

Memento Mori:
An Archival Strategy for Documenting Mortality
on the Canadian Frontier at Red Lake, Ontario, Before 1950

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments.....	v
Dedication	xi
Chapter One – Approaches to Archival Documentation, Local and Community History, and Mortality	1
Chapter Two – A Frontier Community: Red Lake, Ontario	28
Chapter Three – Human and Town Ghosts: Dying and Death on the Frontier at Red Lake	60
Conclusion	112
Appendix I – Maps of the Red Lake District	120
Appendix II – The Records They Are: Evidential Value in Photographs	122
Appendix III – Copyright Clearance Statement	129
Bibliography	130

Abstract

Memento Mori, Latin for “remember thy death,” implores us to be mindful that death is both inevitable and inescapable. What of the records created during the process of dying and about death? Based upon wide-ranging archival research into primary documents, this thesis explores the rich sources of both official, public records, and personal, private ones, relating to mortality on the small-town Canadian frontier before 1950. The community of Red Lake, Ontario, which was established on the frontier as the result of the Red Lake gold rush of 1926, is the subject of a case study.

Rather than merely cataloguing sources, this thesis illustrates that by adapting aspects from such archival appraisal methodologies as macroappraisal and documentation strategy, one is able to make available to researchers a wider range of sources relevant to the themes of dying and death. Specifically, by employing a documentation strategy methodology to identify and illuminate the records of human activities surrounding the functions of dying and death, archivists can offer to researchers the opportunity to locate relevant records wherever they may physically be. Since this is an Archival Studies thesis, it does not provide an historical analysis of dying and death, but is an archival study of the types of records related to the theme of mortality on the Canadian frontier: how those records were created, their character, and their capture and preservation in a small community.

This thesis is organized into three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One explores some relevant trends in the secondary literature of three fields: archival

appraisal and description, small town or local development on the frontier, and dying and death as human activities. Chapter Two sets the context in which the thesis analyzes mortality on the frontier by outlining the relevant history of the Red Lake District of Northwestern Ontario and its pioneers. The focus is especially on the gold-mining boom years from the mid-1920s until shortly after the Second World War. The heart of the thesis, Chapter Three, is a case study of the various records creators, human activities, and resultant records related to mortality. It is organized according to three phases or functional categories surrounding dying, death, and memorialization. The conclusion summarizes the usefulness of the case study, in light of the literature review in Chapter One. It also suggests areas of further research, including aspects not covered herein, of the records of dying and death on the Canadian frontier.

The documentation strategy, adapted from the original methods employed by archivists Helen Samuels and Richard Cox, was found to work best when deployed as a research and descriptive tool for exploring and documenting the records of mortality, more so than its original purpose as an acquisition tool. The strategy has wide-ranging usefulness discovering and then describing a “virtual” documentation universe relating to record-generating human functions and activities.

Acknowledgments

A thesis is both a personal, solitary work, and a collaborative effort. Its conceptualization, research, and writing generate myriad debts to all who contributed to the production. I happily acknowledge the many debts, intellectual and personal in nature, that I have incurred during its prolonged gestation.

Discernible in these pages is the welcome influence of several of my professors, whose high standard of scholarship I admire. A sterling example of such a scholar is my thesis supervisor, Dr. Terry Cook. As a genuine recognition of indebtedness, I thank him sincerely for having the courage to say an enthusiastic “yes” to this subject, and for providing the necessary traction. Terry gave unstintingly of his time and, when a deadline loomed for me, he reviewed my chapters in such unlikely settings as in airports and on patios in Europe.

Terry’s insights gave the requisite strength and sharpening to the expression of an idea. His editorial acumen, which rescued me from convolution and redundancy, has been absolutely alchemical. Whatever clarity this thesis exhibits is largely due to the attention and polish he lavished upon it. I claim authorship of the surviving imperfections. It has been an honour to be mentored by a man widely-acknowledged as an archival visionary and an ideal advisor.

I also offer heartfelt appreciation to my best friend, Allen L. Kimelman, M.D., who listened to the innumerable accounts from the records of dying and death processes, and steadfastly encouraged me through spells of frustration, discouragement, and poverty.

To the thesis defense examining committee – James Blanchard, Acting Head, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, Dr. James Hanley, Chair, Joint Masters Program, Departments of History, University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg, and Dr. Tom Nesmith, Coordinator, Archival Studies program - I offer sincere appreciation for their time, observations, suggestions, and interest in this thesis. I am indebted to them for pleasantly surprising me by making the dreaded thesis defense a very collegial, fascinating experience. Special thanks is due to Dr. Robin Jarvis Brownlie for chairing the defense and for her interest in my subject. Dr. Gaby Divay, the only audience member at the defense, offered warm encouragement and abiding friendship.

A special note of thanks is due to Carol Adam, graduate program executive assistant, who has, for many years, cheerfully and efficiently answered many questions and ensured that my place in the program was running smoothly. Diane Haglund, at the Association for Manitoba Archives, has been an unfailing support. I wish to also acknowledge, with grateful thanks, the full cooperation of the estate of Donald F. Parrott, especially the generosity of Diane Parrott Stampfler, for the copyright of her father's maps. I am thankful, too, for the excellent map donated for this thesis by Red Lake Digital Media, Inc. My friend, Grant Kennedy of Campbell & Chipman, Limited, very generously made professional scans of all the documentary material in this thesis.

Historian, poet, and biographer Dorothy Farmiloe and the late Dr. Daniel Graisbury Revell supported and mentored me in tangible and important ways through my undergraduate and early graduate years. I have been incalculably fortunate in having other mentors who have nurtured my intellectual curiosities. In particular, I offer genuine appreciation for the stimulating conversations and esteemed friendships

shared with Joyce Appel, Elinor Barr, the late Pierre Berton, Silver Anne Bremner, David Brown, Dr. Jennifer S.H. Brown, Dr. Christine Butterill, Julie and Dick Kavet, Rev. Rae Kiebusinski, Robert O. Moninger, Thomas O. Moninger, Ron A. Robinson, Dr. George Toles, and Dr. William F.W. Neville. I also benefitted from the tremendous opportunity presented to me by Dr. Richard E. Bennett, who provided my first professional archival work for several years at the University of Manitoba Archives, and at the archives of James Richardson and Sons, Limited.

On a fortuitous day in 1998, historians Star and Ed Jones of Santa Fe, New Mexico, came into my life. They have spent over four decades of summers in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, working as volunteers in various historical endeavours, including the restoration of the cabin of poet Robert W. Service. They donated their extensive Yukon and Alaska collection to the Dawson City Museum and Archives with the proviso that a professional archivist be hired. The Dawson City repository called the University of Manitoba Archival Studies program and I was recommended. Within days, I found myself living in Dawson City as “Klondike Centennial Archivist,” and, later, working as assistant government records archivist at Yukon Archives. From the outset, I have enjoyed a remarkably complementary and fundamental connection of shared interest in archives, history, and preservation with Star and Ed. They have become family; indeed, few have stirred my soul as deeply as have they.

The singling out for acknowledgment of certain friends is as difficult as it is invidious. However, I have been greatly supported by the unwavering presence of a family of far-flung, but staunch friends. Each of the following has played a crucial role in my life, but especially for their uniformly indispensable caring and enthusiasm, I

thank: Kimberlee Adams, Gary Batstone, Rhonda Bobinski, Bradley Curran, Lesia Boyanowsky Dayneka, John Dobson, Rev. Dr. John Freeman, Audrey Lay, Kelly Lay, Dr. Marcel Lebrun, Olive Lundstrom, Helen Olsen Agger, Kaaren Olsen Dannenmann, and Garth Woodward. A friendship formed in Dawson City, Yukon, with author/journalist Ken Spotswood has greatly enriched my life. He cheered me on throughout the research and writing of this thesis, and did not hesitate to make me laugh aloud, to tell me to get on with it, or to offer genuine empathy when it was called for. I am honoured to know this gifted man.

I also express wholehearted gratitude to Andrea M. Paci, herself a veteran of the peripatetic archival studies thesis trail. She ventured with me on inspired, restorative distractions when I really needed them, abided repetitive grouching, and assured me of my sanity. Another cherished friend, Doug Whiteway, author and former editor of *The Beaver*, was his characteristic gracious self in agreeing to read the thesis and in offering much-appreciated editorial suggestions.

While the following long-time pioneers and mentors have died, I wish, nevertheless, to posthumously acknowledge with much fondness, the unerring kindness, and enriching friendship of William (Bert) Allen, Arnold and Louise Bartlett, Eugenia (Gramma Gene) Campbell, Helena Campbell, Dr. Emil (Danny) Daniel, Inga Kelson Dawson, John (Jack) Dunn, J. Edwin J. Fahlgren, James M. Forbes, Freda Goodison, John G. Gustafson, Rev. Arthur J.B. Hough, Gladys Keetch, Jeanette K.E. Lindokken, Helen and Dr. Joseph McCammon, Margaret H. McDougall, Neil Nylund, Donald F. Parrott, Ernest and Hilda Shephard, Hazel Stanley Slamp, Louise Stanley, and Olga Gan Rusin Wilson.

I have been blessed with close familial bonds. To my sisters, Marianne, and Anneliese, I proffer abiding love and heartfelt appreciation for being an essential part of my life and heart. My nephews, Dakota and Dawsyn Feigl, Dominik Stoschek, and Godson, Benjamin Jones, have brought deep joy into my life. I revel in my role as uncle and friend. My aunt, Leona D. Lavallée, is the person who has known, loved, and believed in me the longest. Indeed, she is the foundation of our family today. From my early days of crawling into her kitchen cupboard and noisily re-arranging the pots therein, to the present day, when we spend time together sharing our genealogical finds or movies, Aunt Leona is lovingly there.

I often think deeply about my mother, Jeannette Richthammer (neè Lavallée), whose love and guidance remains the compass of my life. How the memory her undefeatable spirit has buoyed me during dark times! Mom faced material poverty in childhood, suffered spousal abuse in adulthood, relished the births and early years of raising three beloved children, and remained positive, irrepressibly witty, and valiant throughout a heartbreaking siege with an enigmatical neurological disorder.

While planning a monument for Mom's grave in Red Lake Cemetery, I found a most fitting epitaph: "Accommodation to life's inescapable realities is not surrender." These words, attributed to legendary actress Bette Davis, not only summarize Mom's spirit, but also energized me as I navigated many of life's vicissitudes while writing this thesis.

After arriving in Red Lake, Ontario, in 1957, my father, Johann (John) Richthammer (April 26, 1936 - October 31, 1986), fulfilled his dream of finding adventure in Canada. It was through Dad that I met some of the pioneers who became

surrogate grandparents, mentors, and dear friends. Dad struggled with his demons and, like Mom, also died at the early age of 50. The fervent wish of my parents was that my siblings and I achieve a high level of education, an opportunity which they themselves would have cherished. I am genuinely content in knowing that, through me and my siblings, my parents' dreams have been realized.

Dedication

This work is dedicated in fond remembrance of:

Mom

Jeannette Marie Flore Richthammer
(neè Lavallée)
August 17, 1939
May 3, 1990

Mémère

Marianne Hélène Antoinette Lavallée
(neè Lapointe)
July 23, 1899
November 27, 1965

Mentor

Margaret Helen McDougall, B.A.
(neè Winter)
February 4, 1898
April 12, 1997

Chapter One

Approaches to Archival Documentation, Local and Community History, and Mortality

Introduction

This thesis investigates the nature of records generated by the process of dying, a universally inescapable, inexorable certainty of all lives. For this purpose, the records of pioneers and early settlers on the Canadian gold-mining frontier at Red Lake in Northwestern Ontario have been chosen as a case study of records produced by mortality.¹

As frontier towns evolve from their initial generations of resource extraction and community founding, and become modern centres or, depending upon economic vagaries, ghost towns, the frontier ethos of their early years gradually diminishes and dies. This parallels the inevitable dying out of the generation of men and women whose pioneering created the frontier towns and who either flourished or foundered in them during their early days. Some of those pioneers, as they neared the end of their own lives, were often intent upon keeping alive - through oral recounting or creating or preserving records - the

¹ A frontier is generally regarded as a vast area on the margins or borders of a metropolitan centre. The Northern Canadian frontier is discussed in detail in sociologist Samuel Dwight Clark's *The Developing Canadian Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 4-19, 81-98. Other useful discussions of the frontier are found in Pierre Berton, *The Mysterious North* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1956); Matt Bray and Ernest Epps, eds., *A Vast and Magnificent Land: An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario* (Thunder Bay, ON, and Sudbury, ON: Lakehead University and Laurentian University, 1984); Rex A. Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown: Life in Canadian Communities of Single Industry* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1971); and J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 35 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 1-21.

stories, legends, photographs, documents, and “characters” of the days when they themselves were in their prime.

The collecting as archival resources of the personal documentation of pioneer settlers - those records which were generated as they confronted their mortality, or with their deaths - has not been investigated in archival literature. Nor has the more active process of documenting their lives on the frontier, or gathering their stories, while they are living. Nor has documenting the processes of dying and death, and the records created thereby, been analyzed by archivists, despite the centrality of such processes to the human condition. These issues, however, are not unproblematic.

Some pioneers inevitably censored some of the stories recounted to the acquiring archivist or historian - whether orally, or by judicious winnowing of or adding to records such as memoirs. They lend a particular view of their own lives and of the frontier that they feel is most suitable for their own memorialization. Often because of incapacity or death, this process is partly taken out of their control. How and where were the pioneers buried and by whom, who mourned them (community, family, both, or no one), and, if they were commemorated, who memorialized them?

When a person is dying (as in the case of either advanced aging or a terminal illness), they invariably interact with family and friends, medical personnel, the courts, lawyers, funeral directors (for pre-planning arrangements), publishers (memoirs and photographic imagery being a way to surmount or escape death), and sometimes, the police. These (and similarly related) interactions represent, in archival terminology, the “functionality” of death, the various activities that comprise some human endeavour. What

documentary legacy was bequeathed by these external functions or public institutional activities, along with the pioneer's own personal and private records?

In terms of theory and strategy for dealing with such documentary legacies, some recent archival approaches inform the analyses in this thesis. The documentation strategy outlined initially by Helen Samuels and, for local communities, best by Richard Cox, is suggestive for how archivists might record any theme, including pioneer life and dying and death. The functional analysis outlined in Terry Cook's concept of macroappraisal, too, was also useful, although it is necessary to adapt it from the functions of a large government to the activities of the aging, dying, and deceased individual pioneer.

This thesis is not concerned with building a documentation strategy for an entire frontier town (Red Lake) or its founding industry (gold mining); it also does not explore in total the records, for example, of local government, tourist operations, school boards, community service organizations, businesses, theatres, or various local social groups, but only those entities pertaining to dying and death, and the pioneers confronting that process.

Red Lake, Ontario, was chosen as the case study of dying and death because it is the frontier Canadian community with which I have been captivated since an early age. Born in Red Lake four decades after its legendary gold rush days, I grew up surrounded by the pioneers and hearing their memories. The stirring tales of the First Nations people, the Anishinaabe, and of the fur trade and gold mining eras, as told by grizzled veteran trappers, prospectors, miners, entrepreneurs, and *bon vivants* - all "characters" - fascinated me.

The settlement of the Red Lake area began in earnest, however, when thousands of men and fewer than ten white women from around the world converged collectively during the “Red Lake Gold Rush of 1926” upon this awkwardly remote frontier in Northwestern Ontario: a motley array of seasoned prospectors, naïve adventurers, mining promoters, con men, vagabonds and would-be entrepreneurs stampeded into what was heralded as the “new Klondike.”² Most would never again see their homelands. This assemblage was profoundly human and social, one which was to suffer deaths of relatively young people due largely to ill-fought battles with both nature and human nature: mining-related misadventure, suicide, drowning, murder, exhaustion, exposure and disease.³ Later, infirmity and advanced age claimed the pioneers who lived to tell their stories. Few historical monographs document the gold rush and subsequent settlement, and none of them examine dying and death in a gold-mining district on the frontier.

By my early teens, I was acutely aware that much irretrievable oral history and archival records were being lost with the deaths of the pioneers and the often hurried or careless disposal of their possessions. This compelled me to begin recording their history, locating and collecting their written and photographic records, and publishing some of their life stories in the local newspaper. At age fifteen, I became the founding curator of Red Lake Museum (now the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre), a position which engrossed me for the ensuing twelve years as I worked to rescue from obscurity the life

² The frenzied influx of prospectors and entrepreneurs to the Red Lake District during the gold rush of 1926 echoed the same activity which, just over twenty-five years earlier, had occurred during the “Klondike” gold rush in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, and in earlier gold rushes, such as those in California in the 1840s, and Northern Ontario from the 1890s through the 1910s.

³ Karen Buckley, *Danger, Death, and Disaster in the Crownsnest Pass Mines, 1901-1928* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 144-145. For another comprehensive study of the results of

stories of many of the pioneers. I published several local histories and biographies and have written extensively on Northwestern Ontario pioneers ever since in my own personal race against their vanishing time. This avid recording and archiving of the records of the originals of the Red Lake district has gestated for one-quarter of a century.

In examining documentation of people “living” on through their records (both immediately pre-death and post-death), this thesis seeks to articulate not only the processes of dying and related records creation, but also to suggest the manner in which people manipulate, in various and diverse and perhaps unintentional ways, their posthumous memory. Funeral and memorial services, eulogies, cemetery monuments, commissioned genealogies (an attempt to cheat death by including oneself as a part of a great living chain of descendants from past to future, through the record), producing children, and bequeathing legacies are some of the tools of constructing memory and preserving identity.

The insights gained by this analysis will, it is hoped, encourage archivists first to acquire and then to describe such records in richer functional context. In so doing, archivists thereby allow historians and other researchers to utilize with more nuance the archival records created through the functions of mortality. As Moira Dann, editor of *The Globe and Mail*'s “Lives Lived” column noted, humans have a deep “need to testify.”⁴

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood echoed that sentiment:

...not just some, but *all* writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination

inexperience and misadventure in a similar frontier, see Patricia Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death: A Social and Cultural History, 1840-1918* (Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴ Moira Dann, correspondence with John Richthammer, July 15, 2002.

with mortality – by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead.⁵

The archivist's role is not only to capture and record that testimony, but also to provide as much context as possible by which to situate and describe the records for subsequent research use. This thesis employs in its organizing framework a methodology combining critical qualitative analysis of relevant literature, from archival theory and strategy, from historical and other accounts of dying and death, and from histories of local, frontier communities. Its insights, however, are drawn from the primary sources created by or about the actual pioneers of the Red Lake district, supplemented by an examination of other archival records in Red Lake and elsewhere, and select interviews with the primary participants of the pioneering days, or those who knew them.

This thesis is organized into three chapters and a conclusion. This chapter investigates the secondary literature of the fields of archival appraisal, community development in a frontier setting, and dying and death as human functions. The second chapter offers an overview of the history of Red Lake to set in context the heart of the thesis. That core follows, in a much larger third chapter, with the case study of the activities, records creators, and resulting records relating to mortality and memorialization at Red Lake.

Approaches to Archival Documentation

From an archival perspective, the theoretical or strategic writing on three broad

⁵ Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156.

topics offers useful insights into how archivists, historians, or others may appraise, describe, or document any human function or phenomenon: the documentation strategy relating to the preserving of records of a theme, person, wider geographic area (such as the Northern Canadian frontier), or of a locale or community, such as the Red Lake District;⁶ the macro or functional analysis approach for the records of organizations;⁷ and appraisal and description of personal papers of individuals, including oral history.⁸

Any analysis of archival literature on appraisal and documentation strategies must be set against the background of modern appraisal as conceptualized by the middle of the last century by Theodore R. Schellenberg, a prominent American archivist and theorist. His views, which became archival orthodoxy, germinated after 1934, when the National Archives in Washington opened. Archivists were faced with the daunting volume of

⁶ The documentation strategy employed in this thesis is adopted from the pioneering works of leading archival theorists: Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992); Richard Cox, "A Documentation Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52 (Spring 1989); and Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?" *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986).

⁷ Integral to the macroappraisal or functional analysis approach to records are studies by Richard Brown, "Macro-Appraisal Theory and the Context of the Public Records Creator," *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995); Bruce H. Bruemmer, "Avoiding Accidents of Evidence: Functional Analysis in the Appraisal of Business Records," in James M. O'Toole, *Records of American Business* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 1997); Helen Willa Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992); Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Canadian Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992); and Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950-2000," *Archival Science* 5.2-4 (2005).

⁸ The study of appraisal of personal papers has flourished in the last two decades. Several important archival works on the subject include Verne Harris, "On the Back of a Tiger: Deconstructive Possibilities in 'Evidence of Me,'" *Archives and Manuscripts* 29 (May 2001); Catherine Hobbs, "The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001); Sue McKemmish, "Evidence of Me," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24: 1 (May 1996); and Riva A. Pollard, "The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001). The use of oral history in documenting a community or culture is masterfully handled in Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1990); Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and Lisa Klopfer, "Oral History and Archives in the New South Africa: Methodological Issues," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001).

federal records which, by the Second World War, were created at an annual rate of six hundred thousand metres.⁹

In his classic text, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, Schellenberg contended that archival records held inherent primary as well as secondary significance. Primary records were valued by their creator for their operational usefulness to the business for which they were created, while their secondary value lay in their potential as a resource to later researchers, especially academic historians.

Schellenberg was content with the records creator determining whether or not their records were of enduring primary value. He viewed secondary values as having use by researchers rather than by records creators, and those the archivist would determine. Unlike earlier archival theorists, Schellenberg asserted that, for modern records, only a small selection overall could be permanently retained, while the rest would be destroyed.¹⁰ In today's world of digitized or computer-generated records, the interrelation between primary-value records and secondary-value archives is completely different. Cooperation between the managers of both types of records is essential. Schellenberg's approach was essentially pragmatic: if records are or are likely to be of use, then keep a small selection as archives.

By 1975, another American archivist, Gerald F. Ham, was already flagging the strategic problems in the pragmatism of the Schellenberg's method, asserting that it left "a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and even so often accidental... [one that] too often reflected narrow research interests rather than the broad

⁹ James Gregory Bradsher, "An Administrative History of the Disposal of Federal Records, 1789-1949," *Provenance* 3 (Fall 1985), 1-21.

spectrum of human experience. If we cannot transcend these obstacles, then the archivist will remain at best nothing more than a weathervane moved by the changing winds of historiography.” Ham voiced his deep reservation with a “use-based” archival method, explaining that removing records from their original context of life with their creator does irreparable harm to the meaning and understanding of the record. The provenance of the record is compromised by the risk of haphazard appraisal by archivists chasing after a desire to satisfy the latest research trends to determine archival “value.”¹¹

While Ham contended that Schellenberg’s strategy produced little more than uneven record keeping and a fragmented archival record, and argued for systematic conceptualization to replace haphazard collecting, German archivist Hans Booms advanced a socio-cultural and functional perspective on appraisal. He proffered far-reaching solutions by which archives would more universally mirror the cultures and societies which created them, and the eras in which they came into existence.¹²

Canadian archival theorist and educator Terry Cook considers Booms as the most influential theorist on the philosophical foundation for archival appraisal. “Reacting against the worst excesses of the traditional archivist statist approach, whereby the state’s ideological values are imposed on the very definition of the archival record, Booms asserted that society must be allowed to define its own core values, and that these values should then be representatively mirrored through archival records,” Cook noted.¹³ Booms

¹⁰ Terry Cook, “What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift,” *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), 27-28.

¹¹ F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” in Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, *A Modern Archival Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice* (Washington, 1984), 328-329.

¹² Hans Booms, “Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources,” *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), 106.

¹³ Cook, “What is Past is Prologue,” *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), 30.

advanced that in reality, it is the values of society itself that bestow legitimacy upon archival appraisal. Archivists should research the functions of primary records creators to realize the extent and variation of society's record-keeping activities and the personal or institutional functional imperatives that led to creating various types of records.¹⁴

Booms's and Ham's critiques were developed by the end of the 1980s and early 1990s into, among others, two complementary, though different, approaches to appraisal: documentation strategy and macroappraisal approaches by, respectively, Helen Samuels and Terry Cook. It was in the theoretical work of Booms as it related to the reflection of social values mirrored in the record creator's functions that Cook found inspiration.

The primary developer of the macroappraisal strategy, Cook has centred on distancing the focus of archival appraisal from records reflecting historiography or user needs of the day or those anticipated for tomorrow. The emphasis then shifts the whole or "macro" contextualization of records by the archivist who analyzes "their creators' functions, programs, activities, and transactions. The context and process of the records' own creation, then, is based upon this contextual research, and the archivist assigns greater or lower "value" to some functions compared to others. The records generated by those more valuable functions (and their related programmes, activities, and transactions) then become the target for archival acquisition."¹⁵

The widespread, continuous creation of electronic records has benefitted greatly from this Canadian strategy of focusing on the conceptual context of records rather than on the actual physical mass of billions of records. "The 'new' provenance is also more

¹⁴ Booms, "Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage," 104. This is one of Booms's key articles in which he discusses the implications of record creators' functions reflecting social values.

¹⁵ Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), 31.

functional rather than structural, as is fitting for an era where organizational stability is everywhere disappearing,”¹⁶ Cook added. While earlier principles, such as those of Schellenberg, connected records in context with their creators, today’s context consists of not only billions of paper records, but also a staggeringly uncountable number of electronic or digital records. The focus, then, is best placed upon the appraisal and description of the significantly important interactions of human life: interaction by citizenry with one another, with government, with other institutions, and with a myriad of activities, programs, and other functions, rather than on trying to assess each record for its potential research value.

The documentation strategies of Helen Samuels and Richard Cox have also gained international archival acclaim. Samuels’s “documentation strategy” incorporates societal thinking in documenting central themes, ideas, functions, and various issues as they relate to an institution, such as a college or its students (or may be methodologically adapted or applicable to a local community or industry or geographical area). Her strategy calls for appraisal analysis which moves beyond the record and its creator or creating agency.

Specifically, Samuels combines in her documentation strategy a wide range of corollary but complementary sources, such as personal manuscripts, oral history, and visual media, along with the more traditional institutional records upon which most appraisal theorists concentrated until that point, including Schellenberg, Booms, and Cook. She acknowledges that conflicting themes or overlapping subjects will be problematic. In this regard, Samuels’s documentation strategy is perhaps best suited for

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

appraising the collections of personal records creators rather than for institutional/government records.

Samuels's functional analysis methodology and documentation strategies would work in concert with Cook's macroappraisal because the latter's chief premise, as Samuels herself asserts, that "the focus of appraisal should shift from the actual record to the conceptual context of its creation, from the physical to the intellectual, from matter to mind."¹⁷

The archival documentation strategy as a concept was born in the mid-1980s to combat the sense of futility some archivists felt about the mammoth volume and complexity of appraising billions of potential archival records. In purposefully planning the documentation of a locality, archivists from all relevant repositories research a theme or activity, formulate what the "ideal" documentation should be, and determine the roles that they and their institutions should play in acquiring or preserving the "best" records, without duplication, to document that locality. Cox notes that such active research and planning from archivists starkly contrasts with the traditional archival practice of passively responding "to offered donations, threatened destruction of valuable records, or the changing interests of researchers."¹⁸

¹⁷ Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa, ON: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 38. For the initial articulation of the pioneering documentation strategy in archival literature, see the work of American archival educator and theorist, Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986), 109-124. Also useful in understanding the components and interrelated dimensions of an institutional functional analysis is Samuels, *Varsity Letters*, 3, and throughout.

¹⁸ Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators* (Lanham, MD, and London, UK: Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, 1996), 80.

Cox's study of documenting localities is a significant application of Samuels's documentation strategy to a specific geographical area. His methodologies will thus be assessed in the conclusion of this thesis for their applicability to the Canadian frontier, and especially its viability for documenting the theme of mortality in one frontier locality. Cox's implementation of the documentation strategy was especially created to surmount the pitfalls of traditional archival appraisal responses. He instructs that archivists follow carefully written procedures as a means of evaluating a locality, research the activities of key record creators, study the strengths and weaknesses of the region's archival record base, and develop strategies for acquiring further archival documentation to strengthen that base and especially to fill any gaps.

At the core of the documentation strategy, as envisioned by Cox, is its potential for use as a guiding tool for the appraisal of what records tangibly and enduringly document a locality: "This determination includes provision for encouraging institutional records creators to establish better archival programs that may make the difference in whether these records are saved or not. Existing archival and historical manuscripts repositories cannot handle in a satisfactory manner the universe of archival documentation. The documentation strategy strengthens the selection process."¹⁹

Amateur archivists and historians of small communities, regions or districts are often the cornerstones of the preservation of archival records, the stories the records (and pioneers) told, and are often themselves the repositories and "voice" of much of that history. Thomas Clark, who studied the phenomena of the amateur archivists and historians, believes that archivists are indebted to these local sleuths and salvagers because

“[t]hey have preserved the personal stories of Americans who were founders and prime movers all across the land...Whatever they wrote, whether in flamboyant heroic style or in a sober and matter-of-fact one, they added a rich human dimension to the understanding of our national past.”²⁰

As historian/anthropologist Anthony Wallace observed, there often abounds in small communities many richly and diversely textured layers of potential archival sources.

This *de facto* highlights the need for some form of localized documentation strategy:

Today, only a few members of the community recall much about these happenings. Time has flattened out, like the optical perspective of a landscape seen through a telephoto lens, and word-of-mouth transmission of unwritten historical information has slowed to a trickle. With each death of a participant, a whole world of information dies too; for the most part only written records and physical constructions remain. These dwindle away constantly. Records are lost, paper crumbles, old letters are thrown away, unlabelled photographs become meaningless. And the mills, dams, races, tenements, bridges – all these too are subject to constant erosion. Each year less and less information is left of a world that was once as rich and real as the one that is there today.²¹

The documentation strategy proposed by archivists Joan Warnow-Blewett and Larry Hackman utilized a model and case study to address documentation needs and goals as they relate to a theme, subject, function, or activity. They suggested that collaborative team liaison between archivists from a vast range of geographically scattered (even continent-wide) locations would aid in ameliorating both duplication of records and analysis. The “Documentation Strategy Process Model” they proposed featured five

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁰ Thomas Clark, “Local History: A Mainspring for National History,” in *Local History Today: Papers Presented at Four Regional Workshops For Local Historical Organizations in Indiana, June 1978-April 1979* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society, 1979), 31. Clark’s concern with the disappearing record-keeping values and practises of the past is a valid one.

²¹ Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 473.

interactive stages: documentation strategy drafting, strategy implementation by the documentation group, strategy implementation by other parties, documentation reporting, and documentation area reconsideration.²²

In their case study, Warnow-Blewett and Hackman were clear that the five stages would be obliged to occur in an ideal, sustained team effort, but warned that “in practice, all of the desired information, analytical capacity, participation, and other resources will not be available at a given time.”²³ The remedy they proffered was for archivists not only to meet, but to formulate and implement strategies in a sustained, long-term program of collaboration.

Success in any of the continuing elements in the model is likely to reinforce all of the others and, thereby, make this a truly dynamic and organic process. In a broader sense, the model also is dynamic because it continually holds up archival selection practices for general reexamination within the archival community and in dialogue with parties outside of this community.²⁴

To preserve records, both intellectually and physically, Cox states that archival documentation strategies have been developed by the archivists discussed largely because of the same common reason, that of the “increasing quantity of records, the rapidly developing complexity of their form, and the challenges associated with the interrelatedness of records creators.”²⁵ The documentation strategy’s value is seen in the evolution to functional analysis and acquisition strategies. Cook argues that the salient function of the documentation strategy is to use appraisal to document and record the

²² Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, “The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study,” *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987), 18-19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁵ Richard J. Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 102. See also Samuels, “Who Controls the Past?”

“most important societal functions, records creators and records-creating processes.”²⁶
He sees the documentation strategy as a “secondary [method], supplementary to be used *after* corporate and institutional records have been appraised on the basis of provenance, a provenance rooted *conceptually* in the records-creators’ mandated functions – not artificial functions – and by using a structural-functional matrix.”²⁷

The macroappraisal or functional analyses of Red Lake’s institutions, and especially a documentation strategy research analysis of its pioneers as records creators, offers the tools for this thesis to probe the societal activities of dying and death on the frontier. Equally important for illuminating the nature and character of frontier mortality records is archival description. In the context of a documentation strategy, description affords the opportunity for the archivist to offer richer context to the records they describe, based on the research into the records that is necessary – and already being done – for appraisal.

As such, research developed for appraisal also affords the opportunity to describe more fully the frequently rich layers of meaning in archival records in greater depth. To document society is to research the history and context of records for better appraisal and better description. In recent scholarship, archival educator Tom Nesmith has suggested the adoption of thematic analytical essays as a means of enhancing the description of records so as to more fully situate the researcher.

These essays would be a guide to thinking about and using the wide range of contextual information about records that could be useful to researchers. The essays would not be the actual descriptions of the records, although there would be some necessary overlap, to

²⁶ Cook, “Documentation Strategy,” 182-184.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

enable connections to be made between the essays and the descriptions.²⁸

In cases where researchers cannot physically visit an archives to conduct their own research, the essays Nesmith envisions would also be invaluable in digital format. A high volume of researchers could then access descriptive information from remote locations. The provision of access to analytical essays or thematic guides simply makes public the information archivists already have in their institutional files, have shared in their profession's journals, have researched and written about as part of their earlier appraisal decision-making process, or have noted in internal descriptive records.²⁹

Another useful recent addition to the dialogue on description is the imaginative contribution made jointly by Canadian and South African archival educators Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, respectively. They proffer that archival description could also include the sharing of the stories of the creation of the records. What they term a "liberatory approach" has considerable merit, as it suggests a loosening of the often frustrating limitations of standard descriptive practices.

It would mean finding ways of documenting the continued use of records. It might mean providing space for researchers to embed their own stories of use within the descriptive layerings. Such a standard would, in other words, be permeable to the naming work of users, and respect (rather than banish) prior namings when new ones are articulated.

A liberatory descriptive standard would take the needs of records users seriously. Without this attribute, a descriptive standard courts the danger of being oppressive or irrelevant. A standard *with* this attribute would acknowledge that different categories of user deploy different semantics and require different paths into the record. It would seek to allow different ways of searching,

²⁸ Tom Nesmith, "Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005), 271.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

different ways of interrogating records, different ways of organizing and manipulating representations. It would, in short, place a premium on flexibility.³⁰

The thematic essays which Nesmith suggests, and the stories/narrative descriptions advanced by Duff and Harris would all well serve the records of the Red Lake District. These guides and stories could be connected to basic Rules for Archival Description entries by hypertext links or other means, and may be put onto websites. Such in-depth description only serves to improve the archival experience for researchers, and further contextualize the records they seek.

Approaches to Local and Community History

Region, district, community, town are all miniature yet integral components of the world dominated by large cities. As historian Edgar Wesley pointed out,

Every thought the human mind ever entertained was conceived within a local setting. Every deed that was ever done was performed within the limits of some neighborhood. The world is the sum total of its communities. It inevitably follows that local community embraces everything that ever happened. Within a community it is conceived, written, read, and understood. The local historian writes the history of a church, a racial group, a fraternity, a school, or even a cemetery. In so doing he encompasses a more or less complete entity which in turn is related to larger entities.³¹

Historians such as Morris Zaslow, Paul Voisey and Gerald Friesen have, by virtue of their important monographs on various Canadian localities, created models for understanding small towns and local communities, and may be seen as representative of a

³⁰ Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," *Archival Science*, vol. 2, nos. 3-4 (2002), 280.

³¹ Edgar B. Wesley, "History at Home," *Minnesota History* 19 (March 1938), 1.

vast range of historiography about locality, community, and frontier-metropolitan relationships. The sources they use and cite are varied and illuminate the interconnection yet disparity of archival records in many forms.

They rely heavily on records of settlement, economy, society, and multi-level governance. While analyzing the historiographical themes and interpretations of such writings is outside the scope of this thesis, such studies do suggest the broad themes of local history to which archivists must be attentive when developing a documentation strategy framework.

In *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967*, Zaslow examined critical frontier regions of Canada in the Red Lake gold rush era and, thus, provides a detailed overview of the mining frontier in the northern portions of Canada. He exhibited an admirable mastery of archival records of many levels of government (including at a local level), civil air transport, grain marketing, the coast guard, and numerous agencies and departments of education, health, welfare, geology, mapping, surveying, and northern administration. This work provides the broad context against which an archivist may then focus on a particular region or setting. Zaslow's fourth chapter, "Uncovering the Treasures of the Subarctic," with its cogent analysis of mining, air transportation, prospecting, and many mentions of Red Lake, was especially useful.

The works of Voisey and Friesen, conversely but complementarily, focus on a particular region (Friesen, the broad, western prairies) or town (Voisey, the small community of Vulcan, Alberta). Voisey analyzed and compared statistical archival records with similar privately-held records. He also interweaved oral history in tracing the history of Vulcan from its inception, settlement, defining characteristics, to its local

governing structure. He analyzed agricultural, education, social, institutional, church, economic, and political records. Voisey's examination does not pretend to document all aspects of this locality, but rather to place "emphasis...on the frontier period, the first decade or so when pioneers established the area's basic traditions and institutions."³²

In 2004, Friesen edited and wrote an extensive afterword for P. James Giffen's provincially commissioned 1946 report on the southwestern Manitoba towns of Carman, Elgin, and Rosburn. In this previously unpublished manuscript, Friesen found an historically rich document on the founding, development, and maturing of three prairie communities "on the brink of tremendous change." Friesen notes that although the small towns were founded and functioned in the usual ways, Giffen undertook his study at the close of a vitally important time, when "European settlement on the prairies at a moment when the first phase of that rural society was still in full flower. It encourages readers today to imagine how cultural change, in particular, had been generated within these communities during the previous six decades. The manuscript's very existence, as well as its quality and the exceptional effort that went into it, push us to ask questions about the province and the cultural and political moment."³³

Such studies as these by Zaslow, Voisey, and Friesen – and one could add many hundreds of books and articles relating to myriad towns and villages across Canada – inform this thesis by highlighting the generic kinds of institutional functions and human

³² Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 9.

³³ P. James Giffen, *Rural Life: Portraits of the Prairie Town, 1946*, Gerald Friesen, ed., (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2004), 210. Gerald Friesen's afterword in *Rural Life* allowed him the opportunity to update the insights on locality made in his major studies on the development of the western Canadian prairie region: *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press,

activities occurring in small towns.³⁴ While dying and death do not feature prominently for specific analysis in such works, these human activities naturally take place within the broader context of community life profiled in regional histories. One such local history of a small town, in its initial “frontier” or pioneer period, is that of Red Lake, Ontario, the case-study focus of this thesis. In *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, Friesen observed that “in two generations, 1880-1930, the farm had become the paramount institution of the prairie west.”³⁵ Red Lake’s indispensable life-giving foundation was gold mining. Unlike the gradual growth of the farm communities on the prairies, the towns founded through gold mining grew instantly and, if the mining ores were sufficiently rich, became permanent within the first generation. Otherwise, they just as rapidly became ghost towns.

Approaches to Mortality

There is virtually nothing written from an archival perspective on the records of dying and death, or on these functions as record-generating human activities. A selection of historical studies of general attitudes toward dying and death, especially social attitudes toward mortality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is examined here to illustrate, from an historical perspective, the feelings and practices of people as they relate to their own mortality. To guide the author’s investigation of the records and their related contexts concerning mortality in the Red Lake, a case study forms Chapter Three.

1987), and in his *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1996).

³⁴ A notable example is the aptly titled, Gerald Hodge and Mohammed A. Qadeer, *Towns and Villages in Canada: The Importance of Being Unimportant* (Toronto, ON: Butterworths, 1983).

³⁵ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 301.

From planned funerals to memoirs and autobiographies, from photographs to genealogies to encumbered legacies, from donations to archives and museums, to embellishing the past, many people try to live beyond their natural lives and reflect their lives' stories from beyond the grave. These human needs produce and require records, for the document itself becomes the ultimate monument, the testimony of and for memory, as well as the evidence of the transactions surrounding or reflecting death.

From an archival perspective, the records of human casualties in the wake of gold rushes on the Canadian mining frontier have scarcely been examined. Current monographs on death exist in the social sciences, but archival records of mortality on the frontier rarely form the basis of such published work. In fact, the only archival records-based study is Karen Buckley's *Danger, Death and Disaster in the Crowsnest Pass Mines, 1902-1928*, published in 2004, in which she explores workplace danger, disaster, and death, and a British Columbia community's reaction to it.

Regardless if a man was a seasoned miner, or a greenhorn, it was not long before he learned first-hand of the danger lurking in the Crowsnest Pass mines. Most miners and their families accepted, or at least tolerated, these conditions. Although some evidence suggests that a certain degree of mobility existed, the majority of miners chose to stay in the mines.³⁶

In the case of Red Lake, miners and their families also knew and dreaded the dangers inherent in gold mining. From the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, the country was suffering greatly from unemployment. However, due to the economic viability of the gold mines, the Red Lake District was an oasis of plentiful work. Professional and would-be miners flocked to jobs in the north. Once settled in Red Lake

³⁶ Karen Buckley, *Danger, Death and Disaster*, 142-143.

with their families and basically content with their earnings, miners stayed because they knew that the Depression lurked almost anywhere else they would go.

Countless stories suggest that many citizens of the world died while trying to penetrate the gold wealth of the Canadian Shield. In examining the records of mortality at Red Lake, Ontario, during the last great gold rush of the twentieth century (and the resultant community's subsequent settlement and early maturity), evidence is found that unexpected mortality was frequently confronted by all segments of frontier society, as was planning for an anticipated or at least unavoidable end of life. A comprehensive recent historical interpretation of mortality on the frontier is Patricia Jalland's *Australian Ways of Death: A Social and Cultural History 1840-1918*, in which she documents how "bush" societies dealt with and created records of dying and death.

The subject of male mortality at Red Lake mirrors the observations of Jalland, who concluded that Australian mining accidents were largely due to "ignorance or carelessness." Like Buckley and very similar to the attitudes toward industrial death at Red Lake, Jalland also advances that Australian miners had a

stoical acceptance of inevitable death. Bushmen were pragmatic because they believed there was no more to be done for the dead and they must look instead to their own survival. In the harsh circumstances of the outback, prolonged formal mourning and elaborate ritual were impractical luxuries.³⁷

Elaborate funerals and lengthy periods of mourning were also nearly impossible in Red Lake. When the usually young wives of miners died early deaths, their men simply returned to work and coped with their loss, in some cases, by abusing alcohol. Women,

³⁷ Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death*, 258.

conversely, either returned to pre-marital work, or learned a trade. Well-meaning friends and mine managers were known to discourage young widows from purchasing double plots in the Red Lake Cemetery. The assumption was that the women would remarry, or move out of the area, or both. As a result, some spouses/partners today lie some distance apart from one another in Red Lake.

Significant work focusses on the culture of dying and death more generously in Western society, not just on the frontier as with Jalland's and Buckley's studies. Among the most prominent efforts are Phillippe Aries's *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (1985), Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying* (1979), Antonius Robben's *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (2004), D. J. Enright's *The Oxford Book of Death* (1983), and Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death Revisited* (1998). Enright's work is a comprehensive anthology of quotations and excerpts defining views and attitudes toward death, memory, immortality, love, cemeteries, mourning, and various causes of death. It is an essential source book for those seeking to glean interesting excerpts on all manner of death, ritual, and mourning.³⁸

For the purposes of this literature review, the works of Aries, Kübler-Ross, Mitford, and Robben have greater resonance in the areas studied in this thesis, such as the nature of death, the records created by dying and death, and in an overview of memorialization. Aries believes that the only unchangeable aspect of human life is the fact that death will occur. In *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, he explains that approximately

³⁸ D.J. Enright., ed., *The Oxford Book of Death* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987). The book is a general overview of death in Victorian times, and earlier. It was useful in a general way, but also in understanding how the perception of mortality has changed over decades and centuries.

700 years ago, the dying person organized his or her own death by orchestrating visits with loved ones, and by lying facing east in preparation for going to “Jerusalem.” Aries explores the notion of the struggle of good and evil occurring in the dying person. He also notes that personalized tombs and inscriptions began to become accepted in the sixteenth century.³⁹ In his landmark death study, *The Hour of Our Death*, Aries affirms the tight bond with which small communities confronted death and grief: “Death was not a personal but a social affair in which family and community were present at the deathbed, wake, and funeral. Catholic mortuary rituals served to harness this unpredictable natural phenomenon through highly ordered procedures and provide the deceased with a peaceful repose till Judgment Day. In addition, these rituals repaired broken ties, and reaffirmed the continuity and solidarity of the community. Thus, death was ritualized and tamed.”⁴⁰

Kübler-Ross, in her cornerstone 1969 study of dying and death, noted that the dying usually (although not always) move through predictable stages while coping with their imminent demises. Her “Five Stages of Grief” model began with denial, proceeded through anger, bargaining, and depression, and finally ended with acceptance.⁴¹ Jessica Mitford was concerned with the post-death stage, specifically the funeral industry. In *The American Way of Death Revisited*, she expanded upon her 1963 scathing rebuke of the funeral business in the United States of America. Until her death in 1996, she continued to decry the greed, pressures salesmanship, and corruption in the funeral industry, all while calling for reforms in after-death care. She updated her earlier work to include current

³⁹ Philippe Aries, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Paperbacks, 1987), 3.

⁴¹ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1979). This is widely-acknowledged as the seminal work on the process of dying.

trends such as the widespread preference for cremation, and new laws in which ceilings were established for what funeral directors could legally charge the bereaved.⁴²

Although this literature is explored only suggestively rather than exhaustively for this study, it can be discerned that the process or “function” of dying encompasses three distinct phases, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. They are *preparatory/active* (later-life aging, illness, medical intervention, preparing legal documents, pre-planning funerals, dispositions, and memorials); *immediate post-death* (the terminal event and all related disposal, the funeral and burial, and memorialization-related activities); and *passive* (probate, legacy distribution and estate finalization).

In terms of records, the *preparatory/active* phase may include writing of letters, a will, autobiography or otherwise sharing of life’s stories or memories and photographs, repairing or strengthening of relationships, planning for palliative or other nursing care, and the continuance or renewal of religious observation, planning for the legacy – deciding who inherits possessions/property, pre-planning of the funeral, eulogies, and decisions on rituals such as burial or cremation.

The *immediate post-death* phase includes the orchestration of functional activities immediately following the terminal event – planning of the funeral or following through on a pre-planned funeral (including service, eulogies, music, burial/cremation, obituary, even post-mortem photography), the family or executor’s interaction with the hospital, nursing home, investigating law enforcement officers, coroners’ investigations, legal notifications, completing vital statistics documents, accepting condolences, applying for

⁴² Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death Revisited* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998).

survivor's pension, death benefits or insurance company payouts, and arrangement, perhaps, of a bursary, scholarship, cemetery monument, or plaque in the deceased person's name. The *passive* phase includes legal probate of the estate: the official state-centred dimensions of death, with lawyers, accountants, trustees, executors, and the courts.

The significance of studying mortality on the frontier, and especially the records generated by such activities and transactions, is two-fold. First, it promotes better awareness of what archivists and historians should be documenting and, thus, acquiring as archival records for their holdings. Second, the research offers a more comprehensive description and contextual understanding of the rich possible sources for exploring an underdeveloped dimension of historiography. As noted earlier in this chapter, historian Edgar Wesley suggested that a useful way by which to examine the human condition is to understand the local.⁴³ This thesis attempts to demonstrate the truthfulness of Wesley's observation for one overlooked but unavoidable local, yet human activity: death.

⁴³ Wesley, "History at Home," 1.

Chapter Two

A Frontier Community: Red Lake, Ontario

In January 1926, spectacular news broke in the international and national media of a major gold discovery in Red Lake, a remote, ill-defined area of northwestern Ontario, some 530 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay. Soon the public and the press were smitten, mesmerized by dreams of adventure, gold, and a fresh start. People from all over the world abandoned what they were doing, left their families, homes and work, to swarm *en masse* into the frozen heart of the Canadian Shield. As they clamoured to materialize their visions of quick fortune and exciting adventure, the gold prospectors and entrepreneurs created what would be known afterward as “the Red Lake gold rush.”

Indeed, it was the last of the great nineteenth-century and twentieth-century gold-rush stampedes. California had been enveloped in a significant gold rush in 1849. Less than a decade later, Australia experienced its own clamour for gold, then the Caribou in British Columbia and, later in the century, the Klondike in the Yukon Territory, the Transvaal in South Africa, and in Nevada, Montana, and Colorado in the United States of America.¹ In this long saga of gold, which brought fame and infamy to their communities, Red Lake was the last.

This chapter will first establish the context in which the thesis analyzes the

¹ Pierre Berton’s monumental *Klondike: The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1958) is widely regarded as the most authoritative monograph on a great gold rush. Other books which provide comprehensive coverage of gold rushes are Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Arnold Hoffman, *Free Gold: The Story of Canadian Mining* (New York, NY, and Toronto, ON: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1947); D.M. LeBourdais, *Metals and Men: The Story of Canadian Mining* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, Limited, 1957), and the pioneering work by W.P. Morrell, *The Gold Rushes* (London, WI: Adam & Charles Black Limited, 1940).

records of dying and death on the frontier by examining the relevant founding history of the Red Lake District, the nature of the frontier life there, and its animating pioneers. Against this historical context of the history of Red Lake, the second part of the chapter will briefly introduce the “players” involved in the record-creating activities of the district as these may relate more specifically to mortality. Both parts of the chapter provide the framework for the case study in Chapter Three.

Archaeological studies have discovered strong material evidence to confirm that the group known as Paleo-Indians were the first settlers of the Red Lake area of northwestern Ontario in approximately 7500 B.C. The Shield Archaic and Plains Archaic groups lived in the Red Lake District from then until approximately 500 B.C. Local vegetation, game, and fish provided the sustenance for these peoples. The subsequent Woodland Era (ca. 500 B.C. through 1750 A.D.) saw the first Caucasian contact, the peoples’ practice of living in insular village encampments, and their use of various forms of ceramics and implements. The archaeological record is the only surviving documentation of this period.²

As was the case for much of Canada’s North, the written record of the Red Lake area began after the formation, by a charter granted by King Charles II in 1670, of the Hudson’s Bay Company. This corporation, formally known as the “Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay,” received sole proprietary jurisdiction over the “trade and commerce” of land and water which flowed into Hudson

² Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Historical Planning and Research Branch, “The Archaeology of Northwestern Ontario: The Prehistoric and Fur Trade Periods,” (Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer, 1980).

Bay. Congruent with the geography of the Canadian Shield, the fur trade was divided into two competing commercial regions. The district which became known as Red Lake was located near the boundary of these separated areas. The Hudson's Bay Company traded in the enormous land which drained into Hudson Bay, while independent traders, largely based in or supported from Montreal, Quebec, and who coalesced into the North West Company, worked in the large expanse to the south and east.³

The Ojibwa people (hereafter referred to by their ancestral name, Anishinaape) inhabited the Red Lake district, and began to deliver their furs from the interior to the trading posts. Red Lake is situated west of Lake St. Joseph, the latter being included in a 1700 fur trade route map. Lake St. Joseph was shown as the most northerly limit of the French fur trade area which went north and west from the Great Lakes. Red Lake was also included as part of the fur trade jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company, in the Fort Albany area.⁴

The fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company and the independent pedlars did not enjoy a congenial working relationship. They became sworn rivals, creating a schism which led to the founding in 1779 of the North West Company.⁵ Its principals were comprised of a disparate syndicate of independent fur traders and a number of independent fur trading companies, all of whom operated out of the lands extending out of the St. Lawrence Basin. Initially, the Lake Superior area was the new company's western

³ Edwin Ernest Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Glyndwr Williams, "The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870," *The Beaver* 314 (2) (Autumn 1983) Special Issue.

⁴ Charles A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study* (Toronto, ON: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).

⁵ While there has been some dispute over the year in which the North West Company was officially formed, the year 1779 is widely accepted.

boundary, but after a short period, operations were moved westward to the valleys of the Saskatchewan, Assiniboine and Red Rivers. The North West Company expanded and restructured in 1787, and numerous outposts were established.⁶

The Hudson's Bay Company followed suit and built more outposts of its main fur trading centres. Albany factor Edward Jarvis was the catalyst for the establishment of what became centuries of Hudson's Bay Company involvement in the Red Lake district. He proposed outposts of the Osnaburgh regional post, and the Governing Committee accepted his detailed plans and recommendations. Outposts, as opposed to posts, were deemed temporary and as such, had a smaller staff, stock, and trading volume than the larger posts. Jarvis's proposal resulted in an outpost being established at Red Lake in 1790.⁷

One year later, Red Lake made its debut in the published historical record. John Long, a British trader, clerk, and amateur folklorist, included the legend of Red Lake's naming in his book, which was published in England. The monograph bore the awkward title, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader, Describing the Manners and Customs of the North American Indians, with an Account of the Posts situated on the River Saint Laurence, Lake, Ontario, etc.* Long's memoir provided the first detailed record of Anishinaape life and legend at Red Lake as well as its naming following the slaying of a mythical beast:

A few days after my return to Lac la Mort, a band of Savages arrived from the Red Lake, called by the Indians, Misqui Sakiegan...Red Lake is so called on account of a remarkable circumstance which happened to two

⁶ Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The North West Company* (Toronto, ON: Macmillan, 1957).

⁷ The Red Lake Gold Rush of 1926 and the resultant increase in population motivated the Hudson's Bay Company to promote Red Lake to the "full post" designation.

famous warriors of the Chippeway nation, who were hunting by the lake side, and as they were looking out for game, perceived at some distance an enormous beast, that appeared much larger than any animal they had ever seen; his pace was slow and heavy, and he kept constantly by the water side.

They followed him as close as they thought prudent, determined at all hazards to use their best endeavours to kill him. As they approached, they had a clearer view, and discovered that his body was covered with something like moss; this increased their surprise, and after consulting together, they continued advancing towards the beast, and fired large shot, without appearing to make any impression. They fired again with as little effect as before; then retreated some distance, sat down and sung their war songs, addressing themselves to the Master of Life, and desiring his assistance to enable them to conquer it, as they believed it to be Matchee Manitoo, or bad spirit, in the shape of this monster.

They then got up and pursued him, both firing at the same time: the shot proved successful, and caused the animal to turn around, which induced them to keep up their fire till the beast jumped into the water, and they lost sight of him. From the circumstance of his blood dyeing the water red, this lake has ever since been called the Red Lake.⁸

In 1786, the North West Company built a trading post, “Red Lake House,” at Red Lake. The trader was in residence annually from autumn to spring to accommodate the receipt of furs and exchange of goods with the Anishinaape during trapping seasons. No archival evidence exists to indicate that there was a trading post – whether Hudson’s Bay Company, North West Company, or other traders – after the last trader made his seasonal departure in 1822. There would be no post at Red Lake thereafter for nearly 100 years. While the Hudson’s Bay Company outpost at Red Lake is on several Company maps

⁸ John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader, Describing the Manner and Customs of the North American Indians With an Account of the Posts situated on the River Saint Laurence, Lake, Ontario, etc.* (London, UK: privately published, 1791), 80. A first edition of this monograph is part of the rare book collection at the University of Manitoba Archives.

throughout the 1800s,⁹ there is no record of Red Lake in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives or other logical repositories until the district appears in a district manager's annual report which covered the year 1918.¹⁰ The Red Lake post reappeared as quickly as it had been abandoned.

The 1918 report listed Red Lake as being in the Lake Superior District as an outpost of the Pine Ridge (later Gold Pines) post situated on Lac Seul. The Red Lake outpost was at Post Narrows, close to the northeast end of the lake. This location was approximately eight miles by water from its former, more southerly location at McNeely Bay. The Hudson's Bay Company rebuilt the Red Lake outpost for strategic business reasons. The Red Lake area Anishinaape were growing weary of transporting their furs to the central post at Lac Seul. When independent fur trader George Arthur Swain, a former medical student at Manitoba Medical College, established his own post near Gull Rock Lake, the Anishinaape were patronizing him instead of the Company.¹¹

In July 1925, a group of prospectors made a gold discovery in Howey Bay, Red Lake, which was to have far-reaching effects on the entire area.¹² By the following January, a major Canadian gold rush had begun and the Red Lake outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company was suddenly thrust into the business of supplying all manner of goods to several thousand prospectors. The number of furs brought to the outpost dwindled

⁹ Map of Hudson's Bay Company post in a bay on the north shore of Red Lake, as well the route from Osnaburgh to Red Lake showing Cameron's "old house" on the south shore at the entrance to Red Lake. Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), B.177/a/2.

¹⁰ District Manager's Annual Report for 1918, Lake Superior District, October 25, 1919. HBCA, A.92/19/7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The town of Red Lake grew up around a water body which, following the 1926 gold rush, became known as "Burnt Bay," and then, "Howey Bay." See Appendix I, *Figures One and Two.*

considerably in wake of the gold rush as some Anishinaape eschewed their trapline business in order to work as prospectors' guides.

After outfitting so many gold-seekers, the Red Lake outpost was granted the status of "full post" and, in 1933, moved from Johnson's Point, where it was only accessible by water, into a new, two-storey modern frame structure on the main thoroughfare of the town of Red Lake. The Company outgrew that first location in Red Lake proper and, in 1957, opened a new store nearby. (The first town location then became the Red Lake Municipal Office.)

Just over ten years later, the Company needed more floor space to accommodate the district's growing population. A large, three-storey frame shopping complex was opened on Howey Street in 1970, and the former location became the Company's satellite groceteria. The Company also purchased the mine store at Madsen and operated it from 1950 through 1972.¹³ Additionally, from 1953 through 1997, the Hudson's Bay Company operated a store in Balmertown.¹⁴ The Company's stores loomed large in the business centre from that date until they left the Red Lake District in 1997.

The Geological Survey of Canada, the chief geoscientific division of the federal government, was founded in 1842. Its program of mapping the geological formations and potential mineral wealth of Canada was attuned to the English River, Lac Seul and the Red Lake area in the 1870s. The Survey's director, Alfred Richard Cecil Selwyn, tapped

¹³ The community of Madsen was built around the Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines Limited, which produced gold bullion from 1938 through 1976. It is located seven miles from Red Lake proper. See Appendix I, *Figures One and Two*.

¹⁴ Balmertown was founded when two major gold mines, Campbell Red Lake and Dickenson, were put into production, respectively, in 1944 and 1949. The two mines are located within Balmertown, which itself is located seven miles from the town of Red Lake (see Appendix I, *Figures One and Two*).

the experienced Queen's University geology professor, Robert Bell, to head the massive undertaking.

While engaged in an overview survey by canoe in 1872 of the area later known as Thunder Bay, west to the prairie provinces, Selwyn and Bell visited the Hudson's Bay Company post at Lac Seul. There, local Anishinaabe introduced the men to soapstone or "pipestone" they found at "Pipestone Bay," along Red Lake. Soapstone is the soft rock from which they fashioned the bowl or tobacco repository sections of their pipes.¹⁵ This gesture of friendly interest signalled a deeper meaning to the geologists. Since soapstone is a harbinger of igneous and sedimentary formations, in which gold veins are often located, Bell and Selwyn realized that these soapstone samples may lead them to discover the potential occurrences of important minerals in the Red Lake District.¹⁶

Bell made a subsequent study of the Red Lake district in 1883. Upon completing the survey, he wrote that Red Lake's "shores proved to be of great geological interest. The whole lake lies within a wide belt of Huronian rocks, among which several of the rare varieties are well developed, and they were found to contain some interesting minerals."¹⁷ The water body known as Red Lake, which Bell described as being "of considerable size," is approximately twenty-five miles in length (from west to east) and comprises a sixty-nine mile radius.¹⁸ The water from Red Lake runs south by a series of lakes and rivers joining near Ear Falls with the English River system, which

¹⁵ Robert Bell, "Report on the Country Between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg," in *Geological Survey of Canada Report of Progress for 1872-1873*, by A.R.C. Selwyn (Montreal, PQ: Dawson Brothers, 1873), 87-111.

¹⁶ "Pipestone Leads Dr. Bell to Red Lake," *Canadian Mining Journal*, March 5, 1926, 244.

¹⁷ Robert Bell, "Geological Survey of Canada Report of Progress, 1882-1883-1884," 5.

¹⁸ Donald Fleming Parrott, *The Red Lake Gold Rush* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1976), introduction.

drains to the southeast. The Winnipeg River, which empties the southwest, joins the English River, with drainage occurring to the Arctic via Lake Winnipeg and Hudson Bay. The continuous waterway from Hudson to Red Lake provided an excellent transportation route in both summer and winter.

Bell's hard data and the obvious enthusiasm with which he wrote his reports captivated the Ontario government and business leaders of the day. By this time, what remained of the area formerly known as Rupert's Land, including Red Lake, was under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Since Ontario was seen to have great commercial potential, many lengthy and tiresome federal-provincial and inter-provincial political machinations occurred over ownership of these disputed territories of the northwest corner of what is now Ontario. Eventually, in 1888, the province received the lands lying west of the Lake Superior-Huron district, as well as the territory south of the English and Albany Rivers as far as the coast of Hudson and James Bays. This region, of which Red Lake was part, was re-named "The Patricia District."¹⁹

After having been encouraged by the public interest in Bell's report, the Geological Survey of Canada next sent Dr. Donaldson Bogart Dowling to Red Lake in 1893. He was charged with surveying the northern portion of the English River, through Red Lake, and the Vermilion and Berens Rivers, as far as and including Manitoba. Dowling's geoscientific findings and maps, which confirmed Bell's belief that Red Lake may host a high mineral potential, served as the "current" data on Red Lake for much of the ensuing

¹⁹ The Patricia District was named for Lady Patricia Ramsey (formerly Princess Patricia, 1886-1974), a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Patricia herself never visited Red Lake. For map of Northwestern Ontario showing the Red Lake District, see Appendix I, *Figure One*.

three decades.²⁰ Apart from the professional record Dowling left (in the forms of a report and maps), he also left a poignant personal confirmation of his visit to the area. Dowling related in his diary that he had carved “D.B.D., 1893” into a soapstone ledge on Red Lake. Indeed, Dowling’s stone record remains visible today on a large, flat ledge at what is known as Pipestone Narrows, at the entrance to Pipestone Bay.²¹

The first discovery of gold values in Red Lake was made in 1897. The strike was located at Slate Bay, off Red Lake, by a party headed by Robert J. Gilbert, the ill-fated scion of a distinguished New Brunswick founding family.²² During the twilight of the nineteenth century, parts of Canada were bustling with “gold fever.” While remote Red Lake became of interest to only a small group of speculative investors and adventuresome prospectors, the late 1890s were momentous years for gold discoveries. The Klondike in the Yukon Territory and, closer, the Mikado Mine (Lake of the Woods District near Kenora, Ontario) renewed a prospecting fervour and interest not seen in Canada since the British Columbia gold rush of the mid-century.

Gilbert had read Dowling’s 1894 report on Red Lake, which resonated significantly enough to convince the former to travel to England, where he requested an audience with the 5th Earl of Portarlington and other monied English and Irish men. While they were convinced that the intrepid Gilbert was sufficiently enthusiastic about the

²⁰ Donaldson Bogart Dowling, “Report on the Country in the Vicinity of Red Lake and Part of the Basin of Berens River, Keewatin,” in *Geological Survey of Canada Annual Report 1894* by George Mercer Dawson. New Series, vol. 11 (Ottawa, ON: S.E. Dawson, 1896).

²¹ Pipestone Bay and Pipestone Narrows are located approximately 27 miles from Red Lake proper, at the northwest end of the lake. See Appendix I, *Figures One* and *Two*. Numerous visitors and local residents have followed Dowling’s carving precedent in leaving their names for posterity, including geologist Dr. Everend Lester Bruce and his mapping party which visited the area in 1922 and 1923, and several other early explorers from the 1920s period.

²² Slate Bay is located at approximately the middle of Red Lake, along its northern shores. See Appendix I, *Figures One* and *Two*.

venture, it was Dowling's optimistic geological report which persuaded them to fund an expedition to Red Lake, a place of which they, of course, had never heard. The North Western Exploration Company was thus formed, with its "head office" being located in London, England. Indeed, the future discoveries of gold at Red Lake have, as their imaginative foundation, the reports by the visiting geologists of the late nineteenth century.

The Gilbert party paddled its canoes and portaged the distance of some two hundred miles to Red Lake from Rat Portage (now Kenora). In Slate Bay, the party discovered that free gold was easily obtainable by panning the earth and decomposed rock right near the surface. They staked eight claims and decided to hire James Williams Tyrrell, a Dominion land surveyor Gilbert knew in Hamilton, Ontario, to officially record the find.²³

On the morning of August 8, 1897, Gilbert, 33, was accidentally and fatally shot while he and his crew were about to begin the journey out of Red Lake. Within a few moments, the idyllic venture had morphed into a nightmare. In the first newspaper mention of Red Lake, the *Manitoba Free Press* reported:

After camping for the night they were preparing to leave and were in the act of loading their canoe. Mr. Glover was holding the canoe by the water's edge for the others to load, and apparently all had their backs toward Mr. Gilbert, when a report was heard from behind and, looking around, Mr. Gilbert was seen to fall and clasp his hand to his thigh and exclaim, 'I have killed myself,' and go off into a swoon.

²³ The mineral resource and development records at the Archives of Ontario contain one file on the Northwestern Exploration Company Limited at Red Lake. The file, RG 13-28, box 8, is comprised of reports and also of correspondence with James Williams Tyrrell.

Restoratives were immediately applied to his lips and temple, but he only regained consciousness for a few seconds, and exclaimed again, 'I am dying,' or some such words as these, and almost immediately expired.²⁴

Gilbert's was not the first Caucasian death at Red Lake (several Hudson's Bay men had died at Red Lake in the 1790s), but his was likely the first Caucasian death at Red Lake in the modern era of the late nineteenth century and beyond. It was unanimously decided by his group that they would not bury Gilbert in so remote a spot, one which might never be found or seen again. Out of empathy for Gilbert's family and in respecting the decorum befitting the death of a Victorian gentleman, the party elected to take the body out to the nearest railway line to be shipped for interment near his home.²⁵ The heartbroken friends sewed the body into canvas and started out.

They were especially menaced in their burdensome task by the extreme heat, their own grieving, and the wearying pace of travel by canoe and the numerous portages over which they carried the heavy, decomposing form of their leader. At Lac Seul, a rough box was constructed. From there, local Anishinaape men, along with the Hudson's Bay Company team, conveyed the body across the eight-mile portage to Dinorwic station, where it was sealed into a waiting metal casket. At last, six days after the fatal accident, the Saturday express to the east was on its way.

When the dejected group reached Rat Portage (Kenora), Gilbert's death was formally registered with Ontario Vital Statistics. Since Red Lake was then virtually unknown, the death was recorded as having occurred at Rat Portage. It was, however, the

²⁴ *Manitoba Free Press*, August 16, 1897, front page. The Mr. Glover to which the article referred was G.C. Glover, an artist with the *London Graphic* and, apparently, a mining engineer.

first government record of death at Red Lake. The record contained minimal information in a ledger which provided room only for one line about the deceased. The data contained in that line consisted of name, sex, date and place of death, occupation, cause of death, religion, and name of informant. Gilbert was simply listed as “killed.”²⁶

With the promising samples still in their possession, Gilbert’s group sought out surveyor James Williams Tyrrell in Hamilton, who did go to Red Lake in September 1897. The sinking of a 25-foot mining shaft continued throughout the winter of 1898. However, the remoteness and inaccessibility of the Precambrian location spelled doom for the venture. At that time, it would have been extremely difficult to transport goods and equipment necessary to start and sustain gold mining operations. His “plan of mining locations northwestern of Slate Bay, Red Lake, District of Keewatin,” in October 1897 was the first of its kind for Red Lake. It was never published until it appeared in Donald Parrott’s *The Red Lake Gold Rush* in 1964, courtesy of Tyrrell’s son, William, who himself returned to the site during the 1926 gold rush.²⁷

Following the collapse of the Gilbert/Tyrrell venture in 1897, the Red Lake District saw little prospecting activity for the next quarter century. A fur farming enterprise operated from 1912 through 1916, at which point many of the five trappers in the partnership left for service in the First World War.²⁸

²⁵ There is only a vague reference in the heretofore known archival record of Gilbert’s “home” being “out east.” Since he was from New Brunswick, it is assumed that he was buried there.

²⁶ Ontario Registrar of Vital Statistics, Deaths, County of Rainy River, Division of Rat Portage, as found in microfilm MS 935, reel 85, at the Archives of Ontario.

²⁷ James Williams Tyrrell fonds, MS Coll. 310, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, The University of Toronto. Tyrrell was the brother of legendary Canadian explorer, Joseph Burr Tyrrell.

²⁸ Unpublished memoir by Leland H. (Lee) Parker, 1962. Collection of John Richthammer.

During the summer of 1922, a group of prospectors made a small discovery of silver at East Bay, near Red Lake. Details of the find reached the media, and a modest silver rush of approximately fifty prospectors passed through the area that summer. In September of that year, the *Manitoba Free Press* announced that sixty-eight claims had been staked in Red Lake. Although the assayers found gold in the samples, the prospectors were preoccupied, at the time, with silver.

Timothy Harvey Crowley, a long-time Northwestern Ontario prospector, teamster, and justice of the peace, staked silver claims in Red Lake in 1922. After completing his work, Crowley went to Winnipeg and courted its assayers, mining investors, and press and, thus, the public. In an article entitled “Prospector Sees Bright Future for Red Lake,” he was quoted as saying, presciently, “There is no doubt but that Red Lake will become an extensive mining camp in the near future.” Later in the feature, Crowley re-emphasized his optimism by declaring that he was “satisfied that it [Red Lake] is going to be a camp of great dimensions.”²⁹ This article was the first of many to trumpet an untrammelled future for Red Lake.

The year 1922 also brought a provincial geologist to Red Lake. Working for the Ontario Department of Mines, Dr. Everend Lester Bruce conducted a geological survey over the course of six weeks. His interest piqued, Bruce and his party also spent the following summer surveying the area in much more detail.³⁰ The resulting geological report, published in 1925, triggered an astonishing chain of events.

²⁹ *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, September 28, 1922.

³⁰ Everend Lester Bruce, “Geology of the Basin of Red Lake, District of Patricia,” *Annual Report of the Ontario Department of Mines*. vol. 33, part 4, 1924. (Toronto, ON: King’s Printer, 1925), 12-39.

The curiosity shared by prospectors over Bruce's report only reinforced the excitement they had felt over the Red Lake silver rush of 1922. Prospector and promoter Findlay McCallum had been a prominent veteran of that small rush, and he could not stop thinking of the mineral possibilities held by the Red Lake area. Bruce's report only served to solidify McCallum's resolve to promote, but also to return to Red Lake. While in Toronto, he apprised fellow prospector Lorne Bain Howey on Red Lake's gold potential. Howey was born in Guelph, Ontario, in 1885, but was raised in Toronto. As a young man, he worked as a journalist in New Liskeard and owned a small book store in Cobalt, but his true avocation was prospecting.³¹ Howey meticulously studied Bruce's report, and deduced the potential economic significance of a major gold discovery at Red Lake. By that time, Howey had already participated in Ontario several gold rushes.

He returned to his home in Haileybury, Ontario, formed "The Howey Red Lake Syndicate," and marshalled investors to support his venture by purchasing units of it.³² Subsequently, Howey took his brother-in-law, George A. McNeely as a partner, and left for a summer of prospecting at Red Lake.³³ Mark Raymond (Ray) Howey, Lorne's younger brother, and Ray's prospecting partner, William Francis (Frank) Morgan, a mining engineer, also joined the venture to Red Lake. Ray and Morgan prospected on behalf of the prosperous McIntyre-Porcupine Mines.³⁴

³¹ Lorne Howey worked as a journalist for *The New Liskeard Herald* circa 1906.

³² Correspondence by Horace Greely Young to Robert C. Rowe, editor of the Canadian Mining Journal, October 22, 1934. Gift of R. Jeffrey Charlton, son-in-law of Young, to John Richthammer. Young believed that the "Howey Gold Syndicate" was only the second of its kind in Canada.

³³ Brothers Lorne and Raymond Howey (born 1892) were married to George A. McNeely's sisters, Clara (Lorne), and Florence (Raymond). George McNeely (1888-1974) was born in Rutherglen, Ontario, and is buried in North Bay, Ontario.

³⁴ "Ray Howey, Red Lake, Tells Story of Famous Discovery: Biggest Gold Rush Since Klondike Was Discovered in '98," *The Toronto Daily Star*, February 9, 1926.

The group arrived at Red Lake and encamped on the shore of Burnt Bay (later Howey Bay). On July 25, 1925, the day after Lorne Howey's 40th birthday, the party was deer hunting when they encountered a large tree which had been uprooted by wind.³⁵ They noticed what looked like gold-bearing veins which had been exposed as a result of the roots and earth being moved. The brothers and their partners followed veins in the vicinity and realized that they were exploring one large and significant ore-body. Lorne Howey and George McNeeley staked one half of the ore-body, while Raymond Howey and Frank Morgan staked the other half for their employer, the McIntyre-Porcupine Mines.³⁶

The men left Red Lake and returned to Haileybury as quickly as they could. It was imperative that details of the find be shared with Lorne Howey's and George McNeeley's financial supporters, and that they search for further funding with which to explore the claims. Lorne Howey contacted John Edward (Jack) Hammell, a Toronto-based mining promoter who was legendary for his zeal and courage in bringing raw mining prospects to production. Immediately prior to the Howey discovery, Hammell had just secured the financing for what became Flin Flon in northern Manitoba. Later, following his success with Howey at Red Lake, the brash and fiercely determined Hammell developed and brought into production the Hasaga Gold Mines, Limited, in Red Lake (from the claims staked by Raymond Howey and William Francis Morgan). He also operated gold-producing mines at Uchi Lake and Pickle Crow.

³⁵ According to his birth registration, Lorne Howey was born on July 24, 1885. Ontario Department of Vital Statistics, registration no. 1885-05-038718.

³⁶ "Lorne Howey Who Made Big Red Lake Find Tells Story," *The Daily Times-Journal*, Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, March 2, 1926; unpublished memoir by Edward Charles Cochenour, May 3, 1962. Collection of John Richthammer.

Hammell was the impetus for the development of the Red Lake area, not only through his financing of the Howey, but through his subsequently relentless pressure on both the Ontario and federal governments to improve transportation and provide services to Red Lake. His initial inspection of the property at Red Lake solidified Hammell's resolve to make a mine out of the claims. However, by this time, the inclemency of the October weather was beginning to pose a serious transportation problem. He had to convey mining equipment and labourers into Red Lake before winter took hold. The unusual, yet precedent-setting solution of using aircraft was posed.³⁷ The genesis of this brilliant idea has historically always been attributed to Hammell, who actively courted the media. However, it was mining engineer (and later first general manager of the Howey Gold Mines, Limited) Horace Greeley Young who found the innovative solution to the precarious situation in which Hammell found himself:

Having had service overseas where flying was an hourly occurrence, I wrote to Hammell and told him that the Ontario Government Forestry Branch had an aviation base at Minaki, which actually happened to be the shortest direct route by air to the Howey property. I believe it actually scales off to 100 miles. I told Hammell that regardless of cost he should interview the Ontario Government for the service of these planes to lift all his men and supplies into Red Lake.³⁸

Aircraft had never before been utilized in industrial development on the frontier, and this Red Lake first signalled a radical change in how people, equipment, and supplies

³⁷ K.M. Molson, *Pioneering in Canadian Air Transport* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, Limited, 1974), 4-5

³⁸ Horace Greeley Young, "Notes by Horace G. Young on manuscript by R.C. Rowe,"⁴. Correspondence to Robert C. Rowe, editor of the *Canadian Mining Journal*. Gift of Charlton to Richthammer. The "manuscript" was a draft of an article Rowe was writing on development at Red Lake.

reached mining camps in the Canadian North.³⁹ The Red Lake gold rush also saw the end of complete reliance, at least for some adventurers, on the transportation modes of canoe, snowshoe, toboggan and dogsled. In the latter, Red Lake witnessed the strange spectacle of the oldest way of travelling working alongside the most modern aircraft of the day.

With the dawn of the year 1926, an impressive stream of prospectors and would-be miners were enroute to Red Lake. Only one month into the new year, a front-page headline in *The Manitoba Free Press* read “Red Lake Mine Rush Biggest in 20 Years.” Two days later, the newspaper predicted that by summer one thousand prospectors would merge therein.⁴⁰ That same month, *The Toronto Star* noted the “Great Rush to Red Lake.”⁴¹ A prospector, already there, told the media on February 1 that about twenty groups of prospectors were reaching Red Lake each day. Also in February, *The Sunday Times* of London, England, published a feature bearing the large, bold headline, “Gold Rush: Long Trek Over Winter Trails in Canada,” and newspapers across North America regularly referred to Red Lake.⁴²

Apart from the gaze of the media, this sudden, almost spontaneous, stampede to a remote, frozen part of Canada’s North was noticed by the provincial and federal governments of the day. As they carried out their official business activities, government bureaucrats produced many kinds of records documenting life on the frontier, including the dying and death of pioneers. The gold rush was barely into its second month when those living in tents at Red Lake learned that services were forthcoming from two sections

³⁹ Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 122. See also John Robert Kennedy Main, *Voyageurs of the Air: A History of Civil Aviation in Canada, 1858-1967* (Ottawa, ON: The Queen’s Printer, 1967).

⁴⁰ *Manitoba Free Press*, February 4, 7, 1926.

⁴¹ *The Toronto Star*, February 5, 1926.

of the provincial government, and one federal department: the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Department of Mines, and the Canadian postal service.

Lawrence C. Carr, a young English emigrant and newly-minted police officer, became the district's first resident law enforcement official.⁴³ Herbert Edward Holland, a First World War veteran, and long-time Kenora, Ontario, merchant, mining recorder, and crown lands timber agent, became Red Lake's first mining recorder and magistrate.⁴⁴ William Brown, also a soldier in the First World War, was the first postmaster and coroner of the Red Lake District. He remained in this position until 1929, when he began to work full-time as a general merchant and airways depot agent.⁴⁵ The first "offices" of the police, mining record, and postmaster were located in wood-floored tents, although Brown soon built a log home for the post office. The mail was routed to Red Lake through the village of Hudson, Ontario, a location was also used as the "jumping off point" on the Canadian National Railway from which passengers then made their way to

⁴² The *Sunday Times* of London, February 7, 1926.

⁴³ Correspondence by Lawrence C. Carr to Donald Parrott, January 9, 1964. Gift of Parrott to Richthammer. Carr remained with the Ontario Provincial Police until his retirement in 1963. He died in 1990 in Cornwall, Ontario. See also Dahn D. Higley, *O.P.P.: The History of the Ontario Provincial Police Force* (Toronto, ON: The Queen's Printer, 1984), 170-171.

⁴⁴ "Bert E. Holland, Former Mining Recorder, Passes: Widely-Known Throughout Kenora District in Business, Masonic and Church Circles," *Kenora Miner and News* (Kenora, Ontario, March 5, 1946), 1. Holland (born in 1877) served overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces during the First World War.

⁴⁵ William Brown (born in 1883), who was also a soldier overseas with the Canadians in the First World War, was a founding member of Red Lake branch 102 of the Royal Canadian Legion. He appears to have retained his coroner's duties until at least January 1933, when he completed the Ontario Department of Vital Statistics death registration form of his son, Donald, who died at birth at the Brown homestead at West Narrows, near Pipestone Bay. Ironically, Brown, who had presided over and meticulously recorded several Red Lake inquests, became himself the subject of an inquest following his drowning death in Phillips Channel, near West Narrows, on August 8, 1936. Coincidentally, Carr, Holland, and Brown were all born in England – Carr in or near the City of London, Holland in Coventry, County Warwickshire, and Brown in Hartlepool, County Durham.

Red Lake by all other manner of transportation – aircraft, boat, canoe, snowshoe, dog team, passenger or tugboat.⁴⁶

The first and, for several years, dominant mine in the region grew out of the claims staked by Lorne Howey and George McNeely. Hammell optioned the claims to Dome Mines, Limited, Canada's mining superpower at the time.⁴⁷ At this early stage of the camp's development, the gold mines hired physicians to tend to the miners. In the case of Red Lake, William Sissons Paul, and A.J. Skelly were the first temporary physicians at Red Lake, employed jointly by Dome Mines and the McIntyre Mines, which had crews busily examining the Howey claims.⁴⁸

Much excitement and many dreams of permanency abounded in the camp during Dome's inspection of the claims, and the prospect of the Red Lake camp becoming a subsidiary of Dome Mines.⁴⁹ However, when the property was turned down, a pall of gloom was cast over Red Lake.⁵⁰ Undaunted, Hammell was determined to make a mine.

⁴⁶ Parrott, *Red Lake Gold Rush*, 82-83.

⁴⁷ Correspondence with John E. Hammell, mining promoter, Douglas Guy Hobson Wright, Dome Mines' manager at Red Lake in 1926, "Red Lake Monthly Reports" (1926), and the first share certificate of the Howey Gold Syndicate, 1926, *Dome Mines Limited Company Fonds*," Archives of Ontario, F 1350/MU 8697, boxes 350632 and 359653.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Wright to Dome Mines Limited, April 19, 1926; "Cochrane Physician to Go to Red Lake," *Kenora Miner and News* (Kenora, ON: April 24, 1926). The team of Paul and Kelly were soon followed by Dr. Wilfred Stanton Fitzpatrick, and then, Dr. Thomas Joseph Goodison, who remained as one of Red Lake's resident physicians until 1942. Dr. Joseph McCammon, who served the area from 1938 through 1955, was also another long-time local physician.

⁴⁹ A full-length history of mining giant is Charles P. Girdwood, Lawrence F. Jones, and George Lonn, *The Big Dome: Over Seventy Years of Gold Mining in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Cybergraphics Company, Inc., 1983).

⁵⁰ Young correspondence to Rowe, October 22, 1934, 7. Gift of Charlton to Richthammer. Young wrote that the reason Dome Mines dropped its option on the Howey property was that the former's engineers "could not visualize the profits in lower grade ore and rigidly stuck to the average costs of the time," 7.

He persuaded William S. Cherry, an Ontario-born, Rhode Island merchant prince, to invest \$500,000 in the Howey claims.⁵¹

This infusion of capital, along with funds of his own, enabled Hammell to establish The Howey Gold Mines, Limited. The mine was in operation by late 1926 and, during 1928 and 1929, a complete and substantial mining operation was built. Horace Greeley Young, the Howey's first general manager, was effusive in recounting the construction of the mine

...on the biggest programme of construction ever put over so far from the steel. This cost \$800,000-\$900,000, was completed in nine months and consisted of getting out of the bush logs and timber, erecting a sawmill to cut 20,000 board feet per day, erecting a milling plant to handle 600 tons of ore per day, power house, machine shop, shaft house, sleep camp for men, and built 41 miles of transmission line through the virgin forest with right of way cut out 100' wide.⁵²

The Howey Gold Mines gained the distinction of the lowest-cost gold producer in Canada, and was the talk of the country's mining fraternity.⁵³ As well, it introduced several new milling practices to the continent. The first gold brick was poured in 1930, the town of Red Lake was growing up around the mine, and the area's future was solidified.

⁵¹ Correspondence between Horace Greeley Young, general manager of the Howey Gold Mines, Limited, and Ray T. Birks, a Toronto-based lawyer, who was secretary of the mine, October 12, 1929. Gift of Charlton to Richthammer. William S. Cherry founded a chain of department stores in the New England states.

⁵² "Brief" written in August and September 1931 by Young on his tenure at the Howey Gold Mines, Limited, 10. Gift of Charlton to Richthammer. The "steel" to which Young referred was a casual term used to describe a railway which, in this case, was the Canadian National Railway located 175 miles from Red Lake, at Hudson, Ontario.

⁵³ The low-cost mining operation was due to the accessibility of a compact, large orebody and uncomplicated milling of that ore.

Red Lake was a company town, and the Howey Gold Mines employed many of its citizens. The mine had control of all land in the town proper, and leased property on which miners and their families could build houses and mine-sanctioned businesses. Bunkhouses for single mine workers were constructed by the Howey Gold Mines, while residences (some of log, some of lumber, and some a combination of both) were built by miners either anticipating marriage, or those just waiting until they had the resources by which to move their wives to Red Lake. Various churches, banks, hotels, restaurants, dance halls, and a school were built during the community's early years, and all of them eventually housed records.

While the Red Lake District was largely unaffected by the Great Depression, gold as a commodity was being re-evaluated internationally. Beginning in 1934, Canada inaugurated the selling gold at \$35 per ounce to the United States of America.⁵⁴ A "Depression boom" was triggered, which meant that there was even more demand for Red Lake's gold.⁵⁵

The 1930s, especially from 1933 through 1940, brought an enormous amount of mining activity to Red Lake. Ultimately during that period, seven mines joined the Howey in the ranks of gold producers. The McKenzie-Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, became the area's second gold producer in 1935. Located on the largest local island (named for Donald McKenzie, a fur trader who worked there early in the nineteenth century), McKenzie soon built a thriving community, and a profitable mining operation. The opening of the Red Lake Gold Shore Gold Mines, Limited, followed in 1936, on property

⁵⁴ Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 369.

⁵⁵ Government of Ontario, Treasury Department, Policy Planning Division, "Inflation: The Dollar Premium and the J.E. Hammell Gold Proposals," September 1957, Archives of Ontario, RG 6-44, 1-31.

only one mile from Red Lake town proper. McKenzie Island doubles its fortune when the Gold Eagle Gold Mines, Limited, went into production there. Subsequently, in 1938, the Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, began operating seven miles from the town of Red Lake. By the early 1970s, Madsen's output had topped \$82 million dollars in gold bullion. Upon its closure in 1965, McKenzie-Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, had remitted approximately \$3 million in dividends to its shareholders, and had produced \$24 million dollars in gold bullion. The McIntyre-Porcupine property staked by Raymond Howey and Frank Morgan in 1925 became the Hasaga Gold Mines, Limited, and was located near the Howey Gold Mines, Limited, in the town of Red Lake. Hasaga's production until its closure in 1953 netted \$8 million in gold bullion. The Cochenour-Willans Gold Mines, Limited, operated from 1939 through 1974, and produced an astonishing \$41 million dollars in gold bullion. The McMarmac Gold Mines, Limited, located near Cochenour, began production in 1940, and operated intermittently until 1949. It produced nearly \$3 million in gold bullion.⁵⁶

The prosperity and substantial development of several noteworthy gold mines in the Red Lake District had wide-reaching implications. Seven gold-producing mines and numerous smaller, non-producing gold properties dominated the Red Lake landscape during the Great Depression. While much of the rest of the country suffered under an oppressive economic coma, an astonishing total of \$160, 525, 000 in gold bullion came

⁵⁶ Parrott, *Red Lake Gold Rush*, 174-196. The monographs which deal exclusively with Red Lake's discovery and founding are: Donald Fleming Parrott, *The Red Lake Gold Rush* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, Ltd., 1964, and several revised editions); Parrott, *The Second Red Lake Gold Rush* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, Ltd., 1978, and several revised editions); John E.L. Richthammer, *The End of the Road: A History of the Red Lake District* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, 1985); and Ruth Weber Russell, *North for Gold: The Red Lake Gold Rush of 1926* (Waterloo, ON: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1987).

out of Red Lake area mines. Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, produced for the longest period. With gold at \$35 per ounce (a tenth of its value in the 1980s, and a twentieth of its current value in 2007), and not counting for inflation when one million dollars in the 1930s or 1940s had enormous purchasing power compared to that of recent years, Madsen – and the Red Lake District – was an enormous success.⁵⁷

The extraction of gold from the Red Lake area, along with the development of its modern settlement communities, came at a cataclysmically high cost to the district's original settlers, the Anishinaape:

...the First Nations people of Ontario's undeveloped hinterland lived primarily from the land. They congregated in summer in defined communities but in early autumn dispersed to winter camps to hunt, fish, and trap. Increasingly, however, they found they had to adapt to a different way of life, one closer to the Canadian mainstream.⁵⁸

This adaptation included the possibility, and often the necessity, of becoming guides, miners, and labourers, all while the Anishinaape were simultaneously losing their inherent connection with the land. This negative impact on traditional First Nations life patterns began with the arrival of the fur traders and continued as the Red Lake district became settled. The migratory and seasonal patterns of the Anishinaape were increasingly displaced, and the cultural stability of the Anishinaape communities imploded. While the

⁵⁷ The communities surrounding Red Lake from the late 1920s onward include those at the west end of the lake (including around water bodies such as Pipestone Bay, West Narrows, Middle Narrows, and Golden Arm), McKenzie Island, Madsen, Flat Lake, Cochenour, and McMarmac. The town of Balmertown and the hamlet of Starratt-Olsen were established in the 1940s. Gold Pines and Ear Falls are located 60 kilometres from Red Lake. See Appendix I, *Figures One and Two*.

⁵⁸ John Macfie and Basil Johnston, *Hudson Bay Watershed: A Photographic Memoir of the Ojibway, Cree and Oji-Cree* (Toronto, ON, and Oxford, UK: Dundurn Press, Limited, 1991), back cover.

original settlers' lives changed forever, the Caucasian pioneers also found new phases for their own lives in the Red Lake area.⁵⁹

By the late 1930s, the financial picture of gold-mining in the Red Lake District was no longer robust. The plummeting price of gold (the Depression gold-price “boom” then ending) and the threat of another world war took its toll.⁶⁰ Several key mines ceased operation, and the entire west end of Red Lake – the communities at Pipestone Bay, West Narrows, Middle Narrows, and Golden Arm (see Appendix I, *Figures One and Two*) – fell into the status of “ghost towns.” When the Second World War was declared in September 1939, mining suffered a further loss when a significant number of young miners and potential miners left to defend their country by serving with the Canadian forces. The mines subsequently suffered from labour shortages.

Following the cessation of hostilities during the Second World War, the Red Lake District entered another boom phase, a period known as the “second gold rush to Red Lake.” As investors looked for new properties, governments eased various regulations, and myriad necessities were again available in abundance, Red Lake was again the site of much interest and renewed activity. When three new postwar gold mines – the Starratt-Olsen, Campbell Red Lake and New Dickenson – went into production, the district was the talk of the national mining fraternity. Starratt-Olsen Gold Mines, Limited, produced close to \$6 million dollars in gold bullion during its eight-year operation two miles from Madsen. Campbell Red Lake (later Placer Dome) and New Dickenson (later Dickenson Mines, and Goldcorp), became world-famous for their rich ore reserves. At various

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁰ A helpful examination of Canada's major depression is Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression, 1929-1939* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

periods in the latter part of the twentieth century, the Red Lake District was home to the richest gold mines in North America. At the new millennium, Placer Dome and Goldcorp merged to become the current Red Lake Gold Mines.⁶¹

In 1947, the Red Lake area was made widely accessible to the outside world when Highway 105 was opened from the main east-west highway between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. By the early 1950s, an airport was built in Cochenour, which is 14 kilometres from Red Lake proper.⁶² A causeway was planned also planned in the 1950s between McKenzie Island and the mainland at Cochenour. While the venture was vetoed by mine managers, plans are underway over 50 years later in 2007 for the building of a bridged causeway between those two points. With these ready links to the outside world, including radio and, soon, television connections, the isolated frontier stage of Red Lake's development ended.

As noted, seven modern communities were established in the Red Lake District, and along with them came municipal, economic, political, social, and religious institutions and affiliations. Society became more complex as pioneers and their families evolved with the changing times. As Paul Voisey has observed,

The frontier thesis counters that the wilderness itself molded the new society, while geographic determinism insists that physical environment, be it wilderness or not, forged distinctive features. The powerful and more recent metropolitan thesis insists that great cities directed and controlled frontier development.⁶³

⁶¹ Donald Fleming Parrott, *The Second Red Lake Gold Rush* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1978), 78-91.

⁶² "Red Lake Airport," Archives of Ontario, file RG 3-17, box 455.

⁶³ Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 3.

This was largely true for the Red Lake District, for it was the discovery and establishment of the mines, and the subsequent building and settling of area towns which drove human progress on the frontier. Although the physical structure of the mines and towns in the Red Lake District was created *in situ*, much of the key conceptualization, funding, and organization was done in large metropolitan centres by the executives and boards of directors of the mining companies. In Red Lake's case, the majority of head offices of the gold mines were located on or around Bay Street in Toronto. Several of the mines at the west end of Red Lake in the 1930s were controlled from Montreal, where the financiers of those prospects lived.

The mine managers of the Red Lake District were obliged to report regularly to their superiors (presidents and members of the boards of directors), the latter of which were usually resident in Toronto or in other large cities. As the result of this metropolitan monitoring of mining at Red Lake, numerous types of records of mortality on the frontier were created. When a miner was killed on the job site, the mine manager hastened to send a telegram to head office. The communiqué usually concluded with the assurance that a full report would follow. The latter, a detailed interview with witnesses to the accident, the attending physician, and the manager's own interpretation of the fatality, was usually sent within one to two days via regular mail delivery. Head office usually responded by letter in which the regret and sympathy of the president and board members was articulated. Occasionally, a floral tribute from the head office was flown in for the funeral and interment.

Just as the major decisions for development of the frontier at Red Lake largely originated from offices in large urban centres, so did the major purchasing of equipment

and supplies with which to operate the mines. The large tools and heavy devices of the mining industry were made in large metropolitan areas and shipped long distances to the Red Lake and other mining areas. What remains today, however, is not the urban mine offices in cities such as Toronto. They eventually closed, as did some of their mines. Their legacy in the Red Lake District stands as a testament to the fragility of the distant metropolitan command centres of the mines, and the resilience and permanence of the local communities which were created around the mines. Much of the equipment shipped in from cities remains as historical dinosaurs of interest. Ultimately, as Voisey aptly deduced, “frontier traits may linger long after the death of the conditions that gave rise to them.”⁶⁴

Since the 1960s, the concerted efforts of a scant few historians have attempted to record that progression on the frontier, as it relates to Red Lake to ensure that the human legacy lives on and does not become the rusty equivalent of abandoned mining machinery. The late Donald Parrott, a dedicated amateur historian, Ruth Weber Russell, a writer primarily concerned with women’s history, and John Richthammer, then a high school student, published the three major monographs on what became the last full-scale traditional gold rush of the twentieth century. However, all are intrinsically limited, with Russell’s lacking even basic primary research and none addressing in any satisfying manner the issue of how people faced dying and death in a gold-mining camp.

Parrott produced a work laden with mining lore and detail – an impressionistic narrative of events – rather than a full, documented story of life and death on the

⁶⁴ Voisey, *Vulcan*, 7. For an earlier, pioneering study of frontierism versus metropolitanism, see J.M.S. Careless, “Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 35 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 1-21.

frontier.⁶⁵ Russell's self-published monograph is more seriously flawed because she made little effort to uncover new documentary or primary evidence. In her foreword, she admits having done neither fieldwork nor original research; as a result, her retelling of the Red Lake gold rush, and the settlement which grew in its aftermath, is hobbled by a lack of interpretive orientation to the subject based on primary research. Russell's is simply Parrott's story retold more artfully.⁶⁶

Richthammer's youthful 1985 work, *The End of the Road: A History of the Red Lake District*, was written not only to commemorate the rich heritage of his birthplace, but also to recognize the Bicentennial of Ontario.⁶⁷ The book is divided into chapters on the Anishinaape, fur trade, geoscientific explorations, transportation, early Caucasian women residents, education, religion, medical care, business and commerce, sports and recreation, biographies of some of the pioneers, municipal governance, origins of street names, and many other themes, such as local cemeteries and professional and community organizations. The book also contains 629 photographs depicting all manner of history of the area. Richthammer neither intended the work to be academic nor analytical. It was compiled enthusiastically by a senior high school student with no pretense to academic history or critical interpretation.

While Russell was born in nearby Madsen, Ontario, she left the area following her graduation from high school. Parrott and Richthammer, however, remained "insiders,"

⁶⁵ Parrott, *Red Lake Gold Rush*, 11-196.

⁶⁶ Ruth Weber Russell, *North for Gold: The Red Lake Gold Rush of 1926* (Waterloo, ON: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1987), 1-189.

⁶⁷ John Richthammer, *The End of the Road: A History of the Red Lake District* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, Ltd., 1985). Richthammer was then a member of the Red Lake branch of the Ontario Bicentennial Committee.

with deep roots in Red Lake, and, as will be seen in Chapter Three, an active role in gathering the actual records and memories of the pioneer generation.

With so much of the story of life and death on the Canadian frontier still untold, it is undeniable that much awaits future exploration. Who were the thousands of people who swarmed into such forbidding, dangerous terrain which could and did take lives? Since this was a migration driven by opportunism, optimism and greed, what types of personalities risked their lives and were drawn into this strange quest in a remote wilderness? How would those people and institutions keep records and choose to memorialize themselves? What do the written, oral and photographic records tell us about dying and death in a gold rush and its resultant pioneer community? Primary documents answering these questions abound in both public archival and private collections, generated by the pioneers themselves or by the organizations with which they interacted.

The second part of this chapter briefly introduces, against this broad historical overview above, the community's founding "players" or "records creators," who will be the focus of Chapter Three. Fur traders kept the first journals and, in so doing, became the first to record deaths in the Red Lake District. Hudson's Bay Company journals and correspondence from the Red Lake post will be analyzed to determine how a company handled matters of mortality both from within and outside of their employee ranks.

The prospectors themselves (via their correspondence to mining promoters and letters to family and friends) have left records which are worthy of study because of the rich detail provided on the personal reaction to mortality on the frontier (whether their own, or that of family or friends).

Apart from the obvious impetus for securing funding, equipment and personnel to open up previously unexploited mineral resources, mining promoters used the media to get the word out about Red Lake's natural resources. The journalists, writers, and photographers followed suit, but in the process of so doing, they also reported on many of the deaths by misadventure which befell the pioneers.

Law enforcement personnel, such as the Ontario Provincial Police and, occasionally, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, attended death scenes, removed bodies, cleaned up sites, and then recorded in reports and in vital documents what they saw and did, thus leaving an invaluable "official" record. Physicians and coroners did similar duty, all while treating the health of the populace. They also performed autopsies, filled out vital statistics records, and prepared bodies (duties of which were later handled by undertakers). The roles of the police and medical personnel as record keepers will also be studied in the case study in Chapter Three.

Government officials such as registrars, clerks, vital statistics personnel, war records superintendents, and "Indian agents" also had a large part in creating the "official" record, and evidence of mortality is plentiful in these documents. Additionally, provincially appointed records creators and record keepers such as justices of the peace, notaries public, and The Public Trustee contributed significantly to the official record. Lawyers and trust company agents probated estates, thus creating further "official" records. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, the clergy created records of religious burials, which nicely complement and flesh out the records that exist in the Vital Statistics departments. Apart from their well-known duties, undertakers/funeral directors gathered information for vital statistics, obituaries, and monuments.

Women were early record keepers/historians through their social columns in local newspapers, obituaries, correspondence, and diaries, as were business people/entrepreneurs. This added greatly to the personal record-keeping aspect of dying and death on the frontier. Like female records creators, community historians, local archivists, and various memorialists often underscored the value of personal records of mortality by rescuing from obscurity many of the stories and documents of dying and death.

The absence of a facility such as an archives and/or museum in the Red Lake District until 1982 doubtless led to the destruction of many records and much ephemera about the area's past. However, in 1982, the Red Lake Museum opened its doors and since then has continued to play a vital role in preserving the records of this frontier district, a role which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Having noted in Chapter One the relevant trends in the literature on archival appraisal, small towns, and dying and death as human activities, the current chapter focused on examining the history of Red Lake as a means of setting the stage for the case study which now follows. Therein, the roles, functions, and activities of documents and their creators will be analyzed to connect them to the three phases of dying and death outlined in Chapter One, especially during and following the gold rush of 1926, up to about 1950, and the end of the frontier at Red Lake.

Chapter Three

Human and Town Ghosts:

Dying and Death on the Frontier at Red Lake

This case study on the Red Lake District of Northwestern Ontario examines the broad nature of records generated by the processes of dying and death on the Canadian gold-mining frontier. The study is set against the general overview history of Red Lake in Chapter Two and the literature survey of the phases of dying and death, and of archival documentation strategies in Chapter One.

As Red Lake evolved from its initial generation of resource discovery and extraction by single prospectors and miners, to community founding and subsequently becoming home to family groups as a modern rural centre, the frontier ethos of its early years has gradually diminished. A post-war second gold rush in 1946, followed by a significant influx of new Canadians largely from Eastern Europe, and the permanent establishment of numerous essential services, assured and solidified Red Lake's permanency by 1950. As well, that maturity included more accessible communication

with the outside world. That date is, thus, a logical and convenient point to end the “frontier” analysis of this thesis.

The continued faith in Red Lake evidenced by the second gold rush and its resulting mining and population expansion brought together people from all manner of backgrounds – Europeans mixed with trappers and lumbermen, and even though neither spoke the other’s language, homemakers conversed over merchandise catalogues and over supplies in stores. Mines in Red Lake had little difficulty in finding and holding gold miners, and the mines in turn built public facilities large enough to support their workers and their families.

By the end of the Second World War, hospitals and churches were located not only in Red Lake proper, but also in the outlying communities of Madsen, Cochenour, and McKenzie Island. Municipal government evolved out of the previously autocratic rule of the managers of the gold mines, and schools were established in Red Lake and surrounding towns (along with a district school board). Businesses grew exponentially, with banks and stores having satellite locations in the various outlying communities. Facilities for the dead (with related record keeping) also expanded, as municipal cemeteries at Red Lake and Balmertown became the usual mode of burial for non-Anishinaape citizens, and the district was served by funeral directors who began travelling to the area from such nearby larger centres as Kenora and Dryden.

The evolution from frontier to modern town paralleled the inevitable dying out of the pioneer generation of men and women who had founded Red Lake. As they neared the end of their own lives, some of those pioneers were intent upon keeping alive -

through oral recounting or creating or preserving records - the stories, legends, photographs and “characters” of the days when they themselves were in their prime.

The phenomenon of collecting (as archival resources) of the personal records by pioneers as they confronted their mortality has not been investigated in archival literature. For Red Lake, the pioneers to which this thesis refers include the Anishinaape, fur traders, settlers, builders, mining promoters, miners, transportation workers, business owners, clergy, lumber workers, clerks, medical personnel, educators, photographers, and general citizenry. As with other regions of pioneer settlement in Canada, a very small number of local historians have laid the historical groundwork. In the case of Red Lake, Donald Fleming Parrott and John Richthammer undertook the more active process of recording the lives of the pioneers on the frontier, and gathering their stories while they were living. These community-based historians serve as both an outlet for pioneers committed to telling their stories, and as active agents encouraging such recollections and memorializing.

Parrott spent most of his adult life documenting and writing the history of the Red Lake District, and was a shrewd observer of its mining scene for more than 65 years. At his death in June 2002, Parrott was Red Lake's most prolific and senior historian. Ultimately, he authored 10 books on the gold mining and aviation history of the area, the last in 1998 when he was 82.

The Red Lake gold rush of 1926 greatly interested Parrott who, as a 10-year-old, remembered hearing his veteran prospector father, Fleming, talking mining with grizzled compatriots. From then on, Parrott went prospecting for gold with his father. During the Great Depression, Parrott, 17, terminated his formal education and came to Red Lake in

1936, where he worked as a labourer in drill steel shops, on freight boats, and in mining. Ultimately, he retired from the Campbell Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, as a chief stationary operating engineer. As well, he was an active prospector for more than 50 years.

Soon after his return from overseas service in the Second World War, Parrott began to spend some of his leisure time studying local folklore and talking to prospectors who were part of the Red Lake gold rush of 1926.¹ This casual interest became a consuming passion, as he doggedly interviewed and corresponded with countless mining veterans. Parrott was nearing age 50 when he began the Herculean task of committing to paper the anecdotes, stories and fast-fading memories of events of the last major gold rush of the twentieth century. Some pioneers not only gave him unprecedented access to their memories, but also, in some cases, to their journals, scrapbooks and photographs. Parrott tapped out this history on a well-worn typewriter.²

The result was *The Red Lake Gold Rush*, a small, faux-leather soft-covered monograph Parrott financed and printed in 1964. He recorded a fascinating phase of Canada's gold-mining history in a book which was the first of its kind about the Red Lake District. Parrott's *magnum opus* sold well and went through many printings over the subsequent two decades.

Although he authored nine other books on gold mining and aviation history, Parrott's definitive book on the Red Lake gold rush is the work for which he is best

¹ Donald Fleming Parrott was born in 1916 in Winnipeg, but was raised in Grandview and Norway House, Manitoba.

² John Richthammer, "Lives Lived: Donald Fleming Parrott," *The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 2002; Richthammer, "About the Author," in Donald Fleming Parrott, *Short Stories of Red Lake's Gold*, second edition (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, Ltd., 1996), 5-7.

known.³ Today, his body of work stands as the quintessential record of an enthusiastic amateur historian's traditional storytelling of bygone eras.⁴ Parrott's motivation for documenting both the silver rush to Red Lake in 1922, the first gold rush in 1926 and the second gold rush in 1946 (as well as much aviation history) came from a deep conviction shared with Richthammer: they felt that they must remedy the hard reality that the passage of time was taking with it the "originals" of a notable Canadian mining camp and an intense period of northern mining. They realized that the names, memories and deeds of the pioneers who braved the wilds of a desolate hinterland were being lost to time, and that only the fortunate few whose discoveries became actual gold producers were immortalized. It is largely due to Parrott's early efforts that hundreds of participants in Red Lake area gold rushes - now long-since dead - were rescued from permanent obscurity.

Although Parrott remained unconcerned with the academic and even popular conventions of historical writing and introduced some factual errors into the record, the value of his primary research is its documentary richness, as is evidenced by the pioneers' primary memoirs and correspondence which Parrott gave to Richthammer. Social historian Douglas Fetherling, in *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, noticed Parrott's disregard for conventional historical prose and lack of

³ The nine other books written by Parrott are *A Parrott Family History* (1981), *Harold Farrington, Pioneer Bush Pilot* (1982), *50 Years Mining Gold: An Autobiography* (1984), *Princess Patricia's Regiment, 1938-1941* (1990), *Canada's Richest Gold Mine: Placer Dome's Campbell Mine* (1993), *The Gold Mines of Red Lake, Ontario* (1995), *Short Stories of Red Lake's Gold* (1996), and *Gold Mining Spurs Air Transportation in Canada, 1926-1936* (1998). All of these manuscripts were written in longhand, and then typed. No sophisticated word processors graced Parrott's desk.

source citation. Yet, while critical of Parrott's amateur work, Fetherling himself repeated some of Parrott's unchecked errors of fact. He also acknowledged that Parrott's

honest desire to set down the record as coherently as he can, working with primary sources whenever possible and revising and correcting in successive editions, is commendable, even touching.⁵

At a time when they were still readily available, Parrott collected the memories, details and myriad stories of the gold rush and marshalled information from a wide variety of sources, such as federal and provincial archives and libraries, and government records. Even though synthesizing the voluminous information was a task Parrott found overwhelming, it is more important that, regardless of any flaws in his work, he established a base from which others could launch their own historical investigations, as has Richthammer.⁶

Parrott felt strongly that a younger generation must carry on the tradition of preserving the history of Red Lake and its people. In 1982, he began to read in the Red Lake area's newspaper, *The District News*, the feature articles on various pioneers being written by Red Lake District High School student, John Richthammer. Rather than disregard outright or criticize these obviously sophomoric entries into his historical "territory," Parrott instead wrote encouraging letters to Richthammer, and even offered to be the subject of one of the student's features. Over the ensuing 20 years and until Parrott's death, the inter-generational historians formed a close bond. Parrott, who by then lived in Thunder Bay, Ontario, was prompt to reply by mail to Richthammer's

⁴ A sterling example of an historian working passionately with records in a race against time in a provincial (Ontario) scope is Hugh P. MacMillan, *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth* (Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2004).

⁵ Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 210.

hundreds of questions. Eventually, they shared in each other's research finds, corresponded weekly, visited annually, and encouraged one another in an interest then shared by few in the Red Lake District. In his later years, Parrott gave Richthammer some of the written reminiscences he had received from those pioneers who had participated in the fur trade, gold rush, and settlement eras. These primary documents provide much more detail than Parrott employed in his books. The true archival and historical value is in the first-hand accounts Parrott collected rather than his often factually inconsistent narratives based on them. The hundreds of photographs and negatives Parrott collected over a 40-year period were eventually donated to the Red Lake Museum.

In addition to writing historical features, Richthammer also became the founding curator of the Red Lake Museum from 1981 through 1993, as noted in Chapter One.⁷ He has written numerous books, manuscripts and academic papers on the history of the area and its people, the best-known being *The End of the Road: A History of the Red Lake District*, published in 1985.⁸ Richthammer studied journalism and photography at Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology in North Bay, Ontario, and earned a Bachelor of Arts in history and film in 1996 at the University of Manitoba. He is the longest-serving journalist in the Red Lake District. For the past 26 years, Richthammer has regularly submitted historical and life features, and photographs, to the Red Lake area newspaper, as well as to regional and national publications. Since its inaugural month in

⁶ Richthammer, "Lives Lived: Donald Fleming Parrott," November 7, 2002.

⁷ The Red Lake Museum is now the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre, and includes archival holdings.

⁸ Two of Richthammer's other book-length publications include two biographies on pioneers of Red Lake: *Memoirs of a Prairie Chicken: The Life of Louise Stanley* (privately published, 1989), and *The Arthur Carlson Story* (privately published, 1991).

1997, he has written “Lives Lived” columns in *The Globe and Mail*, most of them on Red Lake pioneers.

With this case study, the processes of dying and death on the Northern Canadian frontier, and the records created thereby, are analyzed for the first time from an archival perspective. In the process of their documenting Red Lake’s heritage, Parrott and Richthammer are a part of the story, as well as its recorders.⁹ Memory and memorialization requires not only original subjects and participants, but also recorders and collectors. Sometimes these may be one and the same person; usually, however, the subject and recorder are separate but work as a team.

A dying person (as in the case of either advanced aging or a terminal illness) invariably interacts with family, friends, medical personnel, the courts, lawyers, funeral directors (for pre-planning arrangements), publishers (memoirs and photographic imagery being a way to surmount or escape death), and sometimes, the police and coroners.

These (and similarly related) activities represent, in archival terminology, the “functionality” of death, the various activities and transactions which comprise some human endeavour. What documentary legacy was bequeathed by these external functions or public institutional activities, along with the pioneer’s own personal and private records? What, in short, are the records of dying and death within this functional

universe? In examining the records of mortality at Red Lake, convincing evidence is found to illustrate that dying and death was frequently confronted very consciously by all segments of frontier society, and that records were created accordingly.¹⁰

While archivists and historians familiar with the history of Northern Canada have correctly observed that the pioneers of northern communities and elsewhere often transported and reconstructed the dying and death rituals they had observed in their homelands, there exists an inherent general assumption that the reader or researcher already has knowledge of this reconstruction. However, as historian Paul Voisey noted, these burgeoning towns on the frontier.

...drew settlers from diverse cultural, social, and geographical backgrounds not easily characterized by single generalizations. Pioneers acquired their habits and attitudes from scattered experiences in many places, including other frontiers...Although an infinite variety of forces continually bombard human society, here it is assumed that everything about a new community in an area lacking a native host culture can ultimately be traced to environment, tradition, frontier, and metropolis.¹¹

This chapter accordingly builds on these insights by exploring how the Red Lake pioneers are memorialized in myriad ways: by their family and friends (if they left any), books, articles, obituaries, photographs (if identified), their diaries, correspondence,

⁹ The communities of Ear Falls and Gold Pines, located approximately 50 miles from Red Lake, have long been linked to Red Lake. Many of the same people pioneering in both locations and, thus, the history is intertwined. While this study has visited the Ear Falls-Gold Pines area occasionally, it did not attempt a full-scale treatment of the records of death and dying in that locale. The only and exceptionally well-researched and written monograph on Ear Falls is Rae Kiebuszinski, *Yesterday the River: A History of the Ear Falls District* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, Ltd., 1973). Gwyneth Rae Kiebuszinski was born in 1920 in England, and came to Canada as both a war veteran (of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and a war bride. At age 65, she made history in the Anglican Church of Canada by becoming the first woman to be ordained in the Diocese of Keewatin, in which the Ear Falls and Red Lake districts are situated. As an octogenarian, Kiebuszinski continued writing history. Her full-scale history of the first one hundred years of The Diocese of Keewatin was published in 2005 when Kiebuszinski was 85.

¹⁰ Bruce Bowden and Roger Hall, "The Impact of Death: An Historical and Archival Reconnaissance into Victorian Ontario," *Archivaria* 14 (Summer 1982), 93-105.

¹¹ Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 7.

eulogies, and cemetery monuments. These are means of perpetuating memory, of “cheating” death, of living beyond the grave, passing the torch, or “testifying.” The primary goal is to analyze this process, this human function of dying and death, as revealed through the nature and history of the records themselves, not just to produce a catalogue of sources.

The rest of Chapter Three is a functional analysis of the processes of dying and death in society, and the related records. The case study is organized under the functions, sub-functions, and activities relating to dying and death within the three distinct functional stages outlined in Chapter One: preparatory/active, immediate post-death, and passive. The records creators within each of the functions and activities, and the functions of those creators follow. Lastly, the types of records produced by these creators within those functions and activities are analyzed for how they relate to dying, death, and memorialization on the frontier at Red Lake.

The *preparatory/active* function simply means the planning for one’s death. This function is often but not exclusively (as in the case of a terminal illness) a process which may occur in latter-life aging. It may also occur during times of serious illness when medical intervention is necessary or sought.

While also not exclusively, the preparatory period is also one in which the preparation of legal documents takes place. The planning for the legacy occurs through the writing of last wills and testaments, powers-of-attorney, appointment of an executor, and health-care directives. The writing of “last” letters, or the sharing of life’s stories and photographs in autobiography, is sometimes done not only to leave a record, but also to

repair or strengthen relationships. As well, business, financial, or professional affairs are often organized in order to be passed on or terminated following the creator's death.

Those who are stricken with a terminal illness or others who wish to direct their own long-term care may institute arrangements for palliative or other nursing facilities. It is quite usual, as well, for one's religious observation to continue even through religious services being held at nursing homes or in hospitals, or in having clergy visit the ill and infirm in their own homes. Apart from deciding and legally documenting the bequeathing of personal and real estate property, people worldwide have a standard and widely accepted practice of pre-planning their funeral or memorial service, and many also make decisions on burial or cremation.

The *immediate post-death* stage largely encompasses the orchestration of functional activities following directly on or from the terminal event (death itself). Initially, the survivors or friends are faced with the intrusion of death, whether suddenly or expected. We become involved in death because it takes a loved one. As Antonius Robben in *Death, Mourning and Burial* noted, the bereaved, "have often had a brief personal brush with death at home – an aunt, a grandparent or a favourite cousin – but only...become engrossed in the cultural complexities of death, mourning, and burial once in the 'field.'"¹²

Family, friends, executors or lawyers are involved in the planning of the funeral or in following through on a pre-planned funeral. Other important details are arranged at this time, including the writing of an obituary, the preparation of a memorial card, the asking a person or persons to deliver the eulogy or eulogies, the choice of whether the music or

singing or both at the service will be live or taped, what hymns or melodies are used and, of course, what manner of disposition of the remains will occur.

Funeral plans usually also include asking a clergyperson or other person to conduct the funeral or memorial service, if there is to be one. Additionally, church personnel are often involved if either the funeral or post-funeral gathering, or both, are to be held in a house of worship. This gathering can be a profoundly social one. William Colborne, who ventured to Red Lake during the 1930s, noted that the entire community became caught up in the death. “Death was community loss because everyone knew everyone else, and the grief was felt by all. There was always a pall of worry about epidemics, drownings, and the ominous sound of the first whistle in the wee hours of the morning [which signalled that a death had occurred in a gold mine].”¹³

Interaction between the family, executor, or friend of the deceased and medical personnel (physicians, nurses, ambulance technicians, nursing home supervisors, and chaplains) usually occurs. If the person dies at home, it is inevitable that the survivor(s) would also come into contact with physicians, ambulance technicians, or other medical personnel. As well, in the case of a home death or of a sudden accident, there is liaison with law enforcement personnel, coroners and medical attendants. Occasionally, a coroner’s investigation is called, and more family involvement is necessary. In the days and weeks following the funeral, families often spend time accepting belated condolences, writing letters and cards of appreciation, and embarking upon memorialization-related

¹² Antonius Robben, ed., *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, Limited, 2004), 1.

¹³ William Colborne, speech given to the Women’s Association, Sioux Lookout, Ontario, May 1975. Excerpted from Sioux Lookout Historical Committee, *Tracks Beside the Water* (Winnipeg, MB: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1982), 29-30.

activities such as donating to charities, planning grave markers, plaques, or bursaries or scholarships in the name of the deceased.

The *passive* function primarily concerns the legal probate of the estate, which is the official, state-centred dimension of death.¹⁴ Those taking chief roles are lawyers, accountants, trustees, executors, probate officers, the courts, all engaged with aspects of legacy distribution and estate finalization. A short time after a funeral (usually a matter of days or weeks), an executor meets with a lawyer to decide upon the probate of an estate. If the estate is deemed to be of some value, probate is begun in the court system.

The probating of an estate may take anywhere from one year from the date of death up to several years (in the cases of a large, complicated estate, or when beneficiaries have disputes regarding the will). Ultimately, executors, courts, and lawyers are charged with the final dissolution of the estate and dissemination, according to the will, of the possessions and property of the deceased.

On a much more intimate level, the passive function may also involve the healing or the non-healing from grief, depending upon a myriad of psychological factors involving survivors of the deceased. As is human nature, some people will begin to heal from their grief, others will mourn for a long time but in a healthy manner, while others will harbour unhealthy grieving agonies for the rest of their lives. Robben suggests that the “mode” of death (be it violent vs. natural, planned vs. accidental) and the treatment of the body (cremation, burial) or the absence of a ceremonial treatment of the body (as in the cases of the Europe-based relatives of gold miners killed and buried in Red Lake) “were of

¹⁴ A noteworthy treatise on estate and medical records in Ontario is Jennifer J. Connor, “Estate Records and the History of Medicine in Ontario,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 10 (1993), 97-114.

foremost concern to relatives, comrades, and friends.” As a result, the ability to hold a commemorative or religious service determined the kind of grieving and its outcome.¹⁵

With the broad processes or “functions” of dying and death illuminated above, the second part of this chapter situates and then analyzes the community founders and records creators of Red Lake who were briefly introduced in the historical outline in Chapter Two. The final segment of this second part describes and examines the uses and usefulness of the types of records created through the processes of dying, death, and commemoration by these records creators who were really actors in the processes of mortality.

The First Nations people of the Red Lake District (hereafter the Anishinaape) were its first records creators. In conducting their traditional way of life, they left evidence of their existence thousands of years ago. Archaeological evidence found to date indicates the Anishinaape not only buried their dead in Red Lake, but also left “records” which included campsites, stone tools, and various remnants of their stays along their seasonal migratory paths.

Until somewhat recently, the Anishinaape did not record their stories in written form, as that was not part of their tradition. Most of their history was transmitted orally from one generation to the next. However, there were strictly enforced tenets of conduct. It is only since the turn of the millennium that Sarah Keesick Olsen (Dedibaayaanimanook), born in Red Lake in 1922, permitted her daughter, Helen Agger, to record her stories. In so doing, Agger learned that:

Talking about certain people and, in some cases, even mentioning their names was strongly discouraged, if not completely prohibited once they were deceased.¹⁶

¹⁵ Robben, *Death, Mourning and Burial*, 1.

Keesick Olsen herself wished to retain some the rules set forth by her ancestors regarding oral history. In 1997, her daughter, Helen, began writing her recollections of conversations with her mother. Ultimately, Keesick Olsen agreed to have her stories documented, but there were “certain limitations, provisos and parameters”:

Dedibaayaanimanook had to decide to what degree she herself would set aside the sanction in order to clarify certain aspects of the story. She clearly articulated the possibility of those limitations. In addition, Dedibaayaanimanook reported only what she knew to be true. She maintained her silence on matters about which she was not certain, and strongly emphasized her intent to be accurate to the best of her ability.¹⁷

Even though she has lived through the encroachment on her traditional lands in the wake of a major gold rush and its subsequent Caucasian settlement and activities, and consequent Anishinaape displacement, Keesick Olsen has held firm to traditional ways at her lifelong home of Trout Lake, located near Red Lake. Her desire to leave an accurate, thoughtful record is amply evidenced throughout her memoir.

In cases where her information may have proven to differ from that provided by others, my mother stressed that she had no wish to undermine either the credibility or veracity of others. Her most earnest desire has been to be true to the telling of what only she can tell: *her* story.¹⁸

Since the Anishinaape people were what Zaslow called “the main casualties of the expansion process,” the amount of physical records they left were directly affected by the penetration of the mining and resultant hydro-electric power activities into their traditional migratory hunting and trapping grounds in the Red Lake district.¹⁹ Archaeological sites

¹⁶ Helen Agger, *A Trout Lake Story: The Oral History of Dedibaayaanimanook Sarah KeesickOlsen* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, Ltd., forthcoming 2008).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), xiii.

were disturbed and the Anishinaape became unwilling to leave much trace of themselves. The industrialization of Red Lake was a devastatingly direct challenge to the economic livelihood of the Anishinaape:

The impact on the wildlife of so many transient hunters caused great concern, for the white trapper, unlike his native counterpart, was unencumbered by family ties, had no permanent stake in the district in which he operated, and aimed only at securing as much fur as he could.²⁰

The Anishinaape, with their great reverence for the land and its animals, were distraught at the denuding of both the land and its wild game. The record of the traditional way of life of the Anishinaape was further eroded with the inauguration of air travel into Red Lake. Commercial trappers and fishers began to use aircraft to reach game-rich and often inaccessible regions, and to strip via regular hunting and poaching those lands of quality furs long before Anishinaape trappers could reach the locale via conventional methods of canoeing and walking.²¹

The frequency of contact between the Anishinaape and Caucasian people also imperilled the health of the former. Due to living in isolation, the Anishinaape had little or no resistance to diseases carried by Caucasians. During treaty payment ceremonies, or in the case of family illnesses, the Anishinaape gathered and interacted. As a result, epidemics flourished, and the Anishinaape were powerless over the plagues which attacked remote areas. Entire families were decimated before news of epidemics reached larger centres. Ontario Vital Statistics records, discussed later in this chapter, attest to the widespread epidemic deaths at Red Lake during and after the First World War and again with the Red Lake gold rush of 1926.

Among the early written records about the Anishinaape people were those created by civil servants of the federal government of Canada. It assumed control over all aspects of northward expansion and, in an effort to “control” the Anishinaape and other clans and totems of First Nations people, created the Department of Indian Affairs. The government employed men as “Indian agents” whose role it was to act as a liaison between the Anishinaape and the government. By the 1890s, the people of Red Lake were grouped under the jurisdiction of the Lac Seul district. Zaslow noted that once the Anishinaape were “under trusteeship,” the mining, hydro, and forestry industries “impinged even more widely” upon ancestral lands.²²

Historian Robin Jarvis Brownlie has written extensively on Indian agents in Ontario. In her monograph, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939*, Brownlie detailed the role played by those men who represented the Anishinaape for the federal government, and the destruction wrought by the Department of Indian Affairs. Indian agents served “as power brokers between the department and its ‘wards,’ while insulating internal, decision-making officials from the inconvenience of negotiating with the real people affected by their choices.”²³

The agent was, in effect, the manager of the Anishinaape of the Red Lake District. He had extensive knowledge of the Indian Act and used it to enforce federal policy. He provided information to the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa and its action or inaction on important issues was largely influenced by the opinions of the local agent.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), ix.

However, the agent often handled as much as he could locally without involving Ottawa. Brownlie described him as “a pivotal figure in Aboriginal-government relations” because “his views, attitudes, and personal qualities decisively influenced the experiences of First Nations people in their interactions with government.”²⁴

The jurisdiction of the Red Lake-Lac Seul Anishinaape was headed by the agent in Kenora, Ontario, as the Department of Indian Affairs preferred to situate administrative regions with the boundaries of provinces. In 1938, a new regional office opened in Sioux Lookout, Ontario.²⁵ The records generated between the Indian agents and their superiors in Ottawa consisted of voluminous correspondence, and reports detailing every imaginable occurrence, request, and situation.²⁶ From an archival, historical and genealogical perspective, some of the most important documentation created by the Indian agent was the registration of deaths of the Anishinaape with the Province of Ontario. The forms were completed in the 1890s and until the First World War by Kenora-based agent R.S. McKenzie, and then by Frank Edwards until his death in 1945. Both men personally knew many of the deceased or their families and it was customary for the chiefs or leaders to supply the information for the record. However, it also seems evident that Edwards often relied on his own memory of the vital data of the deceased person.

For the Red Lake-Lac Seul area, the deaths were recorded under the “District of Kenora, Division of Indian Reserves.” The registration forms called for information such as surname, full given names, places and dates of birth and death, age, marital status, sex,

²⁴ *Ibid*, x.

²⁵ Zaslow, *Northward Expansion*, 154.

²⁶ For an in-depth analysis of the record-keeping structure of the Department of Indian Affairs, see Bill Russell, “The White Man’s Paper Burden: Aspects of Records Keeping in the Department of Indian Affairs, 1860-1914,” *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-1985), 50-72.

names and birthplaces of parents, name of physician, undertaker, and of the record's informant, place and date of burial, and cause of death.²⁷

Ontario Vital Statistics death registrations reveal that tuberculosis, influenza, and meningitis decimated the Anishinaape communities of the Red Lake District, especially its infant, child, and youth population. Provincial death registration records for the period showed that deaths occurred at shocking rates among Anishinaape communities of Northwestern Ontario. Upwards of 78 Anishinaape, many of them children, died during epidemics in 1922.²⁸

Dedibaayaanimook [Sarah Keesick Olsen] mentioned the widespread influenza epidemic that left a trail of devastation throughout the Anishinaabe populations of the Treaty 3 territories. Mute evidence of its ravages is etched on one of the headstones at the traditional burial ground in Namegosibing [Trout Lake, near Red Lake]. The stone marks the resting place of Naansii Nancy Keesick who died in 1916. Being the daughter of Naadowe Robert and Omashkiigookwe Sarah Keesick, she would have been Dedibaayaanimook's first cousin.²⁹

In times of epidemics before, during and shortly after the First World War, the death registrations bear witness to the horrible losses suffered by the Anishinaape. During the course of a season, some Red Lake families were bereaved by the deaths of several children.³⁰

²⁷ Province of Ontario, Department of Vital Statistics, Registrations of Death, 1897-1935, *Archives of Ontario*, for many examples.

²⁸ Province of Ontario, Department of Vital Statistics, Registrations of Death, MS 935, Reel 289, Reg. #14324-17351, 1922.

²⁹ Agger, *A Trout Lake Story*. The people of Sarah Keesic Olsen's ancestral homeland of Red Lake have been members of the Lac Seul Band since the 1874 signing of the adhesion to Treaty 3.

³⁰ Mary and Thomas Keesic suffered the loss of at least four of their children: Paul (December 17, 1919, age five years, of influenza), Anoria (another son, only short weeks later, on January 20, 1920, age fourteen years, of influenza), and Molly Thomas (a married daughter, who died on January 25, 1920, of influenza, at age 24, only four days after the death of her brother, Anoria). Two years later, they also buried another married daughter, Mandy Thomas, who died on November 8, 1922 at age 23 during a tuberculosis epidemic. Province of Ontario, Department of Vital Statistics, Registrations of Death, 1919 through 1922, *Archives of Ontario*.

Ontario's Department of Vital Statistics has recorded many of the deaths which occurred in and around Red Lake since the 1890s, well before it was an established community or district. Until the mass Caucasian settlement in the 1920s, the vast majority of deaths at Red Lake were those of Anishinaape people. As noted, the Indian agent completed the registration of death forms and returned them to the province. Once Red Lake was home to Caucasian people, the forms were completed variously by law enforcement officers, physicians, coroners, or mine managers. The registration of death forms included such information as name, date and place of birth, death, and burial, marital status, cause of death, name of next-of-kin or informant, and parents' names and places of birth.³¹

Although there is newspaper, correspondence, and ephemera proving that death occurred to certain pioneers, some deaths, however, inadvertently, went unrecorded by Vital Statistics. It is most likely that the remoteness of the Red Lake region, the absence of organized municipal governance, and the occasional absence of the coroner or police, contributed to this gap in the record. Notable local examples include the provincially unrecorded deaths of Nehemiah F. Faulkenham, who was killed in a dynamite explosion at Red Lake in August 1926, and David Jackson and William (Willie) Smith, who drowned at Red Lake, respectively in 1926 and 1934. As well, a pattern emerged during the research for this thesis. If bodies were never found, no death registrations exist. Examples of this are the drowning deaths at Red Lake of Victoria Cross winner

³¹ There are no registrations for the numerous deaths which occurred at Red Lake during the gold rush of 1926, and only one registration for the death in 1927 of Thomas Abram, while the Anishinaape deaths are recorded. Archives of Ontario, Province of Ontario, Department of Vital Statistics, *Registrations of Death*, record group 80, series RG 80-8, 1897-1935, mss 935, reels 391, 418, 443, 486, 487, and mss 937, reels 10-13.

Christopher O'Kelly in 1922, prospector John George (Jack) Rosenthal in 1929, and the disappearances in the bush of mine co-founder Dan Willans in 1936, and prospector/guide Jacob Hager in the 1950s. In the absence of provincial documentation of these deaths, family records and family members themselves, if available, may be consulted. Additionally, newspaper accounts of deaths, especially in the cases of the above-noted pioneers, have been invaluable sources of information.³² During the period studied, the death rate statistics do not specifically mention Red Lake. Any statistics gathered on Red Lake people were grossly unreliable due to the many unrecorded deaths. Furthermore, it is impossible to discern in statistics for the general grouping of all areas around the Kenora District what percentage of them were derived from Red Lake deaths.

Another agency of the federal government which affected the Red Lake region was the Department of Defence. When the First World War was declared, several freelance commercial fur trappers of the Red Lake area enlisted at Dryden, Ontario, the nearest larger centre. Red Lake again appeared in the official government record. Soldiers from frontier regions such as that of Red Lake served in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces; however, the shameful federal treatment of the Anishinaape is also evidenced by their military service records.

The military files of Anishinaape brothers Albert and Robert Perrault indicate that, after enlistment, they were taken out of the Red Lake area for the first time in their lives, and were forced to conform to foreign ways. When they deserted and fled to their wilderness homes, the brothers' military records indicate the serious consequences (likely

³² Newspapers such as the *Manitoba Free Press*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Winnipeg Tribune*, *The Times News* (Thunder Bay, ON), and the *Kenora Daily Miner and News*, all ran numerous stories on the deaths of O'Kelly, Rosenthal, Willans, and Hager.

to be lengthy prison sentences) that awaited them if they were ever found.³³ Several local Lac Seul Anishinaape men were not so fortunate. Zaslow noted that they were considered second-class or third-class citizens and, therefore, expendable. As a result, Anishinaape men were sent into battle as snipers.³⁴ While the military service files of the Perrault brothers contain scant and negative information, they, along with hundreds of other Anishinaape war veterans, are memorialized in “The Historical Archive of the Native Veterans of Northwestern Ontario.” This website was created to memorialize these long-neglected war veterans, and to make their information about them available online.³⁵

Red Lake’s first registered nurses, Agatha V. Gamble, Alma F. Finnie Lucas, and Maude E. Wilkinson also served overseas as nursing sisters during the conflict.³⁶ Many of Red Lake’s male pioneers were veterans of the First World War, and served predominantly in the Canadian, British, or American forces. When they grew old and infirm, their care was paid for by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Red Lake physicians completed and submitted departmental forms for every visit by a veteran. Several Red Lake veterans spent their last days in the local hospital, or in the Deer Lodge Veterans’ Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba. When they died, their dates of death were recorded on their original military service records. In some cases, their graves were marked by grey military monuments. Apart from the records generated by the

³³ First World War military service files of Albert and Robert Perrault, *Library and Archives Canada*, Personnel Records Centre, RG 150, Accession 92-93/166, boxes 7607.

³⁴ Zaslow, *Northward Expansion*, 3.

³⁵ Native Veterans Association of Northwestern Ontario, “The Historical Archive of the Native Veterans of Northwestern Ontario,” online at <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/nativeveterans/home.htm> (accessed October 16, 2007).

³⁶ The three women tended to ill prospectors in Red Lake for the Red Cross Society during the summer of 1926. Maude Wilkinson, personal reminiscences, October 29, 1976. Collection of John Richthammer. *The Globe and Mail* reported on July 16, 1926, that the “Flag of Red Cross Now Flying Over Red Lake District: Courageous Nurses, With Doctor, Open Hospital in New Mine Area,” 6.

hospitalization or institutionalization of many elderly war veterans, provincial records reach other domains.

The Government of Ontario also created records in the course of appointing justices of the peace, notaries public, coroners, and court judges for the Red Lake district, all of whom became creators of records relating to mortality. Additionally, the provincial government also wrote and enforced regulations for mining safety:

...recurring mine accidents brought appeals for government regulations to improve working conditions and to provide better safety and inspection services and contributory workmen's compensation systems. Concern grew over the ravages of newly recognized diseases such as silicosis, which could completely destroy the worker's health and livelihood.³⁷

In the course of their regular duties of completing vital statistics registration forms, making reports and creating correspondence on deaths, physicians and coroners left some of the most comprehensive dying and death records on Red Lake.³⁸ Physicians also performed autopsies and prepared bodies for burial, duties later handled by undertakers. Most local physicians were also appointed coroner by the Government of Ontario.³⁹ During the 1930s, Dr. Daniel Graisbury Revell repaired miners' broken bones, sutured their wounds, and soothed children's and bootleggers' maladies with equal skill. His desire to relieve human suffering was amply evident to the communities whenever a death occurred. When two legends of the Red Lake District - the first postmaster, William Brown, and the merchant, Sam Yee - drowned on separate occasions, Revell not only

³⁷ Zaslow, *Northward Expansion*, 120.

³⁸ Physicians usually acted as coroners in the Red Lake District.

³⁹ A sound study of coroners and coroners' inquests is Guy St-Denis, "The London District and Middlesex County, Ontario, Coroner's Inquests, 1831-1900," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-1991), 142-153. While informative in a general way for this thesis, this article focuses on Ontario realities before the Red Lake District boom and community establishment, and the active presence in the area of the various departments of the Ontario government.

located and retrieved the bodies from deep waters, but also acted as funeral director, and family counsellor, and later wrote extensively in letters home and in his diary.⁴⁰

Revell's contribution to the history of the Red Lake area goes beyond his medical contributions, his personal witnessing, and his exacting memory. His photographs of mining and community developments, personalities, and social life at the west end of Red Lake, along with letters home and extensively detailed diaries, all constitute the most complete archival record known to exist of Red Lake, and no small part of these personal/private records, as befits the functions of their creator, documents dying and death. Revell's father, Daniel Graisberry Revell, Sr., was a physician, founding professor of anatomy at the University of Alberta, and coroner, and his mother, Helen, was an academic. As a result of their knowledge of medicine, their son wrote extensively detailed letters home, and today they provide the only record extant of patient care in the early days of Red Lake. Revell often made notes in the margins of his papers and one such exercise in marginilia has contributed to the records of death in Red Lake during the 1930s. Over the course of several years, Revell used his 1935 "List of Electors" from the electoral district of Kenora-Rainy River, rural polling division of West Narrows, as a vehicle for recording dates of deaths of some of Red Lake patients and friends. The voter's list, which contains the names of 90 eligible voters and their respective occupations, was already an historically valuable record of the population of the west end of Red Lake, but Revell's notes on deaths also make the document important for the study

⁴⁰ Daniel Graisberry Revell, daily journal, August 8, 1936 (Brown), and November 25, 1937 (Yee). Collection of Margaret Revell Anderson. Revell correspondence, 1934-1938. Gift of Revell to Richthammer.

of local mortality.⁴¹

Apart from bringing the word of God to the mining camps, clergy and missionaries were also major record creators/keepers in Red Lake. Along with the records of baptisms and marriage, many representatives of various denominations created extensive religious funeral and burial records. Many of Red Lake's earliest clergy left detailed memoirs. Rev. Osborne Littleford (of the Anglican Church of Canada at Red Lake in 1937 and 1938) made special mention of death of Ernest M. Joyal at Red Lake:

He had few friends among the whites and none among the red people. He had used some of the Indians in his lumber cutting, and had never been fair with them...At the time of his death [June 14, 1938], I was called to take care of the body. There was no mortician in town, and this seemed to be another responsibility of mine. Since he had to be buried at once, I had to look for a grave site, and there were none except the Indian burial ground [Post Narrows Burying Ground]. They had found a few acres of land where the earth was deep enough to bury their dead...

The other land in the area had a top soil of one inch to less than three feet above the solid rock, and all the deceased had to be flown to the outside for burial or lie in the Indian grounds. There were several whites already buried there, but this man was their enemy. When I talked to the chief, he shook his head and told me how he felt about the man. When I spoke of God's love and forgiveness, he accepted. He, another white man, and myself, buried the one whom no one seemed to love...In the cemetery we were surrounded by little wooden houses covering the graves.⁴²

Law enforcement officers were also creators of important official documents.

The first provincial police officer, Lawrence C. Carr, was stationed at Red Lake during the gold rush of 1926. Thereafter, officers made regular visits and, by the 1930s onward, were living in Red Lake proper. They recorded their regular patrols of towns and outlying

⁴¹ "List of Electors, 1935: Electoral District of Kenora-Rainy River, Rural Polling Division No. 116C, West Narrows, Comprising the Townships of Ball and Todd." (Ottawa, ON: J.O. Patenaude, The King's Printer, 1935). Gift of Revell to Richthammer.

⁴² Rev. Dr. Osborne R. Littleford, *The Race With Tomorrow* (Winter Park, FL: privately published, 1987). Collection of John Richthammer.

areas, attended to death scenes, removed bodies, cleaned death sites, made reports on deaths to their superiors and often submitted vital statistics documents to the Government of Ontario. Especially during the gold rush years, they worked to educate newcomers of the perils of water travel in summer and ice travel and outdoor exposure in winter.⁴³ Stanley Stebbings and William Quinn, immigrants from the United Kingdom, drowned in 1926 after being expressly warned by the local constable not to travel that day. This incident was one of the first of many times death by aquatic or other misadventure was reported in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Kenora, and other newspapers. The police reported on all manner of deaths:

Some, indeed, lost their lives through scurvy, poisoning, freezing, starvation, or drowning; others were severely wounded by falls, axe-cuts, or attacks by bears or suffered mental breakdowns that sometimes culminated in murders and suicides. These were some of the casualties of this advancing individualistic frontier...The police officers took action on reported homicides...and in crises between white and native trappers; they tried to alleviate epidemics, threatened starvation, feuds, [mining claim disputes, suicides, misadventure] or outbreaks of frenzy that might lead to loss of life.⁴⁴

While the Ontario Provincial Police had provincial jurisdiction over the Red Lake area and investigated all deaths, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as a federal body, investigated murders in Red Lake, as they were considered, like all others, to be national crimes. Red Lake's first recorded murder also provided the opportunity for the RCMP and the OPP to work in concert in the area. John Thomas, a local Anishinaape who was

⁴³ Dahn D. Higley, *O.P.P.: The History of the Ontario Provincial Police Force* (Toronto, ON: The Queen's Printer, 1984), 168-171.

⁴⁴ Zaslow, *Northward Expansion*, 27, 155.

unpopular with his people because of his aggressive nature toward women, had attacked a woman in August 1923. A short time later, his body was found floating in the water.⁴⁵

Officers of both the RCMP and OPP came to Red Lake by canoe to investigate. Upon their arrival, the officers discovered that the Hudson's Bay Company manager, Isaiah Wesley McCauley, and his clerk, William Martin Smith, had already buried Thomas. The officers had the unpleasant task of exhuming the corpse, which was water-logged and had rapidly decomposed in the intense August heat. They decided to only take the head, and had the further horrible duty of dismembering the corpse. After paddling out for several days with the offensive cranium at their feet, the officers were chagrined to learn that decomposition was too advanced for the local Kenora pathologist to make definite findings. Two Red Lake men, Paul Martin and James Pigeon, were arrested, tried, and acquitted of the charge of murder. Several years later, upon the death of James Pigeon's wife, Mary, a local Anishinaape woman, her family and friends revealed to Red Lakers that she had in fact murdered Thomas. With its silence, her community protected her because they saw that she was only shielding her daughter from Thomas's advances.⁴⁶

The extensive RCMP case file on the murder of Thomas is located in Library and Archives Canada, and is open to researchers. It contains voluminous correspondence with the OPP, various commanding officers within the RCMP, crown attorneys and lawyers in

⁴⁵ The *Kenora Miner and News* provided extensive press coverage of the murder and subsequent trial in August and September 1923. This was the first time that a murder in Red Lake was covered by the media.

⁴⁶ The murder and its aftermath were recounted in his memoir by Conrad Hjalmer Hanson, *Cheers to Our Northland* (Kirkland Lake, ON: Toburn Printing, 1978), 86-89.

Kenora, as well as heavily detailed Anishinaape witness interview reports and the attending officers' own statements and summaries.⁴⁷

Company officials and mine promoters and managers were often meticulous record keepers, and segments of their records involve mortality at Red Lake. Fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company wrote the first journals at Red Lake between 1790 and 1923 and, in so doing, became the first to record deaths in the Red Lake District.⁴⁸ A largely Anishinaape customer-base was the only reason for the existence of the post during that time frame: other than the traders themselves, clerks and labourers comprised the post's population.

The first recorded deaths at Red Lake were of Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company clerks. On December 9, 1790, fur trader James Sutherland recorded in his journal that his professional rival but personal friend, Duncan Cameron of the North West Company, had suffered the loss of an employee who had been accidentally shot by another worker.

This morning at 4 o'clock Mr. Cameron's man who got wounded on the 30th of October last departed this life, after being more to a near skeleton. I had dressed him every day and the greatest care possible [was] taken of him, but it was not in the power of Surgery to have cur'd him, as the Shot had lodg'd Inwardly in his body and wounded the Intestines. The mortification began 5 or 6 days ago, after which he declined apace. I spent the evening with Mr. Cameron in his disconsolate condition.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ File on the murder of John Thomas at Red Lake, Ontario, in 1923. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, vol. 3299, file HQ-1180-D-1, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁸ The Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) within the Archives of Manitoba holds the earliest-known Red Lake journals, which date from 1790-1822, B. 177/a/1-11.

⁴⁹ Journal by Hudson's Bay Company fur trader James Sutherland, Red Lake post, 1790-1791, HBCA, B.177/a/1, 17.

Cameron's translator died on January 21, 1791 and was buried the next day on the shores of Red Lake. After a long suffering, which Sutherland detailed in his journal, he recorded a May 24, 1791 burial of another employee. "It was a moving spectacle to a feeling heart," he lamented.⁵⁰

While the Hudson's Bay Company employed record-creating traders, the major gold mines employed managers who had considerable influence in the small mining camp and also became important recorders. Through their daily record keeping, mine managers documented the establishment and growth of Red Lake. They were leaders in providing health care for their employees and their families, and ensured that miners had proper burials.

Many varied types of documentation of Red Lake's history were destroyed over the years, but perhaps no greater paucity exists than that of gold-mining records. Most mine records of Red Lake have not survived due to their destruction upon the closure of the particular mine. The only mainly complete mine records known to exist are those of the Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines. They contain tangible evidence of the activities surrounding the deaths of miners in their employ. A file of correspondence and reports was created on each miner who died suddenly (whether by industrial death, or by natural causes).⁵¹ Historian Henry D. Shapiro explained the reason for the deliberate destruction:

...documents were for use, and when they ceased to have use they were destroyed. When they were retained by the person or institution that had generated them, it was either because they continued to have use or because no one had gotten around to disposing of them.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, HBCA, B.177/a/2, p. 29a.

⁵¹ Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, produced gold from 1938 through 1976.

⁵² Henry D. Shapiro, "Putting the Past Under Glass: Preservation and the Idea of History in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Prospects* 10 (1985), 244.

Most gold-producing mines, as well as many smaller mining operations, engaged physicians to conduct physical examinations of mine workers before they were hired and periodically while employed. The mining companies paid for burials of those killed while working underground or on surface.⁵³ Along with overseeing their mining operations, managers were charged with documenting fatalities at the mines. Beginning in the late 1920s at Red Lake, for example, the mine managers routinely completed vital statistics documents, wrote reports to their superiors about the accidents, and also conveyed the news, often via letter, to the families of the deceased miners. Information contained in the mine managers' reports, as well as facts gleaned from inquests, formed the content of annual bulletins produced by the Ontario Department of Mines' Inspection Branch. The reports contained detailed information as to the manner of deaths of miners at Red Lake (and elsewhere in the district and province), including descriptions and charts of mining accidents, conditions of the bodies of those killed, eyewitness accounts, Workmen's Compensation rates, a five-year comparison of fatal accident statistics, and identifying data such as names, ages, countries of origin, residence, and background.⁵⁴

Mine managers also corresponded with their prospectors in the field, even encouraging them when they were ill. Just after New Year's celebrations in 1931, Howey Gold Mines' co-founder Lorne Bain Howey wrote his mine financier and friend, Horace Greely Young. "I hope I will soon be well, and able to hit the trail again," Howey noted

⁵³ The Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited, collection (including files on its miners who died suddenly) is in the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre.

⁵⁴ A sampling are the reports, *Mining Accidents in Ontario*, for the years 1936 through 1939. They contain helpful information such as detailed accounts of the accidents and inquests. Archives of Ontario, Government documents, M Bulletins 108, 116, 121, and 129.

with optimism. He did get out prospecting again, but it was to be the last venture. The next time he prospected the northern wilds, Howey became dangerously ill and died immediately upon being brought to hospital in St. Boniface, Manitoba.⁵⁵

Mining promoters/visionaries, apart from the mine managers themselves, were also tremendous records creators, as is evidenced by the extensive papers of Horace Greely Young. Apart from the obvious impetus for securing funding, equipment and personnel to open up previously unexploited mineral resources, mine officials used the media to get the word out about Red Lake's natural resources. Once the media learned of the fabulous gold find in Red Lake late in 1925, journalists, writers, newspaper publishers, and photographers from across the world descended upon the desolate spot in Northwestern Ontario. Numerous publications have documented the struggle to settle that remote region, but many of those writings barely discuss the vast issue of the dying and death during the pioneer period at Red Lake, much of which was as a result of misadventure and the ill-preparation of the greenhorn stamperers.

The media today, however, plays a significant role in recording the pioneers' lives and deaths. The local newspapers regularly publish feature articles on the pioneers, and those pioneers are occasionally memorialized on television and in radio. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Margaret Helen McDougall, a pioneer herself, wielded an

⁵⁵ Correspondence from Lorne Howey to Horace Greely Young, January 2, 1931. Gift of Howey's son, Robert Howey, to John Richthammer. Much of the Howey family's collection was lost in Hurricane Hazel in Southern Ontario in 1954. Lorne Howey died in St. Boniface General Hospital on May 30, 1932. His brother, Raymond (Ray) Howey, lived until 1951. The brothers are buried beside one another in Haileybury, Ontario. Young was general manager of the Howey Gold Mines, Limited from 1927 until 1931. His extensive papers, which illuminate in rich detail the professional and private aspects of the life of a mine manager, are in the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre.

eloquent pen as she reported on deaths and local happenings for 50 years until her own death in 1997 in her hundredth year.⁵⁶

Bush pilots of the Canadian north are often romanticized as swarthy, brave, hardy souls who accomplished daring feats of rescue. The appellations were, in most cases, true, but what has never before been illuminated in detail is that bush pilots kept meticulous records of their flights, wrote correspondence to their superiors, and even contributed material to be published in their airlines' in-house staff magazines. Surprisingly, in the course of making "field ambulance" reports on "mercy flights" (the transportation of a critically ill patient) and related occurrences (such as the death of that patient), and their notes on the transportation of the dead, pilots inadvertently became creators of records of dying and death.⁵⁷

Red Lake was already well-established before the citizenry were afforded local mortuary services. Funeral directors only began serving the Red Lake District directly in 1947, when Lorne Moffat of Dryden expanded his funeral service business about the time of the opening of Highway 105 into Red Lake.⁵⁸ The funeral director is doubly significant and indispensable to the creation and keeping of records of death as she or he is to the immediate post-death function. She or he meets with the family, suggests options for all manner of funeral, memorial, and comfort in the time of bereavement.

⁵⁶ Margaret McDougall's long-running *Red Lake District News* column was entitled, "The Red Lake Report." John Richthammer's collection of McDougall columns are in the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre.

⁵⁷ Western Canada Airways Limited (later Canadian Airways Limited), *The Bulletin*, 1930-1936 (Winnipeg, MB: privately published). Archives of Manitoba, Canadian Airways Limited fonds, MG 34.

⁵⁸ The Red Lake-related funeral and burial records of the Moffat Funeral Home and its later competitor, The Red Lake Funeral Chapel, are presently owned by the Stevens Funeral Homes, Limited, of Dryden, Ontario, which bought the aforementioned businesses. All of these files are inaccessible to the public due to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of 1990.

From a records perspective, it is the funeral director who, with information gathered from survivors or hospital records, completes the vital statistics registration of death forms, often writes obituaries and memorial cards, and later assists family members in applying for survivors' pensions, and various death benefits. Insurance company payouts are usually handled directly by the companies and the beneficiaries. Lastly, the funeral director suggests possible choices for permanent grave or ash memorials.

The case of Red Lake also includes the vastly different historical outlooks advanced by both memorialists and anti-memorialists. Fortunately, the process of apotheosis (memorialization) is more the norm than the destruction caused by the anti-memorialists. While the vast majority of pioneers died without seeming to have regard for their posthumous memory, some have "cheated" death not only through memoirs, legacies, and other records they purposely left behind, but also with the active memorializing by the work of archivists, historians, curators, and writers. In *Bodies in Motion and at Rest*, Thomas Lynch articulates:

The facts of life and death remain the same. We live and die, we love and grieve, we breed and disappear, and between these existential gravities, we search for meaning, save our memories, and leave a record for those who will remember us.⁵⁹

Based on such documentation, this chapter examines what personality type engages in memorialization, or anti-memorialization, what drives one to testify about one's life, to live on through the records one leaves behind and, in the case of genealogists, to testify about the lives of ancestors, many of whom died long before?

⁵⁹ Thomas Lynch, *Bodies in Motion and at Rest: On Metaphor and Mortality*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2001), 1.

Insight was also sought through interviews with the daughters, sons, and other family members and friends of the original frontier settlers.

In the case of Red Lake, there are numerous pioneers who have left records in which they have actively “testified” as to the authenticity of the pioneering done by their fellow prospectors, colleagues, employees, or simply someone for whom they had admiration. By altruistically detailing the deeds of others in the founding of Red Lake, some pioneers have become the memorialists of other early settlers. Horace Greely Young, who had been so concerned about the health of Lorne Howey, a founder of Red Lake’s first gold producer, The Howey Gold Mines, Limited, wrote posthumously and confidently of the man to whom Red Lake owes a significant historical place.

I want to get it very clear before you that the late Lorne Howey was one of the great prospectors of Canada. First of all, he was a student who studied very carefully all possible literature which might have a bearing on ore deposits and new fields to prospect. On the basis of this knowledge so gained, he formed his syndicate, financed his syndicate, went to Red Lake, and staked the Howey Gold Mines.⁶⁰

Some pioneers have tried to manipulate those who keep and study the records. In Red Lake, for example, its long-time historian, Donald Parrott, deliberately created a vast personal archive in full knowledge that the material would be saved and described by his successor, the local archivist and historian. What is the archivist’s appropriate role in responding to and memorializing such a person through these records? How does an archivist appraise which records are archivally significantly for historical knowledge?

Historians or “memorialists” as records creators and keepers do their work as individuals or as part of community groups. In the case of Red Lake, citizens with eyes to

⁶⁰ Correspondence from Young to Robert C. Rowe, editor of the *Canadian Mining Journal*, October 22, 1934. Gift from Charlton to Richthammer.

both the past and to the future displayed a plaque in the local hospital for the nine victims of the July 1, 1945 fire which destroyed the Red Lake Hotel, but more importantly the lives of nine pioneers. A large, framed portrait of Mildred MacLaren, a beloved local elementary teacher who perished in the fire, was displayed for many years in the Red Lake Public School by local citizens.⁶¹

Historians also helped the Red Lake branch of the Royal Canadian Legion design, construct and maintain a concrete cenotaph and displays of military medals of local soldiers. Additionally, they encouraged the Municipality of Red Lake to purchase a granite sign at the entrance to the Red Lake Cemetery (founded in 1943), and to budget for perpetual cemetery care.

Whether they be cenotaphs, military or personal cemetery monuments, or community cairns or statues, memorials

connect us to the network of previous lives. Standing in a spot where some great event took place or where some admired person was born, lived, loved, and worked [and died] puts us in touch with our own roots. Statues and buildings may only be brick and granite, marble or bronze, but they can evoke powerful tribal memories.⁶²

Monuments are almost always planned, funded, and erected years after the death of the person being memorialized or the end of the historic feat. Generally, they materialize due to the interest, diligence, and perseverance of relatives, historians, historical societies, fraternal or professional organizations, and by government. As historian Marion Tinling noted, “homes of the famous, fallen into oblivion, are

⁶¹ This portrait is in the collection of the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre, where it was donated by Mildred MacLaren’s widower, Donald Stewart MacLaren.

⁶² Marion Tinling, *Women Remembered: A Guide to Landmarks of Women’s History in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), 121.

rediscovered and restored. Graves go unmarked until someone realizes that the person buried there is deserving of remembrance.”⁶³

In addition to regular administrative records already mentioned, government agencies also consciously create tangible heritage or memorial records, a notable example of which is the work of the Ontario provincial plaque-granting agency (then known as the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario). During the 1960s, the Board erected the first historical plaques at Red Lake, one relating to its fur trade history, and the other providing information on its founding gold mines.⁶⁴ Other local memorials include a concrete and steel mine headframe replica in 1962, a fountain commemorating the Canadian Centennial in 1967 in “Red Lake Centennial Park,” and a cement time capsule established during the Bicentennial of Ontario in 1984 by the local gymnastics club.⁶⁵ Other than the headframe monument, which has been well-maintained, the other memorials mentioned have long been neglected and fallen victim to the vicissitudes of weather and vandals.

Some pioneers have craved a memorial much more substantial than a cemetery monument over their graves. To the end of their lives (some of which were brief, and some lengthy), gold prospectors were in search of the motherlode because they wanted their quest to stand as their monument. Local prospector Charlie Peterson, in his late 80s,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶⁴ Photograph and description of unveiling of commemorative plaque at Red Lake in 1964, under the auspices of the Ontario Department of Tourism and Information, and the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario, HBCA photograph collection, 1964/2; Beaver Magazine search file, press release from the Department of Travel and Publicity (Historical Branch), “Plaque to Commemorate Founding of Red Lake Mining District,” September 20, 1962.

⁶⁵ The Red Lake mining monument in Red Lake was created by the author’s father, Johann (John) Richthammer, in the autumn of 1962, under the auspices of the Red Lake District Chamber of Commerce.

and last surviving Red Lake gold rush veteran Joseph Perkin, in his late 90s, and many of their peers all hoped in vain to leave a gold mine as their legacy.⁶⁶

There were occasionally unlikely memorialists. Ontario Provincial Police constables Martin Ericksen and John Pike investigated the February 10, 1929 cabin-fire deaths of Charles Hudson Pentreath (Tony) Tyrrell, Cleveland Voelk and Leo Goguen. When the officers returned in May 1929 to photograph the fire site as evidence, they erected a makeshift grave marker which they made by axe from halving a section of log and inserting it at the burial site of two of the three victims. Although Tyrrell was buried in his family plot at St. John's Cathedral Cemetery in Winnipeg, Manitoba, his name is included on the memorial, which read: "Chas. H. Tyrrell, Cleve Voelk, Leo Goguen, Rest in Peace, Feb. 10, 1929." To record the memorial, Ericksen photographed Pike kneeling reverently at the marker.

The use of photography as it relates to dying and death is a broad topic, which will not, for the purposes of this study, be examined in depth. It is necessary, however, to note that photographs related to mortality on the Canadian frontier served several key purposes. Photographs have tremendous evidential value in all spheres of life and death. For example, personal photographs of a deceased relative or friend bring the mourner a wistful sadness, but also joy in knowing that a small aspect – the visage of that departed person – is preserved and is, in effect, a method for surmounting death. While much less so than in the past, there remains some evidence (in photographs) of the diminished use of post-mortem photography in Red Lake (see Appendix II, *Figure Four*).

⁶⁶ Registration of Death, Lorne Bain Howey, Vital Statistics of Manitoba, May 30, 1932; "Charlie Peterson Still Wants a Mine," *The Northern Miner*, August 19, 1989; and "Joseph Perkin Recalls Gold Mining Heyday," *The Globe and Mail*, September 2, 1987.

For those whose income depended upon their photography, the capture of the deceased in repose earned them payment for services rendered. Photographs taken by the police, coroners or other death attendants provided proof of death scenes in the event that such would be required in future inquests or court cases. Finally, photographs of funerals, graves and cemetery monuments provide a record of the memorialization of a loved one, or well-regarded community member. A poignant Red Lake example is a photograph of a large group of grieving friends gathered around the casket of Hjalmar Martinsen at the Post Narrows burying ground, located approximately seven miles by boat from Red Lake proper (see Appendix II, *Figure Five*).⁶⁷ Martinsen, 25, emigrated from Norway and had been working as a carpenter in Red Lake for only six months when he drowned in a canoeing accident on May 23, 1933.⁶⁸ The cause of death on the Ontario Vital Statistics registration of death form was given in decidedly non-medical terms by Dr. Thomas Joseph Goodison: “accidental drowning, sailing boat overturned, Martinsen could not make the shore.” Through comparison of the dates of drowning and burial (as recorded on the provincial death record by the attending physician), it is obvious that it took three weeks for Martinsen’s body to be located and retrieved.⁶⁹

There remains only one known photograph of the funeral, and it is one that local pioneer John Gotfrid Gustafson had mailed home to his family in Sweden. Martinsen and Gustafson emigrated to Canada and came to Red Lake together. Gustafson, as the person

⁶⁷ The earliest recorded burials at the Post Narrows burying ground occurred during various epidemics circa. 1918. From that year, until 1926, the Hudson’s Bay Company had its Red Lake outpost near the shore. The burial ground, located on the hill above the HBC site, is today only occasionally used. There are today only visible approximately 15 stone grave markers, and numerous wooden crosses.

⁶⁸ Martinsen may have been the Anglicized version of Mårtensson.

⁶⁹ “Martinsen, Hjalmar,” Certificate of Registration of Death, Registrar of Vital Statistics, Province of Ontario, no. 018795, June 214, 1933. Archives of Ontario.

closest to Martinsen in Canada, signed the registration of death form, took charge of the burial arrangements, and had the funeral photograph taken. On the reverse of the image is the notation, in his hand and in Swedish, “I had all the Scandinavians and Finns gathered together the day I buried Martinsen. The Finnish women made the funeral wreaths.”⁷⁰ This photograph, with its grouping of Scandinavian and Canadian-born friends of the deceased surrounding his casket, memorializes a man who no longer remains in living memory, just as his grave location has been lost to time.

The accompanying photographs in this thesis (see Appendix II, *Figures One through Thirteen*) have been selected as examples of the reasons why photographs are taken as a means of remembering, or “testifying.” Archivist Joan M. Schwartz observed that photographs “are documents created by a will, for a purpose, to convey a message to an audience.” With the addition of this context, the photographs become “archival documents.”⁷¹

An early Red Lake poet and newspaper publisher, Robert Alpine MacGregor, was one of the pioneers’ first memorialists. Other than in his local newspaper, MacGregor’s poem, “At the Funeral of an old Northern Pioneer,” has never been published elsewhere, yet its archival message resonates:

Slow winds the cortege up the snow-clad road:
The mourners walk behind with broken pace,
Each seeking to unmask what is of God,
Since they’ve seen the pallor of death’s face.

As the cold grave encloses one they love,
Stand they foot-deep in snow, and hold the breath;
Bent heads, unbared to the grey heavens ‘bove,

⁷⁰ This photograph was the gift of John Gustafson to John Richthammer.

⁷¹ Joan M. Schwartz, “‘We make our tools and our tools make us,’: Lessons from Photographs for the Practice, Politics, and Poetics of Diplomats,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), 42.

Asking within themselves of this thing Death.

Aye, what of death, this force that defies life?
That brings to naught and leaves but grief behind:
Aye, what of death, this thing that quiets strife?
Who knows until the end that death is kind?

Our mortal clay with mortal eyes can not behold
What lies behind the veil of things unseen;
We can but trust, have faith, and walk blindfold,
Thus stumble on as though we'd never been.⁷²

The role of the archivist, of course, is to reverse that final dolorous judgment, so that some pioneers are not wiped from the slate of memory as if they had never existed. Newspaper accounts of all manner of Red Lake deaths, whether naturally, or by misadventure, provide rich texture to the story of mortality on the frontier.

The body of David Jackson, employee of the Red Lake Transport Company, drowned six days ago at Snake Falls, which came up in the whirlpool in which it was seen to disappear, will be brought here and forwarded to his family's home.⁷³

In reporting on deaths at Red Lake, newspaper journalists also inadvertently became memorialists. As Red Lake's long-serving social columnist Margaret McDougall was likely the continent's oldest contributing columnist, her death was reported over both Canadian and American wire services. Major metropolitan national newspapers assigned reporters to expand on a vignette of her life story which had been sent by the Canadian Press to its member newspapers. *The Ottawa Citizen*, published at McDougall's birthplace, called her the 'Red Lake Columnist [Who] Chronicled the Community.' Thomas Arnold, then president of the Canadian Association of Journalists, agreed that

⁷² Robert Alpine MacGregor, "At the Funeral of an old Northern Pioneer," (Sioux Lookout, ON: *The Patricia Herald*, February 18, 1928.

⁷³ *Kenora Miner and News*, August 18, 1926, 3. As is the case with the provincially-unrecorded death of David Jackson, obituaries from regional newspapers are the only extant document of death.

McDougall was Canada's – and probably North America's – oldest working journalist. “I know hundreds of journalists across Canada, and would be surprised to find anyone older than that. I think it's awe-inspiring that someone could be that interested and enthusiastic to continue for so many years.”⁷⁴

The Toronto Star noted that community columns such as McDougall's provide an invaluable record of social history, and that the interesting bits of commentary and information she fashioned into columns are “the glue that binds a small community together.” The *Star's* tribute had the headline, “Margaret McDougall Kept Town ‘Plugged In.’” The *Winnipeg Free Press* called her a “renowned columnist” of the north, while *The Halifax Daily News* also covered what became a national loss.⁷⁵ Red Lake's grand matriarch was the subject of a “Lives Lived” column in *The Globe and Mail*, a tribute noticed by scores of people who had either lived in or heard of Red Lake.⁷⁶

McDougall was one of the oldest surviving graduates of the University of Toronto, and the last of its class of 1919. The University's *Alumni Magazine* made special mention of her passing. Margaret Helen Winter had earned her Bachelor of Arts in linguistics at St. Hilda's, Trinity College. Her dedication to the Anglican Church of Canada and its community here over more than 60 years did not go unnoticed. *The Anglican Journal* paid tribute with a column about McDougall, who was the last original Anglican parishioner in Red Lake, and also the last surviving founder of the Anglican

⁷⁴ Alison Uncles, “Red Lake Columnist Chronicled Community,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 14, 1997.

⁷⁵ Nicholaas van Rijn, “Margaret McDougall Kept Town ‘Plugged In,’” *The Toronto Star*, April 15, 1997, A18; John Richthammer, “Renowned Columnist Dies,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 14, 1997; “Columnist Wrote Till 99,” *The Halifax Daily News*, April 17, 1997, 53.

⁷⁶ John Richthammer, “Lives Lived: Margaret Helen Winter McDougall,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 21, 1997, A26.

Church Women.⁷⁷ McDougall was a devotee of CBC Radio, which marked her death by interviewing a long-time friend.

There were other forms of tribute. William S. (Bill) Dawson, a B.C. artist (and husband of former Red Laker Inga Kelson) was moved to write and officially register, “The Margaret McDougall Waltz.” Through all the public tributes accorded Mrs. McDougall, a new group of people across the country learned about her, and the archival record was accorded texture and depth of memorialization.⁷⁸

Conversely, several early settlers and/or their families or friends have negatively manipulated the records and their posthumous memories, intentionally creating gaps or silences as they systematically destroyed their records. Perhaps they felt that their “business” should end with them, would be of no interest to anyone in the future, or might contain information that should die with them. Thus, these are the “anti-memorialists.”

The reasons for the anti-memorialist stance taken by some pioneers appear as varied as the individuals themselves. In her first autobiography, legendary actor Bette Davis noted in 1962, “I’ve never looked back before. I’ve never had the time and it has always seemed so dangerous. To look back is to relax one’s vigil.”⁷⁹ Such a statement on her past reluctance to write an autobiography suggests that Davis feared the “dangerous” emotional avalanche which might be triggered by such an extended and focused scale of remembering. Her caution may also be indicative of the need to protect the privacy of

⁷⁷ “Obituaries: Margaret McDougall,” *The Anglican Journal*, June 7, 1997. It was unusual for a local citizen’s death to be so widely reported. However, McDougall was no ordinary citizen.

⁷⁸ The creation of art as a form of memorialization is widespread. The tribute of music, via the waltz in memory of Margaret McDougall, is just one example. While living in the Red Lake District and afterward, renowned Woodland artist Norval Morrisseau (1931-2007) painted many images depicting both physical and spiritual death and passage.

⁷⁹ Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1962), 11.

those with whom she had interacted throughout the course of her life and career until that point.

This attempt to protect or maintain privacy is found in the example of Red Lake's local madam, Beatrice "Patsy" Cameron. She destroyed her papers and photographs, perhaps out of a sense of "protecting" those pictured, or discussed.⁸⁰ She would have been adept at concealing the identity of the clients of her brothel and even though some of the men became friends. Perhaps because of that, Cameron decided that her photographs would not reach the public domain following her death. Another reason some pioneers feel compelled to destroy their records is their belief that those who are alone and have no close relatives, or even no relatives at all, would have no one to whom they would bequeath the material. There is also the notion of "saving" family or friends from having to sort a lifetime of records. Occasionally, pioneers have requested that they have no funeral, obituary or other public remembrance. Others, still, had no family or friends to mourn them.

In her critically acclaimed memoir of mourning, *The Mourner's Dance: What We Do When People Die*, Katherine Ashenburg provides clues as to why some people become posthumous anti-memorialists by eschewing funerals or memorial services:

Their motivations are various: modesty, a horror of sentimentality, the wish "not to make a fuss," as well as more mysterious ones. Since the dead person won't be there to be embarrassed, ashamed, or feeling fussed

⁸⁰ Red Lake's long-time madam was a former Saskatchewan teacher. Beatrice Elizabeth McNeil (who called herself Patsy Cameron), purposely destroyed her papers and photographs before her death in March 1971. Personal interview with Laura Slobodzian Walsh, former welfare administrator, Township of Red Lake, July 15, 1990.

over, and the effect on his family is to deny them the enclosing embrace of a group farewell, the order, in effect, has an element of hostility.⁸¹

The act of removing a name from a public institution, too, is a form of anti-memorialism. When Northwood Lodge, a nursing home in Red Lake proper, was opened in 1999, the former area long-term care centre, the Owen J. Matthews Manor in Cochenour, Ontario, became surplus.⁸² Owen Joseph Matthews (1898-1968) was a fervent booster of medical services in the area, who worked in many community endeavours, including serving as the first president of the Red Lake branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Professionally, he was mill superintendent of the Cochenour-Willans Gold Mines.⁸³ With the move of the Manor residents to the new facility in Red Lake and the demolition of the old premises, the Matthews name has dropped from public view.

The most unlikely example of anti-memorialism to take place in the Red Lake District occurred recently at the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre itself. Ironically, when the J.L. McEwen Building (the home of the local heritage institution from 1990 through 2005) was demolished to make way for the new Centre, no plans were made to retain the name of John Lusted (Jack) McEwen (1904-1988), the long-serving museum board chair, and pioneering municipal councillor.⁸⁴ Despite protests, the honour accorded

⁸¹ Katherine Ashenburg, *The Mourner's Dance: What We Do When People Die* (Toronto, ON: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross, 2002), 75. Ashenburg was the founding editor of the "Lives Lived" column in *The Globe and Mail*.

⁸² See Appendix 1, *Figure Two* for the location of Cochenour, Ontario, in relation to the town of Red Lake.

⁸³ "Obituary: Owen J. Matthews," *Red Lake District News* (Red Lake, ON, April 1968), 1; "Owen J. Matthews Manor Officially Opened," *The Dryden Observer* (Dryden, ON, September 30, 1975); "Farewell to the Manor: Owen J. Matthews Manor Makes Way For New Municipal Water Treatment Plant," *The Northern Sun News* (Red Lake, ON, April 1, 2003).

⁸⁴ John Richthammer, "Jack McEwen, Museum Chairman and Former Red Lake Councillor Dies," *The District News*, (Red Lake, ON: October 19, 1988), 14. McEwen (born in 1904) was an active part of the community since his arrival in 1936 and until shortly before his death.

to McEwen's family at the official opening of the Centre in 1990 was quietly erased from the Red Lake landscape.

Robert Alpine MacGregor, the local newspaper editor, previously mentioned, was also a staunch memorialist, accomplished poet, and observer of northern conditions. His poetry romanticized prospectors and prospecting, but it also memorialized subjects, such as the fear of drowning. The following poem is set on Pakwash Lake, which was a notoriously treacherous stretch through which Red Lakers often had to traverse, and in which many lost their lives by drowning:

I stood unbowed, my head unbarred,
My feet upon the wide lake's shore;
Far across its wastes I stared,
And trembled in my heart's deep core.

O come Wild Winds o'er Pakwash blowing!
Drive through my soul thy tempest's breath,
Till I have dared – my red heart glowing –
Once more in crossing grey old Death.⁸⁵

Several types of pioneers - the Anishinaape, women, and the poor - either left few records, or were, in earlier, androcentric times, all but omitted from local histories. Today, most simply remain voiceless. Just as they were marginalized by a majority of the Caucasian population, the Anishinaape of the Red Lake District often went unrecorded in municipal death records. Additionally, once a town cemetery was established in Red Lake proper in 1943, increasingly more Anishinaape were buried there over the ensuing

⁸⁵ *Patricia Herald Verse* (Sioux Lookout, ON: The Patricia Herald Publishing Company, 1927).

decades.⁸⁶ Grave diggers and others who buried the deceased Anishinaape paid little attention to the vitally important task of recording the Caucasian name of an Anishinaape person, let alone their traditional name. When their burial plot was recorded on municipal maps, they were either unnamed, or simply listed in genderless, nameless fashion as “Indian.” While the identities of some of the Caucasian occupants of burial plots in the Red Lake Cemetery are also unknown, the vast majority of the nameless were Anishinaape.⁸⁷ The indigent or childless often left no one to memorialize them. As a result they tended, naturally, to fade into obscurity. Only a few have been found to have been rescued from their initial posthumous anonymity.

Generally, the pioneering done by women at Red Lake has gone uncommemorated. Few local women’s diaries have found their way into archival collections, and letters were often destroyed after they were answered.⁸⁸ Margaret McDougall, an inveterate correspondent, often lamented in her later years that she wished she had kept a diary. Her correspondence over 60 years in Red Lake would have likely been an invaluable resource to researchers, but she routinely jettisoned her letters. The written legacy McDougall unintentionally left is in “The Red Lake Report,” the social column she wrote on a weekly basis for more than 45 years, and whose contributions were publicly recognized following her death. McDougall had also been the first professional librarian in Red Lake. She was so beloved in Red Lake that in 2002, five years after her

⁸⁶ Red Lake Cemetery records, 1943-1980. The material consists of cemetery maps, correspondence, plot receipt books, burial permits, lists of burials, and minutes of early cemetery board meetings. Collection of the Municipality of Red Lake.

⁸⁷ Red Lake Cemetery Map. Collection of the Municipality of Red Lake.

⁸⁸ An exceptional example of the scholarship which may rise from women’s archival collections is Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna R. McLean, and Kate O’Rourke, eds., *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal, PQ and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

death, the Municipality of Red Lake re-named its public library, “The Margaret McDougall Red Lake Public Library.”⁸⁹

The only other example of a public institution being named after a female pioneer is the fully-accredited district hospital, “The Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital.” Cochenour was the first registered nurse to reside in the area. She was a society matron who had such fervent belief in the mining property founded by her husband, William, his brother, Edward, and their partner, Dan Willans, that she personally bankrolled the establishment of what became the successful Cochenour-Willans Gold Mines. Ironically, Margaret Cochenour died from a stroke at age 54 on the very day the mine’s first gold brick was poured.⁹⁰

There are scant few other memorializations of women in Red Lake. In October 2007, it took the terminal cancer diagnosis of Magdalena (Leni) Sadtler, a long-time local horticulturalist and volunteer municipal gardener, to motivate the Municipality to name a prominent, centre-piece garden as “The Leni Sadtler Perennial Garden.” Sadly, this honour came almost too late, for Sadtler died only one week later.⁹¹ However memorials are established, archival educator Terry Eastwood believes that records are “set aside consciously as memorial of the action or actions giving it existence...archives provide material for the extension of human memory.”⁹²

⁸⁹ John Richthammer, “Address Given on the Occasion of the Dedication of the ‘Margaret McDougall Red Lake Public Library,” July 20, 2002, 1-6.

⁹⁰ John Richthammer, “The Extraordinary Life of Red Lake District Pioneer Ed Fahlgren: From Accounting Clerk to Mine Manager and Northern Environment Commissioner,” *The District News* (Red Lake, ON: January 24, 2001).

⁹¹ “Perennial Garden Named in Honour of Dedicated Volunteer,” *The Northern Sun News* (Red Lake, ON, October 17, 2007), 2.

⁹² Terry Eastwood, “Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal,” in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, ON: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 74.

The obituary is often considered one of the most integral functions in the immediate post-death stage, and it is a vitally important memorial. Family members or friends sometimes choose to prepare obituaries and if they are incapable, unwilling, non-existent or otherwise unavailable, funeral directors write the obituaries. It is common in small towns, such as Red Lake, for the pioneers to be memorialized in a lengthy eulogy or newspaper obituary. Even in the cases of indigent burials, often a notice of the death, however brief, is published.

Cemeteries not only situate the burial place of a pioneer, but any marker or written record of the interment provides a valuable record. The Anishinaape of the communities of Red Lake and Ear Falls were horrified when their traditional burying ground at nearby Gold Pines was washed away in 1930. That year, following lobbying by Horace Greely Young and other mining magnates, Ontario Hydro built a large-scale hydro-electric power station at Ear Falls to supply power for the Howey Gold Mines at Red Lake.⁹³ As the result of damming, a vast amount of water flooded the area, and took with it the graves of the area's earliest people. The very real devastation caused by this electrification and power project to the Anishinaape is articulated by Helen Agger:

The flooding that had brought about so many significant changes to the once familiar landscape was also very destructive in spiritual ways. For example, much of the Lac Seul community's traditional cemetery was ruined. Dedibaayaanimanook [Sarah Keesic Olsen] spoke about community members who attempted to restore the damage but were sickened by the task of having to gather the bones and skulls of deceased family members when caskets disintegrated in the deluge. To this day, remains continue to wash onto shorelines and beaches.⁹⁴

⁹³ H.V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines, and Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941*. (Toronto, ON: Macmillan, 1974).

⁹⁴ Agger, *A Trout Lake Story*, forthcoming 2008.

Death and burial records only relate the facts as they were known at the time. However, a documentation strategy modelled after those of archivists Samuels, Hackman, Warnow-Blewett, or Cox, may be employed in thematic or subject-driven format to provide rich contextualization. The burial, planning, operational, and other historical records of cemeteries, for example, would seem an entirely appropriate area to which the documentation strategy could be successfully applied in Red Lake or elsewhere.

An exemplary model of study of frontier cemeteries is that of historians Star and Ed Jones. Their documentation, via the vehicles of both database and paper versions, of the records of several gold rush and post-gold rush cemeteries in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, serves two main purposes. Digitally, it collects and makes local cemetery research available worldwide within seconds. Documentarily, it provides deeper context to the extant records, as the Joneses worked diligently to incorporate data from (and photographs of) remaining monuments into the database, along with the other expected types of records such as information from burial registers, newspaper obituaries, and community histories. Their goal in conducting such a project was one of memorialization:

The motivation behind it is related to our hope that no one who has died in Dawson will be completely forgotten, and that as much of who they were and what they did here will be recorded for future generations who may want to know.⁹⁵

Oral history, sometimes recorded from the Caucasian pioneers, offers glimpses into a memory record that might have otherwise been documented. For example, the topic of caskets brought the following memories:

Local carpenters, tradesmen or the families themselves made the caskets. My father, Edward John Richards, spent long hours making everything

⁹⁵ Ed and Star Jones, "The Cemeteries of Dawson Project," Dawson City, Yukon (Santa Fe, NM: privately published, 2004), foreword.

from cabinets to caskets. The first casket was for the late George Campbell, founder of the richest gold mine in North America, at Red Lake.⁹⁶

John Hurnaus, Sr. wanted to be buried cheaply. We got planks from John Gustafson [Red Lake Lumber Company] and put them together. I had the wake party for John's friends after the funeral and burial.⁹⁷

The Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre (formerly the Red Lake Museum), operating successfully today, was formed by those interested in preserving history and the legacy or heritage of the dead. The absence for many years of such a facility as a repository for public memory in the Red Lake District doubtless led to the destruction of many records and much ephemera which depicted the area's past.⁹⁸ Since 1968, Ear Falls (located fifty miles from Red Lake) has had a museum. There are museums in Kenora, Sioux Lookout, and Dryden, but none of them address directly the history of Red Lake. Eventually, Red Lake caught up, but by much material was lost in the interim.

Mining ghost towns litter North America. During the community's early days, the majority of inhabitants had the opinion that Red Lake's future was precarious. However, Horace Greely Young was in the progressive minority, and his words, written in 1934, on the records of the Howey Gold Mine (and Red Lake in general) were prescient:

I presume that my files are the only files perhaps available where this complete information is today. What the mine has done with them God only knows. The government engineers tell me that they cannot find them

⁹⁶ Verna Richards Kortz, personal interview, February 15, 1992. Collection of John Richthammer.

⁹⁷ Charles Walter Peterson, personal interview, July 2, 1990. Collection of John Richthammer.

⁹⁸ Journals written at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Red Lake from 1918 through 1927 were deliberately destroyed by burning when the former HBC store in Red Lake town proper was remodeled as the Red Lake Municipal Office. The 1929-1931 journal was rescued from destruction by local pioneer George Webster Aiken, who eventually donated it to the Red Lake Museum. In order to have a more complete collection, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives has requested, without success, the return of the journal.

at the mine office at all. Some day this early history is going to be tremendously important.⁹⁹

Records of mines were regularly destroyed after the mines closed, while the mining records held in the head offices in Toronto have not appeared in archives (save for those of Dome Mines, Limited, which are in the Archives of Ontario). Young's extensive professional and personal papers, which are at the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre, are, therefore, a precious record of not only the discovery and building of the first gold mine in Red Lake, but also of the growth of the community and district around the mine.¹⁰⁰

One of Red Lake's pioneering historians was Winnifred Beatrice Drake Ramsell, the first local woman to hold a Master of Arts degree. Ramsell wrote a paper on the history of Red Lake in 1935.¹⁰¹ At the time, her essay was, at best, of isolated interest (her friends, the Goodisons and the Futterers, to whom she gave the few copies she produced by hand). Even by the 1930s, there is little evidence of any importance being placed on preserving the history of the Red Lake gold camp and its attendant records largely because they were still creating both camp and records. Red Lake was then not expected to be a

⁹⁹ Young to Rowe, 1934, 8. Gift of Charlton to Richthammer. When Young died in 1965 in Montreal, *The Northern Miner* published an obituary, the headline of which read, "Dean of Red Lake, H.G. Young Dead," February 18, 1965. The tribute noted that Young "devoted much of his life's work to the development of the Red Lake camp, in which he always held implicit faith."

¹⁰⁰ Young (1881-1965) bequeathed the contents of a four-drawer legal-sized filing cabinet to his friend, Frederick Albert (Ted) Fell, then general manager of the New Dickenson Mines in Balmertown, Ontario. The cabinet and its archival treasures were kept for decades at Young's house on McKenzie Island, near Red Lake, where he was president of the McKenzie-Red Lake Gold Mines, Limited. Upon the death of Fell (1907-1989), Young's professional and personal papers were deposited at the Red Lake Museum (now Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre) by Fell's son, Frederick, and daughter-in-law, Marilyn. Further records of Young's life were inherited by his daughter, Wilhelmina (Billie), and following her death, were gifted by her husband, R. Jeffrey Charlton, to John Richthammer.

¹⁰¹ Winnifred Beatrice Ramsell, "The Early History of Red Lake," (Red Lake, ON: manuscript, 1935). Gift of Agnes Futterer Ross to John Richthammer.

permanent community. As a result, documenting its history was to be a very long way off, with the preservation of records doubtless being an unconsidered notion.

The emerging interest on a more sustained and consistent basis, during the second half of the twentieth century is, according to Richard Cox, typical of a “growing interest by those outside the archival and records profession in the historical evolution of writing, records, recordkeeping, archives, and historical sources.”¹⁰²

The significance of the study of dying and death on the frontier and especially the records generated by such activities and transactions is two-fold. First, such an examination cultivates and promotes awareness of what archivists should be documenting and, thus, acquiring for their institutions’ holdings. Secondly, with archivists then possessing a better archival awareness, they will be better equipped to understand and describe in expanded finding aids and thematic guides the potential richness of sources for researchers’ explorations of an under-defined dimension of historiography. This harkens back to historian Edgar Wesley’s observation that it is by studying the local that we come to have some understanding of the human.¹⁰³

Historians traditionally mark the passing of the frontier era when an area matures in some sense – when vacant land disappears, or population stabilizes, or perhaps when certain institutions appear. But since places experience continuous change, maturity is a slippery idea that should be ignored, for some frontier traits linger long after the death of the conditions that gave rise to them.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Richard Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 9.

¹⁰³ Edgar B. Wesley, “History at Home,” *Minnesota History* 19 (March 1938), 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Conclusion

Memento mori is defined as “insistently warning of the inevitability of death,” and “pointing out the social leveling wrought by death.” The Latin phrase, which is also read as, “remember that you must die,” may appropriately be applied to the study of the records of mortality on the Canadian gold-mining frontier. Indeed, throughout this thesis, another translation of *memento mori*, “remember thy death,” is significant to the central theme of the illumination, accessibility, and preservation of the records of mortality.¹

The insights gained by this analysis may well encourage archivists first to acquire and then to describe such records in richer functional context, thereby allowing historians and other researchers to utilize the records created through the processes of dying and death with more insight.

Adapting the documentation strategy initially outlined by Helen Samuels and, for local communities, best articulated by Richard Cox and the macroappraisal approach of Terry Cook to one specific human function (mortality) in a defined geographic area (the gold-mining frontier at Red Lake, Ontario), has proven to be successful. When combined this way, the functional analysis and strategic approaches were found to be suggestive for how archivists might plan to research and document any theme. It was modified from the functions of a large government system to the activities and the documentary legacies of the aging, dying, and deceased individual

¹ “Memento Mori,” in Stuart Berg Flexner, ed., *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, second edition, revised (New York, NY: Random House, 1987). There is an abundance of translations, most of which involve the immence of death.

pioneer, and of the institutions with whom that individual would have interacted in the final stages of life.² These methodologies were adaptable to the Canadian frontier and to the theme of dying and death.

As further noted from a documentation needs case study by archivists Joan Warnow-Blewett and Larry Hackman, the outcome became clear: the documentation strategy is employed in this thesis most effectively as a descriptive tool for exploring, describing and making accessible the records of mortality. The identification of pioneers' records has the added potential of being research-rich in areas other than dying and death.

Correctly documenting the vast amount and types of records consulted from disparate sources engendered a particular problem. Many references in other published works (including the monographs by Red Lake's long-time historian Donald Parrott) alluded to other relevant information, but offered neither source citations nor provided the reader with a strategy or roadmap for how the material had been located, or from whom. Such convoluted and inadequate sourcing demanded remedy. Intensive searching through all known historical material for this thesis yielded some original sources which, through the decades, had been accessed many times by historians such as Parrott as though there was no more material to be found. Through repeatedly careless use, the data from the original sources (such as basic facts, name spellings, and credit for material sourced) became altered, even mythopoeic, over time and, ultimately, was often inaccurate or taken out of context. Parrott relied heavily upon his own memory, rarely took notes during his interviews

² For the relevant citations, see footnote 3 in Chapter One.

or conversations, and never orally recorded the pioneers. When expanding upon an aspect of local history or on the life story of one of the pioneers, Parrott seldom referenced any original correspondence or articles, but proceeded to write the story in one sitting.

In light of past mistakes in the documenting and writing of such history, it is evident that the research value from the employment of a documentation strategy is extremely high:

Records are valuable for their evidence, accountability, and memory – linking the critical functions of appraisal to description and access. Every researcher writing about the importance of records attributes such value to the ability of these documents to provide a glimpse into the memory of individuals, organizations, and society. We view memory differently. A half-century ago, records were the raw materials of history. Now, records are part of a vast accumulation of materials weaving the fabric of the past. Society, rushing head on with its many technologies in the front, struggles to hold onto any semblance of a past. There is a fear that records and archives will be lost.³

It is imperative that a comprehensive documentation strategy be initiated in the Red Lake District so that important archival collections will be identified, saved from destruction, and then described in much richer context. The case study for one such function indicates how rewarding a full documentation strategy of the area might well be. As Cox notes, the salvaging of fragmentary collections may come at the expense of the loss of other significant records.

The larger context for the development of archives may be public memory, a strong new focus for studying the meaning of the past and enriched by interdisciplinary research. Archives – both the individual records/collections and the institutional repositories – are clearly a symbolic marker on the landscape. Archives mark the past and are

³ Cox, *Closing an Era*, 174

formed by the past, even though much of the scholarship on public memory has avoided specific or in-depth discussion of archives and historical records....⁴

With the construction and implementation of a \$3 million Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre in 2005, the archives of all aspects of the district's history have moved to the forefront, in a stable environment that is firmly memorialist. Recent trends in commemorating the names and deeds of local pioneer women (the July 2002 re-naming of the library after Margaret McDougall, and the October 2007 dedication of the town's perennial garden after Leni Sadtler) offer additional evidence that memorialization is, at long last, in the minds of community leaders.

The parameters of this study have been narrowed to keep the subject of the documentation strategy to a manageable size. Case studies could have been written in even greater detail on mortality alone for just the pioneer period, on just Red Lake proper, or on just one sub-theme, such as records of mortality in the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre, dying and death of the Anishinaape people, or on the death-care work of law enforcement officers, coroners, or physicians. Glaring incongruities exist in regards to the records of the Anishinaape, of women, and of the indigent. Through the continued gathering of stories and records about their lives, the omission of their marginalized, overlooked voices would begin to be remedied. Unlike archival documents, which may usually be consulted at almost any time, the oral tradition of the Anishinaape has almost disappeared.⁵ Although pioneer women

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10, 70.

⁵ There are only three Anishinaape elders alive in Red Lake who remember the period from the 1920s through the 1950s. They marked the end of a pioneer era, and with them goes much oral history. Their children, some of whom are now in their 50s and 60s, are already being referred to as "elders," and even some of them have died.

have been briefly mentioned in the existing historiography, their important contributions and stories of dying and death have also been inadequately acknowledged and preserved in the archival record.

Since this case study analyzed a broad spectrum of records, their activities, and their creators, and tried not to be too narrow, as suggested in the last paragraph, it did not attempt to expand in the other direction to a more broad documentation strategy for the entire frontier town of Red Lake; it also did not, for example, investigate in total all the themes found in the records of local government, tourist operations, school boards, community service organizations, businesses, theatres, or various social groups, but only those records pertaining to or covering dying and death and the pioneers confronting that process.

Another restriction of this study is the inaccessibility of personal and corporate records which fall under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of 1990. For example, the Stevens Red Lake Funeral Chapel was unable to grant access to even its earliest funeral records of the Red Lake District. While empathizing and wishing he could comply, the funeral director feared the revocation of his license if he violated privacy laws. The same limitations apply with equal force to physicians' and hospitals' records, and some related municipal documents. While privacy legislation has removed from the researcher the ability to consult even the medical history of deceased parents, Canadian archivist Barbara L. Craig insists that only aggressive, sustained efforts may surmount what she sees as a wide-scale loss of archival health-care records, documents which reveal the very resumes of our hospitals themselves.

If Canada's hospital past is to survive for future use, if there is to be any change in the present ad hoc system, archivists must take the lead in stimulating action and guiding the direction of change. Although the acquisition and management of records are important functions, a vigorous archival scholarship is equally important if records are to be properly preserved.⁶

The "virtual" universe, which could be made available to researchers through the implementation of a theme-and-region database, has caused some archival theorists to re-think their initial skepticism of the Samuels and Cox documentation strategies. In particular, Brien Brothman summarized criticism of previous archival scholars of the documentation strategy around two serious concerns:

The first occurs when teams try to define the topic or topics and the geographical areas they wish to document. Without the concrete, constraining reality of institution-based provenance, archives lack objective criteria for defining the scope of their acquisition and documentation activity. In addition, the selection of themes or topics smacks too much of the librarian's propensity for subject-oriented thinking.⁷

Today, with the ubiquitous Internet, Brothman has rightly realized that the documentation strategy model may indeed be worthy of widespread usage, something that in the 1980s was perhaps a matter of an inventive idea springing forth at the wrong time. Now that technology enables "virtual" archival cooperation, Brothman notes that archivists could work in groups or teams on documentation strategies and thus avoid financial and travel-time costs which would otherwise prevent that.

Emerging collaborative technologies may not only facilitate such work; with the very availability of these technologies, the

⁶ Barbara L. Craig, "The Canadian Hospital in History and Archives," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-1986), 67.

⁷ Brien Brothman, "Where's Home? Documenting Locality at the Dawn of the Electronic Age," *Archivaria* 47 (Spring 1999), 155. (Review of Richard Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators*.)

documentation strategy may become a more viable, indeed, logical instrument for use in guiding archives' acquisition activities.⁸

As demonstrated through the initial questioning, even dismissal of Cox's documentation strategy, and now a possible reconsideration of it in light of the Internet, archivists must continually strive to look beyond the limits of the past and hone their vision of the model or strategy that works best for their locality, theme, or organization. As archival educator Tom Nesmith suggests,

the way ahead is not entirely clear, but we can be guided by a desire to explore these contextualities through study of the history of records and archives and explore the shape of theoretical positions and professional practices...This presents a great and exciting challenge to reopen archives in immensely valuable ways.⁹

The implications for archival studies of this analysis of the records of frontier mortality are abundant with possibility. The avenues of archival research just described imply that it is feasible to implement a comprehensive, refined, documentation strategy of the records of dying and death on the gold-mining frontier. Although the actual participants of the Red Lake gold rush of 1926 are deceased, as are many of those who arrived from the late 1920s until 1950, much remains in the archival records of mortality to stimulate, foster and sustain detailed study via the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁹ Tom Nesmith, "Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005), 273-274. The challenge articulated by Nesmith applies well to archival appraisal and description and, thus, would greatly aid in the formulation and implementation of a documentation strategy.

approach suggested.¹⁰ The result would be a context-rich archival record, articulately described, and thus better used by researchers.

The people of the Red Lake District deserve a full documentation strategy such as this. Others elsewhere might find it of interest as well, as the methods employed herein may be applied to other localities (both rural and metropolitan), other entities, such as the gold-mining and tourism industries and other time periods.

Memento mori is thus writ large, from the individual pioneer remembering to contemplate his or her death and all its attendant consequences and memorials, to the archives commemorating death as a vital human condition generating records worthy of greater attention.

¹⁰Joseph Perkin was, in his later years, celebrated as the one of a dying breed of North American gold prospectors, and, as the last known surviving veteran of the Red Lake gold rush of 1926, was last interviewed by John Richthammer. When Perkin died in Toronto his 97th year on July 8, 1999, the sense of loss at this last vital human link to the last great Canadian historical event was almost palpable.

Appendix I

Maps of the Red Lake District

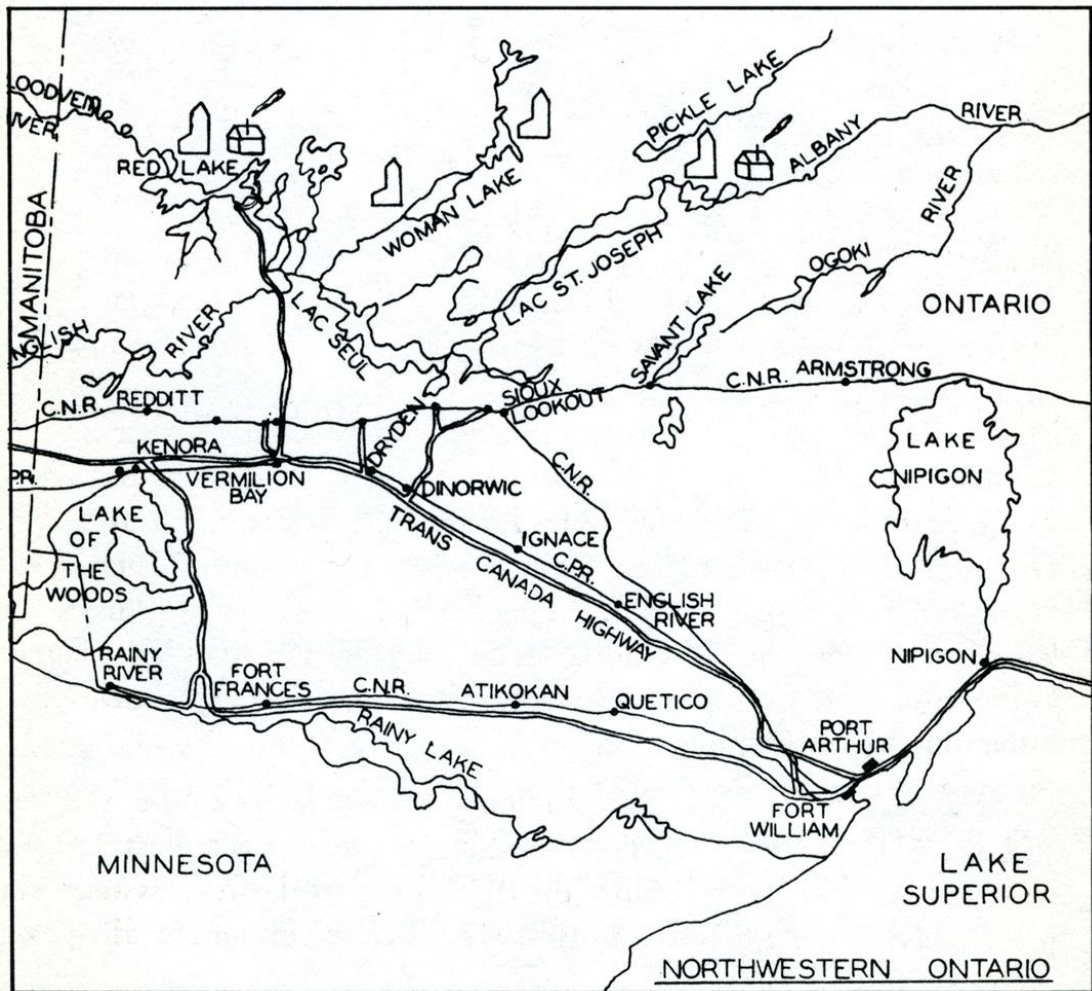


Figure One – Map of Northwestern Ontario, including the water route up to and including the Red Lake District as it would have been used during the Red Lake gold rush of 1926. This map was created in 1964 for publication in *The Red Lake Gold Rush* by Donald F. Parrott.¹¹

¹¹ Gift of Donald Parrott to John Richthammer, August 11, 1986. Copyright permission granted by the Estate of Donald Fleming Parrott.

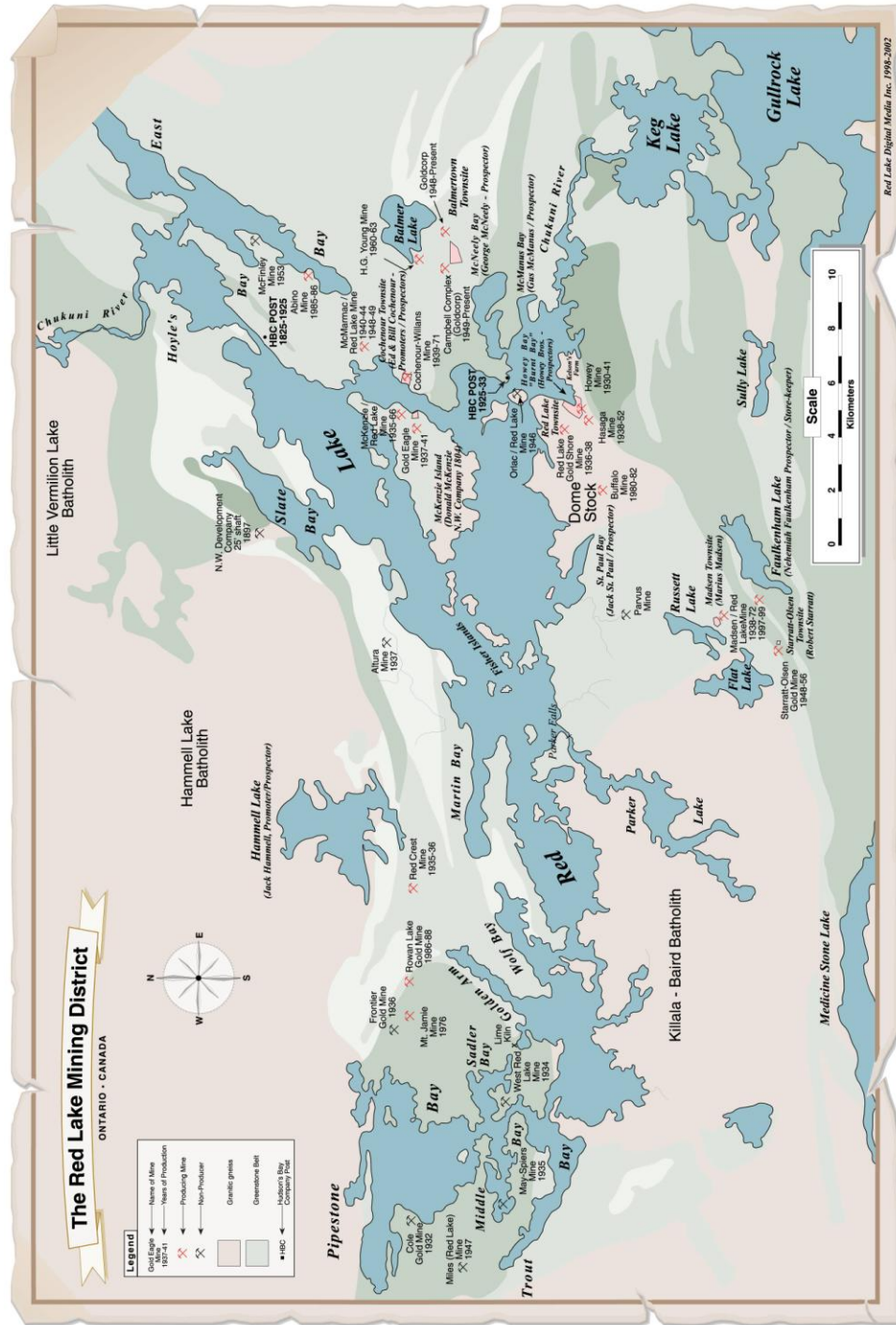


Figure Two - Detail view of the Red Lake District of Northwestern Ontario showing key area towns and past and present mining properties in 2002. Gift to John Richthammer by its creator, Gary Worrall, of Red Lake Digital Media, Inc.

Appendix II

The Records They Are: Evidential Value in Photographs



Figure One- The body of prospector Harry Jones, as it was first seen by Ontario Provincial Police constable John A. Pike in November 1930. Jones had fallen through the ice at Summit Lake, near Red Lake, and died from shock and exhaustion while trying to extricate himself from the water and crawl onto the ice. (Courtesy of Ida S. Pike)



Figure Two - Ontario Provincial Police constable John A. Pike and unidentified Anishinaape guide pulling by toboggan the frozen body of Harry Jones to an awaiting aircraft. (Courtesy of Ida S. Pike)



Figure Three - Bush pilot Arthur Schade, police officer John A. Pike, and unidentified Anishinaape guide posing with the contorted, frozen corpse of Harry Jones in front of an aircraft. The body was laced onto the ski supports and flown to Sioux Lookout, Ontario, for interment. (Courtesy of Ida S. Pike)



Figure Four - American-born mining pioneer John Younglove Cole I died in a log cabin at his son's mining property, Cole Gold Mines, Limited, near Red Lake, during break-up 1934. His body was temporarily stored in an ice house until conditions were suitable for an aircraft to land. It was flown to Hudson, Ontario, and then was transported by train to New York City, where an elaborate funeral was held. To the far bottom left was a floral prospector's pick. Cole's portrait was displayed at top left. (Courtesy of Valerie Starry Cole)



Figure Five - Red Lake pioneers gathered around the casket of drowning victim Hjalmar Martinsen in June 1933. The young Norwegian had only been in Canada for six months. Many of those pictured were the first settlers of Scandinavian descent, and they all ensured that Martinsen had a proper funeral at the Post Narrows burying ground near Red Lake. *Front row, left to right:* Anders Berglund, Steve Sharkey, George Whitney Campbell, Johan (Joe) Granstrom, unidentified, John Franks, Olav Reijtan, Ben Ohman, John Gustafson, unidentified man holding hat, George Johnson (wearing sweater), Tyne Mele (the last survivor of this group), Clemence Dupont (later Wilson), Finnish woman, Dorte Haraldsen, and Malvina Dupont. *Back row, left to right:* first six unidentified, unidentified diamond driller for Reid & Ryan, Ivor Stubson (wearing suit and tie), two unidentified, Rev. Alexander Calder (United Church of Canada), Robert Matti Mele, and Mrs. Edward Salonen (given name elusive in the record). (Courtesy of John Gotfrid Gustafson)



Figure Six – Three of the nine victims of the Red Lake Hotel fire of July 1, 1945, being carried to their graves in Red Lake Cemetery. (Courtesy of Kathleen Weston Patrick)



Figure Seven - The casket of George Whitney Campbell as it was carried by Royal Canadian Legion members on the ice of Howey Bay, Red Lake, Ontario, to a waiting aircraft. The most successful gold mine founder in Red Lake, Campbell was then flown a few miles to the Post Narrows burying ground. (Courtesy of Eugenia (Gene) Campbell)



Figure Eight - Dr. Emil (Danny) Daniel, Red Lake coroner, flanked by Ontario Provincial Police officers as they investigated the 1953 deaths of two local miners in the crash of a DeSoto automobile at Red Lake. (Courtesy of Arnold O.T. Bartlett)



Figure Nine - During its early days and until the 1950s, many of the Anishinaape graves at the Post Narrows burying ground, near Red Lake, were extensively decorated. This photograph, taken in 1926, features the grave ornamentation on the plot of Soubie Keesic. (Photographed by Gordon Suffel, and courtesy of Dr. Priscilla Suffel)



Figure Ten - The same location at Post Narrows burying ground as it appeared in 2004. The grave ornamentation has disappeared, while Soubie Keesic's monument (back) remains. In the foreground is the monument of John Thomas, whose grave was disturbed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police during its investigation of his murder in 1923. (Photo by John Richthammer)



Figure Eleven - Red Lake citizens attending a “Memorial Day” commemoration at Post Narrows burying ground near Red Lake in May 1939. This was an annual event in which the deceased pioneers of the area were remembered. Clergy from three denominations preached at this service. Pioneer Margaret McDougall is pictured at right holding hat. (Courtesy of Rev. Arthur J. B. Hough)



Figure Twelve - The memorial cross erected at Goose Island, near Red Lake, in memory of Christopher P.J. O’Kelly, a Victoria Cross winner in the First World War, who drowned nearby in 1922. His body was never found. (Photograph by R. Elsie Myers and courtesy of Donald Parrott)



Figure Thirteen – The Post Narrows burying ground, near Red Lake, as it appeared in ruin in the 1950s. This image was sold as a postcard. (Courtesy of Eugenia “Gene” Campbell)

Appendix III
Copyright Clearance Statement

I am aware of the Copyright Act of Canada, and hereby certify that I have copyright clearance from the Estate of Donald Fleming Parrott to reproduce the maps of Northwestern Ontario (showing gold rush routes to Red Lake, and the vicinity of Red Lake) which appears in Appendix I of this thesis.

Furthermore, I certify that all photographs which appear in Appendix II are in the public domain, i.e. their creators/photographers have been deceased for fifty years as is required under copyright law. I also hereby certify that I am the photographer of one photograph herein and, thus, hold the copyright, which I willing waive for reproduction of this thesis in any form.

Documentation may be provided upon request, to demonstrate the facts of the preceding two paragraphs.

John Richthammer
October 24, 2007

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