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ALBERTA
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INTERVIEWER: LOUIS RAIN
INTERPRETER: LOUIS RAIN
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Treaty #6, interpretation.

Louis: I'll ask you first of all your name and how old you are and the place you're from?

Alex: I'm Alexander Mechewais. I have been here about fifty-three (53) years. This is where I have been ever since on this reserve. I have attended quite a few meetings such as All Chiefs' Conferences. The reason why I go to these is I am concerned about the young people and at the same time, trying to understand what the Indian people are doing. And as I have heard the old people said. The reason I'm saying this is because no matter where you are, a person will always find something that is good, traditions that are good and also find something that could be useful. This is where a young person could get a lot of ideas. But then again a lot of these people don't attempt to follow these. First of all I will say in regard to the old treaty. Our relative that just spoke here a minute ago, as he talked about the treaty. He is my father-in-law from Saskatchewan. I have heard similar to what he had said.

This Sweetgrass never sold the land and he could never have done this alone whereas a person alone could never accomplish too much that would be effective. The fact I'm saying this, when there's two, five or ten people, those ten

people would have much more power to do something than just one person alone. This is the area where our forefathers made the mistake for the fact they didn't understand English. But today as the elders have said, you have the understanding now which is true, but you must not forget the elders. Even an old lady, don't neglect her for she might have something that could be very useful. She probably would remind people of a lot of things.

Why I'm saying this, a lot of our young people have the understanding, therefore he is easily led to do otherwise, because he understands the white man and his tactics or his ways. He would rather pull that way. When Sweetgrass was induced to give this land, when the deal was made, he went with a trader and a priest to interpret for him, simply because he didn't understand one word of English. Here he took one trader and a priest because apparently they all talked Cree. They interpreted for him, and they got back, Sweetgrass. Sweetgrass's relatives were quite upset for what he did to go and give or sell this land. This is what was said he did. After about ten days he died of unnatural causes, which apparently was caused by one of his brother-in-laws. Because they didn't like what he did. That's how Sweetgrass left this world.

The money he brought back with him, he had left that money with the priest and that is not known where it is, although he never made any notations of that money to who it belonged to. That money was lost. This is what I have heard.

Why I'm saying this I will name two. I'm not hesitating to name those old men (Mis sis stik qwan) (Bighead). He was a chief a long time at Bighead Reserve in Saskatchewan. He was given one of the first reserves that were established. That was my grandfather, this Bear. He was my grandfather. My father-in-law who just spoke, that was his father. They've heard this and besides, they were one of those that would listen closely on anything that is being said. They would rather listen than to try and get into such as if there's a game going on. I have seen those old people. It must have been about sixty years ago since they've died. It's been about over fifty years since my grandfather, the Bear, left this earth.

He was my close relation, not a distant relative, but a very close relative. He was my grandfather, this old man Bear. And also Bighead were my grandfathers. These were the people I used to hear talked about those things. They would tell these stories to the people. When I was small I was one of those kids that liked to listen to everything. I guess that's why I'm telling you these things and today as we are sitting here, as you are approaching these elders. It is very good that you are doing this. These are all my relatives that have spoken already and I am speaking now. I would appreciate very much if you could put these interviews out so the people could hear them all over and the things you are doing. Even though I will

say we are passed over seventy years of age. Still it would be nice. That's all I can say for now as there are more people here who could say some more on this.

Louis: I'd like to ask you the questions that I have asked those others here like this hunting, education and about the mountains and how the Queen promised those things to the people. Have you seen if these promises have been kept as it should have been or has she failed to stand up to these promises?

Alex: The promises she had made. She made them sound good then but today these promises are not in existence. Like this topic we have been talking about; about game animals and other things too. She hasn't done any of these things that she had promised to the Indian people, because it can be plainly seen that what the Indian was promised was never done. It bothers him cause the Indian has kept those things in his head. As an example she was told and she never lived up to these things.

It is from this reason the Indian people never forgot what they were promised. They didn't tell us these things. I myself never heard her to promise these things but there were a lot of old people that heard her. This information we're telling now was passed on to us. When these old people said, hunting or game animals were never sold, that is the truth as far as I'm concerned. Because I have been attending those big conferences for the last four years and before that I have paid attention to what was being said in the meetings - all those meetings that were being held in Saskatchewan. Right today I still remember what was said then. Simmer and up to Frog Lake. He was one-armed. His son is here today. That's all.

(End of Interview)

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