



**GERRY ATTACHIE TALKS ABOUT
GAT TAH KWÂ (MONTNEY) (I.R. 172)**

© Doig River First Nation, 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS: Gerry Attachie describes how he and the band successfully negotiated compensation for the loss of their reserve, I.R. 172, at Gat Tah Kwâ (Montney). He talks about how the Band's administrative and cultural centre was built with this money, and his hope for the survival of the Dane-zaa/Beaver language. Doig River First Nation Cultural Centre, 2005.

CATALOG NO.: DZVMCDV-7-22-05-01.

RECORDED BY: Kate Hennessy and Amber Ridington

ENGLISH TRANSCRIPTION: Amber Ridington and Kate Hennessy, 2006.

DANE-ZAA TRANSCRIPTION: Pat Moore, 2006.

KEY: 00:00 indicates time in minutes and seconds; [] Indicates translator's note.

00:00

I am Gerry Attachie. I was born in Siphon Creek, T̄s̄ii Sooʔaa W̄aaḍeh [rocks located there], 1948, October 29, and grew up down at Petersen's Crossing.

00:16

We there until about ten years, between 1950 to about 60.

00:24

And about round 1899 Treaty was signed down at the old Fort. One of my great grandfathers signed the Treaty, put his 'X' on it. And what they call "Peace Treaty" they sign the Treaty so the early settlers, the gold miners, wanna go up north to Alaska, Yukon, to look for gold. But they can't get by here, our people won't let them go through.

01:11

They don't want anybody around here to go through. So they stopped them and then they took them, I don't know how long, finally they negotiate and then they signed the Peace Treaty.

01:28

And about, around 1916, we, they gave us Montney Reserve. It is about seven miles north of Fort St. John. 18,000 acres.

01:44

So we call that “Where’s Happiness Dwells,” gathering, gathering place. So we were there till, between 1916 up to 1945.

02:11

And 1940, the oil company they ask for permission to drill around, in IR-172 [Montney]. So our people give them permission to go ahead. And they did. They did, did some drilling.

02:43

About that time, in the early 1940s, the government and the people in Fort St. John, they, they want that Montney land, farmers. They thought it’s good for farming, and then our people, First Nation, don’ t use it. That’s what they say.

03:12

And, but some people that work for the Department of Indian Affairs, they said, “The Indians will be farming one of these days, and in the future they will farm.” But about 1943, ’44, they put a lot of pressure on our Chief Succone, our Chief. They want that land, and then finally 1945 they set a date and then September 20, 1945, the surrender took place down at Petersen’s Crossing, which is ten miles west of here.

04:08

Uh, they bring some of the people back from the bush but some were way back, they couldn’t find them. And they brought some people back there at Petersen’s Crossing but not very many. Some were gone. They brought some people in from Prophet River. And I don’t remember what happened. Some of the, according to some of our people they didn’t vote.

04:42

Anyway, the land was sold. 18,000 acres for returned soldiers. And today forty-two farmers own the mineral rights in British Columbia. It’s the farmers at Montney. IR-172.

05:05

But while we, I grew up down at Petersen's Crossing, people were talking about what happened to Montney, they thought, reserve.

05:16

According to some people, when it was sold 1945, 1946 some of the people came back to reserve. But it was fenced off some places, and they said, "You can't come back here. It was sold." And that's when they know, some of the people know, it was sold, 1945, yes.

05:44

About, around 1970, '74, I became Councilor. In 1976 I was elected for Chief, for Blueberry and Doig together. That's when I take it out somehow. I read some books, a book called "Peacemaker" book. And I was looking at that, and then I read a little, a story about Pine View. Pine View reserve, it says, IR-172. They even had a map, parcel, each quarter, and uh.

06:31

It says there, the former reserve, Montney, was sold 1945 and then the mineral rights which add to that IR-172 were forgotten, they said. So I thought, so, the people were talking about that. They only had ten dollars for two years, twenty dollars, each person. They call it nan soniye, money.

07:08

Land money, nan soniye. What happened to nan soniye, they said. So that's when I start to look into that more, and then try to communicate with Indian Affairs. And this led to that, and finally, the Indian Agent, Tommy Watson, and I we sat down, and then we set a date, got all the documents out. And then got a lawyer in Fort St. John, Callison. And we run into problems right off the bat.

07:48

Lawyers are not cheap, and they don't do, they got to have money up front, and everything was new to me. I don't know about, much about law, and lawyers too, you got to have, they have to have retainer, and everything! And we start looking for money.

08:13

We finally got the money from a small Band just across the border. And sometimes people could say, you know, "Indians should help one another." But sometimes, when it comes down to something like this, it's not like this. It's different. We struggle, we travel lots.

Finally we got some money to start. 1987 we went to Court.

08:58

We lost. They said we were six months late over limitation. Thirty year Limitation Act which came into BC in 1974, and we run into that, and we run into a rough, pretty redneck Judge, George Addy, his name.

09:23

Uh, we appeal it, before three Judges, in 1992. One was a black Judge named Isaac. These two other whites, white Judge, these white Judge went against us, but the colored guy, Isaac, he said the Indians have a good case here. And so we appeal it to Supreme Court in Canada in 1995, and won it there. We just settle it out of court.

10:14

And with that money we built this hall here, this complex, the rodeo ground, and some of the buildings. And the sad part is, when we start this court case, some of the Elders said they were happy, they said. Finally they want justice done, because they've been suffering in the past too long. They pass on.

10:50

But now we're just looking forward in the future to set up something for our next generation. One thing lacking right now is, start slowly dying off, is our language. But we are fighting that. We try to bring it back. That's why we brought you people in. The museum here too.

11:19

I hope we don't lose our language, and I just want to end there. And thank you again, for putting me on this video. Haa guulaa [that's finished].