

kā-kī-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk

Our Legacy:

Essays

Edited by
Cheryl Avery and Darlene Fichter

<http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy>

kā-kī-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk / Our Legacy: Essays

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Free e-book version available at:

<http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/resources/>

“It would be so much easier just to fold our hands and not make this fight.

To say, I, as one man, can do nothing.

I grow afraid only when I see people thinking and acting like this.

We all know the story about the man who sat beside the trail too long and then it grew over and he could never find his way again.

We can never forget what has happened but we cannot go back nor can we just sit beside the trail.”

- pîhtokahânapîwiyin (Chief Poundmaker)

“I would rather leave my children the legitimacy of struggle than to leave them with a settlement they cannot live with.”

- Grand Chief George Manuel

Acknowledgements

Over 80 individuals and organizations contributed to the development of the *kā-kī-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk / Our Legacy* site, which currently has 4,865 descriptive records and 67,842 digitized items, highlighting library, archival and museum resources from nine Saskatchewan repositories. To the best of our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive on-line site for predominantly archival Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis material in Canada, and it is still growing. None of this would have been possible without the hard work, enthusiasm and assistance of each of those 80 individuals – too many to identify here, but acknowledged by name at http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/about_ack.

We are grateful for the gift of our site name. “*Our Legacy*” was suggested to us by a Cree researcher at the University of Saskatchewan Archives, who was influenced by the work of late Chief Mary Ann Stoney, Little Pine First Nation. Chief Stoney was known for her commitment to Cree language curriculum development. Although we are aware of the numerous Indigenous languages spoken in Saskatchewan and across Canada, on the web site we included Cree to honour this gift and Dene in recognition of our northernmost partner, Pahnkisiimon Nuyeyááh Library System (Northern Saskatchewan Archives).

All nine Saskatchewan organizations which contributed materials to the first phase of *Our Legacy* were instrumental in creating a rich research resource. The project was initiated by four partners who submitted the applications for funding: the University of Saskatchewan Archives, Pahnkisiimon Nuyeyááh Library System (Northern Saskatchewan Archives), the University of Saskatchewan Special Collections Department, and the Diefenbaker Canada Centre. The contribution of the

Indigenous Studies Portal, University of Saskatchewan Library, was fundamental, and we appreciate their continuing participation.

The site was made possible through funding support provided by: The Canadian Culture Online Program and the National Archival Development Program of Canadian Heritage, Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives; and the Digitization Pilot Project Grant Program of the Saskatchewan Provincial Library (Ministry of Education). Publication assistance was provided through the University of Saskatchewan Publication Fund.

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kinanāskomitin.

Cheryl Avery
Darlene Fichter

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Grace Ratt of Sucker River making a birch bark basket, 1974.
Northern Saskatchewan Archives, DNS Academic Education
Branch Collection, binder 16.

Introduction

Cheryl Avery and Darlene Fichter

This collection of essays grew out of a digital project intended to make materials relating to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, found in Saskatchewan's archival, library and other heritage collections, more accessible.

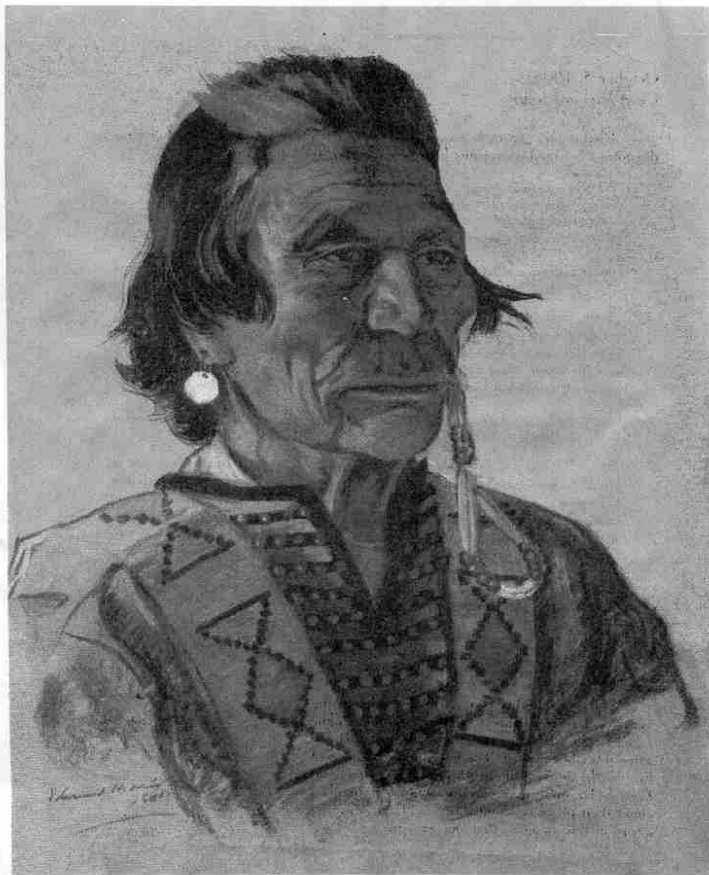
“Discovery” was the primary impetus behind the *kā-ki-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk / Our Legacy* site. It was our hope that the project would help researchers locate those resources often “hidden” within larger archival collections. The site was designed to support independent research. Our aim, therefore, was to be both as inclusive as possible when surveying collections for relevant materials, and to objectively present the material we found. In addition to self-directed research, however, another route to encourage discovery and exploration is available – the “interpretive exhibit,” material presented within the context of a storyline or thesis. For this component of the *Our Legacy* site we issued a call for graduate students interested in writing exhibits.

The response to our call and the resulting interpretive exhibits exceeded our expectations. Because the institutions initially surveyed for the site were not specifically Aboriginal archives, we were aware much of the material we presented would be external representations or views of the Aboriginal experience. Therefore we were particularly pleased that many of the students who responded not only had a keen interest and relevant scholarly experience, but also were First Nations or Métis. We suggested a list of topics we believed could be illustrated from the material on the site; suggested a word limit to ensure the effort didn't exceed our budget for compensation;

and requested that standard academic processes for properly citing any quotes or other works be followed. Other than that, the students were left to interpret the topics as they chose.

We had anticipated academically sound essays; but what we received were also often personal and sometimes passionate explorations of the topics. We were so impressed with the range, diversity and quality of the students' work we were determined to highlight it beyond the project website; hence this publication. Editorial changes have been kept to a minimum; the work remains that of each student.

The essays are informally arranged to first, highlight the differences between reality and perception; next, identify the impact of policy on Native communities (and Canada as a whole); then provide reflections on culture; and finally, offer the hope of reconciliation.



Portrait identified as Chakikum (Splashing Water) of the
Willow Cree Band,
Prince Albert Historical Society, H-395a



Studio portrait of "Gentleman" Joe McKay and Chief Mistawasis studying a book. Likely taken sometime after the 1885 uprising. Prince Albert Historical Society photograph collection.

The Importance of Easy Access to Online Information Resources for Aboriginal Researchers

Deborah Lee

This essay is coming from the perspective of my role as Indigenous Studies Portal Librarian and Team Leader at the University of Saskatchewan. The iPortal, located at: <http://iportal.usask.ca> is an online search tool (like a database), currently with links to over 10,000 full-text resources (including articles, book reviews, e-books, government reports and websites), all related to Indigenous Studies. However, I would also like to acknowledge the importance of having online access to the more than 4000 archival records in the *Our Legacy* database, available at: <http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/>.

This is also an opportune time to congratulate the team at the University of Saskatchewan for obtaining 3 grants simultaneously and for carrying this complex digitization project through to development of a very successful and usable website. Users will want to check back often to search for forthcoming additions to the *kā-kī-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk / Our Legacy* website as it grows with future successful grant submissions.

It is not a surprise that both the iPortal initiative and the *Our Legacy* project are associated with the University of Saskatchewan, given that the Province of Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people of any Canadian province. This demographic manifests itself at the University of Saskatchewan in that we have the highest percentage (nearly

10%) and number (approximately 1,800) of Aboriginal students of any doctoral university in Canada.

It should also be noted that the University of Saskatchewan is also rich with a critical mass of Aboriginal faculty, Research Chairs, and programming which in turn necessitates a concerted effort by information professionals on campus to assist in meeting the information needs of those who make up this critical mass and those of the students they serve.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of Indigenous Studies, relevant resources are often scattered across campus, including at branch libraries and at various colleges and programs. To reinforce the idea of how widespread the information resources might be, it is appropriate to list the various relevant Indigenous Studies programs offered at the University of Saskatchewan. There is the Native Studies Department, the first such department in Canada to have all Aboriginal faculty members with Ph.D.'s. In the College of Education, there is a wide range of Indigenous programming. This includes the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP), the INEP (Indian and Northern Education) Program in Graduate Studies, the SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education) Program, the Aboriginal Education Research Centre and the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre.

There is also the Native Law Centre, the Native Access Program to Nursing / Medicine, the Aboriginal Business Education Program, the Aboriginal Justice and Criminology Program, the Indigenous Peoples and Justice Program, the Indigenous Peoples Resource Management Certificate Program in the Department of Agriculture and Bioresources, Aboriginal Public Administration and the Aboriginal MBA Program.

There are also many courses with Aboriginal content offered in the College of Arts and Science, including in Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Political Studies, Psychology and Sociology.

Also at the University of Saskatchewan are some relevant Canada Research Chairs, such as the CRC in Aboriginal Health, the CRC in Native-Newcomer Relations (Department of History), and the CRC in Identity and Diversity: The Aboriginal Experience (Department of Geography).

As a result of the variety of courses and programs that discuss Indigenous thought and knowledge, there is a vast range of information resources that can be relevant for supporting Aboriginal research and scholarship. I would like to stress the importance of those that are available in electronic format. This includes peer-reviewed articles and book reviews available through subscription (i.e. via database vendors); theses (which might also be available via database vendors but also through institutional repositories and the Theses Canada Portal, an initiative of Library and Archives Canada); electronic books (also available through subscription database vendors but also PDF files available through various types of websites, including governmental reports, digitization projects and institutional repositories); and websites that provide information in formats other than PDF files. So, what is the value of having information online for Aboriginal people?

Well, that depends. If the Aboriginal researcher has easy access to the Internet, then online information can open up the world to this individual; however, there is the drawback of encountering too much information via the Internet and the difficulty of finding what is most relevant. But if the Aboriginal researcher is also associated with the University of Saskatchewan (i.e. has University authorization to access

library subscription resources), then the iPortal serves as a filtering tool to provide a one-stop access to online resources specific to the interdisciplinary field of Indigenous Studies. For instance, the iPortal has historically been strong in the areas of Education, Legal, Health, History and Indigenous knowledge resources. More recently, the iPortal has been strengthening its linkage to online resources in the areas of Art, Literature and Women's Studies.

Though the iPortal has its first mandate to serve University of Saskatchewan researchers, we are also interested in providing access to online resources to the global Indigenous community. This is why we invite other academic libraries to link up to the iPortal with link resolver software so that their clientele can also access content from subscription databases directly through the iPortal. In addition, we also link to many online resources that are open access, or available to everyone, rather than just subscription-based resources from database and e-book vendors. We even have an option to search solely by open access resources.

Another feature about online resources, including those on the iPortal, is their availability 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and therefore not restricted to the opening hours of the physical Library setting. This is especially helpful for Aboriginal students who have families (and my understanding is that the majority of Aboriginal students do have families); the online resources are accessible at times of the day when family responsibilities are less demanding in contrast to when the Library's physical building is open. As well, the online resources are available for use from home, from work, or even when traveling, such as to conferences, and to our global Indigenous brothers and sisters, no matter what time zone they live in.

I also think that the issue of Indigenous knowledge being available online needs to be addressed in this essay. There are issues surrounding the easy accessibility of “sacred knowledge” online and this is particularly controversial for archival information. On the one hand, as information professionals, we have a responsibility to aid researchers in their search for information that will be relevant for their research. On the other hand, we also have a responsibility to the Aboriginal community so that information that may harm or offend individuals is protected or dealt with at a different level. For instance, some digitization projects of Aboriginal or Indigenous archival and museum materials have incorporated passwords to access these materials online, thereby allowing people from the relevant community to access those records that pertain to them. With the *Our Legacy* site, we have been quite cautious to not offend communities in that we have attempted to protect sacred knowledge by not digitizing it. We have also explained on the website that some out-dated terminology used in the titles of archival materials has been transcribed verbatim. Further explained on the website, it is important to know that this terminology does not reflect the views of the website project organizers; rather, such terminology has been retained to provide evidence of the mainstream mindset of the era in which the titling of the various archival materials (such as photos) took place.

In terms of published (i.e. non-archival) materials, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, I once asked an Aboriginal student from the University of Saskatchewan what he thought of accessing (via the iPortal) academic papers that contain Indigenous knowledge and their being available on the Internet. He was impressed with the way that Indigenous scholars were able to walk in both worlds, that is, to publish papers in peer-reviewed journals (and thereby meet academic standards) and to do so from an Indigenous world view,

incorporating their cultural traditions but in a way that was respectful of them. In the student's view, he was receiving the best of both worlds by being able to receive cultural teachings one-on-one from Elders (both on and off campus) and by being able to receive cultural teachings by way of Indigenous faculty and researchers (both in the classroom and through their published work).

This example speaks to the sense of identity and empowerment that comes from the academic exercise of Aboriginal students journeying through their post-secondary education. It is very empowering to be able to access resources written from an Indigenous perspective in order to support your own research program. Finding resources that strengthen the researcher's connection to community is extremely important to the individual's personal growth, their development of identity and their healing. Not only that, it offsets the sometimes soul-wrenching experience it can be to deconstruct so many entrenched Western paradigms that dictate the academic environment and that also negate or devalue Indigenous knowledge and world view. Looking through the exhibits in the *Our Legacy* project provides another example of how the archival resources digitized for the website have enabled First Nations and Métis authors to do their research and express themselves with confidence. And when these resources are available online and in open access format (i.e. with no password involved), it encourages a wider audience to do the same.

Perhaps the most basic benefit to Aboriginal people in having access to online resources in the iPortal and in the *Our Legacy* websites is that these online databases each have a very user-friendly and robust (mostly free from system failure) search engine. Because of this, searching these sites saves the searcher considerable valuable time in gaining access to the

information, as opposed to looking for the journal on the shelf and then photocopying the article, or in the case of archival material, physically accessing the finding aid and the box of materials containing the document from the University of Saskatchewan and other archives.

In addition, because of the iPortal search engine, the same subject (or author) can be searched in various journals at the same time or in various issues/years of the same journal at the same time (rather than searching each journal individually). This feature is known as indexing. The value of the indexing feature can be demonstrated by explaining a recent partnership the iPortal engaged in with Brandon University to digitize nine volumes (from 1997 to 2005) of their *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*. In doing so, the iPortal team has provided more than 150 articles and approximately 160 book reviews to users in open access format (open to everyone, even to those people who did not have access to the print version) that were previously only available in print format. Because of its search engine, the iPortal is the only database that both indexes and links directly to content of the *CJNS*. The iPortal is also the only database that indexes and links to two other journals: the *Journal of Aboriginal Health* and the *Justice as Healing* periodical.

Another partnership, with Purich Publishing of Saskatoon, has also provided some unique content online. This publishing company approached the iPortal to assist with obtaining copyright permissions from the authors of essays contained in their out-of-print book, *Continuing Poundmaker and Riel's Quest*, a collection of the proceedings from a Native law conference hosted by the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan in 1993. The iPortal team then digitized each conference paper for which permissions were obtained and the iPortal hosts these papers on its website for all users to access

and print off if desired. This saves users from both contacting the publisher for a copy of one of the essays or where the book is available in a local library, having to go to the library to find the book on the shelf and then photocopy the essay or conference paper of interest (at least for those papers whose copyright permission was obtained, that is, about 60% of the book). Having these essays online also provides an efficient option for libraries which do not have the book from accessing the essays via interlibrary loan to fulfill user requests.

One other partnership involved the scanning of various archival resources (including photos, pamphlets and other textual materials) that were part of the University of Saskatchewan Library's Special Collections. These digitized resources became a part of the *Our Legacy* website and will soon also become records on the iPortal website. We look forward to adding close to 4000 archival records to the iPortal as a way to enhance the wide range of online research resources available to Aboriginal researchers. The important thing to remember about online archival resources is that they can provide some important information that can't be found elsewhere or can only be found with great difficulty. An interesting benefit of the availability of *Our Legacy* resources is that it also adds to the previous dearth of content for Northern Saskatchewan materials. This is thanks to the active participation of the Pahkisimon Nuyehāh Library System in La Ronge as one of our partnering institutions. As well, many archival resources, such as photos, diaries, and correspondence, are very good sources for expanding community histories and for genealogical purposes. For instance, when these types of original or primary sources are digitized, people are that much more encouraged to research their family roots. And for Aboriginal people, this can have lasting practical implications, such as in the cases of applying for band membership and residential school claims. On a lighter note, two Aboriginal students once told me they

were interested in genealogy because they wanted to find out if they were descended from royalty and to be sure that they wouldn't marry a relative!

At this point, I would like to thank the iPortal team for their scanning, metadata entry and other technical contributions for all three of the digitization partnerships that we completed in the last year (that is, the nine volumes of the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, the Purich book content and the *Our Legacy* website database content). You may never hear how much the resources that you helped to make accessible online have helped people – but please know that these resources will have a huge impact on the lives of many people, now and for the next generations.

Hay hay / meegwech / thank you.

Deborah Lee
Indigenous Studies Portal Librarian and Team Leader
University of Saskatchewan Library



mistahi-maskwa (Big Bear) Trading at Fort Pitt, 1884.
University of Saskatchewan Archives, Edgar Mapletoft fonds
(MG 364), file “Fort Pitt.”

***nêhiyawak* (Plains Cree) Leadership on the Plains**

Liam Haggarty

The *nêhiyawak* (Plains Cree) have produced some of the most famous and revered Aboriginal leaders in Canadian history, including *mistahi-maskwa*, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin*, and *payipwât*. These men shaped not only the history of their people, but the history of a nation and a continent. Although they are remembered as extraordinary individuals, they also were part of a culture that encouraged the emergence of such leaders and nurtured their growth. This cultural foundation is integral not only to these three men, but to every leader produced by the *nêhiyawak* nation. Understanding Aboriginal leadership in this region therefore requires engagement with *nêhiyawak* culture and what it means to be a leader.

nêhiyawak Leadership

nêhiyawak culture is not easily analysed or summarised. As a fluid, ever-changing and evolving set of interconnected relationships and meanings, it cannot be succinctly described or condensed. Even if this were possible, the result would not represent the experiences of all *nêhiyawak* peoples at any given time, much less through time. That is to say, cultures are complex and multifaceted across both time and space. What follows, then, is a snapshot of *nêhiyawak* culture as it was experienced by some of its members, and often as reported by outsiders, during the early to mid nineteenth century. Although neither conclusive nor authoritative, this snapshot provides an outline of the world in which the leaders later described lived and prospered.

***okimaw* (Band Chief or Leader)**

In *nêhiyawak* culture, chieftainship was earned. Although normally inherited from his father, an *okimaw*'s son had to demonstrate he was worthy of the position; nothing was guaranteed by birthright. According to anthropologist David Mandelbaum, a certain level of prestige was required to become *okimaw*, and although chiefly bloodlines accounted for some status, it was incumbent on the individual to accumulate enough prestige to be a recognised leader. *okimaw* often were accomplished warriors, skilled hunters, persuasive orators, able executives, and liberal thinkers – these were prestigious traits *nêhiyawak* people expected of their leaders.¹

Of these traits, bravery in combat was perhaps most highly regarded. “One who had not distinguished himself on the warpath could not be chief,” Mandelbaum wrote. Some *okimaw* even ceded their power to others who had “outstripped them” in battle achievements. But peacemaking could be an even more courageous act. Speaking with Chief Broken Arm in 1847, American artist Paul Kane recorded that “The highest deed of all was to make peace with a hostile tribe. It required great courage to approach the enemy unarmed....”²

okimaw also had to be selfless in their caring for the rest of the group. They had to feed and house guests and give freely of their own possessions as a way to recognise the contributions of others and provide for the destitute. In *Voices of the Plains Cree*, Edward Ahenakew was told by Chief Thunderchild that “There was no selfishness. It is an Indian custom to share with others. That has always been so; the strong take care of the poor; there is usually enough for all.” Gift giving was also used to maintain order and mediate disputes by mollifying aggrieved members of the group.³

In *Ahtahkakoop*, Deanna Christenson provides a detailed description of leadership qualities. According to her research, the ideal band chief was

an outstanding warrior acclaimed for his courage, skill, and leadership. He was recognized for his abilities as a hunter, trapper, and provider. His generosity and concern for others were well known, and his skills as an orator were demonstrated during councils with his own band members and in larger gatherings involving a number of bands. Often, he was also a man who had powerful spirit helpers....

A successful chief attracted families and individuals from other bands and his camp grew in size. ...

A good chief listened carefully when others spoke during council meetings. An outstanding orator, he was able to sway people to his view. As a visionary, he was able to make choices that would ensure survival, and as a realist, he was practical. A strong chief was also able to control the restless young men in his camp. And when a number of bands gathered together, he was among those chosen as spokesmen. In times of war, however, authority was turned over to a war chief who took control of the camp and directed war activities.⁴

Clearly, this was not a position taken lightly. As Fine-Day, a *nêhiyawak* elder, told Mandelbaum:

It is not an easy thing to be chief. Look at this chief now. He has to have pity on the poor. When he sees a man in difficulty he must try to

help him in whatever way he can. If a person asks for something in his tipi, he must give it to him willingly and without any bad feeling.⁵

But *okimaw* were not alone; they received aid from family members and other respected people in the group. Relatives helped *okimaw* both in the acquisition of wealth and other items of prestige and the duties associated with chieftainship. Because the *okimaw* was expected to be more generous than anyone else and because he was responsible for housing and feeding visitors, “the chief,” Christenson noted, required

a large tipi, a good supply of horses, buffalo robes, and hides, as well as abundant amounts of buffalo meat, pemmican, berries, root vegetables and other foodstuffs. Beautifully decorated shirts, moccasins birch bark baskets, and other such items were also needed for gifts. Male relatives contributed to the expenses and assisted with the responsibilities of the chief, and thus gained prestige in their own right.⁶

According to Joseph Dion, author of *My Tribe, The Crees*, “The *okimaw* or leader of a group or band was always well looked after by his followers. They gave him the choicest cuts of their kill and his larder was supposed to be amply supplied at all times so that he in turn could treat his many visitors to the best.”⁷

Even more important were the contributions made by the leading women. “They made sure their tipis were a suitable size and well equipped for guests,” Christenson wrote. “They prepared the food, tanned the hides and furs, made the special gifts, and ensured that the chief and his family were appropriately dressed for their position in the band.” Dion

recounts how “teenaged girls and elderly women did the bulk of the work” setting up camp and errands.⁸

Beyond the family, *okimaw* received advice from councils of respected elders, some of whom also served as criers, men who communicated the *okimaw*'s messages to the rest of the group and made gifts on the his behalf when he was away or unable to do so himself. Criers also ensured that *okimaw* generosity was recognised by the group as a prestigious act and a form of intangible wealth. During summer months, an *okimaw* and his council would appoint a camp leader, usually a man with powerful spirit helpers, to select group camp sites. At the other end of the age spectrum, *okimaw* also received help from young boys, usually orphans or members of impoverished families, who would live with the *okimaw*, care for his horses, and hunt for him. These young workers were called *octockinikima*.⁹

***kihtockinikiwak* (Worthy Young Men) and *okihtcitawak* (Warriors/Dancers)**

Second to *okimaw* in leadership importance were *kihtockinikiwak*, or worthy young men, and *okihtcitawak*, or warriors/dancers. *kihtockinikiwak*, many of whom were sons of chiefs, were men who performed valorous deeds in battle and who acted as junior chiefs but had no specific responsibilities. *okihtcitawak*, on the other hand, had a number of important duties, including dancing, feasting, providing for those in need, guarding the column of women, children, and old people (as well as their belongings) when the camp was being moved, and preparing corpses for burial. They also policed the buffalo hunt, which meant ensuring individual hunters didn't begin the hunt prematurely or break any other rule. According to Ahenakew, “Those who were great hunters and could look after many were known as the Providers. They were the

captains of the buffalo chase.... In camp, the men who enforced law were greatly respected. They belonged to the society of Dancers....”¹⁰

okihtcitaw were organized into societies, called Warrior’s or Dancer’s Society, and were led by a warrior chief. Unlike the band chief, who was appointed tacitly, the chief of the *okihtcitawak* was elected by his peers. He was not, however, a war chief nor was he equal in power to the band chief, though warrior chiefs often did rise to that post. According to Christenson, the warrior chief, who was responsible for leading dances and directing the activities of the warriors, had to be a courageous and skilled fighter and wealthy. During gatherings in the Warrior’s or Dancer’s Lodge, age and prestige, symbolised by back-rests, stratified the members with the chief sitting directly behind the fire at the back of the lodge. Beside him were the next highest ranking members and so on, with the lowest ranking ones next to the door. The same arrangement occurred when different groups gathered together. The highest ranking chief would be at the “head” of the circle, directly behind the fire opposite the entrance, with the rest of the chiefs following in ranked order.¹¹

okihtcitawak, therefore, were somewhat more prestigious than *kihtockinikiwak*, but the two groups were not mutually exclusive. In fact, most *okihtcitawak* were *kihtockinikiwak*, though some were simply good hunters and wealthy. As Mandelbaum notes, these leaders faced high expectations:

Both Warriors and the Worthy Young Men maintained prestige by demonstrating their dissociation from sentiments held by common people. They had to part with their material possessions freely and willingly; they were expected to be above sexual jealousy; they took

it upon themselves to prepare corpses for burial, and unpleasant and dread task. When a Worthy Young Man died in battle the usual manifestations of mourning were foregone because he had willingly courted death.¹²

Today, *okihtcitaw* (Warrior) now refers to people who are generous or who are recklessly brave.

Together, the *okimaw*, his family, aides, and councillors, along with the *kîhtockinikiwak* and *okihtcitawak* provided leadership in *nêhiyawak* communities, from family organisation through inter-group cooperation. This leadership structure, however, was never fixed or unchanging. *nêhiyawak* culture continually adapted to their changing environments and social contexts. Feast or famine, epidemic disease or population growth, peace or war, climate change, technological advancements, or new trading resources: all these things and the innumerable others like them required a flexible, dynamic culture that could take advantage of new resources just as quickly as it could protect itself from potential disaster. According to John Milloy, *nêhiyawak* leadership was “a prime determinant in the cohesiveness and longevity of the band.”¹³ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this adaptability and longevity would be put to the test as prominent *nêhiyawak* leaders struggled to reconcile tradition and innovation in a changed world.

***nêhiyawak* Leaders**

From this culture developed a multitude of prominent leaders, three of whom are discussed here: *mistahi-maskwa*, *pîhtokahânapiwiwin*, and *payipwât*. Revered by their friends and enemies alike, they defended their people and culture in the face of unprecedented challenges according to the values instilled in them early in life. Although success is difficult to

measure, it may be said that these men were champions of their culture, pre-eminent examples of *nêhiyawak* leadership.

mistahi-maskwa (Big Bear)

Born circa 1825 near Fort Carlton, *mistahi-maskwa* was believed to be the son of a *nêhiyawak* woman and a *nahkawininiwak* (Saulteaux) chief of mixed *nahkawininiwak-nêhiyawak* decent named *Mukitoo* (Black Powder). His spirit power was the Bear Spirit, the most powerful animal according to the *nêhiyawak*. Although little is known of his early life, he allegedly contracted smallpox around 1837, leaving his face partially disfigured. By the 1860s, he had risen to be *okimaw* of a small *nêhiyawak* band but was relatively unknown to European traders and missionaries, choosing instead to live a traditional, autonomous lifestyle. After taking part in the war between the *nêhiyawak* and the *siksikáwa* (Blackfoot) in 1870, *mistahi-maskwa* clashed with Métis leader Gabriel Dumont in 1873 regarding proper techniques for hunting buffalo. By this time, he was the leader of perhaps the largest *nêhiyawak* band, consisting of approximately 65 lodges.

As a powerful and popular leader, however, *mistahi-maskwa* could not long avoid the spotlight, and his strict adherence to a *nêhiyawak* lifestyle produced conflict with anyone who wanted him to live differently. When Hudson's Bay Company trader William McKay was sent by the Canadian government in 1874 to gift tea and tobacco to Aboriginal leaders, *mistahi-maskwa* refused, believing they were bribes aimed at facilitating treaties. A year later in reaction to the proposed Treaty 6, he scolded government officials for their tactics, stating "when we set a fox-trap we scatter pieces of meat all round, but when the fox gets into the trap we knock him on the head. We want no bait; let your chiefs come like men and talk to us." When the treaty was finally signed in 1876, *mistahi-maskwa* refused,

warning his *nêhiyawak*, *nahkawiniwak*, and Nakota counterparts to “Stop, my friends. . . . I will request [the governor] to save me from what I most dread – hanging; it was not given to us to have the rope about our necks.”¹⁴

Over the next six years, *mistahi-maskwa* continued to withhold his signature and became a leader to those dissatisfied with the treaty process. But adherence to a traditional lifestyle was difficult. Land and food became increasingly scarce until *mistahi-maskwa* finally relented following the near-extinction of the buffalo and a failed attempt to create a pan-Indian reserve in the Cypress Hills. However, after signing the treaty he remained defiant, a troublemaker in the eyes of the government. He continued to demand better terms from the government and advocated a single large reserve on the North Saskatchewan River for all Aboriginal people. He also continued to practice traditional dances and other aspects of *nêhiyawak* culture, some of which had been outlawed. Again, his popularity as an able leader swelled.

But *mistahi-maskwa* did not want to go to war with Canada. He would defy the nation’s officials and stand up for his people, but he did not want the fight that some younger members of his band, including his son, called for. When hostilities broke out between Métis peoples and Canada in 1885, his reluctance to join forces with Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, and the rest of the Métis warriors provided the impetus necessary for the war chief *kâ-papâmahcahkewêw* (Wandering Spirit) and the Warrior Society to assume control of the band. Following an unimpressive military campaign, *mistahi-maskwa*’s band eventually disintegrated after the battle at Loon Lake and the fall of the Métis at Batoche. Although *mistahi-maskwa* and several other witnesses testified to his attempts to maintain peace and safeguard those most vulnerable, including captives, the old *okimaw* was convicted

of Treason-Felony and sentenced to three years imprisonment at Manitoba's Stony Mountain Penitentiary.¹⁵ While incarcerated, he fell gravely ill and was released from jail shortly before his death in January 1888. He is buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery on the Poundmaker Reserve.¹⁶

pîhtokahânapiwiyin (Poundmaker)

Born around 1842 to a Stony Indian named *sikakwayan* (Skunk Skin) and a prominent mother of Métis ancestry, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin* was a privileged youth. In 1873, this prestige grew when *siksikáwa* head chief *isapo-muxika* (Crowfoot) adopted him in memory of a son he lost in battle. For several years, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin* remained with the *siksikáwa* and acquired much wealth, including the name *makoyi-koh-kin* (Wolf Thin Legs). When he returned to live with his *nêhiyawak* family, he was made a minor *okimaw* and councillor to *pihew-kamihkosit* (Red Pheasant). Like *mistahi-maskwa*, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin* was wary of the Treaty 6 negotiations but did eventually sign his name. Soon after, he became a *okimaw* in his own right and continued to hunt the diminishing buffalo herds until 1879 when he finally accepted a reserve at the junction of Battle River and Cut Knife Creek.

In 1881, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin* escorted the Governor General of Canada on a tour from Battleford, near his reserve, to Blackfoot Crossing, where he was born. Extolled by the Canadians as an intelligent leader and peacemaker, *pîhtokahânapiwiyin* learned much about Canadian society and culture, later stating that “the whites will fill the country and they will dictate to us as they please. It is useless to dream that we can frighten them, that time has passed. Our only resource is our work, our industry, our farms.” This approach led him, in 1885, to pursue peaceful reconciliation with the government in the face of famine and destitution, but like *mistahi-maskwa*,

he was unable to dissuade the more militant aspirations of the young warriors in his band. *pîhtokahânapiwiyyin*'s band played a prominent role in conflicts in and around the Battleford area and intended to join Riel's forces at Batoche prior to their defeat.¹⁷

Following the end of the Rebellion, *pîhtokahânapiwiyyin* surrendered peacefully at Battleford and was put on trial for Treason. Defending himself against charges of treason, he spoke of his attempts to stop the violence. "Had I wanted war, I would not be here now. I should be on the prairie. You did not catch me. I gave myself up. You have got me because I wanted justice." But like *mistahi-maskwa*, *pîhtokahânapiwiyyin* was found guilty and sentenced to three years at Stony Mountain. After spending only a year in jail, he was released due to serious illness and died four months later on the *siksikáwa* reserve where his adopted father lived. In 1972, the Canadian Government organised a celebration commemorating the life of *pîhtokahânapiwiyyin*.¹⁸

payipwât (Piapot)

Known also as Hole in the Sioux, *kisikawasan*, and Flash in the Sky, *payipwât* was born around 1816 near the border separating present-day southern Manitoba from Saskatchewan. As a child, he, along with his grandmother, was taken prisoner by the Sioux and lived among them until being captured by the *nêhiyawak* in the 1830s. Impressed by his knowledge of Sioux medicine, he received the name *payipwât* which may translate as "one who knows the secrets of the Sioux." By the 1860s, he had become a highly respected spiritual leader and *okimaw* of a *nêhiyawak* band that included many Sioux-speaking people. Like *mistahi-maskwa*, he showed little desire to cooperate with the HBC or the Métis, leading British and Canadian officials to label him a troublemaker as early as the 1850s.

Facing rapidly declining buffalo herds, *payipwât* moved his band into the Cypress Hills area, one of the buffalo's last refuges, after a bloody struggle with a Blood village near present-day Lethbridge. While there, *payipwât* missed the Treaty 4 negotiations but did, in 1875, sign what he considered to be a "preliminary" treaty that was to be amended to include more resources and opportunities for his people. The government, however, had not, in the opinion of its officials, agreed to *payipwât*'s amendments, leading to ongoing misunderstandings about the intent and terms of Treaty 4. Along with *mistahi-maskwa*, *payipwât* then turned his attention toward the creation of a large reserve for all *nêhiyawak* people. Famine, however, forced them out of the Cypress Hills area, with *payipwât* accepting a reserve for his band at Indian Head alongside the Assiniboine. Life there was difficult, however, and starvation quickly compelled *payipwât* to move again, this time near Fort Qu'Appelle where he intended to resurrect his plan for a pan-Indian reserve. With the help of *mistahi-maskwa* and others, the plan seemed to be working until hostilities erupted in 1885.

Although *payipwât* was not directly involved in the Rebellion, he was labelled as a troublemaker and a traitor by the Canadian government due to his power and influence among both *nêhiyawak* and Sioux peoples. Nonetheless, *payipwât* continued to practice traditional dances, ceremonies, and other cultural expressions outlawed by the government as a way to resist other assimilationist strategies designed to break-up *nêhiyawak* society and weaken its culture. Despite continued harassment and several arrests, *payipwât* remained a powerful and respected leader until his death in April 1908.¹⁹

nêhiyawak Leadership in Native-Newcomer Relations

One of the greatest challenges faced by *nêhiyawak* culture and its leaders was the emigration of thousands of Europeans to the lands that eventually would become the Canadian prairies. The first manifestation of this Native-Newcomer relationship was the fur trade, led on side by England's Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and on the other by *nêhiyawak* and other Aboriginal leaders. Outnumbered and largely powerless, HBC officials relied on significant cooperation with, and at times dependence on, local Indigenous people. Acquiring furs and sustaining immigrant populations in a foreign land thus compelled them to recognise and respect these leaders and their structures that gave them power.²⁰

To do this, the HBC granted *nêhiyawak* leaders preferential treatment, "including special gifts and gratuities such as flour, tea, sugar, and other trade goods ... [which] they shared ... with band members," Christenson noted. "They were also given coats and high silk hats decorated with a broad gold lace band and three plumes of three different colours called 'coloured cocktail feathers.' ... These garments were known as chiefs' coats and were a mark of their rank. Lesser chiefs received scarlet coats." According to one HBC official, "we give to Chiefs and Councillors good and suitable uniform [sic] indicating their office, to wear on these and other great days."²¹

Mandelbaum, however, noted that this practice also had the potential to disturb traditional leadership patterns if the HBC chose to recognise "peaceful trappers" rather than "troublesome warriors." As Newcomers became more numerous and powerful, they tried to alter the leadership patterns more explicitly as it suited their interests. In the nineteenth century, as the new country of Canada expanded across the prairies, disease decimated Indigenous populations,

residential schools removed Aboriginal children from their homes, Indian agents replaced HBC officials, settlers staked “new” land, and numbered treaties displaced Aboriginal people from their traditional lands and alienated them from their means of livelihood. Of the many disastrous consequences wrought by this period of history was a challenge to *nêhiyawak* leadership. On reserves especially, the power of *okimaw*, many of whom, like Big Bear and Poundmaker, were deposed by the Canadian government, was usurped by Indian agents. Legitimised by the *Indian Act*, they controlled who travel and exchange on and off reserves and exercised broad judicial powers, and made the position of chief an elected one.²²

According to Dion, this was not the original arrangement:

At the outset these [*nêhiyawak*] leaders were to hold office for life. Their title would be “chief” and they were to have a helper or councillor for every 100 people of a following. ... A drastic change, however, began to develop as the reserves became burdened with new laws and regulations. The *okimaw* as chief no longer held supreme command; he was expected by the Indian agent to set an example for his followers, and to adhere strictly to the dictates imposed on all treaty Indians.

As time went by, the poor chief began to realize that he was not the *okimaw* of old, but simply the servant of all....

The Indians themselves clung to the age old tradition that they could always get what they needed at the *okimaw*'s. ... The chief tried as long as he could to live up to the custom of sacrificing everything for the good of his followers, but the painful result was that he soon

went broke. As incredible as it may seem, the grand total of the chief's salary per annum was \$25.

To top off the sad situation, the chief got the blame for his people's wrong-doings while the credit for their hard-earned achievements went to the Indian agents, who always had the last word....

The title *okimaw*, once revered by the Cree, was getting to be only a figurehead. Elected leaders came and went so fast that chief became known as *okimakan*, which means "imitation *okimaw*."²³

Combined with the cultural fractures caused by disease and residential schools and the economic hardships resulting from the slaughter of the buffalo and the end of the fur trade, these political transformations stripped *okimaw* of much of their power and rendered their traditional leadership structures less effective.²⁴

In the twentieth century, Aboriginal leaders began to organise collectively to combat the negative consequences of Native-Newcomer relations. On the Thunderchild Reserve in 1921, John Tootoosis, a *nêhiyawak* leader of mixed ancestry, helped organise the League of Indians of Western Canada, one of several prairie-based organisations designed to lead Aboriginal resistance. Two decades later, the League merged with the Protective Association for Indians and their Treaties and the Association of Saskatchewan Indians to form the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI) with Tootoosis as president. The USI had six overarching goals: 1) the protection of treaties and treaty rights; 2) the fostering of progress in First Nations economic, educational and social endeavours; 3) co-operation with civil and religious authorities; 4) constructive criticism

and thorough discussion on all matters; 5) the adherence to democratic procedure; and 6) the promotion of respect and tolerance for all people.

New aims and external political events led to further changes in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1958, USI changed its name to the *Federation of Saskatchewan Indians* which, following the publication in 1969 of the federal government's infamous "white paper," made land claims and the recovery of other treaty rights its main focus. The white paper, which advocated the termination of Aboriginal treaties and rights in Canada, also led to the creation of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) which focused more broadly on self-determination and civil rights. NIB leadership has included Saskatchewanians Edward Ahenakew and Walter Deiter, the Brotherhood's first president. In 1982, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) succeeded the FSI as the political advocate for the collective interests of Saskatchewan's First Nations. Along with education, housing, and economic development, self-determination and governance remain key issues for the FSIN.²⁵

This history of leadership on the plains testifies to the drastic changes that have enveloped the *nêhiyawak* world over the last two centuries and to the significant adaptations required of its leaders and leadership structures. In recent decades, this adaptation has seen *nêhiyawak* leadership become more bureaucratic and westernised in order to deal effectively with different levels of government in Canadian society. Claims to lands and resources as well as education and religious rights require an extensive network of relationships based on cooperative action and, often, intergroup solidarity. The leadership structure that was in place two hundred years ago was not equipped to handle these situations; change was necessary.

But the underlying traditions have not been lost. Leaders today exhibit many of the traits and qualities their forefathers did and the values that made them leaders are timeless. Culture is inherently fluid and flexible, dynamic, and ever-changing. Leaders produced within these cultural contexts, therefore, will continue to adapt themselves and their leadership structures, using both traditional and more recently developed strategies, to meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

Endnotes

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⁴ Deanna Christenson, *Ahtahkakoop: The Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, His people, and their Vision for Survival, 1816-1896* (Shell Lake, SK: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000), 64-65.

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¹⁷ Quoted in Hugh Dempsey, “PÎTIKWAHANAPIWYÎN”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000
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¹⁸ Quoted in Dempsey, “PÎTIKWAHANAPIWYÎN”. See also Norma Sluman, *Poundmaker* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967); and Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal till Death*.

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**“He Scarcely Resembles the Real Man”:
images of the Indian in popular culture**

Brendan Frederick R. Edwards

The Indian of imagination and ideology has been as real, perhaps more real, than the Native American of actual existence and contact. As preconception became conception and conception became fact, the Indian was used for the ends of argument, art, and entertainment by White painters, philosophers, poets, novelists, and movie makers among many.¹

Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* (1978)

Books have been written of the native American, so distorting his true nature that he scarcely resembles the real man....So, through the very agencies that reach the mass of people, that purport to instruct, educate, and perpetuate true history – books, schools, and libraries all over the land – there have been graven false ideas in the hearts and minds of the people.²

Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933)

Indians, as most non-Aboriginal people think they know them, do not exist. Historian Daniel Francis states that “The Indian began as a White man’s mistake, and became a White man’s fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, Indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become ‘Indians’; that is,

anything non-Natives wanted them to be.”³ Through non-Aboriginal writing, theatre, film, television, comic books, and advertising, Indians have existed as the invention of the European. As such, the popular conception of the Indian has resulted not in accurate representation, but rather an often insulting and misinformed caricature. Teepees, headdresses, totem poles, birch bark canoes, face paint, fringes, buckskin, and tomahawks have thus become the universal symbols of “Indianness,” and such monikers as “Injun,” “redskin,” “squaw,” “savage,” and “warrior,” have too often been used to label Aboriginal characters.⁴ As the curators of the 1992 touring museum exhibit, “Fluffs and Feathers” noted, these “are the symbols that the public uses in its definition of what an Indian is. To the average person, Indians, *real* Indians, in their purest form of ‘Indianness,’ live in a world of long ago where there are no high-rises, no snowmobiles, no colour television. They live in the woods or in mysterious places called ‘Indian Reserves.’”⁵ These Indians are the Indians of storybooks, novels, films, that most non-Aboriginal North Americans were exposed to as children and in school. To many contemporary non-Aboriginal people, Indians are no more real than characters of fantasy; they are characters of the imagination, role-played by countless non-Aboriginal children (and adults) in school playgrounds, as Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

Symbols of Indianness have largely been constructed and imagined by non-Aboriginal people, resulting in the use of such images as mascots of professional and non-professional sporting teams (the Atlanta Braves, Chicago Blackhawks, Cleveland Indians, Edmonton Eskimos, Washington Redskins, etc.), as the logos of high-profile brand marketing and promotional materials of any number of consumer goods and events, from automobiles (Pontiac), to the Canadian Pacific Railway (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics (although not

technically considered “Indians,” images of Inuit culture, formerly known as the Eskimo, are equally appropriated and mis-represented by non-Aboriginal cultures. The Vancouver Olympics has appropriated an Inuit inuksuk as part of its advertising scheme) and even the nation of Canada itself (postcards and trinkets aimed at international tourists are blanketed with images of Indians and Inuit). As caricatures imagined by non-Aboriginals, such symbols of Indianness are immensely offensive to Aboriginal peoples.

European literary (mis)conceptions of the Indian

There have generally been two (mis)conceptions of the Indian since the time of Columbus and the invention of the printing press: the “Noble Savage” (this conception includes the Indian Princess) and the “bloodthirsty” villain (including the intoxicated Indian and easy squaw). These images, of the good and bad Indian, have been so strong and deeply held by non-Aboriginal cultures so as to have persisted virtually unchanged since 1493.⁶ Very soon after Columbus’ “discovery,” as information about the new world was dispersed and became more widely known in Europe, Aboriginal peoples became a permanent fixture in the literary and imaginative works of Old World writers and popular storytellers.

Such (mis)conceptions were not limited to popular culture, but were also accepted norms for generations within the halls of academia. One could argue, in fact, that the cigar shop Indians of the twentieth century were born of academic misconception centuries earlier. The voluminous Jesuit *Relations*, for example, provided the French, and in turn other European scholars, a basis on which eighteenth-century deists and philosophers could draw in their moral and political writings. Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, among others, used the conception of the enlightened Noble Savage to critique French

and European societies and social institutions of the day. The idea of the Noble Savage, for European philosophers and critics, represented the possibility of progress by “civilised” society if allowed the freedom to escape outworn social institutions.⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, the Noble Savage convention had become so widely used to criticize European institutions that the supporters of those institutions were compelled to attack the conception of the enlightened Noble Savage, often evoking the other idea of the Indian, the bloodthirsty villain.

The idea of nobility, in relation to new world peoples, could be seen in how Aboriginal people were often depicted in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries: for the most part, they were described as part of the North American environment, something which European colonists had to overcome in their cause of progress and the task of nation-building. So harmonious was the relationship between the Indian and nature that outsiders viewed the two elements as an integrated part of the new world. Thus, Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians felt a need to conquer and dominate Aboriginal peoples (and their environment) and to remould them in old world conceptions. As historian Cornelius Jaenen explains in relation to French-Aboriginal relations, “it was the French who sailed to America and established contact with the aborigines, not the Micmacs or Iroquois who sailed to Europe and established contact with the Bretons, Normans and Rochelais.”⁸ Therefore, in European ideology of the time, Europe was assumed to be the centre of the world and civilisation, and its cultures more advanced and older than the cultures of other parts of the world. Such Eurocentrism permeated the old world’s understandings of the new world and the relationships that were forged there. The myth of the Noble Savage, and its binary opposite, the depraved barbarian, were thus present in all cultural contact between Europeans and

North American Indians. Although such views were a polarization, they coexisted. When European cultures were dependent on Aboriginal peoples for safety and sustenance, the dominant view of Indians was that of the Noble Savage. But when Indians got in the way of proposed European settlement or “progress,” or sided with a competing European competitor or enemy, then Aboriginal people were portrayed as barbarian and savage. Jaenen, in the context of French-Aboriginal relationships, describes the French view of Indians as both friend and foe, depending entirely upon the immediate circumstances.⁹

Of course, the very basis of what is “civilized” and what is “savage” is entirely unclear. Eurocentric attitudes and assumptions lead Euro-North Americans to assume that the cultures of Europe were the pinnacle of civilization and that Aboriginal new world cultures stood in opposition to this. Yet, as the historian and journalist Olive Patricia Dickason explains, “The word ‘civilized’ is usually applied to societies possessing a state structure and an advanced technology.... The term ‘savage’ is applied to societies at an early stage of technology, a stage at which they are believed to be dominated by the laws of nature. Its use implies that Amerindian societies did not match the refinements of those of Europe, and that they were more cruel.”¹⁰ But as she goes on to elucidate, neither premise stands up under close examination: to suggest that Peruvians or Mexicans, for example, lacked sophistication is absurd. Clearly they (and other Indigenous North American societies) were highly developed, but their value systems were clearly very different from those of the French, English, or Spanish. To say that Aboriginal peoples were crueller also fails to stand up to examination – on both sides of the Atlantic public executions were practiced. Thus the classification of Aboriginal peoples as savage was a conscious tactic by which

Europeans were able to create the ideology that helped make colonization of the new world possible.¹¹

The French and American Revolutions inspired the conception of the Noble Savage as a critique on the social ills of the day. But by the nineteenth century a more romantic, rather than enlightened, image of the Noble Savage took hold in the arts and literature. In England, the conception of the romantic Noble Savage was best expressed in Thomas Cooper's long poem, *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809),¹² the first popular English poem set in North America and including Aboriginal characters. In France, François-René de Chateaubriand published, *Atala, ou les amours de deux sauvages dans le desert* (1801).¹³ Both works imagined picturesque and mysterious landscapes, combined with the confrontation of the "civilised" and "savage." Each volume was published in several editions, producing a romantic and primitive image of the Indian that would speak to generations of Europeans. The successes of these literary works encouraged other European writers to draw on the new world for "picturesque people and sublime nature."¹⁴ In an 1884 introduction to the English translation of *Atala*, Edward J. Harding expresses a familiar tone, noting that the "red Indian" has all but vanished and been forgotten; "to-day the red man's war whoop resounds only in literature of the 'dime novel' school. But it was not so in 1801, the year that witnessed the publication of 'Atala'....After all, who knows how the primitive red Indian thought and spoke? Certainly Chateaubriand is not alone in representing him as courteous, eloquent, tinged with sentiment...."¹⁵ Chateaubriand himself describes Chactas, Atala's lover, as "a savage more than half civilized, since he knows not only the living but also the dead languages of Europe. He can therefore express himself in a mixed style, suitable to the line upon which he stands, between society and nature."¹⁶ The character of Atala, similarly, is that of a half-Indian princess whose love

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for Chactas cannot be realized because she is Christian and he is not. Told as a quasi-Homeric narrative, *Atala* was embraced as an exciting and exotic piece of literature when it was published in 1801. Its “strange blend of primitive ‘Homeric’ simplicity and a brooding Romantic melancholy,” as David Wakefield notes, “set the fashion for literary heroes and their pictorial counterparts for the next half century.”¹⁷ *Atala* served as a major influence in the work of several artists and writers in the nineteenth century, such as the French painter, Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson (1767-1824), whose famous piece, *The Burial of Atala*, was first exhibited in 1813.¹⁸

Following the American Revolution, a similar imaginative transformation of Aboriginal peoples took place, from the Indian of contact to a mythic and symbolic Indian. Like the European conception of the Indian, the American literary idea of Aboriginal peoples was one part romantic and enlightened Noble Savage who stood for the potential freedoms of humankind, and conversely, the bloodthirsty villain that stood in the way of progress and manifest destiny. The nineteenth century saw an explosion in the popularity of captivity narratives, many of which were bestsellers. All included the basic premise of the pains and horrors that Euro-North Americans suffered under the enslavement of Aboriginal peoples. Obviously, the bloodthirsty villain conception of the Indian prevailed, but more importantly the captivity narratives reached readers from both high and low cultures. The best known of the captivity narratives was Samuel Drake’s, *Indian Captivities; Or life in the wigwam*, first published in 1839.¹⁹ Canadian captivity titles from this era included Theresa Gowanlock’s, *Two months in the camp of Big Bear* (1885), John R. Jewitt’s, *The Adventures and sufferings of John R. Jewitt* (1824), and Samuel Goodrich’s, *The Captive of Nootka* (1835).²⁰ The sensationalism and violence of these commercially-gearred texts were a direct influence and

precursor to the popular dime novels and cowboy and Indian movies of the early twentieth century.²¹

Yet, “captivity,” in the words of historian John Demos, “meant ‘contact’ of a particularly vivid sort.”²² In other words, captivity narratives were, at their heart, stories of the encounter between Euro-North Americans and Aboriginal peoples. So while they may have been sensationalised, and certainly fictionalised, they said something of the innermost feelings of Euro-North Americans towards Aboriginal cultures. They portrayed a very real sense of fear, of difference (and attempts at bridging or eliminating difference), and most of all they usually maintained a Eurocentric point of view, assuming Indians to be inherently, if not forever unredeemable. At the heart of captivity narratives was the interplay and conflict between “civilization” (i.e., the European newcomers, who were normally the authors of such texts) and “savagery” (the Indians). Historian Sarah Carter notes that captivity narratives served to construct (and maintain) a perceived threat posed by Indians to “civilized” Euro-Canadian behaviour, particularly in relation to the honour of white women, and to maintain the need to pursue strategies of exclusion and control. Such stories (real or imagined) fed newcomer fears that Aboriginal people (mainly predatory males) were lying in wait to pounce on white children (usually girls) and spirit them away. Captivity narratives, therefore, served as literary barriers, segregating Euro-North Americans (the writers and readers of such stories, overwhelmingly) from Aboriginal populations. They created and fed into an “us versus them” mentality, buttressing (often false) stereotypical images of Indians and European women as a means of establishing social and spatial boundaries between settlers and Aboriginal peoples, and to justify repressive measures against Indian populations.²³

Newspaper and media reports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century glorified and fed a kind of hysteria about Aboriginal people capturing Euro-Canadians, particularly women. In several cases, newspaper reports actively made-up stories about white women who had been subject to “nameless horrors of Indian indignity and savage lust,” when in reality the women suffered little and in some cases had actively chosen to stay amongst their Aboriginal friends. In other words, they could hardly be called captives at all.²⁴ Carter provides examples of such stories and women, particularly those of Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, who were reportedly held captive and subjected to horrors in Big Bear’s camp at Frog Lake during the North-West Resistance of 1885, and the McLean sisters who were resident amongst the Plains and Woods Cree for two months during the Resistance that same year.

Particularly interesting is Carter’s exploration of the case of Amelia McLean Paget (1867-1922). The daughter of a prestigious Scottish fur trader and a Métis mother, she and her sisters lived in close contact with the Plains Cree and Saulteaux during a time that included the disappearance of the buffalo, the North West Resistance, and the establishment of the reserve system in the prairie west. Along with her mother and sisters, McLean Paget was something of a celebrity during the 1885 Resistance, when the family spent two months with the Plains Cree chief Big Bear and a mobile group of Plains and Woods Cree, and was involved in three violent confrontations at Fort Pitt, Frenchman Butte, and Steele’s Narrows. During their months with the Cree, newspapers circulated rumours that the McLean sisters were being mistreated as “slaves of the lesser chiefs” and that they had suffered the “final outrage.”²⁵ But, as Carter notes, “they were not...the objects of the same level of frenzied attention that was directed toward the two White widows of Frog Lake, Theresa Delaney and Theresa

Gowanlock.²⁶ Carter attributes the different tone in the media reports to the fact that the McLean sisters did not fit the prevailing stereotype of Euro-Canadian women as weak, vulnerable, and passive. On the contrary, the McLean sisters were resilient and resourceful, demonstrating keen shooting skills, courage, and independence. Additionally, the McLean's were also of Aboriginal heritage (although the McLean's themselves did not identify closely with this part of their familial history) so their need to be valiantly rescued was thus complicated.²⁷ In truth, the McLean sisters were not "captive" at all, but chose to stay amongst the Cree, despite the dangers they knew they would face. Although newspapers initially tried to paint the McLean sisters as victims, they eventually did not know how to depict these strong, independent, and resourceful women.

Some decades later, in 1909, Amelia McLean Paget (by then she was married to Department of Indian Affairs bureaucrat Frederick Paget)²⁸ published a book called *The People of the Plains*, based on observations and interviews she had been commissioned (by the Department of Indian Affairs) to undertake amongst the scenes of her childhood and the reserves of the Cree, Saulteaux, and Assiniboine. Her manuscript was edited and presented to a publisher by Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs (and poet), Duncan Campbell Scott. Despite Scott's editing, *The People of the Plains* is a sympathetic appreciation of Aboriginal plains culture, challenging conventional views. Paget dispelled myths of plains women as overworked and overburdened, even going so far as saying the women agreed and were happy in polygamous relationships. Researching and writing at a time when the *Indian Act* banned such activities as the sun dance, when the mothering and housekeeping skills of Indian women were heavily criticized in government publications as a means of justifying the residential school system, and when traditional chiefs were

being overthrown by government policy because of their beliefs and practices, Paget “threatened powerful conventions and proposed a radical departure from prevailing wisdom.”²⁹ This is all the more remarkable when we consider that her husband was a respected Indian Affairs bureaucrat, and that Duncan Campbell Scott edited and oversaw the publication of her work.

It is not known to what degree Scott altered Paget’s original manuscript, but it is telling that he felt compelled to offer details of Paget’s background in his 1909 introduction to the book. Scott characterised Paget as being overly positive in her description of Aboriginal peoples because of her capture at Fort Pitt by Big Bear and his camp. Describing Paget as a “cordial advocate,” Scott suggested that her memory of the events had obviously been heightened and romanticised over time. Although Scott was apologetic to readers for Paget’s positive portrayals of plains life, Carter notes that this stands in stark contrast to the role of Delaney and Gowanlock who years earlier had been required to be “frigid critics” of the western tribes. In large part, Carter attributes Paget being allowed to act as a “cordial advocate” because in 1909 the Indians of the plains were no longer considered to be a threat; they were instead viewed as a weak and waning race.³⁰ Despite the fact that Paget’s book received favourable reviews when it was published, indicating there were other Euro-Canadians sympathetic to her views, negative depictions of Aboriginal peoples still prevailed in media and Euro-Canadian writing of the early twentieth century.

Duncan Campbell Scott, now notoriously associated with his administration of Indian Affairs, was during his lifetime (1862-1947) widely celebrated as one of Canada’s Confederation Poets.³¹ Although Scott felt he was critically neglected as a poet, his literary reputation has been solid since at least 1900,

with his work appearing in virtually all major anthologies of Canadian poetry.³² Scott's day job however, as a leading administrator and architect of policy at Indian Affairs, has come to define the man more than his poetry. His tenure as Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs was a turbulent one, characterised by a paternal and narrow approach to administering affairs relating to Aboriginal health, education, and welfare. Rather ironically, much of his poetry was related to "Indians." Drawing on his experience as an Indian administrator in the field, Scott expressed sensibilities as a poet saddened by the perceived waning of ancient Aboriginal culture (i.e. the "vanishing Indian"). Yet in his administrative work, Scott actively sought to assimilate Indians into the Canadian mainstream, effectively quickening the pace of the demise he felt was so imminent. Perhaps this was a strategy on Scott's part. If he could render the idea of Indians firmly to the past through his work as an administrator in Indian Affairs, then maybe his Indian poetry would be taken more seriously. In all likelihood, however, Scott truly believed that the only "authentic" Indian was a pre-contact Indian. In other words, Scott perceived the Indian of the past as a "noble savage," and the Indian of the present as merely in the way of progress.³³

Although widely respected as a literary man in his day, Scott's reputation as a writer did nothing to help the aspiring literary careers of early twentieth century Aboriginal writers. Evidence shows that he very nearly single-handedly quashed the aspirations of (today largely unknown) Aboriginal writers like Anglican priest, Edward Ahenakew (Plains Cree) and Indian Affairs employee, Charles A. Cooke (Mohawk). Cooke attempted to start an "Indian National Library" within the Department of Indian Affairs in 1904, envisioning a collection of rare books and reports which could be accessed by departmental officials of course, but also members of the public and Aboriginal peoples themselves. Although he found

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widespread outside support for such an endeavour, the idea was stopped dead in its tracks by Scott who saw no value in the proposal. Other literary projects begun by Cooke, including an unprecedented study of Iroquois languages and a newspaper in Mohawk, were tackled without any support from Scott or the Department of Indian Affairs.

Edward Ahenakew in 1922, with the help of academic and literary acquaintances, submitted a manuscript to Ryerson Press relating to stories he had compiled through conversations with Chief Thunderchild. Noted cultural nationalist and publisher, Lorne Pierce, was then chief editor at Ryerson Press, and he considered Ahenakew’s manuscript to be of considerable interest and value. But unfortunately for Ahenakew, and other Aboriginal authors of the day, Ryerson Press was in financial difficulties in the early 1920s. Under such circumstances Pierce sought financial subvention to publish Ahenakew’s work. Not surprisingly, Pierce approached the Department of Indian Affairs for financial assistance. In his response to Pierce’s request for financial assistance, Scott wrote, “I regret very much that we would have no funds to meet your suggestion with reference to Mr. Ahenakew’s manuscript, much as I would like to assist.”³⁴

A Vanishing Race

Both the romantic and savage images of the Indian were popular in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature, dime novels, and comic books. And most romantic of all was the notion that Aboriginal peoples were rapidly disappearing. The vanishing race conception was embraced and wholly believed by not only the average European or North American reader, but also by the Canadian and American federal governments who administered policy relating to Indians. As a literary device, the idea of a vanishing race

before the onslaught of “civilisation” inspired in audiences feelings of nostalgia, pity, and tragedy. As Berkhofer, Jr. notes, “the tragedy of the dying Indian, especially portrayed by the last living member of a tribe, became a staple of American literature.”³⁵ The most famous of this genre was, of course, James Fenimore Cooper’s, *The Last of the Mohicans*, originally published in 1826, and still considered a classic by contemporary audiences and scholars.³⁶ But Cooper’s so-called masterpiece was only one of forty such novels published in the United States between 1824 and 1834 which included Indian episodes and portrayed Aboriginal cultures as vanishing. U.S. literary historian, G. Harrison Orians, noted that several of these novels could have been titled “The Last of...” as all, to various degrees, tapped into a sense that Indians were fleeting figures on the North American landscape.³⁷ In time they would either die out, or become fully assimilated into the fabric of Euro-North American society.

Combined with the idea of the vanishing race, the Noble Savage in literature and art was generally only found in the “wild west,” beyond the corruption of advancing Euro-American and Euro-Canadian “civilisation.” Thus, eventually the Aboriginal peoples of the Plains became, in the minds of most European and Euro-North American readers and authors, the quintessential “Indian.” And as the west was won, so to speak, or settled and “civilised” by Euro-Canadians and Americans, the Noble Savage, and thus the Indian, came to be seen as safely dead and historically past in the minds of most. Poets and writers, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (*The Song of Hiawatha*, published in 1855), thus began to romanticise the safely dead Indian.³⁸ The main theme of such literature was the battle between savagery and civilisation, with the too often inevitable outcome of “civilisation” triumphing. In these stories, Indians, both noble and savage, were eventually eliminated through disease, alcohol, war, or simply

the passage of time. Books and poems sharing these sentiments were widely read and enormously influential, with their themes spilling over into film, radio, television, and even school textbooks. The image of the Noble Savage or bloodthirsty Indian villain was not merely literary, but also a staple of popular culture.

Thus, the Indian of reality was eliminated, in the eyes and minds of many, by the printing press, the stroke of a pen, and the turn of the page. Much like Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, Euro-Canadian and Euro-American print cultures helped to define the new world by creating Aboriginal peoples as “the other.”³⁹ Widespread literacy and publishing by a non-Aboriginal populace effectively vanished the Indian of reality.⁴⁰ Historian Brian Dippie has argued that the “vanishing American” has been a constant in Euro-American thinking since at least the early nineteenth century, becoming something of a self-perpetuating cultural myth. In Dippie's words, “It was prophecy, self-fulfilling prophecy, and its underlying assumptions were truisms requiring no justification apart from periodic reiteration.... The point was no longer whether or not the native population had declined in the past but that its future decline was inevitable. The myth of the Vanishing American accounted for the Indians' future by denying them one, and stained the tissue of policy debate with fatalism.”⁴¹

Karl May and the Modern European Image of the Indian Other

Through the first half of the twentieth century, the Federal government's explicit goal was to transform the Indian into a productive individual and respectable citizen through the vehicles of religion and education. The ultimate effect of more than 100 years of a policy of civilisation and assimilation did

not succeed in eliminating Aboriginal peoples, as the government planned, but it did succeed, in many ways, in eliminating the Indian from the Euro-Canadian public consciousness. Increasingly pushed to the public and social backburner, Indians, in the minds of many Euro-Canadians, became caricatures of the representations they read about in popular fiction. In history textbooks of the day, Aboriginal peoples were mentioned usually within a paragraph or two at the beginning of the first chapter, and then they vanished. Perhaps the most influential and popular writers at that time, who employed Indians as their main subject or characters, were James Fenimore Cooper, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Karl May.

Ask almost any modern central or eastern European (particularly in those countries bordering Germany) what they know about North American Aboriginal peoples, and they will likely make some reference to Winnetou and the novels of the German fiction writer, Karl May. Although May did not visit North America or meet a real Indian until after he had done the bulk of his popular writing, his ideas and the imagined characteristics with which he designed his characters held popular in the European imagination for much of the twentieth century (and remain influential even today). A series of popular films, filmed in the former Yugoslavia, and featuring Slav and Italian actors, have assured the continued influence of May's books. His novels are still widely read and continue to be published in new editions in several languages. Young and old, male and female, enjoy May's stories. May's image of the Indian has inspired popular "Indian Hobbyist" clubs and activities, particularly in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic.⁴² In the Slovak Republic, a popular reality TV programme featured an "Indian" character in the 2005-06 season. The audience and cast of *Vyvoleni'* (similar to the American *Big Brother* programme) consisted overwhelmingly

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of young people, but middle-aged Jaroslav Marcinka, alias “Indian,” was one of the programme’s most popular characters.⁴³

Indian Hobbyist clubs in Central and Eastern Europe are common. Participants not only dress like May’s conception of Plains Indians, but also profess to live by “Indian values.” Events vaguely resemble traditional Aboriginal pow-wows, featuring several teepees, wigwams, and sweat lodges. European hobbyists gather most of their information and ideas from the books of May, supplemented with details from anthropological and historical texts. More than simple fun, hobbyists take such events very seriously, often objecting to the scrutiny or observation of outsiders.

Although May’s books are almost unheard of in North America today, their influence in Europe cannot be overstated. May’s leading character was the young and brilliant German immigrant, Karl (or Charlie as he is initially called by his American friends), who travelled to St. Louis in search of adventure in the “Wild West.” Seeking to be a true “Westman,” Charlie demonstrates a natural and uncanny ability to quickly master all that he is taught (soon surpassing the talents of his teachers). Charlie’s character demonstrates extraordinary strength and endurance, and he is soon christened “Old Shatterhand” by his Westerner colleagues because of his ability to fell men with only one blow. His physical strength is matched by a keen intellect and encyclopaedic knowledge, which Old Shatterhand has gained from books about the West. To other Westerners, Old Shatterhand’s book learning is seen as silly and useless, but the German “greenhorn” always proves them wrong. Old Shatterhand eventually gains the trust and friendship of Winnetou, the noble and powerful son of a Mescalero Apache chief. Under Winnetou’s tutelage, Old Shatterhand enters “Indian School,” where he is taught the

ways of Indian life and becomes proficient in the Navajo and Apache languages.

In the character of Old Shatterhand, May portrays Germans as the pinnacle of enlightenment, civilization, and Christianity, and “as Old Shatterhand represents the highest ideal of the German nation, so Winnetou embodies the nobility to which the Native American can rise, assisted by enlightened whites.”⁴⁴ It is Winnetou’s willingness to embrace the best of European (i.e. German) culture and blend it with the best qualities of his own culture, his ability to speak unaccented English, and to read and write which ennoble him.

Through the eyes of Old Shatterhand the Wild West is seen and distorted. May made no attempt to portray the West from a historical or anthropological reality. Throughout all of his books, May laments the retreat of the North American Aboriginal before the greed of American (i.e. not European) geographic, economic, and cultural imperialism. North American readers are accustomed to having North American heroes at the forefront in winning the West, but in *Winnetou*, the noble Teutonic/Apache duo always emerges triumphant over the inferior and villainous Yankee/American, “thereby inverting and subverting an almost sacrosanct myth and causing May’s western books to ring strangely and falsely in the North American ear.”⁴⁵

Grey Owl’s literary origins

Synonymous with Indians in Canada in the late 1920s and throughout much of the 1930s, was Grey Owl. Tremendously popular as an orator and writer internationally, Grey Owl was of course, not an Aboriginal person at all, but Archie Belaney, an Englishman. But not until his death in 1938 was Grey Owl’s secret revealed. From the late 1920s until his death,

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Archie Belaney successfully presented himself as Grey Owl, the supposed son of an Apache mother and a Scots father who had been formally adopted by the Ojibwa of the Temagami district in Ontario. In his writing and speeches Grey Owl spoke with passion about the need to protect the Canadian wilderness and for fairer treatment of Canadian Indians. His wilderness message was wildly popular, spawning an early notion of environmentalism throughout North America and the United Kingdom. But his message with regards to Aboriginal peoples was not as well received, often falling on curious, but largely deaf ears. With the exception of Aboriginal peoples themselves, many of whom guessed Archie Belaney’s secret, much of the world viewed Grey Owl as an “authentic” Indian. Prime Ministers, governors general, statesmen, literary figures, and other prominent individuals all bought into the idea of Grey Owl, and many initially refused to believe in the hoax once it was revealed upon his death.⁴⁶

Belaney’s popularity was due in part to his physiognomy: in other words, he fit the popular public conception of the noble savage, he looked precisely like a storybook Indian, as if he walked out of the pages of a James Fenimore Cooper or Karl May novel. Canadian literary historian, W.H. New, also attributes the public’s widespread fascination with Grey Owl to “the continued public willingness to accept picturesque versions of wilderness life and native people as empirical realities.”⁴⁷ The public’s willingness was directly related to the popularity of such writers as Ernest Thompson Seton, Cooper, May, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Donald Smith, in his biography of Grey Owl, notes that as an English boy, Archie Belaney devoured such books, idealising North American Indians: “He had never met one, or even seen one, but he had books about them. In the margins of these books he sketched feathered braves in buckskins – youthful drawings very similar to those he later used to illustrate his books. He longed to live

amongst the noble red men of James Fenimore Cooper's and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's imaginations."⁴⁸ As a schoolboy, Belaney regularly played Indians with his usually much less enthusiastic friends, modelling himself on the noble savages from his books. Grey Owl had a lifelong love of Longfellow's poem, *Hiawatha*, even using it as a learning tool in his efforts to speak Ojibwa, and he later modelled himself during his international speaking tours as the "modern Hiawatha."⁴⁹ Belaney also read the stories and nature essays of Ernest Thompson Seton, and certainly showed familiarity with them in later life as Grey Owl, referring to Seton, for instance, in *Tales of an Empty Cabin* (1936). Belaney's childhood library included a copy of Seton's *Two Little Savages* (1903), the story of two young Euro-Canadian boys who choose to live as Indians. The boys discover Indians, of course, through books, and Seton's text would in turn influence a generation of North American and English children to act out their fantasies as Indians through woodcraft activities, and later, the Boy Scouts.

Young Archie Belaney's life in many ways mirrored that of Yan's, the central character in *Two Little Savages*: "Yan was much like other twelve-year-old boys in having a keen interest in Indians and in wild life, but he differed from most in this, that he never got over it. Indeed, as he grew older, he found a yet keener pleasure in storing up bits of woodcraft and Indian lore that pleased him as a boy."⁵⁰

Grey Owl, who at the time was still considered an Indian (by non-Aboriginals, at least), was present at a Carlton, Saskatchewan celebration in honour of the signing of Treaty No. 6, in August, 1936. While the Plains Cree claim that it was at this ceremony that they knew once and for all that Grey Owl was not whom he claimed, another internationally famous writer was present at the Indian Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

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John Buchan, then known to Canadians as Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, was honoured at the Carlton ceremony by the Sweet Grass Band of Cree as “Chief Teller of Tales” (Okemow Otataowkew), partly for his role as governor general, representative of the Crown, but also in honour of his international fame and respect as an author. Tweedsmuir’s honouring was witnessed by more than 5,000 spectators, and the ceremony included traditional gift giving and dancing.

Tweedsmuir showed a great interest in Grey Owl at the Carlton ceremony and agreed to visit him at his cabin in Prince Albert National Park in the future.⁵¹ Tweedsmuir met with Grey Owl, only a month later, and Grey Owl used that opportunity to secure as much help as he could for the Indians of Canada, proposing the idea that they should become official guardians of Canada’s wildlife and forests. Tweedsmuir met officially with Grey Owl on at least two occasions as governor general, once in Ottawa in March, 1936, and at Grey Owl’s cabin in Prince Albert National Park in mid-September 1936. One of Grey Owl’s biographers, Donald Smith, writes that Grey Owl impressed the governor general and his family, playing the role of “Modern Hiawatha.” Tweedsmuir is said to have greatly admired Grey Owl’s remarkable knowledge of wildlife and the power of his writing in his books. At his cabin near Waskesiu, Saskatchewan, Grey Owl showed the governor general a beaver dam, trees felled by beavers, and beaver themselves. Grey Owl’s accounts of that meeting indicate that Lord Tweedsmuir was an astute audience. He listened to Grey Owl’s pleas for greater Indian sovereignty in Canadian life with apparent attention and sympathy.⁵² Tweedsmuir’s personal correspondence confirms that he was a great fan of Grey Owl, as he repeatedly mentioned in his letters that he was looking forward to spending time with him in Prince Albert National Park. And when the time came, he was disappointed that bad weather cut his visit with Grey Owl short.⁵³ Euro-Canadians,

like Lord Tweedsmuir, believed whole-heartedly that Grey Owl was an authentic Aboriginal person, and Buchan's interest in Grey Owl was more than camaraderie between literary types.

As an articulate, literary "Indian" figure, Grey Owl fit the romantic notion of noble savage, and an example of an Indian partaking positively in civil society. His image was considered so authentic (before the truth was revealed) that often Aboriginal peoples (i.e. "real" Indians) of the day were not considered "Indian enough" unless they appeared publicly in buckskin and feathers, in full Indian garb. So entrenched in the popular public conscience was the noble savage, the feathered plains Indian standing stoic, that Alberta writer Robert Kroetsch could ironically observe in his 1973 novel, *Gone Indian*, that Grey Owl was "the truest Indian of them all."⁵⁴

General public apathy and ignorance of how such inauthentic images misrepresent and offend Aboriginal peoples has allowed such old fashioned ideas to persist and be repeated, time and time again. Contemporary film, advertising, popular fiction (such as Harlequin romance novels, for instance), and television thus continue to falsely imagine Aboriginal peoples, and such images have altered remarkably little over the last 500 years. In recent years, Aboriginal peoples have begun to reclaim control of their own images. Aboriginal schools in the U.S. and Canada have thus begun to use their own symbols and mascots with Indian names and images. Aboriginal artists of all genres now employ stereotypical images ironically, in an effort to empower and assert control over their own image.

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¹ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man's Indian: images of the American Indian from Columbus to present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978) 71.

² Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978) 227-228.

³ Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: the image of the Indian in Canadian culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 1992) 5.

⁴ See: Viki Ann Green, *The Indian in the Western Comic Book: a content analysis* (Master of Education thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1974).

⁵ Deborah Doxtator, *Fluffs and Feathers: an exhibit on the symbols of Indianness* (Brantford ON: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1992) 10.

⁶ See: Berkhofer, Jr. 71-111, which discusses the image of the Indian in literature, art, and philosophy.

⁷ See, for example, Roger L. Emerson, "American Indians, Frenchmen, and Scots philosophers," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 9 (1979) 211-236; Paul Honigsheim, "Voltaire as Anthropologist," *American Anthropologist* XLVII (1945) 104-118; Honigsheim, "The American Indian in the Philosophy of the Enlightenment," *Osiris* X (1952) 91-108; Carla Mulford, "Benjamin Franklin, Native Americans, and European cultures of civility," *Prospects* 24 (1999) 49-66.

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⁹ Jaenen passim.

¹⁰ Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: and the beginnings of French colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984) xi.

¹¹ Dickason xiii.

¹² Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming, a Pennsylvania tale, and other poems* (London: Bensley, 1809).

¹³ François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala, or, The love and constancy of two savages in the desert*. Caleb Bingham, trans. William Leonard Schwartz, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1930).

¹⁴ Berkhofer, Jr. 79-80.

¹⁵ Edward J. Harding, “Introduction,” *Atala: by Chateaubriand*. Trans. by James Spence Harry. Illust. by Gustave Doré (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1884) 7-9.

¹⁶ Chateaubriand, “Preface to the First Edition,” *Atala: by Chateaubriand*. Trans. by James Spence Harry. Illust. by Gustave Doré (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1884) 17.

¹⁷ David Wakefield, “Chateaubriand’s ‘Atala’ as a Source of Inspiration in Nineteenth-Century Art,” *The Burlington Magazine* 120.898 (1978) 13-24.

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frontier settlements of the United States, from the earliest period to the present time (1839; Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1854).

²⁰ Theresa Gowanlock, *Two months in the camp of Big Bear: the life and adventures of Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney* (Parkdale: Times, 1885); John Rogers Jewitt, *The Adventures and sufferings of John R. Jewitt, the only survivor of the ship Boston, during a captivity of nearly three years among the savages of Nootka Sound: with an account of the manners, mode of living and religious opinions of the natives* (Edinburgh: Archd. Constable & Co., 1824); Samuel G. Goodrich, *The Captive of Nootka, or, The adventures of John R. Jewitt* (New York: J.P. Peaslee, 1835).

²¹ For more on the Indian captivity genre, see: Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive selves, captivating others: the politics and poetics of colonial American captivity narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Rebecca Blevins Faery, *Cartographies of desire: captivity, race, and sex in the shaping of an American nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier, *The Indian captivity narratives, 1550-1900* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan, 1993); Sarah Carter, *Capturing women: the manipulation of cultural imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Gordon M. Sayre, ed., *American Captivity narratives: selected narratives with introduction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

²² John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: a family story from early America* (1994; London: Papermac, 1996) xii.

²³ See: Carter passim.

²⁴ Quoted in Carter 87. Carter provides examples, particularly the stories of Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, who were reportedly held captive and subjected to horrors in Big Bear's camp at Frog Lake in 1885.

²⁵ Quoted in Sarah Carter, "Introduction to the 2004 Edition: The 'Cordial Advocate': Amelia McLean Paget and *The People of the Plains*" In Amelia M. Paget, *The People of the Plains* (1909; Regina: Canadian Plains

Research Center and the University of Regina, 2004) xvi. See also: Sarah A. Carter, “The ‘Cordial Advocate’: Amelia McLean Paget and *The People of the Plains*” In *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal relations in colonial Canada*. Ed. by Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006) 199-228.

²⁶ Carter “Introduction” xvi.

²⁷ Carter, “Introduction” xvi-xvii.

²⁸ Frederick Paget was employed by the Department of Indian Affairs in Regina as assistant to Indian commissioners Hayter Reed and Amedee Forget from 1882-1899. In 1899, the same year he married Amelia McLeod, he was appointed chief accountant of the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. Sarah Carter reports that although he was an accountant, he was valued for his advice on western Indians, in part due to his wife’s background. He was also the author of a 1908 report on residential schools in the west which was highly critical. See: Carter, “The ‘Cordial Advocate’” 212-213. For discussion of Frederick Paget’s 1908 report, see: John S. Milloy, “*A National Crime*”: *the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999) 82-83.

²⁹ Carter, “Introduction” xxvi.

³⁰ Carter, *Capturing Women* 121-123.

³¹ For more on Duncan Campbell Scott as an administrator of Indian Affairs, see E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1986).

³² For more on Scott’s literary achievement, see: Stan Dragland, ed., *Duncan Campbell Scott: a book of criticism* (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1974); Dragland, *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the literature of Treaty 9* (Concord ON: Anansi, 1994); Gordon Johnston, *Duncan Campbell Scott and his works* (Downsview ON: ECW Press, 1983); R.L.

McDougall, “Scott, Duncan Campbell” *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999) 2121.

³³ For discussion of Scott’s Indian poetry specifically, see: D.M.R. Bentley, “Shadows in the Soul: racial haunting in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (2006) 752-770; Dragland, *Floating Voice*; Gerald Lynch, “An Endless Flow: D.C. Scott’s Indian poems” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7.1 (1982) 27-54; Lisa Salem-Wiseman, “‘Verily, the White Man’s Ways Were the Best’: Duncan Campbell Scott, Native culture, and assimilation” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 21.1 (1996) 120-142; and L.P. Weis, “D.C. Scott’s View of History and the Indians” *Canadian Literature* 111 (1986) 27-40.

³⁴ Queen’s University Archives, Lorne and Edith Pierce Collection, Box 1, File 11, Item 14. Duncan Campbell Scott to Lorne Pierce, 16 October, 1924. For more on Aboriginal writers of the early twentieth century, like Charles A. Cooke and Edward Ahenakew, and their struggles to write back against popular (mis)conceptions of Indians, see: Brendan Frederick R. Edwards, *A War of Wor(l)ds: Aboriginal Canadian writing during the “dark days” of the early twentieth century.* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of History, University of Saskatchewan, 2008).

³⁵ Berkhofer, Jr. 88.

³⁶ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans; a narrative of 1757* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1826). Cooper’s classic novel has been republished innumerable times, translated into several languages, and has inspired countless theatre, television, film, and comic book renditions. In film alone there have been at least 17 productions, the most famous being that directed by Michael Mann in 1992, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, and Russell Means. Martin Baker and Roger Sabin refer to *The Last of the Mohicans* as a “book that everyone knows but that few have read.” Nonetheless, its inspirational and influencing qualities (right or wrong) apparently know no bounds. For more, see: Baker and Sabin, *The Lasting of the Mohicans: history of an American myth* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).

³⁷ George Harrison Orians, *The Cult of the Vanishing American: a century view, 1834-1934* (Toledo: H.J. Chittenden, 1934). See also: Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White attitudes and U.S. Indian policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982) 21-25.

³⁸ Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1855). Longfellow's poem initially received widespread success and praise, but after a decade it became a popular source of ridicule and popular satirical imitation – another sign of its widespread appeal and notoriety.

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁴⁰ A distinctly Canadian literature that worked to achieve this included works by missionaries such as John Maclean, John McDougall, and Egerton Ryerson Young. Their most influential works included: John Maclean, *The Hero of the Saskatchewan: life among the Ojibway and Cree Indians in Canada* (Barrie: Barrie Examiner Printing & Publishing House, 1891); Maclean, *The Indians of Canada* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1889); McDougall, *Indian wigwams and northern campfires: a criticism* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895); Young, *By Canoe and dog-train among the Cree and Salteaux Indians* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1890); Young, *Stories from Indian wigwams and northern camp-fires* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1893). Daniel Francis discusses the influence of missionary writers in early Canada in *The Imaginary Indian: the image of the Indian in Canadian culture* (1992; Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1995) 44-60.

⁴¹ Dippie xii.

⁴² See: Jacek Matwiejczyk, “Going Tribal / Pióropusze nad Wisłą” *Kaleidoscope* 82.8 (August 2005): 50-56; Joe MacDonald, John Paskievich, and Ches Yetman, *If Only I Were an Indian*. ([Montréal]: National Film Board of Canada, 1995).

⁴³ “Do vily sa nastahoval u’aj Indian.” *Atlas.sk* (2006). 18 January, 2006, <<http://dnes.atlas.sk>>. Similarly, the popular Slovak ska-punk band, ska pra

šupina, references Karl May's *Winnetou* in their song, "Barbie" (from their 2000 album "Zblíži a poteší," music and lyrics by ska pra šupina).

⁴⁴ Richard H. Cracroft, "Foreword." Karl May, *Winnetou*. Translated and abridged by David Koblick (1892-93; Pullman: Washington University Press, 1999) xvi-xvii.

⁴⁵ Cracroft xxi.

⁴⁶ The best biographical work on Grey Owl is, to date: Donald B. Smith, *From the Land of Shadows: the making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990).

⁴⁷ W.H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature*. Second Edition (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) 110.

⁴⁸ Smith, *From the Land of Shadows*, 17.

⁴⁹ See: Smith, *From the Land of Shadows*, 41. Longfellow included a 150 word Ojibwa vocabulary at the end of *The Song of Hiawatha*, using the writings of former American Indian Agent, Henry Schoolcraft.

⁵⁰ Ernest Thompson Seton, *Two Little Savages: being the adventures of two boys who lived as Indians and what they learned* (New York: Doubleday Page & Company, 1903) 1.

⁵¹ "Grey Owl Lionized," *The Daily Herald* [Prince Albert, Saskatchewan] (August 14, 1936) 1. It is interesting and significant to note that it was at the Carlton Treaty No. 6 celebration that the Plains Cree confirmed their doubts about Grey Owl's authenticity. Although the Cree honoured Grey Owl as a brother, and showed him much attention, his behaviour and manner at the celebration gave them a clear indication that he did not have the "genre and ethos of an Indian." Euro-Canadians and non-Aboriginals, like Lord Tweedsmuir, were as yet still utterly convinced of Grey Owl's Indian background. For more, see Donald Smith's biography, *From the Land of Shadows* 160-161.

⁵² Smith, *From the Land of Shadows* 155, 163-164.

“He Scarcely Resembles the Real Man”... Brendan F.R. Edwards

⁵³ See: Lord Tweedsmuir to Lady Tweedsmuir, 22nd September, 1936; Lord Tweedsmuir to “Dearest Tim”, 16th September, 1936; Lord Tweedsmuir to Alastair Buchan, 15th September, 1936; Lord Tweedsmuir to W. L. Mackenzie King, 29th September, 1936. All in: Queen’s University Archives. John Buchan Papers (Collection 2110), Series 1 (Correspondence), Box 8, File 1.

⁵⁴ Robert Kroetsch, *Gone Indian* (1973; Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1999) 84.



Portrait of Chief Crowfoot. University of Saskatchewan
Library, Special Collections, Canadiana Pamphlets Collection,
XXXII.

Treaties: Negotiations and Rights

Tamara Starblanket

Introduction

In what is now the Canadian state, between 1870-1921, eleven numbered agreements took place between Indigenous peoples and the British Crown. In contemporary times Treaty¹ is greatly misunderstood from both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples alike. What took place at these historical meetings has been a source of contention from the outset. The central issue is the land. Who had authority and jurisdiction over the land? What was agreed to in terms of the Treaty? Another issue is whether Indigenous peoples signed away their right to govern themselves according to their laws and customs. The source of this contention is based on oral understandings versus the written understandings of Treaty. An explanation as to the reasons why Treaty is misunderstood is in the following quote:

For an understanding of the relationship between the Treaty Peoples and the Crown of Great Britain and later Canada, one must consider a number of factors beyond the treaty's written text. First, the written text expresses only the government of Canada's view of the treaty relationship: it does not embody the negotiated agreement. Even the written versions of treaties have been subject to considerable interpretation, and they may be

scantly supported by reports or other information about the treaty negotiations.²

The oral understanding of Treaty has not been taught in colonial mainstream education systems; instead the written version is supplanted as the only understanding. The suppression of the Elders' knowledge has only led to further ignorance on the subject of Treaty. The written version of Treaty leads to further ignorance as it is commonly understood that Indigenous peoples ceded and surrendered the land over to the British Crown. This essay will discuss both Indigenous and Crown perspectives of Treaty. What did the negotiations conclude and what were the rights agreed to?

Before Treaty

Before Treaty, Indigenous peoples' history starts from the Creation and the placement of Indigenous peoples by the Creator on the lands now known as the North American continent.³ Oral understandings affirm that Indigenous peoples have occupied their homelands since the beginning of time.⁴ Indigenous Nations are organized into different legal, political, economical and social societies and live according to the natural laws given by the Creator. Indigenous peoples lives relate directly to their relationship with the land.⁵ Indigenous legal systems are intended to protect and honour the land.⁶ The land is fundamental to Indigenous legal systems. These systems were in place at the time the Crown representatives came to Indigenous peoples' territories to make Treaty.

The Land Question

Before any discussion on Treaty can take place the issue of sovereignty must be addressed. A question worth posing is,

can land already occupied by peoples be discovered? An incorrect supposition held by many people is that Christopher Columbus discovered America; however, the reality is that “he sailed his ships into waters occupied and used by Indigenous Peoples.”⁷ One of the beliefs held by Euro-Canadian society is that the territories and homelands occupied by Indigenous peoples when the European explorers arrived were for the taking. This Eurocentric assumption that the land was for the taking is acknowledged by the Crown in current treaty discussion taking place in what is now Saskatchewan:

- It was widely assumed by Crown officials, that, prior to the treaties, the Crown was already sovereign over First Nations’ traditional territories through unilateral assertion or through treaties with European powers.
- It was assumed, therefore, that the Crown had the power to extend its laws to First Nations.⁸

The unilateral assertion the Crown refers to is based on the belief that Britain had sovereignty over Indigenous peoples’ homelands, but how this came to be is an interesting question. In modern times a person cannot walk into a stranger’s home and claim ownership of the house and the furnishings without committing a crime. What European explorers did at the time of contact and after was tantamount to walking into a person’s home and taking possession of the house and the belongings.

In her book, *Our Elders Understand Our Rights*, Sharon Venne discusses the impact the doctrine of discovery had on Indigenous peoples and their legal systems. The Eurocentric view held by colonizing powers was that they were “bringing civilization and prosperity”⁹ to Indigenous peoples. The doctrine of discovery justified European expansion into Indigenous peoples territories without regard for the peoples

and legal systems that had been in place since time immemorial. Venne argues, “this [Eurocentric] worldview dominated the formulation of European legal systems,” and this had the effect of

...[nullifying] the legal values of peoples who do not share this worldview, including the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. Historical and legal writings about America that are based on the belief that Columbus discovered the lands of millions of Indigenous Peoples deny the rights of these people....The right of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas to continue determining their way of life was denied through the acceptance of the doctrine of discovery, and this denial persists to this very day.¹⁰

The British Crown came to the Treaty negotiations with the assumption that Crown sovereignty was paramount, whereas, the Indigenous peoples under international law at the time had complete jurisdiction over the land and their way of life.¹¹

Indigenous Understandings of Treaty

According to the Elders our rights are not granted by the Canadian Constitution; instead it is bestowed upon us by the Creator and recognized by the making of Treaty.¹² Indigenous rights are inherent.¹³ The inherent authority to governance cannot be granted by any foreign government. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Treaties Miguel Alfonso Martinez determined that the Treaties negotiated and concluded with the British Crown are international agreements.¹⁴ This is the same understanding as our Elders. From an Indigenous worldview, Treaty reinforces the inherent

authority. It is the legal framework that Indigenous peoples operate from. The Elders' understanding of Treaty are peace and friendship agreements, not land surrender agreements.¹⁵ These peace and friendship agreements provide for two parallel legal systems that were intended to co-exist, each party respecting the authority of the other.

The Elders understanding of Treaty is that Indigenous peoples were to continue on with their way of life with control over their way of life and the land and this knowledge is passed down orally.¹⁶ At the time of Treaty, Indigenous peoples had full authority over their way of life and the land. When Treaty was negotiated Indigenous law was the law of the land and used by the Crown to conclude Treaties. For example, in 1876 when Treaty Six was negotiated and concluded it was Cree laws that guided the negotiation process:

When Indigenous Peoples talk about the land and the making of treaty, we are talking about our life and the life of future generations. Land is central to that process. We have a relationship with our Creation based on a legal system designed to protect and honour the land. These are the laws that guided Cree Peoples when the Chiefs negotiated and concluded Treaty Six in 1876.¹⁷

In terms of the relationship, Treaty was negotiated and concluded between Indigenous peoples and the British Crown on a nation-to-nation basis. Each party to the Treaty was to co-exist with neither one interfering with the other. In other words, to live in peace and friendship for as long as the sun shines and the waters flow.¹⁸ Treaties were not made with Canada.¹⁹ Canada as a treaty successor does not have the

authority to alter Treaty without the consent of the Indigenous peoples.²⁰

Today, the government of Canada questions the original spirit and intent of Treaty. It is a very simple answer. Non-Indigenous People were granted the right to live in Indigenous peoples' territories so long as they maintained peace and respected the land.²¹ In exchange Indigenous peoples were to receive benefits such as health care and education.²² It is the oral understanding and not the written version that captures the original understanding of Treaty if the Spirit and Intent is to be understood. As one great warrior has stated, "Lies written down on paper do not make them true for anyone."²³ The relationship was to be a parallel relationship neither party impeding or oppressing the other.

It becomes evident that the state of Canada has violated the terms of the Treaty by relying and imposing the written version of Treaty. Perhaps the main issue with the Crown's understanding is how they came to acquire underlying title over Indigenous people's territories and natural resources. The imposition of Crown sovereignty reflects the earlier discussion pertaining to the doctrine of discovery. How can the Crown claim title to lands that they did not own in the first place?

Crown's Understanding of Treaty

The Crown came to Indigenous peoples with the Eurocentric assumption they already had sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This is evident in the land transfer that took place between the Hudson Bay Company and the colonial government in July 1689.²⁴ Indigenous peoples at the time questioned this transfer of land:

...the Chiefs sent a message to the representatives of the Queen to inform her of the true situation. They stated that the Hudson Bay Company could not gain control of their lands through its trading activities. These lands belonged to the Indigenous Peoples who demanded that the Crown respect their rights before moving into their territory. They wanted the jurisdictional issue settled as soon as possible. They wanted the Crown to determine the exact nature of its agreement with the Hudson Bay Company, which was undertaken without the consent of Indigenous Peoples. They considered such an agreement to be invalid as a means of gaining access to their lands.²⁵

The transfer of land from the Hudson Bay Company to the Crown is fraudulent. The Hudson Bay Company was a trading company and how they came to have ownership over Indigenous lands is suspicious: “In present circumstances, it would be tantamount to Pepsi Cola or another such company gaining title to the lands of another country merely by engaging in trading.”²⁶

How did the Crown have the authority to legislate control over the land and Indigenous peoples? According to the current discussion about treaty implementation in what is now Saskatchewan, the colonial government’s authority was granted by virtue of the *Royal Proclamation*, 1763, which established the following:

- Recognized that First Nations had rights in their lands;

- Established imperial control over settlement on Indian lands whether those lands were within the boundaries of the established British colonies of North America;
- Prohibited private purchase of Indian lands and required that alienation of Indian rights in Their lands by way of surrender to the Crown; and
- Established a process by which surrender of Indian land would be made to the Crown....²⁷

The language expressed operates from the basis that the colonial government already had underlying title or sovereignty. How did Crown establish control over Indigenous lands without the consent of the Indigenous peoples affected? By an enacted piece of legislation the British Imperial Crown has complete jurisdiction just because they say so? According to the Indigenous understanding the *Royal Proclamation* affirmed their nationhood:

Nearly one third of the text is devoted to British relations with Indigenous nations. The Proclamation recognized Indigenous Peoples as ‘Nations,’ as distinct societies with their own forms of political organization, with whom treaties had to be negotiated. It also enshrined the protection of Indigenous lands by the British Crown, and a process of seeking Indigenous consent to European settlement through treaty making. Finally, the Royal Proclamation clearly spelled out that Indigenous nations had an inalienable right to their lands.²⁸

Another important aspect to the Indigenous understanding is that the Royal Proclamation did not bind Indigenous peoples; in fact the British Crown was bound to follow certain rules

with respect to Indigenous peoples and their territories.²⁹ The Royal Proclamation was a “codification of the norms of customary international law for entering into treaties. International law required that a sovereign enter into formal agreements with another people’s sovereign prior to entering lands occupied by those peoples.”³⁰

How does the issue of supposed Crown title relate to the doctrine of discovery? The British Crown contends that the land was ceded and surrendered by the Indigenous peoples at the time Treaty was negotiated. Why does the Crown perpetuate this understanding? According to Venne, the doctrine of discovery justified the imposition of Crown title without the consent of the Indigenous nations. She states: “because of the doctrine of discovery, treaties with Indigenous nations did not ensure a place for Indigenous peoples within the family of nations under international law. The discovery doctrine allowed competing European powers to define their respective sphere of influence in the colonies.”³¹ If Crown sovereignty is based on this fictitious doctrine then what does this say about Treaty? In other words, one party cannot come to a treaty making process with the flawed belief that they have sovereignty over another nation’s territory without that nation’s consent. The Crown came to the treaty negotiations with the belief that Crown title was supreme without legitimizing their sovereignty. However, the reality was under international law the Europeans were “establishing formal legal relationships with indigenous North Americans, the European parties were absolutely clear about a very important fact; namely, that they were indeed negotiating and entering into contractual relations with sovereign nations, with all the legal implications that such a term had at that time in international law.”³² It becomes clear that the Crown was operating in a deceitful manner.

Negotiations and Rights

What are the negotiations and rights that were agree to? This depends on which worldview this understanding comes from. Historically and in modern times the government of Canada, retains the view that Crown sovereignty is paramount when discussions about treaty implementation take place. In most numbered treaty agreements the Crown assumed that they were granting land to Indigenous peoples because of the assumption that title was already solidified.³³ The Royal Proclamation set out the treaty process that was to take place between the Indigenous peoples and the Crown. The Crown's intent for negotiating the numbered treaties is summarized in *Treaty Implementation: Fulfilling the Covenant* as follows:

Each of the western numbered treaties began by stressing “The desire of Her Majesty to open up to settlement” a particular tract of country by obtaining the consent of her “Indian subjects inhabiting the said tract” through a treaty resulting in “peace and goodwill” between the Indians and her Majesty, since they could be assured of “her Majesty’s bounty and benevolence.” In effect, this language indicates the objectives of the treaty making process: opening areas for settlement in exchange for the Crown’s bounty and benevolence thereby ensuring peace and goodwill.³⁴

The Crown’s intent was to clear Indian title to the land and in exchange for clearing Indian title:

The [Crown] intended to reciprocate in a generous and benevolent manner. Reserves would be set aside for the exclusive use of First

Nations. First Nations would continue to pursue their traditional lifestyle; hunting, fishing and trapping would not be jeopardized. If First Nations people decided to take up agricultural activities, assistance would be provided. From the Crown's perspective, each First Nation would be entitled to an annual annuity as well as education and health care. The Intent of all these commitments was to gain title to the land in a peaceful manner, thereby, facilitating the influx of settlers and, in turn, ensuring the First Nations would gain skills necessary to participate in and benefit from the new economy.³⁵

It becomes apparent from the preceding quotes that the Crown believed they had exclusive title and that they were granting Indigenous peoples certain rights. This Eurocentric assumption begs a very important question. Who gave the Crown the authority to grant rights that did not belong to them? The truth of the matter is that Indigenous nations were organized for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European settlers and that their arrival into Indigenous peoples territories did not grant them privilege or control over the territories occupied by Indigenous peoples. The arrival of Europeans on the shores of what is now the North American continent did not magically trump the inherent authority that Indigenous peoples possessed and still possess.

The Elders understanding of Treaty is simple. The Crown came to Indigenous peoples territories asking for rights to share the land. Indigenous peoples did not go to the Crown asking for land rights.³⁶ The Elders are adamant that Treaty is an international agreement between sovereign nations. The agreements concluded were peace and friendship agreements.

The agreements concluded were not cede and surrender agreements. According to the Indigenous understanding:

The Elders have long disputed many aspects of the government of Canada's version of Treaty 6. The main criticism of the written version has to do with the language used about the lands. The written version contains the wording "cede, surrender, and forever give up title to the lands." The Elders maintain that these words were not included in the original treaty. The Chiefs and Elders could not have sold their lands to the settlers as they could only share the lands according to the Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine and Dene laws. When the Elders were told of the written words, they had difficulty understanding them. These words do not exist in their languages.³⁷

What rights were granted to the British Crown? The Elders understand that the Crown was granted rights to live in Indigenous peoples territories (share the land) as long as the Crown respected the land and lived in peace with the Indigenous peoples.³⁸ The mountains, water, animals, birds, minerals and forests were not for negotiation.³⁹ These still belong to Indigenous peoples to protect and no agreement can ever take that responsibility away despite the underhandedness apparent in Crown dealings with Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

It is apparent from the discussion that the understandings of Treaty are divergent. It would be difficult to determine what rights were agreed to if one party comes to the negotiations with the Eurocentric assumption that they have control over the

negotiations. What about the land? The Crown did not have underlying title or sovereignty despite what their imposed legal systems say about the matter. Indigenous peoples have existed in what is now the North American continent for thousands of years. Indigenous peoples have not violated the terms of the Treaty but time and time again the Crown has abused the land through their resource development projects and imposition of their laws.

Pertaining to the question of authority and governance, Indigenous peoples possess the inherent authority to determine their own laws and customs, despite one party holding the Eurocentric assumption they have supreme law on a continent that they did not discover.

Endnotes

¹ From an Indigenous worldview Treaty is the preferred term to use when making reference to Treaties 1-11.

² Sharon H. Venne, "Understanding Treaty 6: An Indigenous Perspective" in M. Asch, ed., *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002) at 173.

³ H. Cardinal & W. Hilderbrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, at 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Sharon H. Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith" in *Native and Settlers – Now and Then* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007), 2.

⁷ Sharon H. Venne, *Our Elders Understand our Rights: Evolving International Law Regarding Indigenous Peoples* (Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books Ltd., 1998), 1.

⁸ Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Implementation: Fulfilling the Covenant*, (OTC: Saskatoon, 2007), 22.

⁹ *Supra* note 7, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff, “The United Nations Study on Treaties, Agreements and other Constructive Arrangement” in *Honour Bound: Onion Lake and the Spirit of Treaty Six: The International Validity of Treaties with Indigenous Peoples* (IWGIA: Copenhagen, 1997), 14.

¹² See generally H. Cardinal & W. Hilderbrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples Will One Day be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000).

¹³ From an Indigenous perspective, “inherent” means ownership and jurisdiction over lands, resources and the laws of Indigenous Peoples. It is the inherent right to of all Peoples to determine their own distinct laws, traditions and systems of governance. The term *inherent* means a right that cannot be transferred or surrendered, also called an inalienable right.

¹⁴ See generally Miguel Alfonso-Martinez, Final Report: Human Rights of Indigenous People Study on Treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous populations, UN Commission on Human Rights, 1999, E/CN.4/Sub 2/1999/20

¹⁵ *Supra* note 2, 187.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 6, 9.

¹⁸ *Supra* note 2, 194.

¹⁹ According to Sharon Venne, the Elders are correct in their understanding of Treaty being an international agreement. Colonial governments could not enter into treaties without the authority of the Parliament that created them. Canada did not have the authority to enter into treaties in its own right until the Statute of Westminster in 1932. Canada could not become a party to the treaty without the consent of both parties. The Indigenous Peoples never gave their consent to Canada to be a party to the treaty, and Canada did not sign Treaty 6.

²⁰ *Supra* note 6 at 9. See also Miguel Alfonso-Martinez, *Final Report: Human Rights of Indigenous People Study on Treaties,, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous populations*, UN Commission on Human Rights, 1999, E/CN.4/Sub 2/1999/20.

²¹ *Supra* note 6, 5-7.

²² For a detailed analysis please see Sharon Venne's paper entitled "Understanding Treaty Six" for a detailed account of the things promised to Indigenous Peoples under Treaty. (Note 2)

²³ *Supra* note 6, 7.

²⁴ Wayne E. Daugherty, *Treaty Research Report Treaty One and Treaty Two* (1871), (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre Research Branch, Corporate Policy: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1983), 3. Online: <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/trts/hti/t1-2/tre1-2_e.pdf>

²⁵ *Supra* note 2, 184.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Supra* note 8, 23.

²⁸ *Supra* note 2, 185.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Supra* note 11.

³³ *Supra* note 8, 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ See generally Sharon H. Venne, "Treaties Made in Good Faith" in *Native and Settlers – Now and Then* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007).

³⁷ *Supra* note 2, 192-193.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

³⁹ *Supra* note 2, 185-202.



1885 scrip coupon for \$160.
Saskatchewan Archives Board, E11.

Métis Scrip

Camie Augustus

Throughout the late 19th century, settling the west was paramount for the newly confederated Canada. Western settlement was part of John A. Macdonald's larger plan for building the country through his National Policy scheme, and clearing the title of the region's Indigenous peoples was integral to this process. As a means of extinguishing the Aboriginal title of the Métis, the scrip policy was implemented in the North-West, part of which is now Saskatchewan.¹

Scrip was designed to extinguish Métis Aboriginal title, much as treaties did for First Nations. However, the Métis were dealt with on an individual basis, as opposed to the collective extinguishment of title pursued through the treaty process. Scrip commissioners travelled to Métis communities and held sittings at various locations where Métis gathered to fill out applications for their entitlement.

Scrip was implemented over several decades in three phases: in Manitoba in the 1870s; in the North-West in the 1880s; and in conjunction with treaties 8 and 10 in the northern part of the province. The policy continued to be the only means of extinguishing Métis Aboriginal title in Canada well into the 1920s.

The basic premise to scrip was to extinguish the Aboriginal title of the Métis by awarding a certificate redeemable for land or money – the choice was the applicant's – of either 160 or 240 acres or dollars, depending on their age and status.

Claimants had to fill out an application, sign an affidavit, and in most cases, received their scrip coupon on-site if they qualified. This process varied from commission to commission, but this format was standard to all phases.

Manitoba Scrip

Scrip was first used in Manitoba, where it provided a means to fulfilling the terms of the 1870 *Manitoba Act* – the outcome of negotiations between the Manitoba Métis and Ottawa following the 1870 Red River Resistance. The causes of the Resistance can largely be attributed to grievances concerning land title and political representation. The catalyst to the affair was the transfer of Rupert’s Land to Canada and the surveys which were conducted throughout the summer and fall of 1869 without the consultation of the Métis who inhabited the lands.

Concerned that their occupation of the land would not be recognized, the Métis petitioned Ottawa to consider their interests. Without a forthcoming or expedient response from the federal government, the Métis declared a provisional government, finally providing an incentive for the federal government to enter into negotiations.

In the spring of 1870, Alfred Scott, Bishop Taché, and Judge Black set off for Ottawa as the Western representatives, returning with the terms of what became the *Manitoba Act*. The *Act* laid out the foundations for extinguishing Métis Aboriginal title in Manitoba and established who was eligible to participate in the land grant. However, it did not identify a process for distributing the land. It was through a series of orders-in-council over the next few years that the issuance of scrip was employed as the means of distributing 1.4 million acres of land to the Métis inhabitants of the original ‘postage-stamp’ province.

Scrip in Manitoba was slow to be implemented. Although the agreement had been ratified in 1870, the distribution of scrip did not begin until 1876. The Commissions were plagued with administrative problems, creating frustration for many Métis. Many families left Manitoba for the west, some settling in what is now Saskatchewan, while others moved on to Alberta and south to Montana.²

Claims still outstanding from Manitoba forced the government to implement a supplementary commission which ran simultaneously with, although independently of, the North-West Half-Breed Commission. For this reason, the two are difficult to separate and have often been confused. To further complicate the issue, some of the North-West Métis making claims in the 1880s were original inhabitants of Manitoba. While they were not making claims under the *Manitoba Act*, they were originally eligible to do so. This unfinished business carried over into 1885.

North-West Métis Scrip: 1885-1889

This, then, provided the basis for scrip in the North-West (now Saskatchewan and Alberta). Much like the circumstances in 1870, it is impossible to assess the scrip policy without an eye to the tensions between Ottawa's intent to settle the west and pre-existing Métis claims to the land. Circumstances leading to the 1885 Resistance and the implementation of a scrip policy were again land-related issues: as the government moved in to survey lands, the Métis became increasingly concerned that their occupation and traditional title would not be recognized as legal ownership under the new system.

Government records and correspondence clearly indicate that they were aware of these complaints; warnings from North-

West officials and missionaries clarified this. Individual Métis communities throughout the North-West launched a series of petitions to Ottawa outlining their concerns. Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s, these petitions continued, a clear sign that these outstanding issues needed to be settled.

In addition, the numerous warnings sent from officials in the North-West Territories to Ottawa indicated that the Métis desired assistance in transitioning to a new way of life: the disappearance of the buffalo on the prairies was all but complete by the 1880s, and many Métis communities were experiencing the effects of a large-scale economic transition amidst a growing settler population and a declining fur trade. However, these warnings went unheeded by those in Ottawa. Eventually, officials responded,³ but the delay proved to be costly.

An order-in-council in January of 1885 marked the first definitive indication that the federal government intended to deal with these complaints which had persisted since at least 1879. The order authorized an enumeration of Métis inhabitants, but it did not actually authorize the use of scrip. It was not until March that commissioners were appointed and a specific course of action was laid out. By this time, though, the Métis had begun to gather and prepare for action under Louis Riel. As the scrip commission was getting underway, fighting broke out at Duck Lake.

Although the Commission commenced in the spring of 1885, the legislative authority itself was set out by the 1879 *Dominion Lands Act*. Section 125(e) of the *Act* authorized the Governor in Council

to satisfy any claims existing in connection with
the extinguishments of the Indian title, preferred

by half-breeds resident in the North-West Territories outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, by granting land to such persons, to such extent and on such terms and conditions, as may be deemed expedient.⁴

The *Act* was vague, though, and did not outline any formal policy or procedure for this process. Again, as with the Manitoba Scrip Commissions, this policy was established through a series of orders-in-council. Throughout the 1880s and into the 1890s, twelve such orders served to define and clarify the scrip policy. Over the next few years, the commissioners travelled throughout the Territories accepting applications from the Métis for scrip.

The process of applying for scrip was cumbersome and confusing. First, an application (Form “D”) had to be filled in and submitted. In many cases, the commissioners were dealing with an illiterate population, thus, the process effectively amounted to an oral interview. Aside from the standard questions, such as name, address, genealogical information, and other means of identification, the applications also inquired about previous and current land holdings. For example, the applicants were asked if they had a homestead entry, what became of it, and the value and improvements of their current land. The extent of inquiries into land holdings during the application process suggests an emphasis on the land and its settlement, not with the rights of the Métis. This point is verified by what is missing on the application itself: consent to the extinguishment of Aboriginal title.

Next, the applicant was required to confirm their identity. Each claimant was required to provide, by affidavit or “two reliable and disinterested witnesses,”⁵ that he was a ‘half-breed’ and a

resident of the North-West Territories previous to 15 July 1870. Once this had been proven to the satisfaction of the commissioners, they would then provide the claimant with a certificate (either Form “F” or “G”) indicating that the claimant was entitled to the amount of scrip which was indicated on the form. The Department was to be supplied with a similar certificate (either Form “H” or “I”) duplicating the certificate issued to the claimant and providing a record for the Department. The same process was required for children, with certificates to be provided to them (on Forms “K” or “L”) and duplicates to the Department (on Forms “M” or “N”). Those who submitted claims on behalf of deceased relatives also had to go through this process.

More challenges followed the application process. Following an approval, the grantee would need to locate and enter the scrip – a process which necessitated a trip to a Dominion Lands office. Next was the wait to receive patent to the land, provided there were no conflicts with other settlers or reserves made for other purposes, such as railway or school grants. Formalities, paperwork, and lengthy waits between each phase characterized the process.

The policy displayed an ignorance of Métis ways of life. Distance, for example, represented a hindrance for many. Travel during the busy summer months would have required entire families to leave their work and their homes for several days, first to visit the commission then again to locate their land. Economic circumstances sometimes prevented Métis from reaching the commissions and applying for scrip.⁶ The process of filling out unfamiliar forms in, many cases, an unfamiliar language proved formidable. The bureaucratic nature of the application process itself would have seemed foreign and confusing, deterring many.⁷

Between 1889 and 1901, scrip commissions continued to operate throughout Saskatchewan. Four types of claims were dealt with during this period: outstanding claims from the 1885 commissions; outstanding claims from Manitoba; new claims arising from land recently ceded through Indian treaties; and new claims based on the 1900 amendment allowing Métis born between 1870 and 1885 to apply for scrip (in previous commissions, only those born prior to 1870 were allowed to apply).⁸ These commissions operated essentially under the same policies which had been established in Manitoba in the 1870s and in Saskatchewan in the 1880s.

Treaty Scrip: Treaties 8 and 10

This next phase of the scrip policy came with the negotiation of treaties in the northern part of the prairie provinces. An increase of activity in the region due to the gold rush, namely miners and prospectors, brought the potential for conflict. Officials at Ottawa recognized the need for a treaty: covering the northwest corner of Saskatchewan, Treaty 8 was carried it out in the summer of 1899; in 1906, Treaty 10 ceded most of the northern part of Saskatchewan.⁹

This third phase of the scrip policy was notably different than the first two. Métis claims to Aboriginal title in the northern part of Saskatchewan were considered at the same time as treaties were negotiated. Government officials recognized the importance of Métis to the treaty process, and were concerned that they would hinder treaty negotiations if their claims were not dealt with, too.¹⁰ This differed remarkably from previous Métis claims, which were considered only after Indian title had been ceded by treaty. The *Dominion Lands Act* was amended in 1899 to reflect this change in policy, allowing claims from Métis residents who were born after 1870.¹¹

Another difference was the amount of scrip issued. Previously, children received 240 acres or \$240 while adults received 160 acres or \$160. During this treaty scrip phase, though, all recipients received 240 acres or \$240, regardless of their status or age.¹²

These changes in policy – particularly the removal of the age restriction – created new claims in addition to those in the treaty area. Métis who had previously been ineligible because they were born after 1870 could now apply for scrip. Consequently, the government dispatched separate commissions to deal with these new claims. The two commissions – the Alberta/Athabasca and the Saskatchewan/Manitoba – while not technically part of the treaty scrip commissions, were operating under the same legislative authority.¹³

The process for applying for scrip, however, was still much the same. For Treaty 8, scrip commissioners accompanied treaty commissioners and awarded scrip coupons on-site, much as they had done throughout the 1880s. The Commission travelled only through northern Alberta in 1899, but held a sitting at Fond du Lac in 1901. Consequently, many individuals were missed. Over the next few years, additional applications were taken while distributing treaty annuities in the region. Unlike previous commissions, though, the applications were not assessed on-site: instead, they were taken back to Ottawa for the Minister of the Interior's approval. It wasn't until the following year that scrip coupons would be delivered by the Indian Inspector. In total, over 1,200 scrip claims were granted under Treaty 8.¹⁴

The terms and process for Treaty 10 scrip were much the same. All successful applicants received scrip in the sum of either \$240 or 240 acres, regardless of their date of birth. In 1906

and 1907, scrip commissions were held in conjunction with Treaty 10 commissions at Snake Plains, Lac la Ronge, Stanley Mission, Southend, Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche Mission, La Loche River, and Portage la Loche.¹⁵ A few more applications were gathered in 1908. In these few years, over 700 scrip claims were granted.

Fraud and Speculation

Ultimately, the scrip policy met the same end everywhere: the Métis still found themselves without a land base at the close of the 19th century. The speculation in Métis scrip, the fraud that often accompanied it, and the government's refusal to protect scrip lands from these illicit activities rendered this policy a failure for the Métis. This subject is still debated in the secondary literature, but ultimately, government officials were fully cognizant of the role speculators had in the scrip process, and in fact, accepted it.¹⁶

What happened in most cases is that Métis lost their scrip to speculators for a fraction of their value. Scrip buyers, sometimes operating for the same outfit, often pre-arranged a set price for scrip.¹⁷ Bartering for a better price, then, became impossible. Other factors also contributed to the sale of scrip below its market value. Information about scrip was unclear to applicants, and many Métis did not appreciate its value.¹⁸ The Métis were often pressured to sell due to reasons of poverty, not to mention the difficulties of locating land. Métis lifestyles were not always compatible with an agricultural life: seasonal work in a semi-migrant economy was not conducive to the sedentary life required by farming. In some cases, it was a prudent decision of economy: speculators offered immediate cash. Reasons varied from individual to individual, but the presence of speculators at scrip commissions almost guaranteed that the decision would be made in their favour.¹⁹

Even land surveyor William Pearce – a critic of the Métis cause in general and of the scrip policy in particular – noted that the scrip process was infected with the unscrupulous dealings of speculators whom, he believed, were in cahoots with commissioners.

Eventually, the role of speculators became cause for legislative change. A Department of Justice memorandum written in 1921 clearly implied the presence of fraud in speculation of Métis scrip. In 1921, an amendment was made to the Criminal Code limiting the time prosecutions could be made in regards to scrip. The Department noted that:

It appears that the scrip was handed to the half-breeds by the agent of the Indian Department and it was then purchased, for small sums of course, by speculators. However the half-breed himself was required by the Department of the Interior to appear in person at the office of the land agent and select his land and hand over his scrip. In order to get over this difficulty they speculator would employ the half-breed to impersonate the breed entitled to the scrip. This practice appears to have been very widely indulged in at one time. The practice was winked at evidently at the time and the offences were very numerous.²⁰

Clearly, speculation and fraud occurred, and it occurred to the detriment of the Métis. Now, years later, the government eliminated any option for recourse by placing a statute of limitations on the very same fraudulent activities that it essentially supported throughout the scrip policy.

Métis Aboriginal Title

From the scrip policy's inception, the expressed intent in the statutes was to extinguish Aboriginal title. Both the *Manitoba Act*²¹ and the *Dominion Lands Act*²² state this. But while the government clearly recognized and acknowledged the existence of Métis Aboriginal title in an official capacity, there was hesitation on an informal level to validate this concept in the same way they did 'Indian' title.

Prior to 1899, the Department of Interior held that Métis title would not be dealt with until Indian title had first been extinguished, suggesting a perceived stratification of Aboriginal title. This concept of stratified Aboriginal title was not yet fully developed in the 1880s, and in fact, did not appear until 1887.²³ A change in official attitude about the position of Métis Aboriginal title occurred during the treaty scrip phase. An order-in-council recognized that "while differing in degree, Indian and Half-Breed rights in an unceded territory must be co-existent."²⁴ Henceforth, the Aboriginal title of both Indians and Métis would be dealt with simultaneously.²⁵

Anthropologist Joe Sawchuk outlines the history of Métis Aboriginal title, its legal basis, attitudes towards it, and contemporary legal concepts. He points to several legal problems of working within the current framework of Aboriginal title as decided in the courts for Aboriginal (non-Métis) cases where the understanding of Aboriginal title does not necessarily fit the Métis circumstance.²⁶ He states, though, that this is of little concern since "the *Manitoba Act*, and several successive *Dominion Lands Acts* have already acknowledged their rights to Indian title."²⁷ However, this is not entirely clear from a legal standpoint. As historical geographer Frank Tough points out, extinguishment of Métis title "remains unresolved."²⁸ This is evident, he says, by the

fact that “there is nothing in the process ... which indicates that individual Métis consented to extinguish Aboriginal title.”²⁹ Assuming that the courts consider the terms of the *Manitoba Act* and *Dominion Lands Act* as a recognition of Métis Aboriginal title, it would indeed be the case that there was no explicit consent to extinguish those rights.

Conclusion

Unlike the effect of Indian treaties in the North-West, the protection of Métis lands was not secured by the scrip policy. In most cases, the scrip policy did not consider Métis ways of life, did not guarantee their land rights, and did not facilitate any economic or lifestyle transition. Instead, Métis scrip lands could be sold to anyone, hence alienating any Aboriginal title which may have been vested in those lands. Despite the evident detriment to the Métis, speculation was allowed to continue. While this does not necessarily confirm malicious intent by the federal government to consciously ‘cheat’ the Métis, it illustrates their apathy towards the welfare of the Métis, their long-term interests, and the recognition of their Aboriginal title. But the point of the policy was to settle land in the North-West with agriculturalists, not keep a land reserve for the Métis. Moreover, Ottawa was unwilling to incur the costs of another reserve-type policy.

The scrip policy carried on into the twentieth century: the last sitting was held in 1924. Following the end of the North-West Half-Breed Commissions in 1887, five more major commissions were set up to award scrip in conjunction with treaty commissions throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the North-West Territories. In 1889, the Green Lake Commission offered scrip alongside the commission of the Treaty 6 adhesion in Saskatchewan. Likewise, treaty commissioners for Treaties 8, 10 and 11 were accompanied by

scrip commissioners. In addition, the Alberta and Saskatchewan Commission of 1900 settled outstanding claims produced after the 1899 announcement that 'half-breeds' born between 1870 and 1885 were eligible for scrip, too, and also dealt with outstanding treaty 8 claims. In all, 24,326 claims were approved by 1929.³⁰ Scrip, then, was a major undertaking in Canadian history, and its importance as both an Aboriginal policy and a land policy should not be overlooked.

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¹ Parts of this essay are based on my MA thesis: see Camie Augustus, “The Scrip Solution: The North West Métis Scrip Policy, 1885-1887” (MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 2005).

² See Gerhard Ends, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

³ *Canada Sessional Papers* 1886, Vol. XIV (No. 45), Department of the Interior, 10-28.

⁴ Canada, *Statutes*, Vic. 42, Cap. 31, Sec. 125(e). [*Dominion Lands Act, 1979*].

⁵ National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 29, Series E16, Volume 1, File 3. A.M. Burgess to W.P.R. Street, 30 March 1885.

⁶ A letter sent in 1885 to J.R. Burpé, Secretary of the Dominion Lands Commission in Winnipeg illuminated this point. The concern expressed, according to Burpé, was if claimants would have to “undergo a heavy, long, or expensive journey” to reach the commission. NAC MG 29 E-16, Vol. 1, File 4. Burpé to Street, 12 June 1885. Another letter written by David Macarthur on behalf of Métis at Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis supports this point. Although a commission had been sent to Winnipeg to hear their claims previously, he noted “that only a few were able to attend and that the others by reason of poverty and other causes were unable to do so.” NAC RG 15, D-II-3, Vol. 178, File HB 1104. David Macarthur to Secretary, Department of Interior, 3 October 1885.

⁷ See for instance Frank Tough, *“As Their Natural Resources Fail”: Native Peoples and The Economic History Of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996). For a contrary view, see Thomas Flanagan, *Métis Lands in Manitoba*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991).

⁸ Métis National Council, "A Guide to the Northwest 'Half-breed' Scrip Applications Document Series," Métis National Council Historical Online database, <<http://tomcat.sunsite.ualberta.ca/MNC/learn.jsp>>, (retrieved March 2008).

⁹ Outside of Saskatchewan, scrip commissions also ran in conjunction with Treaty 11. For a history of these and other treaties, see Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank J. Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Dennis F.K. Madill, *Treaty Research Report: Treaty Eight (1899)* (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986).

¹¹ Statutes of Canada, Vic. 62-63, Cap. 16, Sec. 4.

¹² Jeff Murray, "Métis Scrip Records," Government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: 1986.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Métis National Council, "A Guide to the Northwest 'Half-breed' Scrip Applications Document Series," Métis National Council Historical Online database, <<http://tomcat.sunsite.ualberta.ca/MNC/learn.jsp>>, (retrieved March 2008).

¹⁶ Two perspectives have emerged in the secondary literature regarding the history of the scrip policy. One camp, led mainly by historian D.N. Sprague and sociologist Ken Hatt, asserts that the scrip policy was ill-conceived and poorly administered, and ultimately dispossessed or defrauded the Métis of their lands. The other side, represented largely by political scientist Thomas Flanagan and historian Gerhard Ens, argues that this was not the case: the government was well-intentioned and the Métis sale of land was their own rational choice. See bibliography for references.

¹⁷ Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*.

¹⁸ W.P.R. Street, “The Commission of 1885 To The North-West Territories,” *Canadian Historical Review*, with Introduction by H.H. Langton, vol. 25, no. 1, 1944.

¹⁹ For discussions on this topic, see Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); “Métis Scrip,” in S. Corrigan and J. Sawchuk, eds., *The Recognition of Aboriginal Rights* (Brandon: Bearpaw Publishing, 1996), p. 47-57; and Thomas Flanagan, “The Market for Métis Lands in Manitoba: An Exploratory Study,” *Prairie Forum* vol. 16, no. 1, 1991, 1-20.

²⁰ NAC RG 13, Vol. 2170, File 1853 [1921]. Memorandum for Mr. Newcombe, 14 October 1921.

²¹ Canada, *Statutes*, 1870, 33 Vic., Cap. 3, sec. 31 [*The Manitoba Act*].

²² Canada, *Statutes*, 1883, 46 Vic., Cap.17, Sec. 81(e) [*Dominion Lands Act 1883*].

²³ Privy Council OPCP 898, 9 May 1887. This order authorized the extension of the NWHB Commission and outlined the commission’s jurisdiction as “those portions of the Territories since ceded by the Indians under treaty with the Government of Canada.” Although Section 3 of the 1883 *Dominion Lands Act* set out this limitation, this was the first mention in the orders-in-council confining the jurisdiction of scrip commissions to ceded Indian territory. However, a reference was first made in 1886 in a draft letter of instructions to Goulet from Burgess, 17 May 1886. NAC RG 15, Vol. 501, File 140862.

²⁴ Privy Council OPCP 918, 6 May 1899.

²⁵ Jeff Murray, “Métis Scrip Records,” Government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: 1986.

²⁶ Joe Sawchuk, *et.al. Métis land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* (Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1981), 80.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁸ Frank Tough, "*As Their Natural Resources Fail*," 114.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁰ Côté Report, 1929.

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Charles Nolin testifying at Riel's trial. Original engraving appeared in *The Graphic* (London, England), 12 September 1885. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Photograph Collection, S-B7661.

1885 – Aftermath

Kurt Boyer

Introduction

With the Métis defeated at the Battle of Batoche, the North-West Resistance had effectively ended. For Riel and others directly involved in the conflict, consequences were swift and direct. In the months following however, it became quite clear that the Resistance's aftermath was felt throughout Canada, particularly in communities not directly involved in the conflict. The more enduring and severe consequences were felt by the Métis and First Nation communities, who in the wake of losing the struggle for rights, had to continue living amidst the expanding Canadian state, and increasing hostilities against their people.

In examining the aftermath of the North-West Resistance of 1885, consequences from the conflict can be classified into two broad categories: consequences for individuals who played a major role in the Resistance (i.e.: Louis Riel, Big Bear); and consequences of a thematic nature (i.e.: impacts on French-English relations in Canada, race relations in Saskatchewan).

Aftermath: Métis Leaders and Allies - Louis Riel

In the final moments at Batoche, Riel retreated into the surrounding forest to pray. He had secured the safety of his own family, and after choosing not to flee, accepted calls for his surrender. As he gave himself up to Canadian troops, Riel maintained his actions were in fulfilment to his duty to God,

his council, and his people. Riel was arrested and taken to Regina for trial on charges of high treason.

The trial of Louis Riel has been the subject of much scrutiny since it handed down a conviction and death sentence to the Métis leader. The particulars of Riel's trial are highly suspect with regard to a free and fair judicial process.

The trial site and jury were not selected for their objective qualities. The trial was held in Regina, and the jury was made up entirely of Protestant Anglo-Saxons. Many claim that both the city and those making up the jury were antagonistic to the French-speaking, Catholic, and Métis cause.

Riel's crown appointed lawyers were highly incompetent. At the onset of the trial, they had the judge bar Riel from speaking because he opposed their attempt to establish a plea of insanity. In their closing arguments Riel's defence gave a brief history of the Métis' grievances but also praised the bravery of the volunteers who willingly took up arms to help put down the Métis Resistance. When Riel was finally allowed to address the jury, he vehemently opposed a defence based on the argument of insanity and attempted to convince the jury otherwise. As he addressed the court, Riel's mention of insanity aimed to assuage any misgivings the Protestant jury might have regarding his Catholic faith:

As to religion, what is my belief? What is my insanity about that? My insanity, your Honors, gentlemen of the jury, is that I wish to leave Rome aside, inasmuch as it is the cause of division between Catholics and Protestants. ...I did not wish to force my views, because in Batoche to the half-breeds that followed me I used the word, *carte blanche*. If I have any

influence in the new world it is to help in that way and even if it takes 200 years to become practical, then after my death that will bring out practical results, and then my children's children will shake hands with the Protestants of the new world in a friendly manner. I do not wish these evils which exist in Europe to be continued, as much as I can influence it, among the half-breeds. I do not wish that to be repeated in America. That work is not the work of some days or some years, it is the work of hundreds of years.¹

When the jury returned from deliberation, a guilty verdict was pronounced with a recommendation for mercy. One juror later wrote to Parliament commenting on reasons for the jury recommending mercy: "Had the Government done their duty and redressed the grievances of the half-breeds of Saskatchewan...there would never have been a second Riel Rebellion, and consequently no prisoner to try and condemn."² Despite this recommendation, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's determination to see Riel hang came to fruition, and the Métis leader's execution day was set for the 18th of September. In the hours just prior to his execution, Riel wrote one final letter to his mother, and at 8:00 am; he was hanged until pronounced dead. Riel's body is buried at St. Boniface Cathedral's churchyard. The Canadian government buried the founder of the Province of Manitoba and a defender of Métis rights.

Gabriel Dumont

Unlike Riel who had given himself up voluntarily, Dumont, when assured by Middleton that his surrender would guarantee

him a fair trial, replied: “You tell Middleton...that I am in the woods, and that I still have 90 cartridges to use on his men.”³

Hearing that Riel had given himself up, Dumont helped ensure that the women and children were led to safety, then fled to Montana with Michel Dumas. Upon arrival, he and Dumas were arrested by American authorities, and then promptly released by order of President Cleveland.

Dumont lived briefly in the Métis settlement of Spring Creek, where he was soon followed by his wife, who informed him that his home had been looted and burned by the Canadian army.

After his wife passed away, Dumont accepted a position in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show and toured as the “Hero of the Half Breed Rebellion.” Following the news that the Canadian government had proclaimed an amnesty, Dumont returned north and settled near Batoche where he lived the rest of his days hunting and trapping.

First Nation Participants and Accidental Allies

With the Resistance over, and the Canadian government looking to consolidate its authority in Saskatchewan, it arrested and tried the members of the First-Nations it believed were guilty of ‘treason.’ The trials of Riel’s ‘accomplices’ such as Big Bear and One Arrow are typical examples of the irrelevancy, and cultural inappropriateness, of western conceptions of legality and the imprudence in which they were applied to the actions of Aboriginal peoples.

Prior to the Resistance, detailed and lengthy legal documents known as treaties had drawn up where the First Nations sold their lands to the Canadian government. The treaty making

process deteriorated into land theft and starvation for the First Nations people, and for many, their participation in the North-West Resistance was born out of this fact. Following the Battle of Batoche, dozens of Indian warriors and Métis leaders were tried on various charges. Chief One Arrow of Saskatchewan was charged with treason:

Together with divers and other evil disposed persons...armed and arrayed in a warlike manner, that is to say with guns, rifles, pistols, bayonets and other weapons, being then wickedly and feloniously assembled and gathered together against our said Lady the Queen, her Crown and dignity.⁴

The indictment was translated into the Cree language and Chief One Arrow heard that he had “knocked off the Queen’s bonnet and stabbed her in the behind with his sword.” Chief One Arrow was enraged and demanded to know if the interpreter was drunk as he had never met the Queen.

Literal translation was the common practice in all of the trials of the North-West Resistance. Chief Big Bear denied his treason charges and stated; “these people all lie. They are saying that I tried to steal the Great Mother’s hat, how could I do that? She lives across the Great Water and how could I go there to steal her hat? I didn’t want her hat, and didn’t know she had one.”⁵

The Canadian law of treason had no meaning for the Cree people and it could not be translated. Even if it had of been adequately translated, the law of treason can only punish those who owe allegiance to the Crown and who intentionally turn against it. The whole offence was foreign to the warriors who were tried and the charges were impossible to defend.

The justice rendered in these trials was a travesty.

Big Bear, One Arrow, along with Poundmaker were all convicted of treason and were imprisoned in the Stony Mountain Penitentiary. Here their condition deteriorated rapidly and all three men died shortly upon being released due to poor health.

Placation of Dissent among Manitoban Settlers

While much of the current literature on the aftermath of the 1885 Resistance tends to focus on more national issues, the aftermath of the Resistance had one very distinct regional impact. In many ways, the North-West Resistance placated a growing dissatisfaction Manitobans were feeling towards eastern Canada. If left to fester, this dissatisfaction could have had dire consequences for the Dominion. Instead discontent was replaced with a vehemence directed not at the central government, but at the Métis who at the time shared numerous concerns with the Manitobans.

During the years leading up to Batoche, western Manitoba (defined as the area west of Portage La Prairie to the Saskatchewan border, and between the Canada - United States boundary and Riding Mountain) was in the midst of initial settlement. The new province was still coming to grips with the mercantilist relationship eastern Canada had with the west.

Most of these Manitobans were land-poor Ontarians who had come following a successful campaign by Central Canadian promoters encouraging expansion, claiming that better livelihoods could be had in western agriculture. Approximately forty thousand came to Manitoba between 1876 and 1881. This mass immigration came following the exodus

of Métis, who after successfully negotiating the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, had been systematically marginalised from land and livelihood, and forced to find life further west.

By the 1880s the Métis of Saskatchewan and the new immigrant farmers from Ontario shared numerous concerns that were largely ignored by Ottawa. Both groups began to suffer under the imbalanced relationship central Canada had been employing in its dealings with the west. Manitoban farmers began to protest the unequal transportation and tariff system which had brought disproportionate benefits to eastern Canadians. These concerns led the Manitobans to establish the Farmers' Protective Union in 1883. The union protested the Canadian Pacific Railway's monopoly, the tariff system, and also argued for the need to gain provincial control over the land and resources. Manitoban farmers shared a number of common grievances with the Métis which included: the slow pace of railway construction; the high transportation costs; the country's protective tariff structure; and the second-class constitutional status of Manitoba and North-West Territories (the area now known as Saskatchewan). Like the Métis, western settler communities developed an intense resentment for the limited attention given to their area by the national government. Both the Métis and the settlers were experiencing hardships from a life in a 'hinterland.'

In addition to relief from the material hardships shared with the western settlers, the Métis also hoped to gain provisions which would protect their culture, language, religion, and way of life. The settlers on the other hand, being mostly white, Protestant, and English speaking, were more aligned with the values of the Anglo-Saxon majority in Ottawa. When conflict in Saskatchewan broke out, it was these differences which ultimately marginalised any similarity between the groups'

struggles, and precluded any future cooperation between the two.

The Métis that were involved in the Duck Lake skirmish transformed a budding support for Métis hardship, into a more profound ethnic or racial issue. Deeply held racial hostilities towards Métis and other Aboriginal peoples began to turn commonalities into differences. The increasing alienation felt by western settler communities was replaced by a movement of Canadian nationalism. This nationalism was based on the perceived common ‘threat’ of Métis, and Indian armed insurgency.

It could be argued that the North-West Resistance quelled a growing movement of dissatisfaction which western whites began to voice in opposition to the administration in central Canada. If this growing movement was allowed to fester, the political consequences could have been disastrous for the Dominion of Canada, which at the time was still trying to establish its sovereignty over the west.

Impacts of French-English Relations in Central Canada

Another consequence of the North-West Resistance, or more specifically to the hanging of Riel, was the resulting uproar in French Canada. The Resistance and hanging of Riel rekindled and fuelled Anglo-French tensions in Quebec. The hanging itself resulted in an immediate protest of six thousand in the streets of Montreal. A few weeks later however a more organised rally attracted fifty-thousand protesters, and was held on the Champ de Mars in Montreal on the 23rd of November. One of the speakers at the protest was Wilfrid Laurier, who until the protest had not attracted much attention. It has been argued that Laurier’s moving speech at the Champ de Mars meeting was one of the first steps in galvanizing a political

base which he continued to build until becoming Canada's seventh, and first francophone, prime minister.

Apart from the protests providing Laurier a sturdy political platform, it also provided the Liberal party of Quebec a monumental flashpoint to establish, and then build on its support base. Honoré Mercier, the leader of the Parti National (now the Liberal Party), was strongly opposed to the execution of Riel and to the Conservative government which had held power in Quebec for decades. The public outcry in Quebec over Riel's execution allowed Mercier and the Liberal party to gain support. In 1886, they won the Quebec provincial election. This was the first time the Liberal party had ever held a majority government in Quebec.

While the Liberal party's rise to power was briefly cut short by scandal the following year, the party began a slow process which gradually resulted in breaking the Conservative stronghold in Quebec. The 1896 Liberal landslide victory marked a new era of politics in Quebec. Actions taken by Macdonald's Conservative government during the Resistance and Riel's execution had enraged the French-Catholic province of Quebec, and eventually led to the dominance of the Liberal party. For many years following Resistance, the Conservative party became "le parti des Anglais" (the party of the English).

The hanging of Riel made a big impact on Quebec politics, and is still an important issue in French-Anglo relations in Canada. It is important to note that while Quebecers denounced the hanging of Riel, the issues which Riel and the Resistance fought for were distinct from those perceived and adopted by French Canadians. The Métis Resistance materialised from a struggle to preserve Métis culture, which is distinct from French-Canadian culture. Arguably, connections between the North-West Resistance and changes to Quebec's political

context were an appropriation of Métis struggle to support French nationalism. Contemporary French-Canadian interpretations of the Métis Resistance tend to reduce events to feed discourse surrounding French-English relations. To some even today, Riel's hanging can be reduced to meaning: "a supreme act of cruelty against one whose only sin was to have stood up for the rights of his people (i.e. the rights of French Catholics), as a symbol that Canada was not a land of equality between French and English Canadians but one where the French Canadians were a minority whose views and feelings could be disregarded."⁶

The Rational for the Railway

The impact the 1885 Resistance had on the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway has been well documented. In 1885, Prime Minister Macdonald had first proposed the railway as a way to secure the west for Canada, and protect it from American annexation. The construction of the railway was given government subsidies, exemption from taxation, and other provisions. Despite these provisions, the project was plagued by financial difficulties, and needed to be saved from bankruptcy on numerous occasions. With the outbreak of the 1885 North-West Resistance, an opportunity to gain the enormous funds needed to finish the railway was created.

William Cornelius Van Horne, who was in charge of overseeing the completion of the line at the time, seized the opportunity. As fear of another possible Red River incident in Saskatchewan began to fester in Ottawa, Van Horne lobbied the government for additional funds on the basis that the railway could provide the government's army quick transportation to attack the Métis.

The government accepted the proposition, and used the line to transport its troops across the west. Following the Resistance, the government re-organized the CPR's debt and provided it the additional funds it desperately needed. The railroad was completed in November 1885; just seven months after the first shots of the Resistance were fired.

The Marginalisation of Métis and First Nations

The most pronounced impacts following the 1885 Resistance were felt in Saskatchewan, with the Métis and some First Nations groups experiencing the worst of it. Following the conflict, race became a determining factor in how those living in Saskatchewan began to be treated. While Euro-Canadians (both English and French speaking) were barricaded in towns and forts during the Resistance, they were soon in a position which afforded them privilege over the Métis and other Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan. While the property and homes of Euro-Canadian settlers was protected by the Canadian government, whereas Métis homes and property were destroyed and looted by the military and volunteers following the battle. The Resistance did however cause more harm than just theft and destruction of Métis property; it marked an era of systematic marginalisation of Métis and First Nation people in Saskatchewan.

For First Nations, many who were not a part of the conflict became 'accidental rebels,' or falsely tied to the conflict. The Resistance became another justification to fear Aboriginals, and remove them from any greater societal benefits offered to Euro-Canadians. Poundmaker remarked that after the uprising "[being] Indian was like being in a cage ... There was no freedom for an Indian."⁷ Poundmaker was also referring to how this marginalisation had become not only social, but with the arrival of the pass system,⁸ became physical as well.

While the situation of systematic marginalisation of First Nations people was a national issue, in Saskatchewan the Resistance became a flash point that further increased the isolation of First Nations from Canadian society and further entrenched the destructive paternal relationship.

The Battleford Hangings of 1885 give an explicit example of this destructive paternalism. As a reminder of the consequences to those who do not respect the authority of the government, First Nations children were brought from the residential school in Battleford to witness the execution of eight First Nation ‘traitors’ who allegedly participated in the Resistance.

After the hangings the bodies were buried in a mass grave.

Aftermath: Métis

With Riel executed, Dumont exiled, and most other leaders serving prison sentences, the Métis of Saskatchewan fell on very difficult times. Much as they had been following the signing of the *Manitoba Act*, many of the Métis in Saskatchewan were dispersed after the Resistance. Those who stayed and who were considered by the government to be non-participants in the Métis Resistance were given ‘scrip,’ which were land or monetary allotments valued at \$160 to \$240.

The scrip system was a systemic failure. Many of these Métis never received their scrip. Most of the scrip notes did not state the intended beneficiary’s name, and ultimately resulted in many disappearing before reaching the intended owner. Other Métis families did not have the money to invest in the farming equipment needed to make use of land, and thus sold their scrip.

Scrip was often sold to unscrupulous capitalists who followed the Treaty No. 8 Half-Breed Commission to northern Saskatchewan and offered payments of between \$70 and \$130 to Métis for their scrip. Over 90 percent of scrip issued to Métis ended up in the hands of bankers, lawyers, speculators, and financial institutions. Great wealth was generated from the dispossession of Métis from their lands. This dispossession continued following the scrip fiasco, with many Métis forced to become squatters, and living on land called the 'road allowance.' As more displaced Métis joined together on the side of these roads, small shanty communities built of discarded lumber or logs began to spring up, creating term "The Road Allowance People."

More and more settlers flooded into the prairies, just as they did after Red River. Meanwhile, the Métis' societal marginalisation increased. Because the Métis were not land owners or tax payers, their children were denied basic access to public school. Some Métis children managed to enter into reserve schools; some were accepted into separate Catholic institutions. But before Métis children were admitted to Catholic schools, the recent 'sins' committed by participating in the Resistance needed to be paid for, literally. Edgar Dewdney, the Indian Commissioner for the Northwest Territories at the time explained in a letter: "It is said that the half-breeds have been selling cattle lately to make up the money for required by the priest before he will re-admit the backsliders to the privileges of the church; \$25.00 a man is the figure."⁹

It wasn't until the 1930s and 1940s that the government attempted to address the social, economic, and political marginalization of the Métis people on the prairies. Most government attempts like the experimental farms instituted by the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) were

paternalistic failures, providing the Métis few tools to increase self-determination. Real progressive initiatives instead originated from Métis leaders like Malcom Norris, James Brady, and Peter Tomkins who, by fighting to have Métis concerns brought to the mainstream political agenda, realised such legislation like *The Métis Betterment Act* in 1938.

Conclusion

Impacts from the North-West Resistance were felt throughout Canada and linger on to this day. The influences from the Resistance were multifaceted and served multiple interests. The Resistance provided a rationale to finish the railway, served as a political tool in Quebec, and materialised as a “common enemy” to placate settler dissent in Manitoba. The most severe and long lasting effects were felt by the generations of Métis and First Nations in Saskatchewan who, following the Resistance, were subject to increased processes of marginalisation, which still permeate in Saskatchewan.

Endnotes

¹ Louis Riel, "Final Statement of Louis Riel," University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School, <<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/riel/rieltrialstatement.html>>

² Douglas Linder, "The Trial of Louis Riel," <<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/riel/rielaccount.html>>

³ George Stanley, "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North-West Rebellion 1885," *Canadian Historical Review* 30 (1949). 259 as quoted in Joanne Pelletier, *The North-West Resistance of 1885* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, 1985).

⁴ S. Haring, *White Man's Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 40.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Stewart Wallace, "The North-West Rebellion,"
<[http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/
North-WestRebellion-CanadianHistory.htm](http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/North-WestRebellion-CanadianHistory.htm)>

⁷ First Nations University of Canada Archives, 1885 Resistance Project, Clarence Swimmer interview, Poundmaker reserve, 11 June 1993, as quoted in Erin Millions, "Ties Undone: A Gendered and Racial Analysis of the Impact of the 1885 Northwest Rebellion in the Saskatchewan District" (Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2004), 114.

⁸ The pass system when instituted in early 1886, created an oppressive regulatory system to govern the movement of all First Nations persons. Within this system, a person was unable to leave the reserve unless in possession of a pass. This pass stated where he or she was going, what the purpose of leaving the reserve was, and the duration of the leave. Originally proposed for only the "Rebel Indians", Macdonald, insisted that the system should be applied to all First Nations.

⁹ Dewdney Papers, Vol. 21B, L.M. Herchermer to E. Dewdney, 15 January 15 1886, 9045-8 as quoted in Pelletier, *The North-West Resistance of 1885*, 36.



Quewich and his children, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, ca. 1900. University of Saskatchewan Archives, Brock Silversides fonds (MG 289), file 2.2 – 21B.

Since Time Immemorial

Anna Flaminio

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL...

Creator

Creator as Source of Life and Laws

Mother Earth

**Indigenous peoples' Jurisdiction and Stewardship of Land, Air,
Water, Fire**

Sovereign Nations

Indigenous Nations as Sovereign Nations

Independent Nations

**Determination of all Political, Economic, Social, Educational, and
Familial realms**

Nations

Balanced Individuals, Families, Communities, Nations

RESIDENTIAL / BOARDING / INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS

Euphemism:

“Schools”

More accurately deemed

(Total) Institutions

Tool of the Colonizer

Forced Removal of Children

Deliberate Abduction and Captivity

Cut off from Land, Family, Community, Language, Culture

Tool of the Colonizer

Intended Incarceration of Children

Deliberate Death and Disease

Imposed Sexual Physical Emotional Spiritual Violence

Euphemism:

“Assimilation”

More accurately deemed

(Attempted) Genocide

TRAIL OF COLONIZATION AND DESTRUCTION

COLONIZATION

Systemic attack on the LANDS, CULTURES, BODIES, MINDS, HEARTS and SPIRITS of Nations

PRE-CONTACT

Papal Bull issued by Pope in 1493 to DISPOSSESS Indigenous peoples of their lands

CONTACT

Land was NOT DISCOVERED; Lands were OCCUPIED by Indigenous Peoples

INDIAN ACT

Imposed system of Apartheid to Dominate, Subjugate and Eradicate Indigenous peoples and Nations

TREATIES

**International Peace and Friendship Agreements; State claims
Lands were surrendered**

MISSIONARIES

**Eurocentric, Paternalistic Mission to Denigrate Indigenous
Spiritual, Cultural, and Familial Laws**

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

**Tool to Divide and Decimate Individuals, Families, Communities
and Nations**

CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

**Systemic Removal and Custody of thousands of Indigenous
Children**

POLICE/ COURTS/ JAILS

Oppression, Control and Over-Incarceration of Indigenous peoples

CONTINUED LEGISLATION

**Past, Current, and Proposed Law intended to usurp Indigenous
Lands and Jurisdiction**

GENOCIDE and RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The United Nations Convention on Genocide states Genocide means the intent to destroy a group by:

- (a) Killing members of the group;**
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm;**
- (c) Inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction;**
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;**
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.**

CANADIAN CRIMINAL CODE

Sections b), d), and e) of the Genocide Convention are NOT included in the Criminal Code

INSTITUTIONALIZATION BACKGROUND

Number of Schools

130+ Residential Institutions in Canada that were operated by four main Churches:

Churches Collaborating

The Roman Catholic Church

The Anglican Church

The United Church

The Presbyterian Church

Funding

Churches were funded by the Federal Government to run the schools

Attendance

**More than 150,000 children attended the schools
Almost 80,000 of those children, now adults, are still alive today.**

INSTITUTIONAL TIMELINE

1620 – Franciscans establish the first known boarding school in New France

1800s – Missionaries running several institutional schools

1842 – Bagot Commission recommends training children in manual labour schools far from parents

1857 – Gradual Civilization Act legislates the assimilation of Indians

1876 – Indian Act legislates all Indian peoples as Wards of Federal Government

1879 – Davin Report calls for church-run, off-reserve, ‘aggressive civilization’ schools

1883 – Industrial Schools are built far from reserves to limit parental and cultural influence

1920 – Indian Act legislates compulsory attendance; Children forcibly taken/ parents fined or jailed

1931 – 80 residential institutions in operation

1980s – Adult students begin disclosing sexual and other abuses while attending the schools

1996 – Last government-run institution in Saskatchewan closes

INSTITUTIONAL ATROCITIES AGAINST CHILDREN

Substandard Living Conditions

Poor Construction and Ventilation

Malnutrition

Separation from Siblings

Manual Labour for Half of School Day

Physical Assaults

Sexual Violence

Emotional/ Mental Abuse

Forced Confinement

Religious Fear and Indoctrination

Cultural Theft

Language Tortures

Hatred, Racism, and Oppression

Forced Sterilization

Medical Experimentation

Disease and Inaction

Unsolved Child Deaths and Burials

INSTITUTIONAL AFTERMATH

Litigation / Alternative Dispute Resolution/ Class Action

Thousands of legal claims against the Church and Government

Common Experience Payment

In 2007, approval was received for a settlement payment to only eligible survivors

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2008, the Settlement Agreement's Truth and Reconciliation Commission begins

National Survivors Support Line:

1-866-925-4419

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL...

Creator

Creator as Source of Life and Laws

Mother Earth

Indigenous peoples' Jurisdiction and Stewardship of Land, Air, Water, Fire

Sovereign Nations

Indigenous Nations as Sovereign Nations

Independent Nations

Determination of all Political, Economic, Social, Educational, and Familial realms

Nations

Balanced Individuals, Families, Communities, Nations

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James Ratt with his son James Jr and granddaughter Cecilla

James Ratt:

Lots of changes in 50 years of trapping

For fifty years, James Ratt has lived the traditional nomadic life of a trapper, wintering on the trapline and journeying hundreds of kilometres south to La Ronge for the summer.

His memories go back to a time when settlements which no longer exist today, were flourishing, when portages which are now overgrown and forgotten were in use every spring and fall, and winter dogstled highways crossed regions of the north which are now rarely visited.

In the early days there were no trapline boundaries, and James's family moved from year to year around the vast region between the Foster Lakes, Wollaston Lake and Reindeer Lake. James has many memories of those seasonal journeys.

His family spent the summers living in tents on an island near La Ronge. He first travelled to the family traplines in the Foster Lakes area in 1932, when he was eleven.

By Graham Guest

Interpreter: James Ratt Jr.

James remembers how, in the fall, his parents would load their eighteen-foot freighter canoe with the children, the dogs, and the winter supplies, and leave for the trapline. It would take two or three weeks to make the 350-kilometre trek from La Ronge to the trapping grounds. In the early days it was all done by paddle, but later the family was able to buy a Champion outboard motor.

“James Ratt: Lots of changes in 50 years of trapping.”
Denosa, summer 1983. Northern Saskatchewan Archives,
Pahkisimon Nuyeyáh Library System

Trapping and Trapline Life

Merle Massie

“Lots of changes in fifty years of trapping,” declared James Ratt in 1983. In fact, he added, it was “a way of life now almost gone.” James Ratt’s story of life on the trapline is a simple but profound documentation of the changing nature of northern life, seen from the eyes of the late twentieth century. His account of traditional trapline life, from the lengthy canoe journey to and from his family’s trapline, to the use of dog teams and bush routes that were ‘like a highway’ from so much traffic, and a memory of settlements and gardens long lost to time and the growing urbanization of Saskatchewan’s north strike a chord not often heard by those who study the fur trade.

Fur trade history is dominated by the economic and social history of the major industrial players – the Hudson’s Bay Company, the smaller Montreal trading firms, and others – but rarely do we hear about the life of the ‘suppliers’ on the trapline. It is an interesting story, the invisible backbone of the mighty fur trade empire that drove much of Canada’s development well into the 19th century, and in the northern boreal forest, well into the 20th. The seasonal nature of trapping, the kind of furs taken, the mechanics of setting up and running a trapline, and the connection between trapping, hunting, and other resource extraction activities will form the skeleton of this essay. Mechanization and transportation, the industrialization of the fur trade, changes in staple economics and Aboriginal society are key parts of this story. Trapping is not an isolated activity. It lies within a network of environmental, physical, social, political and economic

pressures that constantly hover over the question: is trapping merely an economic activity, or is trapping a particular way of life?

Fur Trade Overview

Aboriginal groups relied on the annual fur harvest to provide clothing, shelter, bedding, food, and utensils. Before European explorers and traders arrived, there was a vast network of intertribal trade of surplus goods – those over and above what was needed for individual, family, or band sustenance.¹ Fur pelts were traded for buffalo hides from the prairies, corn from further south, flint and basalt from over the mountains, or Inuit goods such as soapstone, whale, or seal products from the far north. This trade was steeped in the creation of alliances, marriages, trading partners, treaties of peace (and sometimes, declarations of war), and extensive rituals.²

The advent of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) introduced a new dimension to this trade. It wasn't only that new goods were introduced – such metal pots, knives, blankets and beads – but the way in which trade was conducted began to change. In the earliest years, canoe brigades from each band carried their pelts to the major forts on the Bay. Some of these brigades took many weeks to complete. Certain groups, such as the Cree, were advantageously situated to become 'middlemen' in a vast network of commercial trading, leveraging their proximity to the European fur trade posts into a sort of cultural brokerage, monitoring the amount of goods that moved into the interior of North America.³ In the late 1700s the Montreal fur traders moved into the vast western interior, building posts and taking goods directly to the First Nations customers. The HBC was forced to move inland to compete. This again changed fur trade needs, and set off an unprecedented period of growth. The fur trade developed into a complex business that involved

not only trappers, but a vast transportation and inland trading post network requiring boats, canoes, paddlers and voyageurs, food, builders, carpenters, labourers, women, children and animals, not to mention goods, in ever-growing numbers.⁴

Gradually, the alliances, rituals, and ‘treaty trade’ between First Nations groups gave way to a more simplistic but pervasive economic exchange, a bartering for goods according to the European model. This exchange grew to include items that initiated great cultural change, such as the gun which revolutionized warfare and hunting⁵, and the introduction of food staples such as flour, from which the First Nations made bannock.

As the European trade grew, it forced a re-examination of the land and its resources, which came to be seen as something to be owned, exploited, used, and cultivated for human benefit and profit, on the European model. Thus, the culture of trapping and trapline life drew from both models: the need to provide food and pelts for daily life; and the need to provide surplus furs to be sold or traded on a large scale.⁶ Life on the trapline was tied to this vast network of the fur trade; but its operation on a day-to-day and seasonal basis remained closely linked with the land and its resources.

The Land and Resources

Most trapping takes place in the northern boreal forest, which stretches from the northern edge of the prairie/parkland to the tundra. The Atlas of Canada describes it as “draped like a green scarf across the shoulders of North America.”⁷ The boreal forest ecosystem changes from south to north and from east to west, but overall it is dominated by needle-leaved coniferous trees such as spruce, fir, tamarack, and jackpine interspersed with broadleaved trees such as birch, poplar and

willow. Various mosses, lichen, and fungi are also found. Low marshy areas, known as muskegs, are filled with water, peat, mosquitoes, blackflies, and a variety of rare plant species.⁸

A vast array of animals live in this ecosystem, from beaver, otter, fisher, and muskrat in the ponds and streams to lynx, fox, coyotes, weasels, rabbits, bear, skunks, squirrels, mink, wolverines, wolves and larger fur-bearing animals such as moose, elk, and woodland caribou in the forest. All of these animals have been trapped or hunted and their pelts traded for profit or other uses, but their importance varied depending on fashion, market trends, and rarity.

Historically, a few prairie denizens have also been trapped for profit. Beaver and muskrat range into the prairie, as do gophers, groundhogs, skunks, rabbits, coyotes and foxes. Birds have also been successfully trapped, and offer both a welcome change in diet and feathers for ornamental and practical uses. Fewer traplines operate on the prairies, although the gopher population might start a new trend.

Each animal's pelt is used for a different purpose. For example, rabbit skins are soft and particularly warm, excellent for lining bedding or babies' winter clothing. Wolverine is particularly useful for lining parka hoods, as it resists the buildup of ice crystals. Luxury furs such as mink are used in fur coats. Tanned moose hide is used for all kinds of clothing, from mittens to moccasins.⁹

The beaver is perhaps the best-known fur-bearer in Canadian history. Beaver fur has 'barbs' which, when the fur was stripped from the hide and processed in factories, made a particularly strong felt for making hats. These felt hats were wildly popular in England and elsewhere throughout the 17th and 18th centuries – much of the fur trade was based on a long-

standing fashion trend! In fact, beaver hides were so important they became the ‘currency’ of the fur trade, known as the ‘Made Beaver.’ This standardized trade so that each HBC post would offer the same rate of exchange. One Made Beaver could buy (at Albany Fort in 1733) two pounds of Brazil Tobacco, or five pounds of shot, or twelve needles. Ten Made Beaver would buy a gun. The company also standardized rates across furs, as, for example, two otter pelts might equal one Made Beaver.¹⁰ James Clinkskill set up a store in the Saskatchewan region in the 1880s; his memoirs discuss trading and trade goods.

Natural furs and hides were among the most sought-after goods from the boreal forest. A renewable resource, fur and leather products generally go into the fashion industry. Protests by various high-profile animal welfare advocates since the 1980s have driven down both the price and demand for furs. Animal rights groups target leg-hold traps in particular, and there are many lurid websites calling for an outright ban on trapping. Some groups are famous for spray-painting expensive fur coats. However, trapping remains a traditional way of life for many First Nations, Métis and a few white trappers, commanding respect and esteem for their stewardship and knowledge of the land and its resources.

Choosing a Trapline

Choosing a trapline is a complex process, and binds two key factors: local resources and regulations. A trapline is established in a remote region of the forest, near good fur regions and game trails. Trappers spend time walking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and canoeing their proposed trapline to find game trails, dens, and habits of their target animals. Natural environmental constraints, particularly local animal populations, are important but an imbalance in the local

animal ecosystem can be carefully targeted and manipulated over time. For example, if the beaver population is low, a trapper can focus on another, more abundant local pelt until the beaver population recovers. Targeting fox and coyotes may allow rabbits to flourish.

Historically, some traplines were developed by family units and passed down through the generations, but these are rare. More often, individuals and family units trap in different regions of the forest each year, in response to external factors such as major forest fires, over-trapping, natural reduction or abundance in local furs, disease, proximity to a trading post or itinerant traders, or proximity to family, friends, or fur partners. Trapper James Ratt, for instance, moved with his family “from year to year around the vast region between the Foster Lakes, Wollaston Lake and Reindeer Lake.”¹¹ Aboriginal ‘fish camps’ of the Stō:lo nation of British Columbia have been in the same place for centuries; in contrast, the northern boreal forest Cree, Chipewyan, Métis and white trappers developed a more fluid industry that responded to local needs and pressures.

Although the trapping industry was traditionally self-regulated by local families and bands according to needs, local pressures, and individual abilities, trapping is now an industry highly regulated by the government.¹² Trappers require licenses issued by each province or territory. In Saskatchewan, those wishing to trap in the Northern Fur Conservation Area must first be a member of the regional trapping block. These trapping blocks are defined regions with specific borders and a regulated membership, usually centered near a village. However, membership in a northern fur block is restricted, and it can be difficult for young adults to become a member and take up trapping. Such restrictive measures, although good for local fur conservation, can cause friction and unrest in small communities with limited local economic resources.¹³

Seasons

The natural cycle of yearly seasons shape and define trapping. The main trapping season runs from about late October to May. In the late fall and early winter season, trapping is at its best: the furs are prime, which means that animals have developed the full-furred and luscious winter coat sought after by fur traders and fur buyers. Beaver and muskrat are taken first, generally in October, but after freeze-up in November, the overland animals are targeted. Conditions are excellent, as the snow is generally not too deep, and the animals are out and about, endlessly curious about their new, frozen world. Game trails are easy to find, and trappers can set up their traps and snares.¹⁴ The majority of a good fur catch comes in before Christmas, and most trappers take a Christmas break.

From January to March, furs are still taken and trappers like to be ready for the spring beaver and muskrat run before summer forces an end to the season. As the winter progresses, furs can become 'rubbed,' or start to lose patches of fur (general wear and tear from life in the forest) and begin to lose value. As spring approaches, fur-bearing animals shed their winter coats and grow a thinner, summer coat, again losing value. As spring arrives, muskrat and beaver are once again taken.

Most trappers move their furs to market in the spring, then take some time to rest. Summer is the off-season for furs. Few animals are trapped or snared in the summer season, unless for food. Fish and berries historically made up the summer diet of trappers. For many years, sturgeon fishing in the rivers supplemented a trapping income, as sturgeon bladders – known as *isinglass* – were marketed as a natural gelatin. Stripping the isinglass for market was a woman-dominated activity.¹⁵

It's important to remember that trapping was only one part of a typical trapper's yearly lifecycle. Few trappers – now or historically – derived their entire yearly income from the trapping season. Trapping was combined economically with other labour sources: manning voyageur canoe brigades, freighting, commercial fishing, lumbering, mining, and road or town building, all generally as wage (or, if for a trading post, trade) labour. Modern income industries have had a direct impact on local trapping. A trapline owner may choose to rent his trapline to another while pursuing more lucrative opportunities, or will only trap before Christmas and reserve the time from January to March for commercial fishing operations.¹⁶ This 'proletarianization' of trapping into a rental situation underscores an ongoing question about trapping: is trapping an economic activity, or is it a way of life?

Shelter on the Trapline

Trapping took place in the depths of a northern winter, and a trapper needed a warm place to live. Most trappers developed a permanent cabin at their 'base' camp, with two or three smaller satellite camps (sometimes called 'line' camps or 'out' camps) at various points along their trapline. A base camp was strategically placed near a good water source for transportation, water, and fish. Ideally, there was a stand of trees nearby to provide logs for cabin construction and firewood. Once the main cabin was built, a number of outbuildings might be erected for: storing food, pelts, and equipment; food preparation (such as smokehouses); dog shelter and usually, a toilet placed a strategic distance away. Although many of these base camps were constructed using only local resources – log walls chinked with moss and mud and roofs made with sod were common construction techniques – modern trappers might bring in processed lumber for doors or floors, glass windows, stoves, and other conveniences. Propane stoves,

fridges and heaters, battery-powered equipment enhanced camp life as those technologies became available in the early 20th century. More recently, a few cabins are close enough to power lines to draw electricity, meaning luxuries like electric lights, stoves and refrigerators can be used – if they can be hauled in – and the growing use of solar panels as a source of energy are transforming base camps.

Outcamps provided storage and a place to sleep and eat when out checking and setting traps on the trail. Outcabins were either cruder versions of main cabins, or more portable tents. These line cabins were more important when the main mode of transportation on the trapline was by sled dog, walking, or snowshoeing. The advent of snowmobiles in the mid- to late-twentieth century with their speed and strength, have limited the need for outlying camps.

Aspects of Daily Life

Until about the mid-twentieth century, Aboriginal traplines were often run by a family group, with specific gender and age roles incorporated into the daily routine. Men followed the trapline, setting bait and traps or snares, and returning with the catch. Women were in charge of processing the pelts, along with child care, camp cooking, sewing, and crafts. Other important chores included making dogsleds, snowshoes and fishnets, pelt stretchers, dog harness, moccasins and other clothing. Children and older family members looked after dogs, fished, carried wood, and picked berries along with learning how to skin and stretch a pelt. Family-oriented trapline life meant that children learned bushcraft from an early age, and were raised both to know the products of the forest, and how to prepare them for use or sale.

This kind of family-oriented trapline life was culturally-specific to Aboriginals – both First Nations and Métis. Although some Aboriginal men ran traplines alone or with one or two other men, family life was the norm. However, white trappers began to enter the north country around the turn of the twentieth century. During the Great Depression, many hundreds took up northern trapping and trapline life, in an attempt to eke out a living. Few of these men brought families. Their entrance into the northern trapping life put added pressure onto the limited local resources, and life became even more difficult. Once the Depression eased, many of these trappers left for better economic prospects in the south, although there remains a strong contingent of white trappers in the north.¹⁷

Trapping and trapline life cannot be discussed in isolation. Unlike other economic activities (like wage labour), trapping is part of a seasonal economic system and lifestyle that includes hunting, fishing, bushcraft, and gathering berries and medicinal plants. Forest products, particularly firewood, are another important bush commodity. Several studies have proved that, contrary to popular understanding of modern First Nations life, the bush harvest remains an integral part of the northern boreal forest economy.¹⁸

While out checking traps, a trapper kept a wary eye out for moose, deer, or other large animals to hunt for food. Indeed, if game or other food sources were scarce, a trapper would have to devote more time to finding food and less to trapping, which had an impact on both the trapper's economic stability and those of the larger fur trade.¹⁹ Time spent hunting and gathering meant less time trapping, and throughout the nineteenth century the HBC developed extensive food import strategies and generous subsidies to trappers to compensate for this gap. Some First Nations groups and medical historians

now point to the introduction of flour, pork, and other European commodities as fundamentally changing Aboriginal diet, with disastrous consequences such as diabetes and a reduced ability to use bush resources.²⁰

A large moose, shot in winter, could keep a family in frozen fresh meat for a long time. Game shot in the summer had to be cut in thin strips and dried for long-term storage, or smoked. Jerky and pemmican (dried pounded meat mixed with fat and dried berries) were traditional First Nations food and powered the voyageur canoe brigades of the past, while native hunters kept local trading posts in fresh meat.

Establishing a trapline near a lake or stream full of fish provided another source of food, both for the family and the dogs. Fish could be caught in nets, split open and dried on racks in the sun or over a green log fire, which generates lots of smoke. Different types of wood create different smoked flavours, and families experimented with different recipes. Fish for dog food could be caught and fed whole and frozen for maximum food value. In summer, after traveling to the post to exchange fur pelts for good and supplies, many families would camp by a river or lake for the summer months, fishing and preserving a supply of meat to tide them through the fall freeze-up.²¹

Fresh garden supplies were always a treat, and some trapping families developed extensive gardens at their base cabins, particularly through the 19th and 20th century, as agriculture became more established at the fur trade posts and southern farms. Potatoes often grew well, even in the shorter growing season, and records from missionary and trading posts indicate extensive garden plots, many of which included fresh greens, turnips, onions, and even grains in addition to roots crops such as potatoes and carrots.²²

The Fur Catch

The main purpose of a trapline was to trap furs and process pelts for trade and profit. Each furred animal was trapped or snared according to its natural inclinations or the trapper's preferences or legal restrictions.²³

While First Nations groups originally took their furs using devices made with local materials (sinew snares, arrows, deadfalls, etc.), the advent of European steel brought manufactured steel traps into use in the 1700s.²⁴ These steel traps were effective, but increased the cost of trapping. Traps had to be purchased and cached from year to year, maintained and kept in good working order. More than one trap size was needed, depending on the size and type of animal targeted.

Traps were set in strategic places on game trails, near dens or food sources. Bait or scent glands were often used to entice game into the traps, and each trapper tended to develop favourite 'recipes' for bait. Once traps were set, a trapper checked the trapline every few days, removing successful catches, resetting traps or snares that had been 'sprung,' tripped, or turned over, and taking the carcasses to camp to be turned into pelts for use or sale. As more pelts were processed, they were carefully stored to maintain quality until the trapper was ready to return to the local or regional center to sell the furs.

Fur farms were a twentieth-century innovation to the fur trade. Particularly on the southern edges of the boreal forest and into the parkland, entrepreneurs developed fur farms as an alternative to setting up and running extensive traplines. It is sometimes suggested that the quality of tame fur or pelts do not compare with wild fur. However, the animals can be kept in

relative safety and comfort, and their annual harvest does not use leg-hold and other less-acceptable trapping methods.²⁵

Transportation and Communication

Transportation routes in the boreal forest generally used established waterways and portages; overland routes were developed by blazing through the forest, cutting trees and widening trails. Such work was labour-intensive (and on a large scale, such as road-building, expensive) and was generally kept to a minimum, although northern road-building initiatives (such as the Roads to Resources campaign) opened up vast stretches of the boreal forest to vehicle and year-round traffic. The simplest winter travel utilized snowshoes – an essential northern transportation item, suited to short trips. In summer, canoes or small boats were essential, although the 20th century adoption of outboard motors has all but replaced long days of quiet paddling.

A typical dog team consisted of about five to seven dogs, and their toboggan. They could pull roughly their own weight (combined) in the sled, plus that of the trapper, or ‘musher.’ Fresh, deep snow was difficult for dogs to traverse; the musher would have to tramp in front of the team, making a track. Toboggans were made of light but sturdy material, with birch being a favourite.

Line cabins were generally placed roughly fifty kilometers apart – the distance a dog team could reasonably be expected to travel in one day. A trapper traveling the trapline would carry only essential goods, such as a bedroll, tea pail, grub sack, extra traps and bait, food for the dogs, and a gun with ammunition.

Perhaps the most important change in transportation on the trapline has been the introduction of personal snowmachines, or snowmobiles. From the original homemade contraptions to the coaches built by Bombardier in the 1950s and the luxury machines of today with hand warmers, foot warmers, electric start and reverse options, snowmobiles became the standard workhorses of trapline life. Snowmobiles offered strength and speed, allowing a trapper to develop a more extensive trapline. Steel traps were heavy. Their use required more dogs to pull a larger sled loaded with heavy traps; more dogs and equipment meant more expense for the trapper in food, harness, and a larger dogsled. As snowmobiles replaced dogs as the main transportation engine around a trapline, some older residents decried this change. Mourning the decline in dogsled use, older trappers pointed out that purchase, repair and maintenance of a snowmobile, including gas and oil, merely shifted the cost burden. If money was tight, dogs could be fed on local resources and in adverse conditions, a dog team could generally find its own way home.

Another significant change in transportation was the development of air travel. First used in the north following WWI, bush pilots and planes broke the isolation barrier of the north. Bush pilots have told harrowing tales of crashes and dramatic rescues. Airplanes had to be adapted to northern life: in the summer, planes were equipped with floats; in the winter, skis, to land on the large and small lakes. Planes became an important component of northern life, freighting in supplies, carrying out those who were sick or wounded, carrying messages and in general providing a faster line of communication and transportation to the convenient services found more abundantly south of the boreal zone.²⁶ Individual trappers on isolated lakes could put out messages or distress signals to airplanes flying over, or could order a mid-winter supply drop. However, there were drawbacks. Where once

canoe brigades trekked through the waterways and dogsled 'highways' connected communities, flying created a separation between the people and the land.²⁷

Communication in the north was also transformed, from the 'moccasin telegraph' to radio, two-way radio, cellular and satellite telephones, and even satellite televisions. Northern news moved quickly between isolated communities and from lonely bush cabins to the wider world. For some, improved communication ameliorated the most difficult aspect of northern bush life – extreme isolation. The so-called 'Mad Trapper of Rat River,' the Yukon trapper who led RCMP officers on a wild chase through the bush, is the most well-known example of the hazards of isolation. This kind of behavior – known as 'bushed' – appeared more commonly among single trappers, and less so for those who trapped as a family.

Market and Economy

Selecting, setting up, and operating a successful trapline was only part of the equation; a trapper must then move the furs to market. As with any staple industry, the fur trade relied on the economics of supply and demand: when demand went up, the price offered for the goods went up and more people become involved in trapping; when demand went down, a glut of furs on the market drove down prices. Knowing the fur price for each kind of animal was part of a trapper's strategy, targeting certain animals over others. However, this sometimes led to species overtrapping.

Historically, a trapper (or a band, or a group of trappers) would take their season's catch to the fur forts (such as York, Albany, Fort Prince of Wales, or others) in spring and early summer canoe brigades. As the fur trade forts moved inland and fierce

competition between the Bay men and the Montreal traders drove up fur prices, trappers only had to travel to local posts with their seasonal catch. Often this was done in two stages, one near Christmas with the late fall catch, and another in the spring, after the ice broke and canoes could once again be used. Trappers and hunters were considered one and the same thing; those skilled in bushcraft usually had not only furs, but fresh meat, jerky, or pemmican to bring to the market to trade for provisions or supplies. Although most posts operated fairly, trappers could take their furs to more than one post in the vicinity, shopping for the best price. Fur pelts were ‘graded’ according to their size, fur quality, and hide quality, and there was considerable room for negotiation in the final return.²⁸

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ‘tripping’ was developed, both by fur companies and private enterprisers. A ‘tripper’ would take a load of goods and provisions inland, seeking out trappers on their traplines, to trade in the comfort of their cabins. Although some trippers operated in early spring, most would go from trapline to trapline in the winter, using dog sleigh or horses over the snow. Many of these ‘trippers’ were Aboriginals who knew their tripping region and its people well. Trippers would trade astutely and usually ended with a profit, with far less effort on the part of either the trapper or the company.²⁹ Tripping developed alongside the more traditional market technique of visiting the fur trade post, but many trappers found such small-scale trading handy in the winter months, if supplies were running low.

The economics of a debt economy drove much of the fur trade for hundreds of years. Aboriginal people trading with the HBC took on ‘debt’. To outfit a season of trapping, or to procure supplies in a lean season, a trapper would take supplies on credit, in exchange for a promise to bring their next season’s fur catch to that post. This early method of credit benefited

both sides: the HBC took on a short-term loan to secure a supply of furs, and the trapper could access goods or supplies when necessary, such as in leaner seasons or just before fall trapping. In a barter economy built on the Made Beaver currency, this kind of exchange was clearly important.³⁰ Even later, as the Made Beaver currency gave way to money barter and exchange in the 20th century, many Aboriginal trappers preferred the HBC method of debt over the cash economy.

The direct connection between a trapper and the fur traders/HBC got a severe blow in Saskatchewan in the mid-20th century. The newly-elected Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government led by Tommy Douglas in 1944 set out to actively develop the provincial north, from its transportation network to its resources. Determined to “eliminate exploitation of the trapper,” it set up a provincial Fur Marketing Service.³¹ Furs were turned over to the local conservation officer, who paid fifty percent of their estimated value. The furs were shipped to Regina, sorted and graded, and sold at a fur auction. The returns, minus auction house and other fees, were returned to the trapper. It was an attempt to control and channel the fur harvest, but northern trappers vehemently opposed the scheme, which ended in 1955.³² One of the reasons the Saskatchewan Fur Marketing Board was so spectacularly unsuccessful was that it cut off the direct ‘debt’ relationship between the HBC and trappers – the HBC could not extend credit when it knew it would not get the furs.³³ Also, the trapper was forced to ‘camp out’ at the post office for months, waiting for the final cheque to arrive.³⁴ However, there has never been a significant return to the ‘debt’ economy.

Social Changes to Trapline Life

Trapping is closely linked to the land and its resources; as such, some aspects of trapline life have changed little in thousands of

years. However, researchers have noted some disturbing historical and contemporary insights that changed the social structure of trapline life. Where once traplines were operated by family units who would migrate to the trapline for several months, compulsory year-round schooling separated women and children from the trapline. Families became sedentized in local villages, unaccustomed to bush life, and children soon began to lose their bush knowledge and heritage.

This younger generation had a much harder time developing skills and instincts to run a successful trapline, and fewer took up trapping as an economic or social livelihood. Several communities in northern Saskatchewan have instituted classes to teach bushcraft, trapping, and traditional skills, but few of the students experience any long-term success.³⁵ The Sucker River ‘Old Things’ Project was a great example of remembering the past before it was lost. Fewer women on the trapline meant that Aboriginal men have learned to do jobs that traditionally were the women’s prevail: skinning and tanning hides, meal preparation, and curing meat for long-term storage. Perhaps, then, the knowledge has not been lost, but has merely shifted.

Another factor that has had an impact on trapline life has been the creation of federal social income support payments to individuals and families, particularly mothers’ allowances and welfare. Since the introduction of these programs in the 1930s and 1940s, combined with compulsory schooling, many trapping families have re-oriented away from the seasonal bush harvest to a monthly cycle of reliable wages and payments – something that trapping has never offered. Researchers are divided over the results: in some cases, it has been argued, these federal income support payments have undermined hunting and trapping economies; in other cases, federal

payments have helped people continue trapping, even though it is a more economically challenging way of life.³⁶

Conclusion

There are fewer trappers now than historically, and their numbers are fading. In part, this is the result of economics, with rising costs (snowmobiles, traps, oil and gas, marketing costs, food, guns and ammunition, etc.) eating up most, if not all, a trapline's profitability. Depending on the price and availability of prime furs, the cost of running a trapline far outweighs the potential profits. International markets dictate fur prices and the number of licensed trappers rises and falls accordingly, from a historic high in Saskatchewan of 26,100 trappers in 1979-80 to a low of 2,700 in 1999-2000. Trapping brings in roughly one to two million dollars in Saskatchewan per year, so it is no longer a significant part of the provincial economy, although still an important source of cash for low-income families throughout the province.³⁷ There is a practical side, too: the provincial government considers trapping a key strategy in controlling certain animal populations, particularly muskrat and beaver, who (as rodents) can quickly become local problems, changing watercourses and causing floods.³⁸

However, trapping is a traditional way of life for many northern Aboriginal people, and research clearly shows that life in the bush carries prestige and value. Although fewer people actively live the trapping/trapline lifestyle, what is carried out assumes greater importance in terms of maintaining a separate identity, a sense of continuity and a link with the past.³⁹ This is reflected in the way people speak about life in the bush: it's healthy, there is plenty of fresh air and water, wild game and berries, and lots of walking. In the bush, it's easier to avoid the pitfalls of modern life, including drugs and alcohol. Indeed, Pinehouse Lake in northern Saskatchewan developed a local

alcohol and drug detox center on a remote trapline.⁴⁰ These comments and examples show a shift in the way life on the trapline is viewed and its appeal advertised – it has changed from being an integral economic lifestyle to offering a clean, healthy and traditional physical, mental, and social way of life. Trapper James Ratt, sporting a wry smile and showing off a skinned bear hide, and flanked by his smiling son and granddaughter in the photograph by the Department of Northern Resources, would no doubt agree.

Endnotes

¹ There has always been some debate on this point. Many scholars prefer to believe that First Nations bands lived in complete harmony with nature, and that 'production and consumption were perfectly balanced.' Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba* (UBC Press, 1996), p. 14. However, archaeologists have pointed to evidence at dig sites that suggest a near-North American wide net of inter-tribal trade, suggesting at least a certain amount of overproduction to satisfy this demand. However, the shift to commercial production of furs is nonetheless significant.

² For an overview of the ideas of reciprocity, exchange, negotiation, trade, and kinship, see Jean Friesen, "Magnificent Gifts: The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the Northwest, 1869-76" in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada Series V, Volume 1, 1986*, 41-51.

³ See, for example, fur trade studies such as A.J. Ray's classic, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto, 1974); general First Nations studies are also helpful, such as J.R. Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (Third Edition. Toronto: 2000) or Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations* (Oxford, 2001).

⁴ The two classic works on the fur trade from a business perspective are Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930; republished by U of T Press 1999) and E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

⁵ See Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), chapter five.

⁶ For an excellent, although contested, article on the changes wrought by European technology and society on Aboriginal life in the boreal forest, see Peter J. George and Richard Preston, "Going in Between": The Impact of European Technology on the Work Patterns of the West Main Cree of Northern Ontario." *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 47, No. 2, The Tasks of Economic History. (Jun., 1987), 447-460.

⁷Boreal Forest

<http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/learningresources/theme_modules/borealforest/index.html> (retrieved March 20, 2008).

⁸ Prince Albert National Park is one of the few Canadian boreal forest parks. It has an extensive education program for visitors who would like to learn more about the boreal forest.

⁹ Charles Tuttle in his 1885 book *Our North Land* devotes an entire chapter to various fur-bearing animals of the North West and their relation to the fur trade. (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1885), chapter XXVI.

¹⁰ The rate of exchange at Albany Fort and York Fort are part of the massive HBC archives. Excerpts of these documents can be found at: <<http://www.hbc.com/hbcheritage/history/business/fur/standardtrade1733.asp>> (retrieved March 20, 2008).

¹¹ Graham Guest, Interpreter James Ratt Jr., “James Ratt: Lots of Changes in 50 Years of Trapping,” Department of Northern Resources newsletter, “Denosa,” Summer 1983.

¹² Each year, provincial governments issue Hunting, Trapping, Outfitting, and Fishing guides that set out the guidelines and regulations. See, for example, <<http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/deplist.cfm?d=66&c=511>>

¹³ Miriam McNab, “Persistence and Change in a Northern Saskatchewan Trapping Community,” unpublished MA thesis, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Saskatchewan, 1992.

¹⁴ Although told from a white trapper’s perspective, the enduring story by A.L. Karras *North to Cree Lake* explains the yearly cycle of the trapper. Karras’ description of the yearly cycle is corroborated by Miriam McNab’s work on Pinehouse: “Persistence and Change,” pages 66-67. Ed Theriau’s *Lost Land of the Caribou* in another good introduction, and provides a historical perspective on relations between Cree and Dene in the North.

¹⁵ Tuttle, “Our North Land,” page 329. He wrote: “From [sturgeon] the squaws take out the isinglass, which is one of the most valuable articles of commerce at the post.”

¹⁶ McNab, “Persistence and Change,” 70-80.

¹⁷ See Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada*, (McClelland and Stewart, 1988), in particular chapter 5, “The Wildlife Industries in Retreat, 1914-1967.”

¹⁸ Terry Tobias and James Kay, “The Bush Harvest in Pinehouse, Saskatchewan” *Arctic* 47 (3) 1994: 207-221.

¹⁹ Tough, ‘*As Their Natural Resources Fail*,’ p. 15. Tough’s work explicitly explains the relationship between trapping and hunting, and shows how the HBC imported food to give to trappers, so that they would not have to stop trapping in order to hunt for food. This separated traditional trapline life from economic trapping, and eventually led to the HBC practices of ‘debt’, extensive gift-giving, and increasing reliance by First Nations on non-bush food products.

²⁰ See, for example, Maureen Lux, *Medicine That Walks* (Toronto: U of T Press, 2001).

²¹ James Ratt, 1983.

²² James Ratt, 1983.

²³ Snaring is another form of trapping, using a wire loop to ‘snare’ an animal. According to white trapper A.L Karras, only Aboriginal trappers could use snares during the 1930s. *North to Cree Lake*.

²⁴ Robin F. Wells, “Castoreum and Steel Traps in Eastern North America.” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 74, No. 3 (Jun., 1972), 479-483.

²⁵ Selmer Ausland, “Memories of Deep River,” <http://www.jkcc.com/> Accessed April 9, 2008. See also Raymond Nixdorf, “Fur Farming and Industry,” *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/fur_farming_and_industry.html> (retrieved April 9, 2008).

²⁶ See the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Center website at <<http://www.bushplane.com/pilots.lasso>> (retrieved April 9, 2008).

²⁷ James Ratt, 1983.

²⁸ For a more detailed examination of the rise of market capitalism and fluctuation, the influence of the cash economy and the relative power of the trapper to negotiate prices, see Tough, ‘*As Their Natural Resources Fail.*’

²⁹ For an explanation of tripping, see Sydney Augustus Keighley, *Trader, Tripper, Trapper: The Life of a Bay Man* (Rupert’s Land Research Center and Watson & Dwyer Publishing, Winnipeg: 1989).

³⁰ Tough describes this ‘debt’ economy in detail.

³¹ See “The New North,” a pamphlet put out by the Saskatchewan Northern Development Program, 1945.

³² David Quiring, “Crown Corporations and Publicly Owned Enterprises.” Online *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* (retrieved April 2, 2008). <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/crown_corporations_and_publicly_owned_enterprises.html> . For a more detailed overview of CCF schemes in northern Saskatchewan, see David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers and Fur Sharks* (UBC Press, 2004).

³³ See *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, “Crown Corporations.” See also Ron Clancy, *True Lies of a Northern Fur Trader*. Excerpts published at <<http://www.jkcc.com/trader.html>> (retrieved April 3, 2008).

³⁴ McNab, “Persistence and Change,” 101.

³⁵ Both Pinehouse Lake and Black Lake have developed classes targeted at school age children, for example.

³⁶ McNab, “Persistence and Change,” 75-100.

³⁷ Mike Gollup, “Fur Harvesting,” *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* online, <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/fur_harvesting.html> (retrieved April 3, 2008).

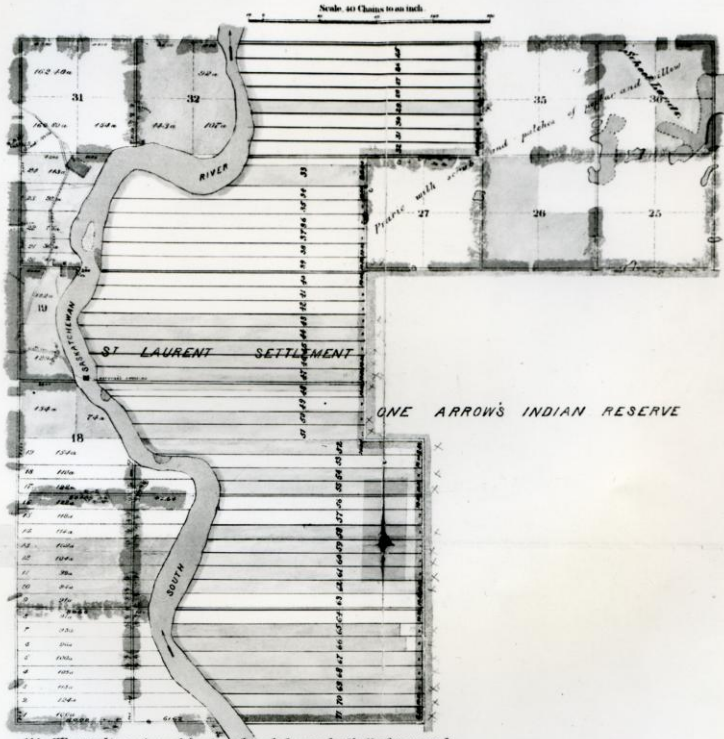
³⁸ Throughout the twentieth century, life in the north changed as various outside interest groups – from government to lumbermen, commercial fisheries, mining and resource development, sport hunters and tourists, and forest fringe attempts at agriculture – tried to shape, define, and control new ways of life in the boreal forest. These aggressive attempts had, in some

cases, a devastating impact on Aboriginal life. Tony Gulig, "In Whose Interest? Government-Indian Relations in Northern Saskatchewan and Wisconsin, 1900-1940," Unpublished PhD dissertation, History, University of Saskatchewan, 1997.

³⁹ McNab, "Persistence and Change," 2.

⁴⁰ McNab, "Persistence and Change," 170.

THIRD EDITION (CORRECTED)
 PLAN OF
TOWNSHIP 43
 RANGE 1 WEST OF THIRD MERIDIAN



Note: The portions coloured red are Lands reserved by the Government

Consolidated from surveys by
 J.L. Read D.L.S. 1879-89
 M. Adams D.L.S. 1879
 M. Hart D.L.S. 1884
 Chas. Pro. Leckie D.L.S. 1889

Dominion Lands Office
 Ottawa
 25th June 1890
 Approved and confirmed
H. W. G. G. G.
 Surveyor General

Contents	
Land in Sections	7 234 00 Acres
Roads	334 00 "
Water	" "
Total Area	7 627 00 "

EXPLANATION OF COLORS:
 Woods Green. Scrub Prairie and Woods Dotted green. Water Blue
 Marshes Yellow with small strokes of Black. Hills or Slopes Etching or Grey Shade.
 Brak (Burnt Woods) Brown. Settlers Improvements Pink

5976

Township Plan of Township 43, Range 1, West of the Third Meridian showing St. Laurent settlement and the Batoche ferry crossing; and location of plots relative to the One Arrow Indian Reserve. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Photograph Collection, S-B6500.

Métis Culture

Yvonne Vizina

Roots of traditional Aboriginal worldviews teach that there are four interconnected parts to life including *mental*, *physical*, *spiritual* and *emotional*. Looking at how culture exists also means looking into these four different, but symbiotic aspects of life. Today, the importance of understanding these aspects of culture are more broadly known and adopted. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) explains that "...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs..."¹ This article will explore Métis culture from within the framework of a traditional Aboriginal worldview.

Coming to Know: Métis Culture

The Métis Nation emerged from within the Métis Nation Homeland during the seventeenth century, as a result of the French and English fur trade. At that time, Canada did not exist as a country² and the provincial governments we know today in western Canada would not exist for another 200 years. Marriages between European fur traders and First Nation women produced children of mixed ancestry, who eventually became known as Métis, 'Half-Breeds,' or 'Country Born' people. Establishing relationships with Aboriginal³ women gave fur traders valuable contacts with tribal communities, and

tribal communities with regular access to trade goods. The women were also able to teach the traders local languages, show them how to survive on the land and tend to domestic affairs such as preparing food, constructing shelters, and making clothing. Daughters born from these unions usually carried on traditional roles taught by their mothers. Sons grew up to enter the fur trade, become hunters, trappers, or canoemen. Those with schooling were able to become clerks or interpreters at the trading posts.⁴ The development of a unique Métis culture began to unfold.

In the spirit of the French voyageurs during the fur trade, Métis men used the superior wilderness skills of their Indian heritage to create their own *esprit de corps*. As agents of the Hudson's Bay Company or the North West Company, Métis men could easily be identified by a blue *capote* (coat), beaded pipe bag and bright red *L'Assomption* sash, which together created a kind of cultural uniform⁵. The Métis even invented their own particular language known as Michif, which was a mix of both European and Aboriginal languages, generally French and Cree or Ojibway. The life of Métis men was rigorous, days were long, work was extremely hard, and always, life and death depended on their skill in the wilderness. During this time, the Cree gave the Métis a name, "o-tee-paym-soo-wuk," which means "their own boss." This characterization underlines the Métis spirit of pride and independence. The versatility and ability of Métis men and women to withstand incredible tests of intellect, strength and endurance during the fur trade, contributed to a growing sense of consciousness of what it was to be Métis. That sense of character, combined with a shared Métis history and language, created a sense of nationhood which would have a significant impact on the development of Canada itself.

During the mid-eighteenth century, the horse was introduced which brought a new means of hunting buffalo and transporting goods. The Métis highly valued their horses, were expert marksmen on horseback, and loved to engage in horse-racing to increase their riding skills, and for the pure joy of it. As the fur trade pushed farther and farther to the western regions, trappers and traders needed a food supply that would not spoil. Dried buffalo meat mixed with fat and wild berries known as pemmican became a valuable commodity sold by First Nations and Métis to the fur trade companies⁶. Horses helped the Métis develop the local buffalo hunts and pemmican trade across Canada and the northern United States. Although this was good commerce for the Métis, in 1814 Miles Macdonnell, the Governor of Assiniboia, issued a proclamation prohibiting the Métis from selling their goods to the fur trade companies, and a second proclamation prohibiting the Métis from hunting buffalo on horseback. Growing animosity between the fur trade companies resulted in a terrible confrontation over pemmican in 1816 at Seven Oaks, in which twenty-one settlers and one Métis were killed⁷. This marked the first time the Métis flag was flown. The flag was emblazoned with the *infinity* symbol, symbolizing two cultures together forever, and demonstrating a statement of nationhood.

On July 1, 1867, Canada became a country governing the newly created provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and entered into negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company to purchase the North West Territories,⁸ as the west was then known. The Métis were not consulted in the negotiations, and land surveyors had begun moving into the Red River area to alter the land divisions from long strips designed by the Métis for their use into an American-developed system of square plots designed for new settlers. The new development strategy was seen as a threat to Métis cultural, political, linguistic and religious, rights, and

resulted in the formation of a provisional Métis government in 1869 to negotiate a list of rights with the federal government. Through this process, the province of Manitoba was created and land was promised to the Métis based on a system of scrip land and money coupons.⁹

The Scrip system was a colossal failure from the perspective of the Métis. The federal government did not start issuing Scrip until 1873 and by 1875 three different methods of allocation were introduced; each cancelling out the previous one, resulting in many Métis losing title to their land to settlers. As a result of the lack of justice, relations broke down between the Métis and the federal government. Conflict emerged again as the Métis tried to stand their ground. English-speaking settlers placed a \$5,000 bounty on Métis leader Louis Riel, who managed to escape to the United States. Ambroise Lepine, Riel's Adjutant-General, was arrested in 1873. With the continuous influx of settlers, many Métis left the Red River area and resettled at Batoche and surrounding areas.

There had been a presence of Métis for many generations in northern, central and southern Saskatchewan. It was natural for other Métis to seek out family, friends and familiar lifestyles in areas similar to what they knew. Settlements were already established at Qu'Appelle, Willowbunch, St. Laurent, St. Antoine de Padou (Batoche) and St. Albert (near Edmonton). Northern Métis settlements such as Ile-a-la-Crosse had existed since the early days of the fur trade and were thriving communities. Their desire for peaceful existence was not long-lasting as the surveyors and Scrip Commissions made their way west.

The Métis were not generally accepted by whites or Indians. They were not included in treaty systems and were ineligible for land grants offered to other settlers. Instead, the federal

government continued to insist on the Scrip system as it was intended to extinguish the Aboriginal rights of the Métis¹⁰. The Scrip system was rife with fraud facilitated by the representatives managing the system, land speculators and other wishing to dispossess the Métis of land. Eventually, the Métis were forced again to stand their ground over rights, resulting in a battle with the Canadian militia in 1885 at Batoche.

Coming to Act: Métis Culture

The Métis have been an important part of Canadian history standing for cultural, political, religious and linguistic rights, demonstrating ingenuity creating political and social structures, technology and trade systems, as well as developing a unique presence in art, music, dance and storytelling.

Among the activities Métis are best known for historically are buffalo hunts. The hunts were not just hard work, they were also festive events. Hundreds of families in military precision made the journey to Pembina, Minnesota where the hunt began. Noisy Red River carts were brightly decorated and hunter's horses proudly adorned with intricate quill and beadwork decorations. When it began, the buffalo hunt was extremely dangerous, but horses and riders were a skilled, fearless team able to take down as many as twelve animals in a day. Métis women and children followed behind the hunters skinning the animals and preparing the meat for drying. At the end of the hunt, boisterous parties were held, celebrating a successful hunt. Energetic dancing, fiddle music, card playing and storytelling were all part of the festivities.¹¹

The Métis lived neither a quiet nor sedate lifestyle and celebration was an important part of the culture. Horse racing, horse-trotting, and winter sleigh racing was also enormously

enjoyed as good sporting activities. As a matter of Métis pride, it was also very important to have the horses outfitted with flashy beadwork and colourful saddlecloths.

The Red River Jig fiddle tune has come to be known as the unofficial Métis anthem. It is believed to have been created by the Desjarlais family of the Red River colony. Métis fiddle music and performance was influenced by Scottish, Irish, French and Indian traditions resulting in a unique style. Vigorous foot tapping is believed to have originated as a replacement for Indian and Celtic hand drums.¹² Métis music was intended for social purpose, especially dancing. This became so popular that it was not uncommon for weekly dances to be hosted at someone's house where several fiddle players would combine their talent and visitors would dance all night long. Sometimes, dances lasted several days¹³. In order to accommodate more people, furniture from the house would be piled up in a corner or put outside until the dance was over. Since the houses were small, people would have to take turns dancing. The most popular dances were the rabbit dance, the duck dance, la dance du crochet and the Red River Jig.¹⁴

The artistic skill of Métis women was demonstrated in practical application of clothing design as well as decorative elements of outfits worn by people, horses and even dogs. The unique combinations of European and First Nations economic, social, political and spiritual traditions as an expression of Métis cultural identity gave rise to them being referred to as 'Flower Beadwork People.'¹⁵ Coats, mittens and caps for people were finely decorated, but the Métis honoured the important relationships they had with their animals by inventing elaborately decorated equipment for them. Horse halters, bridles, martingales, blankets, pad saddles, pouches and whips were colourful expressions of skill and artistic design. Dogs too were invaluable companions and workmates, earning

custom-made blankets called *Tuppies* or *Tapis* to wear. Each was decorated with wool yarn, bells, flower beadwork or embroidery. It is said that when the bells jingled in time to their running gait, the dogs seemed to enjoy the sound and gain inspiration in the same way highland pipes inspired regiments.¹⁶ Many floral beadwork patterns were adopted by Indian women, and Métis-style coats made from hide and decorated with porcupine quills became popular with Europeans.¹⁷ Métis women produced many of their crafts for commercial purpose.

Until most recent times, most Métis spoke multiple languages and many were literate in French or English. The Michif language, rooted in a mixture of French nouns and Cree or Saukteaux (Ojibway) verbs, was a unique outcome of Métis mixed ancestry and creativity. Just as the grammar and lexicon of Michif is unique,¹⁸ the stories of the Métis also combine elements, perspectives and traditions of their ancestral lineages. Stories were generally used as teaching methods, a way of passing on cultural history, but Métis storytellers were also well-known for fantastic embellishments intended to make others laugh, or to frighten a little, thereby making the teller a good entertainer. William Henry Jackson (Honoré Jaxon), secretary to Louis Riel in 1885, spent most of his life collecting Métis historical documents and photographs which were lost to the New York City dump on his death in 1952 at the age of 90.¹⁹ Louis Riel was one of the first Métis poets and his spiritually-inspired creations are still published today.²⁰ The tradition of literary art and poetry is carried on by Métis writers including Rita Bouvier²¹ and Gregory Scofield.²²

Coming to Believe: Métis Culture

The spirit of the Métis and the spiritual practices of the Métis are as complex as the ancestral roots of their Indian and

European culture and languages. During the time of the fur trade, the Métis middlemen, who worked between their fathers' and mothers' cultures, were highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church and sometimes assisted missionaries in spreading the teachings of the Church "telling their wife and children of the Creator and of our duties towards Him, making them pray as they themselves did, baptizing people in danger of death, giving the dead a Christian burial..."²³

This, however, did not mean that Métis relinquished their Indian cultural belief systems, and were comfortable blending them together. Ann Acco (Carriere) of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan explains:

"Women look after the spiritual needs / knowledge of the family. You must be able to pray for yourself. I originally thought that this was because of the Christian ethic in our communities. However, after sifting through all known material and the ceremonies attached to the cultural markers, it is clear that knowing how to communicate with Kitchi-Manitou is beyond culture and ego. This is very important. Women who have no belief system when they are becoming part of a family will sometimes be shunned. "How will the children survive?" becomes the question."²⁴

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, politicians and clergy determined that Aboriginal Peoples would not willingly give up their ancestral belief systems necessitating a strategy to remove the children from their homes and begin a thorough assimilation and indoctrination process.²⁵ The eventual creation of the notorious residential schools meant multiple generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit spent many years

of their lives within these systems. The intergenerational impacts of neglect, abuse and efforts to erase the inherent identity of those children are still felt forcefully today and likely will continue for generations to come.

Throughout Métis history, spiritual beliefs and political views were important parts of Métis life. These were things worth fighting for.

Coming to Feel: Métis Culture

Métis history and culture is steeped in laws and ethics that are designed to overcome challenges and give strength to persevere in the face of enormous adversary. The Provisional Government developed in Red River in 1869 and the List of Rights sought to bring order and protection for the Métis way of life in the face of changing times and pressure from settlers pouring into a new land. The Laws of the Prairie assured everyone knew and understood rules of behaviour to ensure a successful buffalo hunt. A vigorous letter-writing campaign by Louis Riel and Métis efforts to utilize the democratic election process showed their strong desire to negotiate a peaceful settlement to disputes with the federal government over encroachment on Métis land and self-governance. In spite of all their efforts, the fiery spirit of the Métis inevitably led to battles at Seven Oaks in 1870 and Batoche in 1885.

The aftermath of the 1885 battle at Batoche left a grieving Métis Nation. Fewer than 300 Métis and Indians led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont defended Batoche from the 800-strong North-West Field Force, commanded by Major General Frederick Middleton. While the Métis successfully disabled the *Northcote* steamer bringing militiamen, Middleton's land forces were well equipped with guns and ammunition, four nine-pound canons and a Gatling gun. The Métis held out for

four days. Riel and Dumont both escaped, but Riel later gave himself up.²⁶

After 1885, the Métis were branded as rebels and traitors and were relegated to living on road allowances. Mainstream society rejected Métis people, and the federal government refused them recognition under the *Indian Act*. The Métis have endured many hardships economically and politically, forced to live in poverty between worlds, and denied the right to education because they did not pay taxes.²⁷ Over the next several years, contemporary Métis leaders including Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris brought Métis issues into political discussions to raise awareness and argue for the right to a better life.

Despite many hardships, Métis People have persevered. For many years, in the absence of political structures, processes of friendship and reciprocity remained intact. Howard Adams, a well known contemporary Métis educator recalled,

...my memory of a reasonably happy childhood is consistent with most Métis children of St. Louis-Batoche. Since the area included such a large population of Aborigines, most lived at the same poverty level. It was an understood equality that did not base status or hierarchy on material wealth. I remember ... when the Vizinas, a neighbouring couple, dropped in to visit. Dad suggested to Mom that she make a snack for them, and she had to answer that we [had] nothing, no food to eat. Then he suggested at least a cup of tea, but she claimed that we had no tea. At which point Dad got up and took the water pail and said, “Well, I’ll get a

pail of water, and we can at least have a drink of fresh water.²⁸

Howard Adams died in 2001 at the age of 80. He had grown up in the Batoche area and gone on to become a professor of education at the University of Saskatchewan, sharing his knowledge of Métis history with hundred of teachers in training, staff and faculty members. Today, the Métis Nation continues to press for rights as a means of preserving cultural traditions and as a means of bringing honour to past, current and future generations of those proud to call themselves Métis People.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2003) <http://www.unesco.org/education/imld_2002/unversal_decla.shtml#2> (retrieved 21 March 2008)

² Government of Canada was formed in 1867 with jurisdiction over Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 5.

³ The term Aboriginal is used here to indicate that First Nations, and in later generations, Métis women were selected as partners by the fur traders.

⁴ MacLean, H. *Indian, Inuit, and Métis of Canada*. (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1982), 91.

⁵ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. (Calgary, nd), 4.

⁶ Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 10.

⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁸ Ibid, 21.

⁹ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. Calgary, nd, 14.

¹¹ Ibid, 6.

¹² Whidden, Lynn. “Métis Music” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine (eds.). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001, 169.

¹³ MacLean, H. *Indian, Inuit, and Métis of Canada*. Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1982, 93.

¹⁴ Whidden, Lynn. “Métis Music” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine (eds.). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001, 170-171.

¹⁵ Troupe, C. “Métis Material Culture and Identity” in *Expressing Our Heritage: Métis Artistic Designs*. L. Dorion-Paquin, D. Prefontaine, T. Huntley, and T. Paquin (eds). Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid. 39-41.

¹⁷ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. Calgary, nd, 8.

¹⁸ Bakker, P. “The Michif Language of the Métis” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine. (eds). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 177.

¹⁹ Smith, D. *Honore Jaxon: Prairie Visionary*.
<<http://www.coteaubooks.com/bookpages/honore.html>> (retrieved 22 March 2008)

²⁰ Day, D. *The Visions and Revelations of St. Louis the Métis*. (Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 1997).

²¹ Bouvier, R. *Papiyahtak*. (Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 2004).

²² Scofield, G. *I Knew Two Métis Women*. (Victoria, BC: Polestar Book Publishers, 1999).

²³ Recorded by Rev. A.G. Morice, O.M.I., *The Catholic Church in The Canadian Northwest*, as cited in Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 10.

²⁴ Acco, A. “Traditional Knowledge and the Land: The Cumberland House Métis and Cree People” in *Métis Legacy*. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine, (eds). (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001), 129.

²⁵ “Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools.” <<http://www.wherethechildren.ca/en/impacts.html>> (retrieved 22 March 2008)

²⁶ “Batoche National Historic Park.” (Canada, 1986).

²⁷ Shore, F. “The Emergence of the Métis Nation in Manitoba” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine, (eds). (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001), 77.

²⁸ Adams, H. *Howard Adams: Otapawy!* H. Lutz, M. Hamilton, and D. Heimbecker, (eds). (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2005), 6.



Detail of dancers at Beardy's and Okemasis First Nations International Pow-wow, 24-26 August 2001. University of Saskatchewan Archives, Hans Dommasch fonds (MG 172)

“Tawow” Welcome To Pow-wow Country!

Patricia Deiter

Pow-wow to the First Nations people of Saskatchewan is a way of life and a symbol of cultural survival. We have more pow-wows here in Saskatchewan on an annual basis than any other province or state in North America. Saskatchewan pow-wows can be labeled as the best in North America as our dancers and drum groups are proven champions throughout North America. This dance form is traced to the Omaha and Pawnee people of the southern United States and came north through the Dakota people. In their honour, the Plains Cree refer to the dance as the *pwatsimowin* or the Dakota dance.¹

The term pow-wow appears as early as 1903 in the historical records for Saskatchewan, used by Church missionaries lobbying the federal government to have pow-wows banned. A history of pow-wows in Saskatchewan reflects the struggles that confronted First Nations to retain their traditions and spiritual beliefs. Today, Pow-wows have become a source of identity for First Nations and a school for our children to begin to learn their Indian heritage.

The History of Pow-wows

The 1876 *Indian Act* established laws and policies that were directed towards the assimilation of Indian people. The spiritual gatherings of Indian people in the west were targeted by the government from 1884 to 1951 to not only assimilate First Nations but to also detribalize First Nations. The *Indian Act* of 1884 set the stage to prohibit the Potlatch ceremonies for First Nations in the west coast. This provision was expanded in 1895 to include Indian dances and ceremonies in which gift

giving was practiced. The 1895 amendment to the *Indian Act* read:

Every Indian or other person who engages in, or assists in celebrating or encourages either directly or indirectly another to celebrate, any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods, or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at, or after the celebration of the same, and every Indian or other person who engages or assists in any celebration or dance of which the wounding or mutilation of the dead or living body of any human being or animal forms a part or is a feature, is guilty of an indictable offense.²

The ceremonies were banned by government as they recognized that the ceremonies were connected to all aspects of Indian life and that the ceremonies undermined their assimilation policy. Church leaders vehemently opposed Indian spiritual beliefs, ceremonies and dances. Indian farm instructors argued that time spent away from farming was costly; while Indian agents argued that the costs associated with gift giving and the making of regalia was too much for an impoverished people. A main concern on the prairies centered on the Sundance, the major spiritual ceremony for the Plains people. The Sundance ceremony is the most sacred of plains ceremony and was the main ritual in which prayers would bring life. The pow-wow is a more secular dance but just as loved by the people as it is a gift from the spirits that brings happiness to their communities.

The campaign to suppress all forms of Indian dancing in Saskatchewan was taken up with a vengeance by the infamous Father Hugonard, principal of the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School. In 1903 he wrote the first of many letters to the Indian commissioner expressing his disapproval of pow-wows.³ Hugonard recorded that he saw pow-wows as “the hotbed of Indian ways, laziness, and discord, and he recommended that Indian agents refuse all favors to known dancers.”⁴ The Father's stated concern was that his graduates were returning to their communities and resuming their traditional practices.

In answer to the campaign of Father Hugonard, Indian leaders, from Pheasant Rump and Striped Blankets (Ocean Man) band, petitioned the government to allow them to hold their dances just as white people enjoy their dancing.⁵ Indian Affairs Inspector William Graham believed that to allow the Indians to hold pow-wows would be to stall their progress towards assimilation. Graham wrote to Indian agents in Saskatchewan that they should not tolerate pow-wows on their reserves.⁶

Despite threats from government, First Nations continued to practice their traditional ceremonies. Many attended the dances, which had to be held in secret. Some Indian agents were supportive of the ceremonies providing that the events did not include the prohibited “giving away” or piercing referred to in the 1895 amendment. The Indian Agent for the Moose Mountain Agency was chastised for not enforcing a total ban on Indian dances by Inspector William Graham.⁷

First Nations also adapted their ceremonies to accommodate the concerns of the Indian department. Whitebear, Pheasant Rump and Striped Blanket bands agreed to not give away, or consume the sacrificial dogmeat if permission could be granted to hold their dances.⁸ Others agreed to shorten the length of

the ceremonies to be similar to the European Canadians' days of rest on weekends and holidays.

Chief Thunderchild pressured authorities to retain the dances based on Treaty negotiations. He stated that he was assured by the Treaty 6 negotiator that they would be allowed to continue their dances.⁹ In 1911, a delegation of elders present at the signing of Treaty 4 traveled to Ottawa to discuss Treaty violations and to address their concern that Treaty did not prohibit their traditional ceremonies. They were assured that they could practice their ceremonies as long as they did not practice Giving Aways or mutilations. The official clarification of Section 114 for these elders gave rise to increased number of open ceremonies much to the dismay of the local officials and missionaries.¹⁰

By 1913, Father Hugonard reported the dancing at fairs and celebrations had increased on all reserves with the exception at File Hills and Oak Lake. Pow-wows were popular tourist attraction for white communities at local fairs and parades.

Pow-wows found support with various exhibition associations. Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert associations supported Indian villages as part of their exhibitions which combined with the Calgary Stampede, Brandon and Winnipeg fairs encouraged First Nations people to continue pow-wows.

While the government withheld rations to known dancers, the pow-wow organizers distributed rations to Indian camps and paid Indian people to put up their teepees at the fair grounds. They also held competitions for the best traditional dress.¹¹

Through these efforts, Indian crafts such as beading, tanning of hides, and the making of traditional clothing were promoted and preserved through generations.

Archival photos indicate pow-wows held at various exhibitions with one of the earliest occurring in Yorkton in 1908. Once again the Department of Indian Affairs attempted to suppress Indian dances for tourism with legislation. Section 149 of the *Indian Act* was amended in 1914 to read:

Any Indian in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia or the Territories who participates in any Indian dance outside the bounds of his own reserve, or who participates in any show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant in Aboriginal costume without the consent of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs or his authorized Agent, and any person who induces or employs any Indian to take part in such dance, show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant, or induces any Indian to leave his reserve or employs any Indian for such a purpose, whether the dance, show, exhibition, stampede or pageant has taken place or not, shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty-five dollars, or to imprisonment for one month, or to both penalty and imprisonment.¹²

In 1915 Father Hugonard complained to the Indian Department that Inspector Graham obviously did not have enough power to stop the pow-wow since all of the reserves in the south were still holding pow-wows. Hugonard's request was granted by Duncan Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in August 1915, when a circular letter was sent out to all Indian agents instructing them as follows:

It is observed with alarm that the holding of dances by Indians on their reserves is on the increase, and that those practices tend to disorganize the efforts which the Department is putting forth to make them self-supporting. I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavours to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing. You should suppress any dances which cause waste of time, interfere with the occupations of the Indians unsettle them for serious work, injure their health or encourage them in sloth and idleness. It is realized that reasonable amusement and recreation should be enjoyed by Indians, but they should not be allowed to dissipate their energies and abandon themselves to demoralizing amusements. By the use of tact and firmness, you can attain control and keep it, and this obstacle to continued progress will them disappear.¹³

Following the 1914 amendment and the policy circular, Indian ceremonies and pow-wows were suppressed on the prairies by withholding food rations, arrests, and police intimidation used to halt Indian dancing. Indian people responded by sending petitions, organizing political forums, adapting ceremonies into shorter time frames, and also resorting to use of Canadian courts and the outright disregard of the law in order to continue their spiritual practices.

The persistence of Indian dances and ceremonies throughout this period is a testament to the strength of First Nations ability to survive and adapt. Today, special mention is made at pow-wows for the Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation and Thunderchild First Nations who both managed to continue to

host pow-wows for more than 75 years despite the government's overt attempt to ban First Nations' dances.

The Second World War influenced pow-wows in a significant way. First Nations people in Saskatchewan enlisted in the Canadian army in great numbers. When they returned home, they demanded freedom of religion and the right to practice their traditional ceremonies and dance. The post-1945 the Indian contribution to the war effort elevated Indian policy to the public sphere. Veteran organizations, churches, and citizens groups across the country call for a Royal Commission to investigate Indian life. Parliament established a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons to hear various reports on Indian life. In the end, the Joint Commission recommended that the government continue an assimilation policy for Indian people but reduce the overt oppression contained in the *Indian Act*. The result was the *Indian Act* in 1951 that allowed First Nations to continue their traditional ceremonies including pow-wows.¹⁴

By the 1950s the overall effect of the Indian Act legislation and policies of assimilation and detribalization had made an impact on the ceremonial life for First Nations. Because of the residential schools, Indian children were ashamed to participate and Indian elders were afraid to share and promote their traditional knowledge. Some of the rituals themselves were discontinued or altered but the pow-wow endured and became even further enriched to include community giveaways and honouring, as well as fulfilling other ceremonial functions. The impoverished condition of reserves encouraged First Nations to continue to seek the support of non-Indians to host pow-wows at exhibitions and local fairs.

The pow-wows sponsored by the exhibition associations played an important role in promoting dancing. Photographs

indicate Indian camps at the following exhibitions: Saskatoon in 1943 and again in 1958; and Yorkton in 1958. First Nations looked with great enthusiasm towards camping at the exhibitions.

During the 1960s pow-wows became increasingly popular events during the summer months on reserves. One factor that promoted pow-wows was an influx of oil money that allowed the American reservations just across the border to host major celebrations. Reservations like Fort Peck, Montana hosted two or three major pow-wows annually which in turn drew Canadian Indians across the borders to participate and compete.

The Contemporary Pow-wows

Contemporary pow-wows are either traditional or competition pow-wows. The traditional forms are held on reserves and lack the competition programs for dancing and drum groups. Contemporary pow-wows include competitions which encourages high quality dancing and superb regalia. Champion dancers have to be fine athletes but they must also have the support of craftspeople to make their beadwork, feather work, and other materials needed to compose traditional dance outfits. Today, dancers and singers compete for cash prizes that allow some dancers to become professional pow-wow people. These professionals earn their living from dance competitions and from making pow-wow regalia.

Pow-wows celebrate the circle of life by bringing our communities together to sing, dance, and renew kinship bonds and friendships. The dancers form the center of the circle, with drum groups around them forming another circle, with the audience as the next circle.

Each session of dancing begins with a Grand Entry, a processional of all the dancers and dignitaries of the community. The dancers enter the circle, grouped by age and dance style. The national flags are carried in by the lead dancers. First Nations' veterans and dignitaries follow the flag and led the grand entry procession. The Grand entry is followed by a prayer and a Flag song to honour our nations. The next song is a Victory song which reflects pride in our cultural survival.

Inter-tribal dancing forms the core of the pow-wow celebration. All the dancers, regardless of age or categories enjoy the intertribal songs as they dance in harmony.

The dancers all wear their own unique outfits, which are made either by themselves or by friends and relatives. A dancer's Indian name or spirit helpers may appear on the designs. The pow-wow outfit is considered sacred and brings honour to the spirit world, the dancer, their family and their tribal community. Dance Competitions and specials, in the form of give-aways or special contests, complete the pow-wow program. The Competitions are a crowd favourite as dancers are judged for their rhythm, foot work, endurance, and style.

One aspect of pow-wow that cannot be overlooked is that of honouring the First Nations veterans. Veterans carry flags in Grand Entry, retrieve eagle feathers and provide prayers throughout the event. The honour displayed to the veteran is a reflection of our value placed on people who provide a service to people. The Veterans' willingness to give their lives in the service of others merits our highest respect. This honouring of the veteran is also an old tradition for the plains people who have a warrior tradition.

The drum is referred to the heartbeat of our nation. The drumsticks connect the spirit of drum and with the spirit of the singers. Many of the drums used at pow-wows have been handed down within families or given to a drum group. Most of the drums have been ceremonially blessed and must be smudged and prayed over before being used.

The drum also refers to the singing group which may consist of any where from four to twenty singers. Many singing groups have sung together for a number of years and have an established reputation. Pow-wow committees usually extend an open invitation to singing groups and are honoured when a large number of groups respond. Throughout the pow-wow a variety of different types of songs are heard depending on the event.

Drum groups are required to sing Honour songs, Flag songs, intertribal songs, competition songs that are unique for each group, and round dance songs. The songs differ in tempo and words but they all follow a similar structure. Some songs may be very old passed down through generations and others are recent compositions. The singers depend on their lead singer to set the tempo and melody for the song. Lead signers are greatly appreciated as they rely solely on memory for the variety of songs that they will sing at pow-wows. Songs cannot be recorded and then sung publicly by another drum group. There are traditional protocols to observe in transferring songs.

Pow-wow includes many honourings by community members known as Give-aways or specials. The Celebration could include events such as a hoop dance but the core is the intertribal dancing and competitions. Once the competitions have concluded, the flags are danced out and thus ends the pow-wow for the day.

Dance Styles and Regalia

The dance style and regalia of the contemporary pow-wows have their origins in the ceremonies and warrior societies of the Plains tribal groups. Some styles, such as the Women's Jingle dance, are recent additions to our northern pow-wows but have become a part of this continuing tradition.

The dancer's regalia reflect standards established for each category and also reflect the dancer's tribal group and individual beliefs. Some of our dancers will wear geometric designs common to Plains people while others will have floral patterns embedded in the outfits to reflect their woodlands background.

Many dancers use modern materials to construct their regalia such as sequins, glass beads, and coloured fluffs, but the style remains distinctively Indian.

All the outfits are handmade and are considered ceremonial regalia. Dancers are not free to lend out their regalia and nor should their outfits be handled by spectators.

Men's Traditional – Original and Contemporary

The men's traditional dance stems from the days when hunting and war parties upon returning to their home village would celebrate their success by recounting their encounters with the prey or enemy by re-enacting them through dance.

The regalia worn in the men's traditional style is highly symbolic and the colours are more subdued than those worn in other men's dance styles. The traditional dancers wear a single bustle, which is made of eagle feathers. The bustle is representative of the battle field and its circular shape is

symbolic of the cycles of nature and the unity which exists among all things.

Most male dancers wear a headdress called a roach. These roaches are made from the hair of a porcupine and vary in size according to the category. The men's traditional dance roach is long and often topped with two eagle feathers that signify enemies meeting in battle. The dancers usually carry items that denote their status as warriors such as a shield, coup stick (which is used to challenge the enemy and is decorated with eagle feathers representing achievements earned in battle) and an eagle wing fan. Their regalia could also include the following: beaded breech cloth, cloth leggings, breastplate, chokers, necklaces, feathered or animal headdresses, pipe bags, war clubs, shields, beaded cuffs, eagle feather fans, bells and miscellaneous other parts.

Each dancer relates his story of a hunter stalking game or a re-enactment of a battle. The dancers will frequently turn their head from side to side in search of their game or enemy. Frequently, the men's competition will include a shake and stomp dance. The shake dance has a fast steady beat in which the dancers are to imitate the actions of a prairie chicken, moving their muscles and body in time with the music.

The Men's traditional dance has two styles: contemporary and traditional. The traditional outfit is more subdued with more subdued movement. The contemporary style dancer is flashier in coloring and more active in movement.

Men's Grass

During this century the grass dance has been the most dominant of men's dance styles in the Northern plains. This style of dance was introduced into the Northern Plains and

promoted by the Dakota who purchased, from their Omaha relatives, the right to organize grass dance societies and execute the ceremonial dances of the society. Membership in the Omaha Society, as it is called by the Dakota was extended only to the most accomplished warriors who wore braids of grass tucked in their belts during the society dances thus giving rise to the name grass dance.

The Plains Cree used this grass dance to demonstrate the men's ability to control their muscle movement to song. This style of dance is known as the traditional Grass dance style and is distinctive as the dancers rely on body movement not foot work to demonstrate their skill as a dancer.

The most distinctive feature of male grass dancers is their long flowing fringed outfits that vary in style and color. Their regalia are without the feathered bustles and miscellaneous adornments of other male dancers' outfits. The longer-haired porcupine roaches with eagle feather stripped except for the tuft, color-coordinated beaded headbands with circular rosettes, beaded chokers, beaded wide belts with side drops, beaded moccasins, heavier bells, apron breechcloths and leggings fringed with horse hair distinguish the outfits worn by the grass dancers.

The style of grass dancers is comprised of easy flowing body movements of rises, falls and turns, imitating the motions of eagles and other graceful birds. The controlled use of intricate and shuffling footwork, arm and head movements and a variety of combination are also typical to grass dancers. Those dancing this style characteristically shake their shoulders, sway their torso from the hips in a side to side motion, dart suddenly changing their direction, and employ a series of trick steps, giving them the appearance of being off balance and resembling the grass blowing in the wind. The dancers keep

their heads moving up and down in beat with the drum or give a quick nod with each beat to keep their roach feathers moving, which is a sign of a good dancer.

Men's Fancy Dance

There are two stories of origin for the men's fancy dance. A champion fancy dancer from North Dakota once explained the origin of the fancy dance as arising from a ceremony in which a man was so grateful to that ceremony and the drum style that was used to doctor his loved one that he made a special outfit and dance to honour this way of prayer. The ceremony used the fast beat of a water drum and the dancers are to coordinate their feet and body work to move as fast as the drum. The brightly coloured feathers of the original ceremony are also reflected in the bright vivid feather bustles of the men's fancy dancers.

Another story traces the men's fancy style of dance to the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show days of the late 1800s that operated in the northern United States. The war dance performers were asked to wear two bustles and to make their regalia more colourful. They were also encouraged to jazz up their steps and movements. The modern fancy dancer was only recently introduced to the prairies during the late 1950s, coming from the tribal groups in Oklahoma.

The men's fancy dance incorporates acrobatics, spinning, and speed with the standard double steps and movements of the grass dance style making it a very challenging dance style. The dancers execute fancy footwork and an array of complex moves while keeping beat with the drum and in competition must stop with both feet on the ground or in a split precisely when the drum stops. Trick songs, with unpredictable stops, are often sung for men's fancy dance competitions and

exhibitions. This dance is also a test of endurance that warrants great muscle control. The dance is extremely vigorous demanding perfect rhythm, coordination and strength.

Prairie Chicken Dancers

The Prairie Chicken dance has been influenced from both the Plains peoples' warrior societies and the Plains Cree Prairie Chicken ceremony. The dance is distinctive in style of bustle which is made from with prairie chicken feathers. These dancers also often carry mirrors that remind us of the role of scouts during the pre-reserve period when mirrors were used to communicate during times of war or hunting. These dancers imitate the movements of a prairie chicken when dancing. The dancer's artistry should reflect the warrior's spirit to become one with his surroundings when in battle or scouting. He should be so careful in his movement and actions, that his enemies would mistake him for a prairie chicken.

Women's Traditional-Stationary and Walk About

In the past women only danced on the sidelines in support of the male dancers unless songs were sung specifically for them to come out into the centre to dance. Their styles of dance were very modest and dignified, the most common being the stationary, the graceful walk, and the side step. It was not until the evolution of the contemporary pow-wow, in the 1950s, that women came out to dance along side the men in intertribal dancing. The women's traditional style of dance carries forward the dance traditions of women and is either done stationary or in the manner of the graceful walk.

When dancing stationary the women remain in one place bending their knees slightly and moving their bodies subtly up and down in beat with the drum while slowly moving their feet

to make a discreet turn in one direction and then the other, symbolically, seeking the return of their warriors. Those dancing the graceful walk take discreet steps in beat with the drum.

The stylized walk is a forward “two tap shuffle steps” with the body posture held erect and body bobbing up and down, bending lightly at the knees in time to the rhythm while moving their bodies slightly from side to side while the body posture remains erect. One hand is usually on the hip and the other carrying a shawl.

The women raise their fans when the honour beats are rendered. The symbolism associated with this act varies in First Nations. For some, only those who have lost a son, brother, or husband in battle who may raise their fan and it symbolizes their unending quest for their return. Other use the fan to honour the eagle, a symbol for the Indian way of life. They raise their eagle fans in the honour beats to honour this way of life.

The women’s traditional dancers wear long fringed buckskin dresses with solidly beaded yokes, matching wide beaded belts, braid wrappings, knee high beaded moccasins called “high tops;” long fringed shawls complete the beauty of the outfits.

Women’s Jingle Dress-Original and Contemporary

This style of women’s dance is believed to have originated in the Mille Lacs, Minnesota area where it is said that an Anishnabe man dreamt of women wearing dresses adorned with tin lids cut in a fashion so they would jingle. The tin used to make the jingle cones are made from tobacco lids. Tobacco is considered sacred and used for prayer and therefore this dance dress is considered as sacred.

In the vision given to Anishnabe people, these dresses were to be used for doctoring and specific songs are used for the Jingle dance. It is recorded that the people of White Earth in the 1920s gave the jingle dress to the Dakota who promoted this style of dance in pow-wows. Following the introduction of the Women's fancy shawl style of dance, the popularity of the jingle dress style began to decrease and all but died out until the early 1980s when it was reintroduced.

Today there are two forms of Jingle dancing: contemporary and original style. In contemporary, the women carry fans which they raise during the honour beats of a song and their steps are similar to the women's fancy dance steps. In the original style, the women's foot work is closer to the floor and their outfits are characterized by a lack of fans or feathers.

Women's Fancy Shawl

Plains Cree women before 1960 wore beaded capes made of velvet and danced in fast steps that seemed to hover just above the ground. Influence from the United States in the 1960s gave rise to a new style that was added fancy footwork, spins, and the use of shawls. The dance requires agility, strength and endurance. One of our champion dancers noted that she honours the butterflies in her dance movement.

Today, the women's fancy dancers typically wear multicoloured cloth dresses with satin ribbon edgings. Matching beaded yokes, beaded wide belts and "high top" moccasins complete their outfits. The female fancy dancers also wear feathered hair pieces, "designer" shawls with long multicoloured fringes to enhance the overall color coordination and beauty of the outfits.

The contemporary women fancy dancers' style of dancing is similar to the male fancy dancers' vigorous turns, whirls, changes in body positions and intricate footwork but are executed on a smaller scale and without the acrobatic variations. The drum beat used for their competition is often slower than that used for the men's fancy dance but only the skilled can keep in step with the fast beat. Footwork is the chief element of the women's fancy dance.

Closing Comments

Today, pow-wow dancers are considered contemporary warriors, who are the survivors of a war that has been won in terms of retaining an Indian way of life. To be a pow-wow participant is to honour the struggle of our ancestors and their desire to preserve Indian cultural ways. The pow-wow is Indian and, as long as it continues, we as Indian people will continue.

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Detail of arrowhead blade. University of Saskatchewan Archives, JWT Spinks fonds, MG 74.

The Changing Relationship between First Nations Peoples and Museums

Meagan Gough

Humans have both an inquisitive and acquisitive nature. Historically, these qualities of our nature have been most poignantly represented within museums. However, currently the return or “repatriation” of First Nation’s cultural property in Canada from museums back to their communities of origin is of significant social, cultural and political interest to Aboriginal Peoples. Repatriation is a process that is complex and continually changing, so we must first start by exploring what influences the possibilities and limitations of repatriating cultural property.

To this end, the following questions need to be answered: what information do First Nations’ individuals and communities need to participate successfully in this process? There has been a dramatic shift in the last 15 years surrounding the explicit moral and ethical consequences of repatriation for First Nations and museums regarding the management of cultural property. The process is complex and serves to illuminate cultural politics. A synthesis of the vast amount of material that informs repatriation, including contemporary guidelines and ad hoc policies, is potentially instructive to communities intending to repatriate. How, for example, does a community initiate the return of their sacred objects? What are the possibilities? What are the limitations? What information is relevant and useful? Who do I speak with?

A discussion of these issues has been limited here in order to manage a topic which is extremely complex. Specifically, we will explore the process of repatriation with a focus on the dissemination of knowledge that a community needs to make informed decisions. There are numerous other practical issues involved in repatriation once objects have been located within museums. A sample of issues that arise once the process has been initiated include: the availability of funding required by communities to visit museums and verify objects' authenticity; the determination and implementation of culturally appropriate means of handling, storing and identifying objects on behalf of cultural institutions; the use of chemicals to treat objects within museums and the potential threat this poses to communities planning to put them back into use once repatriated; and finally, the complex issue of cultural affiliation.

In order to contextualize this discussion of the repatriation process, it is useful to examine the meaning and implications of the terms “cultural property” and “repatriation” within contemporary discourse. A brief historiographical sketch illustrates how changing definitions influence contemporary museum legislation and policy.

Prior to the 1970s, First Nation's cultural property as a social construct largely related to material culture of a cultural “other” considered distinct from the Western world. Anthropologist and museum expert James Nason articulates the development of the concept of cultural property as the following: “The contemporary battle over the control of this significant heritage of (Native American) cultural property began in earnest in the 1960s within an international context of massive looting of archaeological sites, widespread museum and heritage centre thefts, and associated smuggling and other illicit transfers of cultural property from their places of origin. Scholarly outrage and general public concern with these

matters grew as information about the sheer magnitude of these abuses became more and more apparent.¹ As a result of this alarming situation, the 1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* was held. “The convention did more centrally establish for the first time international guidelines that cultural property of all kinds should be protected by all Nations and should be the subject of repatriation when illicitly removed.”² Simultaneously, the Convention generated a new definition of cultural property: all possible objects of importance to archaeology, anthropology, history, literature, art, or science, including fauna, flora, minerals, palaeontology, monuments or parts of archaeological sites, antiquities, all types of artworks, incunabula, documents, stamps of all sorts, furniture and musical instruments, and all archival materials. Nason notes that “Of special interest here is the inclusion in the last category of documents, books and photographic, cinematographic, and sound recordings, all key forms of what has become known as intellectual property.”³ For the purposes of a contemporary discussion of repatriation, a broad definition of cultural property is useful and provides insight into the range of possibilities relating to repatriation efforts.

What emerged in the late 70s and 80s was a shift to include “intangible cultural property” in discussions related to repatriation. “Intangible cultural property” is defined as “broadly based, and ranges from concerns about the maintenance of traditional languages, to concerns about traditional religious lore and practices, traditional and detailed knowledge of the natural world, and all types of oral history, oral literature and other knowledge that could generally be referred to as ‘lore’.”⁴ James Nason notes in the article “Native American Cultural Property Rights” that “Whatever form it takes, such specialized knowledge is characteristically regarded

as property within tribal legal systems and therefore constitutes a key form of traditionally defined intellectual property.”⁵ The value of such “intangible” forms of cultural property is expressed by Athabaskan Elder Angela Sidney in comments about her oral tradition, a form of intangible property to her: “I have no money to leave my grandchildren. My stories are my wealth.”⁶

The removal or “appropriation” of intangible cultural knowledge, (or what is often now referred to as intellectual property) as a component of the larger appropriation of Aboriginal material culture is an important ethical consideration for scholars and those who work with Aboriginal communities. These “intangible” forms of cultural property are considered of special or sacred importance to Aboriginal communities, and have been acquired both knowingly and unknowingly by researchers and scholars.⁷ This knowledge, including oral history, tradition, language of origin, song, knowledge of natural features and ceremonial practices is represented in various contemporary repatriation efforts, and illuminates the need to examine the diverse categories that have historically defined ‘culture’. The concept of repatriation similarly developed into a component of the contemporary discourse in the eighties and nineties. In Canada, there was a series of historical events that generated awareness of the process. It is important to consider the developments of this historical climate and dominant narrative in order to contextualize the contemporary debate.

A major catalyst for re-evaluation on issues of Aboriginal representation and management of cultural property was provided by the 1988 Calgary Olympics as a result of *The Spirit Sings* exhibit put on at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. The Lubicon Lake Cree of Northern Alberta protested the exhibit, claiming both political and ethical reasons for their

reaction. Members of the Lubicon community decided to boycott the exhibit partially because it was sponsored by Shell Oil, which was drilling in the area claimed by the Lubicons' as their traditional land.⁸ Aside from the political and economic reasons the community had for their protest, "it was assumed that *The Spirit Sings* only pertained to the Native peoples of the past."⁹ The community asserted that confining images of "Indianness" to an ethnographic past while overlooking contemporary social and economic issues which their community faced was morally and ethically objectionable. The protests raised questions such as "who owns the past?" and "how do notions of 'authentic' Aboriginal culture manifest themselves within museums?," initiating a dialogue within the academic and museum communities, as well as among the public, that reflected on representations of Aboriginal communities, management of cultural and intellectual property and the repatriation of such knowledge, that continues today.

As a result of *The Spirit Sings*¹⁰ and the ethical and epistemological issues raised by it, the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) Taskforce on First Peoples was organized by the CMA and the Assembly of First Nations in 1990. As outlined in its mission statement the Taskforce's mandate was to "...develop an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutions."¹¹ The Taskforce, which had an unprecedented number of scholars and Aboriginal people as participants, sought to provide guidelines for relationships between museums and First Peoples that would be less problematic, and this simultaneously brought the concepts of repatriation into a National dialogue for the first time in Canada.¹²

Contemporary repatriation efforts within Canada are largely guided by various informal or "ad hoc" policies, but are

influenced by American legislation as well. While keeping in mind a broad definition of cultural property, a synthesis of relevant policies and legislation is at this point useful. In the United States, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed in 1990, affects all contemporary repatriation efforts. NAGPRA is relevant to Canadian First Nations repatriation efforts when objects are located in American museums. Notably, NAGPRA's working definition of cultural property, or objects that fall under its control, is much narrower than the UNESCO definition mentioned earlier, which includes intangible forms that are often also kept in museums having been acquired by scholars as descriptive forms of the objects collected. NAGPRA deals with the ownership and control over Native American "cultural items," which are defined as the following within the legal parameters of the NAGPRA legislation: "human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony."¹³ Through the application of this definition of cultural property, NAGPRA focuses on the following: the establishment of procedures and legal standards for the repatriation of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and cultural patrimony by federal agencies and certain museums, educational and other institutions and local governments; as well as the recognition of tribal and Native Hawaiian and individual rights in regard to burial sites located on federal and tribal lands. Also characteristic of NAGPRA is that it only relates to the repatriation of cultural property within the public realm and does not address repatriation within the private sector, which includes auction houses and private collectors. Within Canada, there is no federal legislation comparable to NAGPRA, and therefore repatriation efforts are subject to the discretion of museum directors and the protocol established by various ad hoc museum policies and treaty precedents.

In 1990, the CMA Taskforce concluded that it was more relevant to handle repatriation efforts on a case by case basis. Although this method has been the subject of much debate among scholars and First Nations, the following are some of the major policy developments that inform the process.

The 1990 CMA Taskforce had a major impact on the relationships between museums and First Peoples and subsequently, on the issue of repatriation. A result of the symposium was a definite ideological shift, if not a purely pragmatic one, which has had an impact on the considerations that museum personnel are willing to make for contemporary repatriation efforts. The principles and strategies outlined in the Taskforce are considered useful and relevant to contextualizing repatriation in Canada.

Individual museums have developed their own policies to address the issue of repatriation, and one of the concerns about having “ad hoc” policies instead of enacted legislation is that there may be large discrepancies in how the museum will approach repatriation. This is evident in how various museums provide access to resources needed by communities to repatriate.

The Museum of Anthropology (MOA) in Vancouver serves as an excellent example of providing useful and accessible information to communities intending to repatriate. On the museum’s website¹⁴ the following useful information can be found: guidelines for repatriation and the management of cultural property within the museum; information regarding how to make a claim for an object or file a request for information regarding the location of an object both within the museum and in international and American collections; how to request information relating to a specific object known to be in the collection for example, when it was acquired and its current

condition. A sample request letter is provided to illustrate clearly the information a community is required to provide, and to help make the application process easier for people and communities who may not be familiar with formal museum protocol or dealing with institutional practices. The webpage also provides links and contacts to museum personnel, as well as specific names of contacts at various international and U.S. museums.

The MOA did an excellent job at making the required information accessible. By considering the diverse local needs and circumstances of the Aboriginal communities the information is intended for, the MOA illustrates how both the medium and the message are intrinsically linked to informing the possibility of repatriation.

The dissemination of knowledge on behalf of other museums can be very problematic, and illustrates the limitations that communities face while engaging in this process. Such limitations are inherently political, and are articulated in anthropologist Adrian Tanner's notion of 'symbolic politics.' Symbolic politics, claims Tanner, "...involve demands made by Indians - demands which the Government does not, or cannot understand or respond to, and to which it only replies with offers of items other than those being demanded...*Since* it is clear to the Indians themselves that their demands are not actually up for negotiation."¹⁵ A second kind of politics that emerges between Indians and the State "pertains to an Indian group's negotiation and attempts to make gains, but within the dominant society's own formulation of an issue."¹⁶ These politics, which can be easily observed in the failure to provide access to necessary information to participate in repatriation, constitute "sites of cultural politics," which are a result, Tanner argues, of how Aboriginal people are situated within dominant cultural and social systems. He notes: "Indians constitute a

political minority which is largely external to the normal political system, and does not have the same notions about the legitimacy of the state.”¹⁷

As a result of such politics, privately funded organizations have been working to develop a better approach to participating in repatriation by developing tools to gain the information required. One notable example is the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation (AIORF). AIORF is a foundation created to educate communities and collectors, and to help facilitate the repatriation process, in the United States. The organization provides information resources to communities intending to repatriate both public and private collections. As mentioned earlier, private collections are not subject to the NAGPRA law, and AIORF aims to monitor the transfer of cultural property in this sphere. AIORF’s publication *Mending the Circle: A Native American Repatriation Guide*, which is “designed to aid the reader in seeking the repatriation of specific items,”¹⁸ is one of the most comprehensive information packages available relating to issues and questions about repatriation. The guide is designed to inform Aboriginal communities about the process of repatriation and about the status of the museum or institution currently in possession of the material, while simultaneously providing the parameters of repatriation efforts related to “institutions and individuals that do not receive Federal funds and are therefore defined as the ‘Private Sector.’”¹⁹

The work of AIORF and others represent a growing self-initiated attitude among stakeholders in the repatriation process who have found the institutional channels either unsatisfactory or overly consuming in terms of time, expertise and financial resources. In order to fully demonstrate both the limitations and issues that are potentially faced by communities and individuals engaging in the process of repatriation, a social,

historical, political, epistemological and cultural context must be presented. In addition to the previous discussion, it is essential to critically examine museum policy and practice, local First Nations perspectives of such practices, and certain related anthropological themes.

Following are what I have defined as key sites of cultural politics related to repatriation and pertain to areas that are currently or have been historically problematic to the development of effective cultural property management policies. The following categories – appropriation, ownership, representation, authenticity and voice – are a reflection of the contemporary discourse as it relates to the relationship between museums and First Peoples.

Appropriation, defined as the means by which objects were acquired, should be examined in both legal and ethical terms, as it determines the parameters of contemporary repatriation efforts. The means by which an object was appropriated necessarily impacts the mode and possibilities of repatriation. In Canada, as occurred elsewhere for Aboriginal peoples, the last 120 years has been characterized by an unprecedented amount of collecting involving “cultural property,” including what have been previously defined as “intangible” forms. To put the magnitude of such collecting in perspective, James Nason notes, “Native Americans are among the most, if not the most, studied people in the history in the modern world.”²⁰ Such collecting was particularly rampant on the Northwest Coast at the turn of the century when “ethnographers, museum curators and anthropologists suddenly discovered the art of the northwest coast.” Specifically, “the period from 1880-1900, collectors combed the region in what has been described as a ‘collecting rampage’.”²¹ The excesses of this era are exemplified by the following scenario: “In 1897, an Anglican clergyman at the Masset complained in a letter to the

newspaper that ‘every (Native) grave has been rifled and the boxes that contained the bodies left strewn about.’ It is said that by 1910, most traditional objects of value, including totem poles had been removed. The Natives had been divested of almost every traditional object that they owned.”²²

Anthropologists at this time, working within the salvage paradigm of anthropology, moved towards cultural property with a sense of urgency. As has been the dominant narrative for the majority of the past century, the widespread ideology was that Native people were disappearing. As Adolf Bastian reflected “What can be done must be done now. If it is not, the possibility of ethnology is forever lost.”²³ The notion of both a moral and scientific mission permeated collecting in the late 19th and early 20th century and raises valuable ethical considerations in a contemporary repatriation debate. Franz Boas’ reflections at a potlatch feast in Fort Rupert in 1930 foreshadowed the contemporary implications of the mass appropriation of cultural property: The host chief, Boas wrote, made a speech while the meat was distributed, saying: ‘This bowl in the shape of a bear is for you’, and you, and so on; for each group a bowl.” The speech was the same one that he had heard often before, as he noted: “But the bowls are no longer there. They are in museums in New York and Berlin!”²⁴

Although many objects of cultural significance were appropriated through “legal” means, the illegal appropriation of objects has also clearly occurred and may be illustrated through the Kwakwaka'wakw²⁵ potlatch collection. What is distinctive about this collection is that “Unlike other cases of objects appropriated by scholars, missionaries or traders, the “potlatch collection” as it is now known was acquired by the Federal Government of Canada as a result of the 1885 amended Indian Act which outlawed Native participation in the potlatch.”²⁶ This amendment to the Indian Act also restricted Plains

people's participation in the spiritually and culturally significant Sundance ceremony. As a result, "Indian Agent William Halliday, in Dec. 1921, was able to obtain 45 convictions. With 3 on appeal, 20 individuals, (including ranking chiefs and women) went to prison. However, 22 received suspended sentences in return for agreeing to hand over their potlatch regalia. A total of 750 objects were turned in, for which the Government gave the Natives collectively \$1,495."²⁷ Anthropologist Ira Jacknis notes that "the Kwakwiltl never forgot the 1922 "confiscation," but until the Anti-Potlatch Law was dropped in 1951, there was little they could do."²⁸ The historical circumstances surrounding the appropriation of the Kwakwaka'wakw 'potlatch collection' influenced both the form and meaning that future repatriation efforts would take within the community. The first recorded efforts to have the so called 'potlatch collection' returned date from 1958.²⁹ The Kwakwiltl, in anticipation and preparation for the return of the collections, successfully acquired funds in the 1970s for two cultural centers in which to house the collections.³⁰ In 1992, 70 years after the initial confiscation, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) returned 9 of the objects to the community.³¹ Efforts are still ongoing, and most recently masks have been located at the British Royal Museum in England, which is currently refusing the return of the masks. The repatriation of the "potlatch collection" has been interpreted by Ira Jacknis as an ongoing social drama beyond the return of the objects themselves. Drawing upon anthropologist Victor Turner's model of the four phases of social drama: (breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration), Jacknis reflects that "For the Kwakwiltl, the events of 1922 have become a central point of reference in the definition of themselves and their relation to the dominant society. The confiscation marks a time of oppression and forced culture change, and the outcome of the drama, the return of the artifacts, symbolizes their new relationship with white

society.”³² The historical facts of the appropriation of the potlatch collection clearly influenced the mode and form of repatriation and served to illuminate the Kwakwilt communities’ history, so that in essence the return of the objects symbolically marked the return and reintegration of their history and survival as a community.

A discussion of appropriation necessarily leads towards an examination of ownership within the context of cultural property. How do museums define ownership? How do these definitions vary cross-culturally? As Aboriginal scholar Deborah Doxtater notes, “In the past, most of the debate concerning ownership of Aboriginal cultural property has focused on the distinction between “moral” and “legal” ownership” and she asserts that “museums are quick to point out that the vast majority of their collections were acquired through legal transactions made voluntarily by Aboriginal people, and that, were it not for museum collections, the objects and collected information might not have survived for the potential use of Aboriginal people at all.”³³ And yet, regardless of the means by which the objects were acquired, the fundamental and defining aspect of this debate is that there are two very distinct cultural systems and ideologies present, illustrated by the belief that, as Doxtater claims: “For Aboriginal people, culture encompasses much more than the objects, but the objects cannot easily be separated by the culture, which includes the languages, beliefs and objects. In Euro-Canadian terms, people ‘own’ their heritage. In Aboriginal terms, the culture ‘owns’ the people.”³⁴ The idea of nationalism plays a part in how Canada as a nation, and subsequently museums, have defined the role and purpose of Aboriginal people, culture and knowledge. Doxtater relates these notions of nationalism to a museum setting: “Moral ownership, of which the museum claims a kind, (the responsibility to the public)...is a result of Canadian

nationalism exerted since the 19th century over peoples with whom Canada had made nation to nation treaties.”³⁵ These conflicting ideas of ownership and priorities amongst the key stakeholders in a museum setting (First Nations and the museum or institution) are very problematic, and have serious implications for Aboriginal communities. Responding to the institutional resistance that some repatriation efforts encounter, Doxtater asks of the public: “Is your enlightenment a priority over the communities to which these objects belong?”³⁶ Similarly, Michael Ames, Canadian anthropologist and former Director of the MOA, relates the potential to engage with cultural knowledge and history to an underlying power dynamic that is characteristic of Aboriginal relations with museums when he notes: “Since those who control history benefit from it, people have a right to the facts of their own lives.”³⁷

Emphasizing the importance of ownership to Aboriginal communities, Doxtater reiterates the connection between knowledge, history and identity: “It’s a human responsibility. Everyone has to own who they are. You have to own who you are because if you don’t take responsibility, somebody else will, and when that happens, you end up having to live within the confines of what other people think your life should be.”³⁸ Ownership defined exclusively in legal terms is limiting to the development of a genuine and effective understanding of Aboriginal cultural property as it relates to repatriation efforts.

Issues of representation have become a focal point in the discussion between museums and First Nations. Historically, the representation of Aboriginal people within a museum setting has been marked by little collaboration or involvement by Aboriginal people. As outlined in the CMA Taskforce, one of the most valuable components of developing improved relations is for Aboriginal people to be able to represent

themselves and their own histories. There are two essential aspects of the notion of representation that are being addressed in the contemporary discourse on the topic.

The first is an ideological shift that has occurred within the scholarly community in the last 15 years, moving toward employing reflexivity within museum settings to situate Aboriginal culture and property within a more holistic context; one that includes the social, historical and political context within which it exists.

The second involves a pragmatic or applied shift towards increased First Nations participation, to create their own representation and simultaneously to engage with their own culture and history on a deep and meaningful level. The related concept of self representation, linked to self determination and notions of cultural autonomy permeates all forms of the contemporary dialogue or narrative between First Nations and Canadian society, and has been a major focus in developing improved relations between museums and First Peoples. How museums represent First Nations cultures, or more fundamentally *that* they embody this responsibility, lies at the heart of the contemporary ethical and political debate. The questions are not new, as illustrated by Boas' early reflections that: "The character of an ethnological phenomenon is not expressed by its appearance, by the state which it is, but by its whole history."³⁹ But the solutions are more holistic within a contemporary context. Increased pressure by First Nations peoples for inclusion of their voice within their own cultural representations has been a catalyst for museum personnel and scholars to reflect on the "construction of representation." The introduction of reflexivity among anthropologists and museums with regard to cultural representation and interpretation is a component of the post modern shift in anthropology in the late eighties and nineties.

A host of scholars have contributed to a re-assessment of the means by which the cultural ‘other’ is represented. Anthropologists Jacknis and Dominguez advocate that one way to remedy such misrepresentations of culture within a museum setting is that scholars and the museum going public “not limit themselves to studying the first or original meaning of objects (that is, to the makers or original users) or to spending all their energies on attempts to reconstruct that early meaning.”⁴⁰ Rather, these scholars and others suggest looking at the social, political and cultural “life” of the objects while they are in museums – the history of their removal, attempts to have them returned, the way they are classified and displayed – and what this teaches us about Western society.

Similarly, James Clifford’s art-culture system also advocates the inclusion of a cultural object’s social, political, historical and cultural meaning within museum exhibits, aspects typically excluded in favour of an emphasis on aesthetic values or representations of primitivism. Clifford advocates that in this regard “it is important to resist the tendency of collections to be self sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic and political processes of their own production. Ideally, the history of its own collection and display should be a visible aspect of any exhibit.”⁴¹ One of the means by which representation is to be addressed within a museum setting is to situate the cultural object within the most holistic context possible, one which includes the political and social realities of its own existence and appropriation.

Authenticity is a related concept that emerges as a result of historical museum representations and changes within the narrative related to First Peoples. It is important to consider questions such as: what criteria have been historically implemented by both museums and the greater Canadian public to define “authentic” representations of Aboriginal culture(s)

and, how have these categories and definitions impacted relationships between museums and First Peoples over time?

In Canada, challenges to socially and historically constructed ideas of what determined authentic Aboriginal culture began to arise in the late 1980s when an ideological shift within academia and museums began to occur. Michael Ames reflects on this shift: “What is significant about the 1980s is after 100 years and more of boxing others, museums (and their academic counterparts) are only now beginning to hear what the objects of classification, especially those same indigenous groups, have been saying all along: they want out of the boxes, they want their materials back, and they want control over their own history and its interpretation, whether the vehicles of expression be museums, exhibits, classroom discourses, or scholarly papers, textbooks and monographs. Since those who control history are the ones who benefit from it, people should have the right to the facts of their own lives.”⁴²

The Spirit Sings exhibit also had a profound impact on integrating notions of authenticity into contemporary discourse in Canada. The protests by the Lubicon Cree and numerous other Aboriginal people demanded that a paradigm shift occur, so that notions of Aboriginal culture(s) not be represented in an idyllic past. Joanne Cardinal Shubert, an Aboriginal artist who participated in the boycott relates why the protests were so meaningful: “We protested the fact that Native culture was being used by the Olympics to foster a worldview that Native culture was dead, all over, collected; and what was still practiced was frozen in the 18th century. We believe that the Olympics should have held exhibitions featuring contemporary Native art as it is now.”⁴³ Attempts continue to be made within a museum setting to challenge pre-existing and externally imposed constructions of authentic Aboriginal culture. The *Fluff and Feathers: Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness* at the

Woodland Cultural Centre provides an excellent example how a museum exhibit can challenge issues of representation, the construction of authentic Aboriginal identity as well as the appropriation of Aboriginal culture. In the *Fluff and Feathers* visitor's guide, exhibit curator and Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtater addresses some of these issues. "When a society chooses its own symbols, it is a way of empowering itself and its individual members...what then happens to a culture whose symbols are chosen by outsiders, by those who do not understand its deepest beliefs, structures and ways of life?"⁴⁴

By utilizing a self-reflective methodology intended to illuminate both the medium and the message, the exhibit successfully challenged and articulated the issues that form the contemporary discourse as it relates to First Nations peoples. The exhibit, which was risky yet thoughtful, provides an excellent example of the potential for museum exhibits to challenge misguided assumptions and stereotypes of Aboriginal people.

The related concept of "voice" has also developed as a part of the contemporary dialogue between First Nations and museums. The notion of "voice" manifests itself in numerous ways in this setting. In one sense, voice signifies a desire for increased participation, input and control for Aboriginal people to make decisions that affect their lives. In a more specific context, it questions whose voice is used in museum representations of Aboriginal culture(s), as is illustrated through the construction and writing of museum texts, as well as schematic and display techniques utilized by museums. In terms of epistemology, the notion of voice serves to challenge the social constructs that impose value and meaning on an Aboriginal voice as necessarily existing within an ethnographic and historical past. This is illustrated by an emphasis placed on "traditional forms" of Aboriginal culture within museums. Inherently, this "way of knowing" is very political in that it has

functioned to encourage a view of Aboriginal cultures as static and unchanging. Michael Ames critiques museum ideology as it relates to voice: "Museum exhibition techniques continue to impose moral and academic classifications - our 'glass boxes' of interpretation upon diverse cultures. The sizes and the shapes of these boxes have changed with the theoretical fashions of anthropology...they always remain anthropological boxes however, 'freezing' others into academic categories and into that mythical notion of time called the 'ethnographic' present."⁴⁵

Efforts to integrate new forms of Aboriginal expression into a museum setting can be related to the notion of "innovative traditionalism", in which traditional forms of cultural expression are developed within contemporary indigenous cultures with their own creative roots and dynamics. This reflects contemporary cultural politics and gives rise to a "traditionalism which is continually negotiated in the discourse and practice of everyday life."⁴⁶ The fight to include a contemporary voice within the museum world was met with resistance in the early eighties, but the *Fluff and Feathers* exhibit signified the start of an ongoing series of questions and reflections that have characterized contemporary relations between First Nations peoples and museums.

The previous aspects of the relationship between museums and First Peoples, including appropriation, ownership, representation, authenticity and voice are valuable to understand, and through their integration into the contemporary dialogue are useful to continuing the development of fair and effective museum policies. Repatriation efforts cannot be separated from these issues; rather it is a reflection of them and needs to be perceived in this context. As demonstrated, the relationship between First Nations and museums is complex

and informed by social, historical, political, cultural, and epistemological influences.

There are no quick and easy resolutions to these issues, and yet there are some fundamental ideas and practices that will ideally be developed in the future. First, there must be increased participation and input by Aboriginal people within the contemporary dialogue as well as a museum setting. This is both valuable and necessary in order to continue the development of satisfactory relationships. Second, the variance in dissemination of knowledge required for the full participation of Aboriginal people must be challenged and rectified. While an *explicit* paradigm shift in an ideological sense has occurred, the *implicit* complexity apparent regarding the dissemination of knowledge is still problematic. If communities cannot access the information that they need to make informed choices about policies that affect their lives, such as those which inform repatriation, then they face many more limitations than they do possibilities. Third, within academia as well as museums and other cultural institutions, continued reflexiveness and questioning as to how to conceptualize and handle cultural property is a valuable component to the ongoing relationships between museums and Aboriginal communities. As Michael Ames notes regarding the future of anthropology and museum studies, we must first start by critiquing our past, at which point we can construct a future filled with possibilities.⁴⁷

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² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 242.

⁵ Ibid., 242.

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⁷ For contemporary perspectives relating to definitions as well as management of intellectual property, see: *A Community Guide to Protecting Indigenous Knowledge*, INAC Research and Analysis Directorate, 2001. Also, James Nason: “Beyond Repatriation: Cultural Policy and Practice for the Twenty-first Century, in *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*. Eds. Ziff and Rao, 1997. And, James Nason: “Tribal Models for Controlling Research.” *American Indian Quarterly*, Fall, 1997, vol. 21(4).

⁸ Julia Harrison. “Museums and Politics: The Spirit Sings and the Lubicon Boycott.” *Muse*, Autumn, 1988, 12.

⁹ Ibid., 13

¹⁰ The debate surrounding the *Spirit Sings* exhibit demonstrated the diverse perspectives apparent within museum anthropology in the early 1990s. A brief sampling of the reactions of those involved include: Julia Harrison “The Spirit Sings’ and the Future of Anthropology,” in *Anthropology Today* Vol.4, no.6, Dec, 1988. Michael Ames. “Boycott the Politics of Suppression!” *Muse*, Fall 1988, pp.15-16; Bruce Trigger. “Who Owns the Past?” *Muse*, Fall 1988, 12-13.

¹¹ Assembly of First Nations and CMA. *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples*. Ottawa, 1992. Mission Statement.

¹² For further information regarding the implications of the Taskforce, see: Trudy Nicks: "Partnerships in Developing Cultural Resources: Lessons from the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples". Document from the Department of Ethnology, ROM, 1992.

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¹⁴ MOA Collections and Research.
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¹⁵ Adrian Tanner. *The Politics of Indianness*, (Memorial University, Newfoundland, 1983), 32.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ AIORF. *Mending the Circle*, Preface.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ James Nason, 243.

²¹ Pat Kramer. *Totem Poles*. (Altitude Publishing: Canmore, AB, 1995), 27.

²² Ibid.

²³ Douglas Cole. *Captured Heritage: Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. (Douglas and McIntyre, 1985), 287.

²⁴ Ibid, xiii.

²⁵ Note that the Kwakwilt are now referred to as the Kwakwaka'wakw, which is a preferable name for the community.

²⁶ Ira Jacknis. “Repatriation as Social Drama” *American Indian Quarterly*, Spring 1996, vol. 20 (2), 275.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 276.

²⁹ Ibid., 277.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 277.

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³³ Deborah Doxtater. “Implications of Canadian Nationalism for Aboriginal Cultural Autonomy.” In *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies, Proceedings*. Mercury Series Directorate Paper, no. 8. Hull, Quebec: CMC, 67.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 68.

³⁶ Ibid., 68.

³⁷ Michael Ames, 140.

³⁸ Deborah Doxtater, 57.

³⁹ Michael Ames, 141.

⁴⁰ Michael Ames, 142.

⁴¹ James Clifford. *The Predicament of Culture Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1988), 229.

⁴² Michael Ames: 1991: 140.

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⁴⁴ Deborah Doxtater. Preface to: "Fluff and Feathers: and Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness." *Resource Guide*, (Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, Ontario, 1988).

⁴⁵ Michael Ames, 140.

⁴⁶ Valda Blundell and Tony Bennett. "Introduction: First Peoples" *Cultural Studies*, 9 (1), 1995, 4.

⁴⁷ Michael Ames, p. 140. (paraphrase)



Young Aboriginal Woman. George Gwynne Mann Family
fonds, University of Saskatchewan Archives

Narratives and Drama in 1885

Alan Long

The 1885 North-West resistance was a source of many eye-witness accounts that have been told and re-told in newspapers and history books for more than 100 years. The amount of secondary history written about this monumental event in North American history is understandably significant; enough to give many historians pause when they think of adding their own interpretations to the literature. However, many people in Saskatchewan still feel very connected to this history and continue to engage the historical process as they try to re-evaluate the thoughts of the people involved in those significant events. Several scholars, new and experienced, continue to search the archives, reading and rereading the primary source material, in search of new angles on old stories that will expose a fresh understanding of certain individuals or groups not previously thought of. In the last five years at the University of Saskatchewan at least three MA theses have been written on aspects of 1885, with more sure to come.¹ My MA thesis titled *George Mann was not a Cowboy: Rationalizing Western versus Aboriginal Perspectives of Life and Death "Dramatic" History* completed in October, 2007, began as an interest in the Aboriginal oral history of 1885, an area that has received relatively little attention in the academic community until recently. This work still consumes my interest as I continue to develop relationships with the Aboriginal community, and find additional evidence in various archives.

If you read the introduction to my thesis, you will see that my connection to the narratives of 1885 was my great great grandfather George Gwynne Mann's involvement in those

events as a government farm instructor in Onion Lake, North-West Territories. In 1878 he came west from Bowmanville, Ontario alone, and was joined by his wife Sarah and their three children, Blanche, Charlotte and George Junior in 1883.² On the morning of 2 April 1885, Plains Cree warriors in Frog Lake, North-West Territories (approximately 25 miles north west of Onion Lake) decided to take matters into their own hands and killed nine white men in a tragic event that has become infamous as the Frog Lake “massacre.”³ Two of the men killed were farm instructor John Delaney and Indian agent Thomas Quinn, government colleagues of Mann. The primary interest of my thesis were the narratives that reported that later that day two of these warriors were sent to Onion Lake to kill Mann and complete the elimination of government men in the area, men that perhaps represented the long list of broken treaty promises. The grievances of the Cree people in both Onion Lake and Frog Lake were not unnoticed by Quinn and Mann, and a letter sent by Quinn to Mann two days before his death revealed his plans to visit Onion Lake on 2 April 1885 to address their concerns. Mann notes in his account of 2 April 1885 that when Quinn did not arrive “...I could see they (the Cree) were very excited. They expected to see the Ind. Agent Quinn from Frog Lake, who did not arrive as he was killed that morning with the others.” Later that night Mann says he was warned by a “friendly Indian,” about the men killed in Frog Lake, and so he decided leave everything and go to Fort Pitt. These were the only details he gave of that night.

In file A-751 of the Saskatchewan Archives Board Saskatoon office is a narrative written by Blanche Askey (nee Mann), who was Mann’s oldest daughter and about 10 years old the night of their escape to Fort Pitt. Blanche wrote down her story several times, the above version was probably the one sent to her nieces grade eight class in Battleford, Saskatchewan in 1923. Student Edna Beaudry added her own dramatic

touches to Blanches original narrative in her essay. Blanche also wrote her recollection down in 1935 when 50 year commemoration celebrations occurred in several Saskatchewan communities, and newspapers sought to publish stories from the 'old timers' who were witness to events in 1885.⁴ The Prince Albert *Herald* published several first hand accounts of 1885 in their 1935 publications, and later compiled them into one volume titled "Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885 as told by old timers of Prince Albert and District, who witnessed those stirring days." One of these stories highly dramatizes and sensationalizes the Frog Lake "Massacre." As I discuss in greater detail in chapter two of my thesis, drama played a role in the many narratives of 1885, especially in the mid-twentieth century as the development of a nationalist historical myth was well under way. Some of George Mann's descendants collected these stories and commented on the inaccuracies they found in them. However, Blanche Askey was not immune to this influence, and I argue that aspects of her account show her own flare for the dramatic. In my thesis I connect this to a long held British tradition of defining dark skinned 'others' in historical theatre and literature. The British would often paint their faces dark and become the 'other,' sharing knowledge with each other about how they perceived these people to think and act. Since the completion of my thesis I have found pictorial evidence that the use of 'blackface' or darkening up found its way into early twentieth century amateur theatre productions about Indians in Saskatchewan.

In the face of these multiple dramatic narratives of the 'Wild West,' which dominated the newspaper stories, historical literature and school classrooms of western Canada well into the twentieth century,⁵ Aboriginal people and Aboriginal versions of similar events tended to be pushed aside. If you read Blanche's account, you may notice that she does not

mention the names of the Aboriginal people that helped save her and her family that evening, referring to them only as “friendly Indians.” Although this is not an inaccuracy it is quite a glaring omission, considering she and her family lived in Onion Lake for 17 years, and that they spoke Cree fluently. She shows this and other tendencies to follow the literary conventions of her fellow Canadians. Thankfully in 1985, when the 100th anniversary of 1885 arrived, there was a desire to revisit the narratives of that time, and to include Aboriginal oral history of the events. Finally, many of the Aboriginal people not previously acknowledged began to be discussed.

Fortunately for my family a remarkable man by the name of Edgar Mapletoft, who lived and farmed near Onion Lake in the Fort Pitt District, led the Fort Pitt Historical Society when they assembled a local history of the Fort Pitt area called *Fort Pitt History Unfolding*.⁶ Although many local histories rarely engage Aboriginal oral history, a section of this work is dedicated to Aboriginal versions of the events of Frog Lake, Frenchman Butte and Onion Lake in 1885, material that Mapletoft was responsible for collecting and transcribing. The original recorded stories of the elders in the Cree language have been digitized and preserved at the University of Saskatchewan Archives. Mapletoft had these stories translated and transcribed for their history book, including those of Jimmy Chief, the great grandson of Treaty Chief Seekascootch.⁷ According to Chief it was his ancestor Seekascootch and his son Misahew that were responsible for saving the lives of the Mann Family.

In chapter four of my thesis I put the transcribed oral history of Jimmy Chief alongside the narrative of Blanche Askey for comparison. Analyzing where these narratives diverged and intersected made for an interesting discussion, and sparked my interest in making further efforts to understand the Aboriginal

perspective. Throughout my work these narratives were the starting point of discussions between me and members of both families, as I sought to understand how our families remembered this past today. This discussion is also a part of chapter four, as is the remarkable discovery I made when I chatted with elder Mary Whitstone. Her story was the first oral history I heard from an elder in Onion Lake, and set the tone for the rest of my work.

When I went to meet Mary, I thought it remarkable that she would still hold stories about Indian agent Mann, but then again the Cree oral tradition is meant to be kept alive from generation to generation. I wondered what new story she might tell that I had not obtained from Edgar Mapletoft's research, and discussions I had already had with descendants of Seekascootch. I was shocked to find out that she wished to talk about George Mann Jr., the son of Indian agent Mann and my great grandfather. She told me that she had seen him when she was a young girl in Onion Lake, speaking Cree fluently to her parents. She said she was surprised to see a white man speaking Cree so well. While she watched him speak to her parents, Charlie and Matilda Trottier (nee Black), her older sister Mabel nudged her and told her that this white man was her father.

At first I was shocked that I had never heard of this familial connection of our family to the Cree people of Onion Lake. I had grown up very much separate from the people there, and had never really taken an interest in our family's history until recently. However, as I continued my research and went over our family photographs, things began to become clearer. There are several images of George Mann Jr. with the people of Onion Lake, pictures that I looked at in a different light after Mary's story. Mary also related to me that Mann Jr. continued

to visit the people there long after his dad's transfer in 1900, to see his daughter and to visit the people he had grown up with.

In 1904, Mann Jr. married Barr Colonist Ethel Mary Burgess, and together they had four children. Their only son, George Reginald Tudor (Pete) Mann, was my grandfather. An Aboriginal mid-wife delivered him and two of his sisters while the family lived in the north at Moose Creek telegraph office. Even after they moved to a homestead near Lloydminster, the family would often return north on camping trips and to visit their friends. It seems very likely that many of these friends were part of the Aboriginal community, as Mann Jr. had grown up in Onion Lake and was a fluent Cree speaker. Although it is not always evident in the archival photographs, or in the early 20th century historical literature, many of the new settlers of Canada had good relations with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal versions of events and a fresh interpretation of archival documents reveal these connections.

In Métis Joseph Dion's book, *My Tribe the Crees*, he tells how Indian agent Mann had a good relationship with the people of Onion Lake. The archival documents show that Mann sent a petition to Ottawa in November, 1887 to lobby for the release of three men that were convicted of murder in 1885. In chapter five of my thesis I relate these and other stories that suggest Indian agent Mann's family sought to create a community with the people of Onion Lake, and worked hard to help the people who had saved their lives in the spring of 1885. These stories have become pushed away from our family and lost in favour dramatically influenced historical myths about Indians, and not about people working together.

I recently hosted a get together of the descendants of George Mann Jr. and Matilda Trottier (née Black) at my parents' farm near Lloydminster. At this gathering I shared some of my

research and asked Mary Whitstone to speak to all of us about our extended family. I think that was the first time anyone has spoken Cree on our farm. I hope that this analysis of the historical record in the archives, combined with my family's stories and the Cree oral tradition, will become part of a more balanced dialogue between cultures about a shared history.

kakiypay

Endnotes

¹ Paget Code, "Les Autres Métis: The English Métis of the Prince Albert Settlement, 1862-1886," (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2008), and Erin Jodi Millions, "Ties Undone: A Gendered and Racial Analysis of the Impact of the 1885 Northwest Rebellion in the Saskatchewan District." (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2004).

² The history of George Mann and his family's move west was researched by family member Frank Nash and is on file at SAB.

³ The word massacre is put in quotation marks to denote that it is a non-Aboriginal term that presents this historical event in a one-dimensional way. As I allude to in my thesis, there is much historical evidence that casts considerable doubt on the assumption that it was an unprovoked and senseless act.

⁴ These versions of her story can be found in the George Gwynne Mann fonds at the Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta.

⁵ Jerome Alvin Hammersmith, "The Indian in Saskatchewan Elementary School Social Studies Textbooks: A Content Analysis," (M.Ed. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1971). Please refer to the abstract of this work.

⁶ This book is available in special collections at the University of Saskatchewan Library, Saskatchewan Archives Board and Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room.

⁷ Edgar Mapletoft et al. *Fort Pitt History Unfolding, 1829-1985*. (Frenchman Butte: Fort Pitt Historical Society, 1985) p. 101.

J. I. Benson

VOICES OF THE PLAINS CREE



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*by Edward Ahenakew
edited by Ruth M. Buck*

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Contributors

Camie Augustus is a PhD student in History at the University of Saskatchewan. Her Master's thesis, "The Scrip Solution: The North West Métis Scrip Policy, 1885-1887," explores the policy development and failures of Métis scrip in the Canadian North West. She returned to academic research after several years teaching adults and working in Aboriginal land claims in the private sector. Her current research includes Indigenous mixed-ancestry populations globally, comparative history, and First Nations and Métis history in Canada.

Born and raised on the prairies, **Kurtis Boyer** has always maintained an interest in Saskatchewan, and particularly Métis, history. Working as a part-time researcher, Kurtis began his education as a youth worker with Saskatoon's inner-city, "at-risk" youth. He has since supplemented this education with a Bachelor of Arts in International Development Studies, and is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Political Science at the University of Northern British Columbia, where he studies Arctic development issues.

Patricia Deiter (White Buffalo Woman) is a Plains Cree from the Peepeekisis First Nation. Patricia holds a BEd, BA High Honours in Indian Studies and a MA from the University of Regina and is a PhD (ABD) at the University of Saskatchewan in Canadian History. She has been a sessional lecturer, private consultant and public servant for the federal and provincial governments. Her publications include the 2006 FSIN Pow-

wow Program which featured a history of Pow-wows in Saskatchewan and the history of the FSIN; *The First Nations' Oral History of the Treaty Right to Hunt, Fish, Trap and Gather*; *Through Our own Eyes: Text for Indian Residential Survivors*; *Sunrise: Saskatchewan Indian Elders Speak*. (co-edited with Sandra Pace); *Dances of the Northern Plains*; and *Nehiyaw Matowena: Games of the Plains Cree*. Her Master's thesis was *The Biography of Chief Walter Deiter*. Patricia is a mother of three children and a proud cuoom of two grandsons. She and her family are part of the Pow-wow circle and are members of the Native American Church.

Brendan Frederick R. Edwards recently completed a PhD in Canadian History from the University of Saskatchewan. He also holds a Master of Arts in Canadian Studies and Native Studies from Trent University and a Master of Library and Information Studies degree from McGill University. He is the author of *Paper Talk: a history of libraries, print culture, and Aboriginal peoples in Canada before 1960*, as well as articles relating to Aboriginal peoples in volumes II and III of the *History of the Book in Canada*.

Anna Flaminio is Métis from St. Louis, Saskatchewan. She completed her Bachelor of Social Work in 1995, and attained her LLB in 2003. She is presently completing her Masters of Laws at the University of Saskatchewan. She works with Indigenous peoples and organizations in the areas of justice and healing, and has a specific interest in the intergenerational effects of historical colonial trauma.

Meagan Gough is a PhD Candidate in the History department at the University of Saskatchewan with a major in Comparative

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Aboriginal History and a minor in Anthropology. Her Master's degree was also in Cultural Anthropology. Her love of people, as well as her belief in the importance of maintaining stories and traditions, has inspired her travels and diverse experiences working as a field researcher across North America as well as her interest in First Nation's participation within museums. In 2000, she worked as an intern at the Navajo Nation Museum to explore community views of repatriation with members of the Navajo community in Window Rock, Arizona. This experience inspired her Master's work in 2003, which was based on collaboration with members of the Stó:lô First Nation in British Columbia to explore how repatriation could best proceed in accordance with their local cultural values, identity and history. She has also worked as a research assistant at the Museum of Civilization in Hull. Her current PhD Research is based on recording the Life histories of Three Stó:lô elders she met in 2002. She spends her time listening, talking with and learning from people she admires and respects and finds in difficult to distinguish between her work and personal enjoyment.

Liam Haggarty hails from Victoria, BC, where he completed his Bachelors and Masters degree in history at the University of Victoria, and is now a doctoral student in the history department at the University of Saskatchewan. Supervised by Keith Carlson, he is currently studying Aboriginal economies and constructions of wealth in western Canada. Liam lives in Saskatoon.

Alan Long is a theatre artist and writer who lives and works in Saskatoon. His interdisciplinary MA thesis, *George Mann was not a Cowboy: Rationalizing Western versus Aboriginal*

Versions of Life and Death “Dramatic” History, was an analysis of the competing narratives of the short historical event ‘The Escape to Fort Pitt,’ that took place on 2 April 1885. Part of the thesis was a play titled *Friends or Friendlies?* which engages multiple voices from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, past and present, to reveal the complexity of Canadian colonial history. Alan is a student of the Cree language and hopes to continue to engage interdisciplinarity as a means of creating a broader picture of history that can engage all people in a meaningful cross-cultural dialogue. Recent publications include “Emory Creek: The Environmental Legacy of Gold Mining on the Fraser River,” *British Columbia History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 Spring 2007.

Merle Massie is a PhD candidate in the department of History, University of Saskatchewan. She specializes in local, regional, and borderlands history and studies the Canadian forest fringe as a contact zone between the agrarian south and the resource north. Growing up, trapping was a part of her family life.

Tamara Starblanket is a proud citizen of the Cree Nation. She is from Ahtahkakoop within Treaty 6 Territory. She has obtained a degree from Simon Fraser University with a focus on Political Science. In 2004 she graduated from the University of British Columbia with a bachelor of laws. In 2005 Tamara received her call to the bar and is currently doing a Master of Laws on genocide and land dispossession.

Yvonne Vizina is a Métis woman from Saskatchewan. She graduated from the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program in Prince Albert and holds a University of Saskatchewan BEd with Great Distinction. Yvonne double

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majored in Native Studies and Biology, and has a love for both Western and Indigenous sciences. She taught school in Prince Albert and at Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, then went to work with her community in the Métis Nation for several years. In 2004, she returned to Saskatoon from Ottawa where she was the Director of Environment for the Métis National Council. She is working toward her Master of Education Degree on the subject of Métis Traditional Environmental Knowledge. Yvonne is also the Associate Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan.