

Brief History: Young Chippewyan Indian Reserve #107



As part of Treaty 6, signed in 1876 at Fort Carlton, Sk, 30 square miles of land located near the present town of Laird, was granted to Chief Chippewyan and his people as Reserve #107. The following year, Chief Chippewyan died and his son Young Chippewyan became Chief. But life following the Treaty was very difficult. Aboriginal people faced severe circumstances: increased settlement, the decline of the fur trade, devastating epidemics, an influx of ruthless whiskey traders, and the disappearance of the buffalo and traditional foods. With the introduction of the Indian act and Indian Agents, the traditional way of life changed radically.

In 1885, Louis Riel and his Metis people confronted the Government about the way they were being treated and expressed fear about the loss of their land. The Federal Government feared that local First Nations people would join with the Metis, so they implemented restrictions on the First Nations people. Fear combined with these restrictions, forced the Young Chippewyan to Cypress Hills in search of buffalo. The Young Chippewyan people were scared of returning to their land for fear of reprisal from the Indian Agents and eventually many of them made their home with other bands near North Battleford.

In May of 1897, Reserve #107 was taken from the Young Chippewyan Band by the Federal Government to make it available for settlement. The Young Chippewyan people were never contacted and were not aware that their land had been relinquished, it was done without their surrender or consent. In 1895, the Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve had been created by the Federal Government and offered a large tract of land north of Saskatoon up to Rosthern. In October 1898, the land around Laird was added. So the former Young Chippewyan Indian Reserve now became a Reserve for Mennonite farmers and a few years later German Lutherans started to settle. The Young Chippewyan band has never been compensated for the land that they had taken from them. Most of the descendants of this band reside in the North Battleford area or near Prince Albert but are considered to be squatters in the communities in which they reside. In 1994 the Young Chippewyan/Stony Knoll First Nation had their land claim rejected by the Indian Claims Commission. The Judgment stated that they have a legitimate claim but they do not have a recognizable band membership as they ceased to exist in 1897.

On August 22 2006, approximately 130 people (Young Chippewyans, Mennonites and Lutherans) gathered at Stony Knoll, a sacred place to the Young Chippewyan people and St John's Lutheran Church, to Commemorate the 130th Anniversary of the signing of Treaty Six and to continue the journey of building friendship and understanding. A highlight of this event was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding: giving thanks to the Creator, indicating respect for Covenants including Treaties and calling for a committing to peace, justice and sufficiency for all communities. We agreed that we did not want to fight against each other, but rather, to hold the Federal Government responsible for the injustice that they had created. Chief Weenie emphasized that this was not a time of confrontation but a time of healing between our peoples. The emphasis was one of spiritual healing, where, perhaps, said Chief Weenie, we could set an example to the rest of the country for how our peoples could live in peace and harmony with each other. Chief Weenie made it clear that the Young Chippewyan respected the current ownership of the land by the settlers and in turn Mennonite and Lutheran communities pledged support for the Young Chippewyan band in its ongoing struggle to obtain compensation for the land owed to them under Treaty Six. The Young Chippewyan/Stony Knoll First Nation continues to seek justice.



