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SASKATCHEWAN  
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SASKATCHEWAN  
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INTERPRETER: ALPHONSE LITTLEPOPLAR  
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mr. Lonesinger was born on the Red Pheasant Reserve in 1888. He attended school and then began farming, married, and moved to the Sweet Grass Reserve. He is a good singer and storyteller. (For biography, see IH-052, p.11).
- Tells of some of the old people he knew.
- Battle of Cut Knife Hill
- Sundances and their banning.
- Indian agents, good and bad
- Story of the blind man who was lost and who found his way with the help of the little people.

Littlepoplar: You must have known many old people in your time. Who were the old-timers you knew at Sweet Ggrass?

Lonesinger: Yes, I knew many old people, the oldest of which would have been Coming Over a Hill's father. He was old, and his name was Asis. Coming Over A Hill was a cousin of my father, therefore, Asis was my grandfather. Also, there was another old man I knew - his name was Ah-poh-nay-now - and a man named Pay-chik-oh-ways.

Littlepoplar: Were these men very old? And did you know a man named Meh-ha-way-eeno?

Lonesinger: The people I speak of were very old when I was young. I also knew Meh-ha-way-eeno - he was deaf, and he died in 1900, in the wintertime - and my grandfather Musinas, who died in 1890.

Littlepoplar: Was Musinas the son-in-law of Mih-chay-way-is?

Lonesinger: No, Musinas was the son-in-law of Strike Him on the Back. And I remember Kayas-ikan, who died about the same time as Meh-ha-way-eeno. Ka-yas-ikan and Pey-achew were brothers. I did not know Mih-chay-way-is. They say he died in 1902.

Littlepoplar: Did you know Two on Two?

Lonesinger: Two on Two? I knew Two on Two. He died in the fall of 1912. I knew Nacotan too. They were sent back from the United States.

Littlepoplar: Do you remember when Nacotan died?

Lonesinger: He died...let me see...ah...I would think about 1899. These then were the old-timers I knew. Mah-to-cuhp is another old man I remember. In 1913, he died on Mosquito Reserve.

Littlepoplar: Where is he buried?

Lonesinger: He is buried on Mosquito Reserve. I helped bury him.

Littlepoplar: Mah-to-cuhp left Sweet Grass to visit at Mosquito and died over there?

Lonesinger: Yes, he never came back. Smoke, uncle Andrew, a man named Stoney, my brother and I buried him on Mosquito Reserve. That is some old people I knew a long time ago.

Littlepoplar: Did the Indian of long ago really have love medicine?

Lonesinger: Ah yes, the Indians had love medicine, also many other kinds of bad medicine. I used to hear old people talk about it. My grandfather used to say it was made by medicine men. My grandfather never bought bad medicine, only good medicine to cure people when they were sick. He bought medicine for his horses too when they got sick. He was a horse lover.

Littlepoplar: Was there medicine to bring a man luck when on a hunting trip?

Lonesinger: There was, and it brought a hunter good luck when hunting. But it was not good to use. I knew a man who had used it. As an older man, his legs gave him much trouble. And another man from Snake Plain also used it when younger. His

name was Standing Stone. He was my grandfather's cousin. There was a man who used to come here, his name was John Matheson. He was a cousin to John Albert's wife. Matheson's father, Standing Stone, and my grandfather, Tobaccojuice, were cousins. Standing Stone is buried in Red Pheasant Reserve. All the time he was hunting he was using hunting medicine. He killed many moose and other animals. He had good luck when hunting, but as an old man his legs gave him much trouble. He had big, knobby knees. His legs buckled when he walked and he had to use a cane. He blamed his trouble on the hunting medicine he used as a young man.

Littlepoplar: Was Standing Stone a good hunter when he was using hunting medicine?

Lonesinger: Ah, he had very good luck when hunting as long as he used medicine. But later his knees started to swell up and he could no longer hunt. Finally, he could not walk without the aid of a cane. Another one who used medicine for hunting was a man named Little Sioux. This man hunted only with traps, and he had great luck. He trapped mink, beaver, fox, and many other animals. But after a while his eyes began to fail. He began seeing things double, and had to stop his trapping. Later, his head gave him a lot of trouble. He knew the hunting medicine he had used was the cause of it, and he never again used bad medicine. Little Sioux told me about this himself. Hunting medicine is something the white man cannot make. I don't think they could make hunting medicine.

Littlepoplar: Did you know Kah-pay-ak-oonah-pay-wit (Lone Man)?

Lonesinger: Yes, he was my grandfather. He was the oldest, older than all my grandmothers. He was a very dark man, also very skinny. He was not handsome, and his relatives were good-looking people. They were not dark, and some of them had blue eyes. James's wife is a distant relative of Lone Man.

Littlepoplar: Did Lone Man have a reserve?

Lonesinger: Lone Man did not belong to any reserve. He liked to act a white man. His wife was a Metis. His wife and Mrs. John Tood were sisters. Lone Man had a brother who was even skinnier than he was. And they lived at Buffalo Lake, and I believe where they had their houses can still be seen today. Lone Man came to Red Pheasant in 1912 to visit my grandfather who was sick at the time. He came to Red Pheasant twice. He was a tall man. When the Canadian Cree were sent back from the States, Lone Man was in the bunch. He stayed in these parts for about 3 years, then went to Peigan country. That would be somewhere near where a mountain slide covered a town. Two of his boys died in the slide. They did not like being Indians. They wanted to be white people.

Littlepoplar: Did Lone Man and his family live amongst white people?

Lonesinger: I would think so. They did not live on an Indian reserve. I also heard they worked in a gold mine somewhere. Then his sons got killed in a mountain slide. His brother also had two sons in 1916. I worked at Hobbema and I used to visit them at Buffalo Lake every Sunday. There was a Metis settlement on the east side of Buffalo Lake at the time and that was where they lived.

Littlepoplar: How far is Buffalo Lake from Hobbema?

Lonesinger: It is 15 miles from Camrose, to the southwest. From Hobbema it must be 20 miles.

Littlepoplar: How about Falling Through the Ice? Did you know him? Did you see him?

Lonesinger: Yes, I saw Falling Through the Ice. He was in some way related to my grandmother. In 1897 his wife died on Poundmaker's Reserve and is buried there. And soon after, Falling through the Ice left the country. In 1902 we heard he had died somewhere in Alberta.

For some reason, Falling Through the Ice was a very respected man. When I saw him, he had a large lump on the side

of his neck. He used to stay at Red Pheasant for long periods of time. Chik-oh-sees was another one who was sent back from the States. At the time he arrived Living In a Stone was a very young man. It was in 1896. Also arriving at the time was Nacotan, and just a little before, Atchey-nun arrived. About that time we visited Sweet Grass Reserve and saw Nacotan. I also remember seeing Ya-ya-num (Swimmer). I am told Atchey-nun went to the States as a young boy, and came back as a young man. Also coming from the States at the time was Musk-oh-ta-wah-ky (Bear's eyes). He was Chik-oh-sees's brother-in-law. Thunder Child, John Albert and his parents and also his grandparents arrived from Montana. They had with them John's uncle whose name was Einooh(?). This man had a stiff leg. That fall John Albert's grandfather died. He died while having dinner. His name was Yellow Head and he was very old. In later years John used to tell of his family and a band of Cree moving about from place to place in Idaho. In the band were Paskimin, Nichi-a-sees, and Ugly Bear's father to name a few. In 1896, the people brought back from the States formed a large camp at Battleford. They camped there until fall and then scattered, going to reserves where they had relatives. Say-say-see-oh-nah-koos was in the band. He had a team of mules and got odd jobs hauling things for settlers. He lived here (Sweet Grass) for a time. At this time my cousin Fred Littlepoplar was attending classes at the industrial school at Battleford. When he finished his schooling in 1903 he taught school for a while on Mosquito Reserve. Say-say-see-oh-nah-koos had by this time moved with his family to Alberta. They were in the country. It is not too very long ago that Say-say-see-oh-nah-koos died. He lived to be a very old man.

Littlepoplar: Yes, I saw him in about 1940. He was a very old man. He was blind at the time I saw him. Also, he was a very lean man. And he was tall.

Lonesinger: Say-say-see-oh-nah-koos always was lean and tall. His wife, too, was a tall woman. She was fair. Fred's mother's name was Pahs-koos. I guess when he left this part of the country he went to mother.

Littlepoplar: Maybe he wanted to nurse.

Lonesinger: Mah-chap was the name of another man who left this part of the country. He was very short and very fat. He and my father were great friends. When he arrived from the States, he came at once to Red Pheasant to visit my father. He came with Na-nee-soo (Two on Two). Na-nee-soo was my father's cousin, and Mah-chap (Bad Eye) was a friend of my father's.

Littlepoplar: Was Ahn-is-coo-cha-pahn from Sweet Grass, and did you know him?

Lonesinger: I knew him. He lived on Sweet Grass Reserve for a time but did not belong here. His father's name was Nay-nah-choo-kwah-poo. He came here in 1916 on his way to Red Pheasant. He was related to my in-laws. I knew Ahn-is-coo-cha-pahn when I was a small boy. My grandmother lived with us when I was a boy, also her sister whose name was Moos-kah-py-ease. She was Ahn-is-coo-cha-pahn's grandmother. For this reason, Ahn-is-coo-cha-pahn often stayed at our place when he was a young man. His father spent a night with us once. Mah-to-cuhp had two daughters. Ahn-is-coo-cha-pahn married one of them. I did not know these women. They had one son, Thunder Blanket, who looked very much like his dad. Often, he would come to Red Pheasant to see his grandmother.

Some of our relatives went to Hobbema, Alberta, many years ago. Not so long ago when I visited Hobbema, I looked up some relatives I thought I had over there. When I mentioned their names I was told not to look them up. They were drunk most of the time. I was told they would ask me for money and if I did not give them some they would beat me up. I agreed it would not be the part of wisdom to look them up.

Iron Child is another man who used to live here a long time ago. I don't think you would know him. He moved to Little Pine Reserve a long time ago. His father's name was Ah-kee-nahn. Ah-kee-nahn and my mother were brother and sister. Iron Child would therefore be my cousin. His grandson, Norman Iron Child, lives on Little Pine's Reserve. Iron Child died many years ago and he is buried there on Little Pine's Reserve.

Littlepoplar: Is Crooked Neck, the son-in-law of Wandering Spirit, buried on Sweet Grass?

Lonesinger: Yes. He came from Onion Lake, but he was a member of this band. I had a brother much older than me who was

married to the daughter of Crooked Neck's brother. His name was Sah-qways and he died in 1904. My brother had a son whose name was Is-kah-nee. Not too long ago he was hit and killed by a train. He had children living, also a sister, so I have relatives at Onion Lake.

Littlepoplar: Another old-timer you may have known is Cha-qwa-now (Bull).

Lonesinger: I knew Cha-qwa-now. He died I think in 1902. Michay-wyis died about that time, shortly after New Year's Day. Cha-qwa-now died fighting a prairie fire. I guess he inhaled

too much smoke. He used to come to visit his son Saloman at the industrial school. He was a fine looking man, and he was not too old at the time. He came from somewhere in the east, maybe Crooked Lake. Fine Day asked him to come to Sweet Grass. That's how he came to be here. In later years, his son Peter would sometimes visit Crooked Lake.

Littlepoplar: I used to hear years ago, old people speak of a man they called Sakip-pa-kow (Leaves Appearing). Did you know this man?

Lonesinger: I barely remember him. He died when I was a small boy. That man was Norman Frank's grandfather. He had a son named Goose Nose (Nis-ki-coot). I also knew Kin-aus-kon-ace (Tall Man). His name fitted him nicely. He was a very tall man. He would often come to Red Pheasant to visit. He was a big man.

Littlepoplar: Tall Man was William Favel's father, wasn't he?

Lonesinger: Yes, and he had a brother named Basil, and one called Wide Water, and another named Wee-soo-sis. It has been said Tall Man knew a lot about medicine. In ceremonies and rituals he was often called upon to act as server.

Littlepoplar: Did you know Coming Day's father?

Lonesinger: No, he was killed in the fight on Cut Knife Hill. Another one who was killed at the same time was Tracking A Star, Paskimin's father. Coming Day's father was named Half The Sky. These were the only Sweet Grass residents killed in the fight at Cut Knife Hill. Two Stoney Indians were also killed. I do not know their name. Also, one Nez Perce Indian was killed there and a man named Medicine. Five Indians were killed at Cut Knife Hill.

Littlepoplar: How many white men died in the fight at Cut Knife Hill?

Lonesinger: We do not know. The white people did not tell. We have no way of knowing. A Metis named Sayer fought against the Indians. In later years, he used to say all his shots missed the target. This Metis used to say that the Indians were good

fighters. The white man he was with said as much. Another man who fought against the Indians was Ernest Latour. His son Ben is still around, you must know him.

Littlepoplar: Oh yes, I know Benny Latour.

(End of Side A, Tape IH-055)

(Side B)

Lonesinger: Charlie Parker was another white man I knew who fought against the Indians. I don't know if Dick Lautier fought at Cut Knife Hill, but he was an old man, and he was Latour's neighbour.

Littlepoplar: Ernest Latour died not too long ago. He must have been a very old man.

Lonesinger: Yes, he was very old. I think he was even older than Charlie Parker. Pambrun did not fight. He used to clean guns for the soldiers. One day a gun went off and blew his arm off. The Indians from then on called him Cut Arm.

Littlepoplar: Was Pambrun a Metis?

Lonesinger: Yes. He did not fight though. Many Metis were rounded up by the soldiers to fight the Indians, but someone noticed that nobody was looking after their stock at home, so they were allowed to go home. Metis people were not troublemakers.

Littlepoplar: I have heard that at about the time of the fight at Cut Knife Hill, all Sundances were stopped. About when were the Indians allowed to go back to holding Sundances again?

Lonesinger: Fine Day held a Sundance in 1894. Three Sundances were held in a row, the last one being held in 1897. The next was held in 1906. We did not attend as we were busy freighting at the time. We hauled supplies as far west as Wainwright and south to Biggar and Tramping Lake. In 1914, two Sundances were held at Moosomin Reserve. Two weeks later a Sundance was held at Sweet Grass, by Sliding Hill. The next one held was sometime later at Sweet Grass Reserve. It was held near where Hot Sun Man is buried. It was a flop. Very few people attended. They were afraid of the Indian agent. Again in 1920, a Sundance was held at Sweet Grass. It was held close to where we are now living. People came to this one. The crowd was large and it was a success. In 1915, Bear from Little Pine's Reserve held a Sundance at Little Pine. Visitors at this Sundance were picked up, taken to court and fined. Indian agents and policemen were mean to the Indians. They would not allow Indians to practice their religion. They were treated like little children.

When my uncle made a Sundance, it was always a success. He knew how to make one. A long time ago a Sundance was to be held at Sweet Grass, and we all got ready to attend. John Albert came to our place and said, "Why aren't you preparing to

move to the Sundance?" I replied, "We are moving to the Sundance just as soon as the women are done baking bannock." Toward evening we moved. We had five families of visitors with us, some from distant reserves. On the road we met a white man who worked for the Indian agent. He was a farming instructor. This man was very rude. He told us in no uncertain terms to turn around and go home, that there would be no Sundance. "Who stopped it?" I wanted to know. He did not reply, but said according to the Indian Act, Sundances were not permitted. "If I turn around and go back home I will get the blame if no Sundance is held," I told him. He said nothing and went on his way. It was almost sunset when we arrived on the banks of the Battle River where the Sundance would be held the next day.

Across the river and up a few miles lived some settlers. They were German and their name was Rodenbour. About dusk one of them rode into camp looking for me. "My brother Jack wants to see you," he said. "You are to come to our place before noon tomorrow." I told him I would go to see his brother Jack next morning. Late in the forenoon of the next day I arrived at the Rodenbour's place. Jack, the man I came to see, thinking I was not coming, had gone somewhere. I waited and waited. It was late afternoon when he finally got home. He was wanting to buy some hay that I had. He made me an advance. I then went to a store at Delmas for some groceries and returned to the Sundance site.

The lodges and people were many. There was also a red-coated policeman. He was talking to the chief and he looked very official. I walked to a large group of men. They had a book called The Indian Act, and a man named Baptiste Pooyak was reading it to them. He explained to them that the Indian Act said Sundances were forbidden. A collection of money was then taken and given to Fine Day, who was to have made the Sundance. The policeman meantime, was going from lodge to lodge with an interpreter telling the occupants to pack up and leave: no Sundance would be held: the Queen had forbidden it. Many people were angry, and shouted it was too late in the day to move. "In the morning we will leave," they shouted, "and not before." Fine Day sat staring at nothing. "Because of the white man I have broken my promise to make a Sundance. The Spirits will not be pleased," he said. "The white man has sinned," he continued. Fine Day was a dejected man. A storekeeper named Fife was also in camp with goods. This man suggested the Indians hold a powwow that night. The Indians then held a powwow, and most of them were happy.

Several days after the incident at Battle River, I happened to be at the farming instructor's place, the white man who had

helped put a stop to the Sundance. His name was Moore. Baptiste Pooyak was there too, and we really gave him a good scolding for the part he played in stopping the Sundance. While we were telling him off, a man named Fox rode up. This man was noted for his strength. He jumped off his horse and at



once attacked Mr. Moore. He body-slammed him several times before we pulled him off. "That's for interfering with our Sundance," he said. Later, Mr. Moore told us he had worked amongst Indians in southern Alberta, and had been attacked by a Crow boy named Tom Three Persons. He had reported the matter and the Crow boy was fined \$25. This farming instructor was not long with us. After harvest he was sent to the Quinton Agency. He did not get along with the Medicine Hills Indians, and was fired in January.

Littlepoplar: An Indian agent named McDonald spoke very good Cree. I wonder how that came about.

Lonesinger: He was, I think, an English halfbreed. He spoke very good Cree. He could be a very nice guy. Also, he could be very mean. He was not stingy with government money. He gave the Indians the things they needed to go farming; disks, harrow ploughs, and things like that. He came here in 1919. He used to say before he became an Indian agent he used to make a living picking berries. He left here a long time ago. He must be dead by now. After he left we got one letter from him, and we haven't heard from him since.

Littlepoplar: How did Bare Belly come to be here? He used to live here?

Lonesinger: Bare Belly came from somewhere east. His mother married someone here, so he came later to be near his mother. I would think he was one of the great singers of our time, and for a blind man he was very smart. He could tell the colour of beads by smelling them. He was smart. He would walk to Poundmaker and back to visit friends. Once he missed the road and fell into the Battle River. It was a close call. He was lucky to get out of that one. He never tried walking to Moosomin Reserve because there was two rivers to cross.

He once came to our place. He said he was there to plant a garden. He did plant a garden, and had a good crop. He did all the weeding and pulled out only weeds.

Did I tell you the story of the time old man Sayers killed many Sioux?

Littlepoplar: Yes you did, and our tape is running out. It has been said that Bare Belly once lost his directions and was completely lost when he was rescued by the little people.

Lonesinger: Oh yes, I remember the time. It was in 1918. We were building a house at the time.

(the tape ran out at this point, but Lonesinger added this.)

Coming home from Little Pine, Bare Belly missed the road because of the wind (wind used to confuse him), and became completely lost. He was standing on a hill listening and trying to get

his bearings, when he heard what he thought were children talking and laughing. The voices were coming towards him and he waited. Then someone said, "Grandpa, give us some tobacco and we will show you the road to your place." He gave them tobacco, and they led him a short ways to the road. "Here is the road. You just follow it and you will get home," they told him. "But before you go, here is a present for you," one of them said, as he placed five little stones in Bare Belly's hand. These stones were flat and round and very smooth, and all had a little hole through them. Bare Belly found his way home that night, and never became lost again. Bare Belly showed these five small stones to many people. Sometimes I wonder what happened to the stones when he died. He died on Moosomin Reserve in the winter of 1949. He was an old man when he died.

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