

**Severing The Ties That Bind:  
The Canadian Indian Act And The Repression  
Of Indigenous Religious Systems In The Prairie Region,  
1896 - 1951**

By

© Katherine Ann Pettipas

**A Thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of an  
Interdisciplinary Doctor of Philosophy  
in History and Anthropology**

**The University of Manitoba**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**October, 1988**

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ISBN 0-315-47997-3

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the conceptualization and implementation of an aspect of Canadian Indian policy which can best be described as the repression of indigenous religious systems among Indians residing in the prairie region. Subsequent to the Potlach Law of 1885, a number of amendments to the Canadian Indian Act were passed to discourage the persistence of specific ceremonial activities. Both missionaries and administrators contended that such practices were not only immoral from the perspective of Victorian Euro-Canadians, but were also serious obstructions to the assimilative objectives of federal Indian policy. It is postulated in this study that these repressive measures were not simply indicators of Euro-Canadian intolerance of non-Christian religions, but rather, were implemented because of the correctly perceived relationship between religious ideology and ceremonial life with indigenous social, political, and economic values and structures. The destruction of these values and concomitant behaviour was viewed as a prerequisite for the integration of collective Native kin-based modes of production into the competitive and individualistic White-dominated capitalist mode.

While this study is an administrative history of the repression of indigenous religious practices, it is equally an analysis of Indian responses to the attempts by the Department of Indian Affairs to undermine this important aspect of their culture. Through the use of an ethnohistorical approach on the more general issue of religious persistence and change, some of the major forms of Indian resistance



have been identified and examined. In addition to challenging the legitimacy of the terms of the Indian Act and the manner in which anti-ceremonial regulations were implemented, prairie Indians also accommodated to these measures by altering their ceremonial life in terms of space, time, content, and participation. The historical experience of one major group - the Plains Cree, has been presented as a case study to explore religious persistence and change as means of accommodation and resistance to colonial administrations. To what degree these reactions in turn influenced the development of Canadian Indian policy with respect to religious repression from the period 1895 to the post World War One period forms a major part of this dissertation.

In the conclusions of this study it is argued that paradoxically, it was the very system which had been developed to systematically destroy the political economies of prairie Indians that insured at least some degree of indigenous ideological persistence and behaviour. The reformulation and perpetuation of a belief in the ideology of socio-economic collectivism (and its associated ceremonial practices) were forms of resistance to imposed assimilation programs as well as realistic accommodations to the exigencies of survival in economically marginal underdeveloped reserve communities.

**For Peter, Rose, and Leo.**

Picim	niwitchik	kitanipoweanpicim
The sun	helps me	to stand the sun
niwitchik	kitapimohtean	
helps me	to walk	

One of Fineday's Sun Dance Songs as recorded by the late  
Dr. David Mandelbaum.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Epigraph.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
Acknowledgements.....	x
 Chapter	
Introduction.....	1
Preface.....	1
Statement of Problem and Methodology.....	4
Scope of Present Study.....	8
I    NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIONS AND CHANGE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION.....	16
North American Indian Religious Systems.....	16
North American Indian Religious Systems and Change.....	21
Related Studies: The Plains Cree.....	27
Comparative Canadian Studies.....	42
Comparative American Studies.....	44
Conceptual Orientation of this Study.....	45
II   PERPETUAL COMPROMISES BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND IMMEDIATE EXIGENCY: IMPERIAL NATIVE POLICY IN SETTLEMENT COLONIES.....	58
Ideological Factors in the Framing of Imperial Native Policy.....	60
Gross Superstitions and Ferocious Forms of Worship.....	66
Imperial Native Policy: Australia.....	77
Imperial Native Policy: New Zealand.....	82
Imperial Native Policy: British North America.....	88

III	GIFTS EXCHANGED ARE A BLESSING: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE PLAINS CREE.....	107
	Demographic Distribution and Social Organization.....	108
	Social Relations of Production and Consumption.....	113
	Positions of Status and the Political Economy.....	118
	Ceremonial Life and the Political Economy.....	122
	Rites of Passage and Communal Ceremonies.....	127
IV	FROM NATION TO WARDSHIP: BRITISH AND CANADIAN RELATIONS WITH THE PLAINS CREE.....	150
	The Loss of Political Autonomy: 1860-1885.....	151
	Protective Wardship Through Regulation: Post-1885.....	164
	Into Civilization and Citizenship through the Power Of Christianity.....	176
V	THEY MAY NOT WANT YOU, BUT THEY NEED YOU: REGULATING CEREMONIES.....	195
	The Precedent: The Potlach Legislation of 1884 and 1885....	196
	They See, But They Don't See: Applying Section 114 to Plains Ceremonies.....	210
VI	WITH FIRMNESS AND MODERATION: THE ADMINISTRATION OF SECTION 114, 1896-1914.....	232
	Legislation Implementation and Every Other Method of Dissuasion.....	234
	Beyond the Law.....	238
	Other Strategies: Regulation, Compromise, and Substitution.....	256
VII	CHALLENGE AND ACCOMMODATION: INDIAN RESPONSES TO SECTION 114, 1895-1914.....	266
	A Matter of Treaty Rights and Religious Freedom.....	267
	Compromises and Adaptation in Ceremonial Life.....	278
VIII	A MATTER OF FARMING OR DANCING: ADOPTING MORE APPROPRIATE MEASURES OF DISCIPLINE, 1914-1951.....	294

	Defining the "Reasonable Limits of Dancing: Old and New Patterns.....	295
	The Regulation of Public Expressions of Indian Identity.....	318
IX	HOLDING TOGETHER THE SACRED CIRCLE: PATTERNS OF RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE, POST-1914.....	336
	Familiar Patterns of Protest: A Matter of Freedom of Worship.....	338
	Community Regeneration and Ceremonial Accommodations to the Law.....	351
	New Expressions of Worship.....	370
X	A RELIGION OF THEIR OWN: THE FINAL CHALLENGE TO RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION.....	386
	White Advocacy.....	387
	Native Advocacy.....	395
	The Special Joint Committees of the Senate and House of Commons, 1946-1948.....	405
	SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.....	422
	The Plains Cree Experience.....	429
	Indian Responses to Religious Control.....	438
	The Relationship of Other Forms of Assimilation Programs to Ceremonial Life.....	451
	CONCLUSION.....	470
APPENDIX I	Summarized Descriptions of Vowed Ceremonies and Other Dances and Rituals as Documented by David Mandelbaum and Other Sources.....	476
APPENDIX II	Example of Pass Issued by the Agent at the Battleford Agency.....	494
APPENDIX III	Poem Written by the Reverend Edward Ahenakew.....	495
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	501

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Description	Page
1	Map showing territory occupied by the Plains Cree as of 1860-1870 and reserves as they existed in 1936. Source: David Mandelbaum, <u>The Plains Cree</u> (Regina: University of Regina, 1979), p. 13.	498
2	Treaty areas, reserves, and Northwest Mounted Police stations, 1889. Adapted from map published in <u>Sessional Papers</u> , Volume XXIII, Nos. 12-13, 1890.	499
3	Location of Indian reserves and adjacent areas referred to in text. Adapted from <u>Canada. Indian and Inuit Communities and Languages</u> (Ottawa: Survey and Mapping Branch, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, 1980).	500

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The impetus for my interest in the subject of Indian religions and historical change can be traced to my work experience as the Curator of Native Ethnology at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. One of the most fascinating and highly sensitive collections in the Native Ethnology Department are the numerous religious sacred items which had been acquired from Saskatchewan Indian reserves during the period 1970-1971. Many other major Canadian museums had received similar items into their collections. After on-site consultation with a number of Saskatchewan elders (whose trip to this museum was sponsored by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre), these materials were placed in a restricted access area out of respect for their sacred nature and are not available for research or exhibit without consultation with the appropriate sources. While addressing the concerns related to this collection, I have had the privilege of meeting with elders from both Saskatchewan and Manitoba who are involved with reversing the spiritual loss suffered by their people as their societies underwent transformation at the hands of Christian missionaries and government administrators. I have also been in the position to meet with members of the younger generation who, along with the elders, are committed to rebuilding the strength of their people through "traditional" spirituality. On such occasions, I have had conversations on the topic of religious repression, persistence, and "revitalization." For Native people, the sacred collections in museums have come to symbolize this period of repression, and at the same time, these items and knowledge



associated with them, are playing a role in the spiritual "rebirth" which is occurring today. Eventually, these contacts and discussions led to my attendance at local ceremonies including the Midewiwin, the Sun Dance, and the Sweat Lodge. Many of these ceremonies have only been openly performed within the last decade and unfortunately, because of the history of repression, much of the beauty and strength of Native ceremonial life still remains unseen and little appreciated.

Owing to my work experience, the topic of the dissertation has been, in a very real way, part of my own personal and professional journey with those whose heritage I presume to research, curate, and interpret through publications and exhibits. For all those from the Native community who have patiently helped me go beyond the printed page, I say Migwetch! (Thank you). In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to Garry Robson, Dan, Jennifer, and Rose Thomas, Vera Martin, Myrtle Thomas, Herman Atkinson, Grace Svens, Isabelle Thompson, Mark Thompson and members of the Three Fires Society for their kindness and openheartedness.

The topic for this thesis was initially inspired by the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Jean Friesen who first introduced me to the wealth of historical material available for research in the RG10 files of the Department of Indian Affairs. Dr. Friesen also spent many hours editing my work, an unenvied task which is greatly appreciated. Dr. Joan Townsend has been very supportive over the years with her encouragement to develop an ethnohistoric approach to Native history, and more recently, to pursue my interest in the area of the anthropology of religion. Dr. John Kendle introduced me to comparative studies

conducted in other parts of the British Commonwealth. Bennett McCardle, now an archivist with the Public Archives of Canada not only provided me with her lists of documents relevant to the topic, but also kindly shared her knowledge of the location of the numerous government files used in this study.

The expenses incurred during my research trips to Ottawa were partly supported by a grant received from the J.S. Ewart Memorial Fund from the University of Manitoba. The staff members of the Glenbow Archives, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and Legislative Library, the Public Archives of Canada, and in particular, Louise Dallaire of the Ethnology Archives of the Canadian Museum of Civilization were very helpful in filling my many requests for manuscripts and photographs. The Treaty & Aboriginal Rights Research Centre of Manitoba Inc. and Val Hatten, the librarian at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, arranged for numerous loans of microfilm. My curatorial colleagues at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Glenbow Museum, the Museum of Natural History in Regina, and the Royal Ontario Museum provided me with lists of sacred materials housed in their collections.

My research interest in the Plains Cree received impetus not only from the elders whom I have met through the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, but also from the work of the late Dr. David Mandelbaum. Dr. Mandelbaum had responded to my many questions concerning his fieldwork among the Plains Cree in the mid 1930's, even in moments of personal illness. His efforts to "repatriate" copies of his valuable fieldnotes and photographs back to Saskatchewan through the auspices of the Canadian Plains Research Center in Regina were greatly appreciated. The

staff of the centre were able to accommodate my need to study the documents prior to their being catalogued permanently into the archival collections. As I rummaged through the boxes of notes, I was particularly touched by Dr. Mandelbaum's return of a personal gift which he had received from one of his major informants, Fineday - a small hide pouch containing a lithic biface.

Much of the time spent researching and writing the dissertation would have not been possible without the support of management and my colleagues at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. In particular, I would like to express my thanks to Dr. David Hemphill for his initial encouragement to pursue a doctorate program, to Steve Prystupa, the Curator of Multicultural Collections, and at the time, Chairperson of the Human History Division for allowing me to have the "professional space and time" to carry out my research, and to Doug Leonard, the Assistant Curator of Native Ethnology for assuming additional workloads during my voluntary leaves of absences.

The maps for this thesis were produced by Caroline Trottier who spent many hours adapting information from more complex documents into their present form. The formatting and typing of the manuscript was done by the typists at the UMSU On Campus Typing/Copy Centre. In particular, I would like to thank Jeannette Resler, Claudette Cormier and Celine Perron.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of my family and in particular my husband, Leo, who not only helped with proof-reading a draft of the dissertation, but also was an important source of encouragement in this undertaking.

## INTRODUCTION

### Preface

Much of the scholarly research on the early colonial history of Indian societies of the prairie/parkland region of western Canada has been directed towards examining the various forms of social, economic, and political relationships which were established as responses to specific types of Euro-Canadian contacts. The majority of these published studies deal with the involvement of the "Plains Indians" with the commercial fur traders, missionaries, and the British and Canadian governments during the pre-1885 period. More recently, the contemporary issues of land claims and self-determination have provided an impetus for a scholarly re-evaluation of the historical nature of aboriginal and treaty rights from the perspective of both the federal government and the Indian communities.

While such studies have filled in a major gap in our understanding of the formalized relationships which evolved between indigenous societies and the Canadian government, the implementation of specific policies which formally defined and codified these relations remains to be examined. The implementation of the Canadian Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent amendments is only recently beginning to receive attention from historians and anthropologists. Some exceptions are the few published historical evaluations of the reserve system, the federal Indian education system, federal Indian agricultural programs, resource use legislation, and political structures on reserves.<sup>1</sup> However, the use of federally-imposed legislation and more informal mechanisms on the

part of the Canadian government to foster the political, economic, and social integration of Indian peoples into the industrialized nation-state deserves further analysis by both historians and anthropologists.

The impact of the implementation of the Canadian Indian Act is crucial to our understanding of the history of reserve communities. In Canada, as throughout the White settlement colonies of the British empire, all indigenous forms of economic, political, and social behaviour which did not serve the interests of capitalistic states underwent various forms of repression and transformation. While some of these changes were imposed upon indigenous societies, other alterations in cultural behaviour were adopted by these same societies as realistic accommodations to a changing order. For Canadian Indians, the prescribed status of political wardship and the concomitant regulation of cultural behaviour through the use of legislation as contained in the Canadian Indian Act of 1876 and its amendments, were two major means adopted by the state to transform Indian societies. The comprehensiveness of the intent of the directed and systematic transformation of Indians into Canadian citizenry based upon a Euro-Canadian model is evident in the sweeping powers inherent in the Indian Act:

The Indian Act is a Lands Act. It is a Municipal Act, an Education Act and a Societies Act. It is primarily social legislation, but it has a very broad scope: there are provisions about liquor, agriculture and mining as well as Indian lands, band membership and so forth. It has elements that are embodied in perhaps two dozen different acts of any of the provinces and overrides some federal legislation in some respects. . . .It has the force of the Criminal Code and the impact of a constitution

on those people and communities that come within its purview.<sup>2</sup>

Transgression of regulations contained in the Indian Act were subject to punishment under Canadian law. In this way, the justice system itself became one means for the federal government ". . .to 'explain' and 'justify' to Native people the values and institutions of Canadian society;" and ". . .all in the interest of civilizing the Indian."<sup>3</sup>

One common experience which many indigenous peoples shared as a result of this type of regulatory control over their lives was the suppression of their religious systems. With the exception of one historical study which focuses on the role of ceremonialism within the context of the federal Indian education system (1870-1910) and a more recent published overview of religious suppression in western Canada during the administration of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Scott, there are no historical or anthropological studies of the use of government regulations to transform prairie Indian ceremonial life.<sup>4</sup> The conclusions of both these studies suggest that in fact, such regulations had little impact as attested to by the survival of a number of ceremonies, the most important of which was the Thirst or Sun Dance.

Researchers in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies who have attempted to identify specific types of indigenous religious responses to various colonial experiences also have yet to consider the role of government legislation. Furthermore, the focus of most of this scholarship has been on religious transformation or the emergence of nativistic movements as one form of response to negative contact experiences.<sup>5</sup> Such movements as the Gaiwio Religion (the Good

Word or Message of Handsome Lake), the Peyote Religion (Native American Church), the Ghost Dance Religion, Prophet movements, the post-reserve Sun Dance and Giveaway ceremonies, and the more contemporary Pow-wow have been the subjects of this area of study.

While this field of research has been largely concerned with religious change, more recent investigations has revealed that in many North American Indian reserve communities, indigenous religious ideologies and practices continued to have relevance and meaning. And in fact, persistent ceremonialism such as that exemplified by the reformulation of the Sun Dance, can in itself be considered as a nativistic movement if persistence is equated with resistance. Thus, rather than being perceived as an indication of indigenous "maladjustment" to the cultural system dominated by White society or of "cultural lag", religious persistence is now considered to be an indigenously-derived positive and realistic accommodation to political, economic, and social alienation.

#### Statement of Problem and Methodology

In recognition of these research shortcomings, I will be examining the initiation and historical implementation of federal regulations against the religious behaviour of Canadian Indians and the reactions of Indians in western Canada to this policy. More specifically, the historical experiences of the Plains Cree with these regulations will be documented and evaluated from 1885 to 1951. In order to reconstruct the historical use of legislated religious change as an assimilative policy and to determine its impact upon reserve communities, a series of

questions have been posed in this study.

As a British settlement colony, Canada's Indian policy was derived in part from the experience of Britain's relations with indigenous societies in other White temperate climate settlement colonies. While grounded in the principles of Victorian concepts of Christian humanitarianism, material progress, and cultural evolution, the development of Britain's Native policy was largely determined by the exigencies associated with establishing political hegemony and encouraging the economic exploitation of local human and natural resources for exchange in the capitalist market economy. Accordingly, access to local resources, especially land, necessitated a restructuring of indigenous social, economic, and political systems. That is, cultural systems based on kin relations were to be transformed into the western capitalist mode of social relations which undercut traditional obligations towards kin. Often referred to as "local customs" in colonial reports and popular writing, religious ideology and practices perpetuated indigenous forms of social relations of production and distribution. Throughout the British Empire and particularly in the temperate settlement colonies where immigrant labour was considered to be essential for economic development, the transformation or at least control, over certain cultural practices including ceremonial behaviour, was addressed in colonial Native policy. This same strategy was also important in the Canadian government's attempt to incorporate the indigenous human and natural resources of the prairie/parkland region into the national economy. The adoption and implementation of specific measures to achieve this objective is one of the major topics of this



dissertation.

The impact of government measures on North American Indian cultural systems and specifically, religious practices, is an area of study which is only beginning to receive attention from researchers. With the exception of anthropologists dealing with the role of government legislation in indigenous resource use patterns, few cultural anthropologists have examined the relationship between other types of legislation and the cultural transformation of these same groups. On the other hand, historians have documented the development of the historical relations between the federal government and Indian societies but their analysis is generally limited to the perspective of the policy makers and administrators of the Indian Act. Native reactions to the act have been primarily considered in a political context with little attention given to other types of responses.

In order to present a more comprehensive history of the Indian Act with respect to the religious systems of Indian societies, the research methodology used by ethnohistorians in the discipline of Anthropology has proved useful. That is, historical evidence has been examined in conjunction with anthropological studies on the subject of Plains Indian cultural systems and historical change.

It is a premise of this study that the interrelationships between indigenous societies and European colonial powers can best be documented and evaluated through a "holistic and diachronic" approach whereby both the ". . . local level social history and the larger scale social and cultural environments that affected that history"<sup>6</sup> must be considered. Such an approach requires the researcher to examine all forms of

documentation in order to reconstruct the culture and history of the group(s) under study - material culture, visuals, oral histories, folklore, Native texts, and early ethnographic and historical observations. Published studies of the intellectual history of colonial stereotypes, colonial administrative histories, Native-written histories, and theoretical anthropological and sociological models of cultural systems and historical transformation need to be consulted in order to produce a more accurate understanding of Native history. Furthermore, the impact of colonial policies on indigenous societies cannot be evaluated unless researchers in the field of Native history develop an understanding of how these cultural systems functioned.<sup>7</sup> With reference to this study, the extensive use of anthropological literature on band and tribal societies was necessary in order to establish the functional relationship between religious ceremonialism and the social, economic, and political organization of the Plains Cree. Although we may never fully understand these interrelationships, only in this way can we begin to examine the nature of Native responses to colonial forms of Indian administration.

With specific reference to Native reactions to legislated forms of religious repression, a number of questions have been posed in this study: to what degree did the regulation of ceremonies affect religious behaviour and its expressions through the social, economic, and political structures of the indigenous society; what were the types of responses to religious controls and to what extent were these responses determined by the cultural milieu and colonial status of Indians; what affect did these same responses have upon the development and

implementation of federal policy over a sixty-five year period; and finally, to what degree were these responses effective from both the Indian and administrative perspectives? The two existing historical treatments of this aspect of federal Indian policy suggest that as an assimilative program, these measures had little impact upon religious life. While the problem of quantifying ceremonial change and loss is indeed difficult to resolve without intensive case studies of each reserve, both anthropological studies and observations made by Indian historians provide evidence for a significant degree of ceremonial modification and loss. The relative roles of federal religious control, education programs, intrusive capitalism, and missionary work, all of which were important aspects of assimilation warrants examination within the context of religious persistence and change. Finally, the degree to which religious persistence and change reflected the relative success or failure of federal strategies to integrate Indian peoples into the industrialized nation-state also needs to be assessed.

#### Scope of Present Study

In the body of this dissertation I will document the historical development, implementation, and impact of those regulations contained in the Canadian Indian Act which were introduced to undermine the ceremonial practices of Indians residing in the prairie/parkland region. While comparative materials have been drawn from the colonial experiences of other peoples, the major focus will be on the Plains Cree who reside in present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta. The origins of this aspect of Canadian Indian policy are traced to British Native policy as

it was implemented in its various forms in Australia, New Zealand, and British North America. An equally significant aspect of this study is the documentation and analysis of the types of Indian responses to colonial policies which promoted religious transformation. These responses are not only considered as cultural reactions to policy implementation, but also as culturally-determined initiatives which in turn had an impact upon the direction of policy reformulation. By organizing the study in a chronological sequence which divides policy formulation and Native reaction into two periods, that is, pre-World War One and post-World War One, the impact of both historical and cultural factors in policy formulation can be more effectively examined.

The richest source of written evidence of Canadian government policy, field orders, and correspondence relating to the implementation of legislation against Indian ceremonial behaviour is the RG10 Indian Affairs Records, Black Series (Western Canada) in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa. This collection consists of policy statements, official correspondence and directives from Ottawa, and field reports submitted to the department by Indian agents, farm instructors, agency inspectors, commissioners, missionaries, and police. While fewer in number, there are also petitions and correspondence which were sent to the department by individuals from both the Indian and non-Indian communities. This same series of documents also contains agency reports, numerous working papers related to amendments to the Canadian Indian Act of 1876, reports of Indian participation in indigenous ceremonies and White-sponsored events such as agricultural exhibitions and stampedes, as well as policy statements regarding indigenous healing

practices, the ritual use of peyote, and the protection of sacred sites and monuments (British Columbia).

Other relevant documents contained in the Public Records Division of the Public Archives of Canada include: Privy Council Records (RG2, Series 18); Records of the Secretary of State including the Ministry of Indian Affairs (RG6, Series A1,C1); Northwest Mounted Police/Royal Canadian Mounted Police Record Group (RG18); External Affairs Records (RG25, A1,A5); and the Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (RG26). Contemporary, unindexed files held by the Department of Indian Affairs were also reviewed with the permission of the department.

Published reports of the administration of the Department of Indian Affairs are also available in the Sessional Papers of Canada; however, after World War One they are only abbreviated summaries of field activities. Another published source, the Federal Statutes of Canada, contains committee reports and discussions relative to the passage of amendments to the Canadian Indian Act of 1876. Of particular importance are the hearings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider the Indian Act during 1946 to 1948.

Official agency reports and the private papers of agents, missionaries, teachers, and Indian politicians are available in the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the Saskatchewan Archives, and the Glenbow Archives. Another valuable archival resource is the Archives of the Ethnology Division of the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa which houses correspondence on

anthropological field activities conducted under the auspices of the National Museum. Of particular value were the correspondence files of E. Pliny Goddard, Diamond Jenness, Alanson Skinner, Wilson Wallis, and Clark Wissler. Only one document addressed the issue of ceremonial repression and this is Marius Barbeau's commissioned report on the Potlach Law submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>8</sup> Primary documentation relevant to the performance of Plains Indian ceremonies included both manuscript sources and published ethnographies.<sup>9</sup> The most important collection of manuscripts on the subject of Plains Cree ceremonialism are the fieldnotes of Dr. David Mandelbaum who worked among the Cree during the summers of 1934 and 1935. At this time, Mandelbaum witnessed Thirst Dances and other ceremonies which were still being performed despite government regulations. A copy of Mandelbaum's fieldnotes, along with his field photographs are now housed in the Saskatchewan Archives in Regina.<sup>10</sup>

Some oral history collections were available in the previously mentioned archival repositories; however, the majority of community-gathered information had been collected in the indigenous language and thus was inaccessible to this researcher. Visual materials including historical photographs and films were also reviewed and proved to be rich sources for documenting ceremonial persistence and modification.<sup>11</sup> Museum collections of ceremonial materials were consulted at the Glenbow Museum, the Natural History Museum in Regina, the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Museum of Civilization. With the exception of ceremonial objects related to Potlaching activities among Northwest Coast Indians, there

was little evidence for the existence of federally confiscated ceremonial objects originating from the Plains area. Most repositories however, contain numerous sacred objects which were collected in the post 1950 period, a situation which reflected the decreasing influence of Indian religion since the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, other important sources of ceremonial descriptions and documentation of Indian responses to government policy are to be found in the published materials of Indian historians such as the Reverend Edward Ahenakew (1973); Reverend Stan Cuthand (1978); Joseph Dion (1979); Mike Mountain Horse (1979); John Tootoosis (1975, 1982); and Abel Watetch (1959).<sup>13</sup> These offered important historical and cultural insights into the Indian perception of ceremonial life and reaction to government assimilative policies. During the course of this study, the topic was discussed with participants in contemporary ceremonies, however, due to the lack of necessary language skills, the sensitivity of the subject matter, and the extensive geographical parameters of this research, formal oral history interviews were not conducted at this time.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>See Robin Fisher, "Historical Writing on Native People in Canada," The History and Social Science Teacher, 17, No. 2 (1982), pp. 65-72.

<sup>2</sup>J. Rick Ponting and Roger Gibbins, Out of Irrelevance (Toronto: Butterworth and Company Limited, 1980), pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup>Don McCaskill, "Native People and the Justice System," in As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows, ed. Ian Getty and Antoine Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), p. 290.

<sup>4</sup>Jacqueline Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1910," in Western Canada Past and Present, ed. A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1974), pp. 163-81; Jacqueline Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: White 'Rites' for the Indians of the Old North West," M. A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1970; and Brian Titley, A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup>See works such as the following: David Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millennial and other Cult Movements," in Millennial Dreams in Action, ed. S. L. Thrupp (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1962), pp. 209-14; Joseph Epes Brown, The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982); Ralph Linton, "Nativistic Movements," American Anthropologist, n.s., No. 45 (1943), pp. 230-40; and Anthony Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," American Anthropologist, 58, No. 2 (1956), pp. 264-81.

<sup>6</sup>William Simmons, "Culture Theory in Contemporary Ethnohistory," Ethnohistory, 35, No. 1 (1988), p. 10. See also James Axtell, The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) and Bruce Trigger, "Ethnohistory: The Unfinished Edifice," Ethnohistory, 33, No. 3 (1986), pp. 253-267.

<sup>7</sup>Trigger suggests that a more "objective knowledge" (Native perspective of colonial policy) may ultimately be more valuable for what Euroamericans discover about themselves. Trigger, p. 264.

<sup>8</sup>Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), Archives, Native Ethnology Section, VII-X-46, M. Marius Barbeau, "The Potlach Among the B.C. Indians and Section 149 of Indian Act," 1934. While a handwritten date of 1934 appears on the front page of the report, the information was collected in response to a request made by the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott to the Anthropology Division of



the Department of Mines in 1920. The material contained in the report was gathered in the early 1920's.

<sup>9</sup>For example, see Neils Winther Braroe, Indian & White: Self-Image and Interaction in a Canadian Plains Community (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School;" Lucien Hanks and Jane Hanks, Tribe Under Trust (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950); Joseph Jorgensen, The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Alice Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance Religion in Saskatchewan: A Functional Analysis," Diss., Harvard University, 1964; Margot Liberty, "Suppression and Survival of the Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance," Minnesota Archaeologist, 27 (1965), pp. 120-43; Margot Liberty, "The Sun Dance," in Anthropology on the Great Plains, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 164-78; Lloyd O'Brodovich, "The Plains Cree of Little Pine: Change and Persistence in Culture Contact," M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1969; Mitsuru Shimpo and Robert Williamson, Socio-cultural Disintegration Among the Fringe Saulteaux (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1965), and Koozma Tarasoff, Persistent Ceremonialism: The Plains Cree and Saulteaux, Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper No. 69, National Museum of Man Mercury Series (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1980).

<sup>10</sup>In response to a formal request made to Dr. David Mandelbaum by the Canadian Plains Research Center in Regina, copies of fieldnotes and photographs are now in a Canadian repository. While much of Mandelbaum's data has been published in his monograph on the Plains Cree, unpublished material in the area of kinship deserves consultation. Having been one of the first researchers to utilize the fieldnotes, I am very indebted to Dr. Mandelbaum for making this information more readily available.

<sup>11</sup>During my research through various archives for photographs, I collected information on those collections which contained ceremonial subject matter. A card catalogue and contact prints have been made for many of these images and the collection is presently being housed in the Native Ethnology Department of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg.

<sup>12</sup>During the 1960's, a large number of Plains sacred materials found their way into museum repositories and various auction blocks. A number of factors are attributable to this development including cultural disintegration, spiritual impoverishment, economic distress, a move on the part of Canadian museums to enhance their ethnographic collections, and undoubtedly, in some instances, questionable collection practices on the part of both private and public collectors. Religious materials are still being sold and auctioned off as ethnographic "art" objects in the commercial market. Today, some museums are involved with establishing consultative procedures with Native representatives for the care, exhibit, and in certain instances, the repatriation of such materials.

<sup>13</sup>Reverend Edward Ahenakew, Voices of the Plains Cree, ed. Ruth Buck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973); Stan Cuthand, "The Native Peoples of the Prairie Provinces in the 1920's and 1930's", in One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7, ed. Ian Getty and Donald Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), pp. 31-42; Joseph Dion, My Tribe the Crees (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979); Mike Mountain Horse, My People the Bloods, ed. Hugh Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute and Blood Tribal Council, 1979); Norma Sluman and Jean Goodwill, John Tootoosis: A Biography of a Cree Leader (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1982); John Snow, These Mountains are Our Sacred Places (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1977); John Tootoosis, "Modern Indian Societies" in Proceedings of the Plains Cree Conference, Fort Qu'Appelle, October 24, 25, 26, 1975 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979), pp. 74-78; Abel Watetch, Payepot and His People (Saskatoon, Modern Press, 1959).

## CHAPTER I

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIONS AND CHANGE:  
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Fundamental to an examination of the historical development, implementation, and impact of government-initiated policies of religious control among indigenous peoples in western Canada is an understanding of the nature of these non-western religious systems. Particularly relevant to this study are the social, political, and economic values and behaviour inherent and perpetuated by these systems. Researchers in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies have developed a number of theoretical approaches to the study of Indian religions, some of which have been useful in the present study. A brief review of this literature will provide an explanation for the concepts adopted by this researcher.

## North American Indian Religious Systems

Much of our knowledge of North American Indian religions has been derived from either the early historical observations of uninformed White explorers and travellers or from the anthropological studies of Indian cultures made during the first half of the twentieth century. The latter were produced as a result of several ethnology salvage projects conducted primarily under the auspices of major museums. The intent of these field studies was to document the "traditional" aspects of Indian cultures before their disappearance in the face of subjugation by the western dominant society.

Accordingly, in the prevailing anthropological tradition of the school of thought espoused by Franz Boas, field work consisted of the collection of long lists of cultural traits with little interpretation as to their significance within the cultures themselves. Subsequent studies which were based upon the "diffusionist" school of thought used these trait lists within a comparative framework in an effort to trace the origins and spread of cultural patterns and associated materials over time and space. Major ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, were documented in this manner. The end result of these combined methodologies was the production of exhaustive descriptions of Plains religions in terms of ceremonial time, space, participation, and ritual behaviour including songs, dances, prayers, and the use of associated sacred objects. These descriptive manuscripts depicted religious systems as the sum of numerous and often little understood and oversimplified, individually and collectively performed rituals. Within the larger context of cultural evolutionary theory, Indian religions were viewed as an accumulation of archaic forms of superstitious beliefs in a supernatural world rather than as observable aspects of a ". . . distinct, coherent, intelligible theology. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Indian religious practices represented behaviour which Euro-Canadian Christians felt they had long left behind as part of a "pagan" and "uncivilized" past.

In contrast, recent research into North American Indian religions by scholars such as Ake Hultkrantz and Joseph Epes Brown represent an attempt to deal with these religious systems as ideologies rather than as simplistic manifestations of particular forms of cultural traits. <sup>2</sup>

One of the major theoretical concerns emerging from this reconsideration of Indian religions is the comprehension of the meaning of religion for these societies. Theological historian Joseph Epes Brown, for example, advocates a more holistic approach, pointing out that the social, economic, and political aspects of Indian cultures are inseparable from what westerners would term as "religious behaviour" and that in fact, "in no American Indian language is there any single word or term that could translate as 'religion'. . . ."3

Contrary to Brown's approach, other concepts have been applied in an attempt to define Indian religious beliefs and practices, one of the most common being the distinction between religious and other cultural traits by emphasizing the supernatural (sometimes referred to as irrational) aspect of religious behaviour. Many scholarly works on Indian religions ". . . are colored by the assumption that a whole world of the supernatural exists separate from the rest of the visible, empirical world."4 Still other anthropologists and sociologists have combined both "structuralist" and "functionalist" approaches in their analysis of religious behaviour. Here, the primary function of religion is considered to be the perpetuation of ". . . the norms upon which the integration of society depends."5 Sam Gill's work illustrates this school of thought:

We will consider as religious those images, actions, and symbols that both express and define the extent and character of the world, especially those that provide the cosmic framework in which human life finds meaning and the terms of its own fulfillment. We will also consider as religious those actions, processes, and symbols through which life is lived in order that it may be meaningful and purposive.6

It is the second component of Gill's definition which is relevant

here for religion is viewed as ideology and, as such, predisposes members of a society to act in particular ways providing "cultural blueprints" for social action. For example, Adrian Tanner, in his study of this role of religion among the Mistassini Cree of the James Bay area in Quebec, states that

When they are considered as a set, the rites, religious beliefs and myths of the Mistassini Cree constitute an intellectual tradition in the context of which there is a process of production of ideology, in the form of explanations, rationalizations and preparations for actions, as well as emotional predispositions which may help members of the group define some of their behavioural goals, especially during difficult circumstances.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in functionalist terms, religious practices contribute to the perpetuation of a society since it is "through them, the individual gains knowledge of tradition, access to the privileges of performing certain vital roles in culture, and access to the powers upon which successful progress towards life goals can be made."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to encountering problems with defining the nature of Indian religions early researchers were not intellectually predisposed to consider the possibility that the "traditional" religious phenomena they were so painstakingly recording, had undergone various forms of historical change. For example, a number of religious ceremonies recorded by anthropologists in the early twentieth century had already been altered as a result of contact with Christian missionaries, governments, and other Indian societies. The consequence of this approach was that religions were depicted as static and conservative expressions of cultural behaviour, with little or no historical dimension. However, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz has noted,

religious ideology and systems are far from static and

. . . alterations in the general complexion of spiritual life, in the character of religious sensibility, are more than just intellectual reorientations or shifts in emotional climate, bodiless changes of mind. They are also, and more fundamentally, social processes, transformations in the quality of collective life. . . Religion is a social institution, worship a social activity, and faith a social force.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, traditional Marxist interpretations of the nature of religion have been essentially diachronic in that historical changes are central to the analysis. However, the Marxist historical materialist conceptualization of religious behaviour has been criticized for its reductionist tendency, that is, religion is considered to be simply a ". . . mere epiphenomenal reflection of economic infra-structure."<sup>10</sup> More recent Marxist orientations towards religion, as defined by Otto Maduro, have addressed this problem of reductionism. Using the structuralist/functionalist methodology within a historical perspective, the alternative proposition is that ". . . religious systems have to be studied in themselves and to be situated within a specific macro-social context in a historical perspective. . . to establish the complex mutual influences between social structures and religious systems."<sup>11</sup>

This approach to religion is characterized by several assumptions.<sup>12</sup> In the first place, religion is accorded an active rather than a passive role in the social relations of production; secondly, it is not always a "subordinate element within social processes," and may be central to the historical reorganization and "consolidation" of a society; thirdly, while religion may operate as a "functional, reproductive or conservative" element, ". . . it is often

one of the main (and sometimes only) available channel to bring about social revolution . . . ;" and fourthly, "religious change is often . . . a latent one, carried on beneath apparently changeless sacred symbols."<sup>13</sup> Implied in the latter assumption is the premise that important expressions of religious concepts can remain intact although their content and meaning may have been altered.<sup>14</sup>

#### North American Indian Religious Systems and Change

Critical reviews of culture change or acculturation studies conducted among North American Indian populations have indicated that an overemphasis has been placed upon the destructive aspects of European contacts. As a result, Indian societies have been accorded a passive role in post-European contact histories. More recent theoretical approaches have risen to the challenge of attempting to identify the ways in which indigenous societies have interacted with colonialism whether it be acquiescence, subversion, or assimilation.<sup>15</sup> Consequently researchers are now examining the ways in which colonial Europeans were compelled to adapt to indigenous forms of production and resistance. One of the most problematic questions raised from these studies is the documentation of internal changes within the communities despite the persistence of these same populations in a collective sense.<sup>16</sup>

Given the fact that many Indian communities have retained certain elements of their religious systems, the theoretical problem becomes one of explaining the process of "persistence with change." In her critique of the conclusions of one of the major anthropological seminars (1961) on culture change through European contact (Edward Spicer, et al), Janet



Moone argues that there was an "overassociation" of the processes of change with the idea of "absolute change" and postulates that both maintenance and persistence are important processes in historical change.<sup>17</sup> Moone has summarized the typologies of the historical processes of culture change as they appear in the anthropological and sociological literature as follows: (i) addition (elaboration, augmentation, incorporation) whereby ". . . a preexisting and stable social or material form takes on an additional element or elements of form" with ". . . no displacement of existing elements;" (ii) compartmentalization (isolative integration, isolation) whereby ". . . a complete complex of elements of form, function, and meaning develops or enters as a variant of an existing social, or material, and cultural complex" and develops ". . . largely in operational isolation from the existing complex;" (iii) fusion (syncretism, synthesis, recombination) whereby ". . . reconstituted forms and meanings are integrated within a system in the functional areas occupied by the prior complex" and these ". . . were subjected to interpretation, selection, and reordering by an existing, established, and maintained system of meanings;" and finally, (iv) replacement (assimilation, substitution) which implies ". . . a complete substitution of form, function, and meaning" in that "the social or material forms, functional relations, and meanings of an existing complex are disengaged from a system. . . ." <sup>18</sup> Moone maintains that while researchers had recognized and documented the observable expressions of these processes, "the interchange between maintenance and change" from the perspective of the studied groups remains to be understood.<sup>19</sup>

The modification of religious systems of North American Indians which resulted from colonial contact has been analyzed by several scholars in accordance with these concepts of change. Those which have received the most scholarly attention are the "new religions" which were developed in response to colonial repression, including the Ghost Dance and Prophet Dance movements, the Gaiwio (Message of Handsome Lake of the Longhouse Religion of the Iroquois), the Peyote Religion (and its incorporation as the Native American Church).<sup>20</sup> Only recently have the persistence of traditional religious ideologies and practices been examined as positive and realistic responses to historical political and socio-economic transformation rather than as indicators of maladjustment to culture change. In the past, the retention of indigenous values and cultural practices in the face of western colonial contacts has often been interpreted as "unprogressive" or categorized under the general term of "cultural lag." Persistence of all or selected aspects of indigenous cultures however, can be considered as one type of response to colonial contacts.

One of the first attempts to identify and classify religious responses to oppressive forms of colonialism, was made by anthropologist Ralph Linton. According to Linton, Indian religious movements were expressions of nativism or a ". . .conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture."<sup>21</sup> This cultural reaction to colonialism is differentiated into two types termed "magical" (or irrational) and rational. While "magical" nativism is characterized by a reliance on supernatural forms of intervention (such as the miraculous return of bison herds, the

disappearance of Whites, or ancestor resurrection), "rational" nativism is viewed as a comparatively realistic approach to resolving cultural disintegration. Rational nativistic movements which involve a revival of traditional cultural traits are considered to be social mechanisms to foster or restore a society's self worth. This is achieved through the psychological manipulation of symbols which were prominent at a time when a particular group was ". . . free, or, in retrospect, happy or great."<sup>22</sup> Another form of rational nativistic movements defined as "perpetuative," promotes the maintenance of "social solidarity" by using elements to ". . . provide the society's members with a fund of common knowledge and experience which is exclusively their own and which sets them off from the members of other societies."<sup>23</sup> Given Linton's classification of colonial nativistic movements, the maintenance or reintroduction of traditional or transformed religious elements into nativistic movements is one means by which societies might choose to perpetuate their existence--if not as autonomous societies, then as a distinct ethnic groups within the political configuration of the nation-state.

Other scholarly treatments of acculturative processes represent variations of Linton's original classificatory scheme--David Aberle (1966), Simone Clemhaut (1964), Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine (1970), Anthony Wallace (1956), and Bryan Wilson (1973).<sup>24</sup> All of these authors attribute nativistic movements to a "stress reduction process" through which a group attempts to maintain harmony and meaning in their lives in the face of cultural disintegration, either on a personal or societal level.<sup>25</sup> One particular model of nativistic movements which is often

used is Anthony Wallace's evolutionary stages of revitalization.<sup>26</sup> The major problem with Wallace's approach is its emphasis on the creation of "new relationships," "new cultural systems," or "new traits," as an end result and a tendency to underestimate the role of persistence as a positive factor in nativism.<sup>27</sup> One example of this type of reasoning is evident in J. S. Slotkin's The Peyote Religion wherein he argues that the demise of the bison herds on the Plains and government oppression brought about the disappearance of collective rites:

The buffalo was a component of most collective rites, including the Sun Dance. When the buffalo disappeared, these rites no longer could be performed. In addition, as we have seen, collective rites and shamanistic practices were prohibited. Therefore traditional collective forms of supernatural adjustment no longer could be used effectively.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, he argues, new religions such as the Peyote Religion, the Ghost Dance, Prophet Dances, the Grass Dance and the Hand Game developed as replacements for traditional forms of collective rites due to environmental catastrophe and colonial oppression. According to Slotkin, the most successful of the new religions were those which helped people adjust to the colonial reality and, while retaining strong ethical codes of behaviour, curing rituals, and rites to enhance social solidarity, were "less arduous" as "collective means for acquiring power."<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, researchers such as Edward Spicer, in his examination of the impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on Indian cultures of the Southwestern United States, has identified several differing religious responses to colonialism which arose out of particular historical experiences, environmental conditions, and the

cultural system of the society affected. These reactions included: the conscious adoption of Christianity as a new form of religion, the syncretism of indigenous and Christian beliefs and practices, the development of new indigenous cults, the modification of traditional systems, and the persistence of traditional systems.<sup>30</sup> For example, Spicer documented the persistence of traditional religious practices among many Hopis, Navajos, Eastern Pueblos, and some Papagos and Seris despite at least 400 years of missionization and government oppression.<sup>31</sup> To what degree this situation occurred in other areas of North America has yet to be determined.

One other problem encountered in the use of "stress" or "deprivation" theories of religious change has been the tendency to de-emphasize the role of religious systems in the processes of cultural change and persistence.<sup>32</sup> By viewing the religious experience as "cathartic" or "therapeutic", nativistic movements, by implication, are often viewed as unrealistic solutions to cultural disintegration brought on by coercive colonial government policies. Some researchers who have attempted to correct the shortcomings of applying this theoretical orientation to American Indian religious movements are Vittorio Lanternari, Bryan Wilson, and with particular reference to the Sun Dance and Giveaways, Elizabeth Grobsmith, Joseph Jorgensen, Alice Kehoe, Fred Voget, and Katherine Weist.<sup>33</sup> In these works, the reinterpretation of Indian religious systems as positive forces of action to cultural survival have been largely due to a re-consideration of their socio-economic and political dimensions.

### Related Studies: The Plains Cree

Alice Kehoe analysed the cultural, political, and economic aspects of ceremonial persistence and change among the Plains Cree and Dakota of southern Saskatchewan in the 1960's. Before that, anthropological studies of the religious systems of prairie Indians consisted of descriptive ethnographies. The complexity and content of religious ideologies and their expression through ceremonies were little understood or were simply not considered as important given the ethnographic methodology of the day (Stephen Simms, 1903; Alanson Skinner, 1914; Pliny Earle Goddard, 1919; Wilson Wallis, 1919; Donald Cadzow, 1926, 1927; Douglas Leechman, 1939; and David Mandelbaum, 1934, 1935).<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, this literature is of considerable value to this study, as the following brief survey will indicate.

As Assistant Curator of Ethnology at the Field Columbian Museum in Chicago, Stephen Simms undertook an ethnographic collecting trip among the Plains Cree in 1903.<sup>35</sup> While he did not attend any ceremonies, Simms did collect some religious objects, including ceremonial clothing, drums, and a pipe. In total, only 86 artifacts were collected from perhaps some 12 reserves in southeastern Saskatchewan and his field trip was not considered a success.<sup>36</sup> In addition to problems associated with shortness of time, and difficulties with travel and weather, many of his study population had boarded up their houses and moved onto their farm lands for the fall harvest.<sup>37</sup>

During the summer of 1911, another anthropologist, Pliny Earle Goddard, conducted a fieldtrip to Alberta under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.<sup>38</sup> His fieldnotes

contain a description of a Thirst Dance attended by the Cree, Stoney, Sarsi, and Blackfoot near Hobbema, Alberta. Goddard's efforts to document the ceremony were limited by the fact that his interpreter (who lived in town "as a White man") had only a superficial understanding of the events. Goddard's impressions of the ceremony were only derived from what could be "seen or inferred."<sup>39</sup> In order to supplement his own descriptions of the Plains Cree Thirst Dance, Goddard published a detailed account of the Red Pheasant Reserve (Saskatchewan) Thirst Dance forwarded to him by teacher-farm instructor, Robert Jefferson.<sup>40</sup>

Anthropologist Alanson Skinner encountered similar documentary problems of the Thirst Dance ceremonies during the early twentieth century. His published reports were not only supplemented with Jefferson's descriptions, but also those of Amelia Paget's as they were recorded in The People of the Plains (1909).<sup>41</sup> During the summer of 1885, Paget's family (the W. G. MacLeans') was captured at Fort Pitt during the Saskatchewan Uprising and detained in Big Bear's camp from April to June. Skinner's account contains only one reference to government suppression of the Cree Thirst Dance. According to his informants from the Round Lake Reserve in southern Saskatchewan, the Nipagwetcimun, or "Abstaining from Water Dance" was a "locally annual one" before it was prohibited by the government.<sup>42</sup> By the time of Skinner's investigations, the original four-day ceremony and other ceremonials which would have occurred immediately before and following the Thirst Dance had been reduced in time to two days. His ethnographic account of the same ceremony among the Ojibway is only two pages in length due to the reticence of the celebrants to discuss their

ceremonies with the anthropologist. Skinner attributed this evasiveness to fears of government suppression.<sup>43</sup>

During the summer of 1914, another anthropologist, Wilson Wallis was working among the Manitoba Dakota.<sup>44</sup> Like the Plains Ojibway, the Dakota living in the Portage la Prairie area were also "closed" to attempts to document ceremonies. Furthermore, Wallis' work was officially obstructed by the local Indian agent, Thomas Bell, who attempted to prevent the anthropologist from speaking with people camped in a village located on the local Exposition grounds (Wallis was informed that he had to confine his activities to reserves). Eventually, Wallis was forced to seek legal counsel; but his previous altercation with the agent had already seriously undermined the confidence of the Dakota in his research activities:

I have been told by several, and I fear there is some foundation for the report, that all those at Griswold are now afraid of me and think I am trying to find out about the old things so as to send back to the States some of the old men who participated in the massacre there.<sup>45</sup>

Wallis also experienced opposition at Oak River and Oak Lake, where the agent refused to allow him on the reserve on the grounds that he lacked official authorization and that his activities would interfere with farm work.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, Wallis did manage to collect a considerable amount of data, including a number of highly significant personal narratives regarding the performance of the Nipagwetcimun (Thirst or Sun Dance) both before and after the passage of repressive legislation.

Based upon these studies, and others conducted in the United States, Leslie Spier attempted to compile a cross-cultural trait list of Sun Dance ceremonies in order to trace its origins and historical



diffusion throughout the northern Plains.<sup>47</sup> Spier's study is significant in revealing the variability of the performance of this ceremony among different Indian societies. For example, he discovered that the ritual of self-mortification involving "piercing" the flesh of male dancers, figured prominently among the Dakota and Missouri Village cultures, but was only practised to varying degrees by the Crow/Cheyenne, Arapaho, Plains Ojibway, Hidatsa, Mandan, Saulteaux, Assiniboin, Blackfoot, and Kiowa; and that it was altogether absent among the Wind River Shoshone, Ute, and some Kiowa.<sup>48</sup> The Plains Cree incidence of "piercing" was described as moderate, a conclusion derived from Jefferson's, Paget's, and Skinner's observations.<sup>49</sup> One of the problems with Spier's work was that he based his conclusions on the assumption that these historical field observations were descriptions of unmodified, "traditional" practices when in fact the Sun Dance had been subjected to various degrees of change.

It was not until some fifteen years following the publication of Spier's work on the diffusion of the Sun Dance that another young anthropologist appeared on the Canadian prairies to document the cultural history of the Plains Cree. As a doctoral student of Clark Wissler's, David Mandelbaum conducted fieldwork in the Battleford, Saskatchewan area during the summers of 1934 and 1935. He was primarily concerned with the cultural transition of the Woodland Cree to a Plains environment as indicated in his dissertation "Changes in Aboriginal Culture Following a Change in Environment, as Exemplified by the Plains Cree."<sup>50</sup> Mandelbaum's fieldnotes were edited and published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1940 and a revised version was

published by the Canadian Plains Research Center in Regina in 1979.<sup>51</sup>  
In 1966, Mandelbaum returned to Saskatchewan for a brief visit, at which time he attended a contemporary Thirst Dance; and in 1975, he presented a paper entitled "The Plains Cree Remembered" at a conference held in Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan.<sup>52</sup>

Although Mandelbaum documented the early fur trade history of the Plains Cree from available historical records, his extensive 1940 monograph is primarily a classic ethnography of Cree culture as it existed before 1880. Of particular concern to this study was his examination of the ceremonial complex of the Plains Cree as related to him by the elders and through his own participatory-observations. While he published little commentary on the issue of government suppression, his fieldnotes provide an insight into the process of ceremonial accommodation. In addition to his fieldnotes, Mandelbaum's study included extensive oral histories, photographs, and artifact collections.

Since Mandelbaum's monograph, no intensive field studies were conducted among the Plains Cree until the 1960's. By then, anthropologists were combining the more traditional form of descriptive ethnographic documentation with "culture change" or "acculturation" theory in recognition of the fact that indigenous cultures had been significantly transformed through contacts with Europeans. This approach is exemplified in Alice Kehoe's dissertation "The Ghost Dance Religion in Saskatchewan: A Functional Analysis," completed in 1964. During the period 1961 to 1962, Kehoe conducted her fieldwork on the Saskatchewan reserves of Round Plains (Dakota and Cree), Poundmaker

(Cree), and Standing Buffalo (Dakota).<sup>53</sup> In her research, Kehoe compared Dakota and Cree religious responses to the more negative influences on their social, economic, and political lives resulting from European contacts.<sup>54</sup>

Kehoe's investigations were based upon three interrelated functionalist premises about religious behaviour, namely that: "religion acts as an emotional catharsis;" that "the emotions that must find outlet in religion will be engendered, channeled, and sanctioned (positively or negatively) by the culture and society that forms the milieu of the religion;" and consequently, that changes in religious systems are responses to changes in the cultural milieu.<sup>55</sup> Kehoe approaches religion as a ". . . mechanism by which human beings organize their reactions to stressful situations. . ." in order ". . . to function as recognized members of societies."<sup>56</sup> Given this premise, Kehoe contended that any religion will be abandoned if that particular belief system is unable to relieve stress (deprivation). An alternative to total abandonment would be the reformulation of selected elements of indigenous religious practices.

In her conclusions, Kehoe explains the decline of the Ghost Dance and the relative survival of Plains Cree religion in terms of differing group histories with colonial administrations and the capacity of either belief systems to realistically reduce stress. She argues that the Dakota were subjected to greater violence and government supervision than were the Cree and these factors contributed to the decline of the Ghost Dance.<sup>57</sup> Any survival of traditional Dakota beliefs and incidences of their participation in the contemporary version of the

Cree Thirst Dance, are attributed to feelings of deprivation related to the lack of acculturation into the capitalist economy and White society in general. The geographically-isolated Dakota-Cree community of Round Plains and the Cree community of Poundmaker, whose members were only marginal participants in the state economy (as seasonal labourers and welfare recipients), were adherents to the contemporary reformulated Cree Thirst Dance. Those at Standing Buffalo Reserve who had relatively greater access to economic opportunities in a semi-urban or urban environment without having to endure the hardships of permanently leaving their home reserves for employment, did not participate in these ceremonies.

The demise of the Dakota Ghost Dance religion and the comparative successful persistence of the Plains Cree religion (as exemplified through the Thirst Dance) is also explained in terms of the ability of either belief system to provide "realistic" paths of social action for its followers. Described as a "revivalistic-magical" type of movement, the Ghost Dance religion was considered by Kehoe to be an unrealistic response to the stressful realities of colonialism. Actively practised on Saskatchewan Dakota reserves until approximately 1922 and continuing sporadically until 1950, the Ghost Dance was a nativistic millennial movement which promised its adherents better conditions through a return to the past and the supernatural reappearance of the bison.<sup>58</sup> By the 1960's the Ghost Dance underwent a number of changes and was eventually reduced to a "prayer meeting" as practised at Round Plains or to the secularized "Owl Dance" as performed by the Dakota in the Prince Albert area.

By comparison, Kehoe argues that the Plains Cree religion provided more realistic solutions to community stress. Kehoe provides evidence for the historical modification of the Thirst Dance into a powerful curing ceremony, a process termed "reformativ nativism." This modification, she contends, was a realistic response to the hardships endured in impoverished reserve conditions foremost of which were poor nutrition in combination with waves of epidemics of measles, mumps, flus, tuberculosis, and other diseases.<sup>59</sup> The maintenance of selected aspects of indigenous belief systems thus are directly correlated to the "therapeutic" efficacy of their ideologies. Kehoe concluded that the Thirst Dance also relieves feelings of deprivation brought on by cultural disintegration by ". . .demonstrating to the sufferer that his people and his God support him in spite of his inability to achieve either the traditional or the Euro-Canadian adult roles."<sup>60</sup>

The issue of government suppression of Thirst Dances is only dealt with briefly in Kehoe's dissertation and the pertinent data is derived from published materials and the recollections of informants.<sup>61</sup> There was no consultation of the Department of Indian Affairs records and the question of ceremonial repression was not one of her research problems. The impact of government policy however, was evident through the recollections of one of her informants from the Sweetgrass Reserve who stated that ". . .the Indians did not yet dare to hold Sun Dances annually on most reserves. . . ." <sup>62</sup> because of the regulations against its performance in the past.

Five years after the Kehoe study, Lloyd O'Brodovich's Masters thesis examined the problem of cultural persistence and change among the

Little Pine Cree.<sup>63</sup> His 1968 fieldwork was supplemented by agency reports from the Sessional Papers of Canada (1879-1900), early ethnographies, and secondary sources. Persistence and change in the indigenous political economy and religious system as evident in the Thirst Dance, were isolated as major topics.

O'Brodovich's approach to religious systems was essentially historical materialist in that he emphasized the ". . .economic determinants of religious behaviour" as espoused by anthropologist Paul Radin:

Religious beliefs and attitudes were assuredly not created either by methods of food production or by some mechanism of exchange. But they did grow up together with them, and it was the economic system that made certain constituents and certain forms of religion relevant at one period and others relevant at another.<sup>64</sup>

O'Brodovich recorded the continued practice of a number of ceremonies and rituals, including the use of sweetgrass for prayer and purification; general ritual smoking; the ritual cleansing of burial grounds (a.k.a.na.ticki.iktima.skwani); the use of herbal curing treatments (ne.awe.kohtok); and the following ceremonies--the Sweat Lodge ritual, the Smoking Lodge ceremony, the Prairie Chicken Dance (with associated Giveaways), and the Thirst Dance (ni.pa.kwe.simo.win). Because of its power as a collective rite, the Thirst Dance was still considered to be the major celebration of the year.<sup>65</sup>

In his historical overview of the modification of the Thirst Dance, O'Brodovich was unable to discover ". . .any specific orders [given by the federal government] which banned the Sun Dance. . .", but, did indicate that ". . .there was certainly official pressure on the Cree to

stop the ritual."<sup>66</sup> Despite the fact that he was unaware of the anti-ceremonial legislation at the time of his study, O'Brodovich does draw a number of conclusions from the published annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs which indicates the reasons for suppression:

. . . the Whiteman judged the torture ceremony to be inhuman; travelling to the Sun Dances conflicted with the ideal of a sedentary agrarian economy; survival of traditional ceremonials would inhibit the conversion of Indians to Christianity and serve as a distracting influence on those Indians already missionized. Perhaps the most important reason was that of preventing the travel and subsequent gathering of great numbers of Indians in one location.<sup>67</sup>

O'Brodovich's study was one of the first to address the issue of the use of religious suppression as a form of social control and as a mechanism for cultural transformation. Furthermore, his study of contemporary Plains Cree Thirst Dance in terms of ceremonial objects, spatial and temporal factors, participant roles and syncretic relationship to Christianity, provides evidence for the nativistic function of the Thirst Dance. O'Brodovich, like Kehoe, concluded that ineffective government assimilative programs were responsible for the persistence, and possibly the enhancement, of indigenous religious ideologies.<sup>68</sup> He further argues that the Thirst Dance survives on Little Pine because it not only provides a satisfying religious experience, but also because it reinforces values and behaviour necessary for the socio-economic and political integration of the community as a viable ethnic group, that is, Plains Cree.<sup>69</sup> For O'Brodovich, religious persistence is also a Plains Cree statement of opposition to coerced assimilation.

A third study which demonstrates the continuation of certain ceremonial practices among the Plains Cree is Jacqueline Kennedy's study of the Indian education system in her Master's thesis "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in the West, 1870-1910."<sup>70</sup> By examining Indian responses to school programs (through attendance records, parental attitudes, etc.) and comparative reactions to anti-ceremonial policies as indicated in the files of the Department of Indian Affairs, Kennedy challenges the general historical consensus that Indian communities were politically and socially acquiescent to imposed cultural transformation. As in the Kehoe and O'Brodivich studies, Kennedy contends that this resistance was manifested through the retention and perhaps even augmentation of indigenous forms of education inherent in Cree ceremonial life. Kennedy demonstrates that Indian elders in southern Saskatchewan continued to hold their ceremonies "in opposition" to government assimilative programs and that graduates of industrial school programs became actively involved in their indigenous religious practices in spite of repressive measures on the part of the missionaries and the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>71</sup> Kennedy also examined departmental files for specific types of formalized political opposition, including Indian-initiated test cases, petitions, and delegations.

In her conclusions, Kennedy offers several historical explanations to account for the success of Plains Cree resistance to assimilation during the first decade of the twentieth century. Among the most important factors were: their "relatively good economic position" which was based on some farming and seasonal employment; the lack of immediate



pressure for their lands by immigrant populations; the divisive forces of inter-denominational rivalry for Indian converts that at times led potential adherents to doubt the validity of the Christian message; the lack of compulsory school attendance regulations at this time; and the support given to traditional activities by non-Indians who included events such as Indian dancing and horse racing in their agricultural exhibitions and stampedes.<sup>72</sup> According to Kennedy, the differing value systems of capitalism and the Plains Cree political economy combined with the ineffectiveness of Indian policy implementation, were major factors leading to ceremonial persistence.<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that Kennedy's study is chronologically and topically limited and does not represent an examination of the relationship of the political economy to ceremonial life. Rather, her emphasis is on the development and application of the Euro-Canadian education system for Indians and their responses to the ways in which it was implemented.

A fourth major work which deals directly with the issue of religious persistence and change on the Canadian prairies is Koozma Tarasoff's study of Plains Cree and Plains Ojibway ceremonial life in the Broadview area of Saskatchewan.<sup>74</sup> Tarasoff's work, published in the National Museum of Man Mercury Series in 1980, was part of a larger research project conducted in the mid-1960's in which he undertook a socio-economic evaluation of both Indians and non-Indians in the region. His data are largely derived from oral histories, the visual documentation of rituals, his own participation in the ceremonies, the use of previously published ethnographies, and questionnaires. The major communities surveyed were Sakimay, Cowesses, Kahkewistahaw, and

Ochapowace.

Although Tarasoff addressed the definition of the process of religious persistence and change within a colonial context, the value of his work lies in his efforts to document the contemporary (1960's) relevancy of indigenous forms of ceremonial expression. His basic premise is that ceremonialism persists because colonial alternatives were rejected as unbeneficial to the communities in question.<sup>75</sup> In view of the choice made by members of Indian communities presently residing in semi-urban or urban settings to follow the "Indian Way" in religious worship, Tarasoff's correlation between isolation and systems maintenance bears re-evaluation.

Other related Canadian Plains Indian studies include Indian & White, Self-Image and Intervention in a Canadian Plains Community (Niels Winther Braroe, 1975); Tribe Under Trust: A Study of the Blackfoot Reserve of Alberta (Lucien Hanks and Jane Hanks, 1950); and Socio-cultural Disintegration Among the Fringe Saulteaux (Mitsuru Shimpo and Robert Williamson, 1965).<sup>76</sup> Lucien and Jane Hanks approach their analysis of religious ideologies and persistence from a historical materialist, functionalist perspective, and their analysis of the socio-economic and political transformation of Blackfoot society provides a useful parallel to the Plains Cree experience. The Braroe and Shimpo and Williamson studies are among those recent works which associate the persistence and/or revitalization of traditional value systems with self or ethnic identity, i.e., Indian versus White. Working with the theory of "symbolic interaction", Braroe is concerned with

. . .describing in detail how certain cultural values, Indian and White, are directly implicated in substantive and symbolic transactions between two groups. For all participants, these values are more than guidelines for, or goals of, behavior; they also provide a symbolic means of presenting, evaluating, and defining self.<sup>77</sup>

His observations about the contemporary relevance of the Thirst Dance to the Short Grass Cree are pertinent to this study. Baroe contends that for the members of the isolated, economically unproductive reserve of Short Grass (a pseudonym), some traditional ceremonial forms have survived not only as fulfilling religious experiences, but also because of their function as symbolic ethnic markers. The religious experience and ideology inherent in the ceremonies is ". . .equally meaningful as a reaffirmation of community identity, and it promotes a vital sense of solidarity among the participants."<sup>78</sup> He further argues that lack of access to the socio-economic and political benefits enjoyed by the dominant White society has resulted in the perpetuation of group loyalty and an adherence to "traditional" or "Indian" (that is, Cree) values. As a social process, this response is self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling in the sense that the very behaviour which the ceremonies reinforce, is at the same time rejected by non-Indians.<sup>79</sup> This rejection, in turn, serves to further strengthen group loyalty and in this way ensures the survival of the Short Grass Cree as an ethnic group.

Similarly, a sociological study of the Saskatchewan "Fringe Saulteaux" undertaken by Mitsuru Shimpo and Robert Williamson examines the integrative role of the Thirst Dance (Rain Dance).<sup>80</sup> This reformulated Thirst Dance was adopted by these Saulteaux in 1939 as an

attempt to preserve what was remaining of their "traditional" culture. Their intent was also to revitalize the community and to preserve their ethnicity. As in the Braroe study traditional religious elements are at the core of the process of nativism.

In addition to such anthropological and sociological literature, a number of historical studies examine the implementation of other assimilative measures evident in Canadian Indian policy. General historical overviews of the development of Indian policy are available in the published papers of government officials (Abbott, MacInnes, and Scott).<sup>81</sup> More recent scholarship largely consists of critical re-examinations of the treaty and reserve systems and the Canadian Indian Act (Cumming and Mickenberg, Hawthorn, Leighton, Milloy, Ponting and Gibbins, Titley, and Upton).<sup>82</sup> Much of the research concerning the implementation of Indian policy in the prairie region focuses on the history and nature of the treaties and the use of the reserve system and the Canadian Indian Act as mechanisms for cultural transformation (McNab, McQuillan, Price, Taylor, and Tobias).<sup>83</sup> Sarah Carter's dissertation on the implementation of agricultural programs and Indian response in western Canada is an example of a more recent in-depth case study of government policies.<sup>84</sup>

There are relatively few published studies dealing with the impact of the Canadian Indian Act on the Plains Cree. In addition to Kennedy's (Gresko's) analysis of Indian education and Plains Cree response, only four other studies address the implementation of Indian policy on the Plains Cree. These are Grant's "Indian Affairs under Duncan Campbell Scott, The Plains Cree Experience," O'Brodovich's "Plains Cree

Acculturation in the Nineteenth Century," Titley's "W. M. Graham," and Tobias' "Subjugation of the Plains Cree."<sup>85</sup> While publications by Indian historians are not extensive, those which do exist, provide excellent personal accounts of firsthand experiences (Ahenakew, Brass, Cuthand, Dion, Stonechild, and Tootoosis).<sup>86</sup>

#### Comparative Canadian Studies

As in the case of the Plains Cree, few studies on federal religious repression exist for other groups of the prairie region. While Hugh Dempsey discusses in some detail the "Sun Dance War," which occurred between Blood Indian ritualists and the local Indian agent, only one other work provides a history of anti-ceremonial policies as they were implemented in Alberta.<sup>87</sup> In a Master's Thesis, "'Red Backs and White Burdens': A Study of White Attitudes Towards Indians in Southern Alberta, 1896-1911," W. Keith Regular included a chapter on the topic of religious suppression among the Blackfoot, Bloods, and Peigans.<sup>88</sup> The same author, in an article "On Public Display," discussed those clauses of the Indian Act which prohibited Indian participation in White-sponsored agricultural exhibitions and stampedes.<sup>89</sup> In a more general treatment of the subject, Brian Titley addressed policy and implementation from the perspective of government administrators and western Canadian Indians.<sup>90</sup>

Only one major study has been published on the implementation of Section 114 of the Indian Act and its subsequent amendments among Northwest Coast Indian cultures. In The Struggle for Survival, Forrest La Violette devoted a chapter to the enforcement of the Potlach Law on

the Northwest Coast.<sup>91</sup> Another historical treatment of the administration of these regulations from the perspective of an Indian agent can be found in the autobiography of William Halliday, the Alert Bay agent who was largely responsible for the numerous Potlach arrests of 1919 to 1921.<sup>92</sup> A little known evaluation of this legislation and its impact on Indian communities was also written by the anthropologist Marius Barbeau.<sup>93</sup> This unpublished report was produced at the request of the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Scott.

More general treatments of the Potlach regulations within the historical context of colonialism are available in John Grant's The Moon of Wintertime, in which the role of the churches as well as the government are examined, and in anthropological literature such as To Make My Name Good, by Philip Drucker and Robert Heizer.<sup>94</sup> The history of the collection of ceremonial Potlach-related items by private collectors and museums and the part played by the government in the confiscation of these materials as a strategy towards undermining Potlaching, is covered by Douglas Cole in Captured Heritage; The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts.<sup>95</sup>

Much of the ethnohistorical literature on religious suppression among Indian cultures in eastern Canada focuses on missionary activities. However, systematic attempts by the Canadian government to undermine the power of traditional hereditary forms of leadership of the Longhouse Religion of the Six Nations Confederacy has been discussed in several studies (Hauptman, Shimony, Tooker, and Weaver).<sup>96</sup> These investigations focus on events leading up to 1932, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were brought on to the reserve to enforce

elections.<sup>97</sup> By coercively instituting democratic elections, the government hoped to subvert the more "traditional" and "non-progressive" elements in the community. It was also at this time that leaders connected with the Longhouse Religion were approaching international bodies at Geneva for recognition of their political sovereignty within the Canadian state. Shimony's evaluation of the aftermath of this repression and the reformulation of the Longhouse Religion to perpetuate 'Indian Ways,' provides comparative material for the Plains Cree experience.<sup>98</sup>

The only other related study which deals with government policy and ceremonial repression is Bennett McCardle's survey of attempts to officially discourage traditional forms of healing.<sup>99</sup> In her paper, "Government Control of Indian 'Medicine Men' in Canada," McCardle outlines the rationale behind this policy and some of the ways it affected the function of healers.

#### Comparative American Studies

Many studies of Indian religious responses to government policy in the United States have been directed towards examining the various types of nativistic revitalization movements. Only Margot Liberty's research on the history of the Cheyenne Sun Dance deals specifically with government suppression of the ceremony.<sup>100</sup> Her findings regarding the methods used to implement this legislation and the reaction of the Cheyenne to these measures provided valuable comparative insights for this dissertation.

The suppression of Indian religions in the United States closely

paralleled the Canadian experience. The more formalized aspects of this repression as they were manifested through legislation and the official directives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs are summarized in A History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Its Activities Among Indians, by Curtis Jackson and Maria Galli.<sup>101</sup> A more extensive treatment is available in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Report which served as a background paper for the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (August 11, 1978).<sup>102</sup> Produced by a Federal Task Force, this report addressed the question of the extent of federal responsibilities for ". . . administrative and legislative changes considered necessary for the protection and preservation of the religious cultural rights and practices of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut and Native Hawaiians."<sup>103</sup>

Other discussions of Indian religious freedom are also central to histories covering the administrative years of John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the period 1933 to 1945.<sup>104</sup> Through the efforts of Collier regulations against certain features of Indian religious worship and the Sun Dance were repealed in 1934. Finally, a number of more general histories on Indian policy in the United States also deal with the subject although there is generally no in-depth analysis of the role of religious controls as an assimilative mechanism.<sup>105</sup>

#### Conceptual Orientation of this Study

As indicated in this literature review, there have been several studies dealing with North American Indian religious persistence and



change, however, there has been little research on Indian responses to efforts on the part of federal governments to either control or prohibit indigenous religious practices. In order to provide some insight into this important aspect of Indian history, the historical experience of the Indian populations of the prairie/parklands regions of western Canada will be examined with specific reference to the Plains Cree.

In this study, the discussion of Plains Cree ceremonialism is based upon several premises regarding religious systems and change. Religious systems are considered in functionalist terms and according to the holistic perspective as defined by Brown, Gill, and Hultkrantz. That is, Plains Cree ceremonialism is analysed in its spiritual, social, economic, and political contexts. For purposes of identifying and analysing those changes brought about by imposed legislated measures, the ceremonial complex has been interpreted from the perspective of historical materialism. In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with the interrelationships between religious ideology and practices and the ways in which people related to one another socially, economically, and politically in order to survive and reproduce their societies. As a historical methodology, it necessitates

. . . both placing a society fully in the historically specific context of its relationships with its social and geographical environment, and dealing with the complex interrelations and interactions within and between the relations of the forces of production on the one hand and the social and ideological on the other. . . .106

By assuming this approach to Indian administrative policy and ceremonial persistence and change, I have deemphasized the theological content of the religious system of the Plains Cree for purposes of

analysis. This decision was made because the focus of my research is on those aspects of ceremonialism that were specifically repressed and the fact that this area of Plains Cree life has been poorly documented and is little understood by researchers.

Finally, religious ideology is not only perceived as a belief system in the functionalist sense of promoting social cohesion, but also as a mechanism in itself for providing the means for social action.<sup>107</sup> In view of the legislation under study and other assimilative measures which were used to transform Indian societies, accommodations or persistence in religious life are viewed as reactions to social, economic, and political changes taking place in the society as a whole. To what degree these responses were effective in preventing the government from "severing the ties that bind" is a major focus of this study.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>D. Douglas Schwarz, "Plains Indian Theology as Expressed in Myth and Ritual, and in the Ethics of Culture," Diss., Fordham University, 1981, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ake Hultkrantz, "Prairie and Plains Indians," in Iconography of Religions, Section X, North America, ed. Th. P. Van Baaren, L. Leertouwer, and H. Buning (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); Brown.

<sup>3</sup>Brown, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>John Saliba, "Religion and the Anthropologists 1960-1976," Part I, Anthropologica, N.S., xviii, No. 2 (1976), p. 182.

<sup>5</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Religion," in Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural, ed. Arthur Lehmann and James Myers (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Sam Gill, Native American Religions: An Introduction (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Adrian Tanner, Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), p. 206.

<sup>8</sup>Gill, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup>Clifford Geertz cited in Kenneth A. Rice, Geertz and Culture (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1980), p. 223.

<sup>10</sup>Roger O'Toole, Religion: Classic Sociological Approaches (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1984), p. 190.

<sup>11</sup>Otto Maduro, "New Marxist Approaches to the Relative Autonomy of Religion", Sociological Analysis, 38 (1977), p. 359 cited in O'Toole, p. 192.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>T. Rennie Warburton, "Religion and the Control of Native Peoples", in Religion in Canadian Society, ed. Steward Crysdale and Les Wheatcroft (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), pp. 412-22.

<sup>16</sup> Brooke Larson, "Shifting Views of Colonialism and Resistance", Radical History Review, No. 27 (1983), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Moone, "Persistence with Change: A Property of Sociocultural Dynamics", in Persistent Peoples ed. George Castille and Gilbert Cushner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981), pp. 230-31.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see Weston La Barre, The Peyote Cult (New York: Schocken Books, 1975); Vittorio Lanternari, The Religions of the Oppressed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963); James Mooney, "The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890", Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report, No. 14 (1896), pp. 645-1136; Leslie Spier, The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance, General Series in Anthropology 1 (Menasha: George Banta, 1935); J. S. Slotkin, The Peyote Religion: A Study in Indian-White Relations (New York: Octagon Books, 1975); Omer Stewart, "Origin of the Peyote Religion in the United States", Plains Anthropologist, 19, No. 65 (1974), pp. 211-33; Omer Stewart, "The Ghost Dance", in Anthropology on the Great Plains, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1980), pp. 179-87; Omer Stewart, "The Native American Church", in Wood and Liberty, Great Plains, pp. 188-96; Wallace, "Revitalization"; Anthony Wallace, The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Anthony Wallace, "Origins of the Longhouse Religion", Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 15, Northeast, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), pp. 442-48.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph Linton, "Nativistic Movements", American Anthropologist, No. 45 (1943), p. 230.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> David Aberle, The Peyote Religion Among the Navaho (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966); Simon Clemhaut, "Typology of Nativistic Movements", Man, No. 64 (1964), pp. 14-15; Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine, People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970); Igor Kopytoff, "Classification of Religious Movements: Analytical and Synthetic", in Symposium on New Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. June Helm (Seattle: Washington Press, 1964), pp. 77-90; Wallace, "Revitalization"; and Bryan Wilson, Magic and the Millennium (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Anthony Wallace cited in Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. William Lessa and Evon Vogt (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), pp. 424, 425-27.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 422.

<sup>28</sup>Slotkin, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>30</sup>Edward Spicer, Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), p. 503. See also Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change, ed. Edward Spicer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>See Charles Glock, "The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups", in Religion and Social Conflict, ed. R. Lee and M. S. Marty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 27-29. According to Glock, deprivation can be economic, social, organismic, ethical, or psychological.

<sup>33</sup>See Lanternari, Religions; Wilson; Elizabeth Grobsmith, "The Lakhota Giveaway: A System of Social Reciprocity", Plains Anthropologist, 24, No. 84, Part 1 (1979), pp. 123-31; Jorgensen, Sun Dance Religion, Kehoe, "Ghost Dance Religion"; Fred Voget, The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974); and Katherine Weist, "Giving Away: The Ceremonial Distribution of Goods among the Northern Cheyenne of Southeastern Montana", Plains Anthropologist, 18, No. 60 (1973), pp. 97-103. For classifications of religious movements as political movements, see Bruce Lincoln, ed., Religion, Rebellion, Revolution: An Inter-disciplinary and Cross-cultural Collection of Essays (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

<sup>34</sup>Donald Cadzow, "Mr. Cadzow's Field Trip of 1925", Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian, III, No. 1 (1926), pp. 48-50; Donald Cadzow, "Peace Pipe of the Prairie Cree", Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian, III, No. 2 (1926), pp. 271-80; Donald Cadzow, "Expedition to the Canadian Northwest", Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian, IV, No. 1 (1926), pp. 61-63; Donald Cadzow, "Smoking Tipi of Buffalo Bull the Cree", Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian, IV, No. 2 (1926), pp. 271-80; Pliny Earle Goddard, "Notes on the Sun Dance of the Sarsi", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 16 (1919a), pp. 271-82; Pliny Earle Goddard, "Notes on the Sun Dance of the Cree in Alberta", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 16 (1919b), pp. 295-310; Alanson Skinner, "Political and Ceremonial Organization of the Plains-Ojibway", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 11 (1914a), pp. 475-512; Alanson Skinner, "Political Organization, Cults

and Ceremonies of the Plains Cree", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 11 (1914b), pp. 513-42; Alanson Skinner, "The Sun Dance of the Plains-Cree", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 16 (1919a), pp. 283-94; Alanson Skinner, "The Sun Dance of the Plains-Ojibway", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 16 (1919b), pp. 311-15; Wilson Wallis, "The Sun Dance of the Canadian Dakota", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 16 (1919), pp. 319-85; James Vanstone, "The Simms Collection of Plains Cree Material Culture from Southeastern Saskatchewan", Fieldiana Anthropology, New Series, No. 6 (1983) pp. 1-57. Also see L. Bloomfield, Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin No. 60, Anthropological Series, No. 11 (Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1930). Bloomfield had collected numerous stories or "teachings" from the Sweet Grass Reserve in 1925. Bloomfield included no commentary on government suppression of ceremonies, however, he did remark that "The Sun-Dance is crowding out the Mitewin; at Sweet Grass the latter is viewed as black magic" (Ibid., p. 6). Another anthropologist Douglas Leechman, did travel to the Canadian prairie region in 1936 and collected material for the Victoria Memorial Museum, however, there is no record of his fieldnotes. The Museum of Civilization now houses the artifacts.

<sup>35</sup>Vanstone.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Goddard, "Sun Dance of the Cree".

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 306-310. See Glenbow Archives (GA), M585, Robert Jefferson, Notes and Correspondence re Customs and Culture of Cree Indians, Battleford, Saskatchewan, 1911-1919; and Ibid., P. E. Goddard to Robert Jefferson, 28 Sept., 1911.

<sup>41</sup>Amelia Paget, The People of the Plains (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1909). In his introduction to the book, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Scott warned his readers of the "idealistic", that is, sympathetic tendencies of Paget's descriptions. He stated: "During this experience (her captivity) Mrs. Paget's knowledge of the Cree language and her intimacy with all the ways of the Indians, even the very fashion of their thoughts, proved a constant defence for the whole party. The following pages must be read by the light of these facts; they account for the tone of championship for all Indians, and for the idealistic tendency which places everything in a high and favorable aspect ... If there were hardship and squalor, starvation, inhumanity and superstition in this aboriginal life, judged by European standards, here it is not evident." Scott cited in Paget, pp. 13-14.

<sup>42</sup>Skinner, "Sun Dance of the Plains-Cree", p. 287.

- <sup>43</sup>Skinner, "Sun Dance of the Plains-Ojibway", p. 313.
- <sup>44</sup>Wallis, "Sun dance of the Canadian Dakota", and "The Canadian Dakota", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 41 Part 1 (1947), pp. 1-226.
- <sup>45</sup>CMC, Ethnology Division, Archives Section, Dr. Edward Sapir Papers, Correspondence Files, W. D. Wallis, 1914; W. D. Wallis to Dr. Edward Sapir, 28 May 1914, p. 1. The "massacre" referred to is the hostilities which occurred during the Minnesota Uprising of 1862. Many Dakota (Sioux) fled north to British territory to escape reprisals from the American government.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., 22 July, 1914, pp. 1-3.
- <sup>47</sup>Leslie Spier, "The Sun Dance of the Plains Indians: Its Development and Diffusion", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVI, Part VII (1921), pp. 451-527.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 474-75.
- <sup>49</sup>Skinner, "Sun Dance of the Plains-Cree", p. 291.
- <sup>50</sup>David Mandelbaum, "Changes in Aboriginal Culture Following a Change in Environment, As Exemplified by the Plains Cree", Diss., Yale University, 1936.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., "The Plains Cree", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 37 (1940), pp. 163-316; Ibid., The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979).
- <sup>52</sup>The present writer had the opportunity to speak with David Mandelbaum at this conference regarding his fieldwork in Saskatchewan. See David Mandelbaum, "The Plains Cree Remembered", Proceedings of the Plains Cree Conference, Fort Qu'Appelle, 24, 25, 26 Oct., 1975 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979), pp. 74-78.
- <sup>53</sup>Kehoe, "Ghost Dance Religion".
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 4. Kehoe conducted extensive interviews in her fieldwork. In particular, she acknowledged Henry Two Bears, leader of the Dakota Ghost Dancers at Round Plains and Robert Goodvoice, her interpreter, who was Two Bears' stepson. Her major Plains Cree informant was Harry Brown, a Sun Dance maker and shaman from the Poundmaker Reserve. His son, Arthur, acted as her interpreter.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 98. This opinion is also held by Verne Dusenberry in The Montana Cree, Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion, No. 3

(Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1962), pp. 61 and 168.

<sup>58</sup>Kehoe, "Ghost Dance Religion", p. 96.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>61</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree; Dusenberry; and Watetch.

<sup>62</sup>Kehoe, "Ghost Dance Religion", p. 49.

<sup>63</sup>O'Brodivich, "Plains Cree of Little Pine". See also "Plains Cree Sun Dance: 1968", The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 1, No. 1 (1969b), pp. 71-87 by same author.

<sup>64</sup>O'Brodivich, "Plains Cree of Little Pine", p. 14.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-3.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>70</sup>Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'".

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>See Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School", and Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'".

<sup>74</sup>Tarasoff.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>76</sup>Braroe; Hanks and Hanks; Shimpo and Williamson.

<sup>77</sup>Braroe, pp. 8-9.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>80</sup>Shimpo and Williamson.

<sup>81</sup>Frederick Abbott, The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada (Washington: Department of the Interior, 1915); Allan Harper, "Canada's



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<sup>82</sup>Peter Cumming and Neil Mickenberg, Native Rights in Canada (Toronto: Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972); Harry Hawthorn, ed., A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Volumes I and II (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966 and 1967); J. Douglas Leighton, "The Development of Federal Indian Policy in Canada, 1840-1890", Diss., University of Western Ontario, 1975; John Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts: Development Strategy and Constitutional Change", in As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies, ed. Ian Getty and Antoine Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), pp. 56-64; Ponting and Gibbins; John Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canadian Indian Policy", The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 4, No. 2 (1976), pp. 13-30; and Leslie Upton, "The Origins of Canadian Indian Policy", Journal of Canadian Studies, VIII, No. 4 (1973), pp. 51-61. For a historical overview of the administration of Canadian Indian policy during Duncan Scott's term as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, see Titley, Narrow Vision.

<sup>83</sup>Isabel Andrews, "The Crooked Lakes Reserves: A Study of Indian Policy in Practice from the Qu'Appelle Treaty to 1900", M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1972; Larmour, Jean, "Edgar Dewdney, Indian Commissioner in the Transition Period of Indian Settlement, 1879-1884," Saskatchewan History, 33, No. 1 (1980), pp. 13-24. Douglas Leighton, "A Victorian Civil Servant at Work: Lawrence Vankoughnet and the Canadian Indian Department, 1874-1893", in Getty and Lussier, pp. 104-19; David McNab, "The Colonial Office and the Prairies in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", Prairie Forum, 3, No. 1 (1978), pp. 21-38; David McNab, "Herman Merivale and Colonial Office Indian Policy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", in Getty and Lussier, pp. 85-103; D. Aidan McQuillan, "Creation of Indian Reserves on the Canadian Prairies, 1870-1885", Geographical Review, 70, No. 4 (1980), pp. 379-96; Richard Price, ed., The Spirit of Alberta Indian Treaties (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy and Indian Association of Alberta, 1979); John Taylor, "The Development of an Indian Policy for the Canadian North-West, 1869-1879", Diss., Queen's University, 1975; John Taylor, "Canada's North-West Indian Policy in the 1870's, Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations," in Approaches to Native History in Canada, Papers of a Conference held at the National Museum of Man, October 1975, ed. D.A. Muise (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1977), pp. 104-10; John Taylor, Treaty Research Report: Treaty Four (1874) (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Center, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985); John Taylor, Treaty Research Report: Treaty Six (1876) (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Center, Indian and

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<sup>86</sup>Ahenakew, Voices; Eleanor Brass, I Walk in Two Worlds (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987); Dion, My Tribe; Sluman and Goodwill, John Tootoosis; and Blair Stonechild, "The Uprising of 1885: Its Impacts on Federal Indian Relations in Western Canada", Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Journal, 2, No. 2 (1986), pp. 81-96.

<sup>87</sup>Hugh Dempsey, Red Crow, Warrior Chief (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980).

<sup>88</sup>W. Keith Regular, "'Red Backs and White Burdens': A Study of White Attitudes Towards Indians in Southern Alberta, 1896-1911", M.A. Thesis, University of Calgary, 1985.

<sup>89</sup>W. Keith Regular, "On Public Display", Alberta History, 34, No. 1 (1986), pp. 1-10.

<sup>90</sup>Titley, "W. M. Graham" and Narrow Vision.

<sup>91</sup>Forrest LaViolette, The Struggle for Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). See also Forrest LaViolette, "Missionaries and the Potlach," Queen's Quarterly, Vol. 58 (1951), pp. 237-51.

<sup>92</sup>William Halliday, Potlach and Totem and the Recollections of an Indian Agent (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1935).

<sup>93</sup>Barbeau.

<sup>94</sup>John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict:

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<sup>96</sup>Laurence Hauptman, The Iroquois Struggle for Survival: World War II to Red Power (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986); Annemarie Shimony, Conservatism Among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve, Yale University Publications in Anthropology: 65 (New Haven: Yale University, 1961); Elisabeth Tooker, "The League of the Iroquois: Its History, Politics, and Ritual", in Trigger, Northeast, pp. 418-41; Elisabeth Tooker, "Iroquois Since 1820", in Trigger, Northeast, pp. 449-65; Wallace, "Revitalization"; Anthony Wallace, "Longhouse Religion", in Trigger, Northeast, pp. 442-48; and Sally Weaver, "Health, Culture and Dilemma: A Study of the Non-Conservative Iroquois, Six Nations Reserve, Ontario", Diss., Department of Anthropology, University of Waterloo, 1967.

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<sup>98</sup>Shimony, p. 127.

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<sup>101</sup>Curtis Jackson and Marcia Galli, A History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Its Activities Among Indians (Saratoga: R & E Research Associates, Inc., 1977).

<sup>102</sup>United States Department of the Interior, Federal Agencies Task Force. American Indian Religious Freedom Act Report, P.L. 95-341, August, 1979, Washington, D.C., 1980.

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## CHAPTER II

## "PERPETUAL COMPROMISES BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND IMMEDIATE EXIGENCY:"

## IMPERIAL NATIVE POLICY IN SETTLEMENT COLONIES

The post-1870 experience of the Canadian Plains Indians has its historical roots in British imperial native policy as it was developed in temperate climate settlement colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, and British North America. This policy was characterized by Herman Merivale, the Undersecretary of State for the Colonial Office (1848-1874), as one of ". . .perpetual compromises between Principle and Immediate Exigency."<sup>1</sup> That is, official recognition of the sovereign rights of "first inhabitants" was continually undermined by Britain's commitment to fostering a state of economic self-sufficiency and self-government in the settlement colonies as a means to establishing its own economic and political hegemony in the non-western world. In this chapter, the intellectual and administrative precedents of British native policy will be reviewed in order to examine similar patterns in Canadian Indian policy. It will be demonstrated that the Australian Aborigines, New Zealand Maori, and Canadian Indians shared similar colonial experiences due to "compromises between principle and immediate exigency." It was this approach to native policy which fostered their involuntary incorporation into the newly emerging nation-states dominated by newcomers. This incorporation was achieved through ". . .the imposition of special legislation. . .the development of marginal economies and the erosion (if not replacement) of original beliefs, customs and social organisation."<sup>2</sup> The end result was the

reduction of politically independent societies to powerless minorities or ethnic groups within the industrialized western nation-state system.

Several factors influenced the development of imperial native policy. Environmental conditions, the historical period of colonization, the prevalent ideology of the day, the varying types of cultural systems encountered, and indigenous responses to European settlers affected the actual implementation of native policy. Most important, the incongruencies between Victorian principles of humanitarianism and the political and economic exigencies of managing imperial interests often subverted the adoption of a uniform native policy. This administrative dilemma has been summarized by Beverley Gartrell in her examination of variations in colonial expressions of liberal democratic ideologies; she states that while the government is ". . . expected to clear the land of indigenes. . ." it is at the same time ideologically constrained from summarily disposing of those defined as human beings albeit savage ones. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The implementation of native policy is further impeded by financial restraints on the part of both the British and colonial governments. Ultimately, the extent to which indigenous labour remained relevant to the economic development and growth of settlement colonies and the willingness on the part of Native peoples to participate in this process determined the success of imperial policy. In order to promote the peaceful and orderly incorporation of indigenous people into the social, economic, and political realities of settlement colonies, administrative systems of trusteeships were established. As in the case of the British working class, indigenous labourers were expected to contribute to the

prosperity of colonies through hard work and for its part, the Colonial Office assumed the responsibility of protecting native workers from harsh treatment and undue exploitation.<sup>4</sup> The role of further "civilizing" indigenous populations was generally left to missionaries.

#### Ideological Factors in the Framing of Imperial Native Policy

The conceptualization of an imperial native policy can be traced to the humanitarian lobby which followed in the tradition of the anti-slavery reform movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During this period, influential Low Church evangelicals known as the Clapham Sect or Exeter Hall pressured the British Parliament to enforce the principle behind the "Abolition of Slavery Act" of 1833 throughout the empire. According to this act, it was resolved that the ". . . natives of the British Empire be secured in the due observance of justice and the protection of their civil rights."<sup>5</sup> It was within the context of the anti-slavery act that Lord Glenelg issued a dispatch to Governor Bourke in 1837 with instructions to deal with Australian Aborigines as "Subjects of the Queen."<sup>6</sup> The official recognition of the civil rights of indigenous populations and the extension of the British justice system to protect these rights was premised, in part, on the evangelical belief in the "unity of the human family." Observable cultural differences and what were perceived to be degrading forms of behaviour were attributed to environmental conditions, lack of knowledge of the Christian message, and the unscrupulous behaviour of colonists who exploited native populations and resources to their own advantage.<sup>7</sup> It was believed that non-western

societies could be transformed through directed programs of change and by exposure to the British system of values. Thus, the imposition of British political rights and justice was based on the ethnocentric assumption that Victorian values and lifestyle had "universal application," and indeed, would be desired by natives once they became cognizant of the benefits of "civilization."<sup>8</sup>

This view was shared by members of the Christian reform movements who were convinced of the "theoretical universality of the Christian religion" and secular humanitarians who promoted the "idea of progress" as the means to better the human condition.<sup>9</sup> "Progress" was understood as the process by which all would enjoy the opportunity to attain the highest stage of civilization as exemplified by a Victorian Protestant industrialized England. Considering themselves to be "leaders of civilization" and successful "pioneers of industry and progress," Victorians evaluated the cultural systems of other societies against their own image. It was a hierarchical world with Britain at the apex of material and moral progress. The "capacity" for "freedom" and "enterprise" was the measurement by which others were judged; the ladder of Victorian progress assumed the following configuration:

. . .the British at the top, followed a few rungs below by the Americans, the other 'striving, go-ahead' Anglo-Saxons. The Latin peoples were thought to come next, though far behind. Much lower still stood the vast Oriental communities of Asia and North Africa where progress appeared unfortunately to have been crushed for centuries by military despotisms or smothered under passive religions. Lowest of all stood the 'aborigines' whom it was thought had never learned enough social discipline to pass from the family and tribe to the making of a state.<sup>10</sup>

According to the social evolutionary thought of the time, humanity



was perceived as progressing through various regular and predictable stages of development which ranged from barbarism to civilization. This social theory evolved into a "moral and political" one once mid-Victorian humanitarians ". . .with a vivid sense of superiority and self-righteousness, if with every good intention,"<sup>11</sup> considered it their Christian duty to hasten this development. This duty would be fulfilled through the proselytization of Christianity and the establishment of the principle of "free enterprise" as a condition for material progress. And in fact, some believed that "Divine Providence had specifically equipped the English for such a role" by providing them with access to the peoples of the world through commercial contacts.<sup>12</sup>

While "armchair" humanitarian elements were a major impetus for the development of native policy, the direct field observations of missionaries and travellers supplied the public with firsthand information of the devastating impact of uncontrolled frontier colonialism upon indigenous populations. Mission reports received by home offices in London detailed the high incidence of mortality brought on by European-introduced diseases, accelerated levels of warfare, and starvation which resulted from the over-exploitation of food resources or territorial dispossession. If not physically exterminated (Boethuks, Tasmanians, and certain Aboriginal populations), once viable societies were depicted as disintegrated and demoralized remnants. Reacting to these reports, the government struck a fifteen-member parliamentary committee in 1835 to investigate the treatment of indigenous peoples in South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the South Seas, and British Guiana. In a document entitled "Official Report and Minutes of

Evidence of the British House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines" numerous cases of mistreatment were detailed and the committee recommended state action in the colonies. Other organizations such as the Aborigines Protection Society also felt that the Colonial Office should exert a firm control over the relations between the indigenous and colonial societies.

In general, humanitarians distrusted local colonial legislatures to treat fairly with natives and were opposed to "unjust" land seizures and the forceful incorporation of natives into colonial labour systems. They firmly believed that the betterment of these peoples was attainable only through Christian conversion and education. Historian John Galbraith concluded that while the political power and "cohesion of purpose" of humanitarians were "amorphous" in terms of the breadth of espoused principles and the fact that the "language of humanitarianism" was conventional during this period, they nonetheless served to define the nature of trusteeship by appealing ". . .to the conscience of British society against what many of their contemporaries considered the natural law by which the strong exterminated the weak. . . ."13 Thus, in 1838 Lord Glenelg identified "civilization" and "protection" as the underlying principles of imperial native policy, the objective of which was ". . .to protect and cherish this helpless Race. . . .[and] raise them in the Scale of Humanity."14

By the mid-nineteenth century, the initial expressions of humanitarianism were being modified by an ever-strengthening current of social theory which espoused a more explicit doctrine of racial supremacy. Historian Douglas Lorimer traces this development to the

"armchair investigations of the new science of anthropology" which were ". . . reinforced by the romantic speculations of historians seeking in folk myths the elusive qualities of the national character. . . ." <sup>15</sup> It was a theory of race which postulated that in addition to physical traits, moral and intellectual qualities were biologically determined. The social application of this theory not only resulted in a re-evaluation of the work of social reformers among the English poor at home, but allowed Victorians to contextualize non-Europeans in racial terms and to rationalize cultural differences in terms of "inferior" inherited characteristics. <sup>16</sup> Accordingly, there was a philosophical shift in the definition of trusteeship, that is, ". . . paternalism was no longer a trusteeship until maturity was reached, but a perpetual guardianship over ageless children." <sup>17</sup>

The destruction and displacement of non-western societies was implicit in the notion of "survival of the fittest" inherent in the theory of Social Darwinism. Charles Darwin's On the Origin of the Species, published in 1859, provided social theorists with the first formal statement of the theory of biological evolution as a process of natural selection. Applied to race within the context of imperial contacts, the means were used to justify the end. In her study of attitudes articulated in popular Victorian literature, Christine Bolt discovered that most writers believed in the inevitable destruction of indigenous forms of pre-industrial societies. <sup>18</sup> Bolt summarized this popular consensus of opinion as follows:

The principle of the survival of the fittest, seen to be working itself out in these regions, was proving conclusively that civilized and uncivilized races could not mix, and in a conflict situation the latter

must perish. Everywhere the inferior organization makes room for the superior. As the Indian is killed by the approach of civilization, to which he resists in vain, so the black man perishes by that culture to which he serves as a humble instrument.<sup>19</sup>

The application of sociocultural evolutionism to non-Europeans contributed to the development of a world view consisting of an hierarchical order of societies based upon types of subsistence patterns, technology and resource use, forms of social and political organization, and "customs." Pre-industrial societies were considered to be at stages comparable to those which Britain had experienced during earlier phases of her development. Lack of material progress, measured according to British standards, or indigenous unwillingness to participate in programs imposed to facilitate "progress" were indicators of conservatism, backwardness, and cultural stagnation, a situation rectifiable only by direct intervention. This ethnocentrism dominated the ideology of native policy well into the twentieth century and was a powerful force behind the systems of wardship which were established to deal with indigenous societies. As Bolt has pointed out, the challenge to these theories did not emerge until after the first decade of the twentieth century when the association between technological development and morality was challenged and "armchair" anthropological studies were replaced by a methodology which questioned unfounded assumptions about other cultures by encouraging direct field observations.<sup>20</sup>

These concepts not only influenced the ways in which Victorians perceived themselves in relation to other cultures, but also contributed to the emergence of racial stereotypes which permeated policy development and implementation and which served to justify observations

that western capitalism, despite intervention by the Colonial Office, would continually expand at the expense of natives.

"Gross Superstitions and Ferocious Forms of Worship"<sup>21</sup>

In comparison with industrialized Victorian Christian society, non-industrialized societies were perceived as technologically inferior and inefficient in terms of producing surpluses for the international market. The terminology used to describe domestic modes of production and distribution--"backward," "wasteful," "crude," "static," "tradition-bound," and "unproductive" attests to the conviction that such systems were irrelevant to a self-sufficient and prosperous settlement colony.<sup>22</sup> For Victorians, these societies seemingly lacked the "striving go-ahead" or enterprise of Anglo-Saxons, that is, ". . .the desire to keep moving, to be trying and accomplishing new things for our own benefit or that of others. . . ." <sup>23</sup> Often, the lack of visible surpluses was attributed to the prevalence of "indolence," a "common characteristic" attributed to "un-civilized people." Westerners felt it was their duty to correct this situation as indicated in a resolution passed by the Committee of the African Institution in 1807.<sup>24</sup> In some colonial areas, the "motives and means" to create "industrious" labourers and surpluses would be supplied through the use of force while in others, the transformation of political economies would be facilitated by economic inducements and newly-created education systems.

Many of the adaptive strategies developed by non-industrialized cultures to maximize resource use and to ensure the orderly biological

and social reproduction of their societies were viewed as "irrational." Commonly referred to as local "customs," the ideologies and concomitant ritual behaviour of non-western societies were perceived as "gross superstitions" and "ferocious forms of worship."<sup>25</sup> Since these practices were thought to be responsible for the lack of material and moral "development," they became targeted for suppression. It is within this context that the following section will deal with the Victorian effort to repress indigenous religions through imperial native policies.

Victorians examined patterns of religious expression within a framework of sociocultural evolutionary theory. In general, the religious systems of non-Christians were denigrated and few believed that colonial hunters and gatherers or horticulturalists even had a religion. A brief examination of some of the popular theories of the day will reveal the intellectual climate within which native policy was developed.

Anthropologists such as the American scholar, Lewis Henry Morgan, believed that non-Christian religious experience was derived from the imagination and emotions (that is, were irrational and defied scientific analysis). Some of his British counterparts did attempt to define stages of religious evolution.<sup>26</sup> In The Origin of Civilization, published in 1870, Sir John Lubbock traced the evolution of religious thought by identifying various types of behaviour: Atheism, Fetishism, Nature-worship, Shamanism, and Idolatry.<sup>27</sup> Consistent with the views of colleagues like anthropologist Edward Tylor, Lubbock defined religious behaviour in terms of stages in the cognitive evolution of humans. In other words, religious beliefs and organization changed with the

development of greater "scientific" understanding of the occurrence of natural events. As Bolt notes, scholars such as Lubbock ". . .expressed the more optimistic, Christian, version of this attitude" when he stated that "while savages show us a melancholy spectacle of gross superstitions. . .religious mind cannot but feel a peculiar satisfaction in tracing up the gradual evolution of more correct ideas and nobler deeds."<sup>28</sup>

Implicit in this evolutionary scheme of morality was the idea of physical and spiritual progress. Lubbock believed that "advanced ideas" were ". . .entirely beyond the mental range of the lower savages, whose extreme mental inferiority we have much difficulty in realizing."<sup>29</sup> In Lubbock's work, there is only a brief reference to the relationship between his levels of religious behaviour and social organization. He noted however, that the power of chiefs and priests increased from lower to higher levels and associated the stage of Idolatry with sacrifices, temples, and priests.<sup>30</sup>

During the same period, Edward Tylor produced a similar evolutionary scheme to explain cultural differences in religious behaviour. Humanity's progression from polytheism to monotheism was traced in Primitive Culture published in 1871.<sup>31</sup> While not extensive, Tylor's analysis suggested that there was evidence for a functional correlation between religious systems and social, economic, and political behaviour. Tylor reasoned that,

In the course of history, religion has in various ways attached to itself matters small and great outside its central scheme, such as prohibition of special meats, observance of special days, regulation of marriage or kinship, division of society into castes, ordinance of social law and civil government.<sup>32</sup>

In his dialogue regarding the concept of the human soul and animistic practices, Tylor observed that vestiges of animism were still evident in "modern" societies as exemplified in the "folk" beliefs of the illiterate of Britain and peasant societies.

Subsequent studies tended to support the views of Sir James Frazer as they were developed in Totemism (1887) and in his most renowned work, The Golden Bough (1890). Central to Frazer's analysis of religion was his differentiation between magic as ". . .an early expression of science based on a false notion of the regularity of cause and effect processes" and religion as a ". . .higher achievement, substituting uncertainty and prayerful conciliation for misguided notions of causality."<sup>33</sup>

Using a comparative approach to develop his theory of religion, Frazer derived his descriptive material from the observations of explorers, traders, missionaries, gentlemen travellers, and colonial administrators. The "apparent universality of savagery" was considered to be a cultural reflection of earlier stages in the development of modern industrial state. In a section of The Golden Bough entitled "Our Debt to the Savage," Fraser acknowledged the contribution made by previous levels of society to the "perfection of theories of thought" and suggested that "contempt and ridicule or abhorrence are too often the only recognition vouchsafed to the savage and his ways."<sup>34</sup> While Frazer may have appreciated the cultural legacy of his forefathers, he was less tolerant in his portrayal of religious behaviour in other cultures. For example, he referred to practitioners of homeopathic or imitative magic as "cunning and malignant savages."<sup>35</sup> The relationship



between religion and political evolution was defined as a historical transition from medicine man (Magician) to monarchy (Religion), the latter, ". . .starting as magician, tends gradually to exchange the practice of magic for the priestly functions of prayer and sacrifice."<sup>36</sup>

In his comparison of colonial indigenous cultures, Frazer concluded that the Australian Aboriginal population was the ". . .most backward state of human society now known to us. . ." and possessed no religion.<sup>37</sup> He observed that among these "rudest savages," ". . .everybody fancies he can influence his fellows or the course of nature by sympathetic magic, but nobody dreams of propitiating gods by prayer and sacrifice."<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, Frazer did recognize the social and economic role of clan systems in the performance of specialized rituals for food procurement. While not considered to be as backward as the Aborigine, the Maori were described in similar terms. With reference to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Frazer argued that the greatest advancement had been made by the monarchical and theocratic governments of Mexico and Peru. In other societies, including those of the Plains Indians, the "sorcerer or medicine-man" was considered to be the most significant source of influence and political power. Drawing upon the writings of traveller-artist John Catlin, Frazer concluded that the source of political power in a "state of savagery" on the Plains was a "council of elders" in consultation with the shamans.<sup>39</sup> Most significantly, the lack of "progress" was attributed to this "oligarchy" for as Frazer remarked, "no human being is so hidebound by custom and tradition as your democratic savage; in no state of society consequently is progress so slow and difficult."<sup>40</sup> In his comparison of political

systems, he argued that there was more "liberty to think our own thoughts and to fashion our own destinies" under despotism and "grinding tyranny" than ". . .under the apparent freedom of savage life, where the individual's lot is cast from the cradle to the grave in the iron mould of hereditary custom."<sup>41</sup>

The relationship between religious systems and social organization was the subject of other studies including W. Robertson Smith's Religion of the Semites (1889) in which the function of religion in promoting social solidarity was explored, and Herbert Spencer's The Principles of Sociology (1891) which discussed the role of religion in terms of social cohesion and continuity.<sup>42</sup> In his work, Spencer examined the impact of religion in terms of strategies of political control, social cohesion, and military organization present in "ecclesiastical bureaucracies." As contemporary anthropologist Marvin Harris has concluded in his academic study of the historical development of social theory, the majority of treatises on the problem of human evolution mirrored the "cultural idealist heritage of the Enlightenment" for while material progress was an important facet in the stages of cultural evolution, ". . .the ultimate pre-eminence of mind in shaping the direction of material progress remains unquestioned."<sup>43</sup> This theoretical orientation would only be seriously challenged by Marxian models of society as exemplified by Karl Marx's Preface to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) in which all aspects of human culture were derived from a material base.<sup>44</sup> For Marx, the differences in cultures were inherent in the "social production" which humans carry on as ". . .they enter into different relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these

relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production."<sup>45</sup> Marxians supported Lewis Henry Morgan's evolutionary scheme which associated cultural development with technology and types of economies.

These Victorian concepts of social evolution were popularized in the literature of the period and reached an influential audience through public lectures. The oral and written accounts of traders, explorers, missionaries, administrators and colonial residents were disseminated on these occasions. Personal testimonies, in conjunction with the intellectual climate of the times both in Britain and North America lent further credence to evolutionism as it was expressed in imperial protectionist policies. This combination of social evolutionary thinking and humanitarian idealism influenced policy-makers such as the permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office, Herman Merivale. A former professor of Political Economy at the University of Oxford, Merivale was consulted over issues of British native policy by the various Secretaries of State well after his incumbency had ended.

Committed to developing an imperial native policy which would prevent the destruction of indigenous societies, Merivale promoted his ideas on the nature of the relationship between Britain, its colonists and the original inhabitants within the Colonial Office. The issue of metropolitan intervention in the affairs of natives was addressed by Merivale in two major lecture series entitled, Lectures on Colonization and Colonies, first published in 1841 and subsequently revised in 1861. In his evaluation of the contents of both lecture series, historian David McNab has noted that there was a distinct shift in Merivale's

approach to the solution of the "contact-conflict" situation in the empire.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1841 version of the Lecture, the undersecretary supported the regulation of colonial-native relations by the Colonial Office. The role of the state would be protectionist with assimilation as the ultimate objective:

Depending on the local circumstances, the native population would ostensibly be protected (and eventually assimilated) either by a policy of insulation (by means of which a system of reserves or locations would be developed which would effectively separate the native peoples from white settlers) or by amalgamation (by means of which the native population would be encouraged in every possible way, including miscegenation, to adopt the 'superior' material culture of the white population).<sup>47</sup>

The conviction that colonial legislatures would not act in the interests of native peoples was evident in Merivale's insistence that the colonial governor, as a representative of the British government, be responsible for policy implementation. For while imperial native policy was premised on a belief that inferior indigenous systems would disappear once the British colonies became self-governing, this process was to be achieved within the context of humanitarianism.<sup>48</sup> In the light of his experiences with the failure of native policy in British North America and South Africa, Merivale's second lecture series reveals a disillusionment with the ability of the Colonial Office to fulfill its mandate of protection. The best of intentions had been undermined by the principles of free trade, colonial economic self-sufficiency and demands for self-government, a retrenchment in parliamentary funding needed to support metropolitan-controlled colonial administrations, the difficulties involved in enforcing a uniform and equitable native policy

over vast distances, and indigenous resistance to imposed assimilative measures.<sup>49</sup>

The principle of cultural (including religious) transformation was more explicitly defined in the 1861 lecture series in which broad areas of cultural behaviour were characterized as objectionable. These included: "violations of the eternal and universal laws of morality"; "less horrible" but nonetheless "pernicious" customs; and "absurd" and "impolitic" customs that were not "directly injurious."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Merivale postulated that the acceptance of British customs, values, laws, and the Christian religion by native societies was a prerequisite if they wished to be ensured of a place in self-governing White settlement colonies. Colonial self-sufficiency and prosperity were synonymous with control over "land, capital, and labour" at the expense of less progressive societies.<sup>51</sup> Towards this end, Merivale stated that

It will be necessary, in short, that the colonial authorities should act upon the assumption that they have the right in virtue of the relative position of civilized and Christian men to savages, to enforce abstinence from immoral and degrading practices, to compel outward conformity to the law of what we regard as better instructed reason.<sup>52</sup>

As a result of these attitudes, the Colonial Office officially supported missions throughout the empire. In Africa, missions were established in coastal settlements and energies were directed towards undermining the slave trade. The establishment of a bishopric at Zanzibar, the heart of the Arab slave trade market, illustrates this policy.<sup>53</sup> African religious systems were denigrated as ancestor worship, fetishism, and witchcraft. While some, such as the Reverend

J. E. Carlyle (1881) were of the opinion that Africans in the south and west did have religious beliefs, he reduced these beliefs to "grovelling superstitions," and "spiritual pretensions," and was of the opinion that ". . . its charlatanism, ventriloquism, and scarcely disguised fraud and legerdemain. . . hold under. . . cruel control countless millions of the African race."<sup>54</sup> Religious leaders, commonly referred to as "witch doctors," were perceived as major obstacles to progress. In keeping with this attitude, the colonial government of Rhodesia passed the Witchcraft regulations of 1895 and the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899, which outlawed witchcraft and various forms of divination.<sup>55</sup> The latter legislation, still in force in the 1960's, was not only used to punish "witch doctors and finders" but also those who sought out their services.

The various religions of India, however, were more highly regarded. The existence of temples, priesthoods, and religious documents provided Victorians with visible signs of organized religious systems which were equated with a more highly evolved society than found in Africa, Australia, or North America. Nevertheless, evangelicals lobbied the Colonial Office for support of the establishment of missions. Hinduism, in particular, was considered to be idolatrous, corrupt, immoral, and designed for sensual gratification rather than worship. Associated customs such as the caste system, ". . . widow burning, "thuggee," infanticide, hook-swinging, self-mutilation, human sacrifice," and others such as "polygamy, prohibitions on widow remarriage and female education" provided missionaries with justification for suppressing Hinduism.<sup>56</sup>

Although the commercial charter of the British East Indian Company encouraged the promotion of Christianity, the company had actually restricted missionary activity until 1833. In the interest of promoting a favourable commercial climate, the company had adopted a neutral position with regard to religion and local customs. Missionaries accused the company of being concerned with its own selfish objectives at the expense of the indigenous population, claiming that enlightened Indians might demand a more equitable share in commercial transactions.<sup>57</sup> While missionaries blamed the Indian Mutiny of 1857 on the lack of stronger Christian presence, their opponents argued that ". . . the departure from strict neutralism in 1854 had offended Indian traditionalists and led directly to the uprising. . . ."58 The colonial government itself had shifted from a policy of non-interference by passing legislation to discourage polygamy, "suttee" or widow burning, and infanticide. After the Indian Mutiny, however, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation in 1858 which implied that while missionary activity would be supported, Moslems, Hindus, and Buddhists would not be forced to convert:

Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion. We disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose Our convictions on any of Our subjects. We declare it to be Our royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observance, but that all alike shall enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law.<sup>59</sup>

In the colonial situations of Africa and India which were not White-dominated, customary practices and religious systems did undergo some level of suppression. These efforts, however, were largely

ineffective. Administrators, traders, missionaries, and settlers often disagreed over the extent to which they should intervene in local affairs. Furthermore, the general nature of directives issued by the Colonial Office allowed for a significant latitude of local interpretation and implementation. This inconsistency in imperial native policy resulted in some level of tolerance as exemplified among colonial Indian tribal peoples who were allowed to practise their customs provided that they were compatible with British notions of ". . . justice, humanity and good government" or were not "wasteful" and "cruel" (involving religious animal sacrifice).<sup>60</sup>

Unlike non-settlement colonies, interference in indigenous cultural systems in areas of white settlement was more pervasive. A brief examination of the development of policies which directly or indirectly affected ceremonial life in Australia, New Zealand, and British North America, will illustrate the pattern of suppression which was later applied among Indians in the prairie/parkland region of western Canada.

#### Imperial Native Policy: Australia

From the time of the establishment of the first penal colony in New South Wales in 1788, relations between White colonists and Aborigines were typified by the annihilation, exploitation, and dispossession of the latter. As historian C. D. Rowley explained,

It is one of the tragedies of the Aboriginal that Australia was colonised when Britain was becoming an industrialized nation; that the demand for fine wool should coincide with a combination of cheap land, comparative absence of resistance by indigenous man or by the local fauna, and suitable grasses, all cheaply obtained with small capital outlay; that religious restraints on profit making had given away



to the Protestant ethic, which in turn was to be supplemented by the best of all sops to frontier consciences--the popular pseudo-Darwinism which could explain the 'passing of the Aboriginal' as a law of nature.<sup>61</sup>

Unlike other colonial relationships, no formal trade or military alliances were established and no arrangements were made for land cessions. Existing clan ownership of tracts of land went unrecognized and a legal decision passed in 1899 declared that Australia was a territorium nullius at the time of contact and was therefore, unoccupied. It was the desire for the land itself and not indigenous-produced goods which determined the historical relationship between the two groups.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Aborigines had been reduced in number to the point where colonists believed that these original inhabitants would soon vanish. Lacking effective technology and traditional forms of unified military organization, these semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers had been unable to limit colonial expansion into their clan tracts. In an effort to at least ". . .smooth (as cheaply as possible) his dying pillow. . .," the Colonial Office instructed its governors to support the activities of missionaries and the establishment of schools for Aboriginal children.<sup>62</sup>

The Colonial Office had envisioned the incorporation of natives as a process whereby people ". . .would learn by percept and example to live in equality with the lower orders of the colonial society, with all the protections of the law."<sup>63</sup> Directives from the Secretary of State for Colonies stipulated that governors should foster a cooperative and peaceful relationship and recommended that Whites should be punished for

"destroying them" or for unnecessarily interrupting "their occupations."<sup>64</sup> At the same time, governors were encouraged to develop their sense of religion and to support their education. In 1837, the Select Committee on Aborigines, organized to investigate charges of colonial maltreatment, advocated these same policies in addition to proposing the creation of a reservation for hunting land and ". . . special codes of law to protect the Aboriginal until he learned to live within the framework of British law."<sup>65</sup>

Initially, the Colonial Office had advised against interference in local internal affairs and thus the Aborigines were to be free to exercise "their own customs upon themselves" as long as they were not practised ". . . too immediately in the presence of Europeans."<sup>66</sup> Before his appointment as Governor of South Australia, however, Captain George Grey informed the Colonial Office in 1840 that certain "barbarous" local customs should not receive recognition as a regular code of laws. Grey believed that the Aborigines were inferior to Europeans, but was convinced that cultural mores, rather than biological or environmental factors were responsible. In his opinion, Aboriginal religion, or what was referred to as superstitions, or "traditional laws" were responsible for the lack of material and moral progress. In her summary of Grey's views (which were shared by many of his contemporaries, including the Whig leader, Lord John Russell), Pauline Strong noted that the governor had little patience with those philosophers who "idealized the freedom and equality of natural man" and firmly believed that these qualities were absent in the exogamous clan system that ". . . bound the Aborigines to 'barbarism' by allowing the monopolization of advantages by strong

male elders."<sup>67</sup> For Grey, the erosion of the power held by tribal elders was a necessary precondition of integration and eventual assimilation for it was the elders who, through the supernatural sanctions of the traditional laws, would attempt to dissuade those who demonstrated an inclination to assimilate.

While conversion to Christianity was the major mechanism through which morality and liberality would be achieved, the incorporation of Aborigines as labourers into the capitalist economy was also an important objective. Towards this end, Grey and his predecessor, Governor Gipps, supported the introduction of training facilities and apprenticeships whereby new technical skills and European work habits could be learned.<sup>68</sup> This transformation of Aborigines into members of the working class was also a prerequisite for the attainment of citizenship status. The continued use of Aborigines as casual labour was considered to be inadvisable since the low wages (attributed to the lack of skills rather than racism) only served to draw labourers back into the "bush" once they were no longer needed.<sup>69</sup> The location of people on reserves during the transition phase of adopting European values and work skills was to serve both protectionist and assimilative objectives.

With the exception of Western Australia, responsible government had been granted to the Australian colonies by 1856. The colonial frontier had advanced over Aboriginal lands and competition for resources led to violence. For Aboriginal hunters and gatherers, access to water-holes was restricted, fences and grazing cattle and sheep drove off game, and people were forbidden to hunt or congregate near settled areas. Some

family groups settled near pastoral stations where they were employed as casual labour, others sought refuge at mission stations, some located on the outskirts of townships, while still others, particularly in the desert areas, retreated as far as possible from the European.<sup>70</sup>

A system of trusteeship in the form of two administrative offices called the Protectors had been established since 1840 to prevent the total annihilation of the Aboriginal population. In addition, rations, blankets, and medical aid were distributed by resident magistrates. In 1886, the Aborigines Protection Act was passed by the five member Aborigines Protection Board of Western Australia, however, no level of bureaucracy was created to implement its provisions. Rather, the provisions of the Act were simply added to the myriad of other duties performed by resident magistrates, police, and government medical officers. This situation was rectified in subsequent legislation which established an administrative arm to supervise policy implementation in the form of a Chief Protector and a Department of Native Affairs. To facilitate the administration of protectionist policies, the Aboriginal population was to be relocated on a series of small reserves which ultimately served as refuge areas rather than as bases for viable economic development. Through this means, the races were effectively separated and at the same time, the political and economic interests of the colonists were served through the settlement of Aborigines on lands not coveted for development. For the most part, the future welfare of the Aborigines was left to missionaries.

Assimilative programs received support through legislated measures as exemplified by The Queensland Act of 1897 and similar Acts passed in

1911 by other state governments. The comprehensive nature of these acts has been outlined by Rita Bienvenue:

Aborigines were denied the right to vote, the right to testify under oath and the right to participate in certain religious and cultural ceremonies. Moreover, liquor and firearms were prohibited, admission and expulsion from reserves were stipulated, interracial marriages were discouraged, children could be made wards of the state, work permits were granted to those eligible for employment. In addition, institutional regulations on missions and stations were formulated whereby work was assigned, punishment of insubordination enforced, monies and wages controlled. . . .<sup>71</sup>

The failure of the Colonial Office to successfully put in place mechanisms which would protect Aboriginal rights while at the same time facilitating their incorporation into the political economy was rationalized in racist terms. According to C. D. Rowley, to this day, "their failure or refusal to conform to middle-class mores has been monotonously explained as due to the stubborn resistance of Aboriginal 'mentality' or custom, or culture, to 'civilising influences'."<sup>72</sup>

#### Imperial Native Policy: New Zealand

In contrast to the semi-nomadic Aboriginal hunters and gatherers, the Maori of New Zealand practised a subsistence economy based on horticulture supplemented by hunting, fishing, and collecting. Their social relations of production consisted of a hierarchical system of kin-related family groups headed by chiefs who were responsible for pooling household products and supervising their redistribution. The Maori lived in fortified villages which protected the inhabitants during feuds. For Europeans, the existence of chiefdoms, villages, a horticultural subsistence, military organization and highly decorative

forms of "art" placed the Maori on a higher level of social evolution than was accorded to the Aborigines.

Following an initial period of contact with commercial whalers in the eighteenth century, the Maori soon became important suppliers to trading centres which were established on the North Island. During this phase of contact, the Maori traded their communally-produced surpluses of timber, flax, and later potatoes and pigs with colonists on the island and in New South Wales. Even the smoked tattooed heads of Maori slaves and enemies became coveted trade items by Europeans. While the participation of the Maori in the mercantilist system was initially beneficial, some tribes experienced extensive cultural disintegration as they became more entrenched in the European market economy. Competition for access to markets, trade goods such as woollen blankets, and new forms of technology such as metal knives, axes, and firearms resulted in an intensification of intertribal wars. The loss of life through warfare, European-introduced diseases and the abuse of alcohol as a trade item resulted in the deaths, dislocation, and impoverishment of thousands of Maori.

With the influx of British settlers at the height of the industrial revolution, the Maori found themselves competing for access to their own lands. Lord Glenelg and James Stephen, the permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office, both supported British intervention to protect Maori interests while ensuring peaceful colonization. In 1839, a decision was made to annex the South Island as a "right of discovery," to formally negotiate land cessions, and to appoint a "protector" to prevent land frauds and to generally oversee the welfare of the Maori.

In 1840, New Zealand became a British colony. The principle of Maori sovereignty was recognized when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed with a provision that further land alienation would be negotiable only through the Crown. Five years later war broke out between European colonists and those Maori chiefs who refused to consider land sales; this was the first of many subsequent armed conflicts that would disrupt the lives of the Maori.

As evident in its directives, the Colonial Office had every intention of implementing the humanitarian lessons learned from its failure to regulate colonial relations with the Aborigines. Historian Keith Sinclair suggests

These instructions marked a new and noble beginning in British colonial policy. The history of New Zealand was to be distinguished from that of earlier settlement colonies; the fate of the Maoris was to differ from that of the American Indian, the Bantu, the Australian or Tasmanian aborigine; for the new colony was being launched in an evangelical age. Imperialism and humanitarianism would henceforth march together.<sup>73</sup>

The years immediately following the wars of the 1840's were peaceful ones during which the Maori expanded their horticultural productivity on the North Island and even exported food surpluses to Australia. Under the governorship of George Grey, agricultural production was encouraged and communally-organized Maori work crews were hired for public works programs. At this time no serious consideration was given to the removal of the Maori due to their numerical majority, their nearness to White settlements, and their reputation as adept warriors. The colonial government, however, did initiate a policy of "Europeanization" to foster the assimilation of the Maori through

subsidized mission schools, industrial boarding schools, and the provision of medical aid in hospitals. A system of resident magistrates who were responsible for educating Maori chiefs in British legal procedures and law was also introduced. While some attempt was made to accommodate customary law (a provision of the Resident Magistrate Court's Ordinance of 1847 and the Native Circuit Courts Act of 1858), by consulting local leaders and adapting to local needs, the British system of law predominated. These same magistrates were also expected to provide the Maori with support in the Land Court which was established to facilitate the exchange of communal land title for individual property ownership with the excess land being made available to settlers.

In addition to transforming the Maori economy through the introduction of the concept of private property, assimilation was also encouraged by allowing Maori participation in the colonial political system. Although considered to be a "diplomatic" move rather than a serious effort to encourage political representation, the creation of seven Maori seats in the colonial legislature (three in the South Island and four in the North), did provide the Maori with some access to political power in the new order.

By 1860, racial hostilities had increased as settlers made further encroachments on Maori lands. The conflict was not only over land, but the ways in which the land resources were used by the two cultures:

For while the Maori system of subsistence agriculture required large parcels of land which could be allowed to return to forest, lie fallow, and then support the growth of the numerous wild stuffs which the Maori also harvested, the Europeans required relatively small areas of permanently cultivated lands, and vast



areas of grassland on which they could rear sheep. The conversion of forest and scrub into permanent grassland affected the Maori most. . . They were deprived of important foodstuffs, edible wild flora and fauna. They were unable to get sufficient access to traditional industrial material resources such as wood and fibrous plants.<sup>74</sup>

As in the case of Australian Aborigines, the Maoris' spiritual relationship to their land was reflected in their political economy. A leader's ability to productively manage land resources earned the respect of followers and in turn, enhanced his power or "mana" in a temporal (prestige and prosperity) and spiritual sense.<sup>75</sup>

In response to these pressures, an intertribal political movement emerged in the form of the King Movement and consisted of a number of leaders who had united forces under the chief, Wiremu Kingi. The organizational structure of this movement was based upon British forms of government and it was involved in an unsuccessful twelve-year effort to preserve Maori sovereignty in the central North Island area. Two subsequent militant messianic religious movements, the Hau Hau or Paimarire religion (under the leadership of Te Ua Houmene) and the Ringatu religion (under the leadership of Te Kooti Rikirangi), also failed in their objective to drive out the White colonists and regain Maori lands. The Hau Hau followers were defeated in 1872 and disbanded, and while the Ringatu religion was immobilized in the 1880's, a form of the latter persists today.<sup>76</sup>

The initial policy of non-interference in local customs and religion did not imply acceptance or tolerance of Maori cultural behaviour which was often described as "depraved and obscene" as well as unprogressive. A passage from the Wellington Independent typifies White

racial attitudes towards the Maori:

. . .scrape a Maori, the most civilised, and the savage shows distinctly underneath. The 'Haku' (war dance) is an expose of the evil which really lies at the root of their present prostrate condition, an exhibition of the substratum of utter immorality, depravity, and obscenity, which forms the ground work of their race; and in spite of the veneering with which we clumsily cover the rough wood, we shall do nothing until we alter their entire character, by taking in hand the education, per force of the young growing saplings.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the "war dance," another major communal ceremony, the tangi, was discouraged. The tangi was a funeral ceremony which lasted for a week or more and involved the congregating of numerous kinfolk who came ". . .to see the dead, mourn, and make farewell speeches."<sup>78</sup>

During the ceremony, large quantities of foods were prepared and consumed by the visitors. Attempts were made to reduce the size and duration of these gatherings. According to Raymond Firth, such ceremonies were considered to be a "drain on foodstuffs," a "burden on public transport," and a "danger to public health."<sup>79</sup> For the Maori, the funerary ceremony was a "social rite par excellence" which not only signified the passage from life to death, but also served to reinforce solidarity and moral obligations among kin-related households. As with other communal rituals, these practices perpetuated traditional forms of production and redistribution. On these occasions, food surpluses and labour were directed away from the commercial market since the obligation to pool one's resources undermined the accumulation of property by individual producers.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, such ceremonial practices were viewed as hinderances to participation in wage labour, successful family farming, and ultimately, assimilation.

## Imperial Native Policy: British North America

The Colonial Office was confronted with a more complex situation in British North America where it attempted to develop a native policy over a comparatively vast territory occupied by many different indigenous cultural systems. While some Indian societies had economies based upon semi-sedentary patterns of hunting, gathering, and fishing, others were supported by sedentarized villagers who combined horticulture with hunting and gathering activities. Their socio-economic and political organization varied in type from "bands," "tribes," ranked societies, to chiefdoms, but all were characterized by "subsistence level" economies based on the domestic mode of production. In other words, material surpluses were produced and redistributed through kin-related groups and through contacts with other societies. Such networking facilitated the flow of new technologies, ideas, and people (primarily through marriage). Physical boundaries between groups and societies were recognized but there was no exclusive individual ownership of land in the European sense of the concept.

Before the unification of eastern British colonies as the Confederation of Canada in 1867, imperial native policy in British North America followed precedents established by the British government in the English or Thirteen colonies of the present United States; that is, there was a political recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous ownership of occupied lands. Accordingly, any extinguishment of land ownership involved the processes of negotiation and purchase rather than seizure.<sup>81</sup> In addition, control over such land transfers were to be within the purview of the British Crown rather than private individual

dealings. Although the British government recognized the principle of aboriginal rights to land ownership, in practice, there was no uniformly implemented native policy until the 1750's. Following the cession of Acadia (Nova Scotia) by the French to the British in 1713, the government attempted to introduce the process of negotiated land surrenders to the Micmacs; however, it was not until 1752, when conflict over the region ended, that Governor Peregrine Hopson was able to ratify a treaty with the Micmacs. In this treaty, Micmac "hunting and fishing rights" in British territory were recognized and the government agreed to supply provisions.<sup>82</sup> The terms of this treaty were apparently not enforced.

In a subsequent proclamation issued some ten years later by Lieutenant-Governor Jonathon Belcher, the British Crown guaranteed the Micmacs their "just rights and possessions," and, further stipulated that all European squatters on Indian lands would be duly prosecuted.<sup>83</sup> This proclamation contained the essence of the pattern of imperial native policy to be followed in present-day Canada. By the mid-eighteenth century, Britain had adopted a "protectionist" policy not only to prevent the economic exploitation of Indians by colonists, but also to stabilize its commercial and military relationships with the various Indian nations. Such alliances, including neutrality, were considered necessary in the successful establishment of British political and economic hegemony in North America.

With the surrender of New France to Britain in 1763, Indian land rights were reaffirmed in principle. Not only were Indian allies of New France granted the right to occupy their lands in Article 40 of the

Capitulation of Montreal in 1760, but the subsequent Proclamation of 1763 established an Indian Territory ". . . west of the Appalachians and the Thirteen colonies and east of the Mississippi and south of the height of land dividing the waters flowing into the Arctic from those flowing into the Atlantic Ocean."<sup>84</sup> Regarded as a landmark document with respect to Indian aboriginal rights, the Proclamation provided for due consultation before the establishment of military fortifications in Indian territory and assurances that the British government would secure to them previously held "Rights and Privileges."<sup>85</sup> In recognition of these rights, the British government offered Indians protection against European encroachment in their hunting territory and stipulated that future transfers of Indian ownership of land would involve formal negotiations (treaties) and "fair" purchase through the agency of the Crown. This system of extinguishing Indian title to land was later applied to cessions in Ontario and the prairie provinces. Lands were to be set aside for exclusive occupation by Indians (reserves) and monies accruing from sales of Indian lands were to be applied to projects benefiting Indians. In practice, however, such funds were frequently misappropriated and until the twentieth century, there were few mechanisms in the Indian administration to prevent fraudulent dealings.<sup>86</sup>

The protective role of the imperial government was also reflected in the nature of the administrative structures which were developed to establish formal relations with Indian nations. In 1670, colonial governors were instructed to offer Indians British protection when it was requested. By 1755 an Indian Superintendency had been based in the

Mohawk Valley (New York State) and Sir William Johnson was appointed to administer political and economic relations on behalf of the imperial government between the colonists and the Indian nations. After the American Revolution, the Indian Superintendency was relocated in Canada.

The Indian superintendents and their agents were expected to function as both "protectors" and "diplomats." Much of their work involved the negotiation of trade and military alliances through formal meetings and the annual distribution of presents. According to historian John Milloy, the political relationship between the British government and indigenous societies was conducted on a "nation-to-nation" basis whereby the Indian Department, in effect, operated as a "foreign office."<sup>87</sup> This formalized relationship implied that Indians were allowed to retain their social, economic, and political independence despite the government's general support for "civilizing" programs. Milloy contends that there was a major shift in imperial Indian policy after the unification of Upper and Lower Canada in 1860, at which time the British government transferred its responsibilities for Indian relations to the United Canadas.<sup>88</sup> This shift was reflected in the changing administrative structure responsible for Indian relations. At the time of unification, the management of Indian Affairs was assumed by the Crown Lands Department, with the Commissioner also being the Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Under the provisions of the British North America Act in 1867, the responsibility for Indian Affairs was transferred to the Secretary of State and in 1873 it became a branch of the Department of the Interior. With the passing of the Canadian Indian Act in 1876, the social,

economic, and political position of Indian nations was dramatically transformed into one of "dependence." This formalized relationship between Indian societies and the new Canadian government had not been negotiated, but rather, unilaterally imposed and by 1880, a Department of Indian Affairs had been created to implement the terms of the act.

While this transformation in the political relations between Indian nations and the imperial government might be attributed to efforts on the part of politicians to "consolidate" a new nation, Milloy argues that the process started much earlier and received its impetus from ". . . a continuing quest for a more perfect [colonial] developmental strategy in an atmosphere of escalating political conflict involving native leaders and local civilizers, such as Indian agents and missionaries."<sup>89</sup> Before the War of 1812, the British government had favoured a native policy characterized by both protectionism and "conciliation," whereby the Christianization and civilization of Indians was not discouraged if the missionaries received indigenous support; otherwise, ". . . it did not favour activities that encouraged radical social change."<sup>90</sup> The combination of an increased demand for Indian lands and the state of economic dependency in which many Indian groups located near the colonies found themselves, provided the impetus for imperial intervention. For many Indian communities, the situation had reached a crisis level due to the over-exploitation of food resources as settlement and the commercial fur trade moved into the hinterland, the loss of hunting and fishing territories, and the decimation of populations through starvation, disease, and increased warfare.

John Webster Grant has traced the first official movement for

support of "civilization" programs in eastern Canada to Sir Peregrine Maitland, the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, and a former vice-president of the Church of England evangelical Church Missionary Society.<sup>91</sup> During the years 1820-21, Maitland proposed a program of primary education, training in agricultural and industrial skills, and Christianization for the Indian inhabitants of the communities of Grand and Credit Rivers. His successor, Sir John Colborne, extended the program into the Coldwater area of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe in 1829. According to historian Leslie Upton, the official commitment to these social experiments on the part of the Indian Department ". . . came into official policy through the back door of self-interest" and was an attempt on the part of Major General Darling, the Superintendent of the Indian Department to deflect imperial plans for the dissolution of the department by creating a new official function in the form of "civilizing" the Indian.<sup>92</sup> For its part, the Colonial Office verbally supported the establishment of Christian agriculturally-based family farms as a means to rescue Indians from "a state of barbarism," but no funds were allocated. Furthermore, as part of a more general move towards economic retrenchment, and in recognition of the changed role of the Indian as a military ally, the Indian Department was transferred from military to civil control in 1830, with the governors of Upper and Lower Canada assuming responsibility for Indian Affairs.<sup>93</sup>

The only serious internal challenge to the "civilization" program came in 1836 through the office of the newly-arrived Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head. Convinced that Indians were "a doomed race" and were "melting like snow before the sun,"



Bond Head recommended the physical isolation of Indians from all White contact.<sup>94</sup> Towards this end, he undertook negotiations for the removal (without compensation) of Chippewas, Ottawas, and Saukings to Manitoulin Island. Protests on the part of the London-based Aborigines Protection Society and mission agencies such as the Wesleyan Methodist Conference undermined Bond Head's realization of this scheme. By 1838, Lord Glenelg of the Colonial Office had issued an official statement of support for the cultural transformation program as outlined by Darling some ten years earlier, claiming that it was the most effective means to ". . . protect and cherish this helpless Race. . . [and] raise them in the Scale of Humanity."<sup>95</sup> This policy has been summarized as follows:

Wandering Indians had to be settled down; those who were more or less settled had to be made farmers. They had to be given a sense of permanency on their lands, "attached to the soil". . . Still, their lands would be protected from creditors and would be inalienable without the threefold consent of governor, principal chief, and resident missionary. Education was basic to assimilation. The government gave its blessing to the missionaries by instructing the Indian agents to co-operate cheerfully with them.<sup>96</sup>

The education of young Indians was a major focus in this assimilative program. Protestant missionaries had already established day schools for Indian children patterned after those available to the children of the English poor in Britain, and in certain areas, Indian children were allowed to attend White schools.<sup>97</sup> In 1879, the residential "manual-labour" school system as it had been developed in the United States by American educators such as Richard Pratt, the Director of Carlisle Indian School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was adopted. The introduction of these off-reserve industrial residential schools,

according to Grant, signified a "new era" for Indian missions in that ". . . young people would be removed from parental influence in the hope that they would become effective emissaries of Christian civilization among their people. . . ." <sup>98</sup> The ramifications of this education system for Indians was that assimilation would not be a matter of choice, but rather would be imposed on indigenous peoples by the dominant society.

Efforts were also made to integrate members of the adult Indian population into the mainstream of the dominant society. By the 1850's it had become evident that protective measures alone - such as the legislative acts passed to protect encroachment on Indian lands (1839), the regulation of the sale of alcohol to Indians (1839), and the attempt to insulate reserve populations from unscrupulous Whites by introducing punishment to non-Indian trespassers (1850) were not effective in promoting "civilization". Rather than adopt further "insulative" measures, the governor of Upper Canada adopted the strategy of encouraging integration with the offer of full citizenship. <sup>99</sup> In 1857, the Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Canadas made it possible for Indian male adults to attain citizenship upon meeting certain criteria. Citizenship entailed the surrender of all rights to Indian lands, and all privileges accruing to Indians from their special status were to be compensated with an offer of fifty acres of reserve land to be held in fee simple and a payment from band funds.

When the responsibility for Indian Affairs was transferred from the imperial government to the Province of Canada in 1860, these same principles were upheld. They were subsequently incorporated into the British North America Act of 1867 which transferred to the newly-formed

government of Canada the authority to pass legislation with respect to Indian populations. It was at this time that formal mechanisms through which Indians were to become politically incorporated into the state were defined. Towards this end, an Indian Act was passed in 1869, and under Section 10, provisions were made to undermine traditional forms of political leadership through the imposition of the "democratic, elective" process. As in Australia and New Zealand, traditional forms of hereditary leadership were considered to be major impediments to progress because they prevented the political ascendancy of young "educated" men. Furthermore, it was hoped that the power concentrated in the office of the traditional headman would be delegated to councillors through the new system. Thus, the federal government was empowered with the authority to order elections of chiefs and council members for a three-year period. The hereditary leaders who were allowed to continue in office and the newly-elected chiefs, as they were termed, were subject to removal on the grounds of "dishonesty, intemperance, or immorality."<sup>100</sup> In the new Indian Act of 1876, incompetency was added as a reason for deposition.

In their analysis of this legislation, Wayne Daugherty and Dennis Madill maintain that whereas colonial legislation had emphasized the process of "gradual civilization," the new Act promoted "gradual enfranchisement."<sup>101</sup> It was specifically created for those groups (for example, the Six Nations) who had a long history of contact, and was designed to ". . . provide further training in Euro-Canadian political and social values."<sup>102</sup> Concomitant with this legislation was the promotion of the idea of individual ownership of property which would be

fostered through the granting of "location tickets" to holders of individually held land on reserves. The demonstration of ownership of private property and its utilization in the European mode was a prerequisite for citizenship.

In summary, the development of imperial native policy in British North America was regionally inconsistent, reflecting the historical nature of changing political and economic relations between indigenous societies and the British government. Formal statements of policy were generally communicated in a language consistent with Victorian evangelical humanitarianism; in other words, it was the sacred duty of a more advanced nation to enlighten those inferior peoples who had been placed under their trusteeship. The intervention of the Colonial Office in the internal affairs of indigenous societies was motivated by the need to ensure that Britain's political and commercial interests could be pursued within a climate of law and order. The level and type of interference varied on a regional basis. Historian David McNab has concluded that by the mid-nineteenth century, the Colonial Office, in consultation with its resident governors in the colonies, had developed an "expedient" approach to the management of relations with Indian populations, following a policy of non-interference unless local circumstances forced a re-evaluation of this position:

In the North Atlantic colonies Colonial Office Indian policy attempted to 'insulate' the Micmacs by confining them to Indian reserves, until they were ready for assimilation. Its aim in the Canadas was 'amalgamation': an attempt to reduce the number and extent of Indian reserves and to try to persuade Indian people to mix with the white population, by miscegenation and education. In the West the objective was amalgamation, which would occur if the fur trade continued and if the position of the

Hudson's Bay Company could be maintained. The company administered Rupert's Land and was responsible to the Colonial Office for the welfare of the native peoples. On Vancouver Island and on the coast of British Columbia Merivale and his colleagues relied on James Douglas to develop his own Indian policy. Douglas's policy consisted of insulation for those Indian people who lived close to areas of non-Indian population, and amalgamation for all other areas.<sup>103</sup>

This approach was similar to that used in other areas of the British empire. In situations where the productive labour of indigenous populations was considered to be irrelevant (as in the case of the Australian Aborigines) or became redundant over time as a result of European immigration (as in the cases of the Maori and the Canadian Indians), official policies were less tolerant of traditional cultural systems. This pattern typified relations in temperate settlement colonies:

Willing settlers had to be found and transported and land made available, implying a system of allocating and recording claims to land. Large areas had to be cleared of any remaining indigenes and physical protection provided to settlers against any remaining troublesome natives who objected to the disruption of their previous land use. Unlike colonial administrations in other types of colonies, these states did not have to cope with the task of converting indigenes into a disciplined labour force; in contrast to the tropical pattern, settlers were expected to be more or less self-sufficient as regards labour.<sup>104</sup>

The greater part of the legislation introduced by the Colonial Office and subsequently adopted by colonial governments, was directed towards standardizing property relationships, creating greater access to land resources, and defining processes of cultural transformation. With the exception of Australia, legislation pertaining to the protection of traditional lands was not intended to protect the lands per se but

rather, was designed to protect indigenous populations in the "land conveyance process" and to ensure the orderly transference of Indian lands for settlement.<sup>105</sup> Once White colonials predominated in sufficient numbers and the need for political and economic interdependency disappeared, the Indian presence became irrelevant to the colony's self-sufficiency and prosperity. This pattern of relations was experienced by both the Maori of New Zealand and the Indian nations of British North America.

During the 1870's, the newly-formed Canadian government continued to develop and codify its Indian policy according to the general principles which guided imperial native policy. These same principles formed the basis for the Dominion's official dealings with the Plains Indians residing in present-day western Canada. Accordingly, Indian entitlement to occupied lands was formally acknowledged and land transfers to colonists were only possible through the process of formally negotiated land sales by a representative of the Crown. In exchange for surrendered lands, territory (reserves) was set aside for the exclusive occupancy of Indians who had signed treaty. The "civilization" and "assimilation" of Indians into the dominant society through paternalistic social programs and legislation were also acknowledged as long-term objectives.

In the following chapters the implementation of Canadian Indian policy among the Plains Cree will be examined with a focus on those clauses in of the Indian Act prohibiting various forms of "religious" behaviour. In order to establish the cultural and historical contexts for the Canadian government's introduction and implementation of such

legislation, and in turn, Native reaction to this form of cultural transformation, the structure of Plains Cree culture will be discussed in Chapter Three and the history of Plains Cree relations with the Dominion of Canada will be outlined in Chapter Four.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

- <sup>1</sup> McNab, "Herman Merivale", p. 100.
- <sup>2</sup> Rita Bienvenue, "Comparative Colonial Systems: The Case of Canadian Indians and Australian Aborigines", Australian-Canadian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Review, 1 (1983), p. 30; Fisher, "Contact and Conflict", pp. 1-14; Wilbur Jacobs, "The Fatal Confrontation: Early Native-White Relations on the Frontiers of Australia, New Guinea and America - a Comparative Study", Pacific Historical Review, No. 40 (1971), 283-309; and Paul Sharp, "Three Frontiers: Some Comparative Studies of Canadian, American, and Australian Settlement", Pacific Historical Review, No. 24 (1955), 369-77.
- <sup>3</sup> Beverley Gartrell, "Colonialism and the Fourth World: Notes on Variations in Colonial Situations", Culture, VI, No. 1 (1986), p. 9.
- <sup>4</sup> Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1970 (New York: Longman, 1978), p. 23.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Little, "Legal Status of Aboriginal People: Slaves or Citizens", in Racism: The Australian Experience: A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia, Vol. 2, ed. F. S. Stevens (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1972), p. 85. Commenting upon this middle-class group of reformers known as the Clapham Sect, Jean Usher noted that members such as William Wilberforce and James Stephen, longtime Secretary of State for the Colonies, commanded enough authority to influence native policy. The Sect was noted for its support of benevolent activities, its opposition to the slave trade, its promotion of world-wide missionization through the founding of the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the Sunday School Society, and the social reformist schools of Bell and Lancaster and Hannah More. See Jean Usher, "William Duncan of Metlaktla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia", Diss., University of British Columbia 1968, p. xii.
- <sup>6</sup> Little, pp. 82-83.
- <sup>7</sup> Usher, p. 31.
- <sup>8</sup> Phillip Curtin, The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 259.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism (London: The Macmillan Press, Limited, 1978), pp. 2-3.



- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 2; Usher, p. 34.
- <sup>12</sup>Usher, p. 35.
- <sup>13</sup>John Galbraith, "The Humanitarian Impulse to Imperialism", in British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory, ed. Robin Winks (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 2.
- <sup>14</sup>Upton, p. 59.
- <sup>15</sup>Douglas Lorimer, Colour, Class and the Victorians: A Study of English Attitudes Towards the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978).
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 148.
- <sup>18</sup>Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes Towards Race (Toronto: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 20.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>21</sup>Sir John Lubbock cited in Bolt, p. 120.
- <sup>22</sup>John Bodley, Victims of Progress (California: The Benjamin Cummings Publishing Company, Inc., 1982), p. 9.
- <sup>23</sup>Robinson and Gallagher, p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup>Curtin, p. 260.
- <sup>25</sup>Bolt, p. 120.
- <sup>26</sup>Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 199.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-1.
- <sup>28</sup>Bolt, p. 120.
- <sup>29</sup>Harris, p. 201.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 203.
- <sup>33</sup>Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1960), p. 16.

- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 347.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 119.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 72.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 115.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 46.
- <sup>42</sup>Harris, pp. 207-8.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 208.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 212.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 229.
- <sup>46</sup>McNab, "The Colonial Office", p. 21.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 24.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 27 and 35.
- <sup>50</sup>Bodley, p. 104.
- <sup>51</sup>McNab, "Herman Merivale", p. 92.
- <sup>52</sup>Herman Merivale, Lectures on Colonization and Colonies (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 502-3.
- <sup>53</sup>Bamber Gascoigne, The Christians (London: Jonathan Cape Limited, 1977), pp. 239-40.
- <sup>54</sup>Bolt, p. 123.
- <sup>55</sup>Bodley, p. 116.
- <sup>56</sup>Bolt, p. 168.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 161.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 162.
- <sup>60</sup> Bodley, pp. 106-7.
- <sup>61</sup> C. D. Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice, Volume I (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 103. See also T. Long, "The Development of Government Aboriginal Policy: The Effect of Administrative Changes, 1829-1977", in Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present, ed. Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt (Nedlands: University of Western Australian Press, 1979), pp. 357-66.
- <sup>63</sup> Rowley, p. 19.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 20.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 126.
- <sup>67</sup> Pauline Turner Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive: Australian Aborigines in Four Explorers' Journals, 1697-1845", Ethnohistory, 33, No. 2 (1986), p. 184.
- <sup>68</sup> Rowley, p. 134.
- <sup>69</sup> A. Elkin, "Aboriginal-European Relations in Western Australia: An Historical and Personal Record", in Berndt and Berndt, p. 291.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 294.
- <sup>71</sup> Bienvenue, p. 35.
- <sup>72</sup> Rowley, p. 139.
- <sup>73</sup> Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 54.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 59.
- <sup>75</sup> Kenelm Burridge, A New Heaven New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 19-20 and Guy Turvey, "The New Zealand Maori and the Process of Acculturation: An Historical Perspective", Na'pao, Vol. 12 (1982), pp. 26-34.
- <sup>76</sup> Turvey, p. 33.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 16.
- <sup>78</sup> Alan Ward, A Show of Justice: Racial 'Amalgamation' in Nineteenth Century New Zealand (Canberra: Auckland University Press, 1974).

<sup>79</sup>Raymond Firth, Elements of Social Organization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), p. 117.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>81</sup>Cumming and Mickenberg, pp. 13-23. For example, as early as 1629 the British government had instructed Governor Endicott of Massachusetts Bay colony to purchase Indian title to land.

<sup>82</sup>George Stanley, "Introductory Essay", in Getty and Lussier, As Long as the Sun Shines, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation", p. 40. See also Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy".

<sup>86</sup>Cumming and Mickenberg, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup>Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts", p. 56.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>90</sup>Upton, p. 56.

<sup>91</sup>Grant, Moon of Wintertime, p. 81.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>93</sup>Upton, p. 56.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>95</sup>Cumming and Mickenberg, pp. 113-14.

<sup>96</sup>Upton, p. 59.

<sup>97</sup>Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert and Don McCaskill, "The Legacy of the Past: An Overview", in Indian Education in Canada, Volume I: The Legacy, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 5.

<sup>98</sup>Upton, p. 59.

<sup>99</sup>Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation", p. 42.

<sup>100</sup>Wayne Daugherty and Dennis Madill, Indian Government Under Indian Act Legislation, 1868-1951, Part Two (Ottawa: Department of Indian and

Northern Affairs Canada, 1980), p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Part I, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> McNab, "Herman Merivale", p. 86.

<sup>104</sup> Gartrell, p. 8. See also Philip Mason, Patterns of Dominance (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 105-06.

<sup>105</sup> Ponting and Gibbins, p. 6.

## CHAPTER III

## GIFTS EXCHANGED ARE A BLESSING:

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE PLAINS CREE

In this chapter the political economy of the Plains Cree will be examined with specific reference to the relationship of this aspect of Cree culture to ceremonial life. This approach to ceremonialism will provide a basis for an evaluation of the legislation established for the purpose of transforming the indigenous political economy by suppressing giveaways and communal ceremonies. It will be demonstrated that the social, economic, and political components of Plains Cree ideology were anathematic to western capitalism, a dialectic which the Canadian government undertook to resolve through the imposition of assimilative programs. This development will be considered in the following chapter.

The Indian culture known as the Plains Cree evolved from the ecological and cultural adaptations made by a number of Subarctic Cree groups as they moved into the Parkland/Prairie region in the late eighteenth century. Their inland movement was in response to the undermining of their middleman role in the commercial fur trade as the Hudson's Bay Company and its Montreal-based competitors established posts in the hinterland. By the 1790's many of these bands which had seasonally hunted bison in the Parklands settled nearer this valued resource and took on the role of provisioners for the trading companies.<sup>1</sup> This increased access to an environment rich in game resources, successful participation in the commercial trade, and the adoption of new forms of technology (the horse and gun), resulted in

unprecedented affluence for these Cree groups.

#### Demographic Distribution and Social Organization

The migration of the Algonkian-speaking Cree into the Parkland/Prairie region continued throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century. By the 1850's the seasonal range of the Nehiyawuk ("the exact-speaking" people) extended along several major river systems:

During the summer they generally camped along the Qu'Appelle River and the Missouri Couteau, where they bordered on the Sioux and Assiniboine. At other seasons they were mostly in the valley of the Saskatchewan, from the Neutral Hills south of the Battle River to the Beaver Hills and Fort Edmonton where they impinged upon the Blackfoot.<sup>2</sup>

Considered to be the most powerful and populous culture residing in the prairie region, their number was estimated to be approximately 11,500 in the early 1860's. In comparison to other groups which had suffered a reduction in numbers due to the outbreak of smallpox epidemics during the periods 1780-82 and 1810-20, the Cree population continued to rise as more of their Woodland relatives moved into the area. By the late 1850's, however, the Plains Cree were also on the decline due to smallpox epidemics and starvation brought on by both the disease and the decline of the bison herds.<sup>3</sup>

Groups of kin-related extended families who co-resided together in particular locales on a seasonal basis were the foundations upon which the social relations of production, consumption, and distribution were organized. According to Mandelbaum, a number of these co-residential groups formed larger congregations known as "bands" composed of ". . .a

stable nucleus. . .of close relatives of the chief [headman], who would not ordinarily leave his group."<sup>4</sup> While each band tended to frequent its own hunting and gathering range, there were no territorial boundaries or exclusive individual ownership of resources.

Mandelbaum and others have identified at least eight major "bands" and several smaller groupings which could be culturally identified as the "Nehiyawuk". These bands varied in number from 200 to 800 people. The larger bands and their homelands have been identified as follows: the Calling River People, katepwewcipi wiyiniwak (valley of the Qu'Appelle); Rabbit Skin People, wapucwayanak (wooded country between the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers); "Cree-Assiniboin", nehiopwat (southwest of the Qu'Appelle River into the Wood Mountain region); Touchwood Hills People, pusakawatciwiyiniwak (territory between Long Lake and Touchwood Hills); the House People, waskahikanwiyiniwak (congregated around Hudson's Bay Company posts, particularly Fort Carlton); House, Willow or Parklands People, paskuhkupawiyiniwak (descendants of the Scotch trader, George Sutherland and his Cree wife, located immediately to the southwest of the confluence of the South and North Saskatchewan rivers); the River People, cipiwiyiniwak (located between the North Saskatchewan and Battle rivers, ranging as far west as the Edmonton area and south to the forks of the South Saskatchewan); and the most numerous and westernmost of the bands, the Upstream or Beaver Hills People, natimiwiyiniwak or amiskwatchiwiyiniwak (ranging along the North Saskatchewan to the Edmonton area and southward to the Battle River).<sup>5</sup> Mandelbaum noted that there was an additional regional differentiation of these bands, that is, the Calling River People,



Rabbit Skins and Touchwood Hills People were referred to as the Downstream People or mamihkiyiniwak, while the more westerly groups, including at times, the "Cree-Assiniboin", were known collectively as the Upstream People or natimiwiiniwak.<sup>6</sup> On the western fringes of the Plains Cree homelands resided their enemies, the nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy, and to the south and southwest, were the Dakota who shared with the Blackfoot, the generic appellation of ayahtciyiniwak or enemy. The Plains Cree also conducted raids against the Crow, Gros Ventre, and some of the Missouri village groups, particularly the Mud House People, or kotasiskikamikowak.<sup>7</sup>

The composition of any one band was flexible and the size varied. Membership was acquired through birth, marriage, adoption, and in some instances, by simply co-residing with a particular group. Most members, however, were related through either consanguinal (blood) or affinal (marriage) ties. While band size fluctuated with the seasonal availability of game and the re-alliance of individuals (such as young men who were reported to have travelled to distant groups to marry and take up residence), the core membership associated with any one headman remained relatively constant. Members from other cultural groups were also incorporated into Plains Cree bands and the existence of "polyethnic co-residence" (two or more ethnically-autonomous groups residing together) and "fused ethnicity" (such as the bilingual Cree-Assiniboin) are documented in the historical literature.<sup>8</sup> For example, in 1868, Isaac Cowie reported that an encampment located some twenty miles northeast of the Cypress Hills consisted of some 3,000 allied Assiniboin, Cree, Cree-Assiniboin, Ojibway, and Métis. These

politically autonomous groups had gathered for a celebration of the Thirst Dance and ". . .for purposes of mutual defense and support in hunting the buffalo in enemy territory. . ." and, at the same ". . .to allow the buffalo to return eastward to their own territory without being scared and driven back into hostile territory by many small scattered bands of hunters."<sup>9</sup> In her analysis of such groupings, Susan Sharrock points out that these bands were autonomous social, political, and economic units and any formal political organization beyond the band was either "non-existent" or "transitory."<sup>10</sup>

Descent within these kin-groups was patrilineal and residency patterns tended to be patrilocal. Marriage tended to be endogamous. Mandelbaum recorded that a new husband, despite his residency, was expected to contribute to his father-in-law's household and also to fulfill gift-giving obligations to his wife's brother. Matrilocality generally occurred upon the death of a husband's parents at which time he would take up residence in his wife's household. Men of high prestige and status enlarged their household unit by acquiring more than one wife and the sororate was common in these instances. On occasion, wife exchange was practised, the relationship between the two men being expressed as nikocak or "fellow husband" and between the women as nitayim or "co-wife." Such exchanges ". . .reflected considerable honor upon the participants, for only the most stout-hearted of men could become intimate companions of their wives' paramours."<sup>11</sup>

The Plains Cree bands had no age-grade societies which operated as integrative mechanisms beyond the band itself. However, Mandelbaum did report that young boys from different bands associated with each other

during inter-band encampments. At these times, friendships were often struck between two boys who would acknowledge their special relationship through gift exchange or by residing in one another's household. Such friends often participated in raids together. Their relationship was known as niwitewahakan, "the one with whom I go about."

While food resources often determined the pattern of membership dispersal and reintegration, leadership played a key role in attracting followers. A band may have more than one leader, each with his own following. As is characteristic of "egalitarian" societies, leadership was not defined in terms of authority for a headman did not have the power to coerce followers into complying with his decisions. Cree leadership was male and often hereditary although an "unworthy" son could be superceded by another who enjoyed a greater degree of kin support. Personal and supernatural charisma, bravery, oratory and hunting skills, diplomacy and an outstanding raiding record were valued as leadership qualities. Ultimately, the ability of a leader to adequately care for the physical and spiritual well-being of his followers determined his political power. Constant demonstrations of "wealth and liberality" were the key elements of good leadership or "worthiness." This "wealth" was not measured through the personal accumulation of goods for one's own use, but rather through the headman's capacity to mobilize the co-operative efforts of loyal relatives for the production of surpluses which were pooled and redistributed throughout the membership of the band. In this way, band members derived their status and prestige from the redistribution capacity of their headman. The elder, Fineday, described this facet of

the Plains Cree political economy as the quality of "liberality":

It happened many times that a man would be brave and bring back many horses. But he would trade the horses for clothes and would be too lazy to get hides for a tipi cover and so he could never be a chief. . . .It is not an easy thing to be chief. . . .He has to have pity on the poor. When he sees a man in difficulty he must try to help him in whatever way he can. If a person asks for something in his tipi, he must give it to him willingly and without any bad feeling.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, headmen were responsible for maintaining peaceful relations among their followers. Most conflicts between individuals and families were resolved through customary laws. Such resolutions generally involved the obligatory reciprocal exchange of propitiatory gifts on the part of both parties. The only recorded instance where forceful coercion was used was during communal bison hunts when individual transgressions of hunting codes were punishable by members of the Warrior Society.<sup>13</sup>

#### Social Relations of Production and Consumption

The social relations of production were organized according to kinship networks with much of the actual labour being divided along sexual lines. In most cases men, women, and children pooled their labour in the domestic production of goods with sexual differentiation occurring during particular phases of processing. Some larger households were able to achieve a higher degree of status and prestige through their enhanced productivity and redistributive capacity. Under highly favourable conditions, a headman was able to co-opt a "pool of labour" into his household beyond the immediate kinship unit by utilizing the energies of the orphaned or offspring of poorer relations.

These workers or otockinikima lent their support to men of higher rank in exchange for food, clothing, access to horses, and training in hunting and warfare.<sup>14</sup>

The extension of kinship or kin-like ties to augment the potential recruitment of social labour beyond the band was also practised. This method of incorporating new members into the band is reflected in the terminology used to designate newcomers. Amelia Paget, a White captive in Big Bear's camp during the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885, described this form of kinship networking:

The Indians had many friendly expressions which they were in the habit of using when addressing strangers. They were usually terms of relationship, such as 'Nes-tah' (brother-in-law), 'Enjoe-wah-mish' (cousin). Nothing served to put the stranger so much at his ease as being addressed in this friendly way by his host and other members of the band he was visiting. As a matter of fact, if a stranger belonging to the same tribe came to visit any Indians whom he had never seen before, they would soon manage to trace some real or imaginary relationship. They trace their kindred to wonderfully distant sources, and one might almost believe that the whole Cree nation was related or connected in some way.<sup>15</sup>

The fluidity of band membership composition was an adaptation to exploiting the game resources available in the Parkland/Prairie region. Anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have tended to explain the seasonal movements of the Plains Cree in terms of the seasonal migrations of bison. According to this model of resource exploitation, kin-related family groups converged along the southern Saskatchewan rivers to take advantage of the southward-moving herds during the summer months of June and July. After the major communal hunts, encampments were relocated on the Plains between the Grand Couteau of the Missouri and the Saskatchewan rivers. With the northward shifting of certain

herds in the fall, communal hunts were once again held. At the onset of cold weather during January and February, Cree family units which had gathered together to form larger groupings or "bands," now dispersed into smaller groups to hunt in sheltered wooded areas where animal resources were less dense. Although this socio-economic model suggests a regularity of cyclical movement, many factors affected the success of the hunts and even bison resources were periodically unpredictably absent. Most importantly, as Mandelbaum has emphasized, not all Plains Cree households participated in this exploitative round since ". . . at all seasons of the year buffalo were obtainable within the territory of each band; hence a seasonal migration of the whole tribe was not economically necessary and did not occur."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to bison, a number of other animal resources were hunted, including moose, deer, elk, several varieties of smaller game, birds, and fish. Vegetal foods such as the prairie turnip and other wild roots, numerous varieties of berries, and maple sugar were seasonally harvested. Until the early 1800's, some of the Cree bands, along with Assiniboine allies, supplemented their larders with food products obtained from trade with Mandan horticulturalists in the Missouri River region. Commercial trade goods were exchanged for Mandan-produced beans, corn, tobacco and horses, garments, and white-tanned bison hides received by the Mandan through trade with Plains groups further west.<sup>17</sup> Medicines and wild rice were obtained from the Ojibway residing to the east.

Of all the trade goods received through the indigenous exchange network, the horse was perhaps the most important. Horses were first

acquired through trade with the Mandan and with the Blackfoot who bartered these animals along with wolf pelts, tanned bison robes and hide garments for guns, hatchets, kettles, metal knives and iron projectile points.<sup>18</sup> According to John Ewers, the horse was acquired by the Plains Cree during the latter half of the eighteenth century and by the early nineteenth century, its presence had a profound effect on Plains Cree culture.<sup>19</sup> Not only did it replace the dog as a major beast of burden, but also increased group mobility, and enhanced the hunter's capacity to kill bison (through the technique of the chase) and to locate herds. In addition, the highly prized horse became a trade standard and a medium of exchange.<sup>20</sup> As a visible symbols of wealth, horses provided an avenue for prestige and status, particularly through their redistribution as valued gifts. Furthermore, horse herds were often augmented by conducting raids into enemy camps and because great stealth and courage were involved in such an undertaking, the capture of enemy horses was considered to be one of the highest honours attainable.<sup>21</sup> In combination with the gun, the horse revolutionized the means of production and inter-society relationships on the prairies.

With the exception of the communal bison hunts, every household had access to its own means of production and available resources. Bison were hunted by individuals and deer, moose, elk, and smaller game were hunted by both individuals or small cooperative family units. Similarly, communally-accessible fish weirs were operated by both the smaller productive units as well as the larger congregations of people. However, the technology and organization of labour necessary for communal hunts involved the application of specialized knowledge, the

use of trained horses (buffalo runners) and mechanisms for social control. Certain individuals were recognized as specialists in the use of the chute or pound method which was a technique used to capture bison in autumn and early winter. These specialists, known as poundmakers, not only supervised the logistics involved in the construction of the pound, but were also considered to be endowed with the spiritual power requisite for "calling the herd" in for the kill. These leaders also assumed the responsibility for conducting the necessary ceremonies associated with the hunt.

In the late winter and early spring, bison were often stalked by smaller groups of hunters on foot, but in the summer they were taken by the "chase" which involved the use of trained buffalo runners. The ownership of these horses (that is, the access to this means of production) was differential for ". . . only a few men owned horses swift enough for the chase and trained to hunt buffalo."<sup>22</sup> Fine-day informed Mandelbaum that only one tipi (household or extended family) in ten would own a good buffalo horse. Therefore, a number of families would attach themselves to the owner of such a horse and would share in the kill. The possession of such horses, therefore, enhanced one's status in the band and access to social labour. Successful poundmakers had similar followings.

This form of differential access to the means of production did not necessarily preclude access to strategic resources. As Mandelbaum explained, all who attached themselves to men who possessed specialized skills and technology not only participated in the production process but also were recipients of the benefits of pooled labour. No



particular household had exclusive rights of access to any resources or territory. Similarly, access to the use of domestically-produced goods was not restricted.

Material wealth was individually owned in the sense that each horse or dog or gun was the property of some one person. But in practice a man who lived near his father-in-law's tipi made free use of the elder man's horse. A woman who camped near her aunts or her mother took whatever she needed from their stores.<sup>23</sup>

Any tendency to take unfair advantage of the labours of others was checked by a number of means. Although an individual was never physically coerced into participating in productive activities, ostracism, ridicule, and kinship pressure (particularly by a man's brothers-in-law) were used to discourage such behaviour.<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, responsibility for one's kin was the major mechanism used to enhance productivity.

#### Positions of Status and the Political Economy

As has been observed from the material presented above, one's position in Plains Cree society was often defined in terms of production and redistribution capabilities. In this type of political economy, "the economic relation of giver-receiver is the political relation of leader-follower. . . it is the operative ideology."<sup>25</sup> Those who could not reciprocate in kind in the obligatory exchange system, offered their loyalties in place of material goods; this was particularly the case for older or impoverished people.<sup>26</sup> While Mandelbaum emphasized the primacy of the kin-related households as the major units of organization and the lack of political integration beyond the band level, that is, there was

no "tribal" polity, he also noted that there was some degree of ranking. To what extent the commercial fur trade influenced this development needs further study, although, it can be established that differential access to both strategic resources (subsistence) and trade goods directly evolved from participation in a market economy. Mandelbaum indicates that Euro-Canadian companies favoured "peaceful industrious trappers" over "aggressive warriors," and in fact, may have encouraged a new type of leadership by according prestige, status, and preferential treatment to the former in trade negotiations.<sup>27</sup> Such favourable treatment to headmen would have enhanced their access to trade goods and redistributive capacity, and ultimately their status and prestige. As Eric Wolf has pointed out, successful traders were also successful war leaders, resulting in ". . . a concentration of horses and valued goods in the hands of the wealthy and successful, producing a differentiation between richer and poorer, between chiefs and their dependents."<sup>28</sup>

The system of ranked leadership was not rigidly formalized, but ranking was at least tacitly acknowledged and ". . . in any case of doubt, settled by a word or hint from a respected old man."<sup>29</sup> At the band level of organization, one's status was reflected in assigned seating arrangements at council meetings and the weight of one's opinions in the decision-making process. In general, an individual's political power was indicative of his productive and redistribution capabilities; more impoverished members of the council were seated near the doorway of the lodge and may not be given a robe for seating.<sup>30</sup> When several bands periodically gathered together in larger encampments, these headmen would meet in the Warrior Lodge and again, seating

arrangements indicated one's overall status.

The system of ranking was summarized by Mandelbaum in the following hierarchy of positions. All males had potential accessibility to these positions with the exception of the headman which was generally passed on from father to son. As previously indicated, headmen were constantly required to demonstrate their "worthiness." Accordingly, they were responsible for the general welfare of their followers and had the prerogative of summoning Council meetings at which times the opinions of the leading men were solicited, with the final decision being deferred to pronouncement by the headman. Secondly, there was the position of camp crier or oca. kitostamakew. Elderly men with good war records were honoured with this position and their status was further recognized by the fact that the headmen and other men of rank were responsible for their material well-being. In addition to announcing the decisions of council meetings to the general membership, the camp crier assumed a number of powers in the absence of the headman including the authority to maintain public order, the right to distribute the headman's material possessions upon request, and the authority to announced public occasions of gift giving. A third position, also occupied by an elder, was known as the otepwestamakew or caller. Again, the holder of this position was materially supported by men of rank and it was his duty to officially summon people for meetings to the headman's lodge. Still a fourth official responsibility was inherent in the position of camp leader. This position was generally filled only during the summer months when the various households congregated at their favourite hunting locales. The camp leader was responsible for the choice of a

safe and productive camp site for the band members. Because of the importance of this undertaking, it was thought that such a man ". . . had to be one with powerful spirit helpers to guide him;" the holders of this position were periodically change.<sup>31</sup>

Differentiation in status and accompanying responsibilities for the corporate welfare of the group were publicly visible through informally organized men's associations. The kihtockinikiwak or "Worthy Young Men" was a title conferred on younger successful fighters and raiders. Their primary responsibility was to defend the camp and to host visitors. In contrast were the more formalized associations of the okihtcitawuk or "Warriors." There was usually one such organization in each band and its membership played a vital role in the political economy.<sup>32</sup>

Membership in a Warrior's Lodge or society was by invitation and members were recognizable through their insignia and performances of specific dances and songs. While the qualities of bravery and liberality were held in esteem, a good hunter who possessed horses could also gain access to the lodge. The position of warrior was publicly validated through gift-giving (such as horses and hides). In rare instances, an unproven adolescent might obtain the right to dance with the Warrior's society if his parents were able to distribute sufficient gifts. Each society had a formal leader or Warrior Chief. Their meetings occurred at the intra-band encampments where they performed their own rites, guarded moving camps, policed and supervised the operation of the communal bison hunt, and looked after the general well-being of the camp. The society was also endowed with the authority to punish those who had transgressed orders given at the communal

hunt.<sup>33</sup> Above all, Warriors and Worthy Young Men were expected to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in all aspects of life:

Both the Warriors and Worthy Young Men maintained prestige by demonstrating their dissociation from sentiments held by common people. They had to part with their material possessions freely and willingly; they were expected to be above jealousy; they took it upon themselves to prepare corpses for burial, an unpleasant and dread task.<sup>34</sup>

These voluntary societies which crosscut kinship divisions were important in promoting cohesion among the various Cree groupings. The elderly members of these Warrior Societies enjoyed political power and special status which accrued from their valued positions as repositories of cultural knowledge and wisdom. In this manner, life's experience had made the elders specialists and in exchange for their guidance, their material wants were provided.

These socio-economic values were not only transmitted and reinforced through kinship bonding and other integrative mechanisms, but also through beliefs and practices inherent in Plains Cree religious ideology. One's responsibilities for the welfare of the corporate whole went far beyond the secular considerations of morality and in fact, were considered to be sacred obligations. This role of ceremonial life in the political economy of the Plains Cree will be discussed in the following section.

#### Ceremonial Life and the Political Economy

While the true nature of Indian religions can only be experienced and are rarely adequately communicated on the written page, a definition of the relationship between the secular and the sacred in North American

Indian societies is central to any discussion of historical religious change. The "pervasiveness" of Indian spirituality throughout the collective and individual lives of people, is now being acknowledged in several studies, including Alvin Josephy's Now that the Buffalo Gone:

Legends, ceremonies, songs and dances and arts were integrated parts of the spiritual systems, instructing the people not only in sacred matters but about many of the ends and purposes of the systems themselves--what the group expected of an individual, right and wrong behavior, and the position and obligations of each person within the group. The systems were further strengthened by sacred symbols--fetishes, pipes, painted designs, medicine bundles, shrines, the first runs of fish, and the first fruits of harvest--that with the help of prayers and rituals made real and living the spiritual attachments between man and the sun and unseen world and assured food, well-being, and the satisfaction of the needs and wants of the society and its members.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Indian religious systems define, sanction, and integrate those forms of cultural behaviour which are requisite for personal well-being and the survival of the society. This does not imply that religious ideology necessarily provides a rigid "blueprint" for each generation to follow regardless of historical or environmental circumstances. This is clearly evident in the Plains Cree experience following their transition from a woodland to a prairie environment and greater contact with other Plains societies. The transformation of Woodland Cree religion and the fusion of woodland and Plains ceremonial traditions has been discussed at some length by Mandelbaum.<sup>36</sup>

Although both men and women could obtain the prerogative for performing certain rituals, the shaman was the source of religious leadership. The shamans can be considered specialists in the sense that most of their activities were devoted towards the spiritual welfare of

the group. Their position was obtained through an intensive spiritual quest which lasted throughout their lifetime. Their powerful role in the lives of the Plains peoples is largely derived from their comparatively greater access to supernatural power. As the ultimate human sources of sacred knowledge and power, their advice was valued for both physical and spiritual needs. Among the Plains Cree, the shamans not only provided ceremonial leadership, but also served as counsellors, transmitters of sacred knowledge and teachings, and healers. Other forms of religious or ritual leadership can be directly correlated with valued positions in Plains Cree society. This is particularly evident in the quest of a vision experience.

Much of the individualized performance of rituals was centred on achieving spiritual guidance through vision quests which involved preliminary teachings and periods of prolonged fasting and prayer. This quest was particularly important for male adolescents. Certain visions were considered to be more powerful and prestigious than others. This "hierarchical" arrangement of visionary experiences reflected the most valued positions of power in society. These included poundmaking, the ritual leadership of major ceremonies such as the Thirst Dance, the ability to heal, the power to divine (valued by war leaders to locate enemies), the right to make or own certain types of religious paraphernalia which often took the form of sacred bundles (protective war bundles and sacred pipestem bundles were the most powerful), and the power to confer with the spiritual world for purposes of the corporate welfare (often referred to as conjuring).<sup>37</sup>

Receiving a vision, however, was not sufficient in itself, for the

recipient was obliged to demonstrate his or her newly acquired powers to the community. Ultimately, therefore, it was the band members through the auspices of the shamans who validated and conferred privileges and rights obtained by individually-experienced spiritual revelation.

Another limit on the access to power accruing from visionary experiences was the transference of a visionary prerogative from father to son. The right to perform or lead a "vowed ceremony" (the most spiritually powerful and materially demanding type of ceremony in Plains Cree culture) is an example of this form of prerogative.<sup>38</sup>

In their study, "The Plains Vision Experience: A Study in Power and Privilege," Patricia Albers and Seymour Parker correlate the vision experience with access to limited positions of status and suggest that as a belief system it ". . . 'explained' to members of the society why certain individuals were more capable or had greater right to assume positions of prestige and privilege than others."<sup>39</sup> In this manner, the visionary experiences of the Cree served to perpetuate existing socio-economic and political relationships and to legitimize the acquisition of valued positions within the society by particular individuals. The vision experience also provided individuals with a sense of identity and social purpose by channelling and reinforcing behaviour in "socially approved directions."<sup>40</sup> The fact that a visionary experience was legitimized usually became apparent to the individual as access to teachers who could transmit the knowledge required for healing, poundmaking, or the performance of vowed rituals became available.

The tangible manifestations of these religious prerogatives were



evident in the production and use of various types of religious objects and symbols which were in essence the embodiments of spiritual power. While every member of Cree society possessed such symbols, some were notably more powerful than others, particularly those which could be used for the corporate good. Access to the latter was restricted to those who were of exemplary character and had earned the public trust. Some, such as the coveted War Bundle were individually-owned. While knowledge concerning its construction and proper use of its contents was originally received through a vision, younger men undertook to negotiate its transfer from the maker once its supernatural power had been demonstrated through successful raids.<sup>41</sup> In contrast was the Sacred Pipestem Bundle which was held collectively, that is, it was cared for by a worthy guardian on behalf of the community. The Sacred Pipestem Bundle and associated rituals afforded protection to the community at large and was used to resolve conflict situations through the office of its guardian. The bearer of this Bundle had to be exemplary in his behaviour, a status which was conferred by the Council. Unlike the War Bundles, this Pipestem Bundle, being communally held, could not be purchased and its possessor was chosen by consensus from the Council.

Access to other valued religious materials was obtained through visions, gift exchange, and in some cases, was inherited. The possession of such objects afforded the owners increased opportunities to demonstrate their generosity and thus enhance the prestige of their families.<sup>42</sup> In addition to serving as tangible symbolic objects of the power, prestige, and status of the owners, religious paraphernalia,

along with their associated prayers, colours, songs, and dances were important repositories of sacred knowledge. As mnemonic devices which transcended space and generational time, their use and transfer perpetuated the belief system of the society.

#### Rites of Passage and Communal Ceremonies

Much of Plains Cree religious life consisted of the celebration of individual rites or "rites of passage" which socially demarcated the movement of an individual from one status to another and communal rites or "rites of solidarity." All households participated in rituals pertaining to transitory phases of the human life cycle, that is, birth, puberty, adulthood, and death. Other situations which involved similar levels of ritual were illness, conflict resolution, and the

". . .formation of economic or political bonds between groups. . . ."43

Many of these same rituals also had a communal component to them as shifts in status required public validation at some level. All such occasions involved the obligatory exchange of gifts which served as "payments" to ritualists for their services, provided a more general avenue for redistribution, and visibly and tangibly demonstrated one's socio-economic, political, and spiritual status.

In addition to possessing the power to use various forms of religious paraphernalia or to conduct rituals, one's relationship with the cosmic forces could be enhanced as a sponsor of major vowed ceremonies. Among the Plains Cree the following ceremonies were contingent upon the fulfillment of a vow on the part of the sponsor: the Thirst (Sun) Dance, Smoking Tipi ceremony, Masked or Wihtiko Dance,

Giveaway Dance, Prairie-Chicken Dance, Pipestem Bundle Dance, Round Dance, the Mite.wiwin (Medicine Society Dance associated with healing), and the Horse, Elk and Bear Dances.<sup>44</sup> The sponsorship of these vowed ceremonies was a significant undertaking both materially and spiritually and it was believed that the pledger and their kin would suffer serious reprisals should the vow remain unfulfilled.

The production of goods for spiritual offerings, gifts, and food required a cooperative effort on the part of the pledger's relatives and friends over a considerable period of time. In this manner, the socio-economic cooperation which was necessary for the production of surpluses at vowed ceremonials functioned to solidify households by reinforcing kinship responsibilities. Furthermore, the status of members of sponsoring households was directly related to their ability to provide the pledger with the necessary goods for ceremonial redistribution. This was particularly crucial for headmen who ". . . were expected to contribute a larger share of the feast than the other tribesmen," and were responsible for feeding and lodging visitors during ceremonies.<sup>45</sup>

These obligatory reciprocal exchange relationships were also manifested through one's relationship with the spiritual world. Prayers, tobacco, food, material goods, the sacrifice of consecrated dogs or personal sacrifices such as fasting and flesh offerings were all appropriate means of sacred communication. Among the Plains Cree, offerings of labour-intensive products such as tanned hides or highly valued and costly commercial stroud cloth were made at most ceremonies. Over time, stroud replaced the traditional hide wrappings used to hold

important ceremonial objects. In his reference to the stroud wrappings used for the Thunderbird Bundle in the Thirst Dance, elder Abel Watetch explained that "the Crees never hesitate to give what is best to the Great Spirit."<sup>46</sup> Thus, offerings of scarce commodities and personal physical sacrifice were considered to be the most potent in establishing favourable and harmonious relationships with the spiritual world. These demonstrations of ritualistic liberality and personal sacrifice for the general well-being of the community reinforced these same patterns of behaviour in the secular world. Mandelbaum's commentary on the relationship of religious ideology to praxis defined this process:

. . .when the spirit powers partook of food offering, they could hardly turn a deaf ear to the petitions addressed to them by the host. Much of the ceremonialism may be interpreted as a projection of the rules of social intercourse to the sphere of the supernaturals. For example, every gift received imposed a reciprocal obligation on the recipient. A man who was given a new robe during some public demonstration of wealth, often gave clothing away at the same ceremony or at one soon after. An old man who received a gift paid off his obligation by publicly praising and praying for the giver. In the same way cloth offerings were considered to be gifts to spirit powers, in return for which they were duty bound by the rules of the social game to return favors in proportion and kind.<sup>47</sup>

While material offerings and the distribution and exchange of goods were components of all ceremonies, there was one ceremony which epitomized the social relations of production. This was the Math.tah.hit.too.win which translates as "passing off something to each other" or "Gifts Exchanged are a Blessing," and is generally referred to as the "Give Away Dance." Extensive ethnographic descriptions of ritual proceedings are detailed by Robert Jefferson and David Mandelbaum.<sup>48</sup> The performance of this ceremony involved the most conspicuous public

demonstration of redistribution of goods. Held in the fall or early winter, the Give Away Dance was pledged by one who had received the spiritual prerogative from Pa.kahkus or "Bony Specter." Descriptions of this spirit are fairly consistent indicating that it is a "small and mischievous" being residing in the bush country who enjoys frightening humans. While they were rarely seen, the Pa.kahkus made their presence known by whistling.

The Giveaway itself consisted of three component parts--communal feasting, the ritual consumption of fat (hardened bone grease) which was also the offering favoured by Pa.kahkus, and the Giveaway proper. Successful hunts and long life were believed to be within the power of Pa.kahkus<sup>49</sup> and offerings to this spirit reflected Cree concerns regarding their well-being during the ensuing winter months. The ceremony also served as an important channel for the redistribution of goods and an occasion to acquire social prestige.

According to Mandelbaum's version of the Giveaway, there appear to be three levels of exchanges: (i) between the ceremonial sponsor and male celebrants; (ii) among all members of the community; and (iii) the offering of cloth by children to Pa.kahkus.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Dion concurred with these levels of exchange and mentioned two additional ones, that is, between the wife of the headman and other women and a generalized inter-community redistribution.<sup>51</sup> He states that Giveaways were known to have lasted for several days with leaders travelling from camp to camp with a wooden image of the Pa.kahkus. The period of their sojourn in any one camp was ". . .governed by the size of the camp or until the gifts began to go back to their original owners."<sup>52</sup>

The Giveaways maximized the use of local resources and surpluses by ritualizing production, consumption and redistributive socio-economic behaviour. Willingness to redistribute the products of a household's labour was particularly important during the winter months when food resources were more dispersed. The association of the spirit Pa.kahkus with the north, the bush, cold, starvation, the control of game and ultimately life or death itself, attests to the importance of fostering the ideology of sharing. Unsuccessful winter hunts were sometimes attributed to offending this spirit through the non-fulfillment of a vow, offending another who was under the spirit's protection, the breaking of taboos, or the overkill of game.<sup>53</sup>

The dynamics of the Giveaway itself indicates that not only was redistribution obligatory, but also the types and amounts of goods exchanged were crucial. In fact, the accumulation of goods for their own sake was considered to be immoral. Thus, in Thunderchild's description of Giveaways, gift exchange was explained and rationalized in spiritual terms. As Thunderchild explained, "it is because Pah.kahkus can be so lavish in his favors, that those who take part in the dance which honours him give away their horses, harness, clothing, bedding--anything that is theirs."<sup>54</sup> Although some participants accumulated more than others, any deliberate contrivance to amass goods for its own sake was discouraged. Such unethical behaviour was discouraged with both physical and spiritual reprisals. The consequences of giving poor gifts (cheating or negative reciprocity) or attempting to accumulate goods at the expense of others, were misfortunes such as ill-health and unsuccessful hunts. Sincere

generosity (giving according to one's ability) was rewarded with "prestige and supernatural blessings."<sup>55</sup> In fact, the ideal was over-reciprocation, that is, to give more than one received. As Plains Cree leader, Fineday explained to Mandelbaum,

If someone gives only poor little things for good gifts, he will generally not enjoy them. I was cheated like that once. But I didn't mind, even though afterward (sic) I didn't even have a horse with which to hunt buffalo. The one who cheated me got a fast horse, but couldn't make use of it because he (the man) grew blind soon after. The old people said, "He got blind because he cheated you."  
Pa.kahkus has strong powers.<sup>56</sup>

The obligatory acceptance and return in kind of gifts was an important dimension of the Giveaway; if an item of equal exchange value was not reciprocated, the imbalance was at the recipient's expense.<sup>57</sup> For this reason most hoped to give away an equivalent value of goods they received. According to the descriptions of such Giveaways by White observers, there was considerable competition involved in matching or surpassing the value of gifts.<sup>58</sup> Such rivalry was generally amiable. The psychology of "unrequited good measure" was evident from attempts to over-reciprocate and in practice, was a means by which obligatory responsibilities were induced.

In summary, Giveaways and the Giveaway Dance functioned to reaffirm pre-existing kinship ties and to establish new associations. Ritualized Giveaways promoted the cooperative pooling of goods by households both within the community and on an inter-band level. As mechanisms for directing the social relations of production, ritualized reciprocal exchanges discouraged the personal accumulation of material goods for one's own use and in turn, reinforced the Cree values of mutual aid and

sharing. Despite the seeming one-sidedness of some transactions, it is important to keep in mind that ". . . inasmuch as what one gave, another got and the aggregate of possessions remained the same. . . ."59 This process, however, did not ensure the equitable exchange of goods.

Finally, the Nipakew-cimuwin or Thirsting Dance (Sun Dance) was the major communal ceremonial celebrated among the Plains Cree. The vow to sponsor the Thirst Dance was (and remains) one of the most demanding spiritual commitments an individual could undertake to fulfill. It was celebrated as a public communal ceremony by many Plains societies. Although its pristine form remains to be discovered, it is generally agreed that the Sun Dance evolved into its classic "High Plains form" during the period 1800-1883.<sup>60</sup> Its rapid diffusion throughout the Plains is attributed to the acquisition of the horse and the availability of bison herds which enabled large numbers of people to congregate during the summer months. The popularized term for the ceremony, "Sun Dance" is derived from the sun-gazing ritual performed by the Oglalas, however, the name and motivations for vowing the ceremony varied from group to group.<sup>61</sup> Despite this variation, corporate welfare and universal regeneration through communal worship were common objectives. For the Plains Cree, it was a time of "thanksgiving" for world renewal "after the silence of winter"; the Crow often celebrated the Sun Dance for the strength they needed to avenge the death of a relative taken by enemies; and the Kiowa held the ceremony for similar reasons as the Plains Cree, that is, to ensure abundant food (especially bison), good health, fertility, and successful raids.<sup>62</sup>

Both Sun Dance ritualists and informed scholars emphasize the fact



that regeneration is the core feature of the ceremony; it ". . . is a ceremony of new creation, the lodge is the world, and its centre post the world-tree, the communications channel between man and the powers above. . . ."63 Through participation in the communal form of Sun Dances, worshippers, through multisensory ritual drama were transported into a sacred time and space where religious beliefs were reaffirmed. Cree values and appropriate cultural behaviour were transmitted through song, the accounting of sacred teachings (often referred to as mythology), public testimonials to exemplary persons, and by participation in associated rituals. It was by means of the Cree Thirst Dance that the children were most dramatically introduced to cultural values for it was here that they ". . . saw either actually functioning or ritually imitated the major social institutions, the approved conduct of his culture, and the reward granted to those who follow the ideals of. . . life."64

Despite the proliferation of scholarly analyses on the Sun Dance, the ideological components of the ceremony are not fully understood. Most accounts consist of descriptions of the numerous rites performed at the dance itself although a number of preliminary rituals were held throughout the year. These involved personal preparation by means of prayer, fasting, the pledging of vows and purification rites. The following description is a very summarized version of major events occurring at the Sun Dances.<sup>65</sup>

The duration of Sun Dance encampments ranged from a period of several weeks to a few days. The ceremony was sponsored or pledged by a person who had received spiritual direction to hold the dance. If the

pledger was not a Sun Dance ritualist himself, he was obliged to provide the material offerings necessary to engage a ritualist to conduct the large communal ceremony. This was only possible if the pledger had been able to obtain extensive support from his relatives and friends. Other individuals who had received spiritual direction to dance during the ceremony did so in fulfillment of a personal vow generally involving a healing or success on raids and hunts. After a number of preparatory gatherings involving instruction, prayers, offerings, and ritual feasts had been held, activities centred around the construction of the lodge itself and the creation of an altar area located on the ground within the lodge. A number of poles were ritually felled and served as rafters, while a centre pole, or "tree of life" was also selected and brought back to camp. A Thunderbird's nest, along with offerings, was attached at the top of the central pole; other offerings were also affixed to the lower part and base of the pole. The whole lodge was covered with hides and leafy boughs, and dancers were separated from the central part of the lodge with partitions of boughs (and among some groups, from one another).

It was inside this lodge that the ritualists, their assistants, drummers, singers, and dancers, along with supportive relatives would spend the next few days. The dancers would fast from food and water while they continually prayed for spiritual intercession in their lives and for the whole community. The dancing consisted of bending at the knees and taking small steps in one place in time with the drumming while blowing on an eagle bone whistle. Dancers were instructed to concentrate their vision on the centre pole. The periods of dancing

were interspersed with numerous prayers given by ritualists and elders. Among some groups, including the Plains Cree, the final phase of the earlier-period ceremony involved various forms of self-mortification through flesh offerings. It was at this time that male dancers engaged in "piercing" that is, they were ritually tethered to the centre pole with ropes, the ends of which had been passed through the upper chest, back, or arm areas with skewers (at times, the ropes were attached to numbers of guns, bison skulls, or horses). As the dancers pulled back on the ropes, the flesh tore away. Other offerings of this nature might include the severing of a finger joint, or the cutting away of small portions of flesh on the arms or legs. Female celebrants were reported to have engaged in the latter practice. Following the completion of these rites, a number of closing songs, prayers, dances, orations, along with a general feast and Giveaways were held. After the ceremony ended, the lodge would not be used again and was abandoned to the elements. Many of the sacred offerings were taken and placed in undisturbed, spiritually "clean" locations in the bush.

According to Alice Kehoe, the Thirst Dance ceremony was one of the major integrative mechanisms operative among Plains Cree bands.<sup>66</sup> Its origin among the Cree has not been documented, although it is believed that they received their knowledge of the ceremony from Assiniboine allies. As a communal ceremony, it was held in early summer at the time when bison were moving to form large herds and the prairies were lush with the new growth of grass--a time of year known as "the moon of the young birds" or Paskawe Howipism (Hatching Moon). It was during the late spring-early summer period that bands which had sought refuge from

the winter in sheltered river valleys gathered nearer the open prairies in preparation for the early summer communal bison hunt.<sup>67</sup>

The prerogative to sponsor a Thirst Dance as a ritual leader was obtained through spiritual revelation and required formal instruction. One such ritualist, Fineday, related to Mandelbaum that this privilege could pass generationally from father to son.<sup>68</sup> A woman might also pledge a Thirst Dance but it was common practice to have a male member of the family such as a husband or son to sponsor it on her behalf. Visions regarding the right to hold a Thirst Dance were often received in crises situations. This was illustrated in Fineday's account of his own experience:

Years ago my first born son was sick. I tried many medicines and gave away many horses but he was no better. Then one night I dreamed that I was to make a Sun Dance. When I woke I promised manito (the Creator) that I would make one the next summer. That morning it seemed as though the boy improved and by next morning he is definitely better.<sup>69</sup>

The sponsorship of a Thirst Dance was a major undertaking and required the productive and organized co-operation of households far in advance of the actual ceremony. Among the Cree a number of preliminary rituals were held throughout the previous year and were called i.nikimahni.pa.kwe.simo.win or "the singing rehearsals for the Sun Dance."<sup>70</sup> These "Sings" brought sponsors, ritualists, and their supporting kin networks together in anticipation of the co-operation which would be expected of them during the summer celebrations. That is, ". . .they may share in the ritual feasts, have a voice in the decisions, offer prayers, share in the singing, make sacrifices by feasting or donating offerings . . .,"<sup>71</sup> and may participate in the Thirst

Dance. It was during these "Sings" that other pledgers of vows received their instructions from ritual leaders.

During the Thirst Dances there were many occasions for material offerings and gift exchange. The highest form of offering was of one's own person and involved physical mortification through several means: skewers were passed through the flesh at either side of the breast area and attached to the centre pole with rawhide lines--dancers tugged at these lines until they broke loose; guns or bison skulls were suspended from skewered lines attached to the upper back; horses might be tied to skewered lines and the dancer led about; pieces of skin, a finger or a finger joint might also be offered.<sup>72</sup> Other forms of self-sacrifice included fasting from food and water or giving away material goods. These self-mortification rituals have been designated as tests of courage (for young warriors) by uninformed observers. The underlying principle however, was that the sacrifice of one's self, was the ultimate gift which could be offered to the Creator. Therefore, participants in these rituals were in a highly favourable reciprocal position to receive visions, acquire spiritual power, fulfill their personal requests (the curing of an ill relative or success on raids, for example) and on a more general level, to promote the spiritual and physical well-being of the community.<sup>73</sup> Through the expression of self-sacrifice for the corporate welfare, worshippers dramatically demonstrated the Cree ideals of courage, heart-felt sincerity, and sharing.

Thirst Dances also provided one of the most important opportunities to demonstrate one's worthiness of prestige and status through the

redistribution of surplus goods. Prior to the ceremony, participants would bring blankets, clothing, cloth, hides, and other goods to the sponsor's lodge in return for spiritual blessings. At one point during the dance, the "foremost fighters" danced and publicly recited their deeds of bravery. Those who were able to count coups distributed clothing and horses according to need, kin distance, and rank. These goods were distributed from the south side of centre pole by the Shouter who gave them to people of his choice. The elderly or infirm received the first distribution, visitors then received their share, and men, who had a reputation for the liberality, also were given gifts. The generosity of the donor was publicly acknowledged for "as each person received a present, he offered a prayer or a short paean of praise for the donor."<sup>74</sup>

On each day of the ceremony, food is served in the dance lodge for all those not fasting and the women who donated and prepared the food were publicly acknowledged by the Shouter. On the final day of the Thirst Dance, a more general Giveaway occurred:

The gifts given by a man were placed near the center pole; the giver and his family came forth and danced beside their gifts. Then the Shouter distributed the presents to visitors or to tribesmen. The gifts undoubtedly added prestige to the donor's name, but officially they were regarded as offerings to the supernaturals. The people who received the presents prayed for the welfare of the donors and by means of such prayers divine favor might be procured.<sup>75</sup>

Ahenakew stated that these prayers and blessings received in exchange for gifts were not only for the benefit of the giver, but for the entire community.<sup>76</sup>

As a world renewal ceremony, the Thirst Dance provided a ceremonial

time and space in which the regeneration of the Universe was acknowledged and celebrated. The Thirst Dance lodge became the cosmic centre of the Plains Cree Universe and individuals, through their prayers and offerings participated in their quest for transcendental power to achieve redemption and healing for themselves and the community. The corporate nature of the ceremony was of crucial importance to its effectiveness. This is evident from the fact that the Thirst Dance leader was simply a medium through which humans could communicate with their Creator. Power was only attainable through the co-operative effort of the spiritual community. As Fineday explained to Mandelbaum, "making rain is something that is not in my power. It is in your power. Not one or two can do this. Only the whole community joining together can call upon the Great Spirit to act in pity for us."<sup>77</sup> This is the true essence of Plains Cree spirituality.

The ceremonial time and space provided by the communal celebration of the Thirst Dance were also used for other activities associated with the survival of Plains Cree society. Occurring at that time of the year during which it was economically advantageous to draw the smaller localized bands together for the communal bison hunt, it was also an occasion for the realignment of band memberships through marriage and the initiation of alliances. These larger gatherings also provided numerous opportunities for socialization:

. . .bands reunited; military associations convened; tribal chiefs met in formal council; people who had not seen each other all year renewed old friendships. Feasting and dancing, storytelling and courting, gambling and horse racing, and visiting of all kinds abounded. And crowning all of this was a solemn religious ritual, dramatizing and reaffirming tribal identity and membership and enduring tribal survival

through ceremony and song and prayer for another year. Societal values were driven home, as both men and women played key ceremonial roles in which courage and fortitude, fidelity, generosity, and wisdom were singled out and rewarded. Children, watching all this, were indoctrinated into the belief systems of their elders.<sup>78</sup>

In summary, the Plains Cree political economy was characteristic of those systems based upon the domestic (kin) mode of production in which kinship networks and co-residency were the primary mechanisms for committing and organizing social labour. The capacity of a number of kin-related households to produce sufficient goods for its survival and surpluses for redistribution and exchange was largely dependent upon the ability of the headman to attract and organize available labour and to obtain control over the means of production. While there was differential access to the means of production (such as labour, the ownership of buffalo runners or guns, and the possession of specialized knowledge, i.e. poundmaking), there was ideally little differential access to strategic resources. The process of distribution (redistribution), ensured that strategic goods which were accumulated through differential access to the means of production by certain individuals and their families was used for the well-being of the community.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, were those goods or surpluses which were not considered as essential to the survival of a headman's household. These non-strategic resources became part of an exchange system which involved an individually-determined "movement of goods" as opposed to "societal provisioning."<sup>80</sup> While participation in both distribution and exchange enhanced one's status in the community, it was the differential ability



to move goods through the latter system that encouraged a system of ranking. The ability to generate such resources for exchange varied according to the availability of game, one's access to a labour pool, and degree of participation in the commercial fur trade and other activities such as raiding which provided another means to obtain surplus goods and labour (captives).

The ceremonial complex of the Plains Cree reinforced the political economy in a number of ways. The values of co-operation, generosity, fortitude, and universal harmony, all prerequisites for the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of the members of society were not only ritually dramatized but operative in the ceremonial cycle itself. The production of goods for distribution and exchange at ceremonies required a constant pooling of labour, and in turn, enhanced the existence of surpluses and the cohesiveness of kin networks. The prerogative to perform sacred rituals and to use associated religious paraphernalia enabled their possessors to publicly demonstrate their worthiness of such power on a consistently periodic basis. This process not only reflected and validated one's preferential access to spiritual power, but also obliged men of rank and their households to use this power for the corporate good--the material expression of which was through the distribution of accumulated surpluses. Among the Plains Cree and other Indian societies, the concentration of religious knowledge resides with the elders who, throughout their lifetime, acquired both practical and spiritual expertise to guide their people. That is, in societies with oral traditions as a basis for communicating information, the elders were the repositories of cultural knowledge.

This role was vital to the maintenance and perpetuation of the survival of the society.

Finally, ceremonies such as the Thirst Dance served to politically integrate otherwise autonomous bands and their allies. Participation in this collective rite provided a means for crosscutting kinship ties, cultural affiliation and resource bases. In this way cooperative economic and political action were maximized. This level of integration, however, was transitory since there were no formalized mechanisms in place to promote its continuity.

In the following chapter, an overview of the historical colonial relationship of the Plains Cree with the commercial fur trade market, missionization, and the Canadian government is presented chronologically. It is essentially a history of the increasing alienation of the Plains Cree from their subsistence base as hunters, gatherers, and commercial traders. This alienation resulted from the depletion of bison herds and other game as well as the move on the part of the Canadian government to annex the western hinterland. These historical developments had an impact upon all aspects of Plains Cree culture.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> John Palliser cited in Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11. See Figure 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 11. See GA, M1190, William Fraser, "Plains Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux (Plains) Bands 1874-84", TS., 1963, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Sharrock, "Crees, Cree-Assiniboines, and Assiniboines: Interethnic Social Organization on the Far Northern Plains", Ethnohistory, 21, No. 2 (1974), pp. 95-122.

<sup>9</sup> Isaac Cowie cited in Sharrock, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Sharrock, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 105. Mandelbaum provides two examples of this type of leadership: Black-bear, a recognized warrior who was also highly regarded for his leadership qualities, and Tcimaskos who was a successful winter poundmaker and attracted followers to his winter camp.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-16. Mandelbaum noted that "If a man evaded the Warriors and tried to make a kill before the proper time, they immediately advanced to the offender's tipi, slashed it to bits, and destroyed all his possessions. This was also done to a hunter who had unintentionally stampeded the buffalo because of an unmanageable horse. If the transgressor took his punishment composedly, four days later the Warriors gathered and each contributed some article, until ample restitution had been made for the guilty man's losses. Indeed, the gifts often amounted to more than had been destroyed. No restitution was forthcoming if the offender displayed his anger or attempted to protect his possessions."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 110. Much of the theoretical basis for the analysis of the political economy of the Plains Cree was derived from the following

works: Morton Fried, The Evolution of Political Society: An Essay in Political Anthropology (New York: Random House, 1967); Marshall Sahlins, Tribesmen (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968). Dr. Joan Townsend of the Department of Anthropology was particularly helpful through her teaching and published studies on ranked societies and the development of various types of political organizations in the context of colonial contacts. See "Ranked Societies of the Alaskan Pacific Rim", Rpt. from Alaska Native Culture and History, ed. Yoshinobu Kotani and William Workman (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1980), pp. 123-56 and "The Autonomous Village and the Development of Chiefdoms: A Model and Aleut Case Study", in Development and Decline: The Evolution of Political Organization, ed. H. Glaessen, E. Smith, and P. Van de Velde (South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey, 1985), pp. 1-57.

<sup>15</sup> Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 110.

<sup>16</sup> Paget, pp. 130-31.

<sup>17</sup> John Milloy. "The Plains Cree: A Preliminary Trade and Military Chronology, 1670-1870", M.A. Thesis. Carleton University, 1972, p. 118. Milloy stated that "the contact of the Cree and Assiniboine with a source of firearms, the common Sioux enemy, and the Mandan's production of corn were the three legs of the tripod upon which the Cree-Assiniboin-Mandan alliance rested. This alliance did not dissolve until the turn of the nineteenth century when the Mandan adopted bison hunting and made peace with their former enemies to the west (Minnetaree, Crow, and Cheyenne).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-68.

<sup>19</sup> John Ewers, The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1955), p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Grobsmith, Lakota of the Rosebud: A Contemporary Ethnography (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 78. Mandelbaum documented the ownership of pack dogs by women. Such dogs were not a "freely circulating asset" or "inalienable" due to the fact that unless they were traded over a great distance, dogs would return home to their mistress. Dogs did acquire exchange value in the commercial market. While men negotiated these exchanges, it was necessary to obtain a woman's permission before her dogs could be bartered and trade goods accruing from these transactions were considered to be her property.

<sup>24</sup> Colin Turnbull, The Human Cycle (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 273.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>26</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>28</sup>Eric Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 181. Note that the five societies which occupied the Canadian prairie region by 1850, only the Blackfoot were not newcomers.

<sup>29</sup>Mandelbaum, Plain Cree, p. 108.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-10.

<sup>32</sup>Certain dances, songs, and insignia were owned by various societies, some having been acquired from the Dakota such as the Buffalo Dancers Society. The following is Mandelbaum's list of each band's society. It should be noted that names and regalia frequently changed hands, thus this list may have been only contemporaneous with Mandelbaum's field work or within the memory of his informants: River People Band (Rattler's Society); Eastern Bands of Cree (Big Dog Society, acquired from Paddling Men Band of Stoney); West, East and River People Bands (purchased Buffalo Dancers Society); Upstream People (Prairie-Chicken Society); House People Band (Cold Society); Calling Band River People Band ("Ghost Lodge Society"); and one of the western bands (Kit-Fox Society), Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-16.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>35</sup>Brown, pp. 79-80.

<sup>36</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 301-17.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 159-62; 177-78.

<sup>38</sup>A vow is a sacred promise or contract made by an individual who has received spiritual direction for a means to obtain intervention from the Creator for a particular need(s) such as healings, spiritual guidance, success in battle, and good hunting. Generally the fulfillment of a vow involved sponsoring a particular ceremony and/or becoming a participant in a sponsored ceremony which required both material and physical sacrifice (offerings). Through these offerings and demonstration of humility, an individual hoped to be pitied and blessed by the fulfillment of their requests.

<sup>39</sup>Albers and Parker, p. 206. See also Kathleen Dugan, The Vision Quest of the Plains Indians: Its Spiritual Significance, Studies in

American Religion, Volume 13 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), p. 235.

<sup>40</sup>Albers and Parker, p. 206.

<sup>41</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 171. Sacred materials were carefully stored in hide or cloth wrappings and special containers, and are referred to in the literature as "bundles". The term "medicine" is used in the sense of "spiritual power."

<sup>42</sup>Hanks and Hanks, p. 91.

<sup>43</sup>Turnbull, p. 273.

<sup>44</sup>See Appendix I for description of ceremonies.

<sup>45</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 107.

<sup>46</sup>Watetch, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 234.

<sup>48</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 20; Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 206-7.

<sup>49</sup>Pat Atimoyoo, Nehiyaw Matow wena: Games of the Plains Cree (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, 1980), pp. 6-9. In the teaching, "The Youth Who was Pakakus", the spirit's gifts to humans are successful hunts and "long life". Its food is melted fat.

<sup>50</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 206-7.

<sup>51</sup>Dion, My Tribe, pp. 51-52.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>53</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, p. 100.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 206-7.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>57</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 91.

<sup>58</sup>See Ahenakew, Voices, p. 100; Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 91; Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 207; and Paget, p. 51.

<sup>59</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 91.

<sup>60</sup>Liberty, "The Sun Dance", p. 164.

- <sup>61</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>62</sup>Hultkrantz, "Prairie and Plains Indians", p. 9.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup>Dugan, p. 123.
- <sup>65</sup>Liberty, "The Sun Dance", p. 167 and Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, pp. 183-99.
- <sup>66</sup>Kehoe, North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Incorporated, 1981), p. 295.
- <sup>67</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 343.
- <sup>68</sup>Saskatchewan Archives (SA), David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook 11 (Transcription), June 27, 1935, p. 14.
- <sup>69</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook 1 (Transcription), June 25, 1935, p. 22.
- <sup>70</sup>O'Brodovich, "Little Pine Cree", p. 95.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 193.
- <sup>73</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, pp. 137-138. The benefits of self-mortification were reified through oral tradition in the teaching which described We-sa-ka-cha'k and the Sun Dance. This story relates how his spirit, upon waking from a "spell" of dancing and drumming during which he received a vision of the Sun Dance, discovered that he had actually thrust his head into an old bison skull filled with ants. The skull was equated with the dance lodge itself. Because his face was swollen from the bites of ants, he was unable to remove the skull. Finally, the force from a bolt of lightning which struck a nearby tree released him. Through this intercession by the Thunderbird spirit, who was sent by the Creator, We-sa-ka-cha'k was freed from his suffering. This intercession is physically symbolized through rainfall which dancers must pray for (dancers can only quench their thirst with rainwater). Thus, Edward Ahenakew wrote, just as We-sa-ka-cha'k mortified his flesh, "so must man sustain trials to open himself to the store of mercy that is Ma-ni-to." Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>74</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 197.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 198.
- <sup>76</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, p. 198.
- <sup>77</sup>Watetch, p. 39.

<sup>78</sup>Liberty, "The Sun Dance", p. 165.

<sup>79</sup>Alan Klein, "Plains Economic Analysis: The Marxist Complement", in Anthropology on the Great Plains, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 137.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER IV

## FROM NATION TO WARSHIP:

## BRITISH AND CANADIAN RELATIONS WITH THE PLAINS CREE

By the late 1860's the Plains Cree were being confronted with several major changes in their lives. Food resources were being increasingly overexploited, European-introduced diseases had seriously decimated the population, violent outbreaks resulting in further loss of life erupted as Indian, Metis, and White competed in the commercial market for access to the diminishing bison herds. The Cree also became concerned that Euro-Canadian settlement would occur in their homelands without their approval. It was in the context of these changes that the Plains Cree and their allies, the Assiniboine and Ojibway negotiated Treaties Four (1874) and Six (1876) with the Canadian government. The period following the signing of the treaties has been described by anthropologist Noel Dyck as "an opportunity lost," that is, ". . .the establishment of self-supporting and self-governing Indian communities, was lost for want of commitment on the part of government officials to these objectives."<sup>1</sup> For the Plains Cree, this meant the loss of political autonomy, the onset of economic dependency upon the state, and ultimately, cultural disintegration. Subjected to a system of political wardship, the Plains Cree were forced into a colonial relationship experienced by Indians in eastern Canada and other indigenous peoples in British temperate settlement colonies. After the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885, their quasi-colonial status became entrenched through policies of protectionism and insulation reinforced with legislation contained in

the Indian Act.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Loss of Political Autonomy: 1860-1885

The transformation of the prairie economy from one based on subsistence activities and the commercial fur trade to a new state-directed economy founded upon agricultural development and ranching was the context within which the Plains Cree established formalized relations with Canada. Their power to control the timing and perhaps the very nature of these changes, was seriously diminished by a number of factors, the most urgent being the overexploitation of their strategic resources.

The negative impact a commercialized provisions market on the prairies has been analyzed by Arthur Ray in "The Northern Great Plains: Pantry of the Northwestern Fur Trade, 1774-1885."<sup>3</sup> While the Indians were the original suppliers of these provisions, the increasing demands by commercial fur traders and colonists in the Red River area attracted a number of non-Indian competitors into the market. Both the French Métis and English mixed-bloods had cornered the provisions market for southern Manitoba posts and also supplied the establishments located along the Assiniboine River and the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers and their tributaries.<sup>4</sup> The Cree were among those prairie Indians who traded with the more westerly posts. The demand for more bison robes and food products not only forced the Indians and Métis into greater competition with one another, but also with American traders from Fort Union hunting in the Saskatchewan and Assiniboine river areas.

Furthermore, the comparative economic advantages of shorter distances of

travel to American markets combined with a more efficient transportation system, drew hunters southward to trade, thus by-passing the Cree.<sup>5</sup> In order to exert greater control over bison resources, the Dakota, the Plains Cree, and their allies attempted to restrict Métis and White hunting and trading activities in their territories. During a Cree council held at Qu'Appelle in 1857, it was recommended that these commercial hunters should procure dried meat, pemmican, hides, and robes through trade with the Indians rather than through their own independent hunts.<sup>6</sup>

Other factors also contributed to the overexploitation of the bison herds. New methods of procuring and processing bison robes radically altered the need for specialized indigenous labour and ensured greater returns over a shorter period of time. The use of the breach-loading and repeater rifles allowed for a more efficient long-range kill and significantly diminished the margin of chance in the hunt. In addition, a technological revolution in the commercial tanning industry enabled buyers to by-pass Indian and Metis women who had traditionally supplied the time-consuming labour for hide processing. Thus, the favourable economic position which Plains Indian hunters and their families enjoyed as provisioners for commercial trade was undermined by increased competition for resources and the introduction of new forms of technology and processing. All of these factors contributed to the depletion of bison herds. According to Ray, the decline of the herds was recorded for the Red River area in the 1820's; in southern Manitoba in the later 1850's; north of the Qu'Appelle and South Saskatchewan rivers by the 1860's, and in southwestern Saskatchewan and southern

Alberta in the early 1870's.<sup>7</sup> By the early 1880's, bison were no longer significant in either subsistence and commercial activities.<sup>8</sup> Other strategic resources including larger mammals, small game, and sturgeon and whitefish fisheries were also overexploited as they became more important for subsistence.

The diminishing food resources and increased competition in the commercial trade led to an intensification of hostilities. By the 1860's, the Plains Cree and their allies were moving into the westernmost part of the "neutral zone" (Cypress Hills area) which had traditionally served as a natural physical barrier between them and their Blackfoot enemies. Until 1865, relations between the Cree and the Blackfoot had been typified by a series of raids and truces; however, the intrusion of the Cree into the Cypress Hills resulted in more violent outbreaks.<sup>9</sup> Despite initial attempts to negotiate peace, a state of "war" had broken out by 1870 along the frontier line from the Missouri River to Fort Edmonton.<sup>10</sup> The final battle at Oldman River resulted in the death of some 200-300 Cree and 40 Blackfoot. In 1873, the Crees' Assiniboine allies lost at least some 20 men in the Cypress Hills massacre which was instigated by American traders and wolf hunters.<sup>11</sup> In addition, to the loss of life sustained through these conflicts, several thousand Cree and their allies died as a result of two smallpox epidemics and starvation.

While confronted with economic uncertainty in the latter half of the 1860's, the Plains Cree and their allies were also faced with new forms of political incursions into their homelands. By 1870, the land holdings and administrative responsibilities under the control of the

Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories had been officially transferred through purchase to the government of Canada. In the same year, following the suppression of the provisional government under the leadership of Louis Riel, the District of Assiniboia (Red River and area) entered confederation as the province of Manitoba. The remaining prairie region was administered as the Northwest Territories by an appointed governor and council (1872) and later, under the provisions of the North-West Territories Act of 1875). Initially located at Battleford, the territorial council was relocated in Regina in 1882 and continued to be the official administrative link with Ottawa until the territories became part of the Dominion as the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905.

The transfer of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories was negotiated with Canada without political representation by any of the indigenous populations whose homelands were located within the boundaries of the imperial commercial land grant. There was, however, a stipulation in Article Fourteen of the Order-in-Council of June 23, 1870 that acknowledged the principle of aboriginal rights in future land transfers, that is, "any claims of Indians to compensation for lands required for purposes of settlement shall be disposed of by the Canadian government in communication with the Imperial government. . . ."12

Implicit in this provision was that the Canadian government would acquire access to Indian lands according to precedents which had been previously established in eastern Canada, that is, through the negotiation of formal treaties. In return for land cessions, Indians were to receive monetary compensation and a choice of lands to be set

aside for their own use (reserves).<sup>13</sup> The interrelated processes of "wardship, civilization, and assimilation" which negated the persistence of any form of indigenous political sovereignty were also inherent in eastern Native policy. Similar plans for the eventual absorption of the prairie Indians into the Canadian political economy had been formally articulated by administrators such as Commissioner J. A. N. Provencher. In 1873, he advocated assimilation as a solution to Indian-state relations:

There are two modes wherein the Government may treat the Indian nations who inhabit this territory. Treaties may be made with them simply with a view to the extinction of their rights, by agreeing to pay them a sum, and afterwards abandon them to themselves. On the other side, they may be instructed, civilized and led to a mode of life more in conformity with the new position of this country, and accordingly make them good, industrious and useful citizens.

Under the first system the Indians will remain in their condition of ignorance and inferiority, and as soon as the facilities for hunting and fishing disappear, they will become mendicants, or be obliged to seek refuge in localities inaccessible to immigration or cultivation.

Under the second system, on the contrary, they will learn sufficient for themselves, to enable them to pass from a state of tutelage, and do without assistance from the Government.<sup>14</sup>

This approach to establishing political relationships with the Plains Cree was typical of racial attitudes which shaped imperial native policy in the sense that the Cree were considered to be "inferior" to Europeans and incapable of determining their own best interests in the new order. Since it was assumed that Indian cultures, per se, had little to contribute to the Canadian state, the morality of transforming Indians into "Euro-Canadians" was never questioned, and indeed, was considered mandatory if they were to share in the "benefits of civilization."<sup>15</sup>

While there were several suggestions from various officials as to the treatment of western Indians by the government, ultimately, the practices used to negotiate land transfers from the Indians residing in area of Lake Huron and Superior were adopted.<sup>16</sup> These Robinson treaties of 1851 had resulted in large land cessions in exchange for annuities (money), reserves, and assurances that Indians could hunt and fish on the unoccupied portions of ceded land. The Robinson treaties had deviated from past land cessions in that they not only accommodated the immediate needs of settlers, but also future land use. Treaties One, Two, and Three were concluded according to similar patterns of negotiation. The terms of Treaty One (negotiated with the Ojibway and Cree in the Red River area) and Treaty Two (negotiated with the Ojibway residing immediately to the northwest of Treaty One Indians) in 1871 involved massive land cessions and provided the basis for negotiations with the Plains Cree. In these two treaties,

the Indians agreed to surrender title to all their territory, to keep the peace, and not to molest the property or persons of Her Majesty's other subjects. In return, they were to receive an immediate gratuity of three dollars each, an annuity of fifteen dollars in cash or goods per family of five, reserves in the amount of 160 acres per family of five, a school on each reserve, and protection from intoxicating liquor. A number of additional items--clothing for the headmen, farm animals, and implements--were not contained in the written text but rather were assented to informally. . . .<sup>17</sup>

Although the government was prepared to refrain from negotiating further land cessions until settlement progressed further westward, Cree concerns regarding the future intrusion of settlers on their lands, the unnegotiated use of resources and travel on Cree lands and waterways by traders and government personnel, and diminishing food resources,

provided the momentum for official talks. Aware of the plight of their eastern neighbours and the fate of Indians residing on the American plains, the Cree, Ojibway, and Assiniboine of what is now southern Saskatchewan, attempted to ensure their political and economic independence by insisting that they ". . . would not allow settlement or use of their land until Cree rights had been clearly recognized."<sup>18</sup> Also among their immediate concerns was the regulation of bison hunting, and support for those who chose to practice agriculture. Despite the efforts of the Ojibway headmen, Gambler and Pasqua, to place the sale of Hudson's Bay Company lands on the agenda for bargaining, the terms of Treaty Four (1874) were essentially identical to those of Treaty One and Two. In return for the surrender of lands, each chief was to receive \$25.00, each headman \$15.00, and every man, woman, and child, \$5.00. Provisions of powder, shot, ball and twine (\$750.00 worth) were to be annually distributed among the bands. The amount of land allotment reflected the anticipated participation of Indians in an agricultural economy and each family of five was allotted up to one square mile of reserve land. In addition, clothing for headmen, farm implements, and livestock were also included. The government also agreed to control the traffic of intoxicants and to provide a school for each reserve. Hunting, fishing, and trapping activities were allowed to continue on unoccupied ceded lands subject to government regulations and excluding lands required for settlement and economic development (for example, mining). While subject to band consent, the disposal of the reserve land itself could only occur through the auspices of the government and not the Indian council.



Meanwhile, other populations of Plains Cree, located further west had been waiting for government representatives to initiate terms for access to their lands. Once it had become clear that the Cree would not tolerate further intrusions into their territory without negotiation, the government was forced to mediate. That the issue of political and cultural sovereignty would be a point of contention was demonstrated through interference in development projects. For example, surveying parties which had been sent to survey land around Hudson's Bay Company posts in 1872 had caused the Indians some alarm. In 1873 the activities of a geological survey headed by Robert Bell were interrupted and in his report he noted that "on several occasions Indians threatened to steal our horses and outfit and even to kill us all; and finally ordered us to turn back."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the international boundary survey which cut across Cree homelands was also seen as a threat.<sup>20</sup> Three years later the Cree again interfered with the work of a survey party and the construction of the telegraph line running from Winnipeg to Edmonton.

By the summer of 1876, the government began their negotiations with the Plains Cree at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt. Headmen such as Sweet Grass were adamantly opposed to any alienation of their lands. Poundmaker, an influential man of rank, reacted to the government's offer of 640 acres per family by warning the Commissioner that "this is our land. It isn't a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us. It is ours and we will take what we want."<sup>21</sup> The apprehension expressed by some headmen over continued access to their strategic resources prompted Commissioner Morris to promise that they would be able to pursue hunting and fishing ". . .through the

country, as you have heretofore done. . . ."22 In comparison to Treaty Four, the Plains Cree were able to negotiate more favourable terms for economic support including promises for farm equipment, livestock, wagons, handmills, and upon the settlement of two or more reserves, a sum of one thousand dollars of provisions was to be allocated for the promotion of agriculture (up to three years of provisions). The government promised to supply medical aid to Indians by providing each agent with a medicine chest. Indians were also assured that in the event of pestilence or famine, the Queen, acting upon the advice of the Indian Agent and the Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs, would provide the assistance deemed "necessary and sufficient."<sup>23</sup> In return for the surrender of land, the government was to arrange for the survey of reserves where the Cree could settle with minimal interference in their lives. Undoubtedly, of equal importance to the Cree were government assurances that their cultural autonomy was not being negotiated away:

As explained to these Plains Indians, the reserve system was to provide them with a homeland, where they could learn, if they so chose, a new way of making a living. Nothing was said about this being compulsory; in fact the Indians were often told that they could practice their traditional way of life--hunting--as well as farm. They were assured that the Government would not interfere with their religion or alter their culture. . . .In essence, this is what they sought by earlier agitation--a guarantee of a place for them to live and to receive assistance in developing a new economic base for their society.<sup>24</sup>

The rejection of the terms of Treaty Six by some leaders resulted from concerns over access to strategic resources and political independency. Both Poundmaker and Piapot felt that the economic

provisions in the treaty were insufficient to either support their present needs or adequately facilitate their transition to agriculture. Piapot himself, would only later agree to sign an adhesion to Treaty Four in 1875 after receiving promises that he would be able to obtain assistance in the form of ". . .mills, blacksmith and carpentry shops and tools, and instructors in farming and the trades."<sup>25</sup> Both Big Bear and Little Pine refused to surrender their autonomy after ". . .Commissioner Morris made clear that in taking treaty the Cree would be bound to Canadian law."<sup>26</sup> For other leaders, concern for the well-being of their followers, who had already suffered from devastating smallpox epidemics and near-starvation, left little room for choice. The two headmen, Ahtahkakaop (Starblanket) and Mistawasis (Big Child) may have been more amenable to taking treaty for these reasons.

For those headmen who did not sign Treaty Six, their ability to retain their independence was directly proportional to the capacity of the land to support their followers. Piapot (leader of the Cree-Assiniboine in the Qu'Appelle area) and Little Pine (who headed the largest following in the Saskatchewan River area), continued to seek out subsistence in those regions where hunting was still viable. While Big Bear had received a promise from Morris that bison hunting would be regulated, an ordinance passed by the North-West Council in 1877 was not only unenforceable, but also restricted Indian methods of hunting.<sup>27</sup> Initiatives taken by the Plains Cree to negotiate hunting regulations with the Blackfoot and Sitting Bull's Teton Dakota also failed.<sup>28</sup> Pressured by economic necessity, Little Pine took treaty as did at least one half of Big Bear's followers who left the dissident leader's side to

join the bands headed by Lucky Man and Thunderchild.

In order to administer the terms of Treaties One and Two, the appointed position of Indian Commissioner was created in 1871 (the office was relocated in Regina in 1887 and back to Winnipeg in 1897). The Indian Commissioner was directly accountable to the Indian Affairs branch in Ottawa, at that time, part of the Department of the Interior. The Commissioner was responsible for implementing Indian farm policy, overseeing the survey of reserve land, and establishing twelve farm instructorships to aid in the transition from hunting and gathering to farming. During the preliminary phases of this transition, rations were to be distributed to those who agreed to farm. Thus, while the aged, sick, and orphaned were to receive rations freely, the provisioning of supplies to the able was conditional upon their demonstration of loyalty to the state and their productivity as farmers.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the fact that most headmen had now taken treaty, the Plains Cree leaders remained politically committed to negotiating more favourable provisions. By 1881, official protests had been sent to Governor-General Lorne and several council meetings had been held to discuss treaty revisions and the idea of an "Indian territory."<sup>30</sup> A number of Cree leaders hoped that they would be able to retain their political autonomy and control over strategic resources by selecting reserve lands in close proximity to one another. The Cypress Hills area was chosen for this "homeland." As John Tobias has observed, this movement was politically significant since this location for the reserves would have resulted in a "...concentration of the Cree nation and the creation of an Indian territory that would comprise most of what is now southwestern Saskatchewan."<sup>31</sup>

As the Cree began to congregate in the Cypress Hills area, the government responded with coercive measures. Subsistence rations were withdrawn from Fort Walsh and government provisioning was curtailed in the Cypress Hills area. Indian Commissioner Dewdney also attempted to drive a wedge into the Cree political unification movement by opposing the concentration of reserve sites in any one location, restricting off-reserve travel, and limiting access to arms, ammunition and horses. In order to implement this "policy of compulsion," Dewdney recommended the enlargement of the police force and suggested the incarceration of recalcitrants. Coercion, however, was soon considered inadvisable after confrontations occurred between the police and the Cree at Piapot's and Big Bear's Thirst Dances in 1884. An alternative policy of "rewards and punishment" was introduced. It not only entailed subtle inducements to settle, but also, intimidation and surveillance:

He provided more rations, farming equipment, oxen, ammunition, and twine, and arranged for selected Cree chiefs to visit Winnipeg and other large centres of Canadian settlement. If the Cree were not satisfied with his new approach, he would use force against them. To implement this new policy, Dewdney increased the number of Indian Department employees working on the Cree reserves, for he wanted to monitor closely the behaviour of the Indians, and, if necessary, to arrest troublesome leaders.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the Commissioner's efforts to dismantle the potential military power of the Plains Cree, a number of headmen continued to hold council meetings to discuss treaty revisions. The details of Cree petitions to the government are probably best represented by the stand taken at the Duck Lake Council of 1884. The Council was headed by Beardy and was attended by twelve bands among whom were representatives from the followers of Big Bear, Lucky Man and Poundmaker. Although they

were impatient and hostile towards the government, the headmen refused to condone violence:

. . . rather than provide all the farming goods, what the government did, according to the Cree, was to withhold many of the cattle and the oxen; send inferior quality wagons, farm tools, and equipment; and provide insufficient rations and clothes, and no medicine chest. The petition closed with the statement expressing the Cree sentiment that they had been deceived by 'sweet promises' designed to cheat them of their heritage, and that unless their grievances were remedied by the summer of 1885, they would take whatever measures necessary, short of war, to get redress.<sup>33</sup>

The commitment to resolving outstanding issues with the Canadian government through non-violent means resulted in the refusal on the part of major Cree leaders to support the Métis in the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885. Contemporary re-examinations of Indian involvement in the events of 1885 have revealed that most hostilities can be attributed to a number of dissident young warriors from the bands of central Saskatchewan, particularly those led by Big Bear's warrior "chief," Little Poplar.<sup>34</sup> And even in the instances where violence occurred at Frog Lake, Duck Lake, Battleford, and Fort Pitt, these outbreaks, as Dewdney himself admitted, were precipitated by impending starvation. According to historian Hugh Dempsey, the social structure of the Cree and inherent mechanisms for social control had "collapsed" as the "combined weight of starvation, whiskey and thievery" experienced in the uncontrolled Montana frontier created factionalism between young warriors and their leaders.<sup>35</sup>

The historical events which led up to Poundmaker's decision to join Riel's forces after the Battle of Cutknife Hill needs further investigation. At least one historical source suggests that the idea of

a millennial may have played a role in this decision. According to Robert Jefferson, Poundmaker claimed that his military response was supernaturally ordained in order to revive the pre-White way of life. By driving out the Whites, the Cree would be spiritually redeemed and delivered out of their present suffering to a life of plenty:

. . .this was the hand of God, whom Indians had temporarily deserted, but whom they would now return to, and that the buffalo would emerge from the hiding places to which God had diverted them; that Indian stomachs would again know plenty, and they would be happy once more. The white man had failed. The Indians all over the North-West would rise as these had done; his adopted father Crowfoot would light the beacon in the south and leave not a policeman alive. Riel had arranged everything.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the limited participation of the Cree in the events of 1885, the Canadian government, through Dewdney, used this political opportunity to terminate the "treaty revision movement."<sup>37</sup> Troops were used to arrest dissidents and 81 Indians were sent to trial. Of this number there were 44 convictions and the leaders Big Bear and Poundmaker were sent to the Stony Mountain federal penitentiary in Manitoba to serve out their sentences.

#### Protective Wardship Through Regulation: Post-1885

At the close of 1885, the political repression of the Plains Cree had become a reality. Dissident leaders were deposed, their followers were ordered to settle on reserves, horses and arms were seized, and treaty payments were suspended for a number of years.<sup>38</sup> Both Big Bear's and Lucky Man's bands were subdivided, or in the instance of Foremost Man's band, were not granted consideration for treaty entitlement.<sup>39</sup> Rather than "homelands" where the Plains Cree could determine their

future, the reserves became "mechanisms for social engineering," that is cultural transformation. Politically, the Plains Cree were now wards of the Canadian government until it was determined by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs that they were sufficiently "civilized" to be enfranchised as Canadian citizens.<sup>40</sup> Because the leaders were excluded from the political process involving either direct representation as a "nation" or an individual vote, their access to formal avenues of power was greatly undermined.

During his term as Indian Commissioner and later as Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs (1890-1898), Hayter Reed undertook to impose further political restrictions on the Plains Cree.<sup>41</sup> Determined to dismantle the system of "communism" manifested in the Cree political economy and to undermine the influence of "unprogressive" leaders, Reed attempted to prevent the implementation of the chief and councillor elective system, as stipulated in the Indian Act of 1876. Even the progressive leaders, he argued, were reduced to becoming mouthpieces ". . . for the ventilation of imaginary grievances and the presentation of utterly unreasonable demands."<sup>42</sup> The Department, however, refused to support Reed's move to abolish the elective system in western Canada. These elected Indian officials were considered by the Department to be their appointees and generally their term of office was indefinite. The Governor-in-Council however, did reserve the right to depose leaders and councillors on the grounds of "dishonesty, intemperance, immorality, or incompetence" (Section 96; Section 75 of the Indian Act).<sup>43</sup> The latter provision provided the Department with considerable latitude to undermine leaders who were not supportive of its policies. Despite the



provision for an elective system, the selection of officers continued to be held according to tribal custom on most reserves, however, the powers inherent in these positions were severely curtailed over the years.<sup>44</sup>

The nature of traditional forms of "chiefly" authority were now being considerably altered. Subject to the Canadian legal system rather than customary law for certain offences, the headmen were obliged to report crimes against the state to the Indian agent or police and to defer judgement to a White court system. Furthermore, in cases where disputes would have been settled internally between families, the headmen were now expected to intervene and were made personally responsible for the maintenance of law and order. In one sense, chiefly authority was actually expanded ". . . mostly at the expense of individual autonomy and at the same time the placing of final authority in the hands of the whites."<sup>45</sup> The physical isolation of most reserves from police detachments however, allowed for the persistence of customary laws in the internal affairs of many reserves.<sup>46</sup>

The role of the members of the Warrior Society was assumed by the police force and the military. The traditional continuity of their functions perhaps was most evident at the larger inter-reserve ceremonial gatherings. Furthermore, access to these positions of prestige and status were undoubtedly altered as raids (generally involving the counting of coups rather than killing) and the taking of horses were now criminal acts according to Canadian law. Some writers have suggested that the voluntary Indian war effort (World Wars One and Two) was linked to the achievement and demonstration of worthiness as a Warrior and that even competitive rodeos and pow-wows provided

opportunities to earn public recognition through the demonstration of valued traditional skills.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, the deterioration of the power of the Plains Cree elders was also evident. Once valued for their knowledge and guidance, this sector of the population, by the turn of the century, was viewed by many as "unprogressive." Their power and authority was not only constantly challenged by Indian Affairs officials and teachers, but also by the more "acculturated" graduates from Indian schools who were taught to reject their traditional ways. It was the Indian agent, the missionary and teacher who now possessed the knowledge required for survival in the new order and it was the younger Cree men, educated in the ways of the new system, who would assume more control over leadership positions.

Although the Plains Cree had been informed during treaty negotiations that they would be subject to Canadian laws, the signatories were in no position to comprehend the full meaning of this stipulation. Nor were they fully informed of the passage of the Indian Act of 1876 which provided the guidelines for their future relations with the Canadian state. Simultaneously paternalistic and coercive, the provisions of the Indian Act were slowly introduced into the administration of western Indians. The ultimate intent of the Indian Act was to transform the social, economic, and political systems of indigenous populations through a series of imposed regulations. It was these regulations in combination with insufficient government aid to help western Indians to establish a viable agriculturally-based economy which plunged the Plains Cree into the lowest strata of the Canadian class system.

Initially, the government supported the scheme of encouraging western Indians to become profit-making cereal agriculturalists and cattle-breeders.<sup>48</sup> Several officials voiced the opinion that the practice of farming would instill capitalistic values in Indian agriculturalists by forcing them to participate in the market system and by supplanting the "communal" system of property holdings with individualized land holdings. Subject to the consent of the Indian Department and the band council, an individual was able to apply for a location ticket which was actually a certificate of personal ownership for an allotment of reserve land. However, because such lands could only be alienated from the band through the Crown, the Indian farmer actually had control over the use rather than the actual ownership of individualized holdings.

Several strategies were adopted by government officials in order to induce prairie Indians to farm. During the years 1878-79, a model or "home" farm system had been established in a number of Indian agencies. Based upon the British landlord-tenant farm system, the objectives of the scheme were to instruct Indian adults in knowledge needed for farming and to raise surpluses for rations during the training period. Many of the instructors and their employees lacked the necessary skills to subsist on their own land and proved to be ineffective as teachers. One instructor, Robert Jefferson, reported that the first instructors among the Plains Cree were lumbermen from the Ottawa district who ". . .at least knew all there was to know about driving men, in addition to being experienced wire pullers."<sup>49</sup> The "home farm" scheme was in operation from 1879 to 1884 and grew from seventeen to twenty-four

farms. It was rejected as a viable system for promoting Indian farming by 1884 for a number of reasons including the refusal of the department to tolerate the high costs of supporting the instructors, their families, and staff; poor returns from the farms; and the difficulties experienced in providing instruction for Indian farmers.<sup>50</sup> In practice, the staff of home farms were forced to expend a greater part of their time in making their own farms productive, many of which could hardly serve as suitable models to their Indian charges. Furthermore, many of these agency farms were actually located outside of the reserve boundaries, a situation which undermined any serious level of instruction.<sup>51</sup>

From the perspective of the Plains Cree, environmental adversities, the lack of proper instruction, provisions, machinery, capital for investment, and even the necessities of life such as food and clothing, undermined the efforts of many who tried to farm. In addition, the official administrative structure, created to expedite the terms of the treaties and initiate Indian farming, challenged traditional forms of political and economic leadership and modes of production. It was now the department officials and employees who possessed the knowledge for survival, controlled access to the means of production (draft animals, seed, cattle, wagons, etc.) and determined the redistribution of the products of their labour. This shift in authority was a significant factor in Plains Cree opposition to the new order.

As a case in point, Poundmaker, who had moved his followers onto a reserve under economic duress, was described by his instructor as ". . . resenting all, even advisory interference. . . showing pretty

plainly that it was only the dire pressure of circumstances that had brought them to accept the restraint of Reserve life. . . ."52 When Poundmaker requested more control, he was denied on the grounds that he was not ". . . sufficiently advanced to be entrusted with the care of government property or with the supervision of farm work."53 Despite Poundmaker's efforts to adapt to reserve agriculture, departmental parsimony and adverse environmental conditions led the band to question the viability of raising crops. As Noel Dyck and Sarah Carter have pointed out, ". . . the development of suitable crops, farming techniques and agricultural equipment for the northern climate still lay ahead. . . ."54 From the department's point of view, the lack of agricultural productivity was attributed to preconceived notions of cultural "backwardness." This attitude was typically fostered by department officials including Lawrence Vankoughnet, the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs. In his opinion, Indians who preferred to adhere to their cultural ways were indifferent and lazy and ". . . if such Indians would not help themselves, there was nothing the department could do for them."55

By the 1890's a new approach (1889-1898) to developing Indian agriculture was adopted by the Indian Commissioner, Hayter Reed. In 1895 Reed announced his intent to promote the "peasant model" of agriculture among the prairie Indians, that is, the development of small subsistence-level mixed farms which produced wheat flour, vegetables, and cattle. All forms of communalism including cooperative labour, pooling of resources to purchase machinery and livestock, and traditional settlement patterns were to be discouraged. The prohibition

of the use of farm machinery was designed to instill more rigorous (productive) work habits, and the department ordered that Indians should not have access to those labour-saving devices which had been purchased communally prior to 1895.<sup>56</sup> The communally-oriented village pattern of reserve settlement was to be dismantled as part of the de-tribalization or severalty program. One report noted that

. . . the close proximity of the houses afford too much opportunity for visiting and gossiping and the promotion of gambling among men during the winter nights. It also tends to strengthen the clannish feeling which renders it so difficult to deal with individual members of the band instead of the band as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

Another problem with indigenous settlement patterns was their limited accessibility to farm lands. In 1899 agent John Mitchell reported that Indians in the Qu'Appelle area had settled in sheltered river valleys rather than on the uplands where their allotted farms were located.<sup>58</sup>

In order to encourage the individualization of productivity, Reed undertook to ". . . restrict the area cultivated by each Indian to within such limits as will enable him to carry on his operations by the application of his own personal labour."<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, reserves were subdivided into forty-acre allotments and parcelled out to individual families, and farms were spaced throughout the reserve to discourage the traditional village structure. As early as 1899 families on the Piapot, Muscowpetung and Pasquah reserves had resettled on their family plots of land. The pass system which required individuals to obtain permission from the agent to travel off the reserve was used to prevent Indians from leaving their farms during the agricultural season.

Other regulations were adopted to control the redistribution of

Indian farm products and their exchange in the market place. A "permit system" prohibited off-reserve sales without the approval of the agent. Whites attempting to purchase such goods from Indians who did not have a permit were liable to fines. "No Trespassing" signs were posted on reserve lands and White storekeepers declined to extend credit because they were prevented by the Indian Act from collecting debts owed by reserve residents. The accumulative effect of these measures was that they ". . . curtailed the infusion of outside capital into the Indian economy," a situation which led to severe underdevelopment.<sup>60</sup>

These regulations or forms of "kindly supervision" discouraged would-be farmers and intensified hostile feelings towards departmental employees. One Indian historian, the Reverend Edward Ahenakew, has documented the magnitude of the economic and psychological impact of the wardship system as follows:

. . . it is most wretchedly humbling to many a worthy fellow to have to go, with assumed indifference, to ask or beg for a permit to sell one load of hay that he has cut himself, on his own reserve, with his horses and implements. I say again, it may be right for some, but there is no reason why those who try to get on, and who do get on, should have to undergo this humiliation.

. . . What kind of policy is it that aims at bringing a people to a point of self-respect, and then by the nature of its regulations destroys the very thing for which it works?

For myself, I think that I would rather starve than go to beg for such a trifling thing as a permit to sell one load of hay, while I am trying to make every hour of good weather count. To sell ten loads of hay might be difficult. From the standpoint of the government it may seem good, a kind of drill or discipline. . . I have seen with my own eyes, Indians wasting a day, even two days, trying to get a permit to sell, when they are short of food. The Agent cannot always be at home, the clerk may be away, or busy, and the Indian must wait, though he may have to drive to the Agency from another reserve.<sup>61</sup>

Cree responses to these economic policies varied. Some became apathetic or refused to participate, not only out of lack of interest, but as a registration of silent protest against the lack of technical support and most importantly, economic self-determination. Ahenakew described situations where people ". . . wanted to buy cattle when they had money after a successful hunt, but would not because the ID (Indian Department) brand would be put on the cattle."<sup>62</sup> Some families from the Frog Lake and Kehiwin bands left the Onion Lake agency in 1903 to settle on more distant reserve lands. By removing themselves from agency headquarters, they hoped to have greater internal autonomy and a stronger economic base through the combination of marginal farming with commercial trapping.<sup>63</sup> Another more common response was to combine marginal farming with the selling of one's labour. Meagre treaty annuities (\$5.00 per annum) were supplemented with contracted labour such as "brushing," (clearing land) for White farmers. According to one Cree observer of his peoples' access to economic opportunities, ". . . we had become cheap labourers in the eyes of the white man, just as an economic commodity."<sup>64</sup>

The potential for economic development through agriculture was undermined by the further alienation of the Cree from their land base. By the turn of the twentieth century, the prairie agricultural belt was being economically and demographically transformed as the Canadian government encouraged the use of immigrant labour to develop its export market in western wheat and cattle.<sup>65</sup> As the lands around reserves were surveyed and sold, "unused" Indian farm lands were coveted. As early as the 1880's, the towns of Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, Medicine Hat and Swift



Current had been founded and by the next decade some bands were being pressured into releasing their lands. For example, under the influence of Father Delmass, the Thunderchild Band exchanged its farm land for a less-favourably located parcel of land. This transaction was only the beginning of the systematic alienation of the Cree from their land base.

A number of government regulations were introduced to facilitate this process. An amendment to the Indian Act in 1911 allowed for the expropriation of reserve land for public works, while a second amendment permitted the cession of reserve lands adjacent to towns with a population over 8,000 without the band's consent.<sup>66</sup> A bill introduced by the Minister of the Interior, Arthur Meighen, in 1914 to "... lease (uncultivated) land to a third party without Indian consent" was approved in 1918.<sup>67</sup> In the following year, some 62,128 acres of Indian land were expropriated according to the terms of the Soldier Settlement Act. Under the provisions of this act, a board was established to allocate dominion and purchased reserve lands for the soldiers returning from World War One. Indian soldiers were to be settled on their respective home reserves and Commissioner William Graham was given the authority to provide a loan of up to one thousand dollars for each veteran who wished to take up farming.

The "Greater Production Program" was also introduced in 1918 as a war time measure. The objective of the program, supervised by the Indian Commissioner, was to raise food productivity by increasing crop yields on Indian held lands. Through an Order-in-Council Graham, who had suggested the use of uncultivated reserve lands for the program, was authorized to encourage Indian farming, establish Greater Production

farms on reserves using Indian labour, and to arrange for the leasing of reserve land to non-Indian farmers.<sup>68</sup> All profits accruing from this program were to be diverted back to the band, after expenditures incurred from improvements were deducted.

The unilateral nature of arranging for the lease of Indian lands without due consultation was raised by the Liberals in 1924. Both political parties and department administrators such as Duncan Scott rationalized the government's land policy in economic terms and within the context of the wardship system. As one House Member, Charles Stewart argued, objectors should ". . . bear in mind that it costs a considerable amount of money to maintain our Indians, and we have to exercise somewhat drastic powers to deal with these wards."<sup>69</sup> It was also felt that White leasees would not only raise the food production level but also serve as good examples to would-be Indian farmers.<sup>70</sup>

As a result of the 1918 amendment, some 255,000 acres of reserve land were leased to White farmers and an additional 20,448 acres were co-opted for "Greater Production" farms run by the state on the Blood, Muscowpetung, Crooked Lakes and Assiniboin reserves. Unlike the Indian family farm program, these state-operated farms used cooperative labour and modern machinery. They were, however, phased out in the 1920's.<sup>71</sup> That Graham's efforts were successful is evident from the local reputation which he earned because of his inflexibility and harshness. Referred to as "Ke-ke-kat" or the "man with the cut off leg," one Plains Cree elder, John Tootosis recalled the experience of the Poundmaker Indians with the commissioner's aggressive land dealings:

The Commissioner Graham was really hard on people.  
Those in the eastern part of Saskatchewan were really

afraid of him, he really controlled them. . .it was through him that the Indians were made to sell parts of their land. . .persuading them to sell even if they didn't want to. He used to stack money on the table in order to entice them to sell their land and paid them right there. . .he kept bothering us. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Other types of development also resulted in land alienation. For example, 1,408 acres of Cree land in the Touchwood Hills and Qu'Appelle areas were released for summer cottage development. In a 1919 amendment the superintendent general was empowered with the authority to lease "surface rights" for mining on Indian reserves and to arrange for compensation.<sup>73</sup>

"Into Civilization and Citizenship Through the Power of Christianity"<sup>74</sup>

The promotion of economic self-sufficiency among western Indians was one of the major objectives of the Indian education system established by the government. Provisions for government-supported education once bands were located on their reserves had been included in the terms of both Treaty Four and Treaty Six.<sup>75</sup> It was assumed by administrators that these schools would not only provide technical training for children, but also facilitate their conversion to Christianity and cultural transformation (without parental consent).

The type of schooling systems initiated for prairie Indian children had precedents in the schools which were operated for indigenous people throughout the British Empire and in eastern Canada by mission agencies. Until the mid-1870's various Christian denominations had assumed the responsibility of operating day schools, "boarding" schools and orphanages. Western value systems and cultural behaviour were instilled

through a combination of book learning, Christian religious teachings and vocational training. The latter was an important aspect in the day to day operations of the schools. By the late 1870's the Canadian government began to examine the question of Indian education in the light of its own assimilative objectives.

Towards this end, lawyer-journalist Nicholas Davin was sent by the Macdonald government to meet with the American Secretary of the Interior, Carl Schurz and to evaluate the American Indian school system. Davin was particularly impressed with the philosophy which advocated the assimilation of children through their isolation from their home environment. Thus, he recommended that the government adopt the residential school system along with its vocational training program, the latter being intended to create self-sufficient graduates.<sup>76</sup> He also advocated that missionaries, through their previous work, had demonstrated their commitment to 'civilizing' Canada's Indians and should be encouraged to operate the schools. In addition to recommending government support for the operation of three church-operated industrial boarding schools, Davin ". . . advocated rewards to pupils and parents for attendance, future compulsory education, teachers of high moral and intellectual character, and the inspection of teachers' work. . . ."77

By 1883, the government acted upon Davin's recommendations, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Edgar Dewdney, had arranged for the establishment of three jointly state- and church-administered industrial residential schools to be located in each treaty area in the North-West Territories. A Catholic school was established at Qu'Appelle (Treaty

4), another at High River (Treaty 7); and the third, an Anglican institution was to be built at Battleford (Treaty 6). The intent of the curriculum was to provide a limited education with practical vocational training in the areas of crop planting, dairying, livestock care, carpentry, blacksmithing, laundering, cooking and sewing. Competitive individualism was encouraged through sports activities and the submission of handiwork and student-raised farm produce for display at local fairs. Some students were hired out as labour to work for local settlers as farm hands or domestic help. This practice, termed "outing" not only brought in much-needed money to the school, but served as a form of apprenticeship by preparing students for entry into the real world.<sup>78</sup>

The creation of ". . .new moral, self-supporting Christian citizens" who would either be integrated into the White community or return home to elevate ". . .the pagan and dependent reserve community"<sup>79</sup> was achieved through a Victorian regime of discipline and regulatory school codes. The transformation of Cree children began the moment of their arrival in the schools. Their identities were physically altered as each child underwent a thorough scrubbing and a haircut, and was reclothed in Euro-Canadian "uniforms." Newly-registered children were given Christian names which were used throughout their schooling. In addition, the use of indigenous languages was discouraged. Behaviour was controlled through numerous regulations and the regimentation of daily routines. Parents were discouraged from visiting their children in order to prevent lapses into traditional behaviour.

The preparation of Cree children for their future role in Canadian society also involved instruction in Christian religious ideology. Such instruction was intended to supplant traditional religious belief systems, rituals and ceremonies. In fact, once their children were selected for school attendance, parents were obliged to designate the Christian denominational affiliation of their child, leaving no option for declaring the Plains Cree religion (referred to as Pagan). This program of religious instruction undermined the role of indigenous patterns of socialization as they were communicated through oral tradition, ritual (rites of passage) and communal ceremonies. As Jacqueline Kennedy has astutely written, Indian rites were now replaced with rites of the Church.<sup>80</sup> Thus, in the case of Catholic schools, missionaries and visiting bishops administered the holy sacraments of baptism, confession, first communion and confirmation and, as with White children, "these ceremonies marked the childrens' passage into and through the moral and social novitiate and the Catholic catechumenate."<sup>81</sup> Similar rites were experienced in Protestant-administered schools. The secular component of this system was passage of the children from student to the Canadian work force as farmers, mechanics and homemakers; that is, ". . .territorial passages from junior classroom to half days in shops to drama groups or visits to fairs marked their social passage through the rites and stages of apprenticeship."<sup>82</sup>

By 1896 at least twenty industrial schools had been established in Manitoba, the North-West Territories and British Columbia. However, the government began to question whether the results justified the expenditure of public monies. The "reversion" of school graduates back

to their own cultural ways and the parental resistance to a system which forced families to part with their children for long periods of time led to a reconsideration of the Indian education system. The overriding desire to reduce government expenditures and a widely-shared skepticism concerning the ability of Indians to compete with Whites resulted in the adoption of a more general and shorter period of education. For instance, key administrators such as the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, believed that public monies were wasted on the Indian, who did not possess ". . . the physical, mental or moral get-up to enable him to compete."<sup>83</sup> Consequently, in 1910 the more limited objective of fitting ". . . the Indian for civilized life in his own environment" (on the reserve) through the provision of a basic education and practical training formed the basis of a new approach which persisted until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> The three school systems which served the Indian community consisted of the day schools which were on or near reserves; the boarding schools which were also located on or near reserves, and the more distantly located specialized industrial boarding schools.

The opposition of parents and leaders to the boarding and industrial schools continued throughout this period. One headman, Starblanket, argued that the off-reserve boarding or residential school system was a violation of treaty rights and that, in fact, the government had agreed to establish a school on each reserve. In an appeal to the Governor-General who was touring western Canada in 1912, Starblanket protested the inhumanity of forcing parents to send their children to school located hundreds of miles away, some of whom died

there (particularly from tuberculosis) without ever seeing their parents again.<sup>85</sup>

During the 1920's and 1930's, Indian education continued to receive grants based upon attendance records and the operation of the schools remained in the hands of the churches. In 1923 the government agreed to assume responsibility for expenses incurred in the operation of residential schools, allowing church finances to be diverted to improving living conditions and hiring more qualified staff. Although grants were available to promising graduates to enable them to attend high schools, universities, trade schools, or business colleges, most students could not meet the high requirements for such aid. As Stan Cuthand explained, ". . .the eligibility requirements stipulated that a student must have passed grade eight by the age of fourteen; but, in fact, many Indian children did not attend school until the age of eight or ten. . . ."86

For the students who did manage to complete their school terms, there was little to look forward to in either the White society or on the reserves. Because of the poor quality of Indian education and the racial prejudice of employers, there were few employment opportunities beyond casual labour off the reserve. Paid jobs on reserves were equally scarce and in addition to unemployment the "acculturated" graduate experienced a number of social problems due to cultural alienation. According to elder and political activist John Tootoosis, Indian graduates were literally suspended between two cultures:

On one side are all the things he (the Indian) learned from his people and their way of life that was being wiped out, and on the other side are the white man's ways which he could never fully



understand since he never had the right amount of education and could not be part of it. There he is hanging in the middle of the two cultures and he is not a white man and he is not an Indian.<sup>87</sup>

In some schools, graduates were married to one another without due consideration given to prohibitions inherent in traditional kinship or clan affiliations. These married couples were encouraged to establish their own family farms. In the early 1900's, William Graham, then agent in the Qu'Appelle Valley area, initiated his social experiment at File Hills. In cooperation with the principals of various boarding schools such as the File Hills Boarding School and the Lebret Industrial School, ex-pupils were married and settled on land physically removed from the reserve proper. By 1907 there were some twenty families residing in this model colony:

The objective of the colony was to produce a group of Indians who had internalized the whiteman's religion and culture and who were self-sufficient farmers. The economic aims were advanced not only by the activities of departmental farming instructors, but also by the deliberate fostering of the work ethic. Competition among the colonists was encouraged by an annual exhibit at which prizes were awarded for achievements in grain growing, cattle breeding, cooking and sewing. Competitive sports also helped to promote individualism and provided alternative non-traditional recreation. A brass band served a similar purpose.<sup>88</sup>

By the 1930's, the third generation of Plains Cree since the signing of Treaties 4 and 6 had little reason to expect more equitable treatment in the new social order than had been received by their grandparents. In an interview with Coming Day from the Sweetgrass Reserve in 1934, David Mandelbaum outlined the extent of Cree participation in the market economy.<sup>89</sup> Some families practised marginal gardening and farming, and for those who raised wheat, crops were pooled

at the agency mill in return for one pound of flour per person for every two days. Others chose to sell their labour by chopping wood, clearing land, or working as domestics. Many combined their options on a seasonal basis by conducting some farming, contracting out as manual labourers, and trapping muskrat, coyote and other furbearers. Indigenous food resources included fish, berries, waterfowl, rabbits, gophers, muskrats and prairie chickens. The kin-ship based households remained important productive and redistributive mechanisms within this precarious form of economic survival.

The lack of integration of Indians into the Canadian economy as more permanently-employed wage labourers was attributed by administrators to racial prejudice rather than to the government programs of underdevelopment. Deputy Superintendent General Harold McGill explained that Indian unemployment was due to the fact that ". . .their white competitors are favoured in securing such employment as is available. . . ." <sup>90</sup> Surprisingly, Indian agriculture was noted to be "remarkably prosperous" in comparison to White farms; this was undoubtedly due to government aid to Indian farmers and their relatively advantageous position by being exempt from taxes, mortgages and overhead charges during the depression years. <sup>91</sup> By the late 1930's, however, environmental factors turned the tide for Indian farmers who, like their White counterparts, suffered the effects of the great drought. As a result, they were forced to depend on their cattle for food and revenue. Other sources of support included proceeds from the harvest and sale of seneca root and the beadworked handicrafts made by Indian women. <sup>92</sup> By 1939, the Department had attempted to revive Indian farms by providing

mechanized machinery such as tractors and more resources in the form of implements and horses. On some reserves individualized productive labour was reorganized through the creation of community farms and gardens. Ironically, the Director of the Indian Affairs Branch announced that the success of these farms was owing to ". . . showing the Indians the value of co-operative effort," a system of production which had been systematically discouraged through detribalization policies.<sup>93</sup>

Due to the shortage of White manpower during World War II there was an increase in the employment of Indian labourers. Some Plains Cree men worked on White farms in spring and autumn and in lumber camps during the winter months. Individuals were paid \$8.00 to \$10.00 per day for harvesting and families received an average of \$25.00. Women were able to find work in restaurants and as domestics, while their husbands and sons worked in abattoires, oil refineries, with trucking or draying firms, railway companies, and in all types of processing plant work. Once White workers were again available after the war, these sources of employment were considerably reduced.

In addition to unemployment and the lack of effective economic programming, another problem confronting the Plains Cree during the inter-war years, was the further disintegration of indigenous forms of social and political organization. This was evident from the factionalism which was developing between the older generation and those school graduates who chose to adopt the White life-style. This development was partially facilitated by the wardship system whereby young people were more prone to look to White society for leadership and role models rather than to their parents, elders or ritual leaders.

Stan Cuthand summarized this process of societal breakdown during the inter-war years as follows:

Family-arranged marriages were opposed by the youths, and they often ran away to be married elsewhere. The younger generation refused to accept the traditional role of submitting to the wishes of their fathers and tended to question such traditional customs as giving away horses to visitors. The more educated Indians scoffed at Indian rituals and refused to participate. They danced square dances and quadrilles. They would speak English rather than their native tongue. The more traditional families ignored this and continued to show their Indianness.<sup>94</sup>

Generational differences were also apparent in the emergence of new types of political and economic leadership. While working on the Sweetgrass Reserve in 1934, Mandelbaum observed a growing tendency for an individual's status to be determined by one's ability to accumulate wealth rather than through the redistribution of strategic resources. Older leaders who were not able to participate successfully in the new agriculturally-based economy were now losing their following. For example, Fineday stood for re-election as chief on the "strength of his ancient prestige" as a warrior and his ability to care for his band while his rival, Sam Swimmer, who owned eighty cattle and farmed some two hundred acres of land, campaigned for "progress and cooperation with the whites."<sup>95</sup> Swimmer won the election by a small margin of votes. This type of local factionalism was also apparent in the memberships of both regional and national Indian political organizations. As E. Palmer Patterson and other historians have noted, by the mid-1940's some leaders favoured the assimilative approach as a solution to their economic problems while others lobbied ". . .for the retention of Indian identity and the continuation of the Indian practice of adaptation."<sup>96</sup>

The retention of cultural identity and the attainment of self-government was reflected in the official speeches of most Plains Cree political figures in the inter-war years. In his analysis of this movement, John Tobias observed that the pre-1885 treaty revision movement had now assumed the form of a treaty rights lobby.<sup>97</sup> The first formalized lobby was organized by the "old men from southern Saskatchewan" in the Treaty Four area who sent a delegation to Ottawa in 1911.<sup>98</sup> The delegation officially confronted the Department of Indian Affairs on a number of issues including the ban against ceremonies, the unilateral deposition of chiefs and councillors by the department, and the lack of a voice in determining their own social, economic, and political affairs. Their claims that the department's regulations violated treaty rights was largely ignored by officials. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Plains Cree found it difficult to mobilize a united front against the Canadian government. This situation was partially a result of government policies which were enacted to keep the Plains Cree and other Indian political organizations in a state of powerlessness. For instance, John Tobias has pointed out that in the Treaty Four area and the southern part of Treaty Six, traditional leaders were not replaced once they were deposed or had died and as a result many Plains Cree reserves had no formal political representation:

The Cree were to be kept leaderless, and were not to be able to use any group or person as spokesman with the non-Indian authorities. Thus chiefs and councils disappeared on most reserves by 1900. Ottawa wanted the government farm instructor, or the Indian Agent, to be the only person to whom the individual Indian should look in the position of leader or spokesman. At no time was the agent or farm instructor to deal

with any organized faction or group; he was to deal only with individuals.<sup>99</sup>

A further obstacle to the establishment of Indian political organizations was the introduction of a clause to the Indian Act by Deputy Superintendent General Scott prohibiting anyone (lawyers and agitators) from raising or providing funds for the prosecution of claims against the federal government.<sup>100</sup> This amendment (Section 141, Chapter 98 of the Revised Statutes of 1927) was originally directed against the lands claims activities of the Indians of British Columbia, but was now being broadly interpreted to prosecute those who collected or solicited funds ". . .to support an organized grievance or an organization for representing Indian grievances. . . ."101 Although only one arrest was made under this section of the act, the department did use the clause to conduct investigations into the affairs and meetings of Indian political organizations.

Despite these limitations, the political example set by the original treaty signatories was taken up by the next generation of school graduates including John Tootosis, Joseph Dion, Reverend Edward Ahenakew and others through their involvement with the Allied Bands (1920's), the League of Indians of Western Canada (1930's), the Saskatchewan Indian Association and the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (1940's). Their ability to overcome government restraints on their political mobilization was evident in their formal (albeit, unsolicited) written and personal representations before the Special Joint Committees of the Senate and the House of Commons which met in 1948-1949 to reconsider the provisions of the Indian Act.

In sum, throughout the period under consideration, the observable lack of Indian material progress and Indian resistance to federally imposed assimilative programs were attributed to "cultural lag," that is, the persistence of traditional "customs" and leadership. The lack of federal commitment to implementing its Native policy and the methods used to implement assimilative regulations and programs were rarely considered to be factors contributing to the state of underdevelopment. One of the ways in which the Indian Department attempted to counteract the persistence of "unprogressive" traditional customs was by suppressing their most visible cultural expression--religious ceremonies. These efforts, and the reaction of Indian people to this form of repression, will be dealt with in the following chapters.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Noel Dyck, "An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agricultural Programme in the Prairie West", in 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition, ed. F. Laurie Barron and James Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), p. 121. See also Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture", Chapter VIII in which she concluded that the failure of Indian agricultural policies and programs were due to lack of commitment and over-regulation despite the "initial positive response" on the part of many Indians, particularly in the Treaty Four area, to agriculture.

<sup>2</sup>Insulation is a sociological term used to define the ways in which a dominant society controls minority groups including "control over access to resources", preventing minorities from "acquiring skills and knowledge that could facilitate participation in the larger society", by establishing "unique programs", "limiting educational attainments", prohibiting Native people from bearing arms, excluding them from the right to vote, isolating them on reserves, and controlling population movements off the reserve. See Alan Anderson and James Frideres, Ethnicity in Canada: Theoretical Perspectives (Toronto: Butterworth and Company Limited, 1981), pp. 250-51.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Ray, "The Northern Great Plains: Pantry of the Northwestern Fur Trade, 1774-1885", Prairie Forum, 9, No. 2 (1984), pp. 263-80.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. At this time the Hudson's Bay Company still depended upon the York boat and canoe to transport supplies over comparatively great distances whereas the products of the Plains were more effectively brought to American markets by use of the bateaux and steamboat system. Ray states that during the period 1815 to the 1860's, the bison robe trade in the Missouri River area numbered 20,000 to 200,000 robes annually with up to half of these originating from herds in the Canadian prairies.

<sup>6</sup>Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 131; Irene Spry, "The Tragedy of the Loss of the Commons in Western Canada", in Getty and Lussier, p. 210; Irene Spry documented attempts made by some Cree groups including Piapot's Band, to exact payment for passage through their hunting grounds and for the use of resources.

<sup>7</sup>Ray, "Northern Great Plains", p. 278.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



- <sup>9</sup>Spry, pp. 212-13.
- <sup>10</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, pp. 131-32. Milloy has written a good historical overview of the intergroup relations between the Plains Cree and other northern prairie bands in his Masters Thesis.
- <sup>11</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, pp. 134-35.
- <sup>12</sup>George Brown and Ron Maguire, Indian Treaties in Historical Perspective (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1979), p. 33. The Hudson's Bay Company was paid 300,00 sterling for its transfer of assets, allowed to retain posts in the North-Western Territory and was given the option of selecting ". . . a block of land adjoining each Post outside of Canada and British Columbia. . . ." Further options for land acquisition were contained in a provision for the claim up to fifty years after settlement to ". . . 1/20 of the land set apart for settlement in the Fertile Belt (bounded on the South by the United States, on the West by the Rocky Mountains, on the North by the North Saskatchewan River, on the East by Lake Winnipeg, the Lake of the Woods and the water connecting them."
- <sup>13</sup>Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", p. 520. A number of "outside" provisions had been negotiated and were not included in the formal treaty document. In a memorandum which had been forwarded to Ottawa, Treaty Commissioner Wymess Simpson had promised the Ojibway farm animals, horses, wagons, farm tools and equipment.
- <sup>14</sup>Provencher cited in Brown and Maguire, p. 35.
- <sup>15</sup>Bodley, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>16</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, p. 136. See Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture", pp. 104-8.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40.
- <sup>18</sup>Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", p. 521.
- <sup>19</sup>Hugh Dempsey, Big Bear: The End of Freedom (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), p. 57.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>Spry, p. 211.
- <sup>22</sup>Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians (1880; rpt. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1971), p. 353.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 354.
- <sup>24</sup>Tobias, "Indian Reserves", p. 90.

- <sup>25</sup>Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", p. 524.
- <sup>26</sup>Grant, "Indian Affairs", p. 27.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 523.
- <sup>28</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, p. 137. After the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876, Sitting Bull led his people north into the North-West Territories. In May of 1877, 135 lodges of his people joined other Tetons camped in the Wood Mountain area.
- <sup>29</sup>Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", p. 526.
- <sup>30</sup>Tobias, "Indian Reserves", p. 93.
- <sup>31</sup>Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", p. 537. Dewdney prevented the territorial concentration of the Cree by rejecting a proposal by Big Bear, Poundmaker, Lucky Man and others to have a reserve at Buffalo Lake and a subsequent request made by Big Bear, Little Pine and Lucky Man for reserves near Poundmaker's.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 538.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup>See Friesen, Canadian Prairies; Tobias, "Subjugation of the Plains Cree", and Stonechild.
- <sup>35</sup>Dempsey, Big Bear, p. 93.
- <sup>36</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 132.
- <sup>37</sup>Tobias, "Treaty Rights Movement", p. 245.
- <sup>38</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 160.
- <sup>39</sup>Tobias, "Treaty Rights Movement", p. 245. See also David Lee, "Foremost Man, and His Band", Saskatchewan History, XXXVI, No. 3 (1983), pp. 94-101. Foremost Man was the last headman to settle on a reserve in 1913. Up to that point in time, he had lived in the Cypress Hills area without taking annuities or asserting treaty rights. The government had consistently refused to allow them to establish a reserve in the area because they were considered to be a "breakaway" group.
- <sup>40</sup>Daugherty and Madill, p. 6.
- <sup>41</sup>Hayter Reed, according to Sarah Carter, was the "architect of Indian policy" in the North West in the decade following the aftermath of 1885. He was born in Prescott County, Ontario and received much of his training in military schools. In 1871 he arrived at Fort Garry as a recruit with the Provincial Battalion of Rifles. In 1872 he was called to the bar of Manitoba but was not a practising lawyer. A year before

his retirement from the military in 1881, he accepted a position as "chief land guide" for the Department of the Interior. In 1881 he became an Indian Agent at Battleford and was promoted to the position of Assistant Indian Commissioner in 1884, Commissioner in 1888, and Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1893. See Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture", pp. 287-88.

<sup>42</sup>Daugherty and Madill, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>45</sup>Hanks and Hanks, p. 129.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 127. See Figure 2.

<sup>47</sup>Alan Beals, Culture in Process (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), p. 245.

<sup>48</sup>D. J. Hall, Clifford Sifton: A Lonely Eminence, 1901-1929, Volume Two (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), p. 46. See also Sarah Carter, "Agriculture and Agitation on the Oak River Reserve, 1875-1895", Manitoba History, No. 6 (1983), pp. 2-9, and Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture".

<sup>49</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 38.

<sup>50</sup>Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture", pp. 179-80.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>52</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 106.

<sup>53</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup>Dyck, "Opportunity Lost", p. 126; see also Carter, "Agriculture and Agitation", and "Indian Reserve Agriculture".

<sup>55</sup>Leighton, "Victorian Civil Servant", p. 113.

<sup>56</sup>Tobias, "Treaty Rights Movement", p. 246.

<sup>57</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1900, p. 166, John Mitchell to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Hayter Reed cited in Carter, "Agriculture and Agitation", p. 5.

<sup>60</sup>Ponting and Gibbins, p. 21.

- <sup>61</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, p. 148.
- <sup>62</sup>Dion, My Tribe, p. 134.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, pp. 242 and 251.
- <sup>66</sup>See An Act to amend the Indian Act, S.C. 1911, c.14 (1-2 George V), 49A.
- <sup>67</sup>See An Act to amend the Indian Act, S.C. 1918, c.26 (8-9 George V). Costs accrued from improvements were to be deducted from the rental payable for the lease.
- <sup>68</sup>John Taylor, Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939 (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1984), pp. 16-17.
- <sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>70</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 27, 1920, p. 10, Duncan Scott to Honourable Arthur Meighen, December 1, 1919.
- <sup>71</sup>Titley, "W. M. Graham", p. 30.
- <sup>72</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 120.
- <sup>73</sup>Grant, "Indian Affairs", pp. 28-29.
- <sup>74</sup>"Industrial School Visit of Deputy-Superintendent General Hayter Reed", The Standard, 4, No. 39, October 11, 1894. This was the Qu'Appelle School motto.
- <sup>75</sup>The treaties provided for "free schooling".
- <sup>76</sup>Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill, p. 6.
- <sup>77</sup>Nicholas Davin cited in Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites'", p. 169.
- <sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 171.
- <sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 170.
- <sup>80</sup>Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School", p. 96.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 101.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid.

- <sup>83</sup>Hall, p. 126.
- <sup>84</sup>Barman, Hébert and McCaskill, p. 9.
- <sup>85</sup>Starblanket cited in Sluman and Goodwill, p. 162.
- <sup>86</sup>Cuthand, p. 36.
- <sup>87</sup>Tootoosis cited in Sluman and Goodwill, p. 109.
- <sup>88</sup>Titley, "W. M. Graham", p. 27.
- <sup>89</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook VI, 27 Aug., 1934, p. 4.
- <sup>90</sup>Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, March 31, 1933, Report, Harold McGill to Thomas Murphy, 31 Aug., 1933, p. 7.
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid., Report, Harold McGill.
- <sup>92</sup>Cuthand, pp. 38-39. Seneca root (*Polygala seneca*) was gathered, dried and sold for sale to dealers. It was used commercially in cough medicines, particularly as an expectorant.
- <sup>93</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, Dr. H. W. McGill, Report of the Department of Mines and Resources for the Fiscal Year ended 31 March, 1940, Indian Affairs Branch, p. 184.
- <sup>94</sup>Cuthand, pp. 38-39.
- <sup>95</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook VI, 4 Sept., 1934, p. 65.
- <sup>96</sup>Palmer Patterson, The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500 (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1972), p. 175.
- <sup>97</sup>Tobias, "Origins of the Treaty Rights Movement", p. 247.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>100</sup>Taylor, The Inter-War Years, p. 181. The penalty for the offence ranged from a fine of fifty to two hundred dollars or a maximum prison term of two months.
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

## CHAPTER V

## "THEY MAY NOT WANT YOU, BUT THEY NEED YOU":

REGULATING CEREMONIES<sup>1</sup>

The latter half of the nineteenth century was characterized by the relatively rapid transformation of the political economies of the western colonies in British North America (Vancouver Island, New Caledonia or mainland British Columbia, and Rupert's Land). The commercial fur trade, largely based upon the use of indigenous or indigenous-modified forms of subsistence economies, was being supplanted by agriculture and the commercial exploitation of mineral, timber, and on the Northwest Coast, fish resources. Along with these economic changes was the transference of political imperial responsibilities from Britain to the colonies and in turn, to the confederated provinces. During this time period, the new Canadian nation would undertake the building of its own empire.

The vision of this new empire as it was defined by Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party in the "National Policy" involved the establishment of a ". . . new 'investment frontier' that would open the west and enrich the east in one fell swoop."<sup>2</sup> It was a frontier based upon agriculture and resource extraction industries, all interconnected with eastern markets by means of a national railroad. The labour force needed to fulfill this vision would be supplied by newly-arrived immigrants. In order to provide access to Indian lands for this development and to ensure that settlement proceeded within a climate of British law and order, treaties with the prairie Indians had been

negotiated and in 1873, the North-West Mounted Police force was created to assert eastern Canada's political hegemony in the region.

The means for incorporating politically autonomous and culturally-diverse Indian societies into this new order was to be achieved through a number of assimilative programs. Politically, the Indians had been placed in a "distinct legal category" as wards of the Canadian government, subject to all British rights and privileges" with the exception of those accruing from citizenship.<sup>3</sup> This formalized relationship was codified in legislation contained in the Indian Act of 1876 and as settlement expanded, the terms of this act were applied to prairie reserve communities. Simultaneously "protective and coercive," the terms of the act demonstrated "little respect for Indian society" and anticipated ". . . few contributions by Indians--as Indians--to the larger community."<sup>4</sup> Before 1884, the Indian Act primarily dealt with matters concerning property acquisition and disposal, Indian government, and education. In that year, the first in a series of amendments to the act were passed to facilitate the direct interference of the state in the ceremonial activities of the Northwest Coast and Plains Indian cultures. The development of a policy of religious interference was not only a reflection of the political and economic tenets of the National Policy, but also embodied Victorian attitudes towards Indian religious systems.

**The Precedent: The Potlatch Legislation of 1884 and 1895**

Until 1858, when its charter was subject to renegotiation, the Hudson's Bay Company had enjoyed a commercial monopoly in Rupertsland,

New Caledonia, and Vancouver Island. As part of its political mandate in the area, the company was responsible for maintaining law and order and ensuring that Indians received fair treatment. In 1849, the imperial government had authorized the company to promote the colonization and settlement of Vancouver Island. According to Herman Merivale, permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office, it was in the company's best interests to foster the social, economic, and spiritual well-being of the local indigenous population otherwise, ". . .there was always a distinct possibility that the Company's supply of furs would either be disrupted or curtailed. . . ." <sup>5</sup> The Colonial Office had considered the company's monopoly as preferable to a free trade environment which it felt would have led to the destruction of Indians through unscrupulous competition. Despite local petitions to the Colonial Office which challenged the company's monopoly on the grounds that it was not fulfilling its mandate for the welfare of the Indian population, the imperial government opted for expediency by continuing its support.

During the company's control of these colonies, a number of mission projects were initiated, but Christianity was not well received among most Northwest Coast Indians. As Robin Fisher suggests, ". . .their disposition towards western religion was the same as it was towards other aspects of European culture: they were free to select and reject as they pleased. . . ." <sup>6</sup> This is evident in the number of syncretistic cults (prophet movements) that emerged in the area. One of the more successful attempts at cultural transformation had occurred among the Tsimshian under the direction of Reverend William Duncan of the Anglican



Church Missionary Society. In 1862, Duncan had established the village of Metlakatla in order to isolate Indian converts in a controlled social environment. He believed that this form of settlement scheme would prevent the "regression" of converts back to their traditional ways and protect them from exploitation by Europeans. His opinion of Tsimshian ceremonies reflected the general European attitude towards Northwest Coast Indian religions:

The ritual of the winter season was described by Duncan as a 'horrid fabrication of lies'; he thought that the role of the shaman was sinister, the winter dances frivolous, and the potlach wasteful. He realized the importance of these customs within Tsimshian society, but the realization only increased the importance of stopping what was heathenish and idolatrous.<sup>7</sup>

Following the establishment of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849 a number of changes occurred in Britain's relations with the indigenous population as the development of a viable settlement colony became the focus for establishing formal terms for co-existence. Under Richard Blanchard, the first governor of the colony, Indian-European relations was essentially a history of encroachment and coercion; recalcitrant Indians were punished and there were instances of Indian villages being shelled and destroyed by naval vessels.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, his incumbent James Douglas attempted to arrange for the purchase of Indian lands for settlement and was successful at negotiating eleven treaties. However, according to the instructions sent to him by the Hudson's Bay Company, the British notion of land tenure was the basis for negotiating land alienation with the result that "only village sites and enclosed fields" were reserved for the exclusive use of Indians.<sup>9</sup> All other Indian territory was considered to be "unoccupied" and

available for European settlement and development. As the numbers of settlers, land developers, and gold miners grew, the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company recommended in 1857 that the mainland be made a Crown colony under the name of British Columbia. The colonial governor, James Douglas was responsible for promoting agricultural settlement, supervising the commercial development of resources (timber, minerals, and fish), while at the same time protecting the rights of the Indians. Much of Douglas' initial attempts to address Indian concerns regarding White encroachment on their lands and traditional fishing grounds was undermined by his two successors, Frederick Seymour and Arthur Kennedy, and in particular, Joseph Trutch, the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works (1864-1871) who refused to recognize Indian rights to "unoccupied" lands. Before his retirement, Douglas had not entrenched his Indian land policies by enacting legislation and thus left his successors with considerable latitude in their own dealings with the Indians. According to his incumbents, Douglas had been too lenient in his policies. Douglas had not only recognized the validity of Indian land rights (albeit in the Western sense of the principle), but also the rights of Indians as British subjects to pre-empt land by establishing a permanent habitation on the claim and cultivating the soil and even to purchase town lots.<sup>10</sup>

In 1871, British Columbia entered confederation and its Indian population came under federal jurisdiction. At this time there was no re-evaluation of the status of Indians or their lands. The single reference to Indians, attributed to Trutch, was contained in clause Thirteen of the terms of the Union and was essentially a defense of the

status quo. Provincial legislation passed in 1872 and 1875 excluded Indians from the vote ". . . purely on the grounds of race."<sup>11</sup> By 1879, there was some indication that missionaries were gaining more influence over certain local groups. In that year a number of southern interior Indian tribes met in Lytton and agreed not only to educate their children, and accept individualized property holdings, but also to abolish the potlach.<sup>12</sup> These "regulations" were made under the supervision of the Indian reserve commissioner Gilbert Sproat and were among the first official statements of suppression of indigenous customs.

While many of the potlaches were performed at winter village sites distant from White settlements, these ceremonies were highly public affairs and could be readily monitored by local White observers. Because they involved the redistribution and/or destruction of material goods, European settlers considered all potlaching to be wasteful. In particular, the highly competitive potlaches sponsored by the rival ranked households of the Nootka and southern Kwakiutl shocked the most tolerant of Victorians. While highly complex in nature, the essential features of the potlach are summarized in the following observation:

The overt purpose of both feast and potlach was the announcement of an event of social significance: marriage of an important person, birth of a potential heir to one of the group's titles, crests, and high statuses, inheritance and formal assumption of one of these titles or crests and its corresponding position, and rescue or ransom and restoration to free status of a war captive. . . . Much of the legendary history of the group was recited to prove the right to use the name or privilege. Then the gifts were distributed in the name of the recipient of the title or crest. The first and largest gift went to the highest-ranking guest. . . . Recital of the history of the privilege and the distribution of

wealth served to validate its use. The guests were witnesses to the fact that the privilege was rightfully owned and rightfully transmitted to its new bearer. This sanction was the essence of the potlach and the prime purpose of the wealth.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to publicly demonstrating status, potlaches were fundamental to the political economies of Northwest Coast cultures, as they served to ". . . distribute surpluses and special local products to other villages, to maintain or inaugurate alliances for political and economic benefit, and to reinforce the cohesion of lineage-house groups. . . ."14 In terms of the achievements of status within this type of political economy, potlaches are examples of over-reciprocation, since guests could only elevate their rank by hosting a potlach in which they could give more than they received.

From the point of view of European observers, this system was no more than an economic relationship between creditor and debtor and for this reason potlachers were perceived to be self-inflicting victims caught up in a continuous cycle of material impoverishment. Historically, the most blatant occurrences of conspicuous consumption occurred during rival potlaches that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This elaboration of the political economy resulted from increased material wealth accumulated through participation in the fur trade and the disruption of positions of rank due to the loss of life in warfare and from diseases contracted through Europeans. Rivalry potlaches were held to ". . . establish or alter the order of precedence of groups," "to claim a vacant title or status," and there were "feigned" rivalry potlaches for the re-enactment of traditional conflicts between groups.<sup>15</sup> Other forms of ceremonial

gift-giving or transfer of material goods also served to reinforce a system of reciprocal obligation of mutual support during crises, and provided a means for the redistribution of pooled household resources. Gift-giving in these ranked societies created mutual bonds of obligations among all members and symbolized, defined, and publicly confirmed an individual's status and role.<sup>16</sup>

For the members of societies such as the Nootka and Kwakiutl, these potlaches were major mechanisms for social, economic, and political integration and re-integration. For White observers, however, these communal ceremonies came to symbolize all that was inherently wrong with Northwest Coast Indians and the rival potlaches undoubtedly served to escalate these feelings. Citing Superintendent Israel Powell's report, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs urged the adoption of a policy of vigorous and systematic civilization for purposes of "elevating their condition," and ". . . rendering their future intercourse with an inflowing white population."<sup>17</sup> The potlach system was also attacked for its role in perpetuating the powerful influence of traditional leaders. Department officials realized that these positions of power were closely associated with one's capacity to redistribute material goods, particularly through the potlaches.<sup>18</sup> The potlaches were also criticized on moral grounds. The observations recorded by Agent Lomas who was stationed at Cowichan, outlined what would become the official rationale for the repression of potlaches. In a statement forwarded to Ottawa, along with letters submitted by local missionaries, Lomas wrote:

A few years ago I thought that these dances were only foolish imitations of their old savage customs, but

now I am convinced that they are -

1. the principal cause of the decrease of population,
2. of the destitution and misery of the aged,
3. of a great deal of sickness and death among the children,
4. of the difference of the advantage of education,
5. of the neglect of their farms, cattle and horses during the winter months.<sup>19</sup>

Missionaries, who had to this point made few inroads into Northwest Coast societies, welcomed and expected the state's backing on the issue of potlaching. Rather than depending solely on their own energies to eradicate traditional customs, missionaries of the late nineteenth century were ". . . becoming accustomed to look to governments for the enforcement of elements of their moral code. . . they readily extended this logic to the outlawing of traditional religious practices. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

By the early 1880's, the lobby for federal intervention in prohibiting certain types of indigenous religious behaviour had gained momentum. In their department reports, agents consistently claimed that the lack of Indian material progress was due to their participation in lengthy winter ceremonies and the "giving away" of property. The "impoverishing" aspect of potlaching was often cited as the reason for the need to perpetuate the rationing system at the department's expense. These observations were reinforced by missionaries who not only believed that potlaches obstructed material progress and spiritual enlightenment, but also were responsible for the "regression" of their converts who were pressured to support their kin in the reciprocal exchange network.

Thus, in April 1883, a lobby consisting of missionaries, Indian converts, including several headmen from Fort Simpson, Kincolith and Greenville petitioned Superintendent Israel Powell for legislation

against the potlach. In their attempt to address the situation, the Conservative government opted for prohibition by proclamation rather than legislation, and accordingly, the first official "Proclamation" against the practice of potlaching was contained in a Report of a Committee of the Honorable Privy Council on July 7, 1883.<sup>21</sup> This alternative was adopted as a compromise position not only because the federal government had reason to believe that many Indians were becoming "civilized," settled, and absorbed into the cash economy as miners, lumbermen, commercial fishermen, and cannery workers, but also out of economic and political considerations. These included the administrative financial costs of eradicating potlaching activities in addition to the potential costs of protecting the lives and property of colonists should irate Indians decide to rebel. As Sir John A. Macdonald pointed out, since the settlers were easily outnumbered by the indigenous population and the police force was not adequate, the best policy was one of "prevention" rather than confrontation.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the Proclamation was not codified through an enactment of legislation and officials anticipated the obedience of Indians as a demonstration of their loyalty to the Queen. During the following year the department received numerous appeals for further intervention. By April 19, 1884 an amendment to the Indian Act was passed stating (47 Victoria, Chapter 27) that participation in potlaches and Tamanawas (Medicine or Healing ceremonies) was a misdemeanour:

Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the 'Potlach' or in the Indian dance known as the 'Tamanawas' is guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment for the term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other

place of confinement; and any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in the celebration of same is guilty of a like offense, and shall be liable to the same punishment.<sup>23</sup>

The federal government's decision to interfere in potlaching was justified in economic terms. It was argued that potlaches were not conducive to fostering notions of "thrift" and "personal acquisitions" among Indians because they involved the giving away and destruction of property including European goods which had been obtained through the fur trade.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to previous legislation which had been concerned with matters affecting the administration of "persons" or "property," the suppression of potlaches and Tamanawas was the first among several official enactments to "protect the Indians from themselves."<sup>25</sup> The "Potlach Law" was a precedent in the use of legislation to eradicate specific types of cultural behaviour among indigenous populations.

Initial attempts to enforce the "Potlach Law" proved difficult.<sup>26</sup> Administrators and missionaries disagreed over the phasing of the implementation of the legislation. While some such as Dr. Israel Powell, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Victoria, favoured the gradual and lenient enforcement of the law, others argued that a conciliatory approach would weaken the legislation. A few Indian agents hesitated to enforce a law which they believed would foster hostile feelings towards them and seriously impede their other administrative duties. There was also disagreement between the federal and provincial governments over their respective responsibilities in the area of providing funds and manpower for implementing the terms of the Indian



Act. This problem was partially resolved in 1889 when the provincial government agreed to build lock-ups and to provide constables as their contribution to the enforcement of the act. Severe problems were also encountered by the men in the field who were expected to inform Indians about the enactment of the Potlach Law, to monitor "illegal" ceremonial activities, and to make arrests. The lack of manpower combined with the difficulty of supervising ceremonies in the numerous communities located along the rugged coastlines and in the more remote hinterland impeded the implementation of the law. In addition to these administrative difficulties, opposition from several sources also undermined the strength of the "Potlach Law."

Criticism of the law came from White commercial traders who profited by the sale of goods for potlaches, and from non-Christian Indians. The reaction of the latter varied. While some insisted on holding their potlaches in defiance of the law, others agreed to desist from potlaching once they had been allowed to hold one more ceremony to pay back their debts. In fact, Agent Lomas proposed that enforcement be postponed until ". . . each band could be allowed a special licence to hold just one 'returning Potlach' with the distinct understanding that no additional property shall be lent."<sup>27</sup> Such proposals followed from the commonly-held misconception that the Potlach was merely a creditor-debtor system and Lomas' suggested arrangement clearly did not take into consideration that the very intent of the potlach was to perpetuate a state of over-reciprocation or indebtedness. The "once and for all" potlaches would have worked to the disadvantage of all of the hosted communities who would have not been permitted to reciprocate

in turn, thereby encouraging a more rigid form of stratification among the ranked families. Officials, missionaries, and opposed Lomas' approach on the grounds that flexibility would weaken the legislation.

Several Indian petitions requesting the appeal of the law were sent to the department but were not seriously considered. The first arrest related to the Potlach Law was not made until 1889. This test case is historically important since it led to a re-evaluation of the wording of the law.<sup>28</sup> A Kwakiutl chief of Malimalillekulla band by the name of Hamasak was convicted by the Alert Bay agent, R. H. Pidcock and sentenced to six months of imprisonment. The case was appealed and Hamasak was acquitted on a technicality related to the lack of definition of activities implied in the term "potlach." In his report of the case, Chief Justice Sir Matthew Begbie expressed the opinion that according to the existence of previous laws, the potlach itself was not illegal unless "liquor, rioting, and debauchery" were evident and furthermore, until the Statute defined what specific acts constituted a potlach, a defendant should not be expected to know when an offence had been committed.<sup>29</sup> During the next six years, the issue of potlaching was a matter for public debate. A number of settlers feared that the use of force would lead to violence resulting in an ". . . Indian Mutiny on a smaller scale, the murder of outlying settlers, and useless shedding of innocent blood."<sup>30</sup> However, there was sufficient pressure on the part of missionaries, department officials, and agents to strengthen the Potlach Law in the form of an amendment passed on July 22, 1895.

This new piece of legislation not only contained a definition of

"illegal" activities associated with the potlach, but also with other ceremonies. Since it was specific forms of behaviour that were prohibited and not the ceremonies per se, the terms could be broadly interpreted. In fact, in a Brief (no author designated) accompanying the amendment, reference was made to similar objectionable activities practised by other Indians residing in the prairie region:

As there is a similar dance to the Potlach celebrated by the Indian Bands in the North West Territories known as Omas-ko-sim-moo-wok or 'grass dance' commonly known as 'Giving away dance," and there are, no doubt, Indian celebrations of the same character elsewhere, all of which consist of the giving away, parting with or exchange of large quantities of personal effects sometimes all that participants own, it is considered better to prohibit all giving away festivals, as there are. . . [?] extravagance, and cause much loss of time and. . . [?] assemblage of large numbers of Indians with all attendant evils.<sup>31</sup>

In a memorandum written by J. D. McLean, Secretary to the Minister, Department of Indian Affairs, economic concerns appeared to be foremost in the minds of the framers of the amendment. The new legislation was viewed as a means for preventing the "impoverishment" of Indians who were deemed to be incapable of controlling their improvidence during ceremonies.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the amendment to Section 14 (Chapter 35, 58-59 Victoria) was modified to read:

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

liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and not less than two months; but nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the holding of any agricultural show or exhibition or the giving of prizes for exhibits thereat.<sup>33</sup>

In this new amendment, particular types of ritual behaviour were clearly prohibited. It is significant to note that while indigenous forms of gift exchange or "giveaways" were subject to the law, the receipt of goods as rewards for participation in European activities (such as prizes at agricultural fairs) was acceptable. The reference to "the wounding or mutilation of the dead or living body of a human being" was directed towards outlawing the performance of the Hamat'sa or "cannabilistic-related" rituals performed by certain Northwest Coast religious societies. The reference to animal sacrifice was directed at practices performed by religious societies such as the Nutlam society whose members celebrated the power of the Wolf Spirit by ritually consuming dog flesh.<sup>34</sup> Whether this latter section of the amendment was intended to terminate self-mortification at Thirst Dances and the ritual offering and consumption of dogs among the Plains and Woodland Indians is not documented.

The revised version of the Potlach Law enabled the Indian agent to apprehend offenders and to initiate prosecutions. This power, however, was tempered by official departmental directives which urged agents to proceed with caution and discretion by ". . .exhausting every means of bringing the Indians to abandon the custom, through moral suasion, before instituting prosecution. . . ."<sup>35</sup> There were two major reasons for this cautionary advice. First, administrators and missionaries were thoroughly convinced that such practices would die a natural death once

the forces of Christianity and civilization took hold. Subsequent generations, schooled in western Christian belief systems and ideology, would eventually reject these "unprogressive" and "morally degrading" rituals. Secondly, administrators were reticent to use force to suppress ceremonies, particularly public ones which attracted large numbers of people. This reluctance was partially due to the realization that the law was interfering in a sensitive and valued area of peoples' lives (as evident in Indian petitions) and the fear that force would lead to reprisals which would endanger the lives and property of White settlers.

"They See, But They Don't See": Applying Section 114 to Plains Ceremonies<sup>36</sup>

Despite protests from Indian petitioners, Section 114 of the Indian Act was not repealed and was used to suppress similar forms of ritual behaviour on the Canadian Plains.<sup>37</sup> As in the case of the Northwest Coast experience, indigenous forms of worship as witnessed by Victorian colonists were perceived as superstitious and pagan, having no divine basis or practical function. Worship through dancing and singing to the accompaniment of drums, rattles, whistles, and the use of other forms of sacred paraphernalia such as medicine bundles and facial or body paint was, at worst, considered to be a form of "devil worship," or at best, recreation rather than a means of spiritual communication. Furthermore, there were no visible institutions or structures which Whites could identify as comparable to their own forms of worship. Thus, Native religious systems were dismissed as simplistic and meaningless. As Alvin Josephy has commented, non-natives believed that Indians persisted

in observing their traditional religious practices out of fear created by "malevolent medicine men," and that they would readily abandon their religion ". . . once the religion of the White Man was made known to them."<sup>38</sup>

Of all the ceremonies performed by the Plains Indians, the Thirst Dance was the most publicized and misunderstood. As the largest outdoor summer gathering of the ceremonial year, the Thirst Dance (or Sun Dance as it is popularly known) was highly visible to White observers because of the large number of participants, the erection of a sacred lodge for celebrants, its relatively lengthy performance, and the fact that non-native "participant-observers" were allowed to attend the ceremony. Euro-Canadians were fascinated and awestruck by the "drama" of the ceremony while, at the same time, repelled by the ritual of self-mortification and the "giving away" of material goods. The Plains Indian ritual of self-mortification through flesh piercing became the focus for descriptions contained in mission reports, department correspondence, and press coverage.

With few exceptions, missionaries openly condemned all forms of indigenous worship and made no attempt to integrate traditional practices with Christian forms. The performance of the Thirst Dance was considered to be savage, heathen, pagan, and for most missionaries was clear evidence of the destructive work of the Christian devil. An example of this attitude can be found in a description of the Blackfoot Sun Dance written by Archdeacon William Tims:

I can hardly describe the feelings that came over me when first I made the acquaintance of the Blackfoot speaking race. I arrived in the month of July when that great heathen festival, the Sun Dance, was in

full swing--when every Indian on the reserve almost was, willing or unwilling, obliged to attend that gruesome spectacle, the torturing of the body and the tearing of the flesh, as the victim danced before the Medicine Pole to the beating of the tom-tom and weird singing of a thousand voices. The fantastic costumes of the people, the paint and feathers, the then to me foreign tongue, made by heart sink within me, and if ever I felt the hopelessness of a task set me to do it was then.<sup>39</sup>

Noted for his intolerance of indigenous culture, Archdeacon Tims alienated the Blackfoot with his dogmatic approach in religious matters. As his biographer explained, Tims' ethnocentrism made it impossible for him to consider "the idea of compromise, either in salvaging some of the native symbols and customs or in tailoring Christian ceremonies to meet native needs."<sup>40</sup> His successor, Reverend H. W. Gibbon Stocken, while supportive of Blackfoot economic programs, was likewise intolerant of indigenous religious practices.

Other first-hand observations were similarly recorded. In 1881, a North-West Mounted Police officer described his personal reaction to the Plains Cree Thirst Dance at Cypress Hills as follows:

Witnessed to-day the strangest sight that I have ever seen, the annual Sun dance of the Cree Indians a religious performance the main object of which is to make braves or warriors. Each candidate for warriorship has to stand a certain amount of self torture.<sup>41</sup>

Even empathetic Indian agents such as Robert Jefferson associated the dance with barbarism, as indicated in his description of the dancers; ". . .with the gree [n] of the boughs enlivened by varicolored prints, the gifts of votaries, the grotesque get-up of the dancers, and the general barbaric surroundings, the scene is one to be long remembered."<sup>42</sup>

In general, there was little understanding of the profound meaning of the Thirst Dances, and Euro-Canadians imposed their own simplistic interpretations on the ceremony. These misconceptions found their way into both the scholarly and public literature of the day. While some associated this ceremony with the propitiation of "bad spirits" or forms of "devil worship," others claimed it was an ancient form of "sun-worship." Fasting, continuous dancing and singing, and the performance of self-mortification were interpreted as extreme forms of behaviour associated with "initiation" rites devised to test a man's bravery. Thus, most early commentators were in agreement that one of the major purposes of Sun Dances was to "make braves." As Amelia Paget wrote in 1909, the Cree Thirst Dance was ". . . a time for the making of braves, or, rather, an opportunity for the test of courage and endurance. . . ."43

Some contemporary observers, however, were astute enough to recognize other functions of the Thirst Dances. For example, Paget wrote that the Cree version of the ceremony was ". . . primarily a thanks-offering to the Great Spirit, Kitchie Manitou, for the re-awakening of all nature after the silence of winter"; ". . . a time for mourning the dead"; and ". . . a time of petitions through their Pow-wah-kuns (spirit helpers) for future blessings and love."44 Similarly, agent Robert Wilson contradicted the general opinions of self-mortification when he wrote that

Much misunderstanding exists among white people regarding the nature of the torture rite. It is generally thought that its purpose is the making of braves, and much nonsense has been written in that line, such as 'it admits the young man into the noble band of warriors.' It admits him into nothing. Many



of the bravest men and most noted fighters in the blackfoot tribes have never undergone the ordeal; while other individuals who could not be persuaded to face an armed foe, have gone through the so-called 'brave-making' year after year, until their breasts carry a group of scars on each side.<sup>45</sup>

The ceremonial redistribution of goods (Giveaways) at Thirst Dances and other ceremonies was also considered to be excessive and immoral. Much like the potlaches of the Northwest Coast, Plains Giveaways were held responsible for the impoverishment of people and contradicted the western ideal of economic individualism where success was obtained through the personal accumulation of wealth. Very rarely were Giveaways equated with one of the major requisites of Christian behaviour, that is, the distribution of one's wealth to the less fortunate in society.

Sometimes compared to less ostentatious versions of the potlach, Giveaways were consistently referred to in negative terms. For example, in 1889, Superintendent Steele of the MacLeod District claimed that the Sun Dance itself had degenerated into ". . . a gathering merely for the purpose of using up presents of tea, tobacco, etc., given them by their agents or begged from their white neighbors."<sup>46</sup> Few administrators understood the socio-economic complexities of a system in which goods were considered to be communal property. One exception, Robert Jefferson, who openly criticized the department's rationale for suppressing this practice, argued that ". . . inasmuch as what one gave, another got and the aggregate of possession remained the same, the reason would not appear to be a very good one."<sup>47</sup> Spiritual offerings of material goods were also condemned as wasteful, and there is at least one documented instance of nuns taking cloth offerings from the Thirst Dance lodge and recycling it into clothing for school children.<sup>48</sup>

Equally offensive were the payments of goods given to healers and shamans for treatments which were denigrated as forms of "quackery."

In a more practical vein, the department discovered that it was difficult to maintain administrative control over government-issued material aid and monies through these redistribution practices. Considered to be communal property, food rations, cash, horses and wagons were passed along through the kinship network. As one missionary, John McDougall, phrased it, the general consensus was that "tribal communism has always been hurtful to individuality, and without this no race of man can progress."<sup>49</sup>

The transformation envisioned for the Plains Indians was a total one and most administrators and missionaries were convinced that there was little of value in these cultures worth saving. Thus, the government's assimilation program was concomitant with the requisites of moral and spiritual salvation. As the Methodist missionary John MacLean pointed out,

the Christian politician and the political Christian seek to labor so that there shall be the importation of a new affection in the Indian heart, changed modes of thinking, a new religion of higher and nobler import, training for the intellect, surer means of support, and a more useful and happier life. These results will be the reward of enlightened toil on behalf of the red men.<sup>50</sup>

One of the few who believed that Plains Indians were in fact, a very spiritual people, MacLean was of the opinion that indigenous customs were too "antagonistic" for accommodation into western culture. For Maclean, any acceptance of traditional forms of worship and value systems on the part of "civilized" societies would be retrogressive and for this reason, he supported policies which would effectively undermine

Plains cultures.<sup>51</sup>

In keeping with the social theory of the day, MacLean, among other Christian social reformers, believed that individual salvation and social regeneration were interdependent processes determined in part by one's environment.<sup>52</sup> Drawing upon the social Darwinism of the times, MacLean attributed both racial characteristics and religious behaviour to environmental and subsistence patterns. He postulated that "the place of residence begets its own peculiar kind of labor, which acts upon the mental power of the individual, and upon his morality."<sup>53</sup> Maclean attributed the indifference of Plains Indians to Christianity to environmental, cultural, and historical factors:

The prairie tribes lived by hunting the buffalo, and so great were the numbers that in a few days enough meat could be procured for making pemmican that would last for months.

After the excitement of the chase, there was feasting, revelry and idleness, with wars with the neighboring tribes. Camp-life was then debasing to the intellect and morals. . . .The Plains Crees have been harder to reach in religious matters than the same people included in forest tribes, these are the Swampy Crees. The Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegans have had Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries for nearly a decade, and still there is not a single conversion. What are the causes of this? Country, climate, modes of life and labor, proximity of white population, missionary sectarianism, and tribal relationship. The Indians expected physical benefits from religion, and their expectations were not met.<sup>54</sup>

That the process of civilization would exact a high price at the expense of Indian lives was accepted as a necessary evil in their transition from barbarism. As MacLean explained, "despondency takes possession of their hearts, the oppressive feeling that they are a conquered race presses heavily upon them, and, like the wild caged birds, they sicken and die."<sup>55</sup>

Representations of Plains Indians as barbaric and static peoples became part of the consciousness of eastern Canadians and western colonists in a variety of ways. Living exhibitions such as the Wild West Shows dramatized the subjugation of Plains Indians by the dominant society. While exhibitions of traditional outfits, housing, beadwork, and horsemanship were intended to demonstrate a public appreciation for Indian cultures, these events which became commonplace at local fairs, stampedes, and agricultural exhibits also served to reinforce preconceived notions of barbarism. In eastern Canadian museums, Plains material culture was displayed within the context of an evolutionary scheme which provided visible evidence to the visitor that these societies were less developed than their own. Most exhibits depicted Plains culture through popularized warrior imagery achieved by displaying "fierce or stoic-looking mannequins surrounded by their war paraphernalia such as lances, clubs, knives, shields, bows and arrows, and scalp locks."<sup>56</sup> Sacred materials, generally exhibited out of context or with little explanation, were reduced to exotic curios, leaving the uninformed observer to project his or her own fantasies regarding their true meaning. The popularized stereotype of Plains Indians confirmed the validity of the concept of social evolution in the minds of Euro-Canadians and was used to justify federal assimilative programs. Thus, Indian societies were ". . . labeled primitive because they did not have plough agriculture, and because they were labeled primitive, their religions, societal institutions, technology, etc., were described as primitive."<sup>57</sup>

Another major source of this type of imagery was the missionary

whose fundraising lecture tours and published reports served to validate preconceived stereotypes of Plains Indian religions. For example, in 1896, one missionary, Mgr. Pascal, Vical Apostolic of the Saskatchewan, reported that western Indians were ". . .very ferocious and blood thirsty. . .the cruel tortures of the War Dance or Sun Dance being evident of their state of savagery."<sup>58</sup> Missionary literature such as the works of the Methodists John MacLean and John McDougall provided variations on this theme.<sup>59</sup>

A major journalistic source of information regarding ceremonies was the news media. Newspaper reports of major ceremonies such as the Thirst Dance and dances which were performed at stampedes and fairs appeared in both eastern and western publications. Highly sensationalized descriptions were guaranteed to win the attention of readers, satisfy their curiosity for the exotic, and in the end, confirmed their suspicions regarding the state of savagery in western Canada. In 1883, The Regina Leader headlined a Sun Dance held in the Broadview areas as "Frightful Cruelties at the Manufacture of Braves"; "A Sun Dance, Revolting Scenes."<sup>60</sup> Another newspaper, the Ottawa Evening Journal, in 1896 claimed that Indians were dying as a result of their religious practices. The accompanying headline read "Indians Perishing. Dying from the Practices of their Heathen Religion" and was followed by a description of a war dance claimed to have occurred twice a year during which participants were "cruelly tortured" upside down.<sup>61</sup> Yet another article in The Leader, when describing a Thirst Dance attended by some 1,000 people from Piapot, Muscowpetung, and Pasqua, pointed out that while "no making of the braves" had occurred, still

". . .the savage was there in all his glory, painted in vermillion and bedecked with feathers, gaudy colored cloth, in pristine splendour."<sup>62</sup>

Finally, the involvement of the Plains Indians in the Saskatchewan Metis Uprising of 1885 and rumours of the spread of the messianic Ghost Dance religion by Sitting Bull's followers heightened the intolerance for Native religions.<sup>63</sup> After the "Sioux Outbreak of 1890" and the Battle of Wounded Knee, department officials, police, and settlers cast a wary eye in the direction of Dakota communities. In field correspondence, reference was made to a "Sioux Dance" as one of the "war dances" of the Plains Cree and occurrences were reported at Poundmaker, Sweetgrass, and Thunderchild. Anti-ceremonial lobbyists such as Reverend McDonald and farm instructor Finlayson claimed that ". . .Indians are not fit to work after such dances, consequent on their working themselves into a complete frenzy."<sup>64</sup> While it is possible that authorities may have associated this dance with the Ghost Dance movement, this was not the case. In his description of this ritual, David Mandelbaum stated that the "Sioux Dance" was often performed during the Pow-wow and involved the dramatization of a battle during which dancers pantomimed "scouting, aiming, shooting, and scalping."<sup>65</sup> Given the content of the dance, White observers would have understandably become alarmed.

The shift in attitudes towards the Plains Indians prior to and after the 1885 Uprising is significant. One researcher has suggested that while opinion differed as to the methods which the Department of Indian Affairs implemented its Indian policy, most westerners supported the program of civilization and Christianization as a solution to the "Indian problem."<sup>66</sup> Before 1885, the media tended to portray Indians as

"nuisances," "vagrants," or as "members of a dying race" whereas after the Uprising, settlers had changed their minds about "these docile and harmless beings":

Now they realized they had a more dangerous side. The press's complacency and trust in the natives was shattered. The newsmen now looked at the natives and their "keepers," and agents of the D.I.A., in a new manner. They expected the Department not only to lead the natives to civilization, but more importantly, to ensure that they would never again pose a threat to white lives.<sup>67</sup>

The acceptance of the assumptions of social Darwinism and scientific racism are evident in public statements on Indian religious systems. Inherent in the logic of both philosophies is the belief in the unilinear evolution of human cultures ranging from savagery to civilization. The perception of Plains Indians as "savages" or at best "barbarians," influenced the formation of departmental policies and in turn, served the interests of settlers, investors, and missionaries. This correlation between popular image and policy development has been summarized by Robert Berkhofer who stated that ". . .the idea of the Indian served to explain both what had to be done and what could be done for the sake of both the Native Americans and the Whites who came to their lands."<sup>68</sup> The support of anti-ceremonial legislation and its implementation among prairie Indians demonstrates the interplay between the image of the Indian as "savage" or "uncivilized," and Euro-Canadian economic and political interests.

Large communal ceremonies such as the Thirst Dances became suspect as "hot beds" of civil disorder and were regarded as major obstacles to social and political control. In part, this distrust of communal ceremonies resulted from the participation by some in a Plains Cree

Thirst Dance held near Little Pine and Poundmaker Reserves on the eve of the Uprising of 1885. Rather than mere social or recreational gatherings, these tribal ceremonies were now perceived as having a political function. As such, they were seen as forums for the expression of discontent with the potential to mobilize larger numbers of people who otherwise assembled in smaller groupings. The farm instructor, Robert Jefferson observed that the Plains Cree Thirst Dance was held annually until the year of the "Rebellion," although it was opposed by authorities ". . . since it brought the Indians together, and increased the chances of massed insubordination."<sup>69</sup> White observers who had listened to the oratories delivered at Thirst Dances not only heard the recounting of sacred teachings and personal histories, but also the glorification of past war records and impassioned criticisms of department policies. Father Joseph Hugonard, principal of the Qu'Appelle Industrial School, warned administrators about this political aspect of ceremonial life when he wrote of connection between the "regression" of school children and ceremonies ". . . where speeches usually against those in authority over them are one of the main features. . . ." <sup>70</sup>

In addition to their political function, large communal ceremonies were opposed because they interfered with government programs of Indian agriculture. Ceremonial time and space were traditionally phased in accordance with seasonal variations based on a hunting, fishing, and gathering subsistence economy. These patterns were incongruent with the agricultural cycle, the European concept of a six day work week and a single day of religious observance on a Sunday. Furthermore, traditional ceremonies were not necessarily localized affairs (as in



community churches) and participants were often required to travel considerable distances off reserves to attend ceremonies at designated sacred sites. These ceremonies also involved lengthy periods of time ranging from a few days to a number of weeks. According to administrators and missionaries, the successful transition to an agricultural economy involved the constant care of property and indigenous religious cycles precluded this development. In the opinion of Agent Hayter Reed of the Battleford area, Indians would be forced to abandon "their heathenish rites and ceremonies" once they adopted farming and needed to attend to their fields and crops.<sup>71</sup> Comparable objections were raised by Father Hugonard in 1903:

I know a case this Fall where Indians have been called and went to these dances in the midst of harvest, leaving their binders standing idle in the fields when their surrounding white neighbours were cutting night and day; they commenced dancing at noon, and in consequence of their neglect of work part of their crop was frozen.

It is common for Indians to travel from fifty to a hundred miles the round trip to attend these dances, neglecting their stock during the two or three days they are absent from home.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, another reason for the suppression of traditional ceremonies was their role in the transmission and perpetuation of indigenous cultural values. In particular, religious leaders and ritualists were held directly responsible for the "regression" of school children and were considered to be powerful enemies of both the state and church. An exemplary case in point was documented by Austin McKittrick who described in some detail the emulative behaviour of Cree school children after they had returned from a Thirst Dance:

In a few days they were back at school again but now their play was different. Instead of a gopher feast

or the new games of hide-and-seeK, tag, or pom-pom-pull-away in their free time, now their chief and often their only play was a miniature sun dance, with the boys as braves and the girls as spectators. They came to us for pins and thread or twine. They fixed up a small dancing pavilion of slender trees with one strong pole. They bent the pins to be stuck through the flesh of their little breasts and tied by string to the centre pole. They asked us to come and watch them dance as they drummed on an old tin...oil can for music. Round and round, and to and fro, they danced to the hi-yi song, then with a miniature yell the boy dancers broke out the little piece of flesh where the pin had caught under the skin and a small drop of blood oozed out.

'Mewasinayumehawin, Kes-Kinoah-mah-kao' (Good worship, teacher) they said to me. I answered 'Namoweyah (no), but 'Our Father which art in Heaven' is mewasin. . . .In mixed Cree and English they insisted that the sun dance was the right and good way to worship the Great Spirit and that our way of saying 'Our Father which art in Heaven' was no good.<sup>73</sup>

Although administrators, field agents, and missionaries shared the conviction that indigenous cultural practices should be discouraged, there was a difference of opinion in how this should occur. The use of force was the most contentious issue. Describing the Sun Dance as "that ugly feast" and "barbarian show," Father Lacombe urged the department to use state intervention to stop the performance of those ceremonies which encouraged the neglect of farms.<sup>74</sup> The Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Lawrence Vankoughnet, supported Lacombe's request in a report to Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney in which he insisted that ". . .the time has now arrived when the great obstacle to the civilization and advancement of the Indians, viz. the Sun Dance, should be abolished by statutory enactment."<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the Reverend J. W. Tims of Gleichen, Alberta, believing that coercion was involved in ceremonial attendance, requested that Commissioner Hayter Reed provide

protection for those of his converted charges who did not wish to attend the Sun Dance. Reed pointed out to Tims that the agent was authorized to deal only with specific offenders and that the police force would not be used indiscriminately to suppress ceremonies. The Commissioner's response to Tims is important in indicating the future direction of policy decisions in this matter.

We have all along told the Indians that the authorities do not wish the custom of making braves to continue. It was stopped last year in Treaty 7 through the influence of the Agent, and I fancy it can be done again this year. Every effort is being made by our Agents, not only in this direction, but of entirely stopping the dances--great changes have gradually been brought about in this connection--in many portions of the Territories they have been stopped entirely.<sup>76</sup>

Not all objectors, however, condoned the use of force. The Methodist missionary, John MacLean, argued that the civilization process ". . . does not mean the compulsory acceptance of the white man's customs but it is the transformation of the whole man"; and further warned that ". . . it is not by determined opposition that we must win our way, but by continued labor, undermining the customs of the Indians by giving them a superior religion, grander and purer customs, and a nobler civilization. . . ." <sup>77</sup>

There is evidence of only one attempt to prosecute Thirst Dance celebrants under the terms of the original Potlach Law of 1884. Correspondence from Hobbema agent D. L. Clink contained a report of the destruction of a Thirst Dance lodge in 1893 and the arrest of ritual leaders. The ceremony occurred on a "Half-breed" settlement on the Battle River and involved people from Hobbema, Stoney Plains and a number of "Half-breeds."<sup>78</sup> The agent had been under the impression that

the Sun Dance and the Potlach were essentially identical ceremonies. Clink was informed by his superiors that Section 114 was not applicable and was warned to exercise ". . .extreme caution. . .in making arrests for such acts."<sup>79</sup>

The integration of Plains Indians into Canadian society was a goal shared by both the federal government and Christian missionaries. This objective clearly implied the total transformation of Plains cultures to a new socio-economic order based upon the western capitalist mode of production and the adoption of Euro-Canadian values, behaviour, and religious beliefs. This transition entailed the acceptance of a system in which "property. . .was the visible measure of a man's social worth. . .the criterion of his citizenship. . . ."80 Success was measured through the accumulation and proper use of material wealth which, it was believed, could only be achieved by conforming to western notions of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, industry, temperance, and thrift.

The suppression of religious ceremonies was part of a larger design for the creation of a Canadian social order; one which was firmly grounded in the doctrine of uniform social evolution rather than a concept of political and cultural pluralism. Convinced of the ability of non-western peoples to attain and enjoy the benefits of "civilization," Victorians undertook to destroy the cultural underpinnings of Plains societies. In his study, Moon of Wintertime, John Webster Grant explained the influence of the social gospel movement in this undertaking:

During this era there was taking shape a social

gospel that insisted on the importance of the environment in determining the quality of life. . . .Its immediate effect. . .was to intensify pressure on the Indians to abandon a way of life that was condemned not merely as un-Christian but as inefficient and unprogressive.<sup>81</sup>

The coincident depletion of bison herds and other game and the move by eastern Canada to annex the western hinterland, created a fertile environment for this social gospel. The roles played by the federal government and the Christian churches in transforming the physical and cultural environment of prairie Indians through the implementation of legislated and more informal measures of regulation will be discussed in the next chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>The motto contained in the preface of the Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby's Among the An-ko-me-nums, cited in Grant, Moon of Wintertime, pp. 222-23.

<sup>2</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup>Titely, Narrow Vision, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Friesen, Canadian Prairies, pp. 157-58.

<sup>5</sup>Fisher, Contact and Conflict, p. 176.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-28; see also Usher.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Philip Drucker, Cultures of the North Pacific Coast (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), p. 55. See pp. 55-56 for a discussion of the various types of potlaches. The term "potlach" originates from the Chinook trade language and means "giving."

<sup>14</sup>Kehoe, North American Indians, p. 411.

<sup>15</sup>Drucker, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>Mary Lee Stearns, Haida Culture in Custody: The Masset Band (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 289.

<sup>17</sup>LaViolette, Struggle for Survival, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup>Grant, Moon of Wintertime, pp. 137-38.

- <sup>21</sup>LaViolette, Struggle for Survival, p. 38.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup>The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, The Historical Development of the Indian Act (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975), p. 95.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-96.
- <sup>26</sup>LaViolette, Struggle for Survival, p. 56.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 46.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 59.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 68. The reference here is to the mutiny of native troops from the British army in India in 1857.
- <sup>31</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 6808, file 470-2-3, part 1, "Amendments to Indian Act 1895." Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, "Brief on the Bill to further Amend the Indian Act", p. 7. Document is indistinct.
- <sup>32</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 6808, file 470-2-3, part 4, "Memorandum for the Minister" in "Re Proposed Amendment of the Indian Act, 1897".
- <sup>33</sup>Gail Hinge and L. van Hoorn, Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1950 (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1981), pp. 95-96.
- <sup>34</sup>See Drucker, pp. 162-63; 165. See also Jay Powell, Vickie Jensen, Vera Cranmer and Agnes Cranmer, Yaxwattan's (Alert Bay: U'mista Cultural Society, n.d.).
- <sup>35</sup>LaViolette, Struggle for Survival, p. 75.
- <sup>36</sup>This phrase is sometimes used to refer to non-Indian observers who have misinterpreted Indian cultural behaviour. While the physical manifestations of non-western customs may be accurately described, the essence or "true" nature of such behaviour often remains elusive.
- <sup>37</sup>Titley, Narrow Vision. An overview of this history is available in the chapter entitled "Senseless Drumming and Singing" but Victorian perceptions of Plains Indians religions have not been discussed as part of the context for this legislation and they are important to our understanding of its adoption.

- <sup>38</sup>Josephy, p. 80.
- <sup>39</sup>GA, A.T586A, 3469, Archdeacon John William Tims Papers, 1872-1953, "Impressions Regarding Missionary Efforts Amongst the Indians. . .," p. 7. Tims was an Anglican missionary working for the Church Missionary Society.
- <sup>40</sup>Georgeen Barrass, Canon H. W. Gibbon Stocken, Among the Blackfoot and Sarcee (Calgary: Glenbow Alberta Institute, 1976), p. xi.
- <sup>41</sup>PAC, MG29, E47, R. N. Wilson, "Diary 1881-1888", 21 June, 1881.
- <sup>42</sup>GA, M585. Robert Jefferson, Notes and Correspondence re customs and culture of Cree Indians, Battleford, Saskatchewan, 1911, 1919, "Notes on the Western Cree"; "Sun Dance", 1911, p. 4.
- <sup>43</sup>Paget, p. 29.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup>GA, M4422, Robert Nathaniel Wilson, "Ethnographical Notes on the Blackfoot 'Sun-Dance'", 29 March, 1897, p. 46.
- <sup>46</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, Volume XII, No. 13, 1890, p. 65, Annual Report of Superintendent Steele, Commanding Macleod District, Fort Macleod, 30 Nov., 1889.
- <sup>47</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 91.
- <sup>48</sup>Goddard, p. 305.
- <sup>49</sup>John McDougall, Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie (1898, rpt. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1970), p. 70.
- <sup>50</sup>John Maclean, The Indians of Canada: Their Manners and Customs, 1889 rpt. (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1970), p. 267.
- <sup>51</sup>Maclean, pp. 299; 302-3.
- <sup>52</sup>Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 4-5; 176-7.
- <sup>53</sup>Maclean, pp. 304-5.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 315.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 322.
- <sup>56</sup>Judy Zegas, "North American Indian Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition", Curator, 19, No. 2 (1976), p. 170.



- <sup>57</sup>Joan Lester, "The American Indian: A Museum's Eye View", The Indian Historian, 5, No. 2 (1972), p. 30. Lester is citing Vine Deloria.
- <sup>58</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3825, file 60, 511-1, Mgr. Pascal, Vicar Apostolic of the Saskatchewan was reported in the Ottawa Evening Journal, December 9, 1896. Article was on file in the Department of Indian Affairs records.
- <sup>59</sup>Sarah Carter, "The Missionaries' Indian: The Publications of John McDougall, John Maclean and Egerton Ryerson Young", Prairie Forum, 9, No. 1 (1984), pp. 27-44.
- <sup>60</sup>The Regina Leader, July 26, 1883, p. 1.
- <sup>61</sup>Ottawa Evening Journal, December 9, 1896.
- <sup>62</sup>The Leader, June 14, 1894, p. 8.
- <sup>63</sup>A messianic movement based on indigenous northern Paiute and northwest Plateau teachings and Christian millennium beliefs, the Ghost Dance religion had spread throughout the Dakota (Sioux) communities in the North and South Dakota area. According to Omer Stewart, "faithful dancing, clean living, peaceful adjustment with whites, hard work, and following God's chosen leaders would hasten the resurrection of dead relatives and the desired restoration of the 'good old days' of Indian prosperity." During world renewal Whites would be quietly removed. See Omer Stewart, "The Ghost Dance", in Wood and Liberty, p. 180. While the Ghost Dance movement was not directly responsible for the wars against the Dakota (1890-91), it did provide the federal government with a rationale for the massacre at Wounded Knee.
- <sup>64</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3825, file 60, 511-1, Sergeant Albert Mountain to Officer Commanding, Battleford, 23 March, 1894, p. 2.
- <sup>65</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 218. The dance was introduced by the Dakota who had fled to Canada after the Battle of the Little Big Horn.
- <sup>66</sup>Gary Simons, "Agent, Editor, and Native. The Attitudes of the Western Canadian Press to the Department of Indian Affairs, 1880-1891", M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1984.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 83.
- <sup>68</sup>Robert Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 114.
- <sup>69</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 40.
- <sup>70</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3825, file 60, 511-1, Father J. Hugonard to Indian Commissioner, Department of Indian Affairs, 23 Nov., 1903,

pp. 2-3.

<sup>71</sup>Hayter Reed cited in Looy, p. 293.

<sup>72</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3825, file 60, 511-1, Father J. Hugonard to Indian Commissioner, Department of Indian Affairs, 23 Nov., 1903.

<sup>73</sup>GA, M4252. Austin G. McKittrick Papers, "Chief Piapot and the Sun Dance", 1921?, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup>Father Lacombe cited in Anthony Looy, "The Indian Agent and His Role in the Administration of the North-West Superintendency, 1876-1893", Diss. Queen's University, 1977, p. 295.

<sup>75</sup>Lawrence Vankoughnet to Edgar Dewdney, 4 Dec., 1889, cited in Looy, p. 295.

<sup>76</sup>GA, A.T586A, 3469, Archdeacon John William Tims Papers, Hayter Reed to Reverend J. W. Tims, 21 April, 1891.

<sup>77</sup>Maclean, p. 263 and pp. 302-3.

<sup>78</sup>PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3825, file 60, 511-1, D. L. Clink to the Indian Commissioner, 19 June, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., Department of Indian Affairs to the Indian Commissioner, 12 July, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>Richard Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973), p. 134.

<sup>81</sup>Grant, Moon of Wintertime, p. 185.

## CHAPTER VI

"WITH FIRMNESS AND MODERATION":<sup>1</sup>

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF SECTION 114, 1896-1914

The implementation and impact of the Indian Act was influenced by a number of variables including the parameters of the particular regulations, the administrative structure of the Indian Department, and the reaction of those being subjected to the provisions of the act. The actual formulation and approval of Indian policy was centralized in Ottawa through the office of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and in his absence, the Secretary. With the exception of the first Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald, the Minister of the Interior assumed this position as a government appointee. It was through the office of the Deputy Superintendent General that directives were sent into the field and questions regarding specific policies were clarified for personnel. With the entry of Manitoba and British Columbia into confederation and the annexation of the North-West Territories, new offices and staff were added in the prairie region to administer the terms of negotiated treaties and to arrange for future treaties. An Indian commissioner was appointed to inspect reserves and to supervise agency (the name for regional administrative units) employees--an assistant commissioner, inspectors, surveyors, clerks, agents, store keepers, farm instructors, medical workers, and interpreters. The department was a hierarchical bureaucracy with personnel being directly responsible to their immediate superiors and ultimately, to the Superintendent General and Parliament.

No provisions were made within the structure for any formal lines of accountability to the Indians on whose behalf the department was created.

By 1896, the year in which the anti-ceremonial legislation came into effect, the Liberals, under Sir Wilfred Laurier, introduced a number of measures to reduce expenditures in the Indian Department. Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, reorganized the department by consolidating the agencies and moving the commissioner's office from Regina to Winnipeg. Budgets, staff, and salaries were greatly cut. This economic retrenchment not only reduced the quantity and quality of government aid to Indians, but also seriously taxed the energies of the already overworked field personnel.

Policy formulation and decision-making were the responsibilities of officials in Ottawa, but the actual implementation of the Indian Act fell to the commissioner, Indian agents, and farm instructors. The distance from Ottawa and the need to act in an expedient manner to changing local situations provided the commissioner with some degree of latitude in carrying out departmental instructions. Moreover, the commissioner was the major channel through which Ottawa received information regarding the conditions on reserves and the reaction of Indians to the administration. This position enabled the commissioner to influence policy formulation either through directives to field personnel or by introducing proposals for amendments to the Indian Act. The commissioner based his decisions on his own observations or through regular reports received from agency personnel, especially the Indian agent. It was the Indian agent who had the greatest contact with

Indians on reserves and he was expected to implement government policy on a day-to-day basis. His responsibilities included supervising Indian schools, distributing annuities and food rations, providing guidance for agricultural development, supplying medical aid, monitoring Indian and Euro-Canadian movements on and off reserves, collecting statistical information, preparing budgets and reports, dispensing justice, and reporting particular problems to supervisors.<sup>2</sup> It was within the parameters of this broad mandate that agents were expected to enforce Section 114 of the Indian Act.

#### Legislation Implementation and Every Other Method of Dissuasion

Although the Indian agent enjoyed a certain degree of discretionary power in the administration of reserves, he was obliged to refer judgement on any question of policy to the commissioner. In general, agents were expected to enforce the terms of the Indian Act with "firmness," "moderation," and "good judgement."<sup>3</sup> The extent to which these prerequisites of Indian management were operative depended upon the agent's political convictions, racial attitudes, field experience, personality, and professional commitment to the department's objectives. These directives were particularly relevant to enforcing the terms of Section 114. Agents were initially advised to proceed gradually and to allow time for the passing away of the older generation of traditionalists and for the assimilation programs to have an impact. Legal sanctions were to be used to terminate only the "worst features" of the ceremonies.<sup>4</sup>

In recognition of the sensitive nature of suppressing religious

practices, the department urged a pragmatic approach towards the actual prosecution of offenders. And while agents were not expected to turn a blind eye to designated "illegal" activities, they were warned against the use of either force or imprisonment to discourage practitioners. This policy was contained in a directive issued by Indian Commissioner Frederick Paget to Agent J. A. Markle who had attempted to prevent the occurrence of a Thirst Dance on the Waywayseecappo Reserve in 1896. At that time, Paget advised Markle:

- i) . . .to be guided in deciding what action you will take in the matter entirely by the circumstances and the nature and the extent of the opposition likely to be put forth should anything approaching force be resorted to. . .
- ii) . . .the law be not resorted to until every other method of dissuading the Indians from holding the dance, has been tried and failed.<sup>5</sup>

According to these official guidelines, the repression of ceremonial life was left to the discretion of the Indian agent and was largely dependent upon his personal abilities to influence his charges to desist from such practices.

In addition to the problems arising from the ambiguous nature of such directives, there was also some question as to whether the monitoring of ceremonies fell within the jurisdictional mandate of the agents. Some expressed the viewpoint that the transformation of religious behaviour was more appropriately the concern of the churches. For example, after failing to prevent the File Hills Cree from holding their Thirst Dance in 1896, a frustrated Agent A. McNeill wrote to the Commissioner that

Although I shall do my best to stop it, it would appear to me more within the province of the

missionaries than the Agents and rests more with them in having their heathenish customs abolished, for to my mind these Indians will never abandon this mode of worship until they become Christianized.<sup>6</sup>

In this particular instance, McNeill was able to persuade the ceremonial sponsor, Cheepoostatin, to refrain from holding the dance. Off-reserve participants, including nine lodges of Assiniboines and one lodge from Piapot's reserve, were escorted back to their homes by the North West Mounted Police. That a deliberate show of force from the police was necessary to disperse the celebrants was evident from McNeill's comment that ". . . had it not been for their presence I no doubt would have failed to stop the dance, as the Indians were quite determined to have it."<sup>7</sup>

As indicated by the resistance offered at File Hills, the efficacious use of personal powers of persuasion to discourage ceremonies was a naive expectation on the part of the department. Many agents, as official representatives of an alien and imposed civil authority, were not well received on the reserves. Furthermore, even well-liked department employees such as the farm instructor Robert Jefferson, soon discovered that this approach was futile. His description of his own endeavors to undermine the influence of "medicine men" is particularly revealing:

I--from a height, of course--have tried every way to combat these foolish beliefs, especially the blind acceptance of impudent bluffers at their self valuation. I have tried argument, I have tried ridicule; I have tried pity and I have tried disgust; and the result has been to undermine rather the Indian's estimate of my perspicacity than the faiths that have been accepted without question by generations of his forefathers. Time probably, and rubbing up against the white man are the only things that will effect change.<sup>8</sup>

Department officials generally attributed the ineffectiveness of the policy of "persuasion" to the inability of individual agents to exert their authority. When a number of celebrants from Swan River, Crooked Lakes, File Hills, and Touchwood agencies had gathered at Yorkton for a Thirst Dance in 1898, J. D. McLean, Secretary of the Department, observed that ". . . it seems somewhat strange that the Agents concerned do not at this date possess sufficient influence and control over their Indian charges to prevent such a retrograde step. . . ." <sup>9</sup> The numbers of petitions received by Ottawa officials directly from Indian spokesmen who had deliberately bypassed the local bureaucracy was yet another indication that agents had not firmly established their authority on the reserves. The occasion of a petition written by Chief Thunderchild and Charles Fineday of the Battleford Agency for permission to hold a Thirst Dance in 1907 provides an example of official reaction. At that time, the Assistant Indian Commissioner was clearly perturbed by the very existence of the correspondence:

I can scarcely believe the statement to be correct, for the duty of an Agent in the matter of a Sun Dance is to inform the Indians very clearly and forcibly that the holding of same is against the policy of the Department, and that those participating in such a ceremony are liable to be proceeded against and punished. Then if the Indians insist upon reference to higher authority, it is for the Agent to write himself and not to have the Indians communicate direct. <sup>10</sup>

The persistence of ceremonial life and the problems encountered in repressing Indian participation led the department to consider alternative means of suppression that went beyond the prohibitions specified in Section 114.



## Beyond the Law

According to the wording of Section 114, only those activities as specifically defined in the amendment were illegal. Ceremonies in general, and even the Thirst Dance were not prohibited by the act. As Indian Commissioner, David Laird advised Agent James Wilson of the Blackfoot Agency, the Sun Dances in this area had been modified through the deletion of objectionable features and consequently, ". . .it is not possible to stop them by force, nor under similar circumstances is it possible to do so elsewhere."<sup>11</sup> Clearly, provided that the ceremonies were performed without the ritual of self-mortification or Giveaways, the Indian Act could not be invoked.

These limitations on the application of Section 114 also affected the department's efforts to use the police to monitor ceremonial activities. Both this, and the problem of overlapping jurisdictions between the police and the department in enforcing the Indian Act were evident in the following two cases. In 1900, Bull Shield, Calf Shirt, and Eagle Ribs received permission from the local detachment at Fort Macleod to hold a Blood Sun Dance. This interference in Indian ceremonies was viewed as a serious challenge to the department's authority and determination to suppress ceremonies. The infuriated agent, James Wilson, informed his superior that he had

. . .pointed out to these Head Men that the Police had no jurisdiction over Indian Affairs, that they were in the Country for the protection of life and property and to arrest all law breakers, that the Indian Department was the only one able to give them instructions and that Indian agents were appointed for the purpose of letting them know the law.<sup>12</sup>

This problem of overlapping jurisdiction, which partly arose from the

historical protective relationship that had developed between the police and the prairie Indian populations, was seemingly resolved in 1901. In an exchange of correspondence between Police Comptroller Fred White and the department, it was agreed that officers would not discuss or become involved in the internal matters of reserves unless formally requested. With specific reference to interference in ceremonies, White reiterated the position of the North West Mounted Police, that is, they would only disperse gatherings where the law had been violated.

I am not aware of any occasion when an Indian agent has been refused Police assistance in preventing a dance; all that is necessary is for the Agent to make a requisition on the Officer in Command of the District for sufficient Police to prevent a dance, or to preserve order while it is being held. The question whether a dance is to be held or not rests with the Indian Agent, and not with the Police. . . .If you will. . .clearly define what dances, if any, the Indians are to be allowed to participate in, either on or off their Reserves, the Police will endeavour to enforce your regulations.<sup>13</sup>

Certain officials opposed even this limited role of police in discouraging ceremonies. Colonel James Macleod, Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police had delivered a "scathing rebuff" to members of the force for arresting Thirst Dance celebrants and insisted that despite the "barbaric" nature of the ritual, ". . .what they had done was akin to making an arrest in a church."<sup>14</sup>

From the department's perspective, the cooperation of the police was essential if the strategy of "persuasion and moderation" was to be successful. If the officers refused to make arrests, their very presence during ceremonies would at least provide support for the department's authority. Towards this end, the police were frequently called upon to investigate "suspect" ceremonies. The arrival of the

agent accompanied by members of the local detachment not only interrupted the proceedings, but also intimidated participants who were generally interrogated about the details of the rituals performed. In addition, with the police and agent on site, prohibited rituals could not occur without the risk of arrests. Occasionally, participants were also persuaded to discontinue the ceremony and return to their homes.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to monitoring ceremonies, other measures were adopted to prevent people from attending the Thirst Dance, to undermine ritual leadership, and to dismantle the ceremonial complex itself. The pass system restricted off-reserve movement without the permission of the agent and was used both to prevent participation in ceremonies located away from the home reserve and to disperse celebrants who had not obtained a pass to travel off their reserves. The first documented application of this system was recorded in 1885, when an attempt was made to prevent Indians from joining the Saskatchewan Uprising by confining them to their reserves. Although the pass system had no legal basis, it remained intact well after 1885. On August 16, 1885, Hayter Reed, then Assistant Indian Commissioner for the North-West Territories, informed Edgar Dewdney that all Indians in the Battleford area would continue to require passes cautioning that, ". . .I know this is hardly supportable by any legal enactment but we must do many things which can only be supported by common sense and by what may be for the general good."<sup>16</sup> While the department fully supported the continuance of the pass system and the policy of containment, some, such as Commissioner Irvine of the North West Mounted Police, argued that its enforcement was a breach of treaty rights. He pointed out that the terms of the

treaties did not compell Indians to live on reserves or deprive them of the freedom to travel for "legitimate hunting and trading purposes."<sup>17</sup>

Since 1885, passes had been used to contain Indian populations on their reserves, particularly during the agricultural season. In 1889, travel related to general visitations among relatives between reserves, including trips to American reservations, were similarly controlled. The system was also used to discourage frequent visits made by parents to their children in residential schools. The attitude of officials towards the off-reserve socializing of kin was aptly summarized by Agent James Wilson of the Blood Agency in 1902, in his observation that "the less visiting an Indian does the better. It makes them restless and unsettled, and they no sooner return from one trip than they start upon another."<sup>18</sup> From the department's point of view, the larger the gathering of people, the greater potential there was for political mobilization against unpopular regulations. As a case in point, the arrival of off-reserve Assiniboine and Piapot's Cree at a ceremony in File Hills, prevented the agent from persuading people to forego their Thirst Dance. In his report, Agent A. McNeill wrote that the File Hills Indians appeared to be "more defiant and determined" upon the arrival of off-reserve participants, and that he would have been successful in stopping the ceremony if the "strangers" had not been there for support.<sup>19</sup>

While evidence for the extensive use of the pass system for ceremonial repression is not well documented, it remained in effect in the Battleford area until 1918 and was generally implemented in the Treaty Four and Treaty Six areas until the mid-1930's.<sup>20</sup> As a mechanism

for regulating people's movements, the department was able to take advantage of the system to undermine "legal" ceremonies. The major shortcoming of this form of social control was that legitimate "on-reserve" ceremonial attendance could not be restricted. This means of insulating reserve populations from one another, however, did curtail the number of contacts between kin and served to undermine the functioning of indigenous forms of obligatory socio-economic networks and political organization.

Several other means were adopted to discourage ceremonial practices. Among the Blood Indians, the Giveaway clause of Section 114 was applied to the transference of spiritual responsibilities and associated ritual objects. Despite the fact that the Blood Chief, Red Crow, had cooperated with the government by encouraging his people to practice agriculture and to send their children to school, he remained unwavering in his determination to prevent interference in religious worship.<sup>21</sup> In 1898, Red Crow became personally involved in an incident centering around a ceremonial transfer of spiritual power and community responsibility to his wife, Singing Before. In exchange for this privilege, Singing Before was required by customary law to exchange fifteen horses for the transfer of the sacred bundle from Heavy Shield's wife. According to Section 114, she would be unable to assume the leadership of the Women's Society, known as the Motokix Society, since the exchange of goods was involved in a ceremonial context. Although the transference had been prohibited by the agent, the Superintendent of Police, R. B. Deane, permitted the transfer under the conditions that only horses would be exchanged and that no Sun Dance would accompany the

ritual.<sup>22</sup>

Another major altercation between traditional Blood leaders and their agent occurred when access to ritual food (rationed beef tongues) was restricted. During the Blood Sun Dance, whole beef tongues (which had replaced bison tongues) were ritually cut by a Holy Woman who then distributed the pieces to the dancers. Realizing that whole tongues were required for this ritual, agent Wilson ordered that all rationed tongues be cut in half. Due to such interference, no Sun Dance was held for three years and the year 1895 was remembered in Blood winter counts as the time "Indian Agent James Wilson stopped the Sun Dance Lodge."<sup>23</sup> Eventually, Wilson's strategy was undermined by Blood scouts working for the North West Mounted Police, who received whole tongues for their rations and passed these on to the ceremonial leaders. Furthermore, Blood threats to slaughter government cattle herds to procure the needed tongues undoubtedly aborted Wilson's efforts.<sup>24</sup>

Similar types of interference were also experienced by the Plains Cree. By the late nineteenth century, commercially-produced foods, tobacco, clothing, metal goods, and other articles were important components as ceremonial offerings and goods for redistribution. The use of material goods in this manner was adamantly opposed by the department, since it sustained the indigenous political economy, and was considered wasteful. There is at least one documented case of government intervention in those commercial transactions which were related to the support of ceremonies. In 1895, Agent E. Yeomans claimed that untimely credit dealings between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Touchwood Hills Cree subverted his attempts to suppress the Thirst

Dance. Thus, his superior, Hayter Reed wrote on his behalf to the Company's commissioner pointing out that Mr. Cooper, the officer in charge of the post at Touchwood Hills, was undermining the department's policies by allowing the Indians to purchase goods for the Thirst Dance and providing them with "presents" to be used at the ceremony.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Cooper was accused of supplying the Cree with the red cloth used as a sacrificial offering in the Thirst Dance lodge, and of donating "gifts" of provisions such as flour which was either redistributed in its raw form or used for meals. Ultimately, Cooper was fined on a charge of supplying liquor to the Cree but the Company refused to be pressured into withdrawing support from its Indian clientele or from defending Cooper. Clearly, the Company wished to retain its historical pattern of provisioning the Plains Cree and other prairie groups and donations of goods at ceremonial time continued to be important gestures of the Company's goodwill. Another method used to restrict access to material goods for ceremonies was the withholding of agency food rations. This technique, however, was not considered wise for as Agent Yeomans from the Peigan Agency explained, the "simple withholding of rations" would not deter determined Thirst Dance celebrants and moreover, "the deserving and self-supporting" felt that they would be unfairly treated by the adoption of this practice.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to interfering with access to supplies needed for ceremonies, offerings of goods were sometimes disturbed. One report noted that Roman Catholic nuns had removed sacred cloth offerings from abandoned Thirst Dance poles and had recycled the material to make clothing for school children. Customary sacred law required that these

cloth offerings made to the Creator, be left to the elements and therefore such uses of sacred cloths would have been considered sacrilegious. This demonstration of religious insensitivity only served to indicate to traditionalists that Euro-Canadian spiritual leaders as well as administrators had little understanding or respect for their culture.

Traditional ritual leaders were considered to be the most conservative element in the Plains Cree community, and consequently the department was persistent in its efforts to divest them of their power. While some leaders were arrested and imprisoned, others lost their official status as chiefs. Due to the absence of local records in existing departmental files, the frequency of arrests and fines is difficult to assess. In his ethnography of the Plains Cree, David Mandelbaum had noted that ". . . many Cree had been sent to jail every year for participating in the ceremony [Thirst Dance]. . . ." <sup>27</sup> In the following section, those cases which have been recorded will be briefly discussed for the purpose of examining the manner in which Section 114 was implemented and the circumstances under which arrests and convictions were made.

One of the first recorded arrests of a Thirst Dance sponsor occurred in 1895 when Agent Wright succeeded in stopping a ceremony in progress. <sup>28</sup> Although the agent's actions received a commendation from his superior, Hayter Reed questioned the wisdom of interfering in the dance after it had started. <sup>29</sup> This caution against extreme measures, that is, arrests and convictions, was also an issue in the case, The Queen versus Kah-pee-cha-pees in 1896. In that year, Kah-pee-cha-pees



of the Ochapowace Band in Saskatchewan was arrested and sentenced to two months of hard labour for sponsoring a Thirst Dance. After due consultation with the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, the commissioner was of the opinion that the agent had acted beyond his jurisdiction and the intent of Section 114.<sup>30</sup> Although the commissioner considered the punishment to be excessive, he nonetheless upheld the conviction, arguing that the incarceration of Kah-pee-cha-pees would serve as a warning to other Thirst Dance sponsors. Furthermore, he did not believe that the sentence would unduly traumatize the accused, stating that ". . .there is no reason to believe that the Indian has been affected otherwise than to be benefitted by his incarceration. . . ." <sup>31</sup> In this particular case, the agent had taken it upon himself to act as an Ex Officio Justice of the Peace by using his authority to evaluate the offense. Such power was not within the agent's mandate. In his defense of the accused, a local police officer reported that Kah-pee-cha-pees ". . .looked upon this as a religious matter. . ." and contended that ". . .God himself had given him these Rites with a view of saving his own Soul."<sup>32</sup> For Kah-pee-cha-pees, his only crime was expressing his freedom to worship.

Perhaps one of the most historically significant and well-documented arrests was that of Chief Piapot in 1896. Renowned as a very powerful spiritual leader and Thirst Dance ritualist, Piapot was arrested for holding a Thirst Dance in 1899 during which some twenty youths were "pierced." Over 84 years old at the time, he was convicted and imprisoned in Regina. It is significant to note that the official charge was not listed as an infraction against Section 114, but rather

the cause was given as "drunken behaviour." This fact was apparently unknown to Piapot until he was visited by Abel Watetch in Regina.<sup>33</sup> As in the case of Kah-pee-cha-pees, the real issue was one of the right of the Indian's freedom to worship as indicated in a recounting of a conversation held between Piapot and Assistant Indian Commissioner A. E.

Forget:

FORGET: Ask him, Peter [Hourie], why, when he knew that it was contrary to the policy of the Department, he allowed a Sun Dance to be held.

PIAPOT: (Rising to his feet, dropping the blanket from his shoulders and holding it on his out-stretched arm in the gesture of the great Indian orator.) When the Commissioner gets up in the morning he has many varieties of food placed before him, and if he doesn't like what is in one dish, he has a number of others from which to choose. He does not know what it is to have an empty belly. My people, however, are often hungry and when they cannot get food, they pray to God to give it, and their way of praying is to make a Sun Dance.

FORGET: He has an argument there. Tell him, Peter, that we are two big chiefs here together. I ask him as one big chief speaking to another, not to make any more Sun Dances.

PIAPOT: Very well, I will agree not to pray to my God in my way, if you will promise not to pray to your God. . . in your way.

FORGET: By Jove, he has me there. The old rascal should have been a lawyer. . . .34

Piapot's age and his fifty years of leadership did not prevent the department from deposing him from his position as chief. Furthermore, his role in maintaining the loyalty of prairie Indians in the southeastern section of the North-West Territories during the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885 was also not considered as a good reason

for leniency. His biographer, Abel Watetch, commented on the impact of the department's treatment of Piapot as being a traumatic experience for the band - ". . .it broke the old man's spirit. He returned to the reserve, humiliated and sad. On the reserve there was one silent, unbroken determination to have no other chief as long as Payepot lived."<sup>35</sup>

Other chiefs and councillors were also deposed. In 1902, David Laird, Indian Commissioner for Manitoba and the North-West Territories notified Ottawa that one chief and several headmen had been removed from office as part of a vigorous campaign to suppress illegal dancing on reserves.<sup>36</sup> A strong supporter of Section 114, Laird instructed his agents to notify all headmen that they were expected to set the example in their respective communities by discouraging the performance of indigenous ceremonies. Persistence in such activities was considered to be both unprogressive and irresponsible. Thus, in his reaction to a Thirst Dance held in the Onion Lake area in 1910, J. McLean, Secretary of the department, expressed the opinion that ". . .it is very doubtful whether the Department is justified in allowing any Indian to hold the office of Chief or Councillor, who remains so ignorant or indifferent to the real welfare of those under his guidance. . . ."37

A number of participants were also charged for infractions against the "Giveaway Clause" in Section 114. In 1897, five men, Chief Thunderchild, Bran, Wa-pa-ha, Patty, and O-kan-ee were convicted for holding a Giveaway following a complaint registered with the police by Agent P. J. Williams and the farm instructor of the Battleford Agency. All were sentenced to a two month period of imprisonment.<sup>38</sup> Department

officials also took this opportunity to take Chief Thunderchild's treaty medal from him. Williams stated that Thunderchild was the "most guilty of the lot" since he had taken ". . . particular pains to explain the law to him, and from time to time, having arrests made hoping that they would stick to their promises. . . .<sup>39</sup> Because of their youth, two men, Patty and O-kan-ee were released on a suspended sentence. The Commanding Officer also recommended the release of the remaining men three weeks after they had served their term. Although the leader, Thunderchild, was an elderly man at this time, it was felt that imprisonment without hard labour would not be harmful to him.<sup>40</sup> Both the Commanding Officer and the magistrate stated that they would have preferred to give a lighter sentence to these first offenders; however, they refrained from commuting it on the grounds that this case was to serve as a "deathblow" to Giveaways and dancing. This decision was also meant to lend legal support to the authority of the agent who, despite his "strenuous efforts," had not been able to stop the Indians from abandoning their farm work and their livestock to attend ceremonies (dances).<sup>41</sup>

In the same year, four men from the Sweetgrass Reserve were tried for the same infraction. In a report dated January 25, 1897, J. Cotton, Superintendent Commanding "C" Division, Battleford, arrested Pas-ke-min, Baptiste, Sake-pa-kow, and Ky-ass-i-kan. All were released but Ky-ass-i-kan, who was given a two-month sentence. Because the convicted was elderly and physically weak, Cotton recommended that he receive a suspended sentence of three weeks.<sup>42</sup> In the same year, Yellow Bird was accused of being the leader of several File Hills Indians who were

attempting to build a dance lodge on the Okanese Reserve. Despite orders from Agent William Graham to refrain from constructing the lodge, Yellow Bird persisted. He was arrested, charged with encouraging Giveaways, and was sentenced to three months in the Regina prison. The heavy sentence was probably a reflection of the stormy relationship which had developed between Yellow Bird and Graham. Yellow Bird was accused of using "threatening language" against the agent who refused a request for rations and Constable T. Hoskin had observed that "'Yellow Bird' is a bad Indian and has been a source of trouble to the Indian Agent for some time and has been warned and threatened until he has grown defiant."<sup>43</sup>

In 1901, Chief Piapot was arrested for a second time along with six other members of his reserve for participating in a Giveaway Dance. Five of the accused were allowed to go free on suspended sentences and a sixth was sentenced to six months of hard labour, the extended sentence being justified on the grounds that the accused had attempted to resist arrest. Piapot, described as ". . .the ring leader in inciting them to resist arrest. . .," was sentenced to two months of imprisonment in Regina despite the fact that he was very elderly at the time (he died at the age of 92 in 1908).<sup>44</sup> Officials felt that his sentence would deter similar ceremonies from being held.

While the conviction of Wanduta involved a Dakota ritualist, the case does serve to demonstrate the relationship between sentencing and the status of the accused as leaders who openly criticized government policy. In this instance, a number of Oak River Dakota had been paid by the White community of Rapid City, Manitoba, to perform a "Hay Dance" or

Grass Dance in 1903. In return for their performance, for which an admission of fifteen cents was charged, a number of Dakota had been paid with provisions such as meat, sugar, tobacco, and forty-three dollars. According to the charges laid, Wanduta was accused of hosting a dance which involved the giving away of merchandise and a number of horses, and of inducing school children to participate. Furthermore, it was noted that he intended to sponsor similar dances at Brandon and other nearby locales.

Described as a "ring leader" of all "discontented" at Oak River, Wanduta was tried and sentenced to four months of hard labour.<sup>45</sup> An appeal was made by the legal firm Caldwell and Colman but the decision was not reversed. In their correspondence with the Minister of the Interior, the barristers insisted that Wanduta had been unfairly treated and that the court's decision was motivated by political and racist considerations.<sup>46</sup> As in Piapot's case, this was clearly an attempt by the department to break the power of traditional ritualists. According to anthropologist Wilson Wallis who had interviewed Wanduta, this ritualist was a member of the sacred Clown Society and it was his custom to ". . . announce after the War dance held by the Dakota who assemble at Brandon, Manitoba, each year during the week of the exposition, the number of spirits that he had seen during the dance."<sup>47</sup> He was also able to forecast the number of deaths for the coming year. Following his incarceration, Wanduta continued to carry out his sacred obligations as a member of the most powerful of Dakota "Medicine" (healing) societies.

Another well-publicized and significant court case occurred in the

same year. In The Queen versus Etchease of the Muscowpetung Reserve in Saskatchewan, the "Giveaway" clause was also challenged. Etchease was a Plains Ojibway who had initiated a dance in the absence of the agent. Until this time, the agent had been able to prevent dancing for over two years, and on neighbouring reserves (Piapot, Pasquah and among the Dakota) dancing had not been recorded for eighteen months.<sup>48</sup> The acting agent, William Graham undertook to prevent Etchease's ceremony and, accordingly, had him arrested for giving away goods at a Circle Dance. One witness, testified that during a speech made at the Circle Dance, Etchease stated that ". . .he had got a Circle dance and had got the money to pay a lawyer to defend him for the dancing if he got into trouble."<sup>49</sup> On the advice of a Mr. Dickson, an Advocate at Qu'Appelle Station, Etchease ". . .got up a dance which he called a circle dance and in which the only giving away consisted in the providing of food and tea furnished by different Indians of which the guests freely partook."<sup>50</sup> Approximately thirty people from three different reserves were in attendance.

The Assistant Commissioner accused Etchease of deliberately initiating the Circle Dance to test Section 114, and the news media, such as The Globe, publicized the case as a "crafty effort" on the part of Indians to evade the law.<sup>51</sup> In fact, The Globe report accused Etchease of substituting the Sun Dance for the Circle Dance on the Piapot Reserve. For Etchease, the initial trial was a success and he was acquitted. The decision, however, was formally protested by Father Joseph Hugonard, the principal of the Qu'Appelle Industrial School and a fervent opponent of all forms of indigenous ceremonies. In

the retrial, the decision which had determined that the distribution of food at ceremonies was not a contravention of the "Giveaway Clause" was reversed. Justice Richardson, the presiding judge, explained that he had no reason to believe that ". . .tea and bannock or soup should be an exception to the goods or articles the giving away of which makes a dance illegal. . .The value of the articles does not matter at all."<sup>52</sup> According to this decision, ceremonial communal food distribution was prohibited under Section 114. As a result, Etchease was sentenced to three months imprisonment.

The initial decision was considered to be a victory by Indians who interpreted it as an official recognition of "dancing" and the legitimacy of ceremonial food redistribution.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, department officials and missionaries felt that the decision not only challenged their authority but also weakened the strength of Section 114. The Assistant Indian Commissioner interpreted Etchease's actions as a deliberate movement to undermine the government's economic and assimilative programs. He claimed that the test case had not been initiated in order to assert the rights of Indians to participate in "ordinary social intercourse," but rather, to encourage the revival of obstructive "old-time gatherings and dances."<sup>54</sup> For their part, churchmen, including the Archbishop of Saint Boniface, Reverend Dr. Sutherland of the Methodist Church, and Reverend Dr. Haut of the Presbyterian Church actively campaigned for the conviction of Etchease. The initiator of this movement, Reverend Hugonard, was especially disturbed by the apparent successful attempt by Indians to use the justice system to "circumvent" regulations contained in the Indian Act:



Indians unless punished in some visible way when justly arrested, consider their release a victory over the N.W.M.P. and Government authorities as there have been 3 cases lately, covering horse stealing, larceny, forgery and the test case dance, in all of which the Indians were guilty, but has [sic] retained lawyers, to which they ascribe the fact that they were not punished, as they know they were guilty; the effect is to greatly lessen their respect for the law, for the N.W.M.P. and for those in authority over them. Clemency in their eyes is a sign of weakness.<sup>55</sup>

In comparison to a subsequent arrest of another ceremonial offender, Shavetail, who received only a verbal reprimand for violating the same clause of the Indian Act, one suspects that there were other reasons for Etchese's imprisonment. Since his Circle Dance, similar ceremonies were occurring on nearby reserves. Etchese was accused of encouraging these revivals of open dancing by his own example and by informing participants that the judicial system would protect them from prosecution. According to the testimony of one witness, this assumption was correct in that he undertook to gather the names ". . .of all those who had agreed not to have dances" and to enlist their support for legal fees by collecting money from them.<sup>56</sup> Described as a man having no property, only three government cattle, a pony, no implements, and an antipathy towards farming, he was obviously considered to exemplify the worst of the traditional elements in the community. Within this context, his comparatively severe punishment was justifiable in the eyes of the government and the church.

One other case was documented in department files as an arrest of a Sun Dance celebrant, but in fact the accused was attending a Midewiwin ceremony. In early 1904, newspaper headings in The Telegram read "Injustice to Poor Old Indian. Nearly Ninety Years of Age He is Sent to

Jail. No Wrong Meant - He had Deserved Better Treatment From Canada."<sup>57</sup>

The article was based on a letter to the editor written by Edward Field who was protesting the arrest of the elder, Taytapasahsung (Tapassing) for his attendance at a Midewiwin ceremony at Nut Lake, Saskatchewan. The elder was sentenced to two months of hard labour but as early as January, C. Pearson Bell, the Assistant Surgeon for the North West Mounted Police had recommended Taytapasahsung's release. The prison register had described the elder, who was over ninety years old, as "feeble, decrepid, and blind," and unable to take on the simplest of tasks.<sup>58</sup> Such negative publicity concerning the department's lack of good judgement when making this arrest, undoubtedly tempered the activities of over-zealous agents.

In addition to the suppression of Thirst Dances and Giveaways, other forms of indigenous religious practices were also suspect. Shamans and healers were perceived as the keepers and purveyors of traditional values. In the opinion of the Deputy Superintendent, they were ". . .the guiders of thought and action and the inspirers of fear in all but the very boldest."<sup>59</sup> According to Euro-Canadian observers, shamans and healers were practitioners in medical "quackery" who were only interested in duping the naive for their own personal material gain. From a legal standpoint, at this time, both Indians and Euro-Canadians were able to practice unlicensed medicine within the respective provinces provided that the patient was unharmed and that no payment in money or gifts exchanged hands. The latter restriction was difficult to enforce, since most healing of this nature was conducted in private. Furthermore, traditional Indian healers were often the only

source of medical relief on reserves and according to customary law, sacred offerings in the form of the reciprocal exchange of goods for services were a necessary part of the healing process.

**Other Strategies: Regulation, Compromise, and Substitution**

While the majority of Indian agency personnel were unsympathetic to the persistence of Indian ceremonies, some did propose a more gradual approach to religious transformation. This type of compromise assumed four forms: some agents agreed to refrain from interference provided that ceremonies were "legal"; some permitted abbreviated versions of the Thirst Dance; some agreed to consider the performance of "harmless" dances; while still others made an effort to substitute religious practices with Euro-Canadian sports activities and other forms of recreation.

As early as 1892, Hayter Reed reported that an agent had promised the Indians on the Piapot Reserve that they could hold a "harvest home" dance provided they discontinue their Thirst Dance.<sup>60</sup> In the following year, Agent Clink of the Hobbema Reserve had gathered reserve residents together to celebrate the Queen's birthday with a community dinner. Interestingly, some forty dollars in cash were collected and used as prizes (redistribution). Clink was also convinced that the Indians enjoyed themselves at competitive sports ". . .much better than I ever saw them do at a Thirst Dance."<sup>61</sup> Picnics and Sports Days were generally held on most reserves on Dominion Day following Treaty payments, and at this time secularized versions of dancing and sports such as foot and horse races were permitted. One problem with the

Sports Days was that considerable visiting between reserves occurred. In an effort to prevent Indians from following horse racing circuits from town to town, one agent, C. Paul Schmidt of the Duck Lake Reserve requested that legislation be enacted to prohibit off-reserve movement.<sup>62</sup> This agent reported that some people were absent from their reserves for more than three weeks. Another problem with these occasions was that Indians often incorporated traditional dances at some time during the gathering.

With the growth of towns near reserves, sports days and fairs became featured activities during the summer months. Indian families, eager to visit relatives and to join in the excitement of the activities, particularly horse racing, travelled from town to town. For Euro-Canadian settlers, the presence of the Indians themselves had become an attraction and a major money-making drawing card. Because Indian dances were often performed and even encouraged at these secular events, Indian participation at agricultural fairs and stampedes served to undermine the department's objective of discouraging all forms of dancing.

Although there were indications that some Indian agents chose to exercise their discretionary power by regulating ceremonial activities through cooperation and compromise, few officials or clergymen shared their views. Administrators in Ottawa and the regional offices continued to advise their personnel to not only enforce Section 114, but also to discourage all forms of dancing. This rigid stance against indigenous forms of religious worship was evident in the careers of both Duncan Scott and William Graham. Before his appointment to the office

of Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1913, Duncan Scott was one of the commissioners involved with the negotiation of Treaty 9 in the James Bay region. During his trip west, his attitudes towards Indian religion became apparent in an incident at the Lac Seul Reserve. In response to a "Dog Feast" which was in progress and obviously a violation of Section 114, he took it upon himself to confront one of the local shamans.

Upon landing, Scott demanded to see the 'conjurer.' After much procrastination, he was produced. His name was Neotamaqueb--a man of great influence among his people and supposedly highly skilled in driving out 'evil spirits.' In the interrogation which followed, the commissioners were surprised by the wisdom and diplomacy with which he defended his work. But they nevertheless lectured and warned them that they would be watched in future. Scott was ill that evening, but he was well enough to travel the next day.<sup>63</sup>

During a subsequent tour to the west in 1909-1910 as the Superintendent of Education, Scott issued a public statement dealing with his objections to the participation of Indians in White-sponsored exhibitions and fairs. In an effort to undermine what he considered to be "senseless drumming and singing," he later considered this problem as the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs.<sup>64</sup> On October 15, 1913, he issued a directive entitled General Instructions to Indian Agents in Canada, reminding agents of their responsibilities associated with the implementation of Section 149 (previously 114), and advising that all indigenous gatherings should be repressed:

Agents in the West, should in every way possible discourage gatherings which tend to destroy the civilizing influence of the education imparted to Indian children at the schools, and which work against the proper influence of agents and farming instructors.<sup>65</sup>

In conjunction with these directives, agents were also encouraged to work towards achieving at least a subsistence level of mixed farming in their agencies and were advised that "in whatever occupations the Indians are engaged they should be encouraged in habits of thrift."<sup>66</sup> This latter instruction was specifically directed at the indigenous system of redistribution and Giveaways.

While forthcoming amendments to the Indian Act would specifically address the issue of dancing and participation in White-sponsored exhibitions, other administrators recommended the use of existing laws to discourage traditional behaviour. Scott's predecessor, David Laird, had suggested that Section 208 of the Criminal Code, which prohibited indecent exposure, could be used against Indians insisting on wearing their aboriginal outfits; or the vagrancy law might be invoked to prevent people from gathering in and about White towns.<sup>67</sup> Some of the exhibition organizers considered "indecent exposure" to be a problem with Indian events for as the historian Joseph Dion pointed out, ". . .we were forbidden to even take our shirts off. All we were allowed to show was an arm, from under the blanket we used to cover with in our parades."<sup>68</sup>

Field administrators such as William Graham remained firmly committed to the department's objectives of Indian economic self-sufficiency and assimilation.<sup>69</sup> His professional career was long-lived, as he rose in the rank and file from a young clerk in the Moose Mountain Agency (1885), to clerk in the Commissioner's Office (1895), to agent at File Hills (1897) and later became Inspector of

Indian Agencies for the South Saskatchewan Inspectorate (1904). In 1920, Graham was appointed to the position of Indian Commissioner. As founder of the File Hills farming colony, Graham continued to believe that Indian progress was only possible through complete cultural genocide. His position on Indian religion was supported by the clergy and specifically by Father Joseph Hugonard.

By 1914, it had become abundantly apparent to administrators such as Scott<sup>70</sup> and Graham that the policy of "moderation and compromise" had not only resulted in the inconsistent implementation of Section 114, but was also largely unsuccessful. While a number of factors undoubtedly contributed to this situation, the resistance of the prairie Indians to the measures adopted to implement the anti-ceremonial regulations of the Indian Act, was a major force in the adoption of more repressive measures in 1914.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Duncan Scott to H. Gunn, 5 March, 1915, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Marion Boswell, "'Civilizing' the Indian: Government Administration of Indians, 1876-1896," Diss. University of Ottawa, 1978. See Figure 3.

<sup>3</sup>Looy, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 27, 1901, p. xxxii, James Smart to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, December, 1900.

<sup>5</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, F. H. Paget to Agent Markle, 6 June, 1896, p. 1. The letter confirmed that the Waywayseecapo people had given up their dance "very reluctantly".

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Agent A. McNeill to Indian Commissioner, 20 May, 1896, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 1354, File No. 76, Part 3, "RCMP 1896; Sun Dance at File Hills", Agent A. McNeill to Indian Commissioner, 12 June, 1896, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. D. McLean to G. Forget, 2 July, 1898, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Assistant Indian Commissioner to J. Day, 4 July, 1907, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, David Laird to Agent J. Wilson, 11 July, 1898, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Dempsey, Red Crow, p. 213.

<sup>13</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, Comptroller White to J. Smart, 3 Feb., 1901, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>John Jennings, "The Northwest Mounted Police and Canadian Indian Policy, 1873-1896", Diss. University of Toronto 1979, pp. 96-97.

<sup>15</sup>Titely, Narrow Vision, p. 166.

<sup>16</sup>Hayter Reed cited in B. Bennett, "Study of Passes for Indians to Leave their Reserves", (Ottawa: Treaties and Research Centre,



Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1974), p.3.

<sup>17</sup>Irvine cited in Jennings, p. 289.

<sup>18</sup>Wilson cited in Bennett, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 1354, File No. 76, Part 3, "R.C.M.P. 1896; Sun Dance at File Hills", A. McNeill to Indian Commissioner, 12 June, 1896, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Bennett. See also Sarah Carter, "Controlling Indian Movement: The Pass System", Newest Review, May (1985), pp. 8-9.

<sup>21</sup>See Dempsey, Red Crow.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 208. Singing Before had made a vow to assume the responsibility for the Motokix Society as fulfillment of a promise which she made when Red Crow was ill. Upon his recovery, she was spiritually and morally obliged to fulfill the vow.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>25</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, Hayter Reed to C. C. Chipman, 9 July, 1895, p. 1; Ibid., Agent Wright to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 30 Sept., 1895, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 6809, File 470-2-3, Part 5, E. Yeomans to Secretary, 11 July, 1907, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 370.

<sup>28</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, "No Sun Dance", Manitoba Morning Free Press, 1 July, 1895; see also Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1896, p. 67, Agent Wright to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 29 July, 1895.

<sup>29</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, Hayter Reed to A. E. Forget, 9 July, 1895.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 21 Sept., 1896, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Sargent Des Barres, "Report of the Proceedings of Court held at Indian Agent's Office, Crooked Lake, Assiniboia, 17 July, 1896, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Watetch, pp. 44-45.

- <sup>34</sup>W. P. Stewart, My Name is Piapot (Maple Creek: Butterfly Books Limited, 1981), pp. 103-4.
- <sup>35</sup>Watetch, p. 45.
- <sup>36</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 27, 1903, p. 188, David Laird to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 15 Oct., 1902; see also RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, David Laird to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 17 July, 1908, p. 1.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., J. McLean to Agent W. Sibbald, 12 May, 1910, p. 1.
- <sup>38</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, P. J. Williams to Indian Commissioner, 15 January, 1897, p. 1. Peyasiw-awasis or Thunderchild had been one of the headmen originally allied with Big Bear. Thunderchild and Lucky Man had eventually led some 200 of Big Bear's followers into Treaty and had remained loyal to the British government during the 1885 Saskatchewan Uprising.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., P. J. Williams to the Indian Commissioner, 15 Jan., 1897, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., J. Cotton, Commanding "C" Division to Commissioner, Northwest Mounted Police, Jan., 1897, p. 2.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., and RG18, Vol. 1382, Report, J. Cotton to Commissioner, Northwest Mounted Police, 25 Jan., 1897, "R.C.M.P. 1897 file no. 76, Indians, Arrest at Battleford for participating in Give-away Dance."
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., "R.C.M.P. 1897, Indians, Arrest and trial of 'Yellow Bird' for encouraging to start a Giveaway Dance", Report, Constable T. Hosken to Officer Commanding, 14 Dec., 1897, p. 2.
- <sup>44</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, no. 12, 1902, p. 91, Report of Inspector Wilson.
- <sup>45</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, David Laird to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 28 Feb., 1903, p. 1.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., Caldwell and Colman to Minister of the Interior, 20 May, 1903, p. 1.
- <sup>47</sup>Wallis, Canadian Dakota, p. 126.
- <sup>48</sup>Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School", p. 196.
- <sup>49</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511, Report, "William Trant, J. P., N.W.T. Judicial District of West Assiniboia, Deposition of Witnesses, 18 May, 1903", p. 3. Cappo testified that the dance had been conducted between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and midnight and that beef, bannock, and

tea were consumed approximately every half hour. The sponsor of the dance, Etchese, provided the food. Cappel pointed out that Etchese ". . . did not ask us to eat; we all went and helped ourselves and paid nothing. We ate it all and then went away." Cappel further testified that some Giveaways continued for four nights until about eighteen months ago when they were stopped. In reference to the relationship between the Giveaway or the Circle Dance and disruptive behaviour he commented that "I know what excitement means. Indians do not get excited at either of these dances." Approximately some 30 people from three reserves attended the ceremony.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., "Indian Dances Stopped", Globe, 27 May, 1903.

<sup>52</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511, Report, William Trant, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>53</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, Assistant Indian Commissioner to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 15 June, 1903, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Father J. Hugonard to Honourable David Laird, 31 Mar., 1903, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., Report, William Trant, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>57</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, "Injustice to Poor Old Indian", The Telegram, 18 Feb., 1904.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., C. Pearson Bell to Commanding Officer, Northwest Mounted Police, 18 Jan., 1904, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1897, p. xxxii, Hayter Reed to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 2 Dec., 1896.

<sup>60</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3876, File 91,749, Hayter Reed to Deputy Superintendent General, 21 June, 1892, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, Agent D. Clink to Indian Commissioner, 19 June, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Agent C. Paul Schmidt to Department of Indian Affairs, 1 Aug., 1913, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Titley, Narrow Vision, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 177. Duncan Campbell Scott was born in Ottawa in 1862. His father William, was a Methodist preacher. During his earlier years, Duncan lived in numerous towns and villages in both Quebec and Ontario and it was at this time that he became familiar with local Indian

populations. He received his formal education at the Wesleyan College in Stanstead, Quebec. In 1879, his father, a John A. MacDonald supporter, had exerted his influence among his political connections and obtained employment for his son as a copy clerk with the Department of Indian Affairs. He later became renowned as a poet and writer. Much of his literary work revealed a strong admiration for British imperialism and its humanitarian objectives with regard to indigenous peoples. The "Indian" theme also predominated in his works, and while he admitted that Indians were capable of being "civilized," especially through missionization, education, and interbreeding with Whites, he nonetheless, tended to portray them as irrational, violent "savages." Some of his writings however, did reveal the philosophical underpinnings of nineteenth century humanitarianism and he was equally adept at depicting Indians as the "doomed race" whose existence was only assured by the benevolent policies of a paternalistic government program. Scott became the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1913 and occupied the position until 1932. See Titley, Narrow Vision, pp. 23-36.

<sup>65</sup> Duncan Scott, General Instructions to Indian Agents in Canada (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs, October 25, 1915), p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Titley, Narrow Vision, p. 173.

<sup>68</sup> GA, M331, Joseph Francis Dion Papers, "Programme of Old Time Dances", 1929, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Graham was born in the Ottawa Valley area and his father had travelled to the west with the Wolseley Expedition of 1870. Graham senior later received a position in the Indian Department as an official in the Manitoba Superintendency. By 1885, his son, William Morris, had followed in his father's footsteps and had also chosen to pursue a career with the department. See Titley, Narrow Vision, p. 184.

**Severing The Ties That Bind:  
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Of Indigenous Religious Systems In The Prairie Region,**

**1896 - 1951**

**By**



**Katherine Ann Pettipas**

**A Thesis**

**presented to the University of Manitoba**

**in partial fulfillment of the**

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**Interdisciplinary Doctor of Philosophy**

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**The University of Manitoba**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**October, 1988**

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## CHAPTER VII

## CHALLENGE AND ACCOMMODATION:

## INDIAN RESPONSES TO SECTION 114, 1895-1914

I was present at the time the treaty was formed and I did not hear them stopping us the privilege of using our ceremonies or ways of rejoicing. Our country is free and we are only going to dance for four days. This dance is only for the reserve at this vicinity (Thunderchild and Fineday, 1907).<sup>1</sup>

Department files, anthropological research, and Indian historical accounts indicate that Indian communities resisted the implementation of Section 114 in a number of ways. These responses varied in type and intensity from community to community and can only be properly assessed through a comparative approach of specific case studies. There were, however, some characteristic reactions to this legislation that were shared by a number of reserves in the agricultural belt. Some groups endeavoured to obtain a repeal of the legislation, while others sought to limit its broader level of implementation. When these efforts failed, other strategies were adopted including uncompromising resistance and ceremonial accommodation. The types of formal reactions on the part of Plains Cree leaders to Section 114 were circumscribed by their political, economic, and social wardship status within the state. In terms of the political process, their only access to institutionalized political power was through the bureaucratic structure of the Department of Indian Affairs. The use of the court system was another alternative; however, this method was costly and one with which many Indians were still unfamiliar.

## A Matter of Treaty Rights and Religious Freedom

Petitions were the predominant means used to register objections to Section 114. The majority of written requests for permission to hold ceremonies takes the form of restated inquiries forwarded to Ottawa by the respective agent. Generally, such petitions were also accompanied by the agent's personal evaluation of the local situation and, in some instances, his assessment of the character of the petitioners themselves. Many of the earlier letters were written by Indians who had a poor command of the English language (the official language of communication) and this fact, compounded by the difficulty of communicating matters of a spiritual nature to unsympathetic officials led the department to take such protests lightly. Most of the petitions contained requests to hold "legal" forms of ceremonies and dances. Some submissions challenged the legality of Section 114 on the grounds that it infringed on treaty rights since the practice of indigenous forms of religious worship were never part of negotiations. Many Indian agents were accused of exerting their authority beyond the parameters of the law by discouraging all forms of dancing and inter-reserve visiting. Many of the original signatories of the treaties, now elderly men, initiated formal protests regarding the government's general program of de-tribalization.<sup>2</sup>

In 1907, the issue of treaty rights and the freedom of religion was raised by the two Plains Cree leaders, Thunderchild and Charles Fineday.<sup>3</sup> Their petition, requesting permission to perform a Thirst Dance, contained assurances that in return for a positive answer, they would refrain from interfering in their children's education and would



restrict the ceremonies to their reserves. Significantly, Thunderchild and Fineday pointed out that Section 114 contradicted treaty rights.<sup>4</sup> This particular request was refused by the department. In the following years, Joe Ma-ma-Gway-See defended the efforts of the councillors of the Sampson Band in Alberta to hold a Sun Dance by referring to the issue of religious freedom.<sup>5</sup> He reminded the department that during treaty negotiations, Indians were assured that their customs would remain intact. In his correspondence to the department, Ma-ma-Gway-See introduced another type of impact that the implementation of Section 114 was having on Indians. The legislation against ceremonial activities, he claimed, was a direct challenge to customary laws. The dilemma of choosing between obeying those customary laws having sacred sanctions and Canadian secular law was causing trauma in the community:

The law you make is of this world and we follow the law of God. If you stop everything we do we may as well go without the law of God. All of the councils beg of me to writ [sic] to you because we like it and it does no harm to the whites or any one else. I am writing you these lines in good heart and hope you will take this in good heart. . . Everything will go well if every one does right according to the word of God. I am afraid of your trying to stop sun dances according to the law of God. I have never seen him but it is in his command to us and you are trying to stop it. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Similar arguments also appeared in several later petitions. For example, in 1914, an identical submission was made by Chief Thunderchild who wanted permission to attend a Thirst Dance on the Little Pine Reserve. According to Thunderchild, "customs" or "customary laws" were not negotiated away upon the signing of treaties:

When the law was first made here I listened to the true law. The [head] man that I made the bargain with the queen's servant. When he was first going to

look over us he said, I show our God what I am now doing it is true, there is no fooling about it. I am not going to stop your manners. You will have in your future you[r] dance. Your people around Battleford would like to assemble for a sundance and another thing that was said is your farming you will have your own food that is to say all the . . . animals. I[t] makes all the Indians think very much of that as they are now forbidden to kill anything. I was told there is going to be a sundance in Poundmaker. The inspector told me that no people could go to it but them. You will let me know if this is true as soon as you can. . . I would like you to tell me about it as I take you as a father and you took me as a son. I expect myself that God would give me some pleasures.<sup>7</sup>

That Thunderchild's petition was sent directly to Ottawa is indicative of the mistrust which Indians had for local administrators. In this instance, the agent, J. Rowland, clearly felt that his authority was being challenged by the headman and a number of his loyal followers. In a communique to the Department, Rowland recommended that Ottawa respond directly with Thunderchild since he anticipated having

" . . . considerable trouble over this dance, as . . . quite a number have made up their minds to oppose my authority."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to suspecting that the agents were unilaterally behind the implementation of Section 114, there were other reasons why petitioners might well have chosen to correspond directly with Ottawa. One agent, for example, wrote an internal memorandum to the Secretary of the Department recommending that Ma-ma-gway-see's petition be ignored. According to James Campbell, this submission was " . . . a somewhat gratuitous interference from an Indian of the 'Smart Alec' class" and it was denounced as nothing more than " . . . the old begging whine for free rations."<sup>9</sup> Because of his unfamiliarity with the English language and his difficulty in communicating spiritual matters in writing,

Ma-ma-gway-see's concerns were not seriously considered. Campbell pointed out to his superiors that

. . . the letter was a more or less wandering effusion, attributing the institution of the Sun Dance to the Almighty, and involving for reply the somewhat large questions as to the inspiration of the scriptures, and of interference with religious freedom, questions which it did not seem advisable to discuss, all the less when brought up in the manner and by such an Indian as above indicated.<sup>10</sup>

Campbell's attempts to undermine the petitioner's credibility is fairly typical. Another agent, W. Grant of the Assiniboine Agency, went as far as to caution his superiors that the Indian petitions were merely "schemes and plots," being devised by the "old people."<sup>11</sup>

Another category of petitions addressed the suppression of legal forms of ceremonies. Towards this end, local lawyers were hired to contest the actions of agents who went beyond the letter of the law in administering Section 114. As early as 1898, Panapekesis of the Yorkton area consulted a law firm regarding the legality of performing a Thirst Dance. Agent J. Wright of the Crooked Lakes Agency reported that the lawyers not only informed them that there was no law against the ceremony, but also that one lawyer even offered them monetary support (ten dollars) and suggested that they charge a fee of twenty-five cents to White observers.<sup>12</sup>

Some leaders demanded the removal of their agents. In 1900, two headmen from the Pasqua Reserve asked for a clarification of the agent's authority from the Justice of Peace at Fort Qu'Appelle. This meeting was followed by a conference with members from other reserves in the Muscowpetung Agency and resulted in the drafting of a petition for the agent's removal. In his defense, the agent insisted that he was acting

within his mandate to suppress dancing and that his authority was being questioned because many believed that he was personally responsible for initiating the policy.<sup>13</sup>

Other petitioners requested permission to enjoy the same holiday activities as the White sector. In 1903, the Chief and members of the Côté reserve in Saskatchewan wrote that they wished to ". . . meet at one another's houses for music, dancing, and refreshments without violating the law."<sup>14</sup> Three years later, a number of people from the Assiniboine Agency wanted two days set aside for feasting, sports, and a thanksgiving promenade--that is, ". . . holidays exactly similar to those observed by white people on Dominion Day."<sup>15</sup> Well aware of the department's disapproval of any off-reserve movement during the agricultural season, the petitioners suggested a compromise whereby they would remain on the reserve during the summer months if their request was approved.<sup>16</sup> Since the request seemed to indicate that Indians were willing to substitute their ceremonies for secular White activities, the department responded favourably. However, the agent, local clergy, and Inspector William Graham were not supportive, fearing people would take advantage of the department's leniency and introduce dancing into the proceedings. This reticence on the part of field administrators was justified through the reports of the local agent who wrote that the Indians were ". . . inclined to smuggle in some of their old fashioned sports and call it a thanksgiving promenade. . . ."<sup>17</sup> It was further reasoned that the Indians would not take the trouble to consult lawyers if they had no intention of defying the department's directives against dancing.

In addition to registering their protests against Section 114 through personal correspondence and legal representation, some leaders made official visits to the local and national offices of the Department of Indian Affairs, or, directly approached visiting Canadian and British dignitaries when they were touring western Canada. There was at least one official delegation which had an impact upon those repressive measures which went beyond the law. In 1911, a number of the elderly headmen who had been witness to the signing of the Qu'Appelle Treaty sent representatives to Ottawa to formally protest the violation of a number of treaty promises. In addition to demanding more political self-determination and objecting to the unilateral removal of chiefs and councillors, the question of government restrictions on the performance of ceremonies was also raised. Although this delegation was unsuccessful in obtaining a repeal of Section 114, it was the first time Plains Cree officially asserted their treaty rights in terms of guarantees ". . . to their own culture and their own leaders."<sup>18</sup>

Despite their inability to gain more self-determination, this delegation from the Crooked Lakes Reserve did return with an official clarification of the anti-ceremonial legislation. The interpreter, Alex Gaddie, reported to Commissioner David Laird that he had ". . . explained the circumstances of the sun dance and we were assured that nobody would be put in jail on its account."<sup>19</sup> This positive feedback from Ottawa apparently resulted in an increase in "open" dancing, much to the dismay of agents, administrators and missionaries such as Father Hugonard, who wrote:

These people seem to infer, from their interview and the letter in their possession in reply to their

demand, that dancing is no more forbidden or it is at least tolerated. . .The delegates carry the 15 page letter under their arm and recognize in it a precious document obtained from the Great Chief at Ottawa over the head of the agents.<sup>20</sup>

For both missionaries and administrators, the Indian delegation of 1911 was a setback in the sense that the department had refrained from openly denouncing all forms of dancing. The department's refusal to formally back their directives against all ceremonies was interpreted by some as undue tolerance and leniency. While the delegation was not able to persuade the department to repeal Section 114, it nevertheless succeeded in calling into question the illegality of pressures brought to bear on celebrants whose ceremonial activities fell within the parameters of the law. The subsequent movement to perform dances of a legal nature more openly led to a renewed lobby on the part of churches and some administrators for further restrictive amendments to the Indian Act.

One other official channel which was used to challenge the legality of Section 114 was the court system. As previously discussed, Etchese of the Muscowpetung Reserve had consulted with a lawyer prior to holding a Circle Dance during which food was distributed. Because Etchese had spoken with a lawyer and had sponsored the dance at a time when the overseer agent, William Graham, was absent, administrators and clergy viewed this dance as a deliberate effort to test the validity of Section 114 in a court of law. While acquitted at a first trial, Etchese was sentenced to three months imprisonment when an effective lobby by the clergy and administrators led to a reopening of the case. According to the Assistant Indian Commissioner, the issue was not a matter of participating in "social intercourse," but rather, ". . .represented an

attempt to undermine the agent and revert back to traditional practices which hindered self support."<sup>21</sup>

The involvement of ex-pupils in these formalized methods of protest is evident in at least two instances. In the 1903 trial of the Dakota, Wanduta, the defendant had raised money which allowed him to travel to plead his case, accompanied by his son, a student at the Brandon Industrial School.<sup>22</sup> Three years later, with the help of the ex-pupil Daniel Kennedy, members of the Assiniboine Agency effectively petitioned the Minister of the Interior for permission to hold feasts, sports, and thanksgiving promenades.<sup>23</sup> This request was accompanied by a covering letter from Barrister Levi Thompson who commented upon the character of the promoters as being ". . . among the best educated and most intelligent of them."<sup>24</sup> In return for two days of celebrations, the petitioners agreed to work hard on their reserves and to refrain from attending Sun Dances. While the support of ex-graduates undoubtedly lent an air of credibility to the promises made in these types of representations to the department, they did not eliminate official fears that even apparently harmless sports days might lead to a recrudescence of Thirst Dances. In spite of the fact that the department approved the Assiniboine sports days, administrators and agents protested that too much time had been spent on preparations, that money had been wasted on producing beadwork outfits, and that the event had drawn Indians from reserves in other agencies.<sup>25</sup>

According to departmental records, the manifestations of Indian opposition to Section 114 were of a non-violent nature. When their ceremonies were interrupted, celebrants might offer initial resistance

and demonstrate a reluctance to leave their sacred grounds, however, there were no incidents of physical confrontation with the authorities. Some groups did make an effort to gain more political leverage to preserve their religious freedom by suggesting that they would be more receptive to federal programs if they could hold their ceremonies. Agent G. H. Wheatley wrote to his superiors in 1897 that Running Rabbit, White Pup, Big Road, and Many Shot of the Blackfoot Agency had approached him with the following proposal for cooperation in the education of their children:

They will not move or form into a large camp, until the Service Berries are ripe, they will then form into one camp, and only stay together for Five days, when they will break camp and go on with the necessary work on the Reserve. They say if you grant this request they will give all the help possible in connection with the Schools.<sup>26</sup>

In this case, Indian Commissioner A. E. Forget agreed to the terms provided that no one would be "forced" to participate, that preparations would not interfere with "work," that children would not be taken from the schools, that existing schools would be filled to capacity, and that "objectionable" features would be deleted from the ceremony.<sup>27</sup> In 1900, the principal headman of the Pasqua Band, along with supporters termed as "unprogressives" by the agent, refused to honour their agreement to negotiate the sale of a parcel of reserve land and also demanded the removal of the agent. This action, the agent claimed, was motivated by the suppression of Giveaway ceremonies and other "illegal" dances.<sup>28</sup> By 1915, there were reports from the Blackfoot Agency that parents were threatening to keep their children from school as a protest against departmental attempts to prevent them from visiting the Blackfoot



Reserve to attend dances.<sup>29</sup>

During this time period, White support for Indian religious freedom was virtually non-existent however, officials connected with agricultural exhibitions and local stampedes inadvertently contributed towards the persistence of traditional practices by enthusiastically sponsoring displays of dancing and traditional clothing at these public events. Some non-Indians even felt that the department's measures were overly repressive. This feeling is apparent in the previously-mentioned Assiniboine petition for sports day celebrations. Their lawyer had informed Ottawa that local residents believed that if sports days were permitted, it would make the local Indian population "more satisfied" and would encourage them to make "better progress."<sup>30</sup>

In general, the strategy adopted by both elders and school graduates was one of compromise and reason. A few well-meaning petitioners even undertook the task of correcting negative stereotypes associated with their religious practices by drawing comparisons between their dances and Christian religious worship and Euro-Canadian social activity. When the Assiniboine Reserve petitioned the government for the right to hold feasts, sports, and a thanksgiving promenade, they argued the case that these activities would be ". . . exactly similar to those observed by white people on Dominion Day. . . ." <sup>31</sup> In 1909, the White Bear, Pheasant Rump, and Strip Blanket Bands further contended that departmental regulations were discriminatory, as is indicated in the wording of the following petition:

We wish to know why we are stopped dancing we don't do any harm to any body, we are the same as white men. White men like dancing so we like dancing to. We have no other way to enjoy ourselves, we can not

dance with the fiddle so we have to use the drum that is our own. Your own way is to use the fiddle. Makes no difference. . .supposing we go to work to stop the White people from dancing they wont like it too and when its time to work we go to work when we have nothing to do then we want to have a little pleasure in dancing. We will promise you to do more work every year and we will promise you not to eat dogs what we use to do some time ago and we wont dance naked and we dont give our things.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Chief Masqua's appeal for a celebration of a Tea Dance by the Muscowpetung, Piapot, and Pasqua reserves contained the argument that their dance was ". . .more like an afternoon tea among the whites. . . ."33

Some petitioners compared the religious worship at the Thirst Dance with Christian forms of church worship.<sup>34</sup> Others contrasted their ceremony with other Native groups. For instance, in 1911, Little Bird and the Wandering Crees hoped to present their version of the Thirst Dance in a more favourable light by pointing out that it contained less objectionable features than the Blackfoot variation:

. . .our sun dance lasts only from three to four days, no whiskey, or making ourselves poor, the Blackfeet will gathered together in camps for weeks before they put up their real sundance, and their sundance is something more like a big show, dancing inside and play wars, and on our side, we pray for four days, not a gun discharge, or play a war, as. . .soon as the fourth evening we all quit and leave the place.<sup>35</sup>

The department refused to give their approval on the grounds that it was unable to predict ". . .what features or practices may be introduced at such a dance"; however, a "thanksgiving dance" was not considered to be inappropriate.<sup>36</sup>

## Compromise and Adaptation in Ceremonial Life

The adaptation of ceremonial practices to religious repression was also used as a strategy to preserve cultural integrity. In addition to altering ceremonial time, space, and content, new modes of religious expression were introduced. These adaptations will be discussed with specific reference to the Thirst Dance, Giveaways, and other indigenous ceremonies for which there is documentation.

The abandonment of public forms of self-mortification was recorded by many agents in their reports to their superiors. It is difficult to assess the validity of this observation due to the disruption of ceremonies in progress caused by agents who appeared on the scene and the practice of more covert forms of self-mortification. One observer reported that after the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885, the Plains Cree held their dance in a ". . . place where the unsympathetic eye of authority will not be offended," and that "self-torture" was dropped ". . . out of deference to the white man's more delicate susceptibilities."<sup>37</sup>

Willingness to forego this ritual and other "objectionable features" was expressed by several ritual leaders. In 1896, when Agent J. Markle pressured Astakasic of the Waywayseecappo Reserve to order home Thirst Dance celebrants from the Crooked Lake, Valley River, and Rolling River reserves, Astakasic indicated that a shorter version of the dance might be held without giveaways, "tortures," or fasting.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, the Sakimay Band agreed to perform their Thirst Dance under the conditions that no self-mortification would occur, no invitations would be sent to other agencies, and that the ceremony would

be limited to two days.<sup>39</sup> In 1898, She-sheep of the Crooked Lakes Agency appealed for permission to hold a Thirst Dance with the promise to delete all objectionable features. The agent refused to allow the dance and She-sheep was obliged to perform an alternative ceremony.<sup>40</sup> The last reported instance of self-mortification took place on Piapot's reserve in 1899 and resulted in the leader's arrest, imprisonment, and deposition as a chief. Because the ritual of self-mortification was considered to be the major reason for the celebration of the Thirst Dance, the government and the churches were unwavering in their opposition. As Agent Magnus Begg of the Blackfoot Agency explained in 1895, the Thirst or Sun Dance had been reduced to "a mere religious ceremony" since self-mortification was no longer practiced.<sup>41</sup> None of the Indian petitions in the department's files contained appeals for permission to practice this ritual and therefore, it is difficult to determine the impact of its repression in Plains Cree ceremonial life.

In response to attacks on the Thirst Dance as a waste of agricultural time and personal resources, the ceremony was shortened on some Plains Cree reserves. Thus, the actual performance of the four day celebration was reduced to two or two and a half days. Once an inter-band and inter-tribal ceremonial, the Thirst Dance was now more localized in terms of year-to-year performance as well as attendance. These changes were largely determined by the intensity of the implementation of the pass system and trespass regulation. Many endeavoured to circumvent these restrictions by persisting in socializing and worshipping with their relatives despite the risk of being turned back to their homes or being forced to pay a fine that few

could afford.

In addition to performing Thirst Dances according to the terms of Section 114, participants also offered to abandon other "objectionable" rituals. For example, in 1909, the White Bear, Pheasant Rump, and Strip Blanket bands agreed to refrain from the ritual consumption of dog meat, dancing "naked," and giving away goods.<sup>42</sup> Similar petitions were received from the Pasqua Band (1911), Little Bird and the Wandering Crees (1911), and Blue Quill's Band in Alberta (1913).

The role of the Thirst Dance and other ceremonies as mechanisms for transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to another, was also undermined by efforts on the part of the department and the churches to prevent the attendance of school children. The importance of the destruction of this ceremonial function to the success of assimilation programs is evident in a petition forwarded to Bishop Legal by Father H. Grandin and eight other signatories in 1908:

It is also in these gatherings that the sorcerers make long harangues by which almost invariably they excite the young people to hatred of white people in general and of government in particular. . . . And it is thus that the children are brought up on this hatred, which sets them at defiance not only in regard to the missionary but also in respect to the employees of the Indian Department every time that the latter wish to take some protective or progressive measure.<sup>43</sup>

Although school children could be kept from ceremonies while they were in off-reserve residential and industrial schools, there was little that could be done to prohibit their attendance once they were home.

Furthermore, parents persisted in taking their pre-school children to the Thirst Dance, and those children who were returned to their homes due to serious illness were themselves the reasons for both parents and

relatives performing vowed ceremonies.<sup>44</sup>

The ability of the Plains Cree and neighbouring groups to continue to celebrate the Thirst Dance varied according to the proximity of the reserve to White communities and the degree of suppression applied by department personnel and missionaries. Ceremonial life in those communities subjected to more intense surveillance was often disrupted and participants were personally traumatized by the on-site interference of the agents and the police. There is only one documented instance where the Thirst Dance was substituted by an alternative ceremony because of repression. In 1898, She-sheep of the Crooked Lakes Agency performed a one-night Smoke Dance when he was prevented from holding a Thirst Dance. This ceremony was performed on a Sunday evening in order not to interrupt the work week and was restricted in attendance to on-reserve members.<sup>45</sup>

The alteration of Giveaway ceremonies during this period is more difficult to assess. Agency reports indicate that they occurred, however, it is also apparent that many occasions for Giveaways were simply not detected. While Giveaways occurred at the Thirst Dances, these ritual exchanges of goods were also part of most ceremonial and social gatherings. Many of these were held during the winter months in traditional dance lodges, in Euro-Canadian types of recreational "dance halls," or in the privacy of homes where they escaped the notice of officials. Giveaways also varied in terms of size and the amount of goods distributed; some were small localized affairs and might only involve the distribution of tobacco and food, while others such as those given at the Blood Sun Dance of 1913 included the exchange of 300 head

of horses over a six week period.<sup>46</sup>

As in the case of the Thirst Dance, there was some indication that communities would consider the concept of "regulated" forms of dancing. This concept was introduced by both the Indians and certain Indian agents. In 1914, Agent W. Dilworth of the Blood Agency informed his superiors the Sun Dance would not interfere with work if it was held during the last two weeks of June (between the end of farm work and prior to roundup).<sup>47</sup> This solution and similar proposals by other agents were rejected by the department. Some bands also proposed self-imposed alterations in ceremonial patterns. The Pasqua Band submitted a list of proposed regulations that they were willing to consider in exchange for permission to perform their dances.<sup>48</sup> The frequency of dancing was to be greatly reduced and timed according to the labour requirements of the agricultural cycle, with dancing scheduled to commence after threshing and held once a month until spring. Another dance would be performed between seeding and breaking, with a second being held prior to treaty payments (to ensure that treaty money would not be spent on dancing). The duration of the ceremonies was limited to 1:00 a.m. and while necessary "refreshments" were to be provided, no feasting would occur. The band also agreed to exclude school children, "Half-Breeds," and Whites from the dances with the younger children only being permitted to attend the "outdoor" summer celebrations (as opposed to the winter indoor dancing in crowded buildings). It was further proposed that an officer from the department might attend the dance in a supervisory capacity. Other provisions included the prohibition of liquor consumption and the use of facial or

body paints, and, an agreement to refrain from performing dances off the reserve at fairs or in towns. While J. D. McLean responded by agreeing that the Pasqua Band would not be contravening any law if they danced according to these conditions, he nonetheless urged the agent to discourage all dancing which was a "waste of time and energy."<sup>49</sup> As demonstrated in this 1911 petition, some bands were seriously addressing White prejudices against their religious practices and were working towards negotiating a compromise.

To what extent ceremonies were replaced or combined with more secular forms of social activities is difficult to assess from the reports submitted by field personnel. The nature of the Thanksgiving Promenades (Assiniboine) or the Plains Cree Tea Dance still need exploration. Anthropologist David Mandelbaum reported that the Tea Dance (Kickwepehtawin) was popular among the Plains Cree in the early quarter of the twentieth century. It involved dancing and the consumption of strong tea to which were added berries and, sometimes, plug tobacco.<sup>50</sup> What did become evident, however, was that White-sponsored stampedes, fairs, agricultural exhibitions and department-approved Sports and Treaty Days provided community members with opportunities to socialize and perhaps participate in a variety of ceremonies. Indian dances and other forms of traditional behaviour were encouraged through the willingness of non-Indians to pay to see these performances.

This type of White support for traditional practices evolved from a salacious interest in the "primitive." Local show organizers capitalized on this curiosity by sponsoring reserve members to perform



at these events. As early as 1891, Hayter Reed wrote to Reverend John Tims that "one of our greatest difficulties. . . is the countenancing of these dances by white people, who, not only by their presence, but in other ways encouraged them."<sup>51</sup> In his progress report of 1896, Commissioner A. Forget concurred as indicated in his list of impediments to religious suppression:

. . . I might draw attention to one of the most serious encountered in our efforts to secure the final abandonment of heathen rites and ceremonies by the Indians. I refer to the encouragement given to Indians on reserves adjacent to towns and settlements by that element of the white population which is ever ready to assist in the creation or maintenance of anything which panders to an appetite for the sensational and novel and to whom the resultant effect on the actors therein is a matter of perfect indifference. So long as such "shows" are patronized and supported by the gate-money of this class of whites, so long will the difficulty of securing a total abandonment of such continue, and no better service could be rendered in the interests of our wards by the press of the country than by a forcible direction of the attention of the general public to this matter.<sup>52</sup>

Two years later, the Pelly Agency Indians had not only received permission from the agent to have a Thirst Dance, but ". . . the white people at Yorkton had asked 'Panepkesic' to hold a Sundance there on the 1st. July when they are holding sports."<sup>53</sup> Although not substantiated, at least some 2,000 Indians were expected to gather at Yorkton. Clearly, with the growth of White towns around reserves, this participation increased and the "grand Indian Pow-wow" became a major event.

For Indian participants, the performances of "traditional" dances at White public events had other rewards other than the opportunity to congregate and socialize. Economic returns came in the form of cash

payment and prizes for winners in horse races or rodeo events and successful contestants in "best traditional dress" competitions. Rations were also provided to participants. Following his trip to a number of reserves to examine the progress of ex-pupils, Father Hugonard reported in 1913 that dancing at fairs and celebrations had increased on all reserves with the exception of File Hills and Oak Lake. That commercialization of indigenous performances was becoming entrenched was revealed in the coloured poster advertisements of the 1913 Indian celebrations at Moose Mountain and the Assiniboine Reserves. The latter had some 3,000 in attendance at the three-day event. The Calgary and Winnipeg stampedes were also great attractions for Indian participants.

For administrators and missionaries such as Father Hugonard, the enthusiastic Native response to White-sponsored events was intolerable:

. . .morals are decreasing, farming neglected or abandoned and the making of dancing adornments are the order of the day, ex-pupils deeming it a pleasure to devote their time to the making of new and better dance costumes and to the painting of their faces in some new way for every new dance and are proud of what they accomplish, and how can this be otherwise when other Indians are seen indulging in the practice encouraged by Indian Department Officials who invite Indians to attend Celebrations, Fairs and Stampedes.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, for Indian participants, such occasions offered evidence that there was some White support for their indigenous practices--one which could also be a source of capital. Because of the material rewards and the opportunity provided by these events to congregate, share, and act as "Indians," some incorporated the "fair circuit" into their economic and ceremonial seasonal cycle.

The only publicly documented empathetic voice on the issue belonged

to the Methodist minister, Reverend John McDougall, whose position on Indian religious practices clearly deviated from that of his counterparts. The development of a conflict between the department and the Alberta Provincial Indian Commission of the Methodist Church over Indian participation in the Dominion Exhibition of 1908 provided McDougall with an opportunity to express his views.<sup>55</sup> Although he was not supportive of the ritual of self-mortification, McDougall contended that Section 114 of the Indian Act and the methods used to suppress Indian religions seriously challenged the principle of religious freedom:

. . . these Indians of the old faith have as much right to join in the sun dance, or the thirst dance, as a Methodist has to join a camp meeting. We fought hard for the privilege of civil and religious liberty, and the Indian is just as much entitled to religious freedom as the white man. . .

So far as the sun dances and the thirst dances of the Indians is concerned, my opinion is that the Indians should not be allowed to mutilate themselves, but if the Indians who cling to the old faith wish to continue these observances, they must be allowed to do so and there is no harm in them.<sup>56</sup>

As is evident from an internal department memorandum which responded to a request by McDougall for permission to allow the Peace Hills Agency to hold an Indian "Camp-Meeting," such a view did not receive official support. In this instance, the department refused to grant permission for the gathering despite the fact that no objectionable features would be involved. In the first place, it was felt that such a request would contradict an "informal" policy of discouraging all dancing; secondly, there was the fear that a positive answer would encourage a ceremonial revival; and finally, the department argued that it was unable to discern parallels between Christian camp meetings ". . . founded on

Christian doctrine, for worship, fellowship and mutual improvement, and the original Thirst meeting which was a pagan festival for the purpose of invoking some supernatural power to send rain."<sup>57</sup>

In summary, during the period 1895 to 1914, Indians in the prairie region responded to the prohibition of their ceremonies in a number of ways. Representations were made through written petitions, delegations, legal consultation, and at least one formal judicial test case. The legislation contained in the Indian Act and departmental regulations were challenged on the grounds that religious suppression was an abrogation of treaty rights. When these official avenues for change failed to produce results, solutions to repression were initiated on indigenous terms, that is, in the modification of ceremonial behaviour. While some practices were abandoned or performed covertly, others were altered, officially supervised, and even secularized and commercialized.

Although government officials continued to refuse to consider the deletion of Section 114 or other departmental directives intended to undermine ceremonies, the general feeling was that these regulations alone would not suffice to eradicate indigenous ideologies. Rather, Christian missions and the Christian western school system were viewed as the most effective mechanisms for cultural transformation. It was agreed, however, that the official discouragement of all dancing could contribute to this process by undermining the power of the traditionalist leaders in their efforts to retain their freedom to worship and by discouraging school children and their parents from participating in indigenous forms of worship and associated economic practices (Giveaways).

The strength of the Indian religion in comparison to the attraction of Christianity had been clearly underrated by both the government and missionaries. In 1896, the agent for the Assiniboine-Crooked Lakes Agency communicated this fact to his superiors:

The Indians manifest considerable interest in religion, including their own pagan rites, which seem to culminate in a sun dance. There is anything but indifference to religion. The old pagan Indian is very conservative about the sun dance, and takes it very hard that it is made illegal to hold them, and great firmness will be necessary to suppress the barbarous institution. The Christian religion does not seem to progress as quickly as one would suppose, taking into consideration the amount of persuasion employed by the different denominations at work, as in this agency. Of course the schools will show a powerful influence in the future, but paganism is dying hard.<sup>58</sup>

Successful resistance to religious repression prompted Agent S. Swinford of the Assiniboia-Touchwood Hills Agency to comment in 1900 that the passing of indigenous belief systems could only be achieved by educating the younger generation. While many of the elderly and middle-aged held on to their beliefs, their children, he felt would ". . .in all probability incline towards Christianity, and. . .will not know anything about their grandparents' beliefs."<sup>59</sup> In Saskatchewan, evidence of persistence was obvious from both petitions and reports submitted by agents in Assiniboia-Touchwood, Battleford, Onion Lake, Qu'Appelle, Thunderchild, and the Crooked Lakes Agency.

The wording of the regulations in Section 114 allowed for an accommodation to the law without a total destruction of the ceremonies themselves. That is, while all ceremonies were subject to disapproval, the Thirst Dances themselves and other ceremonials, with the exception of the Giveaway, were never specifically mentioned in the legislation as

offences. Furthermore, the fact that the regulations were not uniformly implemented from one area to another significantly undermined their effect and the credibility of the government's intentions. In particular, Manitoba and Saskatchewan petitioners were able to use these cases of inconsistencies in enforcement to their political advantage, as is evident in their references to what they viewed as differential treatment in Alberta where people were holding their Sun Dances.<sup>60</sup> The impact of the department's policy of "moderation in implementation" was apparent from one agent's experiences with Ojibway Sun Dancers at Turtle Lake in 1908. In correspondence with his superiors, he stated:

. . .the principal man who tried to get up the Dance then produced a letter from one of the Hobbema Indians saying that at that agency the Department had given permission to the Indians to hold a Sun Dance and that they did not see why they were allowed to dance at one Agency, and forbidden to do so in another; this view was also taken by several Newspapers, which reported that the Wetaskiwin Sun Dance was held by special permission from the Department: this of course put me in an awkward position.<sup>61</sup>

The combination of inadequate legislation, inconsistent implementation, and local accommodation to these factors by reserve populations resulted in a reassessment of Section 114 in 1914.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

- <sup>1</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2. Citation from petition submitted by Thunderchild and Fineday in Assistant Indian Commissioner Stewart to J. Day, 4 July, 1907, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup>Tobias, "Treaty Rights Movement", p. 247.
- <sup>3</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Assistant Indian Commissioner Stewart to J. Day, 4 July, 1907, p. 1.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., Joe Ma-ma-gway-see to Secretary, 19 Sept. 1908, pp. 1-3.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, Chief Thunderchild to Department of Indian Affairs, 4 June, 1914 (received), p. 1.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., J. Rowland to J. D. McLean, 10 June, 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>9</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Memorandum, James Campbell to Secretary, 22 Jan., 1909, p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., W. Grant to Secretary, 2 July, 1906, p. 1.
- <sup>12</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. Wright to the Indian Commissioner, 21 June, 1898, p. 1.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., J. A. Mitchell, "Extract from Report of the Muscowpetung Agency, December 1900", p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., Assistant Indian Commissioner J. McKenna to Secretary, 4 Nov., 1903, p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Petition, Assiniboine Reserve to Honourable Frank Oliver, 1906, p. 2.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., W. S. Grant to Secretary, 2 July, 1906, p. 1.
- <sup>18</sup>Tobias, "Treaty Rights Movement", p. 247.
- <sup>19</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Alex Gaddie to David Laird, 1 May, 1911, p. 1.

- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., Reverend Father Hugonard to Frank Oliver, 28 April, 1911, p. 1. Oliver was the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs at the time.
- <sup>21</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Assistant Indian Commissioner to Secretary, 15 June, 1903, p. 1.
- <sup>22</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. D. McLean to Indian Commissioner, 5 Jan., 1903, p. 1.
- <sup>23</sup>Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Native 'Rites'", p. 177.
- <sup>24</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, L. Thompson to Honourable Frank Oliver, 19 March, 1906, p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. Markle to Indian Commissioner, 13 June, 1896, p. 1.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., G. H. Wheatley to Indian Commissioner, 31 May, 1897, p. 1.
- <sup>27</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511, A. E. Forget to G. H. Wheatley, 3 June, 1897, p. 1.
- <sup>28</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. A. Mitchell, "Extract from Report of the Muscowpetung's Agency, December, 1900", p. 1.
- <sup>29</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part I, J. A. Markle, "Extract from a Report on the Crowfoot Boarding School", 14 Feb., 1916, p. 1.
- <sup>30</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, L. Thompson to Honourable Frank Oliver, 19 March, 1906, p. 1.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., Petitioners, Assiniboine Agency to Honourable Frank Oliver, 1906, p. 2.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., T. Cory to Secretary, 13 March, 1909, p. 1.
- <sup>33</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Glen Campbell to Department, 30 March, 1912, p. 1.
- <sup>34</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Joe Ma-Ma-Gway-See to Secretary, 19 Sept., 1908, p. 1.
- <sup>35</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Little Bird and the Wandering Crees to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 10 March, 1911, p. 1. Approximately fifty people wanted to celebrate the Thirst Dance.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., D. McLean to Superintendent General, 17 March, 1911, p. 1.
- <sup>37</sup>Jefferson, Fifty Years, pp. 40 and 83.



- <sup>38</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. Markle to Indian Commissioner, 13 June, 1896, p. 1.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., A. MacDonald to Indian Commissioner, 15 June, 1896, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., J. Wright to Indian Commissioner, 21 June, 1898, p. 1.
- <sup>41</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1896, p. 137, Magnus Begg to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 17 Aug., 1895.
- <sup>42</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Wasichunashi, Jimmy Shepherd to Indian Department, 3 Feb., 1909 (received), p. 1.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., Father H. Grandin and eighteen petitioners to Bishop Legal of St. Albert, 9 July, 1908, p. 1.
- <sup>44</sup>Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School", p. 195.
- <sup>45</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. Wright to Indian Commissioner, 21 June, 1898, p. 1. She-sheep stated that he had ". . . eight sacrifices given to him which he will offer up at a Smoke Dance which only takes part of one night. . . ." She-sheep also asked the agent for provisions of meat and tea and these were supplied.
- <sup>46</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, W. Dilworth to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 7 Jan., 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., W. Dilworth to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 10 March, 1914, p. 1.
- <sup>48</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, H. Nichol to Secretary, 16 Feb., 1911, p. 1.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., J. D. McLean to H. Nichol, 21 Feb., 1911, p. 1.
- <sup>50</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 219.
- <sup>51</sup>GA, A.T586A, 3469, Archdeacon John William Tims Papers, 1872-1953, Hayter Reed to Reverend J. W. Tims, 21 April, 1891.
- <sup>52</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1897, pp. 287-302, Report of the Indian Commissioner, Regina, A. Forget to the Honourable Superintendent General, 22 Sept., 1896.
- <sup>53</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1, J. Wright to Indian Commissioner, 21 June, 1898, p. 1.
- <sup>54</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Father G. Hugonard to Secretary, 20 Nov., 1913, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>55</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, David Laird to Secretary, 23 June, 1908, pp. 1-2. McDougall had been organizing Indians to

participate in the Calgary exhibition without the express permission of the agent or the department. See also PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Winnipeg Free Press, 19 Oct., 1908.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., McDougall cited in Winnipeg Free Press, 19 Oct., 1908.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., James Campbell to Deputy Superintendent General, 29 May, 1906, pp. 1-2.

<sup>58</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1896, p. 166, A. MacDonald to Superintendent General, 20, July, 1896.

<sup>59</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 14, 1900, p. 183, S. Swinford, Annual Report, Assiniboia-Touchwood Hills Agency, 20 July, 1899.

<sup>60</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, J. P. Day to Indian Commissioner, 4 July, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER VIII

## A MATTER OF FARMING OR DANCING:

## ADOPTING MORE APPROPRIATE MEASURES OF DISCIPLINE, 1914-1951

By 1914, the cultural transformation of prairie Indian societies through legislated and informal methods of ceremonial repression had not proved to be as successful as anticipated by the department and missionaries. In addition to problems associated with weak legislation and inconsistent implementation, the department was also confronted with unexpected forms of opposition and accommodation to their efforts to suppress ceremonial life. Of equal significance was the fact that indigenous religious expression and ideology were simultaneously undergoing a number of internally-initiated changes in response to the realities of the economic, political and social conditions extant on reserves. Still another important development was the popularization of certain features of Indian cultures by non-Natives through their sponsorship of Native events at agricultural fairs, stampedes, and "Wild West" shows. Considered to be as equally destructive as Thirst Dances, these social diversions were opposed on the grounds that they enticed Indians away from their farms and destroyed ". . .the civilizing influence of the education imparted to Indian children at the schools."<sup>1</sup>

With the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, economic considerations were foremost in the minds of government officials. Agricultural lands for newly-arrived immigrants were becoming scarce and unfarmed portions of Indian reserves were coveted for future agricultural development. This factor, combined with the

reduction of government expenditures on Indian economic programs, placed even greater pressure on the department's administrators to foster a viable level of Indian economic self-sufficiency based upon the model of the individually-owned family farm. All "surplus" communally-held reserve lands were then to be reallocated to White farmers.

These developments were also symptomatic of the increasing importance of agricultural products to Canada's world market export economy. The rationalization of labour and land resources to meet these new demands, however, was to be achieved at the expense of indigenous economies. It was within this historical context of western agricultural development that the department reconsidered the efficacy of its measures to undermine ceremonial life and specifically, the more traditional features of the political economies of prairie Indians.

#### Defining the "Reasonable" Limits of Dancing: Old and New Patterns

While the department insisted that it did not intend to deprive Indians of ". . .such harmless sports and celebrations as are indulged in by their white brethern [sic],"<sup>2</sup> any traditional activities which would ". . .seriously demoralize farming operations. . ." or were judged to be a "moral and physical detriment" were to be formally discouraged.<sup>3</sup> Thus, administrators continued to exercise flexibility in policy implementation solely from the perspective of Western Christian values. The view that dancing caused personal physical deterioration and mental instability was expressed by the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Frank Pedley, to the agent at Carlyle, Saskatchewan in 1909:

. . .dancing tends to waste their substance, to produce a dissipated and frivolous habit of mind and

condition of body which are inimical to work and habits of self-reliance, and tends particularly by the spread of tubercular infection to destroy their health.<sup>4</sup>

Similar opinions were also expressed by Christian Indians who, at times, petitioned the department to take action against the performance of traditional ceremonies. One petition was written by a Plains Cree from the Piapot Reserve to the commissioner in 1914. His description of Saturday dancing on the reserve which had been occurring over a three-year period assuredly confirmed the administrator's suspicions of the detrimental effects of these practices:

. . . a meal is given and invariably a barrel of apples distributed--I have been dancing myself for 16 years and attended 24 Sundances and know all the harm the dances do. The Indians dancing neglect their work, do not farm or very little use the little money they have to buy beaded suits for the dances for themselves, wives and children to buy foodstuff or apples for the dances. The ex-pupils cannot resist the temptation and fall in with other Indians for the dancing; their clean suits soon give up and are replaced by neglected and even raggy clothes, as soon as they have money they buy dancing outfit and apples to give at Dance. Even when pupils come home for vacation, they put on the dancing suit which has been kept for them by parents--the worst of parents keep their children at home several years before sending them to school in order to enjoy seeing them dancing, covered with beads from the age of three or even less--some Indians went this summer to a Sun Dance at Eagle Hills near Battleford and came back eager for dances.

Indians from neighbouring reserves come to dances every Saturday, and presents are made to visitors coming for dance.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to discouraging indigenous ceremonies on the reserves, the department was also committed to controlling the participation of Indians in White-sponsored events. As early as 1902, Agent Wheatley from the Birtle Agency in Manitoba had suggested that all dancing be

prohibited; and by 1908, the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Frank Pedley, had attempted to terminate government grants to those agricultural societies that encouraged Indian cultural exhibitions.<sup>6</sup> A description of a pageant published by a Calgary newspaper illustrates the exotic appeal which these exhibitions held for White communities and the degree of Indian involvement:

The show par excellence was the Indians, fully 600 strong, attired in the gaudy trappings of their choice, in war bonnets, buckskin, war paint, scalps and armed with every kind of weapon, from knife, tomahawk and muzzle-loader, to the modern repeater and revolver. . . . There were Stonies, Crees, Blackfeet, Sarcee, Peigans and Bloods and all painted from their heels to their heads. . . . The war parties were fearfully wonderfully and truly made; some were nearly naked.<sup>7</sup>

Departmental field reports claimed that participation in these events impeded Indian agricultural productivity, promoted the "regression" of school children, and provided opportunities for Indians to surreptitiously perform their "dancing." Moreover, there was the concern that the local White demand for cultural exhibitions would be interpreted by Indian participants as a source of support in their struggle for cultural persistence. Such public gatherings were also condemned because they increased Indian contact with the more unsavoury elements of frontier White society, especially liquor traders.<sup>8</sup>

Foremost in the minds of administrators and churchmen, was the connection between these public shows and the revival of ceremonies. Father Hugonard's correspondence over the years with Commissioner Graham contained several references to this correlation of events. For example, upon their return from the 1913 Winnipeg Stampede, Qu'Appelle Agency Indians informed Hugonard that they were "now authorized to

dance" and had even erected a new dance hall for the purpose.<sup>9</sup>

While these exhibitions were enjoyed by Indians for their value as social gatherings and entertainment, they had increasingly become important sources of provisions and cash. For instance, at the 1913 Winnipeg Stampede, prize money was awarded for the best decorated traditional outfits and to the winners of horse races. In order to attract the attendance Indian families from Alberta, who most ostentatiously represented public notions of the "less civilized Plains Indian," organizers offered to pay for transportation costs, food provisions, and \$25.00 per tent for up to twenty-five tents of families.<sup>10</sup>

Without legislated measures against Indian participation in these events, the department was forced to resort to "informal" means of control. Some agents threatened to withhold rations in order to confine people to their reserves for the duration of local fairs and stampedes. This tactic, however, was undermined by the alternative provisioning provided by exhibition organizers and a general reduction of the level of rationing by the department over the years. In 1908, one agent from the Blood Agency reported that his practice of curtailing rations to all those who travelled to fairs was ineffective since local organizers butchered six to eight steers for participating Indians in each town.<sup>11</sup> Such measures clearly obstructed departmental endeavours to counteract the attraction of exhibitions and stampedes. Moreover, the department's use of "informal" means of intervention on these occasions was seriously challenged during the 1913 Winnipeg Stampede when both organizers and Indian participants consulted lawyers on the legality of government

interference.<sup>12</sup>

By 1914, the department had decided any informal means of regulating dancing were impossible to implement on a consistent basis. Furthermore, the increasing attendance and participation of Indians at these events served as a continual embarrassment to Ottawa. The performance of ceremonial, and even more secular forms of dancing, had become public visual symbols of the Canadian government's failure to assimilate its Indian population. A comment offered by Assistant Indian Commissioner, J. McKenna regarding the Dominion Exhibition in Calgary in 1908 revealed this concern:

The Indians in war-paint and feathers will be pictured in English and American journals, whose readers will be given the impression that the aborigines still wander wild over the plains of Alberta. I would go so far as to suggest that if there is to be anything in the nature of an Indian exhibit or show at this Exhibition, measures should be taken to have the Indians that appear there representative of the working Indians, and clad as the ordinary people of the Country are; and that articles put on exhibition should be the product of their civilized industry.<sup>13</sup>

An inquiry was conducted by the department in 1914 in order to determine the impact of exhibition attendance on agricultural productivity and morality, and to explore possible solutions to the growing popularity of these events among reserve populations. Opinions from departmental employees were solicited and briefs were presented by a number of organizations including the Alberta Conference of the Methodist Church and the Board of Control of the Dry Farming Congress.<sup>14</sup> A summary statement of opinions reflected in these representations was used to justify the drafting of a bill to amend the Indian Act:

The preparation for and engagement in these



celebrations takes many days and in some instances weeks of the Indians' time at a season of the year which should be spent in sowing or reaping their crops. The inspectors and Agents have reported that owing to the pressure brought to bear by advance agents of stampedes and exhibitions the working Indians of the Reserves are becoming unsettled and the tendency is to neglect their stock and farms. These celebrations cannot but have a demoralizing effect upon the Indians who take part in them exposing them to temptation arising during the excitement of celebrations. It is not the intention of the Department absolutely to prohibit any Indians from taking part in these celebrations but only to authorize the attendance of those whose interests will not suffer.<sup>15</sup>

During the inquiry, the Thirst (Sun) Dances and other indigenous ceremonies were condemned for identical reasons. In addition, the dissemination of tuberculosis and other diseases was attributed to poorly-ventilated and over-crowded dance lodges and halls.<sup>16</sup> The department repeatedly insisted that it had no intention of preventing visits and that its only concern was for the regulation of their frequency. The justification for continued regulation was based on the still prevalent notion that Indians were unable to moderate their social behaviour. It was felt that since the Indians were incapable of using good judgment in determining their "own best interests" or preventing their "festivities" from deteriorating into "mere debauches," the department must continue to play an active role in not only protecting Indians from unscrupulous Whites, but most importantly, from themselves.<sup>17</sup> The informal policy of regulating all off-reserve dancing was reinforced with prohibitive legislative measures through an amendment to Section 149. The participation of Indians in indigenous forms of activities at White-sponsored events without the prior approval of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs or his representative,

was also forbidden.

2. Any Indian in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, or the Territories who participates in any Indian dance outside the bounds of his own reserve, or who participates in any show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant in aboriginal costume without the consent of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs or his authorized Agent, and any person who induces or employs any Indian to take part in such dance, show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant, or induces any Indian to leave his reserve or employs any Indian for such a purpose, whether the dance, show, exhibition, stampede or pageant has taken place or not, shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty-five dollars, or to imprisonment for one month, or to both penalty and imprisonment.<sup>18</sup>

Departmental employees and churchmen welcomed the amendment as a positive step towards curtailing "uncivilized" and unproductive behaviour. Some, however, argued that the government had not adequately dealt with the problem, contending that even a three-day celebration at Treaty time on reserves resulted in a loss of a whole week's work. Therefore, on-reserve dancing remained an unresolved and contentious issue. The agent's only path of action in this regard was the use of the "power of persuasion" to regulate on-reserve dances or, to encourage their replacement with Sports Days at Treaty time.

An unexpected negative reaction to the amendment came from a government branch within the ministry of the interior--the Anthropological Division of the Department of Mines. Since its inception in 1842, the Geological Survey of Canada had included descriptions of Indian cultures in its scientific reports (for example, the reports of George Dawson, Henry Youle Hind, Robert Bell, and Joseph Tyrell). A number of archaeological and ethnological objects had also

been collected and were housed, along with natural history specimens, in the Geological Survey of Canada's museum in Ottawa. Under the act of 1907, the Department of Mines was established and the Survey, as part of this department, was assigned a broader mandate including the responsibility for ethnological investigation. One of the major reasons for this change was the realization that most ethnological investigations in Canada had been conducted by American institutions and that "opportunities" for scientifically-conducted research would soon disappear as Indians and their traditional culture vanished in the face of settlement, development, and the influence of "civilization."<sup>19</sup> There was also a concern that both cultural information and objects would be needed for the development of an ethnological exhibit wing in the new Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa (1910). In 1909, further pressure had been placed upon the federal government to conduct ethnological studies and to centralize the information and collections in a national repository by the Royal Society of Canada, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Canadian Branch of the Archaeological Institute of America.<sup>20</sup> By 1910, the Anthropological Division had been formed under the headship of Dr. Edward Sapir and by 1914, at least six field workers had been hired to collect cultural information among Canadian Indians.

The Anthropological Division, which at the time was under the same minister as the Department of Indian Affairs, contended that the amendment to Section 149 would interfere with their scientific investigations. The Deputy Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, Reginald W. Brock, stated that he would not formally contest the

amendment provided that ethnological studies of Indian religious practices were not obstructed. He agreed to give his support to the department on the condition that the ethnology staff could ". . . employ an Indian or Indians in a private performance of Indian rites or ceremonies for the purpose of securing such information."<sup>21</sup> Although the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Scott, assured Brock that the legislation would not impede scientific investigations, Brock remained unconvinced. In correspondence with the department, Brock argued that information regarding ceremonial practices was difficult to obtain "under the best of circumstances," and that ". . . a suggestion that it was illegal. . . might absolutely stop the work."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Brock proposed that a provision for research in the Indian Act itself might be considered in order to facilitate scientific studies. He suggested that such a provision would ". . . have a tendency to exalt it [research] in the eyes of natives. . . ." <sup>23</sup> Brock's concern for scientific access to Plains ceremonial life did not imply that ethnologists were prepared to become politically involved in opposing the amendment to Section 149 as a breach of religious freedom. Ultimately, no special provisions were made to accommodate the work of the Anthropology Division as Scott decided that field investigations could still proceed in those instances where ceremonies were being performed according to the letter of the law.

Once the amendment became law, the department issued a circular to agents on June 17, 1914 for a public reading on all reserves. The reaction of Indian communities was unexpected for this amendment was interpreted as an end to the department's "informal" policy of

prohibiting all dances. Indian traditionalists read into the wording of the circular an official assent for the performance of ceremonies and dancing within the boundaries of their respective reserves, provided that "objectionable" features were eliminated. Ironically, the amendment which was designed to increase the power of agents, only further eroded their authority in the eyes of the Indians.

William Graham, Inspector of the South Saskatchewan Inspectorate, vented his frustration at this turn of events in correspondence with Ottawa. The wording of the amendments to Section 149 had made the situation worse than ever, he claimed, since Indians now believed that they finally had ". . . the sympathy of the officials higher up on this dance question and are continually bringing it up."<sup>24</sup> Graham claimed that the circular should not have been read without informing people that in principle, the department remained opposed to all dancing and he continued to attribute the revival of on-reserve dancing to the lack of forceful implementation of his field directives by agents. For Graham, the new amendment was ". . . sufficient to cut loose any strings that we had to partially control the dancing up to that time."<sup>25</sup>

In 1915, agency reports confirmed the revival of dancing on reserves. Missionaries from the Qu'Appelle Agency observed that nearly all of the ex-pupils on the Piapot and Muscowpetung reserves had "retrogressed" to their old customs of ". . . painting their faces, tying false hair on their head. . . ," and that ". . . farming and other work has all gone to pieces."<sup>26</sup> Such reports were alarming to the department and steps were taken to ensure that agents were informed of the continuance of the policy to suppress all dancing. In response to

Graham's critique of Section 149, the Assistant Deputy and Secretary of the department assured him that this section did not authorize Indians to participate in celebrations as outlined sub-section 2 without first reporting to the department. Graham was also informed that while the department would support the suppression of dancing activities which either had a "demoralizing effect" or distracted Indian farmers from their work, it did not intend to prohibit "simple dances" held on home reserves.<sup>27</sup> In 1915, a second circular clarifying the department's official stand on ceremonial practices was issued to agents. It was apparent from this directive that the policy of "persuasion" was still considered viable as agents were instructed to use their ". . . utmost endeavour to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing" and to only allow forms of "reasonable amusement and recreation."<sup>28</sup>

Immediately after the amendment came into effect, a number of arrests were made. These "manifestations of the strong arm of the law" were most evident in the Saskatchewan prairie region and were intended to serve as cautionary warnings to those who intended to defy the law.<sup>29</sup> Among those who would serve as examples to other recalcitrants were several Saskatchewan religious leaders, including the elderly headman Fineday. Further arrests were made in June, 1915, when some 2,000 Indians (predominantly Cree) had gathered at Whitefish Lake to celebrate a Thirst Dance sponsored by Charles Tott as a thanksgiving for the recovery of his ill child. Chief Joseph Kenemotayo (Band II 8) was apprehended for "permitting" the dance to be held; Charles Tott (Band 101) for leaving his home reserve at Sturgeon Lake to organize the

dance; and Seeahpwassum Kenemotayo (Band II 8) for leaving his home reserve without permission.<sup>30</sup> Because celebrants were present from the Mistawasis Reserve at Tott's invitation, the police were able to charge these men with sponsoring an off-reserve ceremony. At the trial that was heard before the Indian agent, all three pleaded guilty and requested leniency in sentencing. Charles Tott was sentenced to thirty days imprisonment to be served at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and the other two men were fined five dollars and two dollars and fifty cents and costs to be paid at Treaty time.

In the same year, more convictions occurred. A Thirst Dance held on the Little Pine Reserve was attended by members of the Sweetgrass Reserve including the Chief, Fineday. As at Whitefish Lake, the presence of off-reserve celebrants provided the agent and the Battleford police with the pretext to make a number of arrests. Of the twelve who were apprehended, six were convicted, including Fineday, who had hired a lawyer to defend his attendance at a ceremony off his home reserve. Notably, in this particular case, the agent also felt obliged to hire a lawyer to represent the department for as he explained ". . . I was fighting a losing battle, and the Indian Act was not explicit enough on certain points. . . ." <sup>31</sup>

A number of other reserves had similar experiences and many ceremonies were interrupted, including those performed on the following reserves: Alexander,<sup>32</sup> Buffalo Point, Edmonton Agency reserves, Little Pine, Long Lake, Long Plain, Ochapowace, Onion Lake, Pelican Lake, Piapot, Poundmaker, Red Pheasant, Rocky Mountain House, Sakimay, Swan Lake, Thunderchild, and Whitefish Lake. In 1919, the police were asked

to investigate a Thirst Dance at Piapot and to monitor associated activities. They reported that no arrests were made since they did not detect any performance of "rites of the savage," (self-mortification).<sup>33</sup> Three years later, approximately 500 people were dispersed from a Thirst Dance being held at the Red Pheasant Reserve (at least two other reserves were represented). Participants were informed that they could not continue the ceremony and were persuaded by the chief to return to their homes. To further imprint the Department's disapproval of such gatherings, the constable in charge chopped down the sacred Thirst Dance pole.<sup>34</sup> This act of sacrilege was supported by the argument that ". . .Indians used to torture themselves in a barbarous manner at these sun dances, and there was always the possibility--albeit a remote one--that they might revert to the practice. . . ."35

The last recorded series of prosecutions connected with the performance of a Thirst Dance occurred in 1921, when leaders of a "Sun Dance" being held at Buffalo Point, Manitoba, were charged with engaging in the ritual of self-sacrifice through "piercing." During this particular ceremony, approximately ten men underwent the forbidden ritual as an offering for the return of their health after being stricken with a severe form of flu.<sup>36</sup> While some of the convicted were given a suspended sentence, the organizer of the dance, who had sponsored the ceremony to relieve the community of the epidemic, was sentenced to a prison term of two months.

The continued use of police surveillance and the pass system proved to be the most effective means for regulating ceremonial attendance. As Commissioner Graham noted, the very appearance of the police was usually



"sufficient" to warn the celebrants that they were disobeying the department's orders.<sup>37</sup> In cases where dancing was "legal," however, the commissioner could not depend upon any further action since his directive to discourage all dancing was not backed by legislation.<sup>38</sup> That the cooperation of the police would not be consistently or unquestioningly forthcoming in supporting the department's "informal" policy was evident in 1922 when police refused to interfere in the Blackfoot Sun Dance on the grounds that no offence was being committed against the provisions of the Indian Act.<sup>39</sup>

This reluctance by the local police detachments to act "beyond the law" and the accommodation on the part of Indian communities to the letter, if not the spirit, of the legislation against their ceremonies convinced Graham over the years that a moderate policy was unworkable. He believed that Indians would have to be forced to choose between cultural persistence or progress for as he informed his superiors, ". . .no amount of talking or moral suasion can stop them. . .we will either have to give up farming and (allow) the Indians to carry on their dance, or stop the dances and carry on the farming."<sup>40</sup> Other agents shared the commissioner's critical evaluation of the policy of moderation. In 1922, Agent G. Gooderham of the Blackfoot Agency referred to continued Indian participation in Sun Dances and the Calgary Stampede as a "serious" situation and recommended the use of every means of "legal" force ". . .to compel an able bodied Indian to do his work."<sup>41</sup>

The pass system was also proving to be equally ineffective as a deterrent against Indian movement. Graham pressed for greater scrutiny

of applicants before passes were issued arguing that people abused the system, particularly when making requests to visit relatives.

Invariably, the term "visiting" was broadly interpreted by Indians as a leave to attend ceremonies. Therefore, Graham issued a directive stating that visitors to reserves be prosecuted if they were discovered engaging in activities other than those specified in their pass.<sup>42</sup> From the Indian perspective this meant that visitors were prohibited from lending their spiritual, emotional, and material support to relatives and friends during ritual healings and other ceremonies, that is, from fulfilling their reciprocal kinship obligations. In spite of this obstacle, visitations for these purposes continued as indicated by Graham's 1921 report of an incident at Moose Mountain:

I may say in this connection, that the Indian when asking for a pass to visit another Reserve from his Agent, is very careful not to mention that he has any knowledge that a dance will take place on the Reserve which he intends to visit, but will state that the object of his visit is to visit "Sick relatives." In the case under review, that of a dance held at Moose Mountain, the visiting Indians who were permitted to remain owing to the fact that they had passes from their Agents; in no case did the pass state that they were for the purpose of attending an Indian dance--"visiting sick relatives" I am informed was the reason given for their visit in each case.<sup>43</sup>

Giveaways--the redistribution of goods, money, and labour--continued to be an important feature of the reserve economy and arrests were made when the agent was aware that they had occurred. In general, however, there were few arrests and none were recorded for the Plains Cree. According to the department's files, one young man from the Blackfoot Agency was given a suspended sentence for passing twenty-five cents to a woman during a dance (1915).<sup>44</sup> In 1915, Big

Chief Face was convicted by the Supreme Court of Alberta for making a presentation of two mares at a Blackfoot ceremony, and a resident of the Swan Lake Reserve in Manitoba was sentenced to two months in 1926 for giving away a buggy and other goods.<sup>45</sup> The fact that money was collected in support of the war effort during some of these Giveaways did not deter the department from adhering to the legislation. Giveaways sponsored to provide support for projects that would have in themselves received approval from the department were similarly discouraged as revealed in the following petition made to the department by two Dakota (Sioux) from the Griswold area in Manitoba in 1917:

. . .we help anyone with the money, and in that time they were going to build a church here on this reserve. So we had some money from the dancing and we [give] help to the church. We give 225 dollars and that is the best thing we did. And when we have dances we always talk about the seeding and how the children are going later on. When anyone cannot seed for himself, he tells it in the dances, and we go and finished his seeding for him. . . .So anyone cannot find anything bad about the dances. But the agent told us not to dance, and it is five years now, we beg of you would give us back our dancing. We collect some money for the war again so we would like to have our dancing back. On Dec. 1, 1916, we gather together and we thought of the war, we collect some money on that day for you.<sup>46</sup>

Information on the frequency of Giveaways on most prairie reserves is not available but some indication of the persistence of this form of redistribution in the reserve economy can be ascertained from one departmental report of Dakota Giveaways. In a surveillance report submitted by Two Bears for the late winter-spring period of 1916-1917, information regarding the locale, sponsorship, and distribution of goods was recorded.<sup>47</sup> During some twenty-three dances held in the Wahpeton Reserve area in Saskatchewan, the following provisions were

redistributed: groceries, boxes of apples and oranges, deer meat, and one woman from the Sioux Camp sold \$75.00 worth of horses in order to make a cash contribution in support of the dance. This detailed listing of goods exchanged at Giveaways was not usually included in departmental reports. One other list of provisions redistributed in Giveaways is available in documents associated with the arrest of Hotani (Dakota) who had celebrated a memorial feast for the dead at the Oak Lake Reserve in Manitoba in 1917.<sup>48</sup> Hotani, who was released on the condition that he refrain from such practices in the future, was held responsible for the distribution of shawls, guns, and cash; the latter was to be used as a contribution towards the Patriotic Fund and to cover the costs of sending a delegation to the department's Ottawa office.

The department's commitment to undermining indigneous political economies is also revealed in their activities among woodland communities. Ceremonies occurring along the east side of Lake Winnipeg and in the Interlake region of Manitoba were also investigated for infractions against Section 149. Giveaways held at the Bloodvein Reserve were interrupted in 1916; and in 1921, Joseph Black's Giveaway drum (Hollow Water Reserve) was handed over to the local police detachment who, in turn, destroyed it as punishment for Black's part in a ceremony involving the exchange of "articles of every description."<sup>49</sup> In the same year, another Giveaway drum was destroyed at the Jackhead Reserve after the police informed the keeper of the drum, Chief Councillor Travers, that Giveaway ceremonies were prohibited in the Indian Act.<sup>50</sup> The Indian agent also recommended that Travers be removed from office because of his encouragement of these ceremonies. Other

police records demonstrate that Giveaway activities (reputedly held at least once a week) were occurring in the Interlake region during the same period despite the warnings local residents had received to refrain from participating in such affairs.<sup>51</sup>

Giveaways at ceremonies held by the Grand Medicine Society or Midewiwin were also subjected to surveillance. In 1925, a number of Saulteaux from Craig Lake, Saskatchewan were dispersed while attempting to conduct a Midewiwin ceremony. Since offerings consisted of material goods, the ceremony was considered to be a breach of Section 149.<sup>52</sup> During the same year, two other men were arrested on a similar charge; both were found guilty but were released with a warning.<sup>53</sup> The last recorded interference in Woodland ceremonies such as the Midewiwin involved the prosecution of George Gilbert of the Wabigoon Reserve, Ontario, in 1938.<sup>54</sup> Some fifty celebrants had gathered to pray for the healing of the Chief's ill son. Both Chief Mark Shaboqua and Councillor Pitchenesse were given a two-month suspended sentence on the condition that they would never perform another ceremony. Charges included the exchange of material goods such as clothing and the "payment" of supplies to the officiating "medicine man."

The frequency of ceremonial intervention by means of participant dispersal, arrests, and convictions related to the enforcement of Section 149, were comparatively fewer in the southern and northern woodland regions than in the agricultural belt of the prairie provinces. This was partially due to the logistical problems and expenditures involved with conducting regular police and departmental surveillances among the many sparsely distributed woodland reserves. Furthermore, the

need to de-tribalize and culturally transform Indian populations was a greater priority in the prairie region since access to "unworked or surplus" Indian lands could only be obtained once the individualization of property had been entrenched.

In order to expedite the suppression of Giveaways, the department introduced another amendment to the Indian Act (S.C. 1918, C.26, 8-9, George V) that provided agents with greater power. Before this amendment, self-mortification rituals and Giveaways were "indictable" offences; that is the agent was allowed to press charges for infractions against the Indian Act, but was not permitted to preside over the hearings on specific cases. The word "indictable" was deleted and replaced with the terms "liable" and "summary conviction."<sup>55</sup> As the Assistant Deputy and Secretary explained to George Race, the Indian agent at Edmonton, he now had the power to try cases under the provisions of the Section 161 of the Indian Act as well as infractions against Subsection 2 of Section 149; however, the department would continue to espouse the policy of "prevention," rather than prosecution.<sup>56</sup> During the period 1934-36, the department proposed the adoption of further measures to restrict the distribution of goods within ceremonial contexts. Initially designed to terminate potlaching among the Northwest Coast Indians (particularly among the Kwatkiutl), these new measures were directed against the accumulation of material goods for purposes of ceremonial distribution. A draft of the proposed amendment to Subsection 1 of Section 140 of the Indian Act read as follows:

- (a) Any goods or articles of any sort suspected of being given away or being paid or given back in

connection with such Indian festival dance or other ceremony may be searched for under a search warrant in that behalf granted by a judge, police magistrate, stipendiary magistrate or justice of the peace, and, if found, seized by any Indian Agent or other officer connect with the Department, or by any constable, wheresoever found on such land or in such a place or on the person of such Indian or other person.

- (b) On complaint before any judge, police magistrate, stipendiary magistrate, justice of the peace or Indian agent, he may, on evidence that this section has been violated in respect of any such goods or articles, declare the same forfeited to be disposed of as the Superintendent General may direct.<sup>57</sup>

The potlach system, particularly in the Kwakkelth Agency at Alert Bay, was being condemned for similar reasons used to justify the repression of communal gatherings and Giveaways on the prairies, that is, while indigenous economies might have had a "useful function" in the past, these systems were considered to be ". . .wholly unsuited to modern conditions."<sup>58</sup> While supported by the department, this proposed amendment was not passed.<sup>59</sup> Such an amendment, however, could have been used to discourage the Giveaways celebrated by Plains and Woodland groups.

In addition to strengthening existing regulations on the performance of dances and providing agents with more power through the "summary conviction" process, other means were used to check ceremonial persistence. As in the pre-1914 period, pressure was brought to bear on local indigenous leaders for their support of departmental policies and the Indian Act regulations. In 1917, Secretary McLean responded to a request submitted by Chief Thunderchild and Councillor Okane to hold a Thirst Dance by warning them that they were expected to support the

agent's efforts to ". . . advance the Indians towards the adoption of the customs of civilization and to exert their influence in that direction."<sup>60</sup> In the same year, Chief Walter Ochapowace of the Ochapowace Reserve in Saskatchewan was removed from office by Graham on the grounds of incompetency. Departmental files reveal that Ochapowace had forwarded a request to the department for a Tea Dance and for permission to hold inter-reserve gatherings on the Kewistahawa and Ochapowace reserves at that time:

. . . we would like if we could meet in a social capacity as well as at the school and the church and further we do not mutilate our bodies, nor do we give anything away unless it be something on the table to eat and [in] friendship. Can I not go with my wife and visit my wife's people on the other Reserve without being guilty of an offense.<sup>61</sup>

In October of the same year, Ochapowace had also petitioned Ottawa officials for the unification of the two reserves under the administration of one farm instructor, school, and church.<sup>62</sup> Another headman, Thunderchild of the Thunderchild Reserve, received similar treatment from his agent. In 1922, Agent S. MacDonald, in an effort to check the rising incidence of the performance of Pow-wows on the Stoney, Red Pheasant, and Thunderchild reserves warned the headman that he would lose his "Gold Braid" (received during the signing of the Treaty) if he continued to support ceremonies.<sup>63</sup> This punishment would have meant the loss of Thunderchild's status as leader even though he had been personally responsible for leading both his own band and a segment of Big Bear's followers into Treaty.

With the expansion of federal medical services to reserve communities, other forms of traditional leadership and practices were



also subjected to closer scrutiny. Attacks against those referred to as "shamans," "healers," and "medicine men," were forthcoming from missionaries and medical professionals who believed that indigenous healers were responsible for the physical, moral, and spiritual deterioration of Indian communities. A statement which typified this attitude was contained in a report submitted by the nursing Field Matron at Little Pine Reserve to the department:

In every case in point the medicine men are the laziest men we have on the Reserve and the most cunning, reaking a rich harvest by working on the credulity and ignorance of their brethern. It frequently happens that the relatives of the sick will not allow the Doctor provided by your Department to see the patients. . . .64

Since there was no explicit federal legislation directed against indigenous medical practitioners, agents had little recourse other than personal influence. This approach had little impact for a number of reasons. In the first place, most healing ceremonies were not overtly practised and thus escaped the detection of most agents and missionaries. Secondly, adequate western medical facilities and medicines were simply not available to reserve populations. Like many European immigrant groups who had taken up residence in the agricultural belt, Indian populations had to depend on their own resources for dealing with illness. At this time the department could not resort to provincial medical acts since Indian healing activities were not illegal as long as they were practised within reserve boundaries. In the absence of both federal and provincial legislation, the department resorted to more "informal" methods to discourage practitioners and their patients, including the withholding of government rations and

opportunities for employment, the denial of more general types of aid, as well as "vaguer threats of official sanction."<sup>65</sup>

Because indigenous forms of religious worship were categorized as "recreational" activities, the introduction of secular alternatives was an important component in the department's efforts to undermine ceremonial life and traditional forms of leadership. Initiatives taken by agents to replace ceremonies with Euro-Canadian versions of "recreation" enjoyed the approval of Deputy Superintendent Duncan Scott who officially supported any ". . .endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing."<sup>66</sup> In 1917, Agent W. Dilworth recommended that a departmental grant be allocated for the purchase of prizes to be used as incentives for Indian participation in western versions of events at fairs and sports meets on the Blood Reserve.<sup>67</sup> This request was in keeping with a program of Indian agricultural exhibitions which had been introduced in the late 1880's. The department had awarded funds to the territorial agricultural societies in order to provide prizes for outstanding examples of Indian farm products, livestock, and a variety of homemade Euro-Canadian types of household items and farm equipment. These monetary rewards were intended to raise levels of individual productivity by encouraging a "healthy spirit of competition" among Indian farming families.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, from the department's perspective, not only did these forms of exhibitions and sports days provide Indians with "reasonable amusements," but they also served to foster the inculcation of the dominant society's value system. Seriously considered to be equivalent substitutes for large public ceremonies such as the Thirst Dances, these

secularized gatherings received departmental support throughout the period.

#### The Regulation of Public Expressions of Indian Identity

Both Commissioner Graham and Father Hugonard were key figures in the formation of a strong lobby against any move on the part of Ottawa officials towards a relaxation of policy implementation. Of particular concern to them was the participation of school graduates in traditional ceremonies. Not only was this development interpreted as morally and spiritually detrimental for the students, but also, it was viewed as an embarrassing waste of public monies for ceremonial persistence was equated with the failure of the Indian school system. In correspondence opposing a petition made by the Swan Lake Reserve Indians in Manitoba for a Thirst Dance, Graham reiterated his stand against "aboriginal dances" to his superiors, and used this opportunity to inform the department of the consequences of its "moderate" policy:

The trouble at Swan Lake is that the majority of the working Indians are graduates of our Indian Schools who know nothing about aboriginal dances, but spend much time in encouraging the older Indians, not only on the Swan Lake Reserve, but other Indians from across the line to take part in this sun dance, which is not a sun dance at all. These young men dress up like old time Indians and are the laughing stock of the white community around, who know perfectly well that they have been through our schools. The Swan Lake Indians, and other Indians of the Portage la Prairie Agency spend too much time for their own amusement. They go from town to town and attend every picnic and Horse Race that takes place within a hundred miles of the Reserve.<sup>69</sup>

Although some agents suggested that Indian agricultural productivity would increase if ceremonial and recreational activities were permitted

on a regulated basis, Graham refused to be persuaded that Indians could refrain from what he perceived to be self-indulgence and excessive behaviour. In his opinion, Indians had ". . .no idea of moderation with regard to the pursuits of pleasure"; that is, he believed that dancing excited and unsettled Indians, who, following such activities, were unable, "like the White people" to immediately resume their farm work.<sup>70</sup> Another constant concern associated with dancing was the spread of tuberculosis especially when they were held indoors in small, hermetically sealed houses.<sup>71</sup>

Overriding all of these objections was Graham's determination to promote agricultural development and to release Indian lands for this purpose. Throughout his career, the commissioner had been personally and professionally committed to this goal as illustrated in his initiation of the File Hills Colony of ex-pupils, his official role as supervisor of the Greater Production Scheme during and after World War One, and his aggressiveness in promoting new legislation to facilitate the release of "unused" portions of Indian lands to White farmers. For Graham, the persistence of indigenous forms of behaviour, especially ceremonial dancing and communal concepts of property remained major obstacles to Indian economic self-sufficiency rather than the implementation of ineffective government programs. The attraction of traditional values and religious worship for ex-pupils was incomprehensible to Graham. In 1931, he remained appalled by reports from agents that boarding school students were so easily persuaded to "revert to these pagan customs," and in some cases, actually became ceremonial leaders themselves.<sup>72</sup> Even graduates from his beloved

experimental colony at File Hills were known to have attended traditional dances. As one former colonist, Eleanor Brass has explained,

In the earlier days of the colony fiddle dances, pow-wows and any form of tribal ceremony were forbidden, as the founder considered them a hindrance to progress. These colonists were young people and liked an occasional dance. I remember as children my sister and I accompanied our parents to a fiddle dance held secretly in one of the homes. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves very much--possibly the more so because they had been forbidden.<sup>73</sup>

The "regression" of school graduates on their home reserves was largely responsible for Graham's continuous demand for more restrictive legislation and a firmer hand in administering existing regulations. The specific target for more repressive measures were those "unprogressive traditionalists" who were accused of undermining economic programs by encouraging ex-pupils ". . .to neglect their work and revert to the Pagan standard of living."<sup>74</sup> Graham was equally concerned about the rapidly disappearing game resources and the impoverishment of those Indians who persisted in resisting farming as an alternative to hunting and casual labour. The commissioner's most comprehensive statement on the situation was written in 1921, and because of his influence in determining the implementation of departmental policies, his opinion is cited at length:

If we do not prevent these objectionable customs, we will only be marking time, and our efforts towards making material progress will be futile. . .in many instances the Indians will take up more than a reasonable amount of time in the pursuit of pleasure, but it is hoped that by earnest effort and cooperation, we can prevent them from leaving their Reserves in a body, as they have been in the habit of doing at the time of the year when they should be engaged at working on their summerfallow, which

practice has resulted in badly prepared land, with the consequence that in many instances of getting a return of at least twenty bushels of wheat per acre, they have only been getting eight or nine bushels. We have a very short season in which to prepare the land and the Indian cannot hope for success, if he wastes this valuable time. The white farmer cannot afford to take more than a day to attend the local celebration in his district, but the Indians, if not checked, will attend every celebration within a radius of fifty miles.<sup>75</sup>

That the appropriate "measure of discipline" needed to enforce the terms of Section 149 were not forthcoming from the agents was evident in Graham's criticisms of lenient field employees. As a case in point, in 1915, the commissioner reported that the Star Blanket and Little Black Bear bands had insisted on holding their dances because Agent Thomas Donnelly of the Assiniboine Agency had a reputation for permissiveness. During the same time, another agent had allowed the celebration of ceremonies in the Balcarres area and at Standing Buffalo. For Graham, this type of leniency was unacceptable and the agent was accused of not possessing the "force of character" needed to control the Indians.<sup>76</sup>

Until his retirement in 1932, Graham remained unwaveringly opposed to policies of moderation where dancing was concerned. The discrepancy between Graham's and his superior's position on policy implementation was illustrated in an incident arising over the Hobbema Sun Dance of 1923. After his tour of the west in 1922, Deputy Superintendent Duncan Scott had witnessed first hand the persistence of indigenous dances but continued to support the department's previous policy of "persuasion" and "compromise."<sup>77</sup> To this end, Scott was amenable to the idea of allowing the performance of ceremonies such as the Thirst or Sun Dance,

with the provision that their duration would be greatly reduced to check absenteeism from Indian farms and ranches.<sup>78</sup> While he was unable to persuade the Blackfoot on the Hobbema Reserve to shorten their Sun Dance from ten to three days, Scott, in keeping with his leanings towards a flexible policy, agreed to allow a two-day supervised Cree Thirst Dance on the same reserve. Graham, who enjoyed the backing of missionaries in the area, was deeply perturbed by Scott's seeming disregard for his authority and expertise in the field with these matters. He openly criticized the department for its moderate position and pointed out that the inconsistency in policy between Ottawa officials and field staff would only serve to encourage the revival of dancing. Moreover, the commissioner's own campaign against dancing would be seriously compromised if Indians became aware that his superior did not support his informal measures to discourage ceremonies.<sup>79</sup> In 1931, he once again requested Scott to refrain from officially sanctioning "legal" dances throughout western Canada.<sup>80</sup>

Commissioner Graham also remained opposed to Indian participation in fairs, exhibitions, and stampedes throughout his career, and he continued to advise Ottawa to turn down all White requests for Indian involvement. Other activities which seemingly reflected Indian cultures in a positive light or glorified stereotypes, including films and Wild West Shows which featured traditional clothing and behaviour, were similarly discouraged. In 1914, two such requests were officially denied.<sup>81</sup> The first submission, made by the British and Colonial Photographic Company, requested permission to film ceremonies and dances on western reserves. The second consisted of a petition from the

Reverend John McDougall for the participation of a small group of Indians in a film in Wainwright Buffalo Park. Graham's protests against Indian involvement in these events were welcomed by most agents and regional administrators. J. A. Markle, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves for the Alberta Inspectorate, claimed that the lack of economic progress on his reserve was due to the fact that his charges were ". . . often enticed away from their homes and their work to take part in so called Wild West Shows."<sup>82</sup>

Efforts on the part of the department to check Indian attendance at these public events continued to be undermined by both the Indians themselves, and, most importantly, by the White organizers of exhibitions. Some organizations attempted to reason with the department by emphasizing the economic benefits accruing from such events for White communities as well as for the Indians. For example, in 1920, the Dauphin Chapter of the Manitoba Agricultural Society offered to set aside land on which Indians could not only camp and perform their dances, but also to charge admission to the grounds.<sup>83</sup> The Society also agreed to provide feed for the Indians' stock and to make any other arrangements that might facilitate their attendance. Not only was the request denied, but Graham appealed to the police for assistance in preventing Indians from travelling to the exhibition. Another organization, the MacLeod Agricultural Society in Alberta, pointed out in their petition to the department that the financial success of their fairs was contingent upon the involvement of local Indians, particularly in the horse racing events.<sup>84</sup>

Despite departmental regulations and the personal efforts of



administrators like Graham and his field staff, local fairs, rodeos, exhibitions, and larger events such as Banff Indian Days and the Calgary Stampede continued to draw families from their reserves. While the persistence of Indian culture, the loss of productive agricultural labour and time, and exposure to unsavoury White influences were obvious motivations behind government policy, some astute observers were also concerned about the new role models which seemed to be having an impact upon Indian children. More specifically, the position of the hard-working farmer and rancher as "role models" was being subverted by that of the "free-spirited" rodeo star. Using the example of the Calgary Rodeo hero, Tom Three Persons, Agent W. Dilworth described the problem in the following manner:

The interest enlivened amongst these Indians, in Bronco busting, Horse racing, etc. at the Stampedes and Fairs from 1912 to the present, has worked great harm to them. The fact that Tom Three Persons, a Blood Indian won the belt and championship at the Calgary Stampede in 1912, has been responsible for the condition, that every boy on the Blood reserve between the ages of 17 and 23 wished to be a second Tom Three Persons, and all they think about is saddles, chapps, silver spurs, Race and bucking horses, etc., a full equipment of the above accoutrements makes him a hero in his own eyes, and in the eyes of the admiring young women on the reserve.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout the post World War One period, the department continued to withhold their official approval of Indian participation in fairs and stampedes, but by the 1920's, the battle had already been lost. Brian Titley has pointed out that the development of the Calgary Stampedes as "one of the leading 'wild west' shows on the continent" was partially responsible for the failure of the department's policy.<sup>86</sup> In 1919, organizers of the stampede defied both Scott and Graham by sending

invitations to Indians to participate; and in 1923, Scott's opposition to a formal request was duly subverted when the organizers appealed directly to the Superintendent, Charles Stewart, who had once been premier of Alberta.<sup>87</sup> In the following year, a compromise was reached and Graham was directed to make the appropriate arrangements for Indian involvement. It was agreed that Indians could attend the stampede provided that department officials were allowed to supervise the operation, and that organizers would exhibit school work and handicrafts.<sup>88</sup> In exchange for these conditions, some thirty lodges would be set up in the fair grounds and a number of Indians would be permitted to ride in the parade.

Despite the fact that the regulations contained in the Indian Act were proving to be ineffective, there was no move at this time to introduce further restrictions. This cautionary policy can be largely credited to Scott, who persisted in advocating "moderation," claiming that the approach had been effective with the administration of eastern Indians. He firmly believed that the success of using "persuasion" and an "appeal to reason and experience," in policy implementation would be realized once more Indians became self-supporting, educated in the ways of the Euro-Canadian, and enjoyed "free contact with a civilizing environment."<sup>89</sup> And while Scott might have shared Graham's opinion that dancing and participation in White-sponsored events could only be controlled if legislation was passed "to keep Indians on their reserves", he was doubtful as to whether he could convince parliament to endow the department with such powers.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the pass system was never backed by legislation.

By 1931, perhaps as a result of pressure from Graham, Scott was having second thoughts regarding the efficacy of the department's policy of "firmness and moderation." In correspondence with his superior, Scott communicated his frustration with the inadequacy of legislation in the area of discouraging indigenous cultural practices:

We are quite powerless to prevent Indians from squandering their time and rendering nugatory our policy of making them self-supporting through farming operations.

It is most necessary the Parliament should give the Superintendent General the power to control aboriginal customs and native restlessness of Indians. We have a feeble clause in the Indian Act which is inoperative, and I hope to be able to discuss with you fully and make recommendations looking forward to obtaining some effective statutory authority in these respects.<sup>91</sup>

In response to Scott's appeal for greater departmental control over Indians, some modifications were made to the provisions of the Indian Act. In 1933, the words "in aboriginal costume" were deleted from Section 149 (S.C. 1932-33, S. 10, c. 42, 23-24 George V) which meant that any participation in off-reserve pageants, shows, dances, exhibitions, or other performances without the department's approval, was punishable by a penalty of twenty-five dollars and/or one month's imprisonment.<sup>92</sup> Indian attendance at these events was permitted only if the approval of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs or the agent was obtained beforehand. Although the successors of Graham and Scott did not lobby for further restrictions, other amendments to the Indian Act could be applied to the implementation of Section 149. In 1927, Section 92 (S.C. 1926-27, s. 2, c. 32, 17 George V) empowered the Superintendent General to ". . .make regulations governing the operation of pool rooms, dance halls and other places of amusement on Indian reserves."<sup>93</sup>

Section 185 (S.C. 1930, s. 17, c. 25, 20-21 George V), passed in 1930, authorized councils, with the approval of the Superintendent General, to control or prohibit ". . . participation in, or attendance at, public games, sports, races, athletic contests or other such amusements on the Sabbath."<sup>94</sup>

Throughout the 1930's, departmental policy on indigenous religious ceremonies remained consistent with the approach taken in the late nineteenth century. The lack of agricultural productivity and the absence of economic self-support was attributed to continuing indigenous cultural practices and values. This was articulated in a 1932 report on the persistence of Indian ceremonies in the southern Saskatchewan agencies of File Hills, Carlton, and Qu'Appelle by Inspector J. Murison who continued to refuse to grant permission for ceremonies, particularly those involving the attendance of Indians from outside the sponsoring reserve:

. . .the Indians, I have every reason to believe, would comply with the regulations with regard to mutilation of the body and the giving away of their goods, but they have no idea of the value of time and granting a request of this nature would mean that possibly two weeks of valuable time would be lost during a period when they should devote their efforts towards preparing their land for next years crop.<sup>95</sup>

The confiscation or destruction of ceremonial objects as a means to control ceremonies is not apparent in the department's files. There is, however, one file dealing with the department's attempts to investigate the use of peyote in connection with the activities of the Native American Church. Peyote, an hallucinogenic plant, was being transported into Canada from the United States and since it was relatively unknown by authorities and not listed as a narcotic, possessors of peyote could

not be prosecuted under the provisions of the federal Narcotics Act. In 1941, the department endeavoured to control its entry into the country by requesting police surveillance of known users and by investigating the possibility of prosecuting them under the Customs Act or the Drug and Food Act.<sup>96</sup> Police monitoring was considered to be the most effective means of control since its use was limited to few reserves. At this time, there was little knowledge regarding the plant's role in a ritual context and adherents of the Native American Church (the church was generally referred to as a cult) were accused of participating in clandestine peyote "parties" and "orgies."<sup>97</sup> An article published in The Winnipeg Tribune as late as 1954, entitled "Devil's Brew or Sacred Potion," publicized the debate over the consumption of peyote by the Long Plain Dakota and Ojibway of Manitoba.<sup>98</sup> While anthropologists tended to defend its use as an aspect of religious freedom, churches, local White farmers, and the Pharmaceutical Association condemned the drug. Other than these incidents, prairie Indians, unlike their counterparts on the Northwest Coast, were not subjected to massive dispossessions of their ceremonial materials.

In sum, historical evidence in the form of government reports, anthropological fieldwork, and Indian petitions indicates that although ceremonial life was interrupted by repression, some form of the ritual complex persisted in many communities. This situation was perhaps predictable given the fact that the sons and daughters of the traditional parents of the 1870's had already been inculcated with indigenous values at home by the time the government-directed assimilative programs had been firmly established through the Indian

school system. What the department had not anticipated was the continued relevance of indigenous values and associated behaviour for even this generation of school children who had been removed from their cultural milieu through the mechanism of the off-reserve boarding school. Moreover, it was from this group of ex-graduates that a new form of political leadership would emerge, but one which would nonetheless insist upon the perpetuation of Indian cultural identity, values, and the freedom of worship.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup>Scott, Duncan. General Instructions to Indian Agents in Canada, Issued by Duncan C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 25 October, 1913, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, J. D. McLean to W. Grant, 9 July, 1906, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Duncan Scott to Joseph Laroque, 17 Aug., 1914, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-4, Frank Pedley to T. Cory, 9 Mar., 1909, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Kayasowatam to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 25 Nov., 1914, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 27, 1903, p. 123, G. Wheatley to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 9 Sept., 1902; PAC RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, Frank Pedley to J. Gordon, 28 April, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, David Laird to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 3 Nov., 1909, p. 1; see also Regular, pp. 1-10 and Jon Whyte, Indians in the Rockies (Banff: Altitude Publishing Company Ltd., 1985).

<sup>8</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 15, 1909, p. 196, Report, David Laird to Indian Commissioner, 30 June, 1908; PAC, RG10, Vol. 3825, File 60,511-2, R. Logan to Secretary, 4 Oct., 1910, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Father Hugonard to Secretary, 2 Nov., 1913, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., G. Weadick to Honourable Thomas Crowthers, 24 April, 1913, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>GA, BE.31, .B655, A102, Blood Indian Agency Papers 1899-1944, Blood Indian Agency Correspondence, 1903-1909, File 21, Indian Agent to Secretary, 3 May, 1908, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Glen Campbell to Secretary, 11 Dec., 1913, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-2, J. McKenna to Secretary, 1 Feb., 1908, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 6809, File 470-2-3, Part 6, "Brief, Bill No. 114, Amendments to the Indian Act", 1914, pp. 18-19.

- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 20.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., "Brief, Bill No. 114. Amendments to the Indian Act", "Of Dances on Reserves", "The Sun Dance and other dances which occur in Open Air in Summer", pp. 21-22.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 21.
- <sup>18</sup>PAC, RG10 B3, Vol. 6809, File 56,402, Draft Bill, 1914.
- <sup>19</sup>Morris Zaslow, Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972 (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1975), p. 279.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 6809, File 470-2-3, Part 6, R. Brock to Duncan Scott, 28 March, 1914, p. 1. Brock was the Director of the Geological Survey of Canada from 1907 to 1914. The Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa came under his jurisdiction in 1907.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., R. Brock to Duncan Scott, 2 April, 1914, p. 1.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, William Graham to Duncan Scott, 31 May, 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Duncan Scott, 11 June, 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Duncan Scott, 21 July, 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., J. D. McLean to William Graham, 21 July, 1915, p. 2.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., Duncan Scott to agents, 19 Aug., 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>29</sup>Titely, Narrow Vision, p. 175.
- <sup>30</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, Crime Report, J. R. Hooper to Commissioner, 3 June, 1915, p. 1.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., J. A. Rowland to J. D. McLean, 20 July, 1915, pp. 1-2. The lawyer was apparently unaware of the parameters of the legislation.
- <sup>32</sup>Alexander Reserve, Alberta.
- <sup>33</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Inspector Commanding Southern Saskatchewan District to the Commissioner, 23 June, 1919, p. 1.
- <sup>34</sup>F. Hasse, "Sun Dance", R.C.M.P. Quarterly, 34, No. 4 (1969), p. 54.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid.



<sup>36</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Corporal G. Gill to Officer Commanding, 18 Aug., 1921, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Secretary, 22 Sept., 1921, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, William Graham to Duncan Scott, 2 Oct., 1922, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Duncan Scott, 22 Dec., 1922, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., G. Gooderham to William Graham, 18 Dec., 1922, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, William Graham to Secretary, 22 Sept., 1921, p. 3. See Appendix II for example of a pass form.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, J. Gooderham to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 12 Feb., 1915.

<sup>45</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, "The King versus Big Chief Face", submitted by M. S. McCarthy to the Department, Dec., 1915; PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, Sargeant R. Nicholson, Crime Report - "Re - George Tanner. . .Swan Lake Reservation, Man., Illegal Dancing, Indian Act", 25 July, 1926.

<sup>46</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, Harry Hotani and Marpiyaska to Secretary, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, W. Cromling to Duncan Scott, 6 June, 1917, "Memorandum of Dances held by Indians of Wahpaton Sioux Reserve, Prince Albert".

<sup>48</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, James MacDonald to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 14 Feb., 1918, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Report, J. Molly, "Patrol to Hollow Water Reserve, Lake Winnipeg, 21 Feb., 1921", p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Report, Hodgson Detachment, "Patrol to Bloodvein and Jackhead Indian Reserves, Lake Winnipeg", 9 March, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Report, J. Molly, 8 March, 1920, p. 1. In PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4B, Sargeant Mann "Re: Lizard Point I. R. Rossburn, Man., Assistance to Indian Department, 11 July, 1923", a report was made regarding the dismantling of a Medicine Lodge.

<sup>52</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, Superintendent G. Jennings, "Re Sauteau Indians Dance at Craig Lake, Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Indian Act", 8 Sept., 1925, p. 1.

- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., Report, G. Sheppard to Officer Commanding, 12 Dec., 1925.
- <sup>54</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 8481, File 1/24-3, Part 1, Report, E. Moore, "Alleged Pagan Dances - Dinorwic Indian Reserve, Dinorwic, Ontario", 4 July, 1938, p. 1. Prosecutions were made under Section 140 of the Indian Act. In his report, Moore detailed the numerous instances of offerings of material goods which consisted of (i) gifts presented by the sponsor; (ii) those offered by the initiates to their mentor; (iii) other spiritual offerings of goods; and (iv) a suspected offering of a dog.
- <sup>55</sup>Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, p. 134.
- <sup>56</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, J. D. McLean to George Race, 4 Oct., 1918, p. 1.
- <sup>57</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 6810, File 470-2-3, Part 9, "Proposed Amendments to the Indian Act", submitted by Deputy Superintendent General 18/1/36 to the Honourable Superintendent General, p. 1.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- <sup>59</sup>This attempt to impose greater restrictions on the potlaching system was successfully undermined by A.W. Neill who was an Independent member for Comox-Alberni. See Laviolette, Struggle For Survival, p. 92.
- <sup>60</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, J. McLean to Chief Thunderchild, 8 June, 1917, p. 1.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., Chief Walter Ochapowace to J. D. McLean, 8 Oct., 1917, p. 1.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., J. D. McLean to E. Taylor, 12 Oct., 1917, p. 1.
- <sup>63</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, J. Macdonald to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 14 Feb., 1918, p. 1.
- <sup>64</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 10,243, File 1/1-16-3, Vol. 1, H. A. English, Field Matron, "Report of Field Matron for month of November, 1915 on Little Pines Reserve", p. 1.
- <sup>65</sup>McCardle, "Indian 'Medicine Men'", pp. 3-4.
- <sup>66</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Duncan Scott to William Graham, 4 Oct., 1921, p. 1.
- <sup>67</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, J. Dilworth to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 2 Feb., 1917, p. 3. This program had its parallel in the United States.
- <sup>68</sup>Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture", p. 353.

<sup>69</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, William Graham to Duncan Scott, 4 July, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Secretary, 29 Oct., 1928, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid

<sup>72</sup>Titley, "W. M. Graham", p. 30.

<sup>73</sup>Eleanor Brass, "The File Hills Ex-Pupil Colony", Saskatchewan History, 6, No. 2 (1953), p. 67.

<sup>74</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, William Graham to Secretary, 22 Sept., 1921, pp. 1-2.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Duncan Scott, 3 Dec., 1921, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4, Part 1, William Graham to Duncan Scott, 21 July, 1915, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup>Titley, Narrow Vision, p. 178.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, William Graham to Duncan Scott, 9 July, 1923.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Duncan Scott, 2 July, 1931.

<sup>81</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, Duncan Scott to J. D. Cote, 12 Sept., 1914, p. 1; PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-3, J. D. McLean to the Colonial Photographic Company, 23 Jan., 1914, p. 1; Ibid., A. Rafton-Canning to Department, 14 Jan., 1914, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 27, 1916, p. 83, Report, J. A. Markle, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Reserves for Alberta Inspectorate 1915. In a 1911 petition for Indians to join such a travelling show, organizers indicated that not only would participants be issued travel funds, but would also be paid a salary of \$7.00 a week and receive board for each man for a period of six months. The only required services included participation in a parade wearing traditional garb once a day. The letterhead on the petition billed the show as "Western Canada. No. 1 Show. Direct from Calgary, Alberta. Pictorial, Athletic and Variety Company. High Class Specialties. Life Motion Pictures. Also Featuring Genuine North American Indians (Blackfoot Tribe)". See GA, BE 31, B.655, A102, Blood Indian Agency Papers, 1899-1944, Blood Indian Agency Correspondence 1910-1912, File 100, Clarence Dangerfield to R. N. Wilson, 5 March, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Sam Katz to Agent Bradbrooke, 8 June, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Sam Katz, 14 June, 1920, p. 1. The decision was supported by Duncan Scott in correspondence dated 21 June, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., William Graham to Secretary, 22 Sept., 1921, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup>Titely, Narrow Vision, pp. 180-81.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>89</sup>Dominion of Canada. Annual Departmental Reports, 1925-1926, Volume II, Duncan Scott to Charles Stewart, 1 Oct., 1926, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 6810, File 470-2-3, Part 8, Duncan Scott to William Graham, 24 Sept., 1928, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3826, File 60,511-4A, Duncan Scott to T. Murphy, 28 July, 1931.

<sup>92</sup>Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, p. 180.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>95</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 3827, File 60,511-4B, J. Murison to Department, 11 July, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup>PAC, RG10, Vol. 10,243, File 1/1-16-2. Acting Director to Department of Indian Affairs to the Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, July 19, 1941, p. 1. Peyote was blamed for the death of a family who were members of the Louis Sunchild Cree Band in Alberta. Sunchild was a peyote priest whose movements were monitored. There was an instance in 1952 in which his car was searched and paraphernalia associated with the Native American Church was discovered. Peyote was confiscated. See Ibid., H. J. Wilson to the Department of the Minister of Justice, 15 June, 1953; Ibid., Report, Constable J. Mead to the Department of Indian Affairs, 17 March, 1952.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., clipping in files, "Devil's Brew or Sacred Potion", The Winnipeg Tribune, 2 December, 1954.

<sup>98</sup>The Native American Church was incorporated on October 10, 1918 in Oklahoma and was an attempt by American Indians to counteract the government suppression of the Peyote religion by "legitimizing" it as an organization based on an acceptable White format. Its theology was syncretic in that Indian beliefs were combined with those of Christianity. Its strong ethical code stressed brotherly love, honesty, family responsibilities, self reliance, and the avoidance of the excessive use of alcohol. Peyote was ritually used as a sacrament and for healing. See Slotkin, p. 58.

CHAPTER IX  
HOLDING TOGETHER THE SACRED CIRCLE: PATTERNS  
OF RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE, POST-1914

The post World War One period has been often viewed by historians as a turning point in the relationship between the Canadian government and Indian people. It is true that the involvement of Indians in the war effort through voluntary enlistment (the Saskatchewan Cree had a high enlistment ratio) and fundraising activities were lauded by Ottawa and received commendation in popular journalistic coverage. Among the state's rewards to returning veterans was the opportunity for federal enfranchisement without loss of treaty status and the availability of land grants and loans through the provisions of the Soldier Settlement Act. However, little, in fact, had changed regarding their access to political power for greater self-determination. On the contrary, Indian powerlessness was further entrenched during the period 1914 to 1945 through the state's imposition of more restrictions on personal and property rights. And, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, new amendments to the Indian Act were specifically created for exerting even greater control over indigenous political economies, religions, and cultural expression.

In spite of these setbacks, one significant and unanticipated contribution which the war effort did make to the Indian community was the fostering of a strong sense of political self-awareness. While fighting alongside their counterparts from other areas of Canada, Indian veterans from the prairies had discovered ". . . that a person's race or

religion seemed unimportant when they had to fight to stay alive,"<sup>1</sup> and they also developed a strong sense of brotherhood with Indian soldiers from other cultures. According to Brian Titley, the "seeds of pan-Indian consciousness" were sown during the Indian war effort in the sense that "an awareness of common grievances was created which led naturally to a perceived need for political action on a national scale."<sup>2</sup>

In 1919, this brotherhood and conscious-raising experience found political expression through the creation of Canada's first national Indian organization, the League of Indians of Canada. Under the leadership of its president, Fred Loft, a veteran from the Upper Mohawk Reserve in Ontario, the membership grew to embrace many reserves. On the Canadian prairies, grievances were discussed at formal meetings of the League held in Elphinstone, Manitoba (1920), the Thunderchild Reserve in Saskatchewan (1921), and on the Samson Reserve in Alberta (1922), where some 1500 Blackfoot, Piegan, Stoney, and Cree met to demonstrate their support for the League's platform.<sup>3</sup> Although the strength of the League was weakened through government surveillance (as was all political activism suspect of anti-government or "Bolshevist" messages during the period), the lack of funding, the difficulty of effectively communicating with reserves across Canada, and its leader's health problems, the undercurrent of this wave of protest took hold in western Canada.<sup>4</sup> As in eastern Canada, the voices of the elders and the first generation of Indian school graduates were now reinforced by men who were able to articulate their concerns more forcefully to the government. One of the League's demands was the right to retain Indian

cultural identity and values. The role of this nativistic message and its specific forms of expression during the period 1914 to 1945 will be examined in this chapter, with emphasis being placed on the Plains Cree as a case in point.

#### Familiar Patterns of Protest: A Matter of Freedom of Worship

Petitions sent to the department during the post World War One period attest to the fact that prairie Indians were becoming more openly critical of the Indian Act. The issue of "human rights" as expressed through the demand for religious freedom was central to most written protests. The plea for religious tolerance as expressed by the Plains Cree chief, Thunderchild, is perhaps the most definitive statement on the issue. As translated by the Reverend Edward Ahenakew, Thunderchild's observations read as follows:

Can things go well in a land where freedom of worship is a lie; a hollow boast? To each nation is given the light by which it knows God, and each finds its own way to express the longing to serve him. It is astounding to me that a man should be stopped from trying his own way to express his need or his thankfulness to God. If a nation does not do what is right according to its own understanding, its power is worthless.

I have listened to the talk of the white men's clergy, and it is the same in principle as the talk of our Old Men, whose wisdom came not from books but from life and from God's earth. Why has the white man no respect for the religion that was given to us, when we respect the faith of other nations?

. . . The white men have offered us two forms of their religion - the Roman Catholic and the Protestant - but we in our Indian lands had our own religion. Why is that not accepted too? It is the worship of one God, and it was the strength of our people for centuries.

I do not want to fight the white man's religion. I believe in freedom of worship, and though I am not a Christian, I have never forgotten God. What is it

that has helped me and will help my grandchildren but belief in God?<sup>5</sup>

The spirit of this message was reflected in the wording of most petitions. In 1925, elders from Lizard Point, Manitoba protested the suppression of "legal" Medicine Dances contending that not only were these practices exempt from the law, but also ". . . that religious thought both Christian and heathen is a personal matter and not restricted by law."<sup>6</sup> During the same year, the Swan River Reserve had been actively challenging Section 149 on the grounds that it was discriminatory and support was even forthcoming from local non-Native residents who insisted that as Canada's earliest inhabitants, Indians had a right to their ceremonies, particularly when no one was being "harmed."<sup>7</sup> As late as 1932, Chief Red Dog of the File Hills Reserve attempted to negotiate the repeal of Section 149 by offering the department an explanation of the importance and context of ceremonial dancing from the Indian perspective; that is, rather than being a form of recreation, dancing was an important mode of religious expression and prayer.<sup>8</sup>

A number of spokesmen stressed the point that several types of their dances were as secular in nature as dances being enjoyed by the White community. Red Dog Star Blanket of File Hills stated that the Cree Circle or Tea Dance was comparable to Euro-Canadian dances.<sup>9</sup> When members of White Bear's Band from Carlyle, Saskatchewan protested the decision of the agent to "shut down" Indian dances in 1929, they reminded the department that Whites in the area entertained themselves at dances almost every day at the Carlyle Lake Resort.<sup>10</sup> Petitioners from the Qu'Appelle Reserve minimized the traditional nature of their



dances by emphasizing the Euro-Canadian content of their social activities. As their legal representatives, Barristers Miller and Wilson wrote in 1928, the Indians wish to hold "ordinary dances" consisting primarily of ". . . imitations of white mans [sic] dances which they learned at school, also some jiggs and marches;" musical instruments were also listed -- a drum, fiddle, or gramophone.<sup>11</sup> Despite this attempt to "anglicize" their dances, Ottawa officials, after due consultation with Commissioner Graham, advised the Qu'Appelle Reserve that it was in their "best interests" that the request be refused.<sup>12</sup>

Several other types of arguments were put before Ottawa officials by a number of communities who had participated in the war effort. Between 3,500 and 4,000 Canadian Indians had enlisted in the armed forces and this contribution became an important political lever in the lobby for religious freedom.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as a counter-argument to the department's claim that dancing and Giveaways were a waste of time and property, petitioners pointed out that these same dances had facilitated the collection (through the redistribution of cash) of significant amounts of money for the National Patriotic Fund. Saskatchewan Indians alone had raised approximately \$17,000 through their dances and might have made a greater contribution if the department had permitted.<sup>14</sup>

Traditional dances, and particularly the Pow-wow, were important venues for honouring and blessing those who had enlisted in the war effort and for returning veterans. In an appeal made to the department in 1932 by Henry Two Bears of the Indian Temperance Union Society in

Alberta, the performance of a Pow-wow at the Prince Albert Exhibition was defended on the grounds of its affinity to White dances and the patriotic nature of its intent.

Since 1918 we have had a new dance or Indian powwow, its not the same as the dances we have always had before 1918. this dance was first danced by the return soldiers, and its similar to the whitemans dances, and here are the words that fit our song very nicely, we made that song ourselves when our boys [came] back from the war (Germany declared war but we don't want her to pull down Canada's Flag). Everybody likes this dance. We asked Ind. Dept. for a flag, and [on] Feb. 26, 1931, a nine feet flag was forward to us.<sup>15</sup>

On the recommendation of Inspector W. Murison, who feared that his approval would establish a precedent for performing indigenous dances at exhibitions, the department denied the request.<sup>16</sup>

Several other petitioners specifically addressed the clause of the act that prohibited the wearing of traditional Indian clothing at White-sponsored events. Of particular note, was a letter of concern forwarded in 1931 by the elders of the Sakimay Reserve in Saskatchewan who had hired a lawyer to represent their case. In a covering letter accompanying this appeal for wearing traditional dress and conducting dances during Sports Days, their barrister wrote: ". . . many of the Indians on these Reserves are now getting old and are desirous of these sports days to keep alive their old dances."<sup>17</sup> A similar stand was taken by Blackbird of the Côté Reserve in Saskatchewan whose members were prevented from celebrating their Treaty Days in 1933 in the customary manner:

We are not allowed to wear our head-dress or the special costume which all Indians enjoyed, and the public, we believe, attend in great numbers for the purpose of seeing the Indian regalia. . . .

I am sixty years of age and was born on the Côté Reserve, and I and the older members of the band regret very much that this historic custom of the Indians is not allowed. We believe that in order to maintain the proper spirit amongst the younger members of the band, they should be brought up to reverence our ancient customs and learn them.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, the government's assimilative programs were having an impact upon some communities as even White-initiated Sports Days were seen as appropriate occasions for the inculcation of traditional values to the younger generation who had suffered considerable cultural loss in the Indian school system.

With specific reference to the Thirst or Sun Dance, a number of petitions were sent to the department between the years 1920 to 1933 from the following reserves: Roseau Rapids, Manitoba (1920, 1924); Hobbema, Alberta (1920); Rolling River, Manitoba (1925, 1926); Swan Lake, Manitoba (1925, 1926); Broadview, Saskatchewan (1928) and reserves from the Edmonton Agency (1926). Three petitions involved requests for the Rain Dance: Loud Voice, Saskatchewan (1929); Okanese, Saskatchewan (1931); and Fishing Lake, Saskatchewan (1932). The Loud Voice petition claimed that the Rain Dance was being allowed at Moose Mountain, Piapot, and Touchwood. Two of these requests appealed for an expansion of ceremonial privileges. In 1920, Chief Ermineskin of Hobbema wished to "enlarge" the Sun Dance to allow for the participation of young men; no further details were provided.<sup>19</sup> In a second petition submitted jointly by four reserves in the Crooked Lakes Agency, members asked to be allowed to celebrate a Rain Dance on an inter-reserve level. They argued that ". . . the lines between each reserve is imaginary insofar as general customs and activities . . . are concerned."<sup>20</sup> Permission

was denied in both instances.

As in the pre-1914 period, advocates of religious freedom continued to consult with local lawyers. For their part, a number of barristers included their own letters of support along with the more official written statement of demands. Other barristers were not as empathetic and felt that they were being placed in a compromising position by their clients, as illustrated in A. Messner's remarks on his professional intercession on behalf of the Sun Dance celebrants at Swan Lake, Manitoba. It is clear from his letter that he was well aware that the legal system was consciously being used to access political power. In spite of his recommendation that his clients approach their agents and commissioners directly, the petitioners insisted that Messner translate their demands into English and communicate them in writing directly to Ottawa.<sup>21</sup> In this way, Indian spokesmen were able to circumvent the mistrusted local and regional bureaucracy. This means was commonly used to challenge the department's implementation of the more informal policy of prohibiting "legal" dances performed within the boundaries of one's own reserve.

A few communities undertook to subvert departmental repression by forwarding their requests through local police detachments and other sympathetic White sources. Two petitions will serve as examples of this search for a broader base of support. In 1920, the Hobbema Cree used their long-standing favourable client-patron relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company to persuade the manager of the Edmonton store to intervene on their behalf. Over the years, these Cree had continued to hold their "legal" Thirst Dances under the watchful eye of police.

While the presiding agent had tolerated the ceremony, the Cree feared that his incumbent would be less empathetic. Desiring to maintain good relations with the Plains Cree the Company's manager, F. Harker, forwarded an official appeal to the department with the explanation that the Indians ". . . frequently call upon us to help them, and as far as it is within our power we endeavor to act as intermediaries for them."<sup>22</sup> After consulting with Graham, Scott refused to give his assent on the grounds that an official sanction of this particular case would lead to a revival of dancing on other reserves.<sup>23</sup>

A second potential source of support for ceremonial practices emerged as American anthropologists began to conduct their field investigations on the prairies in the first half of the twentieth century. The interest demonstrated by anthropologists in documenting ceremonies was sometimes perceived by Indian leaders as empathy. One petition, written by Chief Matoose of Swan Lake, Manitoba in 1932, was sent to anthropologist Donald Cadzow with a copy forwarded to the department. In the letter, Matoose appealed to Cadzow to intercede on their behalf for the right to hold a Sun Dance. The local situation was emergent and one woman's death had already been attributed to the agent's refusal to allow the ceremony.

This winter one woman was sick and we appealed to our religion the Sun-dance. And when we told Mr. Waite the Indian Agent about having the dance, he said, no, the Indian Department doesn't allow it. When this was told to the woman she was very sorry as she put her trust in getting well in joining the dance. She grew worse after than and finally pass away on the 10th. of this month. And we are asking you kindly to please, make arrangement with our Canadian Government to allow us the freedom to have our Sun Dance, and our religion.<sup>24</sup>

A similar appeal was made by the little Pine Cree to David Mandelbaum in 1935. During his attendance at a Thirst Dance, he recorded the following conversation with ritual leaders and his own reflections on the incident as follows:

'The way we are treating you, we take you for a worthy man. You have power in your way for the white man. Don't be ashamed of the way you act here with us in our religion. We won't tell the white people about it. Whatever a person does here is given to manito.' The burden of this conversation was that I, having doubtless some influence, should defend the sun dance and the Indian religious practices. This [occurred?] whenever I talked for any length of time to almost any Indian. They feel that the missionaries are making savage attacks on that which is dear to them. Note that they consider these attacks unfair not so much because the missionaries get at the children but because they invoked police power to stop the ceremonies. . . . As I write these lines I realize why the Indians incessantly tell me to notice that no evil nor any evil name is called upon in the ceremonies. This must be the result of the missionaries thundering about the native ceremonies being the work of the devil!<sup>25</sup>

Mandelbaum also recorded that he assured his hosts that he ". . . should do all I could."<sup>26</sup>

Instances of direct confrontation with local officials were rare. One case which illustrates the futility of this form of protest was recorded by Abel Watetch and involved the Piapot Reserve. The reserve wished to honour those who died in the war and the safe return of its veterans by celebrating a Thirst Dance. In order to receive official clearance for the ceremony, one of the veterans had been sent to Regina beforehand to confer with "The Big Boss."<sup>27</sup> The "Big Boss," better known as Commissioner Graham, was quoted as having responded by stating that the Indians ". . . have been forbidden to hold the Sun Dance. It's part of the Indian religion and it's no damn good."<sup>28</sup> In his defence,

the veteran argued that the fact that he had offered his life in the war effort was reason enough for approval of his request. As he informed Graham, "I fought for you and I fought for all those who sat in this office during the war. I have the right to ask you to give us back our Sun Dance."<sup>29</sup> Despite Graham's refusal to approve the ceremony, the Thirst Dance was held with a number of participants in attendance from other reserves. After the police were notified by the department to intervene, the visitors were dispersed and only a shortened version was allowed.

The predominant means of protest against Section 149 was, as in the earlier period, religious persistence at the risk of detection. While some may have been motivated by the principle of religious freedom, a deeper, spiritual commitment and the personally devastating conditions of reserve life continued to draw people to their ceremonies. The post World War One period was an extremely stressful time for many prairie Indians. In addition to the fact that the government was continually passing legislation to assume even greater control over nearly every aspect of their lives and lands, there was also intense emotional and physical suffering. Not only had inadequate government economic programs resulted in a state of underdevelopment on reserves, but the population was also being physically decimated by waves of epidemics. The deputy superintendent general had reported that the occurrence of tuberculosis was five times higher among Indian populations than the Euro-Canadians and it was anticipated that at least fifty percent of children attending boarding schools would contract the illness.<sup>30</sup> War casualties and the flu epidemics which swept through Canada during the

immediate post World War One period also took their toll. Medical records indicate that the Saskatchewan Cree were particularly susceptible to the deadly "Spanish flu" and that in 1919, as many as twenty-six deaths were reported on one Cree reserve alone.<sup>31</sup> It was not until 1927 that the office of Medical Director was established to specifically address Indian health. In the interim, traditional methods of healing, especially the powerful Thirst or Sun Dances, continued to provide relief on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level for both "traditionalists" and even Christian Indians.

In order to demonstrate the frequency and types of ceremonial persistence, a number of examples are available in departmental files and anthropological studies conducted during this period. As cases in point, they represent the most extensively recorded occurrences of ceremonial continuity for this time period. Given the fact that they are undoubtedly only a small percentage of the total number of performances, these cases will nonetheless provide an insight into the nature of ceremonial persistence and accommodation within the context of the implementation of Section 149 of the Indian Act.

In 1919, residents of the Onion Lake Reserve in Saskatchewan petitioned Duncan Scott for a two-day Thirst Dance to be celebrated because of the "Great Epidemic," "the Great War," and the fact that they ". . . have been in very poor circumstances this last few years."<sup>32</sup> When Agent W. Sibbald refused permission, Kanipitataw insisted on holding the ceremony. The events as they unfolded after the arrival of Sergeant Howard and Constable Pratt at the ceremony attests to the strength of the religious convictions of the elders and the extent of



accommodation to police intervention.

. . . we went into the tent . . . where some ceremony was being held. Canipotato, Robert Chief, Peter Thunder & Joseph Quinney and many other Indians were there. Sgt. Howard spoke to Canipotato urging him not to proceed with preparations but he was as obstinate as ever and went as far to say that the sgt. might put a bullet through his brains - if he likes that was the only thing would stop him - I suggested to the Sgt. that we give him  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour to consult with his colleagues which the Sgt. did and before the time was up we were called to the tent and Robert Chief (Chief) told us the dance would not go on and asked that they might conclude some ceremonies they were intercepted . . . in the evening and if this was not objectionable the people would disperse the following morning.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike the Onion Lake case, the Piapot Reserve was more successful in celebrating a Thirst Dance in honour of its war veterans. The dance, attended by people from other reserves, was performed in spite of Graham's opposition.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in 1925 several hundred people chose to disregard the department's orders and gathered at the Hobbema Reserve for worship. The ceremony occurred without incident because the agent had only requested that the police serve a warning and had not insisted that arrests be made.<sup>35</sup>

For the administrators, the ideal situation was to prevent the occurrence of the ceremony by early detection. In response to a report that a Thirst Dance was imminent on the White Bear Reserve in Saskatchewan in 1921, police were able to disperse some forty Sioux, Assiniboine, and Cree who had arrived from North Dakota to attend Sports Days. An additional fifty men, women, and children who were en route to White Bear from the Crooked Lakes Agency were also turned back. When an effort was made to resist the order to return to their homes, the corporal in charge reported that he was ". . . forced to take the

leaders team and start them back," and to provide a police escort to place them on the road to their reserve.<sup>36</sup> Three years later, after receiving legal advice, approximately 1500 people who had gathered for their treaty payment at the Saddle Lake Reserve in Alberta planned to stay for a Thirst Dance. The sponsor, Albert Stony, had intended to hold the ceremony in spite of the department's opposition and a visit from the police. One report stated that the dance, in fact, was not held -- this was probably the case since off-reserve participants were present from Hobbema, Long Island Lake, and Big Island Lake.<sup>37</sup> In at least one instance, the inconsistent implementation of Section 149 resulted in a "hostile" verbal exchange between the Chief of the Big River Indian Reserve in Saskatchewan in 1932. Since other reserves were known to have celebrated their ceremonies, the police experienced "considerable difficulty" in dispersing some three hundred people from Big River, Sturgeon Lake, and Sandy Lake who had congregated for a Thirst Dance.<sup>38</sup>

The level of confrontation varied among communities. In 1932, Agent G.A. Dodds had notified police regarding the construction of a Thirst Dance Lodge on the Okanese Reserve in Saskatchewan. A number of off-reserve participants ". . . refused outright to move (their) tents as instructed, stating that they had come to worship god the same as other religions."<sup>39</sup> Chief Red Dog, Cotasse, Adelard Star Blanket, Allen Star Blanket, and Buffalo Bull were arrested but whether they were convicted is not evident from available documents. However, charges were laid against leaders of a Rain Dance on the Sakimay Reserve in Saskatchewan in 1933.<sup>40</sup> While Agent J. Ostrander had been successful in

persuading "the better class of Indians" to stay home, Rain Dance celebrants continued to make preparations. As a precautionary measure against interference, they had invited a lawyer to attend the ceremony. Since Indians from Moose Mountain and Qu'Appelle Agency were present, the agent was provided with a justification for dispersal. Although he was supported by the presence of the police, people refused to heed the agent's warning and to return home. After due consultation with his superior, Inspector Murison, the agent laid charges against the leaders. The arrested were successfully defended by their lawyers and were subsequently released with a lecture.

Not all such confrontation tactics were related to Thirst Dances. In 1934, when one of the agents attempted to stop a "Fiddle Dance" being held in the "Community House," the participants ". . . firmly sat him down near the door and held him there until the dance was over."<sup>41</sup> Their intent was not to harm the agent, but rather, to demonstrate the limitation of the department's powers to both the agent and to Graham, who had issued the order for interference.<sup>42</sup>

The importance of ceremonial continuity to the physical and cultural survival of the Plains Cree communities was emphasized again and again at large communal gatherings. During these orations, leaders reiterated the spiritual power of their ceremonies, the strength in "community," and the need to follow sacred customary law in order to relieve personal and group suffering. The message of resistance to religious suppression is contained in these orations. The following three speeches recorded by Mandelbaum at a Thirst Dance on the Little Pine Reserve in 1935, contain these sentiments:

The chief said 'There is some talk going around that the Farm Instructor from Red Pheasant is coming to chase the R.P. people back to the reserve. Do not listen and do not be scared. Let us just go at this (s.d.) hard. If he comes I am the one that will have to face him and I will take the blame. I will meet him and see that nothing goes wrong.' The counsellor said 'We have gone thru much trouble to get this dance going. . . . We take a pipe here and ask for good things. If we have faith nothing will go wrong. So much do I believe in this that I don't expect anything to go wrong. It looks a lot better to keep on singing and dancing.<sup>43</sup>

A second elder, Alex Tootosis, also reaffirmed this commitment:

We have thought much of this ceremony. Today our father has given us (the blessing) to us to reach it. Any person who wants to stop us had better desist. Boys and girls should obey . . . the old people [in the following old ways?]. I won't force you to go at this but it is very close to the finish now. Thirty three years ago my father told me something good and I am following it yet.<sup>44</sup>

And still another speaker urged the Indians to continue in their faith in the Sun Dance: "A lot of us had a hard time last winter. We should be thankful today to meet each other here. And let us try from now on to see this sun dance pole next year."<sup>45</sup>

#### Community Regeneration and Ceremonial Accommodations to the Law

During the post World War One period, a number of communities continued to modify their ceremonial cycle and their ceremonies in response to both the implementation of Section 149 and the socio-economic realities of reserve life. Some individuals even adopted new forms of worship as alternatives to traditional religion and Christianity. Certain aspects of these historical changes have been documented in departmental correspondence, Indian petitions, and anthropological reports and will be examined in the following section.

By the 1920's there were no official reports of the public ritual of "self-mortification" or "piercing" at the Thirst Dances. In the department's files, there is only one record of arrests made in connection with this practice for this period. In 1920, the "Sun Dance" had been introduced to the Ojibway residing at Buffalo Point, Manitoba by a "dance maker" from the "west".<sup>47</sup> The sponsor of the ceremony held in 1921, Jim Kubinase, had received the teachings to perform the ceremony from the ritualists of the Roseau River Band. At Buffalo Point, approximately ten men were involved in the ritual of self-mortification in which the shoulders were pierced. Although the dance was held at night in a secluded area, the police had been notified. One celebrant, Mayzenahweeshick, testified to the healing powers of the ceremony and stated that ". . . many years ago this dance was practiced among the Indians and it was a remedy for illness, since taking part in it he was cured of rheumatism."<sup>48</sup> Mayzenahweeshick and another man, Blackbird, were arrested and charged under the provisions of Section 149. The ceremony was held secretly after these arrests.

In his reporting of the persistence of this ritual among the Plains Ojibway, anthropologist James Howard was told by informants that although it was no longer practiced, it had been performed covertly during the repressive years.<sup>49</sup> Howard was informed that the Plains Ojibway of southern Manitoba would travel into the Turtle Mountain area of North Dakota to celebrate the Sun Dance with their relatives. Here, the ritual of "piercing" was performed in the "early pre-dawn hours" to avoid detection by either the Whites or the Métis. Similar published documentation is unavailable for the Dakota; however, anthropologist

Wilson Wallis noted in 1914 that "piercing" had been last practiced at Portage La Prairie, Manitoba some fifty years ago.<sup>50</sup>

Some Plains Cree communities did not openly perform the ritual, but nonetheless incorporated its meaning in a symbolic manner. One of Chief Piapot's relations, Abel Watetch, explained that "symbolically the same dance was performed with the dancers fastening ribbons to their clothing and tying the ends to the lodge pole."<sup>51</sup> The same observer reported that the piercing ritual might have been replaced by the greater obligation on the part of the young men to make material offerings. Thus, the offering of scarce material goods became even more significant as a personal sacrifice. Other forms of self-mortification such as prolonged periods of fasting without food or water and sustained dancing also persisted. Such practices as fasting were little understood by officials or missionaries as forms of prayerful offerings and appear to have not been detected.

In addition to the deletion of certain forms of public demonstrations of self-mortification, some communities decided to open their ceremonies to public scrutiny by admitting non-natives to the ceremonies (White participants are not included in this category as anyone who sought help during the ceremony, was not denied). One approach taken to win departmental support for the Thirst Dance was to allow and even encourage the agent and the police to monitor ceremonies. During the period 1920-1928, petitioners from Hobbema, Alberta (1920), Roseau River, Manitoba (1924), Swan Lake, Manitoba (1925, 1926), Rolling River, Manitoba (1926), and Little Pine, Saskatchewan (1928), indicated that either such monitoring was already in effect or that they were

willing to allow this form of surveillance.<sup>52</sup> Another reason for Indian tolerance of the presence of White authority figures at these ceremonies, was the need to control liquor consumption and to prevent disorderly conduct.

At least two reserves -- Roseau River and Swan Lake -- suggested that non-Natives would be welcome at their Thirst Dances, the latter proposing that curious observers might be charged an attendance fee to provide revenue.<sup>53</sup> The department rejected this suggestion since it was felt that a White presence would encourage ceremonial performances. One agent, Dilworth, even attempted to prevent curious White observers from viewing Blood Indian ceremonies by constructing a fence on the Macleod side of the reserve. This action prompted one irate citizen to write a letter to the local newspaper stating that Macleod citizens could not understand the harm they could do since very few were able to make any sense out of what they were witnessing.<sup>54</sup>

The potential number of celebrants and the locale of Thirst Dances were also affected by the regulations. The pass system, trespass law, and the prohibition of off-reserve dancing in Section 149, severely restricted optimum communal participation. Some reserves whose borders abutted one another were able to circumvent this obstacle. For example, in the 1920's, the Poundmaker and Little Pine Cree constructed their Thirst Lodge on the borderline of the two reserves.<sup>55</sup> And in 1934, Mandelbaum reported that the Crooked Lakes Agency Dance was held on the border between Ochapowace and Kahkewistahaw reserves.<sup>56</sup> The more common small, localized performances of Plains Cree and Ojibway Thirst Dances (and those of other groups) can also be directly correlated with

restrictive measures.

Another major modification of the Thirst Dance was the continued reduction in ceremonial time to two, or one and a half days from at least a four day period (this is excluding preliminary ceremonies or associated rituals which traditionally occurred after the Thirst Dance). This abbreviated version of the Thirst Dance now became known as the Rain Dance. Although this new name was possibly derived from a popularized term used by local Whites, it was referred to as the Rain Dance in Indian petitions and possibly reflected an effort to disassociate the "Sun Dance", at least in White minds, from the more controversial form of the ceremony. As Abel Watetch, a Piapot Cree explained,

Year after year the pressure of government and police was aimed at ending the Rain Dance. One of the elders said smilingly, 'The Rain Dance was a short form of the Sun Dance. Like low mass and high mass. We performed the Rain Dance on one day instead of three days we had to dance the Sun Dance. The white man never knew it was the same ceremony.'<sup>57</sup>

By the late 1920's, the term "Rain Dance" was consistently being used in correspondence received from several reserves including Loud Voice, Moose Mountain, Touchwood, Piapot (late 1920's); Grenfell, Sakimay, Ochapowace, Okanese, File Hills, and reserves in the Crooked Lakes Agency (1930's).<sup>58</sup>

This disassociation of the Rain Dance from the Thirst Dance or Giveaways, equally failed to win the department's support. In a petition from Chief Day Walker of the Okanese Reserve in 1931, assurances were given that while it would be necessary to wear "traditional outfits" during the Rain Dance, the "giving away of goods"



and "mutilation" would not be performed.<sup>59</sup> One year later, a similar request was made by members from Fishing Lake, Saskatchewan.<sup>60</sup> Both petitions were denied.

Although the department consistently opposed Rain Dance performances, other elements in the Prairie community apparently were more tolerant and even supportive. During the drought years, White farmers had associated the Thirst or Rain Dances with the occurrence of rain and much to agent Ostrander's dismay, people from Fishing Lake, Ochapowace and the Sakimay reserves were being encouraged to perform these ceremonies. Of this unanticipated source of support, Ostrander wrote,

I believe the Indians receive a great deal of encouragement in this connection from the white farmers in the district, who, whether they profess Christianity or not, are so anxious to see rain after two dry years that they are inclined to try anything. Naturally the Indians need little encouragement in this case as they have always been glad for an excuse to hold one of their aboriginal dances.<sup>61</sup>

In his 1967 interview with Felix Panipekeesick, an 83-year-old "medicine man" from the Sakimay Reserve, Koozma Tarasoff was informed that Felix had made 39 to 40 Rain Dances, including performances during the Depression years:

I remember the dry years of 1938 or 1939, I guess. The local farmers helped me out to make a Rain Dance - so as to make rain. They used to collect money from farmers around here, and would give me \$35 or \$40 to make a Dance. They used to help me a lot.<sup>62</sup>

Felix Panipekeesick also recalled attending Rain Dances at Piapot and Ochapowace as a child.<sup>63</sup>

Some other types of changes evident in Plains Cree ceremonial life were recorded by David Mandelbaum when he documented the Thirst Dances on

the Ochapowace (1934), Kahkewistahaw (1934), and Little Pine reserves (1935). As was typical of this era of ethnological recording, anthropologists were primarily concerned with describing survivals of the more "traditional" aspects of Indian cultures, and thus little attention was given to the analysis of ceremonial reformulation either in terms of the ideology or ritual content. Nonetheless, Mandelbaum's field observations do provide us with insight into the nature of Plains Cree response to ceremonial repression.

In his commentary on the frequency of Thirst Dances at the Crooked Lakes Agency in 1934, Mandelbaum noted that they were no longer annual affairs because of government prohibitions. In 1911, his predecessor, Alanson Skinner, had reported that Four Clouds attempted to hold the dance but was stopped by the authorities; the unfinished lodge remained standing at the time of Mandelbaum's visit. Apparently, the Thirst Dance had been performed over the past three to four years, but only on a localized level.<sup>64</sup> Mandelbaum's interpreter informed him that the trespass law was still enforced and that he had even been arrested and fined for attending a Thirst Dance at Goose Lake in 1933.<sup>65</sup>

According to Mandelbaum's notes, approximately six tipis and twenty-five tents of people attended the 1934 dance held in a pasture bordering the Ochapowace and Kahkewistakaw reserves. Tepaw'tath, or Calling Man, had sponsored the ceremony in fulfillment of a vow to obtain the recovery of his ill daughter.<sup>66</sup> That the celebrants were under considerable pressure from the department is evident from the fact that a lawyer had been hired to prevent any interference by the Indian agent or Christian Indians. One of the singers, Harvey King, showed

Mandelbaum two letters from their lawyer that stated that ". . . he was looking after their interests in regard to the Sun Dance."<sup>67</sup>

While it is difficult to ascertain the extent or details of ritual change or loss from Mandelbaum's notes, Harvey Kenny did explain to the anthropologist that participants could not complete all of the associated rituals since their ceremony had been reduced in time from four to two days.<sup>68</sup> Mandelbaum was also provided with some evidence for changes in the Little Pine Thirst Dance. These modifications included the deletion of "piercing", the tendency of some dancers to take a drink of water when they left the lodge unescorted, and the absence of the practice of climbing into the Thunderbird's nest located at the apex of the sacred pole.<sup>69</sup>

At the Crooked Lakes Thirst Dance, a new element consisting of a small Christian service had evidently been incorporated into the proceedings. Participants included members from the audience, Thirst Dancers, and the headman, Harry Fauch who was ". . . standing beside Mr. Ross as one of the pillars of the Church."<sup>70</sup> Surprised at this "intrusion" of the missionary, Ross, Mandelbaum recorded the event as follows:

Much to my amazement, the principal of the church school at Round Lake was there with Mrs. Taryon, the matron, [and] Mr. Taryon. They had brought with them about twelve of the school girls in blue skirts, brown stockings, brown sneaks, and faded midday [sic] blouses. . . . The singing and dancing stopped and some of the spectators and dancers went outside to the place just south of the lodge entrance where Mr. Ross was to conduct the services. I asked Michael if the people resented it and he emphatically stated that they did not at all. . . . First the school girls sang a hymn. Then Mr. Ross read the 45th Psalm, 'Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving.' Then Mr. Ross gave a short sermon . . . After the sermon

the girls sang 'Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so.' Then the dancing begun again.<sup>71</sup>

The minister's sermon was directed towards the more traditional members of the congregation and they were reminded that the Christian God and Jesus were "disappointed" in the way they worshipped.<sup>72</sup>

Some observations of a more general nature were also included in Mandelbaum's notes. In addition to participation by men and women, children were also dancing in the ceremony. A four year old boy had fasted for half a day and was dancing ". . . his eagle bone whistle just barely clearing the booth fence. . . ."<sup>73</sup> Food was distributed daily to celebrants who had not vowed abstinence and while not referred to in this particular set of Mandelbaum's notes, Giveaways undoubtedly occurred. Mandelbaum was also concerned with documenting the introduction of Euro-Canadian goods into the Dance and accordingly reported any substitution of traditional items and clothing.<sup>74</sup>

In 1935, Mandelbaum attended the Little Pine Thirst Dance at which there numbered 100 to 120 tents. As in the case of the Crooked Lakes Dance, his notes reveal local anxiety over possible departmental interference since it had been rumoured that the farm instructor from Red Pheasant was intending to disperse people. As noted previously, the Chief assumed all responsibility should trouble occur.<sup>75</sup> A number of public orations made during this ceremony referred to the "hard times" which people were experiencing and the Shouter advised celebrants to continue in their faith in the power of the Thirst Dance and to be mutually supportive of one another.<sup>76</sup> The latter message specifically referred to the necessity of maintaining the traditional form of

political economy based upon the kinship and friendship network system. After this particular ceremony, some twenty tents moved to another location where a Medicine Tipi (Sapohtowan) ceremony was held by "Blind Kennedy" who had vowed to build the lodge as propitiation for relief from illness. Food was distributed, sacred mementos of deceased relatives were honoured, and handgames were played.<sup>77</sup>

Children were also actively involved in the Little Pine ceremony. A ten-year-old girl relieved an adult female dancer and a three-year-old boy helped to distribute the first drink to fasting dancers. Having been cured from his illness, this was the child's way of demonstrating "his kindness" to the Thirst Dance sponsors.<sup>78</sup> Many of the children in the camp were wearing sacred facial paint for the duration of the ceremony. Thus, at both Thirst Dances attended by Mandelbaum, parents were not heeding departmental warnings to refrain from allowing their children to participate in traditional ceremonies.

Finally, offerings of goods continued to be an important part of Thirst Dances and while Mandelbaum was not prevented from witnessing these occasions of exchange, he was asked to refrain from making notes, taking photographs, or mentioning these activities in his forthcoming published monograph. In one instance, the leader of the Thirst Dance refused to allow Mandelbaum's interpreter to accompany him into a lodge where a number of offerings were being given. As a further precaution, the anthropologist was reassured that there was "no evil" associated with what he was about to see. Material offerings included blankets, clothing, flour, and horses, the latter being symbolized by the distribution of twigs. Mandelbaum, as a demonstration of good faith

added his own sweater to the offerings.<sup>79</sup>

In his published monograph, Mandelbaum noted that a general gift-giving also occurred at the conclusion of the Little Pine Thirst Dance and that these goods were distributed to relatives and visitors. The socio-economic and political implications of the Giveaway were evident in the observation that while the goods were formally acknowledged as "offerings to the supernaturals," the gifts brought both blessings and prestige to their donors.<sup>80</sup> Muskwa, the eldest man residing at Little Pine, informed Mandelbaum that about twenty-years ago, horses were popular giveaway items but they were rarely given now because of their scarcity.<sup>81</sup> As a variation of the Thirst Dance, the Rain Dance also involved numerous Giveaways.<sup>82</sup>

The persistence of the Thirst Dance as late as the 1930's attested to the continued relevance of Plains Cree religious ideology and led Mandelbaum to conclude that it remained an "active force" in Plains Cree life.<sup>83</sup> Sponsoring a Thirst Dance was still considered to be the ". . . most difficult vow to fulfill and hence, the one most likely to bring about the desired result. . . ." <sup>84</sup> For Mandelbaum, the importance of the Thirst Dance was reflected in the many requests he received from the Plains Cree to lend his support against the repressive activities of the churches.<sup>85</sup> While conversion to Christianity undoubtedly precluded the attendance of some, many Plains Cree perceived little inherent contradiction in combining their traditional belief system with Christianity. Mandelbaum observed that at least one Catholic Indian from the Poundmaker Reserve refrained from attending Thirst Dances, but this religious separation was not generally practised by others. At a

1934 Thirst Dance, for example, Jim Kacucimau (One Who Rattles) was dancing in fulfillment of a vow but also had previously vowed to join the Anglican Church if he was cured of his illness (he had brought his wife and child to be baptized at Easter).<sup>86</sup> Christian Indians were often present at Thirst Dances even if only to provide support for their relatives.

The predominant reasons for the sponsorship of the Thirst Dance were health-related; that is, an individual was either seeking a cure for illness or offering a thanksgiving for a cure that had been received during the year. This concern for health was central to most Thirst Dances, as indicated in Mandelbaum's documentation of a life history of Fineday's Dances (Sweet Grass Reserve). Fineday's first Thirst Dance was vowed upon the illness of his son, and six subsequent ones were performed as offerings for spiritual aid in the curing of his grandchildren. Having vowed a total of eight dances in his lifetime, Fineday informed the anthropologist that the final one would be used for his own salvation:

The only time I'll use that last one is when I am dying or afraid like that. I have done it only when there is some sickness going on among my grandchildren. That is what we give to the children. But I nearly starved to death when I was getting the power. I was weak for a long time.<sup>87</sup>

The importance of the Thirst Dance as a healing ceremony and the traumatization of fearful would-be-celebrants were substantiated by anthropologists working among other groups. During the summer of 1914, Wilson Wallis was conducting research among the Dakota and questioned a number of people in the Griswold and Portage la Prairie areas regarding the reason for their participation in the Sun Dance.<sup>88</sup> In order to

avoid detection, shortened versions of the dance were being performed during the night. The trauma brought on by fear of government intervention was detailed by Wallis in one case study involving a man who believed that his own illness and the loss of his six children were attributable to an unfulfilled vow:

The singers wanted me to continued the dance through the day, but I told them I was afraid to do this because it was against the law to have the Sun Dance. When I danced only at night the white people would not be apprised of it . . . the wakan beings knew it was contrary to the law: So it would be all right if I performed it at night and not at all through the day.<sup>89</sup>

In a second case study, a man, suffering from illness and the loss of two children, firmly believed that his death would be imminent if he could not dance. In an announcement to those present at his dance, in 1901, he explained the importance of fulfilling sacred customary law:

I had been told to do this by the thunders more than a year ago. Now it is too late to profit much by performing it for my boy is dead and my girl is dead. . . . Yet, I wish to save my own life. I would have done it at the time appointed a year ago, but for the fact that it is against the law and I was afraid to do it. But now I must do it. If I have to go to jail it will not matter for I shall save my life and I shall feel better when it has been done. . . .<sup>90</sup>

No self-mortification in terms of "piercing" took place in the Sun Dances recorded by Wallis.<sup>91</sup>

One message constantly communicated to the anthropologists was that the fulfillment of a sacred vow to perform the Thirst or Sun Dance was a serious matter; that is, it was a question of life and death itself. Like their Dakota neighbours, the Plains Cree were also severely traumatized if they were unable to fulfill their religious vows. This



fact was not appreciated by administrators or missionaries who remained oblivious to the spiritual depth of indigenous religious ceremonies. According to one report, the wife of the prominent Plains Cree leader, Fine Day was "stunned" when the department prohibited her husband's Thirst Dance and ". . . . went into a state of complete shock, 'as though she had been shot'."<sup>92</sup> When he was interviewed by Mandelbaum, another Plains Cree elder, Coming Day of the Sweet Grass Reserve, described two disasters that had occurred as a result of his failure to complete a Thirst Dance.<sup>93</sup> His account is noteworthy because in this instance, spiritual retribution for the non-fulfillment of a Thirst Dance vow was not exclusively a Native experience. After having been prevented from holding a Thirst Dance some years ago by a police officer, Coming Day reported that his wife died ten days later and the policeman's own horse rolled over the offending officer. According to Coming Day, ". . . the one who sent the policeman should have had the evil on him but it didn't turn out that way."<sup>94</sup>

Persistence in the belief of the Thirst or Sun Dance ideology as a strong regenerative force is attested not only by its continual performance by groups such as the Plains Cree, Blood, Blackfoot, and Plains Ojibway, but also by its more recent adoption by other cultures such as the Buffalo Point Anishinabe (Ojibway) in Manitoba. Adopted by a ritualist to counteract a flu epidemic in the early 1920's this particular dance involved the "illegal" act of "piercing". Approximately ten men were "pierced" during the ceremony, the sacred skewers being passed through the shoulder rather than the chest area; these skewers were in turn attached to ropes suspended from the central

sacred pole.<sup>95</sup> In a police report, Mayzenahwegeshick of the Manitou Reserve testified that the dance was new to the area and had been secretly performed during the night in a secluded area in an attempt to avoid detection. William Oshie and Tom Lightning of Gull Bay, Lake of the Woods, testified that the dance witnessed at Buffalo Point was similar to the Thirst Dance practised many years ago by western Indians, and in fact the presiding ritualist had been described as a "tall middle-aged Indian from the west."<sup>96</sup>

While its curative powers and hence, popularity, may have been enhanced in importance as a result of the higher incidences of illness among reserve populations, the essence of the ideology of the Thirst Dance as practised in the twentieth century was consistent with its original function as a world renewal ceremony. Before the disappearance of bison herds, the reproduction of these animals and their natural environment -- the prairie grass, sun, and rainfall -- figured prominently in the symbolism and ritual content of the ceremony. The regeneration of the earth was equally relevant to struggling Indian agriculturalists who depended upon favourable environmental conditions for productive crop yields. Accordingly, prayers were often offered at Thirst Dances for abundant crops. In a letter written by Reverend James Donaghy, a missionary working on the Swan Lake Reserve, Manitoba in 1928, this correlation between the performance of Thirst Dance and agricultural productivity was discussed at some length:

. . . the Manitou ordered them to keep up certain ceremonies, and if they failed to do so their crops would fail. The old folks firmly believed this and it makes it difficult to influence them to accept Christianity. The Sun Dance was one of these old ceremonies, and they felt very sore when the

Government ordered it to be suppressed because of the ordeal they had to go through. [self-torture] . . . At Indian Springs when we went there they told us that for seven years they had no Sun Dance, and for these seven years their crops had dried out; then they began again and the rain was sent by Manitou. This change came just when we went to that Reserve, and they held two of these dances, then they were forbidden. They are out for good now. But the fact that by a coincidence wet seasons returned the year they re-established the dance convinces them to the reality of the order issued by Manitou.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the fact that Thirst Dances could be performed in their "legal" form within the boundaries of reserves, pressure from agents and missionaries for the termination of ceremonies either encouraged people to perform them in secrecy or to abandon their practices. In his study of the Canadian Dakotas, James Howard wrote that the Sun Dance had not occurred on most Canadian Dakota reserves since 1910.<sup>98</sup> There are, however, reports of Dakota attending Plains Cree Thirst Dances. In their biography of the Plains Cree elder, John Tootoosis, Sluman and Goodwill described the efforts of the Plains Cree to hold their ceremonies in secluded spots in order to avoid detection.<sup>99</sup> For example, an investigation of a Thirst Dance held on the Thunderchild Reserve in 1929 revealed a gathering of some one hundred off-reserve celebrants camped in a deep coulee in the northeast corner of the reserve.<sup>100</sup> This type of gathering probably occurred frequently and escaped the notice of agents and missionaries, particularly on those reserves that were distant from administrative centres or were difficult to travel to by road.

From all available documents, it is evident that Giveaways were continuously performed throughout the period. Mandelbaum noted that the distribution of goods and sacrifices of material offerings were features

of all the ceremonies that he witnessed. The Giveaway Dance, in particular, was a vital aspect of winter ceremonial cycles and Mandelbaum reported its performance on the Little Pine Reserve in 1935 stating it was ". . . secretly held lest the Department got wind of it."<sup>101</sup> Although Giveaways traditionally occurred on an inter-band and inter-reserve level, prohibitions in Section 149 tended to make the practice more localized and perhaps more private affairs. During the summer months, Giveaways also occurred on occasions of large gatherings of people such as Treaty Days or even agricultural fairs. In 1917, agent James Macdonald reported that the Dakota from Griswold held Giveaways while attending the Brandon Fair; both Giveaways and other ceremonies were performed prior to, and after exhibition hours. Among the items exchanged at these events were horses, buggies, and "things of value," many of them being given to relatives and visitors residing in the United States where they were difficult to trace by the authorities.<sup>102</sup> During the same year, Henry Two Bears reported that the Round Plains Dakota were holding dances in the Presbyterian missionary's residence and the schoolhouse where giveaways of property and money took place.<sup>103</sup> Other forms of exchanges such as horses, were difficult to detect since their transfer of ownership was represented with marked sticks. The actual transfer occurred after the ceremony.

Giveaways were also prevalent at the Midewiwin ceremonies held by both the Ojibway and the Cree. In a petition sent to the department by members of the Midewiwin at Wabigoon in Ontario, the redistribution of goods was explained in comparative terms with offerings made in Christian churches and the value system and pattern of behaviour upheld by

Midewiwin Society members were equated with the Ten Commandments:

For a year or so before one seeks to be admitted to this ceremony he saves what he can and presents at the time of this ceremony his presents as a thank offering to the Great Spirit. The presents should all be new, such as blankets, prints, new cooking pots, etc. He also presents a pot of the choicest food.

The one to be initiated is expected to spend several days at the time of the ceremony becoming acquainted with and memorizing many of the details of making and using different medicines. He is also taught or told about the Indian religion.

The presents are hung up on display. The ceremony is carried on and at the finish these presents or thank offerings are distributed among those who participated in the ceremony. No cash is donated or paid by any one. The presents are simply given as a peace offering to the Great Spirit, in the same way as the white man gives donations to his Church or to his God and are distributed to those in need.

We cannot understand why any objection could be raised by the white Father to such a ceremony. The Ten Commandments are taught and when properly understood the doctrines as taught, are much the same when applied to the Indians as are taught by the ministers who preach to the white man. . . .<sup>104</sup>

These petitioners closed their defence of the Midewiwin by requesting an appeal of the Giveaway provision in Section 149.

In order to reach a compromise with the department regarding Giveaways, some petitioners from Alberta reserves suggested certain modifications to their ceremonies. In correspondence signed by over fifty people, the Peigan leader, Bull Plume proposed in 1915 that a differentiation be made between Indian goods and non-Indian goods and that a monetary limit be imposed upon cash redistribution (two dollars).<sup>105</sup> Indian-made goods included dance outfits, coats, moccasins, beaded belts, beaded neckwear, stone pipes, tobacco, and "things we can do without" such as pocket knives, handkerchiefs and

blankets; non-Indian goods were listed as wagons, harnesses, rigs, saddles, horses, cattle, furniture, and stoves.<sup>106</sup> As evident in this listing those goods associated with an indigenous (including fur trade) economy are being categorized differently from items involved with government-controlled agricultural programs and associated Euro-Canadian lifestyle. The line of reasoning presented in this petition was not seriously considered by the department since it presumed to perpetuate indigenous aspects of the political economy. To what extent the Plains Cree might have differentiated between "Indian" and "non-Indian" goods in their Giveaways cannot be ascertained from available documentation, however, this process does deserve attention by researchers.

Even the redistribution of goods on Christian occasions of celebration were suspect. In 1915, Arthur White Elk of Gleichen, Alberta, asked for permission to hold a "Christmas Tree Dance," contending that Indians had the same right to celebrate Christmas gift giving as non-natives.<sup>107</sup> This petition was denied on the grounds that the wording of Section 149 did not permit Indians to give gifts to friends during "any Indian festival, dance or ceremony."<sup>108</sup> Earlier in the same year, Daniel Little Axe, on behalf of the Blackfoot in Gleichen, informed the department that they would refuse to recognize the validity of regulations against their Giveaways.<sup>109</sup> In an earlier petition, Little Axe attempted to make a case for the more lenient implementation of the pass system, a move which would have facilitated the expansion of the reciprocal exchange network among the Blackfoot, Peigan, and Blood.<sup>110</sup>

## New Expressions of Worship

While certain Plains Cree traditional ceremonies were modified and persisted at least into the 1930's (Thirst Dance, Smoking Tipi, the Masked Dance or Wihtikokancimuwin, Giveaway, Prairie Chicken Dance, Round Dance, and Midewiwin), others were no longer celebrated. During this period, new forms of dancing were also introduced. One such ceremony was the Pitcitciwin or "Moving Slowly Dance", actually a variation of the Omaha or Grass Dance. This dance was, and still is, commonly referred to as a Pow-wow. Introduced to the Plains Cree by the Assiniboine around 1885, the Pitcitciwin had, by the 1930's, "supplanted" many traditional elements of ceremonialism and its more secularized form provided ". . . the most common social activity of reservation life."<sup>111</sup> The more "traditional" version of the Pow-wow was formally organized and incorporated the ceremonial redistribution of goods at several levels. In his study of this type of Pow-wow, Mandelbaum noted that there was a dance hall on each Plains Cree reserve for these winter dances. The dance was given by a "dance chief" and a hierarchy of officials (crier, servers, "whip owners," "drum leg owner," and a tobacco handler). As in the earlier-period traditional forms of ceremonies, spiritual prerogatives were related to the acquirement of status through public demonstrations of liberality such as in the distribution of food and tobacco at dances. The transfer of spiritual prerogatives associated with the "hierarchical" positions also involved ceremonial exchange.

During the performance of the Pow-wows, numerous types of gift exchanges occurred to publicly validate one's social, economic,

political, or spiritual status, to designate and reinforce kinship networks, and to establish new relationships. As in the case of the more traditional forms of Plains Cree ceremonies, this dance embodied the essence of the indigenous political economy. One's position within the kinship network and society in general was demonstrated and reaffirmed through customary law in that the range of possible partners for specific types of dances was regulated.<sup>112</sup> While not common, these "partner" dances reinforced the indigenous system of obligatory kinship responsibilities (the foundation of the social relations of production) and served to indicate which families had a greater access to strategic resources (status accrued from the redistribution of these resources). This process was related by Solomon Blue-horn to Mandelbaum in the following description of the "partner" dance:

If you consider yourself to be a worthy man (i.e. one of some status) you can choose a woman and dance next to her. You give her something valuable. Then her husband tells her to invite you (to dance) and to give you something in return. . . .

There are some women with whom everyone is afraid to dance. Their husbands are well off and both husband and wife are brave. If you touch her with gifts she'll give back much more than she gets. When a woman thinks that a man can't keep up with her in gift giving, she won't dance with him any more.

To cut in, you follow the woman around the circle for a few steps. The person dancing to the right of her will hesitate a bit and you step right in. But, if the person to the right is the woman's mother, or her father's sister, or her sister, a man cannot cut in. And a man cannot cut in to dance with any of his woman relatives except his nitcimus (female cross-cousin) or nitim (sister-in-law). After the dance the man gives the Shouter the gift. The Shouter stands in the middle and announces who gave what to whom.<sup>113</sup>

Because both men and women were prohibited from dancing with potential parallel kin relatives the choices of partners reinforced the norm of



cross-cousin female-male sexual relations. To this present day, the Pow-wow has evolved into a variety of forms and new dance societies and songs have been introduced.<sup>114</sup> In many areas, the more secularized version of the Pow-wow has become predominant and is characteristically commercial with its program of dance competitions and monetary prizes.

Two other dances were introduced during this period. The "Tail Wagging Dance" was brought to Saskatchewan by those Plains Cree who had fled to the United States after the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885. Men and women danced as partners in a style very similar to Euro-Canadians and gift exchanges were made between those who danced together.<sup>115</sup> The "Tea Dance" or Kickwepehtawin, involved the social consumption of a drink made from berries and tobacco mixed with tea. Mandelbaum wrote that this dance was popular among the Plains Cree in the early twentieth century.<sup>116</sup> Other groups also adopted new forms of dances. For example, anthropologist James Howard recorded the introduction of the Grass Dance or Pow-wow, the "Night Dance," "Dragging-foot Dance" or "Round Dance," and the Kahomni or "Turnabout Dance" among the Canadian Dakota.<sup>117</sup> Gift exchanges were also important components of these dances.

New forms of ceremonialism also involved religious syncretism, that is, the blending of traditional and Christian forms of worship. In 1924, Barristers Trotter & Co. wrote to the superintendent of Indian Affairs on behalf of a deputation of some twenty "leading" Indians from the Muscowpetung, Piapot, and Pasqua Reserves for permission to hold a joint "Revival Meeting."<sup>118</sup> It was stipulated that the meeting was neither a "Sun Dance" nor a "Giveaway." Its purpose was to pray for the

regeneration of the earth and the community as well as to instil a sense of spirituality in the younger generation:

As explained by the chief Indians the desire is to revive the spirit of Christianity among the younger element whose present indifference to prayer causes their elders considerable concern. The Indians of course have their church services, but, as is generally the case among whites, these do not attract the young men and women. The Indians recall how, when they had their own primitive gatherings, remarkable beneficial results (as it seemed to them) were thereby wrought. Misfortunes left them and they had abundant crops. They hope by this joint revival both to influence their younger generation for the better and also to obtain again abundant and successful harvests.<sup>119</sup>

Sensitive to the possible objections that might be raised by the department, these petitioners provided a detailed list of activities in an effort to avoid interference.<sup>120</sup> The "revival meeting" was to be led by four elders who would spend the first two days of the ceremony conducting a "prayer ceremony" in a tent holding forty to fifty people. On the third day of the four day celebration, the petitioners advised that Cree hymn books would be used. The singing was to be accompanied by numerous addresses on "right living." They also assured the department that no "endurance tests" would be performed and they were particularly careful to point out that no "excessive" dancing would be tolerated -- they stated that instead,

. . . trained and instructed volunteers [representing a choir] [will] rise in their places in the front circle and sing songs of praise and thanksgiving. While they sing they will keep time to the tunes with their feet. There will be no jumping about, however. This singing will last four of five minutes at a time.<sup>121</sup>

Accompanying this petition was a covering letter from their hired barristers who formally supported the request, stating that "it is

evidently a desire to satisfy religious instinct rendered stronger by times of stress."<sup>122</sup> Despite the obvious syncretic nature of this version of the Thirst Dance (by including Christian content), Ottawa deferred the decision to Graham who typically denied the petition.

In addition to combining indigenous and Christian practices as illustrated in the aforementioned instance, a few chose to adopt another syncretic form of worship by joining the American Indian Peyote religious movement (later known as the Native American Church). While there is reason to believe that some Canadian groups were already familiar with the healing properties of peyote, its use in the performance of rites associated with the Peyote religion was apparently unknown by officials until the 1930's. Anthropologist James Howard recorded the presence of the Peyote religion in the late 1930's for a number of Dakota reserves in Manitoba, including Sioux Village, Sioux Valley, Oak Lake, and Long Plain.<sup>123</sup> In addition, permission for the use of hallucinogenic peyote in a ritual context was requested by celebrants from Griswold, Manitoba in 1941.<sup>124</sup> Subsequent departmental inquiries revealed that its use was confined to southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba Dakota reserves with concentrations of adherents in the Griswold and Pipestone areas.<sup>125</sup> In 1952, the consumption of peyote in connection with rituals associated with the Native American Church was reported as an occurrence among members of the Alberta Cree band led by Louis Sunchild. Sunchild had received his formal training from the Rocky Boy Cree in Montana and the church membership numbered approximately fourteen adherents.<sup>126</sup>

The growth of the Native American Church movement in the prairie

region is difficult to document through the department's files. However, correspondence monitoring Sunchild's activities indicate that he visited the North Battleford area in 1954 and that he and George Necotine of the Red Pheasant Reserve in Saskatchewan had hired a lawyer to apply for a legal charter for the Church.<sup>127</sup> The Native American Church was officially incorporated (40-50 members) on the Red Pheasant Reserve under the Saskatchewan Benevolent Societies Act in 1954. Other reserves mentioned in association with the Church were the Mosquito and Grizzly Bears Head.<sup>128</sup>

To what extent the rise of Native American Church was related to the repression of traditional forms of worship is not discernible from the available information, and deserves further investigation. Its presence, nonetheless, suggests that some viewed it as a viable alternative to both indigenous practices and Christianity. Still, for others, no differentiation was made between the various practices. In other words, one could still follow the Peyote Road and maintain allegiance to both indigenous religious forms of worship and Christianity. Such was the case of one of Verne Dusenberry's informants, a Plains Cree leader who participated in the ceremonies of the Native American Church while visiting relatives in Rocky Boy, Montana:

'There are no conflicts in religion', says one of my informants. Since we are all the children of one God, whether it is Ki-sei-men'-to or the God of the white man, it's all the same thing. So a man can be a Catholic and a leader of the Spirit Lodge or the Smoke Lodge or the Sun Dance. He is just following the instructions of the Creator in different ways. He can also be a leader of the peyote church, for here again, one is just following the Creator who had put all this power in Peyote. You see, he can take

part in all three of these ways of doing things, for all the prayers lead to the same place in the end.<sup>129</sup>

In summary, during the period 1914 to 1945, prairie Indians were not successful in obtaining a formal repeal of Section 149 of the Indian Act. This was largely due to their relative political powerlessness within the Canadian state. Their participation in the mobilization of a national political organization was subverted through the monitoring of their meetings by the state in an effort to defuse any concerted activism against the government. During this time, even non-Native political activism such as the socialist-oriented movements of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F) and the Social Credit Party were highly suspect by the federal government. In the prairie region, Commissioner Graham was also characteristically opposed to Indian political rallies not only for their capacity to create a formally organized opposition to department programs, but also because meetings interfered with agricultural productivity by drawing men away from their farm work during the summer months.<sup>130</sup>

When political and legal venues for redress proved ineffective, a number of accommodative alternatives evolved. These involved alterations in ceremonial time, space, and content and ranged from the persistence of indigenous practices to syncretic modes of worship in which Christianity was blended with traditional ideologies. For groups such as the Plains Cree, the most successful solutions to repression were to be discovered within the context of its own cultural reality. This reality was one of demographic and social upheavals, economic poverty, racial discrimination, and political impotency. It was within

this context that the healing and regenerative powers of the collective rites of the Thirst Dance continued to be relevant. Similarly, the indigenous ideology of communally-based socio-economic reciprocal relations persisted as a means of survival on the economically underdeveloped reserves.

By the 1930's, a concern on the part of the more "traditional" and elderly members of the Native community developed over the loss of cultural values and practices in the face of government assimilative programming. This fear was particularly directed at the impact which the Indian Act regulations, in combination with Indian schooling, were having upon the younger generation. It was this emerging reality, that is, of impending cultural disintegration, which led to a concerted move to press for a repeal of the repressive legislation in the late 1940's.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER IX

- <sup>1</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 117.
- <sup>2</sup>Brian Titley, "The League of Indians of Canada: An Early Attempt to Create a National Native Organization," Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Journal, 1, No. 1 (1984), p. 54.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-63.
- <sup>4</sup>Titley, Narrow Vision, p. 102.
- <sup>5</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, pp. 69 and 72.
- <sup>6</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Sargeant F. Mann to Officer Commanding, 11 July, 1925, p. 1. In a report entitled "Re: Alleged Medicine Dance - Lizard Point, I.R.." Mann was obviously perplexed regarding his role in terminating what appeared to be "legal" dances.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., A. Messner to Minister of the Interior, 20 June, 1925, p. 1.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., Report, Corporal W. Wilkins, "Re: Chief Red Dog, (Indian) Sec. (115) Indian Act, File Hills Reserve, Saskatchewan," 8 July, 1932, p. 1.
- <sup>9</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511, Part I, Red Dog Starblanket to Mr. Scott, Feb., 1918, p. 1.
- <sup>10</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Petition from Indians of White Bear's Band to Department, 4 Feb., 1929, p. 3. This petition was accompanied by a letter from the law office of W. Williams, Barrister, Carlyle, Saskatchewan.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., Barristers Miller and Wilson to Superintendent General, 22 Oct., 1928, p. 1.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., J.D. McLean to Barristers Miller and Wilson, 5 Dec., 1928, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup>Dempsey, James, "The Indians and World War One," Alberta History, 31, No. 3 (1983), p. 2.
- <sup>14</sup>Grant, "Indian Affairs," p. 34.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., Henry Two Bears to Department, April, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., W. Murison to Secretary, 28 April, 1932, p. 1. Two Bears was a Wahpeton Dakota. See also PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, A.F. Mackenzie to George Will, 6 May, 1932.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., N. McLean to Superintendent, 17 June, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., Blackbird to Deputy Superintendent, 3 July, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4A, Superintendent Commanding "G" Division to Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1 Nov., 1920, pp. 1-2.

<sup>20</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, G. Neff to Department, 8 July, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., A. Messner to Minister of the Interior, 20 June, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4A, F. Harker to Minister of Indian Affairs, 15 June, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Duncan Scott to William Graham, 25 June 1920, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Chief Matoose to Department, 20 April, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook II, Transcription, 27 June to 1 July, 1935, Little Pine, Saskatchewan, pp. 36-37; Interpreter: Solomon.

<sup>26</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook I, 21 June to 3 July, 1934, Crooked Lake Agency, Saskatchewan, 23 June, 1934, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup>Watetch, pp. 46-47.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Grant, "Indian Affairs," p. 35.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4A, Kanipitataw, Robert Chief, Peter Thunder, Touissant, Calling Bull, John Quinny to Duncan Scott, 6 March, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., W. Sibbald to Secretary, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Watetch, pp. 46-47.

<sup>35</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Report, Sergeant, Alberta Provincial Police, Wetaskiwin Department to Commissioner, "Re:



Complaint of Indian Agent W.G. Askey, Contravention of Indian Act," 26 July, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4A, Corporal V.W. Hope to Officer Commanding, 17 July, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Telegram to Secretary, 24 July, 1924, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Report, Constable J. Murray, "Sun Dance, Big River Indian Reserve, No. 118, Sask.," 1 July, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Report, "Chief Red Dog (Indian), Sec. (115) Indian Act, File Hills Reserve, Saskatchewan," 9 July, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., J. Ostrander to Secretary, 15 July, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook I, 21 June - 3 July, 1934, 22 June, 1934, pp. 14-15.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, "David Mandelbaum Fieldnotes," "Little Pine Sun Dance," pp. 25-42, June, p. 39 in Randall Brown, M4327, Notes, Articles and Clippings re Plains Indians and Sun Dance, 1819-1977.

<sup>44</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, "David Mandelbaum Fieldnotes," July, 1935, p. III-3 in Brown.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. III-10.

<sup>46</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook I, June 21 - July 3, 1934, 24 June, 1934, pp. 17-19.

<sup>47</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A, Report, Corporal G. Gill, "Crime Report, Re: Walter Blackbird, Indian -- engaging in illegal Indian Sun Dance," 26 June, 1921, p. 1. Ruth Landes reported that the ceremony was held publicly in June of 1920 and 1921; after these years, it was held "secretly". See Ruth Landes, Ojibwa Sociology, Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, Vol. XXIX (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 110.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Report, Corporal G. Gill, "Re: Mayzenähweeshick, Indian -- engaging in illegal Indian dance," 30 July, 1921, pp. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup>Howard, Plains - Ojibway, p. 162.

<sup>50</sup>Wallis, Canadian Dakota, p. 351.

<sup>51</sup>Watetch, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A, F. Harker to Minister of Indian Affairs, 15 June, 1920, p. 2. Harker reported that an officer

had been furnished as a guard for Sun Dances in the Edmonton Agency for the last few years. See also PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Chief Ne-Shaw-Shove to Department, 29 Dec., 1924, p. 1; Ibid., A. Messner to Minister of the Interior, 20 June, 1925, p. 1 and correspondence from same, 16 March, 1926, p. 1; and Ibid., Cecil St. John to Secretary, 14 May, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Chief Ne-Shaw-Shove to Department, 29 Dec., 1924, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4, part I, Clipping from the Observer, "Letters to the Editor," n.d. (1920's). Dilworth was also accused of ". . . holding a fat job and doing nothing on the Blood reserve."

<sup>55</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 142.

<sup>56</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum Fieldnotes, pp. 17-21, "General Remarks about Sun Dance," 23 June, 1934, p. 17 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>57</sup>Watetch, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup>See the following documents: PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, S. Mikisman to Department, 15 June, 1929, p. 1; Ibid., William Graham to S. Mikisman, 25 June, 1929, p. 1; Ibid., Fergus Imlach to Deputy Superintendent General, 27 June, 1931, p. 1; Ibid., J. Ostrander to Secretary, 18 May, 1932, p. 1; Ibid., Report "Chief Red Dog (Indian), Sec. (115) Indian Act, File Hills Reserve, Saskatchewan," 9 July, 1932, p. 1; Ibid., J. Ostrander to Secretary, 15 July, 1933, p. 1; Ibid., G. Neff to Department, 8 July, 1933, p. 1; Ibid., J. Ostrander to Secretary, 15 July, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Imlach Fergus to Deputy Superintendent General, 27 June, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., J. MacMillan to Department, 7 July, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., J. Ostrander to Secretary, 15 July, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>62</sup>Tarasoff, pp. 97-98.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, pp. 17-42, "General Remarks about Sun Dance," 23 June, 1934, p. 17 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>66</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook I, June 21 - July 3, 1934, 23 June, 1934, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, pp. 17-42, "General Remarks about Sun Dance," "Sun Dance Observation," 22 June, 1934, p. 28 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 23 June, 1934, p. 41.

<sup>69</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, "Little Pine Sun Dance," 2 June, 1935, pp. 11-40, in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings." One form of sacrificial offering was to fast in the Thunderbird Nest constructed in the crux of the sacred pole.

<sup>70</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, "General Remarks about Sun Dance," "Sun Dance Observer," 23 June, 1934, p. 28 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>75</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, "Little Pine Sun Dance," June, pp. 25-42, 2 June 1935, p. 39 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 3 July, 1935, p. III-10.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. III-14.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. III-9-10.

<sup>79</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, "Little Pine Sun Dance," 2 July, 1935, p. III-1 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

<sup>80</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 198.

<sup>81</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook III, July 10 - August 6, 1934, 29 July, 1934, p. 33.

<sup>82</sup>Watetch, p. 42.

<sup>83</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 183.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>85</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Plains Cree Notebook II, June 27 - July 1, 1935, pp. 36-37.

<sup>86</sup>GA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, "General Remarks about Sun Dance," 23 June, 1934, p. 31 in Brown, "Notes, Articles, and Clippings."

At the 1934 Thirst Dance, he was described as wearing ". . . a 'porcupine' [roach] in back of head, a feathered halo-like attachment, dyed red. He wore a beautifully beaded hide shirt that came down to his knees. Wore hide leggings and beaded moccasins. His shirt was the finest example of beadwork that I so far have seen. . . . Had yellow and blue dots all over his face."

<sup>87</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, Plains Cree Notebook VII, 19 Sept., 1934, p. 27; Informant: Fineday.

<sup>88</sup>Wallis.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 351. Informants reported that "piercing" had stopped some fifty years ago at Portage la Prairie.

<sup>92</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 142.

<sup>93</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, Plains Cree Notebook VII (Transcription), 25 July, 1935, p. 32.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., Report, Corporal G. Gill, "Crime Report, Re: Illegal Indian Dance -- Buffalo Point," 25 July, 1921, p. 1. Informants stated that participants had blankets around them so that they couldn't identify who was performing the piercing.

<sup>96</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A, Report: Corporal G. Gill, "Crime Report, Re: Walter Blackbird, Indian -- engaging in illegal Indian Dance," 26 June, 1935, p. 32. Landes was told that Ne:nekawigi:jigweb attended the Sun Dance at Dominion City (Roseau River) in June 1907, and brought it to Buffalo Point after receiving instruction from Wa:bas. See Ojibwa Sociology, p. 110.

<sup>97</sup>United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, University of Winnipeg, Reverend James A. Donaghy, "The Swan Lake Reserve and Mission from 1875 to 1927," Letter, James Donaghy to Mrs. John Gowdy, 10 Sept., 1928, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup>James Howard, The Canadian Sioux (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 142.

<sup>99</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 142.

<sup>100</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Report: Constable A.J. Stretton, "Re: Indian Act - Thunderchild Reserve. Re: Alleged Sun Dance and Give-Away Dance," 2 June, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup>SA, David Mandelbaum, Fieldnotes, Plains Cree Notebook IV, July 10-16, 1935, 16 July, p. 54: Informant: Sweet Grass.

<sup>102</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Report: Sergeant F. Schuutz, "Re: Give-Away Dance - Moose Mountain Reserve, 16 Jan., 1931, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4B, part I, James Macdonald to Assistant Deputy and Secretary, 5 July, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 8481, file 1/24-3, part I, Wabigoon petitioners to Superintendent General, 1938, pp. 1-2.

<sup>105</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-3, Bull Plume and 52 signatures to Department, 11 Feb., 1915, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4, part I, Arthur White Elk to Sir R.L. Borden, 1915, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., Memorandum, J.D. McLean to Honourable Dr. Roche, 15 Dec., 1915, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-3, Petitioners via Daniel Little Axe to Department, 12 Feb., 1915, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-3, Daniel Little Axe to Secretary, 8 June, 1915, pp. 1-2.

<sup>110</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-3, Daniel Little Axe to Department, 12 Feb., 1915, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>Mandelbaum, Plains Cree, p. 203.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 216-17.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 214. Mandelbaum noted the introduction of the 'Kaupos' (Cowboys) Society on the Little Pine Reserve in 1925 and the 'Mateunesak' (Worthless) Society on Poundmaker in the 1930's. Another dance performed at the Pow-wow was the Dakota Dance acquired from the Canadian Dakota. Sham battles were part of the content of this dance. Ibid., pp. 217-18.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 218. As in the Pow-wow, the choice of partners may have been determined by kinship and status.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>117</sup>Howard, Canadian Sioux, pp. 93-99.

<sup>118</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, Trotter and Company to Superintendent General, 15 May, 1924, pp. 2-3.

- <sup>119</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>120</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- <sup>122</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>123</sup>Howard, Canadian Sioux, p. 180.
- <sup>124</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 10,243, file 1/-16-2, A.K. Coates to Secretary, 9 May, 1941, p. 1.
- <sup>125</sup>Ibid., Acting Inspector, Department of Indian Affairs to Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 19 July, 1941, p. 1.
- <sup>126</sup>Ibid., Report, Constable J. Mead to Department, 17 March, 1952, p. 1.
- <sup>127</sup>Ibid., E.W. Cousineau to R. Bottle, 1954, p. 1.
- <sup>128</sup>Ibid., W. Cockburn to E.S. Jones, 28 Dec., 1954, p. 1.
- <sup>129</sup>Dusenberry, p. 178.
- <sup>130</sup>Titley, "W.M. Graham," p. 59.

## CHAPTER X

A RELIGION OF THEIR OWN: THE FINAL CHALLENGE  
TO RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION

A time comes in a child's life when he begins to ask the reasons for the actions of his father; a time comes when he wants to know the 'why' of things. That may be a source of trouble and annoyance to the father, but not if he is wise, for he will know that it is the nature of development and should be welcomed; he will do his best to guide this newly acquired curiosity. To check it is to hinder natural development.<sup>1</sup>

"Old Keyam"

In his examination of Indian policy in the inter-war years, historian John Taylor concludes that the Department of Indian Affairs continued to be guided by the philosophical tenets which influenced decision-making throughout the nineteenth century. Any reformulation of policy was ". . . a matter of degree and application to new situations."<sup>2</sup> This consistency in policy was inherent in the historical evolution of the department and its relatively low bureaucratic profile within the federal structure. As Harry Hawthorn explained, a "mystique" surrounding Indian Affairs developed as a result of the "unique aspects of its tasks" and its introspective nature which arose from a "grass-roots pattern of career mobility":

Since outsiders had not shared this special experience of administrative contact which was the basis for understanding Indians, and since Indians were excluded by virtue of their dependent status, the Branch presumably saw little need or justification for seeking external allies. The result was an inward-looking parochialism, a partly self-chosen isolation from the overt political system of voters and politicians and the internal political system of the

bureaucracy with its competitive struggle for funds and personnel.<sup>3</sup>

This peripheral status of the department had minimized both its relative political power and its funding base.

Continuity in policy also existed because of the long political careers of departmental administrators such as Duncan Scott, J.E. McLean, and William Graham. Their careers reflected a struggle between the centralization of decision-making (Scott and Secretary McLean), and the decentralization of departmental powers (Graham); however, there was little dispute over the objectives of Indian policy. Their approach to protecting a ". . . dependent race in its land, monies and its contact with the community," remained the driving force behind departmental policies in the interwar years.<sup>4</sup> Thus, "special forms of regulation" were still deemed necessary to aid in the process "of adjusting" Indians to Canadian life.<sup>5</sup>

However, not all non-Natives were as equally accepting of Canada's Indian policy, particularly those who were in a position to view firsthand the human cost of its implementation. A brief overview of some of these sources of policy criticism will be presented to provide a general context for an examination of the movement towards support for an official inquiry into the Indian Act.

#### White Advocacy

Following a renewed, but unsuccessful effort to suppress the Potlach on the Northwest Coast in the 1920's, the Deputy Superintendent General, Duncan Scott, had persuaded the Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau to investigate the history of the implementation of Section 149.



This government-initiated investigation by Barbeau, who was at the time employed with the Anthropology Section of the Department of Mines, was in reality a substitute for a costly commission of inquiry which had been demanded by prosecuted potlachers.<sup>6</sup> In addition to using his own notes and government records, Barbeau solicited the opinions of colleagues such as Dr. Franz Boas, Charles Hill-Tout, Harlan I. Smith, Dr. Edward Sapir and those of local expert witnesses, including agent E.K. Debeck, the manager of the Alert Bay Cannery, and Dr. C.F. Newcombe, a local "ethnographer." Barbeau's expert witnesses concluded that the Potlach laws had contributed to a general demoralization which was caused by stripping away traditional customs without adequate Euro-Canadian replacements. Dr. Sapir recommended greater tolerance and suggested that "White men are not doing the Indians much of a favour by converting them into inferior replicas of themselves. . . ."<sup>7</sup> Barbeau closed his own report with a citation of Boas's cautionary remark of 1897 which advised against suppression of Potlaches. Boas had not only insisted that Whites misunderstood the Potlach but also warned officials that suppression should not be attempted without ". . . making provision for the gradual transition from the old system to a new one. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Others were also critical of the legislation as an unnecessarily harsh measure. Historian Forrest LaViolette cited several examples of opinions which reflected a mood of tolerance by political representatives, department personnel, and even some missionaries. For instance, in the Log of Columbia (1931), an Anglican journal, Reverend John Antle felt that the practice would die out with time and advised that ". . . the big stick never yet advanced the cause of Christ . . .",

and that the law would only ". . . outrage and embitter a people whose only crime is to love their own people."<sup>9</sup> In addition to supporting appeals made by representatives like Chief Johnnie Scow, Antle himself pointed out that

. . . when all is said and done, the Indian has borne with a great deal of patience an outrageous attack upon his liberty, scarcely equalled in the annals of British colonialism. The Indian is asking for a modification of the law which will allow him to use such of his old customs which are not contrary to what we call our Civilization, and I am on the side of the Indian and will do my best to see that he gets what he is asking for.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after this statement was published, subsequent articles appeared in the Log which supported a revision in the legislation.<sup>11</sup> However, despite such published critiques of government policy, Churches refused to alter their official stand against potlaching, as is evident in the consensus of the 1935 Synod of the Anglican Church in British Columbia.<sup>12</sup>

According to historian LaViolette, the House of Commons was informed as late as 1936 that the department was planning to introduce further restrictions on potlaching. The move was subverted by the Member of Parliament for Comox-Alberni, a Mr. A.W. Neill (a former agent), who represented enfranchised Indians. That Neill became the political spokesman in support of the Potlach is evident from the minutes of the final debate on the issue during the 1938 session of Parliament.<sup>13</sup> The protagonist in the debate was Mr. J.S. Taylor, the Member of Parliament for Nanaimo, who focused upon objectionable Potlach marriage practices as a lever for more regulation. Arguing that Taylor was presenting outdated descriptions for contemporary forms of

Potlaches, Neill used this opportunity to publicly question the humanity and relative effectiveness of policies of "forced" transformation.<sup>14</sup>

In 1940, Anglican Church representatives and government officials met at Kingcome Inlet, in the Kwawkwleth Agency, with Indian representatives to discuss the contemporary Potlach. Despite support from a variety of non-Native elements for a repeal of the law, the church refused to alter its official position on the question of potlaching.

One year later, another anthropologist, Frank Speck, from the University of Pennsylvania, published an article in the Crozer Quarterly entitled "An Ethnologist Speaks for the Pagan Indians."<sup>15</sup> In this statement, (a copy of which was in the department's files) Speck defended the validity of the Iroquoian Longhouse religion and condemned White intolerance of Native religions, denominational warfare, and "oppressive missionization." Speck argued that the price paid by the Indians for this aggressive interference in their lives was typified by the demoralized Iroquois, whose only solace was to be found in their own traditional belief systems. In this public critique of government policy and professional declaration of support for the preservation of indigenous forms of worship, Speck indicated that he was only one of several anthropologists who intended to ". . . defend the religious liberties of oppressed and over-propagandized peoples. . . ."16

The faith of their ancestral tradition if broken up and demoralized will, I foresee, leave a deplorable situation in its wake: loss of the will to live, moral irresponsibility, mental then physical sickness, loss of social coherence. The religious tradition of the people is usually a natural growth suited to them. The break with the past has brought crises under which many groups in a like situation have sunk into a mire

of dismay and decline.<sup>17</sup>

This general trend towards a critical re-evaluation of government policy was also evident in the popular writing of the day. Ronald Haycock, in his historical review of Canadian journalism with reference to Indians, characterizes the period 1930 to 1960 as transitional, whereby "social humanitarianism" was slowly being replaced by "humanitarian awareness and guilt".<sup>18</sup>

No longer did Christianity seem to be the great saving force and bastion of social values for the Indian. The mood was definitely one of an increased appreciation of the traditional non-Christian religion of the Canadian Indians. Optimism was not as apparent. Social and moral values were not as closely linked with Christianity. The Indian could achieve acceptable life standards without ever becoming a Christian.<sup>19</sup>

Haycock provides us with further indications of several new types of popular attitudes towards Native peoples which surfaced during this period. One popular writer he cited is Maude Bridgman who, in 1945, reported in relatively non-judgmental terms<sup>20</sup> on the revival of a Cree ceremonial held at Rochée to commemorate Second World War veterans. Some journalists attempted to promote a more positive image of Indian people by portraying them as Canada's "natural conservationists," while still others wrote exposés which correlated the impoverished conditions of reserve life with inadequate government economic support. One such writer was Richard Finnie, who had been commissioned by the government to prepare a report on the economic condition of northern Indians and to recommend policy changes. Another writer, George Stanfield Belaney (Grey Owl), provided the Canadian public with a positive, although greatly romanticized, view of Canadian Indian cultures. As Haycock

concluded, this popular journalism resulted in a heightened awareness on the part of the Canadian public of the colonial position of Indian communities:

The tragic aspect for all Canadians was this: heretofore the Indian was so isolated, the public was so unreceptive and uninformed, and the policy of the government was one of assimilation, that it was not until the 'thirties that the real conditions were finally dawning on the country. Gradually the attitude of people was becoming more sympathetic to the suffering of the native populations as the knowledge of their poverty, diseases and ignorance spread.<sup>21</sup>

Impoverished reserve conditions were largely attributed to the negative impact of Euro-Canadian society upon Indian cultures. Popular historians like Philip Godsell, a trader, while emphasizing the positive role which Indian populations played in the development of the fur trade economy, also condemned the treatment of Indians by White traders. Other writers challenged the historical depiction of Plains Indian leaders as "uncivilized" rebels who unreasonably opposed the federal government's attempts to bring law and order to the West. Mary Weekes portrayed Poundmaker as a leader who was forced to join in the Saskatchewan Uprising because of undue government oppression; still another author, Al Cooper, presented the public with an unprecedented pro-Indian account of Almighty Voice's "one-man rebellion against white civilization."<sup>22</sup> In his survey of popular literature, Haycock discovered that at least one-half of the articles dealing with contemporary Indian affairs were in fact supportive of a "new deal" for the Indian.<sup>23</sup> This "new deal" included more widespread and higher standards of education, less bureaucracy, and more opportunities for Native-initiated programs. Since wardship was equated with "second

class citizenship" rather than "special status", writers called for the full enfranchisement of Indians. Control over education by Christian churches also came under attack. For instance, political news commentator and former editor of MacLean's Magazine, Blair Fraser, partly attributed the economic marginality of Native people to the outmoded, poorly-operated, and under-funded denominational school system which had the support of a penurious government.<sup>24</sup>

Canada was not alone in undertaking a re-appraisal of its relations with indigenous peoples. Under the administration of John Collier, the United States had initiated a number of reforms which were implemented through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, including the repeal of repressive religious legislation. In 1940, Collier himself was Chairman of the North American Committee to the First Inter-American Conference on Indian Life, which was held in Mexico. The objectives of the conference delegates were to establish avenues of consultation for indigenous populations on both continents and to provide a clearing-house for information and problem-sharing.<sup>25</sup> Canada was invited to send a delegate, but declined the invitation. Departmental files also reveal that administrators were aware of policies in other areas of the world and these files include materials pertaining to South Africa, New Zealand, the United States, the International Labour Office, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.<sup>26</sup> The shifts in power in the relationships between Whites and non-Whites after the Second World War on the international scene was a factor in providing the government with an impetus to assess their own situation.

The development of an international interest in dependent peoples after World War I reached its full fruition after World War II when western imperialism retreated from its positions of control in Africa and Asia. With the liquidation of the great colonial holdings of the European powers the world was no longer a European preserve. The Commonwealth has become a predominantly non-White institution. . . . These changes have increased the salience of race in international affairs, and as a by-product have done the same for the domestic affairs of multi-racial states.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1940's, the Canadian government also began to respond to concerns regarding its own relations with Native people. In his analysis of the intellectual and political climate behind this trend, Harry Hawthorn emphasizes the shift from a laissez-faire attitude towards government functions to one in which the state assumes a more active role in the "regulation of the economy" and the "welfare" of its citizenry."<sup>28</sup> By the 1940's, the failure of the government's "custodial" approach towards its responsibilities for Native peoples had become more evident and publicized. The Department of Indian Affairs found itself in the following dilemma:

It was staffed with few professionals; its financial appropriations were inadequate; many Indian children did not go to school; much of the existing schooling was undertaken by religious orders which provided only half-day teaching for their Indian pupils; the Act governing the administration of Indian Affairs had been devised in the previous century and had undergone few amendments; the Act contained a repressive attitude to Indian cultures.<sup>29</sup>

Still, there was a lack of public debate on Indian policy. This situation has been attributed by some historians to "the apolitical context of Canadian Indian administration" and the ". . . British traditions of reticence, of letting well enough alone, of hushing up 'scandals', of trusting officials. . . ."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Native efforts

to force such a debate were curtailed by the nature of the formal status of Indians within the Canadian political system which denied them access to power at either the federal or provincial levels.

#### Native Advocacy

While the political impact of Indian organizations during the inter-war years was largely ineffective in altering Indian-state relations, there were a number of individuals in the prairie region who emerged as serious critics of the effects of Canadian Indian policy upon their people. As products of the assimilative programs themselves, these men vocalized their concerns to both the Native and non-Native public in a very directed effort towards 'conscious-raising'. Because these individuals played important roles in publicizing the plight of Indians and, with the exception of their biographers, have received little recognition from most historians, three examples will be briefly discussed within the general context of concerns over cultural disintegration and more particularly, religious repression.

Mike Mountain Horse was a Blood Indian who had attended St. Paul Mission School and the Calgary Industrial School as a child. Before 1907 and following World War One (in which he had served overseas), Mountain Horse had worked with the local police detachment. In 1933, he left his job to spend his life writing and lecturing about the culture and history of his people. He later returned to employment in 1943 as a locomotive labourer for the CPR and in 1959 he served on the Blood Tribal Council.

Encouraged to write by Canon S. Middleton, the principal of St.



Paul's School, Mountain Horse began to submit articles to the Lethbridge Herald in the late 1920's. By 1936, he had completed a manuscript entitled "Indians of the Western Plains". However, lack of public interest and the economic exigencies of the Depression prevented it from being published until it was resurrected from the archives by historian Hugh Dempsey.<sup>31</sup> Through his writing, Mountain Horse hoped to reverse the negative stereotypes in which Canadian Indians were cast by publicizing the cultural history of his people in a favourable manner. In an attempt to achieve a balanced history, he not only pointed out the destructive aspects of Indian-White relationships, but also documented the progress which the Bloods had made despite these drawbacks. While admitting that some government programs had benefitted the Bloods, Mountain Horse attributed the ability of the Bloods to adapt to historical changes to their own efforts.

For Mountain Horse, "progress" was manifested through the Bloods' willing adoption of new economic activities and good citizenry. Thus, "progress" was visible in successful stock-raising and agricultural ventures, school attendance, the building of modern homes, the use of modern transport, and the participation of the Bloods in the War effort:

. . . proof of the progress of my people during the past sixty years may be given in the following facts: By the 1930s our women folk no longer served as servile drudges; every Sunday the churches on the various reserves were filled with well-dressed Indian couples who, in most cases, drove to worship in modern, up-to-date cars, some equipped with radios. Some of our young ladies were serving as qualified registered nurses in many of the hospitals throughout Canada.

It has been a hard struggle, I must admit, for those who have helped us in the past. Still, I think some credit is due my people for the advancement they have made. We are not looking forward to the time

when the buffalo shall return. Nor are we anticipating a time when the white man shall disappear from the continent. But we are scanning the horizon for further chances of advancement and further opportunities of proving ourselves true and loyal subjects of the British Empire.<sup>32</sup>

In his manuscripts, Mountain Horse addressed the issue of religious freedom, and although he refused to condone the practice of certain rituals, he defended the right of his people to worship in the religion of their choice. He also attempted to create a greater understanding of the indigenous forms of Blood religious worship by explaining the meaning of certain practices. For instance, self-mortification was described in terms of a personal offering which was made to promote supernatural intercession for an ailing relative, rather than for the purpose of "making braves."<sup>33</sup> A noteworthy historical observation is the discrepancy between the description of indigenous worship in Mountain Horse's original manuscripts and the published version. The descriptive, negative-sounding adjectives pertaining to certain religious practices were edited out of the published version by biographer Hugh Dempsey who was personally acquainted with Mountain Horse. As Dempsey explained, negative qualifiers were used by Mountain Horse in his attempt to appeal to a White audience who persisted in viewing the Indians as ". . . bloodthirsty-individuals, yelling, whooping, and seeking to destroy."<sup>34</sup>

When Mountain Horse wrote the manuscript in the 1930s, he was aiming for a non-Indian audience which he realized was prejudiced against the oldtime pagan Indian. As a result, he tended to apologize for his own people's religious or warring practices, or hastened to assure the reader that things were different now that his people had become good Christians. . . . It was clear that Mike was a proud man and, although he considered himself to be a

member of the Salvation Army, he also supported the beliefs and practises of his tribe. His negative comments in the manuscript were not so much an indication of his feelings as they were a reflection of the attitudes of the 1930s which he believed he had to satisfy if he expected to get his manuscript published.<sup>35</sup>

In comparison, Reverend Edward Ahenakew's message to the Canadian public was more critical and less optimistic than that of his Blood contemporary.<sup>36</sup> Born on the Cree reserve of Sandy Lake, Saskatchewan in 1885, Ahenakew was educated at the mission school and later attended the boarding school at Prince Albert. He taught school for a brief period before undertaking theological training at Wycliffe College in Toronto and Emmanuel College in Saskatoon. At the age of thirty-five, he was accepted into the Faculty of Medicine in Edmonton as a student, but ill-health prevented him from pursuing a medical career. It was during this period of illness that Reverend Canon Edward Matheson of Battleford encouraged Ahenakew to collect the oral history of his people. Once his health was restored, he supervised Indian mission work in the northeastern section of the Battleford Diocese.

Ahenakew's political career involved extensive public lecturing and service as the western president for the League of Indians of Canada. Much of his energies were devoted to improving educational opportunities for his people, and he was successful in re-establishing the schools on the Little Pine and Thunderchild reserves. In 1932, he was appointed General Indian Missionary for the northern Diocese of Saskatchewan, and a year later, he became honorary Canon of St. Alban's Cathedral in Prince Albert.

In an attempt to perhaps discover his own roots and to persevere

Cree cultural traditions and history for posterity, Ahenakew collected numerous oral accounts from Chief Thunderchild. These, together with his own manuscript entitled "Old Keyam," were formally collated in 1923. It is through these writings that we receive an insight into the socio-economic and political conditions of the Cree on a highly personal level. While the character "Old Keyam" is fictitious, he serves well as a literary tool used by Ahenakew to express his own opinions on the history of Canadian Indian policy. The very name which Ahenakew chose for his elder spokesman was highly symbolic. As his biographer, Ruth Matheson Buck explained, the name "Old Keyam" captured the true meaning of the Indian condition and reflected the deliberate choice made by many Cree to simply withdraw from participation in the new order:

. . . Ahenakew saw him [Old Keyam] as "poor, inoffensive and genial", and he named him "Old Keyam", a Cree word with many shades of meaning. Ahenakew interpreted it simply as "I do not care"; but he added, "Old Keyam had tried in his youth to fit himself into the new life; he had thought that he would conquer; and he had been defeated instead. If we listen to what he has to say, perhaps we may understand those like him, who know not what to do, and, in their bewilderment and their hurt, seem not to care."<sup>37</sup>

Among "Old Keyam's" concerns was the repression of religion, although "Keyam" (Ahenakew) referred to many traditional beliefs as "superstitious" and looked to the day ". . . when the Christian Church will be strong on every reserve. . . ." <sup>38</sup> The freedom of worship was defended as a "British principle" and anti-ceremonial legislation condemned as a means to promote change. Ahenakew argued that the use of state regulations to force Christian conversion and to suppress the Sun Dance would result in Indian opposition, thus ". . . only keeping alive what would almost certainly die a natural death."<sup>39</sup> To answer

criticisms regarding ritual behaviour, Ahenakew pointed out that self-mortification was also practised by certain Christian orders, and that travelling to Thirst or Sun Dances was in essence an equivalent to Christian pilgrimages.

During his ministry, Reverend Ahenakew delivered many sermons and lectures which were designed to enhance public knowledge of reserve conditions. His addresses were published in local newspapers and more nationally-distributed journals such as The Canadian Churchman. His messages also found expression through the Cree Monthly Guide which he translated into syllabics, typeset, and distributed throughout the reserves at his own expense. A wide range of issues were dealt with as indicated by the contents of a 1923 printing of the Guide; these included: ". . . agriculture, health, the Indian Act, the League of Indians of Canada, the work of the University of Saskatchewan, and world news."<sup>40</sup> Firmly convinced that "knowledge is power," he was particularly vocal in his lobby for improved educational services for Indian children. His locally-produced press coverage of Indian conditions served to expose the inadequacies of government programs.<sup>41</sup>

The third and final example of Prairie Indian leaders who worked to create a public awareness of reserve conditions and to foster an appreciation of Indian cultures was Joseph Dion.<sup>42</sup> Of Cree heritage, Dion was born on the Onion Lake Reserve where he received his education at the Catholic Mission School. He farmed on his home reserve, and in 1916, at the age of twenty-four, became a teacher at the first school on the reserve. During the 1930's, he became politically active and was instrumental in the formation of the l'Association des Métis d'Alberta

et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, later known as the Métis Association of Alberta. He was also involved with the Indian Association of Alberta.

Dion was intensely interested in collecting and recording traditional aspects of Cree culture, and he undertook this project by interviewing friends, relatives, and historically prominent Indian personalities. During the 1930's, he developed a means to communicate this heritage through the format of a travelling lecture circuit in which the live performance of a Métis Dance Troupe became an important component. The performances incorporated both Métis and Indian music and dances. This attempt to arrest cultural loss and to undermine prejudice through cross-cultural understanding was articulated in Dion's introductory statement to his audience at Bonnyville:

As you all know the Indians are trying hard to accept the White Man's way of living, and in that they are fairly successful. But in the meantime the Indian is neglecting the customs and traditions once sacred to his forefathers. These traditions ought to be preserved as long as possible. It is therefore with this object in view that we have organised this little troupe. . . . I am sure that when you understand my people better you will agree with me when I say "long live the Indian."<sup>43</sup>

In his unpublished manuscript entitled "Index to Dances and Societies", Dion lists Cree dances which persisted into the 1930's and 1940's as well as those which had been discontinued. He was particularly concerned over the intolerance towards the Thirst Dance on the part of both Indians and Whites, and was distressed by what he perceived as a growing lack of spirituality among his own people. Thus, he observed,

What a change time has brought. Some of the Indians

now are neather [sic] white nor red. They go to church for the fun of it, the sun dance is nothing but a farce. They will waylay the poor old fellows and steal the offerings as soon as they are hung up. These men and women will openly laugh at the church and at the Indian belief. They are what we call "civilised". Why not let the old people who still cling to the old style - practice it at will, it's better than no belief. . . . The old system is going anyway. Why hasten its demise.<sup>44</sup>

Several other notations in the manuscript revealed Dion's opinions concerning the suppression of traditional customs. In the first instance, Dion noted that in future lectures he would deal with the issue of White reaction to nudity and dancing: ". . . we were forbidden to even take our shirts off. All we were allowed to show was an arm, from under a blanket we used to cover with in our parades. What about the nudists among the Palefaces of today. . . ." <sup>45</sup> Secondly, he defended traditional healing practices, particularly as they were performed by members of the Mite-wikamik or "Medicine Lodge" Society by pointing out that although Whites might deny the power of Indian "doctoring," as an Indian, he knew otherwise.<sup>46</sup> And at the conclusion of his dance descriptions, Dion made the following observation:

Re Medicin [sic], the Whiteman's version of the medicine man. Anything will stand ridicule after you've killed it. Poor overbearing Paleface, you had much to learn from the Indian, had you taken the trouble . . . to come off your high horse.<sup>47</sup>

The loss of a number of Cree values as a result of the breakdown of the traditional relations of production was also discernible through Dion's description of the Giveaway. In his comparison of the role of generosity and sharing in contemporary Giveaways with those of the past, he noted that few men of prestige were now able to resist the "temptation" of withholding material offerings from further

redistribution to enhance their own surpluses.<sup>48</sup> According to customary law, these men (and their wives) would have been responsible for ensuring that these goods were further redistributed beyond their immediate households.

All three men -- Mountain Horse, Ahenakew, and Dion -- had been educated in the White system; and while recognizing the strengths of the western world, they were nonetheless repelled by demoralizing effects of inadequate government programs and their method of implementation. Despite their obvious Christian bias, all three condemned the history of state interference in indigenous forms of worship, particularly through the use of force.

The personal efforts of these three leaders were reinforced by the growth of political organizations on the prairies. In the late 1920's, the Pasqua, Piapot, and Muscowpetung reserves in Saskatchewan collaborated to form an organization known as the "Allied Bands." This united political front developed as a response to the immediate problem of Indian land policies as they were being implemented by Commissioner Graham under the mandate of the Soldiers Settlement Act. Ignoring a warning received from the department regarding their intentions to organize, a delegation from this group had travelled to Ottawa in 1928 to demand the replacement of Graham, the creation of a Royal Commission to inquire into the administration of Indian Affairs, and the establishment of reserve schools ". . . so that the Indian way of life could survive."<sup>49</sup> Other forms of political activity were also evident during this period. In 1929, at the Onion Lake Reserve in Saskatchewan, a number of delegates representing Treaty Number Six reserves formed an



offshoot of The League of Indians of Canada known as "the League of Indians of Western Canada."<sup>50</sup> Subsequent meetings culminated in the adoption of a number of resolutions which addressed the following concerns: the residential school system, the alienation of Indian lands, religious freedom, and the right for League officers to travel and meet for discussion off their home reserves. Furthermore, delegates asked for the freedom to hold the "Sun Dance", a ceremony which they claimed ". . . has been dear to us for centuries and is still dear to us."<sup>51</sup> In 1933, a Memorandum of Resolution passed by the Chiefs, Councillors, and members of the various Bands attending a League of Indians Conference also addressed the issue of religious freedom, and resolved that

. . . as Canada has freedom of religious worship we Indians would earnestly petition you to grant our request to worship in our own way and according to our past customs the Most High God that created the world and all the beasts thereof and everything that pertained thereof, especially as we do not see anything according to our past customs, and especially that we should not be prohibited from holding our ancient Sun Dance, which should be called the Thirst Dance and the Hungry Dance. . . .<sup>52</sup>

During the late 1930's and early 1940's, a number of other bands began to formally organize into political groups, including The Indian Association of Alberta (1939), The Saskatchewan Indian Association (1944), and the North American Indian Brotherhood under the leadership of Andrew Paull (1943). Three other organizations evolved on the prairies in direct response to the need for Indian representation in the inquiry conducted by the Special Joint Committees of the Senate and House of Commons, which met during the period 1946 to 1948 to review Canadian Indian policy. These were: The Protective Association for Indians and Their Treaties, The Saskatchewan Indian Association, and the

Queen Victoria Protective Association (later known as The Federation of Saskatchewan Indians).<sup>53</sup> By 1946, under the impetus of the newly-formed CCF government (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) of Tommy Douglas, the three separate Saskatchewan organizations realigned as the Union of Saskatchewan Indians with John Tootoosis as its president. It was the representatives of this Union who would appear before the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee.

The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons,  
1946-1948

Prompted both by international developments and lobbying on the part of "numerous social organizations, churches, veterans' associations and other interest groups,"<sup>54</sup> the Canadian government appointed a parliamentary joint committee to review the Indian Act and its administration. Eight specific areas of concern fell within the mandate of the committee; these were: the fulfillment of treaty rights and obligations, band membership, taxation, enfranchisement, voting privileges, the encroachment of Whites on Indian lands, Indian education, and ". . . any other matter or thing pertaining to the social and economic status of Indians and their advancement."<sup>55</sup>

A historical overview of the meetings and the impact of the Special Joint Committee on Indian Policy has been written by Ian Johnson in a paper entitled "Helping Indians to Help Themselves - A Committee to Investigate Itself. The 1951 Indian Act Consultation Process."<sup>56</sup> Johnson concludes that the major objectives and general conduct of the committee reflected an adherence to the nineteenth century philosophy of paternalism and represented yet another effort to ". . . assisting the

Indian to assist himself to absolute equality in Canadian society."<sup>57</sup> Most important, with the exception of Andrew Paull, the President of the North American Indian Brotherhood, who was requested to appear before the Committee in 1946, no active role on the part of the Indian community was solicited or anticipated. And in fact, a motion by committee member B.H. Castledon for the creation of a national Indian committee of five members to monitor the proceedings was rejected on the grounds that such a process would impede rather than facilitate the work of the committee.<sup>58</sup> However, persistence on the part of Indian organizations resulted in delegates being allowed to appear before the committee midway through 1947 after the hearings were well underway. Johnson implies that there might have been a deliberate effort made to undermine Indian representation because bands were prohibited from using their band funds to sponsor delegates to appear before the committee.<sup>59</sup>

That Indian representatives were not involved in laying out the agenda or defining the mandate of the committee is evident in the proceedings and written briefs. While the committee generally assumed that the continuation of assimilative objectives (albeit, less forced) were still in the best interests of Indian people, most delegates lobbied for a greater recognition of treaty and aboriginal rights, increased political power through self-government and national representation, more control over the management of band financial assets, a decrease in the unilateral authority of the agent and the department in internal affairs, and a more formalized definition of the political relationship between Indian reserves and provincial governments.

In reviewing the minutes of the Joint Committee, there were few major submissions which raised the question of religious freedom. This omission may not necessarily indicate a lack of concern, but rather reflects the committee's own terms of reference. Furthermore, the attainment of the objective of self-government would have inherently allowed for the internal settlement of religious matters by the reserves themselves. The tone of those representations which were made to the committee was set in September, 1945 in a Brief submitted to the government by the Protective Association for Indians and Their Treaties.<sup>60</sup> Tracing its origins to the Allied Bands, the Association represented five to six thousand Indians residing on eighteen reserves located in four Saskatchewan agencies. In the Brief, the first item was entitled "The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Worship" and defined this freedom as follows:

This freedom should assure the Indian of freedom to his religious beliefs, and the right to practice his religion according to ancient tradition, without prosecution for the performance of rituals, so long as they do not offend against the general criminal or civil law of the land. It assures freedom to the Indian from the arbitrary imposition of foreign religious beliefs upon him, through parochial schools, or through the undue influence elsewhere, of any particular church or religious creed.<sup>61</sup>

Religious freedom was identified with other civil liberties such as the freedom of "speech", "expression", "peaceful assembly", "equality of opportunity", and the "protection of rights of minorities".<sup>62</sup> A further Subsection titled "The Indian Religion" was included in Section II, "Indian Civilization & Tradition" and contained a defence of Plains Indian belief systems. Petitioners argued that Plains Indians ". . .

were never pagans but had a religion of their own which they practiced in many cases with a great deal of devoutness."<sup>63</sup>

The repression of the sacred Sun or Thirst Dance was isolated as an instance whereby legislated regulation was based upon misconceptions of Indian religious practices. In this petition, the Sun Dance was defended as a major religious healing ceremony which was performed to effect the recovery of ill children.<sup>64</sup> The Protective Association also defended the practice of traditional forms of healing and pointed out that while Indian healers did use "mummery" in their rituals, they ". . . affected many remarkable cures, which often puzzled white medical men" and had a "remarkable knowledge" of pharmacoepia.<sup>65</sup> One other related concern voiced by the Association was the regulation of the movement of people off their home reserves and the use of the permit system. The Association noted that ". . . at one time they were practically prisoners on the land that had been allotted to them."<sup>66</sup>

All Indian submissions contained demands for an end to cultural intolerance and coercive measures involved in assimilation programs. This was the message which Chief Yellowfly, a Blackfoot witness for the unaffiliated Indians of Alberta, brought to Ottawa. Yellowfly argued that the time had come for the treatment of Indians as "fellow Canadians" rather than as a ". . . bunch of savages who must be subjected and regimented in order to get them to do anything."<sup>67</sup> He further informed the Committee that religious choice for Indian people meant that they were free to affiliate themselves with one of the Christian denominations. For example, when parents registered their children in school, they were required to indicate their Christian

religious affiliation.

That regulation overlooks the fact that some Indians very definitely have a religion of their own, which to them contains deep beauty and consolation. If an Indian is an adherent to his native religion, what are you going to do with his children? In a country that advocates freedom of religion, are you going to force that Indian to become a hypocrite by assuming a veneer of either of the religions mentioned in the Act, particularly if he is a better Indian by respecting the sanctity of his real beliefs?<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, it was this relationship of religious freedom to the Indian educational system which motivated the committee to consider the issue of religion. When questioned about the actual persistence of traditional beliefs, Yellowfly replied that even the converted continued to have faith and participate in their indigenous ceremonies, stressing the fact that ". . . the ideologies followed by some of our [religious] societies are exactly the same as are involved in Christianity."<sup>69</sup>

Similar appeals were presented to the Joint Committee by the Indian Association of Alberta and the Union of Saskatchewan Indians.<sup>70</sup> The similarity of wording which appeared in the presentations indicates that there must have been some collaboration between the two groups. In addition, a brief submitted by the United Farmers' Organization of the Stablo Tribe, Sardis, British Columbia also called for the freedom of religious worship, assembly and social gathering.<sup>71</sup>

While religious freedom was dealt with in the representations made by Indian organizations, there was no formal discussion of the issue until it unexpectedly surfaced during sessions related to the secularization of education and other services. It was evident from the reactions of committee members that they were unprepared for the forceful verbal attack which was launched against denominationally-

operated boarding schools. They were equally surprised to learn that Indians were required to declare an official affiliation with a particular Christian denomination not only in order to receive education for their children, but also, medical aid and other forms of relief distributed by churches. Native witnesses further pointed out that some of their people deliberately repressed their true beliefs in order to receive these benefits.

These criticisms were also contained in the Protective Association's formal presentation where the case was made that denominational schools had not only a negative impact upon Plains Indian communities but also served as mechanisms for religious suppression. Specific reference was made to the terms of the Qu'Appelle Treaty which obligated the federal government to assume responsibility for Indian education but in no way stipulated that Christian conversion was a condition for receiving an education.<sup>72</sup> While the Association expressed their appreciation for efforts made by Christian religious organizations to meet the needs of Indian education, they condemned the practice of ". . . the granting of benefits to be contingent upon the acceptance of one or other of the white man's faiths."<sup>73</sup> In fact, the Association recommended that ". . . all social work, including educational, relief, and other ameliorative work proceed among Indians on a non-denominational basis."<sup>74</sup>

In their interviews with the Saskatchewan Indian delegates in 1947, the Joint Committee pursued the relationship between religious affiliation and accessibility to government services. One witness, Mr. Joseph Dreaver, a former president of the Saskatchewan Indian

Association, testified on this matter in the following statement:

When these Indians who do not belong to your religions want to put their children in a school as I said the first question they are asked is, "What denomination?" Therefore, we have people on the reserves today who are marked down as belonging to different faiths, white man's faiths, and yet when the Indians hold their tribal ceremonial dances those same Indians are taking part in the ceremonial dances.<sup>75</sup>

Both Dreaver and John Tootoosis, President of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians, argued that the denominational schools system was a divisive force among their people (Chief Dreaver had a Presbyterian affiliation and John Tootoosis, a Roman Catholic background). Their statements on the problem of denominational factionalism are particularly revealing in terms of its effect upon disrupting communal co-operation and kinship relations:

Mr. Dreaver: . . . One of our Indians at the meeting held in Saskatoon pointed out although he belonged to the Roman Catholic faith he had friends and relatives on many different reserves in that territory whose children were being taught in schools run by different denominations. He said that when those children come out of school they do not mix well. He said, "Why should that be? Why can we not have a school where our children would be brought up together so that there would not be any feelings between the various churches on the reserve?" . . .

Mr. Tootoosis: In my experience trying to organize the people in every band I go to I insist on having a meeting with them, and in each band where there are two denominations and one school they have an awful time to get together. There is a difference there because they are brought up in different schools. It seems like the preachers and the Catholic priests are pulling me this way and that way. They make us fight. That is the chief difficulty in getting co-operation amongst the Indians. With proper co-operation you will get better living conditions because they will co-operate in every scheme they want to take up.<sup>76</sup>

The Joint Committee also solicited the testimony of "scientific



expertise" in the form of anthropologists, including Diamond Jenness, Dominion Anthropologist with Mines and Resources, and T.F. McIlwraith, Professor of Anthropology and the Head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. Jenness, in his evaluation of Canadian Indian policy ". . . compared the conditions of Indians in Canada to the concentration camps of Nazi Europe."<sup>77</sup> While he was highly supportive of the department's assimilation policy, Jenness felt that this could only be achieved when true social and political integration occurred and separate status was abolished. Jenness' presentation was supported by the Committee as ". . . one of the finest talks we have heard."<sup>78</sup>

McIlwraith specifically dealt with the "problem" of the retention of indigenous forms of socio-economic values and ceremonial practices. He attributed the failure of government programs to undue expectations and the social phenomenon of "cultural lag." He argued that it was a ". . . problem of the old and the new; there is the sentimental feeling of the old, and I think you have always to remember that it took a long time for our ancestors in Europe to become adjusted to modern life. . . ."<sup>79</sup> He further claimed that traditional social relations of production which bound kin to one another were partially responsible for the lack of material progress. To illustrate his point, McIlwraith cited one case in which a student was forced to sacrifice his education to help one of his brothers and referred to other examples where attempts at private entrepreneurship had been undermined by reciprocal kin obligations:

. . . an Indian has a bond of family responsibility. I have seen that on the prairies. An Indian will start up a little store or a garage or something of that nature and somebody will come in and ask for

some tobacco. Well, he had not got any money but, well, he is somebody's second cousin, therefore the storekeeper advances him credit and the next thing you know the storekeeper is ruined - ruined by his own relatives or by the claims of his own fellows. The Indian is not as hardboiled as the white man in terms of economy or industrial life.

Now that means that we have a slow progress. You cannot expect the Indian to come out of the reserve and go right into something else; you have to build slowly and bring up the group.<sup>80</sup>

Notably, certain religious practices were also described as disruptive to material progress and the Sun Dance was presented as a case in point by McIlwraith:

In the old days when the sun dance was taking place it was the great centre of attraction and everybody had to go to it. Shreds of the sun dance still carry on. And when it is going on the youngsters at home hear the parents talking about it and then get thinking about it and it interfered with their studies and their thoughts, as far as school is concerned. If somebody tries to hold what might be called a sun dance, or parts thereof, you would have the Indian youngsters with their minds not centred on other things. You see how it works.<sup>81</sup>

Despite his testimony regarding the negative correlation between material progress and ceremonials, McIlwraith cautioned Committee members against being over-critical of these interruptions in the education program or economic activities, and suggested that "... after all, we permit plenty of things to interfere with our activities."<sup>82</sup> Despite their desire to help Indian populations and their well-intentioned testimonies, both Jenness and McIlwraith undoubtedly confirmed in the official mind, that the dismantling of indigenous political economies and ceremonial life were preconditions to their material progress and integration into Canadian society.

In the end, the Joint Committee refrained from making any specific

recommendations pertaining to the issue of religious freedom. In a section of their report entitled "Other Cognate Matters," it was recommended that the ". . . validity of marriage solemnized by Indians, on Indian reserves, according to tribal custom and ritual" should be placed on the agenda for the next Provincial-Federal Conference.<sup>83</sup> Clauses in the Indian Act which were considered to be unreasonably repressive were simply removed.<sup>84</sup> Thus, those sections prohibiting ceremonial practices, attendance at rodeos or agricultural fairs, and the sale of one's produce without the agent's permission were simply dropped from the new 1951 Indian Act.

In their brief to the committee, the Protective Association had argued that any school system which coerced parents and their children to submit to Christian teachings and conversion to the detriment of their own belief system was ". . . a contravention of the most elementary right of freedom of religious belief, a freedom of worship and freedom of conscience, which are basic in every British Country."<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, it was this concern over the rights of British subjects, rather than tolerance or acceptance of the legitimacy of indigenous religious practices, which was the motivating factor behind the removal of these measures by the Joint Committee.

In a forthcoming document, "Regulations Governing Indian Schools," an amendment to the Indian Act was drafted to release parents from the declaration of denominationalism, that is, "a pupil shall not be required to receive instruction in the faith of any religious denomination contrary to the desire of such pupil's parent or legal guardian. . . ." <sup>85</sup> However, little had changed regarding the ". . .

underlying assumptions about the relationship between the majority society and the Indians"<sup>87</sup> and in 1950, the Minister of Indian Affairs, W.E. Harris, confirmed this continuity with the past by reaffirming the assimilative objective of Canada's Indian policy and the necessity of retaining "special treatment and legislation" in order to achieve this goal.<sup>88</sup>

It was evident from the testimonies provided by both the Saskatchewan and Alberta Indians that indigenous ceremonies would continue to have meaning in reserve communities. Ironically, the circumstances under which the Blood Indians discussed and drafted their formal submission to the Joint Committee was perhaps the most symbolic of the role of ceremonials in secular life. Their submission had been discussed and drafted when members of the Blood Indian Band had congregated for their annual Sun Dance on July 15, 1946.

Despite the increase of lobbying for change in Canada's Indian policy on the part of Indian spokesmen, empathetic anthropologists, and a number of other White supporters including representatives from the Christian ministry, the revised Indian Act of 1951 brought few meaningful changes. Most importantly, the underlying notions of wardship and paternalism which had been the basis for the development of British imperial relations with indigenous colonials, remained intact. As Hawthorn had indicated in his analysis of the inter-war period, the revisions contained in the new Act were more symptomatic of ". . . a spill-over of changed citizen government relationships in White society" and ". . . the domestic reaction to the demise of a world in which White skins and the possession of power were tightly correlated"<sup>89</sup> than a

change of attitude towards Indian communities.

For their part, the lack of political power on both a provincial and federal level had severely undermined the due process of consultation in the Joint Committee meetings for Indian activists. The need for greater political representation was being overcome by the development of organizations based upon White models. However, for various reasons alluded to previously, this movement was not yet effective. With specific reference to a tolerance on the part of the dominant society for indigenous forms of religious practices, the Committees' decision to delete those clauses which contradicted the principle of human rights was a pyrrhic victory. The shortcomings of this outcome is still felt by many Indian communities today who are only recently becoming more open about their own spirituality and ceremonial life following years of repression.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER X

- <sup>1</sup>Ahenakew, Voices, p. 123.
- <sup>2</sup>John Taylor, Canadian Indian Policy, p. 199.
- <sup>3</sup>Hawthorn, pp. 369-70.
- <sup>4</sup>Scott cited in Hawthorn, pp. 367-68.
- <sup>5</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6812, file 480-2-1, T.R.L. MacInnes, "The History and Policies of Indian Administration in Canada", 1946, p. 8.
- <sup>6</sup>Barbeau. Marius Barbeau had been hired to work in the Victoria Memorial Museum in 1911. He conducted many fieldtrips among Canadian Northwest Coast cultures and was responsible for acquiring extensive artifact collections for the major eastern Canadian and American museums.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 91.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>9</sup>Cited in LaViolette, Struggle for Survival, p. 92. The "M.S. Columbia" was a ship piloted by Reverend John Antle who visited villages along the coast.
- <sup>10</sup>Antle cited in LaViolette, p. 91.
- <sup>11</sup>See for example, the article entitled "The Potlach: A Plea for the Modification of the Law Prohibiting Potlaches," written by Rene Duncan for the Log cited in LaViolette "Struggle for Survival", p. 92.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 93.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 94.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>15</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6811, file 470-3-6, part 1, Frank Speck, "An Ethnologist Speaks for the Pagan Indians," The Crozer Quarterly, July, 1941, vol. xviii, no. 3, pp. 213-18.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 214.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 216.
- <sup>18</sup>Ronald Haycock, The Image of the Indian (Waterloo: Waterloo Lutheran University, 1971), p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-43. Weekes' article, "Poundmaker the Peacemaker", was published in Canadian Magazine, LXXXI (April, 1934), pp. 10, 29-30. Cooper's article, "The Brave they fought with Cannons", was published in MacLeans Magazine, LXIV (July 1, 1951) pp. 16-17, 34-6.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>25</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6823, file 494-17-2, "Final Act of the First Inter-American Conference on Indian Life," held at Patzcuaro, State of Michoacan, Mexico, 14-24 April, 1940.

<sup>26</sup>See the following files: PAC, RG10, vol. 8587, file 1/1-10-2, "Liaison - New Zealand," 1940-1952; PAC, RG10, vol. 8588, file 1/1-10-3, "Liaison - Union of South Africa," 1949-1962; PAC, vol. 8588, file 1/1-10-4, "Liaison - International Labour Office," 1949-1962; PAC, RG10, vol. 8589, file 1/1-10-6-1, "Liaison - United States," 1937-1958; PAC, RG10, vol. 8589, file 1/1-10-8, "Liaison - Royal Canadian Humane Society," 1939-1951; PAC, RG10, vol. 8590, file 1/1-10-11-1, "Liaison - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization," 1947 to 1951.

<sup>27</sup>Hawthorn, p. 362.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 360-61.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 360. At this time provincial governments were only responsible for fur and game management.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 360-61; see also T.C. Loram cited in Hawthorn, p. 360 who was contrasting the Canadian and American level of public debate on Indian policy.

<sup>31</sup>See Hugh Dempsey's biographical essay on Mountain Horse in Mountain Horse, pp. v-xi.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-10.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., preface.

<sup>35</sup>Dempsey cited in Mountain Horse, Ibid., p. x.

<sup>36</sup>Ruth Matheson Buck has collated Ahenakew's manuscripts on Thunderchild and "Old Keyam" and published them in a volume entitled Voices of the Plains Cree. Buck provides important biographical information on Ahenakew in her introductory remarks to the volume.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 140. See Appendix III for a poem written by the minister on the suppression of Plains Cree religion.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>41</sup>SA, Ruth Buck Papers, R20 II 3. See newspaper article in file entitled "Kindly, Yet Severe Criticism of Treatment of Indians is Voiced by Native Clergyman," Saskatchewan Daily Star, 1 June, 1918.

<sup>42</sup>Dion, My Tribe.

<sup>43</sup>GA, M331, Joseph Francis Dion Papers, Joseph Dion, "Programme of Old Time Dances," 1929, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., "Index, Dances and Societies," 1929, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>49</sup>Sluman and Goodwill, p. 148. The Allied Bands later became the Protective Association for the Indians and Their Treaties. Sluman and Goodwill noted that the first leaders were Ben Pasqua and Andrew Gordon (Pasqua Reserve), Harry Ball and Abel Watetch (Piapot Reserve), and Pat Cappo and Charles Pratt (Muscowpetung Reserve).

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>52</sup>Cuthand, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup>Noel Dyck, "Native People - Political Organizations and Activism," in The Canadian Encyclopedia (Edmonton: Ed. Hurtig Publishers, 1985), p. 1221.

<sup>54</sup>Ian Johnson, Helping Indians to Help Themselves -- A Committee to Investigate Itself. The 1951 Indian Act Consultation Process. Treaties and Historical Research Center (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1984), p. 15.



<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Committee member cited in Johnson, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>60</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6811, file 470-3-6, part I, "Brief of the Protective Association for Indians and Their Treaties" to the Honourable The Minister of Indian Affairs for Canada, September, 1945.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>67</sup>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, p. 143.

<sup>68</sup>Canada, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider The Indian Act, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, Number 12, Monday, 21 April, 1947, p. 552, Ottawa: 1946-1947.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Number 12, Tuesday, 22 April, 1947, p. 671.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Number 19, Thursday, 8 May, 1947, Appendix ES, "Submission of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians," pp. 956 and 983; and Number 18, Monday, 5 May, 1947, Item 11, "The North American Brotherhood of Canada," p. 854.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Number 21, Tuesday, 13 August, 1946, "Brief from United Farmers' Organization of the Stablo Tribe, Sardis, British Columbia," p. 850.

<sup>72</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6811, file 470-3-6, part 1, "Brief of the Protective Association for Indians and Their Treaties to The Honourable The Minister of Indian Affairs of Canada," September, 1945, p. 22.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>75</sup>Canada, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, Number 19, Thursday, 8 May, 1947, Witness: Chief Joseph Dreaver, former President of the Saskatchewan Indian Association, p. 960.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. Number 19, Thursday, 8 May, 1947, Witness: John Tootoosis, President of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians, pp. 560-61.

<sup>77</sup>Diamond Jenness cited in Johnson, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>79</sup>Canada, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, Number 29, Tuesday, 3 June, 1947, Witness: T.F. McIlwraith, p. 1533.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 1532.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, p. 156.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>85</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 6811, file 470-3-6, part 1, "Brief of the Protective Association", p. 22.

<sup>86</sup>PAC, RG26, vol. 70, file 39, "Regulations Governing Indian Schools," "Regulations with Respect to Teaching, Education, Inspection, and Discipline for Indian Day Schools, made and established by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Pursuant to Paragraph (a) of Section 114 of the Indian Act," Final Draft Section 8 (a-d), 14 Nov., 1952, section (c), p. 2.

<sup>87</sup>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, p. 170.

<sup>88</sup>Canada, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, Number 21, Tuesday, 13 August, 1946, Petition: Albert Many Fingers, Percy Creighton, Chief Shot on Both Sides, John Cotton, Morris Many Fingers, A.C.E. Wolf, Charlie Davis, Jim White Bull, Jack Hind Bull, Blood Agency, Cardston, Alberta, to Mr. Norman Lickers, Liaison Officer, Joint Committee on Indian Affairs, 24 July, 1946, p. 876.

<sup>89</sup>Hawthorn, p. 362.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this dissertation I have examined the Canadian government's use of religious suppression as a means to draw indigenous societies into the political economy of an industrialized state. I have addressed the shortcomings of previous historical research on the topic by investigating the issue according to an interdisciplinary approach utilized by ethnohistorians. Thus, while this study is an administrative history of the conceptualization and implementation of coercive policies against Indian religious systems, it is equally an analysis of indigenous cultural responses to these measures. In addition to the numerous historical studies that were consulted, the research conducted in the fields of anthropology, religious studies, and sociology in reference to North American Indian cultures and historical change, proved invaluable. Through the use of an interdisciplinary approach, I was able to determine some of the major implications of these policies for prairie Indians and to identify the more indirect, non-political forms of resistance that were developed as people endeavoured to retain their cultural systems and to assert their rights within the new order.

In this study, government regulations against indigenous religious systems have not been viewed simply as another instance of cultural repression or cultural imperialism, a perspective by which researchers relegate religious ideology and behaviour to a "cultural" or "social" context devoid of significant meaning in either the political or economic spheres of life.<sup>1</sup> Central to my analysis is the identification

of the relationship of Indian religious systems to the social, economic, and political dimensions of their respective societies. It is postulated that the intent and impact of the government measures in question can best be explained and evaluated by recognizing the correlation between Indian religious ideology and ceremonial behaviour with the social relationships established to support the indigenous political economy.

This approach to religious systems has ramifications for the manner in which government assimilative policies are interpreted from an administrative perspective. For as revisionist social historians have emphasized in their studies of Central and South American colonialism, such "coercive practices" are not merely occurrences of "social abuse or aberration," rather, such practices ". . . underwrote ongoing social relations of production and exchange and formed the very basis of a labor system."<sup>2</sup> To what extent this process was evident in the repression of religious practices among the Plains Cree, is a major focus of this study.

The history of Indian policy in western Canada has been compared to the development of British imperial Native policy in other White temperate climate settlement colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, and eastern Canada. In all of these areas, the incongruencies between Victorian notions of rights accorded to indigenous peoples as British subjects were consistently undermined by the political and economic exigencies of managing imperial and local colonial interests. The Colonial Office justified the need for the cultural transformation of indigenous societies within the paradigm of

Victorian humanitarianism (as indicated in the cultural evolutionary concepts of "progress," "civilization," and the idea of "moral trusteeship"). The subjugation and integration of these societies according to these principles at the same time promoted Britain's political and economic interests by facilitating colonial development within a climate of law and order.

While the colonial experiences of the Australian Aborigine, New Zealand Maori, and North American Indian varied during the earlier phases of contact, a familiar pattern of formal and informal relations can be traced. In general, a turning point in mutually beneficial economic and political relations occurred when indigenous resources were commercially over-exploited or when indigenous methods of production were no longer of value to the survival of a European colony. This situation usually developed once White settlers had established a viable self-sufficient economic base. This form of colonialism, that is, economic development through White settlement, resulted in the land itself being transformed into a commodity for exchange and led to the separation of many indigenous societies from their resource base. As the negative impact of colonization on indigenous populations became apparent, the non-military aspects of British Native policy consisted of strategies to integrate the colonized into the new political economy. For societies based on hunting and gathering subsistence activities, this integration involved major socio-economic and political changes as populations were encouraged to become agriculturalists and labourers in a state-controlled economy.

This process of transformation has been referred to by political

anthropologists as "modernization" and involves both "social differentiation" and "social mobilization."<sup>3</sup> In the indigenous societies in question, social differentiation necessitates that religious life be ideologically separated from the political structure to the point where the ". . . society is to be flexible enough to make the adjustments necessary to the constant change that is integral to the modernization process."<sup>4</sup> In this sense traditional religious systems would be viewed as antagonistic to modernization because of their perceived "conservative" tendencies. The process of "social mobilization" involves the actual dismantling of ". . . traditional social and psychological loyalties . . . so that new arrangements of society and economy may become possible."<sup>5</sup> This process may involve the total destruction of indigenous structures through assimilation or result in the persistence and reformulation of these structures to accommodate the new political economy. Implicit in the concept of modernization is the process of "political elitism" in which political and economic power are monopolized (by members of Euro-Canadian society) and centralized. Centralization is particularly evident in the development of Canadian Indian policy for its assimilative objectives required the social, political and economic reorientation of indigenous societies to the state:

Centralization requires, first of all, an ideological transformation in which at least some local loyalties are shifted to a national government, or, more likely, one in which traditional groups begin to perceive the benefits accruing to them through the support of a national government.<sup>6</sup>

Considered within the conceptual framework of the process of "modernization" (capitalist expansion), the intent of Britain's Native

policy and Canada's Indian policy was to facilitate social differentiation, social mobilization, political elitism and centralization. The role which religious repression played in this colonial process in Australia, New Zealand, and North America warrants further study and the scholarly literature associated with this aspect of colonialism is virtually non-existent.<sup>7</sup> Recent works from Australian researchers as exemplified in Erich Kolig's The Silent Revolution: The Effects of Modernization on Australian Aboriginal Religion are beginning to establish relationships between religious transformation and national economic development policies.<sup>8</sup> However, even these efforts do not contain systematic examinations of the history of government policy in this fundamental aspect of indigenous life.

From the general histories on colonial policy in Australia and New Zealand, it is evident that administrators were concerned about the role of tribal elders, ritualists, and customary laws in the persistence of indigenous cultural values and practices. Often referred to categorically as "local customs" or "superstitions," religious systems were subjected to imposed controls because they offended moral sensibilities, posed a threat to lives of colonists by providing mechanisms for political (military) opposition, and interfered with the government's desire to transform the kinship-based social relations of production and exchange into the capitalist mode of production. The Maori funerary rite, the Tangi and religious movements such as the Hau Hau religion have been cited as examples of religious behaviour which were suppressed. In Canada, as in other areas of the world, government intervention in religious life also involved the support of Christian

missionization by colonial administrations.

The Canadian approach to the suppression of indigenous religions was most comparable to the policies instituted by the United States government. By 1883, a system of tribal police and the Courts of Indian Offences had been established on the Indian reservations. Although this administrative arm of the federal government had no legal basis, the "Rules for the Courts of Indian Offences" outlawed the Sun Dance ceremony and the Scalp Dance on the grounds that their performances interfered with the "civilization" process and were "repugnant to common decency and morality."<sup>9</sup> By the mid-1880's, Wild West Shows and similar commercialized exhibitions which glorified "savagery" and exposed Indians to the more "unsavoury" elements of White society, also came under attack. While no specific legislation was introduced, in 1889 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Oberly, instructed his agents to use "every legitimate means" to prevent Indian involvement in such shows.<sup>10</sup> In 1892, on the recommendation of officials in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Commissioner Thomas Morgan, introduced a regulation designed to discourage the performance of specific ceremonies (Sun Dance, Scalp Dance, and other similar feasts). First-time offenders were to be denied their rations for ten days and subsequent offences were punishable by the further withdrawal of rations for a period of ten to thirty days or by imprisonment for the same duration.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of Giveaways, the Canadian legislation did not prohibit the performance of the Sun Dance ceremony or other ceremonies in their entirety. The United States government outlawed the celebration of both the Sun Dance and the Scalp Dance.



As White settlers advanced into the northern Plains and increased the pressure on Indian lands, more regulations were enacted as part of the civilization program. In 1901, the infamous "short-hair order" was issued by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to force European-educated males to cooperate with administrators and to reject their traditional lifestyles.<sup>12</sup> At the request of missionaries and humanitarian reform groups, other restrictions were adopted by the Indian Bureau in the early 1920's. On April 26, 1921, Circular 1665 designated the Sun Dance and "so called religious ceremonies" that involved self-mortification, the use of alcohol or drugs, and "excessive performances" that were considered to be health hazards or interfered with work, as Indian offences punishable by fines and imprisonment.<sup>13</sup> Plains giveaways and Pueblo ceremonials were also targeted for suppression. On February 14, 1923, Indian Commissioner Burke added a supplement to this Circular requesting that agents discourage Indian gambling games, restrict the frequency of dancing (to once a month), control the timing of ceremonies in order to avoid conflict with the agricultural cycle, centralize the location of ceremonies, and discourage the attendance of anyone under the age of fifty at ceremonies considered to be "immoral". As in Canada, the moderate policy of persuasion was favoured over the indiscriminate use of these regulations. In 1934, Indian Commissioner John Collier prohibited religious repression and even attempted to encourage traditional religious practices.

## The Plains Cree Experience

The colonial experience of the Plains Cree mirrored that of other non-western societies structured according to a kinship-based mode of production and exchange. As a result of the commercialization of their natural resources by the Euro-Canadian and American fur trade, the Plains Cree became increasingly alienated from their land base. This process culminated in land surrenders to the Canadian government in the mid-1870's. It is significant that this period of economic stress coincided with the national government's plans for the political annexation and agricultural development of the prairie region. It was within this context that the Plains Cree became subject to the form of paternalistic trusteeship (wardship) which had typified the Canadian state's relations with Indians. The Canadian government supported policies which would not only minimize the Department of Indian Affairs' obligations to the Plains Cree, but would also integrate reserves into the new political economy of western Canada. Hence, the government supported a systematic program of assimilation in order to transform the individual Indian into a self-sufficient farmer.

After the signing of the treaties and the settlement of the Plains Cree on their respective reserves, a number of formal and informal measures were undertaken to destroy their political independence and cultural integrity. Foremost among these were the coerced attempts to replace the "communal" kinship mode of cooperative production and distribution with the social relations characteristic of the individualized competitive structure of capitalism. This was to be accomplished by undermining traditional collective land use patterns and

encouraging the concept of individualized property ownership and consumptive patterns. Attempts were also made to dismantle traditional forms of political structures particularly after the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885. Uncooperative leaders were deposed, hereditary forms of leadership were attenuated through forced elections, or simply by the non-recognition of local leaders, and Indians became subject to federal and provincial laws. Ironically, all of the methods used to incorporate the Plains Cree into the political, economic, and social structures of the state in effect, perpetuated the wardship status of the Plains Cree.

While the aforementioned government-imposed mechanisms for cultural transformation were largely directed towards the young adult population and their parents, the program viewed with the most potential for cultural disintegration was the exercise of state control over the socialization and education of Indian children. An Indian school system, initiated by the government and virtually controlled by the Christian churches was created to prevent the Plains Cree and other prairie Indian societies from culturally reproducing themselves. By forcing Indian parents to educate their children within this school system the traditional role of the parents, relatives, and elders as producers and transmitters of culture and ideology, was supplanted by the state largely through the aegis of the Christian churches. The destruction of the language base, a crucial factor in the communication of any culture's ideology, particularly one which stresses socialization through participatory observation and oral tradition, also served to undermine Plains Cree culture. The residential school system which involved the physical removal of the child from the influence of his or

her home environment, was the Indian school system most favoured by the Canadian government.

All of these assimilative measures were based upon government legislation contained in the Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent amendments. The administration of the Act (and the treaties) was the responsibility of an administrative branch of the federal government (Department of Indian Affairs) especially created for that purpose. The Plains Cree and other prairie Indians were thus part of a colonial wardship system very similar to that experienced by other indigenous peoples throughout White temperate climate settlement colonies of the British empire. This characteristic approach to integrating diverse cultures into western capitalism precluded any meaningful due consultation as indicated by the demands of the Plains Cree for their treaty rights and in the post World War One period, self-determination. Access to economic resources, technology, market outlets, political power, freedom of movement, and even cultural expression were all controlled by a non-Native bureaucracy.

The decision on the part of the Canadian government to suppress various forms of religious practices can be partially attributed to contradictions inherent between the kinship mode of production and capitalism. It has been demonstrated in this dissertation that the policy of the repression of indigenous religions was not due to merely the Victorian Euro-Canadians' abhorrence of unfamiliar forms of religious behaviour or that it was ". . . simply because religion was a part of the larger cultural complex that federal officials thought necessary to eliminate in order to assimilate Indians. . . ."14 As

discussed, the ceremonial complex facilitated and reinforced the indigenous social relations of production and distribution. That this relationship between ceremonialism and the perpetuation of communal forms of production and consumption was recognized by officials is evident in the Potlach Law and the Giveaway clause of the Indian Act. The practice of distributing movable property through ceremonial channels, considered by administrators and missionaries to be a major factor in Indian poverty, was used to rationalize the lack of Indian material progress. Furthermore, ceremonial offerings of material goods to the spirit world were condemned as "wasteful" and impoverishing. As noted in the discussion of Plains Cree political economy, one's worth in both physical and spiritual worlds was based upon the ability to produce surpluses for purposes of redistribution beyond one's own use. It was a system grounded in the moral obligations inherent in reciprocal exchange whereby one's personal welfare was assured only through the well-being of the whole community; in other words, "what goes around, comes around."

Ceremonial time, space, and content inherent in Plains Cree religion clearly impeded the westernized version of productive labour.<sup>15</sup> Initially, communal ceremonial time, space, and participation were synchronized with the natural cycles of seasonal subsistence activities and in particular, the early summer bison hunts. Thus, the period of late spring through to early fall was not only a major time for summer hunts, but also for the celebration of ceremonies, socialization, and inter-band visiting. Locations for public communal ceremonies were pre-determined by the availability of game sufficient

enough to support larger numbers of people for prolonged time periods and the acknowledgement that certain areas were traditionally sacred. With the demise of the bison herds and the subsequent introduction of agriculture in the 1870's, it became evident to administrators that the continuation of ceremonial rounds not only hindered more permanent Indian settlements, but also the transition to labour cycles necessary for cultivation, the raising of livestock, and the Euro-Canadian notions of production time. It was felt that the traditional ceremonial round would result in the neglect of crops and livestock and undermine the success of assimilative programs and the attainment of economic self-sufficiency.

Ceremonial content was also a major concern to administrators and in particular, to missionaries. The publicly-performed rituals of self-mortification, the ritual offering and consumption of dogs, dramatized aggression and sexuality, and "nudity" offended Victorian sensibilities. Dancing as a form of spiritual communication was perceived as "devil worship" and at best, as a form of recreation. In response to a strong lobby on the part of missionaries and certain administrators, the more objectionable rituals were defined as offences in the Indian Act. The inclusion of Giveaways (within ceremonial contexts) in the regulations clearly demonstrated the government's recognition of the role of this ritual in perpetuating the political economy of the Plains Cree.

The social and political functions of large communal ceremonies such as the Thirst or Sun Dances were also referred to by administrators and missionaries in their justification of religious suppression. Such

gatherings were correctly recognized as occasions for the transmission and reinforcement of cultural values and behaviour through participatory-observation or by means of sacred teachings. The regression of participating school children and even ex-graduates were a particular concern not only because they undermined the work of school teachers, but also because any "backsliding" was considered to be a waste of public monies. Finally, communal gatherings were feared as potential vehicles for mobilizing reactionary political movements. Departmental field reports indicated that administrators and missionaries were aware that their policies were discussed and criticized at these ceremonies. Thus, efforts were made to control this customary method of mobilizing political and military power by using the pass system to contain people within the boundaries of their respective reserves and by supervising "legal" ceremonies. Other measures consisted of deposing uncooperative headmen (many of whom were also spiritual leaders) and generally exerting pressure on celebrants through warnings of "persuasions."

The Canadian government's regulation of ceremonial life was also based upon a number of erroneous and preconceived notions of Plains Indian religious behaviour. Significantly, the misinterpretation of the intent and meaning of the Thirst Dance resulted in the creation of an amendment to the Indian Act which would lead to the termination of self-mortification, but failed to make the performance of the ceremony itself an offence. Viewed as a rite to publicly test and validate the courage of young men as warriors (termed "making braves"), it was felt that once this ritual was eliminated and tribal raiding activities were

outlawed, the *raison d'être* for the Thirst Dance would naturally disappear. As a ceremony devoted to world regeneration and healing through prayer and self-mortification this form of religious worship was never understood as a means ". . . to maintain the order of one's world and the meaning in one's way of life."<sup>16</sup>

The use of discretionary regulation combined with legislation against the most objectionable religious practices indicated that the government was aware that ceremonial repression would be met with opposition and might even result in concerted forms of resistance. This policy of "moral persuasion" placed a heavy responsibility on the administrative and personal skills of the Indian agents. On both the Northwest Coast and in the prairie region, the task of monitoring the movement of people to their sacred grounds was nearly insurmountable.<sup>17</sup> Those agents who were successful in forceably containing their wards, only undermined the confidence of the community in the Indian administration. Yet from the government's perspective, the agent's inability to discourage traditional ceremonies was seen as an indication of the lack of professional backbone and inability to curtail the influence of traditional leaders. It is evident from the department's files, that there was a general tendency to attribute the administrative problems of implementing religious control policies to the shortcomings of the agents rather than to the weaknesses inherent in the legislation and the impracticality of its enforcement.

The inadequacy of the policy of discretionary regulation led to the implementation of extra-legal forms of ceremonial repression. The use of non-violent methods to suppress ceremonies and dancing in



general, can be partially documented from the department's correspondence files. These included the intimidation of would-be participants, interference in ceremonies, the withholding of rations from celebrants, the destruction or confiscation of sacred objects, and the refusal to allow the construction of "dance halls." In addition, headmen were pressured not to lend their support to traditional ritualists and, in some cases, administrators attempted to limit access to commercial goods for ceremonial redistribution by discouraging local store managers from selling goods to Indians at ceremonial time. The pass system and the use of police to supervise ceremonial proceedings were two of the more common methods used to undermine indigenous religious practices. Finally, the replacement of ceremonies and secular forms of dancing with substitutes derived from Euro-Canadian culture, such as Sports Days and agricultural exhibitions (but accompanied by prohibitions against the Indian performances at White-sponsored agricultural exhibitions and stampedes) represented one last ". . . endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for . . . senseless drumming and dancing."<sup>18</sup>

This policy of "moderation" with "firmness" was reflected in the number of arrests and convictions. With the exception of a few individual cases which were intended to serve as cautionary warnings, most arrests resulted in suspended sentences with fines or releases after a stern lecture from the presiding judge. Thirst Dance-related arrests were usually made under the terms of the Indian Act clause which prohibited off-reserve dancing. In general, there were a greater number of prison terms and fines associated with off-reserve movement and

transgressions of the "Giveaway" clause.

Throughout the period under consideration, the department remained inflexible on the issue of Indian ceremonial performances although it did defer to the agent's own initiative and judgement with regard to the manner in which they were discouraged. This strategy of policy implementation while practical, led to a significant degree of inconsistency from agency to agency, a situation which greatly undermined the effect of the legislation. This tendency, however, was to a large extent checked in the prairie region by the Indian Commissioner, William Graham who, until his retirement in 1932, demanded that his agents rigorously enforce the law and throughout his career, lobbied for even further restrictions against ceremonies. Despite difficulties in implementing the legislation against off-reserve ceremonies and dancing, the department refused to consider further restrictive amendments to the Indian Act. This was consistent with its strategy of "moderation and suasion" and above all, indicated its faith in the long term power and wisdom of the wardship system. The department reasoned that time was on their side and that perhaps their initial expectations regarding Indian material progress were unreasonably optimistic and should be tempered. Such beliefs motivated the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Scott to refuse to initiate legislation to enforce the pass system. His only concession to Graham and other lobbyists was the deletion of the phrase "in aboriginal costume" in relation to off-reserve attendance at exhibitions and stampedes in 1932. There were no further restrictions legislated against Giveaways although Scott's successor did support an

attempt to prevent the accumulation of goods for ceremonial distribution.

#### Indian Responses to Religious Control

Both the external and internal aspects of "modernization" have been examined here in the context of the suppression of indigenous religious systems. The development of Canadian Indian policy as an aspect of western capitalist expansion has been discussed, and the reactions of the Plains Cree to this policy have been evaluated with particular reference to religious control. From the evidence available in the files of the Department of Indians Affairs and elsewhere, I have argued that the intensity of repressive measures, and thus, Indian responses, varied from reserve to reserve. While the aggressiveness of local administrators and missionaries were certainly factors, it is apparent that those communities which were geographically isolated from White immigration settlements and occupied lands which had little agricultural potential were less vulnerable to repression than reserves located on agricultural lands, near White settlements, or areas designated for public works. In the latter cases, department correspondence and personal testimonies reveal that Plains Cree leaders undertook every means, short of violence, to ensure the preservation of their religious system.

For the original signatories of the treaties, government programs which fostered cultural disintegration were considered to violate the intent of the arrangements made with the Crown through treaty. Thus, the numerous regulations against religious practices were constantly

challenged within the context of treaty agreements. For this reason most Indians believed that local administrators and Indian agents were directly responsible for unilaterally introducing these regulations without Ottawa's knowledge, not realizing that religious control was an important cornerstone of a more encompassing program of systematic assimilation. Few Indians at this earlier stage were even aware of the pervasiveness of the Canadian Indian Act which provided the guidelines for the department's formal relationship with reserve communities.

As wards of the state, devoid of any political power through provincial or federal representation, there were few official channels through which leaders could present their case. Moreover, according to Ottawa's directives, all matters pertaining to Indians were to be handled through the department. Therefore, working through the official channels available to them, leaders such as Fineday and Thunderchild forwarded letters of protest to local agents, commissioners, and when possible, directly to Ottawa. Their unfamiliarity with the English language tended to reduce the effectiveness of their message; however, with the aid of school graduates and hired White lawyers, this difficulty was gradually overcome. Once people knew more of the actual legislative wording and were able to critically evaluate the legality of informal forms of repression, they began to challenge administrators by using local lawyers and the courts. This was particularly true after the return of the Crooked Lakes delegation from Ottawa in 1911.

The written and personal representations to the department by Indians for religious freedom were, however, discredited as being the work of uneducated "unprogressives" or "traditionalists" whose power

would be soon undermined by the ascendancy of White-educated Indian leaders. The only other alternative in the White system open to Indians was the use of the legal system to challenge administrators and agents who went beyond the law in their enforcement of the Indian Act. However, as indicated in the decisions of the two court cases of 1903 (Wanduta and Etchease), both the department and Church representatives were influential in securing a judgement against the Indians.

Some leaders sought other means to compensate for their political powerlessness. While few in number, there are documented instances of attempts to gain political leverage by threatening to oppose other government programs such as the education of children or the leasing of reserve lands for public works. Another method used to enhance their political power and to legitimize their protests was through the recruitment of White supporters. Although not significant in number, sources of White support included local political representatives, town councils, agricultural fair and stampede organizers, Hudson's Bay Company store managers, anthropologists, and even the occasional Indian agent.

The non-violent strategy of opposition to anti-ceremonial regulations also included attempts to correct Euro-Canadian misconceptions of indigenous religious practices. Thus, some petitioners undertook the task of putting forth the argument that their religious ideology was equivalent to many of the precepts upheld by the Christian religion. This was largely achieved through drawing parallels between the Sun Dance and Christian forms of worship. Giveaways were defended on the grounds that, as a redistributive

mechanism which ensured that the less fortunate were materially cared for, it fulfilled the Christian value of caring for one's fellow man through sharing and generosity. More secular forms of dancing were similarly defended, that is, their intent and content was no different from social events enjoyed by White neighbours.

With greater strictures against dancing and participation in White-sponsored exhibitions from 1914 to the 1930's, some petitioners began to express concern over the observable connection between religious suppression and cultural loss (for even participation in the exhibitions had become occasions for imparting cultural knowledge and performing ceremonies). During the post-World War One period, the issue of cultural disintegration was increasingly voiced by Indian war veterans and school graduates. In addition to arguing that anti-ceremonial legislation was a contravention of treaty rights, they contended that such regulations were also a breach of rights accorded to them as British subjects (that is, freedom of religious expression). These new leaders, more knowledgeable in the ways of the White world, now began to assert their power by adopting methods of White political organization in order to unify the locally-initiated and often largely ineffective protest groups. The issue of religious freedom was included in the platforms of the various Indian political organizations which were founded after World War One.

While attempts to force the government to reverse its policy of religious suppression through the use of bureaucratic and legal channels were unsuccessful, another form of resistance proved to be more effective in counteracting the destructive potential of the legislation.

The maintenance of ceremonial practices was a form of resistance, and its impact can perhaps best be measured by the continual struggle on the part of administrators such as William Graham and the Christian churches to persuade the government to enact more repressive measures. Depending upon the type and degree of repression which occurred on particular reserves, religious persistence assumed a number of variations ranging from the retention of ceremonies and their performance in an open or surreptitious manner (maintenance), the modification of ceremonial time, space, and content (fusion), the elaboration of the traditional ceremonial complex with dances such as the Pow-Wow (addition), and the adoption of new religions in the forms of Christianity and the Peyote Religion (replacement).

In this study, the Plains Cree experience has been used to examine ways in which ceremonial ritual, space, time, and participation were deliberately modified as a result of government regulations. The deletion of the more public versions of self-mortification or "piercing" was one of the more obvious accommodations to the legislation. According to the Plains Cree historian, Abel Watetch, some religious leaders created a new ritual which symbolized "piercing". He also suggests that the "piercing" ritual was replaced by a greater number of material goods being offered by young male celebrants.<sup>19</sup>

The location, timing, and attendance at large communal ceremonies such as the Thirst Dance were affected by the prohibitions against off-reserve dancing and the implementation of the pass system. As a consequence, Thirst Dances became more localized, of shorter duration, and were attended by fewer participants. In his 1960's study of the

Thirst Dance, Lloyd O'Brodivich has attributed this localized version of the ceremony to the fact that the Plains Cree were not politically integrated into a "tribal" structure of society, but rather, retained the characteristics of "localized bands". Evidence presented here suggests that the more local performances evolved in response to off-reserve restrictions.<sup>20</sup> Only those reserves whose borders abutted on one another were able to maintain a degree of inter-reserve participation by celebrating the ceremony along their borders. More frequently, however, communal ceremonies were held in secluded portions of the reserve, thus allowing some protection for off-reserve celebrants.

Another major modification of the Thirst Dance was its reduction in performance time to accommodate the "civilized" work week and to meet departmental objections to its celebration as a "waste of time." The exigencies of the agricultural cycle itself and the labour-intensive demands of working the land during the early summer and fall were responsible for the abbreviated version of the Thirst Dance and associated ceremonies. The shorter version of the Thirst Dance, known as the Rain Dance, was celebrated for a period of 1½ to 2 days.

In order to ensure the survival of their Thirst Dances, some communities allowed their ceremonies to be monitored by the police force and department officials. This outside presence of authority was at times welcomed by celebrants as a means of controlling the distribution and consumption of liquor. A number of reserves also permitted the attendance of White observers presumably as a public validation that "illegal" practices were not being performed. At least two reserves



felt that this situation might work to their economic advantage and charged admittance fees for non-Indians.

Other forms of accommodation were also adopted to meet White objections to ceremonial practices. Some petitioners, for example, offered to refrain from the ritual consumption of dog meat and the distribution of goods, and to observe Euro-Canadian notions of "decency" by not dancing "naked." There was only one documented instance of ceremonial substitution for the Thirst Dance and this occurred under duress at the Crooked Lakes Agency in 1898 when a one-night Smoke Dance was used to fulfill a Thirst Dance vow.<sup>21</sup>

From descriptions of ceremonies in both historical and anthropological documents, it is evident that Giveaways persisted throughout the period under study. However, there is little discussion of the ceremony in departmental reports except for the few files related to specific arrests. In the earlier period of the enforcement of the Giveaway clause of Section 114, one of the government's major concerns had been the movement of department-issued goods (goods for use rather than ownership) such as wagons and horses between reserves and to neighbouring reservations in the United States. Some groups may have attempted to negotiate terms of redistribution with the government. For example, in a petition submitted by the Peigan leader, Bull Plume in 1915, it was proposed that only "Indian made goods", that is, domestically-produced goods and commercially purchased goods of small value (including small amounts of cash), be allowed to exchange hands during ceremonies. The lack of documentation on Giveaway practices was largely due to the ability of celebrants to keep such activities away

from the prying eyes of officials, missionaries, and even anthropologists. Unlike the Potlaches of Northwest Coast cultures, the majority of Plains Giveaways and other patterns of indigenous redistribution appears to have escaped the notice of White observers. The Giveaway ceremony proper was held during the winter, a time during which most agents would have found it difficult to monitor ceremonies. Other Giveaways may have involved the redistribution of goods in a more secular setting such as within the privacy of homes before or after a ceremony. This type of accommodation is similar to the practice of the "disjointed potlach" by certain Northwest Coast societies during the same period.

In addition to modifying their Thirst Dances and perhaps the Giveaways, Indian leaders also responded to the more generalized suppression of all forms of dancing, even those held within the borders of the reserves. Some bands attempted to synchronize the timing of their ceremonies with the agricultural cycle and also agreed to refrain from the consumption of alcohol, feasting, using body and facial paint, and allowing the attendance of school children.

Finally, the persistence of indigenous ceremonies was somewhat facilitated by the incorporation of a number of rituals into the program of more secular events at which people naturally gathered - Treaty Days, Sports Days, White agricultural exhibitions and rodeos. During the Dominion Day and annual Treaty celebrations members from numerous reserves gathered to not only collect treaty monies and to socialize, but also to perform communal ceremonies. Among the dances performed were the Tea Dance, the Prairie Chicken Dance, the Whitiko Dance, the

Bear Dance, the Elk Dance, and the Horse Dance. With the passage of amendments limiting the performance of dancing to the reserves, this avenue for ceremonialism was open only to those who were willing to travel the exhibition circuit despite government regulations.

While a number of rituals were either discontinued or reformulated, the general ceremonial matrix was paradoxically enriched during this period of repression. One outstanding example is the adoption of the Grass Dance and its expression in the format of the traditional (non-commercial) Pow-wow. When it was first introduced to the Plains Cree in the earlier part of the twentieth century, the Pow-wow provided yet another avenue for perpetuating indigenous political economies and concomitant values. Other newly-introduced dances which can be traced to this period included the Tea Dance, the Round Dance, the "Tail Wagging Dance", and the Kohomni or Turnabout (the latter occurring only among the Dakota).

There were also many recorded local "revivals" of ceremonies and dances, the timing of which were generally related to periods of relaxation of policy implementation or an increasing awareness of the limitations of the law which permitted local celebrations. There is evidence for the existence of at least one major attempt to initiate a syncretic movement (indigenous and Christian) by the Muscowpetung, Piapot, and Pasquah reserves in the mid-1920's. As explained by the petitioners, the purposes of their meetings were to offer prayers for abundant crops, to relieve illness, and most importantly, to heighten the spiritual awareness of the younger generation to the precepts through which they could live a better life.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the modification of indigenous religious practices and the adoption of the new religion of Christianity or the fusion of both, there were some who rejected all of these alternatives and became members of the Peyote Religion or Native American Church. Primarily consisting of individuals of Dakota affiliation in Manitoba, members could also be found among the Cree bands of Louis Sunchild, Red Pheasant, Mosquito, and Grizzly Bear's Head.

To the extent that scholarly research exists in the area of religious suppression on the northern Plains, there is evidence that the Cree experience was shared by other groups. The fact that repression either drove ceremonial practices underground and caused participants to be wisely cautious regarding their involvement in these activities renders documentation difficult. Despite this research problem, evidence exists for the correlation of the decline of ceremonialism with government suppression.

In his study of the Canadian Dakota, anthropologist James Howard recorded that most Dakota reserves ceased to perform their Sun Dances by 1910.<sup>23</sup> The historical relationship of Dakota communities with the Canadian government is often cited by anthropologists and community members as a reason for their reticence to at least openly admitting to practising indigenous forms of worship:

The refugee Dakota in Saskatchewan made a real effort to acculturate, knowing that only the goodwill of the Canadian authorities enabled them to remain in their new homes. The Cree were not under such pressure to acculturate, and to this day have conserved much of their traditional culture, more than even their relatives in Montana have retained.<sup>24</sup>

The Blackfoot are reported to have discontinued many of their Sun Dances

by the 1940's. Historian Hugh Dempsey has made the observation that since 1920 there have been no overt attempts by the government to suppress Blackfoot ceremonies and that it was the ". . . apathy of their own people in the post-war years that resulted in the decline and loss of a number of ceremonies."<sup>25</sup> However, he acknowledged that Blackfoot Indian forms of "doctoring" persisted. This regional variation in ceremonial loss has also been extensively documented by Hanks and Hanks.<sup>26</sup>

Anthropologist Margot Liberty suggests that legislation against the performance of the Sun Dance in the United States was responsible for its disappearance among the Teton Sioux in 1883, the Kiowas in 1890, and the Wind River Shoshone in 1911.<sup>27</sup> However, Liberty cautions that more scholarly case studies would need to be undertaken in order to verify this information. Liberty's research on religious suppression among the Cheyenne illustrates a case in point for the survival of the Sun Dance in a situation where there was relatively little government pressure directed against its local practice.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, the extent to which indigenous ceremonial practices among the Plains Cree declined as a direct result of government intervention can only be answered through specific case studies of the various reserves. Certainly the fear of imprisonment and the imposition of fines which would have been considered severe in a cash-poor economy must have deterred some celebrants. There were also other forms of traumatization. The inability to fulfill one's sacred vows to participate in a ceremony because of the pass system or the interruption of ceremonies in progress would have placed individuals and

their families under considerable stress. In some cases, religious materials were lost through both voluntary and involuntary means. Two Midewiwin leaders from Manitoba passed their sacred scrolls onto the anthropologist Alanson Skinner for safekeeping in the Museum of the American Indian in New York.<sup>29</sup> It was their understanding that the Canadian government had forbidden the ceremony. Giveaway drums were also destroyed under the instruction of local police in Manitoba.

For those who chose to retain their indigenous beliefs and practices (at times syncretizing them with Christian practices), ceremonial life continued to provide physical, emotional, and spiritual support. Yet the new forms of lifestyles also affected one's ability to meet sacred commitments. For families supporting themselves through seasonal forms of labour by incorporating employment with hunting and fishing, meeting ceremonial needs was relatively less stressful. However, for those who chose to farm and adopt the western work week and Sabbath, the fulfillment of ceremonial obligations became increasingly difficult, especially those which involved time-consuming off-reserve travel.

As in the pre-reserve period, ceremonial life continued to be important avenues for the reaffirmation of ethnicity and the attainment of status and prestige within the reserve communities. Furthermore, by encouraging the production of surplus, ceremonies facilitated the redistribution of goods and services to participants and their kin. Thus, the distribution of goods to ritual leaders and their helpers as "payment" for their services, in addition to more general forms of exchange, persisted as a source of economic support on reserves.

Although the circle of kinship was undoubtedly attenuated by government restrictions on inter-reserve movement in certain areas and perhaps new regulations on residency and band membership, kinship-based reciprocal obligations were retained as a means through which the social relations of production and distribution were organized. According to department reports and observations made by researchers such as Hanks and Hanks, even Christian relatives who refrained from attending the ceremonies, were induced to provide a share of the material support needed to participate in communal ceremonies such as the Thirst Dances and Giveaways.<sup>30</sup>

The impact of religious control on traditional forms of leadership that had been legitimized through the acquisition of spiritual power warrants further research. As a result of the process of state-imposed social differentiation whereby the affairs of the secular world were increasingly separated from the sacred, a new form of leadership emerged. These new leaders were not necessarily knowledgeable in game management or respected because of their spiritual power (as were Piapot and Fineday); rather, they were often accorded status because of their success at accumulating wealth or property as farmers or through their ability to act as conduits between the reserve community and the Department of Indian Affairs. They were the young male adults who had received their education in government schools and who knew more of the White system than their parents or elders. These were indeed the new "warriors" whose battles would not only be fought on the European front in the World Wars, but also in offices of the Department of Indian Affairs.

To what extent the role of ritual leaders and the elders was reduced in political decision-making remains to be examined. It is evident, however, that their displacement from positions of secular power by the department may not necessarily have terminated their customary function. In the Hanks' study of Blackfoot ritualists, it is suggested that while traditional leaders were not formally involved in decision-making, their opinions were offered when solicited.<sup>31</sup>

Considering the department's efforts to encourage "non-traditional" people to run for office, the role of traditional leaders would undoubtedly vary from community to community and become less apparent. Certainly the loss of indigenous spirituality by the new types of leaders could have led to a situation where consultation with elders would not have been deemed necessary by headmen and their followers who chose to support the department and assimilative measures.

#### The Relationship of Other Forms of Assimilation Programs to Ceremonial Life

The impact of religious repression in the process of assimilation must also be considered within the context of other government programs which were simultaneously being introduced to undermine the cultural system of the Plains Cree. In his historical overview of the 1920's and 1930's, Plains Cree historian, Stan Cuthand described this relationship in terms of the convergence of generational, religious, economic, political and social changes that occurred within Indian communities as reactions to government policies. Cuthand depicts the 1930's as a period of increasing conflicts between the "older generations" and the educated members of the "new generation":



Family-arranged marriages were opposed by the youths, and they often ran away to be married elsewhere. The younger generation refused to accept the traditional role of submitting to the wishes of their fathers and tended to question such traditional customs as giving away horses to visitors. The more educated Indians scoffed at Indian rituals and refused to participate. They danced square dances and quadrilles. They would speak English rather than their native tongue. The more traditional families ignored this and continued to show their Indianness. No matter how far removed they may have been from their hunting, fishing, and food-gathering ancestors, and in spite of opposition from the Indian Affairs policies, the elders continued to renew themselves at the sweat lodges and feasts. They restored relationships and kinship ties at the sweat lodges and feasts. When sun dances were completely suppressed by the government, Indians met at exhibitions and fairs to meet each other and renew friendships and strengthen kinship. Kinship was strong amongst the Blackfoot and Crees.<sup>32</sup>

Similar observations were made by agents and missionaries such as Reverend James Donaghy of the Swan Lake Reserve in Manitoba who wrote in his journal:

The young are already tiring of some of these customs, and leave them to the old folks; but for them to openly rebel would be considered a serious matter. At one of their annual picnics the old people put on a pow-wow in an enclosure, while the young men had a series of baseball games to manage. The old folks ordered them to help within the pow-wow, but the ball players told them they were too busy playing ball to dance pow-wow. The old men felt that their superior position had been challenged.<sup>33</sup>

These same developments were reported by Hanks and Hanks for the Blackfoot in the 1940's and by Shimpo and Williamson for the Fringe Saulteaux on the Côté Reserve in Saskatchewan.

Clearly, the government and the Christian churches were gradually undermining the traditional relationship between socialization and ceremonialism. The residential school system which isolated young

children from their families for prolonged periods of time was most disruptive to their socialization in indigenous values and forms of worship. In the first place, responsibility and authority for education once held by grandparents, parents, relatives, and elders, was now replaced by the non-Indian teacher. Because the traditional mode of socialization involved direct observation, experiences and communication through an oral tradition based upon a linguistic-bound worldview, the loss of language at school significantly undermined ceremonial continuity. Ceremonies were conducted in the indigenous language and thus school graduates often remained peripheral to ceremonial life or refrained from attendance, believing that these practices were innately "bad" or "evil". The performance of ceremonies in secrecy undoubtedly enhanced these perceptions.

For those school graduates who chose to follow indigenous forms of worship, those years of spiritual training which had been disrupted through their separation from sacred teachings had to be addressed by their parents and elders. This situation has been noted by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and participants in today's Indian spirituality movements. And in fact, elders still remain concerned about religious persistence, particularly in terms of the need for potential candidates who could assume the demanding responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of the community.<sup>34</sup> Plains Cree elder, Abel Watetch, in the 1950's expressed this fear about the continued performance of the Rain Dance:

The history of the Sun Dance, even in its modern form of the Rain Dance, is almost over. There are few left to carry on the tradition. The youths who once learned the ethics of the Crees in various steps of

participation are no longer in training in sufficient numbers to maintain the tradition. It is almost impossible to find young men of the necessary quality. They are contaminated by their contacts with the worst side of the white man's culture before they are of an age to begin their training. The Indian, even when he is corrupted by his contacts outside the reserve, has great respect for tradition. He will not try to carry on an empty form if he has not the true qualifications for attempting his communion with the Great Spirit. The Crees will not feed on the husks of ancient rituals. No man will attempt to sponsor a Rain Dance if he knows he lacks the spiritual capacity. Moreover the Rain Dance demands powers of endurance and self-discipline which few will possess when the present elders are gone.<sup>35</sup>

To what extent the threat of ceremonial loss was circumvented by the "reversion" or "retrogression" of school graduates, is difficult to determine. However, contemporary researchers do suggest that this process was a factor in ceremonial survival. Alice Kehoe noted that among the Plains Cree the age of forty was a time when many Euro-Canadian educated men would assume an active ceremonial role. A similar situation was recorded in detail by Hanks and Hanks who interviewed young Blackfoot men who had chosen to follow a "traditional" lifestyle after being unsuccessful in the White world:

The uncertainties of income, however, are the greatest frustration, for every poor year brings the young men closer to the circumstances of the caricatured old Indian. Then as he gives up his hard-earned symbols he comes to question the values for which he has been striving. If his child dies, his faith in the protection of white medicine and Christianity is shaken. If his livestock dies of disease, he wonders whether he has not made some great mistake. At first he may vow to give money to the church in order to ensure a good crop. He may vow a pilgrimage to a shrine so that his child may recover from the measles. But should these fail, the entire set of values is questioned. Indeed, his success, as defined by continued good crops, health for his children, and increase in livestock is almost unattainable. The vagaries of Alberta weather, the

high rate of infant mortality, and the difficulty in controlling disease among animals combine to draw most Indians back to their old way of life.

After a series of failures a typical transition occurs. One man lets his hair grow; a second joins a sacred society; another appears at the Sun Dance camp with a painted tipi; a fourth vows to cut the rawhide strips that hold a rafter to the Sun Dance lodge; a fifth summons a Medicine Man to cure his sick child instead of going to the hospital.<sup>36</sup>

Hanks and Hanks astutely point out that this acceptance of traditional ceremonial behaviour and its inherent ideology is not viewed as a "degrading experience" or as an indication of failure, but rather as a path of personal redemption, renewal, and strength for those not seeking to emulate the White way.<sup>37</sup> It is equally a public expression of ethnicity and pride in one's cultural heritage.

In sum, to the extent that they did persist, the various forms of Native-modified ideologies and ceremonial practices continued to be relevant within the context of reserve life. As indicated by both Canadian and American anthropologists, the Thirst or Sun Dances and their concomitant rituals such as Giveaways, continued to fulfill a variety of basic needs for reserve populations. Of particular note was the continuing importance of the collective public ceremony as a powerful source for physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The ability of the Thirst Dance as a ceremony, to accommodate a number of changes (in time, space, and content) while retaining and even perhaps enhancing its value as a regenerative power, is evident in its emergence as one of the most potent healing ceremonies in Canada and the United States during the reserve period. The lack of effective medical services (until the 1940's in Canada), impoverished living conditions, undernourishment, and disease (especially the post-World War One flu

epidemic and tuberculosis) undoubtedly contributed to the persistence of those indigenous ceremonies which were purported to have significant healing powers.

In Canada, the increasing importance of the Thirst Dance as a healing ceremony is attested to in its adoption (including "piercing") by the Buffalo Point Ojibway in 1920 to counteract the devastating effects of the flu epidemic. In the 1940's, the Nibagoimung or Rain Dance was adopted by the Saulteaux in the Côté Reserve area. This group apparently had refrained from practising their collective ceremonies since 1904. According to researchers Shampo and Williamson, this version of the Sun Dance was adopted as a "reintegrative" religion by the elders in an attempt to counteract the disintegration of their culture. In addition to emphasizing the need to retain indigenous values, the role of kinship-based reciprocity was reintroduced through the performance of Giveaways and other rituals at the communal Rain Dance.<sup>38</sup>

The Sun Dance has been revived or adopted by Indian communities in the United States for similar reasons. In his analysis of the Sun Dance "religion" as practised by the Indians of the Great Basin area, Joseph Jorgensen noted that with the exception of the Wind River Shoshone, the Sun Dance was a post-reservation phenomenon.<sup>39</sup> This development has been attributed to the flexibility in the ideology of the world renewal ceremony whereby the focus ". . . was changed from insuring successful bison hunts and warfare to an increased concern over illness and community misery."<sup>40</sup> Described as a nativistic redemptive movement, the Sun Dance "religion" offers its adherents, through collective forms of

worship, an opportunity to obtain healing and to reaffirm their cultural identity within a positive framework (that is, Indian).

In addition to its healing function which has been stressed by several anthropologists, the persistence of the Sun or Thirst Dance and other collective rituals such as the Giveaways can also be correlated with the political and socio-economic marginality of most reserves as they exist within the capitalist system. While more specific socio-economic studies of reserves are required to adequately test this relationship, a pattern does seem evident (Hanks and Hanks, Kehoe, Shimpo and Williamson, O'Brodovich, and Braroe).<sup>41</sup>

In a historical overview of the economies of the Indian reserves in the Saskatchewan prairie region, the Hawthorn/Tremblay Report of the 1960's provided evidence for the categorization of these communities as underdeveloped and depressed. Although some of the bands such as the James Smith or Piapot bands held large amounts of agricultural land, the report concluded that these holdings were ". . . too small to sustain the population on the basis of the large-scale farming operations required for optimum efficiency. . . ." <sup>42</sup> Furthermore, off-reserve economic opportunities were also relatively unrewarding. Other than low-paying casual labour, there were few employment opportunities near reserves. Thus, most would have had to leave their homes on the reserve and valued community support in order to participate in the cash market economy. This economic alternative, however, also had its limitations due to the lack of education and technical skills, racism, and the underdevelopment of the prairie region in general. As the Hawthorn Report points out, limited industrial development in the area further

worked to the disadvantage of Indian workers due to ". . . the existence of an already over-surplus under-employed White population and excessive competition for jobs in cities and towns."<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to the consensus of most White opinions at the time, the Hawthorn Report attributed the history of the lack of economic progress in Indian communities to a state of underdevelopment which resulted from the wardship or "caretaking" role assumed by the department rather than to the persistence of indigenous patterns of socio-economic and religious behaviour. The Report further argued that a more positive approach to economic development in terms of adequate training and capital investment would have produced more viable communities in the prairie region. Although no direct correlation was made between the observation that prairie Indians maintained "widespread" kinship networks and obligations and the state of underdevelopment, the Report did suggest that ". . . as among other depressed and dependent low-income groups," this socio-economic formation was ". . . a result, rather than a cause, of poverty."<sup>44</sup>

Ironically, it was the very system which had been developed to eliminate the political economies of Indian cultures which insured at least some degree of ideological persistence. The reformulation and perpetuation of a system which offered a means of survival according to the ideology of socio-economic collectivism allowed Indian reserve communities to survive physically, emotionally, and spiritually in their "neocolonial, satellite niches."<sup>45</sup> As Noel Dyck has indicated in his research, "prior to 1970 there were relatively few Indians in Saskatchewan who had not lived the greater part of their lives within

the confines of more or less strict variants of this 'reserve experience'."46

A comparison of the Plains Cree and Blackfoot reaction to their colonial experience with economic underdevelopment shows that they were participating in two forms of economies. At what point these economies intersected or took over from one another would require an extensive economic study of individual reserves. This "reserve economy" or the marginal economy of underdevelopment has been characterized for the Blackfoot by the Hanks' in their contrast of subsistence economy based on reciprocal obligations versus one based on monetary fees.

The one is the indigenous system where goods and services flow on a basis of reciprocal obligations between members of a common group of kinsmen. Though the prestige-gaining treasures of the system required a fee as on entering an age-graded society, subsistence was based on reciprocal obligations. The poor were either not poor in this basic sense or were isolated individuals without kinsmen. The other economy, the white system, places even subsistence on a fee basis and dissolves the community of obligations within most groups beyond the family. On the reserve services for a fee have entered; dealings with whites are necessarily on such a basis, and between Indians this pattern is also found occasionally. . . . However, the mechanisms of distribution within the reserve and the relation of Indian employer to employee are still based on reciprocal obligations.<sup>47</sup>

As Hanks and Hanks succinctly point out in their study, lifestyle cannot necessarily be correlated with religious practice. For whether hunter, trapper, seasonal worker, farmer, or professional, if an individual continues to fulfill his or her sacred and social responsibilities within the structure of kinship reciprocity, one is being Plains Cree, Blackfoot, Assiniboine, Ojibway and not White. The philosophy of to "know your relatives and you will know who you are"<sup>48</sup>



continues to have relevance to this day.

Histories of Canadian Indian administration are often examinations of the development and implementation of policy in relatively impersonal terms with little attention given to the human factor. In this study, an attempt has been made to document some of the more personal aspects of the impact of religious and other forms of repression. In keeping with this approach, it only seems appropriate to summarize the course of historical events examined in this study by reviewing their impact upon individuals. As a case in point, the life history of one of the more well documented headmen and spiritual leaders of the time period - Kisikwawasamawasis - (Flash-in-the-Sky-Boy), or as he is commonly known, Piapot, will be presented below.

Piapot's life spanned the years from approximately 1816 to 1908. Born in the Wood Mountain area of Saskatchewan, Piapot's father was Assiniboine and his mother was a Plains Cree.<sup>49</sup> The newborn was named Kisikwawasmawasis or Flash-in-the-Sky-Boy in recognition of the turbulent thunderstorm occurring at the time of his birth. As a young boy, Piapot suffered several misfortunes. He, along with his grandmother, were among the few survivors of an epidemic which devastated their camp. Shortly after, they were captured by a raiding party of Dakota and taken to Montana where they remained until Piapot was fourteen. At this time, the Dakota camp was in turn, raided by Plains Cree who took the pair back to their homeland in the Qu'Appelle area. Because of the mixture of Cree and Dakota characteristics reflected in the young man's behaviour, Kisikwawasamawasis was renamed Nehiyawapat or "Sioux Cree." The "knickname" of Payepot or "Hole in the

Sioux" was also given to him since he knew the ways or "secrets" of the Dakota enemy.

As he grew older, Piapot's leadership skills as a hunter, trader, and warrior became evident and he sat in the council of the Rattler's Society Warrior Lodge. In this position of honour and status, he would have been expected to be a "free-giver" by providing protection for the camp, by being generous in his redistribution of goods, by enlarging the band's horse herds by raiding enemy camps, by playing a major role in the bison communal hunts and commercial trade with the Hudson's Bay Company, and by assisting in the performance of religious ceremonies. As a speaker of five languages - Plains Cree, Dakota, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Peigan - his skills as a trader and negotiator of peace between groups were probably surpassed by few. By 1875, Piapot had participated in one of the most important negotiations in his life when he agreed to sign Treaty Four. At this time he was reported to be fifty-eight years old.

During the years 1875 to 1885, Piapot was compelled to lead his followers through several catastrophic events. With the depletion of the bison herds and other game, the loss of provisions available through the commercial fur trade market, and no resolution on the location of a reserve, Piapot moved his desperate band into the comparatively game-rich area of Cypress Hills. However, this newly-found independency was to be short-lived as tuberculosis, starvation, and the effects of the whiskey trade (Piapot was responsible for facilitating an alliance to drive American whiskey traders from the area) forced people to live off the meat from their own horses, small game, and to request

government rations of flour and salt pork.

That Piapot and other Cree leaders were willing to learn agricultural methods of subsistence is evident from historical records.<sup>50</sup> The government had established a "home farm" in the Maple Creek area of Cypress Hills in 1879 and Piapot selected a reserve approximately ten miles north; here, some of his followers began to plant gardens and raise wheat. This effort was undertaken despite shortages of economic aid. Unfortunately, the government farm was closed shortly thereafter and in the spring of 1882, Piapot was informed that he could not receive rations unless he moved his band to their homeland. Demoralized and weakened with disease and starvation, the band travelled back to Qu'Appelle. While at Qu'Appelle, Piapot met with other headmen, Major J.M. Walsh, and White settlers to discuss the issue of a reserve location.<sup>51</sup> Throughout his negotiations with the Crown, Piapot had relentlessly insisted that he had been promised the freedom to determine the location of his reserve and he was understandably irritated when the Indian agent had unilaterally selected an area for him near Indian Head. Piapot claimed that treaty negotiators had assured him of land in the Touchwood Hills although, he was now considering settling in the Qu'Appelle area. Dissatisfied with the treatment which he received from government officials, Piapot once again headed for the Cypress Hills, and once again his followers were forced to return as the government attempted to prevent large concentrations of Cree from settling in the region. The band, by this time, had been even further reduced in numbers as they made their way back to an area immediately south of Sintaluta. During the devastating winter of 1884,

it was reported that one out of three died. The son of one homesteading family (W.W. Gibson) observed that

Many a time, while herding my father's flock's on the old reservation, I passed aspen groves where there were dozens of platforms lashed to the poplar trees with rawhide thongs, sepulchres that bore mute evidence of that tragic winter.<sup>52</sup>

In the end, Piapot finally located his people in the Qu'Appelle area near Pasquah's and Muscowpetung's reserves.

Despite his many battles with the Canadian government over his right to select a reserve location and his dissatisfaction with inadequate government aid, Piapot remained loyal to the Crown during the turbulent years of the Saskatchewan uprising and was instrumental in persuading his allies in southern Saskatchewan from taking up arms. While his loyal actions were officially recognized by the federal government, his treatment by Department of Indian Affairs officials was by comparison, callous and personally destructive. By 1899, the loyal headmen, who had agreed to try the White way by sending two of his sons to school at the behest of Father Hugonard, was stripped of his position as chief and imprisoned. These events occurred as a result of his role as a powerful religious leader in the prairie region (and perhaps his reputation as a "recalcitrant" who was openly critical of government policies).

An appreciation for the strength of Piapot's spiritual power can be gleaned from a historical record of a Thirst or Rain Dance which was held in Montana in the 1890 period. At this time, Montana was suffering from a major drought. Piapot, who periodically travelled south to celebrate the Thirst Dance with Assiniboine and Gros Ventre relatives,

was requested to conduct the ceremony. The aftermath of the singing of the fourth sacred song by participants under his leadership has been described as follows:

. . . thunder was heard in the distance, the voice of the Thunder Bird. A sudden quickening of the wind took place, bringing the clouds closer to the camp. Lightning in the sky reminded them that Chief Piapot's name to them was Kisikwawasamawasis, Flash-in-the-Sky-Boy.

He kept them going, dancing, singing, without let up, as a plea to the Great Spirit to favor them with the rain, they desperately needed. They did not stop, and the rains came . . . The entire encampment gazed with wonder out upon the muddy site, drenched from the plentiful rains, filled with awe and a sense of religious fulfillment. The equivalent of a miracle had happened; they felt it.

They tell the story to this day in Montana of how Chief Piapot demonstrated his prowess as Medicine Man. . . .<sup>53</sup>

As spiritual leader and healer, however, Piapot would have not taken the credit for the blessing of the rain, rather, he is reputed to have informed the gathering that the key to such power was in the strength of the people for "only the whole community joining together can call upon the Great Spirit to act in pity for us."<sup>54</sup> Piapot's message was one of peaceful living - love for one another and cooperation were the ties that bound the people together and ensured their survival.

While fulfilling his sacred vows to perform the Thirst Dance on his reserve in 1899, the leader who once brought the rains to the sun-parched grasslands of Montana, was arrested and charged with violating the liquor laws (drunkenness). When the eighty-four year old leader was informed of the charge by a young school graduate, Harry Ball, Piapot pointed out that the real reason for his incarceration was that he had been responsible for conducting the ritual of "piercing" for some

twenty young men at his ceremony. This act of self-mortification was a contravention of the Indian Act. At this time, Piapot was also removed as chief by the department. In retaliation, his followers refused to elect another leader until after his death. Two years later, Piapot was again sentenced for encouraging six participants to resist arrest at a Giveaway. He was to spend two months in the Regina prison.

By 1908, Piapot finally succumbed to old age and unlike his forefathers who had been buried on scaffolding, he was laid to rest in a White man's coffin; however, according to the traditional manner of burial, his knees drawn up to his chest.<sup>55</sup> Thus he left the Earth as he entered it.

It seemed only fitting that the maker of Piapot's coffin was a young nephew by the name of Abel Watetch who would later record Piapot's biographical details. Watetch, or "Herald in the Sky" had attended the Lebret School where he had not only learned the skills of a carpenter, a wheelwright, a tinsmith, and cobbler, but also lost much of his language and knowledge of his culture. After returning to his home reserve, the young man had spent many hours with the aging Piapot, relearning his language and listening to a way of life which were now only stories. These stories would be later written down by Watetch and recorded for publication.

During the post World War One period, returning war veterans from the Piapot Reserve would formally appeal to Indian Commissioner William Graham for permission to perform their Thirst Dance. Some would also become active in the various Indian political organizations to seek redress from the Canadian government for broken treaty promises among

which was the freedom of religious expression. These men and their children would be the new warriors in the new social order, and would continue to carry Piapot's message to the Canadian government.

## NOTES TO SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

<sup>1</sup>See Titley, Narrow Vision; Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites';" and Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School."

<sup>2</sup>Brooke Larson, "Shifting Views of Colonialism and Resistance," Radical History Review, 27 (1983), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ted Lewellen, Political Anthropology: An Introduction (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1983), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>See Brian Bullivant, Pluralism: Cultural Maintenance and Evolution (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1984); and Erich Kolig, The Silent Revolution: The Effects of Modernization on Australian Aboriginal Religion (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981). On the Maori, see Ward and David Ausubel, "The Maori: A Study in Resistive Acculturation," Social Forces, 39 (1960), pp. 218-27.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Prucha, Great Father, Volume II, p. 646.

<sup>10</sup>United States Department of the Interior, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>Prucha, Great Father, Volume II, p. 713.

<sup>12</sup>Jackson and Galli, p. 6. The "short-hair order" was issued to destroy all physical manifestations of indigenous behaviour such as the wearing of long hair (which had sacred meaning) by males and the use of sacred paint by both sexes. In addition, Indian "costume and blanket" were to be replaced with "citizen's clothing."

<sup>13</sup>Philip, p. 56; see also Prucha, Great Father, Volume II, p. 802.

<sup>14</sup>Deloria and Lytle, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup>For an excellent discussion on modernization and ceremonial time and space see Edward Hall, The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time (New York: Anchor Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup>Sam Gill, Beyond "The Primitive": The Religions of Nonliterate Peoples (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), p. 87.

<sup>17</sup>See Drucker and Heizer; Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites';" Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School;" and Titley, Narrow Vision.



<sup>18</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A, Duncan Scott to William Graham, 4 Oct., 1921, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Watetch, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup>O'Brodovich, "Little Pine Cree", p. 23.

<sup>21</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3825, file 60,511-1, J. Wright to Indian Commissioner, 21 June, 1898, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>PAC, RG10, vol. 3827, file 60,511-4B, A. Trotter and Company to Superintendent General, 15 May, 1924, pp. 2-3.

<sup>23</sup>Howard, Canadian Dakota.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>25</sup>Hugh Dempsey, Personal Communication, 10 Nov., 1983, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Hanks and Hanks.

<sup>27</sup>Liberty, "Suppression and Survival," pp. 122-25.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>29</sup>Donald Cadzow, "Bark Records of the Bungi Medewin Society," Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 3, No. 2, (1926), p. 124. Cadzow noted that "these sacred barks were given to the writer on condition that they be kept in the museum forever, and that duplicates of the more important ones be made on durable paper and sent to the society; for the two old kichimitos, or past-masters, feared that the originals would become lost, as the Canadian Government has forbidden the performance of the Midewin ceremony, and the fraternity is slowly becoming extinct."

<sup>30</sup>Hanks and Hanks. See chapters on the economy and social effects of the economy.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Cuthand, pp. 38-39.

<sup>33</sup>United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, University of Winnipeg, Reverend James A. Donaghy, "The Swan Lake Reserve and Mission from 1875 to 1927," p. 19.

<sup>34</sup>See O'Brodovich, "Little Pine Cree," and Tarasoff.

<sup>35</sup>Watetch, pp. 47-48.

<sup>36</sup>Hanks and Hanks, pp. 167-68.

- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 170.
- <sup>38</sup>Shimpo and Williamson, pp. 217 and 223.
- <sup>39</sup>Jorgensen, "Religious Solutions," p. 114.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 117-19.
- <sup>41</sup>Braroe; Hanks and Hanks; Kehoe; O'Brodivich; and Shimpo and Williamson.
- <sup>42</sup>Hawthorn, p. 69.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 159.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 122.
- <sup>45</sup>Jorgensen, Sun Dance Religion, p. 232.
- <sup>46</sup>Dyck, "Indian, Metis, Native," p. 39.
- <sup>47</sup>Hanks and Hanks, p. 109.
- <sup>48</sup>Cuthand, p. 39.
- <sup>49</sup>See Stewart and Watetch for biographical information on Piapot.
- <sup>50</sup>See Carter, "Indian Reserve Agriculture".
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 242.
- <sup>52</sup>Stewart, p. 79. Scaffolding refers to the traditional way of burial (on platforms placed in trees).
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 145-46.
- <sup>54</sup>Watetch, p. 39.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

## CONCLUSIONS

The period from the mid-1870's to the turn of the century was a major watershed for Indian societies residing in the plains and parkland regions. The lives of Indian men, women, and children were radically altered as they were forced to come to terms with a series of major ecological, social, economic, and political changes. In addition to dealing with the depletion of natural resources, the loss of the commercial provisions market, and the negotiation of formalized relations with the Canadian state, indigenous peoples were subjected to a unilaterally-imposed reserve administration. The authority and sweeping powers of this Indian administration were defined through regulations contained in the Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent amendments. As was the case in other temperate colonies throughout the British Empire, the Canadian government's policy towards native populations was assimilative in its objectives. Indian societies were to be systematically dismantled through a colonial relationship characterized by wardship and tutelage.

The repression of indigenous religious practices was perceived as being an important aspect of the cultural transformation of prairie Indians into Euro-Canadians. Regulations against specific types of ceremonial behaviour and native religious systems in general, were not adopted merely because Victorian Canadians abhorred non-Christian forms of worship and were driven by an humanitarian impulse to "better" their fellow human beings. Evidence presented in this study indicates that the federal government supported formal and informal religious

repression because administrators and missionaries understood the relationship between religious practices and the persistence of a society's social, economic and political system.

In addition, the vision of the Canadian nation-state which evolved in the 1870's was not based on the concept of political, economic, or cultural pluralism. Rather, it was assumed, that as in eastern Canada (as in other White settlement colonies throughout the British empire), native populations would disappear as they conformed to the model of society inherent in the Christian capitalist state system.

Administrators felt that while this transformation was taking place, native societies, whose social, economic, and political structures and behaviour differed radically from the Euro-Canadian model, should be controlled. It was argued that such controls would not only facilitate the tutelage of native peoples, but also ensure the economic development and political incorporation of the prairie region within a climate of law and order.

Historians who have examined the use of religious suppression as an assimilative policy have concluded that the legislation failed to destroy Indian religions. However, when considered in the context of other assimilative programs, the implementation of this legislation significantly altered ceremonial life. Evidence provided in this study leads to the conclusion that ceremonies were reformulated in terms of space, time, content, and participation. These native-modified alterations were direct responses to religious control by the state and the need to accommodate to the physical, emotional, and spiritual stresses which resulted from coerced assimilation and economic

underdevelopment. Indigenous religious ideology and practices were also eroded by other means -- in particular, the federal Indian education system, Christian missionization, and a greater separation of the sacred from the material world.

The nature of Indian responses to religious repression and the impact of these same responses on government policy throughout the period, have been examined. By establishing the history of the development of the colonial relationship between the Canadian government and a specific society such as the Plains Cree, the demand for religious freedom can be viewed as yet another dimension in the continuing struggle for some degree of control over change (self-determination). Indian efforts to entrench these rights through political movements during the post World War One period were largely ineffective. Subjected to the quasi-colonial administration of the Department of Indian Affairs, the Plains Cree and other prairie Indians were forced to channel their protests through the very structure which not only had been created to check resistance, but also to enforce assimilative measures. Therefore, political activism in the form of written petitions, delegations, and court test cases was unsuccessful in altering the government's decision to institute religious controls. Indian leaders were only able to argue their case against state-imposed sanctions with any success once they had become organized according to White political organizational patterns. Only through this means were Indian leaders able to gain access to government bodies that formulated and were in a position to influence Indian policy.

This case study of Plains Cree protest against religious repression

also demonstrates an important aspect of the treaty rights movement as it developed in early twentieth century Saskatchewan. As historian John Tobias has argued, treaty rights as a political concept ". . . was developed and espoused initially as a defense mechanism against Canada's Indian policy and the Indian Act. . . ."2 which were intended to undermine the culture of Plains Cree and Plains Ojibway societies.

While external criticism did not alter government policy until the passage of the new Indian Act in 1951, what the anthropologist refers to as the process of "native-modified accommodation" to imposed changes, did have an impact on policy development and the ceremonial behaviour of reserve communities. By adopting several strategies of religious persistence, prairie Indians in fact, internally resisted religious repression. In turn, this very resistance, through accommodation, enabled administrators like Indian Commissioner William Graham to justify the imposition of greater restrictions.

For adherents of Native-modified religions, ceremonies such as the Thirst Dance (Sun Dance), the Giveaway, and the Pow-wow would continue to provide a code of ethical behaviour for "upright living", a mechanism for the expression of social, political and ethnic solidarity, and a highly meaningful and rewarding religious experience. Through "traditional" forms of religious worship, personal, and universal regeneration and well-being were achievable goals in this lifetime. Furthermore, these religious beliefs and practices perpetuated and reinforced a collective ideology. By continuing to serve as important avenues for the redistribution of goods, cash, and labour, they were also a means of acquiring positions of status and

prestige within the community. The relationship of the ceremonial complex to the social, economic, and political elements of reserve economies during the first half of the twentieth century deserves to be further researched by ethnohistorians. For those researchers who would undertake such an investigation, the words of the Plains Cree leader, Thunderchild, might serve as a basis for a testable hypothesis. Commenting upon the impact of ceremonial repression and federal assimilative programs, Thunderchild left us with the insight that "customs die hard, though buffalo skulls are not easy to find."<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES TO CONCLUSIONS

<sup>1</sup>Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites';" Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School;" and Titley, Narrow Vision.

<sup>2</sup>Tobias, "The Origins of the Treaty Rights Movement," p. 242.

<sup>3</sup>Thunderchild cited in Ahenakew, Voices, p. 181.



## APPENDIX I

SUMMARIZED DESCRIPTIONS OF VOWED CEREMONIES AND OTHER  
DANCES AND RITUALS AS DOCUMENTED BY DAVID MANDELBAUM  
AND OTHER SOURCES

## I. VOWED CEREMONIES

Many ceremonies were held in fulfillment of a sacred vow made by an individual. The vow to pledge or sponsor a ceremony was generally made as an act of thanksgiving to the Creator for spiritual aid or as a personal offering in the anticipation of blessings such as a healing. The fulfillment of a vow involved numerous spiritual and material responsibilities in both the initiation and actual performance of the ceremony. Sacred vows were pledged by individuals who had received guidance to sponsor a ceremony through dreams and visions along with specific instructions from appropriate elders. In the most powerful of all the vowed ceremonies, the Thirst Dance, many others who had made a similar vow to that of the pledger, also participated.

1. Plains Cree Name: Nipakwesimowin

## Alternative Names:

"Beseeching-for-water-to-allay-the-thirst Dance,"  
Thirsting or Thirst Dance, Sun Dance, Rain Dance,  
All-Night-Thirst Dance.

## Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:1-8); Dion (1979:36-42);  
Mandelbaum (1979:183-89).

## Description:

The ceremony is held in early summer at the ripening of the first berries and when the leaves are fully grown. Four preliminary "Sings" or ceremonies known as inikimahnipakwesimowin (the singing rehearsals of the Sun Dance) were held throughout specified times of the year for pledgers and other participants. The ceremony is pledged in fulfillment of a vow and the pledger, supported by his or her kin, is required to make numerous offerings of material goods. The Dance Maker is assisted in the actual ceremony by a number of people including four assistants (ahnekahnapewak), two tobacco cutters (okaskikotcikanikiwak), two fire keepers (askwekaspakawak), and two camp guards (kanawitsiko). The latter also ensure that other required duties such as the construction of the lodge, are performed through cooperative effort.

The ceremony is primarily one of world regeneration on all levels of the human experience (it was traditionally associated with communal bison hunts). When documented by anthropologists in the early twentieth century, it was generally pledged for health reasons. The ceremony lasted for three to four days, although the Thirst Dance camp itself might persist over a longer period of time and include the performance of many other types of ceremonies. Participants at the Thirst Dances included members from many of the Plains Cree bands as well as other groups such as the Assiniboine and even the Dakota. While the location of the ceremony might vary, it was generally held on designated sacred grounds.

Preparation on the site of the ceremony involved numerous ritualized activities centred around the construction of the sacred lodge, the felling and erection of the "Tree of Life" (centre pole to which a Thunderbird's Nest had been constructed at its apex), the preparation of presiding ritualists, and the preparation of participant dancers, singers, and drummers.

In addition to abstaining from food and water for the duration of the dance, celebrants traditionally participated in other forms of offerings including self-mortification. The latter involved "piercing" by male dancers and other offerings of flesh sacrifices such as the cutting off the small finger and making deep cuts into the arms or legs after the dance. The women offered pieces of their flesh tied in small bundles along with tobacco.

#### Redistribution:

Numerous occasions of gift offerings and redistribution occurred at this ceremony. Anyone who attended the ceremony was allowed to make offerings to the Creator or "Dream Spirits" (wepinasona) and these were attached to the center pole. In addition to the numerous offerings made by the pledger and the dancers, there were more formalized Giveaways. On these occasions, the Shouter or Crier would publicly announce the donor and recipients of the gifts. While redistribution served to enhance the status of the donor, the gifts were considered to be offerings to the Creator and the spiritual world. Those who received such gifts ". . . prayed for the welfare of the donors and by means of such prayers divine favor might be procured" (Mandelbaum). Many of these goods were distributed by the Thirst Dance Maker to the aged and the needy.

Other forms of redistribution occurred along with the performance of other ceremonies associated with the Thirst Dance (Warrior Society Dances, Wihcikokansimowin, Misatimosimowin, and the Mostosisimowin). In addition, goods were redistributed as a result of wagers made during the Handgames (such as the Messekuche Kunek) played following the Thirst Dance.

2. Plains Cree Name: Pihtwowikamik

## Alternative Name:

The Smoking Tipi.

## Documentation:

Cadzow (1926:271-80); Dion (1979:53); Jefferson (1929:86-87);  
Mandelbaum (1979:199-204); Paget (1909:47).

## Description:

This was a night long ceremony held in the spring and the early fall. The spiritual prerogative to conduct the ceremony was acquired through a vision, through inheritance, or the transference of this prerogative (this would involve the exchange of designated goods, sometimes referred to in the literature as purchase). It could be pledged by either a man or a woman. According to Dion, the songs sung at this ceremony included those of the Thirst Dance, the Horse Dance, the Bear Dance, and the Ghost Dance, as well as others. The ceremony itself involved the blessing of numerous pipe bundles. During the feast, Jefferson stated that "the best in food that the community can afford is thrown on the fire as an offering, and the pipe is turned in every possible direction, for the use of all possible spirits, as each person has his own particular guardian and guide." The Smoking Tipi ceremony was considered to be second in importance only to the Thirst Dance, and was occasionally held in the place of the Thirst Dance.

## Redistribution:

Dion stated that the purpose of the ceremony was to reinforce friendships (kinship networks). The transference of goods would also occur in the many ritual exchanges which took place at this time.

3. Plains Cree Name: Wihtikokansimuwin

## Alternative Names:

Masked Dance, Clown Dance, Cannibal Dance (after the "cannibalistic spirit", the Wihtiko).

## Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:13-15); Dion (1929:20; 1979:46-47);  
Mandelbaum 1979:204-6).

**Description:**

The ceremony was performed by members of a society of "Contraries" whose social and ritual behaviour, including speech, was the reverse of what was the norm. Members were endowed with special spiritual powers obtained through dreams and visions. Traditionally, these powers were connected with bison hunting activities and healing. While early forms of the ceremony lasted for two to six days, more contemporary versions are performed in public on the final day of the Thirst Dance. The former involved a traditional bison hunt by the Contraries along with associated rituals, some of which included the redistribution of meat.

Much of the public behaviour of the Contraries provided "comic" relief and entertainment to relieve "tensions" during the "Thirst Dance". The Contraries wore dirtied clothing and cloth masks on which the facial features were distorted with elongated noses, enlarged ears, and small cut out slits for eyes. One informant related to Mandelbaum that upon returning from their bison hunt, the Contraries ". . . attached the intestines to their hair as braids, placed the stomach fat on their own abdomens as though they had a paunch, and used the carcass in other comic ways . . . women and children came out to meet and harry them, trying to pilfer their meat." Both their actions and their speech was backwards and people were expected to also behave accordingly when responding to their demands.

While the Contraries did provide a level of "entertainment", they were equally capable of engendering feelings of fear in the observer. As the embodiment of the reversal of world order, their dramatization of the violation of social norms and taboos, served to remind the Plains Cree of the social disorder that would result from breeches of customary behaviour and law.

**Redistribution:**

Gifts of food and other goods were offered to the Contraries for their role as mediators for spiritual intervention and blessings.

**4. Plains Cree Name: Matahitowin****Alternative Names:**

"Gifts Exchanged are a Blessing," "A Passing of Something to Each Other," the Giveaway Dance.

**Documentation:**

Deiter-McArthur (1987:20-22); Dion (1979:51-52); Mandelbaum (1979:206-7); Paget (1909:51-52).

Description:

The Giveaway Dance was held in honour of the spirit, "Pakahkus" or "Bony Spectre" (often portrayed in the literature as a flying skeleton). Offerings in the forms of prayers, dancing, singing, material goods, and horses were made for the spiritual blessings of good health, longevity, successful hunts, and an abundance of furs. A special offering consisting of an animal bladder filled with hardened bone grease was considered to be the spirit's favourite food. At least four nights of dancing occurred both within the ceremonial lodge and throughout the general camp. During this time men, women, and children "danced off" gifts to one another. In addition, children made cloth offerings to the spirit which was represented by a carved figure. Sticks to which horse hair had been attached were also passed by their owners to selected celebrants and these represented each horse exchanged.

While the ceremony had its serious side, it also provided people with an occasion for socialization, humour, and entertainment. Paget, for example, noted that many of the participants ". . . would make up the most ridiculous words in praise of some article they were giving away, and thus cause no end of amusement to the onlookers."

Redistribution:

In addition to providing access for spiritual blessings, this ceremony also served as an occasion for achieving and maintaining social prestige and status within the community. During the dance, large quantities of goods exchanged hands and one's prestige and blessings were directly related to one's publicly demonstrated generosity. As Mandelbaum and others have pointed out, "It was believed that one who was intentionally parsimonious would have bad luck with any accretion in wealth he might amass." Exchange was also extended beyond the immediate gathering into other camps or communities by the dance makers who sometimes travelled from camp to camp accompanied by the image of the "Pakahkus." This ceremony was held in the late fall or early winter.

5. Dances of the Okitchitawok (the "Free-Givers" or Warrior Societies)

Each Warrior Society had its own ceremonies. Membership to these societies was generally restricted to those men who had demonstrated leadership skills and the outstanding qualities of bravery, honesty, and generosity (free-giving). Members were responsible for maintaining order in the camp, offering protection, participating in the organization of communal bison hunts, and providing material support for the elderly, needy, and visitors to the camp. The members from regionally-associated bands would meet during the Thirst Dances and the summer and fall communal hunts and there is evidence that they

also met in winter if food surpluses permitted larger congregations of people. Traditionally, refusal to attend the meetings was punishable through the forfeit of material goods. In this section, the Prairie Chicken Society has been outlined in detail as a case in point. Other documented Warrior Societies are listed according to name and area of occurrence. The ceremonies related to these societies were often performed in fulfillment of a sponsor's vow (for example, healing).

Plains Cree Name: Pihewisimowin

Alternative Names:

Prairie Chicken Dance, Prairie Chicken Society, Hairy Legs Society.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:24, 26-30); Dion (1929:3, 13-18; 1979:42-43); Mandelbaum (1979:110-121; 207-8); O'Brodovich (1969a:63-65); (Paget 1929:48-49).

Description:

After the Warrior Society lodge was set up, numerous prayers and material offerings were made, a Dog or Wakause Feast was held, and rituals associated with the society were performed. It was during these gatherings that a man's status and prestige was publicly recognized through offerings of gifts and by verbal testimonies to one's charitable deeds, material generosity, success on raids, and "good life". At this time, other matters relative to the well-being of the camp were also discussed. Chicken Society dancers wore bustles made from the feathers of the Sharp Tailed Grouse and emulated the behaviour of this bird. Women participated in the dance by singing.

Redistribution:

There were many occasions of gift exchanges during the meeting of the Warrior Society. When a new member joined the society, family and relatives pooled their labour and resources to offer clothing, blankets, horses, and food to the lodge. Material offerings and a communal feast were given if an individual chose to sponsor the dance in fulfillment of a vow. In addition, women often presented gifts to the dancers. During periods of large encampments, the Warrior Society lodges were located near the camp circle occupied by the members of the band with whom they were associated. Mandelbaum reported that on these occasions, numerous incidents of rivalry would occur, including the ceremony, "E.wapana.pihtcikehk" or "Sitting Up Until Morning". This involved the non-sexual exchange of women

along with the exchange of goods between two households. As Mandelbaum explained, the Warriors and the Worthy Young Men ". . . maintained prestige by demonstrating their dissociation from sentiments held by common people." In addition to freely redistributing material goods, ". . . they were expected to be above sexual jealousy; they took it upon themselves to prepare corpses for burial, an unpleasant and dread task." By going to battle, the Warrior also gave freely of his life.

The names and locations of other Warrior Societies documented by Mandlbaum are:

- (i) Rattlers Society or Sisikwanisak (River People Band). The members of this society were distinguished by their ceremonial regalia and by their small ring-shaped rawhide rattles.
- (ii) Big Dog Society or Mistahatimwok. This society was found among one of the eastern bands who had purchased the prerogative to perform the ceremony from the Paddling Men Band of the Stoney. Associated ritual objects included a two-foot staff decorated with feathers, beads, quillwork, and metal cones.
- (iii) Buffalo Dancers Society. The prerogative to perform this ceremony was purchased from the Red Sand Hills Dakota by the warriors of the West People, the River People, and the East People. Deiter-McArthur states that the Battleford Cree purchased the dance from the Assiniboine, who had received it from the File Hills Cree. Society dancers wore a ceremonial headdress made from a bison head and wore strips of bison hide around their ankles. The tail of the bison was hung from their belts at the back of their dance outfits. Dancers also coated their bodies with clay in the sacred colour of red.
- (iv) "Cold Society". This society was associated with the House People Band.
- (v) Ghost Lodge Society (tcipahkanak). This society was associated with the Calling River People Band.
- (vi) Kit-Fox Society (otikomisisak). This society was associated with one of the western bands.

**Note:** Dion (1979:44) noted that there also was a Chicken Dance in which the movements of the Prairie Chicken were imitated. This dance was held in the mornings for the duration of the ceremonial gathering.

6. Plains Cree Name: Misatimosimowin

Alternative Name: Horse Dance.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:25); Mandelbaum (1979:208-9).

**Description:**

Both the spiritual powers of the weasel and the horse were connected with this ritual. The prerogative to conduct the ceremony was acquired either through a vision or through inheritance. The ceremony involved prayers, the offering of sacred pipes and associated songs and dances. Young men in particular were chosen to dance and their horses were painted with sacred designs and decorated in finery. The dance was held for a number of reasons including the attainment of spiritual power for healing, longevity, and even the acquirement of more horses. It generally lasted one day during the summer months and was performed in fulfillment of a vow.

**Redistribution:**

A communal feast was held and material offerings were given in exchange for blessings. Sponsors of the dance provided the majority of the offerings and the food, although all who attended were urged to contribute to the feast.

7. Plains Cree Name: Wawaskeciwciwcin

Alternative Name: Elk Dance.

**Documentation:**

Dion (1979:47); Mandelbaum (1979:209-10).

**Description:**

According to Mandelbaum's informants, this ceremony was pledged by women and conducted by a female elder. At the time of his fieldwork in the mid-1930's, the ceremony had not been held for "many years". Traditionally, it was performed for short periods at ceremonial gatherings. Fineday stated that women pledged a vow to perform the dance in order that the youth might enjoy a long life. As a young boy, Fineday had participated in the dance and at the time, the young men had made horns from willow sticks and strapped them to their heads to emulate the elk. The female dancers applied a "daub of white mud" to the backs of their dresses to represent the "white rump" of the wapiti. Dancers also imitated the elk's call.

**Redistribution:**

Although goods would have been exchanged by all those involved with the dance, this element has not been documented. Dion noted that the members of the Elk Dance "society" were "well liked".



8. Plains Cree Name: Maskosimowin

Alternative Name: Bear Dance.

## Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:16-17); Dion (1979:47-48);  
Mandelbaum (1979:210).

## Description:

The prerogative to conduct this summer ceremony was derived from a man's dreams or visions in which the bear had offered himself as a spirit helper. Male dancers honoured the spirit of the bear through prayers, song, and dance. Dancers wore bear robes (and at times, bear masks), painted themselves with sacred colours, and imitated the behaviour of the bear in their dance movements. Fineday informed Mandelbaum that only those members who belonged to Dance could partake in the preliminary feast, however, all could participate in the actual dance. Membership in this dance association was also obtained through the fulfillment of a personal vow and the presentation of offerings. Such vows were often made to ensure successful raids or to bring about a healing. Dion noted that this dance was "taken very seriously by the old timers" since the Plains Cree ". . . have always had a lively respect for the 'four-legged human', as the animal was called. Deiter-McArthur states that the Bear Dance might also be held to honour the spirit of the bear which had allowed itself to be taken by humans during a hunt.

## Redistribution:

Material goods were exchanged in return for spiritual aid, but the details are not documented.

9. Plains Cree Name: Oskitciwcinuwin

Alternative Name: Calumet or Pipestem Bundle Dance.

## Documentation:

Dion (1979:52-53); Mandelbaum (1979:211).

## Description:

This ceremony consisted of a dance and a feast for the purpose of consecrating the sacred pipestem (oskitchy or peace pipe). The dance maker, who was also the Keeper of the Pipe, was an exemplary person. Women prepared a feast for the ceremony and

the elders were invited to participate. Mandelbaum's informants stated that this ceremony was no longer held as of the mid-1930's. The Keeper of the Pipe had the responsibility of maintaining order within the camp and initiating peace with the enemies.

**Redistribution:**

Dion noted that the object of the dance was to encourage bonds of friendship and close cooperation among the leaders of the various Plains Cree bands.

10. Plains Cree Name: Wasakamesimowin

**Alternative Name:**

Round Dance Ceremony, Night Singing Tipi,  
Open-End Tent Ceremony.

**Documentation:**

Deiter-McArthur (1987:9-12); Jefferson (1929:84-85);  
Mandelbaum (1979:211-12).

**Description:**

A special lodge was built and a preliminary ceremony was held the night before the actual dance and feast. During the following night, sacred bundles containing the braids of deceased relatives were brought in by the celebrants (the Braid Bundles were referred to as Kitimakisiwina). Food offerings of meat and saskatoon berries were consumed. The ceremony not only honoured the departed but also helped to release mourners from their sorrow. This was important to the dead as well as the living for it was believed that the spirits of the departed could not leave the earthly domain while their relatives still grieved for their loss. Deiter-McArthur noted that while this ceremony is seldom performed today, "the underlying beliefs" persist.

**Redistribution:**

A general feast of food offerings were made. Other exchanges which occurred are not documented in the literature.

11. Plains Cree Name: Mitewikamik, Mitewiwin

**Alternative Names:**

Medicine Lodge Ceremony, Medicine Dance.

**Documentation:**

Dion (1929:27; 1979:48-50); Mandelbaum (1979:212-14);  
Paget (1909:42-46).

**Description:**

This ceremony was received from the Ojibway and Fineday stated that its songs were sung in Ojibway rather than Cree. While associated ceremonies were held at the onset of other seasons, the major ceremony occurred during the final quarter of the hunting moon in September. It was sponsored by the Mitewok or Medicine Society people who had a formally organized membership for the promotion of healing through the use of herbal remedies and rituals and long life through an ethical code of upright living. There were at least four degrees through which a member might pass after specified periods of apprenticeship. During these periods of learning, new knowledge was acquired and one's powers were enhanced.

At the Medicine Lodge ceremony, which generally involved the gathering of large numbers of people, initiation rituals were held for apprentices, the Mitewok performed healing ceremonies, and numerous other ceremonies were held such as the Shaking Tent ceremony, Naming ceremony, and the Sweat Lodge ceremony. In addition, members exchanged knowledge of medicinal remedies. Through healing, purification, offerings of prayer, dance, and songs, as well as public orations on upright living by the Mitewok, a sense of community was created and participants were offered the spiritual, emotional, and physical strength they needed to live out their lives.

**Redistribution:**

People from a number of bands attended these ceremonies and there were numerous occasions for gift offerings. Material goods were offered by initiates and all who sought out the services of the Mitewok. Paget noted that material goods were left on sacred poles or trees located on some elevation of land. These included "buffalo robes, red and blue cloth, blankets, prints or calicoes, mocassins, and other wearing apparel, fire-arms, cooking utensils. . . ." Dion explained that these ceremonies provided an opportunity for the exchange of natural products among groups who resided in the Plains/Parklands area with those living in the southern Boreal Forest. In particular, he mentioned the exchange of pemmican, bison fat, and marrow for dried venison and fish.

**Note:** Mandelbaum was informed that this ceremony was last held among the Plains Cree in 1875 and according to his informants, there was only one member (female) left by 1935.

12. Plains Cree Name: Not given.

Alternative Name: Ghost Dance.

Documentation:

Dion (1979:50-51).

Description:

The ceremony was held in the fall after the Medicine Lodge ceremony. It was performed during the night and its purpose was to commemorate the souls of the departed through the propitiation of the spirit, Pa.kahkus (Skeleton Spirit or Cannibal Spirit associated with winter and starvation).

Redistribution:

Dion stated that a large communal feast was held and each family taking part contributed its share. These offerings were ". . . duly accepted and then offered by the dance-maker to the friends and relatives who had gone before."

13. Plains Cree Name: Kamaciwisimowin

Alternative Names:

Thanksgiving Dance, Scalp Dance, Victory Dance.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:31); Dion (1929:3);  
Jefferson (1929:88-89).

Description:

Traditionally, this ceremony was performed upon the return of men from a raid on the enemy's camp. During the day portion of the dance, women danced with the scalplocks brought home by the men and the scalp-owners and along with the celebrants, sang songs praising the deeds of the Warriors. During the night portion of the dance, all were invited to participate. Deiter-McArthur noted that Warriors who had brought back scalps often had their lodges raided and "they were not to notice or care about the damage, as it was done as a reminder of the less fortunate people in the camp." She also stated that this ceremony was later replaced with the Grass Dance (Pwatsimowin).

## II. OTHER DANCES

While these dances are often referred to as "secular" in nature, they did have spiritual significance.

### 1. Plains Cree Name: Pwatsimowin

Alternative Name:

Sioux (Dakota) Dance, War Dance.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:41); Dion (1919:4);  
Mandelbaum (1979:218).

Description:

According to Mandelbaum's informants, this dance was introduced to the Plains Cree by the Dakota who had fled to Canada after the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Because the Cree did not understand the words, the songs are sung to "burden syllables". Dancers pantomimed battle activities such as scouting, aiming, shooting, and scalping.

Redistribution:

Exchanges are undocumented however, a man's right to participate was obtained through gift distribution.

### 2. Plains Cree Name: Ohosimowin

Alternative Name: Owl Dance.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:58); Dion (1929:3, 1979:54).

Description:

The Owl Dance was one form of Circle dancing and was introduced to the Plains Cree after World War One by "eastern" groups. It showed a considerable amount of Euro-Canadian influence and was the only dance where men and women were allowed to hold hands.

Redistribution:

When performed at Pow-wows, this dance is open to all participants. More traditional forms of the dance involved the presentation of gifts by men to the women who danced with them.

3. Plains Cree Name: Sihtawi, Ekaskaputcikeht, Kiskipocekek

Alternative Names:

Cutting In Dance, To Wedge In.

Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:38); Mandelbaum (1979:216-17).

Description:

According to Cree elders, this dance was brought to Saskatchewan by the Cree who had returned home from the United States after the Saskatchewan uprising of 1885. It was a gift-giving and social dance which was often performed in the context of the Pow-wow. It involved men and women "cutting in" on one another during the dance. According to Deiter-McArthur, the presentation of gifts to one's dance partner was viewed as ". . . a kind act of respect and love for one another." Rules of kinship and marriage patterns were reflected in the range of partners one could dance with. For instance, Mandelbaum was informed that one could not dance with a parallel cousin or a mother-in-law; thus, in the case of a man, potential dance partners were limited to female cross-cousins (nitcimus), sisters-in-law (nitim), and unrelated visitors. Deiter-McArthur stated that the term "kiskipocikek" means to dance with a female who is not considered to be a relative or a cross-cousin. This pattern may have resulted from the fact that Euro-Canadians frowned upon the marrying of one's cross-cousins and thus, this dancing partnership may reflect a historical shift in marriage patterns.

Redistribution:

Mandelbaum noted that rivalry often developed between partners who attempted to return a more valuable gift than they had received. At some dances, the particulars of the gifts, donors, and recipients were publicly announced by a Crier and in this way formal reciprocal obligations became general knowledge.

4. Plains Cree Name: Pichechewin or Piciciwin

Alternative Names:

"Going Little by Little", or "Moving Slowly Dance",  
Circle Dance, Pow-wow.

## Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:36-37); Dion (1979:2);  
Mandelbaum (1979:214-15).

## Description:

Mandelbaum was informed that the dance was introduced to the Plains Cree by the Assiniboine and Fineday traced its origins to the Missouri region. It is described as a variation of the Omaha or Grass Dance and came to be known as the Pow-wow. Usually depicted as a secular dance, the ceremony was also held during times of illness. Traditionally, dancers moved sideways in a clockwise direction. According to Mandelbaum, each reserve had its own dance hall where Circle dances occurred all winter. There was an hierarchy of dance officials including the Dance Maker (who was responsible for supervising all activities), Criers (public announcers), Servers, "Whip Owners" (who were responsible for encouraging people to dance), "Drum Leg Owners", and Tobacco Handlers (for sacred offerings of tobacco). Mandelbaum was told that each position ". . . incurs an obligation of liberality and when a dance is held the officials must supply a large share of food and tobacco." Deiter-McArthur noted that a contemporary version of this dance is performed at other celebrations and the more secularized Pow-wow.

## Redistribution:

Traditionally, attainment of an office or the relinquishing of a position involved the offering of a significant number of horses and a variety of material goods. The parents and relatives of dancers (including children) presented gifts, many of which were redistributed to the elders and visitors. The names of the donor and the recipient were announced publicly by the Crier. Gift exchanges also occurred between dancing partners and the rules for such exchanges were based upon customary laws of kinship relations and often reflected one's social status and prestige. Offerings of gifts also occurred to publicly mark various stages of life passages such as a birth, marriage, death or the honouring of an individual for an outstanding achievement.

5. Plains Cree Name: Wepayiwewin

Alternative Name: The Tail Wagging Dance.

## Documentation:

Deiter-McArthur (1987:39); Mandelbaum (1979:218).

**Description:**

This dance was introduced to the Plains Cree (River People) by their relatives who had fled to the United States after the Saskatchewan Uprising of 1885. It is described as the "Cree Dance" of the Lemhi and Fort Hall Shoshone. Male and female participants danced side by side in a circle and with each other as couples.

**Redistribution:**

Gifts, which were publicly announced, were exchanged between dance partners. Other forms of redistribution which may have occurred are undocumented.

6. Plains Cree Name: Kiskwepehtawin**Alternative Names:**

The Tea Dance, Drunken Dance, "Playing Drunk" Dance.

**Documentation:**

Deiter-McArthur (1987:40); Dion (1929:1),  
Jefferson (1929:33, 73); Mandelbaum (1979:219).

**Description:**

The Tea Dance was a social affair originating after contact with Europeans. Traditionally, it involved communal dancing, singing, feasting, and the distribution of traded alcohol by headmen. Often a strong brew made from tea to which berries and plug tobacco had been added, was also consumed. Jefferson stated that the dance was performed "in house after house" during the winter months. The name for the ceremony is European and the published literature on the dance lacks analysis of its function.

**Redistribution:**

Deiter-McArthur notes that food and tea for communal feasting and tobacco for the pipes were provided by the headmen or by men of prestige. While Dion mentions that women did participate in the ceremony, Deiter-McArthur mentions that only young and older men gathered for the occasion to dance, feast, discuss politics, and visit.

Note: With specific reference to consumption of liquor received through trade, Dion noted that the headmen, in contrast with the common man, received their alcohol from the trader in a less watered-down state (four parts to one) and accordingly, they were expected to share their portion freely.



III. Other Forms of Ceremonialism Documented by Mandelbaum  
(1979:219-27)

1. Bear Ceremonialism:

The bear was considered to be the animal closest to humans in form and was one of the more powerful spirit helpers of the Plains Cree. Respect for the Bear is indicated in two of its many names - ukimawokusisa.n (chief's son) and neokatewayisiyin (four-legged person). When a bear allowed itself to be taken by a hunter, pipe ceremonies and berries were offered in a ritual to propitiate the Bear's spirit.

2. Eagle Ceremonialism:

The Eagle was considered to be the most powerful of all sky spirits and as in the case of the Bear, pipe ceremonies and ritual feasts of berries were made to propitiate the spirit of the Eagle when it allowed itself to be taken by the hunter. Various parts of the Eagle, such as its feathers, wings, claws, tail, and head, were used to enhance the power of ceremonial objects and their owners.

3. First Event Ceremonialism:

Many ceremonies occurred at "first events" such as the appearance of the first berries of the season, the first thunder, at the onset of a woman's menstrual period, the receiving of a "name" and a child's first game kill.

4. Sweat Lodge Ceremonialism:

In addition to purification, there were many other reasons for the use of the Sweat Lodge, including healing. The name of the lodge is derived from the fact that hot steam is produced in the ceremony (much like a sauna) by sprinkling water over heated stones.

5. Dog Feasts:

The ritual consumption of dog meat was principally performed in connection with the power of healing medicines. While it could be held in fulfillment of a vow, it was also used to restore the power of medicines and to transfer the knowledge of medicines from one owner to another.

6. Tipi Painting Ceremonialism:

The paintings on tipi covers were considered to be sacred in that they represented the owner's spirit helpers. Ceremonial pipe smoking, and the offering of prayers and power songs by male elders, followed by a feast were used to consecrate the painted tipi cover which had protective powers.

7. Offering Pole:

The spiritual prerogative to erect an offering pole were acquired through a vision received from the spirit power manito-hkan (Manito-like). Mandelbaum stated that numerous offerings were made to a "human-like" form which had been constructed from logs. Traditionally, offerings consisted of a tobacco, bows, arrows, and "feathers stripped to the quill except at the tip", while offerings made in the 1930's consisted of "worn out clothing, broken guns, old crockery".

APPENDIX II

EXAMPLE OF PASS ISSUED BY THE AGENT AT THE BATTLEFORD AGENCY (Glenbow Archives, Battleford Indian Agency Papers, 1884-1944, BE. 31, .B336)

Department of Indian Affairs. No. 94

No. 94

BATTLEFORD Agency.

..... 191 .....

No. .... of

Band ..... is permitted to be absent from his Reserve for

Time ..... days from date hereof. Business .....

Business .....

Gun .....

Department of Indian Affairs.

BATTLEFORD Agency.

..... 191 .....

No. ....

Band ..... Band

is permitted to be absent from his Reserve for

days from date hereof. Business .....

..... and is ..... permitted to carry a gun.

..... Indian Agent.

## APPENDIX III

POEM WRITTEN BY THE REVEREND EDWARD Ahenakew (Reverend Edward Ahenakew  
Papers, Files 1-12, R-1. Saskatchewan Archives).

I've tasted of the boasted fount  
Of knowledge that the Whiteman's is,  
Its waters ripple in the sun,  
Fit place for gods to drink is this.

Its waters sparkle radiantly  
They glitter so in colored light,  
--But simple life and simple truth  
Seem gone forever with the night.

Nought but the complex things remain,  
Men boost the good which they defy,  
Each other's blood they freely shed,  
Whil'st they the Christ re-crucify.

Why should we take the path they tread  
And leave our own approach to God  
Exchanging our own humbler way,  
For that along the bloody sod?

Oh! surely Christ will not despise  
The winding trail our fathers trod  
With simple steps and faithful hearts  
And loyal minds to reach their God?

Can we not then in 'heathen' rites,  
As ritual, serve the Crucified?  
Mayn't He in dances, reverant, pure,  
As truly then, be glorified?

Why ape the race whose stated creed  
Seems not to lie plumb with their deeds,  
Why follow that which is not ours,  
Nor which doth satisfy our needs?

Ah! Spirit that o'er Indian lands  
Wouldst fain reclaim thine olden sway,  
Thy children are upherded sheep  
Pushed North by even those who pray!

Thy children yearn for what is past  
Nor yearn for what in future lies,  
Perception of thy Presence now,  
Draws forth from them regretful sighs.

In Sun-dance, where the Indian soul,  
 Excels itself in striving might  
 To reach the sphere from whence he may  
 Absorb a ray of godly light,

In this old rite the Whiteman sees  
 That which he holds should be erased,  
 Whil'st winking at his turkey-trot  
 And other things that are debased.

'Sun-dancing is against the faith  
 of Him, Whom Christian nations serve!'  
 --Ah! Christian nations hold the path  
 From treading which they should not swerve

Two thousand years of Christian faith  
 And Knowledge's progress unsurpassed  
 And Wisdom delving deep, for Truth  
 And adding to what was amassed,-

These mark the height of aerial flight  
 To which immortal mortals soar,  
 --But what of Truth and simple good,-  
 Should not these plain things come before?

If pride of Knowledge gains the world  
 And homely Goodness' lost for aye,  
 What vantage gains the human soul  
 With pride that lasts but for the day?

"Religious freedom in the land?"  
 --Then leave us to our peaceful ways,  
 What boots it that we should depart  
 From ancient rites of by-gone days?

You'd force your way to God on us,  
 Therein is blood and much deceit,  
 'Twere better that we stayed behind  
 Than do that which seems counterfeit.

Our fathers groped where darkness was,  
 And found that which has served the race,  
 An Indian rite wherewith to serve,  
 A Sacrement, a means of grace.

-----"

NEXT DAY -

I sense the soul of Indian days  
It hovers in the gloaming air,  
Which, pregnant with the Presence, felt,  
A cloister in the hour of prayer.

I sense the soul of Indian days  
As spreads the night in solitude,  
My soul responding to the touch  
Took on a humbler attitude.

It feels the touch of its own kind,  
It senses there a sympathy,  
The outward paste of white veneer  
Falls as if in antipathy.

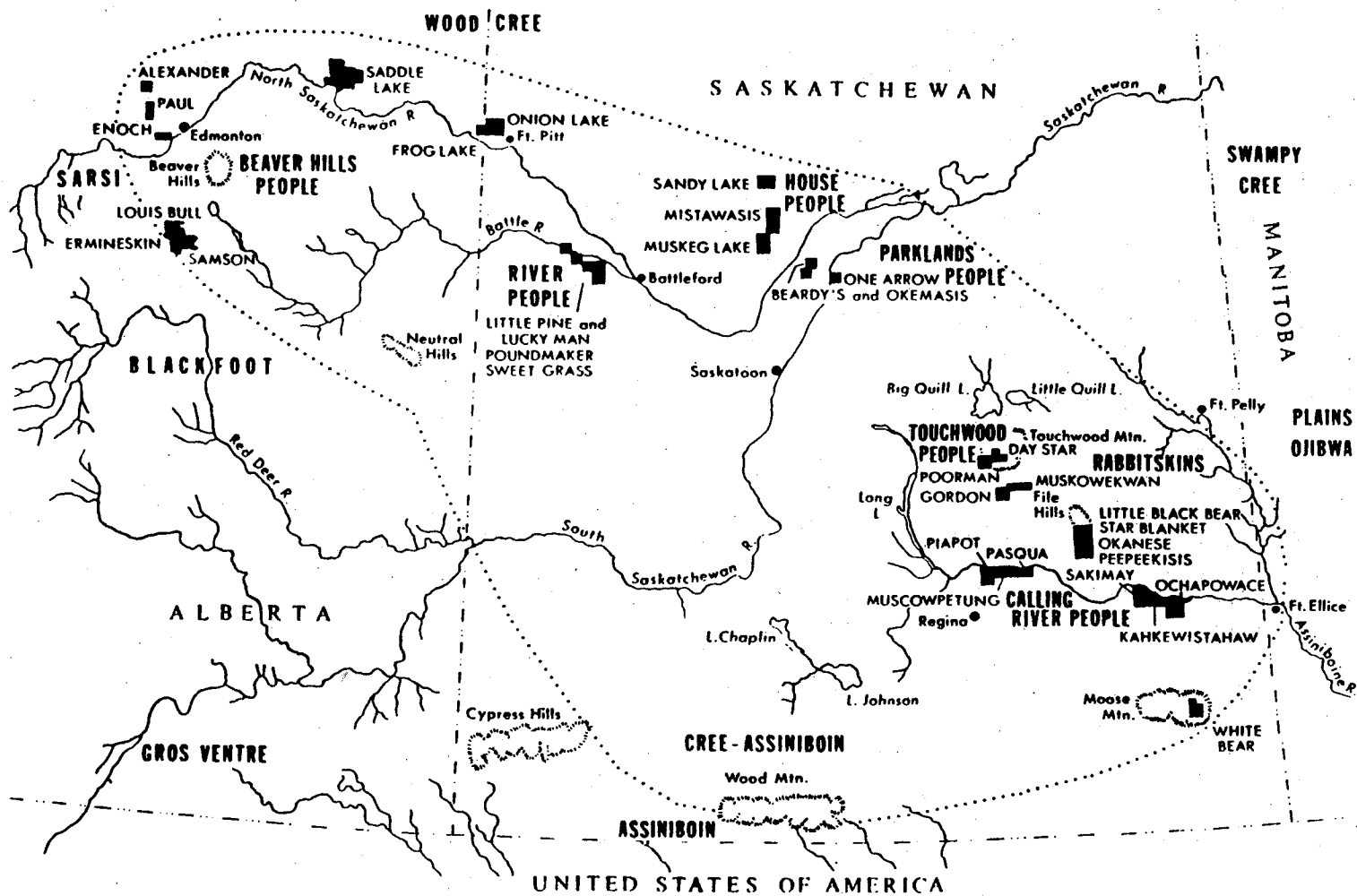


Figure 1: Map showing territory occupied by the Plains Cree as of 1860-1870 and reserves as they existed in 1936. Source: David Mandelbaum, The Plains Cree (Regina: University of Regina, 1979), p. 13.



Figure 2: Treaty areas, reserves, and Northwest Mounted Police stations, 1889. Adapted from map published in Sessional Papers, Volume XXIII, Nos. 12-13, 1890.



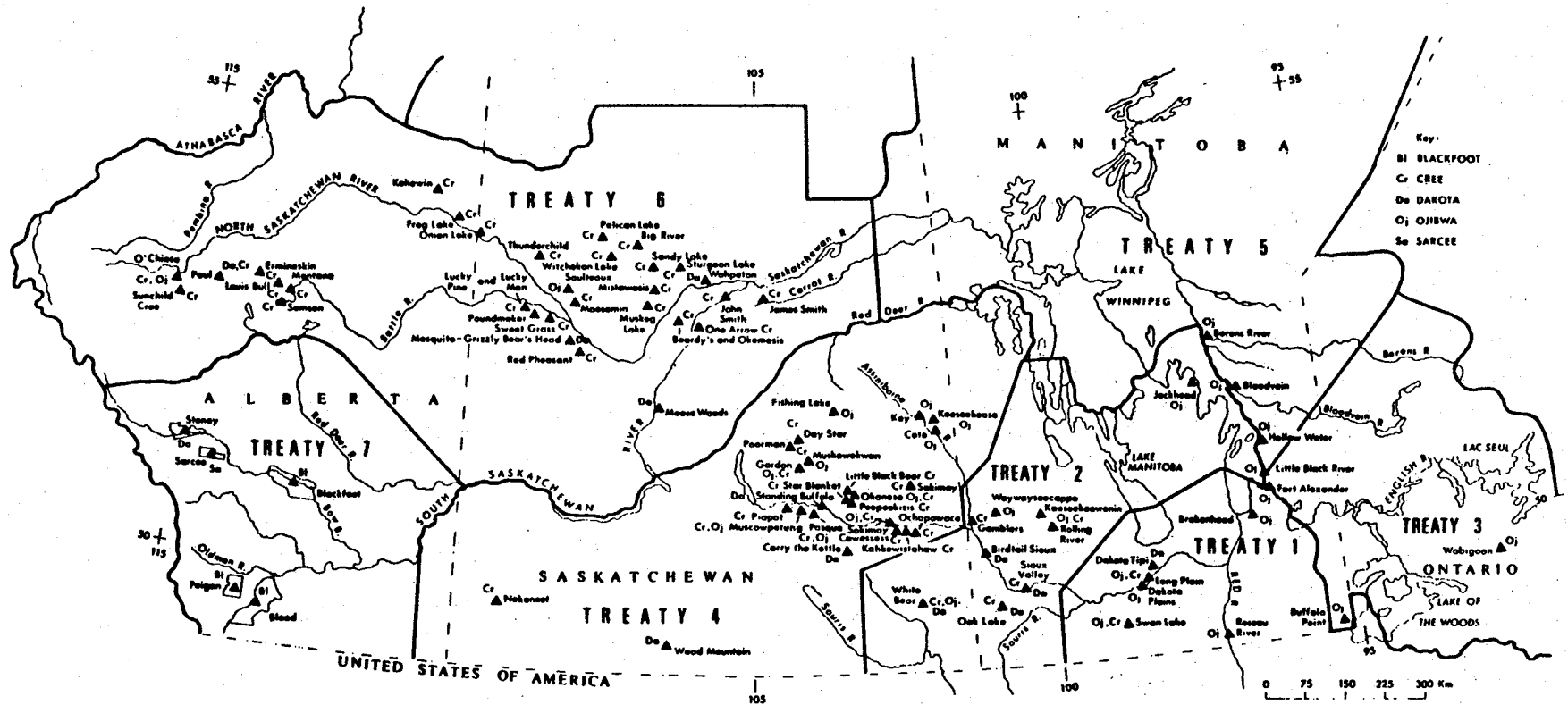


Figure 3: Location of Indian reserves and adjacent areas referred to in text. Adapted from Canada. Indian and Inuit Communities and Languages (Ottawa: Survey and Mapping Branch, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, 1980).

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