

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: USELESS GOOD RUNNER
(BILLY HEAVY RUNNER)
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: BLOOD RESERVE
ALBERTA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BLOOD RESERVE
ALBERTA
TRIBE/NATION: BLOOD
LANGUAGE: BLACKFOOT
DATE OF INTERVIEW:
INTERVIEWER: DILA PROVOST/ALBERT
YELLOWHORN
INTERPRETER:
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
SOURCE: OFFICE OF SPECIFIC CLAIMS &
RESEARCH OF THE INDIAN ASSOC. OF ALTA.
WINTERBURN, ALBERTA T0E 2N0
TAPE NUMBER: IH-234
DISK: TRANSCRIPT 2
PAGES: 7
RESTRICTIONS: NONE

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Treaty 7: events leading up to it; promises made and broken.

Useless Good Runner (Billy Heavy Runner) is here. His great-grandfather participated in the Treaty No. 7 negotiations. His wife is a descendent of Chief Red Crow. His grandfather knew things that had happened in the past.

Now he will begin to tell stories of the Treaty days.

Billy: I am going to tell you stories of the treaty days as told to me.

When the Queen's representatives arrived at Blackfoot Crossing to negotiate the treaty (No.7) with the Blackfoot people.

The place the police arrived at first was Macleod in 1873. The following summer the fort was erected; it was ready for occupation in 1874.

Father Lacombe was among the police when they arrived. One of his first acquaintances here was Rainy Chief. Father Lacombe told Rainy Chief, "All the people of the north-east (other Indians) have found peace since the police came among them. What do you think of the present liquor afflictions among your people?" Rainy Chief said, "Yes, my friend, I have thought about what you have just said. Go back now and tell the police to come here. The boot-leggers that have come among us have

exploited our people and brought unrest. These white men have come among us, have killed children to take the mothers away for their own use."

So Father Lacombe most likely went back east and told his story to the people there. So this must have brought the police up here. It was this same man, Father Lacombe, who insisted to the government in Ottawa to make haste in negotiating treaty with the Blackfoot people. He had heard about the treaties being negotiated beginning in the east and coming west, between the Indians and the Queen. Father Lacombe suggested to the Queen's commissioners that if haste was not taken immediately in dealing with the Blackfoot tribe, that the time was quickly approaching and this tribe is fast becoming aware of what is happening across the border with Sitting Bull and that there has been some contact made between these tribes in combining to fight the white settlers. This was because the white people over the border were debauching and exploiting the people of Sitting Bull.

These were the prime reasons of the coming of the Queen's commissioners to the west seeking negotiations with the Blackfoot tribe. They wanted to prevent us from joining forces with Sitting Bull's people.

They arrived in the month of the haying season (Sept.). The Blackfoot people were not all at one place. They were scattered around in their country; some were in South Peigan country. Word had to be sent for them to return so negotiations between them and the Queen would be possible.

When negotiations of Treaty 7 began, Crowfoot and Red Crow were the principal spokesmen for the Blackfoot nation.

Now for the stipulations of the treaty. David Laird told the people, "You will now receive \$12.00 per person, and as the years continue every new member to a family will also continue to receive this amount. Now, the councillors will get \$25.00, and the chief will receive \$50.00." This is one of the promises made to last forever.

"Ammunition will be provided to your people, now that you have spoken for the non-restriction of game to you, which is rightfully yours. This because you wholly depend on game to retain your livelihood. The animals are rightfully yours; we will not interfere with them. This includes fishing and trapping and birds."

This was a subject that David Laird (Tall Man) brought to the attention of the Indian people. Immediately followed by this statement he pointed out that when the people would give up their nomadic ways and began to settle down on the land given (kept?) to them, that they would name their own locations. Since then the people have been obligated by the government to go live on these lands and were then confined to them.

The locations retained by the Indians were as follows: the Peigans

- the Porcupine Hills; the Blackfeet asked for the location at Blackfoot Crossing, which extends east as far as just west of Bassano (present town of). The Bloods asked for the Belly Buttes country.

Upon settlement on your reserves you will be given various types of farming facilities. These included hay-forks, hoes, hay cutters, and stock. As time spent on reserves shall go on, further assistance that you might require, the government will always provide.

David Laird (Tall Man) extended his hands out formed cup-like, and told the Indians that the Queen will care for them within her palms. No foreigner shall come over to disturb you, on your locations of reserves.

These were told to me, and it happened that we were put on this reserve known as the Blood Reserve with enough land to provide hunting grounds. This area extended to the Stone-gates. This area was our hunting grounds. As are the present coal fields on the Blood reserve east and south to the boundary, this was supposed to be preserved for our (Blood) hunting grounds.

About the money, our people always understood that \$7.00 (reduced from the original \$12.00) would be put away for the Indians future use. The people always believed that some day they would get this amount.

Ammunition was never issued as promised.

The next treaty payment was made east of Macleod. Only \$5.00 was paid to the people. Only then did the people begin getting suspicious, and began suspecting that something was going wrong. After they had been told by David Laird that \$12.00 would always be given, the minor chiefs \$15.00 and the chief got \$25.00. Immediately they went to confer with Col. MacLeod (Bull Head). He told them that he had nothing to do with this change, that it was the government in Ottawa responsible for this change. (Thus the birth of the phrase "Ottawa says".)

When Tall Man (David Laird) was leaving this job he came to visit us at the Old Agency. Everybody (The Blood Indians) was there and he sat at the head of our circle assembly. As he commenced his speech he said, "I have come over to find out how you are getting along under our treaty terms". So Blackfeet Old Women stood up and told Mr. Laird, "I will now ask you a question. At the time of the treaty you told us we'd be paid \$12.00 every year, councillors \$25.00 and the chief \$50.00. Now how come suddenly this money has disappeared? What did you do with this money? Did you establish a fund for us? (Save it?)" Tall Man then sat down for a while and paused before he began to move. He told us, "All right you people, it was a statement made to you people at the time to gain your consent (bribe) at the treaty. At the present time, I am leaving my job. When I get down to Ottawa, there is nothing that you could do to me. If you want to take me to court, you will not be able to because I will have already by then have left my job."

This is how it was told to me. Also the subject of the ammunition, David Laird replied "The money is down in Ottawa. You go ask for it, I am no longer in a position to speak for you as I am leaving this job." This was the last we ever heard of the ammunition money. When Blackfoot Old-Women brought that question before David Laird.

I will give you further details on the treaty with Col. MacLeod and David Laird. "Daily rations (Food) will be issued to you, you will not be in want as long as the Queen will be caring for you. That's how much she has loved you; that's why she has made treaty with you."

As I have already said the people had moved to their respective reserves, and rationing (food) was continued to be issued. It deteriorated gradually. The food was treated with a kind of chemical. The Indians believed it to be a poisonous substance. The meat discolored with the use of this substance. This substance was mixed with flour, with this the people began to have stomach troubles, they called this 'belly sickness'. The people who had died from this food poisoning were all buried at the Belly Butte site.

There was a white man called White Young Bull, an interpreter who was married to an Indian woman. One day some old women, who were related to this interpreter's wife, were assembled. One old lady had just cooked bread and it looked very appetizing with a nice color. So White Young Buffalo broke a piece of the bread. As he looked at it, the centre was all blue. He tasted a little and said "This is poison." He then told the old ladies, "Old ladies, don't eat this bread. Quit eating this bread immediately. Don't eat these rations that you are receiving for the time being. I think you people are being poisoned. They are bringing you out to be buried constantly. Quit eating these rations for now - until I find out further what's happening at the ration house. As I work there, I will be able to find out."

Ever since those days the people have experienced broken promises of the Crown. Up to this day no one can claim to have benefitted to a full extent from the treaty money we get.

During the treaty negotiations, mineral resources of all grades were never mentioned as oil, coal, and others, and therefore no negotiations were ever made and no Indian has ever benefitted from the wealth of these (at least 50 million acres with mineral aspects - more or less, are involved to this date). Our ancestors own these resources, the game, the land, all the natural aspects of the country that the Blackfoot nation inhabited.

Many substances and vegetation derived from the earth such as roots, plants, herbs, paint, rocks, trees, wood were used for various purposes of ceremonial procedures.

Wood, had always been a principal asset to the livelihood of the people used for fires and shelters.

Rocks were used in religious functions - therefore we used everything that existed and was under our feet. We lived off nature in her natural form in our land.

This land was given to us by God; it was meant for us. The white man came and destroyed our culture. The white man came and destroyed our culture. The white man advised us to abandon our way of life and also to abandon our way of doctoring. They told us that if we adopted their way of life, we would be better off in their society.

At the time of the treaty - now I am speaking geographically - our people at that time were told that they would get one square mile to every family of five and our people in those days did not have geographical knowledge as to the size of a mile. They did not understand the stipulations that were put before them to sign. Only many years later, in these times, the people are beginning to realize and understand the deal concerning acres, and now we are starting to realize how small it really is.

Medicare was mentioned to our people. A doctor would travel among us to see to our medical needs. He travelled carrying a medicine bag. They promised that medical services would be improved as time went on. All this was told to me by me ancestors. Now I am going to relate further on medi-care as Mr. Laird had expressed to us. After he had finished speaking on medical terms, he said, as we settle on the reserve a hospital would be built there for our conveniences. A hospital was later erected in the centre of the reserve.

A High Commissioner came from Ottawa one day purposely to investigate complaints from the Catholic priest and Protestant minister, insisting that the school locations should be changed, as they had been subject to floods at the old location. As this commissioner was sitting in on a meeting a Blood Indian stood up and asked him if also a change for a better hospital could be built. The commissioner asked the Indians assembled there, "Are you of one mind, as this man has just expressed?" The reply from the people was "Yes". He then said they would get their hospital. "It is within your treaties, that whenever you need additional privileges or require necessary for your betterment you will be granted as asked. It is now shown that the old hospital building has deteriorated and you are in a new building. We will also build a new school for you. As better facilities are available, according your education needs, these will be made available to you. A new hospital will also progress for your benefit from the same advancement."

We disagree today, as our present hospital is being taken away. Some of us do not wish to go to outside hospitals. We are trying to keep our own hospital on the reserve today.

Now, we will talk about the wars, The First World War and the Second World War.

