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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Philip Lightning, aged 81, tells stories from his father and grandfather of the signing of Treaty #6 and of Indian life before that time.

I'll be talking to an elder here at Pigeon Lake to find out some information from him. I'll ask him of his knowledge about the treaties and other information. First of all you can give me your name, age and your birthplace.

Phillip: The information this fellow is asking will be told to the best of my knowledge. I didn't witness the actual treaty, it was before my time but my father and grandfather told stories of what happened. When the man first came to swindle the land away from the Indians, the minister said, "If I lie to the people or misinform them I'll be responsible for it." And most of the elders know that the minister never reached his home, he perished. So from there you see how a person can do himself harm if he is not careful in his way of life. He thought that the Indians have already been cheated so nothing would happen to him. But Manitou listens, he knows everything even to a single heart beat, we can never hide from Manitou. He knows what we do and also our daily living and how we put it to use. This information was passed on to me through stories, I didn't see it myself I wasn't born yet. At the present time I'm past 81 years old, and my birthplace is here at Pigeon Lake, my name is Phillip Lightning.

Now for the information on treaty, as told by my father. It is true that the commissioner had the Indians in a state of frenzy, when they consented to sign the treaty and he in turn would give them money. During that time the Indians were not on reservations like we have today, where the reserves are becoming overcrowded. The number of children is greater, during that time in the past it was never like that. For example, at first the commissioners came and promised everything when he came to buy the land, the Indian land, as it is true Indian land. Manitou placed the Indians here to live. The commissioner came and cheated the Indians of all the land, it is plain to see that he came with cheating on his mind. When he promised that he would pay so much to an individual, he did in fact pay that much, but later on and even to the present day a treaty Indian only receives \$5.00 per year. What is that? Look at me I'm poor, I would throw away the \$5.00. It is nothing. How can a person make his living on \$5.00 for one year? You can't even buy a decent meal for that amount in town. That is the result of business matters not properly handled and people not looking after their affairs properly. The minister didn't measure up to his ministerial duty and he made us suffer, the Indian people. Nothing happened and we did not benefit from any of it. There was plenty of excitement when they were receiving the money. The women approached the commissioner with their children and grandchildren led by the hand, some went back to their camps to get more children and

returned for the second time. They wanted to get paid more and sure enough they did, because the commissioner didn't know one from the other, he thought the children were with their proper mothers. That is what happened there.

Finally after everything was over and everything the Queen representatives said has happened today. During that time this land they bought was only 1/2 foot from the surface, (open hand extended thumb) no more. And they were not to take anything from underground, they were not given the lakes. They were not given the hunting privileges. That is the price we have to pay today. Some Indians even go to court when they have killed game that was theirs; it was given to them with which they could make a living. So if a person does not do right he will always have trouble, he has to be sincere towards his fellow man and he will receive help from Manitou. That is the pure Manitou, because it is said that there exists two kinds of Manitou. I didn't see them, but this is the way it was said. I didn't see everything that I'm relating here. The time passed, it was wartime, my father went there. When the negotiations were complete, the minister said that "The treaty payment would last as long as the rivers flow," that is what he said to the people, "also as long as the sun walks you'll receive the money." Now where is the money, where did it go? I don't know, how should I know I have limited knowledge. But what I'm saying now is what I heard from the elders. The minister came to defraud us, he was hired by the governments. Now today he has all this he should be thankful, now we even have many white people on reserves. The white man was not give the right to be

on a reserve, today we have them on our reserves. Even an Indian without treaty was not allowed to live on a reserve. Even when an Indian from a different reserve came to visit he would have to get permission from the agent. If he did get permission from the agent he would then have to behave himself and stay out of trouble. For us here and Hobbema all we have is trouble. It is caused from people who are from different places. That is about all I can relate to you and what is going happening on our reserve. Like the other reserves are run differently they also have different administrations. For us it is very difficult, we probably have the greatest number of councillors on our reserves, and for that reason it is not run properly. That is the way I see it but the younger generation like it the way it is, I don't think I have any more to say about the land which was sold, that is the information I have.

Richard: When the treaty was introduced to the Indians, did they know what it was and did they want it?

Phillip: They didn't know what it was, even the money the Indians never saw it before. They wouldn't know how much they were receiving, even if they were receiving it by the sackful,

they wouldn't know how much they were getting. That was their way of life long ago, it is not like today, it is much different the way we live today. They didn't know money; they didn't request it. It wouldn't bother them if they were only paid the one time. But now today the treaty Indian on a reserve receives very little money.

Richard: You make references about a priest, do you remember his name?

Phillip: That I wouldn't know, because he was given a Cree name, but I cannot lie I just don't know his name. There was one whose name was Muskawachees that was long ago.

Richard: There used to be a priest named Father Lacombe and also a Minister Reverend McDougall.

Phillip: Yes, these were the ones but I wasn't told by my father which one it was. I know he told stories about them, but I never knew these names. I don't want to say anything I'm not sure of; that is what I know.

Richard: Was the interpretation properly done at the signing of the treaty?

Phillip: In the past there was no such thing as interpreting, because there was no white man here. Take the Metis people, they were not treaty and they were raised along with the white people. They didn't do an accurate job of interpreting. Because interpreting is very difficult. If an Indian speaks Cree and it has to be translated chances are that it will not be done properly. This still applies today, misinterpretation still exists. There is that much difference between Cree and

English.

Richard: What do you know of the promises made for education and medicine?

Phillip: The information I gave you of the past, during that period the people didn't have education or medicine. It was later when the white man arrived that they brought these things. They were supposed to be medicines but we didn't get much good out of them. Because, we as Indians were given our own medicines, all over the land beneath the surface there are roots and also the different plants, those are the medicines that were given to us in order for us to make our living. Now when we have a small cut we have to run to a hospital, in the past there was none of that, there were no doctors and no medicine, I mean the white man medicine. It was much later that

they were brought here, it was all for the money that the white man tries all sorts of things. Even when they perform autopsies on dead people they know what the cause of death may be and from these they should be able to help people.

Richard: When the treaty was made there was a promise made about a medicine chest that the Indians would always have one, now it's gone, what happened to it?

Phillip: No, there is nothing. It is the white man who destroyed all of that. The white man is strong, he even buys everything which belongs to the Indian. He knows what is going on, take the medicine for example and even the hide on which the treaty was made where is it today? They used a feather when they made those sincere promises, now today there is nothing left of that. I don't know what happened.

Richard: Did the Indians ask for anything in return when they signed the treaty?

Phillip: No, they didn't because they didn't know anything. They knew nothing of business transactions they didn't have foresight for the future of the children. They just accepted the promises which were made to them and they took the money which made them happy. They didn't say "You can help me this way," but they did mention rations, they asked if they could be given rations in the future. Later on the old folks did receive rations. They received such things as bacon, flour, soap, and a few items of clothing. The old men were given pants and shirts. Some received blankets, this was one year's supply.

Richard: Were the Indians issued any farming implements?

Phillip: They were given some, but I'm talking of a period which was much later. They were given hoes, rakes and a hand plow, some received harness and oxen to break the ground. But I don't think the Indians put any crops in, maybe they didn't even break the land.

Richard: Did the Indians here at Pigeon Lake ever get any fish

nets?

Phillip: In the past they never received fish nets. They had to make their own, they were issued with twine to make their own fish net. But just a few years back our chiefs were inquiring about fish nets for the Indians at Pigeon Lake. Some people did get nets, but our chiefs at Hobbema took some. I don't know what they were going to do with them - perhaps snare gophers - because they are not meant for land use they should be used here on the lake.

Richard: In your own mind how should the Indians look into the matter of broken treaty promises?

Phillip: To try and return the treaty will be very difficult, because when they first negotiated they were written down and the treaties should be followed up and studied. It would be possible to straighten out the matter but the government would then have a large debt to pay, because they promised many things and none of them exist today. It would have to be done with the government to try and untangle the matter, to try and straighten it out, but if the original copies are not available, what can be done? That I don't know but there are lawyers who could work on that with the government even the Indian chiefs could do it, to try and straighten out this mess once and for all from the time the treaties were made, because they haven't carried out their original promise. They have done more harm, look at all the oil they are taking from the reserve. It is true that our chiefs have allowed the oil companies to take the oil. But when you look at the original treaty, when they used a feather for a pen in making those treaties, it didn't state that the white man would be allowed to come on the reserve to drill for oil.

Richard: You are holding your hand open with thumb extended is that the measure of surface land? Some elders say it's two feet, one foot and some say six inches.

Phillip: It is this one, this is what was put down when the promises were made, the sincere promises, "as long as the sun walks and the rivers flow" this was said with utmost sincerity, and written on the hide.

Richard: How did the Indian make his living before the treaty and it was during that period when the buffalo began to disappear, how did they disappear?

Phillip: Yes, the buffalo. According to my father's stories the Indians used to travel across the plains in large groups, picking berries or hunting usually looking for a food source. The buffalo was so plentiful that they would have to separate to make way for our travelling train. But Manitou had set down a condition that if his children were overdoing things they would be labelled as sinners. The Indians hunted the buffalo for food and hides. They made blankets from them and clothing for themselves, because they didn't have any clothing. They made pants, shirts, moccasins from the buffalo hide; for the

winter they prepared large supplies of dried meat, pemmican for the survival of the winter months. The Indian was also given the knowledge of how to make his living, like the white man but

theirs is different. The Indians were punished for wasting so much food source, so Manitou took away that form of livelihood, the buffalo. They moved southward, the Indians had so much, such as the buffalo and other small game on the prairies but they were punished so that food supply was taken away from them. The buffalo moved southward. Their trails led in that direction, so where did they go? I never was given that information. But today they are kept someplace. Before they all left some were taken and kept. The white man even brought some and they are now protected. That is what happened there. There is a lake close to us, it is called Battle Lake and along its shore were trails from animals just to indicate that the game was plentiful. Today there isn't one of that, even the gophers are scarce. The white man has poisoned everything. Take the gopher, you find them all over the fields, poisoned. And for the Indian a white man will charge us if we walk across his field, more so if we shoot something, we will go to court for sure. But you take a look at him he took this land for nothing, it seems like that he got the land free when he first came to negotiate, he just came to cheat the Indians. Today it is not known how the Indian is going to look after his own affairs, but the white man is running everything, you know that we have agents in many areas. Some reserves run their own affairs but each reserve is run differently, so there is this uncertainty of how our reserves are to be managed. I can only say that we are in a state of destitution.

Richard: Did the Indians experience any hunger many years ago?

Phillip: The information I gave you on the disappearance of the buffalo... some Indian families followed them as they moved away. Some of the buffalo which were left behind provided some food but it was increasingly difficult to get them. The Indians were camped in several groups and this is where they were to face starvation. Sure enough many died of starvation including children and some older people. The children survived for a longer period because the older men and women would pass their share of food to them, this way the older people would die first. That was the hardship the Indians had to face, many of them died. Then sickness followed, the epidemic; some had collapsed back bones. This is the punishment they received. They didn't have many rifles at the time, they made bows and arrows for the purpose of hunting. Very seldom there would be one knife for one camp but today it is very different.

Richard: How did this reserve originate and is it still tied with the reserves in Hobbema?

Phillip: We had three people here one was called Mighty Knife, (Cree name) and two others. Mighty Knife was from the place now called Bull reserve, during that time there were surveyors from the government. They were to be allotted

some land so they wouldn't take all of this lake. I think it was 8 quarters on land and in the lake the boundary was to run towards the island. But the way the white man is as I said before, we were not to pay for fish permits. Now today for commercial fishing we have to pay. We pay \$15.00 for a permit. However we are allowed one net for food supply for ourselves, and this is within the reserve. But the Indian with the survey crews didn't know anything so they took a short cut as they were tired of walking. The white man was willing to let them have all of Pigeon Lake, but they took the turn before reaching their destination. Whenever the survey crew would stop, the Indians would sleep because there was no work during those years. They were not thinking of the future or how our lives would be affected today, they weren't really concerned about anything. Later on in years the chiefs decided this reserve would serve as the visiting reserve, where fish could be taken. We don't own this although we are administered by Hobbema, and many of us grew up in this area, we only own about two acres for ourselves, the reserve is owned by the four bands in Hobbema. The land is handy we could get food anytime but it doesn't work that way.

Richard: What is the present size of this reserve?

Phillip: We have about 8 quarters, but we are administered by Hobbema and we can't do anything here, we don't even get help from there. The money we should be entitled is used up in Hobbema, we don't get very much.

(End of Interview)

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