indian heart -- nobody can make the hearts of man change, which the Trudeau government, and the minister Chretien, announced this policy statement in the House of Commons, June 25, 1969.

We, as leaders of our tribes, are very concerned for the welfare of our people, also the welfare of our country. Mr. Trudeau wants equality, and that equality costs us the rest of our reserves. The reserve which we thought that has been allotted through treaties, and been robbed elsewhere as far as the original treaties were concerned. I'm talking because I have to express the concern of the associations of the American Indians, the formation of unity is a great success of the Indian people.

I understand that the present, the Indian Health Services, is permitted to fill only 65 percent of its vacancies, since July 1, 1969. Medical services have always been in the treaty, although the minister states that some treaties didn't contain medical promises. But I, alone, as a Indian, I think we have already paid our medical services by appropriation of acres, millions of acres of land throughout the country, through surrendering land through the treaties. This has already meant the loss of the treaty. It must be remembered, and because of its transfusion of policies and the directionships of our leaders of the country. They are apt to break the treaties and let the Indian alone to try and retain their own medicine men. They took our medicine men away by imposing the Health Service schemes.

Now they want us to answer their technical advisor's policy. They expect the Indian to voice out what they really mean as far as the policy paper is concerned. All that we need is leaders. A leader who will dedicate his time, who can reassure us to maintain our lands, to control our lands, to invest our lands, and the Crown, which is what stipulated in treaties in 1877 -- Treaty 6 and 8, 2, 3, and 5, throughout the country. This is what we need, a person who fights without propaganda, without a threat to righteousness, and justifying wrong doers. Let us keep in mind the goals yet to be accomplished in the native survival, like keeping our hunting, the hunting rights that has been promised us.

At the time of the signing of the treaties, when our

grandfathers carried guns, they were free and they were people. A people known to Her Majesty, a society which took a treaty, an agreement, which they called a treaty to bind these two nations together. Nowadays the Trudeau government doesn't believe in the treaty. Now we just don't know where to secure our trust. This is our land, this is our country, this has been taken by white people, land-grabbers I'd say, bootleggers. Now they think that they own the whole country by not recognizing the Indian treaties.

In order to have equality the Indians got to contribute towards the provinces, which the government says turn the services over to the provinces. In order to get these services, to obtain the services of the provinces, we have to surrender our land and government and provincial taxes. Then we'll invade the Indian reserves again. Maybe this is what the government wants -- instead of making the policy paper he should come right out and say, "We want your land. That's not your land. In order

to get the same equality as the rest of the Canadian citizens you've got to give up the rest of your reserve. Let your reserve be taxed." This the Indian people doesn't want. The Indian capital of the world, Ottawa, imagine making this comment, and statement on this policy of government. I know some of his governments doesn't want to side with him, but as far as Chretien is concerned, he doesn't care because he doesn't belong to this country. He doesn't consider the original inhabitant of this continent, just because the Indian played important roles in the original history, creating peace and good will towards the settlers. We signed these treaties in good faith and now we expect the government and Her Majesty to respect these treaties in good faith.

Now ladies and gentlemen I would like to turn you to the quotation, and I'd like to quote the great chief that made this statement in his latter years or reign. But before we get the chief's quote, I'd like to turn you over to one of the patronized songs of Canada's. (Singing)

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the wisdom of the great chief, Crowfoot: One of the greatest chiefs in the history of the Blackfoot Confederacy was Crowfoot, known personally to hundreds of the old-timers of southern Alberta, from the days when ranchers begin to settle in the country, till the time of his death in April, 1890. Crowfoot was born near Blackfoot Crossing. He was the son of a great Blackfoot chief called Many Names, and a Blood woman. From earliest years he had distinguished himself as a youth of sound judgement and great courage. As a boy he had been given the name of Fair Ghost. When he was fifteen years of age, his name was changed because he revenged the treacherous death of his older brother by

leading an expedition into Montana and thoroughly defeating the Snake tribe. Most of the paintings and photographs of Crowfoot show him as quite an old man. They also show striking physical characteristics. He was six feet tall and nobly proportioned, and had the dignity and quiet self-expression of the born

leader of man.

While still a young man he succeeded his father as head of the Confederacy, and for over thirty years was himself a court of last appeal in all matters relating to the welfare of his people. It is said that he had an undisputed position as leader of his people during a terrific battle between the Crees and the Blackfeet on December 3, 1866. This took place at three Ponds, a valley between the Belly and Red Deer rivers. On the occasion, the Blackfeet were thoroughly beaten and were about to retreat with great loss of life. Suddenly, Crowfoot appeared and rallied the discouraged warriors, and caused them to dash into the fight. The Blackfeet drove the Crees back into their own country in complete confusion.

A few years later, the combined force of Crees and Assiniboines were almost annihilated by Crowfoot and his warriors in a battle which took place near Lethbridge. Stories of these engagements are still told by the old men who lived through them. But like most stories, they are inaccurate as to dates. But they are referred to by the Blackfeet.

Crowfoot was not a lover of war, and great as his reputation was, his fame as an orator and as a councillor was even greater. His speech at the occasion of the signing of the treaty at the Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 is a matter of history, and reveals the temper and balanced judgement of a great citizen: "While I speak, be kind and patient. I have to speak for my people, who are numerous and who rely upon me to follow that course, which in the future will tend to their

good. The plains are large and wide, and we are the children of the plains. It is our home, and the buffalo has been our food always. You must look upon us as your children now, and be indulgent to us.

If the police had not come to this country, where would we be now? Bad men and bad whiskey were killing us so fast that very few would have been left today. The police have protected us as the feather of the bird protects it from the frost of winter. It always happens that far away people hear exaggerated stories about one another. The news grows as it travels, while it becomes as a little thing to a big lie. I often hear things about white people -- I do not believe them until I find the truth. Why should you kill us, or we kill you? Let our white friends have compassion and we will have compassion. I have two hearts, my friends. One is like stone and the other is kind and tender. Treat us badly and my heart is like stone; treat us kindly and my heart is the heart of a child."

There is quality of nobility and sound common sense in that speech not often found among uneducated men.

As everyone knows, Crowfoot kept his faith with the white men during the rebellion of 1885. It is reported that Crowfoot met Riel in Montana in connection with the uprising and said to

him, "To rise far there must be an object. To rebel, there must be a wrong to right. And in either case, one must consider that benefit is never gained from war. The buffalo have gone from our plains. The fault partly lies with us. But more fault of the white men far south, when they killed thousands for their skins, not for food. The food we eat today, the White Mother gave to us. Without it, we starve. There is nothing to gain by the war you suggest."

Many stories are told of the logic of Crowfoot in his dealings with white men. When it first became known that reservations were being set aside for the red man there was, of course, great resentment among the tribes. But the plains Indians were in a difficult position. The buffalo were gone and the Indians were hungry. It was perhaps better to live the ways of the white man than to starve. When the Commissioners first approached Crowfoot, they told him that all the tribes to the south and east had signed the treaties, and were given and living on reservations, and getting on well. They advised Crowfoot and his followers to give up their roaming existence and settle down in the same way.

The first meeting took place in Milk River in southern Alberta. And the story is told that on that occasion, the white men spread a lot of one-dollar bills on the ground and said, "This is what the white man trades with. This is his buffalo robe. Just as you trade with skins, we trade with these pieces of paper."

Then the old chief picked up one of the dollar bills which had on it the picture of a man with a bald head. And looking around at his men, Crowfoot said this, quote, "Bald head." When the white chief had laid all his money on the ground, and shown how much he would give if the Indians would sign a treaty, Crowfoot took a handful of clay and made a ball out of it, and put it on the fire. And it cooked it -- it did not crack. Then he said to the white men, quote, "Now, put your money on fire and see if it will last as long as the clay."

Then the white chief said, quote, "No. My money will burn, because it is made of paper." Then, with an amused gleam in his piercing eyes, the old chief said, quote, "Oh, your money is not as good as our land, is it? The wind will blow it away, the fire will burn it, the water will rot it. Nothing can destroy our land. You don't make very good trade." Then with a smile, the dignified chief of the Blackfeet picked up a handful of sand from the bank of the Milk River. This he handed to the white man and said, quote, "You count the grains of sand in that while I count the money you gave for the land." The white man poured the sand into the palm of his hand and said, quote, "I would not live long enough to count this. But you can count this money in a few minutes." Quote, "Very well," said the wise Crowfoot, "our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not perish as long as the sun shines and the water flows. And through all the years it will give life to man and animal. And therefore, we

cannot sell the land. It was put here by the Great Spirit, and we cannot sell it, because it does not really belong to us. You can count your money and burn it with the nod of the buffalo's head. But only the Great Spirit can count the grains and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you, we will give you anything you can take with you, but we cannot give you the land."

In the brow of the hill overlooking the Blackfoot Crossing stand a monument erected by the Canadian government in memory of Crowfoot. Not far away from here there is a tablet setting forth the place where Crowfoot made his last stand and died. Nearby, another monument proclaims the sites shared when Crowfoot stood forth, where his influence was the greatest of Indian chiefs. The Blackfeet and other tribes of southern Alberta signed Treaty Number 7, the greatest series of treaties which the Canadian government entered into with the Indians of the west.

He did not commit himself to sign the treaty until he notified Chief Red Crow, his colleague, of the Blood tribe. He knew the land, birds and animals would disappear if he did sign the treaty with the government. He didn't agree to sign the treaty until Chief Red Crow agreed to sign with him. Colonel McLeod consulted Chief Red Crow that Chief Crowfoot agreed for him to sign the treaty. And the answer Chief Red Crow gave Colonel McLeod is that Chief Crowfoot was the key man for the Blackfoot Confederacy. Chief Crowfoot realized that his colleague, Chief Red Crow's decision was official to him -- to sign the treaty. That is the movement the Blackfoot Confederacy took. When agreement reached its peak of signing the treaty, Chief Crowfoot and Colonel McLeod presented each other articles containing treaty agreements. By showing in comparison of money and handful of soil, by using incorporated seals, of the sun, river and grass, to represent, 'As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows.'

Before signing the treaty agreement, Colonel McLeod assured the Indians that he was going to educate the Indians, and supply medicine chests.

From now on and forever, we cannot count the money but we could not count the handful of soil.

There are an estimated 250,000 Treaty Indians, half of them in the west, and most were placed in treaty. In the 1870s, fear on the part of the white settlers and fur traders that the Indian might rebel; desire to hold back the advance of the United States from the settlement, and the wish to link the nation by rail, fostered the desire for treaties. In treaty the red man gave up his claim to the land, promised never to touch fire water, to be loyal to the Queen and not to harm her

subjects, and to defend the Queen against her enemies. The Indian asked for and received such practical things as land, the right to hunt for food, \$5 a head a year and the new coats for the chiefs once a year. Both sides promised to live up to

their bargain as long as the sun shall shine, and the river flow.

The result was half of a continent taken peacefully, by traditional law and all rights stem from the tribal chiefs. When the Indian took the hand of the Queen he felt he obtained the same chief as the white, and as later events proved wrong, the same legal status.

As the report of the Canadian Bar Association of Indian Rights states: Ethically, morally, legally, treaty promises should undersign, and no circumstances be broken. Governor Morris, who negotiated and signed many of the original treaties, and whose book is the accepted authority on Indian treaties says, "Provisions of these treaties must be carried out with good faith and the nicest exactness the Indians of Canada have. An abiding confidence in the government -- this at all hazards must not be shaken, as the native belongs to the native nations. They come under Treaties 6, 7 and 8 of Forts Carlton and Pitt, signed in late 1876 with Alexander Morris."

Then Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories has negotiations open August 18th that year. Governor Morris told a circle of Indians who squatted upon him on the sun-drenched Plains, that the Treaty would protect their nation forever. "What I trust and hope we will do this, not today or tomorrow only," he told. Quote, "What I will promise, and what I have believed, and hope you will take, will last as long as the sun

shines, and yonder river flows. But understand me, once the reserve is set aside, it cannot be sold without the consent of the Queen and the Indians. As long as the Indians wish it shall be there for their good; no one can take their homes."

Chief Crowfoot of the Blackfoot then pressed the questioning about children yet unborn. He said, quote, "I wish you to treat them in like manner to the white man as they advance in civilization. "Those that come after us," replied Governor Morris, "we'll think of your children as we think of you."

The transcripts of negotiations showed the Badger and other chiefs continued this point saying, "We want to think of our children." Again the governor's promises later states, "And this is a great day, not only for your children, but for your children's children." At the time of entering treaty there was no discussion of illegitimacy, tribal extractions or whether the Indian had any white blood as being prohibitions as entering under treaty. Under the new Act, these are reasons for expulsions from treaty.

The Indians have lived up to this treaty, and willingly met one of the hardest provisions by fighting loyally for the nation in many wars. Three of these being removed are veterans of the last War. How Canada has failed to live up to its promises under the treaty.

I think the Minister of those who were here heard the eloquence

of which the concern of our people was expressed, by the different speakers from the different groups of Treaties 6,7 and 8. I would hope, for the Minister and his colleagues in

the House that are here, that they take those into serious consideration. I am concerned with the reports that have appeared in papers, television, radio, and news media these last two or three months. We're a people, we're all puzzled of the Policy Paper. Groups from all over Canada phoned in, trying to get statements out of the counter-policy that the Indian people are making and preparing.

The strong lobby across the country, with government leaders and Members of Parliament, has spent hours and miles across Canada to try and sell their policy statement to Indian people. And it should have been this morning that our rights are not negotiable, and should not be subjected to a strong lobby system, for groups or organizations, with their self-interests, that might want to take them away from us.

The government and the Members of Parliament should recognize that they are dealing with rights and not privileges. I would hope that this particular issue, Mr. Minister, that your government will recognize and accede to our requests. Maybe not even requests -- our counter-policy proposal -- the policy proposal prepared by Indian people themselves.

It is time that we, as Indian people, should stand up and have a voice, and voice out our rights, and our rights to be instated and honored. It is time now that we stopped getting 'pie in the sky' promises from politicians. Unless you give us back our rights, and make it possible for us to be part of the society, a great new structure which will enable us to do this, you will have no right, you will have no ground to talk to us about Canadian citizenship, or being part of the Canadian scene.

Our forefathers, when they made these treaties, these were the conditions that they agreed to. This was the price we paid for these so-called privileges that we are getting today. These are our rights. These are the first ones that must be observed. How can you expect us to believe when you come with promises of what you are going to do for our people, and our treaties, with promises of economical development and concern of the Canadian government, and of Parliament, when you cannot even keep the promises of the rights that we have as treaty Indians.

Let it be recognized by all concerned that we will not accept anything less than our rights. In order for meaningful consultations to continue, whether it is today, or...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

...the second series, we need now the assurance -- not only an assurance, but a commitment -- from the government of this country that it will give us these rights and give us the necessary legislation that will guarantee their fidelity in court.

(End of Side B)

(End of Tape)

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