HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mrs. Buffalo of the Peigan Reserve, is 93 years of age
- answers questions about what her ancestors told her of buffalo, fur trade, treaty, smallpox and attitudes to the land.

Introduction: My name is John Smith. The purpose of this interview is to obtain an Indian understanding of the treaty and of the promises made to the Indians by the government representatives at the signing of the treaty. We are here today at Mrs. Buffalo's place and my grandfather Tom Yellowhorn has explained in Blackfoot to the group about the work I am doing. The people that will be taking part in this interview are Arthur Crow Shoe, Richard Crow Shoe, Mrs. Buffalo and Mrs. Black Plume (Mrs. Black Plume is from the Blood Reserve and is visiting Mrs. Buffalo.)

John: It is time to talk into the tape recorder. I will start off by asking your name. What is your name?

Mrs. Buffalo: Mrs. Buffalo. My Blackfoot name is Sitting Up High.

John: How old are you?

Mrs. Buffalo: I am past 90 now. Yes.
Tom Yellowhorn: She is past 90 now. Yes?

Richard Crow Shoe: She's 93.

John: Where were you born?

Mrs. Buffalo: Here. I was born here.

John: I will now ask everyone else their names and ages.

Mrs. Black Plume: I am 69. I was born at the Belly Buttes.

Tom Yellowhorn: On the Blood reserve, she's a member of the Blood tribe.

John: Arthur, how old are you?

Arthur Crow Shoe: Fifty.

John: Richard, how old are you?

Richard Crow Shoe: Fifty-nine.

John: And you were all born here?

Interviewees: Yes. All born here (Peigan reserve).

Tom: Richard and Arthur are both children of Mrs. Buffalo.

John: Tom will now ask you these questions I have.

Tom: The question is, saying those people who have left you, your old people, your fathers and grandfathers, did their lives depend a lot on the buffalo and the use of the buffalo?

Mrs. Buffalo: The buffalo? My mother lived at the time of the buffalo and they really depended on the buffalo for their livelihood, for everything, for living and shelter and everything else like that.

Tom: When did the buffalo disappear, before the signing of the treaty or after?

Mrs. Buffalo: Myself, I did not know the buffalo. But the stories that I hear from my elders, they say that the buffalo disappeared shortly after the signing of the treaty. It was sometime soon after the first payment.

Tom: The old people, did they talk about how the buffalo disappeared or why they disappeared?

Mrs. Buffalo: The old people were saying that the white people, they took away all the buffalo. That was the reason why there were no more buffalo around here. The white people just took away all the buffalo.
Tom: Did the disappearance of the buffalo change the Indian way of life?

Mrs. Buffalo: Did it change their way of living?

Tom: Yes, did it change their way of living?

Mrs. Buffalo: When the buffalo disappeared, the white man gave us cattle to eat. They fed us cow meat instead of us eating buffalo.

Tom: Did the signing of the treaty change the way the people were living?

Mrs. Buffalo: The old people told me that after the signing of the treaty, that's when the Indian peoples' way of living changed. They no longer lived the way of the buffalo. It really changed their customary way of life.

Tom: Did the people from here hear anything about the peace treaties being made across the border?

Mrs. Buffalo: We heard that everything was stopped. There was no more fighting. Our relatives across the border and all the other tribes of Indians, they were told," Now you are going to end all the fighting amongst yourselves. You are all going to be friends." My mother was one of the last persons to receive a medal from some officials. It was a medal with a stamp of shaking hands and a peace pipe. This meant that the Indians have agreed to stop fighting amongst themselves. There will be no more wars between the Indians.

Tom: What did the old people think of the signing of the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: Well, at first they thought it was really good. This was right at the signing of the treaty. They said that was the time when they gave us the five dollars. And the rest of the money was supposed to be put away for our use later.

Tom: Did the Indian people think they were going to go on using the land as they had always done after the signing of the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: After the signing of the treaty the leaders of each group of Indians chose the area in which they were to live thereafter. Each tribe claimed a tract of land for their own use. But as time went on these areas claimed by the different headmen was reduced by the white man's fences and surveyors. The Indians felt they could go on living the way they used to. It was not until they were put on reserves that they realized they could no longer live the way they used to. And each tribe lost a lot of land after they were put on reserves. It was Chief Sit Against the Eagle Tail who chose this area, the Old Man River, the Porcupine Hills. He thought this area he chose was going to be the land where his people lived. He was the head chief of the Peigans at that time.
Tom: There are papers, which have recently been uncovered by the government, of treaties that have been signed. They seem to be all different. We are trying to understand these written treaties now to see if they were true. The promises that were made at the signing of the treaty, were those promises kept?

Mrs. Buffalo: At the time of the signing of the treaty, our chief, Chief Sitting Against the Eagle Tail, was promised that his people will get five dollars - the rest of which will be put away until later need - and rations as long as the river flows. They have broken their promises. It is no longer so. They are saying that the old legislations are wiped out, that they no longer exist. New laws that have changed these promises are no longer in effect.

Tom: Did the Indian people think that anything above the ground was of any value or anything below the ground was of any value?

Mrs. Buffalo: The old people, they said the land held much that could be made use of. This is Indian use, not white man use. The old Indian people also found wealth of the land under the ground in the form of paint and medicine.

Tom: Did the old people make any request as to what they wanted that was not in the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: The old people say there was a lot of promises and these promises have never been kept, such as the money that was set aside for ammunition. Today we still have not seen anything of it yet.

Tom: How was the treaty signed?

Mrs. Buffalo: The understanding was made to Crowfoot that the people that signed treaty were to get twelve dollars. It was about the third payment when the Queen's men said, "We will give you five dollars from now on. The rest will be put away for you until you need it." They understand that they had some money coming to them. To this day, they have not received this money.

Tom: Did the white people have everything on paper before they came to sign treaty as to how we were to be governed from there on?

Mrs. Buffalo: The Indians were not familiar with writing. That was the white man's form. The white man had been writing for a long time before we knew how to write. Whether or not everything was written down before the signing of the treaty, I do not know.

Tom: Was there anything that the Indian people said they gave up at the signing of the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: No, they didn't know that they gave up anything.
Tom: Was there anything they asked for that was not written in the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: Yes, the people at the time of the signing of the treaty did ask for a lot of things. But whether or not it was written down, I do not know.

Tom: What did you hear about the fur trade from the elders?

Mrs. Buffalo: All the furs gotten by the men are tanned by the women and then brought to Edmonton, Hudson Bay. They were traded for food and cloth to make clothing. There was no money given for them.

Tom: What did you hear about the whiskey runners from the old people?

Mrs. Buffalo: They used their furs to buy this whiskey.

Tom: When was the smallpox epidemic?

Mrs. Buffalo: Well, I don't know. But across the river from Fort Macleod east, the people...sometimes some of the tipis were empty, no one was living in them. Sometimes all the people from one tipi were wiped out by smallpox. They were struck really bad.

Tom: Was that before the signing of the treaty?

Mrs. Buffalo: No, it was after the signing of treaty that the smallpox epidemic struck the people.

Tom: Do you know what it was all about when Sitting Bull was fighting with the white men in the United States?

Mrs. Buffalo: I don't know. I never heard what the trouble started from.

Tom: Why did the Indian people refer to land as our mother?

Mrs. Buffalo: Yes, that's right they refer to her as our mother.

Tom: Why did they call it our mother, the earth?

Mrs. Buffalo: When we pray, we say, "Help us, our earth, our mother." It was part of the religion. This is where our life comes from because we walk on this land. And whenever we pray for our relatives, whenever we want to wish them well, we tell them to walk happily on this earth as long as they live. I do not know who first called the earth our mother. We always pray to our mother the earth that we may ever live good and ever travel in safety and always be happy. Everything that the Indians thought was holy came from the earth and their needs, such as tobacco and berries. It was more referred to as the
earthly spirit, because whenever they offered anything in sacrifice it always went back into the earth.

Tom: At the signing of the treaty did they know anything about buying or selling of land?

Mrs. Buffalo: No, they did not know.

INDEX

INDEX TERM       IH NUMBER       DOC NAME    DISC #      PAGE #

BUFFALO
   -economic importance of      IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          3
BUFFALO
   -extinction of                IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          3
DISEASE AND ILLNESS
   -smallpox                    IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          6
FUR TRADE
   -and economic dependency     IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          6
LAND
   -loss of                     IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          4
NATURE
   -and spirituality            IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          6,7
NATURE
   -respect for                 IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          6,7
PEIGAN RESERVE
   -establishment of            IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          4
TRADE
   -practices                   IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          6
TREATIES
   -effects on way of life      IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          3
TREATY #7
   -interpretation of           IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          4,5
TREATY #7
   -land allocation             IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          4
TREATY #7
   -payment of treaty money     IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          5

PROPER NAME INDEX

PROPER NAME       IH NUMBER       DOC NAME    DISC #      PAGE #

SITTING ON THE EAGLE TAIL FEATHERS (a.k.a.) SIT AGAINST THE EAGLE TAIL
   IH-228       MRS. BUFFALO  25          4