

Stanley Knowlton

(Head of Interpretation, Head-Smashed-in Buffalo Jump)

SK: My name is Stan Knowlton. My traditional name is *** -- loosely translated it refers to Chief Running Rabbit. If you translate it according to one of our longtime elders, Percy Bullchild, who wrote the book *The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, he would translate it more along the lines of the male rabbit in motion. At one time the rabbit was referred to more as a hunter's lunch. As the buffalo runners were out there on the plain, they needed something they could eat quick and was easy to prepare and wasn't going to have a whole bunch of food left over. The rabbit was just a perfect size. So, in many ways, you could say that the rabbit was one of the first fast foods in North America. As the buffalo runners were out there, a lot of people look at the buffalo economy as something that was along the lines of a hunting and gathering society. But yet if you look at the economy in its total structure, you could see that hunting and gathering was a very small part of what took place. In these societies that were very well organized, the men and women had their duties. Out of the population that would've existed 200 years ago, everybody specialized in certain components of the economy. If we look at what we have down below us here we can see some of the approximately 300 items that came from the buffalo. Everything from hide to bones, horns, right down to the marrow, all formed a specific part in a more complex part of the economy. So there was more to it than just hunting the animal. If we look at what's out on the prairies we can see that buffalo pounds were used, as well as natural traps that were in the environment. You can look west of us where the Pincher Creek flows into the Old Man River; that was another way of catching buffalo. They would simply send the buffalo up the canyon, and at the back end of the canyon where it narrowed down, the buffalo would have to cross the river of the creek. At that point they would be able to catch them. Another method was to simply drive them off the trails in the winter. One of the most complex and intriguing ways of getting the buffalo was with the use of a jump. If we look at the jump, it wasn't simply a matter of having buffalo at a certain place and hoping that they were in the right area that they would eventually go over the cliff. It involved generations of

knowledge being passed down, and eventually looking at a site like Head-Smashed-In and being able to use it to its maximum potential. If we look at the surrounding landscape around us, what we have is glacial landscape. The gathering basins where the buffalo were lured from, these were all channels that were carved out by the glacier. In this area that we're in right here, the buffalo basically moved from the summer grounds, which were down in the central United States, all the way up to the calving grounds, which were between Calgary and Edmonton. In a lot of ways it was very similar to the way the salmon move up the river or the way the caribou move from one location to another up in the northern parts of the continent. After many generations the people would notice certain patterns and they'd be able to use the landscape as a way of acquiring the food and other materials that they needed from the buffalo. In this particular area we have a very nice descent down to the river as well as a way for the buffalo to cross the river and get back up the other side. This was very important in how the buffalo established some of their trails through the area. In the fall time as the buffalo were moving down south, shortly after the rutting season, the big herds, which totaled anywhere from 40 to 60 million buffalo, the males would tend to move off on their own, whereas the cows and calves and juvenile animals would move into the gathering basins. It was from that point that the buffalo runners came in. Buffalo runners were a very specialized group of people. The job that they had was probably one of the most dangerous because it involved getting right up close to the buffalo. In many cases, the people that were involved did not survive. Young boys were trained from a very young age and only a very few were selected to be involved in the running of the buffalo. Even the idea of running the buffalo may not really represent what it was. The idea was that once the females and calves were out in the gathering basins, the idea was to lead the buffalo down to the jump. That was accomplished by mimicking a buffalo calf. Once the herd had spread up, it was being led by dominant females. The dominant female of the herd would try and put the herd between the calf and the buffalo runners that were wearing wolf robes. The wolf robes, the wolf was a natural enemy of the buffalo, and the natural instincts of the female cow was to protect the calf. So the person who had disguised himself as a calf would slowly walk down towards the cliff and that would draw the herd down towards the cliff. Once they reached the critical point within sight of the cliff itself, the person would have

another hide with him, which is a coyote robe. As a coyote does not represent a threat to the buffalo, the person would exit from underneath the calf robe with his coyote robe and make his way out of the path of the buffalo. That was the signal for everybody else to get ready. Once the dominant female came up to smell the calf, that was a signal for everybody to jump up. At that point that's where they would panic the herd and stampede them towards the cliff. At a point the animals, once the female realized there was something wrong, she would slow down. But the animals that were beside her would move up on the sides, preventing her from turning in either direction. The momentum of the herd would simply take the animals over the precipice. That was basically how the jump worked. They had a very short time in order to process the animals. We're talking about 300 animals that would go over the cliff; under 75 just wouldn't work. They needed a good number but the number had to also contain a number of animals from very young up to the older animals. The younger animals, being smaller, would be used to clothe children. Everything from the unborn calf up to the mature animals had their purpose. Being in this situation where the bulls had moved off in the other direction, what they were dealing with was the prime cuts. These were the best meat-producing animals. They were selective in the type of animals they were going after. Once the animals were driven over and the job really set in where they had to take the animals and skin them and process them, they had about five hours to do this. Anything that was damaged was left there but it wasn't discarded in a way that you would say was thrown out. Any meat that was left there was used for secondary purposes. During the night wolves and coyotes and foxes and even eagles would come over and gorge themselves. The next day when the hunters would return they would find even bear that were so big they couldn't run away. A lot of them are stories that simply walked away and put one leg up in the air and the hunters just walked right up to them. That's how they would get the other furs that they needed. There's stories that the eagles were like turkeys, they were so big that they just couldn't fly away. That's how they got the feathers that they needed. When you look at the animals themselves, 300 animals may seem like a lot of animals to take over a cliff. But if you multiply 300 animals by about 300 pounds of dried meat, and with the dried meat you're looking at the animal, and like us they're about 78% water, so you remove that. You remove the hide, you remove all the bone, all the other materials that make up

the weight of the buffalo, which is about 1500 pounds. You end up with anywhere from 100 to 300 pounds of dried meat. You multiply that by 300 animals and you'll get about 90,000 pounds of dried meat. That might seem like a lot of meat but if you look at the population, roughly about 40,000 people, and divide that in 90,000 pounds of meat, that's just a little over two pounds of dried meat that has to last them all winter. You can see that even at that rate you still have to go out and acquire fresh meat in order to supplement what you've taken from the buffalo jump itself. The animals and the different types of animals in a herd, as well as the number of animals, was surprisingly small compared to what a lot of people may have thought about a buffalo jump and the animals that were used.

Q: You said the herds were large – is there any indication as to how many herds there were?

SK: Ya, 40 to 60 million is what they--people that have been studying these--, what the capacity may have been. From the information I've been able to gather, they were basically stating that the animals were not decreasing or increasing. They had sort of reached the carrying capacity. Even 300 animals coming out, you'd probably be losing more animals during calving than what would be taken at the jump.

Q: There must have been sub-herds of the enormous herd.

SK: They would break off into smaller groups. The idea is that once they got into the gathering basin, the time of the year when the hunt took place was also very important, because the winds had to be blowing from the right direction. They would use the horn that you see in the back here, which one of the runners would be carrying. It would be full of a type of moss that's referred to as punk. With the use of the smoke, they would gently let the smoke out, and they would have to move the herd into the right place. If you had a herd that was too small, you'd want to get it out of the way. So you'd use the smoke, you'd move it out of the way, and hopefully you'd get a herd that came in that fit

the criteria that you were looking for. Once that was in place, that's where the animals would be taken down the drive lanes towards the cliff.

Q: That was learned over thousands of years, I suppose.

SK: Yes. The last time the buffalo jump was used was approximately 150 years ago. According to the artifacts that have been found at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, the first time the buffalo jump is estimated to be used was about 6,000 years ago. That's based on a particular type of projectile point that was found below the cliff.

Q: Tell us about how people housed and clothed themselves.

SK: With the hide itself like we can see back here, with a herd of about 300 animals, you look at the teepee. We have a teepee here that's made up of 18 buffalo hides. It sits on our third level. The measurements that were taken from that were based on a teepee ring that was found below the cliff. One of the things is that when you take a teepee down, back in those days before they used pegs, they would use rocks. So these teepee rings that you find out on the prairie all represent teepees that were up at one point. But when they came down, before they came down the rocks were pushed out. Your teepee ring would be a little bigger when the teepee is down than when it was up. So a rule of thumb is when you do find a teepee ring, you would tend to move the rocks back in about a foot or two, and that will give you a proper size. So had they done that with this teepee here, you'd probably see a teepee a little bit smaller, roughly in the range of about 11 hides. The way these teepees were made was that they were laced together. Being able to move them from one place to another, you'd simply unlace them when you needed them. You'd make them smaller and lighter. Back in those days the animal that they used to pull the cargo around was a wolf that had the ? similar to what we have in the back here. That was loaded up and it had to be light enough for the wolves to be able to carry this around. Myself I can handle two or three hides comfortably, but beyond that they do get very heavy. You could look at two or three hides per animal and it would bring you up into, you'd probably need about four animals to pull at least 12 hides. So that's the range that

they would've been looking at, about a 12-hide teepee. One of the things that we did one year was we wanted to see how long it would take us or how long we could live in a teepee for the winter. It was roughly about October when we moved in. As the weather started getting colder we started to adapt to the weather conditions. What we found was that with a canvas teepee they were only good to about -25 and that was it. If you didn't take care of yourself you basically died. So that's how serious it got. But with the teepees that we have, if we would've been using the buffalo hide teepee, it would've been very comfortable. Even with the canvas teepee it was warm enough, we were able to sit around in our socks and T-shirts. One of the things is that a lot of people may imagine teepees to be quite cold. With our canvas teepee, we started out with a camp stove and we filled it full of wood. We found that the stove was useless at -25. We brought in two more stoves to get us through the night. The following morning we ended up throwing out the three stoves because they just, even though they were almost red hot, they produced very little heat that would stay around. The idea was in the early days in order to keep warm they would use what we see in the back there, the buffalo chips. These buffalo chips produced about the same amount of heat as wood but they had one advantage, and that was that they didn't smoke. Once they sat out and dried for a few years they were just like charcoal briquettes. Once you put them on the ground, have a nice stack going in the middle of the teepee, the ground would warm up beneath them and that would also help keep you warm. That was basically how we survived. If we look at the buffalo hunt, we see that with 300 animals you could make about 15 teepees. The way the teepees were made is they were all laced together, so you could have material that would cover a lot more lodges than trying to complete one in itself. There were some replacement and there were some that were used for repairs. Once we look at what we have down here, we can see that there was a lot of tool-making that also went with the hides. Over on one side, the way the teepee was set out, was that we had the females, the ladies occupied one side of the teepee and the men occupied the other. What we refer to as our living off the land display here covers a number of the items that each, whether it was the male or the female, made. We start out with the skull, which is at the very top. We look at how the skull was used in ceremony. On top of the skull you can see what was known as an aniskim, which is often referred to as the buffalo stone. In the buffalo stone, before a

buffalo hunt would take place, they would have a woman that would perform a ceremony. If you look at what the iniskim is, it's actually a fossilized vertebrae of an animal that used to live about the time of the dinosaurs. In this particular layer you'll also find ammonite and a lot of fossilized dinosaurs, which are often referred to as the grandfathers of the buffalo. When you're calling on the buffalo with the iniskim, you're making that connection with the dinosaurs that lived a long time ago and the descendants, which are often referred to as the buffalo. The ceremony would take place and the ceremonial items that were used were very specific, from rattles to hooves and the tail and so forth. Those are some of the uses that came with the skull itself. In addition to that, the horns were used as spoons and they were also used to carry flame, the smouldering mosses. The spoons at one point shortly after the buffalo hunt were used to collect some of the buffalo blood which the tongues were washed in. It was also a method that was used by the people to immunize themselves from whatever the animal had picked up. Just like today we have the birds that carry around bird flu, back then the buffalo migrating around would also pick up different types of organisms. Each year they returned, you had to immunize yourself from whatever it was that they picked up. In this area here it was actually quite interesting that some of the first archaeologists that did work here at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump all came down with a strange form of viral infection. One of the ranchers that used to live in this area, there's one here where he brought his animals down on the east side of the Porcupine Hills, and for some reason they all contracted anthrax and the whole herd had to be culled. So these organisms are still out there. Today because we don't rely so much on the buffalo in its natural state, a lot of the ceremonies have gone but they were used right up until the buffalo jump was last used. Those were some of the important things that go with the skull itself. If you look at the skull, even with the eyeballs, when they were preserving the meat they would have the apanfluet bags like we see down here. The apanfluet bag was something that was used in its raw form. It was very stiff but it was also durable. If you were going to store food inside of it you would use the eyeball from the buffalo and wipe it on the outside, and that would keep insects from getting into the food. Every part of the animal had a purpose. The brain of the animal was used to tan the hide. You were able to get the

hide down to a very soft stage. You could get it so soft that it could be worn right next to a baby's skin.

Q: Tell us a bit more about this stuff you have here.

SK: The teepee or lodge was set up very specifically. The one we have laid out here gives you some idea about what the female people of the camp worked on, and the different duties that each individual had. Over on the other side we have the male and what their job consisted of. In some ways you can see that everybody had their place within the society. You didn't have everybody making moccasins; certain people made that. There were certain people that made fire. There were certain people that made different tools. There were certain people that performed different ceremonies. And there were certain people that sang different songs. Overall, everybody knew what their specialty was. When you brought the whole buffalo hunting or buffalo society or culture together you'd see that everybody had a specific purpose within the camp. If you needed a pair of moccasins you knew who you had to go see. Your labor was exchanged for somebody else's labour. As long as everybody knew what their positions were, that type of society worked quite well. Down here we have one item that was used to find out who the best children were when it came to marksmanship, whether it was with the arrow, the atlatl, or the spear. Those that could regularly put the arrow through the centre of the hoof over here were eventually selected as being the buffalo runners. If you couldn't do that at least you were expected to get it through one of the other hooves. If you were within the other hoof you had another job, and one of them was the fire man. Back in my days when I was growing up, I was the fire man. We just lived up here on the Peigan reserve down in the river valley. Even though we didn't hunt buffalo we still did a lot of hunting and trapping within that river system. Part of my job growing up was to go out and chop wood and bring it back, and I had to make sure everybody else had wood. The way our communities worked, even in my younger days, we weren't really that far from where the people who lived off the buffalo were. Even during my time, I was about 16 years old before we got electricity and gas. Telephone, running water, that type of stuff didn't occur until after I was 18. The first year of my life was spent out in a tent. My older sister spent

one year in a tent, she spent the winter in a tent. Prior to that our people lived in tents throughout the winter, year round. Even though the last time the buffalo jump was used is 150 years ago, in my generation we've just recently started using houses. A few years ago I renovated my dad's house and I was actually quite surprised at how little insulation his house had. I don't ever remember being cold. If you knew how to survive and chop wood and do all the other stuff, you were quite comfortable. I survived, and I guess you could say it wouldn't be too hard for me to go back. One of the interesting things with living this type of life here is when we spent our winter out in a teepee our bodies got acclimatized to the cold. When I finally moved back into Lethbridge, it was a nice warm house, we had running hot water. But it was so hot I couldn't sleep inside the house. It was -22 degrees and I ended up taking my sleeping bag and making a bed out in the back yard. It was kind of interesting with all of us lying out there. Some of the neighbours had seen me go out there. After they saw me in the back yard for a while, they called the police. The police came by to see what was going on. So I had to explain to them that you had gotten used to sleeping outside and you had to get some rest out there.

Q: You mentioned being from the Blackfoot tribe, and you mentioned Peigan. How did those two interacted?

SK: Blackfoot is something that, if you look in history books, they were at one point referred to by the La Vérendrye expedition as the Archithinue Indians. It wasn't until Palliser came through that the name Blackfoot was coined. According to how the name came about, one morning he was asking his Cree guides what people lived in this particular area. According to him, they pointed at the fire and touched the soles of their shoes. So, he said, from this point on I'll refer to them as the Blackfeet. Blackfoot is sort of a recent name and Peigan is also a recent name, the name actually being Piikani. But when you took the word Piikani and you added the phonetics to it, the letters that represented it, when you pronounced the letters it went from Piikani to being Peigan. It's similar to how Spokani, which is down in the States, which we refer to as Spokane, gets its name as well. You've got Spokane and Peigan, which the original way of pronouncing it would be Piikani and Spokani. Spokane would be going towards the sun or moving to

the sun, and Piikani would be something that would make reference to a certain type of hide. If you look at the deeper meaning you'd see that the skin or rough hide or bark of a tree or even the hide of a buffalo all separate the inside universe from the outside. If you look at it from more of a traditional perspective, you can see that a lot of the oral history was incorporated into the language. If you understand the language you also understand a different world view. When we're looking at the Blood tribe, which is just across the road, blood is something that in the English language has sort of a negative connotation. It's something that's scary and feared. But in the Blackfoot language it's something that refers to the life that flows through everything, whether it's the trees or the river; it flows through the plants and animals or even through us. It's something that's life-giving. An interesting thing is that when you go to Calgary you can find a Peigan Trail, you can find a Blackfoot Trail, Sarcee Trail. But I can guarantee you'll never find a Blood trail. Maybe it's Deerfoot, but you can imagine how insecure you'd feel driving down a blood trail. It's probably something we won't see in the near future.

Q: That puts a different perspective on things, and people need to know that.

SK: When we're looking at the territory, where I grew up in, I never really thought too much of it because we spoke Blackfoot in our community and everybody spoke Blackfoot. So we just automatically assumed that the way we saw things was the way everybody saw it. When you come off the reserve and look around at the place names, there is a translation but there's also a lot that gets lost. When we're talking about where I grew up, which we refer to as Napi River, which is just down here, there was always this confusion as to whether or not Napi and the Oldman were the same thing. If you look back at the place names you can see that the Oldman River was actually east of MacLeod and that the river that flows through Lethbridge was called the Belly River. It wasn't until August 4, 1913, when the mayor in the city of Lethbridge found out that the queen was coming up the next year, that he decided to change the name of the river because he didn't want to use the name belly in front of royalty. So what they did was they had the geographers come in, they measured the river flow, and then they extended the name all the way up into the mountains. When I grew up there was always this confusion whether

it was called the Napi River or whether it was called the Oldman River. We just simply kept on referring to it as Napi River. The Oldman to us was something that existed right through this whole area. The mountains represent the backbone. When you get up to a place in Kananaskis and Blackfoot you're talking about *gananatsis*, which is what the most important person wears, the male, which is a headdress. As you move down towards the city of Calgary there's a place on the north side of the river called Nosehill, which is *moksisis*. Below the Nosehill you've got the Bow River, which is the bow or *nama*. Down east you've got the town of Arrowwood, which is *napsi*, which is the arrow. Then moving back up toward Calgary you've got the Elbow River, which is *mokinistis*. That's what we still call Calgary today. We just automatically assumed that everybody understands this. Down farther south we have the Porcupine Hills, which is the chest area. We've got the Buffalo Jump, which comes to the bottom of the ribcage. Then the next river over is the Belly River which used to flow through Lethbridge. Below that you've got Chief Mountain. Then all the way down to Missoula you've got the Blackfoot River. When you start to put it together you begin to say, okay now that's what we refer to as the Old Man. As you move up towards Kallispel, that's *kallispel*, which is a little pouch that's worn on the hip.

Q: So the whole thing is a body that you refer to as the Oldman.

SK: That's the Oldman. The Oldman wouldn't be complete without the Oldwoman. When you go down towards Medicine Hat, that's the bonnet she wears. All the names that deal with elk, like we see on the dress behind us here--that was the dress of the woman. They would decorate that with the elk teeth. You look at the Milk River; that's part of who she is. The Cypress Hills area, that's the womb. That's the place where the origin stories come from. When we were growing up, this is some of the stuff that was passed on to us. Even today that's the way I see things. It's almost like we've got two societies, one superimposed on top of the other. Sometimes they get a little confused; sometimes you're still able to separate them.

Q: We hear that Aboriginal peoples saw themselves more as a part of the earth than as a separate organism. Does this relate to the Oldman?

SK: It does. If you look at Percy Bullchild, in order to understand what he's talking about, because he deals a lot with the napi stories, but he also deals a lot with the origin stories. In order to understand the Oldman and the Oldwoman it's important that you understand the land. In his stories, the comparison would be to the Adam and Eve story, where things go wrong. Then there's this big chase that occurs where the old woman is seeking revenge on her children, which is the seven boys that they had. They have this running battle that comes north, passes through Waterton, comes across here. Down by Medicine Hat you've got the Seven Persons Coulee where they all ran through. Eventually they get down to the sand hills where they go up into the sky. Today you've got the seven stars, which is the big dipper. Napi is one of the stars. When we're talking about landscape and our connection to the earth, we're also talking about our connection to the sun, the moon and stars. There's a complete universal way of looking outward.

Q: I want to take you back to the beginning now. Where were you born?

SK: I was born in Pincher Creek. My sister was born in Brock. We were not too far from here. I grew up in this valley down here. Growing up there, we lived right close to the river. We used to draw our water from the river, and that was our drinking water. That wasn't too long ago. We hunted and fished and followed the older people around within the community. We got our wood from the trees around us; we got our food right from the land. It wasn't until the late '60s where they introduced something called Social Services, welfare. Prior to that everybody lived off the land. Even back in those days I don't remember people being, if you had to hunt and fish and pick the food, you did quite well. As children we would be walking through the bush and just reach down and grab something. That was your lunch. It was something that we just grew up with. When Social Services or welfare eventually came in, it was mostly about buying dry goods. People went out and got their coffee, their tea, their sugar, their flour. But those were just supplements, more of a luxury than really what you needed. At one point the Indian agent

would bring out these rations. They would have meat; I don't know where they got this meat. Everybody was scared of it. So, after the Indian agent left, you'd give it to the dogs, and they sure liked it. If you got hungry you'd have the berries. We fished a lot. That's just the way life was.

Q: Did you live on a reserve?

SK: Yes.

Q: What did you do off the reserve?

SK: It wasn't until after I graduated from high school that I moved to Calgary. I decided to get into the automotive trade. I started out working on bicycles. I used to have horses but I found I was going farther and the horses seemed to be too slow. So I decided to get a bike. With the bike you could go a longer ways. You didn't have to water it or feed it. It was a different way of doing things. When your bike broke down you had to fix it. I found that I had this skill of being able to work with mechanics. In high school it was more of a hobby. After I got good at it, I started working on other people's vehicles. When I graduated from high school, it just came natural to go into the trades. I went to Calgary, went to SAIT, spent the year up there. Then I got a job at a garage over by the Currie Barracks. I ran into a lot of people that my uncle was in the armed forces with, that were in the military. I sort of wanted to work on aircraft. But when I checked it out at SAIT there was about a five-year waiting list for that. The people from the barracks that used to bring their vehicles in would tell me to join the military and I wouldn't have to wait around, that I'd be able to get right into the aircraft field immediately. I didn't believe them at the time and I wasn't too sure if that's what I wanted. But my uncle was in there and he seemed to enjoy it quite well. One day the city of Calgary was expanding the Crowchild Trail. The person I was working for had two garages, and one of his garages was being expropriated for widening of the Crowchild Trail. They shut one of his operations down and all of the mechanics went to the one garage. It so happened I was the last one hired and the first one to go. On one of my trips after I was handed my pink

slip, I just happened to be walking by the recruiting station in Calgary. I was looking at the aircraft and thinking, I wonder if I should try this out? The recruiting officer was standing outside smoking his pipe. He asked me if I wanted to try it out and I said, okay I'll write the test. So I went in, wrote the test. He came back into the room and said, you got it. I told him, maybe I should hold off. Within two weeks I found myself down in boot camp. Before I really had a chance to think it through, I was in. It wasn't until after I got down boot camp that I found out that they actually had a quota, and Alberta was short, and I just happened to show up at the right time. The commandant for the boot camp was retiring and they wanted all air force people out on his parade. They needed somebody in the air force and I just happened to show up at a door at the right time, and there I was.

Q: They had a quota for Aboriginal people?

SK: No, just for recruits. We were one of the first groups to go through contact training. We were allowed from boot camp to wear air force badges. It was just part of this grand show that they had to put on for this retiring commandant. From there, when I eventually came back, I found that even though I did get into the aircraft component, it was broken over such a long period of time that it would've been better for me to go to SAIT. So when I came out I found that I had other ambitions. I showed up at the airport at Pincher Creek and the manager handed me a mop and broom. I thought, well that's it, I'll go look someplace else. I ended up working in construction. I was driving heavy equipment down here in a canal. After the job was complete the boss wanted me to go up north to the Mackenzie valley. It was already cold enough down here. So I decided to take a job with Alberta Corrections.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

SK: I went to high school in Pincher Creek.

Q: Was your experience unique, or did other Aboriginal youth join the military, go to SAIT, etc?

SK: No, I was one of the first groups to leave the reserve. I did my kindergarten here on the reserve. That year when we started my grade 1, the reserve had acquired a number of buses. They just had the one school on the reserve, well actually the two, but they didn't go up too high, so they transferred a lot of the students into Pincher Creek. The day school I was going to went up to grade 5. We got to Pincher Creek and within a couple of months even the students that were in grade 5 were brought back down to grade 1. A lot of it happened because they just simply couldn't speak English too well. At the time we were still speaking Blackfoot in the playground, the classroom. Blackfoot was being used quite extensively. A lot of the older boys that I knew, even though they were very intelligent, they simply didn't know how to use the English language the way it should be. If you look at the English language compared to the Blackfoot language, there's only 13 sounds that they have in common. There's things like Js and Ls and Rs that we take for granted, that don't exist in the Blackfoot language. A lot of Blackfoot speakers can't pronounce those sounds correctly. So when you get to school, the first thing that you're handed is *My Little Red Story Book* or *My Little Blue Story Book* and, wouldn't you know, just about every name in there starts with a J: Jane and Jack and Jill. So you have all these boys trying to pronounce these Js and they just can't. Instead of using a J they're pronouncing it 'tse.' The teachers at the time thought there was something wrong with these students, and they would just simply fail them back. Just shortly after at Elk Hall was opened up. So you had this whole group of young people that were from grade 2 and up and had all been sent back to grade 1. A lot of them became really disillusioned about having to go back up again. One day I remember there was a whole group of them that just walked away. Today I'm lucky if I see a few of them in jail. But a lot of them, that was it, they hit the street. Elk Hall had opened up and that was it. When I graduated there was only two of us. But yet when I was in kindergarten I remember at least 60 of us on the reserve that were in kindergarten.

Q: Talk about how some of these people ended up in a terrible position because of their early experiences.

SK: It started right back in school. When I went up, being back in grade 1, we showed up our first day of class and all the Native students were brought into the gym and left there for a couple of weeks. I don't know what was going on. Then we were moved up to a classroom about a month into going to school. Eventually the difficulty [blank spot] ... I remember when I went to my class, there were about seven or eight of us that were in grade 1, we went into the class and all the non-native students were on one side of the classroom. There was a row of empty desks and then we were put up against the window. When we walked into class, a lot of students that were sitting right close to us were literally sitting on the edge of their chairs, cowering. One of the guys that came in, he was a little bit rambunctious and he noticed this. So as he came in he looked at the students and it was just quiet, all eyes looking at us. He sort of jumped up and made a big noise. The next thing, all these kids were crying and rushed the teacher. Some of them were literally climbing on top of her and they eventually fell into a big pile in the corner. The principal came running back in. He had a stick in his hand and he came over and started beating us up with it. He grabbed the one guy and beat him up pretty good. Then they took us back out of the classroom back to where they'd picked us up from. From there some of the boys I was with just disappeared. Those were my first experiences going out of the community. I don't know what the other ones went through, but it was quite an experience. I stayed at the school for a bit longer. Then I transferred out of there. It was actually quite brutal.

Q: How many people that you know live on the reserve here now?

SK: Between my age, I'm 49, and my dad is in his 70s, in our family the males are all missing. These are all part of this generation of males on the reserve that completely disappeared. When I was in grade 1, these would be the grade 2 to grade 7 or 9 that all disappeared. You could actually see the statistics in the population. When alcohol opened up, the males all disappeared. You could see this demographic change where the females

outnumbered the males. Then shortly after that you could see where it reverses, but that's where all the females have left the reserve to go to school and the male population came up. We're looking at anywhere from about 3,500 to 4,000. Even these numbers are quite misleading because there are a lot of people who are married off the reserve, and their numbers are not taken into consideration. So we figure around 4,000 of what's out there.

Q: Do those who live off the reserve still have rights back on the reserve?

SK: Some of them. When the constitution was repatriated in 1982, they had this bill that came out around 1985, referred to as Bill C-31. Bill C-31 defines who is and isn't a member. It's all based on the blood quantum. There were guidelines that came out that stated that the reserves had to put these membership codes in place. Otherwise membership codes would be given to them. You either develop it yourself or else it's given to you. There were guidelines that you had to follow. It was sort of an exercise in futility to try and come up with anything different, because if it didn't follow the guidelines it was rejected. With that type of document coming out and once it became law, you had a lot more people coming back into the community but there was never any funding increases for education, housing, or any of the other programs. Even though the funding that had come in had been capped, you had to deal with a lot more people. Today a lot of those caps still remain in place and the population has doubled. The communities are still trying to survive with what little there is out there.

Q: A lot of people have ended up living in poverty.

SK: Yes, it is poverty. From where we were living down in the river bottom, even though we didn't have Social Services we were able to live off the land. We were able to drink water out of the river and we were trapping and hunting within that river system. I remember at one point where one winter we had a fish kill. It was at that point that even the old people started to realize that the environment was changing. The backwaters where we used to do our fishing, every winter they'd be frozen out. That was like our food was gone. In springtime once the ice started melting they would all come up floating

dead to the surface. You could see at that point that living off the land was becoming harder. Today even if you go down into the river bottom you find a lot of the original plants and animals are gone. Once the dam was put in the flooding occurred, and that was actually what drove the last people out of there. So they went from being self-sufficient to becoming totally dependent. Even though they live on welfare, the average single person has to live on about \$200 a month, and that covers everything. A lot of the plants that were in that environment are just not there anymore.

Q: How do you see the concept of reserves?

SK: It goes back to the 1800s. A lot of people at the community level were under the impression that they had these treaties. But if you look at the legislation going back to how it was written, what they actually were were surrenders. What we have are actually Crown lands, and a lot of Canadians don't realize that these reserves belong to them. They don't belong to the Native people that are on them. There's always this misconception that natives own these reserves and they're their homelands, when in fact that's not what the case is. Any time there's some kind of dispute, whether it's over resources or whatnot, native people are mistakenly thinking that they've got land claim issues. But if you go back to the way the surrenders were written, they basically cede and release everything. Over the years they've been told that that's not the case, you've got treaties. There's always this funny thing that goes on where you've got the politicians and the legal system that don't want to come out and actually tell them what the situation really is. On the other side, Native people, not really understanding what the traditional legal and political structure is all about, don't understand how they fit into that system.

Q: It sounds as if the Aboriginal people didn't claim to own the land, they were just part of it.

SK: They were part of it, ya. You could see with the stories I was talking about earlier of the old man and old woman, that's the type of understanding that they have of territory. The culture is part of the territory as much as they are. Today when we're looking at the

reserves, it's a completely different understanding of space. Within these spaces you've got all these jurisdictions, whether it's federal or provincial, or the reserves. A lot of times people from the Aboriginal communities misunderstand the reserves as being a separate component when it falls under federal jurisdiction.

Q: A lot of the land claims are probably as much over resources as they are over land.

SK: Yes. I guess it goes right down to the people themselves, the cultures that they have under the provincial resources act. Resources are a big part of it, along with hunting, fishing and everything else.

Q: You mentioned that a lot of the young men you grew up with disappeared. Was there anything different about your background?

SK: I've thought about that for many years, as to why I survived and why the other boys didn't survive. At the time I hit kindergarten I had enough understanding of the English language as well as the Blackfoot that I was able to operate in both worlds. They were mostly Blackfoot-speaking and they didn't quite understand what was going on on the other side.

Q: What was your experience as a correctional officer?

SK: The correctional officer was...the Native people that were in there were just, it wasn't something that they were going to-- there was no correction involved with it. It was more or less just a warehouse where they would go there and they found a place to have three meals and a place to sleep. Even when they came out, you'd find they were very dysfunctional once they got out. But when they were in there they functioned quite well. They were joining clubs and they participated in their communities. They fit into their community in jail quite well. But when they got out it was the complete opposite, they just couldn't function out here.

Q: But what about your own career as a correctional officer?

SK: You had to work twice as hard, be twice as good in order to fit in. Because I was already in the military I was able to handle that environment quite well. There was a lot of components of it that I really didn't see how they were working. But it just wasn't my position to go out and say what was wrong with it. You just sort of have to go along with the way the system was structured. But I never saw any correction in it. I always thought, well it does what it does and these guys are here. When I see them out there they're not doing very well out there. So for the time being this may be the best that we can do.

Q: How were you accepted as an Aboriginal person in that position? Were you resented by the prisoners?

SK: No, they actually ran the place. A lot of the other correctional personnel wondered why certain officers have such a hard time and others get along quite well. The Aboriginal inmates would tell me what was going on. It's almost like I had many eyes and many ears within that system. If something was going to happen I was on top of it right away. It's not because I knew it on my own, it's what the inmates were telling me all the time. I had that advantage that none of the other correctional service people had. They only had what they could see and hear, and that's all they knew. I had all the inmates telling me, you'd better watch this or you'd better watch that; this is what's coming.

Q: Did you see correctional officers being mean?

SK: Yes. It's just that environment that you're in. It is extremely violent. It's a very violent world. It's a different world in there. You have to watch yourself. I know there's some workers in there that just didn't belong there. Even though they tried to stay there, it's just a matter of time before they got very resentful, they hurt somebody, or else they would get hurt. It was one of those situations where if you didn't really have a good understanding of how it worked, you were putting your health at risk in many different ways.

Q: Where did you do your university degree?

SK: While I was working at the correctional centre, it's one of those things where after my first coffee break I knew I wasn't going to be there forever. There was only one way to get out of there. During my four years I started doing some upgrading. Eventually I reached the stage where I was able to move on, and took that opportunity. I started at the university and that went quite well. Once I graduated with my geography with a concentration in GIS, I went back and did my Masters in Native American Studies. Some of the students that I was down there with sort of went backwards. They did their undergraduate in Native American Studies and would move into a science. That didn't work too well. I figured I'd go the other way around, and that didn't work too well. Culture and science just don't always mesh. Even though some of the professors that I worked with liked to think they understand culture, when it came down to actually producing something I found they were lacking in a lot of these areas. A lot of the work that I was doing wasn't really understood.

Q: How did you wind up doing what you're doing now?

SK: With the geography at the University of Lethbridge, it's one of the only universities where archaeology is part of geography. Most other institutions, archaeology is under anthropology. When I had an interest in archaeology, I had to take all these geography courses. Once I had my geography with the archaeology and the background in Native American studies, this position opened up so I tried for it. This was the second time I had gone for the position. This time around I got it.

Q: How long have you been here?

SK: This is my second year. The transition here has been something that I had to get used to, coming right out of academics and moving into this field. This place is sort of like a pendulum. Originally it was based on science and then over the years it switched

over to a cultural focus, and now it's sort of moving back towards the science level. Over the years since it's opened up a lot of science has changed. When they first opened up there was a very strong emphasis on the theory of evolution. A lot of the themes that used to be here were based on those theories, but over the years those have all changed. As a result of that, the culture hasn't really changed but the science components have all changed. Smack in the midst of this it's also gone from something that has been more the preservation of a site to becoming something that's more into the travel and tourism industry. So there's this transition that's in between culture and science to tourism.

Q: It doesn't sound like you're in favour of that.

SK: It's something that's quite interesting. The building was designed with certain limitations. One of them, you can see the washrooms, there's less than 10 facilities in there. I've been asking around and saying, how many people was the building actually designed for? Historically it looks like it was around 20 people a day that would come through. In the summertime we're getting upwards of 1,500 people coming through here. We've far surpassed what the original intentions were. You have to be quite creative to manage that many people coming through.

Q: Do you think people who come here gain an understanding of the culture, or of archaeology, or what do you think?

SK: They leave with a better understanding of the culture, the archaeology and also the landscape. We do have a lot of school groups that come through. What they're looking at is some of the programs that we have behind me here. They're able to have direct contact with the culture itself. We have some good guides here and they're able to add more to what you would normally see through the building if you just came on your own. Spending that time one to one with as many groups as you can, the culture is going out there from somebody who understands it rather than reading it out of a book. That's where I see there is an advantage to it. It's just that it would be nice if more local people

came up so they would get a better understanding of the people that they live with. But so far a lot of our people are from outside the area.

Q: How do you see the relationship between the Aboriginal people and the rest of the population? Is there an enlightenment developing, or is it getting worse, or is it staying the same?

SK: I think it's sort of staying where it's at. In order for it to get better we have to be able to take more steps in that direction, and that's not happening right now. Shortly after the reserves were created there's a person by the name of Orrin Wilson who did a study on the economies at the time. The Native people who were supposed to be hunters and gatherers, just shortly after the treaty surrenders were signed, coming off that buffalo economy and then moving into mainstream economics, which was ranching and farming, actually excelled quite rapidly. The farming and ranching Native people in this area became so successful that the government had to step in and shut it down. There was just too much competition for the local settlers to be able to compete in that kind of a market. Since then the Indian Affairs have never really backed off. They've always been in this position where if something starts they sabotage it. The economies have never really had a chance to get going. On the other side, the communities and surrounding area have never really been told about what is causing these situations. What we see is by design, and it's by design that we're going to have to get out of it.

Q: Some people look at Native people and say they have to fix things themselves. How do you answer that?

SK: It can be done. But the problem is you've got to get the people that sabotage it out of the way. My dad started farming, and that was part of the residential school training. But yet when he got to a certain point he was hit with all these roadblocks. Just as the group that they had started to succeed, Indian Affairs opened up this leasing program where people who had never had training in farming all of a sudden had land, and they started leasing it out. They became armchair farmers, where they sat back and leased their land

out, but they had no idea of what was going on. But then you had the ones that were trained and working at it, but they had to take all the risk. They weren't allowed insurance, so all it took was one crop failure and that was it. You could build up your farm machinery to a certain point, but if you got hit, like my dad, twice in a row with hail, that was the end. He didn't have seed for the third year. He eventually just ended up leasing it out. Since that time he has never gone back to farming; it's easier to avoid the risks.

Q: You ran in the federal election as a New Democrat. What attracted you to the New Democrats, and do you think they have some of the answers that Aboriginal people require?

SK: My involvement with politics came from running for the tribal government. I was the youngest person to ever get on the council. I was 23 when I got on, and that was just unheard of. A lot of people thought I would lose and didn't have a chance. But I did. I got on. That's where I had my contact with mainstream politics. The year that I got on they had just repatriated the constitution. So there was a lot of constitutional stuff that was happening. It was through that process where I had to learn very quickly. I had to translate a lot of what was being said at the constitutional Ottawa level down to the reserve level where the elders and our politicians were sitting. I had to be able to translate the ideas and concepts both ways. That's what gave me this understanding of what it's all about. When I did see flaws in the constitution I would bring it up with the people that I knew, whether they were Liberal, Conservative or NDP. NDP at the time, I really didn't understand what they were all about. But the people that I did work with originally were with the Liberals.