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ONION LAKE, SASK.
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IRIS BAKER
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Traditional lifestyle: cooking, tool-making, fishing, etc.
- Stories of "little people" and of "sacred women" who were half woman, half fish.
- War with other tribes to obtain horses; feats of bravery; escape after capture, with help from spirit powers.
- Cree names and their significance.
- Weather-forecasting.

M: Onion Lake. You were going to tell us this story that you heard from your great-grandparents?

Francis: Well you read a lot, eh?

M: Yes.

Francis: Well, did you ever read about when the people, the whole of Canada had smallpox?

M: Yeah.

Francis: How many years is that?

M: Oh, I don't know.

Francis: I figure around about 120 years ago.

M: It was sometime in the 19th century.

Francis: So when my grandfather told me, he was around about 20 or 25 years old at that time. There was no cure for that smallpox. All what they did was to take the children to a big salt lake, a real salt lake. Took all the kids and all the people in there and they had a bath in there and that is how they got cured out of that smallpox.

M: Is that right?

Francis: Yeah.

M: How did they know that would work? Who thought of it?

Francis: It's something wonderful you know. A lot of them died on smallpox but when they found out, one old man found out that... he had a swim in that salt lake and that is how he got cured out of that smallpox.

M: Now, what were you saying? You were going to tell us about the beginning of the reserves?

Francis: What?

M: You were going to tell us about the beginning of the reserves and before the Indians were civilized.

What was your father's name? Your father's name again, what was it?

Francis: Kitcheno.

M: You don't know what it means in English?

Francis: Well I would say that the best thing you can pronounce that is A Generous Man. A Generous Man. It means a lot of words, but I think that is the best thing to put it.

M: What was your mother's name?

Francis: Ann... Patnaut, Frances Patnaut. Well, I will start telling the story. I am going to say a few words in my prayers so I wouldn't make any mistake you see.

M: Okay.

Francis: Oh my Jesus. Oh my Lord. I am asking you today that I may speak right that I am asked to do by this white girl, so that I may speak, oh my Jesus. Jesus give me clear thinking in my storytelling. That is all I ask of you today. Hallelujah!

You going to start now.

M: It's on now. Your prayer is on there too. Is that all right?

Francis: Is it all right where it is?

M: Yes.

Francis: (Translation from Cree) With the first people here there was no knife, no toys, no guns, no axe. How did they live? They never knew what else was here in Canada. That's what I'm going to tell, when the people were first here. When the first white men came, we didn't know what kind of people they were. Today we call them Frenchmen. A long time ago, we call them English people. When they landed we didn't know who was the first to land here on this land. Can you tell me, what is the name of the first man that came into this land in a boat, in a ship?

M: Columbus.

Francis: Columbus, ahah. (Goes back to speaking Cree.) I will translate that in English. In the olden days, as they went about 7-800 years ago, the people, the Indians of all Cree kind, they never knew when the time the ships come into Canada. They never knew what money was, what gold was, what silver was, what paper money was because it wasn't given to them. All what

was given to them was buffalo, moose, deer, and all kinds of game. He used to shoot them with arrows. But since then when the ships come in, they traded off pemmican, buffalo hides, moose hides, all kinds of hides, all kinds of furs. But still they never knew what, the Indians didn't know what money was so they just had to trade for different kinds of tools such as axes, guns, knives, pails, everything - that is how they come to get these. That is something wonderful how these people come to live without these things at that time. They didn't have no matches. How did they make a fire? Nobody ever knew but the way they used to make fire - take a saskatoon stick, peel it and dry it, have it nice and dry and when they want to make a fire (before they had this flint that come from across the ocean) they used these saskatoon rods, had them nice and dry and then they would rub that on a rock. And that rod got so hot it would turn into fire and that was how they would make their fire. And then once they made the fire, well the whole people all around would take a bit of fire from here and then everybody had fire going.

M: Have you tried making a fire like that?

Francis: If they wanted to move, if they didn't have to move their camps too far, there would be several women or some men would carry a piece of wood that was in flame, that was on fire. So they would go so far with it and before it was out, they would put that on the ground and make it burn again. So they would put on it some grasses and it would come into a big flame again and they would move it out until they get to the

camp. And when they got to the camp, well, then they got the fire all ready to go.

M: Oh, yeah. Have you ever tried starting a fire like that?

Francis: No, we never tried but I know we can do it because a lot of times when we used to make bow and arrows, even in school, we would get these bow and arrows... get these bows to get dry you see... we would rub it so long on a rock to get them dry to make real good bows you see, well, it pretty near started a fire.

M: Is that right?

Francis: Yeah. It would pretty near start burning. So, in that way you can just believe what people said and how they come to live you see. And when they didn't have no knives, how did they skin an animal? They would kill a buffalo or a certain kind of an animal. They would take the ribs and they would sharpen those ribs on a stone and when it comes to a

sharp edge then they would put it on a smooth stone and it would be that sharp that they could cut meat with it. That was before they ever had steel knives and stuff like that. And that is how they made their knives.

M: And what would they have used to kill the buffalo in the first place?

Francis: To kill the buffalo? Bow and arrows.

M: So where do you think they got the first arrows if they didn't have knives to make them?

Francis: They had bow and arrows and then they wouldn't hardly kill a buffalo with just a straight arrow. But they had a little spear at the end of the arrow that is a little flat rock, just as fine as you can get it and make a little sharp spear and then stick that spear on the end of the arrow. And when that got into the buffalo, that went right through his body and that is how they killed it. Of course, lots of times they could kill a buffalo, if they don't hit the bone, without a spear on there. Because the arrow was that sharp, you see, right through. But usually they used a little spear arrow so that if it hit the bone, it wouldn't stop it and the arrow will go right through, even pretty near right through the bone. It would be so powerful it was pretty near just as good as a shotgun.

I: Did you use a bow and arrow for hunting?

Francis: You see, in the olden days, the old people, Indians, they were awful powerful because they just lived on meat and blood, no tea, nothing. Meat and blood and soup.

And I will tell you another thing, how the people used to, before they had any kettles at all... how did they drink that

soup? They would kill a buffalo and they would cut the hide off big enough - oh I would say round about two, three feet square - and they would cut it around and they would cut little holes all around it, all around that hide. And then they would cut a hole about - oh I would say about a foot deep maybe more - and then they would stick that hide with stakes all around on the outside and then they would tack that rawhide down in the ground where they dig that hole. They had that hide nice and clean. And then they would light up a big fire and they would pick up a good size rock, not real big ones but good size ones, and throw it in the fire and you would get it red hot. And then they would cut the buffalo meat in pieces

with the fat, cut it into small pieces, even some big ones, doesn't matter, and they would put it in that hole. And then they would get the water in a buffalo manure bag - where the buffalo(Inaudible) - and they would take all that clean stuff and get the clean water in there and throw it down in that hole. Fill it right up, pretty near fill it right up. And then they would get these red rocks, red hot, oh lots of rocks. And they would have a big pile of Indians - Indian women, children, everybody - and then when the rocks were red hot, they would take a willow and make it into the shape of a spade. Make it in a circle and tie it together and throw that under a rock and make a spade out of it - that rock would be nice and clean - and throw it in that hole there with that meat and water. And they would just keep on throwing them. Well, in no time that water would start to boil. Then they would pick up these rocks that is in the water and put fresh red hot rocks. Of course, the meat wouldn't be real cooked right through, but it would be just about half-cooked, you see - that is the only way they could eat it. They would have it just about halfway cooked and they would take all the rocks in there. And they would have wooden plates, they used to make wooden plates and they would use oyster shells. They would pick up oysters, great big shells, there were some big ones, and everybody would have them...

I: Each person would have his own?

Francis: Yes. Everybody would have his own oyster stone. They would take that and eat that soup, and then they would take a little meat. They just went on and on until everybody had some. How they got...not only in one place but a lot of places when there is a lot of people, you see, that have five, maybe twenty, maybe fifty pieces so everybody can eat you see. But that was how they eat in the olden days.

I: Would they do the same thing in the winter?

Francis: Yeah. And then another way, if they didn't eat that way, they would slice the meat and they would cook it on a stick in the middle of the fire. (Says something but because of the increased speed of the tape, is totally unintelligible)

I: Barbecue?

Francis: Yes, that is what you call barbecuing in English. Well, these people, that is all they live on, is just take a

stick and shove that stick into meat and put it on a fire and just keep on turning and cook it. But they never cook it right through; there is a little blood in it. Oh, that way is good. That is the only way I eat mine right now.

M: Me too. (laughs)

Francis: If I eat really cooked meat, I can't eat much of it. But if I build a fire outside, outside in the open and cook meat, just have it halfways cooked, rare, just barely on each side, oh my. That is the only way you can taste the meat.

M: That is right.

Francis: If you buy meat in a meat market, there is no taste to it at all. I can butcher an animal anytime and, if you taste my meat, by golly, you would never have anything else. You know why? Because I don't bleed them enough.

I: Not at all?

Francis: No, when you bleed animals and then you take all that blood out and then there is no taste in that meat. You cut that neck off, let them bleed, of course, but you don't move them. Leave a little blood in all the meat. Have a little blood on it. And when you cook it, boy oh boy, there is no better meat on earth.

I: Oh, I never heard about that.

Francis: Yeah, I have been butchering for forty years each year. When these white people come in there to take up homesteads and one time...I used to live here, you see, in my young days. And I started to farm and I come there and I had butchered an animal and I took... next to the hide and the bone, I cut the meat off on the back there. It was about that thick. Oh, about that wide, maybe that long. Stick that on the fire and cook it. And one of the farmers come in there and I said, "Just in time, dinner time." So he come in and he tasted that meat and he said, "I never tasted meat like this in my life, as good as this. How did you cook it, how did you make it?" "I'll tell you," I says, "when you butcher, you cut the neck off an animal and you let him bleed all over, let all the blood get out of that meat. When you cook the meat there is no taste to it. When I butcher, I cut the neck off and I let the blood run out but I don't strain it. I let part of that blood stay in the meat. That is the best meat. You can taste that meat." "From now on I will never have anybody else to butcher. You come and butcher for us everytime we want some beef." And I butchered for forty years for them.

M: Who were they?

Francis: And that was just a little while ago they wanted me to start butchering again, because I quit butchering there for about five or six years I guess. Somebody told them I was getting too old to butcher. It was just because I wanted to get the insides maybe, the head and the tongue, you see. So when my boy Louis told them, he said, "Oh, he can still butcher yet. He might be slow but he can still butcher." So they said, "The next time we are going to butcher, we are going to get him." You see, when they butcher, they take part of their meat into the freezer and then they take part in the lockers. But they keep most of the meat at home you see. I have a treat then.

M: So that is the way they would butcher the animals long ago then and they left the blood?

Francis: Yeah. They didn't know too much. They don't know how to make beef taste. Take all that blood out of that animal and, by God, there is no taste in that meat and it costs too much.

I: Where did you learn to butcher?

Francis: I learned it myself. Because the people here, we used to have about a thousand head of cattle after the rebellion. They gave us so many cattle to raise and in the fall, they would gather up all the animals, put them in one big corral. And in the whole reserve, they would figure out how many people there was and who was there. They would kill about twenty-five. It didn't matter if it was a steer or a cow, they had to kill it. It didn't matter if it was a fat cow with a calf or anything, no matter how good an animal was, you just pick them and shoot them. Shoot it down. They didn't do very good selecting you know. (Unintelligible) and make a box out of dry wood. ...and then towards this one. They would be shooting another one. They just kept on shooting and shooting. The whole herd would be in this big corral and they would just pick out whatever they want and shoot it and take it home. Everyone had a gun. Ten in a family or if there was fifteen in a family with the old people - you know, they counted the old people - well, there would be so much meat you couldn't believe. "How many of you?" "Sixteen, maybe ten." "Well, you pick up two, three quarters." They would pick up everything, clean it up. The meat, they would cook it. They used everything.

M: Did they do this once a year? How often would they kill them? When would they kill the cattle, once a year?

Francis: Once a year, yes, in the fall. Just about in November. So they would cut up, cut up that meat and the savages, they might grab it and when it got too cold they would put it up on top of the [] somewheres and let it freeze that way. Or hang it up on a tree and cover it up. And then they would get someone to make a kind of a tipi out of wood. They would make a kind of a tipi: it wasn't a tipi. We would call it a wigwam because it was made out of wood. It had sticks right in the center of it and there was a fire in there

and black smoke and that heat and that smoke would dry out that meat, even in the cold weather. So when they were done, they would put that in bags you know...

(The rest of Side A, Tape IH-037 is totally unintelligible because the tape speed is far too fast.)

(Side B)

(Repeat to an extent of Side A. The majority of Side B is blank.)

(Side A, Tape IH-038)

All Cree

(Side B, Tape IH-038)

All Cree

(Side A, Tape IH-039)

M: Francis Harper, June 20 at Onion Lake.

Francis: Well, there isn't much more that I can say. I think I started from my babyhood and listened to the old people. My grandfather, my great-grandfather, my grandmother, my great-grandmother, how they started to live in the south country, in the prairies, and I have told a lot of things that I have remembered. I don't know whether I remember everything. There is a lot of things to tell but I just can't really remember all of them. And I am doing the best that I can to tell you what I know.

M: Do you know anything about the Little People? Do you know anything about the little people on this reserve?

Francis: Little people?

M: What do you call them in Cree?
(Cree)

Francis: I have seen the little people.

I: You did?

Francis: Right in this lake, in my young days. I seen four. I just seen them, that is all. I didn't happen to have a look at them, you know, just what they look like. And my boy seen them too when he was a little kid. He is standing there and looked at them. He would see them about up to here. He said they came up about that high. Little small people. And they look just the same as ordinary people, he said, but as long as they were playing in the grass, in the long grass on the shore line. "And just as soon as they would dive," he said, "that is the only time I would move." Then he would run back home and start to cry.

I: All the little people?

Francis: Yeah. But as long as he was looking at them by the lake, he couldn't move. He couldn't make a step, he couldn't turn around, he couldn't run away from them.

I: Is that right?

Francis: He just stood there and looked at them. He never talked to them or nothing, but they looked around and looked at him for a little while and just played in the grass.

I: Do you know anything about them? Or who they are?

Francis: No, I don't know anything about them.

I: Have quite a few people seen them?

Francis: And, I have seen - there is a big island right here.

I: On Long Lake.

Francis: When I was living there, I used to live here, just about a half a mile from here. I got a big round hip-roofed barn where they used to have the English school.

I: Yes, I saw it.

Francis: Well, when it burned down, I lived in there. When I was there, there was nobody around. About two o'clock in the

afternoon, the water was nice and calm. There was no wind or nothing and it was hot. I thought I would go down and shoot a duck. I took my gun and I got down to the shore line, just right below there on the east side of the island, that big island, it is a high island. There was lots of spruce in them days, spruce trees and great big trees in that island. Oh, that island used to look awful big just on account of them trees blowing all over, all around that island. And all of a sudden, my goodness, I seen something on the east side of that island. I seen four people in there, looked like all women, hair dragging right on the water. You could see their tits but you could see them as far as here. That is all you could see them. I seen four of them. They went around, you know, dived and come up and shake their heads, and oh, their long hair. Only once I seen them. And then I told the people about it and they said, "You are not the first one that has seen them."

I: Is that right?

Francis: That is taboo. Ever since people have lived in the reserve, and even before they had the reserve, people driving from one place to the other, they would see everything in here. They would see these sacred women, they were half women and half fish. I don't know whether it is right or not.

I: Mermaids?

Francis: Yeah. They say it was women. They didn't seem to see any men or anything like that. They looked all like women.

I: Are there any old stories about this lake?

Francis: No, no. I haven't heard anything about them. That is the only thing I know, that I wasn't the only one that seen them. There have been people, oh, twenty-five, thirty, fifty years before that, that seen these people in the center, right on that island. But they say it wasn't the only ones that they seen. They seen these people...different lakes.

I: All around here, though?

Francis: I don't know which lakes they were talking about, but it wasn't only one lake where they seen these people. But they never told any stories about them. They only just seen them, that is all.

I: Do you know of any stories about any of the other places around here?

Francis: They claim when people see them that some people are going to have good luck and some people are going to have bad luck. I don't know how it is. They can't understand. But I heard a story about my grandfather. I don't know where, what place it was, where two women see these people. And there seemed to be always four, from two and four. They see these and one of the women had two children and that same night the children took sick and before they could do anything with them, by golly, they died. Just because they seen that. It was a sign that they were going to have bad luck. Her kids died, something like that. And sometimes, when you see them, they can give you good luck. Like me, when I seen them, well, I didn't have no bad luck.

M: Did you have some good luck?

Francis: Yeah, I had good luck.

I: What happened?

Francis: I don't remember what but it looked like I felt happy when I seen them, that's all.

I: Do you know anything about the stones up on the butte? From the air they look like the shape of a man.

Francis: Stones?

I: Yes.

Francis: No. Well, I'll tell you, people would dream about rocks. But they would dream about a rock somewheres. Instead

of seeing that rock, they would see a man and tell his fortune, like, sometimes what is going to happen or something like that.

I: That man would tell the person who was dreaming?

Francis: Yeah, this man would tell them that. Well, they would go there, and after this guy would tell them something, then they would tell this person to look at him again. And he would look at him and he would be a big rock. And this person would come sometime, and by golly, he would go and find that rock. He never been there before but he would go and find it. That is one funny thing about it.

I: Do you know of any people that did that?

Francis: Now I am going to tell you something. There used to be old people...if you were a baby, if you were sick, an old woman or an old man would give you a Cree name so you would live.

I: Was this only for a sick baby or every baby?

Francis: Yeah. And I will just tell you something. (Speaks Cree) And Jimmy Chief's wife, when she was a kid I suppose, she got a name from that rock and ever since they drive out to where that rock is and they put beads in there, maybe some tobacco, maybe matches. Everytime they go trailing that rock. And Jimmy Chief's wife got her name, (Cree) how would you announce that? (Cree) That is a hard thing to translate. She had a Cree name but I just can't translate it.

I: It was related to the rock though?

Francis: Yeah. That was the rock where she got that name from. And in order to live a long time, every time they would go [they] travel on that road. She was a Little Onion Lake Reserve treaty Indian over there, but Jimmy Chief belongs here but he married that woman. And every time they go on the road, well, that woman would put a few beads in there, or ribbon or tobacco, put it where that rock is. It is just like giving it to the spirits, you see.

I: Who gave her the name?

Francis: Well, that I don't know. I don't know which one. (Cree) I don't know. I don't know what old man give her that name, you know. Give her that name but...

I: Did the Cree Indian ever have a thing, you know, where they would put stones out in the shape of a man?

Francis: No. The only one thing I can tell you. I went over there when I went out trapping live beaver to raise beaver in this reserve. I went down to Wainright to get live beaver and then when I get live beaver, put him in a cage, and they would be shipped all over in the north to raise beaver, you see. Well, when I went down at Wainright, I seen an old farmer there

and I asked him, I said, "Could you tell me where that ribstone is?" He says, "Sure." and he showed me the road. And he said, "When you get on that hill, you go alongside the hill and you will see it. It is a great big rock. It is that high but it

is the shape of a person, like a man. And you can see his ribs. That rock has got ribs." That is why they call it ribstone you see. That name has been there for hundreds of years. When men would go out and try and steal horses from another place, another country, they would go in there and they found that rock. It looked like a person, it looked like a person with ribs on it. This rock had ribs just like an ordinary person. I seen that. I seen that rock. Oh, it must have been about that long, I guess.

I: Did somebody carve it that shape or it was naturally shaped like that?

Francis: Yeah, it is something like a person, pretty near, the body of it. But you could tell the ribs, you could see the ribs come like that. That is why they call it ribstone. And when they have a little war and they would get caught trying to steal horses from across the mountains. Coming down there, they had promised that ribstone so many little things and then drop it in there so they have good luck. So they never got caught when they would be stealing horses. That is how these Indians raised their horses, stealing them. (laughs)

I: Were there any things here for good luck like that?

Francis: Oh yeah. Well, people don't come across the mountains. They would come back here and steal horses, too. They would steal horses from there. They got caught they just got to turn them horses loose if they wanted to be alive so they could run in the bush and hide. If they just kept on, well, the Indians had good horses just the same as the others. They would just grab them by the head and cut their necks down and cut their head off and take the scalp.

I: Oh, boy.

Francis: And then they would take that scalp and make a stick around and they would show that head around, let it dry. Let them see the head. (laughs) I never done anything like that. If you kill an Indian, not an Indian but a Blackfoot Indian or that kind of relation from down in the Rockies, if you killed two people or four people, the more people you kill, the bigger chief you are. That is how it is.

I: That is how they chose the leaders?

Francis: They didn't have to have elections to get a chief. You had to be a brave man to be a chief.

I: Did most of these people, the brave men, did most of them

have powers?

Francis: Oh yeah.

I: Do you know of any people who had them?

Francis: The people that does the killing you know, they are that powerful. They don't care for their mortal lives but they are powerful and they are smart. And they know how to steal at night. They even, people alongside the mountains, they would have a tipi and they would put one or two best horses in that tent, right in front of the doorway of the wigwams to keep these so the people wouldn't steal it. Well, Indians are so brave and so smart, they go down in there and, by golly, if they didn't steal them horses that have a rope tied on them. And that rope would go inside the tent, so if somebody moved that rope, that big chief would get up and look. But lots of times, instead of trying to get ahold of the horse, they would look all over for that rope and cut that off and take them out. And they wouldn't lead them, but they would just turn them loose. And then as soon as they are turned loose, they would see where that horse is going to and follow it. And there would be people going round and round and round. How they hide, nobody knows. These people don't see them, even when they were going round these tents, watching, guards. Nobody knows. They will tell you it looked like what they call a spirit hiding them, so they wouldn't see.

They would go somewhere and pick up their very best horses, you know, running horses. The good horses. Then they would go out - there would be about, maybe 10 Indians, 10 people - well, they would go out and they would find a big bunch of horses. Well, in them days, they say there used to be one family of horses. There would be a few mares with colts all in one bunch; it belongs to one man. Fifteen, twenty head. Of course there might be some others somewheres but these are horses that are used all the time. They would go on about fifteen, twenty head in one bunch and fifteen, twenty head in another bunch and like that. They would pick up one horse and one horse would start and the others would follow. So in

that way, if there was about ten men stealing horses, if they pick up two or three bunches, well there would be about twenty, forty, sixty head of horses. Well, then they would divide that, you see. They would know which one was a good horse. All the horses that were used always were dragging a rope, a rawhide rope. Then they would have a ride. And even sometimes some people would go right inside the tent there and pick up saddles, what they call a buckskin saddle, an Indian saddle. Well, when they would steal these horses, they would just put that saddle on a horse and go. And they would run away with those horses. Ride all night to take them horses home, all night and all day the next day and all night the next night, three or four nights without stop. And then there were these people that would try and catch them you know. If they know people are close, they would jump off the horse and take a peace pipe, smoke, and ask the spirits to pour down water and,

by golly, there would come a real big heavy rain. It would be raining behind them and they wouldn't have no rain here. They would be going but it would be just blowing rain. Well, that stopped these people from chasing them, you see.

I: Well, if those people came and stole horses from the people here, would they do the same kind of thing?

Francis: Oh, they would do the same thing. They would do the same thing.

I: Would this have been in your grandfather's day? When would this have been? In your grandfather's day?

Francis: Oh yeah, oh yes. My grandfather used to be amongst them.

I: Do you have any stories about things that happened to him?

Francis: My grandfather was caught with ten other Indians one time before they stole the horses. One of them I guess was on, somewhere in the hill. And they just happened to be in the open, like, and they seen these Indians. That Indian, that man would jump on the horse and he would run back and forth. That is the sign that they see something. Well, all the rest of the people, they would jump on a horse and come up. And these people had to look for a place to hide. Well, my grandfather said that they got caught like that and they had to dig holes, trenches; they had big trenches. The hole...they had to stay in the hole there. People would come around there and they would shoot, you know, shooting, shooting, shooting, but they never got killed. Oh, sometimes they might kill one accidentally with a gun or arrows but they keep them there till they kill them all.

Well, then there used to be a Cree Indian woman that was caught in the war like that. This woman would talk Cree and she talked Blackfoot language or any kind of nation she is living with. Well, they would bring that woman down there and tell her to translate in Cree, to tell these people that they were going to be all shot before morning, before sunrise. So this woman would tell them, "Try and find out how you are going to live because you are going to be all killed before sunrise." So then it come dark, these people would build a fire all clear around, build a fire here and here and it would be just like it was in the daytime. It would be all full of fire. Keep that cage, you see, keep that trench. Well then, they would find somebody in that bunch so they would give him a peace pipe and smoke and ask the spirits to be saved. Then after the smoke, there would be wandering lights. It would be chock-full of wandering. You know what a wandering light is? At night when - wandering lights.

I: The northern ones?

Francis: Yeah, the wandering lights. It would be full of them. They would be so bright, you can't hardly see anybody. It would be just like smoke all around. Then that is when they asked the spirit to come down. He would get up and they would

all go one by one on a walk - not to look around, just to look at the one you are following - and they would go one by one. And if the enemy went through, they would stop until it passed and then they would keep walking until they go out of that site. And then when they got out of the site and then it is time to run. Of course, they couldn't steal anymore; they had to run home for life. They would just keep running, you know. And they wouldn't run in a row. It would be one run here, one here, one here, so they couldn't track them. They would run all night and then they would stop in one place where nobody could see them and sleep there all in the daytime. And then they would start over again at night. So they were out of luck, they couldn't steal nothing. And by that time, when morning come, just as soon as the bright day comes, these people were ready to kill. They would shout and they would jump and, by golly, not one person in there. That is something funny. Something that people would never believe, you know, but that is just how it happened.

I: Well, couldn't the other people, like, if these were Blackfoot that were surrounding them, couldn't they get together and smoke their peace pipe and ask the spirit to show them where these men were?

Francis: It wouldn't do them any good.

I: Why?

Francis: Because this man is powerful, he has got more power than them.

M: But what if one of them was more powerful?

Francis: Well, then, it all depends. I don't know. People dream different things and... Now you take this wonderful spirit you see, that wandering lights, people like that. Well, maybe they don't know anything about it, so... Oh, a lot of things like that. That is why I said there is so many things people know...

(End of Side A, Tape IH-039)

(Side B)

Francis: Right today, some people know what is going to happen the next day, even right today. But in years ago it was more important. If you want to know where you are or even your relations, if something is going to happen with your relations, you know it. They were told by the spirit.

I: Are there very many people now who can do it?

Francis: Oh, there is some people yet.

I: But not as many.

Francis: Yeah. Even sometimes, even me. Sometimes I see such a person that is not living on earth. You dream about

that person and he will tell you something, what is going to happen. And sure enough, it happens and you dreamed it.

I: Well, if you should dream about something, some bad luck coming to somebody, can you stop it?

Francis: Oh no. No, there is no way to stop it. It has got to go through.

I: So it doesn't do you much good to know.

Francis: Oh, there is a lot of different ways. I suppose some can stop that. How do you stop a bad luck? But sometimes, like when I used to go out hunting moose, you would ask the Lord to give you help to kill something for meat, you see.

Well, then you would go to sleep. Some of your relations that had already died would come down. You would see them and you would dream he was talking to you to go in such a place to get meat. You get up early in the morning and the first thing, you know, you take your gun and you go right where they point and, sure enough, your moose is there.

I: Could these dreams come to everybody or is there something you can do to have the dreams?

Francis: No, no. Not everybody gets dreams about stuff like that. Not everybody but I don't know how it is. I guess it all depends what kind of nationality, what kind of a person you are. If you are a good man, good-hearted man. And another thing, if you kill a moose and if there is two or three men with you, you got so much meat and you give them that to use. You don't sell it to him. I have known people who sell meat, moose meat. Well, these people that sell moose meat all the time, they get bad luck. When they go out for a hunt, they can't get anything. Just on account of that. Because, do you know why? The Lord had given you that meat. You are not buying it in a meat market. If you go in a meat market, you have to pay for your meat, your beef. If you kill a moose, it is the Lord that give you that meat. It is just like lending you, for feed. But if you give that meat to everybody - don't matter who it is, give a little piece of meat here and there, you don't sell it - in no time, two or three days time your meat is gone. You have nothing to eat again. Well, you can go out again, maybe, some other time. But you are lucky because you don't sell that meat. That was lend to you and you are lucky to kill another meat. All the time that way.

I killed three and four moose in one hunt, just one. I go out for about two or three hours and I will kill three or four moose. Cut all that meat all in pieces and bring it home. Go all over and everybody know about it and they come around and "Give me, give me, give me." Sometimes, in one day, all that meat is gone. But you are lucky, if you go up north and you want some meat, by golly, it looks like that moose is waiting for you to kill it. (laughs) That is just the way it is. Somebody else would go out there and he would be selling that

moose meat. He would go out there and he has an awful hard time to get a moose. If he happens to be one of the best hunters, you know, a good hunter, he would have an awful time to kill a moose once in a while. But if a man is not greedy

or anything like that for meat, he seems to be always lucky. Everything. Like, fish, it is just the same. You go out...if I go out in this lake now and go and set a net, a fish net, I get about two, three hundred in one net. Load them up in a wagon or in the truck and go all over the reserve and give five and six, everyone, let everybody eat fish. You are lucky, keep a few for yourself, that is all. And that is how it is.

I: Who taught you that?

Francis: Now, a white man go and put his net in there. Maybe get two, three hundred. You ask him for it - 25 a piece, 50 a piece. You see, that is how it is. Oh boy, in the olden days, up north, there is one lake they call...what is the name of that, how would you say when they make it like a raft? It is against the law to do that now, you know. You are not supposed to use a light to kill fish. I don't know what they call that. I can't translate that in English. But it is a flashlight. It is a fire. You make a raft with wood, you know; you haven't got no boat. And then you wet your ground and mark that one place, make it about half a foot, maybe a foot thick. And you build a fire out there on that raft and you have spears and go at night. And you go alongside the edge of the lake where the grass grows, go alongside of it. And you set your fire. You use birch bark; birch bark is just the same as lighting coal oil. It comes that bright, that birch bark. Take the birch bark and burn that. And up comes the flames and you stand on each side of that raft and as soon as - it is mostly a lot of whitefish - just as soon as they see that light in the dark, they all come for it. And they just come right close to the raft, you spear them and throw them on the raft. Kill about thirty or forty and you go ashore and that is how you got your fish. But now, the government stopped that, you know. Especially for the white people. The Indians never do that anymore but you are not supposed to use a light at night to kill fish. You can use a net but not a light. If a white man get's caught using a light trying to spear fish, my goodness, he gets about a four or five hundred dollar fine. Yeah. That is just the way it is.

I: Do you know about the Northern Lights?

Francis: Well, that is what I was telling you about, those wandering lights.

I: What is it supposed to be?

Francis: It is just the same thing. In the Indian way, these lights happen that way. They claim it is the spirit, your people that died off hundreds and thousands of years ago, it is their spirits still alive, like. Well, when something is going

to happen, or if it is going to be a good day, or something is going to happen, then they show up.

I: Something unusual?

Francis: Yeah, something unusual. You see, that is when you see these lights. Now, if it was raining here every day for three, four days, a week, or something like that, well, all of a sudden you see these northern lights, nice and bright, even during the raintime when it kind of quit raining, you see the wandering lights, well, you are going to have a good day the next day. The weather is going to stop. The next morning, by golly, nice day. Nice bright sun. Just as bright as could be. Stopped that rain altogether. That is just the way it is. It is just about the same thing. You take when it is raining all the time...or if it's nice, nice day, nice and bright, you see the sun dogs. You see the sun dogs on each side - sun dogs are not right around the sun, you know - you see the sun dogs on each side and you see big sun dogs in front of the sun and not so much from behind, that means it is going to be bad weather. Bad weather is coming. Maybe the next day you have rain. I don't know how long it stands but then it comes bright a little bit again. You see the sun dogs again, nice and bright from behind. Maybe it is a round sun dog, nice and bright, and the next day you have a good day and all the rain has stopped and you have good weather. That is just the way it is.

I: Are there any other ways to tell the weather?

Francis: No, no. It is just the same thing with the moon. If you have sun dogs beside the moon or behind the moon or something, it is always a change in the weather. That is about all I know myself. Yeah.

I: Are there any stories about the rainbow?

Francis: No, not very much. Well, it is just about the same thing. If it is raining, even if it doesn't rain so much, you know, if you see a big rainbow right in front of you - sometimes you can see it right in front of you, you know, a big rainbow - well, that means it is going to keep on raining. If you see it way up, a different place, way up away from you altogether, a long ways up in the air, but it is going to change the weather. But if you see it right in front of you, well, that means the weather is going to keep on. That is

the only thing that I know. You see, it would be nice and bright, nice and quiet, and you will hear a toad, a frog. Right in the dry weather you will hear a frog and people say he is asking for rain. Sure enough, there is rain. A dry frog, you know, not in the water, not a frog that lives in the water. Take these toads, these big toad frogs, some days when it is nice and bright you hear a frog, toad, and he keeps on calling and pretty soon he gets the rain. Yeah. It is just the same thing as a robin. At night you will hear a robin calling, calling, calling, calling. You don't hear them all the time, you know, but you will hear a robin calling pretty near all

night, that means a sign of rain.

I: Is that right?

Francis: Yeah. That is a sign of rain. They claim he is asking for rain for his young ones. (laughs) I don't know if it is right. How would they carry that water for the young ones? That is something, I think, to explain. But they claim that the robin asks for water for the young ones, not only for his young ones but for the rest of the birds and ducks and everything like that, asking for rain so the young ones can have water. (laughs) Well, I guess that is all I can tell you for now.

(Speaks in Cree for awhile)

I: What is your Cree name?

Francis: My Cree name? I couldn't translate it.

M: Kahnaheekapawewahin.

Francis: Kahnaheekapawewahin, yeah. That is my Cree name.

I: Were you given any advice with that name?

Francis: It looks like A Good Standard. You can pretty near translate that A Generous Standard or A Good Standard or something like that.

I: Who gave it to you?

Francis: At first an uncle of mine named... (speaks Cree to Mary). I don't know. I never heard about his English name but his Cree name is Bear Man. That is his Cree name. That is the one that give me that name. (speaks Cree to Mary again) I don't remember the old lady's name but she has got an English

name and her Cree name, I don't know her Cree name. I don't know that old lady's Cree name even. I don't remember. And I think she had an English name. But this Bear Man, I never heard about his, although he was a treaty Indian. He died a few years ago. He must have had an English name but that is the one that gave me that name, the Cree name.

I: How did he pick the name?

Francis: I don't know. I guess he just knew that I should use that name by his spirits. He told me it was by his spirits that he was told, before even I knew they were going to give me that name. He used to work for me when I was farming, when they were living here, and he said some spirit came down and told him to give me that name.

I: How old were you?

Francis: I must have been about, around twenty-three,

twenty-four, yeah, when I got that name. You see, some people, they get their name when they are babies.

I: You didn't.

Francis: Yeah. And you take Louis, he has got a Cree name. Stone Listener in English - that is the best way I can translate it - or Stone Obeyer or something like that. Like, if you talk to the stone, it will obey you, something like that.

I: Was he given any advice with that name too?

Francis: I don't know. I'll tell you, old Benjamin Quinay... He died when he was round about a hundred years old. That is just a few years ago.

I: William's father?

Francis: Yeah. That is the one that gave that name to Louis. And Louis got hurt. One of his big tractors laid over him and this old man Quinay knew he was going to get hurt right away. And that wheel went right over Louis and smashed him all over his face, broke his bones and everything. And he said, "That man of mine is going to live." That is his grandson, you see. "That rock is going to give him the power so he won't die." And by golly, he lived. He got all his bones broke, his head and his jaw, had him all torn to pieces. And he stayed in the hospital in Lloydminster - I don't know how long he stayed there but...cut him open and put the jaws in the right place and sew them together and put his tongue in the right place.

All over, here and here, fixed him all over. And by God, he is still alive today, when he just go underneath that wheel and he got it right there.

I: So it would be through Benjamin's power, through his spirit?

Francis: Yeah, see old Benjamin told him, he said, "That rock will give him that much power so he won't get killed from that tractor. Because the tractor will go over a rock and won't hurt the rock."

I: Oh, yeah.

Francis: Yeah. That is the way it is. Things like that happen that people wouldn't never believe, you know.

I: Why did they quit doing them or, you know, mostly anybody who does them now, they keep it very secret. Why is that?

Francis: Yeah. Oh, I don't know. There is too many things to talk about, and it is hard to believe, and it is no use to mention. You see, you think of so many little things. Like looking for good luck, you don't dream about that lots of times, just once in a while, once in a great while. If you are thinking, if you got something in your head that you are

thinking about all the time, some nights just as soon as you go to bed and you go to sleep, the first thing you dream about is the thing you have been wondering about. And it looks to me that you will be told what to do or what is going to happen, something like that. That is just the way.

I: Well, in between those times, would you have a lot of dreams that don't mean anything?

Francis: No, no, it don't mean nothing at all. It is just the same as the white man. It don't matter who he is. All these songs, these musics they learn, they don't run it themselves. take it out of their dreams. You know that is the song.

I: You mean the ones who write the songs the first time?

Francis: If you are sleeping, you hear the music or you will hear a song that...you hear every word in that song. You get up in the morning and, by golly, you know that song. That is just the way it is with the people. They are going to learn all these songs by their dreams. Not only that, but the old people have songs like that. They take it and give it to such a person. When that man will grow up and maybe grow old, they

never forget them songs. All their lives they always keep them songs. That is just the way it is.

I: We were told that you are a good singer? Do you know lots of songs?

Francis: Oh, I know lots of songs.

I: Would you like to sing some for us?

Francis: Sundance songs, chicken songs, smoking pipe songs but I wouldn't sing them. You are not supposed to sing them because they are songs you use for good luck. Like the spirit songs, you see. I would never sing them. I will tell a story but not these songs.

I: Are there any songs that aren't spirit songs?

Francis: Well, there are, you know, but just the same, I was told never to sing any of them things.

I: Is that right?

Francis: Yeah.

I: By whom?

Francis: You destroy your nationality.

I: Is it?

Francis: Yeah.

I: Where did you learn the songs?

Francis: Sometimes songs...well of course, like these powwow songs, well, you can sing them. You take the drum and sing them. I mean like, it would be like smoking pipe songs and Sundance songs, you are not supposed to sing them or use them. They claim the people will have bad luck if they start using them. Of course they are only used for, like, religion. By rights, you call them religion songs....

(End of Side B, Tape IH-039)

(End of Interview)

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