

A Social and Cultural Study of Split Lake,
Manitoba, with Special Emphasis on Education

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Presented to

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In partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by

Donald Serge Tessier

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ABSTRACT

It is the intention of this thesis to examine a system of education which does not achieve the expectations of either its students, or the educators who are in direct contact with these students. The specific reference area for this study is the community of Split Lake, Manitoba. An examination of the historical and cultural influences of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Medical Services Branch and the Anglican Church are also included. The approach is generally chronological.

A discussion of the Swampy Cree's religious beliefs and social history before White contact is first presented. The emphasis of the narrative shifts to the impact and influence of the four major social institutions on the community. An examination of the reserve, as it exists today, is also included, to outline and assess the problems facing the educators in Split Lake. A study of the hopes and aspirations of the residents of Split Lake is also undertaken. Projection and analysis is made as to the role of education in resolving these problems.

There are many problems facing Split Lake, but it is claimed in this thesis that many can be resolved through an improved and more effective system of education.

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I wish to express thanks to Professor Neil McDonald, chairman of the committee. I would also like to acknowledge the other committee members, Dr. John Seymour, and particular thanks to Dr. Keith Wilson, whose advice and assistance in the preparation of this thesis was truly appreciated.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Topic

A Social and Cultural Study of Split Lake, Manitoba, with Special Emphasis on Education.

The Problem

Northern communities such as Split Lake are faced with difficulties arising from their isolated location, lack of natural resources, and from cultural backgrounds and attitudes held by and about their Indian inhabitants. In most northern communities, only limited types and amounts of secondary industry are viable, so meagre earnings are eked out of depletable resources. As a result of physical location, the necessities of life are more expensive than they would be in any other location. Despite these problems, the elders of Split Lake believe that their children can improve their well-being if they receive greater educational opportunity.¹ Providing greater equality of opportunity in the education field is, however, a very difficult task. It is particularly challenging in northern Indian settlements, where both the availability and the relevancy of education are being questioned. The desires of the Indians themselves regarding education have been clearly stated by the National Indian Brotherhood as follows:

Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. We want education to give...a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education:

..... as a preparation for total living,

..... as a means of free choice of where to live and work,

..... as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement.

We do not regard the educational process as an 'either-or' operation. We must have the freedom to choose among many options and alternatives.²

These educational objectives are very closely related to the desires of most educators, but such an education, unfortunately, has not been provided in Split Lake., or in northern Indian communities generally.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyze a system of education which does not achieve the expectations of either its students, parents or the teachers who are in direct contact with these students. The specific reference area for this study is the community of Split Lake.

This study will be a historical account of the influence of religious, political, commercial, and social factors on the educational development of the Split Lake reserve where, in the past 150 years, education has been controlled successively by the Indian adults, missionaries, and the Department of Indian Affairs.

Importance of the Study

Many university instructors and classroom teachers do not receive exposure to, and therefore are not always aware of, the situations and circumstances that face a northern educator. They are seldom aware of the cultural processes of the people who live in these communities. Hopefully, by reflecting on the problem identified in this study, the teacher of the northern sector will gain some insight into the conditions which

are about to confront him. Instructors who will never be exposed to such circumstances should be able to apply the insights gleaned from this study to their own classroom situations.

Another aim and value of this study is to analyze and assess the importance of the roles played by the Church, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the Medical Services Branch in the development of the Split Lake community, particularly as they relate directly and indirectly to education.

Procedure

Chapter I--an introduction to the thesis is provided in this chapter. Consideration is separately given to the outline of contents, purpose, importance, methodology, sources, limitations, and definitions of terms.

Chapter II--a review of related available literature is included.

Chapter III--an anthropological analysis and social history of the Woodlands Indians, primarily the Swampy Cree, and their settlement patterns, are provided. This profile will consider the necessary background against which the community's and the people's ancestry may be viewed from pre-European contact up to the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Chapter IV--an overview is provided of the political, economic, and social structures of Split Lake. This section includes a study of various institutions--the Anglican Church, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Medical Branch, and the school. An assessment is made of their importance to the development of Split Lake.

Chapter V--Split Lake today. The physical nature of the reserve is described, including a housing comparison. The Indian Act and the local government are treated in this chapter. Information obtained from inter-

views with natives is also presented.

Chapter VI--assessment of the problems facing the educational institution in Split Lake today.

Chapter VII--the major physical, economic, social and educational concerns facing the community of Split Lake are analyzed.

Chapter VIII--this final section of the thesis again points to the hopes and aspirations of the residents. Projection and analysis are made as to the role of education in resolving these problems.

Appendix A--Anglican Church Correspondence.

Appendix B--Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Correspondence.

Appendix C--Hudson's Bay Company Correspondence.

Appendix D--Summary of the Indian Position on Education, as presented by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood.

Appendix E--The Churchill River Diversion Project. A brief summary of a government newsletter is presented.

Appendix F--Five Year Plan for Education in Split Lake.

Appendix G--Source Newspaper Articles.

Appendix H--Teacher Interviews--Transcript.

Appendix I--Resident Interviews--Transcript.

Appendix J--Treaty #5 and Adhesions.

Methodology and Sources

The primary source material for this study was found in: the Manitoba Provincial Archives; the Public Archives of Canada; the Hudson's Bay Company Archives; those of the Anglican Church Diocese in Kenora; the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Thompson; the Medical Branch, Thompson; and the

Split Lake community members and institutions. Other primary material was gathered by personal interviews with hunters, fishermen, tradesmen, and teachers who live in the community.

Secondary sources have also been consulted. Subject books include those on the Swampy Cree, education of minorities, ethnicity, and northern education. Published studies and journal articles have also been consulted.

Limitations

This study is limited to a brief historical and cultural study of Split Lake. No attempt is made to provide a detailed analysis of all the contributions of the external forces on the community over approximately two hundred years.

Other limitations result mainly from the lack of primary and secondary resource material. In addition, interviews with elders of the Split Lake Band had to be conducted through an interpreter because they could converse fluently only in Cree whereas the author speaks only English. This indirect method of communication undoubtedly detracts to a degree from the accuracy of the information gathered in this survey.

Definition of Terms

Some specialized terms will be used in the study and it was therefore decided to define the main ones at this point.

Annuity--The term refers to a sum of money guaranteed payable annually over a set period of time, or for the life of the annuitant.³

Dry Reserve--A reserve is designated dry when the decision has been reached by the Chief and Council to keep it free of alcoholic intoxicants.

Enfranchise--This term denotes "...to set free (as from slavery, prison, or obligation); 2: to endow with a franchise: admit to the pri-

vileges of a freeman or citizen; 3: to admit (a town or city) to political privileges: give political rights to (a town or city)...."⁵

Enfranchisement--This term implies "...the releasing from slavery or custody; b: admission to the freedom of a corporation or body politic."⁶

Indian Act--The standard regulations and privileges governing the Indians of Canada are stipulated by the Government of Canada in the Indian Act.

Band--This term denotes "...a body of Indians, a: for whose use and benefit in common, lands, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, have been set apart before, on or after the 4th day of September 1951; b: for whose use and benefit in common, moneys are held by Her Majesty; or c: declared by the Governor in Council to be band for the purposes of this Act..."⁷

Rehabilitation Phase--A term coined by L. Mason to describe the efforts of the Europeans to assist the now culturally dependent Indians.⁸

Footnotes

- ¹ See the transcripts of interviews, Appendix I.
- ² National Indian Brotherhood, Indian Control of Indian Education (Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), p. 3.
- ³ Paraphrased from Life Insurance Law and Terms, CLU Course Material, Life Underwriter's Association of Canada, 1976.
- ⁴ Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1967.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 275.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Indian Act, R.S., c. 149, s. 1, p. 4249.
- ⁸ Mason, Leonard, The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller, 1967), p. 8.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Anthropology

There are a number of studies available dealing with the anthropological background of the Swampy Cree. One valuable study consulted was Robert Surtees'. The Original People, which deals specifically with the arrival of Europeans in North America and the effect of them on the life-style of the Indians, both directly and indirectly. He identifies and discusses three main catalysts for change, namely, the introduction of horses, firearms, and the establishment of the fur trade.¹ This work was useful in the preparation of Chapter III.

Diamond Jenness, author of The Indians of Canada, overviews the various Indian tribes of Canada. This work is rather sketchy and dated, but an attempt was made to provide a degree of detail.²

Leonard Mason, author of The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation, traces the social and cultural history of the Swampy Cree. His vivid descriptions of these unique people add life to his study. He traces their development from pre-European contact to the mid-twentieth century. This book contains the most accurate source material available and is invaluable to anyone conducting an investigation into the Swampy Cree Nations.³ Mason's work formed the model for the third chapter of this thesis.

Another work, by Palmer Patterson, The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500, outlines many of the cultural changes undergone by the Indians

since 1500. According to the author, politics have been a major factor in these cultural shifts. He traces attempts to assimilate the Indian into Euro-Canadian culture. The plight of the Indian people is compared to that of other aboriginal groups around the world. The author outlines the move of the Indian from a position of autonomy in 1500 to one of cultural and economic subservience today. It is an extremely well-documented account of the Indian's history in Canada.⁴

Arthur Ray provides a thorough, yet concise, account of the Cree and Assiniboine Indians who lived in the area lying southwest of the Hudson Bay. He traces the migration of these Indians and their life-styles from 1660 to 1870. Numerous maps and diagrams are included, emphasizing points and demonstrating adaptations made by these natives. He elaborates on such points as tribal distribution, food sources, and the major trading areas. These maps greatly aid the reader's comprehension of this period in history. It is a very helpful and well-researched book.⁵

Jean Trudeau, in his dissertation, Culture Change Among the Swampy Cree Indians of Winisk, Ontario, provides an extremely detailed social and cultural study of a tribe of Swampy Cree who live near the southwest coast of Hudson Bay. Trudeau traces the changes in life-style from the Minimal Contact Phase, through the Sustained Contact Phase, to the Maximum Contact Phase. This well-written work should be used as a standard source in the study of cultural adaptations, and was found indispensable in the third chapter of this study.⁶

The writer found George Quimby's work a very valuable study. This collection of essays, entitled, Indian Culture and European Trade Goods, traces the history of the Indians of the Great Lakes region. The major

topic of the book is the influence which the French had upon the Indians of this area.⁷

History of Social Institutions

An important journal concerned with the history of the Hudson Bay Company is The Beaver. This monthly publication is considered the base resource for any study of the Hudson Bay Lowlands area. It is generally quite helpful, but must not be assumed to be totally accurate. In my research, I have found discrepancies and one or two errors; therefore, this source must be used judiciously.⁸

E. E. Rich, in The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857, traces the development of the fur trade in Canada from Cartier until 1857. Well-written, factual and well-organized, it traces, in chronological order, the growth of the fur trade from the mouth of the St. Lawrence north to the Hudson Bay, and west to the Rockies and the Pacific. The explorers and their various explorations are discussed in detail.⁹

Contemporary Issues

The Indian: Assimilation, Integration, or Separation? by R. Bowles, J. Hanley, B. Hodgins, and G. Rawlyk, is an anthology of articles, opinions, and government documents. The subject of this anthology is the life-style and social position of the Indian in Canada today.¹⁰

Another useful anthology is entitled Conflicts of Culture: Problems of Developmental Change Among the Cree, edited by Norman Chance. This anthology comprises seven separate papers. The Indian subjects are the Cree of northern Ontario and Quebec. The subject matter involves assimilation, education presently being received, and occupations presently held

by Indian populations in the White culture.¹¹

Harold Cardinal's book, The Unjust Society, The Tragedy of Canada's Indians, provides a unique approach to contemporary issues. Cardinal does not appear concerned with what the Indian could do about his lot. Instead, he laments that the Indian has been oppressed by government bureaucrats and the White Man in general. He feels a strong disregard for human rights has taken place in the past, is happening in the present, and will take place in the future. His primary concern, however, appears to be what has happened in the past. The book does not prove extremely helpful for anyone interested in obtaining factual information, but does provide one Indian's point of view.¹²

A somewhat dated but relevant doctoral dissertation written by H. Hoffmann in 1957, Assessment of Cultural Homogeneity Among the James Bay Cree, deals with the Cree Indians around James Bay. Hoffmann spent a summer gathering data at several settlements in the James Bay area, and in one of these communities he was able to make a detailed study of both the Cree and Eskimo cultures. The major value of his study is the cultural data he amassed on emotional reactions, as they relate to cultural behavior. Thematic Apperception Test plates (TAT), developed for use with American Indians, were used. His use of personal interviews is particularly effective.¹³

An interesting book by Robert Jamieson, A Review of Indian Education in North America, is a fairly recently published account of some of the successes and failures of various educational programs that have been implemented in the United States and Canada. These programs are analyzed at both the primary and secondary school levels.¹⁴

A most valuable publication, cited by the writer quite extensively throughout this thesis, is Wahbung. Written and published by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, it is a comprehensive statement on the mistreatment of the Manitoba Indians, presented from the viewpoint of this Indian organization. This work is well-researched and extremely easy to read. It covers topics which include treaties, the Indian Act, culture, housing, education, social development, and reserve government.¹⁵

Margaret Mead deals specifically with culture change caused by increasing contact with a dominant society in her book, Culture and Commitment. The author discusses three stages of development in the advancement of a culture: Pre-figurative, Post-Figurative, and Configurative. Although the concepts are interesting, they are rather terse and vague. It is extremely difficult to formulate a general description of the learning process based upon studies conducted on only a few aboriginal tribes. Because of these forced generalizations, this book was not found to be as useful as it might have been.¹⁶

A study undertaken by Underwood, McLennan and Associates Ltd., entitled Community Study of Split Lake Indian Reserve, was conducted in 1966. It provides a very general and somewhat superficial view of the reserve, and therefore was only of limited use for this study.¹⁷

Another source concerning contemporary issues is William Wuttunee's book, Ruffled Feathers (1971). Wuttunee is a Canadian lawyer, and this book presents his views on the integration of the Indian into Canadian society. He has been criticized by many Indian groups in Canada. He has also been banned from many Canadian reserves, including the one on which he was raised. Wuttunee puts forward some interesting insights into the problems facing the

Indian today. His viewpoint could best be summarized by stating that the Indian must assume more control over his own destiny. If this is to be accomplished, he must also assume greater responsibility for his leaders' actions.¹⁸

Henry Zentner's book, The Indian Identity Crisis, contains essays on contemporary Indian issues. One of the basic concepts common to all of the essays is the assimilation process, and how it is affecting today's Indian. Except for the introduction, this book is informative and easy reading.¹⁹

Miscellaneous

Glazer and Moynihan compiled an excellent, scholarly reference anthology of several essays entitled Ethnicity: Theory and Experience (1975). This book is one of the best research pieces available for the study of the mechanisms of cultural adaptation, progress and change in a multi-ethnic situation.²⁰

Footnotes

- ¹Surtees, Robert J., The Original People (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Limited, 1971).
- ²Jenness, Diamond, The Indians of Canada (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955).
- ³Mason, Leonard, The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller, 1967).
- ⁴Patterson, Palmer E., The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500 (Toronto: Collier MacMillan Canada Limited, 1972).
- ⁵Ray, Arthur J., Indians of the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
- ⁶Trudeau, Jean, Culture Change Among the Swampy Cree Indians of Winisk, Ontario (Ph.D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1966).
- ⁷Quimby, George Irving, Indian Culture and European Trade Goods (St. Paul: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).
- ⁸The Beaver. Winnipeg: The Hudson Bay Company, 1920 - .
Quarterly.
- ⁹Rich, E. E., The Fur Trade and The Northwest to 1857 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967).
- ¹⁰Bowles, R.; Hanley, J.; Hodgins, B.; Rawlyk, G., (eds.) The Indian: Assimilation, Integration, or Separation? (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada Limited, 1972).
- ¹¹Chance, Norman (ed.), Conflicts of Culture: Problems of Developmental Change Among the Cree (Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, 1968).
- ¹²Cardinal, Harold, The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians (Edmonton: M. C. Hurtig Limited, 1969).
- ¹³Hoffmann, Hans, Assessment of Cultural Homogeneity Among the James Bay Cree (New Haven: Yale University, 1957).
- ¹⁴Jamieson, Robert. A Review of Indian Education in North America.
- ¹⁵Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, Wahbung (Winnipeg: Manitoba Indian Brotherhood Inc., 1971).

¹⁶Mead, Margaret, Culture and Commitment (New York: Natural History Press: Doubleday and Company, 1970).

¹⁷Community Study of Split Lake Indian Reserve (Winnipeg: Underwood, McLennan and Associates, Ltd., 1966).

¹⁸Wuttunee, William I. C., Ruffled Feathers (Calgary: Bell Books, 1971).

¹⁹Zentner, Henry, The Indian Identity Crisis (Calgary: Strayer Publications Limited, 1973).

²⁰Glazer, N., and D. Moynihan (eds.), Ethnicity: Theory and Experience (London: Harvard University Press, 1975).

CHAPTER III
ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS
OF THE SWAMPY CREE

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a brief cultural study of the Swampy Cree Indians. It is felt that this study will help provide insight into many of the present day problems which face these people and their attitudes towards them. The best model of the cultural development is developed by Leonard Mason and it has been used in this chapter.

There have been four major divisions in the cultural evolution of the present day residents of Split Lake. The first period, or pre-contact phase, was characterized by migration and subsistence. The fur trade with the Europeans was the catalyst for the next phase, that of intermittent contact. A great economic boom was experienced by both races during the period. The numbers of fur-bearing animals began, however, to decrease rapidly during the next phase, that of sustained contact. This period was comparable to a depression. The fourth has been the rehabilitation process (according to Mason) instigated by the White Man. This phase spawned the existence of such measures as the treaty and reserve system.

Pre-Contact

Religious Beliefs

The indigenous religion of the Swampy Cree can be divided into three main categories: theistic beliefs, shamanistic practices, and hunting observances. These beliefs and attitudes formed an integral part of

Swampy Cree life for centuries, if not millennia. Today, most Swampy Cree formally adhere to the Christian religion, but many of their present social and cultural attitudes stem from these almost forgotten first beliefs.

The theistic believers worshipped a supreme being, Man'to or Kice Man. He was considered master of all life and owner of all things. Surprisingly enough, however, research has shown that there were no elaborate rituals to praise him. He was a totally benevolent god; a trait not found in most religious deities. He would not harm the Indian, and therefore there was no need for such rituals. He was considered an excellent intermediary when prayer to lesser beings had been fruitless. This god has been equated with the sun by some authorities, but this theory has not been substantiated.

With kitchi manitu the zenith, the being in the nadir position was matci manitu. His evil brought all forms of ill fortune to the Cree. Elaborate sacrifices were made at different times of the year to appease him. These were closely related to the functions of daily or seasonal life.

The beliefs of the Swampy Cree were not restricted to these opposite extremes. One of the major malevolent gods was the much feared witiko, best described as "anthropomorphic spirits which fly through the night, breathing flame, in an eternal search of victims to satisfy a craving for human flesh."¹ The need for this god stems from the fact that cannibalism was not unheard of amongst the Cree during the long, cold winters. Those who succumbed to this practice were believed to take on witiko personalities, and would be killed on sight if it was believed they might regain their craving for human flesh.

The Cree version of the 'grim reaper' was pahkuk, the angel of

death. Another night-winged creature, he was warded against by small hand-fashioned effigy dolls which the Indians carried around with them. According to Mason, the Indians believed that they would be able to see the spirits of deceased Indians dancing in the night. It was also common practice to bury many of a man's possessions with him. Their belief also included a land of plenty if the man's life had been just, but, had he done evil, he was sentenced to a life of torment.

Another group of spirits had to be appeased and their benediction sought whenever the Indian was to undertake a journey. These were the manituwuk, who were primarily in charge of the elements of water (in all forms found on earth) and the air.

The Swampy Cree also enacted many ceremonies throughout the year. Mason states that no one has been able to tell if these ceremonies were truly celebrations, or if they did indeed have a very strong religious basis.²

Shamanistic rituals among the Swampy Cree were common. The most common purpose was preventative medicine. A curse could, however, be evoked. There was a degree of fear between the Shamans and the Indians themselves, which is understandable when one considers the power which the Shamans held over the natives.

Beliefs held by the Swampy Cree concerning hunting observances were based on the fact that animals were endowed with supernatural spirits. Those animals responsible for the Indians' existence, food, and clothing were the major subjects of many of the myths of the time. They spoke, according to the myths, quite frequently with their friends, the Cree. Further, these creatures did not appreciate being spoken about, and therefore, these stories could only be told during the winter months, late at night, when their

spirits were asleep and could not hear.³

Life-Style

The physical environment primarily dictated the way of life of the Swampy Cree, especially in pre-contact times. The area in which they lived was not suited to agriculture, and therefore the Cree had to rely on hunting, trapping, and gathering for a livelihood. They found it most effective to live in small groups dispersed over large areas. In the winter, these small tribal groups separated into family units in an attempt to ensure adequate game for all to hunt. Long, hard travel to inspect the traps and to trail the elusive game was the rule during this season. Most winter travel was by snowshoe, which they had devised for traversing the nearly impossible terrain.

...The early use by the Cree of dog-teams for pulling sleds is problematical...Eskimo dogs in the Arctic are hitched fanwise by single traces to a sled, while south of that area, throughout the northern Indian country, dogs are hitched in tandem. Wherever dog-teams are reported among northern Indians, commands to the team are usually in French, even to this day....[P]erhaps the French traders of the eighteenth century...introduced the tandem dog-teams to the Indians who previously had by themselves drawn their light sleds over the snow.⁴

Upon reaching a good hunting ground, a winter camp of caribou skin teepees was established near a source of water. At these winter camps, the mainstay of the Cree diet was flesh. Their habit of gorging themselves when food was plentiful during the winter, and then nearly starving when food was scarce, was well known. The extremely long winters and lack of agriculture prevented them from adding a significant amount of vegetable food to their diets.

Mason also explains how meat was primarily prepared in the fire by boiling. Receptacles made of birch bark, called nockins, were used to hold

the water and meat. The boiling process was hastened by the introduction of heated stones to these receptacles. The broth formed in this manner was the only beverage used by the Indians, and this greasy substance was referred to as sagamite. If the meat was tender, they occasionally roasted it, using a spit over the fire. This method was used primarily with such animals as dog, beaver, and bear.

In the spring, all tribe members assembled near a waterway to establish a summer camp. Such locations provided water for day to day life, transportation, and the mainstay of the summer diet, fish. Birch bark was used to build wigwams, and to construct the canoes which carried them over long distances. During spring and summer, the Swampy Cree used snares and barriers to trap single larger animals so that they then could be killed by use of arrows. The purpose of the barriers was to channel the animals to the area where the Indians lay in wait (Skinner, 1911). They were extremely skilled in this method of hunting. The major killing device used in this process was the arrow, whose point had been hardened in the fire. The spears that they used in hunting larger game often had points of stone or sharpened bone.

...But their weapons and implements were contrived of wood, bone and stone, because, like all other Canadian Indians, these pre-historic people were in the stone age until the white man introduced metal articles among them....⁵

Various methods were used to catch fish, depending on the time of the year. During the summer, the barricade system was used to trap the fish inside a small space where they could be speared. These spears were described as being:

...of a wooden foreshaft to which were fastened two barbed harpoon-like blades of bone at angles to each other, fastened to a long handle. The blades were driven into the fish and the backward

pointing barb prevented its escape. Such spears are still used, but the bone blades have been supplanted by iron....⁶

Two methods were used in winter. One ingenious system comprised two holes in the ice and a net. The other was more normal ice fishing, using lines on which they tied a small piece of bone. Thus they obtained fish to supplement their food supply.

Although known to the Cree, the practice of preserving meat by smoking or drying was not extensively used. The Indians appeared to lack the foresight to prepare for times of famine which were almost certain to follow.⁷ Because of this lack of planning, the Indians would, at times, be reduced to drinking a broth made from bark and moss. In certain extreme cases, they would even resort to cannibalism.⁸

Prior to the intrusion of the White Man, all the animal hides were put to good use. One of the major uses was clothing. The typical clothing, depending on the time of year, amounted to a breech cloth, thongs, moccasins, leggings and ornate belts.

...According to information gathered...leather and fur clothing was used extensively, by both sexes...the styles of clothing...were remarkably uniform...men's clothing in winter consisted of...shirt of beaver...with the fur turned in...leggings...made of beaver, fisher, or of the skin of the legs of the caribou....[H]ooded coats of caribou skin...were also worn in winter....These...were put on over the head, in contradistinction to the...women['s] which were put on coatwise and laced up in the front....During the summer, trousers took the place of leggings....⁹

The Cree used grease from animals in their hair. Red ochre was used to treat hair and to paint their faces with characteristic tribal lines.

Due to the nomadic nature of their life, eating was not done at any formal time, but whenever food was prepared. All forms of eating utensils, such as pots, were made of bone and wood. Spoons or forks were fashioned by the Indians, but were not used in day to day eating.

Other important aspects of Cree life-style in the pre-contact period are language, kinship groups, and child rearing practices.

The Cree language, unlike the languages of western Europe, does not have one dialect which is considered the standard. A few shared features of speech are the only common bond between the various Cree dialects. Swampy Cree, which forms the so-called *oo* dialect, is estimated to be used by 24,000 people at the present time.¹⁰

Before contact with the White race, the family was the only really functioning economic and political unit amongst the Swampy Cree.¹¹ Besides a few families banding together, there were no major hunting parties. The Band itself was knit together very loosely, mostly by a feeling of identification, and even the chiefs had no real power.

At the age of five, there was a public separation of the children by gender. Researchers have not drawn definite conclusions as to the purpose of this move, but at least one, Honigman, states that the separation did not last for very long.¹²

Special puberty rites were undertaken by both the males and females. They removed themselves from the rest of the tribe, and for a time would live either in separate tents, enclosures, or on a stage erected high off the ground. These were set up quite a distance from the rest of the settlement. Here the young men and women awaited a sign in their dreams which would dictate their animal guardian or helpful spirit for the rest of their lives. In the case of a hunter, it would be this animal that would tell him where to set his traps, and the best time to leave on his hunting expeditions. The young incumbent medicine men would utilize this spirit to be told of the secrets of the herbs and roots useful in aiding the others of the settlement.¹³

Another interesting facet of life-style and belief is that formal courtship did not exist. First marriages were parentally arranged. Gifts were brought by the girl's parents to the man chosen. There were no formal marriage ceremonies as such.

Divorce was very simple, in comparison to today's standards. All that was required was 'justified reason.' If such occurred, either spouse simply left the other. Polygamy was permitted among these people; however, this was not the general rule. Abortion on demand was available to the women of the tribe, but if a child was born out of wedlock, there appears to have been no stigma attached.

The Contact Phase

It is believed that the first European contact was made with members of the Swampy Cree by Hudson, along James Bay in 1611. A small barter session ensued, and the Indians were introduced to a few of the items which the European culture had to offer to make their lives easier.

Many years passed from this initial contact until the Cree were again confronted by the Europeans. The French had settled in eastern Canada and the fur trade activities of Radisson and Grosseillers caused the next contact. There were many political battles between the French and English, the goal being the control of the much sought after fur trade with the Indians. In the interim, the Indians traded with anyone who wanted to give them European goods for the furs that they had trapped.

Years later, the desire to trade prompted mass migrations of the Indians to the trading posts of the Europeans who had established forts well into the Cree country, with the major post being called York Factory.

The construction of posts on Hudson Bay after 1670 favoured a more northwesterly movement...especially after the 1680's when [the Swampy Cree]...began to take over the role of middle-men in a trade that was increasingly oriented toward York Factory--the most important post on the Bay. Assumption of this new role was facilitated in large part by the fact that their early historic occupation of the lower Nelson River basin placed them in a strategically advantageous position to control the trade of the largest and probably most densely populated river system that drained into Hudson Bay...nearly all of the major canoe routes leading to York Factory pass through central Manitoba and converge on Split Lake.¹⁴

The traders and the trading Indians would transact business together for several days. The Indians would then return to their more stationary encampments to prepare for another year of hunting and fishing. This scene would then be reinacted the following year.

The original items which the Europeans brought for trade were: ...guns, powder, shot, brass kettles, knives, and hatchets. The Indian quickly substituted these for his primitive equipment. As trade flourished, other items were introduced, such as cloth, glass beads, woollen blankets, clothing, red lead for paint, twine for fishnets, pewter ware, and tobacco. In return, thousands of beaver, marten, and fox pelts were carried to London by waiting ships for the annual fur auctions.¹⁵

The introduction of all of these materials could only have vast consequences on the way of life of the Swampy Cree. Guns, powder and shot had one of the most profound effects on the Indian culture. Almost immediately, the hunting process became much easier for the Indian. The guns were much more accurate than the spears and arrows that had previously been used in hunting.

Other effects soon arose out of contact with the Europeans. The Cree Indians became convinced of their invincibility vis a vis other, more isolated tribes, once they had guns. This meant they must have more guns, plus perpetual supplies of shot and powder. Consequently, the men had to spend more time trapping fur-bearing animals than previously, and the women had to devote more of their days to the preparation of the furs for trade. This had a two-fold effect in that the hunters did not have the time to trap

the caribou which had been their mainstay for clothing, and the women did not have the time to prepare this clothing even if the hides were available. The obvious result was that cloth had to be bought from the traders.¹⁶ This provided a chain reaction in that more furs would have to be hunted in order to buy this cloth.

Other facets of day to day life were also changed. Previously, hunting and fishing implements had been hand-fashioned, but now the Indians no longer had the time. They also found the cooking instruments of the White Man much more efficient than their former bone and wooden implements. The Indians' diet was also changed by the introduction of flour, tea, and the other staple items introduced by the Europeans. Liquor also became an item upon which the Indian relied heavily.

The geographic distribution of the Cree also underwent considerable change during the contact phase, as Ray describes in the following passage:

By 1763 the distribution of Indian tribes had changed radically.... After having initially been drawn eastward as trappers into the French-Ottawa trading system before 1670, the...Cree began moving rapidly in a northwesterly direction after 1670 as they became involved in the Hudson's Bay Company trade. Using the arms they obtained at the Bay, they quickly assumed the role of middlemen in the evolving trade network and expanded their trading areas with force. By 1720, the bulk of that expansion appears to have been completed and a somewhat more peaceful period began as inter-tribal trading patterns became well established....¹⁷

Sustained Contact

The intermittent and often indirect contact of the early White era eventually gave way to more sustained contact as trading posts and missions became established in the interior. Gradually, the Indians began to spend more and more time near the forts, and they even began attending religious services at the missions. Priests were turned to as advisors and they also provided some educational and medical services as they became more perma-

nently established.¹⁸

Store-bought provisions became more and more a part of the Indian's way of life. They settled in groups near the posts, and this fact contributed greatly to their cultural breakdown. With their improved hunting methods, the Swampy Cree were still able to supply most of the meat they required, but improvidence and a desire for an easier life soon made them dependent upon European foods such as bannock bread made with flour and tea. The Indians incorporated these into their diet, which originally had consisted of fresh meat, fowl and fish. The Indians also became dependent upon tobacco and liquor, although abuse of the latter prompted the Hudson's Bay Company to cease selling it to Indians after 1824. The Cree then turned to making homebrew, but this practice is now becoming obsolete. Furthermore, the Federal Government has completely banned the use and manufacture of liquor on many of the northern reserves.

Many other items of Indian culture changed as a result of European contact. Canvas and cloth replaced the skins formerly used on teepees, and log cabins became their permanent living quarters. The birch bark canoe was replaced by one made of materials purchased from the traders.

As the Indians became more and more dependent on European goods, they required more and more furs to pay for these goods. This, in turn, led to over-trapping and depletion of furs in many areas of Manitoba by the early 1800's.¹⁹ The Indians then faced the dilemma of being dependent on European goods without their former relatively easy means of obtaining them.

Present Life-Style

Some aspects of Cree life have been little changed since early times. Thus, they still depend, in part at least, on trapping, hunting, and fishing

for a livelihood. On the other hand, absorption of White culture and, particularly in recent years, a growing reliance on government direction and support, have destroyed much of their earlier vitality and independence. Indeed, many observers, both Indian and non-Indian, feel that unless something is done quickly the future of the Indian in Canada will be bleak to the point of despair.

Summary

The Swampy Cree have undergone great changes in their process of acculturation since the initial contact with the European culture. At first, the contacts were fleeting and extremely intermittent. It is only within the past seventy-five years that the contacts have been sustained. Their life-style has been profoundly and generally adversely changed because of this.

Footnotes

¹Mason, Leonard, The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller, 1967), p. 57.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 16.

⁵Careless, J. M. S., Canada: A Study of Challenge (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1963), p. 19.

⁶Skinner, Alanson, "Notes on the Western Cree and Northern Saulteaux," Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 9, supplement (June 1911): 1.

⁷Mason, op. cit., p. 17.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Skinner, op. cit., pp. 14, 15, 17.

¹⁰Mason, op. cit., p. 57.

¹¹Trudeau, Jean, "The People of Hudson Bay" in Science, History and Hudson Bay, 3 vols. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller, 1968), 1: 134.

¹²Honigman, J. J., "Social Disintegration in Five Northern Canadian Communities," The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 2, supplement (May 1965): 40.

¹³Mason, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁴Ray, Arthur, Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 13.

¹⁵Mason, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹⁷Ray, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁸Mason, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 117.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY ON SPLIT LAKE'S INSTITUTIONS

A brief examination of the main social and economic consequences of European contact upon the Swampy Cree has been provided in Chapter III. The purpose of this chapter is to examine these influences in more detail, with particular reference to the community of Split Lake itself.

The Hudson's Bay Company, the Anglican Church, and the Government of Canada, in that chronological order, has each been the dominant influence at some stage in the development of Split Lake. The presence of the Hudson's Bay Company has been felt for two hundred years, but it is only during the past seventy-five to one hundred years that all three have combined to dramatically change the community. These changes have been many and varied but almost all have, directly or indirectly, affected education in Split Lake, as will be discussed in later chapters.

The Hudson's Bay Company

The Hudson's Bay Company began trading with the Indians of what is now northern Manitoba in the late 1600's. The Company had a monopoly of trade in the area for over one hundred years and, largely because of this, they were content to establish posts on Hudson Bay and let the Indians travel to them. The Indians used two main routes to get their furs to York Factory, which was the main post of the region.¹ One route necessitated their travelling down Grass River, through Split Lake, onto the Nelson River, and then down the Nelson to York Factory. The other route

originated on the Churchill River, bypassed Burntwood Lake, went down Burntwood River to Split Lake, and thence continued along the Nelson River to York Factory.² Both main routes therefore included Split Lake, a fact which became of greater significance later when the Company began to establish inland posts.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, traders from Lower and Upper Canada (Quebec and Ontario) challenged the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in the vicinity of Hudson Bay. Competition became particularly keen with the formation of the North-West Company in 1783. This company continued the earlier French-Canadian policy of establishing posts at strategic points to trade directly with the Indians. The Indians naturally preferred this to travelling many miles to Hudson's Bay Company posts and, consequently, supplies to the Hudson's Bay Company soon declined. The Company belatedly began to establish their own posts in the interior during the late 1700's, one of which was at Split Lake. As it was not in the midst of fur-rich territory, the post's existence depended upon its being on the Nelson River trade routes.³ Its fortunes therefore fluctuated as first the Nelson, then the competing Churchill route, was favoured by the Hudson's Bay Company. Indeed, the post was abandoned and revived several times between its first establishment in 1790⁴ and 1887, the date after which it became permanent.⁵ With its future secure after 1887, the post attracted a considerable number of Indians from as far afield as York Factory and Norway House. These Indians eventually congregated near the post to form the Swampy Cree community of Split Lake.

With permanent settlement, the influence of the Company on the Indians became more pronounced. By the turn of the century, the autonomy

of the Split Lake Band had been undermined, and at the same time furs, which still formed the main item by which the Indians obtained goods from the Hudson's Bay Company, had become scarce. It was at this critical point that the Anglican Church became involved with the Indian community at Split Lake.

The Anglican Church

The influence of the Anglican Church upon the Indians extended far beyond the religious sphere. The Indians were indeed christianized, but the missionaries also established the first formal system of education. Thus, the indoctrination process into the White Man's ways was initiated. The missionaries also acted as a liaison between the Indians and the Federal Government, whose influence was also beginning to be felt at Split Lake in the late 1800's.

The Reverend J. Lofthouse was the first missionary dispatched by the Anglican Church to the region now known as Split Lake. A major concern of Rev. Lofthouse and subsequent ministers was finances. Once the Department of Indian Affairs had taken charge of the schools in Split Lake, it was approached for financial assistance. In one of the requests for money, Rev. Fox, missionary (1906) stated that the Cree children were being instructed in their native Cree.

As the missionaries themselves were responsible for teaching the students, the continuity of the school program was very strong at this time. The missionaries' efforts tended to be to no avail, however, with the lack of a decent school building. Finally, after much correspondence and study, it was decided to allow the missionaries to use the former R.C.M.P. barracks as a school building.

A persistent problem facing the teachers in Split Lake was the children's need to leave school at the end of summer. This permitted them to follow their parents to the trapping grounds. Thus all the school work that the children were able to learn during the months would be forgotten by the time they returned to the reserve in the spring.

Reverend Walter developed a system to alleviate the serious loss of schooling while the children were away with their parents for the winter months. Mr. J. W. Waddy, Indian Agent, writes of the Rev. Walter:

...That when the parents are absent in the winter with the children, that he sends letters at every opportunity with little lessons for each family, so that when the children appear in school again they have not forgotten everything they have learned previously.⁶

In the fall of 1925, there were average attendances of forty-three in the summer months and about eighteen in the winter months. There was a growing desire on the part of the Anglican Church to acquire a full-time teacher to instruct the children on the reserve. This would allow some time for the missionary to attend to the spiritual needs of the people of the community.

Mr. A. G. Hamilton, Inspector of Indian Agencies for Manitoba, submitted an inspection report on July 19th, 1945. It outlined several significant problems related to education in Split Lake. Mr. Hamilton's report stated that the school needed repairs to both the inside and outside building structures. Student attendance numbered about twenty-four but, when the fall hunting season began, the student attendance dropped off from six to ten students. It was suggested by Mr. Cowley that classes be cancelled for the months April and May. He also suggested they commence instruction in July and August at the peak of student attendance. Mr. Hamilton noted that in regard to student progress:

...The exercise books showed very nice writing and neat work. The pupils, however, are so irregular in attendance that progress is slow and the children rarely pass grade two or three....⁷

He further stated the need for a boarding school in or near the reserve so as to ensure the education of all school age children (see Table 4.1).

The presence of the Anglican Church has been assessed until the beginnings of the 1960's. Formal education was finally being accepted among the natives, with varying degrees of success.

Federal Government

Medical Services

The Split Lake inhabitants were faced with other difficulties arising from their encounters with the White Man. Even with all his knowledge and ideals, the White Man was also the carrier of disease. The Indians never had the opportunity to build up resistance to many of the common European illnesses, and therefore, attention is now turned to the Medical Services Branch. A brief history demonstrating the somewhat sparse involvement of this organization in Split Lake is presented. The nursing station in Split Lake performs the functions as prescribed by the national mandate, and therefore, shall be discussed in these terms.

Indian health and welfare were not priorities of public administrators during the nineteenth century. Except for the efforts of a few missionaries, most officials were not concerned with the health and well being of the Indians. Economic success was the interest of the time. The other concern was to maintain peace and order among the inhabitants.

Before 1755, no organization had been established to look after the health of the Indians.⁸ The first traces of any governmental agency assigned to such services in connection with the Indian came in 1755. This office was

TABLE 4.1

ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT

1955-56 ^a						
Grades	(I)	(II)	(IV)	(V)	(VI)	Total
Enrolled	22	13	10	7	2	54
Present	13	8	3	2	0	26
1956-57 ^b						
Grades	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)	(V)	Total
Enrolled	26	9	9	7	4	55
Present	23	9	6	5	3	46

a, b Source: various interdepartmental communications 1955-1957.

established by the Imperial British Government. On July 2, 1860, this responsibility was officially handed over "...to Crown Lands Department, Province of Canada, by the Imperial Government...."⁹

At the time of Confederation, the newly organized Government of Canada assigned the responsibility of the Indians' well being to the Office of the Secretary, of which Sir John A. MacDonald was the first Minister. In 1873, however, the Department of the Interior, a newly created government department, took over the duties of the Indian Affairs in Canada.

With the possible exception of Treaty #6, which provides for the availability of a 'medicine chest' in every Indian Agent's office, none of the treaties negotiated and signed in Canada make reference to Indian health. Consequently, were it not provided for by the Indian Act, Indians would have no legal right to free medical services from the Government of Canada. By the turn of the century, however, many Indians were treaty and were located on Federal Reserves where they came under the Indian Act, which did provide for free medical services. The Government was the only authority in a position to provide for the Indian's health care and was soon "forced into action."¹⁰

After the signing of Treaty #7, governmental attitudes toward the Indian in Canada began to undergo considerable change due to:

...Happenings south of the border in the United States, open warfare with the tribes, and more Indians coming under the surveillance of the Department of the Interior; it was judged advisable that a special department of Government be set up to give full time attention to Indian Affairs, and accordingly in 1880, the Department of Indian Affairs was established....¹¹

Sir John A. MacDonald was the first General Superintendent of this department. The department was maintained until December 1, 1936.

Like earlier administrative efforts, the newly organized Department

of Indian Affairs was not concerned with Indian health problems, nor did it provide for the availability of medical personnel for the various treaty Indian reservations. The Department of Indian Affairs, in 1903, began initial considerations of the health needs of the Canadian Indian people.¹² By 1934, the amount of money spent for health services on every Indian man, woman and child amounted to approximately \$9.60. In comparison, the amount spent on the White population was approximately \$31.00.¹³

In 1944, the present Department of National Health and Welfare came into being, with Dr. G. Brock Chisholm appointed as its first Deputy Minister. With the enactment of an Order-in-Council (P.C. 6495) on November 1, 1945, the responsibilities for Indian Health were officially transferred from the Department of Mines and Resources to the Department of National Health and Welfare. However, the Order-in-Council allowed for the transfer of health services only, and not matters pertaining to welfare, housing, land, education and environmental hygiene.¹⁴ These were still handled by the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources.

The administrators of Indian Affairs were referred to as Indian Agents. They visited the various reservations as representatives of the Federal Government and were the "designated Health Officers," "not the personnel of the Department of National Health and Welfare."¹⁵ Although this administrative split concerning the Indian people has caused some confusion to the public, this transfer "...was made to increase the efficiency of health services, as then organized under a minister whose prime responsibility was health...."¹⁶

The term 'Medical Services Branch' was coined with the creation of a new department under the mandate of the Indian and Northern Services

Department in 1962.¹⁷ The responsibilities of this department were:

1. Public Service Health;
2. Environmental Inspection Services was transferred from Public Health Engineering;
3. Civil Aviation Medicine;
4. Sick Mariners Service;
5. Quarantine Services; and
6. Immigration Medical Services.

Emergency Health Services, Indian Health Service and Northern Health Service were separated as to activities.¹⁸

In Manitoba and, indeed, Split Lake, the following activities form a significant portion of the Government Branch: Indian Health, Administration Services, Public Service Health, and Quarantine and Immigration Services.¹⁹

On each Indian reserve there are Field Units referred to as Nursing Stations, Clinics, Health Centres or Health Stations. They are under the direction of registered nurses, whose immediate supervisors are medical officers. Their responsibilities are the health and care of the Indians.²⁰

The Nursing Station serves as a home for the nursing personnel as well as the operation centre for nurses. Some of the public health programs carried out on the reserve have already been outlined. Their basic function is to handle the organizational and minor medical situations of the reserve.

Department of Indian Affairs

One facet of the Government's involvement has been presented, and now attention is turned to the other auspices from which the Government of Canada attempts to control and regulate the reserves under its jurisdiction.

Some historical detail is also provided of the Government's increasing influences on the community. One by one, the services formerly provided by others are becoming part of the national concern.

Until 1903, steps were not taken to secure the Split Lake Indians a treaty place among the already growing numbers of Indian Bands across Canada. J. Keewatin, Bishop, wrote to Mr. D. Laird, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, asking that "...some step be taken in the interests of the Indians...."²¹ Mr. Laird contacted the Chief Surveyor, S. Bray, to check into the matter.²²

According to Mr. S. Bray's findings, Split Lake was located within the territorial boundaries of Treaty #5.²³ The point of contention appears to have been the actual hunting territories of the Split Lake Indians. There was no doubt that Split Lake was within the territorial limits of Treaty #5 (see Map 4.1), but according to the Senior Indian Affairs Accountant in October 1905:

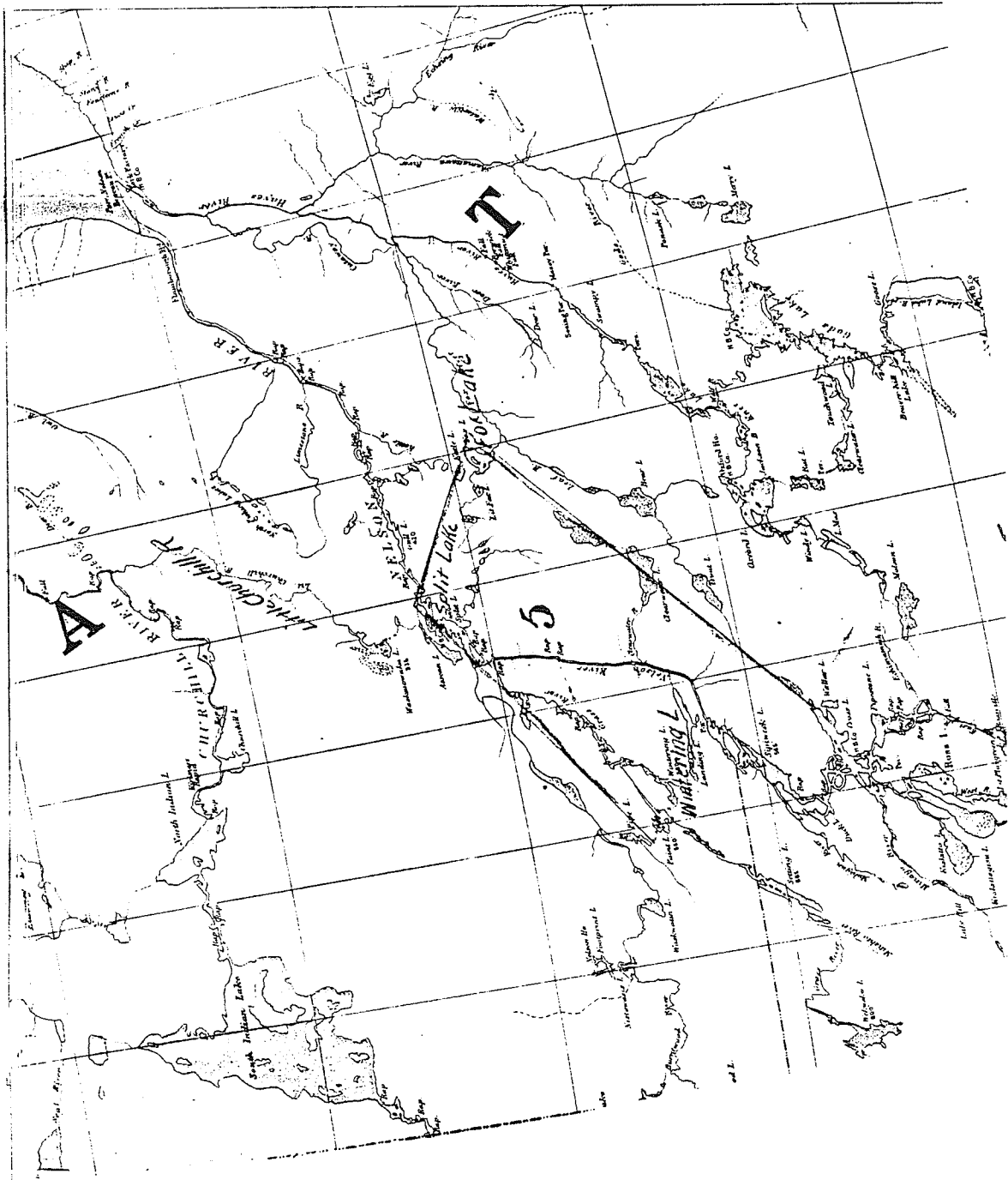
...If the hunting grounds of these Indians are within the limits of the Treaty they certainly should be taken into Treaty but this remains to be established....The memorandum deals with the subject as if the Indians were outside Treaty. We have no definite information on that point and everything hinges upon where their grounds are....²⁴

During the intervening months, Mr. D. Laird requested that Rev. Fox send information concerning the actual hunting grounds of the area's Indians. Fox replied March 7th, 1906, stating that:

...Roughly speaking their hunting grounds extend on the N. West to Waskewaga Lake then on to the junction of Little and Gt. C. Rivers, east to Limestone [and] Fox Rivers then in a line towards Wintering Lake....²⁵

By April 8th, 1907, Inspector John Summers had visited the community and had described the hunting territories of the Split Lake Indians (see Map 4.1)

MAP 4.1
SPLIT LAKE'S HUNTING TERRITORIES



...The population [of Split Lake] is about 250....Their hunting grounds may be described:

- (1) Draw a line from the point where the Little Churchill River junctions with the Larger Churchill south-westward to the Wintering Lake.
- (2) Draw a line from Wintering Lake northeastward to Fox Lake including all that Lake.
- (3) Draw a line from Fox Lake northward to the junction of the two Churchill Rivers the point of starting....²⁶

By October 17th, 1907, Inspector Summers had visited the Split Lake community. Summers reported that he had met with the important members of the community (Chief, Councillors, the Catechist and the Sergeant), and ascertained the approximate number of people residing in the community. He had also made an announcement concerning the Government's willingness to pay Treaty to the Indians by the following summer. According to Summers, this information was well received by the local people.²⁷

On June 26, 1908, the Split Lake Indians signed Treaty with the Government of Canada. Mr. John Summers was accompanied by Dr. Grant, Medical Officer at Norway House, R. J. Spence, a clerk, G. J. Wardner, and Henry McKay, Commissioner, at the signing of the Treaty in Split Lake.²⁸

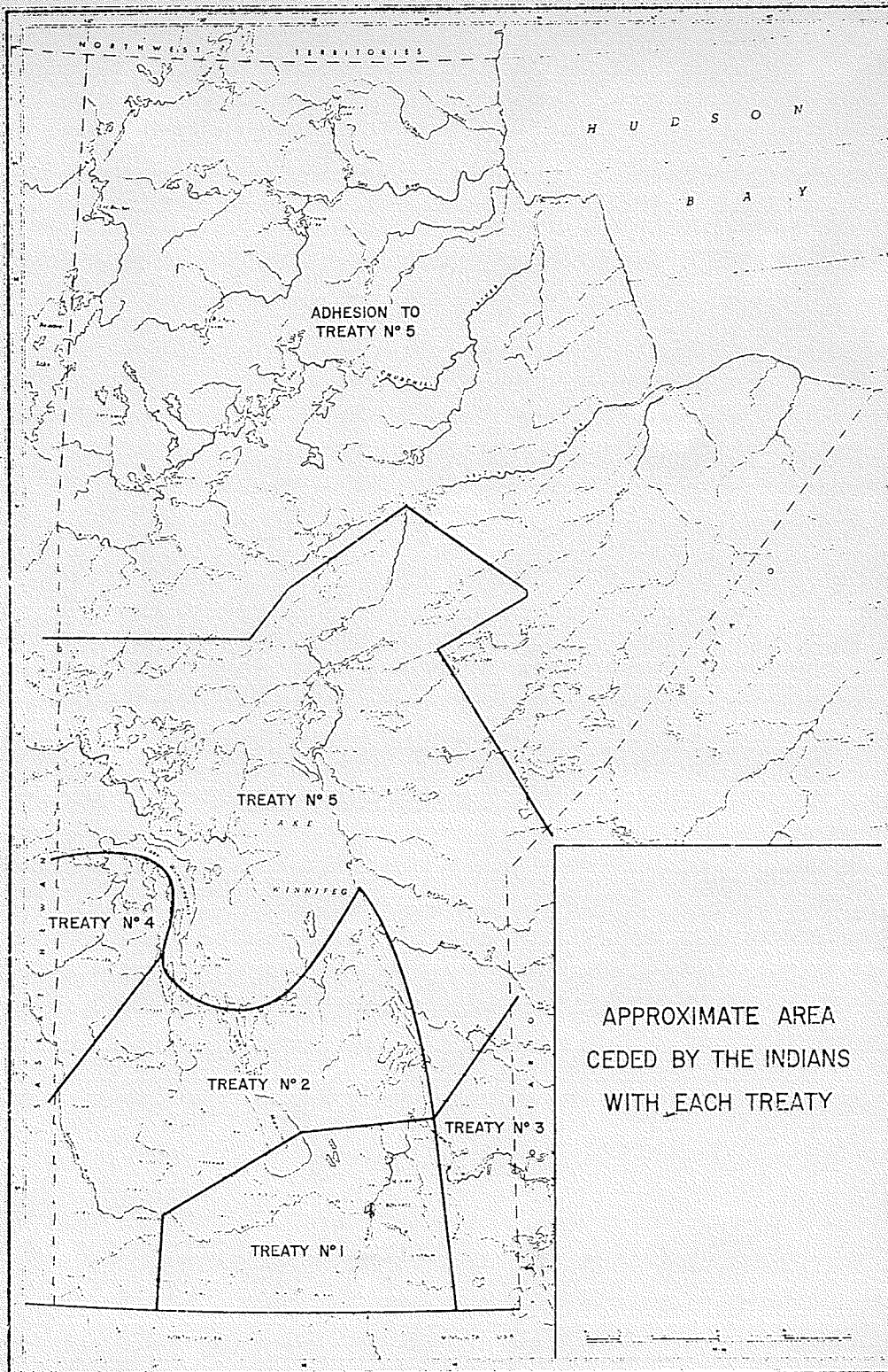
The Treaty that the Split Lake Indians signed with the Government of Canada stipulates that the said Indians:

...agreed that the said provisions shall not be retroactive, transfer, surrender and relinquish [to the Crown]...all our right, title and privileges [to the Land]...forever....²⁹

Altogether, the Indian Bands that signed Treaty #5, signed over "...approximately an area of one hundred and thirty-three thousand and four hundred (133,400) square miles...."³⁰ (see Map 4.2) to the Federal Government of Canada.³¹

In return for signing away their land, the Indians agreed to accept a five dollar annuity,³² due once a year for life, for every Indian man, woman, and child.

MAP 4.2



Source: Lagasse, H. Jean, A Study of the Population of Indian Ancestry Living in Manitoba, undertaken by the Social and Economic Research Office, Main Report, The Department of Agriculture and Immigration, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1959.

A significant clause of this treaty demonstrates the fact that:

...Half-breeds born in the territory covered by the proposed adhesion to Treaty #5 and resident therein on the date of the signing of the adhesion at Split Lake and whose rights to scrip have not been otherwise extinguished [are] to be entitled to scrip. A person who died the day before the date of the adhesion has no right. A child born the day after has no right....³³

Only the Indians who were alive on the day of Treaty signing are entitled to the annuity payment, and once there are no longer any of these original Indians, the annuity payments will cease.

The Government agreed to set aside a given portion of land for reservation purposes, and agreed to provide a grant for "...the purchase of ammunition and twine for nets...."³⁴

The reserve had finally been established, and all of the paper work taken care of in regards to making it official. Many institutions, governmental and private sector organizations had been involved in bringing Split Lake to this point in time. Attention shall now be turned to an analysis of the community as it appears today.



Footnotes

¹Ray, Arthur J., Indians of the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 35.

²Stayner, M., "Preference of CR to YF for Northern Trade," December 1797, B42/Z/1, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, p. 48-48B-49.

³Hudson's Bay Company, "Minutes of Council, 1832-1850, Minutes of a Temporary Council held at Red River Settlement Northern Department of Rupert's Land," B/239/K/2, Resolution 73rd, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, p. 42.

⁴Joseph Cohen to William Cook, June 1790-91, B239/B/51, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, p. 3-3B.

⁵Winnipeg, Public Archives, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, D/30/12.

⁶Waddy, July 20, 1920..

⁷See letter dated November 27, 1929.

⁸Dept. of Health and Welfare, "A Report of the History of the Department of Health and Welfare" (1973). Many entries are paraphrased from this source. No pagination available.

⁹Ibid. All quotations are from this source.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

- ²¹Keewatin, October 2, 1903.
- ²²Laird, October 5, 1903.
- ²³Bray, October 13, 1903.
- ²⁴Indian Affairs (RG 10, Vol. 4009, File 249, 462-1), Public Archives of Canada.
- ²⁵Indian Affairs (RG 10, Vol. 8745, File 378/8-10-8-171), Split Lake Indian Reserve No. 171, 1958-61, Part 1), Public Archives of Canada.
- ²⁶Fox, March 7, 1906.
- ²⁷Indian Affairs (RG 10, Vol. 4009, File 249, 462-1), Black Series, Indian Affairs Records, Public Archives of Canada.
- ²⁸Indian Affairs (RG 10, Vol. 4009, File 249, 462-1), Public Archives of Canada.
- ²⁹Indian Affairs, Adhesions to Treaty Number 5, Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, p. 3.
- ³⁰Indian Affairs, Adhesions to Treaty Number 5, June 26, 1908.
- ³¹Full Treaty and Relevant Adhesions to Treaty Number 5, cited in Appendix D.
- ³²Annuity defined in Appendix A, Definition of Terms.
- ³³Indian Affairs, Adhesions to Treaty Number 5, June 26, 1908.

CHAPTER V

PRESENT-DAY CONDITIONS AT SPLIT LAKE

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide the background for the educational difficulties to be raised later in this thesis. Comparison of the physical housing at Split Lake with reserve housing in northern Manitoba and on individual reserves shows that Split Lake is severely disadvantaged in this respect. Study of the Indian Act, the financial statements and the residents' opinions demonstrate the thinking of the Federal Government and the residents themselves as to their life-styles. Particular attention is given to the many ways in which education at Split Lake has suffered from being removed from the control of the individual family to that of a culturally foreign government. In essence, this chapter provides an explanation for many of the particular difficulties that face the Indians of Split Lake today.

Housing

Housing conditions at Split Lake are compared with Fisher River because both have approximately the same population and number of family units, and both were formed at about the same time.¹ Fisher River is, however, located a considerable distance south of Split Lake.² The reserve is also compared to the northern reserve designation for the Province of Manitoba.

Table 5.1 shows that housing and related services at Split Lake are considerably poorer than those at Fisher River and on northern Manitoba

TABLE 5.1
HOUSING COMPARISON STUDY*

	Split Lake	Fisher River	Northern Manitoba
General Conditions of Housing			
Good Condition	53	78	64
In Need of Repair	20	3	15
Requiring Replacement	31	23	15
No. of New Houses Needed to Meet Present Needs	36	11	--
Size of Houses (one and two room houses)			
	23	0.8	--
Houses with Electricity			
	8	34	--
Sewage Treatment			
Sewage Disposal Outlets	0	0	18
Septic Tank	0	2	--
Indoor Toilet (Chemical)	23	3	--
Indoor Bath	0	23	--
Houses with Running Water			
	0	18	47
Houses with Telephones			
	0	35	26

SOURCE: Federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Manitoba Region Housing Survey, 1974.

*All values are expressed as a percentage.

reserves generally. Split Lake has considerably poorer housing, and a greater lack of suitable accommodation. Coupled with an inadequate housing situation, Split Lake has significantly fewer houses with fewer rooms than does Fisher River. This fact has accounted for the poor, deplorable and crowded conditions that exist on this reserve. In terms of houses with electricity, running water and access to telephones, Split Lake again ranks far below Fisher River and Manitoba. These differences are primarily due to the greater isolation of Split Lake, which leads to higher construction and maintenance costs and to a lack of concern by government agencies.

The Indian Act

A brief discussion of the Indian Act is included here so that the following topic, that of reserve government, will be more readily understood.

To be a legal Indian in the eyes of the Government, an individual has to be a registered Indian or be entitled to be registered. This definition does not include many people who are Indians by descent.

Every registered Indian is entitled to a piece of land for his use on a designated reserve. Title to these properties is in the name of the Queen, but the land has been provided for the use of the Indians. It is, however, within the Government's authority to set aside specific tracts of land or reserves for certain purposes, such as for schools or health service buildings.

Land on reserves is not, however, guaranteed solely for Indian use. An Act of Parliament, a government agency, or a corporation so empowered by the Government may take the land away without the consent of the owner. In all cases of expropriation, an arbitrator is to be appointed to make final

decision on compensation for such land take-overs.

Even though the land tenure seems so nebulous, provisions have been made for testamentary distribution of such properties. Should the Indian so entitled die intestate, then the normal intestacy laws for estate distribution would apply, as they would for any resident of Canada.

The Government has made certain guarantees of obligation to the Indian. An effort shall be made to maintain and preserve wildlife on all reservations. The Indian Act also guarantees that health services shall be provided for all Indians on reservations. Responsibility also falls on the Government to ensure general health and sanitation conditions on all reserves. The Government also promises to provide all necessary assistance to Band Councils wishing to borrow funds for housing.

Local Government on the reserve comprises a Chief and Council who are elected to office for terms of two years. The Chief and Council are responsible for the administration of all Government funds which are supplied to the reserve. They shall also provide such duties as the Government may allow. On no condition is this Council allowed to make any law or by-law which is contrary to the provisions of the Indian Act.

Once a Band has achieved certain size, as determined by the Governor-in-Council, he may give the Band Council full authority to act as would a municipal council. If this is done, the Council has the authority to levy taxes, and authorize other projects to raise funds for the use of the reserve. This right may, however, be arbitrarily withdrawn at any time by the Governor-in-Council.

Indians do enjoy certain concessions, especially in the area of taxation. There are no property taxes to be paid on reservation lands, nor is

there any tax required to be paid on personal property on a reserve. Also, estate settlements in respect to such property are tax exempt. There is, as well, protection against creditors for no one but an Indian may mortgage or cause to be mortgaged any land on a reservation.

The Indian Act is very clear in its treatment of Indians and intoxicants. It is a punishable offence to consume liquor on a designated dry reserve. The law also applies to Indians who are off a dry reservation. No Indian may consume, hold, or produce any intoxicant. Penalties are severe: fines and/or imprisonment. This law appears to be superceded in some respects if the liquor is purchased in a tavern, in some provinces. Regardless, the Indian will still be held in breach of law if he is found by a member of a law enforcement agency in an intoxicated state. Severe penalties also apply to the purveyor of the liquor.

The regulations concerning enfranchisement are also quite specific. To be enfranchised, an Indian must be twenty-one years of age, be capable of assuming the duties and functions of enfranchisement, and be capable of supporting his family.

Once enfranchisement is achieved, the Indian ceases to be Indian under the laws of the Indian Act. At this point, he would achieve the full rights of a Canadian citizen. By making such a formal request, the Indian relinquishes all of his former rights and privileges. Enfranchisement, once implemented, is almost irreversible; however, a Band Council may reverse this situation. Indian women are automatically enfranchised by the Government should they marry any other than a treaty Indian. Entire Indian Bands may be enfranchised at the request of the Band Council after the Government makes a feasibility study of such a move.

The Governor-in-Council may, if he so desires, provide education for the reserve, either in the form of Federal schools or schools under the direction of religious orders. If this is done, the Governor-in-Council may also regulate standards for this education. He may also grant any funds that would normally be payable for maintenance of a child in a residential school to the reserve school for the maintenance of that child at said reserve school.

It is normally deemed compulsory for an Indian child to attend school from the ages of seven to eighteen. The student shall, however, only be compelled to attend beyond the age of sixteen if the Minister deems it necessary. Certain dispensations from attendance may be received if the child is required for household duties, cannot be placed in the designated school due to overcrowding, or is receiving acceptable education elsewhere.

Band Expenditures

Thus the rights of an Indian are stated, and his obligations outlined. To see that these obligations are fulfilled and to oversee the day by day general management of the community are the main functions of the Split Lake Band Council. These duties include such tasks as formulating routine programs and activities for the Band, implementing budget works, and dispensing wages to Indians employed by the Government. Meetings between the Chief and Council are called regularly to discuss present and future community events. The Council is in charge of preparations for such events as Feast Day, Treaty Day celebrations, and sports days. They also discuss and plan for the yearly community cleanup. As the Council is responsible for general law enforcement on the reserve, they must also deal with disputes involving liquor, curfew violations and other such matters.

Council meetings are also held to make arrangements for weddings and funerals.

General work contracts for road repairs, house building, sanitation services and garbage disposal originate at the Band level. The allocation and distribution of community grants and welfare monies are also within the framework of the Band's responsibilities.

The Chief and Council are official spokesmen for the wishes and desires of the reserve. In all matters of education, politics and economics, the Council provides representation for these people.

An analysis of various expenditures made by the Council, and comparisons of the funds received is now discussed. Approximately seventy-six percent of all the monies received by Split Lake Council are for the social services, a large portion of which are for welfare payments, compared with just over fifty percent for Manitoba and Canada as a whole (see Table 5.2). In contrast, education funding accounts for only five percent of the total budget at Split Lake.

This high level of social service funding forcibly illustrates that Split Lake is not self-sufficient economically. Indeed, only fifteen percent of the adult Indian population is gainfully employed. The money made by this gainful employment would support only a subsistence level existence at best, and therefore, high levels of welfare support are required. Economic activities participated in by the Indians include trapping, fishing, and local service jobs provided by the MTS, HBC, the church, the nursing station (janitorial) and the Band Council. Only some 3.5 percent of the working age population is, however, employed in these ways. The commerce of Split Lake has been described as follows:

TABLE 5.2
BUDGET ALLOCATIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Category	Year	Budget Allocations for Split Lake		% Distribution of Budget Allocations for:	
		\$	% of Total	Manitoba	Canada
Social Services	1976-77	\$467,769	75.18%	55.24%	52.72%
	1977-78	552,310	77.61	55.24	52.74
Band Management	1976-77	49,499	7.95	10.37	10.10
	1977-78	36,350	5.10	10.37	10.10
Local Government	1976-77	33,875	5.44	*	*
	1977-78	45,231	6.35	*	*
Education	1976-77	29,217	4.69	*	*
	1977-78	35,848	5.03	*	*
Core Funding	1976-77	41,850	6.72	*	*
	1977-78	41,850	5.88	*	*
Total		\$1,333,799	100%		

SOURCE: Financial and Management Advisory Services, Department of Indian Affairs.

*No data available.

...based on the local service sectors, trapping, and commercial fishing. The nearest operating mine is in the Thompson area... However, few, if any, Split Lake residents have migrated to Thompson. Forest resources are available...however, transportation costs are likely to be excessive.

Commercial fishing is based on whitefish production...Fish production can only be considered a marginal source of income. Commercial trapping...based on the beaver, lynx, mink, and the otter, is also a marginal source of income.³

The future does not look much brighter for the residents of the community. Predictably, as is the case in similar communities, this small potential employment sector results in:

...high levels of unemployment, underdevelopment and welfare... [therefore, these conditions] are likely to continue...Unless nearby resource developments occur, migration seems to be the only alternative for residents seeking viable employment. Lack of skills, language differences, local ties, and Reserve benefits are likely to stall migration.⁴

The School

Attempts have been made to increase the skills of the natives, particularly through the school system. Education in the community is governed and operated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Split Lake has two school structures, the primary and the main school buildings. These buildings together house approximately three hundred and sixty-five students who are educated from kindergarten through grade nine. Those students wishing education beyond the ninth grade are sent to a number of schools outside the community. Most are sent to the residential school in Dauphin, but they may also continue their education in The Pas, Thompson, or Winnipeg.

According to recent figures available from Statistics Canada, there are four hundred and ten Indian university students in Manitoba.⁵ Split Lake has fifteen of these students. They are all teachers-in-training and are

presently involved in the B.U.N.T.E.P. and P.E.N.T. programs both on and off the reserve. These fifteen students represent approximately three point seven percent of all the Manitoban Indian students currently attending a university, which is a far higher proportion than might be expected from a community comprising only two percent of the total Indian population of the Province.

The success of Split Lake students has not, however, extended to the field of university scholarships. Indeed, there have been only two scholarships awarded to university students of Indian extraction in Manitoba during the past nineteen years, and neither has been obtained by a student from Split Lake.⁶ It is interesting to note that all other provinces scored much higher in this area than Manitoba.

Changes in Child Rearing Practices due to Education

The advent of the governmental schools on the reservations has been a catalyst for drastic social change on the reserves. One of the most significant changes has been the lessening of parental control over young members of the community. Parents no longer assume complete obedience from the youth, as traditionally was expected, so that young members of the tribe have become much more independent than their historical counterparts. This decline in parental authority, together with the fact that many young adults are better educated and more influenced by White culture than their parents, have produced wide gaps between old and young on the reserve and amongst the Cree generally.⁷ This is especially true of those Cree who have left the reserve to attend residential schools in the south.

The missionaries have also brought about vast alterations to the traditional mode of life. With the coming of the Wesleyan missionaries to

the Swampy Cree territories in 1840, the traditional polygamous ways of the Swampy Cree began to undergo a gradual decline. The introduction of Christianity meant that a man with more than one wife must consummate marriage with only one. This decree rendered former wives without any means of support. Traditionally, the wife deserted would be held in disgrace by the tribe, and the change from polygamy to monogamy was a very difficult decision for all concerned. Today, however, polygamous relations are extremely rare, for such unions are subject to scorn by mission Indians.

In early Cree society, promiscuity was also an accepted practice. There would be no scorn on the young people as long as there were no children born out of wedlock. Even if children were conceived in this manner, and this occurred very infrequently, they were soon readily accepted into the family. Once married, there appears to have been no problem for an Indian woman who was not faithful to her husband. In fact, the Cree Indian women considered it an honour to be selected for a wife loan.⁸ On the contrary, the man and woman who did not involve themselves in such a practice were held in disgrace by the rest of the tribe. The good hunter could afford to support three wives, and thus polygamous relationships developed. Normally, in such a situation, the first wife would assume the dominant position, although it would often be one of the younger wives who would be chosen to accompany the hunter when he was travelling.

In recent years, the frequency of unmarried girls becoming pregnant has increased on the Split Lake reserve. Although medicine men traditionally performed abortions for the unmarried women, the practice almost disappeared in the twentieth century because the father received an annual treaty gift for all of his children. The unwed mother syndrome is especially high in

girls between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. The elders of Split Lake have blamed this phenomenon on the freedom of the youth to roam around the reserve at night, and they have placed a curfew on the reserve in the hope of curtailing premarital sexual relations.

The White Man's outside forces of church and state have also been responsible for alterations in the traditional arrangements of marriage. The missionaries, especially, encouraged parents to let their children choose their own spouses. Now young adults are basically free to choose their own mates without parental persuasion or interference. The Band Council, however, will recommend to parents that certain of the youths should get married or stop seeing each other if the Council feels that the courtship is continuing too long. Parental consent for marriage is still sought after today.

The traditional marital arrangements are worthy of note at this point. They would usually occur after the puberty ceremonies (which shall be dealt with later) had been completed. By custom, the female had little choice in this matter. The male would make his choice, and inform the parents of the girl that he wished to marry. The young man had to prove that he was an excellent hunter so that he could provide for his new bride and her parents. This support of the parents continued until the end of the first year or the birth of the first child. The birth of a daughter was therefore a welcomed event because it provided security for the parents' old age.

Many of the ceremonies which we normally associate with birth were not practised by the Swampy Cree. For example, they did not give a name to a newborn child because of a high infant mortality rate. The Indians felt that it would be wise not to name the child, thereby not acknowledging its existence and identity, for fear of its not surviving. Child rearing and

supervision were traditionally the responsibility of the mother. As a son became older, he was allowed to venture out with his father to learn the hunting skills necessary for survival. He was thus taught to provide for his eventual family.

The most important events now amongst Swampy Cree are marriage, raising children, and supporting a family. The birth of a child usually takes place in a cabin with the aid of a mid-wife and her assistant. Although infant mortality, miscarriage, and stillbirth are relatively high, they could easily be reduced with further medical aid at the reserve level.

The Swampy Cree Indians once viewed adolescence with great superstition. This period of life meant considerable ceremony and personal constraint for the young people entering puberty. For a young man, this period meant the beginning of his role as hunter and provider. To the young girl, this phase in life meant sexual maturity, marriage, and her own family. The Cree, however, no longer attach importance to the rites of entering puberty, and thus another loosening has taken place in the once strong link between the young and their once respected leaders.

The beginning of menstruation meant personal confinement and isolation from the rest of the Band for a period of a few days to a month, depending on the Band. Normally, the girl would only be served water with a wooden bowl, or a woman could be assigned to bring food to her. Similarly, once a young Cree boy had attained the age of thirteen or fourteen, he began his period of fasting. During this fast, he waited to be visited in dreams by an animal spirit which would be his guardian.⁹ Much celebration and festivities were associated with this event. The father was in charge of arranging a large gathering to welcome his son into manhood.

An obvious conclusion from having observed the day to day lifestyles of the Swampy Cree is that they have experienced considerable change in their culture since initial contact with the Europeans.

Recollections and Opinions

There has been only one element of permanence, the Swampy Cree Indians themselves. It is important to include some of their thoughts on their past, present and their future.

James Garson, aged sixty-six and born and raised in the community, recalls that: "...the winters were very cold...fish...caribou and other animals were used for food...."¹⁰ Sammy Kitchekeesik remembers when the church and the Hudson's Bay Store (the first permanent structures of the community) were made entirely of logs and heated mainly by wood stoves. But

...as for the people who were living here,...They had wigwams or tents...made of wood covered in mud and moss. These wigwams were similar to a teepee or a lean-to...[with] mud all along the outside and there was a hole right on top so that the smoke from the inside could escape, and they had evergreen boughs...on the floor, that's where they slept,... [and] ate and right in the centre of this wigwam was a fire....

The structures that Sammy is describing were quite effective for the summer months, but during Manitoba's harsh winter, another sort of accommodation had to be devised. For this reason "...they used log cabins covered with mud to insulate against the cold winter winds...." Finally, the Indians attempted the same sort of construction techniques that they observed the Europeans using. They cut the lumber in a sawmill, and used the wood for walls and flooring. Eventually these were replaced by prefabricated units which were built for them.

Housing is not the only area where there have been great changes.

Sammy notes that there are not as many trappers on the reserve as there once were. He explains that the people's livelihood has been altered considerably since the coming of the White Man:

...Today, people here are bunched up...in the community. A long time ago, families used to go out [trapping] every year. These people used to go 200 miles north...south, [and] east, to trap... But ever since the White Man came here...The [Split Lake] people have changed. Their livelihood has changed...we have taken much for granted...Today, we have all kinds of food and clothing right in the store. Life is easier today than it was in the past....

Peter Beardy's sentiments are similar. The White Man has brought his technology, and thus improved many situations for the citizens of Split Lake.

...The White Man brought materials for us to make nets...guns and fishing rods to make it easier for fishing. [But most important of all] the White Man has brought in the Skidoo for Split Lakers so we no longer use the dog sled to travel back and forth from the trapline....

Times have changed, he echoes:

Nowadays, we do not hunt as much. All we need to do is to go to the Hudson's Bay Store for our food. Today, we...do odd jobs around the community, jobs that we have been trained to do by working in the school...[However] in the old days, to be a good hunter meant that you could provide food for your family. A good hunter had lots of prestige. Nowadays, it's not that important.

There were, however, other drawbacks to the new way of life with which they were provided. As the importance of hunting and trapping declined, reliance on the Government increased, and today the young people of the community accept welfare and other forms of support as the norm.

Helen Spence complains:

...these teenagers are just sitting around doing nothing, just watching T.V., getting support from the government and not working for a living like we used to do.

It is interesting to note that an elder is making this comment about the

young people. From examination of the welfare rosters, it would appear that more than the teenagers enjoy watching television.

The majority of the interviewees had favourable opinions about the school. Many felt that the school had helped to aggregate the people. The community has been much more stable since the school, for now the families do not wander to trap for furs. John Harvey explains:

...The school helped to hold the community together. The parents were compelled to bring their kids to school, and thus, once their kids were in school, had to remain in the community to live. They could not wander from area to area or region to region as their ancestors had done.

One possible explanation for the positive view of the school could be that many of the older persons had little opportunity to attend school, mainly because of family duties on the trapline. They feel that their children are "...learning more today than they did in the old days..." Peter Beardy continues that he "...sees a big improvement in the young people's learning..." today in comparison to the type of education that he received as a child. Helen Spence recalls when she was a child. Her experience is similar to that of many of the community.

...I strongly feel that our kids who are going to school at the present time will eventually lose their traditional cultural way-of-life and they will also lose the Cree language, the language of their parents....

This is a land steeped in tradition. The residents have seen many of their beliefs and customs fall by the wayside, and thus are understandably concerned. For example, before the Hudson's Bay Company first located its store in Split Lake, the natives depended quite heavily on the land. John Harvey recalls his ancestors' reliance on nature. "...For clothing, they used hides of animals, like the beaver, muskrat or rabbit. Sammy recollects that he "...had to hunt, trap and fish for...his...food and

clothing, but nowadays, we have a store and we don't have to rely on hunting and fishing to live...."

An interesting anecdote was told by John. The Hudson's Bay Store frequently ran out of food and the selection was always guaranteed to be poor. It seems that the supplies were brought into Split Lake via Norway House.

...In the summer they used the York boat to get supplies and in the winter they used dog teams. Even when they used a lot of dogs, there was always a shortage of food. There wasn't anything in the stores like we use today, like butter and lard. All they had here for lard was TARO... [and] pork [and] baking soda... [and] flour... [when] available....

The Hudson's Bay Store is not considered a tremendous asset by all members of the community. According to Peter Beardy,

...when the local people bring furs to the Hudson's Bay Company to sell them, all the Bay is doing is taking money away from the people. What is happening is that they are putting pressure on the people, the Indian people.

His argument is that the money does not remain in the community to improve conditions. It does not have the chance to better the people of Split Lake. Also, Sammy Kitchekeesik notes:

...that the prices of items have gone up too high. The prices for products found in the Hudson's Bay store are going up....

Prices are high and few job opportunities exist on the reserve. The majority of the work force families are on welfare. The dear price of articles and food stuffs at the Bay is one of the many difficult problems that the Split Lake people must bear.

There have been other areas of improvement in the Split Lake situation. John Harvey recalls that the Indians used to have medicine men who would treat the sick. The medicine men disappeared with the coming of the White Man's medicine. They "...knew how to make medicine from

herbs and wild roots....They got their medicine from nature...." However, with the establishment of a nursing station in Split Lake, "...people have stopped using their Indian medicine...." Peter Beardy feels that:

...Since the nursing station opened...it has certainly improved a few things here. In the old times when somebody wanted medicine, the people had to go to the priest, but now...if a person gets sick,...[they] simply go down to the nursing station to get cured....

Thus, the priest became less and less involved in the medical and other matters. He was allowed to become more involved in religious matters.

If the people interviewed are a true representative group of Split Lake opinion, then the nursing station is very popular. The nursing station would appear to be performing its functions, for according to John Harvey:

...a great deal has been done to lessen the amount and kinds of sicknesses that the people of Split Lake have...dentists and doctors...now come in to treat and help the local people, to lessen the hardships...in this isolated community. We are very happy to have the nursing station here....

Another social institution which appears to meet with the approval of the community is the Anglican Church. The settlement is extremely devout. According to James Garson, even before an actual church building was constructed in the community, "...church was held in people's homes..." As time progressed, however, the community built a church structure. John Harvey comments:

...[S]ince the Anglican Church has been located in Split Lake, the people appear to be more religious. Every Sunday they would go to church...now we have a new church and everyone goes to church every Sunday....

It is interesting to note that even with the new building, the methods of heating the church have undergone little change. Except for the introduction of a few electrical heaters, the former heating system remains. Helen

Spence points out that:

Even today, they use wood for heating. But some electricity is used for heating in the church....[Traditionally] kerosene lamps were hung from the ceiling for light...men used to have to cut wood to heat the church....

Helen makes other interesting observations. While the church and the nursing station may be totally accepted by the Indian, not all of the White Man's ways are as acceptable. She points out some of the difficulties faced by the Indian in his attempt to live side by side with the White Man.

...They [the White Man] set laws....They make promises to the Indian people and don't abide by them. They come and bother us. The chief and council have the authority but they can't hold the White Man back....They have spoiled our livelihood. The people here tend to listen to them and abide by their terms.

Helen Spence and the others have strongly felt the impact of the White Man's influence in Split Lake over the past decades. These people desire to be more autonomous and self-governing. They do appreciate the White Man's aids, and realize how difficult life would be without them. Helen was asked what changes she felt would take place in Split Lake over the next fifteen years. Her comments follow:

...I am sure that there will be a lot of changes....Maybe there will be new stores and new types of foods. Maybe it'll be harder for the people here....Maybe the welfare will stop....It will be very hard for our people. Then what are we to do?

She is obviously concerned for the future generations of Split Lake people. She has questions for which there are no immediate answers. The future of the Indians in Split Lake is open to question. This is due, at least in part, to their lack of control over their own destiny.

Footnotes

¹The following figures show the comparability of the two reserves with respect to population:

	<u>Fisher River</u>	<u>Split Lake</u>
Band Membership	1,182	1,037
On Reserve Population	730	712
Family Units	116	120

²Fisher River is located 335 miles south of Split Lake.

³Underwood, McLelland and Associates, Community Study for Split Lake Indian Reserve, as cited in Department of Northern Affairs, Province of Manitoba, Community Profile, Volume T-10: Split Lake, Manitoba, ROB 1PO, p. D-1.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Employment and Related Services Division, Education Branch, Indian and Eskimo Affairs Program, February, 1977.

⁶Program Statistic Division, Indian and Eskimo Affairs Program, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, November 1976.

⁷Mason, L., The Swampy Cree: A Study in Acculturation (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller, 1967), p. 53.

⁸Ibid., p. 49.

⁹Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰All quotations are from interviews previously conducted on the Split Lake Reserve between 1975 and 1977. Full transcriptions of these interviews are to be found in Appendix F.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS OF THE SPLIT LAKE TEACHERS

Most Manitoba education graduates are trained in Winnipeg or Brandon. It is readily apparent that they have intentions of obtaining employment in the south. Their goal is the large urban areas, but some will concede to the southern rural centres.

Increasingly, however, such positions are not found to be readily available. Faced with this circumstance, many, unfortunately, leave the teaching profession. Others, generally against their will, accept positions in northern Manitoba. They tend to find themselves confronted with situations for which they are totally unprepared.

It is the purpose of this chapter to illuminate a few of the difficulties experienced by such teachers. Their experience is obviously valuable to any study of education in the north. Therefore, lengthy interviews were conducted with several southern-trained teachers at Split Lake School. It was the intention of these interviews to establish some general points concerning the practical problems experienced by the teachers of a northern remote community.

Some of the topics raised by the teachers were anticipated. Others showed insight that can only be gained by experience. Their concerns involved language and curriculum employed in the school. They also appeared frustrated due to problems of isolation, staff turnover, and the lack of community involvement. All were in agreement that the major problem of Split Lake's

educational system was that of student dropout.

The three teachers interviewed wished to remain anonymous, so the following pseudonyms will be used:

Interviewee No. 1 shall be called Rita.

Interviewee No. 2 shall be called Paul.

Interviewee No. 3 shall be called Kate.

Language

One source of astonishment for the new teachers is the language problem. At least in the case of the Split Lake Swampy Cree, the children are not exposed to the English language until the primary school level.

Kate, a primary teacher, explains:

...Most of the kids coming into grade one had very little English language skills. They were very good in Cree, so it was very hard for me to communicate with them initially....

Paul comments on this problem which haunts the students throughout their education:

...The fact that the children's first language was other than English was probably the biggest problem...the way I understood it, was that the teacher might ask the student a question in English, of course. The children would turn the question from English into Cree, consider it, answer it in Cree, and then transfer it back into English, and then give the oral answer. That was something that took me awhile to understand....

He is referring to secondary level students, but the problem is more acute at the primary school levels. Most of the school-age children spoke predominantly Cree at home and with their school-aged friends. Dealing with these children in the classroom was a particular problem.

Curriculum

Another problem cited by the interviewees dealt with the lack of

relevant curriculum. Concerning Primary to Junior High grade levels, Rita states that:

...the textbooks which we used were far too difficult for them and are designed primarily for kids in the southern schools....The things that you talk about in the textbooks they haven't come across, they haven't seen....Most of the children couldn't understand the things that I was talking about....When talking about buildings in Winnipeg, and escalators, they didn't know what escalators were. So it was rather difficult for me to explain to them....

Paul also had definite ideas about texts and curriculum:

...Practically all [these] textbooks...are designed for white, middle class children....Often the texts recommended for a grade were beyond their reading age....The textbooks unfortunately...were too difficult for kids to read and understand....

Isolation

Split Lake is an extremely isolated community. As a direct result, there is a prohibitive cost attached to the importation of instructional and visual aids. Thus, treatment of subject material in the classroom is limited to the ingenuity of the teacher involved. In recent years, significant efforts have been made on behalf of the Split Lake School in this area. However, the general effect of these efforts has been to create new problems. Kate states:

...The aids...are available, the 16 mm projector, the slide projector, these are very important for the school, and Split Lake School does have this type of equipment available, however, things that are not available are the cassettes or the films or the slides to put inside these types of equipment, so what's the point of having all this equipment if you've got nothing to put inside it to use it as an effective classroom aid?...

Kate goes on to explain the particular problem with acquiring films for use in the school:

...During the course of the year, we had ordered...many, many films that were to be used in the classroom, however, because of our isolated community these films, most of them did not come and most when they did come were often received late....

Staff Turnover

Another problem facing teachers at Split Lake is that of trying to understand and deal effectively with people of another culture. The teachers found themselves trying to "...throw off middle class values..." and yet attempting at the same time to prepare the children for life in a society dominated by such values. Paul expands:

...I had problems in the beginning, and I suppose all along at times... trying to understand some of the things that the kids would do. Some of the things that the kids would do seemed unusual. They irritated me. But I think as time went by, I learned a little more. I came to understand why they did some of them. They are cultural[ly] tied up in child rearing practices, and when they come to school, they meet for the first time the middle class values of the unknown teacher....

In a northern community as isolated as Split Lake, staff turnover has become a serious and recurring educational problem. As outlined by Paul:

...It does make a lot of difference....Every year school policy seems to change. There's no continuity from year to year. The program is new, it seems, every year and nothing seems to get done....

Although Split Lake has less of a staff turnover than most Indian reserves in Manitoba (over 70% of the staff returned for the 1976-77 school year), it does nonetheless interrupt the smooth flow of the education program.

Paul points out that staff turnovers often involve a change in the school administration:

...In the four years that I was there, we had five principals, and I know the year before I was there, there was a new principal, so you can safely say that in five years, there have been approximately six different principals. Now if you look upon the principal as the guiding hand, the educational leader of the school, then you can see that there has been no continuity at all. There has been little innovation provided by principals....

Paul observes that principals were often assigned for a year probation period and that during this trial period they were required to devote much of their time to duties outside the field of education. Thus, principals

at Split Lake are required to be both postmaster and maintenance supervisor of the school. As they are not trained in these areas, these responsibilities often took far too much time away from the more important educational matters. Paul also points out that at the start of a new school year, a new staff must begin to establish a working rapport. The new staff is bound to encounter communication problems among themselves, with the administration in Thompson, with the Chief and Council and, not least, with the new principal who is, unfortunately, often unable to devote enough time to his staff.

As outlined, a persistent problem is staff turnover. The Department of Indian Affairs has usually managed to acquire someone for a vacant teaching position in the community, but they appear to have paid little attention to the academic background, previous isolation experience, or cross-cultural teaching background of the persons hired. Paul states:

...that many teachers who have been there [Split Lake] don't really want to be there and don't have very much understanding of cultural differences....

Acquiring qualified professional teachers for teaching positions in Split Lake has proven to be a problem in northern Indian education. The reasons for a qualified teacher's reluctance to go north are many. Paul postulates:

...a lot of city teachers have or hold Indian people in very low esteem and wouldn't want to spend a full year of their time in a situation where they live face to face with Indian people. Also, of course, reserves are very isolated, very small where nothing is happening like in the city....

Lack of Community Involvement

Paul also feels that an essential element in the education of Indians is the involvement of the Band and parents in the day to day

running of the classroom. Without their involvement, commitment and participation in the school's affairs, the objectives of the school program are impossible to attain. This full and welcomed participation has not been reached in the school at Split Lake. Paul states that:

...the natives don't see the school as being theirs although we outsiders or white people say 'Yes, it's your school, sure it's your school' but I still don't think that they see it as their school. [It] is the White Man's school, and perhaps part of that feeling is over [sic] our fault because we don't think of ways to get the parents into the school more often....

As Paul points out, the parents visit the school only to pick up reports or to attend the Christmas Concert. He states that the parents

...can't encourage their children...to get the high grades...to get a good job. If you tried saying something like that to Indian children, it just doesn't work, and parents will say, well I had a bit of education myself but it hasn't improved my living situation, and [so] how is it going to improve that of my children?...

The problem does not lie so much with parental involvement in their child's education as in the people's not being involved in making decisions concerning their local school. Paul draws attention to this problem when he states "...still not enough decisions made concerning education in Split Lake are made by Split Lakers...." This particular problem has undergone considerable discussion in recent years. The Department of Indian Affairs is concerned and concrete actions are now in progress to rectify the problem. The problem is quite diverse, however, and solutions will take time to implement.

Student Dropout

Student dropout is probably the most important and the longest standing concern. Fortunately, improvement has been achieved in this area, but there is still a major discrepancy between the dropout rate on the reserves

and in urban centres. Most children do attend Split Lake School from grades one to nine. Those who continue beyond grade nine must, however, leave the reserve to continue their education in such cities as Thompson, Dauphin, Winnipeg, and Brandon. Most of them soon become dropouts. Paul comments:

...Dropping out is another problem which we have in Split Lake School, but to a much greater extent once the kids leave and go to Dauphin in their grade 10 years. There are not too many of them that manage to see out the year, but when one considers the huge changes that take place once the...student gets to a place like Dauphin, maybe it's not so hard to understand why they do want to come back home to people and things that are more familiar to them....

The problem of attendance is one for which there has been less improvement. Once mid-winter, early spring arrives, a fair number of the students leave with their parents for the trapline, and their formal education suffers.

In summary, the main educational problems in Split Lake, as seen by the teachers themselves, are (a) language and cultural differences between the teachers and students, (b) teaching staff who are poorly qualified and reluctant to adjust to conditions in northern Indian communities, (c) a high rate of teacher and administrative turnover resulting in little continuity from year to year, (d) lack of parental involvement and confidence in the school system, and (e) a high dropout rate after grade nine, which is caused in part by the fact that students going beyond this level must leave Split Lake.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNS FACING THE COMMUNITY

Many problems face the community of Split Lake, and most of them affect education either directly or indirectly. These problems and their implications for education, where these can be discerned, are the topic of this chapter. The isolation of the community is considered first. Attention is then focused on the economy. The need for an all-weather road to nearby larger centres is then examined. Problems associated with teaching and administration of the school are extremely varied, and therefore are discussed separately for teachers, principals, and the Band Council. The relationship between students and their parents is examined in the final section.

Isolation

The Split Lake reserve is an isolated community, and this isolation is compounded by the terrain and climate of the surrounding area. It would appear that the most logical means of combating these physical limitations would be air service, but scheduled air travel does not exist for the community of Split Lake.

The community airstrip is totally unsatisfactory, and subject to unpredictable climatic conditions. When air service is impossible, the community is almost totally cut off from the outside world. On occasion, this condition has prevailed for as long as three weeks. When this happens, no reliable source of medical support services are available. In cases of emergency, the nurses can only make patients comfortable. All supplies of