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Yellowknife, N.W.T.

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1 Important Times for Yellowknives about Treaty

1899 A Treaty party representing Queen Victoria, on behalf of Canada, made Treaty 8 with Aboriginal peoples. The Treaty was written in Ottawa and people had no chance to change or negotiate the terms. A "Halfbreed" Commission gave out scrip (either land or a one-time payment) to Métis.

1900 A Treaty party and "Halfbreed" Commission comes to Denínu Kúe (Fort Resolution) to add Dene and Métis around Great Slave Lake to Treaty 8. Dene from the north shore of Great Slave Lake went by boat and were photographed arriving at Fort Resolution. The photo is on the cover of this package.

These Dene called themselves Wuledeh and the Treaty Commissioner called them the Yellowknife River people. Old Man Drygeese was chosen as spokesperson by the Wuledeh and he made Treaty for them as Chief.

The way Treaty 8 is remembered by Dene Elders who were present when the Treaty was made is not the way the government of Canada has written Treaty 8. But the Treaty Commissioner did report discussions with the Dene about Treaty 8.

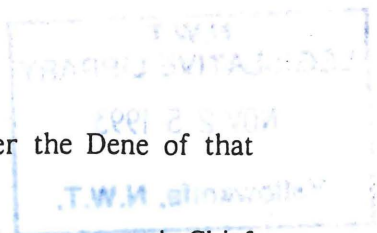
1903 The Wuledeh and other Dene went to Fort Resolution to receive Treaty. They complain to the Indian Agent that Treaty promises that the Dene way of life could continue without interference were not being kept by the government.

1905 The provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were created from the NWT. The federal government appointed a Commissioner for the remaining land area of the NWT -- but this Commissioner was a federal employee and worked in Ottawa.

1911 The prairie provinces were extended north to 60°, the present boundary of the NWT. By these changes, Dene within Treaty 8 were split into different provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

1916 The Migratory Birds Convention Act was negotiated as an international law between the USA and Britain (on behalf of Canada). In Ottawa, an Advisory Wild Life Board was responsible for Canada's position.

Hunters, including Treaty people, were no longer allowed to shoot migratory



"Yellowknife Game Preserve" -- which must have been called after the Dene of that name because the town did not yet exist.

It seems that officials in Ottawa did have the Chief Drygeese and Chief Montfwi maps at that time. The Game Preserve was removed in 1955 by the NWT Council, which was still in Ottawa at that time.

1928 One of the worst epidemics kills 10 to 15% of Dene in each region of Denendeh. Many families were deeply affected by their losses.

To try to stop diseases from spreading, buildings, clothing, and bedding were burned. It is thought that the papers and maps made by Chief Drygeese and Chief Montfwi that were kept by the Dene were burned at that time.

1937 Bishop Breynat, who had actively urged Dene to make Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, was upset about animals being overhunted by non-Dene and about hunting laws affecting the Dene.

The Bishop prepared papers that described the making of the Treaty, as it was understood by the Dene, and had the papers translated and signed by people who had been present at the making of the Treaty. These Treaty witnesses signed the papers in the presence of a Justice of Oaths.

1957 Indian Affairs officials met with Dene Chiefs in Fort Smith to ask them how they wanted Treaty 11 land to be settled. (No mention of Treaty 8, although the Treaty 8 Chiefs were there.)

Between 1957 and 1959, officials in Ottawa met many times to discuss ways to settle Treaty lands with the Dene.

1959 A Royal Commission came to Denendeh to discuss ways for Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 to be carried out. Two Dene Chiefs were members of the Nelson Commission.

The Nelson Commission reported that the Dene understanding of the treaties was different from the government's written version. The report recommended that the treaties be renegotiated and that Dene receive royalties from non-renewable resources removed from their lands to compensate Dene for not having benefits from the Treaties since they were made.

The recommendations were not carried out by the government. Instead, the Indian Agent and the RCMP started moving Dene off the land and into the settled communities.