

Turtle Mountain Tales:
The Council Stones



By James A. M. Ritchie

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Contents

Chapter 1: Spiritual Geography of Turtle Mountain	1-2
The Function of Myth	1-3
Spiritual Geography	1-4
Creation Stories	1-5
Mayan version	1-6
General Algonquin version	1-6
Cree Version	1-7
Huron Version	1-9
Iroquois Version	1-10
Ojibway-Chippewa Version	1-12
European Filtered Versions	1-14
Mandan Version	1-16
Common Themes	1-17
Ritual and Geography	1-17
After the Glacier	1-19
The Mound Builders	1-21
Sourisford Mounds	1-23
Ball Game	1-31
Stone Circles and Petroforms	1-36
Boundary Commission as Creation Story	1-39
Chapter Two: End of the Old Ways	2-1
Collapse and Migration	2-1
Reorientation	2-5
Middle Ground	2-7
Shining Mountain	2-12
Council of All Nations	2-15
Mandan Trail	2-18
Chapter Three: Continental Contests	3-1
Michilimackinac	3-1
War on the Plains	3-4
The Crow	3-7
Three Affiliated Nations	3-7
Dakota-Algonquin War	3-11
Assiniboine Secession	3-14
Northwest Passage	3-17
Michilimackinac Council	3-22

1778 Ohio Valley Campaign	3-25
Louisiana Purchase	3-25
Rupert's Land in 1800	3-28
War of 1812	3-30
Opening the Oregon Question	3-41
Seizure of Fort Astoria	3-42
Rupert's Land Culture	3-44
The Gathering of the Clans	3-45
Saving Red River	3-46
Treaty of Ghent 1818	3-50

Chapter Four: Prelude to a New Order	4-1
American Events 1800-1850	4-1
British-American Tensions	4-1
Disease	4-2
New Nations: Michif and Metis	4-7
Last Battles	4-12
Council at Turtle Mountain	4-14
Many Sitting Eagles	4-18
Sacred Clowns	4-22
The Indian Removals	4-24
1830-1840 Spy Contests	4-25
1840-1870 Increasing Tensions	4-29
Canadian Militia	4-33

Chapter Five: Consolidating the Conquest	5-1
Escalation of the Indian Wars	5-1
Dakota and Lakota	5-4
Minnesota Uprising	5-7
The Shadow of the Council	5-12
Red River Rebellion	5-16
The Last Fenian Raid	5-23
Refugees and the Council	5-32
Boundary Commission	5-33
Custer's Last Stand	5-36
Crossing the Medicine Line	5-37
Cypress Hills	5-39
The Treaties of Canada	5-41
Indian Affairs	5-42
Border Closing	5-47
The 1885 Northwest Rebellion	5-50
Religious Suppression	5-54
Fire on the Mountain	5-54
Ghost Dance	5-59

Chapter Six: the Council in the 20th Century	6-1
Social Conflict	6-1
Birth and Death of I.R. #60	6-7
Divided Soul	6-10
The Last Council	6-13
Women's Council	6-19
Pauline Johnson	6-25
The Land Sale	6-27
Sovereignty	6-28
Recruiting Bill Moncur	6-37
Sitting Eagle and the Council	6-38
Appendix: Astronomy	A-1
Appendix: Carver 1778 CIHM Facsimile Edition	C-1
Appendix: Le Sonnant - Many Sitting Eagles	D-1
Appendix: Alexander Morris history of the Sioux	M-1
Appendix: Robert Rogers on Pontiac's Conspiracy	R-1
Appendix: Scots, Diaspora and Bad Manners	S-1

Preface to the 2004 edition

Since the completion and limited circulation of *Turtle Mountain Tales : the Council Stones* there have been a few items come to light that deserve correction or inclusion. In some cases, I would have preferred to rewrite entire chapters but that is not practicable. In lieu of this, the following comprise some cases of additional information which either correct something in the text, or shed a new light on the conclusions.

Sitting Bull's Eulogy

In the text I speculated that the Eulogy had been written by Inspector James Morrow Walsh of the Northwest Mounted Police and was printed in the *Boisvevain Globe* due to Walsh's personal friendship with editor W.H. Ashley.

However followup inquiries, and the assistance of the Adirondack Museum & Research Library of New York, have confirmed that the author was mid-nineteenth century writer William Henry Harrison Murray who wrote under the pen-name of "Adirondack Murray." Murray had been a popular journalist during the mid-1800's and was still writing when Sitting Bull was killed in 1891. The Adirondack Museum were able to establish that Murray had known Sitting Bull personally (producing a photograph to that effect) and that the original had been published in the *New York Herald*.

But like many archival questions this answer only raised more interesting problems. How did the article get to the *Boisvevain Globe* so quickly, and why the *Globe*?

The Manitoba Legislative Library archives were able to establish that the eulogy *did not* appear in any other Manitoba papers of the period. The Adirondack Museum informed us that they were unaware of the article appearing in any paper other than the *New York Herald*; that the copy we provided from the *Globe* is slightly different; and that it appeared within a matter of weeks. Therefore, while not written by Walsh, nor written especially for the *Globe*, the article was uniquely placed.

And although, James Walsh did not turn out to be the author, we did find that Walsh was present in *Boisvevain*. Walsh is mentioned several times in the *Boisvevain Globe* of the same period in the role of agent for the Adirondack Coal Co. arranging for distribution of *Turtle Mountain* coal.

I am still left wondering if James Walsh didn't have a hand in connecting up the writing of William Murray with local publisher W. H. Ashley. Regardless of the precise trail of publication, it is a remarkable article.

Bungee and Dakota

Several Dakota and Metis elders have spoken with me about the use of terms which changed in meaning over the years. Some of these were addressed in the original preface and text. I have been convinced that the common scholarly use of these terms is entirely too narrow, even misleading.

The term "bungee" seems to be of Ojibway derivative — this much is agreed on — and means "a little bit". This may be a reference to the racial mix of Bungees, or it may be a reference to the Bungee forming a small population.

However, the assumption made by scholars and their readers, is that because the word is Ojibway - Algonquin in origin, it follows that the people described are exclusively Ojibway. This reasoning fails when we consider that the word "Sioux" is also Ojibway in origin, but does not describe an Algonquin people at all.

Some elders, notably the late Chippewa tribal historian Patrick Gourneau, have said outright that Bungee included Ojibway - White mixes, but also included others such as Dakota. The principal difference noted between Bungee and Metis seems only to have been that the former tended to have Scots fathers, spoke a "lilting" patter, and were seen as distinct from the French Metis.

The frequent mentions of Bungee working on the trade routes between Brandon House and the Mandan villages has been cited by some to prove an Ojibway presence in southwestern Manitoba, at a time when the area was claimed by the Assiniboine and/or Dakota. If we accept Gourneau's own testimony that Bungee could be Dakota-Scots, then a mystery may be cleared up. If the community had no internal cohesion and was composed simply of the cast-off "little bits" of other communities, then it is not surprising that it ceased to exist when its parent communities — fur traders and Natives both — were themselves displaced.

Dakota as Nation-State

The word Dakota (or its cognomens Lakota and Nakota) is usually translated into English as "the Allies" or "the Allied People." Despite this, following the lead of most scholars, I fell easily into the habit of writing and thinking about the Dakota as one homogeneous ethnic group.

However, several Dakota elders, scholars in their own right, have spoken to me about this subject and have asked that I should adapt the practice of thinking and writing about the Dakota as a "polity" rather than as an "ethnicity." In other words, the Dakota are a federated state which comprises a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population. Most, but not all are of Siouan descent (whatever that turns out to mean) and most, but not all speak a Siouan based language. But, it is possible for non-Siouans (such as the Algonquin Cheyenne) to join the Dakota polity, and for Siouan speakers such as the Nakota Assiniboine or the Crow to politically secede from the overall federation.

In this view, Dakota history should be seen as the history of the evolution of a political state, its trials, pitfalls and successes. Concepts such as "race" may be historical false leads. Therefore, the meaning of the word "Dakota" potentially changes much of the historical interpretation.

Which goes to show that there is nothing more likely to be revised than an overconfident list of historical "facts."

James A. M. Ritchie
Boisvevain, 2004

Preface

The Council Stones is the product of a large number of volunteers, part-time staff and occasional professional help drawn from several boards, municipalities and bands. A great many people have contributed to the paper through suggestions, reading assignments, interviews, legends, site locations or artifacts. Since we began this process we've benefitted from corrections to geographic features, dates, cultures, eco-system and spelling. In the process I know that my own ideas: geographic, ecological or historical; about Turtle Mountain have been turned upside down.

What *The Council Stones* attempts to do is to reconcile artifact, story, historic record and archaeological evidence in order to arrive at a reasonable approximation of events. When a working journalist I found that whenever I heard two or more conflicting stories, all might be found to be in some sense true. Professor Clint Wheeler, under contract to the Dakota Nations of Canada, in arguing for the use of oral history wrote:

From a scholarly perspective oral tradition provides another line of evidence about the past of a society. This evidence is neither superior to or inferior to the written record. It is simply additional evidence to be examined first for internal consistency and secondly for correspondence with the written record. If the oral tradition is not internally consistent it must be rejected as historical evidence and if the oral tradition is consistent and yet at odds with the written record again we must reject the oral tradition as historical evidence. The significance of oral tradition may be emotional and mythological and have little or no bearing on the understanding of historical events.

I think this is precisely why more information *isn't* gleaned from oral history: the researcher guided by these principles would discard most of the really valuable information. Oral history has texture and flavour, stress and dynamic quality. Consistency is important and reveals a uniform experience of an event, but the contradictions reveal the nuances of what actually happened. To the cowboys the "Wagon Box Fight" was a victory. To the Sioux the "Wagon Box Fight" was a victory. Each side believes in its own oral history that the other side was defeated. If we followed the narrowest interpretation we might never discover that there had even been an event known as the Wagon Box Fight at all.

In preparing this research paper we have taken a number of givens that may not be the usual starting place for the researcher. One is that we are mandated to consider the history of Turtle Mountain, not of the rest of the Prairies, and so the research has a deliberate bend in that direction. It is a Western history from the perspective of events taking place on Turtle Mountain. Incidental to that is the fact that one cannot tell this story without also delving into the story of the Native people who inhabited Turtle Mountain for 12,000 years. In relating the

crucial transition period at the end of the Fur Trade and the beginning of the Homestead Era, the role of the Dakota emerges as central. Finally, we have assumed that oral history, particularly where echoed, should be regarded as the report of a real event. We have then looked for corroboration or explanation of how that oral history can be true, and to what extent. *The Council Stones* endeavours to pick its way among a great many contradictory histories, oral or written. It invites the reader to consider the same old facts, in a different light.

We have also been appreciative of the work of archaeologists in helping to date the dispersal of artifacts. This has often helped to debunk a previous tradition or historical interpretation. The guidance of Pat Badertscher and Manitoba Historic Resources staff ought to be mentioned here. The Department has been helpful in providing reading suggestions, access to archaeological site logs, and the use of staff time to audit artifacts. We particularly appreciate their patience with our approach.

The guidance of Native medicine people and elders has been especially helpful. In particular I'd mention the nudging of William Dumas of Nelson House Cree Nation to approach the research and his many calls of encouragement. I first heard of the "Council of All Nations" from William Dumas when I worked in Thompson. Kevin Tacan of the Sioux Valley Dakota has been pivotal in securing the cooperation of local Dakotas and officialdom, as well as providing an ongoing interpretation of Dakota ritual and artifacts. Two Lakota women who've been extremely helpful in providing guidance and reading assignments are Colleen Cutschall and Suzanne Dupree-Schuldt. It was Cutschall who suggested looking into the motives and plan of the Council elders in light of the work of Black Elk and Chase in the Morning, and provided many early clues to approaching the problem of the Stones. Dupree-Schuldt has been invaluable as a sounding board for every damn fool question and both these women raised questions that led to the discovery of the Women's Council on Turtle Mountain. I appreciate the advice and guidance from many on interpretation and care of the artifacts in the Moncur collection.

At the national level the study has benefitted immensely from the excellent cooperation of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and National Archives of Canada. At the local level, the research has benefitted from more than forty years of effort by librarians and volunteers to create the wonderful community history facility that is housed in the Library building in Boissevain. The library "elders": Bernice Pettypiece, Anna Grace Diehl, and Phyllis Hallet set very high standards of record keeping, conservation and arrangement. The happy result of four decades of dedication is a library catalogue of literary, video, audio, archival and museum artifact material that is searchable on one Internet-accessible catalogue. The integrity of this approach has been an important credit in dealing

with our Native neighbours, a trust relationship which including Bill Moncur's work is now in its seventh decade.

An area that may have been overlooked by previous researchers is that of the oral history among the non-Native population which complements that of the Native. Sometimes, the Native oral history can tell us that an event occurred and what its significance was, but the non-Native story may reveal where and when. This is in fact a fundamental lesson of the Medicine Wheel, that it takes more than one view to comprehend a reality.

There is a large body of military history which seems to be left alone by the mainstream researcher. Native-White interactions are well documented, and ironically better understood, among the military historians and hobbyists than among many writing general histories. I am very appreciative to this sub-genre of scholarship (and recreation) for providing Orders of Battle, Tables of Organization, and lists of officers. I particularly appreciate the assistance and advice of our elder historian veterans Robert J. Drake (history & analysis) and Norm Smith (military operations) in interpreting military records and providing insight as to the *why* and *what* of maneuvers and events.

An enjoyable aspect to the work has been the regular visits to the landscape of Turtle Mountain and the Souris Plains. Deloraine historian Bob Caldwell directed our attention to the Indian Affairs archives and to the stone petroforms of Souris-

ford. Volunteers Frank Smith, Dave Neufeld and his son Ezra have put in time and personal resources to ferry me around the country. Our younger volunteers have sometimes had the best insights, as well as the best sight, and many times Ezra Neufeld or Alexandra Casselman discovered things that their elders missed. Volunteer organizations such as the local museum associations and the Boundary Commission Trail Association laid a foundation of historical work that is called on in *The Council Stones*.

Finally, there was the quiet insistence by Bill Moncur that "things weren't right" about how the history of the mountain, and of White-Native interactions was being recalled. He was quite clear with me from the outset, that he wanted "*the record set straight. What happened to those people was a shame. It ought not to have happened.*" This work is the result of many hours of conversation with Bill Moncur, and the successful effort to find corroborative evidence. It is to the memory of Bill Moncur (1910-2001) that *The Council Stones* is dedicated.

James Arthur Moore Ritchie

Moncur Gallery : People of the Plains
Boissevain & Morton Regional Library
and Boissevain Community Archives

Abbreviations in text and credits

AFC	American Fur Company	NWT	Northwest Territories (of Canada)
BC	British Columbia	OB	Order of Battle (a military organizational table)
BCA	Boissevain Community Archives	PAM	Provincial Archives of Manitoba
BCR	Band Council Resolution (by-law of a Canadian First Nation.)	RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police (successor to the NWMP)
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs (USA)	RCR	Royal Canadian Rifles (later R.C. Regiment), first raised as a British Imperial regiment, later transferred to the Canadian Order of Battle.
BU	Brandon University	RG	Record Group (used in Archival references)
DIAND	Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (Canada)	RM	Rural Municipality (local government unit)
DLS	Dominion Land Survey <i>or</i> Dominion Land Surveyor	RR	Red River
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company	RV	Royal Veterans (discharged soldiers on semi-active duty.)
HM	His Majesty's ...	SK	Saskatchewan
IR	Indian Reserve (Canadian)	SD	South Dakota <i>rarely</i> , School District
MB	Manitoba	TARR	Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre (Manitoba)
MG	Manuscript Group (used in Archival references)	UM	University of Manitoba
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly (Provincial)	USA	United States of America
MMF	Manitoba Metis Federation	UW	University of Winnipeg
MP	Member of Parliament (Federal)	XY or XYZ	A company of independent ex-Nor'westers which competed with, then rejoined the NWC.
NAC	National Archives of Canada		
ND	North Dakota		
NWC	Northwest Company (the Nor'westers)		
NWMP	Northwest Mounted Police		

Introduction

There's a nice cautionary note at the conclusion of Brandon University archaeological professor Dr. Bev Nicholson's thesis, which we might put at the beginning of our story of the Turtle Mountain Council Stones.

Against the background of 10,000 or more years of prehistory in the study area, the Protohistoric and Ethnohistoric periods covering less than 200 years, seems insignificantly short — less than one standard deviation on most C14 dates. This time period has incorporated numerous anomalies into the archaeological record which would be extremely difficult to discover in the absence of the ethnohistoric accounts. The confinement of Selkirk/Clearwater Lake ceramics to the boreal forest is an artifact of the introduction of metal pots into the Cree cultural assemblage at a particular point in time and does not represent the final boundaries of Cree expansion. Given the rapid but brief expansion of the Ojibwa into the area, their occupation probably cannot be distinguished at all as separate from the general distribution of European, fur trade related, artifacts. The entire period is too brief to be sequentially ordered by means of radiometric dating. What remains that is to some degree comparable with the identifiable, and in most cases longer lived prehistoric manifestations, are the subsistence strategies.

The protohistoric and ethnohistoric strategies appear to have been consistently related to the environmental opportunities, regardless of the ethnicity of the groups living in the various areas. Each succeeding group seems to have interacted with the preceding group and acquired the technology most suited to harvesting the available food resources. This may be partly a function of the spread at which replacement and expansion took place in this short 170 year period. During these population shifts, there was a rapid depletion of game resources and the fur trade network facilitated and encouraged expansion of hunters into new, less intensively exploited areas.

The events of prehistory seem to be less structured, perhaps more gradual and indicate a wider variety of adaptive schemes related not only to broad environmental parameters but possibly to social configurations as well. There is virtually no information on the subsistence strategies of Paleo-Indian cultures in the study area and, from the study of later groups, it is clear that extrapolation over long distances are as likely to be incorrect as otherwise.

“Ethnohistory of Western Manitoba,” B. Nicholson, pp. 245-246.

Correspondingly, there's nothing to lose by venturing some informed guesses because the odds are equally good of

being correct. For more than twenty years my chief occupation has been that of a story teller, and this is a story to tell.

What we do have, is some solid artifacts, some circumstantial historical documentation and a few threads of eyewitness testimony of second and third-hand events.

That being said, I am reminded of a caution by another author on the West. George Catlin, reflected on the life and death of The Light, an Assiniboine ambassador who was assassinated by one of his own people.

We may call it a 'caution'; for instance, when I come to write your book, as you have proposed, the fate of this poor fellow, who was relating no more than what he actually saw, will caution you against the imprudence of telling all that you actually know, and narrating all that you have seen, lest like him you sink into disgrace for telling the truth.

Catlin's Indians, Vol. 2, George Catlin, p. 227

On Names and Terms

Several problems in language attend this book. There are problems of specialist jargon; anachronisms; and spelling.

Large sections of the content are derived from different specialties which don't always coincide. Some archaeological jargon is unavoidable, although as a non-archaeologist I've tried to avoid it as much as possible and to substitute more commonly understood language.

The Medicine Wheel specifically, and the study of Religion generally, have their own specialty jargons. Again, I've tried to avoid obscure terms in as much of the text as I could, but retained it where it was necessary.

Finally, there are many anachronisms of terms and spellings scattered throughout the historical quotes. As much as possible I've tried to retain the authors original spelling in order to keep the flavour of the time, event and/or persons involved. Occasionally I've let this slip in correcting common typos such as “th” for “the” or “form” for “from.” I felt that correcting these small instances did not detract from the flavour or meaning, but did increase legibility in these cases.

I tried to retain original spelling where it affected the flavour such as alternate spellings of terms for food and drink, or place names. Michilimackinac migrates across three geographic locations and a dozen spellings. In the text I try to use the most common one, or failing that, the one that seems to get the idea and/or pronunciation across best.

“He Who Rattles As He Walks” presented a problem. The root words are “He” “Dami” “Mani” which created the syntax of the English translation. However, Lakota and Dakota advisors consulted suggested that the Dakota language is strongly alliterative and that the spelling “Hadamanie” best allows non-Dakota speakers to manage the sound of the name. There are perhaps a dozen different spellings of this name scattered through the historical texts used.

A final kind of anachronism and spelling error is really an error of terminology. When Native root words are translated into English there are sometimes collision of meaning. There are three notable examples in the historical (and even modern) material where we've been careful to heed the cautions. Three phrases are sometimes historically applied to completely different peoples: Chippewa/Chippewyan; Blackfoot/Blackfeet; and Gros Ventre.

Necessarily these have been retained in the historical quotes but have been clarified by square brackets [].

"Chippewa" as an historical term is customarily applied to some Ojibway bands now living in the United States. The term is simply a mispronunciation in English or French of the word "Ojibway." In the text the term would have been dropped in all cases in favour of "Saulteaux" or "Ojibway", however it is part of the proper name of the "Turtle Mountain Chippewa Band" and is retained in that context.

"Chippewyan" is another mispronunciation, and in this case is a misnomer as well. The people referred to are the northern Dene, primarily the Sayisi [Eastern] of Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This term is dropped throughout the text in favour of "Dene" and is retained only in some historical quotes.

The term "Gros Ventre" translated as either "Big Belies" or "Big Arms" is unfortunately used throughout the historical and modern texts for several otherwise unrelated people. I was particularly cautioned by Native advisors from the Prairies to avoid these terms where possible because of the confusion. When writers speak of the "Gross Ventre of the Rivers" or "the Villages" or in any relation to the Mandan, they are usually speaking of the Arikara (otherwise called the "Rhee") or of the Minnataree and Hidatsa. The Arikara are a Caddoan people from the central Mississippi who migrated northward and coalesced with their trade partners the Siouan "Mandan" and "Hidatsa" to form the present-day Three Affiliated Tribes. Consequently in the latter half of the 19th Century these people become one, but in the 17th Century they were cultural and geographically distinct.

When "Gros Ventre" is used in conjunction with "the Prairie" or in relation to the Blackfoot Confederacy, the term refers to the Atsina, an Algonquin band within the larger Blackfoot Confederacy.

Sometimes it is only possible to distinguish which group is being referred to in the historical texts by the geographic clues. The reader is welcome to question my judgement where this has been applied. In deference to the advice received, I've used Atsina, Arikara or Hidatsa in the text to distinguish between these groups.

Even the term "Canadian" bears some mention. For hundreds of years the word meant people who came from New France and/or were of French descent (or at least partially.) Generalized, it also frequently included Metis who had never seen anything east of Lake of the Woods but were tied to the culture perceived by others as "Canadian." These Canadians worked and travelled far afield from the boundaries administered by their contemporary colonial governments. The Canadian River in Texas is named for these people and they were

found as voyagers, fur traders, scouts and riverboat crews throughout the interior of North America from Mexico to the Arctic.

After the 1820's or so, the word "Canadian" became more limited for a time to the central provinces of what is today southern Quebec and southern Ontario. Those to whom the term applied in the Red River Valley become known as "Metis" while those on the Mississippi River become "Creole" or "Cajun". Locally, the Metis family surnamed "Canada" derived their name from the early period, and found themselves in an incongruous conflict with the Canadians of the late 19th Century.

When the term "Canadian Party" is used during the 1860's to 1890's it means a distinctly anti-French and Ontario-dominated faction within the old Northwest. They are relative newcomers, intolerant or indifferent to the traditions and customs of those before them. They bring in new constitutional arrangements such as the land survey system and the Manitoba Schools Question. Throughout this period the "Canadians" were the Federalists and were usually opposed to everything dear to the "Canadians" of the previous century.

Finally the term "Blackfoot" presents a problem when pluralized by otherwise well meaning writers into "Blackfeet." De Voto as one of the most particular and exacting historical writers is all the more disappointing for having committed this error deliberately.

The "Blackfeet", also called the "Brules", are a branch of the Tetons — Lakota Sioux. The term refers to a legend of a narrow escape from a prairie fire.

The "Blackfoot" are a confederacy of a majority of Algonquin bands and a minority of Athapascan. The former are related to the Cree and the latter to the Dene.

There is no cultural relationship other than a certain amount of technical diffusion and a great deal of competition between the Blackfeet and the Blackfoot. Unfortunately this is the worst example of confusion of terms in both the historical record and in modern writing.

In the text I have used "Blackfoot" and "Blackfoot Confederacy" for the northern Algonquin group. I have used "Brule" or even generalized with "Teton" or "Lakota" in the text to make it clear when I mean the Siouan group.

I have been told that there is a move among the modern Assiniboine to revert back to a Nakota-language term for themselves. Since this is not as of this writing well established, and since an overwhelming amount of material uses the term "Assiniboine" to denote the northern Nakota Nation, I have retained the use of this term throughout the text.

Before leaving this subject, I might mention that the term "Scotch" is originally a pejorative, a reference to drink and a pun on a Roman term for "pirate." "Celt" is a Greek term for a stone axe. The French "Ecosse" is closer to the original Latin, and meant a pirate who emerged out of a boat to raid civilized people on land. Like the word "Viking" in place of "Norse" or "Scandinavian" we are now stuck with a specific term for "pirate" being applied to an entire people. Perhaps the historical lesson is to turn around your enemy's epithets.

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Seven “ceremonial stones” sit in the Moncur Gallery Museum. They are nearly round granite stones, ranging from about the size of a child’s head to slightly under that of a watermelon.

For more than fifty years, the founder of the collection Mr. William Moncur, has offered a short, consistent, and tantalizingly brief account of how the seven stones entered his collection.

In 1942 William Moncur supplemented farm income by working on the railway as a kind of courier agent, processing high priority light packages. One dark winter morning the train was ready to pull out of Deloraine on its return trip to Winnipeg when Bill noticed an exchange between an “old Indian” and the conductor of the train. As the conductor passed, Bill asked what the fuss was about, to which he received the answer that the old Indian wanted to put some untanned, improperly wrapped, skunk furs onto the train for the HBC office in Winnipeg. The conductor wouldn’t allow it in their present condition.

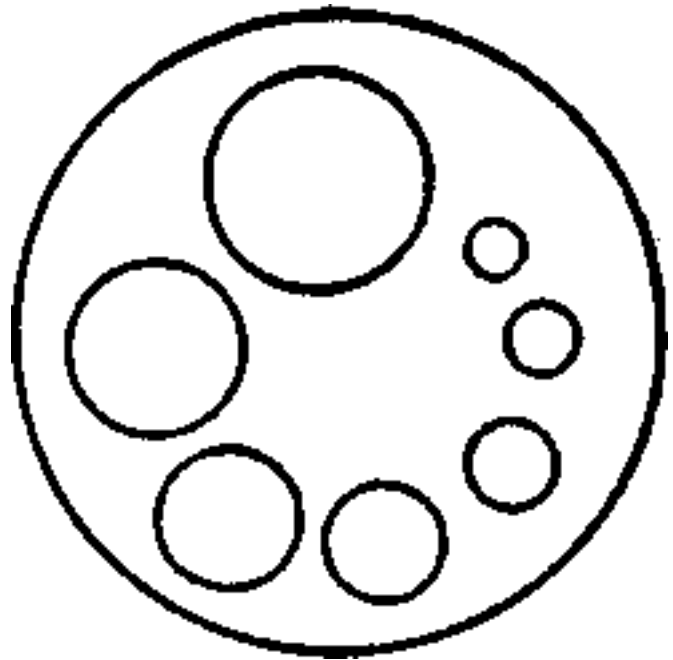
Moncur signalled to the old man once the conductor had passed by, and “expedited” the package of furs. He said he’d look after it as part of his courier waybill, and stashed the furs between the cars so the smell wouldn’t intrude.

“A few weeks later I was back through Deloraine and I saw the old man again,” recalled Moncur in interviews in 1999. “He waved his HBC cheque at me and said he’d got paid.”

Moncur as a 31 - year old farmer already had 20 years of collecting Native artifacts. He was curious and wanted to strike up an acquaintance. He knew that the old man had ice cream and raisin pie at the Chinese restaurant in Deloraine. “I don’t know if he liked raisin pie so much, as it was the only kind of pie the Chinaman made, but I do know he loved ice cream,” said Moncur.

Moncur arranged with the restaurant owner to run up a tab for pie and ice cream on behalf of the old man. Moncur would square up the tab whenever he passed through. After some negotiation this was agreed to. “I don’t know if he got all the raisin pie and ice cream I was billed for, it was quite a lot sometimes. I think I was charged for some others too, but I know he got some at least.”

Over a two-year period, 1942-1944, Moncur and Sitting Eagle, as he now knew to address the old man, struck up a coffee table friendship. Moncur has not elabo-



“From this time on, the holy pipe will stand upon this red Earth, and the two-leggeds will take the pipe and will send their voices to Wakan-Tanka. These seven circles which you see on the stone have much meaning, for they represent the seven rites in which the pipe will be used.”

Black Elk Speaks, p. 7

rated on this acquaintance until recently. All of the printed versions of this story, and the recorded interviews jump from this point, meeting Sitting Eagle and the ice cream bill, to the next element.

One day in 1944 the station agent at Deloraine approached Moncur. “There’s a package here for you.”

“For me? What is it?” asked Moncur.

“A couple of rocks left for you by the old Indian.”

“A couple of rocks? What for?”

“I don’t know. He just said he left them here for you and you were to keep ‘em.”

Moncur and the station agent walked over to the side of the platform and the agent showed him a heavy bag with two of the granite stones inside. Over the course of the next few months, five more stones arrived, sometimes in pairs, sometimes one at a time. Each time Sitting Eagle had carried the stones (presumably) from his cabin on the mountain, twelve miles away, to the train siding. The bag would be left with the station agent, and Bill

would add the stones to the growing collection.

"I learned a little later that a few weeks after he delivered the last stone he died," said Moncur sadly.

From 1944 to 1986 the seven stones were kept safe by Moncur at his farm near Whitewater Lake. In 1986 the Moncur Gallery was created as a municipal trust to continue Mr. Moncur's pioneer work in archaeology and history on the Turtle Mountain region. The stones passed into the safekeeping of the Moncur Gallery. One attended a United Church synod with the Rev. Stan McKay, a Cree minister who at the time was the national moderator.

In archival documents, print, radio and video interviews Moncur repeated the story of Sitting Eagle and the seven stones with little embellishment or variation. All the more remarkable in a master story teller who has left as his legacy several museums, books, manuscripts and archaeological digs contributing to our understanding of the region's history.

In 1998-99 the Moncur Gallery Board embarked on a program to uncover more information on the "provenance" of the stones. Should we have them? What are they for? What should we do with them? Will they need to be repatriated some day? The Board posed all of these questions with regard to the stones, and with regard to several other artifacts in the collection that fell under the general heading of "sacred."

Included in the program of discovery was an outreach to the Dakota and Metis communities in our region. Summer student staff, municipal councillors and museum volunteers travelled to the MMF days on Turtle Mountain, Metis celebrations at Batoche, and to pow wows at Sioux Valley and Long Plain. A small portable museum display travelled with the delegation.

At Sioux Valley several elders approached the Moncur delegation. Discussions were held, honestly explaining what we knew and what we were inquiring, and

a tobacco gift was presented to the elders.

This was followed up at Long Plain where board member Anna Grace Diehl was approached by Nellie Kopetz on behalf of the Dakota Oyate Lodge (the senior's residence) and by Sioux Valley elder Kevin Tacan.

Since then the Gallery has been visited by Neil Sioux, and his students from a Dakota-Ojibway summer youth program. Our own staff received instruction in regard to the artifacts, and Neil Sioux had two groups of students (elementary and high school aged) tour the Gallery.

These 1999 summer visits culminated in the visit of the Dakota Oyate seniors to the Gallery. Due to wheelchair access difficulties, the seniors were received upstairs in the Council chambers and museum staff brought up artifacts and trays. A tea was served, which was also attended by Hattie and Bill Moncur.

During the summer public relations campaign contacts were established between elders, council members, volunteers and staff in the Boissevain and Morton area and Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation.

Parallel to these programs, the Board, Moncur family and Bill Moncur decided to begin a new series of archival interviews. As the new archives assistant I conducted the interviews.

A tobacco gift was presented to Mr. Moncur.

In the words of Bill Moncur, "Somebody finally asked the right questions."

What we initially thought were some ceremonial artifacts associated with the Turtle Mountain Dakota Sioux, has expanded in scope. Each interview, each encounter, each trip once again back to the archives to re-examine something missed before, has peeled off another layer of the onion. And in the process, Bill Moncur chose to finally relate what happened between buying the pie and ice cream, and receiving the seven stones.

Chapter 1: Spiritual Geography of Turtle Mountain

Turtle Mountain as a landform stretches about 50 miles east to west, and about 30 miles north to south (depending on where one wants to draw the imaginary line of its "base".) Local tourist trade generally refers to the "Turtle's Back" as the mountain. Beyond that, jurisdictionally Turtle Mountain is usually the height of land above 1500' or so, which on the Canadian side is predominantly forest reserve or park. In a very broad sense, it can be viewed as the huge comma-shaped height of land which centres on the Turtle's Back, has below its right foot Whitewater Lake, and a tail that extends to dip

into Devil's Lake, North Dakota. Regardless of the definition used, in a prairie environment, in the absence of other dominating features, Turtle Mountain stands out as the easiest thing to see, the biggest natural feature, with the most obvious environmental effect. It snows on the mountain when it rains on the flats. It's usually cloudy, when the surrounding countryside can be clear. During the Dirty Thirties there were vegetable gardens and hay meadows on the mountain, when there was dust on the prairie.

For 10,000 years Turtle Mountain has had this kind



Jonathan Carver published this map in 1778, based on his own travels and on accounts including La Verendrye's. The map puts 2 and 3 together to make 4. Carver confused the Rockies and Turtle Mountain because of the term "Shining Mountains." He knew that the Missouri system flowed east and south away from a height of land, and that the Lake Winnipeg-Hudson Bay system flowed north away from the same height of land. He just couldn't conceive of a height of land as gentle as the Missouri Couteau. Setting aside the mistake of substituting mountains for escarpment, (and the western half of the map about which he knew nothing), his line of "Shining Mountains" does correspond closely to the line of the continental divide, which terminates at Turtle Mountain. Carver was also trying to make sense of his sources who referred to Turtle Mountain as "the centre of the world."

Illustration from "Course of Empire" by Bernard De Voto, p. 249

of effect on the regional environment, even to the point of forcing the Wisconsin glacier to part and flow around it, lap over it, but not actually subsume it as the glacier had to mountains farther north. As the glacial age passed, the mountain's environmental effect caused the area around its skirts to clear before the rest of the province. It became the cradle of human colonization of Manitoba.

Regardless of the era we pick, from glacier to the present, the mountain structure plays a significant role in the regional environment, and therefore in animal species and human habitation.

The Function of Myth

Myth is historical, social and psychological insight reduced to metaphor. It is shorthand for human experience. A Western ethnocentrism is to regard "history" as being something qualitatively different from "myth" when actually history is only the myths we've decided to accept. It is true that there is more detail in the written record than in the transmission of oral history, but it is not true that the written record is inherently more accurate than oral history.

Attempts to understand what happened in the history of the West have relied too heavily on written records, and insufficiently on listening to and comparing the oral stories. The break between these methods of recording human endeavour is arbitrary — the break between one civilization and another. If we really want to understand this land we live in, then it is necessary to integrate what we think of as history with what we think is *only* myth.

The French anthropologist Levi-Strauss noted the similarity between history and myth, as well as the bias.

On the one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future. This can be made clear through a comparison between myth and what appears to have largely replaced it in modern societies, namely, politics. When the historian refers to the French Revolution, it is always as a sequence of past happenings, a non-reversible series of events the remote consequences of which may still be felt at present. But to the French politician, as well as to his followers, the French Revolution is both a sequence belonging to the past — as to the historian — and a timeless pattern which can be detected in the contemporary French social structure and which provides a clue for its interpretation, a lead from which to infer future developments. Michelet, for instance, was a politically minded historian. He describes the French Revolution thus: "That day...everything was possible...Future became present...that is, no more time, a glimpse of eternity."

Structural Study of Myth, Levi-Strauss, pp. 205-206

The story of the Turtle Mountain Council Stones is a story of the collision of myth and history. To make

sense of the presence of *people* in the Souris Basin and Turtle Mountain regions of Manitoba and North Dakota today requires that we reach an understanding of myth and history as a continuum, not as mutually exclusive modes of thought.

Spiritual Geography

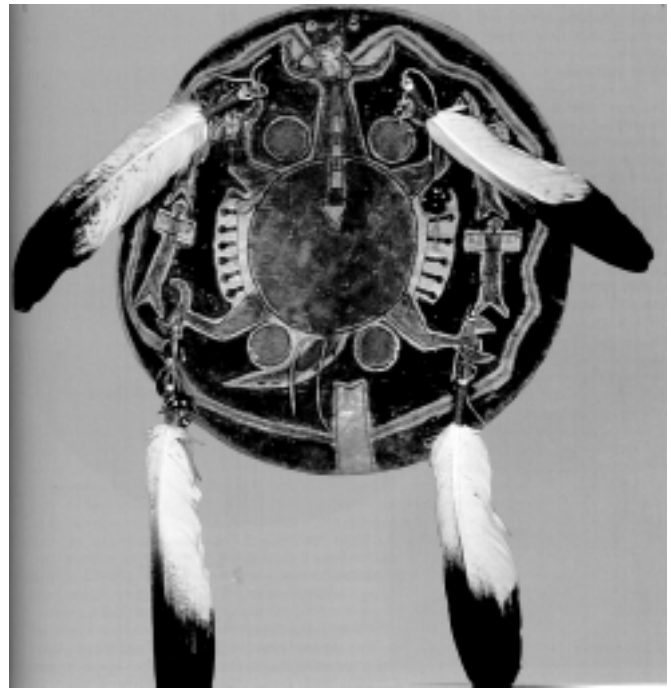
Since humans are spiritual creatures, it would be impossible for the residents of the area in any age not to regard the mountain as special. It's a well documented practice that Christian churches have planted their facilities and sacred places on top of the same spots favoured by predecessors. It's no accident that so many Bible camps are located on the mountain, bumping shoulders with recreational users, community pastures, hunters, Metis festivals, Aboriginal culture camps, trappers even weddings and funerals. While many of the cultures surrounding the mountain may live in cultural enclaves, the mountain itself is used by all.

The mountain, inescapably, continues to play a role in our culture similar to the role it has played more or less continuously for the last 10,000 years. It's the "big important place."

Swiss theologian and scholar of comparative religion, Mercea Eliade, said that "sacred" is not an end-state so much as a continuum with "sacred" on one end, and "profane" on the other. Just as "tall" is not an end-state but a continuum from "short" to "tall." It's this range of difference that allows us to navigate what Eliade called the religious landscape. He meant it as a metaphor, but he also made it clear that the metaphor of height and depth in a landscape developed out of real experiences in our evolutionary past.

We climb a hill and we get a different perspective. We obtain, relative to the state of mind and physical position we started with before we climbed the hill, a sense of the sacred as a result of climbing the hill. We hold it briefly while we sit on top of the hill, and lose it if we remain indefinitely at this one place. Eliade called this the "religious faculty of mind" and without it society and civilization are impossible.

Eliade observed a number of defining characteristics found wherever humans must interact with a landscape. He gave the study of comparative religion working definitions of how landscapes are "informed" with religious meaning; the criteria for holy sites; and how sacred space and sites can be founded. From the neolithic occupation of Turtle Mountain, through the stone petroforms and mound builders, the Medicine Wheel and the Boundary Commission, these principles were unconsciously but reverently followed.



"A Cheyenne deerskin shield cover is decorated with feathers and the image of a sacred green turtle, which according to Cheyenne tradition supports the earth on its back."

Caption and photograph from "The Spirit World", Time-Life American Indian series, p. 133.

A well understood symbol such as the turtle could be used by Aboriginal people to form common understandings. In the case of Turtle Mountain it was used as a template to assign names and uses to the landscape. An important mytheme of the turtle is that there is room on its back for all.

Here, then, we have a sequence of religious conceptions and cosmological images that are inseparably connected and form a system that may be called the 'system of the world' prevalent in traditional societies: (a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space; (b) this break is symbolized by an opening by which passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld); (c) communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images, all of which refer to the axis mundi [world axis]: pillar, ladder, mountain, tree, vine, etc.; (d) around the cosmic axis lies the world (=our world), hence the axis is located 'in the middle,' at the 'navel of the earth'; it is the Centre of the World.

The Sacred and the Profane, Mercea Eliade, p. 37

Before any human set eyes upon it, Turtle Mountain was an ideal candidate for fulfilling these conditions. But it's insufficient that a landscape "be", it also has to "do", and that requires an integration of the landscape (artificial or natural) with key myths — preferably the story of creation.

The same symbolism of the centre explains other series of cosmological images and religious beliefs. Among these the most important are: (a) holy sites and sanctuaries are believed to be situated at the centre of the world; (b) temples are replicas of the cosmic mountain and hence constitute the preeminent 'link' between earth and heaven; (c) the foundations of temples descend deep into the lower regions.

The Sacred and the Profane, Mercea Eliade, p. 39

Finally, if space is not yet sacred, or is new territory that requires assimilation, Eliade observed two general methods of carrying out this task.

For our purpose, it will suffice to distinguish two methods of ritually transforming the dwelling place (whether the territory or the house) into cosmos, that is, of giving it the value of an imago mundi [world image]: (a) assimilating it to the cosmos by the projection of the four horizons from a central point (in the case of a village) or by the symbolic installation of the axis mundi (in the case of a house); (b) repeating, through a ritual of construction, the paradigmatic acts of the gods by virtue of which the world came to birth from the body of a marine dragon or of a primordial giant [both examples of ancient symbols of chaos.]

The Sacred and the Profane, Mercea Eliade, p. 52

This mountain took on some particular characteristics in the human mind. The most obvious was the association with turtles. Physically, it reminds anyone who sees it of a turtle. The "Turtle's Back" is the part which most closely resembles the animal. The rest of the structure has also been described by people as having features, notably the "heart" and "head."

The turtle is one of the most important animal symbols in the North American mythos, found within the legends of every nation. This suggests that the first use of the symbol lies deeply buried in antiquity, probably before or during the original crossing to North America from Asia.

Creation Stories

In creation stories from the Maya in the south to the Cree in the north, the turtle plays a similar role. Several short summaries of myths provide an indication of the meaning attached to the turtle as a cosmic entity. The first story is Mayan, translated only within the last twenty years from Mayan inscriptions. (See "A Forest of Kings" and "The Code of Kings" by Linda Schele.)

Although the versions naturally differ in detail, there are key structural similarities that point to the layering of several old stories. Common elements include: twins; the death of one twin and the resurrection of another; "old gods" who are sometimes inimical to humans; a set of "new gods" who must "steal" sacred knowledge for the benefit of humans; the teaching of key rituals including the ball game; invention of agriculture; the past destruction of the world; and recolonization of a deserted landscape. Although the role of the turtle changes in these stories, in most cases it is an intermediary between this world and an underworld wherein dwell the old gods.

It should be borne in mind that throughout this paper "myth" (and indeed any religious term) is used in the technical Comparative Religion sense, not in the archaeological or common sense. A myth is a cultural template which explains relationships and provides patterns of behaviour. In this sense, all myths are true or they cannot become myths. A "cosmology" is a system of symbols and concepts which relate to the organization of the universe, not a bunch of artifacts. An "ontology" is a specific kind of cosmological myth which is more commonly called a "creation story." A "god" is any mythic character that can arbitrate or generate a portion of reality. (For this reason Christianity is regarded by many Comparative Religion scholars as a pantheistic religion, not a monotheistic one; while on the other hand the Medicine Wheel is much more monotheistic because all of its lesser beings exist only at the sufferance or pleasure of the great Manitou and are considered a part of the Whole.) A story which is perceived of as patently false will never acquire the status of myth. Myths also have internal structures, logic, consistencies and tensions which can be used to shed light on circumstances to which the myth refers, or out of which the myth was generated. When myths are layered (as are the following examples) they are indicative of a cultural change having taken place which required a realignment of the cosmology. A "static myth" usually has little or no layering, is internally consistent, and is designed to maintain a culture in place in perpetuity. A "change myth" on the other hand usually has an internal dynamic which propels the listener forward from one state of mind to a new (and presumably better) state

of mind. Individual elements of a myth are called “mythemes”, such as the ball, the game, the twin, the struggle, etc. Mythemes are often formed from “archetypes” which are rooted in racial memory, but acquire their particular form through cultural and individual memory. The “structure” of a myth refers to the internal organization of symbols while the “function” of a myth refers to the behaviours and attitudes which the myth encourages or discourages. Whatever terms are used, most good storytellers are well aware of these principles and unconscious forces.

While archetypes are unconscious, symbols which cloak archetypes are not. It is possible for two people on opposite sides of the planet to coin a story about a twin and a turtle, even to have some coincidence of meaning. It is not possible (barring telepathic transmission or space aliens, neither of which is very likely) that two people far removed can generate identical mythemes much less mythemes that comment upon each other. For that to happen in different versions of myth requires the transmission of ideas by some means at some time. It requires contact. When a mytheme such as the turtle, receives an additional attribute which is not found in physical observation, such as the shell growing to become land, then the mythemes are linked and probably arise from the same historical root.

The purpose in using a Mayan myth is to show that there are structural continuities between Central America and the northern Plains; not to argue that any of these versions is the direct ancestor of another. Secondly, the work of Linda Shele in translating ancient texts allows us to leapfrog backwards in time past the limitations of many of the oral histories where detail fades after a few centuries. Her translations of first millennium texts gives us a more complete glimpse of a story structure prior to contact with Europe.

In back of the Mayan myths are older cultures such as the Toltec and Olmec. Somewhere within these lost civilizations is the common root of the Plains myths and the Central American myths. Without oral histories or translations, the Mayan texts are as far back as we can go in the written record.

Mayan version

The following version is a summary of that presented by Linda Shele in her books *The Code of Kings* and *A Forest of Kings* containing translations of Mayan texts.

Two “new gods” are born who are twins. They trace a descent from the old gods through their mother. The twins find a crack in the back of the Cosmic Turtle

and discover it is the ideal place to play a ball game. They are so loud and noisy that they wake old gods who are sleeping below the Cosmic Turtle. The old gods come up through the crack, seize the two young god twins, and take them back down to the underworld, which lies in some watery chaos below the Cosmic Turtle. The young twin gods are subjected to a series of tests, all of which are unfairly stacked against them. Because the old gods cheat, the young gods fail the tests and are killed. One of the twins is buried below the “ground” of this underground world; while the other is decapitated and his head hung in a tree (still within the underground world.)

A daughter of the old gods is warned not to go near the severed head, but out of curiosity does so anyway. The head magically impregnates her. She flees the old gods who are her parents and seeks refuge with her in-laws, in particular a grandmother (the mother of the twin gods.) There she is hidden and protected. She gives birth to a set of twins, who are in many respects like their father (and uncle) but also have the power of the old gods.

The new young twins discover the ball playing equipment of their elders, and they too take up playing the ball game in the crack on the back of the Cosmic Turtle. Again, the old gods are awakened by the noise, and again they rise up through the crack to seize upon the ball players.

However, this younger set of twins have been forewarned by their mother and grandmother of the tricks. The two young gods submit to the same series of tests, and forewarned, pass all of them. The old gods are astounded at this, and in their confusion, the two young gods make their escape. Two more “old gods” appear who are in some way relatives, and they carry the two young twins in their canoe up and out of the underworld. Along the way, the young gods rescue the ball playing equipment, and their father and uncle who are revived. The entire family group emerges through the crack in the back of the Cosmic Turtle to found a new lineage of deities. The point at which the older twin gods were killed in the crack sprouts corn and this knowledge of growing corn is taught to humans, along with the ball game, to commemorate the sacrifice made by the older twin gods.

The young twins are “alive” and involved in human affairs. The older twins ascend to some heavenly abode where they lend guidance to their younger offspring.

General Algonquin version

The following is summarized from several versions of Algonquin stories from the Canadian side of the Great

Lakes. The story differs slightly in detail from the Mayan, but the key elements are very similar. (Readers may recognize that the Hiawatha legend is part of this myth structure.)

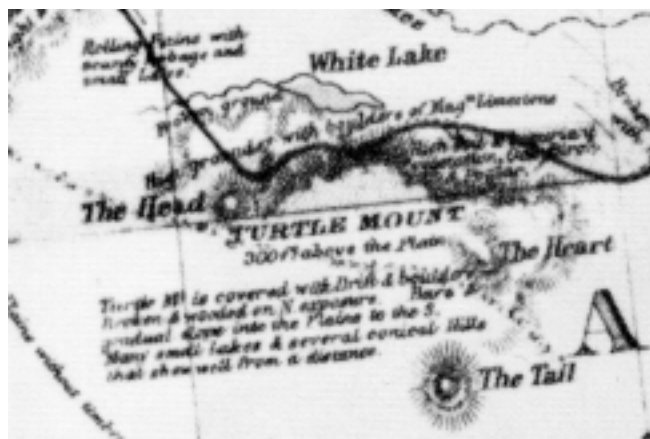
In the usual Algonquin versions, there are a set of twins cared for by their grandmother Nokomis: Nanabush (or Nanabozho) and his brother the Wolf-Boy. Both are descendent from old god blood, have powers, and are shapechangers. The Creator decides that the Wolf-Boy is “wrong” and removes him to heaven. Nanabush is initially angry, but eventually reconciles (that’s another story.) Nanabush comes into conflict with some old gods, usually just called “monsters” by the Algonquin, who do not like his free spirited approach to things. Nanabush conceives a plan to kill two of the chief monsters, he invents a ballgame to distract them, then shapechanges into a tree on the ball court in order to get close when their guard is down. The old monster gods find the ball equipment and take up play with enthusiasm. Though they suspect a trick, even to the point of testing the tree, they are convinced Nanabush is nowhere about. Tired after their exertions, the two old chief monsters lie down to sleep. Nanabush changes back into human form and stabs both, although he is unable to kill them. In the confusion, Nanabush makes his escape, and the old gods retreat beneath the waters to lick their wounds.

Nanabush meets with another old god monster, Toad, who is not very powerful. He learns that Toad is carrying medicine to the old chief monsters. Nanabush kills Toad and shapechanges into a likeness. With this disguise and the medicines he descends through the water to the underworld, and makes his way past the guards. Under the pretence of tending to the two old gods, he instead finishes them off. The other old gods discover the assassination and the ruse, then chase Nanabush.

Nanabush uses his shapechanging abilities to flee the water (variously as a fish or otter), and then runs out onto dry land. The old monster gods pursue. When they discover Nanabush has fled onto land, they raise a great tidal wave that follows after Nanabush. The latter flees to the highest mountain, and climbs the highest tree on that mountain, but still the flood pursues him and in the process inundates the whole earth. Nanabush finds himself up a tall pine tree, with all of the surviving animals hanging onto the same tree for dear life. But the power of the old gods is exceeded and the waters are unable to rise above this tree.

Unable to get out of this predicament by himself, Nanabush sees an object coming through the water towards their perch. It looks like a giant island, but moves. It is the Cosmic Turtle.

The Turtle glides in under the tree and allows Nana-



The Northwest Mounted Police map section shown above was based on Captain Palliser's 1865 map. The basic zoomorphic form of the turtle is indicated by Palliser's record of "The Head," "The Heart," and "The Tail". Although some writers have interpreted Palliser to have meant the "Turtle's Back" by the "Heart", this map clearly shows the Heart south of the 49th Parallel — at or near the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reserve.

bush and all of the animals to descend to its back. It gives instruction to Nanabush on how to recreate the world. Animals and birds such as Loon and Otter, assist by diving down to the bottom where they pick up mud. The mud is thrown onto the back of the Cosmic Turtle where it magically begins to grow. The Turtle becomes fixed in place, and the dry land spreads outward concentrically from the Turtle’s Back until a new world is created. On this new soil, Nanabush teaches the humans how to raise plants for food.

Cree Version

In the legends of the Cree, the Trickster character who is interchangeable with Nanabush is Wisakedjak. The name means “the Flatterer” and is usually rendered in English as Whiskeyjack. David Thompson recorded a Cree creation story that shares some elements and not others with the sample covered here. In the version recorded by Thompson there is no Cosmic Turtle at all, and Whiskeyjack precipitates the flood by angering the Creator with his laziness. In all versions of the myth, the Trickster is an unreliable but nevertheless resourceful sub-creator.

After the Creator had made all the animals and had made the first people, he said to Wisakedjak, “Take good care of my people, and teach them how to live. Show them all the bad roots, all the roots that will hurt them and



As First Nations reclaim their heritage, sacred sites around Turtle Mountain have been reactivated. This Sun Dance Arbor has been recreated on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reserve directly across from a turtle stone effigy. The area corresponds to the “heart” shown on many early maps of Turtle Mountain. (There is another “heart” further south at Fort Totten Reserve, but may be unrelated to the turtle form.)

kill them. Do not let the people or the animals quarrel with each other.”

But Wisakedjak did not obey the Creator. He let the creatures do whatever they wished to do. Soon they were quarrelling and fighting and shedding much blood.

The Creator, greatly displeased, warned Wisakedjak. “If you do not keep the ground clean, I will take everything away from you, and you will be miserable.”

But Wisakedjak did not believe the Creator and did not obey. Becoming more and more careless and disobedient, he tricked the animals and the people and made them angry with each other. They quarrelled and fought so much that the earth became red with blood.

This time the Creator became very angry.

“I will take everything away from you and wash the ground clean,” he said.

Still Wisakedjak did not believe the Creator. He did not believe until the rains came and the streams began to swell. Day after day, and night after night, the rains continued. The water in the rivers and the lakes rose higher and higher. At last they overflowed their banks and washed the ground clean. The sea came up on the land, and everything was drowned except one Otter, one Beaver, and one Muskrat.

Wisakedjak tried to stop the sea, but it was too strong for him. He sat down on the water and wept. Otter, Beaver, and Muskrat sat beside him and rested their heads on one of his thighs.

In time the rain stopped and the sea left the land. Wisakedjak took courage, but he did not dare to speak to the Creator. After long and sad thoughts about his misery, he said to himself, "If I could get a bit of the old earth beneath the water, I could make a little island for us to live on."

He did not have the power to create anything, but he did have the power to expand what had already been created.

Indian Legends of Canada, Ella Clark, pp. 7-8

In this Cree version, the diving animals appear with the usual result. Beaver and Otter each try twice and fail to bring up any mud. Muskrat is able to pick up a little piece of "the old earth" on his second attempt, even though he almost drowns. Whiskeyjack uses this pinch of mud to expand into an island and then a continent. The version concludes by stating that there are several alternative stories about what happened next and how life was restored.

Huron Version

In *Indian Legends of Canada* ethnologist Ella Elizabeth Clark gives a version of the Huron creation story that is both lengthy and ancient. This version "was related in 1874, north of Lake Erie, by a Huron sub-chief who was then about seventy-five years of age." Elements shared with the other creation-myths offered here include the presence of twins, a watery world, the turtle, the recreation of the world from mud and the discovery of agriculture.

This Huron version omits any mention of how the watery conditions were created. The story begins with the newer divine beings, and differs from others in the choice of animals to play key roles. Here loons carry Sky-Woman rather than geese, and Toad is the successful diving animal that brings up mud from the deep. The story uses the animal figures to anchor the creation of clan lineages. Interestingly there is a tortoise clan and character, but it is distinct from that of the "Great Turtle" who appears as a male rather than a female. Where the Algonquin and Siouan versions clearly separate the Trickster and Turtle characters, the Huron version combines some elements. The protagonist seems to be the Turtle itself. The version in Ella Clark's book begins with the fall of Sky-Woman towards earth.

In the beginning, there was nothing but water — nothing but a wide, wide sea. The only people in the world were the animals that

live in and on water.

Then down from the sky world a woman fell, a divine person. Two loons flying over the water happened to look up and see her falling. Quickly they placed themselves beneath her and joined their bodies to make a cushion for her to rest upon. Thus they saved her from drowning.

While they held her, they cried with a loud voice to the other animals, asking their help. Now the cry of the loon can be heard at a great distance over water, and so the other creatures gathered quickly.

As soon as Great Turtle learned the reason for the call, he stepped forth from the council.

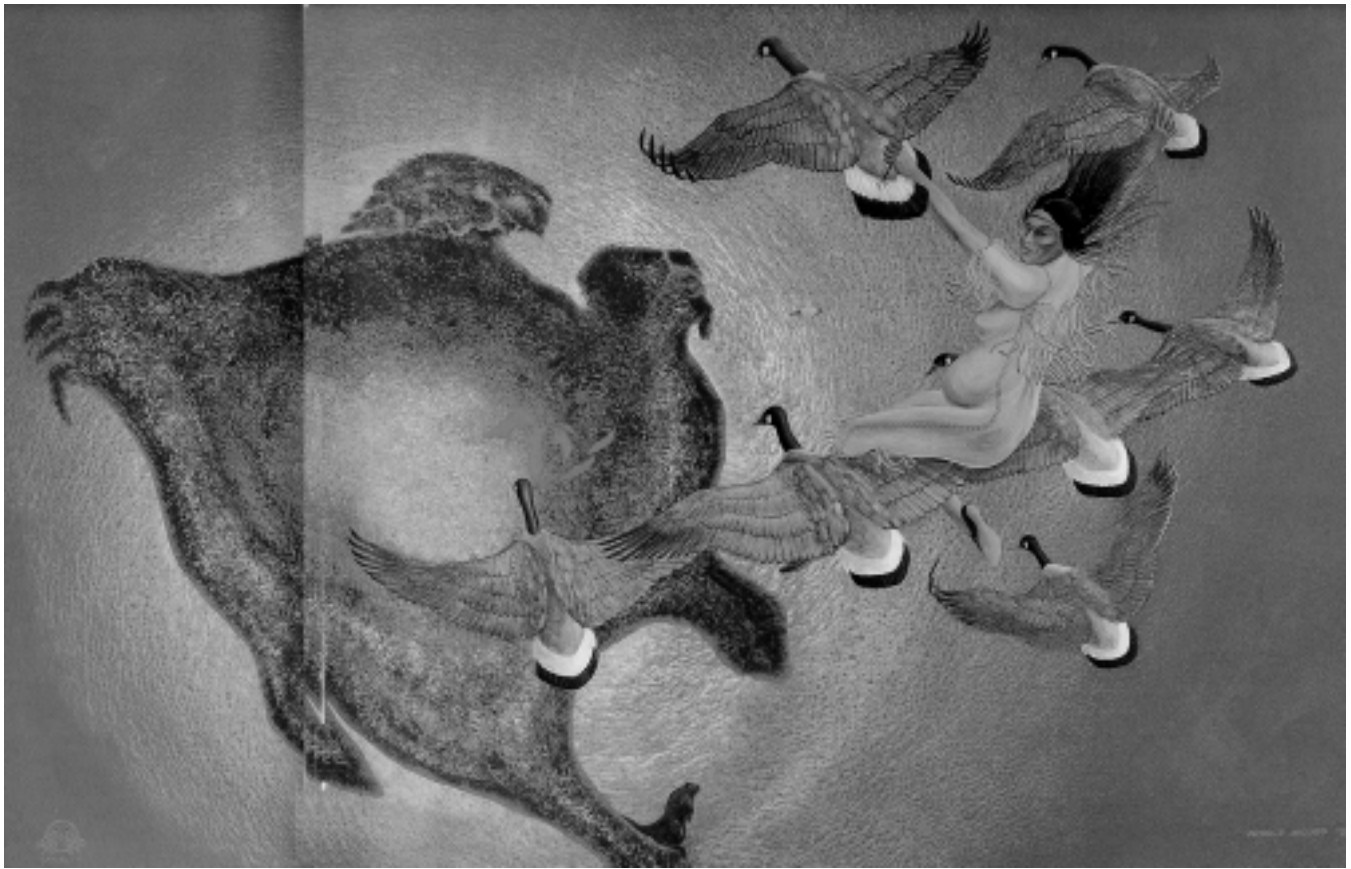
"Give her to me," he said to the loons. "Put her on my back. My back is broad."

And so the loons were relieved of their burden. Then the council, discussing what they should do to save the life of the woman, decided that she must have earth to live on. So Great Turtle sent the creatures, one by one, to dive to the bottom of the sea and bring up some earth. Beaver, Muskrat, Diver, and others made the attempt. Some remained below so long that when they rose they were dead. Great Turtle looked at the mouth of each one, but could find not trace of earth. At last Toad dived. After a long time he arose, almost dead from weariness. Searching Toad's mouth, Great Turtle found some earth. This he gave to the woman.

She took the earth and placed it carefully around the edge of Great Turtle's shell. There it became the beginning of dry land. On all sides, the land grew larger and larger until at least it formed a great country, one where trees and other plants could live and grow. All this country was borne on the back of Great Turtle, and it is yet today. Great Turtle still bears the earth on his back.

Indian Legends of Canada, Ella Clark, pp. 1-2

In this version of the myth the twins come after the turtle island mytheme in the story sequence rather than before. The brothers are called Good Brother and Flint, which gets the idea across nicely. They are sub-creators, adding to the variety of life along rules laid down by the original Creator. Good Brother creates good things, and Flint throws in thorns and monsters etc. A ritual duel



Section from "Skywoman Descending to Great Turtle Island by Arnold Jacobs (Onondaga), 1981 printed in *Native Americans: an Illustrated History*. Among the Iroquois, human life began when Skywoman was pushed out of her domain. She fell to an island that grew when a muskrat brought mud from under the sea and placed it on a turtle's shell. Turtle and island grew to make a home for Skywoman, who shortly gave birth to a daughter — the beginning of the world." from ***Native Americans: an illustrated history***.

is fought between the two brothers in which hunting and agricultural symbols provide the weapons. The creation of the Iroquoian peoples occurs in the myth in an age subsequent to the defeat of Flint (and hunting) by Good Brother (and agriculture.)

This Huron version ends by stating that the Turtle Clan is not the Tortoise Clan, and that it has a different history which suggests a cultural diffusion of some kind. One can't help but wonder if the following isn't a Huron comment on the fall of Cahokia.

The Turtle clan had a more complex history : during a very hot summer the pool in which the mud turtles lived became dry. So they started out to look for a new house. One of them, a particularly fat one, suffered a good deal from the exercise he was not used to. Finally, for comfort in walking he threw off his shell. He continued to change his appearance until in a short time, this fat and lazy turtle

*became a man, the ancestor of the Turtle clan.
Indian Legends of Canada, Ella Clark, pp. 4*

Iroquois Version

Kent Gooderman's anthology *I Am an Indian* includes many first-person accounts and legends told by elders from a variety of First Nations. One of the stories Gooderman collected was from Hia-yon-os (John Dockstader), an Iroquois artist, sculptor and businessperson from a long line of Iroquois storytellers.

This Iroquois Version provides more detail on the origin of the fall of Sky-Woman, who is the main protagonist of the first part of the story. She is the mother of the Hero Twins, and from her initially comes agriculture on the back of the Turtle. The turtle is present in its usual role as a supporter for the world but only as a supporting actor.

In ancient times there dwelled in the Sky-world a great and powerful chief, "He The

Sky Holder". In this Sky-world there was neither light nor darkness. Near the lodge of this great chief grew the Great Tree of Light. The blossoms from this tree lighted the Sky-world. The Beings that lived in this world possessed great wisdom and lived in peace.

The chief took a young wife named Mature Flowers, but did not find happiness because the Fire-Dragon of jealousy filled his mind. "He The Sky Holder" uprooted the Great Tree of Light and invited his wife to sit beside him and look down on the world below. While she was doing this he crept behind her and gave her a mighty shove. As she fell she grasped at the roots of the Tree of Light and the earth but she could not save herself from falling through the hole in the sky.

The world below was populated with man-creatures of the sea and of the air for there was only water. These creatures seeing the Sky-woman falling toward them held a council and decided that she should be saved since she had the power to create.

The creatures of the air flew up to bring her gently down on their wings. The water creatures volunteered to dive to the bottom of the sea and bring up some mud so that she might have a safe place on which to rest. Many tried but all failed and some were drowned.

Finally Muskrat tried and after a long time had passed he rose to the surface but he too had drowned. In his lifeless paws and mouth he held some of the precious mud from the bottom of the sea.

Beaver tried to hold the mud on his back but it became too heavy and he asked that someone else take on the burden. Turtle tried next and Beaver placed the mud upon his back. The creatures of the air then placed Sky-woman upon this island on the Turtle's back and it immediately began to grow. As she walked about, the seeds from her clothing fell to the earth and in her footsteps vegetation sprang up instantly.

Just as the world grew to a suitable size Sky-woman gave birth to a woman child. This child soon grew to maidenhood and had many suitors among the Beings that lived in this world. These beings had the power to transform themselves into human form at will. The maiden, after asking her mother's advice, re-

jected all these proposals but accepted the Being in scalloped leggings and robe.

She soon gave birth to twin male beings but died because of the evil nature of the younger child. She was buried and from her grave grew the Three Sisters, Squash, Corn, and Beans. She then became known as Earth-Mother.

Sky-woman, now a grandmother, named the Eldest Brother, who was good minded, "He Grasps The Sky With Both Hands". The Younger Brother, who had purposely caused the death of his mother, was evil and ugly to look upon and was named "Flint".

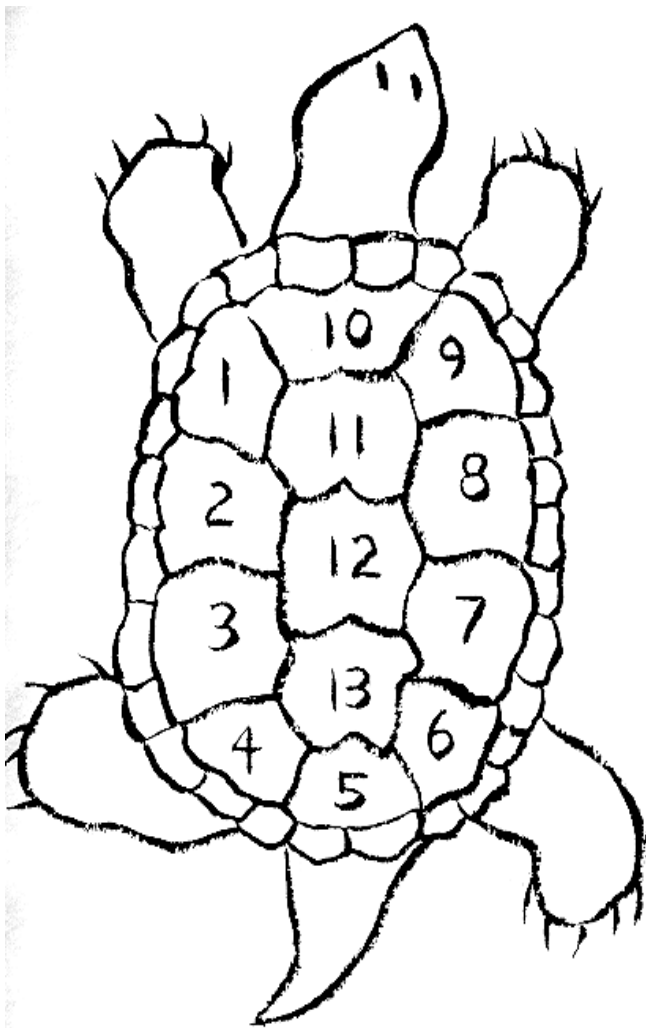
"He Grasps The Sky With Both Hands" sought out his father and finding him asked for wisdom and power to create the good things for this earth. He then created plants, animals, and songbirds. When all this was completed he created man after himself and called him "Sapling", then he created woman and called her "Growing Flower". In the sky he placed Our Grandmother the Moon, Elder Brother the Sun, Day Bringer the Morning Star, and the path to the Sky-World the Milky Way and gave them all duties to perform.

His evil brother "Flint" tried to imitate his works but only succeeded in creating thistles, thorns, bats, monsters, and serpents. Rivers had currents than ran both ways for ease of travel till "Flint" made falls and rapids. He stunted the growth of food and caused winter to be invented. All of his creations were of no use to man. He finally challenged his brother to a duel to determine who should control man. "Flint" was defeated and was banished forever.

"Good-Minded" returned to the Sky-world but returned to earth four times to teach the people, whose bodies he created, he taught the use of plants and animals and the four ceremonies of Thanksgiving. He taught them to live in peace and harmony and to seek out human values. When all his work was completed he left for the Sky-world promising to return when the rains came from the East, saying, "Thus shall it continue to be in the future that there shall be always two tribes of people living on either side of the river."

I Am an Indian, John Dockstader, pp. 149-150

The generational theme here is like the other versions. The Hero Twins are the grandchildren of the



*An astronomical link between the Turtle and time. Thirteen plates on the turtle's back correspond to thirteen lunar months. This child's version of the turtle mytheme emphasizes that the Turtle carries all of time on its back. Adapted from **Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back**.*

woman who is both human and godlike. The treatment of the bad Twin is more severe than in the Algonquin versions where the bad Twin is simply wild rather than evil. "He Grasps The Sky With Both Hands" plays the same role as Nanabush. Turtle Island, however, fades into unimportance once the initial creation is passed. It is also interesting that the Iroquois version has the invention of agriculture twice.

Ojibway-Chippewa Version

An Ojibway version which was published on the *Indigenous People* website recounts the Trickster in the form of Nanabozho as the protagonist against the "Great Serpent" who is the primeval water monster. In this version there are hero-cousins rather than twins, and

there is no obvious turtle. The recreation of the world is simply attributed to the waters subsiding. In the Ojibway-Chippewa version as published on this website the waters in which the Trickster-Water Monster battle takes place are those of Devil's Lake, North Dakota. The hero and animals take refuge in the high mountains to the "west of Lake Superior" but the proximity of Devil's Lake to the story would suggest that Turtle Mountain is meant.

Christian missionaries gave Devil's Lake its translation and the Siouan people of North Dakota have been moving to return the name to "Spirit Lake" which they feel is a better translation. The original connotation may not be that far off however, if it is accepted that the Serpent figure is usually malicious towards humans. This is not like a Christian Devil, but more like the idea of the Titans — old gods who are not the enemies of humans so much as they are indifferent to human survival. In some early fur trade maps Devil's Lake is actually called the Lake of the Titons. This is usually taken for a misspelling of Tetons, the Lakota nation, but it could just as easily be a misspelling of Titans and reflect a perception of the Nanabozho and the Serpent story.

The Ojibway version below begins after the separation of the Hero-Twins, in this case "cousins."

One day when Nanabozho returned to his lodge after a long journey, he missed his young cousin who lived with him. He called the cousin's name but heard no answer. Looking around on the sand for tracks, Nanabozho was startled by the trail of the Great Serpent. He then knew that his cousin had been seized by his enemy.

Nanabozho picked up his bow and arrows and followed the track of the serpent. He passed the great river, climbed mountains, and crossed over valleys until he came to the shores of a deep and gloomy lake. It is now called Manitou Lake, Spirit Lake, and also the Lake of Devils. The trail of the Great Serpent led to the edge of the water.

Nanabozho could see, at the bottom of the lake, the house of the Great Serpent. It was filled with evil spirits, who were his servants and his companions. Their forms were monstrous and terrible. Most of them, like their master, resembled spirits. In the centre of this horrible group was the Great Serpent himself, coiling his terrifying length around the cousin of Nanabozho.

The head of the Serpent was red as blood. His fierce eyes glowed like fire. His entire body

was armed with hard and glistening scales of every colour and shade.

Looking down on these twisting spirits of evil, Nanabozho made up his mind that he would get revenge on them for the death of his cousin.

He said to the clouds, "Disappear!" And the clouds went out of sight.

"Winds, be still at once!" And the clouds became still.

When the air over the lake of evil spirits had become stagnant, Nanabozho said to the sun, "Shine over the lake with all the fierceness you can. Make the water boil."

In these ways, thought Nanabozho, he would force the Great Serpent to seek the cool shade of the trees growing on the shores of the lake. There he would seize the enemy and get revenge.

After giving his orders, Nanabozho took his bow and arrows and placed himself near the spot where he thought the serpents would come to enjoy the shade. Then he changed himself into the broken stump of a withered tree.

The winds became still, the air stagnant, and the sun shot hot rays from a cloudless sky. In time, the water of the lake became troubled, and bubbles rose to the surface. The rays of the sun had penetrated to the home of the serpents. As the water bubbled and foamed, a serpent lifted his head above the centre of the lake and gazed around the shores. Soon another serpent came to the surface. Both listened for the footsteps of the Nanabozho, but they heard him nowhere.

"Nanabozho is sleeping," they said to one another.

And then they plunged beneath the waters, which seemed to hiss as they closed over the evil spirits.

Not long after, the lake became more troubled. Its water boiled from its very depths, and the hot waves dashed wildly against the rocks on its banks. Soon the Great Serpent came slowly to the surface of the water and moved toward the shore. His blood-red crest glowed. The reflection from his scales was blinding — as blinding as the glitter of a sleet [frost] covered forest beneath the winter sun. He was followed by all the evil spirits. So great was their number that they soon covered the shores of the lake.

When they saw the broken stump of the withered tree, they suspected that it might be one of the disguises of Nanabozho. They knew his cunning. One of the serpents approached the stump, wound his tail around it, and tried to drag it down into the lake. Nanabozho could hardly keep from crying aloud, for the tail of the monster pricked his sides. But he stood firm and was silent.

The evil spirits moved on. The Great Serpent glided into the forest and wound his many coils around the trees. His companions also found shade — all but one. One remained near the shore to listen for the footsteps of Nanabozho.

From the stump, Nanabozho watched until all the serpents were asleep and the guard was intently looking in another direction. Then he silently drew an arrow from his quiver, placed it in his bow, and aimed it at the heart of the Great Serpent. It reached its mark. With a howl that shook the mountains and startled the wild beasts in their caves, the monster awoke. Followed by its terrified companions, which also were howling with rage and terror, the Great Serpent plunged into the water.

At the bottom of the lake there still lay the body of Nanabozho's cousin. In their fury the serpents tore it into a thousand pieces. His shredded lungs rose to the surface and covered the lake with whiteness.

The Great Serpent soon knew that he would die from his wound, but he and his companions were determined to destroy Nanabozho. They caused the water of the lake to swell upward and to pound against the shore with the sound of many thunders. Madly the flood rolled over the land, over the tracks of Nanabozho, carrying with it rocks and trees. High on the crest of the highest wave floated the wounded Great Serpent. His eyes glared around him, and his hot breath mingled with the hot breath of his many companions.

Nanabozho, fleeing before the angry waters, thought of his Indian children. He ran through their villages, shouting, "Run to the mountaintops! The Great Serpent is angry and is flooding the earth! Run! Run!"

The Indians caught up their children and found safety on the mountains. Nanabozho continued his flight along the base of the western hills and then up a high mountain beyond

Lake Superior, far to the north. There he found many men and animals that had escaped from the flood that was already covering the valleys and plains and even the highest hills. Still the waters continued to rise. Soon all the mountains were under the flood, except the high one on which stood Nanabozho.

There he gathered together timber and made a raft. Upon it the men and women and animals with him placed themselves. Almost immediately the mountaintop disappeared from their view, and they floated along on the face of the waters. For many days they floated. At long last, the flood began to subside. Soon the people on the raft saw the trees on the tops of the mountains. Then they saw the mountains and hills, then the plains and the valleys.

When the water disappeared from the land, the people who survived learned that the Great Serpent was dead and that his companions had returned to the bottom of the lake of spirits. There they remain to this day. For fear of Nanabozho, they have never dared to come forth again.

www.indigenouspeople.org/natlit/greatflo.htm

A petroglyph motif that has been recorded in North Dakota and Minnesota is the joined turtle-snake image. It may also appear on one of the Council Stones but the image is unclear. The two symbols, female and male respectively, are joined at the tail with their heads in opposite directions. The structure of land formations named for animals or animal body parts around Turtle Mountain includes two “hearts” but only one “tail.” This puzzle might be explained in the sequence of the foregoing Chipewewa story as the hero fled Devil’s Lake and the Great Serpent to the safety of the Turtle. The hill called the “Tail” could be shared by both the Turtle of Turtle Mountain and a Great Serpent if the Serpent’s head was considered to be submerged in Devil’s Lake. It is interesting that like the Mandan version of the story, a raft is employed rather than a tall tree as the final refuge.

European Filtered Versions

There are several versions available that were told second-hand, by a Siouan person usually to a furtrader or homesteader. These might be called “European” in that they have been heavily filtered through translation from the Siouan language into English, and from one culture to another. They are interesting in the salient fea-



Turtle petroglyph on one of the Seven Council Stones in the Moncur Collection. The Turtle’s head is at the top with forelegs extending to the left of the shell.

tures they preserve out of a story which must have originally been richer and more complex.

The version immediately below is brief and third-hand, but is important because it links the Cosmic Turtle myth with both Turtle Mountain, the modern Dakota and a well-known local White farming family. The version is quoted from an article by R. D. Colquette which appeared in the Country Guide in the early 1930’s.

Sitting Eagle, an Indian chief on the Pipestone reserve, told F. W. Ransom, secretary of the Manitoba Wheat Pool, two Indian legends concerning the district. One refers to Turtle Mountain. According to it a great turtle once started on the long journey from the Big Water [Mississippi?] to the western Ocean. Just before it reached the river (the Souris) it died

and its body grew and grew until the mountain was formed. Along the southern [actually the northern] edge, where the mountain rises out of the prairie, its outline somewhat resembles the outline of one side of a turtle. This resemblance probably gave rise to the legend and to the name.

*The Boundary Trail, R. D. Colquette, BAC MG1/B3
1984-43 p. 3*

Alexander Henry Jr. recorded a short version which he received from the “Big Bellies.” Since Henry stayed most of the time of his visit to the Missouri with the Hidatsa grand chief Le Borgne, it’s reasonable to assume he meant Hidatsa when he used the term “Big Belly.” If he meant Arikara instead then we have a Cad-doan version filtered through a Siouan intermediary step to a European reporter. We might also add that Elliot Coues’ editing imposes an additional filter.

The Big Bellies, as far as I could learn, have an extraordinary notion of creation. They say that at first the world was entirely water, inhabited by no living creature but a swan, which in some unaccountable way produced a crow, a wolf, and a water hen. One day the crow dressed herself out very fine, having daubed herself with red and white earth, particularly her face, which was painted in equal proportions of those two colors. Having thus made her person the more agreeable, she visited the wolf, and reminded him of their forlorn and pitiful situation, surrounded as they were by water; adding how much happier they would be had they but a certain proportion of earth, to obtain which she proposed to send the water hen to the bottom to fetch some up. This was accordingly done, and after some time, the water hen returned with a small quantity in her bill. The crow then took the earth in her hands, and directed the wolf to take a chiecheckquoi or [turtle] rattle, and sing a certain song. While he was performing, with a melodious voice and graceful manner of beating time, the crow sprinkled the earth around them; instantly the globe was formed, and it remains the same to this day.

Henry and Thompson Journals, Elliot Coues editor, p. 350.

In the “Big Belly” version quoted by Alexander Henry Jr. the trickster in the form of the Crow is the

actor who recreates the world. The turtle is present, but reduced to the role of a magic talisman in the form of the “chiecheckquoi” rattle.

George Catlin, a generation after Alexander Henry, recorded an equally short version of the Mandan creation story. Like other Europeans, he thought the Flood stories echoed the Biblical Deluge.

I am not yet able to learn from these people whether they have any distinct theory of the creation; as they seem to date nothing further back than their own existence as a people; saying (as I have before mentioned,) that they were the first people created; involving the glaring absurdities that they were the only people on earth before the Flood, and the only one saved was a white man; or that they were created inside of the earth, as their tradition says; and that they did not make their appearance on its outer surface until after the Deluge. When an Indian story is told, it is like all other gifts, “to be taken for what it is worth,” and for any seeming inconsistency in their traditions there is no remedy; for as far as I have tried to reconcile them by reasoning with, or questioning them, I have been entirely defeated; and more than that, have generally incurred their distrust and ill-will. One of the Mandan doctors told me very gravely a few days since, that the earth was a large tortoise, that it carried the dirt on its back — that a tribe of people who are now dead, and whose faces were white, used to dig down very deep in this ground to catch badgers; and that one day they struck a knife through the tortoise-shell, and it sunk down so that the water ran over its back, and drowned all but one man. And on the next day while I was painting his portrait, he told me there were four tortoises, — one in the North — one in the East — one in the South, and one in the West; that each one of these rained ten days, and the water covered the earth.

Catlin’s Letters and Notes, George Catlin, pp. 204-205

Catlin also related a brief version of the flood in which those who drowned were turned to pipestone, while a virgin called K-wap-tah-wa was saved by a thunderbird or eagle and taken to a peak of the Missouri Cou-teau. There she gave birth to twins. Catlin also recorded his doubt that his translators were getting either the essence or the detail of the myths.

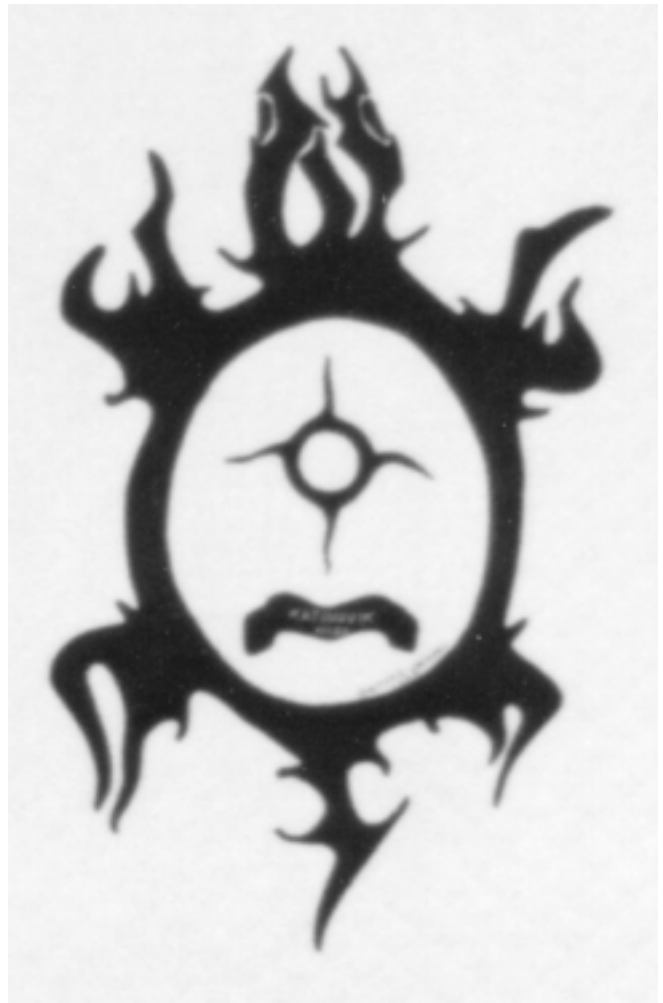
Mandan Version

The Mandans alone of the Siouan cultures related a Flood story which included an ark-like boat. Both Alexander Henry Jr. and George Catlin who heard this story felt that this was not an original element to the myth, and had been adapted from the stories told by Catholic missionaries. Since we don't have a record of Mandan stories prior to the French Catholic missions this is impossible to determine. If Mandan legends and history can ever be recovered the way Linda Shele has recovered Mayan myths then we might be able to determine the answer to that particular puzzle.

That these people should have a tradition of the Flood is by no means surprising; as I have learned from every tribe I have visited, that they all have some high mountain in their vicinity, where they insist upon it the big canoe landed; but that these people should hold an annual celebration of the event, and the season of that decided by such circumstances as the full leaf of the willow, and the medicine-lodge opened by such a man as Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah (who appears to be a white man), and making his appearance "from the high-mountains in the West;" and some other circumstances is surely a very remarkable thing, and requires some extraordinary attention.

This Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah (first or only man) is undoubtedly some mystery or medicine-man of the tribe, who has gone out on the prairie on the evening previous, and having dressed and painted himself for the occasion, comes into the village in the morning, endeavouring to keep up the semblance of reality; for their tradition says, that at a very ancient period such a man did actually come from the West — that this body was of the white colour, as this man's body is represented — that he wore a robe of four white wolf skins — his head-dress was made of two ravens' skins — and in his left hand was a huge pipe. He said, he was at one time the only man — he told them of the destruction of every thing on the earth's surface by water — that he stopped in his big canoe on a high mountain in the West, where he landed and was saved.

That the Mandans, and all other people were bound to make yearly sacrifices of some



In 1999, Dene artist Denis Janvier of Cold Lake, Alberta visited Bill Moncur, the Moncur Gallery and toured Turtle Mountain. Janvier presented the above design of the Turtle to the community of Boissevain for incorporation into a town quilt by the Guilty Quilters.

edged-tools to the water, for of such things the big canoe was made. That he instructed the Mandans how to build their medicine-lodge, and taught them also the forms of these annual ceremonies; and told them that as long as they made these sacrifices, and performed their rites to the full letter, they might be assured of the fact, that they would be the favourite people of the Almighty, and would always have enough to eat and drink; and that so soon as they should depart in one tittle from these forms, they might be assured that their race would decrease, and finally run out; and that they might date their nation's calamity to that omission or neglect.

These people have, no doubt, been long liv-

ing under the dread of such an injunction, and in the fear of departing from it; and while they are living in total ignorance of its origin, the world must remain equally ignorant of much of its meaning, as they needs must be of all Indian customs resting on ancient traditions, which soon run into fables, having lost all their system, by which they might have been construed.

Catlin's Letters and Notes, George Catlin, pp. 200-201

Catlin recorded that one of the great annual Mandan feast-celebrations was called "Mee-nee-ro-ka-ha-sha (sinking down or settling of the waters.)" At this dance the legend of the Flood and recreation were re-enacted.

Common Themes

In all of these versions the Cosmic Turtle is "older" than the old gods. Unlike the old gods who are (or have become) inimical to humans, the Turtle is neutral or even friendly. The Turtle never challenges the other gods, but it does intervene to assist humans. In all of the versions quoted where the Turtle makes an appearance, it is an intermediary between old knowledge and new, between an upper world of the living and an underworld of the dead. In the more complete versions of the story the initial act of agriculture takes place on the Turtle's Back. Some kind of ritualized combat is necessary to bring forth the secret of agriculture: a ball game or a wrestling match. A key difference among the versions which points to some distant cultural separation is the degree of rebellion implicit in the actions of the heroes. The Algonquin version puts much more distance and rebellion between humans and the old gods. The Siouan versions, as received through non-Native observers, are too truncated to know with which side of the rebellion the speaker identified. Many of the stories involve a journey from one level of society to another, and that the journey is interrupted by an accident that separates related peoples.

Writers of European descent felt compelled to compare Flood stories from the Plains with those from Biblical texts. It may be true that unconscious archetypal forces are at work — a flood is a grand trauma in any culture. However, there are enough differences of motifs to conclude that while the Plains and Woodlands versions are related to each other, and to Mexico; they are not related to Palestine. The most significant differences concern the method used to survive the flood and its original cause. The Turtle and a magically induced island are the principal methods used in Plains myths to save life.

The ark is the principal method used in Hebrew myths. It should also be noted that the Biblical version is not in fact the original version of this particular story at all. The Flood myth is pan-Semitic and is found in all Semitic societies of Mesopotamia. The oldest versions recovered by archaeology are Sumeric and were written several thousand years *before* the earliest books of the Old Testament. Like the Biblical version, the gods destroy mankind for being irreverent and one sympathetic god tells one human to build a great ship for himself, his family and the animals. Unlike the Plains Native versions, there is no turtle, nor is agriculture "wrestled" into existence. If archaeologists of the future ever prove that there is any relationship at all between the Old World and New World versions of the flood, it will probably be derived through the Phoenicians and not through the Hebrews.

There may be an argument that given the pattern of deglaciation, Turtle Mountain would be a good candidate for the "original" Turtle Island. (The Algonquin refer to the origin point where Nanabush stepped down off the tree as "Turtle Island".) North America and in fact the entire world can also be called "Turtle Island."

Regardless of whether that can ever be proved, it is very likely that Aboriginal people within the last few thousand years would have regarded Turtle Mountain closely in light of whatever version of the myth they favoured.

Ritual and Geography

The following extract from *The Native Americans: an illustrated history* succinctly states the relationship of social groupings and landforms.

The organizations that we now call tribes were mostly created in the aftermath of European disease and disruptions. Before "tribes," various parts of ancient America were peopled by loosely knit groups whose common identity was created and maintained during the celebration of defining rituals. These periodic celebrations, in which a whole community might join, were intended to renew the world and the connectedness of all living things by enacting the community's Origin Saga. Thus farmers celebrated harvest festivals like the Green Corn rite of the Southeast, or, in the Southwest the Solstice rites of the Pueblos. Hunter-gatherers held ritual celebrations to welcome the arrival of fish runs, the harvest of acorns, or the shift, from plant foods to hunting in the fall.

Ritual definition of identity served to unite people into congregations that often included communities from several watersheds. Over the millennia, the differences between separated communities gradually increased.

Yet, while every waterway had its own dialect and way of living, these blended with similar traditions, throughout the watershed. And so, at least during times of ritual celebration, differences of housing, foods, kinship, and language could be celebrated in shared acts of communion.

Along the greater rivers, however, the long distances eventually created cultural boundaries that gradually separated one tradition from another, and, in the long term, fostered suspicion, if not hostilities. Even so, diversity was valued for its own sake, because it added to the richness of the mosaic of life.

Native Americans: An Illustrated History, p. 119

As it sits in the middle of prairie, Turtle Mountain also acts like the centre on an old fashioned record turntable or a potter's wheel. Human populations are both drawn to it, and are spun off from it. Some regions of Canada seem to have Aboriginal occupations that can stretch in a homogeneous unbroken line for thousands of years. Turtle Mountain however, has breaks and starts and seems to have been visited and occupied by almost everybody at some time or other.

While the Turtle Mountain escarpment provides the general figure of the turtle, the landscape has been informed with sites at key places on the mountain, and at a distance roughly to the horizon in all directions around Turtle Mountain. The most common type of stone pattern is the so-called "tepee ring" which doesn't anchor a teepee at all. Elders we've consulted have unanimously agreed that the small stone circles are for individual vision quests and/or small group worship. They don't contain hearths because they are not homes. Usually there will be a few of the small rings clustered near a larger petroform of some sort. The entire group will then be placed in a relationship with one or more sites on the mountain. (E.g.. many points have line of site contact with the Turtle's Back or the Turtle's Head, two of the most prominent features.)

Liz Bryan's general description of such Vision Quest sites fits the Turtle Mountain conditions very well.

The vision quest, which likely inspired much of this prehistoric art, remained an important part of life well into the historic era and it

has been well described, often by the participants themselves. The ancient practice seems recently to have been revived and is said to take place even today, though perhaps it never truly came to a halt. Writing-on-Stone, unquestionably a most magnificently illustrated site of many individual religious experiences, is not a typical vision quest location. Found throughout the plains, though not in large numbers, other sites are difficult to authenticate because commonly all that remains is a small oval or semicircle of locally obtained rock, sometimes with built-up walls to provide some shelter. Most of these are found in high, inaccessible places; there are several in the Rockies and in Montana's Sweetgrass Hills. Elsewhere on the plains they occupy other kinds of exposed situations, a rocky tor, the rim of a river valley, the edge of a coteau. All the known sites are isolated and enjoy splendid views. Johan Dormaar, a research scientist in Lethbridge, has found in fact that all the sites he has visited in southwest Alberta and Montana have views focused on one of several mountains, including Crownest and Chief mountains, which were believed to be the seats of spiritual power. Typically, offerings of material goods, including ribbons, feathers and tobacco, were left at the sites, a practice that sometimes continues today.

The Buffalo People, Liz Bryan, 138-141

The other sites mentioned by Bryan: Sweetgrass Hills, Chief Mountain, Writing-on-Rock; together with sites such as Whiteshell, Calf Mountain and Turtle Mountain comprise a system of giant ceremonial sites which anchor the Medicine Line. Later this line would be averaged as the 49th Parallel.

Even to those not steeped in the local lore, a vision quest site could be inspiring. George Catlin recorded his own visit to such a high-place.

...I strolled out one day to the shade of a plum-tree, where I lay in the grass on a favourite bluff, and rote thus:—

"It is generally supposed, and familiarly said that a man 'falls' into a reverie; but I seated myself in the shade a few minutes since, resolved to force myself into one; and for this purpose I laid open a small pocket-map of North America, and excluding my thoughts from every other object in the world, I soon

succeeded in producing the desired illusion. This little chart, over which I bent, was seen in all its parts, as nothing but the green and vivid reality. I was lifted up upon an imaginary pair of wings, which easily raised and held me floating in the open air, from whence I could behold beneath me the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans — the great cities of the East, and the mighty rivers. I could see the blue chain of the great lakes at the North — the Rocky Mountains, and beneath them and near their base, the vast, and almost boundless plains of grass, which were speckled with the bands of grazing buffaloes!

The world turned gently around, and I examined its surface; continent after continent passed under my eye, and yet amidst them all, I saw not the vast and vivid green, that is spread like a carpet over the Western wilds of my own country. I saw not elsewhere in the world, the myriad herds of buffaloes — my eyes scanned in vain for they were not. And when I turned again to the wilds of my native land, I beheld them all in motion! For the distance of several hundreds of miles from North to South, they were wheeling about in vast columns and herds — some were scattered, and ran with furious wildness — some lay dead, and others were pawing the earth for a hiding-place — some were sinking down and dying, gushing out their life's blood in deep-drawn sighs — and other were contending in furious battle for the life they possessed, and the ground that they stood upon...

Catlin's Letters and Notes, George Catlin, p. 291

The vision goes on to include the slaughter of the buffalo by all races, and then the slaughter of each race by the others as the produce of the land is turned into poison. It's too bad his vision wasn't heeded by more people. Few Euro-Americans coming into the territory realized this kind of purpose in the vision quest sites.

After the Glacier

Briefly, Turtle Mountain acted as a *refugia* during the last Ice Age, serving as an island of life on the edge of a sea of ice. It probably wasn't a very hospitable climate, at best something like the coast of Hudson's Bay today. Inhospitable or not, a trail of Clovis and Folsom points suggests that humans moved very quickly in the wake of the receding glacier from south to north. Rivers



The Folsom point from the Moncur Collection, made of alibates chert from Texas. This is the most common material used in Folsom points as a whole, but the least common to be found in Manitoba. The hunter who dropped this point between Whitewater Lake and Turtle Mountain could probably still see the glacier on the distant northern horizon. Whitewater Lake was part of Glacial Lake Souris. As a beautiful and valuable work of art, the point may have been carried by many hands from Texas to Turtle Mountain, or by one. The location of the find was the busiest intersection of the Mandan Trail for thousands of years and would have been the kind of marshy country believed to have been favoured by Folsom hunters. This point is estimated to be about 10,000 years old.

etched deep finger valleys into the glacier which created avenues for life to advance.

One Clovis and one Folsom point are found in the Moncur Collection. The Clovis is believed to have been collected from within a thirty mile radius around Boissevain, while the exact quarter section of the Folsom point

find is known between Whitewater Lake and Turtle Mountain. A Clovis culture was possibly exploiting the fringe of the glacier even before it began its retreat. A Folsom culture was advancing along the residual high ground of the Missouri Couteau and leapfrogging past Turtle Mountain sometime between 8000 and 10,000 BC.

The trade route passing Turtle Mountain which we know as the Mandan Trail began operating at this time. Copper flowed from mines at the head of Lake Superior and shell came up the Mississippi and Missouri. From the west came obsidian. The Clovis point in the Moncur collection is made of obsidian from the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming or Colorado. The Moncur Folsom point is made of alibates chert from northern Texas. Copper artifacts, unearthed from local mounds, are found scattered throughout collections in southwestern Manitoba.

An increasingly rapid succession of technological (and probably cultural) change followed: Plano, Oxbow, Besant and Sonota. With each succession, the number, variety and dispersal of artifacts throughout the Turtle Mountain region increased.

The stone petroforms that surround Turtle Mountain could date from any of these periods. More work needs to be done to create a map of the mountain's ceremonial sites which can be referenced against the time period of occupation. One of the last of these patterns to make its appearance at Turtle Mountain before the Mound Builders period was the Avonlea.

It's important to bear in mind that these artifact types track a change in technology in usage, not necessarily a change in culture. Conversely, two different cultures could use identical technology just as they do today.

While Avonlea was a long-lived culture, its distinctive style of arrowhead eventually faded away and by about A. D. 800 it began to be replaced by different forms of side-notched point. These later arrowheads became standard throughout the grasslands and lasted, without significant change, for more than a thousand years, until the bison and the indigenous Plains way of life were gone. The new type of projectile point is known in Alberta as Old Women's from the type site but in Saskatchewan as Late Side-Notched, sometimes divided sequentially into Prairie and Plains Side-Notched. To complicate things, several cultural complexes within the era of the side-notched point are distinguished in Manitoba and parts of Saskatchewan mainly on the ba-



*Bill Moncur holds the broken Black Stone Pipe found on Len Randall's farm north of Killarney, circa 1948. The pipe is now in the Moncur Gallery. Photo from Bill Moncur fonds, **BCA MG14/C164**.*

sis of ceramic variations. As you can see, from here on even the nomenclature becomes complex.

Not surprisingly, archaeologists cannot decide what happened to Avonlea and Besant, nor where the Late Side-Notched tradition came from. The latest theory seems to be that the new culture owes its existence, in part, to both former traditions, perhaps Besant evolving into Prairie Side-Notched and Avonlea into Plains. Certainly there are distinct differences between the two subtypes, both in workmanship and notching.

[several paragraphs omitted]

Until about A. D. 800, the cultural history of the grasslands of the three prairie provinces remains remarkably uniform. The influx of different peoples and influences from the west and the east seemed to affect them equally. All the prehistoric peoples of the Plains were bison hunters, tied to the movements of the herds and disciplined by the harsh weather and the limited resources. After A. D. 800, however, the eastern edges of the plains — eastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba — diverge from the mainstream because of strong southern influences. Here



Petroglyph of a Bear on one of the Shaman's Stones from the Grace Sage Collection, now in the Moncur Gallery. Drawn with a mixture of ochre and blood (leaving an iron residue) these paintings are amazingly durable. At upper right two shiny black flaws in the stone have been used as the eyes of the Bear; a face has been drawn around the edge giving the bear a three-dimensional aspect. One line forms the neck and foreleg, another the back and tail, and a third the powerful hind leg of the Bear. Far from being primitive, such art is expressionistic and plastic, qualities which Europeans would claim to invent and call "modernism" in the 19th Century.

there was an explosion of new ideas, new peoples, new trading patterns, perhaps even new lifestyles. So A. D. 800 marks a kind of watershed in the human history of the Canadian Plains, the first cultural rift between east and west.

The Buffalo People, Liz Bryan, pp. 122-124

Archaeology here corrects an error in the historical interpretation. It has been the assumption of most western histories that the horse created the Plains culture. It would be more accurate to say that the buffalo determined the character of the Plains. The archaeological evidence is that a migratory pattern of small bands, occasionally uniting into larger tribes, following the buffalo herds was the norm for thousands of years. The horse did not change that.

In military history it is well established that horses do *not* increase the mobility of an army; rather they in-

crease striking power, speed and carrying capacity. They do not actually increase range or rate of march because horses require an inordinate amount of food as compared to what they can carry. A Napoleonic guideline was that an infantry soldier could march ten miles a day for a month, while a cavalry soldier and his mount could travel ten miles a day for only three weeks.

Where the plains had previously been burnt over by an extensive prairie fire it was impossible to advance over them with horses, but was still possible to travel on foot. An historical example of this effect was the HBC expedition from the South Saskatchewan to the Cypress Hills in the 1820's. The first expedition had to turn back because it was using horses and fires had swept the area. The party was reorganized to travel on foot and was able to penetrate to the Cypress Hills although profits were reduced with their carrying capacity. In this example horses extended carrying *capacity*, not range.

The opportunity to follow a plentiful food supply was a factor in creation of Plains cultures. That condition existed since at least the last Ice Age. The horse and the gun alter the character and style of the community, but they do not necessarily create it or define it.

The archaeologists as a rule have not interpreted Avonlea, Plano or Mound Builders by any present-day cultural affiliation. The hypothesis being followed in this paper is that the Avonlea and Plano cultures represent the proto-Algonquins and Siouans respectively, but that the technologies are probably mixed up. It is more likely that they were both Siouan than they would have both been Algonquin.

Using the old standard definition of civilization that they are societies which create public works, there is a civilization or are civilizations that flourished in the Turtle Mountain area for thousands of years. The dating of boulder sites, rather than the typology of points, will give a clearer picture of these transitions during the change from Paleolithic to Neolithic. The phase which links the irregular misty shape of the stone age with that of the historical period is the Mound Builders. They emerge out of the old Plano and/or Avonlea cultures in some way, and disappear at the beginning of the Fur Trade Era. In the Turtle Mountain region their heyday appears to have begun shortly after 800 AD and was ending in the late 1500's and early 1600's A.D.

The Mound Builders

The mystery of the "Mound Builders" is a key element in the story of the Turtle Mountain Council Stones. The Stones, and the activities of the Council, create a bridge between the era of the Mound Builders and the

historical period of the Plains Sioux. The Siouan nations on the advent of receiving the horse, were the last people to use the artificial mounds which dot the landscape of southwestern Manitoba.

It remains a mystery because the historical, or archaeological, “smoking gun” is missing — or perhaps it is just not understood. Because the Dakota of the 19th Century were not the identical historical people to have constructed the mounds of western Manitoba, they were disenfranchised historically. The absence of an apparent relationship between the Mound Builders and the modern Dakota of Manitoba has been cited as evidence that they are not Aboriginal to the area. The Dakota oral history maintains that even before the refugee emigrations of 1861, the Dakota had hunted and trapped as far north as the Assiniboine River. The valley of the Souris was therefore disputed territory, not exclusively controlled by one Nation or another.

Who the Mound Builders were therefore has a bearing on any current historical interpretation of the Dakota presence in Manitoba. If the Mound Builders were proto-Sioux, and especially proto-Dakota, then there is a Dakota aboriginal claim in this province extending back hundreds of years. At minimum, there is an historical relation of museum-and-curator with respect to the Turtle Mountain Council. The Turtle Mountain sites were brought to the attention of Bill Moncur initially by Sitting Eagle as part of the business of the Council of the 1940’s. We do not know at what date a public body assumed some kind of guardianship for the sites, but we do know through eye-witness accounts that Sitting Eagle regarded it as a duty he’d inherited when he assumed the role in 1913.

Lewis Spence, a turn-of-the-century ethnologist published *Myths of the North American Indians* sometime during the first quarter of the 20th Century. (A 1994 reprint says that the original date is unknown.) Despite the quaint language, Spence was a keen recorder of observations. The following passage summarized what was then known of the Mound Builders and makes a link to the turtle form.

“...In the Mississippi basin and the Gulf States, chiefly from La Crosse, Wisconsin, to Natchez, Miss., and in the central and southern districts of Ohio, and in the adjoining portion of Indiana and South Wisconsin, are found great earthen mounds, the typical form of which is pyramidal. Some, however, are circular, and a few pentagonal. Others are terraced, extending outward from one or two



Petroglyph of a shaman on the Goodlands Stone in the Moncur Gallery. The stone has been shaped to make a perfect sphere. At left the shaman figure holds a bow or spear, his body forms the oval at centre. Legs are partially etched into the stone at bottom and curve around the stone. A tiny head at top centre of the picture radiates a thin halo of lifelines. — the shaman receiving a vision. On the reverse side of this stone an “eagle’s claw” motif has been etched out — three claws forward, one back — inspiration from on high.

sides, while some have roadways leading up to the level surface on the summit. These are not mere accumulations of debris, but works constructed on a definite plan, and obviously requiring a considerable amount of skill and labour for their accomplishment. The form, except where worn down by the plough, is usually that of a low, broad, round-topped cone, varying in size from a scarcely perceptible swell in the ground to elevations of eighty or even a hundred feet, and from six to three hundred feet in diameter.”

Myths of the North American Indians, L. Spence, p. 17

“The Tomb of the Black Tortoise.” A more detailed description of one of these groups of sepulchral mounds may furnish the reader with a clearer idea of the structures as a whole. The group in question was discovered

in Minnesota, on the northern bank of St. Peter's River, about sixty miles from its junction, with the Mississippi. It includes twenty-six mounds, placed at regular distances from each other, and forming together a large rectangle. The central mound represents a turtle forty feet long by twenty-seven feet wide and twelve feet high. It is almost entirely constructed of yellow clay, which is not found in the district, and therefore must have been brought from a distance. Two mounds of red earth of triangular form flank it north and south, and each of these is twenty-seven feet long by about six feet wide at one end, the opposite end tapering off until it scarcely rises above the level of the soil. At each corner rises a circular mound twelve feet high by twenty-five feet in diameter. East and west of the structure stand two elongated mounds sixty feet long, with a diameter of twelve feet. Two smaller mounds on the right and left of the turtle-shaped mound are each twelve feet long by four feet high, and consist of white sand mixed with numerous fragments of mica, covered with a layer of clay and a second one of vegetable mould. Lastly, thirteen smaller mounds fill on the intervals in the group.

Myths of the N. American Indians, L. Spence, pp. 19-20

The Turtle Mountain area is dotted with mounds: conical, platform, tear-shaped, star-shaped and linear. And, as Bill Moncur quipped during one interview, "*Turtle Mountain's the biggest petroform you'll ever see.*" The most prominent feature to resemble a tortoise is the "Turtle's Back," one of the highest hills of the area. The broader mountain is a chunk of Missouri plateau which the Wisconsin glacier failed to erode. The ancient lore of Turtle Mountain refers to this larger area and its environs, not only to the popular Turtle's Back of the tourist and hiker. Prehistoric people found and reshaped the landscape on a grand scale. The natural form of Turtle Mountain; roughly eighty miles along its long axis from tip of nose to tail above Devil's Lake, and fifty miles along its wide axis; was extended by a pattern of ritual sites covering the feature, and surrounding it like a skirt at the distance of the horizon. The feature is large enough for many nations — seven according to the tradition — to meet. Each could have their own respective ceremonial sites, and still have enough space left over for sites to share in common. Common sites included those set aside for mysticism, government, public ceremony, recreation and commerce. That continuing tradition is reflected to-

day in the location and use of the International Peace Garden and the various trans-border parks.

Sourisford Mounds

The Sourisford-Devil's Lake Burial Complex — a pattern of burial preparation and site development — constitutes a distinct cultural group, which at the same time shared elements with neighbouring cultures. This mound-building culture was the furthest northwestern extension of the tradition based on the central Mississippi valley — itself imitative of the great civilizations of central America. Its distinctive family of mounds are found from southeastern North Dakota to south central Saskatchewan. The greatest concentration of these mounds was around Sourisford in Manitoba and at Devil's Lake in North Dakota.

A different, though likely related, burial complex is found east of Turtle Mountain and along the Red River Valley. It is represented by such features as Calf Mountain and Star Mound which are both quite a bit taller, more developed, successive and current than the mounds at Sourisford. Archaeologists have termed this eastern group of mounds the Arvilla Burial Complex.

The greatest concentration of mounds within Canada is at Sourisford which is due west of the nose of the "Turtle's Head" on the horizon averaging about 12 to 15 miles from the mountain.

It is the treatment of the Sourisford mounds more than anything else which has given archaeologists a bad name in southwestern Manitoba. Prof. Montgomery holds the unenviable Canadian record for opening mounds. Turtle Mountain families, Native or non-Native, have long memories. When professional archaeologists today presume to lecture locals on disturbance of sites, they should bear in mind that the perception on the other side is that the archaeologists themselves are little better than looters. This public relations problem has not been adequately addressed by the archaeological community, and is sometimes exacerbated even today.

Another researcher intent on solving the identity of the mysterious builders [of the Sourisford Mounds] was Henry Montgomery, a professor at the University of North Dakota who carried out his investigations mainly throughout the Dakotas, though he did make some surveys in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario. While his reports were far more descriptive than those of Bryce and others and he deposited his Canadian finds in the Royal Ontario Museum, he too shoved aside any

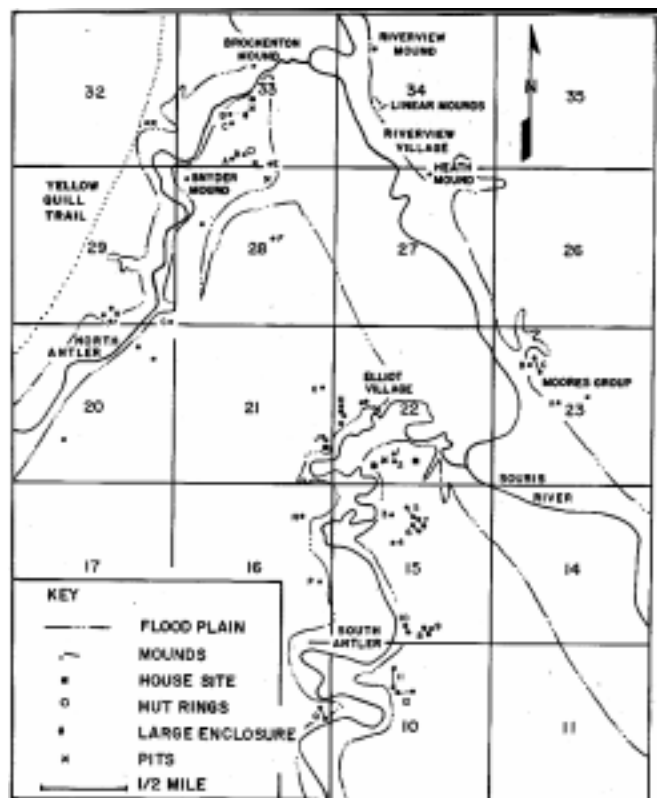
pretence at scientific method and excavated hastily and, alas, untiringly, with shovels and earth-scrappers. He left his trademark everywhere: deep central pits that turned mounds into doughnuts. Because of the volume of his twenty years' work on the plains he probably did more damage than any other single mound digger. In most cases, not even the geographic locations of the plundered mounds were recorded. Many of the mounds contained several graves, often at different levels, yet no attempt was made to map their positions or even to keep the contents of each burial separate. Artifacts from possibly different time periods and cultures were all lumped together simply as Mound Builders' artifacts.

The sad thing is that Montgomery unearthed in Manitoba what would have been splendid evidence for today's scientists: different kinds of burial pits with skeletons in sitting and flexed positions as well as in bundles; the presence of large stones or "boulders"; bison bones, mostly skulls and scapulae; heaps of charcoal and fragments of charred woods; different kinds of pottery, engraved shells, stone pipes, copper ornaments, and artifacts of stone and bone. He also noticed semicircular layers of "calcereous earth" separating different burials within the same mound. This led him to speculate that some of the mounds grew to their finished size by the cumulative effect of multiple burials over the course of many years. In this case, he was right.

The Buffalo People, Liz Bryan, p. 159

Gutted doughnuts are the most common type of mound to be found in the Turtle Mountain area today thanks to Prof. Montgomery. We have not visited a single one of these sites without having local families point out that "that was done by them archaeology fellows." Montgomery's work is the radioactive waste of archaeology. Every serious discussion with the Native community about recovery of artifacts has to begin with an apology and disclaimer for Montgomery *et al.* The local White community is almost as sore about it as is the Native community.

Early archaeologists had a difficult time getting a "read" on the Sourisford people and their environment. Professor Nickerson couldn't understand anyone living in the absence of springs. This observation was made in the midst of country pocked with sloughs generated by overflowing aquifers, driven in turn by the difference in



The main group of Sourisford Mounds as depicted in Katherine Capes 1961 Survey of Nickerson's 1916 work. Local information is that Sections 22 and 33 act as natural traps and/or shelters for wildlife. The mounds may have taken advantage of this natural feature on the regular buffalo migration route. The "Elliot Village" site is the location of many stories and the entire structure was part of Sitting Eagle's rounds. Coulter Pioneer Park occupies the the river conjunction in Section 33.

the height of the water table on the mountain and the surrounding countryside. The entire river system is springfed, which can be seen anywhere it does not dry up completely in a dry year. Nickerson couldn't understand why civilization wasn't concentrated in the river valleys. He was looking at the Souris flood plain.

Despite those shortcomings in analysis, Nickerson made some observations and recorded them, which was an improvement over his predecessor in the field Montgomery. By employing locals, some degree of historical information was transmitted through local oral history. Thanks to Catherine Capes of the National Museum of Canada in 1961, those living who could still remember the Nickerson and Montgomery digs were interviewed and their information summarized. Capes produced a map of the Sourisford Mound Complex and a nearly complete inventory. Capes also inventoried the eastern Arvilla mounds and noted the differences with the western Sourisford group.

Strategically the Sourisford Mounds lie directly on top of the Mandan Trail, straddling both its river portion branch and its landward branch. It was dry land as early as 8000 or 9000 BC with Turtle Mountain dominating the landscape to the southeast and the retreating glacial wall dominating the horizon to the north. As Glacial Lake Souris dried up leaving behind only Whitewater Lake, the glacial runoff rivers shrank to become the present day Souris and Antler Rivers. The Blind Souris was a glacial runoff valley left high and dry.

Along these broad grassy highways travelled migratory animals, first mastodon and mammoth, and later their ecological successor the buffalo. The Turtle Mountain bison herd eventually became established in a tight circle bounded by relatively larger buffalo herd circular routes to the east and west. The Turtle Mountain herd was smaller and more constrained than the great herds of the plains by having the boundary of Turtle Mountain on the northeast and the Missouri Couteau on the southwest.

In the fall this migration brought the buffalo northward along the broad grassy highways of the ancient Glacial River Souris and Blind Souris. Buffalo stones and well worn paths easily mark the routes through this area. Antler River is a mistranslation of local Native names that would have been better translated as “Head-and-Horns River”, possibly referring to buffalo as well as to ungulates.

Indications of primitive man in this region are most abundant on the plains in the vicinity of the two Antlers and in the valley of the Souris adjacent to the plains. The surface of the North Antler [Gainsborough Creek] plain, where broken and cultivated, is strewn with broken buffalo bones, and where the plain is unbroken, groups of shallow pits, indicating camp-sites, may be seen. The South Antler [Antler Creek] plain is similarly marked with shallow pits at some points. These pits and the mounds scattered over the plains, singly or grouped, comprise the principal archaeological features of the region. Small bands of Sioux and lone hunters still occasionally traverse the Souris Valley (1914), stopping to trap along the Antlers in their journeying to and fro between Dakota and the Moose Mountain reservation. The oldest settlers of Sourisford tell of large bands of Sioux having frequented this region as transients at some seasons, but never having permanently

camped here. Many of the scattered bones on the plains must be attributed to these transients, who left little to mark their passage except broken bones from their soup kettles. Indications of more extended occupation, such as a village, were found at only two places, one on the east side of the Souris, the other on the north bank of the South Antler.

The W. B. Nickerson Survey and Excavations, Katherine Capes, pp. 7-8.

There is more than a hint of the protectiveness that certain individuals and families among the White Homesteaders felt for their Native neighbours. When Nickerson wrote these words, he was talking about conversing with Art Gould, W. F. Thomas and the Elliot brothers (about whom we'll say more in the closing chapter.) Nickerson's account of what he was told does not square with other accounts given by these same men to other people. Either Nickerson is simply wrong, or he was deliberately misled. These men knew perfectly well that living Sioux villages were found only a few miles away on Turtle Mountain and at Sioux Valley and yet redirected Nickerson's attention away from them. (No. 60 Reserve had only been closed in 1910.) Capes on the other hand, whom local oral history rates much more highly than Nickerson and Montgomery, was given much more information and a better quality of information, by the “oldest settlers.”

The archaeologists found two village sites within two to three miles of each other — each occupied seasonally for centuries. The southern village, called the “Elliot Village” after Dave Elliot is on the west side of the Souris at the conjunction of (South) Antler Creek. The northern village is at the conjunction of Gainsborough Creek (North Antler) with the Souris, the present day site of Coulter Park.

R. D. Colquette's article “The Boundary Trail” for *Country Guide* magazine appeared sometime in the early 1930's. The publication date is unknown, but W. F. Thomas was interviewed and photographed as an old man. Colquette received a different account of the village sites than the “*idunno*” which Nickerson received. The following is a quote from Dave Elliot, the very same person whom Nickerson quoted as saying the Indians knew nothing of the sites. Fortunately Elliot told this story to a journalist trained to quote correctly.

In the fall of 1880 a half-breed came out from the Willow Bunch country. He had a Red River cart loaded with pemmican and buffalo hides which he was taking to Winnipeg. He



A massive horse race such as this one painted by Catlin in 1837 was an occasion for a gathering of several Sioux bands, and a celebration of several days. The scene could easily be placed west of the Turtle's Head. Catlin does not identify the exact location except that it was during his visit to the Sioux and Mandans on the Upper Missouri.

had some trouble getting across the river and I went down to help him. He was a very old man, probably 80 years of age, and he told me of an incident that happened at the ford when he was a very small boy, so long before that he could just remember it [circa 1810.]

He was with a party of hunters who had come from the Red River. As they neared the ford they saw a camp of Grosventres... [probably Hidatsa by the context.] There are still the remains of a Grosventres village down on the South Antler creek and a Swiss engineer who came out here in 1812 records that he saw a village of them over there.

The party of hunters saw the camp on that ridge over there east of the river [indicating a spot opposite the "Elliot Village" site] and they noticed some stir as if something was wrong. Dropping down into a coulee they rode along it until they came opposite the camp. Then they rushed it. They found that the Grosventres had been surprised by a band of Sioux [Dakota] on the warpath who had killed every one of them. The Sioux fled but the hunters cornered them opposite to where the South Antler en-

ters the Souris and in turn killed every one of them. The old half-breed remembered seeing one of the Grosventres partly scalped. The sudden appearance of hunters had interrupted the proceedings and he had been left as the half-breed remembered seeing him. If the old fellow's story was right that incident must have taken place at least 115 years ago.

The Boundary Trail, by R. D. Colquette. BCA MGI/BI 1984-43 p. 2.

I have interpreted Gros Ventre to mean Hidatsa in the quote above because it is known the Hidatsa travelled the Mandan Trail between the Missouri and Brandon House; while the Arikara appear to be trading southward from the Missouri. When Dave Elliot recounted the story in the 1930's the Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan remnants had become fused into the Three Affiliated Tribes.

On less firm ground I am assuming that by "Sioux" Elliot meant Dakota, but it could have been a party from the southern Nakota or the Lakota.

It is interesting that the Metis (or Half-breeds) saw themselves as natural allies of the Hidatsa and enemies of the Dakota. It is also interesting that the Sioux "war-

party” was wiped out by the Metis “hunters”.

Archaeologist Brian Smith commented in a 1994 interview with the author that “*a good camping spot is a good camping spot three thousand years later.*” It’s a dictum that seems to be borne out by the evidence, and goes part way to explaining the phenomenon of ancient seasonally occupied sites. David Thompson probably camped in what is today Coulter Pioneer Park.

Tuesday 13th [1804]. Departed Early in the Morning, did not Stop at all till half past 3 P.M. when we Stopp’d to pass the Night, on the Side of the 1st little River of the Elk Head [Antler River], which is a piece of high Ground upon the South Side of the River la Souris, opposite which on the North Side 2 Small Rivers, discharge themselves, their Course nearly from West to East, that of R. l. S. [Souris] at this place S. to North.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, p. 133

The idea of a seasonally occupied site, and of continuity of culture and government across several years (much less decades) seems to have been difficult for Nickerson. Referring to the southern, “Elliot Village” site, Nickerson said he couldn’t fathom the relationship of the village sites to the mounds. (Capes observed that the village sites and mounds contain the same style and age of artifacts, as well as the same kinds of food bones treated in similar ways. She felt it was implausible not to connect them.)

There were scattered bone fragments elsewhere on the South Antler plain, but nowhere else were there surface indications of habitation for any length of time, notwithstanding the extensive earthworks in Sections 10 and 15 which must have required a settled population for their erection. It does not seem reasonable that a migratory people encamped in the region for a season, or even several seasons, could account for the labour required to erect these earthworks.

The W. B. Nickerson Survey and Excavations, Katherine Capes, p. 25

It is possible that the Sourisford Mounds served at least two different purposes: tombs and sacrifices. In the Capes survey there are broadly speaking two types: small conical mounds with multiple burials and many grave

goods; and linear mounds with solitary or paired burials and few burial goods. Both occur in profusion around Sourisford. The conical mounds bear some resemblance to those of the Arvilla Burial Complex in that there is a chamber, multiple bodies, and grave goods procured from a continental trade network. They differ from the Arvilla style in being smaller, having an inner hut instead of a complete pit, and usually consist of one set of burials made at the same time. (Star Mound, Calf Mountain and Pilot Mound, all found between Turtle Mountain and the Red River to the east, are examples of the Arvilla burial style.)

The linear mounds found at Sourisford usually consist of two cones with a long low mound connecting them, sometimes running hundreds of feet. In these cones the bodies show much less care. The bodies are usually damaged while living or have a part missing such as a head, hand or foot. There are very few grave goods, and just as likely to be found are food bones. Instead of digging a pit and erecting a small hut to enclose the body or bodies, the terminal cones of linear mounds have bodies that were laid on the bald prairie, and then covered with scooped earth.

Mound 6 is part of a group of three oriented from the northwest to the southeast, which lie on the bluff to the south of the Antler-Souris confluence. The orientation could channel buffalo from the open plain to the south into the closed valley below the Elliot Village site. This group of three linear mounds is southwest of Sourisford Crossing, and on the bluff to the south of the Elliot Village. Its contents are typical.

In the northwest end, two flexed skeletons were found, one lying on its back and the other on its left side, with heads southeast. Both skeletons were but 18 inches deep, or about on the plains’ level, one 15 feet north of the other. Both were of adults, probably of middle age, about 5 feet 2 to 4 inches in height.

In the southern skeleton the knees were drawn up, the right leg over the left. The bones were in place in natural order, except the skull, the atlas, the sternum, and the bones of both arms which were missing, though some of the bones of one hand were found.

In the northern skeleton, the skull was in place, towards the southeast, resting on the left side with face west. The occiput was penetrated on the right side by a square hole; this piece of skull was not found, nor was it within the skull when examined. All bones were

in place in natural order except those of the feet, which were missing. The right leg lay over the left, and the arms were flexed. The bones were badly decayed; the left fibula and the vertebrae were nearly gone.

No mortuary offerings were found. Both skeletons lay on the black earth above the subsoil, which had nowhere been penetrated. Scattered animal bones were not present.

The W. B. Nickerson Survey and Excavations, Katherine Capes, pp. 29-30

Mound J, one of two paired mounds, contained no identifiable human remains to Capes. It did have evidence of a lodge made of poles one to two inches in diameter, which was then covered with earth. Inside were bone whistles, pottery, Gulf Coast shell and animal bones. Capes noted that some mounds had been previously obliterated by Nickerson or Montgomery for which there were no records. The twin to Mound J had been excavated by Montgomery.

Mound C, a linear mound some 20 feet wide and 765 feet long, contained a hodgepodge of burials at different levels suggesting it had been used repeatedly. It was constructed of a wet mixture of soil and gravel allowed to dry until it was as hard as a crumbly concrete. Early burials were found on the prairie level below the gravel mix while later burials had been hacked into the hardened material. The burials did not seem to conform to the same style of treatment. Two babies had been interred after the mound was formed by hacking out narrow pits. They had been placed in the mound in a sitting position. At the level of the prairie, skeletal remains were found with bark decay, possibly indicating the original inhabitant of the mound was placed under a hut or bark covering. At the two foot level the skull of a white male was disinterred.

One of the most interesting burials in terms of linking ancient locations with more recent historical practice was a relatively early addition to Mound C. At the centre of Mound C and only 6 inches below the surface was buried a boulder under which was a bundle of human bones stained by copper residue. The copper artifact buried with the bones had long since decayed, but had stained the bones a tell tale green. Capes felt it had been a copper wrapper of some kind, perhaps a tube or a can. It was not an object like a knife, because where it had not protected the remains, the bones had dissolved. Underneath the remains of the bundle were seven smaller stones and a fragment of a skull. Despite the shallow level, Capes felt the soil indicated that the bundle and stones had been set in place as the mound was con-

structed, and the mound finished around it.

One mound contained the hind end of a buffalo skeleton below the linear mound and the front end of the same skeleton buried nearer the surface of the mound and some distance away.

Mound 4 contained two skeletons which had originally been interred in an upright position in a shallow pit. The skull of the adult skeleton had been crushed, but aside from badger disturbances the entire skeleton was present in natural order. The second skeleton was that of a child which was undamaged. With the bodies were buffalo bones, including a scapula planted upright. A small fire had been kindled before the mound had been closed. An arrow point was covered in ochre and placed in the mound.

There are stories associated with Medicine Wheel oral history that at one time sacrifice was not voluntary and that the historical Medicine Wheel emerged in reaction to this time. The Sun Dance gains some of its importance from the fact that it is voluntary. That there are degrees of difference of the interments in the Sourisford Mounds seems to support this community memory.

Local oral history has it that the Native people around Turtle Mountain employed buffalo runs, jumps and later pounds prior to the advent of the horse. (In a jump the animals are killed by stampeding over a cliff or steep embankment and in a pound the animals are herded into a fenced area for killing by spear or bow.) It's possible that the linear mounds channelled buffalo runs over jumps, and/or into natural pounds. The area of the Souris and Blind Souris Valleys was on the path of the Turtle Mountain Herd's annual migration. Archaeology and oral history have only recently been combined to understand how a buffalo run works. These may have disguised the approach of the steep banks of Head-and-Horns Creek [Antler River.] The confluence of the Blind Souris, Antler River, Gainsborough Creek and Souris River at Coulter Park is observed by locals to both trap and shelter wildlife. It was the choice location of Sitting Eagle for wintering and it was the location of two prehistoric village sites. This convergence of landscape and natural forces is at the centre of the Sourisford node of the Sourisford-Devil's Lake Burial Complex -- a group of almost a hundred known mounds.

According to published statements by Bev Nicholson of Brandon University, there has been little archaeological work done in southwestern Manitoba beyond the calibre just described. None of the researchers of the early twentieth century looked for buffalo jumps or pounds, much less signs of fishing and agriculture. (Agriculture and trade along the Souris River have been the subjects

of recent research by Nicholson and Brandon University.) Consequently, if there were evidence of jumps or pounds at Sourisford it was not looked for and remains in as yet unreported. Jumps have been documented throughout the Pembina Valley.

The mounds have been tentatively dated by archaeologists as having been constructed over a period from about 1000 AD to 1500 AD. The later burials (such as the bundles) show more similarities with what is known about historical period Sioux practices. In some of the most recent mounds Capes thought she saw evidence of scaffolds constructed first; then allowed to collapse; bundling of bones; and finally a mound erected over top. This suggests a continuity of use by either one society which underwent a gradual change of burial practice, or several societies that shared information, items and practices.

According to personal conversation with Dakota and Lakota advisors (including Kevin and Marina Tacan, Suzanne Dupree-Schuldt and Colleen Cutschall) the burial customs of the Plains Sioux underwent some forced change as a result of the Indian Wars. According to Sioux lore, "sky burials" in which the physical body was first offered to the sky and elements and the soul released, were practised by placing the body on a scaffold. This was usually done on a favourite high place, often visited by generations. (We know that historically the north slope of the Turtle's Head was used for this purpose.) The body eventually collapsed. Anciently it was the practice to gather up some of the bones and personal possessions into a bundle. When the Sioux were sedentary the bundle was usually buried in the ground. Where the Sioux nation was migratory, the bundle seems to have been carried for a time by the grieving family. Towards the end of the Indian Wars when time for a funeral was a luxury, the bundle step was often omitted in favour of simply keeping a lock of hair or similar memento of the deceased.

One of the mounds which showed the strongest connection to 18th Century burial practices of the Sioux is "Lone Mound" found north of Alexander, close to the present-day Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation. This mound showed indications that there had been scaffolding first, then a mound constructed.

As the work of excavation progressed, it became evident, although there had been much subsequent shifting of the bones, that originally an adult skeleton had been seated close to the southwest side of a bowl-shaped grave, measuring 5 feet northeast by 6 feet 3 inches

southwest, which was lined with bark that had decayed. The grave had been dug in the sand to a depth of but 1 foot 7 inches below the sod line. Along the southwest side of the grave, stakes (running northwest to southeast) were lined up. Some of them apparently were put up only after the burial had been made; perhaps all were placed after the body had fallen. Samples of the wood were retained. None of the stakes had been sharpened. Evidently when the body collapsed it fell towards the east; the bones were since disturbed.

Close about the most northern stake were nine small arrow points. Six of these were embedded in wood decay, probably the remains of some slender shafts such as a bow and a container or quiver, apparently one suspended from the stake, together with a food offering, indicated by bones found nearby. Southeast of here, four other small points were scattered. One hundred and sixty-two small shells with one side ground off to facilitate stringing, and six large shell beads or pendants, made from columella of a conch, were in about the centre of the bottom of the grave. An arrow tip was found on the southwest side of the grave, embedded in the old sod under the mound. Beside one of the centre stakes at a depth of 11 inches, were a small arrow point, a tooth, and a very small chip from a pipe of catlinite.

... [several paragraphs on disposition of main skeleton, and a secondary skeleton of an infant are omitted here.]...

It was apparent that this burial place was visited once or twice at appreciable intervals after the first interment was made. In the first interval the body had been permitted to fall apart, and the offerings which hung on the post were not molested but had fallen into the grave. The mound was then built, and some of the other stakes set up. The burial of the child may have taken place at this time or at a later period.

The W. B. Nickerson Survey and Excavations, Katherine Capes, pp. 70-72

Capes also reported that the archaeological team continued excavating from this site into an adjacent site. They realized that they'd jumped from a site believed to be created about 1600 AD to one from the first decade of the 1900's when they encountered nails and planks.

Were it not for the modern artifacts, the contents of the site itself did not stand out to the investigators as qualitatively different from Lone Mound. This accident argues strongly for an historical continuity between the modern Dakota and the late Mound Builders.

One possible relation that has been suggested between the Sourisford and Arvilla groups is that they represent the burial practices of different but related groups. They may have been as closely related as the immediate ancestors of the Nakota and Dakota. There is an emerging agreement that regardless of precisely which groups they represent, the mounds were reflective of a culture immediately preceding the historical Sioux. Archaeological work in the Mille Lacs area of Minnesota recently has shown a direct relationship between the Dakota of the early 1600's and Arvilla style mound building. It has been suggested that the early Assiniboine were the principal builders of the Sourisford group.

Earlier archaeologists and Pioneer era historians have been generally reluctant to draw connections between the Sourisford mounds and Siouan Nations. More recent work has tended towards a hypothetical proto-Sioux of some sort, or in the case of David Braddell's work an assertion that they were Assiniboine. There is ample evidence in the early first-person histories of use of the mounds, and a few references to reuse. Joseph Nicollet described witnessing Wahpekute Dakota using these sites in 1838, and refusing to leave even when threatened by Algonquin tribes from the east.

The Indians of the Wahpekute tribe cannot bring themselves to leave the country in spite of the continual danger they run of being attacked by the Sauk and Fox. At this moment they are scattered in little bands of 3 to 6 lodges in les bois francs around the lakes to gather wild rice. They see us and we do not see them. From time to time some of them wander alone on the prairie or on the summit of the hills where they stop to weep on the tombs of some of their recently buried kin.

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, p. 125

Henry Youle Hind in 1857 observed current usage of mounds as ceremonial sites in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

About fourteen miles from the South Branch there is a gigantic erratic of unfossiliferous rock on the south side of the valley. It is seventy-nine feet in horizontal circumference, three feet from the ground; and a tape stretched across the exposed portion, from side to side

over the highest point, measured forty-six feet. The Indians place on it offerings to Manitou, and at the time of our visit it contained beads, bits of tobacco, fragments of cloth and other trifles.

Narrative: Vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 364

Kevin Callahan of the University of Minnesota Anthropology Department has argued that the Dakota are directly connected with construction of the mounds, or at least reuse of them. Callahan examined the destruction of Dakota villages at Kathio in the Mille Lacs region of Minnesota. Ojibway, armed with guns and homemade grenades had overrun an area formerly held by the Dakota. Callahan left open the question of whether the war caused the depopulation of the area or whether the food resources had become depleted. Ojibway tactics worked both ends.

On the shores of Mille Lacs Lake are numerous village sites and hundreds of mounds. The village sites are very rich in potsherds and the mounds contain secondary burials. The exact type of the vessels that Hennepin saw is unknown, and there is no historical account showing that the Sioux built mounds over the bones of the dead, but all of the evidence points to the Sioux as the makers of the pottery and the mounds at Mille Lacs.

Late prehistoric Dakota projectile points were triangular in shape. Although Brower illustrated his book Kathio with an iron club from Mille Lacs, identified by an Ojibwe as being Dakota in origin, there were no archaeologically recovered guns, bullets, or gunpowder residues. For the Dakota to have traded for guns, and gunpowder in a substantial way they would have presumably have needed to have gone to a French trading post. These were initially set up along the Mississippi in southeastern Minnesota which could indeed have provided an incentive to at least travel to, if not move to a location near the post, particularly if the natural resources in the Mille Lacs area had become depleted from population growth. In this view the Ojibwe moved into an area the Dakota had already been abandoning.

The Dakota at Mille Lacs, Kevin Callahan, web site

French furtraders in northern Minnesota of the late 1600's saw Dakota interring their dead into mounds that

already existed. Nicollet described Dakota visiting “tombs” on high places in the 1830’s. Catherine Capes found evidence of transitions between mounds of the pre-1500 AD period and the scaffold burials of the 1800’s. Whether or not the Dakota of Hadamanie’s generation in the late 1800’s knew *who* built the Sourisford mounds, they knew *what* they were.

The oral history emerging concerning the Council on Turtle Mountain suggests that it played a guardian role in preserving the memory of the sites, if not actually using them or even building them. Obviously, some kind of social organization was necessary to enable a people to seasonally occupy a site and construct public works. It is generally accepted today that one of the social roles of shamans was to direct communal hunt preparations such as jumps and pounds.

An historical Council on Turtle Mountain, as intimated by Carver in 1768 or Tanner in 1815, need not have been directly connected to the builders of such public monuments in order to respect them.

Tony Baker, a retired engineer from Texas who studies lithic point construction, in discussion on an unrelated matter of the Moncur Folsom point, made the observation that modern people did not invent museum collections. He cited digs in the Pueblo sites that had uncovered what appeared to be deliberate collections of artifacts of previous cultures.

The few first person accounts still available in 2001 confirm that Sitting Eagle exercised a kind of guardianship over this eclectic mixture of archaeological sites. That they range from the Ice Age to Pre-Contact didn’t seem to matter to him, excepting only that some sites were used as current and some were only visited in the course of his rounds. The present-day municipal complex in Boissevain is actually built into the side of a large mound and so both the Council Stones and local municipal councils still meet at a mound.

Ball Game

The Ball Game is both a significant religious ritual and a public sport. It could be one or the other, or both simultaneously. The many versions of the ball game seem to fall into three general categories 1) field games of two teams; 2) bowling games of a number of individuals; and 3) ball toss games with no limit to the participants. The balls seem to have been usually stone, although these may have been padded.

Brenda Angoshadluk, a Katimavik volunteer who provided some assistance to the Moncur Gallery in the fall of 1999 commented that she had participated in ball games in her home community of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

which were very similar to those described in the fur trade accounts. She described two teams using a crook and net like the Dakotas. The ball she described had a small round stone at the centre, a layer of feathers and an outer covering of leather.

Our modern games of lacrosse, basketball and hockey are all directly derived from First Nations ball games. The nearly complete indoctrination of our culture into observing the Stanley or Grey Cups is an indication of the importance such ball games would have held for First Nations in pre-contact times.

The ball game figures prominently in many versions of the creation story involving the Cosmic Turtle mytheme. The game is usually played in the crack of the back of the turtle, and the Zeiler site fits this description well with respect to the Turtle Mountain landform. The ball game is played to recreate the world, to bring back old knowledge, to teach agriculture, to instruct on the competition of life. We know it was routinely played at *Turtle Island* — Michilimackinac. It should not be surprising therefore to find it ritually played on *Turtle Mountain*.

It is an intriguing side note that the Zeiler site is on a line directly north of the International Peace Gardens and that the boundary between Treaty 1 and 2 must have passed through it or very close to it.

In 1768, Jonathan Carver described his experience of the ball game as a spectator.

As I have observed, the Indians are greatly addicted to gambling, and will even stake, and lose with composure, all the valuables they are possessed of. They amuse themselves at several sorts of games, but the principal and most esteemed among them is that of the ball, which is not unlike the European game of tennis.

The balls they use are rather larger than those made use of at tennis, and are formed of a piece of deer-skin; which being moistened to render it supple, is stuffed hard with the hair of the same creature, and sewed with its sinews. The ball-sticks are about three feet long, at the end of which there is fixed a kind of racket, resembling the palm of the hand, and fashioned of thongs cut from a deer-skin. In these they catch the ball, and throw it to a great distance, if they are not prevented by some of the opposite party, who fly to intercept it.

This game is generally played by large com-



Depiction of the finale of a ball game from a Mayan ball court, based on an illustration in Linda Schele's **"The Code of Kings."** At left the victorious team captain holds a flint knife in his right hand, and with his left holds by the hair the severed head of the losing team captain. At right the body of the losing team captain is still kneeling in willing sacrifice. In his right hand he holds the Mayan version of the ball racket, decorated with a motif of his team. From his neck sprouts six snakes and a squash vine. The squash vine symbolizes the recreation of agriculture and the blessing of the deceased's sacrifice. The symbol of the six snakes was not understood until Linda Schele cracked the Mayan Code in the 1970's and 1980's. According to Schele this is a word-pun. "Six snakes" in Mayan is "wak-kan", a play on the word "wakan" or "holy". The same word for holy is used by First Nations from central America to the Canadian Plains.

panies, that sometimes consist of more than three hundred; and it is not uncommon for different bands to play against each other.

They begin by fixing two poles in the ground at about six hundred yards apart, and one of these goals belong to each part of the combatants. The ball is thrown up high in the centre of the ground, and in a direct line between the goals; towards which each party endeavours to strike it, and which ever side first causes it to reach their own goal, reckons towards the game.

They are so exceeding dextrous in this manly exercise, that the ball is usually kept flying in different directions by the force of the rackets, without touching the ground during the whole contention; for they are not allowed to catch it with their hands. They run with amazing velocity in pursuit of each other, and when one is on the point of hurling it to a great

distance, an antagonist overtakes him, and by a sudden stroke dashes down the ball.

They play with so much vehemence that they frequently wound each other, and sometimes a bone is broken; but notwithstanding these accidents there never appears to be any spite or wanton exertions of strength to effect them, nor do any disputes ever happen between the parties.

Travels through North America, Jonathan Carver, pp. 363-365

George Catlin's painting of three ball players is a composite from two different games which Catlin observed in the 1830's. One of the players, holding two sticks, was the leading Choctaw player whom Catlin saw play on the middle Mississippi. The other two were Dakotas who played in an extraordinary game held on the Fourth of July, 1837 before an audience of US Army officials and civilians, between a team of Dakota and a team of Sac and Fox. In the latter of the two games



Illustration of ball players from “The George Catlin Book of American Indians” by Royal B. Hassrick, New York, Watson-Guption Publications, c1977. Catlin made this composite painting during 1837-38. The man at left was the premier Choctaw ball player and is attired and equipped in that Nation’s style with two sticks. The two men at right are Sioux, probably Dakota, and were the star players on the Dakota side during a 4th July, 1837 ball game at Ft. Snelling between a Sioux team and a Sac & Fox team. (A tripartite treaty negotiation was in progress at Ft. Snelling at the time.) The Dakota players carry one stick.

there are definite implications that the game was part of the treaty-making ritual. The only reason the three parties were present at all was for treaty negotiations. The US Army officers suggested the idea of a ball game on July 4th by way of celebrating their own creation myth. The staging of the game for Catlin confirmed the American power over the two tribes come to assemble for a treaty.

At the Choctaw game Catlin observed that gambling was an intrinsic part of the event.

All this preparation was made by some old men, who were, it seems, selected to be the judges of the play, who drew a line from one bye to the other; to which directly came from the woods, on both sides, a great concourse of women and old men, boys and girls, and dogs and horses, where bets were to be made

on the play. The betting was all done across this line, and seemed to be chiefly left to the women, who seemed to have martialled out a little of everything that their houses and their fields possessed, goods and chattels — knives — dresses — blankets — pots and kettles — dogs and horses, and guns; and all were placed in the possession of the stake-holders, who sat by them, and watched them on the ground all night, preparatory to the play.

Catlin’s Indians, Vol. 2, George Catlin, p. 142

Catlin travelled up the Mississippi, passing the old trade centre of Prairie du Chien, and arriving above that place at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. The US Army constructed Fort Snelling between Prairie du Chien and the Falls of St. Anthony in the Noman’s land that had developed between the Santee Dakota and the Chippewa Ojibway. This was the same area as the old No. 1 and No. 2



Carl Bodmer's 1840's painting of Dakota playing the ball game, in this case on the ice surface of a frozen stream. Scenes very much like this could have taken place on Turtle Mountain.

Districts surveyed by the British Army that had anchored the “hundreds miles of land” stories. (Discussed in detail later in the section on the “Sioux Treaty” and in Appendix C.)

At Fort Snelling, Catlin met Dakota, Sac and Fox chiefs who'd assembled to conclude treaties with the United States. The Black Hawk War had just come to a conclusion and the defeated Sac and Fox were represented by Keokuk. The defeated Black Hawk, now sidelined from power, was also present at Fort Snelling when Catlin visited there.

The Dakota, according to Catlin, were represented by a grand chief “Wa-mah-de-tunck-a (the big eagle), commonly called the ‘Black Dog’.” In Catlin’s painting of him, Big Eagle holds a pipe not an instrument of war, and he is wearing what could be a treaty medal. The Dakota had been pressed by the Chippewa but not defeated. The overrun of Chippewa and other southern Algonquin nations by the United States might have ended the war on terms the Dakota could have accepted, if

they could have negotiated a treaty with the Americans which would have stopped the Whites from advancing any further.

So it was that representatives of two ancient enemies came to be camped at Fort Snelling on July 4, 1837 waiting to negotiate treaties with their mutual enemy, the Americans. It was a strange mix of cross-cultural currents that would never be witnessed again. This ballgame was going to be attended by all the ritual two great civilizations could muster and combined Algonquin and Siouan elements.

The fourth of July was hailed and celebrated by us at this place, in an unusual, and not uninteresting manner. With the presence of several hundreds of the wildest of the Chippeways, and as many hundreds of the Sioux; we were prepared with material in abundance for the novel — for the wild and grotesque — as well as for the grave and ludi-



A Women's Ball Game among the Dakota, observed by Catlin at Prairie due Chien in 1837. The prizes are hung on a rack at centre of picture and will be distributed to the winners. An elder to the right of the rack is the referee. The players in this version of the Ball Game have a short pointed stick in each hand. Two balls joined by a cord are used, and the sticks are employed in tangling and throwing this bolo-like affair.

crous. Major Talliaferro, the Indian agent, to aid my views in procuring sketches of manners and customs, represented to them that I was a great medicine-man, who had visited, and witnessed the sports of, a vast many Indians of different tribes, and had come to see whether the Sioux and Chippeways were equal in a ball-play, etc., to their neighbours; and that if they would come in on the next day (fourth of July), and give us a ball-play, and some of their dances, in their best style, he would have the big gun fired twenty-one times (the customary salute for that day), which they easily construed into a high compliment to themselves. This, with still stronger inducements, a barrel of flour — a quantity of pork and tobacco, which I gave them, brought the scene about on the day of independence, as follows: — About eleven o'clock (the usual time for Indians to make their appearance on any great occasion), the young men, who were enlisted for ball-play, made their appearance on the ground with ball-sticks in hand — with no other dress on than the flap, and attached to a girdle or ornamental sash, a tail, extending nearly to the ground, made of the choic-

est arrangement of quills and feathers, or of the hair of white horses' tails. After an excited and warmly contested play of two hours they adjourned to a place in front of the agent's office, where they entertained us for two or three hours longer, with a continued variety of their most fanciful and picturesque dances. They gave us the beggar's dance — the buffalo-dance — the bear-dance — the eagle-dance — and the dance of the braves. This last is peculiarly beautiful, and exciting to the feelings of the highest degree.

Catlin's Indians, Vol. 2, p. 154

Bill Moncur observed a bowling version of this game being played at the Zeiler site in the 1920's, which as he recalled was accompanied by gambling. In Moncur's description the balls were rolled down a hill into holes. Asked in a 1999 interview if this was the only way to use the balls, or the proper way, Moncur replied, "No, the young people got heck for it from the elders." The balls from this game were removed in 1944 at the instruction of the Turtle Mountain Council and are presently in the Moncur Gallery. With them came one stone "target", a disk of stone about 5 inches across and two inches thick. Other target stones and ball stones have subsequently been found or rediscovered elsewhere in

the area and turned into the Moncur Gallery. Seven of these smaller ball-stones were identified by Moncur as being a specific set used at the Zeiler site.

Often at the end of an interview, Bill Moncur would set a ritual task such as the recovery or identification of an artifact. Until staff and/or volunteers completed his assignment he wouldn't unfold the next layer of the story. He admitted at one juncture that this was exactly how Sitting Eagle had trained him, including the use of pranks. The ceremonial Council Stones were as he put it "*easy to find. I left 'em on the floor where you could trip over them.*" Which was literally true.

After several interviews Moncur announced that we had to find other sets of seven stones, two in particular. He informed us that there were seven Ball Stones, which were quite different from the Council Stones. Three of these were already on display, where were the others? To this he answered only that they were in the collection somewhere, and clammed up until we found them. A thorough inventory by staff, summer students and volunteers which included checking under displays, staircase and behind wall panelling, eventually turned up a surfeit of stones — out of which Moncur identified the four remaining to complete another set of seven. One of

these he had hidden under the stairwell fifteen years before; two were catalogued in an unusual way which hid them; and one was located in a bag of waste stone flakes.

During the extensive search we read, researched and listened as the story of the ball game emerged with its importance to diplomacy, war, trade and religion. The next task took us out of the Museum when Moncur announced we had to "*take a good look around the Chain Lakes and tell me what you see.*" After our rediscovery of seven gigantic stones at the Chain Lakes, and noting their sight lines to other features around Turtle Mountain, Moncur was willing to discuss ceremonial sites and petroforms.

Stone Circles and Petroforms

In addition to the mounds and ball game site, Turtle Mountain is also surrounded by hundreds of stone patterns forming circles, ovals, rectangles and animal petroforms. Boulders are certainly not unique to this region, but a particular unique combination of events exaggerates this feature of the landscape.

According to the Geological Survey of Canada, the region around Turtle Mountain has experienced at least three glaciations, mostly from the north or north-east but at least one from the west. This eastward flowing glaciation occurred around 40,000 BC and carried with it a large amount of gravel and boulder material from the Rocky Mountains. In certain places the boulders received a great deal of tumbling from glacial river runoff, resulting in this region in a characteristic soil layer.

Gravel and sand that overlie bedrock with buried valleys that include a significantly higher percentage of quartzite and chert pebbles than do the typical glacial gravels of this region, are here informally named "Souris gravel and sand"...

... "Souris gravel and sand" includes from 20 to >75 per cent of rock types of western (Rocky Mountain) provenance whereas typical glacial gravels include less than 10 per cent. The western of "preglacial" pebbles comprise a distinctive assemblage of subrounded to well-rounded quartzite, argillite, chert, agate and porphyritic volcanic rock types, whereas glacial erratics are commonly subangular to rounded carbonates, granites and foliated metamorphic rock types.

Chronology in Southwestern Manitoba, Geological Survey of Canada, p. 4



Believed to be stone targets, meant to be piled on top of each other for a bowling-type of ball game. The stone disks were found on the Mandan Trail between Souris and Brandon; now in the Moncur Gallery.



One of the stone petroforms found on the horizon line around Turtle Mountain. This petroform includes an inner group of stones, a middle ring and an outer ring. The mound on which this petroform sits is large enough to show up in aerial soil surveys. This circle is on the downslope of the Souris River facing towards the west. An observer standing on the high ground at the back (east) of the picture could look directly into the Turtle's Head approximately 10 miles away. The stone pattern forms a medicine wheel as well as a turtle design. Sioux Valley elders have suggested it is a dancing ground for an old form of Sundance no longer commonly practiced. The position of the medicine wheel and its orientation works with the landscape to make the usual observations of solstice and equinox so important to the Siouan cultures. This site has been protected by private farm families for the last hundred years. This petroform is flooded regularly and may be related to a re-enactment of the Creation Story of the Turtle's Back and recreation of the land.

These glacial deposits were in some cases covered with two hundred feet of later sediments. In the region of Turtle Mountain, the "Souris gravel and sand" directly overlays bedrock. When subsequent glaciers arrived from the north and east, they brought with them newer and less rounded material, and in some cases eroded the old sediments to re-expose the Souris gravel and sand level. Throughout the Souris Valley and around Turtle Mountain this has resulted in a landscape littered with boulders, some as round as bowling balls, many of which can be polished or shaped to become "shining stones."

Before reaching the 49th parallel, the Souris meanders for several miles through a treeless valley, about a mile broad and sixty feet below the prairie level. Turtle Mountain on the east rises nobly from the great plain, the boundary line between British and American territory cutting it. The country west of the Souris is a treeless desert, in dry seasons destitute of water, and without a shrub or bush thicker than a willow twig. We ascertained the breadth of this arid, woodless tract to be at least sixty miles north of the Red Deer's Head River [Antler Creek?] on the 49th parallel. Near the boundary line the Souris expands into a series of large ponds and marshes which are called the Souris Lakes. [Sourisford, Whitewater or Chain Lakes possibly.] During periods of

high water they form a continuous lake of imposing magnitude, extending many miles south of the 49th parallel, consequently far within the United States territory.

A vast number of gneissoid and limestone boulders are strewed over the hill bank of the Souris, near the 49th parallel, and on a point between a small brook and the river we found a number of conical mounds, and the remains of an intrenchment. Our half-breeds said it was an old Mandan village; the Indians of that tribe having formerly hunted and lived in this part of the Great Prairies. We endeavoured to make an opening into one of the mounds, and penetrated six feet without finding anything to indicate that the mounds were the remains of Mandan lodges.

Narrative: Vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 299

One of the most common varieties of petroforms is the misnamed "tepee ring." These are stone rings, usually with one end open, most often oriented to the east. The term has no archaeological accuracy whatsoever but unfortunately entered the professional jargon early and has been conservatively held to by that profession. So-called "tepee rings" do not include hearths, and seldom provide material one would associate with the normal detritus of living.

The term was coined by Henry Youle Hind in his Narrative, and as we have seen, Hind was a geologist.

Immediately on the banks of the Qu'Appelle Valley near the "Round Hill" opposite Moose Jaws Forks, are the remains of ancient encampments, where the Plain Crees, in the day of their power and pride, had erected large skin tents, and strengthened them with rings of stones placed round the base. These circular remains were twenty-five feet in diameter, the stones or boulders being about one foot in circumference. They wore the aspect of great antiquity, being partially covered with soil and grass. When this camp ground was occupied with by the Crees, timber no doubt grew in the valley below, or on the prairie and ravines in detached groves, for their permanent camping grounds are always placed near a supply of fuel.

Narrative: Vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 338

What Hind had observed was a vision quest site, or complex of sites. His assumption that the people were Cree had no more basis than his assumption that there had been trees on a fire-swept prairie or that the stones had ever anchored a teepee.

Despite many inquiries of teepee makers and users, and of archaeologists and archivists, there is no evidence of a teepee ever being held down by such stones. Pegs are preferred. But as a vision quest site the area Hind described did not require easy access to wood and water, and perhaps it was better than it didn't. A good vision quest site requires some work to get to and some privation in order to use.

Hind did acquire some sense of the sacred when he spoke of "standing stones" — a term commonly used in Europe for Celtic and Neolithic stone forms. He knew very well the connotations of using this term.

The level character of the country disappears after passing Pipestone Creek; the prairie is either undulating and sandy, or varied with low hills of drift, on which boulders are scattered. On the evening of the 6th we camped at Boss Hill Creek, which flows into the Assiniboine through a broad valley among low hills and gentle slopes. From a conical eminence near our camp, Boss Hills, Standing Stone Mountain, and woods fringing Oake Lake are visible.

The "Standing Stone" is probably the same familiar object in these regions as mentioned

by the Rev. John West, who traveled during the winter of 1821 to Brandon House and the mouth of the Qu'appelle on a missionary journey. Mr. West related that he stopped to breakfast at the Standing Stone, where the Indians had deposited bits of tobacco, small pieces of cloth, and other trifles...

Narrative: Vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 309

Dr. John Eddy in 1977 rediscovered a pattern of observation lines found in most petroforms, cairns or medicine wheels. [See Appendix: A on astronomy.] Eddy's observations and those of his successors were primarily made in the morning and in summer. Consequently his sight-lines are oriented towards sunrises and morning star positions. It is just as likely that such sites had lines which were used for observation of night-time, sunset and winter positions. Bill Moncur recalled that all of the ceremonies he attended on Turtle Mountain in the 1920's and 1940's were conducted during sunrise, daytime or sunset.

One of Eddy's insights was that the angles were independent of the size of the site. One could draw out sunrise observation lines on a dinner plate, on a teepee ring, on a petroform or a medicine wheel, or from hilltop to hilltop. The Turtle Mountain formation lent itself well to this use and there is ample evidence that the hilltop sites were more clearly visible to each other in the days when they were still swept by prairie fires.

Francois Larocque climbed a hill he called "Grosse Butte" in the summer of 1805. The historians Raymond Wood and Thomas Thiessen interpret Larocque's description to apply to Buffalo Lodge Lake and note the presence of a "large unnamed hill." The Saulteaux map of Earth Elder shows a Buffalo Lodge Hill at the place. (Larocque's capitalization and spelling have been left as is.)

[June 8, 1805] *We sat of to go to a hill called Grosse Butte to dry our things, and water our horses, but there being none here arrived there in two hours and a half where we stopped for the remainder of the day and night. The Grosse Bute is a high hill, which is seen at 20 miles off on either side. At its foot on the North side is a Lake of about 8 Mile in Circumference in which there are middle sized pikes. Between the Lake and the hill there is some wood chiefly with each other. From the top of the Hill the turtle Mountain was seen being due Nort. River la Sourie likewise was of in N:N:E: South*

and South west, being seen on all sides of the hill except West.

Early Fur Trade of the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, p. 163

Given that Larocque describes the Souris River as bending around the hill on all sides “except West” he must be in the big loop of the Souris — the opposite side of the river from where Wood and Thiessen place him. There are several candidates for this hill: Little Medicine Lodge, White Rock Hill and Black Butte. Elliot Coues came to the same conclusion and felt that White Rock Hill was the most probable candidate for being Grosse Butte. Alexander Henry Jr. wrote that he could look directly north from Grosse Butte to see Turtle Mountain on the horizon “like a low blue cloud”, which could be the case from either White Rock Hill or Little Medicine Lodge.

What is significant is that for purposes of navigation, defence, camping, ceremony and astronomical observation there were reasons to visit these hilltops and to take sightings from them to each other. The angle from the Turtle’s Head through the Council Tree site to Bois-sevain corresponds to the rising summer solstice sun. The same holds for the angle from the Turtle’s Back through the Killarney hills. The angle from White Rock Hill and Little Medicine Lodge through the Butte of St. Paul (otherwise called the “Tail”) would give the same summer solstice sunrise observation. In reverse, the summer solstice sunset could be observed from Butte St. Paul-the Tail over the Turtle’s Head. There is no end to these configurations, enough to allow many Nations to have access to ceremonial sites on and around Turtle Mountain.

Boundary Commission as Creation Story

In the sections to follow on Turtle Mountain’s history in the 1870’s, the International Boundary Commission is discussed in some detail. The political, military and intelligence aspects of the Boundary Commission are reviewed in Chapter 5. But, there is a mythic aspect of the Boundary Commission which is perhaps better dealt with here.

It may be that the Council on Turtle Mountain understood the social role of the Boundary Commission better than its own members. As Mercea Eliade observed, one of the ways of reconsecrating a landscape is to extend imaginary lines from a centre to an horizon. The evidence of the stone patterns is that this principle was already known and used by people on Turtle Mountain

for thousands of years. When the elders of the Council of Seven Stones met the International Boundary Commission they knew they had in one sense met kindred spirits. They also knew that they could use this to their advantage in several ways.

One use that Native people made of the Boundary Commission was to provide a conduit for communication with the Crown. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Another use was to encourage the Boundary Commission to follow, mark and use ancient sight lines. The most prominent example of this is the conversion of the Medicine Line into the 49th Parallel.

For the European-descended colonists who came after, the Boundary Commission occupied the same role as the Cosmic Turtle and Nanabush, finding a way, making a new land, sheltering an immature and fragile human community. Today in Turtle Mountain many of our roads follow the trails of the Boundary Commission — the most important being Highway No. 3.

Even the ritual of the Boundary Commission surveyors must have been seen by the Turtle Mountain elders as reminiscent of their own ceremony as in the following example of an 1870 surveyor’s regulation.

The reference of lines to an astronomic meridian... shall as a rule, be made by observations on Polaris. The telescopes used being amply powerful to show stars of the second magnitude within a few hours from noon, and stars of the third magnitude in twilight when it is still clear enough to read the graduation, the observations will be taken in day time, whenever practicable.

Visions of an Ordered Land, James G. MacGregor, p. 13

By using the various hilltops available in the Turtle Mountain area as their observation points, the Boundary Commission surveyors had unconsciously mimicked actions of the elders and medicine people associated with the Council of Seven Stones. In some cases, such as the Turtle’s Back and Killarney Hill, the surveyors literally put their tripods smack on top of vision quest sites used since the last Ice Age, and erected their own standing stones in the same places.

An unconscious, but nevertheless meaningful, echo of the ancient uses of the landscape was described by Ailsa Hurt on June 26, 1902 — the date originally set for the coronation of King Edward VII.

Soldiers just back from service in South Africa were to take an active part in the pro-

ceedings. Many riders had wonderful costumes planned for the parade. Dad was to be the King because he wore a beard cut the same as Edward VII favored. It was called "Imperial style". Mother was to be the Queen because she wore her hair the same way, and had a fur lined cape that could pass for ermine turned inside out. There was also a strong resemblance in features and appearance.

On the whole it was to be quite a day. People were coming from miles around to join in the fun. Arthur Aitkins and two other men went to the lake to build a huge bonfire on the highest point of the mountain. It was to be lighted at dusk on Coronation Day in the hope it would be visible in the village far across the country side. He was to put a wooden gasoline barrel on the top to add to the flames.

Well! After all these preparations, plans and excitement the King developed appendicitis and the Coronation had to be postponed. What an awful let down!

As Arthur Aitkins and the other men had gone to the mountain several days ahead there was no way of letting them know about the postponement. The plan was that Arthur was to send up a rocket a certain time and if it was seen in town Dad would send one up too.

Sure enough, we all saw the rocket sail up and explode high above the mountain. Everyone cheered madly. Then Dad sent off his rocket. Soon we saw the fire burning brightly. It really showed up well. We all felt we had some thrill even if there was no parade.

*Turtle Mountain Corduroy, Alice Selina Hurt, pt.2,
ch.9, p. 1*

Even without the official Coronation of Edward, another Era had come to an end and the occasion was marked on the Shining Mountain. That occasion was marked vividly in Ailsa Hurt's memory. The "real" Coronation held later in August, 1902 as she recalled, was by contrast a drab, dismal affair unmarked by the people of Turtle Mountain. What Hurt saw and sensed in June of 1902 can only be a shadow of the public ceremony which must have been conducted around the mountain by Native people in ancient times for millennia.

Chapter Two: End of the Old Ways

Collapse and Migration

Around 1500 AD, a series of agricultural trading nations, including city-states, spread throughout the Mississippi river system, extending into the Missouri and the Red Rivers. In popular lore these people are called the “Mound Builders.” For both burial and for public ceremony, mounds of earth were erected by this society in their villages and sacred places scattered along this river system. Pottery artifacts in the Moncur collection attest to the trade contact with the core of this society.

Local sites of mound builders are attested in the archaeological survey of Turtle Mountain, in several digs, and in the Homestead records. Correspondence from the Surveyor-General of Canada found in the Homestead files explains the discrepancies of one chain (66 feet) to three chains in the property lines southeast of Boissevain. This variance in the property lines was made to adjust the sections equitably around several mounds. Most mounds in southwestern Manitoba have been obliterated by industrial or agricultural activity.

Our closest early contact with the Mississippi cultures was with what archaeologists have termed the Oneota culture. The Oneota were a transition between the wilds of plains and forests and the more settled interior of the Mound Builder civilization. They lived in settled river valley towns, and traded in both directions, exchanging furs, hides and meats for manufactured products from the interior of the Mississippi basin. They may be the direct ancestors of the Sioux.

From 1539 to 1542 the Spanish De Soto expedition rampaged through the waterways and highways of this civilization. Capitols were looted, ruling elites executed, political rivalries diced with. Populations who’d never seen a White person were infected with new diseases. Like the Aztecs and Incas who’d already fallen before the Conquistadores, the Mississippi civilization collapsed.

“Disease and disorder overtook the surviving Mississippian towns. As American Indian population plummeted, most Mississippian societies imploded. The complex political and social ties that had defined the Mississippian lifeway unravelled as epidemics diminished population numbers. People no longer constructed public works such as mounds and palisades. They no longer supported their royalty. They no longer hosted elaborate mortu-

ary rituals for their ancestors”

Native Americans: An Illustrated History, p. 103.

Mound building as a custom among the Upper Missouri and Mississippi communities came to an end.

There is also more than a hint of internal collapse preceding the Spanish incursion in this story. Invasions and collapse on this scale can occur only when a society has already lost internal cohesion.

Internal clues within the Medicine Wheel mythos of the Plains suggests that this religion emerged in reaction to a combination of social and environmental threats. The new Medicine Wheel which emerged out of the collapse of the more conservative Mississippi culture maintained many of the same symbols, like a new testament emerging from an old. It differed in being more egalitarian, and perhaps in placing a greater emphasis on self knowledge and good deeds than its predecessor. This is a pattern of religious evolution reflected in many places around the world and we shouldn’t be surprised to find the same human forces operating here.

The archaeological team of Michael Gear and Kathleen O’Neal Gear wrote a popular series of books on ancient America. The Gear’s book *People of the River* uses historical fiction to present a plausible account of the last days of Cahokia. The city was located at the conjunction of the Missouri and Illinois with the Mississippi. (Today the site of St. Louis, Missouri.) Cahokia would have served as the nearest great metropolitan centre to the Sourisford complex. If Turtle Mountain was the northern rural area of this society, Cahokia was the big city. As late as 1752 a French census (quoted in the *Historical Atlas of Canada*) gave the Indian population of Cahokia at about 2,000 people. Interestingly, Cahokia had by 1752 also attracted approximately 1,000 French settlers with about 500 slaves. The city was eclipsed during this period by new settlements throughout the same valley but it was still there in 1763 when Thomas Hutchins of the 60th (Royal Americans) made his survey.

The Medicine Wheel has a very strong environmental message, which suggests that it is in reaction to a time in which that was not understood or was insufficiently observed. We do know, that coincidental to the destruction left by the De Soto expedition the following two decades were marked by droughts. The Gears were convinced that the original pre-Contact Cahokia dissolved in civil war before being reconstructed by survivors and newcomers.

The rise of Mississippian culture corresponds to what we call the Neo-Atlantic climatic episode. Beginning about A. D. 900, the earth experienced a global warming, which brought moist, tropical air into North America. This extended the length of the growing season and increased the summer rainfall, allowing the substantial crop yields and fostering a massive increase in population.

Then, between A. D. 1100 and 1200, the climate changed again.

The Pacific climatic episode, which lasted until about A. D. 1550, brought strong, dry winds and drought. Rainfall declined by as much as fifty percent. Crop yields plummeted. To sustain their population, Mississippians expanded their trade routes and cleared more land for crops. Deforestation increased erosion, which caused catastrophic flooding when the rains did come. Around A. D. 1150, the people were recycling wood. Red cedar had become so scarce that they were unable to refurbish their sacred structures. Flooding resulted in stunted corn growth, with ensuing malnutrition. Burials from the period are rife with pathologies, including decreased stature, tooth loss, and arthritis. Famine likely ravaged the population centers.

By A. D. 1200, all of the major towns and many of the small, surrounding villages had been palisaded, surrounded with walls twelve to fifteen feet high, and mounted with shooting platforms on all sides. War followed. In one Illinois cemetery, dating to around A. D. 1300, thirty percent of all adult deaths were due to trauma and mutilation resulting from warfare.

Outlying villages began to disperse, and this led to changes in the economic system, as well as in the varieties of plants cultivated. The complex Mississippian way of life, with its emphasis on intensive agriculture, was replaced by a simpler tribal structure. Once again native American peoples mixed hunting with horticulture. Large temple towns vanished and society devolved.

People of the River, M. & K. Gear, pp. 16-17

The description by the Gears of the sequence of events and the ecological collapse of Cahokia is vivid. However, there is no proof that the successor culture

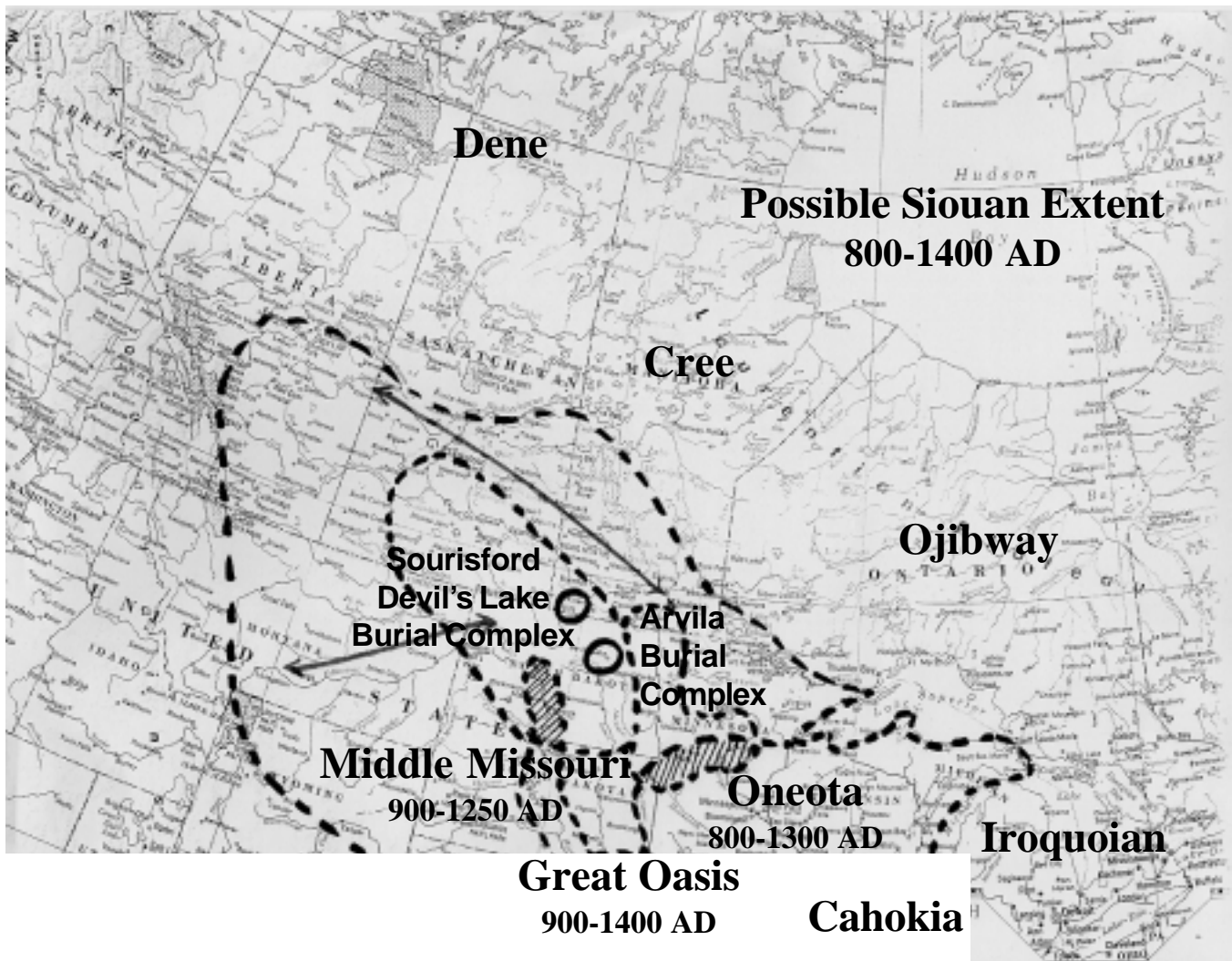
was “a simpler tribal structure” or that society “devolved.” It could just as very well be that common sense prevailed and people realized that building gigantic mud mounds to commemorate the dead was a bad idea. We could credit people of long ago with sufficient intelligence and insight that not every social change was bad. The way of Cahokia had demonstrably failed — what followed was a program of improvement for the people who carried it out. Environmental determinism still has support among archaeologists but among historians it has pretty much lost credibility. That is, the disintegration of Cahokia was primarily social not environmental. The environmental degradation was itself a symptom, not a cause, of the social decline. Consequently, the Medicine Wheel civilization that developed in place of the Cahokia-Mississippi civilization emphasized the values and lessons that its founders identified as critical to avoiding a similar fate as that of Cahokia. In that light, the Medicine Wheel civilization is more sophisticated than that which it replaced.

The survivors of the Mississippi breakdown had to deal with reduced population, environmental stress, alien invasion and collapse of ritual centres. Peripheral ritual and trade centres began to assume more importance and slowly the quality of life began to improve.

“As they assessed the new, more difficult and threatening conditions, peoples of the northern Plains began to adopt the round earth lodges characteristic of the central and southern Plains. The inspirations for these round lodges came by way of the Caddoans farther south. As ancestors of the Caddoan people who became Pawnee and Arikara moved north (trading people, they were moving closer to their markets,) their building style was copied by Siouans already living along the upper Missouri River. Thus by the mid - 1600’s, the northern rectangular houses built slightly into the ground were being replaced by tightly clustered, palisaded communities of domed, buried earth lodges.”

Native Americans: An Illustrated History, p. 195

At some time prior to this collapse there had developed a temporary balance of three commercial centres: a Hidatsa centre on the upper Missouri; a Mandan centre on the Red River; and the Arikara centre on the lower Missouri. The last of these served as a mediator with the Caddoan heartland to the south. When the collapse of the Caddoan heartland occurred, these three trading centres moved closer together, finally coalescing



Possible maximum extent of the Siouan culture prior to its separation from the Cahokia-Mississippi civilization. Map created by the author based on comparison of archaeological reports, historical record and oral history. The names of surrounding societies are only general locations. The "Middle Missouri" and "Oneota" areas show distribution of archaeological evidence of Siouan settlements. Historical patterns for nomadic routes suggest a linkage between the settlement areas and the burial areas. Shaded area shows overlap of settlement and burial grounds. Arrows show the axis of stress which resulted in schism and language differentiation between Crow and Hidatsa on the west; and the Assiniboine and Yankton on the north. It is the author's theory that the Siouan culture was originally affiliated with the Mississippi Civilization, providing the role of marchmen against Algonquin societies to the north. The Siouan society was alienated from the Mississippi civilization during or after the collapse of Cahokia around 1200 - 1300 AD. In the next few centuries, the Siouan culture divided again separating the Crow and Assiniboine from the main body. Unable to maintain a military cohesion, the main body of the Siouan society suffered encroachment from the great Algonquin federations on its northern and eastern frontiers.

on the upper Missouri. Three widely separated peoples, only two of them culturally related, would eventually coalesce into the present-day Three Affiliated Tribes.

"As Caddoan communities living along the lower Mississippi had moved north to become the Arikara, they provided a trading link through their Pawnee and Wichita relations

to the Caddo proper, who had traded with the Pueblos and other Mississippians long before the Spanish — and Spanish horses — appeared in New Mexico."

Native Americans: An Illustrated History, p. 196

Jonathan Carver heard an echo of this history in the oral tradition related to him concerning Turtle Moun-



Artist conception of Cahokia at its peak in the year 1000 A.D. from Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

tain in the guise of the “Shining Mountain.” The information was provided by a Cree or Assiniboine grand chief Carver met at Lake of the Woods in 1768. Carver’s narrative typically mixed up prescient geography with confused directions, and got recent history confused with creation stories. He also could not resist injecting his own pointed humour. He betrayed a secret sympathy for the Native people he described. In this short passage Carver linked a number of themes of the Council Stones story: the far ranging trade; collapse, migration and reassimilation of cultures; cultural radiation from Mexico; folklore clues to history and ritual about Turtle Mountain.

Three important historical details emerge in these passages. Firstly, the provider of the information is part of the Cree-Assiniboine alliance and they are attesting that there existed a war between the Algonquin and Caddoan societies before the Sioux were ever considered as independent belligerents in their own right. Secondly, it confirms that there is a link between the Sioux from the Winnebago in the east to the Hidatsa in the west, with the cultures of the central Mississippi who in turn were cultural imitators of Mexico. Thirdly, it confirms that from the 1570’s to Carver’s day in the 1760’s Turtle Mountain was viewed as a refuge.

Unfortunately for Carver, he confused the Rockies with the Missouri Couteau in his search for the elu-

sive Northwest Passage.

They likewise informed me, that some of the northern branches of the Messorie and the southern branches of the St. Pierre have a communication with each other, except for a mile; over which they carry their canoes. And by what I could learn from them, this is the road they take when their war parties make their excursions upon the Pawnees and Pawnawnees, nations inhabiting some branches of the Messorie River. In the country belonging to these people it is said, that Mandrakes are frequently found, a species of root resembling human beings of both sexes; and that these are more perfect than such as are discovered about the Nile in Nether-Ethiopia.

A little to the north-west of the heads of the Messorie and St. Pierre, the Indians further told me, that there was a nation rather smaller and whiter than the neighboring tribes, who cultivate the ground, and (as far as I could gather from their expressions) in some measure, the arts. To this account they added that some of the nations who inhabit those parts

that lie to the west of the Shining Mountains, have gold so plenty among them that they make their most common utensils of it. These mountains (which I shall describe more particularly hereafter) divide the waters that fall into the South Sea from those that run into the Atlantic.

The people dwelling near them are supposed to be some of the different tribes that were tributary to the Mexican kings, and who fled from their native country, to seek an asylum in these parts, about the time of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, more than two centuries ago.

As some confirmation of this supposition, it is remarkable, that they have chosen the most interior parts for their retreat, being still prepossessed with a notion that the sea-coasts are still infested ever since with monsters vomiting fire, and hurling about thunder and lightning; from whose bowels issue men, who, with unseen instruments, or by the power of magic, killed the harmless Indians at an astonishing distance. From such as these, their forefathers (according to a tradition among them that still remains unimpaired) fled to the retired abodes they now inhabit. For as they found that the floating monsters, which had thus terrified them could not approach the land, and that those who had defended from their sides did not care to make excursions to any considerable distance from them, they formed a resolution to betake themselves to some country, that lay far from the sea-coasts, where only they could be secure from such diabolical enemies. They accordingly set out with their families, and after a long peregrination, settled themselves near these mountains, where they concluded they had found a place of perfect security.

The Winnebagoes, dwelling on the Fox River (whom I have already treated of) are likewise supposed to be some strolling band from the Mexican countries. But they are able to give only an imperfect account of their original residence. They say they formerly came a great way from the westward, and were driven by wars to take refuge among the Nadowessies [probably meaning Iroquoian in this context]; but as they are entirely ignorant of the arts, or of the value of gold, it is rather to be supposed, that they were driven from their ancient set-

tlements by the above-mentioned emigrants, as they passed on towards their present habitation.

These suppositions, however, may want confirmation; for the smaller tribes of Indians are subject to such various alterations in their places of abode; from the wars they are continually engaged in, that it is almost impossible to ascertain, after half a century, the original situation of any of them.

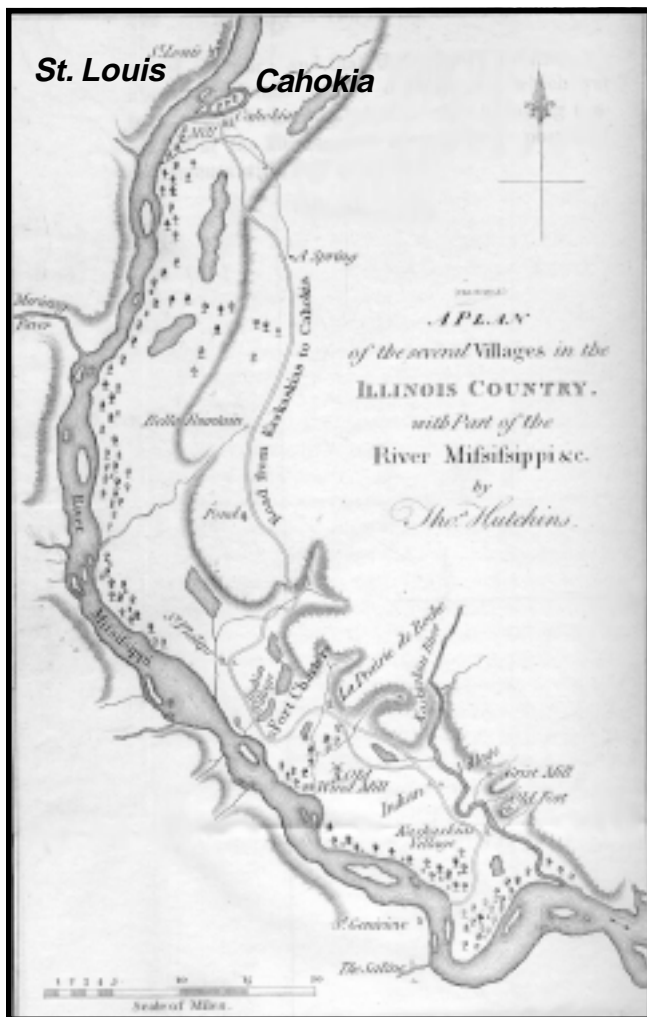
Carver's Travels, CIHM facsimile edition, pp. 59-61.

Reorientation

A new smaller and tighter version of the old extended Mississippi network began to take shape on the Missouri. The country cousins of the Oneota provided the bulk of the population, the hunters, and ultimately the military. The descendants of Caddoan merchant villages settled among their Mandan trade partners to create a new mercantile and agricultural hub. In addition to bringing trade, the Caddoans also brought the horse. This far-from-smooth process over the course of two centuries produced a new Plains Sioux culture and a new Medicine Wheel religion. Initially at least, the villages would have some difficulty convincing their nomad neighbours that settlements were more valuable as trade centres than as objects for plunder. Ironically, the force which would wield these disparate elements into one civilization was the invasion of Whites.

While these cataclysms were taking place south of Turtle Mountain; north of Turtle Mountain the White-Native interaction played out on a very different course. The Algonquin civilization appears to have benefited, at least in the first few centuries, by contact with Europeans. The introduction of White colonists into the lower Great Lakes gave the Algonquin a White buffer state on their southern border. However this displaced some Algonquin groups westward. Unlike the southerners, the Algonquin arrived with a social structure largely intact, and with the arms and equipment which European civilization could provide. The Algonquin used their status as middlemen to recolonize a great deal of the Plains from which they'd apparently been driven (or retired) a few centuries before.

This difference in the character of the interaction meant the Algonquin such as Ottawa, Ojibway, Cree and Saulteaux were better armed and better organized than the neighbouring Siouan societies. The Algonquin nations cooperated, shared resources and mounted joint expeditions. Surprisingly, they were even joined by one defecting Siouan group — the Assiniboine.



Map of the St. Louis-Cahokia section of the Mississippi Valley. Map taken from the 1885 edition of Francis Parkman's **Conspiracy of Pontiac**. This map in turn is a copy of Thomas Hutchins' 1764 Survey of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys.

The collapse of Cahokian society sent shockwaves along the Mississippi-Missouri river systems. The repeated destruction of the Mississippi Forks core communities broke the Dakota nations out of the southern cultural orbit by the 1500's forcing them to strike out on their own in developing their own culture. Strategically placed, Cahokia and its environs continued to play an important commercial role. No longer dominant, it became the prize for the various contestants.

In the campaigns of the American Revolutionary War it became the battleground between the American forces of Colonel George Rogers Clark, and the British of Colonel Henry Hamilton. In the late 1700's the loss of this juncture by the British to the Americans ended the Ohio Valley campaign and meant that the Dakota had to look northward.

Competition for the riches of the fur trade contributed to a series of events which culminated in the destruction of Huronia by the Iroquois Confederacy in 1650. The Hurons, who had played a dominant middleman role in the fur trade of New France, were dispersed to the west, possibly as far as the Mississippi, where they were visited by Radisson in 1658. In order to reestablish their trade links, the French were forced to explore and travel beyond Michilimackinac into the regions surrounding Lake Superior. It was in the latter half of the seventeenth century that the French fur traders, notably Radisson and Grosseilliers, came into direct contact with the Cree (Kristineaux) who were primary producers of beaver and other boreal forest furs. By 1685, the French governor, Jacques Rene de Brisaye, Marquis de Denonville, recognized the importance of a new tribe, the Assiniboine, as primary suppliers of furs to other Indian middlemen, and urged that steps be taken to encourage them to trade with the French on Lake Nipigon rather than journey to Hudson Bay to trade with the English. At this time, the Cree were living west of Lake Superior in the vicinity of Rainy Lake and northward into the James Bay region. The Assiniboine were found living about Lake-of-the-Woods, eastward to Pigeon river along the present Ontario/Minnesota border, and northward through the fringe of the boreal forest to the parklands of the Carrot River region of Saskatchewan. The Ojibwa (Chippewa, Ottawa, Saulteaux) were found to the south and east of the Cree and Assiniboine territories.

Seventy-five years later, following the westward expansion of French fur traders, and the construction of trading posts in the interior, there was a noticeable shift to the west and south by the principal Native groups involved in the fur trade. This resulted in part from a depletion of fur bearing animals in the eastern regions, as grouped adjacent to the trading posts intensified trapping activities to satisfy their desire for European trade goods, and in part from a desire on the part of the Indian Middlemen to maintain their controlling position in the flow of furs from the receding hinterlands to European markets.

Human Ecology of Western Manitoba, Bev Nicholson, pp. 89-90.

Santee Dakota were pushed westward and northward out of the Ohio Valley. Algonquin people moved westward and southward out of what is today Northern Ontario. These two great movements of people met in the middle at Turtle Mountain.

Middle Ground

Turtle Mountain's strategic importance must have increased in an environment of competition by different groups, none of which could retain sole ownership of the geographic feature. The mountain stood guarding the land and river roads between the Siouan village societies of the Upper Mississippi in the southwest, and the Algonquin hunter-gatherer societies of the northern forests. As a geographical feature, resembling a turtle, its inclusion in the cosmic geography of the people surrounding the region could hardly have been avoided.

By 1800 A.D. the different groups utilizing Turtle Mountain included several Siouan tribes and several Algonquin tribes. The Michif culture was born here and the Metis culture soon followed (and to some extent absorbed its Michif predecessor.) White fur traders were doing business in the area, but they came as foreigners, welcomed for the sake of commerce. The area between Turtle Mountain and the South Bend of the Souris was one of the most heavily trafficked points of interaction between the Siouan and Algonquin civilizations, and so it became for a time a perpetual battleground as well.

Turtle Mountain began to emerge first as a place where the Algonquin and their allies could muster, and then later as a good point to mediate between the competing societies.

As the European pressure mounted, the competition between Native societies also escalated. Smallpox, measles and tuberculosis arrived on the Plains in force in the 1800's. Disease reduced bands to a fraction of their pre-plague size and played havoc with the balance of power.

At the beginning of his climactic volume, Francis Parkman says, "The most momentous and far-reaching question ever brought to issue on this continent was: Shall France remain here or shall she not?" No, not quite. The most momentous and far-reaching question ever brought to issue on this continent was, "whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." Yet there was another question that linked these two together, a question which the con-

inent itself asked — and was to answer. It was: Are there geographical units here to which political units must correspond?

The Course of Empire, Bernard De Voto, pp. 227-228

Before there was a 49th parallel, a kind a no-man's land (if not an outright border) had developed on the prairies. The land is more-or-less open prairie between Lake of the Woods and the Rockies. But, because of the combination of different watersheds, and different latitudes affecting climate, there developed distinctly different ecological and economic zones north and south with the approximate border occurring along the 49th. The real anchor points of this imaginary "medicine line" were the watersheds. The Algonquin nations and their Assiniboine allies controlled the Hudson's Bay watershed to the north. The predominantly Siouan societies controlled the Mississippi and Missouri watersheds to the south.

From their relatively restricted homeland, circa 1620, the Ojibwa rapidly expanded their sphere of influence westward and northward to include almost the entire study area [Westman and Parkland regions of Manitoba,] with the exception of the area to the west of Turtle Mountain. During the greater part of this expansion, much of the area was shared with Cree and Assiniboine people with whom they were allied against the Sioux.

By 1760, the Ojibwa had expanded westward into the northcentral Minnesota and Lake-of-the-Woods areas where wild rice became available as a fall and winter staple. In the next fifty years, most of the study area east of the Manitoba Escarpment was occupied by the Ojibwa.

Human Ecology of Western Manitoba, Bev Nicholson, pp. 125-126

According to the European powers signatory to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the area south of the 49th parallel between the Rockies and the Mississippi (excepting the Red River colony) was claimed by France. Why did the Treaty of Utrecht take the border through the Great Lakes to Lake of the Woods, and then by extension in a line westward from there? The stake which Britain and France had in settling this border was their respective trade areas. Because the British had historically entered the interior fur trade via Hudson's Bay, they had *de facto* become business partners and allies of the Cree and Ojibway. It was in their interest to maintain a border which supported the economic activity of their

the field, and were. As De Voto observed, every time there was a border incident, the number of English gentlemen hunting buffalo on the American plains would suddenly increase.

Carver travelled to what is today North Dakota during the years 1766 through 1768 on the orders of his superior officer, Major Robert Rogers, Governor of Fort Michilimackinac. During war time, both before and after this, Rogers would serve as chief scout for the general officer commanding in North America. This particular mission, however, was not officially authorized by anyone above Major Rogers. Carver suffered the double embarrassment that in his lifetime he could never owe up publicly to having been a serving officer on duty, and secondly that the Army denied the whole thing, seized his papers and refused to pay him. The legend is that to finance his declining years he wrote the book from memory.

Carver retained a spy's habits and obscures who is the observer and actor. Historical critics of the book agree that at least two other officers: Captain Tute and Captain Goddard are condensed into the one character of gentlemen-adventurer Carver, the narrator of the story. (The three men, all captains, occasionally led their parties on separate explorations from each other and sometimes together. Tute was senior, then Goddard and third-in-command was Carver.) Many social, geographic and economic observations are plagiarized from earlier explorers, including French and English fur traders. That's less surprising when one realizes Carver was a military spy used to writing reports. He wanted accurate detailed information about what he observed, but he also wanted to obscure who was doing the observing and why.

Therefore when Carver wrote that the various parties were less than honest with each other about the geography and politics of North America, we should believe him.

I knew that many obstructions would arise to my scheme [a Prairie expedition] from the want of good Maps and Charts; for the French, whilst they retained their power in North America, had taken every artful method to keep all other nations, particularly the English, in ignorance of the concerns of the interior parts of it: and to accomplish this design with the greatest certainty, they had published inaccurate maps and false accounts; calling the different nations of the Indians by nicknames they had given them, and not by those really appertaining to them. Whether the in-

attention of the French in doing this, was to prevent these nations from being discovered and traded with, or to conceal their discourse, when they talked to each other of the Indian concerns, in their presence, I will not determine; but whatsoever was the cause which it arose, it tended to mislead.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. ii-iii

It's possible that Thompson, Pond, Carver, the British, French, Spanish and US commissioners actually knew (more or less) what they were arguing about, and why. According to De Voto, Thomas Jefferson (then Secretary of State) used the word "Mississippi" inclusively in 1783 when he mentioned a loop that came north of the 49th, while as president in 1817 he used "Missouri" as a distinct geography from that of the "Mississippi." The fact that Jefferson used the word "Missouri" in 1817 and not in 1783 does not mean he failed to understand the concept of a watershed centred on the Mississippi.

So [in 1783] they decided it: "Thence through the said lake to the most northwestern point thereof, and from thence on a due west course to the river Mississippi." Since the source of the Mississippi is well to the south of Lake of the Woods, the northwest corner of the United States was to be an intersection that did not exist.

The Course of Empire, Bernard De Voto, p. 274

De Voto is in error in projecting present day definitions backwards. The Missouri is a feeder branch to the Mississippi. It has a different name and identity as a river because White people have written it so. So far as the water, and therefore the watershed, ecosystem, and First Nations dependent upon it were concerned, the Mississippi was one big river system which included among its many tributaries the Missouri. The European commissioners may not have known the geography, but they knew empirically that there was a continental divide between the watersheds of Hudson's Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. They knew from the experience of Native people and European fur traders that this dividing line occurred at approximately the 49th parallel. They knew of instances such as the southern portion of the Red River Colony which extended across the boundary. They knew there would be concessions. But because it was an "intersection that didn't exist" so far as survey lines were concerned, it would perennially reassert itself as a problem.

De Voto says that this decision would cut off half

of the fur trade, but it doesn't do that either. This was a natural barrier and the fur trade hardly extended south of it all. The trade which it cut off was buffalo, used as an ingredient in the manufacture of pemmican which in turn made the extended canoe brigades on the South Saskatchewan and Assiniboine Rivers possible. Pemmican and the Sioux are what the British sacrificed, and by doing so retained the lion's share of the fur trade.

According to the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, less than 10% of the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trade was generated south of the 49th parallel. France's fur trade was axed but fur exports through Montreal to Europe tripled after the British Conquest of Quebec. Very few of these furs came from south of the 49th parallel.

The economy north of the 49th was based on furs and conservation, while the economy which developed south of the 49th was based on buffalo and exploitation. Denig testified in his *Five Indian Nations of the Upper Missouri* that it was the policy of the American Fur Company to encourage trapping to extinction — somewhat analogous to the corporate raider of today who maximizes shareholder profits while destroying the business itself.

"It was now [1795] known certainly that the line fixed in 1783, from the northwest corner of Lake of the Woods west to the Mississippi, was an aberration. Montreal exhausted its political resources to procure a rectification that would make Grand Portage and the canoe route west entirely Canadian, and the British commissioners offered various lines that would join Lake Superior with the Mississippi. Hamilton was willing to sacrifice the canoe route and a portion of Minnesota. Jefferson was not; he held out, Washington supported him, and Jay got the evacuation [of the southern Great Lake ports and the Ohio Valley] anyway. But the treaty left a large loophole for the future to rush through. It left the boundary west of Lake of the Woods indeterminate, to be determined by a future commission and survey.

The Course of Empire, Bernard De Voto, p. 343

Carver was one of many British officers employed in rushing through this loophole between the end of the French-Indian Wars in 1763 and the end of the 18th Century. As an ex-Army man turned journalist, he would argue before the public that British colonial expansion should flow into the Prairies and Great Plains.

...a settlement on that extremity of America would answer many good purposes, and repay every expence the establishment of it might occasion. For it would not only disclose new sources of trade, and promote many useful discoveries but would open a passage for conveying intelligence to China, and the English settlements in the East Indies, with greater expedition than a tedious voyage by the Cape of Good Hope, or the Straits of Magellan would allow of.

How far the advantages arising from such an enterprize may extend can only be ascertained by the favourable concurrence of future events. But that the completion of the scheme, I have had the honour of first planning and attempting, will sometime or other be effected, I make no doubt. From the unhappy divisions that at present [American Revolution] subsist between Great Britain and America, it will probably be some years before the attempt is repeated; but whenever it is, and the execution of it carried out with propriety, those who are so fortunate as to succeed, will reap, exclusive of the national advantages that must ensue, Emoluments beyond their most sanguine expectations.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. vi-vii

That Carver said he was approached by both Dakota and Ojibway elders on the idea of interposing a ceasefire line of British troops and colonists is evidence of a frontier, if not of a border, between the Algonquin-led allies and the Sioux.

That the 49th Parallel was based on an *idea* and not on an astronomically based scientific survey was uncovered by Frederick Merk. When in the second quarter of the 19th Century the British and Americans tried to resolve the continental boundary question, their own research at the time uncovered that there was no written agreement on the 49th, only an oral tradition.

The question as to the negotiation is really two: Why was the 49 line named in the instruction, and why was it proposed so promptly in the negotiation? As to the instruction, it was based on an American conviction that a line at 49 already existed as a boundary separating British North America west of the Lake of the Woods from the possessions of the United States. The line was believed to have been drawn under the Terms of Utrecht of 1713,

separating British and French possessions west of the Lake of the Woods. The reality of such a line was more than a tradition. It was attested to by maps European and American, and was credited by such American statesmen as Adams, Gallatin, Rush, Monroe, Madison, and Thomas Hart Benton. Some American statesmen and cartographers, including Benton, believed it had been extended even to the Pacific. That no such line had ever been established was shown, in the closing statements of the Oregon controversy, to have been the case. Yet in 1807 Monroe relied on it in the Northwest boundary negotiation in proposing to the British the line of 49, and he had done so again in instructing the American peace commissioners at Ghent.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 41

Francois Larocque, a Nor'wester fur trader, described the extreme claims which could be pushed in the aftermath of failure to arrive at a firm international boundary. David Thompson surveyed the 49th Parallel in 1797 and 1798 believing that this was going to become the international boundary if it were not already. Larocque found himself the audience for a number of American claims made by Captains Lewis and Clark. In the arguments of the American mapmakers of the day the Missouri watershed extended as far north as the North Saskatchewan River!

[January 30, 1805] *Having nothing to do at the Lodge, I Remain'd here a Couple of days, being presed so by the Captains. They took observations for the Longitude & Latitude of the place while, I was with them, & often since their arrival here. They differ much from Mr. Thompson, in the Longitude of this place, & say that Mr. Thompson has placed these villages, & this part of the River, a great deal too westerly, which they think is the Case, with all his observations for the Longitude; they observed some time ago an Eclipse of the moon which they say is an Infallible Rule for finding the Exact Longitude of a place. But they do not differ from him in the Latitude.*

They Include in their territory as far North as River qui'Appelle, for as it was Impossible for a Line, drawn west, from the west End of Lake des Bois to strike the Missisipi, they make it Run, till it strikes its tributary waters that is

the northern Branches of the Missouri, & from thence to the Pacific, which Could not have been done while Louisiana belonged to the French or Spanish, as those powers would not have suffered England to give a Country which did not belong to it & of Course the Line drawn west, would have stopp'd, when it struck, the Spanish or French territory. Cap't. Lewis fix'd my Compass, very well, in doing of which he Employed the whole day, Cleaning it & c.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood & Thiessen, pp. 151-152

The Qu'Appelle is *not* a tributary of the Mississippi, nor is the Assiniboine River. It is an interesting coincidence that the American claim to the Northern Plains was the same as the traditional Siouan claim — that their area of influence and resource use extended as far north as the Northern Saskatchewan. It certainly wasn't the watershed that formed the basis of the American claim. Every fur trader knew that the Saskatchewan and Assiniboine systems emptied into the Arctic Ocean.

On March 22, 1814, President Monroe instructed his ambassadors Gallatin and Rush to push acceptance of the 49th Parallel to the Pacific as the international boundary.

On no pretext can the British Government set up a claim to territory south of the northern boundary of the United States. It is not belived that they have any claim wahtever to territory on the Pacific ocean. You will, however, be careful, should a definition of boundary be attempted, not to countenance, in any manner, or in any quarter, a pretension in the British Government to territory south of that line.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 127

Until 1818 there was no written document anywhere that set down the 49th parallel as a border. As Merk indicated it was based on nothing more than *faith* so far as the Americans and British politicians were concerned. He would have been more correct to have said that the *reality* was attested by movements of populations, armies, watersheds and ecosystems.

Two natural borders that run between Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains are the height-of-land and the line of sacred mountains. Both have been used by Native and European states.

The height-of-land, as we've commented, divides

the Mississippi-Missouri watersheds from the Nelson. Its biggest dip south of the present border was the southern half of Selkirk's Colony which was ceded to the United States in 1818. A slight arc north of the present border allowed for the Milk River tributary of the Missouri to lie south of the border. It was a convenient observation point, a division between ecosystems, a barrier to transportation and a natural defensive line. It's no surprise therefore that it frequently provided the frontier framework between societies from the Neolithic down to the present.

The sacred site border runs, more-or-less, from the stone effigies of the Whiteshell through Calf Mountain, Turtle Mountain, Sourisford, Pierce Rock, Pyramid Rock, Wood Mountain, Cypress Hills, Three Sisters, Sweetgrass Mountain to Chief Mountain at the edge of the Rockies. Consisting of isolated high points and the occasional lake, this natural boundary also divided ecosystems north and south. It had the advantage of allowing for powerful medicine between the sites along the border, and had a long recognized tradition of serving as middle grounds, albeit discontinuous ones. Frank Turner in *Across the Medicine Line* referred to these as "the stone crested border highlands."

It is this second line that Native people in the 1700's convinced European fur traders was the natural border between their resource harvesting operations, and therefore by extension, between the empires of Britain and France.

Shining Mountain

The effort to pass on accurate geographic information from Natives to the European public was a process distorted by human error and greed. Some people had reason to lie or mislead for a season or two. Sometimes translators just couldn't get the meaning quite right, or innocent copyist errors moved a mountain several hundred miles.

The Saulteaux storyteller Earth Elder recounted two versions of the origin of the term Shining Mountains, one for winter and one for summer. Turtle Mountain in the 17th to 19th Centuries was bare topped from frequent fires, with wood encroaching along the river valleys, springs, peninsulas and islands of its several lakes. In 2001 the hilltops of Turtle Mountain are mostly forest cover and present a markedly different appearance. To see what La Verendrye or Earth Elder saw we have to imagine a different landscape. In the following extract, Earth Elder told a story of a Saulteaux princess who secretly loved a orphaned pauper in her own village. The adventure takes the heroine in search of her missing love, like any worthwhile epic, to a great mysterious place --

probably Turtle Mountain. (The Saulteaux were at the time unfamiliar with the Rockies and had not penetrated in numbers as far west as Wood Mountain. Turtle Mountain, in the setting of the story, would have been at the furthest end of the Saulteaux-known world.)

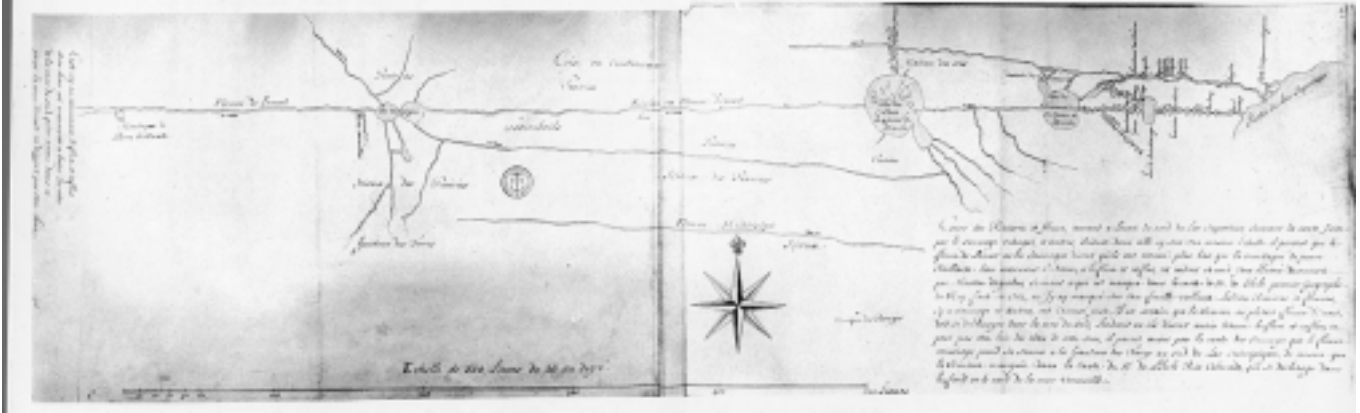
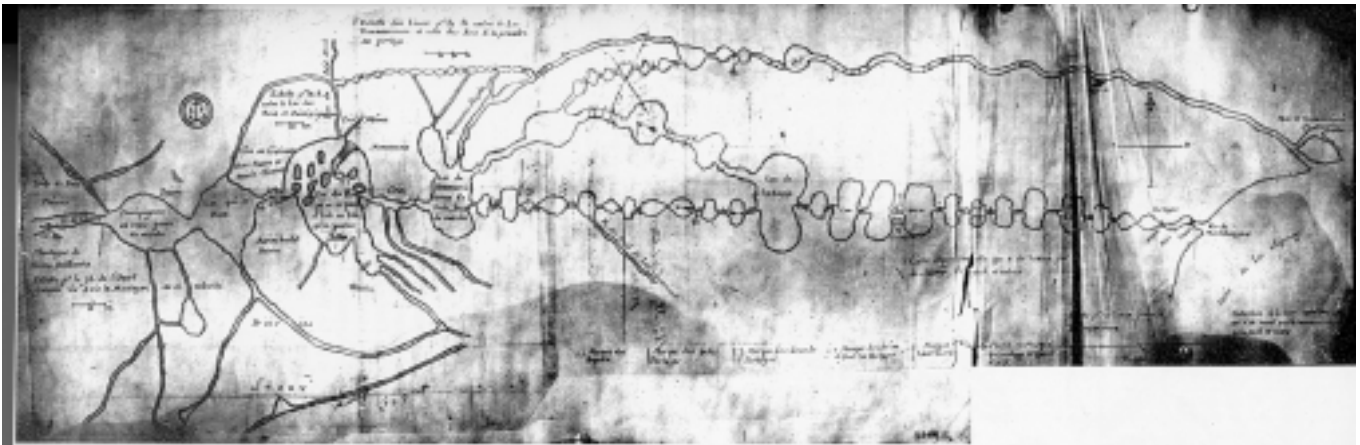
Soon the girl could no longer hear the victory dance as she ran towards her destination. She ran day and night, stopping only to eat and change her moccasins, as they wore out. She ran many days and nights until, finally, one day she sighted the tops of the Snow Mountains shining in the distance. The next morning she began to look for the landmarks that had been described to her. As she neared the mountains she recognized the landmarks and made for them. There at the base of the mountain was the forest. Making her way into the forest she came upon a large wigwam. All was quiet. She did not know what to expect.

Earth Elder Stories, Alexander Wolfe, p. 16.

Her intended as it turns out is inside the wigwam, where he was abandoned by other warriors as too wounded to follow. They had left some food and water, but unable to hunt he was starving when found by the princess. The beneficial side effect of the ordeal is the realization of a vision, without which he cannot take his place in society and publicly win the princess. Interestingly, her role is far from the usual view of the traditional retiring Native female. The hero seems to have to be occasionally put back on track, even to the point of being rescued, by the heroine.

In another story, Earth Elder described approaching Shining Mountain in summer time. Here he attributes the shining effect to the heat shimmer of turbulent air above the forest as well as the height of the peaks. In an environment of bald prairie, the semi-wooded hills must have presented a brilliant contrast.

Boissevain area resident Lois Todd recounted to the author a version of the Shining Mountain story as related to her by the late Hilliard Jones. Jones was a Scots farmer from Ontario and a Presbyterian Elder in Ninga; an older contemporary of Bill Moncur. Jones recalled hearing a story of seeing the hill tops shine, but only at the right time of year and day. He had found a good position to the east of Turtle Mountain from which he felt he could view several features of the surrounding terrain. The opportunity came when he was called away to locate a Homesteader party coming west from Emerson. On the long return trip he had plenty of opportunity to watch for the legendary effect on heights of ground



The two maps above show how French cartographers confused the location of Turtle Mountain. The top map was drawn by senior Cree traders at Lake of the Woods. The text was added by La Verendrye. The map is really a schematic of the lakes, portages and rivers between Lake Superior (at extreme right) and Turtle Mountain and the Mandan Trail (at extreme left.) Turtle Mountain is labelled *Le Montaigne de Pierres Brilliante* — The Mountain of the Shining Stones.

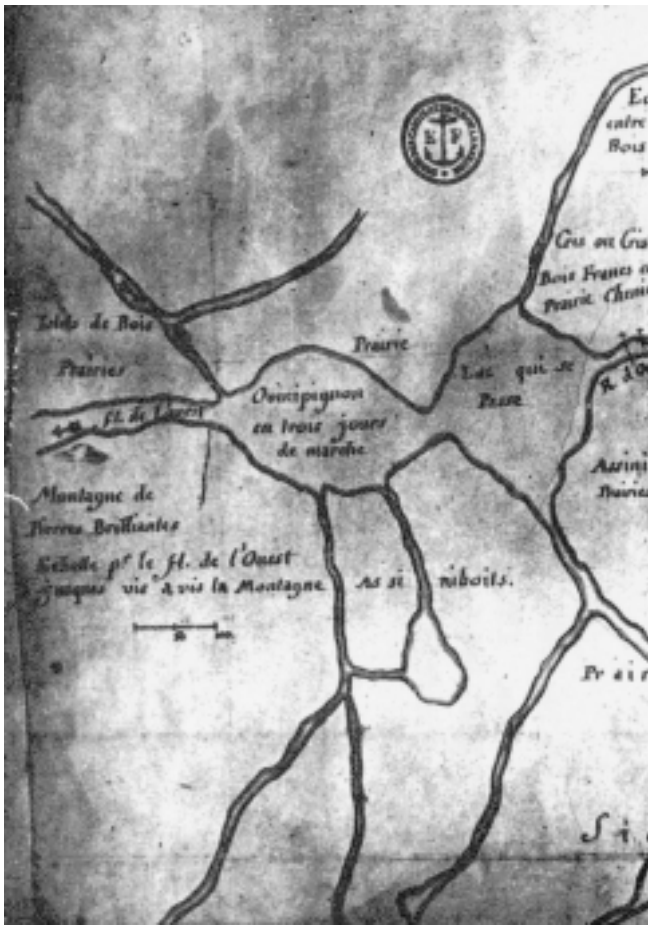
The lower of the two maps was reproduced by the cartographers of the French Navy. The relative distances between Turtle Mountain, Lake Winnipeg, Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior were better known and the map has been adjusted somewhat. However, the name of Turtle Mountain has been changed slightly to *Le Montaigne du Pierre Brilliante* — The Mountain to the Shining Stone.

along the way. Jones told Todd that his grandfather had seen the hilltops light up at about midmorning with what he presumed was sunlight reflected from quartzite boulders to other boulders on hilltops along the route. Hilliard Jones' grandfather, some time in the early 1880's saw the mountains shine. This may also be the origin of the local term "the Sunshine Highway" for the road that intersects the old Mandan Trail ford at Lang's Crossing on the Souris River.

According to popular lore, it was La Verendrye who dubbed Turtle Mountain the "blue jewel of the Prairie." He also recorded a tradition that they were referred to as the "Shining Mountains." Both phrases in English may be translations of what was meant originally in Cree or Assiniboine. La Verendrye first heard stories about

the Mandan Trail from Assiniboine and Cree chiefs he met at Lake of the Woods. The Chiefs were there to attend an annual trade conference, which was but one step removed in the chain of middlemen from Michilimackinac. Some of those present would go on to Michilimackinac to trade and council, others such as the Assiniboine normally would not. La Verendrye's sources were probably grand chiefs, at least of trade concerns if not of nations. La Verendrye's subsequent explorations are not as interesting as the fact that the information provided by the Cree-Assiniboine trade concern covered the area from the Mandan villages of the Upper Missouri to York Factory on Hudson's Bay.

La Verendrye's own contemporaries, as well as Canadian historians, argued whether he was primarily



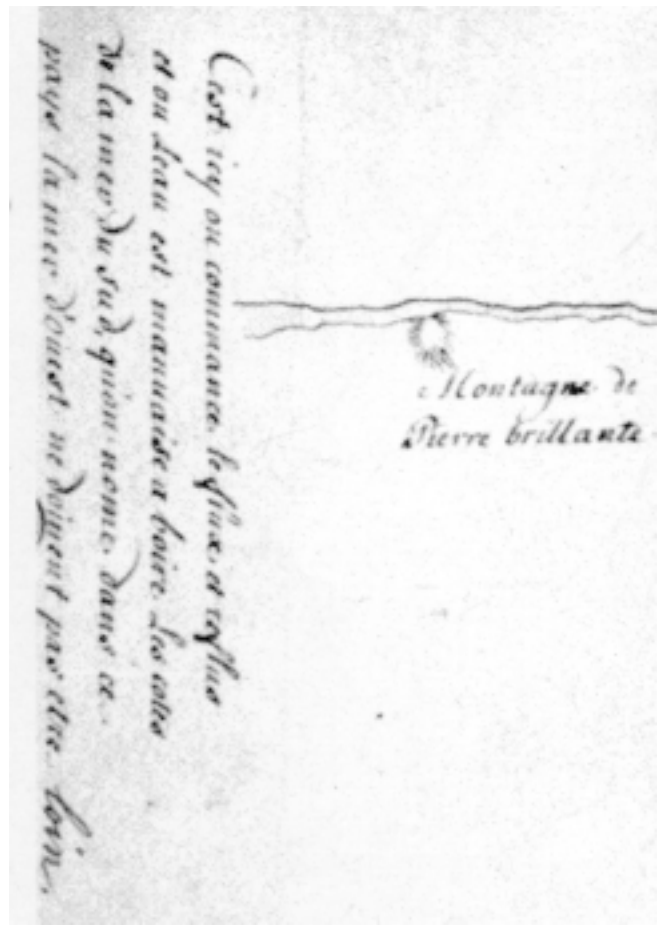
La Verendrye labelled Turtle Mountain on the map he received from the Cree as "Montaigne de Pierres Brillantes," or "The Mountain of the Shining Stones." In a revision on economic opportunities he would add the label "mining."

an explorer or a fur trader. His superiors at the French Court were convinced he was a fur trader spending the money they provided for him to be an explorer. Canadians today usually lionize him as an explorer.

If he had been either of these things before he was no longer after the death of his eldest son at the hands of a Dakota reprisal party. (His son had led a Cree-Assiniboine raid on the Dakota.) He did not bestir himself to explore unless he was forced to; nor did he recognize the biggest commercial network of the interior continent when he had it laid out in front of him.

The Native trade concern was anxious to open up a commercial communication with France. This was viewed as a counterbalance to the English to keep prices low, and, initially at least the French goods offered were superior to the English. La Verendrye was fed this information because the Native traders wanted him to visit the Mandans (and to go no further.)

The route followed the well-worn trail due



The French oceanographer who redrew the map changed the name slightly to "Montaigne du Pierre brillante," or "Mountain to the Shining Stone," and moved it further west out onto the Plain as if it were the gateway to the Rockies.

south to the escarpment called the Pembina Hills, across them and west and west-southwest to the higher hills known as the Turtle Mountains (the ones which he had heard at Lake Nipigon shone night and day,) and from them south-southwest for a hundred and fifty miles to the Mandan villages on the Missouri.

The Course of Empire, Bernard De Voto, p. 208

Even before La Verendrye, another French fur trader and exploring officer had reported a reference to a shining mountain. Stanley Vestal writing in *The Missouri* observed that the first Frenchman to reach the Missouri and report back was Etienne Veniard de Bourgmond in 1714. Upon reporting back to France he was promoted and given a commission as Commandant de la Riviere du Missouri. After an abortive 1721 mission, he succeeded in reaching the Middle Missouri again in 1722 where he constructed a fort and made the usual claims for France. Bourgmond met with chiefs of differ-

ent nations, and even adopted a Native son. After a final return to France, Bourguignon chose as his coat of arms a blue field with a silver mountain.

Carver used the term “shining mountains” in his notes and maps, bending the Rockies to fit the shape of the Missouri Couteau thereby terminating at Turtle Mountain. De Voto wrote that the Shining Mountains were one of the goals in Carver’s orders as the imaginary height of land from which all rivers flowed; Major Rogers having confused legends of two different “Shining Mountains” as one geographic feature. Carver had access through the Rangers to copies of French maps which had previously moved Shining Mountain several hundred miles westward to conform to the known location of the Rockies. Carver didn’t know about the Rockies, but he did know about the Missouri Couteau and so moved the Shining Mountains (i.e. the Rockies) several hundred miles eastward again. Needless to say, there were problems for anyone trying to reconcile these maps with a landscape they could observe.

That range of mountains, of which the Shining Mountains are a part, begin at Mexico, and continuing northward on the back, or to the east of California, separate the waters of those numerous rivers that fall either into the Gulf of Mexico, or to the Gulf of California. From thence continuing their course still northward, between the sources of the Mississippi and the rivers that run into the South Sea, they appear to end in about forty-seven or forty-eight degrees of north latitude; where a number of rivers arise, and empty themselves either into the South Sea, into Hudson’s Bay, or into the waters that communicate between these two seas.

Among the mountains, those that lie to the west of the River St. Pierre, are called the Shining Mountains, from an infinite number of chrysal stones, of an amazing size, with which they are covered, and which, when the sun shines full upon them, sparkle so as to be seen at a very great distance.

Carver’s Travels, CIHM facsimile edition, p. 61.

Thus far Carver was fairly accurate. Turtle Mountain is right on the 49th latitude, which bisects its wide back and head. The Missouri to the south does empty into the Gulf of Mexico, and the Souris to its north empties into Hudson’s Bay. Then Carver hit the old French problem of reconciling the location of the reported “shining mountains.” The following passage shows his solu-

tion to the problem and is proof positive that he did not personally penetrate to the Shining Mountain. Carver is a man as confused as his age and in one paragraph swings between exploitive empire building and the revolutionary struggle of minorities.

This extraordinary range of mountains is calculated to be more than three thousand miles in length, without any very considerable intervals, which I believe surpasses any thing of the kind in the other quarters of the globe. Probably in future ages they may be found to contain more riches in their bowels, than those of Indostan and Malabar, or that are produced on the golden coast of Guinea; nor will I except even the Peruvian mines. To the west of these mountains, when explored by future Columbuses or Raleighs, may be found either lakes, rivers, and countries full fraught with all the necessaries or luxuries of life; and where future generations may find an asylum, whether driven from their country by the ravages of lawless tyrants, or by religious persecutions, or reluctantly leaving it to remedy the inconveniences arising from a superabundant increase of inhabitants; whether I say, impelled by these, or allured by hopes of commercial advantage, there is little doubt but their expectation will be fully gratified in these rich and unexhausted climes.

Carver’s Travels, CIHM facsimile edition, pp. 61-62.

David Thompson wasn’t above making his own changes. His original journal noted the name down with the appellation “Mountain.” A revision of the journal changed the term to “Hill” but that was Thompson’s editorial revision, not a reflection of common usage.

Council of All Nations

The “norm” for the Aboriginal society around Turtle Mountain would have been to regard the mountain as sacred, and ideally immune from violence or “bad acts”. Circumstantially, there is evidence for considerable horse stealing, murder and outright warfare occurring in all directions *around* the mountain, but there are few occasions when such events occur *on* the mountain. When they do, they are noted by contemporaries as regrettable or out of character.

According to conversation with William Dumas there is an oral tradition among Crees of a “Council of All Nations” associated with Turtle Mountain, which in-

cluded occasional military participation by the Crees in “international” wars. In accordance with the custom of Native societies who would have been its likeliest members, the Council would probably have had no legislative role. It may have discharged duties akin to a supreme court or an ongoing peace conference. Its jurisdiction, if any, was likely confined to the ecosystem of the mountain itself. It probably did not dictate many religious matters to its constituents, but it almost certainly would have reflected a common denominator in its constituents’ religions; and it may have played a role in the adjustments made to the Medicine Wheel ceremony in order to survive within White society. Circumstantial evidence suggests the Council’s public role was initially to coordinate the defence of Algonquin trade routes from Siouan incursions, but by the end of the 19th Century it had evolved into a role as a mediator between these same societies.

It is clear that Carver expected to find Native leaders with whom to negotiate. It is also known that he had orders from Governor Rogers to persuade as many chiefs as possible to come down river to Fort Michilimackinac for a grand council in the summer of 1768.

Before I left my canoe I overtook a young prince of the Winnebago Indians, who was going on an embassy to some of the bands of the Nadouewessies [Sioux.] Finding that I intended to take a view of the Falls, he agreed to accompany me, his curiosity having been often excited by the accounts he had received from some of his chiefs: he accordingly left his family (for the Indians never travel without their households) at this place, under the care of my Mohawk servant, and we proceeded together by land, attended only by my Frenchman, to this celebrated place.

...The Prince had no sooner gained the point that overlooks this wonderful cascade, than he began with an audible voice to address the Great Spirit, one of whose places of residence he imagined this to be. He told him that he had come a long way to pay his adorations to him, and now would make him the best offerings in his power. He accordingly first threw his pipe into the stream; then the roll that contained his tobacco; after these, the bracelets he wore on his arms and wrists; next an ornament that encircles his neck, composed of beads and wires; and at last the ear-rings from his ears; in short he presented to his god every part of his dress that was valuable: during



Carver had access to the French maps which had shown Shining Mountain. He also had access to British information on the Shining Mountains (aka the Rockies.) He confused the two in an effort to reconcile them. In this map, Carver accurately placed the Snake protected behind a wall of mountains from their enemies the Lakota and Assiniboine, but he has located that line of mountains on top of the Missouri Couteau.

this he frequently smote his breast with great violence, threw his arms about, and appeared to be much agitated.

All while he continued his adorations, and at length concluded them with fervent petitions that the Great Spirit would constantly afford us his protection on our travels, giving us a bright sun, and a blue sky, and clear untroubled waters: nor would he leave the place till we had smoaked together with my pipe in honour of the Great Spirit.

I was greatly surprized at beholding an instance of such elevated devotion in so young an Indian, and instead of ridiculing him as I observed my catholic servant tacitly did, I looked on the prince with a greater degree of respect for these sincere proofs he gave of his piety; and I doubt not but that his offerings and prayers were as acceptable to the universal Parent of mankind, as if they had been made with greater pomp, or in a consecrated place.

Carver’s Travels through North America, pp. 66-68

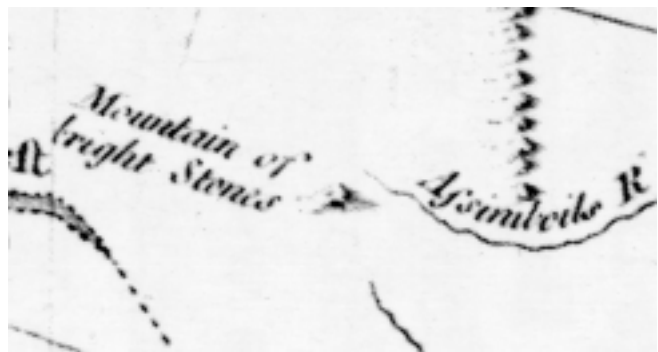
The entire Dakota Nation referred to its pre-contact government as “the Council of Seven Fires.” Prior to the collapse of Cahokia and the advent of the European traders there had been little need for the Siouan and Algonquin Nations to have intercourse. In the middle of the 1700’s the changing situation required some structure for mediation across a perpetual war zone. The war needed to be reduced and trade encouraged. That was the motivation for the creation of “the Council of Seven Stones.”

The initial members of a “Council of Seven Stones” probably included: Mandan, Hidatsa, Assiniboine, Cree and Ojibway. It is at this point uncertain who the remaining members were: Dakota, Lakota, Saulteaux, or Ottawa? Perhaps there was more than one Cree representative. It may be that from the outset a seat was reserved for “Whites” and that this is represented in the story of the adoption by Assiniboines of La Verendrye’s eldest son. The creation of symbolic kinship ties where otherwise there might be none, through “adoption” and “marriage” ceremonies seems to be a signature of the Council on Turtle Mountain.

In this southeastern area the Cree also contacted the Mandan-Hidatsa. These Siouan-speaking, village-dwelling agriculturalists lived just downstream from the Big Bend where the Missouri River turns sharply south. La Verendrye’s comments on Cree-Mandan-Hidatsa relations appear in separate journal entries of 1733. He noted that in the past, “Cree and Assiniboine have constantly made war upon them and have captured several children from them,” and then that the “Cree and Assiniboine have made peace with that Tribe.”

The attractiveness for the Cree of a Mandan-Hidatsa peace was twofold. The first element was revealed in a further entry in 1733. La Verendrye reported that the Indians “were leaving in the spring to go to the Ouachipouennes (Mandans) in order to buy corn from them.” Corn was an ideal portable food supply for winter hunting expeditions and for the long-distance travel that Cree and Assiniboine middlemen were involved in. It, like pemmican, was an important tool in the prosecution of the native fur trade.

The second element, a further possible cause for a link between these people, was their



On this extreme close-up of the preceding Carver map, Turtle Mountain still stands alone south of the Assiniboine River and is called the “Mountain of Bright Stones.” The Missouri is still to its southwest, but a range of mountains has appeared to the east.

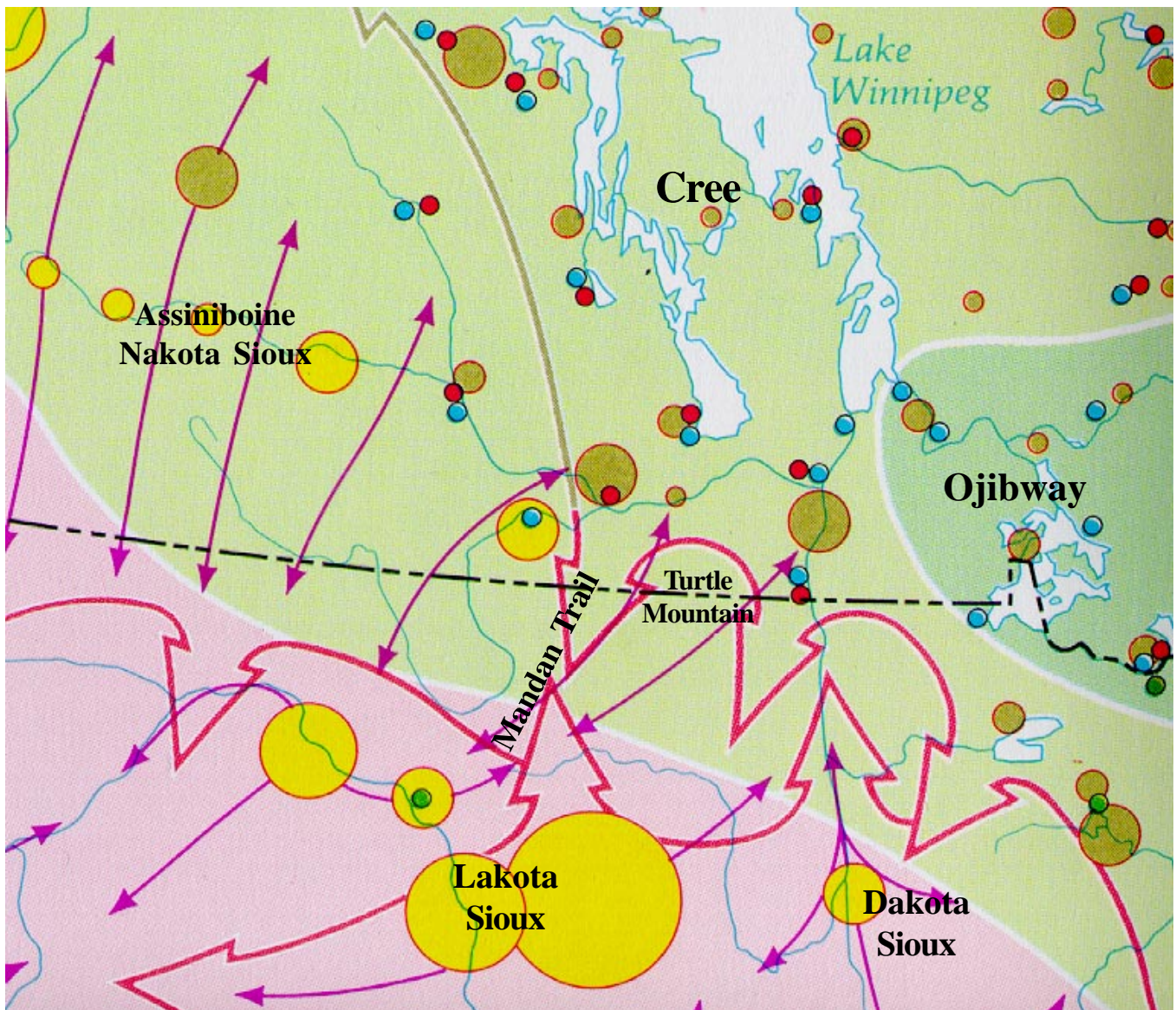
Shining Mountain has been kept in the same relative position as on the French maps, but is now west of several large mountain chains. The habit of the Ojibway for calling successive though otherwise unrelated enemies “Snakes” also confused the French and British cartographers. When Carver was an ensign in the French-Indian Wars, the “Snakes” were the Iroquois. When he was a captain out on the trans-Mississippi plain the “Snakes” referred to by Ojibway were the Sioux. But the Snakes of the Rockies were another group entirely. Carver seems to be trying to reconcile them all as one group.

mutual enmity for the Sioux. The Sioux had forced the Mandan on a number of occasions, before 1730, to abandon their villages and move to new sites.

The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War; John S. Milloy, p. 43

As Milloy expressed it, “the peace had become an alliance,” and the next step was to establish an order upon the Mandan Trail. When La Verendrye visited the Mandan villages he was given an Assiniboine military escort from the Forks to the Missouri. The dangerous noman’s land south of Pembina and around Devil’s Lake was avoided.

Sioux Valley elder Kevin Tacan related that in his 2000 interviews with Dakota and Ojibway across southern Manitoba he found a pattern of stories about the Pembina Trench and the Manitoba Escarpment. According to these stories the latter formed a barrier between the Red River and the interior. The Pembina Valley which cut through the escarpment was the “authorized” route for diverse nations to access Turtle Mountain and the Mandan Trail from the Red River. This did not make it a



The "Historical Atlas of Canada" released by the University of Toronto produced a map of First Nations interactions in North America, of which this is a section. The map was based on statistics gathered from fur trade accounts, and comparisons of early travellers. The map cannot be completely accurate, but does give an idea of the relative sizes of population and their movements. The white line in a gentle "S" curve across the map divides Algonquin from Siouan controlled areas. Large dark outlined arrows indicate violent movements (raids and wars). Thin two-way arrows indicate trade and migrations. The circles indicate population centres and relatively size. Light coloured circles are Siouan speaking. (Note minority of Siouan-speaking Assiniboines spread along the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers within Algonquin territory.) Small darker dots indicate French and British fur traders. Larger medium shade dots indicate Algonquin.

safe route, only safer.

The military and trade alliance thus forged to protect the Mandan Trail seems to have operated from about the 1730's to the 1830's with few interruptions. It's most serious problems occurred during the first decade of the 1800's and again in the late 1830's when the north-south alliance that maintained it finally broke down.

Mandan Trail

In 1806 Alexander Henry Jr. travelled from east to west across the Turtle Mountain country and then back again as he travelled to and from the Mandan communities on the Upper Missouri. In an effort to get the jump on his HBC competitors, he had taken his show "on the

road” and travelled along the major avenues of communication. Or at least that’s more or less what he told posterity and his superiors. His own contemporaries intimated he was out on a lark at company expense in search of a cheap good horse, which led him inevitably to the greatest horse market of that day — the middle Missouri villages.

The Mississippi river system was the single most important feature of Native settlement patterns in the middle of North America. The Missouri and Red River systems were in effect satellite systems of the larger Mississippi urban network. The river valley people formed the core of economic activity and therefore the trader who made the most money was going to be the trader who made successful contact with this system. The Mandans had been described as having been resident in the Red River, but by Henry’s time were located westward on the upper Mississippi, a few hundred kilometres southwest of Turtle Mountain. The Souris River made a convenient highway, and the bridge of land between the Souris and the Mississippi was a natural place for a road.

By the time the 18th and 19th Century “explorers” entered the Prairies, the Mississippi complex had collapsed and the Mandans had stepped into the niche of providing a commercial core — and possibly a religious and political one as well. The Mandans according to these travellers referred to themselves as living at “*the heart of the world.*” They were certainly at the heart of *their* world. And, as Bill Moncur kept saying about his collection and its attendant mysteries, “*It’s all about the Mandan Trail.*”

This combination of trails and rivers connecting the Cree in the northeast with the Mandans in the southwest in combination made the Mandan Trail. It could be traversed by water or by land, with short intervals where the alternate mode of transportation would have to be used. The actual overland portion between the Souris and Missouri is less than 40 miles, meaning that a person could literally canoe from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico with that forty mile stretch as the only overland leg (exclusive of short portages.) Most of the projectile points in our collection which date from the last two thousand years come from the Knife River region of upper Missouri tributaries. That short land leg is the reason Gulf of Mexico artifacts show up in southwestern Manitoba collections.

The Mandan Trail was so busy in its heyday that it was a clearly beaten trail, even in winter. David Thompson wrote in his (revised) journal for **February 1st, 1798**, “*We have now the great Road of the Stone Indians to walk in, which is so well beat down that we do not require Snow Shoes.*” A summertime observation of



Valley of the Souris, opposite the Valley of the Backfat Lakes.

Canadian Red River Expedition, H. Y. Hind, p. 291

Modern highways still follow the old trails in some places due to the local geography. One of these places is today the Souris River Bend Wildlife Management Area, the site of McKellar’s Bridge and Lang’s Crossing. Henry Youle Hind passed this way in 1857 as he followed a large part of the Mandan Trail across southern Manitoba.

A continuation of the valley of the Souris extends in a direction nearly south-east towards Pembina River, with which it is said by the half-breeds to interlock. Three lakes visible from our camp were stated to be the sources of Pembina River; a little stream issuing from the most westerly of these is called Backfat rivulet, it flows into the Souris. Southwards, Turtle Mountain shows with a faint blue outline on the horizon.

Deer are very numerous at this beautiful bend of the river; it appears to be a favourite watering-place. The half-breeds of St. Joseph often make it their crossing place when on a hunting expedition to the Grand Coteau. It is not improbable that it will become a point of importance if ever an emigrant route should be established from Minnedosa to the Pacific...

“Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857,” Henry Youle Hind, pp. 290-291



Valley of the Souris, looking towards the Blue Hills of the Souris.

Canadian Red River Expedition, H. Y. Hind, p. 290

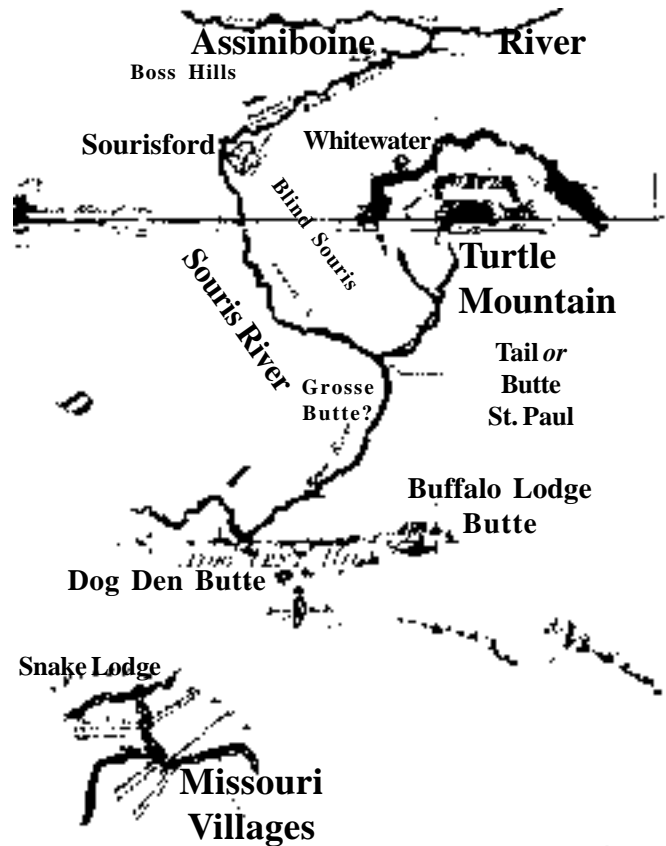
the same area described it in places as a road, sixty paces wide, beaten as hard as concrete. North of Whitewater Lake it could fan out to its many destinations on the Northern Plains, but around Turtle Mountain it narrowed in a chokepoint which could be barricaded for economic or military advantage.

The area of the southeastern plains has been portrayed as the homestead of the Selkirk settlers, the base camp of both the colourful Metis buffalo hunters and eager missionaries dreaming of rich harvests in native souls, the battleground of Canada's one successful rebellion, and the origin of the province of Manitoba. On the part of fur-trade historians, these preoccupations are understandable. Yet, in the shadows of the fur trade and struggling prairie settlement, significant events were occurring in the course of Indian history and, in particular, Cree history.

The Mandan-Hidatsa trading centre and Cree participation in it are probably the most important factors in the history of the Plains Cree on the southeastern plains. This centre must represent a high point in plains economic organization. It was the home of a native trade system which was in existence prior to the European fur trade and then adapted well to the introduction of European goods. The Cree and their Assiniboine allies had an important role in its operation, both as traders supplying European goods and as military actors in the area. As in the Northwest with regard to the Cree-Blackfoot trade system, here again military, diplomatic and economic factors were linked from the early eighteenth century onward.

The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War; John S. Milloy; p. 41.

Alexander Henry Jr. was returning on the Mandan Trail when he passed Turtle Mountain for the second time. He was concerned about being caught out in the open by Assiniboine. If he met an Assiniboine raiding party, he expected to lose all of his horses and probably his furs, spelling economic ruin for the whole trip. He didn't fear for his life, just his property. That suggests that Henry was voluntarily moving through a social landscape which had rules that he well understood. Le Borgne, the "Gros Ventre" leader of the party Henry travelled with, conducted a ceremony and sacrifice on the banks of the Souris River before entering the precinct of the



Based on a David Thompson map reprinted in "Early Fur Traders on the Northern Plains" by W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen. Original in Provincial Archives of Ontario. Labels have been added by the author to show relative locations in the narratives.

mountain. Once camped on the "brow of the turtle's head" Henry felt more at ease.

This passage of Henry's is often cited as evidence for the hostility of the Assiniboine. But Pritchard and Thompson passed through the same landscape, at nearly the same time, and recounted just the opposite. Henry was paying for furs with rotgut and smuggling weapons to the Sioux. The Assiniboine hostility to Henry therefore is evidence only that they could tell one White man from another, and knew very well who and what Alexander Henry Jr. represented.

The following version of Henry's journal is taken from G. A. McMorran's *Souris River Posts* booklet, found in Bill Moncur's archival fonds. Most quotes used by historians are drawn from Coues, who admitted that he edited Henry heavily. McMorran had a photocopy of Henry's journals courtesy of the National Archives, from which he transcribed his own version.

“July 15, 1806: *From our camp we have a good view of Turtle Mountain, about eight leagues E. of us. Our most direct route would have been along the W. extremity of that mountain, but we had been informed that a number of Crees and Assiniboines were tented there, who would certainly steal our horses if they could — even pillage, and, perhaps, murder us, as they disapprove of our taking arms and ammunition to the Missouri to supply the natives there, with whom they are often at war. We, therefore, thought it prudent to make this circuit to avoid them.”*

Henry’s Journal in McMorran, p. 33

August 8, 1806: [the return trip] *We were off early, and pushed on with speed. At eleven o’clock we came to the head of Turtle Mountain, where we found the vestiges of several Assiniboine camps, one only a few days old; had we fallen in with them, our horses might have been all stolen. We halted on the brow of the mountain, which appeared to be a very eligible and convenient summer residence for the Assiniboines and Crees, judging from the number of old and new vestiges of camps we saw.*

Henry’s Journal in McMorran, p. 36

As a side note to this investigation, summer student Alexandra Casselman traced Henry’s description of his trip on a topographic map of Turtle Mountain. This interpretation moves his route away from that stated by Coues, instead placing Henry as passing over the neck of the Turtle by Sharpe Lake. He would not have descended down onto the plains to make an abortive loop around the northwestern corner of Whitewater Lake. His descriptions are more consistent with the geography if his route passed around the northwestern corner of Sharpe, rather than Whitewater. This route passes through the thick of prehistoric campsites and is incidentally the same locale where the modern Manitoba Metis Federation celebrate Metis Days.

Henry referred to the feature as “Turtle Mountain” in 1799 when he saw it for the first time. On his second pass in 1806 he noted the structure by referring to the “head” and even “brow.”

David Thompson travelled the same route in 1797 and left a completely different picture of the Assiniboine. However, Thompson was a trader of a very different type from Henry even though he was in the same company. Henry had traded with the Sioux indiscriminately,

as well as trading in watered down rum. Thompson, on the other hand, was more scrupulous in his business dealings, and stayed firmly attached to the Assiniboine-Mandan-Ojibway alliance. Henry had indiscriminately allowed himself to be drawn into the Yankton-Assiniboine conflict by supplying arms to both sides for furs.

Dec. 4, 1791 ...*We came to five tents of Stone Indians [Assiniboine], who as usual received us with kindness; they did not approve of our journey to the Missouri, and informed us that some skirmishes had taken place between the Mandan and Sioux Indians in which the latter lost several men, which they attributed to the ammunition furnished to the former by the trading parties from the Stone Indian River.*

David Thompson’s Travels, V. G. Hopwood, pp. 163-164

On a trip from the Assiniboine River to the Mandan villages in 1804, Northwest Company trader Francois-Antoine Larocque described an encounter with the Assiniboine blockade. Prairie fires had forced Larocque away from the Souris River and up the slopes of the Turtle’s Head. What Larocque encountered reads more like a customs inspection by a war-party than it does like an actual war. The objectives of the Assiniboine are clearly stated and they are *not* war.

[November 20th, 1804] *Went down the Crick & Came to the River, which we followed for an hour & a half. We again ascended the hills. the wind having shifted South, the weather was clear for about 2 hours, when it again veered to the S. West, & we were Involved in Smoke but not so thick as yesterday. At 10 A.M. we stopp’d On a Hill to look at a dark Spot which appeared moving. By the help of a Spy glass found it to be Buffalo. As we were moving off, heard a number of people, hooping & halloing, as Indians generally do when at War. Some Hills prevented us from seeing, who they proceeded from. We immediately unsheathed our guns for defense, as we were Certain that if they were numerous Enough, they would Endeavor to pillage us of our Goods, it being their fix’d determination, to prevent as much as they Can, any Communication, between their traders & the Missouri Indians; as they wish to Engross that trade themselves. However, they Immediately appeared to the number of Eight, & behaved very peaceably, they asked for a little*

Tob[bacco], which I gave them, 4 Inches to Each & 20 R'ds ammunition among them all. As we were going off, one of them went before the Horses, & Endeavored to prevent them from passing, being I suppose displeas'd at not getting more. He let fall his Robe, & put an arrow to his Bow, as if to let fly at the horses, however we soon Caused him to give way & went on. One of them followed us for about 1 mile & being question'd said he wanted more Tob. I Refus'd giving him any, being very sorry, they had got any at all.

They Informed us that they were Coming from the Missouri Villages, where a great number of their Nation that is Assiniboines had been & were on their way back, with whom they said we would probably meet, likewise with a band of the Knisteneaux [Cree], who had also been there, trading Corn & horses.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood & Thiessen, p. 135

Charles McKenzie was another Nor'wester operating on the Mandan Trail in the first decade of the 1800's. He felt his place in history would be more important than his level of employment in the Northwest Company indicated and described his own literary abilities as coming in "descent from Ossian" a mythical Celtic bard. McKenzie traversed the Assiniboine blockade of the Mandan Trail in the fall of 1804.

We proceeded on our journey — arriving within sight of the Missouri, the natives flew in crowds to meet us, wishing us joy and congratulating themselves upon our appearance as traders amongst them — these were of the Gros Ventres nation. Here we found four of the Hudson's Bay Company's Servants like ourselves on a trading expedition. They had arrived six days before — and informed us that having lost their way they had fallen in with a party of Assiniboines, who detained them prisoners for seven days, and compelled them to pay handsomely for their liberty Which incident greatly diminished their stock for trade — but expecting no opposition they raised the value of the remainder and thereby entertained hopes of making ample amends for the loss sustained by the hostile Indians. However the Mandans had not entered into their views, and finding our prices more moderate we soon obtained the command of the

whole of their furs.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 231-232

Notwithstanding these blockades, Larocque, McKenzie and others succeeded in talking or bribing their way through. On the western side of the Mandan villages, Larocque ran into another blockade, this time by the Hidatsa of direct trade with the Crow. The reasons were similar to those of the Assiniboine blockade — to preserve the position of the middleman in the economy. It's an ancient economic fact of life that free trade yields an increase in business and an even greater increase in investor profits, but middlemen create jobs and communities. The Assiniboine and the Hidatsa knew they were facing economic redundancy. Larocque described his difficulties when he attempted to leave the Hidatsa villages around Snake Lodge Butte for the west.

[June 14, 1805] *The Indians here are exceedingly troublesome to sell their horses to us, the prise that we usually pay them for a horse can purchase two from the Rocky Mountain Indians who are expected daily & they would wish us to have no more goods when those Indians arrive, so as to have the whole trade themselves. I told them that the purpose of our coming was not to purchase horses either from them or the Rocky Mountains, that we came for skins and Robes, and that for that purpose one of us was to pass the summer with them and one at the Mandans; that I and two men were sent by the white peoples Chief, to smoke a pipe of peace & amity with the Rocky Mountain Indians and to accompany them to their lands to examine them and see if there were Beavers as is reported & to engage them to hunt it, that we would not purchase a horse from no one, therefore that their best plan would be to dress Buffalo Robes, so as to have Ammunition to trade with the Rocky Mountain Indians.*

They pretend to be in fear of the surrounding Nations, that is Assiniboines, Sioux, Chayenne & Ricaras, so as to have an excuse for not trading their guns with the Rocky Mountain Indians, and likewise to prevent us. Some of those Rocky Mountain Indians have been here already and are gone back, but more expected, with whom I intend to go.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, p. 165

It took Larocque until late July to persuade the Hidatsa to allow him to go, and it required the intervention of the Hidatsa Grand Chief, LeBorgne. Larocque was aware that the further west he travelled the more dangerous it became, and he learned from the Crow that at least one white fur trading party had been robbed and killed. He took precautions and travelled with the local authorities. It was because of this long experience of living among the Missouri Villagers, and treading very carefully, that Larocque was so resentful when Alexander Henry Jr. showed up to pull rank and trade horses.

The Mandan Trail also attracted the Spanish, in addition to the French and English traders. One of the most important was Manuel Lisa, who successfully managed the transition from Spanish to French to American jurisdictions and became a co-founder of the American Fur Company.

When Alexander Henry Jr. came through in 1799 he passed, and commented upon, a group of Ojibway who were then camped at Pembina. One of these was John (“the Falcon”) Tanner, the patriarch and founder of the famous family of the Old West. Tanner had been captured as a child in 1789 near Sault Ste. Marie on the American side. He was traded to a group of Ottawa who were migrating from Lake Huron to seek a better life out west away from the Whites. Adopted into this family, Tanner became for all intents and purposes a Native, even to the point of forgetting how to speak English.

According to Tanner, large numbers of Assiniboine, Cree and Ojibway (plus assorted smaller Algonquin groups like Tanner’s own Ottawa), assembled at Turtle Mountain in 1803, 1806 and 1815 (give or take a year in each case.) In each instance the alliance was called into being at the request of the Siouan Mandans with whom the allies carried on trade. The Mandans complained of raiding by other Siouan groups, often the Dakota, and the Allies responded by sending hundreds of warriors — sometimes more than a thousand. This is far too many to be indigent to Turtle Mountain, and the degree of control required speaks of some kind of political structure to mediate.

It was possible to draw upon this kind of manpower from a distance because of the proximity of the Mandan Trail and its connections by trade to population centres elsewhere. It may be that the volume of business conducted on the Mandan Trail in the 1700’s exceeded that of the Hudson’s Bay Company and Northwest Company combined. In this light the Mandan Trail is as equally important in understanding prairie history as is the Fur Trade.

Chapter Three: Continental Contests

Michilimackinac

The Turtle Island creation myth motif is repeated in several places across North America. Influencing the story on Turtle *Mountain* were events on Turtle *Island* located between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan — Michilimackinac. The word is a French phonetic approximation of an Ojibway word for “Turtle Island.”

During the 1600’s the Iroquois Confederacy, supported by Dutch and later British arms, carried out a war of conquest against the Hurons, a related culture. By 1670 the Hurons were being driven completely out of southern Ontario, precipitating a general diaspora of Native people westward. Their Algonquin neighbours to the north also began evacuating civilian populations to the head of the Great Lakes in order to remove them from Iroquois attack. Eventually the French would be drawn in to support their Algonquin and Huron allies or lose all interior trade. Although the French took credit for defeating the Iroquois, it is more likely that strategic victory should be awarded to the Ojibway.

The Iroquois fell into a trap common to aggressors, advancing after too many victories until their lines were overextended. This occurred when the Iroquois war parties attacked Huron refugee camps among the Ojibway, Ottawa and Saulteaux in the vicinities of Manitoulin Island and Michilimackinac. There must have been some high level diplomacy and strategy meetings among the Algonquin nations because what followed was a coordinated general offensive that stretched from Montreal Island in the east to Great Slave Lake in the west. The offensive took about seventy-five years to carry out, at the end of which the Algonquin Federation was in possession of the Prairies from the Rocky Mountains to the Middle Missouri, all of Ontario and had made serious inroads into the Ohio Valley. The Hurons were absorbed into the Algonquin Nations and the Iroquois were given a defeat from which they would never recover militarily.

Peter Jones wrote his *History of the Ojebway Indians* in 1861 with information provided by Ojibway elders around the north shore of the Great Lakes. The account he recorded accurately describes the strategic events of the war, although it generalizes all enemies. This is the curious origin of the term “Sioux.” In Jones account “Nahdoways” is used to mean the Iroquois, although he mistakenly thought it meant the Hurons. “Nadouwessioux” a Francophone rendition of the same Ojibway word for “snake,” meaning an enemy, became applied to the Dakota. The only cultural and political is-

sue in common between the Dakota and the Iroquois was that at various times they had both become enemies of the Ojibway. Later the “Nadouwes” or “Nahdoways” prefix was dropped to invent a new term “Sioux,” which marginally reduced the confusion.

I have often listened with deep attention to the narration of Ojebway wars with other tribes, long before the white man appeared in their country. The Ojebway tradition states that the greatest and most bloody war their nation ever waged was with the Nahdoways, a term applied to the six nations of Indians who originally inhabited territory now called the State of New York. The Hurons or Wyandots are also called by the same name. At the commencement of their wars the Ojebway country extended eastward only to the northern shore of Lake Huron, and the Nahdoways owned all the region east and south of it. The Nahdoways made the first inroads into the Ojebway country, where they surprised, killed, and scalped many of the scattered tribes. For some time the Ojebways acted only upon the defensive; but, after the war had continued for a considerable period, during which many were killed on both sides, the Nahdoways got so exasperated at being often defeated, that they began to kill and waste, and to eat all their prisoners. These brutal acts called forth the vengeance of the great Ojebway nation. A general council was called; the chiefs, prophets, and warriors met; the council fire was lighted, and the smoke ascended to the abode of the Great Spirit. The meat of the buffalo, deer, bear, and beaver was brought and cooked; sacrifices were offered to the gods of war for success in their contemplated destruction. The prophets predicted certain victory; the sachems made speeches, and exhorted the young braves to signalize themselves by some daring exploit, and thus immortalize their names. The old warriors sung the war song, and the young men danced the war dance. The war whoop was raised, which made the earth quake, the sound echoing like that of thunder from mountain to mountain. The tomahawk, or puhguhmagun, was lifted

up, the scalping-knife sharpened, and the bows and arrows made ready. The medicine bags were prepared, and filled with war medicines and emblems of their munedoos. The warriors painted themselves; the women prepared the parched corn and the pemegun. All being in readiness, the war-whoop was again raised, and every warrior breathed vengeance on his enemy. The women saluted their husbands, and exhorting them to be courageous, wished them a happy return with many scalps. The children wept at the thought that perchance they might never again see the smile of their fathers; but the brave warrior leaves all the endearments of home for the land of the enemy. The first attack they made was on an island on the south shore of Lake Huron. There they fell on a large body of the Nahdoways, who had been dancing and feasting for several nights, and were so exhausted as to have sunk into a profound sleep the night on which they were killed. The island is called Pequahkoondebaymenis, that is, skull island, from the number of skulls left on it. In one of my tours to the north I visited this island, and lodged on it for a night. Its present appearance indicates a place frequented by Indians, the smoothness of its surface being well adapted for a great Indian dance. From this island they extended their conquests to Lakes Simcoe, Ontario, Erie, St. Clair, and the interior parts of the country: wherever they went they conquered, destroying villages, and leaving dead bodies in heaps.

The last battle that was fought was at the outlet of Burlington Bay, which was at the south end of the beach, where the Government House formerly stood. Near to this place a mound of human bones is to be seen to this day; and also another at the north end, close to the residence of the late Captain Brant. Besides these, there are traces of fortifications at short distances along the whole length of the beach, where holes have been dug into the sand and a breastwork thrown round them. They are about twenty or thirty feet in diameter, but were originally much larger. At this finishing battle the Ojebways spared a few of their enemies, whom they suffered to depart in peace, that they might go and tell their brethren on the south side of Lake Ontario the fate of their nation — that all the country

between the waters of the Ontario, Erie, St. Clair, and Huron was now surrendered into the hands of the Ojebways. After this, the conquering remnant divided into two parties: one went westward, and settled on the banks of the Detroit river; the other moved eastward, towards the shores of the St. Lawrence. A treaty of peace and friendship was then made with the Nahdoways residing on the south side of Lake Ontario, and both nations solemnly covenanted, by going through the usual forms of burying the tomahawk, smoking the pipe of peace, and locking their hands and arms together, agreeing in future to call each other Brothers. Thus ended their wars with the Nahdoways.

History of the Ojebway Indians, Peter Jones, pp. 111-113

In a sense, by this war the Algonquin Nations defined the boundaries of Canada. The Ojibway secured control of the Great Lakes trade routes, which they exercised from their headquarters at Michilimackinac.

Also from Michilimackinac, the French sent out military, religious and commercial expeditions which penetrated the interior of North America via the Great Lakes and river systems.

According to Father Laviolette's history of the Dakota, the Santee Dakota were contacted by the French as early as the 1640's, if not earlier. Over the next hundred years friendly relations continued to develop between the Dakota and the French, with the French sending missionaries and traders among the Siouan nations, treating them as independent states. So long as the French were involved, they attempted to maintain peace between the Dakota and Ojibway. According to traditions of both people, the Dakota and Ojibway had been at war for decades *before* the French arrived.

[Radisson and Groseillers] spent the winter of 1659-60 at Sault Ste. Marie, between Lakes Superior and Huron. In the spring of 1660, they met chiefs and warriors of a Dakota village with eight messengers "each accompanied by two wives laden with wild rice, corn and other grains." They exchanged some of their clothing for buffalo and beaver robes while the Dakotas performed the ritual of weeping copiously, an ancient Dakota custom, indicating joy when meeting strangers. They smoked the peace pipe together. Radisson described the red stone pipe which was as big as a fist with a cluster of eagle tail feath-



A notorious incident in the Pontiac Rising, 1763: Ojibway and Fox braves turned without warning from lacrosse to massacre of the British garrison at Fort Michilimackinac (now by Mackinaw City, Mich.). The Seneca treated Fort Venango likewise.

The Ball Game as an extension of War. This 19th century woodcut illustrates a pivotal event during the close of the French-Indian Wars. Abandoned by the French in 1760, Pontiac led his own nation and other former-allies of the French in a revolt against the British which almost succeeded. Most of the frontier forts were seized at once, many with stratagems such as the one used above. A ball game was staged outside of the fort, and the British garrison became involved as spectators. When the ball was "accidentally" flipped over the stockade, the gates were opened to allow the ballplayers to regain the ball. Both teams suddenly rushed the fort and overwhelmed the garrison. The British regained the forts with difficulty, thanks to leaders such as Sir William Johnson and Major Robert Rogers, and the elite Native and Colonial troops that followed these men. Pontiac was defeated but his dream would live on.

ers painted in various colours and arranged so as to open like a fan. After the ritual smoking, the Dakotas threw tobacco into the fire. Then the French threw gunpowder on the fire to show how much more powerful their 'tobacco' was.

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, G. Laviolette, p. 78

The defeat of the French in the Seven Years War and the Treaty of Paris of 1763 removed official French presence from east of the Mississippi River. West of the Mississippi it was reduced to commercial endeavours under Spanish licence. The British already had diplomatic relations with the Ojibway through their allies the Cree. The fall of New France would put Michilimackinac and its trade system at the disposal of British subjects operating from former French colonies. The Dakota were once again politically independent.

Fort Michilimackinac was built by the French and served as one neck for many funnels stretching back into the interior of North America. Under the British it continued to play this role. In 1766 when Captain Jonathan Carver was there posing as a gentlemen explorer, Major Robert Rogers was the Governor of Michilimackinac as well as Carver's commanding officer in the King's Rangers. Carver displayed an insider's knowledge of Native military alliances in his accurate recounting of the taking of the Fort by Pontiac during the final actions of the French-Indian Wars. He omitted only small details such as the participation by Major Rogers and the Rangers Regiment in the British campaign that retook the forts.

Michilimackinac, from whence I began my travels, is a Fort composed of a strong stockade, and is usually defended by a garrison of one hundred men. It contains about thirty

houses, one of which belongs to the governor, and another to the commissary. Several traders also dwell within its fortifications, who find it a convenient situation to traffic with the neighbouring nations. Michilimackinac, in the language of the Chippeway Indians, signifies a Tortoise; and the place is supposed to receive its name from an Island, lying about six or seven miles on the northeast, within sight of the Fort, which has the appearance of that animal.

During the Indian war that followed soon after the Conquest of Canada in the year 1763, and which was carried on by an army of confederate nations composed of the Hurons, Miamies, Chippeways, Ottowaws, Pontowattimies, Mississauges, and some other tribes, under the direction of Pontiac a celebrated Indian warrior, who had always been in the French interest, it was taken by surprize in the following manner. The Indians having settled their plan, drew near the Fort, and began a game at Ball, a pastime much used among them and not unlike tennis. In the height of their game, at which some of the English officers not suspecting any deceit stood looking on, they struck the ball, as if by accident, over the stockade; this they repeated two or three times, to make the deception more complete, till at length, having by this means lulled every suspicion of the centry at the south gate, a party rushed by him; and the rest soon following, they took possession of the Fort, without meeting with any opposition. Having accomplished their design, the Indians had the humanity to spare the lives of the greatest part of the garrison and traders, but they made them all prisoners, and carried them off. However some time after they took them to Montreal, where they were redeemed at a good price. The Fort also was given up again to the English at the peace made with Pontiac by the commander of Detroit the following year.

Having here made the necessary dispositions for pursuing my travels, and obtained a credit from Mr. Rogers, the governor, on some English and Canadian traders who were going to trade on the Mississippi...I left the Fort...

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 18-20

And so, Michilimackinac changed hands again, but

continued to play the same role. From their new interior headquarters at Michilimackinac, the British agents fanned out to claim an empire in the northwest.

War on the Plains

The period from 1750 to 1850 on the Great Plains was marked by constant change, and constant warfare. Wars of the "heroic band" variety were replaced by wars of conquest. The Siouan and Caddoan societies were displaced, intermixed and forced to compete and cooperate in new ways. The horse was introduced into the region by southern nations that had contact with the Spanish. (The original De Soto expedition had only geldings, thereby delaying introduction of the horse to this region.) European descent colonists entered the Plains and Prairies from the east during this period, hardly perceptible at the beginning, overwhelming in the end.

The Northern Plains at this time was divided among several great powers. The primary resource was buffalo, and territory meant controlling access to and control of the ranges on which the buffalo migrated. Key crossings between environmental regions became the major battle grounds.

The northwestern zone was dominated by an Algonquin group, the Blackfoot. They were better organized, and due to their relationship with the British, better armed than their southern competitors. (Initially this relationship was carried on through the Cree as an intermediary, and later independently when relations with the Cree became strained.)

To the south of the Blackfoot nation lay the territory of the Siouan speaking Crow. Numerically inferior to the Blackfoot, the Crow in 1750 were reported to be slowly losing a war of attrition. (This was prior to the introduction of the horse to the Crow.)

Squeezing the Blackfoot from the east was another Siouan nation, the very large and very aggressive Lakota Nation which reached from close to the Rocky Mountain foothills on the west, to the forests of the Great Lakes on the east.

The northern plains was held by the Nakota nation, the Assiniboine. They had defected from the Sioux camp and allied to the Algonquin. They continued their plains lifestyle, but were frequently bilingual and even preferred using the name the Cree had bestowed on them. The Assiniboine were among the last Native nations to receive the horse, and so horse stealing from southern tribes became high art and high drama to the Assiniboine. Only the alliance with the Algonquin preserved the Assiniboine from destruction by their larger and more aggressive neighbours.

(Some historians feel that the Assiniboine defected from the Yankton Nakota at a time when both were woodland dwellers, and that the Assiniboine developed their plains lifestyle later in conjunction with the Cree. The historical sequence seems plausible, but the Assiniboine cultural motifs, including the horse gear and military equipment, have a closer affinity to other Sioux than to the Cree. The Assiniboine oral history accounts include horses in the stories of the rebellion, though not many.)

To round out the major powers of the Great Plains, the Algonquin nations led by the Ojibway advanced into every available niche, pushing the Sioux out in a determined and organized fashion. Ojibway victories are seldom celebrated precisely because they were usually against other Native nations. Before the Red River settlers, and before the Ontario farmers, the Ojibway foot soldiers were already pushing out onto the plains of North Dakota, enveloping Turtle Mountain in the process.

In the early historic period, most Plains dwellers spoke Algonkian languages. The powerful Blackfoot Confederacy, composed of the Blackfoot, Blood and Peigan, epitomized the high plains hunters and warriors. Their allies, the Gros Ventres (or Atsina), although extending far into Canada during the early historic period, were eventually pushed south of the border. Their bitter enemies during this time were the recently arrived Plains Cree and Plains Ojibwa. In addition to these Algonkian-speakers, the Athapaskan Sarcee became part of the Blackfeet Confederacy, and the Siouan Assiniboine (or "Stoney") were closely allied and intermingled with the Plains Cree. The Dakota Sioux arrived in Canada only at the end of the horse and bison days.

Ethnographic Plains natives were highly nomadic, ranging over great distances to hunt, trade and make war upon their enemies. No clearly defined territorial boundaries existed, and tribal distributions were constantly shifting. New groups surged onto the Plains with the advent of horses and guns, while others were displaced. Plains culture history was dynamic, frustrating attempts to place neat labels on maps or to assign archaeological remains to known ethnic groups.

Native Peoples and Cultures of Canada, Alan D. MacMillan, p. 114.

With an incomplete oral history, and without a writ-

ten record at all, it is difficult to reconstruct a diplomatic or military history of the Algonquin Federation (as some have called the great Cree-Ojibway alliance that spanned most of Canada for hundreds of years.) A very credible work in this regard is that of John S. Milloy who cross-referenced innumerable trade records and first-person accounts to write *The Plains Cree : Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870*. The perspective taken in this paper *The Council Stones* is that Milloy is correct insofar as he goes, but that the Plains Cree and Plains Ojibway actions should also be viewed against the backdrop of a larger and more powerful society. Oral history and archaeological evidence tantalizingly suggest that the Algonquin Federation people occupied the northern plains and had retired or been pushed out. When Europeans made contact with this society, the Algonquins were in the process of reoccupying territories they'd claimed as formerly theirs. It was often the very same territory claimed by Siouan societies. In the closing decades of the 1700's this great federation of nations was in full bloom, had evicted the Iroquois from Ontario, and was in the process of sweeping the forests south of the Great Lakes and the plains to the west as far as the Rockies. After 1800 it began to show signs of internal dissension and lost a considerable amount of momentum with the disaffection of the Blackfoot Confederacy, (thereafter an independent league in its own right.) The Algonquins were also weakened by the defection of the Cheyenne Nation to the Siouan-speaking enemy, but was balanced off by the defection of the Siouan-speaking Assiniboine Nation to the side of the Cree and Ojibway.

The Sioux were called by European military observers, "the finest light cavalry in the world." The Ojibway arguably had "the finest light infantry in the world." Ojibway soldiers lived off the land as Sioux did, but frequently didn't have to feed a hungry horse as well. Their backpack could be devoted to useful articles such as spare weapons and prefab fortifications and shelters. They also carried good British issue firearms with standardized ammunition.

The British Rangers did not particularly want to be drawn into Native war or politics. However in sending out long range patrols they couldn't help but encounter the general war between the Algonquin and Dakota nations. Carver described an incident when he (or one of the other Ranger officers) was accompanying a Dakota band between Devil's Lake and the Mississippi. His reference to his own fame can be put in context when it is remembered that this "Carver" is really three or four different Ranger officers *plus* their scouting parties, backed by the resources of their regimental commander and governor. He may represent himself here to the Eng-

lish public as a civilian, but at the time in the field Carver *et al* represented themselves to the Dakota and Ojibway as His Majesty's serving officers.

A little before I met with these three bands I fell in with a party of the Mawtawbauntowahs, amounting to forty warriors and their families. With these I resided a day or two, during which time five or six of their number, who had been out on an excursion, returned in great haste, and acquainted their companions that a large party of the Chipeway warriors, "enough," as they expressed themselves, "to swallow them all up," were close at their heels, and on the point of attacking their little camp. The chiefs applied to me, and desired I would put myself at their head, and lead them out to oppose their enemies. As I was a stranger, and unwilling to excite the anger of either nation, I knew not how to act; and never found myself in a greater dilemma. Had I refused to assist the Nadowessies [Sioux] I should have drawn on myself their displeasure, or had I met the Chipeways with hostile intentions, I should have made that people my foes, and had I been fortunate enough to have escaped their arrows at this time, on some future occasion should probably have experienced the severity of their revenge. In this extremity I chose the middle course and desired that the Nadowessies would suffer me to meet them, that I might endeavour to avert their fury. To this they reluctantly assented, being persuaded, from the inveteracy which had long prevailed between them, that my remonstrances would be vain.

Taking my Frenchman with me [one of the Metis members of the Rangers], who could speak their language, I hastened towards the place where the Chipeways were supposed to be. The Naoudowessies during this kept at a distance behind. As I approached them with the pipe of peace, a small party of their chiefs, consisting of about eight or ten, came in a friendly manner towards me; with whom, by means of my interpreter, I held a long conversation; the result of which was, that their rancour being by my persuasions in some measure mollified, they agreed to return back without accomplishing their savage purposes. During our discourse I could perceive as they

lay scattered about that the party was very numerous, and many of them with muskets.

Having happily succeeded in my undertaking, I returned without delay to the Naudowessies, and desired they would instantly remove their camp to some other part of the country, lest their enemies should repent of the promise they had given, and put their intentions in execution. They accordingly followed my advice and immediately prepared to strike their tents. Whilst they were doing this they loaded me with thanks; and when I had seen them on board their canoes I pursued my route.

To this adventure I was chiefly indebted for the friendly reception I afterwards met with from the Naudowessies of the Plains, and for the respect and honours I received during my abode among them. And when I arrived many months after at the Chipeway village, near the Ottowaw lakes, I found that my fame had reached that place before me. The chiefs received me with great cordiality, and the elder part of them thanked me for the mischief I had prevented. They informed me, that the war between their nation and the Naudowessies had continued without interruption for more than forty winters [ca. 1745 by this count] That they had long wished to put an end to it, but this was generally prevented by the young warriors of either nation, who could not restrain their ardour when they met. They said, they should be happy if some chief of the same pacific disposition as myself, and who possessed an equal disposition as myself, and who possessed an equal degree of resolution and coolness, would settle in the country between the two nations; for by the interference of such a person an accommodation, which on their parts they sincerely desired, might be brought about. As I did not meet any of the Nadowessies afterwards, I had not an opportunity of forwarding so good a work.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 60-63

Carver was hinting at a job for himself. His implicit assumption is that British-Dakota relations will increase as a precursor to planting colonies. He is also arguing a public policy that *someone* should carry out this course. As Carver observed, the American Revolution intervened.

The Crow

Originally part of the Siouan Nations and closely related to the Hidatsa, the Crow like the Assiniboine had also seceded. Unlike the Assiniboine, they had formed their own independent state around which war ebbed and flowed. Their initial difficulty was trying to strike a balance with a powerful and aggressive relative to the east, the Lakota Nation. A strategic benefit was the arrival of horses among the Crow at a relatively earlier date than among their neighbours to the north and east. Firearms was a different problem and their arrival from the northeast was delayed.

Charles McKenzie recorded in 1804 a very brief version of the origin of the split between the Hidatsa and Crow.

Two Brothers of the Gros Ventres named Regh-Chy-Sa [or Kegh chysa] and Hey-re-ro-ka were wicked men — They murdered numbers of their own relations, and were in consequence obliged to fly for safety to distant recesses of the Rocky Mountains: — there falling in with the Flat Heads [Shoshone] they provided themselves with wives from that nation — who speaking a different language, the offspring of that connection became a new tribe — speaking a new dialect which being a mixture of the other two is understood by the three Tribes.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, p. 249

The Crow Nation were armed with firearms by the American Fur Trade, when they were armed at all. Perhaps in response to the severe pressure, it is said they adopted large numbers of prisoners to maintain and build their population. Initially during this period, the typical Crow war party killed warrior-aged males, but captured and adopted women and young children. Towards the end of this period, eye witness accounts shift instead to reflect a pattern of civilian massacres by all of the parties involved in the war.

Denig, an observer from the 1820's through the 1850's, recorded his observations.

About 12 years ago in a great battle with the Blackfeet [Blackfoot] in which the Crows killed all the men of 45 lodges of the former, they also took 150 women and children prisoners. These they did not even use harshly. The women were made to work like their own

wives — 'tho not abused. The children were adopted into their own families, have grown up, and are now as much Crow as those of their producing. It is also worthy of remark that the women, after a year's residence, and understanding some of the language, will not return to their people when given their liberty. This speaks volumes in favour of the Crows, proving how much better they are with strangers than with their own friends. The male children become Crow warriors, and carry the tomahawk and scalping knife against their relations, often murdering their own fathers or brothers without knowledge or remorse. The loss of a male child of a warrior is always a great misfortune with Indians. It is one less to defend the camp or to hunt. Therefore, in thus raising the children of their enemies, they in a manner supply the loss of a portion killed in war. These children are not always adopted as sons or daughters of those who capture them. This only happens when those who have taken them have recently lost by sickness some of their own children, to which the prisoner child is supposed to bear a resemblance. Whether or not this step is taken, they always become attached to them.
Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, Denig, p. 148

The situation facing the Crow was one of national survival. As a northern group, they received the horse a little later than the Sioux, and for that reason the animals were harder to come by. Numerically inferior, they couldn't afford to fight both the Blackfoot and the Sioux by attrition. There had been some serious reversals including the failure to take a fur trade post which had been supplying the Blackfoot. When the United States Army entered into the Great Plains, the Crow were the one Siouan nation to seize wholeheartedly on alliance. By providing scouts and squadrons of light cavalry to the US Army they could at least weaken their enemies, the Lakota, if not actually strengthen their own case.

Three Affiliated Nations

The Three Affiliated Nations (as they are now known) of Mandans, Arikara and Hidatsa occupied the Missouri river valley system. They had forged by 1750 a new syncretic trading culture out of Siouan and Caddoan influences, based on settled fortified towns. Unlike other Siouans, they placed a major emphasis on agriculture. Their Caddoan ancestors had migrated from the Missis-



Hidatsa village painted by Alfred J. Miller in 1837. The lodges are similar to the Mandan but the village as a whole lacks the extensive defensive fortifications. Contemporaries described the Hidatsa villages as smaller and less dense than the Mandan. [Original in National Archives of Canada.] Dakota earth lodges were probably similar. War and displacement required more temporary and “nomadic” living arrangement.

sippi to get closer to markets and suppliers. The pattern of trade involved the nomadic tribes of the hinterland travelling to these river valleys and there trading with the Three Nations.

Each of the member nations of this triad maintained a relationship with a nomadic nation of the hinterland. At the Missouri the three nations traded with each other, and with white fur traders, resulting in a truly continental network. In order to maintain its economic and political position each of these nations zealously guarded their own trade routes. The Mandans probably maintained the closest ties with the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota nations. The Hidatsa maintained a special trade relationship with the Crow to whom they were related by blood and language. (The Hidatsa are also the most frequently cited group of all the Middle Missouri villagers to occupy sites along the Souris River.) The Arikara maintained the same kind of relationship to the south with their Caddoan cousins the Pawnee.

As rich towns, the Three Affiliated Nations also presented tempting targets. Their wealth could be taken by raiding or war as well as by trade. To defend themselves the Three Nations evolved a military response and

a diplomatic response. The military response consisted of improvements in earth lodge construction, palisades and the “weapon system” of the fortified village. The diplomatic response was to engage their trading partners in defensive alliances.

From the point of view of the river valley towns, some kind of diplomatic understanding would have been desirable to secure the crucial trade routes to and from their area. One of these ran northward via a parallel track to the Algonquin nations. The water section ran along the Souris River, and the land section ran around the western shoulder of Turtle Mountain. The area between these two forks, including both river and land road, was of paramount strategic importance.

We call this trade complex the “Mandan Trail” but that may be an historical bias. Those explorers who approached the villages via the southern Siouan route tended to contact the Mandans first and regarded them as paramount. The HBC and Nor’westers on the other hand tended to deal primarily with the Hidatsa and saw them as having a more extended trade network than the Mandans. Around 1800 the Hidatsa seem to play a major role militarily in control of the core market area. There are

frequent mentions in fur trade accounts of the military power of the Hidatsa grand chief LeBorgne [one-eye]. The Wolf Chief or the White Wolf appears to be a title for the Hidatsa military leader. A particular Hidatsa warleader mentioned in several accounts of this period was the father of the Wolf Chief in 1800, a man called Caltahcota [Chokecherry] who was either the brother or uncle of LeBorgne. Larocque mentioned being escorted by the Wolf Chief safely to meet with Crow, and Alexander Henry Jr. wrote that his guard was commanded by Chokecherry. In each of these cases the Hidatsa formed the major portion of troops, which were then supplemented by allies such as the Assiniboine.

Henry for the most part travelled under an Hidatsa and Assiniboine escort, as a commercial tourist not an explorer. He described the chain of command in actual control of his convoy.

...old Choke-cherry, who acted as generalissimo, passed and repassed amongst us at full gallop, haranguing and attended by three of his sons, who repeated what the old man said, which was an order to halt to allow the horses to feed and themselves to smoke. These three are principal men among the tribe, having performed some extraordinary feats of bravery at war. The eldest is named Chief of the Wolves; the second Lake, and the third Rattlesnake.

Journals of Alexander Henry Jr., Elliot Coues, p. 368

Henry also mentioned a protocol officer, "...Two Crows, a Big Belly, who carried LeBorgne's grand pipe of ceremony..." Henry was both attracted to and repulsed by LeBorgne. He commended LeBorgne's military acumen and his diplomatic skills. He credits LeBorgne with narrowly avoiding violence on occasion and calming troubled waters. Henry also described LeBorgne's treatment of women as little better than slaves including the murder of one of his wives for leaving him. Other fur traders called him "Cyclops" and meant every bit of the association with the legendary monster. Regardless of his qualities, or lack, as a human being it is clear that LeBorgne dominated the Mandan Trail at the beginning of the 1800's.

The interesting thing about the Hidatsa under LeBorgne is that they could go back and forth between allies, who were themselves inimical to each other. Alexander Henry Jr. described the tension that erupted when too many such trading parties showed up at the same market at once.

Just as the sun was going down, a number of Schians, Big Bellies, Mandanes, and others suddenly mounted on horseback, armed cap a pie, and rushed toward the rivulet N. of the encampment. There a large group soon collected, some on foot, others on horseback, and showed by their actions there was some misunderstanding which threatened hostilities. Everything was now in commotion and confusion — the men arming and saddling their horses; the women of our party collecting their horses and preparing for immediate departure, without any of the howling and bawling which is so common amongst them when danger threatens. Everyone exerted herself in sullen silence, through dismay was painted on every face; and in a few moments all were ready to start, should matters appear more alarming. LeBorgne's wives advised us to saddle also, and keep ourselves ready to move, in case of necessity. We accordingly did so, and stood awaiting the event of an affair which we suspected would end in a fight.

After remaining thus in suspense for some time, we were informed that the uproar proceeded from the presence of 12 Assiniboines, who, having arrived at the village just after we had left, and learned that the Big Bellies and Mandanes were more numerous than the Schians and Sioux, had followed our tracks to this camp. The Schians were fully determined to kill them, as these people are inveterate enemies. But as they came upon our road, and in a manner under the protection of our party, the latter were resolved to defend them, let the consequences be what they would. LeBorgne was one of the first to be informed of their approach; and, suspecting what might happen, he instantly ran out to meet them with his battle-ax in his hand. He took the chief, old Crane, by the hand, telling him that he might advance into the camp without fear of danger. The Schians soon surrounded them, and wished to strike some of the Assiniboines; but LeBorgne, who was by this time joined by many of his own people, kept them at bay by flourishing his battle-ax. He desired them to desist; saying that if any of them were imprudent enough to hurt an Assiniboine whilst under his protection, he might advance and make the attempt, but the event would show



A Crow mounted warrior takes aim at a Sioux who throws himself behind his horse in order to present a smaller target as painted by Alfred J. Miller in 1837. [National Archives of Canada.]

who would be the most pitiful.

Journals of Alexander Henry Jr., Elliot Coues, pp. 385-386

Despite overt hostility: Hidatsa, Mandans, Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Nakota [or Lakota,] and whites traded with each other through this system of councils, alliances, partnerships, and intermarriages.

Charles McKenzie described the commitment and system of the Hidatsa in fostering international relations.

The Enasas [Hidatsa] make it a rule to protect all strangers from insult or injury while they remain within the limits of their villages — even the natural enemy of their own tribe are safe there. For which reason the Enasa Villages have become a Sanctuary for fugitives from all the surrounding Tribes; who go about fearlessly speaking their respective languages. These strangers, however, cannot be accommodated with the use of wives from among the Natives — but must confine themselves in that kind of happy liberty to the use of Slaves, or to women taken in war — Even the Mandanes who are neighbours are treated

as Strangers in this respect.

But some of these strangers often make ungrateful return. They often destroy their Benefactors and fly with the Scalps to their own nation, and thereby obtain forgiveness for the offence which caused their banishment. Though the Enasas are sensible of this treachery from dire experience, they still encourage the perpetual presence of Strangers. For they sometimes find it convenient to make use of them as Interpreters to traffic with the many Indians that resort to that quarter in the Summer Season; and Sometimes as ambassadors to distant Nations for the arrangement of differences. The Enasas are from dire experience sensible of this treachery Still they continue to encourage the presence of Strangers among them — for they Serve as Interpreters to the many nations who Send in the Summer to trade for the Commodities of the Mississouri — Some of these Interpreters speak four or five different languages and some times are Sent as Ambassadors to distant nations to make up differences.

Early Fur Trade, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 259-260

Initially the river valley towns probably tried to defend themselves without assistance. Militarization of the surrounding societies and reduction of their own population by disease made it necessary to seek allies. A delicate balance of trust could suddenly be upset if one or more parties were suddenly weakened or strengthened.

Dakota-Algonquin War

According to the traditions of the societies involved, the area around Turtle Mountain had been a battle ground between the Algonquin Cree to the north and the Siouan Dakota societies to the south. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Cree occupied the southwestern plains at least twice, and left or were driven off twice, over a span of three to five centuries.

Had the war been going on intermittently for as much as five centuries? Like England and France, had the Sioux and Algonquin nations simply warred at each other for centuries punctuated by brief unsteady periods of peace? When Jonathan Carver visited the southern Turtle Mountain region in 1768 he was told by elders of both the Ojibway and the Dakota that the current war had been going on for about forty years. The King's Rangers became involved in the war because it was an inconvenience. Robert Rogers wanted the Indians to be united for two reasons: to assist in the war against the French, later the Americans; and secondly, to assist in establishing British trade routes to the Pacific Ocean.

David Thompson made the acquaintance of "Manoah" a Metis living among the Mandans. Menard was regarded as a Mandan, having converted wholeheartedly to their culture (albeit as Thompson observed, his manners were regarded as vulgar by the Mandans.)

W. Raymond Wood established that this single individual, for better or for worse, is responsible for a great many of the first-hand accounts passed down on life among the Mandans. Menard was killed by some Assiniboines in 1804.

The earliest known Euro-American to become established as a resident in the Mandan and Hidatsa villages was a French Canadian named Menard; his first name is lost to us. Although he was one of the best known of the residents of those villages to contemporaries, his name is nevertheless spelled in their journals as differently as Mahnow, Manoah, Manor, Manore, Menire, Menor, Minor, and Minore. The date of his arrival at the villages and most other details of his life there are not at all clear. He appears to have lived in the

village now known as the Sakakawea site. His wife was "a native woman, fair and graceful." David Thompson said that he had no children and that Menard "was in every respect as Native." Six contemporary sources... provide dates for his arrival between 1778 and 1783.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, p. 43

Though unlettered, Menard was a keen observer, listener and articulate story teller. Thompson took the opportunity of interrogating Menard/Manoah about the Mandan's conflicts with the Ojibway and reasons for relocating to the Missouri.

As Manoah was a native with them, I enquired if they had any traditions of ancient times. He said he knew of none beyond the days of their great-great-grandfathers, who formerly possessed all the streams of the Red River and head of the Mississippi, where the wild rice and the deer were plenty, but then the bison and the horse were not known to them. On all these streams they had villages and cultivated the ground as now; they lived many years this way, how many they did not know. At length the Indians of the woods [Ojibway,] armed with guns which killed and frightened them and iron weapons, frequently attacked them, and against these they had no defence, but were obliged to quit their villages, and remove from place to place, until they came to the Missouri River, where the Mandans say, "Our fathers made villages and the Indians of the woods no longer attacked us, but the lands here are not so good as the land our fathers left; we have no wild rice, except in a few ponds not worth attention."

David Thompson's Travels, p. 172

That occasion was in the winter of 1791-1792. The effects of the war were obvious on anyone travelling the plains. In his journal for Dec. 16. 1797, when on another trip along the Mandan Trail, Thompson skirting the southwestern side of the Turtle's Head wrote that "near this Spot, 15 Tents of Stone Indians were killed by the Sioux or Nadowessies 2 Years ago." On Dec. 29th of the same year, Thompson recorded that, "Three of the Willow [Hidatsa] commonly called the flying Fall Indians came to us, happy to find we had brought them a good supply of Arms and Ammunition to enable



The Indian Wars spill over the Medicine Line. A Boundary Commission photo from 1874, identified by an NWMP historian, shows dead Crow warriors killed by Piegans (Blackfoot Confederacy) on the Canadian side of the line somewhere in southern Alberta. [Provincial Archives of Manitoba : Boundary Commission fonds.]

them to continue the war with the Sieux.”

On December 31st, 1797 Thompson attended a Mandan and Hidatsa Council with Menard as interpreter. The subject of business concerned the mounting pressures which were threatening to close down the Mandan Trail. To the south the Yanktons and Pawnees were in 1797 raiding or blockading the trail, while to the north the Assiniboines were blockading any traffic they considered to be extra-legal.

December 31st Sunday [1797]. *A very cloudy day with Snow from the eastward. Assembled the principal Men and smoked with them about 2 Hours. Their conversation chiefly turned on their inveterate Enemies the Sieux [Nakota?] and Pawness, and in the extreme difficulty of their ever being able to open out a passage to our Settlements for the purposes of Trade, to which I much pressed them.*

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood & Thiessen, p. 112

In 1798, Thompson received another opportunity to investigate the causes of the general war. This time he was able to question an Ojibway chief, Sheshepaskut, about his understanding of the reasons for the current general war.

“Our people and the Cheyennes for several years had been doubtful friends, but as they had corn and other vegetables, which we had not and of which were fond, and traded with them, we passed over and forgot many things we did not like. Until lately, when we missed our men who went ahunting, we always said they have fallen by the hands of our enemies the Sioux Indians. But of late years we became persuaded the Cheyennes were the people, as some missing went to hunt where the Sioux never came. We were at a loss what to do when some of our people went to

trade corn, and, while there, saw a Cheyenne hunter bring in a fresh scalp which they knew."

David Thompson Travels, p. 182

The Ojibway chief apparently took it for granted that the Sioux-Ojibway conflict was self-explanatory, or at least *he* needed no explanation. The chief said that the response of his band was to raid a Cheyenne village while its men were away hunting, and there put everyone found to death except for three older women. Into this cycle of war and politics stepped the British bringing their own cycle of war and politics.

Minnesota anthropologist Kevin Callahan used archaeological evidence, oral history and archival sources to look at the conquest of the Mille Lac region by the Ojibway. Among many insights, he noted that the real people and events do not fit neatly into categories — and this may include definitions such as “river village” vs. “nomad”, or perhaps “Dakota” vs. “Mandan.” Callahan used the Battle of Kathio, believed to have occurred in the early 1600’s, as an example. Technologies, markets and cultures are mixed up in the events, and therefore in the evidence. There are mounds and earth houses, but some of the people are described as Dakota. The following passage from an 1885 early ethnologists and oral historian Warren Warren, illustrates Callahan’s observations. There are references to burial mounds co-located in or near villages, re-interments or secondary burials, looting of mounds by victors, and the advent of gunpowder. Callahan also notes that these sites are found in close proximity to petroforms and petroglyphs. The remembered paradise which the Dakota lost at Kathio, Mille Lacs was the one they attempted to recreate on Turtle Mountain.

The vanguard of the Ojibways fell on the Dakotas at Cormorant point early in the morning, and such was the extent of the war party, that before the rear had arrived, the battle at this point had already ended by the almost total extermination of its inhabitants; a small remnant only, retired in their canoes to the greater village located at the entry. This, the Ojibways attacked with the all their forces; after a brave defence with their bows and barbed arrows, the Dakotas took refuge in their earthen lodges from the more deadly weapons of their enemy.

The only manner by which the Ojibways could harass and dislodge them from their otherwise secure retreats, was to throw small

bundles or bags of [gun]powder into the aperture made in the top of each, both for the purpose of giving light within, and emitting the smoke of the wigwam fire. The bundles ignited by the fire, spread death and dismay amongst the miserable beings who crowded within. Not having as yet, like the more fortunate Ojibways, been blessed with the presence of white traders, the Dakotas were still ignorant of the nature of gunpowder, and the idea possessing their minds that their enemies were aided by spirits, they gave up the fight in despair and were easily dispatched. But a remnant retired during the darkness of night to their last remaining village on the smaller lake. Here they made their last stand, and the Ojibways following them up, the havoc among their ranks was continued during the whole course of another day.

The next morning the Ojibways wishing to renew the conflict, found the village evacuated by the few who had survived their victorious arms. They had fled during the night down the river in their canoes, and it became a common saying that the former dwellers of Mille Lacs became by this three days’ struggle, swept away for ever from their favorite village sites. The remains of their earthen wigwams are still plainly visible in great numbers on the spots where these events are said to have occurred; they are now mostly covered by forests of maple trees. The Ojibways assert as a proof of this tradition, that whenever they have dug into these mounds, which they occasionally do, they have discovered human bones in great abundance and lying scattered promiscuously in the soil, showing that they had not been regularly buried, but were cut in pieces and scattered about, as Indians always treat those they slay in battle.

It is well to state here, that some of the old men who relate this tradition, give the name of O-Maum-ee to the former dwellers of Mille Lacs, and they further assert that those people were totally exterminated on this occasion. The more intelligent affirm that they were the Ab-oin or Dakotas, who having their principal village on a peninsula, or Min-a-waum, were known in those days by the name of O-maum-ee. This, connected with the fact afforded us by the early French explorers,

Hennepin, Du Luth and Le Seur, that the Mde wakantons were former dwellers of Mille Lacs, is sufficient to prove the identity of the people whom the Ojibways drove from its possession. History of the Ojibway People, W. Warren, pp. 160-162. [see also The Dakota at Mille Lac, Kevin Callahan.]

By the late 1760's when the British Rangers were begining to nose around the upper Mississippi and Missouri, the Mille Lacs region had degenerated into a noman's land along with much of the Ohio Valley. Dakota river villages still hung on tenaciously to the higher reaches of the Mississippi and the Red Rivers, and Dakota war parties (as La Verendrye discovered) could still reach deep behind Ojibway lines. The war had been going off and on for about a century.

Carver found the reasons for this general war between a Dakota-led alliance and an Ojibway one to be quite plausible — and therefore ameliorable to diplomacy. As an army cartographer he observed that the borders between First Nations were precise and well understood.

The reasons the Indians give for making war against one another, are much the same as those urged by more civilized nations for disturbing the tranquility of their neighbours. The pleas of the former are however in general more rational and just, than such as are brought by Europeans in vindication of their proceedings.

The extension of empire is seldom a motive with these people to invade, and to commit depredations on the territories of those who happen to dwell near them. To secure the rights of hunting within particular limits, to maintain the liberty of passing through their accustomed tracks, and to guard those lands which they consider from a long tenure as their own, against any infringement, are the general causes of those dissentions that so often break out between Indian nations, and which are carried on with so much animosity. Though strangers to the idea of separate property, yet the most uncultivated among them are well acquainted with the rights of their community to the domains they possess, and oppose with vigor every encroachment on them.

Notwithstanding it is generally supposed that from their territories being so extensive, the boundaries of them cannot be ascertained, yet I am well assured that the limits of each

nation in the interior parts are laid down in their rude plans with great precision. Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 297-298

Probably, to the Dakota, Lakota, Ojibway and Cree elders the motives of the British were obviously commercial. However, the arrival of the British presented an opportunity to end the war by introducing a buffer. Carver took credit for ending the war, though of course it didn't end for another hundred years. In Carver's books, he quotes a Dakota chief as thanking him (and the Rangers) for ending the general war between First Nations.

We thank you for what you have done for us in making peace between the Nadouwessies and the Chipeways, and hope when you return to us again, that you will complete this good work; and quite dispelling the clouds that intervenc, open the blue sky of peace, and cause the bloody hatchet to be deep buried under the roots of the great tree of peace. Carver's Travels through North America, p. 91

A popular US Army song from the Indian Wars of the early 1800's contained the quip, "*this war isn't endless, it's been ended forty times before.*"

Assiniboine Secession

However long the war had been going on, the legends agree that it had begun before the Assiniboine seceded from the Nakota. Ethnologists believe that the Assiniboine group began splitting from the main Sioux body about 1200 AD, and by 1500 AD the process was well underway. According to the oral traditions the Assiniboine formally seceded from the Yanktonai Sioux, and made the unusual step of seeking an alliance with the Cree. Despite a few incidents of Cree-Assiniboine violence, this alliance remained largely in effect from around 1700 AD to the present day.

According to legend, the Assiniboines were members of the Dakota, or Yanktonai Sioux, who dwelt in the western forest lands of Minnesota, possibly at Lake Traverse. But they rebelled against their Dakota tribesmen, who thereafter called them "Hoha," the rebels. The Hoha increased into a separate tribe, which by the late 1770's had become a formidable force on the plains.

There are several accounts of the bitter split which eventually created the informal Assini-

boine-Cree alliance that for two centuries sporadically fought the Dakota with a vengeance as full of hatred and irrationality as some of the confrontations between contemporary societies. It is told that passion and jealousy over a woman caused an inter-tribal war among the Yanktonai. A young warrior of a prominent family seduced and carried away the woman of a man who was a member of another important family. When the husband attempted to claim his wife he was killed by the young warrior. Unwritten tribal laws held that the murderer had forfeited his life to the deceased husband's relatives.

However, the avenging relatives were intercepted by some loyal friends of the murderer and several of them were killed. The camps of the Yanktonai turned red with the spilled blood as an endless series of avenging acts occurred. Finally scalps were taken, signifying a fight to extermination. The smaller group of Yanktonai — said to be as many as one thousand lodges — left for the north to seek an alliance with the Cree (Ke-nis-te-no) who inhabited the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg water routes.

The Hoha collected Cree children and women captives who had been adopted into their tribe, and placing them on horses with presents, led them to the large Cree encampment on the Dead River (Ne-bo-se-be.) Over the council fires the Hoha explained their march away from their Sioux brothers. A promise was given to the Cree that they, the Hoha, would fight as their allies against the Sioux. After some deliberation, the Cree offered the peace pipe to the Hoha and their council fires became united. They have lived side by side since this time.

Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief, James Stevens, pp. 8-9

The events in stories about the secession of the Assiniboine have sometimes been located on the Middle Missouri, around Lake of the Woods or in northern Minnesota. The following story is more detailed than the more usual versions and it differs in placing critical events at a specific place — White Horse Plain, approximately 40 miles west of Winnipeg. It also places events after the introduction of firearms and horses in the late 1600's or early 1700's. The version below was summarized by Manitoba Historic Resources Branch personnel.

The most common version of the legend explains how the bonds of friendship between the Assiniboine and Sioux Indians were broken. According to this account the Assiniboine were members of the Sioux nation; they spoke the same language and had frequent exchanges with their brothers to the south. But the Assiniboine lived close to the Cree Indians (Kristinos), who were traditional foes of the Sioux. The Cree had been given firearms and powder by the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company, and so the Assiniboine sought a peace treaty with their armed neighbours. The rest of the Sioux nation had no share in this agreement and they began to suspect their Assiniboine brothers of treachery. The event that led to the final break between the Sioux and Assiniboine is described as follows.

One day a young Cree brave entered an Assiniboine camp and asked if he might marry the chief's daughter. As the maiden was a rare and delicate beauty the chief claimed a great price for her hand. Fortunately, the Cree warrior had a peerless and tempting prize to offer — a beautiful and spirited snow-white steed. A horse of such fine breeding and character was of immeasurable value to the buffalo hunting Assiniboine, and the Chief was unable to resist the offer. He happily gave his daughter in exchange for the Cree's powerful horse.

Other members of the Assiniboine tribe still harboured a fierce hatred of the Cree, a tribe that had killed and scalped many of their relatives. Rumours spread and a few began to plot against the marriage that would further estrange the Assiniboine from their blood relations, the Sioux. The medicine man, who had long held a grudge against the bride's father, notified the Sioux of the proposed marriage, and a few days later a large band of warriors arrived at the Assiniboine camp.

One of the Sioux braves had also asked for the hand of the Chief's daughter but had been rejected. When he learned that a Cree warrior had been accepted over him, he flew into a rage and vowed to capture and torture his rival under the pretext that such action would constitute a reprisal for past wars. Aware of the danger that threatened his son-in-law, the

Assiniboine chief saddled the white horse and advised the couple to escape under the cover of night.

The warrior and his bride mounted the steed and fled, but the Sioux discovered their disappearance at daybreak and followed in hot pursuit. They overtook the couple on the west banks of the Assiniboine River, a few miles west of the spot where the parish church of St. Francois-Xavier now stands. The Sioux arrows found their mark and the Cree warrior and his bride were both shot and killed. The white horse, freed of its double burden, dashed off across the plain at a wild gallop. The Sioux tried to capture the horse but were unable to keep up with his tremendous speed.

According to the legend the white horse continued to roam the neighbouring plain for many years. The Indians did not dare risk his capture because of his association with the dead couple. No one knew what became of the horse, but an Assiniboine medicine man assured his people that the Manitou (Spirits) had carried the horse to the spirit world where he was reunited with the Cree brave.

Thus the hostile division between the Assiniboine and the Sioux was complete. The Indians named the plain where the white horse ran free in honour of this powerful animal. Henceforth, the land which eventually included the parish of St. Francois-Xavier came to be known as the White Horse Plain.

Most accounts of the legend differ only in detail. One source identified the white horse as a Blanco Diablo, one of the famous breed from Mexico. Some versions relate the actual conversations between the parties involved. Another account, based on oral traditions, claims that the white horse was killed many years later by the Minnesota Sioux who arrived in Manitoba in 1863 in desperate search of food.

There is only one version that differs substantially from the first. According to this account, the Cree warrior rode into the Assiniboine camp on a grey horse, leading the white one laden with gifts for the bride's father. At the time of their escape, the bride rode off on the white horse, while the groom followed on the grey. Even though they doubled back on their tracks to confuse their pursuers, the white horse could not be camouflaged on the open

prairie. As a result, the Sioux were able to keep sight of the couple's course.

Because she rode the superior mount the Assiniboine maiden could have eluded the Sioux, but legend has it that she refused to abandon her husband and chose instead to die with him. Once they had killed the couple, the Sioux captured the grey horse. Owing to its great strength and speed, the white horse won its race for freedom. Many Indians believed that the soul of the girl passed into the white steed, and so few people were brave enough to try and approach the animal.

*The Legend of the White Horse Plain
Manitoba Historic Resources, pp. 2-4*

In 1800 the area on the northern and southwestern sides of Turtle Mountain were held loosely by the Assiniboine, backed up by their alliance with the Cree. Further to the south, the region was held by the Western Siouan nations in the river valleys of the Upper Mississippi (Mandans etc.) and by the Central Siouans (Lakota etc.) on the plains. A constant state of raiding and petty warfare seems to have been maintained throughout the 1700's and 1800's between Assiniboine and (southern) Nakota. At the same time, the Assiniboine developed into a Cree-like niche as middlemen, maintaining extensive trade networks with all parties on all sides. Even when warring with the Dakota, the Assiniboine kept trading with the Mandan.

Buffalo was common along the Red River in Manitoba and Minnesota in 1799. Prairie grizzlies and packs of wolves, often rabid, trailed the herds, killing the weak and aged animals. Of course there were other sources of food on the prairies; all kinds of waterfowl were plentiful, and raccoons, foxes, black bears, red deer, badgers and skunk were indigenous to the western lands.

But for the Assiniboines and the other Indians of the plains, the buffalo was central to their existence. Alexander Henry the younger mentions an Assiniboine buffalo pound near the Park River, and later he wrote in his journals of an ancient Assiniboine shrine on the east escarpment of the Pembina Mountain at Tete de Boeuf, now called Calf Mountain. There, at the south end of a small lake on the mountain, Henry found buffalo skulls, painted red, set facing the east on top of a small beehive-like hillock.

In the early years of the eighteenth century the Assiniboines and other ancient tribes in the western Americas dwelled intimately within this natural environment which supplied all their basic needs. But in 1735 the Assiniboines met with the French trader La Verendrye at Fort St. Charles on Lake of the Woods. Later, when more Europeans arrived, the ancient culture, customs and economy would begin to disintegrate.

La Verendrye was the first Frenchman to trade directly with the Assiniboines in their territory south of Lake Winnipeg; previous to this they had visited York Factory. In 1737 La Verendrye's men built Fort Rouge at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red rivers. Fort Rouge was constructed, according to La Verendrye's journals, on the request of an unnamed Assiniboine chief.

...It was the Assiniboines who introduced La Verendrye to the now extinct Mandans in the Upper Missouri. The Assiniboines had been trading axes, knives, and firesteels to the Mandans for corn and beans.

Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief, James R. Stevens, pp. 10-11

Through the 1700's and into the early 1800's, Turtle Mountain and southern Manitoba were Assiniboine. Commercially and militarily the Assiniboine maintained that position until external forces upset the balance.

Northwest Passage

Under the leadership of Arthur Dobbs, the British Admiralty in the 1730's was able to convince Parliament to offer a reward of 20,000 pounds to the person who "discovered" (for the benefit of the British Empire,) a Northwest Passage. It was envisioned to be a channel by which the Empire could communicate with the orient going either around or through North America. The development of clipper technology; the Panama Canal; Arctic explorations — all were responses to the drive to discover a passage.

Dobbs, a bitter opponent of the Hudson's Bay Company Charter, found himself eventually retired from the Admiralty to the reward of Governorship of Georgia. In the Americas he was able to influence a new generation with the idea of a Northwest Passage. There was also the matter of the outstanding and unclaimed reward.

In the 1760's and 1770's at the conclusion of the

French-Indian Wars, this was too much temptation to the land-based officers of the King's Rangers operating throughout the interior waterways of British North America. To these officers, what was already an interesting tactical challenge, had now been informed with monetary reward.

Jonathan Carver, who went to take a look as far west as the region of the Upper Mississippi and Red River, thought that an overland east-west water route was feasible, and reported it to be so.

The Mississippi has never been explored higher up than the River St. Francis, and only by Father Hennipin and myself thus far. So that we are obliged solely to the Indians, for all the intelligence we are able to give relative to the more northern parts. As this River is not navigable from the sea for vessels of any considerable burthen, much higher up than the Forks of the Ohio, and even that is accomplished with great difficulty, owing to the rapidity of the current, and the windings of the river; those settlements that may be made on the interior branches of it, must be indisputably secure from the attacks of any maritime power. But at the same time the settlers will have the advantage of being able to convey their produce to the sea-ports with great facility, the current of the river, from its source to its entrance into the Gulph of Mexico, being extremely favourable for doing this in small craft. This might also in time be facilitated by canals or shorter cuts; and a communication opened by water with New-York, Canada, & c. by way of the lakes. The Forks of the Ohio are about nine hundred miles from the mouth of the Mississippi, following the course of the river; and the Messorie two hundred miles above these. From the latter it is about twenty miles to the Illinois river, and from that to the Ouisconsin, which I have given an account of, about eight hundred more.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 73-74

Carver (and his alter-egos Captain Tute and Captain Goddard) were winding their way upriver in an effort to locate the height of land. In the belief that the north-south divide would be the same as the east-west divide, they eventually arrived in the vicinity of the Missouri Couteau, approaching from the southeast.

I proceeded up this river [St. Pierre River,

today the Minnesota River a tributary of the Mississippi] *about two hundred miles to the country of the Naudowessies of the Plains [Lakota or Nakota,] which lies a little above the Forks, formed by the Verd and Red Marble Rivers, just mentioned, where a branch from the south nearly joins the Missorie River. By the accounts I received from the Indians, I have reason to believe that the River St. Pierre and the Messorie, though they enter the Mississippi twelve hundred miles from each other, take their rise in the same neighbourhood; and this within the space of a mile. The River St. Pierre's northern branch rises from a number of lakes near the shining mountains [here Carver thinks he means the Rockies, but is in fact talking about Turtle Mountain;] and it is from some of these, also, that a capital branch of the River Bourbon [Nelson River,] which runs into Hudson's Bay, has its sources.*

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 75-76

The Rangers did not at first realize the two continental divides were different, and when it did dawn on them, they were still optimistic that the east-west divide would be only a few days travel further west. Carver had apparently reached an area around Big Stone Lake on the border between the present day states of Minnesota and South Dakota. This was the divide between the Mississippi watershed and the Red River Valley. He may not have actually entered the Red River Valley. Carver states he thinks the Missouri and Souris, his "capital branch of the River Bourbon," rise within a mile of each other when in fact it is loops of the rivers that approach within fifty miles of each other. That this confusion was allowed to stand in his book suggests that he (or the others) did not get as far as the Mandan villages on the Upper Missouri — the southern terminus of the Mandan Trail. Else they would have known it was several days travel across the portage between the South Bend of the Souris and the Missouri. Then again, since they were all spies, it could equally be that this was information they decided to leave out.

The King's Rangers proceeded carefully, and Carver's descriptions suggest that diplomatic relations were practised. While gun-runners like Alexander Henry Jr. and American military explorations speak of navigating the landscape under constant threat of annihilation, Carver says his attitude was one of respectful wariness.

I now thought it necessary to proceed with caution: and therefore kept on the side of the

river opposite to that on which the Indians [unidentified scouts] had landed. However, I still continued my course, satisfied that the pipe of peace which was fixed at the head of my canoe, and the English colours that were flying at the stern, would prove my security. After rowing about half a mile farther, in turning a point, I discovered a great number of tents, and more than a thousand Indians, at a little distance from the shore. Being now nearly opposite to them, I ordered my men to pull directly over, as I was willing to convince the Indians by such a step, that I placed some confidence in them.

As soon as I had reached the land, two of the chiefs presented their hands to me, and led me, amidst the astonished multitude who had most of them never seen a white man before, to a tent. Into this we entered, and according to the custom that universally prevails among every Indian nation, began to smoke the pipe of Peace. We had not sat long before the crowd became so great, both around, and upon the tent, that we were in danger of being crushed by its fall. On this we returned to the plain, where having gratified the curiosity of the common people their wonder abated, and ever after they treated me with great respect.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 81-82

Carver says that the expedition was snowed in shortly after and on the advice of the Dakota, chose to winter among them for almost seven months. He spent the winter profitably (for a spy) by gathering intelligence from the Dakota, drawing maps, and learning the language and customs. Bear in mind that these duties were spread over three or four different officers who are compiled in the book into one character. By spending the winter with the Dakota, the British gained a considerable insight into Dakota religion and government, as well as the lay of the land.

Sometimes I sat with the chiefs, and whilst we smoked the friendly pipe, entertained them, in return for the accounts they gave me of their wars and excursions, with a narrative of my own adventures and a description of all the battles fought between the English and the French in America, in many of which I had a personal share. They always paid great attention to my details, and asked many perti-

nent questions relative to the European methods of making war.

I held these conversations with them in a great measure to procure from them some information relative to the chief point I had constantly in view, that of gaining a knowledge of the situation and produce, both of their own country, and those that lay to the westward of them. Nor was I disappointed in my designs; for I procured from them much useful intelligence. They likewise drew for me plans of all the countries with which they were acquainted; but as I entertained no great opinion of their geographical knowledge, I placed not much dependence on them, and therefore think it unnecessary to give them to the public. Such as I afterwards found confirmed, by other accounts, or by my own observations, make a part of the map prefixed to this work. They draw with a piece of burnt coal, taken from the hearth, upon the inside bark of the birch tree; which is as smooth as paper, and answers the same purposes, notwithstanding it is of yellow cast. Their sketches are made in a rude manner, but they seem to give as just an idea of a country, although the plan is not so exact, as more experienced draughtmen could do.

I left the habitations of these hospitable Indians the latter end of April 1767; but did not part from them for several days, as I was accompanied on my journey by near three hundred of them, among whom were many chiefs, to the mouth of the River St. Pierre. At this season, these bands annually go to the great cave, before mentioned, to hold a grand council with all the other bands; wherein they settle their operations for the ensuing year. At the same time they carry with them their dead for interment bound up in buffaloes skins. Besides those that accompanied, others were gone before, and the rest were to follow.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 83-85

In a speech which Carver says he delivered to a council of all the Sioux bands in the area, he acknowledged the relationship of the Dakota and British, and encouraged them further in this alliance. In the book, Carver tries to present this as the innocent question of an educated British gentleman who happens to be travelling among foreigners and wanted to foster goodwill. In light of the fact that Carver was a serving British officer en-

gaged in treaty negotiations within a territory claimed by Spain, the quote takes on a different aspect.

Several of the chiefs of your bands have often told me, in times past when I dwelt with you in your tents, that they much wished to be counted among the children and allies of the great king my master. You may remember how often you have desired me, when I returned again to my own country, to acquaint the great king of your good disposition towards him and his subjects, and that you wished for traders from the English to come among you. Being now about to take my leave of you, and to return to my own country, a long way towards the rising sun, I again ask you to tell me whether you continue of the same mind as when I spoke to you in council last winter [an event he does not describe;] and as there are now several of your chiefs here, who came from the great plains towards the setting of the sun [Lakota,] whom I have never spoke with in council before, I ask you to let me know if you are all willing to acknowledge yourselves the children of my great master the king of the English and other nations, as I shall take the first opportunity to acquaint him of your desires and good intentions. I charge you not to give heed to bad reports; for there are wicked birds flying about among the neighbouring nations, who may whisper evil things in your ears against the English, contrary to what I have told you; you must not believe them, for I have told you the truth.

As to the chiefs who are about to go to Michillimackinac, I shall take care to make for them and their suite, a straight road, smooth waters, and a clear sky; that they may go there, and smoke the pipe of peace, and rest secure on a beaver blanket under the shade of the great tree of peace. Farewell.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 88-90

The CIHM facsimile edition of Jonathan Carver contains an Appendix on treaty protocol and “divisions” of land roughly a hundred miles squared. The “hundred miles” story has an echo in a rigorous though fictionalized account of Carver’s travels. Kenneth Rogers published *Northwest Passage* in 1936. He may be trusted to have worked off of many first-person accounts, although his conclusions about what the events meant were coloured by his era. Carver must have been successful



Jonathan Carver may have been inexact about the location of the Great Divide and Shining Mountain, but he was very clear about the concept of recognized First Nations with well understood territories [shaded areas.] The map reproduced above is one Carver based on the work of Captain Thomas Hutchins of the 60th (Royal American) Regiment of Foot. Hutchins had been carrying out a preliminary survey of the Mississippi with a view to planning future colonies. Hutchins' map has a direct correspondence to Carver's land "divisions" which formed the basis of the "one hundred miles of land" stories.

at his negotiations because the Dakota attached themselves diplomatically and militarily to the British instead of to the French or the Americans. The British called on the Dakota during the War of 1812 although it does not appear initially that Dakota lands were under threat. Kenneth Roberts presents this crucial negotiation in the context of a joke on Carver, but the terms echo those preserved in the Dakota oral traditions. The parties to the negotiations fit the Dakota memory, the "River Bands" are the ancestors of the Dakota of Manitoba. A "younger

chief" present at the negotiation could have been the age of Hadamanie's father or grandfather. In the narrative, the issue of the land transfer is brought up in a conversation between two former Rangers.

Now on the eastern side of the Mississippi there was an enormous stretch of territory claimed as hunting grounds by the River Bands who lived only along its water-front. This piece of territory extended from the Falls of St. An-

thony to the Chippeway River, along the Mississippi, and also extended an equal distance inland from the river. Roughly it was one hundred miles square. Since it was claimed by both Chippeways and Sioux, no Sioux could hunt on it without being regarded by the Chippeways as trespassers, whereas the Chippeways who already lived on it were held by the Sioux to be intruders. Thus the Sioux and the Chippeways were perpetually going to war over this square of land, and persuading their allies to go to war over it as well.

When Carver told the River Band chiefs that there must be no more fighting between Chippeways and Sioux, two of the younger chiefs already famous for their skill at horse-stealing, had an idea. Their idea was to sell all the debatable land to Carver in return for his undistributed presents, but to retain all hunting and fishing rights in the property. Carver thought highly of the idea, wrote it all out in English, and two chiefs signed it.

“That by God,” McNott told me, “is why they call Carver ‘Moon-buyer.’ That pop-eyed idiot has a deed to land that never belonged to the Sioux anyway, and they have as much right in it as they ever had.”

Northwest Passage, Kenneth Roberts, p. 523

In the Dakota oral history version of this understanding, the land cession was being made to secure the peace with the Algonquin Nations at the behest of the English. It may have been true that by 1768 the Santee Dakota were already being pushed westward by the Algonquin Nations but that did not mean they’d relinquished their claim or right to self defence. The “one hundred mile” territory was to be redeemed later within British North American territory. The distribution of the presents was only good manners and would not have been considered a payment. That a related story can appear in Dakota oral history, a British military memoir, and a popular American Western novel argues that the event represented by the story actually occurred. That the versions differ slightly in meaning, but agree in many details, argues that the event was complex.

If Carver was an individual gentleman-adventurer out sightseeing on the Frontier then the transfer makes little sense as Carver cannot by himself make use of the property. He would indeed have been a “moon-buyer.” But, if Carver, Tute and Goddard were agents of the Crown then the matter takes on a different character and explains why it should echo through several streams

of oral history.

An Appendix was tacked on to some editions of Carver’s book, written during the Revolutionary War. In it, Carver discussed treaty protocol and specific townships he called “divisions” that could be the basis for future colonies on the Mississippi. In 1768 this was “Indian Territory” of the British Crown and subject to the Royal Proclamation of 1763 — no treaty, no settlement. The territories he described conform to a plan Carver attributed to Captain Thomas Hutchins of the 60th (Royal Americans) Regiment of Foot. That is, they’d already been roughly marked out on British Army maps *before* Carver wrote his book. Carver’s comments only add a quick first-person look at each of the potential colony sites delineated by Hutchins. (Hutchins also travelled among the Indians in 1768 and published a book almost ten years later.)

In the Appendix to Carver, the land area alluded to by Kenneth Roberts is described as “Division No. II.”

“No. II. This tracts, as I have already described it in my Journal, exceeds the highest economiums I can give it notwithstanding, which it is entirely uninhabited, and the profusion of blessings that nature has showered on this heavenly spot, return unenjoyed to the lap from whence they sprung. Lake Pepin, as I have termed it after the French, lies within these bounds; but the lake to which that name properly belongs is a little above the River St. Croix; however, as all the traders call the lower lake by that name, I have so denominated it, contrary to the information I received from the Indians. This colony lying in unequal angles, the dimensions of it cannot be exactly given, but it appears to be on an average about one hundred and ten miles long, and eighty broad.

Carver’s Travels Through North America, CIHM Facsimile Edition, p. 277

Division No. I to the immediate north was still held by the Santee Dakota in 1768. Division No. II as described by the British was already a noman’s land brought on by war economic or military. What the Dakota were negotiating for wasn’t just the land of Division No. II or Division No. I, but the entire system of colonies which the British planned in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. They were agreeing to a peace with the Algonquin Nations, and a British buffer zone, in return for a promissory note for land to be redeemed later. Carver did not pay for the treaty; he only negotiated the opening terms.

The treaty was sealed, or thought to have been sealed by the negotiating parties, at Fort Michilimackinac by Governor Robert Rogers and a grand council of Algonquin and Siouan Nations.

That Carver was engaged in treaty negotiations is revealed by his knowledge of the protocol.

It is however necessary to observe, that before these settlements can be established, grants must be procured in the manner customary on such occasions, and the lands be purchased of those who have acquired a right to them by a long possession; but not greater difficulty will attend the completion of this point, than the original founders of every colony on the continent met with to obstruct their intentions; and the number of Indians who inhabit these tracts being greatly inadequate to their extent, it is not to be doubted, but they will readily give up for a reasonable consideration, territories that are of little use to them; or remove for the accommodation of their new neighbours, to lands at a great distance from the Mississippi, the navigation of which is not essential to the welfare of their communities.

Carver's Travels Through North America, CIHM Facsimile Edition, p. 276

Lack of supplies forced the Ranger expeditions of the late 1770's to turn back. That bears some explanation. Carver and the other officers could have lived off the land and continued indefinitely, as long as they kept moving. If they were only exploring, or only acting on their own initiative, this wouldn't have mattered very much. Since they were in fact spies, and were engaged in diplomatic missions on behalf of Major Rogers, the Governor of Michilimackinac, they required trade goods and gifts. Without gifts they could not initiate the formalities of any serious talk, and without trade goods they could not raise money for subsequent phases of Rogers' plans. Rogers had been given the commission of a governor, but no budget equal to his plans. Whatever money they'd raised by trading, had to be returned to Rogers at Michilimackinac.

To make matters more awkward, Sir William Johnson had made it illegal to go out among the Indians and trade — they had to come to the posts. This edict affected the lands responsible directly to the Governor-General in Canada and had no effect on Rupert's Land. The independent traders who operated through Michilimackinac were hamstrung, (which may have been John-

son's intention) and placed their hope in Rogers. For their sake, they needed Rogers to induce the Native chiefs and traders to come to Michilimackinac.

Michilimackinac Council

When Carver returned from his western expedition to Fort Michilimackinac the French presence was still strong, and French agents were still active throughout Louisiana and the Ohio country. Carver met "Le Grand Saulteaux," the grand chief of the Ojibway on the Great Lakes, on his return trip in 1768.

The first I accosted were Chipeways inhabiting near the Ottowaw lakes [meaning the upper Great Lakes]; who received me with great cordiality, and shook me by the hand in token of friendship. At some little distance behind these stood a chief remarkably tall and well made, but of so stern an aspect that the most undaunted person could not behold him without feeling some degree of terror. He seemed to have passed the meridian of life, and by the mode in which he was painted and tatowed, I discovered that he was of high rank. However, I approached him in a courteous manner, and expected to have met with the same reception I had done from the others: but to my great surprize he with-held his hand, and looking fiercely at me, said in the Chipeway tongue, "Cawin nishishni saganosh," that is, "The English are no good." I expected that this lanconick sentence would have been followed by a blow; to prevent which I drew a pistol from my belt, and, holding it in a careless position passed close by him, to let him see I was not afraid of him.

I learned soon after from the other Indians, that this was a chief, called by the French the Grand Sautor, or the Great Chipeway Chief, for the denominate the Chipeways Sautors. They likewise told me that he had been always a steady friend to that people, and when they delivered up Michilimackinac to the English on their evacuation of Canada, the Grand Sautor had sworn that he would ever remain the avowed enemy of its possessors, as the territories on which the fort is built belonged to him.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 96-97

The really interesting thing is that this encounter

with members of First Nations from the Great Lakes, including a grand chief, occurred somewhere on the height of land above the southern end of the Red River Valley. Carver makes it clear in the order of the narrative, that after he met the Grand Saulteaux when he arrived at Prairie du Chien, and that both the Grand Saulteaux and the Dakota representatives were on their way to Fort Michilimackinac to attend Governor Roger's conference. Carver is understood to have been travelling north upstream after leaving present-day western Minnesota state. Prairie du Chien is at the confluence of the Wisconsin River with the Mississippi. (Today there is a town of the same name on the east bank in the state of Wisconsin, and several effigy mound historic parks on the western Iowa side.) He portaged across to the Red River and from there took the Lake of the Woods route back to Michilimackinac. When Carver passed through Prairie du Chien three years before on his trip westward he estimated the seasonal population as reaching as much as 20,000 inhabitants.

If the Ojibway didn't arrive in the Red River Valley in great numbers until about 1800, what was the Grand Saulteaux doing near there in 1768? If he was a chief of the Michilimackinac area, why was he upstream of Prairie du Chien in what was ostensibly Dakota territory? Carver suspected he was there as an agent of the French to dissuade chiefs from going to Michilimackinac, and states that some delegates were induced to travel south on the Mississippi to a French sponsored conference (in what was officially Spanish territory.) By Carver's account neither the British nor the French respected the Spanish sovereignty over Louisiana.

The next morning I continued my voyage, and before night reached La Prairie le Chien; at which place the party of Naudowessies soon over-took me. Not long after the Grand Sauter also arrived, and before the Naudowessies left that place to continue their journey to Michillimackinac, he found means, in conjunction with some French traders from Louisiana, to draw from me about ten of the Naudowessie chiefs, whom he prevailed upon to towards those parts.

The remainder proceeded, according to my directions, to the English fort; from whence I afterwards heard that they returned to their own country without any unfortunate accident befalling them, and greatly pleased with the reception they had met with. Whilst not more than half of those who went to the southward through the difference of that southern cli-

mate from their own, lived to reach their abode. And since I came to England I have been informed, that the Grand Sauter having rendered himself more and more disgustful to the English by his inveterate enmity towards them, was at length stabbed in his tent, as he encamped near Michillimackinac, by a trader to whom I had related the foregoing story.

I should have remarked, that whatever Indians happen to meet at La Prairie le Chien, the great mart to which all who inhabit the adjacent countries resort, though the nations to which they belong are at war with each other, yet they are obliged to restrain their enmity, and to forbear all hostile acts during their stay there. This regulation has been long established among them for their mutual convenience, as without it no trade could be carried on. The same rule is observed also at the Red Mountain (afterwards described) from whence they get the stone of which they make their pipes: these being indispensable to the accommodation of every neighbouring tribe, a similar restriction becomes needful, and is of public utility.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 98-99

Carver is not the only source to describe councils at Michilimackinac among different Native Nations and the British. John Tanner specifically states that his adoptive grandmother, the Princess Net-no-kwa, attended meetings of the "...Sioux, the Winnebagoes, the Menomonees, and many remote tribes, as well as by the Ojibbeways, Ottawwaws, etc." [Tanner, p. 15.]

The quest for the Northwest Passage by the Rangers ended with Roger's court martial. Their legacy to our history was a pattern of contact between individual serving British officers and leaders of the Santee Dakota. Carver wanted to continue but his faction found it difficult to gather enough parliamentary support. When they did, the American Revolutionary War intervened. Carver described an expedition which was supposed to have been led by MP Richard Whitworth.

He designed to have pursued nearly the same route that I did; and after having built a fort at Lake Pepin, to have proceeded up the River St. Pierre, and from thence up a branch of the River Messorie, till having discovered the source of the Oregon or River of the West, on the other side the summit of the lands that divide the waters which run into the Gulf of



General Sir William Johnson was an expatriate Irishman who married a Mohawk princess and became a pivotal figure in British North America as the Commissioner for Indian Affairs during the French-Indian Wars. Johnson, in collaboration with Iroquois elders, framed the Royal Proclamation of 1763 upon which is based Canadian treaty law. Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson was a descendant.

Mexico from those that fall into the Pacific Ocean, he would have sailed down that river to the place where it is said to empty itself near the Straits of Annian.

Having there established another settlement on some spot that appeared best calculated for the support of his people, in the neighborhood of some of the inlets which tend towards the north-east, he would from thence have begun his researches. This gentleman was to have been attended in the expedition by Colonel Rogers, myself, and others, and to have taken out with him a sufficient number of artificers and mariners for building the forts and vessels necessary on the occasion and for navigating the latter; in all not less than fifty or sixty men. The grants and other requisites for this purpose were even nearly com-



Major [later Colonel] Robert Rogers was a loose cannon in the British Army: a colonial with a reputation for getting things done. He organized and led the Rangers, elite light infantry in green buckskin who emulated Native fighting tactics. Rogers may have presided over the “Sioux Treaty”, but political clashes with Sir William Johnson left him in disgrace and destroyed any records of the councils.

pleted, when the present troubles in America began, which put a stop to an enterprise that promised to be of inconceivable advantage to the British dominions.

Carver’s Travels through North America, CIHM edition pp. 281-282

Rogers and the Rangers had been brought to heel, there would be no treaties without the approval of the Indian Department. The obligation to the Dakota wasn’t collected, but the Algonquin Nations had occupied the Ohio Valley with the acquiescence of the British. The allegiance of the Dakota Nations to the British or to the Americans was left in doubt by Roger’s disgrace. When the American Revolutionary War broke out, the Indian Department had to pick up the threads of Roger’s negotiations to secure allies. From the Dakota point of view, the negotiations resumed where they’d left off and the price was the same — “one hundred miles of land.”

1778 Ohio Valley Campaign

In 1783, Great Britain conceded on paper the Ohio Valley region to the US, setting the northwest corner of the new country at Lake of the Woods. In fact, Britain did not give up its forts along the south shore of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, continued to trade via the HBC with Ojibway and Santee Dakota, and built up allies such as Tecumseh. The US accused Britain (correctly) of attempting to foster a Native buffer state in the region between Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. These relationships were extensions of the British-Native alliances which had held the Ohio Valley in the Revolutionary War of 1776.

Canadian historian Thomas H. Raddall described in his 1957 contribution to Thomas B. Costain's multi-volume work, the process by which the British lost the Ohio Valley.

The inflated Canadian domain set up by the Quebec Act was now in its last days [1778]. The undefended posts in the huge wedge between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers had survived the war so far because they had not been attacked; but as [newly appointed Governor of Canada] Haldimand walked into the Chateau St. Louis a band of Kentucky riflemen were on their way down the Ohio, led by George Rogers Clark. They had no trouble in winning over the happy-go-lucky French and Metis settlers, and in six weeks every post between the rivers was in American hands. Colonel Henry Hamilton, commanding the British fort at Detroit, led a party of soldiers and Indians deep into the country and recaptured Vincennes in December; but two months later the Indians deserted and betrayed him there and he was captured.

Thus the great midwestern belly of the Canadian empire vanished from the British maps, never to return. Mackinac, Detroit, Niagara and other fortified posts along the Great Lakes remained in British hands throughout the war; but all of them were on the wrong side of the water when the peace commissioners drew the boundary through the lakes, and eventually they too passed into the possession of the United States.

The Path of Destiny, Thomas H. Raddall, pp. 67-68

Raddall seems unaware of the operation of the

fur trade posts or the British Army (independently of the politicians) and displays a strong anti-Native bias. When Native forces retreat they “betray” and “abandon”, but when White forces retreat they engage in “strategic withdrawal.” Raddall wrote of the “abandonment” of Colonel Hamilton during the Ohio Valley campaign, in preference to actually crediting the American commander Colonel George Rogers Clark with outsmarting the British commander. The first person accounts of this battle do not square with Raddall’s assessment.

Louisiana Purchase

A pattern of diplomatic relationships emerged around Turtle Mountain which was not necessarily interrupted by warfare. The wars of the 1700’s were relatively low key affairs when compared to what followed in the later 1800’s. The Assiniboine and Dakota quarrelled over migratory buffalo herds, and sometimes over fixed natural resources, but by and large they did not seek to displace each other from their overlapping territory.

That situation changed dramatically with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

According to the European signatories to the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht the area south of the divide between the Mississippi and Hudson’s Bay watersheds was the territory of France. This was Louisiana. Subsequent to the post Seven Years War settlement of 1763 the territory of Louisiana was ceded to Spain. This was a compromise since Britain would continue the war unless France gave up the territory, and France would not see it in British hands. At the same time the British got Hudson’s Bay, Quebec and Acadia. The Spanish could not occupy such a vast territory as Louisiana, and therefore, expeditions such as de Soto’s notwithstanding, the vast region largely remained in the hands of its indigent Native nations. There were Spanish traders, and Canadian Metis and expatriate Celts employed by Spanish traders, all operating on the Upper Missouri but never in the numbers of their northern competitors. It helps to explain why La Verendrye was told at Lake of the Woods by an Assiniboine chief from Turtle Mountain that the latter had met a white man in armour on horseback somewhere to the south.

It took the Spanish until 1769 to even get a governor to New Orleans, one with the unlikely Latin name of Don Alessandro O’Reilly. In the 1790’s in order to establish a presence on the Middle Missouri they gave Royal Charters to Spanish businessmen such as Manuel Lisa. Lisa was born in 1772 in New Orleans to a provincial official’s family. In 1795 his company hired an experienced



North America as it was divided up by European powers in the early 1700's. This disposition would bring French, Spanish and English into contact with local and regional Algonquin, Siouan and Caddoan authorities. A French commercial core has grown up around ancient Cahokia. **[Native Americans: An Illustrated History.]**

Scottish trader and ex-Nor'wester, James McKay, as Chief Factor for a Spanish expedition to the Mandans. McKay's assistant was a romantic Welshman named John Evans who was looking for Welsh Indians. McKay and Evans lasted one year among the Mandans before being driven off by the northern fur traders, HBC and Nor'westers included. So much for the maiden Spanish presence on the upper and middle Missouri.

In 1800 the Spanish sold the Louisiana Territory, (which reached from New Orleans to the 49th parallel,) to Napoleon Bonaparte of France (at the time First Consul and later Emperor.) Napoleon intended to rebuild the French colonial empire in North America with this purchase. But, a few military reversals and he was cash poor. Consequently, in 1803 the Louisiana Purchase was

sold again, this time by Napoleon to the Americans, doubling overnight the official landmass of the USA.

Manuel Lisa and his Missouri Fur Company weathered the transition well. Lisa's base of operations was a warehouse and expediter business at St. Louis (across the river from ancient Cahokia.) He had no problem operating under the brief French regime of 1800 to 1803, and as an American citizen became a supplier to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. With John Jacob Astor he was one of the grandfathers of the American fur trade. The trade route which Lisa had inherited from the French, was in turn employed by Astor to bridge the distance from Michilimackinac on the Great Lakes to Oregon. Ironically this was the very same route advanced by Rogers and Carver.

No one at this point had as yet bothered to ask the First Nations living within this area how they felt about being traded back and forth.

According to the official history of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa, the Plains Ojibway arrived at Turtle Mountain as conquerors, not as refugees. The Louisiana Purchase for the Ojibway reopened the general offensive against the Sioux. The Ojibway cut a path from Lake Superior westward until they settled at Turtle Mountain. They stopped partly because they were running out of steam, while facing increasing resistance, and partly because the changing political climate at the end of the 1800's reduced the popularity of wars of extermination.

In the period between 1801-1805, the Ojibway formed their first permanent settlement in the Western Ojibway territory around the Alexander Henry trading post, in the area where the town of Pembina, North Dakota is now located. This group became the seed from which grew the Pembina Band of the Plains-Ojibway, of which later on the Turtle Mountain Band became the principal group. When the buffalo herds began to decline about the year of 1870, they were still headquartered in the Pembina area in the Territory of Dakota. With the decline and later on the almost complete disappearance of buffalo and other meat supply animals of the prairies, and also fur bearing animals, the means for obtaining livelihood dwindled down to a very low point. By their choice mode of life as hunters and trappers, they helped to hasten the day when this situation would become inevitable.

With their main source of subsistence gone and settlers moving farther west, they could not be tolerated in the face of a determined but selfish surge of civilization westward, so they had to move from the Pembina and Red River areas to the favourite spot of their ancestral homeland, Mekinawk Wudje, or Turtle Mountain.

Turtle Mountain Chippewa, P. Gorneau, p. 12.

On the Missouri the "British" traders, which included Hudson's Bay, Northwest Company and independent traders, held the upper hand over the Americans when the territory changed hands in 1803. Lewis and Clark's expedition was as much about showing the British off the premises as it was about exploring. Francois Larocque lacked the semi-official sanction of an Alexander Henry or a Selkirk, but it didn't stop him from in-

voking with a vague indeterminacy the authority of the British Empire. Larocque meant business, literally, and didn't mind blurring the edges of commerce and diplomacy. The reader should keep in mind that he made these promises when within territory he knew to be claimed by the United States.

[June 25, 1805] *This morning the Borgne sent for me, he showed me the Rocky Mountain Chief viz. of the Ererokas [Crow], and told him before me that I was going with him & to take good care of us & he spoke very much in our favour telling me that the B. Bellys were undetermined whether they would allow us to go or not, but that we would go if we liked it for that he would clear the road before us if necessary. I gave to two of the Ererokas each 6 Inch Tobacco and 20 Rounds of ammunition.*

Wednesday 26th. *The Mandans, Souliers, little village people & the people of the village went on horseback and arrived to perform the same ceremonies round the Rocky Mountain Camp, as the Rocky Mountains did yesterday here — they were about 500, but a great many warriors are absent being gone to war.*

Thursday 27th. *Assembled the Chiefs of the different Bands of the Rocky mountains, and made them a present [lists inventory of axes, knives, tools, tobacco, ammunition etc.] Made them smoke in a stem which I told them was that of the Chief of the White people who was desirous of making them his Children & Brethren that he knew they were pitiful, and had no arms to defend themselves from their enemies, but that they should cease to be pitiful as soon as they would make themselves brave hunters. That I and two men were going with them to see their lands and that we took with us some articles to supply their present wants that our Chief sent them those goods that lay before them, to make them listen to what we were now telling them, that he expected, they would treat all white people as their Brethren for that we were in peace and friendship with the Red skinned people and did not go about to get a scalp that probably they would see white people on the land from another quarter but that they were our brethren, and of course we expected they would not hurt them, that a few years ago they pillaged and ill treated a white*

man [Menard] who went to trade with them, that we would see how they would treat us and if they have behaved well towards us and kill Beavers, Otters & Bears, they would have white people on the lands in a few year, who would winter with them and supply them with all their wants &c &c. I told them many other things which I thought was necessary & closed the Harangue by making them smoke in the medicin pipe.

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 170-171

In 1803 the United States was requiring every Native nation within the former territory of Louisiana to pay allegiance to Washington. There would be no tolerance of British protectorates, or of sovereign tribes. A considerable part of Lewis and Clark's visit to the Middle Missouri villages was to apply this pressure to the Mandans, Hidatsa and Arickara. The latter would require more convincing, but after an initial reluctance the Mandans and Hidatsa by the end of the War of 1812 seem to have switched their alliance from the British to the Americans. Matche-go-whewub's three "police actions" directed from Turtle Mountain to the Mandan villages seem to be the last major cooperation among the nations using the Mandan Trail. After the War of 1812, the Mandans actually carried out raids deep into Assiniboia against their former allies, and by extension against the British.

In 1804 Nor'wester Charles McKenzie also found that the American pressure on the Mandan villages was increasing. Like Larocque, McKenzie felt the Mandans would resist the American enticements but without military support from the British it was only a matter of time.

Here we also found a party of forty Americans under the command of Captains Lewis and Clark exploring a passage by the Missouri to the Pacific Ocean — they came up the River in a Boat of twenty oars accompanied by two Peroques. Their fortification for winter Quarters were already complete — they had held a council with the Mandanes, and distributed many presents; but most of the Chiefs did not accept any thing from them. Some time after Captain Lewis, with three Interpreters paid a visit to the Gros Ventres [Hidatsa] Village, and went directly to the Serpents Lodge where he passed the night; next morning he came to the village where I was —

and observed to me that he was not very graciously received at the upper Village...

...After haranguing the Indians and explaining to them the purport of his expedition to the Westward, several of them accepted clothing — but notwithstanding they could not be reconciled to like these strangers as they called them: — "Had these Whites come amongst us, Said the Chiefs, with charitable views they would have loaded their Great Boat with necessaries. It is true they have ammunition but they prefer throwing it away idly than sparing a shot of it to a poor Mandane." The Indians admired the air Gun as it could discharge forty shots out of one load — but they dreaded the magic of the owners. "Had I these White warriors on the upper plains, said the Gros Ventres Chief, my young men on horseback would soon do for them, as they would do for so many wolves — for, continued he, there are only two sensible men among them — the worker of Iron, and the mender of Guns."

Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 232-233

A practical result, observed by McKenzie, was that the Hidatsa Wolf Chief felt he could kill Canadian traders on the upper Missouri with impunity. A few years later the United States would prosecute the brief Arickara War to bring that nation into line with the aspiring new masters of the Plains.

Rupert's Land in 1800

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Rangers-Dakota diplomacy had brought a breathing space for Siouan and Algonquin Nations in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. When the American Revolutionary War ended British *official* involvement south of the Medicine Line, the war between Ojibway and Dakota was resumed. If the disputed territories were not British, then either Dakota or Ojibway could claim them. Neither of these large Native societies was as yet going to recognize American authority in the Ohio Valley or Mississippi.

John Tanner the Falcon recorded that his own migration with the Ottawa from the Sault Ste. Marie area to the Red River of Manitoba occurred in 1793. He described the relationship of the Algonquin to the traders as being a very close one, with the Natives often directing the Europeans as to when and where they could trade and set up posts. He also observed the close cooperation

of the Algonquin with each other.

We stopped at a place called Prairie Portage where the Indians directed the trader who was with them to build his house and remain during the winter...

...We remained in this place about three months, in which time we were as well provided for as any of the band; for if our own game was not sufficient, we were sure to be supplied by some of our friends as long as any thing could be killed. The people that remained to spend the winter with us were two lodges, our own making three [of mixed Ottawa and Ojibway]; but we were at length joined by four lodges of Crees.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 31

A steady inflow of eastern Algonquin increased the pressure, resulting in some sharp exchanges between individual Ojibway and Ottawa. Occasionally this led to violence, but at no time did it reach among the Algonquin the systemic scale it found among the Siouans. One of the outlets for the Algonquin for the increasing population pressure was to expand into Siouan territory.

Tanner described a lecture he received from an Ojibway senior warrior, Wa-ge-tone, not because he was White, but because he was an Ottawa.

You are a stranger, said he, and one of many who have come from a distant country to feed yourself and your children with that which does not belong to you. You are driven out from your own country, and you come among us because you are too feeble and worthless to have a home or a country of your own. You have visited our best hunting grounds, and wherever you have been you have destroyed all the animals which the Great Spirit gave us for our sustenance. Go back therefore from this place and be no longer a burthen to us.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 158

An individual Cree might feel that the Ottawa were intruders, but overall it was the will of the Cree Nation that the Ojibway be allowed to resettle in areas of present day Manitoba. The history of Cree military and foreign policy shows a long term winning of control over a substantial portion of what later became Canada. These former Ottawa who were becoming known as the Saulteaux of Manitoba, along with other Algonquin people, were deployed in a national policy that included even the

fur traders. The oral history recorded by Chief Thompson included an account handed down from Peguis of meeting John Tanner.

When roving bands arrived from the Great Lakes to visit and hunt on the Plains, they were made welcome by the Saulteaux encampment. With one of these groups there appeared a large bark canoe bearing a flag denoting the royal status of the occupant, Princess Net-nokwa.

Recently widowed, she was travelling with her two sons. Her husband had lived in the Red River country when a young boy and often spoke of the fabulous prairie black with herds of buffalo, and the princess was hopeful of her sons becoming rich in the hunt.

Chief Peguis, observing the white skin of a fourteen-year-old boy, learned that he had been kidnapped from the settlers in Ohio six years before. He answered to the Indian name Shaw-Shaw-was-Be-na-se or The Falcon and appeared quite devoted to his foster-mother and older brother. His real name was John Tanner.

When Peguis saw Tanner eight years later, in 1803, the "white Indian" was twenty-two years old. He was one of a party of braves gathered at Fort Pembina to avenge a massacre there. A minor Assiniboine chief, the father-in-law of Alexander Henry the Younger, who was in charge of the Nor'Wester's fort, had been shot as he sat in a tree scanning the prairie for signs of buffalo.

Before the party of raiding Sioux could be driven off a number of men, women and children had been slaughtered.

When Alexander Henry returned from an inspection trip and found the people in mourning, he supplied the avenging Assiniboine and the Saulteaux with guns and ammunition, to pursue and fight the Sioux.

Peguis and his warriors joined the battle to annihilate the invaders, and the Chief noticed that John Tanner fought beside his adopted brother with outstanding bravery.

Chief Peguis and His Descendants, Albert Edward Thompson, pp. 4-5

The Ojibway claim of traditional territory which they put forward to their American allies, didn't include any recognition of Dakota or Cree traditional claims.

There's hardly a First Nation in the interior of North America that can't claim to have occupied part of Turtle Mountain at one time or another in the last 10,000 years. This Ojibway claim was opportunistic. Without the US or British support in weapons, the claim appeared ridiculous, based as it was on an oral history of having occupied the site approximately one thousand years before. For most of the last thousand years it had been contested by Dakota and Cree.

And yet, there had to be some basis for the claim to have been felt to be current in 1800. The Pembina Band were changing rapidly from woodland to plains environment. They virtually invented the "Plains Ojibway" tradition in a matter of only a couple of generations. According to Gourneau's history, the main body of the Ojibway band at Pembina didn't reach Turtle Mountain until the 1880's yet the Dakota chief Hadamanie negotiated in 1861 with an Ojibway chief on Turtle Mountain. Either the Ojibway were in control of Turtle Mountain; or Hadamanie was negotiating with an international council; or both.

In Tanner's account he relates that the north side of Turtle Mountain was visited by many different Algonquin groups, as well as by Assiniboine. While the Cree presence in southern Manitoba was intermittent at this time, Tanner described a steady escalation of pressure from the Ojibway and their cousins. Loose bands from nations such as the Ottawa, (to which Tanner belonged,) would in a few short generations fuse to become the *Saulteaux* of Manitoba.

The Ojibway tried to steer a course between the British and the Americans — not an easy thing when events such as the War of 1812 intervened — while at the same time encroaching upon Siouan held territory. The Ojibway of the period would have simply said they were reclaiming traditional territory.

The Americans, and to a lesser extent the British, viewed this process with some mixed feelings. Beating the Sioux back was good, but allowing other Indians such as the Ojibway to carve out new territories was viewed as questionable. Gourneau described the on-again off-again support which the Pembina band of Ojibway and *Saulteaux* received.

They had to seek help from the [US] Federal Government, their hope being that the Federal Government would comply with their request. As a matter of fact the Federal Government was fully aware of their plight but was reluctant to provide the necessary assistance to relieve the situation. To regard their

claimed territory which contained approximately ten million acres as a plum, the plum was ripe for picking, and picked it was by the permission of the Federal Government to allow settlers to move in and take it for themselves. The permission was granted quite a few years before the Federal Government offered to negotiate for the territory, which then formed a large portion of the northern part of North Dakota.

Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Patrick Gourneau, p. 12.

Professor Hind's report to the Province of Canada on conditions in the Northwest Territories agrees with Chief Gourneau's account of an Ojibway "state" recognized by the US government by 1859. His 1859 report would have put *all* of present-day North Dakota within a jurisdiction called "Chippewa Territory" so far as the USA was concerned, but also noted that the Sioux hadn't ceded their territory as late as 1859 — the eve of the Minnesota Uprising.

War of 1812

After the expulsion of the French from most of North America, the Sioux dealt with the British. When the Revolution of 1776 broke out, the Sioux remained in the British camp. This alliance established the Sioux claim to rights in Canada, because like United Empire Loyalists, they felt they deserved land and compensation for supporting the British.

According to the Dakota oral tradition, as passed by Holy Sky of Sioux Valley Reserve to Father Laviolette, the British promised "*one hundred miles of territory*" within British North America as compensation for lands lost by the Dakota to the United States while serving the British cause in the War of 1812.

Though now distant in both time and geography, these events have a direct bearing on the subsequent events at Turtle Mountain in the late 1800's.

In 1776, the American Revolution began. Both the Americans and British sought military alliances with Indian nations, but the Dakota had already chosen to support the Crown. Wapasha, chief of the M'dewakontonwon, went to Mackinac in 1779 to offer his warriors to the British cause, for which he was given a commission in the British army. When he learned of the defeat of the British in 1783 Wapasha accepted the fact, but refused to transfer his allegiance to the

Americans.

The Dakota of the Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 8

According to Laviolette, the Santee Dakota who joined the British were led by a chief called Red Standard. Laviolette's history puts Red Standard as the grand chief in 1778. By 1812 he had been succeeded as Dakota grand chief by one of the others on the list, Red Thunder. Another of the chiefs on the list, Waanatan (Wannata or Wanatan)[“Charges” or “Charger”,] was reputed to be the son of Red Thunder and would eventually become a senior chief of both Yankton and Santee. Wanatan was met by Carver as a young man, and by Nicollet when an old man. It's an important historic list, which is why Laviolette recorded it from the elders. These people bridge the era between that of the American Revolution and the Indian Wars of the 1860's.

The Canadian Dakota oral tradition retains the names of eleven Santee chiefs who received George III medals on August 17, 1778, in recognition of the assistance given British troops during the War of Independence: Wabasha (Red-standard) of the Mdewakantons; Hinton-kasa-wakan (Sacred-weasel) of the Mdewakantons; Wakan-to (Blue-above) of the Wahpekutes; Wakinyan-duta (Red-thunder), a Sisseton; Hupa-duta (Red-wing), a Sisseton; (Inyang-mani) Runs-walking, a Wahpeton; Wambdi-hoton-mani (Eagle-cries-walking), a Wahpeton, Ta-cante (His-heart), a Wahpeton; Waanatan (Charges-at), a Yanktonai; Wamaza (Maize), a Yankton; and Tahahukeza-nonpa (His-two-lances), a Teton.

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, G. Laviolette, p. 101

Another oral tradition attributed to Sitting Eagle and cited in a 1937 *Winnipeg Free Press* interview attests that “seven nations” of Sioux received medals in recognition of a military alliance with the British in the War of 1812. In the list given above by Gontran Laviolette there are *eleven* chiefs representing *seven* nations: Mdewakanton, Wahpekutes, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Yanktonai, Yankton and Teton.

The original “Sioux Treaty” as an historical event which became the stuff of legend was probably that negotiated by Major Robert Rogers at Fort Michilimackinac in 1768. Allowed to lapse by Sir William Johnson's administration of Indian Affairs, it was reinvoked for the War of 1812. The man with the right knowledge, authority and opportunity to do that was Robert Dickson. Dickson was an independent fur trader of the Nor'westers to

some; a British army captain to others; an Indian Agent to the British government; and to the Dakota he was Mascotapah (the Red Hair Man).

The Dakota were immediately engaged in the struggle against the Americans. When the war was declared, Robert Dickson, a trader who had headquartered at Michilimackinac, addressed the principal chiefs of the Dakota, who were assembled near Wapasha's village. He asked for a re-affirmation of the ties between the Dakota and the British. The Dakota call the War of 1812 Pahinshashawackikiya. Wahpentonwon Tribal Historian Robert Goodvoice of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, translates this to mean “When the Redhead Begged for Our Help.” referring to Dickson's reddish hair.

The Dakota of the Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 8

As a Nor'wester, Dickson had access to an extensive logistical system which could deliver goods, services and men to any point from Prairie du Chien in the southwest to Montreal in the northeast to the Rockies in the west or the Mackenzie Delta in the far north. The American and British Armies might have transport problems, but Dickson had transport solutions at his call.

As a British Army militia officer and an Indian Agent, Dickson was the appointed liaison for the upper Great Lakes area between the British command and the “western Indians.” Dickson constantly recruited troops from the Native allies of the British, and in some cases he led mixed parties on commando-like raids.

As a British officer of the generation *after* Robert Rogers, but serving at Fort Michilimackinac, Dickson was aware of the “historical” grand council meeting which had taken place at his very post thirty years or more before. He was acutely aware of the vulnerability of the British possessions to attack, and the need for Native levies to flesh out the paper armies. As a Nor'wester he had the additional benefit of knowing about the American declaration of war more than two weeks before the local Americans did. (An American officer complained that the Northwest Company was little better than an intelligence network for the British, albeit a commercial one.)

These advantages held by Dickson paled before the additional benefit that he was married into the leading Dakota families. The following biographical information was located on the “Trade Goods” website on fur trade history, and was corroborated with the Dickson family genealogical web.

Robert Dickson (Mascotapah or “Red Hair Man”):(abt. 1768-1823)

He was the oldest son of John Dickson & Helen Wight, born at Dumfries, Scotland. Robert’s wife was Helen or Totowin (daughter of Chief Wanoti & sister of Nakota Chief Red Thunder) and their children were: William (b. 1798/1801)(m. 1st. to a part Ojibwe woman & 2nd. to a Yankton woman), Helen (Ellen) (1808-1884)(m. 1st. to Joseph R. Brown & 2nd. to Moses Arconge), Thomas (1812-abt. 1833) & Mary (Marie)(b. 1814)(m. to Henry Ange).

Robert and his brothers (William & Thomas) were brought to North America to assist their cousin, Robert Hamilton, with his British government contracts & the fur trade. He was employed by the British Indian Department at Mackinac Is. in the 1780’s which allowed him to become acquainted with the trade in the Upper Mississippi. By the beginning of the War of 1812 he was one of the most influential traders in that region. During the war he was placed in charge [of] the British Indian Department for the Western Tribes, due to his influence in the area of the Great Lakes and to the west. He died at Drummond Is. on the 20th of June in 1823.

www.usinternet.com/users/dfnls/dickson.htm

Dickson could hardly have been better connected to facilitate a military alliance between the Nations of the Ohio and Mississippi River systems with the British. According to Doug Elias, Dickson’s commission was actually granted in 1813 and postdated a year before the beginning of the war in order to legitimize any of his actions. That implies that Dickson as a fur trader was already to some extent undercover for the British military. It is possible that Dickson initiated such a far-reaching alliance, and a resurrection of an old lapsed treaty, entirely on his own but it seems doubtful. It is equally possible, and a great deal more probable, that the Dakota or Tecumseh initiated the broad strategic alliance in the “Old Northwest.” From the Dakota point of view the original treaty terms of 1768 would still be remembered in 1812, and would continue to be the price of cooperation. Tecumseh was well aware of the strategic issues in the Ohio, including the need to have a peaceful ally at his back.

Before their arrival at Michilimackinac,



Tecumseh, from a woodcut reproduced in Richardson’s War of 1812. The military forces led by Tecumseh in alliance with the British numbered more than twenty tribes, principally southern Algonqin but including a minority of Santee Dakota.

Dickson and the Indians of the west were acting very much upon their own initiative. In January 1813 a board of enquiry was convened in Quebec to consider the role played by this force, and it was recommended that Dickson be “Agent for the Indians to the Westward of the East side of Lake Huron,” and that he be compensated for all expenses incurred. His commission was antedated one year in order to make legitimate the services so far rendered. The board of enquiry also recommended that the Indians be presented with a large belt of wampum, six silk flags and five large medals “intended to be given to the Principal Chief of each nation for the purpose of descending from him to his successor

John Richardson's account of the War of 1812 preserved two despatches from this action in its footnotes. Richardson was critical in the text of Captain Charles Roberts in glossing over the role of the Natives, and included for thoroughness the report of a stores clerk of the Army Indian Department to the Superintendent-in-Chief of Indian Affairs, Colonel Claus.

The order of battle is significant. Indian Affairs was then a department within the British Army bureaucracy. In this case its officer in the field was a stores clerk, who in turn answered through a chain of command in the form of Captain Roberts. The principal "British" troops involved were a company of the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion, one of the bands of discharged Rangers and Light Infantry, (and/or their descendants) who received colonial land grants in exchange for military service. Often farms of the 10th Royal Veterans were found cheek-by-jowl with those of the Ojibway. After the final western battle, both nations' farms and villages were despoiled by the advancing Americans, as was one of Selkirk's colonies. The 10th Royal Veterans was Richardson's adoptive home regiment, into which his father had been discharged after service as regimental surgeon to the King's Rangers. The military alliance, or warrior-bond if you prefer, between these units and their Native allies was at this time two to three generations old. The entire Right Division of the Canadian Army was composed of British and Canadian units experienced in working with Natives, and Native forces experienced in working with Whites. Tecumseh held the rank of a provincial brigadier general in the British Army.

Sir,—On the 15th instant [15th July, 1812] I received letters by Express from Major General Brock, with orders to adopt the most prudent measures either of offence or defence which circumstances might point out, and having received intelligence from the best information that large reinforcements were daily expected to be thrown into this garrison and finding that the Indians who had been collected would soon have abandoned me if I had not made the attempt, with the thorough conviction that my situation at St. Joseph's was totally indefensible, I determined to lose no time in making the meditated attack on this Fort [Michilimackinac.]

On the sixteenth, at Ten o'clock in the morning, I embarked my few men with about one hundred and fifty Canadian Engagues, half of them without arms, about three hundred

Indians and two Iron Six-pounders.

[...two paragraphs omitted here on deployment, stores and mentions...]

The Indians are flocking in from all Quarters...

Richardson's War of 1812, pp. 22-23

Store Clerk John Askin Jr. was the supply officer who had to sign out ammunition and rations to His Majesty's Indians. His report to Colonel Claus gives greater detail on the numbers of Native forces and their parent Nations. As a clerk, Askin was equivalent to an ordnance sergeant today or a quartermaster. The despatch also draws a sharp distinction between the discipline of a war-party versus that of a raiding party. The Native warriors sent by their Nations to serve with Askin were soldiers, not bandits.

Which is not to say that the Canadian traders who served as officers didn't turn a profit. They were enlisted (on paper at least) in a kind of supply and transport unit called the Canadian Voyageur Corps. The Army command eventually decided that giving traders the prerogatives of military rank was a bad idea and the unit was disbanded the following year. That in turn required rehiring a lot of free-lance voyageurs to make up the deficiency in transport as the logistical problems of the Canadian forests and lakes became apparent to the British generals. The ranks and uniforms of the Voyageur Corps would re-emerge later in the Red River Troubles.

Dear Sir, I am happy to have it in my power to announce to you that Fort Mackinac capitulated to us on the 17th instant, at 11 o'clock A.M. Captain Roberts at our head with part of the 10th R. V. Battalion. Mr. Crawford had the command of the Canadians which consisted of about 200 men, Mr. Dickson 113 Scioux, Fallsowines [Menominee,] & Winnebagoes; myself about 130 men, Ottawas and Chippewas: part of the Ottawas of L'Arbre Croche [The Bent Tree] had not arrived. It was a fortunate circumstance that the Fort capitulated without firing a single gun, for had they done so, I firmly believe not a soul of them would have been saved. My Son, Charles Langlade, Augustin Nolin, and Michel Cadotte, Junr., have rendered me great service in keeping the Indians in order, and executing from time to time such commands as were delivered to me by the Commanding Officer. I never saw so determined a set of people as the Chippewas and Ottawas were. Since the

Capitulation, they have not tasted a single drop of liquor, nor even killed a fowl belonging to any person, a thing never known before, for they generally destroy everything they meet with.

Richardson's War of 1812, pp. 24-25

The Winnebago are a Siouan people who lived on the northwestern shore of Lake Michigan close alongside their trading partners the Algonquin Menominee, Saukteaux and Ottawa. The "Scioux" referred to by Stores Clerk Askin were drawn from some or all of the Siouan nations mentioned in Laviolette's narrative.

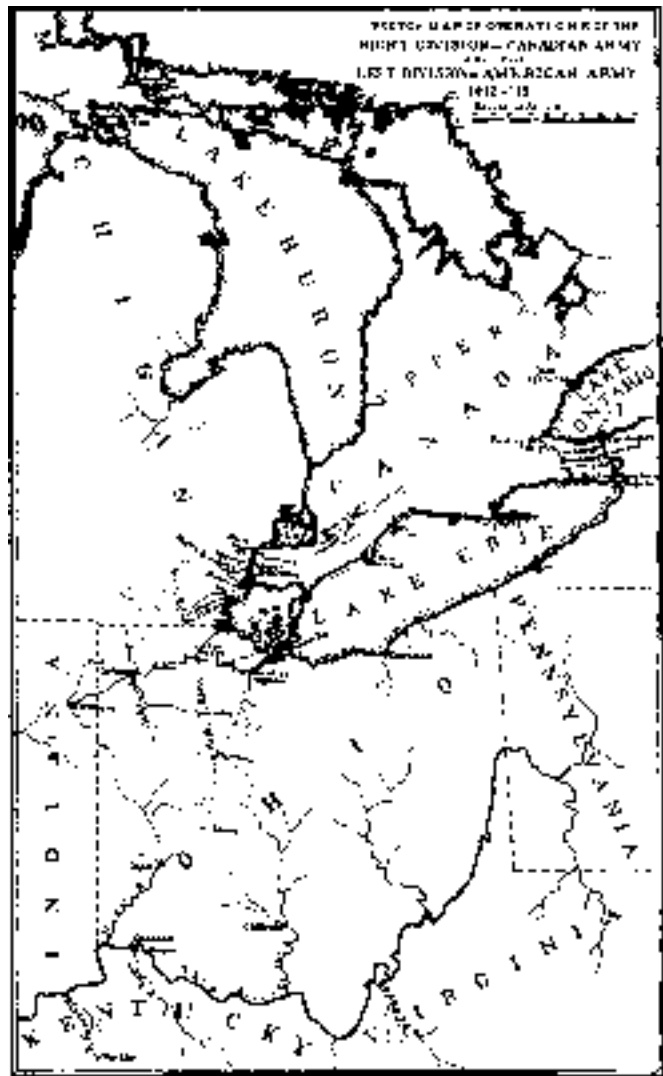
Taking Fort Michilimackinac wasn't an idle side-show. As it had been for ages, in 1812 the region was still the strategic control point for Lake Superior, Lake Michigan or Lake Huron depending on one's direction of travel. Those routes in turn controlled access to the Hudson's Bay watershed, the Mississippi watershed, and the Atlantic watershed respectively. Captain Roberts would have had to have been a fool not to act, and the Native war chiefs did not give him that choice.

If we look at participation in this battle as a demographic problem, the resources applied to the seizure of Fort Michilimackinac show the real face of the northern alliance. The British Army acted through its surrogates, the Native war parties. The Northwest Company supplied the bulk of the logistics. Of approximately 450 total personnel: 44% were landed Canadians, 37% were Algonquin, 17% were Siouan. The remaining 2% were command and logistical personnel.

If the entire population of the Siouan Nations was 30,000 at the time of the War of 1812, then its peace time military strength was around 3,000 warriors. One hundred "Scioux" at the Battle of Michilimackinac in 1812 would have represented about 3.3% of Sioux military strength. That should be sufficient to claim a treaty given that the British and Canadian claims to Rupert's Land (prior to 1870) represented a smaller commitment in both *per capita* and in actual numbers.

One of the leading figures among the southern Algonquin, was Tecumseh or "Shooting Star." Tecumseh's leadership drew heavily on both his father's Panther Clan and on his mother's Turtle Clan. Both parents had a reputation for wise leadership, which Tecumseh lived up to and surpassed.

Major John Richardson was a Canadian colonial who rose to see Imperial service overseas in South Africa and India. He was born in a military colony of retired Rangers and Light Infantry, the son of the regimental surgeon of Roger's Rangers. In the War of 1812 he served with the "Right Division" which included Tecum-



Map of the British operational area in the Ohio Valley during the War of 1812. This map originally appeared in the 1902 edition of Major Richardson's memoirs. Richardson accompanied British and Indian troops in campaigns around Detroit. The entire western edge of this map was held by Native allies of the British at the conclusion of the war. The Americans had been held to a position east of modern Indiana. This huge area was traded back for the southwestern Ontario peninsula which was then occupied by the Americans. The Ghent treaty makers swapped half a continent for part of southwestern Ontario. It's unlikely that the British negotiators ever looked at a map.

seh and his warriors along with British regulars and Canadian militia. Richardson knew Tecumseh personally as he was then a young captain on staff. In his own memoirs, Richardson complained that Tecumseh's contribution was minimized by too many historians on the one



The Fortress of Michilmackinac as it appeared in 1812. The turtle shape outline is visible, but the shoreline has a village, the heights a fort, and the peak has a gun battery. Awarded to the Americans at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, it was taken by Dakota and Ojibway forces with support from the British at the beginning of the War of 1812. In 1813 an attempt by the Americans to retake it in an amphibious operation was repelled. After 1818 it was returned to the Americans.

hand, while in his victories the numbers of his forces are exaggerated.

I call it a grave error, not only because it diminishes the extraordinary merit of the action, but because it detracts from the glory and influence of Tecumseh, the prestige of whose name and presence as much as anything else, by inspiring the utmost confidence in his little band of followers, contributed to the signal defeat sustained by the enemy on that memorable occasion.

Richardson's War of 1812, p. 33

John Richardson was present at many of the cooperative military operations carried out by the British and their Native allies. In his writing he discarded none of the 18th Century paternalism of his day, but he also portrayed a protective bond that developed among comrades-at-arms. Richardson's "old boys network" included Natives. As a serving officer he witnessed first hand how British and Indian forces cooperated and what they expected of each other.

Much has been said and written in respect to the Redmen of the forest; but I do not recollect having ever met with a detail sufficiently accurate to convey a just idea of the character of these people. As they will occupy a tolerable portion of my attention, and frequently appear under circumstances which may incline the reader to incredulity, I will merely

observe, that no one incident will be found committed to these pages, which may not be attested by every officer who served with the Right Division of the Canadian army. In fact, to that division alone were the more savage of the Indian race attached; and when it is considered, that among the warriors of at least twenty different tribes, there were those who had scarcely ever any previous intercourse with whites, and had seldom approached a fortified place but in open hostility, the indomitableness of their natures will cease to excite surprise. As it is my intention to give a faithful account of the various cruelties committed during our struggle in Canada — cruelties we had not power to prevent, since perpetrated by an ally over whom we had no control — it may not be improper to advert to the motives for their employment. The Americans have invariably been loud in their condemnation of a measure which alone secured to us the possession of Upper Canada: with how little reason, however, will appear from the well-known fact, that every possible exertion was used, by the agents of their Government, to detach the Indians from our cause. Embracing the system adopted and followed by England for years, presents of all descriptions were issued to the warriors; while, in the council, the most flattering promises were made, the most seducing offers held forth, to induce them to make common cause with the invader. The wary chieftains, however, were not to be tempted by professions of friendship from those whose perfidy had long been proverbial with the Indian race. The bounties of England had been heaped on them with no sparing hand — the faith of the Government had never been violated — no spirit of interest or domination had chased them from the homes of their forefathers — the calumet of peace had never once been dashed from their lips of those they were called to abandon; and they remained true to the faith they had pledged, staunch to the cause in which they had embarked. The natives must have been our friends or our foes: had we not employed them the Americans would; and although humanity may deplore the necessity imposed by the very invader himself, of counting them among our allies, and combating at their side, — the law

of self-preservation was our guide, and scrupulous indeed must be the power that would have hesitated at such a moment in its choice.

Richardson's War of 1812, pp. 5-7

If written documentation of the "Sioux Treaty" was destroyed with the disgrace of Major Robert Rogers, the effect of the treaty and others like it was still being felt in the British and Canadian army of 1812 — thirty-five to forty years after Rogers first negotiated the treaty. Political leaders have been careful in the preserved documentation not to endorse the existence of such a treaty, but military leaders had to operate around it in the field. When the Americans were approaching the recapture of Detroit there was a battle of rhetoric to accompany the bullets. The American general William Hull issued a proclamation aimed at divorcing the Canadian militia from the Indian forces. The proclamation included within its fierce language the explicit statement, "*No white men found fighting by the side of an Indian will be taken prisoner; instant destruction will be his lot.*" This precipitated a response from the British general who felt forced to clarify, for the benefit of the Canadian and Native civilians, as well as for the allied army, the relationship between allied First Nations and the British Empire. Richardson kept copies of both, which were reprinted in the 1902 edition together with an editor's note on the provenance of the response. According to editor Alexander Casselman, the counter-proclamation was ordered and signed by Major General Isaac Brock, the general officer commanding in British North America. However, the document was written by "*Mr. Justice Powell, then Senior Puisne Judge of the Court of King's Bench of which Court he became Chief Justice in the year 1816.*"

It's as close to an 1812 court opinion on a secret treaty as the record is likely to produce short of prying open the British Privy Council files on the subject. It contains two important principles: that Natives like anyone anywhere had a right to self defence; and secondly that the British owed their allies compensation for lands lost in the service of the Crown.

Be not dismayed at the unjustifiable threat of the commander of the enemy [American] forces to refuse quarter should an Indian appear in the ranks. The brave bands of natives which inhabit this colony were, like His Majesty's subjects, punished for their zeal and fidelity, by the loss of their possessions in the late colonies, and rewarded by His Majesty with lands of superior value in this Province;

the faith of the British government has never yet been violated, they feel that the soil they inherit is to them and their posterity protected from the base arts so frequently devised to overreach their simplicity. By what new principle are they to be prevented from defending their property? If their warfare, from being different from that of the white people, is more terrific to the enemy, let him retrace his steps — they seek him not — and cannot expect to find women and children in an invading army; but they are men, and have equal rights with all other men to defend themselves and their property when invaded, more especially when they find in the enemy's camp ferocious and mortal foe, using the warfare which the American commander affects to reprobate.

Richardson's War of 1812, pp. 18-19

After a promising opening campaign in which Detroit fell almost bloodlessly, the Right Division became bogged down in its march down the Miami River towards its confluence with the Ohio. During the retreat the British and Indian forces were overtaken by American forces under Brigadier General William Henry Harrison.

Several times Tecumseh attempted to get the British commander to make a stand, as each mile of territory given up without a fight to the Americans meant another disaffected Native band. If all the Native lands were given up as a sacrifice to preserve the White colonies, there would be no Native allied army left.

General Procter proposed that the forts of Detroit and Amherstburg, together with the various public buildings, should be destroyed, and that the troops and Indians should retire on the Centre Division at Niagara. This proposal was met by the chieftains with divided sentiments; but Tecumseh, whose gallant and impetuous spirit could ill brook the idea of retiring before his enemies, had no sooner heard the conclusion, than he arose, and, in a speech of much length, and accompanied by powerful energy and gesticulation, protested against the infamy of abandoning the position without first using every exertion for its defence.

Richardson's War of 1812, p. 204.

Tecumseh couldn't believe that Procter would destroy military stores rather than use them. Richardson, who heard Tecumseh speak, provided his own lengthy

account of the meeting during which Tecumseh offered to fight a rearguard so the British could withdraw, if only they'd leave the equipment.

"Listen, father! The Americans have not yet defeated us by land; neither are we sure that they have done so by water: we therefore wish to remain here, and fight our enemy, should they make their appearance. If they defeat us, we will then retreat with our father.

At the battle of the Rapids, last war, the Americans certainly defeated us; and when we retreated to our father's fort at that place, the gates were shut against us. We were afraid that it would now be the case; but instead of that we now see our British father preparing to march out of his garrison.

Father! You have got the arms and ammunition which our great father sent for his red children. If you have any idea of going away, give them to us, and you may go in welcome, for us. Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them."

Richardson's War of 1812, p. 206

Eventually General Procter was able to convince the chiefs and chieftains, as well as his junior officers, that the Right Division had to withdraw or risk being cut off. When the Right Division advanced it was Brock against Hull, a very aggressive British general against an indecisive American general. On the retreat the active and passive characters were reversed in Procter and Harrison. Harrison was one of the most active American generals in the war and Procter easily one of the most indecisive British generals. Before Moriaviantown the British and Allied army had to make a stand because if this key Indian reserve was lost, all of the Ontario-based Native forces would melt away and southern Ontario would be strategically exposed from the west. Procter's handling of the battle was inept, and ignoring Tecumseh's advice, he attempted to delay American mounted riflemen and dragoons with light skirmish lines. Tecumseh's own forces formed a wing in a swamp, and for this reason some of them lived and were able to help British soldiers escape. The confusion of the swamp battle added to the mysteriousness of Tecumseh's death.

Richardson described vividly his last glimpses of Tecumseh in the Battle of Moriaviantown.

The most serious loss we sustained on this

occasion was that of the noble and unfortunate Tecumseh. Only a few minutes before the clang of the American bugles was heard ringing through the forest, and inspiring to action, the haughty Chieftain had passed along our line, pleased with the manner in which his left was supported, and seemingly sanguine of success. He was dressed in his usual deer skin dress, which admirably displayed his light yet sinewy figure, and in his handkerchief, rolled as a turban over his brow, was placed a handsome white ostrich feather, which had been given to him by a near relation of the writer of this narrative, and on which he was ever fond of decorating himself, either for the Hall of Council or the battle field. He pressed the hand of each officer as he passed, made some remark in Shawnee, appropriate to the occasion, which was sufficiently understood by the expressive signs accompanying them, and then passed away forever from our view.

Richardson's War of 1812, p. 212

The lines did not hold, and the American cavalry rolled up the British skirmishers like beads on a string.

With the collapse of the British force [US general William Henry] Harrison turned his cavalry on the Indians. There the tale was just as brief, although in their swampy thickets, where horsemen could not follow, most of the Indians were able to get away. Some escaped upstream and eventually reached Burlington by circling through the woods, bringing with them a number of the British soldiers. Tecumseh by his own fierce example held a few together at the front of the wood, but they were overrun and the Shawnee was killed. In the quick shift and confusion of the fight some of his band seized a chance to drag the body into the thickets, where they scooped a shallow grave and buried it, concealing the traces. When darkness came they slipped away, never to return. So ended Tekumtha, the Shooting Star, and with him the last hope of Indian unity in the West."

The Path of Destiny, Thomas H. Raddall, p. 237

Actually, the "last hope of Indian unity in the West" did not die with Tecumseh, it became the theme for the Indian Wars that dominated most of the following

century.

The destruction and capture of most of the Right Division of the Canadian Army was a political setback for Native people in that it removed from the Canadian Order of Battle the most experienced people in Native-White relations. For the remainder of the War of 1812 the Right Division's former theatre was filled in by hastily drafted militia battalions from eastern Canada. The close working relationship of Sioux and Ojibway warriors alongside British Rifles and Canadian Rangers was increasingly forgotten.

Out west there were still victories. General William Clark (of Lewis and Clark,) built up a riverine force and attacked upriver along the Mississippi. British generals and other American generals might not have understood how the interior waterways worked, but William Clark did. (His eldest brother was the Colonel George Rogers Clark who'd led the American Ohio Campaign of 1778.) In 1767 Jonathan Carver had described a tent city of 20,000 people at Prairie du Chien. In 1811 the Americans described it as a "hundred families" with permanent residence. As a market Prairie du Chien was declining in importance, but as a strategic chokepoint it was still critical.

Located above the Wisconsin River on the east bank of the Mississippi in Illinois Territory (modern Wisconsin), Prairie du Chien had long been important as a center for the Canadian fur traders and as a supply point for Indian lead mines located to the southward. In 1811 the town had a population of about a hundred families, mainly of mixed French and Indian blood, and boasted over thirty houses within the actual settlement. American officials had never attempted to exert more than a shadowy control over either Prairie du Chien or Green Bay. Both areas were nominally under the authority of the Governor of Illinois, but the people felt closer to officials of Missouri, and closest of all to the British, since Canadian fur interests completely dominated the towns.

The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest, A. Gilpin, p. 245.

To secure what was on paper American territory, General Clark sent sixty regular infantry and 200 militia in three gunboats. There was no opposition but the American troops still found it necessary to kill prisoners. Among those slain were several relatives of Red Thunder and Robert Dickson.

At this news most of the western Indians that had arrived at Mackinac with Dickson demanded to return westward. McDouall was well aware of the military importance of Prairie du Chien to the Americans, and also that its continued possession by them would go far toward putting the fur trade of the whole Upper Mississippi region into American hands. He appointed William McKay, an old fur man, to the rank of major (he had been the captain of the Michigan Fencibles on the island), gave him the local rank [either a brevet or a provincial rank] of lieutenant-colonel, and assigned him to command an expedition to Prairie du Chien. McKay's force consisted of Sergeant James Keating of the Royal Artillery and twelve men of the Michigan Fencibles equipped with a three-pounder, as well as two companies of voyageurs and Canadian volunteers under specially commissioned captains, Thomas G. Anderson and Joseph Rolette. The force left in three gunboats, accompanied by 300 Indians traveling in canoes.

The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest, A Gilpin, p. 245.

The combined British and Native force retook Prairie du Chien, seriously damaging one of the American gunboats which despite the name had not been equipped with any cannon. This battle and the forces engaged were not mentioned in any of the Canadian histories consulted, although the American military historian Gilpin felt that it was as equally important as the taking and retaking of Detroit. The fact of the deployment is echoed in John Halkett's defence of Lord Selkirk because he recalled that Selkirk was refused a request for demobilization of a small garrison including artillerists from Prairie du Chien to the Red River. Selkirk knew they were to be withdrawn from Prairie du Chien as a peace condition and hoped to have them relocate to the colony. It is likely that the majority of forces engaged on the "British" side in this battle were Dakota.

The close of the War of 1812 had left the British in an astonishingly good military position, but they don't seem to have appreciated it themselves. After decades of Napoleonic warfare, the British government and public wanted peace. The forces led first by Brigadier General Tecumseh, then succeeded to by Black Hawk (for the Algonquins) and Red Thunder (for the Dakota), had defeated the Americans across a large front stretching from the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi, to Michilimackinac. The Americans had succeeded only in

occupying the southwestern Ontario peninsula. The developing farms of Ontario could be visualized by the British negotiators, but for some reason the forests of present-day Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin could not. The Native forces had won a strategic victory which could have secured *half* of present-day continental United States to the British Empire. For some of the First Nations who joined the British alliance, the land which was lost represented *all* of their world.

Notwithstanding the best intentions of the British officers such as Colonel Elliot, Captain Dickson and then-Lieutenant Richardson, the British government *did* abandon its Native allies who were caught on the wrong side of the demarkation negotiated in 1817. The first “Medicine Line” was drawn through the Great Lakes to Lake of the Woods. Allies of the British for two generations, the Natives of the Ohio Valley couldn’t believe they’d been abandoned.

The Indian concerns were made known at the annual August 15, 1815 meeting of Canadian Ojibwe chiefs at Drummond Island. Lieutenant Colonel McKay, of the Indian Department, reported that Black Hawk had complained that Americans were overrunning the Sauk country, adding that they were threatening his people with destruction. Black Hawk reminded the British of their promises that “when our Great Father made peace we should be considered as Englishmen and your brethren. This was not only told to us by you, my father, but also by Redhead Dickson, Agent at Amherstburg, and by our Great Father, the chief warrior at Quebec. Chief Mishenaway was at Quebec and, with his own eyes saw the Great Warrior and, with his own ears, heard him repeat nearly the same words that you yourself told me.”

Chiefs Wabasha II and Little Crow travelled one thousand miles by canoe to attend the 1816 Drummond Island Conference. They protested bitterly the separate peace made by the British with the Americans.

With great dignity, Wabasha II addressed the British, saying, “My father, what is this I see before me? A few knives and blankets! Is this all your promised at the beginning of the war? Where are those promises you made at Michilimackinac and communicated to our villages on the Mississippi? You told us you would never let the hatchet fall until the Americans

were driven beyond the mountains; that our British father would never make peace without consulting his Red Children. Has that come to pass? We never knew of this peace. We are told it was made by our Great Father beyond the water, without the knowledge of his war chiefs; that it is your duty to obey his orders. What is this to us? Will they make good your promises to us? For myself, I am an old man. I have lived long and always found the means of subsistence, and I can do so still!”

Little Crow was even more defiant and vehement in his statement, “After we fought for you, endured many hardships, lost some of our people and awakened the vengeance of our powerful neighbours, you make peace for yourselves and left us to obtain such terms as we can! You no longer need our services, and offer us these goods to pay us for having deserted us. But no! We will not take them; we hold them and yourselves in equal contempt!” Saying so, and throwing away the presents right and left, he withdrew.

The oral Dakota tradition after the 1815 peace describes how the Dakota nation felt betrayed by the British:

“About eight years (in 1823) after the war... The British had a big paper made (for the Wahpetons). This paper gave us one hundred miles of land for our help in the war.” (This official document was held by Mahpiyawakan [Holy Sky] until the day it was given to Canada’s Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, during his visit to the Sioux Valley Reserve in Manitoba, during his term of office, 1911-1916.)

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, G. Laviolette, pp. 110-111

The Siouan allies of the British were again cut off from their source of European support. They could hardly expect any sympathy from the American government. The Ojibway however, still enjoyed British support from the Great Lake forts and took advantage of the changing circumstances. The alliance carefully built by Tecumseh was already unravelling.

Tanner described joining a party of approximately a hundred Ojibway in an excursion south of Pembina around 1812-1813.

After our [1812] spring hunting we began to think of going against the Sioux... We went on, wandering about from place to place, and

instead of going against our enemies, spent the greater part of the summer among the buffalo... In the fall I returned to Pembinah... In the ensuing spring [1813], there was a very general movement among the Ojibbeways of the Red River toward the Sioux country, but the design was not, at least avowedly, to fall upon or molest the Sioux, but to hunt.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 156-157

In fairness to the Sioux, hunting or warfare in this kind of economy was much the same thing. Communities deprived of food through overhunting died just as surely as if they'd been killed by tomahawk or gun. Little Clam, the Ojibway chief of this group, would have certainly known that. He would later be killed in battle at Devil's Lake, North Dakota, well inside the southern region of Turtle Mountain nominally held by the Sioux.

Although the Pembina Band of Ojibway appear to have been embarked on their own war of conquest, they also carried on negotiations with their neighbours. Gourneau states that the Ojibway had between 40 and 50 treaties with neighbouring Native groups, as well as with the US. The US reneged a little and decided that a group of "friendlies" with good diplomatic skills, should receive more support.

In summary, from 1812 to 1814 full fledged war erupted in North America between the United States and Great Britain. From the Canadian point of view "we" won the war because the invaders were repelled. From the American point of view this is equally true. In the Ohio Valley and Michigan the losing party was the Native buffer state the British had encouraged under Tecumseh. The death of Tecumseh broke up the Shaunee (Southern Algonquin) confederacy, allowing the US and its Native allies to secure what was then their "Northwest." War between the Ojibway and the Dakota resumed.

Opening the Oregon Question

The Oregon Question dominated British-American relations from the end of the War of 1812 until 1846. Until the United States became distracted by Mexico, the possibility of war existed between Britain and America, and the possibility of invasion of British North American territories was ever present. Between 1818 and 1846 the two powers held six major international negotiations in order to avoid going to war, and despite incidents such as Alexander Henry's seizure of Fort Astoria, for the most part the efforts to avoid belligerencies were successful.

Turtle Mountain's history was affected by the Oregon Question in a strange loop. The peaceful "undefended border" of the 49th parallel was cited as a rationale by both sides when occasion suited them for extending the border along the same lines through the Rockies to the Pacific. When tempers flared in Oregon, the belligerency could back up to Turtle Mountain and Red River as the undefended border became more enticing. Oregon had a sporadic British military presence, especially Royal Naval warships. Red River had little.

Consequently, the British in order to secure the undefended border had to turn to Metis and Native allies on both sides of the 49th parallel. The idea of a Native buffer state, first postulated by the British in 1763, still had merit in defending the 49th. British troops by themselves could not.

Oregon, or at least its inlets, was approachable by the Royal Navy. When the British entered Oregon (which as it was understood then included modern Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia) they still had in mind Major Robert Rogers' old notion of an interior river version of the Northwest Passage. In 1792 Captain George Vancouver entered the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest. Yet even here in the Pacific, the captain's orders required him to be cognizant of possible routes to Lake of the Woods.

Captain Vancouver had orders from his government to explore and survey the coast of the Pacific Northwest, and particularly to ascertain whether, between the North Pacific and the North Atlantic, there was any navigable passage. He was to determine whether by means of inlets of the Pacific or by large rivers that had communication with lakes in the interior an intercourse could be established between the opposite shores of the North American continent. He was to explore especially the "supposed" strait of Juan de Fuca, said to be situated between the 48th and 49th degrees of north latitude. The discovery of a near communication between any such strait and any river running into or from the Lake of the Woods would be particularly useful.

"The Oregon Question," Frederick Merk, p. 1

At the time of Captain Vancouver's visit and exploration of the river mouths and inlets of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the British were concerned about Russians to the north and Spanish to the south. According to Merk it was the sale of Louisiana in 1803 which brought Oregon into the perception of the American government,

and more directly, into the reach of American fur traders.

A contest of exploration, colonization, and diplomacy in the Pacific Northwest followed the discovery of the Columbia. It followed not at once, but as soon as the American people had caught a glimpse of their destiny on the Pacific Ocean. In 1803 the United States acquired the province of Louisiana. By this coup of diplomacy the republic extended its boundaries to the crest of the Rocky Mountains and strengthened, through the principle of contiguity, the claim it had to the territory west of the mountains. In 1805-1806 the Lewis and Clark expedition explored and mapped the middle tributaries of the Columbia and the main river from its junction with the Snake to the sea. In 1811-1812 John Jacob Astor, at the head of the Pacific Fur Company, built Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia and other trade posts on the upper waters of the river. These measures broadened the claim of the United States to the Columbia Valley. They added to American rights arising from Gray's discovery those of contiguity, systematic exploration, and occupation.

"The Oregon Question," Frederick Merk, p. 6

Seizure of Fort Astoria

We last met Alexander Henry Jr. on the Mandan Trail. In 1813 on the Columbia River he managed to dip his paddle into the War of 1812, caused a ripple, and in a short space of time was drowned.

While Britain and France waged a global war, and the United States and Canada a continental one, the Northwest Company was engaged in its own economic and sometimes literal war to the death with the Hudson's Bay Company. In August of 1813, Alexander Henry Jr. arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River to assume command of NWC activities in that portion of Oregon. The NWC had been plagued by the HBC's charter, but the mandate didn't reach into the Columbia watershed and there the contest could be on a more equal footing. When Henry arrived, he found not just the HBC competitors, but also Americans. Precipitously, Henry catapulted the Northwest Company straight into the "Oregon Question." By doing so, he hastened the death of the NWC in making it politically expendable to the British Cabinet.

On his arrival in August at the palisade fort [Ft. Astoria,] Henry found the Mountain Men [American Fur Company] in a state of panic. The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain was being used by the Nor'westers as an excuse to grab John Jacob Astor's trading post. The Canadians circled Fort Astoria, warning that a British warship the Raccoon, was on its way to blast the Yankees with cannon. The "Yankees" inside the fort were almost all former Nor'westers — British subjects hired by Astor. Led by the ex-Nor'wester Duncan McDougall, the Astorians were trading under the Stars and Stripes while their own country was warring against the United States. Even more embarrassed were their besiegers, who were short of provisions. The Nor'westers had to beg for handouts from the very fort they had come to conquer.

After bargaining, the impasse was resolved, McDougall decided to sell the fort to the invaders, for \$40,000, a third of its fur value. McDougall himself came as part of the deal; having sold Astor out, he became chief factor for the Nor'westers. To increase his influence over the neighbouring Chinooks, McDougall bought a Chinook Indian princess; a flatheaded girl, her pierced nose adangle with sea shells, her hair glistening with whale oil. She was the daughter of the great one-eyed Chief Comcomly, and the man known as the "Mephistopheles of Astoria" drove a hard bargain.

Taming of the Canadian West, Frank Rasky, pp. 92-93

The Chief seems to have inserted a member of his own family into the control of the fur trade and received fifteen guns and fifteen blankets in the bargain. In this case the Native powers were able to play the White factions against each other. It corroborates the overlooked role of women in the fur trade as translators, negotiators and mediators. Like the ancient Chinese Silk Princesses who kept the economy of the Silk Road running despite wars and raiding, women such as the Princess of Astoria kept the fur trade operating despite the sieges and battles over fur posts.

When the HMS *Raccoon* arrived, its captain and crew were very disappointed to find the fort had been not only surrendered, but bought and sold! This removed any chance of prize money. To mollify the Royal Navy, the Nor'westers agreed to lower the British flag, run up the Stars and Stripes again, and then let the Navy for-

mally take down Old Glory and put the Union Jack back up. Henry felt it was comic opera, and noted one near casualty when a member of the firing party nearly shot himself.

Henry did not live to see how much of a problem the NWC/Royal Navy seizure of Astoria would present to future negotiations. The end of his life was truly bizarre. After contesting with fellow Nor'wester and cousin Donald McTavish over the hand of a prostitute, Jane, the two — or rather three — settled the matter. Henry would get Jane, and McTavish bought a Native woman. The two men decided to celebrate their refound amity and repaired aboard McTavish's schooner "*the Jane*" named for the same lady. They, and five other Nor'wester employees spent the remainder of the evening getting very drunk aboard the schooner which was anchored in the Columbia River mouth. When a gale blew up, they were too drunk or too unconscious to notice. The schooner was tipped over, sank, and all aboard perished.

We do not know if Jane and the unnamed Native woman were brokenhearted or relieved by this news.

The darndest things get remembered in oral history. This incident is one of only a few fur trade stories to survive into the Clan MacTavish traditional lore in Scotland as recorded in *Scotland and her Tartans* by Alexander Fulton. The McTavish fur traders are fondly remembered. (The unit referred to, the 78th (Seaforth Highlanders) Regiment of Foot were originally clan levies that were being absorbed into the Royal Army.)

Simon McTavish (1750-1804) was born in Stratherrick, son of John McTavish of Garthbeg, a lieutenant in the 78th Regiment of Foot. Simon left Scotland for New York when he was fourteen. Twelve years later he was ensconced in Montreal, preparing to leave for London with a cargo of furs worth 15,000 pounds. Nicknamed "The Marquis", for his elegance, personality and business acumen, he became the most influential Canadian businessman of his time, and in 1799 he bought back for his clan the original estate of Dunardarie. His cousin Donald McTavish (1771-1814), also born in Stratherrick, started in 1790's an apprentice clerk in the North West Company, of which Simon was the principal director. He would have become the company's agent had he not drowned at the mouth of the Columbia River while on his way to board a ship whose commission was to destroy American settlements on the northwest

coast. Impressed into the British navy, he had travelled to England to join the ship, and during the thirteen-month voyage back again from Portsmouth he consoled himself with the charms of a local barmaid, whom he had persuaded to come with him.

Scotland and her Tartans, Alex. Fulton, pp. 164-165.

One account characterizes the ship as a personal yacht for Northwest Company aristocracy, the other account turns it into a Royal Navy warship. Likely both are true.

The Northwest Company found itself in a fatally dangerous position as a result of Oregon. It had jumped in sensing an advantage over the Hudson's Bay Company. Geographically it had sought Oregon because it was outside of the HBC Charter while politically it was an opportune time as the English mood did not support Crown monopolies.

Initially as the Oregon crisis developed the Northwest Company had the inside track with the British government over the HBC. When the Americans challenged the British over the capture of Astoria, the British stalled and sought information from the NWC as to the status of Astoria. The Imperial government were for a time flying blind dependent on intelligence furnished by a renegade trading company. Both the British and the American fur traders appealed to their respective governments for protection.

As a preparation for further correspondence on the subject the charge [d'affaires of British interests in Washington] sent a request for information regarding Astoria to the governor general of Canada. He also wrote home for instructions. From the governor general he received a memorandum, drawn up by Simon M'Gillivray, a partner of the North West Company, in which the argument was made that Astoria did not fall within the formula of the Treaty of Ghent since it had been bought by British subjects, not captured. This memorandum the charge stowed away, waiting apparently for instruction that were expected from England. But the instructions never arrived.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 9

In the absence of any other information or instruction, the intelligence furnished by the North West Company became the British policy. There was a certain amount of co-dependence. In order to carry on the war

with the Americans while fighting the French, the British had to call upon every resource. That meant relying on the NWC with a little help from the Royal Navy to hold and expand in Oregon. So long as the British government was dependent on the help of the NWC and so long as the information was accurate, the Nor'westers could preserve their peculiar advantage with Cabinet. Once those conditions soured, the North West Company became politically expendable.

As the War of 1812 developed the Americans were too concerned about other things to bother about Oregon very much. To fur traders it was the golden cup, but to nearly everyone else in America it was a distant unreachable chunk of land that would probably never be part of the United States. The US Navy was far too occupied with duties in the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean to challenge the Royal Navy over the Pacific, or even the NWC for the Columbia River.

The American fur traders, such as John Jacob Astor, who had been the successors to Michilimackinac dreamed of continuing the ambitions of the French and Robert Rogers before them. On the Upper Missouri there was Manuel Lisa and his Missouri Fur Company who'd begun operations when the Spanish still nominally controlled Louisiana and then continued under the Americans. With the control of a Great Lake communication and the Mississippi the American fur traders *could* create a link to the Columbia and the Pacific. It was the same old dream but unlike the French and British before them, the Americans were securing political control over the intervening distances. The American government might forget about Oregon from time to time, but American business would not.

Rupert's Land Culture

Rupert's Land was hardly a state, and never a nation, and few lamented the passing of this artificial entity. Its creation, exact terms and boundaries, form of government and courts, military history and above all its economy intimately affected events unfolding in and around Turtle Mountain.

Its evils were many, and have been amply described by other writers from then till now. There were however a few virtues, and a few lasting contributions, that significantly affect the present: the single most important being sovereignty.

The political troubles of Quebec and the court battles over Native land claims in the 20th Century have highlighted the issue of sovereignty in Canada. During the first half of the 20th Century, it was taken for granted

by politicians and historians. Sovereignty, nation, state, capital and religion were all considered one thing. What if they weren't? The Canada which emerged from the 19th into the 20th Century had these attributes, or at least its leading citizens believed it did. The Canada which emerged from the 20th Century into the 21st Century was one state with several semi-autonomous territories sharing coequal sovereignty, participating in a global market with protections for local cultures, traditions, religions and languages. Hardly the same country at all to appearances.

Interestingly, the Canada emerging into the 21st Century is very much like the Rupert's Land of the 19th Century. The government and court system of Assiniboia (the Red River colony) was nominally independent of the "federal" government based at York Factory. Nations and states were completely separate entities although they were mixed up with religion. And for every resident who tried to live a life of going back to the wild, there was another person convinced that he or she must single-handedly maintain the standards of civilization.

One of the officers of the Company, not wishing to give up his old-fashioned liking for the morning paper, was in the habit of having sent to him, by the one annual sailing vessel which kept up communication with the territory and conveyed the supplies to and from England, a complete file of the Times of the previous year. Every morning this conservative old gentleman would digest his paper while digesting his breakfast, the journal losing nothing in interest by being a year old, while his faithful old servant had the corresponding pleasure of saying "Your morning paper, sir." These old officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, who led an isolated life in the loneliness of the great North-West, have left behind them a memory that will long beneficially influence the country; and after leaving the service many of them settled down in comfort in Canada, whither their good record followed them.

The history of the Hudson's Bay Company is one of great interest. It tells of stirring times when the great trading company of England had to hold its own at the point of the pen or the bayonet. The Company had one principle, which all the officers rigidly acted upon, namely, to hide from the world any knowledge of the extensive and valuable resources over

which they held sway, dreading the influx of an enterprising population, which might wrest from them their valuable fur trade and demoralize the hunting qualities of the Indian.

North-West Rebellions, Charles A. Boulton, pp. 44-45.

Boulton was no fan of the Hudson's Bay Company. Like many of the Canadians coming into the territory, he appreciated few virtues of Rupert's Land.

The Gathering of the Clans

Historians and contemporaries both refer to the Hudson's Bay Company as the "English Company" and the Northwest Company (or its derivatives) as the "Canadian Company." This was nominally true when the respective companies were founded but by 1800 substantial numbers of Scots (and even Irish) were penetrating the middle and upper management ranks of both giant companies. This was reflective of demographic upheavals occurring back in the countries (occupied or not) of the Celtic fringe: Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, Isle of Man, Brittany just to list the principal lands. It was only the most recent of many giant movements in the Celtic Diaspora which slowly over a period of two thousand years displaced the Celtic centres westward: from eastern Europe to the extreme western coasts; and then to America.

Darrien loomed in the background of the consciousness of every Scot of the generation that lived around 1800. No business decision, no exploration, no diplomatic endeavour could be undertaken except in the shadow of Darrien.

Briefly, after the overthrow of the Catholic Stewarts by the Protestant forces of the House of Orange, Scotland had enjoyed a period of nominal independence. William and Mary were King and Queen of Scotland in their own right (much as Elizabeth II is Queen of Canada.) England and Scotland shared a King and Queen, but they did not share a government. (The first wave of Scottish immigration into the fur trade was closely linked to the Jacobites, the defeated supporters of the House of Stewart.)

The Scottish Parliament at the suggestion of William Patterson, one of the leading minds of the day and a founding governor of the Bank of England, launched its own east India company to compete on the growing global markets. The House of Orange had no problem reconciling that England and Holland both had competing commercial empires overseas, why should there be a problem with Scotland? The Scots never considered it.

To facilitate global trade the Scottish chartered

company needed a northwest passage of some kind and they seized upon the idea of planting two Scottish colonies on opposite sides of the Panama Peninsula — thereby anticipating the Panama Canal by a century. The first colony was planted at Darrien on Panama's Atlantic coast.

The reaction of the English government was to pressure the King and Queen to withdraw all support for this venture. English bankers put pressure to prevent any more capital being raised by the Scots in England. Shut out of the London money markets, the Scottish company appealed to the national sentiments of its people and succeeded in raising the money. A fleet of more than a dozen sailing ships was purchased and perhaps 3,000 people involved in the colonization scheme. Four companies of Scottish troops were sent. William Patterson and his wife joined the second wave.

When the Spanish approached the English about why they were planting a colony on Panama, the response was that this was merely a Scottish colony. The English intimated that they would not protest if the Spanish took action to defend their possessions.

A brief war ensued during which most of the casualties on both sides were from disease rather than bloodshed. At the end the Darrien Company was utterly destroyed. The fleet was sunk or captured or seized by creditors in American harbours. Approximately 2,000 Scots died either in Darrien or subsequently as slaves in Panama. Economists estimate that approximately one-third of the liquid wealth of the entire country of Scotland had been destroyed in the scheme. William Patterson returned to Scotland as a widower, but resumed his place in international banking circles a chastened and bitter man.

The generation that followed included Simon MacTavish and Lord Selkirk. They grew up on the tales of the impoverishment of their elders at the hands of the perfidious English. The new generation vowed not to repeat the mistakes of Darrien, but they also learned that the basic ideas were sound.

The need for: a self-supporting colony, friendly relations with the Natives, a means of defence, global trade, a fleet of ships, a niche market, good capital and an English Charter were the lessons Scots learned from Darrien.

Around 1800 a consortium of Hebridean and Highland chieftains approached their counterparts among the Border Clans with a proposal. Darrien could be repeated, *if* an English Charter could be bought out. Simon MacTavish, a chieftain of Clan MacTavish with his allies the MacGillivrays and Frasers, proposed to Lord Selkirk's consortium of Border Clans that they jointly buy out the Hudson's Bay Company. The stock was closed,

limited to 100 shares. No one would sell this stock to a raggedy Highland or Hebridean chief. However, the Borderers with their fancy titles such as Earl of Selkirk, could buy up shares of the HBC with the support of money from the north of Scotland.

The Border Clans had minimized their Scottish appearance. They dressed as English, ate as English, tried to speak as English. They had been more successful than their northern counterparts in accommodating themselves to the English, and more importantly to the English economy. Families such as Douglas, Colville, Wedderburn and Halkett owned mills and factories. Their clan crofters were now prosperous farmers.

The Highlanders and Hebrideans were fighting a losing rearguard action against "Progress."

One theory has it that the Highlanders approached the Borderers with the proposal to take over the Hudson's Bay Company. Other stories have the struggle as a deadly one from the outset with the two groups offering alternative salvations to their fellow Celts. Regardless of who approached whom or not, the Celts then and now found it easier to quarrel about obscure doctrinal and genealogical points intelligible to no one else but themselves, than they did to accomplish something together.

The contest between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company ceased to be that of stockholders and learned counsel, and instead degenerated into the worst features of the clan wars. There were even some instances of personal champions fighting it out with claymores in the depths of the Northwest forest!

Saving Red River

The history of the Red River Colony, the difficulties of the pioneers, and emergence of the Metis are well covered by Manitoba histories and magazine articles. For the purposes of our story at Turtle Mountain there are a few aspects that concern us. In particular, the treaty negotiations between Lord Selkirk and the Native chiefs Peguis and Le Sonnant *et al* directly affected Turtle Mountain. Secondly, the alliances surrounding the colony's destruction and rescue reveal some basic understanding in force at the time, as well as some of the intentions of the participants.

Chief Albert Edward Thompson, a descendant of Peguis wrote an account of his illustrious family's history. In the following sequence, Chief Thompson outlined the basis for the occupation of the Red River by the Saulteaux under Peguis, and the permission sought from the established inhabitants. The Assiniboine chief referred to, Ouckidoat, is the person who signed the Selkirk Treaty and was identified as "the Premier." Chief Thompson

begins the relevant section of the narrative with the arrival of the Saulteaux in the vicinity of Netley Creek, just upstream from where the Red discharges into Lake Winnipeg.

These people had no destination in mind when they left their old home in Ontario but decided to travel westward until they could find a location where fish, waterfowl and game could be had in abundance.

They travelled by canoe for weeks in their search, and finally entered Lake Winnipeg along the eastern shore and headed south, to the Red River. Not far from its mouth, the Saulteaux canoes came to a halt when they encountered a small stream flowing from the west.

On the banks of this stream a fairly large encampment was discovered which appeared to be deserted. After assuring themselves that this was not an ambush, a landing-party went forward to investigate. The teepees contained the remains of dead bodies.

It was evident that the people had succumbed to disease. Their tools, cooking pots, clothing and totems revealed a tribe unknown to Chief Peguis and his followers.

The Saulteaux paddled further along this "river of the dead" and camped upon a second silent camp where the teepees also held corpses. When an alert scout observed a movement in the willows he found a small boy hiding. The frightened child told Peguis how his people, the Plains Cree, had sickened and died of smallpox. He was the lone survivor.

The boy was adopted into the tribe and named Pockwa-now. They called the river Nepoo-win, Death River. The white men named it Netley Creek.

The location seemed to be ideal for the band's needs. From the mouth of the Red to the creek fishing was good, and in the marshes on both sides of the river plenty of fur-bearing animals and wild fowl could be seen. There was also wild rice, and scrub maple trees that the people could tap for sugar in the spring, and fertile ground in which to plant the Indian corn that old Shag-koosink had carried in a deerskin bag from Sault Ste. Marie.

Now that the earlier occupants no longer required the area, the Saulteaux appropriated

the land for their new home. Later when their explorations took them south along the Red to the mouth of the Assiniboine River, they found a large band of Indians encamped for the winter.

These were the Assiniboines, led by Chief Ouckidoat. They occupied the country stretching westward from the Red River far across the prairie. They subsisted wholly on the buffalo, and told the newcomers that they were welcome to the animals of the bushland and the fish in the waters.

Chief Peguis and Chief Ouckidoat smoked the pipe of peace and swore allegiance. Together, they would fight the Sioux, their common enemy since 1640, and jointly patrol the Red River, the route frequently used by their foe from the south. The Sioux, who claimed all the land about the Pembina River where it joins the Red (just south of the International Boundary) often made forays to plunder and kill as far north as the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine, known to voyageurs, fur traders and the Metis as the "Forks".

Chief Peguis..., Albert Edward Thompson, pp. 2-3

This story told by Chief Thompson may also indicate why the Cree government was willing to allow, even encourage, eastern Algonquin to resettle on the Prairies and in the northern woodlands. Depopulated by disease, the Plains Cree could not hold their traditional territory against incursions by the Sioux. Without a substantial settlement at Red River, the Cree may well have feared the loss of this strategic juncture.

Although the Nor'westers (and subsequently Canadian historians) have often represented the "wild Indians" as being the threat to the colony, in fact it was the Natives primarily led by Peguis that twice provided a military escort on evacuation, at least twice took the colonists under their wing to hunt buffalo, as well as providing military support for the retaking of the colony.

On the 24th of June, two of the Sautoux chiefs, with about forty warriors of that nation, arrived at the settlement. From thence they went to the North-West Company's station at the Forks, and endeavoured to prevail upon Mr. M'Donell to permit the settlers to remain, but without effect. The Indians then expressed their regret that, from the numbers of people whom the North-West Company had collected in the neighbourhood, supported by

the field-pieces which had been taken from the colony, they were not able at that time to protect the settlers. They therefore advised them to depart, and offered to give them a safe escort, for themselves and their property, down the river, to Lake Winipic. — This offer was thankfully accepted, and was probably the means of saving the lives, as well as securing the property, of the remaining settlers...

...Under their Indian escort, therefore, the officers, and remaining settlers, amounting to about sixty, quitted the settlement...

...Having thus quitted their habitations, they went, in their boats, down the Red River to its mouth, from whence, after taking leave of their friendly Indian conductors, who expressed an anxious hope that they would be enabled again to return to their settlement, they proceeded to the other end of Lake Winipic...

"Earl of Selkirk's Settlement," John Halkett, pp. 28-29

Too many Whites in 1815 and again in 1885 were ready to believe in the inevitability of an "Indian Uprising." Few Whites were actually cognizant of the details of the French-Indian Wars and the role Native forces played as Allies to the Crown. John Halkett, a brother-in-law of Selkirk and major stockholder in the HBC, was angry enough to set down his view of the matter for posterity. In the following quote, Halkett responded to Northwest Company polemics that deliberately stirred up interracial tension. Specifically, Halkett took issue with two letters written on August 17, 1817 by NWC officers which fabricated a story of the destruction of the Red River Colony by Indians.

In this short extract, the reader has probably remarked that the Indians are distinctly repeated no less than four times, as being the persons exclusively engaged in this act of hostility, or rather (as the writers would have it) of self-defence. It was evidently a main object of this story, that what had occurred should be ascribed, in this country [Canada], to Indian hostility; — but the tale was very ill told. No one who knew any thing of the state of that country [Rupert's Land,] or of the friendly conduct which the native tribes of Indians had always shewn towards the European settlers, gave credit to the report of warfare having been carried on between them. At all events, it appeared a very unaccountable part of the story, that the savages, after

being thus wantonly fired upon, should, on gaining the victory, immediately throw aside the “indiscriminate hatchet,” — and, in place of scalping man, woman, and child, — sit coolly down, like prize agents, — draw up inventories of the captured property, — lay aside one portion, as being public stores, for the use of the captors, and generously give up another, as private effects, to the vanquished! Those also who had known Governor Semple, were confident that he was not a man to have acted, towards the unoffending Indians, with that “mad and infatuated violence,” thus ascribed to him; — a charge which, in the absence of all evidence, and Mr. Semple no longer alive to answer it, ought not to have been so wantonly, unjustly, and ungenerously, levelled against him. An unfortunate infatuation may, indeed, with some apparent justice, be ascribed to him, during these last acts of his life; — but, it was the infatuation of a brave and generous mind. — Too confident in his belief that the justice of his cause, and the bravery of his associates, would be more than sufficient to overawe the hired banditti assembled to oppose him, he had declined the proffered aid of those free Canadians, who had become attached to the settlement, as well as of the native Indians, who had voluntarily offered to come forward to assist him.

Earl of Selkirk’s Settlement, John Halkett, pp. 105-106

Chief Thompson recorded the version handed down by Peguis, picking up the thread of the narration after Peguis has spirited Madame Lajimoniere (the wife of the courier sent to Lord Selkirk) and her children safely away from the Nor’westers and Cuthbert Grant’s forces.

The morning after her escape from Fort Douglas, it was occupied by the Metis, and the Hudson’s Bay Company employees were banished also. While the Metis were engaged in this heartless act, Peguis and his men gathered the mutilated bodies that had been left to the wolves at Seven Oaks, and buried them in a little grove of trees close to the fort. Governor Semple and the company doctor were laid in rough boxes; the others were wrapped in Indian blankets. Eye-witnesses reported that Chief Peguis stood at the burial with tears running down the cheeks. These white men were his friends. They had been outnumbered

three to one, and no mercy had been shown the wounded.

Chief Peguis..., Albert Edward Thompson, pp. 12-13

The conventional nationalist interpretation on Selkirk is that he died “broken and penniless.” It’s a conclusion hardly borne out by the evidence. The “failure” of his colony in Upper Canada was due to it being looted by an invading American army in the War of 1812, not because the concept was unsound. In the interior Selkirk destroyed the Northwest Company and left a legacy to the HBC that would serve them until the 1860’s. He saw colonies firmly established in Prince Edward Island and Red River. Finally, he left the HBC in the hands of his own family while providing for his widow and children.

It is very likely that in 1815 Selkirk knew he was dying. He could hardly have *not* thought about it as he was already predeceased by six brothers.

That factor, and the result of his actions are too often missed. He knew he was on a time limit. When told he would lose his cases against the wintering partners he replied that it didn’t matter, nor did it. By 1815 it had become a common tactic to trump up a charge on someone in the opposing company, “arrest” them and ship them back to England or Canada, and by the time they got back to the Northwest they’d missed a year of trading.

When Selkirk did not receive satisfaction from the Governor-General of Canada, believing that the man was influenced by the Nor’westers, he stepped out of the role of British lordling and became again a Scottish chief. He used the cover of a British lord as long as he could to deal with the colonial administration and courts, but his behaviour towards the Nor’westers and Natives was that of a chief of a great clan. He was after all *the* Douglas, the descendant of the Black Douglas who’d succeeded William Wallace as commander of the armies of Robert the Bruce. No Hebridean chieftain would displace *his* crofters and tacksmen!

Selkirk hired recently discharged British troops. Most of them were Swiss who had served in the Des Meurons Regiment and the De Wattville Regiment. (De Wattville himself had retired to Canada with the rank of major general.) These were Napoleonic veterans, some of whom had fought in the French Army before their regiments had joined the Allied armies. They had no home and had known only the life of a foreign legion for most of the last two decades. They had briefly seen service in the War of 1812 and would be given land grants in Ontario but had not taken them up yet or become attached to the Canadian colony. Selkirk offered them land grants in Assiniboia in exchange for military service to the colony.

Halkett defended the legality of moving them through Canadian territory by noting they were paid for being “voyageurs” — transporting themselves and their military equipment from Montreal to Fort William. A few Rangers and genuine Voyageurs rounded out the company.

At Fort William, Selkirk fell upon the Wintering partners like a thunderclap. A large number, critical to management of the interior trade, were arrested at once and shipped under guard back to Canada. The legalisms were immaterial to Selkirk by this time. The Wintering partners would be out of circulation for a trading year, long enough for Selkirk to use the last of this strength at Red River.

John Tanner the Falcon, the loaner on the world stage, chose this moment to strike a bargain with Selkirk.

Captain D’Orsonnens, aware that the Indians about Rainy River used a trail to the Northwest known to them as the “old muskeg carrying place” persuaded John Tanner, who was wintering in the area, to guide the soldiers overland to the Red River.

In early January 1817 Chief Peguis’ scouts reported the approach of the de Meurons. With a number of his best warriors the Chief rode out to join the troops about ten miles south of the Forks. It was after midnight when the soldiers approached Fort Douglas and found no outdoor guards.

Chief Peguis held his men in readiness for action within the pallisades should it be necessary. They stood by and gleefully watched the Swiss soldiers, under Tanner’s guidance, place Indian ladders against the walls of the fort. (These were sturdy trees from which the branches had been lopped off at either side to make footholds or steps.)

The de Meurons made a bloodless conquest and reclaimed the territory for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Peguis’ warriors had enjoyed a good show although they had anticipated inflicting smarting punishment on the Nor’westers to avenge Seven Oaks.

Chief Peguis..., Albert Edward Thompson, p. 14

Tanner, the Falcon, provides a much longer blow-by-blow description of these actions as is to be expected with a direct participant. He recalled four forts in all which were taken by sudden attack, not all of which fell entirely without bloodshed. Usually Tanner, his Ojibway “relatives” and the troops hired by Selkirk were in the

NWC forts before the sentries could react. Tanner spoke highly of both Selkirk and the Swiss for being game enough to learn frontier warfare. They accepted his guidance when he counselled for stealthy surprise attacks rather than sieges.

Selkirk during this period picked up the name “the Silver Chief” from the Saulteaux. He was red-headed and died too young to develop any substantial grey. However, the dress tartan of Clan Douglas has a silvery-grey background and it may be that his traditional dress is the source of this name. Selkirk as a Scot spoke to his Native counterparts in the Red River as chief-to-chief. He appreciated public theatre as much as they did. He also apparently understood what the military calls the “doctrine of overwhelming force”, knew when to use it and when not to.

At nine o’clock on the morning of June 21, 1817 Lord Selkirk and a fleet of thirty canoes reached Netley Creek. He had a bodyguard of seven soldiers wearing bright red coats that impressed the Saulteaux very much. There were thirty-seven soldiers of the de Meuron and de Wattville regiments. It was an impressive display of colour and force that pleased Chief Peguis and his band.

The Chief with his warriors accompanied Lord Selkirk along the Red River to Fort Douglas. He offered to drive all the Metis serving under Cuthbert Grant away but Lord Selkirk refused to use force.

He sent his agent to Norway House to lure the destitute settlers back to the Colony. While he awaited their return, Lord Selkirk laid out excellent plans for an entire township. There would be road, churches, schools and two-mile long farm lots stretching back from the rivers. Teachers and clergymen of all denominations were also promised for the new settlement.

Lord Selkirk met with Chief Peguis and four other men of influence among their people to discuss the situation. One lesson had been learned from the tragic Seven Oaks massacre — the original inhabitants of the Plains must be consulted and reimbursed for loss of their hunting-grounds to the colonists.

When agreement was reached, Lord Selkirk placed the name of Chief Peguis above that of Ouckidoat, Rayagie, Reboma, Muchiwikoab and Mukitoukoonace, although

the Crees and the Assiniboines had occupied this part of the country long before the arrival of the Saulteaux.

Chief Peguis..., Albert Edward Thompson, pp. 15-16

Canadian historians have generally lost sight of the issue that Peguis did not outrank the “four other men of influence”. It was to honour his unfailing support to the colony that Selkirk placed his name on top. The “Muchiwikoab” listed above is Le Sonnant or Many Sitting Eagles.

After losing the war for the Red River to Selkirk, some of the Norwesters retreated along the Mandan Trail to look for allies. One of the HBC men present at the Mandan villages in 1816, Thomas Costello, gave a deposition to the court in 1817 on his knowledge of NWC activities.

In the month of October 1816, Mr. Alexander McDonell accompanied by a large Party of Half-breeds, a few Canadians and Deponent [Costello], Sweney, Hoy and Kennedy arrived at Qu’Appelle. A short time after their arrival at that place Mr. Alexander McDonell set off to the Mississourie to make peace as Deponent was told by one Francois Ducharme a halfbreed, with the Mandal Indians in case Lord Selkirk should arrive in such force as to render it necessary for Alexander McDonell and his band of Assassins to seek a retreat in the United States.

Early Fur Trade, Wood and Thiessen, p. 52.

Francois Ducharme had served as a scout to Alexander Henry Jr. when Henry travelled to the Mandan villages to procur horses. (A musket belonging to Francois Ducharme is in the Moncur Gallery. It was among his descendants on Turtle Mountain that Bill Moncur spent a large portion of his early teens. Moncur procured the musket from Fred Ducharme. “I paid him \$20 for the musket and for the story,” said Moncur in an interview. It was also from Ducharme that Moncur first learned about Sitting Eagle and the Council Tree.)

Alexander McDonell may have been successful in the short term because the Medicine Line was firming up into the International Boundary. The Americans were pressuring the Mandans to decide if they were American or British, and during the early 1820’s the Mandans actually launched several military raids northward along the Trail, sometimes reaching to Red River. However the years were numbered for both the Mandans and the Northwest Company.

Treaty of Ghent 1818

Merk, who made a careful study of the diplomatic history involved, wrote that the American and British negotiators at the Treaty of Ghent, believed that the 49th parallel had been chosen as a border by the commissioners appointed as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The line had not yet been surveyed, and a clause naming the 49th parallel had *not* been ratified by the participants at any time between 1713 and 1818. For that reason, the Selkirk Colony claimed the area south of Turtle Mountain to the height of land of the Missouri Couteau. It was at Ghent that the oversight was corrected, and the signatories agreed on a British-American border running from the northwest corner of Lake of the Woods along the 49th parallel to the Rocky Mountains.

By 1818 the Northwest Company had overreached itself and was about to pay for its *hubris*. The NWC had taken the fight to the Hudson’s Bay Company on several new theatres: the Red River Valley; Oregon; and the British Parliament.

At Turtle Mountain this epic life-and-death struggle was barely perceptible. There were people on Turtle Mountain in 1818 who’d participated in the troubles at Red River on both sides. At the foot of Turtle Mountain where it meets Whitewater Lake, the HBC and the NWC had both set up small shacks to gather the winter and spring furs, operating them cheek-by-jowl like competing corner businesses (which they were.) The NWC gave every appearance of strength and raised the distinct possibility that they might win over the HBC. On the Mandan Trail joint parties of NWC and HBC men travelled together from Brandon House to the Missouri.

A series of blows from 1817 through 1818 finished off the NWC. Selkirk’s strategy had resulted in the Wintering Partners being taken out of circulation for a crucial season. (This was repeated by HBC Governor William Williams in 1819-20 at The Pas.) The NWC company direction in the interior floundered. In Oregon the Americans were not giving up easily. In Parliament, Lord Selkirk was rallying his supporters in the House of Lords.

Then the NWC sealed its fate in one document — a report on the fur trade by Simon McGillivray to the British Government. McGillivray gave his view of the HBC-NWC fight, libelled the Indians, and generally cast doubt on Selkirk and the HBC service to the British Empire. It was this document that sent John Halkett to the printer with a response. But McGillivray overstepped himself, he combined in the same document with the attacks on the HBC, a polemic about his troubles with the Americans in Oregon. Worse, he had created on his maps

a fictional river — the Caledonia — in order to influence the diplomatic negotiations over the boundary. For a time the British Foreign Office stuck to a negotiating position with the Americans which was based on McGillivray's papers. When it was found that McGillivray had presented fraudulent information to the Foreign Office the timing could not have been worse. All of the other NWC activities, and its characterization of the HBC and Selkirk, were now seen in a different light. Support for the NWC in government melted away.

The NWC credibility first began to unravel over its reports on American activity in Oregon.

The news that the [American frigate] Ontario had departed for the Columbia reached [British Ambassador to Washington] Bagot in distorted form from New York. The account was that the captain of the Ontario had instructions to seize or destroy the settlements and trade of the North West Company on the Pacific coast. The informant of Bagot was Simon M'Gillivray, a leading partner of the North West Company, who happened to be in New York on a visit at the time and heard the news, perhaps, as a leak from Astor's office. His distortions were a product of misinformation or fear or design.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 18

It dawned on the NWC's former friends within the British Cabinet, that the position of the Montreal fur traders was getting in the way of the business of governing the Empire. (The very point that Lord Selkirk was raising in the House of Lords.)

The problem of Astoria was reviewed by the British cabinet as soon as the news of the turn it had taken reached London. The primary question before cabinet was, probably, whether a restoration of the flag of the United States was required by the provisions of the Treaty of Ghent. The North West Company had developed the theory that the post did not fall within the treaty's provisions, inasmuch as it had been acquired by purchase, not capture. That theory had the approval in 1815 of Lord Bathurst, the colonial secretary, if the testimony of Simon M'Gillivray is accepted. The weakness in the theory lay in the formal seizure that had been made of Astoria by the efficient captain of the Racoon. Of that seizure Castlereagh was aware. It was referred to in

the letters M'Gillivray had written Bagot regarding the Ontario departure, and which Bagot had transmitted to Castlereagh with his own report of the Ontario affair..

The solution reached was that the United States was entitled, under the terms of the Treaty of Ghent, to the same position on the Columbia that it had formerly held. It was therefore entitled to a restoration of Astoria.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, pp. 20-21

Merk described the British government in 1815 as riven by factional difference. The Tory party was nominally in power, but it had three leaders. Lord Liverpool was Prime Minister; Castlereagh headed the Foreign Office (and therefore the colonies as well) while George Canning was President of the Board of Control. Canning and Castlereagh had actually once duelled with each other.

The policy of the government was repression in domestic affairs and the maintenance of the status quo in foreign. Castlereagh sought, wherever possible, to allay international excitements after the wracking years of the Napoleonic era, by conciliation or the application of sedatives. He described this policy succinctly in a dispatch sent to Bagot, by coincidence, while first reports of the departure of the Ontario were disturbing that minister in Washington. "The avowed & true Policy of Great Britain is, in the existing state of the World to appease controversy & to secure if possible for all states a long interval of Repose."

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 20

This government was not going to make any major effort to remember, much less honour, a Sioux Treaty made with allies who were now irrevocably behind enemy lines. It would even make the Northwest Company give Astoria back to the United States and it would not countenance the kind of espionage among Natives (or anyone else) that had gone on during the Napoleonic Wars. It was a pendulum swing, not a steady state. In this political atmosphere the NWC attempted to pass patently false information about Oregon, involve the Empire in a war with another major power, and then have the HBC charter revoked on the basis of the NWC's interpretation of events. During war time it had been possible to get away with quite a lot, even obtaining British Army commissions for NWC officers in the field. But the battle with Lord Selkirk came to a head after the

war when Castlereagh was now trying to put out the international fires. Castlereagh wanted agreement with the Americans on a demilitarized border. The Northwest Company placed itself squarely in the way by 1818. Castlereagh had begun to disbelieve the Nor'westers, and particularly Simon M'Gillivray (this at a time when the Nor'westers were convinced they still had the ear of government.)

The response Castlereagh made to the "Ontario" affair was to accept the assurances of Adams that the vessel had sailed on a peaceful mission and that the failure to give notice had been an oversight. He accepted the American view that the mutual restoration provision of the Ghent treaty did cover the case of Astoria. He persuaded the cabinet of this, and orders went out to British representatives in the Pacific Northwest and at Washington to cooperate with American representatives in a ceremony restoring the post to its prewar status.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 31

Despite improvements in maps, there was still a small error in that the northwest corner of Lake of the Woods was actually north of the 49th Parallel. The correction line created the Northwest Angle, the tiny isolated peninsula of American territory. That one geographic error aside, the boundary had narrowed to a general understanding on both sides which permitted of only a few miles of discrepancy instead of hundreds of miles of disputed territory. A more precise border would have to wait for the 1872 International Boundary Commission. The largest discrepancies were between the 49th parallel and the height of land to the south of the Red River; between the 49th and the height of land to the north of the Milk River in Alberta; and Oregon.

Another territorial issue Castlereagh wanted to resolve was the so-called "Northwest boundary" question. This was the question of a boundary to be drawn from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains — separating British Rupert's Land from the Louisiana Purchase area of the United States. It had been an issue ever since the purchase was made from France in 1803. It had withstood all direct negotiations. Castlereagh proposed to settle it by arbitration. He had in mind a single arbitration for both territorial issues, one that would draw a line from the Pacific

Coast across the Oregon Country to the continental divide and thence across the Great Plains to the northwesternmost point of the Lake of the Woods, where it would meet the line of the peace treaty of 1783.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, pp. 31-32

The American response to this proposal was to take one line, the 49th parallel, all the way from the Lake of the Woods to the Pacific Ocean. Initially it did not sit well with the British.

That proposal was coldly received. It was objected to on grounds of convenience and of British rights. On grounds of convenience two objections were made to it. One was that the line would sever rivers. The severed ones were not named, but they were the Columbia, on which were establishments of the North West Company, and the "Caledonia," which had appeared on a map published by the Company shortly before the conference. The Caledonia proved later to have been a mythical river, a creation of the North West Company.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 39

The British concession was to agree to the international boundary being drawn along the 49th parallel from Lake of the Woods (which required a line going south first,) to the Rocky Mountains. In 1818 they hadn't yet realized the Caledonia River was a fraud of the NWC, but that would soon become apparent.

The effect on Turtle Mountain was gradual. The Selkirk colony retracted northward of where it understood the international boundary to be (within a few miles.) The area south of Pembina was officially abandoned by the Red River colonists, but as the extreme hinterland it had seen little settlement. The Metis continued to use Pembina as a jump off point for the annual buffalo hunt in the southern Red River Valley and pressed further southwest into the Devil's Lake area. Those Metis living well south of Pembina began to think of themselves as American citizens. Their Ojibway allies took it as an opportunity to launch a general offensive against the Sioux for possession of the territory which Britain had given up but which the Americans were slow to occupy. The Dakota had not abandoned the British cause, but the temporary wartime alliance with the Ojibway was at an end.

The resolution of the International Boundary on the Prairies did not end all British activity south of the 49th Parallel. The War of 1812 left a lot of unhealed wounds which contributed to the failure to quickly re-

solve the Oregon Question. In *The Last Refuge*, J. G. Nelson discussed the effect of the post-1818 settlement on the Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan.

Thoughts of the south would also persist among the traders as a result of the remarks of visiting Indians about the richness of the beaver in the Missouri country. The area clearly offered the prospect of fresh fur ground. Indeed, as early as 1815, while commenting on the possibility of improving the declining trade of the Saskatchewan, James Bird stated that "an enterprising Mind might project an expedition up the South Branch and hope to make settlements near the Missouri and in the Rocky Mountains."

Simpson also may have begun thinking about the expedition as a result of a specific suggestion made in 1819. On the 21st of October of that year a man known as Colonel Dickson, a somewhat mysterious individual who moved rather freely between the United States and Rupert's Land, proposed to Governor Williams that the Hudson's Bay Company finance an expedition to the headwaters of the Missouri. Simpson arrived in Rupert's Land in the spring of 1820 and may have heard Dickson's proposal being discussed by Williams and other Hudson's Bay Company personnel.

The Last Refuge, J. G. Nelson, p. 66

This suggestion of Dickson's resulted in an expedition by the HBC into the Cypress Hills country to trap and to trade. From this base, smaller extended expeditions were mounted towards the Missouri and the Bow Rivers. South of the border similar events were probably occurring around Turtle Mountain as one of the figures involved was Robert Dickson of Michilimackinac. If Dickson could influence events in the Cypress Hills from Michilimackinac, then he could influence events at Turtle Mountain.

The influence by agents of the British government such as Dickson upon the Hudson's Bay Company was not a one-way street. Frederick Merk concluded that if anything the influence was more heavily felt in the opposite direction after the merger of 1821. This was not so much because the HBC was a giant corporation among the pillars of British commerce, but because Rupert's Land and Oregon were so far removed from the centre of things that with the NWC out of the way no one else cared.

In England there was no public opinion comparable to the American on the Oregon question. None had been raised by persistent agitation. Public discussion of the question was conspicuously absent. There was no Oregon debate in Parliament at any time prior to 1840; indeed, hardly any thereafter. No parliamentary committee report on the issue ever appeared. The question was similarly unnoticed before the forties in the British press. The forces shaping Oregon policy in England were under the surface; they operated more quietly than in the United States.

Most active of the forces shaping Oregon policy was the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821. The Company was almost the only direct force. Its influence was exerted privately; it preferred to remain out of public sight. It published no reports. It discouraged publication by its employees even of narratives of their adventures in the fur trade. Its method was to persuade cabinet members in strategic positions. It exerted influence especially on Canning, who, in the years from 1822 to the time of his death in 1827, very nearly determined the Oregon policy of the British government.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 139

A limited peace followed the ending of the Fur Trade War between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company and the agreement of the United States and Britain on the 49th Parallel boundary. Warfare became much less common across the boundary, although tensions remained high and would sometimes threaten the return of continental, if not global war. To the south of the Medicine Line, the Americans could now concentrate on their internal Native foe rather than the external British one.

Chapter Four: Prelude to a New Order

American Events 1800-1850

A brief review of a few dates of American history is useful at this point. The United States approached the new century with a decisive show of force. The 1794 “Whiskey Rebellion” in Kentucky and western Pennsylvania was crushed by the US Army. The ostensible issue was refusal to remit federal tax revenues on whiskey to the central government.

In 1800 Spain traded Louisiana back to France, and in 1803 the territory was traded again to the United States. The US promptly sent off Lewis & Clark to map, explore, find a western route, trade and generally show the flag.

The United States was changing rapidly from a small secessionist confederation into a power capable of global plays. There was a brief political and potential military flare-up in New England in reaction to the Louisiana Purchase, but that ended with the acquittal of Aaron Burr for treason. (Burr had planned to have New England secede from the US because the opening of the West was causing a shift of power to southern and western states.)

In 1805 US Marines stormed the Bey’s palace at Tripoli in punishment for piracy on American shipping in the Mediterranean.

The US became drawn into the Napoleonic struggle in the form of the War of 1812-1814. At the conclusion of this war, the British withdrew from the south shore Great Lakes forts and posts, and from the Ohio Valley entirely. Tecumseh was dead, and the British’ Native allies were left on their own to face the US.

In 1818 the British and Americans agreed that the 49th Parallel, right through the middle of Turtle Mountain, would be the international border between the Lake of the Woods and the Rockies. Oregon was still jointly occupied.

Between 1830 and 1834 Georgia became embroiled in a struggle with the “civilized tribes” of Cherokee. The Cherokee were evicted and sent on a “trail of tears” westward until they reached land west of the Mississippi. At this time, the US government thought of the territory to the west more as a dumping ground for all Indians than as potential useful property.

In 1836 Texas became a republic and seceded from Mexico. The US became involved in a war with Mexico, ultimately annexing Texas.

At the same time Irish Republicans first began raiding into Canada from safety in the US. Border incur-

sions by authorities of both sides in the interests of “policing” threatened to unravel the peace achieved after 1814.

In 1838 the Underground Railway began spiriting away runaway slaves to Canada.

In 1845 Texas was formally annexed, ending its fictional independence. The following year the British and Americans reached agreement over Oregon.

From 1846 to 1848 the US went to war with Mexico again, this time invading the country and seizing the capitol. The US Army began to emerge as a permanent fighting force. The year the war ended with Mexico, gold was discovered in California. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe the Americans got California, New Mexico, Arizona and secured their ownership of Texas.

Settlement of the great expanses of Sioux and Plains-Ojibway territories of the American Northwest had been delayed firstly by a half-century of political and military events that distracted US attention elsewhere. Secondly, because admission of so many Northern territories as states would unbalance the delicate teeter-totter of slave versus non-slave state, US politicians were reluctant to create a new political headache for themselves in the Dakotas. Pro-slavery forces flatly would not sanction the creation of another free state out of the northwest territories without the corresponding creation of another slave state.

In 1854 the Americans removed any further impediments from themselves. Under the Kansas-Nebraska Act, territories were opened for settlement on the basis of popular sovereignty (meaning that the settlers could decide later by their own referenda if they would be organized into slave states or not.) The politicians had bowed in favour of public pressure to open up the lands; and all of the treaties signed with Natives to leave the lands west of Mississippi alone were now forfeit.

British-American Tensions

Today we look back on American-Canadian, or American-British relations as being relatively peaceful since the end of the War of 1812-1814. The Dakota oral history claim to have been secret British allies throughout the middle of the 1800’s seems at odds with this tradition. But it is the tradition which is incorrect, not the Sioux memory. Canadian military historian C. P. Stacey wrote a monograph for the Canadian Historical Society entitled “*The undefended Border : the Myth and the Reality,*” discussing the arms race between Britain and

the United States which dominated most of the 19th Century. It is useful to keep Stacey's behind-the-scenes analysis of military expenditure in mind when considering the meetings that the Dakota allege to have taken place between themselves and representatives of the British military.

As we have said, at the time when the Rush-Bagot agreement was made [1817] few people if any thought that there would never be another war between Britain and the United States. In fact, for more than fifty years afterwards such a war always seemed possible. Sometimes it seemed decidedly probable.

It is true that for some years after the Treaty of Ghent, Anglo-American and Canadian-American relations were comparatively tranquil; but just as the bitter memories of the war were beginning to fade, the Canadian rebellions of 1837 touched off another crisis. Many Americans were anxious to intervene in Canada's troubles and formed organizations to do so. The result was border raids and skirmishes which caused a good deal of bloodshed and might well have brought on an official war. In 1839 this crisis shaded off into another, the "Aroostook War," bloodless but very dangerous, between Maine and New Brunswick over the unsettled boundary between them. Then when this sore point was disposed of by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842,) trouble over the Oregon boundary on the other side of the continent followed, and there were apprehensions of war until 1846, when another treaty settled that dispute. The 'fifties were peaceful, on the whole; the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 emphasized the friendly state of relations between Canada and her neighbour, and the Prince of Wales' visit to the United States in 1860 actually led people to talk about permanent peace. But even this happy decade had its dangerous controversies, particularly over the British attempt to recruit in the States during the Crimean War and over the San Juan Island boundary in 1859; and the very year after the young Prince's trip the outbreak of the Civil War, which tore the American Union apart, brought on an Anglo-American crisis that lasted ten full years.

In the autumn of 1861 the Trent affair, when a Union cruiser took two Confederate diplo-

matic agents off a British ship on the high sea, brought war closer than it had ever been since 1814, so close that the British Government ordered about 11,000 troops across the Atlantic to strengthen the garrison of British North America. The good sense of the Prince Consort [Albert,] who toned down the British demand for satisfaction, and of Lincoln's government, who acceded to the demand, prevented an outbreak; but the episode left bitterness behind it. This was later heightened by the depredations of the Alabama and other Confederate cruisers fitted out in British ports. When the Civil War ended, the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States began to organize attacks on Canada. This hostile Irish-American agitation went on for years; there was a certain amount of actual fighting, the British Government again sent out large regular reinforcements, Canada herself was put to great expense and residents of her border areas were kept in terror, and infinite international ill will was generated. This grim period, whose greatest significance in our history is that its various menaces helped to produce the Confederation of British North America, was ended only by the Treaty of Washington of 1871, when Britain agreed to arbitrate the Alabama claims.

The undefended border, C. P. Stacey, pp. 9-10

These tensions must be borne in mind when considering any historical events occurring on or near the Canada-US border between 1800 and 1880. Every resistance by Native people of the plains to the Americans contains a particle of influence from north of the border. Similarly, every event which undermined the authority of the British, and later the Canadians, north of the border, also betrays a particle of influence of the United States. It is not possible to build an intelligible picture without considering these cross-border influences.

Disease

Besides the Whites, and the horse, and the firearms, there was another factor which could suddenly change fortunes — disease. A great nation could be laid low by losses from small pox, as the Mandans were when they lost more than 90% of their population over a three year period. A nation even if near defeat which had survived disease better than its attackers, could find sudden opportunities to turn the tables.



As smallpox ravaged the plains this scene was multiplied many times over, sometimes without anyone left to bury the dead. One such cemetery on Turtle Mountain of smallpox victims contains the bodies of at least twenty-seven individuals. **Lithograph illustration from Narrative of the Red River Expedition, Henry Youle Hind.**

If any uprising was in the making, the winter of 1781-82 put a stop to it. War parties from the upper Missouri country brought smallpox north with them to tribes that had never had it before, and it spread across the Northwest. The country came close to being depopulated. "Naught was left to them," Alexander Mackenzie wrote, "but to submit in agony and despair. To aggravate the picture... may be added the putrid carcasses which the wolves with a furious voracity dragged forth from the huts or which were mangled within them by the dogs... Nor was it uncommon for the father of a family whom the infection had not reached to call them around... and to incite them to baffle death with all its horrors by their own poniards... He was himself ready to perform the deed of mercy with his own hand as the last act of his affection and instantly to follow them to the common place of rest and refuge from human evil." Every tribe it struck was decimated; the Athapascan peoples of the far North were almost wiped out.

The epidemic changed tribal relations on the upper Missouri. At least half the Mandans

died. The survivors abandoned the ill-omened villages at the mouth of Heart River — the center of the world — and moved sixty miles upstream to Knife River.

The Course of Empire, Bernard De Voto, pp. 306-307

It is estimated that the Mandans lost over 50% in the first small pox epidemic, and by 1840 had lost 99% of their population from that of a century before. No one knows what the critical mass for breakdown of an oral tradition might be, but losses over 50% must stress it, and losses over 90% must surely imperil it. In abandoning "the center of the world", the "heart," the Mandans were ceasing to be a people.

James Stevens recounted the history of the downfall of the Assiniboine war chief and medicine man Tchatka, whose rise and fall were bracketed by smallpox. Tchatka was called the "Wild Napoleon" by members of the American Fur Company.

Tchatka was born in the early 1770's and as a child he survived a smallpox epidemic at one of the Hudson's Bay posts on the northern plains. From this attack he subsequently gained immunity to the disease.

...A Gros Ventre [Atsina] encampment was

discovered and was wiped out because the braves were away on the warpath. On the return march, the Assiniboine skirmished the Gros Ventre war party and Tchatka killed the Gros Ventre Chieftain, scalped him, and cut off his hands. Because of this heroic deed his name was changed to Mina-yougha, One Who Holds the Knife. Afterwards it was commonly believed that Tchatka had so much power he could cut a rock in two with his knife.

...In 1832, Tchatka led a war party which attacked a drunken Blackfoot trading party outside the walls of Fort Union. In the dawn hours, six hundred Assiniboine and Cree warriors, swooped down on the inebriated Blackfoot and killed most of them, making off with their booty — three hundred horses! After this battle, Tchatka changed his name to Tatogan, the Antelope.

The decline of Tchatka's leadership began with reversals on the warpath. Then, in the summer of 1838, his twelve hundred warriors contracted the dreaded smallpox at Fort Union. In six months it was reported that only eighty men survived to continue the assault against their hereditary enemies. Many of the other tribes along the Upper Missouri suffered the same horrible ordeal. The Mandans were reduced from six hundred warriors to thirty-two-men, and two years later they were extinct.

Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief, James R. Stevens, pp. 18-19

White involvement in the smallpox epidemics of the 19th Century ranged from deliberately spreading it on the one hand, to immunization and quarantine efforts on another. Several period reports name the US Army as a culprit, distributing “gift blankets” up and down the Missouri which had come from smallpox victims. If true, it was one of the earliest uses of biological warfare on this continent.

In fairness to the US, the idea of using smallpox blankets did not originate with the Americans. General Amherst, a British commander-in-chief in North America during the Revolutionary War, distributed smallpox blankets to Indians during the earlier revolt of Pontiac. Given that this was a fraction of the Native population which supported the British Empire it was a particularly inept decision by Amherst. Strategically it weakened allies while strengthening the relative position of the eventual opponent, not to mention the deliberate genocide it entailed.

Even without the US or British Army, the smallpox plague would have spread. The frontier posts overrun by Pontiac included soldiers with smallpox. Every battle, win or lose, spread the disease. The traders sometimes carried it, while the influx of civilian colonists certainly did. In contrast to the US Army's involvement, the American Fur Company tried unsuccessfully to apply quarantines in an effort to check the spread of the disease. The Algonquin fared better because they had been exposed to European diseases longer, and the Hudson's Bay Company took the unusual step of conducting an immunization program in advance of the spread of the illness.

One of the smallpox plague's countless victims when it spread across the Prairies to the Rocky Mountains in the 1790's was a founding member of one of the early Nor'wester consortiums. Ironically, the indomitable Captain James Tute had survived the French-Indian Wars, the American Revolutionary War, the expedition to find Shining Mountain and the Western Sea, and the battles with the HBC and XY Companies only to die of smallpox on the upper reaches of the North Saskatchewan River. He had raced ahead of the smallpox plague precipitated by his old commander General Amherst only to have it catch up with him anyway.

Smallpox did not strike a Nation once but several times. It took generations to build up a broad immunity in a population. First Nations staggered from the blows of repeated cycles of death and disease.

Thompson described the effect of smallpox epidemics on the general war. In the winter of 1787-88 he met a Peigan elder called Saukamappee. The Peigan recounted tales of his military exploits from the 1730 to 1740 period. He noted for Thompson that earlier on it was usual to eliminate an entire village, taking no prisoners. Later, after the smallpox epidemics had reduced so many tribes to a handful, it became customary again to take live prisoners, returning to the practice before the escalation of the Indian Wars. Saukamappee also related that both the horse and the gun raised the stakes in warfare, making it more deadly, and allowing for war to be carried farther. Saukamappee related that their own war of conquest against the Snakes (who at the time had some horses, but no guns) was halted by smallpox.

“We thus continued to advance through the fine plains to the Stag (probably the Red Deer) River, when death came over us all, and swept more than one half of us by the small pox, of which we knew nothing until it brought death among us. We caught it from the Snake Indi-

ans.”

David Thompson's Travels, p. 198

Saukamappee told Thompson that they had found an entire village of the Snake, in which everyone was dead from disease. Not understanding how the disease was spread, the warriors looted the village, taking away food, tools and clothing. The losses by disease to the invading Peigans was so severe the invasion was called off and the surviving Peigans limped home, literally carrying each other

Denig described the spread of one epidemic to the Assiniboine people during the 1830's.

The first calamity by which this nation [Assiniboine] was cast down was the smallpox of 1838, which has been already alluded to in the history of other nations. This disease made its appearance in Fort Union when the steamboat arrived in the month of June with the annual supplies of the post. No Indians were then near except the wives of the engagees of the Fur Company in the fort, every one of whom caught the infection. In a short time 30 persons were laid up. When the first band came, they were met a mile from the place by good interpreters who represented to them the danger of going near and goods were brought out with the view of trading with them at a distance. All efforts of the kind however, proved unavailing. They would not listen, and passed on to the fort, and 250 lodges or upwards of 1000 souls contracted the disease at the same time, which during the summer and fall reduced them to thirty lodges or about 150 persons old and young. Other bands coming in from time to time caught the infection, some of which remained at the fort where the dead were daily thrown into the river by cart loads. Others attempted to run away from it. The different roads were dotted with carcasses and occasionally lodges standing in which whole families lay dead.

Five Indian Tribes, Edwin Thompson Denig, p. 71

A nation which could defend itself one month, might be wiped out the next. A culture which depended on passing on oral traditions and knowledge intact, was losing vital personnel at a rate which threatened national amnesia. Social order was breaking down, customs were overthrown.

Le Main Gauche, or the Left Hand (or just *the*

Left), is a figure that shows up as one of the principal military commanders of the Cree-led alliance. In the “good ol’ days” he appears as the war-hero, but after the ravages of smallpox and the social chaos which ensued, he reappears in the histories as an opportunistic bandit turning on the very same communities he was formerly pledged to protect. By the time of the quote below there was no longer any semblance of an alliance remaining between the Cree and Mandan. Denig described an attempt by a group of Assiniboine led by *Le Main Gauche* to seize a weakened Mandan village. The attempt backfired because of the consolidation of the Three Affiliated Nations brought on by severe losses from disease.

The Gauche, ignorant of this, presented himself before the Mandans, taking his usual place on the hills and sending forward most of his party, which consisted of 52, with the pipe of peace. The former nation, anxious to make a peace with their hitherto hostile neighbours, eagerly embraced this occasion, and came out some distance to meet the deputation. A halt was made on the prairie. The parties met, seated themselves and proceeded to open negotiations with the pipe. Now the formula of peace making between two savage nations is somewhat tedious. The ceremonies with the pipe, the speeches etc., usually take the best part of a day to get through with. During this time it seems something had been done or said which led the Mandans to believe their supposed friends meditated some treachery. They, therefore, secretly sent off an express to the Arickaras requesting their presence. The distance is not far and in a few hours the latter made their appearance in great force. The Assiniboines, seeing the plans broken, ran away, were followed by the Rees [Arikara] and Mandans, and about 20 of them were slain.

Five Indian Tribes, Edwin Thompson Denig, p. 78

Other sources swap *Hidatsa* for *Mandan*, or vary the numbers of casualties, but the essential features and the character of *Le Main Gauche* remain unchanged.

It should be borne in mind that *Le Gauche's* actions were not endorsed by the Assiniboine nation as a whole. He was by 1838 regarded as a bandit by his own people. In any human catastrophe there are individuals who surface who will exploit the misery and misfortune of their fellows. The Mandans by forming a defensive alliance with their fellow sufferers the Arikara managed

to preserve themselves a little longer.

Denig also noted that the Assiniboines were themselves weakened by disease, and by competition from better armed neighbours.

The Gens des Canots [Assiniboine] are commonly found along the White Earth River; extend their travels in the summer seasons as far north as the heads of La Riviere aux Souris, Grand Coulee [the Rock Lake-Pelican Lake trench] and Pembinar River. Indeed the entire extent of country east of Fort Union as far down as the Great Bend is hunted by them at different times. But owing to the absence of wood on this great plain they are obliged to place their camp on or near the Missouri in the winter season. They are usually found at that time either on White Earth River or above that point where trading houses are established and they are dealt with in the same way as the others. Some 15 or 20 lodges of this band trade at the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company or with the half-breeds of Red River who visit their camp during the winter with dog sleds loaded with merchandise. These Indians of later years have been much troubled with Sioux war parties, have been run away from their customary hunting grounds which, it is believed, will before long be occupied by that great and warlike nation

In proportion as buffalo recede from the Sioux country, that people are forced to follow them and being numerous must displace weaker tribes to provide for their own subsistence. Every year the battles between the Sioux and Assiniboines become more frequent.

Five Indian Tribes, Edwin Thompson Denig, p. 81-82

Denig was not above getting names, people, events or places mixed up, though he succeeds well in conveying the flavour of his time. He was poorly informed at the time of writing this book (about 1850-1851) regarding human geography north of the 49th parallel. He thought then that the majority of the Cree lived on the Plains and was only dimly aware of the vast extent of that society. In 1850 Denig was certain there weren't more than 2,080 Assiniboines when most estimates placed their number between 20,000 and 28,000. He tended to think that the Natives with whom he was familiar, represented all Natives of that nation.

The references to the "Gens de Canot" of the Assiniboine places Turtle Mountain within their northern

range. Denig gave their Sioux name as *Wa to pap pe nah* and said that their current chief in 1851 was Rattle Snake. (This is another instance of a chief at Turtle Mountain being referred to as "Rattler.")

Usually Gens de Canot is rendered into English as the "Canoe Band". It could be a mistranslation when one considers that the Dakota name of the band presently at Oak Lake is the "Canupawakpa Dakota Nation," meaning "pipestone" rather than "canoe."

The combination of disease and war depopulated the river valley towns and broke up the prevalent economic partnerships. Sometime in the second quarter of the 1800's the Assiniboine Canoe Band withdrew from Turtle Mountain westward to Saskatchewan in the face of increasing pressure from Metis and Dakotas, as well as from the threat of disease. Although Hadamanie is known to have moved to the mountain in 1861 it is possible that Dakota were already moving into this area before then. We know from HBC reports that Dakota did in fact hunt north of Turtle Mountain as far as the Assiniboine River in the late 1700's.

Denig's editor summed up the change upon the river valley people. Even as late as 1836, Caddoans were still arriving as refugees on the Upper Missouri from the Lower and Middle Mississippi.

In the fall of 1836, the Arikaras sent two delegations from their camp 'at the Black Hills' to ascertain the feelings of the Mandans at Fort Clark toward them. These delegations were received in most friendly fashion. The Arikaras wintered on the Little Missouri and northeastward as far as Turtle Mountain. On April 28, 1837 they arrived at Fort Clark, 250 lodges strong. The Mandans found quarters for most of them in their larger village. The remainder, some 20 lodges, took residence with the Hidatsas with feasting and dancing. In July smallpox broke out among the Indians in the vicinity of Fort Clark. By fall, Chardon [the American Fur Co. factor] reckoned seven-eighths of the Mandans and one-half of the Arikaras had died of the disease. On September 21, 1837, the remnant of the Mandans, fearing the Arikaras would unite with the Sioux against them, removed to the opposite side of the Missouri. After wintering south of Fort Clark, the Arikaras returned March 20, 1838 to take possession of the larger Mandan village. On June 29, a few Mandans who had remained with the Arikaras become incensed by Arikara theft of their

women and moved upriver to join the Hidatsa. Next month, however, the Hidatsas moved downriver to the smaller Mandan village to be near the Arikaras for mutual protection against the Sioux.

Five Indian Tribes, Edwin Thompson Denig, footnote p. 59

And so war and disease gradually reduced three separate First Nations, each numbering in the thousands if not tens-of-thousands, to a single tiny village by 1840. The Santee Dakota, were affected almost as severely as the Three Affiliated Nations. In 1837 George Catlin saw the beginning of the mass death which would carry off most of the Natives he had painted, and all of the Mandans.

The small-pox, whose ravages have now pretty nearly subsided, has taken off a great many of the Winnebagoes and Sioux. The famous Wa-be-sha, of the Sioux, and more than half of his band, have fallen victims to it within a few weeks, and the remainder of them, blackened with its frightful distortions, look as if they had just emerged from the sulphurous regions below. At Prairie du Chien, a considerable number of the half-breeds, and French also, suffered death by this baneful disease; and at that place I learned in all cases of vaccination, which had been given several years ago, it was an efficient protection; but in those cases where the vaccine had been recent (and there were many of them), it had not the effect to protect, and in almost every instance of such, death ensued.

Catlin's Indians, Vol. 2, p. 183

The traditional chain of information was beginning to break down, and with it the last ability to resist the encroachment of the Whites.

New Nations: Michif and Metis

In the early 1800's the Metis were still unsuccessful at being included among "the people", so far as the First Nations were concerned. Metis were regarded then by Native leaders as either/or. Either you were a Native, or you were a White. there could be no in-between and there was no such thing as a Metis nation. While "the Falcon" Tanner regarded himself as an Ottawa (though racially he was White), his children chose sides as either White or Native — one son became an Ojibway chief,

while a cousin died with Custer. The following generations of Tanners became more comfortable with the identity of Metis, while some continued their identification with First Nations.. (One of the Ojibway seniors who visited the Moncur Gallery during the 1999 Dakota Oyate visit was a Joe Tanner.)

According to Gourneau, the long association with White fur traders had a pronounced effect on the Plains Ojibway.

When trading posts were finally established on the Park and Pembina Rivers, in what was to become the state of North Dakota, groups from different bands of Ojibway and few members of other tribes as well, combined to form what was to become known as the Pembina band. By this time the migrants from the woodlands had successfully changed their culture from one developed to fit lake and forest regions to one very well adaptable to life on the Plains.

Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Patrick Gourneau, p. 7.

Gourneau noted a curious by-product of Sioux-Ojibway relations. The Sioux were patrilineal but the Ojibway were matrilineal. Consequently a person born of a Sioux father and an Ojibway mother had the happy inheritance of being able to claim both or either cultural traditions. But, a person born of a Ojibway father and a Sioux mother, might end up outcast without any "legitimate" cultural membership.

Enter the Whites, Michif and Metis.

Two very distinct ethnic groups of the past and present time provide the make-up of the Plains-Ojibway tribe now known as the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. They are 'full-bloods' and the Metis. The term 'full-blood' can be applied sociologically and does not imply that the group is made up entirely of people of pure Indian descent. It merely means that these individuals prefer and adhere to the Indian way of life instead of Metis, or 'half-breed' way of life, which includes dancing and forms of worship. A major portion of this group shows less white, or European ancestry than the Metis group, or 'Mechifs' as they prefer to identify themselves. 'Mechif' (singular) is the Indian twist of the French word Metis. Many members of the group show a good quantity of European ancestry and bear French, Scotch and other European nation-



Paul Kane travelled with the Metis of Red River on buffalo hunts during the late 1830's and early 1840's. This painting of the Red River carts forming into brigades was finished circa 1840. Kane, like many artists, kept "improving" on his landscapes, changing them past easy recognition. Earlier pencil versions of the same painting show much lower hillocks in the foreground, but the lake and hills on the horizon are largely unchanged. Without the foreground hillocks, the scene could be of Whitewater Lake looking south towards the Turtle's Head. Artistic licence has also dramatized the height of the Turtle's Head and/or Back. If this interpretation is correct, the painting shows Metis buffalo brigades intersecting the old Mandan Trail and the Turtle Mountain Herd by 1840. This kind of pressure would result in the 1851 Battle of the Grand Couteau between thousands of Sioux and Metis. **National Archives of Canada.**

ality surnames.

Turtle Mountain Chippewa, P. Gourneau, pp. 8-9

On Turtle Mountain the usual practice of mixed marriages to foster trade, combined with the influence of the presence of institutions such as the Council of Seven Stones, encouraged an unusual degree of cross-cultural communication. Communication here meaning everything whether it is the transmittal of ideas, trade goods or genes. The result was a rich local Michif and Metis culture. Peter Bakker, a Dutch linguist, described the problem such a cross-cultural effect presents to conventional historical interpretations.

The Michif language is spoken by Metis, the descendants of European fur traders (often French Canadians) and Cree-speaking Amerindian women. It is spoken in scattered Metis communities in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada and in North Dakota and Montana in the United States. There are also pockets of speakers in

northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories in Canada and in Minnesota and Oregon in the United States. It is spoken outside the French-speaking part of Canada and the Cree-speaking areas of North America. At present, the number of speakers is estimated at fewer than 1,000. It was probably double or triple this number around the turn of the century but never much higher. Michif is a rather peculiar language. It is half Cree (an Amerindian language) and half French. It is a mixed language drawing its nouns from a European language and its verbs from an Amerindian language. It has been called the "nec plus ultra of grammars in contact". Michif speakers, however, rarely know both Cree and French. No such mixture of two languages has been reported from any other part of the world. There are some other mixed languages, but these are all of a different type, dissimilar to Michif. Michif is unusual, if not unique, in several respects among the languages of the

world. It poses challenges for all theories of language and of language contact.

First, it is a problem for the “family tree” model of language. In this model, every language has one parent language, from which it differs slightly. One “parent” can have different “daughter” languages. These daughter languages and the parent language are said to be “genetically related” : they belong to the same “branch” of a “language family.” Michif cannot be classified by this model. Being a mixture of Cree and French, it cannot be classified as an Algonquian (Amerindian) language or as an Indo-European (or Romance) language. Therefore, Michif is a problem for classification and a challenge to this model.

Second, Michif is a problem for theories of language contact. A number of processes of contact-induced change and a number of types of contact languages have been formulated by scholars in this field, but Michif appears to be different from all these, as I show. Mixed languages are rare, but Michif appears to differ strikingly even from those.

Third, Michif challenges all theoretical models of language. It is a language with two completely different components, with separate sound systems, morphological endings, and syntactic rules. For psycholinguists this is a challenge: how does this work in the brain? For language theoreticians it is also a problem: how can one make a grammatical model that combines two grammatical systems in one language? How can one account for the presence of two phonological systems in one language?

In many respects, Michif is an impossible language. I know several professional linguists who contest its existence since it does not fit into their model of how a language, or a mixed language, should look.

A Language of Our Own, Peter Bakker, pp. 3-4

Local Michif speakers, such as Patrick Gourneau, add that Michif also includes words and phrases from Assiniboine and Gaelic in addition to the major body of the language which is drawn from Cree and French. Even among the so-called English-speaking population of Turtle Mountain there are peculiarities of phrase and perception. Margaret Dumas, a Cree from Nelson House remarked on one visit to the area that Turtle Mountain

non-natives speak of geography the way Native people speak of time — as a process. That Bakker observed unique syncretisms in language development around Turtle Mountain lends weight to the argument that there must have been unique syncretic social institutions as well.

Gourneau provided a detailed explanation of the breakdown of Ojibway, Cree, Assiniboine, French and Scots influences in the Chippewa, Metis and Michif populations. For our purposes the subsequent political role played by this group can be summed up under the one heading of “Metis”. In this light it is the Metis, more than the Plains-Ojibway, who drive the Assiniboine from Manitoba. Paul Kane described Saulteaux advancing onto the Plains to hunt buffalo literally in the protective shadow of the Metis.

As the Metis gained in strength, other Nations of the plains revised their policies and one by one began seeking treaties with the Metis. Nicollet described the Dakota coming to an arrangement with the Metis in 1839 at the Tail of Turtle Mountain. His informant was the Dakota chief and diplomat, the friend of Carver, Wanatan at the time an old man.

This year the men of the north seem to have come to hunt six weeks earlier than usual. This circumstance, it appears, is owing to an agreement which they had with the Yankton and the Sisseton of Lake Traverse to meet near Devil's Lake in order to bring about peace. This meeting took place about a month before our arrival in this same country. We heard of it when we were on the Missouri at Fort Pierre, and when we met Wahanantan at his camp, he told us that it had taken place and that the men of the north had left again for the Red River.

Joseph Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, p. 189

By 1851 the Assiniboine and Metis conflict reached a peak in battles over control of the buffalo herds. According to the local version of the story, commonly attributed to Pierre Falcon the Metis bard, a battle took place in the summer of 1851 between the South Bend of the Souris and Turtle Mountain. A small group of 200 Metis, 70 of them hunters, travelled from the White Horse Plain to hunt buffalo at Turtle Mountain. Somewhere within the South Bend of the Souris River, the White Horse Plain Brigade were met by an estimated 1,000 Assiniboine warriors. (Roughly 30% of the estimated total military strength of the Assiniboine nation at the time.) A parley was held but went sour. One or two Metis were killed and at least one wounded in a scuffle with the Assini-

boines. The Metis formed squares or circles, depending on terrain, and travelled in columns. They fought a running battle for four days as they inched south and eastward around the mountain in order to locate two other larger brigades operating from the Forks and Pembina. No further Metis deaths were reported, but the Assiniboines are reported to have lost 200 to 300 killed or wounded before breaking off the engagement.

A thorough treatment of the Metis side of the battle was written by William Morton and published in the 1960-1961 *Papers of the Manitoba Historical Society*. Morton cross-referenced six early sources on this battle, some of them eye-witnesses. Among the papers he reviewed were letters from Father Lafleche, the priest involved in the battle; and the account of Pierre Falcon's son, Jean Baptiste Falcon who led the small Red River cart company that became engaged. Morton did not identify the Native forces involved as other than "Sioux" but did try to identify individual Native leaders. The composite narrative which Morton arrived at suggests a change in leadership on the Native side from the commencement to the end of the battle — an heroic war chief was killed early on while a peace chief of some sort ended the battle.

Morton narrowed down the precise dates of the Battle of the Grand Couteau (as he termed it) as occurring on July 12, 13 and 14 of 1851. He bases this conclusion on a reference in the various letters in which the participants observed a lunar eclipse during one evening of the engagement.

First, however, it is to be noted that the fight at the Grand Couteau is also the most remarkable military feat of the "new nation" of the Metis and exhibits the peculiar tactics of their plains fighting at their highest development. To tell the story of the battle is therefore to comment on the whole military history of the Metis from the "fur trade war" on the Assiniboine and the Red from 1815 to 1817 to their defeat by the Canadian militia at Batoche in 1885.

The Battle of the Grand Couteau, William Morton, Manitoba Historical Society Series III, No. 16, p. 37

In 1851 the Metis Nation was at its militarily peak. It had the strength to pursue the buffalo herds deep into Sioux territory, and it had the population at home that needed the food. Simultaneously the great herds were being destroyed along the Red and Mississippi Rivers, forcing hunters to concentrate in greater numbers to the west. The authority and cohesion of the Native govern-

ments south of Turtle Mountain was weakening. The Mandans had disappeared and the Hidatsa, Minataree and Arickara had not been able to fill their place. The Assiniboine, Lakota and Dakota all contested the area between the Souris and the Missouri. The constricted range of the Turtle Mountain buffalo herd guaranteed that these many nations would be pulled into conflict with each other. In the first half of the 1800's the Metis had hunted primarily to the south along the Red River, but in the 1840's and 1850's were moving in force into the Turtle Mountain herd. Not one, but three great Metis Red River cart brigades would converge on the area southwest of Turtle Mountain. Where only a few decades before these three groups hunted apart, in 1851 their courses would be bent westward. Partly this must have been because they followed the dwindling buffalo, but it may also have been equally due to increasing conflict with the Siouan nations. From the Ojibway and Chipewewa histories we know that these people were often intermixed with the Metis buffalo hunters.

In June of that year, the Saint Boniface, or "main river" party accompanied by Father Albert Lacombe going for the first time to the plains where he was to serve out his ministry, travelled south to a rendezvous with the Pembina party. From Pembina the combined parties set out west on June 16 to a rendezvous with the buffalo hunters of Saint Francois-Xavier. The parties numbered three hundred and eighteen hunters. With them were the able-bodied women, with children too small to be left in the settlement, for it was the women who cut up and dried the meat, made the buffalo hide sacks and prepared the pemmican. The total number of persons was thirteen hundred with eleven hundred carts.

On June 15, the White Horse Plain party had left Saint Francois-Xavier, accompanied by its missionary, Rev. Louis Francois Richer Lafleche, grand vicar of Bishop Provencher and himself later to be famous as Bishop of Three Rivers. The party was small, numbering only two hundred carts and sixty-seven hunters, with an unknown number of women. It was led, not by the chief of the White Horse Plain settlement, Cuthbert Grant, but by a nephew of his, Jean Baptiste Falcon, a son of the bard of the Metis.

The Battle of the Grand Couteau, William Morton, Manitoba Historical Society Series III, No.16, pp. 39-40

Although the three brigades had formerly operated quite separately, all the better to hunt, in 1851 they agreed to operate in parallel for better safety. Councils were held at the different camps, and it was agreed that the three columns would stay with twenty or thirty miles of each other. This would be far enough away not to interfere with each other's hunt and close enough to respond within a day's march. A small encounter between skirmish parties was reported on June 30. On July 12 to 13 the Metis reported Sioux attempts to cut off Metis stragglers. It is probable that they'd been dogged throughout the preceding two weeks as the territory they were inadvertently invading rounded up sufficient troops to carry a battle.

The precise location of the battle is not known, but most accounts agree it is not at Turtle Mountain itself nor is it on the Missouri Couteau but somewhere in between. William Morton places it on the north side of the Souris River's big bend, southwest of Turtle Mountain and northwest of Dog Den Butte. It would not likely have been any further north than a line west of Sourisford.

The local version of the story is that a "thousand Assiniboine" took part in the battle. Morton says that the accounts he consulted varied from 2000 to 2500. This is too many warriors to be easily called up by any one First Nation in 1851 in this area. It is quite possible that the initial encounters were with a thousand Assiniboine, and that they called on allies to reinforce. If as many as 2500 were involved on the Native side then some kind of government was required to organize that many. Since it wasn't clearly Dakota, Lakota or Assiniboine territory in 1851 a good candidate for organizing the resistance would be the Council on Turtle Mountain. The Hidatsa in 1851 were no longer capable of leading a resistance. It is possible that the Lakota could have provided the leadership and main numbers, as they did on the Bozeman Trail, but the area in question is on the northeastern extreme of Lakota territory. Many stories agree that 1,000 Assiniboine was the usual strength of the military force called up by the Assiniboine Nation to protect their frontier along the Souris River. In order to call up 2,500 warriors, the Assiniboine Nation by itself would have to have called on every able bodied adult male — full mobilization.

That a battle would occur was not a foregone conclusion. There were abortive peaceful overtures by both sides, which were understood poorly. The only Metis death occurred among five scouts who initially approached the Assiniboine camp. According to the Metis sources, the Assiniboine informed them their own people were starving and the Metis could not hunt the Turtle Mountain herd. The Assiniboine soldiers moved in with their own carts to seize the proceeds of the hunt from

the Metis.

During the preceding night the Metis had entrenched their carts by upending them and weaving the wagon tongues together. They piled up debris and dug firing pits in a star-shaped pattern to provide overlapping fields of fire. The surviving captured Metis scouts broke away and escaped. Even so the Assiniboine forces held their fire and tried to physically force their way into the encircled carts.

The Sioux came charging in, hoping to brush aside the flimsy barrier of the carts and break up at the circle. At their head rode a young chief, "so beautiful," Falcon said in after years, "that my heart revolted at the necessity of killing him." He shouted to the Sioux brave to turn away, but the Indian rode on, the war cry ringing from his lips. Falcon shot him off his horse, and the Metis hunters fired in volley.

The Battle of the Grand Couteau, William Morton, Manitoba Historical Society Series III, No. 16, p. 45

On July 14, 1851 the small company under Jean Baptiste Falcon broke camp and began moving southward to seek the safety of the larger Metis brigades from Pembina and Winnipeg. The company proceeded in four columns in order to be able to quickly form square in case of another attack. It was necessary as they were attacked again. The next-to-last scene of the battle suggests that the impetuous decision of the now-deceased war-chief was being regretted by someone in higher authority.

Finally the firing slackened and the war cries died away. Once more a thunderstorm was rolling up over the Couteau. A Sioux chief rode up, upraised palm out in the gesture of peace and demanded to be allowed to enter the camp. He was told to leave quickly, if he did not wish to be left on the prairie. He replied with dignity, before retreating, that the Sioux had had enough, that they were going away; that, henceforth and forever, they would never again attack the Metis.

The Battle of the Grand Couteau, William Morton, Manitoba Historical Society Series III, No. 16, p. 48

Meanwhile some of the escaped scouts from the previous day had managed to reach the main Metis force. That evening a relief force arrived consisting of over 300 Metis and an equal number of Saukteaux and/or Chippewa.

The available Metis-led force now numbered over 700, all armed with guns. Morton reports that the Metis decided to leave the area and rejoin the other parties further southeast, *“but first they raised a tall pole on the plain with a letter to the Sioux. What was in the letter, no one had recorded.”*

Tactically the Assiniboine (or whoever) won, but with two inescapable lessons which were identical to those lessons learned by the Lakota-led forces on the Bozeman Trail. The invaders could inflict casualties at a rate of a hundred-to-one; and the Metis in this case could, and would, hunt wherever they pleased. An unknown number of Sioux, somewhere between 100 and 200 by most accounts, had been killed.

This story falls into the category of “Last Battle” stories associated with Turtle Mountain. The formal statement to that effect by an unidentified “Sioux chief” at the end of the battle suggests the intervention of the Council on Turtle Mountain. After this point the Assiniboine Nation withdrew from the Turtle Mountain area, and then from Manitoba altogether. Like so many others, they were pushed westward by more organized, more aggressive, and better equipped groups coming from the east. The Metis occupied some of the land vacated around Turtle Mountain, as did the Chippewa on the south side. The land formerly claimed by the Assiniboine between the western side of Turtle Mountain and the Souris was temporarily abandoned. Roughly thirty years later in 1883 the last solitary bison of the Turtle Mountain buffalo herd was killed at Whitewater Lake.

Last Battles

The foregoing account of the Battle of the Grand Couteau enters Turtle Mountain oral history as the Last Battle between Metis and Assiniboine. There are other Last Battle stories around Turtle Mountain. These stories follow a common pattern. Each one recounts an incident which is apparently typical of the conflict between the contesting parties. Each one rationalizes the necessity of the conflict and then takes a surprising turn where some extraordinary feat of bravery, diplomacy and/or medicine power takes the parties to a new understanding. In each story a new treaty is forged which has “lasted until now” and is the foundation for current present-day relationships between these ethnic groups.

William Dumas recounted to the author a story of a Last Battle between Cree and Dakota. According to Dumas, the Cree recall sending war parties, as many as four hundred at a time, from Manitoba Keewatin six hundred miles or more to Turtle Mountain. One of these stories, alluded to earlier, mentions a Council of All Na-

tions, and seems to be an account of participation under Matche-go-whewhub in one of the expeditions reported by John Tanner the Falcon. The last story, stated Dumas, is that a party of several hundred Cree, possibly with allies, fought a battle on a hill on or near Turtle Mountain with the Dakota. A medicine man appeared, accompanied by a fog, who shut down the battle and brought the Cree and Dakota into a council with each other. According to the story, this was the Last Battle fought between Cree and Dakota.

Bill Moncur was told a story by Sitting Eagle of a Last Battle fought on one of the hillocks on the southern side of the Cherry Creek Coulee (Musgrove Ravine) a few miles south and west of Boissevain. Moncur recalled the battle as being fought between Dakota and “*northern Indians*”, in which two large parties hunting the same buffalo herd had collided. “*They didn’t intend a battle,*” said Moncur. “*It was supposed to be a hunt.*” Nevertheless, according to the story a fight ensued between the Northerners and Dakota which ended on a hill. Wiser heads mediated, and the two parties sat down to a council. As a result this was the Last Battle fought between Dakota and Ojibway and/or Cree. Moncur believed the battle occurred around 1851.

A turn of the last century account of the same incident by C. C. Musgrove specified the battle in Cherry Creek as having occurred between Cree and Dakota. This account is found in the records of both C. C. Musgrove and his daughter Mildred Musgrove (now deceased.)

Path Maker recounted a Last Battle between Mandan and Assiniboine which circumstantially seems to fall within this timeframe rather than with an earlier account from perhaps the 17th or 18th Centuries. Since the story of the Mandan-Assiniboine Last Battle seals the present day peace, the original event cannot have occurred in the halcyon days of the Mandan Trail before the Assiniboine falling out. It must have occurred after the Assiniboine raids on the Trail, towards its last days.

In Path Maker’s account, the Grand Chief of the Assiniboine, Anokasan (the Condor) had a headstrong son determined to prove himself against any odds. This son, accompanied by his foster-brother, a few warriors and a shaman went on the war road to attack the Mandans. When the shaman informed the party that something prevented him from seeing any further, all but the Chief’s son decided that discretion was the better part of valour and turned back.

Path Maker referred to the hero of this story only as “the young Chief”. In his account the Young Chief makes his way to a Mandan camp where he considers the relative temptations of stealing horses or killing Man-

dan warriors. However, he also sees a Mandan maiden and this soon diverts his attention away from his original goals. Instead of killing anyone, or abducting the woman, the Young Chief sneaks into the woman's teepee at night and then sits "silent and motionless." Before dawn he left, then repeated this performance on the next night, only this time he couldn't resist touching the woman. She woke, but did not let on. On the third night the woman laid a trap for the Young Chief.

Impatient with the long wait between his visits and blinded by his infatuation, the young Chief failed to notice that the campfires were put out earlier than on the preceding nights, and walked into their trap.

When he entered her lodge, she, under the pretense of returning his caresses, jerked the line which informed her brother in the next lodge of the intruder in her lodge. Her brother immediately rushed to her tent and stood there with a dagger clasped in his hand, poised and ready to strike.

The young Assiniboine Chief quietly sat down beyond the fireplace opposite the door. In the meantime, the maiden started the blaze with the shavings and kindling wood, and for the first time they saw their bold visitor sitting there with an unconcerned smile, indifferent to his danger.

By means of the universal sign language, the Mandan brave asked the young Chief, "Who are you?"

Likewise he was answered in the sign language, and the young Chief indicated, "The Decapitators."

The Mandan gave an exclamatory grunt as a picture flashed in his mind of this ruthless tribe, who had left headless Mandan corpses on the plains.

"Where are the rest of your party?" the Mandan asked again.

"I am alone," answered the Assiniboine.

"What brought you here?" countered the Mandan.

The Assiniboine Chief told briefly of how he was left alone by his party, who had given up their unsuccessful warpath and had returned home. He also informed the Mandan he was tempted to slay him the morning he made his kill and dressed the buffalo below him and how his life had been forfeited to him the past two nights as he slept, unconscious

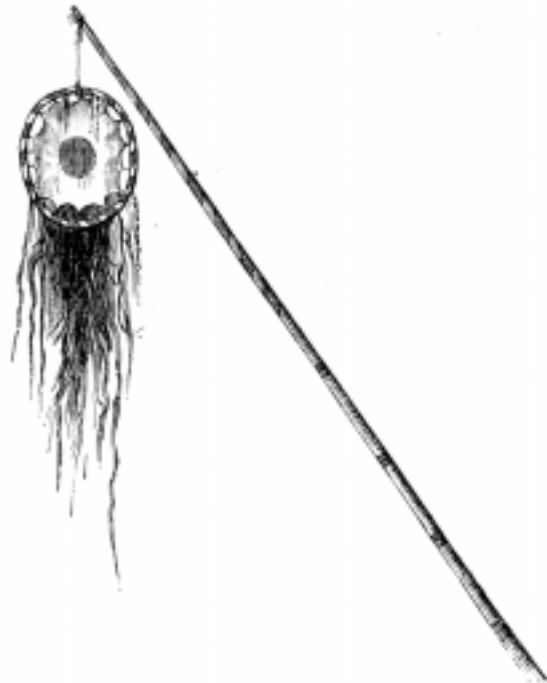
of his fate. The young Chief told the Mandan brave that he wanted his scalp, but he also wanted the maiden.

"Be quick with your knife and end the suspense," said the Assiniboine, resigned to death.

The maiden intervened at this moment and implored her brother to stay his hand and spare the life of one who was so brave.

The Mandan slowly sheathed his knife in response to his sister's plea and called his wife to bring his pipe and tobacco from his lodge. She had been waiting outside the door, prepared to crack the skull of the intruder with her hatchet, should he escape from her husband.

When she brought in the pipe and tobacco the Mandan sat down and smoked in contemplation, pondering over the remarkable events and their climax, the profession of a reciprocal love by his sister for this hated Assiniboine. To him, his sister's plea was a command, and he knew he was deprived of a great opportunity — glorious combat with his adversary, the Assiniboine, and if victorious he would be acclaimed and honoured by his tribe.



Sioux Scalp from the Graves at Red River.

When Henry Youle Hind saw this Sioux scalp decorating an Ojibwa grave at Red River in 1858, the Ojibwa-Sioux War was well over a century old. "Assiniboine Expedition," Henry Youle Hind, p. 124

Curious to know more about his foe, the Mandan inquired about his heritage.

“My father is Chief of the Assiniboines, and I am his only son,” was the answer of the young Chief.

The Mandan now proceeded to tell him about himself.

“My father is Chief of the Mandans, and the maiden is my sister. We have been living in concealment, away from our people, for some time, to escape the unwelcome attentions which were forced on my sister by the villain of the tribe. This villain offered my father twenty ponies for the hand of my sister in marriage, intimating reprisal if his offer were rejected. He is the tyrant of the camp, a giant in stature, and with a bludgeon he enforces his will on others.

All night long the Mandan smoked, but as dawn was breaking upon them, he offered his pipe to the Assiniboine: a silent token of the pledge of peace. The two foes now smoked in fellowship, passing and repassing the pipe of peace between them.

Recollections..., Path Maker, pp. 148-149

In Path Maker's story, the next extraordinary event was a peace conference among the Mandan themselves, at the end of which the “tyrant” took the unexpected step of embracing the Assiniboine Young Chief as his adoptive brother. With his new wife, a Mandan warrior escort including his new adopted brother the Tyrant, and six hundred gift horses, the Young Chief returned to his village. At the Assiniboine village the Young Chief found his parents were mourning him as presumed dead.

After a visit, the Mandans were showered with reciprocal gifts from the Assiniboines, including more horses. A later meeting of two villages of Assiniboine and Mandan was marked by a new ritual, erecting their tents in two parallel lines facing each other. *“Thus was consummated a peace treaty between the Mandans and the Assiniboines.”*

The community history of Dunseith, North Dakota includes a substantial amount of information about the composite Turtle Mountain Chippewa Band. It contains an account of a Last Battle fought between Sioux and Chippewa around 1850, where the Sioux could be either Lakota or Dakota.

The Sioux war band had followed a small

remnant of Chippewas to what is now known as Little Fish Lake near Belcourt. Here they stopped and were making war medicine to exterminate the Chippewas who were making their last stand. Their condition was probably unknown to the Sioux, but one of the Chippewas, Rising Sun, knew how desperate the situation was and after a sleepless night determined to sacrifice himself in the hope of saving the tribe. He arose at daybreak, stood erect in his canoe with hands outstretched to show that he was empty handed. His friends shoved him out into the water to a point where the north wind took charge and he drifted slowly toward the Sioux camp. The Sioux, catching sight of him adrift in the uncertain light of the dawn amidst wisps of fog, superstitiously thought he was the great spirit bearing down upon them, so they hurriedly left in terror. This occurrence brought about a peace pact that was observed until the Minnesota Massacre. Then some of the Sioux warriors fled into this area to hide and to rest after being pursued. However this caused no conflict between the tribes.

Prairie Past and Mountain Memories, p. 323

In contrast to this general tenor around Turtle Mountain in the 1850's, peace did not come to the plains farther west until well into the 1870's and 1880's. According to John S. Milloy the Cree and Blackfoot Confederacy did not achieve a lasting peace until a treaty was agreed upon between them at Red Deer, Alberta in 1871.

Council at Turtle Mountain

If a political structure such as a “Council of All Nations” or a “Council of Seven Stones” existed in 1800, the Ojibway were successful in gaining admittance; that, or they already knew they owned membership before they arrived at Turtle Mountain. The same may be true for the Ottawa and even the Dakota.

Carver and the King's Rangers may have met with this hypothetical council, or one very much like it. Picking up the narrative where he left the main Sioux camps on the St. Pierre River, Carver said that they travelled generally north to where *“these bands annually go to the great cave...to hold a grand council with all the other bands; wherein they settle their operations for the ensuing year.”* Carver even tells us that the date on which he addressed this council was May 1, 1767.

Never did I travel with so cheerful and happy a company. But the mirth met with a sudden and temporary allay from a violent storm that overtook us one day on our passage. We had just landed, and were preparing to set up our tents for the night, when a heavy cloud overspread the heavens, and the most dreadful thunder, lightning, and rain issued from it, that ever I beheld.

The Indians were greatly terrified, and ran to such shelter as they could find; for only a few tents were as yet erected. Apprehensive of the danger that might ensue from standing near any thing which could serve for a conductor, as the cloud appeared to contain such an uncommon quantity of the electrical fluid, I took my stand as far as possible from any covering; chusing rather to be exposed to the peltings of the storm than to receive a fatal stroke. At this the Indians were greatly surprized, and drew conclusions from it not unfavourable to the opinion they already entertained of my resolution. Yet I acknowledge that I was never more affected in my life; for nothing scarcely could exceed the terrific scene. The peals of thunder were so loud that they shook the earth; and the lightning flashed along the ground in streams of sulphur; so that the Indian chiefs themselves, although their courage in war is usually invincible, could not help trembling at the horrid combustion. As soon as the storm was over, they flocked around me, and informed me that it was a proof of the anger of the evil spirits, whom they were apprehensive that they had highly offended.

When we arrived at the Great Cave, and the Indians had deposited the remains of their deceased friends in the burial place that stands adjacent to it [to the north, Carver says elsewhere,] they held their great council, into which I was admitted, and at the same time had the honour to be installed or adopted a chief of their bands.

Carver's Travels through North America, pp. 85-87

Evidence for the existence of a Council at Turtle Mountain specifically is found in John Tanner's diaries. He states explicitly that Algonquin and Assiniboine allies gathered for war at Turtle Mountain in the winters of 1799-1800; 1800-1801 and around 1813-1814. The years

are vague because at this time Tanner no longer used White terms or calendars. We can place these events roughly by Tanner's statements about his own age at the time, and the occurrence of the last event *after* the War of 1812 - 1814 and *before* the Red River battles of 1815. One of the difficulties mentioned by Tanner is the organization of disparate elements towards meeting a common goal. The first expedition described by Tanner fared poorly for want of organization.

But at this time [Winter 1799-1800] the Assiniboine, and Crees, and all the Indians of this part of the country, with whom the Mandans had made peace, were invited by the Mandans to come to their country, and join in a war against the people called by the Ojibbeways A-gutch-a-ninne (Minnetarees) who live two days distant from the Mandans. Waus-so, hearing of this, determined to join the war-party, then assembling at Mouse River.

...But this expedition, for which the Mandans had called assistance from such remote regions, failed for the want of concert and agreement between the different bands. Some of these being the hereditary enemies of the rest, quarrels were sure to arise, and the project was thus disconcerted, the A-gutch-a-ninne being left at peace in their own village.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 39

The following year, a call for assistance was again put out by the Mandans to their northern trading partners. Again the warriors assembled at Turtle Mountain; this time with more success. This time the allied force of several hundred, (Tanner did not accompany it and did not estimate its size,) reached a Mandan village where they were hidden in reserve within the town. The townsite was attacked and besieged by Dakota. At the turning point of the battle, when the Dakota besiegers and the Mandan defenders were both exhausted, the Ojibway and Assiniboine reserves boiled out of the town and routed the attackers. Tanner's party of latecomers met the victorious Allies returning towards Turtle Mountain after the battle was over. But the size of the force strained local resources, and the Allied forces experienced some starvation as they passed Turtle Mountain northward on their return journey.

This extraordinary military effort may have been a result of the Dakota getting carried away in raiding. David Thompson described witnessing the site of 15 Assiniboine lodges between Whitewater Lake and the Souris River, whose inhabitants had been killed by Dako-

tas. The implication of this to Thompson was that raiding on the Mandan Trail was on the increase.

Thompson presented the Assiniboine as having been vigilant, without bothering him. Despite Henry's apprehensions, the Pritchard and Thompson testimonies both described the Assiniboine as lending assistance and medical aid to lost or starving fur traders. Of course Alexander Henry the Younger wasn't lost or starving as we've already noted — he was a rum running gun smuggler in the eyes of the Assiniboine of the time. Henry's marriage to an Assiniboine helped to mend some fences. When his Assiniboine father-in-law was killed by Sioux, he provided ammunition and supplies to his in-laws. That helped cement relations with the Assiniboine but added to alienation from the Dakota. When we caught up with Alexander Henry Jr. later on the Pacific coast, his Assiniboine wife was nowhere to be seen and Henry was pursuing the affections of a White prostitute.

Tanner's third and final reference to war parties at Turtle Mountain is the most intriguing. This time he arrived well in advance, witnessed the assembly and the camp tensions as the army gathered on the Turtle's Head. He was, in 1815, a veteran warrior himself and came closer to the action, therefore witnessing more events and naming more people.

Tanner made several references that are important to the Moncur Gallery collection — he described games being conducted on the Turtle's Head between different national groups; as well as some kind of international council. The name Tanner gave the chairperson of the Council makes a direct connection to the Moncur artifacts. The following events took place sometime after the conclusion of the war in 1814, and before 1817. By the context, the events probably occurred in 1815.

We were all now about to join the Crees and Assineboin to go against the Sioux... We were about forty men in number when we started from Red River. As we passed along through the Cree and Assineboin encampments and villages on our route, our party was augmented to the number of two hundred men long before we arrived at Turtle Mountain...

...we arrived at the head of Turtle Mountain, being now about four hundred men. This was the place agreed upon for the assembling of all who should join in the party, and we supposed that those we should meet here would be few in number in comparison with ourselves. We were therefore somewhat surprised when we found already on the ground, one thousand Assineboins, Crees and Ojibbeways.

We stopped at a little distance, and some communication took place between the chiefs, respecting the ceremony of salutation to be used. It is customary for war parties engaged in the same cause, or friendly to each other, when they meet, to exchange a few shots by way of a sham battle, in which they use all the jumping, the whooping, and yelling of a real fight. But on this occasion both bands were so large, and one so much larger than the other, that the chiefs thought it more prudent to use a different method for exchanging compliments in meeting. It was agreed, on the part of Match-a-to-ge-wub (Many Eagles Sitting,) the principal chief, that his young men should all remain in their lodges, and that twenty warriors of our band should salute their encampment by practising the manoeuvres of attacking a village. A large lodge was set up for them to cut in pieces by their firing. I was one of the twenty selected for this performance, having supplied myself with a gun which I procured from a man who turned back. It was not without the utmost exertion of all my strength that I kept even pace with my companions, in running, leaping, loading, and yelling, and though we rested four times, when we arrived at the chief's lodge, and had blown it to fragments, I was entirely exhausted with fatigue. A man of our own party, imprudently, and without any authority, exposed himself in the village while this salute was in progress, but his clothes were blown and scorched off his back, his lodge shot down, and himself much hurt. But as the exposure had been altogether voluntary on his part, and the notice taken of him rather honourable than otherwise, he had no cause of complaint.

On the first night after we came together, three men of the Ojibbeway were killed. On the next, two horses belonging to the Assineboins, and on the third, three more. When such numbers of men assemble from different and remote parts of the country, some must be brought into contact between whom old grudges and enmities exist, and it is not surprising that the unstable power and influence of the chiefs should be insufficient to prevent disturbances and bloodshed. On this occasion, men were assembled from a vast extent of country, of dissimilar feelings and dialects and of the whole fourteen hundred,

not one who would acknowledge any authority superior to his own will. It is true that ordinarily they yield a certain deference, and a degree of obedience to the chief each may have undertaken to follow, but this obedience, in most instances, continues no longer than the will of the chief corresponds entirely with the inclination of those he leads. In this party were some who had been a year on their journey to reach this place. Two hundred lodges had their women with them.

Soon after we joined the main body at Turtle Mountain, a Cree of Prairie Fort, adopted me into his family, taking my baggage, and inviting me into his lodge. He called me constantly Ne-je (my friend) and treated me with great kindness. Many other men who were without lodges, were in like manner taken into the families of those that had.

But a few days had passed, when the little boys commenced, in the first instance a very small number, by kicking at each other in playfulness merely, but it happened that on one side were Assineboin children only, and on the other Crees and Ojibbeways. By degrees larger and larger boys, and at last men joined in on either side, and what had commenced in play, was like to terminate in a serious and bloody brawl. Match-a-to-ge-wub ran between the combatants, exerted his voice and his hands; afterwards Wa-ge-tote [Tanner's chief] and all the other principal chiefs, but the young men paid little or no regard to them. The excitement which had kindled among them was maddening to rage, and the chiefs were running about in the utmost distress and fear, when an old man, whose head was white as snow, and who was so bent down with age that he walked on two sticks, and looking more like a dog than a man, came out, and though his voice was too feeble to be heard at any distance, he no sooner appeared, than all the Assineboins desisted entirely from their violence, and the quarrel ended. Of those that were wounded and injured in this affair, only two died immediately, but many were so much injured that they were sent back to their own country. Had not the greater number entered into the affray without their arms, more extensive mischief would have resulted. Though I inquired much, I could neither learn the name, or hear any thing satisfactory of the



The Selkirk Treaty map. Here shown upside down from the original to orient the Red River and Assiniboine to our customary view with North at the top of the map. The signature glyphs are therefore shown upside down. The cross-hatched lizard-like glyph at the bottom is that of Le Sonnant, the Rattler, Many Sitting Eagles — the leading figure of the Council at Turtle Mountain in Tanner's narrative.

The map shows the area leased (not sold) to Lord Sekirk by the chiefs. The dotted circles showed where the lease extended ten miles from the river instead of five.

history of the old man, by whose interference this affair was brought so timely to an end. Vague, and probably extravagant reports, circulated among us respecting him.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 195-198

Ritual or actual adoption was used in forging trade, military and diplomatic alliances. Tanner's "adoption" by a Cree is typical. At the higher levels of government, chiefs and shamans formally adopted representatives of

other nations or trading concerns. Many Northwest and HBC traders describe being adopted as sons or as brothers, or both since the whole purpose was to extend relations. Chief Albert Thompson recorded an echo of this custom as recently as 1967, which marked the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Selkirk Treaty.

On July 3, 1967, at a Peguis Day celebration, Lord Selkirk and Lady Selkirk were present. I presented the Earl with a peace-pipe and a headdress on behalf of the Women's Auxiliary of St. Peter's Parish. He, in turn, made me a member of the Douglas clan.

Chief Peguis and His Descendants, A. Thompson, p. 65

In his capacity as Chief of Clan Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk has the traditional power to adopt people into that clan. Regardless of the era, when the Scots encountered the various Native trade councils, adoption was a custom they could understand. It served the same purpose in their society as it had for Native society. Neil Sioux pointed out that Bill Moncur's inclusion in the Council of Seven Stones began with an adoption ceremony.

Many Sitting Eagles

The reference to "Many Sitting Eagles" raises more questions. The Deloraine community history *Deloraine Scans a Century*, contains an intriguing entry about Sitting Eagle (1867ca.-1944.) The entry is prejudicial, but William Dumas suggests it may be literally correct without the author necessarily having realized why.

Sam Eagle, Chief Sitting Eagle, as he was known locally lived in a little shack in the Turtle Mountain, but was a very familiar figure on the streets of town, and to the farms at which he called in his walking in the countryside. While some older residents agree that he was indeed a Chief, early writers wrote that he was not the Chief he claimed to be. According to them, the real Chief Sitting Eagle was a fine chief in the Wood Mountain in Saskatchewan, who died there, whereas 'our' chief worked for local farmers here (and this a something that no chief would do). Whether or not his claims were true, he added a bit of colour to the local scene, and in memory, one sees him sitting on the steps of his favourite spots in town. He died alone in his place in the bush in 1947, and was buried at Deloraine cemetery.

Deloraine Scans a Century 1880-1980, p. 767

The quote is full of typos including confusing "Chaske (Charlie) Eagle" with "Sam High Eagle," (a confusion which the Indian Agents also made.) The date of death is wrong by three years, a 7 replacing a 4. William Dumas suggests that as a Peace Chief of Turtle Mountain, Sitting Eagle was indeed not the kind of chief that White people generally think of. Kevin Tacan would observe that as a Sacred Clown, Sitting Eagle would be very hard to fit with the usual idea of a "chief." He headed no band, led no warriors. Dumas also suggests that the confusion with Wood Mountain may be due to another reason. He related that he'd had as a teacher a Cree medicine man named Sitting Eagle, who had some association with Turtle Mountain, was married to a Dakota woman, and died in the early 1980's. The name of the leader in John Tanner's description was Many Sitting Eagles, adding another.

Dumas suggests that Sitting Eagle is not a personal name at all, but a title — the Eagle who sits in council on the mountain on behalf of his people. (This would be applied much in the same way we refer to the man baptized as Thomas Douglas, as "Selkirk", although that was not his name and between being Thomas Douglas and Selkirk, he had also briefly been Lord Daer.) The phrase "Sitting Eagle" would have been translated into each of the respective nations' own tongue. The confusion arises when the names are translated into English, but it is also a clue to the existence and structure of the council.

A review of the available records, written and oral, shows the title or name of "Sitting Eagle" was used from at least 1799 until at least the 1970's.

The first of the five Native signors of Treaty Two was a Cree chief "Mekis" [Eagle] but an attribute such as "sitting", if any, is not indicated. It's interesting that Mekis is the last of the Cree chiefs to be indicated in Treaty Two and under his name is recorded the catchall clause that the remainder of Treaty Two lands not covered by previous paragraphs are to be covered by Chief Mekis. In Treaty Six, which was signed after the death of Mekis, one of the Peigan Blackfoot signatories is a "Chief Sitting Eagle." Today Sitting Eagle is a common family name in the Blackfoot Confederacy.

In Treaty Four one of the Assiniboine signatories is a "Chief Sits Like an Eagle." This person may be John Hunter, a Stoney chief who as Sitting Eagle in the 1890's was one of the founders of the Calgary Stampede.

Bill Moncur remembered "John the Hunter," and that one of the Council members had spoken about the Calgary Stampede. "He said they didn't want any Indians in it at first but he held it out. He thought it was

important that Indians be part of the Stampede,” said Moncur. “But he thought they were cruel to the animals.”

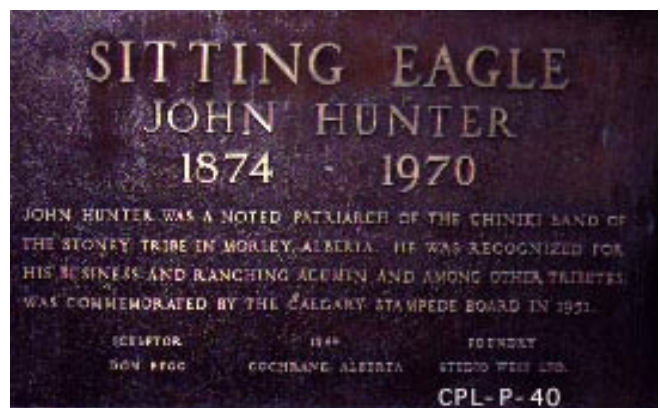
The University of Oklahoma archives holds a series of paintings by a Lakota named White Bull. The paintings which illustrate White Bull’s personal history as a warrior during the Indian Wars were annotated by him. One illustration, referring to the Sioux victories on the Bozeman Trail, is entitled “The Wagon Box Fight (Wyoming) August 2, 1867,” and is captioned “In this scene, White Bull rescues his friend Hairy Hand (Sitting Eagle), who was shot by the soldiers defending their position in the wagon boxes.” This is the year that Charlie Chaske is believed to have been born. It is interesting that two names, implying a name change, are attached to this heroic figure. The Wagon Box Fight was one of the first battles which saw a grand alliance of the Plains Indian. As many as 3,000 warriors may have taken part (against 32 soldiers with repeating rifles, later reinforced to about one hundred.) Most of the Siouan Nations were involved, including individual Dakota and Crow. The pyrrhic victory kept the US Army out of Montana for two years but cost the forces under Red Cloud anywhere from 300 to 1000 dead. The syntax of the caption implies that “Hairy Hand” was the name of the individual at the time of the Wagon Box Fight, and that at a later date the person became “Sitting Eagle.”

In *Voices of the Wintercount*, a Native-run web site containing first-person historical accounts, there is a 1930 interview conducted with an Oglala named “He Dog”. This individual was interviewed because of his close friendship with Crazy Horse. In the course of the interview He Dog described a dereliction of duty by Crazy Horse consisting of an affair with another man’s wife and several fights with the aggrieved husband, No Water. As a result of this, Crazy Horse was required to give up his sacred shirt, a badge of honour. Here, “Sitting Eagle” appears as a mediator and as an enforcer of morality.

Spotted Crow, Sitting Eagle and Canoeing brought No Water’s wife to Bad Heart Bull’s tent [a relative of Crazy Horse] and left her there on condition that she should not be punished for what she had done. This condition was demanded by Crazy Horse. Bad Heart Bull arranged for her to go back to her husband in peace. If it had not been settled this way, there might have been a bad fight.

But Crazy Horse could not be a shirt wearer any more on account of his adultery.

Voices of the Wintercount, He Dog interview, p. 3



Statue and plaque of John Hunter (Sitting Eagle) in Calgary, Alberta. Image from City of Calgary website.

The “Sitting Eagle” who mediated a dispute with Crazy Horse is at the right time period to be the same person as the “Hairy Hand” who was at the Wagon Box Fight. The two events would fall about ten years apart.

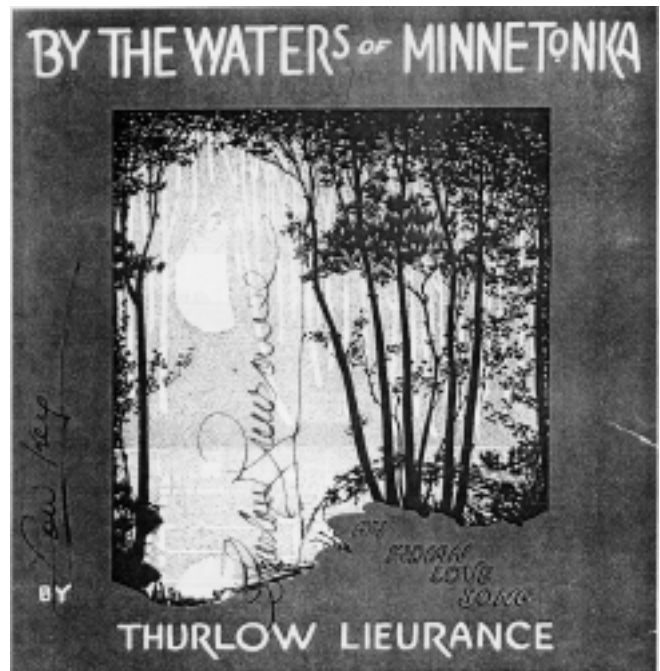
A “Chief Francis Sitting Eagle” appears as a silent screen credit, but the film historians consulted reported they had no further information other than a death date of 1977 and couldn’t tell from their records in what films he had played.

A “Sitting Eagle” that corresponds closely to the pattern is one who met and inspired American composer Thurlow Lieurance. Lieurance’s claim to fame is that he was one of the few Americans of the early 1900’s to take Native culture seriously. He wrote scores based on Native musical and mythical themes. By his own account, his best was his first “By the Waters of Minnetonka.” The following transcript, unsigned, comes from a typewritten account from the Thurlow Lieurance Papers, Wichita State University Special Collections.

The timing is close enough that it could be Charlie Chaske (or his immediate predecessor) and the details corroborate with known details of the Ojibway-Dakota War. Interestingly the encounter with a “Sioux chief” occurred on a Crow reserve. If this “Sitting Eagle” were the same person as “Hairy Hand” then he would be an old man in 1910. Lieurance does not describe his Sitting Eagle in that way although it does not rule it out. If Lieurance met Charlie Chaske, he would have met a “Sitting Eagle” in his mid-forties.

“By the Waters of Minnetonka” was inspired by a Sioux Love Song recorded by Mr. Lieurance in October 1911, on the Crow Reservation in Montana. The tune was sung by Sitting Eagle, a Sioux. No one knows how old this Sioux Love Song is. [The events described are early 1600’s.] It moves on today and into the future. This love song is based upon the following legend:

Moon Deer, daughter of the Moon Clan, loved Sun Deer of the Sun Clan. Tribal law forbade marriage between the two clans. It was decreed that daughters of the Moon Clan must marry into the Eagle Clan. The two lovers, in tears, ran away far to the east and north. They came to a beautiful lake called Minnetonka (Minne means water; Tonka means large and round.) [Tunka means bull or great.] Their happiness was disturbed because their traditional enemies, the Chippewas, lived on the north shore of this lake. They feared to



*Cover page from a 1914 songsheet by Thurlow Lieurance. The song was taught to Lieurance in 1910 or shortly thereafter by a man named Sitting Eagle. Lieurance was a composer on the Chautauqua circuit. Image courtesy of **Wichita State University Special Collections.***

return home and be separated, and finally in desperation they decided to end it all. The legend states that they disappeared beneath the waves and were no more. The waves moaned a rhythmic sound and the pines crooned their love song.

Many moons afterwards the warriors of the Sioux drove the Chippewas north to Lake Superior. One night while they were camped on the shores of Lake Minnetonka, they heard the waters singing a weird melody and, in the moon-path on the waters, two lilies appeared and grew to the skies. The lilies were the spirits of Moon Deer and Sun Deer.

Wichita State University Special Collections

The Wichita State collection preserves a 1940 interview with the *Kansas Teacher* in which Lieurance stated, “That night marked an epoch in my life, opened to me a new world. What work I have since done has been due chiefly to that song.”

Lieurance (d. 1963) composed for, and performed in, the Chautauqua Circuit, a travelling week-long educational and cultural show that toured the Prairies. Southwestern Manitoba towns were included in the circuit and the Chautauqua is known to have been the biggest sum-

mer attraction of the late 1910's and 1920's. Performers could originate locally and in turn interacted with *international* performers. The Chautauqua Circuit failed during the Great Depression.

This participation in reformulation of cultural events is very much in keeping with the Sitting Eagle theme. "Chautauqua" as a noun is derived from a place-name — Lake Chautauqua, New York where the first big Chautauquas were held. Its popularity however became greater in the western US and Canada than in the east. Stanley Vestal was of the opinion that the Western popularity of the Chautauqua, and the forms which evolved, were in a direct descent from public ceremonies on the Middle Missouri and in particular credited the Arikara with their inspiration.

Nearly every tribe on the Missouri had some interesting skill that set them off from other Indians. Thus the Mandans knew how to make glass beads, beautiful thin pottery, and were famous for their artistic skill in painting war-like exploits upon tanned buffalo robes. The Osages had a class of men who served as chefs or cooks, devoting themselves to the culinary art, to preparing and presiding over formal feasts, and also acting as town criers. But the Arikara, or Rees, who at one time occupied thirty-two villages up and down the river, were famous for their skill at magical performances and sleight of hand.

These jugglers were medicine men who used these tricks to advertise their powers and inspire awe and confidence in their patients. They held ceremonies lasting for days on end. Their performances were so popular and so frequent that they were known to resident traders as "the opera."

The Missouri, Stanley Vestal, p. 214

Virtually all of the towns of Turtle Mountain on both sides of the lines hosted Chautauquas at one time or another. A 1930 map shows that Pilot Mound, Clearwater, Killarney, Lena, Ninga, Deloraine, Waskada, Lyleton, Melita, Pierson, Lauder, Hartney, Elgin, Souris, Ninette and Nesbitt all held Chautauquas of anywhere from 1 to 6 days duration in that year. Glenbow Archives historian Sheila S. Jameson wrote a history of the Chautauqua phenomenon in Canada which included the following vignette about the performance of Princess Oyapela, reputedly of the Creek Nation of the southern US.

The Princess, looking lovely in a fringed

doeskin robe with ermine trimming, charmed her audience completely. There was indeed music in her voice which enhanced the appeal of her stories, and there was music in the rhythm of her body as she danced and pantomimed the legends to vocal and orchestral accompaniment. Her most popular number was "By the Waters of Minnetonka."

Chautauqua in Canada, Sheila S. Jameson, pp. 67-68

Sitting Eagle's song, including its implicit statement of Dakota land claims, was performed for audiences across North America for several decades.

The title of "Rattler" also appears spotted throughout the written record, and like Sitting Eagle, is used by only a few people at a time. Matche-go-whewub (Le Sonnant) apparently used both titles. "Rattlesnake" appears as the name of a Hidatsa chief or office in 1805, and of an Assiniboine Gens de Canot chief in 1850. The Santee Dakota chief Yellow Tent changed his name to Hadamanie (He Rattles As He Walks) when he joined the Council of Seven Stones at Turtle Mountain in 1861.

A "Petit Sonneau" or "Little Rattler" is mentioned as a chief around Brandon House, but has no band directly attributed to him. Little Rattler conducted a series of diplomatic overtures between the Assiniboine, Cree and Mandan to repair their tattered alliance. The Assiniboine and Mandan had been fighting, possibly because of opportunistic raids on weakened villages. The Sioux, (presumably the Lakota or Nakota) were reported to have sealed a new defensive alliance with the Mandans which included war on the Assiniboine. To repair this, Little Sonneau travelled to the Mandan villages and returned with an ambassador but not everyone north of the Medicine Line wanted the peace restored.

During the summer of 1818 three Assiniboine warriors fell in with Little Sonneau's band and treacherously murdered the Mandan [ambassador,] who had returned to live with the Cree after the Mandan peace settlement. This action may have been deliberately design to disrupt the Mandan-Hidatsa-Cree peace and to force the Cree into active support of the Assiniboine against marauding Sioux-Mandan-Hidatsa war parties. The Cree, however, took the risk of travelling to the villages, unprepared for war, to return the dead men's hair and "to trade horses."

The Plains Cree...; John S. Milloy, p. 63

The Cree thereby preserved for a time their alli-

ance and trade relation. The Mandans also kept up a treaty with the Sioux (whichever branch is meant.) The Assiniboine suffered in being frozen out of military support from the Cree and from commercial access to the Mandans. Increasing pressure from the Americans on all First Nations south of the Medicine Line to decide their allegiance would eventually sever the alliance. By that time the Mandan Nation would be literally in its final years.

In most of these stories, the figure of the “Sitting Eagle” appears as a mediator across cultural barriers. Sometimes Sitting Eagle leads a military force drawn from different Nations; sometimes the role is to mediate a dispute or to encourage a ceremony. The figure of “the Rattler” often appears as a messenger. When the Mandans pushed events too far in 1823, a figure called “the Eagle” lead a combined Cree-Assiniboine force to drive the raiders south of the Medicine Line.

Sacred Clowns

A troubling part of this story to any conventional interpretation is the strong element of comedy running throughout. Matche-go-whewub lead a huge war party infected with comic opera. His tattooing was unusual among other contemporary chiefs, but was noted as also appearing on his son. Fur trader Robert Campbell several decades later witnessed Matche-go-wewub pantomiming a parody of a fur trade factor, entertaining both Whites and Natives. Then there are the 20th Century Sitting Eagle’s displays in farm homes, or the Deloraine history book account of his routine in a Brandon restaurant. Bill Moncur had a deserved reputation as a prankster — plays on words and misdirection formed part of his teaching tool kit. The idea of a sitting eagle has a slightly comic aspect when associated with the overstuffed bird that cannot fly away. A sitting or lame eagle in Plains symbolism pokes fun at itself. Finally, there was the matter of the ceremonies which seemed to be backward, or the descriptions reversed.

Lesser wakan beings were the Heyokas, who had the bodies of small men, and whose desires and experiences were contrary to nature. The members of the Heyoka Society imitated their god, saying or doing exactly the opposite of what might be expected of them under normal circumstances. The Dakotas objected to singing Heyoka songs, nor did they like to speak about them because they feared the Thunder gods would kill the offender’s family. Heyoka men and women dreamt about

the Thunders and made promises to them to obtain what they desired. If they broke their promises, they were convinced they would be killed by the thunder.

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gontran Lavolette, p. 23

A visit by Dakota Elders Marina and Kevin Tacan in April, 2000 shed some light on this and provided a key to interpreting the historical events. Kevin Tacan commented that he was troubled by some of the evidence and thought that this hypothetical council could not be chiefs, perhaps something else, but not a government as such in the usual sense of the word. After a two hour meeting with Bill and Hattie Moncur, accompanied by the researcher, Kevin Tacan advanced the opinion that perhaps the members of the council were “Sacred Clowns,” or *heyoka* in the Dakota language.

Innocent and wise; painted in their stripes; their lightning streaks; fantastic masks, or naked from head to toe; the Clowns catch our attention whenever and wherever they appear... they are the guardians of ritual.

Whenever the Clowns enter the stage of drama in a ritual and wherever they are found in the oral histories, stories, or songs, the Clowns have something in common with each other. A sacred Clown from one tribe would recognize a sacred Clown from another tribe, and, without a word passing between them, they would know who the other one was; what he represented, and what he was placed on earth to do. Clowns and foolish characters are part of the oral tradition of most Native American peoples. When Clowns appear in the Creation histories they often play very important roles during the emergence of The People into this present world.

The Sacred, Beck and Walters, p. 301.

Kevin Tacan pointed out that a council of Sacred Clowns, drawn from many nations, could intervene militarily, politically or even in ceremony if they so determined. They could bridge boundaries, alter borders, and settle disputes. Tacan noted that it would be very much like them to adopt a white guy as a Mandan, (as was apparently done with Bill Moncur.) It made a good historic joke that continues to teach a lesson to this day.

Clowns often turn these directions inside out and backwards. Instead of moving clockwise they move counterclockwise. Instead of using

the right hand, they use the left. The Clowns may also enter realms where ordinary people are not allowed to go or would be afraid to go, for instance, into the symbolized world of the Holy People. In this way the Clowns portray the limits and boundaries of the world by going beyond them, acting in a non-ordinary way while doing so, and in this way they contest their own contrary behaviour with the orderly ritual directions and sacred worlds.

Fundamentally, the sacred Clowns portray the Path of Life with all of its pitfalls, sorrows, laughter, mystery, and playful obscenity. They dramatize the powerful relationships of love, the possibility of catastrophe; the sorrow of separation and death; the emerging consciousness of human beings entering into life — into this world as ordinary beings with non-ordinary potential. They show the dark side; they show the light side; they show us that life is hard; and they show us how we can make it easier. If death takes everything away when it robs an individual of the life, then the Clowns must be able to combat death in mock battle and wrestle life back again.

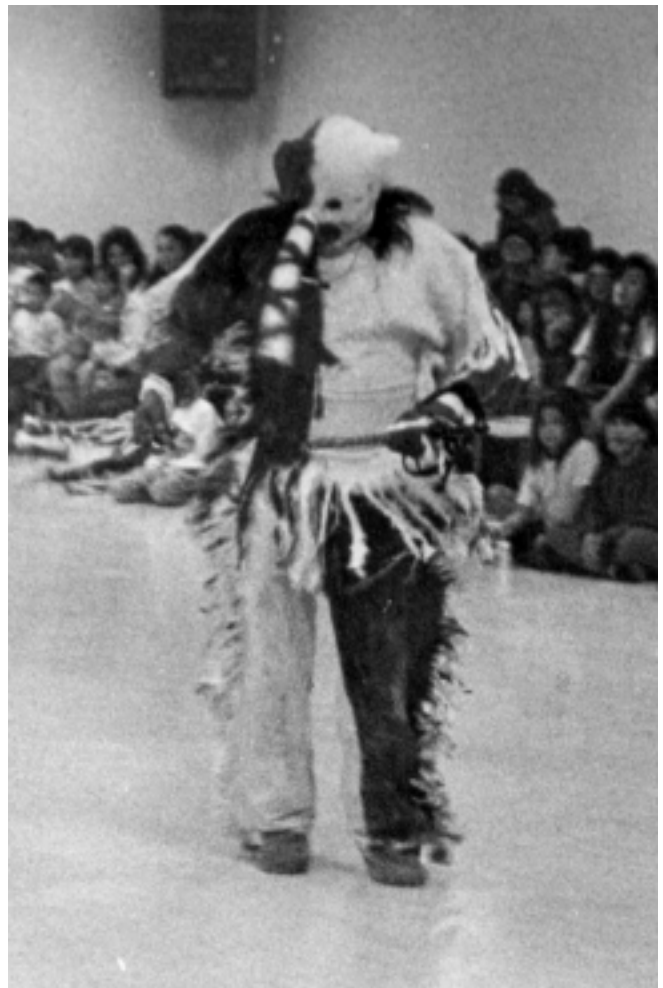
The Sacred, Beck and Walters, p. 307

During his early years, the Oglala shaman Black Elk was troubled by particularly disquieting visions which the regular medicine people did not feel qualified to interpret or to handle. *Heyoka* were called in as specialists.

In the heyoka ceremony, everything is backwards, it is planned that the people shall be made to feel jolly and happy first, so that it may be easier for the power to come to them. You have noticed that the truth comes into this world with two faces. One is sad with suffering, and the other laughs; but it is the same face, laughing and weeping. When people are already in despair, maybe the laughing face is better for them; and when they feel too good and are too sure of being safe, maybe the weeping face is better for them to see. And so I think that is what the heyoka ceremony is for.

Black Elk Speaks, pp. 192-193

There is even a tradition that Sacred Clowns could under one set of circumstances assume the reins of government — in the event of a national catastrophe.



A Sacred Clown performs at the Ma-Mow-We-Tak pow wow in Thompson in the early 1990's. Photo by the author.

One of the roles of sacred Clowns is to serve The People against excesses by practitioners or leaders who might wrongly use their special knowledge: the power of magic; secrets or oral traditions; sacred practices; and other special techniques or prayers. The Clowns, as allies and friends to ordinary people (as we heard in the Sayataca Night Chant parody) by dancing behind the dancers and mocking their steps; interrupting speeches by dance leaders as the Clowns did in the aboriginal Winter Hesi Ceremony; or mimicking shams in their work. Like all excesses, the Clowns serve to neutralize them; to return excesses to a balanced state.

The Sacred, Beck and Walters, p. 320

At the suggestion of the Sioux Valley elders, the information was combed again for hints about *heyoka* ceremony. One clue is the occurrence of dog sacrifices and feasts. Dog, to both the Algonquin and the Siouan

cultures, is served at special events. The Dakota, having fewer dogs than the Cree, appear to have historically given a higher valuation to dog feasts — providing the feast less frequently and with more ceremony. Many first-person accounts of life among the Sioux in the 18th and 19th Centuries mention the right of women to give a dog feast to a man in recognition of some special achievement. For the *heyoka* the dog feast had a special variation and meaning over and above the usual Dakota meaning.

A dog feast as performed by sacred clowns involved the sacrifice of a dog or puppy. A stew was made by the clowns of the dog, often with special attention to preservation of the head. The clowns served up the stew to the assembled congregation who came especially for this ceremony and its curative reputation. Part of the dog carcass, usually the head or a piece of the head, would at the conclusion of the feast be buried.

Bill Moncur was questioned carefully by Kevin and Marina Tacan concerning one particular event which bore evidence of this. Gradually as the picture emerged, it was clear that Moncur had participated in a *heyoka* version of the dog feast sometime around 1943 at the Council Tree site. Sitting Eagle was the principal actor in the ceremony. Moncur recalled the head of the dog in the stew, and that it was removed for burial. He also clearly recalled that the supplicants had come for a healing ceremony. At this occasion the sacred pipe was passed counterclockwise in a reversal of the usual practice. The *heyoka* used the dog stew to bless the audience who were there for healing.

Tacans also stated that the pattern of the landscape selected by the clowns on Turtle Mountain was replicated in a site on Sioux Valley Reserve where it is known clown ceremonies took place in the early 20th century.

We have already mentioned that behavioural descriptions of some of the individuals associated with the Turtle Mountain Council (such as Matche Go Whewub and Sitting Eagle) tend to support Tacan's theory.

One of the stories collected from the Stovin family, neighbours of No. 60 Reserve from the Homestead Era to the present, recalled that dogs would “*go nuts when Sitting Eagle entered the yard.*” The story goes on that the father of this particular farm family “*got rid of the dogs*” so Sitting Eagle would feel comfortable visiting the farm.

In combing the available historical and archaeological evidence there are elements that might support the association of dog ceremonies with many of the sites around Turtle Mountain. Nickerson, in his 1912-1915 excavations of the Sourisford Mounds often found pieces

of what he identified as “badger or bear” skulls interred in the mound with the deceased. He did not draw any conclusions about this other than to note the occurrence. Capes in reworking the material had the artifacts submitted for analysis to biologists. She learned that all of Nickerson's “badger or bear” samples were in fact dog. (These artifacts consisted of partial skull caps or pieces from the back of the skull.)

This does not necessarily confirm Sacred Clown activities in association with the Sourisford Mounds, but it does at least strongly suggest that dog sacrifices and/or feasts were part of the burial ritual. It also confirms a long association of dog as a sacred symbol among Plains people as the mounds cover a period from about the time of Christ until about 1500 AD.

Whatever is the truth of how ancient the Council of Seven Stones might be, by the early 1800's it clearly existed. It had mediated trade, and occasionally mounted a military intervention. It is doubtful that it was ever envisioned as a government by its founders, or by many of its participants. However, in the last half of the 19th Century, the Council of the Seven Stones on Turtle Mountain was called upon to act as an emergency government in an attempt to quell the spiralling cycle of violence and to resettle thousands of civilians made homeless by war.

The Indian Removals

In the Ohio Valley, the most powerful of the southern Algonquin chiefs was Black Hawk of the Sac and Fox. The second most influential was Keokuk. After the War of 1812, the Americans wooed Keokuk and alienated Black Hawk. This policy was followed only until the pressure to seize the Sac and Fox territories grew too great. Ironically, the land which the Dakota had originally ceded to the southern Algonquin for “a hundred miles” of promissory British North America real estate was now seized by the Americans from the Sac and Fox.

Until 1829 these treaties gave the Sacs and Foxes no serious worries. But that year Chemokemon [Americans] began to settle lands purchased legally from the government. Sac and Fox delegations protested to their agent at Rock Island, Thomas Forsyth, who told them curtly that they had given up their terrain years ago. Now they must leave. Not only did this edict apply to the truculent Black Hawk, but even to friendly Keokuk, who wanted to stay with friends in Illinois to harvest the corn he had planted. Angry Rock Is-

land Chemokemons sent memorials to the Governor of Illinois. The Indians had been ordered to remove, yet they were tearing down white men's fences; they were horse thieves and were even threatening murder. The pioneers of northern Illinois expressed a righteous horror of Black Hawk. William Clark, in St. Louis, shook his graying head. He knew he had no influence with Black Hawk, the war chief "who had always looked to Canada."

The Trail of Tears, Gloria Jahoda, p. 119

There had been an Ohio Valley Campaign in the French-Indian War, in the American Revolutionary War, in the War of 1812 and there would be another in the 1830's and 1840's. This strategic interchange had probably been attracting war as long as it had been incubating civilization. With the "removal" policy of the Andrew Jackson years, the middle Mississippi axis would again see massive disruptions of its society. Cahokia became a parody of the leading role it had once played.

John Reynolds, governor of Illinois, often enjoyed reminiscing about the joys of his frontier childhood. He had gone about in a wolf-pelt and had been fond of "stoning darkies." An uncle had put him through college, and he had had a nervous breakdown there. His doctor had ordered him "never to study again, lest it damage his mind," and he never had. He spent his time with cronies who killed Indians for fun; one such fighter he later called "one of the greatest men that was ever raised in Illinois." His campaign resolution had been, "I must stir or git beat. The people is with me." His opponent had been illiterate, and Reynolds had won handily with the financial help of an amorous Creole widow from Cahokia, an old French settlement opposite St. Louis. The actors in the pageant of the Black Hawk War were all gathering: Black Hawk who loved the soil on which he had been born, The Prophet Wabokeshiek who wanted power, Neapope who saw himself as a red messiah, Keokuk who preferred surrender to bloodshed, and a phalanx of white officialdom mindful that Andrew Jackson hated Indians and didn't care when or how they perished.

The Trail of Tears, Gloria Jahoda, p. 121

Counselled by the British to seek a reconciliation

with the Americans, Black Hawk tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a treaty. Then he tried closing down the liquor vendors. A faction, with or without his encouragement, grew around Black Hawk and came to be known as the "British band." Officially Britain's policy was hands off but it's hard to believe that this period was different from the decades before or after with respect to British encouragement of Native resistance to the Americans. Push came to shove and the Sac and Fox were soon involved in a shooting war with the US Army. Denied the support of the British, the Sac and Fox found themselves pushed towards the Mississippi along with the Santee Dakota.

In 1832 at the "Battle of Bad Axe", (basically a massacre of civilians with an exhausted guard,) the American Army ended the Black Hawk War. The Sac and Fox warriors attempted to fight a rearguard action covering their civilians as they crossed the Mississippi River into Dakota Territory.

The effect of the Black Hawk War on Turtle Mountain was to displace Algonquin populations westward into Sioux territories. That in turn brought pressure on the Siouan populations as too many people had to live off a shrinking resource. Although Keokuk was able to eventually persuade the Americans in releasing Black Hawk from prison, neither his treaty strategy nor Black Hawk's War had managed to salvage the lands of the Sac and Fox. This lesson was not lost on the Dakota who realized that to the Americans treaties were only delay; and that the British would not intervene south of the Medicine Line. In response to the pressure, the Dakota Nations began patrolling their territories more vigorously. The red pipestone quarries to which Catlin gave his name were closed by the Sioux to other nations for a time.

When George Catlin met Keokuk at Prairie du Chien and asked him about the red pipestone quarries, Keokuk replied that he'd wished he owned them so he could "sell them for a big box of money." What Keokuk knew in the 1830's was what the Dakota would discover in the 1860's — they wouldn't be allowed to keep their land.

Along the entire length of the Mississippi this policy placed established western First Nations in conflict with eastern Nations forcibly removed from their ancestral lands.

1830-1840 Spy Contests

Throughout the 1830's tensions remained high between Britain and the United States. The British government felt (correctly) that some factions within the American government were spoiling for a war — with whom

didn't seem important, but a war of conquest would be preferable. In 1830 the State of Georgia was involved in an internal war to suppress, remove or destroy the Creek Nation of Georgia.

In 1832 Captain William Drummond Stewart arrived in America for the first of seven annual hunting trips. Stewart was a career British Army officer who had served abroad before the Napoleonic Wars in Her Majesty's various exotic colonies, and then in the 8th Hussars during the Peninsula Campaign. He was reassigned to Wellington's staff as an "exploring officer" (as the 19th century euphemism termed it) and remained in that role throughout the remainder of the war. At Waterloo he was again assigned as a general staff officer.

Stewart is principally famous to the world as the patron of one of the greatest Western American frontier artists, Alfred Jacob Miller. It was Stewart who paid for Miller to accompany him on his annual excursion in 1837, and to "*paint interesting things.*" Miller arrived, with Stewart, at a critical moment in history and some events, such as interior scenes of Mandan ritual, we have from no other source. Stewart is famous to the world at large because he made Miller's western paintings possible, but to our story on Turtle Mountain, Stewart is also important because he was a spy.

Many historians never questioned Stewart's eccentricities. Michael Bell, introducing the Public Archives of Canada set of prints (from which many of the Miller illustrations in this text are taken) wrote...

Miller accompanied an eccentric and romantic Scot, Captain William Drummond Stewart, a restless adventurer who had been on four previous rendezvous caravans. By 1837 the fur trade had already entered a decline. Stewart was in fact witnessing the beginning of the end of a significant way of life in the American West. It may have been a premonition of this which motivated him to commission Miller to record with his pencil and brush the thirteenth rendezvous of 1837.

Braves and Buffaloes, Michael Bell editor, p. 6

The rendezvous in Oregon were of critical interest to the British government, as were the attitudes of the American fur traders, the dispositions of the several Indian tribes across the Prairies, and the military preparations of the United States. All of this is illustrated in Miller's paintings. There is no doubt that Miller used his commission to make beautiful paintings, and to record scenes which he wanted to see, including unique ceremonial events. However, he also probably knew, (or

suspected) for whom he really worked and his landscapes and portraits convey important military intelligence.

Stewart was a chameleon, albeit he seemed to always use his real name. Miller thought of him as a patron of the arts and an amateur ethnologist. The American fur traders recounted that Stewart could be just plain folk, putting his shoulder to the Red River cart wheel to get it unbogged, and several sources attest that Stewart was second-in-command of the American Fur Company expedition to the Green River in 1837. A Presbyterian missionary who encountered Stewart on a Mississippi steamboat recorded that he'd met a gentlemanly moral man who was a Methodist and a teetotaler. A Cajun riverman encountered Stewart playing cards in the back of a New Orleans house of ill repute with his Metis cronies. Sioux, Pawnee, Snake and Crow accepted him as a chief. Stewart apparently could be whatever he needed to be.

Frederick Merk referred to the undefended border between Lake of the Woods and the Pacific Ocean between the years 1837 and 1841 as a "*line of discord.*" The Dakota oral history is consistent that their nation met with British officers continually from the War of Independence up to the end of the Indian Wars. Just as Roger's Rangers had gathered military intelligence from the Sioux in the 1770's and 1780's, Captain Stewart gathered intelligence during the 1830's. He was no doubt only one of many, and probably not the last.

The Americans mounted another exploratory and scientific expedition among the Dakota people in 1838 and 1839 led by a French born scientist Joseph N. Nicollet. As usual, it combined scientific exploration and cataloguing with military intelligence. An unusual feature was that French was the working language of this expedition. Nicollet kept all of his notes in French, using English only to report to his superiors in Washington. As a military liaison officer he picked Lieutenant Frémont, a bilingual South Carolinian, a man who would later become infamous for his guerilla role in California against the Mexicans.

Nicollet broke the common American mold by displaying a broader European sensibility. He was offended by treaty breaking behaviour of the Minnesota and Missouri governments and put his objections in writing. As he passed through Dakota populations and territories in the late 1830's his writing forms an important historical bridge between the Dakota-British relations of 1812-1818 and the Dakota-American wars towards the end of the 19th Century. For the purposes of understanding events on Turtle Mountain, Nicollet is helpful in that he met many of the Dakota diplomats (now as old men) who had worked with the British in 1812, as well as the young men who



*"Caravan en route" by Miller shows the scale of British Captain, William Drummond Stewart's modest hunting party as it travelled across the plains from the Mississippi towards the Rockies. Stewart is in buckskins at centre, astride a white horse. Miller wrote that "a caravan always comprises a heterogeneous mass of people from all parts of America, and of every variety of complexion. There are the Company's and the Free Trappers of the West, Half-breeds, French Canadians, Spaniards, Indians, etc." Stewart was in charge, his authority backed up by a few close Metis retainers whom he'd known for several years. One of them, Antoine, returned to Scotland with Stewart to become his valet. **National Archives of Canada.***

would emerge subsequently as leaders in the 1860's.

Nicollet's treatment at the hands of the Dakota suggests that the Dakota were attempting to arrive at a peaceful relationship with the United States. He was everywhere met, feasted and escorted by Dakota hosts. Nicollet seemed to regard it as normal to behave as a visitor, not a conqueror, and welcomed the Dakota protection. Chiefs Sleepy Eye and Crow Man (whom later American folklore would represent as villains) provided guidance and diplomatic support.

This morning [Aug. 13, 1838] I dispatched the greater part of my baggage to the Traverse des Sioux, under the leadership of James Clouet [the editor corrects this to Clewett]; I send Frémont and Flandin, accompanied by Joseph Renville, two men, and two Indians, making a convoy of two canoes, to continue the survey of the Minnesota and to visit the mouth of the Blue Earth River.

I set out by land to explore the region included between the Cottonwood and the Blue Earth. Mr. Geyer and Laframboise with me

and two men, two cars, and Mr. Laframboise's wagon. I cross the Minnesota and the Cottonwood and lunch on the slope at the beginning of the plateau of the large prairie which precedes the Coteau des Prairies. Chief Sleepy Eyes arrived a little earlier and lunched with me. He had wanted to accompany me replacing his son, but I have declined his offer because of his wound and the great jealousy of his young wife whom he would leave alone. His oration to the Indians there, his joy to see me with the second chief (Le Male du Corbeau) [Crow Man] and his brother as guides.

We left at 10:30 and set out en route. Toward noon we heard repeated rifle shots on the route we had traveled. They indicated to us that someone very rushed approached us; we waited; and we saw with surprise the brave Chief Sleepy Eyes. "My friend, I am glad to see you again," I said to him. He replied, "You have left me sad. I asked myself if I was a squaw. I whom the fears of death, the wars, and the pains have never stopped. You are

going to risk dangers. I waited for a horse to follow you, not being able to walk; the horse did not come in time. I mustered my forces. Here I am. I am not leaving you. He was sweating with big drops, and the eloquence with which he pronounced these words moved us all. Here he is, then, with us.

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains..., pp.116-117

In a footnote, Nicollet gave the name of Sleepy Eye's son as Manza Ostag Mani which he translated as "he who marches with the merchandise on him."

Nicollet described seeking the protection and hospitality of the Wahpekute (Santee Dakota) villages as he traversed the Upper Mississippi region.

There is no one in the village Okaman [main townsite]. The lodges are deserted and the temporary fortifications around them are falling down. My friend, Tasapie [a footnote says Tasagi is an alternate spelling], chief of the tribe, tired of waiting for me, has returned to St. Peter's and his band is 20 miles from here in the woods.

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, p. 126

Nicollet also spoke glowingly of his friendship with Wanatan. It's probable that Wanatan did strike up a friendship with Nicollet. The chief was after all, a senior diplomat of the Dakota.

Wednesday, August 21, 1839. We were awakened at daybreak by the arrival of the great chief Wahanantan accompanied by a dozen of his warriors. They had learned that we were on the Coteau des Prairies and that I did not intend to return by Lake Traverse and their villages. Therefore they came to see us, possibly with the hope that we still had enough goods left for a few more presents to them. They are exhausted from hunger and fatigue. They have been wandering on the Coteau for three days looking for us. They had not expected to lose track of us in a country they knew so well, and since they were making a friendly visit, they had not brought arms or fishing equipment. Thus the really terrible deprivations they had endured for these three days.

Whatever the motives that brought them, they are welcome, we are happy to see them, and this pleasure appeared to be mutual. If there



*Fort Laramie as painted by Alfred Jacob Miller in 1846. Famous for his natural landscapes of the early American West, and his portraiture of Native chiefs and Yankee fur traders, Miller was employed by the British spy Captain William Drummond Stewart. Paintings such as the one above show military intelligence information such as: the fordable crossing; open terrain around the fort; arcs of fire for rifle bastions; protection of the front gate; and placement of the fort's sole cannon. The painting was accompanied by two others showing details of rifle loops, the sentry boxes and accessibility of the gate and interior blockhouses. **National Archives of Canada.***

are still suspicious, egotistical, and quarrelsome persons who do not think mutual affection is possible between whites and Indians, I will say for the satisfaction of any with such an unfortunate temperament that I had a particular interest in seeing again these brave and intelligent Indians: They are going to give me information about the country, to clarify our route, and help us get off this plateau where our progress has been uncertain for the last twenty-four hours.

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains..., pp. 207-208

The joy of Sleepy Eye or Wanatan at seeing Nicollet may be genuine. It may also be that the Dakota did not want Nicollet moving around through their territory without an escort, and in the dangerous noman's land bordering the Ojibway. They may have been uneasy with an American expedition wandering through the sacred and neutral territory between Devil's Lake and Turtle



*“Pawnee Indians on the war-path” by Miller illustrates an actual event as a Pawnee company charged up to Miller’s caravan. Captain Stewart signalled to lower weapons, acknowledged the Pawnee authority in the area, and engaged in treaty protocol including a pipe ceremony with the Pawnee chief. Nobody was hurt and Stewart negotiated permission (with appropriate gifts) to pass through Pawnee territory. **National Archives of Canada.***

Mountain, personal friendships notwithstanding.

Nicollet alluded to the border tensions resulting from treaty breaking. The treaties which George Catlin observed being made, were observed by Joseph Nicollet as they unravelled.

The treaties made by the United States with these various Indian nations guaranteed them always, and without exception, protection, friendship, and the right to hunt, provided this right was not officially withdrawn by the president. But the people of the United States pay little attention to federal laws and treaties when it is to their advantage to nullify them. The state of Missouri, in this respect, indulges in such lawlessness every year at the expense of the Mormons, the Indians, and others. Neither the Congress, nor the government, nor the friends of justice, of morality, of humanity, concern themselves about it or raise their voices.

Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, p. 150

The Minnesota and Dakota Territories described by Nicollet were a powderkeg waiting for a spark.

1840-1870 Increasing Tensions

The 1840’s to 1870’s was marked by the rapid expansion of both Canada and the United States westward across the Great Plains. It was a period of chaotic change and rising military tension between the British Empire and the USA.

American westward expansion was in a large measure the work of rough frontiersmen, men who at the cutting edge of civilization had developed habits of direct action and self-help. Such men were hard to control anywhere, and in the Spanish border-lands, weakly held and badly governed, they quickly brought on revolution and annexation to the United States. But West Florida, Texas, and California are not Oregon. In the Pacific Northwest American pioneers were confronted by sterner stuff than Spaniards or Mexicans — the British government and the Hudson’s Bay Company.

The Oregon Question, Frederick Merk, p. 254

Around Turtle Mountain these same methods to promote annexation would be tried, and would fail for similar reasons as they did in Oregon. The most vocal of

the American congressmen in favour of annexation of Rupert's Land were called the "Western Warriors." Not entirely without justification, the Western Warriors regarded Brits and Indians as their major enemies in the field.

Bernard De Voto wrote that the frontier of the 1840's to most non-Natives was the "Great American Desert." The western half of North America was entering political chaos, and in fact some contemporary writers used the word anarchy to describe the situation. "Provisional governments" were the order of the day west of the emerging new nations of Canada and the United States. The national and international politicians of the 1840's couldn't even find the trouble spots on a map because few maps existed outside of the closed vaults of the fur trade companies.

It is of absolute importance that no map maker of any nationality, even if he had been able to bound these vast areas correctly; could have filled them in. Certain trails, certain rivers, long stretches of certain mountain ranges, the compass bearings of certain peaks and watersheds, the areas inhabited by certain Indian tribes — these could have been correctly identified by the most knowledgeable, say Thomas Hart Benton and the aged Albert Gallatin. But there were exceedingly few of these and the pure white paper which the best of them would have had to leave between the known marks of orientation would have extended, in the maps drawn by anyone else, from the Missouri River and central Texas, with only the slightest breaks, all the way to the Pacific. That blank paper would almost certainly have been lettered: "Great American Desert."

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, p. 6

In 1846-47 Lieutenant Ruxton of the Coldstream Guards was prowling the southwestern Great Plains of the United States, closely observing the progress of the Mexican War. Ruxton was only observing, but the Americans were fearful enough that rumours spread throughout the advancing pioneers of British attempts to instigate an Indian Uprising.

Bryant heard that a party of five Englishmen were moving down the trail on Her Majesty's business, to incite all Indians between here and the Pacific "to attack trains, rob, murder, and annihilate them." This was the



"Presents to the Indians" by Alfred Jacob Miller painted in 1837. This painting often appears in books to illustrate fur trade practices. However, the European depicted in the picture is actually Captain William Drummond Stewart of the 8th Hussars, formerly a member of Wellington's staff; on leave-of-absence for seven years to hunt buffalo on the American Plains — during the height of tensions over the Oregon boundary dispute. Captain Stewart could appear anywhere and be anybody. Stewart, and officers like him, would keep the British Government in direct contact with the Sioux for well over a hundred years. **National Archives of Canada.**

passage of Francis Parkman among the half barbarous, or it was mere air — though it is true that a surprising number of British Army officers went out to hunt buffalo or commune with the prairie gods while Oregon and California hung in the balance.

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, pp. 148-149

The historian Francis Parkman, who was riding on the Great Plains in the summer of 1847, did not find an Indian uprising but he did find a general war between the Lakota and the Crow with the latter being driven from the plains. Fort Laramie in 1847 was definitely within Lakota territory.

When James Polk became President of the United States in 1846 he had already decided that a war, or better yet the threat of war, could be used to dramatically expand the territory of the United States. De Voto charged

that Polk didn't care whether it was with France, Spain, Britain or Indians. If De Voto's view is correct, then the Canadian Northwest could just as easily have been invaded as California; that it was not done so was solely because the Sioux provided a more formidable army than did Mexico.

Polk thought with admirable realism about tariffs, the treasury, and the routine of domestic policy. He thought with astonishing shrewdness about the necessary political maneuvers of government. But he thought badly about war. He was willing to make war on either England or Mexico, if he should have to in order to accomplish his purpose. But he believed that if there should be a war it could be won easily, probably without fighting, and certainly without a great effort or expense. Deliberately carrying twin torches through a powder magazine from March 4, 1845, to May 13, 1846, he made no preparation for either war. He had no understanding of war, its needs, its patterns, or its results. The truth is that he did not understand any results except immediate ones. He did not know how to make war or how to lead a people who were making war.

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, p. 205

The American process of infiltrating and seizing territory via provisional governments was a frightening possibility to its neighbours. Oregon in the mid 1840's was under joint occupation and both the British and the Americans had set up the equivalent of governments in the area, with overlapping claims in some cases.

The Americans certainly admitted to having their spies out ahead of the advancing settlers, and sometimes among them. James Magoffin was an agent appointed by President Polk to operate behind lines within New Mexico.

The two agents before Magoffin whom Polk had sent to Santa Fe had learned little and done nothing.

Well, Kearny had his orders. From Bent's Fort he issued a proclamation annexing the province of New Mexico east of the Rio Grande to the United States. (Thus using the old, shadowy claim of Texas, and sheathing his advance in a diplomatic envelope of peace.) He sent this in with some of the spies he had captured and also sent a copy to Taos,

to propitiate the Pueblo Indians. And here was James Magoffin ["advising" the insurgent Pueblo,] from the President. Kearny detached Captain Cooke with twelve Dragoons to take the secret agent to Santa Fe, and had him carry a letter and a copy of the proclamation to Armijo.

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, p. 269

Captain Frémont, who had accompanied the Nicollet expeditions of the upper Missouri a decade before, demonstrated the remarkable flexibility with which innocent mapmakers could become guerilla agitators. The captain was leading a mapping and geological exploration party in northern California with the permission of the Mexican government when he suddenly declared for a provisional government.

However you care to interpret what followed, you can get supporting evidence at the source. Frémont had come back to California to initiate a movement which should seize it for the flag — whether as an act of war against Mexico or as a safeguard against Great Britain did not matter to him and should not matter to us. He was promptly surrounded by men who had long wanted to seize California, who were both annoyed and anxious because the expected war had not developed, and who clearly understood the significance of his return. The expected was now going to happen and the only question is how far Frémont was the instigator of it.

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, p. 222

After the Mexican War, Frémont (now a lieutenant-colonel) was court martialled and dishonourably discharged from the Army for his reckless unmilitary behaviour bordering on banditry. But of course, the United States did not give California back. This lesson could not have been lost on the British.

In 1847 the British made a new offer to settle the Oregon question by accepting a continuation of the 49th parallel as the international boundary through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. With America now involved in a war with Mexico, it could not also take on a war with Britain at the same time. The British government wanted to hedge their bets against the day when the United States had finished with Mexico and turned north again.

Offering to accept the American proposal put Polk in the awkward position of having officially achieved what he'd said he'd wanted. According to De Voto, the presi-

dent still wanted to play the dangerous game of keeping Britain on a hook while simultaneously invading Mexico, so he submitted the question to Congress to ask its advice.

De Voto suggested that Polk and the American government were quite unprepared for the speed of events in the late 1840's. Some Americans had agitated for a continental state reaching from sea to sea since the turn of the previous century, but most had felt that at best the far west and Pacific shore would develop into independent American republics. The surprise at the conclusion of the Mexican War was that militarily and politically the country *had* been linked to the Pacific Ocean. Socially and economically the pioneers were flooding in. Technologically, the steamboats, railways and telegraphs were annihilating distance as a barrier to communication.

And still there was no government for Oregon, New Mexico, California and Deseret — for the West. Oregon was finally given Territorial status in August, 1848, and the first governor arrived there three years after Termination. New Mexico continued under military government til the great Compromise permitted its organization as a Territory in September, 1850. The same measure pared down Deseret from Brigham's [Young, leader of the Mormons,] claims, renamed it Utah, and gave it Territorial status. California never was a Territory. The military organization established by Kearny had to govern it till the same Compromise made it a state of the Union.

The Year of Decision, Bernard De Voto, p. 491

“Indian Territory” was left to govern itself for a little while longer.

Small garrisons were occasionally dispatched to the Red River Settlement to show the flag for the benefit of unruly colonists, fur traders, Indians and any Americans who were watching. It is not realistic however, to represent these garrisons by and of themselves as sufficient deterrent to have persuaded the Americans against invasion. The US was more than willing to tackle Mexico, a military power which on paper was more their equal than was thinly garrisoned British North America.

At Red River one battalion of the 6th (Royal Warwickshire) Regiment, an Imperial regular infantry unit, was in garrison from the summer of 1846 until summer 1848. Its acting-colonel, Major John Ffolliott Crofton couldn't wait for the regiment to leave and abandoned his post at Lower Fort Garry at the end of June, 1847.

This was not a man who attended to the details of command. He met with Chief Peguis on one occasion and could recall only that he (Crofton) was wearing a new dress uniform for the occasion. If Chief Peguis had anything to say, it was wasted on Crofton.

The replacement garrison was another downgrade. Major Caldwell and a single company of retired Imperial Army veterans, called the “Chelsea Pensioners”, were sent out by the government in Britain. The Pensioners were offered the usual lure of land grants in return for half a lifetime of military indenture. They were past their prime and did not represent a serious military presence. That prompted Governor Eden Colville's observation that the safety of the colony depended on the Metis and the Sioux not having a war, and that the fate of the colony was staked on the Metis.

Throughout the middle of the 19th Century, military tensions between the British Empire and the United States continued to rise. The theoretical settling of the International Boundary at the 49th Parallel in 1818 and the resolution of the Oregon Question in 1847 had not ended the risk of war, though it had reduced it. Although there was a lessening of tension in the 1850's, the *Trent* affair in 1861 had set off another spiral of military spending. The distraction of the American Civil War probably saved Canada from invasion.

C. P. Stacey noted that in 1862 British strength in Canada peaked at 18,000 combat troops. Between 1816 and 1829 Congress had expended \$200,000 on the Canadian border. Half of that was wasted when it was discovered a new fortification in Ontario was several miles north of the resurveyed boundary line. During the 1830's and 1840's fortress building expanded eight to ten-fold.

By 1852 American railways reached the Mississippi River, thereby forging a network of east-west, as well as north-south, transportation routes. It would not be long before American pioneers began filling up the regions west and north of the Mississippi.

In 1857 the Imperial Government again felt it prudent to wave the Union Jack with more vigour over the Red River Colony. This time a company of Imperial regulars would be sent from the Royal Canadian Rifles. (The RCR's were at the time on the Imperial Order of Battle and would not be entered into the Canadian one until after 1870 when they were decommissioned from Imperial service.) The RCR's were brought in from York as an experiment in logistics and it was found that the infrastructure was not up to the military demands. If a company was difficult to move via this route, it would be impossible to move anything larger. Ironically that pushed the HBC to encourage more transportation connections

southward with the United States. Numerically this was the smallest of the Imperial military interventions to date and Rupert's Land was becoming more vulnerable to invasion with every road and railway.

Between 1852 and 1866 according to C. P. Stacey there were no armed British vessels on the Great Lakes, but after 1866 gunboats were hastily outfitted in response to the Fenian threat.

During the Civil War the Rush-Bagot agreement had its narrowest squeak. Its terms provided that it could be ended on the initiative of either party on six months' notice. American feeling against Canada reached its hottest point late in 1864, after the St. Albans Raid, when a small group of Confederate soldiers who had secretly assembled in Canada slipped across the border and terrorized the town of St. Albans, Vermont. The United States now actually gave notice to end the agreement. Fortunately, sober second thought prevailed, and before the six months were up the State Department withdrew the notice.

The Undefended Border, C. P. Stacey, pp. 10-11

According to American historian John E. Parsons in his study of the International Boundary Commission, *West on the 49th Parallel*, there was at least one cross-border excursion in the 1860's which was acknowledged by the US Army. Major William Johnson Twining was a US Army Engineer, an accomplished surveyor and astronomer. In 1872 he would be named as the American Chief Astronomer to the International Boundary Commission. In 1869, three years before there was any agreement on joint border surveying, Twining carried his survey of North Dakota into the western Turtle Mountain area. On September 1, 1869 while surveying the eastern side of the Souris River loop, Twining and his escort of thirty men from the US 20th Infantry Regiment, illegally crossed the unmarked border in the vicinity of Sourisford. Twining reported to the US Army and government that he had conducted "astronomical observations" on Turtle Mountain. This would probably have been the Turtle's Head feature as it provided the highest bald hill and was the nearest to the Souris River of the various Turtle Mountain features. The border may not have been marked, but since Twining was a competent surveyor fixing the position of the 49th Parallel for American benefit, he must have known he was inside British North American territory. According to Parsons, Twining also reported that he encountered twenty lodges of Sisseton and Santee Dakota on the north slope of Turtle Mountain

who fled at the approach of American uniforms. The most probable group for Twining to have encountered would have been Hadamanie's camp.

In 1871 when Britain and the United States finally settled over the *Alabama* Claims the tension de-escalated. British troops were withdrawn from Canada. Fortification building on the International Boundary came to a halt. The Americans withdrew their support for the Fenians and the British no longer needed the Sioux. Canada need not be troubled that there had ever been a "Sioux Treaty" between the British Empire and the Dakota Nation. The only Canadian institution which would retain a corporate memory that there had ever been a strategic alliance between Britain and Natives on the plains was the Northwest Mounted Police.

Canadian Militia

Charles Arkon Boulton figures prominently in Prairie Canadian history as a regular army officer in both the 1870 and 1885 Rebellions, and as a homesteader and community founder. One of Manitoba's rural municipalities is named after him. Boulton left a memoir, now a rare edition, which was originally given a limited circulation to veterans of the military units commanded by Boulton in the two Northwest Rebellions. *I fought Louis Riel*, a distillation from this account, typically omits half of Boulton's original writing, weeding out his quirky social commentary and leaving only his military campaign diary. This reduces Boulton to a caricature. Thanks to local historian Hal Duncan, we were able to read Boulton in the original. He is sometimes inaccurate when he takes second-hand evidence, but he is always exact about what he himself sees or hears. In a century of part-time soldiers he was a rare full-time one: born in Ontario, but having seen Imperial service overseas. His memoirs are exacting as he could make them, and they lack a politician's finesse. Consequently he blurts out political realities of his day without apology.

Boulton was born in an era of great British-American tension and his career was shaped by that fact. He described Canada and the United States as being brought to the brink of war many times during the first half of the 1800's. During the early 1860's then-Captain Boulton found himself rotated from garrison duty at Gibraltar and Malta back to Canada with the 100th (Canadian) Regiment of Foot. When the 100th (Canadian) was raised a decade before, the British Empire needed colonials for service overseas. With the approach of the American Civil War tensions between Canada and the United States also increased and what better reinforcements to send to Canada than a Canadian-raised regiment? Boulton wrote



Section of a landscape showing RCR officers “talking with Indians” at Lower Fort Garry made in 1857 by John Fleming. This thin military presence was not by itself sufficient deterrent to invasion of the Northwest Territories, but allied with Native and Metis forces it could perform a command and control role. **John Ross Robertson Collection, Toronto Central Library.**

that it was anticipated the regiment would simply serve out the remainder of its tour of duty in Canada, and there the dischargees would receive a land grant and pension. Although raised from Ontario and Quebec, the regiment had been trained in England along with British Imperial regulars as well as serving with them in the Mediterranean. Its returned officers were therefore sought after by the new Canadian government to provide an experienced leaven for the Militia. Boulton had risen to the rank of regular British Army major by the time the regiment was broken up.

Canada at this time was strongly garrisoned by British troops, having been sent there in 1861, on the occasion of what is known as the “Trent Affair.” The American people approved of the bold conduct of Captain Wilkes in that affair; and the British public resented it as an insult. For a while there were strained relations between the two peoples, but the good sense of the governing powers at Washington, in giving up the prisoners, avoided

what might have been a very serious difficulty. The Emperor Napoleon [III] was anxious to recognize the Southern Confederacy as a belligerent power, but England declined, and the American people were left to deal with the great civil war and to re-establish their government. We expected every moment to be under orders about this time. The Queen, one of H.M. line-of-battle ships, had hammock hooks fastened up for us all ready, but the order never came for embarkation. Canada, however, having been taken advantage of by the Southerners, as a place of refuge where they might concoct schemes on the northern frontier of the United States, to assist their friends on the Southern frontier, was not held blameless by the Federal Government; and the Fenians took advantage of this feeling to commit a series of invasions of Canada, to stir up their Irish compatriots and to maintain their organization for the personal ends of their leaders.

the North-West Rebellions, Charles A. Boulton, p. 34

The fact of having served together formed the basis of an old boys' bond. As the population of Canada was small, and the professional military even smaller, this shared service cemented a tight bond between men who would later serve in military, police, administrative, religious and political posts scattered across Canada and the British Empire.

The discharged soldiers of the 100th Regiment went to their respective homes in various parts of the country, and to-day many of them occupy positions of honour and trust, in virtue of their military experience and discipline. Not a few of them joined the militia regiments that were raised in 1870, to accompany Colonel Sir Garnet Wolseley's expedition to the North-West Territory, for the suppression of the first Riel Rebellion, Colonel Casault of Quebeck a former officer of the 100th, was appointed commander of one of these militia battalions; and many other officers and men were appointed to military and civil positions and to the police force of the country, whose experience was found of great advantage.

the North-West Rebellions, Charles A. Boulton, p. 36

Like the fur trade companies before them, the Ranger regiments, the 100th Foot, the Highlanders, the Irish, even the American Civil War created networks and bonds of former professionals. Boulton, who was an exhaustive journalist, provided a list of every officer of the 100th Regiment who found later employment with Canada. These networks could create pathways within the regular society and bureaucracy that moved information very quickly. On the other hand, because of old rivalries with other commercial companies or military units, people within the same departments might not work together. The Hudson's Bay Company people collectively possessed a great deal of knowledge and tact on the handling of government in the Northwest. The men of the new Canadian military that followed had discipline, technical skill and organization. Among the First Nations trade and war built up relationships which extended beyond the band or tribe.

As the second half of the 19th Century dawned, most people on the Prairies knew that an Age had passed. Each group of people chose how to react to the situation. As each network of people called upon their own resources and solutions, they created a new world — whether they were prepared for it or not.

Chapter Five: Consolidating the Conquest

Escalation of the Indian Wars

The Indian Wars of the first half of the 1800's were usually fought between individual White governments and individual First Nations. This general characteristic changed in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century when the wars began to escalate and coalesce until it appeared for a time that the American Government was at war with all Indians. Counting coup and hostage taking became a thing of the past, and the prevailing mood of the 1860's and 1870's was total war to the point of extermination.

When Henry Youle Hind toured the Prairies in 1857-1858 the general war on the plains had entered a final static phase. Substantial changes of territory between Native people occurred less often, and certain corridors of conflict had become permanently depopulated. Paradoxically, the absence of people meant an abundance of furs and so these were still places attractive to the trappers. Hind recorded several well-known "War Roads."

The selection of certain tracts of country for the "War-path" is probably determined by the facilities presented for communication and concealment combined. The following are celebrated "war-paths," where hunting is generally disallowed although game from that circumstance is usually more abundant.

1. "The War-path River" and war road of the Lac la Pluie Ojibways, and the Sioux, from Rainy River to Red Lake River, thence across the prairies in the Valley of Red Lake River to Miniwaken or Devil's Lake, in Dakotah Territory.

2. "War-path River," from the south-west corner of the Lake of the Woods to Roseau River, thence to the prairies west of Red River — the same tribes.

3. "War-path River," from Lake Winnipeg to the Little Saskatchewan, thence to the prairies south of Manitobah Lake — the old war-path of the Swampy Crees, the Assiniboines and Sioiux, also of the Swampy Crees and the Lake Winnipeg Ojibways.

4. The "War-road," near the Elbow of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, on the flanks of the Grand Coteau, of the Blackfeet and the Plain Crees.

5. *The "War-road" of the Sioux, Blackfeet and Crows, in the valley of the Yellowstone.*

Narrative vol. II, Henry Youle Hind, p. 30

The pattern of war roads observed by Hind, supplemented by those on the American side, left Turtle Mountain isolated. War rippled around it as much as trade.

The fictionalized account *Blackfoot Crossing* by Norman Sluman gives a behind-the-scenes description of events from within the Blackfoot Confederacy. In it the government of Crowfoot are the main viewpoint, while the American "wolfers" are the villains. Sluman travelled Canada in the 1950's accompanying her husband who was a pro-football player. She volunteered her time at the Indian-Metis Friendship Centres in the Prairie Canadian cities where she had the opportunity to build up her own collection of first-person interviews with Native elders.

When most White historians did not yet grasp the ideas of Aboriginal government, states or treaties, Norma Sluman was writing about the intricate politics of the Blackfoot regular military societies with respect to the Blackfoot police. Sluman was fifty years ahead of her time for the depth and quality of her historical analysis. She also prefigured the feminists by placing a female character front and centre in her narrative, and then in placing her character within a well-researched historical context. She accurately portrayed the role of Aboriginal women as mediators, translators, facilitators and guides.

Sluman gave her own incisive description of the closing era of the Indian Wars in *Blackfoot Crossing*.

This was Montana Territory, 1873: an uneasy womb, penetrated, impregnated, about to give birth to war. It had been a long and violent gestation, sixty years of promises and broken treaties, bloodshed first on one side and then the other; a constant skirmishing manoeuvring, hiding and striking.

The land was rife with a deadly hatred. The Sioux swept down on outlying settlements, burning, killing and plundering. They attacked wagon trains on through passage, including army supply trains, and some were utterly destroyed. Always there was fear, wherever men rode — and hatred.

The buffalo herds were shrinking, subjected to a constant slaughter. Every day by the thousands they died and the army protected the

white men who killed them. What would happen to the red man without his buffalo? What would he eat? What would he wear? What could he do without the sturdy skins to make his home, sinews for his bow? What kind of a life could he make for himself when the great herds were no more? He knew. He would starve and he would freeze and he would depend on the kindness and generosity of the very white men who had turned their howitzers on his women and children. He had been betrayed out of his rights by marks upon paper that he had not understood. He was rapidly being pushed back, so that there was little room behind him; and because to fight was his ingrained savage habit, it was his answer.

After all, he was born to struggle. His life was a constant battle with the elements and vast distances. He had to kill to eat and he had to endure to survive. He could accept that, but not the spectre of extermination.

Even the white men had grown weary and cynical about the long indecisive series of encounters. They were still dazed from the recent civil war, too full of white men killing white men to try to comprehend the feelings of furred and feathered aborigines. The life of the fort was monotonous and very lonely. Comfort of any sort was unknown. Some of the officers were careerists, the others railed and grew bitter at misdirection from a faroff capital.

There were trouble-makers among white men, too; the settlers who chose Indian Territory out of all this wilderness; the prospectors and trappers who plied their trade on forbidden ground. And there was the awful, empty unknown land itself.

...The tribes were uniting, old enmities forgotten. Sitting Bull brooded to the north, Crazy Horse and Spotted Tail sat uneasily on their reservations, daily losing men and prestige to the hostiles. Drifting in together they became an ominous thunderhead. And still they gathered. They came down from the mountains, out of the deep valleys and across the plains, a tide of angry men who gave back the eagle's scream, and danced to the sound of drums in the night. Yet for all their numbers they might have been held without white men's weapons. They knew that, themselves, and it became a sort of secondary war, this quest for new

arms.

Blackfoot Crossing, Norma Sluman, pp. 18-20

According to Sluman's story, the Blackfoot received embassies from Sitting Bull seeking a general war against the Americans. Crowfoot refused, stating that the Medicine Line would protect the Blackfoot more surely than would joining the Sioux in a suicidal war. Sluman makes it clear in the context that Crowfoot's reliance on the Medicine Line as a deterrent is quite independent of the Canadians. For Crowfoot it is the historical border between the Blackfoot and the Crow or Lakota, an inheritance from an ancient border between the Algonquin and Siouan nations.

By the middle of the nineteenth century many of the combatants were beginning to realize that peace was their only hope for survival. The Whites had not yet arrived in full force on the scene, and the Crow made several attempts with limited success to end the incessant warfare with their neighbours. Denig described the Assiniboine coming to a peace agreement after a protracted period of warfare.

In these skirmishes the Assiniboines suffered considerable losses, so much so that when overtures for a peace were made in 1844 by the Crows the other readily accepted the proposal. In a few years these two nations became good friends, often camped and hunted together, the Crows giving the others a good many horses, hunting in their company... The peace still exists and enables the Crows to visit the Gros Ventres [Arikara] for corn.

Five Indian Tribes, Denig, pp. 89-90

The Crow were less successful at achieving a lasting peace with the Lakota, and that contributed to the final act of the Indian Wars.

Denig observed in 1850 that the nature of the war was changing. An earlier chivalrous period was being replaced by a nastier, larger scale, total war to the death.

The damage done at war by the Arikaras, either to the Assiniboines or any other nation, is very trifling, mostly limited to the killing of a defenceless woman or child. But of later years the Sioux have become more formidable than they formerly were. It is believed that the great diminution of buffalo in the Sioux country will compel that nation to seek subsistence farther west.

Five Indian Tribes, Denig, p. 93



Blackfoot mounted warriors chase off an enemy raiding party in an 1837 painting by Alfred Jacob Miller
National Archives of Canada.

Denig records that around 1854 Crow diplomacy was reaching its limits and recounted the assassination of a Crow peace delegation by the Blackfoot with whom they were supposed to negotiate. Woman Chief, a female who became a war chief of the Crow, led the peace delegation. Having been captured and adopted from the Blackfoot originally, and being a woman, it was thought she would make a good ambassador to this powerful state.

The Crow and Assiniboine had already successfully negotiated a peace, and the Assiniboines had followed that with a peace with the Blackfoot. Diplomatic and trade channels had been reopened between the Blackfoot and Crow.

With a view of ascertaining how far their hostile spirit had been quelled, and perhaps of gaining a goodly number of horses, this Woman Chief undertook a visit there, presuming that, as she was in fact one of their nation, could speak their language, and a general peace was desired, she could associate with them without being harmed.

...When near the camp, however, she en-

countered a large part of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie [Atsina Blackfoot] who had been to Fort Union and were returning home. These she boldly met, spoke to, and smoked with. But on their discovering who she was, they took the advantage while travelling with her to their camp to shoot her down together with the four Crows who had so far borne her company.

That closed the earthly career of this singular woman and effectually placed a bar to any hopes of peace between the Crows and her murderers.

Five Indian Tribes, Denig, p. 200

Denig also observed that fur trade forts could be dangerous places to be, not because the “hostile Indians” wanted to kill Whites particularly, but because each fort sat squarely in the middle of a different market. Consequently each fort supplied military equipment to a different nation. The Crow regarded any fort serving the Blackfoot as a quartermaster store supplying their enemy in time of war. The Blackfoot viewed any fort within Crow territory exactly the same way.

This observation brings home emphatically the point that while Whites regarded Native battles as merely extensions of their own global conflicts; First Nations in turn would often regard European states as simply bit players in their own epic struggles.

In 1858 when Professor Hind visited Manitoba he was surprised to find inter-tribal warfare still being waged “*after a century’s intercourse with civilized man.*”

Early in the spring of 1858 the warlike bands of Ojibways called the Lac la Pluie Indians, were thrown into a state of savage excitement by the arrival of messengers from their friends on Red River, with tidings that two Sioux had been killed and scalped in the Plains. In testimony of this triumph, they brought with them two fingers severed from the hands of the unfortunate Sioux. The announcement of the intelligence that the scalps would be sent, after their Red River brethren had celebrated war dances over them, was received with wild clamour and shouting. After the scalps had been carried from hand to hand and the victory that won them triumphed over with dancing, singing, and feasting they would be returned to the warriors who took them, and finally suspended over the graves of relatives or friends mourning the loss of any of their kindred by the hands of the Sioux.

Narrative vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 123

The War on the Plains had reached a crescendo after two hundred years of escalating tension, increasing scope of raids and battles, and depredations on civilian populations. Among the First Nations at least, faced with exhaustion, peace was about to break out in the bloody aftermath of the Minnesota Uprising.

Dakota and Lakota

In the late 1850’s the crisis came to a head in Minnesota. The Sioux were being pushed out of the woodlands by other Natives allied with White states, and by Whites themselves. The pattern of treaty signing and breakage by White governments was steamrolling along, and the territory was the scene of some nasty skirmishes and several atrocities. Within Siouan society of the time there was a multiple “chief” tradition. (The English word “chief” is overused and is applied to a wide variety of offices.) A system of “Peace Chiefs” led the civil and religious government, its successors chosen by elders from a field of qualified candidates. The candidates prefer-

ably were sons, grandsons or nephews of Peace Chiefs. Adoption was also used.

The society evolved several other social roles and orders with ritual and social responsibilities. “Dog soldier” societies provided the day-to-day police forces, and probably the cadre of experienced regular warriors. There were other special societies for observing certain rituals or festivals. Later during the height of the Indian Wars there were elite heroic societies. An important ritual official was the “Pipe Carrier”, who wasn’t necessarily a Peace Chief although the two often went together. These customs changed over time, and from group to group.

“War Chiefs” were originally not very important to the Sioux. They were selected by elders and Peace Chiefs in time of need from the best possible people. There are some accounts of women serving as War Chiefs. As the Indian Wars accelerated, the Siouan nations became more militarized. The military societies grew in size, scope and variety. The War Chiefs became virtually lifelong offices because so many of them died in office.

The authority of the chiefs was very great, but from the time of the first treaties with the United States government, it began to decline until the chief was only considered to be the mouthpiece of the Soldier’s Lodge, (tiyo-tipi), the only real power in the bands. Such was Wabasha (1718-1806) a Mdewakanton, the leading hereditary chief of the Peoples-of-the-lakes. Also called Red Leaf, his word was law in all inter-tribal affairs of importance, not only for his own band, but for all the Santees.

Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Lavolette, pp. 3-4

Native people themselves are reluctant to describe their own history in terms of factional confrontations, the way we might discuss European history. In many groups it is considered impolite to openly criticize, or to acknowledge a policy difference. However, it is fair to say that a factional struggle developed between a peace faction centred predominantly on the Peace Chiefs, Medicine People and Pipe Carriers, and a war faction centred predominantly on the War Chiefs, military orders and Dog Soldiers.

There were instances of cooperation, and both War Chiefs and Peace Chiefs represented themselves as serving the same society and goals. Crazy Horse was a War Chief, recognized as a superior by other War Chiefs. Sitting Bull was a Peace Chief, who was as the war progressed and particularly after the assassination of Crazy Horse, called upon to serve as a Grand War Chief.

So long as Crazy Horse lived, and worked with Sitting Bull, the Sioux could act united. There were other times Peace Chiefs and War Chiefs were clearly in conflict.

Hyemeyohsts Storm, a modern Cheyenne medicine person authored a fictionalized novel called *Seven Arrows* which is based in this same period. The protagonist is actually the evolving Medicine Wheel teaching, and is passed from character to character in conversation. The running dialogue is used to develop both the doctrine and the history of the Medicine Wheel. Against this dialogue, Storm paints a backdrop of historic events. Although fictionalized, Storm based his work on a lifetime immersed in oral histories of Cheyenne and Dakota. The following extract occurs in the book just as the Indian Wars began to accelerate, the social order was breaking down and the people of the plains were being forced to make difficult choices.

“We will have to move soon,” he finally said as he began to eat. “The people who murdered your brothers and uncles were not whitemen, Day Woman.” His voice was full of emotion. “We have known, we all have known, for a very long time. The Brotherhood is dead. The men of the Shield are no more. The Way of the Medicine Wheel that bound us together in the Brotherhood is truly dead.”

“The Way is not dead!” the Medicine Chief said as he entered the lodge. He was a big man, over six feet tall, with broad shoulders, a man of about forty winters.

“Wars,” continued the Peace Chief, “have been with man for so long that man has forgotten when they began... I do not understand these men, but if their Way is one of war and death, then they cannot be a full people. And remember, my brother, their gifts are ours too. And one day we will find peace and live together. And we will grow.”

Seven Arrows, Hyemeyohsts Storm, pp. 66-67

This internal philosophical struggle among the Sioux in Michigan in the 1850's has a direct bearing on the disposition of the Moncur artifacts. It is here that the key players among the Sioux begin to emerge.

Dr. Lorenz Neufeld cogently described the struggle in a series of articles published in the Boissevain Recorder and in the Deloraine Times & Star.

Inkpaduta [Red Top, a reference to blood on his lance] was a War Chief to emerge among the Sioux in Michigan. He differed with the faction of which Hadamanie was a member. Father Laviolette's history states

that there were two of this name, father and son, and that Inkpaduta I was responsible for the early murders and died in the 1830-1845 period, while Inkpaduta II was the man who fought with Sitting Bull and caused so much anxiety later in Manitoba.

The following quotes are taken from Lorenz Neufeld's articles in the Recorder, April 5 and April 12, 1978.

Inkpaduta [I] was born about 1800 - 1815 into the Wahpekutes, smallest of the four Santee Sioux tribes... considered the most lawless by whites. It was split into two factions by Chiefs Wamdisapa and Tasagi because of strategy differences regarding Sioux warfare against their enemies, Fox and Sac.”

*Boissevain Recorder, Lorenz Neufeld, April 1978.
BCA MG14/C68*

Inkpaduta I was the son of Wamdisapa.

“In about 1839 Tasagi was murdered by either Inkpaduta, who wanted to be a chief, or by an accomplice. [Laviolette would say here “by the father Inkpaduta I.”] Wamdisapa with family was expelled for two years during which time they lived... in South Dakota. By 1841 he was again chief, and signed a treaty [with the US.]”

“...In the early 1840's Wamdisapa died. Inkpaduta, [probably Inkpaduta II] rather fat, dirty and ugly with pock-marked sullen face, was in line for chieftanship but few tribesmen trusted him. His younger brother, the very handsome stalwart Sintominaduta, who'd left to join the Sisseton Sioux under Chief Sleepy Eye whose sister he'd married, became chief of the now loosely-united Wahpekutes and Inkpaduta sub-chief.”

*Boissevain Recorder, Lorenz Neufeld, April 1978. BCA
MG14/C68*

The “Wahpekutes” here reported in 1840 as being in Michigan emerged as refugees in Manitoba in the 1870's

The Fox and Sac had already been removed to reserves, and so the situation was temporarily defused. However, when the policy change occurred in the 1850's regarding northwestern expansion, the US and Sioux were again in conflict.

Professor Hind commented on the powderkeg political conditions south of the border when he passed through Manitoba in 1858-59.

The question of Indian title is one of very great interest and importance in regard to the future peace of the colony, and as much misapprehension appears to exist respecting the territorial rights of different tribes of Indians, and their title to the land they now claim, the present condition of the question may be noticed here, as far as the slender and unconnected evidence at command admits. In Canada much trouble, great expense, and endless inquiry have been erected by Indian claims, which even now [1859] remain in part unsettled, and are a source of many incidental expenses to the Government, which might have been avoided if proper arrangements had been made at the right season. In Rupert's Land where disaffected Indians can influence the savage prairie tribes and arouse them to hostility, the subject is one of great magnitude; open war with Sioux, Assiniboines, Plain Crees or Blackfeet [Blackfoot] might render a vast area of prairie country unapproachable for many years, and expose the settlers to constant alarms and depredations. The Indian wars undertaken by the United States Government during the last half century, have cost infinitely more than the most liberal annuities or comprehensive efforts for the amelioration of the conditions of the aborigines would have done; and in relation to the northern prairie tribes, war is always to be expected at a day's notice.

The encroachment of western settlers upon Indian lands are constant and increasing in the United States, and there is no reason to suppose that these encroachments will diminish for many years to come. Already the Red River south of the boundary line, as well as its southwestern tributaries, are invaded from the valley of the Mississippi, and as the territory of Dakotah has not yet been ceded to the United States Government, the prospect of a war with the Sioux, whose hunting grounds embrace it, becomes daily more imminent.

Narrative vol. II, Henry Youle Hind, pp. 168-169

After quoting an American officer on the flaws and strengths of US Indian policy, Hind summarized the geographic and political position of the Sioux with respect to British North America. It's an interesting geography lesson, and must have been true on paper at least

in 1859 when Hind published the report. It has little correspondence with the popular version of Wild West political boundaries. The borders described by Hind also suggest the existence of a treaty between the Plains Ojibway and the United States. Echoing Turtle Mountain Chippewa Chief Patrick Gourneau's history, Hind describes a "Chippewa Territory" occupying all of what is present-day North Dakota and extending into Montana. His description does not always follow the borders which were used when the Plains states entered the Union. If Hind's observations were correct in 1861 when Hadamanie led one hundred lodges on a march to Turtle Mountain, then the Dakota would of a necessity dealt with an Ojibway occupation and government. The "ceasefire" that pertained through the 1850's had ended the Siouan-Algonquin fighting, but left the Chippewa bands controlling most of the Turtle Mountain region.

The following quote suggests that Hind also understood hunting grounds, and therefore resource use, to have overlapping areas despite political boundaries.

The country of the Dakotahs borders on British territory, some of the tribes (the Inhanktonwanna...) are the confirmed enemies of the half-breeds and Ojibways of Red River; peace has often been made, but as often broken again upon trivial and even accidental grounds.

The frontier tribes can muster at least two thousand warriors by uniting with several of their more southern allies. Being the most warlike and numerous Indians in the United States territories, and their hunting grounds interlocking with those of the Crees in British America, they will probably yet play an important and active part in the future of the colony and the new adjoining territory of Chippewa.

[original footnote] *The new territory of Dakotah is to be composed of a part of the present territory of that name and a portion of Nebraska, and bounded as follows:—The forty-sixth meridian of north latitude on the north, Minnesota and Iowa to the mouth of the Big Sioux on the east, on the south following the Missouri river from the mouth of the Big Sioux to the mouth of the Nebraska, and along the Niobarah to the one hundred and second meridian of west longitude, along the hundred and second meridian to the forty-third parallel north latitude, thence along the forty-third parallel to the crest of the Rocky*

Mountains, and on the west by Washington Territory. This territory will consist of about one hundred and thirty-five thousand square miles. This does not include or interfere with any of the settled portions of Nebraska.

Chippewa is an entirely new territory, and is composed of the northern part of Dacotah and Nebraska, bounded as follows:—The British Possessions on the north, Minnesota on the east, the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude on the south, and Washington on the west. This will make an area of about one hundred and thirty thousand square miles.

Narrative vol. II, Henry Youle Hind, pp. 169-170

That would have left in position between the British and the Americans a Native buffer state, three degrees of latitude from north to south, between the Mississippi and the Rockies. It was a policy Britain had pursued since the Ohio Valley Campaign. To Hind, all of the First Nations were independent and unique. He did not regard the Sioux as “American” or “Canadian” any more than he classed the others by their state citizenship. The whole concept of Aboriginal peoples in the Great Plains *belonging* to one country or another was still in the future when Hind wrote his report in 1859.

The community history book of the southwest side of Turtle Mountain, *Historical Highlights of Bottineau County*, includes a statement of claim for Chippewa traditional chief Little Shell.

Little Shell, hereditary chief of the Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa, claimed for his people the territory described as: Commencing on the International Boundary line between Canada and the United States at a point five miles west of the Grand Coteau [south of Calf Mountain on the US side]; thence southerly in a direct line to the most westerly source of Goose River; thence in a line running from the source thereof in a westerly course, passing through the center of Devils Lake and continuing its westerly course to Dog Den Butte; from thence in a northwesterly direction, striking a point on the Missouri River within gunshot sound of the Little Knife River; thence north to the said International Boundary; thence east along said line to the place of beginning, containing between 8,000,000 and 10,000,000 acres.

Little Shell, the younger, with the principal headmen and Attorney John Baptiste

Bottineau, eldest son of Pierre Bottineau, pressed their claim to this territory through protest against the ratification by Congress of an agreement alleged to have been concluded October 22, 1892.

Historical Highlights of Bottineau County, pp. 13-14

The territory as described mirrors that claimed by the Dakota in Manitoba on the northern side of Turtle Mountain and the International Boundary. The eastern borders of both the Dakota and Chippewa claims begin at the western edge of the Selkirk Treaty. Little Shell the Younger was probably among those attending the Councils on Turtle Mountain, and he or his father may have been the “Ojibway warrior” with whom Hadamanie negotiated in 1861. In the year 2001 the Little Shell Band have been displaced westward into Montana and are still not recognized as Treaty Indians by the United States.

Minnesota Uprising

In a scene very reminiscent of the outbreaks of the first and second Riel Rebellions, the initial spark to the Minnesota Uprising of 1861 was lit by a surveyor. Inkpaduta robbed survey parties of horses and supplies, pulled up stakes, and (understandably) tried to interfere in the process of surveying.

Governor Ramsey of Michigan became involved in the sometimes vicious band politics.

“When Gov. Ramsey acknowledged a Tasagi son as Wahpekute hereditary chief, that individual with 17 followers was murdered — and Inkpaduta naturally blamed. Nevertheless he was innocent of that crime and years later it was proved a Sac and Fox force sneaked back to massacre them. When the brothers were ignored in the 1851 treaty and Medicine Man Umpashota asked to sign for their lands, the two became really alienated.”

Boissevain Recorder, Lorenz Neufeld, April 1978. BCA MG14/C68

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 removed any further internal impediment to American colonization of the rest of the old Louisiana territory. In 1859-60 the pressure reached a crescendo on the upper Red River Valley. Native observers knew the Whites were serious when in the winter of 1859-60 the steamer *Anson Northrup* was partially dismantled and portaged across the low continental divide between the upper Mississippi and Red River. (This crossing is close to where the

present-day states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota meet.) In addition to the *Northrup*, US special agent John Wilkies Taylor reported to his superiors in Washington that other heavy equipment including a steam tractor for hauling freight sleds had been transported across the height of land to the Red River Valley. A new road was being surveyed from the area of Lake of the Woods to the Dakota border which would cut right through the disputed territory of both Ojibway and Dakota, indifferent to the rights of either Native party.

As the year 1861 dawned the eastern Santee Dakota realized that White immigration was no longer confined to a little lapping at the edges; it had become a fullfledged flood. The question of the Whites coming was no longer an *if*, it had become a question of what would be the appropriate response. The Dakota had seen what had happened to the tribes that had attempted to resist the removals of the late 1830's. Christianized or civilized it had made no difference. The Dakota expected to be treated much worse. The debate within the Dakota Nation was what to do — fight or flee?

By the summer of 1862, the Dakota would surrender no more of their culture to the wasicu (white men) [more accurately, any representative of Western European culture regardless of colour,] and no longer grovel at the doors of the Indian Agent's warehouse. They rose with their guns, bows, arrows and axes to reclaim their own lives and land. By September of that same year, a few short months later, the Isantee Dakota were crushed, and the survivors had begun the long trek to the north, seeking the protection of Canada [meaning British North America and the HBC.]

*The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest,
Doug Elias, pp. 17-18.*

At this point the Sioux started choosing among several options. Black Elk, an Ogalala Medicine Man referred to one of these as the “Hang Around the Fort People,” meaning those who accepted surrender to the US Government, and lived as well as they could on the handouts from the Indian Agents.

Another faction, led by the Inkpadutas and Sleepy Eyes of the nation, favoured total war.

A third faction, attempted to put as much distance as they could between themselves and the Whites.

The Peace Chiefs and medicine people as a rule tried to stay out of the conflicts, and to preserve as best they could the evolving tradition of the Medicine Wheel. White histories sometimes oversimplify the policy debate



*The War Chief Inkpaduta II.
Minnesota Historical Society photograph.*

within the Native community. Nineteenth century histories described “good” and “bad” Indians in terms of the degree to which they surrendered amicably to White society. Like humans anywhere, the Sioux were more concerned with their own internal issues than they were with how observers might describe them. Peace and War Chiefs wanted to preserve the same thing, or so they believed. The issue was which road would be effective at realizing that goal. Many war chiefs regretted having to take the war road. Many peace chiefs wanted to fight.

One of the peace faction leaders to emerge in Minnesota at the time Inkpaduta was first making a name for himself was a young man called Yellow Tent.

In the last days of the uprising, the bands of Dakota that had been located closest to the mouth of the Minnesota began to work their way back up the river. When they reached Mazaska's village, that chief, backed by Tatankanaje and other leaders of the upper Dakota, refused to let them pass and bring the war trailing after them. Little Crow, Shak'pay, Red Middle Voice, Wakanozhan and other M'dewakontonwon chiefs then left

the vicinity of the Minnesota River, moving west toward the Missouri River. There they met with the Ihanktonwon who hunted on the plains around the James and Sheyenne rivers, and swung toward the north.

What the Dakota needed was a refuge beyond the reach of the pursuing American army where they could rest and regroup. All of the fleeing bands moved west and north to Devil's Lake in present-day North Dakota, an area used extensively by the Ihanktonwon. The Minnesota Dakota were able to use their relatives' "corridor of influence" as a highway away from danger, without exposing themselves to the hostile Ojibwa further east. The lake was an oasis of plenty surrounded by prairies and plains, with sufficient wood, water, food and protection to accommodate a large gathering. As a final advantage, it was near the international boundary. By the winter, there were over six hundred lodges [3000 to 6000 people] from all branches of the nation camped by the lake.

While the majority of the remnant nation remained for the winter at Devil's Lake, at least three bands of Dakota slipped into British territory during the winter of 1862-63, unnoticed by the sparse white community. H'damani, originally from Mazaska's village below Lac qui Parle on the Minnesota River, crossed the international boundary at the Turtle Mountains, where he and his band remained until the first decade of the twentieth century. Wambdiska and his followers from Mazomani's Wahpetonwon village joined Tahampegda and his larger band of Sissetonwon and Wahpetonwon to cross the boundary at the Souris River. Wapahaska, leading a band of Sissetonwon from Istak'pa's village and a smaller number of Wahpetonwon from Mazomani's village, crossed at the north loop of the Souris River and may have passed as far north as the Moose Mountains."

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 20.

The Dakota may not have known that the Ojibway had already concluded a treaty with the Americans to create "Chippewa Territory." Those Dakota fleeing Minnesota in 1861 were moving through what was on paper at least, a hostile state. They may have thought Devil's Lake was safe, but the fighting between Dakota

and Ojibway had already preceded them in this area.

One of Mazaska's subordinate chiefs was Yellow Tent. Though only in his early twenties, Yellow Tent led one group of "one hundred lodges" (500 to 1100 people), on a 400 mile trek from their home in Minnesota to the safety of Turtle Mountain. This group of Dakota had not taken part in the Uprising. Yellow Tent carried with him his own sacred pipe and possibly a number of ritual items which he would need once he got to the mountain. He took on a new name, He'Dami'Mani — "He Who Rattles as He Walks" — usually rendered with alliteration as "Hadamanie".

When the Dakota entered the Northwest, they fully understood that they were approaching the periphery of their territory, an area already occupied by the Cree, Assiniboine, Ojibwa and Metis. These nations had no reason to welcome the newcomers, even though they recognized that the arriving Dakota groups were not the same as the Ihanktonwon, with whom they had been in conflict for at least the preceding century. There were, however, pressures in Rupert's Land which caused the inhabitants to resist the Dakota influx.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 27

Once at Turtle Mountain, sometime around 1862, Hadamanie negotiated with the Ojibway, recognizing their claim as superior, and thereby successfully securing a cession from them of the northern side of the mountain. To the Turtle Mountain Chippewa as this particular group of Ojibway became known, the area ceded was land they could not politically hold. Ecologically and militarily they may have dominated the area at that time, but politically the claim to Turtle Mountain north of the 49th was a claim that neither the British nor the Americans would recognize. It cost the Turtle Mountain Chippewa nothing to cede the northern side to the Dakota and so the geographic position of these two groups flip-flopped with the Dakota now settled to the north of the Ojibway.

In 1862, when the Dakota appealed to the authorities in the Red River settlement at Fort Garry for sanctuary and protection, they claimed a right to be on British soil. In support of this right, they cited their tribal history, which described how the Dakota people had, in generations past, constructed an entire lifestyle on soil since claimed by the British Crown. Further, they said, King George

III, the ancestor of the reigning "great mother," Queen Victoria, had made a mighty oath to the Dakota assuring them that for their part in allying themselves with the British in the War of 1812, their culture and freedom would always be respected and honoured wherever British rule prevailed.

These claims drew the minimal amount of attention that could be expected of the very few representatives of law, order and the Union Jack then in the Red River, especially when suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by over a thousand people who had, as could be plainly seen, the blood of war still upon their hands.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p.17-18

Governor Dallas and the Hudson's Bay Company became caught between the Americans and the Dakota. There were natural antipathies held by the "British" Natives and by Red River Colonists for both the Dakota and the Americans. There were natural sympathies as well. Elias noted that some colonists travelled to Pembina to urge the US Cavalry to cross the border. The mood of the colonists was described at near panic by some; filled with Christian sympathy for the destitute Indians by others. Governor Dallas followed the time honoured tradition of sending "presents" of food, blankets and ammunition with which to hunt to the Dakota -- hoping that they'd move on. Even when they did not, he suggested that it was cheaper to feed and clothe them than it was to prosecute a war against them. At one point the Council of Assiniboa weakened and granted permission for the Americans to cross the border, then relented in the face of pressure from the Imperial government.

When they were refused permission to send troops across the border, the Americans resorted to a covert operation, probably with the connivance of some Red River or Portage area residents.

At the very time that Dallas was denying permission to the Americans, the latter were conniving to kidnap the Dakota chiefs Shak'pay [Little Six] and Wakanozhan [Medicine Bottle.] This daring raid was completed successfully on January 17 or 18, 1864, by Lieutenant Cochrane of the Pembina garrison [2nd US Dragoons Regiment.] Shak'pay and Wakanozhan had refused to consider returning to the United States, but they were drugged with opium [laudanum] and chloroform, tied

to a sled and quickly hauled across the line to Pembina. Shortly thereafter, a number of the followers who had been in the chiefs' camp voluntarily surrendered to the American troops. Eventually, Shak'pay and Wakanozhan were taken to Fort Snelling where they were hanged on November 11, 1865.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 23.

There is an important point to be observed in how authorities reacted to this event. The British Imperial Government was not amused, and Dallas was censured. In fact, he'd neglected reporting the kidnapping at first because he feared that would forestall any further options with respect to the Americans. We can conclude, and the British government meant everyone to conclude, that this kind of behaviour by another state was not to be tolerated. But, another implication just as strong, is that the occupation of the northwestern slope of Turtle Mountain by Hadamanie's band was considered legitimate by *both* the United States and the British. No one raided their reserve. No one told them to leave. They may have been there on the sufferance of the British, Ojibway, Metis and Cree, but they were indeed suffered to be there.

In the first four years after their arrival in the Northwest, the Dakota were harassed and attacked by the resident nations. In the summer of 1866, Tatankanaje and forty of his men went into Fort Garry, where they met with a camp of Ojibwa from the Red Lake district. The Dakota entered into what they thought was a peace discussion and, after the appropriate ceremony took their leave for the West. They were followed and fired upon by the Ojibwa, who killed six of the Dakota. That same summer, the Ojibwa attacked Tahampegda in the vicinity of Portage la Prairie, killing the chief and his eldest son. These were the last recorded accounts of violence between the Dakota, the Indian nations and the Metis of the Northwest.

In the summer of 1874, Tatankanaje the Younger and Wapahaska told Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris that the elder Tatankanaje had made an enduring peace with the Cree of the prairie. This peace must have been struck before 1866, since the elder chief died that year leading his last war party. In 1874, too, H'damani told Morris that the Dakota had acquired from the Ojibwa the right

to live in and use the Turtle Mountains.

*The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest,
Doug Elias, pp. 28-29*

This was not a situation where everything was cut and dried. Far from it. Each party entertained within itself doubts and compromises. No one could accurately predict how things would turn out, and the possibility of violence raised the tensions among all concerned. Dallas was roundly criticized by the Colonial Office for having been too cosy with the Americans and the abduction of the two Dakota chiefs precipitated an international crisis.

In explaining his decision to London, Dallas stated that the Dakota might otherwise remain in British territory permanently. When they had arrived at Red River, he said the Dakota chiefs had narrated their ancient history of northern origins and had displayed the medals their fathers received from King George ...[which the]... Dakota had cherished. Dallas was ignorant of this history and could neither comment upon it nor use it to guide his actions. While he would have liked to expel the Dakota, he was unable to do so, and while he would have liked to call in the Americans, he foresaw unpleasant repercussions. Finally, he begged for guidance in this very difficult situation...

Eventually, London learned of the illegal capture of Shak'pay and Wakanozhan, and of Dallas' permission for the American Army to enter Canada [sic, meaning Rupert's Land.] The resulting publicity, both in the press of eastern Canada and on the floor of the Commons in London, ended any fleeting ideas of loosing the American army on British soil. The government in London notified the governor-general of Canada that the only appropriate action in the Northwest was to deny entry to the Americans. By mid-April, [US Army] Major Hatch and his soldiers were ordered to withdraw from Pembina..."

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 25.

Elias gives a summary of the marches and countermarches carried out by the Dakota once they were within the British Northwest. Although Indian Affairs made much of the "divisions" within the Dakotas, Elias argues that this was determined more by economics than politics and that the Dakota were endeavouring to repli-

cate the economic organization they'd had previously.

When the M'dewakontonwon and Wahpetonwon moved west, they formed four separate camps – at High Bluff, Poplar Point, Portage la Prairie and Beaver or Rat Creek, which enters the Whitemud River near Lake Manitoba. The Dakota at High Bluff and Poplar Point laboured for the farming settlers in the area, cut construction timber and firewood, and fished and trapped to the northeast around the Shoal Lakes and the southeast end of Lake Manitoba. Surplus fish were sold or bartered in the settlements. Members of the camp at Portage la Prairie worked in the village or on the farms, and also cut wood and sold fish. Most of their fishing was done from the south shore of Lake Manitoba. The Dakota at Rat Creek laboured for the traffic passing over the Prairie Portage to Lake Manitoba and trapped in the marshes to the southwest of the lake. All of these camps, numbering perhaps a hundred lodges, recognized Weeokeah or Waoke as their leader, since Little Crow, Shak'pay and Wakanozhan all were dead. This would suggest that the division into separate camps was the result of economic strategy rather than of political division. During these early years, most of the Dakota left the vicinity of Portage la Prairie during the winter to hunt and trap in the Turtle Mountains, where they maintained their close ties with the bands under H'damani, Wambdiska and Taninyahdinazin, and renewed their acquaintance with Wapahaska, Tatankanaje and Mahpiyahdinape.

H'damani, Wambdiska and Taninyahdinazin all remained in what is now southwestern Manitoba, between Oak Lake and the eastern slopes of the Turtle Mountains, making excursions south to Devil's Lake, where they joined the Ihanktonwon. They rarely went north of the Assiniboine River, but often followed that water east to Portage la Prairie and the other settlements. In the main, they hunted and fished for subsistence, but also traded furs, meat, pemmican, robes and manufactured items such as carts to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Ellice. Some time before 1870, however, people from these bands started small gardens at Oak Lake and on the Assiniboine.

Mahpiyahdinape and his band stayed in the vicinity of Fort Ellice, camping mostly along the Birdtail River. From there, they hunted north into the Riding Mountains and Duck Mountains and south in the Moose Mountains.

*The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest,
Doug Elias, pp. 30-31.*

This was in some respect a golden afterglow to the historic Santee Dakota. For ten years they had free run of southwestern Manitoba.

The Shadow of the Council

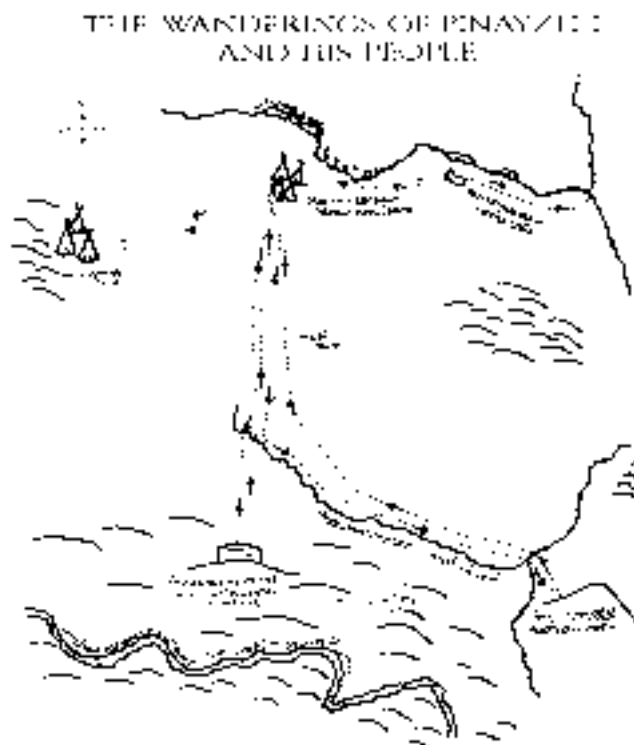
A system of international treaties, to which the British were sometimes party, created and maintained the Council on Turtle Mountain as an international dispute mechanism. In the case of the British, the original documents which should have attested to the treaties were destroyed or lost; and in many cases the treaties were themselves oral. By the latter 1800's, the Council was quickly losing its force and purpose. The story of the "Sioux Treaty" was becoming fainter. But, while there is little in the way of direct evidence of the Council at this time, there is a consistency to the shadows cast in the evidentiary record.

The Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail Association printed a wonderful series of booklets entitled *Meet You on the Trail*, edited by historian Hal Keown. In these, first person accounts from the Homestead Era are reprinted, often with copious footnotes. Volume 2 of the series "*Jottings from a Buckboard*" reprinted a newspaper column originally written by J. F. Tennant in 1881 under the pseudonym "Buckboard". In one such story Tennant mentioned visiting a "solitary Indian grave".

In the morning with [Land Titles Assistant Clerk] Gauvreau we took a ramble around inspecting some of the fine sections of land in the neighbourhood bordering on the timber of the Turtle. Here, on one of the highest mounds of the Whitewater Coulee [Turtle's Head Creek], we came across a solitary Indian grave.

On four crotches about seven feet high in the air, a rude coffin was elevated and covered with a bright scarlet cloth indicating that he was the son of the Chief of the Mountain. This mode of burial was viewed by my companion with great wonder and astonishment.

Meet You on the Trail, Buckboard, p. 58



Earth Elder's map of the wanderings of Yellow Calf's Saulteaux band. Buffalo Lodge Hill would correspond to Buffalo Butte, a hill between the Missouri Couteau and Turtle Mountain.

A key letter, written by trader George Arthur Hill on behalf of Hadamanie, was preserved in the Indian Affairs Black Files. Doug Elias both quotes the complete letter and comments upon it.

I Aahdamane — a Dakota of the Mocktow Band — desire to have the grant of land from the Queen which is to be given to each of us, in the Turtle Mountain, in a part where you think the land is good. I speak for myself and my three sons. We have been in this place for twelve years.

I saw the Ojibwa here and gave him four horses and five sacred pipes.

The Chief Warrior of the Ojibwa gave the Turtle Mountains to me and my people.

I want some land from the Queen for myself and my three sons — and at present know not where they intend to send us.

If you will let what I say be known and tell me what they say, I would be very grateful.

My God hears what I say.

This brief note contains much of interest. H'damani identified himself as a member of

the Mocktow Band, a misrepresentation of the Dakota phrase ma-k'a'to (or Blue Earth.) In Minnesota, H'damani and his family were a part of Mazaska's village and part of the Wahpetonwon branch of the Dakota nation. The chiefs who had up to then been promised reserve lands in Canada were of different political realms at the band and village levels. Since H'damani was not identified as a part of Taninyahdinazin's or Wambdiska's followers, he asked for lands in his own right, and more specifically, for himself and his three sons. This latter point was to be the cause of considerable bitterness in coming years.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 42

Although this story does not point to a "Council of All Nations" with a wide membership, it does support the idea that there were direct diplomatic relations between otherwise hostile groups. It verifies that at least two: the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and the Turtle Mountain Dakota, conducted treaty negotiations with each other and recognized a kind of co-sovereignty even though the mountain was not otherwise a major centre for either's population.

John Tanner the Falcon's testimony established that Assiniboine, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Cree, and probably Mandan and Hidatsa belonged to this fraternity at an earlier date.

For almost two centuries, the Cree, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux had held a monopoly over European trade goods and weaponry entering the western interior. Together, they had created an "iron alliance" that enabled them to expand across the northern plains.

Loyal Unto Death, Blair Stonechild & Bill Waiser, p. 17

"Four horses and five pipes" (or "seven pipes" in some versions,) does not sound like a payment for land. It sounds like a ritual, and specifically, a ritual accompanying a treaty.

The Siouan Nations refer to the "Seven Council Fires" and a period of more-or-less unified policy and government. The organization of the government is well described in Dakota lore as recorded by Father Laviolette. It reflects a Sioux comfort-level with how international affairs should be handled. Similarly the Algonquin nations were used to grand councils, grand chiefs and federations of tribes, a pattern they retain to this day. It would be a natural step for these two societies to form an intermediary structure, a Council of Seven Stones on

Turtle Mountain. In this sense, the entire Siouan society was represented through its seats on the Turtle Mountain Council.

In the early 1600's, the Dakotas numbered about 25,000. Their nation was united by a traditional governing inter-tribal organization — the Seven Council Fires (Oceti Sakowin). The Seven Council Fires met at least yearly during the trading markets. It was formed of a representative of each of the Santee tribes, and one each of the Yankton, the Yanktonai and the Teton tribes. The governmental functions were performed by men whose offices were determined by kinship. The legislative, executive and judicative functions were not differentiated.

The males were divided into three classes: the chiefs, the soldiers (warriors) and the young men. The chiefs were religious and civil leaders; the soldiers, called akicita, were servants of the chiefs. The assembly was composed of chiefs alone, who also were leaders in time of war. Tradition is silent on how the Seven Council Fires leaders conducted their business.

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, G. Laviolette, p. 3

The difference was that the Council on Turtle Mountain was a mediator, not a governing body.

The "sacred precincts" of Turtle Mountain might be described as encompassing an imaginary line which runs around the Turtle's Head feature on the west, and moving clockwise would pass between the mountain and the Canadian Turtle Mountain towns, then along the eastern edge of the Tail feature to include Devil's Lake, then in a large arc that would include Buffalo Lodge Butte and back to the Turtle's Head. At different times, to different people, this imaginary circumference would have been smaller or larger. There would have been exceptions-to-the-rule as it was violated, but custom would also have reasserted itself. Nicollet passed through this strange no-man's land when he travelled northward from the Sisseton Dakota territories of Tasapi and Wanatan into the Devil's Lake area.

Sunday, July 28, 1839. Our fearfulness increases as we approach Devil's Lake, where all the enemy nations are on guard and ready to fight. We are several times obliged to keep our horses tied up all night within our camp and to take as much precaution for their safety

as for our own...

[several paragraphs omitted on geology]

...As we advance, we discover more and more of the trees that surround Devil's Lake, the end of our northern course. The hills bordering the east shore can be seen as vague shapes in the misty distance. There is one hill the Sioux name Mini wakan chante — the heart of the supernatural water which the voyageurs translate as the Heart of Devil's Lake. It is higher than all the others and can be seen for more than 30 miles in all directions. We shall camp not far from its base. This summit produces a remarkable effect upon the plains... Its name is derived from its shape and not from its location. The Sioux believe that from a certain direction they see in it the shape of a heart, chante, and because it is close to the lake that they call Mini Wakan — the supernatural water — they give it the above name...

...We come upon a series of three or four pretty lakes, connected with each other and emptying into Devil's Lake. Providentially their water is sweet, and there is a little wood on their banks. We camp here and soon discover that the metis of the Riviere Rouge have also camped here a few days before. We have often found traces of their camps during our trip, and this evening the deep ruts made by their numerous wagons confirm without a doubt that they intend to return home. We are really very sad to learn this. We had looked forward to an interesting encounter with these people, new to us, and we hoped to see them in their own theater of action where their men annually acquire the reputation of being the best hunters, the best horsemen, and the bravest warriors of the prairie.

Joseph Nicollet on the Plain and Prairies., pp. 184-187

Nicollet camped at what is today called Free Peoples Lakes, within the Fort Totten Dakota Reservation. Here his friend, the Dakota diplomat Wanatan found him when Nicollet became temporarily lost in the maze of coulees and sloughs that surround Turtle Mountain.

When Nicollet travelled through the Turtle Mountain neutral zone, tensions were high from recent armed conflicts between different First Nations, the Metis, and the US Army. Nicollet did not meet directly with any Council on Turtle Mountain, nor did he comment on the existence of one. However, he did note that characteristic no-man's land around the feature, and he also noted

the frequent diplomatic missions between First Nations. By a fortunate chain of circumstance, *three* diplomatic letters have been preserved from Nicollet's visit to the Devil's Lake and southern Turtle Mountain areas. The letters were originally written in Roman orthography, using Dakota or Ojibway words as the case may be. They were translated into French, at least one by Nicollet himself. From Nicollet they appear to have been passed on to the Francophone American diplomat, Albert Gallatin — the man in charge of negotiating the Oregon Treaty among other duties. Nicollet preserved them in an appendix as grammatical curiosities.

It is worth quoting all three letters here, with Nicollet's remarks, not the least because they are first-person testimony. They are also testimony to the pattern of diplomatic relationships which surrounded Turtle Mountain: firstly because they are indeed *written* correspondence between the Ojibway and the Dakota; and secondly because they were considered important enough to record by the American scientific community and important enough to be passed onto the American diplomatic corps. Finally as letters they have the advantage to the historian of naming names; and they include the names of people associated with Turtle Mountain such as Inyang Mani. The widow of Inyang Mani was one of the residents of the Turtle Mountain Reserve, and later the Oak Lake Reserve. Hole-in-the-Day was a prominent leader of Ojibway on both sides of the Medicine Line from Lake of the Woods to Turtle Mountain.

In introducing the letters in his appendix, Nicollet explained the role of the military society, the Kit Fox, which he observed at the peak of the Indian Wars. The correspondence is between the Kit Fox Society on the part of the Dakota and Hole-in-the-Day on the part of the Chippewa Ojibway.

The name of the company of soldiers at Lac qui Parle is Tokadan okondakitchie, the united company of the little prairie wolf. This is the name, ostensibly, that they took because of the savages. But the secret title is Wowapi wakan okondakitchie, the company of the friends of the holy book (the Bible). The kit fox is taken as an emblem of vivacity and activity. The savages of the prairie say that the kit fox is the most alert and quickest of the animals that they know.

The chief of the village of Lac qui Parle is Iyankamani or Iyankmani, He who runs walking. His little child traveled with me and the soldiers.

Hupi ohendeya, His feather that borders the

earth. Chief of Little Rapids and of Big Stone Lake, and a little chief of Lac qui Parle.

The four chiefs of the company are Tatchanrhip tahiye, His warclub that appears; Marhpiya snan, Sounding Cloud; Marhpiya witchashta, Cloud Man.

Joseph Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, pp. 277-278

The editor of Nicollet's papers concluded that another man on the signature list, *Wanmdi Okiya* - He who talks to the eagle, was the actual writer of the Dakota letters. An alternative theory could be that it was Nicollet himself. In the quote above Nicollet said that the "little child traveled with me and the soldiers." "Me" definitely refers to Nicollet, and the reference to soldiers is to members of the Kit Fox Society — Dakota soldiers not US Army. If he was travelling with Kit Fox soldiers then it is entirely possible that he obliged a request to draft a letter. The second of the two letters below, from the Kit Fox to Hole-in-the-Day, exists in the Gallatin Papers archive as an original written in Dakota with the Roman alphabet, and as a rough translation into French by Nicollet. If he wrote the one it is quite possible he wrote the other. The first letter is written in English. The third letter was written in Dakota, and has an English translation with it, neither of which is in Nicollet's hand. This third letter is written from He Who Speaks to Eagles, to Nicollet personally. Regardless of who actually penned the letters, the dictation means that different First Nations around Turtle Mountain and Devil's Lake were exchanging written diplomatic correspondence in Native languages using the Roman alphabet in 1837.

Correspondence between the Sioux of Lac qui Parle and the Chief Pagune kizhik, Hole-in-the-Day, of the Chippewa band at Swan River on the upper Mississippi.

Message of the Hole in the Day

To the Sioux

I have done what I was sorry for — but 4 times was I struck by you on the same ground where I found an opportunity to revenge the Loss of my proper[blank]. I look into your fort & know when you are at Lac qui Parle. I could go there but I never did & will not for war. I am sorry for what has happened but I could not help it. I return your relation with pleasure. I saved her life Twice & would have killed the dog — who had harmed her — I have fed & clothed her well. I wish if ever one of my relations should fall into the hands of her husband, they be saved & taken as

good care of as I did of his wife. I am for peace. I promised never to strike another blow & to kill the first of my nation who should dare to break the peace — provided the Sioux are willing to stop at once. I will never strike another blow on the Sioux nor permit to be done if I know it in time — if the Sioux will say they will not strike us.

I have beged to go down & give myself up. I am ready to die at any time. I have done so once & I know I can die but one time. Soon or late this must take place, and a few short days makes no difference with me. I repeat that I am for peace — a permanent peace with you if you wish it on the terms I propose.

Pagune Gizhik

Younger brother of Strong Earth:

You have written another letter. We have seen it. You say that last spring you did something bad and that you are sorry about it. Truly, how could you not be sorry about it? That action wasn't that of a man, but of a woman. This action is not the only one for which you should be sorry. There are many others as well. Be sorry for all of them together. But you still say that we will be relatives. Where are the names of the chiefs, where are the names of the soldiers? We do not see any. Your name is the only one that appears. It isn't that of a chief; it isn't that of a soldier; but it is the name of a woman. This is why we will not say more.

Inyang Mani — He who walks running (chief of the Wahpeton tribe)

Upiya Hendeya — He who touches with the feathers of the bird's wing (the chief of the village)

Tachanrpi Taninniye — Warclub that shows itself (the chief of the camp)

Marhpiya Wichashta — Cloud Man (first soldier)

Marhpiyasna — Rattling Cloud (soldier)

Wanmdi Okiya — He who talks to the eagle (soldier)

Translation of a letter addressed to Nicollet from the Sioux soldiers of the Tokadans company at Lac qui Parle. The names given to Nicollet by the Sioux were Woktchan witchashta, divining man, the diviner, and Woktchan wakan, the sorcerer.

Wokchan awakan koda, our friend, the spirit diviner.

We will tell you in what manner we are related, and from what nation we are sprung, we will relate to you.

A white woman married a Sioux, and they had a son, who grew up to manhood, and took a wife. He became the father of a son and in addition his wife gave birth to yet more children. After that the woman died, and left two children, the one a female, the mother of Rainville; the other a male, who is our father.

This is a correct account of our parentage, which shows us to have derived our origin partly from the Whites, partly from the Sioux.

In reference to your exploring tour, we, and we alone, have made you acquainted with a large tract of country and have aided you to the best of our abilities. We hope you will remember us on this accounts. We who inhabit one lodge have one mind, and are one body, remember then us all, and do not forget us for a long time.

He who speaks to the eagle.

Joseph Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, pp. 279-280

The Rainvilles are specifically associated with Michilimackinac under the French, and later under the British with Robert Dickson. Wanmdi Okiya has in effect stated in this letter that his lineage goes back to political and marriage alliances with the British and before them the French. As a multilingual, literate, cross-cultural expert, Wanmdi Okiya would have been an ideal candidate for the Council of Seven Stones on Turtle Mountain.

The wars around Turtle Mountain between First Nations were being negotiated to an end. At some point after 1862, even the Dakota and Metis came to a treaty with each other. Where before during the height of the “Indian Wars” they were inimical to each other, after the flight of the Dakota across the Medicine Line they reached accommodation at both the political and social levels. Several accounts of the period after 1870 describe Dakota joining Metis on the latter’s own buffalo hunts. According to Elias, the two bands led by Wapahaska and Tatankanaje the Younger on their migrations in southeastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba would periodically link up with the Metis. Ironically, the Dakota now looked to the Metis for protection. The only safe way to hunt buffalo below the 49th parallel for a Dakota in the late 1870’s was in the company of Metis. Eventually the US authorities began interdicting the Metis hunts,

initially looking for Dakota to detain, then later denying any of the Northerners the right to hunt south of the Medicine Line.

The improvement in relations between Native groups, and then finally with the Metis, changed the landscape around Turtle Mountain and Devil’s Lake from a dangerous war zone to one of mutual support.

In June of 1871, a few Dakota, including Bookpa from H’damani’s camp, travelled from the Turtle Mountains to trade six oxen [at Fort Ellice.] The men arrived in advance of the main camp, and were followed one or two days later by the women and children. The practice of travelling separately was not done in the earlier years, and suggests that the Dakota had become more comfortable in their environment.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 33

Assurances were also being given by the Dakota leaders to Lieutenant Governor Morris that the Dakota had reached treaties of peace with all of the Aboriginal Nations of Rupert’s Land.

Red River Rebellion

Canada introduced the question of sovereignty in 1869 when footdragging at the negotiations in London led to a legal interregnum. The Hudson’s Bay Company mandate ended at the close of 1869 but Canada refused to pay up until it had some obligations clarified to its satisfaction. Unfortunately the Canadians at the scene ceased to play from the same orchestra sheet as the Canadians in London. The surveyors entered first, followed by the administration and only afterward did the legal authority catch up. The result was a temporary lapse in the Imperial order of things, and within this gap Louis Riel organized his “Provisional Government.”

No friend of Louis Riel, Boulton described the atmosphere of the Council of Assiniboia, an atmosphere historian W. L. Morton wrote was carried over into the first provincial administration under the philosophy of “community government.” With the influx of Ontario immigrants partisan politics swamped and then submerged the community government concept, for a time.

...the Council [of Assiniboia] resumed the consideration of the subject before them, and the expediency of calling out an armed force to meet and protect [Canadian appointed Governor] Mr. Macdougall was suggested. But as it was seen that it would be from the English-

speaking portion of the community that such a force, if forthcoming at all, would be chiefly drawn, the result would evidently be to bring into armed collision sections of the people who, although they had hitherto lived together in comparative harmony, yet differed from each other so widely in point of race, language, and religion, as well as in general habits, that the commencement of actual hostilities would probably involve not only themselves but the surrounding Indians in a protracted and sanguinary struggle. The Council therefore felt that without a regular military force to fall back upon they could hardly be held justified under the circumstances in resorting to measures so full of possible mischief to that whole country.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 68-69

When Major Boulton accompanied Colonel Dennis and the survey parties into Manitoba in 1869 he recorded many details of where the surveying was done, where it was not done, and what the assumptions were of those people engaging in the surveying. Boulton made a lot of mistakes about details and agreements, and had a low opinion of almost everyone. (He saw Riel as a megalomaniac and Selkirk a meddling do-gooder, but convicted violent offender Thomas Scott he saw as a swell fellow.) The assumptions of the time are revealed through his prose.

The Earl of Selkirk, to carry out his plan of settlement, obtained a grant from the Hudson's Bay Company of a tract of land, consisting of a narrow strip on the banks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. His title to this tract was completed, but it aroused hostility on the part of some of the shareholders of the Company at the time it was made, and in 1835 was repurchased from his heirs for 35,000 pounds. The noble earl, however, as chief of the Company, so pressed forward his plans and operations that the country was continually in conflict, greatly to the injury of trade. The North-West Company held their own, and an amicable solution of difficulties was finally arrived at by the amalgamation in 1821 of all interests.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, p 48

Boulton befriended Dr. Schultz, the fanatic leader of the Canadian Party and later a lieutenant governor of

Manitoba. Schultz's myopic view of HBC history is reflected in these passages. The NWC for example did not "hold their own" and by 1821 had to accept amalgamation or bankruptcy. The "heirs" simply sold the colony to their own kin and allies. But what's really interesting is the mistake Boulton makes about the land grant. What he is describing is not the land as granted to Selkirk by the HBC, but the land Selkirk secured under the treaty with Le Sonnant and Peguis *et al.* Moreover, when Boulton described the surveyors pacing off the first lines, they do not proceed to survey the HBC grant, but the *difference* between the Selkirk Treaty and the rest of British North America. In other words, the pattern of their surveying implicitly confirmed their understanding of the Selkirk Treaty. The Red River Colony did not extend to the height of land, it included only a fixed distance of usually not more than five miles either side of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers and as much as ten miles around major settlements, posts and forks. (The distance fixed in the treaty was a little less, but over time practice had extended the edges of the colony outward from the river. For the most part the Natives did not object.)

Boulton might make mistakes about events beyond his ken, such as the dealings between Peguis and Selkirk, or the HBC and the NWC, but he does not deliberately lie. When he observed where the surveyors carry out their work, he was meticulous.

In their eagerness to open up communication with and take possession of the country, the Canadian Government, in advance of the Imperial proclamation transferring the country to Canada, in the early part of 1869 sent a surveying party to locate and construct a highway between Winnipeg and the Lake of the Woods, giving communication by aid of the water-stretches from there to Lake Superior. This was followed by a surveying party, under Colonel Dennis, to run the meridian lines and lay the foundation of the future surveys of the territory, upon the American principle, of square blocks containing six hundred and forty acres each, with a road allowance around the four sides. This proceeding created a feeling of hostility among the population, which had not been consulted, and were not cognizant of any policy propounded, or that might be pursued towards them, in regard to their holdings. The region had been surveyed by the Hudson's Bay Company with the view of giving river frontage to the settlers, and the farms of the people were laid

out in narrow strips of land, two miles deep by a few chains wide, fronting on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. In addition to this the settlers possessed what was termed "a hay privilege," or a similar strip of land running two miles into the prairie. The churches also had grants of land for educational and religious purposes. The titles of these lands were not held in fee simple, but as leasehold from the Hudson's Bay Company. The Canadian Government, therefore, who had become possessed of the sovereignty of the soil, had they so willed, might possibly have set aside this mode of survey and ignored the settlers. This was the feeling among many of the half-breeds; and there were not a few who fostered the idea that the Canadian Government would not deal justly in the matter. There were others of the population who, though bound by ties to England, owed no allegiance to Canada, and did not feel disposed to assist in bringing about a change the effect of which might possibly imperil their interests. A few Canadians, chief among whom was Dr. Schultz, had travelled extensively over the territory, and had mainly been the means of disseminating the information in Canada as to the value of and resources of the country. These Canadians were eagerly looking forward to the consummation of the transfer, and were not in sympathy with the governing power of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose policy had naturally been one of isolation in the interests of their trade. Such was the state of feeling in the 1869, when the surveying parties alluded to arrived on the scene.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 53-54

Boulton gave a brief mention to the equally brief "Republic of Manitobah". Generally regarded as a silly episode in provincial history, the fracas over the short-lived "Republic" also reveals some understandings of current borders in the last days of Rupert's Land.

Dr. Schultz played no unimportant part in the troubles that followed the transfer of the country to Canada, and to indicate the feeling that existed prior to the transfer, an attempt was made by Mr. Thomas Spence to form an independent government at Portage la Prairie, supposed to be outside the limit's of the Company's rule.

Portage la Prairie was *not* outside the limit of the land grant made by the HBC to Lord Selkirk. If there was a common belief sufficient for Spence to have made this attempt, then where did the belief come from? According to Professor Hind who travelled through in 1859, "Manitobah" was then being administered as a separate district from Assiniboia under the overall authority of the HBC governor in residence. Interestingly, the western border of Manitoba the district as recognized in 1859 was at the same point as the westernmost limit of the Selkirk Treaty. Where they disagreed was in extending White authority into the hinterland past the limit of a few miles of "hay privilege" from the river.

When the survey party crossed the Boundary from Pembina some of the party attempted to stake claims on "unclaimed" territory. Boulton's context makes it clear this was understood to be improper even as it occurred. Unfortunately, this sense of impropriety was not translated into restraint.

When the surveying party arrived, the first thing done was to send the horses down to Point du Chene and leave them with those of Mr. Snow, the overseer of the construction of the road before referred to. [Also the man whom Thomas Scott beat up, leading to the latter's assault conviction.] Some of the party were struck with the beauty of the country in that neighbourhood and determined upon taking up land. Then and there they selected a tract and staked it out for future occupation. This gave rise to jealousy on the part of the half-breeds in the neighbourhood, who watched their proceedings; and Riel, as it turned out, followed us down to ascertain what our movements were likely to be. It was not difficult for him to persuade the half-breeds that this act was hostile to their interests, and they assembled to intercept us on our way. Riel, who came with the half-breeds as their spokesman, warned our party that they must not survey the land or take possession of any of it. The words of his argument I have forgotten, but the gist of it was to the effect that the country was theirs, and that we had no right to it and must not survey it.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 57-58

Boulton states with some precision where and why the survey parties began their work. It is significant that

their point of departure corresponds to both the Hudson's Bay Company's own riverlot surveys and to the Selkirk Treaty. The decision as to where the "Prime Meridian" should run — the base line on which all of the land descriptions in the Prairies are calibrated — according to this description was derived from determining first the outer (western) limit of the Selkirk Treaty with respect to Red River.

The party left their horses and returned to Winnipeg, where Colonel Dennis organized a surveying party, with Red River carts and ponies as transport, then returned to Pembina and went west along the boundary line for about ten miles. Under the superintendence of Colonel Dennis, assisted by Milner Hart, now inspector of surveys for the North-West, we there commenced to run the principal meridian line straight north, upon which the future surveys were to be based.

We were now out upon the open prairie, far removed from any society, and had no opportunity of knowing what was going on in the settlements. We ran our meridian line north as far as Shoal Lake, on the east side of Lake Manitoba. We read in the papers, which occasionally came to hand, that the Hon. Mr. Macdougall had been appointed the first Governor of the North-West Territory, and was on his way up. We also learned that Major Webb, another surveyor, had been interfered with by Riel and some half-breeds in his surveys, and, awaiting orders, had abandoned them. Mr. Webb had apparently been infringing upon the outside two mile limit which was claimed as hay privilege, and he thought it prudent to desist.

Colonel Dennis, in charge of the surveying parties, felt annoyed at the interference with his work, but found that he was powerless in the matter. He applied to the authorities, the Council of Assiniboia, and asked them to take action; but they expressed themselves as also powerless, and confined themselves to remonstrances.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 58-59

None of this argues that Native people surrendered their rights and ownership outside of the narrowly defined strip of the Selkirk Treaty. The pre-1870 Manitoba residents seemed to have understood this. It was people like Dr. Schultz who discarded history when it was in-

convenient.

A confusion that enters into the picture here arises between the old Scottish legal system and the emerging British 19th Century industrial one. The Stewarts had granted the original Charter, and a Scottish business cabal led by the Douglas and Colville clans gained control of the HBC and eventually the NWC as well. Under Scottish law "fee-simple" hardly existed and was an English imported idea. Instead land was held under a system of "quit-rents" in which the original owner retained ownership, while allowing an infinite digression of owners-in-practice who officially rented. So long as each tenant fulfilled their terms, they could not be dispossessed of the land. This system was imported from Scotland to Manitoba and formed the original basis of White understanding of the Selkirk Treaty and the Red River Colony's land tenure system.

The Clearances in Scotland and the Famine in Ireland were in part brought on by the change of legal interpretation from Celtic to English. The courts simply stopped recognizing the old system. Scottish chiefs who'd possessed the land under the old system with all of the attendant obligations to their own tenants, now found they could sell the land for a profit and be held unaccountable.

Manitoba followed this pattern. The Selkirk Treaty at no point uses terms like sovereignty or ownership. It states clearly that the agreement was for a "quit-rent" in which the owners, the Native people, rented the land to the tenants, the Red River Colony. Similarly, the same system of land tenure was extended by the HBC to the colonists. Under the Scottish system this all made sense because the HBC couldn't grant ownership on land which it itself did not own. The colonists held a tenancy from the HBC, who in turn held it from the Natives.

The method successfully used in Scotland and Ireland to break up the clans and divest the people of their land, would be used by Canada in Manitoba to do the same thing. The justification by the expatriate Scots and Irish in the Canadian survey seems to be no better than the usual excuse for extending any abuse cycle, "*it was done to me so I can do it to someone else.*"

In ignoring previous understandings and the basis of law as practised by both settlers and Natives, Canada was able to impose an historical fiction. By ignoring the existence and structure of Native government, they could deal with anyone they chose. If the policies of one "high chief" were unacceptable to the Canadian government, they would find an excuse to recognize someone else. Since the chiefs who signed the Selkirk Treaty had not been obliging enough to sell the land outright, other chiefs would be found, or even invented.

Alexander Morris, the newly appointed Lieuten-

ant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in 1872, rationalized the undermining of Native government.

Divisions and local jealousies have taken possession of the Indian mind. The difficulties are the inability of the Indians to select a high or principal chief from amongst themselves and as to the matter and extent of the demands to be made.

It is many years since these people had a general council, and in the interval many head men have died, while others have grown to man's estate, and feel ambitious to take part in the proceedings.

Treaties of Canada with the Indians, Alex. Morris, p. 54.

Father Laviolette described the same process of disintegration and dissolution of the chiefs' authority.

As certain chiefs were recognized by their own nations, others by the military, and others again by the Indian agents, and, as traders had given medals without reason, (and even had appointed chiefs), the authority of all chiefs was weakened."

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Laviolette, p. 127

Merely dividing history into Native and Non-Native, or even Native, Metis and European doesn't do justice to the complex factions that contested for control and influence in Rupert's Land of the 1860's and 1870's. Boulton states that Governor Macdougall was a political opportunist who received his reward for services rendered in the House of Commons. Lieutenant Colonel J. A. N. Provencher was a member of Macdougall's first and only cabinet in 1870. (Provencher would later be notorious to the Dakota for his obstruction, and ultimately would be dismissed as Superintendent for Indian Affairs in the North-West for his corruption.) Boulton related that the motives of other parties were equally sullied and mixed.

The priest, Pere Lestanc, who was left behind in Archbishop Tache's place, was a gentleman apparently with more zeal than discretion in the midst of a difficulty such as the present. He came from France, and was not imbued with the Canadian instincts that most of his clergy [who were from Quebec] possessed. His actions gave rise to the feeling that the Roman Catholic church was in sym-

pathy with the extreme measures enforced by Riel. The attitude of the church seemed more clear, when O'Donohue [a Fenian,] who at that time was being educated for the priesthood at Saint Boniface, and was a teacher there, saw fit to leave those duties to join Riel and to become his right hand man during the rebellion that immediately followed. With some honourable exceptions, the Americans, of whom there were a few, were hostile, and were fain to fan the flame of discontent that advantage might possibly accrue to them or their country. The Canadians, who were not numerous, were enthusiastic over the transfer of the territory of the Dominion. Dr. Schultz, at the time undoubtedly represented the feeling, and was most popular among the Canadians. Colonel Dennis advised the Hon. Mr. Macdougall, the Governor, who had just arrived at the boundary line, of the state of affairs that existed at Fort Garry. The Governor unfortunately over-estimated his own power and under-estimated that of the rebels.

The North-West Rebellion, C. A. Boulton, pp. 60-61

It had all the makings of an international incident and neither France nor the United States could resist the opportunity to make their old adversary uncomfortable. According to military historians for the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Bruce Tascona and Eric Wells, the French government of the Second Empire had a opportunistic involvement in the 1870 Rebellion.

The activities of the Red River Force, with all the drilling and bustle, in turn stimulated the French-speaking community, and many volunteers answered Lepine's call for more guards at the Upper Fort. By now both sides had professional military advisors, the Red River Force with its veterans from the Ontario militia, and supporters of Riel with the appearance of Capt. Norbert Gay, officer in the army of the Republic [sic] of France, who had been sent to Red River to compile reports on development for Napoleon III. Capt. Gay undertook the training of the Metis cavalry, and to the dismay of the majority of the populace it appeared that a collision was inevitable.

Little Black Devils, Bruce Tascona and Eric Wells, p. 3

Certain of their authority (and equally as wrong as they were certain,) the Canadian partisans among the

surveying parties, military and settlers, began to recruit “loyalist” forces with which to defend their vision of the Crown and Country. Riel had played as badly as Macdougall and had managed to alienate the support of the “English” colonists after first getting them to pass a Bill of Rights.

Mr. Macdougall, no doubt, unaware of the altered policy of the Canadian government, and thinking that the Queen’s proclamation, which by pre-arrangement was to issue on the 2nd of December [1869,] would duly arrive, and that it had been only delayed in the mails, and being also impatient at his detention in Pembina, he boldly determined upon a Coup d’Etat. He issued a proclamation of his own, proclaiming himself Governor of the territory, and crossed the boundary line for the purpose of reading it on Canadian soil and giving it full legal effect. At the same time, by virtue of this proclamation, he commissioned Colonel Dennis to enter the territory and raise a force to quell the insurrection.”

The North-West Rebellion, C. A. Boulton, pp. 75-76

Troops were raised and only a blizzard prevented a stand-up shooting battle from occurring at the Forks. Although Boulton constantly raised the spectre of “Indian uprising”, nothing of the kind ever occurred, excepting only that many Metis took the side of the Provisional Government, and many of the Natives took the side of the Canadian government (which seemed to them to be more closely tied to the British Crown.) The Canadian forces eventually disintegrated and were overcome by those of the Provisional Government. The local political leader, Dr. Schultz, would not listen to Colonel Dennis who counselled for a cautious campaign. Dennis had commanded untried militia against the Fenians in 1866 in Ontario and had been routed. He advised building strength slowly and constraining the rebels. Schultz instead led all the available Canadian partisans in a fruitless march down to Portage and Main. They had forgone Native offers of additional troops (which might have decided the matter) and failed by taking on the Metis largely unsupported.

I hastened to return to Colonel Dennis with news of the surrender of Dr. Schultz’s party, but was met by a courier with a letter from him informing me that he had abandoned his project and was leaving the country. He instructed me to go to Portage la Prairie and hold a conference with a tribe there of Sioux,

asking them to remain peaceable and loyal to the Queen, and not to interfere in the difficulties that had arisen. These Sioux were the remnants of the tribe that had committed a massacre in Dakota, in 1863, when twelve hundred whites fell victims to their lust of blood. They found protection under the British Government and had lived peaceably in our midst ever since. I was relieved to find that they had no desire to break the peace, as Chief Little Fox assured me.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 84-85

This kind of passage shows how prone Boulton was to error. He must mean the 1861 Uprising, in which approximately five hundred Whites lost their lives. Many more Dakota were killed or subsequently starved to death. The possibility of an Indian Uprising existed only in the minds of some Canadian and American newcomers to the region.

Morale was poor among both the Canadian and Provisional factions as no one was sure who or what constituted legal government. Matters spiraled out of control with the trial and execution of Thomas Scott for “treason.” Meanwhile American expatriates agitated for annexation and the Fenians stood ready to invade. It had been only a few years since US bountyhunters had kidnapped Little Six and Medicine Bottle from well within British territory, and there was a standing offer from the US Cavalry at Pembina, to intervene whenever the local authorities couldn’t handle the trouble. What was supposed to be a simple transfer from commercial enterprise to colonial government, threatened to become an international incident.

Her Majesty’s Government was not amused. Canadian historians since have tried to put as good a face on subsequent events as possible, but it could be argued that the Wolseley Expedition was as much to put the Canadians in their place as it was to put down the so-called Riel Rebellion.

As Canadians on the spot, we beheld with pleasure the advent of the Lieutenant-Governor, and were disposed to judge severely all who were not inclined to view the coming of the Queen’s representative in the same light. In this we represented the ambition and hopes of Canada, in having so magnificent a domain added to her boundaries, the value of which, being resident in the country, we thoroughly appreciated. We could not enter into the feelings of those who were about to be

subjected to a new order of things, the effect of which no one, at this time, could know. There was, however, a general feeling in the country that a change of government was desirable, otherwise greater opposition might have arisen to its occupation by Canada, which would probably have altered the current of affairs. As things were, the Imperial Government, when it realized that there was opposition to the transfer on the part of the local population, refused to consummate the bargain made, or to send troops to establish the sovereignty of Canada without the people's consent, or rather without a due recognition of their claims.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 71-72

There remained the matter of working out the financial arrangements between the various parties. The Imperial government was also concerned about maintaining neutrality from the colonial infighting.

But before the English Government would allow the troops to start it was required of Canada that the rights and privileges of the existing population should be respected, and the English Government were to be the judges in case an agreement was not arrived at. The force was to consist of British Regulars and Canadian Militia, the whole to be put under the command of Colonel Wolseley [later Field Marshall, Lord Wolseley;] and he at once set about making preparations for the expedition.

In the midst of the preparations I returned to Toronto, and was anxious to have an opportunity of joining the force, but I found that the Dominion Government [read Wolseley] had excluded from its ranks all those who had been in any way mixed up with the troubles during the previous winter, which was to me a great disappointment. The expedition was to be one of peace, for the purpose solely of re-establishing law and order.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, p. 144

Boulton and the English Canadians of his day as well as those after, have made the most of this intervention. Flags flying, the British Empire knows no sunset. Wolseley is a well known name to residents of the provincial capitol if only because of the beautiful avenue named for him.

Shed of its 19th Century spin control, to have

Wolseley sent out to clean up one's problems meant that one had done very poorly indeed. It's worthwhile at this point to remind ourselves of a quickly disappearing fact: the British Privy Council had direct contact with the Dakota leaders, as they did with Aboriginal leaders worldwide. They maintained these relationships principally through a system of "intelligence officers", sometimes called "exploring officers," or otherwise just "spies." The Dakota, Ojibway and Metis had all been invaluable to the British in blocking off American expansion. Canada had placed the entire North-West at risk. It's worthwhile at this point in digressing a little to look at Wolseley's *curriculum vitae*, albeit in 1870 he was barely half way through his extraordinary career. The following is only a brief extract on this unusual general.

Wolseley was a British imperial commander of the late Victorian era — a noted 'trouble-shooter' who arrived just too late to save Gordon at Khartoum. He instituted numerous reforms in the British Army.

Born in County Dublin, Ireland... entered the British Army at the age of nineteen... served in the Second Burmese War (1852-53.) ...fought in the Crimean War, ...present at the capture of Sebastopol...

...joined the staff of the Quartermaster-General... in India at the time of the Mutiny... at the first siege of Lucknow ...in China in 1859-60 as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General ...with the Anglo-French Expedition, ...present at the capture of the Taku Forts on 21 August 1860 and of Peking...

In 1861 he was appointed Assistant Quartermaster-General in Canada, becoming Deputy Quartermaster-General six year later; while in Canada he wrote his "Narrative of the War with China in 1860," reorganized the Canadian Militia, and studied past and current tactics. He also compiled "The Soldier's Pocket-book for Field Service." ...in 1870 he commanded the Red River expedition.

Military Biography, Windrow and Mason, pp. 330-331.

The biography goes on to credit Field Marshall Wolseley's contributions in a half dozen other campaigns around the world's trouble spots, his reform of army administration and supply, and his creation of the Department of Intelligence — formalizing and reorganizing practices that were already in use for a century. He retired in 1901 after rising to command of the entire British Imperial Army.

In every one of Wolseley's campaigns, direct negotiations with local and Aboriginal leaders was a key note. Wolseley emphasized intelligence: getting it, recording it; communicating it; and sending it out. The Canadians may have blundered into a situation, but Wolseley would not. In fact, his campaign showed no loss of life even while its military objectives were obtained. It is unfortunate that subsequently Canadians would remember this event not as an impartial Imperial government come to settle a dispute among its contending children, but as a sanctioned conquest of a frontier by a colonial power.

No sooner had Viscount Wolseley departed, than the Canadian government began undoing his work and nearly handed Manitoba over to the United States. Despite Wolseley's handling of the situation and the appeals of Archbishop Tache, the Canadian government decided to withdraw the general amnesty for the rebellion in Manitoba. The following letter, quoted in Boulton, gave the response of the Canadian cabinet to the Governor-General of Canada with regards to Wolseley's recommendations for clemency.

"...although the right of clemency of the Crown in criminal cases is amongst the high functions entrusted to Your Excellency, the exercise of that power is limited by the royal instructions to the cases of individual criminals after conviction, and does not confer upon you the power of granting a general amnesty or special pardon before trial."

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 148

This sort of post-rebellion sabre-rattling did nothing to calm down the mood of Red River. It only encouraged the Canadian Party to more belligerence, and convinced dissidents that they would find no home within the Canada. One group was waiting on the wings, forgotten by almost everyone concerned, but willing and able to exploit an opportunity — the Fenians.

The Last Fenian Raid

The Fenians, or *Fianna na Fail* to give them their full Gaelic name, were the mid-19th Century equivalent in North America of the IRA — the Irish Republican Army. The ancient *Fianna* of Irish lore were elite warrior-poets, bards, or rangers, who served the Gaelic nation as a whole rather than any one king or *tuath* [tribe or band]. The *Fianna* were supposed to be above petty internal politics, guarding the outer borders of the Gaelic lands against the incursions of alien invaders or monsters. In bitterness, the Fenians of the 19th Century dis-

torted this tradition to justify invasion and terrorism in a land far removed from Ireland.

The Famine in Ireland in the 1840's had sent millions of Irish to North America. The American Civil War had trained and armed hundreds of thousands of them. The close of that war left thousands still armed, dangerous, and unemployed. From the image of the *Fianna na Fail* the discharged Irish-American veterans constructed a new para-military organization dedicated to the theory that by conquering (or at least threatening) Canada they could trade it for Ireland. Canada has had only two political assassinations ever, one by the FLQ and one by the Fenians. A half-dozen "invasions" had been launched between the end of the American Civil War and 1870, mostly of southern Ontario but also Quebec and the Maritimes as well. There had been one pitched battle, in which the British Army and Canadian Militia had routed the Fenian battalions.

The Americans had permitted their territory to be used as a launching ground for invasion and raids because international relations between Britain and the US were strained to breaking at the end of the Civil War. Britain had almost recognized the South, and had certainly provided a haven for Southern sympathizers to organize. Many Southern officers had found refuge in Canada after the war and our historical landmarks are peppered with their names. Rosser Ave. in Brandon is named for Colonel F. A. Rosser, a Confederate colonel turned CPR land agent. Richmond Ave. is named for the conquered capitol of the Confederacy.

In 1870 relations between the British and Americans had improved and the US Government was becoming reluctant to allow the Fenian Raids to continue. By 1870 the incoming US Government was aware that the Fenian Raids instead of destabilizing Canada and drawing the northern colonies into the American orbit, were actually driving Canada into a unified defence against the US. The final chapter of this peculiar Celtic agony was played out in Manitoba. Shut out of Ontario and now watched closely by their former friends in the US Army, the Fenians regarded Rupert's Land as an opportunity.

There are two aspects of the Fenian Raids which are often missed. One factor is that the Fenians arose out of the agony of the Celtic Diaspora, and therefore find common cause with other Celts who'd been similarly displaced. The second factor often overlooked is the Fenian Raids were themselves an instrument of US Government policy — they were enabled by the US, encouraged by the US, launched from the US, and eventually stopped by the US when the policy changed.

Between 1866 and 1870, the Fenians launched attacks in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Most of these were successfully repulsed by combinations of British regular troops and Canadian militia, except for the Battle of Ridgeway in 1866 on the Niagara frontier where General John O'Neill, civil war veteran, staged a successful two-day operation. He then withdrew to Buffalo, having served his goal of undermining Canadian military defences and self-confidence. The same O'Neill turned up in 1871 in Pembina as a supporter of W. B. O'Donoghue.

Manitoba History, Ruth Swan, Sp/Sum 2000, pp. 24-25

It might be argued that since the objective was the liberation of Ireland, *none* of the raids were successful. If the goal was to undermine “Canadian military defences and self-confidence,” the very opposite was precipitated by the raids. This was the principal reason that Ulysses S. Grant abandoned support for the Fenians after he became president in 1869.

During the Manitoba Crisis of 1869-1870 the role of the Winnipeg-based US Consul Malmros in promoting annexation was made too public by congressional debates. Having embarrassed the Federal administration, Malmros resigned to take care of urgent family business back in the States. Whether or not Malmros was a spy, the man who succeeded him certainly was.

James Wickes Taylor was a sometime newspaper editor, sometime state politician, sometime special agent of the Treasury, or the Interior Department, or the Commerce Department or whoever would pay him. He was a paid railway lobbyist, and a promotor of US annexation of the British Northwest. Taylor's specialty was commercial espionage and economic analysis.

The same year the Anson Northrup steamed down to Fort Garry, Taylor petitioned President James Buchanan for an appointment with the United States government. Support for this request came from Senator Henry M. Rice of Minnesota who suggested it was “eminently necessary that the Government should be fully advised upon whatever was transpiring” in the northwest. Taylor worked as a Special Agent of the Treasury Department until 1869 spending much of his time investigating the question of trade and transportation between Canada and the United States. Specifically, for a few years, he directed his efforts toward

the retention and extension of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. On the outbreak of the disturbances at Red River in 1869 he sensed an opportunity to bring about the annexation of the North West Territories. He was appointed a secret agent of the State Department to report on Red River affairs and was in Ottawa while the delegates of Louis Riel's Provisional Government were negotiating with the Canadian government. In his reports to Washington he repeated optimistically time after time that the majority of the people and the Hudson's Bay Company officials favoured annexation to the United States. He urged that an American railway line be built from Minnesota into the Red River Settlement to further its commercial attachment to St. Paul. He never lost hope in this or in the possibility of political union and when he was appointed American Consul in Winnipeg — after Manitoba's entry into Confederation — he accepted the appointment eagerly for, as he said, it was in Winnipeg he could best pursue the object of annexation.

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, p. xxviii.

Taylor was gathering intelligence on the Northwest Territories as early as 1859 and as early as 1861 was advocating that invasion was feasible if combined with pioneers, railways and local disaffection. In 1861 the American Civil War was in full storm and the British *Trent* had been stopped in November on the high seas by the US Navy. The American sailors arrested two Confederate diplomats on board. Tensions were high and war talk between the Britain and the United States reached a peak not seen since the Oregon Question. In a report dated December 17, 1861, Taylor reported to US Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase on the prospects of an advance northward on the prairies. The “undefended border” was an inviting target.

As I have previously assured the department, the Americanization of this important section of British America is rapidly progressing. Unless the British Parliament acts promptly — for instance, during the session soon to transpire — I shall confidently expect a popular movement looking to independence or annexation to the United States.

In case of a collision with England, Minnesota is competent to “hold, occupy, and possess” the valley of Red River to Lake Winnipeg. There are no British troops at Fort

Garry...

I hasten, sir, to lay before you these facts in regard to the Red River settlement, as confirming my conviction that no portion of the British territory on this continent is so assailable, so certain of occupation by American troops in case of war with England, as Fort Garry and the immense district thence extending along the valley of the Saskatchewan to the Rocky Mountains. If our struggle is to be, in the fullest sense, a struggle for national existence, against foreign foes as well as domestic traitors, Minnesota, however remote from the scene of the southern insurrection, will claim the distinction of a winter campaign for the conquest of central British America. I append a rough diagram exhibiting that portion of British territory... which 1,000 hardy Minnesotians, aided by the French, American, and half-breed population, could seize before the 4th of March.

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, pp. 21-22

The following year on June 25, 1862 Taylor addressed a formal presentation to D'Arcy McGee, at the time chairman of the legislative Committee on Immigration. (McGee was the Federal cabinet minister and Irish ex-revolutionary who was assassinated by the Fenians in 1868.) In this report to the legislature of the United Canadas, Taylor tempered his rhetoric to publicly renounce invasion in favour of free trade.

We exclude altogether the idea or term of Annexation — we have learned a better word "Reciprocity": and hope with the inauguration of an English Colony beyond us to better the instruction of the Eastern States and Provinces, upon the subject of frontier intercourse. As I have had occasion to remark elsewhere "Our whole commercial future (here in Minnesota) has been projected in concert with the victories of peace, even more renowned than War, of which we still hope to witness the achievement in Northwest America irrespective of the imaginary line of an international frontier."

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, p. 28

Notwithstanding his public protests to McGee, in 1863 Taylor reported cheerfully to his superiors in Washington that "*the dissatisfaction of the people of Selkirk Settlement with the Hudson's Bay Company, and*

the authorities appointed by the Company, has almost reached the point of violent resistance." For Taylor the local revolution was always just around the corner. Even if Taylor were completely delusional on this point, he and others like him must have caused concern for Canadian and British Imperial authorities. In 1866 a bill had been introduced in the US Congress, though it died in committee, to entice British colonies into union with the United States instead of Confederation.

Taylor's reports are written from a variety of diplomatic covers. Usually his contact in Washington was the Secretary of the Treasury, sometimes State, and rarely the President directly. On May 17, 1867 with Confederation imminent Taylor reported to US Secretary of State W. H. Seward on the modifications to plans in the Northwest which were now required. The political desirability of open invasion was receding quickly as the memory of the Civil War also faded. However, the prize of a continental empire was still to be sought after. (The **bold** phrase below was rendered as *italics* in the original document.)

1. The population of Red River or Selkirk, north of Minnesota, is about 10,000, of which 5,000 are Canadian French, 2,000 English, 2,000 Scotch and 1,000 Americans. Great dissatisfaction exists with the domination of the Hudson's Bay Company and neglect by England — but the organization of a Province and the extension over it of the Canadian Confederation might check this dissatisfaction and restrain an annexation movement. But these measures must come quickly, and be very liberal in their terms, to have such an effect. The situation, just now is critical: and may be materially influenced by the action of the State Department.

*2. But the object of this note is to invite your attention to the region east of British Columbia and north of Montana. In the course of my investigations, as Mining Comr. [Commissioner] of Treasury Department, I learned last February that important discoveries of gold and silver had been made in November 1866 on the headwaters of the South Saskatchewan river: and I have just been informed that 500 Americans, mostly from the adjacent territory of Montana, have wintered in their vicinity. It is probable that before July there may be a migration of 5,000 Americans to the Saskatchewan country, not unlike the rush from California to Frazer River in 1859. If so, **that number of Americans will not be long without***

a government. *What shall it be — acquiescence in the Canadian Confederation, or an organization independent not only of the Hudson's Bay Company, but of England? It has occurred to me that the leaders of this emigration should receive a suggestion, that an open adhesion to the United States might not be expedient at this time.*

Something like the self-government of Oregon in 1839 or Austin's dismemberment of Texas from Mexico, would probably be the impulse of the settlers.

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, pp. 48-49

That same year, on November 23, he reported hopefully that “*the voluntary annexation of British America is nearer than we have supposed.*” Casting around for suitable disaffected sections of the British North American population, Taylor observed that “*the French of Lower Canada are not reconciled to English domination; the Irish population is everywhere seditious...*”

In 1869 Taylor predicted, if in fact he didn't help instigate, the Metis-led resistance to the Ottawa government. He also predicted incorrectly a general Indian War on the soon-to-be Canadian prairies. It is an open question whether Taylor was actually trying to encourage an Indian War, or whether he simply believed that it was an inevitable social tragedy and couldn't conceive of peaceful relations between Native peoples and Whites.

Taylor's attitude about the Indians generally, and the Sioux in particular, is important because it reveals how the United States officials viewed events in Manitoba. To the US, the old HBC Northwest was still available for the taking in 1869. The Metis might provide a useful delay or limitation to Canada, however the Indians could delay or limit the Americans. Whether it was objective fact or not, in the minds of the Americans, Rupert's Land *was* defended by First Nations. That belief affected American decisions much more than did the presence of Canadian Militia. This may not have been understood by the Canadians, but it *must* have been understood by the British military.

Taylor, St. Paul, to Alexander Ramsey, June 14, 1869

Since your departure I have information of the form of the Provisional Government, which Canada proposes for the Selkirk and Saskatchewan Districts. The Canadian Ministry have introduced a bill at Ottawa, which provides for the appointment by the Governor

General, of a Lieutenant Governor and a Council of not more than fifteen or less than seven: who will constitute the Executive and Legislature. The Lieutenant Governor is to have the exclusive appointment of magistrates. A complete proconsulship, as you perceive. It is almost a transcript of the impossible administration of the Hudson's Bay Company: and must be obnoxious to the people of Selkirk.

I have further information of jealousies and collisions with the Indians resulting from the scarcity of buffalo, which may involve the Canadian government in that most unwelcome of complications — an Indian war.

I am satisfied that Canada with a little patience and address, can be brought to concurrence with your proposition of July, 1868, which certainly offers the only practicable basis for the renewal of negotiations with England.

I should be gratified to be of any service to the Department of State, in bringing forward this Northwest question as an element in a future adjustment.

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, pp. 78-79

The “proposition of July, 1868” referred to was an offer by the United States government to purchase Rupert's Land from Britain for six million dollars. In 1870, Taylor went so far as to accuse “Col. Dennis or his agents” in agitating and enlisting the Dakota along with other Natives in a letter to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish. These documents were not at the time public, nor for the foreseeable future going to be public. It is known on the Canadian side that Dennis declined a Dakota offer of troops. If Taylor's internal report to his superior is correct, then the British-now-Canadian military were still maintaining a military liaison with the Dakota as late as 1870 — three years after confederation, and fifty-two years after the alliance supposedly ended.

Thereupon, Col. Dennis proceeded to enlist two hundred Swampy Indians, many of whom are partially civilized, living on farms near Lake Winnipeg, and members of an Indian mission church. Lower Stone Fort, twenty miles from Fort Garry, was occupied by this Indian contingent: and simultaneously the Cree Indians, whose villages are near Portage La Prairie sixty [miles west of Fort] Garry, and a band of Sioux Indians, refugees from

the Minnesota Indian massacre of 1862, who were in the vicinity of the Mouse river near the international boundary, manifested a hostile disposition. It is vehemently charged that these savages were instigated by Col. Dennis or his agents; and Col. Dennis had made a merit of circumstance, that he dissuaded the Sioux Indians from continuing their march upon the settlements, when the overthrow of the Canadian cause was ascertained to be complete.

James W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, p. 129

Taylor, in the parlance of espionage, was the “intelligence officer”, the professional who was answerable through a chain of command, albeit a hidden one, to the top of the administration. To do his job he worked in the same way that spies do today through “agents” both witting and unwitting. Witting agents were those who knew they worked in some way for the American government. Unwitting were those who believed they worked with Taylor in some common cause independent of American interests, but often in alliance with them. Some agents were paid, some were merely manipulated.

In O’Donoghue, the sole Fenian member of Riel’s cabinet, Taylor found someone who for a time seemed to be the perfect witting agent. Taylor recruited O’Donoghue’s cooperation in 1869 by playing on the common cause of anti-British sentiment, and the fact that the US Government had until that point been supporting the Fenian Raids. It is almost certain that Taylor laundered money to the Provisional Government through O’Donoghue. The consul could arrange for US dollars to go to US citizens in North Dakota and Minnesota, who were in turn part of the Fenian network. Made available to O’Donoghue, the money could then be used to buy influence with Riel. The Metis leader would be grateful for Fenian support without ever knowing the role of the American Government.

Ruth Swan concluded in her *Manitoba History* article on the subject that O’Donoghue’s Raid was not properly authorized by the Fenian Brotherhood, even though several prominent Fenians led the Raid. The Fenians had struck at the Eastern Townships of Quebec in May of 1870. Against this backdrop of international confusion, Taylor found it easy to precipitate one more terrorist raid. The Fenian leadership, as Swan noted, may have been reluctant to waste more limited resources on a losing cause, but O’Donoghue had the financing thanks to Taylor, and the inside support thanks to his own role within the Manitoba Provisional Government.

The following is a portion of a report to Washing-

ton written January 13, 1870 by Taylor.

For the 10 days past an agitation, secretly urged on by the Hudson’s Bay Co. has been commenced for the purpose of reconstructing the Provisional Government with a view of giving that Company the management of affairs here. Partially with that object in view the Hudson’s Bay Co. has attempted to hire a large number of French Halfbreeds to transport their boats, canoes and stores to York Factory and other posts. The French Halfbreeds however have refused this tempting offer on the ground that the country demanded their services. This action on the part of the halfbreeds is the more to be admired as all of them have served as soldiers for a long time, a portion since middle of October, practically without any remuneration, and as their families are beginning to suffer in consequence. It is to be feared however that on account of their poverty the French Halfbreeds will not be able to hold out much longer unless they obtain pecuniary aid from abroad. The sum of about \$25,000 — promptly sent would materially aid and I think secure the success of the independence movement.

J. W. Taylor Correspondence 1859-1870, pp. 107-108

Taylor’s idea was that the Fenians could be used to cover American reinforcement of the Manitoba Provisional Government. He thought this should be followed up by flooding the frontier with colonists, perhaps by offering cheap loans or other incentives for claiming Northwest Territories homesteads. Taylor envisioned Fenian reinforcements for the Provisional Government, not a Fenian Raid as such. The problem was one of timing and the intrusion of other unplanned-for-events. When the Provisional Government shot Thomas Scott, it made it politically more difficult for the American Government to openly support Riel. The other unplanned-for-event was the election of Ulysses S. Grant as president in November of 1868. Unlike his predecessor, Grant did not feel that the Fenians were a useful adjunct to US foreign relations. In April of 1868, the Fenians had shocked American sensibilities (not to mention Canadian) when they assassinated Irish-Canadian cabinet minister Thomas D’Arcy McGee in Ottawa. Taylor could not get approval for the amount of support he wanted by a lame duck administration entering its final months, and with the new Grant administration the project was officially cancelled.. For the Metis, the Fenian support had been

fatally delayed from 1869 through 1870 and into 1871.

Consequently, the Fenians who had gathered under O'Donoghue found themselves in a now-or-never situation. The US funds had dried up, the American Army previously supportive was now watching them closely, and the cause of the Provisional Government was fading. In a sense, the Last Fenian Raid was launched when it was because it had already failed. It retained a grand Celtic style in that regard.

Taylor like any good spymaster realized that O'Donoghue and company had to be expended and provided Captain Wheaton of the US Army with evidence that the Fenians had been funnelling money to the Metis. He ought to know since he was a source of the funds. Historian Ruth Swan in her *Manitoba History* article cites two eye-witness reports of incidents pertaining to the Last Fenian Raid: Captain Wheaton's report and that of George Webster, a courier for Lieutenant-Governor Adams Archibald. Wheaton described the armed crossing of the border.

They came from the direction of Pembina and were led by O'Donoghue, on horseback: O'Neill, Curley and Donnelly were acting as officers or leaders. O'Neill wearing a sword. Upon arrival at the Dominion Customs House, they demanded its surrender in the name of the Provisional Government of Rupert's Land, entered it and placed a sentinel on the road in front of the house. From thence, they marched to the HBC Trading Post, demanded its surrender in the name of the Provisional Government, etc., and occupied it, and began handling the stores of the Company with a view to their removal.

Captain Lloyd Wheaton, Report to Assistant Adjutant-General, #3248, October 5, 1871.

The courier George Webster, taken prisoner by the Fenians, described an escape which warned the U.S. Army nearby.

About nine o'clock, the Fenians had at least twenty prisoners as they stopped all those who were not connected with them. One of the prisoners was an American citizen and as he demanded his liberation on that ground, O'Donoghue was afraid to detain him... Mr. Douglas and I had previously instructed him what to do and as soon as he got out of rifle shot of the Fenians, he ran all the way to the U.S. military post and informed Captain

Wheaton of the circumstances.

Last Invasion of Canada, Hereward Senior, p. 183.

According to the chronology pieced together by Swan, the Fenians for whatever reason failed to move from the last position they'd taken in the HBC trading post. That evening they were still waiting when Captain Wheaton appeared with a platoon of troops and two wagons in which to transport prisoners. According to Swan, the American soldiers captured three Fenian officers, ten other ranks, 94 muskets, 11 sabres and 12,000 rounds of ammunition. O'Donoghue was arrested by the Metis and turned over to the American authorities. Captain Wheaton observed that a number of Irish descent residents of Pembina had assisted with the raid. However, he was confident that with the ringleaders arrested there would be no further problems of this nature.

In the autumn of 1870 [actually 1871,] the Fenians took advantage of the excited state of the country to make a raid, at the instigation of O'Donoghue and others, who were intriguing against its peace. "General" O'Neil managed to find his way to the borders with an armed force, invaded the territory, and took possession of the Hudson's Bay post at Pembina. O'Neil, however, was promptly followed by the American troops and compelled to return. Finding that the American authorities were firm in their desire to preserve international amity, he abandoned the enterprise. In the meantime the settlement was thrown into great excitement and alarm, and Governor Archibald issued a proclamation asking for volunteers to serve against the Fenians. Shortly after the issue of this proclamation he received a letter from Riel, Lepine and Perenteau, telling him that they had organized several companies of half-breeds for service against the Fenians, and containing assurances of loyalty. The Governor went over to St. Boniface to inspect these volunteers, and publicly thanked them for their services, shaking hands with them as they marched by, Riel and Lepine being present. In this communication to Sir John Macdonald on the subject the Governor says in reference to this act:

"If the Dominion has at this moment a province to defend and not one to conquer, they owe it to the policy of forbearance. If I had driven the French half-breeds into the hands of the enemy, O'Donoghue would have been

joined by all the population between the Assiniboine and the frontier; Fort Garry would have passed into the hands of an armed mob, and the English settlers to the north of the Assiniboine would have suffered horrors which makes me shudder to contemplate.”

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 149-150

A battalion of infantry, a battery of guns and a squadron of mounted infantry were called out, marched from Winnipeg to Pembina where they learned of the raid and its arrest by the US Army from the HBC post. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity to fly the flag, and have the retaking of the Customs House appear as an illustration in the newspapers — albeit it had already been retaken by the Americans and returned to the HBC before the Canadian Militia had departed Winnipeg.

On Turtle Mountain the entire Canadian component of the International Boundary Commission found itself suddenly activated. Lindsay Russell, then Surveyor-General of Canada and Col. Dennis immediate superior wrote...

The Government Proclamation calling all to enrol themselves has necessarily arrested our surveys as many of the men were old volunteers. While I write Mr. Doupe has come in to say that the offer of all services is accepted and that this afternoon the news of the Fenian advance across the line as led to an immediate call to arms for the whole of us.

Visions of an Ordered Land, James G. MacGregor, p. 19

Wheaton was probably disappointed with the result of the trial at which he was prosecutor. The American judge dismissed the case for want of jurisdiction, it apparently not being illegal to stage an armed invasion of a neighbouring country from American soil. The question of the alleged support for the Provisional Government, which had dissolved the previous year, was allowed to muddy the issue further. Under pressure from the American government, the Fenian leaders were allowed to quietly be on their way. There were no further Fenian Raids against Canadian soil.

O’Neal gave an interview after his release in which he denied any involvement of the Fenians in the raid, although admitting that he personally had been on a raid in aid of “French half-breeds” dissatisfied with the British government.

One of the odd characters with a possible association to British military intelligence made his appearance here as well. J. F. Tennant, mentioned in despatch

by Wolseley during the ascent from Ontario, happened to be engaged in telegraph line repair at the very place and time that the Last Fenian Raid crossed the international border. Tennant telegraphed the warning to Winnipeg. According to his biography, these was simply a lucky thing. The next time we’ll meet Tennant, he’s a “government guide” for homesteaders into the Turtle Mountain area — joining the Lands Branch about the same time as Gilbert McMicken.

Ruth Swan states that with the Last Fenian Raid, the Canadian government finally took the issues of the Northwest seriously enough to appoint their own intelligence officer to the region. It is unlikely that the old British military intelligence system shared much with the Canadian politicians.

The Canadian Government took the issue so seriously, however, that it appointed Gilbert McMicken, head of Canada’s “secret police” and an anti-Fenian spy, as Commissioner of Lands. Prime Minister Macdonald sent McMicken at the end of September 1871 to Manitoba to assess the Fenian threat. He took the train to Morris, Minnesota, the railway terminal at that time, and then continued by wagon. He gathered intelligence as he went and one of his sources was Bishop A. A. Tache who was traveling east.

...McMicken hired an express wagon to carry him day and night so that he could overtake the Fenian contingent and reach Fort Garry ahead of them. Although there were rumours of 1500 men camped along the boundary between Pembina and St. Joseph, a [US] sergeant at Fort Abercrombie reported only about forty with O’Donoghue. McMicken’s wagon passed the Fenians about midnight, and noted “three were ahead of the wagons as an advance guard, and five were behind them.” A new driver being a Fenian, he observed that the organizers had made a mistake by not waiting until November as originally planned when the rivers and lakes could not be passed over; now the “Canucks” could send in their soldiers, a prophetic observation. “Still” he said, “you’ll see fun anyhow.”

Manitoba History, Ruth Swan, Sp/Sum 2000 pp. 26-27

Years later in 1888, McMicken gave a public lecture on his hair-raising ride from DuLuth to Winnipeg. It’s an interesting read and expands significantly on Mc-

Micken's role, or at least it does so from McMicken's point of view. And although it is full of excitement, including encounters with O'Donoghue and Riel, one is struck by the fact that for an intelligence officer McMicken never seems to assess very well what is going on around him. Even though he comments on the bankruptcy of the Fenians prior to the Last Raid, he isn't able to discover that someone else provided the financing. He employs himself and seven others directly, spends lavishly to hire the express wagons, and manages to arrive at the scene after everything is over. He even manages to get the dates of information and action wrong with respect to Metis forces, surely his most important task. McMicken minimized the Metis contribution to the defence of the colony by omitting to mention the Metis arrest of Fenians and by reporting the date of Metis mobilization later by one week than was actually the case. (The newspapers had already reported on these events when McMicken states that they were as yet a few days to a week in the future.) He sheds some light on the organization of the Fenians, but not much. When McMicken finally arrived the Fenians had already been arrested by the US Army, the Metis were scouring the plains for loose Fenians, and the Militia had already been called out. McMicken is a bellweather however, in that he shows how information failed to be transferred from those previously in the region to the new government coming in. He knew a lot about the Fenian activities in Ontario and Quebec, but he discovered nothing beyond common public knowledge of the Fenians in Manitoba.

An interesting inclusion in McMicken's own description of events is a passenger list for the stage he hired. He was anxious not to share transportation and so booked a stage full of his own operatives and himself. His idea was to move this group of agents suddenly from Ontario to the Northwest where they'd disperse and take up their duties. A few of the list are long-term professionals, some recent recruits, and some are part-timers seconded from other useful professions.

Here I fell in with my companions for the trip booked, like myself, from St. Paul to Fort Garry in their totality. Mr. Wylie, a gentleman, representing the firm of James Turner & Co., of Hamilton, and who in that capacity had been over the route several times previously, with him was Mr. James Turner, jr., son of the senior of the firm a fine young lad; in years somewhat short of his majority. Mr. Richard Fuller, also from Hamilton, with whom and myself an acquaintanceship had sprung up some 16 or 17 years before. Besides these,

there were Colin Strang, a younger brother of Robert and Andrew Strang, well known citizens of Fort Garry then as they are now of Winnipeg; and a Mr. Klotz from Berlin, County of Waterloo, Ontario. These with myself, my son and [Frank] Ritchie, made a party of eight. After supper, at about 9 o'clock, the arrival of the stage vehicle from Fort Garry was announced and with it the Rev. Bishop Tache.

The Abortive Fenian Raid, Gilbert McMicken, p. 2

By travelling on the main communication route McMicken kept running into, running ahead of, or running behind other key players in the events of that moment. He took the opportunity of meeting Bishop Tache to both interrogate and lobby the cleric. When he met O'Donoghue at another stage stop, he hid to avoid premature discovery. The inclusion of the name "Mr. Klotz from Berlin" is particularly interesting to the Turtle Mountain story because this was Chief Surveyor Otto Klotz of the Dominion Land Survey; a person who also reported to the Surveyor-General Col. Dennis. Klotz was assigned by Dennis to tie in the critical range lines to the International Boundary and was responsible for naming most of the lakes through Turtle Mountain. (Lakes Max and Oskar are named for his first and second-born sons respectively.) The appearance of Klotz in this list raises the possibility of links between the Boundary Commission, George Hill, Turtle Mountain, the Dominion Land Survey, Col. Dennis and Gilbert McMicken — with all of whom he had contact. It is particularly indicative that Klotz did not enter the region with either Col. Dennis' first survey, or with the International Boundary Commission, but instead entered Manitoba with the head of Canada's secret police. It is doubtful that he was just hitching a ride.

There is also of necessity, some kind of relationship implied between McMicken and Dennis. McMicken as head of secret police reported directly to Sir John A. Macdonald. However, in his cover appointment with the Dominion Lands Branch he reported to Col. Dennis in the latter's capacity as Surveyor-General. Finally, the usual practice within the armies of the day; including the British, Canadians and Americans; was that military intelligence was handled by the topographic engineers. In Canada in 1870 the top ranking officer of the topographic engineers was Colonel Dennis.

Of the members of the original Manitoba Provisional Government, Lepine was arrested, tried and convicted for the murder of Thomas Scott; Riel and Dumont fled the country, though not before Riel managed to sign the register in the House of Commons in Ottawa as the

duly elected Member of Parliament for Rupert's Land. The British Government decided to commute Lepine's sentence to two years imprisonment and Riel's *in absentia* became a five-year exile.

Of the Metis who cooperated with the Last Fenian Raid, one was acquitted and one convicted and then the sentence commuted. The third, Andre Jerome St. Matte was inexplicably remanded in custody and then tortured for information. Swan states that this is inexplicable as the only information Jerome St. Matte could give was that O'Donoghue led the raid — and that was already attested by other eye-witnesses. It may not have been just spite, which is not to excuse torture. The motivation may have been to confirm the funding sources for the Fenians. Since there was in fact American money behind the Last Fenian Raid, something which did not emerge in the trials, there would have been motivation for McMicken to want to extract more information.

If Andre Jerome was being tortured in the Stone Fort [Lower Fort Garry,] who were the Canadian officials who would have authorized such tactics by his jailers? Archibald's reference of 25 November 1871 showed at least that he was aware that one Metis had been remanded and he was obviously keeping close tabs on the situation as the Lieutenant-Governor was anxious to punish those involved in the raid. A month earlier, he had lobbied the Prime Minister to pursue Fenian convictions in Saint Paul, Minnesota: "Would it not be well for you to telegraph to someone at Saint Paul to ask Davis, the district attorney, to spare no efforts to convince parties?" He was very disappointed that no Fenians were convicted and wanted as many convictions as he could get, whether Metis or Fenian, to deter future armed resistance. However, considering Archibald's even-handed approach to political unrest in Red River from 1870-72, it is doubtful he would have agreed to torturing prisoners for confessions if he had known about it.

Two Canadians who had a better knowledge of the Fenian threat were the Prime Minister and his chief spy, Gilbert McMicken, whom he had sent to Manitoba as head of the Dominion Land Office after serving as head of a frontier police force to protect the United Canadas before Confederation. McMicken's job required him to develop a spy network against the Fenians, which historian D. N.

Sprague has pointed out did not give him an experience in administering a land office. Spying on political resistance movements such as the Fenians was common in both Britain and Canada.

Manitoba History, Ruth Swan, Sp/Sum 2000 p. 30

Consul Taylor skilfully threw everyone off the scent by appearing to cooperate with Captain Wheaton's arrest and prosecution of the Fenians, and then by arranging to have the defendants released. In addition to the disgrace of the Fenians, American involvement in supporting the *Nor'Wester* newspaper was also exposed at this time and perhaps the Canadian officials of the day satisfied themselves with blunting the current threat. They had narrowly averted the loss of the Northwest, and though the Canadians had also caused the crisis, they congratulated themselves on its resolution.

Ironically, while Taylor appears to have fooled Gilbert McMicken, he did not fool rival railroad barons. In Rev. George M. Grant's account *Ocean to Ocean*, Sanford Fleming complained that treaty negotiation difficulties along the border, and particularly at Pembina, were "*instigated by parties interested in the Northern Pacific Railway.*" Fleming certainly knew who Taylor was because Grant states that Fleming met with him in Winnipeg, as well as separately with the Lieutenant Governor [Morris], the Land Commissioner [McMicken], Dr. Schulz [leader of the Canadian Party], and the Officer of the Battalion [Col. Osborne Smith.] He also mentioned the prompt action of the Militia in suppressing the recent Fenian Raid.

The Rebellion, and its aftershock the last Fenian Raid, could have been a lot more serious. It should not be ignored that the Native communities, for the most part, stayed out of the conflict. The lessons of the Fenian Raid were learned by the Canadian Army and applied.

The population being scattered far and wide over the country, the Government found it necessary to organize a Mounted Police force, to institute legal machinery in the scattered districts, and to throw over the whole country its protecting arm. The force was temporarily organized by Col. Osborne Smith [we know him today without the 'Smith',] then Deputy Adjutant-General. It was afterwards commanded by Col. French, now commandant of the militia of one of the Australian colonies. Subsequently it was commanded by Col. McLeod, now Stipendiary Magistrate of the North-West, and by Col. Irvine, who is its

present head [1889].

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, p 155

And so the Mounted Police were a direct outgrowth from Militia District #10, which itself was an outgrowth of the British Army-Canadian Militia system. The inclusion of so many Army officers among the early Mounted Police leadership meant that the Mounties were frequently better informed about Native-White relations than were the agents of the Indian Affairs department.

Refugees and the Council

While the events of the Minnesota resistance of 1851-1863 wound their way to a sad conclusion, Hadamie continued to lead his people in a peaceable occupation of their part of Turtle Mountain. There are no records of “troubles” between this band and their non-Native neighbours. They were accused once of running off a homesteader, but were exonerated when it was discovered that a clerical error in a land description number (township 1 versus township 10) had got them confused with another group of Sioux sixty miles away.

Some refugee Sioux headed for Saskatchewan, some came through Turtle Mountain, and some travelled along the Red to take temporary refuge around High Bluff, north of Portage. There are no reports of violence by Sioux against White or *vice versa* in the Turtle Mountain district.

Homesteader accounts in the Turtle Mountain region frequently report Dakotas hunting, trapping, working for food, begging, and sometimes just dropping in unannounced to share food with complete strangers. But they don't contain accounts of violence, much less killing. An account by C. C. Musgrove in *Beckoning Hills: 1956* recalled personal encounters between Whites and Natives. It also includes the unusual elements of a “Cree chief” and a Last Battle story. An echo of what appears to be the same Last Battle story was told to the author by William Dumas in Nelson House. The parenthetical note () was interpolated by the editor, Bill Moncur.

The Indians (probably Dakotas) of Boissevain pioneer days came mostly from St. John, N.D., to camp west of Boissevain. They would hold pow-wows there, dry their meat on poles, annoy the white women by looking in and walking into their homes unannounced. Upon receiving gifts of flour and sugar they were content to leave. After a stay of two weeks, they would disappear until the following summer. I recall an old Indian tell me of a big

fight in the Musgrove ravine where the Northern Indians ambushed the Dakotas. I found one native grave ringed round with stones and containing a skull and trinkets.

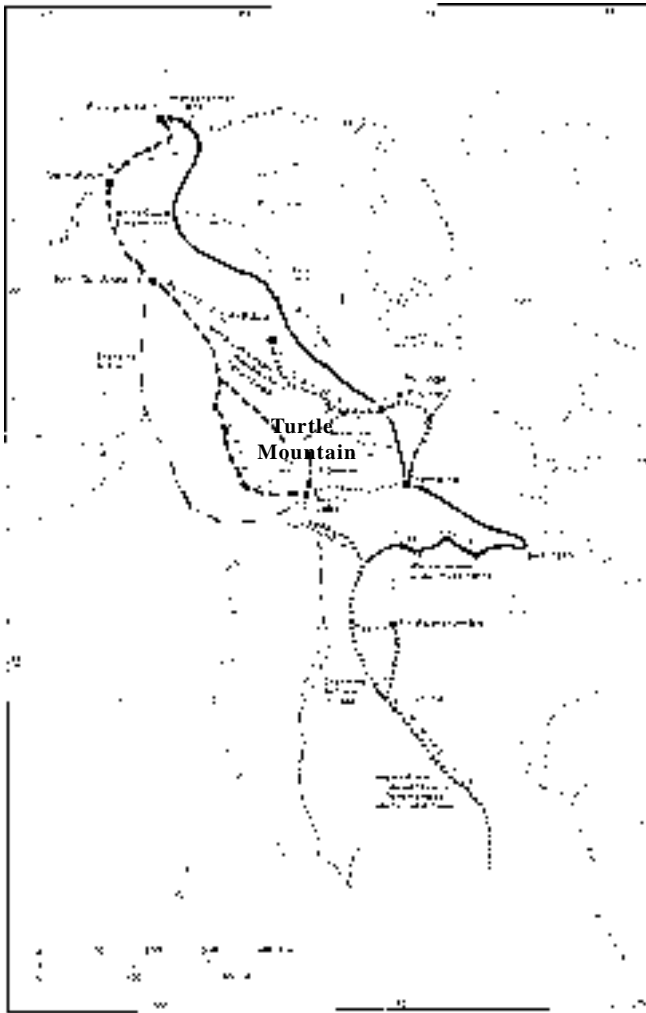
C.C. Musgrove in Beckoning Hills: 1956, p. 189

On the north side of Turtle Mountain there doesn't seem to have been much apprehension of violence between Whites and Natives. (Musgrove Ravine is another name for Cherry Creek, the ravine adjacent to the modern town of Boissevain.) Similar stories of encounters over food come from local histories of Wakopa, Killarney, Deloraine, Melita or any of the Turtle Mountain communities on the Canadian side. One house is known today on the Canadian side that has an escape tunnel, and that is on the Metigoshe Trail very close to the border.

In contrast, the groups which camped north of Portage la Prairie were pursued and attacked by American “Chippewa” and half-breed Ojibway bountyhunters. The Dakota, in consequence, were forced to dig fortified trenches around their camp, which itself had been relocated to an island. Some White residents of Portage protested to Mounted Police officials that the Sioux were being slaughtered by American raiders. Others complained of the intrusion of “American Indians.”

The Tanner family histories place several members of their family at the skirmish battles around Portage in 1869-1872. Several of them were members of the “Canadian Party” that advanced from Portage to Red River against Louis Riel in 1870. Their ancestor “the Falcon” was already a prominent enemy of the Sioux, and in keeping with tradition, they would be too.

According to Bob Mummery's *Tanner Crossing*, a community history of Minnedosa, he and Dr. Lorenz Neufeld were of the opinion that John Tanner lost an arm in fighting on Flee Island. His father James Tanner would also have taken part, as did Chief Pichieto of the Portage Ojibway (eldest son of the Falcon.) That this was sanctioned somehow by the US is suggested in several places. Local histories and even the Manitoba Historic Resources Branch, have said the bountyhunters came from the US seeking scalps. Mummery obtained copies of disability applications made by John Tanner to the US Army. Tanner was required to claim his various ailments and prove they were in the service of the US Army. A number of earlier injuries were allowed and pensioned, but the loss of the arm was disallowed. Tanner argued over this and claimed it was an injury “while doing his duty” but accepted the \$100 a month pension he got for the earlier injuries. Since John Tanner of the one-arm had served as a Union Army scout during the Civil War and Indian Wars, it would not be surprising if



Map 5. Minnesota-Canada
Principal migratory routes of the Dakota after 1861 from Minnesota to the Canadian Prairies. Turtle Mountain is approximately at the centre of the map. Map from "The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest," by Doug Elias.

he'd been contacted by the US Army and/or bounty-hunters about the Sioux at Portage (where the Tanners were then living.)

Why do bounty hunters, who are after scalps, attack the heavily fortified group at Portage, but do not attack the relatively defenceless group on Turtle Mountain? It is possible that to the "half-breeds" in question, the mountain was a sacred precinct and off-limits, while the Dakota camped north of Portage were fair game. The Tanners would certainly have been aware of that and as Ojibway would have been influenced by the Council on Turtle Mountain. Alternatively, since the bountyhunters were employed by the US Army, the Americans may have decided to pay more respect to the border which was then being surveyed by an International Joint Commission.

Circumstantial evidence for the role of Hadam-

anie as a peacemaker is also contained in Father Lavolette's book. Lavolette recounted the rising tensions in the Red River colony as each group of Sioux refugees arrived in the province. His mention of Hadamanie here is enigmatic.

"When Chief H'damani from Maza-sha's village on the Minnesota River had crossed the Canadian border and led his people to the Turtle Mountain area in late December [1862], tension in the Red River Colony eased."

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Lavolette, p. 148

Lavolette did not explain why Hadamanie's arrival should *reduce* tension.

Father Lavolette afforded another example of Hadamanie's influence when the chief arrived with his party for a visit to Fort Ellice, Saskatchewan. Stealing, begging and fighting were on the general rise around the post as the refugee problem and its attendant tensions increased. When Hadamanie arrived, matters settled down and the post took on a different tone.

In June of that year, H'damani's band came from Turtle Mountain to the fort, the men arriving first, women and children following one and two days later. Fort Ellice records indicate that the Santees were prompt in settling their debts, cautious in the amount and kind of debts they assumed and rarely resorted to begging. Many of the jobs were done without supervision.

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Lavolette, p. 159

Throughout the 1870 to 1910 period, the few government censuses conducted of the Turtle Mountain Dakota population show the community swelling and contracting as it processed refugees.

Boundary Commission

In 1872-1873 the International Boundary Commission (or North West Boundary Commission as it was known to the Americans) travelled through the area of Turtle Mountain. For the Americans, the British Imperial government and the Canadians there is evidence the Boundary Commission had an intelligence gathering element. The two men leading the expedition from the British side were both Imperial officers, drawn from the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery. Both of these corps traditionally handled observation and intelligence tasks in the Napoleonic era armies. Captain Cameron was teaching

mapmaking and surveying (among other things) at Sandhurst Military Academy when he was appointed as the British Commissioner.

One of the Boundary Commission's scouts was J. F. Tennant, whom we last met fortuitously telegraphing a warning of the Fenian Raid to Colonel Osborne. As mentioned earlier, Dominion Lands Surveyor Otto Klotz arrived in Manitoba in a sealed stagecoach with Canada's head of secret police Gilbert McMicken.

While the Boundary Commission slowly moved westward from Pembina and reported peaceful contacts with Native groups it encountered, the Winnipeg newspapers whipped up public opinion about Sioux raids along the border. (It was later established that at least one of the *Nor'wester* editorial writers was in the pay of the US with a view to advocating annexation.) While these events were taking place, US Consul Taylor was reporting in writing that a Sioux rising had already occurred — even though there wasn't one.

When the Boundary Commission reached Turtle Mountain it slowed down to a crawl. The ostensible reason, and a valid one, was that cutting a survey line through the mountain took a considerably longer period of time than it had anywhere else to date. However, at Turtle Mountain the Boundary Commission did something odd — it set up a store. It set up depots routinely, but not as a store for trading with locals. This store was staffed by George A. Hill and according to Bill Moncur (and Manitoba Historic Resources) was located on the north shore of Lake Max, just about exactly where Camp Koinonia is today. (The site is opposite two possible ceremonial sites, Arbor Island and Eagle Island.)

The 1881 Census lists George A. Hill as an "H.B. Trader", but there hadn't been an HBC post at Turtle Mountain since about 1805. The Boundary Commission's stated reason for this action was to keep the Indians on good terms by trading with them. Hill's trading post was smack in the middle of an ancient Native ceremonial area that was probably being used by the Dakota and the Council on Turtle Mountain. For a storekeep Hill was more unusual in carrying on a regular correspondence with Lieutenant Governor Morris.

In the year 2000 following up on the line of inquiry of the Council Stones study, the Indian Claims Commission in Ottawa uncovered a four-page document written from George A. Hill to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris detailing the political factions among Natives on Turtle Mountain. Captain Cameron added his own intelligence analysis of the Indian situation.

On the basis of these reports, the Lieutenant Governor formed a favourable impression of the Dakota (despite the Winnipeg media) and actually took their side

when arguing with Ottawa over reservations. Hill was able to befriend Hadamanie sufficiently that the latter called the former his friend, and asked Hill to draft a formal letter to the Boundary Commission.

From Hadamanie's point of view he was conducting international treaty relations, as he'd been doing for more than a decade. Through the medium of Hill, Hadamanie made a careful reasoned argument. He did not ask for widely interpretable Aboriginal rights. In fact he acknowledged that Assiniboine, Cree and Ojibway had already signed treaties covering the territory of Manitoba (Turtle Mountain formed an outer border in Treaty One,) and that as latecomers, the Dakota had no aboriginal claim on a large area. However, he did maintain that his treaty with the Ojibway should stand, and that his band was entitled to the two sections of land (Hill enclosed the land description) on the north slope of the Turtle's Head. He further argued that his people were not, nor ever had been US citizens as they had not signed a treaty with the US, and have not surrendered. (Hadamanie left Minnesota before other Peace Chiefs signed the treaties.) He brought up British North American history and argued that his particular people had a treaty with the British going back to the War of 1812, and therefore as an allied nation should be allowed refuge in Canada.

The whole style of the argument was that of a senior chief, a diplomat with experience and international standing. It's very doubtful that George A. Hill, a White, would have gone out on a limb to invent a plausible argument on behalf of some Natives whom he'd only just met. Hadamanie's arguments to the Boundary Commission suggests a long term continuity of experience in policy and international relations, with British and US governments as well as with Native ones. There is a cadence, an oratorical style and a shorthand reference to political principles that is characteristic of a grand chief or elder statesman. Hadamanie's letters have it. To the informed listener it is unmistakable and it is doubtful that George A. Hill could have easily counterfeited it. There'd be little point in faking it since to the informed listener it would elevate, rather than deprecate, the importance of the speaker's words.

Evidence for the existence of a Council of All Nations at Turtle Mountain is also found in the diplomatic channels chosen by the Lieutenant Governor in 1873.

When homesteaders were once again pushing into Indian lands in the Dakotas, more Sioux began to make their way northward to British territory. In the fall of 1872, some 200 found their way into Turtle Mountain and



Shown above is a section of a Boundary Commission photograph entitled "Turtle Mountain Depot." There are two distinct locations shown in the Boundary Commission photographs with the same title. The other location is on the flatter prairie between the Turtle's Head and Whitewater Lake (or possibly near Sourisford.) The depot shown above was located close to No. 60 Reserve, and was specifically set up to "trade with the Indians." Ex-fur trader George A. Hill was appointed by Captain Cameron to oversee the operation, keep the Sioux on good terms, and not incidentally report Sioux and US Army movements. Bill Moncur's research placed the location of George Hill's operation at Lake Max. Moncur also believed that the man centre left holding a horse collar is probably George Hill.

BCA MG1/B3 Boundary Commission fonds. PAM Boundary Commission photo fonds #N11953

north as far as Portage la Prairie. While Turtle Mountain was not claimed by anyone as farmland, Portage la Prairie was now a thriving small settlement, and people there began to complain to Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris that something had to be done about these American Indians.

Morris requested that Captain D. R. Cameron of the International Boundary Commission meet with the Sioux to examine the situation. Cameron did so at Turtle Mountain in September 1873, and reported that the Sioux were requesting a reserve at Oak Lake so that they could settle peacefully on the British side of the boundary. The following spring, apparently on his own initiative, Cameron established a small trading post at Turtle Mountain under the direction of George A. Hill, partly to encourage friendly relations between the surveyors and Indians, but also as a means to gather information from them.

Morton & Boissevain Heritage Report, pp. 23-24.

If the Sioux problem was at Portage, why did Morris send to Capt. Cameron at Turtle Mountain? And since as subsequent history shows, Hadamanie never left Turtle Mountain voluntarily, why did he ask for a reserve for other Siouans elsewhere, unless he in some sense represented them? Both sides, the Canadians and the Dakota, found that the International Boundary Commission was a convenient cover for negotiations.

In the year 2000 at our suggestion, the Canadian Indian Claims Commission conducted its own search of Boundary Commission documents to examine whether or not Hill and Cameron were involved in diplomacy or intelligence with respect to Native people. Among the documents to come to light were a four-page report from Hill directly to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris on Dakota factions, and a 100-page report from Captain Cameron to the Canadian government on Indian Affairs.

Custer's Last Stand

There is a tradition, noted by Lorenz Neufeld among others, that sometime around 1868, Crazy Horse travelled to Turtle Mountain and addressed some kind of assembly. The story makes no sense given the sparse population of the mountain unless there was a "Council of All Nations" for Crazy Horse to address. If the Council existed in 1860, then even without governmental authority the Council could have served as an audience and conduit for Crazy Horse to reach other audiences much further removed.

According to this tradition, the Council rejected Crazy Horse's call to war. Although many Sioux and Cheyenne participated in the last Indian War against the US Army, the Turtle Mountain Dakota and Ojibway bands did not.

In 1876 the Indian Wars came to a crescendo at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. It was a tactical victory for Crazy Horse but a strategic defeat for Sitting Bull. A cavalry advance guard under Col. Custer was wiped out, and later one of three columns of infantry was scattered or destroyed. However, two of the three columns successfully converged and the Sioux were driven into Canada.

Black Elk recalled the war fever and heroic flavour of the era with mixed feelings. As a young teen he witnessed the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

"We were a small band, and we started in the night and travelled fast. Before we got to War Bonnet Creek, some Shyelas [Cheyenne] joined us, because their hearts were bad like ours and they were going to the same place [Little Big Horn.] Later I learned that many small bands were doing the same thing and coming together from everywhere."

"...When we came to the ridge on this side of the Rosebud River, we could see the valley full of teepees, and the ponies could not be counted. Many, many people were there — Ogalalas, Hunkpapas, Minneconjous, Sans Arcs, Black Feet [the Sioux band,] Brules, Santees, and Yanktonais; also many Shyelas and Blue Clouds [Cheyenne and Arapaho] had come to fight with us. The village was long, and you could not see all the camps with one look. The scouts came out to meet us and bring us in, and everybody rejoiced that we had come. Great men were there: Crazy Horse and Big Road of the Ogalalas; Sitting Bull and Gall and Black Moon and Crow King of the

Hunkpapas; Spotted Eagle of the Sans Arcs; the younger Hump and Fast Bull of the Minneconjous; Dull Knife and Ice Bear of the Shyelas; Inkpaduta with the Santees and Yanktonais. Great men were there with all those people and horses. It is so."

Black Elk Speaks, pp. 77-80

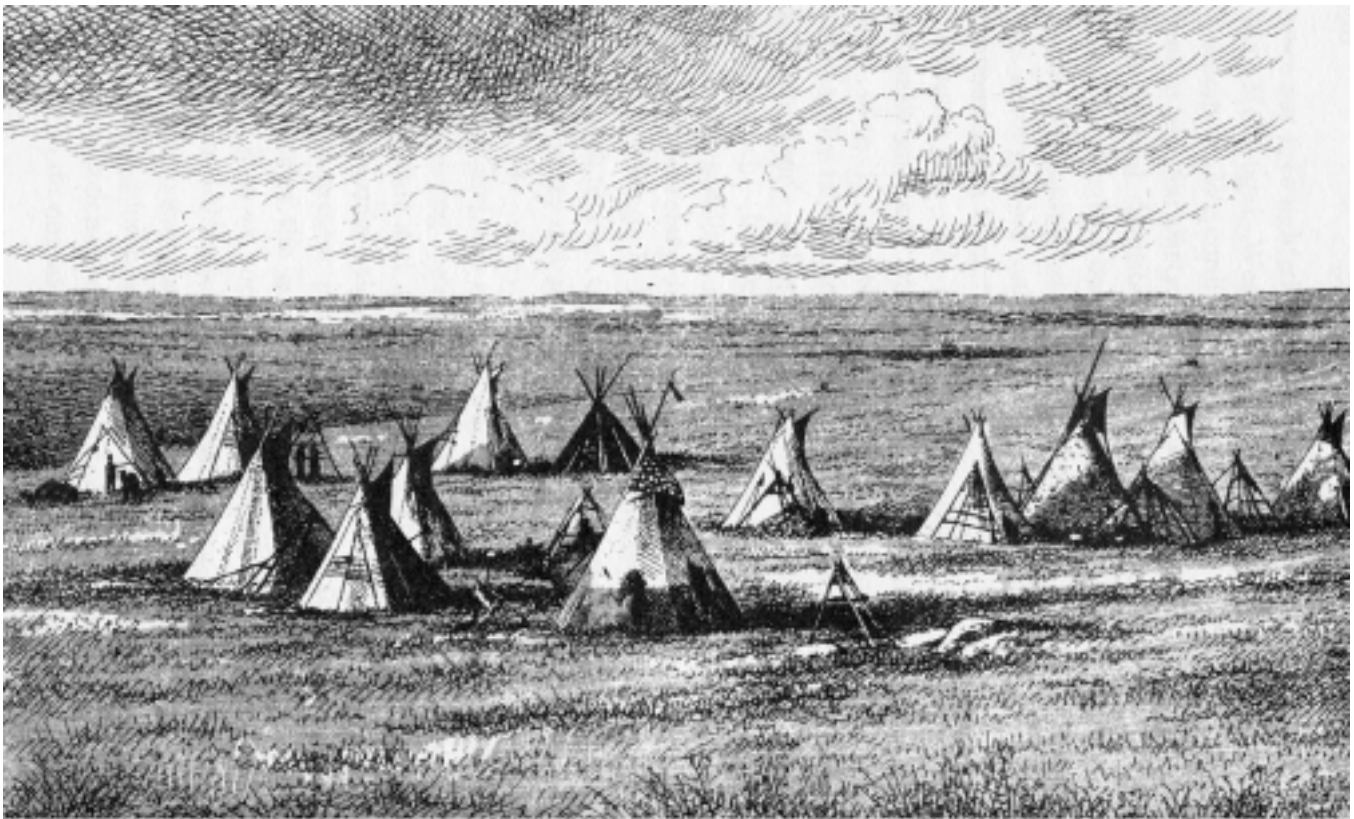
Father Lavolette recorded the following first-person account of the death of Custer. The speaker, Charlie Cunwinyuksa (1861-1937) lived out the last years of his life at Oak Lake Reserve. He was the fourth son of Chief Kicumani, and a grandson of Inkpaduta. He witnessed the Battle of Little Big Horn as a fifteen year old.

"On the night before the battle, 5,000 painted warriors gathered at the head waters of the Little Big Horn, waiting for General Custer and his troops to spring what he hoped to be a surprise attack upon the Lakotas. It wasn't so much a surprise to us as Custer intended it to be. The Lakotas were keyed up for they knew that by morning the whites would make a move, and they were ready. Shortly before nine o'clock, as Custer and his men crossed the Little Big Horn, we were upon them before they knew it. In the late afternoon we saw Custer fall. He was no coward. He fought to a finish. After he fell the remainder of his soldiers were chased about the prairie like buffalo. We saw five or six Lakotas after one white man, staying until everyone had fallen. No one could take Custer's scalp for he, too, was just one of a butchered and bloody mass of dead soldiers."

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Lavolette, p. 187

The victory was short lived. In the campaign that followed the Sioux forces were defeated and scattered. Thousands of refugees crossed the border seeking refuge — anywhere from hundreds to thousands of them infiltrating through the hidden trails of Turtle Mountain. These forested border hills provided the most safety for crossing. According to Turner in *Across the Medicine Line* Major Walsh and Dakota chief White Eagle [Wambdiska] combined efforts to calm the Lakotas when they crossed in 1876 near the Cypress Hills.

The Sissetons had crossed the border following the Minnesota Massacre and had established themselves peacefully, and although they were related to their newly arrived neigh-



A “Sioux Encampment” — The only Siouan people Fleming met on this scouting expedition along the future CPR line were Dakota from Oak Lake and Turtle Mountain whom he met on the Assinibone River east of present-day Brandon. This was a diplomatic party led by White Cap which was travelling to Winnipeg to attempt treaty negotiations with Lt. Gov. Alexander Morris. Hadamanie may have been a member of this delegation. Illustration from George M. Grant’s 1872 book **Ocean to Ocean, Plate 18**.

bours, they did not greet them with open arms as brothers. White Eagle, in council with the Teton chiefs, took it upon himself to warn his distant relatives, as best he could, that unless they were prepared and willing to abide by the laws set forth by the Redcoats they would not be welcome on Canadian soil — by him or the authorities.

Across the Medicine Line, C. Frank Turner, p. 51

At Turtle Mountain, Hadamanie found himself and his small community swamped by the influx of refugees. It is probable that they were moved on as quickly as possible to the safety of Dakota reserves further inside Canadian territory.

Crossing the Medicine Line

Something kept the Dakota Nations in check. The difference in the degree of violence north and south of the border, which the Sioux themselves called the “Medicine Line”, suggests that they had some agreement concerning it. Despite the Winnipeg editorials and Taylor’s insistent reports, there were no killings instigated by Da-

kota in Manitoba. (The one exception being the “execution” of a Dakota criminal by the Dakota themselves. This was protested by the lieutenant-governor and the Dakota responded that in the future they’d let the Canadian courts handle such matters. The issue was dropped.)

The Assiniboine chief Path Maker, a contemporary of Hadamanie, recorded in *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief* a first-person account given to him in 1939 by Shiyo Hushte of an encounter between an Assiniboine patrol and Sitting Bull’s band north of the Medicine Line in about 1876. Sitting Bull and his Lakota had fled north after Custer’s Last Stand seeking refuge in Canada. Shiyo Hushte recalled that the encounter began unknowingly.

“It was in winter about sixty-three years ago [1876] that we took the warpath,” he commenced. “We were out many days facing the winter storms, when we sighted a herd of buffalo in the distance.

“I was detailed to make a kill for our immediate requirements Another man was sent to go with me. As we neared the herd I went alone

— I had on a white blanket coat and a parka that blended well with the snow. I followed a depression and crawled up the slope to get closer to an animal.

“I picked out a nice fat yearling and was on the point of pulling the trigger when I saw a pair of eyes between the animals legs watching me from some distance away in the opposite direction. By coincidence, he had picked on the same animal at the same time, and we saw each other at the same moment. I almost yielded to the temptation to take the opportunity of killing the beast but it was strictly against the warpath code, so I crawled back and reported.

“Then we trailed the warrior I had seen but he escaped through a nearby gully. However, his tracks led us to Sitting Bull’s camp.

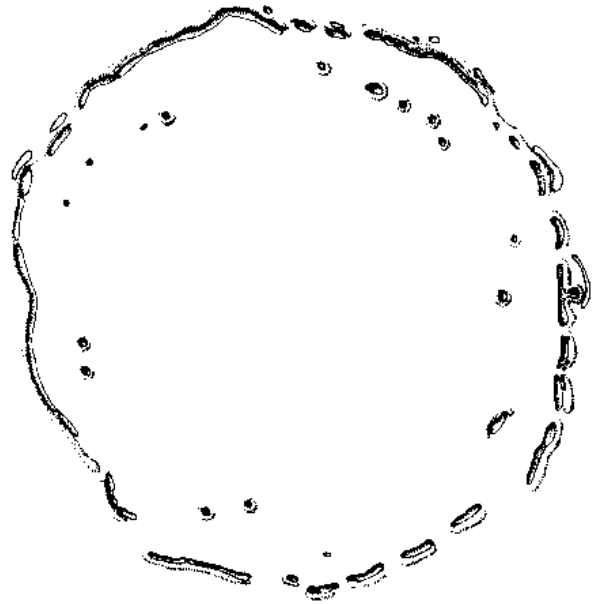
“That night we tried to steal the horses from Sitting Bull’s camp but we were discovered and surrounded. We would have been all killed,” he concluded, “only for the timely arrival of Sitting Bull, who commanded his braves to call off the attack and rebuked them in an angry voice — that at all costs they must not arouse the enmity of the Indians in whose territory they were forced by circumstances to seek temporary refuge.”

Recollections, Path Maker, pp. 76-77

The surprise to Shiyo Hushte was because the Assiniboine south of the border had been fighting the Lakota in alliance with the U.S. Army. According to Path Maker the Assiniboine intentions were to aid U.S. General Miles by holding or delaying the Lakota retreat long enough for U.S. troops to arrive. Shiyo Hushte’s party had intended to cross the border from north to south, and then raid Lakota horses. Path Maker wrote that Sitting Bull and his warriors cut through the Assiniboine parties and reached the border anyway. Shiyo Hushte’s party had run unexpectedly into Sitting Bull’s main force and consequently fallen prisoner. Clearly, Sitting Bull and to a lesser extent the Assiniboine, recognized that *some* different code of conduct was required north of the Medicine Line than that to the south.

Laviolette described a scene in 1877 where Sitting Bull, accompanied by Mounted Police (including Walsh and McLeod,) met with US Army and Indian Department officials to discuss repatriation.

Sitting Bull replied, “For sixty-four years you have persecuted my people. What have



The drawing above shows a circle of fortified entrenchments dug by Sioux on Flee Island north of Portage in 1872. The circular design reflects traditional Sioux camp patterns, but the entrenchment technique has probably been copied from the Metis. These Sioux were on the defensive, pursued by “Chippewa bountyhunters” in the employment of the US. This kind of camp, of which several are found around Portage, points to defensive fights. Yet, nothing like this exists among the Sioux on Turtle Mountain who were even more exposed. **Manitoba Historic Resources graphic.**

we done that caused us to depart from our own native land? We could go nowhere else, so we took refuge here... You are a bigger fool that I if you think I believe you. This place, the home of the soldiers of the Grandmother, is a Medicine House...”

The Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Laviolette, p. 195

In 1881, according to Laviolette, the US Army began interdicting the border to buffalo hunters and even Metis were arrested and extradited. Sioux, if found with them were arrested and returned to the American reservation. (Some sources would put this earlier in the mid-1870’s.) The first attempt by Sitting Bull and Gall in 1881 to surrender and return with their weapons and horses, was rebuffed by the US Army who attacked them. The US would only accept a surrender of arms and horses *first* at the border, and then the surviving Sioux would be escorted to the reservations allotted to them.

It is stated by Path Maker in his *Recollections* that after the Cypress Massacre, the US Army confined

itself to clandestine attacks on the buffalo herds by placing bounties on the bison. This economic sabotage could be carried out without the same risk of discovery or reprisal by the Canadian authorities, while at the same time would still have the effect of killing off Sioux. Path Maker asserted that retired NWMP sergeant major John W. Aspdin confirmed to him that the Mounties believed this to be the case, though they hadn't been able to prove it.

Cypress Hills

A just treatment of Moose Mountain and the Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan is beyond the scope of this study. However, they require some mention because of the similarity of events and structures there, to those at Turtle Mountain, and because the land features act like magnetic poles on the societies that fall between them.

At this place on the “*stone crested border highlands*”, Sitting Bull and his Lakota sought refuge with the British authorities — now represented in the form of the Northwest Mounted Police. Frank Turner recounted the following scene as evidence for the understanding between different nations of the presence, and practical effect, of a border — in this case at the Cypress Hills.

The surprise was mutual and after the initial exchange of enquiry and cordiality some of the young belligerents noticed a couple of Redcoats wearing U.S. soldier garments. It was explained by Walsh, who was sitting at a table in the open, that the uniforms had been bought from traders because their own had worn out.

The explanation did not satisfy the Sioux spokesman. The whites were lying; they were not Redcoats, but Bluecoats in disguise. Walsh countered through [interpreter Jerry] Potts, who was trying to interpret, that the flag on the staff behind him was the Union Jack, the flag of the great mother. The whites they saw were her policemen.

The Sioux became increasingly agitated. Most of the police who were cutting and hauling wood for the fort picked up their firearms and ammunition belts and hurried in; the Indians surrounded Walsh and pushed against his table, threatening to eliminate the camp.

“If you try to kill us you will lose many of your own and soon there will be more Redcoats here than there are buffalo and none of you will be left alive,” Walsh warned them.

Then, to the relief of the hard-pressed de-

tachment, a large band of Crees, friendly to the police, were seen in the eastern hills heading for the camp. The Sioux, outnumbered by their hereditary foes, retreated.

Across the Medicine Line, C. Frank Turner, pp. 30-31

Walsh by all accounts entered into the spirit of this neutral ground, and acted with respect towards the traditions and customs of the several First Nations with whom he had to deal. According to Turner, Walsh made a promise in public that was well understood and accepted by his audience, “*You can only be an enemy by disobeying the law, and that is my sacred charge, one which I will defend even at the expense of my own life, and the life of every man in my command.*”

Cypress Hills is also important to Turtle Mountain's history as a contrast. The Cypress Hills Massacre furnishes an example of “but for”. Both areas were noman's lands between Canada and the US, and between warring First Nations. Although no massacre such as occurred at the Cypress Hills occurred at Turtle Mountain, it sets in perspective the very real fears that Canadian authorities, Native or White, had about what could happen in a sensitive border zone.

It is true that the atrocities usually didn't take place in Canada to the extent that transpired in the United States. A notable exception is the Cypress Hills incident of 1873 in which a party of Americans trailed and then lost a party of Assiniboines who'd stolen horses from them. The Americans, unable to find the warriors who were the real culprits, decided to take out their anger on a civilian group of Assiniboine camped within their reach. A village was murdered and what was alleged to be the chief's head was left on a pike.

The Assiniboine historian Path Maker recorded a first-person account of the massacre by a man named Eashappie. This account makes it clear that the chief escaped, but since the wolfers couldn't tell one band from band from another, they probably couldn't distinguish individuals either. Nor did they care. Eashappie also believed that the original horse thieves were Cree rather than Assiniboine.

“I was twelve years old at the time that this tragedy took place and I still have vivid recollections of the ruthless massacre.

“My father ‘Inihan Kinyen’ was a Chief of the Wood Mountain Assiniboine tribe. With twelve other hunting lodges of our people we were engaged in our early spring buffalo hunt for our meat requirements. Eventually we drifted down to the Whiskey Trader's Post,

where we met the survivors of the winter famine.

“There were at least thirty lodges of these unfortunates, whose camps stood in a clearing near the creek that ran by the Whiskey Trader’s Post. We pitched our camps by them and stayed on till the day of the Massacre.

“In the morning of that fateful day, my father had just returned from his visit to the Whiskey Traders, with the news of the arrival of ten American horsemen and the warning he had received that these men were looking for trouble.

“Immediately he instructed his followers to break camp, but ‘Wincanahe,’ an outspoken Indian, ridiculed and scoffed at their panic and bluffed them into staying encamped.

“That morning whiskey flowed like water in the camps and by mid-day the tribesmen were all hopelessly drunk. Inside of our tent my father lay in a stupor and we employed every artifice, including herbs, to revive him to consciousness. I knew the other camps were also in the same predicament, working frantically over their men, but it was hopeless; we were doomed. We were left defenceless.

“In the meantime, the ruthless Americans, well equipped with rifles and ammunition, crept up behind the cut banks of the creek and commenced their murderous fire on the innocent and helpless Assiniboines.

“The sun was quite low in the western sky when my father recovered semi-consciousness and was able to wobble out of the tent. We led him to nearby cover from whence we could make our get-away. Before we could reach the safety of the cover, he was shot through the right shoulder. He did not waver, however, and we reached the cover and made our escape.

“Now, the reason why we were attacked by these men. We learned only afterwards from indirect sources that some Crees had stolen horses from these men at the junction of the Bear River, a tributary of the Missouri River, way past the Bear Paw Mountains.”

Recollections, Path Maker, pp. 44-45

According to Norma Sluman, the Blackfoot escalated border patrolling after this event and were responsible for wiping out several parties of “wolfers” as the American intruders were called. They earned the appel-

lation “wolfers” in part from hunting wolves for their skins; partly from operating in packs; and mostly for their own predatory behaviour. The wolfers were the extra-legals operating outside the United States, across the Medicine Line, using established companies inside the United States as bases of operation. The more legitimate companies had pulled back from each other’s borders after 1847, but independents could still purchase goods and trade furs. The Mounted Police used the very same bases of operation to support their own marches.

After this incident, the NWMP marched on Fort Whoop-up and its sister forts in the Cypress Hills. Facing harassment by the Blackfoot and an impending siege by the Mounties, the wolfers and whisky traders abandoned the forts. It was a victory for peace on the prairies because while the victims had been Assiniboine, the responsive action had been taken by two other groups: the soldiers of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Mounted Police.

The particular Americans in question were never brought to justice, but, the Mounted Police and the Attorney General of Canada pursued the matter so tenaciously that the wolfers were dragged through international courts for the next ten years. The case was actually lost in Winnipeg on the questionable testimony of Donald McKay the fur trader who viewed one Assiniboine much like any other. The defence was arranged and paid for by James Wilkes Taylor, the American consul and spymaster in Winnipeg. Although it didn’t result in a conviction, the ten year pursuit of the culprits by Canadian authorities convinced cowboys and Indians alike on the Canadian plains that the Mounties meant business. There were no further incidents of this nature.

The great confederacies of the Plains and the Canadian authorities had entered into a *de facto* alliance which had successfully maintained the integrity of the Medicine Line. Norma Sluman presented the practical alliance in her novel in a conversation between the historical characters of Blackfoot Confederacy grand chief Crowfoot and Metis guide Jerry Potts.

“...But they [the police] could be no worse than the wolfers; perhaps they might be much better. There has been time for the Canadians to learn from the mistakes of the Americans. And the Canadians have not been fighting a terrible war among themselves as the Americans have been, so there has also been time for them to think. They do not have the men or the wealth to send huge armies out here. Do you know, Crowfoot, that last year the Americans spent more on the Indian Wars than

Canada's whole cost of government?"

Crowfoot got up and began to walk up and down. His smile was sardonic. "I have examined your words carefully. What you are really saying is that the Canadians will be honest because they cannot afford to be anything else."

Blackfoot Crossing, Norma Sluman

Whether Crowfoot actually spoke those words, or whether Sloan put them in his mouth, the sentiment expressed the *realpolitick* of 1870. The Americans could not afford the expense of their Indian Wars but it took them until the 1880's to learn this. The Canadians, always operating on a tighter budget, knew they couldn't afford an Indian War from the outset and would govern themselves accordingly.

The Treaties of Canada

For purposes of the narrative about events on Turtle Mountain there are two aspects of the Treaties of Canada that need to be borne in mind: the contrast between American and British approaches; and the difference between the treaties of old Canada and the new numbered treaties of the Northwest.

In very general terms, the United States had begun treaty making with Native people at the level of Nation-to-Nation. Treaties were negotiated with a large group of bands, or even several tribes at once, and then submitted for ratification to the US Congress. As internal pressure increased to deprive Native people of the lands set aside by treaty, this process began to dissolve first into smaller treaties with individual bands, and then finally into executive orders-in-council without the constitutionality of Congressional approval. Being a Native person in the United States became constitutionally awkward and created by the year 2000 a bewildering variety of legal standings.

One useful contrast to Native people in the dealings north of the 49th was the implementation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which set conditions for successful and legal treaty making. Treaties with colonial Canada tended to be small affairs with one or a few bands. The numbered treaties of the Dominion of Canada covered large areas of land, and negotiated comprehensive agreements on a Nation-to-Nation basis. The repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1981 and Charter of Rights of Freedom, has been combined with existing guarantees of the British North America Act and the 1763 Proclamation to establish a constitutional standing for First Nations Treaties.

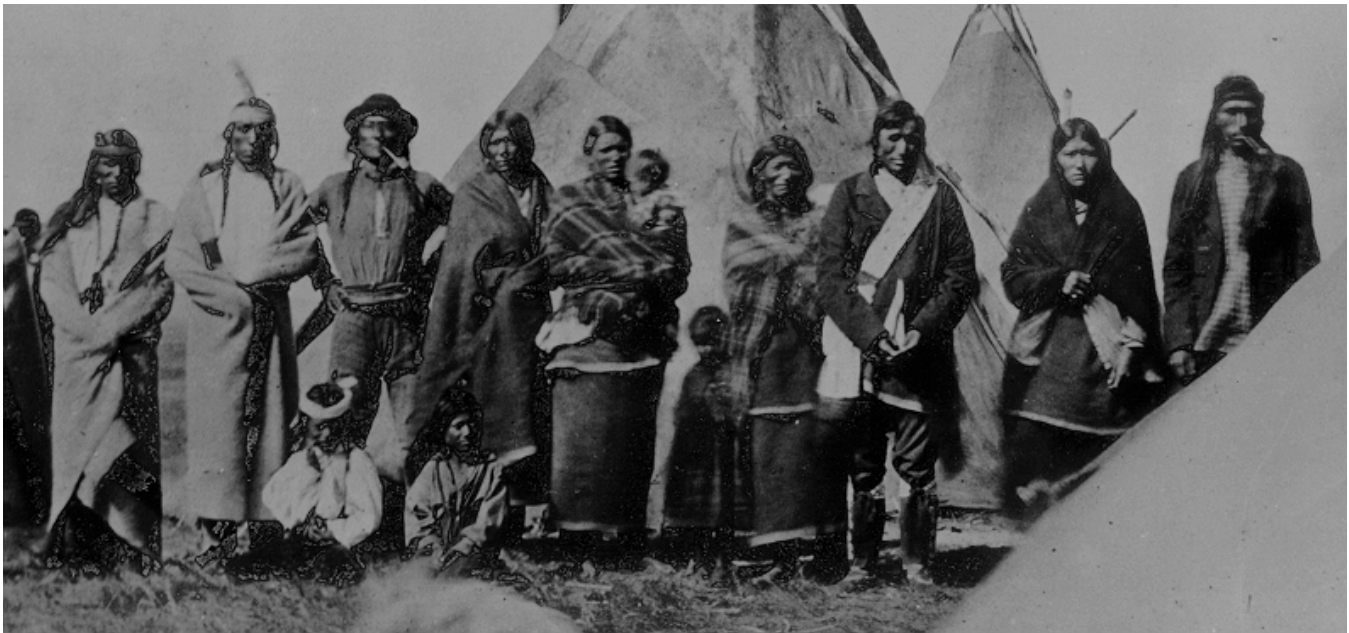
Treaties, in Canada, can be defended before the Supreme Court and can be found binding on the Canadian state.

The careful councils, preparations and discussions on all sides during the Treaty making process after 1870 suggests that the constitutionality of these questions was well understood. If the exact nuance each clause would take was difficult to see, the participants nevertheless had a vision of the importance of what they were doing.

Alexander Morris chose to quote *the Manitoban* newspaper report of Oct. 18, 1873 on the Northwest Angle Treaty negotiations, noting that "*they present an accurate view of the course of discussions.*" Within the section quoted by him, there is a report of the speech of a Saulteaux chief, Ma-we-do-pe-nais, who alludes to the years of council meetings and settling of principles of negotiation leading up to the 1873 negotiations. Ma-we-do-pe-nais addressed Lt. Governor Morris telling him that the position of the Saulteaux was one negotiated in council with other First Nations as early as 1869. A second and third chief follows up this point, but they are unidentified by name.

Ma-we-do-pe-nais — "*...We will follow up the subject from the point we took it up. I want to answer what we heard from you yesterday, in regard to the money that you have promised us yesterday to each individual. I want to talk about the rules that we had laid down before. It is four years back [1869] since we have made these rules. The rules laid down are the rules that they wish to follow — a council that has been agreed upon by all the Indians. I do not wish that I should be required to say twice what I am now going to lay down. We ask fifteen dollars for all that you see [meaning \$15 per capita,] and for the children that are to be born in future. This year only we ask for fifteen dollars; years after ten dollars; our Chiefs fifty dollars per year for every year, and other demands of large amounts in writing, say \$125,000 yearly.*"

Another Chief — "*I take my standing point from here. Our councillors have in council come to this conclusion, that they should have twenty dollars each; our warriors, fifteen dollars; our population fifteen dollars. We have now laid down the conclusion of our councils by our decisions. We tell you our wishes are not divided. We are all of one mind.*" (*Paper put in before the Governor for these demands.*)



Identified only as “Turtle Mountain Sioux”, this group was photographed by the International Boundary Commission in 1872. According to the Commission, they met with a delegation led by Hadamanie [He Who Rattles As He Walks, known prior to 1861 as “Yellow Tent”].

Similarity to known pictures of his grandson, the ornamentation, and the stance slightly in front of other members all suggest the person third from right is Hadamanie. When a blow-up was shown to Bill Moncur without explanation his first reaction was *“It’s Sitting Eagle.”* After hearing the provenance of the photograph, Mr. Moncur felt the man in question was definitely Hadamanie. Blow-ups show his nose had been broken, which Mr. Moncur recalled from conversations with Sitting Eagle. (*“Sitting Eagle told me that his grandfather had gone over the head of his horse while buffalo hunting and landed on his face, breaking his nose. He may have broken it again in battle too,”* said Moncur.)

Moncur also suggested that the woman immediately to the left of Hadamanie is his wife. The woman next to her holding a baby may be Sitting Eagle’s mother or an aunt, and the boy sitting in front at right is probably Sitting Eagle. The woman immediately behind the boy could also be his mother, or an aunt. This family group has notably shorter hair than the others in the picture, and there is a complete absence of braids. Cutting hair was a sign of grief among the Dakota, and it is known the family of Hadamanie had been recently bereaved prior to the time the picture was taken. Three sons of Hadamanie’s had died of tuberculosis, small pox and/or alcoholism between 1861 and 1871. The son-in-law to the right of the picture was killed by a miss-fire the following year. The only remaining son in the U.S. had converted to Christianity and became a Congregationalist minister. Consequently the office of Dakota representative to the Council of the Seven Stones on Turtle Mountain passed directly from Hadamanie to Sitting Eagle/ Charles Chaske. **PAM Boundary Commission photo fonds #N11951.**

Chief — *“I now let you know the opinions of us here. We would not wish that anyone should smile at our affairs, as we think our country is a large matter to us. If you grant us what is written on that paper, then we will talk about the reserves; we have decided in council for the benefit of those that will be born hereafter. If you do so the treaty will be finished, I believe.”*

Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, pp. 59-60

This pattern of treaty making was replicated across

the Canadian prairies, laying a foundation for subsequent relations between Algonquin and Canadian Federal governments. However, the pattern was not followed in the case of the Dakota found within the borders of the new Canada.

Indian Affairs

The term “Indian Affairs” was already in common use within the British military and government when Robert Rogers led his Rangers against the French and Hurons in the 1750’s. The result has been a specialized

bureaucracy, mostly White, which dealt with a wide range of issues and problems whose only common denominator is that they concern Native people. Nowhere else in government would anyone seriously suggest a “department of everything” staffed by experts who have little or no qualification in the key subject matter. It is an organizational prescription for disaster.

Most readers will be aware of its few successes, and its many tragedies. For our purposes, the one singular achievement of Indian Affairs was the keeping of records about a culture which was otherwise non-literate.

In the late 1700’s Indian Affairs was strictly the purview of the British Army. It was customary for serving Indian Agents to also be British officers. If they weren’t already, they often received commissions and this led to the practice of “Indian Affairs commissions” which carried a military rank that had little or no effect outside of Indian Affairs. The bureaucratic dispute between General Sir William Johnson and Major Robert Rogers over who was to direct Indian Affairs had the unfortunate effect of leaving a great many Native people high and dry, as well as destroying crucial documentary evidence.

As a consequence of this kind of organization, the left hand did not often know what the right hand was doing. Moreover, sometimes the messages didn’t even reach the “brain” back in London, and if they did, they might get hidden away within memory.

Sir William Johnson worked for the British Army’s Department of Indian Affairs, and came to head up that agency. Robert Rogers on the other hand worked for what today we would call the “intelligence community.” In 1778 Rogers and Johnson were no longer on speaking terms with each other. Unfortunately this attitude persisted and very quickly, the bureaucrats of Indian Affairs were no longer communicating with the bureaucrats from Intelligence.

This pattern was again compounded when the Province of Canada was formed in 1841. Between 1841 and 1867 “Canada” meant the united province of what is today southern Quebec and southern Ontario. It was a halfway stage between being a simple colony and a self-governing dominion. During this period important civic institutions including the army and Indian Affairs began to take on a Canadian shape, and for a very long time the Canadian and British systems would operate alongside each other.

Consequently, Indian Affairs after 1841 within the territory of the United Province became the jurisdiction of the embryo Canadian government. At first the system was simply identical to that built up under Sir William

Johnson in the previous century. Initially there were Indian Affairs commissioned ranks as there had been under the British Army, and the geographic organization of the department was broken down into a series of superintendencies. But there were important marks of deterioration as well with respect to Native people. Whereas Sir William Johnson had “gone Native” and his descendants became status Indians, the new Canadian administration expected Native people to “go White.” Over time the military chain of command was replaced by a bureaucracy corrupted by political reward.

What happened to Indian Affairs in the rest of British America? After 1841 the British Army withdrew from Indian Affairs. The *ad hoc* system at this time required the continuation of Indian Affairs commissioned ranks. However the “officers” were simply people *in theatre*, usually fur traders, who were accorded the rank for dealing with emergencies or if they had to represent British interests to Native people. On paper at least these officers reported to the Governor General of Canada in his capacity as the senior Queen’s representative. (The local Governor of Assiniboia by definition did not deal with Natives as he dealt exclusively with the Red River Colony. His corporate superiors within the HBC were commercial governors and not political ones, and after Selkirk passed on they had no clout in these matters.)

Indian Affairs in the British Northwest entered a never-never land. Both the HBC and the Northwest Company had among their traders men who held Indian Affairs or Provincial Militia commissioned ranks. During the troubles of the Red River Colony which ended in 1817, these ranks were used by both sides to legitimize their actions. When Lord Selkirk complained to the Governor-General about the usage made of the ranks by the Northwest Company, the latter issued an order cancelling all of the old outstanding commissions west of the Great Lakes.

The decommissioning order reads like a who’s who of the Northwest Company and the independent traders of Michilimackinac.

His Excellency the Governor in Chief and Commander of the Forces, is pleased to cancel and annul the Militia and Provincial Rank, in the Indian and conquered territories, conferred by General or Garrison Orders, or by commissions, on the under-mentioned persons, as well as all others holding rank under the same authority. [list attached:] Lt. Col. W. M’Kay, W. M’Gillivray, Major A. Norman M’Leod, Toussain Pothier, Alex. M’Kenzie, P. De Rochblave, Captain James Hughes, Ken-

neth M'Kenzie, Duncan Cameron, John M'Gillivray, Lieut. John M'Donald, Alex. M'Donell, Ensign Seraphim La Mar. Earl of Selkirk's Settlement, John Halkett, pp. 153-154

When the HBC and Northwest Co. joined in 1821, the problem of divided loyalties was removed, but the only militia in the Northwest in practice consisted of whoever the Council of Assiniboia might deputize. In theory this was supposed to be retired British Imperial Army veterans such as the De Meurons, De Wattvilles and later the Chelsea Pensioners. But in practice it meant the Metis.

In 1851 at the height of conflict between the Metis, Dakota and Assiniboine, Selkirk's successor and relative, Associate Governor in Rupert's Land Eden Colville lamented that it was necessary to support Metis policy with respect to the Sioux because the Metis were in practice the only defence force the colony could muster. He hoped that the Metis would not provoke the Sioux to a general war, since the survival of the colony would then rest with the fate of the Metis.

When the Dakota began migrating into Manitoba in earnest during the 1860's this was the situation. Dealing with the Metis, by the account of the HBC governors themselves, was more important for the Dakota than dealing with any colonial administration.

In 1869 when the recently formed Dominion of Canada prepared to take over the Northwest from the Hudson's Bay Company, the new government decided to extend its own Department of Indian Affairs westward by creating a new superintendency. (More would be added shortly.) Consequently, the Indian Affairs officials who entered Manitoba (or were appointed) in the 1870's knew nothing of the treaties which the Dakota had entered into a century before. Whether or not they believed it is unclear; we can be thankful they recorded the fact that the argument *was* put to them by the Dakota and by others. We do know they did not take it seriously and felt that all Native nations were at square one with respect to negotiating with the new Canadian government.

This was further compounded when sometimes the historic clock was turned back. The actions of the Canadian government in first jumping ahead of the transfer timetable, and then delaying it to the point of chaos, made the First Riel Rebellion possible. The British Imperial Government was so upset with the Canadians' handling of matters, that the relief expedition excluded the Canadian officers already in the field. In light of the political corruption unearthed in the subsequent decade this may have been a wise policy, however it also meant that



Hadamanie is probably the "Turtle Mountain Sioux" at right in this otherwise unidentified 1872 Boundary Commission photograph. The face closely matches known photos of his grandson.

the military chain of command of Colonel Dennis (who would later become the Surveyor-General of Canada) did not communicate on Native issues with the Imperial chain of command under General Sir Garnet Wolseley, and that neither of these two bureaucratic systems com-

municated with the old or the new Indian Affairs.

The only places this information was gathered together were at the top in the Imperial Privy Council, and at the other extreme among the Dakota, Metis, Saulteaux and other Native nations.

When the Dakota met with newly appointed Indian Commissioner for the Northwest William Spragge they received a partly sympathetic hearing, but had to explain everything over again from the beginning.

In early 1872, the Dakota appeal for land, which had been addressed to the government through the lieutenant governor of Manitoba, was finally placed before the governor-general. The Dominion government had considerable difficulty with the Dakota request because in its view the Dakota were American Indians who had no rights in the Northwest, much less to have land there. The practical problem of getting the Dakota out of the province and territory, however, made both local and distant authorities quite receptive to any positive evaluations of them. William Spragge, the Indian commissioner for the North-West Territories, penned a most convincing argument about why the Dakota should be allowed lands in Canada: "To the foreign immigrant of white blood who applies for land, no objection is made, providing he be an orderly law abiding man. And the question, should these expatriate red people have granted to them a few hundred acres of land whereon to establish their homes, is to be met."

Spragge reported that six hundred Dakota had claimed consideration from the Crown, saying that their ancestors had been faithful allies, and producing four or five King George III medals as proof.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 38

Canadian society and government sought to standardize what a "reserve" meant, even though to different Native societies it could mean different things. To the Northern Cree a reserve was land on which to form a municipal core of commercial and residential property. The land for hundreds of miles around, which was "Crown" and not "reserve", was still available from which to produce food and a livelihood. The Cree and Ojibway had, to some degree even then, been recognized as having owned the land and received recognition of an entitlement on paper.

The Dakota's entitlement had disappeared with the

British claim to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. As visitors they did not expect exactly the same treatment with regard to Aboriginal hunting and trapping rights. What they did seek was a system of reserve lands which could provide the basis for a varied economy.

[Wambdiska and Tatankanaje the Younger] ...asked that they be given lands to take up in the spring, and Morris promised to ask for a reserve on their behalf. He was apparently unaware that Tatankanaje had no intention of moving from the Qu'Appelle district where he had settled with his father a decade earlier. What the Dakota chief sought was a separate reserve that could be used as a home when he and his people were not hunting buffalo with the Cree and Metis on the northern prairie.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 40

In early 1877, Morris received yet another request for land in the Turtle Mountains. This request is not preserved in any archive, but it must have mentioned lands at Oak Lake. David Mills, minister of the interior, responded when Morris forwarded the request along with his recommendation of compliance, by assuring him that the matter would be given full consideration. Mills wrote J. A. N. Provencher, a person whom he seemed to feel was more in touch with the day-to-day lives of the Dakota than was the lieutenant governor. In May, Provencher reported, stating that "the reasons that prevented the Government from giving the Sioux a reserve at that locality, or anywhere near the frontier, have now more weight than ever." Provencher reasoned that many of the treaties between the Dakota and the United States were about to expire and when this happened, a reserve populated by Dakota would be a great refuge for those wishing to leave America. Vankoughnet reviewed Provencher's report and agreed with both his reasoning and his conclusions, suggesting instead that they go onto the reserves already set aside. On the bottom of Vankoughnet's note, there is the following comment, written by "D. M.", probably David Mills: "These Indians might perhaps be assigned reserves in the vicinity of the other reserves or upon the northern border of the [Carberry] desert. It is doubtful whether grain, implements or cattle would be



A world in rapid transition... "Hungry Hall" was the local name for one of the Pembina area Hudson's Bay Company posts in 1872. It was a tiny community at the crossroads of transportation, commerce and history. At centre background are the log buildings of the HBC and its servants. Ojibway-style wigwams of the Pembina Chippewa Band comprise half the village. A dis-used palisade and tower stands crumbling in the right rear of the picture. The boats on the banks of the Red River are a mix of canoe, dory (or York Boat) and a new hybrid boat with an inboard steam engine. A Chippewa or Metis woman washes clothes by hand on the riverbank. ***Ocean to Ocean, George M. Grant, Plate 15.***

any use to them."

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, p. 66

Elias cited this letter as evidence that the Dakota of Turtle Mountain received *some* recognition that they ought to choose their own reserve lands. There is something strange about this exchange of letters which interested Inspector Ebenezer McColl. McColl was appointed as one-half of a two-person Royal Commission charged with investigating corruption within the Manitoba and Northwest offices of Indian Affairs. He found that grain, implements and cattle had *not* been delivered to the Turtle Band, but they *had* indeed been ordered on the government's books.

Indian Affairs Black Series file number 8900 "Winnipeg — Correspondence regarding an investigation of charges of corruption against Acting Superintendent J. A. N. Provencher. 1877 - 1878" contains a considerable amount of information on this matter, including accounts on transactions charged against the Dakota bands. Typical of the language in the file is the shock recorded in Inspector McColl's report with

regard to... "*the startling number of fictitious accounts and accounts sent in under other names than those who supplied goods...*"

Frances McColl, a descendant of Ebenezer McColl the investigator, described her grandfather's arrival in the Indian Affairs office of Provencher in the fall of 1877.

Once in Winnipeg, Ebenezer began familiarizing himself with the affairs in the Indian Office. He found that all the employees except one spoke only French. When he read reports of the previous administrator he found that when the man wanted to make a correction in what he had written he would blot the ink with his thumb and write through it. This made deciphering an almost impossible task at times. Added to this was the problem that the given names of the Indians were duplicated many times and there had been little effort to record family members as a group.

Ebenezer McColl, Frances McColl, p. 45

McCull complained that the “*entire apparatus of local government*” had been employed to thwart the investigation of the behind-closed-doors Royal Commission. To save face, and avoid the problem of a Federal and Provincial government at loggerheads, Provencher was fired and the whole thing hushed up. For a time, a rigorous system of Inspectors was put in place to check on the work of the Indian Agents. Some of the best demographic and economic information on the reserves during this period comes from the Inspector reports. Within a decade that rigour lapsed and the last of inspector’s reports for Turtle Mountain was written in Birtle without the inspector even visiting the reserve. As McCull’s health failed, the inspector system failed.

For most Natives there was a marginal benefit in the temporary improvement achieved during the period of the Inspectors in the 1880’s. Yet even this did not benefit the Turtle Mountain Dakota because the government policy continued in favour of removal. The successive Indian Agents, apparently unaware of why the grain, implements and cattle were in relatively shorter supply on Turtle Mountain than elsewhere, blamed the band. The Turtle Mountain band was first stolen from, then blamed for having fewer possessions than did other bands.

Border Closing

In the 1880’s American pressure led to the border being officially closed to the migrations of Native people. It was not possible to put this completely into practice, but it was possible to kill or prevent buffalo herds from migrating back and forth. Even preventing the buffalo migrations would eventually kill those who depended on buffalo for a living. While not completely successful, the Americans did attempt to interdict the border to people. Paradoxically, American government policy in the 1880’s was to reduce to a fraction of its former size any area on which Native people lived, and at the same time prevent them from leaving to find a new life in Canada.

During this period there was a continuous presence of observers on Turtle Mountain for both the American and Canadian governments. Dr. Dann, a veterinarian was appointed as Veterinary Inspector for customs, installed on Turtle Mountain, and instructed to intercept livestock herds as they moved across the border for assessment and possible quarantine. More ominous, the Americans placed a spy in the Deloraine telegrapher office. In 1879 the Canadian surveyor and spy Otto Klotz made a return visit to Turtle Mountain to lay out townships. (In effect assigning one of the country’s top surveyors to some of the lowest priority agricultural lands in

the Prairies.) The Drummonds a string of three British remittance men with no visible means of support, occupied one particular homestead between Whitewater Lake and Turtle Mountain. When after several years neighbours complained to the Lands Department about the complete lack of agricultural activity on a square mile of good farmland, it was suddenly announced that one of the men had inherited the title of Strathallan in Scotland and all three would be returning home immediately. (This was the same kind of story given for the disappearance of Captain Drummond-Stewart fifty years before.) A rural school was named in honour of Strathallan, but in fact no such feudal fief existed. The next occupant of this same homestead was a serving officer in the 90th Battalion, a fact attested to by his being called up during the 1885 Rebellion to command troops.

Under pressure from the American government the Canadians attempted a half-hearted interdiction, ostensibly because the reserves couldn’t support the burden of an increasing number of refugees. The Mounties made a half-hearted effort. They told the Canadian government it wasn’t illegal (as yet) to simply cross the border and so enforced customs duties to discourage bringing household goods and animals, and therefore the families that depended on them.

In 1886 Assistant Commissioner Hayter Reid reported on the lack of progress to his superiors in Ottawa.

September, 24th, 1886, Office of the Indian Commissioner, North-West Territories

Sir,

I have the honor to refer you to my letter No. 1308 of 9th Inst. [Sept. 9] in which I reported for your informatoin that some Sioux Indians who had eluded the Police were settling upon the Reserves having come from across the line, and requested to be instructed as to what course to pursue with regard to allowing these to remain, or having them sent out.

Since writing that letter, I have to inform you that I have visited these refugees personally, whom I found scattered at various points along the line of rail — The numbr of who have come over in this way amounts in all as accurately as can be ascertained to one hundred and six divided among twenty-two teepees, and they possess forty-one horses and several waggons, purchased by themselves. They appear to be more or less closely related to the Sioux already settled on this side, and give as their reason for desiring to be allowed

to take up their abode here that they have been very badly treated on the other side.

They state that they have been defrauded of the weight of the rations issued to them by U.S. officials once a week and have not received Bacon, Tea, nor Ammunition while the frequent changes of agents have prevented their cases being ever fully understood. They complain further that they have been moved about so frequently that the poor land which they have been permitted to break up by the use of their own horses, has been invariably given to others, before they had been allowed to crop it twice, while when had they been supplied with ammunition, the scarcity of game would have prevented their gaining a living by hunting.

I am inclined to the belief that there is some foundation for their complaints but [phrase illegible] while it may appear harsh under such circumstances to insist upon their return to the United States, it has nonetheless to be remembered that the provision made for those recognized by the Department while sufficient for themselves, when made to extend over so many additional recipients will not provide satisfactorily for any, and furthermore that should those who have thus crept in be allowed to remain, there is no doubt, that large numbers of others will follow in their footsteps... [Next phrase was stroked through as if to delete: ...and it is open to suspicion that the treatment complained of by these may be meted out in order to compel them to the course adopted and thus provide an easy way for the Americans to relieve themselves of the burden of their support.] I will therefore be glad to learn what course the Department desires to be pursued with regard to them.

NAC Indian Affairs Black Files, File 1564

Some of the Siouan people who crossed were eventually induced to return to the United States, Sitting Bull among them. But a substantial number, no one knows if it was a minority or a majority, chose to remain and were welcomed by their relatives onto the overcrowded Canadian reserves. At Turtle Mountain the tiny community swelled, and Dakota farm labour in the surrounding towns was readily available. Even if the Indian Agents hadn't been trying to restrict the size and existence of the Turtle Mountain Indian Reserve, it could not sustain the population it was receiving. A steady stream of peo-

ple first got their bearings at Turtle Mountain under the protection of Hadamanie, Bogaga and Tetunka Nopa, then were moved on to reserves such as Oak Lake, Birdtail and Sioux Valley. Over time the lineages of these communities became intermingled and they ceased to be composed of uniform ethnic groups. The neglect by Indian Affairs of Turtle Mountain in this instance served Hadamanie's purpose. The constant influx of Dakota and Lakota people from the U.S., telling their side of the story to White Canadian townfolk, farmers and employers also meant a steady shift in local White opinion in favour of the Dakota.

Initially, the Americans attempted to prevent the movement of either the bison *or* people across the international boundary. If Hayter Reid's deleted suspicion was correct, by the end of the 1880's the Americans were permitting Native people to leave, but not while they carried any movable wealth.

The man whom Path Maker cited as the source of his information was Thomas W. Aspdin, easily the most honest and capable of Indian Agents. He had retired from the Mounties to take up a homestead near Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan and a commission with Indian Affairs. He quickly earned a reputation for fairness, and a certain amount of dislike from White town folk and his own superiors. Aspdin went on record that both Dakota and Lakota were exploited as labour, and that there needed to be a land settlement. He was also exceptional among his contemporaries in prosecuting whites for crimes against Indians.

Aspdin was well connected with the governing Liberal Party, and he was tenacious and meticulous. He was well connected through his former colleagues to the Mounted Police. He had married a Dakota woman, a daughter of Chief Black Moon. In 1895 his professional dislike of US Indian policy became very personal when his wife was detained in a round up of Sioux in Dakota. Mrs. Aspdin, like other Dakota, had routinely migrated back and forth across the Medicine Line, visiting relatives and attending ceremonies. She was arrested on the American side when the border was finally closed. Aspdin wrote his counterpart on the American side. A copy of the letter (quoted below) was filed with his superiors in Regina.

Moosejaw, Canada

23rd April 1895

[Received Stamp] May 8, 1895, Indian Commissioner's Office, Regina

Dear Sir,

I have the honour to address you in regard to my wife and three children now on Cherry

Creek, Cheyenne River Agency, S.D.

Last spring, acting under the instructions of our Assistant Indian Commissioner — I [escorted] a number of the Refugee Sioux to go back to their agencies — at first it [illegible] a larger number would go, and I was instructed to accompany them across. Finally when only about a third went the office concluded merely to give them letters.

My wife, a Sioux woman and daughter of “Black Moon” a Minneconjoux Sioux wished to make a visit so as to see her relatives whom she had not seen for a long time. I thought it a good opportunity for her to go, and gave her an outfit.

She wishes now to return and I am informed that the Agent has instructions not to allow any to come back.

I really cannot understand this. I am most anxious to get her back and also get the children to school. It puzzles me greatly to imagine why your office can wish to keep myself and family apart and I feel sure it is a mistake.

I am and have been for some time the Department’s agent among these refugee Sioux, & had I had the slightest feeling that my family would be forcible detained because they actually wished to pay a visit to their relatives I certainly [bottom of page damaged]

I appeal to you sir for [illegible] feel ours. Here is some gra[illegible] through the business.

May I ask you if you will finally instruct the Agent to allow them to leave at once.

Uncertainty — acts the [illegible] of my family is causing me a great deal of anxiety and some expense.

Apologizing for troubling you and hoping for a speedy solution.

NAC Indian Affairs “Black Files” fonds, File 1564

Eventually Aspdin did get his wife and children back, but he first had to take it to Ottawa, and from there it became a minor diplomatic incident with Washington. Only when the Indian Agent at Cheyenne River received criticism from Washington that he had embarrassed them internationally, were Mrs. Aspdin and the children released.

When Mrs. Aspdin finally returned, almost a year-and-a-half after she’d entered the United States, the response of the Canadian bureaucracy was all too typical.

Moosejaw, N.W.Ty.

22nd Novb. 1895

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that when my wife arrived at Estevan N.W.Ty. from Cheyenne River Agency, U.S. she was charged duty on everything she had by Inspector Wilson of the N.W.M. Police the excuse being that she had been over the time viz. twelve months. All the articles she was charged for she had previously taken from here. As you are aware she was delayed on the other side through no fault of hers and I think under the circumstances she should get a refund. I have applied for a refund for her through Mr. Darin M.P. and I beg to ask you if I could get a letter from your office to the Comptroller of Customs explaining the reason my wife was delayed as you know she could not start till permission was obtained from Washington.

I am sure with such explanation the Comptroller of Customs will grant a refund of the duty paid.

NAC Indian Affairs “Black Files” fonds, File 1564

Mrs. Aspdin did not get her refund. The collection of the customs duty was a deliberate policy by Indian Affairs, executed through the Mounted Police, intended to discourage more Sioux from crossing into Canada. Canadian law did not permit their exclusion at the time, but it did permit their being charged custom duties on everything they owned.

Aspdin found himself at Moosejaw in exactly the same predicament as Hadamanie at Turtle Mountain. Aspdin’s own homestead became an emergency refugee centre. He found his wife’s ties smoothed dealings with the Sioux, but also obligated him to help his new relatives.

At Turtle Mountain the inattention of Indian Affairs provided Hadamanie and Bogaga with temporary breathing space. Less easily patrolled than the plains to the west, Turtle Mountain provided many avenues to cross the border. The tiny reserve’s population swelled with refugees which the local environment could no longer sustain. Aspdin complained that the White townfolk affected to side with the Natives because the farm labour was so cheap. That may have been so, but the steady peaceful influx of Siouan refugees from the U.S. who told *their* side of the story to their White neighbours and employers gradually swayed local White opinion more to the Dakota point of view of history.

Even without the official discouragement by Indian Affairs, people had to move off Turtle Mountain to relieve the population pressure. From Turtle Mountain, Native people fanned out to the Sioux reserves to the north: Oak Lake, Sioux Valley, Birdtail and others. There may have been Ojibway mixed in with the refugees as not all names on the Indian Affairs documents appear to be Dakota. Some people stayed at No. 60 Reserve until its closure in 1910. A few stayed longer.

The 1885 Northwest Rebellion

During the 1885 Northwest Rebellion, the Metis made overtures to the Dakotas to join them, as they did to most First Nations. The peace chiefs did not, as a rule, join the Rebellion. They were conscious that in contrast to the situation on the southern side of the international boundary, on the northern side they had won a measure of tolerance, and sometimes even support. Openly joining the Metis in their grievances risked that delicate indifference. To the Dakota civilian leadership, the Metis were offering certain suicide in place of a difficult, but possible, life north of the Medicine Line.

Among the war chiefs and warriors, however, there was a great deal of sympathy for the Rebellion. According to A. M. Thompson's recollections of Sitting Eagle for the Melita community history, Sitting Eagle as a young man wanted to join the Rebellion.

As a young warrior, he and several others from the Pipestone tribe came down on horseback to where Mr. Dave Elliot [local postmaster] had his first dwelling of dugout and logs in the hills near the South Antler Creek about a mile west of its junction with the Souris River. This was the time of Indian rebellions in the west. All tribes were urged to join with those assembled with Riel west of Saskatoon. They demanded that Dave Elliot give them his gun, ammunition, knives and what else he had for trading. He refused and threatened to use his shotgun unless they let him alone.

Later, after the 1885 engagements with the Western Indians were over, they decided such a brave man deserved to be recognized as a warrior. As was their custom, the tribe accepted Dave Elliot as a member in particular as Sitting Eagle's 'brother'. Still later, Sitting Eagle often visited his 'brother' Dave Elliot, enjoying his food and farm...

Our First Century, p. 67

One anomaly with this account is that Sitting Eagle's age in the 1910 Indian Affairs census is given as 22 years. If so, he hadn't been born in 1885. However, local histories both oral and written are clear that Sitting Eagle was a contemporary of Elliot. Moreover, he appears in photographs from the Coulter Pioneer Picnic around 1905 where he is a mature or middle-aged man, certainly not a teenager. Since the Indian Affairs documents in question all cite their information from the original census, it's not unlikely that it's a translation or copying error and his true age in 1910 would have been closer to 42 than 22. The most probable explanation is the confusion of Sam Hi Eagle, aged 22 in 1910, with Charlie Eagle, age 42, an error which was repeated throughout the trust fund documents.

In Beckoning Hills 1956, which was edited by Bill Moncur, James Henderson recounted some events of 1885 on Turtle Mountain. The following events illustrate both the efforts of the "war party" and the controls exercised by the "peace party." It's also significant that there is a reference to the headwaters of Turtle Head Creek as a burial site.

"One evening in 1885, when I had lain down on my hay mattress for the night, I heard a lot of yelling and drum beating from across the meadow [on or near 32-1-16, two miles south of Pancake Lake. Henderson doesn't state which direction he walked to observe the "pow wow".] Putting on my clothes I hurriedly walked, ran and crawled to within sight of a big camp of Indians in war paint. Some three hundred were holding a pow-wow in preparation to going west to support Riel. I did not return to my cabin that night, but chose a clump of wolfe willow half a mile away, and was very pleased when morning came. They never harmed anyone in our area, left the next afternoon by the Commission Trail to the west."

"It was [border wardens] Bill Barber and Sam Kelland with an Assiniboine Indian named Will Moon who uncovered a plot to smuggle a Gatling gun to the Duck Mountains in Saskatchewan by a large band of Indians. They had come up from North Dakota by the way of the [eastern branch of the] Missouri Trail and had passed through Wakopa and proceeded about two miles beyond when they were asked to stop and uncover the so-called coffin. Even though they outnumbered the patrol by forty to one they did not offer any resistance and uncovered the box when asked

to. It was Will Moon who had suspicions when the band stopped in Wakopa to rest for a few hours. The braves who were guarding the wagon with the box in it acted rather odd he thought, when they told Sam Kellan that they were going to bury an old Indian chief at the headwaters of Turtle Head Creek on the west end of the Turtle Mountains.”

Beckoning Hills: 1956, James Henderson, pp. 122-123

Powwows are conducted for healing, not war and since the Dakota did not participate in any numbers in the 1885 Rebellion, it's likely that Henderson observed a community healing ceremony. That would be in keeping with the common usage of the mountain's sacred sites by the various First Nations. In contrast, Will Moon would have known that the Gatling gun smugglers were approaching the burial grounds from the “ass end” of the Turtle in a counterclockwise direction -- somewhat like climbing into a church backwards through a window. If they were *heyoka* this might arguably have been a correct approach, but it's more likely that everything about them looked wrong to Will Moon. The coffin may also have been incongruous with the prevailing custom of sky burial still common at that time.

The fact that the smuggling party surrendered to a quarter of their own number suggests that they recognized *some* kind of authority. Since they were “rebels” participating in a war against the Canadians, the authority for which they showed respect cannot have been the Crown. If, however there was a Council on the mountain, then Will Moon could have been its agent and the encounter would be consistent with the visible pattern of the Council's activities.

Accounts from the Northwest Rebellion in Saskatchewan display similar scenes. Piapot is credited by Path Maker with persuading Lakotas not to join the Rebellion. (Piapot is one of our possible Council members.) Big Bear is generally credited with unsuccessfully trying to restrain the war chief Wandering Spirit.

Another article by Lorenz Neufeld in the Sept. 9, 1981 edition of the Recorder entitled “*Dumont and post-rebellion unrest in the Turtles*” hints at the influence of a Council. Turtle Mountain today only supports a population of about 25,000 in the towns and farms around it's base. Split among many different First Nations in the 1880's, competed for by Whites and Natives, the mountain could not have supported a larger permanent population of Native people. But, in 1885 it was a very busy place. In addition to Henderson's account, there is a report by a Saulteaux chief named Yellow Calf to the Canadian government, reporting on Metis activities around



*The alliance of the British military with Native forces could find unique expressions. Shown above is Major General Middleton, commander of the 1885 Canadian Northwest Expedition, posing after his victory. Despite the apprehensions of White settlers, First Nations with a few notable exceptions did not join the Metis cause. The Council on Turtle Mountain may have played a role in keeping many Native communities out of the war. The Native nations remembered their alliance with the British even though the latter would act as if this relationship had never existed. **National Archives of Canada.***

Turtle Mountain.

Yellow Calf had once led a sit-in style of occupation in Broadview, Saskatchewan to protest starvation and lack of land settlements. In 1885 he was on Turtle Mountain, where he discussed the Rebellion with a surprising number of people.

With a pass granted to me by my Agent, I visited Turtle Mountain last month, where my wife has been for one year; she was sick when



*This Boundary Commission photo, has been printed with and without captions in different publications. In the **Meet Me on the Trail** series it is identified by historian Hal Keen as being the same as that visited by J. F. Tennant and Gavreau of the Land Titles Office. In the background is the Turtle's Head feature at the western end of Turtle's Mountain. The scene is on, or close to IR #60. If this is the same grave as viewed by Tennant, with its red cloth covering, then it is the grave of Hadamanie's last surviving son of the three who were with him on Turtle Mountain. So many premature deaths threatened the continuity of oral tradition.*

Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

she went and is still very ill. She is living with her father Kecheasonis... While there I wanted to find out what was going on... met a man from Moose Mountain with two Indians who told me he had been sent to find out how many of our Indians were there, and what they were after... Kakhahchiquan told me a half breed of the name of Baptiste had received a letter from Gabriel Dumont... that Dumont would be at Turtle Mountain very early in the spring... that he had one thousand men — Indians — when he wrote, that Gabriel said he had drilled them only once. He here dropped the subject. Assahwekeesick, a Sauteaux of Tur-

tle Mountain, told me Baptiste told him everything, and he could tell what he heard to any Indian who he thought would not repeat to Indians from across the line (Canada) who could not keep it to themselves, but only to those who could and the letter he got from Gabriel Dumont said that all the half breeds that were concerned with the Rebellion of Spring of 1885 would join him. A party of Indians was going to the Sioux Camp anxious to get further news. I accompanied them, keeping my plans to myself. On my way we met Bazelle Mazine. He told me the same reports... asked him if he could get further news.

His reply: 'I think I can' from Devil's Lake... when we reached Buffalo River... where I met another half breed just from Sun River, US ...on his way to Turtle Mountain. He said that Charles Trotchier and Dumont were visiting each other. While I was there, (Antoine) Lafontaine's wife wrote a letter to Trotchier for him. The man asked if I wished to send a word to Trotchier. I said Yes. The message I sent was... Please let me know what you are doing; trust me and send a letter to me to The Boss Hills [northwest of Turtle Mountain and the Souris River]... I then came from there to Broadview in the cars... Should anything happen in the Spring, Akahquahnaychaquin will be at the Moose Mountain early.

*Yellow Calf
NAC : Indian Affairs "Black Files"*

More typical of the White-Native relations, even during tense times such as the 1885 Rebellion, is that reported by Mrs. H. E. Creed of Souris. Published in 1956, the one-paragraph mention of "Indian Camps" probably referred to the 1885 period when Mrs. Creed was a little girl.

The Indians used to camp on Snake Point and all around. There was one camp on the hill south of the park. When there was a rumor of war the white men from Plum Creek would go out to see if there was going to be a war and smoke the peace pipe, till there was another rumor.

The Souris Plains, Reg Saunderson, p. 57

The spot described was the same place that La Verendrye chose to stop for lunch, and was identified by archaeologists Kate Peach and Dan Nicholson as a buffalo jump. Today it is part of the Souris town park and includes an ancient oak tree revered by the townfolk.

The steady wear of Natives on Whites and Whites on Natives changed both societies. The Native acclimatization to White society is self-evident. Less immediately obvious, but just as inevitable, was the acclimatization of White North Americans to Native ways. The Metis Nation represented the fusion of both. Even Army die-hards like Boulton had mellowed by 1885 and were beginning to understand some of the nuances of diplomacy between our divergent societies. Boulton described an armed standoff with three warriors. Back in the 1840's and 50's he would have opened fire, but in 1885 he negotiated.

They had slipped like eels from under our noses, when we had to take up the pursuit once more. Captain Gardiner and half a dozen others, however brought the three Indians to bay in an opening, while they were crossing a deep gully. There they stood, back to back, their rifles pointed, with their fingers upon the triggers of their rifles; and we were at a loss how to capture them. One of my men, named Dunkin, volunteered to go down and speak to them. I told him to leave his rifle behind, that they might not suspect treachery. He went down to the bottom of the gully, which was about seventy feet deep, but the language he knew was not their language. Two more of my men, Neil and Lyons, followed, who knew other Indian dialects, and spoke to them, gave them some tobacco, and assured them that no harm would be done if they surrendered. But they steadfastly refused, and Lord Melgund ordered me to send down ten men to take them prisoners. Before I had time to do so, however, Captain French [younger brother of the Mounted Police superintendent,] who was on the opposite side of the gully, went down, smoked their pipe, shook hands with them, and brought them up.

The North-West Rebellions, C. A. Boulton, pp. 215-216

Middleton himself conducted the interrogation of the prisoners. Boulton says they were surprised to learn that the three warriors were Dakota, not Cree as were most of the Native people with the Metis at Batoche. Two were sons of White Cap, and one was a brother-in-law, though Boulton did not record their names. However, he mentioned that Captain Haig, the chief of engineers, sketched them and that the drawing was reproduced in the London Graphic.

The 1885 Order of Battle provides the strongest demonstration of the link between the Dominion Land Survey and the military intelligence system of the day. The "Dominion Land Surveyors Intelligence Corps" was an elite scout unit called up on the Canadian Order of Battle and formed entirely from staff of the Dominion Lands Survey. Its commanding officer was J. S. Dennis Junior, son of the Surveyor-General. So many of its members were commissioned as officers that other Army units called it "The 49 Officers and the Scout." The DLS Scouts in addition to scouting, mapping and general observation also served in the role of field engineers for the Canadian Militia.

Religious Suppression

Although First Nations played a very small role in the actual military operations of the 1885 Rebellion, they played a disproportionately large role in the minds of the White Canadian public back east. Despite evidence such as the report of Yellow Calf cited above, the Department of Indian Affairs panicked, and the Medicine Wheel religion and all other Native ceremonies were legally proscribed. Performing a ceremony became a crime. Repeated offences could result in jail.

In April of 1889, Indian Agent J. A. Markle received a report from one his informants identified only as “Antoine,” on a secretive meeting which occurred between Ojibwa and Dakota representatives, somewhere near Turtle Mountain. Markle immediately passed this information onto his superiors in Indian Affairs in Regina.

“Antoine” of Oak River Sioux Band No. 58 has sent me the following information.

“Three Ojibway runners from Turtle Mountain US visited “Hinhanhota” of Oak River band on 23rd ulto. [ultimo = last month.] A meeting was called and the Sioux were asked to make a league with the above bands for a purpose to be afterwards explained by “Hinhanhota.” Tobacco was left with him to seal the compact but the latter named Indian has not yet disclosed their intentions. These runners represented an Ojibwa Chief known as Red Bear, and stated that runners had been sent to White Earth and Poplar River Reserves in U.S.”

They returned to Turtle Mountain on 23rd on foot. “Antoine” alleges that the Indians do not want to get into any trouble through the action of these runners and thinks “Hinhanhota” should be looked after for countenancing them and forced to divulge the meaning of visit.

NAC Indian Affairs “Black Files” fonds

Markle, vigilant as always, wanted the Mounted Police to discover and arrest the culprits. There followed a series of panic-inspired letters back and forth within Indian Affairs and with the Mounties. The Mounties reminded the department that unless they could produce a crime or a suspect, there was no point trying to arrest anyone. The matter was finally dropped without ever discovering who was involved in the meetings, or why.

While the Indian Affairs officials were conjuring up images of Indian uprisings, the particular Ojibwa band sending out the message was in fact an ally of the US Army. Either this element escaped Indian Affairs completely; or they knew and did not care. It provided at any rate an excuse to make another show on the reserves and to impress upon the Indians that the old ceremonies were to be suppressed.

Fire on the Mountain

On the American side of Turtle Mountain, the post-conquest period was uneasy. Fear was a prevalent emotion among the White population in the decades following the Minnesota Uprising. The Medicine Wheel ceremonies had been proscribed in the early 1880’s and any gathering was viewed with suspicion.

The years of 1889-1891 were years of extreme tension on both sides of the Medicine Line as the White populations, Canadian or American, adjusted to the conquest of the Plains Nations. It was a time when it was still possible, or at least still believed to be possible, that an Indian Uprising might yet sweep away the Whites from the Plains.

These years on the American side of the Turtle Mountain are known in local history as the “Great Indian Scare.” On the Canadian side local history recalls this period as “When the Americans set fire to the Mountain.”

Until the Homestead Era, prairie fires had swept the rolling plains and hills regularly. “Old growth” in this context seldom exceeded a century because sooner or later a fire was going to sweep a dry river valley or overtop a hill. There was absolutely nothing that was more awful to people of this period, whether Native or White, than being caught in a prairie fire.

George Catlin recorded a conversation with his Metis guides about the fear of fire.

“Well, then, you say you have seen the prairies on fire?” Yes. “You have seen the fire on the mountains, and beheld it feebly creeping over the grassy hills of the North, where the toad and timid snail were pacing from its approach — all this you have seen, and who has not? But who has seen the vivid lightnings, and heard the roaring thunder of the rolling conflagration which sweeps over the deep-clad prairies of the West? Who has dashed, on his wild horse, through an ocean of grass, with the raging tempest at his back, rolling over the land its swelling waves of liquid fire?”

Catlin was still dubious. It made a great story, and he liked the oratory of his comrades. But, he was still not sure how much to believe. On another occasion he was himself caught in a prairie fire, this time with a Dakota named Red Thunder and a Scots or Metis trader he refers to as M'Kenzie.

Red Thunder was on his feet! — his long arm was stretched over the grass, and his blazing eye-balls starting from their sockets! "White man (said he), see ye that small cloud lifting itself from the prairie? he rises! the hoofs of our horses have waked him! The Fire Spirit is awake — this wind is from his nostrils, and his face is this way!" No more — but his swift horse darted under him, and he gracefully slid over the waving grass as it was bent by the wind. Our viands were left, and we were swift on this trail. The extraordinary leaps of his wild horse, occasionally raised his red shoulders to view, and he sank again in the waving billows of grass. The tremulous wind was hurrying by us fast, and on it was borne the agitated wing of the soaring eagle. His neck was stretched for the towering bluff, and the thrilling screams of his voice told the secret that was behind him. Our horses were swift, and we struggled hard, yet hope was feeble, for the bluff was yet blue, and nature nearly exhausted! The sunshine was dying, and a cool shadow advancing over the plain. Not daring to look back, we strained every nerve. The roar of a distant cataract seemed gradually advancing on us — the winds increased, the howling tempest was maddening behind us — and the swift-winged beetle and heath hens, instinctively drew their straight lines over our heads. The fleet-bounding antelope passed us also; and the still swifter long-legged hare, who leaves but a shadow as he flies! Here was no time for thought — but I recollect the heavens were overcast — the distant thunder was heard — the lightning's glare was reddening the scene — and the smell that came on the winds struck terror to my soul! The piercing yell of my savage guide at this moment came back upon the winds — his robe was seen waving in the air, and his foaming horse leaping up the towering bluff!

Our breath and our sinews, in this last strug-

gle for life, were just enough to bring us to its summit. We had risen from a sea of fire! "Great God! (I exclaimed) how sublime to gaze into that valley, where the elements of nature are so strangely convulsed...

I beheld beneath me an immense cloud of black smoke, which extended from one extremity of this vast plain to the other, and seemed majestically to roll over its surface in a bed of liquid fire; and above this mighty desolation, as it rolled along, the whitened smoke, pale with terror, was streaming and rising up in magnificent cliffs to heaven!

I stood secure, but tremblingly, and heard the maddening wind, which hurled this monster o'er the land — I heard the roaring thunder; and saw its thousand lightnings flash; and then I saw behind, the black and smoking desolation of this storm of fire!

Catlin's Indians, Vol. 2, George Catlin, p. 24

Starting a prairie fire was an act of last resort in war or escape. It was punished severely in both Native and White society (unless it was a controlled burn.) John Tanner the Falcon described an Assiniboine warrior being beaten for setting a prairie fire on a march. Homesteaders found it inconceivable that anyone would deliberately set one.

For some reason 1889 saw a rising peak in the fear of American Homesteaders about Native people. Sitting Bull, it is true, had returned from Canada to house-arrest in the United States but that should have eased tension not increased it. The Bottineau county history described the prevailing feeling among American Whites on the south side of Turtle Mountain in 1889-1890.

The Indians in the area were not hostile and in 1889, at the time of Bottineau's false Indian scare, Hurt stayed at home. Most of the township's other residents fortified themselves in Peder Hanson's log house for a few days before returning home. Port holes were made in logs of cabins for better observation and protection. Metigoshe and western Township settlers flocked to Bottineau.

Historical Highlights of Bottineau County, p. 70

A 1934 interview with an American Homesteader named Gilbert Hanson, also printed in the Bottineau Country history, recounted events higher up the mountain on the south side of Lake Metigoshe. The "lake in Canada" referred to is probably Sharpe Lake and therefore the



Prairie fire by Alfred Jacob Miller, 1837. This party has been caught out on the prairie. They are creating a fire break around themselves. One man sets a fire with a torch while another man puts it out. Once the burn area was complete, a fire was set along its downwind edge and the whole encampment marched downwind following the receding preburn while fleeing the oncoming main fire. **National Archives of Canada.**

Homestead posse had actually invaded Canada and was on its way to IR #60.

We saw few Indians during these early years, although they had a good trail from Metigoshe to their reservation [IR #60: Turtle Mountain Dakota]. We were here however, to appreciate the Indian scare of the winter of 1889. Brother Peter's home was one of the "fortifications," made in the Turtle Mountains. (Knut Homen's home near Vinje church was the other.) Loop holes were bored through the upstairs walls. People came from far and wide bringing whatever, they could with them as they hurriedly left their homes. For 2-3 days we were stationed here — perhaps 40 of us in his little home. Guards were on duty day and night. We had few guns and little ammunition. Finally as nothing was seen of the Indians, brother Peter and I were sent out as scouts to see if we could learn anything about them. We neither heard nor saw anything of them, naturally. We did see a man fishing in Lake Metigoshe. It proved to be Gilbert Nicholson.

He called to us and teasingly nicknamed all who had gone to the fortified places "scared rabbits." He had remained at home in spite of rumors. East in the mountains, Mrs. Charlie Berg had done the same thing — sending her family to Homen's while she herself stayed home to care for the stock. Well we scouted about Lake Metigoshe and a lake in Canada north of it but found no hostile Indians. When we returned to Peter's with our report people took heart and gradually left to take care of their stock. A few days later I was in Bottineau. Bottineau, it seems, had wired for military aid and finally an officer was sent here to see how things stood. When it was discovered I was from the "hills" I was asked to talk with him. When I told him we scouts had seen no sign of Indians his eyes twinkled.

Historical Highlights of Bottineau County, p. 123

The Bottineau history also recorded a reason why the White population might have felt the local Natives would be hostile — the ongoing theft of the land.

Before 1882, Roland Township area was

Indian territory. No white settlers were allowed. Gradually the Indians were restricted to the [Chippewa] Turtle Mountain Reservation of two townships, and land was opened for settlement after being surveyed by the federal government.

Historical Highlights of Bottineau County, p. 70

But there were no Indian raiding parties, and the barricaded Homesteaders never found any targets to shoot at. It was the policy of both the Canadian and the American governments to remove if possible or otherwise restrict the movement and settlement of Native people on Turtle Mountain. The Canadian actions are discussed in the section on the *Life and Death of I. R. #60* and the *Land Sale*. It is alleged in the Canadian-side oral histories of Turtle Mountain, White or Native, that the Americans took matters more urgently and decided to destroy the “wilderness” eco-system of Turtle Mountain, thereby driving off the Natives. In 1889 the first and largest of a series of devastating fires swept Turtle Mountain.

The first big forest fire in 1889, according to local lore, accounted for most of the damage by sweeping the mountain end to end. Subsequent smaller fires occurred almost annually up until about 1910. Only a few islands, peninsulas and spring-fed coulees escaped deforestation. The shores and surrounding country of all of the lakes of Turtle Mountain were cleared of forest, leaving only a few places such as Arbor Island and Eagle Island untouched. Animal species dependent on good forest cover and especially upon old growth departed, replaced in time by other species that could exploit new growth. Antelope, Elk and Moose disappeared from Turtle Mountain along with Eagles, Bears, Wolves and Coyotes. Hardwoods were replaced by fast growing softwoods and White Tail Deer moved in. Alice Hurt described the effects of a fire she observed in 1898 at Lake Max.

In 1898 the whole of Turtle Mountain was burnt over. It was a great tragedy, all that beautiful forest of hard wood destroyed, to say nothing of the wild animals and birds. The saw mill, lumber yard, all the houses and other buildings were burnt to the ground. Only the great oak tree that held the guy wire for the mill smokestack survived. It was scorched but not killed and grew for many years, eventually falling in a windstorm.

There was a huge slab pile on a point of land behind where the planing mill had stood. This escaped the fire, and was of great value

in later years when camps were opened on 90 acre Island, providing fire wood, and slabs for rustic seats, cabins and kitchens.

I remember going to the lake after the fire and crying when I saw the terrible devastation. Nothing green left anywhere, only blackened stumps and fallen logs.

*Turtle Mountain Corduroy, Alice Hurt;
Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 2*

Ostensibly the fires were started by American Homesteaders clearing land. Sitting Eagle told Bill Moncur that the fires were deliberately set to destroy the forests and animals in order to drive his people off of Turtle Mountain. The fires were set along the southern edge of the turtle’s carapace, and a southerly wind took the fire northward. Forest Ranger Charles Walkinshaw of Boissevain wrote in the following decades that he received little or no cooperation from American authorities in discouraging or controlling these fires.

A 1901 Department of the Interior report summarized Walkinshaw’s findings after his first year on the job.

As this reserve lies along the American boundary, certain communications have passed between the two governments with reference to joint action to preserve the timber in this district. It is said that the worst fires have come from the south.

BCA MG8/E3 Charles Walkinshaw fonds

In 1901, Walkinshaw’s second year as Forest Ranger, the forest had been regrowing on average for about ten years. Quick growing species were replacing the burned out areas from the disastrous 1889-1890 fires, but the rebuilding of the forest could too easily be upset. Walkinshaw found it necessary to build a fireguard between the forest and the boundary to guard from the south, and along the western side because of prevailing winds.

The eastern part is well timbered with aspen and balsam poplar with a few scrub or mossy cup oak. It is difficult to protect this reserve from fire owing to the adjacent timber land south of the boundary being opened for settlement. During the early part of the present season, Forest Ranger Walkinshaw had the assistance of one man in guarding the timber, and great difficulty was experienced for a few weeks in May in keeping the fire from spread-

ing from the burnings of the settlers along the boundary who were clearing their land.

BCA MG8/E3 Charles Walkinshaw fonds

As American settlers settled into the mountain, they too became more aware of the dangers of fire, and Walkinshaw reported that their willingness to cooperate changed with the time settled on the mountain. In 1903 severe fires again swept the mountain, and this time damaged the farms of American settlers.

I may say that disastrous fires from American territory crossed the International Boundary this spring and destroyed a great many of the young trees, but fortunately did very little damage to the larger timber. As previously reported to you I called for assistance to stop the fires in the reserve, but owing to such dry weather, I found it impossible to get them all under control until rain came. I then visited some of the settlers on the American side for the purpose of getting them to be more careful in the future in setting out fire. I found they were as anxious as I was to prevent these fires and that the fires I complained of had been started a long way south in Dakota, the high winds carrying it along with great rapidity and burning out at least ten settlers along the boundary on the Dakota side. I think the only way to prevent fire from entering the reserve from the southern boundary is to establish a house and stable near the boundary for the ranger and assistant, so that they can be right on the spot in the spring and fall when fire is liable to run and do damage.

BCA MG8/E3 Charles Walkinshaw fonds

In 1906 Walkinshaw reported that cooperation with the Americans was again poor. In contrast with the cooperation he'd reported with the American settlers in previous years, this time he found multiple fires being set by people he was not able to identify. He found it suspicious that no sooner had he brought the American-origin fires under control, there was a string of fires started along the northern edge of the forest on the Canadian side.

The month of May was very dry and warm and gave us considerable trouble fighting fires coming from the American side in range 21. There were strips burned in this range, some of them nearly across the township. By hard

work we succeeded in stopping the fires before they got into the green timber at the east end of the township. It seemed to me that the settlers along the international boundary on the American side were trying to burn up the reserve. I counted fifteen big fires burning about half a mile across the boundary. Fortunately the wind changed and blew them south; otherwise all the people in Manitoba could not have saved the reserve.

...I did my best to find out who set the fires on our side but failed to get evidence to convict any one although I had strong suspicion of some parties who were seen coming from the part where the fires started.

BCA MG8/E3 Charles Walkinshaw fonds

The entire ecosystem of Turtle Mountain was changed in a few short decades. First the buffalo had been destroyed between 1860 and 1880. After 1889 the major forest had been destroyed, along with it the fur bearing animals, and as Walkinshaw reported it was only beginning to replace itself in the first decade of the 1900's.

The result was that No. 60 Reserve lost a major part of its livelihood. A population which previously could earn a living from hunting and trapping, was now forced into agricultural labour or outmigration. George Morton, the father of Morton municipality, lost his lumber mill at Lake Max, along with the entire Turtle Mountain timber industry. The traplines which had been nursed along by Turtle Mountain Metis also collapsed as the animals which they harvested were burned or fled. In 1908 Walkinshaw reported that Metis families formerly living within the western end of the Forest Reserve had left. (He also reported that he was carrying out his instructions to evict any White Homesteaders who tried to squat on the land kept back for the Forest Reserve.) In 1909 Walkinshaw reported that he was receiving cooperation from the new School of Forestry in Bottineau. In 1910 modest portable sawmills were re-established in Turtle Mountain. In 1913 the system of public grazing lands on Turtle Mountain was begun.

There were still fires in the 1920's. Bill Moncur recalled as a young teen seeing the horizon lit by the orange glow of a fire on the mountain and "*the stooks covered in ash like it was snow.*"

It took twenty years after the devastation of 1889 before the mountain could again support even modest forestry. It has taken nearly a hundred years for Turtle Mountain to regain something of the ecosystem it had in the 1880's, and the forest today is both different and more extensive. With the exception of a few commercial bi-

son, cattle have replaced buffalo on Turtle Mountain. Only in the last few decades of the 20th Century have Bear, Moose, Eagle and Coyote returned to Turtle Mountain.

Ghost Dance

The third and final group of Sioux refugees to come from the United States through Turtle Mountain into Canada, occurred in the winter of 1891-1892. These were members of the “Ghost Dance.” As the buffalo disappeared in the 1880’s and the War Chiefs lost the struggle, the civilian population of the Siouan Nations turned in despair to an early synthesis of Medicine Wheel and Evangelical Christian.

The Ghost Dance began in California and New Mexico, then spread like wildlife from south to north, as each tribe was defeated by the US Army. It was the latest of many such prophetic movements which had been sweeping the forests and plains since the Whites arrived, continuing in the same vein as that of Tecumseh and the Prophet. Although the prophetic movements had differences in ritual and observance of taboos, they generally advocated peace between Native nations, if not necessarily with Whites, and they usually tried to address the social ills of violence and alcohol.

Each of these tribes accepted or rejected the Ghost Dance movement in varying degrees and for different reasons. One of the main factors affecting the acceptance or rejection was, it has been suggested, the degree of stability within the tribal community.

The greater the stability of the group, the less likely it will be to accept ideas and behaviour that are radically different from its own. And if there is any acceptance, the more likely it will be that a stable group will take the new ideas, concepts, and procedures, and weave them into its traditional cosmology and sacred ways.

The Sacred: Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters, p. 180

The Ghost Dance as experienced among the Sioux utilized the same symbolism as the Medicine Wheel, modifying existing rituals and developing new ones in a very short space of time. In the case of the Sioux the change took place in the matter of only two or three years, an incredible rate of change for social customs.

The elements borrowed from Christian missionaries included a “Second Coming” which was just around the corner, and sometimes a saviour figure. “Geesis” (as Black Elk spelled and pronounced the word) had been

betrayed by the Whites who’d killed Him. But, He would come again to the Native people who performed the Ghost Dance. He would bring back to life all of the ghosts of the vanished buffalo, and all the Native’s vanished relatives with them. Paradise on earth would be re-established, and the Whites would be gone.

It had a certain appeal.

The Ghost Dance was nonviolent, especially when contrasted with the failed strategy of the War Chiefs. Twenty years of constant warfare, with nothing to show for it, had disillusioned warriors as well as Peace Chiefs and Pipe Carriers. This did not prevent the US authorities from viewing the Ghost Dance as a threat.

By the time the Ghost Dance reached Wounded Knee in 1890 the US Bureau of Indian Affairs was in a state of panic. They were afraid that this social movement was out of control. Its claim of getting rid of the Whites was threatening enough, but now it had spread to Wounded Knee and there resided Sitting Bull, returned from exile in Canada. Sitting Bull did not lend any public support to the Ghost Dance, nor did he publicly speak against it. He wasn’t participating in the Ghost Dance at the time of the critical incident. However, it was assumed by the Indian Agent and his Indian Police that Sitting Bull would be the ring leader of anything that might happen. They decided to pre-empt a rebellion (which didn’t exist) by arresting Sitting Bull.

The arrest backfired. A warrior resisted, although Sitting Bull himself had not. Violence erupted with police and warriors killed, and among the slain was Sitting Bull. The US officials panicked even more, and anticipating a violent uprising as a result of Sitting Bull’s death (which had more plausibility), they moved US Artillery into position to fire on a Ghost Dance ceremony. They ordered the Ghost Dance participants to disperse, which they would not do, though they made no aggressive moves towards the soldiers. The artillery opened fire, killing hundreds of civilians — men, women and children.

It was the 1891 Christmas holiday season.

Black Elk recalled that as he was getting ready to participate in the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee he heard shooting and screaming. Prepared for dancing, not for war, he nevertheless led a small party of warriors which attempted to go to the relief of the dancers and get as many civilians away to safety as possible.

I started out alone on the old road that ran across the hills to Wounded Knee. I had no gun. I carried only the sacred bow of the west that I had seen in my great vision [minus the arrows.]... We rode fast, and there were about twenty of us now. The shooting was getting



A mounted American officer surveys the scene of slaughter at Wounded Knee in late December, 1891. Photo from *Native Americans: An Illustrated History*. **North Dakota Historical Society photograph.**

louder. A horse-back [rider] from over there came galloping very fast toward us and he said: Hey-hey-hey! They have murdered them!

...A little way ahead of us, just below the head of the dry gulch, there were some women and children who were huddled under a clay bank, and some cavalymen were there pointing guns at them.

We found a little baby lying all alone near the head of the gulch. I could not pick her up just then, but I got her later and some of my people adopted her. I just wrapped her up tighter in a shawl that was around her and left her there. It was a safe place, and I had other work to do.

...Men and women and children were heaped and scattered all over the flat at the bottom of the little hill where the soldiers had their wagon-guns, and westward up the dry gulch all the way to the high ridge, the dead women and children and babies were scattered.

When I saw this I wished that I had died too, but I was not sorry for the women and children. It was better for them to be happy in

the other world, and I wanted to be there too.

Black Elk Speaks, pp. 219-221

The Christmas-New Year's issue of the *Boissevain Globe* carried a wire service story to the effect that a "big battle" had taken place between the US Army and the Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

A heavy battle was fought in the Dakota Bad Lands between Indians and U. S. troops on Monday. The following despatch was received at Washington: "Whiteside had four troops of cavalry and held the Indians till Forsyth reached him with four more troops. At 8:30 a. m. while disarming the Indians, the fight commenced. Very few Indians have escaped. Capt. Wallace and five soldiers were killed, and Lieut. Garlington and fifteen men wounded. Big Foot, 120 men, and 250 women and children have been captured." The Indians are scattered in all directions, and they appear to be determined to avenge Sitting Bull's death.

Boissevain Globe, Jan. 1, 1891
BCA MG16/B12

This was the first mention in the local press of Sitting Bull's death. Two weeks later the Globe issued a retraction. Editor Ashley's revised view was based on recent eye-witness and reliable reports which contradicted the view being put out by the US Army. The following article was printed under the pen-name of "Adirondack Murray." The identity of the author, who had an obvious sympathy with the Sioux, was not revealed. Some elements are apparent from the content and style of writing. The author was very well educated for his day, he drops Classical and Biblical references throughout the text. The article takes a Classical form, the Eulogy or "praise for the dead;" a form as traditional as the Roman Republic, with a Christian spin to reach an 1890's audience. The author must also have been intimately familiar with Sitting Bull and the workings of Sioux government because he alludes to matters that are not evident in other contemporary writers, such as the hierarchy of chiefs. It also includes a formal indictment of murder.

A good candidate for "Adirondack Murray" would be a Mounted Police officer, probably James Morrow Walsh who had the most dealings with Sitting Bull, and who'd received as gifts a US Army horse taken from the field of Little Big Horn along with Sitting Bull's own war bonnet. Walsh was one of the Mounted Police officers who had received their commissions originally from the British Imperial Army. He had served in the Wolsley Expedition of 1870. In 1891 Walsh was a civilian, having resigned from the NWMP in protest over Ottawa's Indian policy. He was at the time employed as a vice-president of the Dominion Coke, Coal and Transportation Company. In 1897 he rejoined the force as Commissioner of the Yukon.

Adirondack Murray's Estimate of the Dead Indian

A Great Historic Character — A Seer and a Prophet

"Everybody is well satisfied at his death."

This is the [sentiment] I read this morning in a great American journal touching the murder of the great Sioux prophet, Sitting Bull. I say murder, for murder it was and murder it was intended to be, unless all the reports sent eastward for the last month have been lies.

The land grabbers wanted the Indian lands. The lying, thieving Indian agents wanted silence [...] past thefts, and immunity to continue their thieving. The renegades from their people among the Indian police wasted no opportunity to show their power over a man

who despises them as renegades and whom, therefore, they hated. The public opinion of the frontier — the on growth of ignorance, credulity and selfish greed — more than assented to a plan to rid the country of one who while he lived, so great was he in fame and in fact, must forever stand as a reminder of wars past, and a threat of war to come. One of all these and other causes peculiar to the condition of things there localized some accidental and deplorable, others permanent and infamous, was born as Milton's Death was born, from Satan and Sin, the plot to kill him.

And so he was murdered.

His death is sad enough. It would have been sad to many of us who knew him as he was and admired him or what he was had he died in peace amid the remnants of his people and the mourning of his race. But killed as he has been in obedience to a conspiracy and as the outcome of a plot to make an end of him, untried by process of law, proven guilty of no crime, unconvicted of any overt act, we pronounce his killing a crime and his sudden removal in the manner and substance of it an outrage and a murder.

The Great Medicine Man

I knew this man; knew him in relation to his high office among his people and in his elements as a man. As to his office or rank I honoured him. He filled a station older than human records. As a man I admired him. He represented in person, in manners, in mind and in the heroism of his spirit the highest type of a race which in many and rare virtues stands peer among the nations of the world. As to his rank or official station, we whites called him Medicine Man. It is a name that does not name. It is and has been from the beginning of our intercourse with the red race a delusion and the source of delusion among even the scholarly. A word of truth as to this.

When the French first mingled with the aboriginals of this continent they found in each tribe a man honoured of all, in many respects greater than the greatest war chief. Of his rank there was no doubt. Of his functions only one was apparent; all others were hidden. They were connected with the religious rites and mysteries of a mysterious people. The one function of his high office that they could

apprehend the least of them all, as we now know in fact was this: he was the physician, the healer of his people. This they could see and understand and hence in their ignorance of his real office, of his nobler functions and rank, they named him the medicine man, and this misnomer clung to him and his office and has been perpetuated, blinding all eyes and hanging a veil of darkness between us and true knowledge.

But so the red men he, whom the whites in their ignorance misnamed the medicine man, the physician, the healer, was the prophet of God, as Samuel was to the Jews, holding the relation to the war chiefs that Joshua held to Moses, and holding to their religion and its rites the same great rank and office that the High Priest among the Jews held to the Temple.

The man, Sitting Bull was a war prophet, not war chief, to his people. The seer, in the line of a seers of a race, beside which, as to antiquity, the Jews are but mushrooms. What was the misnomer, a joke, a term of contempt to us in our ignorance of fact and ancient things, to the red men — for the term Indian as applied to them is also a misnomer and a proof of fourteenth century ignorance — was a rank above all ranks won or bestowed by the tribe; an office above all earthly offices, connected and symbolic of the highest truths and deepest mysteries of their religion.

The Counsellor of Chiefs

Hero, by virtue of his office, old custom and tradition, this man, Sitting Bull, was counsellor of chiefs, the Warwick behind the throne stronger than the throne, the oracle of mysteries and of knowledge hidden from the mass, hidden even from chiefs, to whose words of advice and authority all listened as to the last and highest expression of wisdom.

Such was Sitting Bull as to his office, as interpreted and understood from a standpoint of knowledge of the religion, the traditions and the superstitions of his people. That he was faithful to this high office all knew. That he was, in fact, counsellor of chiefs, that as Joshua did to Moses, so he in hour of battle upheld their arms till the sun went down and the battle was lost or won, let all who fought his tribe declare; that the gods of his race

found in him a high priest faithful so his trust none can ever deny. He lived and he has died a red man, true to his office and his race. That leaf of laurel none can deny to his fame — not even his renegade murderers.

But no office, however great, is as great as the man if he fills it greatly, and this man Sitting Bull was greater as a man than he was even as a prophet. I met him often; I studying him closely as one of intelligence studies the type of a race — I may add of a departing race, and I knew him well. And this I say of him. He was a Sioux of the Sioux, a red man of the red men. In him, his race, in physique, in manners, in virtue, in faults, stood incarnate. In face he was the only man I ever saw who resembled Gladstone — large featured, thoughtful grave, reflective, reposeful when [...] In wrath his countenance was a collection of unexploded and exploding thunder — the awful embodiment of measureless presence and power.

[one line obliterated in original] ...of low words, but state and low voiced. In moments of social realization he was companionable, receptive of humour, a genial host, a pleasant guest. In his family gentle, affectionate and not opposed to merriment. When sitting in council his deportment was a model: grave, deliberate, courteous to opponents, patient and kindly to men of lesser mind. I suggest that our Senators copy after him.

Eloquent and Proud

In pride he was equal to his rank and race, a rank to him level with a Pope's, and a race of the oldest and bravest in the world. Of venality I never saw one trace in him. [...partly illegible, compares Sitting Bull to Gladstone and Wesley] He was never over-dressed. He wore the insignia of his office, as a king his robes, or a judge his gown. In eating he was temperate; from spiritous drinks an abstainer. His word once given was a true bond. He was a born diplomat. No foe ever fathomed his thoughts. I have watched him by the hour when I knew his heart was hot with wrath, but neither from eye nor lip nor cheek nor nostril nor sinewy hand might one get hint of the storm raging within. There was no surface to him. He was the embodiment of depth.

Was he eloquent? What is eloquence? Who

may say — who may agree to it? Men tell me that Mr. Depew is eloquent, and that New Yorkers go wild with the glasses in front them when their Mr. Choats is speaking. I have read their words. Their eloquence is not that of the great Sioux Prophet. Here are some words of his. You can compare them with your orators' best.

“ You tell me of the Mohawks. My fathers knew them. They demanded tribute of them. The Sioux laughed. They went to meet them, 10,000 horsemen. The Mohawks saw them coming, made them a feast and returned home. You tell me of the Abenazis. They are our forefathers and the forefathers of all men. They were the men of the Dawn. They came from the East. They were born in the morning of the world. The traditions of my people are full of the Abenazis. They rocked the cradles of our race.”

“What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken? Not one. What treaty that the whites ever made with us red men have they kept? Not one. When I was a boy the Sioux owned the world the sun, the sun rose and set in their lands. They sent 10,000 horsemen to battle. Where are the warriors today? Who slew them? Where are our lands? Who owns them? What white man can say I ever stole his lands or a penny of his money? Yet they say I am a thief. What white woman, however lonely, was ever when a captive insulted by me? Yet they say I am a bad Indian. What white man has ever seen me drunk? Who has ever come to me hungry and gone unfed? Who has ever seen me beat my wives or abuse my children? What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own? Is it wicked in me, because my skin is red, because I am a Sioux, because I was born where my father lived, because I would die for my people and my country?”

“They tell you I murdered Custer. It is a lie. I am not a war chief. I was not in the battle that day. His eyes were blinded that he could not see. He was a fool, and he rode to his death. He made the fight, not I. Whoever tells you I killed the Yellow Hair is a liar.”

*Boissevain Globe, Jan. 14, 1891
BCA MG16/B12 Reel #1*

telegrammed Canadian authorities to warn them of the Sioux “warriors” now passing over the border into Canada. He advised our government to take immediate military action against the Sioux before they could disperse or raid Canadian settlements.

The Canadian response was that a single Mounted Police inspector and two constables were sent out from Regina to talk to the Sioux on Turtle Mountain. They travelled to Hadamanie’s camp on the Turtle’s Head, and returned a few days later. In passing through Deloraine and Boissevain, the Mounties issued a statement to the effect that they had a good discussion with the Sioux and that there would no problems. Nor were there.

The Globe suggested in an editorial that the Sheriff of Rollo should be sent a bill for the Mounties’ expenses.

The effect of the Medicine Line could not be more dramatically demonstrated.

The Indian Wars, fought by First Nations resisting the invasion of their lands by an alien society, had finally drawn to an end. The wars had continued virtually without interruption for almost 150 years. A resistance which had begun with Pontiac at Detroit and Michilimackinac, ended with the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee and the refugee flight to Turtle Mountain.

In anti-climax the Sheriff of Rollo, North Dakota,

Chapter Six: the Council in the 20th Century

Social Conflict

The decades leading up to and following from the Wounded Knee massacre were very hard ones for the Sioux. Out of 100 Santee Dakota lodges which originally made the migration in 1861-1862 from Minnesota with Hadamanie, only 30 remained to be counted by the Boundary Commission at Turtle Mountain in 1872. The mountain itself cannot support a large community on a permanent basis. From both Sioux Valley and Oak Lake we heard stories about “smallpox scares” used to discourage people from assembling at Turtle Mountain. The threat of disease and starvation was real enough.

Available sources agree that Hadamanie had four sons who could have been candidates for the role of Dakota Turtle Mountain Peace Chief (for lack of any better term.) Three died of tuberculosis (and possibly small pox.) In an interview Bill Moncur related that Sitting Eagle had stated his own father among them had died of “*tuberculosis and drink.*” The eldest of the four, left behind in Minnesota, had converted to become a Congregationalist minister. He was unsympathetic to the religious tradition represented by Hadamanie, referring in his own papers to his grandfather as “Rattler.”

In the 19th Century, the Mandans had been reduced from over 4,000 to barely 40, and then to nothing. Oral tradition has it that the last forty to survive the small pox were all men and without women the culture largely disappeared, absorbed into other Siouan Nations. Today, one American reserve makes the claim of representing the aggregate descendants of “Three Nations” including the Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan. The gene line is preserved even where the cultural continuity was broken.

LeBorgne, the ferocious grand chief of the Hidatsa whom Alexander Henry the Younger met in 1806, was apparently one of the survivors of the smallpox plague. Francis Parkman’s first-person memoir *The California and Oregon Trail* includes an account of meeting LeBorgne in 1847. Parkman did not know anything of the Cyclops’ earlier history, or even his ethnicity. When Parkman met LeBorgne, the latter was a respected elder, a quaint reminder of the past who lived in the Oglala Lakota camp led by The Whirlwind. Parkman did not realize that LeBorgne was not an Oglala, and Lakota was the language they used to communicate. The old tyrants and heroes both, were being forgotten.

The defeated War Chiefs and military societies were among the refugees and there may also have been some tension between the Dakota on Turtle Mountain

and the returned veterans of foreign wars, as it were. Inkpaduta II, with whom Hadamanie parted company thirty years before, was one of those not welcomed on the mountain. He had risen very high after Minnesota, becoming one of Crazy Horse’s lieutenant generals. Inkpaduta’s son Bear Bull is reputed to have been the warrior who gave Custer the killing blow. His tomahawk is today a treasured artifact among the Sioux Valley Dakota.

The earlier Killarney community history book, *Then and Now*, contains a reference to Inkpaduta’s flight northward in its oral history record.

After the massacre in Yellowstone, Montana, by the Indians, in 1876, General Custer’s horse and saddle were brought to Wakopa.

Then and Now, Fred C. Norris, p. 13.

A local joke has it that there are enough “Custer’s saddles” to equip Custer’s regiment. The importance of the story segment is that it indicates movement of people and material associated with the event, north across the border.

Dr. Lorenz Neufeld wrote this account of some of the peace faction - war faction politics, and how the issues became entangled with land use.

“Turtle Mountain Sioux chief Hydamani had been deeply worried over Caucasians moving into the area and cutting wood in “his mountain.” In February of [18]81 he’d filed a complaint with federal lands agent G. F. Newcome, who in turn wrote the surveyor general. Part of the letter read: ‘he and his son-in-law, an American Indian known as Big Nose, who took an active part in the massacre (Minnesota 1862) a few years ago, have demonstrated their intention to hold certain lands in this vicinity by setting up tents, erecting buildings and assuming a defensive attitude at the approach of white settlers. It is further alleged that Big Nose has sent for his band of 150 lodges to come across the International Boundary to aid and abet the effort to obtain a Treaty.’”

Lorenz Neufeld, Recorder Sept. 9, 1981.

BCA MG14/C68

Lorenz Neufeld believed that Land Agent New-

combe was confusing the two factions' objectives. He suggested that "Big Nose" was a mistranslation of Inkpaduta which literally means "Red Point" or "Red Top". Usually applied to the idea of his lance tip, Lorenz Neufeld was speculating the nickname was a uncomplimentary variation of this. However, a photograph of Inkpaduta II reprinted from *The Dakota Sioux in Canada* does show an enormous nose on the man.

In *Earth Elder Stories*, Alexander Wolfe recounted tales told to him by his grandfather Earth Elder (or Earth Man.) Earth Elder was a Saulteaux who died in the 1940's. Earth Elder was also an older brother of Yellow Calf. According to Earth Elder, their oldest brother was a chief. When the eldest died suddenly three of the brothers (including Earth Elder) refused to take up the hereditary chieftanship on the grounds that they were better at hunting than being a chief. Yellow Calf reluctantly accepted the post. Earth Elder described his younger brother as an impetuous chief, not as seasoned as the eldest brother would have been, but courageous to take on the position when so much was in confusion.

Earth Elder paints a much more complete picture of Yellow Calf, as a persistent advocate for his own people, as well as for First Nations in general. It is also clear from both Native and White testimonies that Yellow Calf played a significant role in *reducing* violence during the 1885 Northwest Rebellion.

Earth Elder described his brother as residing at Turtle Mountain for long periods of time, rather than for a short visit as implied in Yellow Calf's own letter to the lieutenant governor.

Yellow Calf reminded them that several winters had passed since the signing of the treaties. He and the other chiefs and headmen who had negotiated the treaties, had been given to understand that the Great Lady Chief in the land beyond the great waters would look after their needs, and that they, the Anishnaybak, must stop all hostility and live in peace with each other. It had been agreed that in the future none of their Indian children would ever be compelled to bear arms and to fight... "What was honourable in times past is now and in the future wrong because of our commitment to a treaty, as a people."

Earth Man said Yellow Calf had remarkable speaking abilities, as well as other great leadership qualities. When Yellow Calf made a statement it was direct, straight from the shoulder and final. His attitude was consid-



"Na-ja-ou, Sioux constable and head of the Sundance at Turtle Mountain. This could be one of the constables referred to by Laviolette as assisting Hadamanie and the Deloraine chief of police. Provincial Archives of Manitoba

ered radical because he spoke candidly about what he saw, and critically about his people's confinement within a reserve.

...The coalition of local government officials and the clergy caused him great concern. He saw the spiritual unity of his people, disintegrating, leaving them in a state of confusion and uncertainty. In view of these deteriorating conditions, Yellow Calf decided to depart from his people, rather than suffer further degradation under government and church pressures.

After leaving his people Yellow Calf lived for many years with the Chippewa people of the Turtle Mountains in North Dakota. He is remembered in that country as a very old man, an excellent storyteller, who was respected by many. Near the end of his days Yellow Calf returned to Canada to the reserve named after his old ally and relative, Chief Waywayseecappo. On the Waywayseecappo Reserve at Rossburn, Manitoba, the path of

the old man called Osowopeeshkez (Yellow Calf) came to an end. He was buried in the Presbyterian cemetery there.

Earth Elder Stories, p. 59

According to the historical evidence, and according to Bill Moncur's recollections of comments made by Sitting Eagle, there was a consistent policy of ejecting the war faction members from the mountain. Inkipaduta, said Moncur, was definitely among those made unwelcome by Hadamanie. As an in-law the contact in Dakota society between Inkipaduta and Hadamanie would have been kept properly at a minimum. As an ex-in-law this social constraint may have been eased, but the oral histories of both the Dakota and the White communities around Turtle Mountain suggest that relations between Hadamanie and Inkipaduta were never good.

The same oral histories place Inkipaduta in the Turtle Mountain area of Manitoba in the 1870 to 1890 period, but he is characterized as an itinerant. There are no "homes" of Inkipaduta as locations that have emerged in the oral history as of yet. In contrast, a few sites are popularly associated with Hadamanie. *The Trails Along the Pipestone* book specifically states that Inkipaduta was at the Oak Lake Reserve at some time, if however briefly.

Consequently, Inkipaduta, or at least his sons and other refugees, camped down on the flats on Cherry Creek rather than on the mountain. An incident in 1891 at one such refugee camp illustrated the tenor.

The *Boissevain Globe* of April 30, 1891 contained the following report.

WHISKEY AND SHOT GUNS

For several days there were a dozen or so Indians and squaws camped just west of the town, passing the time by coming in and taking jobs of cutting wood, scrubbing floors, etc. from those of our citizens who would thus engage them. Quietness appeared to reign in the wigwam until Wednesday night of last week, when there was an outbreak caused by the introduction of a little "fire water" amongst the braves.

In the party was a Sioux named Bear Bull, who had been through the Custer massacre, and a Cree named Standing Cloud, who began to quarrel, being influenced no doubt by the whiskey provided. They shot several times at each other with shot guns, and both were more or less wounded. Mary Good, better known as "Fat Mary," was shot in the hip by Bear Bull.

On Thursday after the shooting the Indians left for the reserve near Deloraine, and a day or two after the shooting was reported to the Mounted Police at Deloraine who went out and arrested the two Indians. It then leaked out from whom the Indians procured whiskey, and Sergt. Pennyfather came down to Boissevain on Sunday last and arrested Martin Delowrey, porter at the Ryan House, on the charge of selling liquor to the Indians.

Martin declared his innocence: but as the officer brought one of the Indians to identify him, there was no chance of escape. The sight of the Indian as "informer" so enraged Martin that he declared he would "kill him if it takes the last drop of blood in my veins." "Take him away," he exclaimed, "for I hate an informer." However, Martin was taken away and on Tuesday sentenced to six months imprisonment, his partial acknowledgement of his guilt, and also his contradictory statements being sufficient to convict him. The two Indians have been committed for trial.

BCA MG16/B12 Boissevain Globe fonds

Other sources say that Standing Cloud was a Sauteaux, or he could easily have been a little of both. In any event, the two men coming from Siouan and Algonquin backgrounds were as potentially inimical as Greeks and Turks or Jews and Arabs. The situation was charged.

According to Lorenz-Neufeld's account, several men from the camp were arrested once it was determined exactly who was involved in the incident. The authorities decided that Standing Cloud was simply a victim. Bear Bull received two years-less-a-day. He attempted suicide once while in prison, but recovered and was eventually released.

The Indian Affairs Black Files on the Turtle Mountain Sioux contain several pieces of correspondence concerning Standing Cloud which suggest that he was not so innocent a bystander. After the above incident, the Indian Agent at Birtle reported he'd received complaints from Chief Hadamanie that a Cree named Standing Cloud had been attempting to steal horses from No. 60 Reserve. Indian Affairs could do little, but the information was passed on to the provincial constable at Deloraine. The constable was more than likely already aware of the matter.

Despite the pacifying effect an intact Native society was able to have, the Canadian government was thrown into near panic by any hint of Native initiative. Instead of endorsing the Peace Chiefs and their policies,

Indian Affairs began pursuing the pagan conspiracies with a vengeance.

With the good times came the giveaways and the dancing, into which the Dakota entered with such enthusiasm that the local church officials were compelled to complain to the authorities. Not only were the Indians dancing on the reserve, but they were also moving into the towns, where they were “an annoyance to the respectable inhabitants.” When these complaints reached the Commissioner’s ears, he responded by sending them a clipping from a local newspaper, in which a committee of the “respectable citizens” announced their plans for Dominion Day celebrations featuring a “war dance” conducted by the Dakota. Reed pointed out the hypocrisy of the matter, and since at that time the Indian Department could not compel the dances be stopped, refused to do anything more. His refusal came in spite of Agent Markle’s more strident criticism deploring the dances and his suggestion that the department use a private detective agency to pursue the dancers. Reed’s money sense prohibited anything of that sort.

The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 81

Elias quotes this letter of Agent Markle, which is altogether too typical of the man Chief Hadamanie had come to despise.

The Sioux are particularly fond of dancing and spend entirely too much of their time and earnings at “pow-wowing,” which is the appellation given when conducted by Indians in their style. I have discouraged the continuation of this custom for the reason that Indians so engaged were wasting their time and earnings, and I failed to observe any benefits therefrom: also that the Indians who were most zealous to retain this custom were those strongly opposed to educational and Christian advancement, and I regret that the Indians under my charge receive so many invitations from the whites to attend celebrations, picnics and other gatherings to give such exhibitions, which, if accepted, usually take them off their reserves and away from their work for several continuous days, and encourage them to cling to customs that are neither elevating,

refining nor profitable.

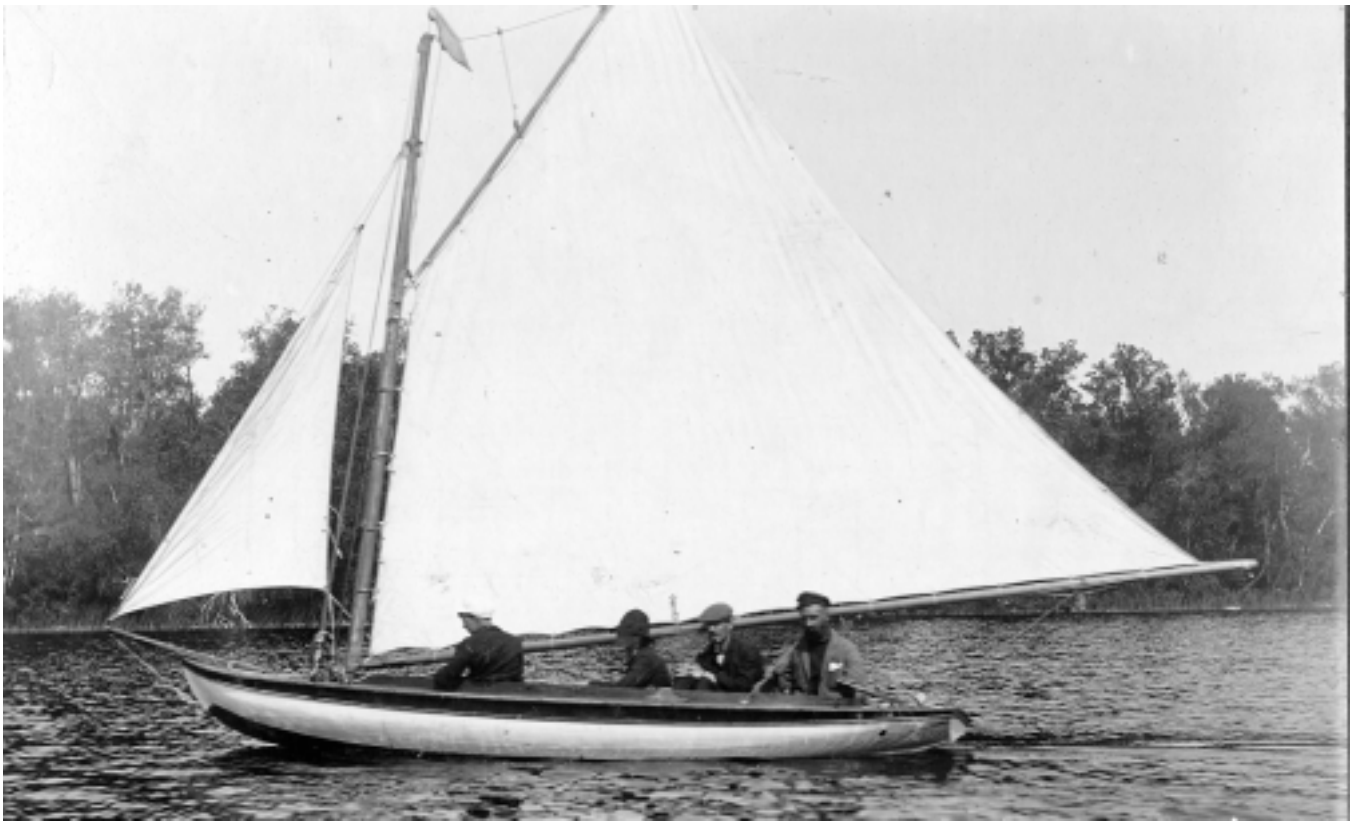
The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 104

The Council of Seven Stones on Turtle Mountain apparently reasoned along parallel lines to that of Markle, but had arrived at a different conclusion. They’d realized that the all the invitations to “celebrations picnics and other gatherings” were a possible route for preserving some elements of Native history and culture.

The camp referred to in the Boissevain Globe coverage of the Standing Cloud-Big Bear shootout was located somewhere in the western area of Boissevain, probably in the Cherry Creek valley. One of the likeliest spots for the location of the camp according to Bill Moncur was on or close to another local sacred spot, a great flat stone large enough to support a wagon and an eight-horse team. The coulee contains half-a-dozen catalogued archaeological occupation and manufacturing sites, and a reputed battle site in addition to being the site of Big Bear’s camp in 1891. It has always been a busy place.

Alice Selina Hurt (also called “Ailsa”) described the terrain before it was changed by the Boissevain townsite and Highway No. 10 in her first-person account of the Homestead Era, *Turtle Mountain Corduroy*. Hurt was one of the few Whites of her day to take an interest in the landscape in a way Native people could find *respectful*. She mentions no Native people by name in her memoir, but does note the presence of Native people in the Turtle Mountain she knew during the 1880 to 1930 period. Her father, a local character in his own right popularly known as “the Commodore”, operated and later owned the steam launch *Lady of the Lake* on Lake Max. Hurt must have had some intimate contact with Dakota people on Turtle Mountain because she called her favourite camping spot on Arbor Island by a family pet name — Nip-an-hoc-ah-tee-sun — “camp starving” in Dakota. She is also one of the conduits selected by the Council on Turtle Mountain for its artifacts. The pipe bag and cedar toque were handed over to Ailsa Hurt who in turn gave them to Bill Moncur when she left the Turtle Mountain region. Hurt saw the landscape south of Boissevain at the end of the Plains way of life. Her writing breathes with a sense that is not found in many of the first-person accounts from this era. In Ailsa Hurt, the elders on Turtle Mountain found a kindred spirit who was alive to the presence of the land, and to a intimation of something greater, even when considering only a rock or a piece of bone.

When I was a child the regular Sunday afternoon outing was to walk to the top of the



*Sacred spots and favourite camping locations of the Native people who occupied Turtle Mountain were given over in the late 19th Century to White immigrants. Lake Max with its ceremonial sites of Eagle Island and Arbour Island, became a cottage development as early as 1890. In the face of this cultural deluge elders on Turtle Mountain sought out sympathetic ears among the incoming White population to preserve stories, artifacts and sites. One of those brought into this confidence was Alice ("Ailsa") Selina Hurt, shown above in dark hat at centre in this 1900-era photo. Her father, Robert Hurt called "the Commodore", sits at the helm of this miniature schooner which Hurt built and sailed on Lake Max. He also constructed and operated the gasoline launch "the Lady of the Lake" which served as a taxi. Ailsa Hurt became one of the community's first local historians and recorded her reminiscences in Turtle Mountain Corduroy. Some Native legends, a few site locations, and several key ceremonial artifacts were preserved by Ailsa Hurt and deposited into the Boissevain Community Archives and Moncur Gallery. **BCA PG8/E11.***

"Big Hill" south of the village. Sometimes we would go on to the top of the next hill where there was a "buffalo wallow". It was almost hidden, overgrown with badger weed, wolf willow and tall grass. The scooped out wallow was about 20 feet across, with a huge rock in the middle. As there was no such rock anywhere on the prairie, it must have been brought there during the ice age.

I loved to climb about on the rock, tearing my stockings and dress as well as getting bruises and scratches. I did not mind because I had a vivid imagination, and could picture the great shaggy buffalo wallowing in the mud after a rain, rubbing against the rock to get the dead hair off their backs and shoulders.

How they must have revelled in the coolness of the mud!

There were numerous buffalo skeletons lying on the prairie, bleached white by the sun. We had eight or more skulls around the foundation of our house for many years.

The "Big Hill" is no longer big. It was graded down to form part of the famous "C to C" highway which when completed will run from the foot of the Statute [sic] of "Christ of the Andes" to Churchill, Manitoba, on Hudson Bay. This great highway has been nearly completed in Canada and South America. There is a road from the Pas, Manitoba, continuous as far as a point near Panama, and I understand there is also one from "Christ of

the Andes” to a point near Colombia, South America.

Building the #10 section of this great highway destroyed the buffalo wallow. Nothing is left of the great rock to mark the time when mighty herds of buffalo ranged and roamed over the prairies where Boissevain stands and great grain fields sweep away to the horizon.

Turtle Mountain Corduroy, Ailsa Hurt, pt.2-ch.5-pg.1

The same construction took out at least one mound and possibly more, the buffalo wallow as described by Hurt, and the great flat stone which could support a wagon and team. This last stone located on the Cherry Creek slope where it intersects Highway #10 is the same stone James McLaughlan broke up to make the “House Built of One Stone”. Ironically, in the obliteration of one heritage structure some of the material was preserved and carried over into another. The House Built of One Stone is a local heritage site today, part of the Boissevain historical walking tour, and is located directly west of the surviving grand mound in the middle of the town.

Although the idea of an International Peace Garden originated with American and Canadian horticulturalists, the location of the Garden was suggested by Boissevain Recorder editor William V. Udall and local doctor Francis Bird. Bird was Metis and as a town doctor had ample opportunity to pick up local lore. Udall himself had immigrated after 1900, but his wife was a Brondegeest. The Brondegeest family general store was located smack dab on top of the concentration of the Mandan Trail as it bends around the southeastern edge of Whitewater Lake. This is the same locale as Nimitaw School, named for the Dakota word for “council”. It is possible that Udall picked up local Native lore via the Brondegeests. It was said of John Brondegeest that he spoke seven languages, two of them Native American. Bill Moncur says this family was one of his early contacts, and in fact he made his Folsom point find on the Brondegeest property attesting to steady long term traffic through the area.

Even without a conscious transmittal of the information, the sequence of events unconsciously followed the old Native patterns on Turtle Mountain.

The International Peace Garden is near Boissevain. On top of Turtle Mountain. I was privileged to go on a drive through the bush searching for a spot that might be developed to take such an honoured position as a memorial to one hundred and fifty years of peace between two nations living side by side.

Mr. William Udall invited Dad [Robert Hurt] and me to go on this drive with him. It was a tour of discovery. We went over the most awful roads, really little more than old winter wood trails and deer paths. We drove through streams, over logs and trees, up hill and down dale. Often I expected the car to groan to a stop and break in half, but it was valiant and kept going.

We found numerous small lakes concealed in charming hidden valleys and among lovely rolling hills. Open spaces with distant vistas that took one’s breath they were so lovely. Everywhere showed the vast potential waiting to be developed. All natural, no need for man to make artificial beauty, here. It was all part of the Turtle Mountain that had been burnt over so long ago. The timber was all second growth, quite large and vigorous, ash, elm, birch, poplar, oak, alder and willow with fruit trees included.

Mr. Udall took the information he had gathered that day to the committee considering the Peace Garden project. He laid it all before them and a team of men able to evaluate the overall possibilities was sent out to look over the whole location. They were satisfied that it was an ideal spot, and lent itself to all the desired points, also had many other advantages. So the land we scouted that day was chosen for the International Peace Garden.

Turtle Mountain Corduroy, Ailsa Hurt, pt.2-ch.20-pp. 1-2

Hurt’s story, referenced to the other evidence, suggests the ceremonial importance of the pre-European Boissevain site. It also suggests an echo of a story that these sites lay on a early “road” which modern roadbuilding has followed in turn. This is confirmed in a story related by Turtle Mountain resident Walter Zeiler to the Boissevain Community Archives. In **BCA AV3/C10 Turtle Mountain Oral History Interview**, Zeiler responded to a direct question concerning the construction of Highway #10. Zeiler’s farm on Turtle Mountain is today intersected by Highway #10, has an archaeological designation as a camp site, and has been identified in this research as a ball game site. Zeiler related that the construction of Highway #10 through Turtle Mountain simply followed a road that he’d blazed during the 1930’s in exchange for taxes. By the 1930’s the forest had grown back and completely occluded many old trails. Zeiler was asked how he knew where to break the road through the bush and he replied that he simply followed “the old

Indian trails, but you had to know where they were.” Zeiler’s tax levy wagon road links the modern site of the International Peace Garden with the area described by Ailsa Hurt in Cherry Creek, immediately south of Boissevain. It is the route followed by No. 10 Highway.

A review of **BCA MG15/D1** *Town of Boissevain fonds* uncovered a June 2, 1936 letter from the Manitoba Department of Public Works to Boissevain asking for “men on relief” to be hired for work on the new Peace Garden Road which would follow Zeiler’s road allowance cut. The names of nineteen men are attached to a list from the R.M. of Morton which include at least one Native person, Necheeput, and three members of the Ducharme family: D[?], Alf, and Frank. The presence of the Ducharme family members links the Zeiler and Moncur narratives, as well as Alexander Henry the Younger’s travels since it was the grandfather of these men who guided the fur trader.

Zeiler’s archival interview also clarified a problem in Bill Moncur’s explanation of the acquisition of the ceremonial stone balls. Moncur had said he’d witnessed a bowling version of the ball game at the Zeiler site, and had recovered seven stone balls at another time from this same site. Followup interviews with Bill Moncur confirmed that the game had been witnessed in the 1920’s, but that the recovery of the balls had occurred at the instruction of the Council in about 1943 or 1944. In Zeiler’s interview it was revealed that the farmstead was not occupied by Whites until the Zeiler’s homesteaded the property in the early 1920’s. Although Walter Zeiler was somewhat feral himself, and was also a friend with Bill Moncur’s mentor Fred Ducharme, he was more distant from Native people. The occupation of the site by his family had interrupted its use for the ball game ceremonies. The recruitment of Moncur by the Council, and his acquaintance with Zeiler, made it possible to execute the recovery of the artifacts. In a more recent interview Moncur recalled that this had to be done under the nose of Walter Zeiler’s father, a difficult man. “*I just told him I was pickin’ rocks,*” recalled Moncur.

Birth and Death of I.R. #60

Only one of the Dakota bands which settled in Canada elected the ancient arts of hunting, fishing and trapping as the basis for an economic strategy. The band was headed by H’damani, who had crossed into Canada in late 1862 and taken up residence in the Turtle Mountains after having entered into an

agreement with the Ojibwa that permitted him to take the lands for his own use. By 1911, the band and the reserve that it occupied had been obliterated by the Department of Indian Affairs and little was left to document its existence. The destruction of the band broke the continuity of tribal history, so that all that remains today in the living memory of the Dakotas is a general awareness of ancestorship. The band was never large, and over the years relentless pressure from the Indian Department forced one or two families at a time to abandon the Turtle Mountains. These families and their children were absorbed into the communities they joined, and detailed recollections by the Older Ones faded. But the story of their existence and eventual dissolution can be pieced together, particularly from records concerning the land in the Turtle Mountains.

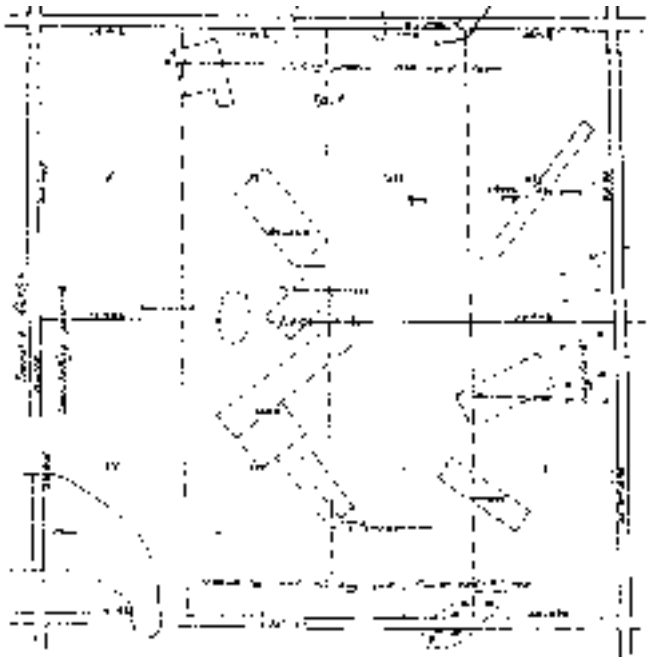
The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 131

Hadamanie arrived on Turtle Mountain sometime after 1861. In 1872 the course followed by the Boundary Commission intersected the Dakota camp, (and therefore the hypothetical Council on Turtle Mountain.) Hadamanie negotiated on behalf of his own small group for rights to the small strip of land allotted to them by “the chief warrior of the Ojibway” in 1862; but he also negotiated for settlements on behalf of other Dakota, then flooding into Canada.

Laviolette noted that Morris signed an agreement with “*Turtle Mountain chiefs Running Grizzly Bear and Young Chief,*” and later that these two represented 150 Dakota. Laviolette observed that their requests were “*identical to that of H’damani.*” Young Chief pops up later, but there’s no mention of Running Grizzly Bear elsewhere, and one wonders if it wasn’t simply a mistranslation in the correspondence — ‘travelling rattle’ changed to ‘running grizzly’.

George Hill, the mysterious trader, wrote on behalf of Hadamanie to Lt. Gov. Morris in 1874. Captain Cameron also wrote to explain the presence of George Hill. Both quotes below come from *The creation of Turtle Mountain Indian Reserve No. 60* by Lorenz Neufeld, printed in the Boissevain Recorder, May 27, 1981.

“I Aahamamne — a Dakota of the Mockatow Band — desire to have the grant of land from the Queen which is to be given to each of us in the Turtle Mountain, in a part where you think the land is good. I speak for

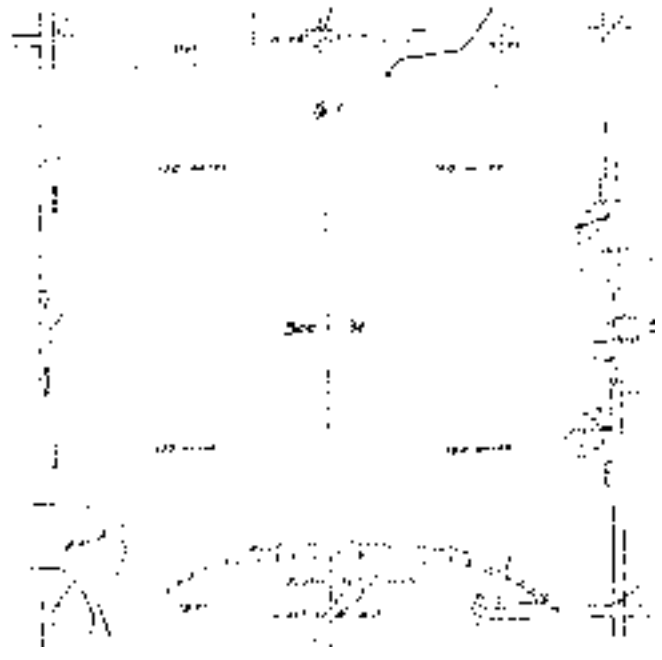


Copy of the 1909 Survey of Turtle Mountain Reserve #60 showing the subdivision into 80 acre plots. Surveyed in a wet year, a pond adjoining Stovin Lake is shown extending into the southwest corner of the property. This was "the Bay" referred to in Indian Affairs files. Neither map shows the "cemetery." **NAC Indian Affairs Black Files, 1909 Surrender**

myself and my three sons. We have been in this place for 12 years. I saw the Ojibway here and gave him four horses and five sacred pipes. The chief warrior of the Ojibway gave the Turtle Mountain to me and my people. I want some land from the Queen for myself and my three sons — and at present know not where they intend to send us. If you will let what I say be known, and tell me what they say, I would be very grateful. My God hears what I say.... He who has plenty of food feels well and we want a little more flour to keep us from feeling bad. What you told us at this place was that when we got out of anything you would send us more. Also, some of the goods we are in need of. If you intend to send us the flour... you might bring out loads on flat sleds. What you think of this I don't know but will be satisfied with what you say. What I say now is we are comfortable and our hearts are good."

Captain Cameron wrote of George Hill...

"...under my instructions, has been residing with the Sioux Indians of Turtle Moun-



Copy of the 1910 Survey of Turtle Mountain Reserve #60 showing the reallocation of land pending auction as farmland. Surveyed in a drier year, the Bay had begun to recede. This map more clearly shows the "foot." The Surveyor-General of Canada was troubled by the implicatons of this second survey. **NAC Indian Affairs Black Files, Reserve Auction**

tain, about 100 miles west of Pembina. Mr. Hill was directed to cultivate the friendly feeling which the Sioux has evinced towards the British Boundary Surveying party during last year's operations. Upon a continuance of that friendliness will depend the prosecution of the boundary survey westward during the present year."

The historical Dakota were a male dominated society and the women seldom appear in the records. Hadamnie asked for land for his "three sons", but by 1872 all three were dead, exclusive of the one turned Congregationalist minister whom he'd disowned. He was in effect asking for property on behalf of the widows and families, one of which contained the young future Sitting Eagle.

The same article noted that 34 heads of families signed the petition in 1877 asking for a reserve on Turtle Mountain. On June 26, 1877, Morris wrote to the Federal Minister of the Interior, John A. Macdonald, to ask for reserves at Oak Lake and Turtle Mountain. The Federal government, largely oblivious to the politics and conflicts that tore the Siouan Nations apart for a hundred years, could not understand why the Dakota didn't just

lump in with the Cree or Saulteaux, or at least live in one big Dakota group. But Morris and other wiser heads eventually prevailed. Reserves were created at Long Plain, Sioux Valley and Oak Lake. Turtle Mountain came last, officially, and was created under unusual circumstances.

The Dakota reserves in Canada were not created by treaty, but by orders-in-council. Whether or not the Federal government consciously recognized a council at Turtle Mountain, it was tacitly accepting the Council's interpretation that the Algonquin and Assiniboine nations had concluded treaties with the Crown, while the Dakota were there at the sufferance of the other First Nations.

After Manitoba became a province and Lieutenant Governor Adams Archibald took office, the Santees began to frequent the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Garry. The primary attraction was that Archibald had been empowered to deal with Indian concerns. Wambdi-ska and Ta-niyan-hdi moved from the Souris River and Turtle Mountains to Poplar Point. They were the first Dakota chiefs who wanted to secure reserve lands to settle on permanently.

The only previous surrender of land in Manitoba had been made by the Ojibwes and Crees in 1817 to Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk. The Crown had reserved the exclusive right to treat the surrender of Indian lands, a question of great importance and interest to the Red River colony. The Santees claimed part of the British Northwest but they were unpopular with the Canadian Indians. The conflict of interests ultimately brought about a union of the Ojibwes, Crees and Assiniboines in a bid to expel the Dakotas from the country. The Tetons also had laid claim to territory in the Canadian Northwest as a traditional hunting ground, however the validity of their claims to British territory was more questionable.

Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Laviolette, pp. 160-161

Chief White Cap advised Lieutenant Governor Archibald at Fort Garry [in 1870] to inform him that the Dakotas had made peace with the Metis, the Ojibwes, the Crees and the Assiniboines."

Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Laviolette, p. 162

In 1886 one section of land on the northern slope

No.	Names	Age	Sex	Total	Remarks	
1	Hadamane	22	M	22	Includes his wife (the boy and wife)	
2	Bogoga	11	M	11		
3	Saukaneapi or Kogokhipe	11	M	11	all the family (wife & children) girl married	
4	Wahlanahdi	11	M	11	1 boy his name is [unclear]	
5	Hinkanawanna	11	M	11	2 years in reserve girl married the boy	
6	Wahga Kogoga	11	M	11	The old woman is wife brother	
7	Wahshi-tika	11	M	11	Man dead under [unclear]	
8	Huwaka-huwaka	11	M	11	Man	
9	Saukaneapi	11	M	11	Man getting [unclear] wife great [unclear]	
10	Wahganah Kogoga	11	M	11	Man [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] The old man is [unclear] father	
11	Saukaneapi	11	M	11	Man [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]	
12	Wahshi-tika	11	M	11	Man [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]	
13	Huwaka-huwaka	11	M	11	Man [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]	
Total					45	See [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]

Reproduction of the 1908 Indian Affairs census of Turtle Mountain Reserve No. 60. Had the Dakota been treated as Treaty Indians this group of 45 people would have been entitled to 2 1/4 sections. Had the Dakota been treated as Homesteaders, this group of 13 adult males would have been entitled to 3 1/4 sections. (Had the Census been conducted earlier the population would have been greater.) Treated as US Refugees the band received 1 section of land which was then taken away in 1910. **National Archives of Canada, Indian Affairs "Black Files" fonds.**

of the Turtle's Head was finally surveyed and ownership assigned to the families of Hadamanie's band. This reserve was also created by an order-in-council. Even more unusual, it was not created as common land in the manner of most Native reserves. Instead, it was subdivided into 80 acre plots, with each plot assigned to one family head. (This was also done at some of the other Dakota reserves.) It was believed that this would facilitate liquidation.

Chief H'Damani who had crossed the Canadian boundary in 1862 with twenty-eight families first set up camp in the Turtle Mountain area, southeast of Deloraine. Following a peace agreement made with the Turtle Mountain Ojibwes made years before, the Dakotas felt safe from the United States Cavalry. The people lived off the abundant natural resources, hunting, trapping and fishing.

Many Dakotas travelling in and out of Canada to the United States, were coming to the reserve and receiving the hospitality they expected. Unwelcome individuals were not allowed to remain as H'damani expelled them himself. When the aging chief was no longer able to do this on his own, he asked for help from the provincial constable from Deloraine with whom he enjoyed amicable relations.

Dakota Sioux in Canada, Gon. Laviolette, p. 248

Hadamanie's band had been in occupation for 25 years, if not more, and yet all the Federal government would permit was a temporary arrangement of individual plots. From 1886 to 1909 pressure was maintained on the band to sell the plots and move to one of the other Dakota reserves, usually Oak Lake or Sioux Valley.

One of the letters preserved in the Indian Affairs files Black Files, conveys the concerns of the Yankton Nakota who had come across as refugees. The speaker and the writer may be a little unsure of English, but they are confident of their names, places and events. The letter also reads in a manner to suggest that the writer has been learning English from a bureaucrat.

Deloraine, Manitoba

Aug. 25, 1892

Dear Sir,

I am going to write for you today last summer you told us, you will give us a land and we went at Moose Mountain. But that time Major J. A. Markle [Indian Affairs] he told us to give us ration But he fool to us and we had no something to eat Therefore we had come back at Town, because we want to work in Town But That is land we have remember all the time Because we have think you never have to fool us but last time we have no [in]terpret[er] because we can no talked to you anything about the land. But we want you rapidly to remit a land for us now. Therefore we want hurry to take land We have a great many children those all we wish to go to school.

Thirty years now we have been in the Queen lands. Aug. 25, 1874 That time one man name is D. R. Cameron [Canadian Boundary Commissioner] in the Wood Mountains he told me I can to have lands anywhere in the Queen land x he told me I can have ration anything I want to be issue, he says your Sons or Daughters They all can go to School in the Queen lands. other man the same say his name L. N. F. Crozier [NWMP] at Fort Walsh when man [?] in July 12, 1877. Therefore always We have been in the Queen lands & always we wait for the Queen When have to give reservation for us, They all one tribe name Yanktonais But this time we want you to tell the Queen about this letter. Will you please give us answer, shall what you have to do for us please write in the

Oaklake Mani

Chief Two dogs

Hehokaha wasto [Good Elk]

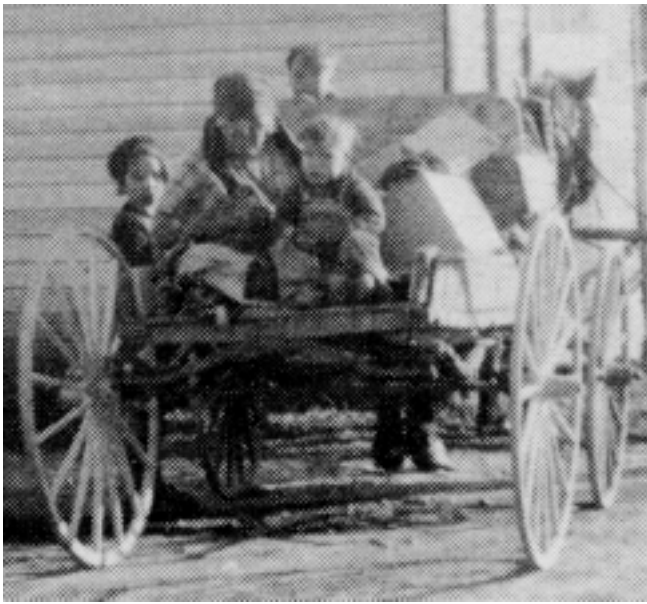
NAC Indian Affairs Black Files fonds.

Both of these individuals are named in the 1908 Indian Affairs Census of No. 60 Turtle Mountain Indian Reserve as resident but not band members. Neither of them appears to be on the 1877 list of band members with Hadamanie, but then neither is Hadamanie's name.

Divided Soul

The Sioux already divided between peace and war, now found themselves divided between Indian and White economies, and between the Medicine Wheel and Christian religions. To make matters worse, the Christians themselves were divided between Catholics and Protestants. Hadamanie's eldest son became a Congregationalist minister. Another Sioux, John Thunder, was an influential minister at Oak Lake Reserve. (In different sources Thunder is referred to as being Methodist, Congregationalist or Presbyterian. These are all Calvinist sects which eventually joined on the Prairies to become the United Church of Canada. Crossover between these sects was not uncommon, even before Church Union.)

Scots Presbyterian minister Rev. A. F. Mackenzie organized an interdenominational mission school on Reserve No. 60. Ironically, some of the Hebridean and Highland Scot families that came to the district had been Christianized for less time than some of the Sioux. Presbyterian missionaries were still going into unreformed Celtic traditional communities as late as the early 1800's. In Ireland, food offerings at sacred wells continue into this century. To the Sioux, the Scots must have seemed a



Photograph of Winona, first wife of Charlie Chaske, with children taken in Pipestone circa 1910. Trails Along the Pipestone

strange mirror, with their clans, warriors and thinly veiled animism. In 1892 not all Scots immigrants in the Turtle Mountain region spoke English.

Hadamanie resisted this too. When the interdenominational Christian mission closed due to lack of funds in 1895, after three years of operation, the children were sent to residential school, except as the Globe reported, those under the care of Hadamanie.

This conflict would return to plague Hadamanie. Rev. Mackenzie had appointed a US Lakota missionary, John Thunder, as the teacher of Christian Endeavour School. As a new convert, Thunder was enthusiastic and eager to suppress any trace of the old religion, referring to Hadamanie's holding of traditional Sun Dances and Pow Wows as "wickedness." He seems to have been employed by whichever Calvinist sect had a program going at the time: Congregationalist, Presbyterian or Methodist. Most of the allusions to dissent on the reserve that appear in later Indian Affairs documents are directly attributable to John Thunder's letters. Thunder's influence was further enhanced by his frequent service as translator for Indian Agents.

The unknown author of the Oak Lake Sioux Band article in *Trails Along the Pipestone* recalled the local history and perspective on the problems of education and community faith.

Long ago, education to the native person was everything around him... the earth, water, animals, birds and plants. In order for him to survive, he had to understand nature. The

native child got his education from his parents. It was not as it is today. It was passed down from the elders, through stories, legends, and folklore. The first [permanent] school was built in 1951 when Mr. Kenneth Eastman was chief. It was built by the Presbyterians, but the Chief called all his people together and told them that both Catholic and Presbyterian children would go to school there. Later on, having a new Chief on the reserve, a Catholic teacher was hired. However, the people started having problems so the school was closed down and the children sent to Virden school. This was the start of integration between Indian and non-Indian schools. Today the school is being used for the Band Office.

[one paragraph on language omitted]

For native people the Great Spirit guides us in our daily life. In this context it involves the pipe, different dances and respect for nature and fellow brothers. Before the arrival of the European missionaries, the Indian people worshipped one God. Through personal communications and sacred ceremonies with the use of the Pipe and Sweet Grass, the Indian people worshipped God. All ceremonial rights, sacred songs and prayers were celebrated for this one God known as Wankan Tanka. The well-intentioned missionaries made attempts to discourage the religious beliefs of the Indian people, not realizing that these beliefs and culture were a way of life. No form of life, be it a plant, animal, bird or fish was taken without thanksgiving and prayer. This was lost with the introduction of the European religious teachings. A Presbyterian preacher from the United States [John Thunder,] with his wife Ihawastewin came in 1910 and he and his followers built a church. By 1919 no one was going to church and the religion faded. The church was sold to a farmer Mr. Van Loo, about two miles north of the reserve. It is still there today... The other church which was established was the Roman Catholic... that church is closed today but both denominations carry on, the Presbyterian in their church and the Catholics use the culture building.

Trails Along the Pipestone, pp. 332-333

There was really no policy in Indian Affairs to suppress the Medicine Wheel other than a general policy

that most things Indian were bad and most things White were good. Few Indian Affairs agents knew enough about Native religion to discern one sect from another, much less appreciate or care about doctrinal disputes. Native religions were suppressed under the general definition of "superstitions." Ostensibly this was done for political reasons because White governments feared an "Indian uprising." In other words, the policy of suppression was directed at a *fantasy* of Native culture, though real people suffered for it. Native communities were alternately subjected to the tyranny of white collar criminals such as Markle or puritanical theocrats like Hollies.

For many years the agent responsible for the Standing Buffalo Reserve was J. B. Lash, and he was no Markle or Hollies. His rare comments on the dances were not complimentary, but he observed that the band was self-sufficient and, if they wanted to dance it was their concern, especially since at that time there were no laws prohibiting the dances. The only aspect of dancing to which he objected was what he called the "torture" parts of the sun dance. When, by the end of the 1890's fewer men were submitting to the sacrifice, his criticism ended. Lash was more concerned with the Cree sun dances, where the sacrifice was an integral part of the ritual. The Dakota attended the Cree sun dances when they were held, but only rarely assembled the great celebrations themselves. There were, and are today, considerable differences between the sun dance as practised by the Cree and by the Dakota, and the Standing Buffalo people made no attempt to remake the ceremony in a Dakota image. In their turn, the Dakota regularly invited Cree from far and wide to attend their wacipi and giveaways, notably less traumatic events for sensitive Indian department personnel. So long as the agent did not make an issue of the dances and giveaways, there was no pressure on the band to mend their ways.

This came to an end when the department introduced laws in the 1890's for the purpose of suppressing the sun dance, giveaways, and other dances and religious ceremonies. Active enforcement began in 1901, when the Indian Act was revised to include the new laws. The department hired a young man of the Dakota band, a recent graduate of the Qu'Appelle Industrial School for Indians, to

assist the agent in identifying and prosecuting those who conducted the dances. Thirty men of the band sent a petition to the Indian commissioner, asking that the informer be sent away from the reserve, as his only function there was "to find the least little thing to put someone in jail."

Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 160

One of the rationales used for the ultimate break-up of Reserve No. 60 was the alleged dissent and bickering on the reserve. Hadamanie's reputation today among Dakota appears to be one of a tough guy who gave people the choice of "my way or the highway." Be that as it may, the Department of Indian Affairs deliberately introduced a disruptive element into the Birtle Agency in the form of missionary John Thunder.

Pipestone, Manitoba

May 23, 1898

To the Indian Department, Ottawa

Dear Sir

Three families of Turtle Mountain Sioux Reserve have been moved onto the Pipestone Reserve which is under my missionary Charge. Those three families have been found out that, that reserve have because useless within some years ago is every bad Indians from American side who came there very often and carried on evil practises.

And, I found meself ever since this last winter it was that reserve [is] nothing but dancing ground. Bighorn Indians and Half-breeds are gathering up during this whole winter. Great annoying to those who are trying to do right, at last they could not stand and moved here.

Three families remain there yet, namely, "H'damani," "Bogaga," & "Tatonka nopa" which are equal to those disgraceful Indians.

In my humble opinion that reserve should not [be] allowed for reserve there any further.

Nearly hundred Indians that now already to do the tame souls [or perhaps "save souls"?].

I remain my dear Sir,

John Thunder

NAC Indian Affairs "Black Files" fonds

The atmosphere of corruption in the Agencies of the 1870's and 1880's had been replaced by an equally destructive atmosphere of righteousness in the 1890's and 1900's.

In the spring of 1907, J. Hollies was assigned as sub-agent at the Oak River Reserve. Two years earlier, Oak River, Oak Lake and Turtle Mountain reserves had been reorganized into a single agency, called the Griswold Agency, under the direction of a sub-agent. The move was prompted largely by the bands' success, which in the past had served as a trigger for the Department of Indian Affairs to intervene more directly in their business. Inspector Marlatt objected to the appointment, saying that Hollies was "not acquainted with Manitoba agricultural work."

The sub-agent had an ally in the Reverend John Thunder, the Presbyterian missionary at Oak Lake, who could see an incompatibility in the level of his people's economic progress and their level of moral and spiritual development. In particular, Thunder objected to the Dakota's dances, especially the giveaway.

Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 117

Hollies detailed his efforts to suppress the Medicine Wheel religion in a letter to Lieutenant Governor David Laird dated April 2, 1908.

I sent for the Chief [of Oak Lake] one evening to come and see me as I wanted to have a private talk. However, the Chief who is a Christian refused to come alone, but collected all of the Christians and Missionary [John Thunder] at the Agency office, and what was to be a private talk, became a meeting. No good came out of it, except, when each man was asked to give what he considered the best method of ending the pagan feasting and dancing said he would leave it to the Agent to stop it as he (the Sioux) had no place.

The Chief, who was the complainant to the matter, [contradicting the opening paragraph,] resembled the rest in leaving it to the agent. So much for the Christians. Another evening within a week after, the Pagan leaders, who had heard of the other meeting, called on the Missionary and said he was wanted by the Agent, and with him, brought an interpreter to the office without the slightest notice to me. At once, with oily sweet words and savoury wishes, declared their intention on behalf of the Pagans, for the future, of going to church every Sunday, of making large subscriptions

to the new stone church building in prospect. All the Pagans would combine in making the crooked straight, they would moreover build a boarding school for all the children so they could be fed and instructed! I was astounded! The Sioux millennium was at hand! And after a pause, the next speaker said the funds to be collected for all these things would be \$50 each collection and was already arranged for and to be handed over and given to the Missionary for the church! It would be collected from the attendance at each Pagan feast and dance! I stopped further proceedings by reading Sect. #149 of the Indian Act! with the comment that the law is made for all and all had to keep it. The Agent. The Missionary. The Commissioner! Even the King was under the law! And so were they! All must keep the law!

It was their turn to be astonished! Who had made the law? was asked in great surprise! I said "The Government." It was the best I could do for a short answer! The law was read by the interpreter once more! Then I was asked to lend "The Indian Act" which I did for one day! They departed! and thus ended abruptly another Nicodemus meeting! Truly the Sioux are an extraordinarily busy and fertile-minded people! I report these meetings to show the workings of the Sioux mind.

*Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. 121
also NAC Indian Affairs "Black Files" fonds*

And so, in order to better suppress "paganism," Hollies sabotaged the financing of a church, the funding of a school, and an early childhood nutrition program. Correspondence in the Indian Affairs Black Files sheds light on the fate of the school and discloses that Hollies' superiors did not want a functioning school for Native children anywhere near Turtle Mountain. The families were to be forced to move, and education and food would detract from that objective.

The Last Council

The Council of All Nations, or Council of Seven Stones, as presented here passed through several distinct phases. In its early history it was concerned primarily with protecting trade routes, and was not adverse to military intervention when necessary.

For the last half of the Nineteenth Century, the Council was preoccupied with ending the Indian Wars, getting people settled, and doing whatever was possible

to mitigate the “White problem.”

A probable member of the Council of Seven Stones on Turtle Mountain during the last half of the 19th Century was the Saulteaux chief Yellow Calf. Contemporary with Yellow Calf, Piapot is a very good candidate for having been a member of this Council.

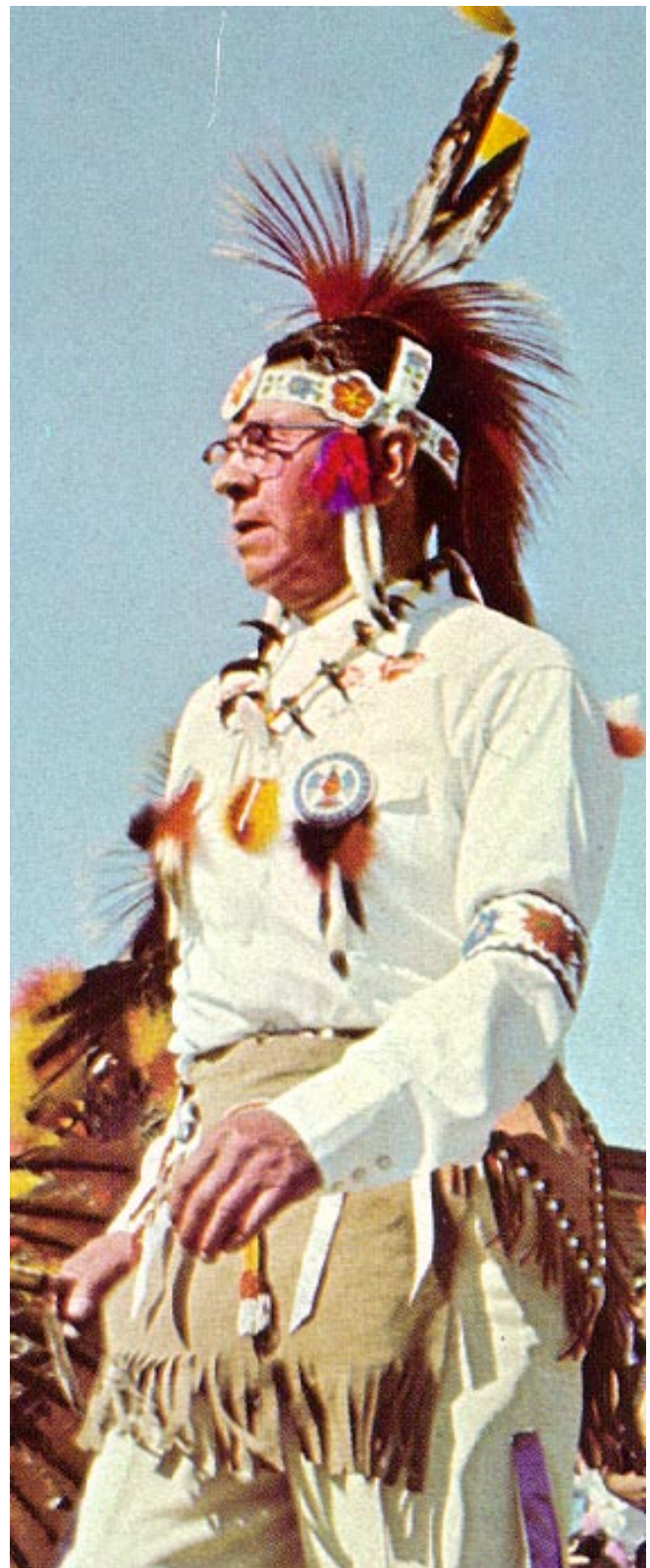
Yellow Calf’s brother, Earth Elder, hinted at the ceremonial importance of Turtle Mountain while at the same time deflecting attention from it.

When they were hungry and desperate, spiritual instinct sometimes led grandfather and other Indians to the place called Peeshkeekatat (Lodge of the Buffalo), where Grandfather Buffalo dwelt. This hill stands alone on the Dakota plains in central North Dakota. To the west, Grandfather said, is a great ridge reached only after many days of travel across the plains and along many ridges of hills. When one views this great ridge in the distance from the east, past midday it looks like a dark low cloud on the western horizon. This darkness, he said, is created by the trees of many different kinds which grow there. Grandfather and his people often went to hunt there because there was much game in this place, known today as the Cypress Hills in southwestern Saskatchewan.

Earth Elder stories, p. 67

Viewing the Cypress Hills “from the east” does not put the observer in central North Dakota, it puts you in southeastern Saskatchewan. When Earth Elder’s map is overlaid on a topographic map, it is possible for the Buffalo Lodge to align with Turtle Mountain (depending on scale,) and the eastern end of Earth Elder’s wanderings would be a loop through the Upper Missouri and Turtle Mountain region. Even more likely, Buffalo Lodge Hill is Buffalo Butte in North Dakota, one of the horizon ceremonial sites southwest of Turtle Mountain. Either way it affirms that a seasonal ceremonial site for the Saulteaux was at the point of their intersection with the Mandan Trail and that the eastern rim of their migratory circle touched upon Turtle Mountain and the Turtle Mountain buffalo herd.

This story of Earth Elder’s places Yellow Calf at Turtle Mountain on a seasonal basis. The Indian Affairs files puts Yellow Calf in touch with a large and varied group of contacts at Turtle Mountain for a few days at a time. The time discrepancy suggests a measure of secrecy on the part of Yellow Calf, at least insofar as Indian Affairs is concerned.



Chief Patrick Gourneau, also known as “Aun nish e naubay” — roughly “original person”, a term not usually used as a personal name. Gourneau may have played a role in relationship to Chief Little Shell as Bill Moncur played to Sitting Eagle. North Dakota Tourism, 1961.

Piapot's possible candidacy is suggested firstly by his personal qualifications. He was raised alternately by Dakota and Cree.

Path Maker, the Assiniboine chief and historian, said that Piapot was a mediator between different groups, that he led a bi-lingual band of mixed Assiniboine and Cree, and that he was a steady counsel against rash actions. Piapot counselled against participation in the 1885 Northwest Rebellion. The Carry-the-Kettle Band in Saskatchewan are the principal inheritors of Piapot's legacy.

Katherine Pettipas summarized Piapot's character qualifications to be a spiritual leader in her book *Severing the Ties that Bind*.

Kisikaw-awasis's [Flash-in-the-Sky-Child] early years proved to be as turbulent as the conditions accompanying his birth. One day, tragedy struck when warriors returned to the camp unsuspectingly carrying smallpox with them. The disease took its toll on the village, but kisikaw-awasis and his grandmother were among the survivors. Shortly after, they were captured by a raiding party of Dakota warriors and were taken to Montana, where they lived with the Dakota. When the boy was about fourteen, these Dakota were in turn raided by the 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, kisikaw-awasis was renamed nehiyawipwat, or Sioux Cree. He was given the nickname of Payepot or Hole in the Sioux, since he was knowledgeable in the ways, or "secrets" of the Dakota enemy.

Severing the Ties that Bind, Katherine Pettipas, pp. 9-10

Popularly Piapot is translated colloquially as "knows the secrets of the Sioux" but literally could be translated as "hole in the stone" or "secret of the stone." Pettipas also states that Piapot "sat in the council of the Rattler's Society Warriors' lodge." She did not attribute the source of this particular statement, but included in her bibliography of first-person sources is Abel Watetch. The pun on the word stone is a weak pointer to a membership in the Turtle Mountain Council, but Abel Watetch's unabridged remarks provide stronger evidence.

As he [Piapot] grew to manhood he proved to be remarkable in many ways. He was a famous warrior, a revered Medicine Man, a great horse thief, bringing in many fine horses for



*Chief Little Shell, the last hereditary chief of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa. Little Shell led the band at the conclusion of their independent period in the last quarter of the 1800's. He protested against the ceding of territories west of the Mississippi, and did not assume any official role after 1888 when the band signed a treaty with the US covering its territory in the southern Turtle Mountain region. Little Shell probably sat in Council with Hadamnie and later Sitting Eagle. This photo was picked out by Bill Moncur from a selection of contemporaries of Sitting Eagle as a face he remembered from the Council meetings in 1942-1944. **Photo from Gourneau. Original photo by James H. Howard, 1952.***

the use of the band. And he was also a man of vision and wisdom and was called to sit on the council of the Rattler's tepee, the council of the bravest. In the rain dance he acquired a reputation for magic in rain making.

"Payepot the Sioux-Cree Chief" as recalled by Abel Watetch in I am an Indian, editor Kent Gooderham, pp. 66-67

Bill Moncur confirmed that the Rattler's Teepee was a term used for the Council on Turtle Mountain. A reference to the bravest of the brave probably refers to diplomats such as Le Petit Sonnant who were willing to walk into enemy camps without their weapons. Watetch is not referring to a warrior's society but to the Council of Seven Stones — Piapot knows the secrets of the stones, as well as the secrets of the Sioux.

Incidentally it also raises the question of whether Rattler or Sitting Eagle was the senior title. Equally it may not matter and the terms may have been to some extent interchangeable, as indeed we know Tanner's chief of the mountain in 1815 used both titles.

By the turn of the last century the Mandan trade route was no more. It had been replaced by a global pattern of trade in which Natives would eventually also take part. Under Sitting Eagle, from 1913 to 1944, the Council entered a tidying up phase. It is probable that hereditary chiefs such as Little Shell of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa, and George Gillette of the Three Affiliated Nations (Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan) were members of the Council with Sitting Eagle.

The Indian Wars had ended, at a nearly catastrophic price. However, all of the nations connected to the Council at Turtle Mountain had been settled successfully on reserves. The Cree and Ojibway had negotiated more-or-less sound treaties which perhaps would serve them better in the future than they would at the outset.

The principal remaining questions for the Council were the general issues of abuse and loss of tradition — the aftermath of too much war and famine for too long a period. The Council may have felt that each individual nation was better equipped to deal with reducing violence and ending abuse. The Council probably never played any great role in internal affairs of the various First Nations.

So far as the traditions were concerned, again, each First Nation was managing to preserve something of their culture. The issue which occupied the Council's attention in 1942 was how to preserve the overall history of their international accomplishment, and the traditions which accompanied them.

In discussions with Dakota, Lakota and Cree advisors there emerged the theory that the Council would have tried to manage the change from oral lore to written history; as well as ensuring where possible that sacred sites surrounding Turtle Mountain were preserved. This idea was suggested by Bill Moncur as the reason Sitting Eagle and the Council were concerned that Moncur visited such sites as the Zeiler ball game area, Sour-



“George Gillette, chairman of the Fort Berthold Indian Tribal Business Council, weeps as Secretary of the Interior J. A. Krug signs a contract confirming the sale in 1948 of 155,000 acres of the North Dakota reservation's best lands for the Garrison Project... Of the sale, Gillette said, ‘the members of the tribal council sign this contract with heavy hearts... right now the future does not look so good to us.’” **from Native Americans: An Illustrated History.**

According to Chief Gorneau's history, by this sale the Chippewa and Three Affiliated Nations gave up access to and control of the southern Turtle Mountain region. Gillette objected to but could not stop the transfer.

George Gilette, or a brother, was one of those recognized by Bill Moncur in interviews, as having been present at ceremonies or councils on Turtle Mountain.

isford and the Chain Lakes. On the suggestion of Deloraine based historian Bob Crawford we visited the medicine wheel and mound sites approximately ten to fifteen miles off the western end of the “brow” of the Turtle.

At Sourisford and Coulter there is a concentration of prehistoric mound and boulder sites, as well as a concentration of stories about Sitting Eagle which remain current among the predominantly White population. Sitting Eagle is commemorated in Coulter Park, which local lore assigns as his “wintering quarters.” Places where he dug himself into the riverbank can be identified by locals and the valley provides abundant wildlife in winter.

It is here that Sitting Eagle met Dave Elliot, as well as other local people such as J. B. Elliot, W. F. Thomas, Art Gould, the Bambridge and Mallo families. Just as the McCorquodale, Stovin and Moncur families have stories and lore about Sitting Eagle and certain sites near

No. 60 Reserve on the mountain; the families of Sourisford-Coulter have stories and sites along their portion of the Souris River.

Our visit in May 2000 confirmed the stories were alive and treasured.

David M. Neufeld, a volunteer on the project, asked seventy-five year old Tom and Beth Bambridge outright if there was any continuity between Sitting Eagle, his sacred sites and modern-day local celebrations. We learned from the Bambridges that the connection was so direct that the annual Coulter Pioneer Picnic (the local community event) is held in the same tiny valley as the northernmost of two ancient village-ceremonial centres and that Sitting Eagle was among the founding members of the Pioneer Picnic in 1895. (It is also north of the spot the Boundary Commission referred to as their "First Crossing of the Souris.")

It was both a shock and a confirmation when Beth Bambridge pointed out the 1905 picture of the Pioneer Picnic founders where Sitting Eagle is shown standing between his two old friends, the first clerk of the municipality W. F. Thomas and the first postmaster J. B. Elliot. Dave Elliot is the man who figured in the story about Sitting Eagle as a young man being persuaded *not* to participate in the 1885 Rebellion. (The story scene is set on the Sourisford crossing, which is the southern of the two prehistoric village-ceremonial centres.) A current story recounts how W. F. Thomas as municipal secretary paid local farmers to "chase away anybody with a shovel."

It was felt that this area and the early pioneer families who settled here played a very significant part in the settlement of South-West Manitoba and this story should be told in the form of a history that can be passed on to future generations.

Some of the histories of the first settlers have been recorded in other history books, but it was felt that because of the unique character of the part played by this area in the surveying of the International boundary, the trek to the west of the newly formed North-West Mounted Police force and evidence of very early Indian culture in the area, as well as the exploits of the settlers, should be recorded while the material was still available.

Sourisford and Area from 1879, p. 1

The principle Boissevain, Melita and Deloraine history books each provided one Sitting Eagle story. From

the history of tiny Sourisford another half-dozen stories came to light. Sourisford-Coulter was clearly on a section of Sitting Eagle's rounds, possibly an outer loop and apparently a winter seasonal one.

The Pipestone community history, *Trails Along the Pipestone*, provided the most stories, and as with the others, often contained enigmatic clues. The Pipestone history contains one story on Charlie Chaske and separate references to Sitting Eagle without combining or contradicting the two. It does *not* state that the two are the same person. It also contains an enigmatic warning that things are not as they seem. The text appears to have been written by a member of the Pipestone/Oak Lake Band and included interviews with local elders. It does not state who is the author. It adds a few details that other accounts do not provide, such as the early death of Chaske Eagle's first wife Winona; yet has odd omissions such as noting the name of John Thunder's wife but not the minister's own name.

Some native people still have visions or dances because they believe a famine is coming. These people will have a rain dance because this is the power of Wakan Tanka. It is through this person that Wakan Tanka is producing rain. All these things we've not written because Wakan Tanka made the Indian strong and could remember things and keep them in their heads. Whatever they were told, they remembered. They all remembered the teachings of their God and when they responded, it was in good faith. If they failed to respond to the wishes of their God it wouldn't work, or something happened to the family. Therefore, medicine men would help each other. They would get together and have a Wacipi. Here they would pray to the Creator with the medicine that was given. Many of the teachings of the Wakan Tanka have been lost. Indian people believe that these teachings are with the spirit of the dead, therefore there is a dance called the Ghost Dance. The Indian people believe that Wakan Tanka made a place for all Indian people and we will all be with each other when we die.

The pipe is something that we value very much and it's like a part of us. Most ceremonies include the pipe. There are medicine men who many of us do not know about. They are afraid of what people might say or do to them if it become known.

The younger generation will never understand because their beliefs are lost and they don't know where they belong. Many Indian people have given up the old way of life.

Trails Along the Pipestone, p. 333

Relations with Whites were always problematical. The fact of a White invasion and occupation was unavoidable. Native leaders changed their focus to negotiating the best possible arrangement for their people. However, Natives often found it difficult to fathom whether Whites were sincere or not, or even if they “got it”. The same confusion on the White side is well documented, but we forget it was equally as confusing on the Native side of the negotiating table.

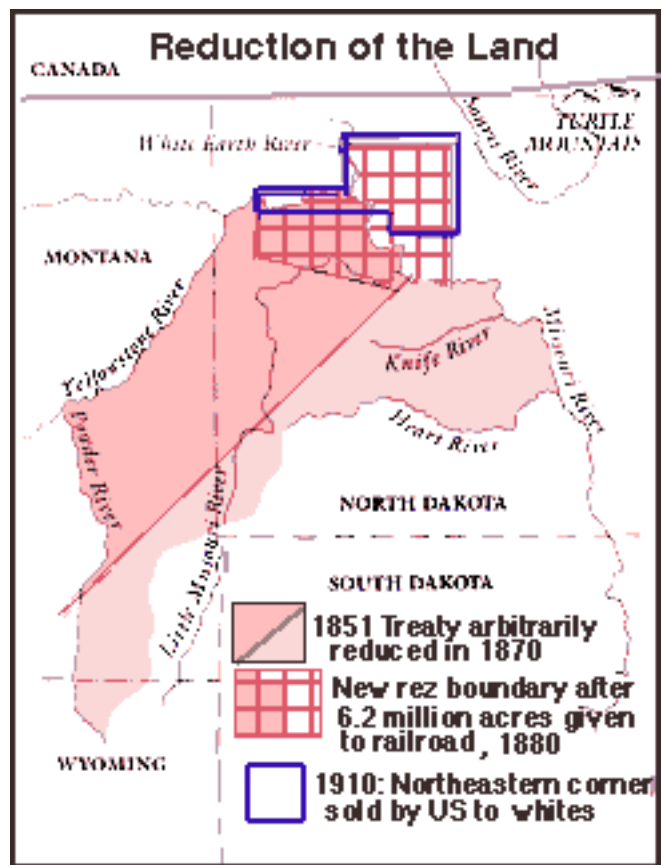
Henry Youle Hind lamented in 1859 that his fellow Europeans had picked up few of the manners even when they adopted Native customs.

It has been well said that the tobacco pipe constitutes the peculiar and most characteristic symbol of America, intimately interwoven with the rites and superstitions with the relics of ancient customs and historical traditions of the aborigines of the New World. If Europe borrowed from it the first knowledge of its prized narcotic the gift was received unaccompanied by any of the sacred or peculiar virtues which the Red Indian still attaches to it as the symbol of hospitality and amicable intercourse...

Narrative: Vol. II, Henry Youle Hind, p. 138

In *Loyal Unto Death*, Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser relate a scene from treaty negotiation preliminaries in which Morris left the Native delegates wondering if he understood the gravity of the discussions, or if he was just putting in an appearance.

Once Morris had arrived at the tent, set on a slight rise overlooking the grounds, and the Union Jack had been hoisted, the two thousand Indians came together, beating drums, signing, dancing, and discharging guns. They then advanced slowly in a large semicircle, led by some two dozen riders on horseback who rode in circles while performing intricate feats. Within fifty yards of the governor's tent, all fell silent as the sacred pipe-stem bundle was unwrapped. This ceremony — described by Morris as most “peculiar” — was an invi-



Map showing post-Treaty reductions of reserve lands belonging to the Three Affiliated Nations (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara.) It was for these losses that George Gillette wept. **Map from Three Affiliated Nations official web site.**

tation to the Creator to witness the proceedings and provide guidance. It also signified that the Cree approached the negotiations with considerable thought and commitment. Chief Strike-Him-on-the-Back carried the large, beautifully adorned pipe-stem to the front of the semicircle where blankets and robes had been spread for the Indian chiefs and headmen. Strike-Him-on-the-Back had received his name from a coup he had counted by striking the enemy on the back during a horse raid. His bravery gave him the honour of serving as bearer of the pipe-stem at this important occasion. Chanting, he raised the pipe-stem towards the heavens, turning it to the north, south, east, and west, acknowledging all of creation. He then returned to the seated leaders, and together, the whole body once again moved forward to greet the Queen's representative and formally present them with the

pipe-stem. Morris stroked the sacred object a few times, then passed it to his fellow commissioners, William Christie, a long-time servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, and James McKay, a former company guide.

Loyal Unto Death, Stonechild & Waiser, pp. 13-14.

This scene probably left the chiefs and elders wondering if Morris would be as cavalier with treaty provisions as he was with the ceremonial pipestem. His action did not inspire confidence.

Women's Council

Throughout this discussion the metaphor of the "shadow of the council" has been used to describe both the impact of the Council on Turtle Mountain on affairs around it; and on the necessity of falling back on circumstantial and oral evidence where direct written record is wanting. If the Council on which Sitting Eagle sat is a shadow, the possibility of a Women's Council is morning mist, all that much more elusive. However, there is consistent evidence that a Women's Council accompanied, or sat in addition to, a male dominated organization.

The extensive re-evaluation of the role of women in history, anthropology and archaeology which occurred in writings of the 1960's through 1990's need not be gone into here. In general, it has been demonstrated that a bias often obscures the role of women as we have seen with their role in the fur trade. It was a common suggestion of the women consulted in preparing this research that it was unlikely men were left to make social decisions entirely by themselves, regardless of what they may have believed about their own leadership.

Carver is the earliest written source we've found in this connection. When he had nearly concluded a treaty with the Dakota in the vicinity of the Red Pipestone Quarry he was surprised when the leading chief informed him the question would have to be submitted to the "chief elder of the women." Carver protested his surprise at this, but the chief responded that an important societal question such as a long-term treaty relationship with another Nation would require the approval of the women. The answer about a "chief elder" suggests that there was a hierarchy, and the common pattern would be to expect a council of some sort.

Throughout the stories of Sitting Eagles and Rattlers who may have sat in the Council on Turtle Mountain, and especially throughout the relatively more recent history of Hadamanie and Sitting Eagle, there is a recurrent theme of cross-cultural marriage. High profile male ambassadors often have wives of another First Nation.

Metis or White traders often have Native wives, and for a time it seemed no successful fur trader was without a "country wife."

Sacajawea is just such an intriguing feature. She is a Snake woman, married to a Metis from Red River. According to Lewis & Clark on the occasion they met Sacajawea and her husband they had just come from the northeast — from the direction of Turtle Mountain, or having come from Red River via the Turtle Mountain area. She spoke four or five languages though not equally well. French, English, Ojibway, Snake and Dakota are the ones mentioned in accounts. Usually she and her husband worked together as a translation team. She is presented as a happy historical accident but perhaps her arrival represented more. Her common names appear as a cross-cultural pun. Sacajawea is her Mandan name meaning "Bird Woman." Sakakawea, another popular form, is Snake meaning "Boat Launcher."

Stanley Vestal thought that the pattern was clear enough to link Sacajawea directly with a Missouri society — the Little River Women's Society.

Sacajawea was a daughter of the Snake, or Shoshone, Indians who lived to the west in the Rocky Mountains. But in 1800 the Hidatsa (Minnetarees or Gros Ventres of the Village) on one of their innumerable raids attacked the Snake camp at the Three Forks of the Missouri, killed four men, four women, and some boys, captured the remaining women and children, and carried them back to their palisaded town on the Big Muddy. Sacajawea was then only a girl. Apparently she first was the slave of the gigantic one-eyed chief, Le Borgne, described variously by travelers as "a Cyclops," a "monster," a "demon," a "cruel and villainous tyrant." He was probably the greatest scoundrel that ever lived on the banks of the Missouri. But she was soon purchased of Polyphemus by the Frenchman, Charbonneau. He brought her up, and when she became a woman, took her to wife, Indian-fashion.

The Missouri, Stanley Vestal, p. 247

LeBorgne was the Grand Chief of the Hidatsa in 1800, the man all the fur traders depended upon. He dominated the Mandan Trail trade in the heyday before the last terrible smallpox epidemic. Alexander Henry the Younger described him killing a concubine that had moved in with another man. LeBorgne's personal qualities aside, Sacajawea was moving in the very centre of commer-



Lakota beaded yoke for the shoulders of a ceremonial women's dress. At centre the Turtle swims towards a star, leaving wake behind it. Detail from an image from the **Minneapolis Institute of the Arts** website.

cial and political power on the northern Plains. Even if she was a slave, she represented a substantial intellectual and financial investment. It is more likely that as a real person she had some idea of her worth and was a party to the negotiations between LeBorgne and Charbonneau. It is probable that this is how a commercially-driven and Mandan dominated council in 1800 conducted its business. It was the same era as that of Matchego-whewhub and the army on Turtle Mountain.

Charbonneau's history *before* the couple met Lewis & Clark is in keeping with the business climate of the Mandan Trail.

The most famous of the white residents at the Knife River villages, however, is Toussaint Charbonneau, largely because of his marriage to the Shoshoni slave girl Sacajawea and their subsequent association with the Lewis and Clark expedition. Born in or near Montreal about 1759, he is believed to have settled among the Hidatsas and Mandans in the period between 1796 and 1799. Charbonneau continued to live in the Knife River villages until at least 1839 and possibly until his death sometime between 1839 and 1843, except for occasional periods of residence elsewhere resulting from temporary employment with various trading companies and the U.S. government. He is mentioned in nearly every major firsthand account of the Upper Missouri from the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition through the last 1830s. It is therefore strange that is nowhere mentioned in the Brandon House Post Journals, which often docu-

ment dealings with his fellow residents — probably a clue that he had no association with the Hudson's Bay Company and thus did not earn mention in the business records of that company. Before having settled in the Mandan-Hidatsa villages, he seems to have been an employee of the North West Company at Pine Fort along the Assiniboine River. In 1833, Prince Maximilian noted that Charbonneau lived in the middle village of the Hidatsas, now known as the Sakakawea site.

Early Fur Trade, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 46-47

This type of man was exactly the type sought after by the country wives and their guardians. Sacajawea is much more than a "slave girl" and her transfer from LeBorgne to Charbonneau is more important than a simple sale of goods. She is the active intelligent component of a commercial treaty.

Sacajawea, and her husband Charbonneau, were so important that they were the subject of a pointed warning from American to British authorities. The Northwest Company resident trader Francois Larocque, as we noted earlier on the subject of treaty medals, was hauled onto the carpet by Captains Lewis and Clark on Nov. 29, 1804. Part of the heated exchange concerned an accusation that Larocque had handed out "flags and medals." In light of the existence of units such as the Voyageur Corps and the Rangers this is entirely possible, though Larocque denied it. Another, and equally important, part of the warning concerned the employment of Charbonneau and Sacajawea. Larocque was permitted to continue to call on their services as translators and trade facilitators, but in the future the United States government's representatives would have first call. Shortly after, Lewis and Clark left the Mandan Villages, taking Charbonneau and Sacajawea with them.

Francois Larocque recorded in his journals that once LeBorgne gave permission to trade, the actual trading was carried out by his wives. Larocque found them hardnosed and not at all diplomatic about bargaining. Alexander Henry the Younger wrote that while the men made war, or romantic exploits, the women of the camp carried on the business of trade.

The women were also busy exchanging their corn for leather, robes, smocks, and dried provisions, as if at a country fair. Each one was anxious to dispose of her property to advantage, and to this end carried a load from tent to tent. But the numerous women of our

party had overstocked the market, and many were obliged to keep half what they had brought, for want of buyers.

Journals of Alexander Henry Jr., pp. 384-385

Larocque's contemporary, Charles McKenzie also noted the dependence on Charbonneau, and sometimes missed Sacajawea. He made direct observations of women in business. McKenzie was staying with another Hidatsa chief, whom he refers to only as an "old man." At one point in the narrative McKenzie complained to his host that the Americans controlled Charbonneau and Sacajawea while the HBC men could speak passable Mandan. Consequently he was losing business. The Hidatsa village chief pleaded with McKenzie that he would use his influence with the market.

"Do not go, do not abandon me, my Son, Said he, the Indians who are coming tomorrow will be kind to you — I will go with you to their Village — Your mother and your Sister will join us, and we shall talk of you. The Indians love my family, and you shall have all their furs — take courage, my Son, quiet your mind and go to rest."

Early Fur Trade, Wood and Thiessen, pp. 235-236

The context of the speech suggests that the village chief had "adopted" McKenzie. He calls him "my Son" and refers to his mother and sister although McKenzie's family exclusive of Nor'westers are back in Scotland. It's also significant that like LeBorgne's bargaining, once the male chief lent authority to the proceedings and engaged in a little diplomacy, women conducted the business.

McKenzie described Sacajawea, and though disdainful of the process gave a backhand acknowledgment to the role Sacajawea played in the transmittal of information.

The Missouri was free of ice the Second of April [1805]. Then the American Gentlemen sent off their twenty oar Boat with ten men for the United States; and on the 8th. following the Expedition proceeded up the River towards the Rocky Mountains. It consisted of one large pirogue; and seven small wooden Canoes — containing the commanding officers, thirty men, and a woman — the woman who answered the purpose of wife to Charbonneau was of the Serpent Nation, and lately taken prisoner by a war party:— She understood a

little Gros Ventre, in which she had to converse with her husband, who was a Canadian, and who did not understand English — A Mulatto who spoke bad French and worse English served as Interpreter to the Captains — So that a single word to be understood by the party required to pass from the Natives to the woman, from the woman to the husband, from the husband to the Mulatto, from the Mulatto to the Captain.

Early Fur Trade, Wood and Thiessen, p. 238

As a journalist writing in 1945, Vestal was able to hear stories from elders along the middle Missouri who were born in the mid-1800's. In 1945 he reported the Little River Women's Society as still active, and that membership cost an aspiring woman "a buffalo robe or good blanket, and a horse." The Little River Women's Society dominated commercial business on the Native side along the Missouri, and therefore on the Mandan Trail as well. Societies like this probably formed the foundation of the women's council, at least among the Siouan members. Vestal recorded a creation story that described the geography of the Mandan Trail, including a possible reference to Turtle Mountain.

...the Village tribes believe that spirit women, or — so to speak — hamadryads, dwell in the trees and buttes along the river. These strange beings are thought to assemble under a bare peak on the west bank known as Eagle's Nose or Bird Beak Peak. The Mandans were quite sure of this even before they became members of the society.

Once upon a time these spirit women lured away two Mandan women and carried them to their subterranean lodge under the peak. The Mandans mourned the two as dead, not knowing what had become of them, until — after a time — one of the women turned up again and rejoined her family. From her they learned that their companions still remained with the spirits in the peak — whether voluntarily or not is not clear.

One thing seems certain, that the earthborn woman was ready enough to come home when opportunity offered.

When the spirit women, who lived in the buttes and trees, held their next annual gathering, they decided to found a chapter of their society in the Mandan village — perhaps out of friendship for their flesh-and-blood com-

panion. She eagerly offered to go with them to act as their interpreter, since she now understood the language of spirits as well as that of Mandans. At this council in the peak, each of the spirits wore a bright green snake, such as are found in the buttes, for a headdress...

...When all was ready, the spirit women came out of the bare peak, crossed the Missouri River, and started for the Mandan village, still wearing the bright green snakes twined around their heads. After they had gone a little distance they met an eagle, who said, "Let me go with you, and I will give you one of my feathers to add to your headdress." The spirit women took one of the feathers and let the eagle come with them. For this reason a feather was always worn in the front of the headdress of this society. Next they met a coyote, who said, "If I do not belong to your society it will not succeed." The coyote gave them a song which was always sung at the close of the ceremony, and asked them to add to their headdress a wreath of plummy grass which resembled his fur. In return for this he was allowed to go with them and share the feast. As they came to a creek they met a bear, who said, "You may meet trouble on your way, so you must wear claws to protect you from enemies you meet and from those who may follow you." The bear also gave them a song. For this reason the bear was allowed to go with them and share the feast, and when the ceremony was held there were two women who wore necklaces of bear's claws.

The spirit women came to a creek and there they saw an otter and a flat clamshell. Both wanted to join the new society, so the spirit women allowed them to come...

When the spirit women entered the Mandan village they were still wearing the bright green snakes twined around their heads, together with the eagle feather and the wreath of plummy grass. They also wore the bear claws, the otter fur, and the polished shell... They said, "We bring the society because you are the people of the Missouri River," and they told the young women to bring food for a feast. The young women took food and gifts into their lodge.

The Missouri, Stanley Vestal, pp. 243-245

At the suggestion of several of the medicine women and elders the question of a women's council was put to Bill Moncur. He recalled that there was indeed a custom of cross-cultural marriage, in fact a full membership on the Council required it. He said he recalled that he'd been told he would never be a "Sitting Eagle" because he was already married to a woman of his own Nation.

Many homestead stories around the mountain recount that Hadamanie was quite concerned about finding a non-Native or Metis husband for his daughters. This is generally dismissed in the stories as quaint, at best, but it may have been that the Council was seeking for a bridge to the White world. Dave Elliot, Art Gould and W. F. Thomas of Sourisford all received proposals according to local histories from that area.

Some kind of tension was introduced into relations between Sitting Eagle and Oak Lake Band with regard to his wife. Some stories from the Native side recount his first wife Winona dying, and then Sitting Eagle leaving the reserve to return to the mountain. Stories around the mountain itself about Sitting Eagle mention his having two wives, and that this was a source of tension as the second one was not Sioux. The mysterious second wife has been intriguingly described in some stories as a Mohawk or an Iroquois princess.

These same stories do not seem to require that the male Council member actually cohabited with the female Council member. The requirement seems to be only that they join the Council in gender-pairs which are cross-cultural. Such a practice would certainly strengthen the ability of the Council to mediate across cultures by entangling kinship systems and providing a broader perspective of custom and language.

Bill Moncur recalled that a women's council met separately from the men's. "You had to be invited to come to the other one," he stated during interviews. He did not recall attending a women's council, but did recall a member of the women's council appearing before the men's council.

Bill Moncur only recalled meeting an elderly woman who he was told was "Mrs. Sitting Eagle" and who died before Sitting Eagle. This person could not have been either Winona nor Pauline Johnson. Johnson died in 1913, Winona Chaske in 1909. Moncur did not recall Sitting Eagle living with this elderly "Mrs. Sitting Eagle", but believes the date to have been early 1920's. "She was a power in her tribe," he recalled, and thought that she was perhaps Ojibway or Chippewa. If there were a male and female council that were paired in some way, this would be consistent with the tradition.

The “Sitting Eagle” that William Dumas met in the 1960’s and early 1970’s was also married to a “Mrs. Sitting Eagle.” In this case he was Cree, and she was Dakota.

Some of the ceremonial artifacts that have come into the Moncur Collection are associated specifically with women. There is usually little or no information on their provenance. One of these items is a cedar toque which stylistically seems to match those made on Vancouver Island by the Kwakiutl-speaking Toqwhit Band. The only other example of one in Canada is located in a BC Museum and is a product of the Toqwhit. The particular artifact in the Moncur Gallery was carefully preserved in clay, wrapped in buffalo hide, then passed on through a series of guardians from a Native person at Lake Max to Ailsa Hurt (a local White historian who spent her childhood at Lake Max,) and from Hurt to Bill Moncur. Moncur felt it was associated with the women’s council but received no instruction that he could recall about it. To many who see it, the toque’s shape is suggestive a clown’s hat, or a witch’s hat (which could be taken either way.) It’s certainly unusual and was no doubt meant to make an impact on its original audience as something above-the-ordinary.

It is possible that if the Council of Seven Stones included an element of sacred clowns, then this would have been reflected among the women as well as the men. That there *were* women clowns is attested to by George Catlin who witnessed a performance during the July 4, 1837 Ball Game festivities at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Catlin in setting the scene, said that the warriors were sitting around engaging in ritual boasts about their valour, exploits and wounds they’d endured — usually the exclusive prerogative of the male — when a woman jumped into the circle.

During this scene a little trick was played off in the following manner, which produced much amusement and laughter. A woman of goodly size, and in woman’s attire, danced into the ring (which seemed to excite some surprise, as women are never allowed to join in the dance), and commenced “sawing the air,” and boasting of the astonishing feats of bravery she had performed — of the incredible number of horses she had stolen — of the scalps she had taken, etc., etc.; until her feats surpassed all that had ever been heard of — sufficient to put all the warriors who had boasted, to the blush. They all gave assent, however, to what she had said, and appar-



Two Dakota women attending public ceremonies at the Royal Manitoba Exhibition, Brandon, circa 1900. Section from a National Archives of Canada photograph.

ently credence too; and to reward so extraordinary a feat of female prowess, they presented to her a kettle, a cradle, beads, ribbons, etc. After getting her presents, and placing them safely in the hands of another matron for safe keeping, she commenced disrobing herself; and, almost instantly divesting herself of a loose dress, in the presence of the whole company came out in a soldier’s coat and pantaloons! and laughed at them excessively for their mistake! She then commenced dancing and making her boasts of her exploits, assuring them that she was a man and a great brave. They all gave unqualified assent to this, acknowledged their error, and made her other presents of a gun, a horse, of tobacco, and a war-club. After her boasts were done, and the presents secured as before, she deliberately threw off the pantaloons and coat, and presented herself at once, and to their great as-

tonishment and confusion, in a beautiful woman's dress. The tact with which she performed these parts, so uniformly pleased, that it drew forth thundering applause from the Indians, as well as from the spectators; and the chief

stepped up and crowned her head with a beautiful plume of the eagle's quill, rising from a crest of the swan's down.
Catlin's Indians, Vol. 2, p. 155



Sitting Eagle in Melita, circa 1935. Photo from *Our First Century : Melita and Arthur.*



Mrs. Sitting Eagle. Taken by "Winnipeg Photo" in 1909. *National Archives of Canada PA-029555.*

Pauline Johnson

A fascinating coincidence are the visits to Turtle Mountain made by Pauline Johnson, great-granddaughter of Sir William Johnson, world-class poet laureate, and Mohawk princess. Strangely, on her world tours she included Boissevain and according to evidence from local newspaper files, the memoirs of Ebenezer McColl and local lore: Johnson received one of her trademarks, a bearclaw necklace, from Turtle Mountain. The necklace, or rather the claws, were a gift of several admiring young local Boissevain area men. The claws came from a bear which had been shot on Arbor Island in Lake Max. There is a lengthy version of the story in a 1925 Boissevain Recorder printed after Johnson's death in 1913. The story described a late 1890's event in which a group of men camping on the island met Johnson. The story named George Sankey as the giver of the gift. A recollection by Ebenezer McColl has Pauline Johnson lecturing in Winnipeg, wearing the bearclaw necklace which she had recently received from an admirer in Turtle Mountain.

W. V. Udall, the editor of the Recorder was sure Johnson had got the bearclaws from Arbor Island, but he wasn't sure that Sankey was the donor, or only donor. A Jim Nelin [or Neelin] is credited in the newspaper account with shooting the bear. Precise date of the article is unknown but is believed to have been printed in 1925, after some books on Johnson's life briefly revived interest in the poet.

Bear Claws

The "Bear Claw Necklet," a very interesting object, was given to Pauline Johnson by Ernest Seton Thompson, the well known author. So Pauline Johnson's executors said.

With regard to this necklet, F. M. Buckland of Kelowna writes as follows:

"Back in Southern Manitoba in the early 'nineties, some Boissevain people were at Lake Max in the Turtle mountains, where their summer camp was held.

"One night they were disturbed by a prowling bear, of which they got a glimpse as he stood looking over a fallen log. One of the party took a shot at bruin and he disappeared behind the log into the woods. Some time after they came across the dead bear, but it was in such a condition of decay that they could not make use of the hide. The campers returned to town and that night Pauline Johnson was entertaining them. She heard the story of the bear and expressed the desire to possess some

bear claws for a necklet. Some of the young men drove back to Lake Max and secured the claws of the dead bear, which they presented to the poetess, and she used them in a necklace for her stage costume." — Vancouver Sun.

We have taken the above excerpt from the Vancouver Sun of March 5, a marked copy have been sent to us.

There is quite a possibility of Mr. F. M. Buckland's contention being correct. In the nineties Miss Pauline Johnson visited our town on one or two occasions and if the writer remembers correctly it was on the occasion of her last visit to Boissevain that she was presented with the claws, which she stated she wished to have for a necklace. There is a little story in connection with these claws and the bear that brings back to memory our early experiences at the now famous Lake Max Summer resort. However, we will on this occasion deal with the shooting of the bear and the presentation to Miss Johnson.

Jim Neelin, Gerald Sankey, the Editor of this paper and one or two more had gone to the lake to spend a few days under canvas. It was the first or second night in camp that Jim Neelin came running in and asked for a gun as he said he had seen a bear. He grabbed a gun and off he went: the rest of the campers did not move as it was thought that Jim was trying to pull something off. However the gun was fired and Jim returned to camp and maintained that he had shot at a bear, and was pretty sure that he had hit Mr. Bruin; even this did not create any enthusiasm with the party, and in camp it was spoken of during the next few days as Jim's bear story. However on returning to the lake a few days later the smell at the old camping ground on Arbour Island led to the discovery of the dead bear, and in order to convince the skeptics in Boissevain that a bear had actually been shot, Charlie James cut off one of the claws (which he still wears on his watch chain.) On the return to town of course the bear story was revived and even the claw would not convince some at the Queens, and considerable bantering went on. Miss Johnson liked a joke as well as anyone else and she once in a while would refer back to the bear story. Eventually Miss Johnson said, "I would like to have some of those claws for a necklace." One or two present volun-



A characteristic publicity pose by Pauline Johnson with the Bearclaw Necklace from Arbor Island, Turtle Mountain. Section of image from original in Vancouver Public Library.

teered to drive out to the lake and get them, which they did, and we believe it was Gerald Sankey who made the presentation in Wright's hall to Miss Johnson, however we are not quite certain as to this, but we do know that Miss Johnson was presented with bear claws and she stated she would have them made into a necklace.

BCA MG14/C390 Pauline Johnson fonds.

William Dumas noted that a bearclaw necklace could also be a courting gift in the Algonquin culture. Bill Moncur recalled clearly that Sitting Eagle had spoken of Pauline Johnson "fondly." That may be the root of the legend of Sitting Eagle marrying an Iroquois princess and yet the absence of this mysterious second wife from any stories.

This doesn't suggest that Pauline Johnson was on the Council, only that she went out of her way to visit Turtle Mountain. A statement by Ailsa Hurt in her memoirs places Johnson at Arbor Island. In reminiscing about Arbor Island cottages she specifically brought up an association between at least one of the Arbor Island cottagers and Pauline Johnson.

Bob Morrison, a son, knew Pauline Johnson the Indian poetess, and she taught him to paddle a canoe. So of course he had the first one on the lake.

*Turtle Mountain Corduroy, Alice Hurt;
Part 2, Chapter 6, p. 3*

A biography of Pauline Johnson written by Betty Keller explains the trips to Boissevain as a part of mini-tour of Prairie towns. The first in 1895, according to Keller, was a test-run preparatory to touring larger Western Canadian communities. The swing through southern Manitoba included Morden, Boissevain, Souris and Carman. Keller states that the 1898 visit was on a similar swing through southern Manitoba.

Boissevain and Turtle Mountain people may have been quite taken with Pauline Johnson but she doesn't seem to have shared the feeling. Keller reprinted a section of newspaper article, written by Johnson in which she described her reaction to Boissevain. Johnson was perhaps too "citified" to take the shock of a rural community. Boissevain area water is high in alkaline salts which did not meet Johnson's standard. In the context she seems to be using the euphemism "snake" to stand for an intoxicated person, but that's only a guess. She found the people, customs and language of Turtle Mountain to be quaint.

At Boissevain...the water is opaque.

In this place there are two factions: strict teetotallers and the more intelligent. It is a funny place. You cannot walk ten yards along the sidewalk without falling over a snake. This of course is one argument for the first party. On the other hand, some villainous smelling compound was provided us in the dressing room which we at first sight took be lemonade. Mr. Prose [her male co-performer Owen Smily] remarked to the official that brought it that it was very kind of them to provide fancy drinks but that simple water was all that was required.

"Wal, that's what ye've got," replied Aquarius.

Mr. Prose looking around the room as if in search of this hitherto undiscovered object asked, "But where is it?"

"Why here, right here in this yer glass pitcher."

"Oh, this is water and I thought it was lemonade. But why did you rinse the milk jug with

it?"

Aquarius (growing ruffled), "I ain't washed no milk jug in it. That there is the best water in Boissevain and comes from the best well in town."

Miss Poetry [Johnson referring to herself] (dramatic aside): "That explains the snakes!"

Pauline, Betty Keller, pp. 92-93

Pauline Johnson would have appeared to the Council on Turtle Mountain to have had all the qualities they required in a spokesperson for Native history, ceremony and issues. However, she appeared to lack the necessary personal interest and could never take the Turtle Mountain people any more seriously than as caricatures.

The Land Sale

The families who'd lived on No. 60 Reserve filtered away over the 1880's and 1890's, and in 1909 three of the remaining five family heads signed away their lands at Turtle Mountain. Hadamanie and his grandson, then called Chaske, refused. (Chaske, meaning "Eldest Son," adopted the name Sitting Eagle after his grandfather died in 1914.)

The first attempt at auctioning off the property failed when no one would put in a bid, citing the asking price as too high. The second attempt a year later resulted in sale of the four quarters. The Auctioneer, James Morrison, recommended that Hadamanie should receive \$2,000 for the property as fair market value, but the government awarded him \$500 and Chaske \$300.

There is no record of Hadamanie or Sitting Eagle ever surrendering their claim.

Hadamanie may have softened on Christianity. A 1911 letter, written by his son-in-law Luke Bigtrack of Fort Totten, ND, reported that Hadamanie was attending a Catholic conference. (Curiously, this same conference was also attended by Black Elk and Chase-in-the-Morning who had become Roman Catholic catechists in addition to being Oglala medicine men.)

In 1913 or 1914, Hadamanie travelled to Sioux Valley where he died shortly thereafter. Before he died, he instructed Sitting Eagle in his new duties. Sitting Eagle left Sioux Valley, and returned to Turtle Mountain.

At this point White local histories become confused about what exactly Sitting Eagle was doing. References to him as a "squatter" can now be set in context, as the land (where he was probably born) had been expropriated. His "dispute" with the Sioux Valley Band, may have been the enmity that had developed between the peace and war factions after two hundred years of



"Sitting Eagle's Tree" as photographed by Moncur board member Jeff Cannon in 1999. This site was the usual location for meetings of the Aboriginal government of Turtle Mountain from at least 1862 through 1944. It was probably used much earlier.

struggle. Or, it may simply have been that the pressure on Sioux Valley of accepting more and more refugees without land compensation was too much. (The land base had been diluted from 80 acres per family of five, to about 40 to less than 30.) Remarks that he "*was not a chief*" can be seen in the context that he led neither warriors nor a band.

But chief he was so far as the respect accorded to him in his own lifetime, and also for position he ought to occupy in the historical record. He may or may not have been the hereditary Dakota Peace Chief of Turtle Mountain, and he was certainly the Dakota member of the Council on Turtle Mountain. Elder Kevin Tacan of Sioux Valley offers the alternate theory that Sitting Eagle could have been a member of the Council as a sacred clown, a *heyoka*, and this may be the best explanation. For whatever was his role, Sitting Eagle's presence was required on Turtle Mountain. He fulfilled that responsibility with dedication from 1914 until his death in 1944.

The erosion of the authority of the traditional chiefs noted by both Selkirk and Morris, continued through the turn of the Nineteenth Century into the Twentieth.

The government took over short-term planning, specified the quality, quantity and sources of livestock, seeds and tools, and instituted the permit system for the sale of agricultural products. This erosion of political autonomy, best represented by the department's appointment of a "head chief" at Oak River, combined with a series of very poor farming years, triggered the migration of families to the far West and even to the United States. By the late 1870's, there were eighty Dakota at Birdtail Creek, ninety at Oak River, and about sixty-five at Oak Lake. Together, these numbers represent about half the Dakota that had been in the same areas at the close of the previous decade.

Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, D. Elias, pp. 68-69

Instead of assisting to preserve traditions and a coherent social fabric, the governments of the day reproached any Native initiative or cultural display.

Doug Elias in *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest* succinctly described the fate of Hadamanie's reserve:

"...the one band of Dakota in Canada that maintained an economy based upon a hunting, trapping and gathering mode of production. The limitations on the Turtle Mountain Band were such that the entire band and reserve were obliterated. The history of this people is the most dramatic instance in Dakota history of violation of aboriginal and native rights."

Dakota of the Canadian Northwest, Doug Elias, p. xvi

Old No. 60 Turtle Mountain Dakota Reserve was auctioned off in 1911. All of the band members had left. In 1914, Sitting Eagle (Charles Chaske) returned to this section and was permitted by the new owners to live on the property. On one corner, the ceremonies of the Council of Seven Stones continued until 1944.

Sovereignty

The question of sovereignty, and correspondingly of Aboriginal rights, dominates the story of the Council Stones. The hypothesis advanced in this paper is that the

Turtle Mountain Council never possessed sovereignty, except perhaps over Turtle Mountain itself and the Mandan trail between the Souris River and the Missouri. It did however have a tremendous amount of *influence* on member communities who were themselves sovereign, and it could *act* in their sovereign interests when mandated to do so.

Writing in *Manitoba History* magazine, Professor Kent McNeil of Osgoode Law School discussed the recent context of Supreme Court decisions and the history of First Nations.

Where the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are concerned, history and law are inseparable. Lawyers working on Aboriginal claims ignore history at their peril. But the converse is also true — historians whose work involves the Aboriginal peoples cannot afford to disregard law. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Rupert's Land out of which the province of Manitoba was at least partially created. Solutions to lingering questions of sovereignty, territorial boundaries, jurisdictions, title to land, and so on, all must be sought in the middle ground where law and history overlap.

"Sovereignty and the Aboriginal Nations of Rupert's Land," Kent McNeil, Manitoba History, Spring/Summer 1999 p. 2

For Native people in Manitoba, and for most of the Prairies, the critical event which has been misinterpreted is the Selkirk Treaty and its place within the Hudson's Bay Company Charter.

The consistent historical and contemporary Native argument has been that there are agreements made with Native people that are implicit in the Selkirk Treaty, the HBC Charter and in their actual practice. These agreements were ignored, or misinterpreted when Canada assumed the responsibility of acting as the state, in other words "the Crown."

The Native governments on the Prairies prior to 1870 viewed themselves as participants in a multi-cultural state which was headed by "the Crown." They had agreed to this on condition that certain limits were observed, and certain promises kept. During the acquisition by Canada after 1870 of the Northwest this relationship was all but forgotten, and the interpretation imposed by eastern Canada was that the Natives had been somehow conquered in the past, and were a subject people. In the case of the Dakota the attitude was so persistent that immigrants from Europe to Canada would refer to the



Photo identified as "Wanduta (a Dakota from the Oak Lake area in Manitoba.)". A Treaty Medal hangs around Wanduta's neck. **National Archives of Canada photo PA-030027**

Dakota who'd been here since before Confederation as "U.S. Indians." Federal government auditors in the mid-nineteen fifties who could spot a missing penny, couldn't observe that 1861 came before 1867.

Today, in the year 2000, the attitude of the Canadian Supreme Court is considerably different from that of the mid-20th Century. To the benefit of Native people, on constitutional issues its attitude is closer akin to that of the British courts of the mid-19th Century or even 18th. In a nutshell, the Court's concern is: what was understood by the parties at the time the treaty was concluded; and to what degree that conception is reflected in implementation of the treaty today.

Following from that, the courts have ruled that unless parties can prove otherwise, all Canadian land was "Aboriginal" at some point. The sequence of events showing the transfer of ownership from the last verifiable Aboriginal owner to the present owner has become the crux of land entitlement cases today.

In order to have title to the lands that he purposed to grant to the Hudson's Bay Company, King Charles would first have had to have sovereignty over Rupert's Land. How might that have been acquired? In British colonial law, there were four ways for the Crown to acquire sovereignty — inheritance from another sovereign, conquest, cession by international treaty, and settlement. We can immediately eliminate the first three possibilities, as they simply did not occur in Rupert's Land. That leaves settlement. Basically, this means peopling a territory with British subjects so that effective possession and control is established in the name of the Crown. In fact, it has been decided in a number of Canadian court cases that Rupert's Land was acquired by settlement. What is not so clear is how and when this occurred.

"Sovereignty and the Aboriginal Nations of Rupert's Land," Kent McNeil, Manitoba History, Spring/Summer 1999 p. 3

The Hudson's Bay Company Charter, issued in 1670, has so far escaped being challenged before a constitutional court. The HBC Committee was ever scrupulous in avoiding this risk. The supporters of the HBC in Parliament never wanted to have the issue of Royal Charters tested. McNeil states that Royal Charter issues have not fared well before British Courts. The following exchange in 1899 between the Lord Chancellor, chairing the Justice Committee of the Privy Council (the highest appeal court in the British Empire) and the Crown counsel on the issue of corporate colonization in South Africa is cited by McNeil as indicative of where an HBC case would have been lost.

The Lord Chancellor: Have you ever heard of sovereignty being insisted upon by reason of such a grant? It is new to me that such a thing was ever heard of.

Staples' Counsel: I ask you to look at the terms of the grant.

The Lord Chancellor: The terms of the grant cannot do what you assume it can do, namely give jurisdiction of sovereignty over a place Her Majesty has no authority in.

"Sovereignty and the Aboriginal Nations of Rupert's Land," Kent McNeil, Manitoba History, Spring/Summer 1999 p. 3

Professor McNeil argued that the HBC Charter

conferred the *right to acquire* sovereignty of land, not the acquisition itself. The HBC therefore acquired a measure of sovereignty *via* the Selkirk Treaty for a narrow river settlement, and under many arrangements with local Native governments for its network of posts. McNeil cites in the same article an exchange with Sir George Simpson, Governor in residence of Rupert's Land, when he appeared before the British House of Commons select committee in 1857. Governor Simpson told the Committee that the HBC exercised no control over Indians, "*They are perfectly at liberty to do what they please; we never restrain Indians.*"

For these reasons, sovereignty over Turtle Mountain passed to Canada with the signing of Treaties One and Two and not before. In the case of the Dakota already resident on Turtle Mountain, they were not consulted and historically cannot be said to have surrendered sovereignty.

McNeil observed that the reverse legal argument fails — if the Crown acquired sovereignty by means of the HBC Charter in 1670, then most of the Indian Treaties of the 19th Century are invalid due to the migration of First Nations. The Saulteaux could not by this reasoning sign a treaty in Manitoba any more than the Dakota could because both are perceived of as immigrants to the region after 1670. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 date works no better. The argument that the 1818 Boundary Settlement can be used doesn't account for the inclusion of Ojibway and Saulteaux immigration from the US in the Lake of the Wood area after 1870. If the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada in 1870 is used then the Dakota were in aboriginal title of the northwestern slope of Turtle Mountain.

The following summary of events is taken from the report of Indian Affairs trust fund auditor B. E. Olsen in 1956.

The whole record reveals the following significant facts:

1. *The Sioux Indian was a refugee on Canadian territory.*

2. *The Sioux Turtle Mountain land was never assigned as a Reserve. It was not given by Order in Council. The Indians were allowed to live on the section "by an act of grace."*

3. *The only right or title to the "Reserve" was "by occupation or residence which the Department recognized by acceding to them the privilege of surrendering the same." Quotation June 3, 1912, by the Honourable D. Laird, the first Lieutenant Governor of the*

Northwest Territories and Indian Commissioner.

4. *The surrender was valid and lands were sold by auction.*

5. *The principle of distribution of the proceeds of the sale of the Turtle Mountain lands was decided by the Department in 1914.*

6. *The distribution of moneys included all parties at the surrender meeting (and their heirs) and those who moved to Oak Lake Reserve in 1898 and 1908.*

7. *Amount of distribution to each individual varied and was decided on compassionate basis.*

*BAC MGI/A2 Indian Affairs fonds, Series #6: Trust Fund Account
NAC Indian Affairs "Black Files" fonds*

Upon the above sequence of conclusions the Dakota treaty entitlement cases of the 20th Century floundered. But, the available historical evidence which we've been able to examine bears *none* of these conclusions except for No. 5, "the distribution... was decided by the Department in 1914."

Dealing with the last conclusion first, the files of the Department of Indian Affairs show a consistent pattern of self-service alternating with evangelism and political control. There is little in the Department's own correspondence to suggest that compassion or human interest guided its policies. In particular, the record of Herchmer, Markle, Provencher and Hollies shows considerable manipulation of the facts to present the writer to the best advantage. The fact of the Royal Commission investigation of Provencher and Markle should alone have raised questions of bias in any documents prepared by these two men.

With respect to item 6, the Department's own files showed that the principal heir, Hadamanie, never received his full compensation before he died.

With respect to item 4, an internal Indian Affairs investigation showed that surrender papers had not been obtained from a majority of the band as it was recognized to be by Indian Affairs. In order to secure the surrender, Indian Affairs had to resort to recognizing a definition of the band's membership which they'd previously refused to countenance since it implied an aboriginal right of occupation. The Department cannot on the one hand refuse recognition of Aboriginal rights because the band includes so-called American Sioux, and then on the other, use that same recognition to justify a majority of 3 to 2 by "Canadian Sioux" in selling the reserve. If the 3 to 2 vote was valid, then so was the occupation of the land in

1862. The conclusion that the surrender vote was valid is based on a premise that the Department had in other instances dismissed. It would be kind to say this is merely illogical.

Item 3 has been upheld as a principle of justice by the Supreme Court of Canada. Occupation of land (and the agreement of one's neighbours) is the primary definition of the right to hold the same land. The fact that the Dakota were in occupation prior to 1867 by and of itself proved an Aboriginal right of ownership, occupation and sovereignty. (It should also be noted that David Laird was *not* the first Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories; that dubious honour went to William Macdougall the man who precipitated the 1870 Rebellion. The second was Adams Archibald, followed by Alexander Morris. David Laird was fourth.)

Item 2 is a moot point. Since it was not in the power of the government of Canada to give land to a people who were already the rightful owners, the government cannot base the legal existence of this reserve on whether or not there was an order-in-council. Correspondence from the Surveyor-General of Canada's office stated that surveying and subdivision implied a recognition of legal ownership, and that in their view since the Turtle Mountain Band was present before Treaty One and Two were signed, the Manitoba Dakota must therefore be regarded properly as participants in either or both of those treaties. (Dennis said they were "Treaty Two Indians.") Their possession of the land existed prior to any involvement by Canada in the region.

Item 1 may or may not be true when applied to the American refugees who arrived after 1867, and particularly those after 1876 and 1891. It is however, an anachronism to claim that someone can immigrate into a country which does not yet exist. The perception of Canada as existing prior to Confederation confuses the colonial identity with the later national one. Canadians in the 19th Century may have done this, but it discounted the existence of other countries within British North America such as Rupert's Land.

Politically, the Dakota were left out of the treaty making process in Canada because a) they didn't fit easily within the established Cree-Ojibway governing structures; and b) they were an embarrassment to the British government, representing as they did a military alliance from a previous age. Procedurally, leaving the Dakota out of the treaties was even simpler — they just weren't given Notice. The right of Notice — to be informed of proceedings that concern you — is a fundamental right of Common Law underlying all Canadian parliamentary procedure, and therefore all treaty negotiations and meet-



*A section of a 1905-era picture reproduced from **Sourisford and Area from 1879**. Sitting Eagle stands between Arthur municipality first secretary-treasurer W. F. Thomas [left] and its first postmaster J. B. Elliot [right.] To the right of Elliot, wearing a white hat is Alfred Gould. Events such as the Coulter Pioneer Picnic recreated community celebrations, passing a tradition from Native to Homesteader, and incidentally protecting historical ceremonial sites.*

ings of governing bodies as well.

Notice of a meeting must be given to all persons who are entitled to attend, otherwise the meeting is invalid. Apart from special provision in the regulations, even accidental omission to give notice will invalidate the proceedings.

*Law and Procedure of Meetings in Canada,
Judge William G. Craig, p. 5.*

In Alexander Morris' own book he described the procedure whereby the First Nations in the Northwest were called to the treaty councils. In the opening paragraphs of Treaty One and Two, the faulty Notice is laid out... "*Whereas, all the Indians inhabiting the said country have... been convened...*" although in fact one Nation had been excluded. In his official letter of report on Treaty One to the Secretary of State in 1871, Indian Affairs commissioner Weymiss Simpson smoothed over the sleight-of-hand that first appeared to consider, then omitted, the Dakotas from the talks.

Bearing in mind your desire that I should confer with the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, I called upon Mr. [Adams] Archibald, and learned from him that the Indians were anxiously awaiting my arrival, and were much excited on the subject of their lands being occupied without attention being first given to their claims for compensation. Amongst the settlers, also, an uneasy feeling existed, arising partly from the often-repeated demands of the Indians for a treaty with themselves, and partly from the fact that certain settlers in the neighbourhood of Portage la Prairie and other parts of the Province, had been warned by the Indians not to cut wood or otherwise take possession of the lands upon which they were squatting. The Indians, it appeared, consented to their remaining on their holdings until sufficient time had been allowed for my arrival, and the conclusion of a treaty; but they were unwilling to allow the settlers, the free use of the country for themselves or their cattle. Mr. Archibald, and those residents in the Province of Manitoba with whom I conversed on the subject, appeared to think that no time should be lost in meeting the Indians, as some assurances had already been given them that a treaty would be made with them during the summer of 1871; and I therefore, at once, issued notices calling certain of the Indians together, naming two places at which I would meet them. The first meeting, to which were asked the Indians of the Province and certain others on the eastern side, was to be held on the 25th of July, at the Stone Fort [Lower Fort Garry,] a Hudson's Bay Company Post, situated on the Red River, about twenty miles northward of Fort Garry — a locality chosen as being the most central for those invited. The second meeting was appointed to be held on August 17th, at Manitoba Post, a Hudson's Bay Company Post, at the north-west extremity of Lake Manitoba, as it was deemed that such of the bands of Indians residing without the limits of the Province of Manitoba, as I purposed to deal with at present, would meet there more readily than elsewhere.

Weymiss Simpson, Nov. 3, 1871 to Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians, Alexander Morris, p. 37.

It was Hadamanie and the Dakotas at Turtle Mountain and Oak Lake that had complained about wood cutting. It was they, more than the Cree or Ojibway, about whom the settlers were the most apprehensive. The western boundary of Treaty One roughly followed the present route of Provincial Highway #10 from Brandon to the US border, and there east towards Pembina. It is arguable therefore that the Dakota band at the west end of Turtle Mountain was outside of this boundary. However, if they were not in Treaty One, then they were definitely inside the boundary of Treaty Two and this opinion was shared by the Surveyor-General of Canada, Colonel Dennis. The infinitesimal width of the boundary between Treaties 1 and 2 somehow became wide enough to swallow up the entire Dakota Nation in Canada.

The exact location of the boundary between Treaties One and Two is a problem because the Turtle Mountain corner is defined only by a circumlocution in the treaties. The only reference to this anchor point of the treaty boundaries is reproduced below. The route described would roughly follow the present-day Number 10 Provincial Highway (plus or minus five miles either way.)

...to a point on Lake Manitoba, half way between Oak Point and the mouth of Swan Creek; thence across Lake Manitoba, on a line due west to the western shore; thence in a straight line to the crossing of the Rapids on the Assiniboine [Brandon or more probably Grand Valley]; thence due south to the International boundary line, and thence easterly by the said line to the place of beginning...

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, p. 314

The language of Treaty Two is even more obtuse.

...then in a southwesterly course to the north-western point of the Moose Mountains; thence by a line due south to the United States frontier; thence by the frontier eastwardly to the westward line of said tract ceded by treaty as aforesaid...

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, p. 318

Weymiss Simpson could not claim he was ignorant of the existence of the Dakota because in the same letter in which he reported giving Notice for Treaty One, he'd praised the Dakota's loyalty to the Crown and their availability as farm labour.

Moreover, in the Province of Manitoba, where labor is scarce, Indians give great as-

sistance in gathering in the crops. At Portage la Prairie, both Chippawas and Sioux were largely employed in the grain field; and in other parishes I found many farmers whose employes were nearly all Indians.

Weymiss Simpson, Nov. 3, 1871 to Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians, by Alexander Morris, p. 43.

The Indian Affairs and government officials of the day couldn't have been completely unaware of the historical claims of residence of Hadamanie's band of Dakota. They knew what the proper forms of treaty making were, and they deliberately set them aside in their handling of the Dakota. In marked contrast to this was their handling of the Northwest Angle Treaty (Treaty No. 3.) The area travelled to was much harder to get to than Turtle Mountain or Sioux Valley. ("Remoteness" had often been cited as a reason for not travelling from the Forks to Turtle Mountain. Some things don't change.) Some of the Lake-of-the-Woods Indians concerned had not only been resident of the United States recently, they were also given a two-year moratorium *after* the signing of the treaty to move to the Canadian side of the line!

The contemporary Chief Engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway stated in 1872 that he was aware of Indian land claims of the Ojibway and by 1873 he'd added the Dakota. Sanford Fleming travelled east to west across the Prairies in 1872 as he surveyed the future CPR route. In doing so he naturally encountered many of the treaty delegations travelling to and fro, including that of White Cap on his way to meet Lieutenant Governor Morris in Winnipeg. Fleming, or at least his narrator Rev. Grant, understood that assimilation, by and of itself, did not extinguish Aboriginal claims.

But, whatever the benefits that have been conferred on them, or whatever their natural defects, they surely have rights to this country, though they have never divided it up into separate personal holdings. They did not do so, simply because their idea was that the land was free to all. Each tribe had its own ground, which extended over hundreds of miles, and every man had a full right to all of that as far as he could occupy it. Wherever he could walk, ride, or canoe, there the land and the water were his. If he went to the end of another tribe, the same rule held good; he might be scalped as an enemy, but he ran no risk of being punished as a trespasser.

And now a foreign race is swarming over



Mr. Walter Thomas and
Sitting Eagle, 1930

Photo from *Our First Century* : Melita and Arthur.

the country, to mark out lines, to erect fences, and to say "this is mine and not yours," til not an inch shall be left the original owner. All this may be inevitable. But in the name of justice, of doing as we would be done by, of the "sacred rights" of property, is not the Indian entitled to liberal, and, if possible, permanent compensation?

Ocean to Ocean, Rev. George Grant, p. 48

On their way westward towards present-day Brandon, Fleming's party encountered a delegation sent by White Cap to negotiate with the Crown. Rev. Grant noted the presence of George III medals and implied that there was a well known understanding between the British and the Sioux which had a bearing on their pres-

ence in Manitoba. At Portage la Prairie they saw several small bands that were definitely associated with the Minnesota Uprising.

No demand was made for their extradition, probably because they had been more sinned against than sinning. Frightful stories are told of the treatment of Indians by miners, and there are comparatively few tales of Indian atrocities to balance them. When the Sioux entered British territory they had with them old George III medals, and they declared that their fathers had always considered themselves British subjects and that they would not submit to the rule of the "long knives." They are and always have been intensely loyal to their "great mother," and during Riel's rebellion, were ready and anxious to fight for the Queen. We were told that the United States authorities had offered pardon if they would return to their own lands for the Government at Washington is desirous now to do justice to the Indians, though its best efforts are defeated by the cupidity and knavery of its agents; but the Sioux would not be charmed back. The settlers around the Portage speak favorably of the Sioux. They are honest and harmless, willing to do a day's work for a little food or powder, and giving little or no trouble to anybody.

Ocean to Ocean, Rev. George Grant, p. 80

This information was personally reinforced to Fleming when he met White Cap and saw several of the George III medals with his own eyes. The "long knives" is a specific reference to the Ohio Valley Campaigns of Colonel George Rogers Clark in the 1780's and of General William Clark during and after the War of 1812, as well as serving as a general term for the U.S. Army. It is a brief oral account of the same history as that borne out in the British and American military records. Fleming according to Rev. Grant believed it, and though he had no power, assured the Dakota that they would get a fair hearing from the Crown.

At 4 P.M., we prepared to follow our party, but, at this moment, a body of sixty or eighty Sioux, noble looking fellows, came sweeping across the prairie in all the glory of paint, feathers, and Indian warlike magnificence. They had come from Fort Ellice, had recently travelled the long road from Missouri, and were



1931 photo from "Black Elk Speaks". Black Elk instructs anthropologists in the ritual of the Hoop Game. Left to right: Hilda Neihardt; Black Elk; Chase in the Morning; and John G. Neihardt.

Neihardt expected to spend this day recording Black Elk's vision experiences, and was surprised when the elders insisted on playing a ball game. As Neihardt learned, recreation in a ritual context is also part of public religion. Some "recreational ritual" artifacts such as stone balls and targets have been deposited into the Moncur Collection. The border between Treaties One and Two passes through or very near a ball game site on Turtle Mountain.

now on their way to Governor Archibald to ask permission to live under the British flag, and that small reserves or allotments of land should be allowed them, as they were determined to live no longer under the rule of 'the long knives.'

Ocean to Ocean, Rev. George Grant, p. 87

Notwithstanding the George III medals, the Dakota could not get the Canadian government to treat with them on the same footing as the Ojibway or Cree, including even more recent immigrants from Red Lake, Minnesota.

Lt. Governor Alexander Morris, who took over

from Adams after the Fenian Raid, reported on the conduct of treaty negotiations with the Saulteaux Ojibway at the Northwest Angle in a letter dated October 14, 1873.

On arriving [Sept. 26, 1873 at Lake of the Woods,] the Indians, who were already there, came up to the house I occupied, in procession, headed by braves bearing a banner and a Union Jack, and accompanied by others beating drums. They asked leave to perform a dance in my honour, after which they presented to me the pipe of peace. They were then supplied with provisions and returned to their camp...

...On the 1st October they again assembled. The principal cause of the delay was divisions and jealousies among themselves. The nation had not met for many years, and some of them had never been assembled together. They were very jealous of each other, and dreaded any of the Chiefs having individual communications with me, to prevent which they had guards on the approaches to my house and Mr. Dawson's tent. On the 2nd October they again assembled, when I again explained the object of the meeting, through Mr. McPherson, an intelligent half-breed trader, whose services I secured. Mr. Chatelan, the Government interpreter, was also present. They had selected three spokesmen, and had also an Indian reporter, whose duty was to commit to memory all that was said. They had also secured the services of M. Joseph Nolin, of Point du Chene, to take notes in French of the negotiations.

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, pp. 47-48

In the same letter, Morris reported on the discussion regarding the status of those Ojibway resident in the United States in 1873. The **bold** portions appear in the original publication as *italics*.

*They explained that some of their children had married in the States, and they wished them to return and live among them and wanted them included in the treaty. I told them the treaty was not for American Indians, but any **bona fide British Indians** of the class they mentioned who should **within two** years be found **resident** on British soil would be recognized.*

They said there were some ten to twenty families of half-breeds who were recognized

as Indians, and lived with them, and they wished them included. I said the treaty was not for whites, but I would recommend that those families should be permitted the option of taking either status as Indians or whites, but that they could not take both.

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, p. 50

Morris offered no explanation as to the discrepancy in treatment the Lake-of-the-Woods Ojibway and the Turtle Mountain Dakota. In the former case, American residents born and raised were permitted to immigrate into Canada and to claim to be British subjects up to two years after the signing of the treaty. Ojibway mixed blood descendants could choose to be treated as either status Indians or as white settlers.

In the narrative account which the Saulteaux recorded, and which Morris published, the Lieutenant-Governor stated this point quite emphatically.

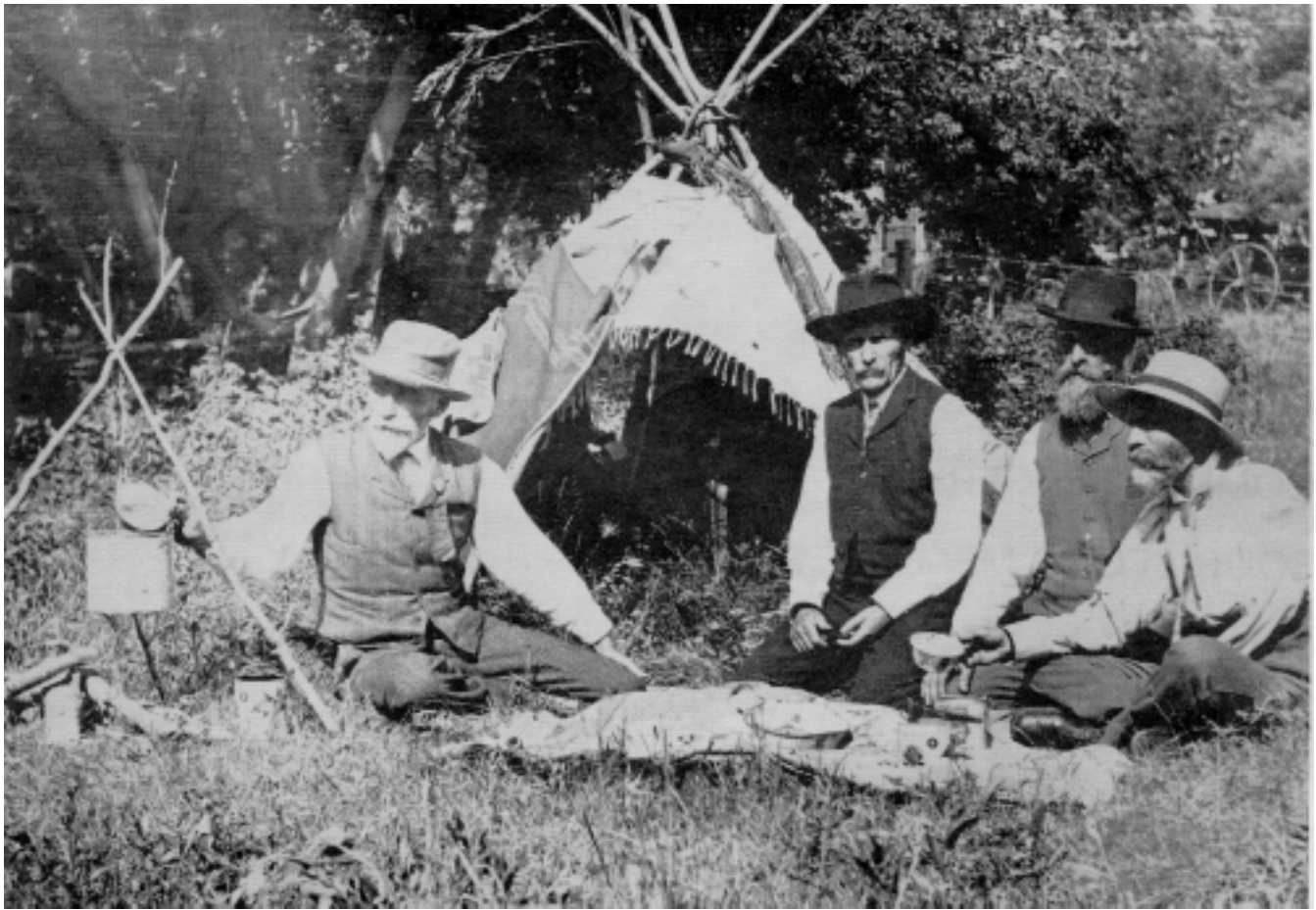
Governor — “I am dealing with British Indians and not American Indians; after the treaty is closed we will have a list of the names of any children of British Indians that may come in during two years and be ranked with them; but we must have a limit somewhere.”

Chief [unidentified] — “I should not feel happy if I was not to mess [British Army slang for ‘sit down to dinner with’] with some of my children that are around me — those children that we call the Half-breed — those that are married to our women.”

Governor — “I am sent here to treat with the Indians. In Red River, where I came from, and where there is a great body of Half-breeds, they must be either white or Indian. If Indians, they get treaty money; if the Half-breeds call themselves white, they get land. All I can do is to refer the matter to the Government at Ottawa, and to recommend what you wish to be granted.”

Chief — “I hope you will not drop the question; we have understood you to say that you came here as a friend, and represented your charitableness, and we depend upon your kindness. You must remember that our hearts and our brains are like paper; we never forget. There is one thing that we want to know. If you should get into trouble with the nations, I do not wish to walk out and expose my young men to aid you in any of your wars.”

Governor — “The English never call the



By enlisting key people, especially those who were willing to engage in a little cross cultural education, Sitting Eagle and the Council were able to preserve history, sacred sites and even some ceremony. Shown above are four of Sitting Eagle's close friends and contemporaries caught candidly at a 1905 era Sourisford Pioneer Picnic. Left to right: Alfred Gould, Dave Elliot, J. B. Elliot and W. F. Thomas. The latter's missing left arm is noticeable. Thomas' arm was cut off by the others when he'd got gangrene. When Native people and Whites were few per square mile these men and Sitting Eagle formed a close bond. Gould was a farmer, the Elliots operated a general store and post office, and Thomas was municipal clerk. Elliot recalled that for the first three years most of the customers were Dakota. **Sourisford and Area from 1879**

Indians out of their country to fight their battles. You are living here and the Queen expects you to live at peace with the white men and your red brothers, and with other nations."

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, pp. 68-69

The Turtle Mountain Dakota, who had already been resident in British North America for twenty-two years at the time of the Northwest Angle Treaty, couldn't obtain *either* status as Treaty Indians *or* be treated as whites for homestead purposes. In contrast, the fact that many of the Saulteaux were from Red Lake, Minnesota did not bother Morris — provided they did not also sign treaties with the United States. The Dakota children born north of the 49th parallel, and their descendants, did not receive legal recognition of permanent residency until

the 1960 Canadian Bill of Rights — ninety-nine years after the people had originally "immigrated."

Several times during the Northwest Angle negotiations, the issue of distrust emerged. The Native representatives sent to the negotiations did not display a generic distrust of all Whites so much as a specific dislike for certain individuals. In the following exchange the Saulteaux negotiators tried and failed to draw Lt. Governor Morris' attention to the difference in credibility between J. A. N. Provencher and Charles Nolin. In this sequence, Nolin is the recording secretary and Provencher is briefly in the chair.

Commissioner Provencher (the Governor being temporarily absent) — "As soon as it is convenient to the Government to send surveyors to lay out the reserves they will do so, and

they will try to suit every particular band in this respect.”

Chief [unidentified] — “We do not want anybody to mark out our reserves, we have already marked them out.”

Commissioner — “There will be another undertaking between the officers of the Government and the Indians among themselves for the selection of the land; they will have enough of good farming land, they may be sure of that.”

Chief — “Of course, if there is any particular part wanted by the public works they can shift us. I understand that; but if we have any gardens through the country, do you wish that the poor man should throw it away?”

Commissioner — “Of course not.”

Chief — “These are matters that are the wind-up. I begin now to see how I value the proceedings. I have come to this point, and all that are taking part in this treaty and yourself. I would wish to have all your names in writing handed over to us. I would not find it to my convenience to have a stranger here to transact our business between me and you. It is a white man who does not understand our language that is taking it down. I would like a man that understands our language and our ways. We would ask your Excellency as a favor to appoint him for us.”

Governor — “I have a very good feeling to Mr. C. Nolin, he has been a good man here; but the appointment of an Agent rests with the authorities at Ottawa and I will bring your representation to them, and I am quite sure it will meet with the respect due to it.”

The Treaties of Canada, Alexander Morris, pp. 70-71

Nolin, who had the partial trust of the Saulteaux, had been in the cabinet of Louis Riel. Subsequently he would serve as a Manitoba provincial cabinet minister, and during the 1885 Rebellion would attempt fruitlessly to prevent escalation from political to military action. In contrast, J. A. N. Provencher was purely in it for the pork barrel and was disgraced during the McColl Royal Commission investigation of corruption in Indian Affairs. A great deal of trouble could have been avoided if men of good will like Morris, had trusted to other men of good will like Nolin or the Saulteaux chief, instead of men like J. A. N. Provencher.

Recruiting Bill Moncur

During the years 1999 to 2001, at the request of the Moncur family, the Moncur Gallery Board and Bill Moncur himself, a series of interviews were conducted with Bill Moncur. The object was to ascertain as much as possible about the provenance of the anomalous artifacts in the collection: stones, pipes, tobacco pouch, ladle and some hammers. The last formal interviews with Bill Moncur were conducted in early 2001, shortly before his death on May 12, 2001.

The method used simply meant having Mr. Moncur repeat the old stories, and with his permission, he was interrupted at different points to ask for elaboration. E.g.. “Exactly which cars did you place the furs between?” Or, he would be presented with an artifact associated with the story at a key moment. Elders Marina and Kevin Tacan successfully used sound, smell and Dakota names and phrases to spur Moncur’s memory. Each time board, volunteers and contacts uncovered another bit of information, that in turn would be taken back to Moncur for verification. All of these “tricks” helped Moncur to enter the memory and recover more detail. Sometimes it was simply that 50 intervening years had blurred the edges of memory; but the real surprise was that Bill Moncur had deliberately held much of the story back.

The breakthrough came almost two-thirds of the way through the first interview:

Q: Did you know that the pie and ice cream was a food gift to an Elder?

A: Not then. I was just being friendly, and I knew he loved ice cream. Later I came to realize what it meant.

Q: Did you give Sitting Eagle tobacco?

A: [Mr. Moncur slammed the chair at this point.] How did you know that?

Q: Well it was missing from the story. I couldn’t see handing over artifacts without a tobacco gift and a proper council on the subject.

A: Yes, I did give him tobacco.

[The conversation continued for a bit on the significance of the tobacco and food gifts.]

Q: [thinking to myself out loud] I should have brought a tobacco gift.

A: [slamming his fist down again on the arm of the chair] Now! you’re talking.”

A whole new dimension opened up in the interviews that previous records had not disclosed. It was only after he’d been presented with tobacco that the “Na-



*Sitting Eagle in Deloraine in 1924. Photo from **Deloraine Scans a Century: 1880-1980.***

tive” side of the story emerged. The result of this, and subsequent research suggested by Moncur, is the information contained here. The following version of events is a reasonable reconstruction, given the new information gained from Moncur in the interviews conducted in 1999 and 2000. Prior to his death, Moncur was able to check through a large print version of this chapter. He paid particular attention to the following sequence.

Sitting Eagle and the Council

By 1942 the Council of All Nations on Turtle Mountain had wrapped up the majority of its current business. Protection of the Mandan trade route was no longer a mission, as trade in general now followed the new industrial transportation routes.

The internal social disintegration, or as the Council thought of it, simply “abuse”, was more effectively dealt with at the Nation and band level. The permit sys-

tem was restricting agricultural development, but all of the member First Nations of the Council now had at least some reserves of land to form a basis for future capital.

The Indian Wars, as we called them, or the White Problem, as the Council thought of it, had settled down to a quiet occupation. The war had been lost in some areas, and in others First Nations had held their own, including their constitutional place within the new Canadian and American states. That battle, led by the peace chiefs and elders, meant the survival of the First Nations in the long run.

There remained the matter of how to best preserve this history. In the aftermath of the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, the Canadian government attempted to suppress language, custom and religion. The Sun Dance was outlawed in 1885 and the ban was not lifted until 1951. In 1942, the very meeting of the Council was illegal.

The consensus of the Council was that the wars and disease had stressed the traditional method of keeping records by “winter counts” and oral tradition to the breaking point. Each First Nation was going to have a struggle merely to preserve their own traditions and knowledge. The history and traditions of the Council of All Nations would be more difficult to preserve.

Assignments were made to each of the elder chiefs who sat on the Council. Each of the members in turn made appropriate arrangements within their own First Nation trying to preserve at least the reference to a Council on the Mountain.

For the special task of preserving the overall story, significance, sacred artifacts and spaces, Sitting Eagle proposed that extraordinary steps would have to be taken. The Council needed to place someone deep inside the White society, where the rules and authorities of the new system could be slowly blended to the needs of the old.

By 1942 Sitting Eagle of the Dakotas, (formerly “Chaske [Charles] Eagle” of Sioux Valley), had been watching a young white man who had pestered every Native travelling the old Mandan Trail. The boy’s farm sat squarely on the trail, very close to a spring which was a traditional watering stop for thousands of years. Contact with him was unavoidable. Many of the other Elders had seen the boy, and in 1942 the boy was a 32 year old man with a dozen years of experience collecting “Indian artifacts.”

Sitting Eagle had not revealed himself to the young man, but had been favourably impressed with his maturing attitude. The Dakota chief proposed to the Council that this man be recruited to protect the sacred artifacts which did not belong to any one First Nation, and to record

the history.

The Council agreed, but set a series of tests to confirm that the young man's heart was good, and that he was equal to the task.

Accordingly, one day in 1942, Sitting Eagle now 75 years old, waited in the cold winter morning on the train siding in Deloraine. He'd carefully trapped about twenty skunks, then improperly cured the hides so they still smelled strongly of skunk. Although he shipped furs on the train innumerable times, and knew the procedure well, he wrapped these skins so the odour would escape.

As the train got up steam and the crew took their places, he could see his target hanging on the express car at the other end of the platform. The conductor approached to ask him what he wanted and Sitting Eagle presented the nonregulation package of skunk skins. He was counting on the conductor to hold to his regulations and refuse the package. He was not disappointed.

Sitting Eagle stood in place, with the package of skins at his feet, looking as dejected as he could muster. From one corner of his eye he watched his target to see how he'd react. The conductor passed the young man, who spoke to him briefly. When the conductor walked passed towards the front of the train, the young man gestured at Sitting Eagle with a "come on". Sitting Eagle seized his chance and told the young man the concocted story about needing to ship the skins to the Hudson's Bay Company. How would he react?

The man swung the package up between the cars so the cold would prevent the odour from infiltrating the cars. Sitting Eagle was pleasantly surprised at the man's cleverness.

The train swung out of the station, and Sitting Eagle watched it, his quarry and his furs depart for Winnipeg. He'd have some explaining to do to the HBC man, but he'd sent enough furs before that they'd humour him, and when they arrived they'd be good and frozen anyway.

A few weeks later Sitting Eagle received a cheque in the mail from the Hudson's Bay Company. The cheque would provide another prop for the drama, and he carefully folded it away rather than cash it.

When next he saw his quarry at the train station, he pulled out the folded HBC cheque and waved it. "I got my cheque," he told the young man in English.

Over the next few weeks the young man acted in a very courteous manner to Sitting Eagle, even though he didn't really know the right way to do things all the time. He'd arranged somehow with the Chinese restaurant owner to give Sitting Eagle all the pie and ice cream he wanted. One day he'd come to Sitting Eagle with

some pipe tobacco.

"Do you know what this is?" asked Sitting Eagle surprised.

"No, not really. But I know you like tobacco, and that you show respect to an older person by giving them tobacco," replied the young man.

Sitting Eagle told the young man his name, and learned he was called Bill Moncur.

Sitting Eagle reported to the Council on the mountain what the young man had said and done at each of the tests. They decided that Sitting Eagle was right, that this Moncur was the right candidate for what the Council intended. It was agreed that Sitting Eagle would bring him to the Turtle's Head.

Now it was reversed as to who was surprised. Moncur agreed immediately to Sitting Eagle's request to come to the mountain. The old man reflected ruefully that the young man barely understood what he was getting himself into.

On the Turtle's Head, at the traditional Council site below the Foot of the Turtle, the Council of All Nations/Council of Sacred Clowns convened. There was one vacancy in 1942 because the Three Affiliated Nations had suffered losses to disease and starvation. This loss had not been rebuilt. However, Sitting Eagle as principal chief of the council, and five other council members gathered. Seven stones were brought into the council bowl, a natural depression beneath a great oak tree which stood at the northern edge. Sitting Eagle sat at the middle north, beneath the tree. In a line beside him, from east to west sat five other Council members to make six in total: one each for the Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibway, Hidatsa, Dakota and Assiniboine. Although the Mandans had historically founded the Council, none remained to take their traditional seat.

The candidate, Bill Moncur, was seated opposite the council members, in the position of trust on the southern edge of the bowl. Around the edges of the bowl, a few spectators gathered who were privy to the Council decisions.

The councillors were smudged to purify them, and then the sacred pipe was carefully introduced at the east and passed around the circle in a clockwise direction. Moncur did not smoke, though he took the smoke into himself the same way as he had for smudging.

The Council may not have understood all of the taboos that bound a Celt, but they knew they existed. They understood there were enough cultural similarities that they could work with such a person, and that a promise elicited from the right one on his oath was binding — forever. They accepted Moncur's method of handling

the pipe and smoke as reverent if irregular. As sacred clowns this was within their power, to modify ritual to new circumstance.

A discussion ensued. Sitting Eagle introduced the subject, a review of the history of the Council, its change of focus over the years, and the threat to its continuity through losses in the oral tradition. He noted the sad absence of any Mandan representative at the Council. The matter of how best to preserve the traditions and history of the Council was discussed by the representatives of the several nations assembled.

“This is a young White man who has expressed an interest in our traditions,” Sitting Eagle told the Council. “He means no harm. It is a good thing that we teach him.”

In the end it was agreed that the young White would have to be trusted. They would ask him for a promise, to preserve and protect, to remember, and to teach the meaning of the artifacts to be placed in his care. The knowledge would have to be hidden for a time, but it must be continued, and eventually reintroduced. To these requests Moncur gave his promise.

Essentially the same thing was taking place at many other locations throughout the Plains. During the same decade that Sitting Eagle recruited Bill Moncur; Earth Elder was relaying his stories to his journalist grandson Wolfe; while Black Elk and Chase in the Morning were recruiting a series of anthropologists and poets (such as Neihardt,) to put their traditions, histories and beliefs into the record.

To all of this the young man agreed, although he understood little of it at first. The debate was not translated for him, and indeed, as was the practice of the Council, it had occurred in several languages. Sitting Eagle translated only a little of it for Moncur.

“I knew they were talking about me, and I knew they talked about what to do with the stones, but not much else,” recalled Moncur in 1999. “They felt that the young people weren’t going to preserve these traditions, and that they had to do something.”

Over the course of the next two years, from 1942 to 1944, the Council met with Moncur several times. Each time a different ritual was stressed. At the conclusion of one of them, for example, a ball game, the Council told Moncur where to go after a suitable time had elapsed to find seven stone balls. After each ceremony he was given artifacts to take into his safekeeping, or assigned tasks, or given directions to find artifacts and sacred sites. He was charged with doing whatever he could to care for these things.

One day in 1944, the station agent called Bill Mon-

cur to say he had a parcel for him personally.

“For me? What is it?” asked Moncur.

“A couple of rocks left for you by the old Indian.”

“A couple of rocks? What for?”

“I don’t know. He just said he left them here for you and you were to keep ‘em.”

Moncur and the station agent walked over to the side of the platform and the agent showed him a heavy bag with two of the granite stones inside. The moment Moncur saw the stones he recognized them as the key stones used to bring the Council to order. He knew immediately what they were, that he was to keep them, and that the Council had adjourned. Over the course of the next few months, five more stones arrived, sometimes in pairs, sometimes one at a time. Each time Sitting Eagle carried the stones (presumably) from his cabin on the mountain, twelve miles away, to the train siding. The bag would be left with the station agent, and Bill would add the stones to the growing collection.

A little bit of instruction only remained, or at least only a little time remained. Sitting Eagle told Moncur that the artifacts which he now had, and which he would discover or receive later, were to be kept, preserved, and their history honoured. He told Moncur that this decision had been made because the traditions were being lost. They knew that Moncur, because of his own traditions and character, would honour their request, and his own promise.

In the summer of 1944 Sitting Eagle called on Bill

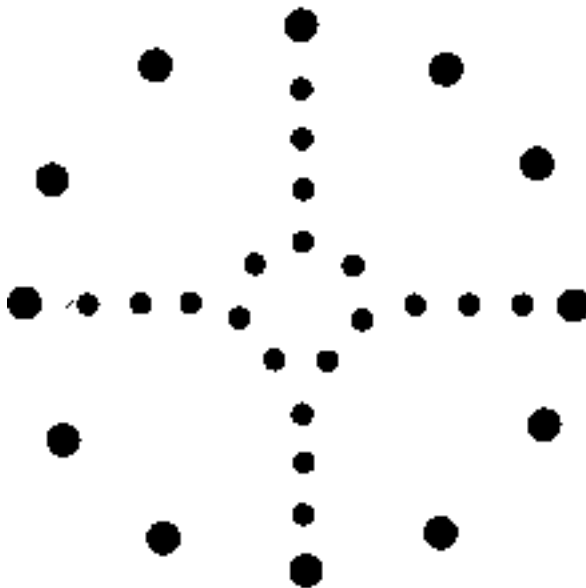


Illustration of a common stone Medicine Wheel pattern, with seven key stones in place.

Seven Arrows, p. 5

Moncur's farm to ask for a ride up to the Council Tree. Moncur drove Sitting Eagle in his pick-up truck and the two walked in, taking a wide spiral and approaching the tree from the south. In an echo of the ancient burial practices of the Sourisford mounds, Sitting Eagle sat down on the southwest corner of the tree. He pulled out his red eagle pipe, offered it to the Four Directions and then smoked the pipe with Moncur.

"That's the last time I'll smoke that pipe," he told Moncur, and separating the pipe he handed the bowl to Moncur. (Moncur did not recall seeing where the rest of the pipe went.)

Sitting Eagle directed Moncur's attention to a spot and told him that he'd buried something there.

"What did you bury?" asked Moncur.

"Well you won't want to eat it," chuckled Sitting Eagle.

"Is it because it's too hard?" asked Moncur trying to play the game.

"No....," Sitting Eagle just trailed off.

Moncur surmised that whatever it was, it wasn't too hard to eat but wasn't edible. He gathered it was some kind of a bundle. "What is it?"

"Some things that needed to be kept," replied Sitting Eagle.

"What did you do that for?" Moncur asked, referring to the burying.

"To keep it out of the hands of the Whites," said Sitting Eagle.

"Well what are you telling me for?" asked Moncur. "I'm White!"

"No that kind of White. You know what I mean," replied Sitting Eagle. "Maybe some day you'll need to get it. I don't want the wrong people getting it. Too much is gone. My old friends are gone. And the young people today don't want to remember. So you remember for me."

"How will I know it?"

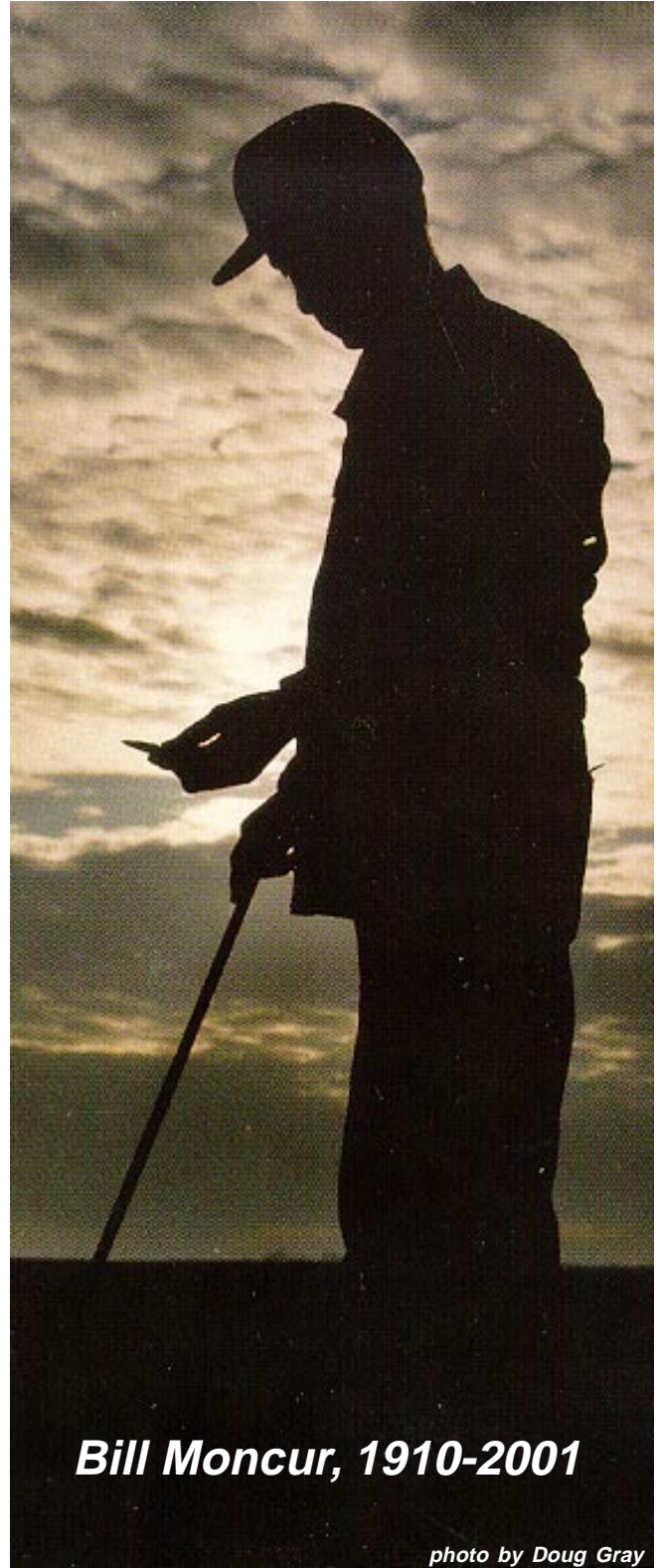
"Oh you'll recognize it alright," said Sitting Eagle. The old man took a tour around the Council site, and pointed out a small skin and canvass dome nearby. "That's my sweatlodge," he said.

Moncur said that he wanted to look inside, but Sitting Eagle pushed him away without saying anything. Sitting Eagle chanted for a time and Moncur believed later that he'd heard the old man's death song. They talked a little more, and Moncur drove off leaving Sitting Eagle behind at his own request on the old No. 60 Reserve property where'd he been born.

A few weeks later, after delivering the final stone, Sitting Eagle, entered his sweatlodge for the last time,

and sang his death song. The Deloraine Times reported that the provincial constable had investigated and found the old man. The doctor surmised that Sitting Eagle (Charles Chaske) had died of pneumonia.

More than fifty years later the story of the Council Stones would be told again.



Bill Moncur, 1910-2001

photo by Doug Gray

Appendix: Astronomy

Arise to greet the morning star!
traditional Dakota crier call

A fascinating puzzle faces anyone today who looks at the many stones, stone piles and intact petroforms of south-western Manitoba. How were they used?

In 1977 astronomer Dr. John Eddy concluded that most of the “medicine wheels” and “petroforms” of the Great Plains and Canadian Prairies include sighting markers for making astronomical observations. These findings were published in *Scientific American* and *National Geographic*, creating a modest stir at the time. Since then the work has been taken up by some Native people themselves, but has not received as much serious attention from the rest of the scientific community. Few archaeologists incorporate Eddy’s ideas into their analysis of stone formations.

On Turtle Mountain oral history tells us that Native elders and medicine people used natural landforms to mark the seasons. Literally hundreds of stone forms and mud mounds dot the landscape in and around Turtle Mountain, and even the hills themselves are incorporated into the patterns.

Eddy (and his few successors) found that they were seven key markers that were almost always present — regardless of whether the site was a wheel, a petroform or an arrangement of mounds. The markers themselves could be stones, stakes or pieces of landscape.

The chart shown below left is based on the medicine

wheel atop Moose Mountain, SK. Markers A, B, C, and D are “front sights” for observing the positions of Aldebaran, Rigel, Sirius and Fomalhaut on specific days of the year. Markers E and F are “back sights” through which observations are made of the other stones. The last marker, O, is near the centre of the structure. Observing from E through O gives the summer solstice sunrise.

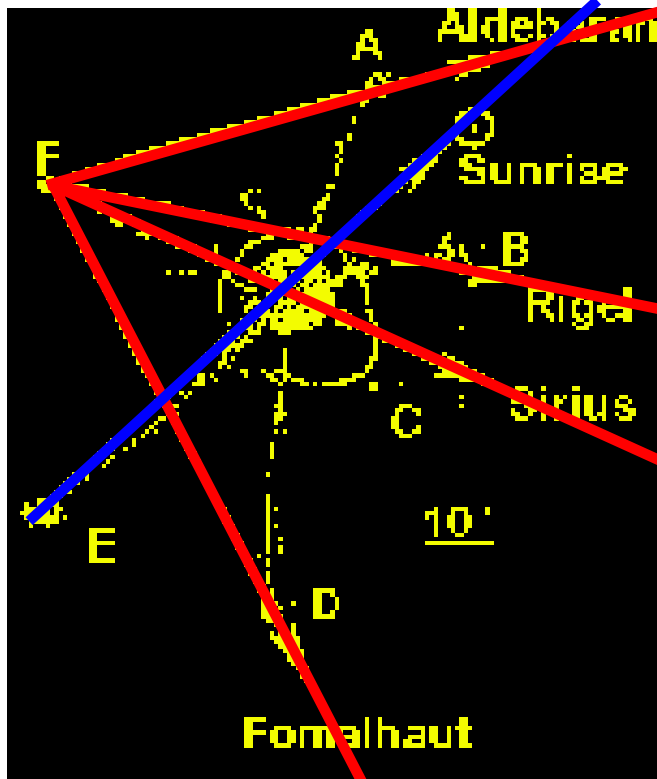
Aldebaran, Rigel and Sirius gave “morning star” positions for one, two and three months after the summer solstice. The Fomalhaut sight gave a date approximately one month before the winter solstice.

Eddy concentrated on morning and summertime observations. It is probable that the sites were also used for winter and evening observations as well. Unfortunately much of this knowledge has been lost.

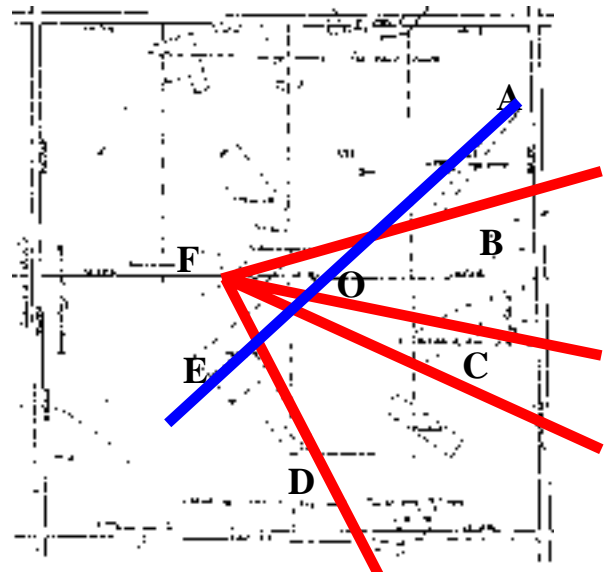
Most of these angles stay relatively constant, but Aldebaran’s position relative to earth has gradually shifted it counterclockwise until it no longer rises as a morning star. Astronomers believe that approximate dates can be determined for the last use of a medicine wheel by measuring the angle of the Aldebaran sight and comparing it to tables. The oldest site determined so far, at Moose Mountain, has been radiocarbon dated to approximately 500 BC.

Most of these sites have been disturbed and it may never be possible to determine where stones or markers originally lay. However, an historical accident resulted in one “hidden” sight on Turtle Mountain being surveyed.

The diagram at below left is an astronomer’s analysis of the angles on sighting stones found at Moose Mountain, Saskatchewan. The diagram below right is based on the 1909 Dominion Land Survey of the Turtle Mountain Dakota reserve. The lines were drawn over the Moose Mountain diagram, and then superimposed on the No. 60 Reserve survey showing the same kinds of relationships. The apparently haphazard placement of the plots probably points to other sight lines.



The diagram below right is based on the 1909 Dominion Land Survey of the Turtle Mountain Dakota reserve. The lines were drawn over the Moose Mountain diagram, and then superimposed on the No. 60 Reserve survey showing the same kinds of relationships. The apparently haphazard placement of the plots probably points to other sight lines.



just mentioned. It is true that the Mississippi being the boundary between the English and Spanish settlements, and the Spaniards in possession of the mouth of it, they may obstruct the passage of it, and greatly dishearten those who make the first attempts; yet when the advantages that will certainly arise to settlers, are known, multitudes of adventurers, allured by the prospect of such abundant riches, will flock to it, and establish themselves, though at the expence of rivers of blood.

But should the nation that happens to be in possession of New Orleans prove unfriendly to the internal settlers, they may find a way into the Gulf of Mexico, by the river Iberville, which empties itself from the Mississippi, after passing through Lake Maurepas, into Lake Ponchartrain, which has a communication with the sea within the borders of West Florida. The River Iberville branches off from the Mississippi about eighty miles above New Orleans, and though it is at present choked up in some parts, it might at an inconsiderable expence be made navigable, so as to answer all the purposes proposed.

Although the English have acquired since the last peace a more extensive knowledge of the interior parts than were ever obtained before, even by the French, yet many of their productions still remain unknown. And though I was not deficient either in assiduity or attention during the short time I remained in them, yet I must acknowledge that the intelligence I gained was not so perfect as I could wish, and that it requires further researches to make the world thoroughly acquainted with the real value of these long hidden realms.

The parts of the Mississippi of which no survey has hitherto been taken, amount to upwards of eight hundred miles, following the course of the stream, that is, from the Illinois to the Ouiseconsin Rivers. Plans of such as reach from the former to the Gulph of Mexico, have been delineated by several hands, and I have the pleasure to find that an actual survey of the intermediate parts of the Mississippi, between the Illinois River and the sea, with the Ohio, Cherokees, and Osage

A P P E N D I X.

THE countries that lie between the great lakes and River Mississippi, and from thence southward to West Florida, although in the midst of a large continent, and at a great distance from the sea, are so situated, that a communication between them and other realms might conveniently be opened; by which means those empires of colonies that may hereafter be founded or planted therein, will be rendered commercial ones. The great River Mississippi, which runs through the whole of them, will enable their inhabitants to establish an intercourse with foreign climes, equally as well as the Euphrates, the Nile, the Danube, or the Wolga do those people which dwell on their banks, and who have no other convenience for exporting the produce of their own country, or for importing those of others, than boats and vessels of light burden: notwithstanding which, they have become powerful and opulent states.

The Mississippi, as I have before observed, runs from north to south, and passes through the most fertile and temperate part of North-America, excluding only the extremities of it, which verge both on the torrid and frigid zones. Thus favorably situated, when once its banks are covered with inhabitants, they need not long be at a loss for means to establish an extensive and profitable commerce. They will find the country towards the south almost spontaneously producing silk, cotton, indigo, and tobacco; and the more northern parts, wine, oil, beef, tallow, skins, buffalo-wool, and furs; with lead, copper, iron, coals, lumber, corn, rice, and fruits, besides earth and barks for dyeing.

These articles, with which it abounds even to profusion, may be transported to the ocean through this river without greater difficulty than that which attends the conveyance of merchandize down some of those I have

just

beche Rivers, taken on the spot by a very ingenious Gentleman,* is now published. I flatter myself that the observations therein contained, which have been made by one whose knowledge of the parts therein described was acquired by a personal investigation, aided by a solid judgment, will confirm the remarks I have made, and promote the plan I am here recommending.

I shall also here give a concise description of each, beginning, according to the rule of geographers, with that which lies most to the north.

It is however necessary to observe, that before these settlements can be established, grants must be procured in the manner customary on such occasions, and the lands be purchased of those who have acquired a right to them by a long possession; but no greater difficulty will attend the completion of this point, than the original founders of every colony on the continent met with to obstruct their intentions; and the number of Indians who inhabit these tracts being greatly inadequate to their extent, it is not to be doubted, but they will readily give up for a reasonable consideration, territories that are of little use to them; or remove for the accommodation of their new neighbors, to lands at a greater distance from the Mississippi, the navigation of which is not essential to the welfare of their communities.

No. I. The country within these lines, from its situation, is colder than any of the others; yet I am convinced that the air is much more temperate than in those provinces that lie in the same degree of latitude to the east of it. The soil is excellent, and there is a great deal of land that is free from woods in the parts adjoining to the Mississippi; whilst on the contrary the northern borders of it are well wooded. Towards the heads of the River Saint Croix, rice grows in great plenty, and there is abundance of copper. Though the falls of Saint Anthony are situated at the south-east corner of this division, yet that impediment will not totally obstruct the navigation, as the River Saint Croix, which

* Thomas Hutchins, Esq. Captain in his Majesty's 60th, or Royal American Regiment of Foot.

which runs through a great part of the southern side of it, enters the Mississippi just below the Falls, and flows with so gentle a current, that it affords a convenient navigation for boats. This tract is about one hundred miles from north-west to south-east, and one hundred and twenty miles from north-east to south-west.

No. II. This tract, as I have already described it in my Journal, exceeds the highest encomiums I can give it; notwithstanding which it is entirely uninhabited, and the profusion of blessings that nature has showered on this heavenly spot, return unenjoyed to the lap from whence they sprung. Lake Pepin, as I have termed it after the French, lies within these bounds; but the lake to which that name properly belongs is a little above the River St. Croix; however, as all the traders call the lower lake by that name, I have so denominated it, contrary to the information I received from the Indians. This colony lying in unequal angles, the dimensions of it cannot be exactly given, but it appears to be on an average about one hundred and ten miles long, and eighty broad.

No. III. The greatest part of this division is situated on the River Ouifconsin, which is navigable for boats about one hundred and eighty miles, till it reaches the carrying place that divides it from the Fox River. The land which is contained within its limits, is in some parts mountainous, and in others consists of fertile meadows and fine pasturage. It is furnished also with a great deal of good timber, and, as is generally the case on the banks of the Mississippi and its branches, has much fine, open, clear land, proper for cultivation. To these are added an inexhaustible fund of riches, in a number of lead mines which lie at a little distance from the Ouifconsin towards the south, and appear to be uncommonly full of ore. Although the Saukies and Ottagouais inhabit a part of this tract, the whole of the lands under their cultivation does not exceed three hundred acres. It is in length from east to west about one hundred and fifty miles, and about eighty from north to south.

No. IV. This colony consists of lands of various denominations, some of which are very good, and others very bad. The best is situated on the borders of the Green Bay and the Fox River, where there are innumerable acres covered with fine grass, most part of which grows to an astonishing height. This river will afford a good navigation for boats throughout the whole of its course, which is about one hundred and eighty miles, except between the Winnebago Lake, and the Green Bay; where there are several carrying-places in the space of thirty miles. The Fox River is rendered remarkable by the abundance of rice that grows on its shores, and the almost infinite numbers of wild fowl that frequent its banks. The land which lies near it appears to be very fertile, and promises to produce a sufficient supply of all the necessaries of life for any number of inhabitants. A communication might be opened by those who shall settle here, either through the Green Bay, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario with Canada, or by way of the Quiconia into the Mississippi. This division is about one hundred and sixty miles long from north to south, and one hundred and forty broad.

No. V. This is an excellent tract of land, and, considering its interior situation, has greater advantages than could be expected; for having the Mississippi on its western borders, and the Illinois in its south-east, it has as free a navigation as most of the others. The northern parts of it are somewhat mountainous, but it contains a great deal of clear land, the soil of which is excellent, with many fine fertile meadows, and not a few rich mines. It is upwards of two hundred miles from north to south, and one hundred and fifty from east to west.

No. VI. This colony being situated upon the heads of the Rivers Illinois and Ouabache, the former of which empties itself immediately into the Mississippi, and the latter into the same river by means of the Ohio, will readily find a communication with the sea through these. Having also the River Miami passing through it, which runs into Lake Erie, an intercourse might be established with Canada also by way of the lakes, as be-

fore

A P P E N D I X. 279
fore pointed out. It contains a great deal of rich fertile land, and though more inland than any of the others, will be as valuable an acquisition as the best of them. From north to south it is about one hundred and sixty miles, from east to west one hundred and eighty.

No. VII. This division is not inferior to any of the foregoing. Its northern borders lying adjacent to the Illinois river, and its western to the Mississippi, the situation of it for establishing a commercial intercourse with foreign nations is very commodious. It abounds with all the necessaries of life, and is about one hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and sixty miles from east to west; but the confines of it being more irregular than the others, I cannot exactly ascertain the dimensions of it.

No. VIII. This colony having the River Ouabache running through the centre of it, and the Ohio for its southern boundary, will enjoy the advantages of a free navigation. It extends about one hundred and forty miles from north to south, and one hundred and thirty from east to west.

No. IX. X. and XI. being similar in situation, and furnished with nearly the same conveniences as all the others, I shall only give their dimensions. No. IX. is about eighty miles each way, but not exactly square. No. X. is nearly in the same form, and about the same extent. No. XI. is much larger, being at least one hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and one hundred and forty from east to west, as nearly as from its irregularity it is possible to calculate.

After the description of this delightful country I have already given, I need not repeat that all the spots I have thus pointed out as proper for colonization, abound not only with the necessaries of life, being well stored with rice, deer, buffaloes, bears, &c. but produce in equal abundance such as may be termed luxuries, or at least those articles of commerce before recited, which the inhabitants of it will have an opportunity of exchanging for the needful productions of other countries.

The

The discovery of a north-west passage to India has been the subject of innumerable disquisitions. Many efforts likewise have been made by way of Hudson's Bay, to penetrate into the Pacific Ocean, though without success. I shall not therefore trouble myself to enumerate the advantages that would result from this much wished-for discovery, its utility being already too well known to the commercial world to need any elucidation; I shall only confine myself to the methods that appear most probable to ensure success to future adventurers.

The many attempts that have hitherto been made for this purpose, but which have all been rendered abortive, seem to have turned the spirit of making useful researches into another channel, and this most interesting one has almost been given up as impracticable; but, in my opinion, their failure rather proceeds from their being begun at an improper place, than from their impracticability.

All navigators that have hitherto gone in search of this passage, have first entered Hudson's Bay; the consequence of which has been, that having spent the season during which only those seas are navigable, in exploring many of the numerous inlets lying therein, and this without discovering any opening, terrified at the approach of winter, they have hastened back for fear of being frozen up, and consequently of being obliged to continue till the return of summer in those bleak and dreary realms. Even such as have perceived the coasts to enfold themselves, and who have of course entertained hopes of succeeding, have been deterred from prosecuting their voyage, lest the winter should set in before they could reach a more temperate climate.

These apprehensions have discouraged the boldest adventurers from completing the expeditions in which they have engaged, and frustrated every attempt. But as it has been discovered by such as have sailed into the northern parts of the Pacific Ocean, that there are many inlets which verge towards Hudson's Bay, it is not to be doubted but that a passage might be made out

out from that quarter, if it be sought for at a proper season. And should these expectations be disappointed, the explorers would not be in the same hazardous situation with those who set out from Hudson's Bay, for they will always be sure of a safe retreat, through an open sea, to warmer regions, even after repeated disappointments. And this confidence will enable them to proceed with greater resolution, and probably be the means of effecting what too much circumspection or timidity has prevented.

These reasons for altering the plan of inquiry after this convenient passage, carry with them such conviction, that in the year 1774, Richard Whitworth, Esq. a member of parliament for Stafford, a gentleman of an extensive knowledge in geography, of an active, enterprising disposition, and whose benevolent mind is ever ready to promote the happiness of individuals, or the welfare of the public, from the representations made to him of the expediency of it by myself and others, intended to travel across the continent of America, that he might attempt to carry a scheme of this kind into execution.

He designed to have pursued nearly the same route that I did; and after having built a fort at Lake Pepin, to have proceeded up the River St. Pierre, and from thence up a branch of the River Messourie, till having discovered the source of the Oregon or River of the West, on the other side the summit of the lands that divide the waters which run into the Gulf of Mexico from those that fall into the Pacific Ocean, he would have sailed down that river to the place where it is said to empty itself near the Straits of Annian.

Having there established another settlement on some spot that appeared best calculated for the support of his people, in the neighborhood of some of the inlets which tend towards the north-east, he would from thence have begun his researches. This gentleman was to have been attended in the expedition by Colonel Rogers, myself, and others, and to have taken out with him a sufficient number of artificers and mariners for building the forts and vessels necessary on the occasion, and for navigating

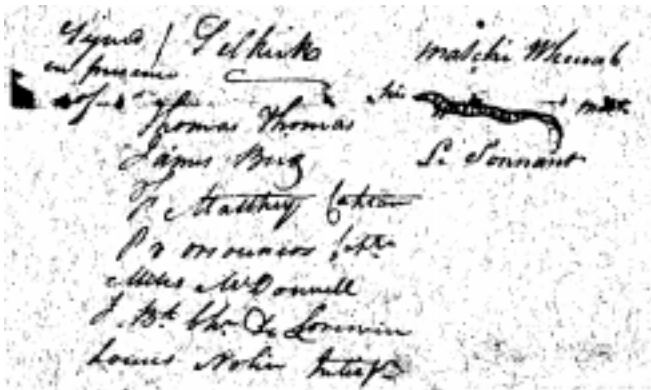
navigating the latter; in all not less than fifty or sixty men. The grants and other requisites for this purpose were even nearly completed, when the present troubles in America began, which put a stop to an enterprise that promised to be of inconceivable advantage to the British dominions.



F I N I S.



Appendix: *Le Sonnant - Many Sitting Eagles*



Shown above left is a reproduction of a section of signatures on the original Selkirk Treaty. [These were scanned from a facsimile edition of the Treaty.] AT upper left is Selkirk's own signature. The drawing at upper right, labelled "his mark" has "Matchi Whewab" written above it, and "Le Sonnant" written below.

Le Sonnant — translated variously as "the Rattler," "the Sounder," "the Musician," or infrequently as "the Singer," — was the principal Ojibwa chief in his day.

"Matchi Whewab" according to a translation provided by William Dumas, does not mean "Le Sonnant" but instead literally means "Many Sitting..." This is the same phrase translated by John Tanner to mean "Many Sitting Eagles." Dumas noted that only a contemporary such as Tanner, who spoke better Ojibway than he did English, can tell us what the missing allusion was.

If Matchi-a-go-te-wub [Tanner] and Matchi Whewab [Selkirk Treaty] are one and the same person, then Le Sonnant was the principal member of the council on Turtle Mountain and his signature on this treaty indicates a role played by the Council.

The "Selkirk Treaty" itself has been misrepresented in light of later treaties. It was an agreement made by a Scottish laird, and followed Scottish law and custom, not English. The "treaty" is an indenture for quit-rent, a term under Scottish law at the time which conveyed a perpetual rental of a property without alienating ownership (or in this case, sovereignty.) This is a rental agreement, not a purchase.

Shown at right is "Le Sonnant" as painted by Karl Bodmer when he met the chief on the Upper Missouri.

A letter from fur trader Robert Campbell to his brother in 1833 confirms this identity with a first-person description. Campbell met Sonnant when the latter was "past sixty."

Amongst those who lately visited me, was a part of the tribe of Creek [Cree] Indians accompanied by their chief Sonnant (anglice "Rattle.") He is a man above the common size, and of very remarkable ap-

pearance... my new friend Sonnant could peer into your very soul, without appearing to be looking at you.

His forehead was prominent — and such were the general developments of his cranium, that without being much of a phrenologist you would at once attribute to him, resolution, to sustain his purposes, implacable hatred and deadly revenge on those who crossed him. His head surmounted by a huge mass of hair, tied in a knot before... His full chest and brawny arms, were tattooed with blue stripes, very regularly laid on: and indeed handsome, after your eye became familiar with it; although at first sight, you would condemn the taste that could admire such horrible and disgusting ornaments. The easy, dignified and elastic step of this chief, proved that he was 'born to command.' His apparel was simple, but comfortable. A buffalo robe enveloped him from head to knee. Leggings of antelope skin ensconced his legs; and plain moccasins his feet.

Sonnant — or "the Rattle," as I shall call him, has seven brothers, all of whom are chiefs of subordinate rank in the nation."



Le Sonnant, by Karl Bodmer

It may have been Le Sonnant or one of his “seven brothers” with whom Henry Youle Hind held a council in 1857. Hind, not very helpfully, brackets his age as between 50 and 100 only by comparison to others present. The Cree chief and his son are described as having blue barred tattooing, a buffalo or elk robe, and hair piled high on top of the head — much like the descriptions and paintings of Le Sonnant. The council described below was held in the Qu’Appelle Valley.

Mis-tick-ooos, or “Shortstick,” is about fifty years old, of low stature, but very powerfully built. His arms and breast were deeply marked with scars and gashes, records of grief and mourning for departed friends. His son’s body was painted with blue bars across the chest and arms. The only clothing they wore consisted of a robe of dressed elk or buffalo hide, and the breech cloth; the robe was often cast off the shoulders and drawn over the knees when in a sitting posture; they wore no covering on the head, their long hair was plaited or tied in knots, or hung loose over their shoulders and back. The forms of some of the young men were faultless, of the middle-aged men bony and wiry, and of the aged men, in one instance at least, a living skeleton. I inquired the age of an extremely old fellow who asked me for medicine to cure a pain in his chest; he replied he was a strong man when the two Companies (the Hudson’s Bay and the North West) were trading with his tribe very many summers ago. He remembers the time “when his people were as numerous as the buffalo are now, and the buffalo thick as trees in the forest.” The half-breeds thought he was more than 100 years old.

When Mis-tick-ooos was ready to receive me, I proceeded to the spot where he was sitting surrounded by the elders of his tribe, and as a preliminary, rarely known to fail in its good effect upon Indians, I instructed one of my men to hand him a basin of tea and a dish of preserved vegetables, biscuit, and fresh buffalo steaks. He had not eaten since an early hour in the morning, and evidently enjoyed his dinner. Hunger, that great enemy to charity and comfort being appeased, I presented him with a pipe and a canister of tobacco, begging him to help himself and hand the remainder to the Indians around us. The presents were then brought and laid at his feet. They consisted of tea, tobacco, bullets, powder, and blankets, all which he examined and accepted with marked satisfaction. After a while he expressed a wish to know the object of our visit; and having at my request adjourned the meeting to my tent in order to avoid sitting in the hot sun, we held a “talk,” during which Mis-tick-ooos expressed himself freely on various subjects, and listened with the utmost attention and apparent respect to the speeches of the Indians he had summoned to attend the “Council.”

All speakers objected strongly to the half-breeds hunting buffalo during the winter in the Plain Cree country. They had no objection to trade with them or with white people, but they insisted that all strangers should purchase dried meat or pemmican, and not hunt for themselves.

They urged strong objections against the Hudson’s Bay Company encroaching upon the prairies and driving away the buffalo. They would be glad to see them establish as many posts as they chose on the edge of the prairie country, but they did not like to see the prairies and plains invaded. During the existence of the two companies, all went well with the Indians, they obtained excellent pay, and could always sell their meat, skins, robes, and pemmican. Since the union of the companies they had not fared half so well, and received bad pay for their provisions, and were growing poorer, weaker, and more miserable year by year. The buffalo were fast disappearing before the encroachments of white men, and although they acknowledged the value of fire-arms, they thought they were better off in olden times, when they had only bows and spears, and wild animals were numerous. They generally commenced with the creation, giving a short history of that event in most general terms, and after a few flourishes about equality of origin, descended suddenly to buffalo, half-breeds, the Hudson’s Bay company, tobacco, and rum. I asked Mis-tick-ooos to name the articles he would wish me to bring if I came into his country again. He asked for tea, a horse of English breed, a cart, a gun, a supply of powder and ball, knives, tobacco, a medal with a chain, a flag, a suit of fine clothes, and rum. The “talk” lasted between six and seven hours, the greater portion of the time being taken up in interpreting sentence by sentence, the speeches of each man in turn.

During the whole time we were engaged in “Council” the pipe was passed from mouth to mouth, each man taking a few whiffs and then handing it to his neighbour. It was a black stone pipe which Mis-tick-ooos had received as a present from a chief of the Blackfeet at the Eagle Hills a few weeks before.

Narrative: Vol. I, Henry Youle Hind, p. 360

Was Prof. Hind attending a Council of Clowns as the Council on Turtle Mountain may have been? The banded tattoo and scarring may indicate a sacred clown. Another possible indicator is the use of a black stone pipe rather than red one. Hind does not indicate the direction in which the pipe was passed.

Mis-tick-ooos and Matche-go-whewub and Le Sonnant could be the same person. If Many Sitting Eagles was born around 1880 he could have been 25 when Tanner met him, around 45 when Robert Campbell met him, and 77 when Prof. Hind described this Council.

Many faces of Sitting Eagle

On these pages is a photo study of the man Charles Chaske Eagle (ca. 1867-1944) known as Sitting Eagle. The source of each photo is indicated, and whether or not the photo was identified as being Sitting Eagle. Most of the pictures are taken from local community histories. Several pictures are from Archival photos which were identified only as "Sioux".



possibly this child. Provincial Archives of Manitoba : Boundary Commission photo 1872.



about 25. Identified in *Trails Along the Pipestone*.



probably the person with W. F. Thomas, age about 45. *Sourisford & Area*. Circa 1905.



with W. F. Thomas, age about 55. Identified in *Our First Century*.



in his "Cheyenne" bonnet. Identified in *Trails Along the Pipestone*. Unknown date.



possibly the same man at Brandon, Royal Manitoba Exhibition circa 1900. NAC Photo.



about age 50. Moncur Gallery photo of Sitting Eagle with hunters. Unknown date.



as a mature man about 60. Identified in *Deloraine Scans a Century*. Unknown date.



about age 65. Identified in *Deloraine Scans a Century*. circa 1935.

Indian Chief, Proud of George III Medal, Will Not Take Country Back

Proudly displaying a medal given to the chief of his tribe 150 years ago by King George III, in recognition of their services to the British forces during the American Revolutionary war, Chief Sitting Eagle, of the Pipestone Sioux, visited the Free Press office and posed for his picture.

The endeavor of the Free Press cameraman to get a picture of the chief was almost ruined by a casual question from one of the reporters.

"Chief," he was asked, "would your people consider taking this country back if it was offered to you." The chief became indignant. People, apparently, are always asking him to take the country back, and it's getting on his nerves.

"Ugh!" he snorted in the best of the poor Indian manner, "ugh! We had this country once, when it was in a lot better shape than it is now. Palefaces won it, and Indian always plays for keeps. You got it, you keep it; no exchanges can be made on this goods, thank you," he declared.

The chief's medal, which he will hand on to his nephew when he goes to the happy hunting grounds, is as handsome as it is rare. It is one of seven which were struck following the war, and given to the seven chiefs of the Seven Nations. On one side is a facsimile of King George, and on the reverse side a picture of a lion and a wolf allied against an unseen foe.

The Sioux at Pipestone are not natives of western Canada, but came here many years ago from the United States.



Clipping from 1936 Winnipeg Free Press interview with Sitting Eagle (Charlie Chaske Eagle)[ca.1867-1944]. (Exact date of article unknown.)

Copy of clipping provided to Boissevain Community Archives by Canupawakpa Dakota Nation (Oak Lake), Aug. 2000

Appendix: Alexander Morris history of the Sioux

In "The Treaties of Canada with the Indians", the one-time Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories Alexander Morris treated with the subject of Sioux history — insofar as explaining their appearance in Canada. Morris' aim of course was to provide some background to the thinking behind the respective treatment of Dakota and Ojibway. The tone throughout "Treaties of Canada" is that of an informed observer, not a person claiming to be an authoritative expert. In his introduction he said that his primary goal was to explain the background of the negotiations. His own contribution to ethnohistory he understated as "a few brief observations."

Morris may have been surprised, and we hope more than a little disappointed, at how his history would be later used. His brief observations throughout the Indian Affairs correspondence and files is referred to as final. Ottawa senior civil servants are often compared to mandarins, and in this case the comparison was apt. Like a tortuous Chinese scholarly critique, the "brief observations" were quoted and requoted, sometimes a few out-of-place antique sentences dismissing an entire land claim.

The sentence probably most often cited in the files, and unfortunately an inaccurate one, was "The Sioux in the Dominion are refugees from the United States, the first body having come over some fourteen years ago." The sentence was written in 1875 and published in 1880, and either way there was no "Dominion of Canada" to enter in 1862.

Because this area was so important in the assumptions of later paper battles over the Dakota reserves and land claims, it is worthwhile quoting some of the lengthy pertinent passages. The following is taken from Chapter XI: The Sioux in the North-West Territories.

Much interest has been awakened with regard to the warlike race, owing to recent events; namely, the war between them and the United States, the destruction by them of Captain Custer's command, and their subsequent flight into British territory, and now prolonged sojourn therein.

Prior, however, to this irruption, a portion of the Sioux tribe of American Indians, took refuge in the Red River settlements, after the massacre of the whites by the Indians in Minnesota, in the year 1862. Their arrival caused great consternation in the settlement. The main body took up a position at Sturgeon Creek, about six miles from Fort Garry, now the City of Winnipeg, and others at Poplar Point, and the Turtle Mountain. The Governor and Council of Assiniboia then governed the Province of Assiniboia, under the Hudson's Bay Company, and was composed of representative men. Their deliberations were grave and anxious. In December, 1863, the Governor-in-Chief, Mr. Dallas, reported to the Council, that he had visited the principal camp of the Sioux at Sturgeon Creek, and found there about five hundred men, women and children, and more had since arrived; that he had found them in great destitution and suffering, from want of food and clothing, and that

after consultation with Governor Mactavish of the Province of Assiniboia, he had offered sufficient provisions to enable them to remove to such a distance from the settlement as would place it beyond all danger and apprehension, and also offered to have the provision conveyed for them, and ammunition supplied them to procure game, but they had positively refused to go away — giving as a reason the inability of the old men, women and children, to travel in the winter. The Governor was in consequence authorized by the Council to offer them the means of transport, for those who were unable to walk. The Indians then removed to White Horse Plains, a distance of twenty miles only from Fort Garry, and camped there. A supply of food was given them, but no ammunition. The United States military authorities in December, 1863, sent an envoy to see the Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land, and the North-West Territories, with a view to ordering the Sioux to return to United States territory. The Governor was assured, that, though the American authorities would punish such of the Sioux as had actually been engaged in the massacre, they would furnish the innocent with all needful supplies of food and clothing for the winter, in the event of giving themselves up peaceably. The Council, on hearing this statement, authorized the granting [of] permission to the American authorities to enter into negotiations with the Sioux in the territories, on condition that they adopted no aggressive measures against them, and that in the event of the Americans accepting the proposed permission, they should protect themselves by a sufficient guard to preclude the danger of attack from the Indians, and to ensure the preservation of the peace.

In January, 1864, the Council considered a despatch from Major Hatch, in command of the American forces, representing that on the approach of spring, he apprehended a renewal of the barbarous scenes of 1862 and 1863, and asked authority to cross the national boundaries and pursue and capture the murderers, wherever they might be found. The Council accorded the permission asked, but it was never acted on. It is not likely that a permission to cross our borders in pursuit of a flying enemy would ever again be granted. It was conceded in exceptional circumstances by an irresponsible Government, but the growth of the Dominion of Canada has been such, and in its relations to the empire have become so intimate, that it would not in my judgment be granted, if at all, except in concert with the Imperial Government. The Governor also reported to the Council, that the main body of the Sioux on the Missouri in the United States, had sent him a message asking his advice as to making peace with the Americans, and expressing a desire to visit Red River in spring, and that he had advised the Sioux to make peace with the Americans, as otherwise, the war would be renewed with increased vigor next summer. He had also counselled them not to visit the Red River country. The Council warned the Sioux not to visit the settlement, but in the summer of 1866, the advice was disregarded. A band of Sioux came to Fort Garry and were leaving quietly, with a number of Sauteaux, but when about a mile from the Fort, they were attacked by a band of Red Lake Sauteaux Indians,

who had just come into the settlement from the United States, and five of them were shot. The remainder fled for their lives.

The Council apprehended that the Sioux might congregate in force, and a collision take place between the Sioux and the Saulteaux, and therefore authorized the formation of a body from fifty to one hundred mounted armed men from among the settlers, to prevent the Sioux from coming into the settlement. Fortunately they did not return and a collision was avoided.

In 1866, the American authorities again opened up communications with the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, through Colonel Adams, who intimated that he had been authorized by Brevet Major-General Corse, commanding the District of Minnesota, "to use every possible means to induce the hostile Sioux to surrender themselves at Fort Abercrombie, and to grant them protection and entire absolution for all past offences in the event of giving themselves up," and asking the aid of the Council, to endeavor to influence the Sioux to accede to the proposals he made. The Council accordingly authorized Judge Black and Mr. McClure to communicate to the Chiefs of the Sioux, the letter of Colonel Adams, and endeavor to induce them to accept of it, and to supply them with what provisions might be necessary to carry the Sioux to Fort Abercrombie.

All efforts having that end in view failed, and the Sioux remained, some in the Province of Assiniboia, and others in the territories beyond, [sentence fragment missing?] As time went on, in 1870, the country passed under the rule of Canada, and when the Government of Canada was established in the Province of Manitoba, which included the district of Assiniboia, the Sioux were found living quietly in tents, in the parishes of Poplar Point, High Bluff, and Portage la Prairie, in what became the new Province of Manitoba. Immigrants from Ontario, had begun to settle in that section of the Province, and the settlement rapidly increased.

The Sioux were found very useful, and were employed as labourers, cutting grain, making fence-rails, and ploughing for the settlers. They also endeavoured to gain a subsistence, by killing game and fur-bearing animals, and by fishing. They frequently applied to Lieut.-Gov. Archibald, to be allowed to settle on a reserve, where they might support themselves by farming, a step which that officer favored. In 1873, they renewed the application to his successor, Lieut. Gov. Morris, who having obtained authority to do so, promised to give them a reserve, upwards of one hundred of these Sioux, resident within Manitoba, having waited upon him, and represented "that they had no homes or means of living," and asked for land and agricultural implements.

They were informed, that the case was exceptional, and that what would be done, would be as a matter of grace and not of right, which they admitted. They were also told that the reserve would be for themselves alone, and that the Sioux now in the States must remain there. A reserve was proposed to them on Lake Manitoba, but they were unwilling to go there, being afraid of the Saulteaux, and especially the Red Lake Saulteaux.

It is satisfactory to state, that after the treaty at the North-West Angle, the Saulteaux having become bound to

live at peace with all people under Canadian authority, sent the aged Chief Kou-croche to see the Lieutenant-Governor at Fort Garry, to acquaint him of their desire to make peace with the Sioux. The Chief said the words he had heard at the Angle were good, he had promised to live at peace with all men, and he now wished to make friends with the Sioux. The distrust between the two tribes had been great, owing to past events. At the Angle, but for the presence of the troops, the Chippewas would have fled, it having been circulated among them, that the Sioux were coming to attack them. Permission was given to the Chief to pay his visit to the Sioux, and messengers were sent to them, in advance, to explain the object of his visit.

The result of the interview was satisfactory, and the ancient feud was buried. In 1874, two reserves were allotted the Sioux, one on the Assiniboine River, at Oak River, and another still further west at Bird Tail Creek. These reserves were surveyed, the former containing eight thousand and the latter seven thousand acres.

Settlements were commenced, on both reserves, and cattle, seed, and agricultural implements were supplied to them. In 1875, the Lieutenant-Governor finding that a large number still continued their nomadic life, in the vicinity of Poplar Point and Portage la Prairie, visited them, and obtained their promise to remove to their reserves — which the majority eventually did. Kenneth Mackenzie, Esq., M.P.P., a very successful farmer from Ontario, who had largely employed Sioux laborers, kindly visited the Assiniboine reserve and directed them from time to time as to the agricultural operations. The Church of England undertook the establishment of a mission and erected buildings there, while the Presbyterians opened a mission at Bird Tail Creek, and obtained the services of a native ordained Sioux minister from the Presbytery of Dakota. The number of these Sioux is estimated at about fifteen hundred. Both settlements give promise of becoming self-sustaining, and in view of the rapid settlement of the country, some disposition of them had become necessary.

During the sojourn of thirteen years on British territory, these Indians have on the whole, been orderly, and there was only one grave crime committed among them, under peculiar circumstances — the putting to death of one of their number, which was done under their tribal laws. An indictment was laid before the Grand Jury of Manitoba, and a true bill found against those concerned in this affair, but the chief actors in the tragedy fled. Had they been tried, their defence would probably have been that the act was committed in self-defence. The slain man having, as the Chief represented, killed one of the tribe, cruelly assaulted another, and threatened the lives of others. When the war broke out between the Sioux and the American Government, the American Sioux, endeavored to induce those in Canadian territory to join them, but they refused. Precautionary measures were however taken, and messengers sent to them, by the Lieutenant-Governor, to warn them against taking any part. They disclaimed all intention to do so, and said they meant to live peacefully, being grateful for the kindness with which they had been treated. Besides these Manitoban Sioux, there were two other bands in the North-West Territories — one at Turtle Mountain, and another large

party in the bounds of the Qu'Appelle Treaty. In 1876 the latter sent their Chiefs to see Lieut.-Gov. Morris and the Hon. Mr. Laird, at Qu'Appelle, and asked to be assigned a home. They were told that their case would be represented to the Canadian authorities. In 1877, the Sioux at the Turtle Mountains, sent two deputations to the Lieutenant-Governor, to ask for a reserve in that region. They said they had lived for fifteen years in British territory, they wanted land to be given them and implements to cultivate the soil, and seed to sow, and scythes and sickles to reap their grain, and some cattle.

They were told that they had no claim on the Queen, as they were not British Indians, unless she chose to help them out of their benevolence. This they cheerfully admitted, but hoped that they would be helped. They were further informed that if a reserve was granted them, it could not be near the boundary line as they wished, and that they must avoid all interference with the American trouble with their nation. This they willingly promised, and said "they had already taken care to have nothing to do with the matter." These Sioux were very intelligent and superior Indians, and were well dressed. A reserve was subsequently allotted to them in the year 1876, in the vicinity of Oak Lake, about fifty miles due north of Turtle Mountains, allowing them the same quantity of land, which had been given the Manitoba Sioux, viz., 80 acres to each band of five persons, and they will doubtless follow the example of their brethren on the other two reserves. With regard to the Sioux to whom reserves have been assigned, the then Minister of the Interior, the Hon. David Mills, thus reported in 1877: "The report of the Deputy Superintendent-General in 1877 gives some details respecting the operations of the Manitoba Sioux on their reserves, during the past year. He says: 'Upon the whole, they appear to have made fair progress in cultivating the land, and their prospects for the future, had they the advice and assistance of some good farmers, for a few years, would be encouraging. Indeed, the Sioux generally, who are resident in Canada, appear to be more intelligent, industrious, and self-reliant, than the other Indian bands in the North-West'."

While the authorities were thus successfully dealing with the problem of how to provide a future for these wandering Sioux, a grave difficulty presented itself by the incursion into the North-West Territories of a large body of American Sioux (supposed to be under the lead of what is now an historic name, the Sitting Bull), who had fled from the American troops. The Minister of the Interior, the Hon. David Mills, in 1877, thus alluded to this difficult subject:

"The presence of Sitting Bull and his warriors in Canada is a source of anxiety both to the Government of Canada and the United States. These Indians harbor feelings of fierce hostility towards, and thorough distrust of, the United States people and Government. These feelings may be traced to two principal causes, the dishonesty of Indian agents and the failure of the Federal authorities to protect the Indian reservations from being taken possession of by an adventurous and somewhat lawless white population. The officers of the North-West Mounted Police have been instructed to impress upon Sitting Bull and his warriors the necessity of keeping the peace to-

wards the people of the United States, and there is no reason for supposing they will not heed the warnings which have been given them. It is not, however, desirable to encourage them to remain on Canadian territory, and Col. McLeod has been accordingly instructed to impress them with their probable future hardships after the failure of the buffalo, should they elect to remain in Canada; that the President of the United States and his Cabinet are upright men, willing and anxious to do justice to the Indians; and should they return peacefully they will be properly cared for, and any treaty made with them will be honestly fulfilled. It is desirable that as wards of the United States they should return to that country, upon the Government of which morally devolves the burden and the responsibility of their civilization."

The Sioux have since continued within the borders of Canada, and the Minister of the Interior, Sir John Macdonald, reported in 1878, "That is only just to them to say, that they have behaved remarkably well ever since they crossed into Canada." Their presence in the North-West Territories has, however, been attended and will be followed, in any event, by serious consequences. The natural food supply of our Canadian Indians, the Crees, Chippewas, Assiniboines and Blackfeet, of the Plains Country, viz., the buffalo, was rapidly diminishing, and the advent of so large a body of foreign Indians has precipitated its diminution, so that the final extinction of the buffalo is fast drawing near. Already the Government of Canada, in the discharge of a national obligation, which has ever been recognized by all civilized authorities, has been obliged to come to the aid of the Blackfeet and other Indians to avert the danger and suffering from famine. The Sioux are already feeling the hardships of their position, and it will tax the skill and energies of the Government of Canada to provide a remedy. Already, at the instance of the Hon. David Mills, then Minister of the Interior (who visited Washington for the purpose), an effort was made by the American Government to induce the Sioux to return to their homes. Envoys were sent to them from the United States, but they declined to accept the overtures made to them. On the previous occasion of the flight into our territories of the Sioux, the American Government, as has been before recited, after an interval of nearly four years, offered them protection on their return journey from British territory to their homes in the United States and "entire absolution for all past offences." This forms a precedent which should be invoked and would doubtless be accepted by the Sioux if they can be induced to believe in the good faith of the American Government towards them. Every effort should be made to bring about so desirable a result, and the subject will doubtless engage in the future, as it has done in the past, the anxious consideration and wise action of the Canadian Government, who have right to appeal to the President of the United States and his advisors, to relieve them from the incubus of the presence in our territories of so many of the wards of that Government, and who are without the means or opportunities of obtaining a livelihood for themselves.

"The Treaties of Canada with the Indians," Alexander Morris, Chapter XI, pp. 276-284.

Appendix: Robert Rogers on Pontiac's Conspiracy

Although Robert Rogers ended his days in alcoholism, disgrace and accusations of profiteering and treason it is also evident that he won the trust of a great many Native leaders. During the recruitment of the King's Rangers in the American Revolutionary War the Crown may have been unwilling to let Rogers have an actual command, but they still tread on Rogers' reputation in order to recruit.

As a complex human being the real Robert Rogers probably had elements of both devil and angel within him. We do, however, have a glimpse inside the soul of the man through the unlikely medium of a play. "Ponteach: or the Savages of America. A Tragedy" was published in London in 1765. There is a general agreement among historians that it was not penned by Rogers, but it certainly was informed by him. The play came out at roughly the same time as Rogers' geography, and was almost certainly part of the lobbying campaign which resulted in his appointment as Governor of Michilimackinac.

Kenneth Roberts in his book *Northwest Passage* has the play penned by Rogers' secretary, a dramatic wannabe, while Rogers literally stood over his shoulder. There is certainly the appearance of two minds at work behind the writing: one which is interested in turning a dramatic phrase with fine language; and another that has a blunt honest message of criticism and a grasp of the inside facts.

In contrast to the prevailing mood of horror and betrayal in England at the uprising led by Pontiac, this play presented the view that Pontiac's revolt was justified, and that the policies of the traders and the Army's Indian Affairs Department, precipitated that revolt.

The following extract from the play is taken from Appendix B to the 1885 edition of Francis Parkman's *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*.

Act 1, Scene 1 - An Indian Trading House

Enter M'Dole and Murphey, Two Indian Traders, and their Servants

M'Dole. *So, Murphey, you are come to try your Fortune among the Savages in this wild Desert?*

Murphey. *Ay, any thing to get an honest Living, which, faith, I find it hard enough to do; times are so dull, and Traders are so plenty, that Gains are small, and Profits come but slow.*

M'Dole. *Are you experienced in this kind of Trade? Know you the Principles by which it prospers, and how to make it lucrative and safe? If not, you're like a Ship without a Rudder, that drives at random, and must surely sink.*

Murphey. *I'm unacquainted with your Indian Commerce and gladly would I learn the arts from you, who're old, and practis'd in them many Years.*

M'Dole. *That is the curst Misfortune of our Traders; a thousand Fools attempt to live this Way, who might as well turn Ministers of State. But, as you are a Friend I will inform you of all the secret Arts, by which we thrive, which if all practis'd, we might all grow rich, nor circumvent each other in our Gains. What have you got to part with to the Indians?*

Murphey. *I've Rum and Blankets, Wampum, Powder, Balls, and such like Trifles as they're wont to prize.*

M'Dole. *'Tis very well: your Articles are good: But now the Thing's to make a Profit from them, Worth all your Toil and Pains of coming hither. Our fundamental Maxim then is this, That it's no Crime to cheat and gull and Indian.*

Murphey. *How! Not a Sin to cheat an Indian, say you? Are they not Men? havn't they a Right to Justice?*

M'Dole. *Ah! If you boggle here, I say no more; this is the very Quintessence of Trade, And ev'ry Hope of Gain depends upon it; none who neglect it ever did grow rich, or ever will, or can by Indian Commerce. By this old Ogden built his stately House, purchased Estates, and grew a little King. He, like an honest Man, bought all by weight, and made the ign'rant Savages believe that his Right Foot exactly weighted a pound. By this for many years he bought their Furs, and died in Quiet like an honest Dealer.*

Appendix: Scots, Diaspora and Bad Manners

Throughout the early Fur Trade narratives, writers become drawn into their own culture clashes. What offended a writer in 1790 might be cited in 1890 as evidence of racial superiority. It should be a sobering reminder that all of the cultures saw things in each other which offended, and also which they admired.

John Tanner the Falcon encountered many different nationalities in his travels, but of all these, one struck him as the most vulgar and uncouth — Scots.

These Scots labourers who were with me, were much more rough and brutal in their manners than any people I had before seen. Even when they had plenty, they ate like starved dogs, and never failed to quarrel over their meat. The clerks fequently beat and punished them, but they would still quarrel.

Indian Captivity of John Tanner, p. 193

The relationship of Scots (and other Celts) with first Nations in the interior of Canada began in the last half of the 1600's. A bloody struggle between two great houses — Stewart and Orange — representing the Catholic and Protestant forces respectively, would throw Scots and Natives together in British North America.

The Hudson's Bay Company was chartered under the Stewart monarchy. The Stewarts were a peculiar social institution which bridged several worlds, unsuccessfully. They were an ancient clan of Scotland, the traditional prime ministers and regents to the High Kings of Caledonia. Later, with an influx of Anglo-Norman blood, they succeeded to the Scottish throne in their own right. Still later, they followed the Tudor Dynasty onto the throne of England where they forgot their Scottish roots as quickly as possible. Upon the Stewarts, Scots placed their hopes for a Celtic and Catholic dynasty. They would be disappointed in both regards.

When the House of Orange succeeded the Stewarts at the end of the 1890's, the supporters of the former Stewart regime (called "Jacobites") were hunted out and purged. Their propensity for leading active armed rebellions doomed to failure also brought unwelcome attention from the new government.

In 1692 the Orange faction in power in Scotland decided to make an example of the recalcitrants and orchestrated the Massacre of Glencoe. Glencoe was by no means the largest such massacre to be perpetrated in Scotland, but it has entered history as the most controversial and ignominious.

It was upon the Jacobites and their Highland clan supporters that the House of Orange first perfected the institutions of chief, band and treaty — institutions which would later be applied to Aboriginal populations throughout the world.

A Jacobite chief of a minor Macdonald clan was manipulated into missing a treaty signing. He and his band were punished by Clan Campbell troops (their hereditary enemies) billeted among them. At a signal, the Campbells rose up and

attempted to slaughter their hosts, violating the ancient laws of hospitality. Government troops delayed long enough to shift most of the blame to their Campbell auxiliaries.

As massacres go it was neither big nor efficient. Of approximately 500 - 700 people in the target population, fewer than 80 were actually caught and killed.

Throughout North America settled by expatriate Scots there are churches, streets, towns and counties named for Glencoe so that the memory of the deed would not fade.

In 1745 the Highland cause was irrevocably lost at the Battle of Culloden. The battle lasted a night and a day, but the killing of wounded and civilians by Government troops continued for four days. The purging of the civilian population continued for decades. The Highland Host was destroyed. The Campbells fought on the Orange side, while most of the clans fought on the Jacobite side, resulting in an animosity that continues today however subdued.

Once the battles were done, Transportation and Clearances began. "Transportation" means the forcible eviction and exile from the country to some other part of the globe. After Culloden a lottery was held for the prisoners — one-half were Transported while the other half were summarily executed. "Clearing" meant the forcible eviction of tenant farmers from the land which created a worldwide diaspora of Celtic populations in search of a living. Clearing is what the Scots called it. The Irish simply called it "the Famine." The government of the day called it "Agricultural Improvement." Rebels were often given the choice of execution, slavery or transportation. Many sold themselves into a kind of military or industrial slavery called "indenture" with only the vague promise that someday somewhere they might be freed with a little property.

A Scottish ballad of the era concludes when a soldier after many years of overseas service on behalf of the British Empire returns to his clan holdings only to find that they have been Cleared.

*When I came back to the glen,
Just as the season's turning,
All our goods lay in the snow,
And our houses were burning*

I Will Go, I Will Go [trad.]

A anonymous Scottish bard in 1803, cleared with his clan from their traditional lands and forced into exile in North America memorialized his feelings in a Gaelic curse.

*Their land they themselves
will die together,
since they have become hard monsters,
stiff-necked, cruel,
with no mercy or remorse;
poisonous, cold
to inferiors and tenantry,
slaughtering them with heavy burdens*

The Council Stones : Bibliography

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Index

Symbols

100th Regiment of Foot 4-33
10th Royal Veterans 3-34
20th Infantry Regiment, US 4-33
49th Parallel 1-39, 2-8
 closing 5-47
60th (Royal Americans) Rifles 2-1
 1764 Mississippi Survey 2-6, 3-21
6th (Royal Warwickshire) Regiment 4-32
78th Regiment of Foot 3-43

A

Aboriginal rights 6-28
Alexander Henry the younger 3-16
American Fur Company 2-23, 3-42
American Fur Trade 3-7
Anokasan 4-12
Antler Creek 1-25
Antler River 1-27
Arikara 2-2, 4-6, 6-1
Arikaras 4-6
Askin, John Jr., Indian Affairs clerk 1812 3-34
Aspdin, Thomas W. 5-48
Assiniboine 3-14, 5-9
 loss of Souris plains 4-12
Assiniboine and Red, junction 3-17
Assiniboine-Cree alliance 3-14
Assiniboine-Saulteaux Treaty 3-47
Astoria 3-42
Astronomy A-1, S-1

B

Ball Game 1-31
Battle of the Grand Couteau 4-10
Bear Bull 6-1, 6-7
Bear stone 1-21
Bent Tree 3-34
Bird Beak Peak 6-21
Birdtail River 5-12
Black Hawk 4-24
Black Stone Pipe 1-20
Black stone pipe D-2
Blackfoot 3-7
Blanco Diablo 3-16
Blind Souris 1-25
Border
 closing 5-47
Border Clans 3-46
Bottineau, Jean Baptiste 5-7
Boundary Commission 5-12
Bourmond, Etienne Veniard de 2-14

British-American Tensions 4-1
Brock, Isaac
 orders to Indian Department 3-34
Buckboard 5-12
Buffalo
 Metis hunt 4-10
 runs 1-28
Buffalo Lodge 6-18
Burial Complex, Sourisford 1-23

C

Caddoans 2-2
Cadotte, Michel Jr. 3-34
Cahokia 2-1, 2-6, 4-25
Caledonia River fraud 3-52
Calf Mountain 1-23, 3-16
Calumet of peace 3-36
Cameron, Duncan 5-44
Canadian Company 3-45
Canadian Pacific Railway 6-33
Canadian Voyageur Corps 3-34
 decommissioning 5-43
Canoe Band 4-6
Capes, Catherine 1-24
Carver, Jonathan 2-8, 2-9, 3-17, C-1
Castlereagh, Lord; British foreign minister 3-51
Celts S-1
Ceremonial stones 1-1
Charbonneau, Toussaint 6-20
Chardon 4-6
Chaske 4-18, 6-17
Chautauqua 4-21
Chelsea Pensioners 4-32
Cherry Creek 5-32
Chippewa
 in War of 1812 3-34
Chippewa Territory 5-6
Chokecherry 3-9
Clark, William 3-39, 4-25
Claus, W. Colonel, Indian Affairs 1812 3-34
Clearances S-1
Clovis 1-19
Clowns 4-22
Columbia River 3-42
Colville 3-46
Community government 5-16
Condor, (Anokasan) 4-12
Conquistadores on Mississippi 2-1
Cosmic Turtle 1-17
Council
 protocol D-2
Council of Assiniboia 5-16

Council of Seven Stones
 dissolution 6-13
Crane 3-9
Crazy Horse
 appeal to Turtle Mountain Council 5-32
Creation Story 1-5
 Algonquin 1-6
 Chippewa 1-12
 Cree 1-7
 European 1-14
 geography of 1-4
 Huron 1-9
 International Boundary Commission 1-39
 Iroquois 1-10
 Mandan 1-16
 Mayan 1-6
 principles of 1-3
 Turtle Mountain 1-5
Cree 5-9
Crofton, John (Major) 4-32
Crow 3-7, 4-5
Crow Man 4-27
Custer
 horse and saddle 6-1
 Last Stand 5-36
Cypress Hills 5-39
Cypress Hills Massacre 5-39

D

Dakota 3-14
 raid on Sourisford, ca. 1805 1-26
Dakota-Algonquin War 3-11
Dakota-Chippewa Treaty 1837 1-34
Dakota-Metis Treaty 4-9
Dallas, Lt. Gov. 5-34
Darrien 3-45
De Wattville Regiment 3-48
Dead River 3-15
Des Meurons Regiment 3-48
Devil's Lake 1-12, 5-9, 5-11
Dickson, Robert 3-31, 3-53
Dirty Thirties 1-2
Disease 4-2
Dobbs, Arthur 3-17
Dog Feast 4-23
Dominion Land Surveyors Intelligence Corps 5-53
Douglas 3-46
 Clan alliance with Peguis 4-18
Ducharme, Alfred 6-7
Ducharme, Francis 3-50

E

Eagle 4-18
Eagle, Charlie 6-17
Eagle's Nose 6-21
Eastman, Kenneth 6-11

Eddy, John - astronomer A-1
Eliade, Mercea 1-4
Elliot, Dave 1-25
 photograph 6-36
Elliot, J. B.
 photograph 6-36
Elliot Village 1-24, 1-25
English Company 3-45
Extinction of fur animals 2-16

F

Falcon, Jean Baptiste 4-10
Fenians 5-20
Fire 5-54
Flash-in-the-Sky-Boy 6-15
Flee Island 5-33
Fleming, Sanford 6-33
Folsom 1-19
Fort Abercrombie 5-29
Fort Clark 4-6
Fort Ellice 5-11
Fort Garry 5-33
Fort Rouge 3-17
Fort St. Charles 3-17
Fort Union 4-4
Fox 4-24
Francis Sitting Eagle 4-20
Fraser's 3-45
Fremont, John Charles 4-26
Fur trade 2-10

G

Gainsborough Creek 1-25
Gatling gun plot foiled 5-50
Gauche 4-5
Gens des Canots 4-6
George III medals 3-31, 6-33
Ghost Dance 6-17
Gift blankets 4-4
Gillette, George 6-16
Glacier 1-3
Goddard, Captain 3-17
Goodlands Stone 1-22
Gould, Alfred
 photograph 6-36
Gould, Art 1-25
Grand Couteau, Battle of 4-10
Grand Sauteaux 3-23
Grand Sautor 3-22
Grant, Cuthbert 3-48
Great Serpent 1-12
Great Turtle 1-9
Gros Ventre [of the Plains] 4-3

H

Hadamanie

four sons 6-1
possible photograph 1872 5-44
Halkett 3-46
H'damani 5-10, 5-11
Head-and-Horns 1-25
Hebridean 3-45
Hehokaha wasto 6-10
Henry, Alexander Jr. 2-18
death by drowning 3-42

Heyoka 4-22
Sitting Eagle 6-27
Hidatsa 4-6, 6-1
relationship to Crow 3-7
High Bluff 5-11
Highland 3-45
Hill, George Arthur 5-36
Hilltop sites 1-39
History and myth 1-3
Hoha 3-14
Holds the Knife 4-5
Hole-in-the-Day 5-14
Horse race 1-26
Hudson's Bay Company 4-6
Hudson's Bay Company Charter 6-28
Hughes, James 5-43
Hungry Hall 5-46
Hunter, John 4-18
Huron Creation Story 1-9
Hurt, Alice Selina 6-5
Hurt, Alice Selina "Ailsa" 6-4
Hurt, Robert 6-6
Hutchins, Thomas 2-1
maps 2-6

I

Ice Age 1-19
Ihawastewin 6-11
Immunization 4-4
Indian Affairs commissions 5-43
Inkpaduta II 6-1
International Boundary 2-8
International boundary
closing 5-48
International Boundary Commission 5-34
as ceremony 1-39
Fenian call-up 5-29
International Peace Garden 6-6
Interpreters 3-10
Inyang Mani 5-14, 5-15

J

Jackson, Andrew 4-25
Johnson, E. Pauline 6-25
Jones, Hilliard 2-12
Jumps 1-28

K

Kansas-Nebraska Act 4-1
Kathio 1-30, 3-13
Kentucky 5-9
Keokuk 4-24
Kisikaw-awasis 6-15
Kit Fox Society 5-14
Klotz, Otto 5-30

L

La Mar, Seraphim 5-44
La Verendrye 2-16, 3-17
Lac qui Parle 5-9
Lady of the Lake 6-4
Lafleche, Louis Francois (Father) 4-10
Lake Max 6-5
Lake of the Woods 3-17
Lake, the 3-9
Langlade, Charles 3-34
Lang's Crossing 2-13
L'Arbre Croche 3-34
Last Battle
Chippewa and Sioux 4-14
Cree and Dakota 4-12
Dakota and Cree 5-32
Dakota and Ojibway 4-12
Mandan and Assiniboine 4-13
Metis and Assiniboine 4-12
Le Main Gauche 4-5
LeBorgne 2-23, 3-9, 6-1, 6-19
Left Hand 4-5
Lestanc 5-20
Lewis and Clark 3-28, 5-9
Linear mounds 1-27
Lisa, Manuel 2-23, 3-26
Little Crow 5-8
Little Rattler 4-21
Little River Women's Society 6-19, 6-21
Little Shell 5-7, 6-16
Little Sonneau 4-21
Liverpool, Lord; British prime minister 3-51
Lone Mound 1-29
Louisiana 3-25, 5-9
Louisiana Purchase 3-25

M

Ma-we-do-pe-nais 5-41
Macdonald, John A.
intelligence 5-29
Macdonnell, Alexander 5-44
MacGillivrays 3-45
Mackenzie, Kenneth 5-44
MacTavish, Simon 3-45
Mahpiyahdinape 5-11
Mandan 4-6
absorbtion into Three Affiliated Tribes 6-1

- aid request 4-15
- women 6-21
- Mandan Trail 2-20
 - Assiniboine blockade 2-21
 - blockade by Hidatsa 2-22
- Mandans 3-17, 4-6
- Manitobah, Republic of 5-18
- Manoah 3-11
- Many Sitting Eagles 4-18
- Manza Ostag Mani, son of Sleepy Eye 4-28
- Marhpiya Wichashta 5-15
- Marhpiyasna 5-15
- Maya 1-5
- Mazaska 5-8, 5-9
- Mazomani 5-9
- McDonald, John 5-44
- McDougall, Duncan 3-42
- McGillivray, John 5-44
- McGillivray, William 5-43
- McKay, William 5-43
- McKenzie, Alexander 5-43
- McLeod, Norman 5-43
- McMorran, G. A. 2-21
- Mdewakantons 3-31
- M'dewakonton 5-11
- Measles 2-8
- Medals, Treaty 5-11, 6-33
- Medicine Line 1-18
 - crossing, refugees and military 5-37
- Medicine Men 6-17
- Medicine Wheel 1-37, 2-1
 - astronomy A-1
 - sacrifice 1-28
- Mekis 4-18
- Menominee
 - in War of 1812 3-34
- Metis 4-6, 4-7, 5-9
- Metis-Dakota Treaty 4-9
- Mexico
 - diaspora story 2-5
 - war with USA 4-31
- Michif 4-7
 - language 4-8
- Michilimackinac 3-1
 - recapture by British and Natives 1812 3-34
- Mille Lacs 1-30, 3-13
- Miller, Alfred J. - painter 4-26
- Minnesota Uprising 5-7
- Mis-tick-oos D-2
- Mississippi 2-9
 - collapse of civilization 2-1
- Mississippi river system 2-1
- Moncur Gallery 1-1
- Moncur, William (Bill) 1-1, 6-27
- Montgomery 1-24
- Moon, William 5-50
- Mound Builders 1-21, 2-1

- Mounds 1-21
- Mounted Police 5-39
- Musgrove Ravine 5-32
- My Son 3-34
- Myth
 - and History 1-3
 - definition of 1-5

N

- Nanabozho 1-12
- Nanabush 1-7
- Napoleon 3-26
- Neapope 4-25
- Net-no-kwa 3-29
- Nickerson 1-24
- Nicollet, Joseph N. expedition 1838-39 4-26
- Nokomis 1-7
- Nolin, Augustin 3-34
- Northwest Angle Treaty 5-41
- Northwest Company 3-45
 - Oregon operations 3-42
- Northwest Mounted Police 5-39
- Northwest Passage 3-17
- Notice 6-31

O

- Oak Lake 5-11
- Oak Lake Band 6-17
- Oak Lake Sioux Band 6-11
- Objiwa 5-9
- Oceti Sakowin 5-13
- O'Donoghue 5-27
- O'Donohue 5-20
- Ohio Valley Campaign
 - 1778 3-25
- Ojibwa 5-9
- Ojibway 5-33
- one hundred miles of land 3-40, C-1
- One Who Holds the Knife 4-5
- Ontario affair 3-52
- Orange, House of 3-45
- Orange monarchy S-1
- Oregon 4-31
- Oregon Question 3-41
- Ottawa
 - in war of 1812 3-34
- Ouckidoat 3-46

P

- Pacific Northwest 3-42
- Park River 3-16
- Partisan politics 5-16
- Pawnee 2-2
- Peace Garden 6-6
- Peace pipe 3-36
- Peguis 3-29, 3-46

Petit Sonneau 4-21
Petroforms
 astronomy A-1
Petroglyph 1-21
 shaman 1-22
Piapot 6-15
Pipe 6-17
Pipestone 6-17
Plum Creek 5-53
Polk, James 4-30
Pontiac R-1
Poplar Point 5-11
Portage la Prairie 5-10, 5-11
Pothier, Toussant 5-43
Potts, Jerry 5-39
Pounds 1-28
Pow wow 5-50
Prairie du Chien 3-23, 3-39
 smallpox 1837 4-7
Prairie fire 5-54
Premier, Chief aka Ouckidoat 3-46
Presbyterian 6-11
Prime Meridian 5-19
Pritchard, John 2-21
Provencher, J. A. N. 5-20
Provisional Government of Manitoba 5-21

Q

quarantine 4-4
quit-rent 5-20

R

Rangers 2-9
Rat Creek 5-11
Rattler 4-21
Rattlesnake 3-9, 4-21
RCR 4-32
Red Deer's Head River 1-37
Red Lake Ojibwa 5-10
Red Leaf 5-4
Red Middle Voice 5-8
Red Mountain 3-23
Red River Colony 3-46
Red Standard 3-31
Red Thunder 5-55
Republic of Manitobah 5-18
Riding Mountain 5-12
Right Division 3-34
Rising Sun 4-14
Ritual and Geography 1-17
Robert Rogers 2-9
Roberts, Charles Captain 3-34
Rochblave, Pierre de 5-43
Roger's Rangers 2-9
Rogers, Robert 2-9, 3-3, 3-11, 3-22, R-1
 illustration 3-24

 treaty legacy 3-31, 3-37
Roman Catholic 6-11
Royal Canadian Rifles 4-32
Royal Navy 3-42
Royal Proclamation of 1763 5-41
Rupertsland 3-44, 5-9
Russell, Lindsay 5-29

S

Sac 4-24
Sacajawea 6-19
Sacred Clown 4-22, 6-38
Sanctuary in Hidatsa Villages 3-10
Saukamappee 4-4
Saulteaux, NW Angle Treaty 5-41
Saulteaux-Assiniboine Treaty 3-47
Scaffold burial 1-29
Schultz, Dr. 5-20
Schultz, John Dr. 5-21
Scots S-1
Scott, Thomas 5-22
Selkirk 3-46
Selkirk Treaty 5-20, 6-28
Serpent 1-12
Seven Council Fires 5-13
Seven Oaks 3-48
Shak'pay 5-8
Shaman
 petroglyph 1-22
Shaman's Stones 1-21
Sheshepaskut 3-12
Shining Mountain 2-5, 2-12, 2-15, 3-18
 La Verendrye's maps 2-13
Shortstick D-2
Sioux Treaty 3-21, 3-22
Sisseton 3-31, 5-9, 5-36
Sitting Bull 5-38, 5-39
 eulogy in Boissevain Globe 1891 5-61
Sitting Eagle 1-1, 4-18
 father's death 6-1
 multiple use of title 4-18
 rounds 1-24
Sitting Eagle, Mrs.
 photograph 6-24
Sky burials 1-29
Sky-Woman 1-9
Sleepy Eye 4-27
Smallpox 4-4, 4-7
smallpox
 graves, illustration 4-3
Soldier's Lodge 5-4
Sonnant 3-46
Souris 4-6
Souris Lakes 1-37
Souris Park 5-53
Souris River 1-27, 2-21, 5-9

Souris South Bend Battle of 1851 4-9
Sourisford Mounds 1-23
 map 1-24
Sourisford-Devil's Lake Burial Complex 1-23
South Bend, 1851 Battle 4-9
Sovereignty 6-28
Spanish De Soto Expedition 1539-1542 2-1
Spanish fur trade 2-23
St. Louis 2-6
Standing Cloud 6-3
Star Mound 1-23
Stewart Dynasty 3-45
Stewart monarchy S-1
Stewart, William Drummond - British captain 4-26
Stone
 circles - diagram 1-1
 game targets 1-36
 petroform 1-37
 shaman 1-22
Stones
 ceremonial 1-1
 shining 2-15
Sunshine Highway 2-13

T

Tachanrpi Taninniye 5-15
Tahampegda 5-9, 5-10
Taninyahdinazin 5-11
Tanner, John 3-29
Tasagi 4-28
Tasapi 4-28
Tatankanaje the Elder 5-10
Tatankanaje the Younger 5-10, 5-11, 5-16
Taylor, James Wilkes 5-8, 5-24, 5-40
Tchatka 4-3, 4-4
Tecumseh 3-35
 woodcut image 3-32
Tennant, J. F. 5-12, 5-34
Tete de Boeuf 3-16
Teton 3-31
Thomas, Walter 1-25
 photograph 6-36
Thompson, David 2-21
Three Affiliated Nations 2-3, 4-6, 6-1
Thunder, John 6-11, 6-13
Tipi ring, misnomer 1-37
Tiyo-tipi 5-4
Tomb of the Black Tortoise 1-22
Trail of Tears 4-25
Treaties of Canada 5-41
Treaty
 breaking 4-29
Treaty Medals 3-32, 5-11, 6-33
Treaty of Ghent 1818 3-50
Treaty of Utrecht 2-8
Treaty Two 4-18

Turtle
 Cheyenne shield 1-4
 Iroquois island 1-10
 moons on back diagram 1-12
 mounds 1-22
 Palliser's map 1-7
 petroform medicine wheel 1-37
 petroglyph on council stone 1-14
Turtle clan
 Huron 1-10
Turtle, Cosmic 1-9
Turtle Island 1-17, 3-1
Turtle Mountain 5-9, 5-11
 and Mandan trail 2-20
 as Shining Mountain 2-12
 forest reserve 5-57
 geography 1-2
 head 1-5
 heart 1-5
 military assembly 4-16
 US 1869 incursion 4-33
Turtle Mountain buffalo herd
 hunting pressure 1851 4-10
Turtle Mountain Chippewa 5-9
 land claim 5-7
Turtle Mountain Sioux
 Boundary Commission photograph 1872 5-42
Turtle's Back 1-5
Turtle's Head
 military camp 1815 4-16
Tute, James 3-17, 4-4
Twining, William Johnson (Major, US Army) 4-33
Twins 1-6
Two Dogs 6-10

U

Udall, William V. 6-6
Upiye Hendeya 5-15
Upper Missouri 3-17
Utrecht (1713), Treaty 3-25
Utrecht, Treaty 1713 2-8
Utrecht, Treaty of 2-8

V

Virden residential school 6-11
Vision quest sites 1-18
Voyageur Corps 3-34

W

Wabasha 3-31, 4-7, 5-4
Wabokeshiek 4-25
Wahpekute
 hill top graves or tombs 1-30
Wahpekutes 3-31
Wahpeton 3-31, 5-9, 5-11
Wakan Tanka 6-17

Wakanozhan 5-8
Wakopa
 Sioux flight north in 1876 6-1
Walkinshaw, Charles 5-57
Walsh 5-36, 5-39, 5-61
Wambdiska 5-11, 5-36, 5-45
Wampum 3-32
Wanatan 3-31, 4-9, 4-28
Wanduta 6-29
Wanmdi Okiya 5-15
Wapahaska 5-10, 5-11, 5-16
Wapasha 3-30
War of 1812 3-30
 Oregon 3-42
War roads 5-1
Wedderburn 3-46
Weeokeah 5-11
Whiskeyjack 1-7
White Eagle 5-37
White Earth River 4-6
White Horse Plain 3-15
Winnebago
 in War of 1812 3-34
Winona 6-17
Winona, wife of Charles Chaske/Sitting Eagle 6-22
Wisakedjak 1-7
Wisconsin glaciation 1-3
Wolf Chief 3-9
Wolf-Boy 1-7
Wolfers 5-40
Wolseley Expedition 5-21
Wolseley, Viscount and later Field Marshall 5-22
Women
 absence and consequence 6-1
 adopted captives 3-7, 6-19
 as military targets 5-2, 5-59
 captives 3-15, 5-60
 clowns 6-23
 giving dog feast 4-24
 in fur trade 3-42
 infrequent mention in record 6-8
 march order 5-16, 5-33
 mediators, translators, guides 5-1
 Native mothers of Metis 6-35
 societies 6-19
 survivors of massacre 3-13
 theft of 4-7
 warriors and war chiefs 5-4
 with armies 3-37, 4-17
Women's Council 6-19

Y

Yankton 3-31, 5-11
Yanktonai 3-14, 3-31
Yellow Calf 6-14
Yellow Tent 5-9

Young Chief 4-12
Youth
 generation gap 6-18

Z

Zeiler site 1-31
Zeiler, Walter 6-6



Back Cover: Embroidered "Seven Arrows" shield made by unidentified Mayan woman in Guatemala, 1977. The embroidery was copied from the book *Seven Arrows* by Hyemeyohsts Storm; sold to a Canadian tourist; and thereby made its way back to Brandon. Shown to Hyemeyohsts Storm, he commented "It shows that everyone on its route understood the symbols. It was language to them: from the author to the artist, to the printer, to some bookseller, to this woman who made it over again. Then from her to the Canadian and brought back. Even though they spoke different languages, everyone understood the medicine wheel." The subtle Siouan colours of the Prairie have been replaced by a vibrant Mayan technicolour but otherwise the design is the same.

Front Cover: Embroidered "Turtle Mountain" by Kim Stobbe Shaw, 1977 on a design by the author. The green spot is the turtle.