I'll be talking with an elder here at Hobbema, his name is John
Richard: First of all, I'll ask you your age.

John: Coming 75.

Richard: Where were you born?

John: Hobbema

Richard: The information you are about to relate to me, did that come from the elders and ancestors?

John: Yes, I knew and saw many of the old people including old women who had received the first treaty. My grandmother and grandfather were there at the first treaty payment. When they received their third treaty payment, they were camped by a lake called Nipee Ka Pitee Qak (Rumbling Water) - it is located straight east of Stettler. My grandmother was present at the time when they received their final payment there. That is also the time the chiefs were given their authority, and also the councillors. That is when Bobtail became a chief and Ermineskin wanted to become a chief also but he was told he couldn't become a chief because they were related. However he was told that he could become a councillor, so he did. This was told to me by my mother-in-law, Mrs. Smallboy. She is about 108 or 100 years old and she is being cared for in Edmonton. I hear this old woman telling the story of the treaty; she was there. Bobtail, the first chief was her grandfather. It was also during that time that they came here to Hobbema. That is what the old Mrs. Smallboy said. She said that the reserve here at Hobbema was one whole reserve at the time. Then Ermineskin decided to separate to form the Ermineskin band. His older brother (Bobtail) gave him a portion of the reserve. He was then the chief and his councillor was Louis Bull, David Headman, Johnny Ermineskin and another man. Finally Louis Bull asked Ermineskin if he too could have his own reserve. Ermineskin did give him some reserve land - he was the chief of that reserve. So there was the Ermineskin reserve and the Bull reserve, they wanted to be on their own. When all that had taken place, Bobtail took enfranchisement. He left the reserve for his people, that was the Montana Reserve. My mother-in-law said that Samson also asked for some reserve land from Bobtail, that was a long time ago, so old Chief Samson also received some reserve land. So Montana became a small reserve as a result. The people who now live there originally came from the state of Montana. They were transported here by freight train; they were wandering around before they were gathered and shipped here. The freight train stopped at Ponoka and the Indians were brought to the Montana Band. They stayed there for one winter and in the summer they started to wander away again. Their excuse was that they were going berry picking but they left for good and today they are the Crees of Rocky Boy, Montana - those people are from here. Some of the older people fled to Montana during
the rebellion. So that is how they made their homes in Montana, according to my mother-in-law.

At the time of the first treaty my grandfather, Buffalo Chief, was a councillor, also old Saddleback and Louis Natchowaysis - their chief was Samson. I used to listen to my grandfather. He, too, was issued with a councillor's suit as they were included with the treaty promises. They were told that if the land was not suitable for anything then that portion wouldn't be taken, only the land where the settlers could make their living through agriculture. The commissioners were not to take the game animals, the timber or the big lake - that was for the Indian for means of survival and anything underground would also not be given up, only 6 inches, enough for the settlers to grow crops. If anything is discovered below the surface of the land, half of its value will be towards your benefit. The commissioner said, "You will be so well off in the future that you will not have to work." None of that exists today. They are even pumping oil from our reserve right here and I would say we are only getting about 25 for it. Over half of the money is taken by the white man. As far as the game animals are concerned the Indians were given the right to kill them anytime, anyplace, even if it is in town, because they will not be wearing a government brand. They were told they belonged to them. This also applied to the timber.

When the negotiations were complete, the papers were taken away by the commissioners, and the mountains were not even mentioned. This is what my grandfather said. Because it was something that would not be useful. These were terms of reference made by the commissioners at first, "Anything that cannot be used agriculturally will be yours." So when they took the papers back to Ottawa they made them so that the government could claim all of Canada. They didn't ask permission here to do that, so now Canada is owned by the white man as a whole. That is not what the commissioners said. That is what I heard from the elders but I myself think it was their own arrangement that the whole of Canada would belong to them, including the timber and everything else. You will see sawmills all over. They didn't ask us for the timber, the commissioners didn't negotiate for the timber. Now they put the timber through the mills, make lumber and make money, but they never even give us 10. Even the animals, they said, "We are not taking your animals," but now they are selling hunting and fishing licenses. They take money from these, that is not what they promised us. Those are the things they took right out of our hands. I guess the government make a great deal of money. I would say we are not getting anything out of it as our elders were promised - where are those promises? "As long as the sun walks, as long as the river flows, you will not have liquor," is what the commissioner said. Today, even when the chiefs don't want liquor, it is still legalized. It looks like they don't have any authority at all after the commissioners had decorated them as chiefs. So they try to stop the liquor without success. I wonder if the people in Ottawa have
overruled the Queen to be able to do that. That is what I think.

Richard: What about education and medicine, how were they arranged?

John: We used to receive medicines from the Indian agency - they were sent there and we would get our medicines from there, but we didn't use them. Some people had said that the medicines were made by the white man, and they were sent to the reserves. They were testing them on the reserve. That is what some people said. I myself used to go and pick up the medicine, it was cough medicine. Finally I used up many bottles but it didn't do me any good. The one I bought in town would be more useful. There used to be all kinds of medicines at the Indian agency - today there is nothing. How about the education when Ermineskin took up his own reserve, he met with the priest to inform him that he wanted a school within his reserve. He told the priest that he wanted a boarding school. And the priest helped him. There was a boarding school here on the Ermineskin Reserve. They were provided with food, clothing and accommodation for sleeping - it was provided by the government - that is the children were being educated.

Today there is none of that. I don't know who is responsible for doing away with the boarding school. Now the children are sent outside the reserve. They have to take lunch - that is not the arrangement which was made by Ermineskin. This is my way of thinking. Today in the situation we are in, everything is very difficult - it is very hard, we don't own anything. Even the animals, if we hunt too much we will be in jail. I'm talking about treaty Indians. That is not what the Queen's commissioner told us. And the buffalo, the commissioners didn't even ask permission for the buffalo. The only thing they said that they wouldn't take the buffalo. I don't know why that is.

Richard: Were they promised implements and garden tools for agricultural purposes?

John: Yes, they were. Ploughs were given to them with oxen to do the ploughing with - it was a 12" walking plough and a disc. For the garden they were issued with hoes and scythes. They put up hay with the scythe and fed their cattle with it during the winter. The job of making hay stacks was done with everybody involved but during the winter only two men were selected to care for the cattle. The two men would receive rations every Saturday. I remember when I was young I rode a horse every Saturday to collect the rations for my grandparents. It helped supplement our food supply.

Richard: When the Indians were negotiating, did they really understand what they were getting themselves into?

John: Maybe they did but I don't know what kind of interpreting they were getting because there was an interpreter. I think he was Metis. Now, after the commissioner spoke and
spelled out his promises, one old man in the crowd stood up and denied all that was said, he said that "it couldn't be possible." The commissioner stood up again and repeated what he had said. But when he had finished another old man stood up and again was disagreeable with the statements which the commissioner made. All the elders didn't believe that it could all happen and were in total disagreement. The commissioner would not be able to comply with his promises. So that is exactly what happened, that is how I see it.

Richard: Did the Indians request anything from the Queen on their behalf when they were negotiating?

John: You mean did the Indians ask for anything? That I do not know. It was only the commissioner who promised to the Indians. That is the reason the elders were not in favor of it, because it would not happen. The Indians were informed that they could take reserve land any place they chose, while it was still open and they had a right to it. Take reserve land any place and as much as you want. It was at this time that the Indian elders had a disagreement. My grandfather Buffalo Chief was there also and several others. My grandfather said, "I'll start riding from here and go to Buffalo Lake, then I'll go west for a long way, then I'll ride north and circle Pigeon Lake on it's west shore and I'll keep travelling until I feel that I've travelled enough. I'll turn east. I'll be riding far north of Peace Hill (Wetaskiwin) and I will approach Dried Meat Lake from the North." That is how much they were going to take for a reserve. But that is when the elders were disagreeing with one another. They were saying it was too much. They were saying, "Where are we going to get all the people to put in to that reserve?" Others said, "We can use it in the future, it will be for the benefit of the future." Yet others maintained it was too much and would not have any use for it. Again it was stated that in 100 years from that time the future generations of children could make use of it. So it resulted in taking reserve east of Pigeon Lake, south of Wetaskiwin, and this side of Ponoka, because the people who wanted a large reserve were overruled.

Richard: During that period did the priest influence the Indians for the good of the Indian or did they influence them in the wrong way?

John: They were encouraging them in the wrong direction - it is they who did harm to us. They didn't help us to any great extent. The elders said: "White man will come ashore on this island (Canada) the ones with the black robes will be in front. They were sent forth to try and extinguish us." Sure enough, the priests arrived. They were amongst the Indians teaching them prayers and other things, so they managed to discourage the people. That is how the elders told the story.

Richard: How did the buffalo vanish from the prairie?
John: The elders said that the buffalo just left. When the land was taken over that is when they moved towards the southwest. The Indians moved camps as the buffalo migrated. They were in search of food. During the night they could hear them but the following day they would move again until night fell. They never did reach the buffalo. Some old men said that the buffalo entered somewhere, but that I don't know. It must be true as there are none left. Some of them were cut off from the herd but they were hunted by the white man for the hide. The meat was left behind. The few remaining buffalo were then protected. Finally they transferred them up north.

Richard: Did the Indians experience any hunger during those years before the treaty?

John: Yes, they did and also when the buffalo left, some died of starvation. They survived by eating horse meat.

Richard: Would they have been encouraged to sign the treaty because they were faced with hunger and starvation?

John: No, they were not.

Richard: What do you know of the Indian livelihood before the white man arrived?

John: Yes, I know that. They were doing good for themselves. There was no work, this land had herds of buffalo, they were all over the prairies. During the mid-summer the land looked as if there was a prairie fire with the amount of dust made by the buffalo. The elders said that if a person was to put his ear to the ground by a hole, he would hear the loud rumbling of the buffalo. That was the Indians' food source. The meat, the hides were tanned for clothing and blankets and also for shelter. During the winter they used the Buffalo Jumps. One old man in few had this given power to be able to attract the buffalo towards the jumps. They would eventually get them in the jump by riding circles around the buffalo. Those Indians who lived prior to the white man's coming never experienced any disease - headaches, toothaches, stomach aches and no sickness at all. When a person reached old age, like 100 and over, he would just die in his sleep. That is what was said by the elders.

Richard: When the treaty was made, did the Indian know of money or its value?

John: No, the majority of Indians didn't know money. As an example our grandmother received payment for three sons, two daughters and herself at $25.00 per head. She had the money in her hand but she just gave it to another woman for payment on a horse she bought. They told this story themselves - they didn't know the money. She paid $150.00 for her horse.

Richard: Why was it they were borrowing children from one another?
John: Some people had no children, others had just one or two, but they received payment just the same.

Richard: How did the agents treat the Indians here, were they good to them?

John: Some were good, others were not so good. Some were crooked. There is a case in Hobbema when they rented that land in Hobbema where the Post Office is located, the agreement was that we would get it back or we could increase the rent, this is what the agent said. When the 10 years expired, we discovered that it was a 99 year lease he had made but never told anybody. There is a case of cheating.

Richard: How can the Indian protect the treaties like the ones which are already broken, what can be done?

John: It would be very difficult to look into that matter. The people would have to work together as a group, to enquire about this. I don't think one chief will be able to do anything by himself. It would have to be dealt with by all the chiefs and councillors, they might be able to accomplish something. I know of one story but I won't tell you, I'm afraid of the white man. It was told to us by Chief Ermineskin. I can relate a bit of it to you. In 1923 an inspector arrived here to have a meeting. He was from the east, he was employed by the government. He was working in support of the Indians, at least that is what is said. It was then that one of the agency clerks told Chief Ermineskin that he would not be agreeable to the man's suggestions. "He is going to do you harm," said the clerk. "Just watch what will happen in the future, the promises which were made during treaty. They want the Indians to break them for themselves." He also told Chief Ermineskin that they couldn't break them, so this man thought of something that would make the Indians destroy themselves. And they would also be able to cover it up as well. That is what the clerk told Chief Ermineskin. He said to him, "Don't go. With your decoration and recognition as chief you hold much power." He was told that in the future there would be new law enforcement, who said during the treaty negotiations with sincerity that these laws would do you good. That is law from the outside. That is when you removed your coat (stripe on each sleeve) you turned away your treaty promises. Today we see that, nowadays the chiefs only hold office for two years. When treaty was made, the chief was to last as long as they lived. This is what I gathered from the elders who used to tell stories.

Richard: Thank you.

INDEX

INDEX TERM  IH NUMBER  DOC NAME  DISC #  PAGE #

AGRICULTURE  -cattle-raising  IH-169,169+  J. BUFFALO  25  5
- equipment
  AGRICULTURE
    - farming
  BOBTAIL RESERVE
    - fate of
  BUFFALO
    - economic importance of
    - extinction of
    - hunting of
  CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP
    - elected
    - lifetime
  ERMINESKIN RESERVE
    - establishment of
  INDIAN AFAFIRS, DEPARTMENT OF
    - Indian agents
  LOUIS BULL RESERVE
    - establishment of
  MISSIONARIES
    - influence of
  MONTANA RESERVE
    - establishment of
  NON-INDIANS
    - duplicity of
  SAMSON RESERVE
    - establishment of
  TRADE
    - money, introduction of
  TREATY #6
    - interpretation of
    - taking of

PROPER NAME INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPER NAME</th>
<th>IH NUMBER</th>
<th>DOC NAME</th>
<th>DISC #</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOBTAIL</td>
<td>IH-169,169+</td>
<td>J. BUFFALO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BULL, LOUIS</td>
<td>IH-169,169+</td>
<td>J. BUFFALO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERMINESKIN</td>
<td>IH-169,169+</td>
<td>J. BUFFALO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROCKY BOY RESERVE, MONTANA</td>
<td>IH-169,169+</td>
<td>J. BUFFALO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMSON</td>
<td>IH-169,169+</td>
<td>J. BUFFALO</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>