INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

**Medicine Wheels and the Media:
Seeking journalistic balance from a Native perspective**

by

David Forbes

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Journalism**

School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

January 2002

© Copyright 2002 David Forbes

**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-68306-0

Canada

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

acceptance of the thesis

Medicine Wheels and the Media:

Seeking journalistic balance from a Native perspective

submitted by David Forbes

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Journalism

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' shape with a horizontal line crossing through it, positioned above a horizontal line.

Thesis Supervisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'D' shape with a horizontal line crossing through it, positioned above a horizontal line.

Director, School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

2002

Abstract

Journalists have written in newspapers about the Native Peoples of Canada for more than a hundred years, but they have failed to present a *balanced* account of the people and their lives. The issue of balance will be explored within different concepts of the term. Evidence presented will support claims that this imbalance perpetuates colonialist stereotypes and misconceptions in the media. The traditional Native concept of balance, incorporating the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life, will be introduced through the medicine wheel. This can then be used as a unique approach for journalists to achieve a more complete type of balance regarding Native people.

Dedication

To the clan — Hamish and Reni. Shirley, Greg, Heather, Erin, Sarah, Brad and Amy. Rosemary, Jermaine, Camilla and Hamish. Murray, Marilyn, James, Robert, Andrew and Shannan. Bill. Our late mother, Jane Forbes, our father William Forbes and our mom Mildred Forbes. And my precious daughters Janelle, Naomi, Marie and Leah.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the revered Dave Tait, my thesis adviser, for countless hours spent guiding me through this project and for walking with me on this journey.

This thesis would not have materialized were it not for people like the awesome Charlton Weasel Head, Caen Bly, Everett Soop, Gloria Weasel Head, Pete Standing Alone, Frank Weasel Head, Dan McGinnis and Willie Big Bull, as well as Garry Allison, Peter Scott and Greg Price at the *Lethbridge Herald*, Richard Shockley and Rob First Charger at Fort Whoop-Up Interpretive Centre, and members of the Lethbridge National Aboriginal Day committee, who all shared their time with me.

I appreciate the sagacious Warren Harbeck for his indefatigable encouragement, and thank Madeleine Dion Stout, Marjorie Lavallee, Jane Dickson-Gilmore and Elaine Keillor for sharing their knowledge about Native culture, and also Catherine McKercher, Peter Johansen and Bob Rupert for their support.

I express my heartfelt thanks to the people of the Stoney First Nation, especially Cora House and her family, for giving me an opportunity to learn about their culture.

I couldn't have completed this thesis without the generosity of Shirley and Greg Fleming and my nieces and nephews, who shared their space with me. And I thank Judy and Bob Garrison for letting me look after the fort and ride horses; Maureen Beecher for having a spare room and a canoe at the inn; and Duane Beazer, Myrna and Jim Fleming, and also George Parry of Westlands Books in Cochrane, Alberta, for his kindness.

I owe my newspaper "career" to two people. Ruth Chisholm encouraged her son Tim and a few friends in 1968 to produce a wonderful little rag called the *Bathtub Bugle* in Nanaimo, B.C. We used ink and spirit duplicators and hectograph jelly pads to produce the paper during various holidays for several years. And Peter Bottomley persuaded me in 1977 to leave radio to join the *Nanaimo Daily Free Press*. The ink is still in my blood.

Table of contents

Title page	i
Acceptance form	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Prologue	vii
Chapter 1 — Introduction	1
Chapter 2 — Beginnings — Using the medicine wheel as an academic model	25
Chapter 3 — Exploring — Examining news coverage of Natives	66
Chapter 4 — Exploring — Analysis	102
Chapter 5 — Experience — Colonialism, Indians and basketball: a case study	121
Chapter 6 — Experience — Charlton Weasel Head profile	141
Chapter 7 — Experience — Medicine wheel concept in other examples	172
Chapter 8 — Understanding — Conclusion	181
Appendix A	185
Bibliography	190

Prologue

It was a warm spring afternoon in 1997 when I attended the funeral of two young men who had been killed when the truck they were in crashed on Highway 1A west of Calgary. More than a thousand people, members of the Stoney First Nation, filled the old Morley community hall while a couple of hundred more waited outside. The atmosphere in the hall, as I sat amid the exceptionally silent throng, was unlike anything I had ever witnessed at any gathering. Never before had I seen such an outpouring of grief and intense sense of community as the young and the elderly — parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins and friends — came together to say farewell to Wayne House and Trevor Hunter. How powerful a statement to have almost the entire community of 2,400 people come together as a sign of respect.

The majestic Rocky Mountains, an hour or so west of the thriving metropolis of Calgary, are the envy of many throughout the world who dream of living amid the splendour of such an idyllic setting. Yet the thousands of travellers who visit the region every year silently pass the townsite of Morley oblivious of the wonderful people who live there, unaware of their rich culture and vibrant history.

Between Calgary and Morley is the town of Cochrane, a community of almost 12,000 people.¹ Most residents are newcomers to the area, having migrated from city life elsewhere seeking a peaceful family community or a place where they can retire. It was

¹At the time of the funeral, the Town of Cochrane population was almost 8,000.

during this boom period I was invited to take over the editorship of the weekly *Cochrane Times*.² The proximity to Morley provided experiences which opened my eyes to a rich culture, previously unknown to me, and for more than two years I was privy to many facets of life among the Stoney people. Along the way I realised all these people were also part of the Cochrane community, yet their lives, achievements, history and celebrations were seldom chronicled in the local paper — unless it involved tragedy or crime. Though I never set about to accomplish any goal, many opportunities were opened to me to observe and participate in their day-to-day lives. I attended feasts and celebrations, participated in a round dance, attended rodeos, church, band elections, accompanied RCMP patrols, grieved at wakes and funerals, visited people in their homes, attended an honour night for 78-year-old brother and sister twins, visited a sun dance encampment in a truly sacred place, covered a school powwow where young people enthusiastically participated in traditional singing, drumming and dancing, and also the school's Christmas presentation. And I sat on a hilltop overlooking those same majestic mountains on a chilly star-studded autumn night listening to a friend speak of how he and many of his people struggled with the demons of alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse, hopelessness and tragedy — murders, accidents, suicides — which constantly interfered with life at Morley.

As I got to know some of the Stoney people and some of them got to know me, I

²The official name of the newspaper was *Cochrane This Week*, though Morley and Cochrane residents referred to it as the *Cochrane Times* — the title of a previous publication in the town. The title of *Cochrane This Week* was changed to *Cochrane Times* in 1998.

wrote stories about them and helped some of them write stories about their own people. Other journalists from Calgary's television, newspaper and radio media, meanwhile, would occasionally show up in Morley to cover tragedies and alleged administrative scandals. Talk among the Stoney people after a media event, more often than not, suggested the reports had been sensationalized and failed to present an accurate image of the people in their community. Reporters, they felt, descended on their community without knowing much about the Stoney people, their history, their culture, their political system, or the underlying day-to-day issues affecting their lives. Over the course of time, I found some journalists often failed to truly connect with the people and the community. Most stories were negative. Stoney people grew weary and leery of the media. What was missing? Part of the answer lies within these pages.

If there was anything I could do to make the world a better place, one of my Stoney friends, Kenny Hunter, suggested I do something to help the young people. Today's young people will be tomorrow's adults — the parents, leaders, elders, teachers and administrators of the next generation. These young people live in a world where they can access and learn from media sources, including newspapers, radio, television (including satellite television), and the Internet, even in remote locations of Canada.

With a long-term picture in mind, I feel there is a tremendous need for those in the journalism profession to begin looking at Native people from a different perspective — an inside perspective of Native people and their communities. My thesis, therefore, is a

journey which explores ideas to help journalists respect Native cultures and traditions and how journalists can play a vital role in creating better understanding among all who read or hear their words.

Within the research section is some information about medicine wheels, a concept of Native culture I first learned about more than 10 years ago but one I didn't appreciate until only recently. This concept was introduced to me by a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Kelowna, British Columbia, who had learned about it while on her own journey to better understand her Native heritage. She explained that her culture is based on a holistic philosophy, or for balance in life, and the medicine wheel is used as a symbolic tool to explain those beliefs. I, in turn, have used this unique concept to look at how journalists write about the descendants of the people who have lived in this part of the world since long before Europeans made their way across the ocean.

Chapter 1

Introduction

When people from other parts of the world arrived in what is now Canada, they interacted with the Aboriginal Peoples of this land and wrote about their experiences to others in their homeland. Some of those accounts made their way into books and, eventually, newspapers in Europe and people there became fascinated with the peculiar inhabitants of the New World. As colonies developed into larger communities, newspapers¹ were eventually established and accounts of encounters with Indians were written as news. Today, claims have been made that newspaper coverage about Native people has not always been accurate, fair or balanced, and that published articles have perpetuated stereotypical images and misconceptions. Journalists, however, believe their articles are, in a professional sense, balanced. This thesis is not intended as an exercise in studying Natives, but to research how journalists write about Natives.

Central to this thesis is that Natives and journalists both have different concepts of balance. Those divergent ideas will be examined by reviewing material published in newspapers and reports, through comments from historians and media and communications educators, and through input from Natives and people who are or have been involved with the media. Research will focus in the Lethbridge area of southern Alberta where about 10 per cent of the population are Native and where newspapers have

¹ According to the Canadian Newspaper Association, early forms of newspapers appeared in the New England colonies in the 1630s. The first newspaper published in Canada was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, when the *Halifax Gazette* appeared in 1752. The *Quebec Gazette* in Quebec City appeared in 1764.

been published continuously for about 120 years; material from elsewhere in Canada will also be used. This focus area allows for both historical and contemporary research.

The end result will be to show how journalists can begin to look from a different perspective at how they write about Natives. This will be achieved through the various chapters, each of which will represent a step in examining the issue of the thesis. The chapters are presented in four sectors — Beginnings, Exploring, Experience and Understanding — with some sectors having more than one chapter. The reason for designing the thesis in this fashion will become evident in Chapter 2.

This introductory chapter will show that some Native people perceive there is a problem with the way in which journalists write about them. This will be shown by way of comments about how Natives are presented in the media, how images perpetuate stereotypes, and how word usage plays a role in creating different images. A recent example showing public concern about news coverage will be examined. It's the story about the accidental death of a three-year-old boy near Lethbridge and how the local daily newspaper handled it. The chapter will introduce the idea that there are different concepts of balance and explain how journalists use balance in their work.

The second chapter will consider a unique concept of balance and how it could be used by journalists to write about Natives. This will set the stage for the entire thesis, using a model of a Native medicine wheel to take the reader of this writer's work on a journey of discovery. Information presented will be both historical and contemporary,

using previously conducted scholarly research and information collected for this academic assignment. Some of the information has been obtained from primary sources.

Chapter 3 will then examine historical and modern newspaper coverage about Natives. This will provide some interesting evidence to support the argument that there is an imbalance in the way Natives are presented in the media.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of material researched in the previous chapter and considers whether or not Natives are marginalized in the media. This will then enable the reader of this thesis to begin to see how others see the problem so that in subsequent chapters the issue of balance will be clear.

The next two chapters will study how the story of one Native athlete has been presented in the media. Chapter 5 will examine one particular article and use the theory of colonization to analyse its content. Other newspaper articles about this athlete will also be examined to see how balance plays into the image presented. Then, in Chapter 6, we shall use the previously introduced concept of the medicine wheel to see how journalists could take a different approach to writing about Natives. Most of the chapter will be this writer's attempt to apply the medicine wheel concept as a journalist. The seventh chapter critiques some recently published articles about two Native people to see if the medicine wheel concept of balance is present.

The thesis will conclude by considering recommendations in Chapter 8.

Is there a problem?

Former Assembly of First Nations national chief Phil Fontaine told the 1998 First Peoples and Fourth Estate Conference on aboriginal issues that he had “grave concerns about the imbalance” found in the media on the subject of Natives. “We need balance, fairness [and] a genuine attempt by those who report [...] to understand about what they write,” he said. (First Peoples) Matthew Coon Come,² the Grand Chief of the Council of the Crees of Northern Quebec, said there are too many negative stories about Natives in the news. He said too often journalists write about Natives being shot, about mismanagement of band funds, about roadblocks and alarming statistics. “We want to build some bridges, close the gap, take a different approach and allow First Nations people to tell their stories,” Coon Come told the conference. (First Peoples)

These comments are a starting point to explore what type of imbalance is claimed by Native people when they talk about a balance within the news. The conference brought together Native leaders with National Capital Region journalists, journalism students, media and communications assistants to government ministers, and Native journalists. Some of the issues raised during the one-day event included stereotyping of Natives in the media, the impact of ghetto-izing Native stories, the use of *Native* as a prefix or identifier, and the continuing legacy of previous news coverage and how it affects media-Native relations. One of the solutions offered was that journalists need to “think

²Coon Come was elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations in August 2000.

of balance in the process” of writing about Native people. (First Peoples)

The following year the AFN conducted a three-month media research project. Results showed that “stories overwhelmingly focussed on negative or controversial topics, such as crime, allegations of impropriety, and protests.” (Debwewin 6) Between Jan. 2 and April 5, 1999, 782 newspaper articles were reviewed from the *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Regina Leader-Post* and *Ottawa Sun*.³ The researchers noted that the *Leader-Post* “was the exception to the rule, providing its readers with more balanced coverage across most subject areas.”

Veteran southern Alberta newspaper editor Caen Bly told a public forum on Natives in the Lethbridge media in November 2000 that news coverage in local papers lacked balance, and that journalists need to consider doing more than just reporting on negative things. Bly said: “Yes, news is news but maybe we as a society need to take a look at the interpretation of what news is. It’s the media that sets the tone for society and how they view what is news. There needs to be balanced reporting.” (C. Bly 19 Nov. 2000) Issues raised during the forum will be raised later in the thesis.

Shannon Avison of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, writing with Michael Meadows of Australia’s Griffith University, said

[m] ainstream media mis-representation of Aboriginal people has compelled them

³It is interesting to note that the survey did not include newspapers from Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto or Winnipeg, communities with significant Native populations.

to turn to their own media where they can “define their own identities and legitimize their values and goals” [... and ...] “provide the context so often missing in the dominant non-Indian press.” (Avison & Meadows 354)

And communications educator Gail Valaskakis said the media have “played a central role in creating a powerful fictive identity” of Indians by continually writing articles about them with a negative slant. (Valaskakis 70) She posits that the media can do something to change negative or inaccurate images.

These comments from prominent sources point out that there is a problem, and this thesis will now begin the journey of examining the problem.

Thesis style and nomenclature

There are two anomalies which must be dealt with. One is the manner in which the thesis is written and the other is nomenclature. Although this is an academic undertaking, it is for a journalism degree and therefore acceptable to use both journalistic and academic writing styles. Already both academic and journalistic material has been used. Guidelines for journalists found within *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, a standard in the news industry in Canada, will be followed.

Regarding nomenclature. Terminology involves words, and the art of using words is part of the craft of every journalist. How should a word be spelled? Should it be capitalized or not? Does it have more than one meaning? Is this the appropriate use of the word? These are mechanical questions journalists consider when composing a story. Aboriginal people within the geographical and political boundaries of Canada are often

incorrectly considered one collective or homogeneous group and incorrectly referred to as First Nations. The fact is, there are three aboriginal groups — “Indians,” Métis and Inuit — and each group must be considered unique. First Nations refers only to Indians; Métis and Inuit are not Indians. All three groups can also correctly be referred to as Native. Within the so-called Indian category there are dozens of different peoples, each with its own unique culture and identity, who belong to a First Nation, Tribe or Band.⁴

Use of the word *aboriginal* is a good place to start as it means “from the beginning” and can refer to anything indigenous (Fee). It became part of common usage in Canada after 1982 when the term “the aboriginal peoples of Canada” was introduced in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The term was previously associated with the term *Aborigine*, referring to the indigenous peoples of Australia. Aboriginal refers collectively to Indians, Métis and Inuit, while Aboriginal Peoples means the different groups of aboriginal people in Canada (Fee).

Some examples provide insight into appropriate usage. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) states it is incorrect to write there are *633 aboriginal communities* or *633 Native communities* in Canada because using aboriginal or Native in that context includes Indian, Métis and Inuit. But it would be correct to write that there are *633 First Nations communities* in Canada (Resource Guide 13). The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, also known as DIAND, states it is also incorrect to write

⁴All terms such as Indian, Native, Aboriginal, etc., are suspect. For instance, Haida claim they are culturally far more closely related to Polynesians than with mainland indigenous peoples. (Kelly)

“Canada’s aboriginal people have traditions and cultures that go back thousands of years,” because that describes aboriginal people as belonging to Canada. The correct way is “Aboriginal people in Canada have traditions [...etc].” (DIAND 5) Indians, Inuit and Métis are aboriginal as well as Native, so it is important to clearly identify the individual or the group when it is necessary to include this information in a story. Journalism educator Carman Cumming suggests it is best to use terminology the groups use themselves. He said:

This is particularly important in writing about First Nations communities in Canada, which prefer to be known by that general name or by tribal names (Cree, Mohawk, etc.), rather than by the term “Indian,” which originated with European explorers. (Cumming 404)

Some Natives prefer to use anglicized transliterations of terms from their own languages to identify themselves or their group. A prime example of this would be the Mi’kmaq on the East Coast of Canada. Some prefer to use *Micmac*, not *Mi’kmaq* (Canadian Press 248). Several years ago the DIAND communications office began the process of producing a terminology guide, but that project was shelved in draft form in November 1998. *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* contains material which would be invaluable to any reporter or editor.

The Canadian Press Style Book suggests journalists should use *aboriginal* and *First Nations*,⁵ not *Indian* and *Native*. However, this thesis will use *Indian* and *Native*

⁵First Nation refers to a group of Indians with a common cultural and territorial identity. Some groups use this term to describe themselves, similar to a community. For example, the Alexander First Nation. Others do not use “First,” such as the Siksika Nation and the Peigan Nation. Some groups use

because some aboriginal people (particularly in Western Canada) use them and generally prefer them instead of what they consider to be politically correct terminology.⁶

Traditional Indian terminology will occasionally also be used and an explanation footnoted as appropriate.

Levi Prairie Chicken: A case study

News coverage of the death of a three-year-old Native boy on a highway dividing the town of Cardston and the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta prompted an outcry about how unfair the media can be when reporting about Native people. The *Lethbridge Herald* had published three articles about the accident, which resulted in several readers writing letters to the editor complaining about the coverage. Three strongly worded letters were published, along with a response from the managing editor.

Levi Prairie Chicken had wandered away from his home and was struck on the road about 10 p.m. The following day, July 20, 2001, a front-page headline article was accompanied by a large colour picture showing distraught relatives of the child at the accident scene. The paper dedicated 50 column inches⁷ to the tragedy. Reporter Gerald

the term tribe, such as the Ermineskin Tribe and the Blood Tribe. And others use the term band, such as the Alexis Band and the Sucker Creek Band.

⁶Concoctions such as First Nation Indians or Aboriginal First Nations, Aboriginal Natives, Native Indians, or Native Nation are incorrect. Likewise, it is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), not Native Affairs or First Nations Affairs.

⁷This thesis has used metric terminology, but column inches is an acceptable journalistic term to measure space in a newspaper.

Gauthier obtained comments from the child's parents and other people, and police indicated the 16-year-old female driver was not at fault. (Gauthier 20 July 2001) A follow-up front-page article (12 column inches) the next day states that "a review will be conducted to determine if child service workers could have intervened to prevent the death" of the boy and that police were continuing their investigation to determine if criminal negligence charges were warranted. (21 July 2001) Then a third article, "Officials reviewing toddler's death," (12 column inches) appeared three days later on Page A3, with an editorial, "Tragedy needs hard answers," (13 column inches) on the following page. The tone of the editorial was about parental responsibility, and suggested that this incident was not a faultless accident.

The day before Levi Prairie Chicken was killed at Cardston, another accidental death of a three-year-old boy in a rural area near Taber, a community equidistant to Lethbridge, resulted in less coverage and no immediate implication of guilt on the parents' part. The July 19 article, "Drowning highlights need for farm safety," dedicated 18 column inches to this tragedy, 32 column inches less than the one about the Cardston incident. The Taber-area boy had wandered from his home in the early evening and fallen into an irrigation canal. His father found the body a kilometre from their home about an hour later. No family members were interviewed, the article did not include a photo, there is no mention of police involvement and no suggestion social services should investigate the matter. In fact, the article was more about farm safety than about the death of an unnamed three-year-old boy.

Public reaction

The three letter writers about the Levi Prairie Chicken coverage expressed outrage at how the story insinuated that, perhaps, because the parents of the child are Natives, social services would conduct an investigation — implying guilt on their part because they are Natives. The letters (30 column inches) published on July 27, provide insight. The main letter, “Herald story perpetuates harmful Native stereotypes,” written by Ingrid Hess of Lethbridge, points out that the paper’s coverage of Levi Prairie Chicken’s death included “presumption of inadequacy of this young child’s parent(s),” in addition to “implications of criminal conduct and serious neglect” (Hess). Jason N. Fox of West Moses Lake (the area of the Blood Reserve where the boy lived), in his letter, “Accusations hurt parents,” makes a strong point: “The *Herald* continues to perpetuate the negative stereotypical images of Natives we, as readers, have become accustomed to. It seems, from [t]he *Herald*’s viewpoint, the relationship between Natives and crime is symbiotic.” (Fox).

Fox continues, in his strongly worded letter, that the media needs to report matters “regardless of race, with full equality.” He said: “You would be better served to educate society rather than condemn it. From a Native perspective, it would be great for [... the] *Herald* to promote acceptance rather than merely tolerance.” (Fox)

The third letter, “Highway 5 speed must be slowed,” is from Blood Tribe Department of Health registered nurse Leslie Fournier. The tone of this letter is one of

safety, suggesting the 50 kilometre-per-hour speed zone where Levi Prairie Chicken was killed be reduced to 30 kilometres per hour.

The editor responds

Managing editor Peter Scott defended the *Herald's* coverage of Levi Prairie Chicken's death, indicating that the newspaper reported the facts. He then states:

Perhaps we do, in fact, perpetuate Native stereotypes if that is done by publishing facts. The *Herald* treated this incident as it does any similar occurrence. The reporter involved made no assumptions, as one [letter to the editor] writer suggests. He merely reported the course of action taken by the RCMP. (Scott 2001)

Scott also points out that the writers of these letters "may not be aware" that the *Herald* devotes staff time and news space to provide its readers with positive articles about Native life, "not merely from, as one suggests, the 'noble savage' stereotype, but also for the accomplishments of members of the Native community in their everyday lives, be they students, teachers, spiritual elders, business people, etc." He continues:

We celebrate their diversity in print as we do others in southern Alberta. However, we do publicize incidents, as one writer says, when Natives are involved in crime the same way we do when non-Natives run afoul of the law. We do so with an even hand but, should we stray from this intended policy, we stand to be corrected by any and all of our readers. (2001)

This signed statement from the managing editor in response to letters is a rarity.

Having examined a recently published example of news coverage, showing that information and images, including stereotypes, about Native people is a problem today,

some of the issues raised will now be addressed.

Identity and Images

Already it has been shown that there are some differences when it comes to the identity of Native people. Identity and image are recurring themes associated with terminology when writing about Native people. The Blood Indians⁸ of southern Alberta speak of themselves as being *niitsitapi*, which in Blackfoot means *the real people* (Standing Alone 2001). The words Dene, Kutchin and Inuit all mean *the people* (Lower 6). Assembly of First Nations national chief Matthew Coon Come declared: “No matter what we call ourselves [...] the names of our nations mean we are people.” Addressing an international conference in Ottawa on Mar. 29, 2001, he pointed out that there are success stories about Native people that need to be told to “celebrate the survival” of their philosophy, languages, traditional knowledge, music and beliefs — their identity. “We’ve come a long way from smoke signals,” said Coon Come, referring to the launch of a World Wide Web portal connecting Internet sites about and for Aboriginal peoples.

The identity theme is one addressed by communications educator Gail Valaskakis. She said “[...] Indians have struggled with who they are and the nature of their interaction with Others in relation to media constructions [...]” (Valaskakis 62) She suggested that

⁸Bloods are also known as Kainai. Their neighbours to the northwest, the Peigan, are also known as Piikani. (In Montana, directly south of the Alberta-U.S. border, the Peigan are known as Piegan.) Both belong to the Blackfoot Confederacy. (In the United States, Blackfeet, not Blackfoot, is the preferred term.)

“[c]ultural studies has linked communication and cultural formation to identity through the analysis of lived experience and public text: the discourse of everyday action, discourse and events” (Valaskakis 63-64), which is what historian Robert E. Neil referred to as “an accumulation of casually related events that render the present substantially different from the past and that will render the present substantially different from the future.” (Neil 33)

Former British Columbia Supreme Court justice and author Thomas Berger addressed the identity issue. He said Native people

[...] have never surrendered their history or their identity, although Europe has cast a long and terrible shadow over them. Today they are emerging from beneath that shadow, and they have a tale to tell not only of subjugation but also of survival [...]. (Berger xii)

It’s that “tale” or story that journalists weave into Canadian society through accounts rendered in the mainstream media or in the dozens of newspapers published by Native businesses and organizations across the country.

Alfred Young Man, head of the Native American Studies Department at the University of Lethbridge, writing in the June 2001 edition of the news magazine *aboriginaltimes*, suggested that the issue of identity through name labels is an important one. Young Man, who is Cree-Chippewa and was raised on the Blackfeet Reservation at Browning, Montana, said Indians “[...]have all glorified in, or suffered unnecessarily under the more questionable symbolism inherent in some of these labels in the past, and

many [Indians] even today continue to suffer under these titles [...].” (Young Man 44)

He wrote:

This information is important to those non-Natives as well, who live and dwell among us, so that they can determine for themselves how they unwittingly misconstrue the facts of who Native people are, to the extent that they cannot see how nor understand why their own knowledge is in such critical need of improvement. (45)

Actor and writer Gary Farmer, addressing a conference at the University of Lethbridge in 1997, said aboriginal people must control the images presented about them if they are to take control of their lives. Farmer, who is Cayuga, declared: “There’s no information in the media that pertains to Aboriginal people. We’re bombarded by images that don’t reflect our reality.” He cited Canadian and American examples of negative stereotyping of Native people, including the movies *Black Robe*, *Thunderheart* and *Pocahontas*. He said *Black Robe* told the story from the Jesuits’ point of view, that *Thunderheart* portrayed a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent with an alcoholic aboriginal father, and that *Pocahontas* was depicted as “the essential stereotype of the sexual savage.” Farmer told the conference that poor self-image is one of the biggest problems facing Native communities. A Canadian Press article from the Feb. 12, 1997, *Ottawa Citizen* cites Farmer on the topic of negative images in the media. The article states:

The fighting warrior, sexual savage and mystical Indian are all stereotypes that undermine aboriginals searching for a positive self-image, says a Native actor. And Gary Farmer lays the blame on TV and the movies. There’s rarely a dramatic movie made with aboriginals that doesn’t involve scenes of violence and alcohol,

says Farmer. As a result, people fear Indians because of the image of the “fighting warrior.” “To some extent, fear is also the reason you don’t want to live next door to them,” he says. (Canadian Press 1997)

Farmer’s claim that there is no information in the media concerning Native people, and that Canadians are “bombarded by images that don’t reflect [Native] reality,” may well reflect what many Native people perceive about how they are presented in the media. To say, however, there is “no information” is inaccurate, because there is overwhelming evidence to show that the media — radio, television, newspapers, film — produce both positive and negative material about Natives. To then say “bombarded by images” contradicts the first statement. In Lethbridge, for example, there have been efforts in recent years by the daily *Lethbridge Herald* to challenge the perceived lack of information or negative coverage about Natives. (Scott 2000)

Since journalists use words to create images, it’s important to consider how some words conjure certain images. The word *Indian*, for instance, is not a term or concept traditionally familiar among the indigenous peoples of North America. “There was no such idea in existence prior to the arrival of the Europeans,” according to Prof. John Mohawk of the State University of New York at Buffalo, New York. He points out that Robert F. Berkhofer’s theory, put forward in his book *The White Man’s Indian*, is that *Indian* is a term invented by the Spanish to describe “who somebody is not” — the people who were here when the Spanish, in the 15th century, arrived in what became known as the Americas.

There is also no term which describes a non-person. Indians, however, claim they have been treated as non-persons for generations. Native groups see themselves as independent nations, that they are not Canadian. Canadian is a concept of someone they are not. This type of rhetoric suggests a *them versus us* or *Canadians versus non-Canadians* or *Natives versus non-Natives* situation. This bipolarity, or concept with two sides or extremes, is a recurring theme that exists in many facets of non-Native culture: good versus bad, and positive versus negative.

It has become apparent that there is a *dis-ease* between Natives and those who are not Natives regarding media coverage, evident through comments from several sources. Stanley Arcand made a significant statement about the state of the relations between Natives and the media in an *Edmonton Journal* column. The former chief of the Alexander First Nation⁹ wrote: “The media have earned little respect from First Nations. Where there should be bridges of understanding between our cultures, the media have helped to create walls of intolerance and mistrust.” He said journalists continue to promote “outdated stereotypes” and biased portraits of Indians and of First Nations as “islands of corruption and financial mismanagement — dark holes of misery and despair.” (Arcand 1998)

Balance, harmony and fairness

When about 50 men attended a presentation about journalism at the City View

⁹The Alexander First Nation is located 40 kilometres northwest of Edmonton.

United Church Men's Club in Ottawa on Sept. 6, 2001, the topic of news balance was raised. Veteran Ottawa journalist Henry Heald, following his presentation, fielded questions about the need to improve news reporting. "How can we get a more balanced view?" asked one man. Similar questions about balanced reporting were raised, and always the response was about two-sided balance, or getting both sides of the story. To journalists, balance means equal and fair, or that there are two sides to any story and both sides of the story are told. "But sometimes it doesn't seem getting both sides of the story is enough," observed another man.

People in Western society talk of losing their balance (falling to one side), being mentally unbalanced (suffering psychological or psychiatric difficulties), balancing an account or budget (ensuring debits don't exceed credits), balancing the scales of justice (maintaining legal and moral fairness between two litigants), and balance pertaining to weight.

The example of balance pertaining to weight provides a metaphor to understanding the mainstream concept of balance. Modern scales located at the grocery store check-out are found in a neatly-engineered device which also contains infrared sensors for scanning product barcodes. The mechanisms of these modern scales are hidden from today's shopper, though their predecessors were not compact and concealed. Thirty years ago a person could go into a grocery store and ask for a pound of carrots. A store clerk would then place several carrots in one of two metal trays dangling from the crossbar of a

contraption that resembled a cross. When the carrots were placed in one tray, that side of the crossbar would fall and the other side would rise. The grocer would then place a metal weight equalling one pound in the other tray. If the tray with the carrots did not rise, the greengrocer would take a few carrots off the tray until it did rise and both trays hung level. If the side with the carrots rose higher than the side with the weight, additional carrots would be placed in the tray until both sides were level. When both sides were level, the scales were said to be balanced.

Within this description of mechanical balance pertaining to the grocery business are similar terms long associated with journalism. Those terms include level, two sides, equal and measure. The same terms can be used to show how a journalist composes an article which, when completed, will be balanced.

Journalists are expected to achieve balance in their stories. This concept of balance means to get both sides of the story or to include equal comment from various sources. The first could be including information from two groups seeking a solution to parking on a downtown street to give readers a balanced account of the situation. A second example could be a civic election where several people were running for mayor, and the journalist would devote an equal amount of space to each candidate to provide readers with a balanced report. A third concept of balance pertaining to newspapers could be the amount of space dedicated to civic news, business news, human interest, entertainment, social events, sports news, etc. This could include so many pages set

aside for each section, based on what management perceives to be an appropriate balance to satisfy readership demands. The amount of news in each section would not get equal space, but the overall or holistic impression would be that the whole paper had some semblance of balance.

Journalists are trained to be *fair* when writing news, and fair is seen as synonymous with balanced. This concept suggests fair means equal from both the writer's perspective as well as to the person reading the writer's article. American journalism educator Melvin Mencher said journalists are expected to be fair by using "attribution and verifying material and by balancing assertions and allegations from sources." He said that editors, during political campaigns, try to balance — sometimes down to the second of air time or the inch of copy — material about candidates vying for position. Mencher suggests that "some journalists contend that balance does not mean they must station themselves precisely at the midpoint of an issue. [...] Balance is a moral commitment and cannot be measured by the stopwatch or the ruler." He also cites fairness as being part of balance. (Mencher 56-58) Balance culminates through a sequence of events. Mencher observed that:

Reporters [...] assess events with detachment, breaking them down into facts that [they] weigh against each other and against their knowledge of the background of the event. They draw conclusions on the basis of their observations, not in accordance with their hopes and beliefs. Then they reconstruct these events into coherent, orderly stories. (318)

Journalism educator Carman Cumming does not specifically define balance in

news reporting, though he does suggest that balance will come about through various processes. These include, in part, “fundamentals” such as news judgment, accuracy and completeness. Trainee journalists are encouraged to ask themselves if there is anything missing before submitting a story (Cumming 9-28). He said part of the process is doing some background research and thinking about the story before attacking an assignment. If a reporter doesn’t understand an issue or topic, there is no shame in asking someone knowledgeable on the matter. “That approach is more likely to get you through the doors than an attempt to bluff your way into a substantial interview before you’re backgrounded.” He also points out that by investing time before tackling an assignment, a reporter ought to learn to cultivate his/her powers of observation and listening. (33-34) This is an example of the journalist seeing balance as being between two elements, the bipolar concept raised earlier.

From another perspective, long-time Ottawa journalist Val Sears raised the balance issue regarding news coverage following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States in his *Ottawa Sun* column on Sept. 23, 2001. His concern was the ongoing negative reports about horror, war, death and destruction. Many of his friends, he said, have found it “hard on the nerves” to constantly see this type of news on television or in newspapers. Sears then points out that there is a lack of balance: “It’s hard to fault responsible editors who, presumably, are trying to achieve a balance between conveying important and interesting information and scaring the hell out of people.” His point is that editors have a role in the process of presenting news “balance” to their readers.

What's missing, he suggests, is some humour and humanity amid the horror. (Sears)

In searching for a description of balance in the news sense, journalism educator Mitchell Charnley uses the term "proper proportion" in referring to balance in quantitative terms. He said: "As the reader's or listener's representative, a reporter has to try constantly to place each fact or group of facts in proper proportion, to relate it meaningfully to other elements, and to establish its relative importance to the story as a whole." (Charnley 31) Could proper proportion equate to balance? Although he doesn't actually define balance, he does suggest it *doesn't* mean counting words, minutes or lines of print. Charnley recalled what happened when a radio station decided to give each candidate in an election the exact same news time each day. He said:

[the radio station] quickly discovered that the news events themselves didn't balance — that you couldn't report either fairly or accurately by devoting exactly [15] lines of typewriting to a major campaign speech on the one hand and a [24-hour] stretch of complete silence on the other. (32)

If balance isn't about the exact same amount of news lineage, radio or television air time, or giving both sides an equal opportunity to raise their point of view, etc., perhaps perception comes into the picture. Could it be there is a different way of viewing balance, something other than the bipolar concept of balance?

A different balance

Journalist and educator John Medicine Horse Kelly, who is Haida, said he believes there is. During a Nov. 6, 2001, presentation to faculty at the Carleton University school

of journalism, Kelly several times spoke of a need for balance in news reporting. He later elaborated on what he had said and drew a chart to represent a form of balance. The first drawing showed a box on the left in which he wrote *Anglo* and a box on the right in which he wrote *First Nations*. Under these two boxes he drew a line and then placed an upside down V at the centre of the line to indicate the pivot point of balance. (See Appendix)

Under that he drew a second chart within a large box, which he labelled *First Nations*, and drew a similar diagram with the names of the boxes the *Eagle* and the *Raven*, representing two clans within a First Nation. A third diagram represented a further dimension within the box labelled as *Eagle*, with a similar two boxes on a pivot, with one box representing *men* and the other *women*. This, said Kelly, shows how there can be balance. That balance, he added, could be a two-sided balance or a four-sided balance. Kelly said:

Whatever structure you are working in, you have to find the balance. It doesn't have to be through one story, as long as that medium balances one unbalanced story with another unbalanced story. No side of the story is left out or receives too much attention. (Kelly)

He also pointed out that through either the two-point balance or the four-pointed balance, no valid viewpoint would be left under-represented.

Journalism educator John Miller also touched on the topic of balance. In his book *Yesterday's News* he offers this explanation:

Much of journalism is stenography. The reporter [...] adopts the guise of the detached observer and records what happens before him, often reproducing it uncritically. Thus many of the subtle and difficult issues of public life are reduced to statements and certainties, devoid of suspense, surprise, personality, doubt and

meaning. When conflict is involved, as it often is with news, the reporter merely strives for balance by getting someone from the other side to dissent. Tomorrow, someone else weighs in with a different opinion. Stories deemed to be important get covered in little bits like this until some action is taken or it is time for the light of publicity to be shone elsewhere. There is little room for solutions, universal truths or even real understanding. (John Miller 230)

This opens the door to consider a few more points before concluding this chapter. Miller points to the gathering of information as part of the process journalists go through in order to write articles. The mandate of any professional journalist is to present a balanced, accurate and fair account of what is happening in society. What they produce, particularly through newspapers, is a record of history complete with facts and opinions. Their work generates public discourse and, in the process, incites public response. In effect, they can also make history happen. As journalists interact with people and write about them, they could change the way others perceive those people and the activities in which they are involved. They can even “influence people and make history happen” in the process (Alia).

Miller’s point about reporters striving for “balance by getting someone from the other side” again offers evidence of a bipolar concept within journalism.

Journalists, therefore, claim a vital role in modern society. They interact with people, write about them, publish those writings as a record of history, and other people read what they write and respond to those writings. The question of balance in news reporting has been raised and will now be explored from a different perspective.

Chapter 2

Beginnings

Using the medicine wheel as an academic model

The mystery of all beginnings is found in the birth of new beginnings.

— from *The Sacred Tree* —

Many North American Indians are familiar with and use within their cultures a version of symbolic medicine wheel, each based on a circle with four quadrants created by four lines emanating from the centre to the edge of the circle. The medicine wheel's quadrants generally represent the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life. It has become both a popular teaching tool and a contemporary symbol of "Nativeness," even among peoples who may not have had any historical connection with ancient "medicine wheels." No matter how it is used today, the medicine wheel is perceived to advocate such concepts as understanding, insight and, most of all, balance. This chapter will show how versatile the concept can be and, therefore, how it can be used as an academic model for this thesis. Medicine wheels will be explored from historic and contemporary perspectives in order to support this plan. This will also support the theory that by applying the medicine wheel concept, journalists can begin to understand the vital role they can play in presenting a more balanced view of Native issues in Canadian society.

Discovering medicine wheels

Scattered throughout North America there are mysterious stone circles which are said to be sacred or significant to some of the indigenous peoples of this continent. Archaeologists suggest most are hundreds of years old, while some are even older than the ancient pyramids of Egypt. No person alive knows unequivocally the true origin of these objects, often referred to as medicine wheels.¹⁰ But it is generally understood that, because of their immensity and calculated design, they must have played some significant role at some time for either personal or communal purposes. And whether those purposes were practical or spiritual, it would seem their original significance may have been lost through time.

About 75 examples of these stone clusters are found scattered mainly throughout the Plains region, with more than half of them in Alberta and the others in Saskatchewan, Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming. Some are as large as 27 metres across, others as small as six metres across, with varying numbers of cobble spokes emanating from a central cairn to the circle's perimeter. Some are symmetrically round with distinct lines within or without the circle, while others are sprawling spider-like formations without even a circle. Plains archeologist Rod Vickers said "only one [medicine wheel] consists of a cross in a circle" and that one may have originally had a central cairn (J. Vickers).

¹⁰University of Saskatchewan educator Don Barnett notes that the term *medicine wheel* has been used since the 1800s to describe a variety of ancient stone arrangements found on the northwestern plains. (Barnett)

Although no indigenous group claims to have built the oldest of these, suggesting they were “laid out by pre-Indian people” more than 4,000 years ago (Joseph 139), some of the ancient structures are today revered by many Native and non-Native people. Among the documented sites are at least two constructed in recent history by Blood Indians¹¹ in southern Alberta. One of the most recent examples is a medicine wheel,¹² an eight metres in diameter, dedicated to a warrior chief and holy man named Steel,¹³ born in the early 1860s (Dempsey 242). Located on the Blood Reserve, near Lethbridge, Alberta, this site consists of a large stone circle with four radiating stone lines emanating from the edge of the circle. Steel, when nearing the end of his days, told his son to build a special memorial to honour him after he died. A circle of stones he had placed around his tepee, Steel said, had to be moved elsewhere and “four lines of stones placed on the ground, each extending from the circle to the cardinal points” to create a medicine wheel (160). (See Appendix) Steel’s son-in-law Laurie Plume told historian Hugh Dempsey the lines signify that Steel was a brave man, a leader who had been to war, and the medicine wheel was a tribute to him as a warrior chief. Steel, who died April 7, 1940, was buried on a hill on the reserve and the medicine wheel was constructed several kilometres away.

¹¹Blood tribe member and Native studies educator Lois Frank said the term *Bloods* was derived from a Cree word meaning Blood people or Red people, “because the color red was used by the tribe for ceremonial purposes” (Frank 17).

¹²According to Dempsey, the term *medicine wheel* in Blackfoot is *atsot-akeeh’ :tuksin*, which means “from all sides” (*atsot*) a small marker of stones (*akeeh’*) for posterity (*tuksin*). (Brumley 52)

¹³ Also known as *Ski’ matsis*, which is Blackfoot for the metal tool used to start a fire by striking it with a piece of flint. (Dempsey 242)

Journalist Garry Allison includes an account of the site in an article about Dempsey's research, featured in an educational series circulated to Lethbridge-area schools. The article states:

Steel's wheel is 8.2 metres in diameter, contains 77 field stones, with a one-metre entrance to the east flanked by two larger stones. The radiating lines are all 9.1 metres in length, with stones evenly spaced. The north and west lines contain 10 stones, the south and the east contain 12 stones. The double fireplaces¹⁴ are both a metre around and contain 14 stones. (Allison 23 Feb.1993)

Two major research reports concerning medicine wheels were published within two years of each other. Alberta archeologist John Brumley, recognized as an authority on the subject, completed a report of Plains medicine wheels in 1988. Then, in 1990, David Eric Vogt explored the same topic in his dissertation for a doctorate at Simon Fraser University. Vogt points out that "medicine wheels were largely ignored by the archaeological community until the mid-1970s when a profound shift occurred in the thoughts concerning them." He credits John Eddy as initiating this interest (Vogt 2). Both Brumley and Vogt measured, mapped and analysed rock formations showing a combination of cairns, circles and lines of stones at dozens of sites. Brumley focused on the northern Plains region, while Vogt went beyond that and included Alberta, Arizona, Colorado, Manitoba, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, Washington and Wyoming. Vogt suggested these rock clusters "[...] supply little or no useful information toward understanding what the original function(s) of Medicine

¹⁴ Steel owned a 30-buffalo skin teepee with two fireplaces. The average teepee was made with 12 to 14 skins and had one fireplace. The large teepee was considered an honour for a great warrior. (Dempsey 242)

Wheels may have been,” adding that “[n]obody knows what Medicine Wheels are, but everybody seems to know that they are *something*” (Vogt 5). His theory is that medicine wheels could be commemorative monuments, sun or thirst dance structures, vision quest structures, buffalo culture structures, petroform (art or graffito), horizontal-based astronomical observatories, travellers’ signposts, or simply geometric arrangements or gnomon (sundial). (Vogt 7)

Vogt notes a similar description to that given in Allison’s article about Steel’s medicine wheel, though he cites the circle as being nine metres in diameter made with 77 stones, with the south and east lines containing 10 stones and the north and west lines containing 12 stones (Vogt 321). Diagrams for the Steel medicine wheel also show two circles of stones, each about one metre in diameter, located within the larger circle (Brumley 50; Vogt 321).

The second example, the Many Spotted Horses medicine wheel, is also on the Blood Reserve, which is in traditional Blackfoot territory. This wheel is believed to be on either the site of the tepee or death place of a great warrior named Many Spotted Horses (Brumley 51, Vogt 326). Vogt also lists the Eagle Child and St. Mary’s medicine wheels, and the accompanying diagrams suggest all four of these structures are of a similar design — a circle with four lines emanating beyond the circle (Vogt 358, 372). Another medicine wheel on the reserve is associated with a great Blood chief named Bull Back Fat, who died in 1842 (Allison 1993, Brumley 53).

Vickers suggested the Bloods “constructed wheels with the form of a circle with four lines which radiated outward,” adding that pre-historic examples consist of teepee rings with “non-symmetrical (in length or placement) radiating lines.” He said “bilateral symmetry is a historic (post AD 1850) phenomenon” (J. Vickers).

An archaeological survey exploring Alberta’s medicine wheels suggests the ancient objects could have served different functions over time (J. Vickers). They could have been ceremonial sites for buffalo hunters or used for religious purposes. Other theories suggest they could have been used as calendars to keep track of the important solstices, such as four sets of seven stones around the circle to represent the lunar cycle of 28 days.

Other historical symbols

While the meanings of these ancient rings have been lost, the meanings of other Native artifacts and symbols are still known and from these examples we can perhaps infer the use and significance, if not the specific meaning, of the ancient medicine wheels.

As North America Indians communicated through oral — not literary — tradition, the facts and philosophy concerning their culture were usually not recorded in any written form. However, some historical events were recorded in pictorial form painted on robes, shirts and tepee coverings made with buffalo (bison) hides, and painted or carved on rocks and cliffs, as well as painted and carved on wood.

A collection of Blackfoot buffalo robes from southern Alberta provides vivid

examples of this form of recording events. The first examples which came to the attention of Europeans were not long before 1830. These robes show images of warriors with bows and arrows, rifles, horses, tepees, and battle scenes (Brownstone 16 - 25). These painted pictures could then be used as a mnemonic tool by a warrior, pointing to the images, to recount brave deeds to his community (Brownstone 11). The story could perceivably, at some later date, be retold by another person using the same graphic prompts, thus preserving the story over many years through oral tradition — as long as the images did not fade. This practice continued into the late 1800s, until the Blackfoot Indians — Blood, Peigan and Siksika — signed a treaty with the Crown on Sept. 22, 1877, at Crowfoot Crossing, near what is now Calgary, and settled on assigned reserves (Mountain Horse 1 - 4, 14, 105). It was also the end of an era when the once-plentiful buffalo, which had been the livelihood of Plains Indians societies, were annihilated by overzealous commercial hunters and joyseekers.

Petroglyphs¹⁵ at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park¹⁶ in southern Alberta show many warriors, bison, horses and various symbols, all scratched or carved into the rocks and cliff faces. (Archeological Society of Alberta 63). This area, which now attracts thousands of visitors a year, was once a retreat for young men on vision quests, periods of sacred fasting where they sought personal insight and spiritual strength. While there

¹⁵ Drawings etched into stone, many of them hundreds of years ago.

¹⁶ Situated on the Milk River in southeast Alberta, about 30km east of the town of Milk River and 10km north of the Canada-United States border.

they carved into the embankments various images associated with dreams experienced during their fast.¹⁷ A 1980 survey report describes and provides photographic examples of virtually hundreds of images found in the Writing-on-Stone area and other nearby southern Alberta locations. Even at the writing of the report, it was said some of the images documented during the survey no longer exist due to natural erosion. Among the examples are several images of men holding round shields, some of them with markings on the shields.¹⁸

Sometimes symbols were used as prompts for a person retelling a story passed down through many generations, such as the “totem poles” carved by the peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Totems are supernatural animal beings, including killer whales, sea lions, frogs, bears, ravens, and so on, within the histories and legends of many West Coast Indian clans. Totem poles are carved trees containing several totems, with the series of totems on a pole used 1) to represent ancestral claims, 2) as memorials showing family lineages, 3) to commemorate special events, 4) for mortuary purposes,¹⁹ and 4) as an

¹⁷Archeological researchers suggest some of the drawings, either carved, scratched or painted, date to the 17th century. Some could be older, while some could be more recent. A complete survey of the area suggests different tribal groups travelled through the Milk River area, including Blackfoot, Plains Cree, Gros Ventres, Crow, Assiniboine, North Shoshoni, Kutenai, Pendant d'Oreille and Nez Perce (Archeological Society of Alberta 5 - 7).

¹⁸One of the images includes a “double lined cross with two arcs in each section” Although this one example bears an uncanny resemblance to a modern medicine wheel, Alberta archeologist Rod Vickers emphasizes that this is just one of a number of round shield designs. He said the meaning of this drawing is unknown and it should not be misconstrued as representing a medicine wheel (J. Vickers).

¹⁹The coffin of a chief was sometimes placed in a fork at the top of the pole or his ashes concealed in a niche.

entrance pole with a hole carved through the base forming an elaborate doorway into a house (Bancroft-Hunt 38). A stranger could, therefore, approach a house and know the family connections, or lineages, and tribal affiliations of the people living there by studying the crests and totems on the poles. Not only do totems represent symbolic meaning, they also provide prompts for someone to explain the family's or individual's story about events or people associated with the images (Bancroft-Hunt 38-41).

Although a totem pole could be used as a teaching tool, such as teaching about ancestors or events, it is not used as a teaching tool in the same way as a medicine wheel. The messages in a totem pole are expressed through the various and very specific images, while the medicine wheel is an object of a symbolic nature.

For many generations some Indians have used wampum made of shells as a means to recall events and stories about their people. The creamy-white and coloured strings of shells are patterned into symbols and lines within a string or belt, which are then used to remind the belt's possessor its accompanying story. Ethnologist Garrick Mallery said in 1972 that, from an Iroquois perspective, the predominance of white beads indicated peace, and purple or violet meant war (Mallery 230). These strings and belts vary in size, with some as large as 6,000 shells. In his quest for greater understanding of native culture through Indian picture-writing, Mallery points out that wampum were also used to record treaties (228). Not everyone owned wampum, nor did everyone who knew about them know exactly what they meant. He said: "It was not understood except by the memory of those to whom and by whom it was delivered" (229). Algonquin elder William

Commanda is the keeper of three wampum at his home in Maniwaki, Quebec. The 88-year-old traditional chief, who is also known as Grandfather William, said each belt has a unique story and history. One is known as the Seven Fires Prophecy wampum dating from the 1400s, the second is from 1701 and concerns peace negotiations and the sharing of resources of land between aboriginal people and newcomers (French and English), and the third wampum is from 1793 and pertains to the Jay Treaty. Although most wampum were made of white and purple- or violet-coloured shells, Mallery said a black wampum was once circulated among the people of the Six Nations proclaiming the death of a chief (Mallery 230). Wampum, therefore, is a form of symbolism where an object is used to inform, explain or teach.

Symbols and symmetry

There is other evidence of symbols and symmetry among antique Native arts and crafts, with no indication that any of it had to do with modern medicine wheels. It is only interesting to note that the quadrated circle was not uncommon. A pre-historic slate effigy found near Memphis, Tennessee, in 1837, has a “repeated bird” motif within a circle. About 30cm in diameter, the four “birds” extend from a centre circle, each face looking to one of the four points of the compass (Hothem 125). A “good luck charm” made of shell, which was found in a burial mound in Oklahoma, shows a quadrated circle with a face in each quadrant, and is said to contain Central American influences (Borland 114-117).

There is also an example of what appears to be a medicine wheel in a ceremonial drum head drawn by a Beaver Indian shaman²⁰ in northeastern British Columbia, showing the “four-quarter symbol that anchors the earth in the midst of the primeval waters, and which also becomes the link between cosmic realms above and below” (Nabokov 248-262). There is no explanation as to the origin or age of this object.

J.W.E. Newbery, addressing a 1977 conference on native religious traditions, explained the significance of symbolism among the Ojibwa. He said the sacred pipe ceremony and use of a “teaching wand” and the medicine wheel, together are part of a coming together of community (Newbury 166 - 171). The teaching wand resembles a medicine wheel with a stick running through the centre point of the wheel. On the medicine wheel, he said, “[...]the universe is portrayed as a sacred hoop quartered and divided into its varieties yet complete and unified as a circle. Its centre is the drum speaking with the thunderous voice of the sky, throbbing with the heart beat of the earth” (174).

Two examples connect symmetry and the term medicine. A leather medicine bag made around 1870 clearly shows a circle with four cardinal points sewn on a “braided scalp-tanned skin on a beaded leather back,” with two golden eagle feathers attached (Hothorn 289). And a Pawnee buffalo-hide medicine drum shows four arrow-tipped lines emanating from a centre circle, “illustrating the four quarters into which the world was

²⁰ Also known as a medicine man or medicine woman.

divided.” Plains culture had an “elaborate mythology about the sky in which the heavens were divided into four quarters” (Borland 92-99).

The Pawnee, who lived in the southern Great Plains, south of the Platte River in Nebraska, also travelled with the buffalo. Borland explains that within their mythology is a story of the First People, who were created by the gods at the beginning of the world. While hunting in a forest, the young man and young woman heard voices singing sacred chants and ventured through the forest until they discovered a lodge. Within the lodge they found four old men beating a medicine drum at a central altar. While the men — Wind, Cloud, Lightning and Thunder — sang and beat the drum, the other people performed a round dance. At stages of the dance, certain women approached the altar from the four directions. The symbolism includes references to the North and South stars and the morning and evening stars, suggesting four directions. (92-99)

Artist Paul Kane, who roamed North America in search of subjects for his paintings in the mid-1800s, selected some Blackfoot men for one particular project. Titled *Blackfoot Chief and Subordinates*, the painting shows men with a quadrated circle or medicine wheel design on their clothing (Kane).

Medicine wheel messages

Could any of these examples have inspired someone to draw an image that became the forerunner of the modern, symmetrical medicine wheels in common use today?

Archeologist Rod Vickers said the subject of medicine wheels is popular and there is a lot of room for “idiosyncratic explanations [...] grounded in contemporary life rather than in Native tradition” (J. Vickers). But he warned that “one should not confuse contemporary folklore with Native ceremonialism from before white contact. Nor should one ascribe pre-historic designs in rock art or cobble medicine wheels to explanatory statements derived from contemporary folklore.”

Did the ancient stone arrangements have some spiritual or stellar connotation, or were they intended for some now-forgotten ancient ceremonial purposes, or for keeping track of the seasons? Perhaps they were just an interesting design, a directional marker, a memorial, or something to say “I was here.” American mythographer Joseph Campbell speculates that they “reflect [...] the delicate problem of keeping a human community in accord with the rhythmic order of the universe” (Joseph 141). All are possibilities. There are very few symmetrical stone circles with cobble spokes, and one can only begin to imagine where the quadrated medicine wheel of today originated.

Blood elder Pete Standing Alone said in a 2001 interview that there is likely no one alive today who can really explain the true meaning of the medicine wheels. “Seventy-five years ago governments, missionaries and churches were trying to do away with Indian spirituality,” he said. But the late Blood elder Daniel Weasel Moccasin talked about medicine wheels. Standing Alone said Weasel Moccasin claimed medicine wheels might have been a place of sacrifice or they could depict a war scene. Standing Alone

noted that members of the Blood tribe today use a stone to hold down an offering, which could reflect traditional practices of Indians travelling the Great Plains. “My theory is that medicine wheels represent a place where offerings were made,” he said, adding that spirituality continues to be integral to Native culture despite colonialist efforts from governments and churches.

The final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized the importance of Blackfoot spiritual matters. It noted that the plains peoples were “profoundly spiritual” and that spiritual activities were a part of everyday life as well as for ceremonies conducted in each of the four seasons. “Medicine wheels connected the stars and the universe with the earth,” the report states (RCAP final report). This brief but vague comment indicates that the ancient medicine wheel may well have had a place in Blackfoot culture, but, as Standing Alone said, no one alive really knows the role they once played.

No matter what their role in the past, the ancient cobble clusters with their various designs have transcended their original purpose and evolved into an archetypal medicine wheel with numerous modern designs, concepts and interpretations. This symbol and its uses shall now be explored from various modern perspectives.

Modern medicine wheels

Is it possible that the ancient medicine wheels, no matter what their original

purpose, gave some North America Indians cause to ponder their meaning and that they eventually adopted a contemporary version into their cultures? Aforementioned examples show that the stone circles, from an historic perspective, meant different things to different people. But today the symmetrical image of the medicine wheel has taken on a new and refined look and, so it seems, a distinct symbolic meaning. This modern symbol has become popular and is utilized for a plethora of purposes in regions far beyond the areas in which the ancient stone circles are located. Evidence suggests that modern medicine wheels are well established within many indigenous cultures throughout North America.

The modern version of the medicine wheel is usually a circle encompassing four lines emanating from the centre of the circle, with the points where the lines connect with the circle representing the four cardinal compass points — East, South, West and North, in that order. (The sequential relevance will become evident, with the main precept being that the sun rises in the East.) Each resultant quadrant usually has a designated colour, such as black in the southeast quadrant, red in the southwest, white in the northwest and yellow in the northeast. Some medicine wheels have the colours indicating the points, such as yellow for East, red for South, black for West and white for North (Bopp 10). The colour sequence for quadrants and points varies for different wheels.

Contemporary medicine wheels begin with a circle, which represents the circle of life. This is a common concept widely accepted in cultures throughout the world. It

represents “infinity, perfection and the eternal,” and the symmetrical shape represents peace. The geometric design may even evoke feelings of “intrinsic balance within nature itself, each state of mind counterweighted and in part defined by its opposite” (Fontana 54). This sense of balance is explained by psychiatrist Carl Jung as a sense of oneness through the “recurring motifs” or imagery of the circle (Baldwin 29). His research suggests that the image of the circle dates to prehistoric times when “wheels” were carved and painted as sacred symbols long before the wheel was invented. The wheel symbol, he said, is one of the “mythic motifs springing from the collective unconscious” (Baldwin). Lord Baden-Powell, who organized the Boy Scouts organization, taught that trail signs, using available resources such as grass, rocks, sticks and the ground itself, could be used to leave a message for someone. One of those is a large circle with a smaller circle in the middle of the large one, made of small stones or drawn with a stick in the ground. (Baden-Powell 41) This symbol is used to indicate “I have gone home,” simply meaning the person making the mark has gone home. But it has also been used metaphorically on grave markers to signify that a person has left this earthly existence and gone home.

There are other interpretations or legends concerning the use of four points or quadrants. In addition to the four cardinal directions, Bopp and others suggest the points can also represent the four races of man — yellow, white, red and black — or the four grandfathers,²¹ the four winds, the four seasons, the four stages of life — infant, youth, adult and elder — or the four fundamental values in traditional Native culture — kindness,

²¹The term *grandfathers* in Native culture represents four rocks used in sweat lodge ceremonies.

honesty, sharing and strength. The areas between the points can represent the elements — earth, wind, rain, fire — or plants, animals, birds and sea creatures. Numerous examples can be found of modern medicine wheels incorporating the points, colours and animals in a concentric, multifaceted or interconnected design. The number four as a symbol is the “number of mankind... four (being) associated with wholeness and completion — four elements, cardinal points, seasons and ages of man” (Fontana 64).

Museum of Civilization anthropologist Morgan Baillargeon said the first time he saw a contemporary quadrated medicine wheel was in 1979 or 1980 at a powwow in Hobbema, Alberta. The items were from Manitoulin Island, off the northern shore of Lake Huron. He said they were similar to dreamcatchers and that they reminded him of two things: a lacrosse stick and a hoop-and-stick game hoop — items used in traditional Native sports. Baillargeon, who has extensively researched Plains Indian culture, reflecting on the emergence of the curious new item, said: “The concept of four was not new to the Plains Indians and the four-point medicine wheel was readily accepted. Within a few years they were everywhere. It became part of the pan-Indian culture [that] emerged in the 1970s.” Baillargeon said in a 2001 interview that there has been much discussion among social scientists and Natives about the origins of the ancient medicine wheels, and one of the questions often raised is “what is traditional?” when it comes to something that has been incorporated into a culture in the way the modern medicine wheel has.

Students at Valley City State University in Valley City, North Dakota, constructed a 27-metre medicine wheel in 1992 so they could learn about North American Indian astronomy. This teaching tool was set out on the campus grounds to “capture some of the spirit and purpose” of the original medicine wheels as a solar calendar. The main circle has 28 spokes radiating from the centre, representing the 28-day lunar cycle, and six sight lines pointing to the position of the rising and setting sun for each solstice and equinox.

Some medicine wheels are available for purchase at many Indian craft stores, powwows or gatherings, or even via businesses on the World Wide Web.²² The usual mainframe circle, about 10 cm or 15 cm, can be made of a metal, plastic or wooden ring, with string, plastic wire or wood forming the four lines. Medicine wheels often feature leather, and natural or synthetic fur, feathers and coloured beads. These items are used for ornamental, educational and spiritual purposes, whether designed as objects, artwork or conceptual tools.

The medicine wheel is also being used by businesses, institutions and organizations for instructional, commercial and counselling purposes with the overall

²²A hand-crafted medicine wheel was listed for sale on *e-bay.ca* by someone in Ontario for \$18 US (\$27.78 Cdn) on March 7, 2001. There is no explanation of the purpose of this “one of a kind” item. It appeared to be a buckskin-wrapped ring of approximately four inches in diameter, with four lines of coloured beads. The object was adorned with four brightly-coloured feathers and a “sweetgrass bundle” attached to the centre. An accompanying tag states the medicine wheel is divided into four sections, each representing “a number of things and teachings.” The overly-simplistic “things and teachings” include: “FIRST is the 4 directions - N. S. E. W. SECOND is the 4 colours of people - RED, YELLOW, BLACK, WHITE. Each colour of people carries a gift that is to bring balance and healing. THIRD is the 4 sacred plants - TOBACCO, CEDAR, SAGE, SWEETGRASS. FORTH (sic) is the 4 states that make up yourself. They are SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL and MENTAL.”

intrinsic concept being one of balance. This concept of balance will also become evident.

Here are some examples of businesses and organizations using a medicine wheel logo.

- The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the national organization advocating on behalf of Indians throughout Canada, went through a corporate identity change in late 1999, which included using a medicine wheel within the organization's logo. The overall logo incorporates several symbols, including an eagle, a bear's paw, the sun, a human being, seven feathers and a medicine wheel.
- Anokiiwin Employment Solutions Inc., a Winnipeg-based employment agency, uses a medicine wheel with four lines emanating beyond the circle in the four directions and featuring symbols of an eagle, airplane, office buildings, trees and water.
- The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) uses computer-aided design graphics to feature the medicine wheel promoting such programs as *Indigenous Circle* and *Reel Aboriginal Movies*.
- The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College logo incorporates only the circle, without the lines, but with four points (from East to South to West to North) represented by the colours white, blue, yellow and red.
- Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has the complete wheel with the quadrants represented by the colours (from East to North) yellow, white, black and red. This same medicine wheel design has been adopted by the Circle of Courage, a program of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity as a tool in assisting at-risk youth within the Calgary school system.
- The Institute of Indigenous Government, a Vancouver-based educational centre, uses the medicine wheel concept in its logo. The circle is filled with a Haida design but the four cardinal points radiate from the edge of the circle, similar to the four medicine wheels documented earlier in this chapter.
- Former United Church of Canada moderator Stan McKay even uses a form of medicine wheel on his business card, with four interlocking fish arranged to resemble a medicine wheel.

Within the culture of the Blood Indians, the concepts of the circle and the

medicine wheel as symbols is evident. The main entrance to the Blood Tribe's health care centre at Standoff prominently features a shield in the form of a medicine wheel. (See Appendix). A circle is formed by silhouette images of tipis connected at the base, with the apex of each tipi pointing towards the edge of the shield. Four sections are created with four equal groups of tipis coloured red, yellow, blue and black. Within each resultant quadrant are animal symbols: the otter in the blue, eagle in the black, bison in the red, and horse in the yellow. Footprints of each animal are also contained in each quadrant. And the logo of the Blood Tribe's Department of Health incorporates an uncomplicated medicine wheel within its design.

From these examples we can surmise that medicine wheels now play a role within the traditions of the Blood Indians, whether or not it is as the continuation of any original custom. The stone medicine wheels now lie silent on the ground, but their modern replications are certainly used by today's Bloods as a modern symbol.

Interpreting medicine wheels

So far, the modern medicine wheel has been presented as a visual concept used to associate a symbol with an idea. New examples continue to appear in various forms and for increasingly different purposes. Scott Vickers, citing Jung, said archetypal symbols tend to lose their original power by repeated conscious use over time (Jung 7). He said:

The more comprehensive the image that has evolved and been handed down by tradition, the farther removed it is from individual experience. We can just feel our

way into it and sense something of it, but the original experience has been lost. (S. Vickers 115)

Some of the “original experience” concerning the concept of medicine wheels could have been altered through time. One can imagine trying to explain the symbolism or the concept in written form, with the writer possibly adding to or detracting from the meaning. One person’s description and report about medicine wheels, with their accompanying interpretation, could change the concept of the symbol to their personal perception. It is possible to state the facts — circle, cardinal points, lines, etc — but is that what the medicine wheel is all about? Simply put, no.

Lame Deer, a Sioux also known as John Fire, said non-Indians do not see things the same way as the Indian. A few lines, circles and other symbols mean so much more to the Indian. Non-Indians see only a geometrical pattern of beads, consisting of lines, triangles and diamond shapes. He said:

We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. To us they are part of nature, part of ourselves [...]. We try to understand them not with the head but with the heart and we need no more than a hint to give us the meaning. What to you seems commonplace to us appears wondrous through symbolism. This is funny, because we don’t even have a word for symbolism, yet we are all wrapped up in it. You have the word, but that is all. (Fire & Erdoes 109)

Symbolism, he said, helped Indians to write without an alphabet. “By way of symbols we can even describe abstract thoughts precisely so that all may understand them” (111). For example, a belt given to Lame Deer by his grandmother tells a story about his grandfather. The solid diamond shape in a north-south position represents a feather given

to a warrior to wear after doing a brave thing, such as a battle. The “rectangles with one line missing” (they look like a squared version of the letter “C”) represent the tracks of ponies captured from an enemy. Another diamond (outline) in an east-west position with shapes at either end which resemble the letter “E” and its mirror-reverse mean a horse killed in battle and its rider rescued by Lane Deer’s grandfather. Two triangles represent arrows shot at the enemy. The person using the belt, through oral tradition, would be able to explain the meaning of the symbols and recount the story passed on from one person to another (109-110).

The following variations on the medicine wheel model each have a different intent and purpose, though some of the concepts and terminology used will be similar.

Medical models

One predominant role the medicine wheel has acquired, as an all-encompassing symbol, is for healing purposes — not that the “wheel” is placed or used on a person to perform some healing role, but that it represents how a person can be healed physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually by finding a way to balance each of these aspects.

Physician and newspaper columnist Dr. Gilles Pinette, who is Métis from Manitoba, believes the native concept of the medicine wheel is an essential tool for bringing lives back into balance. He writes about the need for balance in *Windspeaker*, a

newspaper published by the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta (AMMSA) and distributed across Canada. Pinette's philosophy is that "[t]he body, mind and soul need to be carefully balanced for us to have wellness. If an area of our life is in crisis or imbalance, emotional trauma from past abuse, for example, then other areas of our medicine wheel will need to compensate or they too will suffer" (Reading 38-39).

Physician Louis Montour, a Mohawk from Kahnawake, Quebec, who has a clinical practice with the Kaiser Permanente organization in Colorado, suggests a medicine wheel model is a "symbol for a world in which everything is connected in harmonic synchronization." He said that in the language of North American Indians that "medicine" meant power or "a vital energy force" within all forms of nature, as well as meaning "knowledge." He adds: "Because a wheel is accurately thought of as a spiral or vortex of energy in motion, 'Medicine Wheel' means a circle or spiral of generated power under the control of Mind" (Montour).

Montour stressed that understanding the medicine wheel concept must be done through mind and spirit, not as a scientific or technical device. He said he has found it beneficial in both his personal and professional life, while assisting patients to "embark on their own journey" to better health. He said this is

a journey whose importance lies not in a final destination (for there is none) but in living day to day and moment to moment, focused on the present, cognizant of the past, and with enough awareness to struggle continually to separate past from present. (Montour)

This shows that the medicine wheel can be incorporated into modern society, by Native and non-Native professionals as a teaching tool. Montour's idea is that a physician interviewing a patient can use the medicine wheel concept to make a thorough assessment, not just dealing with the physical problems but also considering the emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects.

The medicine wheel model, from a medical perspective, has also been used to teach people how to deal with issues associated with diabetes and AIDS. The following are two examples.

The Anishinaabe medicine wheel developed by the University of Winnipeg's Health Science Centre (Aboriginal Services), mainly for helping people with diabetes, is an elaborate tool incorporating several concepts. As a person begins to grasp some of these concepts separately and in unison, the role of the medicine wheel will reveal itself.²³ A person seeking balance in life would learn to focus on the different directions, aspects, concepts, phases and symbols to help them deal with the disorder. Here are the four areas of focus:

- East is a *spiritual* point, a place of new beginnings, energy and vision, the child phase (0 to 9 years), represented by the eagle, and the element of fire.
- South is an *emotional* point, a place of the heart, of generosity, and of summer, the youth phase (10 to 20 years), represented by the mouse, and the element of water.

²³ www.umanitoba.ca/womens_health/medwheel.htm

- West is a *physical* point, a place of learning and seeing from within, the adult phase (21 to 40 years), represented by the bison, and the element of air.
- North is a *mental* point, a place of wisdom and strength, the phase of the elder (41+ years), represented by the grizzly bear, and the element of earth.

This particular medicine wheel also indicates a concept for the centre, being a place of volition and of the self. Surrounding the main circle are four aspects of letting go: let go of security between East and South, let go of belongings between South and West, let go of control between West and North, and let go of recognition between North and East. The term *letting go* is used to assist people learning to cope with diabetes. The multifaceted medicine wheel can then be a constant reminder to them as they deal with issues associated with the disease.

The Atlantic First Nations AIDS Task Force has incorporated the medicine wheel concept to helping people with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) cope better with what is happening in their lives. In the beginning, the *physical* aspect, the AIDS virus is in its “infancy” and this is referred to as the child stage. From there they go into a youth stage, which is within the realm of the *emotional* aspect. From there they deal with the *mental* aspect, or adult stage, until they move beyond that into the *spiritual* phase or elder stage. Each step of the way the person with AIDS has to contend with different issues. In the beginning, they may well not even know they have the virus though it is within their system. During the second phase they begin to “confront feelings about their own mortality.” In the third phase, however, the person with AIDS begins to contemplate life because of what is happening to them. In the next phase, the

fourth phase, they become “one with their own spirit” and have an inner understanding about their life (Atlantic First Nations).

Business model

The medicine wheel has also been adapted as a management model, with program planning, training, special projects and administration as the four directions of focus. Trent University’s Ian Chapman, David Newhouse and Don McCaskill report that one unidentified organization has used the four directions to plan in the Spring (the East), prepare for the annual general meeting in the Summer (the South), leading to the annual meeting in the fall (the West), and to make business decisions in the Winter (the North). Four working teams are established, based on the four aspects of the company’s medicine wheel, to “employ the core values as a guide to action in carrying out their work tasks and in relating to each other and to outsiders” (Chapman 339-340).

Justice models

A state-of-the-art facility for men serving federal sentences opened at Hobbema, Alberta, in April 1997. Pêsâkâstêw²⁴ is unique among correctional facilities in North America, in that the entire 40-acre layout and structure of the buildings is based on the medicine wheel concept. The centre is situated around a large circle with pathways representing the four cardinal directions. Symbolic use of the circle is found throughout

²⁴ Pêsâkâstêw is Cree for the rays of the sun in the early morning before it appears.

the complex. The entrance to Pêsâkâstêw is located at the east point where there is an administration building, containing a round board room, and an adjoining round community hall. The hall is used by the *owîcîyîsîwâk*²⁵ (the men assigned there are not referred to as inmates) for traditional ceremonies, building tepees and making crafts. It is also used by residents of the Hobbema area²⁶ for joint community activities, such as traditional round dances.

Six buildings are located around the circle, each with two separate living units for five men. At the north point of the circle is a building constructed in a symbolic eagle design, which is used mainly as a ceremonial hall. Inside there is a round hall with rafters soaring to the sky, and in the centre of the room is a fire pit around which the men sit to participate in talking circles or honour ceremonies. The walls of the hall have been painted in magnificent traditional Native imagery by one of the *owîcîyîsîwâk*. Other buildings around the circle are for training and personal development, such as education upgrading, a substance abuse prevention program and horticulture. There is also a building set aside for visiting elders and family members who come to work with the *owîcîyîsîwâk* as they go through the healing process, but not for conjugal visits. A short distance from the ceremonial hall is an area dedicated as sacred land for sweat lodge ceremonies. This area even has a sweat lodge inside a building for use in extremely cold winter conditions.

²⁵ *Owîcîyîsîwâk* is Cree for a person who is helping himself.

²⁶ Hobbema is the central community for the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin First Nation, Louis Bull Band and Montana First Nation.

Architect Ken Hutchinson, who designed the centre, said Pê Sâkâstêw can provide the framework and “impetus to allow a social and spiritual revolution” to take place, and that time owîcîyîsîwâk spend within the healing lodge would be regenerative. It is a place to relearn and reinforce traditional culture and spirituality. He adds that the owîcîyîsîwâk may perceive himself as “part of a society that has had traditional values and customs [...] eroded by the numeric, economic and cultural imbalances forced upon them by white society. Being aware of the problems is a start towards identifying the solutions.”

(Hutchinson 1999)

A community-based, Native-oriented “correctional service” has also adapted the medicine wheel into its mandate. Aboriginal Ganootamaage Justice Services of Winnipeg Inc. uses a medicine wheel in its logo and operates a four-point community diversion program.²⁷ This program includes drug and alcohol treatment, spiritual and cultural teachings, community service, and/or restitution to promote behaviour adjustment. Both offender and victim are involved with a “broken-spirited relations” program. The four aspects of the program, outlined in the company’s Community Council Diversion Program pamphlet are 1) to reintegrate back to the community, 2) to make amends, and 3) to assume responsibility for their actions 4) through open discussion with members of a community council. The wheel used in the logo includes a circle with the four colours, and the four lines are formed with an eagle feather and judge’s gavel.

²⁷Diversion programs within the justice system are designed to help adult and young offenders — often first-time offenders — deal with their offences through a community corrections office instead of through the courts and jails.

A healing metaphor

Writer Gregory Scofield, who is Métis from Vancouver, uses the medicine wheel as a healing metaphor in a collection of his poetry. His intent is to create a bridge between native and non-Native worlds from a Métis perspective,²⁸ using the medicine wheel to reflect on his life's journey and show how he survived in the world of the White man (Scofield 18). The poet's drawing of his medicine wheel starts with a circle, representing the introduction to his collection of poems. The wheel gradually takes shape in different chapters by adding four spokes emanating from the circle in the four cardinal directions. Scofield's journey begins in the West (which he has labelled the "arrival" phase), going to the North (the "searching" phase), to the East (dreams), then the South (healing). The sequence concludes with a completed image of a medicine wheel, with another circle encompassing the previous five stages of the diagram.

Other examples

Judge Tony Mandamin, who is Ojibwa, presides over the Peacemaker Court on the Tsuu T'ina First Nation just west of Calgary, Alberta. In addition to his official provincial judge's black and blue robes with white collar, Mandamin wears a large beaded pendant which resembles a medicine wheel (Large 20-25).

²⁸There are no examples of the medicine wheel being part of Métis culture, but there is no reason for Métis not to adapt it since their ancestors, the Cree, Saulteaux, Ojibwa and other North American Indians, have incorporated this symbol into their culture.

And in 1993 the University of Tromsø in Norway used a medicine wheel concept in its logo for the Conference of Indigenous Politics and Self-Government (See Appendix).

The logo, designed by artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen, is explained thus:

The indigenous peoples of the world are symbolized by the four directions of the earth and of the wind. Birds flying in the same direction signify unity and increasingly strong bonds between indigenous peoples. Different conditions of living and of natural surroundings are indicated by the interplay of light and darkness. The labyrinth is a symbol of major challenges to be met in the fields of indigenous research and politics, as defined by the indigenous peoples themselves. (Brantenberg iv & v)

Mathisen, who is Sámi²⁹ from Norway, said concepts and symbols much like the medicine wheel can be found in his indigenous culture. He has worked with North American Indians and produced similar works using the medicine wheel design. “These designs are supposed to be not only Sámi, but universal,” said Mathisen. “So in this way one can say that the medicine wheel also lies behind those designs in a spiritual, maybe even unconscious, way.” (Mathisen)

These examples have shown that the medicine wheel is not unique to any one culture, in North America or elsewhere, and that the symbolism of the circle and four aspects can be applied using a variety of concepts.

Symbolism

These different concepts exemplify just how adaptable the medicine wheel has

²⁹Sámi are the indigenous people of Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia.

been as a teaching tool. There is no single meaning, no one limited way to interpret just exactly what this symbol represents.

Such symbolism is not exclusive to Native culture. Another example of a symbolic circle with four quadrants is the Celtic Cross, used throughout the world by individuals affiliated with Scots/Irish culture. This symbol is said to have been introduced on the island of Iona in the 6th century, and is composed of a Christian cross upon a circle — a pagan symbol for the sun. The Celtic Cross “brings together the circle and the cross” and pre-dates Christianity by many centuries (Fontana 57). It also differs from the traditional Christian cross, which is simply two pieces of wood formed into an upright and crossbar, representing the object upon which Jesus Christ of Nazareth is said to have been crucified. The current hymnal used by the Anglican Church of Canada features a version of the Celtic Cross on the cover, consisting of a simple circle with a fluted cross radiating in each of the four cardinal directions from a centre circle until each section reaches the outer circle. The four aspects of Celtic “being” are earth, air, water and fire, which match the four elements identified by aboriginal people (Bopp 11).

The Manitoba Millennium High Cross³⁰ at the First Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a granite monolith incorporating symbols of Aboriginal and Celtic peoples within its structure (See Appendix). Although it is not a Celtic Cross per se, the

³⁰The French translation of Millennium High Cross is cited by Pangea to be *La Croix Celtique de Millénaire de la Terre du Grand Esprit*. It is interesting to note that the French version is more akin to the Native concept translating back into English as The Celtic Cross of the Millennium of the Land of the Great Spirit. *Millennium High Cross* is rather plain, compared with the French version.

Celtic Cross can be seen within the intricate design. The 5.6-metre high, three-tonne monument displays several distinct sections. The panel closest to the ground depicts the *creation* period and features a symbolic turtle representing Turtle Island — or the world — created by the Great Spirit Manitou.³¹ It also has symbols representing the cycles of the sun and moon — the *eternal rhythm* of Turtle Island. The next panel depicts the first millennium, representing faith, righteousness and spirituality. Symbols include a sword or righteousness and a tree of life. The Celtic Cross section consists of four panels and an encompassing circle. The lower panel depicts the second millennium, representing the migration of people to what is now Manitoba. Symbols include a Red River cart used by settlers and a sheaf of grain. The left panel depicts a group of Native people looking across to the right panel, which depicts a group of settlers looking across to the left panel. The centre of the cross consists of a single hexagonal honeycomb within a circle. The honeycomb is said to be a symbol of Celtic wisdom and within the honeycomb are three rays of sunlight representing the holy Christian Trinity. The centre also represents “the journey together into the new era, our hope of reconciliation, peace (Gaelic *sìth eadar nàbannan* ‘peace between neighbours’), and relational harmony with the art at this ‘cross roads’ to the third millennium” (Pangea). The upper panel represents “God’s creation of the cosmos — the future frontier of the stars and beyond where new discoveries of relationship and infinite connectedness are constantly being made” (Pangea). The circle,

³¹The word Manitoba is said to have come from the Cree word *manito-wapow* or Ojibway word *manito-bah*, referring to The Narrows of Lake Manitoba which was known as the strait of the spirit. Manitou refers to the spirit.

which encompasses the cross, could represent, among other concepts, “[...] the triumph of Christian faith over earlier Celtic rites with the building of cruciform sanctuaries on the site of ancient stone circles” (Pangea).

This unique example suggests an object, such as the high cross incorporating Native and non-Native symbolism, can be used as a teaching tool across cultural lines to gain greater understanding. Although not in exact quadrated symmetry, like the modern medicine wheel, the circle and four connected panels are similar to the wheel in that they represent a journey of people together.

During the Medieval Ages, art was used to remind Christians of religious beliefs. One such example is a tetrad, or quadrated square panel, depicting the four Evangelists as man, lion, ox and eagle. These painted images “were inspired by the four creatures of Ezekiel” in the Bible, and by Eastern symbolism, to represent the “four guardians of the earth, or the four supporters of the heavens” (Fontana 41).

American theologian Robert Moore said humans “quadrate” the world in mythic images, such as the four mountains of the Navajo, the four faces of God as told by the Hindus, and the four gospels of the Christians. He maintains there are four structural forms to the human psyche which correspond to four energies in the human soul. Moore said:

These four energies and the task of balancing them are the way in which men and women are alike. ... [The] energies which men and women have to learn to access

and then balance in their pilgrimage, their journey to the centre, are the same four energies. But the way that we get to the centre is not the same. (4)

Moore's idea is that men, specifically, can find balance in their lives through four aspects of the soul with proper guidance and nurturing. The four powers, or phases, are identified as King, Warrior, Magician and Lover. He points out that Indigenous Peoples created initiations which corresponded to these four lines of development, by men doing things together through mentoring and ritual. Moore uses a square, not a circle, organized into four quadrants around an inner square as a tool to explain the four aspects a man needs to develop on their journey through life. The King quadrant is in the north position and qualities sought in this area, referred to as the line of nurturance, include blessing, caring, centring and calmness, ordering and provision. The Warrior, through the line of aggression, focuses on service, production, focus and discipline, and boundary formation. The Magician, through the line of cognition, focuses on healing, wisdom, contemplation, and transformation. And the Lover, through the line of embodiment or affiliation, focuses on joy, community, intimacy and erotic sexuality (6). This model is another example of using a symbolic tool with multifaceted ideas and imagery to point the way towards balance in life.

The Assembly of First Nations Debwewin media watch project used the symbolic wheel to conceptualize an action plan "designed to encourage higher journalism standards and help make Canada a community respectful of cultural diversity" (Switzer 1). The diagram, consisting of three concentric circles, is superimposed on an artistic rendition of

a great turtle, representing Mother Earth and Aboriginal history, culture and tradition, with four sections representing the East, South, West and North points. Colours used are red, yellow, black and white, representing the four peoples of the earth. The four functionary aspects of the outer circle are an advisory board, a press council, monitoring, and a response network. The middle circle features traditional Aboriginal values of respect, honesty, sharing and strength as its four points. And the inner circle represents teamwork, annual awards, analysis, and a quarterly bulletin. At the core of the image is a symbolic flame, representing “the spirit of life and the light of knowledge” (Switzer 2).

What does it all mean?

While the world and the universe about us have everything to do with things round and circular, the White Man’s symbol is the square or a variation of a square. Lame Deer points to the White man’s square houses, office buildings, doors, paper currency, and gadgets galore — “boxes, boxes, boxes and more boxes” — such as televisions, radios, washing machines, computers, cars, etc. He said: “These all have corners and sharp edges — points in time, white man’s time, with appointments, time clocks and rush hours — that’s what the corners mean to me. You become a prisoner inside all these boxes” (Fire & Erdoes 112-113).

Lame Deer also provides valuable insight into what non-Native people would refer to as “the mysteries” of Native symbolism. Although the material may be academically outdated because it was published 30 years ago, it is, nonetheless, worth considering.

The traditional way of thinking is still traditional. It's material such as this which can provide the non-Native person more than a glimpse into the Native way of thinking. Especially true is the aspect of symbolism and how it is applied from a Native perspective. Lame Deer, providing an insider perspective, claimed that, "To a white man symbols are just that: pleasant things to speculate about, to toy with in your mind. To us they are much, much more. Life to us is a symbol to be lived." (117-118)

Symbols express concepts without using words and they are used as "tools in the search for inner wisdom." (Fontana 44) A symbol with particular significance for one person may not have the same — or any — meaning to another. A symbol might only be representative of something and have no genuine connection with the projected image. Manufacturers of the Jaguar, Mustang, Thunderbird and Eagle automobiles promote their products using animal symbols, though the vehicles have nothing to do with the animal.

Symbols provide members of certain religious groups a physical connection with spiritual beliefs, such as variations of a cross and a fish as Christian symbols or the Star of David as a Jewish symbol. Likewise, the brotherhood of Freemasons use images of a square and compass to remind members of the need for truth and integrity. Religious symbolism, according to religion historian and philosopher Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), has the capacity to reveal a multitude of structurally united meanings, with the symbol being "capable of revealing a perspective in which diverse realities can be fitted together or even integrated in a "system" (Eliade 203-204).

Fontana offers a suggestion for symbol systems, where several elements are combined. They speak “to us of shared wisdom whose truths we recognize but can never quite put into words.” He adds that “a symbol system can only reveal its full meaning if we acquaint ourselves with all its aspects. Each symbol in the system has meaning not only in its own right, but also in relationship to the other symbols (Fontana 141). And so it is with the multifaceted medicine wheel, a symbol which transcends the limitations of simple identification and affiliation. The medicine wheel is a personal symbol, and the person who develops it may envision it one way and present their message from their perspective while the person observing it could interpret it in a different way. “But symbols are more than just historical and cultural signposts. They can help us toward a fuller understanding of our own minds.” (51)

Chapter summation

This chapter has shown that ancient medicine wheels, no matter what their original intent or what they were called when built, have survived the test of time and are believe to have played some role in North American Indian culture. Some of this continent’s aboriginal people have been using a modern symmetrical, quadrated medicine wheel for about 30 years. This contemporary design has become an accepted symbol of Indianness and as a teaching tool to show the importance of balance in life through four aspects — physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Educator and counsellor Joseph Couture, who is Métis of Cree ancestry, reminds us of a traditional saying: “The centred

and quartered Circle is the sign of wholeness, of inclusiveness of all reality, of life, of balance and harmony between man and culture.” (Couture 36)

In 1995, Carleton University anthropology student Lee Grigas studied the medicine wheel for a graduate degree thesis. He refers to the medicine wheel as part of native cosmology, or how a person sees him/herself in the broad scope of fitting in with the universe (Grigas 122). He suggests non-Native interest in native spirituality could be a result of the New Age movement, where people are dissatisfied with secular spirituality. He says:

As long as one approaches such a topic with curiosity, genuine interest and, above all, respect for its traditional guardians, the medicine wheel teachings can assist the individual with an understanding of their own cosmology and provide a path in which one can live their lives in balance and harmony with the universe. (Grigas 136)

Grigas, whose mother is Cree, is now an assistant negotiator with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on issues concerning the Mi'kmaq at Burnt Church, New Brunswick. Reflecting on his thesis research more than five years later, he said in a 2001 interview that he could not recall finding anything to indicate when the contemporary medicine wheel emerged into popular culture. Today he asks, “What is traditional” when it comes to native culture? “Our teachings change with the times. In the past, the situation was different, the times were different and the people were different,” says Grigas. “The difficulty is determining the rationale behind it then.” (Grigas 2001)

Regardless of what he wrote in 1995, he clearly recognizes that it was, from an anthropological position, a beginning. He says he struggled with the medicine wheel concept as he searched out information for his thesis. Today, he adds, he has gone beyond that point and continues to learn from the teachings of an elder who has seven generations of teaching behind him.

Community workers Phil Lane Jr., Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp used the medicine wheel concept throughout a study document, *Community Healing and Aboriginal Social Security Reform*, prepared for the Assembly of First Nations aboriginal social security reform strategic initiative in 1998. (Lane and the Bopps, along with Lee Brown, featured the medicine wheel concept in their book *The Sacred Tree* in 1984.) In their report, they say it is important to begin looking at things from a different perspective. They stated:

Most of us have habitual ways of thinking and acting. These old habits of thought and action have created a world as we know it. No matter what we visualize or desire in our future, if we keep thinking and acting in the same old ways, we will always get the same old results. If we are to create a new kind of future for ourselves (or within our families, organizations or community), we will need to learn new ways of thinking and acting that will lead to the new outcomes we desire.” (Lane 33)

With that in mind, as this chapter concludes, the medicine wheel is placed on the table as a new way of thinking — new, at least, to many non-Native participants in journalism. This chapter has shown variations of the medicine wheel, its designs, concepts and uses, and how, as a symbol, it is used as a teaching tool. This concept, therefore, can be applied

as the model for a thesis, a discourse of discovery for the writer and the reader of material presented.

Aboriginal people have embraced the medicine wheel as a representation of balance within their cultures. This, in turn, shows their concept of balance is not satisfactorily represented by two-sided balance found in the grocery scales or the scales of justice, which we have seen is the metaphor or symbol of balance commonly accepted by non-Natives.

The four aspects of the media medicine wheel are beginning, exploring, experiencing and understanding. (See Figure 1 on Page 65) It is, indeed, the map of a journey, a journey of life-long learning. The journey encompasses the four cardinal directions around the circle, beginning in the East, moving to the South for exploring, to the West for experience and to the North for understanding. Having begun the journey, with an understanding of the medicine wheel concept, we will now move to the second phase — exploring. Within this next section we will examine the implications of the disconnect in understandings of balance in terms of coverage of Native peoples.

Figure 1: Media wheel archetype

This is not meant as a definitive schematic but one representation of a medicine wheel and various aspects combined therein.

Chapter 3

Exploring

Examining news coverage of Natives

This chapter will begin to examine how the media has portrayed Native people and show how some accounts may have contributed to a sense of imbalance in reporting about Natives in the present day. The chapter will first look at how newspapers, mostly in the Lethbridge area of southern Alberta, portrayed Natives in the early days of settlement. Then, at the same time, it will try to capture a sense of the historical setting and the history of the people and their interaction with the non-Native community. This parallel purpose may seem anecdotal and not tied directly to the purpose of the thesis, but the background it provides will provide deeper perspective when the discussion turns to modern coverage, attitudes and individuals. A section of the chapter includes articles written about Native soldiers, most of them in the First World War. This was a time when newspaper headlines about Natives went through a transition from being negative to more of a positive nature. Also in this chapter will be examples of how journalists today write about people and events from the past, reflecting a change in the attitude about such matters. As we examine the news coverage, the issue of balance will be raised to see if what was presented through the media was fair or balanced in a journalistic sense as well as in the traditional Native sense.

Stepping into the past

Culture and communications educator Neil Postman in his book *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century* discusses a period of “enlightenment” which he said began in the 18th century. He said it was a new era of information, and that colonization was very much a part of that time. He said:

Beginning with Columbus’ explorations, many European nations pursued policies of colonization so that, by the eighteenth century, explorers, merchants, and clerics from many European nations had stories to tell of exotic customs and strange people. [...] They returned with original perspectives and startling information [...] and an era of new information was opened — about geography, social life, agriculture, history, and, of course, science and technology [...]. (83)

This was a time when public interest in the Indians of North America as a subject was immense. People in Europe and Eastern Canada couldn’t get enough information to satisfy their curiosity. The Western *savage* intrigued them. Indians were considered mysterious, wild and something completely contrary to civilized society. Paintings, drawings and photographs, along with written accounts in books and newspapers, created and perpetuated certain images in the minds of those who viewed such material.

Often, portrayals of the Indian savage fell into one of two simple and simplistic categories: the good and the bad. The good was the *noble savage* image — an Indian living in harmony with the world, handsome, strong, proud and brave — admired by Europeans. On the other hand, the Indian was seen as wild, evil, naked, fiendish, cruel and filthy — to be feared by Europeans (Berkhofer 28). Even photographers shaped

their portrayal of Indians according to their public's whims: "First it was the dirty, backward aboriginal in need of guidance, then the idealized, but soon-to-be-extinct 'noble savage,' followed by the Christianized, civilized 'white' Indian, and (then) a romantic rendering of the legendary Indian" (11-12).

This implied *savage* image was then anticipated by those who came to Canada, evident in comments made in 1890 by British writer Edward Roper. At Maple Creek, Northwest Territories (now southwest Saskatchewan), he wasn't impressed with the local Indians as he didn't see the "ideal Red Man" among the crowd. He wrote that Canadians seemed to regard Indians "as a race of animals which were neither benefit nor harm to anyone," that they were "surely dying out" and "when they were all gone it would be a good thing" (Roper 118-120).

Historian Daniel Francis raises several examples in his book *The Imaginary Indian* that show the Indians of North America proved popular subjects no matter in what form they were presented, be it paint or in text. He explains that romantic images of the aboriginal North Americans were perpetuated through artists, writers and, eventually, film producers. He cites several examples of the popularity of the Indian as a subject, but one of the most interesting is that of German author Karl May. Francis said May never even visited the West, yet he wrote dozens of novels about frontier experiences featuring Indians who read Longfellow and spoke German. The writer's readership was phenomenal: "Ridiculous as they may seem in retrospect, May's books were translated

into twenty languages and were read by an estimated 300 million people” (Francis 73).

As settlements were established along the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) tracks, Europeans saw themselves as civilized and their neighbouring Natives as uncivilized. The federal government became engrossed in assimilation tactics, a concerted effort to force Indians to become just like the Europeans until, as Duncan Scott Campbell stated in the 1920s, “there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question” (J. Taylor 147). One significant factor of assimilation was the concept of residential schools, where Native children were removed from their natural environment and sometimes taken hundreds of kilometres from their homes. They were deprived of familial association and traditional culture, and prevented from speaking their own language. Many suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuses and death.

During the main colonialism period, information about Native people began to circulate in books and newspapers across the country and in Europe. Photographers, artists and writers set out on adventures to take in the landscape and its peoples. Though some did go beyond the CPR mainline and make inroads in Native communities, most of these professionals made only a whistle stop to take a snapshot image for consumers of this type of news about the West. Resultant images and journals were then published in Eastern Canada and in Europe. In the last decade of the 19th century, tourists descended on the remnants of the western frontier. Francis said many tourists with cameras jumped

at every opportunity to snap a photo of Indians. One tourist commented: "Crossing the prairie, every operator imagines he is going to kodak an Indian; but the wily Indian sits in the shade, where instantaneous photography availeth not, and, if he observes himself being 'time exposed,' covers himself with a blanket" (42-43).

Blackfoot history

Historian J. Arthur Lower states that when the first Europeans arrived in the west they entered a region that was already inhabited by many Indian groups. He said:

In the immense area of North America the Native peoples, over thousands of years, developed a wide divergence in their patterns of living. Formal boundaries were not mapped, but each band and tribe associated itself with a recognized territory. [...] Each band or community was a unit having its own characteristic economic, political, religious and social life adapted to its environment [...]. (6-7)

The Blackfoot alliance — Blackfoot, Peigans and Bloods — at the time of European contact "occupied the plains east of the Rocky Mountains" (9).

Blood Indians have had prominence in the Plains region of North America for several hundred or even thousand years. Today they are concentrated in the southwest corner of Alberta, near Lethbridge, with upwards of 10,000 members of the tribe living on or in the vicinity of the Blood Reserve — the largest reserve in Canada with more than 14,100 hectares.³² For someone learning about the Bloods of today, it is necessary to understand something of their past.

³²Equal to 352,600 acres

University of Lethbridge Native studies educator Lois Frank said the Bloods, also known as *Kainaiwa*,³³ were a nomadic people who lived organized and highly-structured lives and hunted in what is now southern Alberta and northern Montana (Frank 18). Nomadic does not mean that they wandered aimlessly, but rather that they lived “a fluid, dynamic process of continuous movement, and not necessarily in an ordered, patterned fashion” (Brink 60). A signed declaration made by the Elders of the Blood Indian Nation in the 1960s states unequivocally that the Bloods “always existed as a Nation from time immemorial” and that they have “always had control over [their] lands and over [their] religious, political, economic and cultural destinies [...]” (Kainayssini). The Assembly of First Nations states that each nation throughout the continent had its own tribal customs, political organization, language and spiritual beliefs, and vast trade and economic systems.

Alex Johnson’s account of Blackfoot chronology shows that by the early 1860s the once powerful people of the Plains, their numbers diminished through disease, foresaw the end of an era when the buffalo, upon which their culture thrived, would soon be decimated and their way of life altered forever. Outsiders, both Native and Europeans, began penetrating their territory (Johnson 9). Then, as historical writer D’Arcy Jenish explains, the government of the day ruthlessly and determinedly set about destroying Native society. The stories contained in *Indian Fall* show how the lives of Native people were forever affected through the White man’s hegemonic “transformation of the West” in the middle of the 19th century (Jenish 8-10).

³³Blackfoot for *many chiefs*.

On Oct. 25, 1870, three years after Sir John A. Macdonald's much-celebrated confederation of Canada, the last great intertribal battle took place on the banks of the Belly River at what is now Lethbridge. Johnson states:

The Crees knew the Blackfoot had been severely weakened in 1869 by a smallpox epidemic. Thus they decided to attack the Blood Indians in camp on the Belly (now Oldman) River near Fort Whoop-Up. Unfortunately for the Crees, they were not aware that the Peigans had been driven out of Montana as a result of the Baker Massacres of January 1870 and were also in camp on the Belly River. In addition, the northern Blackfoot, while not numerically strong, were camped along the river as well.

About 40 Blackfoot and between 200 and 400 Cree, who collaborated with Saulteaux, Young Dogs and South Assiniboine, died in the bloodbath (Johnson 13-23).

Blood elder and author Mike Mountain Horse (1888 - 1964) provided a vivid account of the battle, based on information from those who survived. He wrote:

At break of day warriors from the Blackfoot camps north and south could be seen approaching on horseback, in twos and threes, over hills and knolls, chanting their war songs in anticipation of battle. The Cree braves, noticing these horsemen, cried out to the others: "Look at them coming over every hill. We are outnumbered. Let us retreat." The invaders began to retreat, the Blackfoot warriors in full pursuit. [...] All along the route of retreat, hand to hand conflicts occurred, and dead bodies were strewn, as the Crees tried to make a stand. [...] After throwing down large boulders on the Cree braves and killing a few in this manner, the Confederacy fighters closed in and routed them out of the coulee, sending them down a steep cutbank into the river. Here a fearful massacre occurred, the water of the river turning crimson with blood (50-51).

Mountain Horse, who had both Blood and Peigan heritage, was encouraged by the Rev. Samuel Middleton, the Anglican priest on the Blood Reserve, to begin writing stories

about his people. Some of those stories made their way into the *Lethbridge Herald* in the late 1920s.

Indians in the news

Newspapers in the Lethbridge area have published articles about Bloods and Peigans for more than 100 years. Most of the articles in the late 1800s were negative. In the years prior to 1901, articles in the *Macleod Gazette*³⁴ and *Lethbridge News*³⁵ covered issues such as the continuing topic of “the Indian Problem” (1883 etc), horse stealing, liquor problems, confining Indians to reserve lands, Bloods on the warpath (1887, 1889), equality of justice, police reports, poverty, industrial and boarding schools, sun dances, a “captive white child” being rescued from Blackfoot reserve (the girl was later reported to be a “half-breed”), historical accounts, some cultural insight, and “sensational misrepresentations in the Eastern press” (1886). Headlines include Bold, Bad Bloods (1887), Thieving Indians (1888), Bad Blood Brave (1889), Bad Blood Indians (1892), Progress of the Noble Red Man in the Direction of Civilization (1896), and Canadian Savage Folk (1896). (Wheeler & Ellis 90-96)

Between 1901 and 1918, the occasional *Lethbridge News* and *Lethbridge Daily Herald* article did offer readers insight into Native life. All too often, though, the reports

³⁴A weekly newspaper published in Fort Macleod, a community 50km west of Lethbridge, 30km north of Standoff and 50km east of Brocket.

³⁵A newspaper published in Lethbridge from the late 1880s through 1906.

surrounded issues of assimilation. Thirty-five articles between 1909 and 1918 focused on reserve land tenure, others included agriculture, government reports about the Indians, band finances, band elections, moccasin symbolism, increased population, and treatment of Indians. A Page 2 article about the treatment of Indians appeared on Nov. 19, 1909, with the headline noting that, as a whole, the Canadian government plan had been successful (Marshalsay & Wheeler 80).

During the First World War local Indians came forward with funds for the war effort. A front-page story on Aug. 11, 1914, in the *Lethbridge Daily Herald* told readers about the Bloods offering the Empire \$1,000. Three months later, on Nov. 10, a Page 2 story told about the Peigans making a “fine gift” of \$1,600 for the war effort. The following year, on May 19, 1915, the *Herald* had a front-page story about Cardston Indians being “anxious” to go to the front with the Canadian military forces.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, readers in southern Alberta had opportunities to read about the Bloods and Peigans, as well as other Indians, and issues concerning their lives, though not in the quantity published in the last two decades of the 20th century. As can be seen, most are of a negative nature and provide little insight into Native culture or contribution to developing or improving relations.

Albert Mountain Horse

After all the brief accounts of Natives interacting with non-Natives, there appeared in the Nov. 29, 1915, *Lethbridge Daily Herald*, a spectacular front-page account of the funeral of 21-year-old Albert Mountain Horse.³⁶ The headline read: "White and Red Races Unite in Last Tribute to Brave Indian: Albert Mountain Horse who died of war wounds." Mountain Horse died after serving in France during the First World War.³⁷ Hundreds of people filled the wintry streets of Macleod (now Fort Macleod) and an unnamed reporter provided a vivid in-depth account of the funeral in the next day's paper. The article mentions Mountain Horse's parents and siblings, but does not list their names. In describing the mother, the reporter states:

The mother of the deceased, who was deeply attached to her son, was on the (station) platform some hours before the appointed time for the service to commence. She was attired in full Indian dress and during the waiting hours gave vent to her expressions of grief in a manner which was most pathetic to witness.

The report lists the dignitaries present, including a contingent of Boy Scouts, members of

³⁶Brother of Mike Mountain Horse, the writer mentioned earlier in this chapter.

³⁷The military records of Albert Mountain Horse (Reg. No. 30396) states he was born Dec. 25, 1893, and was an Indian from the Blood Reserve who signed an oath of enlistment with the Canadian Army Service Corps on Sep. 13, 1914, at Valcartier, Quebec. He stood 5-11 and had a 35-inch chest. It shows his rank as "driver" and that he had previously served with the 23rd Alberta Rangers and had been a cadet instructor. His religious affiliation is noted as Church of England. Ten months later, on July 31, 1915, Mountain Horse was reported "dangerously ill" with bronchial pneumonia while at Havre, France, and admitted to the Welsh Hospital at Netley. A week later he was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis and transferred to England aboard the hospital ship St. Andrew. Although his condition showed some improvement while at the Duchess of Connaught's Hospital in Taplow, he was given a medical discharge on Oct. 29, 1915, and sent home to Canada on Nov. 11, 1915. Albert Mountain Horse died on Nov. 19, 1915, at an undisclosed location in Quebec. His military file within the National Archives of Canada (RG 150 Acc 1992-93/166 Box 6448-11) also records that the Memorial Cross was sent to his mother.

the Home Guard and Royal North-West Mounted Police, four officiating ministers from the Anglican Church, the Indian Agent, officers of the Blood Reserve cadet corps, the mayor of Macleod and several councillors, the Chief of Police, five Indian Chiefs — Shot Both Sides, Weasel Fat, Running Wolf, One Spot and Running Antelope — many members of the Blood Tribe, and hundreds of townsfolk. Businesses closed for the occasion. The reporter states: “The fraternizing of the Indians and the white men, combined with the solemnity of the occasion, presented a most striking and unique scene.” And also commented: “The respect shown was a fitting tribute to this gallant boy who gave his life willingly for his King and Empire, although not called upon to do so.”

As the cortege made its way through the streets of the town, the reporter suggested “the sight was a most inspiring but solemn one, and was a great tribute by the white race to the memory of this young Blood Indian.” Entry to the church was by ticket only, and most of those were for Indians. Archdeacon Tims spoke “in the Indian language” and then in English. It is duly noted that this was the first time in the history of the church in Macleod that the Indian language had been used from the pulpit and the first time a funeral service has been conducted for an Indian therein. “The spectacle of red and white brethren worshipping together on such an occasion being absolutely unique and certainly one that will be remembered for many years to come.”

The tribute from the minister of the St. Paul Mission on the Blood Reserve was a glowing one. Rev. Samuel Middleton said, speaking of the role Mountain Horse played in

being an officer³⁸ with the Canadian military forces: “It is a new era, for less than seventy years ago the forefathers of these Indians were fighting against the flag under which this noble Indian warrior has now lost his life.”

The reporter concludes with Middleton’s comments about the death of a “true patriot” and hero:

One of the Empire’s greatest sons who fought to uphold the prestige and traditions of the British race, and having gained all the honors and respects which can be shown to a soldier and a man has cast a brilliant reflection on the Blood Indians of Alberta. Proving to the world at large he was truly an Indian warrior.

Mountain Horse’s coffin was carried out of the church by his father, three brothers and Jack Bull Shields, while George Frideric Handel’s *Death March of Saul* was played in the background. At the cemetery, all four ministers celebrated burial rites; then the young soldier’s comrades from the cadet corps fired their rifles over the coffin and the Last Post was played.

Canadian war historian Fred Gaffen points out that although some Indians didn’t hesitate to sign-up to join the military or support the war in other ways, other groups refused to participate.³⁹ More than two years after the death of Albert Mountain Horse, Nick King, Mike Mountain Horse, Joe Mountain Horse and George Coming Singer were

³⁸Middleton and others claimed Mountain Horse held the rank of lieutenant, though his military file held at the National Archives shows no record of him receiving this promotion.

³⁹The contribution of 400 Indians from Western Canada in the First World War is the topic of L. James Dempsey’s 1999 book *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I*, which was initially researched as a master’s thesis at the University of Calgary in 1987.

wounded while serving overseas. This prompted “bitter emotions on the reserve,” which moved Rev. Middleton to write Duncan Campbell Scott, the deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, on Sept. 3, 1918, warning of “his fear of the possible consequences” if others from Standoff died while serving overseas. Their fears were allayed when the war ended a few months later. (Gaffen 29)

Middleton had been instrumental in establishing the Blood cadet corps, the first cadet corps on a reserve in Canada, signing up 25 boys from ages five to 18. The corps even had the distinguished role of being the honour guard for the Prince of Wales when he visited Macleod in October 1919. Indian cadet corps became a major source of Indian recruits during the Second World War (30).

Mike Mountain Horse is also featured prominently in Janice Summerby’s 1993 book *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields*. The Page 1 quote — the first statement in the book — comes from *My People the Bloods* in which Mountain Horse, writing about Natives serving as soldiers in the First World War, states:

The war proved that the fighting spirit of my tribe was not squelched through reservation life. When duty called, we were there, and when we were called forth to fight for the cause of civilization, our people showed all the bravery of our warriors of old.

Native men and women served in the Canadian military forces, at home and abroad, during the First World War and the Second World War, as well as in the Korean War and even the Boer War. Summerby notes in her introduction comments by Peter McCreath, former

federal Minister of Veterans Affairs:

Each time, the strength of the Native response was unexpected, for the wars seemed to have little to do with the everyday lives of the nation's first peoples, particularly of those living on Indian reserves. The battlefields were in foreign lands [... and ...] the roots of conflict were primarily embedded in European civilizations. Newspapers published countless articles on Native enlistment and, later, on the wartime experiences of Native soldiers.

The number of Indians volunteering in the First World War is estimated at more than 4,000, while more than 3,000 served in the Second World War, plus several hundred in the Korean conflict (3). Several received high commendations for being snipers and reconnaissance scouts, "drawing upon traditional hunting and military schools to deadly effect" (9).

Summerby's book also cites several newspaper articles about Natives who served in the military. Edith Anderson Monture of the Six Nations Grand River reserve, signed up in the First World War with the United States Medical Corps. When Monture was 93, in 1983, *The Grand River Sachem* published an account of the Native woman's life serving in a military hospital at Vittel, France. The *Regina Leader-Post* published an article in 1989 about First World War hero and Métis marksman Henry Norwest from Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta.

Indians were in the spotlight in newspapers through both the First and Second World Wars. Fred Gaffen, in his book *Fogotten Soldiers*, said stories in the early years of the Second World War "abounded in the newspapers demonstrating the support of

Canada's Indians for the war effort to help boost public morale and promote Indian recruiting" (39).

Gaffen said that while in the United States, Navajo code talkers "received much deserved acclaim, the contribution of Canadian Indians in general, or even specific groups [...] have been unrecognized. The occasional Canadian newspaper story that appears on this subject usually concentrates on alleged injustices" (78). About 540 Navajos served as U.S. Marines in the Second World War, and between 375 and 420 of those trained as code talkers (Kukral), an elite group "who employed a derivation of their tribal language to encrypt messages in the Pacific Theater. The results were completely undecipherable by the Japanese" (Bissley 130 - 136).⁴⁰

Gaffen doesn't mention that Canada had its own code-talkers, who were Cree, who played a vital role during the war. *Calgary Herald* reporter Wendy-Anne Thompson recounts the obscure story about Charles Checker Tompkins, from Grouard in northern Alberta. He and others travelled through European battlefields translating military messages into Cree, which were then dispatched to other areas and kept secret until another Cree translated the message into English.

Tompkins, who served with the 2nd Armoured Brigade, and was assigned to the

⁴⁰The story of the code talkers has recently been incorporated into a feature Hollywood film by way of John Woo's *Windtalkers*, scheduled for release in June 2002. And actor Adam Beach, a Saulteaux from Manitoba, now living in Ottawa, plays one of two main Navajo characters in the action-packed film recreating the Battle of Saipan.

American Eighth Air Force and the Ninth Bomber Command in England, recalled attending a meeting in London in the final days of 1941:

When I got there, there were all kinds of different Indians. We didn't know what it was all about. They put me together with another Cree from Saskatchewan. They gave us messages to translate. The Crees were then put to work as message soldiers because of the accuracy of the translation (Thompson).

In the United States, one of the most famous Indian soldiers in the Second World War was Ira Hayes, a Pima from the Gila River reservation in Arizona, who helped raised the Stars and Stripes at Iwo Jima. He was a national hero who became a destitute alcoholic and died at age 32 in the desert on his reservation (Gaffen 78).

One of Canada's most famous Indian soldiers was Sgt. Thomas (Tommy) Prince, a member of the Brokenhead Band from Manitoba, who enlisted with the Royal Canadian Engineers in 1940 and transferred to the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in 1942, then assigned to the Canadian-American First Special Service Force — the elite "Devil's Brigade." For his bravery, he received the Military Medal. For gallantry in action he was also awarded the U.S. Silver Star — one of America's highest military awards. He also served in Korea with the Canadian Army Special Force, enlisting in the 2nd Battalion, Prince Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. (55-57)

Prince's story, though he died in poverty at age 62 in 1977, has occasionally been retold in the national media, most recently when the medals he was awarded were put up for auction in August 2001. Sun Media columnist Peter Worthington, a former Canadian

military officer, paid tribute to “a hell of a soldier.” He also corrected journalists on their reporting of this once-valiant man. He said in his Aug. 26, 2001, column: “The respect he got from comrades of all ranks was absolute — he was a living legend, esteemed by peers, deferred to by young recruits, a source of pride for officers. He was an army icon.”

Worthington pointed out that journalists have often incorrectly cited Prince as Canada’s “most decorated” Native soldier, when in fact it would be more accurate to refer to him as this country’s most famous Native soldier. He suggests top Second World War honours rightly go to Francis (Peggy) Pegahmagabow, an Ojibwa man, who thrice won the Military Medal. Also mentioned is Charles Byce, a Cree, who also won the Military Medal as well as the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his “magnificent courage and fighting spirit when faced with almost insuperable odds.” (Worthington)

Gaffen concludes that Indians “responded in far greater numbers than their treatment had merited. In the battles they fought exceptionally well and suffered heavy casualties; when peace came, they did not share to the same extent in the material benefits of the society” (79). He states:

They enlisted and many went overseas in spite of objections and protest from some Indian leaders and loved ones. We who enjoy the benefits of living in Canada and those countries that they help defend and liberate are forever indebted to them. Let us hope that their sacrifice will not be forgotten (80).

If there is any way of keeping such heroes alive, newspapers would be one way. In the Lethbridge area, journalist Garry Allison has been writing about heroes for more than 30

years. In the March 9, 1993, *Lethbridge Herald* edition of the education series about Natives, Allison wrote about two veterans. Korean War hero Charles (Bunny) Grier, who was Peigan, later served his people as a tribal councillor and acting chief, and was a founder of both the Indian Association of Alberta and the Indian War Veterans Association of Alberta. Grier was decorated for valour. Steve Mistaken Chief, a Blood, said he found “no prejudice” towards Natives in the Canadian forces during the Second World War. “On the front lines you are just like brothers, you become very close to each other,” he told Allison. Mistaken Chief recounted experiences he had in Sicily, Italy and Holland. He volunteered to join Canadian troops in the Pacific, but the war ended while he was at home on leave. He told Allison: “I felt part of those men back then... but when I got back home I found I was an Indian again.”

Native perspectives

Images and articles about the lives of, and events involving, Native people from the past resurface through the media. Their stories are now being told to a new generation that might not have known anything about Natives and the role they played in the history of this continent. Some of these stories make their way into popular motion pictures retelling events which might not have actually happened, though they could be based on facts of a general nature. The epic 1990 Kevin Costner movie *Dances With Wolves*, based on Michael Blake’s novel by the same name, told the story of a United States soldier who accepted an assignment to serve at a isolated frontier outpost. He interacted with Lakota

Sioux, learned about their culture, including their language, ceremonies and values, and wrote about his experiences. Lakota dialect was used by Native actors and subtitles provided viewers with a translation.

This may have been the first time many modern non-Native viewers had been exposed to traditional, fully-depicted Native culture. Whether the story was factual or not, it presented Native people and their culture to the mainstream public in a new perspective. Motion pictures prior to *Dances with Wolves* often featured stereotypical Hollywood Indians, played mostly by non-Native actors speaking accented English or fabricated languages.

Sixty years before *Dances with Wolves* was a box-office hit, another movie about Indian life was released. But *The Silent Enemy*, which depicted North America before the arrival of Christopher Columbus (Smith 200, Francis 126), though it received glowing reviews, was a box-office flop because it was a silent film released at the time sound production films became popular. However, *The Silent Enemy*, though depicting Indians of Eastern Canada, has a curious connection with the Indians of Western Canada.

The distinguished Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance of the Blood Tribe was the star of the show. Before launching into film this man had been a highly acclaimed journalist and popular lecturer, and a bon vivant by all accounts. His journalism career started with the *Calgary Herald*, and he later found his way to the *Vancouver Sun*, *Regina Leader* and the *Winnipeg Tribune* in the early 1920s. He also made his way into the glamour of New

York City's high society and then right into Hollywood movie circles. Long Lance was *the* authority on Indian life and people lapped up his accounts of life in the Wild West. There was only one problem — he was not an Indian.

Sylvester Long was born Dec. 1, 1890, at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the son of parents who were both of mixed European, Indian and African ancestry and born into slavery (Smith 188-189, Francis 127). He was considered “colored,” a Black or Negro, during a climate of stigmatized racial segregation in that part of America. Long wanted nothing to do with that and left school when he was 13 and joined a travelling Wild West show. He eventually claimed he was Cherokee. In 1916 he travelled to Montreal, signed up with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and fought on the front lines at Vimy Ridge. He even wrote about his experiences in *Maclean's* magazine in 1926 (Smith 193).

Long finished his military career with the British Army and was discharged at a place of his choosing — by the Rocky Mountains of Western Canada. He apprenticed as a reporter with the *Calgary Herald* and during his time on staff was introduced to the Blood Indians. Rev. Samuel Middleton became Long's friend and it was the Anglican minister and school principal who suggested the Blood tribe adopt him. In February 1923 he was given the name Buffalo Child.

Although an interesting story in itself, Long did the people who accepted him a disservice. He fabricated stories about native culture, embellishing historical accounts to suit his whim and delight whatever newspaper audience he was writing for (Smith 197).

One of the most amazing stories he wrote was published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in July 1927. In it he recounted the story of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, the famous battle involving Sioux warrior Sitting Bull and General George Custer; Long Lance stunned readers by claiming there was “no last stand” and that Custer had committed suicide (Francis 126). Long, the self-created Indian, committed suicide himself on March 19, 1932, in Glendale, Calif.

One real Blood Indian in particular emerged as a newspaper columnist. Mike Mountain Horse began writing in the late 1920s and by the 1930s had made a name for himself as a writer. Local papers, including the *Herald*, published his stories on a regular basis. Historian Hugh Dempsey said: “As far as his writing was concerned, people knew he was writing for white people, but not many Indians read newspapers in those days” (Mountain Horse ix). Mountain Horse, the same First World War veteran and brother of Albert Mountain Horse mentioned earlier in this chapter, even wrote about inaccurate newspaper coverage of a Blood charged with murder and later executed. The Charcoal case, as he called it, was intermittently on the front pages of the press for more than seven months. Mountain Horse states:

Most of the accounts written at the time were inaccurate, because those probing the crime were not in a position to divulge the facts for which a curious public was clamouring. (121)

Although most of his writings were significant because of their historical nature, his reputation as a writer was not recognized by his own people during those early years.

They saw him as a warrior because of his valiant efforts fighting in France during the First World War. What he did as a writer, however, was leave a legacy for both his own people and for others to learn first-hand, from a Native perspective, about legends, traditions, Indian warfare and life in general.

Tom Longboat

In 1998, Canada's foremost news magazine *Maclean's* named an Indian as one of the 100 most important people "who most inspired" the nation (Granatstein). Tom Longboat, the Onandaga marathon runner from the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario, ranked highest in a list of 10 "stars." Others in the list include the skater Barbara Ann Scott (2nd), hockey player Wayne Gretzky (3rd), actress Mary Pickford (4th) and philosopher Marshall McLuhan (5th). The magazine notes: "In picking its top Star, *Maclean's* reached back to the early years of this century, to a marathon runner who dazzled the world. All but forgotten now, he may have been the finest athlete Canada has produced." (49)

Granatstein's profile outlines the young runner's climb to fame in the first two decades of the 20th century. Not only was Longboat a sports hero because of his athletic abilities and vibrant personality, he signed up with the Canadian Army in the First World War and served as a dispatch runner in France and Flanders (51). The author also noted that after serving valiantly during the war, Longboat returned to Canada and worked as a garbage collector in Toronto. The sports and war hero's life, added Granatstein, ended in

relative obscurity on a reserve after Longboat became “troubled” by alcoholism and poverty (51).

Longboat has long been a role model for athletes, particularly Native athletes like Charlton Weasel Head. This young Blood basketball star, who has twice been honoured with a Tom Longboat Award, has his own spot as a sports hero among Native people across the country. The life of Charlton Weasel Head will be examined later in this thesis.

History repeating

Today some newspapers provide their readers with historical reviews about events that happened in the past. They are, in effect, looking back at the past and once again retelling stories told decades earlier. Both the *Lethbridge Herald* and the Fort Macleod *Gazette* publish such features. The Lethbridge paper offers this via a monthly supplement called Decades of the South, while the Fort Macleod paper publishes a weekly column under the title *From Past Issues*. The *Herald* also publishes regular features about people still living who have stories to tell about the early days of Lethbridge and surrounding area.

The *Gazette* column is filled with extracts from various newspapers published in Fort Macleod over the past century or so. Previously reported incidents involving local Indians are sometimes mentioned in the column. The June 6, 2001, column includes a June 4, 1891, *Macleod Gazette and Alberta Live Stock Record* mention of an Indian named

Medicine White Horse escaping the fort's guard room with two other men. The other men were captured but for Medicine White Horse, "the chances are against his recapture."

Fifty years later "Chief Yellow Horn, his minor chiefs and Indians and squaws from the Piegan reserve" got honourable mention in the June 5, 1941, *Macleod Gazette* after "attracting keen attention and [presenting] an imposing sight" in the town's Victory War Loan parade.

Another 50 years later, the June 5, 1991, *Gazette* noted that "Henry, Janet and Tyrone Potts were in their dress uniforms in the place of honour at the head of the 1991 Midnight Days parade [...]." The excerpt also mentions that the three Potts family members, "now regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, are carrying out a family tradition started by their ancestor, Jerry Potts, who led the North West Mounted Police Force to Fort Macleod in the late 1800s."

Although it doesn't mention who Jerry Potts was, this significant character in local history became a "famous interpreter" for the mounted police after having done some "magnificent fighting for the [Blackfoot] warriors" in the 1870 Battle of the Belly River at what is now Lethbridge (Mountain Horse 51).

These people were not imaginary Indians, but real people who were involved with their communities and their cultures. Stories about their lives did, however, make it into the newspapers of the day and are retold in newspapers of today.

Today some of these people and events are remembered by members of their tribes and in the Lethbridge area through local landmarks. Local newspapers continue to provide accounts of their lives and important events from the past. A major thoroughfare on the west side of Lethbridge carries the name Jerry Potts Boulevard. An elementary school on the west side carries the name of Mike Mountain Horse. And hundreds of people pass at 80 km/h or more the site of the last great Indian battle as they drive past Indian Battle Park on the Whoop-up Drive bridge over the area on the Oldman (Belly) River that once flowed red with blood.

This chapter has shown how stories and images about Indians have been woven into the media. Albert Mountain Horse and his brother Mike, and Sylvester Long or Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, were each befriended by Rev. Samuel Middleton. Both Long Lance and Mike Mountain Horse wrote about Blackfoot culture and history. Local newspapers carried stories about these people.

People like Mike Mountain Horse and Sylvester Long emerged at a time in the 1920s when new perspectives about Natives were introduced through newspapers. Headlines evident in the previous century made way for more modern concepts of the Indian, though the colonial influence was still present. The colonialist aspect will be discussed later in this thesis. Mountain Horse, who was a genuine Indian, and Long, who was not an Indian but presented himself as one, were both accepted as newspaper contributors with a Native perspective. Mountain Horse provided valuable insight into

Native culture, while Long may have provided some insight even though some of it may have been embellished. At the same time articles by Mountain Horse and Long were being published, Tom Longboat emerged as a national celebrity — first as an athlete and then as a war hero.

It is also clear from what has been presented in this chapter thus far that much of the newspaper material about Natives was tipped heavily in one direction and out of balance, which had a direct effect on how non-Natives perceived Natives.

The chapter will now proceed to more modern times to see how perspectives have changed and determine if journalists now present a more balanced account about Natives.

Writer Thomas King often commented on Indians in the media through his popular CBC Radio comedy series the *Dead Dog Cafe*. Fabled characters Gracie, Jasper and Tom, on several occasions, lamented that there are too many negative newspaper stories when there are a lot of positive things happening in the lives of Native people.

This argument has been realized by Lethbridge journalist Garry Allison in his articles about the Bloods and Peigans. The veteran writer has gone out of his way to present a balanced view about Native culture. One particular effort was significant. In 1993, Allison and education consultant Sharon Gibb produced a 20-week education supplement series, circulated in the *Lethbridge Herald* and used as a teaching tool in local schools. Altogether it contained more than 600 articles, features, photographs and

cartoons, with most of the material about Natives of southern Alberta.

Allison and Gibb worked with Indian and non-Indian educators, Blood and Peigan elders, councillors and religious leaders to create better understanding. (It would be interesting to survey a group of students who learned about Natives through the series and ascertain their attitudes seven years after the fact.) In that series, Allison offered a solution to any rift between Indians and non-Indians:

We often look down on a people we don't understand. But once you learn more about Indian people, their history, values and culture you'll find they are a wise, loving and ambitious people. It's time we began to understand and learn all we can about our neighbours [...]. (Allison 16 Feb. 1993)

Bringing people together is one way to create better understanding. Historian James R. Miller said both Natives and non-Natives have room for improvement in the way they conduct their relations. As evident in material reviewed during the research period, the *Lethbridge Herald* has been trying to improve how it covers Indians and issues concerning them. There was no evidence of local Indians being attacked in the press and little evidence of stereotypical images. This issue will be addressed later in this thesis.

People in the Lethbridge area have access to several local media outlets that include the daily and weekly papers, four FM radio stations and two television stations, in addition to two regional papers, two national papers, and a handful of Calgary AM radio stations⁴¹ and television stations. These will be referred to as mainstream media.

⁴¹ CJOC 1220, a long-established Lethbridge AM country and western music radio station, featuring local news and agricultural news, ceased broadcasting in November 2000.

Bloods and Peigans also have access to Native media sources. Twice-monthly papers are published in Standoff and Brocket. Although they provide information to people within their own communities, they do not include hard news, controversial articles or editorial comment. Both receive funding through tribal administration and information on tribal council business is provided to the paper, rather than the paper reporting on it. Community “news” is often school reports, sports stories, personal and business profiles, and health information.

Radio with a Native perspective includes Laster FM, which broadcasts to a limited area within the Blood Reserve, and Edmonton-based CFWE FM. If there is one form of “voice” being heard to raise issues within Native communities, it is within the music that is broadcast on Native-run radio stations. They regularly feature songs written and performed by Aboriginal artists who speak out within the lyrics about injustices, their struggles, traditions and life in general. Cable TV customers can tune in to the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network channel from Winnipeg, which has now been broadcast throughout Canada for just over a year. *Windspeaker* and *Alberta Sweetgrass* newspapers, which are written and published by Native people, are also available.

Nekaneet Gathering

Between 5,000 and 8,000 aboriginal people from throughout North America, and even some from South America, attended a healing and medicines gathering in southwest Saskatchewan. This was a solemn occasion held over four days at the end of August

2000. It was a time for people to make and renew friendships, share traditional healing methods, participate in spiritual ceremonies and to celebrate their cultures. Among the throng were members of the Blood Tribe, some of whom have been involved with the residential school healing program.

It was a significant event for the host Nekaneet Cree First Nation⁴² because, with only between 130 and 150 members living in the Okimaw Ohci Hills, they are one of the smallest Indian bands in Saskatchewan. The people of Nekaneet⁴³ are also fairly isolated and although they have seen some of the side effects of non-Native influence over the years, they have been able to maintain a certain spiritual foundation which other Native peoples may not have enjoyed.

Elder Gordon Oakes said one thing which has not been a major detriment to the Nekaneet Cree is the outside influence of religious organizations. The people decided long ago that they did not want any missionaries or churches to come into their community, and thereby maintained traditional spiritual practices. This is an important point, as everything in life, according to Oakes, depends on retaining spirituality. He said people must first understand their history so they can know where they came from.

Keeping sacred the sacredness of traditional ceremonies is paramount to retaining

⁴²Also known as Indian Reserve No. 161.

⁴³The Nekaneet First Nation derives its name from a chief named Nekaneet, who signed Treaty 4 with representatives of the Crown at Fort Qu'appelle on September 15, 1874. Elder Gordon Oakes said Nekaneet means "walking in front of the people" or "with the people behind him."

the culture of the Cree people and Oakes is a firm believer in this concept, even though others, he said, may be too open in discussing such matters in public. Now 68, he said he feels young people must retain their language and become involved with the sacred ceremonies if their culture is to survive.

The band has 366 members, of which between 130 and 150 live on the reserve. When people go away, problems can develop and Oakes is trying to teach young people their culture so they will hopefully not stray into destructive practices such as alcohol and drug abuse. "A lot of good values were given to the Cree by the Creator," said Oakes, who is sad that some people feel they don't need to continue with the traditional ways and practise those values. "When you are young you hear the elders talking. Maybe you don't recall what they said until one day when you are older, and it comes back to you. My words will come to them when they are older."

This was part of the vision of the Nekaneet Gathering and some journalists were given an opportunity to share in the experience. Chief Larry Oakes approached *Maple Creek and Southwest Advance Times* reporter David Lilley about helping with media relations for the gathering; he presented Lilley with an offering of tobacco. "The gift of tobacco is very sacred and not something given or accepted lightly," said Lilley. "By accepting the tobacco, you are formally obligated to undertake the task as requested."

According to Lilley, an Australian, he had established cordial relations with the Native community in and around Maple Creek in the three years he has lived in the area.

Also at Nekaneet is the federal women's prison known as Okimaw Ohci⁴⁴ Healing Lodge, the first facility of its kind for aboriginal women in North America. Lilley, who became familiar with the Native concept of healing through Gordon Oakes, said he has found his experience learning about Native culture as a journalist to be rewarding:

The relationship between First Nations people and the media, as opposed to just the newspaper sector, is tenuous. It stems from a basic mistrust of the broader industry and has developed... since the first European settlers came to North America. I can sympathize with their view, given the media's general 'feeding frenzy' approach to anything aboriginal and the fact that 'bad news' sells more than the good. (Lilley 25 Sept. 2000)

He pointed out that "there's a tendency to generalize everything" about Natives such as the misconception that "all Indians are drunks." Such generalizations, said Lilley, don't really hold water when examined closely.

Lilley met with the Nekaneet chief and council to discuss his role for the gathering. "I made a personal undertaking that any thing I did would be culturally appropriate and would not breach any of the band's restrictions, especially as they applied to photographs," he said. The photograph rule was that no cameras (still or video) were to be allowed at the gathering. During the period of the event, the area was to be considered sacred. Lilley found a way to provide visual images to *Advance Times* readers. He said:

Working under these restrictions was difficult, but I found that people accepted me working around the Gathering. It was, after all, about people, so my stories focused on the people who came to Nekaneet. I also tried to give some flavour of

⁴⁴Cree for thunder hills.

the spirit and joy which was in this place. I supposed the definitive picture would have been the aerials I took. These shots gave a dimension to the event, which you couldn't realize from the ground. The biggest difficulty... was finding the words to adequately describe the event and the emotions it generated in me and in the people around me.

After the event, Lilley met with the chief and council and he reported that they were enthusiastic about the coverage and had used the reports to share with other First Nations what the Gathering was about and what had happened during the four days.

The *Advance Times* published articles on Aug. 21 and Aug. 28, the editions directly before and after the Nekaneet Gathering. The Aug. 21 edition included a photo on the front page of three tepees erected for the gathering, plus an article and photo about preparations for the gathering. There were also four independent advertisements welcoming visitors to the gathering. The Aug. 28 edition carried a front-page photo and article about the gathering, with the photo featuring a view of the camping area complete with tepees, tents, buses, vans, campers and trucks. A Page 2 aerial photo shows the extent of the entire gathering area, taken before the official events began. There is also a photo of newly elected Assembly of First Nations national chief Matthew Coon Come with some other guests, plus an article about the success of the event. Elsewhere in the paper were two more photos, including one from an evening pow wow, a feature article about residential school abuses, and a smaller article about how organizers coped with serving thousands of meals.

Meanwhile, the *Maple Creek News* published an article by Tom Pierson on Aug.

29, 2000, covering the gamut of the gathering, including a large photo of several tepees in the camping area and another of a single tepee.

The *Advance Times* articles were more in-depth and personal than the *News* article, though both newspapers offered readers some general information about the gathering. The *Advance Times* feature on residential school abuses may have been one article which was different from any of the others published. Lilley's feature was mainly an interview with two anonymous women about their lives in residential schools and the effects of "intergenerational abuse" on their families.

As previously mentioned, no cameras or recording devices were allowed during the gathering, and Pierson explains in his article the reasons: "The philosophy behind the bans were that people should take away a spiritual recording of the proceedings. The spiritual record goes deeper and will last longer than any other visual record."

The writer of this thesis also attended the Nekaneet gathering on the day of the residential school abuse symposium and observed the overwhelming atmosphere of community, of people coming together. Although most of the guest speakers focused on historical facts and anecdotal accounts of abuse, one speaker proclaimed it was time to stop talking about the past and to move on from that stage. However, several elders who spoke after him, without criticizing what he had said, maintained how important it was to

not forget the past.⁴⁵ Both Pierson and Lilley wrote articles that presented an overall sense of balance.

Reporter James Cudmore in his Aug. 25, 2000, *National Post* article “Healing Power: More than 4,500 shamans, traditional healers and medicine men from across the Americas gather to share their secrets,” focused on the healing and spiritual aspects of the Nekaneet gathering. His article included quotes from a medicine woman from Ecuador, one of the co-organizers from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, a Costa Rican medicine man and a Mayan priest. The article did not include comments from any Native participant from Canada or the United States.

Lethbridge news survey

Between May and November 2000 the *Lethbridge Herald*⁴⁶ published dozens of articles about Bloods and Peigans, as well as other Native peoples. There were stories about tribal politics, attempts to resolve issues associated with residential school abuse, historical events involving treaties, allegations of financial mismanagement, land claims, cultural events, letters to the editor written by local Indians, Metis genealogy, and

⁴⁵When the writer of this thesis was discussing Native issues in general with a non-Native man who was born and raised near the Blood reserve, and who had never attended any Native event in his 45 years, the man admitted his ignorance about such matters. He then asked if the writer had ever been to any Native events. When told of the Nekaneet Gathering, the man prefaced his remarks by indicating he was well aware of stereotyping and that he didn’t want to come across as racist, and said: “You’ll probably think I’m out to lunch,” he hesitated, “but it was probably nothing but a big drunk.”

⁴⁶A daily newspaper published since 1905, recently acquired by Horizon Publications of Chicago from the Thomson Corporation.

profiles of people involved with politics, education, sports and business.

One non-local Native event received considerable attention in the *Herald*, with accounts of political, legal and physical skirmishes involving Mi'kmaq lobster fishermen at Burnt Church, Nova Scotia, featured almost daily for about two months. And the *Southern Sun Times*⁴⁷ included features about local National Aboriginal Day celebrations, university students learning about traditional Indian games from a Blackfeet⁴⁸ teacher, and a talented Native musician striving to break down cultural barriers through his songs.

Lethbridge area newspapers are today publishing more articles about Indians than those a century ago. Bloods and Peigans openly voice their concerns about issues pertinent to themselves and society at large. Photographs accompanying some articles put a face to the printed words, something not possible in the late 1800s. And local Indians write letters to the editor. But despite efforts in recent years by newspaper journalists, members of the Blood Tribe and Peigan Nation perceive Indians as still being portrayed in a negative image and being marginalized in the local media.

This chapter has shown that Natives were once written about as romantic images, whether they were portrayed as noble warriors or loathsome heathens. Newspaper coverage that emerged in the late 1800s was often of a negative nature, but that gave way

⁴⁷A weekly newspaper, affiliated with the *Lethbridge Herald*, distributed free to homes in Lethbridge.

⁴⁸Blackfoot Indians in Montana are called Blackfeet. (Peigans in Montana are called Piegans.)

in the early 1900s to a different type of attitude. Headlines and articles became more positive and Indians became heroes when they fought valiantly alongside non-Natives in the First and Second World War. The early examples showed how there was a distinct imbalance in the way journalists wrote about Natives, though it appears that a more professional balanced approach emerged in subsequent decades. The next chapter will now analyze some of that historical and contemporary news coverage.

Chapter 4

Exploring

Analysis: News, Balance and Understanding

Native people have clearly not been ignored in the Lethbridge area media, evident by material presented in the previous two chapters. However, there is some divergence about the amount and type of material published in local newspapers. Journalists in that region say they believe there is an ample selection of positive articles, while Natives claim news coverage is not fair or balanced. This raises several issues: 1) the number of articles published, 2) the amount of positive versus negative information published, and 3) balance in news coverage. The last dissects further into balance in the individual articles and balance in the overall number of articles published. This chapter will consider these issues, referring to articles previously presented as well as some other recent articles.

There is adequate evidence to determine the type of news written about Natives in the Lethbridge area more than a century ago. Without conducting an extensive content analysis, which would be insurmountable within the context of this thesis, categorizing headlines from early Lethbridge area newspapers can offer some insight. Marshalsay, Wheeler and Ellis provide an invaluable snapshot of this through their comprehensive collection of headlines extracted from newspapers dating back to 1882. Many articles

were of a negative nature, based on the European positive/negative concept.⁴⁹ Chapter 3 listed several instances where “bad” was even used in headlines, such as *Bold, Bad Bloods* (1887), *Bad Blood Brave* (1889) and *Bad Blood Indians* (1892). Such scornful attacks, as we now reflect on such terminology a hundred years hence, are clearly of a negative nature. Other terms such as warpath, confined, invasion, torture, outbreak, trouble and nuisance all have negative connotations.

Were there any positive articles during the 1882 - 1918 period? Articles addressing efforts to assimilate implied that “progress” was being made. On Jan. 25, 1900, the *Lethbridge News* carried a story on Page 2 that there was “Hope for the Indian: he may soon cease to be a burden.” (Marshalsay & Wheeler 94) Such sentiment reinforces hegemonic attitudes towards Indians, that the Indians were inferior and in need of being assimilated into the new white man’s culture. Several articles between 1882 and 1898 were about the development of boarding schools on the reserves. These and similar articles may have been considered positive during that era. There were few identifiable positive articles listed during the 36 years reviewed by Marshalsay, Wheeler and Ellis.

And then the article about the funeral of Albert Mountain Horse, outlined in Chapter 2, appears out of nowhere like a bush of blooming roses in the middle of a barren

⁴⁹Gloria Lee suggests European justice systems were based on a religious model of guilt and penance, with a judge (God) punishing the guilty person (sinners) by sending them to prison (Hell) where they could be penitent (regretting and atoning for their sins). Prisons were considered “cruel and harsh” environments and the system of guilt, punishment and confinement alien to Native thinking. People who violated the newly established “laws” were--and still are--sent to the penitentiary to be punished, not to heal. Lee maintains that through development of the Anglo-European justice system in Canada, Native people were forced into a “mens rea” or guilty mind philosophy of justice. (Lee 5-8)

desert. Mountain Horse gained instant celebrity and hero status when he died during the First World War at a time when Indians, as soldiers, were considered equals.

Was the report about Mountain Horse's funeral in the Nov. 29, 1915, newspaper negative or positive, balanced or unbalanced as an individual article, balanced in an overall sense? Generally it would be considered positive, though it provided little information about the life of this young man. It was more about the pomp surrounding the funeral. The list of dignitaries, both Native and non-Native, was impressive — five Indian chiefs, the local mayor and council members, police and military, four Church of England clerics (including the archdeacon from Calgary), and hundreds of Indians and townsfolk — for a small frontier town event. But the names of his mother, father and brothers were not mentioned.

In the general sense, it provided an accurate account of what happened in Macleod that day. The reporter observed the events surrounding the funeral and then wrote about what was observed. In the journalistic sense, it was balanced. But because it was the only article like this ever published between 1882 and 1918, the negative articles overwhelmingly outweigh this one example of positive news — even though it was a negative event, the death of a man.

What news is

Former *Kainai News*⁵⁰ editor Caen Bly told a public forum⁵¹ on Natives in the Lethbridge media that if 10 per cent of the area population are Indians, then 10 per cent of local media coverage should be about Indians. She and others at the forum indicated news coverage lacked balance, pointing out the need for journalists to consider doing more than just reporting on negative things. Bly said

Yes, news is news but maybe we as a society need to take a look at the interpretation of what news is. It's the media that sets the tone for society and how they view what is news. There needs to be balanced reporting.

If balance is a key issue, then what constitutes balance? If John Medicine Horse Kelly's idea about balance is applied to news coverage in the Lethbridge area, perhaps in the long term there has been imbalance during the past 100 years. Though recent attempts have been made by Peter Scott and his editorial team at the *Lethbridge Herald* to provide a more balanced view of Natives in the Lethbridge area, the people of the Blood Tribe and Peigan Nation still feel news coverage it is not balanced.

Betty Bastien told the forum a recent morning radio newscast in Lethbridge began

⁵⁰An independent newspaper published on the Blood Reserve for more than 20 years from the mid-1960s.

⁵¹The public forum was held Nov. 19, 2000, at Lethbridge, Alberta. The event was organized by this writer while completing a practicum under the auspices of Carleton University's Department of Canadian Studies, supervised by Madeleine Dion Stout, and the City of Lethbridge's Fort Whoop-up Interpretive Centre, supervised by Richard Shockley. The practicum also involved assisting the Lethbridge National Aboriginal Day committee organize a community celebration on June 21, 2000. The forum was held as part of the research for this thesis.

with an item about a crime committed by a Blood Indian. She said using this story first made it seem it was more important than any other thing happening in the world. “People in southern Alberta would be waking up to this image of an Indian committing crime” and that was not the most important thing happening, Bastien told the forum. She added

Any journalist knows that the media project a certain image that’s based on a consciousness of the society and I think that Canadian society has a very negative consciousness regards to First Nations people and the media perpetuates that very negative consciousness.

Newspapers place what is considered the most important story as the main headline on their front page. Television newscasts feature the most important story as the first item. The situation is similar for radio. Bastien was correct that “the more important” news items are featured ahead of those considered less important items. This can be witnessed daily on television and radio, as well as in newspapers. National newspapers, like the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* headline their front pages with articles of national or international prominence.

However, regional newspapers like the *Calgary Herald* or smaller regional papers like the *Lethbridge Herald* often feature items of local or provincial significance as front page headlines. A story significant enough to be featured as the first item on a radio or television newscast, and as the main headline on Page 1 of a newspaper, suggests to the listener, viewer or reader that it is important enough to warrant such a position. This has become perfunctory to news in all three media.

There is an exception to this, one alluded to by Bastien. That is that smaller market radio stations sometimes use a local item to lead a newscast, even though it may not be *more important* than other news in more global terms. If a news announcer has no other local news, that lone local news item is the one they will use as the lead even though there may well be *important* news from other cities, provincial or national capitals or from other countries. It is unlikely that a local news item of little importance would supersede an item as, for example, the death of former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Another example is the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Four passenger planes were hijacked and crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., into a field near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, New York, resulting in the deaths of about 3,000 people. Although the atrocities centred on the eastern U.S., they were of paramount interest to people throughout North America, and the rest of the world, and received front-page attention. A local fatal highway crash might usually have made the front page, but not on a day following such an horrific attack and the voluminous media attention warranted.

What happened in the United States was a significant event, forcing all other news to be relegated to inside news briefs or into oblivion. The media made coverage of the terrorist attacks more important above all other news, though other matters happening in local, regional, national or international jurisdictions may have been important to

individuals in those areas.⁵²

Better understanding

One of the main points raised at the public forum was that if newspapers provided readers with positive, informative and unbiased articles about Native issues, readers would be better able to understand the people they live and work with in the Lethbridge area. One of the concerns was that some journalists write about Natives without knowing the people. Journalism educator Carman Cumming said journalists “are drawn to the prominent personality and the prominent event” and that

Part of the motivation is to chronicle the landmark events in a community. But journalists are also vulnerable to the criticism that they ignore deeper patterns — that, for instance, they bring their cameras to native communities only when the Pope or prime minister visits. (37)

The Nekaneet Gathering, highlighted in Chapter 3, attracted between 5,000 and 8,000 people but very little media attention. Even with Matthew Coon Come, newly-elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, in attendance, it did not receive much news coverage. Both local Maple Creek weekly newspapers published articles and photos, and the *National Post* ran an article. No significant report of this event was

⁵²The day following the terrorist attacks, the *Ottawa Citizen* dedicated 48 pages to news about what had happened. A phenomenal amount of stories, editorials and photographs, each having some direct or indirect connection with the attacks, filled those pages. Business and sports sections reflected the after-effects of the attacks. Two news items, among several other significant stories, which could well have made front-page news under different circumstances, were relegated to inside pages. One story was the announcement that “rebel” Alliance Member of Parliament Monte Solberg would be rejoining caucus. The other was that former Canadian media magnate Conrad Black was made a life peer in the British House of Commons. Both stories had previously attracted considerable media attention. Sept. 11, 2001, was an important day for these two individuals.

published elsewhere in the mainstream media.⁵³

David Lilley of the *Maple Creek and Southwest Advance Times* provided his readers with a balanced account of the gathering. He incorporated the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects into his stories. His personal involvement with the local Cree community, preparing for the gathering and then attending and participating in the event, was evident throughout his coverage.

This seemed like a significant event but did not attract much in the way of media attention. Had it been an international gathering of scouts or guides, no doubt there would have been more news coverage than what happened at the healing event.

Local journalists might know Native people and be familiar with Native culture and long-standing issues, but those from elsewhere may not be so fortunate. Pete Standing Alone told the Lethbridge public forum that “all media people should get a crash course on where they are located and study the Indians in their area.” He said not all Indians have the same customs, histories, cultural experiences, etc. “A lot of white people don’t know much about us,” he said, adding that there is still a belief within the general population that Europeans conquered the Indians and they need to forget whatever happened in the past and get on with the future. (P. Standing Alone, 19 Nov. 2000) But the Indians were never conquered. Many were allies of the newcomers until

⁵³A reporter from the *Regina Leader-Post* was believed to have attended the gathering, but no record could be found of any article published.

Europeans exerted dominion over them and changed the terms of relationship.

Standing Alone also told the Nov. 19, 2000, forum that some reporters erroneously quote “elders” when in fact they are only quoting some older Indians. “We also have elders (or grandfathers) who are spiritual leaders.” He said “protocol it is very important” when it comes to interviewing and writing about Indians. He noted a recent photo of a Blood Indian and an Oriental person in a Calgary newspaper: The Indian was in full regalia and was referred to as “chief” when, in fact, he was not an elected or hereditary leader of the Blood Indians.

University of Lethbridge student Angela Grier, who plans to be a journalist, concurs with Bly and Bastien that more positive articles need to be published. But she also addressed the issue of media images. She told the forum

There’s a revolution taking place among our young people. When you look in the newspapers and you’re seeing nothing but negative things about yourself and your people — Natives are more communal than individual — where do they look for role models? (Grier 19 Nov. 2000)

This point about negative stereotyping of Natives was raised by journalism educator John Miller, who said:

It doesn’t take an academic study to tell us how the public will perceive aboriginals if they’re constantly being portrayed as a threat to Canada’s social order (the Oka blockade), an economic liability (cost of the massive land claims), a burden on our criminal justice system (there are more Natives in prison than their percentage of the population seems to warrant) and a medical problem (drunkenness and suicides). (137)

To show that sometimes efforts are made to change those perceptions, an example of what happened in Lethbridge will be offered. Journalist Garry Allison and educator Sharon Gibb provided a balanced view about Native culture in a 20-part series published in the *Lethbridge Herald* in 1993. Not only did the series include stories about native culture — language, ceremonies, spiritual activities, history, day-to-day life — but it also included material written by native elders and native educators, complete with photos and stories of Bloods and Peigans considered to be role models. The series, though not hard news, was used as a tool to create better understanding among students in Lethbridge-area schools. The series contained information representing all four aspects of the medicine wheel — physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual — as well as the type of balance explained by educator John Medicine Horse Kelly where all material is considered instead of just one article. This series, overall, was highly informative and a credit to those who produced it.

Caen Bly said people in the media need to think about Native issues from a different perspective. She said reporters can always find a flip-flop story. But, she added, “There can be another story and it doesn’t have to be negative.” As an example, she pointed to Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day’s comments about Native people during the November 2000 federal election. Bly said reporters across the country reported on what Day said but they never “ran to the tribes” to get an opinion from a Native perspective.

Balancing the news

Several people attending the Lethbridge forum expressed a sentiment of distrust towards the *Herald* because of articles published in the past. Some said they believe the paper prints very few positive articles about Native people, even though the *Herald* has taken the initiative to change its approach and has published positive articles about Indians, their lives and their culture. As shown through research for this thesis, there is ample evidence showing a considerable amount of negative news about Natives in the Lethbridge-area media for most of the past 120 years but not in recent years. If there is now a fairly substantial quantity of positive-oriented articles about local Natives, is the issue one of balance?

As previously documented, there are different concepts of balance. The issue of balance in the news needs to be addressed. Pete Standing Alone said finding the right balance is not an easy task but he feels it is possible using the medicine wheel as a tool. “Rather than media having a one-sided approach,” he said, “by using this medicine wheel approach they would at least have some understanding of our Indian ways.” He suggested journalists take some kind of course on how to be a journalist when it comes to writing about native issues. “At least they should know something about the Indian culture,” he said.⁵⁴

⁵⁴While discussing the medicine wheel and applying it to journalists, Standing Alone became intrigued with the idea and began drawing a chart of how tribal administration is structured on the Blood Reserve. He has been interested in the mystery of the medicine wheel for several years and even discussed it in the 1982 film *Standing Alone*. With a few strokes of a pen on a piece of paper, he drew a circle and divided it into sections. Standing Alone then drew a hierarchy structure of the Blood Tribe administration

Part of the imbalanced picture could also have to do with the lack of Native “voice” in the local media. This is considered a form of marginalization. History educator James (J.R.) Miller said that relations between Natives and Europeans in Canada have gone through four phases and we are stuck in the last phase. The first phase was “mutually beneficial contact” in the early 1700s, followed by an “era of alliance,” then ruthless attempts at assimilation in the 1800s and 1900s, and the fourth phase of “emergence from irrelevance to the larger population” where no relationship has developed. Miller, explaining the fourth phase, said “[t]here is no consensus on either side of the relationship as to what should be done” (275). Part of the problem, he claims, lies in the non-Native side having not yet developed consensus on replacing the assimilation program (275). Canada’s news media can play an integral role in moving beyond Miller’s fourth phase by allowing native voices to be heard through newspapers, radio and television, thereby creating better understanding and opportunity to improve relations between Natives and non-Natives. (James Miller 270-275)

Creating better understanding

Evelyn Peters, writing about Native people living in urban settings, offers yet another idea to help create better understanding. She claims there are few streets, parks or buildings named after significant Native people, whether historical or contemporary.

system and said this is how it is organized now, but suggested he needs to work with chief and council to begin looking at things from the medicine wheel perspective. He said the circle represented all the members of the Blood tribe and the circle in the middle represented the individual, with the different sections representing different aspects of administration.

Native heroes do not often appear in monuments dedicated to their memory. Peters states: “Making Aboriginal people and cultures visible in urban landscapes would signal that they have a valued place in contemporary urban areas” (261).

Is that the case in Lethbridge? Mentioned elsewhere in this thesis are a few examples of Lethbridge-area placenames with Native origins, such as Mike Mountain Horse School, Indian Battle Park and Jerry Potts Boulevard. There is other evidence of the area’s Native heritage. Fort Whoop-Up Interpretive Centre and the Sir Alexander Galt Museum frequently have exhibits associated with Blood and Peigan heritage. When the west side of the city was developed a hundred years after the last great battle in 1870, a neighbourhood was named Indian Battle Heights with streets given local Indian names, such as Red Crow Boulevard and Peigan Court. Other streets bear the names Sarcee, Stoney, Lakota, Niska, Ojibwa, Cayuga, Mohawk and Micmac (Rand McNally), which are the names of different Aboriginal Peoples from across Canada.

Mike Mountain Horse elementary school in Lethbridge, which opened in 1987, is a tribute to a man who worked in both the Lethbridge and Blood communities, and wrote about his people (see Chapter 4). Students can borrow copies of Mountain Horse’s book *My People, the Bloods* from their school’s library to learn about the history of local Natives. Other books in the library include *Indian Tribes of Alberta* by Hugh Dempsey, *The Land of the Bloods* by Joyce Quilty, Leo Fox, Ruby Eaglechild, and the *Scholastic Encyclopedia of the North American Indian* by James Ciment with Ronald LaFrance.

The Land of the Bloods is used in school district curriculum; students are taught in Grade 3 about pioneers and in Grade 4 about fur traders and the West, and in Grade 5 they have a course in Native studies.

The school's stationery has a sketch of Mountain Horse, and there is an oil painting of him at the school's entrance. Additionally, students learn about Native culture by visiting the Head Smashed-in Buffalo Jump and the North West Mounted Police fort museum at Fort Macleod. They also visit the Fort Whoop-Up Interpretive Centre in Lethbridge and Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park near Milk River.

These examples show that an effort has been made in the Lethbridge area to ensure Native people and their history are not ignored. Peters suggests educational systems *and the media* need to change their presentations of Native peoples and histories. (260) She concludes there is "a long history of denying that Aboriginal cultures have an appropriate place in urban areas — a place that has challenged the identities of many urban Aboriginal people." Peters adds that "taking measures to support and enhance their cultures will make cities better places for Aboriginal people and for non-Aboriginal residents." (261)

If efforts have been made through newspapers, the school system and the community to create better understanding between Indians and non-Indians in the Lethbridge area, what is still missing if Bloods and Peigans feel not enough is being done? The *Herald* is presenting news about Indians in a fair and professional manner, as those terms are defined within conventional journalism. If an Indian is involved with a crime,

the story is presented in the same way as it would be for a non-Indian. Headlines do not blatantly point out racial difference, though sometimes the word *native* is used. There does not appear to be much in the way of stereotyping, though beads-and-feathers photographs of dancers are not uncommon. Articles published are seen by Natives and non-Natives as both positive and negative. In reality maybe it's just news and neither negative or positive. Several *Herald* journalists have worked with the paper for 10 years or more and, according to the managing editor and others, they are sensitive when writing about issues concerning Bloods and Peigans.

But there is a dearth of articles about Indians from an Indian perspective — written by Indians. Editors say the paper is willing to receive material from Bloods and Peigans, or accept an Indian on their journalism team. The latter has not yet happened.

Much of Miller's work is from an historical perspective and his theory is that, historically, non-Natives have simply been bad to Natives. His book, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, an examination of Indian-White relations in Canada, is not an exhaustive collection with all the answers on how to improve relations between the two, but it does offer insight necessary to begin. Miller does not clearly identify marginalization or how to overcome this problem. Maybe this was material he opted to omit. It would have been helpful for readers to get a clearer picture of marginalization because the perception among the mainstream population is that there is already a lot of good news out there, so why the need for more? It is this attitude which, perhaps, is blocking relations between

Natives and non-Natives. Miller says Indians, Métis and Inuit must not be considered “just another ethnic group” in Canada’s multicultural mosaic. Both Natives and non-Natives must have an open mind, as well as an open heart, and work together to create better understanding. It’s not something that’s going to fade away, and journalists have a key role in helping make this happen.

Bloods and Peigans are only seen from a distance, on the horizon, and are sometimes only front and centre when there is a news story to be told, which often seems to Indians to be synonymous with a negative story. There is some truth to the claim of marginalization in the Lethbridge media, with an obvious level of invisibility when it comes to radio and television coverage. During the six-month newspaper survey conducted in the summer and fall of 2000, very few radio and television newscasts even mentioned Natives. On those rare occasions when they were, it was often a crime-oriented story.

The *Lethbridge Herald* and *Southern Sun Times*, on the other hand, have done an excellent job of not letting local Indians become totally marginalized, much through the commendable efforts of journalist Garry Allison and other staff reporters. The nearby *MacLeod Gazette* and Cardston’s *Temple City Star*, it is noted, have also published material about Natives, but not to the same extent as the *Lethbridge Herald*.

Another viewpoint

Journalism educator John Miller asks: “Why do the images seen in our newspapers fail to match the images of the people we see in the streets around us?” (127) This can be taken two ways: the images of people in the news and the images of people reporting the news. As the first point has already been considered, the latter will now be briefly addressed.

Management at the *Lethbridge Herald* has indicated they look forward to the day when they can provide their readers with a true Native perspective. Managing editor Peter Scott said he is aware that there are no Native journalists or contributors in the paper, and said he and others have tried to resolve this to no avail. Until that happens, there is no authoritative voice from the Indian community expressing or writing about issues and events important to them.

While serving as chairman of a Canadian Daily Newspaper Association subcommittee examining diversity in newsrooms in 1993, Miller learned that at 41 newspapers polled across the country, of 2,620 journalism jobs only 67 were held by people of colour. He said this “works out to 2.6 per cent, at a time when aboriginals and visible minorities constituted 13 per cent of Canada’s population.” (128) Miller urged that “publishers and editors (need to) begin understanding diversity and setting specific and measurable goals for action” to improve coverage and hiring. He points out comments by columnist Irshad Manjii in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 19, 1994, that “[...] how can

any paper claim to give their readers an accurate picture of the world when that picture is sketched, refined and reprinted by one group [middle-aged white guys]⁵⁵ with a limited set of experiences?" (129)

In concluding this chapter, which has considered how some newspaper articles have presented Native people, some ideas from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples warrant reflection. The Assembly of First Nations told the Commission in 1993 that many people in Canada

have little, if any, interaction with First Nations peoples in their daily lives and are likely to develop images and perceptions from newspaper articles [and] television programs [...]. Too many of those still perpetuate stereotypes which foster racism and discriminatory practices. (RCAP 5 4 4)

The commission also heard from Sheena Jackson of Lethbridge, who said there is a lot of misrepresentation and misconceptions about Native people. Jackson states: "People who may live right next to an Indian reserve will not have the slightest idea of what native people are all about, and that is very sad." (5 4 1) She suggests education is a key to overcoming such barriers.

Journalist Charles Bury also told the Commission that newspapers and broadcast media often contain misinformation, sweeping generalizations and galling stereotypes about Natives and Native affairs. He said their stories are usually presented by journalists with little background knowledge or understanding of Natives and their

⁵⁵This is Miller's interpretation, not this writer's, of what Manjii wrote in her column.

communities. Then he pointed out one of the main concerns today:

The large media outlets include shamefully few Aboriginals either on their staff or among their freelance journalists. As well, very few so-called mainstream media consider Aboriginal affairs to be a subject worthy of regular attention. The result is that most Canadians have little real knowledge of the country's Native peoples or the issues that affect them. (RCAP 3 6 6.12)

Bury concludes that the Native voice will be heard only if it is included as a regular part of the Canadian media landscape and that native people must be part of mainstream media. Native journalist Bud White Eye agrees. He told the commission that

Many of the myths and misperceptions that persist among non-Aboriginal people are perpetuated by no communication, poor communication or one-sided communication... The depth and diversity of the Aboriginal perspectives must be communicated through both First Nations and mainstream news media, to as broad a public as possible. (3 6 3.1)

These comments concur with those from the Lethbridge public forum and journalism educator John Miller, that journalists can create greater understanding between Natives and non-Natives by being better informed themselves in order to write about Natives, which, in turn, would better inform their readers, listeners and viewers.

The next two chapters will examine how the story of a young basketball player has been told in the media during the five years he was on the college and university athletics circuits. Some of the issues presented in this chapter will be raised to assess the quality of material published.

Chapter 5

Experience

Colonialism, Indians and basketball: a case study

Print media have played a significant role in perpetuating the myth of the stereotypical Indian in Canadian culture. Stories and images depicting Native people have, over the past 200 years, been published on postcards and posters, in books, newspapers and magazines. They either show the Indian as a brave and noble savage or as a pathetic and loathsome character. Colonialist attitudes have helped to maintain this image and, thereby, have kept Native people from having an equal role in Canadian society.

This chapter will show that newspapers can play a significant role in creating a more complete, accurate and balanced image of Native people. It will introduce the concept of colonialism, how Europeans exerted dominance on aboriginal people and how that attitude continues today in mainstream media.

One particular story, about an athlete named Charlton Weasel Head, will be examined and the colonialism theory applied to it to show how journalists may unknowingly be perpetuating historical stereotypical images.

Charlton Weasel Head

The following article about Charlton Weasel Head appeared on Page 59 in the Dec. 30, 1999, final edition of the *Winnipeg Sun*.

Bobcat takes control of his life Now a role model for aboriginal kids

By Paul Friesen, Staff Reporter
Charlton *Weasel* Head's life could have easily gone in another direction. The wrong direction.

While growing up on the sprawling Kainai Reservation near Lethbridge, *Weasel* Head, who's a Blackfoot Indian, saw his share of misery, often caused by drug and alcohol abuse.

While in high school, he was on that path of self-destruction, too. And it almost cost him his life.

"I was a big partyer, doing drugs and all that kind of stuff," *Weasel* Head, a member of the Brandon University men's basketball team, said yesterday. "I've been in like, three serious car accidents, where I'd look at the vehicle we were in, and I can't believe I survived. It got to me, and I thought to myself, 'One of these days I'm going to kill myself.'"

ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

Realizing he was on the road to nowhere, *Weasel* Head began to turn his life around.

Today, he's the starting point guard for the Bobcats -- the 10th-ranked team in the nation -- a dedicated student and a role model for aboriginal kids, not only back home, but here in Manitoba, too.

It's a responsibility the 22-year-old takes seriously, whether he's signing autographs for

youngsters in Brandon, or making public appearances at his old school on the reserve.

"I just tell them what I went through, and I tell them to try not to go through that experience," *Weasel* Head said, before leading the Bobcats against Lethbridge at the Wesmen Classic last night.

If *Weasel* Head needed his own role models, he could look at his parents. Now divorced, they were hard drinkers until some seven years ago.

"It was getting to the point where it was almost taking their life away," he said.

His father found comfort in spirituality, while his mother has joined him in Brandon, where she's taking courses of her own.

Athletically, *Weasel* Head first began to gain national attention while playing at Lethbridge Community College, where he was named an All-Canadian his second year.

Proud of his heritage, he says it doesn't bother him when opposing fans make fun of his name or his Native appearance.

It's something that might have bothered him back in high school.

But he's come a long way since high school.

Although the headline implies the article is about a basketball player who has taken control of his life and that he is a role model, there is no semblance of any positive storyline. The article states that Charlton Weasel Head, a Blackfoot Indian who grew up on the “sprawling Kainai Reservation,” saw his share of “misery, often caused by drug and alcohol abuse” around him. It says that, while in high school, he was “on that path of self-destruction, too [...] and it almost cost him his life.” Weasel Head admits he partied and used drugs, that he had walked away from three serious car accidents and thought “One of these days I’m going to kill myself.” Then the article injects a positive point:

Realizing he was on the road to nowhere, Weasel Head began to turn his life around. Today, he’s the starting point guard for the Bobcats — the 10th-ranked team in the nation — a dedicated student and role model for aboriginal kids, not only back home, but here in Manitoba, too. It’s a responsibility the 22-year-old takes seriously, whether signing autographs for youngsters in Brandon, or making public appearances at his old school on the reserve. (Friesen 1999)

The positive then turns again to negative. After explaining, briefly, that Weasel Head tells school kids about his personal life experiences, the article states:

If Weasel Head needed his own role models, he could look at his parents. Now divorced, they were hard drinkers until some seven years ago. “It was getting to the point where it was almost taking their life away,” he said. (1999)

The article mentions only that his father sought “comfort in spirituality” and his mother is “taking courses” in Brandon. In closing, the article points out that Weasel Head gained national attention when he was named an All-Canadian (one of the top athletes in Canada) while in his second year at college. It concludes with:

Proud of his heritage, he says it doesn’t bother him when opposing fans make fun of his name or his Native appearance. It’s something that might have bothered

him back in high school. But he's come a long way since high school. (1999)

At the outset, because of the headline attracting the reader to the article, this appears to be a positive story about a young man who had overcome struggles in his life to achieve success as a basketball player. However, what it actually does is re-affirm the stereotypical colonialist images. It portrays Indians as people being controlled by government to live on *reservations*⁵⁶ where they live a life of *misery* and *self-destruction* where there is no hope. It implies that Weasel Head's parents were drunken Indians, the loathsome savage depicted in early publications. The article also suggests that some basketball fans can be racist through derogatory comments directed at Weasel Head about his name and his colour. The article does not explain how this outstanding athlete and university student was able to overcome problems in his life. Nor does it look at his accomplishments from the perspective of an athlete. The sole focus is on Weasel Head being a Native.

Colonialism and Indians

Now that some negative points or voids have been identified in the article, the colonialism theory will be addressed. French and British settlers began interacting in the late 1500s with the *Indians* of what was to become Canada. Both cordial and hostile relations ensued as the Europeans began exploring and establishing settlements throughout the land over the next 300 years. When British administrators decided in the 1830s that

⁵⁶Reservation is a term referring to government-allotted land in the United States, while in Canada the lands are referred to as reserves.

Indians were disappearing, they decreed that those who remained should either be moved to isolated communities or be assimilated into the emerging dominant European society. Historian Olive Dickason contends that this is when the main colonialist thrust began to change the face of Canada (Dickason 199).

Sociologists James Frideres and Liliane Krosenbrink-Gelisson assert “the indigenous peoples of Canada were unquestionably colonized” and that their position in Canada today is a direct result of colonialism (Frideres & Krosenbrink-Gelisson 3). This process, according to their theory, had seven components:

- 1) incursion of the colonizing group into a geographical area;
- 2) destructive effect on the social and cultural structures of the indigenous group;
- 3) external political control;
- 4) Native economic dependence;
- 5) provision of low-quality social services for the colonized people;
- 6) racism; and
- 7) establishment of a colour-line (3-7).

Sociology educators Victor Satzewich and Terry Weatherspoon, however, claim colonialism began as far back as the 16th century, long before the 1800s as suggested by Dickason, Frideres and Krosenbrink-Gelisson. Their reasoning is that Europeans involved with the fur trade “systematically” exerted their influence over the indigenous peoples (Satzewich & Weatherspoon 8-9). Nevertheless, the Europeans succeeded, “acting in their own interests” (Frideres & Krosenbrink-Gelisson 4), in forcing their way into the lives of indigenous peoples throughout the land and carried with them a certain attitude of superiority. Satzewich and Weatherspoon suggest after the decline in the fur

trade that “ruling classes deemed that future economic expansion should occur on the basis of agriculture and industrial capitalism [so that] aboriginal peoples and their culture became systematically defined as a ‘problem’” (8-9).

Indians were seen as dirty, backward and in dire need of guidance (Berkhofer 11-12). When the government deemed it necessary to control where Indians lived (reserves), serious problems with agreements (treaties) arose. Some Native leaders believed the deals were deceptive, resulting in confusion and a plethora of legal challenges. This had a serious effect on social and cultural systems as the government implemented fiscal and social controls on the people. Government officials and politicians exerted dominion over Native people, controlling personal or community development (education, health care, business). This did not create friendly relations between Natives and the government and the general population. Dickason points out that it was necessary for a 15-member *Select Committee on Aborigines* to conduct a government inquiry in 1836-37. After 10 months, the committee issued a lengthy report. The committee concluded that Native people were being treated unfairly and deprived of their lands as settlers spread across the Canadian landscape (Dickason 220).

About 160 years after the initial 1,000-page report from the committee, the 1991-1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* conducted an inquiry into why Native people were still being treated unfairly. They concluded in a 3,500-page report that there was a need for: 1) a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; 2) self-determination through self-government; 3) economic self-sufficiency; and 4) healing

for Aboriginal peoples and communities (402).

Colonialism and the Weasel Head article

The *Sun* article clearly follows the seven-point theoretical model of colonialism advocated by Frideres and Krosenbrink-Gelisson. It places Weasel Head:

- 1) in a forced geographical area;
- 2) living in a community rife with social and cultural problems, including misery, alcohol- and drug-related problems, divorce, suicide and hopelessness;
- 3) external political control (reserves are controlled by the federal government's Indian Affairs ministry) which causes Native communities to
- 4) rely on government funding;
- 5) implying there is little help available to deal with alcohol and drug problems;
- 6) that he faces racism from basketball fans; and
- 7) these fans make condescending remarks on the basis of the colour of his skin, as well as his culture, as embodied in his name.

The *Sun* article only briefly mentioned that Weasel Head was an All-Canadian, which is a phenomenal national sports achievement for any young person. It doesn't mention the support of his mother in helping him in his athletic or academic career, nor does it mention anything about Weasel Head's wife and children.

Although some newspapers occasionally highlight Native people in a negative way, such as tragedies, social problems and alleged tribal administration corruption, they also present what would appear to be positive images. Examples include Native dancers — usually men, not women — adorned with beads and feathers at a powwow, or a non-Native political leader being honoured with an Indian name, or how a Native person has

found success as an entrepreneur. Occasionally there are examples of Natives who have become celebrities, such as actor and singer Tom Jackson, film actor Graham Greene, singer Susan Aglukark, hockey great Ted Nolan, Olympic water polo athlete Waneek Horn-Miller, or rising National Hockey League star Jordin Tootoo.

Weasel Head in the spotlight

Just being in university and playing basketball at a national level has put Weasel Head in the spotlight among his own people. Over the years he has not only been talked about in his own community and in sports circles around southern Alberta, but he has also occasionally been in the news spotlight. Weasel Head has been profiled in the *Blood Tribe News*, had his photo and a few sports articles mentioning his achievements in tournament coverage in the *Lethbridge Herald*, and also had the article written about him in the *Winnipeg Sun*. For the most part, reporting has been factual about how he performed on the basketball court in a given game. But the *Sun* article attempted to venture beyond that, to profile him as a Native role model. Did it succeed? Or didn't it?

Weasel Head said the *Sun* article gave him mixed feelings. On one hand, he said it identified that he was a positive role model for Native kids but it also focused on negative things in his life without explaining the positive influences or how he had stuck to the values he had been raised with under the guidance of his mother. The article does not include a photo of the basketball star, which suggests a faceless voice so common when Native people are featured in the news.

Reporter Paul Friesen remembers deciding to write a story about the Brandon team and singled out Weasel Head to interview. “I scanned the Bobcats roster and Charlton’s name jumped out at me,” said Friesen. “I saw where he was from and thought there might be an interesting story there.” (Friesen 2001) The team roster showed Weasel Head’s home town as *Kainai Reservation*.⁵⁷ What caught the reporter’s eye then, was the player’s uncommon name and that he was from a *reservation*. Friesen did not indicate why Weasel Head’s name stood out or why coming from a *reservation* might be different than from a city or town.

The two of them spent an hour together talking before one of the tournament games. Weasel Head said he felt they developed a rapport. “He asked me questions about past experiences, what I’d overcome and where I’m at now,” the basketball star recalled. “We talked about the alcohol, but very little about what I am doing now.” (Weasel Head 2001) Missing in the article was information about just how he had been able to overcome some of the difficult times in his life and how he got to be one of the premier basketball players in all of Canada.

Friesen said he found Weasel Head to be an interesting interview and wished at the time that he’d had “more time to talk to Charlton, and perhaps interview his teammates as well, just to paint a more complete picture” (Friesen 2001).

⁵⁷Reservation is a term used in the United States of America, but it is sometimes used in Canada even though the official term in Canada is *reserve*. Kainai Reservation refers to the *Blood Reserve*. It is not known why Charlton Weasel Head was listed as coming from Kainai Reservation. His home town could have correctly been listed as Standoff, Alberta.

“I told him about my wife and two kids back home,” said Weasel Head. “I told him about my mother being at university with me, and, when he asked me about who had influenced me, I told him about my great-grandfather.” (Weasel Head 2001) But none of that made it into Friesen’s story. Weasel Head admits, however, the story at least lets others know he had been able to overcome difficulties in his life to succeed as an athlete.

Friesen said he didn’t feel he had written the article any particular way. “Like every story I write, I simply want it to be interesting so that people will read it,” he said. “If I’ve accomplished that, I feel I’ve done my job.” (Friesen 2001)

In this instance, Friesen said he felt good about the Weasel Head article. “I see the article as being positive, although that’s something each reader would have to decide for themselves,” he said. “However, I think any story about someone who’s overcome adversity is primarily a positive story.” (2001)

Other media coverage

College basketball coach Craig Anderson agrees that Weasel Head had little in the way of media coverage during five years of college and university competition. “If he was a hockey player he’d get more press,” he said, “but basketball in Canada isn’t like it is in the United States.” (Anderson) The coach pointed out regional and national newspapers generally focus on basketball action and personalities in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and during national collegiate tournaments. Local newspapers, meanwhile, include local school and collegiate action, as well as NBA. Anderson offers

some suggestions for journalists:

When we have an athlete like [Charlton], as a community, why don't we bring them into the light? As media, we could do more stories about people like Charlton. Ask the question: What has he done for the community? It would help relations between people — not just with Natives and non-Natives — to have in-depth personal articles. With Charlton, he's so much more of a person than just basketball. In Canada, he is gifted in a sport that doesn't get a lot of attention. Charlton is a hero in many people's eyes because of what he's putting back into basketball.

Anderson made no reference to Weasel Head having “overcome” any problems.

It is interesting to examine just what type of media coverage Weasel Head has received over the years. Sometimes he would be mentioned briefly within an article about a basketball game, with the reporter pointing out one or two scoring details. Most articles were fairly short, though two are longer articles. No report has include all four aspects of the medicine wheel.

Reporter Cameron Yoos wrote about Weasel Head in the March 26, 1998, edition of the *Lethbridge Herald* following a college awards banquet. The young Kodiaks star was named men's basketball MVP and shared the spotlight with women's soccer team MVP Melissa Smith. A small photo of the two athletes accompanies the article.

Yoos wrote: “Weasel Head was acknowledged for his on-court presence with an all-Canadian selection, and was singled out for his stature as a positive role model for other Kainai students.”

In the article, Kodiaks coach Carlos Maffia praised Weasel Head for his “exceptional” talents and for being “the first to succeed at his level as a Native.” Maffia

said: "It takes a special individual to handle all of that, and that's why I admire him so much. He has dealt with the pressure, he has met the obstacles, and jumped over them."

Lethbridge reporter Dave Wells wrote a mostly upbeat sports feature about Weasel Head for *Cage*, a basketball-oriented magazine, in December 1998. It basically focuses on his basketball career, complete with statistics and honours, comments from coaches, and briefly mentions that four of his siblings are involved with sports. Wells wrote that Weasel Head "ultimately ran the show for legendary Kainai (high school) head coach Jerry Dawson," carrying out Dawson's game plan with great precision. His comment that, "Although Kainai⁵⁸ has produced many superior players over the past half-century, few enjoyed extended intercollegiate careers," leaves the reader in the lurch as it does not explain the connection with Weasel Head. (Wells)

Using the medicine wheel model, Wells' colourful feature contains only the physical and intellectual aspects, avoiding the emotional and spiritual aspects.

Two years later, Yoos covered the basketball game between the Brandon Bobcats and the Lethbridge Pronghorns. A pre-game article spotlighted the Lethbridge team's plan to tackle the visitors, noting that

Brandon brings weapons with its game, including southern Alberta product Charlton Weasel Head, who helped lead the Lethbridge Community College to the college national tournament last season. A full house is expected at the U of L gymnasium with his presence. (Yoos 14 Sept 2000)

⁵⁸The 1996 Statistics Canada census report shows the Blood reserve with 4,305 people categorized as Aboriginal and 20 people as non-Aboriginal.

An article the day after the game provides token mention of Weasel Head's contribution to the game, but features an action photo of the Brandon star charging past a Pronghorns player (Yoos 15 Sept 2000).

When the Bobcats showed up at the 2000 CIAU Men's Finals in Halifax a couple of months later, Wells was there and wrote an article with the angle that two southern Alberta men were competing in the opening round game. It points out that Weasel Head was "proud to reach the pinnacle of Canadian hoops" by playing in the finals. Wells wrote briefly about Weasel Head and his family, as well as his college and basketball success. The article also provides equal space to Ryan Baldry of the University of Alberta Golden Bears, who was raised at Raymond, south of Lethbridge. Two days later, Wells wrote a sidebar to a Canadian Press (CP) blow-by-blow article about the one-point loss by Brandon to the St. Francis Xavier X-Men in the championship game. The sidebar contains Weasel Head's reflections on the game. In the main CP article, Weasel Head's participation is contained in two brief sentences: "An offensive foul on Charlton Weasel-head [sic] gave the X-Men another shot with 1:47 left and ex-Bobcat Dennie Oliver hit his shot to make it 60-57. Diminutive guard E.I. Adams then stripped Weasel-head [sic] of the ball with 1:13 left and the Metro Centre crowd of 8,391 went wild." (Canadian Press) Wells' sidebar, however, explains how Weasel Head played "an instrumental role" for the Bobcats and praises the Kainai product for his efforts (Wells 20 March 2000).

From a national perspective, when the Brandon Bobcats once again made their way to the Canadian championships in Halifax in March 2001, Weasel Head received

only fractional media attention. *Globe and Mail* basketball reporter Robert MacLeod wrote about the victory for the St. Francis Xavier X-Men, providing readers with an account of the final game. It would appear the Brandon team was hardly part of the action, as the article seldom mentioned any of the team's stars or their dramatic court manoeuvres. The final paragraph of the article notes Randy Nohr and Fred Perry of St. Francis Xavier University joined Earnest Bell and "Charlton Head" of Brandon on the tournament all-star team, along with Andy Kwiatkowski of the University of Western Ontario and Steve Maga of McMaster University (MacLeod).

What's in a name?

The misspelling of Weasel Head's name was unfortunate. Although just a passing mention at the end of the article, Andy Kwiatkowski's name was not misspelled. One can only assume that either the reporter or an editor chose to eliminate Weasel from Weasel Head because they may have been unaware of names in Native culture and thought Weasel may have been a nickname.⁵⁹

Editors and reporters may well be unfamiliar with naming patterns within Native cultures. This could be because Native people are often not the focus of major news

⁵⁹ Everett Soop, the Blood journalist who died in August 2001, was once interviewed by a young woman who wanted to write an article about him. According to Soop, the woman questioned the authenticity of his surname. "That doesn't sound like an Indian name," Soop recalled her asking. So he told her, in his quick-witted facetious way, how he got his name:

My great-grandparents were the poorest of the poor and went to Fort Whoop-Up to get some grub. Because they were poor, they were at the end of the line and could only get some soup. So our real name is Standing at the End of the Soup Line. Soop, who was, on occasion, known to spin a tale with such believable enthusiasm, said the woman was ecstatic. "Now that," she exclaimed, "sounds like a real Indian name." (Soop 2000)

stories. People such as Assembly of First Nations grand chief Matthew Coon Come and his predecessors Phil Fontaine and Ovid Mercredi made national headlines in recent years and the spelling of their names would become familiar to journalists. (Others receiving national media attention include Donald Marshall, Tom Jackson and Leonard Pelletier.)

Journalists, let alone everyday Canadians, would likely be hard pressed to name more than a couple of Native people who have been in the news. Likewise, few would likely be able to identify names of Native people who have been in the news. The opposite might be true in the Lethbridge area because Blood and Peigan Indians maintain a relatively high profile in local newspapers. Names like Weasel Head, Weasel Fat and Weasel Moccasin are not uncommon. Other local Blackfoot surnames include Mountain Horse, Standing Alone, Strikes with a Gun, Good Striker, Long Time Squirrel, Small Face, Small Legs, Many Fingers, Tail Feathers, Big Bull, Many Grey Horses, Many Spotted Horses, Chief Moon, Spear Chief, Mistaken Chief, and so on. Such names do not follow the European pattern of single-element surnames.

Former *Kainai News* editor Caen Bly said “many of the names come from dreams or visions” and are closely associated with the spiritual aspects of Native culture. Some, she added, resulted from people with little understanding of Blackfoot who interpreted Native names in their own way for church records (C. Bly 2001).

Name recognition is vital in the media. Readers, viewers and listeners become familiar with news, sports and entertainment personalities through repeated use of their

names. Charlton Weasel Head's name is known in the Standoff-Lethbridge area among Natives and non-Natives alike. Craig Anderson said players get excited knowing Weasel Head is going to play. When the Brandon Bobcats played against the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns in Lethbridge, the fans, said Anderson, were thrilled to see Weasel Head in action — even though he was playing for the visiting team.

When Weasel Head was invited to a basketball workshop hosted by the Sik-ooki-toki Friendship Society centre in Lethbridge, about 30 kids between eight and 13 participated. Local television station CISA arranged for reporter Mike Brown to spend more than an hour recording Weasel Head putting the boys and girls through some basketball drills. When 12-year-old Brad Fleming⁶⁰ heard Weasel Head was going to put on a workshop, he jumped at the opportunity to see one of his basketball heroes in action. "He's awesome," said an excited Fleming, who had first watched Weasel Head play during the Pronghorn-Bobcats match. "He's so fast and he can jump." (Fleming) His outstanding performance at the match had left a lasting impression on the young man's mind. Fleming, who is not Native, attended the workshop and joined in with the rest of the kids learning to dribble, pass, and shoot hoops the Charlton Weasel Head way.⁶¹

⁶⁰For sake of full disclosure, Brad Fleming is the nephew of this writer.

⁶¹When he's at home on the Blood reserve, Weasel Head is often invited to local schools to offer words of encouragement to students. The young people know who he is. While Weasel Head and this writer met outside his sister's home at Standoff, no fewer than a dozen cars and trucks drove by within 20 minutes with the drivers honking horns and the occupants waving and calling out greetings as Weasel Head waved back to them. He had only just returned home from Brandon, where he had completed studies for his degree and finished his fifth successful season on the varsity circuit.

When Weasel Head did so well at the end of the first year with the Brandon Bobcats, his cousin Cody Weasel Head was inspired to write an article for the *Blood Tribe News*. The student reporter focused on the life and times of the Kainai hoopster, providing readers with an exciting feature. Cody Weasel Head wrote:

He took to college basketball like a duck to water... in the first year he was splitting defenses [sic], putting the audience in awe with great passing techniques and even scoring a few points (15 avg/game) with his great 3 point stroke.

And later in the running commentary about the March 2000 national finals, he wrote:

Now it's on to the championship game; the game they waited, hoped and prayed to get to all year, was finally here. Their adversary's [sic] would be St. Francis Xavier. The two teams battled back and forth, showing great skill on both sides of the court. But in the end it would be the Bobcats to fall short of victory by a heart wrenching one point. But... don't be too sad. Although losing the championship, they still played great [...].

The article also includes highlights of Weasel Head's basketball career and mentions that he is studying to become a teacher and that he has a wife and children. Although it is exhilarating at times, it cannot be considered a professional piece of journalism. It is, rather, an amateur account of community boosterism. It does, however, present physical, intellectual and emotional aspects of Weasel Head's life, although not spiritual.

The most recent article about Weasel Head was published in the *Lethbridge Herald* when he and another basketball player received Tom Longboat regional awards for outstanding achievement as athletes. Reporter Garry Allison covered the event, interviewed both Weasel Head and Jocelyn Davis, and took their photo. The June 6, 2001, article focused on scholastic and athletic milestones, and included brief comments

from both Davis and Weasel Head. Allison wrote: “Weasel Head says through his sports career he has learned to be proud of his Native heritage, and to take part in that heritage.”

(Allison 2001) This is a reference to a spiritual aspect of Weasel Head’s life, but, although this is understood by Allison, this is not explained for the general readership.

Basketball and Indians

It is interesting to note that Weasel Head’s choice of sport may have Native origins, according to Sam Houston State University’s Peter Donahue. The invention of the game of basketball is usually credited to Canadian-born educator James Naismith, who is said to have developed the game as a class assignment in the 1890s. But Donahue, an assistant professor of English, said there is enough evidence to suggest that Naismith’s inspiration may have been based on an undeveloped form of the game played by Natives. Fictional characters in author Sherman Alexie’s *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* claim that “basketball is an authentically Indian game,” based on hoop and ball games played by North American tribes (Donahue 45-46).

Donahue said even if basketball has little connection to these games, “the sense of sportsmanship that Indians brought [to these] traditional games survives in the attitudes they bring to contemporary sports such as basketball.” (46)

Donahue points out that works of fiction may well be based on real life, and that “past reservation basketball heroes are recalled not for the number of points or assists they racked up or the important games they won, as sports heroes are typically

remembered by statistics-crazed Americans. Rather, they are remembered solely for the special quality of their play.” (47)

This chapter has shown how colonialism has influenced the way in which newspapers portray Native people, and one Native person in particular. Although the material published may appear to be neutral it is, in fact, condescending. The story of Charlton Weasel Head has been presented in such a fashion, though reporters who interviewed and wrote about him unknowingly perpetuated a stereotypical image of one of Canada’s foremost athletes.

There was an automatic assumption by the *Winnipeg Sun* reporter that if Weasel Head was from a “reservation” that he must have overcome problems in his life to achieve success as a basketball star. When defining the relationship between the athlete and his parents, the reporter pointed out that Weasel Head and his parents were inextricably bonded through substance abuse problems.

On several occasions Weasel Head’s name was carelessly misspelled when other people mentioned in the same story had names which would have warranted a journalist checking to make sure the spelling was accurate.

Although other basketball players, no matter what their cultural background, may well be role models for young people, in Weasel Head’s case being a role model was connected with being Indian as if to assume it was rare for an Indian to be a role model.

Different articles highlighted different aspects of Weasel Head’s life, but most

focused on the physical and intellectual, sometimes the emotional, but never explored the spiritual aspects. In the traditional Native sense, as presented elsewhere in this thesis, all four aspects together constitute balance.

Coverage of Weasel Head was not the only example where some of these faults are evident. More than 80 years ago, as outlined in the previous chapter, similar omissions or assumptions surfaced in the 1915 tribute to Albert Mountain Horse. The article contained very little personal information about the young man's pre-military life or how his traditional upbringing had prepared him to serve on the battlefields of France. His parents were mentioned but their names never cited. Even though the term *role model* was never used, the article quoted the archdeacon addressing the funeral audience as saying Albert Mountain Horse would be an "inspiration to the rising generation."

The next chapter will now take a different approach to writing a profile about Weasel Head to see what has been missing in media coverage thus far.

Chapter 6

Experience

Applying the medicine wheel concept in a profile: Charlton Weasel Head

Some Native people claim that when things are written about them in newspapers, they are often negative and perpetuate stereotypical images. Previous chapters have shown that some articles are blatantly negative while others are intended by their writers to be positive, or at least balanced in traditional journalistic terms. Examples of this bipolar or two-sided balance have been presented, as has a different concept of balance.

Most of this chapter will focus on one character, Charlton Weasel Head, and show how the story of this young man could be told using this different approach to balance. The previous chapter introduced this individual through already published articles, but this version will be this writer's effort to present him using the medicine wheel concept of balance — with its physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects — as outlined in the second chapter. It will also introduce the idea that a warrior is the epitome of balance within Native culture. Blood elder Pete Standing Alone, introduced elsewhere in this thesis, will explain his idea of what a warrior is. The Charlton Weasel Head profile will then be presented, with subheadings used to highlight when the different aspects of balance are present. At the conclusion of the profile, there will be a discussion about how this version of the athlete's story is considered balanced in a traditional Native sense.

Identifying the warrior

This section will explore what a warrior means in Native and non-Native society, showing how previously outlined stereotypes can mislead people to have misinformed perceptions about Indians. Historical images of Native people found in dramatic paintings, printed on postcards and posters, and published in books, newspapers and magazines, often featured warriors — Native men either half-dressed or fully dressed in striking poses. Alberta archivist Brock Silversides explained in his book *The Face Pullers* that photographic images of stoic Indians “excited the imagination” of civilized society between 1871 and 1936. Photographers, Silversides stated,

shaped their portrayal of the Native person according to their public’s whims — first it was the dirty, backward aboriginal in need of guidance, then the idealized, but soon-to-be-extinct “noble savage,” followed by the Christianized, civilized “white” Indian, and, finally, a romantic rendering of the legendary Indian. (11-12)

Those early images typified the noble savage, someone who was young, strong and ready for battle or old, wise and a victor of battles past. The romantic image did not explain what a warrior was, or what a warrior represented in Native society. That was left up to the imagination of the viewer. A warrior was, in fact, a young man who embodied the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of his culture. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples final report, by the time Blackfoot men reached their 20s, having been raised in traditional ways, they became members of their tribe’s warrior societies with responsibilities to watch over and provide for their people (143).

Mention the word *warrior* to most Canadians today and they will likely recall vivid news images from newspapers, magazines and television of masked and armed Mohawks face-to-face with police and the military at Oka in 1990. Or they might conjure up Hollywood images of half-naked and face-painted nondescript Indians chasing — or being chased by — soldiers through badlands or across a desert. Warriors portrayed in today's media, including film, television, newspaper and magazine images, are usually presented in a confrontational situation. But is being bad, or fierce, what being a warrior is all about?

In exploring the Mohawk warrior movement of 1990, Linda Pertusati said the participants at Oka perceived themselves as “a domestic army united to maintain the integrity” of their nation. From a Native perspective, it was not a good-versus-bad situation, no matter what media images were presented. The warrior is more than someone fighting against an opposing force. Pertusati contends that “the very concept of ‘warrior’ differs from its common usage in the dominant society, in a symbolic and highly significant manner relevant to the dominant interests” (42). Although the Mohawk language contains no word that translates literally as warrior, the word *rotiskenrakhete* symbolically means warrior, or those who carry the responsibility of protecting the origins, or those who carry the burden of peace. Pertusati said what Canadians and the rest of the world actually witnessed during Oka was a joining together of historical traditions with modern militant strategy.

She said that the role of the warrior is being part of Mohawk society — not an organization, *per se* — responsible for making the community stronger, “whether it’s protecting jurisdiction, building an economic base, or strengthening a sense of culture” (43). Gail Valaskakis concurs; warriors have historically been an important social force in Mohawk society. She said they were peacekeepers, “the men of the nation, drawn from communities cemented in matrilineal clans and common culture” (Valaskakis 64-65). Part of the role of Mohawk warriors is knowing their history, knowing who they are, knowing their place within the network of clans and kinships, accepting responsibility, and participating in traditional ceremonies. In other words, having some form of balance within Mohawk culture — understanding and taking an active role in the social, spiritual and political system (44-48). The warrior role, at Oka, went beyond the personal ideology of individual being; there is also an organizational aspect to being a Mohawk warrior, one involving decision-making by consensus.⁶²

In Blackfoot culture, the warrior was, and still is, an essential part of society, even though media images associated with warriors in southern Alberta may not be the same as those of Oka warriors. Among the tribes of southern Alberta, according to Blood elder Pete Standing Alone, today’s warriors include educators, war veterans, tribal councillors,

⁶²William Commanda, 88, a respected peacemaker among the Algonquin known as Grandfather William, says consensus meant that traditionally the people “came together and talked together” to make decisions pertaining to their community. Commanda, a traditional chief, says consensus brought the community together to decide who should be their leader, but that process was taken away by the federal government in the 1960s. Native groups were told they could no longer choose their leaders by traditional methods and had to use a democratic election system. Band elections, says Commanda, pit one side against another, families and family members against one another. He says he refused to be elected chief because elections divide people. Division, consequently, does not promote balance.

athletes and those who strive to retain traditional customs. These individuals, and others, he says, are seen as warriors as a direct result of striving to live by traditional values. Standing Alone is one of the *niitsitapi* or *real people* who has received significant media notoriety over the past 40 years, having been the focus of two movies and a book. Now a youthful 73, he spends some of his time raising and trading horses. But he is also very involved with his culture, something he admits he had no interest in as a youth — the time when warriors take their place in Blackfoot society.

The 1960 documentary film *Circle of the Sun*⁶³ portrayed a young Pete Standing Alone torn between Native and non-Native culture. He stated in the film that the culture of the Blood Indians was dying. Forty years later he says that's what he believed back then. He admits he was not involved with his culture at that time, and ventured away from the reserve to work in the United States and elsewhere in Canada for a few years. Standing Alone was 18 when he and an uncle went to Shelby, Montana. He had \$35 in his pocket and the two young men had some sandwiches and pop between them. After taking a bus to Cheyenne, Wyoming, he worked for two days and, in the end, made nothing. "But I didn't want to go back home. I didn't want to be a failure," Standing Alone recalls. "That's what is like the warrior's attitude — *kanutsi-onita*, which means aggressive, no fear." In other words, he had the gumption and fortitude to make something of himself and nothing was going to stop him.

⁶³Colin Low's National Film Board of Canada production.

With that kind of determination, Standing Alone left town and sought work elsewhere. When he eventually returned home, something stirred within his soul to want to do something to save his culture. “Our identity was taken away to a certain extent through governments, missionaries and churches,” he says. “They succeeded in most instances, but not with the Blackfoot. We still have our spiritual ways intact, our way of worshipping and our beliefs, ceremonies and societies.” He got involved with some of the tribal societies and later served on the tribal council.

Twenty years later, Standing Alone was featured in the 1982 documentary film *Standing Alone*,⁶⁴ a sequel of sorts to *Circle of the Sun*. This film showed how the young man had matured, was very much intrigued by his heritage, and was now taking an active part in Blood culture. (Part of the film explores the mystery of medicine wheels.)

Standing Alone says today’s warriors are those who work for their tribe, such as young Blood councillors Jason Goodstriker and Willie Longtime Squirrel.⁶⁵ “Council members fight for rights we’re supposed to have. People who have initiated changes, to make custom band elections,” he says. “They need to stand up to the government and tell them what must change. They have the potential to be leaders in the future.”

Charlton Weasel Head is considered by some, including Standing Alone, to be a

⁶⁴Also produced by Colin Low through the National Film Board of Canada.

⁶⁵Standing Alone also says there are other warriors among the Bloods, including Second World War veterans Steve Mistaken Chief and Arthur Wells. This shows that soldiers, such as Albert Mountain Horse highlighted elsewhere in this thesis, are still considered warriors within Blackfoot culture.

warrior in the making. Others, like his mother and other family members, already see the warrior in him. This chapter will now move into a journalistic phase with a profile of the 24-year-old basketball player.

Because it is a story about an athlete, the physical aspect will be dominant in the eyes of the readers. However, woven within the text will be the other aspects. Some will be obvious, such as the intellectual, while others might not. Subheadings will indicate when different aspects are present. Comments from newspaper reports and from interviews with Weasel Head, his mother and coaches, conducted by this writer, will be included.

Charlton Weasel Head: Profile

When the Brandon Bobcats rambled into town to take on the Lethbridge Pronghorns, hundreds of basketball fans from all over southern Alberta filled the university gymnasium to see *one* player — Charlton Weasel Head. Yet this young man was not the star or even a member of the home-town Lethbridge team. The crowd was ecstatic every time he took to the court and displayed the agility and adept manoeuvring that has made him one of Canada's foremost basketball players.

Weasel Head's eyes scan the court as the basketball rhythmically rises and falls between his left hand and the floor. His heart beats like a drum, a traditional drum made of elk or moose hide resonating with a strong, steady and unwavering beat. Players'

positions become fixed in his mind, as he quickly and carefully calculates what's best for his team. His focus is keen as he cunningly moves around opponents while keeping watch on his teammates.

Physical & Emotional

The sound of cheering fans erupts and echoes throughout the gymnasium as Weasel Head contemplates his next move. The action is suddenly fast, everything coming together naturally for him, and in a split second, without any warning, he bounds down the floor and hurls the ball to the Bobcats' star shooter who appears from nowhere and pops the ball into the Pronghorn hoop with what seems to be little effort. Weasel Head raises his right hand and points into the air, then humbly walks across the floor to the Bobcat bench for a well-deserved break. The crowd is not easily silenced.

By the end of the game, the Pronghorns had shown they had no intention of losing on home turf. The next day's local newspaper reported that, despite having "fought tooth and nail and elbows" to take a four-point lead at half-time and a "14-point edge in the second half thanks to a determined, relentless assault on the boards," the visitors bowed to a 76-68 Pronghorn victory (Yoos 15 Jan. 2000). Weasel Head netted 10 points for Brandon, including a pair of three-pointers in rebounds. Time and time again, no matter what team he's on, that's the type of performance Charlton Weasel Head has made as an invaluable team player.

“If a coach would give him a chance and work with him, he could be a great international player,” says Tim Tollestrup, director of athletics at Lethbridge Community College (LCC), adding that there is no reason why Weasel Head couldn’t be a member of Canada’s national basketball team. The young star has the qualifications and the capabilities to continue his basketball career, and has even been enticed to seek higher levels.

Intellectual & Emotional

But Weasel Head says he feels⁶⁶ it is best that he finish an education degree — his second degree — so he can become a teacher. In the two years he was at Brandon University, he completed a Bachelor of General Studies. He was also one of the driving forces which twice took the Brandon Bobcats all the way to the CIAU championships and came within a hair of winning the national title.

“I don’t think I’ve seen a player who has the balance, using all the tools of balance, that he has,” says Tollestrup. “Very seldom do you see an offensive player who can score from the inside and the outside. But it doesn’t stop there.” Tollestrup added that Weasel Head is “very tenacious” on defence. “He takes all the fun out of basketball for an offensive player. He creates a nightmare for them on defence.”

⁶⁶The term *feels* is used in this thesis and is an expression of an inner quality beyond intellectual or emotional processes. The word *feels* is often used interchangeably with *thinks*, though the two are distinctly different. Feeling, from a Native perspective, incorporates emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual qualities. As one Native put it during an interview with this writer: “It doesn’t matter what you think. It’s what you feel that’s important.”

Other coaches in southern Alberta have watched Weasel Head's climb through local, provincial and national basketball circuits, even before the rising star joined the college team. Ron Strate, assistant coach of the LCC women's Kodiaks basketball team, first encountered Weasel Head about 10 years ago when both were students — Strate's Magrath high school team went up against Weasel Head's Kainai high school team. "When he made it on to the team, Charlton was a force to be reckoned with," says Strate, who is also now completing an education degree at the University of Lethbridge. "When Charlton was on the court, you had to double-team⁶⁷ him to try to stop him. And most of the time that didn't work." Strate says that teams planned special strategies when they knew they would be playing against Weasel Head's team.

Craig Anderson, coach of the LCC men's Kodiaks basketball team, agrees. Weasel Head joined the team about six years ago when Anderson was an assistant coach under Carlos Maffia "He was always 100 per cent — committed," says Anderson. "He was such a raw talent right out of high school; his confidence level was high but he wasn't cocky." Even with mostly rookies on the team that year, the Kodiaks went undefeated 10-0 at home, which was a first for the college and rare in the league. Anderson says the main reason was Weasel Head — he led by example, used his playing skills to the max and was humble. "He was our best player, but he was our hardest working player. You don't see that that often," says Anderson. "He is so unselfish on the court. He gives up the ball and makes everyone else look so good."

⁶⁷Refers to two-player defence on one player.

Intellectual, Emotional & Physical

Athletics is all about balance, and Tollestrup says Weasel Head is a prime example of balance. Physically, intellectually and emotionally astute, Tollestrup says it wouldn't surprise him if Weasel Head had spiritual qualities too. He described the young player as the epitome of balance and an outstanding leader when it comes to basketball.

Although initially describing balance as a player being good at offensive and defensive roles during a game, Tollestrup expanded that balance concept to Weasel Head being exemplary when it comes to unselfishness. "He makes his teammates look good. He's a good general, a good quarterback. He's a passer and a shooter. He anticipates what's going to happen. He's a thief. He makes the game happen."

Tollestrup, a long-time sports aficionado in the Lethbridge area, says he would have enjoyed the challenge of playing against Weasel Head had they been in the same league. "Basketball is a big man's game," says Tollestrup, who stands 6-8, meaning that most basketball players are tall and often stretch well past the six-foot mark. Weasel Head, at 5-10, doesn't let height interfere with his performance among the towering giants.

Tollestrup compliments Weasel Head on what he has achieved academically, to have gone beyond high school, completed three years of college, then graduated from university, and now set his sights on a second degree. "He realizes the intellectual

significance of what he is doing,” says Tollestrup.

Weasel Head was scouted by several universities as he was nearing completion of his final year at LCC, but not by the University of Lethbridge. He would have preferred staying on home turf and playing for the Pronghorns. “I had my mind set on the U of L,” says Weasel Head. Tollestrup said he was just as disappointed as Weasel Head when the college’s star player, with national achievements to his credit, wasn’t invited to join the Pronghorns.

Emotional

Then a call came from coach Jerry Hemmings at Brandon University to try out for the Bobcats and Weasel Head hastily made the 1,000-kilometre trip to Manitoba to show what he could do. “I felt intimidated at first,” recalled Weasel Head, who found half the 30 hopefuls were black and taller than himself. He also wasn’t the only one trying out for point guard.

“I remember thinking to myself, ‘I’ve got to give it all I’ve got,’ and that’s what I did,” he says. The coaches saw what Weasel Head could do and invited him to join the team. He was named starting point guard, a position he held throughout the season. “The coach needed me to be the quarterback, to set up the team. Points were not my goal,” says Weasel Head, adding that he found his teammates to be outstanding athletes and a powerful force on the court.

Although Weasel Head has said his long-term goal is to have a positive influence on young people, Anderson says he has already had an impact because of the athletic prowess and the type of person he has become. The coach pointed out that Weasel Head has had an influence on the basketball courts and in the communities where he has lived, worked and played over the past five years.

Because of what he has witnessed in Charlton Weasel Head, Anderson says he now thinks about Native people from a different perspective. “It’s made me a more open person, learning about Native people and their culture.” One of the stereotypes, he pointed out, is that Natives have no work ethic. However, Anderson says he has seen many Native students attending Lethbridge Community College prove otherwise.

Emotional

Weasel Head had obstacles to overcome to get through college. Physically getting to the college to attend classes and stick to a schedule for practices and games wasn’t easy because he would have to leave home before 7 a.m. to get to Lethbridge for 8 a.m. classes. He didn’t have a car, so he had to find ways to get to the city. Anderson says Weasel Head was “resilient” about getting to college in time for class. “He has shown he has a great work ethic.”

Being “Native” was never really a factor when it came to basketball, according to Anderson. “In sports we can diminish those roles, but outside it’s not easy,” he added,

pointing out that the stereotypes of drunk Indian and brave warrior never came up with the college team members. “Being a team is more important than culture,” says Anderson.

But during Weasel Head’s first year with the Kodiaks, he got a reputation for having a bit of a temper and Anderson says some sports enthusiasts, including coaches, labelled him because of that. The label, he says, had negative connotations of being a savage Indian or a warrior. Anderson said it seemed to disappear after a year or so until an incident in the last few moments of a national final the first year Weasel Head was with the Brandon Bobcats.

“He elbowed someone with a minute left in the game and people were instantly saying negative things [...] bringing out that negative ‘savage’ image,” says the coach. “For a whole year after that, people would bring up that he was Native and had a temper. If it had been a non-Native, that wouldn’t have happened.”

Another quality Weasel Head has acquired through his years on the courts, according to Anderson, is that of humility. “He could have been arrogant and the critics would have labelled him even more,” he says, “but he wouldn’t allow that.”

Anderson said he argued on Weasel Head’s behalf on more than one occasion, telling any coach who dared to raise that “Native” label in conversation that “they’d want him on their team.”

Other college teams also wanted to pit their players' skills against Weasel Head's during the time he was at LCC. Anderson recalled the time the Kodiaks were invited to a tournament at Edmonton's Grant MacEwan College. Weasel Head got sick the day they went to play. When the host team and audience found out he wasn't going to be on the court they were disappointed. "We didn't know that before but he was *the* reason we were invited to the tournament," says Anderson.

When the Brandon Bobcats showed up in Calgary for their 2000-2001 season opener against the University of Calgary Dinosaurs,⁶⁸ the Dinos were prepared for Weasel Head and his teammates. A dozen loud-mouthed young men sat directly behind the bench where Bobcats coach Jerry Hemmings and his team made their base. This rambunctious little group intermittently shouted comments at the Brandon players during the intense gameplay.

Weasel Head once told a reporter⁶⁹ that people made fun of his name. The hecklers typified such action as they repeatedly shouted slowly and in unison, in their deep and monotonous tones, "Weasel Head." It resonated throughout the gymnasium above the noise of the cheering crowd.

Weasel Head later said he never heard the mocking cries of the hecklers. However,

⁶⁸Game was held Oct. 27, 2000, and attended by this writer.

⁶⁹*Winnipeg Sun* sports reporter Paul Friesen. See previous chapter.

some members of his fan club (family and friends) sitting a few rows from the jeering lads turned and scowled in disgust. One Native man, obviously tired of what seemed like taunting, stood up and quietly asked the group to quit it.

The hecklers responded and turned to face the man, acting animatedly puzzled as several replied in unison: "It's his name. We're just saying his name." The man shook his head and sat down to continue watching the game. Family members later said they didn't like what they heard, though they accepted that heckling is part of the sport.

No other player in the game attracted such attention from the hecklers. Occasionally, the group tried to distract Bobcats team leader Earnest Bell, one of the foremost scorers in all of Canada. "Ernie!" they shouted, "Osteoporosis slowing you down?" When Bell was switched, the hecklers called out: "Good! Let him sit down. Yes, he needs a rest."

Anderson says this sort of heckling is not uncommon in competitive sports, especially when fans of the opposing team are trying to distract someone as high-profile as Weasel Head. "They know he is good, so it's almost like an honour" to be targeted as someone of such a calibre, he says.

Physical & Emotional

With the glory of five seasons now over, Weasel Head has no intention of disappearing from the basketball scene. This past summer he kept his basketball skills

intact by playing for the summer men's league at the Lethbridge college. At the end of the season, he was named the league's Most Valuable Player. Anderson says "players actually get excited when they know they will be up against him; they respect him." In the six years Anderson has been working with college teams, he says, no other athlete has "demanded such respect" because of his outstanding abilities on the court, his dedication to the team, and the work he does off the court.

Weasel Head is also shown respect by his family, friends and members of the Native community. When the Bobcats played against the Dinosaurs in Calgary, his mother drove 1,000 kilometres and upwards of 50 avid fans drove 200 kilometres to see him play. When the Bobcats played in the March 2001 Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) nationals in Halifax, Weasel Head had his own cheering section in the arena all the way from southern Alberta — his mother included. Countless more fans in Standoff, Cardston and Lethbridge, and across the country, were also glued to televisions to watch his every move.

Spiritual

Weasel Head says always knowing he had so much family and community support helped him stay focused as he dribbled and scored on basketball courts from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. He said that also helped him as he attended classes and fulfilled course assignments. Yet, admits Weasel Head, it wasn't always easy.

“Sometimes I felt like I just wanted to return home to be with my family,” he says. “It was tough having my family away.” Weasel Head’s wife Lenni Day Chief and children, son Bailey, 3, and daughter Taylor, 2,⁷⁰ stayed at Standoff with her family while he stayed in Brandon.

But there was always one person close at hand who could help Weasel Head to refocus when he felt that way — his mother.

Born at Cardston, Alberta, on March 11, 1977, the son of Gloria Weasel Head and Norbert Fox, Charlton Weasel Head is the youngest of four children. He has a brother and two sisters, plus three older brothers and an older sister through his father.⁷¹ His parents separated when he was an infant and he was raised by his mother, living on and off the Blood Reserve until 1983 when his great-grandfather, Pat Weasel Head, passed away. Since then he has lived on the reserve, except for his time at Brandon.

Perhaps Gloria has been an inspiration for Weasel Head and the reason why he had no hesitation asking her if she would go with him to Manitoba. The two of them

⁷⁰Taylor was born in October 1999, a month or so after Weasel Head arrived in Brandon.

⁷¹Western society generally refers to such family relationships as half-brothers and half-sisters. Native society, however, accepts extended family (including cousins, step- and half-siblings, and adopted children) as immediate family and often terminology does not differentiate. They are seen as whole people, not part people. Weasel Head specifically said he had “a brother and two sisters” in addition to “three older brothers and an older sister” through his father.

Alfred Young Man, head of the Native Studies department at the University of Lethbridge, said on this topic: “We must not forget our great extended families whose magnificent spirits glitter like beautiful necklaces of purple and white pearls strung out before us with sparkling diamonds, multicoloured emeralds, gold, and silver beads strewn gracefully across the velvet blue-green surface of our common Mother, that giver of all life, the Earth.” (Young Man 44)

shared an apartment during the two years in Brandon; while he worked on a general studies degree, his mother worked on an Aboriginal counselling degree. They supported each other as they dealt with day-to-day life at university and being away from the rest of their family in southern Alberta. Both graduated from Brandon University the same day.

Gloria Weasel Head, in discussing her son, provided a glimpse into the role of mothers in Blood culture. "Charlton has treated me very well. All my children have, no matter what pain I may have put them through," she says, referring to the years when she struggled with alcohol. Now 12 years sober, Gloria says she always tried to teach her children the importance of traditional values. "I believe everything is based on spirituality. What I mean by spirituality is a way of life, a way of life taught to me by my parents and grandparents. They taught me how to love, how to respect and how to care."⁷² She says Charlton and his brother Lionel were raised in the company of her grandfather, a medicine man who lived the traditional ways.

The love shown by her extended family was, in turn, shared with her own children. Now her son is sharing that love with others. "He has given me love. I've learned a lot from Charlton," says Gloria. "I've learned to forgive, for I know in his small heart as a young boy, no matter what I'd done, he has forgiven me."

⁷²On Dec. 29, 2000, while attending a basketball tournament in Winnipeg, Gloria Weasel Head contemplated her purpose in life and wrote in her journal: "Everything I've worked for is based on spirituality. When I say spirituality, I mean a way of life taught by my grandparents. This certain way of life also looks after the needs of my children. This way of life is the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of taking care of myself and my children."

"It was a simple way of life," she says, reflecting on how she was raised.

Still feeling responsible as a mother, Gloria says she would do anything for her children and they would do anything for her. That support is one of the reasons she travelled literally thousands of kilometres to see Charlton play basketball during the five years he was with the Kodiaks and the Bobcats.⁷³

Today, Gloria is the drug and alcohol program co-ordinator with the Kainai Board of Education and works with students in schools in the Standoff area.

Although he didn't have much to do with his father as he was growing up, Charlton Weasel Head says he has no animosity towards him. Norbert Fox works for the Blood Tribe Agricultural Project and Weasel Head says they talk when they occasionally see each other.

Emotional

During one of their periods away from the reserve, Weasel Head, who was in Grade 1 at the time, and his mother lived in Edmonton while she completed studies for a social work diploma at Grant MacEwan College. "Moving to a big city from the reserve, being young, I didn't know what to expect or how to react," he says. Until then, he had never had to deal with racism. Now it was literally in his face. "There were two or three incidents where kids just wanted to beat me up," he recalled. The fights didn't make any

⁷³She wrote in her journal while attending the Dec. 29, 2000, tournament in Winnipeg: "My main reason for being here [in Winnipeg] is to support my son and watch him play his final year in basketball. He's a very good basketball player and I am very proud of him."

sense to him because, prior to this, he had had both Native and non-Native friends at Standoff and Cardston. “When I returned to the reserve, it was good to be back home with my friends,” he says.

Physical

Athletic prowess and achievement are prominent in Native society in southern Alberta and Weasel Head’s interest in sports emerged when he played soccer about age 11. He said one of the biggest influences in his life was his brother Lionel, who was an all-round athlete in hockey, football, basketball and baseball. His brothers Gifford, Elliot and Jason Fox also excelled in several sports, including basketball (Wells 1998). “At first I felt I had to do it too,” says Weasel Head, “but then I got to like doing it for myself.”

The first time Weasel Head played basketball was in Grade 5. “I was fast, and had a fast dribble,” he says. “But I didn’t know how to take a break.” Two years later, he was the water boy for the high school’s Kainai Warriors and a “gym rat” shooting the ball on the side as the team practised their moves. He credits high school coach Jerry Dawson, who spent 40 years coaching kids at Standoff, as the one who opened the door for his basketball career. Weasel Head says it was a two-way partnership — he was willing to learn the skills needed to play basketball and Dawson was willing to help him develop those skills.

Emotional

Life as a teenager wasn't always easy for Weasel Head, but he says he doesn't mind sharing his stories in the hope that others will learn from his experiences. He has actually insisted on making time to visit a school or youth group to tell his life story when the Kodiaks or Bobcats were on the road or back in southern Alberta. He tells them the facts, that he was almost killed in car crashes on more than one occasion.

When he was about 13, a chance meeting with his older brother Jason almost cost him his life. Weasel Head vividly recalled what happened more than 10 years earlier. His brother, who was drunk, offered him a ride home from Fort Macleod and they were driving towards Cardston when Jason passed out and lost control of the car. "I closed my eyes," he says, and "next thing we flipped in a ditch." Weasel Head says he was thrown out of the vehicle and his legs were pinned under the roof. This, he added, posed a dilemma for the emergency response team: if they lifted the car, it would crush one of the young men. But someone figured out a way to extract both young men safely from the wreckage. Weasel Head had a head injury and his right leg needed therapy for three months. He says he realized then how important his legs were if he wanted to play sports. "I thought I wouldn't be able to run," he says. "I was very lucky."

A second crash occurred when Weasel Head was 17, not long after he started using drugs and alcohol. He and three others, who had all been drinking, were near Billings, Montana, and the driver of the car passed out going about 60 miles an hour. The car hit a

culvert, rolled and flipped. This time Weasel Head sustained only a cracked cheekbone.

The second crash was too close to becoming a tragedy and Weasel Head says he remembers thinking that's not how he wanted his life to end. He says he feels it is important to tell this to young people so that they will think twice about making wrong choices. "That is how my life was," he stated, adding that substance abuse "did play a big part in my early days, and it got to a point my grades were way too low."

Emotional & Intellectual

One day, he said, he realized he wouldn't be able to do school sports any more and asked himself, "Is this what I want to do with my life?" Weasel Head says he thought about it and felt he didn't want to experience any more negatives in his life. "I had family behind me, supporting me," he says. "I knew I could go on to college and get a degree."

Physical & Emotional

Determined to do something with his life, he found his way into several sports, including baseball and football, and then basketball. In Grade 10, he made it to the southern provincial basketball team. He made top 20 for the provincial team, but eventually got cut from the roster. It was a blow to his ego, yet the disappointment didn't last long as he became determined to sharpen his skills. The following year he was named to Team Alberta.

That's when he realized he could go somewhere with basketball. "I was fast, a good defender, and could see the whole court. I didn't think about myself," says Weasel Head. "I wasn't there to score, but to help someone else score. I could drive to the hole (penetrate, get through) and shoot three-pointers." And college scouts knew it.

According to Lethbridge sports writer Dave Wells, "most observers wondered whether the lightning quick penetrator would ever perform in the college or university ranks." Weasel Head showed those "observers" he had every intention of making the grade in the varsity hoop leagues.

While playing for the Kainai Warriors in Grade 12, he received recruitment letters from four Alberta colleges: Mount Royal College, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Grant MacEwan College and Medicine Hat College. But upon graduating from Kainai high school in 1995 he enrolled at Lethbridge Community College. Weasel Head says he wanted to stay close to home. It wasn't long after classes started that he got a spot on the Kodiaks basketball team. After three years making a name from himself on the college circuit, he spent the next two years with the Brandon University Bobcats.

Emotional & Spiritual

Weasel Head says he learned during the first year at college that basketball couldn't be his top priority. He tried to put basketball first and school second, then school first and basketball second, with family in third place. "Now it's family first, then

school, then basketball,” he says. Coach Craig Anderson says the young star had to work at his priorities, first in his relationship with wife Lenni and, eventually, with their son Bailey and daughter Taylor. (He and Bailey share the same birthday, March 11, and on the same week Bailey was born in 1998, Weasel Head was named an All-Canadian.)

Deep inside this unassuming young man is an inner strength that has also helped him stay on track. Weasel Head says this strength “comes down to knowing who I am, knowing my culture and traditional values.” Those values, he added, include respecting the elders, “knowing they are the people who have guided the new generation” and preserved the culture of the Blood Indians. Weasel Head says knowing that his culture is “still alive” is important to him. “I am proud of who I am [...] and excited to be a Native and succeeding basically in a white world,” he says.

Before every league and championship game, Weasel Head says, he offers a personal prayer — only a few words — in Blackfoot, the traditional language of the Bloods. And when he scores a three-pointer, he doesn’t forget where his inner strength comes from — he points upwards as a sign thanking a close friend and his great-grandfather who have both passed from this life. He says these are still important people in his life, and he thanks them for being there for him.

He’s also pleased to see Bailey, as young as he is, happily participating in traditional dancing at powwows and learning to sing to music performed by relatives in the drumming group White Feathers. Weasel Head, meanwhile, is uplifted by the singing

and dancing, and especially the drumbeat. “It gives me a sense of feeling ... listening to the drumbeat (and) the singing,” he says.

Gloria Weasel Head says the spiritual aspect of her son’s life is represented by “the values” he has developed through the years. She explained that this includes “how you look at life, deal with life and relate with other people — that’s the spiritual.” She says her son continues to develop balance in his life as he studies at university and matures as a human being. “Our ancestors always had a concept of balance,” says Gloria, pointing out that her son was raised being taught this concept. Balance, she explained, is incorporating the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects into one’s life.

Although he has no defined “spiritual” habits, Charlton Weasel Head says he does respect the spiritual aspect of life. He says when he has needed guidance and strength to overcome tough times in his life, he has talked with elders. In the summer of 2000, Weasel Head and his wife, and their children, visited a medicine woman to help them as a family. He admitted it was something they needed because he and Lenni had “some differences” and he could see his occasional drinking with friends wasn’t helping matters. “I don’t know if I will ever be free of that,” he added, referring to alcohol. However, he says he knew the medicine woman could help and that he felt renewed and cleansed after getting guidance and a traditional blessing from her. Weasel Head says it helped him re-focus so he could return to university to complete his degree and, once again, play a pivotal role on the basketball courts. He says his family continues to be the impetus for

getting an education and doing the things he does.

A warrior in the making

Charlton Weasel Head is considered by his family to be a modern-day warrior in the making. He has warrior qualities: someone who is strong, who is brave, who has courage to overcome what stands in his way, and who is a leader among his people who is seen by them as doing good things. These four qualities are reflected in his life. Weasel Head is not only strong physically because of his training and athletic prowess, but also strong intellectually because of his thirst for learning, strong emotionally because of his stamina to stick to his goal and thwart any thought of giving up, and strong spiritually because of his loyalty to traditional values taught him by his mother and elders in his community.

The warrior label in a modern context is often given to a politician, such as a tribal council chief or councillor, or someone seen as a soldier fighting a cause. Frank Weasel Head, a respected elder among the Bloods, said his great-nephew Charlton is a warrior in the truest sense — someone who wants to do something to better his people.

The younger Weasel Head says he has been “so honoured and blessed” to be considered one of the better basketball players in Canada. “As a Native person, I have pushed these limits for the younger generation to believe it’s possible to succeed.” He says he doesn’t see himself as a warrior yet, but that he is becoming one.

“Once I become an educator, I’ll not only be able to put my athletics knowledge to good use but I will be able to help young people realize the importance of education.” Then, says Weasel Head, he’ll feel he has made a difference.⁷⁴

Analysis of profile

The preceding biographical report has outlined some key points which could be included in a sports profile about Charlton Weasel Head. It shows, to some extent, the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of this man’s life. It may now be evident to the reader that all four aspects are interconnected.

The physical aspect is the most obvious because it is a story about an athlete, and being an athlete involves physicality. To have achieved excellence in such a physically demanding sport means that Weasel Head would have consistently worked hard to be so fit. The profile showed that there came a point in his life when he decided to focus on sports and honed his skills for several years before being accepted for the college basketball team. To be so fit would mean dedicated exercise to maintain optimum physical ability. That dedication would require maintaining a healthy emotional state, that stick-to-it-iveness, to maintain such a rigorous regime. He would also need a certain intellect to learn new physical skills and strategies. His coaches spoke of how Weasel Head showed continued progress throughout the five years he played the college and

⁷⁴Material for this article was obtained through interviews with Charlton Weasel Head (8 Aug. 2000, 7 Mar. 2001, 20 Aug. 2001), Ron Strate (12 Aug. 2000), Gloria Weasel Head (28 Mar.2001, 9 Jan. 2002), Craig Anderson (5 Aug. 2001) and Tim Tollestrup (17 Aug 2001).

university circuits. Had he not shown interest to learn new skills and strategies, and grasp what he was taught, he would not have gone beyond the first season. This young man also had to have an inner quality or understanding of the self, with the confidence to know he was capable of pulling it all together to be a powerful performer.

The intellectual aspect is also fairly clear. Weasel Head is a university student who has completed one undergraduate degree and is now working on an education degree. That generally equates to having the intellect to achieve academic standards. But it also involves having emotional stamina to deal with the demands placed upon such students. Weasel Head, with his ambition to become a teacher, realizes the importance of that role and how important education is to his people.

The emotional and spiritual aspects may not be so obvious. Some people may consider them to be one and the same, but there is a distinction. One element which always came through in comments from Weasel Head's mother and coaches, as well as from himself, was that he is humble. He may well be proud of his achievements, but he carries them with humility. This, according to his mother, comes from having been raised with traditional values such as respect for self and others, respect for the Mother Earth and respect for the Creator.

It is interesting to note that athletics director Tim Tollestrup twice brought up the word balance when discussing Weasel Head. He said: "I don't think I've seen a player who has the balance, using all the tools of balance, that he has." This pertained to how

Weasel Head could play either offensively or defensively, suggesting a two-sided balance. However, later Tollestrup expanded two-sided balance to include physical, emotional and intellectual qualities. Perhaps Tollestrup, admitting Weasel Head was the epitome of balance, recognized the athlete as being well-rounded as a person without being aware of the traditional Native sense of balance. After discussing the medicine wheel concept of balance with this writer, Tollestrup said it wouldn't surprise him if Weasel Head also had spiritual qualities.

This profile was not intended to be a better piece of journalism, but an example of how Weasel Head's true character would have emerged had a journalist taken time to pursue the story using the medicine wheel model. It is obviously in much greater detail than the article written by Paul Friesen in the *Winnipeg Sun*. Friesen even admitted he appreciated the interview with Weasel Head and wished he had more time to do a more thorough interview.

This writer's attempt to write a profile may well exemplify balance more closely resembling the Native conception of the term. It contained all four aspects of the medicine wheel model, though each aspect does not have the same amount of lineage. Overall, though, it did present a balanced report about Charlton Weasel Head. Journalism educator Mitchell Charnley also argued that balance did not mean an equal amount of space or lines in newspapers and magazines or time on radio or television, even in the simple two-sided model of conventional journalism.

The next brief chapter will offer two additional examples to see how the traditional Native sense of balance has been applied by other journalists.

Chapter 7

Experience

Medicine wheel concept in other examples

**There's no need to fear the mythical drunken Indian,
for they live in the city behaving like white men.**

— Everett Soop —

The previous chapter offered this writer's example of how the medicine wheel concept can be applied from a journalistic position. This chapter will examine how other journalists have written about the lives of two Native people, both members of the Blood tribe. The profile about Gertrude Spear Chief was written by Angela Grier, a university student interested in becoming a journalist. Spear Chief is the Native education program co-ordinator for the Lethbridge School Division. The second example looks at how several journalists commented on the life of the late Everett Soop, who was himself once a prominent journalist and cartoonist. Material presented will show that the traditional sense of balance was present, even if not employed consciously by the writers.

Gertrude Spear Chief

Angela Grier wrote a profile about Gertrude Spear Chief for the *Lethbridge Herald*, which appeared in the June 24, 2000, edition. The following is the article, in its entirety, as submitted by Grier. Italicized sentences, phrases or words indicates material removed by an editor from the author's submitted article. The reason for examining this

article is two-fold. The first is to see how it was originally written and the second is to see if changes made to the article made any difference in the overall presentation. This is the first time Grier, who is Peigan, had written an article specifically for a newspaper.

Breaking down cultural barriers

Gertrude Spear Chief honoured for her work in aboriginal community

By Angela Grier

for the Lethbridge Herald

As the growing force of *benevolent* Aboriginal women are taking charge of their careers and their communities, Gertrude Spear Chief says she is content with the way of life in the circle of the urban “reservation” of Lethbridge.

A member of the Blood Tribe and coordinator of the Native Education Program for Lethbridge schools, she was one of four people recognized by the Lethbridge Aboriginal community during Wednesday’s National Aboriginal Day celebrations.

Walking into her office, you’ll most likely find her preoccupied with a phone call (her staff jokingly refer to the phone as a deformity on the side of her head) or in a conversation with someone. Her ties to the First Nations are prevalent as seen through artwork and posters regarding Aboriginal issues or gatherings. *In an underlying way, Gertrude sends a strong message that she’s a busy woman with little time to spare.*

Some may ask what’s so special about this woman? She oversees the entire Aboriginal student body in the Lethbridge district of 27 schools involving 1,000 Native students. Her responsibilities consist of seeing that Aboriginal students have access to cultural activities, Blackfoot classes and Native clubs that will instill identity and pride of being a First Nations person in their schools.

Gertrude enthusiastically points out how these students want more understanding of their culture and how devoted she is to making this happen. She also touches on the importance of bridging gaps between Natives and non-Natives through the involvement of non-Native students throughout cultural activities and classes. Gertrude enjoys seeing the enthusiasm shared about the distinct uniqueness of Aboriginal people. “There’s no need to take an anthropology class at the university,” states Spear Chief. “We have two huge reserves in our own back yard (Blood and Peigan).” Gertrude understands the importance of breaking

down these barriers, as she has lived off the reserve since she was 18. *She knows that breaking the barriers helps instill power and knowledge to the ignorance often seen in urban areas.*

When addressing issues of Aboriginal students and the challenge of keeping them in school, Gertrude stands firm on having a strong family support unit. She advocates between parents and the school regarding any concerns and information needed by parents or the schools regarding the student.

This independent, *yet* humble woman has triumphed over her obstacles of being an Aboriginal and being a woman. Gertrude has worked since she was 18. *While* starting her family young, *it* put more than enough work on her plate. She admits that alcohol played a factor in her life, but it never stopped her from persevering. She dedicates her ability to burn the candle at both ends to her father; a man who she watched work tirelessly to provide for a family of 11 children. Her family stressed the importance of being close-knit and upholding their family values. This virtue of Gertrude remains strong today.

Spear Chief's job doesn't simply end at the School District #51 Building. She is also the chairman for the Opokaasin Advisory Committee, a part-time university management student and sits on the "Hard-to-Serve Committee." She also works with the Aboriginal Inter-Agencies of Lethbridge to discuss mutual concerns and policy matters. This committee worked collectively on the local National Aboriginal Day celebrations. *Spear Chief's views on National Aboriginal Day are recognition and awareness of First Nations people.* She is relieved to see that the First Nations are finally acknowledged in their own right in contrast to other minorities.

Gertrude speaks of her dedication to assisting Aboriginal families. Her previous work has included working at women's shelters and transitional homes as families move from the reserve to the city. Although she is not directly involved in family care, she makes home visits with student's families to support or hear their grievances. She stresses that everyone needs someone to listen to them and isolation often leads to disaster. She expresses her gratitude to four special women who stayed by her side in critical times when she wanted to give up, namely Gina Tailfeathers, Lena Nefeuld, Karen Howe and Gisele Gregory.

Gertrude speaks of the candidness she shares with families in order to make a connection. She says she has nothing to hide at the age of 53. This rawness she shares is one of her tactics she uses to get in touch and to let others know that she's been there, on both sides of the fence. *Her advice to anyone is that all obstacles can be overcome, just to keep trying, don't give up! Her life experiences*

have given her her greatest virtue - perseverance! To persevere and to always leave room for improvement. These words from a way too modest woman who blushes at the idea of being honoured through this article and at the National Aboriginal Day celebrations. This bountiful mother, grandmother and wife might have just enough time to catch her breath and relax once in a while - something she's still learning to do as well.

This article highlights the life of a woman who is a member of the Blood tribe and very much involved with her community. Physical, emotional, intellectual aspects are easily identifiable, and the spiritual aspect is evident through reference to Spear Chief's dedication to family values, the Blackfoot language and Native culture, as well as the important role of women in Native society. These factors would be seen as the spiritual aspect to someone who is attuned to Native culture, because they are inclusive.⁷⁵

Some material edited from the submitted article was relatively insignificant, but three things omitted may have added to the overall balance. The first thing edited was one word in the lead sentence. Grier wrote that "the growing force of benevolent Aboriginal women are taking charge of their careers and their communities," but an editor chose to remove *benevolent* from the sentence. This word gave added meaning to the subsequent term *Aboriginal women*, showing that women have an important role in Blood society. Blackfoot society was chronicled in the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the prominent role of women within that culture, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, was given significant attention therein (1 4 3). By removing *benevolent* from the sentence, the meaning of the lead changed somewhat. Had it

⁷⁵When Spear Chief read the article before it was submitted, she was overcome emotionally and wept because, she said, she saw it as a well-rounded and very personal perspective on her life.

remained in the article, it could have given the reader just that bit more insight into the life of Gertrude Spear Chief. However, in conventional journalism, the description “benevolent” is a value judgment by the writer and therefore is seen as being at odds with objectivity or fairness.

As for the other significant deletions, one was “She knows that breaking the barriers helps instill power and knowledge to the ignorance, often seen in urban areas” and the other was “Her advice to anyone is that all obstacles can be overcome, just to keep trying, don’t give up! Her life experiences have given her her greatest virtue - perseverance! To persevere and to always leave room for improvement.” This information, particularly the last two sentences within the second section, would again have given added insight into this woman’s life.⁷⁶

Although material was edited from the submitted article, it still presented a profile that would be considered balanced within the medicine wheel concept because it included all four aspects of balance in the traditional Native sense.

Everett Soop

One of the Blood Tribe’s contemporary warriors was journalist and cartoonist Everett Soop. Although he never wore a badge emblazoned with the word warrior, Soop was a warrior in the true sense. When he received the coveted Native American

⁷⁶Missing from this article was an accompanying photo, which would have put a face with the comments. The *Herald* originally planned to publish the article on Page 2, the spot for daily profiles with an accompanying photo. However, an editor selected it for Page 4 — a community news page — instead.

Journalists Association (NAJA) lifetime achievement award in 1999, actress Tantoo Cardinal offered a peek into Soop's life as a warrior. She wrote: "Everett Soop has given his life, his energy, toward making this world a better place. He is an essayist, a philosopher, an artist, a cartoonist, an activist and a warrior in the greatest sense of the word" (NAJA).

Soop worked hard to do something good for his people through his prolific writing, thought-provoking cartoons, being a champion for the disabled, fighting injustice and serving on the tribal council. Soop died on Aug. 12, 2001, at Lethbridge, Alberta. He was 57. His warrior status was evident in the recognition he received from fellow journalists in their tributes following his death. Articles were published by Garry Allison in the *Lethbridge Herald*, David Bly in the *Calgary Herald* and Sandy Greer in the *Globe and Mail*. Media educator Sandy Greer presented posthumous kudos to the self-proclaimed "pit bull of Native journalism" in her tribute to Soop in the Aug. 29 edition of the *Globe and Mail*.

The entire article will not be presented, as the intent is to summarize what Greer wrote. Her piece was often poignant and personal because she knew Soop well and maintained a friendship after producing the 1998 film documentary *Soop on Wheels*. The tribute, published on the paper's obituary news page, commanded approximately 75 per cent of the page and included a large three-column portrait plus three of his satirical cartoons. Greer wrote

Soop was an outspoken political satirist who did not suffer fools gladly and took on both cultures — white and aboriginal — with telling accuracy. He was ahead of his time, exposing injustices and messy realities two and three decades ago that only now are beginning to be dealt with: suicide, incest, sexual abuse, political corruption and addiction. He was fiercely determined to tell the truth as he saw it.

Greer's account delves into areas of Soop's life that illustrate the four aspects of Native balance. For the physical aspect, it shows that Soop struggled to deal with the debilitating effects of muscular dystrophy for more than 40 years. The emotional aspect is presented through comments about his voracity to speak out on vital issues through his newspaper columns, his cartoons, three books and in the film documentary *Soop on Wheels*.⁷⁷ Greer explained how Soop used humour to cope with his disability and the isolation it brings with it. She said he told her

My friends are not coming in the last 10, 15 years. [...] But they'll all be there at my funeral, and that's telling me they'd sooner see me dead than alive. Why the hell do these people make such a display of a funeral? I wish I could moon them, if I had a chance — stick my butt out from my coffin.

His humour demonstrates both the emotional and the intellectual aspects. By saying he became "an advocate for the disabled, seeking to make meaning of a life fraught with adversity and pain," and that he educated medical professionals, the public and other people with disabilities, Greer showed the physical, emotional and intellectual aspects.

Greer also noted that Soop spoke Blackfoot fluently, that he loved classical music and his studio was "filled with books" on philosophy, anthropology, art and world

⁷⁷Originally broadcast on VisionTV in 1998, *Soop on Wheels* was also broadcast on the Bravo television channel on Dec. 3, 2001.

religions. In addition to having studied at no fewer than four post-secondary institutions, Soop was taught traditional Blackfoot values by his grandmother and mother, and “paid close attention to traditional teachings and practices as a child growing up among various elders.” This shows the intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects.

Garry Allison and David Bly provided readers with different accounts of Soop’s life. Although they didn’t adhere to the journalistic medicine wheel model offered in this thesis, they did provide valuable insight. Allison reported on the death of Soop with a front-page article in the Aug. 14, 2001, *Lethbridge Herald*. The article carried the headline “Native satirist dead at 57” with the sub-heading “Everett Soop’s famous acerbic wit will be missed, says Blood Tribe Chief.” No photo accompanied the article. Allison commented: “In a world long before the plague of political correctness, Everett Soop was politically right. Now his pen is at rest.” The article contained facts about the journalist’s life and tributes from people who knew Soop, including Chief Chris Shade, journalism educator Bob Rupert and Alberta historian and author Hugh Dempsey.

Bly reflected on the life of the “cartoonist, artist, writer, philosopher and advocate for the disadvantaged” in a feature on Page B4 of the Aug. 17, 2001, *Calgary Herald*. The article commanded two-thirds of the page and featured a two-column photo of Soop, a smaller and lighter version of the one used in the *Globe and Mail*. Bly, who is the *Herald’s* heritage editor, wrote:

Humour was Soop’s weapon in his battle against injustice, and it was a weapon he

used with power and precision. He was a strong advocate for fair treatment of Natives, but didn't hesitate to criticize his own people if he felt they deserved it. Bly quoted Soop from a 1979 interview, in addition to several statements Soop made as journalist and advocate for the disabled. He also included comments from former *Kainai News* editor Caen Bly and Alberta historian Hugh Dempsey.

Bly's article not only includes the physical aspect, through addressing Soop's battle with muscular dystrophy, but also the intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects through comments about his thirst for learning through several post-secondary institutions, that he was a published author and artist, and that he was involved in politics both on the reserve and throughout Alberta. Bly wrote: "He expressed his love and respect for his mother in his nickname for her — 'the colonel.' His grandmother he referred to as 'the five-star general.'" He also wrote that Soop, in his school years, developed a love for literature, art and classical music, and "at the same time, he was heavily influenced culturally by his grandmother [...] and his mother [...]." (D. Bly) This shows that he was raised in a traditional environment, incorporating the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of Blood culture.

This chapter and the previous chapter have shown that journalists can apply the traditional Native sense of balance to articles they write about people. The balance outlined in this chapter would have been even more complete had these writers been aware of the medicine wheel model and been able to use its quadrants as a type of check list while researching and writing.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Understanding: Beginnings, Exploring, Experience in retrospect

Those who read this thesis will have realized it was not written within a familiar linear framework generally found in academia, but rather a unique model based on the medicine wheel found within many Native cultures. The medicine wheel has also been used to demonstrate how journalists could use this concept to write about Natives in a unique and balanced way. Additionally, it was used to show that journalists could encounter four phases — beginnings, exploring, experience and understanding — as part of a personal journey to become better acquainted with Native cultures.

Research exploring how journalists have written about Native people in the past hundred years or so has shown that coverage has indeed not been balanced. It was not balanced in either the traditional journalistic sense or in the traditional Native sense. The problem was raised by officials from the Assembly of First Nations, through data obtained in the Debwewin media project, from participants at the media conference at Carleton University, and from participants at the public forum in Lethbridge.

Balance in the traditional journalistic sense includes, among several concepts presented, getting both sides of the story or reporting on bad versus good. This bipolar or contradictory approach is not the same as the Native concept of balance. This

imbalance is evident in the stereotypical images and misconceptions still perpetuated through stories and photographs, which support claims from Native people that newspapers have published a great deal of negative material about Natives for a long time.

The introductory chapter described how this imbalance has shown itself in southern Alberta newspapers, from accounts of Indians in trouble in the 1880s to Indians in trouble in the present day. Although most reports in the early days were negative and some similarly negative reports occasionally surface today, more positive *and* balanced articles are being published today. The *Lethbridge Herald* has tackled complaints about news coverage raised by members of the Native community, but some people feel there is still not enough balance. There is no clear answer as to why they believe that. Perhaps some people feel a few years of balanced coverage doesn't balance what has been published in the past hundred years. Other questions have been left unanswered as the writer has carried out this assignment, and those are questions others will have the opportunity to explore on their personal journey.

The comment from one man while discussing if this writer had ever attended any Native event, noted earlier in this thesis, shows that some people who have lived in southern Alberta all their lives just don't understand Native culture. The man said, when told of upwards of 8,000 people attending a healing gathering, that he supposed it was nothing but a big drunk. Part of the problem with someone, who was raised in the Lethbridge area more than 40 years ago, having the wrong idea about such matters could

well stem from negative or unbalanced news circulated about Natives in the past. To his credit, however, he readily admitted that his way of thinking was outdated and that he was intrigued to learn something about Native people.

In closing, several people whom this writer met during the experience phase offered some worthwhile advice for journalists. Blood tribe teacher and artist Lance Scout said: “Journalists need to listen and not just look with their eyes. They need to give, not just take.” Blood tribe educator and author Mike Bruised Head said that journalists and all non-Natives would benefit from spending time with Native people, getting to know them as individuals and getting to understand their cultures. Similarly, Steve Outhouse, a former media relations executive with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, said he found journalists are often not adequately informed when they write about Native issues. Former *Kainai News* editor Caen Bly said “there’s a major wealth of cultural news, history — a wealth of knowledge, right under our noses by way of elders and their wisdom.”

The late writer and artist Everett Soop said journalists need to be open-minded. If journalists could adjust their way of thinking to include the medicine wheel concept of balance, there is a good chance some interesting changes will evolve in the way they write about Natives and other people. Some journalists, like Garry Allison, though perhaps unknowingly, have already found a way to write balanced articles in the traditional medicine wheel sense. Allison is to be commended on his professional astuteness and

insightful quest for balance as a journalist.

Another journey begins

Having already completed a four-fold journey from a point of beginnings, followed by explorations, experience and understanding, this concluding section is actually a point of new beginnings. This thesis, like any other thesis, is but a beginning. This writer recommends that journalists take the opportunity to begin looking at issues involving Native peoples from a different — a balanced — perspective.

The journey around the media medicine wheel started by listening to what people had to say, making sense of what they said and then trying to find a solution. The symbolism of the media wheel is strong and can be adapted to suit various situations. Can journalists use this four-point approach when writing about Natives? Yes.

Although the main focus of the thesis has been to show how the medicine wheel concept can be applied to the coverage of Native people and the issues affecting their lives, there is no reason journalists could not apply this same concept in their day-to-day work with all people.

Appendix A

John Medicine Horse Kelly's diagram on balance

Appendix A**Steel medicine wheel (Brumley 50)**

Appendix A**Blood Tribe health care centre medicine wheel**

Appendix A

Conference of Indigenous Politics and Self-Government logo by Hans Ragnar Mathisen

(Brantenberg)

Appendix A**Manitoba Millennium High Cross**

Bibliography

- Alia, Valerie. Indigenous Peoples and Media Ethics in Canada. Cultural Survival Quarterly. Summer 1998.
- Allison, Garry. "Medicine wheels still evident in North America." Lethbridge Herald 23 Feb. 1993: Newspapers in Education.
- . "Invisible neighbors just across the river." Lethbridge Herald 16 Feb. 1993: Newspapers in Education.
- . "Kainai High grads Longboat recipients," Lethbridge Herald, 6 Jun. 2001: B3.
- . "Blood Reserve athletes making their mark." Lethbridge Herald. 2 Dec. 2000. B5.
- . Personal interview. 5 Jul. 2000.
- . Personal interview. 17 Aug. 2000.
- Anderson, Craig. Personal interview. 28 Jul. 2001.
- Arcand, Stanley. "Media must earn natives' respect." Edmonton Journal 9 Aug. 1998, final edition: A13.
- Archeological Society of Alberta (Lethbridge Centre). Story on Stone: A photographic record of rock art in the Southern Alberta area surrounding the City of Lethbridge. 1980.
- Assembly of First Nations. Media Handbook. Ottawa: 1998.
- . Resource Guide for Reporters. Ottawa: Unknown.
- Avison, Shannon, and Michael Meadows. "Speaking and Hearing: Aboriginal Newspapers and the Public Sphere in Canada and Australia." Canadian Journal of Communication. Vol. 25 2000, pp 347-366.
- Baillargeon, Morgan. Telephone interview. 19 Apr. 2001.
- Baden-Powell of Gilwell, Lord Robert. Scouting for Boys. Ottawa: National Council Boy Scouts of Canada. 1908.

- Baldwin, Christina. Calling the Circle: The First and Future Culture. New York: Bantam, 1994 (1998).
- Barnett, Don C. "Mystery of the Medicine Wheels." 17 Nov. 2001 <<http://usask.ca/education/ideas/tplan/sslp/wheel/medicine.htm>>
- Bastien, Betty. "Natives in the Media" public forum, Lethbridge, Alberta, 19 Nov. 2000.
- Berger, Thomas R. A Long and Terrible Shadow. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre 1991, 1999.
- Berkhofer, Robert F. The White Man's Indian. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Bissley, Jackie. "Adam Beach." Cowboys and Indians. Vol 9 No. 2 May 2001.
- Bly, Caen, "Natives in the Media" public forum, Lethbridge, Alberta, 19 Nov. 2000.
- . Personal interview. 23 Jun. 2000.
- Bly, David. "Native cartoonist used humour to fight injustice." Calgary Herald. 17 Aug. 2001. B4.
- Bopp, Judie, and Michael Bopp, Lee Brown and Phil Lane. The Sacred Tree. Wilmot, Wisconsin: Lotus Light, 1989.
- Brantenberg, Terje, Janne Hansen and Henry Minde, eds. Proceedings of the Conference on Indigenous Politics and Self-Government. Tromsø, Norway, November 8-10, 1993. Tromsø: University of Tromsø - Sámi dutkamiid guovddás. 1995.
- Brink, Jack. "Dog Days in Southern Alberta." Archeological Survey of Alberta Occasional Paper No. 28. Alberta Culture, Historical Resources Division, 1986.
- Brownstone, Arni. War Paint: Blackfoot and Sarcee Painted Buffalo Robes in the Royal Ontario Museum. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1993.
- Burland, Cottie. North American Indian Mythology. London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965.
- Cairney, Richard. "Canada Like You've Never Seen It." SEE Magazine, 14 Oct. 1999. No. 307. 1 May 2001 <<http://198.161.96.43/see/issues/1999/1014/print1.htm>>

Canada. Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Draft. Ottawa: 10 Nov. 1998.

Canadian Newspaper Association. "Facts About Daily Newspapers — Lethbridge Herald." 23 Nov. 2001 <<http://www.cna-acj.ca/newspapers/facts/circulation.asp>>

Canadian Press. "Images on screen promote aboriginal cliches." Ottawa Citizen Online, 11 May 2001. <<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/minrep/resource/articles/cliche.htm>>

---. "X-Men claw past Bobcats to win CIAU title." Lethbridge Herald, 20 Mar. 2000, B1.

Chapman, Ian, and David Newhouse and Don McCaskill. Management in Contemporary Aboriginal Organization. 14 July 2001. <<http://www.brandonu.ca/Library/CJNS/11.2/McCaskill.pdf>>

Charney, Mitchell V. Reporting. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1959 (Third edition 1975)

Commanda, William. Personal interview. 20 Mar. 2000.

Community Council Diversion Program. Winnipeg: Aboriginal Ganootamaage Justice Services of Winnipeg, Inc.

Coward, John. M. The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identities in the Press, 1820-90. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

(CP) Caps and Spelling. Toronto: The Canadian Press, 1998.

Craats, Rennay. "Putting First Nations Last." Ryerson Review of Journalism. Summer 1998.

Cudmore, James. "Healing Power: More than 4,500 shamans, traditional healers and medicine men from across the Americas gather to share their secrets," National Post. 25 Aug. 2000.

Cumming, Carman. The Canadian Reporter. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada. 1994.

Dead Dog Cafe. By Thomas King. Perf. Thomas King, Edna Rain and Floyd Favel Starr. Prod. Kathleen Flaherty. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. 1999 - 2001.

Debwewin Media Monitoring Three-month Pilot Project Final Report. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 1999.

Dempsey, Hugh A. Stone "Medicine Wheels" Dedicated to Blackfoot War Chiefs. Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences. Vol. 46. No. 6: 177-182. 1956.

---. The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and other Blackfoot Stories. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1994.

Dickason, Olive Patricia. Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Donahue, Peter. New Warriors. New Legends: Basketball in Three Native American Works of Fiction. American Indian Culture and Research Journal. Vol. 21. No. 2, 1997.

Down, David and Russell Everett. "Healing Circle." Canadian Architect. 1998: Vol. 42 No. 1142(11), pp 30-33.

Ecklund, Janine. "Mean streets: Food bank statistics paint disturbing picture of rising poverty rates." Lethbridge Herald. 29 Jul. 2001, A1, A3.

Eliade, Mircea. The Two and The One. London: Harvil Press. 1965.

Fee, Margery. Guide to Canadian English Usage. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Fire, John (Lame Deer) and Richard Erdoes. Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

First Peoples and the Fourth Estate Conference: A Media Conference on Aboriginal Issues. Overview/Final Report of the First Peoples and the Fourth Estate: A Media Conference on Aboriginal Issues. 10 Dec. 1998. Ottawa: The Aboriginal Affairs Group, 1999.

Fleming, Bradley James. Personal interview. 17 Jun. 2001.

Fontana, David. The Secret Language of Symbols: A Visual Key to Symbols and their Meanings. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993.

Fox, Jason N. "Accusations hurt parents." Lethbridge Herald. 27 Jul. 2001. A5.

Francis, Daniel. The Imaginary Indian. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1995.

Frank, Lois. "Early cultural properties of the Bloods." Niitsitapi: The Real People — A Look at the Bloods. Blood Indian Reserve. Liberty Printers.

Frideres, James S., and Lilianne Krosenbrink-Gelisson. Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1993.

Friesen, Paul. "Bobcat takes control of his life." Winnipeg Sun 30 Dec. 1999: 59.

---. "Re: Charlton Weasel Head." E-mail to David Forbes. 1 Oct. 2001.

"From past issues." Fort Macleod Gazette. 6 Jun. 2001. Page 7.

Gaffen, Fred. Forgotten Soldiers. Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985.

Gauthier, Jason. "Cardston toddler killed." Lethbridge Herald. 20 Jul. 2001. A1.

---. "Child services review ordered in tot's death." Lethbridge Herald. 21 Jul. 2001. A1.

Giago, Tim. "Setting the record straight on media stereotypes." Cultural Survival Quarterly (Winter 1994): 21-23

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 5th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

Granatstein, J.L. "100 Canadians: Maclean's ranks the famous — and the forgotten — who most inspired the nation." Maclean's. 1 Jul. 1998. 14, 15, 49, 51

Greer, Sandy. "Everett Soop: The pit bull of native journalism." Globe and Mail, 29 Aug. 2001.

Grier, Angela. "Natives in the Media" public forum, Lethbridge, Alberta, 19 Nov. 2000.

---. "Breaking down cultural barriers." Lethbridge Herald. 24 Jun. 2000. A4.

- Grigas, Lee C. Medicine Wheels: Tools of Adaptation in Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Society. Master of Arts thesis. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1995.
- . Telephone interview. 18 Apr. 2001.
- Grindle, Lucretia. "The major and the chief." Globe and Mail. 6 Dec. 1999. R1.
- Hellson, John C. The Function and Significance of the Blackfoot Sweat Lodge. University of Lethbridge. Thesis. Lethbridge, Alberta.
- Hess, Ingrid. "Herald story perpetuates harmful native stereotypes." Lethbridge Herald. 27 Jul. 2001. A5.
- Hodgson, Janet. Vision Quest: Native Spirituality and the Church in Canada. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1990.
- Hothorn, Lars. North American Indian Artifacts: A Collector's Identification and Value Guide. (3rd ed.). Florence, Alabama: Books Americana, 1984.
- Hultkrantz, Ake. Belief and Worship in Native North America. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981.
- Hutchinson, Ken. Architectural notes on "Design Understanding" for Pê Sâkâstêw.
- Jenish, D'Arcy. Indian Fall: The Last Great Days of the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot Confederacy. Toronto: Viking (Penguin), 1999.
- Johnson, Alex. The Last Great Indian Battle. Occasional paper No. 30. Lethbridge Historical Society. City of Lethbridge. 1966 (1997)
- Joseph, Frank. The Medicine Wheels. Sacred Skies of the West. Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House, 1997.
- Jung, C. G. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Princeton and New York: The Bollingen Series/Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Kainayssini. Declaration of the Elders of the Blood Indian Nation. Standoff, Alberta: Blood Tribe and Council.

Kane, Paul. Blackfoot Chief and Subordinates. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Kelly, John Medicine Horse. Personal interview. 6 Nov. 2001.

Kessler, Lauren, and Duncan MacDonald, When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2000. 5th edition (Instructor's Edition).

Kesterton, Wilfred, and Roger Bird, "The Press in Canada: A Historical Overview," in Communications in Canadian Society, ed. Benjamin Singer. Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1995.

Kesterton, W.H. A History of Journalism in Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.

Kreztmann, J.P., and J.L. McKnight. Building Communities from the Inside Out: A path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Evanston: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1994.

Kurkel, L.C. "The Navajo Code Talkers." Navy and Marine Corps World War II Commemorative Committee, Navy Chief of Information Office. 01 Aug 2001. <<http://was.com/webcat/navajos.htm>>

Lane, Phil Jr., Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp. Community Healing and Aboriginal Social Security Reform. Lethbridge, Alberta: Four Worlds International Institute for Human and Community Development. 1998.

Large, Norma. "Healing Justice." Alberta Views. Vol. 4 No. 3. May/June 2001.

Lee, Gloria. "Defining Traditional Healing." Justice as Healing, 1(4), 5-8. 1996.

Lilley, David. "RE: Request to David Lilley." E-mail to David Forbes. 25 Sep. 2000.

---. Nekaneet Gathering preview. Maple Creek and Southwest Advance Times. 21 Aug. 2000. pp 1-2.

---. Nekaneet Gathering coverage. Maple Creek and Southwest Advance Times. 28 Aug. 2000. pp 1-2, 5-6.

Long, David Alan and Terry Fox. "Struggles within the Circle: Violence, Healing, and Health on a First Nations Reserve." Visions of the Heart. Eds. David Alan Long and Olive Patricia Dickason. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1996.

Lothian, Jason. "From teacher to Order of Canada: Helen Many Fingers has bridged the past with the present and on to the future." Lethbridge Herald. 19 Jan. 2000. A1.

Lower, J. Arthur. Western Canada: An Outline History. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre. 1983.

MacLeod, Robert. "St. Francis does it once again." Globe and Mail, 19 Mar. 2001, Pp S1 and S6.

Mails, Thomas E. Dog Soldiers, Bear Men and Buffalo Women: A Study of the Societies and Cults of the Plains Indians. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1973.

Mallery, Garrick. Picture-writing of the American Indians. Vol 1 of 2. New York: Dover Publications. Toronto: General Publishing. 1972.

Mander, Jerry. In the absence of the sacred: the failure of technology and the survival of the Indian Nations. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991.

Maracle, Brian, "One More Whining Indian Tilting at Windmills," in Clash of Identities: Media, Manipulation, and Politics of the Self, ed. James Littleton. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: Prentice Hall Canada, 1996.

Marshalsay, Barbara and Margaret Wheeler. Lethbridge News and Macleod Gazette: 1882 - 1900 — A Subject and Biographical Index. Lethbridge, Alberta: MW Associates Library and Information Services.

Mathisen, Hans Ragnar. "Re: Hans." E-mail to David Forbes. 28 Nov. 2001.

Melchior, Jeff R. "Mutual ignorance source of racial difference." Temple City Star 26 Jul. 2000.

---. "Natives pursue 'the big claim'." Temple City Star. 26 Jul. 2000.

Mencher, Melvin. News Reporting and Writing. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown. 1977. 1981. Fourth printing 1982

- Mieder, Wolfgang. The Only Good Indian is a Dead Indian: History and Meaning of a Proverbial Stereotype. 1995. 1 May 2001 <<http://www.deproverbio.com/>>
- Miller, James Rodger. Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- Miller, John. Yesterday's News. 1998. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Mohawk, John. The Sacred in Nature: Mythology can Change our Minds. Native Americas: Akwe:kong's Journal of Indigenous Issues. Vol 12 No. 1 & 2 Spring/Summer 1995. Cornell University.
- Mofina, Rick, and Kate Jaimet and Susan Korah. "World will hear aboriginal voices: PM." Ottawa Citizen 30 Mar. 2001: A5.
- Monture-Angus, Patricia. Journeying Forward. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1999.
- . "Lessons in Decolonization: Aboriginal Overrepresentation in Canadian Criminal Justice." Visions of the Heart. Eds. David Alan Long and Olive Patricia Dickason. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1996.
- Morris, Alexander. The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories. Including the Negotiations on which They were Based, and Other Information Related Thereto. Toronto: Prospero, 2000 (Toronto: Belfords, Clarke & Co., 1880).
- Moore, Robert. "Masculine Initiation for the 21st Century: The Global Challenge." Everyman: A Men's Journal 31 (1998): 4-9.
- Mountain Horse, Mike. My People, The Bloods. Ed. Hugh A. Dempsey. Calgary: Glenbow Museum and Blood Tribal Council, 1979.
- Nabokov, Peter. Orientations from their Side: Dimensions of Native American Cartographic Discourse. Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use. Ed. G. Malcolm Lewis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

- Newbery, J.W.E. The Universe at Prayer. Native Religious Traditions. Eds Earle H. Waugh and K. Dad Prithipaul. Joint International Symposium of Elders and Scholars, Edmonton, Alberta, 1977. Wilfrid Laurier University Press: Waterloo, Ontario. 1979.
- Ninastako Cultural Centre. Niitsitapi: The Real People — A Look at the Bloods. Blood Indian Reserve. Liberty Printers, 1983(?).
- Oakes, Gordon. Personal interview. 6 Jul. 2001.
- Outhouse, Steve. Personal interview. 4 Apr. 2001.
- “Ownership of Canadian Daily Newspapers.” Canadian Newspaper Association. 20 Nov. 2001 <<http://www.cna-acj.ca/newspapers/facts/ownership.asp?language=English>>
- Pangea, Alice. First Presbyterian Church home page. 22 Feb. 2000 <<http://www.alice.pangea.ca/~firstwpg/overview.html>>.
- Paraschak, Victoria. “Variations in Race Relations: Sporting Events for Native Peoples in Canada.” Sociology of Sport Journal. 1997 pp 1-21
- Pertusati, Linda. In Defense of Mohawk Land: Ethnopolitical conflict in Native North America. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Pierson, Tom. “Healing Gathering leans on past to secure future.” Maple Creek News. 29 Aug. 2000. pp1.
- Peters , Evelyn. Aboriginal People in Urban Areas, in Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues, ed. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason. Toronto: Harcourt Canada, 2000.
- Postman, Neil. Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past can Improve our Future. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 2000.
- Price, Greg. Personal interview. 14 Aug. 2000.
- . “Natives in the Media” public forum, Lethbridge, Alberta, 19 Nov. 2000.

Rand McNally Map of Lethbridge & S. Alberta Communities. Map. Markham: Allmaps Canada, 2000

Reading, Chris. "Something Big." Alberta Views. May/June 2001 Vol 4. No. 3. pp39

Resource Guide for Reporters. National Indian Brotherhood (Assembly of First Nations). Ottawa.

Rideout, John, and E. Lisa Moses. "Quest for Spirituality." Association Director. Nov./Dec. 2000. Vol. 1 No. 5. pp 6 - 11.

Rolf, C.H. "Policing in Relation to the Blood Tribe." Report of a Public Inquiry: Volume 1: Findings and Recommendations. Feb. 1991.

Roper, Edward. By Track and Trail: A Journey Through Canada. London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1891.

Ross, Rupert. Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality. Markham, Ontario: Octopus Publishing Group. 1992.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa, 1992. 15 Apr. 2001 <<http://www.indigenous.bc.ca>>

Saltanaviciute, Jurgita. Native American Sacred Sites: Battle for Protection. Master of Arts thesis: Laramie, Wyoming: University of Wyoming, May 2000.

Satzewich, Vic, and Terry Weatherspoon. First Nations. Race, Class and Gender Relations. Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993.

Schudson, Michael. The Power of News. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Scofield, Gregory. Stones for the Medicine Wheel. Vancouver: Polestar Press, 1993.

Scott, Peter. Personal interview. 20 Jul. 2000.

---. "The Herald responds." Lethbridge Herald. 27 Jul. 2001. A5.

Sears, Val. "Bad times demand bad jokes." Ottawa Sun. 23 Oct. 2001 p13.

Silverside, Brock V. The Face Pullers. Saskatoon: Fifth House. 1994.

Smith, Donald B. "From Sylvester Long to Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance." Being and Becoming Indian: biographical studies of North American frontiers. Ed. James A. Clifton. United States: Richard D. Irwin. 1989.

Soop, Everett. Personal interview. 23 Oct. 2000.

---. Personal interview. 8 Jun. 2001

Stackhouse, John. Canada's Apartheid: Welcome to Harlem on the Prairies. Globe and Mail. 3 Nov. 2001. Print edition, F2. 17 Nov. 2001 <<http://globeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/printarticle/gam/20011103/FOCSTAC1>>.

Standing Alone. Dir. Colin Low. Perf. Pete Standing Alone. National Film Board of Canada, 1982.

Standing Alone, Nadine. Personal interview. 23 Jun. 2000.

Standing Alone, Pete. "Natives in the Media" public forum, Lethbridge, Alberta, 19 Nov. 2000.

---. Personal interview. 14 Jul. 2001.

Statistics Canada. Profile of Census Tracts in Lethbridge and Red Deer. Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1999. 1996 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 95-211-XPB.

---. ---. Profile of Divisions and Subdivisions. Ottawa: Industry Canada, 1999. 1996 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 95-190-XPB.

Strate, Ronald. Personal interview. 12 Aug. 2000.

Summerby, Janice. Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields. Veterans Affairs Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1993.

Switzer, Maurice. Debwewin: The Assembly of First Nations Media Watch Project. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 1998.

Tailfeathers, Ira. Personal interview. 23 Oct. 2000.

Taylor, Fraser. Standing Alone: A Contemporary Blackfoot Indian. Halfmoon Bay, B.C.: Arbutus Bay Publications, 1989.

Taylor, John L. Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939. Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Branch, 1984.

Tichenor, Philip J., and George A. Donohue and Clarice. N. Olien. Mass Communication, Policy and Community Conflict. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980.

Thompson, Wendy-Anne. "Code talker player heroic role." Calgary Herald. 11 Nov. 2000, Pg A1 and A2.

Tollestrup, Tim. Personal interview. 17 Aug. 2001.

Vickers, J. Rod. "Re: Medicine Wheels." E-mail to David Forbes. 11 Apr. 2001.

Vickers, Scott B. Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

Vogt, Eric David. An Information Analysis of Great Plains Medicine Wheels. Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, B.C. April 1990.

Walker, Deward E. jr. Protection of American Indian Sacred Geography. Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom. Ed. Christopher Vecsey. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Washington, Booker Taliaferro. 12 July 2001 <<http://nps.gov/bowa/home.htm>>

Weasel Head, Charlton. Personal interview. 17 Dec. 1999. Lethbridge, Alberta.

---. Telephone interview. 21 Jan. 2000. Brandon, Manitoba.

---. Personal interview. 22 Jul. 2001. Standoff, Alberta.

Weasel Head, Cody. "Hoop Dreams." Blood Tribe News, 7 May 2000, Pg 6.

Weasel Head, Gloria. Telephone interview. 24 Jan. 2001.

---. Personal interview. 9 Jan. 2002.

Wells, Dave. "LCC Weasel Head sets example at ACAC." Cage, December 1998.

---. "Other teams have southern Albertans at nationals." Lethbridge Herald, 18 Mar. 2000: B1.

---. "Weasel Head a key to Bobcats' success." Lethbridge Herald, 20 Mar. 2000: B1.

Wheeler, Margaret and Greg Ellis. Lethbridge News 1901 - 1906 and Lethbridge Herald 1905 - 1918: A subject and Biographical Index. Lethbridge: The Archives of the Sir Alexander Galt Museum, City of Lethbridge. 1987.

"White and red races unite in last tribute to brave Indian." Lethbridge Daily Herald, 29 Nov. 1915: p1.

Worthington, Peter. "Wartime medals misunderstood." Winnipeg Sun. 26 Aug. 2001. 30.

Yoos, Cameron. "Kodiak athletes wrap up inspirational season." Lethbridge Herald, 26 Mar. 1998: B3.

---. "'Horns won't take Bobcats lightly.'" Lethbridge Herald, 14 Jan. 2000: B1.

---. "'Horns rally in second half for tough win over Bobcats.'" Lethbridge Herald, 15 Jan. 2000: B1.

Photographs

Blood Tribe health care centre medicine wheel. Standoff, Alberta. Personal photograph by author. 23 Oct. 2000.

Manitoba Millennium High Cross. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Personal photograph by author. 27 Aug. 2000.