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PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes the movement of the Dakota Sioux to Canada.
- Mentions various plants used for medicine.

Helga: I am here with Robert Goodvoice, who lives just a short distance out of Prince Albert. And I have known Robert for a while and one of the things we have talked about were Indian medicines as used by his people, the Dakotas. And Robert, before we start on the medicines, well, I would like that story that I have heard before about how your people really got to come from way in the States up here. It was to do with medicines too, really, wasn't it?

Robert: Yes. Now there was a huge camp of Dakotas and as they say, one morning a white man came -- because you know they always live in a circle -- a white man came into this circle and stood here looking around and moved on and stood here and they know he was looking for something or somebody. So one fellow walked up to him and asked him what he was looking for. And this white man said he is looking for a man that healed the sick. He noticed that when an Indian gets sick they don't go to the doctor or the hospital, that man, that Dakota Medicine Man as they call him, healed them and made them well. He would like to see him. So they told him where this medicine man lived and he went there and he told him that his wife was sick

and the doctors, that is the white doctors, they give up on her. And they told this white man to treat his wife the best he possibly can because she is not going to live no more than ten days. Before ten days is up, she will be dead.

Now this statement that was made to Mr. McKay hurt him bad and he wondered what he could do. And he thought of this Indian medicine man and he told him what the doctor told him and his wife was very, very sick. So this Indian medicine man, he told Mr. McKay to go home and he will go there and see what he can do for her. He followed him to his home and then he went into the room where Mrs. McKay laid and this man here, this Indian medicine man, he has an extra power to heal sick. He got this power from a power that moved through the air, a power from above, as he always say. Now, he had to pray to that and tell him what he is up against and recite certain prayers, and he also had to sing some sacred songs, which he did. And in his vision he saw this, he saw through this sick woman's body, and he know what was wrong with her. And there was four roots that were shown to him. And he knows what to do then. So he went home and dug up these roots and boiled them and took the juice to this sick white woman. And she drank that and two days after he went to see the sick woman and she was sitting up in bed. Of course, he brought some more of this here juice, you know, these herbs or medicine. And on the

fourth day, he went there, she was sitting on a chair beside her bed. On the sixth day, she was walking up and down outside of her home and on the eighth day, she was standing beside her husband, Mr. McKay, who was working in the garden. And then he know that she was well and cured so he didn't go back there.

A few days after, Mr. McKay sent a word to this medicine man whose name is Hoopayakta. Now that is an Indian name that is pretty hard to translate. It would take a lot of words to translate. It is a name and a lot of people would like to know what these Indian names mean but this one is a hard one to translate so I don't think I'll try to translate it. But I will go on. Now Hoopayakta was called to Mr. McKay's home one day and Mr. McKay told him to bring two or three of his relations or a man with him. And when he got there, when the Indians got to Mr. McKay's home, and he invited them into his house and into the room, and then Mr. McKay said to Hoopayakta, "Now," -- they had a halfbreed as an interpreter -- "now," he said, "Hoopayakta, you cured my wife and I am glad of it. And I am a very, very poor man and I can't give you very much but I will give you what I could spare." And he give him some blankets and some clothing and some pots and pans and a few dollars and then he told him, "Now, I am going to tell you something but don't tell anybody, especially a white man, don't tell them what I am going to tell you. This is what I am going to tell you. Now you Dakotas fought the Big Knife, Esontonka," that means Americans. "You fought the United States and you did a lot of damage and now the United States government is planning to hang lots of you people. And the way he is going to come at you is he is going to build homes for you people in a certain -- in one place. Everybody who goes there, he will

get a home. And there will be a school and church and store and that will be your home until all the Dakotas are gathered in one place. You are going to go to bed and when you wake up in the morning the American soldiers would be right -- you will be surrounded by the American soldiers and they will drive you south to a place and there they will hang most of you. You have got to pay for the damage that you have caused by fighting. This has got to be paid and that is the way you are going to pay is being hanged. You are going to go through some persecution. They might hang you, they might shoot you, they might club you to death. You are going to go through some persecution." This is what Mr. McKay told Hoopayakta. "Now, to escape this persecution, I got a friend straight north from here, across the line." That means McKay's friend is across the line in Canada, a place called Portage. Now he said, "I will write a letter and take your friends, all your relations,

all those that want to live, take them and go straight north from here and you will give this letter to a man over there," he says. "And from there he would guide you to another place way north. There is two rivers over there and north of these two rivers there is lots of land there. Nobody is there. Lots of game, fur-bearing animals, and this will be a place where you fellows would be. You can trap and you can hunt. You will live there free from want. My friends are over there." So this is in the year 1875. So Hoopayakta, he was the leader, and they all moved north across the line into Canada and they come to a place called Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. That is the name of it today. They stayed there that winter.

In the spring of 1876, in the month of March, they started moving northward towards Prince Albert. This man in Portage, the Indians didn't say his name but they called him The Man in Portage, he guided them. One evening he called them and he told them, "See that star over there in the northwest? Right under there, that is where that town is." And they say this man in Portage, the man in Portage took out a little watch and this watch is moving all the time so they called that the moving watch. That must be a compass and he told them, "That is the direction. You go, you keep going. The town is over there." And before they left Mr. McKay, the man that had the sick wife, he said he is coming over there, not next year but the year after that. So they left and they come to Portage and in the spring of 1876, they started to move.

There was quite a few families that started off to come to Prince Albert. They didn't have no horses, no oxen, or nothing. They packed everything on their backs and they started off. They kept going and kept going for a number of days until they come to a lake, a big body of water. They thought it was the ocean and they were disappointed. Some said, "We come to an ocean and we can't go any further." So some turned back from there, back to the States. But they didn't go back to Portage, they went southwest from there. And the rest, they say they will try and get around this by going around the west shore. They kept going west and finally it started to

turn north, north, until it was, the shoreline was turning east. They followed that until they were straight opposite from where they started to go west. And then in the evening, they put up a stick pointing to that star and they follow that again. When they do that, in the morning they will see a hill way over there in the far off distance. They head for that. When they come there, they do the same thing.

Helga: That was their navigation? Wonderful.

Robert: Yes. Yes. And they, as I said, they started in the month of March and they reached Prince Albert in August. That is how long it took. And on the way, they trapped. In the spring they trapped muskrats and minks and foxes and some fur-bearing animals that they could trap. They dried that and they would pack that and carry that. And they shoot two or three deer and then when they have three or four hides, they stop and they tan that and that is their footwear. And they dry the meat and they pound it into powder and they make what they called pemmican. We call it wasnow(?). And that is the way they lived while they journeyed to Prince Albert.

Helga: Yes. And then, now this medicine man, that was with you, your doctor man, how long did he live up in this area?

Robert: Quite a while.

Helga: Quite a while? Did he live to quite an old age?

Robert: Oh yes, very, very old age.

Helga: Do you remember or have you heard how old he was when he died? I suppose maybe not, he would be pretty old.

Robert: Yes, yes. He was past 90. Some say he was pretty close to 100 and some say he was 100 years of age but...

Helga: Around 100 then?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And now many of these stories you heard from your grandparents, Robert?

Robert: Yes, and from others too, other old people.

Helga: Yes, other old people of that same -- that came up in that time too.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Now, in the earlier days, all these different -- your medicines, the Indian medicines, were used all the time pretty

well with the people, until later when doctors came and so on and then it died away. But there are still some that know

about these and you have used some yourself.

Robert: Yes, yes, I have.

Helga: You were telling us one story of a time twenty-five years ago when you had a heart attack, and what you did. We would like to hear that one, Robert.

Robert: I was suffering with it until I see my cousin, James Ermine, in Prince Albert. And he heard that I was, I had heart trouble, and he said he had that many years ago. And he said, "This is..." he showed me a little bundle of pounded roots, they were in powder form. And he told me, "These are the roots that healed me," he said. And since then, I never have heart trouble.

Helga: No. But that is in all these twenty-five years, that was after taking this you never had any recurrence of it?

Robert: No, never.

Helga: You have been very healthy ever since. Now, you don't know what these roots were or...?

Robert: Yes, he showed me the roots and, well, I met him and he give me this little bundle of... package of pounded medicine. And he said, "In the spring," he said "when the grass grows, I will show you the plants," which he did. And I, what he give me I finished them and before I finished that I felt better. But anyway I got some more from him and I kept that and I ate some of that once a week until I finished. By that time it was spring and he showed me the roots. But I was lucky that I have never had any heart attacks or heart trouble ever since.

Helga: From that day on? That is, you know, when you think how wonderful that is, all the studies that have been done and yet you people had the, you had those things. And when the first white people came, they didn't have doctors either and as happened, when your people came up, they went to you people very often for help too. They had to.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: So, you... And then you were also mentioning another, when you had arthritis in one -- when your fingers were so all crippled up and what you did there.

Robert: Well, I dug up some medicine that my grandmother and my grandfather used to dig up and boil it and drink it. When they feel some of their joints aching or some place in their body that is aching, they boil these roots and they drink it for a day or so and then it is all over.

Helga: Imagine.

Robert: Yes, the pain is gone.

Helga: And the stiffness and everything? Because your hand, you say it was all twisted up and now it is quite straight. You couldn't even work with it. Your hands were just useless. There were three fingers on your hand that were quite useless.

Robert: Yes, they were entirely no good.

Helga: Yes, and how long ago was that.

Robert: It was either in 1971 or 1972.

Helga: Imagine. And then another who had a bruise on the hand that wouldn't heal. That is another one you were telling us that we would love to have on tape.

Robert: Well, that is this woman that saw that and knew the root. Her name was Mrs. Willie Gun. They had a place in White Star district. They bought a place there, a little four acres of a home, you know, and they lived there. And Mrs. Willie Gun, she told me about this and she asked me -- she was wondering about this here sickness called cancer. She asked me what it is and I didn't know what it is. And I tried to explain to her in kind of a white man's way, I said germs. I don't think there is a word for germs in my language.

Helga: No, no. It would be like poison in some way. You would call it a poison of some sort.

Robert: Yes, and a magnifying glass, I don't think there is a word for that either, so I told her there was a thick glass that the white man...

Helga: That you can see, like a microscope, but you can see things bigger.

Robert: It magnifies what you are looking at. This is how I explained to her, "And they say it is a germ," I said. And then she told me that there was a person hurt his hand and a sore started and it couldn't heal. And for a long time it couldn't heal, wouldn't heal. They went to the doctor and this and that but it couldn't heal so they tried some of their own medicine. They got ahold of some roots, pound it and wet it and then they made poultices of it and put it there and bandaged it. The next morning when they took it, there is a little red spot. It is a drop of hard blood right in the middle of the poultice. They took it and they look at it and they look at it and they say that thing stretched out, then stretched out this way. They couldn't see no head or tail of it but it is a living thing. And that is what came out of it. There was about five, four or five I would say, came out of that sore. When they put this here root on there, this...

Helga: Drew it out.

Robert: Yes, it drew it out or else this thing left the human, the deteriorating human flesh, it come to this root. Somehow it...

Helga: It came out.

Robert: Yes. And then the sore healed after that. And another one had a bruise at his heel and they did the same thing with the same root and it happened the same. It seemed to draw it out. Whatever is causing that sore to remain as a fresh wound all the time, they drew it out and it dried up and healed up. Now, Mrs. Gun said she would show me this root. And at the time I was threshing, and while I was out on the harvest field Mrs. Gun died. So, that was lost and that is gone.

Helga: But do you think there would be other people though that might know? You haven't met any though.

Robert: I haven't met nobody...

Helga: That knows.

Robert: No. And this is one of the medicines that started with these 150 that I mentioned.

Helga: The 150 on this, the Red Path, of the 150 different plants and roots and so on that were to be used for the good of your people.

Robert: That is it, yes.

Helga: For all the different things that could happen.

Robert: Now I believe if I mentioned this to Henry Crow, I believe he heard something of it sometime in the past, because he lived with Mrs. Gun. That is his cousin, so she must have mentioned this to him one time or another, you know.

Helga: Yes, so he would probably know.

Robert: He might know it.

Helga: Yes.

Robert: But he is a man that don't pay any attention to the past or to anything. He don't...

Helga: It would be hard to get him to talk about it?

Robert: And he is an older man than me but he can't tell stories as I can.

Helga: Yes, but if you asked him, he might know.

Robert: He might know.

Helga: We should try to see him together sometime.

Robert: Yes, that would be a good thing.

Helga: And then, you know, try to get him to talk a bit. We might manage to if we are good at it. (laughs)

Robert: That is a good idea.

Helga: That would be good. Because he might. There would be a... And let's see... But among your young people, they are not interested any more in these old, your people's, the old people's medicines too much. They go now to doctors and they have forgotten all this or they don't care to know.

Robert: No, they don't care to know.

Helga: That is too bad because it'll... You know, these wonderful things that have been handed down to you should be kept.

Robert: They should be kept, yes.

Helga: So, you know, if we could just find more of this some way. I know there are studies being done. You were mentioning Pauline McGiven -- that there was a book.

Third Person: Well, Pauline McGiven...

Helga: It is in her custody or care?

Third Person: ...was given an Indian herbal remedy for cancer by a 94 year old nurse by the name of Renie Case who just passed away this past December. She was going to come to Saskatoon to give a talk to a health group there. She learned it from an Indian lady when she was a young nurse and they became very close friends. And she has documented cases over fifty years of cancer cures by this herbal formula.

Helga: Well there, that would be so interesting. Would there be a chance of getting a copy of that book, do you think, or is it in the archives? Is it just notes in the archives?

Third Person: There is no book on it. It is just her work that she has done. Now where her case histories are now, I have no idea and I would like to find out. But it has been given to a couple of doctors in the States who are sympathetic to it. But I am quite concerned as to what will happen to it. Will it turn into something that...? Is the profit motive going to take over?

Helga: Well, that is the point. That is the trouble that happens. These things are, well, as you explained, these medicines were given for the good of all people, not to make money out of but to help one another. And there is where the trouble comes sometimes.

Third Person: That is right.

Helga: So there it is.

(Break in Tape)

Robert: It is about the water. When they dig us a well on the reserve, the water is about sixty, maybe eighty feet below.

And if they... Before we use it, the nurse would take some of it and send it away and it would come back and says it is not fit for human consumption. I don't know what it is, too much mineral or contaminated or something wrong with it. Now, in the olden days in my grandmother's time, when she was a little girl, and in my time too, we never used to drink well water. Slough water, rain water, river water, spring water, we drink water out of the Saskatchewan River. Not too much but...

Helga: It is pretty muddy.

Robert: But the Red River, we lived close there and we used that water. Of course, there is springs coming out of the side of the hills and that is where we would get our water. And now, the slough water, they don't drink out of every slough. Now, they will go to a new camping site and, of course, the first thing they look for is water. There is a nice slough there with a nice white sand bottom, or it looks nice. And there is a couple of men will go around this slough looking for a, what would you call it? Is it a plant if it is in the water? It is a plant that has a leaf about that big.

Helga: You mean like water lilies or whatever? Water lilies?

Robert: No, I don't, I never saw it. Oh, I saw it but it is a long time since I saw it. If you see that in the slough, that is good...

(End of Side A, Tape IH-112)

(Side B)

Helga: ...sometimes it would be good water too, would it not?

Robert: Oh, I don't know. We don't go by that, we go by those plants. Yes. Just that plant.

Helga: Yes.

Robert: Yes, and that... And I heard some people say that they take that plant and they dry it and they boil it and they drink this tea.

Helga: Is it a big plant or a little plant?

Robert: Well, if the water is that deep, if the water is four feet deep, the stock would be four feet. And if it is only one foot, that is how it is. It will come to the surface and then

stop growing.

Helga: Oh, I see. It just grows to above water level. And does it have a big leaf or a small?

Robert: A big leaf, yes. It don't matter if it is a big lake, it still has the same leaves as a small lake. It is a plant. Of course there are some young ones coming. They are small but they grow to, now, let me see now, of course I never measured, but the biggest leaf I seen would be about like that.

Helga: About the size of, like the size of a rhubarb leaf nearly or something. Like a wild rhubarb sort of thing.

Robert: But then, it is not in the length, it is more round.

Helga: More a round leaf. Then it would be more like water lilies. They are round, and big and green. And they grow on top of the surface. They grow flat on the surface?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: That would be like the water lily, wouldn't it? The lily plant.

Robert: It is not a water lily.

Helga: It isn't though.

Robert: No, no, maybe the water lily that you are speaking of might be a different one of what I am thinking of but I don't think this is a water lily. There is no flower that comes on top. There is a flower there but it is short.

Helga: Small, short, little thing.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Would be the seeds, I suppose.

Robert: No, I think it comes at the end of the... at the edge of this here leaf. And the root, it is not a big root, it

is a small root but then it has lots of stems or whatever you call it. Now the size of the stems and the height of it and the size of the leaf, you would think it would have a root that big. But it is just a small, small root. Now that's...

Helga: That is the way you found out what was good drinking water?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And that would be so very important when you were travelling and making camps in different places.

Robert: Oh, yes.

Helga: Of course, your first thing would be good water.

Robert: Yeah, if they see that when the sun is low, when they travelled when they see that, that is where they stop.

Helga: Was that usually sandy...?

Robert: Any place.

Helga: Could it be a muddy little...?

Robert: Could be muddy, it could be on the sand.

Helga: Any of...

Robert: It could go across here on one of the jack pines if there is any. If there is a slough there and it could grow there, and it could grow on a muskeg and it could grow on a slow-moving stream. If it is fast, the current would drown it or take it down or whatever you want to call it. Now this... that is what... I often thought, you know, supposing that person takes a root and puts it where the lake is contaminated and put it there, would it live?

Helga: That would be a point, wouldn't it?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: It probably wouldn't grow.

Robert: No, if that is not good, it wouldn't grow.

Helga: That is the reason it is there is because it grows only in good water, in clean water.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Oh, that is wonderful.

Robert: Yes, that is what I was wanting to put on some tape someplace.

Helga: That is very important because that is part of health, of course. Very much a part of health is good water. And now, you never... Of course at that time, you wouldn't have people going around testing water. It is a shame, it would be interesting to find a little lake or slough with those plants on and then just for a test, take some of that water and have it tested and then you would have complete proof then, wouldn't you. You could prove it scientifically as well as every other way. That would be interesting. If you ever know of one some time, we should do that.

Robert: Yes. Even if the tests come back and say that slough there with that plant in it is contaminated or it is unfit for human consumption, I believe if that plant is there I will still drink it.

Helga: You'll drink it. Well, I don't blame you.

Robert: I will.

Helga: Yes, that is true.

Robert: I am sure because my parents, that is what they go by. Nobody ever got what they call typhoid fever. That comes from the water, don't it?

Helga: Yes, yes, it does.

Robert: And what else?

Helga: Well, all kinds of dysentery, you know, and all those sort of things. That is all from bad water that has something wrong with it, and all kinds of stomach troubles.

Robert: And these people, in them days, they travel back and forth all through the country and wherever they see that, some of them they stay there for the summer.

Helga: Well, what about with colds, like bad colds and things? You would have certain medicines for that too. You had medicines for anything that would happen to you.

Robert: Oh yes, yes. I was just ready. I was going to pick some of the herbs around my place. There is three there that I could see that they use for colds.

Helga: You could try that and see.

Robert: I was going to, yes. Well, I have tried those things in the past. When I am way up north.

Helga: Where you have been not close to any place to get some medicines, then you could try those.

Robert: If I can see it above the snow. You know, you can always see them. Then I go and dig and follow the stem to the ground and dig the root out and boil it and drink it. And I don't suppose I'll do that if I was... if the aspirins and that was handy to me, I might go there. But this, I depend on it and as I said, you know, there are certain things that you have got to say to take these things, you know. And I say these prayers and then I take it. I don't go there, this will fix my cold. I don't say that, no. I follow the procedure that my parents...

Helga: That your parents and grandparents told you first. That is important.

Robert: Yes, yes.

Helga: To have a belief in the medicines first.

Robert: Maybe some of my own Indian boys, high school

students, if they see me and know the way I -- what I do before I dig that root, they might say -- what do you call it, superstitious, or whatever you call it. They might think that but...

Helga: So you have to be a little careful.

Robert: But my people were not superstitious. They were sincere. And they respect these things. So that is the idea I have. They can think towards me as they please. But I am sure, me and Henry Crow, we are the last ones. I don't know how many medicines he knows, the natural roots and herbs as you call it. I don't know if he knows any or not. When we are gone, well, that will be it.

Helga: Well, we should get together with Henry Crow one day and do some more on this. I would like that.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: You say he comes up once in a while, or you know where he is and where he lives.

Robert: Oh, yes.

Helga: Does he let you know when he is coming or...?

Robert: No, he don't let me know but he is in town all the time.

Helga: Oh, he is?

Robert: Oh, three or four times.

Helga: So when he comes sometime, let's arrange that I could be with you and meet him.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: I would like that. Then we could do that.

Robert: Yes, I could do that.

Helga: Now, what else, let's see? (Break in Tape) Robert, if you would like to tell us a little more about when you first came here and the different places you were and how you came to be where you are now.

Robert: Well now, we had a man, his name is Aheonkee. And this Aheonkee worked for man in Prince Albert. And this man in Prince Albert, he was rancher. And Aheonkee was a faithful worker and he was a good worker. And this rancher see that if

Aheonkee can get a piece of land and if the other Dakotas could work like Aheonkee could, they will make a living for themselves and have a garden and one thing or another and make

a living. So they suggested that he should ask the Canadian government for a piece of land. And they wrote a letter for him. In about a month's time, the government answered in favor of whatever the Indian had requested for. It is a piece of land. And Aheonkee chose that place where they are now, today.

Helga: The Round Plain Reserve.

Robert: Yes, the Round Plain Reserve. But the Canadian government said he can't give them any assistance as they give to the treaty Indians because we are not treaty Indians. All they can give us is the land to live on. And we have to make our -- build our own houses and live there and make the best of we could.

Helga: That was pretty... It wasn't easy either.

Robert: No, it wasn't.

Helga: Because imagine not having all the help that the other Indian tribes of Canada had, you know, in everything. And now in health services and everything, and education and all the rest, you had to do that all on your own.

Robert: On our own, yes. And it was very, very hard for the Indians to make a living on that reserve. So they go there and they stay there maybe two or three days and away they go.

Helga: Go to work.

Robert: Some place to make a living. And at that time, there was a ruling that an Indian have to have a written permission to be absent from his reserve. A written permission by the Indian Agent. But these people, they used to leave without having this here written permission. Now, the farmers around here, the settlers around here that know that, this Indian went there to ask for a job but he hasn't got written permission to leave the reserve, they don't give him a job. And it was very, very hard for them to make a living. And then the people said... There is a lot of children of school age that are not going to school and they ask the Indians why they don't send

their children to school. No school on the reserve. And they couldn't go in the other reserve and send their children there because the other Indians wouldn't allow them there. And they can't go into the white community; the white community wouldn't allow them so they are. We were up against it in every walk of life.

Helga: You were just sort of isolated there.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: How terribly hard it must have been.

Robert: Yes. And if an Indian is known to be absent from his reserve maybe ten days, the police will send him back. Send him back to the reserve. Finally a minister -- by gosh, I just forget his name -- but anyway, it is a minister from the Presbyterian church, he went to that reserve and he looked around. He figured there was enough children there to start a school and to keep it going. And if they build a school, they can use it for a church. And that is why the Presbyterian church took over. They built a school there and the Presbyterian missionaries were there. Who paid them, I don't know. Or would they get paid, I don't know.

Helga: Yeah, well, they may have got a grant, some sort of a grant, but a lot of it would be paid by the church probably.

Robert: Yes, and we understood that we can't get no help from the Indian Department. No doctors, nurses, or medicines or...

Helga: That doesn't seem right, does it?

Robert: No. And if we are sick, we can't go into the hospital unless we pay for it, and we haven't got the money to pay for it. But we are lucky that nobody took sick.

Helga: Well, maybe your good Indian medicines in those early days kept you going.

Robert: Yes, there is about four of them were in the tribe, you know.

Helga: You had four medicine men in your tribe?

Robert: Yes. And when anybody gets sick, they all go there. And they all look over this sick body and they perform over it. They know what is wrong and they know what to do. This is the way they live. But when the Presbyterian church took over, they didn't like that system. They didn't like to live with some, what they call this now...

Third Person: Rituals?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Another belief really than their own. I can see they wouldn't like it.

Third Person: They called it superstition, I suppose.

Robert: Yeah, you just used that word here not too long ago. What do you call that now? Witchcraft.

Helga: Yes.

Robert: The Presbyterians didn't like to live with that. So the Presbyterians through some arrangement with some society and we got a doctor. And by that time, the Presbyterian church

had built a school. And a few of us, a few of the children were going there.

Helga: What year, do you know what year that would be?

Robert: This would have been in 1890 when the school was built. 1891, 1892, 1893 this place was surveyed and then in 1894 we moved in there. I always use the we -- I wasn't there but, you know, my people. In 1894, we moved in there.

Helga: You moved to the reserve.

Robert: Yes, and the Presbyterian church was with us there. Miss Lucy Baker, she was a nurse, she was a trained nurse and she looked after the sick people -- bandaged the wounds and this and that, and in the evening the Indians would take that off and they would use their own medicine.

(laughter)

Helga: Got better faster.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Isn't that lovely. That is beautiful.

Robert: So, this went on for, oh, for a long time.

Helga: But now you do get help from the Indian Affairs.

Robert: Yes, we get everything...

Helga: It took you how many years before you started to get some help from Indian Affairs?

Robert: Around 1910 or 1909.

Helga: That is a long time.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Now, have you any treaties still, I mean what is your standing as a reserve, you know, as far as treaty rights and so on? Did you have a treaty or anything with the federal government or what happened?

Robert: No, the federal government took us under their care as a treaty Indian, and they register us as a treaty Indian but we don't get this five dollars a year. That is the only thing we don't get.

Helga: You don't get the treaty money. You never did.

Robert: No. We get everything else, what the treaty Indian gets.

Helga: But no treaty money.

Robert: No treaty money.

Helga: Except for that help you have been on your own all these years in this country. You know, except now you are getting help from the federal but...

Robert: Yeah, we get health, education, everything.

Helga: And then you also... Will you get loans for farming and all that sort of thing or do you get...?

Robert: Yes, yes we do.

Helga: You do now. You get that so that would be a help, a big help.

Robert: Yes. And the land on which we are living, it is confirmed to us. It is ours the same as the treaty Indian owns the land.

Helga: There are not too many like your people in Saskatchewan, are there? They are not... there are a few... what about the Sauteaux, are they...?

Robert: No, the Sauteaux is different from us.

Helga: No, but I meant whether they had that kind of an arrangement. Some of them came from the States too, did they not?

Robert: They did but their original tribe remained in Canada. Like the people in Alberta. They just go across the line and live there but the main body is in Canada. So anything they are not satisfied over there, they come back. They are not satisfied here, they go back.

Helga: They keep crossing back and forth. There is nothing to stop them. I know that part of it, but you know, I wondered... But that is quite a thing. And you people, I know in the earlier days, when you used to come in with wood and sell wood and you did everything to make some money, to make a living. I remember that.

Robert: And then sometime between 1915 and 1894, somewhere in that period, the Indian department took over and give us medicine and all this and that. And they started paying missionaries to go in there. And they started paying the Presbyterian church who were teaching the children. Then the other denominations jumped in. Like the Catholics and the others. So that split us in different groups. But anyway, the starter is Miss Lucy Baker, with Miss Annie Cameron. Later on Miss Annie Cameron become Mrs. William Kirby and that lady, well, they both, Miss Lucy Baker and Miss Cameron, they can master our language very, very well.

Helga: Could they?

Robert: Oh, yes.

Helga: They spoke Dakota. Well, isn't that wonderful? So you had some good people coming in to help you too. That was good. Well, of course you people, if you were good workers, it works both ways. You carried your load and you carried your responsibilities and people respected you for it.

Robert: By that time the Indians were farming around fifteen or twenty acres. They do it with little Indian ponies and a walking plow, you know, and those ponies would only haul about two sections of harrow.

Helga: Yeah, they were pretty small ponies, I know.

Robert: Yes, and there was no drill so they used to broadcast it by hand. And they didn't have no harrows for a long time so they used to cut brush and drag it back and forth as a harrow. So that is the kind of a start we got but...

Helga: Yeah, you have had a hard start. It makes for good people sometimes.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Well, that was really...

Robert: Oh, yes, there is one thing... Oh, I guess I said it already. The Canadian government said they can't give us any help of any kind. They would give us land and that is it. I got it on here, yes.

Helga: At the beginning you had no help at all.

Robert: No help.

Helga: You just had a piece of land to live on and had to build your own houses. You built them out of log, I suppose.

Robert: Yes, logs and sod roofs, mud walls...

Third Person: And no central heating.

Robert: No, no. Just a tent stove in the middle.

Helga: Those good old log houses were pretty warm. They were better than our houses you have now.

Robert: Yes, they were warm.

Helga: Far better, really good. They were good old houses.

Robert: And the children used to walk to school, you know. And the church... they were good people. They used to feed the children at noon right at the school so they don't have to take their lunch.

Helga: Oh yes, that was good. So they had a good hot meal at

noon, eh.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And some of your family are still on the reserve?  
Some?

Robert: Yes.

Interveiw: You have one of your...

Robert: But there is nobody living now that went to school with Miss Lucy Baker. There is only one white man. Oh, yes, the school went for about four years, I think they said. Then the outside children come in, in the reserve. Then it was a mixed school. And there is only one man that I know of that went to school in our reserve, he is still alive. And, oh, he must be around 90 years of age anyway.

Helga: Do you remember his name?

Robert: Robert Cadieux. He is living in Shellbrook now.

Helga: Oh, for heaven sakes.

Robert: Now, if you go and see him, he can tell you lots of the past. Who come there and, you know, all that.

Helga: Well, you have given us a lot, Robert, and we will also try to get your other friend, get him to talk with you sometime too -- Henry Crow. Sometime you ask him when he is in if we

could have a little meeting together and do a little bit more. So this was really very, very interesting and I want to thank you so much. It is perfect. It was wonderful, wasn't it?

Third Person: It sure has been.

(End of Side B, Tape IH-112)

(End of Tape)

(Tape IH-113, Side A)

Helga: An interview with Robert Goodvoice of the Round Plain Reserve near Prince Albert. The other interview was on September 8. Today is September 25. We are just going to do a few and then we are going to go further on down around Dundurn where Robert has a friend he knows who also knows quite a bit about Indian medicines and herbs and roots and so on. So we are just going to start right off now, Robert. Just one or two things and then we will continue on later.

Robert: Yes, well, this here flower-like plant that grows on the prairies mostly and I -- we, the Dakotas, we call it Moneechacha. And the Wasitiu, the white people, they call it

tiger lily.

Helga: Yes. Or prairie lily or whatever.

Robert: Yes. But anyway, this plant that I have just mentioned -- the root, you dig it out, there is a few little seeds there. They look like rice. And they say that is very good food. They used to gather that as much as they can and dry it and keep it and use it during the winter. They mix it in the... When they boil some meat they will throw a handful in it and make soup out of it, or they cook it pure, and they say they use it as medicine. And they use... they feed it to a sick person.

Helga: Like a tonic or something to cure people when they are sick, to build their strength back up. And how does it taste, this seed, have you ever tasted it?

Robert: I have never tasted it, no.

Helga: I was wondering if it tasted a bit like rice or probably, it could, I suppose.

Robert: I saw my mom... my grandmother cooked some one time and then she took the... took it out of the fire and mix it, you know. It looks thick, it looks -- I don't know if she put any flour in it or whatever. I don't think...

Helga: Sort of mealy then.

Robert: Yes...

Helga: Sort of a mealy or floury look about it. So it is sort of starch or something like that. Sort of powdery.

Robert: Yes, that is the way it looked.

Helga: So that was used and gathered as part of the diet for winter or whenever people were not feeling too well or something.

Robert: Yes, when a person is not... having difficulty digesting their food or stomach trouble. Then they say they used that and it helps them and it gives them an appetite.

Helga: So it is just an all-around sort of a tonic and good for the stomach and had many uses then. You know, and of course, that is one plant or flower that we all know, and of course it is also the emblem of Saskatchewan -- the prairie lily or the tiger lily as we call it.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Well, that is wonderful. So you still remember that from when you were a little boy, that your grandmother would gather those and use them. And also you were talking a little about the Seneca root that...

Robert: The Seneca root is... everybody knows that. And they used to buy the -- chiefly the fur buyers, eh -- they buy that and they would pack it.

Helga: Yes, there were signs out, you know, that they would be buying Seneca root and I often wondered what it was used for.

Robert: Well, I couldn't tell you how the white man used it but my people they used the juice and they drink that. They say it helps to open up the windpipes for what they call that now, congestion.

Helga: Oh yeah, when you have a congestion or bronchitis or some bad, very heavy cold and you have trouble breathing, that this helped to open up the...

Robert: The air passages, yes.

Helga: The air passages, oh gosh. And it was just picked as a root and then boiled and strained, I suppose, and used as a drink, was it?

Robert: Yes, and they mixed some other roots with it.

Helga: Yes, you don't remember what other ones?

Robert: Well, they mix it with this here what they call mint. This grows...

Helga: Wild mint.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: That would help to give it a better taste too.

Robert: Yes. And another thing they used this... How they call it? Wild ginger they call it. We call it Sincpaytawotay(?). That is what we call this root. That is the Indian name.

Helga: That is the ginger root sort of thing, the wild ginger.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And that one you said was used, as you said, when you have congestion and for a bad cold.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And then also you mentioned that the poplar or the aspen was also used, did you? The inner bark or do...

Robert: The inner bark of poplar.

Helga: Of poplar

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And...

Robert: The young poplar...

Helga: The very nice, little green, young ones.

Robert: Yes, about one inch in diameter. That is about the size they used.

Helga: And then you would peel the outer bark and then scrape off the inside, that soft bark that is inside.

Robert: Yes, yes.

Helga: And was that boiled up? I suppose it was.

Robert: Yes, it was boiled and it was drank the same as any other medicine. But that is very strong. You have got to dilute it until it...

Helga: It would be very bitter, wouldn't it?

Robert: Yes, it is.

Helga: Very bitter.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And what was that used for?

Robert: Well, for about the same thing as the Seneca root.

Helga: For colds and that sort of thing.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And so... Now it seemed to me there was another one. Just a moment.

Robert: Yes, I'm just boiling up some roots. And this root has been handed down from generation to generation, I believe, because my grandmother told this to my mother, and my mother showed this root to me. And I also... I stayed with a woman as

common-law wife for thirty-nine years and she used a lot of that when anybody has any stomach trouble. And that's... this is what... I'm boiling it and I am going to give it to a white man who has stomach trouble. And I did give him some already and he said it helped him. And so he's coming...

Helga: And now, what type of roots would that be that you use in there? Or would you be... The thing is it is hard to describe, isn't it?

Robert: Yes, it is.

Helga: The names of these things.

Robert: Yes, the root is very, very hard to describe. It is a root, you know, and when it dries, it is very, very stiff. But it don't spoil. It is just like sticks, just like little dried sticks.

Helga: Is it from a shrub, a small tree, or a tiny little low growing...? What does the tree or plant look like?

Robert: Well, when it comes out it has very short leaves right at the base of the stock and then there is one stock comes about a foot or so and then that is where it flowers.

Helga: And what color are the flowers?

Robert: Oh, I never...

Helga: Never noticed that.

Robert: No, I never bothered until about this time, after they are dried. When they are fully matured.

Helga: You don't ever take... These things, you wait until later on in the summer once they have flowered and they are completely a matured plant then.

Robert: Yes, but I saw it...

Helga: It is a small form of a wild flower then, in a way.

Robert: Yes, it is.

Helga: It grows about how high?

Robert: About a foot. And it is green, all right, enough. The flowers are green.

Helga: And is that plant around here too?

Robert: Yes, they are around here. And it grows at the edge of a bush and it grows better out in the open where there is no bush.

Helga: And so you dig up the plant and then, do you dry the roots a bit first?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: Then you cook them, right? And then strain them?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And make it up then into... And it smells very nice and fresh. Lovely.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: So, that is one that has been handed down from your grandmother to your mother?

Robert: Yes.

Helga: So it is a very old one?

Robert: Old remedy, it is known long ago.

Helga: It was handed down from many generations?

Robert: Yes, as far as that goes. It is not old, you know, because it grows every year as new plants. But then it has been known by the people for many, many years. Generations back.

Helga: And as you say, that is used for people that are having bowel troubles and stomach troubles and that sort of thing, to help settle their stomachs. And this man had been having problems for some time, and so finally he thought he would come to you to ask if you could help him with that.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: So, it, well, you know, it is known... I mean even as the, as I showed you that little clipping about aspirin that is known so well. That is from a plant too. And that is a very old one and we're still using it under, of course, all kinds of different names now. But there again is an interesting thing.

Robert: Now, I am beginning to believe in these things. Because my hand was useless and now I can use my hand very good. And I know very well that it is these herbs, the juice of these herbs that helped me, yes.

Helga: That cured your hand. Well, it is true. And I mean so many of our... Most of our medicines are made from these different types of herbs and things anyway.

Robert: Yes.

Helga: And, you know, we just happen to use them in a different form. But some of yours are still better than what we are using, that are the natural, that are given. As you say, how these have been given to your people and many other peoples. It is a gift from God, sort of thing, these living things that can help us.

Robert: Yes. Now this is the reason why I don't like to tell these things when I am alone. I like to have somebody with me that is of my age or older than me, if possible, and I would like you to tell a story, or tell as he knows about these medicines.

Helga: Yes, so you have two people talking. Not only yourself. You feel that it is better. So I do hope that we will be able to meet with your friend from around Dundurn one of these days soon and continue with this interview, because it is very, very important in so many ways, to preserve much of

this, as people are beginning to appreciate it more now than they ever did. So, it's...

You know Robert, there was another... Since I have been doing these interviews with you, every time I see anything about medicines I start reading. And there was one that I read, this one that I mentioned a little bit before about aspirin in one form or another, and how many people use it. And that way back in the early 19th century and way before, they found the active ingredient in willow was sellacin(?) and that is what aspirin is made of. And the aspirin or

acetylsalicylic acid is the modern version of the willow. And so your people have used that too, the willow as used for relieving pain and reducing fever and that sort of thing.

Robert: Well, I don't know about that, but they use it anyway.

Helga: They use it. They use it as a medicine, some parts of the willow.

Robert: Yes, the tender part of the willow, that is the top. And then the bark of the roots. They get the roots and then they scrape the bark of the root. And then the next bark that is under that, that is what they... They eat that or boil it and they drink the juice. When they are not feeling...

Helga: Just not too well, and it just sort of helps.

Robert: Yes, it helps them to feel better and to help them to gain their health in many ways, you know.

Helga: You know, there is so much. I mean, it is such a big field but well, we'll continue with it at another time. We have done a little bit now and we'll just leave this tape until we can get down south and meet with your friend and we'll do a little more.

Robert: Good.

Helga: And that is awfully nice, thank you.

Robert: Good.

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