

Raymond H. Smoke

Sr.

Tape 790

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Smoke, there's nothing in particular, no special questions, but you start out this way. What tribe do you come from? Are you a Mdewakanton?

Raymond: Supposed to be Wahpeton.

INTERVIEWER: Wahpeton. Well, where did your people come from?

Raymond: South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: They did. Up in the Sisseton area or...

Raymond: I think it's called...anyway some come from South Dakota, Sisseton and some from ...

INTERVIEWER: Prairie Island?

Raymond: Prairie Island yeah.

INTERVIEWER: From Prairie Island.

Raymond: Some...from some Falls. I always forget.

INTERVIEWER: Granite Falls?

Raymond: Yeah, Granite Falls.

INTERVIEWER: Granite Falls area.

Raymond: Yeah, Granite Falls and Pipestone, Minnesota.

INTERVIEWER: Pipestone, Minnesota, too. Yeah. So you're Santee and have relatives all across there.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Who are some of the people you know back there?

Raymond: I think I had a grandmother up there Pipestone, Minnesota, but she had a Sioux name.

INTERVIEWER: A Sioux name. What was that, do you remember?

Raymond: It was...I just forget her name now, but I remember for a long time.

INTERVIEWER: How did your people get up here in the first place, then?

Raymond: Well, they had a battle against the white people.

INTERVIEWER: In Minnesota?

Raymond: Yeah, in Minnesota.

INTERVIEWER: That was that uprising in '62, huh?

Raymond: Yeah, I got lots of friends up there Sisseton. We'll be going back and forth to see them once in a while.

INTERVIEWER: You get back to see them some, do you?

Raymond: Um hmm. I got a niece there. Her name is Irene Shepherd.

INTERVIEWER: Irene Shepherd.

Raymond: And I got aunt there, Mrs. June Williams.

INTERVIEWER: June Williams, yes, I know about her.

Raymond: The Hills.

INTERVIEWER: The Hills. Who is it at Prairie Island that you...you have relatives there?

Raymond: Um hmm. I forget their names now. They know me down there, though.

INTERVIEWER: At Prairie Island. Do you ever get down there to see them?

Raymond: Well, I have no way to go down from there, but sometime I'm going to try to get down there. People want to see me (that way?).

INTERVIEWER: How many people are in your tribe here, sir?

Raymond: Supposed to be two, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Two tribes of Sioux. How many are in the one that you belong to?

Raymond: Oh, there's quite a few of them...all my nephews (inaudible).

INTERVIEWER: All the Smokes. Do you have a tribal chief then?

Raymond: No chief. The chief died quite a while ago.

INTERVIEWER: He did. Who runs the tribe then?

Raymond: Well, I got a nephew that runs the tribe.

INTERVIEWER: That's Ernest.

Raymond: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a tribal council then that works with him or does he just do that alone pretty much?

Raymond: He does it alone, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Well, where do your people live? They live on that farm land out there some time and then some in the village here?

Raymond: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Is that all your tribe in this village or is there other people here, too?

A. It's all here.

INTERVIEWER: These are all in your tribe?

Raymond: (inaudible)

INTERVIEWER: He is.

Raymond: All belongs here.

INTERVIEWER: I see. They all belong to the same tribe. How many people are in the village here? 100 maybe or ...

Raymond: Oh, there's over a hundred.

INTERVIEWER: Over a hundred here. And do these people...where do they go to school, the kids.

Raymond: Kids...in town Portage.

INTERVIEWER: Into Portage. Do the men work in town here too then?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you folks ever have anything like powwows here or anything?

Raymond: Yes, we used to have them.

INTERVIEWER: You used to, but you don't anymore?

Raymond: Our last powwow was in '69.

INTERVIEWER: In 1969. You don't have them anymore. Do you have any singers around?

Raymond: Oh yeah. I'm one of them.

INTERVIEWER: You're one of the singers.

Raymond: I sing...went to Sisseton year ago, we was invited to a powwow.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you went down there. Do you ever go down to Fort Totten?

Raymond: Oh yeah, got relatives there, too.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you have there at Fort Totten?

Raymond: Um hmm. Got a sister-in-law and cousins and...

INTERVIEWER: What are some of their names?

Raymond: Ephraim Hill.

INTERVIEWER: Ephraim Hill. Oh, yes. How about Twin Buttes?

Raymond: Twin Buttes, I just have one cousin down there. He's from South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: I see, and anybody from Santee, Nebraska. Do you have any relatives from down there?

Raymond: Nebraska...well, we have some, but I don't know their names.

INTERVIEWER: You've lost track of them.

Raymond: Yeah, I've lost track of them. But I know in Nebraska we're supposed to have some friends up there.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that bunch of people that came up from Minnesota a hundred years ago, about how many Sioux came up here after that?

Raymond: Oh, quite a few. I couldn't tell you. They live around Portage, you know. After they got settled down some went up west from here.

INTERVIEWER: They did. Most of them settled around Portage here.

Raymond: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: I see, and there would have been a hundred or more....

Raymond: More.

INTERVIEWER: More than that. several hundred? Do you know whether or not Little Crow came with them?

Raymond: Little Crow? ..never heard of him.

INTERVIEWER: Any chiefs come up with them to stay?

Raymond: Oh, yeah. The chief he died I forget the deal. he died.

INTERVIEWER: Who was that?

Raymond: His name is... (P Ashe?) anyway.

INTERVIEWER: P Ashe?

Raymond: He's got a Sioux name. I think they name him....

INTERVIEWER: One chief came to stay with them...several hundred of them. Well, where did the rest of them go that didn't stay around here. out around Griswold, they didn't go that far did they?

Raymond: Oh yeah. Most of them went up west and they all live around here and up in the Lake, too.

INTERVIEWER: In the Lake area, too Lake Manitoba area. I see. When did they get on this reservation then?

Raymond: Oh, 1956. We used to live south of Portage, two miles south along the river. used to flood every year. We have to move and they found a place for us here to move.

INTERVIEWER: In 1956. That was when they founded this village then.

Raymond: That old village is pretty old. I don't know what year they moved them there.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when did you get the land down on the other side of the Saulteaux Reservation then, where I was this morning?

Raymond: 1929.

INTERVIEWER: 1929 and you've held that land. How much is that over there?

Raymond: Oh, at least two sections.

INTERVIEWER: Two sections. Is that tribal land?

Raymond: Oh, just government.

INTERVIEWER: Government. Do you own these homes here, too, or is this government?

Raymond: Government... everything government.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you folks get your medical attention? Do you...

Raymond: In town.

INTERVIEWER: You just go to the ordinary doctor there?

Raymond: Yeah, but the government doctor.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you do. Does the government help you up here like they do in the States at all?

Raymond: A little, not much.

INTERVIEWER: Not much. What kind of help do they give you?

Raymond: Oh, we get rations anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Do you?

Raymond: People that don't get jobs, well they help us out a little bit. But way up in 1920 (all of that?) the government never...

INTERVIEWER: Government never helped.

Raymond: 1922, they had a small pox, the whole village (inaudible...) the government to go.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, after the small pox, the government move in to help then.

Raymond: Before that people just used to live in (inaudible).

INTERVIEWER: They just kind of got along...farm a little bit and hunt and fish.

Raymond: No, they just hunt.

INTERVIEWER: Just hunt.

Raymond: Them days was good hunting.

INTERVIEWER: You remember those days.

Raymond: (inaudible) I'm 63 now.

INTERVIEWER: You're 63 now. Were you born and raised in that old village?

Raymond: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Down here, that's along the river, the Assiniboine.

Raymond: That's along the river, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You just hunted for a living and fished. Did you have much land to hunt on?

Raymond: Oh, we had all up north part way down 16 miles from here a big lake, Lake Manitoba.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you hunted and fished along there.

Raymond: Yeah, we trapped minks and muskrat, weasel.

INTERVIEWER: Oh my, how much did they bring you then?

Raymond: Quite a bit for fur. We used to get \$ 40.00 them day, but not now.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you sell them?

Raymond: Oh, Winnipeg, Hudson Bay.

INTERVIEWER: Hudson Bay bought them from you. I was born and raised on a mink ranch. I sold a lot of mink to Hudson Bay. Did you go to school here then, too?

Raymond: Yeah, I went to school, you see, you pass that big school there. It was an Indian school then.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, it was...where the Indian office is now?

Raymond: Yeah, down the street.

INTERVIEWER: Right here. Oh, I see.

Raymond: Along the lake there is a big school.

INTERVIEWER: That was an Indian school? How long did you go there?

Raymond: Oh, I didn't go there very far, I have to walk most of the time because I was the best worker, I didn't have much education, you know. Sometimes a whole week I never went, have to work on...got a farm...got four horses, cattle.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you worked for a farmer, did you?

Raymond: No, they had a farm there.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, the school had a farm.

Raymond: Most...some people...some kids there, they learned pretty good.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a boarding school?

Raymond: Yeah, it was a boarding school.

INTERVIEWER: How many years did most kids go there, just a few or...

Raymond: Oh, all around I think...all around the reserves. Look way down hundred miles north ... all coming here.

INTERVIEWER: They all came in to go to school here, yeah. Well when the government started to take over in 1922, what did they start to do then, bring you together in villages, or...

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: They did.

Raymond: outside, move into the village.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you probably know that down in South Dakota and Minnesota the tribes are starting industries of various kinds, do you have any kind of tribal industry here, or...

Raymond: No, just our...

INTERVIEWER: Just the land, huh?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Anybody here make arts and crafts or anything like that?

Raymond: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Beadwork and...Where do they sell that?

Raymond: Winnipeg.

INTERVIEWER: In Winnipeg. Do a little bit of that?

Raymond: My wife, she makes beadwork, too.

INTERVIEWER: Oh does she?

Raymond: Yeah. Sometimes we take it to Saint Michael.

INTERVIEWER: What does she make?

Raymond: Mukluks, jackets...beadwork jackets.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, she does?

Raymond: Yeah, and moccasins.

INTERVIEWER: Where is your wife from, or where are her people from? Is she the same tribe that you are?

Raymond: Oh, yeah...yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does she come from Sisseton area? Is that the same...?

Raymond: Oh yes. Her mother was... we all from South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: All from South Dakota. How about the young folks now? Do they all go to school here? Any of them get away to college now?

Raymond: Some of them, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does the government help with that?

Raymond: Well, yes...yeah, but some go to high school, but they don't get jobs like some white people.

INTERVIEWER: They don't?

Raymond: Nope.

INTERVIEWER: Is there quite a lot of feeling about that?

Raymond: Oh, yeah, there is.

INTERVIEWER: There is. My goodness. Do they go away much or do the folks and the kids stay here after they graduate.

Raymond: Oh, some go just around Winnipeg or Brandon.

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Smoke, do you ever write to the folks back in Prairie Island or Sisseton, do you keep in contact with them or...?

Raymond: Just Sisseton.

INTERVIEWER: Just Sisseton.

Raymond: The people want to see me down in Prairie Island but I have no way...I have no car. We used to go just as far as (here someplace?) and go in South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: Well, they have a big powwow about the Fourth of July down there every year. I'd like to see you down there.

Raymond: I been out to Twin Butte's celebration.

INTERVIEWER: You've been to Twin Butte's celebration?

Raymond: End of July first of August down in Twin Butte.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Raymond: They had one in Winnipeg that was a good one.

INTERVIEWER: Does that Indian Brotherhood do anything for you over there?

Raymond: Oh, they're trying now.

INTERVIEWER: What is that? Is that like our AIM (American Indian Movement) group of people...kind of an action group of people?

Raymond: Action group.

INTERVIEWER: Does it help to get jobs, or...

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do they have any members out here?

Raymond: Oh, one or two...one from Griswold and one from this Saulteaux tribe, the one big reserve that maybe you've seen here.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I drove through there this morning.

Raymond: It's Saulteaux.

INTERVIEWER: I see. They have one out there. Are there any other old folks here in the community you know like in their 60's and 70's or 80's?

Raymond: Three now. Who are they? But they don't know very much about...

INTERVIEWER: They don't?

Raymond: The ones that know more have died.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So most of the ones up here now just don't have any contact back there at the States anymore. I see.

Raymond: Way back 1920, my grandfather used to get letter from States, supposed to...people... Wahpeton in the tribe supposed to get money. They been fighting for that and when the small pox came and the (aim?) disappear. We never heard anything about it.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't?

Raymond: Now lately they started again.

INTERVIEWER: Trying to get money from the States...the government there?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they will?

Raymond: I wish. I got land up in Sisseton.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you do...you have land there. How much do you have?

Raymond: One hundred sixty acres, just, you know the Indian office.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Raymond: Across the road, by the highway close to the filling station.

INTERVIEWER: That big Mobile station there, down by the hospital.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get lease money for that?

Raymond: Well, no. I didn't find out for a long time. People that were related to my grandmother, they spend all the money and when they spend the money they turn to me (inaudible) learn not to talk. I got lease money from my first wife. She's got land up there, too.

INTERVIEWER: Your first wife is from there, too, I see. Does your wife have any land down there?

Raymond: The one she died in 1966. She's got land.

INTERVIEWER: Does this wife have land down there now?

Raymond: No.

INTERVIEWER: She doesn't have land there. Did you ever write to the government about your...

Raymond: Oh, I just wrote to Sisseton.

INTERVIEWER: To the Sisseton Agency?

Raymond: I got...three times I got money from there. He didn't tell me what's (the , you know the lease?) from the land, you know, we lease.

INTERVIEWER: You say that you get some rations from the government up here when you're not working. How much do they give you?

Raymond: Oh, just \$90.00...\$70.00 for...

INTERVIEWER: The month, huh?

Raymond: Yeah, for a family. That's not much.

INTERVIEWER: You've been working steadily then, haven't you?

Raymond: Oh, yeah. I've been working steadily.

INTERVIEWER: You work for the city?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Have you don't that a long time?

Raymond: Fifteen years.

INTERVIEWER: You have. What did you do before that? Were you a farmer?

Raymond: A farmer before.

INTERVIEWER: Now this morning I learned that a couple of your nephews are going to take over that land and start to farm it out there.

Raymond: Oh yes. I got nine nephews...nine boys.

INTERVIEWER: Nine boys.

Raymond: And one sister.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And who is it – Lawrence—is going to farm and who is the other one?

Raymond: Raymond.

INTERVIEWER: Raymond is...those two are going to farm it, huh? Do they do that for the tribe or are they going to...

Raymond: Oh, they do that for the tribe.

INTERVIEWER: They had to buy their own machinery, huh?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's quite a job out there.

Raymond: Got three boys and three girls of my own.

INTERVIEWER: You have three boys and three...are they here in the village with you?

Raymond: Yeah, its two houses over there. My girl is away from here. One lives east of town...got a filling station...and one lives on the Long Plain Reserve.

INTERVIEWER: One lives on the reserve, one in town, her husband has a filling station.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And the three boys live here with you and their families.

Raymond: And one...my daughter lives....

INTERVIEWER: And you have a daughter who lives here. Where do these folks work?

Raymond: Well my son-in-law works with me and my boy...my two boys one boy is crippled lives over there.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So your son-in-law works with you in town and you have three boys with families here.

Raymond: Two boys with me.

INTERVIEWER: Two boys that work with you. They all work for the city, too.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does that pay pretty well?

Raymond: Oh, we get two dollars and 33 cents an hour.

INTERVIEWER: Is that pretty steady work now?

Raymond: Just like a season.

INTERVIEWER: Seasonal work like in the summer?

Raymond: Summer, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And in the wintertime you have to make it without?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does the school bus come out here to pick up the kids?

Raymond: Oh, just the town bus.

INTERVIEWER: The town bus comes out.

Raymond: But they going elect the chiefs and the councils this village and that reserve up there together.

INTERVIEWER: Together you're going to elect a chief and councillors. How often do you have tribal elections?

Raymond: Well, we never had one...this is the first time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, this'll be the first time. How did you pick the chiefs before?

Raymond: Well, they vote.

INTERVIEWER: Just vote, but now you're going to have an election and elect a chief and a council for the first time.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What's their relationship to the government, then? Will they...will that mean self-government for you?

Raymond: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: It will. You'll take over your affairs.

Raymond: Yeah. The boys will take over get our own money to live on for school, everything.

INTERVIEWER: They turn all that over to the council, then, when you get that?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

Raymond: We'll have some bookkeepers, (time?) keepers in the council and a chief. We should have had that long ago.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Never had that before.

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Will you have some kind of constitution? Do you think, or...

Raymond: Um hmm.

INTERVIEWER: You will like they do back in the States?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. When is that going to start, next year or this year?

Raymond: We're waiting for a letter from (Ottawa?).

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Raymond: It'll be here any time now.

INTERVIEWER: As soon as you get it, you'll form your tribal government?

Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know how many people are in the tribe altogether?

Raymond: No.

INTERVIEWER: I heard there are 80 down there. How many do you figure in the village?

Raymond: Oh, we had a book somewhere, but I don't know. My daughter, she knows more people here...knows them all. See me, I work all the time, I don't...

INTERVIEWER: Don't know them well. What do you figure, maybe 150 here or....

Raymond: Something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Something like that. So you'd have about maybe 250 in the whole tribe.

Raymond: Raymond: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see. I was trying to get some idea of how big it was.

ADDED NOTE: I want to add an interviewer's note to this tape. Mr. Smoke was rather difficult to interview. I went into the interview with some information and I had to lead him most of the way because he's either hesitant or perhaps his memory is fading. But I. he is known around the tribe as being the chief repository of information about the tribe. And from him I gather that these people are Wahpeton rather than Mdewakanton for the most part. A couple of things I learned in addition or observed in addition, he talked about the old village where the Indians were brought together where they had lived prior to 1956. That's about 2 miles south of Portage La Prairie along the river.

There now exists a dam above that point which controls the flooding and when they removed they were positioned west of the dam or upstream on the Assiniboine River from the dam approximately one half mile; so today the new village exists above the dam where there is no flood problem. From casual observation, though, I could not see the whole village and the woods at the same time. It appears that there are about 15 to 20 houses. Now these houses are old and small. They appear to be no more than two...three rooms at the most. Their quality is less than that on the average reservation. Out on the other half of the reserve, the country half..the two sections on the southwest edge of the Saulteaux Reservation...there are some of the same type of houses, but there are a number of new ones put up with the support of the government. A man puts up 135 dollars and the government supplies the labour and a man can have a new three-bedroom home built out there with electricity and modern conveniences, but there are none of those homes in the village. They're all older and small and rather run down in condition. Not too desirable housing; cramped quarters, they are very close together in a little village here in the woods. Now in the Indian school he talked about, it's a large stone building positioned along the lake on the south edge of Portage, yet traditionally operated as an Indian boarding school. Today it doesn't any longer; but it does function in two different ways. For one thing, it houses the Indian Affairs Bureau here—the Portage branch --- and in addition, it serves as a boarding place for Indian children who go to school in the public schools. They no longer attend school out there, but they board in the old school buildings and they go into town every morning to the public school and return there in the evening.

Frank Eastman

Tape 846

INTERVIEWER: Just start out tell me where you were born and how old you are and where you were educated, first of all.

Frank: I was born on this Oak Lake Reserve here 46 years ago, born here. And my mother, she was born here too. My dad is from Sioux Valley, before he came to this reserve here some 40 years ago I guess. I was brought up here and then I went to a residential school in Brandon. I spend a good many years there, at Brandon Indian Residential School. After I came out of school, my dad was farming here at that time, so when I quit school here I came home and I worked out for a while. At the same time I was going to take over my dad's farm, so since then I've been farming here ever since. I farm and then I work out at the same time, out at (inaudible) . And I've been on the band council for full three terms before, and I've been the chief a couple times before. And this last year again I was back on this council, one of the band councils at Oak Lake Reserve here. And this is the first time, this year that Oak Lake Reserve is going into you call this self-government. And pretty well, the reserve is taking over doing their own business. So that's how we've been doing, and I think it's working out better than what it has been working before.

INTERVIEWER: Before was there an Indian agent involved?

Frank: Yes, there was an Indian agent involved. He comes to visit here, oh, every week or every...twice a week he comes around and meets with the chief and the councillors and see if the reserve has any problems if we want anything, any requests for anything. We have to take it up to the Indian agent and take it back to the superintendent there before things can be tried out, before we can get what we are asking for. But now everything is up to the chief and the council, more like we decide what we should be

doing on the reserve. We've only got what you call this local government advisor; he's from Brandon, he comes out here every weekend to see what we are doing and if we got anything that needs to be done, if we need any advice we ask him to see if it's right, and if he knows that it's not right then he'd tell us. When we do something and we're not quite decided if we should do that or not, we ask him, and he tells us. But he won't tell us what we are supposed to do; we're the ones that are supposed to be doing it. Unless we ask him or I think that is the best way to do things. So I think we're better than we were in the years before. It has been getting better every year; things are changing every year and things are moving faster than what they've been moving before.

INTERVIEWER: You have one elected chief and two elected councilmen. How many people is on the tribal rolls here, the band roll?

Frank: Two hundred and eighty-four.

INTERVIEWER: You are elected every two years is that?

Frank: Two years.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of things are you doing here now? What is the normal business of the band government? Do you provide the bus transportation and road maintenance, that kind of thing?

Frank: Yes, we've been doing that, transporting the kids from here to Virden; it's some 20 miles up north here, another bigger town there. That's where all the children are going to school there, kindergarten, junior and there's even a collegiate to the kids even going up to Grade 12, going to school there. So we provide all that and we got one big school bus and three other small ones, been going here and back every day. And I've been doing some farming and some of the Reserve here and the land has been leased to the non-Indians off the reserve. But when the time comes, when lease expires, and with more of this

local government taking over now, the land we'd like to be farmed by the Indian, from the reserve like when this land leases out.

INTERVIEWER: You have four sections all together don't you?

Frank: Yes, four sections.

INTERVIEWER: How do most of the family heads support their families? Do they drive off to get jobs?

Frank: Yeah. The reserve is not too big a reserve for more of the labour that's been going on the reserve. They've got to go out to get jobs around the reserve. But some boys have been working on the construction maybe over to some other city, and they live there and they work. But some here on the reserve only go out to get jobs, it's more of a just a summer job in the winter time. The chief and council provide a winter work program which we did last winter. We had all the men working on the winter work program in the winter time cutting the cord wood. And we have some courses set up on the reserve, doing carpentry course and things like that to keep the man employed like through the winter months. Because the winter months is the hardest part of the year to get jobs, not very many jobs in the winter time around here. Because it's not like some other places; there's no factories or industries or saw mill or nothing around where we live around here see. It's pretty hard for us to get a steady job. The year round, work on the farm, why they only work in the summer, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Do people here get any support from the government or any kind of welfare help, those that can't get jobs?

Frank: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You have apparently done a lot of work on housing in the last ten years or so, haven't you?

Frank: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How does that work—the construction of homes? Do people pay for it themselves or is that a government?

Frank: That's from the government. The government is getting housing for each Reserve every year. They build houses according to the population on each Reserve. Like Sioux Valley, there's a big population, and they built so many houses there. Here we're about only 284 or something, population, we generally build about 3 houses or 4 houses every year. The houses were given to the one that got the poorest houses and they make the applications. It will go according to if a man in a family has employment and he's working, well he has to pay for the new houses. They pay \$135, they pay that much and then they build them a new house. And if it's a woman and she's a widow or living alone with kids, well she pays \$25 and they build her a house; and that's how it works. And if somebody needs a new house, you make an application. Some applications come out, and they have to ask for these application forms. You fill out the application and make your payment, \$135. Sometimes if we're building three houses and there's more than three people who are on the list that have paid. They have to go according to a list we got. Suppose one man, he wants a house but couldn't pay them at the present time. We set a deadline for payment, and if one man can't pay well maybe the next one has the money, he pays the money and we build the house. So that's how we've been working and we've been building houses every year, and it's pretty well everybody want one has a good house. We're going to build another three houses again this year. We're still waiting for the material to get here, the material comes from Winnipeg.

INTERVIEWER: These are three or four bedroom homes that you build?

Frank: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you put well in with them?

Frank: Yes there's a well for the house.

INTERVIEWER: It isn't far to water here?

Frank: Well there's some places you have to go about 16 feet or 18 in some areas. In some places it's not that deep. In my house here I got a (sand? Inaudible) about 16 feet.

INTERVIEWER: Driving across here I've seen three types of houses here. There's some old log houses here yet standing. These must be some of the originals.

Frank: Oh yes, way back in early, I remember when I first quit school I got out of school there, I quit school, it was the year 1943. When I quit school there, and at that time there was still a lot of log houses. A lot of people, most of them were still living in the log houses at that time when I first quit school. But then every year since then it's been gradually getting houses every year and so on. Now I don't think anybody on the reserve is living in the log houses now.

INTERVIEWER: What about medical facilities for the reserve? How do people get treatment when they are sick here?

Frank: They go to the hospital. We're right in the middle of a good place here, because Virден here – that's north here, about 18 miles from here – Virден has got a great big community hospital there and clinic there with three doctors there to serve that community hospital. And then over west there, the town of Reston is about 11 miles, is another hospital there and we got two doctors there too. Over south here, another 20 miles here, is another town Melita, there's another hospital there with another doctor there. So we've been served around here by three ways we can go to any of the hospitals there. If it's emergency, they got an ambulance there and we just can call the ambulance and the ambulance can come out and will take the patient to the hospital. If they want to get there in emergency, well they just call the ambulance. And then the people can make an appointment if they want to see the doctor. And we got a field nurse here from Brandon. She comes out here every Wednesday and she visits around homes and

sees the children. If any needs dental care or eye test or something, they got a special place in Brandon where they make appointments. They go down to Brandon and have their appointment. And the reserve has a fund that can pay you, anybody has no transportation, there's always somebody with a car that can pay the mileage, transportation to take these people down to Brandon to have their appointment. If it's either Virден or Reston we pay all the mileage, the band pays for that, we have no problem of medical in that line we're alright.

INTERVIEWER: I gather it isn't like it is in the States where they have special Indian hospitals, but you just go to a doctor of your own choice.

Frank: Yeah, that's much better.

INTERVIEWER: How about recreation, do you have summertime recreation here for the kids?

Frank: Well we have ball games and that's about the main thing we have in the summer time, is kids playing ball. And some go to the camp in the summer time, one week camp at some lakes around here. More of these camps are for a Bible camp or something, most of the kids will be away for a week or so. In the winter time, hockey is another main sport we have around here. We have a big boys hockey team here, Senior, and of course the smaller boys playing hockey. Some of these boys are going to school in Virден. They play with the Virден hockey team and some in Reston. And they got a team here of their own. Everything is all, they are always doing something one thing to the end. There is another thing going on, like we're having hockey all winter; then when hockey is over, they start playing ball gain through the summer, things like that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you run the summer time powwow in this reserve?

Frank: Oh yes, we have it every year. This year we don't know what time we are going to have it.

But we have it every year. It's always in Sioux Valley here, and we have quite a time trying to get organized so we don't have the same weekend as some other. We have to kind of work that out, so that there'd be one weekend here and one weekend someplace else, and we have more crowds that way.

INTERVIEWER: I hear that you just had a big one over at Sioux Valley last weekend. Was that Sioux Valley?

Frank: No, that's Prince Albert, they had one. No, Sioux Valley's celebration is coming up in the third weekend of July. That's when they usually have it, so they are going to have it in the third week of July.

INTERVIEWER: Do you meet many people from the States up at these powwows?

Frank: Oh yes, there's quite a lot of people come from the states here every year from here and Sioux Valley and different other places here. Some come from North Dakota and South Dakota and Montana, and sometimes from Oklahoma and all those different states. We're drawing quite a crowd up here for some of these celebrations going on.

INTERVIEWER: Do you folks get down there then?

Frank: Oh yes we go down there to Poplar, Montana, the big celebration down there, and down to Utah and White Shield, North Dakota and Sisseton, those towns, and all those big celebrations.

INTERVIEWER: You talked about going to Brandon school. What do you remember about that school? What kinds of things did you study? That would have been in the '30's, wouldn't it?

Frank: Yes, that was in the 30's there when I went to school there. Well I went to school there when I was quite small then. I didn't know too much, in fact, I didn't know a word of English

when I went to school. There have been some boys, Sioux boys, from here that were going to school there before like, so when I went to school I didn't know a word of English. But then I would go around with these boys here that had been going to school, and that's how I kind of got to get around with what I was supposed to do and that. But there's been a lot of changes since that time when I first went to school and then today what they're going to school now. When I first went to school there, we'd leave around the end of August here. School started the first of September, and we'd leave here about the end of August. We'd go back to school there, well I was just a small boy, but when I grew up I had to do a lot of work there because the Indian Residential School was running a big farm. They got over 100 head of cattle, a lot of horses, all the crops put in, that's all done by horses. They only had one small tractor at that time, horses doing most of the farm work. And we milked about 20 cows and boys have to do all the milking. There were so many boys going to school there. I'd say about over 100 going to school there, boys and girls were over 100. And there's an intermediate junior and intermediate senior classroom and there's so many grades that they can't go to school all the day, just only half a day. When I got up to about Grade 4 and 5, well I have to go to school only half a day. And the other half a day supposing that I was supposed to go to school in the morning, well they put me on a work milking, so I can get the milking done before breakfast. When I finished milking, well after breakfast, well then I go to school in the morning. And then after dinner I don't go to school. I have to go out and do some work around the farm there at the school. And when you get up to certain grades then they might change it around and you don't go to school in the morning, you go to school in the afternoon. It changed around like that. And then when we go there, like when we go back there in August, we don't get home for holidays until the end of June when school is over. So we never see our parents, unless they go to see us at the school; that's the only way we can see our parents. But, we can't come home. Its different today, some are going to school at some residential school,

and Easter holidays and Christmas holidays they come home. Some even come home for weekends. In those days when I went to school, there was nothing like that; we go back in the fall, we don't get back until June, that's how they worked it.

INTERVIEWER: How many years were you there Frank?

Frank: There?

INTERVIEWER: At the school, do you remember?

Frank: Well I'd been there for seven years (...) because for some reason they didn't send me to school earlier at that time. Nowadays, you have to go to school when you are six years old or something; but I was older than that when I came to school. At that time I guess the government or something wasn't too particular about somebody reaching so much years that you have to go to school. At that time I guess they weren't that strict about it. For some reason I didn't go, they didn't send me to school early at that time. So I was kind of a bigger boy when I went to school, when I first went to school. But anyway I worked pretty hard, and went to school at the same time. I think it's better; in that way doing both I think it's better for me, because I went to school and at the same time I was working on the farm at the school. So I know more about farming and how to work and all that stuff. It was kind of more experience for me, like for working and going to school at the same time, it was kind of learning them both at the same time. So when I came home, I was ready to work. When I came home, quit school and came home. I start to work, do a little bit about farming around here.

INTERVIEWER: You think it did you good then?

Frank: At that time I think it done me good, but I think on the other hand now, nowadays the way things are changing and everything today it's a lot better than what it was at that time. Because

in my time there, you quit school when you were 16 years old. They only allow you to go to school, I mean when you reach 16 you quit school. When you go to residential school, when you're 16 years old, well you graduate and come home; you can't stay there no more. Because there's more coming in and there's no more to go, so when you reach 16, why you quit school. No matter you might be at Grade 10 or 11 or 9 why you quit school then and that's it. Some might come home and work, and they don't make too much use of their education. But nowadays it don't matter how old you are if you can to keep going to school. Keep going up one grade why it's open all the way. You can go to school and go up to grade 12, and if you want to go to a university or college and taking up courses and anything, the government has that all open for the Indians to get ahead if they want to. But at that time there wasn't too much; I don't think there was much of that at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Your own kids go to the public schools don't they?

Frank: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do they hope to go to college, some of them?

Frank: They don't say, but they like going to school. They started out by going to school here on this Reserve. They've been going to school here but then they went to Virden. And I think that's a great thing because it's all get mixed up with the white children and non-Indians, they play together and they have more recreation in Virden today, going out there, because a lot of things coming up. During Christmas, the Christmas play and the Christmas concert and things like that. There's always something to look forward to. My kids, they'll be glad when Christmas is coming, they want to be in the concert, and going to have a Christmas party, and all that. When that's over, Christmas holidays and New Year's, and Valentine's and Easter. Next they are looking forward to Easter and Easter holidays. And after that, summer holidays. They're really enjoying it and at the same time

they're learning a lot more than I think that I learned here, when they were going to school here on the Reserve I think. In the evening the kids come home and they bring back their homework and the first thing they do after supper is they have to get busy and start doing their homework. They got it all finished because when they go to school the next day, the teacher has to come around and check all the homework that they are supposed to do. So that's the reason why they are interested, and they have to get these done. They're interested and they get at it and get done with everything.

INTERVIEWER: More interest now than before?

Frank: More than they were before.

INTERVIEWER: When did they close the school here? That's a band house isn't it? That old school?

A. I can't really recall when they closed it. Must be about, I wouldn't say how many years it's been going, it must be closed 50's I think, somewhere in there. And then the school was turned into a band office using that. The kids going to school in Virden mixed with white kids and they'd be talking in there, and they come home, they don't hardly hear them talking their language. They've been talking English all the time and even at home, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Can they talk Indian, your kids?

Frank: Oh yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: You bring them up that way?

Frank: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: A couple of things I am curious about. I haven't seen any cattle around the reserve.

Frank: No this is one place, we haven't got any here.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever?

Frank: No I don't think so. Way back in the earlier part of the time, the older generation when my grandfather was here – they had a few cattle. But not since then; there wasn't any on this reserve. This is a smaller reserve, and all the land is more of grain farming. There wasn't too much pasture land like that, so that's the reason why. We did have quite a few horses one time too, but now the horses are kind of dying out, and you don't hardly see any horses on the reserve. The only horses you see, my dad here, he has a team across there and Arthur Young over there.

INTERVIEWER: I thought I saw he had a few.

Frank: They're the only ones that got horses. Probably they are the only two people you see going someplace in a wagon today. Arthur Young still goes to town in a wagon and a team, but he's the only one that you see like that. The rest have just cars I guess for transportation.

INTERVIEWER: I gather your dad kind of likes the horses?

Frank: He like horses, he always likes to keep horses, and he has me keeping horses all the time. Oh he hitches up the team once in awhile and goes some places, he just likes driving the team there.

INTERVIEWER: Another thing I am curious about, I notice on the arm of your chair some bead work. Is there much of that around the reserve?

Frank: This? Yeah, quite a bit of it's been going around here. Quite a lot of beading work going around here. Some ladies been doing that even some younger girls are interested in making their own costumes. I got two boys here. One of them has a new outfit there they're making for him to use this summer. There's a handicraft in Brandon, the Indian Handicraft they call it, they're buying a lot of this bead work. They even have their own handicraft in Sioux Valley.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah I saw it in Brandon at the old school.

Frank: They have their own handicraft there. And then there's one in Brandon there that's run by non-Indians. They are buying all the bead work and necklace and that you know, moccasins and mukluks and belts, slippers and anything that you can think of. They buy it there, and they sell it out.

INTERVIEWER: It's a lot of work isn't it?

Frank: The cost on them, it costs quite a bit. A lot of work that too.

INTERVIEWER: Was your wife raised here too Frank?

Frank: Yes, she was born here too on the reserve. But she didn't go to school where I went to school, she went to Saskatchewan at Lebret residential School, she went to school there.

INTERVIEWER: How did they determine which residential school you went to?

Frank: Well they go by, that's a Catholic residential school and this is a Protestant. She's a Catholic, so she went to school there.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a choice where you could go?

Frank: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think that covers the main things I wanted to ask you Frank. I appreciate it.

Frank: I'm glad I could talk with you.

Tom Benn

Tape 841

INTERVIEWER: June 22 at Birdtail Reserve in Manitoba. Herbert Hoover the interviewer. Several questions I want to ask you about yourself. First of all, were you born here, Mr. Benn.

Tom: Oh yes, I was born here, since 1900 I was born. I was born in Birtle District municipality.

INTERVIEWER: You lived here all your life?

Tom: Oh yes, I lived here all my life, never go nowhere.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you go to school in Birtle then?

Tom: Yes, I was going to school in Birtle, yeah, for four years. I was going to school since 1914, started Germany's war, you know. That started in 1914, and it quit in 1918, four years war there. Canadians and Germany, the First World War. On Second World War my boy Wallace, boys went to war and he got killed over there.

INTERVIEWER: He did?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: One of them, or more than one?

Tom: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: One boy?

Tom: Just one boy.

INTERVIEWER: One boy.

Tom: He was the oldest boy, you know, had went overseas and got killed over there.

INTERVIEWER: How many children did you have Mr. Benn?

Tom: Uh, well, I had two wives you know. The first wife, that's the one, the boy went overseas.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: I had two wives, you know, I must be a good -bull (sic)... anyone (Laughing).

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: First wife I got four boys and four girls. Just today, only one boy living. He lives down to...lives down to Isabelle.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes.

Tom: Yeah, the second wife I had four boys and four girls again.

INTERVIEWER: Looks like you had a big family.

Tom: Yeah, big family...sixteen all together.

INTERVIEWER: I see, my goodness. Did your parents come from the States or were they born up here, your father and mother?

Tom: Well no, they born in Canada. But my grandfather came out from United States, you know. I heard they skipped away from that, they had a locked war over there I guess. He was fighting them, that was Sioux Indians, Crees and the half-breeds all together they were fighting in there (*Riel Rebellion?), and I guess in the States there's a head man in that war there name is ah, John McArthur. John McArthur, he is head man from the war, you know, and he was a fighting (inaudible)... in 1940 a fella come from the States looking for, what tribe is that who killed him you know, Indian or Sioux or Cree or what Indian, you know. He come and he wants to find out you know, but I guess he hide I don't know (laughing).

INTERVIEWER: What tribe did your grandfather belong to? Do you know down there?

Tom: Well he's Sioux Indian anyway...but I couldn't say what...

INTERVIEWER: Did he ever tell you about how he got up here and the story of how he, you know, the troubles he had along the way or anything?

Tom: Well he told me he slipped away from there after the war, you know. He's running away from there you know. He's come to Canada, you know, he's running all the way from, from Canada so...

INTERVIEWER: Did he go to Portage first, is that where he went or...?

Tom: Well, I don't know where he went anywhere first place you know. He come down. But anyway he got married down here that's what my dad's born from here you know.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, he got married over here?

Tom: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was your grandmother Sioux too?

Tom: Well, half of a, half Saulteaux like you know.

INTERVIEWER: Half Saulteaux.

Tom: His mother's, my grandmother is a Saulteaux from Rosburn (*Waywayweecappo?) .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: So that's how, but his father is a Sioux, you know.

INTERVIEWER: You, have you been a farmer most of your life, Mr. Benn?

Tom: Farming? Oh yes, I had a farm in this field, run way over there. Oh I quit that for three years ago.

INTERVIEWER: You did? How much did you farm?

Tom: Oh, about 160 acres, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When did you start farming that?

Tom: Well, I start farming since 1918. 1918 I was farming, but the crop is not very good so I quit then. I went out Isabella and (Decker?). I worked out for farmers for the cutting grain with binders, you know and so we had to scoop that, you know. So I got a job over there for, lasted over the five years since I got on that job, you know. After five years I come back on the (reserve?) again.

INTERVIEWER: You farmed until three years ago?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What did you raise, wheat mostly or...?

Tom: Well, what do you mean?

INTERVIEWER: Did you raise wheat and barley and oats?

Tom: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I sow wheat and oats, just oats, no barley.

INTERVIEWER: Were you farming during the '30's, the Depression years-Back in the Depression?

Tom: Yes, yes, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about those years?

Tom: Oh, well I was just, this time you know, they used to use the threshing machine and the separator and all that, you know. Tractors and all that and scoop chains, but now there is, is a, just a combinenow.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, different.

Tom: Uh huh, it's different now.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any crops during the '30's, the Depression years?

Tom: Oh, well now, well it's the dry years, we never have no crops at all. Just, just like straw you know that (inaudible) hot warm dry days and burn all the crops, of course, all these years now farming, you know. You see what it's like there? All that land up there, all these here, all these just on the bottom you know. Its heavy land you know.

INTERVIEWER: Eli Bunn's there.

Tom: Yes, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: This isn't very good up there?

Tom: No, no, no. It's only good for I think is a (fertilizer it's?) good for up here you know.

INTERVIEWER: If you fertilize it, would it go?

Tom: Oh yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What did, what did you live on during the '30's when you didn't have any crops?

Tom: Who?

INTERVIEWER: Well, your whole family, did you have to hunt or how did you get food during those hard years?

Tom: Well, we had to, we had to hunt deers and anything to eat, you know, anything, ducks and all that you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: That's how I make my living, you know, I was talking about have no job, no way to get money any way you know; when you got to have hard living anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I guess. Are most of your children here or have they moved away for the most part?

Tom: No, no, no, no.

INTERVIEWER: They still live here?

Tom: Yeah, they are still here. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do they, can they find work?

A. Oh well, they...lots of jobs now, but lots of jobs now. They work always in the, in the, they work in the school and they work out on the farm and all that. But they all grow big now, you know. One right here, and one right here and my daughter lives in that new house there and one up north, my big boy is driving a van, yeah. They make pretty good living anyway.

INTERVIEWER: They have to go out, though, and get jobs.

Tom: Yeah, oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: No work on the reserve?

Tom: No, no, well, just in the school, you know. There's some boys working at that school there, fixing up the school and some of them making...digging wells, you know, by the houses you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, they are putting in wells around the houses?

Tom: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Them fellows are supposed to come and dig well for me today but I don't know why that woman gets that well you know? I got a well down here but they said it's no good... , that's a spring you know?

INTERVIEWER: Well, this house is not very old, is it?

Tom: No, no, just in the 1970's.

INTERVIEWER: 1970's?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: There's about three bedrooms?

Tom: Yes, yes, yeah, oh—four bedrooms.

INTERVIEWER: Four bedrooms in there?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And they are going to put in a well for you?

Tom: I guess so.

INTERVIEWER: Where did your children go to school?

Tom: Well, the school in Birtle.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they take them down there to the public schools?

Tom: Yeah, yeah. Well, the first time before they to public school you know that, there's a school way up beside that church. Do you see that building?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

Tom: Well, that's what used to be done with the children, that school. One driver. I used to drive the school bus for my children, go around by the houses and collect all the boys and girls and take them to school there, every day.

INTERVIEWER: That's where the band office is, isn't it?

Tom: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: When did they stop that? Do you remember when they closed that school?

Tom: It was quite a while ago now, about six, seven years.

INTERVIEWER: And now they all go down to Birtle?

Tom: Oh yes, they all go down to Birtle now, oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get much help from the Canadian government? Do they, do they help you at all?

Tom: No.

INTERVIEWER: They don't?

Tom: No, we used to before, before I was a pensioner, you know. I used to get relief and all that, you know, but not now, when I'm on pension. They don't give me no relief.

INTERVIEWER: No relief?

Tom: No, no, no.

INTERVIEWER: Did your father ever talk to you about how this reservation was established here, how it all started right here?

Tom: Yes, he talked. He talks about this some, some kind of story about they come out, how to (inaudible) the Assiniboine, the Assiniboine he says, was just about narrow, narrow the first time you know. But every spring its, there's flooding in that water you know, that river you know. It's caved in like and getting wider every time, every year...well, now it's wide, you know, that river-Assiniboine River. First time my dad come in here, he says, that a steam boat worked

from here to Lazure, St. Lazare right through that to Brandon, hauling that cord wood. I guess they buy cord wood down there, so they start loading up, he's working that steam boat, and they were loading that up with wood and they take it back to Brandon. I guess, hauling wood up there you know, cord wood. That's what he told me, I know...

INTERVIEWER: Well, when, when did they start to live here, the Sioux people of right here at Birdtail, do you know?

Tom: Well, I wasn't born at that time, I don't know when. I was born in 1900, you know. So I, before that I guess, I don't know when they give this reserve like, you know. But they are supposed to ... (government?) give this reserve, every reserve you know and my grandfather Sioux Benn he told me, he says, you come in this Canada. He said he heard a story of Sioux Indians. Sioux Indians way down in (back, Quebec?). The third, those Indians there, a fellow named is named Columbus and he was going on a boat you know, there's a (lake?) over there I guess. When they travelling by boat you know, and he found the Indians down Quebec, that was the Sioux Indians, the first time to see the Sioux Indians, the Indians, Columbus they call that fellow and they went in there and there was a kind of bush like you know in that, on that lake there. Some Indians come around and had a paddle, some kind of, not paddle, but they used to. Yet don't have no paddle at that time, you know. They're making their own wooden basket you know. They make baskets and they use that for carrying some things and I don't know how it worked out but anyway, so they had a big, big baskets, round ones you know. He seen some Indian woman close along there, she was talking to that Columbus, he was talking to the Indians and while the, some woman was walking there when the, something, the leaves were about that high. They just out there and they pulled it out; it was a big potatoes in there, yeah. So they picked him up and filled his basket up and they went away. So Columbus, he seen one, "What is those in there?" "Are they good to eat?" Well, yes, so this fellow says, "Ah your people dig some

_____ about 10 or 15 bags, I'm going to take it home. If I plant them they will grow?" He says, "yeah". So that's what they all start all over the world now is the potato now.

INTERVIEWER: It is?

Tom: That's where they come, that's where...the come.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

Tom: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: That what my grandfather Sioux Benn told me anyway, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have relatives at the other reservations, like Sioux Valley or, your cousins there or uncles or...?

Tom: Oh yes, he told me he was a Blacksmith, he is my cousin.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, he is your cousin?

Tom: He's my cousin, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Tom: Yeah, but my old ones, the first cousin I had is down state, his name is Pretty Big Eagle in Crow Creek.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, is that in Crow Creek?

Tom: Crow Creek. He's got a, he's got sugar diabetes and they cut off his leg. I don't know if he's living or not, but I write to him about 2 months ago and he never answer. He was down in Rapid City, you know where's Rapid City?

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes, Rapid City.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: The hospital, yes.

Tom: That's where he is, but I don't where he is now, maybe he died.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I see.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What are there, about 200 people here?

Tom: I guess so.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

Tom: I guess. I don't know, pretty close to 200 anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, are the mostly young people or...?

Tom: Well, it's all the Sioux you know.

INTERVIEWER: All ages.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What do the young people do here? Do they have any, any chance to get out and work or...?

Tom: Oh yeah, they all get a chance to work. Well, they, the farmers come along and pick them fellows up and made them work, you know, picking stones all out, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Do they still do some of that?

Tom: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I notice you got some horses out here.

Tom: Who?

INTERVIEWER: You do.

Tom: Oh yes, I got three horses here; I got three horses in the back of there.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

Tom: Yeah I always have, keep them. I always have three horses since I was born, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you work them anymore?

Tom: No, no, no. I just got one eye. Besides, it doesn't work.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, it doesn't work?

Tom: No, blind, blind...Just got one eye. Yeah, pretty soon I'll lose my eye, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: You are cutting some cord wood out there? How much do they sell for, those posts?

Tom: Well, I just...we never make cord wood out here but just, you know...pickets, you know, posts, fence posts.

INTERVIEWER: Fence posts?

Tom: Yeah, we sell them at 18 cents you know, but the (farmers?) busy, we got less than \$10 (inaudible) posts.

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to ask you about that log cabin back there.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Does that, did somebody live there before, or...?

Tom: No, well, I lived there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you?

Tom: I mean, I build that, standing there for 10 years now, more than 10 years.

INTERVIEWER: Without anybody in it?

Tom: No, nobody there.

INTERVIEWER: When did you build that?

Tom: Oh, that was 1955 I think.

INTERVIEWER: 1955, and you lived there.

Tom: Yeah, it's still there, that's all that. The logs are some black poplar.

INTERVIEWER: Black poplar, yeah.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah.

Tom: Yeah, that's the first time I lived in that log house, you know.

INTERVIEWER: And you lived there until about 1965?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Tom: Then I started getting my... my pension when I was 65 you know. They build that house for me too, that's the first time I had at that house there. That house is just way on the other side of that house there. My mother used to live over there. That's when we pulling in here, my mother used to live there.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you moved it over here?

Tom: Yeah, I moved it over here but my sister wants to look after. ... He's getting old now so my mother she moved on and left the house here, so one of my boys lives in there now.

INTERVIEWER: Oh I see.

Tom: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You get a pension from the government now, do you?

Tom: Oh yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, how much does that come to usually?

Tom: Well, oh, I'm getting \$130.05 every month I get.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you do?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's better than in the States. They don't get that much back there.

Tom: No? Oh.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's better.

Tom: Well, they said they are going to raise up this month again. I will be up to \$12 to raise again.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they will?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You start that when you are 65?

Tom: Well, I didn't get that. I maybe I will get it next Monday, I think. Sometimes maybe I will get that money, more money next month, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: I want to ask you too, I, somebody was picking Seneca root the other day.

Tom: Where was this?

INTERVIEWER: Down here I saw one of the boys that...

Tom: Well, that's my boy lives here, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, here?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What is that... that Seneca root?

Tom: Well, Seneca was made out of some kind of a medicine I guess. That's where they buy it at Winnipeg. He got quite a bit. He send it down to,

he send it down to Winnipeg. I don't know it is worth, \$2 and \$2.80 I think a pound.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that grows wild around here.

Tom: Oh yes, yeah, they dry them first before they sell it you know.

INTERVIEWER: They dry the root?

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

Tom: In South Dakota, some people, they're Sisseton, you know and some Wakpeton they call it.

INTERVIEWER: That would be over in Minnesota, wouldn't it?

Tom: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Tom: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, well that's...

End of Tape

Vernon Mazawasicuna and Pete Whitecloud

Tape 795

This tape is made at band headquarters at Sioux Valley Indian Reservation, nine miles north of Griswold in Manitoba, on the 30th day of October, 1971, interviewer Herbert Hoover. The informants are two: Chief Vernon Mazawasicuna and band administrator, Pete Whitecloud.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That's a...he's a... he translates, but it's very hard because the dialects are different.

Well, I'd like to start, or I think the best thing to do is to start with yourself. We're always interested in the person. You said that you think your background is Sisseton.

Vern: Yes, this is what my grandmother...she's from Sisseton. The state, this is what my grandparents...

INTERVIEWER: Come in and sit down.

Vern: Sit down, sit down. As I started telling you, Peter White Cloud was the band administrator... his wife (inaudible).

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

Vern: So, you know...

INTERVIEWER: We're restarting to make a tape, here. You said that your people came from the Sisseton area, most of them, do you know how they...how they got here or when?

Vern: Well, the course of appreciation has been the band went to a meeting so...well in Saskatchewan which told many of the different stories, some moved up here, around the Canada area, North Battleford (inaudible) it was okay. And then one terrible year they were short of

food in North Dakota...that area in South Dakota. Back in there some people moved from (inaudible) up towards the South Dakota area and next in the North (inaudible) and towards... they moved around.

INTERVIEWER: I see. They've been in this area ever since.

Vern: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When was this reservation founded, do you know?

Vern: Oh, I can't remember exactly (inaudible) because it was in the....

INTERVIEWER: It'd be in the last century, though, huh?

Vern: Yes, um-hum.

INTERVIEWER: How big is the reservation?

Vern: Well, it's a. one end is 16 miles and the one of the west side is seven miles and back to the river bed is 16. 15 square miles.

INTERVIEWER: 15 square miles?

Vern: Yes, 16.

INTERVIEWER: What's the population?

Vern: Oh, the book says now that the census came up in spring and 930 it'd be.

INTERVIEWER: Nine thirty. Is that...

Vern: It was all polled but the ones on the reserve were not categorized or something.

INTERVIEWER: You're an organized band, aren't you?

Vern: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I came from Long Plain where they are not an organized band yet. Do you have elections every two years?

Vern: Yes, elections...either that or come March it will be an election year.

INTERVIEWER: And you elect a chief and a council of how many...five?

Vern: Well, we have what was now supposed to be eight councillors and now we better cut it down to four councillors and a chief. This will work better.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Do you have a constitution of any kind, that you...you know any organization paper of any kind or do you just operate informally this way?

Vern: No, we don't have to work. (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Mr. White Cloud, does the tribe have a constitution in Canada, back in the States, you know, they have a piece of paper which says, "We're an organized tribe." Do you have anything like that up here or...?

Pete: The Sioux? No, I don't think the Sioux have anything like that, but as Indian tribes of Manitoba, they have a Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, represents the whole Crees, Siouxs, Chippeways, Saulteaux—all tribes.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Pete: And they're the guys that look after your bigger problems that you can't seem to solve, you know. They have lawyers and consultants and they're a pretty big outfit and easy to deal with the people, if there's any case of discrimination or anything like this, first of all, they would step in and bring in legal advice as to what you should do.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Pete: And on a reserve level we don't deal with anything like that or we're not...or we have got the education, we haven't got the lawyers to deal with such things, but anything that happens in this...in respect to this law, why we report it to Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and carry on from there, you know, and they take it further.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Pete: And they got the biggest...ah, the educated people in that outfit.

INTERVIEWER: Is that centered in Winnipeg?

Pete: That's centered in Winnipeg.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what do your people out here do for a living mostly?

Pete: Well, this reserve is mostly a farming community.

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

Pete: Yeah, and it's known as a farming community and is known as self-supporting reserve, which sometimes we laugh at but it's good to get a name like that, that you have your class is a little above the rest of the reserves cause of this...you know, the importance of trying to do something for yourself instead of being dependent on government funds, you see, but of course, we have a majority of them are on welfare cases, too, who live on rations... in the States they call them commodities.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, um-hmm.

Pete: Well, we call it welfare here, but there's nothing that you could do...the white people, the taxpayer, he cries about where his tax money is going. And yet as Indians now we're sort of underprivileged people and lower class citizens of this country, it seems and we've been raised in this environment, you know, that we can't seem to break away from it and say, "Well, we're equal to the white people on the outside." So, therefore, you know, we're sort of stuck to the

reserve. Anyone that gets out and he gets a permanent job on the outside, well, he may be out for three or four years and then sooner or later he ends back...ends up back on the reserve again, you know. 'Cause of...I guess 'cause of the problems of integrating with the white society, where the Indian isn't accepted as...on an equal basis. I think that if he was accepted on equal terms...well, I think things would improve much more. But as you can see in Canada here the reserves are so small.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, they are.

Pete: There is no comparison with the reserves in Canada to the reserves in the States, they get enough land, you know, and in the States...well, they can sell their land to white people. Well, here we can't...I mean this is more or less a place to stay and this is (unbelievable?).

INTERVIEWER: This is community property.

Pete: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Belongs to the government.

Pete: Belongs to the Crown.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Pete: Therefore, we can't sell...we can't even resell to what we claim. You just put on (inaudible) whatever you can get off the land as far as farming. You could farm all you want, but then if you stop farming, well, then it goes to somebody else again. Well it returns back to the band...the band council.

INTERVIEWER: Do your people farm the land themselves?

Pete: There's a lot of good farming done on this reserve, who are, of course...in the last 10 years maybe, they have really actually shown any interest in farming where they want to get up there into a viable unit where they could, you know, sustain themselves as far as farming goes without having to be dependent on the

government funds. See, before they used to hand out seed in the spring, you know, and fuel and repairs---that was paid for by the government. Where it was good, for the smaller farmer cause it kept him happy. And if he just had 40 acres of land, well, he was happy to just keep doing that year after year, although he wasn't making any money, you know. And he was classed as a farmer on the reserve which was on a little...maybe higher level, you know, than the rest of them, I guess in social aspects of the thing. Social implication (inaudible) we look at that way, we know the guy is not making any money, but well, it keeps him going if he wants to do that and we'll help him as far as we can. If he says he's not making any money, let's say he'll quit then. I mean this wouldn't do anyone good. We try to...we tried to give more to the ambitious farmers...give them enough acres to be a vital human, as well we would have to cut down on the smaller ones and then instead of making that little bit of money, out of working the land well, we just cut them off and they have nothing to do, see? Then you turn them around and put them on welfare funds which is coming from the government again and this is using up more money through this way than if they were, you know, putting in 40 acres a year, which would give them a thousand dollars of government funds that they didn't have to use.

INTERVIEWER: I noticed down here a sign that said you have a craft industry?

Pete: Oh yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a pretty big business for you?

Vern: Well, Pete could tell you more about it, he's the president of the Indian craft store.

INTERVIEWER: How about that, Mr. White Cloud, is that...

Pete: Well, this is what they call a pilot project. It's something that they wanted to try out to see if it was feasible...to see if it would make enough profit to be self-supporting and there, again, the

government gave them a grant. I think the number was 60 thousand for a two-year pilot project, they call it, and it seems to be working out quite well right now, but then we don't seem to have the right management. We couldn't seem to get the right people in there...maybe on account of the salary for the general manager or...you see, maybe the salary was too low for a good management to come in to take over. This is where we're having our problems right now is in our bookkeeping, the way the manager-ship is handling it, you know, and sometimes we think one should be a little more strict with the employees, but with most Indians you can't be too strict, you see, or people start to resent you if you start treating them too strict and the Indian likes to be sort of a happy-go-lucky, free type of person. And, therefore he isn't raised on discipline like the white people are. You know, as soon as you're one year old, your parents give you a piggy bank, you know, and say, "Put a penny in there, put a penny in there." You're learning to budget right off the bat. You put a penny in there and you get to be five, six years old...walking, you know, going to school, and say, well, the kid wants to buy a ball, maybe the ball is worth 50 cents, why he has to save 50 cents to be able to get what he wanted. And this is the teaching that's missing in Indian home, so, therefore, we don't budget for nothing you see, money-wise we're lost and I think this is where the biggest problem is. He's got the ambition, he can work, he's got the brains and he's got everything but...but the training. I think that's got a lot to do with school, too, 'cause the Indian kids are dropping out, you know, and they get to Grade 8 and reach the age of 16 years old, they don't...they say, "Well that's it for me. Thank goodness! I'm sixteen now!" And they're not thinking of the education part.

INTERVIEWER: They have to go to the age of 16?

Pete: 'Cause they figure they are obliged to go to school and it's something they have to go do.

INTERVIEWER: Where do they go to school here?

Pete: Well, they go to school on the outside and integrate with the white people.

INTERVIEWER: You don't have a reservation school?

Pete: Well, we have a kindergarten.

INTERVIEWER: You have a kindergarten?

Pete: One school.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Pete: It's been running for three or four years.

INTERVIEWER: But the rest of them are bussed out, are they?

Pete: Yeah, well, we transport them from here, school buses are operating from the reserve.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they are. Well.

Pete: We have 12 of them.

Vern: Fourteen now.

INTERVIEWER: Fourteen buses. Who drives the buses, are they your people here?

Pete: Yeah, yeah. They tried to introduce these big yellow buses but we didn't want anything to do with them, of course, our roads was not made for that anyway...for the big buses to send out. When you start hiring big buses, why you have to widen the roads and you have to make the turning point and all this and that and you run into a lot of money again. Well, then you can just imagine when you get 14 buses of kids and 20...and on the average 20 passengers to each vehicle, you get 14 of them, it's quite a few, you gonna have quite a few yellow buses on the road just the same, so you'll probably be bumping into one another.

(Laughter)

Vern: Fourteen (inaudible).

Pete: But here on this, Sioux Valley, I think the Indians have...it's one of the more progressive reserves that you could see in comparison to other ones. There's other reserves, but I think this one is...here's...I think this one is pretty good.

INTERVIEWER: This is about the biggest one, too, isn't it...with Sioux people?

Pete: Yes, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I noticed, too, just, you know, casually walking around talking to people that you seem to keep the language alive here you have pow wows, do you, here once a year?

Pete: Yeah, we will be talking English, but I mean we have to have that, you know, otherwise we couldn't communicate with anyone, but it's something you have to have it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you teach your children...the little children...the Indian, too, or...?

Vern: Oh, the kids, some them now...take my sister. They have a little kid there, they all talk Indian, but the kid won't talk Indian.

INTERVIEWER: He won't?

Vern. No, he's only five years old, but he understands them, but when he answers, he talks English.

INTERVIEWER: How about your religion, do you have a sweat lodge like the big reservations down there or any more...or any medicine men around anymore?

Pete: No, there's no more medicine...

Pete/Vern: Just the old lady...just the old lady; of course, I think she quit now.

INTERVIEWER: What...do you have a church out here or something on the reservation?

Vern: Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, and what's the other one?

Pete: Mennonites.

INTERVIEWER: Anglican and Mennonites and Catholics. And now I think...

Pete: And one more... the Pentecostals.

INTERVIEWER: The Pentecostals, are these all on the reservation?

Pete: Yeah, all on the reservation.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, do you have regular preachers there?

Pete: Well, Pentecostals...I mean anyone could get up and preach as far as that goes, but with these other ones they have a priest and ministers come down.

INTERVIEWER: No, I think you...I heard you say something, Pete, here a few minutes ago that interested me. You said that you have the Santee, which would be, what Mdewakan, too. Is that..?

Vern: Mdewakan, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And then you also had the Wahpekute background?

Vern: Yes, this is what I was...can't remember but I just read it through the book who they are, the Dakota Sioux Nation, that was formed here...two years ago.

INTERVIEWER: And you have Sisseton, do you have any of the western Sioux...like the Rosebud people or the Brules...or are these all Eastern Sioux people out here?

Pete: I think these are all Eastern.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they are.

Pete: And, of course, with inter-marriage and that now there's a little bit of Santee and culture which they took from the Indians in Pipestone.

INTERVIEWER: What are they down at Pipestone?

Vern: Hunkpatina.

INTERVIEWER: Hunkpatina, too? They are, I see. Now in your administration you said you function chiefly as a fundraiser.

Vern: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's not too different, the young chairman at Flandreau Sioux Reservation says that he spends his time raising funds and each councillor takes responsibility for something. Do you do this, each councillor...?

Vern: Yeah, yeah. This is on the same basis.

INTERVIEWER: The same basis yeah. What do those councillors do mostly then?

Pete. Well, one looks after roads, you know. Same as administer of roads or something, it's the same thing. He has a budget to work with, a flow of money to look after roads and if you need new culverts to be put in, he puts them in, you need a snowplough in order to open...to see that roads are kept open for the schools. And if there's any new roads to be built, well, he looks into that. And then he brings back the ideas to the council table, and says, "Look here, I want to repair that road," and he presents it to the council and the council say, "Well, go ahead," you know? He gets the okay and he goes ahead. That's his responsibility, see then we have one for housing repair which there's a little bit of money on housing repair, and he looks into the people that need housing repair. Such as, maybe windows or new window frames or new leak in a roof. You recognize that thing and you get shingles and we have one on sanitation...wells and sanitation...looks after wells and he looks at the needs of the people, you know. They need

water. I mean they sort of spread it around, you know, you get one maybe...one well in a central location for three or four houses and then they all use it as a community well. And then we have another one for agriculture, who looks at the agriculture aspects of the reserve, you know, and looks after the needs and whatever he could get for the individual farmers and this is what he looks after. I think that is out...oh, and then we have for welfare who looks after the welfare of the people who have no jobs and the elderly people and people that they're older, you know, getting old, getting to the stage where they don't get this old age security pension. You know, around the age of 50, who can't work out anymore, well these are the people they look after.

INTERVIEWER: You have quite a few people on welfare, I gather, from your earlier comments.

Pete: Well, there's only about fifteen farmers, you see, there's fifteen farmers and there's the band drivers, and there's fourteen vans and these people are unemployed. And there's quite a few working in Brandon, near the city.

INTERVIEWER: What do they do?

Pete: They commute back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: They have industrial jobs there?

Pete. Yeah, well, more of construction works than anything else. And these are the people...of course; we haven't got too much you know, considering the employment situation. We haven't got too many jobs to go around. Especially with the unemployment pretty high, the percentage is pretty high right now amongst the people.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, it is.

Pete: So, I mean, for the Indians to get a job makes it a little more tougher.

INTERVIEWER: They getting jobs on the farms around the area here?

Vern: A few days.

INTERVIEWER: A few around there.

Vern: Yeah, a few little jobs.

INTERVIEWER: I want to ask you a little more about housing. Frankly, I...just looking at the housing, this is probably better than any I've seen in any reservation in the Dakotas or Minnesota. You seem to have done a lot of work on the houses. Is that been done in the last few years?

Pete: No, this has been going on, well not too long it has been going on...maybe the last 15 years they've been building houses...

Vern: Round 1950 they started.

INTERVIEWER: How does that work, is that...is the government engaged in that?

Pete: Yeah. It's from government funds. It comes from welfare funds.

INTERVIEWER: It is.

Pete: Yeah. And, of course, one of the houses that I see in the States... pretty good...myself, going downhill.

INTERVIEWER: I think the difference down there is that they have these model houses like the Sioux 400 where here you're able to design your own floor plan and...

Pete: I drove through Red Lake this summer...Red Lake and up and down through Sisseton and what I saw down there and back up through Devil's Lake and they're getting better houses than we are and they're discontent? I would really like to know how that's done (inaudible). (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess my initial impression when I drove on the reservation was that it probably looks better, you know, all around.

Pete: The reason there is that people look after their homes much better than the people on the other side. I know this. It's only the new houses that are being built other places that seem to look good 'cause they're new, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's true.

Pete: What would they look like, you know, five years time. But here the people...I don't know how many gallons of paint we handed out from here, you know, just to paint their houses. If they want to paint their houses, the paint's here, you know, by all means.

INTERVIEWER: They are painted, and I also noticed the yards are...most of the yards are pretty well kept.

Pete: Yeah, oh yes. They always seem to have a lawn mower, you know, and this makes a big difference around the place. Where we get quite a bit of rain up here, you know, the...the grass is pretty nice sometimes and it rains quite a bit and grass in comparison with the States and grass is all just burnt. (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: That's right. Especially with western reservations, they're... What do the kids do around here for recreation?

Pete: Well, this is where we are having problems. We need recreation and we can't seem to get our hands on enough funds to carry this out. We know of...we know we need recreation, but the government just can't seem to see to put a budget, you know, aside for the Indians, but the little bit of measly funds that they give us, well, we try to develop a recreation ground down here—maybe you passed it down the hill—we'll be just starting this, oh, this past summer, I guess and this summer, carry it on. We add a little bit on as we get the money, see, so the money is

pretty well spent here. So we found out we have to wait till next year again.

Vern: Inaudible.

INTERVIEWER: What do they do then, just hunt and fish and things like most country kids do?

Pete: Well, the funny thing is, I went to Sisseton and I'm talking to this chap down there and I'm talking to him right on the powwow ground there. He's talking about recreation funds and he said, "Well, we have a grant of 60 thousand," he said...no, 50 thousand...from the government you know. He was talking about his tribal chairman, said he was an educated man but he was in there fighting for his people and he said presently he draw a 50 thousand grant for recreation. He said, "We're gonna fix up our powwow grounds here," and he said that "we thought it wasn't enough...that 50 thousand wasn't enough...so we asked for an additional 20 thousand, but we got it. We had 70 thousand to work with on the recreation." (Laughter) We can do quite a bit with that up here.

Vern: We only had 4 thousand to start out with.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right...for recreation?

Vern and Pete: Yeah, that's the bottom line. He and me were thinking about this photographing (Laughing) (Inaudible)... Seventy thousand dollars, holy mackerel! We get that much to work for everything down here, we haven't much money.

INTERVIEWER: I think maybe the advantage that they have there is that they have several government agencies to work from like the O.E.O (Office of Economic Opportunity?) .. and Indian Bureau, they can get it from maybe six different agencies and they can pile it up that way, you know, get a little bit from each one.

Pete: It's fantastic the kind of money with work with down there.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, that means jobs, too, for them.

Pete: Yes, I mean if we had that money here, why I'd say we could do a lot for improvement. But we only get, see, the cheapest...we only get so much and then they say you spend that and the work is unfinished, you know no follow-up. So this is our biggest handicap is we have some very good ideas and very good projects, to put in process, but for lack of money we just...we just run up against a wall every time. And this here, this is supposed to be a rich country and, you know.

INTERVIEWER: This looks like it would be pretty good farm land down there in the valley.

Vern: I forgot to tell you when I first mentioned White Cloud, here. He's the president of the Farm Organization, He'd tell you...this spring (inaudible). Of course, that last year until fall (Inaudible). Now he's working on helping smaller farmers.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

Vern: And I'm working on the smaller farmers who get the load, this is what I'm working on now and trying to get this and you carry on from there what you have to do.

INTERVIEWER: Trying to get people back on the land more.

Pete: Yeah. Well, you came up with this viable unit business of just a couple of years ago. None of this small farming business anymore, you see, if you're gonna farm from now on, you're gonna be...you have to get a viable unit...get a section of land or you have to step out, you know. So we try this, of course; damn fools, you know, every time they tell us something, we'd listen to them...we'd listen to them and we'd cut out a lot of small farmers and then we'd put the other guys in a viable unit. And so then what happened was some of these guys they just couldn't handle a big unit, you see. So it fell

through and weeds that grow up after last couple years, why they were just a disgrace...disgrace to the reserve, you know. So we put the blame on the Indian Affairs.

Vern: You can tell that we have to put up this small farmer back on the welfare...how much money is...

Pete: Yeah, we put this smaller farmer back on welfare. We cut them off and told them to quit farming because they weren't making any money, so we put them back on welfare and they're using up more money through welfare than if you just left them, you know, doing what they were doing. Because they weren't spending that much money out of the government funds through their farming. But this is what they try to hold against us, they were getting themselves into debts, year after year, and the debts in a ten-year average...the debts for an individual...the highest I think was a little bit over two thousand dollars in a 10-year period. I mean, that's...you know, it's really, it wasn't too bad—two thousand dollars, that a...he made money over those 10 years, you know, that's 10 thousand that otherwise would have come from that government...taxpayer's pocket again. But this they couldn't seem to see. They could've been further ahead if they'd' have just kept on, you know, like helping the farmers whatever...

INTERVIEWER: Do you have....

End of Tape

William T. Eagle

(Editor's Note: Mr. Eagle is band 'overseer' and a grandson of Chief White Cap who founded the reserve in the 1800's.)

Tape 882

INTERVIEWER: I think a good place to begin is anything you remember about his history of the reserve, you know, the way it was founded and...

William: Well, it's...they found it in 1800. I couldn't say when in 1800, what part, it's about oh, 1800. And they first make a stake was at Fort Qu' Appelle. It was south of that Fort Qu' Appelle -- or east. And Standing Buffalo was chief then and my grandfather was Chief White Cap. So they put a stake on each side of that valley of his and Standing Buffalo people, they took the stake away from my grandfather and so they tell him to look for another land, and that's why it won't...from there and then to over here, you see is small (town?).

INTERVIEWER: I see.

William: They camped over there on their right, rises back to... towards the west and they found this lake and river. There's lot of muskrats and so on, deer there is. So they put in the stake again...they put a stake just a little (patch hills?) So they add up the land afterwards, those, all of these are added to the (inaudible) all this. And so that's west, and northwest corner. So it added over seven sections north.

INTERVIEWER: That's what you have today?

William: Yeah, what was there, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when the people came here in the 1800's, did they start farming, or how did they...?

William: Yeah, they did farming and try to raise cattle, too.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

William: Then that, the rebellion ...the half-breeds, treat them like, just like prisoners. They took them to long death walks...my grandfather (inaudible) you know. But on their way to Batoche they kill one and they beat all the people. So after the rebellion all the leaders were in prisons, just like my grandfather was in it, but he's got nothing to do...

INTERVIEWER: Chief White Cap?

William: Yeah, yes. So they turn him loose and told him to come back here and start to make their own livings. So from that one we're just self-supporters. Out here, oh, in 19—around 196-, 1958 to so on that the people will some have ... (inaudible) well, the peoples, they getting assistance from the Indian Affairs.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And up until then they support themselves farming, huh?

William: Yeah. Well, they farm, we start to farm, but we use horses and we didn't have much implements. So we quit and we raised cattle.

INTERVIEWER: Mostly cattle.

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any...are there people here now, today, who are farming, or...?

William: No, they're all ranching out here.

INTERVIEWER: All ranching, cattle industry.

William: But not all of it. But some younger people, they took up to raising cattle.

INTERVIEWER: There's pretty good grass here.

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But not good farmland.

William: No, no. It's all alkaline.

INTERVIEWER: Do some of your people drive in to Saskatoon to—the young people—to work?

William: Yes, yes, they do.

INTERVIEWER: They do.

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How many people do you have on the tribal, on the band rolls here? How many people are here?

William: There's over 150. I remember when I was 12 or 13 years old, that was in 19--, 19--, around 19--, they only had 54 people on this reserve. So we increased a lot, 200 now or..

INTERVIEWER: I see, about 150.

William: Yeah, yeah, over 150. My girls are married to white people, now, white men. But still we have over 150 in all.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

William: The whites they married, the white people, it's enfranchised, so they couldn't come back on the reserve.

INTERVIEWER: Then they go away?

William: Yeah, they go away, see.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of government do you have for the band, do you have a council or...?

William: No, well, it's just like, oh, overseers, head man, two head men.

INTERVIEWER: Two head men?

William: My brother and another (big bang in background –inaudible).

INTERVIEWER: I see.

William: And a band administrator, that's my son.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, he is?

William: He is, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I heard about him. So you have an administrator, and an overseer, and two head men?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Are you all elected?

William: I was elected as overseer (inaudible) ... affairs, as overseer; actually we took over that administration and then we handled work programs...(inaudible) welfare.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh, I see. You have quite a few new houses here. You have a very nice home yourself.

William: Well, yeah, that's all welfare houses.

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

William: Yeah, oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do quite a number of the older people get welfare help now?

William: Oh yes, yeah, but mostly get pension, you know, we don't have to

INTERVIEWER: When they get old they go on pension, I see.

William: But the widows and some unwed mothers, we have to give them assistance.

INTERVIEWER: Back to something we were talking about earlier, you said most of the people here are mixed. You said that there are some Sisseton's here, and then the Wahpetons for the most part.

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But you are descended partly from Titunwan and Red Eagle.

William: No, not Red Eagle.

INTERVIEWER: White Cap.

William: White Cap.

INTERVIEWER: But there are no other Titonwins living here.

William: No.

INTERVIEWER: About how many cattle do you have here today, do you know?

William: Well, that's a hard question because we have lots of calves. It should be over 200 head.

INTERVIEWER: Should. Is this a band...?

William: No, It's individuals.

INTERVIEWER: Individuals. How about land, do individuals own a piece of land here?

William: No, no. We don't have just like, all the bands still own their piece of land, but we allot to it, some to work, so it's just like their own land but the whole band owns the reserves.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I see. You mentioned this rebellion that your grandfather was put in prison for, even though he didn't participate in. Is that the Riel Rebellion that...?

William: Yeah, that's Riel's Rebellion at Batoche.

INTERVIEWER: Some of the people here were punished for it then?

William: No, just my grandfather.

INTERVIEWER: Were any people here in this reserve actually involved in that?

William: Well, they took him to a prison so that they were involved in that.

INTERVIEWER: But they didn't really fight?

William: No, I don't think so, not really...when they start to fight, you know, they ran away from it.

INTERVIEWER: They left the fight?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But they locked them up anyway.

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Where do most of the children here go to school?

William: In Saskatoon.

INTERVIEWER: The bus picks them up?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And do you have a hospital here, anywhere nearby for the people?

William: No, there's just...some of the people go to St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon.

INTERVIEWER: Go wherever they want to go?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I see. Does the government help pay for that like they do for other...?

William: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: The same kind of system for everybody. Okay. (Someone comes in). How are you? Herb Hoover is my name.

Wallace: Herb Hoover? My name is Wallace Eagle.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes, I heard about you. You're the band manager.

Wallace: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

Wallace: You're a long ways from home.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I am. It's a long drive up here. It's cooler here.

Wallace: Oh yeah, yeah, it's been a cold summer here.

(Wallace Eagle leaves)

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to ask you, too, a little about have you been participating in this claims thing with the States?

William: No, not really. But we have folks that...two from this reserve, that's (inaudible) Wallace here and my brother Archie.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh. Did they go down to the States?

William: No.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't. Just got together and...?

William: Yeah, they got meetings, they represent for this reserve. Go to the meetings. All that seven reserves has meetings someplace the delegates from this reserve.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Another thing that I think would interest the people in South Dakota, you have an association here of Saskatchewan Indians.

William: Yeah, and we had an association of, a Dakota Association, generally.

INTERVIEWER: For all seven reserves?

William: Yeah, all seven reserves. Not including Wood Mountain, they're Titunwan, that's South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they don't belong to this... federation?

William: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: How do these organizations work? Do you elect people from each of the reserves..?

William: Yeah, we did.

INTERVIEWER: You did. What kind of activities do they engage in?

William: Well, the only thing that's works, well, is ah, they try to claim that money in the States and we had some about documents about signing treaty and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh, I see. These are large organizations, aren't they?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Substantial number of leaders in them.

William: And also represents this. Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, well, that's the whole Saskatchewan it's about 61 reserves in Saskatchewan.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, are there?

William: So that's a big organization.

INTERVIEWER: Does that get any financial help from the Canadian government?

William: Yeah, I think so.

INTERVIEWER: It does. So they work on community development and...

William: Yeah, and so on, but. when I was working for Indian Affairs before I gots. ah, we

don't get much help, you know, 'cause the Indian Affairs, they do all that work.

INTERVIEWER: I see, OK. Do you have a powwow here?

William: Yeah, we had one this summer.

INTERVIEWER: You have one every summer?

William: Yes...it's our second annual, this summer.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you just started that up?

William: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the powwow ground up here?

William: Yeah, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, good.

Interviewer's Note:

I should clarify that in conversations prior to and following this tape we discussed the tribal affiliations of people on the White Cap Reserve, the reserve obviously named after Chief White Cap, grandfather of William Eagle. And he said that while he was descended in part from Titonwin, he had relatives down in Pine Ridge, the Oglalas. He was the only one here that he knew of that was thus associated. All the remainder come from the Eastern Sioux. There are a number of people descended from Sisseton, and he thought a bit Mdewakanton, and the other Santee or Eastern Sioux tribes. He felt that they were all mixed so it was difficult to say precisely which tribes are represented. But it is a reservation comprised almost entirely from people from the Eastern Sioux tribes of the United States. He went on to point out in this tape, you'll recall, that they have seven reserves, four in Manitoba and three here, Qu'Appelle, White Cap, and Sioux Wahpeton are all Eastern Sioux oriented, and the Western Sioux of Canada congregated chiefly at the Wood Mountain Reserve in southern Saskatchewan.

