

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: PETER SHIRT 2  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: GOODFISH LAKE RESERVE  
ALBERTA  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: GOODFISH LAKE RESERVE  
ALBERTA  
TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
LANGUAGE: CREE  
DATE OF INTERVIEW:  
INTERVIEWER: ABRAHAM BURNSTICK  
INTERPRETER: RICK YELLOWBIRD  
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD  
SOURCE: OFFICE OF SPECIFIC CLAIMS  
& RESEARCH  
WINTERBURN, ALBERTA  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Peter Shirt, born 1886, gives his understanding of Treaty #6.

Abraham: How old are you Peter Shirt of Goodfish Lake?

Peter: I am over 88 years old.

Abraham: Can you tell us anything of the treaty and our forefathers who made the agreements?

Peter: There was one old man from here name NUN PAYNE who used to go to the meetings. He used to say again and again that the buffalo were never given away to anyone. That is true. You never hear of the buffalo being given away in any written form anywhere. They couldn't be given away as they were the livelihood of the Indian. You heard that the white man killed them all deliberately and caused much hunger. The animals and fish were never given away. There used to be so many of them everywhere you looked and they killed them all.

Abraham: They have done us much injustice.

Peter: Yes, they have. They used to hunt at will until the policeman used to arrest them for hunting. Things changed so fast the Indian didn't realize it.

Abraham: Why do they make money off the animals as we never gave them away and they are ours, what happened?

Peter: No one should even comment on that as they just took them. This land, there was never any white man before. I don't lie, the Creator gave this land for the Indian. If the Creator hadn't considered the Indian, the Indian wouldn't be here either but he is and that's evidence of the fact. This land is wealthy. There is so many good things to eat. The minerals found underneath the ground that are of value are the Indian's property but what does he get out of it? Nothing, nothing. The Indian has been taken advantage of in many ways. If the white man had been here first, it would be different but that isn't so, so why all the injustice? We have a small voice and we're not heard.

Abraham: What happened to you people at the treaty signing?

Peter: There used to be meetings and the one who spoke for the Indian people who was raised by white people by the name of Steinhauer. He was well educated and a minister. So that was good for us. Big River, Beaver River, Dog Rib River and Wa Ba Tun Sk Rivers not far from here was the land asked for by Steinhauer. That didn't happen. Fort Pitt and Sandy Lake area was where the meetings were. He was alone except for his wife.

Abraham: So it is safe to assume he never brought anything back to the people?

Peter: He brought back writings of what happened. But there was misinterpretation of those papers too, you see. The chief misinterpreted them and there was much loss of the original land deal. Look at the size of the Blood Reserve. Our reserve would be of that size.

Abraham: Did you hear of the reason the sun and rivers were used in the treaty?

Peter: So the treaty promises would never end, that was what was said.

Abraham: Are they still being followed?

Peter: No, if they are it isn't much because we have a small reserve. Those reserves may have more say in those matters but we are a small reserve.

Abraham: Were you given any farm implements with which to grow crops?

Peter: It was said that happened, life was harder and some people had animals. My father used to hay north of here in a sod house. A Sin Nee Ka Ka Min. He wasn't always on the reserve. There was another old one named Morse Jackson near Spedden who used to hay and make a living raising animals. They made a living.

Abraham: What was life like before the treaty? Some say the people roamed extensively living off the land.

Peter: Some people were ignorant of things but this Steinhauer, he travelled and became learned in the white ways so that is why today they are that much ahead. He's seen much and benefit as a result of it.

Abraham: What of minerals, gold, coal, and other things found under the earth? What use did the Indian have for it?

Peter: I don't know. In Redwater there is much oil and there was one old man who spoke of it and he must have seen some come up out of the ground. He's dead now. There was another A Sin Niw Pach who would hear from Ki Po Ta Kak, he also spoke of it. If the white man considered us at all, he'd give us the money that is rightfully ours tomorrow, but he is not that way.

Abraham: The old ones did not give the mountains up, what use did they have for them?

Peter: I cannot say for this area as we are a long way from there but your people are not. They are close to the mountains. Travel was hard a long time ago.

Abraham: They did not give the trees or the grasses away, why?

Peter: There was a white man who brought a title to us saying it was the map of our reserve with the boundaries. The white man has succeeded in taking away some of our land by devious means. We are many on this reserve and then more children every year. Where are they going to go when we are overpopulated? This is good, you don't know all the people you're fighting for but you're fighting for our children. I urge you in your efforts. There is many children; they have to be taken care of.

Abraham: Was there provision made for more land to be allotted in the event of overpopulation?

Peter: That has never been heard. If you could get that, we especially would be indebted to you as we need more land. The haying we have here is not too much anymore. There was a fire a long time ago and made large holes and there is water all the time.

Abraham: That is all you can tell us?

Peter: Yes, I urge and thank you in your efforts for the children.

(End of Interview)

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