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PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.

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SASKATCHEWAN

TRIBE/NATION: DAKOTA (SIOUX)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Robert Goodvoice, born 1901.
- story of the journey of a group of Sioux from the United States to Canada, through Portage la Prairie, Manitoba to Prince Albert, Sask.
- settlement of the Wahpaton (Round Plain) Reserve in Sask.
- division of the Sioux tribe
- Indian medicine and curing practices
- reflections on the loss of knowledge and the old ways

(Side A)

I am Robert Goodvoice. My age is 76 and I am a Dakota.

There is a question that has been asked of me many times. The question is this: How come you Dakota, or the Sioux Indians are in the Prince Albert district? Well this is what I am going to tell.

Back in 1876 there was a big Indian camp and in that camp there was a man known as a Medicine Man and his name was 1. One day a white man visited the camp looking for 1. When he found him this white man told the Indian Medicine Man that his wife had been sick for quite a while and the doctors had told him that there was no hope for her. And they told him to

keep that lady as comfortable as he possibly could for she was not going to live very long. So this white man's name was McKay. I don't know his first name or his initials, but that's the way the Dakota's call him - McKay. Now Mr. McKay visited the camp looking for 1 and told him of his troubles and in answer said that he would come over and look at Mrs. McKay, which he did. He went to Mr. McKay's home and this Indian Medicine Man performed over this sick woman by praying and singing some sacred songs. In his performance, the power in him that gave him this extra power to heal the sick, showed him what was the matter with the lady and also showed him what herbs and roots to boil and give the sick woman the juice of what he picked from the ground, which we call medicine. So came home that day and dug up what he saw in this vision. That evening he went back to McKay's place and the woman was laying in bed, very sick. Again he prayed over her and sang some sacred songs as he had done before and then gave her a drink of what he had boiled up, which we call medicine. He brought a pot full. By midnight this lady drank every bit of it. This Indian Medicine Man went home and said he would come again tomorrow which he did, with another pot. When he got there the next day the sick woman was sitting up in bed. She drank what he brought to her for her to drink.

He did this day after day and on the fourth day when he went to this sick woman, the sick woman was out of the bed sitting on a chair. On the sixth day she was sitting outside of the house. On the eighth day she was walking back and forth outside of her home. On the tenth day, he went back and she was standing beside her husband who was working in the garden. From there on her health improved and he didn't go back to that home until he was called by Mr. McKay. 1 took his

cousin with him and Mr. McKay said to him, "You have done me a great favour." Now these are the words he used, "My wife is well, my wife has gained her health and she is happy and I am happy, but I can't pay you too much. I can give you a little bit of money and I will give you some clothing, some blankets and some food and on top of that I am going to tell you something 1 but I don't want you to tell this to anybody else. You have heard it so keep it that way."

He told him, "You Dakota or Sioux Indians fought the United States, fought the Esontonka." (That means the United States - Americans. Esontonka means the Big Knife and that's the way the Dakotas used to call the Americans, Esontonka.) "Anyway, you fought them and you caused a lot of damage. You killed the horses and cattle, whatever was alive in your path you killed it and you've got to pay this some way. Now the United States government is going to build houses for your people some place and they are going to feed you and they are going to treat you real well and every Dakota or Sioux would be asked to go there and live in that community. When everybody is there, they will all have a house. There will be things there to entertain them and when they are all gathered at this one spot some morning you are going to wake up and you will be surrounded by American soldiers. They are going to take the

best of you, maybe every one of you and you are going to go through some torture of some kind. They are going to hang you, they are going to kill most of you, maybe all of you."

Now this is what McKay told 1 . "Now want you to escape this persecution. You go straight north from here, keep going. There is a town over there and I have a friend there." This is Mr. McKay's conversation. He is telling 1 . "You go north to this town and I've got a friend there. I'll write a letter and you give him this letter when you arrive at that town. From there he will direct you to another town further north and when you get to that town away north (it's a long way) but when you get there you will be safe. There is lots of game there and there are lots of furbearing animals there. Your living is there. There are lots of lakes and it is all timber. You won't suffer. There is a big store there, everything you want is there. He will direct you from there on. So you do that and get all your friends, your relatives, your close relations and anybody that wants to go. "Go, you will be safe."

and his cousin went home and told the people what he heard. He didn't say McKay told him that, but he said that he heard that when he was in the village, in the white village. So he told them he was going to journey northward to that safety, to that safe place where he was told to go. This he did. About 30 or 40 families moved northward. They moved straight north until they came to a town. That town is known as Portage la Prairie (that's today). That's the name of the 1 town today and they landed there and showed this letter to a person and this person saw the name on the envelope and told him to go to a certain place. He went there but the man wasn't home. He waited there until he came home. When he came home the Medicine Man gave him the letter and he read it. They could see in his face that he was accepting these visitors and he sent a man to show the group of Indians where to camp, to make their home for the winter. They stayed there that winter. They say they spent a good winter. They made baskets and they made rugs, mats, quilts. They tanned hides and made moccasins and they sold whatever they made to this man in Portage. They didn't know his name. They never knew his name. They called him "That White Man". 2 , which means that white man. This referred to this man who told them to camp at this certain place.

They stayed there all winter and they made baskets as I have said. They were busy all winter. When the crows arrived from the south, that means it is spring. This is maybe the first of March. Then they packed up and they headed for the north. This man in Portage told them, in the evening he called them, and told them in the northwestward from where Portage was, "You see that star over there, right under there is where that town is. So go to that star, that is your guide. Every evening get a stick or something pointing to that star and in the morning follow that until you come to that town. It is a long, long way." He said, "There are two rivers, one in the

south and the other north. One is called the South Saskatchewan and the other is called the North Saskatchewan. He told him of these two rivers. These two rivers, they join and from there there is only one river. You cross the first one, but don't cross the second one. Follow the second river towards the west and you will come to that town.

So they started off in March to come to Prince Albert. Their children, some of them four years old, some of them six years old, some of them ten years old, but they walked every

step from Portage la Prairie to Prince Albert. On their way they came to a lake, a body of water where you can't see the shore. Looking towards the east they say you can't see the shore. Looking towards the northeast you can't see the shore. They figured they had come to the ocean. If possible they would go around it by going westward, which they did. kept going and finally the shoreline commenced to turn northward and they followed it until they were just straight across from where they started going west and then they hit north from there. They walked on and on and on and wherever they came to a slough if there were muskrat houses they trapped them all and they caught minks, racoons, muskrats, foxes and other fur-bearing animals. They skinned them and dried the pelts and they carried them. If they shot two or three jumpers and if they had two or three, maybe four, hides then they stopped and they tanned them and they wear that, that's their footwear. They travelled northwest from Portage and they carried all the dried pelts that they have trapped on the way.

One day they came to a road, straight across from east to west. They made camp a little way from that road. Pretty soon somebody said that something appeared in the east and it was something very strange. They watched it and they watched it and that's the freighters or settlers going from someplace down east and going west. This is, I would say, a wagon train, horses and mules and oxen or whatever can pull a wagon. They had them loaded and they were going west. They said there was at least 50 of them, maybe more. There was an odd horseback among them. As they camped there a man rode towards them. He came to this camp and he was what they call a halfbreed. Nowadays they call them Metis. He is a halfbreed, a French halfbreed. But this halfbreed could talk the Dakota language, not too well, but he could master it enough that he could make them understand what he wanted. He wanted some 3 means pelts, fur-bearing animals. That's what he wanted and he made them understand that. So they sold all their furs to this man, to the people who were travelling west. Oh yes, this man on horseback, he went back to the wagon train and a man drove up in the wagon and they loaded all the fur that they had for sale and he gave them money. He gave them lots of money, everybody had money.

Now they kept on coming north. They camped here for two days and then they kept going for two or three days without. They travelled every day, all day and then they had a rest for

two or three days, then they kept going. They left Portage la Prairie in March and they landed in Prince Albert in August. Since then they have stayed around Prince Albert.

Oh yes, one evening they made camp on a high hill and in the evening towards when it is getting dark they could see fog rising. It was in the low place and the fog was rising so they knew there was a river or a lake. So in the morning they sent four men to go to see if it was a lake or a river. In the morning the fog was still hanging over the low land. These four men went there and sure enough it was the river. Two went upstream and two went downstream looking for the place where these two rivers joined. I think they call that Colt Falls today. From there there is only one river. It is the Saskatchewan River from there. I believe that is what they call that river now, the North Saskatchewan River. There they found a place where they could cross. The river was wide and it looked as if it were shallow there. They got down and they crossed it and sure enough there was only one place where the water came above their knees and the rest of it was below their knees. So they crossed it and they put a sign there and they went back. They crossed back to where they started.

The other two boys who went upstream, they came back and they told them that they found a place where the two rivers joined. They went to the camp and they told the people. They went down to the river and that's where they crossed, still going north, until they came to the second river. That's the North Saskatchewan River. Then they followed it upstream until they came to a place which is called the Miller's Hill nowadays. When they came there they could see the village below. Anyway, they made camp there and the next day the men took that letter and the leader 1 and they went to this village and they looked for this man. And they saw him and he read the letter. He was glad and he received them. He told them to camp in a certain place, which they did, and they stayed around there and they started working for this man doing odd jobs and in the wintertime. They cut cord wood for a living all winter. Whatever they caught trapping they sold it to the store. That store is known as the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Dakotas made a deal with the Hudson's Bay Company that whatever they catch when the tracking season is open, whatever fur they catch they will sell it to the Hudson's Bay Company, no other buyer. So they made this agreement and then the

Hudson's Bay Company told them that they could live on the Hudson's Bay land. Wherever there is Hudson's Bay land they can live there, which they did. Since that time the Dakotas that came from Portage la Prairie, they lived independently on Hudson's Bay lands up until 1918. Then they moved into what is known as Round Plain Reserve.

This Reserve was surveyed in 1893 and the people, the Wahpatons, Wahpetona. Wahpatons is what they call them today. They didn't pronounce the word right, but it is known better by Wahpaton than Wahpetona.

The first teacher and missionary that was here was Miss Lucy Baker. At that time the Reserve was only three and three-quarter sections, but there were lots of sloughs, lots of timber and lots of game, fish and ducks. The river ran through the Reserve so there was fish there, which was a good place for them. When they moved here the Indian Department helped them by giving them ploughs and oxen, hoes and rakes and binders and showed them how to run the ploughs and they started farming. And they gave them cattle. That farming has improved a lot since then. All that land that I just mentioned it is all under cultivation and the people are all doing well, some have high school education. They have improved a lot since then and we still intend to improve some more, especially this year.

Since Lucy Baker, there was a fellow by the name of Johnny Beverley who was a teacher and Reverend J.G. Meek, a minister and teacher; Mrs. Mary Hilliard; Mr. Charlie Fetch. Just a few of the teachers.

Now I am telling this story as my grandparents told me. There are a few things that I have forgotten that I would now like to mention.

Now the first thing that I would like to mention is Mr. McKay, the man who told them to come here, said he would be travelling this way the following year, which he did. The Dakotas were in Prince Albert and not the following year but the second year Mr. McKay introduced them to his relatives. There were lots of McKays in the Prince Albert district at that time. So they were really, really happy and they felt very safe from there on until about 1885, that's the year the Northwest Rebellion broke out.

(End of Side A, Tape IH-103) (Side B)

There were at least 350 families of Dakotas living in Prince Albert district, living on the Hudson's Bay lands. When the war broke out most of them went back and there was only about 35 or 40 families left. Some of them came back after and some left and that's the way it has been going since until the Indian Department registered the Indians and their names were written in what they call a band list and wherever their name is that is where they have to stay and they don't travel back and forth as they used to.

All this time my grandparents used to talk about their childhood days. My grandfather and my grandmother talk about Niagara Falls and they talk about the territory where the city of New York is situated today. They didn't call it New York at that time but they called it 4 . Now I didn't know where that was until this summer. I met some people from the southern part of the United States and I mentioned this to them. They said that the Indians used to own that. 4 means "holy island". The Indians used to own this holy island but the white man took it and I don't know who owns it now, but

they told me that it is called Manhattan, something like that. I just can't pronounce that word right, but anyway that's just the way they told. So my grandparents in their childhood days, they came from way south.

I find this very interesting and when they speak of this or tell this story, they tell the story over and over and this is the one that I like to hear. They say they used to live in circles. There is a big circle and there is another one within that big circle and then another. That's three. The fourth one, it is a small circle and in this small circle there are four lodges there. That's where all the decisions are made. In the big circle, they say if you stand at one side of the circle and look straight across, the tent at the other side looks just about the size of a thimble, so that must be at least or almost a mile across. There is another circle in that and another one. So there are quite a few circles. There are quite a few families living in these four circles. In the first circle, the big circle, there are all the young men and strong men and good hunters. So is the second one. They are all able-bodied people. The third one, they are still strong people but then they are men around 50 or 60 years of age.

Now the first circle and the second biggest, whatever they get in the line of food they feed the people that are living in

the small circle because they are the old people and the people who are crippled, blind or children, orphans, women with children, widows. The people in the first two circles, whatever they get as food they feed the rest. That's the way they help each other. Whatever clothing or hides (they used to have hides, deer hides and coyote hides and all that kind of hides), they used to tan them and that's their clothing. The stronger people used to do that and help the old people, the weak people, in the line of food like berries, wild berries and wild turnips and wild carrots (there are a lot of wild things, vegetables that grow wild) and wild rice (that's a very good food they say). They lived together, but there were so many of them so whatever is edible in that territory in two or three days it is all gone. So they are always under the shadow of starvation.

One time the chief, all the chiefs and the councillors, the head men of each circle, they gathered in these four lodges. As I said, they gathered there and they came to a decision that they should divide - so many people as a group to move one direction and so many others, just spread out so that the food could be more plentiful. In this way they wouldn't be moving camp every other day. So this was agreed by all people and that's where lots of these groups got their name.

We will say there is a group that went a certain direction and they came to a lake where there are ducks and fish and wild rice and other things that was food to them was theirs. So they camped near that lake and after dark they say they used to see sparks and lights and things like that passing over the water. They called it a sacred lake - 5 - they called

that lake. But the people lived there. They would stick around that sacred lake. So they called them the 6. Today we still call them the 6. There is another group who went a different direction and they came to a creek, a creek where there is lots of wild rice and there are some beavers and other things and food to eat. So they stick around there. Now that creek we call it (8)Wakpa and the people living there are 9 so the people were called 10. That's how lots of them got their names, by moving, when they spread out, by the divisions of the tribe.

I asked this question of one man in Manitoba, who is my uncle. He is about a year older than me. I asked him if he heard of that and he said he thought he heard some old person

mention that and I told him to tell me as he heard it. He said he can't, he said he just heard it and that's all.

There is another people. They went to the Prairies. They live right in the prairie. Well the prairie, we call it 11, but the people live there so we call them the prairie dwellers 12. This is where a lot of these people, most of these people, got their names.

There was a group who went northeast and they landed in a place where there are big hills and lots of timber and lots of lakes. So they were called 13 . "Fe" means hills, "mene" means lakes and water, "cha" means timber. So they put those three words together 14 dwellers. There are lots. I can go on and say lots of how they got their names, but it is pretty hard to translate those things word for word. I would like to do that all right enough and I am doing my best to translate the easiest ones.

Now these are the kinds of stories that my grandparents tell to other people and other people tell different stories to them. I used to sit there and listen. That's how I can tell lots of these stories. There are men of my age, the same age as me, that can't do these things because they lived with their parents who were young and they don't seem to care for what the old people say or what the old people know. This is where I kind of (I wouldn't say I am ahead of them), but this is where I know what they don't know because I lived with the people that know these things and saw these things. How they cure meat and how they cure food for the winter, I have heard all this and I have ate a lot of it. My grandmother used to cure meat and wild fruit and how they tan hides. They used to live without going to school or learning anything from a teacher. They learned these things from their own parents. This trade (or whatever you might call it) has been handed down from one generation to the other and they don't change it. Whichever way they have done a certain piece of work, and if it is good, well that's the way it is done all the time. They don't change it at all.

Another thing, it seems to me that my grandparents, my grandmother said that she was a good swimmer. So they must

have lived in a place where there is lots of water. She said when she was a little girl she used to dive and swim. They mastered the water pretty well. She doesn't remember

hearing of anybody telling about anybody getting drowned. go to the lake and swim and play in the water and this and that but they seem to get into the lake or river but they would all come out. So that's something. I look at my grandmother and the way she looks at age of around 90, she doesn't look as if she can swim at all. But I guess she could. My grandfather said water doesn't mean anything to him. He said he can swim against the waves. He said he likes water, he likes swimming and he likes hunting. He showed me how and he told me how to hunt and how to trap and how to snare this way and why he set his trap this way and all that. He said the animals are going to come there and you've got to understand this thing, you've got to understand what move he is going to make after he steps over this log, or to go around this clump of willows. What is he thinking when he is going around. Is he going to look right down or is he going to take a far away look? My grandfather used to tell me all these things, which is very good.

There is one good thing that I know, by him telling me, "There is a certain time of the day when all the animals, like the jumpers and the deers and elk, there is a certain time of day when they are sound asleep. You could walk right up to them," he said. "The are just sound asleep." There is a certain time of the day, and that's when he said he gets his animals, is when you catch them right in their beds sleeping. They didn't have horses or anything to haul their meat home so they packed everything. They are good packers. They could pack quite a few pounds.

They seemed to have a feeling of tomorrow, what sort of a day it is going to be tomorrow. They seemed to feel it today. They watched the stars and they watched the sunset and they watched the weather and they seemed to guess. But most of the time they seemed to know what they are saying when they speak of weather. Today, nobody knows anything about the weather, only what we get over the radio.

Another thing, a person getting sick, they don't go to a doctor and they don't go to a nurse because there was no doctor or no nurses in the camps. But then they would dry roots, herbs and leaves and this and that. Not any kind, just a certain kind of plant that is a medicine. It is good for the wind and it is good for the muscles and so on. There is something for every part of the human body, as they always say.

If we have a headache today, what do we do? We take an aspirin. If they had a headache in those days they would take a piece of root, a dry root and they will get a piece of charcoal and they will put this dry root on that red hot charcoal and it would smoke up and they will inhale that smoke through their nostrils and then they would cover their head and lie down and their headache is gone. It never came back to them again. Now things like this, if I tell them to my

grandchildren, they won't believe it. They won't believe it. If that root, the smoke of that root could kill headache, why couldn't a cigarette? This is the answer they will give me. I know they would.

To hear them talk and when they show you what they did to live and how they lived and what makes them do these things to live, it is wonderful. They have a reason. It is pretty hard for me to explain. They have a reason. They never go to a doctor, they never go to a nurse as I said before. There are no hospitals. They catch cold, sure they catch cold and they break a bone once in a while. They cured themselves and nothing else sets in. Today, if a person breaks a bone, there is some other thing which sets in before the bone heals. But in those days they put some kind of root, leaves and this and that and they make poultices of it and they wrap it around it and they put bits of clay of some kind. They put that all around it. Today, it always comes to my mind when I see a man with a cast on his arm or his finger, or his leg, I often remember what my grandmother and grandfather used to say about this clay that they put on their arm or leg to keep it in shape. It doesn't go out of shape, it keeps it there and in so many days they cut it, they chip it some way and they take it off and the bone is healed and it is healed the way it should be. All these things, they would talk about it and they believe in it.

Another thing that I find very good is, my grandmother and grandfather, both old, if they have toothache well they take a root. They soak a root in warm water until that root is soft and then they put that in their mouth wherever the tooth is aching they put it there and then they will bite it and then they will cover their face and lay down and tomorrow, no more toothache.

The same thing - they've got an eyewash. My grandmother, she is 93 and she can thread a needle just as good as anybody else. So does my grandfather. Some old people, once their eyes give they just give, give, give and they go blind. But most of them seem to have good eyes right up to old age.

As far as living and medicine and looking after the body is concerned, this is the way they talk and there is a lot of medicine they get from the ground and from the trees, from the flowers, the bark and the leaves and the flower and the root. But us Indians today, we don't know nothing about those things that my grandfather and grandmother used to live by using these things. Now we don't, we don't know what these roots are. Where can we go to get them? What are they, how do they look?

Animal meat, like the buffalo, they dried the meat. They get the meat and then they treated it in some way that it tastes different. They dry it all right enough but then some of it they dried over a fire. Some of it they dried maybe ten feet up and let the air dry it, the heat from the sun and the air. That tastes different. Things like that, you know it is

very interesting. We don't know anything about it at this time. That's lost.

A fellow asked me the other day (he said he was going up north) and he asked me if I could go along and dry meat for him. Well I guess I could try but I don't know whether I could make the dry meat as my grandfather and grandmother used to make it. I don't know how to do it. So it's lost, those things are lost and we will never find out what we don't know now. We will never find out. There aren't very many Indians living today that know these things and if you ask them -- "Oh yes, I heard my grandfather say something about it." "Oh, yes, I heard my grandmother say something about it, but I don't know." That's the answer you get. At least that's the answer I get. I have been getting that for the last two months now and it is very hard for me to tell stories and put it on tape. What I am saying is what I heard from my grandfather and grandmother, but there is nobody to testify of what I am saying and I would like to get somebody who would elaborate on what I am saying, if possible. But there is nobody here. I have one man here who is older than me, but he is not interested in a thing like that and I am. I asked him a couple of times and he said, "I don't I'm doing all right," he said. This is what he said. He has a pension and when he wants medicine he goes to the drugstore and goes to the doctor and that's it. He doesn't have to worry about what is gone and what has gone out of sight. And he doesn't have to bring in his presence his grandmother or grandfather and he is not criticizing himself for not knowing this or he didn't ask his grandmother, grandparents about these things, which was good to them. It was their

livelihood in those days. But now he doesn't know and he still enjoys life, as he says. Really, I would like to know and remember everything that my grandparents used to tell me and used to say. They never depended on anybody but themselves. They knew what to do and if they had a sore foot or a headache, they knew what to do to cure themselves. I am having a hard time to find out things.

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| MEEK (OR MEAK), REV. J.G. | | GOODVOICE | 2 9 | 7 |
| PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MAN. | | GOODVOICE | 2 9 | 4-7 |
| PRINCE ALBERT, SASK. | | GOODVOICE | 2 9 | 2-8 |
| WAHPATON RESERVE, SASK. | | GOODVOICE | 2 9 | 7 |