

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: ALEXIS SIMON  
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ALBERTA  
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ALBERTA  
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INTERVIEWER: JOHNNY CARDINAL  
INTERPRETER: JOHNNY CARDINAL  
ADELE ARCAND  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Establishment of Paul's band; mistakes in surveying the reserve; sale of reserve land.

Johnny: What is your name?

Alexis: Alexis Simon.

Johnny: How old are you?

Alexis: 67 years old.

Johnny: Where were you born?

Alexis: Right here at Paul's Band.

Johnny: Do you speak Cree or Stoney and which are you?

Alexis: Without doubt I am Cree, my folks are Cree, but here at Wabamun Lake there are Stoney Indians. I associated with both Cree and Stoney there.

Johnny: Who were your folks? Where were they born? And were they Stoney or Cree?

Alexis: I said they talked Cree, so they are Cree. Both my mother and father were Cree. I don't know where they were

born. My mother was born here on this reserve, and I don't think my father was born here. I think he was born from Alexander Reserve.

Johnny: How long did your folks live here?

Alexis: I don't know how long, I don't know where they were born. My mother died in 1919 and my father died in 1908. I was born in 1908 and was only one year old when he died.

Johnny: Where did your folks come from?

Alexis: Right here, they were here before. My maternal grandfather was a Cree but I don't know where he came from. My maternal grandfather was also from here, the Stoney settlement. I really don't now where my grandfather came from, I never did ask (grandfather from which side of the family is unclear). But his relations are in Enoch. His sister stayed there. Her name was Rabbit Nose. She was married there and died there. (deleted a couple of sentences to do with relatives, because unclear).

Johnny: Where did these people live before there was a reserve here?

Alexis: Right here where the reserve is now, that's where they lived.

Johnny: How did this reserve get its name?

Alexis: It was called Paul as soon as it was surveyed. Before that it was called Wabamun Lake Reserve at first. The first chief was called Ironhead, but he died before everything was settled. I don't know anything about what happened after that.

Johnny: Do you remember who was the chief while you were young?

Alexis: Yes, I remember Joe Michael was the chief and from there I remember all of the chiefs.

Johnny: Do you remember when there was land surrendered?

Alexis: No, I don't remember.

Johnny: Did you ever hear any stories?

Alexis: Yes, I've heard stories. But on land surrender there was no land surrendered or sold on our behalf. Just about the survey I have heard stories. Sharphead ran away from Wolf Creek that time they were dying, I suppose. They were told to take land somewhere else. So that's when he left and came here. He was the one who came and made this reserve. Before that, as I said, Ironhead was the chief but he died. He left some markers for future surveys. People used to say that's how big the reserve will be. When Sharphead came, is when the survey of the reserve began. That's all I know.

Johnny: How much land was involved in land surrenders?

Alexis: They didn't get the full amount of what Ironhead marked off in that survey. Later there was land surrendered south of this reserve a 2 mile strip from which they used to get rations. That's all I know.

Johnny: Do you know when this happened, when that land was surrendered?

Alexis: I don't know. I would think all the documents would be at Indian Affairs.

Johnny: Who all was involved with this transaction? The superintendent and the chiefs?

Alexis: The superintendents were the first ones who corrupted Indians on land surrenders. Definitely the superintendent was involved, also the chiefs and Sharphead. Joe Michael was the chief when the land was sold. That's what they got rations from.

Johnny: Why did the Indians sell this land?

Alexis: I don't know. I only know they got rations, that's all I know.

Johnny: Did the Indians know when they sold this land, did they understand they were selling this land?

Alexis: I don't know. I was too young to know. The only story I have heard is they sold this land for rations.

Johnny: This land you're talking about was sold, was it lost or surrendered at one time or separately?

Alexis: I really don't think there was any land lost, because they sold the land for rations. It's been a long time since they quit getting these rations. They then changed to money, no more rations were given after they changed to money. I think that's also been stopped. We used to get everything from that (money) like bullets, nets and rations. But long ago that stopped. Now I don't know if there is any more revenue.

Johnny: Do you know if there was a proper meeting held for this land surrender?

Alexis: Yes, they used to say it was done properly. Some really didn't want it and others wanted money for it. Some asked for rations every week, like meat and flour. That was the choice they had been given. A lot of them agreed to get rations. That is how come they got that (rations). Not too long ago that stopped.

Johnny: Did they vote for this land surrender?

Alexis: I don't know. I was not there and I never really asked what happened. They just sold the 2 mile strip and got rations, that's what they used to say, that's all I ever heard.

Johnny: Do you think they were treated fairly on this land surrender?

Alexis: No. Why I say no is I don't know what happened to the rations. I really don't know what is going on. One of these days I will ask the chief what happened. He is the one that controls the reserve. He should know and he should be able to tell what happened.

Johnny: Did they ever go hungry or have a shortage of food, the Indians?

Alexis: Yes, but at that time they could go out and get food for themselves. They worked on anything they could sell like rails and posts, and also they worked out. They never were hungry they raised their kids the right way.

Johnny: When this land was surrendered do you think hunger caused the surrender? Maybe that's why they sold this land, because of hunger.

Alexis: I don't think so, not because of hunger, because there were all kinds of ways of making a living like hunting and fishing. Everything was plentiful at that time, lots of game, also trapping. But they took rations. They thought ahead, if for instance there would be any poverty in the future. I guess they also thought we couldn't make a living this way always, so they took rations.

Johnny: Do you think we have enough evidence to claim back any land?

Alexis: I would think we have a lot of evidence to claim with, but I couldn't do it myself, I would have to ask the right people for the information. That's the only way it would work.

Johnny: Those people, what all did they receive when they surrendered the land?

Alexis: They didn't receive anything but rations, flour and meat, for that land surrender. Also they got a net once a year, I don't know if that came from the same deal. Also I don't know if they received clothes every year, that I don't know. This was before pension time. They only received those things once a year. They got blankets and pants, underwear and mitts, socks and shoes. Women got cotton material, cotton under material, and stockings. That's what they received every fall. I don't know if that all came from the land surrender.

Johnny: Who was the superintendent at that time?

Alexis: The Indian agent I remember is Mr. Reese (unsure of

proper spelling) that was in my time. I remember he was the superintendent and rations were given by a man named Patterson. He was the farm instructor.

Johnny: Did he do a good job for the Indian people?

Alexis: No, because he was the one that ruled everything. What he said went. The chief had no say. Mr. Reese used to say, "Don't talk over my head. I am the boss."

Johnny: What do you remember or know about a man named Bristow, does it ring a bell?

Alexis: Yes, not too long ago he was ration man or farming instructor here.

Johnny: How much land do you think you people lost here.

Alexis: What we lost was in not surveying what Ironhead staked out the first time. Lake Wabamun was to be in the reserve and also the east part would be covered. Johnny Lake and Battle Lake and Star Lake and Jackfish Lake, all those lakes should be on the reserve, up to the Saskatchewan River on both sides. The Seba line and the east line and the boundary line would be highway 16 north. That's how much land the people wanted. When the survey started the old man (who was to show them where to survey) chopped his foot and so they surveyed it how they wanted, the white man surveyors. They cut off half of what the man was supposed to survey.

Johnny: Where was this land surrendered?

Alexis: I don't know if there was any land sold. Just the land the people got rations from. I said a two mile strip on the east side of the reserve.

Johnny: South?

Alexis: No, east.

Johnny: On the east side of the reserve, north and south?

Alexis: Yes, a two mile strip.

Johnny: So is that all you know of land that's been lost.

Alexis: They sold the land, it's not lost. The only land that's lost is what was cut off by those surveyors. That's all I know.

Johnny: That's all you know that could be claimed?

Alexis: Like this Wabamun Lake west of here should be in the reserve. This should be a big reserve.

Johnny: Is that all you can tell me?

Alexis: That's all the story I know. I heard they cut off a lot of land from what the people had wanted, also they didn't know when the surveyors were coming. They came in the fall. No one was here but the old man who cut his foot and the chief. They just surveyed one township that's all. They're the ones who give land, the white man who survey. They were dishonest, that's dishonest work they did. The chief had this reserve staked out, that's the way they should have surveyed it. But it didn't turn out that way.

Johnny: Are you able to remember when this took place?

Alexis: I just don't know. Sharphead's band was made in 1884, and this was surveyed in 1894. It was staked out way before. About 3 or 5 or 10 years before, they had staked it out as to how big the reserve was to be.

Johnny: Is that all? Thanks a lot.

Alexis: Yes, that's all.

(End of Interview)

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