Jim Deranger [00:01]

So how it all began was just like the way that they said it, they said, I’ll say it in Dene. They said:

[Dene 00:12- 03:20].

Now, somebody will hear that what I just said in the Dene language. When the land was there 15,000 years ago, there was the barrenland Dene, who was using the land in the barrenland. Right at the tree line. And we go into the Northwest Territories, into the tundra and then they would go back in the tree line. That's where they lived, that’s where they were. And then they went further south, there was Dene that lived in bush. They were the Dene Bush. [Dene 04:10] and that's how they, that's where they lived.

And then there was other Dene that lived around there, around the lakes way up the Northwest Territories and also Lake Athabasca and around Hatchet Lake and Haylong Lake, and Head Head Lake. All the Dënesųłıné lived around those big lakes. And then there were Great River Dene people. Like the Slave River, Athabasca River, Fond du Lac River, Stony Rapids River, those are big rivers that those Dene used to live around at those shores, at those lakes too.

And then there’s the Birch Mountain Dene who live around the Birch Mountain [05:00] area. So, there were five groups of Dene, Dene people living in these areas and then on the land, which was northern, north, northeast BC, Alberta, northern Alberta, and northern Manitoba, which is, and then there's the southern Inuit, which was some years ago Northwest Territories but now it's Inuit. Then Northwest Territory, some in the Northwest Territories. So that land is a huge, huge land was Dënesųłıné land.

And the Dënesųłıné people then wherever they were, wherever the people died, that’s where they buried them on the land. Like there’s graves all over that land. And Elders at that time was saying even to this very day to recent – quite recently, like in the late 1990s, the Elders were saying that the land was made with Dene blood. And so, we asked, how? They said wherever the Dene were traveling, wherever they died, they buried the people, and that blood went back into the land. That's how the Dene land is recognized today. It was made by Dene blood because wherever the blood went back into the land, all over the land. And they were saying that the Dene people, the caribou and the wolf are one – are one person. And that's how the Dene people recognize themselves today in Dene lands. That’s why they have a strong attachment to the land.

Peter Fortna [07:08]

Right.

JD [07:09]

There’s so many things like, I heard in the Dene language, I’ll probably be the last person that ever heard it.

PF [07:23]

I'm happy you're able to share it now with me, and hopefully with future generations and in your language.

JD [07:34]

And even though there were five groups of Dene people, the ones that really up in north – Barrenland Dene, and Bush Dene, and the Great Lakes Dene, and the Great Rivers Dene, and the Birch Mountain Dene, they traveled. They always did meet each other somewhere on Dene lands to exchange information about how are they living, about hunting, trapping – I mean hunting – and where their food is and where other people have met other people. So, there was always an interaction between them over the centuries. It was never like, they would be coming the first time, they always have been there.

PF [08:30]

Right.

JD [08:31]

The only person that were new were the traders that came into the region to Hudson Bay. And then the Hudson Bay traders just allowed us to be on our lands as owners of the land. They recognized that we're the owners of the land. Then the missionaries came after. And then geologists came after. Then settlers came after. Each group had a different view of the land. But the Dene people always had their same view.