

DOCUMENT NAME/INFORMANT: ANTOINE LONESINGER 10  
INFORMANT'S ADDRESS: SWEET GRASS RESERVE  
SASKATCHEWAN  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: SWEET GRASS RESERVE  
SASKATCHEWAN  
TRIBE/NATION: CREE  
LANGUAGE: CREE  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: SEPTEMBER 6, 1974  
INTERVIEWER: ALPHONSE LITTLEPOPLAR  
INTERPRETER: ALPHONSE LITTLEPOPLAR  
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SOURCE: SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD  
TAPE NUMBER: IH-059  
DISK: TRANSCRIPT DISC 17  
PAGES: 10  
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Story of a Cree boy who became a Blackfoot Chief  
- Biography of Antoine Lonesinger, see IH-052, p. 11.  
Littlepoplar: Let's listen as Old Man Lonesinger tells us some  
stories. My uncle is a good storyteller.

Lonesinger: A long time ago it was the belief of the Indian  
people that if a child was orphaned or was born to parents who  
were poor, in later life such a child would become famous and  
much respected by his people. Spirits would bring him wisdom  
and luck.

To the west, I would say around Saddle Lake, a boy was  
orphaned. His old grandmother took it upon herself to raise  
the boy. This grandmother had a cousin who was younger than  
herself. The boy was happy with the grandmother. Then when he  
was twelve years old, his grandmother became sick. She grew  
sicker and sicker and the boy was very sad. One day the old

woman called the boy to her bedside. "Grandson," she said, "I am leaving you behind. The end for me is near. After I am gone, you go to your other grandmother, who is my cousin. She will take care of you."

And so very soon after this the old lady died, and the young lad was alone again and very sad. The people of the camp buried her on a hill beside some bushes. In those days the Cree buried their dead in a framework of logs and covered it up good so the wild animals could not get it.

After the burial the young lad sat down at the foot of the grave. There he stayed as people began to leave. Finally all were gone and he was all alone. He cried and cried as he sat at the foot of his grandmother's grave. All day and all night he sat there. On the second night he was hungry, and later fell asleep. Then in a dream his grandmother came to him. "My grandson," she said, "you are hungry. Here," she said, "eat this," and she handed him some pemmican. "After you have eaten, you go west of here till you come upon some horses. You stay with the horses till a man comes. This man will ask you to go home with him. He will call you "My Man." This man and his wife will be good to you. His wife's brother and you will become good friends. The man you will call "My Boss." Later this man will be like a father to you. So that will be all my grandson. Do not cry for me anymore. I am going to a very beautiful place, but I will always be near you. If you ever need me, I'll be there."

The boy woke up before the sun was up. He ran west, like his grandmother had told him. He had not gone far when he came upon some horses. He sat down and very soon a man came walking toward him. The man shook his hand and sat down beside the boy. "How long have you been here?" he asked the boy. "I just got

here," replied the boy. "You must be hungry," said the man. "Let us go to my lodge and have something to eat." At the lodge, the young lad had a good washing and after eating, the man said, "You stay here with us, My Man. See, my wife and I have no children. We would be happy if you stayed." The boy began to cry. "Don't cry," said the man. "You make your grandmother sad when you cry. My wife has a brother just a little older than you. He should be here soon. You and him will get along fine."

And so the lad stayed and got along fine. He looked after the horses, went on buffalo hunts with his adopted father and was given nice clothes to wear. He had plenty to eat. All in all, he was fairly happy.

Later, after the lad had been in his new home for quite a while, the man said to him one morning, "My Man, the braves are getting ready to leave on a raiding party and I have decided to go along. Any new horses I can get, we will be able to use. While I am gone, you stay here and look after our horses." "Yes, My Boss," replied the boy. After the party had gone, all day long the lad would stay in the hills with the horses,

seeing to it that the horses did not stray from camp. One day, while out in the hills watching the horses, he knew that his adopted father and the rest of the party would all be killed. "I will chase them and warn them," he thought to himself. His mind was made up. He would follow his adopted father, catch up to them and warn them. He returned to the camp and said to his adopted mother, "I am going to follow them. I am very lonely and want to be with my adopted father." "Be very careful and don't get lost," said the woman. "I will get my brother to look after the horses." She packed food and an extra pair of shoes in a bag and handed it to the boy. She also gave him a leather thong that he may use as a shoulder strap to carry his food. The boy then went to the lodge of an old man whom he knew owned a gun. This old man was too old to hunt, but would loan his gun on occasion for a share of the meat. "Grandpa," said the boy, "if it is all right, I should like to borrow your gun."

"You may have the gun," replied the old man, "but I have only one bullet to go with the gun." "One bullet will be enough," said the lad.

In a short time the boy was on his way. He travelled fast. All day long he walked, and all night. Early next morning he caught up with the party. His adopted father was surprised to see him. He explained to him that he was lonesome and wanted

to be near him. "Your wife said her brother would look after the horses," he told his adopted father. After having a short rest and something to eat, the party moved on. They kept walking south and a little to the west. At noon they came upon a small slough. Here they stopped to eat and drink.

In the party was a young brave who was also the clown of the party. This brave found joy in making fun of the youngster and teasing him at every opportunity. After they had eaten and were resting beside the slough, the brave said to the lad, "If you go to that small hill, then run back to us, and when you are almost upon us pull your breech cloth to one side, I will give you four bullets for your gun." This the lad agreed to do: he needed bullets; and the boy left for the hill. The adopted father did not like this, but said nothing. From the hill the lad ran towards the party and stopped in front of the brave who had challenged him. The others in the party did not look. "You have me beat," said the brave to the boy. "Here are four bullets for you."

Then the party left and walked the rest of the day, camping at night beside a small slough. Very early next morning they resumed their journey, and at noon came to a small creek where they stopped for a meal. Again the clown of the party asked the boy to walk off and run towards them, as he had done the day before. This the boy did, and got four more bullets from the brave. The rest of the day they walked, and at night camped very close to enemy country.

Next day, as they walked, the boy and his adopted father walked behind, and the young boy told his adopted father why he had come. "We are in Blackfoot country and must be careful," he said. "When we are over them hills, we will kill a buffalo, and after we have eaten a meal of fresh meat we should go a little further and throw up some earthworks in case there are enemies behind." By and by they came over the hills and here they saw one buffalo cow, which they killed. After a meal of fresh meat, they sat on the grass resting. South of where they sat was a high hill. Later they climbed this hill to look over the lay of the land, and were surprised to see a large camp of Blackfeet just below the hill.

The Blackfeet saw them and at once got ready to fight. There was no time for the Cree to run, so they very quickly dug earthworks with their knives in which to hide themselves. In a very short time they saw the Blackfeet coming at them. There were many of them, and they shouted war cries and fired their guns in the air as they came. The Cree kept them away from gun range with their guns till it got dark. After dark, the Cree lit their pipe to seek help from the spirits.

As they sat in the pit smoking, the boy heard a whistle and knew his grandmother was there. The pipe was passed around and finally it came to the boy. After he had smoked, he knew what to do. After he had smoked he said to the others, "We will go now. We will walk in single file. The Blackfeet have us completely surrounded, but they will not see us walk right past them. We will go east until we come to the south end of the lake." So they left their rifle pit and walked fast right past the Blackfeet, and came to the edge of a lake. Here they stopped, and the young lad said he would go to the camp and bring back some horses while the others wait there for him. "All the braves are watching our pits. Only women and children are in camp," he said. "No one will notice me. They will think I am one of them." And the boy left, walking in the dark across the prairie towards the Blackfoot camp.

The Cree did not have long to wait. The boy was back in a short time bringing with him many horses. Now that the Cree had horses they were anxious to leave and put distance between them and the Blackfeet before daylight, when the Blackfoot braves found out the rifle pits were empty. But the boy said, "There are three horses left in the camp; three I will go back and get. You take these horses and wait for me at the north end of the lake. It is a very long lake. It will be daylight when you get there."

The party then went north with the horses, while the young lad went back to the Blackfoot camp to steal the three horses he had missed the first time. It was just breaking day when the party arrived at the north end of the lake, where they waited for the boy. He soon came into view riding a tall, grey horse and leading two others. Moving a little further north, they came upon some sandy and hilly country. Here they grazed their horses and rested before resuming the trip home.

They arrived home about noon one day, and the boy rode to the

lodge of the old man he had borrowed the gun from. "Grandpa, are you home?", shouted the boy from outside the lodge. "Yes, I am home," called the old man. "Come outside. I have returned your gun," said the boy. When the old man stepped outside the lad gave him back his gun and nine bullets. "Also," he said, "here is a grey horse for you Grandpa, for the use of your gun." The old man was so pleased, he had tears in his eyes. Later he rode his grey horse up and down the camp, singing the victory song, and calling out the boy's name. The old man later made this boy his favorite grandson.

Littlepoplar: And that is the end of the story. It is a very good story. My uncle will now tell us another story. It will, I think, be a Blackfoot story. Let's listen as he tells the story.

Lonesinger: A very long time ago, among our people, there were three epidemics of smallpox. This must have been very long ago. Not much is known of the first epidemic. This story happened at the time of the second epidemic. The third epidemic happened not so long ago. It spread from the Blackfoot people to the Cree. It has been said people at the time of the third epidemic also starved to death. Many died from smallpox at the time of the second epidemic. It is the time this story took place.

To the west was a very large camp of people. There were many lodges and a lot of people. So many were the people that there were two chiefs. As the people prepared for the coming of winter, one chief led his people further to the west. "We will suffer if we stay together," he told his people. "We are too many." So one band moved. The place they picked to winter was an ideal place, a big lake not too far away, and they set up their lodges deep among the trees for shelter and with plenty of firewood handy. There was plenty of game for food and fur.

The other camp was not too far away either. When the weather was fine they visited back and forth. Later they began to get sick, and people died at an alarming rate. The chief who was camped deeper in the woods also took sick. He grew steadily worse, and finally died. His young son and wife wrapped up his body and placed it against the wall of the lodge. All in camp, except the chief's wife and young son, had died. Finally, the chief's wife became sick, and died soon after. Before she died, she had told her son to go to the other camp when she died. After she died, the boy wrapped the body of his mother in a robe and placed it beside that of his father. He kept a good fire going, till all the wood was gone. Then he climbed a hill and could see their horses in the distance. Then he headed east to where he thought the other camp might be. A wind was blowing and the day was cold. But he kept going. Then it got dark, as the trail led into some bushes. He had not gone far into the bushes when he saw a light.

Very cautiously he approached the lodge. As he stood

outside, he could hear them talking and they were Blackfoot people. As he was about to leave, a young Blackfoot boy saw

him and invited him in. "Have a seat," said the Blackfoot boy. "Where do you come from, and do you bring news?" The Cree boy said, "All the people in my camp are dead. My parents are dead also." "Let us go to your camp and see," said the Blackfoot boy. And so they started in the direction of the Cree boy's camp. They had not gone far when the Blackfoot boy said, "Let's turn back. It is too cold and windy. We will go another time."

When they entered the lodge they found the father of the Blackfoot boy at home. He was a chief, and was not pleased. "Why do you bring this boy here?" he said to his son. "He will bring us sickness and many of us will die." "The boy is not sick," replied the Blackfoot boy. "You have said to become a chief a man must be kind and good. You are not being kind now." Then he got water and the Cree boy had a good wash. Then he got smallpox medicine from his mother and gave it to the Cree boy. "Are you hungry?" he asked the Cree boy. "No, I am not hungry," said the Cree, "but I am very tired." A bed was made for the Cree boy and he went to sleep.

Next morning, after a wash and a meal, the Cree boy was sitting by the fire, and the Blackfoot boy had stepped outside. The Blackfoot chief told the Cree boy to sit by the door. He apparently did not like the Cree boy. When the Blackfoot boy walked in and saw this, he became angry at his father. He told the Cree boy never to sit by the door. "It is cold and you might get sick," he told the boy. To his father he said, "You are a mean old man, and not worthy to be a chief."

Time went on and the Cree boy stayed. He got along well with the Blackfoot boy, and they called one another brother. The days began to get longer and longer and finally it was spring. One morning, soon after the snow had all melted, the Cree boy said to his adopted brother, the Blackfoot boy, "Before my people all died, last winter, we had many horses. I should show you where our camp was. These horses must be still there close to the camp. You can go get them if you like. I give them to you." The Blackfoot boy left, and was back in the later afternoon with a herd of horses. "Come," he said to the Cree boy, "and see if the horses are all here. Perhaps I missed some." "They are all here," said the Cree boy, as he looked over the herd.

It was not so long after this that the Blackfoot boy announced he was leaving to go on a raid on Cree country. "You stay here," he told the Cree boy, "and look after our horses. When I return I will have a very nice horse for you."

One day a short time later, a small band of Blackfoot braves left the camp to go to Cree country on a raid. The Cree boy cried when he saw them leave. He thought that his Blackfoot brother would be killed and would never come back.

The day after the braves left camp, the Blackfoot chief said to the Cree boy, "Son," he said, "I want you to go on a vision-seeking mission. You will be gone for four days and four nights. It may be good for you. When I was young I went on such a quest. This is why I became a chief." The Cree boy, remembering the chief had a disliking for him and being a little scared of the chief, agreed to go. "Fine. We will go now," said the chief, as he took two long leather thongs. Then they walked till they came to a river. They walked along the river till they came to a place where the bank was very steep and high. Here they stopped and the old chief took his axe and drove a stake into the ground close to the bank, to which he tied one end of the leather thongs. Then he made a small fire, burned sweetgrass, smoked the pipe and said a prayer. Then he told the boy to lay on his stomach and not to cry out or the spirits would be angry. Then with a sharp knife he cut slits behind the boy's ankles and tied the other end of the thongs to the boy's tendons. Then he lowered the boy down the wall of the cliff. The boy hung there above the water. He was in great pain, but had not made a sound. From the top of the bank the old chief looked down and said, "I am leaving now. After four nights I will come to get you. After I leave you may cry."

The boy cried all afternoon and at dusk he heard an owl across the river. Across the river from where he hung was a heavily wooded slope. This is where he first heard the owl. This time the owl was closer to him. Then he saw the owl as it lit on a small ledge beside the boy. The owl rattled its beak and flapped its wings. He looked at the boy who was crying and said, "Do not cry any more, my grandson. Stop crying now. I have been sent to help you. When you started to cry all the spirit helpers heard you. They are sorry for you. They love you and will help you. Your pain will stop now. You will not suffer anymore." Instantly the pain left the boy. All night the boy hung there, and the next night the owl returned. "I have good news for you, my grandson," he said. "Look over there," he told the boy. The boy looked and saw his adopted brother following a large herd of horses. "You see," said the owl, "your brother is coming back with many horses. In the herd he has a young colt for you. This colt is yours and will grow up to be the fastest horse in all Blackfoot country. In the spirit world I am the server. That is why I am sent to bring you news. All the spirits love you because you are a good boy. Spirits do not love bad people and do not help them." Then the owl left, but was back on the fourth night. "Grandson," he

said, "I have come with more news for you. Your adopted father, the chief, has angered the spirits because of what he did to you. Your brother will not go on a raid next summer, but will go the summer after, and he will not return, as a punishment to the chief for being bad. The chief will then pretend he has great love for you. Do not fall for it. He will be doing it because he is afraid of you. The spirits have asked me to give you my eyes and my ears. From now on your eyes will be very good. You will see things other people can't see, and you will be able to see in the dark. Your ears too will be very good.

You will make good use of these things I give you, and I will always be with you. If you ever need me, I will be there." Then the owl sang a song. "This song I give you, my grandson," he said to the boy. "You will sing this song only in time of war," he said. Then he flew away and the boy was alone again.

Next morning, the chief came and pulled the boy up by the thongs. Again he made a small fire, burned sweetgrass and purified his knife before he cut the thongs from the boy's ankles. "What happened, my son?" he asked the boy. "Did you have any visions? Did you pick up any knowledge?" "Very little," replied the boy. Then they returned to camp, and the boy had his first meal in four days.

After he had eaten, he heard the camp crier shout, "The raiders are back, the raiders are coming!" The Cree boy ran to meet his brother. He was so happy to see him he cried. "I have brought a colt for you," said his Blackfoot brother. "That little sorrel there is for you. He is only a year old, but he will grow up into a very good horse."

And so the Cree boy lived with the Blackfoot band, and time went on. The next summer when the braves went to raid the Cree, the chief's son did not go. He stayed in camp. The summer after, the Blackfoot boy said he would go on a raid this time, and told his Cree brother to stay in camp and wait. This time he would bring him a better horse.

The Cree boy cried when his brother left. He knew he would never see him again. After the party had left the camp, the Cree boy prepared war paint and kept to himself. Many days later, the camp crier announced the return of the war party. The chief's son was not with the party. He had died in battle.

The chief and his wife were sad people and so was the Cree boy. The Cree boy's sorrel colt had by now grown up, and was a very beautiful horse. One day, some time later, scouts returned to camp with news that invaders were on the way. This meant a fight, and the Cree boy prepared himself for it. He

painted his body the colour of an owl, then got his sorrel horse, and sang the song his grandfather, the owl, taught him many summers back. When the invaders arrived, the Cree boy fought beside the Blackfoot braves. In a short time the Blackfoot fighters had the invaders on the run. The Cree boy had given a good account of himself as a fighter.

Soon after his fight, the Cree boy married a Blackfoot girl, and continued to live in the Blackfoot camp. Sometime later, he was surprised when the head man of the camp asked him if he would accept the position of chief. "Our chief is getting old," they said, "and should be replaced by a younger man." The Cree accepted the position.

This is the story of how a Cree boy became a Blackfoot chief.

Littlepoplar: That was a very good story. So that's two good stories you have told us. Our tape is running out. Perhaps you could sing a few songs to fill the rest of the tape.

(End of Tape)

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
ADOPTION				
-inter-tribal	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	3
BLACKFOOT INDIANS				
	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	2-6
CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP				
-behavior of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	3
CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP				
-choice of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	6
DEATH				
-customs	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	2
DISEASE AND ILLNESS				
-smallpox	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	2,3
HORSES				
-as gifts	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	3,5
POWER				
-vision quests	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	4,5
SONGS AND SINGING				
-acquisition of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	5
SPIRITS				
-spirit helpers	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	4,5,6
WARFARE, INTERTRIBAL				
-motives for	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	4,5

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
ADOPTION				
-intertribal	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	3,4
CEREMONIALISM				
-sweetgrass	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	8,9
CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP				
-behavior of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	7
CHIEFS AND CHIEFTAINSHIP				
-choice of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	10
DEATH				
-customs	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	2,6
DISEASE AND ILLNESS				
-small pox	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	6,7
HORSES				
-acquisition of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	5,9
HORSES				
-as gifts	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	5,9
POWER				

-vision quests	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	8,9
SONGS AND SINGING				
-acquisition of	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	9
SPIRITS				
-spirit helpers	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	4,5,8,9
WARFARE, INTERTRIBAL				
-motives for	IH-059	LONESINGER10	17	9,10