

METHODIST INDIAN DAY SCHOOLS AND INDIAN  
COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN MANITOBA, 1890 - 1925

by

Susan Elaine Dueck

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
The Faculty of Graduate Studies

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## ABBREVIATIONS

DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives
PAM	Provincial Archives of Manitoba

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Chapter I  
INTRODUCTION

The relationship that existed between Indian communities and Methodist Indian day schools in Northern Manitoba from 1890 to 1925 constitutes an important area in the study of Euro-Canadian attempts to educate Indians. During these decades, Methodist day schools in Indian communities played important roles in efforts at cultural assimilation.

To understand such educational procedures and developments, it is not sufficient to look only at factual aspects such as achievement and attendance records, curriculum, administration and teacher training. It is also essential to study the Indian community in which a particular school was situated, the effects of Euro-Canadian educational attempts on community families and institutions and the consequent relationship between two confronting cultures: Cree/Ojibwa and Euro-Canadian. This provides a context in which events and attitudes can be placed and deepens our understanding of Indian issues--past and present. Day schools provide the most poignant setting for the observation of interactions between Indian and white society since children daily divided their time between their parents' homes and the day schools which attempted to immerse their students in Euro-Canadian culture.

Using the Department of Indian Affairs school records, the Black Series, Canada Sessional Papers, and the Hudson's Bay Company Records, Methodist Indian day schools in Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House will be explored as case studies. These communities and their day schools are representative of northern Indian communities. All are situated in the boreal forest with its attendant ecologically adaptive culture. All experienced the decline of the fur trade and a continual intrusive Euro-Canadian presence.

Daily life and the seasonal round in the schools will be studied. Situations and attitudes of students, parents, teachers, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Methodist missionaries and the Indian community as a whole will be evaluated. The extent to which the school, its goals, and its values were accepted or rejected by the Indian community and the extent to which changes were wrought by Euro-Canadian culture on Indian communities as a result of education will be determined. During the 1880s, Indian assimilation became a key factor in the Canadian government's Indian policy. This study of day school/community relations will analyze the role of education in this policy and the effects it had on Northern Algonquian culture in Manitoba.

The largely reconstructive nature of the research demands careful attention to methodology. The primary sources used are not to be taken at face value and glibly recorded. In-

stead, critical questioning of each document will have to occur. Questions about who wrote the document, for what purposes and to whom, deserve careful attention.

As well, some inference from ethnohistorical and ethnographic data will be required. Much has been left unsaid in the school records although such gaps are often useful since omissions sometimes reveal more about a specific writer or situation than what has been said, and much material carries a basic assumption that the reader will be aware of the issue being addressed. As well, material contributed by the Indians themselves is sparse, and this creates a greater need for inference if one is to evaluate their attitudes.

For example, an examination of the lists of materials ordered for the school by the teacher will make it possible to discern some attitudes held by Methodists regarding leisure time, sports and organized activity. While inference and reconstruction can produce fine history, the shortcomings of such endeavours will have to be kept in mind.

Two major areas constitute the core of this thesis. The first is: what Indian education policies were devised by the government and the Methodists? Chapter II outlines the general educational principles that existed in Canada from 1890 to 1925 in order to discern the kind of standards and philosophies that were transplanted to the Northern Manitoba setting. This base having been established, the study turns

to the role of education in the government's "civilizing mission" to the Indians and the administration of Indian day schools. An examination of the dual control system of Indian education which existed between the Dominion government and the Methodist Missionary Society shows the drawbacks of such a union by comparing government attitudes toward Indians and philosophies for "improving" their "red brethren" with those values and goals of the Methodists in their educational work. The driving forces behind Methodist mission work and the way in which Methodists regarded the Indians present some important contrasts to governmental aims and attitudes. Church and government each had their own idea of what was supposed to be going on in Indian day schools in Northern Manitoba from 1890 to 1925.

The second area of this thesis is: what really happened in the day schools? The community contexts of these schools must be understood as fully as possible. Chapter III presents a short history of the culture, seasonal movements, religion, policies and leadership of Cree/Ojibwa Indians in Northern Manitoba to 1890. In Chapter IV, case studies of the four day schools in Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House from 1890 to 1925 serve to illustrate the effects of Methodist Indian day schools on community life and consequent changes. The role of local native response in generating any divergences between alleged ideals and actual educational practices will also be examined. Fi-

nally, the four schools and communities will be compared and contrasted and important trends will be evaluated.

This research can be directly related to three larger fields: the history and historiography of Indian day schools, of Indian education and of Methodist missionaries.

In the field of Indian day schools, existing material is scant. The Canada Sessional Papers and two unpublished papers by Susan E. Dueck help to provide a context. The latter are the only secondary sources dealing with northern Manitoba Indian day schools.<sup>1</sup> An M. A. thesis by H. J. Vallery,<sup>2</sup> written in 1942, addresses the day school issue in Canadian Indian education; however, this material is largely narrative and its interpretations are dated. A case study of Methodist Indian day schools has not previously been undertaken. Perhaps attention to these schools as well as to the resulting cultural interactions will contribute to greater understanding of modern Indian communities in Manitoba and encourage further study of these institutions elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan E. Dueck, "The Berens River United Church Indian Day School" (Honours paper: University of Manitoba, 1983), and Dueck, "The Berens River Roman Catholic Indian Day School" (Graduate paper: University of Manitoba, 1984). These papers have been largely written from primary sources--very little secondary source material was drawn upon. The papers in question are studies of two Indian day schools.

<sup>2</sup> H. J. Vallery, "A History of Indian Education in Canada" (M. A. Thesis, Queens University, 1942).

In the sphere of Indian education, this thesis is an extension of Jacqueline Gresko's work.<sup>3</sup> Gresko uses anthropological as well as historical sources and perspectives in a case study of Indian education policy and the native response in the old North West Territories where native resistance confronted the government's administrative efforts to bring about the assimilation of the Indians. This thesis takes her work as a model while concentrating to a greater extent on community response and the little known area of the day schools themselves.

The historiography of Indian education, especially involving Northern Manitoba, is sparse. Most material needs a strong interpretive overhaul. Examples of this are studies by J. E. Lysecki,<sup>4</sup> Arthur Rempel<sup>5</sup> and R. F. Bishop.<sup>6</sup> In the first study of its kind, Lysecki traces the establishment of missions and mission schools in Manitoba north of the 53rd parallel. Writing from a Euro-Canadian perspective, Lysecki expounds on the benefits gained by Indians who

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<sup>3</sup> Jacqueline Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Response in the West, 1870-1910," in Western Canada Past and Present, ed. A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> John Edward Lysecki, "Education in Manitoba - North of 53" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1936).

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Rempel, "The Influence of Religion on Education for Native People in Manitoba Prior to 1870" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Francis Bishop, "A Historical Survey of the Learning Experiences of the Northern Cree People of Manitoba" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980).

were exposed to missionary activity.

Much good resulted from these missions [because of missionary endeavours] ... the Indians were most degraded ... the population increased, the Indians became more industrious, built better houses, imported stoves and cows and replaced their native dress and adopted civilized habits.<sup>7</sup>

This interpretation of Indians as degraded and degenerate until the government and the missionaries took gracious and generous action to "save" and "elevate" them is the traditional interpretation of the history of Indian/white contact. Lysecki, Bishop and Rempel narrate happy stories of heroic white efforts rewarded by desired results: "With the coming of the missionary," writes Lysecki, "the Indian was Christianized and became more and more like the white man in his customs and beliefs."<sup>8</sup> No mention is made of native input or response (except to imply that the Indian eagerly and pathetically followed the shining white example in hopes of being delivered from confusion to reach that great goal of becoming "white"). Such a paternalistic view is found in the work of the Reverend Thompson Ferrier who wrote in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that as late as 1973 and 1980 respectively, Rempel and Bishop were still making little attempt to challenge traditional interpretations in the history of Indian/Euro-

<sup>7</sup> Lysecki, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. Thompson Ferrier, "Our Indians and Their Training for Citizenship," The Missionary Bulletin, vol. IX, no. 1 (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1913).

Canadian contact.

A sharply contrasting view is provided by the work of Robert Gustafson.<sup>10</sup> Gustafson views the recent history of Canada's Indians as one of dependency, paternalism, the failure of the government to meet the needs of the people it was to serve and the failure of the Indians to organize effectively and lobby successfully for change. He suggests that the political dynamics between the dominant society and Indian peoples have been typified by internal colonialism and he identifies educational factors as contributing to the Indians' underdevelopment. While it is refreshing to read a different historiographic perspective on Indian education, Gustafson's work is one-sided to another extreme. Without attempting to discern native input and interpret events any more than the traditional paternalists he opposes, Gustafson sees Euro-Canadians' activities among Indians as part of a plot to assimilate the Indian, yet keep him out of white Canadian society,<sup>11</sup> and views Indian response as weak and disorganized. Missionaries are seen on a par with alcohol and disease--cultural threats with the missionaries using education as a dastardly means to a religious end. Perhaps an interpretation such as Gustafson's, however, can be seen as an example of a "turnabout" in historical thought. Al-

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<sup>10</sup> Robert W. Gustafson, "The Education of Canada's Indian Peoples: An Experience in Colonialism" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.43.

though extreme, as somewhat revolutionary ideas often are in early, unmodified stages, Gustafson's approach reflects newer and more critical ways of viewing the history of Indian/white relations.

Studies such as those done by John Long<sup>12</sup> and John Stewart Murdoch<sup>13</sup> present more evolved critical interpretations of this history. Long and Murdoch deal as much as possible with Indian viewpoints while taking into account the motives of missionaries who, on one hand, sincerely desired to help those in desperate need and, on the other hand, were the agents who most actively and ethnocentrically wished to speed the demise of Indian culture through education.

Literature synthesizing and publicizing Methodist missionary activity provides this thesis with another context. Accounts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries written by Methodists such as J. H. Riddell,<sup>14</sup> F. G. Stevens<sup>15</sup> and S. D. Gaudin<sup>16</sup> are mainly useful for gleaning

<sup>12</sup> John S. Long, "Rev. E. A. Watkins: Missionary to the Cree of Fort George 1852-1857," paper presented at the 16th Algonquian Conference, Duluth, Minnesota, 26-28 October, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> John Stewart Murdoch, "Syllabics: A Successful Educational Innovation" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> J. H. Riddell, Methodism in the Middle West (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946).

<sup>15</sup> F. G. Stevens, "The Autobiography of Reverend Frederick George Stevens, Doctor of Divinity, Indian Missionary, Cree Scholar" (United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, circa 1940).

an impression of the way contemporary Methodists viewed the Indians. After presenting somewhat superficial, glowing accounts of the "tremendous good" being carried on by the church, the writers sometimes leave one with the uneasy feeling that "much mileage [was being gained] from few converts."<sup>17</sup> Such "whiggish" one-sided accounts are too general to be of great value to modern historians.

Work such as John Webster Grant's The Moon of Wintertime,<sup>18</sup> an M. Ed. thesis by Michael Owen,<sup>19</sup> who provides a useful historiographical survey of the more important sources dealing with Methodist missionary activity; Ph. D. theses by George Emery<sup>20</sup> and W. H. Brooks<sup>21</sup> and an unpublished paper by Jennifer S. H. Brown<sup>22</sup> provide some insights into the activities and ideals of Methodists in the Canadian

<sup>16</sup> S. D. Gaudin, Forty-Four Years With the Northern Crees (Toronto: Mundy-Goodfellow Printing Co., 1942).

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Fur Trade/Mission Parallels, Conflicts and Consequences in Northern America: A Methodist Among the Rainy Lake Ojibwa, 1854-55," paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Meetings, Washington, D. C., 1983, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> John Webster Grant, The Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Owen, "Methodist Missions to Western Canada in the Nineteenth Century" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1975).

<sup>20</sup> George N. Emery, "Methodism on the Canadian Prairies 1896-1914: The Dynamics of an Institution in a New Environment" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> W. H. Brooks, "Methodism in the Canadian West in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of

West. Brooks critically describes the appearance of various Methodist groups in the nineteenth century Canadian West and their missionary endeavours. His account of the failure of Methodist education and missionary work is particularly useful for discerning Methodist missionary attitudes and activities.

Through compilation of related secondary source studies and careful assessment of primary source material, a contribution can be made to the field of Indian education and the study of native/Euro-Canadian contact. Existing understanding of issues involving Indians, past and present, will be deepened by placing events and attitudes into a conceptual framework and assessing the activities and motivations that inspired Indian day schools.

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Manitoba, 1972).

<sup>22</sup> Brown, "Fur Trade/Mission Parallels".

## Chapter II

### EURO-CANADIAN PLANS FOR INDIAN EDUCATION, 1890-1925

Between 1890 and 1925, philosophies of education in what is now the province of Manitoba changed in ways that were to affect children from all backgrounds within the province. Attention to recruitment and retention of teachers with good qualifications intensified in an effort to curb the long-standing attendance problem that existed among the pupils in Manitoba schools. Indeed, concern for the student was a trend that was especially marked during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>23</sup>

As more people became educated during this time, they became concerned with schooling and the aims of schools, and expressed newly awakened interest in education.<sup>24</sup> There was a growing emphasis on educating children in areas of health and hygiene, especially after World War I which "drew attention to the poor physical condition of many Canadian youths and thereby led to a greater concern for physical fitness and medical inspection in the schools."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Keith Wilson, "The Development of Education in Manitoba" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1967).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.298.

World War I also produced a wave of patriotic fervor and identification with Britain. This fuelled the small flame that had been kindled in the 1890s when the influence of school playgrounds began to be seen as important for community growth. The idea was that children should learn to communicate through "healthy and manly sport on the playground." Physical training, self control, and a grasp of the principle of mutual concession were given new emphasis.<sup>26</sup> The resulting fire forged education into a new and stronger agent of social change.

Curricula moved decidedly towards practicality and away from a narrowly academic training. By 1910 practical education was accepted for its developmental aid (where communities and social growth were concerned) and because it was also seen as a good way to "Canadianize" immigrant and Indian children.<sup>27</sup> Boys received manual training and girls were immersed in homemaking skills that had been considered essential from Victorian times (when an emphasis on the home and family was initiated).

Keith Wilson, in his study of the development of education in Manitoba, suggests that closely related to this change was an increasing concern for the individual--especially for the child's development at school.<sup>28</sup> Care of

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 309. Also see William H. Magney, "The Method-

health and hygiene, willingness to experiment with curriculum in the interests of students and promotions based on teacher assessment rather than examination results began to occur after 1899.<sup>29</sup> School savings banks, started in 1900, exemplified the desire to "cultivate the virtues of thrift and the habit of wise expenditure of money."<sup>30</sup> Also by 1900, military drills in the schools were carried out in an attempt to promote order and discipline, improve the carriage and bearing of students and produce manly, self reliant characters.<sup>31</sup>

Concern for children's physical and social welfare increased from 1900 to 1925. Hot meals were served in several rural schools, eyesight tests and "school nurses" became a part of many institutions and time began to be scheduled for "field days" and school fairs. The trend towards catering to the interests and needs of both the individual and society produced new school services and curricula.<sup>32</sup> Such trends and philosophies spread to the northern outreaches of Manitoba. By 1919 it was the conscious aim of the Department of Indian Affairs to "maintain in Indian schools the same stan-

ist Church and the National Gospel 1884-1914," The Bulletin, no. 20 (Toronto: Committee on Archives of the United Church of Canada, Ryerson Press, 1968):14.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, "Development of Education," p. 310.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>31</sup> "Report of the Department of Education, 1900," p. 465, cited by Wilson, "Development of Education," p. 307.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 426.

dards that exist in the public schools of the province."<sup>33</sup>

In the 1880s, education became a major part of the government's Indian policy. Jacqueline Gresko, in her study of the Qu'appelle Industrial School, says that the goal of government and missionary administration was "to bring about the assimilation of the Indians."<sup>34</sup> Traditional Indian lifestyles were considered to be at worst evil and at best inferior to white ways of life. Nineteenth century policy makers hoped for a cessation of bands' nomadic lifestyles and "a gradual metamorphosis of the savage to a civilized state."<sup>35</sup> Convinced that the merits of civilization could only be realized by a sedentary people, the Canadian government adopted a cultural evolutionist theory which Murdoch says was the product of the underlying assumptions of western scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Proponents of this supposition believed that, at the same level of cultural development, all men would share equal mental ability.<sup>36</sup>

Such was the context in which the Canadian government reported its problems with Indian students. It concluded that children not only spent too short a time in school to fully

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<sup>33</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6014, file 1-1-6 Man., Part 1, 15 January 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'," p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Murdoch, "Syllabics," p. 78.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

absorb white culture and attitudes but that they usually were admitted too late, "after the idle filthy ways of their people had already been ingrained."<sup>37</sup> Indians were seen as lacking in every area that constituted truly civilized human beings: "good manners," proper attitudes toward social restraint, and ability to make effective use of time. While it was also considered important to teach manual skills and academic subjects, white society usually "chose to enculturate rather than educate the Indians."<sup>38</sup> Of crucial importance was the achievement of literacy in English or French and regular attendance at school. Churches and government worked to settle the Indians, to ensure occupational changeovers to agriculture and to use schools to inculcate white values, especially those of a religious nature.<sup>39</sup> The government believed that Indians could be transformed from inept youths to superior, useful adults through competent secular instruction and mission work that was designed by God to improve the Indians' "spiritual and temporal welfare."<sup>40</sup>

Missionaries took the latter to be their special province and endeavoured to fight the evils of tribal life and prevent the Indians' moral and physical extinction. They and their contemporaries considered that "a lower culture coming

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Gustafson, "Education of Canada's Indian Peoples," p. 170.

<sup>40</sup> Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'," p. 166.

into contact with a higher one was doomed to extinction."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, aborigines could survive only by becoming like Europeans. Government neglect and incompetence coupled with the corruptive elements of the white frontier and industrial society, were seen as other foes to be battled.

In post-treaty years, northern Indian life patterns underwent a massive shift. Food shortages, changes in territories and techniques of hunting and fishing, changes in seasonal movements and social organization of bands occurred<sup>42</sup> but as Gresko points out, "the greatest change of all was the indigenous educational system."<sup>43</sup> Through educational stages of classroom instruction, agricultural, industrial and domestic training, the civilized Christian was expected to emerge: literate in English, organized, efficient, with an understanding of time (as Euro-Canadians understood it) and an ability to work. Thus, in the 1880s, Indian Department policy was geared toward creating new moral, Christian, independent citizens through the education system. Indians would be

capable of amalgamating with the white community or of elevating the pagan and dependent reserve community.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Grant, Moon of Wintertime, p. 75.

<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed discussion in this area see Chapter III below.

<sup>43</sup> Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'," p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

According to W. H. Brooks, Methodist literature of the period contained little discussion of the philosophy of Indian education. Indian missions were seen, rather, as an "administrative problem." Certainly it was difficult to find moral, upright, qualified teachers willing to work in remote areas for little pay. After the Hudson's Bay territory of Rupert's Land was transferred to the Dominion government, church missions faced new problems of administrative conflicts with the government in the area of Indian education.<sup>45</sup>

Part of the federal government's responsibility in the process of setting up reserves for the Western Indians was to provide educational facilities for Indian children under its authority. The existing mission schools presented problems, however. Not only were many of these institutions too well established (in terms of buildings and equipment) to be removed, but to take them over legally would undoubtedly have been to wreak denominational havoc. The result was a dual control system which W. H. Brooks has described as clumsy, bulky and a breeding ground for strife between the Methodist Missionary Society and the Dominion government.<sup>46</sup>

John Webster Grant's view of the union is milder and he interprets its origin as stemming from desire on the part of the missionaries rather than from administrative necessity.

<sup>45</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," p. 189.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

According to Grant, many Protestants were not in favour of reserves or the government's secular handling of Indian affairs; and the government was often embarrassed by the missionaries' never-ending denominational competition and unnecessary interference with harmless native customs. The churches, however, had no intention of breaking up the relationship. Missionaries pressed the Department for financial and legal help, and consensus emerged that the only hope for the Indian was "a strong and vigorous policy in which the Government and the Church shall be partners."<sup>47</sup>

These different interpretations notwithstanding, perhaps the important element in the formation of the dual control system was that no Indian opinions were asked for or considered. Undoubtedly the missionaries saw the Indians as being in too weak and pathetic a position to assume any stand--just as legal authorities of an orphaned toddler would not consider the child's viewpoints concerning his future. Certainly, this should not be too harshly interpreted. The missionaries were clearly very happy when Indians "succeeded" or "acted on their own" (if they followed the Christian way). There was no conscious wish to keep their "red children" submissive. But since the Indian position was vulnerable and native people were seen as a burden on Canadian society, the overwhelming paternalism that resulted allowed little Indian involvement on any meaningful level. The In-

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<sup>47</sup> Grant, Moon of Wintertime, p. 187.

dians' only defence was passivity. "Missionaries devoted much earnest effort," writes Grant; "...their major mistake...was in relying too much on one-way communication."<sup>48</sup>

An example of this can be found in the Rev. E. A. Watkins, missionary to the Cree Indians of Fort George, Quebec, from 1852 to 1857.<sup>49</sup> Although Watkins considered these Cree to be a fairly uninteresting group, he was spurred on in his attempt to make an impression on what he described as their "dull" Indian minds because they did possess "immortal souls." As John S. Long explains,

He felt his lack of success was due to the natural reserve and sullenness of the Indian character, and the indolence and despondency so common to their race.<sup>50</sup>

Such seeming native disinterest, suggests Long, may have been a mechanism for maintaining their independence. Watkins, being committed to his own interpretation of their behaviour, experienced a lack of communication with his clients that impeded him in his work.

In 1880, as a result of a series of meetings between representatives of the government and the Methodist Missionary Society, the basis for future policy of Methodist schools among the Indians was established. Grants for existing schools were to be made payable following the government's

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>49</sup> Long, "Rev. E. A. Watkins."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

receipt of "suitable returns" for the schools. The amount of aid to such schools was to be "12 dollars per annum per capita of the average attendance for the whole year but not to exceed 300 dollars to any one school." All communications between the Department and the Methodist Indian schools would be henceforth restricted to the officers of the Missionary Society. The Methodists were given free rein to hire their own teachers.<sup>51</sup>

This was the starting point for years of discord. Schools sometimes did not receive their grants due to "improper returns" or no returns at all being sent to the Department. Teachers were found to be incompetent in some of the day schools.<sup>52</sup> Communication between the government and the Missionary Society was poor. In 1912, for example, the Indian Agent at Cross Lake wrote to the Department concerning a prospective school teacher.<sup>53</sup> "I think Miss Gaudin is just the one to teach the Indians as she has been brought up amongst them and knows the Indian child's ways." Probably grateful for a solution to a longstanding problem, the government hired Miss Gaudin at a salary of 300 dollars/year. When Indian Affairs officials discovered in February of 1913

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<sup>51</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," pp. 191-192.

<sup>52</sup> The DIA records contain many exchanges of angry correspondence between the Methodist Missionary Society and the Department over these issues.

<sup>53</sup> This school spent more time closed than open due to the extreme difficulties of attracting or retaining instructors.

that the Superintendent of Methodist missions, Rev. Thompson Ferrier, had sent a different teacher to Cross Lake and that Miss Gaudin had never taught a day at the school, the Department was confused and the tone of the correspondence was angry. Assistant Deputy and Secretary of Indian Affairs, J. D. McLean wrote to Ferrier, explaining in no uncertain terms that they were not going to give the school any money towards a teacher's salary until they knew who exactly was teaching and what his or her qualifications were.

Chilled by the tone of the letter, Rev. Ferrier lost no time in spelling out the Cross Lake teacher's qualifications and added,

The Department is fully aware of the great difficulty in securing teachers for these places and I am very glad to engage and send them whenever I have suitable opportunity.<sup>54</sup>

How did Indians and their children fare in the heat of battles generated over these issues of jurisdiction and administration? In 1919 a letter was sent to the Department--beautifully typewritten and in perfect English, with the names of several chiefs attached, including William Berens of Berens River:

we...crave...that Your Excellency will order that the education of Indian children be given under the sole management of the Government without any interference or influence from any sources whatever--political, religious or otherwise. In some unknown way, perhaps with a laudable desire for mutual benefit, a system of education of Indian children has been arranged in the past between the

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<sup>54</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA vol.6230, file 508-1, part 1.

Department of Indian Affairs and the different Churches or Religious Organizations, the Churches being given the privilege of nominating the teachers only and the Government paying the teachers' salaries and all the expenses of school management. [The teacher is placed] under two masters and has also been the means of causing serious religious quarrels among our people.... We will at all times welcome and assist to the very best of our ability any Church ... who wishes to bring to us the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but will not tolerate or uphold any who has any influence with our schools.<sup>55</sup>

T. Carter, the Indian Agent for the bands in question, discussed the above letter in correspondence with the government. Since he clearly took the letter's validity for granted (some might suspect forgery since the document contained no handwritten signatures or 'X' marks) we may assume that the chiefs had direct input into the document. Carter had likely discussed the matter with them before reporting to Ottawa. We have no way of knowing whether some specific issue or series of events angered the chiefs into making this complaint. The records mention nothing catastrophic and such feelings on the part of the Indians may well have been products of longterm frustration with administrative battles and their negative effects, particularly on children. Carter sounded as disgusted as the chiefs when he wrote to J. D. McLean on 7 March, 1919, that

anyone of ordinary vision could see that the handling of school matters by the Churches in the face of the enlightenment of the modern Indian could only result in the alienation of the Indians from the Churches.

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<sup>55</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA vol. 6001, File 1-1-1, part 2.

He wrote that, according to Rev. Ferrier, if the churches cannot appoint their own teachers the Methodists will step "down and out of missionary work." Carter concluded,

If this is the spirit of the Churches, it will be the greatest blessing if they will withdraw from the reserves...school affairs should be either under the Church or the Department.<sup>56</sup>

It does not seem that Carter had a particular hatred of Methodists since Miss Gaudin, whom he had recently recommended to the Department as a fine prospective teacher, was the daughter of Methodist missionary S. D. Gaudin.

The Department made other accusations and allegations against the Missionary Society during the 1880s and 1890s. It complained that school buildings were neglected, to which Dr. Alexander Sutherland, General Secretary for the Methodist Missionary Society replied, "it does not appear to me that this is a matter which belongs to the Society. We have no title to any of these properties...."<sup>57</sup> Society and government seemed bent on playing with their own and each other's "rules and regulations." In this case, school buildings were probably in deplorable condition and the two powers were each concerned only with pawning off the responsibility on the other. School equipment was also complained about in Departmental reports.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," p. 195. (The Reserves referred to are not named.)

The struggle ran both ways however. Dissatisfaction on the part of the Society was very much in evidence. In an article published in The Missionary Bulletin in 1913, the Rev. Thompson Ferrier blamed government Indian policy for allowing Indians to remain idle, unprogressive and dependent. This state, he argued, produced debauchery, pauperism and discontent. As soon as the Indian can take care of himself, claimed Ferrier, he should be set on his feet.<sup>58</sup> Ferrier's statement represented the typical (often well-founded) view of the Methodists regarding government bungling.

Brooks cites several instances where the Department made gross errors in calculating teachers' salaries and sending out much needed grants to the schools. In one instance (19 February 1881) the government advertised for and attempted to hire teachers for the Methodist schools at Norway House, Islington and Berens River. Such intrusion into the clearly marked territory of the Society was wholly unacceptable; but although Dr. Alexander Sutherland raged, he never received a satisfactory reply from Ottawa.

Brooks says that the conflict that went on for years was really...a clash of rival bureaucracies. There was little or no mention of salvation or bringing the Christian message to the Indian. In any of the Methodist correspondence in these affairs, the Methodist teachers differed from their government counterparts only in the requirements of being in good standing in a church and of having a reasonable moral character.... The Methodists were aggressive in an institutional sense and jealous of

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<sup>58</sup> Ferrier, "Indians and Training," p. 11.

their jurisdiction which they sought to extend.... This denominational imperialism, however, did not necessarily signify any clear cut purpose or intention other than the extension of their institution into more distant fields.<sup>59</sup>

Sutherland's reply to Ottawa after the government had disqualified some of the teachers employed by Methodists in Indian schools reflects much about the standards and priorities held by Methodists regarding these institutions.

I was not aware until now that a certificate [from the county Board] was required [for the teachers] by the Department, nor am I yet certain what grade of certificate is necessary. [This reveals a typical lack of communication between Society and government.] In our "Regulations for Indian Day Schools"...it is required that the standard of qualification for teachers shall be equivalent to a county certificate of the second class in Ontario and that "teachers be of good standing in a Christian church".... There are three points that we regard of primary importance, viz--1. Moral character, 2. Ability to teach the branches required in the school to which the teacher is appointed, 3. Diligence and success in securing the attendance of the children. Where these qualifications concur, we consider them "equivalent" for the work of an Indian School.... I do not think it will be possible to secure persons holding anything higher than a third class certificate to teach for a salary of 200 [dollars] per annum.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps this last sentence is a jibe at the Department which paid teachers' salaries. What is clear, however, is the fact that moral character was of prime importance and that ability to teach the "branches" required by the school was second among Sutherland's points of "primary importance." Indeed, his prime emphasis on character was further manifest

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<sup>59</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," p. 204.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

when he wrote in 1881,

As much of the work in Indian schools is of the most primary kind, we do not insist upon the full standing required by the second class county certificate...provided we find in a marked degree, other qualifications which we consider essential in the teacher of an Indian school.<sup>61</sup>

In order to clearly understand developments in Indian education under the auspices of the Methodist church, it is necessary to discuss the essence of Methodism as it existed between 1890 and 1925, the aims of Methodist Indian policy and the values and goals inherent in the church's mission work. A comprehension of the motives behind this work and a view of how the Methodists saw their Indian clients will illuminate one side (the Methodist side) of the struggle for souls and citizenship.

William Magney, in a discussion of Methodism, says, "Methodism was a way of life with deep roots in the Canadian past."<sup>62</sup> A profound concern for the afterlife and a commitment to saving souls for the next world had long been driving forces behind Methodist religious culture. Between 1884 and 1914 an evolution of these basic principles occurred and nationalistic fervor became a marked feature of Canadian Methodism by the 1890s. Motivated by a Victorian-British notion of superiority ordained by God and a consequent mission to enlighten and guide the other less fortunate nations

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>62</sup> Magney, "Church and Gospel," p. 4.

of the world, Methodists sought to apply Christian truths to the restoration of society and the improvement of societal institutions at all levels.

Although clearly influenced by British and American Protestantism, Methodist leaders saw the West as Canada's responsibility. George Emery suggests that Methodists were

the self-appointed guardians of Protestant Christian values in society and they assumed that the perpetuation of Protestantism was a nation building process.<sup>63</sup>

Christian values would be menaced throughout the Dominion, they feared, if the West with its enormous material potential were not won for Christ. If the Canadian West could be Christianized it would be a fortress for salvation and evangelism on a global scale and Canada could help in the creation of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>64</sup> Riddell says that Methodism between 1883 and 1897 called for a

new individual...possessing a new ideal, filled with a new passion, ceaselessly striving to realize in the society the principles of the Kingdom of God.<sup>65</sup>

Magney suggests that while the character of this unique Ontario-based English-Canadian religious nationalism rested on the same scriptural principles as British and American Methodism, it was "more passionately nationalistic, more

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<sup>63</sup> Emery, "Methodism on Prairies," p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Riddell, Methodism, p. 117.

strongly motivated by positive goals of national destiny."<sup>66</sup>

The "Social Gospel" that arose from this religion between 1884 and 1914 held the church increasingly responsible for the welfare of the individual's physical as well as spiritual life. It was believed that Biblical truths should be infused into every aspect of the secular world to create the "Kingdom of God" on earth. Hence, Methodism became a busy focal point of community life and development.<sup>67</sup>

The Christian Guardian, an influential voice of Methodism to 1914, carried numerous articles centring on themes of patriotism, nationalism, the social gospel and the attainment of the "Kingdom of God" on earth. One article published in 1893 read:

Love of country is essential to true national and political progress.... Now is the time for Canadians to show their practical attachment to their own country. We depreciate the wreckless charges of disloyalty that are hurled at political opponents in partisan strife.<sup>68</sup>

James L. Hughes, an Ontario Public School Inspector, wrote in 1900,

The fullest preparation for citizenship requires that the spirit of broad patriotism should become a distinctive element of character. As with other elements, so with patriotism...the principles must be taught, but there must be a centre of patriotism formed in the life by true life processes

<sup>66</sup> Magney, "Church and Gospel," p. 88.

<sup>67</sup> This is reflected in the contemporary education philosophies which stressed community improvement and concern for the individual child's welfare.

<sup>68</sup> Christian Guardian, 8 February 1893, p. 88.

before these principles can become part of the real life in the end. Children so trained in early life will be ready for the comprehension and assimilation of the principles of the broadest and most liberal patriotism in later years.<sup>69</sup>

Addressing the topic of "Christian Citizenship," an 1896 article declared:

it is now the supreme duty of every man to make the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.... men and women can be patriotic in the quiet walks of everyday Christian life as in the fierce excitements of doubtful battle. The time has come when every Canadian shall assume the duties and bear the responsibilities of true citizenship. This world belongs to Christ. He made it, upholds it, owns it and will judge it.... He...desires the regeneration of the State.<sup>70</sup>

Methodism represented the striving for Christian perfection on the part of the individual. Writing about his childhood experiences with Methodism, A. R. M. Lower recalled, "they [Methodists] heated you up white hot and then plunged you into the cold water of decision."<sup>71</sup> He says of Methodism between 1870 and 1914:

Methodists set the pace for other evangelical denominations and gave a lasting set to Canadian life. If there was anything in you, the Methodism of the day would force it out.... It would make you feel responsible for the neighbour next door. It would underline to you that it was your duty to keep the whole thing going through your efforts and your money.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Christian Guardian, 3 June 1896, p.1.

<sup>70</sup> Christian Guardian, 5 December 1900, p. 771.

<sup>71</sup> A. R. M. Lower, My First Seventy-Five Years (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.8.

An article in an issue of the Christian Guardian, January, 1890 presents an excellent summary of the principles of Methodism during this period. It is a compilation of rules centred on the theme "What to Teach Boys." It lists:

1. to be true and genuine. Above all else teach boys that truth is more important than riches, more than earthly power or possessions.

2. to be pure in heart, language and life--to be pure in mind and body.

3. to be unselfish. To care for the feelings and comforts of others. To be generous, noble and manly.

4. to be self reliant and self helpful even from childhood. To be industrious always and self supporting at the earliest possible age.

Teach them that all honest work is honourable and that an idle life of dependence on others is disgraceful.<sup>73</sup>

These rules are an embodiment of the values that Methodist missionaries strove to impart to the Indians. Education had a three-fold aim as described by the Methodists: "temporal, intellectual and spiritual improvement."<sup>74</sup> Academic knowledge was not the overriding goal. An article in the Christian Guardian of 1900 stated,

The theory of education does not deny the importance of knowledge...it is the capital with which the mind works, but the value of capital depends entirely upon the character...of the possessor.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Christian Guardian, 8 January 1890.

<sup>74</sup> Grant, Moon of Wintertime, p. 178.

<sup>75</sup> Christian Guardian, 21 February 1900.

A modest grasp of reading, writing and enough bookkeeping to enable Indians to communicate and carry out business transactions in a society dominated by Euro-Canadians was sufficient. More importance was attached to agricultural and manual training, but it was "character building" that was considered essential to the programme. Grant explains that the main concern of missionaries was to

impart instruction...to change work habits and personality patterns.... By the end of the nineteenth century it was generally agreed that the principal aim of missionary work was to prepare Indians to assume the privileges and responsibilities of Christian citizenship.<sup>76</sup>

Methodists strongly believed that Christianity could never be embraced by a dependent group of people; hence self-sufficiency and industry were the emphasized goals, the purpose of the Methodist mission. Indians should abandon their lifestyle which was considered heathen, static and inefficient. Thompson Ferrier writes in a 1913 article that encompassed contemporary mission philosophy:

The Indian is growing up with the idea firmly fixed in his head that the government owes him a living and that his happiness and prosperity depend in no degree upon his individual effort.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Grant, Moon of Wintertime, pp. 178-183. Note that the word "citizenship" is used instead of the word "civilization"--the emphasis had shifted from a loose, universal term to one that carried nationalistic implications for assimilation into Canadian society.

<sup>77</sup> Ferrier, "Indians and Training," pp. 9-10.

This system, Ferrier believed, destroyed energy, push, independence and the necessity of compelling a man to labour for what he needs. Individual advancement was of the utmost importance.

The Indian massed in tribes is the problem.... To recognize the man as a unit and hold him responsible as such, train him for his place and then let him occupy it is the true method for civilizing the Indian ... the preparation of youth for the duties, privileges and responsibilities of citizenship is the purpose of the government plan for education.<sup>78</sup>

Ferrier's goal was to teach Indians the basic rudiments of knowledge but especially to impart those skills that would enable them to survive in a changed world.

Wherever possible a garden should be cultivated.... Sufficient produce should be raised to give variety to the daily bill of fare, and instead of giving a dry biscuit, encourage the boys to bring rabbit, game and fish and this, with the produce of the garden should serve for a hot meal at noonday. Such a plan would not only help the boys but afford a cooking lesson for the girls. There would be a great advantage in making the school life a good object lesson for the home. Add this to compulsory education.<sup>79</sup>

It was imperative that Indian children develop healthy bodies and minds well trained to take up the duty of self-support. The occupations of farming and raising stock were seen as most desirable by the Methodists since no other labour would

so soon dispossess him of his nomadic instincts...no field in which he [could] so readily

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-13.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

contribute to his own support....<sup>80</sup>

Ferrier's analysis of the "Indian character" can be considered representative of Methodist opinion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Indian is naturally suspicious of the white man. He clings to the ways of his ancestors, insisting that they are better than ours and many resent every effort...to educate their children...but they have no objections to appropriations from the Government treasury.<sup>81</sup>

An unsigned article in the Christian Guardian gives another encapsulation of the purpose of the Methodist mission:

The poor Indian, like Lazarus, is so enswathed, not only with the grave clothes of habit but with the birth garments of heredity. There is only one thing that can give him life and that is the Gospel and only one thing that can give him liberty and that is a Christian education.... there is a white man buried deep in the person of the Indian, but we will have to use mallet and chisel, all the appliances of an all-round Christian education to set him free. We believe God gave us the Indian to take care of and minister unto. The Divine Being sent us, the stronger--having been made thus by centuries of Christian teaching. He sent us unto these our weaker brethren and if we would measure up to our high calling in country and citizenship, in true patriotism, in vital Christianity, we must do nobly and generously by our Indian brothers.<sup>82</sup>

This notion of a white man somewhere inside each Indian was common. Methodist missionary F. G. Stevens, for example, wrote glowingly in his memoirs of a favoured Indian convert

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Christian Guardian, 4 October 1905, p. 9.

who was "huge, ugly with a beautiful white heart...."<sup>83</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, Methodist writers were alluding to the "progress" that had been made with the Indians over time:

It is evident that the Indian occupies a higher plane as a Christian today than he did as a pagan yesterday, but how to raise him still higher...is a problem that we still have to solve.<sup>84</sup>

Such statements, however, were usually made in the context of soliciting financial support from the Methodist congregation and pleasing the higher levels of administrators in this church that was so much controlled by its highly centralized polity.<sup>85</sup>

Most of the Methodist sources complained of the same things in 1920 that they did in the nineteenth century:

The task of evangelism [to the Indians] is rendered many times more difficult by widespread illiteracy, unwholesome moral and social customs, industrial backwardness, economic dependence and almost entire political helplessness....<sup>86</sup>

Indian cultures were successfully resisting Euro-Canadian culture. The Methodists were becoming frustrated enough to put the whole Indian mission enterprise on the "back burner" when they switched the Indian work from the "Foreign Mis-

<sup>83</sup> Stevens, "Autobiography," p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> "Report of the General Board of Missions, 1902" General Conference Journals, 1902 (United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario).

<sup>85</sup> Emery, "Methodism on Prairies," p. 40.

<sup>86</sup> "Report of the General Board of Missions, 1918" Conference Journals, p. 229.

sion" department to the auspices of "Home Missions" and began increasingly to highlight opportunities of Asian missions. Indian work was frustrating and its challenge was becoming lacklustre. Only those missionaries who were actively involved in field work seemed to maintain some remnants of hope and enthusiasm. Their view of their northern Indian clients and their responsibilities toward them are interesting.

Some of these Methodists experienced an evolution in their attitudes. For example, S. D. Gaudin, who described the Indian as "ordinary...a pleasant fellow...witty and quick to see a joke,"<sup>87</sup> discussed a change in his way of thinking. Initially frustrated with the Nelson House band over their lack of participation in the erection of a new school house, he later wrote more sympathetically:

Their aim seemed to be, not how much work they could do but rather how much flour, bacon and tea they could dispose of and also how often they could smoke.... The trouble with these men was that they were at new work which was out of line with their past experience. They were industrious as hunters, trappers and trippers but this log-hewing was out of their line until a new training experience came to them. Till then they acted lazy. I did not think of these principles at the time, I was too annoyed....<sup>88</sup>

Another example of a change of outlook and a gaining of understanding through actual work among the Cree/Ojibwa is found in the journals of F. G. Stevens. At the onset of his

<sup>87</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years, p. 78.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

work, Stevens was thrown into a period of disillusionment upon realizing that the Indians were not overflowing with love and gratitude for the "loneliness and privation and hardship" that he endured in his efforts to "help" them. Upon his recovery, the missionary entered "a second period" of association with the Indian.<sup>89</sup> This "second period," marked by a more practical attitude and a consequent broadening of Stevens' understanding of those with whom he was dealing, prompted him to write to John Lysecki in the 1930s:

The whole structure [of Indian education in Residential and Boarding Schools] is wrong. Taking the Indian children away from their parents and their natural environment is a mistake. The idea that you can, in a few years, educate Indians so that they can maintain themselves in "White" communities is wrong. Day Schools on the Indian Reserves are the true way of educating the Indians.<sup>90</sup>

By the twentieth century, the stated goal of Methodist Indian day schools was still "...to elevate the Indian industrially, intellectually and morally."<sup>91</sup> In his history of the Canadian Methodist Church in 1906, Alexander Sutherland implied that "true spirituality" was indicated by expansionist missionary activity. W. H. Brooks believes that the expansionist tendencies of the Methodist church were merely "rampant institutionalism." By 1912, the Methodists seem to have become almost wholly secular in their approach to their

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<sup>89</sup> Stevens, "Autobiography," p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Lysecki, "North of 53," p. 89.

<sup>91</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6001, File 1-1-1, part 2.

Indian missions.<sup>92</sup>

In 1923, a convention was held in Fisher River, Manitoba. All teachers of Indian day schools in the surrounding districts attended and the following summary, by G. W. Bartlett, School Inspector, was sent to Ferrier, now Methodist Superintendent of Indian Education:

Considerable emphasis was placed on the practical aims of a good Indian school as compared with a white school and how best to work these out. Training in self-reliance and good citizenship were also fully considered. The correlation of school and out-of-school interests were [sic] emphasized.<sup>93</sup>

It is essential to note that the stress had changed from an aspiration to "Christianize and civilize" to a desire to "educate and civilize." In their quest to make "white men" out of these students, the Methodists intended their schools to reach into the communities and envelope students in their home life as well as in their school life.<sup>94</sup>

At a teacher demonstration held at Peguis School in 1922, the school staff outlined the following (unsigned) "Practical Aims in Indian Education and How Attained." They show the extent to which secularism was growing within the standards and philosophies of day school administration.

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<sup>92</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," p. 205.

<sup>93</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6032, file 150-34, part 1.

<sup>94</sup> Brooks, "Methodism in Canadian West," pp. 208-209.

## A.

1. Cleanliness and observation of elementary laws of health and decency.

2. A pride in self-support and usefulness.

3. A rational attitude to practical problems rather than sway of traditional superstition.

4. Appreciation of useful work well done (a well kept garden, a clean house) and conversely a distaste for carelessness and slovenly work.

5. Good manners.

6. Good morals.

## B.

School attendance.

## C. How to Interest Indian Children.

1. adaptation of school program to their experience and environment.

2. more manual work.

3. arithmetic, English and other subjects based on real problems of Indian boy or girl.<sup>95</sup>

Some of the above points, such as concern for health and hygiene and the instilling of a "Protestant work ethic" are reflections of contemporary educational philosophy. However, ethnocentric views of conquering Indian tradition and culture were in evidence as was the goal to make native communities self-sufficient in order to reduce the Department's financial obligations towards them. The old desire of the missionaries to assimilate Indians into white culture for the good and survival of their race however, seems to have become attenuated. Point "C, 1" is interesting in calling

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

for an "adaptation of school program to their [Indian's] experience and environment." This undoubtedly did not mean that teachers were to modify their curricula to include lessons in hunting and setting up a lodge in a winter camp. Instead, it is a reflection of the realization that in order to change an Indian child into a "white" one, the problem must be tackled by dealing with a student in terms of his or her environment. This shows the enormity of the schools' challenge to the Indian communities and the struggle and confusion that Indian children, caught in the middle of such forces, must have endured.

Departmental records are filled with inspectors' and teachers' observations that children who were drilled and programmed to think and behave in one way by teachers leading them with "firm hands" and "compassionate hearts" often mysteriously "lost what they...gained because they [were] thrown into an environment which annuls the ideals that prevail in the school."<sup>96</sup> Indian children attending Methodist day schools in northern Manitoba from 1890 to 1925 were heirs to generations of native people struggling to recover from difficulties that had beset them since the decline of the fur trade. Despite the internal and external changes that bands were forced to undergo and the battered pride that resulted from poverty and dependency, the Cree/Ojibwa maintained a fight (often through avoidance or passivity)

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

for their culture. Government and Methodist policy worked to destroy this culture by implanting the values of Euro-Canadian society in the minds and hearts of Indian children.

### Chapter III

#### THE INDIAN BANDS OF BERENS RIVER, CROSS LAKE, OXFORD HOUSE AND NELSON HOUSE

The Western Woods Cree of Nelson House, Oxford House and Cross Lake, and the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux Indians of Berens River dwell in an area between Lake St. Joseph and the East Winnipeg country. The northern boundary of the East Winnipeg country is the Nelson River, the southern boundary is formed by the Winnipeg River, and Lake Winnipeg comprises the west boundary. Boreal forest covers the entire region with a heavy blanket which consists mainly of white and black spruce, some other conifers such as tamarack, balsam fir, jack pine and a few varieties of broadleafed trees such as white birch, trembling aspen and balsam poplar. A maze of lakes, rivers, streams and swamps is evidence of the area's poor drainage.

The East Winnipeg country, with the Poplar, Berens and Bloodvein Rivers comprising its major river systems, possesses a topography that varies from rolling to hilly to fairly flat. Although climate and drainage conditions produce an abundance of tree growth, the ravages of glaciation have robbed the area of soil that is adequate for agriculture.

Agriculture is further impeded by the East Winnipeg Country's cold, continental climate which yields winters with average temperatures of -20 degrees F. and summers which do not get much warmer than 72 degrees.<sup>97</sup> Winters are long with snow often appearing before November and piling up anywhere between 15 inches to 100 inches by February which is the coldest month of the year. In April the snow begins to melt and leaves appear on the deciduous trees in June. The months of June, July and August comprise northern Manitoba's summer. The changes in temperature that occur during this annual cycle affect the arrival and departure of migrant birds, the habits of fur-bearing animals and the economic activities of the Indian bands whose hunting and gathering work is closely governed by the limitations of habitat in this subarctic forest.<sup>98</sup>

Since survival depends upon individual hunting and trapping and the cooperation of small groups, people must be prepared to divide or congregate, depending on food supply fluctuations; hence the formation of large, permanent, organized groups is prevented. John Murdoch suggests that since the major technological advances which may have evolved through such large group formation were impeded, the

<sup>97</sup> For a detailed discussion of the geographical nature of the East Winnipeg Country see Victor P. Lytwyn, "The Historical Geography of the Fur Trade of the Little North and Its Expansion Into the East Winnipeg Country to 1821" (M. A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1981), pp. 24-29.

<sup>98</sup> A. Irving Hallowell, Contributions to Anthropology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 333.

Cree and Saulteaux bands were forced to accept the limitations of their environment. Hence the social, economic and technical cultures of these groups were built around the accepted restrictions of their environment. This adaptive culture, which carries a high degree of independence and self-reliance (springing from the requirements of individual effort), combined with a need for self-restraint, is persistent and not easily changed.<sup>99</sup>

By the time they have reached school age, Cree/Ojibwa children have already been steeped in this lifestyle and its accompanying basic religious and intellectual assumptions. Skills are acquired at an early age when simple contributions to family survival are mastered and progression is made toward the accomplishment of more difficult tasks with the length and repetition of lessons largely determined by the children.<sup>100</sup> Although most northern Indian children have a clear sense of self reliance in bush survival techniques such skills have usually counted for naught in the ethnocentric schools of Euro-Canadians whose recognized and accepted adaptive culture is of urban industrialism and agriculture.

Despite changes wrought by the fur trade in areas of Indians' consumption habits and technology, the demand for furs ensured a continuation of the traditional adaptive

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<sup>99</sup> Murdoch, "Syllabics," pp. 164-168.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

hunting style of the Cree/Ojibwa Indians.<sup>101</sup> This ensured the retention of a subsistence economy and its closely integrated culture; such as a dispersed winter hunting pattern and a biseasonal movement of the population between winter hunting and summer fishing settlements.

By the late eighteenth century when Oxford House was founded, the Cree/Assiniboine middleman system in the fur trade had broken down as the Hudson's Bay Company and Montreal traders increased their own inland activities. With consequent decreases in independence and mobility, and following the Hudson's Bay Company/Northwest Company merger of 1821, food restrictions became more severe. In the face of the privation that ensued from gruelling winters, game shortages and epidemic illness, bands began breaking down into smaller groups, mobility was probably limited and the subsistence base reduced to fish and hare.<sup>102</sup>

A study by Edward S. Rogers and Mary Black Rogers on the Northern Ojibwa subgroup known as the Cranes concluded that the history of the Cranes "represents a pattern of group evolution that has occurred repeatedly among Subarctic Algonquians."<sup>103</sup> The Cranes' social characteristics, they explain,

<sup>101</sup> See Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983).

<sup>102</sup> Christopher Hanks, "The Swampy Cree and Hudson's Bay Company at Oxford House," Ethnohistory vol. 29, no. 2, 1982.

are probably typical of the band life of Indians in this area. They suggest that these bands were never unilineal or exogamous and since increasing numbers produced segmentation, the Cranes "probably did not act as a unified political or corporate unit"<sup>104</sup> though segments had leaders in later times. Although boundaries tended to fluctuate, these anthropologists do not believe the core geographical area of such groups shifted greatly.

"Segments" comprised a collection of closely related individuals with a kinship system based on cross cousin marriage.<sup>105</sup> Such unions were arranged by parents usually to achieve the "most practical and judicious subsistence-territory allocations and hunting group compositions in the coming generation."<sup>106</sup>

Territorially based and self consciously protective of land, the Cranes were sometimes hostile to the intrusion of strangers. As their population grew, the number of existing segments increased and face-to-face gatherings became more

<sup>103</sup> Edward S. Rogers and Mary Black Rogers, "Who Were The Cranes? Groups and Group Identity Names in Northern Ontario," in Approaches to Algonquian Archaeology: Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference of the Archaeology Association at the University of Calgary, eds. Margaret G. Hanna and Brian Kooyman (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1982), p. 172.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>105</sup> For further discussion of this area see R. W. Dunning, Social and Economic Change Among the Northern Ojibwa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

<sup>106</sup> Rogers and Black Rogers, "The Cranes," p. 171.

impossible until by the time a treaty was signed, the segments represented competing political factions.<sup>107</sup>

Given the sparse evidence and lack of written records kept by Indian bands, it is extremely difficult to draw detailed conclusions about Northern Algonquian culture and value systems. Anthropological contributions by A. Irving Hallowell and R. W. Dunning who lived among bands in the Berens River area of northern Manitoba and are helpful.<sup>108</sup> Mary Black Roger's work on Ojibwa power-belief systems sheds a few pools of light on the Northern Algonquian.<sup>109</sup> Articles in the Subarctic, vol. 6 of Handbook of North American Indians<sup>110</sup> provide some generalizations and specifics. In order to understand developments occurring in the Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House communities, it is necessary to synthesize as much evidence as possible regarding the traditional cultures and cultural change that occurred after the eighteenth century in the lives of these

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> See Hallowell, Contributions to Anthropology and Culture and Experience and Dunning, Social and Economic Change.

<sup>109</sup> Mary Black Rogers, "Ojibwa Power Belief Systems," in The Anthropology of Power: Ethnographic Studies from Asia, Oceania and the New World, eds. Raymond D. Fogelson and Richard N. Adams (New York: Academic Press, 1977); and Black Rogers, "Ojibwa Power Interactions: Creating Contexts for 'Respectful Talk'," in Proceedings of the Conference on Native North American Interaction Patterns, ed. Regna Darnell (Ottawa: National Museums, 1984).

<sup>110</sup> William Sturtevant, gen. ed., Handbook of North American Indians, 20 vols. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), vol. 6: Subarctic, ed. June Helm.

bands.

Jack H. Steinbring, discussing the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux, which include the Berens River Band, concludes that the hunting and fishing economy of these Indians was supplemented by seasonal collecting. Recent innovations such as pulp-cutting, mining and guiding that occurred in their subsistence culture also relate to seasonal, male-oriented activities. Fish comprises this people's basic, continuous dietary source with whole families traditionally participating in spring runs.<sup>111</sup>

The traditional lifestyle of the Berens River Ojibwa is filled with social and cultural characteristics that are rooted in adaptations to the subarctic environment. Since seasonal movements correspond with temperature changes, fixed settlements have always been impractical. The socio-cultural system functions primarily in small, face-to-face localized groups-- comprising the winter hunting groups and the summer fishing settlements.<sup>112</sup>

The winter hunting group was an extended family made up of at least two married couples and their children. Each group was associated with a hunting territory system onto which trespass by others was resented. Sizes of such systems depended upon the size of the exploiting group, abun-

<sup>111</sup> Jack H. Steinbring, "The Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux," in ed. Helm, Subarctic, p. 247.

<sup>112</sup> Hallowell, Contributions to Anthropology, p. 334.

dance of game and topography. Previous to the fur trade and its introduction of a more competitive, individualized system, where each hunter was responsible for his own "debt" account, less exclusive rights to these hunting tracts may have prevailed.<sup>113</sup> Although territories would have been exploited annually, they lacked rigid boundaries. It is important to emphasize that fur trade changes did not drastically affect seasonal habits of the Ojibwa in relation to their ecological environment nor did they alter the general sociocultural system.

While there was no superordinate community organization in summer fishing settlements, their greater size afforded opportunities for social interaction on a wider scale. Close cooperation existed in economic tasks and the sharing of food. Each of these summer settlements, as in the case of winter groups, represented primary functioning units of Northern Ojibwa sociocultural life. According to Hallowell, the absence of any level of supergroup organization and leadership posed major problems to the Dominion government when it included all Indians of Berens River in a treaty in 1875.<sup>114</sup>

Previous to 1875, there was no tribal or band organization to which the Indians of the Northern Ojibwa region all belonged. Localized groups had functional autonomy and Hal-

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 338.

lowell explains that the unifying factor among the Indians of the Berens River region was a "common linguistic and cultural heritage, rooted in the distant past."<sup>115</sup> Their cultural heritage system included a common kinship pattern, traditional shared values, and a system highlighting real or fictitious lineages.

Ojibwa culture places a high value on sharing what one has with others.<sup>116</sup> It necessarily follows that for each person, the most desirable state is to be in control of resources since personal stability is symbiotic with the process of sharing. The ability to share shows strength and independence. Therefore, one of the major goals of an individual is to be in control of himself and his destiny so as not to be controlled by his environment; which consists of both other humans and natural beings or forces that could affect one's future.<sup>117</sup> Northern Algonquians appear to resent attempts at controlling others; hence frustration was experienced both by Indians confronting the Euro-Canadian social order and by Euro-Canadians confronting the lack of political leadership exerted by Indians.

The bands at Nelson House, Oxford House and Cross Lake can be loosely classed as Western Woods Cree, a term which encompasses the Rocky Cree of Nelson House, the western

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>117</sup> Black Rogers, "Ojibwa Power Belief Systems," p. 145.

Swampy Cree and the Strongwoods Cree. The fur trade played a larger role in the lives of these Indians than in the case of the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux of Berens River. Particularly before the coalition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1821, the Cree were pressed to increase their take of fur-bearing animals. Eventually such exploitation produced severe food shortages which, together with smallpox and other epidemics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were responsible for depopulation.

The trading monopoly that existed after 1821 produced an increased pressure for bands to be localized and oriented to a specific post; and there is less evidence of individual or family hunting/trapping territories.<sup>118</sup> Between 1821 and 1939, there was an increasing use of log cabins and by the end of this period, material culture was almost solely Euro-Canadian in nature.<sup>119</sup> Although reserves had been formed between 1875 and 1906, the Cree were able to continue the use of their traditional territories until the encroachments of such industries as mining, lumbering and commercial fishing operations.

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<sup>118</sup> For further discussion on this see Christopher Hanks, "Swampy Cree," and James G. E. Smith, "The Western Woods Cree," in ed. Helm, Subarctic, pp. 258-259.

<sup>119</sup> Smith, "Western Woods Cree," p. 259.

Little information is available on the culture and social organization of the Western Woods Cree in the eighteenth century. This is partly due to the flexibility of organization that existed among them.<sup>120</sup>

Households probably consisted of lodges of ten to fourteen relatives and local bands were constituted of several related families comprising the autumn, winter and spring hunting group. These bands each had a leader whose skills were based on experience, ability as a hunter and organizer, and possession of spiritual powers. Any decrease in his powers prompted his replacement or the dispersal of band members to other bands.<sup>121</sup>

Summer was an important season socially as it was the time when hunting bands (consisting of two to five men and families) congregated by the shores of a lake to form a regional band (consisting of up to several hundred people) who fished, hunted, traded and formed alliances.<sup>122</sup> This seasonal grouping was the largest cooperative unit in Northern Algonquian life.

The kinship system of the Western Woods Cree, based on the principle of adaptability, was a bilateral one which allowed for a maximum of affiliations; bilateral cross cousin

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

marriages were preferred. James Smith, in his study of the Western Woods Cree, suggests that such a system "maintained kinship ties between bands and ensured cooperation when needed."<sup>123</sup>

It is important to note that, as in the case of the Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux, no formal political institutions existed. The chief lacked consolidative power and Smith argues that leaders could influence but not control individual behaviour.

Cree culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries underwent significant changes. The first of these was the cessation of communal hunting of big game. Individual hunting and trapping were increasingly carried on by small cooperative groups made up of two to three families related through kinship or marriage. By the early twentieth century, all native log communities, existing as base camps, were oriented to traplines and trading posts or missions. With the spread of European technology and attendant cash economy, (fostered particularly by payments of treaty annuities), band membership grew increasingly stable and sedentary, defined also on the basis of those Indians admitted to specific treaties and reserves.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

Traditional leadership roles declined as the Hudson's Bay Company factor was the economic authority through his credit control. Although chiefs were recognized, or in effect sometimes chosen by the government in the formation of treaties, their powers limited them to the role of intermediaries between Euro-Canadians and natives. The method of their selection changed from consensual to elective, and traditional methods of social control yielded to those introduced by Euro-Canadian Indian Agents, police and others. As missionary activity fostered increased sedentarization, the mission complexes increasingly became the focal points of band life (to eventually evolve into villages), and at least nominal conversion to Christianity occurred.

#### BERENS RIVER

Berens River, which came under treaty 5A in 1875, had its Methodist mission established in 1874. Unfortunately information about the community life on this Reserve before 1925 is sparse. The Canada Sessional Papers contain some sketchy general reports sent to Ottawa by Indian agents who were anxious to condense as much material as possible into a short space. It is impossible to rely too closely upon these documents for accuracy as most of them were written by employees of the government who were probably interested in making themselves look competent and productive to their Ottawa employers. However, the reports provide some context

for other data concerning the day school.<sup>124</sup>

By 1890, the government and the missionaries had had fifteen years in which to implant themselves and their values in the Berens River community which was also experiencing other pressures against its traditional lifestyle. A Hudson's Bay Company post had been established at Berens River since 1824, although records show occupation of the post as early as 1814 by men sent from the Jack River mouth.<sup>125</sup> Government agents and missionaries writing between 1890 and 1925 seemed more critical in their judgement of the morals and actions of these Indians than they were of bands which were more recently exposed to the full force of Euro-Canadian culture (like the Nelson House band).

The Indians of Berens River during this period confronted economic changes. Although they still left the reserve for periods in which they hunted and fished, many depended increasingly upon commercial industries such as sawmills, cordwood camps and commercial fishing companies for employment, erected permanent houses, owned cattle, and attempted to plant gardens on land that was never meant for such endeavours (although some garden produce was possible on a small scale).

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<sup>124</sup> This also applies in the cases of Oxford House, Nelson House and Cross Lake.

<sup>125</sup> HBCA, District Reports, 1805-1825.

Between 1890 and 1899 the band experienced hard times. Fishing had long been the staple upon which these Indians depended the most important fish being whitefish, lake trout, pickerel and pike.<sup>126</sup> Hunting was also important to survival with moose and caribou heavily relied upon. Drastic depletion in fishing and hunting grounds prompted the Indian Agent, Ebenezer E. McColl, to report in 1890 that

now that fishing and hunting grounds are becoming depleted, Indians (who formerly only cultivated potatoes) are looking more to the Department of Indian Affairs for help.<sup>127</sup>

The Indian Agent reports for the following years illustrates the sad state at Berens River. Angus MacKay in 1891, described a severe winter and added that although they were self-supporting, Indians often did badly, especially when the hunt yielded poor results as it did in the winter of 1891. Agricultural endeavours were not producing favourable results either. MacKay reported that although the Indians were working hard on their gardens, "the wooded and rocky nature of the country impedes farming." Perhaps the best indication we have of the seriousness of this band's condition is the fact that they were putting so much effort into things which they had hitherto considered to be of little consequence. It is possible that time spent in caring for

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<sup>126</sup> Smith, "Western Woods Cree," p. 257.

<sup>127</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1890," Sessional Papers, 1892, vol. XXIV, no. 18, p. 202. The "help" he is referring to must have been sought in the form of seed for gardens.

marginally productive gardens, raising cattle and obeying Departmental "sanitary regulations" represented an effort to please Ottawa and secure more aid.<sup>128</sup>

Another unusually severe winter and a great deal of sickness occurred among the Indians in 1892.<sup>129</sup> Many reserves were adversely affected by these conditions and tension was mounting over fishing rights. In 1890, Indian Agent reports included brief mention of the fact that Berens River Indians were asking for government aid. They wanted to stop the large numbers of white men from sport fishing in Indian territories and discarding their catches in the bush at a time when Indian families were starving.<sup>130</sup>

In 1893, the Berens River Indians were further angered over the issue of fishing regulations, deeply resenting the requirement to obtain licences before being able to fish for domestic purposes.<sup>131</sup> This was a particularly bad year with another devastating winter, a poor fishing season, a bad epidemic of measles and most cattle dying of disease. Some starving Indians managed to find work in lumber camps and mills. An example of the typical official response to this

<sup>128</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1891," Sessional Papers, 1892, vol. XXV, no. 10.

<sup>129</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1892," Sessional Papers, 1893, vol. XXVI, no. 9.

<sup>130</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1890," Sessional Papers, 1891, vol. XXIV, no. 18, p. 202.

<sup>131</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1892," Sessional Papers, 1893, vol. XXVI, no. 9.

hardship can be found in the report of Superintendent Inspector E. McColl who wrote:

In some respects the Indian is superior to the European. His perceptive faculties are wonderfully developed, nothing escapes the searching glance of his eagle eye and his memory is so retentive...but in other respects he is inferior. His reasoning power is not of the highest order [i.e. it is different from European "reasoning power"] and it is therefore most difficult to convince him of anything by argument. He does not possess that energy and perseverance which constitute the mainspring of prosperity...hence he never accumulates anything beyond his immediate need and is therefore constantly on the verge of starvation. The more assistance rendered him the more helpless and dependent he becomes.<sup>132</sup>

This passage painfully illuminates the cultural clash that occurred continually between white and Cree/Ojibwa societies. Northern Algonquian Indians had built a culture inside the parameters of a subsistence economy over several hundred years. A major premise of such a lifestyle is that one does not exploit one's environment any more than is necessary for survival. Building up vast stores for the distant future ruins the delicate environmental balance of the deceptively indestructible subarctic. The Indians of Berens River and surrounding areas must have been experiencing a growing feeling of being backed into a corner. Immersed in their own deep rooted culture, they were being driven by privation to accept the offerings of people who held them in contempt and demanded a dear price in return for their aid--

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<sup>132</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1893," Sessional Papers, 1894, vol. XXVII, no. 10, p. 46. Ebenezer McColl had evidently been promoted from Indian Agent to Superintendent Inspector between 1890 and 1893.

the price of assimilation.

Hunting conditions improved slightly over the last half of the decade; the Indian Agent reported that moose, caribou and rabbits were available "in fair amounts," although apparently traders were "not paying so well."<sup>133</sup> Fishing continued to be meagre and more Berens River Indians were working in lumber camps, mills and fisheries. Health was poor and Indians were ravaged by scrofula and tuberculosis.

The Indian Agent's report in the Sessional Papers published in 1900 mentioned poor health among the Berens River Indians whose principal occupations were listed as "hunting, fishing and gardening"; the report noted a "fair amount" of game and fur bearing animals. The Agent commended the band for their "warm comfortable very clean buildings" and their "marked progress" in becoming industrious, temperate and self-sustaining.<sup>134</sup>

Unfortunately, Methodist missionary sources are not particularly forthcoming on the matter of Berens River community life in the 1890s. The reports in the Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church<sup>135</sup> made only brief mention of additions to the Church. In 1897, for ex-

<sup>133</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1896," Sessional Papers, 1897, vol. XXXI, no. 14.

<sup>134</sup> "Report of L. J. Levesque, 1899," Sessional Papers, 1900, vol. XXXIV, no. 14.

<sup>135</sup> (United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario).

ample, J. A. McLachlan, the missionary at Berens River wrote, "Last winter this mission enjoyed a gracious revival during which most of our young people professed conversion."<sup>136</sup> These reports are too sketchy to be of much use; and further each missionary seemed anxious only to make the most of any examples of "progress" rather than present a full account. Finally, we do not know the extent to which editors of the printed texts cut or reshaped material.

Between 1900 and 1925 Indians at Berens River became increasingly involved in commercial industries. The Reverend Inspector John Semmens reported in 1902 that the Indians of the Berens River band were

in excellent condition due to the good fishing industry and extensive lumber interests of Captain Robinson of Selkirk.<sup>137</sup>

Noting that most Indians were connected with one or the other of these pursuits, he listed the Dominion Fish Company, the Northern Fish Company, Ewing and Fryer, and the J. K. McKenzie Fish Company as dominating the fishing industry.

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<sup>136</sup> "Report of J. A. McLachlan, 1897-8," Annual Report of Missionary Society, p. xlix.

<sup>137</sup> "Report of John Semmens, 1901," Sessional Papers, 1902, vol. XXXVI, no. 1. Rev. John Semmens began his work in northern Manitoba as a Methodist missionary and went on to become Inspector of Indian Agencies for the Department of Indian Affairs. He was in a rare position of understanding the aims and philosophies of both the government and the Missionary Society.

Between 1900 and 1917 (when individual reports were no longer included in the Sessional Papers), accounts generally agreed that the "moral standards" of the Berens River Indians "could be better." Criticism was moderate however. The Indians of this reserve seemed to be on an even keel; fishing and freighting for the Hudson's Bay Company in summer, hunting and trapping in the winter. It would seem that whatever passive resistance existed in the 1890s (such as putting little effort into agricultural endeavours and the maintenance of buildings and livestock and the retention of a nomadic lifestyle) faded over years of privation. Government officials still complained that "these Indians [applied] very little energy to cultivating the ground" and that "their other occupations take them away every year when they should be at home looking after their garden plot."<sup>138</sup> The following assessment made in 1905 may contain some accuracy, however:

The Indians here are an intelligent lot and have largely adopted methods of the white man in manner of living.... They make progress with hardly any help from the government.<sup>139</sup>

The last statement holds the key. The Indians of Berens River had been "wards" of the Dominion government since 1875 and were faced with the problem of increasing food shortages. White men were permanent "fixtures" and the cards of

<sup>138</sup> "Report of S. J. Jackson, 1904," Sessional Papers, 1905, vol. XXXIX, no. 11, p. 118.

<sup>139</sup> "Report of Neil Gilmour, 1905," Sessional Papers, 1906, vol. XL, no. 12.

power were stacked in their favour. It seems clear that these Indians chose to take in stride those Euro-Canadian institutions that were unavoidable and move on within the new white world. They participated in commercial industries, erected permanent buildings and raised stock with dignity. This put them in control of these endeavours to a large extent and removed them from an intolerable position of pauperism and helplessness.

#### CROSS LAKE

Cross Lake, which like Berens River came under treaty in 1875, was without an ordained resident missionary until the coming of native Methodist preacher Edward Paupanekis in 1895.<sup>140</sup> Its community development was extremely similar to that of the Berens River band with the notable exception that there was markedly better fishing at Cross Lake. The Cree of this community seem to have come to terms with changing conditions and the continual, intrusive presence of the white man in the same manner--not endeavouring to "become white" but learning to survive in a foreign game that could only be played by white man's rules. Besides showing the patronizing manner and lack of respect typical of Euro-Canadian attitudes toward natives at this time, the following document helps illustrate the state of these Indians. In 1915, Inspector J. R. Bunn reported that the (unnamed)

<sup>140</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years. Edward Paupanekis was converted at Norway House by Methodist missionary Egerton Ryerson Young.

Cross Lake Chief was

upset--he said it was very difficult for the band to make a living this winter with prices of fur so low and no labour to be had. I pointed out that if only they had been diligent and energetic...they would not have any destitution. I told them there is plenty of Labour in the Mission and the Department wasn't going to help anyone who was lazy and did not make an effort.<sup>141</sup>

Trapped by poor economic conditions and dependent on Ottawa for aid, the Indians had no choice but to at least passively go through the motions of cooperation with white dictums. The mission "Labour" during the winter probably consisted of janitorial and other jobs which were not suited to Cree skills or interests. Between 1900 and 1925, the Cross Lake band, as in the case of Berens River Indians, were sufficiently acculturated to operate at some level within parameters set by Euro-Canadians.

#### OXFORD HOUSE

The Oxford House and Nelson House bands provide interesting contrasts with the previous bands and each other. Although a Methodist mission was established at Oxford House by native preacher Henry B. Steinhauer in 1848, the band did not enter into a treaty with the Dominion government until 1908. The Oxford House band, unlike the Berens River and Cross Lake bands,

is the result of historic late eighteenth and early nineteenth century interaction between the fur trade and native groups and was not an in situ

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<sup>141</sup> PAM, RG10, DIA, vol.6230, File 508-1, part 1.

development of the aboriginal population.<sup>142</sup>

This band is a dramatic historical example of Indian/white contact in the fur trade era. After Oxford House was established in 1798 as a Hudson's Bay Company supply depot,<sup>143</sup> a symbiotic relationship emerged between the company and the Cree who began to focus their activities upon the post.

After three decades of mutual dependence, the relationship shifted to place the traders in a dominant position. Although the Cree had not lost their land by the 1820s, years of intense contact with the Europeans had rendered them increasingly dependent on European provisions. After the fur trade monopoly in 1821, the situation worsened to the point where Indians were bound to the post by debt. The Oxford House Cree grew increasingly specialized in trapping (in order to meet their advances) and paid less attention to the requirements of survival. The upshot was increasing dependence on Euro-Canadians during the nineteenth century (especially after 1821). Involved in the fur trade (Oxford House was Head Post in the district by the 1890s), the economic base of these Cree was affected by the decrease of furs.<sup>144</sup> While this case is similar to the situations of Cree Indians at other Hudson's Bay Company posts, Christo-

<sup>142</sup> Hanks, "Swampy Cree," p. 103.

<sup>143</sup> This is because of the need for native labour in transporting goods to and from the interior via the Hayes River.

<sup>144</sup> PAM, HBCA, J. K. McDonald, "Oxford House District Report, 1891," B156/e/12.

pher Hanks maintains that the decline was made more devastating for the Cree at Oxford House due to their heavy dependence on the fur trade and their large population.<sup>145</sup>

The 1891 district report by J. K. McDonald, Chief Factor of the post, supports Hanks' conclusions and further illuminates the subordinate position of the Cree there as well as the conditions under which they lived.

Live stock [sic] decreased 25% and a further decrease on that remaining will take place this Fall.... There are less opportunities of showing a favourable result at this Post than at the others.... It has not such a good Fur country surrounding it, while the men are not such good hunters, a very great many of them having been brought up as labourers, runners, etc. employment of this sort, which used to be had is now all but gone, and the only resource left them is the hunt at which many of them are not skilfull.

This supports the earlier conclusion regarding the Oxford House Crees' specialization in narrow areas. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, less attention was paid to such requirements of survival as hunting; the generation occupying the post in 1890 seem to have largely lost touch with the art.<sup>146</sup>

In his contribution to the Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, F. G. Stevens wrote of the Oxford House Indians in 1898:

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<sup>145</sup> Hanks, "Swampy Cree," p. 111.

<sup>146</sup> PAM, HBCA, J. K. McDonald, "Oxford House District Report, 1890," B156/e/12.

Here we find a people sunken to what seems to us almost the last stages of life, both temporal and spiritual. We say sunken for we believe it was not always so at Oxford Lake. Great changes have come to our people. They are on the verge of starvation and general destitution and this seems to affect their spiritual life.<sup>147</sup>

This is one of the earliest significant Methodist records pertaining to these Indians.

Most documents concerning this band allude to their desperate state. For example, a letter to the Department of Indian Affairs dated 1880, possibly from the chief,<sup>148</sup> requested a treaty since

the Indians, who are unable to help themselves are in a worse state than formerly when they received gratuities from the honourable Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>149</sup>

In 1891, another letter to Ottawa, this time from Indian Agent Angus MacKay, discussed the wish of Oxford House Indians to come under a treaty: "They complain of being very poor and plead for help from the Queen."<sup>150</sup> In 1902, Rev. John Semmens wrote to the Department, stating that the Oxford House Indians greatly desired a treaty with the government on the basis of

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<sup>147</sup> "Report of F. G. Stevens, 1897-98," Annual Report of Missionary Society, p. xlix.

<sup>148</sup> The name was torn off the document.

<sup>149</sup> St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba, RG 10, Black Series, vol. 3722, file 24,161.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 November 1891.

1) the poverty of the people compared with those under treaty.

2) the remoteness of their country from present lines of trade making it impossible to earn anything and occasioning high prices of life's necessities and an utter scarcity of the best, most desirable clothing.<sup>151</sup>

Despite the fact that several Oxford House Indians died of starvation in the winter of 1901,<sup>152</sup> the Department made the same reply that it gave the Chief in 1880: the Oxford House Indians were well located since they dwelt on land that was too poor to attract Euro-Canadian settlement. Therefore there was no reason to remove the Oxford House Indian title and no need for a treaty with this band.<sup>153</sup>

Despite a scarcity of sources, these few pieces of correspondence allow certain conclusions. The Oxford House band was experiencing poverty and dependence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Further, the Department of Indian Affairs disregarded the band's problems. It can be suggested that Ottawa was selective in its professions of paternalistic interest in the welfare of its "Indian children." The Berens River and Cross Lake bands had been moved into a reserve situation because their land was desirable and in exchange the government professed a commitment to their welfare. The Oxford House Indians possessed nothing which the government wanted, hence their poverty was disre-

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

garded. Alexander Sutherland received the following typical reply when he wrote to Ottawa in 1901 asking that the Oxford House school be opened: "We have had no record of any school returns for twenty-five years and as these Indians are outside the treaty...no provisions can be made."<sup>154</sup>

The Oxford House band finally entered into a treaty with the Dominion in 1908. The period from 1908 to 1915 showed signs of rapid "white" community development, perhaps facilitated by the fact that the band had originated because of white activity, had been in contact with Euro-Canadian culture for several generations, had become dependent upon European technology and had become impoverished. In December, 1910, Oxford House Chief Jeremiah Chubb and Councillors (Robert Chubb and James Natlaway) wrote to the Department, signing their names with an 'X'. They were anxious to acquire a school house, a teacher, a resident doctor, ("a great number of our people are sick and we have many deaths and a number of lives could be saved if we had a Doctor here") cattle, ten scythes and ten hay forks, saws to build wood houses, twenty spades, twenty hoes, and garden seeds.<sup>155</sup>

This is not to imply that the Oxford House Indians "became white." It rather illustrates the way in which this particular group coped with their changing environment. It

<sup>154</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, file 530-5, part 1.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

shows their endeavours to recover from their sharp fall, which was different from the gradual decline that occurred in the lives of the Berens River and Cross Lake bands.

By 1914, the Oxford House Indians were engaging in freighting in the summer and hunting and trapping in the winter. They had very few permanent buildings: living in tents in the summer and camps in the winter may have contributed to their increasingly improved health. Although they were assessed by the Indian Agent as being temperate and good workers, they were also frowned upon for not being moralistic and taking no thought of the morrow.<sup>156</sup> These Indians were obviously no white men.

#### NELSON HOUSE

The "chief characteristic" listed for the Nelson House band in 1914 by the Indian Agent was independence.<sup>157</sup> This term is extremely representative of the character of their community life from 1890 to 1925. A Methodist mission was opened at Nelson House by the Rev. John Semmens in 1874. The band entered into a treaty with the government in 1908.

As in the case of Oxford House, the Sessional Papers contain almost no references to Nelson House. Some shreds of information drawn from the Department of Indian Affairs Re-

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<sup>156</sup> "Report of J. G. Stewart, 1914," Sessional Papers, 1915, vol. XLVIII, no. 23, p. 103.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

ords and the memoirs of S. D. Gaudin, Methodist missionary at Nelson House from 1891 to 1906, are useful in allowing a partial reconstruction of Nelson House community life as it existed from 1890 to 1925.

The Nelson House band is unique among the four cases studied here. These Indians were still making a good living from the hunt between 1890 and 1920. Consequently, there are several references made by teachers and missionaries to their excellent health and pleasant attitudes toward the Euro-Canadian presence on the reserve. Of the Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House Indians, the last were the most untouched by Euro-Canadians, the most unaffected by white ways and the most independent of Euro-Canadian technology. They were in an economic position that allowed them to maintain a large degree of freedom to live their life in traditional fashion.

Perhaps this is why white nurses, teachers, missionaries and Indian Agents found this band to be so amiable. They were not ravaged by starvation. They were in a position of retaining much of their Indian lifestyle.

This is not to say that Euro-Canadian culture had no effect on Nelson House citizens. The band seems to have been supportive of the school on the reserve, sending their children to learn reading and writing whenever the family was

living in the vicinity.<sup>158</sup> It is of great significance that the band returned to the mission every summer since traditionally Cree Indians were wont to form a regional band on the shore of a lake each summer. This congregating around the mission post shows the influence of white involvement in the local Cree culture.

It is also significant that Nelson House Indians used the Euro-Canadian nurse on the reserve instead of relying solely on the medicine man. S. D. Gaudin maintained that the Indians frequently required the services of his wife once they "learned that the lady of the mission fields was a skillful doctor/nurse."<sup>159</sup> It would also seem that the Nelson House Indians were not averse to including missionaries in at least a few areas of problem solving. As Gaudin recorded,

Sometimes difficult situations were brought before me to be straightened out such as trouble between a husband and wife. There was no tribunal to which they could bring their difficulties and so they appealed to their missionary.<sup>160</sup>

Existing documents illustrate the effects of white culture on these Indians, yet show that the band was also fairly immersed in Indian ways, not driven to take up agriculture nor to reduce its trapping areas. In his report of 2

<sup>158</sup> For more information on this, see Chapter IV, below.

<sup>159</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years, p. 64.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 30. Of course it is impossible to discern how often this kind of situation occurred. Was it representative of everyday life around the mission or was it a case of Gaudin writing under the hopeful illusion that he was a guiding light?

November, 1909, John Semmens, Inspector of Indian Agencies, wrote:

It should be explained that many of the men of this band are hunters who do not locate near the mission or for that matter anywhere else. They are moving from one place to the other and are known as "Wood Indians," men who live in their tents and take their families with them and spend only a short time in the summer at the Hudson Bay Post or near one of the mission stations.<sup>161</sup>

Writing of the period 1892-1906, Gaudin described the Indians of Nelson House as being "above all else trappers." Many were "great hunters."<sup>162</sup> In his descriptions of band life among these Indians however, Gaudin also shows that Euro-Canadian culture had crept into the lives of these people. By 1892, the hunters had long been accustomed to the Hudson's Bay Company system of giving debt. As well, from mid-June to mid-August, the Company employed Nelson House men to freight supplies from Norway House via York boats. Of their work Gaudin said:

no man ever did such heavy work for such comparatively small pay as did these Nelson House men on their freighting trips.... Talk about lazy Indians? Even now it makes me indignant.<sup>163</sup>

Gaudin also noted the good health, friendly attitude and economic independence of this band. "Everything is pleasant in our work...." he wrote in his contribution to the Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in

<sup>161</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

<sup>162</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years, p. 76.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

1904-5.

The people have done well supplying wood for the school and church though they have been intensely busy in their own work and doing well. Our sermons are well attended and people...at least appear to be interested.<sup>164</sup>

Gaudin also frequently mentioned instances when Nelson House Indians generously donated money and furs for the church.<sup>165</sup> This reflects both a favourable financial state for the Nelson House band and a good relationship with the Methodists; the latter possibly occurring because of the former.

In a report to Ottawa in 1913, the Nelson House teacher, Rev. Henry T. Wright, complained about the fact that

the teacher is left alone on the reserve over half the time [because]...at the last of March, all Indians leave the village, first spring hunt then they return for a few weeks, until treaty is paid, then the men work in boats for the Hudson's Bay Company, the women and children all leave for the fishing grounds, returning, just long enough to take their fall outfit, then they all leave here, some to return, about the first of November, and others not until near Christmas.... The children are always clean and well clothed.<sup>166</sup>

This poorly written letter, besides revealing something about the competence of the writer, indicates that in 1913, Nelson House Indians were still largely living as Indians. Rev. Wright must have been a poor teacher judging by the facts that his letter was badly written and he was obviously

<sup>164</sup> Annual Report of Missionary Society, p. xxii.

<sup>165</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years, pp. 120-123.

<sup>166</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

less successful than his predecessors in drawing students to the school during the summer, when most families were on the reserve. The fact that their children were well clothed suggests that they were successful in their endeavours.

In 1919, Alice H. Jackson, a missionary nurse who had worked with the Nelson House band for seven years, wrote to the Department:

I...am leaving here the first of June for rest and a change.... I have enjoyed my work among the Nelson House Indians, have found them kind and grateful for the assistance given. I believe they are the most healthy Band of Indians I have met in my 22 years of service.<sup>167</sup>

Perhaps the most revealing document regarding the situation of the Nelson House Indians is the report of Indian Agent James Graham Stewart (former Hudson's Bay Company officer) for 1912. He attributed the band's excellent health to their tent homes, which were used summer and winter. Listing their occupations as "freighting in the summer by canoes and York boats and trapping in the winter," Stewart described them as temperate people possessing good morals.<sup>168</sup> It is almost unheard of to find a report in the Sessional Papers which is uncomplaining about Indian morals. This "morality" was possibly due in part to a lack of white corruptive elements in the environment of the Nelson House Indians, and the health, prosperity and evident satisfaction

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> "Report of J. G. Stewart, 1911," Sessional Papers, 1912, vol. XLVIII, no. 23, p. 102.

which were part of their lives.

## Chapter IV

### THE INDIAN DAY SCHOOLS

#### THE FORMATION OF THE DAY SCHOOLS

To set scenes for study, it is necessary to establish what the schools of Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House were actually like in appearance. In the case of Berens River, the Department of Indian Affairs records provide a rather hazy view. It seems to have been assumed that the condition of the school was either well known and taken for granted or not cared about. Superiors within the Department for the most part, seem to have had too much work to do to establish a clear mental picture of some tiny school in the middle of nowhere.

Berens River school records begin around 1910 and we have some sketchy reports of Indian Agents.<sup>169</sup> Early clues to the deplorable condition of the building can be found in repeated pleas for a new school house. The school was not accessible to many students on the reserve since it was not situated in the middle of the property but rather off to one side. However, a letter written in 1936 provides the best

<sup>169</sup> For example, the report written in 1912 by Inspector Bunn is brief and unrevealing--Berens River school is "satisfactory." Another typical report was submitted in 1915 by Inspector Carter--work in the school was "good." See: PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

picture of the condition of the school building. Writing to the Minister of the Interior, Reverend J. W. Niddrie explained:

Twenty years ago, the Indian Department created a schoolhouse here 20' x 30' with logs for foundation and no concrete. Walls were of siding outside and unseasoned rough lumber inside. Building paper (long since rotten and eaten by mice) was put between.... For nearly 20 years our children have eaten their meals on the same desk as they study on. Children roast and freeze at the same time.... The foundation is rotten and the walls are giving way, having been held together for some time by an iron rod across the inside.<sup>170</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the day school itself appears in the records as early as 1907. There seems to have been a great desire for the formation of a boarding school on the reserve. Inspectors and teachers were vocal about this--and so were the Indians themselves. Three years after a 1907 report by Inspector Reverend John Semmens<sup>171</sup> a letter was forwarded to Ottawa signed with an 'X' by Chief Jacob Berens and his two councillors: William Everitt and James McDonald.

The day school at Berens River, according to the chief's and councillors' letter, was not fulfilling the Indians' needs. The community wanted a boarding school:

Fishing and hunting, the occupations we make our living, takes so many of us away--sometimes for months at a time, that our children have no chance

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> He strongly advised "discontinuance of schools of day school class and substitution of boarding schools." PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

to attend the school regularly. In winter, the most distant from the school are often deterred from attending. For 18 years we have been agitating for a boarding school. Even so long ago we realized the need. And now we feel it more than ever before.<sup>172</sup>

The letter went on to assure unanimous support of the Indians for such a school and emphasized the fact that the band was willing to devote 160 acres of land to the site of a new school. Of interest is the stress the letter places on requesting that any new boarding school be run "under the auspices of the Methodist Church." It is possible that the Methodists were influential in the actual typing of the letter (since the signatures were signed with an 'X') and it is doubtful that the Indians actually composed the letter themselves. However, since the chief was a Methodist, it is not surprising that he should want a new school which would be affiliated with this denomination. We will never be certain of how strongly the band really felt about the plans for a boarding school.<sup>173</sup>

Did the chief and councillors know what they were signing? Is it possible that the Berens River Indians were so convinced of the "superiority" of white man's education that they would plan to discontinue teaching their children the skills of hunting and fishing in the wilderness--so vital for survival? It is probable, given the nature of the Ber-

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> This school was never built as it was blocked for years by the government until the idea died in frustration.

ens River community at this time, that the Indians of this band realized that white men and their ways were to be a permanent fixture in their lives. Consequently a boarding school on the reserve itself might have been seen as a means of allowing children to attend school and allowing parents to get on with making a living in the bush. At the same time, children would be in close proximity to parents. This point is significant as, in his report for 1895, Indian Agent A. MacKay mentioned that the Indians of Cross Lake and Berens River were "all being told that they should send their children to the Brandon Industrial school but they won't." The Brandon school was over 200 miles to the southwest and parents had no desire to be thus separated from their children.<sup>174</sup> While white men may have conceived of boarding or industrial schools as the most effective means of assimilation, it seems clear that Indians viewed them as, at best, a convenient means of coping with Euro-Canadian demands<sup>175</sup> and had no taste for sending children great distances to attend them.

Poor school buildings were typical of all reserves studied with the exception of Oxford House, which had none. Indians there began appealing to the government for a school

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<sup>174</sup> "Report of A. McKay, 1895," Sessional Papers, 1896, vol. XXIX, no. 14.

<sup>175</sup> Berens River and Cross Lake Indians had undoubtedly learned that satisfying Euro-Canadian wishes to some degree was useful in obtaining aid during bad winters and poor hunting or fishing seasons.

in 1910. By 1912, when existing Department of Indian Affairs records for this reserve end, there was still no school building at Oxford House.<sup>176</sup> Cross Lake School files contain many references to the rundown condition of that school between 1900, when records begin, and 1925.<sup>177</sup>

The Methodists began fresh agitation for a day school at Nelson House in 1899.<sup>178</sup> Departmental correspondence contains numerous exchanges between the Rev. Alexander Sutherland and J. D. McLean. In 1899 McLean explained that

there are 115 Roman Catholic children [in the Nelson House area] and the Anglicans already have six schools around the Hudson's Bay district of Moosonee,

concluding that one more day school added to the area, Methodist or otherwise, would be a waste.<sup>179</sup> Sutherland replied that there were already 80 Methodist children who would attend a day school under the auspices of that church. In 1900 the Methodists went ahead and established a school

<sup>176</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, file 530-5, part 1; and file 530-1, part 1.

<sup>177</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.

<sup>178</sup> Methodist interest in schooling at Nelson House goes back to the 1860s and 70s, when the local convert, Sandy Hartie (taught by Egerton Ryerson Young), began teaching his people there in the 1870s. Correspondence with Ottawa ebbed during the last decade of the century, until 1899, when it increased again.

<sup>179</sup> Moosonee is entirely irrelevant to the Nelson House area--being hundreds of miles to the southeast. McLean must have observed the locations in question on a map and misjudged the vast distance between them. It is another example of the Ottawa bureaucratic workers' lack of understanding of the territory (not to mention situations and people) of the north.

without a grant. Classes were held in the church<sup>180</sup> until 1904 when Ottawa gave Gaudin a grant of 150 dollars to build a new schoolhouse with the dimensions of sixteen feet by twenty-four feet.<sup>181</sup> By 1912, however, this building was in poor shape and basically undesirable. The Indian Agent reported "The school at this [reserve] is a very poor building. It is far too small for the number of children that could go to school."<sup>182</sup>

As in the case of Berens River, the Nelson House band expressed a desire for a boarding school. On 26 August 1907, Chief Joseph Hartie<sup>183</sup> and two Nelson House band councillors, Murdock Hartie and Peter Moose, wrote to the Minister of the Interior. They had heard there were going to be treaty negotiations in the near future and that one clause would deal with education. At a council meeting it had been decided that they should ask for a boarding school to be built on their reserve.

The work done in the past in our day school has been faithful. But in the face of the best efforts, the Day School has proved...a most inefficient factor from an educational point of view. This school has been centrally located but this is

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<sup>180</sup> This building, which was not equipped for schooling, possessing no desks nor blackboard, was cold and uncomfortable. It took two stoves to heat it and the missionary, S. D. Gaudin, often found it difficult to get much help with hauling wood fuel.

<sup>181</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6241, file 527-5, part 1.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Joseph Hartie was a close relative of Nelson House Chief Sandy Hartie.

of very little real assistance. The dwellings are so scattered that it is hard to get to them in winter. The Day School can only be kept open in winter as little children are not allowed to cross the lake in bark canoes. Only a few children of school age are around during the months when the school is open. Their fathers are hunters and the hunting grounds are miles away and they take their children with them.<sup>184</sup>

This letter reveals the extent to which the traditional culture was imbedded in the Nelson House band's lifestyle; it contrasts sharply with the situation at Oxford House where trapping areas had, by this time, shrunk to the degree that men often did not leave the post at all.<sup>185</sup>

The councillors' appeal seems to have an explanation similar to the Berens River Indians' appeal for a boarding school. The day school was cold, poorly equipped, difficult to reach in freezing winters when young children were forced to cross the lake and impossible to reach in summer. Parents were undoubtedly receiving pressure from Indian Agents and missionaries to ensure that their children attended school and it is probable that they desired their children to be literate. Proof of this can be found in a letter from Chief Patrick Constant of the Pas Indian Reserve dated 2 August 1924, and written on behalf of the Nelson House Indians who apparently still desired a boarding school:

They realize the importance of having their children educated and find the day school does not in any way supply this need. They want their children well educated so they can go out and take up

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<sup>184</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

<sup>185</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, file 530-3, part 1.

their place earning a livelihood among the white people....<sup>186</sup>

It would appear that these Indians believed that with the prospect of survival from the hunt diminishing it would one day be necessary for their children to venture into the world of the white man. If a day school would not teach children to deal with encroaching Euro-Canadian culture, perhaps a boarding school would. The Cree probably saw such a school as a simple solution to the problem. They undoubtedly did not realize that the main intention behind these schools was to rid children of every shred of Indian culture they possessed.<sup>187</sup>

#### INDIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

We have very few clues about exactly how important the issues of day schools and white education were to parents on the Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House reserves. The records contain almost no input from natives. It is also dangerous to rely to any great degree on Euro-Canadian reports of how the Indians really felt on any given issue. Often such reports were products of frustration and misunderstanding about Indian ways. Some reports regarding the Indians' wishes may also have been contrived in hopes of swaying Ottawa's opinion. An example of this appears in

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<sup>186</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

<sup>187</sup> See Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'," for an excellent discussion of Indian boarding schools.

John W. Niddrie's report to Ottawa of 31 December, 1910:

These [Oxford House] people are well disposed towards education and would welcome anything done in the line of education in the rising generation....<sup>188</sup>

We cannot assume Niddrie to be completely innocent of "using" Indian opinion to influence Ottawa to support Methodist work financially.

The letters from the Nelson House and Berens River bands regarding boarding schools are some of the few extant examples of direct Indian involvement. Even they, of course, cannot be taken at face value. Their authors may not have had complete understanding of what the presence of a boarding school would do to their community, especially in the case of the Nelson House band which had been so removed from such issues. We do not know, either, to what extent they reflected committed conviction or missionary manipulation. In the case of Oxford House another example of Indian involvement exists in the form of the letter written to Ottawa in 1910 asking for the erection of a school.<sup>189</sup> Cross Lake affords no examples of Indian involvement. This band's attitude toward white educational attempts and the Methodist day school is only hinted at in the repeated references to the lack of interest that the Indians displayed toward such matters.<sup>190</sup> The picture painted is one of ambivalence at

<sup>188</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, File 530-1, part 1.

<sup>189</sup> See Chapter III above.

<sup>190</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.

most.

The records afford only one other example of the expression of native opinion. This incident occurred in 1917 when Chief Jacob Berens of Berens River apparently expressed the desire to have a new teacher appointed following the resignation of the former teacher, Mr. Percy Jones. The chief requested that the new teacher be experienced and preferably older. The next teacher hired--extremely quickly--was an older widow.<sup>191</sup> It may be a little more than coincidental that the Chief's request for an "older" teacher was filled so quickly. It is possible that the Methodists intended to hire an older woman and encouraged this communication from the chief.<sup>192</sup> It must also be remembered that, in this case, the chief's wishes were conveyed to the Department through the Inspector of Indian Agencies (Bunn). Jacob Berens did not write a letter himself or sign an "X" on any document.

Perhaps the fact that active Indian involvement in the schools was rare is indicative of the attitudes of these bands toward Euro-Canadian educational efforts. The record allows us few concrete insights into the collective minds of the Indians and so it is necessary to read between the lines. Poorly built as they were, none of the schools stud-

<sup>191</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2. Unfortunately, records do not reveal the name of this teacher nor the extent of her experience in the area.

<sup>192</sup> This whole episode provoked much disturbance since the Department had not even been aware of the fact that Mr. Jones had ever resigned.

ied ever "mysteriously" burned down--however, every year several requests were made for panes of glass. Windows were clearly being broken; perhaps accidentally or by students of the schools, perhaps in the cases of Berens River, Cross Lake and Nelson House, by students from Roman Catholic schools which were in fierce, bitter competition with Methodist schools.

#### ATTENDANCE

One of the best clues we have regarding just how the schools fitted into the Indian world on the reserves is attendance. Over the years, teachers were rewarded with higher salaries if they could keep up attendance figures.<sup>193</sup> Inspectors' reports for schools contain numerous references to poor attendance in the day schools. The Methodists tried numerous schemes to get more children to school--everything from serving a midday meal to, in the case of Berens River, begging the government for horses and a sleigh to transport children.<sup>194</sup> Ottawa's position was clear: no extra money was to be spent to induce attendance. In 1931, an excellent expression of the Departmental attitude was communicated to the Methodists:

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<sup>193</sup> It must be remembered, however, that poor attendance was a problem throughout Manitoba schools from 1890 until the establishment of compulsory education. Poor attendance was not confined to Indian schools. See Wilson, "Development of Education," p. 426.

<sup>194</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

If the Department is going to furnish money for a school, the least the parents can do is take responsibility to see that their children attend.<sup>195</sup>

Berens River teachers and inspectors lamented the poor attendance between 1890 and 1925. "Very irregular attendance,"<sup>196</sup> reported Indian Agent A. MacKay in 1894. A frustrated Rev. Thomas Neville reported to the Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in 1905, "Schools on the Reserve...seem to be a failure. Children do not attend...."<sup>197</sup> It is interesting that Indian Agents attributed any increases in attendance at Berens River to the teacher. E. McColl, the Inspector of Indian Agencies, wrote of the Berens River teacher (unnamed) in 1901 that "The large attendance she has is an evidence of their [the Indians'] appreciation of her."<sup>198</sup>

Records referred frequently to poor attendance at the Cross Lake day school. Once again attendance appeared to be linked to teaching quality. In 1890, the Indian Agent from Cross Lake reported that the school there was doing badly,

owing in great measure to the small and irregular attendance of the pupils, partly in consequence of the indifferent and perfunctory manner of the

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1893," Sessional Papers, 1894, vol. XXVII, no. 10.

<sup>197</sup> "Report of Thomas Neville, 1905," Annual Report of Missionary Society, p. xxiv.

<sup>198</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1901," Sessional Papers, 1902, vol. XXXV, no. 11.

teacher.<sup>199</sup>

"Very irregular attendance" was reported by Cross Lake in 1892.<sup>200</sup> It is interesting to note that after another bad attendance report for the Cross Lake school submitted by the Indian Agent in 1909,<sup>201</sup> the report for 1911 was markedly improved with the cause now being attributed to a good teacher. C. C. Calverley wrote that

The day school is well attended. The parents are interested in the school and they have a very good teacher. The result is very satisfactory.<sup>202</sup>

Nelson House seems to have shared the Berens River and Cross Lake day schools' poor attendance records. The records are filled with complaints. For example, in 1913 the teacher, Rev. Henry T. Wright, wrote:

There are 45 pupils on the roll.... The children live far from the school, attendance is very irregular and anything but punctual.<sup>203</sup>

Oxford House records are the most brief and unrevealing of any of the four day schools studied. Very little attention seems to have been paid to this band, members of which were largely left on their own to sink or swim in their des-

<sup>199</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1890," Sessional Papers, 1891, vol. XXII, no. 18.

<sup>200</sup> "Report of A. MacKay, 1892," Sessional Papers, 1893, vol. XXVI, no. 9.

<sup>201</sup> Sessional Papers, 1909, vol. XLIII, no. 15.

<sup>202</sup> "Report of C. C. Calverley, 1910," Sessional Papers, 1911, vol. XLIV, no. 17.

<sup>203</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

perate struggle against poverty. It is significant that there is almost no mention of attendance problems occurring because parents were away on hunting and fishing trips.<sup>204</sup> Attendance seems to have been necessarily low "owing to the great distance which they [the children] live from the Methodist mission."<sup>205</sup> Summer attendance was usually better since during the winter, Indians often retired to their houses for shelter. By 1911, however, the school at Oxford House seems to have secured itself to some extent in the community. The Indian Agent's report made mention of the good attendance and marked progress being made at the day school.<sup>206</sup>

Attendance problems were not unique to the schools studied here. In 1918, the report of the General Board of Missions cited "inability to enforce regulations respecting attendance" as being one of the drawbacks in day school success.<sup>207</sup> As has been noted, poor school attendance was often blamed on teachers. Deputy Superintendent General Duncan Scott wrote to Reverend G. Baker, Secretary for the General Board of Missions of the Methodist Church in 1919:

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<sup>204</sup> The hunt was no longer very rewarding for this band. (See Chapter III above).

<sup>205</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, file 530-1, part 1.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> "Report of the General Board of Missions, 1918," General Conference Journals, p. 229.

So far as the [Indian] day schools are concerned, I have noticed that the best attendance and ultimate results are secured only by those teachers who are competent to arouse and retain the interests of parents and pupils.<sup>208</sup>

There were several other explanations for low attendance which must be considered, however. Because their "wild untutored homelife" was usually preferable to the restricted routine of a day school, Indian children attended only irregularly, explained one report.<sup>209</sup> J. A. Macdonald's 1883 report in the Sessional Papers explained that not only were Indians too concerned with hunting to achieve regular attendance at school--but there was also an "inherent conviction" among the Indians that a child's education that differed from that of the parents' would separate the family in the hereafter.<sup>210</sup> In an earlier report, Macdonald attributed poor attendance to bad roads and long distances between home and school.<sup>211</sup> Finally, Duncan C. Scott, Superintendent of Indian education wrote in 1910 that

many Indians are extremely poor. Even if they desired their children to be educated, they could not afford to give them proper clothing or food for a noonday lunch. They are often too proud to send their children to school in tattered and insufficient clothing.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6032, file 150-40A, part 1.

<sup>209</sup> "Report of L. Vankoughnet, 1889," Sessional Papers, 1890, vol. X, no. 15, p. 83.

<sup>210</sup> "Report of J. A. Macdonald, 1883," Sessional Papers, 1884, vol. 17, no. 4.

<sup>211</sup> "Report of J. A. Macdonald, 1879," Sessional Papers, 1880, vol. 14, no. 14, p. 7.

Another explanation for poor attendance has centred on the health of Indian children. H. J. Vallery equated poor attendance with poor health. Prior to 1910, most teachers were not trained to teach health and Indians lived in "un-sanitary environments."<sup>213</sup> Sessional Papers reports say such things as, "children are surrounded by dogs who sleep with them at night, live in poorly ventilated huts which are overheated and unduly crowded."<sup>214</sup> Vallery maintained that poor hygiene among students and a lack of rigorous health requirements created irregular attendance in Indian day schools and retarded progress.<sup>215</sup>

Between 1908 and 1930, regulations were enacted to make school attendance compulsory. In 1910, hygiene textbooks were issued in Ontario and Manitoba, and greater stress was placed on physical health. This was part of a growing awareness of physical fitness and hygiene that was sweeping the country at this time.<sup>216</sup> Attendance, however, did not markedly increase. The report written in the Sessional Papers in 1910 was premature and optimistic: "The children became cleaner and improved living conditions occurred in

<sup>212</sup> "Report of Duncan C. Scott, 1910," Sessional Papers, 1911, vol 9, no. 27, p. 274.

<sup>213</sup> Vallery, "Indian Education," p. 103.

<sup>214</sup> "Report of L. Vankoughnet, 1887," Sessional Papers, 1888, vol. 13, no. 15, p. 83.

<sup>215</sup> Vallery, "Indian Education," p. 103.

<sup>216</sup> At Berens River we find evidence of calisthenics going on as early as 1908. See also Chapter II above.

homes. Improved health produced better attendance and better progress."<sup>217</sup>

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive explanations of poor attendance at Berens River school and the reasons behind it can be found in a letter to the Department from the teacher, Mrs. Lowes, in 1910.

As far as I can see from my 10 years of observations on the reserves, the Day Schools are a failure in educating the children. There are on this Reserve about 70 children of school age. This quarter I have 56 on the Register with an average attendance of fifteen decimal seven [15.7]. This is the largest enrollment since March, 1909. I believe the larger enrollment is due to the services of the native policeman who has been who has been visiting the houses and persuading the people to send their children to school.

There are many reasons why the children do not attend regularly. Perhaps the chief reason is the indifference of the parents. Many of them live quite a distance from the school and when the trails are bad or the weather stormy the children do not come. Some of them are not properly clothed. There were several of them this winter who could not have attended if I had not provided clothing.

Another reason for the poor attendance are the fishing seasons. About the middle of May, sometimes earlier, the people leave their homes and move to the mouth of the river where they remain until August. The distance is too great for any to attend school. They are home again only a short time before they are off again for fall fishing.... Every winter hunting also takes children away.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> "Report of Frank Pedley, 1910," Sessional Papers, 1911-1912, vol. 20, no. 27, p. 27.

<sup>218</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2. Unfortunately, records contain no biographical data on Mrs. Lowes.

A fairly clear picture of what the school probably represented to most Indians in Berens River can be deduced. Situated far away from homes, difficult to travel to; and in terrible shape, the school and its 'motives' were foreign to the lives of the Indians. This was undoubtedly the case at Cross Lake and Nelson House and, to a large extent, at Oxford House. While parents probably wished their children to acquire those skills that would enable them to cope with the Euro-Canadian world, they had no intention of allowing the assimilation of their children into the Euro-Canadian world. These bands seem to have placed little stock in staying home in order to send their children to schools that would teach skills different from those inherent in their own background and culture. The day schools posed a real practical problem as well. Children could not stay home alone to study while parents left for several weeks of hunting and fishing. Even the bands of Berens River and Cross Lake--who faced some gruelling winters, many meagre hunts and poor prices for their furs, and who were at least keeping peace by going through the motions of agriculture and cattle raising--made a choice between the school and their traditional livelihood. The school did not come out the winner. Despite differences in the characters and situations of the four reserves, it is probable that the parents in all these bands thought alike on these issues.

Poor attendance, broken windows and meagre Indian involvement are evidence that the day schools did not fit in well into Indian communities. Further evidence of conflicts and misunderstandings comes from the Berens River school records. Mr. Colin Street, the teacher at Berens River, prepared two students to write the high school entrance exam in the summer of 1926. The Methodists were extremely proud of this accomplishment; it was the first time Berens River students had progressed to such a level. One unnamed female student passed. The other student who ought to have written was the son of Chief William Berens.<sup>219</sup> However, he missed the opportunity. Reverend Niddrie wrote an explanation to Ottawa:

too much tobacco and attending dances at night and Wakes caused him too much sleep the following day so we had to drop him. The Chief is exceedingly angry and blames Mr. Street which I need not say is most unjust.<sup>220</sup>

The bitterness stirred by this situation was sufficient to warrant further correspondence with Ottawa for two years. In June of 1927, Rev. Ferrier wrote a memo about Chief Berens.

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<sup>219</sup> William Berens, Chief from 1916 to 1948, became anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell's main informant during the 1930s, impressing the latter as a sensitive, intelligent man. This incident could have been a contributing factor to Berens' enthusiasm in the preservation of Saulteaux traditions. Chief Berens seemed to have found an outlet in Hallowell who ventured along at precisely the right time.

<sup>220</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

It appears that his oldest boy (age 17) was guilty of a serious misdemeanor and he left the school rather than take the punishment. The Chief then withdrew his 4 other children from the school and is now doing his best to damage Mr. Street's reputation as a teacher.<sup>221</sup>

In August, 1928, Niddrie wrote to Ferrier that three students had written the high school entrance exam and passed.

There is only one man who does not feel elated and that is the Chief. This will show you what kind of man we have to deal with. You remember we were up against it with him as we could not send his son up...on account of his immoral condition. Ever since then, he has been using his influence against Mr. Street (of course in the dark).<sup>222</sup>

Many interesting things can be learned from the above correspondence. Some "progress" was obviously being made in the school in order for Mr. Street to be able to bring three students to such a standard. Although the chief's son was somewhat old (in Euro-Canadian terms) to be writing the exam, it is significant that he had achieved such a level and was still attending school at such an age.

Also of interest is the difference between the original explanation forwarded to Ottawa and the actual reason for preventing the boy from writing the exam. The former places all the "blame" on the student--he sounds too careless and ambivalent to bother getting out of bed to write the exam. In reality, the Methodists disapproved of the student's personal conduct and forbade him to write. Clearly 'ambiva-

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

lence' cannot describe the feelings of the family who were agitated for at least two years.

The real reason for this fracas, of course, centres on the ever-present morality issue. The missionaries slapped a judgement on the boy that seemed unfair to the family concerned. The Berens family clearly were deeply resentful of this encroachment of the teacher's authority into their lives. The intrusion touched a raw nerve and shattered fragile communication. The duration of the bad feeling gives one a grasp of its obvious intensity.

Bitterness seems to have run on both sides. Niddrie's comment that the chief had been exerting negative influence "of course in the dark" shows mistrust and anger--an emotional venting on the part of Niddrie--perhaps a slip which revealed more than it was intended to.

### TEACHERS

Whatever happened, the schools plowed on--small domains under the direction of the teachers. Day school teachers were crucial instruments--conductors that would allow currents of Euro-Canadian values and ideals to flow from the Methodists and the Department into the lives and psyches of the students. Serving three masters (Methodists, Ottawa and, to some extent, Indian parents) teachers were charged with massive responsibility and blamed for everything that went wrong in school from student performance to attendance.

This pressure was added to the effects produced by isolation, hard work<sup>223</sup> and immersion in a culture vastly different from their own.

Since the school was considered to be the most effective means of "civilizing" Indian bands, the teacher was responsible for influencing life both inside and outside the school. In 1887, the following appeared in a booklet of regulations concerning Indian day schools:

Teachers shall devote themselves as far as possible both in and out of school to the improvement of the minds, morals, personal deportment and habits of their pupils and...shall endeavor to influence them by appealing to their reason and affections rather than their fears.<sup>224</sup>

Since teachers were in the unique position of being in close proximity to Indian families, they could not wave a wand--as Ottawa policy-makers and Methodist Missionary Society administrators hoped--and apply contemporary philosophies to change the Indians. It was one thing to aim to "Maintain in Indian schools the same standards that exist in the public schools in the Province"<sup>225</sup> and another thing to do it. After 1922, teachers in Indian schools were also expected "to carry out the instructions of the [provincial] inspectors regarding their work and general school manage-

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<sup>223</sup> Most teachers were responsible for building maintenance and could not always secure Indian labour.

<sup>224</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6001, file 1-1-1, part 1.

<sup>225</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6014, file 1-1-6Man, part 1.

ment."<sup>226</sup>

In his "Memories of a Happy Journey Through Life," Methodist missionary Roscoe Chapin included a revealing statement about the life of a day school teacher. Discussing Charles Clay, the "young and energetic teacher" working at the Island Lake day school in 1925, Chapin wrote:

In the summer he had a group of about 40 children.... at noon he would come into the house utterly done out, weak and famished and flop on the floor...too exhausted to go any further.<sup>227</sup>

Teachers had two choices: they could work hard and learn to live with the struggles of different constituencies pulling them in all directions or they could quit. Many chose the latter course of action; the high rate of turn-over is striking.<sup>228</sup> It was extremely difficult to attract and retain well-qualified teachers. In 1890, the Methodist General Conference Journal lamented the fact that

Qualified and efficient teachers are hard to procure, for salaries are meagre and the isolation is great, regular attendance on the part of the pupils seems to be out of the question, for there is no home discipline.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Roscoe Chapin, "Memories of a Happy Journey Through Life" (United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario), c. 1940, p. 48.

<sup>228</sup> Cross Lake provides a typical example. In 1904 Inspector E. McColl wrote angrily about the rundown state of the school there and "the intermittent manner in which this school is conducted." He warned that the Department would not fund any more repairs until a permanent teacher could be hired. PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.



Berens River day school for eight of the years between 1920 and 1935. This unfortunate gentleman ended his career with a nervous breakdown. While he had been through the Boer War and The Great War, one cannot help but wonder if his career in the school was itself a contributing factor to his condition.<sup>233</sup>

Some teachers were well qualified. In 1894 the (unnamed) teacher at Berens River won a prize given by the Inspector for efficiency. In 1896, Miss Alexander, a graduate of Mount Allison College in New Brunswick, took over a vacancy in the school. She was replaced a year later by Miss Mary E. Hayne, 23 years old and the holder of a second class certificate with honours. The teacher arriving in 1910 was equally well qualified and "extremely interested in Indians."<sup>234</sup> The teacher hired by the Methodists to work at Nelson House in 1920 had taught for nine years in Indian Departmental schools "on the coast."<sup>235</sup>

Other teachers possessed weaker qualifications but were taken on anyway. Many possessed training that was "about equal" to a certificate. In one instance (1916) an applicant for a position at Berens River was declined at the last minute as he was in the advanced stages of consumption.

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<sup>233</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

<sup>234</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-3, part 2.

<sup>235</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2. We do not know which coast was being referred to.

There does not seem to have been any concern about the threat such an illness would pose to the students.<sup>236</sup> The only reason given for the failure of his application was that he was "too weak to handle the school."<sup>237</sup>

It seems clear that when the Methodists had the fortune to have qualified teachers they swept them up, praised them and gloried in their "great discovery." If a qualified teacher did not appear, unqualified ones were accepted so long as they were morally upstanding. Many examples of this can be found in the school records. For instance in 1902, Alexander Sutherland wrote to Ottawa that the Methodists

have been trying to secure a teacher at Oxford House for some time but find it exceedingly difficult to get a certified teacher willing to go to one of those isolated posts.<sup>238</sup>

According to Sutherland, in order that the school not become vacant, the Methodists were sending in a supply teacher with no certificate and no teaching experience but possessing "good judgement and excellent character."<sup>239</sup> Sutherland was confident that she would do well in handling the primary teaching "at a place like Oxford House." The Methodists put the best face possible on their selections in their corre-

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<sup>236</sup> The students were probably considered too affected by this disease for one more to matter. See Chapter III above.

<sup>237</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-3, part 1.

<sup>238</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6242, file 530-1, part 1.

<sup>239</sup> Sutherland did not mention the name of this "supply".

spondence with the Department.

Teachers were expected to teach children who often seemed ambivalent, unresponsive and foreign. Some accepted the situation and learned to live with it: examples were Colin Street, and Mrs. Lowes who wrote to the Department about her students with a tolerance and an absence of bitterness that could only have been the product of some understanding borne of time. Others went perhaps for the adventure or to secure some experience, thus making them more employable back home, or perhaps for the challenge of "civilizing" and "helping" the "poor Indians." Many of the latter must have been sadly disillusioned, especially the ones who did not last through the year.

#### EXTRA CURRICULAR WORK IN THE DAY SCHOOLS

Unfortunately no teachers' diaries were available to this study. The records, however, tell something of the extra-curricular work that they encountered. Teachers needed a certain amount of compassion and common sense to extend beyond the line of duty. Mrs. Lowes, for example, clothed children herself in order to have them properly attired to battle through a winter day to school. Midday meals had to be cooked and served by the teacher, who usually had to cajole Ottawa into giving money for peas or beans, biscuits and cocoa for the children. For instance in 1920, the Nelson House teacher wrote to the Department, "The children

come across the river for some distance to this school and if they were given lunch it would help attendance greatly."<sup>240</sup> One has to wonder about the generations of children at this and other day schools who fought through freezing winters only to sit all day in a cold room<sup>241</sup> with nothing but a dry biscuit at noon.

Sometimes the midday meal was another means of imparting Euro-Canadian culture to students. The following letter, dated 1919, is typical. Miss Sara Richardson of the Cross Lake school wrote:

The Indians are ill-nourished and underfed and waste supplies given to them by S. D. Gaudin by ill-cooking. It is probable that if Indian children were taught to cook as children [this waste would not occur.] The Indian children whom I have taught to cook have been much interested in the art.... the parents seem pleased to have them cook like white people. Also this has been a strong incentive to their using English.<sup>242</sup>

Richardson explained that she wished to teach cooking to give the children a hot midday meal. Two other points raised in her letter are significant. Indians at Cross Lake were obviously in need of aid at this time and the fact that they were having difficulty cooking food given to them by the missionary was probably because he was providing them with

<sup>240</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6240, file 527-1, part 1.

<sup>241</sup> For example, the Nelson House church in which school was conducted was difficult to heat. At Cross Lake in 1912, teacher Annie Cunningham reported to the Department, "When cold it is quite impossible to have the school comfortable." See PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

materials that were foreign to their regular diets. Since this probably represented another aspect of encroaching Euro-Canadian culture, it is not surprising that parents desired their children to be skilled in this area. Secondly, it is interesting that as late as 1919 the teacher was in need of "incentives" to get children to use English during school hours; this shows signs of a cultural struggle with the children resisting the use of English.

Other extra duties of teachers appeared in the form of extra-curricular activities for students. Gardens were maintained at many day schools.<sup>243</sup> These yielded potatoes, turnips, onions and carrots under the tender attention of teacher and students. At Berens River, song books and yarn were ordered. The teacher at Cross Lake was teaching the "Flag and Wand Drills" and Christmas carols in 1912. Teachers were free to use their imaginations in an attempt to bring any number of new activities to the students; so long as they were "character building," aided the assimilative process and (probably most important) cost the Department no extra money.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Berens River school records contain many references to their garden.

<sup>244</sup> For example, in 1935 when Colin Street asked Ottawa if he could put two old typewriters he had found to use by giving his students typing lessons, they gave him the go-ahead accompanied by a clear warning that the venture had better not lead to requests for any more money from the Department. See PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-1, part 2.

The bleak Departmental responses to teachers who wrote to them with plans for student activities afford a real sense of the hopeless case of the day schools of northern Manitoba. The dilapidated little buildings, on those reserves which had school buildings, were maintained at the bare minimum. Expectations and challenges decreased over time.<sup>245</sup> While the existence of the students was acknowledged by Ottawa, the mysterious, careless, semi-civilized people of Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House were too remote to stir great concern. We will never know how many teachers caught this ambivalent feeling or how many transmitted it. We do know, however, that some, like Street, remained to grow gardens, teach typing and knitting and physical culture.

Physical culture was certainly a part of the lives of day school students. At Cross Lake in 1912, the teacher reported that she conducted "calisthenics twice a day."<sup>246</sup> Berens River submitted requests for baseballs, bats, footballs and basketballs. Inspectors made a point of reporting on the quality of calisthenics carried out at Manitoba Indian day schools.

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<sup>245</sup> By 1900, Methodists and government alike seemed to be wearying of their plans and ambitions for Indian assimilation. The Methodists seemed only to care that teachers were "moralistic" church members and the Department only worried that returns be completed accurately by the teachers and that expenditures be kept to a minimum.

<sup>246</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.

It seems that extra-curricular activities were carried out too often to be dismissed as exercises to fill time. Besides obvious assimilative motives for Indian (and immigrant) students in Manitoba, another probable motive involved fears of "the Devil making work for idle hands." Extra-curricular work broadened the mind, used extra time constructively and, especially in the case of organized sports, produced discipline, practice in acceptable social behaviour and ultimately, obedience. This emphasis was prevalent in schools throughout Canada between 1910 and 1925. The concept was extremely popular and educators had great faith in the long-term benefits of such activities.<sup>247</sup>

#### CURRICULUM

The emphasis in day schools was on providing students with a suitable English education. If the government was to build Canadian citizens (or, at least, citizens coming as close to the Euro-Canadian ideal as such a breed of "savages" could come) one of the best ways to begin was with a good solid English Canadian education in the schools.

From 1867 to 1900, therefore, reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, history, geography, music, singing and drawing were taught in Indian day schools. Some emphasis was placed on fine arts. This was important for a truly educated person was in possession of a broad range of accomplish-

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<sup>247</sup> See Chapter II above.

ments. In some day schools, advanced students were taught catechism, dictation, mental arithmetic, composition, and Scripture, and they were given object lessons.<sup>248</sup> The education of the spirit was an important part of Canadianizing any Indian, just as it was for training any Euro-Canadian or immigrant student.

After 1900, more stress was placed on hygiene lessons. All four schools studied submitted requisitions for combs, mirrors, soap and toothbrushes. Boys were instructed in agricultural subjects after this date, and were urged to cultivate garden plots. Some day schools taught domestic science to girls and education seemed to evolve into somewhat more practical areas rather than stressing only theoretical subjects.<sup>249</sup>

It is unfortunate that records for the schools at Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House make no mention of the subjects that were taught. In the case of Berens River one piece of correspondence sheds light on students' activities. A Department letter to the Methodists in 1910 commented on the materials ordered for the school by the teacher, Mrs. Lowes.

supplies will be ordered from the government stationery office, with the exception of slates, fire shovels, yarn and needles which Rev. J.

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<sup>248</sup> "Tabulated Statements," Sessional Papers, 1880-1890.

<sup>249</sup> "Report of Duncan C. Scott, 1913," Sessional Papers, 1914, vol. 23, no. 27, p. 309. This was a trend in all Canadian schools at this time. See Chapter II above.

Semmens...will purchase. The Victorian Readers, formerly used by this school are out of print--the Ontario series has been substituted. It is presumed that the yarn is to be used in the teaching of knitting to children. Kindly ask the teacher what book of songs and solos she wishes.<sup>250</sup>

From this it is obvious that some domestic science work was being undertaken at Berens River and that this was probably new, since the Department did not take the ordering of yarn for granted and speculated about what it would be used for. The other schools under study seemed to have too many problems in securing teachers and staying open at all to bother submitting reports of programmes and classes. To do this, schools needed to have some stability in the community and some consistency of operation.

Between 1915 and 1917, the Manitoba provincial curriculum was gradually introduced to the day schools. Vallery believes the change was made to "oblige the Inspectors of the various provinces in the supervision of Indian schools and also to obtain the required textbooks more easily."<sup>251</sup> Under provincial curricula, Indian day schools provided the necessary preparatory training to qualify pupils for Canadian high school attendance. Such a step furthered the chances for Indian assimilation into white society and theoretically provided something of an open door.

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<sup>250</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6227, file 500-5, part 2.

<sup>251</sup> Vallery, "Indian Education," p. 110.

Previous to this development, Indian children were educated to a limited end.<sup>252</sup> There was little opportunity for them to continue with a high school and post secondary education due to the type of training they had received. At the same time, as each generation of students spent less time in the bush, it was perhaps more difficult for them to return to their traditional Indian lifestyle after so much formative time had been spent in the day schools. The change to the provincial system may have at least delayed the almost inevitable state of limbo that was to ensue from combining a poor Euro-Canadian education and a poor Indian one. Students could spend more time in school before their release and the subsequent battle they would face over the consequences of not having developed skill in the bush nor the classroom.

During the 1920s, more emphasis was placed on language and reading (both were necessary for assimilation), domestic science, general housework, manual training, agriculture and physical training. There was a firm conviction that education should have a useful, practical end if students were to make significant contributions to society, or at least maintain self-sufficiency.

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<sup>252</sup> See Chapter III above.

### STATISTICS

The following graphs and tables, generated from statistics in the Sessional Papers, demonstrate some enrolment, attendance and achievement figures for the students in the Berens River, Cross Lake, Oxford House and Nelson House schools. Data include the total number of male students enrolled in the school, the total number of female students enrolled and the average total attendance over the year. Unfortunately, almost all sources of data mentioning individuals or carrying noteworthy features pertain to males. Even with female teachers present, native mothers and daughters sink into anonymity in the records.

All statistics begin with the year 1895 as no data were available for 1890. Data were also unavailable for the years 1915 and 1920. In the case of the graphs, the 1920 statistics were derived from averages of the data from the years 1919 and 1921. In the case of the tables, statistics from 1919 have been substituted. Unfortunately, there is no way of discerning whether female or male students attended more regularly.

# BERENS RIVER ENROLMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

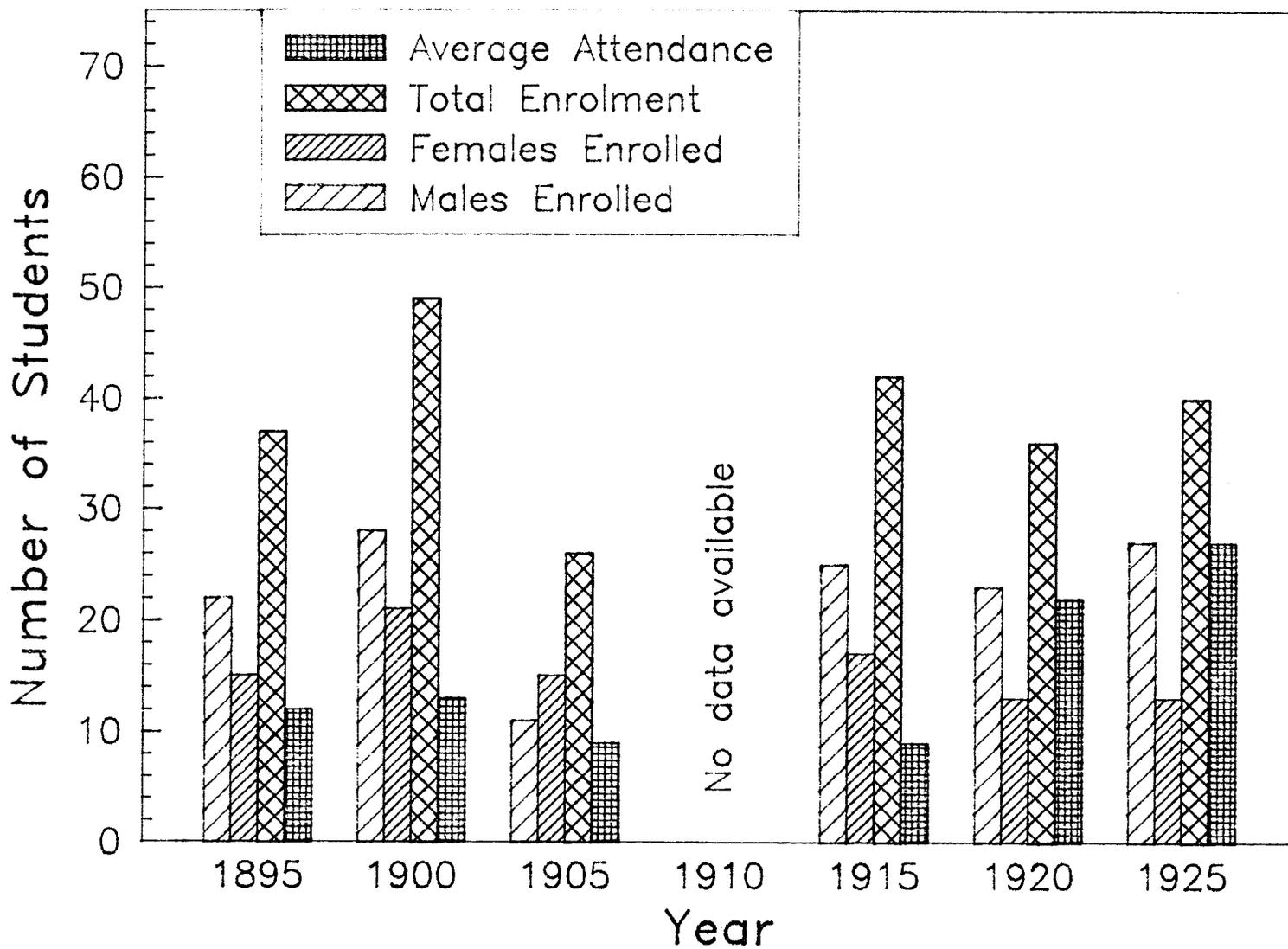


Figure 1

# CROSS LAKE ENROLMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

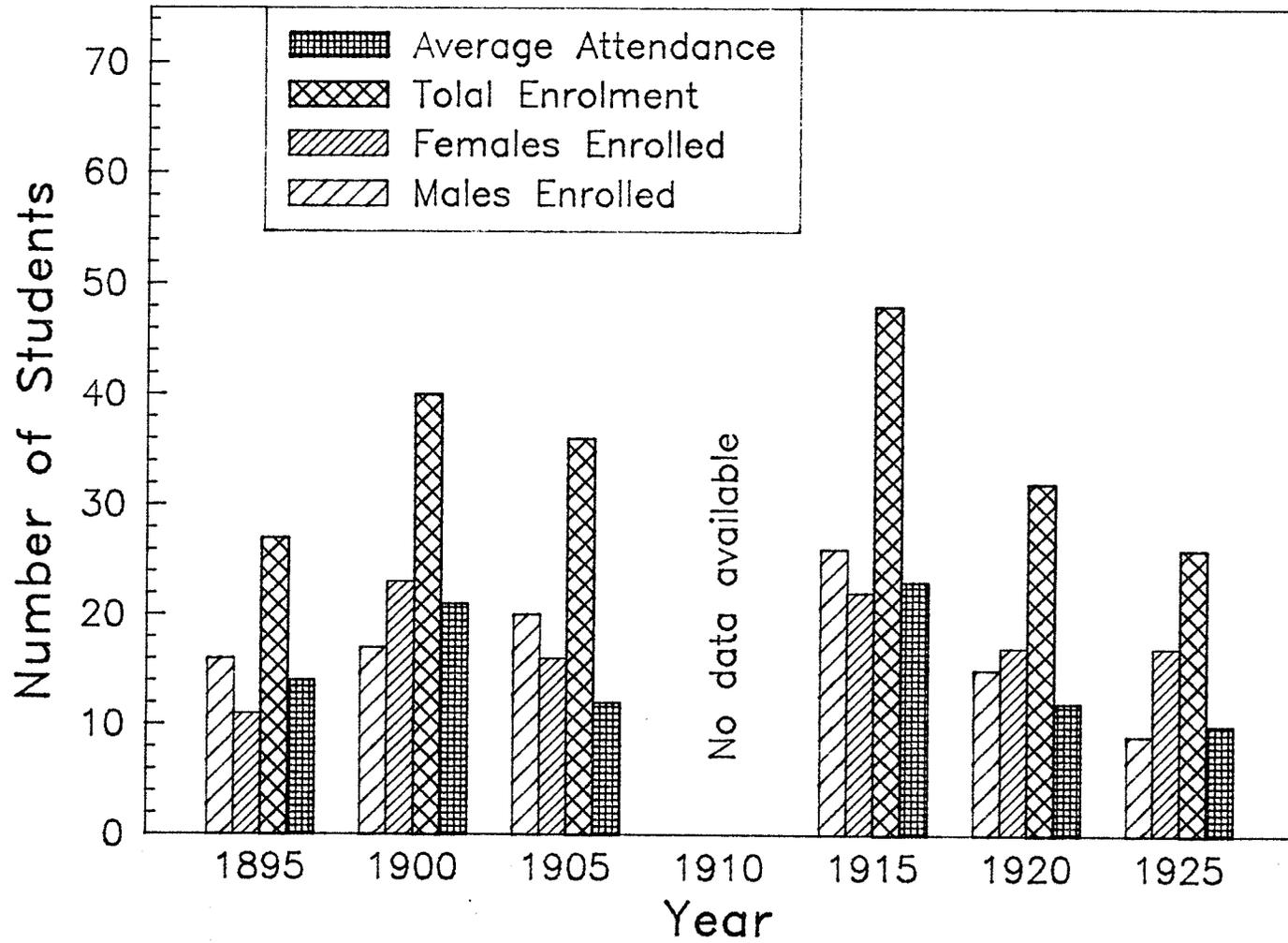


Figure 2

# NELSON HOUSE ENROLMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

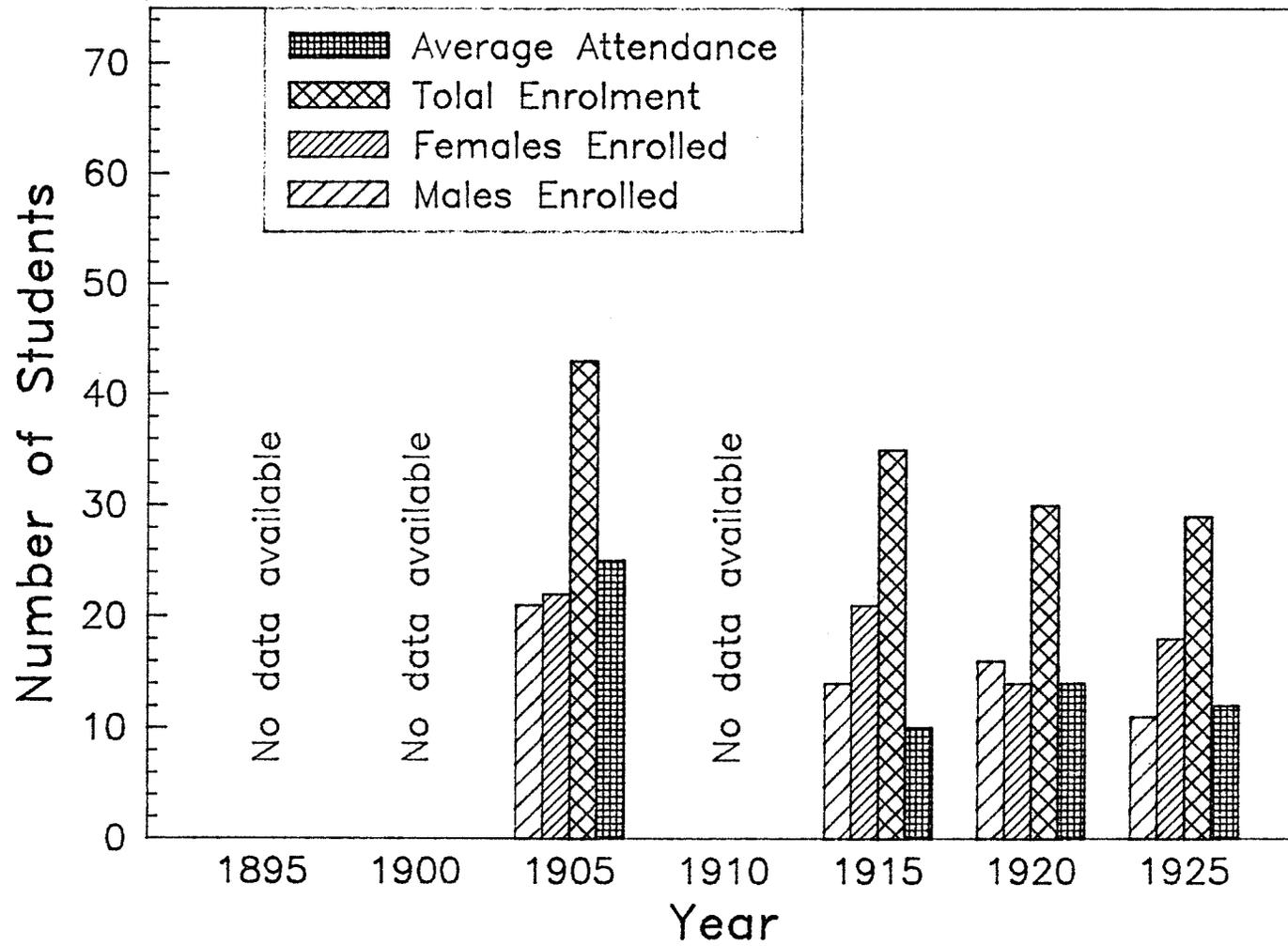


Figure 3

# OXFORD HOUSE ENROLMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

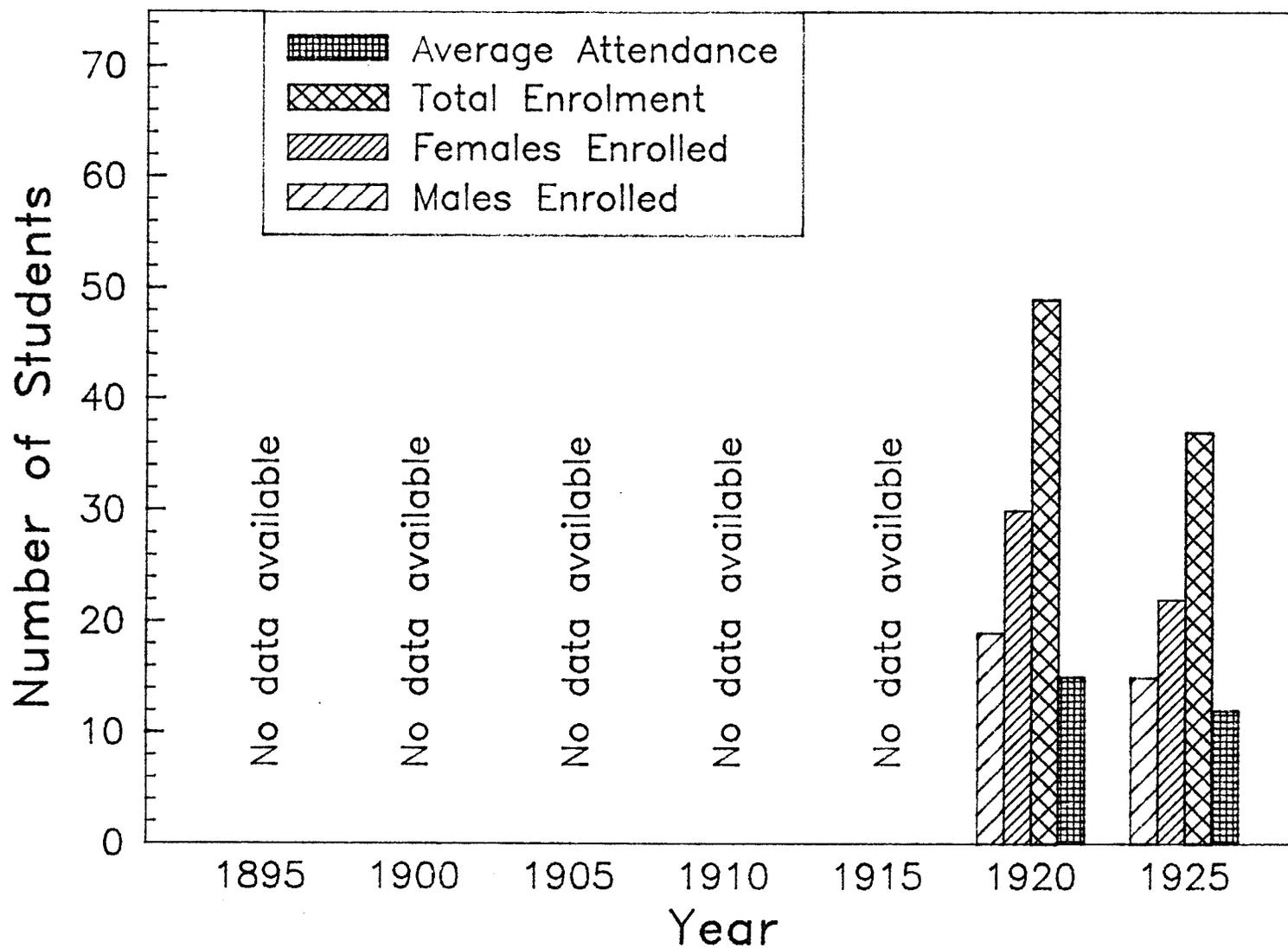


Figure 4

TABLE 1

## Levels of Achievement of Berens River Students

YEAR	STANDARD							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1895	24	6	3	3	1	0	0	0
1900	14	3	5	0	0	0	0	0
1905	17	7	4	0	0	0	0	0
1910	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1915	26	14	3	0	0	0	0	0
1919	14	10	5	5	2	0	0	0
1925	16	7	6	2	1	9	0	0

TABLE 2

## Levels of Achievement of Cross Lake Students

YEAR	STANDARD							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1895	24	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1900	24	6	6	4	0	0	0	0
1905	25	4	7	0	0	0	0	0
1910	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1915	33	7	4	0	0	4	0	0
1919	20	8	7	3	0	0	0	0
1925	16	7	3	0	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: For all tables and preceding graphs:  
Canada Sessional Papers,  
 1896, vol. XXIX, no. 14; 1901, vol. XXXV, no. 11; 1906, vol. XL, no. 1  
 1916, vol. LI, no. 23; 1920, vol. LVI, no. 8; 1926-27, vol. II.

TABLE 3  
Levels of Achievement of Oxford House Students

YEAR	STANDARD							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1895	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1905	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1910	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1915	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1919	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1925	25	6	5	0	0	0	0	0

TABLE 4  
Levels of Achievement of Nelson House Students

YEAR	STANDARD							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1895	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1905	34	5	2	2	0	0	0	0
1910	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1915	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1919	8	10	4	0	0	0	0	0
1925	27	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

. These tables classify pupils according to their reading level. The "standard" indicates the level of the textbook used and, therefore, shows the degree of general standard advancement. Standard I involves the first reader: part 1. Standard II involves the first reader: part 2. Standard III involves the second reader; Standard IV, the third reader; Standard V, the fourth reader; Standard VI, the fifth reader; and so on.

In the case of Berens River, the graph demonstrates that both attendance and levels of achievement were raised between 1920 and 1925. Fewer students were crowded into the beginning books and more were spread through more advanced levels. 1915 was the worst year for achievement as well as attendance (which dwindled practically down to nothing).

Average attendance levels were low from 1895 to 1915. This was a time when teachers were leaving as soon as their year's work was completed (if not before). Subject matter at that time was mostly of an academic nature with great emphasis on religion, and it is possible that students and probably parents believed there was little to gain from school life.

The years prior to 1920 were filled with changes and upheavals in Berens River community and school life. Hard winters and a struggle for food probably took up most of this band's attention. Illness was also plaguing these people. Perhaps a high death rate is partly responsible for the drop in the number of male students enrolled in the school between 1900-1905. Male students may also have quit school during those years to help their families survive. It is probable, however, that such poor average attendance in this period reflects the low impact this institution had on the reserve.

One of the reasons for increased attendance at Berens River between 1920 and 1925 may be that the school was becoming more useful and practical for students. Goals such as the high school entrance exam were set and a broader, probably more interesting array of subjects existed. It is also possible that the school was becoming a fixture in the Berens River community. In 1925, some children attending the Berens River Methodist school would probably have been second or third generation students. By 1920, this school was also better organized than most day schools with more efficient teachers. Reports sent to Ottawa by these instructors were increasingly frequent and comprehensive.

Cross Lake school's attendance and achievement levels also correlate. Between 1895 and 1900, standards and attendance rose dramatically only to plunge between 1900 and 1915. After another dramatic rise in 1915, both attendance and achievement levels dwindled until 1925. Generally low levels probably resulted from little emphasis being placed on the day schools by both Indians and Euro-Canadians.

The records do not mention who was in charge of the school during the time of the first major rise in 1900, but the Indian Agent reported that when this teacher left the reserve at the end of the year the Indians were asking that another be sent.<sup>253</sup> This is the only time such a request

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<sup>253</sup> "Report of E. McColl, 1900," Sessional Papers, 1901, vol. XXXV, no. 11, p. 108.

from the Cross Lake band appears in the records. It is probable that the teacher at the day school was deserving of high attendance as far as the band was concerned.

Between 1900 and 1910 there was a great deal of illness among the Indians at Cross Lake. This could partly account for the drop in attendance. Undoubtedly, however, part of the decrease was due to the fact that no teacher was available until 1904.<sup>254</sup> Unfortunately the records contain no evidence about the uncharacteristic, short-lived rise in attendance and achievement in 1915. However, it seems that gross administrative mismanagement over a twenty-five-year period accounts for the diminishing attendance and performance that occurred after 1915.

There are almost no records for Oxford House and Nelson House; hence it is nearly impossible to draw many conclusions about these schools. At Nelson House one report was submitted by S. D. Gaudin between 1890-1915. Not only is this report unique in this aspect; it also contains the highest average attendance column of any. Standards, once again, correlate with attendance. This performance may have been due to the fact that Gaudin had been working diligently with this band since 1892 and the Indians had come to like and trust him. However, it is curious that such a high attendance figure could appear in records dealing with an extremely hunting-oriented band. It is possible that Gaudin

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<sup>254</sup> PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6230, file 508-1, part 1.

calculated attendance based on the number of days when most of the band members were located around the mission. Perhaps because they were not under treaty, Nelson House Indians were not pressured by anyone but Gaudin to attend school and consequently attended school more frequently. Certainly this band was financially secure enough at this time to be able to send its children to school.

Between 1915 and 1925, the period when we have the bulk of the data concerning Oxford House and Nelson House, it seems the Nelson House school endured the same neglect that the Oxford House school experienced. The scarcity of all records pertaining to these reserves supports this conclusion. The government and Methodists did not strenuously involve themselves with the Indians. The Indians seemed unconcerned with the school.

Whatever unique situations or neglect occurred in each case, all four of the schools continued to struggle. Changes occurred from 1890 to 1925 in fits and starts, all with the goal of assimilating the Indians of these reserves. At Berens River after 1915, the Department and school gained some good teachers; the band was also becoming increasingly settled and some hope must have arisen that these Indians really could come close to becoming "civilized" if they were (gently but firmly) steered on the right course.

Children attended day schools (on some level), grew more or less accustomed to the expectations made of them and carried on, increasingly caught in a cultural mish-mash woven of a strange fabric: part Indian, part white. Some of these children learned their lessons--to read, write and speak English, to sing and draw, to be at least overtly obedient, civilized and disciplined.

Over the years the presence of the teacher would grow less foreign. Gaudin wrote of his pupils at the beginning of his work with them at Norway House in 1890:

The inheritance of the past was still very much among them. Some of them were wild as deer. When they were playing near the woods and I happened along they would slip out of sight like little rabbits.<sup>255</sup>

In later years, in contrast, these children fought to hold the teacher's hand.

As new and "higher" levels of academic achievement presented themselves after 1915, older students were faced with added expectations. The high school entrance exam was open to them--they were to be trained to write it and then, it was hoped, move on to higher plateaus of "progress" towards assimilation into the "superior" Euro-Canadian society.

Underneath it all, however, Indian day schools represented a foreign culture and foreign values. Students were forced to sink or swim within them; but whatever happened or

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<sup>255</sup> Gaudin, Forty-Four Years, p. 16.

did not happen, they were expected to attend. We can know little about what went on in the minds and hearts of the students who went through the motions of lessons, baseball, catechism and hoeing the garden. How much was memorized by blind repetition and how much was interpreted by students to become a part of their own world is a study that would have to be carried out on each child that stepped from his parents' home--filled with Cree/Ojibwa culture, values and legendary traditions--into the schoolroom to learn the imparted message of Indian inferiority.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSION

In the history of Euro-Canadian efforts to assimilate the Indian, the relationship between Indian communities and Methodist Indian day schools in Northern Manitoba from 1890 to 1925 stands out as both more significant and more problematic than has been previously understood. Government and Methodist policy during this time focussed on creating Christian citizens out of the aboriginal population. Since Indian society was unacceptable and threatening to the encroaching white world, attempts were made to make native people fit into Euro-Canadian culture as much as possible. This enterprise began for the Methodists as an exciting, challenging mission; it was the duty of the "superior" white race to help its red brethren adapt to a changing life on earth, preserve them from certain extinction and from the corruption of the industrialized world, and save their heathen souls for the afterlife. For the Dominion government, Indian assimilation was crucial for economic reasons. In exchange for Indian land titles, the government had undertaken financial responsibility for its "native children" and therefore had a vested interest in aboriginal independence.

By 1900, however, both Methodists and government officials were lagging in their quest. There were as many complaints from Indian Agents and missionaries about the laziness, poor morals and nomadic habits of Indian bands in 1910 as there had been throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Canadian West was rarely the scene of bloody battles between natives and whites. Indian communities were facing a desperate struggle for economic and cultural survival and had been forced into a position of dependence. There was a quiet rebellion among bands. Christianity had not proven to be "the answer" for these people who were still caught up in the same problems in 1900 as they had been in the late nineteenth century. Cultural survival was maintained to a large extent through passivity and avoidance. This "non-struggle" made a strange, impenetrable defence. White society had almost nothing tangible to fight.

By 1900, therefore, little real assimilative progress had been made. The flames of mission zeal had considerably waned for the Methodists. Canadians were getting tired of reading about the importance of the work carried on in the northern reaches. Missions abroad were filled with exotic allure and interest shifted to India, China, Africa and Japan. By the time Canadian Indian work was transferred from "Foreign" to "Home Missions" the coals were barely warm.

The government also became increasingly resigned to the prospect of retaining the role of guardian for years to come. A blanket of lethargy settled over projects once undertaken with enthusiasm. Emphasis changed as goals were lost in an ambivalent tide; how much gain could result from the least money and effort expended was increasingly seen as practical.

The clash between Cree/Ojibwa and Euro-Canadian societies was not one of bullets and flying sparks. Euro-Canadian goals, however, were incongruous with the ecologically adaptive culture that was so deeply imbedded in the northern Manitoba native. The struggle to subsist in the subarctic necessarily involves a nomadic lifestyle and the division of labour into small, pliable groups. Agricultural endeavours are futile in such an environment owing to the poor glacier-scoured soil and short growing season.

Although northern Manitoba bands adapted Euro-Canadian technology to their needs, had stabilized their residence to a large extent--returning regularly to missions and Hudson's Bay posts--and became Christian at least in name; they maintained their traditional lifestyle as much as possible. It continued to comprise the essence of their existence and was, in fact, the only system which could really work for them in their environment.

In the day schools, then, students were thrown into a whirl of conflict. The major clash existed between two confronting cultures--Cree/Ojibwa and Euro-Canadian. The aim of Indian education as the Methodists and the government saw it was to implant Euro-Canadian values in the minds of very young children and to strengthen this foundation as students grew older by teaching survival in the industrial world, good Euro-Canadian citizenship and Christian principles. The products were supposed to be assimilated white natives who could either venture out into the world as self-supporting individuals or remain with their people to spread truth and light.

In reality, however, Indian children arrived at school almost completely independent and steeped in their own culture. Their nights were spent immersed in an Indian environment and days were spent being steeped in Euro-Canadian culture.<sup>256</sup> Children often responded by refusing to speak English, refusing to "perform" or even attend. Native parents realized the need for their children to learn to cope with encroaching white culture (which was there to stay), but they did not intend to allow education to change the

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<sup>256</sup> In 1914, according to officially published Indian Day School Regulations, all Indian schools were to be kept open for no less than 200 days each year. Between March and October, school hours were 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm, with a fifteen to twenty-minute recess period in the morning and afternoon. Between November and February, school hours ran from 9:30 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 3:00 with only one recess period. PAM, RG 10, DIA, vol. 6032, file 150-40A, part 1.

community. However, the struggle was often vicarious. Indian day schools managing to achieve strong administrative management and some stability in staffing were a formidable force in a reserve like Berens River that was increasingly made to live and prosper in a white man's world.

Among Methodist Indian day schools in Manitoba between 1890 and 1925, a well-run school was, however, a rarity. Day school administration was a series of battle grounds, the first of which was the clash between Indian and Euro-Canadian cultures. At the top of the administrative hierarchy was the Ottawa-based Department of Indian Affairs which represented the government, and the Toronto-based Methodist Missionary Society representing the missionaries. These agencies, both idealistic and both remote from the northern Manitoba environment, propounded the philosophies and methodologies that were to be applied to contemporary Indian education. They waged almost constant war with each other over day school administration. Petty and jealous about any intrusions, real or imagined, of one into the jurisdiction of the other, the two administrations shared the responsibility of running the schools, of providing financial support, and of hiring and firing of teachers. The clumsy dual control system that resulted from this union was a jungle of bureaucratic bungling, feuds and lack of communication.

The next set of battlegrounds existed in the conflicts and poor communications between the day school teachers and the Department of Indian Affairs and the Methodist administration. While the teachers were culturally removed from the community, they were directly exposed to reserve life and consequently, were personally involved with the Indians who were merely faceless problems to the Ontarians. They actually saw children travelling miles, often poorly dressed, over a frozen lake to school, felt the cold from a defective schoolhouse stove that the Department had not bothered to fund repairs for, and knew the frustration of teaching children who probably would not return the next day or who refused to communicate in English. These teachers bore the brunt of much of the struggle between the two higher powers and were charged with the responsibility of carrying out the often differing aspirations of their remote leaders.

The final battleground existed in the lives of the native children caught between the influence of the teacher and the pull of their own community and families. Euro-Canadian lifestyles were pushing in around them, their parents were often at the mercy of white men for aid or employment, and white teachers were pounding the merits of their "superior" culture into them whenever possible.

On this battleground, however, the school often lost out. Of the four cases studied, only the Berens River institution

began to make progress in relation to Euro-Canadian standards after 1915. While the four bands coped differently with the presence of Euro-Canadian culture and their own increasing economic dependence on it, the schools had little impact on the lives of the Indians involved.

Berens River and Cross Lake were similar in that both of these bands had been subjected to governmental and mission pressures since the 1870s. Both managed to maintain some semblance of self-support by acculturating themselves, to a degree, to the Euro-Canadian world around them. Both bands seem, however, to have been ambivalent towards the day schools throughout most of the period studied, although the Berens River school gained ground after 1915 due to better administration.

The Cross Lake school was a loss from the beginning. Since neither the Methodists nor the government ever really took this school seriously, it never gained a firm foothold in the community. Although the Indians were enthusiastic about it for a short time between 1902 and 1905, perhaps after a particularly good teacher had left, they seem to have eventually caught the spirit of ambivalence when no one cared enough to apply principles of management.

The Nelson House band clearly did not view its day school with hostility. These Indians, who had considerably more economic and personal freedom than the other bands mentioned

here, seem to have welcomed the chance of teaching their children to deal with the ways of the white man whenever the opportunity arose. One thing is certain, however; the instruction was expected to be imparted on the Indians' terms. When the band was around, school was in session. At no time did the school affect the life of this community sufficiently to change the lifestyle of these people.

Oxford House is a strange distorted example of Euro-Canadian neglect and Indian desperation. The environment at this reserve was somewhat synthetic since the Oxford House band was more exclusively a product of the fur trade and had not evolved over several pre-contact centuries. At Oxford House the ravages of poverty ensuing from a decline of the only life these people had ever known are evident. The government tended to ignore the existence of these Indians and the sparse, almost non-existent school records reflect this.

On all four reserves, school buildings were broken down, poorly equipped and often in inconvenient locations. Attendance of those enrolled was extremely poor and there is very little evidence of Indian involvement in school matters; although certainly native involvement was rarely encouraged by the Methodists who did not see their Indian clients as capable of active, positive contributions. Teachers usually left their positions after one year, if not before, and in some cases no replacements were found for periods of up to several years.

Although day school curricula changed from 1890 to 1925, the quality of education offered to the students was minimal, since unqualified teachers of "good character" were often cheaper and easier to hire and the government did not see the necessity of doling out great quantities of money to some isolated school which was closed more than half the time. Although the standardization of the Indian day school curriculum from 1915 to 1917 with the requirements of Manitoba provincial schools during the 1915-17 period theoretically broadened the scope of possibilities for Indian students, it reinforced the assimilative nature of Euro-Canadian educational attempts. Indian children were expected to progress in a school program that had been designed specifically for the majority, middle class society. Within this foreign system were variable and shifting emphases that must have been confusing to students. Sometimes, Indian children were pointed in the direction of becoming "happy farmers"; other classes were spent immersing the students in vocational curricula that directed them towards Euro-Canadian life. While the motives of exposing native students to an all-round practical education seem theoretically sound to the distant philosopher, the lack of a single, consistent plan of action--as opposed to a variety of foreign pursuits--seems to have created a chaotic effect.

Writing of American Indian educational policy from 1870 to 1915, Dr. Charles Eastman, a Sioux physician, described a

similarity of purpose that ran like a current through Canada and the United States.

Two things were determined upon: First he [the Indian] must be induced...to enter the reservation. Second, he must be trained and persuaded to adopt civilized life.... Here is a system which has gradually taken its complicated form during two thousand years. A primitive race has put it on ready made, to a large extent, within two generations. In order to accomplish this feat, they had to fight physical demoralization, psychological confusion and spiritual apathy. In other words the old building had to be pulled down, foundations and all, and replaced by the new. But you have had to use the same timber!<sup>257</sup>

As in Canada, the United States had a system of educating their native Indians (after 1870) which involved day schools and boarding schools; the latter were considered to be a superior way of imparting white values. Elaine Goodale Eastman, a white teacher who married Charles Eastman in 1891, discussed in detail her experiences in Sioux Indian day schools. Her writing reflects much about day school administration, curricula and educational goals which were very similar to the contemporary Canadian system.<sup>258</sup>

Plagued with poor attendance, American day school education was assimilative in nature. From Goodale Eastman, we learn that her agenda in the 1880s, as was typical of North American school programmes, included instruction in the

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<sup>257</sup> Charles A. Eastman, The Indian Today, The Past and Future of the American Indian (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1915), p. 63.

<sup>258</sup> Elaine Goodale Eastman, Sister to the Sioux, ed. Kay Graber (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

reading, writing and speaking of English, marching, singing and simple calisthenics, drawing, sewing and cultivating the school vegetable garden.<sup>259</sup> Governmental aid to the schools was as unreliable in the United States as it was in Canada and the teacher was forced to rely a good deal on her wits for supplies. Goodale Eastman's school experienced government neglect so similar to that suffered by northern Manitoba schools that the reader might assume she is discussing Cross Lake or Oxford House. "Each of these little camp schools was an isolated unit, functioning blindly and without standards."<sup>260</sup>

Perhaps Indian day school education can be viewed from an Indian point of view as a study in irrelevance. Irrelevant to the culture and environment in which they lived and to parental participation or community involvement, the day schools of northern Manitoba did not overtly change Indian communities. After several decades the Indian in 1925 was largely unassimilated. What the schools did do was to create dilemmas in the lives of their students by forcing them to choose between their Indian culture and a foreign Euro-Canadian world, one characterized by interdenominational rivalry and by missionaries fighting with the government. The educational paralysis and Indian resistance resulting from the situation ensured that Indian day schools would remain

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-43.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

largely foreign elements in native Manitoba communities.

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