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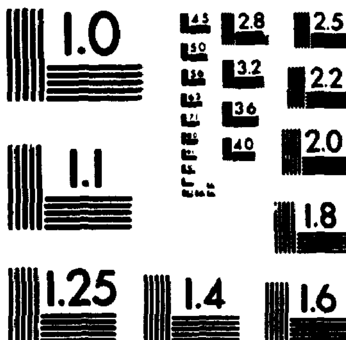

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DISCOURSE IN THE SUN DANCE WAR 1880-1914

An analysis of the narratives of suppression, resistance, reaction, and revitalization in the successful struggle by the Plains Indians to defeat the Canadian government's orchestrated campaign to destroy their central religious ceremony

By James Robb, B.A., B.J.

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

Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
June 1, 1995

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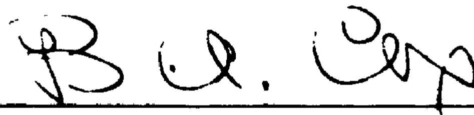

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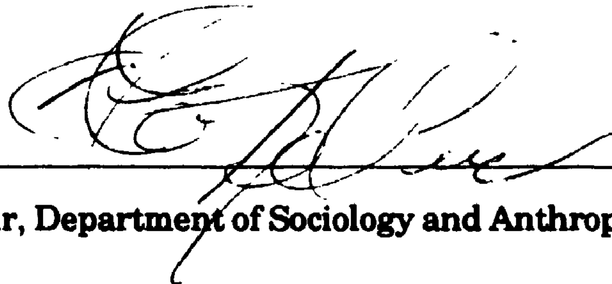

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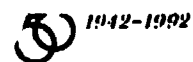

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ABSTRACT

Between 1880 and 1914 the Canadian government attempted to suppress the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians because it interfered with efforts to turn the Plains people from a nomadic, hunting lifestyle to farming and ranching. The government failed in its avowed aim. The discourse surrounding the Sun Dance in those years, as it emerged in the narratives of Indian Agents and other Indian Affairs officials, the missionaries, the Plains Indians, and of Prairie newspaper editors, is examined using Anthony Wallace's revitalization theory, Edward Bruner's concepts concerning narrative and discourse, and the categories of Indian stereotypes described by Michael Marsden and Jack Nachbar. The thesis demonstrates that the Plains Indians successfully resisted the government's efforts to eliminate the ceremony and, in line with revitalization theory, used it to retain some hold on their traditional culture and religion despite the demonstrable active hostility of Euro-Canadians. The thesis also supports Bruner's view that narratives are the products of the dominant society and often fail to reflect reality.

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•

My spouse, Carrol, deserves a special place on this page for her understanding forbearance, patience and generosity in overlooking my absent-mindedness and glazed look. Her support, and occasional elbow to get on with it, saw the project through.

•

My children -- Peter, Nancy, Malcolm, and Edward; and granddaughters Evelyn, Rebecca and Laura -- gave me their full moral support and cheered me on.

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Indian reserves in the West (From map of Dominion of Canada showing Indian reserves prepared to accompany 1891 annual report of the Indian Affairs Department)

SECTION I

The Discourse Environment

CHAPTER 1 -- INTRODUCTION

"Let us have Christianity and civilization to leaven the mass of heathenism and paganism among the Indian tribes . . . ."

Treaty commissioner Alexander Morris

For seven decades the Plains Indians waged a long, sporadic struggle to fend off the vigorous, often punitive efforts of the Canadian government to destroy the Sun Dance, the central, sacred, integrating ceremony of their native religion.

It was a struggle that ended only in 1951 when the government finally gave up its attempts to eliminate the Sun Dance, dropping coercive measures first legislated in 1895.

This study examines the discourse of the early years of the struggle as it was played out in the narratives of the Plains Indians themselves, of politicians, of Indian Affairs officials, of the missionaries, and of Prairie journalists.

How did newspapers interpret the Sun Dance? The study examines the columns of Prairie newspapers in Saskatchewan and Alberta between the 1880s and 1914 when even more stringent sanctions were enacted in the drive to finally extinguish the ceremony. The analysis is conducted within a more

general examination of how Plains Indians were portrayed to Euro-Canadian newspaper readers of the era, marked as it was by casual, effortless racism towards all people and communities not of white Anglo-Saxon or northern European origin.

Methodological guidelines for the study have been drawn from Anthony Wallace's work on revitalization movements (1956), and from Edward Bruner's discussion of discourse and narrative (1986).

A COLLAPSING CULTURE

By 1880, the traditional lifestyle of the Plains Indians had collapsed. Decimated by disease and liquor, destitute and often starving, stripped of their homelands and hunting grounds, shunted on to reserves, subjected to capricious police and official power and the regulations set out in the Indian Act of 1876, deprived of their traditional food resource and dependent on government for sustenance, and with their cultural and religious institutions under sustained attack by church and state, the Plains Indians faced a bleak future as the twentieth century approached (Pettipas 1988).

It was, for the Plains tribes, a period of accelerating, enforced, and near suffocating change (Patterson 1972: 3-4, 37).

European diseases -- measles, scarlet fever, influenza -- ravaged the tribes, reaching epidemic proportions at times (McQuillan 1980), while virulent outbreaks of smallpox took a dreadful toll among the Blackfoot, Cree, Ojibway and Assiniboine.

Smallpox swept across the Plains in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and in 1869-70 a new outbreak devastated the Blackfoot, spreading rapidly to the Cree and Assiniboine.

Describing the West as "a chaotic land of sickness and death, " Fiske (1973:88) puts the death toll at up to two-thirds of the population. Harrod (1971:43) suggests the Blackfoot lost half their population in the 1870-71 outbreak.

The Methodist John McLean describes that fateful year (1891: 24):

> The summer of 1870 was one of great sorrow, but as the winter began the disease abated and the hopes of the people became bright. Alas! they were soon to be doomed to disappointment, for the fell destroyer returned with renewed strength, breathing the foul air and scattering the inmates of the lodges . . . .

Dempsey (1978) asserts that an earlier epidemic in 1837 had wiped out two-thirds of the Blackfoot population of that era.

Tuberculosis was an ever-present scourge on the reserves, claiming the lives of many victims each year, as attested by the annual reports of the Indian Affairs Department in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

Between 1871 and 1877 the Plains Indians were effectively brought under government control, especially with the signing of treaties 4, 6 and 7, covering the Crees, Ojibway and Assiniboines of Saskatchewan, and the Crees, Assiniboines, Blackfoot and Sarcees of southern Alberta.

Coincident with the signing of the treaties and the creation of the reserves, the buffalo virtually disappeared from the Plains, over-hunted to near extinction by the demands of the buffalo robe trade in Canada and the United States (Roe 1934), among other causes. Andrist (1964: 333) describes the final days of the "remnant of the great, brown living blanket that had once grazed

the plains from Canada to Texas." The northern herd, or what was left of it, was concentrated in Montana, unable to move into Canada because the grass had been burned off to discourage migration while the buffalo hunters went to work.

By the end of 1883 the herd had been eliminated (Andrist: 334). Andrist quotes a hunter's description of the scene upon the Little Missouri in 1881-82, after the killers had completed their work: "I saw buffaloes lying dead on the prairie so thick that one could hardly see the ground. A man could have walked for twenty miles upon their carcasses."

The disappearance of the buffalo and the impact on the economy of the Plains Indians has been compared (Cash 1976:108) to the disaster that would follow if all industry and agriculture in the United States disappeared over a 20-year span. "The people were desperate, potentially [and actually] starving, and clearly saw the end of their civilization."

Meanwhile, Euro-Canadians looked forward to the day when the Plains Indians would be encouraged to forsake their culture and become assimilated into the dominant society (Taylor 1979; Trigger 1985:3).

Chamberlin (1975: 215) cites the comment of treaty commissioner Alexander Morris in the 1880s as typical of the attitudes of those Euro-Canadians who had negotiated the Prairie treaties in the previous decade.

> Let us have Christianity and civilization to leaven the mass of heathenism and paganism among the Indian tribes; let us have a wise and paternal Government faithfully carrying out the traditions of our treaties, and doing its utmost to help and elevate the Indian population, who have been cast upon our care, and we will have peace, progress, and concord among them in the North-West; and instead of the Indian melting away, as one of them in older Canada tersely put it, 'as snow before the sun', we will see our Indian population, loyal subjects of the Crown, happy, prosperous and self-sustaining, and Canada will be enabled to feel, that in a truly patriotic spirit, our country has done its duty by the red men of the North-West, and thereby to herself.

Politicians, Indian agents, and missionaries echoed such sentiments as articles of faith and pursued the twin goals of Christianizing and civilizing the Indians with enthusiasm, although they sometimes disagreed on whether Christianity or civilization should take priority in the tearing down and remaking of a culture (Tobias 1976). Euro-Canadians, like their counterparts in the United States had few lingering doubts about their "divine mission" to bring civilization to the Indians (Kehoe 1989: 27).

In the 1879 annual report of the Department of the Interior, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who was also the minister responsible for the Interior Department, assured the Governor General that the Indians, ". . . were abandoning the old tribal system and the state of tutelage which it involves, [and] assimilating with the rest of the population . . . ." (SPC 1880:x).

Scholars, too, saw the end of the Plains Indians only as a matter of time, prompting an anthropological campaign to secure and record as many facts as possible about ceremonies like the Sun Dance and the West Coast Potlatch before they vanished, along with the people who performed them. Some native groups were doomed to early extinction, others might survive for several generations or even centuries, but the end of the Plains culture and others was

held to be inevitable, even if a precise date for doomsday could not be assigned (Jenness 1932:264).

The Euro-Canadian narrative spoke of assimilation, as it had for many decades, and manifested itself in an ideology that insisted that Euro-Canadian values could be inculcated in the Plains Indians, making them responsible for their own destiny through learning the value of hard work on the farm, thrift, ownership of property and sobriety. This "old story" (Bruner 1986:140) was the dominant narrative for Euro-Canadians.

The annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs during the 1880s and beyond are replete with self-satisfied assurances by politicians and bureaucrats that all was well with the Plains Indians. They were learning to farm, their children were attending schools and acquiring white ways (although there was a regrettable tendency on the part of some parents mired in the old ways to take them out of school for extended periods for hunting, fishing and, yes, dancing), and they were being turned to Christianity and Christian values, despite reluctance on the part of the older generation to abandon their so-called "pagan" beliefs.

REVITALIZATION

While Euro-Canadians were embellishing the assimilation narrative, a more muted narrative was developing among the Plains Indians. It embraced both resistance and persistence (Spicer 1971; Castile and Kushner 1981)) and demonstrated a remarkable flexibility in persevering with old ways and old customs, however modified and syncretized to cope with Euro-Canadian pressure.

Linton (1943) applies the term "nativistic movement" to examples of such persistence and defines it (1943:230) as "Any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture." A cultural element is selected for its symbolic value in strengthening the culture against the inroads and depredations of a dominant outside force.

Farb (1978:260) argues that members of a culture which is being "swamped" by another may physically confront the aggressor but may also defend as well their cultural institutions. Regardless of whether such "defensive cultural reactions" are termed nativism, revivalism, or revitalization, Farb says, "the reaction amounts to a deliberate effort to salvage a new culture from the defeat or decay of an older one."

Wilson (1973:274) suggests that "cultural revitalization" is an attempt to restore past traditions. Like Farb, he argues that in practice the past that is being restored, is of necessity a "synthesis" of traditional elements and "more recently acquired items."

Jorgensen (1972) argues that the Sun Dance was adopted by Ute and Shoshone groups in the 1890s as a means of combatting, or at least coping with, the despair and frustration felt by tribal members.

His research into the Sun Dance among twentieth century Ute and Shoshone groups confirmed for him that adoption of the dance was a reaction to the economic and social misery and oppression (1972:4) being suffered by the groups.

While Jorgensen's arguments, are complex and detailed he suggests four reasons for the persistence of the Sun Dance among the Ute and Shoshone

that are applicable to the Plains Indians of an earlier era. They are: the deprivation suffered since the beginning of the reservation system; the weight of the "political-economic machinery" that had been a major cause of the deprivation; the esthetic beauty of the Sun Dance religion; and the religious impact experienced by adherents (1972:8).

"The Sun Dance provides a means for people to achieve spiritual well-being, responsibility, status, and self-esteem when these things are generally unachievable in the greater social context, or denied them by the dominant group" (1972:12). The groups were, in other words, attempting to vitalize or revitalize a culture under extreme pressure to conform to hostileand alien values.

Washburn (1975) interprets Jorgensen's analysis of the Ute and Shoshone adoption of the Sun Dance in 1890 and their rejection of the Ghost Dance as evidence the Indians had become resigned to their fate. Washburn (1975:226) describes the Sun Dance as performed by the Ute and Shoshone simply as a "redemptive" response:

> The Sun Dance, unlike the Ghost Dance did not seek to reform the context in which the believer found himself, but to make the believer able to cope with the life he found himself controlled by. It did not promise to free the world of whites, but to make men well and communities happy in a white dominated world (1975:227).

Washburn is only partially correct. He ignores the integrating function of the Sun Dance and ignores, too, the reinforcement it gave to traditional culture and religion (Spicer 1971). It was more than simply redemptive. In the experience of Plains tribes it had a revitalizing effect as well, as this study will demonstrate.

Wallace's discussion of revitalization movements (1956), although flawed in some aspects, is a useful methodological approach for examining and analysing the persistence displayed by the Plains Indians in maintaining the traditional religion embodied in the Sun Dance against the parallel campaigns of government and missionaries to civilize and Christianize them.

It should be noted that Wallace's ideas have not gone unquestioned. Kopytoff (1964:85-86), for example, argues that revitalization movements don't exist except as "metaphors," although he accepts the existence of revitalization "processes" that are "reactions to domination."

Wallace defines a revitalization movement as "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (1956: 265) and asserts that:

> . . . the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system . . . they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new traits.

Wallace uses a biological model and examples, making untested assumptions that assert similarity between the behavior of an individual under stress and that of a group under stress. Thus, for Wallace (1956:265):

> . . . a society will work, by means of coordinated actions (including 'cultural' actions) by all or some of its parts, to preserve its own integrity by maintaining a minimally fluctuating, life-supporting matrix for its individual members, and will, under stress, take emergency measures to preserve the constancy of this matrix.

Wallace links the individual to the larger society -- culture, group, however defined -- by his concept of the "mazeway" (1956:266); the self-image of an individual projected to merge with the image of the group or society. He

goes on (1956:266) to offer an explanation of what revitalization movements accomplish:

> Whenever an individual who is under chronic, physiologically measurable stress, receives repeated information which indicates that his mazeway does not lead to action which reduces the level of stress, he must choose between maintaining his present mazeway and tolerating the stress, or changing the mazeway in an attempt to reduce the stress.

The emphasis in Wallace's discussion of revitalization is on movements characterized by sudden wrenching shifts; by religious fervor; by the presence of charismatic leaders, such as Wovoka, the Ghost Dance prophet, Handsome Lake, the Seneca religious revivalist; or, by the revolutionary activities of leaders who strive to overthrow the established political order, as in the French and Russian revolutions. Wallace, it should be noted, failed to include the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany in his discussion. Nazism is, arguably, a better example of revitalization involving charismatic leader and entranced society than the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Indeed, Wallace's sweep is so broad that he appears ready to accept any kind of change within a group or society as indicative of revitalization (1956: 267).

Wallace approaches revitalization in two ways. His main emphasis is on a group's break with the past, after a period of increasing stress, and the creation of a new order for the society or culture. At the same time, he recognizes that a group under pressure to change from outside forces may fall back on traditional practices and ceremonies to vitalize or revitalize the group so that it can fend off or accommodate alien pressures without surrendering to them. Linton's nativistic movements (1943) fit this category.

Of particular relevance to this study is Wallace's discussion of the five stages that mark a 'typical' process (1956: 268-275). They are: 1. Steady

state; 2. Period of increased individual stress; 3. Period of cultural distortion; 4. Period of revitalization; 5. New steady state.

Stages 2, 3 and 4 are applicable to the scope of this study. And, it can be argued that for the Plains Indians stages 2 and 3 occurred simultaneously or nearly so in the latter decades of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century when Euro-Canadian intrusion, disease, loss of the major food resource and other factors combined to create a period of great pain and upheaval for the Plains tribes.

For the Plains Indians, the Sun Dance was the ceremony above all others that allowed them to continue to express themselves as a distinct people, as Euro-Canadian pressure and coercion to conform to new ways increased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Wallace (1956:259) explains Stage 2 as a period in which the individual goes through a period of prolonged, unresolvable stress, in terms of such factors as military defeat, political subordination, extreme pressure toward acculturation, economic hardship, and epidemic disease.

In Stage 3, the period of cultural distortion, individual stress continues to rise as the culture becomes less and less able to cope with the outside pressures impinging on it, leading some individuals to seek remedies or solutions in religious revivals, or other channels of relief.

Stage 4, the period of revitalization, is at the core of Wallace's approach and to explain the process he relies heavily on psychoanalytic dream theory and Max Weber's ideas concerning charismatic leadership.

Observing that many revitalization movements are of a religious nature, Wallace suggests that they embrace a number of challenges including

the relief or redirection into healthier directions of individual stress, provision of improved communication among members of the group or society, provision of an organizational framework for the revitalizing process, stimulation of changes within the culture that are seen to help individuals cope with unacceptable stress, and, finally, the acceptance and adoption of these changes by the group or society.

That revitalization movements take many different forms and directions is obvious from Wallace's wide-ranging selection of examples he considers illustrative of the process.

That some, perhaps the majority of revitalization movements, are fraught with danger and end in failure is obvious, too. The 1890 Ghost Dance, for example, led to individual and group tragedy for the Sioux and other Plains tribes in the United States.

Given the fervor and extremism that characterize many of Wallace's examples of religious revitalization -- the Ghost Dance, the Melanesian cargo cults, the Bolshevik Revolution (officially atheistic but with its own deities in the form of Marx, Hegel, Lenin, et al), the Boxer rebellion -- it is essential to ask whether the struggle of the Plains tribes in Canada against the ban on the Sun Dance, can be properly termed a revitalization movement.

It is argued here that there is enough elasticity and latitude in the concept to make a reasonably strong case that the Plains Indians' struggle does, indeed, constitute an example of one type of revitalization movement. Indeed, Wallace (1966) appears to accept the Sun Dance as an example of an integrating ceremony that served to revitalize the Plains Indian communities that practised it.

Wallace (1966:25) points out that, "... the religious institutions of a society represent, and elicit acceptance of, certain central values whose internalization by members of the society is necessary for the adequate integration of that society's various parts."

An effective and acceptable religion, according to Wallace (1966:26), "must define (however loosely and broadly) the boundaries of loyalty, assert that outsiders are outsiders, and insist upon the distinctive virtues of one's own kind."

Wallace asserts further, that religion provides individuals with a community or class identity when there is conflict between or among opposing groups and holding to traditional religious beliefs is a means of maintaining identity, rather than demonstrating a refusal to adopt values "more appropriate to the new circumstances of the society" (1966:26).

Wallace singles out the Sun Dance as an example of a ritual that celebrated values needed by a society under extreme stress and challenge (1966:26):

> Among the Plains Indians . . . the annual Sun Dance was an occasion on which the values of physical endurance and fortitude under pain were publicly celebrated . . . . Whatever else was intended by this ritual, it served as a dramatic reminder of the respect accorded to men who were able to carry on in spite of pain, hunger, thirst and fatigue.

It is readily demonstrable that although spared the ultimate humiliation of brutal, overwhelming military defeat that befell the Plains tribes in the United States, the tribes of the northern Plains were subjected to official coercion that was at once both benign and suffocating. While Indian Affairs agents sought to undermine the traditional authority of chiefs -- especially those considered troublemakers, or recalcitrant -- missionaries strove to entice

Indian children into schools where they they were deprived of contact with parents, forbidden to speak their native languages, and forced to wear Euro-Canadian clothing in a sustained effort to make them agents of acculturation and assimilation (Kennedy 1970).

The failure of the Ghost Dance: The failure of the Ghost Dance to make inroads, with minor exceptions (Kehoe, 1989), among the tribes on the Canadian Plains in 1890 is puzzling, given the near parallel experiences of the tribes in the United States and Canada. But it may be explainable, in part, by the less severe regime to which the Plains tribes on the Canadian Prairies were subjected, to the loss of tribal integrity which accompanied the forced move to small, isolated reserves, to a perception that population loss through epidemic diseases did not constitute a catastrophic threat to tribal existence, and to the location of the Canadian tribes on the periphery of the Plains.

Tribal rivalries may also have played a role in the rejection of the Ghost Dance. The Bloods, for example, apparently rebuffed overtures from the Sioux to participate in the movement because of long-standing enmity (SPC 1892a). In addition, by 1890 the Plains tribes in Alberta and Saskatchewan were subjected to regulations that inhibited travel away from their reserves (Barron 1988; Carter 1985). Finally, the Sun Dance may have fulfilled for some tribes, the same sense of "Indianness" that the Ghost Dance fulfilled for others.

Citing the work of a number of scholars concerning depopulation and social movements, Thornton (1986) argues that the Plains tribes whose populations had declined dramatically because of war and disease were the most fervent participants in both the 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance movements that swept the American Plains. The basic aim of the Ghost Dances of both

1870 and 1890 was to bring dead Indian populations back to life. He argues, too, that it was only the larger and stronger Sioux groups that espoused military action through the Ghost Dance. For the smaller, weaker groups the Ghost Dance was a peaceful movement.

Thornton contends that demographic analysis suggests strongly that depopulation had more to do with the spread of the Ghost Dance fervor, than the social breakdown and cultural deprivation to which the Plains tribes in the United States were subjected.

While many Plains tribes in the United States looked for succor and revitalization from the Ghost Dance, the tribes in Canada continued to look to the Sun Dance as a means of vitalizing and revitalizing their cultural identity.

The emphasis in the literature on the Ghost Dance movements has tended to detract from the continued importance attached to the Sun Dance by many Plains tribes in the United States. The Sun Dance, however modified to accommodate white pressure, has survived, both in Canada and the United States. The Ghost Dance is a relic of the past.

DISCOURSE

Bruner (1986) advances the idea that ethnographies are stories locked in time and space, prisoners of the assumptions made by the dominant narrative then current.

He suggests that in the 1930s and 1940s the dominant narrative, the "old story," about Indian culture "saw the present as disorganization, the past as glorious, and the future as assimilation" (1986:139).

The "new story," which emerged in the decade following the Second World War, and which is still current, sees the present as resistance, the past as exploitation, and the future as "ethnic resurgence" (1986;139).

Bruner (1986:153) sums it up this way:

> In the past we had the cigar store Indian, the travelling troupe in full ceremonial dress representing the quintessential American Indian, on display at the sideshow at county fairs, carnivals and rodeos . . . . Indians were mute, like museum specimens, a disappearing breed. It was not that they had nothing to say; rather, they were denied a space in discourse and hence had no power. Now, however, we have a new narrative. Indians march on Washington [and Ottawa], become legal experts on water rights, and come to our universities to lecture. They speak directly in the political arena, not just in ritual and expressive domains, and stress such new themes as the value of Indian culture for white society, tribalism and ecology, and how to live in harmony with each other and with nature.

This story is told in the present, when the dominant code words of anthropology include terms like "exploitation, oppression, colonialism, resistance, liberation, independence, nationalism, tribalism, identity, tradition, and ethnicity," but it is about a past when Euro-Canadians were assured that the Plains Indians would ultimately disappear, to be swallowed up by the dominant culture after they had been transformed into reasonable facsimiles of farmers and ranchers and had been convinced that their future on this Earth and in the hereafter would be assured when they became Christians, members of whatever denomination happened to grab their allegiance.

With hindsight, we know that that view was false. Narrative, in other words, may not reflect reality -- for Indians or ethnographers. In the 1930s, as Bruner points out (1986:141), ethnographers in the United States, and presumably in Canada as well, fit their stories of individual reservations or reserves, of bands or tribes, into the dominant story of the time.

In Canada, at least, the dominant story through that period and well into the 1970s, was the impact of Canadian government policy on Indian communities. This is reflected in the journals and in many theses and dissertations. The result has been a one-dimensional discussion that has largely ignored the Indian narrative.

As Bruner (1986:143) notes:

> Our anthropological stories about Indians are representations, not to be confused with concrete existence or 'real' facts. In other words, life experience is richer than discourse . . . . there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by the dominant story . . . . there was active Indian resistance in the past, probably more so in expressive culture than in direct political action . . . in such religious movements as the Ghost Dance, the Sun Dance and the Native American Church. Retrospectively, we see that there always were expressions of resistance in Indian experience, and there were early formulations of the story of resistance.

Bruner rejects the idea that the two narratives -- that of the 1930s and that of the 1970s -- spring from the fact that the Indian story embraces resistance while the white story embraces assimilation.

Narratives, he argues, " are not only structures of meaning but structures of power as well. The assimilation story has been a mask for oppression; the resistance story is a justification for claims of redress for past exploitation" (1986:144).

The assimilation narrative reinforced the then current view that the Indian was going to disappear. The resistance narrative now current reinforces claims for Indian self-government and redress for past wrongs.

When the assimilation narrative was foremost, the Indian, Bruner says, was romantic, "the exotic Other" (1986:144). In the resistance narrative the Indian is portrayed as victim, or as victim fighting injustice.

The stories of ethnographers and ethnohistorians are abstracted from discourse. But once abstracted they serve as models for future discourse. The assimilation narrative can be understood in its historical context which developed when Euro-Canadians were penetrating the West in increasing numbers, when Indian land was being alienated, when Euro-Canadian interest in the Plains Indians was waning with the arrival of new immigrants, and new problems were emerging which were not quite as simple as ones involving Indians as horse thieves, cattle rustlers, improvident wards of government, and part-time laborers for Euro-Canadian ranchers and farmers.

This study is derived from the past but the story is written with the dominant narrative of today very much in mind. It will demonstrate that Indian resistance remained active throughout the period when Bruner's "old story" prevailed. Plains Indians were far from mute or inactive when it came to protecting, maintaining and rejuvenating their culture.

The study will demonstrate, too, that the cigar-store Indian was a myth. Indian voices were strong, and an Indian narrative of resistance and revitalization was being shaped throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This narrative is followed in official documents, in newspapers, in accounts by Euro-Canadians of Indian leaders, in the published recollections of Plains Indians themselves, in the accounts of anthropologists, and as demonstrated in the actions taken by Plains Indians to counter or reject Euro-Canadian influence and pressure.

Succeeding chapters deal with the nature of the Sun Dance, with Euro-Canadian attitudes as settlers flooded on to the Prairies, with the efforts of the Indian Affairs Department to break the hold of the Sun Dance on the Plains

tribes, with the way the struggle was played out in Prairie newspapers, and with Indian resistance and revitalization.Whatever Euro-Canadians thought and believed, the Plains Indians' struggle was successful. It gathered strength from individual leaders, who reflected their people's aspirations for cultural identity by maintaining the Sun Dance through decades of acculturation efforts and bullying by officials and missionaries, and despite a climate of public opinion that was generally hostile to Indians and Indianness.

The Plains Indians, like other Indian communities in the Western Hemisphere (Larson 1983: 3-20) demonstrated an ability not only to survive but to defend their cultural institutions against the Euro-Canadian intruders who sought to change their life.

As Berkhofer observes (1971: 358):

> . . . the central theme of a new history of Indians ought to be the remarkable persistence of cultural and personality traits and ethnic identity in Indian societies in the face of white conquest and efforts at elimination or assimilation.

CHAPTER 2 -- THE SUN DANCE

"The Sun Dance is a sacred institution. Through it, prayer is made for all people; and in the camp there is reverence . . . ."

Chief Thunderchild

ORIGINS, ELEMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The poignant, powerful, complex and moving Sun Dance, most sacred and most spectacular ceremony of the buffalo-hunting tribes, was at the core of Plains religion.

James Riley Walker once described the difficulties he faced in adequately describing the Sun Dance as akin to "writing a system of Christian Theology from talking with ordinary laymen, only the Sun Dance is more difficult" (1980:27). Walker, the United States Indian agency physician on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota from 1896 to 1914, produced the classic monograph, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota*, published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1917.

Many of the Sun Dance elements are repeated in other Plains ceremonies, testifying to its central and pre-eminent position (Spier 1921:460). It was practised by most of the tribes, some 20 in all, and, while details of the

ceremony varied from tribe to tribe, there was, at the same time, "a marked uniformity" (Spier 1921:476) in the fundamental elements.

Most anthropologists, following Spier, suggest that it derived in the eighteenth century from earlier rituals of the so-called Village tribes -- Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras. It spread throughout the Plains, especially between 1750 and 1800 when most groups had gained access to the horse (Liberty 1980: 164). Spier (1921) believes the Sun Dance began first with the Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho or Oglala Sioux. The three tribes share a great proportion of the 53 Sun Dance traits that he identified.

Furthermore, Spier argues that the Sun Dances performed by these three tribes show a coherence in presentation that is lacking in the Sun Dances of other tribes. Spier (1921:478) points out that the Canadian Dakota, on the northern margin of the Sun Dance area, incorporated only five traits of those he enumerated, in their version of the Sun Dance, compared with 53 for the Arapaho, 46 for the Southern Cheyenne, and 40 for the Oglala.

The acquisition of the horse by the Plains Indians made possible a wide-ranging nomadic life, sustained by the food and other resources provided by the buffalo herds. It also made possible a rich religious and community life, allowing bands that had gone their separate ways during the winter to seek food and shelter, to reunite and re-integrate for weeks at a time during the period of the summer buffalo hunt.

The Sun Dance was at its peak when encountered and described by Euro-American and European travellers early in the nineteenth century. It flowered and flourished for less than a century (Liberty 1980:164) before

becoming the target of heavy-handed attempts by the governments of the United States and Canada to eradicate it.

The generic term Sun Dance was in general use by white commentators by 1850, according to Liberty (1980:165), and is used in this study to denote variants, including the "thirst dance" of the Crees. The Sun Dance, despite its name is not sun worship. The name derives from the sun-gazing ritual of the Oglala Sioux which took place during the closing celebrations of the ceremony. The Oglala prayed to "Wakan'tanka," sometimes referred to as the "Great Mystery."

The Sun Dance, as interpreted by anthropologists and others, fulfilled different functions among the tribes. For some it was a ceremony celebrating the annual renewal of the Earth after the harshness of the winter months, for others it was a prayer for fertility, or, as phrased by Hultkrantz (1973: 9) it was "a religious ceremony aiming at the sacred recreation of the world."

The mechanics of the ceremony were generally uniform throughout the Plains, although different interpretations and emphases were placed on various elements by the different tribes.

Extended dancing in supplication before a central pole within a consecrated shelter by young men guided by older mentors was a universal element (Liberty 1980: 164). The self-torture that government officials and missionaries in the nineteenth century found so repugnant was considered essential only by the Oglala. The self-torture usually consisted of skewers of wood driven through the skin of the chests or backs of dancers who were then tethered by rawhide to the central pole or to buffalo skulls, against which they strained until they broke free when the skewers tore through their flesh. Other

participants whose prayers had been answered after making a vow, however, might have a finger severed at the joint, as a sacrifice.

Oliver (1974:311) quotes another author [no citation], who described the Sun Dance as "the integrative and structuring institution of the Plains tribes." The ceremony was, "an invention -- an exquisitely perfect one -- at the social level," and "the circle of tepees symbolized tribal unity."

Kidd (1937:169) saw in the Blackfoot Sun Dance, "a tool to be used to make one's progress through life a trifle easier." The ceremony, he suggests, had as its most important function, "the enlisting for the individual of the aid of the benevolent supernatural powers against the forces of nature and of evil."

Encapsulating descriptions of the Sun Dance by a number of anthropologists, Liberty (1980:16[illegible]-65) describes it as follows:

> The Sun Dance was the high point of the Plains year. It came during full summer, when tribal bands that had been scattered widely throughout the fall and winter could come together in a season of plenty. Tribal organization dormant during the months of dispersion sprang into full play: relatives scattered by marriage into various bands reunited; military associations convened; tribal chiefs met in formal council; people who had not seen each other all year renewed old friendships. Feasting and dancing, storytelling and courting, gambling and horse racing, and visiting of all kinds abounded. And crowning all of this was a solemn religious ritual, dramatizing and reaffirming tribal identity and membership and ensuring tribal survival through ceremony and song and prayer for another year. Societal values were driven home, as both men and women played key ceremonial roles, in which courage and fortitude, fidelity, generosity, and wisdom were singled out and rewarded. Children watching all this, were indoctrinated into the belief system of their elders. And for all there were moments of awesome religious power coupled with striking beauty as the elaborate pageant moved through carefully enacted sequences to a dramatic close.

The Sun Dance ceremony involved several days of intense activity before closing with a ceremony that might include self-torture by some of the participants. Dancers participated as a consequence of vows made previously.

A man might dance to fulfil a vow made when praying for success in warfare, or after vowing to dance when praying for a loved one to be healed or cured.

Spier (1921:461) asserts that:

> The Sun Dance is usually initiated by some man or woman in fulfilment of a vow made at a time of distress, when supernatural aid is invoked and received. It is however not so much a thanks-offering as a new occasion for supplicating supernatural power.

When the camp circle is formed by the tribe or band a tepee is erected near the centre where, in secret, the man who has pledged or vowed the Sun Dance and his supporters receive instruction from tribal priests on the ceremony's significance. While this secret initiation is going forward, other activities are taking place. In the Sun Dance performed by the Blackfoot these include the slicing of buffalo and later steer tongues by virtuous women for use in the ceremony. Other members of the tribe gather brush and timbers for the dance shelter at the centre of the camp circle.

The ceremony then is initiated by the selection, felling and installation of a cottonwood tree to serve as the central pole of the dance shelter. This ritual may involve a party of tribespeople or most or all members of the tribe able to travel. The tree can only be felled by someone qualified for the honor. The pole is carried into the consecrated shelter formally by the felling party; and the dance pledger, his supporters and the priests then leave the initiation tepee for the dance shelter. During this procession spectators, especially children, receive blessings from the participants and priests.

After the central pole is decorated with a brush bundle, buffalo bull hide and other offerings in the fork, the pole is raised into place. Before dancing by the pledger and supporters begins, warriors dance in the shelter and an altar is installed. Thereafter, pledger and supporters, who deny themselves water and

food, dance in supplication of the supernatural power. Members of the tribe and material possessions are blessed during the dancing by the pledger and his supporters. This dancing lasts several days and nights, culminating in the torture ritual (Spier 1921:461-62).

Rethinkingorigins: While most anthropologists accept Spier's interpretation of the origin of the Sun Dance a provocative and compelling case for rethinking is made by Schlesier (1990) who argues that the generally accepted version of the origin and spread of the Sun Dance is "a persevering anthropological fiction." (1990:1)

Schlesier suggests the Sun Dance originated among Algonquian people during the seventeenth century as a direct response to the devastation and depopulation wreaked by European diseases such as smallpox, and the economic and social pressures generated by European colonizers and missionaries.

Citing a 1983 study, Schlesier suggests that a first pandemic of smallpox ravaged present-day United States territory from 1520-24, causing population losses that reached 75 per cent wherever the infection spread. Again in the seventeenth century, smallpox ravaged the Iroquois, Huron and Algonquian peoples in virtually every decade. The smallpox plague spread westward, rapidly devastating the mid-western tribes and collapsing population numbers. Schlesier argues (1990:23) that two "great" Central Algonquian ceremonies were initiated in the 1660s. The Midewiwin originated on the southeastern shore of Lake Superior, the so-called Plains Indian Sun Dance started in southwestern Minnesota. Both were based, he argues, on long-held Algonquian world views:

> Both developed because the old Indian world of the western Great Lakes and the eastern Great Plains was crumbling under the impact of a) epidemic diseases, taking a terrible toll in life; b) the disorganization of previously existing social, economic and religious systems; and c) the demands of European explorers, fur traders, military personnel and missionaries. Both developed because existing religious structures appeared inadequate for the survival of tribal societies on conventional terms. Both were expressions of revitalization and reorganization; they were attempts to cope with disaster. Both found a very wide distribution across cultural, linguistic and historical boundaries because the conditions of despair were common over a very wide area.

The function of revitalization argued by Schlesier is reinforced by explanations of the religious and social significance of the Sun Dance put forward by anthropologists and by Plains Indians, among others.

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

James Riley Walker holds a pre-eminent position among all those who studied the Sun Dance in the early reservation period and beyond. Both insightful and persevering, and with a deep personal affection for the Oglala medicine men who had given him their confidence, Walker, in a 1911 letter to his part-time employer and mentor Clark Wissler, at the American Museum of Natural History (1980:27), described the Sun Dance as, "a religious ceremony . . . in all its bearings . . . ."

Walker's study, *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* is, in essence, a manual of instruction for Sun Dance candidates and has been used as such by Indian communities. As summed up by Walker, "The ceremony of the Sun Dance was given for the benefit of both the dancer and the people and could not be carried out without the participation of the latter" (1917:58).

Walker emphasizes (1917:62) that one who dances the Sun Dance in its fullest form, that is with the self-torture element included, establishes before the Sun and the people that he possesses bravery, generosity, fortitude and integrity -- in other words, those personal characteristics that any leader hoping to revitalize his people or community would need.

But Walker also emphasized that the ceremony went beyond religion. Touching on its integrating function for the Plains tribes (1982:66), Walker said that it was also "social" because "not only all members of the camp took part in it, but it was expected that all friendly camps would be invited to participate."

An 1882 Sun Dance staged by Canadian Sioux is said to have attracted over 9,000 Dakotas and members of other tribes (Laviolette 1991:32).

Walker's study is based on the texts supplied by the Oglala holy men who befriended him and entrusted him with their secrets. One of his principal informants, George Sword (Long Knife) (1980:xiii), said they did so because "the Gods of the Oglala would be more pleased if the holy men told of them so that they might be kept in remembrance and all the world might know of them."

The Sun Dance, according to Hultkrantz (1973: 9), was, "a re-creation ceremony, a rite that makes everything new . . . ." Its traditional performance in June coincided with the spring peak in the northern Plains and with the budding of trees and the growth of grass and flowers. As Hultkrantz notes (1973: 10), "The flowering summer is not only the height of the yearly season, the peak of joy and plentiness; it is also the beginning of the new year." Hultkrantz (1973:10) cite's Dorsey's 1905 interpretation of the Cheyenne Sun Dance:

> The name given by the Cheyenne to the Sun Dance is the New-Life-Lodge. According to the interpretation of the priest, the name means not only the lodge of new life, or lodge of new birth, but it is also the new life itself. The performance of the ceremony is supposed to re-create, to re-form, to re-animate the earth, vegetation, animal life, etc.; hence it would not be inappropriate to speak of the Sun Dance as the ceremony of rebirth or of the renaissance.

Hultkrantz, it should be noted, has been criticized for a simplistic "cultural primitivist" approach to Indian religion, and for an excessively romantic vision of Indians as natural people who, unlike whites, are in harmony with their world (Kehoe 1990:194-5). Hultkrantz, as a cultural primitivist then, describes the Sun Dance as a ceremony anchored in the universal creation myth despite the contentions of Spier and Schlesier that its origin dates back, at the earliest, to the seventeenth century (1973:15). "It represents in its actions the primeval events of the past, in this way promoting the prosperity of the tribe in the near future: good luck, health, plenty of berries and buffalo."

Schwarz (1981:154) quotes Lame Deer's comment, as recorded by Richard Erdoes in *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions: The Life of a Sioux Medicine Man* (1972) that, ". . . the Sun Dance is all the people communicating with all the mystery powers. It is the hamblechia [vision quest] of the whole Sioux nation."

Schwarz, paraphrasing Walker, says the goal of participants in the Sun Dance, referring to the Oglala ceremony, is to display the four virtues of bravery, generosity, fortitude and integrity. And he again quotes Lame Deer (161) that, "The Sun Dance is a prayer and a sacrifice."

The Jesuit Albert Muntsch (1931:24) cites the Sun Dance prayer of the Teton Sioux Red Weasel, recorded in *Bulletin 61* of the American Bureau of Ethnology:

> Wakan'tanka [Great Mystery, Supreme Being or Spirit, of the Sioux], hear me. This day I am to tell your word. But without sin I shall speak. The tribe shall live. Behold me for I am humble. From above watch me. You are always the truth, listen to me. My friends and relatives, sitting here, and I shall be at peace. May our voices be heard at the future goal you have prepared for us.

Muntsch (1931:25,26) also cites the Sun Dance prayer of a Blackfoot chief recorded by Walter McClintock in 1910 in *The Old North Trail* :

> Great Sun Power! I am praying for my people that they may be happy in the summer and that they may live through the cold winter. Many are sick and in want. Pity them and let them survive. Grant that they may live long and have abundance. May we go through these ceremonies correctly, as you taught our forefathers to do in the days that are past. If we make mistakes, pity us. Help us, Mother Earth! For we depend on your goodness. Let there be rain to water the prairies, that the grass may grow long and the berries be abundant. O Morning Star! when you look down upon us, give us peace and refreshing sleep. Great Spirit! bless our children, friends and visitors through a happy life. May our trails lie straight and level before us. Let us live to be old. We are all your children and ask these things with good hearts.

Hultkrantz's research and the Sun Dance prayers cited above, albeit by white interlocutors, are arguments suggesting the powerful annual revitalizing effect the ceremony had on Plains communities. Jorgensen (1972) sees Ute and Shoshone adoption of the Sun Dance around 1890, as a "redemptive movement" (1972:7). Following Aberle (1966: 320-22), he also sees in redemptive movements "the search for a new individual state." The Sun Dance, Jorgensen argues, allowed the Ute and Shoshone to deal with misery and oppression. It provided a code of conduct for individuals, decried the evils of white society, helped reconcile the individualistic ethic preached by Protestant

missionaries with the collective tradition of the tribes, and provided a buttress fortifying Indian identity and integrity against "vast odds."

He points out (1985:115-116) that following the last big buffalo hunt by the Shoshones in the 1880s the Sun Dance ritual changed with the dropping of buffalo-hunt elements and the addition of "Christian-like" concepts, and, ". . . There was a notable shift of concern toward the curing of illness and the maintenance of communal unity . . . ."

Communal unity could be used to wage war on other tribes (La Barre 1970:129). La Barre suggests that the conclusion of the Sun Dance ceremony was a good time for warring on other tribes because the men of the tribe were now endowed with supernatural power.

The Jesuit scholar Peter J. Powell (1969:xxiv) postulates the idea -- one with very Christian overtones -- that personal sacrifice as demonstrated in the submission to self-torture is a central tenet that runs through much of Plains Indian religious belief: ". . . a man through the sacrifice of himself and his body, brings blessing and renewal to his tribe and to all creation . . . ."

Mandelbaum observed two Cree Sun Dances or "Thirsting Dances" in 1934 and 1935 performed by the Calling River and River People bands on the Crooked Lake and Little Pine reserves. Even then the Sun Dance was "an active force" in Plains Cree life (1979:183).

Mandelbaum largely confined his description to the physical elements of the Sun Dance, nevertheless, he noted (1979:186) that:

The burden of all the prayers was that a ceremony very dear to the powers was about to be given, that the powers help the participants complete the Sun

Dance, so that mankind might be blessed [The two dances included self-mutilation by several participants].

Pones, one of the two Cree pledgers in the 1935 ceremony witnessed by Mandelbaum gave this invocation (1979:232) at the start of the dance:

> Our father, master of us all, of course I have to name you first. Look at this dancing. All Spirit Powers, I beg a good life for the people that are coming here to fast. Last fall when my children were having bad luck I promised you this lodge. Now I am glad and happy that it is being completed for me. I am satisfied and I think manitou is satisfied. Now give us good health for all the people . . . .

In a paper describing the survival of the Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance in the twentieth century Liberty (1965:131), says that the traditional ceremony reaffirms tribal unity against the pressures of outside economic and social forces:

> Today tribal unity is . . . reaffirmed, but in the different sense of resistance to overwhelming tides of change. The ceremony now symbolizes all that was good of the vanished life. It reminds young and old of their Indian heritage; it rekindles tribal pride. But the implication of defence against cultural annihilation is always there.

Karter (1979:84) asserts that "the Sun Dance is for and about the pursuit of supernatural power," while Hultkrantz's student, Joseph Epes Brown, like his mentor an advocate of cultural primitivism, (1982:105) argues that:

> "The Sun Dance is . . . not a celebration by humans for humans; it is an honoring of all life and the source of all life that life may continue, that the circle be a cycle, that all the world and humankind may continue on the path of the cycle of giving, receiving, bearing, being born in suffering, growing, becoming, returning to the earth that which has been given, and finally being born again. Only in sacrifice is sacredness accomplished; only in sacrifice is identity found. It is only through suffering in sacrifice that freedom is finally known and laughter in joy returns to the world.

The Sun Dance, says Brown (1982:41) ensures renewal not only for individuals "but of the tribe itself, of the world, and of the universe." The ceremony (Wolf 1982:180) "invoked a promise of world renewal for all."

While Spier provided an overview of the origins and organization of the Sun Dance for the American Museum of Natural History, other anthropologists employed by the museum sought information on Sun Dance versions among the different Plains tribes, including the Sarcee, Blackfoot and Plains Cree of Canada.

While most such accounts describe physical and dramatic elements of the ceremony, they do touch in depth on aspects that deal with religious beliefs. In his note on the Sun Dance of the Sarcee, Goddard (1919:276) says little about the religious aspect of the ceremony, beyond noting that:

> It is stated that in a crisis, when in danger on the warpath or at other times when help was needed, a young man would take a solemn vow that if his petitions were answered he would permit himself to be 'tied up' (tortured) at the next celebration of the Sun Dance.

Skinner (1919:287) quotes Saskatchewan author Amelia Paget in *People of the Plains* (1909) in his note on the Sun Dance of the Plains Cree. According to Paget, whose family had been held captive by the Crees during the 1885 rebellion, the ceremony was:

> . . . primarily a thank-offering to the Great Spirit, Kichie Manitou for the re-awakening of nature after the silence of winter. It was a time for the making of braves, or, rather, an opportunity for the test of courage and endurance, it was a time for mourning their dead, and a time of petitions through their Pow-wah-kuns (dream guardians) for future blessings and love.

But Skinner adds that Paget's interpretation, although it agreed with what he was told by Cree informants, was contradicted by the view of Robert Jefferson, of the Indian Affairs Department, who in reference to a Sun Dance

performed on the Red Pheasant Reserve in Saskatchewan, discounted the white view that the ceremony's primary motivation was to "make" braves, insisting that:

> The dance is projected during the fall or winter previous, and is the result of a promise, made in sickness or trouble, or may be an endeavour to secure some favor from the Powers Unknown. The same idea actuates the dancers.

In notes on the Cree Sun Dance prepared for Pliny Earle Goddard of the American Museum of Natural History, Jefferson, farming instructor for the Indian Affairs Department and son-in-law of Poundmaker, described the Cree ceremony as a "locally annual ceremony of supplication and thanksgiving" (1911:1-2):

> Apart from its religious significance, the Sun dance is the yearly gathering of people, whom the exigencies of life compel to spend the fall and winter in isolation, and it is looked forward to as such. The young make, and the old renew acquaintances, and it is a general holiday.

In a brief note on the Plains Ojibway Sun Dance, Skinner (1919:313) describes it as a rite devoted to the worship of the thunder and secondarily to the sun and other gods, second only to the Midewiwin in Ojibway ceremonial standing.

Outdoors writer Calvin McQuesten observed a Sun Dance on the Blood reserve in Alberta in 1912 and recorded his reactions for *Rod and Gun in Canada*. McQuesten reflects the commonly held view of the period about the imminent disappearance of the Plains Indians, but he is perceptive in the description of the religious connotations of the ceremony, often overlooked by contemporaries who viewed the Sun Dance as a "war dance." McQuesten (1912:13,1169) noted:

> The Sun Dance gatherings of the Blackfoot are the last surviving remnants of the tribal life of a people who once ranged supreme and untrammelled over a stretch of territory as large as the whole of England. Today their numbers are more than decimated by war and disease. Crowded to the wall by a foreign invader whose civilization they seem utterly unable to assimilate, they drag out a miserable existence cooped up within the narrow limits of their reservations, and huddled together round the distributing offices of the Government which feeds them.
> But at these annual gatherings are to be seen the last broken outlines of their unique social organization, the last spiritless performance of their weird and frenzied religious rites, and the last faint gleam of the wild, fierce and almost heroic spirit which has made these and other red men of North America appeal to the imagination of the world.

Describing the gathering of tribal members at the newly erected Sun Dance lodge, McQuesten (1912:13,1174-75) said they:

> . . . listened in stolid silence while the aged chiefs, in impassioned, if somewhat quavering, accents, urged the members of the tribe to perform the worship of the Sun-God faithfully and carefully. It was the neglect of this that had wrought their downfall in the past; and it was only the careful observance of sacred rites that could save them from further calamity in the future . . . .

Anglican clergyman Edward Ahenakew in the opening years of the twentieth century recorded the comments of his fellow Cree, Chief Thunderchild, on the religious import of the Sun Dance (1973:68). As described by Thunderchild:

> The Sun Dance is a sacred institution. Through it, prayer is made for all people; and in the camp there is reverence . . . . it is with pure hearts that the people dance, or watch the dancing . . . . those who are sick or in trouble make a vow to dance later, to give thanks for the help they will receive . . . .

Assiniboine Chief Dan Kennedy (1972:104), recalling childhood memories, said the Sun Dance celebrated, "the rebirth of nature and asked the Great Manitou to bless nature with abundance so that the tribes might increase and multiply." Kennedy goes on to describe a father and son at a Sun

Dance following the end of the Second World War. The incident demonstrates in a small way, the integrating power of the ceremony. The son had been taken prisoner at Dieppe and it was only after a six months' wait that his family learned he was a prisoner of war. "As the father and son danced in thanksgiving before the sacred tree, the hearts of those who witnessed this finale throbbed in unison with the worshippers."

The integrating function of the Sun Dance is also touched on by Blood historian Mike Mountain-Horse. He describes the excitement and sense of community that prevail as the Sun Dance lodge nears completion (1979:63):

> Hundreds of Indians in all their finery, parade to a nearby wood to bring back tree branches to be used as covering for their Sun Dance lodge. Different societies and lodges, mounted and dressed in gorgeous attire, are represented in this body, while unattached Indians ride in small groups to join in this annual parade.

Cree historian Joe Dion (1979:42) also attests to the integrating power of the Sun Dance, describing one such ceremony as needing two dance lodges because the people had gathered in such large numbers.

Misunderstood and feared: The most misunderstood element of the Sun Dance ceremony was that of self-torture or self-mortification. Euro-Canadians and Euro-Americans equated it with barbarity, the cruelty associated with the "savage reactionary" stereotype of the Plains Indian (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), and with Indian warfare, since the ritual was wrongly interpreted as primarily aimed at the making of "braves" or warriors.

Typical of the kind of jaundiced view held by Euro-Canadians was that expressed by G.E. Laidlaw (1885:170). Laidlaw an Ontario resident, described the Sun Dance for an American periodical as "a ceremony of such a nature

that the successful participation of it, denotes whether the young men shall be 'warriors' or not."

After describing the elements involved in the self-torture ritual, Laidlaw said that if any of the young men "show the least signs of cowardice in bearing pain they are told that they are not fit to associate with men . . . ." Laidlaw, who may or may not have actually witnessed the ceremony, incorrectly described the "ordeal" as "obligatory" for all young men.

When George Catlin, the American artist, published an account of the Mandan Sun Dance in 1841 after witnessing it in 1832 during his travels on the Plains, he was called a liar by the U.S. superintendent of Indian Affairs, who was obviously unaware of the ceremony and unable to visualize the kind of self-sacrifice involved (Ewers 1948:166).

In 1947, Ewers interviewed two elderly Blood men who had submitted to self-torture in the Sun Dance of 1889, just two years before the ritual was suppressed by the Indian Affairs Department.

Scraping White, 81 at the time Ewers interviewed him through an interpreter, said that he had made his self-torture vow while "on a war party to take horses from the Assiniboine." Asking for good luck when he made the vow, Scraping White said that he had managed to steal "two fast horses" and returned home safely.

Heavy Head, 78, made his vow of self-torture when facing much the same challenge that confronted Scraping White. In Heavy Head's case, he was on a horse stealing expedition with another Blood, Buffalo Teeth. Both men made off with horses from a camp of Cree "half-breeds" and reached home safely, although they had only a single rabbit to eat in three days of travel.

After providing a detailed account of the self-torture ritual based on his participants' accounts, Ewers suggests that "The vow was a simple, direct appeal to the deity for protection and success in the immediate, hazardous undertaking" (1948:170). It was not a way to display bravery or courage but a way to thank the deity for the protection accorded one undertaking a hazardous act.

Robert Wilson, a trader on the Blood reserve at the turn of the century and former Indian Affairs official, who had gained the confidence of the Bloods, prepared a lengthy account of the Blackfoot ceremony in 1897. He noted that "much misunderstanding exists among white people regarding the nature of the torture rite" (1897:46):

> It is generally thought that its purpose is the making of braves, and much nonsense has been written in that line, such as 'it admits the young man into the noble band of warriors.' It admits him into nothing. Many of the bravest men and most noted fighters in the Blackfoot tribes have never undergone the ordeal; while other individuals who could not be persuaded to face an armed foe, have gone through the so called 'brave-making' year after year, until their breasts carry a group of scars on each side.

Austin McKitrick was a teacher at a church-run school on Muscowpetung's reserve in 1889 when he observed a Sun Dance on Payepot's reserve nearby. [Payepot rather than the more common form Piapot is used throughout this study because, according to Cree historian Abel Watetch, it is the preferred form among the Crees.]

In an unpublished article written in 1921 for a Sunday school paper, McKitrick described the reactions of the young Indian children at the school after they attended a Sun Dance on Payepot's reserve nearby (1921:5):

> . . . as the time for the Sun Dance approached the parents asked that they might be allowed to attend this great annual festival. The Missionary consented and they went off with their parents. In a few days they were back at school again but now their play was different. Instead of a gopher feast or the new games of hide-and-seek, tag, or pom-pom-pull-away in their free time, now their chief and often their only play was a miniature sun dance, with the boys as braves and the girls as spectators. They came to us for pins and thread or twine. They fixed up a small dancing pavillion of slender trees with one strong centre pole. They bent the pins to be stuck through the flesh of their little breasts and tied by string to the centre pole. They asked us to come and watch them dance as they drummed on an old tin coil oil can for music. Round and round, and to and fro, they danced to the hi-yi song, then with a miniature yell the boy dancer broke out the little piece of flesh where the pin had caught under the skin and a small drop of blood oozed out. "Mewasin ayumehawin, kes-kinoah-ma-kao." (Good worship, teacher.) they said to me. I answered "Namoweyah (no), but 'Our Father which art in Heaven' is mewasin" . . . . In mixed Cree and English they insisted that the sun dance was the right and good way to worship the Great Spirit, and that our way of saying "Our Father which art in heaven" was no good . . . .

The Sun Dance was, first and last, the cultural pivot around which Plains Indian identity revolved.

CHAPTER 3 -- CONTROL, CONVERSION, CONFRONTATION

"... the Indian has no future."

Bleasdell Cameron, journalist, friend of Big Bear, 1900

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem ... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada ...."

Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, 1920

The Plains Indians signed away their rights, their land, and their future in seven treaties, from 1871 to 1877.

Peripatetic trader and journalist Bleasdell Cameron, who testified on Big Bear's behalf at the Cree chief's trial following the 1885 rebellion, set down his interpretation of what had been inflicted on the Plains tribes at the hands of Euro-Canadians (1900:215):

> The white man came, accepted his hospitality -- and destroyed his burfalo. He debauched his women and introduced all manner of curious diseases . . . . Scrofulous, flat-chested children replaced the sturdy, bright-eyed urchins that gambolled about his lodge door in the old days of plenty . . . . The white man made a bargain with him. He paid him five dollars a year and took his country, leaving him a strip of land, outside the boundaries of which he was forbidden to go. When he starved he was given a morsel of bacon and lumpy flour. He was told to cultivate his land, but it is hard to cultivate any great quantity of land on quarter-rations of very indifferent food . . . . for some thousands of years he had been a hunter and warrior; ploughs were clumsy things compared with bows and guns; planting potatoes tired his back, and cutting wheat with a sickle wore holes in his leggings and hurt his knees.

Cameron admired the Plains Indians but he believed, as did his contemporaries, that they could not compete with whites, were improvident, ill-adapted to agricultural pursuits, and lacked ambition to succeed in a white world, even if equipped with a white education. Cameron could see only extinction looming for people he liked and respected. "It is a truism that the primary effect upon savage life, wherever found, of contact with civilization, is a most destructive one" (1900:214).

Contradictory attitudes were part and parcel of the intellectual clutter of myths and stereotypes Euro-Canadians carried with them in confronting the Plains Indians. This created a bewildering world of paradox where words were often at odds with actions. Lofty Euro-Canadian sentiment was not always matched by honorable behavior. Indians were urged to learn to be like whites -- industrious, sober, hard-working and Christian. But their efforts to follow the injunction were met by obstacles and attitudes that put those goals beyond their reach.

Euro-Canadians -- Indian Affairs officials, missionaries and settlers -- were steeped in the belief that European, more particularly Anglo-Saxon, civilization, was divinely ordained to subdue other peoples.

The narrative in the official record and in prairie newspapers was colored and informed by this cultural dogma. It shaped Indian policy, guided Indian administration, upheld the missionary endeavor, and influenced the way Euro-Canadian settlers treated the people whose land they usurped.

INDIAN POLICY -- MYTHS AND REALITIES

Myths to believe in: Regina magistrate William Trant, who tried and convicted Plains Indians for dancing in violation of the government's rules, could declare in 1895 that after two decades under treaty the Plains Indians had been "tranquilized." Not only that, "the red man has become thoroughly attached to the white man's government" (1895:520). The behavior of the Plains Indians, as a result of benevolent government policies and wise administrators was now "marked by manly independence, intelligent enterprise, and unflagging industry" (1895:523). Trant took pride in the wisdom and kindness of Canada's Indian administration (1895:527):

> It would have been our fault and our shame if we had regarded the Indians as we regarded the wild beasts, the natural evils of a new country, to be gradually removed in the process of settlement. Canada was wiser and kinder. When the Indian sent up his wail of lamentation, 'We are miserable and wretched, our pipes often cold, our tents melancholy,' he did not cry to deaf ears. The red man was not allowed to sicken beneath our civilization and to die amid our prosperity. Canada has saved the Indian . . . .

"Saved" the Plains Indians may have been. But they were still marginal to Euro-Canadian society and Euro-Canadian ambitions. While the Plains Indian might have acquired some white attributes they didn't make him the

equal of Euro-Canadians and Trant had no intention of dining with them (1895:523):

> . . . the Indian still enjoys a dinner of boiled dog, and he cares not whether his veal or pork has been killed by the butcher or died a natural death; or whether his beef be that of an ox or a horse he has found rotting on the plains. This is not the kind of dinner the white man enjoys.

The Plains Indians were honest, Trant observed, they would rather starve than steal, but they were also indolent and improvident, despite the progress they had made (1895:511).

Historians of earlier and later generations, including Stanley (1936:236), have described the Indian policy that emerged from the numbered treaties and successive Indian Acts as wise and benevolent:

The interests of the Indians and the State alike, required that every effort should be made to assist the red man to lift himself out of his condition of tutelage and dependence, to prepare him for a higher civilization, and to encourage him to assume the privileges and responsibilities of full citizenship.

Stanley's perception of Canadian Indian policy was the dominant one for decades, and, like Social Darwinism, has died a hard death. As late as 1946 a commentator could make these assertions about Canadian Indian policy (Harper 1946:305):

> Canada's Indian Act eschews radical administrative expedients to accomplish the assimilation of the Indians. Its inherent assumption is that Indian amalgamation can be achieved only through a long evolutionary process. Its spirit is cautious, conservative. A guiding administrative concept is the progression of the Indians from primitive status to civilization through three stages, for each of which is conceived successively more advanced forms of economic and political organization. This signal contribution to the science of native administration has received surprisingly little attention in the descriptive and interpretive literature.

Self-congratulatory attitudes prevailed into the 1950s. In 1949, one historian commented that "the white occupation of central and western Canada presents an amazing contrast to the land robbery, wars, atrocities and dishonesty on the other side of the American-Canadian boundary" (Price:82-83). Another could note in 1955 that compared with Indian treatment in the United States, Canada's Indians had met "honesty and respect" from the government (Sharp 1955:373).

Realities to face up to: Latter-day historians are more critical. Owram (1976:306) has noted that early on, "Canadian expansionists had relegated the Indian to a secondary position because his welfare no longer fitted so neatly into their visions of the North West."

Believers in their own myth-making, Canadians derided American Indian policy as "extermination" (Owram 1976:323), while holding up their country's approach to Indians as exemplary.

Since Confederation, "protection, citizenship and assimilation" have been the goals of Indian policy (Tobias 1976:13). "These goals were established by governments which believed that Indians were incapable of dealing with persons of European ancestry without being exploited."

Official behavior fell far short of official ideals. Callous and cynical dealings with the Crees in order to exert absolute control over a potentially dangerous force on the prairies marred Indian administration in the 1880s and 1890s (Tobias 1983). Rations were manipulated so that only the worthy starving would receive them -- meaning those Indians who had taken treaty; allocation of reserves was manipulated despite treaty promises of free choice of location to ensure that there was no large congregation of bands in any one

area; and, in a final stroke, the participation of a few hundred Crees in the 1885 rebellion, was used to destabilize the little that remained of Cree autonomy by bringing to trial leaders and diplomats like Big Bear and Poundmaker and to enforce rigid control on others like Payepot, whose participation and support for the rebellion had been tenuous, at best. The Crees paid a heavy price for their minor role in the rebellion in which "less than five per cent of the Indian population of the North-West was involved" (Stonechild 1991:274).

The foundations of post-Confederation Indian policy were laid in mid-century when the British Colonial Office set out to assimilate Indians into white society as they became irrelevant to changing circumstances in the Canadas (Upton 1973; MacNab 1983).

Colonial Office permanent undersecretary Herman Melville was certain that natives of whatever continent had only three alternatives in the face of European colonization: They could be exterminated; they could be isolated in remote communities where they could learn the rudiments of civilization; or, they could be assimilated or amalgamated into white society. Merivale, said Upton (1973:55) favored the latter course, which was to be achieved by first protecting and then civilizing the natives.

Following Confederation, the British North America Act and successive versions of the Indian Act ensured that the Indians, especially the Plains Indians, were to be wards of the government until finally raised to civilized state through training and acculturation that would see them assimilated or amalgamated into Euro-Canadian society.

The United States had been created by an elitist revolution. Canada was created "by businessmen and politicians in the interest of economic

expansion" (Barron 1984:28). Both nations acquired a western hinterland. The United States wrested it by diplomacy and force of arms from the French, Mexicans and Indians. Canada acquired its western hinterland by purchase from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870 and secured the North-West Territories for settlement by negotiating for surrender of Indian title (Barron 1984).

The decline of the fur trade, and the opening up of the West to agriculture and settlement, made the Plains Indians irrelevant in the North-West Territories, except as obstacles to Euro-Canadian expansion (Miller 1991:xi).

It was against this moral and historical background that the numbered treaties with the Plains Indians set out how they were to live in future while successive versions of the Indian Act determined how they were to be controlled.

The treaties were said to be worthy expressions of the policy that Canada had inherited from Britain and which it was determined to honor. The reality was different. Taylor (1979) points out that the initial proposals for treaties with the Indians of the North-West offered little beyond reserves and annuities.

It was at the behest of the Plains Indians that in those treaties covering western Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta schools, agricultural assistance and assistance in making the transition to a new life were spelled out (Taylor 1979:6). The Indian demands labelled "extravagant" by Euro-Canadian officials were the very elements that allowed the myth of a wise and benevolent Indian policy to be spread. Far from having a carefully thought out

program to recompense the Plains Indians for their territorial and other losses the Canadian government had no plan at all. "The picture is one of a government seeking to forestall potential trouble from the Indian inhabitants occupying the site of its prospective development project, and attempting to do so at the least cost."

Despite the noble sentiments and promises of the treaties, the Plains Indians soon found themselves in a poorhouse. It was a poorhouse without walls but there were Indian Agents and NWMP officers to keep them in line, and punish them when necessary. They were directed to work for their rations, learn how to farm, and to send their children to schools run by Euro-Canadians where, it was anticipated, their cultural traditions such as they were would be erased, to be superseded by those of the dominant community. Additionally, freedom of movement was curtailed by a pass system, however imperfectly enforced (Barron 1988; Carter 1985; Miller 1991:327), that could be invoked at the whim of an individual Indian Agent to hinder travel by Indian diplomats, parents bent on visiting their children in residential schools, or would-be participants in a Sun Dance or other ceremony (Miller 1991:327).

Reviewing the government's handling of the Plains Indians in 1895, historian Alexander Begg applauded the reserve system as a necessary step towards civilization because, "The Indians, when congregated in small numbers, cling less tenaciously to their habits, customs and modes of thought . . . ." (1895:418).

Begg displayed no sympathy for the Plains Indians, approving the withholding of rations (1895:419) as:

> . . . the only lever beyond moral suasion available to compel Indians, naturally averse to it, to work . . .The doctrine inculcated has been the Apostolic one; that if a man will not work, he shall not eat.

Reflections of a harsh society: The injunction was more than Apostolic. It was a rigidly adhered-to convention of the Euro-Canadian elite from which the officials of the Indian affairs Department were recruited. The harshness towards the Plains Indians was simply an extension of the harsh treatment which awaited all who depended for sustenance on government welfare.

Euro-Canadian society at the end of the nineteenth century, for all its pretensions to nobility of purpose and action, was authoritarian, cruel, and dogmatic.

The well-to-do, if they thought of the poor at all, considered their plight to be the result of personal failure, not circumstances over which the unfortunate had little or no control. Poverty was held to be the inevitable result of personal failings, or weak character. Success, on the other hand, indicated that the the individual had lived a correct and godly life. "The poor were urged to appreciate the values of thrift, hard work, self-help, and self-discipline" (Guest 1980:16).

In the 1890s, the urban workplace was often a place of "grim exploitation" not only of adult men and women but of children as well. Long hours, poor pay -- often "callously" reduced during the winter months, and dangerous and unhealthy conditions, made factories seem "more like places of detention than employment" (1980:20).

Education for the working class was "sterile, authoritarian . . . [it] mirrored the ethics of the corporate workplace and was designed to provide an increasingly refined training and selection mechanism for the labour force"

(1980:25). It was from such thinking that the residential industrial schools for Indian children were developed.

The final indignity heaped on many unfortunates was the poorhouse or workhouse test (Guest, 1980:37):

> . . . an applicant for public assistance, unless he had a medical certificate excusing him from work, could be required to saw cordwood or break rock as a condition for receiving help. In 1915, for example, the House of Industry in Toronto required an applicant for relief to break up a crate of rocks weighing 650 pounds.

The justice system could be insensitive and cruel. In 1880, one of those sentenced to six months in an Ontario reformatory, having first served 14 days in the Toronto jail, was a young girl, convicted of stealing a gooseberry from a garden (Wallace 1950:387).

Long on promises, short on performance: Leighton (1975:354-403), among many others, has chronicled the shortcomings of the Indian Affairs Department, which was officially inaugurated in 1880, as well as the privation and difficulties facing the Plains Indians with the disappearance of the buffalo, which coincided almost exactly with the advent of the department as the Indians' keeper.

Ottawa's takeover of the North-West Territories was anything but tidy. Many Plains Indians, especially Crees, refused to take treaty and shift to reserves and the department was periodically faced with alarming concentrations of Indians at Fort Walsh and in the nearby Cypress Hills, as starving bands sought the few remaining buffalo in the Canadian range or congregated after unsuccessful buffalo hunts in the United States. The response of Indian Affairs officials was to shift them north to new locations away from the sensitive border. "The spectacle of the bedraggled and

discouraged prairie warriors migrating was indeed a sad one" (Leighton 1975:356).

Leighton's portrait of Indian Affairs administration in the West is unflattering. Some agents, clerks and farm instructors were second or third-rate because the department could not attract capable individuals for such remote and isolated jobs, "the Department's western field operations were marked by drunkenness, dishonesty and political jobbery which senior officials found difficult to curb" (1975:360).

The new department was over-centralized and most of its senior officials including deputy superintendent-general Lawrence Vankoughnet had spent all their careers in the East and had no knowledge of or sympathy for the Plains Indians and the turmoil they were going through (Leighton 1983:113):

> Though there were occasional expressions of public concern and sympathy, there was no great public understanding of the Indian situation. The public saw the Indian as a "brown White man," assuming the factors which made for white advancement would meet Indian needs too.

When Vankoughnet slashed rations for the Plains Indians after an 1883 trip to the West -- as part of general government cost-cutting because of an economic downturn -- he helped precipitate Cree participation in the 1885 rebellion. "Here was the ultimate bureaucratic triumph; spending would no longer be determined by local needs but by administrative convenience" (Leighton 1975:392).

Barron (1984:37) has summarized the retribution visited on the Plains Indians in the wake of the 1885 rebellion. Harsh, arguably unjust treatment, of Indian leaders was matched by a concerted effort to "de-tribalize" Plains Indian society by displacing troublesome chiefs to give the Indian Agents a freer hand

at controlling the lives of their wards; by undermining the Indian sense of community through subdividing the reserves into 40-acre plots to encourage so-called "severalty" or individual lease holding; by implementation of the pass system to restrict movement off the reserve, even though it had no legal basis (Barron 1988; Carter 1985); by setting up industrial schools for Indian youngsters to further ensure the inculcation of Euro-Canadian ideas and values; and by creating a system of permits which prevented Indians, without the approval of the agent, from selling farm products to settlers.

Barron (1984) cites the treatment meted out to the Cree chief Starblanket. The Cree had slaughtered an agency steer without permission to feed some of his band. He was removed from office and was only reinstated in 1912, when old and destitute, on condition that he give up his opposition to having band children sent away to the residential schools.

Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney had initiated measures in the 1880s to bring the Crees under tight government control. His successor, Hayter Reed, effectively completed the process with his "peasant" farming policy (Carter 1987). It was designed, variously, to save the government money, ease fears and complaints of white settlers about competition from Indian farmers who were too successful, and to spearhead the department's assault on the tribal system. Reed decreed in 1889 that henceforth Indian farming would not be the large-scale enterprise demanded by the dry prairies but would be rudimentary subsistence agriculture based on small plots manageable by a single family. Further, Indians were expected to make the rudimentary tools they needed for such "peasant" farming. The modern equipment they needed was denied them. The policy remained in effect until

Reed was ousted from the Indian Affairs Department in 1897 by Interior Minister Clifford Sifton's new broom but by then it had taken a heavy toll of Indian farmers and Indian progress in farming. Even after Reed's dismissal, the policy may have persisted locally (Boag 1991).

The genesis of the "peasant" farming concept can be found in nineteenth century liberal economics (Carter 1989:37-38). Reformers in England and the United States espoused the idea as a means of raising agricultural productivity, lowering prices for food, and reducing urban unemployment, thus defusing the potential for unrest among the masses.

In Reed's hands, the idea became entangled in the Social Darwinism that underlay the department's approach to the Plains Indians (Carter 1989:34):

> Reed drew on aspects of an evolutionary argument to support his peasant farming policy. In the late nineteenth century, those who took an evolutionary view of the North American Indian and other 'primitive' people believed that there were immutable laws of social evolution. It was thought that man developed progressively through prescribed stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. These stages could not be skipped, nor could a race or culture be expected to progress at an accelerated rate. The Indians were perceived to be many stages removed from nineteenth-century civilization, and while they could take the next step forward, they could not miss the steps in between.
> Reed employed these notions in defending his stand on machinery. He argued that Indians should not make an 'unnatural' leap from barbarism to a nineteenth-century environment, including all its appliances. The Indian was 'prone to desire to imitate the white man's nineteenth century civilization too hastily and too early.'

When Indians protested the restrictions placed on their farming efforts they were dismissed as "chronic complainers and lazy idlers" (Carter 1989:49). Meanwhile, the interests of Indians were "sacrificed" to the demands of settlers and Indian farming received little encouragement.

By the 1890s, Jennings suggests (1975:98), rations were being cut back or cut off to force the Indians to become self-supporting. Indian policy reflected the interests of settlement and resulted in the twentieth century in the selling off of the best agricultural land on many reserves as surplus to Indian needs (Carter 1989:49). After 1897, when reserve land surrenders were heavily pushed by the Indian Affairs Department the future of Indian farming became problematical. The department had, by its intransigence, destroyed the ability of the Plains Indians to become like Euro-Canadians. Reed and his cohorts, in effect, condemned the Plain Indians to become welfare recipients (Carter 1987).

Carter's work stands at odds with the prevailing view that Indians failed at agriculture because they were unable to adapt to the settled life of the farm That view had been espoused by Stanley in 1936 and has continued in vogue.

Jennings (1979) and Looy (1977), deal with the Plains Indians' reaction to farming in the Stanley tradition. Both blame the victim. Jennings claimed that Indians considered farm chores to be women's work, "demeaning for a warrior," while Looy concluded that the Plains Indians failed at farming because they were unable to stick to the routine and were of an "improvident" nature.

Summing up a coercive situation from a different perspective, Dyck (1986:133) says that:

> In the wake of the Rebellion, Indian agents came to exercise administrative control over almost every aspect of reserve life. Reserves became highly regulated units within a closed system of federal Indian administration. Access to Indians and to information about Indian administration was closely controlled by federal authorities who attributed the slow progress made in reserve agriculture in subsequent years to the nature of Indians as uncivilized, non-Christian people. In time the Department's self-serving characterization of Indians as being dependent upon government became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Confronted with the contradictions between what the Indian Affairs Department proclaimed and what it did, and conscious of the growing flood of white settlers on the lands that had once been theirs, the Plains Indians could only cling to those cultural symbols that had provided unity and integration in past years (Patterson 1972:32):

> . . . the Indian may have clung to what he had, for fear of loss of identity, a fear based on an awareness of the new reality which made "Canadian" the norm, the native, the identity in Canada, and destroyed Indian identity as previously established.

While the Plains Indians clung to what little reality they could find in the strange new world, the Indian Affairs Department was slowly settling for the status quo. By the turn of the century it was no longer pressing civilization and assimilation with the vigor it had once shown (Surtees 1988:93). Interior Minister Clifford Sifton had little interest in the Indian side of his portfolio, preferring to focus his time and almost all his energies on settling the West (Hall 1977:127-151).

In 1931, the ubiquitous Duncan Campbell Scott, soon to retire as deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs looked back on 50 years of department rule through rose-colored spectacles. The Plains Indians, he said, had been turned into farmers in just two generations and were largely self-supporting. And the day was not too far off when Indians would be fully

amalgamated with Euro-Canadian society (1931:1-27). But the poet and bureaucrat admitted there were potholes on the road to progress. "The department," he confessed, "is confronted with serious problems in the slow process of weaning the Indian from his primitive state" (1931:25).

Scott excoriated the white showmen who enticed the Plains Indians away from their farming to perform for white audiences. But he had special words of condemnation for the Sun Dance (1931:25):

> Like all people living close to nature, the Indians perform rites at the time of the summer solstice, notable among these ancient native customs is the Sun Dance of the Plains. The Indian Act prohibits the appearance of Indians in native costume without the consent of the Superintendent General at pageants, and also dances or ceremonies involving mutilation of the body. It may seem arbitrary on our part to interfere with the native culture. The position of the department, however, can readily be understood, and it is pointed out that Indians will spend a fortnight preparing for a sun-dance, another fortnight engaging in it, and another fortnight to get over it. Obviously this plays havoc with summer ploughing.

Never one to waste a theme, Scott's 1931 paper, prepared for the bi-annual conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, meeting in Hangchow, China, was little more than a reprise for the public of his sermon to Indian Agents in 1921. As exasperated with Indian dancing then as he was 10 years later, Scott (Buckley 1992:44) lectured that:

> It is observed with alarm that the holding of dances by the Indians . . . is on the increase . . . . I have therefore to direct you to use your utmost endeavours to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing.

The poet, like his predecessors, including the penny-pinching Lawrence Vankoughnet the martinet Hayter Reed, the lacklustre James Smart and the ineffectual Frank Pedley, had little love for, and possibly even less

understanding of, the people whose welfare was his responsibility (Jenness 1954:161; Titley 1986).

His task was to hurry on their assimilation into Canadian society. As he expansively told a Commons committee in 1920 (1978:115):

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone . . . . Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.

CONVERSION -- DRAGGING THE PLAINS INDIANS TO CHRIST

Three denominations -- Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican -- were in the forefront of Euro-Canadian efforts to cure the Plains Indians of their moral failings, wrong-headed "pagan" religion, and unchristian practices, like polygamy.

There were no self-doubts among any of the denominations that if Indians were to be civilized they had to be Christians (Ronda and Axtell 1978:1). The physical privations endured by the Plains Indians afforded proof that they needed spiritual uplift. "The Indian was not a noble and independent man but a degraded savage" (Owram 1980:24) whose deprivation and misery reflected his savagery and paganism. It was, Samek (1979:10) observes, a case of "hate the sin but love the sinner." Hoxie (1984:ix-x) suggests the move to assimilate the Indians rested on two assumptions: thatIndians existed outside white society and; and, that they could not be part of "civilized" society unless they became Christians and accepted the idea of "progress." Or, as the so-called "Friends of the Indian" stated with regularity at the Lake Mohonk Conference, "As soon as you get the Indian to become a Christian, you have

settled the whole question in regard to his industry and morality" (Burgess 1972: 147).

It may have been a matter of some debate as to whether civilization should precede religious conversion, or vice versa. But all denominations tried to ensure that the process went forward hand in hand.

Josephy, commenting on the United States experience, although his observations are applicable to Canada as well, points out that "Whites failed not only to appreciate the sophistication and role of Native American spiritual systems, but even to acknowledge their validity as religion . . . . (1982:80):

> In their earnestness to convert Indians to Christianity, few . . . missionaries ever recognized the extent of the dependence of Indian societies on their religious systems and the consequent enormity of what Whites expected the Indians to give up. In a way, it was like urging them to shed their own skin and fit their flesh and frame into a new one.

"Believing as they did that barbarism was due to the free operation of original sin, they could not conceive of a civilized man who was not Christian, nor could they envisage an uncivilized Christian" (Usher 1971:37).

The Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society held that to not offer the chance of salvation for the less developed "was for English civilization to begin to decay" (Getty 1974:20). But the Anglicans were also realistic. Adult Indians were "considered irredeemable" and missionary work was focussed on the children (Porter 1981:ii).

The Methodists, said Carter (1980:44), "felt themselves to be part of a world-wide movement to introduce and nurture the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon civilization among the peoples of the globe."

John Maclean observed that, "The Church says, 'Christianize first and then civilize;' the State replies, 'Teach the Indians first to work and then to

pray.' True civilization includes the work of both these agencies, and it is not antagonistic, but the one is the complement of the other" (1889:264).

"It should be unity in labour, not precedence," said Maclean. And, indeed, it was. Missionaries ran the Indian industrial schools established to break youngsters away from the faith and culture of their fathers and mothers. Missionaries, like Methodist clergyman John Semmens were hired by the Indian Affairs Department and placed in key positions. Semmens, for example, became Inspector of Indian Agencies for Manitoba.

He brought with him some deep-seated and unflattering opinions about Indians (Stephenson 1925:115-116):

> They are a peculiar race of mortals -- sad looking specimens of humanity -- poor, neglected, ignorant heathens. Among themselves they are suspecting, dishonest, revengeful. In their habits they are filthy, and in their dealings brutal. They are slaves of debasing superstitions, worshippers of inanimate deities, believers in tokens and charms. They are conjurers, medicine-men, gamblers, poisoners. The majority of them are bigamists and treat their wives as slaves or dogs . . . In a word, they have no moral law, and every one does that which is right in his own eyes, and the consequences is the country is corrupt before God and full of violence.

Roman Catholics might have wide differences with the Protestants on matters of dogma but they were united on the inextricable link between Christianity and civilization. One could not exist without the other. Oblate missionary, Rev. Albert Lacombe, the best known of all the missionaries to the Plains Indians, was convinced that the Indians he loved had to be prepared for the day when Euro-Canadians would dominate the prairies (Stan 1978:14).

But as an industrial school principal Lacombe was convinced that only stern discipline was workable with Indian youngsters and he urged on the Indian Affairs Department in 1885 stern measures to make Indian education more effective.

They included withholding rations if parents neglected sending their children to school, forcible return of students who decamped, incentives to get parents to bring their children to the schools, and stronger authority to keep students at school (Stan 1978:27).

Missionaries, of whatever persuasion were listened to when they had complaints about Indian Agents or about department policy.

Whatever their intentions about the well-being of their flocks and their spiritual welfare, missionaries were active agents of assimilation (Josephy 1982:82). Their activities resulted in reserves that were split between Christian and "pagan" factions, as the official record demonstrates in the chapters that follow.

The missionaries, like their fellow-civilizers in the Indian Affairs Department, viewed the Plains Indians as a people who were at a lower stage of development than Euro-Canadians. Filled with hubris about the achievements of European civilization, the missionaries saw the Plains Indians as a backward, benighted people whose religion and cultural practices, including the treatment of women, were affronts to civilized men (Carter 1984:28).

Usher (1971:33) cites the following 1849 comment from the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* of the Church Missionary Society:

> Old books . . . may describe the simple pastoral life of the North American Indian . . . But we know that, on more accurate inspection, these pleasant imaginations shift into dark and horrible realities; and cruelty and cannibalism, and human sacrifice tell us too plainly that Heathenism is everywhere and always the same accursed thing.

The Methodists, like some of their brethren in other denominations never seemed clear on whether they were "spreading Christian doctrine, moral

respectability, or the blessings of British civilization" (Brooks 1972:205-6) but they hardly paused to consider the issue.

Methodists like McDougall, Maclean and Egerton Ryerson Young "shared the belief that progress meant an end to the tyranny and superstitions of the past; man's mission was to replace superstition with reason, barbarism with civilization" (Carter 1984:32). McDougall could be sympathetic to the Plains Indians and tolerant of ceremonies like the Sun Dance, but he still believed that it was inevitable that the Plains Indians should be supplanted on the prairies by a stronger, more energetic and more advanced society. Missionaries thus had no problems with the avowed intention of the Indian Affairs Department to turn the hunters of the plains into facsimiles of Euro-Canadian farmers to spare the public treasury the expense of feeding them. Indeed, they were ever ready to speed the process. One missionary author proudly described the collective efforts of the missions as "accelerated social evolution" (Dennis 1897:45).

The Plains Indians were seen as slaves of wilderness forces, unable or unwilling to subdue the physical landscape in any way. "The most glaring evidence of the Indians' inability to master their environment was that they left no marks of their presence on the land" (Carter 1984:32). They left no monuments, built no dwellings, cleared no forests, broke no ground. Progress seemed foreign to them.

The missionaries were continually irked and upset by the Indians' apparent indifference to their futures. The squandering of food on feasts when they should have been rationing it out, their tendency to give away goods and wealth in ceremonies, and their fascination with what the missionaries viewed

as trinkets or frivolities, conflicted with the Euro-Canadian ideals of thrift and sobriety.

The missionaries were convinced that the Indians were never likely to begin subduing the land on their own. This disregard for the Biblical injunction and neglect of the West's potential forfeited their claims to the land . . . It was a land for a hardy, thrifty race of men who would dot it with homesteads and build cities and factories. The land was crying out for "real" occupation (Carter 1984:36).

While the missionaries viewed the Plains Indians as little more than children in their intellectual development they were convinced that like children the Indians could learn, however slowly, and be taught the rudiments of civilization (Usher 1971:33).

Not all Indians were regarded as little better than children, however. Some, like the chiefs Red Crow (Blood), Poundmaker (Cree) and Crowfoot (Blackfoot), earned the admiration of the missionaries for their abilities, physical bearing and intelligence. But as Carter has pointed out (1980:107), "it was a respect earned according to the degree to which they were not like Indians at all."

Over the years, the missionaries won converts and many Plains Indians were led away from the traditional ceremonies. But in many others, Christianity overlay deep-seated and unerased yearnings for the traditional way of life and the traditional ceremonies (Barrass 1976:xi). "Traditional and Christian ways co-existed without coalescing into a new outlook" (Grant, 1984:166).

Old beliefs, old "resentments," old resistance to white ways persisted and the Sun Dance and other rites "took on a harder edge in defiance . . ."

And, in the farthest reaches of the reserves there were Indians who remained "irreconcilably" opposed to the white man and all his ways, including Christianity (Andrews 1972:194).

THE CLASH OF CULTURES

The Euro-Canadians who usurped the prairies from the Plains Indians carried with them a cumbersome intellectual baggage. Weighted with Old Testament beliefs and nineteenth century prejudice, the settlers could see little that was good or noble in the culture of the people they were displacing.

Euro-Canadians were convinced that the new society they were creating in the "last, best west" was to be founded on agriculture, property, fixed residence, hard work and regular church-going. The nomadic, improvident life -- or so it seemed to them -- of the Plains Indians, was beyond their ken, something to be shunned or changed.

Everything about the Plains Indians -- the blankets, long hair, habits of personal hygiene, religion -- bothered some of the Euro-Canadians all of the time, and all of the Euro-Canadians some of the time. The attitudes cut across religious lines, rural and urban dwellers, professionals and working class, missionaries and Indian Agents. Carter (1987:29) observes that:

> Indian life was viewed as a chaotic search for game, without forethought or provision for the future, characterized by periods of both wild extravagance and utter destitution, which led to deeply ingrained habits of improvidence and indolence. Hunting and gathering was perceived as living irresponsibly and reckless off the fat of the land. Despite the vast acreages at their disposal, Indians were without field, farm, town, or city and thus lacked any notion of private property, which was understood to be the very basis for "civilization" itself.

The Bible directed humans to till the earth and reap its bounty. Failure to heed the direction was viewed as savagery and sloth. The notion of civilization with which Victorian Canadians were imbued was filled with images of steamships, railways, foundries and mills; there was no accommodation for or patience with cultures that failed to grasp the importance of such achievements (Carter 1987:30):

> The Indians of the plains were viewed as 'thoughtlessly, carelessly living on the surface. Like the butterfly flitting from plant to plant, so these men roamed and camped and dreamed, not of mines and means which were above and beneath them on every hand'.

The Euro-Canadians might be excused for feeling superior. They had been fed a steady diet of myth that emphasized the "supremacy" of the West (Baudet 1965:65) for generations, and that had little patience with or perception of other societies and other cultures.

The nineteenth century ethnologists and historians, said Baudet, had "erected a monument to a mankind that had been marching onward for countless centuries and would, with the West at its head, eventually scale the cultural heights."

From at least the time of the Greeks, the "other" had been treated as a "barbarian" in an on-going exercise in Western self-definition (Hall 1989). If the "other" was dirty, the European was clean. If the "other" was savage, the European was civilized. If the "other" was pagan, the European was Christian. If the "other" was "weak, the European was "strong," even if that strength only resulted from superior technology (Axtell 1981:41-43).

At all times, the "other" had to be convinced that the European was all-powerful. Greenblatt (1985:23) quotes Thomas Harriot, Sir Walter Raleigh's agent in North Carolina:

> The Indians must be persuaded that the Christian God is all-powerful and committed to the survival of his chosen people, that he will wither the corn and destroy the lives of the savages who displease him by disobeying or plotting against the English.

Discussing the concept of Orientalism, as it has dominated nineteenth and twentieth century intellectual thought in the West, Said (1979:43-44, 109), argues that:

> Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")... Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours .... The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury of every facet of Oriental behavior.

Given that intellectual baggage, "The Indian became a victim of the white man's proclivity for conceptualization and idealization .... It tended to infantilize the Indian and to destroy the integrity of his culture" (Sheehan 1973:8, 10).

Euro-Canadians, like their counterparts in Great Britain and the United States, were imbued with the mystique of white, read Anglo-Saxon superiority, over all other "races".

It was used to justify African adventures, wars to punish transgressors of the white code in India, Afghanistan and other nether regions of the world, and to justify the economic hegemony of Euro-Canadians over the Canadian prairies and the Plains Indians.

"The innate inferiority of coloured ... races made such intervention ... not only practicable but excusable, in the interests of religion, progress, and truth" (Bolt 1971:ix).

The decline of non-white, non-western cultures was regrettable but viewed as inevitable. Bolt cites the following passage from the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* in 1864 (II 1xviii):

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

Euro-Canadians were conscious they had a mission to settle the West, just as Americans saw their West as a region to be imbued with republican ideas.

"Westward expansion seemed as much a divine mandate to Canadians as to Americans . . . Canadians were increasingly aware of their 'duty' to establish British institutions in the West" (Sharp 1955:376).

If the Plains Indian was to be saved he had to be converted, as fast as possible, into a reasonable facsimile of a white man, and well into the twentieth century philanthropic groups, churches and the government tried to do just that (Samek 1987:25).

Canadian officials certainly shared the views of Thomas Jefferson Morgan, appointed by President Benjamin Harrison as U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1889. Morgan sensed, like many others of his kind that, "the Native Americans' religion . . . was the force that held Indian societies together, and the natives' religious leaders were the principal agents for keeping them Indian" (Josephy 1982:78).

The exceptions to this assimilationist sentiment were rare. Samek cites a passage from the short-lived journal *The Canadian Indian* in 1891. An anonymous correspondent asked:

> Would it not be pleasanter and even safer for us to have living in our midst a contented, well-to-do, self-respecting community of Indians rather than a set of dependent, dissatisfied, half-educated, and half-Anglicized paupers?

The answer was an unequivocal no if the periodical's fate is any indication. It survived for only a few issues. Always lurking in the background of Euro-Canadian attitudes towards the Plains Indians especially in the early years of white settlement on the prairies was fear of an Indian uprising or Indian violence.

It was a fear that long had been generated by tales of Indian "savagery" and cruelty from a host of sources. No less an august personage than Henry Youle Hind, esteemed faculty member of Trinity College, Toronto, could dwell at length on the image of the "savage reactionary" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), that haunted and titillated Eastern Canadian imaginations.

Returned from a trip to the wild, untamed west, Hind was the speaker at the "President's Conversazione" of the Canadian Institute (1859:254):

> It is often asked whether the thrilling descriptions of savage life, as given in [James Fenimore] Cooper's delightful romances, are imaginary or real . . . . to be an eye witness of a scalp dance or a skull dance is more than enough to press home the conviction that the fiendish passions . . . still find expression in violent gesture, loud vociferation, triumphant song, and barbarous feasting with undiminished strength and bitterness, even after a century's intercourse with civilized men.

The Cree Sun Dance that took place in 1884 in Poundmaker's territory was linked to the large gathering of "disaffected" Indians who had gathered at the behest of Big Bear to discuss a united front to attempt to gain better treaty provisions from the Canadian government.

That Sun Dance had led to a violent confrontation between the Indians and the NWMP when they attempted to arrest a young Cree following an assault on the farming instructor. The incident and others in the turbulent

months leading up to the outbreak of killings and violence in 1885 went into folk memories of Indian violence (Allen 1972:13). And there were parallels in the United States that reinforced the image of the Plains Indian as wild and uncontrollable. The Ghost Dance episode in the United States was one such example.

"Fearing all types of gatherings called and directed by Indians, they [American Indian agents on the Sioux reservations] viewed any Indian assembly, especially those involving Indians from different reservations, with suspicion . . . (Stewart 1980:181).

There was a long tradition in nineteenth century lore of savages on the so-called frontier, and Euro-Canadians were not immune to the spectre of such savages and the depredations they could cause.

In mid-century, at the peak of westward movement in the United States there were regular episodes of "rumor and alarm" on the overland trail (Riley 1984:427):

> With the spectre of the savage always before them, trail people were frequently less than calm and rational in their dealings with American Indians, a situation that complicated the process of opening the frontier.

"Mythical massacres" became commonplace in accounts of frontier travel as newspapers embellished already fanciful accounts of confrontations between whites and the Plains Indians. Riley quotes one woman overlander who described the reaction of women in her party to the grotesque shadows cast by the campfires: "the red man needed only horns and cloven feet to complete the soul stirring picture" (Riley 1984:435).

The popular press did its share in providing readers in both Canada and the United States with a distorted view of the Indian and a distorted version of

Indian culture. But academic historians also did their part in distorting the image of the Plains Indian.

Summing up their nomadic lifestyle, George Bryce (Carruthers 1974:124), concluded that, their "wandering habits and the insecurity of life and property among them have rendered progress impossible."

In *A Short History of the Canadian People* (1887), Bryce attempted a description of the Sun Dance and the role of self-torture in the ceremony.

"If without flinching he endures the ordeal, he is declared worthy of the dignity of a brave, and fit to go upon the war-path" (Carruthers 1974:125). Carruthers quotes Bryce on the Sun Dance describing dancers who "leap, howl, and cry like wild beasts and appear more like demons than men."

For Bryce, "The Indians were cunning, fickle, jealous, warlike, nomadic, improvident, factious, and idle" (Carruthers 1974:129). Despite this negative portrayal of the Plains Indians, Carruthers says that Bryce, like other historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada and the United States, favored the eventual assimilation of the Indian into white culture.

By 1910, however, Bryce had relegated the Plains Indians to being examples of the natural obstacles and dangers confronting settlers. Carruthers provides the following quotation from Bryce's contribution to *The Makers of Canada* series [editor Duncan Campbell Scott]: "famed for fierceness and deceit, [the Indians] must for the first time be taught fear or respect for the adventurous intruders upon their domain" (1974:130).

Novelists roughly contemporary with Bryce, like Ralph Connor, also drew pictures of Plains Indians that were far from flattering. Praise for their

physical attributes was coupled with descriptions of their wild, cruel, unpredictable nature. Indians were often portrayed as part of the wilderness landscape, little more than obstacles to the ambitions of a Euro-Canadian hero (Williamson 1976).

At the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, James Earle Fraser's statue "The End of the Trail" was a major attraction. It shows an exhausted Indian slumped in his saddle on an equally exhausted pony. For the sculptor and the audience it conveyed the image of the end of a people dominated by a stronger one (Hoxie 1984:93).

Hoxie suggests that the popularity of Fraser's "pathetic" Indian indicated that the romantic notion of the "noble savage" was coming back into vogue at a time when many foresaw the end of the real Plains Indians in America. This was in contrast to portrayals at earlier expositions that had emphasized the changes and reforms taking place among the Plains Indians as they adapted to farming, education and a new lifestyle (1984:94).

The dark side of this change meant that Americans -- there's little reason to doubt that many Euro-Canadians were not of like mind -- considered that the Plains Indian had been marginalized. If they were to be assimilated or amalgamated into the white society that was being created it would be on the margins, not as full participants (Hoxie 1984:112).

> In the early twentieth century, shifts in popular perceptions reshaped the public image of the Indian and his place in American society. Writers and politicians turned away from the hopeful view they had created a generation before. They began doubting the speed with which the Native American might "rise" to a civilized state and questioning whether total assimilation was desirable at all ....

Euro-Canadians had sympathy for the Plains Indians, regretting their lower place in the evolutionary scale and tut-tutting about the Indians' failure

to make better use the land they had occupied but this "sense of sympathy in no way contradicted the right of European civilization to supplant the native" (Owram 1992:132). Canadian expansionists, those easterners who viewed the West as a tabula rasa on which British ideals, values and ambitions could be implanted conceded their duty to civilize the Indian. But the Indian had no say in how that aim was to be carried out. The expansionists saw assimilation as "desirable and paternalism as necessary" (Owram 1992:132). Settlement of the West would "uplift" the Plains Indians and transform them from an unwashed, unlettered barbarian horde.

There were other attitudes, as well, that influenced the way settlers dealt with or viewed the Plains Indians. One such, was the idea of what constituted "manly" behavior. Some settlers and missionaries, whether they understood it or not, were products of the "Cult of Manliness" (Morton 1968;321). It was, said Morton, in his essay on "Victorian Canada," the need or drive "to prove oneself in an individualistic and competitive society, and to do so with some style and eclat.." Such individuals might have admired the Plains Indian of the past, they had little sympathy for the ones they encountered receiving rations on the reserve or seeking work at the back doors of houses in villages and towns.

The early settlers in Alberta also brought with them a "garrison" mentality (Rasporich 1975:vii):

> In the eighteen seventies and eighties, Calgary was a frontier garrison town peering through the chinks of its wooden armor at hostile forces without -- at Indians stealing cattle; at its ranching competitor, Fort Macleod . . . .

The "garrison" mentality influenced house types, as well as minds -- Ontario stone farmsteads were often replicated, as were Ontario kitchen

gardens, which effectively created a landscape barrier between settler and prairie (Thomas and Clarke 1979:83-104). And there were other indications of the same mentality at work in what Friesen has termed the replication on the prairies of a "British-Ontario" society (1992:10-11):

> From their selection of house type and creation of segregated residential districts to their foundation of historical societies, schools, private clubs, and other voluntary agencies of cultural improvement, the members of the respectable class set the proper tone for prairie life. The danger they anticipated was not class war of the Marxian type but an Indian uprising or frontier violence or disrespectful -- even downright disgusting -- public behavior.

The officers of the NWMP were members of the class that dominated the new prairie communities, meaning they had been recruited largely from the "Ontario elite" (Macleod 1976:106; Jennings 1979:101). According to Jennings, they were determined that "the Canadian Plains would not have the classless society such as that which they thought existed in the American West." Many of the officers had a low opinion of the Plains Indians, although there were notable exceptions such as Col. Macleod and Superintendent R.B. Deane, among others. For many of the officers the Sun Dance "was a vestige of and link to past Indian ways and rendered the Indian difficult to manage (Stan 1978:98). Stan argues that Superintendent S.B. Steele was expressing a common NWMP attitude when he said that the Sun Dance (1978:98-99):

> has the effect of reviving too vividly old associations. Old warriors take this occasion of relating their experience of former days . . . . This has a pernicious effect on the young men; it makes them unsettled and anxious to emulate the deeds of their forefathers.

Western Canada's reputation for peaceful and tolerant Indian relations "did not rest on the tolerance and understanding of early settlers" (Jennings 1975:88). Rather, it depended on the ability of the NWMP to maintain order.

While many ranchers had good relations with the Plains Indians on their newly acquired ranges, "violently anti-Indian attitudes" could be found in towns like Calgary where the local newspapers fanned racial flames with their diatribes against Indian cattle-stealing.

At best, among the ranchers, relations with the Indians were friendly but usually "distant and condescending" (Jennings 1975:89).

In 1886, Calgary had about 3,000 inhabitants, according to Walpole Rolland, a civil engineer with the Canadian Pacific Railway, set down his impressions of the area in 1886 for the Winnipeg magazine *The Emigrant* (1970:24).

Although noting that the Stoneys had a reputation for "virtue and honesty," Rolland was generally critical of the Plains Indians he encountered:

> . . . by far the greater part of the Indian's time is spent in nursing his pipe, lying in slothful ease in his tepee. He makes occasional trips to visit the scene of civilized man, and gazes at the stone and brick tepees they erect. He watches too, with well concealed surprise, the approach of the iron horse as it ploughs its way over the green and fertile prairie, where once the noble red man chased the antelope and buffalo. Often in early mornings are those wandering Bedouins to be seen on elevated ridges and knolls, in statuesque attitude, brooding over the decay of their life and watching the ever incessant advance of the whites.

The West and western communities grew quickly in the closing years of the nineteenth and the opening decade of the twentieth century. In 1901 Saskatchewan had a population of 91,300. By 1911 it had reached 492,400. Alberta in the same period went from 73,000 to 374,300. In 1891, Calgary's population was put at 3,876. By 1911 it was 43,704. Between 1901 and 1911, Regina's population soared from 2,249 to 30,213, while Edmonton's went from 4,176 to 31,064 (Lower 1983:316,318).

As the nineteenth century drew to a close the Ontario-born and British-born settlers who had been first on the prairies were joined by growing numbers of Germans, Scandinavians, Ukrainians and other Europeans under the immigration policies of Interior Minister Clifford Sifton (Hall 1977:60-85).

The population of the prairies jumped from a quarter million in 1891 to 1,300,000 in 1911 By 1921, some 2,000,000 people inhabited the prairies from Manitoba to Alberta (Woodcock 1988:281,282).

The pull of the West was more than simply the opportunity to acquire cheap land and forge new careers. There was, as well, a vision of the prairies as the 'last best west', "one of the few remaining regions in North America, if not the world, where conditions were right to create the perfect society" (Francis 1989:232).

That perfect society was to be white only, and preferably Anglo-Saxon or at least nordic in make-up."Anglo conformity" was to rule the West and the immigrant was the target of measures aimed at ensuring he conformed to a "British or Canadian norm" (Palmer 1971:139). It was not to be a society that included the Plains Indians except possibly as servants, workers, or paid performers in stampedes and fairs so that the newly settled communities could enjoy the flavor of the old days in the West -- before the buffalo had disappeared, before the Plains Indians became wards of the state -- without suffering the hardships and privation that was once the lot of the Euro-Canadian intruders.

In the final analysis, the Plains Indian was considered inferior to Euro-Canadians, even when he was seen as the "noble savage" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988). Berkhofer (1981:55) suggests that the "noble savage" was a

view espoused by a minority of whites and was usually put forward "to make polemical points . . . even those who held this view seldom doubted that white society was generally superior to Indian societies." For some writers of the time, the Plains Indian was clearly little more than a child in intellectual development. Saskatchewan historian Norman Fergus Black, for one, viewed the religion of the Plains Indian as childlike animism (1913:97):

> The Indian's almost ineradicable reticence, especially with regard to topics upon which he has reason to suspect that the white man will look with ridicule, has made the facts hard to discover and our own religious and philosophic standpoint is so far removed from that of the race of children of whom we are speaking that the whites have the intensest difficulty in grasping Indian religious conceptions and ideas, consequently we tend to read into Indian lore notions really attributable to our own religious inheritance and quite foreign to that of the Red Man . . . ever since the advent of the whites the institutions of the aborigines have been sinking into decay and have been subject to insidious transformation resulting from intercourse with the pale faces.

Not all Black's contemporaries, however, viewed the Plains Indian as little more than children. For some, they were the devil incarnate, blood-stained forces for evil. Regular (1985:7) quotes from an article by John Campbell in *Canadian Magazine* for February 1894:

> Blood stains the whole of Indian history -- blood shed in endless wars; blood poured out in wanton cruelty, blood offered on the altars of their unhallowed gods. As races they had sold themselves to do the Devil's work, and when the white man came they received the Devil's pay.

Then there was the tone adopted by writers whose market was the emigrant (Moyles and Owram 1988:129-131). The "official propagandists" acted as if the Plains Indian didn't exist; a second group treated the Indians as quaint specimens who, although degenerate, were peaceful and harmless; a third group attempted to reveal the "truth" about the Plains Indians by discussing their underlying savagery. Moyles and Owram cite an observation

by the Duke of Argyll, who, after witnessing a Sun Dance in 1881 remarked that "white men, for some reason, cannot endure [pain] as can a redskin" (1988:173).

What earned praise from the late Victorians then, were the Indian's qualities of endurance and wilderness skills, not his intellect or his ability to think like a European. "What counted was the perpetuation of the stereotype of the Indian as proud, dignified, and warlike" (1988:175). But, conclude Moyles and Owram (1988:183):

> The cumulative image of the Indian from the 1880s on was one likely to evoke pity or disgust rather than admiration. The Indian's savage traits, including his weaknesses, were no longer tempered by that strain of romanticism which saw him as a 'denizen of the wild.' The Indian had gone from being savage but dignified, whatever his faults, to being merely pathetic. The image of the savage Indian, whether noble or wild, had been replaced by descriptions of him as a creature alongside the tracks of the new transcontinental, no longer free or independent, clinging to the scraps thrown out by a new civilization.

The narrative in the official record and in prairie newspapers was both shaped and informed by these beliefs. And, in a perverse way, so too was the Indian narrative (Bruner 1986).

An elderly Cree in Saskatchewan could recall for an interviewer in 1963 (Shimpo, 1976:136) his feelings of being marginalized by Euro-Canadians:

> We feel particularly bitter when the missionaries say all men are created equal. Do whites really believe Indians are equally created by the Christian God? . . . even the ignorant, poor, and drunken whites despise us because we are Indians. They look at us as if we Indians are a kind of animal . . . I cannot understand the white man's logic. The more we observe them, the more we are convinced that the whites do the opposite of what the missionaries around here preached to us).

In the marginal world of the Plains Indians, the Sun Dance came to be more than a religious ceremony. It became a metaphor for Indianness in a time of trial and upheaval (Wallace 1956).

SECTION II

The Narrative of Repression; and Echoes of Resistance and Revitalization

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION II

The narratives of politicians, Indian Agents, other Indian Affairs officials, missionaries, Plains Indians, and journalists have to be analysed within the broad framework of the discourse surrounding Canadian Indian policy, and the Plains Indians' adjustment to government control and the increasing impact of Euro-Canadian settlement in the North-West Territories.

The narrative of the Indian Affairs officials dealing with the Plains Indians at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries is the product of its time and ethos as is the narrative of the Plains Indians who challenged them morally and intellectually. But, the Plains Indian narrative, unlike that of the Euro-Canadians, has to be pieced together from fragmentary revelations, the remembered oral history of later Indian historians, the interpretations offered by sympathetic white interlocutors, or inferred from the observations and reactions of Indian Agents, missionaries and others.

This section deals with the narrative of the Indian Agents and Indian Affairs officials and is based almost entirely on material available in what can be termed the "official record." The official record, for the purposes of this study, is comprised of two sources: the annual reports of the Indian Affairs Department in the Sessional Papers of Canada, referred to as SPC in cited references; and those letters, reports, memoranda, telegrams, and other items from the files of the Indian Affairs Department that have been assembled and arranged by the Public Archives of Canada in Record Group 10, Black Series, Volumes 3825,3826, 3827, 3876 and 8481. These files deal with Indian dances

in the Northwest Territories and Manitoba, "more particularly the Sun Dance." Collectively, for the purposes of this study they are referred to as the Sun Dance File, or SDF for citations.

Much has been written about the stereotypes and biases that appear in the narratives of dominant cultures as they describe the "other" who confronts them. What holds true for Greeks describing barbarians (Hall 1989) holds true for the way those people labelled "Indians" have been described by European commentators from colonial times to the present (Pearce 1988; Berkhofer 1979; Walker 1972 and 1981 et al). It is a convention of anthropology that such narratives are exercises in self-description because it is against the attitudes and values of the dominant culture that the "other" is judged, and generally found wanting in those characteristics deemed admirable and desired. For the purposes of this study, the stereotypes described by Marsden and Nachbar (1988) have proved useful and convenient. The three main stereotypes set out by Marsden and Nachbar are: "noble savage," "savage reactionary," and "noble anachronism." These are not newly minted terms. They have been used to describe or typify Indians for centuries but they are useful because many sub-types can be collapsed into them.

Bruner (1986) has suggested that anthropologists have constructed two Indian narratives. The earlier narrative viewed the Plains Indians' history or story as embracing "past glory, present [read late nineteenth and early twentieth century] disorganization, future assimilation" (1986:143); the later story embraced "past oppression, present resistance, future resurgence."

In fact, as analysis of the Sun Dance discourse will suggest, there never was a time when the Plains Indians did not resist Euro-Canadian intrusion and repression, and attempts at assimilation, either through accommodation that absorbed the initial shock of that intrusion and bought time for recovery, resurgence, and revitalization, or through more direct challenges to Euro-Canadian pressure and authority. Both phases of such resistance are demonstrated in the Sun Dance discourse and the broader discourse involving Indian-white relations of which it forms a part.

CHAPTER 4 -- THE OFFICIAL RECORD: 1879-1894

" . . . the darkest clouds of pagan ignorance . . . are gradually vanishing. . . ."

Ebenezer McColl, inspector of Indian Agencies, 1893

INTRODUCTION

The Euro-Canadian narrative or story in the Sun Dance discourse was shaped largely by the officials of the Indian Affairs Department and the attitudes and biases they embraced.

The views of Ebenezer McColl provide a useful entry point to examine the perspectives of Indian Agents and headquarters officials and politicians.

McColl summed up his personal feelings towards the Plains Indians in 1893. The Inspector of Indian Agencies for Manitoba regarded the government's wards as inferior beings who were, nevertheless, with the help of the Indian Affairs Department and its officials, making a gradual if difficult transition from savagery to civilization, from paganism to Christianity, from the dark of their nomadic way of life to the enlightened pursuit of farming (SPC 1894a):

> The baneful influence of the designing medicine man over them through his poisonous nostrums and mysterious incantations is fast disappearing, and the darkest clouds of pagan ignorance and superstition which overshadowed for centuries their mental horizon are

> gradually vanishing as the glimmering rays of civilization are penetrating through them.
> In some respects, the Indian is superior to the European. His perceptive faculties are wonderfully developed; nothing escapes the searching glance of his eagle eye; and his memory is so retentive that his recollection of places and events is simply marvellous; but in other respects he is inferior. His reasoning powers are not of the highest order, and it is therefore most difficult to convince him of anything by argument. He does not possess that energy and perseverance which constitute the mainspring of prosperity in any undertaking, hence he never accumulates anything beyond his immediate requirements, and consequently he is frequently on the verge of starvation.

McColl's observations followed on two decades of departmental experience with the Plains Indians after the conclusion of treaties with them in the 1870s. The Euro-Canadian narrative in the broader discourse embracing Indian-white relations, like McColl's observations, encompasses a number of overriding themes. They provide the framework for understanding the official narrative surrounding the unrelenting efforts of the Indian Affairs Department to eradicate the Sun Dance.

Bruner has suggested, rightly (1986), that the dominant (Euro-Canadian) narrative of the era as constructed by anthropologists, was underpinned by two fundamental beliefs: acculturation and assimilation. The values and customs of a Euro-Canadian culture would gradually displace the cultural norms of the Plains Indians and they would, in turn, be assimilated into the broader society, however marginalized they might remain.

The narrative of Indian Agents and officials as found in the annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs and the Sun Dance File of the department is brusque and humorless and, with few exceptions, shows little sympathy for or understanding of the Plains tribes and their culture. The narrative demonstrates in its reactions to Indian customs, habits and ceremonies the kind of self-definition that has been the subject of many

anthropological studies. The narrative is also replete with stereotypes that fit the types defined by Marsden and Nachbar (1988).

Four interrelated and inter-meshed themes emerge from study of the opening years of the official record.

White man's burden: The Plains Indians were considered to be inferior to Euro-Canadians but capable of making the transition to civilization over time. As wards of the government they were viewed in the same context as the Euro-Canadian poor in Canadian cities and towns. The harshness, severity and callousness of the workhouse was replicated in the Indian Affairs Department's treatment of the Plains Indians. As little public money as possible was to be expended on these indigents and wherever and whenever possible they were expected to work for their keep or, failing that, to at least demonstrate a proper appreciation of their inferior status by remaining humble and docile.

Good Indians, bad Indians: Indians leaders were either good or bad. The stereotypes had nothing to do with how an Indian leader was regarded by his community and everything to do with how he was regarded by the Indian agent who dealt with him.

An Indian leader who resisted or questioned departmental dictates was immediately cast as a bad Indian, someone who could not be trusted and who was, at all times, suspected of being a mischief-maker bent on thwarting or undermining departmental goals. Such a leader was, in effect, a "savage reactionary" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), someone who was generally unpredictable,and often cruel, unkempt, unwashed and unwholesome.

The good Indian was the leader who accepted Indian Affairs domination, accepted Indian Affairs policies as gospel and demonstrated a general willingness to abide by and acquiesce in Euro-Canadian decisions about his people's future. Such a good Indian was praised as an example to other tribal leaders, a man who was truly a "noble savage" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988).

A dangerous force: The Plains Indians were feared as an unpredictable, feckless and capricious force driven by different values and motives than Euro-Canadians, with a capacity for mischief and violence when massed in sufficient numbers.

Indian agents and their superiors were wary of Indians, en masse, and discouraged large assemblies of Indians wherever possible.

An end to paganism: The fourth and final theme is the recurring belief that with continued pressure from the missionaries and continued coercion by the Indian Agents, always with the power of the North-West Mounted Police on the horizon, the Sun Dance would inevitably, sooner or later, disappear, speeding up the arrival of that day when the tribes could be considered civilized agriculturalists, as civilized as those "yeoman" farmers from the British Isles and Europe who were now finding their way on to the lands that were once the domain of the Plains Indians.

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

In 1880, the Indian Branch became a "sub-department" of the Department of the Interior with the minister responsible holding the title of superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, and with the deputy superintendent-general assigned the rank of deputy minister. In addition, an Indian

Commissioner was appointed to be the department's overseer of its recently acquired responsibilities for Manitoba and the North-West Territories.

Interior Minister John A. Macdonald (SPC 1880a) set the tone for successive annual reports of the department when he reported to the Governor General in 1879 that the overall condition of the "aboriginal inhabitants" was improving, and they were showing signs of throwing off the old tribal system and adopting civilized ways, including the "cultivation of the soil." Acknowledging the grave problems faced by the Plains tribes following on the disappearance of the buffalo, the 1879 annual report noted that to head off the famine that appeared inevitable, newly appointed Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney, former member of Parliament for Yale, British Columbia, had been dispatched to the North-West Territories to lay down supplies at Forts Walsh and Macleod, where large numbers of starving Indians had gathered. Dewdney assembled provisions "to relieve all cases of actual distress" (SPC 1880b).

Macdonald, however, assured the Governor General that the Plains tribes had been warned not to expect continued handouts from the government. "The expediency was at once acknowledged of encouraging them in every possible way to engage in the cultivation of the soil and the raising of cattle" in order to become self-supporting (SPC 1880c).

Farming agencies had been established for the reserves and Indian Agents replaced the officers of the North-West Mounted Police in attending to the needs of the reserve Indians. The wisdom of the policy was being "thoroughly demonstrated" Macdonald said (SPC 1880d).

In that curious blend of Victorian rectitude and unthinking brusqueness and callousness that characterizes much of the Euro-Canadian narrative,

Lawrence Vankoughnet, deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, noted "an improvement in the moral and intellectual status of the Indians generally" (SPC 1880e), while he amplified at the same time on the horrendous condition of the Plains Indians. Vankoughnet then revealed matter-of-factly that many Indians in the North-West had been reduced to eating "mice, dogs and even their buffalo skins" in 1879 (SPC 1880f) while, at Blackfoot Crossing, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney had found young men reduced to "perfect skeletons" and heard reports of famine deaths of men, women and children among the destitute Blackfoot.

Vankoughnet pontificated that, "strict instructions have been given to the agents to require labor from all able-bodied Indians for supplies given them" (SPC 1880g). In return for help, however meagre, they were expected to labor hard at the work chosen for them by Euro-Canadians and to expect little or no sympathy for their plight. Meeting with Plains Indian chiefs, Edgar Dewdney "impressed upon them that the government expected they should work, the same as the white man did" (SPC 1880h).

It was a theme that was to recur time and again in future years as the government attempted to guide, coerce and inveigle the Plains Indians to become agriculturalists.

A year later, Macdonald told the Governor General that the Plains Indians had expressed deep gratitude for the famine relief rendered by the government and repeated the work for welfare theme, observing that the "system pursued in affording relief to the Indians is calculated to accustom them to habits of industry," at the same time encouraging them to depend on

their own efforts for a livelihood. "Under that system all able-bodied Indians are required to work for the food given themselves and their families" (SPC 1881a).

Parsimony and rigid administration, as well as fear of the Plains Indians were Hayter Reed's trademarks throughout his lengthy career in Indian Affairs and as Indian Agent at Battleford he was at pains to impress Macdonald and Vankoughnet with his diligence. One of his primary goals was to curtail rations to Indians of the Battleford agency and to get Indians to stay put on their reserves by refusing to issue rations except on the reserve to which an Indian belonged (SPC 1882a). Reed demonstrated deep distrust of the Indians, accusing some, in the same report, of lying to get more rations allotted to them. Never one to show undue modesty, Reed also took credit for ensuring that a Sun Dance in 1881 at Fort Pitt was held after the potato crop had been hoed and before it was time to bring in the hay crop, although he admitted that he had been powerless to stop the ceremony.

Early on, the Indian Affairs Department realized that if its effort to turn hunters into farmers was to be successful, the tribal organization of the Plains Indians had to be subverted, if not destroyed. By 1880, Macdonald was preparing the way for the residential schools that would separate Indian children from the influence of parents and elders who stood in the way of more rapid conversion to Christianity and faster transition to civilized ways. He stressed that young Indians, if they were to cope successfully in a white world would have to be removed from the "prejudicial" influences to which they were exposed on the reserves (SPC 1881b).

By 1883 it was beginning to dawn on the Indian Affairs Department that the business of "civilizing" the Indians was no easy challenge. Macdonald

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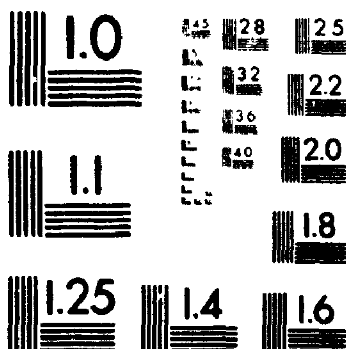


PRECISION℠ RESOLUTION TARGETS

commented that although "no very rapid strides" had been made, "gradual movement" was taking place (SPC 1884a).

Lawrence Vankoughnet, the deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs had been dispatched on an inspection tour of the North-West Territories and Macdonald told the Governor General that Vankoughnet had found that because some progress was being made in turning the Plains hunters into farmers, flour rations on several reserves could be reduced and that eventually the government would be freed entirely of the burden of providing rations. Macdonald discovered in 1885 just how wrong-headed Vankoughnet's advice had been.

The Social Darwinist dogma that marked Euro-Canadian attitudes towards the Plains Indians was ever-present in the Indian Affairs narrative. The department's 1887 annual report on the one hand takes note of the fact that Indian farmers had won several prizes in competition with Euro-Canadian farmers at agricultural fairs (SPC 1888a). On the other, Thomas White, who had succeeded Macdonald as superintendent-general of Indian Affairs lamented that, "Indians, as a class, will never become skilled agriculturalists" (SPC 1888b).

By 1889 the officials of the Indian Affairs Department were, once again, mightily pleased with themselves about Indian "progress" (SPC 1890a).

In his annual report to the Governor General, Edgar Dewdney remarked that:

> It is gratifying when one examines the record of past transactions in connection with Indian management to observe the steady, though necessarily very gradual, progress which has marked the endeavours made from year to year to elevate the red man and place him on a social and intellectual level with his white brother.

As Indian Commissioner, Hayter Reed continued to demonstrate a compelling fascination with penny-pinching. He said that "... every effort to relieve the country is being made; and wherever alert observation can detect an opening for economy it is practised" (SPC 1890b).

The 1890 annual report of the Indian Affairs Department emphasized the strict *quid pro quo* the government expected from the Plains tribes.

Dewdney told the Governor General that, "As respects able-bodied Indians . . . the Department insists upon the principle being applied to them, that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat" (SPC 1891a).

Dewdney was at pains to emphasize, however, that the Indians did not cost the taxpayers any more, proportionately, than others "of the same class," that it to say, they were not a greater burden to communities than those Euro-Canadians who were supported at public expense; but he complained that the Plains Indians were far less advanced in becoming self-sufficient than other Indian wards of the government.

Samuel Lucas, Indian Agent on the Sarcee reserve, may well have summed up with a high degree of accuracy the result of a decade and a half of departmental dealings with the Plains Indians when he noted that although the Sarcees were some distance away from being civilized, they were making progress. "They are more obedient, work better, and drink and gamble less than formerly; they also dress, as near as their circumstances permit, like white men" (SPC 1895a).

GOOD INDIANS, BAD INDIANS

Years before his pivotal role in keeping the Blackfoot from joining Cree rebels in 1885 made him the darling of Ottawa, Crowfoot was esteemed by the Indian Affairs Department for his willingness to accede to Euro-Canadian plans for the Plains tribes and to accept Euro-Canadian rules.

The very model of a good Indian or "noble savage" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), Crowfoot's assurances to Edgar Dewdney in 1879 that young Blackfoot would take readily to farming, deeply impressed the Indian Commissioner. Dewdney also was initially impressed with the Cree chief, Big Bear, who had not endeared himself to other officials and was generally regarded as a troublemaker, a bad Indian.

"I have not formed such a poor opinion of Big Bear, as some appear to have done," Dewdney said. "He is of a very independent character, self-reliant, and appears to know how to make his own living without begging from the government" (SPC 1880i).

The qualities that the commissioner identified in the Cree leader were the very ones later used by officials, in the aftermath of the 1885 rebellion, to label him a bad Indian, the "savage reactionary" described by Marsden and Nachbar (1988).

The Cree chief, Poundmaker, was a special target for Euro-Canadian vilification. Hayter Reed, then Indian Agent at Battleford, accused Poundmaker of stirring up the Indians on his reserve and of interfering with the agent's efforts to keep the Crees at their farming tasks.

Reed alleged that Poundmaker, and other troublesome Indians had created a furor on Stroke-him-on-the-back's reserve (Sweet Grass) by

spreading rumors that a contingent of soldiers had arrived at Prince Albert and were preparing to march on the reserve to put the men in prison and abuse their wives and daughters.

Reed said that (SPC 1882b):

> This had such a terrifying effect upon them, that suddenly one morning they were all in the greatest bustle repairing carts, harness & c., getting in horses and loading up, preparatory to a flight to the plains, that it was with the greatest difficulty they could be persuaded to the contrary and remain longer.

Within two years Poundmaker was being accused of backsliding from farming and was being subjected to coercive measures. The farm instructor on Poundmaker's reserve had been told to withhold rations from any Indian who refused to work at farming, starting with the chief. The department was unwittingly helping to write the prescription for Cree involvement in the 1885 rebellion (SPC 1884b).

Big Bear was labelled as a malcontent in 1884 when acting Indian Agent Thomas Quinn accused him of urging Crees to leave their reserves and assemble at Fort Pitt for annuity payments, telling them that if they did so, the annuity payments would be increased by the government. Quinn went on to accuse Big Bear of stirring up the Crees to perform the Sun Dance, warning that if Big Bear and his followers returned to the Fort Pitt area "they will, of course, revive this heathenish dance" (SPC 1885a).

Four years later, Crowfoot again earned the praise of the Indian Affairs Department for the support he had given to the Blackfoot Indian Agent in getting the tribe to drop the self-torture element from the Sun Dance. Crowfoot, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney said, "seems to be always desirous of doing whatever will benefit his people, [and] lent his powerful aid to

the agent in preventing the usual infliction of torture in connection with the celebration" (SPC 1889a).

A DANGEROUS FORCE

The third major theme in the official narrative appears in Dewdney's expressed concern (SPC 1881c) about the large numbers of Plains Indians who congregated for the payment of annuities at posts like Fort Walsh -- 3,000 had camped there in October 1879 -- and the possibility that an encampment of upwards of 8,000 Blackfoot, Bloods, Peigans and Assiniboines would have to be supplied with provisions in the spring, or "trouble might arise."

Macdonald reported in 1882 that Indian Affairs officers had had to deal with some 5,000 "defiant" Crees and Assiniboines at Fort Walsh during the previous summer and only the arrival of the buffalo saved the situation from deteriorating into angry confrontation (SPC 1882c).

In 1883, Edgar Dewdney again expressed fears about Indians assembling in large numbers. He worried about the concentration of large numbers of "worthless and lazy" Indians in the Cypress Hills and the potential they posed for horse stealing raids across the border that could draw down the wrath of United States authorities (SPC 1884c).

The 1884 report of the department linked the Sun Dance to both individual violence and perceived potential for violence on a larger scale. At Little Pine's reserve in the Battleford agency, a farming instructor, Thomas Craig, was assaulted after refusing to give out rations to an Indian who it was claimed hadn't worked for them. A Sun Dance was in progress and the report noted that, "as is usual at these celebrations, a large concourse of Indians had

assembled to whom the Indian who had been refused the supplies was not slow in making his complaint" (SPC 1885b). The annual report underplayed an incident that involved a major and potentially ugly bloodletting between the Treaty 6 Crees who had assembled there under the leadership of Poundmaker and Big Bear and some 60 police officers sent to arrest the Cree involved in the altercation.

The "potential for danger" theme emerged a second time in the 1884 report. When measles and diphtheria broke out on Payepot's reserve near Qu'Appelle in 1884 the Crees set fire to their houses and left the reserve, assembling for a Sun Dance near Qu'Appelle, "to the terror of the white settlers" (SPC 1885c).

Dewdney a few years later exulted over the failure of the "Messiah Craze" [Ghost Dance] to attract any response from the Plains tribes in Canada, even though there was reason to believe, he said, that runners had been sent from "the disaffected Indians of the United States" to induce the Canadian tribes to take part (SPC 1892a).

He went on to tell the Governor General that the Plains Indians, "these aforetime Ishmaelites of the desert" (SPC 1892b) were making "gratifying" progress to become self-supporting (SPC 1892c):

> The examples of increasing industry and thrift are more noticeable in the North-West Territories and Manitoba than in the case of Indians of the older provinces, owing to the contrast which the present settled conditions of the majority of the Indians of those parts, as tillers of the soil and herders of cattle presents to the continued unrest which but a few years ago characterized them, when as painted and feather-bedecked warriors they traversed the vast plains which they are now assisting to reduce to a state of cultivation, one tribe at continual war with another, or when as hunters they sought for a precarious subsistence from the buffalo chase.

William Pocklington, Indian Agent on the Blood reserve offered a possible explanation of the lack of interest shown by Plains Indians in Canada towards the Ghost Dance movement. Pocklington said the Bloods had ignored appeals to join the "Messiah" movement in the United States, "and stated again and again to me that the trouble was in a different country and was none of their business, that the Sioux were their enemies, and that they would have nothing to say to it" (SPC 1892d).

In 1894, an extended patrol of a number of reserves by NWMP Sergeant-Major Albert Mountain to investigate the holding of so-called Sioux dances by North-West Territories bands rang alarm bells in Indian Affairs about possible Indian trouble brewing until the report was squelched by Indian Agent P.J. Williams at Battleford.

Williams told his jumpy superiors including Hayter Reed and Assistant Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget that the "Sioux" dances or war dances the NWMP officer had warned about were "simply dog dances" that involved the "destruction" of a couple of dogs, and nothing more. Williams said the Indians "were never more content" and mischief was not brewing (SDF 1894).

AN END TO PAGANISM

The first years of Indian Affairs wardship were a harrowing time for the Plains tribes. Forced to adjust rapidly to the loss of their primary food and cultural resource, coping with starvation and disease, and under the tutelage of often unsympathetic, if not hostile Indian Agents, the survival of their customs and religious rites was placed in jeopardy almost from the start. These were the years when reaction to government policies was at a low ebb and Indian

voices were weak, virtually mute, at least in the official record. There is little evidence, aside from the narrative of Indian Agents that suggest the Plains Indians were resisting Euro-Canadian rule and attempting to revitalize their communities.

In these early years there is a remarkable consistency in the official narrative concerning the Sun Dance. A chronological examination demonstrates consistency in the narrative. It is composed of linked sub-themes that emerge in almost every reference made to the ceremony by Indian Agents or their superiors. The self-mutilation element had to be eradicated because it offended Euro-Canadian sensibilities. The dance could not be eliminated by force or fiat; it had to be discouraged with tact and secondary steps that discouraged Indians from attending such as appeals to leaders sympathetic to Indian Affairs goals; or, by tempting the Indians with acceptable substitutes. The Plains Indians had to be convinced that if they neglected their farms to participate in the ceremony they would suffer the consequences of reduced food rations.

Hayter Reed, for example, while Indian Agent at Battleford, expressed chagrin that he had been powerless to prevent a Sun Dance taking place, but had managed to convince the Crees to stage it after the potato crop had been hoed and prior to haying time (SPC 1882d).

The efforts to eradicate self-torture from the ceremony were almost always reported in optimistic terms by the Indian Agents. The 1882 report of the department, for example, claimed that the Plains tribes were showing less interest in their "medicine dances" and that fewer participants than in the past

had submitted themselves to self-torture in the Blood Sun Dance, "formerly a necessary accompaniment of these heathenish ceremonies" (SPC 1883a).

The Sun Dance and other dances drew Indians from their reserves for weeks at a time when they should have been attending to crops, created insubordination among the young men, and kept them in a "heathenish" condition when Christianity beckoned to them, Hayter Reed observed from Battleford (SPC 1883b).

Ever the martinet, Reed said that he had "discountenanced" the dances with the aid of the North-West Mounted Police detachment and was "under the impression that in the future they [the Indians] will be guided by the dictates of the agent" (SPC 1883c). Ever the penny-pincher, he went on to say that he wanted to slash the outlay of winter rations, but increased numbers of Indians on the reserves would probably thwart this aim.

At Fort Macleod, Indian Agent William Pocklington reported that the annual Blood Sun Dance had taken place but had been stripped of any element of self-torture when no candidate came forward. Pocklington was realist enough to comment that, "It is very unlikely that this custom will die out as the Indians still look upon it as the great event of the year" (SPC 1885d).

Unlike most of his Indian Affairs contemporaries, Edgar Dewdney was restrained, almost complimentary about the Sun Dance. Acknowledging in his 1884 report to Macdonald that to those unaccustomed to the ceremony the participants presented "a formidable appearance," the commissioner confessed that he had never known "any trouble brought about by the holding of this dance" and that with the decline of the self-torture element it was taking

on the characteristics of a "social gathering," not a religious ceremony (SPC 1885e).

Dewdney urged caution in moving to suppress the ceremony, setting the tone for vacillating, unsure and sometimes timid action by Indian Affairs officials in future:

> I am in hopes the ceremony will gradually die out; and it will be better to allow it to do so, without using strong measures to prevent its celebration as many of the old Indians, who generally inaugurate the dance, attach great importance to it.

Comments on the rebellion dominated the 1885 annual report of the Indian Affairs Department. Even so, the Sun Dance figured once again in the report of the Blood Indian Agent, William Pocklington. He said that the Sun Dance had "passed over quietly and quickly." He predicted, in a turnabout of his comments of the previous year, that if not interfered with by authorities, the Sun Dance would soon cease to be the "great festival of the year" (SPC 1886a).

Blackfoot agent, Magnus Begg, was less optimistic and more judgmental. He said the dance did not appear to be a success as far as the Blackfoot were concerned because there were no candidates for "the torture act" and wet weather had dampened enthusiasm for the ceremony. He went on:

> I should be glad if they were disgusted as it is an unmitigated nuisance, always occurring at the time they should be working at the crops. I am continually trying to get them to do away with it, and also the habit of carrying rifles, as they both interfere with their work.

The following year Begg noted that the Blackfoot Sun Dance had taken place as usual but it appeared that the tribe was gradually losing interest in the festival (SPC 1887a).

B. Williams, the Indian Agent at File Hills reported that he had succeeded in dissuading the Crees on the reserve from holding their Sun Dance but complained that the ceremonies on nearby reserves unsettled the Crees because they left the reserve and moved from one dance to another, staying away until the annual annuity payments were to be made, "leaving their fields neglected and their homes uncared for" (SPC 1887b).

But there was growing belief that with government and missionary pressure the Sun Dance would die an early death. At Moose Mountain, Indian Agent J.J. Campbell said that while almost all reserve members had attended the annual Sun Dance at Indian Head they had done so after seeding and fencing were completed and returned immediately after the conclusion of the dance, "an encouraging improvement upon their conduct last year" (SPC 1888c).

Blood agent William Pocklington assured the department that although the Bloods had persisted in holding their annual Sun Dance it was "gradually but surely losing its old time importance, a few years more will probably see the end of it" (SPC 1888d). At the nearby Peigan reserve the Sun Dance was not held, leading to the prediction that they had given it up for good (SPC 1888e).

The department was convinced by 1888 that Indian resolve in maintaining traditional ceremonies was in a much weakened state. Edgar Dewdney, now superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, reported to the Governor General that the introduction of schools and other "civilizing influences" were leading to "gradual abandonment" by the Plains tribes of "their old heathen celebrations, such as the Sun Dance" (SPC 1889b).

Dewdney noted that the Sarcees had not held a Sun Dance in 1888, leading to hope that they had abandoned the ceremony permanently. And on the Blackfoot reserve, Crowfoot, "who seems to be always desirous of doing whatever will benefit his people, lent his powerful aid to the agent in preventing the usual infliction of torture in connection with the celebration" (SPC 1889c).

Those who persisted in celebrating the Sun Dance had, Dewdney said, omitted the element which "formed the most objectionable, but which with the Indians perhaps was the most important feature in the performance, namely the torture test, which if passed successfully established the reputation of the subject of it as a 'brave' " (SPC 1889d).

Dewdney followed this prediction with more praise for Crowfoot, already cited as the perfect example of the "noble savage" stereotype (SPC 1889e):

> When the renowned Head Chief of the Blackfoot, Chapo-Mexico, Anglice Crowfoot, objects to the continued celebration by his people of these heathenish ceremonies, we may surely be said to have heard their death knell. And their partial cessation furnishes an additional proof of the progress of civilization among the Indians of the North-West.

At File Hills, the Indian Agent reported that while the Crees had conducted their annual Sun Dance, it lasted only for four days and was "conducted in a much milder form than those I witnessed sixteen years ago at Prince Albert" (SPC 1889f).

A.R. Springett, the acting agent on the Peigan reserve, said that as a result of much sickness during the winter the Peigans were about to hold a Sun Dance, after abandoning the ceremony for three years, to celebrate the recovery of loved ones from illness (SPC 1889g).

But the Sun Dance, despite predictions that it was dying out, continued to feature prominently in the sometimes discouraged reports of the Indian Agents.

On Muscowpetung's reserve an epidemic of "sore eyes" had spread among the Cree bands as a result of many taking part in Sun Dances at the end of May 1889 (SPC 1890c).

William Pocklington, the Blood Indian Agent, reported that the annual Sun Dance had resulted in disagreement among the Bloods over where the Sun Dance lodge should be constructed. In the end 60 lodges refused to join the dancing. As he had for several years, Pocklington predicted the ceremony was dying. "I did not visit them during the ceremony, but from what prominent Indians told me, it was the poorest they ever had and will not last much longer" (SPC 1890d).

Like the agents, Hayter Reed remained optimistic that the despised Sun Dance was dying out, regretting that the year before when rain was badly needed on the Prairies, it had poured shortly after the Indians had prayed for rain in their Sun Dances, allowing the medicine men "to make a great handle of this among the superstitious." Reed went on to claim that his efforts to introduce "harvest homes" on the reserves as a "profitable" substitute had met with some success (SPC 1890e).

In August, 1889 an Indian Agent made the first attempt to invoke official sanctions to head off a Sun Dance. In a report to Reed, F.C. Cornish, agent on the Sarcee reserve, told the commissioner that he had stopped the issue of rations to Bull's Head and his band because the chief had gone ahead

with a Sun Dance after promising that only a "Cree" dance to celebrate the recovery from illness of some members of the band would be held.

Cornish called on the NWMP to help him coerce the Indians into returning to the reserve. The affair ended without incident, Cornish said, but he was forced to tell the Sarcees that the police were there simply to "drive home" wandering Crees and Blackfoot. The agent complained that he had heard that whites from Calgary had encouraged Bull's Head and his band to perform the Sun Dance and that many whites from Calgary attended to ceremony.

Cornish said that Bull's Head had complained that the Sun Dance was performed on other reserves without the stopping of rations and wanted to know if a new law had been passed to stop the issue of rations because of dancing SDF 1889a):

> I told him it was the wish of the white chiefs that the sun dance should cease, but that I had stopped the rations because he had lied to me. He remarked that he had prolonged the dance at the special request of the white people who had given them lots of money to do so.

Reed told Cornish that the department "would never sanction the adoption of force to prevent the repetition of Sun Dances" (SDF 1889b) and urged the agent to use "dissuasion" in the future. It was the kind of ambivalent advice that agents were to receive time and again from superiors, leading to often irresolute stances in the department's dealing with the Plains Indians.

Efforts to organize Sun Dances continued as the final decade of the century opened. George Mann, Indian Agent at Onion Lake reported a thirst dance held by "hunting" Indians, which the Indians of the Onion Lake reserve did not attend. Mann praised the Indians of the agency for their industriousness and attention to farming and said he believed most of their "old customs" were disappearing (SPC 1891b).

The following year, Mann again reported that the Onion Lake Indians showed no interest in a Sun Dance taking place nearby, despite "many invitations" (SPC 1892e).

Magnus Begg, Indian Agent for the Blackfoot reserve, reported that he and Anglican missionary Rev. John Tims had been able to talk the Blackfoot out of the self-torture feature of their Sun Dance, leading him to again predict that with a major attraction of the Sun Dance in disuse "the dance itself will gradually die out" (SPC 1892f).

The following year, Indian Agent J.B. Lash exulted over his success in getting the Cree chief Payepot to abandon plans for a Sun Dance involving not only Payepot's Crees but also Indians from Touchwood Hills, File Hills and the Assiniboine reserves. In return for postponing the dance until all other Indians had returned home Payepot, according to agent Lash, agreed to a Sun Dance involving only residents of Muscowpetung's reserve with the understanding that it was to be the last ever held.

"I agreed to give the Indians a harvest home every year," Lash wrote in his 1892 annual report to headquarters.

Lash said the truncated Sun Dance had been "a miserable failure" (SPC 1893a) and similar reports of decreased interest in the Sun Dance came from other agents.

Reporting to the deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, Hayter Reed took credit for sending Lash to Muscowpetung's reserve to stop the dance and claimed that the department would save money because a Sun Dance kept the Indians away from their farm work for up to six weeks at a time and, "unsettles them for steady work for a longer period" (SDF 1892a).

An unidentified newspaper account (SDF 1892b) said that over 1,000 Indians had assembled for the Sun Dance and that:

> . . . the usual performance was gone through, with the exception of the making of braves, which appears to be pretty well abandoned by these bands. However, the savage was there in all his glory, painted in vermillion and bedecked with feathers, gaudy colored cloth, pristine splendor . . . The Indians entered into the ceremony with an earnestness which showed that it was one which appealed to them with a wonderful power. Between the dances a chief or prominent man would harangue the crowd sitting around, explaining the object of the dance, and offer up a sort of prayer to the hot, burning sun. Many of the Indians kept up the dance until they sank exhausted with the heat, when others would take their place. Several of them danced continuously from Saturday morning until Sunday evening without food or drink.

The same newspaper story included a report taken from the *Saskatchewan Herald*, published in Battleford, which included an explanation of the meaning of the Sun Dance, supposedly by Little Bear, a Cree chief:

> In the Springtime, when the children of Manitou are sick and the grass is coming up and the trees putting forth their leaves, we dance the sun dance that we may be made well and to thank Manitou for the things that grow. The priest of the white man at certain times fasts for several days, so we Crees likewise fast and think of Manitou. It is our church and our preaching. The young men listen to me and I instruct them in the ways of our fathers. My father and father-in-law and other old men of our race told me to take their places when they were gone and teach the people to make the sun dance in the spring, and that day the next spring to dance again. We Crees meet to punish ourselves for our sins . . . .

The explanation attributed to Little Bear, which touches on religious freedom, is the first hint by a Plains Indian leader of a developing Indian determination to retain the Sun Dance which appears in the official record of the Indian Affairs Department.

A.G. Irvine, who had succeeded William Pocklington as Indian Agent on the Blood reserve, said he believed and hoped the 1892 dance was the last the Bloods would hold SPC (1893b).

Blackfoot agent Magnus Begg reported the 1892 Sun Dance had "passed off very quietly, there being no torturing done." And Pocklington, now Indian Agent on the Peigan reserve, said the Peigans were holding a Sun Dance but he had condoned it because the dance encampment was a safer place for the Indians than their houses, following a smallpox outbreak on the reserve (SPC 1893c).

Not all agents were prepared to work at eliminating the Sun Dance by cajolery and tact. In June, 1893 Indian Agent D.L. Clink at Hobbema called in the NWMP to suppress a Sun Dance organized by a "halfbreed," Accasianent, at the Battle River settlement, asking the police to arrest the ringleaders. Reporting to Hayter Reed at the commissioner's office in Regina, Clink complained that it was the third time Accasianent had organized a Sun Dance over a three-year period. The agent said that the police found Indians from Saddle Lake and Stoney Plain as well as from Hobbema assembling for the dance. On entering the Sun Dance lodge the police had arrested Accasianent and handcuffed his son, who was assisting in the ceremony. The police then ordered the Indians to tear down the Sun Dance lodge or face penalties if they refused. Clink said the Indians complied and he dismissed the Indians with a reprimand, after contemplating criminal charges, on condition of "their promising not to aid or countenance in any way another dance of the kind." (Clink had earlier been told by Reed, when he asked for advice on possible criminal charges, that the potlatch law passed in 1884 as an amendment to the Indian Act and a section of the Criminal Code might be used to prosecute the Indians but the commissioner had urged "extreme caution as to arrests and none should be made if dance begun" (SDF 1893).

The official narrative for 1894 focusses on a problem that was to pre-occupy the department and its officials a decade later. J.A. Markle, the Indian Agent at Birtle, Manitoba, complained that the Turtle Mountain Sioux were making little progress in learning how to farm because whites were inviting them to picnics and fairs to give exhibitions of dancing, distracting them from tending their crops and achieving self-sufficiency (SPC 1895b):

> The Sioux . . . are fond of dancing and spend entirely too much of their time and earnings at "pow-powing" . . . I have discouraged the continuation of this custom for the reason that Indians so engaged were wasting their time and earnings, and I failed to observe any benefits therefrom; also that the Indians who were most zealous to retain this custom were those strongly opposed to educational and Christian advancement, and I regret that the Indians under my charge receive so many invitations from the whites to attend celebrations, picnics, and other gatherings to give such exhibitions, which, if accepted, usually take them off their reserves and away from their work for several continuous days, and encourage them to cling to customs that are neither elevating, refining nor profitable.

CONCLUSIONS

The narrative that emerges from the early years of Indian Affairs administration of the Plains tribes is almost devoid of any Indian voices. Indians resisted the efforts of Indian Affairs to dissuade them from dancing -- the record makes that clear -- but how intense that resistance was cannot be calculated with certainty. There are hints, however, that the Plains Indians were attempting to revitalize their near-shattered culture by maintaining the Sun Dance, using it to again engender a spirit of tribal unity, to restore well-being to their communities, and to resist complete acculturation at the hands of Euro-Canadians.

The tribes of the Blackfoot confederacy remained obdurate about the Sun Dance, despite the reports from agents that suggest they were losing interest in it. While the official narrative suggests that Cree attempts to stage the Sun Dance ebbed and flowed over the years, the Blackfoot tribes held the ceremony virtually every year.

The Plains Indians acceded to Euro-Canadian wishes to drop the self-torture element from the ceremony, an action that led officials to believe the Indians were ready to give up the Sun Dance entirely. What they failed to understand was the relatively minor role played by self-torture in the substantive part of the dance, those elements linked to healing and community well-being. Spier (1921) has observed that the self-torture element was important only for the Oglala Sioux.

For their part, the effort put forth by Indian Agents and senior officials to suppress the dance was characterized by vacillation and timidity, with occasional outbursts of bravado and coercion.

In part this pattern of behavior may have been occasioned simply by the realization that the Indian Affairs Department did not have the resources in personnel to cope effectively with the Plains Indians in any intensive way. The result was day-to-day administration that lacked continuity and could at any time sink into pettiness over inconsequential issues as agents struggled to make farmers of their recalcitrant wards.

That Indian Agents and the Indian Affairs Department in general viewed the Plains Indians from ingrained stereotypical attitudes is apparent in the official narrative. There are examples of the "noble savage" and the

"savage reactionary" scattered throughout the correspondence and in the departmental annual reports.

Moreover, there are other examples in the narrative which suggest that many Indian Agents failed to reach any appreciation of the strength of the culture they were confronting. The agents and senior officials were constrained by the Social Darwinism of the era and their own Euro-Canadian values.

It was this kind of blinkered response to the Plains tribes which allowed the Indians to successfully fend off in future years the mounting attack by government on the Sun Dance.

CHAPTER 5 -- THE OFFICIAL RECORD: 1895-1904

"... paganism is dying hard."

A. McDonald, Indian Agent

INTRODUCTION

1895 was not a good year for the Indian Affairs Department; and other troubled ones loomed ahead.

On the Blackfoot reserve, Frank Skynner, an Indian Affairs rations-issuer, was killed in an altercation with a Blackfoot man grieving over the death of his child. And, despite the years-long efforts of Indian Agents and missionaries to suppress the Sun Dance, there was a dispiriting outbreak of efforts to stage the ceremony.

For Hayter Reed, deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs at headquarters in Ottawa, the Blackfoot incident demonstrated that, despite the best efforts of Indian Agents and missionaries, some Plains Indians remained "savage reactionaries" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), who could turn their fury on Indian Agents or other departmental employees at any moment (SPC 1896a). He lamented that:

> ... the general public have very little idea of the dangers to which our employees in the younger provinces are still exposed, nor of the amount of courage and determined firmness combined with tact required to deal with, and, often in their own interests, to coerce tribes in whose breasts the latent fire will never become entirely extinct, at any rate until those who originally entered into treaty relations shall have passed away ...

For Assistant Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget, the Plains Indians were both "savage reactionaries" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), and historic anachronisms. He blamed "medicine men," aided and abetted by meddling Euro-Canadians, for the Sun Dance outbreak. Forget dwelt at length, in the department's annual report on the Sun Dance troubles, admitting (SPC 1896b) that:

> There has been, during the past spring, a tendency on the part of some of the bands of the central and to some extent those of the eastern portion of the Territories to return to the observance of their ancient rite of sun-dancing, accompanied, to a limited extent, by the practice of 'making braves' and its concomitant acts of torture. In only one instance, however, were the attempts in the central district successful this year, Piapot's reserve being the only one where a dance was successfully held. An attempt to inaugurate one at Touchwood Hills was firmly resisted by the agent and overcome by prompt action on his part. It is very noticeable, however, that these dances do not now receive the hearty support which in former years they commanded from nearly all the Indians. The attempted dances of last spring were inaugurated by the few remaining members of a class that has now almost passed away, ie, the medicine men who still cling to the traditional customs of their race and who are, owing to age and consequent fixity of ideas, beyond the reach of the elevating influences of civilization. The responses to their efforts are now very far from being as general as in earlier years, and come mainly from those who are possessed of but little in the form of landed improvements or property in cattle, etc., to interest them in their reserves and work -- on the other hand the industrious owners of good farms, herds of cattle and comfortable homes, perceiving the unsettling influences of these ceremonies and their inconsistency with the teaching of the Christian faith which they have adopted, hold entirely aloof therefrom.

> Among the Indians of the west, by whom sun-worship with its attendant rites and ceremonies was in the past most religiously and regularly observed, there has been this year noticeable indications of a similar disinclination on the part of the better class to continue to participate therein, and on the Blood reserve where they were of so frequent observance heretofore, through the efforts of the agent these rites were not celebrated at all during the past two seasons, and in the current summer the only sun-dance held in Treaty No. 7 was one of a very mild type on the Blackfoot reserve. There is, therefore, good ground for the hope of finally bringing about their complete abandonment at an early date, and were it not for the encouragement given the Indians to continue the practice by the attendance at the dances of a number of white people, drawn thither by curiosity, the advance in this direction would, I believe, be more rapid.

By almost any measure, 1895 should have witnessed the beginning of the end for Plains Indian ceremonialism embodied in the Sun Dance. For a decade and a half, the Indian Affairs Department and its agents had been subjecting the Blackfoot, Crees and other tribes to unremitting pressure to drop the ceremony. For longer than that, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries had been inveighing against the supposed evils of the ceremony in their efforts to gain converts among the Plains tribes. And, in 1895 the Canadian government moved formally to hasten the passing of the Sun Dance. The Indian Act was amended to enable the department and its agents to bring the force of law against those Plains Indians who had the temerity to persist in practising the ceremony.

The amendment, given Royal assent July 22, strengthened and extended the provisions of the 1884 regulation directed against the West Coast potlatch by making it an offence, subject to a penalty of two to six months in jail, to engage in dances or ceremonies involving the giving away of personal possessions or goods, or in which mutilation of the body of a human being or animal was indulged in (Statutes of Canada, 1895):

> 114. Every Indian or other person who engages in, or assists in celebrating or encourages either directly or indirectly another to celebrate, any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at, or after the celebration of the same, and every Indian or other person who engages or assists in any celebration or dance of which the wounding or mutilation of the dead or living body of any human being or animal forms a part or is a feature, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and not less than two months; but nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the holding of any agricultural show or exhibition or the giving of prize for exhibits thereat.

But 1895 was not the beginning of the end for the Sun Dance. Rather, it was witness to the stirrings of active, and evident Indian resistance to the government's efforts to eradicate the ceremony as the central integrating element of Plains culture. In the end, that resistance proved successful. The Sun Dance lived on.

The official record for the decade from 1895 to 1904 demonstrates how that resistance developed. The record from 1895 on, unlike earlier years, is dominated by the Sun Dance. It suggests that having absorbed the initial shock of Euro-Canadian intrusion and control, the Plains Indians were fighting back to retain their culture and traditions (Wallace 1956).

At the same time, the coming dawn of the twentieth century marked the twilight of that sense of optimistic self-assurance which had imbued and colored the official narrative of Indian Affairs in earlier years.

The West was changing rapidly. It was no lor ger a vast, lonely expanse dotted with isolated Indian reserves, scattered farms and ranches, NWMP forts, and fur trade posts surrounded by small clusters of cabins and Indian tents. There were growing communities and an increasing flood of Euro-

Canadian and newly arrived European settlers who were filling the once-empty spaces and fencing them off from trespassers.

The transition brought change that fit badly with the aims of the Indian Affairs Department. Its harsh, often ruthless attitudes towards the Plain Indians remained, as did the stereotypes which framed the approach taken by the Indian agents. But self-assurance was giving way to self-doubt. There was a developing sense of malaise about the ability of the department and its agents to move the Plains Indians very fast along the path to civilization.

The social turbulence of the era is reflected in the official narrative. Its themes reflect the new tensions and new complexities.

While the narrative embodied in the record is founded in and emerges from that of the preceding years there are readily apparent changes in mood, tone and emphases on the part of agents and officials that illustrate and spring from the changing circumstances in which both Indian Agents and Plains Indians found themselves.

Prior to 1895, four themes dominated the official narrative. They fit appropriately under the headings: "White man's burden"; "Good Indians, bad Indians"; "A dangerous force"; and, "An end to paganism".

Two themes dominate the official narrative from 1895 to 1904 and most of the entries in the record, unlike preceding years, are devoted to the Sun Dance. The discussion and analysis of this central topic has been titled "A persistent paganism," to illustrate and reflect the tenor of the narrative and the pessimism embodied in it. Introducing this dominant theme is one titled "A vexing burden." It subsumes topics that appeared in the earlier narrative as well as two new ones -- first, the unwelcome impact of Euro-Canadians on the

ability of the Indian Affairs Department to maintain its almost exclusive control over the lives of Plains Indians and secondly, the previously mute voices of Christian missionaries decrying the barbarism of their would-be converts and Indian dancing and its attendant "evils."

Rooted in the earlier narrative are such continuing sub-themes as the lamentable failure of the Plains Indians to move as rapidly as the Indian Affairs Department had hoped towards civilized ways, as embodied in agriculture; the continued fear of the capacity of the Plains Indians for capricious and unpredictable violence when provoked; and, the continued labelling of Plains Indians as "good" or "bad."

A VEXING BURDEN

An inferior and indolent race: The Indian Affairs Department and its agents held firm to their long-standing belief that the Plains Indians were inferior to the Euro-Canadians, now flooding onto the Prairies in increasing numbers. They were, for better or worse, wards of the government, and in much need now of more forcible improvement to supplement the earnest moral suasion that had been used in the early years of Indian Affairs administration.

The hope of a rapid and reasonably smooth transition from a nomadic life to the settled life of the farm was fast fading. And some agents publicly despaired of ever seeing the Plains Indians become reasonable facsimiles of Euro-Canadians.

The road to civilization was proving longer and bumpier than any Indian Agent or headquarters official could have imagined in 1880. The rosy forecasts of Plains Indian progress that once regularly appeared in the official record

continue to appear occasionally but they are counterbalanced with pessimistic comments about Indian failure to learn rapidly, despite the best efforts of the department and its agents.

James Smart, political crony of Liberal Interior Minister Clifford Sifton, named deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs following Hayter Reed's ouster by Sifton in 1897, summed up the department's views in his 1898 report (SPC 1899a):

> It cannot be expected that any marked change either in the higher or more rudimentary phases of civilization will become perceptible in the course of any single year, but as, more especially in the earlier stages, any halt in the onward march is the immediate precursor of retrogression , some progressive tendency must be jealously watched for.

Indian Agent F.C. Cornish probably spoke for many of his colleagues when he observed that, "An Indian is naturally indolent, except when he is hungry" (SPC 1897a).

J.A. Markle, Indian Agent on the Oak River Sioux Reserve in Manitoba echoed such sentiments when he lamented that his charges were spendthrifts who had failed to learn the value of money and frugality (SPC 1898a):

> The majority of this band are fairly industrious and law abiding, and, although they earn considerable money, they are very indiscreet in the spending of it. They cling tenaciously to their ancient custom of dancing and feasting, and in this way waste a great deal of their earnings.

Similar sentiments were expressed in 1902 by Sydney Swinford, Indian Agent at Portage la Prairie. Swinford lamented the Indians', "most determined objection to provide ahead for the rainy day" (SPC 1903a), and blamed government hand-outs as the main reason: "It is quite plain that the more the government assists them, the more they will ask for and expect."

J.P.G. Day, Indian Agent at Battleford, commented that, "The men of these bands [Crees] are good workers, but they need constant supervision to keep them in the right path" (SPC 1903b); and J.A. Markle, now the Blackfoot Indian Agent, said that ". . . nothing withers, and eventually destroys true manhood more surely than the gratuitous issue of food to those who have the strength to earn it for themselves" (SPC 1903c).

Undertones of Social Darwinism continued to color the official narrative. Frank Pedley, who had succeeded James Smart as deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, reported to Sifton in 1903 (SPC 1904a) that among the Plains Indians, "habits of providence as well as the spirit of enterprise and self-reliance are steadily extending," but, development was being held back by the need for continued, tight Indian Affairs control over the reserves and their residents because of "the superior acumen of the dominant race."

Despite its disappointments and the tendency of its wards to backslide into paganism, the value of agriculture as the only effective means of civilizing the Plains Indians remained an article of faith with the Indian Affairs Department.

In 1904, Pedley reported to Sifton (SPC 1905a) that:

> With regard to the first contact with civilization, nothing can take the place of agriculture as a means of effecting the necessary transformation of habits, of which fixity of residence is the fundamental one required for civilization, and at further stages of development it is rare to find Indians making such solid and permanent material progress as when engaged in farming.

Indian Agents in the field held similar views. Sydney Swinford at Portage La Prairie, observed in the same annual report th .:

> They are certainly making progress although very slowly, and to those who are not familiar with them it is in many cases invisible . . . To uplift the Indian, his whole character has to be reformed, and how this is going to be accomplished on an Indian reserve with its usual surroundings, I fail to see. But if an Indian with his family goes off the reserve to work for a good class of farmer for a year or two, his development in character is quite apparent to anyone; and if this is carried on, it will in time produce the 'survival of the fittest' and the next generation will develop in the character of their parents.

Mostly "bad" Indians: In earlier years "good" Indians had been those chiefs who heeded the Euro-Canadian call to get their people marching down the road to civilization while "bad" Indians had been those backsliders who rejected or ignored the summons.

Such stereotyping continued. But the "good" Indians, scarcely mentioned now in the narrative, were no longer the traditional chiefs on whom the agents had once relied. They were those Indians, generally Christian converts, who had adapted to Euro-Canadian ways and Euro-Canadian pressure to take up farming.

The "bad" Indians were, increasingly, the growing number of chiefs who led or assisted efforts, sometimes unsuccessful, to stage the Sun Dance, and unidentified "medicine men" who promoted so-called "pagan" rituals.

Even Crowfoot, the Blackfoot chief, the best of the "good" Indians as far as the Indian Affairs Department was concerned, didn't escape censure when he refused to accept cattle for fear that government rations would end.

James Smart, deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, reported to Sifton in 1901 (SPC 1902a), that the elderly Blackfoot leader:

> . . . failed to grasp what it has required so many years of education to bring the most progressive of his people to realize, viz., that it is in every way far better for themselves to learn to depend upon their own exertions than upon the charity of the government.

For agents and for Indian Affairs generally, and for the missionaries, "bad" Indians displayed a regrettable tendency to nakedness, lechery, double-dealing, and superstition (Berkhofer 1979).

Not all comments about Indian progress were pessimistic. But they sometimes revealed more about white attitudes than about the Indians. For some Euro-Canadians and Europeans, the "noble savage" of their childhood reading was what they were searching for.

A.J. McNeill, Indian Agent on the Sarcee reserve, reported that in 1898 (SPC 1899b), a number of American and European tourists had visited the reserve in the course of the year and "seemed deeply interested in the red man and his life on the reserve." Many seemed surprised, McNeill said, to find the Sarcees at work farming "and so far advanced in the ways of the white man. They expected to see him the same as depicted in the Fenimore Cooper novels a century or two ago."

A potential for mischief: The potential of the Plains Indians for violent mischief was still to be reckoned with but it was a fear that was gradually diminishing as more and more settlers poured on to the Prairies. No longer held capable of widespread violence, their potential for short-lived outbursts of local mayhem still sent shivers through some Euro-Canadians.

The sagas of renegades like Charcoal and Almighty Voice who ran afoul of Euro-Canadian justice, were awesome reminders of that potential.

Charcoal had killed another Blood Indian who was having an affair with his wife in October 1896. He then shot and brutally killed NWMP Sergeant William Brock Wilde, head of the police detachment at Pincher Creek, who went in pursuit of Charcoal when the Blood was spotted in the vicinity.

Charcoal was turned over to the police within days by his two brothers and was hanged at Macleod in March 1897.

Hayter Reed, as obsessed with the notion of the "savage reactionary" as he was with penny-pinching had this to say about Charcoal in 1896 (SPC 1897b): "Like the true savage, once having drawn blood, the desire for more becomes aroused; and under such circumstances white men, if in the vicinity, become the unfortunate victims." Reed ignored the fact that Charcoal had killed a member of his own tribe as well as the NWMP officer and had been turned in by members of his family.

The rising Indian Affairs and literary star, Duncan Campbell Scott, wrote a short story about Charcoal, which he later told John Masefield was almost a transcript of trial evidence, embellished with additional color and facts from Indian Agents (1983:122-129). In his introduction to the slim volume of stories in which "Charcoal" appears, Dragland (1983:15) suggests that Scott had conveyed the bewilderment of an individual caught between the Indian world and the world of the white man.

When Almighty Voice was hunted down and killed in 1897, after eluding police for 19 months -- his initial offence had been killing and butchering an Indian Affairs steer -- James Smart observed that even though Almighty Voice had successfully defied the NWMP for months, Euro-Canadian power had prevailed: "Thus the Indians learn that justice, although sometimes slow, is sure, and will be executed at whatever cost" (SPC 1898b). The cost, in this case, included three officers of the NWMP dead, a Euro-Canadian civilian dead and three Crees, including Almighty Voice, dead.

Euro-Canadian meddlers: The Indian Affairs Department also faced increasing challenges to its authority from the promoters of agricultural fairs and exhibitions who were prepared to pay Indians to perform traditional dances for their audiences; from Euro-Canadian lawyers hired to act for Plains Indians in their efforts to maintain the Sun Dance and other ceremonies against the sustained effort to suppress them; from Euro-Canadians who ventured on to reserves to witness the Sun Dance or other ceremonies, as Assistant Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget had noted; and, from Euro-Canadians who sided with the Plains Indians in confrontations with Indian Agents.

A memorandum prepared by the department when the 1895 Indian Act amendment was being discussed suggests that the growing Euro-Canadian presence on the Prairies was undermining and thwarting the ability of Indian Agents to maintain control of the reserves and their residents. At precisely the time when the government was stepping up its campaign against the Sun Dance there was an increasing interest in the ceremony on the part of Euro-Canadians anxious, for whatever reasons, to see it enacted.

The memorandum complained that some Euro-Canadians were, in effect, mischief makers who were using the Indians for their own ends. The presence of such individuals on reserves to observe the Sun Dance or other ceremonies was "not always actuated by the highest motives" (SDF 1895a).

The official record does not elaborate on the problem. Were the concerns of the department based on fears that whites would sell liquor to the Indians, or buy the favors of women? Or was the department simply expressing resentment at any Euro-Canadian encroachment on its fiefdom?

The annual report of the Birtle (Manitoba) agency for 1902 (SPC 1903d), warned against allowing Indians to perform pow-wows or "heathen dances for exhibition purposes to amuse the public." Such fairs, the report said:

> . . . tend to draw the Indians in large numbers to the towns, where on account of the large number of people present, liquor is easily obtainable by them . . . . Could these dances be prohibited altogether, it would lessen the danger to a great extent.

The official narrative also suggests that relations between Indian Agents and other Euro-Canadians who had dealings with the Indians could be unpleasant and confrontational, colored by deep-felt personal animosities.

John Wright, the Indian Agent at Touchwood Hills, moved ruthlessly in 1895 to suppress a Sun Dance on the reserve, ordering the arrest, improperly as it turned out, of the tribal leaders promoting it. Wright also acted against the local Hudson's Bay Company officer who had allegedly sold red cloth needed for the Sun Dance pole to the Indians on credit and, according to Wright, supplied them with liquor. The HBC officer, B.F. Cooper, was taken to court by Wright and ultimately pleaded guilty to supplying liquor to "certain half-breeds who were receiving treaty" and fined $150 (SDF 1895b).

Raising the case with C.C. Chipman, commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg, Hayter Reed, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, lectured him on the need for the company's officers to back up Indian Affairs in its efforts to suppress the Sun Dance (SDF 1895c):

> You are doubtless well aware of the antagonistic effect of Sun-Dances upon our efforts to improve our Indians and can understand why our strongest efforts are put forth to discourage them, although the time is not considered ripe for suppressing them by law . . . we have to rely almost entirely upon moral suasion and the individual influence of our Agents to put down these degrading ceremonies: it is most discouraging to have the influence of those who, as a rule, possess so much over the Indians as your officers do, exert it to thwart our efforts.

The HBC, after initially defending Cooper and blaming the incident on Wright's animosity to the HBC official, replaced him at Touchwood Hills.

But white presence on reserves wasn't the only problem facing the department. Municipal clerk Malcolm Turriff drew the department's wrath in 1902 and 1903 for his part in inviting a party of Sioux to perform a traditional dance [hay dance] at the annual fair in Rapid City, Manitoba. When Turriff had the temerity to question the department's jailing of a Sioux named Wanduta, who had led the dancers at Rapid City, both he and the Sioux were castigated. In a letter to headquarters, Indian Commissioner David Laird described "bad" Indian Wanduta as "worthless" and said Turriff deserved "censure" for his instrumental role in getting the Indians to perform [they received $41.30, plus tea, sugar, flour, beef and tobacco].

Like all Plains Indians who acted contrary to the Indian department's policies or wishes Wanduta was roundly condemned. Laird called him "the ring-leader of all the discontented Indians on the Oak River (Manitoba) reserve (SDF 1903a). In effect, Wanduta was a "savage reactionary."

Laird vented such spleen because, in an earlier interview, Wanduta had successfully passed himself off as a chief when pressing the commissioner to get the department to ease its opposition to virtually all Indian dances, not simply the Sun Dance, the department's main target. Although the Rapid City dancing had taken place in 1902 it wasn't until January 1903 that the department caught up with Wanduta and he was arrested, brought before a police magistrate at Griswold, Manitoba, and given four months at hard labor

for breaking the law because the Rapid City dancing had involved give-aways of possessions and goods.

"Wanduta was given a fair trial before Mr. Police Magistrate Lyons and was sentenced to four months in jail with hard labour, which sentence he should serve in full to give himself and his followers an example and to teach them that the law must be respected," Laird said.

A plea for clemency to Interior Minister Clifford Sifton made on Wanduta's behalf by the Brandon law firm of Coldwell and Coleman was rejected by the department, even though the Justice Department had told Indian Affairs that the police magistrate had exceeded his authority in summarily convicting the Sioux on flimsy evidence. In a departmental memorandum to another official, Frank Pedley, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, observed that as far as he was concerned the "cause of justice is not going to suffer very much by keeping this Indian in jail for the full term of his sentence" (SDF 1903b). "Bad" Indians could expect no sympathy if they ran afoul of the department.

That closed Wanduta's case as far as Indian Affairs was concerned. It wasn't until May 15 that Sifton wrote to Coldwell and Coleman to tell the law firm that clemency would not be exercised on behalf of the Sioux. The department's letter drew a sharp rejoinder from the lawyers (SDF 1903c), who lectured the officials on Wanduta's legal and human rights.

> We are sorry that you have taken the view that you do in this matter . . . it is the harshest kind of treatment that this Indian received. We do not see why any different justice should be meted out to them than to a white man and certainly no white man has been treated in the way this Indian has . . . executive clemency should at once have been meted out to this Indian instead of leaving him to serve his term and answering a letter about the time his term is up. When another matter of this kind occurs we shall not take the trouble to appeal to you but will apply for a habeas corpus and bring the matter before the Courts, where redress can be got in a reasonable way.

File Hills Indian Agent W.M. Graham, who was to emerge in future years as the leading and most vociferous Indian Affairs proponent of putting a ban on all Indian dancing, was engaged in a major legal confrontation between March and May, 1903, with Etchease, a Saulteaux living on Muscowpetung's reserve, one of eight under Graham's administration in Saskatchewan. Etchease tested the 1895 Indian Act ban on give-away dances with the help of a Euro-Canadian lawyer by holding a circle dance on the reserve at which food was given away.

Etchease was charged with breaching the Indian Act and when brought to court for a preliminary hearing before a police magistrate another member of the reserve testified that the Saulteaux had made a speech at a circle dance on March 14 claiming to have money to defend himself with a lawyer if he got in trouble.

The Indian witness testified that he had only been given beef, soup, bannock and tea at the dance. Acquitted when tried initially, Etchease promoted more dances and was charged again and this time convicted to three months in jail, the judge ruling that the amount of food distributed could be construed as a give-away under the Indian Act.

Briefing headquarters on the case and the court proceedings on June 15, Assistant Indian Commissioner J.A.J. McKenna described Etchease as "a

rather clever and determined character." Etchease was obviously viewed as another "savage reactionary." The decision to have him re-tried was made because the Indians were taking Etchease's acquittal "as a defeat of the Agent's policy and a formal and official recognition of dancing" (SDF 1903d):

> It was quite clear that the movement was not simply for the purpose of testing the right of the Indians to indulge in ordinary social intercourse, but with the direct object of reverting to the old-time gatherings and dances which follow each other in such close succession as to make adequate work for self-support impossible on the part of the Indians.

Interpreting the word of God: The early years of the official record revealed no indication of missionary concern about Indian morals, dancing or religious ceremonies. But beginning in 1896 submissions and complaints from missionaries start to appear. Their focus is Indian dancing in general with the Sun Dance singled out for special condemnation.

The department obviously took the submissions and comments of missionaries seriously. They were, after all, staunch allies in the long struggle to civilize the government's wards. Even a fanciful account of Indian rites was deemed important enough for inclusion in the official record. The final word on the Sun Dance in the 1896 files of the Indian Affairs Department is contained in a press report of the *Ottawa Evening Journal* for December 9 (SDF 1896a). The story reported on a sermon preached by Monsignor Pascal, Vicar Apostolic of Saskatchewan, in the Basilica the previous night.

Pascal was described as a missionary for many years among the "pagan" Indians of the West. The cleric, obviously obsessed with the "savage reactionary," claimed that nothing worked better in turning the Indians toward civilized ways than "kind words and actions" from the missionaries sent to Christianize them. The article continued:

> The character of these people and their ready and warm acceptance of the doctrines of a strange religion from that of their own is, he said, something remarkable. Judging from past successes in converting to Christianity this mass of fellow creatures, the addition of a few more missionaries would result in Christianity being quickly introduced to the fiercest tribes of the West. Some of the tribes, he said, are very ferocious and blood-thirsty and will not associate with white men.
> Those engage in a war dance twice a year, during which time the performers are tortured most cruelly. Ropes are tied around the feet and then the body fastened to branches of trees, the head almost touching to the ground while they are cut and beaten by their fellow companions. This dance lasts six days, during which time the performers are given very little food. Several die from the effects of this terrible torture.
> The Rev. Vicar during his stay intends if possible to interview the government with regard to having this outrageous and barbarous practice stopped.

In a lengthy brief to the department in November 1903, Father Joseph Hugonard, principal of the Qu'Appelle industrial school added his voice to those demanding tough action to curb Indian dancing. Hugonard's submission had the support of Roman Catholic Bishop Adelard, archbishop of St. Boniface, and the support of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, like the Roman Catholics heavily involved in running Indian schools in the North-West Territories (SDF 1903e).

Anyone with knowledge of "pagan" Indians, Hugonard said, "can point without hesitation to the dance as the source of all the trouble that missionaries and Government officials have to contend with."

Indian dances, Hugonard warned:

> . . . promote agitation against missionaries, Christianity and authority on the reserve, nullify to a great extent efforts towards education, cause great loss of time, neglect and abuse of stock and horses, and foster degradation, debauchery, idleness and craving for liquor . . . and are the source of most discontent and trouble.

Hugonard said that too many graduates of the industrial schools "have relapsed into Indian and pagan habits" . . . . These heathen habits and customs

must be eradicated, or at least suppressed, before permanent improvement can be expected."

A PERSISTENT PAGANISM

Despite repeated assurances by Indian Affairs officials that the Sun Dance had all but died out, Indian Commissioner David Laird was forced to admit in 1900 (SPC 1901a), that the ceremony was still performed by some of the bands, although he took heart from the abandonment "to a considerable extent" of self-torture and give-aways, noting, however, that "The giving away evil is . . . still too frequently practised, mostly in a clandestine way."

Laird also alluded to "grossly immoral practices" during the Sun Dance but got conflicting opinions on the supposed evils from missionaries and Christian Indians. One missionary said he had never observed any immoral behavior but the converts insisted "the evil exists."

Laird also decried the difficulty of prosecuting tribal members for participating in give-aways, commenting that, "One of the drawbacks in the way of prosecution is the great difficulty to get any of the Indians to give information against the ringleaders in the illegal practices."

There are other hints in the official narrative as well that suggest the Sun Dance was revitalizing or helping re-integrate Plains communities that had been shattered socially by the initial Euro-Canadian intrusion (Wallace 1956).

In 1897, W.S. Grant, Indian Agent at Hobbema, aided by Roman Catholic missionary Father Albert Lacombe successfully suppressed an attempt to hold a Sun Dance. He predicted (SPC 1898c), after Lacombe

preached a three-day mission to the Crees that, "the sun dance is a thing of the past as far as this agency is concerned."

Within five years, Grant was witness to an example of community revitalization (SPC 1903e) among the Hobbema Crees:

> There is . . . a sort of unity among them, for all the tribe united (pagans, RCs, Methodists) to hold a sun dance during the summer, and saw no incongruity in returning to their ancient rites and ceremonies, for a few days, combining the prayers of the Church with pagan ceremonies, and making pagan vows and keeping them with Christian fortitude. This is an Indian characteristic, and worth studying.

The following year, Grant (SPC 1904b), observed that while most of the Crees at Hobbema were Christians and observed Christian festivals, the Christian festivals weren't held when they interfered with "some ingrained Indian custom handed down from ancient time such as the 'sun dance' . . . ."

In 1896, Hayter Reed (SPC 1897c) had painted the department's efforts to suppress the Sun Dance as a virtual crusade against the powers of darkness:

> . . . the sun dance has become an Indian ceremony almost, if not quite, of the past . . . it has been robbed of its most revolting ceremonies, so that in the end it has afforded little attraction to a great proportion of the Indian population. So long as it remained a prominent performance, so long did it keep burning those superstitions which it was sought to eradicate. The abandoning of this dance evidences in no small degree the civilizing influences brought upon the Indian, and the great change in his feelings and modes of thought. The success attending these efforts cannot be fully appreciated save by those acquainted with the Indian character. The 'medicine men,' the guides of thought and action and the inspirers of fear in all but the boldest, had to be fought. To win Indians from such a thraldom, and to get them to disregard the influence of generations, required no small amount of courage and skill in management.

That same year, A. McDonald, the Indian Agent at Crooked Lake, observed that the "old pagan Indian" was taking it hard that the department had moved firmly to suppress the Sun Dance. McDonald (SPC 1897d)

commented pessimistically that, "The Christian religion does not seem to progress as quickly as one would suppose, taking into consideration the amount of persuasion employed by the different denominations at work in this agency."

McDonald pinned his hopes for change on educating Indian children in Euro-Canadian schools, but warned that "paganism is dying hard."

Like McDonald, Blackfoot Indian Agent G.H. Wheatley (SPC 1898d), was convinced that it was only the "middle-aged and old people" who wanted the Sun Dance to continue.

But, Blood Indian Agent James Wilson, had to admit two years later (SPC 1900a) that, "Those older Indians who are baptized, and the pupils from industrial schools, seem to care more for their own dancing religion than for any other form."

A noticeable development in the official narrative after 1895 is the labelling of tribal leaders like the Cree chiefs Payepot and Thunderchild and the elderly Blood chief Red Crow as "bad" Indians for the roles they played in sponsoring or promoting Sun Dances and dancing in general.

Thunderchild, for example, was sentenced to two months in jail in January 1897 for his leading role in a give-away dance. Battleford Indian Agent Peter Williams, who charged the chief and five other Crees for the offence, said he considered Thunderchild "the most guilty of the lot, as I took particular pains to explain the law to him and put off from time to time having arrests made, hoping they would stick to their promises . . ." (SDF 1897a).

NWMP Sergeant J. Cotton, who acted as one of two magistrates at Thunderchild's trial, reporting to the police commissioner in Regina on January

18 noted that the give-away dances had a "demoralizing effect" on the Indians but urged, in view of Thunderchild's age that the sentence be reduced. The appeal for clemency was ultimately acted on and Thunderchild was released in early February.

Hayter Reed learned of an 1895 Sun Dance on Payepot's reserve from newspaper reports and on June 8 called for a report on it from Forget, saying he regretted that the agent had failed to prevent the dance or, at least destroy its "eclat" (SDF 1895d).

Reed responded to a query about the dance from Interior Minister T. Mayne Daly the same day, declaring that despite the best efforts of Indian Affairs to suppress the Sun Dance it was meeting with opposition:

> Some Indians . . . have proved less amenable to influence, and when really set upon having a dance, to say nothing of when under its excitement when in progress, nothing short of an over-powering force would make them desist, even were the dances declared illegal.

Indian Agent J.B. Lash wrote Forget on June 25 telling the assistant Indian commissioner that the Crees, claiming religious freedom, would not listen to any "inducements" he offered them to stop the dance. "They claimed," he said, "it was a religious ceremony in accordance with their belief and refused to argue the matter" (SDF 1895e).

Lash was also unable to prevent Payepot's people from leaving their reserve for another Sun Dance at nearby Touchwood Hills. But if Lash vacillated, John Wright, Indian Agent at Touchwood Hills, moved ruthlessly to stop that Sun Dance from taking place.

Wright wired Forget June 14, asking departmental approval to arrest those promoting the dance and bind them over to keep the peace. Forget told Reed that he had instructed Wright "to use every lawful means in his power to

prevent the dance" without specifying clearly what action the agent was free to take (SDF 1895f).

Reed replied four days later (SDF 1895g), as cautious as ever about raising a storm in the West. He lectured Forget that:

> ... we must be careful how we stop these. It would never do if they have gone a certain distance to use any force -- police or otherwise. Our Agents should know by this time what action to take in order, if not to totally discourage this, to make it an unsuccessful one.

But Reed was prepared to take firm action in an unspecified future, telling Forget that, "After the present generation of old people die out we can then act differently."

Reed learned from a July 1 report in the *Manitoba Morning Free Press* that Wright had arrested the Sun Dance leaders and bound them over to keep the peace. But he managed to make the best of Wright's bellicose action and his own timidity, noting in a July 9 letter to Forget that although he would not have taken such drastic action (SDF 1895h):

> . . . the success of his course proves all along what I have contended, that Agents on the spot are in a position to exercise a discretion , and that much can be done by acting at the right time, either to stop those dances or to make them practically failures, and you will note the difference between the action of the Agent at Touchwood and that of others.

The *Free Press* account of the skirmish, by an unidentified Touchwood correspondent, said that:

> It is claimed that the Indians here have been too much humored in the past; that the presents of flour at the time of the dance only encouraged them in the performance of the unnatural ceremony, when they became so excited as to be drawn away from all peaceful employment, such as tilling the soil and tending their stock; in fact, they have been suspected of killing cattle when emboldened by the influence of this idolatrous performance. Mr. Wright did not use the gentle method but stated plainly that the dance would not be allowed and to show that he was not trifling had the leaders arrested and bound over to keep the peace. As a result, the braves are now moving back to their reserves sadder, but no doubt further on their way to civilization than before, as it is thought they have had their last sun dance in Touchwood, at least.

The last word in the official file on the Touchwood incident came from Forget on Oct. 12. The assistant Indian commissioner told Reed (SDF 1895i) that he had refrained from acting on Wright's request that the department thank the justice of the peace who had bound over the Sun Dance leaders because if it was thought that the JP had only done what was expected no show of appreciation was necessary, while, if he had overstepped the line, it was better to not be seen offering such a gesture.

There were other Sun Dance incidents that year that were less troubling to Indian Affairs.

From Onion Lake, Indian Agent George Mann reported that the "hunting" Indians of the district had invited the Indians on the Onion and Saddle Lake reserves to take part in a Sun Dance. Only two or three responded, said Mann, and upon their return "appeared very much ashamed of their conduct" (SPC 1896c).

Magnus Begg, Indian Agent on the Blackfoot reserve, reported a Sun Dance in June but dismissed it as "a mere religious ceremony; no torturing is done" (SPC 1896d).

Despite the increased powers it now had, the Indian Affairs Department continued to vacillate between force and suasion, "moral" or otherwise, in its

efforts to suppress the Sun Dance. Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget visited the Peigan, Blood and Blackfoot reserves in June 1896 and reported that while the Peigans and Bloods were willing to replace the Sun Dance with Dominion Day sports, the Blackfoot were "obdurate" about continuing to hold the ceremony. "The dance went on, though stripped this year of nearly all its former glory. I do not anticipate its recurrence next year," Forget reported (SPC 1897e).

The Indian Commissioner had telegraphed Reed on June 24 to inform him that he had failed in his effort to get the Blackfoot to abandon the dance but said it might still be prevented if he had authority to hire 100 Indians at 50 cents a day to work on extending the reserve's irrigation system. Tight-fisted as always with taxpayers' money, Reed gave his approval to the request but urged that Forget get the agreement of the Blackfoot to recover the money spent on wages from the proceeds of marketing the Indians hay crop later in the year. Presumably nothing came of the scheme because the dance went ahead

Individual agents viewed the supposedly reduced state of the Sun Dance with mixed feelings. For James Wilson, Indian Agent on the Blood reserve, the fact that 1896 marked the second year that the Bloods had not held a Sun Dance was a matter of some rejoicing. For Wilson, it meant that the workers among the Bloods had wearied of seeing their earnings expended for the dance. Additionally, while some members of the tribe had attempted to get up the dance, they had been easily discouraged from the effort and dispersed to their homes. ". . . in this way I hope to stop, in part at least, their migratory habits," Wilson said (SPC 1897f).

Like his colleague A. McDonald at Crooked Lake, A.J. McNeill, Indian Agent for the File Hills agency at Qu'Appelle, complained in 1896 that paganism was, indeed, dying hard, "... there are many who still cling to their old habits." McNeill said that the Crees and Assiniboines on the File Hills reserves had attempted to inaugurate a Sun Dance in the spring but had abandoned the idea after making preparations for it in the face of departmental opposition, which included removing several groups of Indians as trespassers and sending them back to their own reserves.

The File Hills people had to be satisfied with a "horse dance," which McNeill said he allowed to "lighten their disappointment" (SPC 1897g).

McNeill's terse report on the successful suppression of the Sun Dance in his agency suggests that the issue had been resolved quickly by firm department action. In fact, much dithering took place over how to handle the situation, even though a serious health threat existed.

In fact, on first informing the Indian Commissioner's office in Regina that the Indians were inaugurating a Sun Dance, McNeill said he had been told by the Indians that it was a religious ceremony and that no one had any right to interfere with it. McNeill, while noting that he would do his best to prevent the dance taking place suggested that it was up to the missionaries as well as the agents to get the Plains tribes to abandon their "heathenish customs" (SDF 1896b).

McNeill said that "runners" from the reserves at Nut Lake and Crooked Lake had visited Star Blanket's band to make arrangements for the dance, which was being promoted by Star Blanket, the chief, and by Powastin and Cheepoostatin of his band.

Forget's reply expressed sympathy with the agent's point of view that the missionaries should be more active in getting the Indians to abandon the Sun Dance, but emphasized that the agents in the field had to be equally vigorous in forcing its abandonment.

Forget told McNeill that the Indians should be prevented from assembling on Star Blanket's reserve for the Sun Dance because diphtheria had broken out in the area (SDF 1896c):

> . . . they should be given to understand that in the interests of the health of the community it may be necessary to forcible interfere for the purpose of preventing the assembly of a large number of Indians from other agencies.

Forget said he would instruct all agents in the File Hills area to warn the Indians not to attend after telling McNeill that under the strengthened sections of the Indian Act, Indians from other reserves could be ejected as trespassers or charged with an offence.

The same day, F.H. Paget, writing for the Indian Commissioner, alerted the NWMP commissioner in Regina that the department might have to call on the police to prevent Indians of the Crooked Lake, Muscowpetung and Touchwood Hills reserves from assembling at File Hills for the dance although the ceremony couldn't be interfered with if only File Hills Indians were involved and there was no self-torture (SDF 1896d).

On June 1, W.S. Grant, Indian Agent for the Assiniboine reserve, informed the commissioner's office that some of the Indians on the reserve had departed for File Hills. Paget, replying on June 3 in the absence of Forget, who was touring the Blood, Peigan and Blackfoot reserves, said that a definite decision to stop the dance hadn't been made but the agent should do everything

possible to prevent more Indians leaving for File Hills because of the diphtheria threat (SDF 1896e).

On June 4, J.B. Lash, the Muscowpetung Indian Agent, told the commissioner's office that Indians on the reserve were very quiet about their plans and warned that if McNeill did not take firm action to head off the dance the Indians on Lash's reserve would "slip-off with the hope that the dance will come off" (SDF 1896f). "It is most important that the dance should be stopped as if it takes place the Indians will think we cannot legally interfere with them and Sun Dances will continue as in the past."

On June 7, McNeill was facing a showdown with Star Blanket and his supporters. The Indians appeared determined to go ahead, despite the warning about diphtheria, division within the band, and the displeasure of the department. McNeill reported June 7 to the Indian Commissioner's office that nine lodges of Assiniboines and one from Payepot's reserve had arrived for the ceremony "and since then . . . my Indians seem more defiant and determined" (SDF 1896g).

McNeill asked for immediate help from the NWMP to head-off the Sun Dance. Paget, acting for the Indian Commissioner, contacted the NWMP on June 8 to act on McNeill's request for prompt help and notified the agent two days later that a detachment of police was being sent to the reserve to deal with the "trespassers" but that he was to make every effort to get the Indians to abandon the Sun Dance before resorting to police action.

The confrontation finally ended June 12 when the Indians gave up their plans for the ceremony. McNeill exulted to the Indian Commissioner's office that Sun Dances at File Hills, "will now be a thing altogether of the past"

because he had the word of the dance maker, Cheepoostatin, "the Big Medicine man" that "he will never try the like again" (SDF 1896h).

McNeill admitted that he would have been powerless to stop the dance without the police detachment being on the reserve. The police presence was enough to persuade the Assiniboines and Crees to give up their plans and return to their reserves.

The police power was also resorted to at the Crooked Lake agency where Indian Agent A. MacDonald was faced with a request from Sakimay's band to hold a two-day Sun Dance, with no self-torture and no Indians from other reserves in attendance.

McDonald told the commissioner's office June 15 that he was inclined to allow the dance since it was only of two days' duration and ". . . it is a ceremony which (if not too rigorously opposed at first) will die a natural death" (SDF 1896i).

While the official record suggests the dance did not take place, McDonald was faced with another Sun Dance on July 11 inaugurated by an Indian on Ochapowace's reserve. The Sun Dance leader, Kah-pee-cha-pees, was arrested, tried summarily and sentenced to two months' hard labor at the NWMP guard room in Regina.

Reporting to Hayter Reed, the deputy superintendent-general, Indian Commissioner A.E. Forget said that the police and the justice of the peace who heard the case had exceeded their jurisdiction and the scope of Section 114 of the Indian Act.

But Forget callously observed that the effect of the sentence, although illegally imposed, "has been beneficial and there is no reason to believe that the

Indian has been affected otherwise than to be benefited by his incarceration, which has now ended" (SDF 1896j).

On May 26, George Mann, Indian Agent at Onion Lake, informed the commissioner's office that "hunting" Indians of the district were organizing a Sun Dance near Frog Lake. Mann said that he had refused passes to leaders on the reserve to attend the Frog Lake dance and asked if he should arrest those holding it.

Mann got the usual reply from the commissioner's office -- the dance could only be stopped if self-mutilation was practised or give-aways were made; there should be no arrests unless absolutely necessary; police action should be engaged in only as a last resort; but, the Indian Act could be invoked under Section 22 to prevent Indians from other reserves attending the dance (SDF 1896k).

At least one other attempt to mount a Sun Dance was made in 1896. On June 16, Indian Agent J.A. Markle, at the Birtle, Manitoba agency wrote the commissioner's office to inform him that he had headed off a Sun Dance by Waywayseecappo's band. It had attracted a dozen or so lodges from Crooked Lake, almost as many from Valley River, and several from Rolling River.

Markle, who had been briefed by the commissioner's office on what was expected of him in attempting to get the Indians to abandon the dance, described them as "a sorrowful lot [who] gave up the dance very reluctantly, but . . . without one angry word being spoken on either side" (SDF 1896l).

Agents, for some time, had been predicting that the Blackfoot Sun Dance would disappear because they had convinced the tribe to abandon the

practice of self-torture. It was a misreading of Blackfoot determination to retain the ceremony, despite the pressure exerted on them to abandon it.

Blackfoot Indian Agent G.H. Wheatley met with chiefs Running Rabbit, White Pup, Big Road and Many Shot on May 31, 1897, and reported to the Indian Commissioner's office in Regina that the tribal leaders had made a proposition that in return for departmental sanction of the ceremony they would restrict the Sun Dance camp to five days and "give all the help possible in connection with the schools" (SDF 1897b).

The Blackfoot leaders, according to Wheatley, "do not wish to relinquish the Sun Dance as it is their religious festival."

Forget instructed Wheatley on June 3 (SDF 1897c) to tell the chiefs that:

> . . . while the department can in no way countenance the celebration of this rite and therefore cannot give assistance in any form towards it, there will on account of its religious nature in their eyes and of the representations which have been made, be no interference therewith on this occasion.

Forget, however, set a stiff price for looking the other way. The Indians were to restrict the Sun Dance camp to five days, as they had proposed; no pressure was to be used to get tribal members to participate; there was to be no self-torture; there was to be no giving away of property; there was to be no interference with those Blackfoot who were working before, during or after the dance; the children were not to be removed from school; and, the Blackfoot were to promise to fill the existing schools to full capacity.

Wheatley reported to the commissioner July 17 (SDF 1897d) that the dance had taken place between July 10 and 14 and the Indians had fulfilled all their commitments, except filling the schools to capacity.

"During the Festival the Indians behaved admirably," Wheatley said. The agent noted that he had been told by Running Rabbit that one young Blackfoot, Thomas Calf Child, "had wanted to be put through the torture, but no attention was paid to him by the Chiefs." Wheatley said that Calf Child was a former pupil of Elkhorn Industrial School and a brother of Joe Calf Child, serving a prison term for criminal assault. "The family are a bad lot and require watching."

Chief Calf Child was among the Blackfoot leaders who petitioned Wheatley the following February for beef tongues and paunches for a seed festival and Sun Dance. The other chiefs and headmen included White Pup, Running Martin, Yellow Horse, and Greasy Forehead.

The plea made by White Pup, as interpreted by Wheatley in a February 4 letter to Forget (SDF 1898a) had overtones of community revitalization and community re-integration (Wallace 1956):

> White Pup said that these feasts were handed down to them by their Forefathers, and they did not wish to have them discontinued as it was their religion, and they have the same veneration for their religion as the white people have for theirs, all he wanted for his people were the tongues and paunches as previously given to them for that purpose. He also said that these were his words given to the Big Chiefs at Regina, when on a visit to the Exhibition. He also said he would continue his appeal until it was granted. He spoke, he said, not in anger but in a spirit of peace, and in hope that the Government and Chiefs would grant his request.

"Running Martin and Greasy Forehead spoke in favor of the festivals, the latter saying that the Sun Dance was part of his body and could not be given up," Wheatley said.

The following day, Wheatley again wrote the commissioner, informing him that minor chief Big Plume had asked for permission to hold a Sun Dance because he himself was ill and his son had pneumonia. Big Plume said his wife

had vowed the Sun Dance and asked for beef tongues from the agent for the ceremony (SDF 1898b).

Forget responded to Wheatley on February 10 (SDF 1898c) giving the agent the usual message from senior Indian Affairs officials for Indians:

> . . . the Department cannot countenance the Sun Dances or other similar heathen rites, it is quite impossible to in any measure abate from the position taken, and he cannot therefore reasonably expect to be given aid to carry out what the Department desires to discourage.

Forget then responded to the chiefs' request on February 28, telling them through Wheatley that the seed festival and Sun Dance would not be interfered with, as long as there were no elements contrary to the law. But the agent was told to tell the chiefs that the department wanted such ceremonies "relinquished" because they interfered with work and because "they contribute towards the spread of immorality;" additionally, the department wasn't prepared to offer any aid to the Indians to stage the ceremonies in view of its position (SDF 1898d).

It wasn't until August that Big Plume's Sun Dance went ahead. The Indians circumvented the department's refusal to provide the sacred beef tongues for the ceremony by selling some of their horses and buying a steer in Gleichen for the Sun Dance, according to the August 14 report of NWMP Sergeant A.F.M. Brooke (SDF 1898e).

The NWMP had been asked by Wheatley to patrol the Sun Dance camp because he had heard that "some of the white people in the vicinity contemplated visiting the Reserve for the purpose of seeing the Sun-dance."

Brooke had arrive at the camp just as preparations were being made to put one or more of the dancers through the self-torture ritual, which he managed to stop by threatening to arrest any participants.

Wheatley's August 15 report to Forget reflected his surprise and chagrin at finding that one of the would-be candidates for self-torture was a son of Yellow Horse, "who is one of our very best Indians, and the boy himself is a good worker, and very quiet" (SDF 1898f).

The agent described Yellow Horse as being very grieved at the incident. "It seems the boy himself had made the vow last winter to go through this ceremony, if an Indian named Northern Eagle who is his uncle, and who was very ill at the time, recovered."

Wheatley said that he had also previously ordered some non-treaty Crees from Medicine Hat off the reserve and had the NWMP escort them away because they had returned for the Sun Dance, unknown to the agent.

Merchants in Gleichen had refused to sell supplies to the Blackfoot so they could continue dancing, Wheatley told the commissioner, adding: "I do not anticipate any further trouble; this dying struggle is made more in bravado on account of no assistance being given them in any way for the first time for their Sun-dance."

Wheatley reported to Forget on August 19 (SDF 1898g) that the Sun Dance had ended two days previously and that, "The Indians now see that we mean to stop these dances by giving them no assistance whatever of any kind." He added that only 41 tents were counted at the Sun Dance, compared with 110 in 1897.

Reporting to Indian Affairs headquarters August 19, Forget noted that the department had tried to undermine the Sun Dance by slicing the beef tongues issued to the Blackfoot thus rendering them unusable for the ceremony [only whole tongues could be used]. He said that the Indians, on

several occasions, had called on the agent, for tongues, even threatening to take them by force from the rations-issuer. He observed that it had taken 75 to 100 tongues in the "old days" for a Sun Dance (SDF 1898h). Wheatley informed Forget August 24 that the Sun Dance had used the tongue of a single steer, purchased from a livestock dealer in Gleichen by Big Plume, as noted earlier by Sergeant Brooke. "Without tongues and bereft of its most essential feature, viz: the making of braves, the sun-dance, it may be expected, will soon be a thing of the past" (SDF 1898i).

The reports of the imminent end of the Blackfoot Sun Dance were premature. Within months, Blackfoot chiefs were again asking Wheatley for beef tongues and paunches for the spring seed festival and the Sun Dance.

Wheatley said he had been told by Anglican missionary Rev. H.W. Gibbon Stocken that one Blackfoot, the Key, had threatened to take his son out of school because of the agent's refusal to supply the paunches for the seed festival (SDF 1898j).

> I saw the Key, who denied the Rev. gentleman's statements. I told Mr. Key plainly that if he made any more foolish statements, I would have him punished and that his children would not leave the school. The boy returned the same day, with the Rev. Owen, Principal, and the Key gave no trouble. This Indian . . . is a very useless fellow. He has served a short time in jail after last Treaty Payments, for being drunk, in Calgary.

While the official record for 1899 makes no mention of a Blackfoot Sun dance, one was held according to an undated 1900 NWMP report.

The Blackfoot also staged a Sun Dance in 1900 and NWMP Sergeant A.F.M. Brooke reported June 21 (SDF 1900a) that an attempt had been made to put three candidates -- Black Bull, Many Heads and Red Wolf -- through the self-torture ritual. This was given up when the police intervened. Brooke's report noted that the ceremony had attracted Bloods, Sarcees and Crees, who

claimed they came because they were not allowed to dance on their own reserves.

"It is . . . these dances that the children run away from the different schools to attend," Brooke said, "the four boys that I arrested yesterday were attending the dance . . . when I arrested them."

By December 1901, newly appointed Blackfoot Indian Agent John Markle was urging on Indian Commissioner David Laird the draconian measure of withholding rations to force the tribe to give up the Sun Dance (SDF 1901a).

Blood Indian Agent James Wilson had thwarted that tribe's efforts to hold Sun Dances for several years by cutting the beef tongues needed for the ceremony into two pieces before they were issued in the beef rations received by families, thus rendering them unacceptable for the ceremony.

Wilson had urged on the department the idea of having all agents in the Northwest Territories slice the tongues into two pieces before they were issued because, "it is well known if the beef tongues are cut into two pieces the Indians cannot use them for this ceremony . . ." as a means of completely eliminating the Sun Dance (SDF 1901b).

In 1898 the long feud between the Bloods and Wilson over the Sun Dance and give-away dances had boiled over into a major dispute in which the Indians found an ally in NWMP Superintendent R.B. Deane.

In his monthly report for June 1898 Wilson had complained that at the instigation of chiefs Red Crow and Running Wolf, who had ordered Indian scouts of the NWMP to get them to assemble, the Bloods had been gathered

into one large camp for some days and had done "nothing but dance all the latter part of the month" (SDF 1898k).

Wilson complained July 9 that Deane had refused to take action against the tribal leaders because he held that the Indian Act prohibition against give-aways did not apply to the "medicine dances" being held by the Bloods (SDF 1898l).

An angry Wilson said that if it had been up to him, "I would most certainly have put the ring leaders under arrest and had them brought to trial."

The agent had more to get off his chest:

> It seems utterly useless to educate boys and girls in expensive schools if the only result is a return to the old Indian customs. The Reserve at present is in a more demoralized state than I have ever seen it, and the future entirely depends upon what action the Department authorizes to be taken. My firm conviction is they must be forced or else they will relapse into a worse state than their former one. If they are to be fed and pampered and allowed to do just as they please then there is little use in giving them waggons, cattle, &c., or trying other measures to civilize them.

Wilson reported to newly appointed Indian Commissioner David Laird on June 28 that he had cut off rations to some families and reduced the rations of others in an attempt to break up the camp, which was preparing for a Sun Dance along with the "medicine" dances that Deane had refused to act against (SDF 1898m).

Wilson said he had learned that most, if not all of the trouble, had been caused by visiting Blackfoot, the chief offender being minor chief Calf Child, who reportedly told the Bloods that the law regarding the dances was not what Wilson had been telling the Bloods. Calf Child, according to Wilson, had told the Bloods that the Blackfoot planned to have a Sun Dance and "other Medicine Dances, as usual."

"The time I think has now arrived," Wilson fumed, "when these Indians of Treaty Seven should be made to feel that what is the law of the land must be obeyed."

Wilson accused Deane of granting the Indians 11 days for their dancing after a deputation of Bloods led by Red Crow met with him in Macleod:

> . . . now these dances have got the sanction of the Police they will increase from year to year and anyone acquainted with Indians in the slightest degree knows that there is nothing so demoralizing to them.

Wilson's hard-line stance got him into difficulty with Laird who lectured him on the need to be more diplomatic in handling the Bloods (SDF 1898n).

Laird said that while the Blackfoot chiefs had continually pressed for the right to hold "regulation" Sun Dances and give-away dances, theses requests had always been turned down. The 1897 Blackfoot Sun Dance, Laird said, had lasted only one day "and was regarded as a failure."

The Bloods held their first Sun Dance in several years in 1900, ignoring Wilson and appealing directly to Deane to allow them to conduct the ceremony.

At an early June meeting with Deane, Red Crow (SDF 1900b) told him through the interpreter that:

> There is prayers all over the world. You go to church. Red Crow believes in his own praying. He wants to be allowed to have his prayers. They only want it once a year, the next month is the time. They have been asking so long, they want to get it this time. They are going to buy their own tongues and they don't want them cut.

Deane reported the meeting with Red Crow and the minor Blood chiefs to NWMP headquarters in Regina on June 13 (SDF 1900c), noting that:

> . . . they are keen on having a Sun dance and its is quite clear to me that they mean to have one . . . the fact of its being forbidden has the natural effect of increasing their desire for it.

A June 25 reference to the Blood Sun Dance, extracted from the report of the NWMP Stand Off detachment, was forwarded to Indian Commissioner David Laird in Winnipeg by J.H. McIllree, assistant commissioner of the NWMP (SDF 1900d).

The extract noted the Sun Dance had broken up on June 25 and had been attended by Peigans and Blackfoot as well as the Bloods, but ". . . no braves were made; it was a very poor affair all through, very few of the sensible Indians taking part."

Deputy Superintendent-General James Smart, displaying remarkable ignorance about his agents' activities, called Indian Affairs Secretary J.D. McLean's attention to the Blood and Blackfoot Sun Dances of 1900 in a November 26 memorandum (SDF 1900e):

> I am informed that this is a grossly immoral proceeding and, by permitting it a reflection is cast on the administration of the department. There may be no special way of preventing this dance amongst the Indians by prohibitive measures, but I understand that it can be done by simply refusing the rations to any Indians who join in it, and I think it would be well to write to the agents on these two reserves, referring specially to this matter and suggesting to them the advisability of some action being taken to prevent the continuation of such proceedings.

Smart's comments, referred to the agents, drew an exasperated response from Wilson. The Blood agent told Laird December 17 that he had been successful "so far back as 1895 and 1896" in preventing the Blood Sun Dance from taking place, offering the Indians an annual sports day to replace it but complained that meddling by NWMP Superintendent R.B. Deane in 1898 had weakened his control over the Bloods.

"This last summer they again held a Sun-dance very much against my expressed wishes," said Wilson, " but there was little use taking any action so

long as they were being encouraged so to do by the Police, and since two years ago the Indians have gone fairly dancing crazy."

Wilson said there was no need of stopping rations (a suggestion he had put forward in 1898) because the Indian Act gave ample powers to agents if the police co-operated. Deane's remark to the Bloods that he saw no harm in Indians camping together, "shows the danger of men unacquainted with the ways and manners of the Indians giving advice," Wilson said (SDF 1900f).

The Sun Dance, far from fading away as agents and other officials had been predicting for years, had become a continuing source of irritation and trouble for the Indian Affairs Department.

Laird turned his attention to it in January 1901, preparing a lengthy memorandum (SDF 1901c) to headquarters on the Sun Dance and give-away dances.

"This Indian Dance question gave my predecessor in office, and has given me and the Indian Agents on not a few Reserves a great deal of anxiety and trouble," Laird said, noting that it was "a burning question" as well, among the Crees and Sioux.

Laird blamed the outbreak of Sun Dances among the Blackfoot and Bloods on lack of police support for the agents and said that he had taken to lecturing Indian deputations against the "illegal and immoral" features of the dancing.

But he rejected out of hand Smart's suggestion that the dancing be controlled by withholding rations:

> 1. It is dangerous. With Indians perhaps more than any other people the claims of the stomach are of first importance. If they have no other means of obtaining food . . . they can hardly be expected to refrain from acts of violence.

> 2. The fact that dances are participated in by large numbers of a band, a goodly proportion of whom are excitable young men, increases the danger . . . .
> 3. The experiment was partially tried last summer on the Blood reserve with unsatisfactory results . . . . My conclusion . . . is that the combined efforts of the Indian Agents and Mounted Police will prove to be the most efficient method of suppressing illegal dances.

Laird added that it might be worth following up on a suggestion by T.P. Wadsworth, Inspector of Indian Agencies for Alberta, to offer Indians a cash inducement for prizes at a sports day to replace the Sun Dance.

Wadsworth had written the commissioner earlier (SDF 1901d), informing him that Blood chiefs Day Chief and Crop Eared Wolf had made the suggestion. The idea was eventually adopted by headquarters but when proposed to the Bloods it was turned down. Wilson reported to Laird July 3 (SDF 1901e) that Day Chief told him the offer was too late and the Bloods planned to hold a Sun Dance that year.

As for the Blackfoot, Indian Agent John Markle told Laird December 4 (SDF 1901f) that he had been informed that a Sun Dance had been held in June and that most of the tribe had spent one quarter of their time during the summer, "at dancing, gambling, speeding horses and having a good time generally and it goes without saying that all these gatherings lead to immoral practices and that they are no credit to the administration . . . "

Unaware of Laird's reluctance to withhold rations as a means of checking the dancing, Markle urged that, "a good many wrongs could be righted on this Reserve, by withholding rations from those who refuse to obey the wishes of the Department."

In 1904, a tragic suicide during the Peigan Sun Dance led Indian Agent J.H. Gooderham to urge complete suppession of the ceremony. Gooderham

described the victim in his report to the Indian Commissioner as, "at times moody, and slightly demented . . . the speeches and excitement so worked on her weak intelect [sic] that for some fancied wrong or vow she committed the rash act . . . but for the dance she would still be alive today" (SDF 1904).

Gooderham said he agreed "wholeheartedly" with a Roman Catholic missionary who had urged the department to prohibit all Indian dancing. The Sun Dance, he said:

> . . . if carried out in the modified form as represented by the Indians has no very objectionable features, but this is just what they fail to do . . . it is the same dance, barring the torture part or what was commonly called 'stringing up' as the Sun Dance of old, with all the objectionable features, waste of time, waste of goods, and chattels, inflamatory [sic] speeches, heated imaginations, immorality, undue and unnecessary excitement . . . .

Gooderham said he had been under pressure since the winter to sanction the Sun Dance because a Peigan had made a vow and feared that "some dire calamity would fall upon him and in all probability on most of the band" if the dance wasn't held.

". . . as the time drew near for holding the dance, the strain on them became intense. They then came to me in a body, some 25 or 30 and tried in every way to get me to sanction their holding one. This I absolutely refused to do."

Gooderham said that, "as a last resort a number of them went to Macleod and got legal advice and otherwise on the subject. As they represented the case nothing objectionable could be found to prevent their holding it."

The dance went ahead while Gooderham was busy on the annual round-up. The agent complained that "work was much retarded" because Indians

could not be persuaded to leave the dance to help in the round-up of their cattle and calves for branding.

"I am of the opinion that what is called the Sun Dance in any form should for the benefit of the Indians morally, socially and financially be done away with," he said.

CONCLUSIONS

Between 1895 and 1904, the Indian Affairs Department hardened its determination and efforts to suppress the Sun Dance. And some Indian Agents were ready to impose punitive measures to suppress the ceremony. At the same time, Indian resistance stiffened and the first indications of the kind of group revitalization discussed by Wallace (1956) is visible.

There are statements in the narrative, despite being filtered through interpreters and officials that demonstrate the growth of Indian resistance and at the same time demonstrate that, for the Plains Indians, the Sun Dance was a major element in community renewal and re-integration after the initial decline in community cohesiveness that resulted from the impact of Euro-Canadian values and attitudes on their culture.

It was not just the old generation or the discontented who were dancing the Sun Dance but graduates of the Indian industrial schools as well. Not only "pagans" but Christians as well were involved in performing the ceremony and honoring its significance for the Plains culture.

In addition, respected chiefs like Red Crow, Payepot and Thunderchild were willing to risk Indian Affairs disapproval, even dismissal from office, to support their communities in dancing the Sun Dance.

Among Euro-Canadians, whether officials of the Indian Affairs Department, or missionaries, there is a perceptible hardening of attitudes towards the Plains tribes and their ceremonies. Moral suasion and the tenets of Christianity had failed to convince the tribes of either the benefits of civilization held out by the Indian Agents, or the need for redemption preached by the missionaries.

CHAPTER 6 -- THE OFFICIAL RECORD 1905-1914

"... we shall never make him a white man."

John Semmens, Inspector of Indian Agencies

INTRODUCTION

By 1905, the New Jerusalem envisioned for the Plains Indians by Indian Affairs appeared farther away than ever. The road to civilization was troubled with an ever-receding horizon that no amount of bureaucratic hand-wringing, cajolery or force appeared capable of surmounting.

John Semmens, Inspector of Indian Agencies for Lake Winnipeg and Rat Portage, summed up the frustration of western agents with their wards in the department's 1905 annual report (SPC 1906a).

There are overtones of the "noble savage," and the "noble anachronism" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988), in Semmens' observations, along with just a hint of the "savage reactionary":

> His devotion to his family is worthy of all honour. He provides all that is possible, but he takes the shortest cuts to success and plenty, and takes out all the enjoyment that the situation allows as he goes along. He earns well, but he disburses unwisely. His appetites are strong but his principles are weak. He purposes well, but the environments are too potential [sic] for him. He is capable, but lacks equipment and adaptation. He has been constructed for a gypsy life, and we are trying to domesticate him. He is a child of nature, and we seek to make him a product of the schools. We may improve the type; but we shall never make him a white man.

The quarter-century mark had passed in the great social experiment being conducted by the Indian Affairs Department to turn the Plains Indians into Christians and reasonable facsimiles of Euro-Canadian agriculturalists.

Progress had been made. Some Plains Indians were farming and ranching and making a success of those pursuits. Enthusiasm for the Sun Dance, that most reviled and detested and feared of all Plains ceremonies, had been dampened, sometimes forcibly, by missionaries and Indian Agents. Plains Indian children were being educated in Euro-Canadian schools, however unwilling they and their parents were about Euro-Canadian indoctrination. Plains Indian women and men had adopted Euro-Canadian dress. But, at the same time, there was a regrettable tendency for the Plains Indians to cling to old ways and old rites.

The Plains Indians and their culture were proving infinitely adaptable and flexible. The old nomadic, hunting life had vanished but their culture, under rigid, dogmatic pressure from Indian Affairs and the churches, was revitalizing (Wallace 1956) as it was changing to meet that pressure.

Euro-Canadian officials and missionaries, on the other hand, continued to demonstrate the unyielding and inflexible attitudes of the early years when they were dealing with a dispirited people recoiling from the loss of their food

resource, the devastation of epidemic diseases and the shattering impact of Euro-Canadian control.

The official record for the 10 years to 1914 reveals the continuation of those rigid attitudes on the part of agents and officials. But the record is also marked by frustration and vexation with Plains Indians who had learned to use Euro-Canadian weapons against the dictates of the Indian Affairs Department. The decade culminated in the final effort of the Indian Affairs Department to maintain at least a semblance of control over the individual lives of Plains Indians no longer willing to accept unquestioned the direction of Indian Agents and missionaries over all aspects of their existence.

The 1914 amendment to the Indian Act was, like all such amendments, ostensibly passed in the best interests of the Plains Indians. It was designed, it was said, to protect their morality and well-being by preventing Euro-Canadians from enticing them to take part in shows or exhibitions of those rites and ceremonies from the past.

The amendment was, in reality, an admission of defeat by the Indian Affairs Department. It had been unable to turn the Plains Indians into farmers as completely and as swiftly as once thought possible. It had failed in its war on the Sun Dance and other forms of Plains Indians ceremonialism, including the complex of dances of which the Sun Dance formed the crown. It had failed, too, in keeping the Plains Indians isolated from growing interaction with Euro-Canadians that further delayed and eroded its control.

The official record for the decade from 1905 to 1914 reveals increasing frustration, bitterness, vexation and hostility on the part of Indian Agents towards the Plains Indians. As well, there is a developing disenchantment with

the general public for its penchant in encouraging the Indians to demonstrate, perform and display elements of their culture, however much they may have been distorted by Euro-Canadian influences. For Euro-Canadians those displays recalled the glory days of Plains culture and the idea, however half-baked, of the "noble savage" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988).

VEXATIONS, FRUSTRATIONS, AND HARDENING ATTITUDES

In 1905, R. Logan, the Indian Agent for Portage la Prairie, was of the same mind as John Semmens. "Progress appears to be slow," he said, "the Indian will not or cannot work steadily and systematically on his own behalf, though he will give faithful service to a white settler" (SPC 1906b).

Frank Pedley, deputy superintendent-general of Indian affairs, while noting that aggregate earnings of Indians across Canada had climbed the previous year, had to admit that many of the department's wards, although showing hopeful signs of progress, were not embracing Euro-Canadian values or discarding tribal values quite as fast as they should have been. ". . . among many of them the desire to perpetuate tribal memories and customs may not be by any means incompatible with the spirit of national amalgamation," said Pedley (SPC 1906c). He also warned that many of the Plains Indians suffered from poor health and were prone to illnesses like tuberculosis because of the "crowding in small houses" (SPC 1907a).

The penchant of the Indians for "continual dancing" didn't help, Pedley said, because, is "stirs up the dust which the promiscuous expectoration of the affected has charged with germs, and at the same time stimulates respiration."

The official narrative a year later had, if anything, taken on an even more sombre appreciation of the difficulties faced in the department's long struggle to civilize the Indians. Even the "most advanced bands," Pedley said, "might be deemed to have reached a halting point . . . on the march towards higher civilization . . . ." (SPC 1907b).

And John Semmens had more cautionary personal observations to make about Indians (SPC 1907c):

> The Indian, as I observe him, is essentially law-abiding. He entertains proper respect for authority. He is nct wholly indolent, but rather spasmodic. He will work well for a time, then become careless. He must be kept at work by a ceaseless vigilance accompanied by some special inducement or encouragement. Even then he must not be goaded too much or he will grow weary and listless . . . .

George Mann, Indian agent at Hobbema, echoed Semmens. "A peculiar characteristic of an Indian," he observed, "is that one is never sure of him. He may be an industrious, promising Indian today and tomorrow it may be a thing of the past . . . " (SPC 1907d).

There were mixed reviews about the Plains Indians from agents in 1907. W.S. Grant, Assiniboine Indian Agent in Saskatchewan praised the band for its steady advance towards civilization, "and self-support. "The paint and blanket is seldom seen now, with the exception of the old people," Grant said, "I started these Assiniboine Indians on this reserve 24 years ago, and a wilder lot of Indians could not be found at that time" (SPC 1907e).

W. Sibbald, Indian Agent at Onion Lake, on the other hand, had no words of praise for two bands at Frog Lake. "Some of the least progressive of the Indians of this agency belong to these two reserves . . . they are less observant than the other bands of the desire of the department to cease their pagan dances . . . ." (SPC 1907f).

Reports from the field continued to reflect pessimism over the possibilities of ever being able to bring the Plains Indians to civilization.

Inspector S.R. Marlatt noted that he had been "in close touch" with the Indians and "their mode of life for four decades" and admitted to being disillusioned (SPC 1908a): "I have had every opportunity to become acquainted with their characteristics and peculiarities, and the conclusion that I have come to is, that it is impossible to educate or develop an Indian to fit him to compete with his white brother."

The view from Ottawa the following year was somewhat more cheerful. Pedley, as his predecessors had done for years, put the best face on the department's continued frustration with the recalcitrant Plains tribes.

The Indians, he said, had developed a spirit of independence and "sufficient self-reliance to enable them to hold their own under comparatively difficult conditions" (SPC 1909a).

But he watered down those encouraging words by observing that (SPC 1909b):

> Much and indeed most of the progress made in the civilization and improvement of the department's wards is necessarily so gradual that it is seldom possible to point to any considerable accomplishment in the course of any single year, and to appreciate this requires the consideration of accumulated results during more extended periods, and in no direction is this more true than with regard to the inculcation of the spirit and habits of industry.

As some slight evidence of such industry and self-sufficiency, Pedley said that in the previous 10 years Indian Affairs had been able to reduce rations of flour, beef and bacon to the Plains tribes by some 1.9 million pounds and aid to the destitute had been reduced by more that $80,000 (SPC 1909c).

Drawing on memories of the "savage reactionary," Pedley said (SPC 1909d):

> . . . had not the spirit of independence been inculcated and every advantage taken of available means and opportunity, these Indians would with perhaps few exceptions, have remained largely dependent upon the government, and paupers, dangerous, instead of, as now, a source of benefit to the commonwealth.

The burden of dragging the Indians along the road to civilization, even if the task was proving nearly impossible, was one that had to be carried with fortitude by Christians, the loquacious John Semmens [a Methodist clergyman] observed (SPC 1910a): "The red man is low in his ideals sometimes, but he is our brother, and his needs appeal strongly to our best instincts and command our sympathies and our assistance."

Occasionally, very occasionally, a hopeful note was added to the constant refrain of despair and pessimism voiced by the Indian Agents.

Battleford Indian Agent J.P.G. Day (SPC 1911a) praised the Moosomin band for being "shrewd, intelligent and industrious" and for being progressive and "dressing like white folks."

More in tune with the main chorus were Day's comments on Thunderchild's band in the same agency (SPC 1911b). They were, he said, being held back by "old-style Indians who are too prejudiced and heathenish to try and lift themselves out of their ancient methods and customs. . . ."

Blaming lack of progress on heathen customs and paganism had become a constant refrain by the end of the decade. Indian Agent H. Nichol at Qu'Appelle blamed the lack of progress shown by Payepot's band, even though they were hard-working and law-abiding, on their insistence in clinging to "their old pagan customs" (SPC 1912a).

Moose Mountain Indian Agent Thomas Cory had only words of scorn for White Bear's band: "These Indians are naturally indolent, and would much sooner get up on top of a hill beside a stone cairn and go to sleep in the sun than to go to work . . . there is not ambition enough in the whole band to supply one good healthy man" (SPC 1912b).

Sometimes, lack of progress was blamed on lack of control and discipline. Indian Agent J.A. Rowland described the Red Pheasant band (SPC 1913a) as being "ambitious" and anxious to progress but they had "been allowed to travel by themselves too much" and had fallen into "wrong ways and ideas." They were, he complained, "great at making plans for future improvement, but they lack method and perseverance in their work."

Qu'Appelle Indian Agent H. Nichol described Muscowpetung's band in 1913 in much the same terms he had used a couple of years earlier to describe Payepot's band. They were, "of the old type and cling as closely as possible to their original mode of life. In their innermost beings they are pagan, but profess Christianity.

"Under these circumstances it is difficult to make much headway" (SPC 1914a).

The Indians are getting uppity: The days were passing when Indians swallowed whole everything they were told or ordered to do by Indian Agents. They were showing a disturbing tendency to stand up for their rights and use legal help to take on the department, Pedley said in 1908 (SPC 1909e):

> Increasing contact with civilization has largely corrected the vagueness of the Indians' information as to their legal rights and the powers of the law [a vagueness that Indian Affairs had shown no inclination to dispel] . . . they have in no small measure become independent of the department.

The Indians' increasing awareness of their rights, and how to make use of lawyers' help to confront the authority of the department had led to all kinds of unfortunate results, said Pedley (SPC 1909f):

> . . . it is no longer sufficient to forbid Indians to leave their reserves on objectionable excursions, such as attendance as sun-dances, or to take part in demoralizing gatherings for exhibition purposes to which they are invited by local agricultural societies, or to order them to desist from bigamous or polygamous marriages on threat of deprivation of rations, and as a consequence the impression is apt to be created that in some directions there has been a relaxation of the department's discipline. As a matter of fact, however, the department is just as vigilant as ever in the use of its available means, and entertains no doubt that a sufficient impression has been made to ensure the prevalence before long of an enlightened public sentiment among the communities referred to.

Indians at Round Lake reserve, Saskatchewan, called on local real estate agent R.S. Park, of Whitewood, to intercede on their behalf with the department, because they felt the Indian Agent at Crooked Lake had overstepped his authority in suppressing some of their dances (SDF 1908a). Pedley admitted when queried by Indian Commissioner David Laird, that the department would not interfere with Indians indulging in moderation in social dances.

The Assiniboine reserve in Saskatchewan had earlier hired lawyer Levi Thomson of Wolseley to forward a petition to the department, drawn up by Dan Kennedy, an industrial school graduate, asking for a two-day "Thanksgiving Promenade" to replace the Sun Dance and other festivals frowned on by Indian Affairs.

Thomson (SDF 1906a) told Interior Minister Frank Oliver that:

> . . . the people in the neighborhood of the reserve who know most about the matter, think that it is very important that the request of these Indians should be granted and believe that it will have the effect of making them more satisfied and make better progress on their Reserve. The leaders of this movement seem to be among the best educated and intelligent of them.

The department's secretary, J.D. McLean, wrote Thomson in early April that the promenade appeared "to be in line with the Department's policy in having the sun dances substituted by picnics or festivals" and it could be held, subject to provisions of the Indian Act (SDF 1906b).

By the end of June, Indian Affairs headquarters was on the receiving end of angry telegrams from W.M. Graham, now Inspector of Indian Agencies for South Saskatchewan and fierce opponent of all Indian dancing; and from Father Joseph Hugonard, principal of the Indian industrial school at Qu'Appelle (SDF 1906c).

Graham, as blunt as ever, wanted to know if the department had sanctioned "Indian dances" while Hugonard complained that the Assiniboines had invited "other Indians and ex-pupils to a dance and other demoralizing performances reported authorized by you."

McLean wired back that the department had appro.ed the Assiniboine request for two days to hold feasts and sports events "similar to white people on Dominion Day" and subject to Indian Act provisions (SDF 1906d).

Indian Agent W.S. Grant feared the worst in a July 2 letter (SDF 1906e) to headquarters:

> It seems to me that these Indians are inclined to smuggle in some of their old fashioned sports and call it a Thanksgiving Promenade, but I think it really means some kind of a dance and it looks to me as if these Indians intended to deceive the department and the officials, or why should Indians think it necessary to go to lawyers for advice . . . I may say that I know Indians so well that I am afraid they will try hard to turn some of the sports into dancing, the majority of the Indians are in the habit of turning even a little feast into a dance to end up with . . . all dancing is demoralizing to Indians as they carry everything to excess.

Grant said he agreed with Graham's successful opposition to any dancing. "I know the Indians are doing everything they can think of to introduce dancing again by calling it a Thanksgiving promenade."

It would help agents and inspectors to deal with Indians, "if the department would take less notice of Indian letters as many of their letters are schemes and plots talked over by the old people, who spend many nights advising those young boys who have returned from school."

Grant's heated words drew a cool response from McLean who told the agent that he should warn the Assiniboines to stay within bounds and to put a stop to anything objectionable, but noted that "there are two sides to most questions, and any attempt to deprive the Indians of such harmless sports and celebrations as are indulged in by their white brethren is extremely likely to defeat its own object" (SDF 1906f).

The agent backed down August 6 (SDF 1906g) in a letter to headquarters in which he reported that the promenade had been harmless and no dancing had taken place. But he said he hoped the promenade would not be repeated. It took the Indians away from farm work , he said, and "they spend too much on beads and other ornaments which would feed themselves and children for a considerable time."

M. Millar, Indian Agent at Crooked Lake complained that the promenade had unsettled the Indians on the reserve and it had been difficult to get them "to do any kind of work" (SDF 1906h).

"I could find no reason for this until immediately after Annuity payments there was a general demand for passes to leave the Reserve to visit the Assiniboine Reserve," Millar said. The agent added that allowing a general invitation to be issued "is most undesirable."

Indian Commissioner David Laird also fired off an angry note to headquarters, expressing surprise that the department had granted permission for the two-day promenade. He said the Indians had taken advantage of the permission received to send runners to all the reserves in the Qu'Appelle and Crooked Lake agencies to invite Indians to the event. "Mr. Inspector Graham wisely took the matter in hand and to a large extent checked the gathering," said Laird (SDF 1906i).

The verbal fireworks touched off by the promenade didn't deter the Assiniboines from again petitioning the department for a two-day sports event in July 1907 but chastened headquarters officials rejected the appeal (SDF 1907a).

Indians were also learning to pull political strings to take on the Indian Affairs Department and obdurate officials like W.M. Graham. Member of Parliament J.G. Turriff forwarded a petition from his "friends the Indians on Moose Mountain" (SDF 1909a) complaining that Graham had stopped them dancing. Turriff asked Pedley to give the Indians permission to continue their social dances, commenting that, "I think it is rather hard on them to be interfered with in this way."

The petition, from White Bear's, Pheasant Rump's, and Star Blan... .'s bands, was straightforward:

> We wish to know why we are stopped dancing we don't do any harm to any body. We are the same as whitemen. Whitemen like dancing so we like dancing to. We have no other way to enjoy ourselves, we cannot dance with the fiddle so we have to use the drum that is our way and your own way is to use the fiddle. Makes no difference. I supposing we go to work to stop the white people from dancing they won't like too and when it is time to work we go to work when we have nothing to do then we want to have a little pleasure in dancing. We will promise you to do more work every year and we will promise you not to eat dogs what we use to do some time ago. And we don't dance naked and we don't give our things [away].

Indian Affairs official James J. Campbell cautioned Pedley against interfering until Graham's explanation had been obtained because, "it would be apt to have bad consequences" (SDF 1909b).

Graham's explanation obtained, the department's hard line stayed in effect. Pedley wrote Turriff in early March (SDF 1909c), telling the MP that the restriction was "perfectly justified."

"One great trouble the Department has had to encounter is to persuade the Indians to give up a lot of these customs and devote themselves to something more serious and profitable and whenever the door has been opened to this form of pleasure demoralization generally followed . . . ."

By August 1909, Graham was complaining to the department that Moose Mountain had been the scene of a large gathering of Indians the previous year following the holding of a number of local sports days in nearby towns and the celebration had been repeated in 1909 (SDF 1909d).

"The demoralizing effect of running about the country is telling on the reserves and I would like to know if the Department can do anything to stop it."

Graham enclosed a report from Crooked Lake Indian Agent M. Millar complaining that he faced increasing difficulty keeping Indians at work because of the growing number of sports days organized by towns and villages. In July, after annuity payments and several days of sports events, Indians in the agency had taken off for Moose Mountain to attend a sports celebration and the agent, Thomas Cory, had ignored his telegraphed requests to make them return immediately.

"They returned here after an absence of nine days, having driven their horses fully 150 miles, this in spite of their constant protest that their horses are unable to do ordinary work," Millar said (SDF 1909e).

Millar said the Indians told him that agent Cory had laughed when he told them he had orders to send them back but they could stay and enjoy themselves and that they had had a sports day and two dances.

Millar said it was:

> . . . almost useless . . . trying to maintain discipline along anything like advanced lines of civilization among Indians so long as there are places where they may go and participate in practises, which, I at least, am trying to suppress, believing they are wholly degrading and demoralizing to the Indians and are not compatible with civilization and industry.

By 1912 the Indian Affairs Department was having difficulty maintaining political support for its tough attitude towards the Plains Indians.

Urged by an Indian Agent to toughen the Indian Act to curb give-away and other dances, Indian Affairs Secretary J.D. McLean observed that, "it is not easy to get such legislation through Parliament. Many Members in both Houses think Indians should have the same right to hold dances as white people have who sometimes dress in rather odd costumes" (SDF 1912a).

Where Indian Affairs could still exercise unlimited control over Indians, however, it didn't fail to do so.

The same year, residents of Grouard, Alberta asked permission to hold a July 1 sports day on the Sucker Creek reserve because the fair grounds were wet, and because the Indians invariably attended the event. McLean refused permission because the Indian Agent was unable to attend (SDF 1912b).

<u>The great train robbery</u>: In November 1907, Indian Agent R. Logan, at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba got wind of a give-away dance planned for the "Sioux Village," a nearby Indian community (SDF 1907b).

Logan said Seehaw of the Sioux Village was the instigator of the dance and he had invited American Sioux as well as Sioux from the Oak River Reserve, Manitoba, to participate. Logan wired the Indian Agent at Oak River asking him to prevent any Indians from there leaving to attend the dance at the Sioux Village, then drove there and ordered a number of American Sioux "laying round" to return home. He gave them until 10 a.m. the following morning (November 8) to leave.

At the station on Nov. 8, Logan found the American Sioux ready to board a train for the west. Meanwhile three Sioux from the Oak River reserve arrived on the eastbound train and Logan told them to return to Oak River on the same train as the American Sioux.

At that point, Logan thought he had quashed the planned give-away dance but learned it was on again for November 14 and was to be held at Carberry, halfway between Portage la Prairie and the Oak River reserve.

Logan called on the Indian school principal for help and the two of them headed for the railway station on Nov. 14. They found 35 Sioux waiting to

board the train for the west and Logan told they would be refused tickets for Carberry.

The train left without the Indians but at 3 p.m. he was called to the station by the ticket agent because Indians were "clamoring" for tickets. Logan said he "found the same crowd of Indians that were there in the morning with a few additions . . . ." The Indians gave up the vain attempt to buy tickets but when they tried to get on the train to Carberry, Logan and two brakemen blocked the doors to the cars, preventing the Indians from boarding.

The agent then headed for Carberry, engaged the help of two provincial police constables and ordered the Sioux to return to their homes or face arrest.

Never one to sit on the fence, retired Methodist missionary Rev. John McDougall, soon had a letter in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (November 22) protesting the way the Sioux had been treated (SDF 1907c). He wrote, in part:

> Having been in association with these various Indian tribes all my life (and I am now in my sixty-fifth year) having a good knowledge of two of their languages and a smattering of several others, and knowing something of their life and faith, I must say I feel very much in sympathy with the Indian, and the more conservative he is the more he commands my respect.
> And I altogether fail to see why in these days of our much boasted religious liberty anyone should interfere with a few Indians in the exercise of their faith . . . .
> If these Indians were not about to do anything more than hold a sun-dance as this institution is now modified and thus understood by all Indians in this country, then these officials of our government performed an act which carries us back into the days of religious persecution [McDougall had learned of the Carberry incident from press reports which used the term Sun Dance to describe it] . . . .

<u>'Painted and bedecked' to amuse others</u>: As settlers moved onto the Prairie lands and towns and cities mushroomed, there was a growing interest on the part of Euro-Canadians to gain impressions of a past they had never known. Seeking to understand the "noble savage" of literature they had to

settle for their latter-day counterparts, hired to recall the old days and old ways. Euro-Canadian meddling with the Plains Indians to get them to appear at fairs and exhibitions drew the ire of John Markle, now Inspector of Indian Agencies for Alberta. Markle, as great a foe of Indians attending fairs and exhibitions as W.M. Graham was of Indian dancing, went on at some length in 1907 about the wrongheadedness of cities and towns who enticed Indians to leave their homes and work (SDF 1907d)

> . . . to give exhibitions of old time customs, ie, male Indians in almost nude attire parading streets and other public places, giving so called war and other dances for the edification of the wives and daughters of people who claim to be civilized and refined.

That year, he said, the Blackfoot had been invited to Strathmore on July 4 and to Calgary the following week, where they stayed for 10 days. Some then went to Macleod for two weeks in company with about 2,000 other Indians, and from there to Lethbridge for yet another exhibition.

> It goes without saying that their morals were not improved by contact with the riffraff of the villages . . . Any agent who protests against the promoting of these Indian exhibitions is now liable to be hounded in the public press and held up to the public as a 'knocker' of the village, town or city . . . If this show business is to be continued, why not drop all attempts at farming and stock raising and take up the show business in earnest, and with a view of gaining sufficient therefrom to partially meet the cost of supplying the Indians with food during the winter months.

Assistant Indian Commissioner J.A.J. McKenna had a solution. If the public wanted Indians, give them ones in white man's garb, doing white man's work (SDF 1908b):

> The Indians in war-paint and feathers will be pictured in the English and American journals, whose readers will be given the impression that the aborigines still wander wild over the plains of Alberta. I would go so far as to suggest that if there is to be anything in the nature of an Indian exhibit or show at this Exhibition, measures should be taken to have the Indians that appear there representative of the working Indians, and clad as the ordinary people of the country are; and that articles put on exhibition should be the product of their civilized industry.

The department acted, with inconclusive results, on McKenna's suggestion that provincial governments be urged to withhold grants from fairs and exhibitions that continued to feature Indian pageants.

Markle returned to his personal attack on the practice two years later (SPC 1909g):

> A discouraging feature in the management of Indians of late years, at this and at many other of the reserves within this inspectorate, has been the inducement held out at cities, towns and villages to the Indians to leave their homes and their work to take part in parades, old time dances & c. These mirth-loving people will leave their haymaking or any other important work for weeks at a time and travel from town to town to take part in horse and squaw races, parades and like diversions . . . .

In a report to headquarters the following year, Markle complained that (SDF 1909g):

> When we read of ex-missionaries [like John McDougall] encouraging the Indians to cling to the customs of their forefathers, such as the giving of war and other ancient dances, to appear in public in nude attire and with little on them except paint and feathers, we must confess that we fail to see wherein this either tends to civilize or christianize our peigan [sic] wards.

Markle said he had read a newspaper account in Calgary of a visit to the city exhibition by about 50 members of the International Council of Women who had watched a "squaw race."

The delegates, Markle said, "thought this about the best thing they had seen since they came west."

"These delegates did not see the moving pictures if they would, doubtless, have been more highly pleased with their western trip and known more of what was being done to please and edify the public."

Markle said he had seen the motion pictures and the most popular was one that featured:

> . . . a teepee in the background and an entirely naked Indian youth in the foreground and another whose only attire was a very short shirt . . . The chief attraction now at most exhibitions appears to be a great number of Indians and the more uncivilized they appear at these exhibitions the more they please the public and more is the honor bestowed upon missionaries who enticed the Indians from their homes and their work . . . .

Later in the year, Indian Commissioner David Laird, in a lengthy report deploring the allure exhibitions had for Indians and urging possible regulations to prevent cities and towns from enticing Indians to take part, described Indian performances and dances for the public as "ludicrous and grotesque . . . yet there is a craving for them among a large portion of society" (SDF 1909h).

Civilized people really ought to be ashamed of themselves for thwarting the department's goal of civilizing the Indians by enticing them away from farming to put on such spectacles, Laird had complained a year earlier (SPC 1909h):

> It is to be regretted that there is not a more general realization among the citizens of the country of the importance, in the public interest as well as in the interest of the Indians themselves of discouraging the aborigines from indulging in demonstrations of their old-time customs and ceremonies. At many fairs and exhibitions Indian parades and demonstrations are put among the prominent attractions. The result is that the unprogressive Indian, who seeks to perpetuate the old order and to prevent the extension of the new, is aided in his efforts and put in a position to work against the more progressive and especially the younger element who desire to break with the old order and to follow in the ways of the cultivation of the soil. I have done what I could to put an end to this prejudicial practice, and I am happy to say that in this I have received the fullest co-operation on the part of the Provincial Governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. I am, therefore, led to hope that in the future Indians will cease to be used as painted and bedecked things for the amusement of others, and will when taking part in exhibitions take such part as displayers of the products of their labours.

In 1910, the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches and Indian Affairs staff called for legislation to end the appearance of Plains Indians at fairs and exhibitions. And, McDougall was censured by the Alberta Indian Commission of the Methodist Church for his role in defending the Sun Dance and encouraging the participation of Indians in fairs and exhibitions. An unapologetic McDougall, who had retired from the ministry in 1906, engaged in a letter-writing battle with his detractors in the church.

In the *Winnipeg Free Press* (SDF 1910a) he declared that " . . . Indians of the old faith have as much right to join in the sun dance or the thirst dance as a Methodist has to join in a camp meeting."

McDougall had few if any allies among fellow missionaries. "We have been trying to civilize these Indian races and to induce them to discard their old practices which, for anyone who knows, are intimately connected with their old superstitious beliefs and their crude ideas of life,' Bishop E.J. Legal declared in a letter to newspapers (SDF 1910b):

> . . . it is not the half civilized Indian, the Indian who has discarded the blanket and who dresses like an ordinary citizen; the Indian who would profit by the study of the products of farm and industry, that is desired in these circumstances, it is the Indian in gaudy attire, the men and women in blankets and buck-skin fineries, the young brave in war paint and decked in feathers that are wanted and nobody else.

John Markle canvassed his friend, Anglican missionary, Bishop J.R. Matheson, for his opinion and the clergyman was only too happy to oblige.

Matheson (SDF 1910c) said that "of all the scenes of demoralization, debauchery and degradation I ever witnessed, nothing could ever approach" what he had seen at the conclusion of the Edmonton exhibition in 1909:

> The Indians were 'dead' broke and had all the whiskey white profligates chose to supply them with in exchange for their women and girls . . . We read of men 'Beheaded to make a Roman holiday;' well let us have butchery plain and simple to give a fine turn to a Canadian holiday, in preference to wholesale debauchery, disease and demoralization long drawn out . . . these people are my fellow countrymen. I was borne and brought up among them. I love them and grieve to see what was once the noble red man, nature's gentleman, kindly, honest and true they always were to me . . . .

An attempt by Indian Affairs in 1911 to persuade exhibitions to end the practice of using Indian pageants as drawing cards drew a sharp rejoinder from E.L. Richardson, manager of the Alberta Provincial Exhibition in Calgary.

Richardson (SDF 1911a) told the department that the exhibition wouldn't put on any Indian "features" in 1911 but pointedly reminded officials that while Indians might be "unsettled" by leaving their reserves to take part in fairs, "They are . . . not slaves, and have the same right to attend an exhibition as anyone else, and they undoubtedly receive some benefit and information from the exhibits . . . ."

It was especially galling for the Methodist church when plans for the inaugural 1912 Calgary Stampede were announced to discover there would be an Indian parade and the man at the head of it would be Rev. John McDougall.

The Methodists (SDF 1911b) had done their best to head off all Indian parades when plans were announced for the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, to visit the West. The church had drafted a lengthy resolution, reeking of Social Darwinism, seeking to prevent local parades and pageants taking place and had addressed it directly to the Governor General. It read, in part: "The Indians have not reached that stage of development where they are able to distinguish between the idea of a Show and of a serious act . . . ."

The Indian Affairs Department must have been just as irked and chagrined by the ability of the Stampede organizers to garner official approval for Indian participation. According to Chief Inspector Glenn Campbell, a former Conservative member of Parliament, who was placed in charge of Indian participation, Interior Minister Robert Rogers had had pressure put on him by Alberta Senator James Lougheed, R.B. Bennett, then the Member of Parliament for Calgary, and leading rancher Hon. Frank Cochrane (SDF 1913a) "to make the Frontier Days celebration a success."

All the work done by officials to have towns and cities forgo Indian pageants, which had started to show some measure of success, was overturned, although the approval of Indian participation for the Stampede meant that other Indian pageants being promoted for places like Macleod, Alberta, at the time of the Governor General's visit, could be turned down.

Duncan Campbell Scott, director of Indian education, displaying fine political footwork, had informed Campbell that he didn't need special letters sent to the agents directing them to co-operate in the project (SDF 1912c).

Scott told Campbell the first sentence of his [Campbell's] letter to the agents was:

> . . . quite sufficient to enable them to act with you in this matter: -- 'The Minister has decided to allow the Indians to take part in the celebration'. The Minister is the Department, and when you are acting under his authority you have proper instructions . . . I like your idea of exhibiting some of the agricultural produce of the Indians.

The following year, with the political heat turned down and the Stampede, billed as the "World's Greatest Frontier Celebration," taking place in Winnipeg, Acting Interior Minister Thomas Crothers, now taking advice from Duncan Campbell Scott, the new deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, turned down the Stampede's request to give official sanction and support for Indian participation (SDF 1913b).

Campbell, however, got into hot water when he allowed a group of Saskatchewan Indians to attend the Winnipeg Stampede on grounds that the department had no power to prevent them going and it was better to give their participation a semblance of official control than none at all.

His move raised bureaucratic hackles, not only in Ottawa, but in the field as well, with the likes of Inspector W.M. Graham complaining vociferously to headquarters over his action.

Campbell said (SDF 1913c) that he had acted personally in suggesting to Saskatchewan agents in a letter introducing the representative of the Stampede committee that one or two tents from each of their reserves might go to Winnipeg if satisfactory arrangements could be made.

Campbell explained to J.D. McLean that:

> . . . it came to my knowledge that the Stampede authorities on advice of their lawyers were making preparations to bring Indians down whether the department liked it or not. I also knew that Indians at different points were consulting lawyers and finding out that the department could not deprive them of the privilege of coming. The better way seemed to me was unofficially to have conditions imposed on the Indians that would enable a certain number of them to come down under pay and with the chance of competing for prizes without interfering with the work on the reserves.

If he hadn't acted the Indians would have been brought to Winnipeg anyway, Campbell said, and work would have been neglected. There was no love lost between the easy-going Campbell and the bristly Graham.

Campbell added in his explanation to McLean that, "The only Indians that I know of who came here without the knowledge of their agent and no arrangement with the Stampede authorities were certain Indians from Mr. Graham's own reserve."

The chief inspector's explanation was not appreciated by the Scott regime at Indian Affairs. McLean said he had been "directed" to acknowledge receipt of Campbell's letter, then proceeded to the attack (SDF 1913d):

> It is difficult to understand how you, as chief inspector of this department, attempted to do unofficially what you knew was in contravention of the department's policy in regard to stampedes . . . the department's policy as regards Indian dances and stampedes has not varied and it relies on you to assist it in endeavouring by all possible means to prevent Indians from attending same.

Years of hand-wringing and complaints by Indian Affairs over the way exhibitions and fairs encouraged the Plains Indians to continue the practice of their traditional ceremonies and took them away from their farm work culminated in heightened suppression in 1914.

The Indian Act was amended and given Royal assent on June 12. The new measure, adding a new sub-section to Section 149 [Section 114 in 1895], made the reserves on the Prairies into virtual prison camps (SPC 1915a):

> 2. Any Indian in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, or the Territories who participates in any Indian dance outside the bounds of his own reserve or who participates in any show, exhibition, performance, stampede or pageant in aboriginal costume without the consent of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs or his authorized Agent, and any person who induces or employs any Indian to take part in such dance, show, exhibition, performance, stampede, or pageant, or induces any Indian to leave his reserve or employ any Indian for such a purpose, whether the dance, show, exhibition, stampede or pageant has taken place or not, shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty-five dollars or to imprisonment for one month, or to both penalty and imprisonment.

Duncan Campbell Scott looked on the measure as reasonable and necessary for the well-being of the Plains Indians.

"In the past three or four years," he said, "the action of persons interested in collecting the Indians for stampedes and pageants has had a most unsettling effect upon the life of the reserves" (SPC 1915b).

Scott hoped that "reasonable enforcement" of the new powers, "will tend to prevent the objectionable practices."

There was no shortage of supportive comments from Indian Agents in a departmental brief on the amendment (SDF 1914a), when it was being debated in Parliament. R.N. Wilson, later a trader on the Blood reserve, said that exhibitions and parades had "a degrading and deteriorating effect on the young Indians." E.P. Schmidt termed exhibitions and fairs "a curse to the Indians," while R. Logan said that Indians would "even sell their ponies" to attend.

U. Verreau termed fairs "a rendezvous where whisky flows freely, where immorality reigns as a sovereign, and where the diseases of the different tribes are mixed up and imported on the reserves." Inspector John Markle said that Indians returned from fairs "much poorer financially and morally, debauched, less tractable and several degrees lower in manhood . . . it will be almost impossible to lead them into a higher sphere of living and into industrial pursuits if they are allowed to be led away . . . ."

The brief also cited support from the churches for the amendment. The Methodist Church, it was noted, was concerned about degrading incidents, drunkenness, and the "debauch of many Indian women and girls."

Rev. T. Albert Moore, the Methodist general secretary, had already said (SDF 1912d) that, "the Missionaries are almost unanimous in their opposition to permission being granted by the Government for the Indians to participate in these parades."

Postscript -- What's a nice Indian like you doing in a place like this?: Blackfoot Indian Agent J.H. Gooderham, who had called for a complete ban on the Sun Dance in 1904 when he was Indian Agent on the Peigan reserve, was overjoyed in 1914 (SPC 1915c) with a restrictive measure the government of Alberta had placed on Indians to protect their morals:

> . one of the greatest steps for the protection and well-being of the Indians, was the passing by the Government of Alberta, of the Act making it illegal for any Indian to frequent or play in any licensed pool room. The frequenting of these pool rooms by Indians had become a growing evil . . . .

THE SUN DANCE LIVES

The Indian Affairs Department had waged its nasty little war on the Sun Dance for three decades when, in 1908, Deputy Superintendent-General Frank Pedley had to admit that it wasn't going well. But he, like his predecessors, discounted the resurgence of Plains Indian culture and said the outbreak of Sun Dances that year was nothing more than a passing "recrudescence" of the hated ceremony (SPC 1909i). As usual, the older generation and medicine men took the blame for the lamentable outbreak of Sun Dancing that had stirred the department's ire:

> With respect to sociologic conditions the feature which has attracted most attention has been a certain recrudescence of the sun dance among some of the western bands.
> The policy of the department in this and kindred directions has been to confine prohibitive legislation to the most conspicuously objectionable features of what was deemed objectionable and to trust as far as possible to the influence of Christian civilization to engender a public feeling on the reserves hostile to such celebrations, and thus lead to their voluntary abandonment.
> To this partial and temporary revival the department does not incline to attach serious importance because it regards it as a spasmodic and expiring effort on the part of the older generation and particularly the surviving medicine men to keep alive superstitions and customs which are doomed to complete disappearance in the near future, but naturally are dying hard.

"The department's policy," Pedley explained, "has always been, as far as possible, to avoid excessive measures, and to trust to moral suasion and education to wean from objectionable habits and customs" (SPC 1909j).

Not always one voice from on high: Relations between Indian Agents and missionaries, and among missionaries, however, were not always as close or harmonious as might have been expected from those who professed to be working for the civilization of the Indians.

Roman Catholic Bishop Emile Legal, of St. Albert, had complained in 1905 to Interior Minister Frank Oliver that some of his officials were less than enthusiastic about stamping out "pagan" practices. "In place of discountenancing pagan practices, as Sun Dance and the like, they seem rather to overlook them," Legal said (SDF 1905a).

Legal might have included Rev. John McDougall among those who were inclined to overlook or condone the continued practice of pagan rites. In 1906 McDougall interceded with the Indian Affairs Department on behalf of Hobbema Crees. It would be only "simple justice," McDougall told Pedley, for the department to allow the Crees to stage a four-day "Camp Meeting" or "The Thirst Dance" (SDF 1906j).

"Long since, anything like barbarity in connection with this religious festival was done away with and holding it is but a clinging to the sentiments of the long past and from my standpoint there is no harm in such a gathering."

Further, said the missionary, the Hobbema Crees would be celebrating on their own reserves, "away from the distractions of the town or village among the white people."

The department wasted no time in framing a reply. "Experience has clearly and universally shown that Indian dances under whatever names, interfere with work, have a dissipating and unsettling tendency, and encourage . . . immorality," Pedley was reminded by his officials (SDF 1906k).

". . . to have it get abroad among the Reserves that the Department had countenanced an Indian dance or festival at all, would have disastrous and wide spread effect, and stultify its own policy, and the stand taken by its Agents in carrying it out."

McDougall sent his letter on May 24. By May 30 he had been sent a telegram informing him that the Department couldn't agree to any dance or festival but it did not have the authority to prevent them provided the law wasn't violated (SDF 1906l). That equivocating response was enough for McDougall.

Hobbema Indian Agent G.G. Mann reported to headquarters in early July (SDF 1906m) that the Crees had gathered at Samson's reserve for their Sun Dance, "under the apparent sanction of the church" and that throughout June "The whole band had but one thought, and that was the 'Sundance' or 'Thirst dance' and no other labour could or would be considered or followed."

Mann was not a happy agent:

> There is enough with which to contend in the natural peculiar characteristics of an Indian without the additional sanctioning power of the church to increase the headway of these opposing forces . . . . to have the 'Sundance' with its demoralizing influence backed by the church is too much to endure without a protest.

It was time, Mann said, to take "concerted action" to do away with the dance, but he had to admit that even close observation by the NWMP could find no violation of the law.

The Hobbema incident soon had Presbyterian ministers up in arms. According to the *Winnipeg Telegram* for July 11 (SDF 1906n), the Winnipeg Presbytery, having heard that Indians had received permission to hold pow-wows vowed to, "oppose the granting to Indians of any rights which would indicate a return to barbarism."

The *Telegram* reported that "Rev. Clarence McKinnon, pastor of Westminster church, brought the news to the attention of the presbytery, and

said that any semblance of a return to the old heathen customs was derogatory to Christian work among the tribes.

McKinnon said he had been told by missionaries that "any revival of old customs" led to a drop in attendance at church services.

McKinnon, the newspaper said, warned his colleagues that, "If the setback received by the missionaries is serious as it is likely to be after the holding of a pow-wow or national dance, they may take it into their heads to drive the white missionaries from the reserves."

No fewer than six successful or aborted attempts to hold a Sun Dance are recorded in the official narrative for 1907 and there is some evidence of increased aggressiveness on the part of Indians in attempting to stage the ceremony, and of toughened efforts by agents to stop it.

At Swan Lake, Manitoba, a ceremony in late June attracted Indians from Devil's Lake, North Dakota, as well as from other reserves in Canada (SDF 1907e). On June 28, the Saskatchewan Crees, Chief Thunderchild and Charles Fine Day, arguing for their rights, petitioned the Indian Commissioner to hold a Sun Dance, informing him that the agent had told them to make their plea to the commissioner (SDF 1907f):

> Do not be surprised at my asking you for this privilege of our old form or way of rejoicing. I am not going to interfere with anything or work or children at school.
> I was present at the time the treaty was formed and I did not hear them stopping us the privilege of using our ceremonies or ways of rejoicing. Our country is free and we are only going to dance for four days . . . .

The commissioner's office took umbrage with the petition and and its claim to the right of free expression and tore a strip off Indian Agent J.P.G. Day for supposedly encouraging them to make the plea (SDF 1907g):

> . . . the duty of an agent in the matter of a Sun Dance is to inform the Indians very clearly and forcibly that the holding of same is against the policy of the Department, and that those participating in such a ceremony are liable to be proceeded against and punished.

Day replied that he had warned Thunderchild and Fine Day that the Sun Dance was "contrary" to the law and that if they persisted in going ahead with it he would have them arrested and charged (SDF 1907h).

On the Peigan reserve rations were withheld during the Sun Dance but Indian Agent E.H. Yeomans said withholding rations hadn't worked "and never will have any effect in preventing or stopping this festival" (SDF 1907i).

The only result, he said, was that:

> . . . deserving or self-supporting Indians are . . . unjustly treated . . . I personally advised the chiefs and headmen that I would stop rations if they continued the preparations and engaged in a Sundance, ordered all strangers without passes of the Reserve and any disregarding the warning were fined. I adopted the same measures as my predecessor with the same result.

Yeomans blamed "outside influence" for the continuation of the Sun Dance and said that it would be difficult to stop unless more severe measures were adopted by the department because "the chiefs and headmen are the principal agitators and leaders."

The Crees at Hobbema, Alberta, having secured the support of Rev. John McDougall the previous year, went ahead with a Sun Dance in July, despite the efforts of Indian Agent G.G. Mann to head it off.

Mann told the Indian Commissioner (SDF 1907j) that he had urged the Crees in June to give up the dance but they kept their plans "very quiet" and formed the Sun Dance camp after the annual annuity payments.

"Up to the last minute they led me to believe that they would not hold the dance unless they had authority," Mann said. The dance went ahead even though the commissioner had sent a telegram forbidding it.

At Onion Lake, Indian Agent W. Sibbald, unable to prevent a Sun Dance taking place, asked the Indian Commissioner for advice on how to deal with the problem in future (SDF 1907k). "Although there are not nearly so many dances of the smaller kind as there used to be in this neighborhood, still these thirst dances are not on the decrease, gardens and ploughing and other work is neglected in order to go to the dance."

If God's word won't work, get the government to do something: In 1908 the Crees of Hobbema, Alberta were planning yet another Sun Dance, Roman Catholic missionary Rev. G. Simonin, warned Indian Commissioner David Laird, saying he had heard they were inviting "their friends" at Onion Lake, Saddle Lake, Battleford, Stony Plain, and Morley as well as the Blackfoot.

". . . this sun dance is the very root, the original principle of the old superstition, so as long as they stick to it, the Indians will stick to their old ways of living, and stay away from our civilization in moral as well as material way" (SDF 1908c).

McDougall's attitude to the Sun Dance drew Simonin's ire:

> I don't know if he was acting as a Minister of Our Lord, or a representative of the Department, but I know perfectly well that he was in contradiction with the opinion of every old missionary and with the experience of everyone who has to live amongst the Indians.

Simonin had a lot more to say:

> . . . this large agglomeration of Indians is very disastrous for their morality; for days and for weeks the Indians entertain their guest; every night there are dances and festivities; young folks, married and unmarried, make too close acquaintance together, thence jealousy, disputes follow, and adultery, &c, &c. When years ago I was already missionary on the Ermineskin reserve, there were at most four illegal unions, or admitted adulteries, but then the sun dance was over and drunkenness not much known yet. Now, after two or three of these sun dances permitted again, and liquor easy to get, the illegitimate unions are one third of them, 14 on 40 families . . . .

Not only that, Simonin warned, the Indians killed cattle given them by Indian Affairs, to feed their guests during the Sun Dance camp. The cowboys simply reported the animals as dead in the bush during the fall round-up, and the department had to accept their word:

> So if the Department will truly look after the welfare, moral and material as well, of his wards, this sun dance should be stopped altogether, and the law regarding liquor to Indians strongly enforced. The Missionaries are willing to help the Department by their influence, but Department and specially Agents and others should use their power to help the missionary's work amongst these poor people, and the change will be prompt and effective.

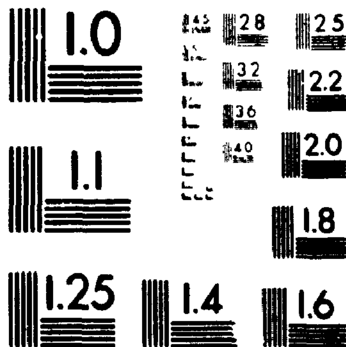
Bishop Legal endorsed the missionary's plea and urged Indian Affairs to "stop this sun dance's nuisance."

On June 12, Laird telegraphed headquarters reporting a Sun Dance in progress on Ermineskin's reserve "with very large attendance,' asking if it had been officially sanctioned (SDF 1908d).

Laird received a telegram the same day from Secretary J.D. McLean telling him the department's policy prohibiting dances with "objectionable" features remained in force and the department "desires all lawful means to be used for their prevention" (SDF 1908e).

3

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



PRECISION℠ RESOLUTION TARGETS

Indian Agent G.G. Mann reported June 15 (SDF 1908f), that the order to prohibit the dance had arrived too late for him to take action but there had been no reports of cattle being killed or give-aways during the ceremony.

Exasperated officials weren't about to let the Hobbema Crees get away lightly. In August ,the chiefs and councillors of three bands in the Hobbema Agency received letters telling them they would be deposed if they didn't take firm action to halt future Sun Dances (SDF 1908g):

> . . . the Department considers that one of the principal duties of Chiefs and Headmen is to co-operate with the Indian Agent loyally in suppressing among the Indians everything the Department considers objectionable and detrimental to their truest interest, and it will expect you in future to make every possible effort to prevent anything of the kind occurring again . . . under the provisions of the Indian Act, Chiefs and Councillors are liable to be deposed for incompetency . . . .

The warning drew a response from Hobbema Cree Joe Ma-Ma Gway-See, described by an Indian Affairs official as of no account, an Indian of the "Smart Alec class" whose letter of protest was a "wandering effusion attributing the institution of the Sun dance to the Almighty."

The official, James J. Campbell, noted in a memorandum to McLean (SDF 1909h) that he hadn't responded because "the proper treatment of the letter was to ignore it."

Ma-Ma Gway-See had had this to say (SDF 1909i):

> . . . If you look in the first book of the bible you will see that I learn what is right. Whenever you heard of the sun dance did any damage or harm . . . If you are going to stop sun dances, the life of Indians, I would like to know the reason why. You are all Christians and we believe it in our worship the same as you do in your church. I would be very surprise that you would go and stop the work of God, which was given to us by this our form of worship. Therefoure if you are going to stop this and take it away from us you may as well stop your own and stop the law of God.

I hope in the name of God you will take everything I am telling you is right according to our word from God in scripture. Even then why do you not stop sporting days where many things go wrong and killing? No one rules the world but God and anything he says and to believe in him is true and none other rules the world but himself.
All the Indian Agents do not believe in us and they will do no good for us and I do not depend on them for me. All the good people do the best they can to be good and to follow the law of the land to the best for the country and pull them through to the next life. Even the poor man if he does right is Gods blessing and he looks upon him. I think all the people do not right and are getting harmful and try to beat the Indians which should not be done to us. Your good education and the law of God ought to guard us to do what is right and not take from us the light which we worship by. When you told the Indians in the name of the King you promised us everything in our customs and we want it all the time.
I think if you are going to put a stop to our doing what we are accustomed to we might better throw away every thing and do the doctrine of Christ. Every Country has its King and councils and have different customs.
The law you make is of this world and we follow the law of God. If you stop everything we do we may as well go without the law of God. All of the councils beg of me to writ to you because we like it and it does no harm to the whites or any one else. I am writing these lines in good heart and hope you will take this in good heart in every thing I say to you. Do not try to break the law of God which he has commanded to us. Everything will go well if every one does right according to the word of God. I am afraid of your trying to stop sun dances according to the law of God. I have never seen him but it is in his command to us and you are trying to stop it....

The Hobbema Sun Dance had sparked another at Turtle Lake, Battleford Indian Agent J.P.G. Day reported to the Indian Commissioner in July (SDF 1908h). Day said he had managed to stop the dance after it had been going for three days but one of the participants had produced a letter from Hobbema, purporting to give the department's permission for the dance at that agency. [McDougall had written a letter to the Hobbema Crees in 1907, saying the dance that year could go ahead, after he received a department telegram saying the dance could be stopped if there were no illegal features].

Help me put the heat on these Indians: Confronted with the likelihood of yet another Sun Dance in 1910, Onion Lake Indian Agent W. Sibbald asked for a strong letter from headquarters that he could read to the Crees (SDF 1910d). J.D. McLean was only too happy to oblige with a bullying response (SDF 1910e):

> Now the Thirst Dance is regarded as a ceremony which has no redeeming features, encouraging as it does the retention of purely pagan superstitions in the minds of those who engage in it . . . . ample time had been given to your Indians to recognize for themselves the folly and evil consequence of keeping up the Dance referred to, and if they fail to show reason for themselves it will become a matter of very serious consideration whether measures should not be devised to compel the cessation of so conspicuously an objectionable custom."
> . . . it is very doubtful whether the Department is justified in allowing any Indian to hold the office of Chief or Councillor, who remains so ignorant or indifferent to the real welfare of those under his guidance, as to refrain from doing his best to suppress what is so objectionable from every point of view," McLean said.

'A momentary resuscitation': Roman Catholic Bishop Emile Legal had endorsed Rev. G. Simonin's attack on the Hobbema Sun Dance in June 1908. In July he forwarded another attack on the ceremony, and on polygamy, signed by 19 missionaries to the Plains Indians.

Forwarding the priests' petition to Interior Minister Frank Oliver, Legal declared that the two practices could be "easily suppressed without any danger of trouble and excitement among the Indians" if the department took firm action.

Legal recalled that when he had been a missionary on the Blood reserve, Indian Agent James Wilson had managed to suppress the Sun Dance for several years and polygamy had been reduced "to almost nil" (SDF 1908i). Agents "imbued with Christian principles" were needed, the bishop said, as well as strict enforcement of the law.

Legal's letter was turned over for a response to McLean who told him that, "It has always been the earnest desire and effort of the Department to suppress these dances which have always been regarded as most objectionable and generally detrimental to efforts to civilize and christianize the Indians," but it was felt that voluntary abandonment was best when the ceremony was shorn of its "most objectionable and repulsive features" (SDF 1908j).

The success of that policy was shown in Legal's own experience among the Bloods, McLean suggested. ". . . there has been manifested on some of the reserves, a certain recrudescence of the dance or festival, but the Department regards this as nothing more than an expiring and momentary resuscitation of what is moribund," he said.

McLean said Indians had been careful to observe the law and noted that, despite problems, there was no law preventing whites or other Indians visiting reserves to watch a Sun Dance, and that:

> . . . one of the difficulties which the Department and its Agents have now to contend against with increasing force is the fact that Indians are being daily better advised by outsiders as to what their legal rights are, and becoming less impressionable by an assumption of authority . . . .

A translation of the priests' petition (SDF 1908k) denigrated the Sun Dance as "a pagan practice eminently contrary to all progress and civilization." Although the priests claimed that the ceremony had been abandoned on a large number of reserves they said it was being kept alive by "medicine men" who made their living from it and "who try to lead their fellow countrymen back to things of the past."

The missionaries deplored the give-away aspect of the ceremony, claiming that Indians could not refuse their hospitality to visitors or to giving away possessions during the dance for fear of being considered as "white men

and misers." In addition, sanitary conditions around the Sun Dance camps were poor, and the health of Indians suffered as a result of that and deprivation of food during the dance.

The core of the missionaries' concerns about the Sun Dance, however, suggested that the ceremony had not lost its ability to serve as an element of cultural integration among the Plains tribes.

> It is also in these gatherings that the sorcerers make long harangues by which almost invariably they excite the young people to hatred of white people in general and of the government in particular . . . it is thus that the children are brought up in this hatred, which sets them at defiance not only in regard to the missionary but also in respect to the employees of the Indian Department every time that the latter wish to take some protective or progressive measure.

A storm brews in Saskatchewan: The Sun Dance, despite the best efforts of the department and missionaries, wasn't about to disappear. In 1911, a delegation of Saskatchewan Indians raised the issue with Interior Minister Frank Oliver (SDF 1911b) on a visit to Ottawa. Interpreter Alex Gaddie put the Indians' position to the minister:

> About the Sun Dance. Long ago our forefathers had their way, through the Sun Dance, of praying to their God once a year, and we were stopped and we find it hard. We don't see any harm in it. Only we used to string ourselves up and some people thought it awful cruel. The Sun dance was our way of praying and I ask the government to have the dance once a year. We want the Sun Dance and the ordinary dance . . . . Indians from all over say we should have some pleasure in the dance. That was our pleasure before the white man came. Once a year we prayed to our God and we made a Sun Dance to pray but that was stopped. The white man goes to church and hears the minister talking about God, and in the Sun Dance was the way he talked to God and that was why we had the Sun Dance once a year . . . We ask the government to grant us that dance.

The minister tried to walk a fine line in responding to the delegation. He told the chiefs and their interpreter that he saw no harm in the Sun Dance itself, but:

> . . . there is harm around it . . . . However nobody can put you in gaol for having the dance, but I think you are better not to have the dance, so long as there is none of the giving away business or mutilation, you will not be put in gaol.

The exchange prompted a memorandum from Deputy Superintendent-General Frank Pedley to agents (SDF 1911c) instructing them to "impress upon the Indians the folly and evil consequences of keeping them [the dances] up."

It was not long before the department heard once again from Rev. Joseph Hugonard, of the Qu'Appelle industrial school, deploring a "revival" of all kinds of dancing, not just Sun Dances since the return of the Indian delegation (SDF 1911d).

"These people seem to infer, from their interview and the letter in their possession in reply to their demand, that dancing is no longer forbidden or it is at least tolerated."

Hugonard complained that, "The delegates carry the 15 page letter under their arm and recognize in it a precious document obtained from the Great Chief at Ottawa over the heads of the agents."

> It will be most regrettable if the revival of the old dance custom would be allowed especially in this district where it had almost disappeared and where the young generation know little or nothing about it.
> Dancing among Indians can only be and is opposed to civilization and christianity as well as being a bad influence on ex-pupils who are fascinated by it and by indulging in it will become retrogressive thereby losing the benefits of education. Much valuable time, sleep and money will be sacrificed and its influence will lead them back to the old Indian habits.

Duncan Campbell Scott, soon to succeed Pedley and long a prime mover in the department (Titley 1986), reviewed the transcript of the minister's

interview with the delegation as complaints from missionaries like Hugonard, and harried agents, arrived at headquarters (SDF 1911e).

Oliver's intent had been to discourage dancing, Scott said, "but they are likely taking advantage of his statement that they would not be put in jail so long as there is 'none of the giving away business or mutilation'."

Scott urged that "our efforts should be to discountenance dancing and if we find that this document is having the effect of increasing the practice and causing the Indians to neglect their farming operations we should be firm in dealing with the matter."

Two days later on May 4, a circular (SDF 1911f) went to all agents telling them nothing had changed. They were to continue to discourage dancing with all the "zeal" of heretofore and "to enforce, with due discretion, the instructions of the Department on this subject."

On May 8, Indian Commissioner David Laird received a letter from Alex Gaddie (SDF 1911g), reminding him of the delegation's interview with the minister:

> The time I was down to Ottawa as interpreter for the Indians I explained the circumstances of the Sun dance and we were assured that nobody would be put in jail on its account. I think at that time I explained clearly enough the method of the Indians idea of worshipping God. That is of those [Indians] of no denomination. It is nothing but fair that they should be allowed their liberty and I sincerely hope that you will be in favour of what I say.

Laird's reply (SDF 1911h) echoed the circular and acknowledged an enclosure from Two Voice and four other Indians of the Crooked Lake agency regarding a Sun Dance planned for May 15. "If they do not violate the law they will not be prosecuted . . . ."

Crooked Lake Indian Agent M. Millar complained (SDF 1911i) that he had heard that although the Indians had promised that no outsiders would attend the planned Sun Dance, "my information from another source is that Indians are expected to be present from far and near."

The exasperated agent said the dance "should not be permitted to take place under any conditions whatever" to avoid influencing ex-pupils of the Indian industrial schools.

Another agent complained (SDF 1911j) that since the return of the Indians from Ottawa "there has been a good deal of mischief making going on at Crooked Lake and Qu'Appelle Agencies."

The agent said that Alex Gaddie, "an old man of seventy-five, a half-breed," had been actively using his influence with the Indians "in the wrong way."

"I consider Gaddie a mischievous and dangerous man on the reserve. he is extremely selfish and works everything to gain his own ends."

The agent [unidentified] pointed out that in the previous five years "many of the heathen practices" had disappeared.

Now, however, he complained:

> . . . the Indians who went to Ottawa are trying hard to give the impression to the Indian workers and non-workers alike that the Department have no confidence in their field staff and that they are told to deal direct with Ottawa over the heads of Agents.

Millar reported May 16 that he had been able to suppress the planned Sun Dance at Crooked Lake with the help of the "moral suasion" of Roman Catholic and Presbyterian missionaries (SDF 1911k) but the members of the delegation were "keeping up an agitation."

A month later, Millar reported that he had again suppressed a Sun Dance, this time on Ochapowace's reserve, with the help of missionaries and the NWMP. Millar said the Sun Dance camp had attracted some 300 Indians, "among them many who are ex-pupils of our schools both young men and women." The gathering included Indians from Turtle Mountain agency, North Dakota, Qu'Appelle, and Moose Mountain.

W.M. Graham, Inspector of Indian Agencies for South Saskatchewan, instructed to tell Indians on the Saskatchewan reserves that they had the wrong idea about what the minister had told the delegation, said he would comply (SDF 1911l) but hoped the department would "go further than merely telling the Indians of the folly and evil consequences of dancing."

Graham suggested that chiefs and headmen who encouraged dancing should be removed. "Dancing was practically a dead issue before the Indians went East," Graham said, in a backhanded swipe at the minister and headquarters officials.

Ex-pupils, Graham said, "are gradually falling back and will soon lose their identity .... The Agent [unidentified] claims they are worse than the uneducated Indians."

Sun Dance attempts haunted Indian Affairs from the beginning of the year in 1911. In February, Onion Lake Indian Agent W. Sibbald had alerted headquarters (SDF 1911m) to the possibility of a Sun Dance on Long Lake reserve, to be led by Peter Thunder, son of Big Bear. Sibbald said Thunder told him that, "for long he has felt the influence of the Great Spirit, urging him to this end, and that the time had come for him to obey what he considered had now reached a command.

"I am sorry to say that Peter Thunder is a very influential man with the whole Cree nation . . . . owing to Thunder's prominence, it is almost certain that Indians from all parts will attend."

Little Bird, one of the so-called Wandering Crees, appealed directly to the Interior minister in March (SDF 1911n) for permission to hold a Sun Dance later in the year. Little Bird said that:

> . . . we all promised and vowed to our Great Spirit that if all our relations were well again from their recent sickness that we would sacrifice a Sun Dance to the spirits and of course the ones that we prayed and promised for turned well . . . . So now superintendent have pity on us. We are only few Indians and we ask you to let us to have Sun Dance. God will give you his blessings if you will open your heart and approve to what we all ask you.

Indian Affairs Secretary J.D. McLean told Little Bird that the department did not consider it advisable to grant permission for the dance, "for it does not know what features or practices may be introduced at such a dance (SDF 1911o).

It again took the "moral suasion" of both Roman Catholic and Presbyterian missionaries to head off a proposed Sun Dance at Crooked Lake in 1912. Indian Agent Millar said the Crees had launched preparations for the Sun Dance because they had misunderstood the department's position during the 1911 meeting with officials.

"After much persuasion and parley," Millar said, "the intention was abandoned but not until a large camp had gathered and the lodge had been erected. The missionaries . . . gave every assistance to discourage the dance and to keep their people away . . . ." (SPC 1913b).

The same year, Graham was instructed by the department to take action against the Crees of Pasquah's reserve after receiving an urgent plea

from Hugonard that the Indians were "painted" and pupils of the industrial school were demoralized (SDF 1912e). Graham's response doesn't appear in the Sun Dance File, but Chief Inspector Glenn Campbell criticized the department for failing to keep him fully informed of the affair.

Campbell commented that, "These people [Indians] are sensible if one will only talk horse sense to them." Then he launched an attack on the department's policy regarding suppression of Sun Dances:

> . . . if the department would have put on the Statute Books preventative measures against Sun dances, give away dances &c., instead of merely registering the objection to them by regulations which we cannot enforce, it would put the staff here in a very much better position. The Indians now have got into the habit of running with their troubles to petty-fogging lawyers and know just what power our Agents have and what they cannot do.

Despite its long reliance on "moral suasion" in preference to an outright ban, the department showed no reluctance in stretching its policies to attempt to prevent Sun Dances, even when it had no right to do so.

In 1913 two Alberta bands -- Saddle Lake and Blue Quill's -- asked Indian Agent Charles Hughes for permission to hold the ceremony (SDF 1913e). The Indians pledged there would be no liquor and nothing illegal done at the Sun Dance. Hughes passed on their request to Indian Commissioner David Laird.

Laird advised (SDF 1913f) against giving permission for the dance, citing the usual reason of loss of time when the Indians should be attending to their crops and farming chores. He admitted the opinion he gave was "doubtful" but worth a try.

J.D. McLean, now assistant deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs as well as secretary of the department instructed Hughes to turn down the request (SDF 1913g).

Meanwhile, the Samson reserve at Hobbema, a centre of Sun Dancing for years, went ahead with the ceremony without asking permission. Indian Agent Thomas Fleetham said he "interviewed the Chiefs, and endeavoured to prevail upon them not to have the dance" (SDF 1913h), but they disregarded his pleas and the Sun Dance took place over three days in late June.

A plague of dancing: Indian Agents, officials like Inspector W.M. Graham, and the missionaries had railed for years against all kinds of Indians dances, not simply the Sun Dance, claiming that the Indians' health suffered from long hours of exertion in small, dusty halls; too many give-away dances were held despite the ban on them; and dancing left Indians too tired to do useful work the following day.

While some officials like Chief Inspector Glenn Campbell labelled dances like the circle dance, harmless and picturesque, for missionaries like Rev. Joseph Hugonard, principal of the Qu'Appelle industrial school, they were way stations on the road to perdition, part and parcel of Indian dancing fervor that too often culminated in the dangerous -- for missionary endeavors -- Sun Dance.

Hugonard wrote Indian Agent H. Nichol (SDF 1913i) that on an inspection trip of surrounding reserves, he had been "surprised and disappointed" to find a "general return to dancing."

"Not only do the old Indians dance, on Piapot reserve, but all the ex-pupils [those young men and women supposedly inculcated with Christian

values and Euro-Canadian attitudes] as well with one exception even going so far as to paint their faces, so I am told."

Hugonard said that during his three days' on the reserve two dances had taken place. "The Indians dance once or twice a week, often until morning, although the farmer told them to stop at ten o'clock and to feed their cattle and horses."

Because of the department's opposition to dancing, Hugonard said, they had asked permission to build a music hall "but the building has been used so far only for dancing."

Worse, it was decorated with a large cloth bunting which an Indian said had been given to the band by Chief Inspector Glenn Campbell:

> Several Indians have been at Winnipeg (where Campbell had his headquarters) to interview this gentleman about dancing and they state that his answer to their request was that he would first come to see their dances before giving authority but the Indians being convinced that there are no objectionable features started dancing.

Hugonard said that Moose Mountain Indians had told him that on their reserve dancing was conducted weekly in an old log dancing house.

"I consider it my duty to make this report to you," Hugonard said, "to strengthen your hand in getting the Department to use strong measures in creating a better surrounding for ex-pupils."

Shortly after Hugonard's letter to Nichol had been forwarded to Ottawa, E.D. Sworder in charge of the South Saskatchewan inspectorate in the absence of Inspector W.M Graham, complained (SDF 1913j), that there was, "unusual restlessness among a certain class of Indians here."

Sworder told headquarters that many were requesting passes to visit the Qu'Appelle Agency because, "the Indians there are allowed to hold old time Indian Dances, which go on for two or three consecutive days and nights."

"I gather that the Indians wish to establish dancing here, with official sanction, before the return of Mr. Inspector Graham, whose firmness in suppressing these dances and the liquor traffic in this district is well known."

Sworder said he had started refusing passes to Indians requesting them on grounds that they would be neglecting their cattle.

"Many of the older and most shiftless of the younger Indians are very keen" on dancing, Sworder reported.

The consternation with which some agents and missionaries viewed all Indian dancing wasn't shared by Glenn Campbell.

Campbell told headquarters (SDF 1913k) that he had requested the performance of a circle dance while making a promised visit to Pasquah's reserve and termed it the "weirdest most picturesque sight I ever witnessed."

Campbell said "It is as much the National Dance of the Indians as is the Highland Fling of the Scotch, and in my opinion as harmless."

Campbell recommended regulations, however, to ensure the dancing wasn't "carried to excess."

He pointed out that the Indians "know that the Sun Dance is held every year out in Alberta within the knowledge of the Department and no effort is made to suppress it and they feel that it is an injustice to them that their innocent pastime should be interfered with."

Campbell's suggested regulations got short shrift from McLean (SDF 1913l). The headquarters official said they couldn't be enforced because the

department didn't have the authority, and further, "it has been the policy of the Department to discourage Indian dances as much as possible. Our aim is to civilize them and not to perpetuate weird performances characteristic of savage life."

Following a second inspection trip later in the year, Hugonard informed the department (SDF 1913m) that he had been disheartened because:

> . . . dancing, painting, making and wearing of bead costumes, neglecting work and leaving reserves to attend fairs and celebrations have considerably increased this year on all reserves except at File Hills and to some extent at Oak Lake Sioux reserve . . . If this condition was confined to old or uneducated Indians it would be bad enough . . . but it is sad and disheartening to know that the ex-pupils are now making use of their time, knowledge and energy to become even more proficient in those evils than the uneducated Indians, consequently the money spent on them and the educations received is wasted and the habits of industry, morality and civilization acquired at school are lost . . .where dancing is prevalent morals are decreasing, farming neglected or abandoned and the making of dancing adornments are the order of the day, ex-pupils deeming it a pleasure to devote their time to the making of new and better dance costumes and to the painting of their faces in some new way for every new dance and are proud of what they accomplish, and how can this be otherwise when other Indians are seen indulging in the practices encouraged by Indian Department officials who invite Indians to attend celebrations, fairs and stampedes.

"The many Indians who were sent to the Winnipeg Stampede [in 1913, Stampede promoters held the second one in Winnipeg], by the authority of a department official , and others who were attracted there returned filled with enthusiasm for dances," Hugonard complained.

"They are proud to say that Mr. Glenn Campbell's daughter danced with Indian dress, ornaments and feather cap." Others, said Hugonard, told him that "dancing was a better and easier way to make money than farming."

The missionary blamed Campbell's laxity for the increased dancing:

> A farm instructor told me that he tried to stop dances but after the Stampede, and an hour's exhibition of dancing in the presence of Mr. Glenn Campbell, at the agency, it was useless to make further efforts.

So-called Indian celebrations also drew Hugonard's criticism. He said such events at Moose Mountain and Assiniboine reserves had been publicly advertised and that 3,000 had attended the Assiniboine affair, "proving to the Indians what success can be obtained by their dancing and costumes.

"It is time that steps be taken to abolish Indian dances before it is too late," Hugonard said, complaining that it made recruiting of Indian children to attend school almost impossible.

'You should keep your Indians up to the mark': Duncan Campbell Scott's admonition to Qu'Appelle Indian Agent Thomas Donnelly (SDF 1914b) was stern but it belied the state of affairs the department found itself in by 1914.

Evidence was piling up that the rigid control Indian Affairs had once been able to exert over the lives of the Plains Indians had eroded. The department could not keep Indians at farming as it once had done. Ex-pupils of the Indian industrial schools were returning to pagan ways when they left the schools, Indians were refusing to obey agents' warnings not to leave the reserves for fairs, pageants and so-called sports days, and the Sun Dance, chief target of the agents and the missionaries was still being held.

Even Scott could not keep Indians up to the mark. The deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs, despite his stern words for others, readily gave permission for Stoney Indians to attend the annual celebrations at Banff (SDF 1914c).

The department did, however, reject a request from the organizers of the Saskatoon Industrial Exhibition to have Prince Albert Sioux give a number of

dances at the fair (SDF 1914d) and have the cadets of the Indian industrial school at Qu'Appelle, where Rev. Joseph Hugonard was principal, put on demonstrations for the Euro-Canadian audiences.

In Gleichen, Alberta, Blackfoot Indians were a major attraction at the town's stampede in June, without the department's approval. Even W.M. Graham was having trouble maintaining a tight rein on Indians in his South Saskatchewan domain. A "celebration" at Standing Buffalo reserve, which had attracted many Indians from the Assiniboine, Moose Mountain and Crooked Lake reserves, had gone on for days and had had a "very unsettling effect," Graham admitted (SDF 1914e).

In October, 1913 Edmonton Indian Agent George Race arranged a day at the Pantages Theatre for members of Enoch's reserve, as recognition of their hard work at farming during the year. Following the performance, the Indians had danced on stage for the edification of Euro-Canadian customers because, said Race, in an October 13 letter to the *Edmonton Bulletin* (SDF 1913n), "they derive as much enjoyment in entertaining as they do in being entertained."

By January, however, the reserve was holding "tea" dances to "revive old Indian customs and superstitions," Race complained to headquarters (SDF 1914f), seeking authority to stop rations for band members to enforce suppression of the dancing.

McLean (SDF 1914g) told the agent that while it was department policy to, "discourage any dance amongst the Indians that has a demoralizing tendency" the Indian Act only provided penalties where give-aways or

mutilation were involved. But McLean said withholding rations if a dance was deemed demoralizing was approved.

Even at File Hills, Saskatchewan, which had been firmly under Graham's thumb for more than a decade, dancing was being revived. Graham (SDF 1914h) blamed the dancing on an "element" that included the chief, Star Blanket, "always more or less a serious drawback to progress."

"I do not know how long I can prevent them from starting up again and if it does begin it will not confine itself to the old Indians," Graham warned headquarters.

Indian social dances were one problem. A much bigger one, because of what it meant to the Plains Indians and their sense of themselves, was the resurgent Sun Dance. All the moral suasion exercised over the Plains Indians by all the Indian Agents for better than three decades had failed to suppress the ceremony.

Blood Indian Agent W.J. Dilworth admitted he had failed to exercise enough moral suasion in 1914 (SDF 1914i):

> I tried by every means that I knew of to head it off and finally when I seen that the Indians were determined and knowing that the attempt had been made some twenty years ago to prohibit the dance and had met with failure I decided not to say stop when I could not carry my command through but rather make them promise to curtail the time engaged in the performance.

"Moral suasion fails where dancing and these Indians are concerned," Onion Lake Indian Agent W. Sibbald complained when he was unable to prevent a Sun Dance taking place (SDF 1914j).

"They tell me they are going to have a dance (their way of asking for permission) and all I can say will not stay them."

South Battleford Indian Agent J.A. Rowland wired the department in near panic that non-treaty Saulteaux Indians were planning a Sun Dance (SDF 1914k) and it was "causing regular stampede my Indians." McLean (SDF 1914l) could give him only cold comfort, suggesting he "endeavour to dissuade Indians."

The final words on the Sun Dance in the official record for 1914 belong to a Cree of Payepot's reserve (SDF 1914m). Kayasonatam, complaining about dancing, told the department that the Crees on the reserve were dancing continually and had been doing so for three years. Parents were keeping their children out of school so they could learn the dances before they came under the influence of Euro-Canadian education, he said.

"Some Indians went this summer," he wrote, "to a Sun Dance at Eagle Hills near Battleford and came back eager for dances. I can testify that the dances are a great inducement for immorality."

CONCLUSIONS

By 1914 the Indian Affairs Department had effectively lost its ability to tightly control and determine the lives of the Plains Indians. The 1914 amendment to the Indian Act, draconian as it may have been, was an admission of failure. Unable to suppress dancing, in particular the Sun Dance, and too timid to impose the ultimate act of coercion by banning it and other dancing completely, the department sought to restrict it to individual reserves.

The Sun Dance File for the years following 1914 demonstrate the failure of the amendment and indeed, the failure of the social experiment which the Indian Affairs Department had conducted for almost four decades.

Christianity and agriculture were supposed to bring the Plains Indians to civilization. This twin endeavor presupposes a common goal for missionaries and bureaucrats. In fact, the official narrative suggests divergent aims. For the missionaries the Sun Dance was a major obstacle to gaining and maintaining converts. The official narrative demonstrates clearly that the missionaries could not count on holding the undivided loyalty of those converts -- young or old, ex-pupils of the industrial schools or the uneducated -- given the significance of the Sun Dance for the Plains tribes as a major integrating element in their culture.

The spectacle of missionaries pleading with the Indian Affairs Department to ban the Sun Dance, and other Plains dances, because of the they fostered among ex-pupils makes for strange reading.

For the Indian Agents in the field the Sun Dance was something else entirely. It was, simply, a major obstacle to the successful conversion of Plains Indians to agriculture. Agriculture for the Indian Affairs Department, was synonymous with civilization, and Christianity and Christian ideals played little part in the efforts of Indian Agents to suppress the Sun Dance and other dancing on the reserves.

The Sun Dance was an obstacle to bureaucratic correctness and tidiness. It was a ceremony that interfered with agricultural practices and hence in the ability of Indian Agents to report "progress."

Throughout the official narrative in the decade leading up to the 1914 amendment one searches in vain for other than pejorative comments about the Plains Indians. The "noble savage," "noble anachronism" and "savage reactionary" stereotypes (Marsden and Nachbar 1988) are merged into one

that could be termed "reactionary anachronism" combining the worst flaws of the others.

What emerges in the ten years from 1905 to 1914 is an Indian stereotype best termed "reactionary anachronism." There are few encouraging words in the official narrative for the Plains Indians. They are regarded as less able, less energetic, less good than Euro-Canadians, unable to work as hard, to concentrate as hard, or to practice the thrift necessary to become the equal of Euro-Canadian farmers.

In a word, they were a lesser breed, incapable of adapting to new ways, who had become a continuing burden for the country. As well, they had become a troublesome burden, because they had learned about rights, about the extent of the department's power, and about the ways of the Euro-Canadian legal and justice system.

The reality was, of course, that the Plains Indians had absorbed the shock of Euro-Canadian control, and had made those changes and adaptations in their culture that enabled it to survive in altered form side by side with the dominant society (Wallace 1956).

In a word, the Plains Indians had revitalized themselves and by fighting off Euro-Canadian efforts to destroy the central element of their culture -- the Sun Dance -- they had found other strengths and other ways to thwart Euro-Canadian control.

SECTION III

Narratives of reaction and revitalization

CHAPTER 7 -- EDITORS AND INDIANS

"Let us have an end of sun dances, grub dances, thirst dances and all the other dances on the programme . . . ."

Macleod Gazette, June 20, 1885

" The wretched old ragged, pock-marked, insect repository who follows along your trail now, with his old sore-eyed squaw and numerous offspring, picking up the white man's leavings, tells a pitiable tale, and shows only too plainly the decadence of the redskin."

Saskatchewan Herald, October 29, 1910

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, the Plains Indians haunted the imaginations of Prairie editors and their readers and dominated the front pages of newspapers. Their descent from prominence was swift. By the early 1900s the Indians had been shuffled to the back pages as the Prairie papers focussed on world news via

wire services, national and local stories of Euro-Canadian events, and unrelenting boosterism for the "last best West." Immigration, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Boer War, the beginning of trouble between Imperial Britain and Imperial Germany, the Russo-Japanese War, emerging provincial status for Alberta and Saskatchewan, reciprocity and other events made the Plains Indians little more than shadowy, if sometimes scary backdrops to the unfolding world and national view of newspapers that had once focussed almost entirely on local and parochial issues.

The Plains Indians ceased to be relevant to newspapers, except where their exploitation advanced Euro-Canadian projects or entertainment, where their presence interfered with economic exploitation of the West, or unless their actions could be used to remind readers of the 'heroic' early settlers and the perils they had faced on the Prairies.

The Plains Indians were transformed from bogeys to buffoons in less than three decades.

In an age that was especially biased and prejudiced, when belief reigned that whites, especially Anglo-Saxon whites, were a superior, chosen people of God, the newspapers were marked by casual, unremitting racism. Terms like "nigger," "coon," and "chink" appear in headlines and editorial copy. And, into the early years of the twentieth century, newspaper comment suggested that Galacians, or Ukrainians, would not make good settlers on the Prairies because they were lower on the evolutionary scale than Anglo-Saxons and other north European peoples considered far more suitable as immigrants.

As the most frequently encountered "other," the Plains Indians were the targets of epithets from Euro-Canadians. The phrase, "a good Indian," as in,

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian," generally ascribed in its different versions to William Tecumseh Sherman, appears in headlines. Officers of the North-West Mounted Police were invariably treated as heroes, as friends of the settler and Indians alike, and when they tangled with Plains Indians at odds with the law, like Charcoal and Almighty Voice, there was seldom an encouraging word for the plight of the so-called renegades, or sympathetic attempts to explain the background to their escapades.

The narrative that emerged from the official record displays an gradual and subtle changes in the stereotypes and images of Plains Indians that emerge over the years. The stereotypes that emerge in the newspaper narrative display a similar shift from noble savage, savage reactionary and historic anachronism to "reactionary anachronism"(Marsden and Nachbar 1988).

The *Saskatchewan Herald* touched on this shift in 1890. In an August 20 editorial, the newspaper noted that *Harper's Weekly* had dispatched artist Frederick Remington to the West Coast to prepare illustrations of Indians for a series of articles. Unfortunately for the artist and the writer who accompanied him, the *Herald* commented, the Indian of history and literature couldn't be foundt:

> Instead of the painted and feathered savage they found the Indian of the Pacific Coast to be in every way the peer of the white settler . . . Indians of the Daniel Boone and Colonel Crockett days are fortunately becoming scarce. They have ceased to exist on this side of the boundary line, and under the liberal and enlightened management of General Morgan [U.S. Indian commissioner] will soon disappear from the southern side as well.

The Indian, however, owed whatever "progress" he had made to Euro-Canadian kindness and sagacity and wise administration by the government:

> The romance that used to surround the Indian is fast passing away; and while there are still many of the plain Indians unable to sustain themselves unaided in providing for their own maintenance the progress they have made during the past decade is on the whole satisfactory, and attests the value of a system of kindness and the advantages of education.

The Sun Dance, the major religious and integrating institution of the Plains Indians received remarkably little attention from the Prairie newspapers. Coverage of and comment on the Sun Dance was sporadic, generally sensationalized and, most often, misinformed. A major element in the lives of the Plains Indians, and a major self-perceived problem for the Indian Affairs Department in its dealings with them was trivialized by the press. By the turn of the century it was largely ignored, or mentioned in other coverage that dwelt on the Plains Indians as show business, as in the coverage extended to spectacles like the first Calgary Stampede in 1912.

Three dominant themes emerge from study of Prairie newspaper copy. The Indian "Question" or The Indian "Problem;" Good Indians, Bad Indians; and A Fear of Indians.

It is as an adjunct to these central themes that the relatively slim coverage given the Sun Dance can be examined.

A note of explanation: Several Prairie newspapers which started publishing in the late 1870s and early 1880s were surveyed, from their inception to 1914. Microfilm copies of the newspapers were studied over a two-year period and stories, editorials, and letters concerning Plains Indians were retrieved. This survey was especially thorough for the *Calgary Herald, Regina Leader*, and *Saskatchewan Herald*, published in Battleford. The *Qu'Appelle Progress* (Saskatchewan) was studied over the same period but microfilm copies of the *Progress* for 1912 and 1913 could not be located, despite a

thorough search by the efficient staff of Carleton University inter-library loans service. In addition, two published indexes of early Prairie newspapers were examined and relevant material was selected on the basis of the headlines or headings cited. The two indexes are: *Lethbridge News and Macleod Gazette 1882-1900, A Subject and Biographical Index*; compiled and edited by Barbara Marshalsay and Margaret Wheeler (MW Associates, Lethbridge, 1981); and *Lethbridge News* 1901-1906 and *Lethbridge Herald 1905-1918, a Subject and Biographical Index*, compiled by Margaret Wheeler and Greg Ellis (Sir Alexander Galt Museum, Lethbridge, 1987). The selection provides a crude balance between the areas of the North-West Territories that later became Alberta and Saskatchewan. Relevant editorial material from other newspapers was also studied, including stories, editorials and letters to the editor retrieved from the official record and included in the chapters devoted to it.

The *Calgary Herald* and the *Regina Leader* grew rapidly with their communities and became major western daily newspapers within a few years of starting publication. The others grew more slowly, or ceased publication.

The newspaper survey makes no claim to being comprehensive. Tracking early newspapers on microfilm that is sometimes almost undecipherable, was a time-consuming, frustrating, and eye-wrenching task. What can be said is that no major stories or comment escaped the research net.

In all the newspapers surveyed there was a noticeable falling off of coverage of the Plains Indians over the years. This has been ascribed by others (Simons 1984) to dismissal of the Plains Indians as a topic of interest to Euro-

Canadians. A more likely explanation is somewhat more complicated. Newspapers, it hardly needs saying, catered to the needs and tastes of their readers as well as the idiosyncrasies of publishers and editors. As the West filled with settlers and the economic interests of ranchers and farmers expanded the newspapers serving their communities shifted coverage to meet these needs. The Plains Indians became of marginal interest to the prairie newspapers because their communities and economy were marginalized by the dominant white society. They remained of interest to the newspapers where crimes, violence, or general misbehavior were involved; or, where they or their land interfered with Euro-Canadian economic aspirations.

THE INDIAN QUESTION

The "Question" or "Problem" of what was to be done with the Plains Indians pre-occupied early editorial comment and the rhetorical answers were often mean-spirited. Generosity to a people considered inferior, dirty, shiftless, childlike, improvident and unpredictable (Berkhofer 1984, et al) was in short supply in editorial comment, which was often punitive in tone, and rigidly Christian and narrow-minded in its approach.

Newspaper editors in the early years more often viewed the Plains Indians as the savage reactionaries described by Marsden and Nachbar (1988) than as so-called noble anachronisms.

Keep them on the reserves: Of all the Prairie newspapers studied the *Macleod Gazette* was the most unremittingly vitriolic in its coverage of the Plains Indians and its remedies for The Indian Question. Its demands for action were generally harsh, and almost invariably simplistic. Responding to reports

of Indians stealing from ranchers, the *Gazette* on September 14, 1882 called for the Indians to be confined to their reserves unless they had a permit to leave "and the sooner this is brought about the better for all concerned."

> They should not be encouraged in their visits to the different settlements. If they were resolutely refused grub while off their Reserve, and could not get enough to carry them back to it if they leave, they would very soon get tired of starting out on what they would know to be an unsuccessful bumming tour.

On July 14, 1883 the *Gazette* bemoaned the light sentences several Indians had received after being convicted of "killing cattle out of pure deviltry."

The culprits should have received penitentiary terms, not light sentences in the local jail, the *Gazette* fulminated, because such sentences would only provoke more Indian crimes.

> If stockmen who lose cattle and horses get no satisfaction, they will take the matter into their own hands, and some day there will be a dead Indian, a dead white man will probably follow, and so the ball will be opened. If we are obliged to fight these Indians to stop their depredations, let the entertainment commence . . . .

The *Calgary Herald* was of like mind in an editorial on January 22, 1890. Calling for action to prevent Indians killing range cattle, the *Herald* urged that, "If the keeping of the Indians on their reserves is merely a question of rations and money it should not be considered for a moment."

The *Macleod Gazette* displayed a certainty that was absent in other newspapers. As late as 1893 it was repeating its nostrum for the Indian "Problem."

On March 24 it commented that a scheme was needed to force the Indians to stay on their reserves.

> "Indians should not be allowed off their reserves at any time without the written permission of the agent," the paper said.

> "And any Indian found off his reserve without a pass, or found in any other direction than that his pass called for, etc., should be promptly arrested . . . the annoyances complained of by ranchers resulting from itinerant bands of Indians would then speedily end."

How do we feed these people?: In 1879, the *Saskatchewan Herald*, published in Battleford, acknowledged that the Plains Indians, by then starving for want of buffalo, would have to be fed at taxpayers' expense, but not for any longer than absolutely necessary. In a February 10 editorial, editor P.G. Laurie argued that:

> . . . it is evident that for the Indian there is but one resource -- he must be taught to cultivate the soil, to accommodate himself to a civilized mode of life, and be at least partially fed while he is learning . . . it will be more economical in the end than to feed them in idleness year after year. It will be better for themselves, as it will teach them to be self-reliant and give them something to think about . . . They will soon see how profitable it is to raise their own vegetables and flour, and this lesson learned, they will the more energetically settle down to their new work.

More than the well-being of starving Indians had to be considered, Laurie said. There was also "the peace of the country, and the safety of the settlers" for the government to keep in mind.

On March 10, a short news item carried much the same theme. It reported that at Eagle Hills, Saskatchewan, the Anglican Church Missionary Society had hired a farmer to teach the Indians "in the mysteries of farming" so that in future, "every man will work his own bit of land instead of holding all in common, as has been the custom" . . . because, "Indians are like other people -- they work best when they see a direct return on their labor and have a personal interest in the result."

On June 2, 1879 the *Herald* returned to the "Question," expressing the hope that starving Indians, like the Blackfoot and Sarcee who had wandered into the Battleford area in search of the vanishing buffalo, would take heed of

the successful conversion of Indians to farming at Eagle Hills and move on to their reserves and begin farming.

In the December 29 issue of the *Herald*, a correspondent in Fort Macleod reported with satisfaction that only a "few lodges of Bloods" remained in the vicinity and the Indians were "made to work for their rations."

It was a theme the *Herald* took up again on April 26, 1880 in an editorial on Indian farming:

> Not only must the Indian be shown how to work, but he ought to be impressed with the idea that if he does not work, and work well and faithfully, as the white farmer has to do, neither shall he eat. He must learn that farming is work -- a labor that brings its own reward when honestly performed -- and that while he has been fed this winter, he must hereafter look out for himself . . . . The experience of the past winter has shown that the liberality with which provisions have been issued has not been an unmixed good; in fact it has in many cases been productive of real harm, by giving the Indian the idea that, to be fed, he has but to say he is hungry . . . bands of Indians whose source of food supply was no more restricted this winter than in former years, have not made the usual effort to help themselves, but have contentedly resigned themselves to idleness . . . To remove this false idea of their "rights," and to prevent the Indians from becoming hopelessly pauperized, should be one of the first duties of the officers placed over them, whether they be agents or instructors.

The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported January 17, 1881, on a "mass meeting" of citizens held the previous week. "The most important part of the meeting was a discussion on the Indian question -- that ever fruitful topic," the *Bulletin* reported.

"Some startling stories of misery and wretchedness amongst the Indians were told . . . Settlers in the out-lying districts are becoming alarmed for the safety of their families and stock for they know that no one can blame the Indians if they resort to force to obtain food."

The *Bulletin* returned to the topic of starvation among the Indians in 1883, carrying the text of a letter February 3 from local Cree and Stoney chiefs to the minister of the Interior.

The letter complained that the "dire poverty, our utter destitution" was being ignored by the government and treaty obligations weren't being met:

> . . . if no attention is paid to our case now we shall conclude that the treaty made with us six years ago was a meaningless matter of form and that the white man has indirectly doomed us to annihilation little by little . . . a condition on our part is to respect all property belonging to white men. If any of our tribes pushed by hunger, kill an animal belonging to a white man, they are taken and punished according to law. A condition on the part of the government is to furnish us with a number of farming implements and cattle . . . during six years that we have been in the treaty, the officers acting for the government have robbed us of more than one-half of these things . . . .

The letter, obviously inspired by Euro-Canadian political enemies of Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney and written by a Euro-Canadian, continued with a complaint that the Blackfoot, "because they are bold, ready to fight and kill cattle if allowed to go hungry" received better rations.

The letter was signed by seven Cree chiefs including Bob Tail, Samson, Ermine Skin and Woodpecker and two Stoneys, Iron Head and William.

While most newspaper stories and editorials wholeheartedly supported the rule that Indians had to earn their rations, an occasional sympathetic voice was heard. In a letter to the editor of the *Regina Leader* on September 30, 1890, Percy G.B. Lake (Lt. Col. late, 100th Royal Canadian Regiment, Winmarleigh Grange, Grenfell) suggested that while economy needed to be practised, the industrious Indian had to be supported.

"What encouragement is it to the industrious Indian if directly he gets a good crop he is struck off the ration list?"

"Let the reduction be done gradually and give the Indian agents on each reserve a free hand to act according to circumstances," said Lake.

The *Lethbridge News* had advice of a similar sort in editorial comment on the annual report of the Indian Affairs Department on April 17, 1891. "The 'Bible and the plough,' are the two things that will elevate the character of the red men," the News said.

"The Canadian government profiting by the experience of the Americans, recognize the fact that it is cheaper to feed and teach the Indians than to shoot them, and that a live Indian may if treated fairly, be a good Indian."

On October 10, 1892 the *Regina Leader* returned to the topic of no work, no rations in a news story on Muscowpetung's reserve, north-east of Regina.

"The majority of the Indians are good workers," the reporter said, "and the rest are rapidly becoming so."

There was a simple explanation: "The motto under which they are governed is, 'No work, no grub. If Mr. 'Lo' doesn't work he goes hungry and he has become convinced that obedience to the agent is his best policy."

<u>They're not behaving like us</u>: Despite such comments, the stereotype of the lazy Indian who learns quickly that he can rely on government handouts recurs throughout the newspaper narrative.

The fears of the *Saskatchewan Herald*, for example, were confirmed March 28, 1881 when an editorial headed "Indian Question," castigated Indians in the Battleford area for killing and eating government cattle given to them to start herds. The Indians, the editorial said, "have thrown down the gauntlet;

they refuse to work and declare that they will not go hungry a day as long as there is an animal left on the reserves."

Charging that government policy had vacillated back and forth between toughness and over-generosity, the *Herald* urged a hardline approach based on honoring treaty commitments and measures to ensure the Indians did their part and learned farming.

The "savage reactionary" was a popular stereotype in the 1880s. The *Calgary Herald* July 9, 1884 carried an interview with an American Indian trader that it had lifted from the *Winnipeg Sun*. I.G. Baker, of St. Louis, was quoted at length. Said Baker: "I am inclined to the belief, after careful study of the character of the Indian, that it is a hard matter indeed to civilize a full-bred one."

Baker complained that even after receiving a white education the Indians he had encountered returned to their reservations and refused work if there was enough to eat.

In 1886 the *Saskatchewan Herald* ran an editorial February 1, lifted from the Helena, Montana *Independent* that obviously reflected the Battleford editor's views. The editorial ranted that the Indian had to learn his "superstitions" were "not in harmony with man's highest religious impulses" and urged an end to tribalism so that each family could have a separate farm while sending their children to white-run schools, to escape the superstitions of "old bucks and squaws."

Rations should only go to those who heeded the call to work and educate their children. "Their treatment must be humane, but firm. There must be no

compromise with their savage propensities which interfere with the civilization of their children."

The *Herald* on July 9, 1887 criticized a parliamentary committee's report that suggested the Plains Indians were "badly used" in being forced to take up agriculture.

Said the *Herald*, "The training to habits of industry is the only thing that will save the Indian . . . the alternatives offered would in every case perpetuate the nomadic habits in which he delights and keep him wandering about . . . ."

The editorial went on to praise the Indian Affairs Department and said opposition to its policy of getting the Indians to adopt farming came from the older generation of Indians and Eastern meddlers who thought that Eastern Indians and Western Indians could be dealt with in the same way.

The *Macleod Gazette* displayed its usual contempt for Indians in an item February 8, 1888 reporting on a meeting between the Bloods, the NWMP, and Indian Agent W.C. Pocklington. The discussion, said the *Gazette*, amounted to little and was on the old topic of more food.

<u>Disarm these people</u>: By April 16, 1885 the *Calgary Herald* was looking beyond the rebellion, and urging stern measures to ensure the safety of settlers in the future. While lauding the prime minister's announcement that the NWMP would be augmented, the *Herald* pointed out that in the United States George Armstrong Custer's widow had been awarded only a few hundred of dollars for her husband's death but "Custer's murderer was made the lion of the day."

Talk of punishing the Indians had, the *Herald* fumed, "a good deal of buncombe in it."

> There is nothing in the nature of things to make it improbable that after they have rioted to their hearts' content, Poundmaker and Big Bear will not go on a starring tour through Canada and return much richer men than they ever were before.
> Every Indian in the territories should be disarmed . . . Learning to eat potatoes instead of muskrats and gophers does not render a man less dangerous . . . Until the settlers in the territories are numerous enough not to care whether the Indians are armed or not, the weapons should be taken out of their hands.

Maybe they have some good points: On rare occasions, a newspaper carried a complimentary or not entirely derogatory item on Indians.

The *Qu'Appelle Progress*, which usually reprinted comment and stories on Indians from other newspapers, reported July 27, 1887 that at Touchwood Hills the Indians under Indian Agent H. Keith "have made some very rapid strides toward becoming what all white people are anxious to see them become, viz., Christianized."

The *Progress* returned to the theme July 26, 1888 in a report on a meeting of the Episcopal Church Synod held at Qu'Appelle, that called for greater efforts at converting the Indians to Christianity.

> If only our Indians can be made to understand the Christian religion and receive proper educational training we shall have more success in civilizing them. We are aware that many have no faith in such efforts, and cut short all discussion by saying the only good Indian is the dead Indian. Even so, we have the live Indians. No one can go so far as to say exterminate them.

By 1899, the *Progress's* charitable instincts were wearing thin. Reporting on a correspondent's visit to the Assiniboine reserve the Progress was no longer so certain of Indian progress.

> In many respects they are like a lot of children . . . They have little realization of the abstract or futurity and can hardly be persuaded to give up anything they have set their minds on. The lazier element will not farm or keep cattle since it would tie them to the place and they would rather be free.

The *Saskatchewan Herald* March 31, 1888 ran a letter to the editor from settler P.C. Pambrun, who urged others to stop whining about competition from Indian farmers and leave if they were dissatisfied. Pambrun said the government had treaty obligations to fulfil to its Indian wards. Besides, the Indians were a source of cheap farm labor, ready to work for a third of what Euro-Canadians asked.

The *Saskatchewan Herald* for July 10, 1891 carried an item from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, praising the Indians for celebrating the July 1 holiday like Euro-Canadians. "The Indians are seemingly contented and well disposed towards the Department's officials . . . . The fact that the Indians, both male and female, are dressed as becomes civilized beings proves . . . that they are making material progress in the arts of civilization."

Education is only part of the answer: A series of articles in the *Calgary Herald* beginning June 3, 1891 had praise for the Blackfoot and the progress they were making. The young men of the tribe, said the writer, were "gradually throwing off their old time savagery." And on June 4 the paper complimented Father Albert Lacombe on the progress shown by Indian children in the residential school at High River. It sympathized with his fears, however, that once through school, the young Indians would lapse into old ways unless firm action was taken by the government to break tribal ties.

> "The Indian children in the industrial schools are on the high road to better things, let the government see to it that no indifference on its part sends them back to the tepees and their old Indian life . . . ."

A year later the newspaper returned to the school issue, congratulating the Indian Affairs Department on the progress shown in the Indian industrial schools system. In a February 9 editorial it pontificated that, "if the Indians of

the future are to be a civilized and Christianized people a beginning must be made with the children."

Backsliding Indians were an ongoing pre-occupation of Prairie editors. In a September 16, 1902 editorial, the *Calgary Herald* praised a U.S. congressman for demanding that Indians be made to work for their rations and went on to complain that while Indian children received a sound education at the Indian industrial schools too many of them were lapsing into old ways when they graduated. "Some means must be evolved by those in charge of Indian affairs to provide . . . employment for the discharged pupils," the paper said.

"A change in the system must come," the *Herald* said in a follow-up editorial October 30, "The question is, how soon?"

The *Regina Leader* focussed on the education issue in a brief report from Ottawa on September 26, 1901. The paper said that efforts were being made to prevent young Indians lapsing into old ways by putting them into colonies, as urged by Inspector W.M. Graham, "whereby they shall be remunerated for work done and restricted by regulations to overcome natural indolence and lack of ambition . . . ."

On August 1, 1911 the *Leader* praised the playing and appearance of a brass band from the File Hills colony established by Graham. It was one of the attractions at the Regina Exhibition.

Said the *Leader*, "They were not of the ancient blanket type of Indian that history shows us, nor of the sneaking, begging variety that we see too much of, but straight manly fellows neatly dressed in khaki jackets, blue trousers with a red stripe and cowboy hats."

Noble and not so noble anachronisms: Sympathy for the plight of the Plains Indians was often tinged with barely disguised contempt. By the 1890s the stereotype of the noble anachronism was taking hold but at times there was more emphasis on anachronism than noble in newspaper reports. On August 8, 1890, the *Calgary Herald* expressed annoyance and disgust at "the prevalence of Indians begging at houses and shops."

Housewives, the newspaper said, "are greatly annoyed by the visits of the filthy Sarcees, who usually enter their residences without ceremony."

The nuisance had to be suppressed, the editorial said, "means must be taken to keep them in their place."

On September 4, 1895, the noble and not-so-noble anachronism appeared again in the *Calgary Herald*. Commenting with some approval on an article in the *Toronto Mail-Empire*, attributed to "Captain Jack," the *Herald* quoted a passage decrying the laziness of the Plains Indians.

> These lords of the soil had what is commonly known as a "soft snap." Fed and clothed by a paternal government, they having nothing to hunt, and being anyway too lazy to hunt it, passed their days in a state of blissful idleness or in contemplating the white men and half-breeds working. Perhaps their names had something to do with it. Who could imagine the "Man-Who-Was-Never-Afraid" cleaning a stable, "Great-Black-Eagle-Plume" heaving flour sacks at two dollars a day.

The *Herald* was also taken with another comment by Captain Jack referring to the Indians' personal hygiene. "Indians in the abstract, are picturesque pieces in a western sketch," Captain Jack said. "In reality and at close range you are not reminded of violets."

Still fixed on the idea of the descent of the noble savage to the noble anachronism, the Calgary newspaper decried the harmful impact of the reserve system on the Plains Indians in a February 28, 1899 editorial. The

paper quoted Roman Catholic Archbishop Tache and the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Governor General, to bolster its argument.

Bishop Tache, it recalled, had said that:

> One must have seen the undaunted Indian erect in the midst of the immense prairies, his flashing eye scouring the boundless horizon, inhaling an atmosphere of liberty not to be found elsewhere, glorying in a sort of royalty which had neither the embarrassments of riches nor the responsibilities of dignity. And then look at the Indian of today, dragging his misery, deprived of his incomparable independence, reduced to want and semi-starvation, and having added to his vices the loathsome consequences of the immorality of the whites.

The editorial closed with a comment made earlier by the Governor General:

> It is impossible to meet these poor people and to listen to their statements without the deepest feeling of sympathy for their present situation . . . We can scarcely be surprised if their hearts occasionally sink within them when they see, as they express it themselves, that the white man is getting rich and the Red-man poorer, with each year that passes.

Noble anachronism, or not, the Calgary paper was complaining two years later about the practice of whites living near reserves, and missionaries, giving Plains Indians letters commending their good character. An April 19, 1901 editorial said the practice of giving such letters to "Man-Who-Ate-the Bones-of-His-Great-Grandfather" and others was simply encouraging begging. "It is difficult to see why Indians continue to be furnished with these letters of credit drawn upon the credulity and good nature of the long suffering public."

<u>Assimilation is the answer, or is it?</u>: In 1899 the *Saskatchewan Herald* again turned it's attention to the Indian "Question." In a February 10 editorial it argued against putting the graduates of Indian industrial schools into so-called farming colonies or allowing them to go back to their reserves. To do so was "to waste the money spent on their education."

The solution to the "Indian Question" was to get the Indians assimilated and "to this end it is more to their interest to have them away from the reserves than fenced in on them."

On June 30, the *Herald* reported "agreeable surprise" at the appearance of 10 Crees from the Onion Lake reserve who arrived in Battleford to unload a wagon of 3,000 pounds of wool from the reserve farms.

The Indians read off the weight and grade of the sacks in "good English" and were all dressed in "store clothes," the *Herald* reported.

By 1901 the attitude of the *Saskatchewan Herald* on the Indian "Question" displayed some sympathy for the Indians. On July 31, an article on Indian Affairs policy concerning Indians' cattle castigated the government for first telling the Indians that the cattle given to them would be theirs when certain conditions were met, then changing that policy to one in which the Indians had the use of cattle belonging to the government. The article applauded the Indians for forcing the issue by surrendering the cattle they had to the government so they would have to be fed at government expense.

On August 14,1901, the *Herald* turned its attention to the broad aspects of the Indian "Question" on the eve of an extended western trip by Interior Minister Clifford Sifton.

> The Indian question is one that is pressing for settlement. The time has come for a revision of the methods that were adopted when the Indians were taken from the plains and placed upon reserves twenty years ago. The young men of today have grown up under conditions somewhat in advance of those that prevailed at the time of the first effort to civilize them -- too far advanced to be content with the treatment they get as having no rights as individuals, but not qualified to be thrown suddenly upon their own resources. How best to improve this condition is a problem in the solution of which a personal visit would be most helpful. The present system cannot be continued indefinitely.

The *Herald* came up with answers to its earlier questions on September 17, in editorial comment on a new Indian education policy, an apparent about-face from its stance two years before. Noting that the policy called for graduates of industrial schools to be formed into colonies to keep them away from the influence of the reserve, the *Herald* said it approved of the idea of regulations "to overcome natural indolence and lack of ambition to be self-supporting."

The editorial ended with the observation that the "Indian problem" could only be solved through encouraging individual ownership of farms so that Indians cut themselves loose from dependence.

The *Saskatchewan Herald* returned to the assimilation issue on March 12, 1902 in an item commending an editorial in an American newspaper that endorsed the views of Col. Richard Pratt, head of the Carlisle Indian school in Pennsylvania. Pratt urged the destruction of the tribal system as the only sure way of ending the Indian problem in the United States and ensuring that Indians would be assimilated into white society.

"Col. Pratt has the correct idea," the *Herald* said. "Removed from the irksome restraint and tutelage in which they have been kept on the reserves . . . many Indians have become quite well off and independent of Government rations."

On August 13, the *Herald* again touched on the issue, commenting editorially that in 20 years on the reserves, the Indians of the Battleford district had made little progress: "the great majority of them are Indians in their mode of living -- a condition of being herded on reserves and kept away from associating with the white population."

The only ones who have done well, the *Herald* said, "are those who have cut off from the tribal community plan and set up on their own account."

In 1909 a news report in the *Calgary Herald* of March 2 attributed the closing of the Indian Commissioner's office in Winnipeg and the transfer of Indian Commissioner David Laird to Ottawa as strong evidence that the Indian was now civilized, "the old order was passing away." But the 'civilization" achieved hadn't been what had been originally intended, Laird admitted in an interview.

Paraphrasing his comments, the *Herald* condemned the Indians for being shiftless:

> The plains Indians were used to . . . rigors of the chase. Civilization has made them lazy and shiftless and without their plains to roam at will and lacking the stern necessity of hunger to drive them to the chase, they have suffered from want of exercise . . . .

They don't really need all that land: By 1906 the *Saskatchewan Herald* for all its expressed periodic sympathy towards the Indians was urging the government to dispossess Indians and resettle them on more remote reserves so that the land they originally selected could be sold off to Euro-Canadian settlers. On December 19 it said that moving nearby Indians from their reserves would remove "one of the drawbacks to the progress of the town [Battleford]."

Six years later, in a final word on the Indian "Question" the Battleford paper reported on March 9, 1912 that wandering Indians around the city of Medicine Hat had been ordered on to their reserves by the Indian Affairs Department because, "the country is becoming thickly populated, and it has been decided that the roving of the Indians on the prairies . . . must end."

Alas, the poor Indian: On October 29, 1910, the *Saskatchewan Herald*, ran a long article entitled "Experiences with the Indians of Western Canada," by a correspondent who signed himself "SEC". He appears to have been a railway surveyor, so the time referred to was probably the late 1870s or early 1880s.

He had scant regard or respect for the Plains Indians encountered in his travels.

> All Cooper's fairy tales fade away when you encounter the real child of nature, so different from the tall lordly savage portrayed by the novelist, marching along, arrayed in a bunch of feathers and a coat of red paint with his lovely consort at his side, whose simple toilet, inexpensive but effective, consists of a string of beads; a coiffure made up with the aid of bacon grease; buckskin leggings and embroidered mocassins.
> Alas! How all is changed. The wretched old ragged, pock-marked, insect repository who follows along your trail now, with his old sore-eyed squaw and numerous offspring, picking up the white man's leavings, tells a pitiable tale, and shows only too plainly the decadence of the redskin.

End of the trail: The noble savage and the noble anachronism emerged full blow in the treatment given the Plains Indians by the *Calgary Herald* in its coverage of the first Calgary Stampede in 1912.

On September 3, exuding jubilation over the success of the opening parade the *Herald* said that "one could moralize for a mile on the superiority of the redman over the white for the purpose of pictorial procession."

"We may have better houses, more loose change, better sanitation than they have, but when it comes to romantic toggery they leave us decidedly in the lurch."

The Plains Indian, said the *Herald*, "is the typical child of nature, the man who refuses to grow old. His life is one romantic adventure . . . in the vast caravanserai of the western prairies, draped in the colors of the sunset."

> In our modern self-sufficient way we are apt sometimes to believe that the representative of the redman is the listless member of the tribe who walks about clothed in the pickings from some junkstore scrapheap, round whom we sometimes dance with a truly Cockney baseness. But it is not so. The real Indian is the man in the procession surrounded with the ritual of his race, remote, detached, picturesque and romantic.

On September 7, the *Herald's* romantic enthusiasm was dampened. A news item reported that the "noble" anachronisms were charging Stampede-goers 25 cents if they wanted photographs of them in ceremonial garb.

GOOD INDIANS, BAD INDIANS

Prairie newspapers, like the Indian Agents and officials in the official narrative, had no trouble categorizing Indians as good or bad; and an Indian could be "good" one year, and "bad" the next

The Cree chief, Poundmaker, is a case in point. On August 2, 1880 the *Saskatchewan Herald* reported on a meeting between Battleford-area Crees and Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney. Poundmaker, not yet a chief, was a spokesman for the Crees, and the officials, according to the *Herald* account, were impressed with his oratorical skill. Winding up the parley, Poundmaker, as interpreted, said that:

> I am glad to come and hold council in this house -- all looks bright and like silver . . . What we wish is, that the Indians on the farms should have all the assistance you can give them. I am not going to ask for more money. We would like to get ten cows and ten yoke of cattle on each reserve. We think that then we could get our living. We that are on the reserves now, when we do set to work have so few cattle that when one family goes to work lots of others remain idle and we cannot put in much crop; but if we get what we ask, I think then we could make our living.

"The Council closed with every evidence of good will on both sides," the *Herald* reported, describing Poundmaker as a young man, "looked up to by all the chiefs in this neighborhood.

"There is little doubt" the *Herald* said, "that the Government will shortly recognize the excellent example he has set . . . by acknowledging him as a chief and giving him the advantages pertaining to the office."

By May 23, 1881 the newly created chiefs Poundmaker and Thunderchild were stereotyped as "bad" Indians. "Chief among the malcontents," the *Saskatchewan Herald* termed them, because they refused to work at farming and were taking their followers back on to the plains against the wishes of the Indian Affairs Department.

By 1885, Poundmaker was cast irrevocably as a "bad" Indian for his leading role in the 1884 confrontation with NWMP officers at Lucky Man's [Little Pine's] reserve and for his part in the 1885 rebellion.

On March 29, 1886 the *Herald* accused the just-pardoned Poundmaker of not showing enough humbleness towards Euro-Canadians and of forgetting why he had been jailed.

"The most strongly developed bump, speaking phrenologically, on Poundmaker's cranium is that of self-esteem," the Battleford paper said.

A laudatory editorial on Poundmaker in the *Regina Leader*, following the Cree chief's death July 4, 1886 was attacked by the *Saskatchewan Herald* on July 26. The *Leader*, said the *Herald* , "has been noted for the idiotic way in which it 'gushes' over the noble (?) red man."

The Cree chief, Beardy, of Duck Lake, on the other hand, did not enjoy a good reputation, even in the early years. On August 16, 1880, the

Saskatchewan Herald said his name was "associated with all the troubles that have arisen in that neighborhood." Furthermore, the paper said, he failed to keep his promises and was mean-spirited.

Accused, with other Crees, of shooting three head of cattle intended for rations for the Indians, and stampeding three others, Beardy was arrested but not before a force of NWMP were confronted "by a large number of Indians armed with knives."

The *Herald* reported with some satisfaction that the band had voted out Beardy as chief and elected another in his place. "It now only remains for the Commissioner to ratify this action, and Beardy will be rendered powerless for evil."

Sitting Bull, a refugee in Canada following the Battle of the Little Big Horn, came in for scornful treatment by the *Herald* on October 31, 1881. The newspaper, in an article by "One Who Knows Him," termed Sitting Bull:

> . . . a very common type of impostor . . . any Indian who had ever brandished a scalping knife or torn the bleeding trophy from a victim's head, was immeasurably more deserving to have his bravery or greatness recorded than was the cunning old fox. Crafty we admit he is -- a very Bengalee in wile and deceit among his tribe; but this trait is as common in an Indian as sagacity is in a dog, cunning in a fox, or cowardice in a wolf. Of even the dastardly Indian pluck Sitting Bull was devoid, and frequently in their councils, chiefs like Spotted Eagle and Long Knife told him plainly to his face that when they fought his place was with the women.

On August 5, 1882 it was the Cree chief Payepot's turn for criticism from the Battleford paper. He was reported to have "very exaggerated ideas of his own importance" and of being grasping and selfish in claiming his share of rations from the government. Big Bear, on the other hand, cast as villain for his role in the 1885 rebellion, was described in 1882 as a Cree statesman who only wanted what was best for his people.

Responding to a letter in the *Herald* blaming him for much of the Indian unrest the Cree chief sent the paper a "message" denying the charges and saying he was a "true friend to the white man."

> So far from having held treasonable secret meetings, Big Bear desires us to state, that repeated efforts have been made by American and other traders, Louis Riel and others, and Indians from across the line, to commit acts designed to embarrass the government . . . but he always resisted their seductions.

By April 23, 1885, the *Herald* had no doubts at all, if any lingered, about who were the "bad" Indians. They were the "petted and feted" ones who had joined the Metis in rebelling.

> The petted Indians are the bad ones. The Stonies have been treated as being of a superior race, and are the first to shed the blood of their benefactors. Poundmaker has been petted and feted, and stands in the front rank as a raider. Little Pine, bribed to come north and kept in comfort, hastens to the carnage. Big Bear, who has for years enjoyed the privilege of eating of the bread of idleness, shows his gratitude by killing his priests and his best friends in cold blood. Little Poplar, a non-treaty Indian has been liberally supplied with provisions and other necessaries and thus enabled to spend all his time in travelling up and down the land plotting mischief and preparing for this season's carnival of ruin. The petted Indians have proved the bad ones, and this gives weight to the old adage that the only good Indians are the dead ones.

So-called "lazy" Indians were a target of all prairie newspapers. On September 23, 1886, the *Herald* reported that 64 Indians from Poundmaker's reserve had deserted their reserve and were headed to Edmonton after their rations had been stopped because they refused to work.

Ever suspicious of Indian motives or intentions, it said that "It is probable that this stampede is the outcome of some of their plotting that has defied detection."

Good Indians, difficult for the newspapers to identify at the best of times, turn up occasionally as the subject of news stories or editorials,

primarily if they sought to emulate Euro-Canadian characteristics and precepts. On August 4, 1991, for example, the *Saskatchewan Herald*, lauded an essay by Edward Bear, an industrial school student at Battleford.

The essay speaks for itself:

> We are to do the best we can to try and speak English. No matter if we can't say it properly. And try, you boys and girls, not to speak Indian any more. It is for our own good, not for the good of the Principals, masters and the Government . . . We must try to make the Indian speakers talk English.

The Crees at Onion Lake came in for praise in 1894 and 1895 for conducting their July 1 celebrations in a "civilized" manner, rather than with a Sun Dance or other time-consuming dances.

On July 13, 1894 the *Saskatchewan Herald* attributed the "civilized" state of the Onion Lake Crees to "good training, enterprise and contentment."

The following year, on July 12, the *Herald* praised the Onion Lake Indians for being enthusiastic about "many games of a civilized class" and for being as enthusiastic about them as "their palefaced friends."

Rarely, an Indian leader received praise or a tribute that had nothing to do with his relationship or attitude to Euro-Canadian power. On February 12, 1897, for example, the *Saskatchewan Herald* ran an obituary on Old Sun, chief of the Northern Blackfoot, which praised him as "their greatest warrior," whose eloquence had "gained him a place as their leader" and whose "life-long generosity gained for him a popularity that never diminished."

In contrast, the *Herald* had little good to say about Moosomin when that chief's death was reported on April 2, 1902.

Moosomin's conduct on the reserve near Battleford that carried his name was "never such as to win the esteem of the officials," the obituary said, and he was "an inveterate beggar."

Moosomin also took part in the rebellion , "to the extent of looting everything he or his men could carry but kept carefully away from where there was any fighting."

On June 17, 1898 the Battleford paper related the story of a "good" Indian woman who froze to death because she had protected her infant child by stripping herself of almost all clothing to keep the child warm after she and another woman were deserted on the trail by their husbands.

A "good" Indian was sometimes put in that category if he looked or behaved like a Euro-Canadian and was suitably docile. The *Saskatchewan Herald*, May 22, 1909 reported the victory of Cree distance runner Paul Acoose, of Crooked Lake Indian Reserve, over Appleby, "the celebrated English long distance runner" in a 15-mile race at Winnipeg.

Acoose was described as having a "very good appearance, looking more like a white man than an Indian, being very light in color and not having prominent cheek bones."

The account said that "One good trait of his is, he talks very little about himself, and does practically anything his managers ask him to do."

A FEAR OF INDIANS

A continuing preoccupation of prairie newspapers to 1914 was the distrust and fear with which they regarded the Plains Indians' potential for violence and mayhem. In the early days of intensifying contact worries were

expressed of possible Indian violence because of the destitution and starvation facing many bands. The rebellion heightened fears and rhetoric and left a legacy of continued suspicion about Indian intentions that carried into the twentieth century.

A penchant for mischief and depravity: The *Saskatchewan Herald*, on March 24, 1879 reported that Roman Catholic missionary Father Lestanc, in a letter to W.J. Scott, of Battleford, had said that the Indians he encountered considered the recently signed treaties with Canada to be of no value to them and some were talking about getting the assistance of Sitting Bull, then a refugee in Canada following the Little Big Horn battle, in negotiating new ones. The motives of Cree chief Big Bear's active pursuit of a grand Indian alliance on the Plains was also viewed askance by the missionary.

On May 5, the *Herald* breathed an editorial sigh of relief, reporting that Big Bear's plans had come undone and there would be no Indian alliance to confront Euro-Canadian traders and settlers, and the Indian Affairs Department.

Reporting June 30, 1879 that a Cree named Swift Runner had killed and eaten members of his family, the paper said that the Indian exhibited "a degree of thorough-going depravity that would secure him a high position near the thrones of Burmah or Dahomey."

To drive home the depth of Swift Runner's cruelty and his callous disregard for life, it reported that when the police discovered the remains, he had "put his fingers into the eyeless sockets of a skull, and holding it up coolly remarked, 'this was my wife'."

Too many in one place: On August 11, 1879, the *Herald* worried over the large numbers of Indians assembling at Battleford for their annuity payments under treaty and castigated the government for failing to forward the money even though knowing six months before it would be needed during the summer.

> To those at a safe distance it may seem a small matter to collect a few thousand uncivilized Indians at a central place to receive the performance of a solemn treaty obligation and then coolly tell them to wait; but to those who have to deal with them it is very serious .... it is not to be wondered at that a feeling of uneasiness should prevail in the country.

Close contact with individual Indians also raised fears among settlers. The *Regina Leader* reported June 29, 1886 that settlers at Strasburg, New Alsace, were being annoyed by Indians who entered homesteads uninvited:

> ... refusing to leave, even going so far as lying on the beds ... One settler, going out to find his cow, was surprised to see a big buck Indian lying on his back under her, with a pillow to support his head, sucking milk for all he was worth. On the settler's appearance, Mr. Indian made himself scarce.

Don't get too close to them: Attacks on farm instructors or Indian Agents on reserves got big play. The *Edmonton Bulletin* of January 10, 1881, reported that an Indian Department employee had been attacked by a knife-wielding Indian but had knocked him down with his rifle butt. In the same item the *Bulletin* commented that the Blackfoot were "too stubborn to deal with" while the Sarcees, after causing trouble all winter, had gone in a body of 400 to Calgary to demand food.

On February 14, 1881 the *Saskatchewan Herald* reported two incidents in which Indians had threatened Indian Department employees over rations being issued to them.

Fear of Indians during 1884 and 1885 blossomed into near-hysteria during the rebellion and the events leading up to it. The *Herald*, like other newspapers gave extensive coverage to police versions of the incident at Lucky Man's reserve when a party of police tried to arrest a Cree for assaulting farm instructor Thomas Craig.

On June 25, 1884, the *Herald* described what had taken place at the reserve as being totally unexpected, despite rumors of impending troubles that had been circulating for months.

Finding nothing in the rumors, the paper said that "it seemed as though the peacefulness which has so long reigned between the red man and the paleface was to remain unbroken.

"Last week saw all these expectations suddenly scattered and an outbreak, fraught with untold horrors, only avoided by a miracle."

The killing of Indian Affairs rations issuer Frank Skynner on the Blackfoot reserve in April 1895 was major news in Calgary. The *Calgary Herald* in a follow-up story to the one making known Skynner's death, reported April 5 that the Blackfoot Scrapping-High-By-Night had been "Sent to the Happy Hunting Grounds by a Policeman's Bullet."

"Last evening word was received that one more had been added to the list of good Indians," the *Herald* said.

Reporting at length some 18 months later on the killing of a NWMP sergeant by Charcoal, the Calgary paper on November 11, 1896 concluded the story by suggesting that other Indians had been "affected by Charcoal's success" in eluding capture and taking on the police. The paper said that

another Blackfoot whose son was on trial for stealing cattle had "made threats against some of the officials if he is convicted."

A breaking point for images: By April 23, 1885 the *Calgary Herald* was prepared to recognize nothing good in the Plains Indians. The reoellion had changed the way Indians were to be regarded.

They have, a *Herald* editorial said:

> . . . proved themselves to be fully as savage and unreasonable as they were before the attempt to civilize them was made. Untamed and untamable they turn on the hand that fed them . . . . They have, in the wildest and most unprovoked manner, and with circumstances of the basest treachery, begun a war of desolation such as had never been equalled in the history of Canada.

Accept the challenge, the paper said, "and follow up the war until the miserable wretches shall be placed beyond the power of doing any further harm."

On June 15, 1885 it commented editorially after the rebellion had been quelled and the leaders jailed in irons, on the childish unpredictability of the Plains Indians:

> If anything were needed to prove the groundless and causeless character of the uprising amongst the Indians on the Saskatchewan, it would be found in the manner in which they have conducted themselves since they donned the war paint. The most carefully framed inquiries conducted by their old friends and confidants fail to elicit any reason they had for their stupid crime; it was brought about by the excitement under which they were constantly kept by Half-breed agitators in their camps. This and an uncontrollable restlessness resulting from the war talk so artfully kept alive amongst them are the only grounds they assign for their conduct.

Less than a year later there was more cause for alarm and the *Herald* made the most of it. It reported on January 18, 1886 that, "The telegraph and press bring constant warnings of another Indian outbreak . . . in the South-west."

The culprits this time were the Bloods and Blackfoot. "They must be made to feel the strong arm of the law, unstayed by any false sentimentality about the 'poor Indian' and especially must the severest penalty be imposed on every white man found fighting by the side of an Indian."

A week later, on January 25, the *Herald* again warned of an uprising, "the Indians on the Saskatchewan are again becoming restless , and while some of them profess to be friendly and disposed to remain quiet, there are others who speak out and avow their determination to have another uprising . . . ."

The Indians, said the *Herald*, "have no regret for last summer's work. It was in their eyes just a fight in which they were stood off."

On January 15 the *Lethbridge News*, criticized a Winnipeg newspaper for fear-mongering about the ability of the Blackfoot and Bloods to put 20,000 warriors into the field. That was nonsense, the News said, but added that, "The presence of an Indian nation in the midst of a cattle country, where their power for doing harm is at its greatest, certainly demands much watchfulness and constant care on the part of Government."

On April 30, 1887 the *Saskatchewan Herald* called for a police crackdown on the Bloods, notorious for horse stealing, cattle killing and various other real or imaginary depredations because their misdeeds could be the cover for "a deeper plot to create trouble."

The *Herald* complained that in the 1885 rebellion the government had left Battleford unprotected and said that in dealing with another rebellion Battleford deserved adequate protection from the NWMP.

On August 20, 1887 the *Herald* reported that Indians in northern Minnesota were threatening whites and that three Indians bent on mischief had been killed.

Individuals with first-hand experience of Indian cruelty were favourite newspaper interview subjects. The *Calgary Herald* ran a short news story on June 17, 1885, in the aftermath of the rebellion, in which the wife of General George Custer expressed her views on the Plains Indians.

The widow Custer was of the opinion that the Plains Indians were "fundamentally cruel and treacherous." Her remarks, none of them direct quotes, were paraphrased throughout the short item.

"Their enmity towards the white race is not only fixed and deadly but essentially barbarous. They are not content with merely killing a white man, they delight to torture him to death by inches, and to tear the body apart and burn it afterwards."

The Calgary paper, a month later, was supporting calls for disarming the Indians, even if the Blackfoot were upset by the proposal. On July 15 an editorial declared, "That the Indians must be disarmed can admit of no doubt whatever. There is guarantee of life of neither man nor stock in this country if disarming is not enforced."

The *Saskatchewan Herald* was so enamored of a short article on "an Old Indian Fighter" which had appeared in an American periodical that it reprinted it twice, once on January 14, 1888, then three years later on July 3, 1891.

"Am I disgusted when he tells me how he once cut a steak with his bowie knife out of an old Indian? author A.G. Tassin asked. "Yes -- but there he stands before me, and I must say that he does not at all look like a butcher."

Indians could be volatile, cruel, unpredictable. A white man who perpetrated a vicious act of cruelty didn't look like a killer.

The *Calgary Herald* ran similar copy on May 3, 1901. It picked up a *Toronto Globe* interview with Colonel W.E. Morgan, a retired U.S. Army officer, who claimed to have killed 16 Utes in one incident while serving with the 3rd Cavalry in the West. "We had many an exciting chase out in the West in those days, I tell you," the officer boasted.

The death of Sitting Bull: The shooting of Sitting Bull by reserve police at Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota drew a long commentary in the *Saskatchewan Herald*. On December 19, 1890 it said Sitting Bull's death would further inflame tribes already worked up over the "messiah craze" [Ghost Dance] and that tribes in the United States from the Red River to the Pacific Coast were "uneasy" and working together for an "early outbreak."

"Everything points to a blood war," the *Herald* said, expressing the hope it would be short so that Canadian Indians didn't become excited.

The newspaper said that Canadian authorities could ensure things remained tranquil if they banned dancing, arrested runners or "tramp" Indians and showed firmness in dealing with "unruly" elements among the Indians. Other newspapers joined in the clamor. The *Calgary Herald* of December 2, 1890 carried a one-paragraph item from St. Paul that warned of "increased preparations" for war by Indians. On December 3 the same paper said that Interior Minister Edgar Dewdney had been advised that while the Blackfoot and Blood remained quiet, the Crees "are being affected by the Messiah craze. In the same issue the *Herald* also carried a brief reporting a "fierce battle" near Fort McKeogh, Montana between Cheyennes and U.S. troops. On

December 6 the Calgary paper fanned more fear of Indians with a long report on the Cheyennes joining with the Sioux to battle whites. "The religious craze has now spread to nearly every Indian tribe between California and Iowa . . . It is estimated that 40,000 Indians are in the dance," the paper reported.

On January 9, 1891 the *Saskatchewan Herald* took the United States to task for wanton killing of Indian women and children as well as men in the fignting in the Bad Lands of Dakota. The newspaper took heart from the fact that Canadian Indians wouldn't join the fighting because of "ancient feuds" with the neighboring tribes in the U.S.

on January 12, 1891, the *Calgary Herald* reported that settlers in North Dakota had fled to the town of Bottineau from their farms at Turtle Mountain because of fear of Indian hostilities. "It is reported that about 250 Indians from the Oak Lake reservation in Manitoba have joined the other Indians and commenced dancing." The rumors had enough substance to put the NWMP on standby in case of trouble and to dispatch a patrol of 18 to Deloraine near Oak Lake.

The *Regina Leader* gave extensive coverage to the 1891 outbreak of trouble in the United States. It carried a long story on January 6 reporting the Wounded Knee massacre and a further story reporting alleged massacres of whites near Pine Ridge in South Dakota. A week later on January 13, the *Leader* reported that other Indians were "on the war path" and that Shoshones in Idaho were preparing to make war on whites.

The *Leader* returned to the issue of warlike Indians in an editorial March 31, 1891. Noting that the recent troubles in the United States had cost the U.S. $2 million, it asked: "What shall we do with our Indians?"

Despite the best efforts of the U.S. army to pacify the Indians, said the *Leader*:

> . . . fully three-fourths of them are as thoroughly and essentially as savage as ever their forefathers were. They are still treacherous, revengeful, jealous, suspicious of each other, and of everybody else, white or red, they still treat their women as slaves . . . In every way they are simply barbarians.

Ever ready to assume that any rumor about Plains Indians had an element of truth in it, the *Leader* reported September 9, 1897 that Indian runners had visited the Cree chief Payepot to sow the seeds of rebellion. "The alleged programme is to have a simultaneous rising of all the Indians on both sides of the line. Piapot has been wavering as to his action," the story claimed.

Fears linger on: Just a few years later, the fear of Indians had subsided from major status to one that called for only periodic attention. On May 4, 1894, the *Saskatchewan Herald* could treat lightly an alarm raised by a woman who thought that the shots from a hunter's rifle meant that a full-scale Indian attack was on the horizon.

A year later, on July 12, 1895, the Battleford paper condemned the *Toronto Globe* for running stories of a threatened uprising by the Blackfoot that could lead to a massacre of white settlers. The rumor originated in the expulsion of Anglican missionary Rev. John Tims from the reserve at Gleichen. His high-handed manner was resented by the Blackfoot. When a child died in the mission hospital the angry Blackfoot forced Tims to leave and the report of an uprising had been started by the comments of a woman missionary expelled along with the clergyman.

Earlier, the *Calgary Herald* had raised once again the possibility of Indian violence with a report on February 21, 1895, that warned the Blood Indians were "rejoicing" over a report that the NWMP was to be reduced.

> The principal chief told the Indian agent that he will not be able to control his young men. The country, he said, will be theirs again and they will own the cattle . . . Before the late rebellion the Government was urged strongly to increase the force, but did not listen to the advice of experienced officers. The result was a rebellion and a heavy butcher bill.

In 1902 the *Calgary Herald* returned to the same topic, warning in a January 22 editorial against any plans the government had to cut the strength of the NWMP. "The Indians are pacific now, but no one can tell how long they would remain so if the police were withdrawn."

<u>Trouble at Jackfish Lake</u>: On August 31, 1894 the *Saskatchewan Herald* reported that there were "restless" Indians at Jackfish Lake and Turtle Lake and word was they were "threatening violence to the settlers."

A NWMP party was dispatched to the area but found no gathering of Indians, despite rumors that runners had been sent to other bands urging them to join in action against the whites.

Yellow Sky, the local chief, was reported acting under orders from Metis leader Gabriel Dumont and others and had been told that the Indians were to first drive settlers cattle into the woods, then await further orders.

"One thing is very plain, and that is that Yellow Sky is being controlled by an outside influence for evil."

Despite admitting in the closing paragraphs of the story that the incident had been concocted by a "mentally unbalanced" woman used as an interpreter, the *Herald* inveighed editorially that:

> The amount of temporizing and offering excuses for the 'poor misguided' marauders that characterized the last rebellion will not be tolerated; nor will the settlers sit quietly down and see their cattle driven away as they had to do then.

The summer of discontent was not put to rest until October 5, when Indian Agent Williams returned from the northern bands and reported that the only Indian activity in the area was a medicine dance organized by Yellow Sky "and his seven lodges."

> There was neither a Cree nor a strange Indian in the party, nor had there been. And as for making trouble, Mr. Williams says they are more afraid of war or fighting than the settlers were, and are ready to fly to the north on the first sign of trouble. The old folks are annoyed and the children frightened at the visits of the Mounted Police.

More alarms: The potential for violence was recalled in November, 1895 when the *Herald* started running stories on Almighty Voice's escapade and killings. On March 6, 1896 the *Herald* quoted the *Prince Albert Advocate* as the authority for a report that unless Almighty Voice was caught quickly Indian trouble was coming. Citing the Prince Albert newspaper, the *Herald* said that Indians were supposedly just waiting until spring before rising up to avenge wrongs on white settlers nearest them.

When Almighty Voice was finally cornered and killed in late May, 1897 the *Herald* reported June 4 that authorities had feared an uprising around Duck Lake and Batoche, Almighty Voice's home.

Indian uprising stories continued to make their appearance in prairie newspapers well into the twentieth century.

The *Herald* reported a Minnesota uprising on October 15, 1898 in which Plains Ojibway had fired on U.S. troops killing eight, as well as two Indian policemen. There was fear that the uprising could spread, the *Herald* said.

Two years later, on July 11, 1900, it reported that 8,000 Indians had massed in Minnesota near Fort Frances, forcing American whites to flee to Canada. The *Herald* reported that the "Indian excitement" had spread to Canada and that at Fort Frances, Ontario, preparations to repel a "threatened invasion" were being made.

They're all potentially troublesome: The Prairie papers regularly picked up wire services reports of trouble brewing with Indians, whether in neighboring British Columbia or in the United States. The *Calgary Herald* turned the use of such copy into a regular routine. In 1909 it ran a half dozen or more reports of trouble brewing among Indians in British Columbia over railway construction near Hazelton, reporting on November 13 that white residents of the area were leaving because of possible violence with "women and children . . . being sent in canoes down the Skeena to Prince Rupert."

Between 1907 and 1913, headlines on stories from U.S. wire services fanned any latent fears quivering in Canadian breasts. "Cavalry to quell Indians: Squadron of Second Cavalry on way to scene of Sioux uprising" (October 28, 1907); "Navajos are up: Indians causing trouble in the States and bloodshed is looked for" (July 15, 1908); "Yaqui Indians on warpath kill five: Rebellious savages attack Colonia and successfully resist troops" (September 9, 1912); "Fifty Indians will fight to a finish: Refuse to deliver Big Rabbit to officers -- armed with rifles" (January 20, 1913).

Like the Calgary paper, the *Regina Leader* routinely carried stories about real or more often alleged armed Indian uprisings well into the early years of the twentieth century. On November 1, 1906 a headline read "Utes still on warpath: Six hundred warriors seeking to effect junction with

Cheyennes." On October 28, 1907 it was again the Utes. A headline said "Indians reported on the war path: Ute tribe said to have killed and scalped reservation officials."

The *Leader's* fascination with impending massacres continued into 1910. On May 14 it reported that the U.S. feared an outbreak of Indian warfare in New Mexico and that a judge had appealed for U.S. troops because "a massacre was imminent."

On June 15, 1910 the *Leader* reprised the Ghost Dance episode of two decades earlier. It carried a short item datelined Carlyle, Saskatchewan. The headline read "Indians look for whites' extinction: New religious craze strikes White Bear reserve -- pale faces to be smothered."

THE SUN DANCE

For Prairie editors the most fascinating element of the Sun Dance was the self-torture ritual. It was described in terms of revulsion and disgust and was taken as proof positive of the untamable savagery that lurked in every Indian heart.

Describing an Assiniboine Sun Dance in 1880, the *Saskatchewan Herald* of July 19 called it "A free circus performance by native artists," but then said that it had been, "celebrated . . . with a degree of vigor and earnestness that proved that the stoicism and powers of endurance of the untamed Indian are not so mythical as some would have us believe."

Unlike descriptions in some stories, the *Herald* account found dignity in the ceremony. "The acts to be performed were partly of a penitential and

partly of a propitiatory character, and every one was marked by a high degree of solemnity."

> There were also some acts of heavy tragedy performed. One man had a couple of wooden skewers thrust through the flesh on the shoulders. To these were attached the lines of a horse which the victim had to lead around the camp until the flesh gave way. But the surgical operator miscalculated either the toughness of the Indian flesh or the strength of the horse, for it would not break. After the victim had led his horse around the camp for a couple of hours the managers concluded to let him go and unloosed the horse.

The *Herald* couldn't resist a disparaging pun in describing another act of self torture:

> "Another hero had four pegs put into him -- two on his back and two in the back part of his arms -- on which four guns were suspended. Having remained "under arms" for the greater part of the afternoon he, too, was released."

Commenting favorably on the give-away aspect of the ceremony, the *Herald* said that the participants, "In their liberality and zeal . . . set on [sic] example worthy of imitation by many professing Christians."

There was a reminder of former noble savagery in the description of one participant:

> One fine looking young buck attracted a good deal of attention. Pendant from the skin of an American lion which he wore gracefully over his shoulders were eight lariats, each representing ten horses that he had captured. He trod with the step of a king, and wore his honors with as much pride as did every his white brother the jewel of an order of merit.

The Plains Indian as paid circus performer put in an early appearance on the Prairies. The *Saskatchewan Herald*, reporting an 1882 Sun Dance on August 5, said that the Indians, presumably Crees since the term Thirst Dance was used, "profiting by the example of their white brethren, had bills printed and imposed an admission fee, for, they argued, 'Whenever the white

man has a show he advertises it, and charges people for the privilege of seeing it, and why should we not as well'?"

The *Herald* said that the cases of self-torture "which usually form a prominent feature of the entertainment were conspicuous this year by their absence, only two braves thus showing their nerve."

The *Regina Leader* on July 26, 1883 concluded a long report on a Cree Sun Dance by terming the self-torture of a young man "a horrible sight" and calling on the government to ban the practice.

On August 4, 1883, the *Macleod Gazette* carried a report "By a Good Authority" that provided one of the few restrained descriptions of the Sun Dance to appear in a Prairie newspaper.

The author appears to have witnessed a Blackfoot Sun Dance, describing in some detail the place in the ceremony played by buffalo tongues. And, the self-mutilation aspect is put reasonably in perspective. It is not the focal point of the article.

An early *Calgary Herald* description of a Sarcee Sun Dance appeared in the paper on August 31, 1883. It played upon white fears of the Plains tribes. Describing some 50 lodges "painted in a very fantastic manner," the reporter focussed on one that was said to depict the stealing of horses from three white men. The Sarcee hero, taken prisoner, "had managed to kill and scalp his captors and thus effect his escape."

The reporter described the music as "not very inspiring" and while admitting that the dance while "of considerable importance to them [Sarcees], to outsiders it seemed very foolish, and became quite monotonous."

Describing the self-torture of a young Sarcee man, the Herald reporter said that, "We watched the whole sickening performance for some time, but was [sic] at length compelled to turn away in horror."

A *Herald* account of an 1890 Sarcee Sun Dance, which appeared July 10, describes the relationship that had developed between the Sarcees and Euro-Canadians.

The report said that a number of people from Calgary had visited the Sun Dance camp the day before, "but the number being limited and their contributions of cash, tobacco or tea being equally so, no braves were made."

The visitors included young women who bought Sarcee accoutrements and watched the ceremony:

> They could not but admire the painted savages, with their fine variety of color, the gorgeous suits in which they were arrayed, the stateliness of the dance, the harmony of the music, the natural way in which males and females were grouped on the ground within the tent, the gorgeous head dress of the medicine man and the persistency worthy of a better cause with which the half-dressed youngsters begged for even "a chew tobacco."

The *Saskatchewan Herald* lost interest in the Sun Dance very early. After no mention of dancing for several years the ceremony rated just three lines in a much longer story on the annual report of the Indian Affairs Department.

On March 6, 1889 accepting the assurance of the department, the *Herald* said that, "Sun dances are going out of fashion and are annually becoming less objectionable in their character."

An unusually perceptive description of the Sun Dance in 1887 on the Assiniboine reserve near Qu'Appelle, carried by the *Qu'Appelle Progress* of June 16, offers insights into the make-up of the Sun dance camp, and captures the

power of the ceremony as an integrating element in Plains Indian culture (Wallace 1956) not found in other newspaper accounts.

The report, by an unidentified correspondent, noted that the Sun Dance had to be cut short because the Indian Agent had refused to issue rations to the participants. The dance, the report said, was "simply starved out."

The reporter arrived at the scene just as the "the great medicine camp one hundred and fifty feet in circumference and thirty feet high, " was being dismantled.

He described it as "rising from the grassy plain like a great pyramid surrounded at a distance of twenty-five rods with over eighty large lodges."

The Cree chief Payepot, "with his one hundred warriors" occupied a knoll to the north-east. Chiefs Pasqua and Little Mountain had their bands to the south. The Assiniboine chief Jack and his band were encamped to the west with:

> the entire encampment occupying an area a quarter of a mile wide by one half long representating every phase of wild Indian life on the plains, and presenting at that evening hour a strange aspect, the grotesque Indian costumes, painted faces, fancy colored tepees, representing buffalo and strange looking western animals. Steamers (sic) and flags of every size and color made of calico and flannel, were flying to the breezes from tops of tepees and flag poles in every direction. Add to this the busy hum of camp life, groups of Indian children gleeful as those at home listening to the stories told by gray-haired warriors as they seemed to ask what mean these strange things. As the sun cast its long shadows chief Pia-pot ascending to an eminence overlooking the encampment addressed his braves in Cree while a hush fell upon the whole camp. It was truly a grand sight as he stood erect wearing a white felt cowboy hat crowned with long red tipped feathers. His voice seemed strong and sonorous and as its echoes died away among the surrounding hills, the camp seemed aroused with enthusiasm and . . . warriors of different tribes took up the strain.

A short item in the same edition of the *Progress* noted that Payepot and his band had returned to their reservation from the Sun Dance camp

accompanied by two Euro-Canadians from Qu'Appelle "in order that settlers on the line of march may be assured of his peaceful intentions."

The report notes that the Crees were provided with "plenty of rations and fresh beef" for the journey but doesn't make clear whether the rations came from the Indian Agent or were offerings from settlers.

Editorially, the *Progress* wasn't as enamored of the Sun Dance as its correspondent had been. A June 16 editorial said that:

> Judging from what took place at Poplar Plains lately, a "sun dance" cannot be considered a pretty sight. The red men from different reserves assembled in the full and fearful flush of all the war paint they could crowds on, presenting a strange but picturesque sight. The self-imposed torture they go through, however, is enough to make a white man shudder, to say the very least of it; imagine the agony of being suspended by the sinews that pervade the breast, adding to this the previous total absence of food for three or four days. Some photographs were taken of this ghastly scene, but the "noble red man" would not allow the photographer to take a picture at close quarters . . . Surely it is high time prompt action was taken to put a stop to such terrible work as interpreted by the words "sun dance."

The editorial demand for government action to end the self-torture element of the Sun Dance is the first encountered in the Prairie newspapers.

The *Regina Leader* reported on the same Sun Dance June 14, noting that, "The Indians went into the ceremony with an earnestness which showed that it was one which appealed to them with a wonderful power." The *Leader's* account included the speech supposedly made by the Cree Chief Little Bear on the meaning of the Sun Dance.

Five years later, reporting briefly on an upcoming Sun Dance at Jackfish Lake, the *Saskatchewan Herald* (June 8, 1894) also ran the speech.

On July 6, 1894 the *Macleod Gazette* carried a fanciful account of a Sun Dance at Swan Lake, Manitoba, lifted from the *Pilot Mound Sentinel*.

The *Sentinel's* account, headed "A Strange Ceremony of the Canadian Indians" said "the aim of the Sun Dance was "discovering to what extent those who desire to become braves can endure hardship, fatigue, hunger and pain."

> No doubt indifference to suffering was a useful quality if possessed by Indian warriors in the days when the taking of scalps was a common employment and when those, who at the sun dance showed to the greatest extent the character and ability required for the accomplishment of difficult and laborious undertakings were highly honored and distinguished. Now when war has ceased, the ceremonies of the sun dance have lost their value and significance, but the remnants of the ancient race still cling to the old custom, although now only a shadow of what existed in former days.

Commenting editorially on confrontations between Blackfoot and Indian Affairs officials on July 9, 1895 the *Calgary Herald* said that the Blackfoot would be allowed to hold their Sun Dance despite efforts of the Indian Affairs Department and missionaries to suppress the ceremony.

"These things . . . are not done in a day," the *Herald* editorial admitted. "The Pueblos of New Mexico have been Christians for 300 years, but still they retain a number of their ancient Pagan ideas and ceremonies . . . ."

The *Herald* noted that Indian Affairs officials lacked the authority to put down the ceremony by force, although the agent at Touchwood Hills in Saskatchewan had used police that month to suppress a Sun Dance. It then observed, "That cheerful old fraud Pia-pot, holds his Sun Dance every year under the very nose of the headquarters of the Indian Department at Regina, and makes quite a nice little thing out of it by charging 25 cents a head to outsiders for admission into the medicine lodge."

On July 10, 1896, the *Saskatchewan Herald* reported approvingly that Battleford district bands had held their annual "social dance" but it was "a tame affair" compared with those of previous years.

> Before obtaining permission to hold this dance they had to promise that there should be no gambling, no "give away" dances, and no making of braves by torture. It was to be a tea dance -- a purely social function; and that they accepted these conditions marks a step gained in their progress towards civilization.

A year later, the *Macleod Gazette* of June 20 harrumphed that, "The Bloods have been hard at that old relic of barbarism and brutality, the Sun Dance."

Never a newspaper to restrain itself in the use of vitriolic rhetoric, the *Gazette* said that:

> It is about time that, if any interest is taken in the civilization of these Indians by the officials, which is more than doubtful, such barbarous farces as Sun dances and various other Indian pleasantries should be forbidden. While the troops are in the country is an excellent opportunity to give the "noble" red man several practical lessons as to the civilized methods of living, and to force them to live up to what is taught them. Let us have an end of sun dances, grub dances, thirst dances and all the other dances on the programme, and with the aid of the volunteers, induce them to live, in some small degree at any rate, like white men.

The *Gazette* took an unbending, bellicose approach to dealing with the Plains Indians. For the editor there were no noble savages, or noble anachronisms, only savage reactionaries.

In 1902 the *Calgary Herald* managed to combine elements of both the Indian "Question" and "Fear of Indians" themes in a short wire service story from Ottawa on July 12.

The story reported that the Indian Affairs Department had learned preparations were under way for a Sun Dance on the Blood reserve.

"The Bloods number nearly 2,000 and are among the most warlike of the western tribes," the story said, but noted the dance was "an annual affair, consequently there is no apprehension of a disturbance."

> An effort will be made however, to retain [sic] the Indians from indulging in objectionable practices. The authorities recognize that while the Indians cling to their old habits the sundance just now cannot be abolished. They hope, however, by advice to secure the modification of the old time orgies . . . .

The *Saskatchewan Herald* and other Prairie newspapers used the term Sun Dance to cover all Plains ceremonies even remotely connected to it. "Sun Dances Stopped: Indians Summarily Dealt With for Attempting Heathen Practices," was the headline on a story of June 10,1903 that covered Indian Agent W.M. Graham's confrontation with Etchease over give-away dances organized by the Indian to test Graham's authority in the File Hills agency in Saskatchewan.

A 1911 *Calgary Herald* story on the Sarcee seed dance, suggested it was a replacement for the Sun Dance, dropped when the government banned self-torture. The April 29 story said that for weeks the Sarcees had been camped at Weasel Head waiting for thunder before the seed dance could go ahead.

"The old men talked of the past glories of the tribe, they whispered of Bull Head, their greatest warrior, they muttered of the tribal hatred of the Crees, of the taking of scalps, the stealing of horses, and women and children."

On June 1, the Calgary paper announced that the newly elected Sarcee chief, Big Belly, had been invited to open a Sun Dance in Montana attended by Blackfoot, Peigans and Sarcees. "The ancient ceremony of the sun dance has been barred on the Canadian side, but apparently there is not such strict censorship south of the line . . . ."

The *Saskatchewan Herald* trivialized the ceremony in a 1912 story on the Sun Dance at the Assiniboine reserve near Battleford.

The June 28 story was headlined "Sun Dance is Some Festival: Indians make presentations and go through weird antics."

> To those who have never before seen a sun dance, the sight is indeed a novel one. It is a sort of festival of the tribe, and is a season of celebration and good will and gift giving. Each Indian presents to a friend some article which he himself values very highly, and during the course of the festival the presentation is fully reciprocated . . . . During the whole time a wierd [sic] sort of dance is kept up to the accompaniment of the beating of tom toms, the dancers wailing a dismal sort of song, like the wail of a lost soul. This year the braves have taken a modern step, and are charging spectators to the dance an admission fee.

CONCLUSIONS

From the 1880s to 1914 the Prairie newspapers surveyed displayed remarkable perspicacity in setting out the news agenda for their Euro-Canadian readers. They were able to meet the ever-increasing demand for news of national and world events through liberal use of wire services and material lifted from Central Canadian, American and English publications.

They appear to have learned very quickly that there was little real interest among Euro-Canadians for any deep or intensive understanding of the principal other society with which they shared the Prairies.

Plains Indians were relegated early on to a marginal role in terms of the news agenda and editors trivialized Plains Indian affairs in both news and editorial copy. The Sun Dance, in only one instance in the newspapers reviewed, received anything approaching informed and sympathetic treatment. In most cases, reports were badly skewed because of the self-torture element and the disdain and revulsion which Euro-Canadians claimed they felt for it, notwithstanding the interest displayed by gawkers from cities.

Discernible in the copy, albeit in a crude and uneven profile, is a trend from dealing with the Plains Indians as noble savages to savage reactionaries to noble and not-so-noble anachronisms (Marsden and Nachbar 1988).

Missing from the newspaper copy except for the one instance already cited, is any grasp of the power the Sun Dance held for Plains Indians and the elemental integrating force it exerted in holding together Indian communities that had been shattered by white contact and were only slowly coming to terms with the poverty and lack of freedom of reserve life.

The Prairie newspapers thought of the Plains Indians in the stereotypes of the age. They were dirty, shiftless, lazy, mischievous, treacherous, cruel, and dull compared with Euro-Canadian Christians. They lived for the moment and failed to practice thrift and frugality for the future. And, they made lousy farmers. The only good Indians were those who kow-towed to Euro-Canadian superiority, who looked more white than Indian, or who had become completely assimilated in terms of words, deeds and work habits. Or, they were exceptions to all of the above like the Indian distance runners Paul Acoose and Tom Longboat, who could whip the best of white society in a sports competition.

The Plains Indians became museum specimens to be examined by anthropologists and others before they became extinct or, more baldly, they became inmates in prisons without walls. The reserve system, often criticized in Prairie newspapers could be corrupted and manipulated. But it was never fundamentally changed by the government or any group of Canadians concerned about what the future held for the Plains Indians.

-- Courtesy of National Archives, PA28837

Kah-me-yo-ki-si-kwew (Charles Fine Day): Sun Dance defender, 1896

-- Courtesy of National Archives, C19977

Blood Chief Red Crow: Fought to maintain tribal Sun Dance

-- Courtesy of National Archives, PA28836

Sun Dance circle, Battleford area, 1895

-- Courtesy of National Archives, C14106

Blackfoot Sun Dance camp, probably late 19th century

-- Courtesy of National Archives, C49476

Tethered to Sun Dance pole: Submitting to self-torture

CHAPTER 8 -- AN INDIAN EPILOGUE

"I'll tell you all about sun dance is good for, its good for ever one of indians in the world . . . ."

Chief Kay-Bay-ow-sea-Kay, Buffalo Point Bay, Manitoba, 1921

"Wakan-Tanka, have mercy on us,
That our people may live!"

Sun Dance song of the Teton Dakota

INTRODUCTION

By 1921, the Indian Affairs Department had waged an unremitting and vengeful, if sometimes bumbling campaign against the Sun Dance for more than four decades.

Interior ministers had come and gone. Five deputy-superintendents general of Indian Affairs had headed the Indian Affairs Department, scores of agents in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta had fought against the Sun Dance in the field, missionaries of all denominations had railed against it and actively supported the department's nasty little war, and two amendments to the

Indian Act -- in 1895 and 1914 -- had aimed directly at sending the Sun Dance into history.

The department's campaign had failed. The amendments, the strictures of Indian Agents, missionaries and senior Indian Affairs officials like Hayter Reed, Duncan Campbell Scott and W.M. Graham, coercion and bullying, fines and imprisonment, had failed to deter the Plains Indians.

They had found the resources and strength in their traditional culture to fend off the weight of Indian Affairs suppression.

In 1921, far from disappearing, the Sun Dance, or a ceremony inspired by it, was performed, far from the Plains area, on the shore of Lake of the Woods, at the Manitoba-Ontario border.

A PARTICULARLY BAD YEAR FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS

'A checked suit and wide Stetson hat': Chief Kay-Bay-ow-sea-Kay wrote to J.D. McLean, the fence-sitting secretary of Indian Affairs, on August 19, 1921 pleading for leniency on behalf of band member Jim Kubinase, sentenced earlier to six months in the provincial jail at Winnipeg for organizing a Sun Dance in June on the Manitou Reserve.

The chief told McLean that the Ojibway band hadn't known the Sun Dance was illegal or that they were breaking the law, but he was definite about the benefits the members had derived from the Sun Dance, in which some 10 band members submitted to self-torture (SDF 1921a):

> . . . I'll tell you all about sun dance is good for, its good for ever one of indians in the world for that sun dance the time sickness was all over the world sickness call flue, ever one boys had that flue in Buffalo Point and thats where we have started sun dance ever one and boys been sick they pull threw all of them boys when they took the vaccinne in Indians way thats what the sun dance for, thats what we have that sun dance for we didnt know we made mistakes we make awful big mistake for that . . .

Reporting to his commanding officer, Corporal G.G. Hall, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment at Fort Frances, Ontario, said that he had patrolled the reserve area after hearing reports of give-away dances on the reserve. Instead he found that Kubinase, described as an elderly man, the son of a renowned medicine man in the area, had organized a Sun Dance, assisted by an Indian "from the west" who wore "a checked suit and wide black Stetson hat" (SDF 1921b).

Reporting the statement of Walter Blackbird, one of the participants in the self-torture, Hall said Blackbird told him that Kubinase and the western Indian had said that if he and his wife had a dream they were to tell it to the dance maker. "His wife had a dream that night and told Kubinase who insisted that Blackbird must be a candidate in the dance because of it" (SDF 1921c). Hall said Blackbird told him that the western Indian "did the butchering":

> Each candidate was pierced in the shoulder with a blunt instrument like an awl and two wood skewers inserted. These sticks were attached to ropes from a pole in the middle and each Indian then danced around this pole for a time pulling on the skewers which were embedded in his flesh. Accused also stated that most of the Indians who took part in this dance were from some place in Manitoba and he did not know and had never seen them before.

Blackbird got six months suspended sentence for his part in the dance. Three other Ojibway, including two from from the Roseau River Reserve in

Manitoba, received similar sentences, one of six months, the other two got two months each.

In a final report on Jim Kubinase, Hall (SDF 1921d), said that:

> Accused stated that he was the organizer of the dance and had raised it to cure sickness which had been very prevalent at Buffalo Point. Then praying to the Great Spirit he had been instructed to hold a sun dance as the only means of alleviating sickness. Since the dance nearly all sickness had disappeared as the Great Spirit had promised. he took all the blame for this affair and declared that he did not know that it was against the law.

Mayzenahwegeshick, a member of the Manitou Reserve, who received a six-month suspended sentence, told Hall (SDF 1921e) that:

> Many years ago this dance was practised among the Indians and it was a remedy for illness, since taking part in it he was cured of rheumatism . . . He declared that Kubinase was like a minister and when he conducted such a dance it was a religious ceremony as in the old days.

'An out-and-out Sinn Feiner': Nineteen hundred and twenty-one was a year of alarms and excursions for the Indian Affairs Department. Rumors and reports of Sun Dances flickered across the prairies from Manitoba to Alberta and, some of them proved to be true. On the Blackfoot reserve that old bogey of the department, the white mischief-maker, put in an appearance in the form of lawyer Joseph O'Keefe, one of two practising in Gleichen, Alberta.

Corporal C.C. Harper, of the Gleichen detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, reported to his commanding officer in Calgary on August 1 (SDF 1921f) that when Indian Agent George Gooderham had tried to stop the Blackfoot from holding the Sun Dance earlier in the year they had immediately sought legal counsel.

The first lawyer consulted by the tribe, Berton Corey had, according to the RCMP officer, told the Indians they had better do what the Indian Agent wanted and not hold the Sun Dance:

> Of course the Indians did not like this, they therefore went to Joseph O'Keefe for his opinion. He immediately told them that there was no power could stop them holding their Sun Dance, unless the Indian Act was amended, and advised them to go right ahead with the celebration. He also at their request sent a petition to Ottawa regarding their various fancied wrongs . . . If it had not been for J. O'Keefe I do not believe the Indians would have attempted to hold a Sun Dance this year, but acting on his advice they went right ahead.
> When the Indian Agent attempted to stop this dance being held, and called on us for assistance, of course the Indians heard of it, and again consulted Mr. O'Keefe. They were again advised to go right ahead, "And if force is used to try and stop you holding your Sun Dance, you will be perfectly in the right to resist with all the force you can". When I heard of this statement I went to Mr. O'Keefe personally and asked him if this reported statement of his was correct. He replied, "Certainly I said that. And what is more I hope there is a real good scrap between you people and the Indians. It will show Ottawa where they are getting off at."

Harper then reported that the Sun Dance "passed off very quietly" but drew attention to an earlier RCMP report suggesting O'Keefe was a sympathizer with the Self Determination for Ireland League and, according to rumor, was "an out and out Sinn Feiner," worth keeping an eye on as a possible trouble maker.

Indian Agent Gooderham, in his report on the July Sun Dance to Indian Commissioner W.M. Graham, said that when he and RCMP Inspector J.W. Spalding, commanding officer for the Calgary sub-district, had gone to the Blackfoot camp with Corporal Harper and other officers, "the Indians were hostile to force and had been advised to use force" (SDF 1921g).

Gooderham's report prompted Graham, sworn foe of all Indian dancing to urge on headquarters the need to amend the Indian Act to strengthen the powers of Indian agents to stop Sun Dances and other ceremonies from taking

place, a course of action he had been urging on his more fainthearted superiors for years (SDF 1921h).

Aside from Harper's concerns about lawyer O'Keefe the police took a more balanced view of the Sun Dance incident.

Spalding in his report commented at length on a speech made by Weasel Calf, a minor chief of the Blackfoot, said to be the only Blackfoot still alive who had signed Treaty 7 in 1877 (1921 SDFi).

> He stated the Indians and the Police had always been friends, he hoped there would be no trouble about their dance, and that they would be allowed to hold same.
> They only wanted to live in peace and they met this way once a year in a friendly way to pray to the Unseen God of the Sun for their sick, for good crops, and that they might be happy. In this, he said, they were only carrying out what had been taught them by their fathers and which had been the custom of this tribe for the past 500 years. He was an old man now and couldn't forget what he learned as a boy. He was sure they did no wrong as they practiced none of the things that were forbidden by law . . .

Spalding noted that Gooderham, after stirring up an official storm about the Sun Dance, had assured the Blackfoot when he confronted them that he had "no desire" to interfere with their having a good time. Spalding suggested that, "it is only a matter of time of a few years before the Sun Dance is entirely discarded . . . and it would be really too bad to curtail the pleasure the old Indians have in keeping what is left to them of their old customs in this respect."

The Indian Affairs Department had been unable to stop the Blackfoot Sun Dance taking place but it could squelch any public exposure. On July 19, Indian Affairs Secretary J.D. McLean curtly turned down a request from Motion Pictures Canada Ltd., of Calgary, to film the event for movie-goers (SDF 1921j).

The Indian Affairs Department confronted a plague of troubles with the Blackfoot Confederacy in 1921. Six Blood Indians (SDF 1921k) were fined $5 and costs of $1.50 each for participating in a Sun Dance on the Peigan Reserve, without getting permission from Indian Agent J.T. Faunt. And the Bloods, through Chief Shot-Both-Sides (SDF 1921l) complained bitterly to Ottawa that Faunt was forbidding them to hold a Sun Dance in July prior to payment of treaty money.

The Bloods ultimately defied the agent by meeting in camp for two weeks prior to treaty payments and holding meeting of their age societies, including the Horn society.

When Faunt cut off rations for all Indians in the camp, "with a view to starving them out," they were supplied by trader R.N. Wilson, a former Indian Affairs official, but another white mischief-maker in the eyes of the department. Reporting to Graham on August 13, Inspector M. Christianson (SDF 1921m) described Shot-Both-Sides as "the right-hand man" of Wilson, "It is through him that all the mischief is made."

A farewell word from Venerable Archdeacon J.W. Tims: In 1895, Anglican missionary Rev. John Tims had been forced off the Blackfoot reserve after a young girl died in the mission hospital. Tims had been the target of Blackfoot criticism for years because of his heavy-handed approach to suppressing traditional ceremonies and customs and his rigid approach to religious instruction. Forced out of the field of Indian missions, Tims had for years worked in the Calgary diocese. But his views about Indians and Indian customs hadn't changed. He reacted angrily to a story in the *Calgary Herald* August 30 concerning a stampede to be put on by the Sarcees, which was to

include a buffalo hunt, with steers substituting for the long-vanished bison. Tims wrote Duncan Campbell Scott the next day, while vacationing at Banff, urging his immediate attention to the stampede and calling on the department to force its cancellation (SDF 1921n). "I am terribly disappointed that the Indians should be encouraged to get back to such uncivilized ways and more than surprised that hunting steers with bows and arrows should be countenanced by anyone in authority over the Indians."

The *Herald* story was replete with the "noble savage" stereotype (Marsden and Nachbar 1988):

> As soon as it was announced on the reserve that an old time buffalo hunt would be staged, no less than a half-dozen old Indians were in the tepee within five minutes, making inquiries. Having learned that it was true, they were very happy and they returned to their tepees and immediately began to make new bows and arrows for the event. This will be the first buffalo hunt since they were young men.
> All Indians taking part in the various races, etc., will be required to dress down to the costume of the old days; namely moccasins and breechcloth.

The story said in passing that Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance was to act as the announcer for the events. The stampede went ahead, without the "buffalo hunt" because of other protests, and drew a crowd of 5,000 to the Sarcee Reserve, according to RCMP Inspector J.W. Spalding (SDF 1921o).

The Crees of Samson's Reserve at Hobbema, Alberta ran afoul of Indian Commissioner Graham in July with their plans for a Sun Dance. Graham, in line with his hardnosed approach to all Indian dances, refused the Indians permission to hold the Sun Dance, not bothering to explain that it could be held if Section 149 of the Indian Act was not contravened.

The refusal drew an aggrieved telegram from Chief Joe Samson to Duncan Campbell Scott (SDF 1921p), telling the deputy superintendent-general of Indian Affairs that:

> Two things I don't like on this reserve your leaders made laws that everybody should be friends but now strangers are prohibited to enter this reserve by Indian Agent when at Ottawa you advised we were boss of our reserves why should we Indians have no holidays have asked Mr. Graham Indian Commissioner permission to hold Sun Dance which you told me nobody should prohibit Sun Dance Mr. Graham refuses this request advises that police will stop us if we have our dance we sincerely beg for your permission please wire reply may God help you.

Correct as always, and sidestepping as always Indian Affairs Secretary McLean wired back to Indian Agent G.W. Kirby that no dance could be held in contravention of Section 149 of the Indian Act (SDF 1921q).

Both the provincial police and the RCMP were called in to the reserve by Kirby to oust visiting Indians and to ensure that no Sun Dance took place. RCMP Sergeant Spriggs reported (SDF 1921r) that the chief had told him no dance would be held but that it had been planned to "help a number of old people and those who couldn't work."

Meanwhile, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Constable S. Heden of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported in late June (SDF 1921s) that he had kept watch on a Sun Dance at Swan Lake reserve, Manitoba, that had been attended by five Indians from North Dakota, who were there on passes from their agent.

Early in July, the RCMP broke up a Cree camp at Poundmaker's reserve in Saskatchewan where a Sun Dance was being readied. Constable J. McPherson reported (SDF 1921t) that he found 150 Indians assembled and sent outsiders back to their reserves while ordering the Poundmaker residents to return to their homes. Later in the month, RCMP officers broke up another encampment on the White Bear reserve, near Carlyle, Saskatchewan, following reports of a Sun Dance there. Corporal V.W. Hope reported that he

intercepted some 50 men, women and children from the Crooked Lake reserve on their way to White Bear but they had refused to turn back until he took the leader's team of horses and forcibly turned the wagon around (SDF 1921u).

Hope said he reported the incident to the Indian Agent at Broadview, Saskatchewan and had been told that the Indians had been "a little unruly and had left their reserve."

Hope said he was maintaining a patrol at White Bear to ensure no Sun Dance was organized following sports days on the reserve. He later reported (SDF 1921v) that he had sent some 40 Indians from North Dakota back across the border with an RCMP constable because they had crossed without clearing customs.

The martinet and the poet: The Sun Dance outbreak in 1921 set Indian Commissioner W.M. Graham and Deputy Superintendent General Duncan Campbell Scott at loggerheads. Graham demanded tough action to curb dancing because "the dances more than any other aboriginal customs, have a demoralizing effect on advancement towards civilization among our Indians" (SDF 1921w):

> There has been an increasing number of requests from practically every point in the three provinces for permission to hold dances and pageants -- all of which I have refused to agree to . . . we are confronted with the fact that many of our school graduates take part in these affairs, dressed in the aboriginal costumes of their tribes, and the tendency of these dances is to encourage rather than discourage aboriginal custom . . . One of the greatest factors the ex-pupil has to fight against on his return to the reserve, if he is progressive and ambitious, is that on nearly every reserve, there is a number of Indians who cling tenaciously to their old Pagan customs and whose whole influence is directed towards keeping the interest in these customs alive.

Graham's testy outpouring drew a mild response from Scott, also an implacable foe of the Sun Dance (SDF 1921x). "It has always been very clear

to me that the Indians must have some sort of recreation, and if our agents would endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing it would be a great assistance," he told Graham.

Scott's response drew yet another splenetic letter from Graham who ranted (SDF 1921y) that:

> The idea of depriving the Indians of legitimate pleasures does not enter into my mind. Those who have lived with Indians for years [Scott had never worked in the field beyond, serving as a commissioner for Treaty 9 negotiations], know that they have no idea of moderation with regard to the pursuits of pleasure. There is no question in my mind, but that aboriginal dances and pageants in aboriginal costumes have a retrograding effect on our young Indians, and agents should be impressed with the seriousness of giving in any way their approval to these customs. They should make it their business to prevent visiting Indians from attending dances on the reserves. And they should be further instructed that the department expects them to discourage and frown upon all customs which have a tendency to make our young graduates revert to the aboriginal costumes of their people.

The final word for the year came from Scott in a circular letter (SDF 1921z) to Indian agents and inspectors of Indian agencies.

The deputy superintendent-general noted that "it is observed with alarm" that Indian dances were on the increase (Scott had used the same opening phrase in 1915 in an almost identical memorandum to Indian Agents).

He urged all agents to use "their utmost endeavours" to dissuade the Indians from "excessive indulgence" in dancing and to discourage attendance at fairs and pageants if it meant farming was to be neglected. Scott said he was sure that, "by the use of tact and firmness" agents could maintain control over their reserves and "this obstacle to continued progress will then disappear."

TOUGH TALK AND DIRTY TRICKS MEET STIFF RESISTANCE

From 1915 on the official narrative takes on a hard-edged, more uncompromising tone than in previous years. There is a growing reliance on dissimulation to discourage Indian dancing, the police power is employed with increasing frequency to bully Indians into cancelling or curtailing Sun Dances, and there is a growing impatience with Indians who show the temerity to challeenge the department's attitude towards them, and curt dismissal of their pleas and entreaties. There is also, in the official narrative, a discernible note of panic. Police officers are called on to accompany agents not simply to stop Sun Dances in preparation or being performed, but to check out vague rumors and alarms that the Indians were getting ready to initiate the ceremony.

The official narrative suggests a stiffening Indian resistance to the dictates of the department and Indian Agents and a readiness to constantly probe the mettle and determination of individual agents seeking weak points. In effect, the department was losing the war on the Sun Dance just as agents were losing the iron-clad control of reserve life they had once held.

There is a querulous ring to Inspector John Markle's 1916 comment on the Crowfoot boarding school, for example. Markle, inspector of Indian agencies for Alberta and long an advocate of tough action to eradicate the Sun Dance and exert continued departmental control over tribal life reported that he had heard a rumor that a number of Blackfoot had decided to keep their children out of school because the department was preventing visitors from other reserves attending Blackfoot dances. "Some of the Indians have said that they do not do any more dancing than their white neighbours and that they see no good reason why they should be singled out in this particular" (SDF 1916).

The Plains Indians were moving in two world: that of custom and tradition, and the outside white world. They knew their way around both. There is a plaintive note, for example, in Indian Agent W.J. Dilworth's comment in 1917 (SDF 1917a) that "every boy on the Blood reserve . . . wishes to be Tom Three Persons, and all they think about is saddles, chapps, silver spurs, race and bucking horses." [Tom Three Persons, a Blood Indian, won the bronco riding championship at the 1912 Calgary Stampede and became a star on the rodeo circuit in Canada and the United States.]

A growing impatience: In 1915, Dilworth complained to headquarters that his predecessor had taken no action to discourage or stop the Blood Sun Dance for years (SDF 1915a). Dilworth said he had made it his business to find out all he could about Indian dancing, "to be in a position to counteract or head off excessive dancing."

He noted that the 1913 Sun Dance had occupied six weeks and that in 1914 it had continued for 10 days. Dilworth vowed to "head it off if possible" but said there was not much point in trying to act alone if the Peigans and Blackfoot were allowed to continue with their ceremonies. "I would suggest," he told Ottawa, "that it be policy to stop all issuance of permits to be absent until danger of the Sun Dances is past." He promised to write agents at U.S. rese es near the border urging them not to issue permits to their Indians during the Sun Dance season to prevent outsiders taking part in the Blood ceremony.

By 1917 Dilworth was reaching for any solution to end the Sun Dance (SDF 1917b). He asked the department for prize money so that a fair and sports meet could be held on the Blood Reserve. "I believe if we make a firm

stand, this dance can be abolished, that is if the three Blackfoot reserves ... take the same action."

Dilworth then gave the same excuse for the continuation of the dance that had been used by Indian Agents and officials of a previous generation, not recognizing that the old people he referred to had been the promising younger ones, supposedly turning away from Indian ways 20 or 30 years before:

> It is the old men and women who keep this dance going. It is not the sublime religious festival it is pictured to be. The purposes of the old men are to keep alive the traditions of the past and to be benefitted at each Sun Dance to the extent of several horses. In reality, the objects are mercenary.
> But we must do something to take the place of the Sun Dance before we can hope to blot it out. The American reserves, Blackfoot, Crow, Gros Ventres, Assiniboine, have abolished this dance, and have substituted an agricultural fair.

In the closing years of the decade, the Crees of the Thunderchild, Little Pine and Poundmaker reserves in Saskatchewan put continued pressure on the department to conduct Sun Dances. Referring to Thunderchild and Little Pine, Indian Agent J.A. Rowland complained in 1917 that "the Indians of these two bands have given ... considerable trouble in wanting to hold sun dances. We have repeatedly told them that the department would not consent to the holding of such an affair." At one point, Indian Affairs Secretary J.D. McLean had lectured Chief Thunderchild that "the chiefs and councillors are expected to co-operate with the Indian Agent in his efforts to advance the Indians towards the adoption of the customs of civilization and to exert their influence in that direction" (SDF 1917c).

Call in the police, we need them: In July 1915, Battleford Indian Agent J.A. Rowland (SDF 1915b), with NWMP, support arrested and prosecuted six Crees from Sweet Grass Reserve for participating in a Sun Dance on Little

Pine Reserve. Those convicted included the redoubtable Charles Fine Day, Poundmaker's war leader at the battle of Cut Knife Hill in the 1885 rebellion. Rowland singled out Fine Day as the leader in the attempt to take part in a Sun Dance off his own reserve, noting the Cree had consulted a lawyer in an attempt to fight the case.

In June, NWMP constable J.R. Hooper had broken up a Sun Dance at White Fish Lake, Saskatchewan involving some 2,000 residents of nearby reserves and had arrested and fined three Crees including the band chief, $5 each plus costs for leaving their reserves to participate (SDF 1915c).

Two years later, in June 1917, the Edmonton detachment of the Royal North West Mounted Police dispatched an officer to Frog Lake, Alberta after a plea from Indian Agent W.J. Sibbald about a rumored Sun Dance.

"It would appear that there was no necessity at all for Mr. Sibbald, the Indian Agent, to have sent this report. It would appear that the Indians had no intention of resisting authority," the G Division commander, Superintendent T.A. Wroughton, reported to the RNWMP commissioner in Regina (SDF 1917d).

The same week, Wroughton was called on to send other officers to the Wabamun Reserve near Frog Lake because of reports of a Sun Dance taking place there. Those reports turned out to have some basis in fact. Corporal J.B. Brown reported that he and Indian Agent George Race had talked strongly to the chief, Paul Firebag, and a planned dance had been cancelled (SDF 1917e).

The Wabamun Reserve may have been easily subdued in 1917. The following year Race was complaining that "these Indians have caused me considerable trouble for some years as they have persistently tried to make a

Sun Dance every year and the last two years I have had to get the police out to put a stop to it" (SDF 1918a).

The week before, Firebag had written the Interior minister [the letter was witnessed and probably written by missionary teacher Austin McKitrick] (SDF 1918b) asking:

> . . . about dancing, we would like to be informed just what the law is in regard to dances on Indian Reserves. What dances are forbidden and what and when are they harmless? We wish to be loyal and do not wish to break any laws but we do not know just what the law is . . . .

After helping break up a Sun Dance on the Big River Reserve near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in June 1919, Staff Sergeant W.S. Loggin of the RNWMP reported that the chief had disclaimed any responsibility for the dance, telling him privately (SDF 1919a) that:

> As I was representing the King, he wished to say to me that he had nothing to do with the Sun Dance, his idea was that owing to the Indians having had a great deal of sickness last winter and the fact that the war was over, they thought they would have a dance with music to celebrate their rejoicing that the sickness and war was over, and he had no idea that it was going to turn into a Sun Dance.

Indian Agent W.J. Sibbald was also forced to call in the RNWMP from Battleford to quell a Sun Dance planned for Onion Lake reserve, Saskatchewan (SDF 1919b). The show of force was successful but not before a confrontation took place with the assembled Crees who refused to back down immediately.

In 1922 the RCMP were called in to help head off outsiders from participating in a Sun Dance at Long Lake reserve in the Onion Lake Agency. Staff Sergeant G.H. Sheppard reported he had no trouble keeping the outsiders from taking part but that many of them had simply left the Long Lake Reserve and participated in a Sun Dance at Moose Lake Reserve, 15 miles

away. Six Crees were charged, tried, and found guilty, but were let off with a warning for a first offence. One of them was Sam Napayo, chief of the Frog Lake Reserve (SDF 1922a).

Enter the Hudson's Bay Company, friend of the Indian: In 1920 the Crees of the Hobbema Agency in Alberta pulled strings with the Hudson's Bay Company to make the annual Sun Dance an agency-wide ceremony. Frederick Harker, the company's manager in Edmonton interceded with the department to plead that the Hobbema Crees be allowed to conduct their annual Sun Dance on the adjoining reserves in the latter part of June. Harker had written to thank Indian Affairs for allowing 20 Crees to participate in the company's historical pageant at Edmonton that May.

"Their reason for asking official permission is because they are expecting to have a new agent during the next few days and fear he might not permit this old tribal custom," Harker said in his letter to Duncan Campbell Scott (SDF 1920a).

Harker noted that the Sun Dance had taken place annually for several years on the reserves and the Hudson's Bay Company had furnished tobacco for the ceremony.

"I should esteem it a favour if you could comply with this request by notifying the Indian Agent at Hobbema and also myself," Harker said.

Scott's response to Harker does not appear in the official record but he wrote to Graham "for information" informing him of the request (SDF 1920b).

There is no entry in the official record indicating any response Graham may have made but the dance was held. A patrol report by RCMP Corporal A.R. Schulz commented on the 1920 dance (SDF 1920c).

The vituperative W.M. Graham: Headquarters officials in Ottawa and Indian Agents he considered weak or ineffectual felt the wrath of W.M. Graham, Inspector of Indian Agencies for South Saskatchewan in 1915. Graham complained to Ottawa that the 1914 amendments strengthening the department's powers to deal with Sun Dances were proving ineffectual (SDF 1915d). "The situation . . . is worse than it was before the law was amended and many Indians know that they have the sympathy of the officials higher up on this dance question and are continually bringing it up."

Six weeks later, in mid-July, Graham was criticizing Indian Agent Thomas Donnelly for sanctioning three days of dancing by the Assiniboine Reserve near Sintaluta, Saskatchewan (SDF 1915e). "I would ask how are we going to get any good results if this is to continue." "My object in writing," Graham told Duncan Campbell Scott, "is to request that a good strong letter be sent to Mr. Donnelly which will make him think he will be seriously dealt with if he allows such a celebration and which will also help him to realize that agents must discourage dancing on their reserves."

Graham found an ally, as he had in the past, in Rev. Joseph Hugonard, principal of the Indian industrial school at Qu'Appelle, who complained to the department at the end of July that the new legislation had been "the occasion for increased dancing on their own reserve" now that Indians could be fined for attending dances or dressing in aboriginal costume off their reserve.

If all agents had been as zealous as Graham in policing the reserve at File Hills and the colony of ex-pupils of the industrial schools that he had started, dancing would soon be eradicated, Hugonard said (SDF 1915f). The priest lamented that ex-pupils who danced avoided the missionaries and were

falling behind in their farming practices as well as their personal morality and behavior.

A plea to the prime minister: In May, 1922 Didsbury, Alberta resident Austin T. Schantz wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King on behalf of Stoney Indian Hector Crawler [father-in-law of Stoney leader and philosopher Walking Buffalo], a minor chief of the tribe in Morley, Alberta (SDF 1922a).

Crawler, "a consistent christian," said Schantz, wanted to dance the Sun Dance:

> He said . . . that they do not inflict torture on themselves in any way during the dance. It is simply a rite performed from time immemorial by his forefathers who danced the sun dance once a year in the month of June.
> During the ceremonies they prayed the Great Spirit to grant bountiful crops or such food as they subsisted on. That there should be rain to make the grass grow to feed the buffalo and deer.
> There is nothing heathenish in the performance. They think that God will answer their prayers now as in past years . . . .

Schantz said he had attended a church service presided over by Crawler "and was much impressed with the sincerity of everyone."

"I wonder if red tape will interfere with the granting of a request so simple and so small. I hope not," Schantz said.

Shortly after, Schantz was smothered in red tape. He received a lengthy reply from the Indian Affairs official to whom Mackenzie King had forwarded his letter. The official [name indecipherable], spelled out the regulations chapter and verse including a section of the circular letter from Duncan Campbell Scott distributed to Indian Agents the year before.

The official closed with the pious observation that, "the law and the policy of the department do not . . . appear to be unreasonable, and are considered to be in the best interests of the Indians" (SDF 1922b).

Spectre of the Sun Dance: As late as 1923, Christian missionaries continued to fret mightily about the Sun Dance and its attractiveness for the Plains Indians. Concerned possibly about how shallow-rooted Christianity was among the Plains tribes, 17 oblate priests from Alberta and Saskatchewan, meeting in Edmonton in July, forwarded a lengthy memorandum on the Sun Dance and its supposed evils to Duncan Campbell Scott, urging that the Indian Affairs Department, "take once for all, the proper step to prevent in the future the recurrence of the evils . . . ." (SDF 1923a).

> There are no two ways to settle this question. Let the old customs and specially the Sundance be revived amongst the Indians, let their old ways have full sway amongst them, and before long we shall consider with dismay the appalling and disastrous effects on them.
> To the Indians the Sundance is not merely a sport or a dance. but, specially a revival of their pagan traditions, the return to their ancient customs, the raising up of the old paganism with all its evil consequences, morally and materially, a challenge to our common christian principles and a setting up of the old barbarian order on the ruin of our common civilization.

Slightly more subdued but in the same vein was a letter to the editor from a Protestant clergyman that appeared in the Edmonton Journal in the summer of 1923. Signed by the Rev. Roy C. Taylor,a missionary to the Indians at Gull Lake, Alberta, it criticized the Indian Affairs Department for allowing the Hobbema Crees to hold their Sun Dance that July (SDF 1923b).

> If the Sun Dance was stopped for three years why has it been allowed to recontinue? Surely the very fact that we know it is obsolete and immoral ought to warrant the creation of legislation to abolish it . . . Some of us missionaries to Indians wonder how to take the spasmodical method of government control exercised over the Indian.

Duncan Campbell Scott, mustard, burdock and thistle: In 1923 the deputy superintendent-general of Indian affairs found out that his fiat did not extend much beyond the confines of Parliament Hill.

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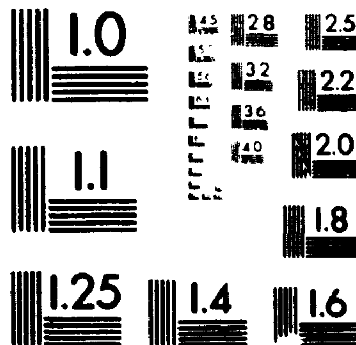

PRECISION[SM] RESOLUTION TARGETS

After meeting with Blackfoot chiefs in the spring on a trip through the West, and telling them to limit their Sun Dance to three days, Scott learned in the fall from Indian Agent George Gooderham and W.M. Graham, now the Indian Commissioner, that the Blackfoot had taken 10 days in August for their Sun Dance and many had taken that much time before it to attend the Calgary Stampede, despite a department edict that no Indian participation would be allowed (SDF 1923c).

Graham, never one to mince words or hyperbole to make a point, told Scott in a year-end report (SDF 1923d) that:

> . . . the Sun Dance and Calgary Stampede . . . (are) interfering with the farming operations in this agency to such an extent that I believe we will be forced to go into the show business altogether and give up farming and unless some decisive action is taken to stop these dances serious consequences are bound to result . . . with the Indians everything is neglected and the land is allowed to go to weed . . . we find ourselves with 14,000 acres of land on the Blackfoot reserve under cultivation which was clean land a few years ago but which is fast becoming a mat of weeds and when these weeds are firmly rooted on the Reserve doubt very much whether they can ever be eradicated by Indians.

It was a long, hot, unhappy summer for Gooderham, with or without noxious weeds.

In July, he complained to Graham that despite his entreaties to the Blackfoot to undertake summer fallow to help eradicate weeds, "The Indians are carrying on in their own sweet way and I am more or less helpless . . . mere words mean nothing to these people, what they want is a little more of the mailed fist (SDF 1923d).

Two weeks later he complained to headquarters that the Sun Dance was under way and the Blackfoot paid no attention to him (SDF 1923e):

> These people know they have a lot of money in trust and they believe the employees, from the Agent down the line, are their paid servants, and they look to these poor inferior white men to save the situation, else they will run to the first man who will listen and adversely report on them. Generally speaking, as far as the Indian is concerned and owing to the latitude allowed to him, conditions are not the pleasantest to work under

In November, a newspaper feature on the 1923 Blackfoot Sun Dance appeared in the *Halifax Sunday Leader.* The author was no stranger to Indian events. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance (SDF 1923f) had capitalized on his part-Indian ancestry to fashion a writing career in Canada and the United States.

Long Lance suggested that self-torture was still carried out in secret by the Blackfoot, despite the best efforts of the RCMP to ferret it out.

Claiming it was the first time the Blackfoot had allowed anyone to divulge the secrets of the Sun Dance camp or the rites of the Horn Society, Long Lance let his imagination soar in describing the ceremony.

What emerged were images of the "noble savage" and the "savage reactionary" (Marsden and Nachbar 1988). Long Lance describes the scene at the camp as like being "in the midst of an Indian camp on the upper Missouri River one hundred years ago."

Returning from a walk to the river one night after getting a drink of water he said he was "suddenly struck with the distant familiarity of what I heard and saw before me."

<u>End run at Hobbema</u>: The Blackfoot had conducted their Sun Dance in 1923 without asking anyone's permission. The Crees at Hobbema used the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to carry their request to Ottawa. Appealing to Inspector W. Lindsay, commanding officer of G Division at Edmonton, they got

him to forward their request to Ottawa via the RCMP commissioner on the ground that the Indian Agent was new and "they did not know him" (SDF 1923g). Lindsay told the commissioner they had assured him the dance would last just two days and it seemed a"trivial" request.

Lindsay's letter added the personal comment that:

> The Sun Dance as it is practised today, is more of a tribal picnic which gives them an opportunity to display their finery . . . and I would strongly recommend that their petition be granted. It is of comparatively trivial importance, and if acceded to would give great pleasure to these people who have no intention of wasting an excessive amount of their time, whereas a refusal would be more than likely to cause discontent.

Duncan Campbell Scott told the commissioner the request would be granted but asked for a police patrol to ensure the two-day limit was adhered to.

The Cree Sun Dance caused rumbles in the West. M. Christianson, inspector of Indian agencies for Alberta, said the Crees had approached him during the winter and he had told them he was not in favor of the Sun Dance being held. "I endeavoured to show them that they were wasting much of their valuable time; also, that not only did it excite the Indians of that place, but a number of the Indians from other reserves who spent weeks in coming to the Hobbema agency" (SDF 1923h).

The Sun Dance drew the usual angry intervention from Graham, who said he could not believe the department would grant permission for the dance without informing his office or the Indian Agent.

"I am disappointed in so far as I had been led to believe by the inspector that Mr. Askey had control over the dance situation and that in all probability there would be no dancing," he wrote Scott.

Graham followed up that letter with another, telling the deputy superintendent-general that the department and the police had been duped by the Crees.

He said that the agent had refused permission for the Sun Dance at which time two of the Crees had called on Inspector Lindsay and asked him to intervene. "No dance would have been held this summer if Lindsay had minded his own business instead of interfering in Indian Affairs," Graham said (SDF 1923i), quoting a telegram from Inspector Christianson.

Like the Blackfoot Sun Dance of 1923, the Hobbema Sun Dance attracted newspaper attention. On July 21 it was the subject of a feature in the *Edmonton Journal* headlined "Sun Dance of the Crees at Hobbema: By special permission of government red men observe weird ceremony."

The scene in the hall where the Indians danced continuously for 48 hours, "beggars description," the writer said, then went on to describe it:

> A blue curl of smoke drifting upwards from grey ashes at the foot of a giant poplar pole that raises up into the sky; tom-toms beating; quick staccato jerks of sound from reed whistles; painted dancers in the shadow, swaying, jogging; a bright gleam of of sunlight striking sharply through the bright open patch of blue sky above on to moist, wet copper bodies.

VOICES FOR AND VOICES OF PLAINS INDIANS

Despite the efforts of the Indian Affairs Department, the Sun Dance had persisted, just as the Plains Indians had survived the initial onslaught and then the remorseless pressure of Euro-Canadian contact.

The Sun Dance and the Plains Indians had changed and been changed but the cultural heart of the ceremony and the people was intact. Ethnologists and anthropologists as well as historians have recorded the continued vitality

of the Sun Dance in the years following on 1914, as an integrating and revitalizing mechanism (Wallace 1956). Plains Indian historians, relying on their oral tradition, have recorded the strong and continued attachment to the ceremony.

Titley (1986:182) noted that the Blood Sun Dance in 1930 attracted some 1,800 Indians and continued for 11 days. There was no cessation in enthusiasm or participation.

Braroe (1975:63), describing the Saskatchewan reserve which he called Short Grass [Nekaneet], in the 1970s, said that the Sun Dance was performed, even then:

> to place the community of humans in contact with the spirits from whom all blessings are secured . . . The Dance has more than religious significance alone: it is equally meaningful as a reaffirmation of community identity, and it promotes a vital sense of solidarity among the participants.

Braroe termed the ceremony (175:146) a portrayal of a sharing ideology among the Crees he studied: " . . . one gives offerings of cloth, tobacco, and prayers in return for blessing from the spirits."

Mandelbaum (1940[1979]:186) described the Cree Sun Dances he observed in the late 1930s in similar terms. "The burden of all the prayers was that a ceremony very dear to the powers was about to be given, that the powers help the participants complete the Sun Dance, so that mankind might be blessed."

Mandelbaum (1979:193) set out in elaborate detail the 1935 the Sun Dance at Little Pine Reserve in Saskatchewan, which took place over three days (He had also observed a Sun Dance in 1934 at Crooked Lake). Cree men, in defiance of the ban on self-torture submitted themselves to the ritual.

Pierced through the breasts with skewers, they were attached with tethers to the centre pole and danced for one song in the lodge. "Guns or buffalo skulls might be hung from skewers set into the flesh of the back, or horses tied to the skewers and led about," Mandelbaum said, describing the self-tortures as offerings to the spirit powers, Mandelbaum said.

Mandelbaum went on to describe (1979:197) one element in the ceremony he witnessed that supported Braroe's concept of "community identity," and gave effect to the integrating function of the Sun Dance.

Proceedings in the 1935 ceremony on Little Pine Reserve were interrupted from time to time by the Sun Dance presider so that men "of prestige" could deliver speeches exhorting the dance participants to honor their vows and promises. Mandelbaum counted some 20 speeches during the 1935 dance, which was attended by Charles Fine Day, of the Sweet Grass Reserve, pledger of eight Sun Dances in the course of his long life.

Howard, discussing Plains Ojibway ceremonialism (1964:104-116), describes a Sun Dance ground at Swan Lake, Manitoba and the deep impression it made on him:

> . . . I counted the remains of at least thirty lodges, the oldest one represented only by rotted poles, the latest being complete lodges in near perfect condition. The impression created by this grand display of past ceremonies and the thought of all of the dancers, many now gone to their graves, who had worshipped there, was almost overpowering, even to me, an outsider. Again, at Turtle Mountain [North Dakota], the blind Thomas Taken-care-of conducted me, I know not how, to a shrine deep in the woods near the Greatwalker School. Here were more Sun dance poles from many years' dances, brought here by the faithful so that metis and white vandals would not strip them of their offerings or otherwise desecrate them.

Skinner (1919:313), in a short note on the Sun Dance of the Plains Ojibway or Bungi, says that reluctant informants admitted after much

questioning that the Sun Dance, "sternly repressed by Indian Agents" was still conducted secretly at night. His informants had all seen the ceremony "frequently."

In 1968, O'Brodovich (1969-70:71-87) observed a Sun Dance at Little Pine which was attended by Plains Indians from Alberta and Montana.

In the late 1930s, the Hanks studied the Blackfoot Reserve and, almost in passing, observed that while the Sun Dance had been modified and shortened to meet the exigencies of reserve life and the attraction of the Calgary Stampede, it still formed an integral and integrating part of Blackfoot life.

" . . . the Sun Dance continues as a reunion of those who embrace Indian ways and as a time for them to display their solidarity with the past" (Hanks and Hanks, 1950:173).

"Old people, previously too sick to sit erect, insist on attending the Sun Dance and the Tobacco Dance, happy if they can die there" (1950:174).

Discussing the Blood Sun Dance, as he observed it in the 1960s, Schwimmer (1972:133-134), describes it as:

> the supreme occasion of the Blood annual cycle when members from all parts of the tribe live together for twelve days under conditions evoking the ancient social and spiritual order . . . . It is the great occasion when the Indian collectively confronts unseen powers.

Schwimmer says that interviews with individual Blood Indians about the meaning of the Sun Dance, which he conducted in 1965, had one dominant them: "the conflict between White and Indian" (1972:138). It was claimed, too, that for the Indian "the Sun Dance has a superior efficacy, just as Church has superior efficacy for Whites" (1972:141).

The Bloods clearly regarded the Sun Dance as their way of ensuring well-being in a hostile and difficult world over which they exercised little control, as a

way of defining themselves as different from the dominant society, and as a way of ensuring the continuity of their group against outside forces.

Zimmerly (1978) who quotes the words of the sacred Sun Dance song of the Sioux, "Wakan-Tanka, have mercy on us, That our people may live!", suggests that the modern Sioux pursue a way of life in which elements that are uniquely Indian, are combined with those of the dominant society, and those common to all humankind.

"The most consistent part of the many Sioux rituals is the fact that change has always been present," Zimmerly suggests, discussing four Sun Dances he had witnessed in recent years.

Zimmerly says Sun Dance participants dance for different reasons -- giving personal thanks for coming through an ordeal safely, for the restored health of a loved one -- "but to a man [and woman], they danced also for the well-being of all people."

The Plains Indians speak about their own: Among the few explanations by Plains Indians of their rituals and ceremonies is Abel Watetch's discussion of the Cree Rain Dance, the shortened form of their Sun Dance.

Watetch (1959), has suggested it is based on "reverence for life" (1959:34). As set down by Blodwen Davies, the Cree historian described the integrating function of the Rain Dance in band life (1959:35-36):

> During any Rain Dance the youth of the band are given preliminary training, tasks and responsibilities so that they can associate with the elders and Medicine Men and so learn the outer forms of the ceremonies. This will, of course, whet their desire to know more about the mysteries and to prepare themselves to participate in them . . .

> A Rain Dance may be given for many different reasons. If a man has a loved one who is ill or handicapped, he may want to give the Dance to petition for aid. If he has been the recipient of good fortune, he may want to express his gratitude in this way. It may be that the band is facing difficulties which he feels can be helped to a solution through this means; or it may be for a wider brotherhood, all humanity, that he is making an appeal.

Watetch, who attended the industrial school operated by Rev. Joseph Hugonard at Lebret, Saskatchewan [Qu'Appelle], was a young carpenter living on the Payepot Reserve when the great chief died in 1908. His account of Payepot's [Watetch's spelling for the chief's name is used throughout this thesis] life and times includes a description of the Rain Dance in 1899 when 20 young Crees submitted to self-torture for the ceremony. The event led to Payepot's deposal as chief. As recounted by Watetch, an elder who had attended the ceremony (1959:44) said that it made "good men" of the young men who participated, "some of them eventually became Medicine Men."

Watetch was pessimistic about the survival of Cree ceremonies when he collaborated with Davies, predicting that the Rain Dance, because it demanded "powers of endurance and self-discipline which few will possess when the elders are gone" (1959:48), would die out.

But Joseph Paskamin, of Sweet Grass Reserve, whose father had been prosecuted in 1897 for taking part in a give-away dance, told interviewer Allan Campbell (1975:132) that even though many old ceremonies had fallen into disuse, "for my part, the feasts will go on and on, they will never stop. It will be a long time before the Sun Dance, the pow-wows and the feasts go out."

An elderly Cree on Little Pine Reserve around 1940 is reported to have told an interviewer (Stewart, 1981:122) that, "If the Indian is anything in his

heart, he believes as his father did. If he really believes in the Sun (or Rain) Dance, the lodge, and does it right, it will help him. This I have seen."

The elderly man continued (1981:123): "Many times the white man has tried to stop our religion but, all the same, the Indians went ahead and performed their ceremony. They danced and that's the way it must be."

Goodwill and Sluman point to the incongruity in the constant complaint of government that the Sun Dance took Plains Indians away from farming and the readiness with which Catholic Indians were allowed to leave reserves for religious pilgrimages (1984:141). "The dances restored and nourished the souls of the people . . . The Sun Dances, round dances, horse dances, chicken dances, and the big smoke and the singing practices were of either a reverent or social nature and they helped to maintain friendship and kinship ties."

Cree elder Emil Piapot at a 1977 conference, described in Cree, as translated by Stan Cuthand (Waugh and Prithipaul 1979:31), his reaction to a film on the Sun Dance and remarks by the commentator suggesting the ceremony was dying out:

> They seemed to be laughing at it and he [Piapot] told them that they did not know much about it, and that they should not laugh at it. It was not dying out, but coming back. The Sun Dance was outlawed by the Indian Act . . . and it went underground. It survived that way, because, instead of having it eight consecutive days as it was supposed to be, they chopped it up. In the midst of a potlatch, when the Mounties showed up, we put everything away, pretended nothing was happening. When he left, we started up again.

The Anglican priest, Edward Ahenakew, a Saskatchewan Cree, captured (1973) what the Sun Dance meant to the Plains Indians and why it survived the years of suppression at the hands of the Indian Affairs Department.

Ahenakew relates the story of Pointed Arrow, the first man, as told by Chief Thunderchild in paid interviews, at $1.00 per interview, conducted by Ahenakew in Cree with the elderly leader during the winter of 1923 (1973:67). In Thunderchild's version, Pointed Arrow foretold of a second man who would come to teach the Indians:

> Now when this man came again, he told the people, "I am not coming to live with you. I am sent to tell you that the spirit of man lives always. Use love, and work out your own future. Do what is right."
> All this he taught through the Sun Dance so that generations that came after might learn things that are good.

Ahenakew's compilation of his interviews with Thunderchild, which was edited by Ruth Matheson Buck, daughter of an Anglican missionary, who grew up with Ahenakew, includes a description of the meaning of the Sun Dance by Chief Thunderchild. He described the ceremony (1973:68) as:

> . . . a sacred institution. Through it, prayer is made for all people; and in the camp there is reverence, with fasting for two days and nights, and abstinence from sex, as proof that it is with pure hearts that people dance, or watch the dancing . . . The lodge is open to all who come in reverence . . . A dancer may remember his own needs, or express his own thankfulness for personal blessing, but the dance itself is a prayer for all people . . . When a man gives of himself to those who are unfortunate, when his heart says, "I thank thee, Great Spirit," can one believe that nothing comes of it? White people have not understood and they condemn the dance. I see only blessing from it; and when it ends, when all that can be done is finished, there is everywhere a spirit of deep reverence and contentment . . . . Today the dance is forbidden; those who have made there vows cannot fulfil them, and it is heart-rending. Ka-mi-yo-ki-si-kwe (Fine Day) is one who is not permitted to make the Sun Dance that he vowed, and the shock has stunned his wife, as though she had been shot.
> Can things go well in a land where freedom of worship is a lie, a hollow boast? To each nation is given the light by which it knows God, and each finds its own way to express the longing to serve Him. It is astounding to me that a man should be stopped from trying in his own way to express his need or his thankfulness to God. If a nation does not do what is right according to its own understanding, its power is worthless.

> I have listened to the talk of the white men's clergy, and it is the same in principle as the talk of our Old Men, whose wisdom came not from books but from life and from God's earth. Why has the white man no respect for the religion that was given to us, when we respect the faith of other nations?

CONCLUSIONS

This epilogue makes no pretence to be a detailed or sweeping review of the fate of the Sun Dance following 1914.

But the examples of Sun Dance activity cited, the meanings placed on them by Plains Indians, and the interpretations formulated by a number of commentators suggest strongly that the Plains Indians had been successful in keeping their traditional ceremony alive, although it had obviously been altered by contact with Euro-Canadian power.

There is ample evidence that the Plains Indians themselves could see the integrating value of the ceremony in keeping their traditional lifestyle and culture as more than a misty and fading tradition.

Nor is there much evidence to support the repeated contention of the Indian Affairs Department that the Sun Dance would die ou when the older generation of so-called "pagan" Indians died out and the younger generation took over.

In fact, the Sun Dance was successfully handed down to succeeding generations and, while interest in it may have waned at times, there were enough believers and devotees to keep the ceremony vital and forceful.

Plains Indians at the beginning decades of the twentieth century looked to the ceremony to restore their sense of community, and their sense of being Indian and apart in a world that had become white.

SECTION IV

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

CHAPTER 9 -- CONCLUSIONS

When *Kah-me-yo-ki-si-kwew*, or Charles Fine Day, died early in 1941 at age 94 he was eulogized in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* . On January 9, C.Wetton praised Fine Day as the last survivor of "a band of Indian fighters such as will not be seen again."

> What Tecumseh was to the Shawnees, Fine Day was to the Crees of the Western plains. Brave and skilled in warfare, proud and resolute. Co-operative, intelligent and well-versed in many phases of Indian culture, he was, the Indian people believed, fortunate in having strong 'spirit helpers.'

In the course of his long life the man who had served as Poundmaker's war leader at Cut Knife Hill in 1885 vowed and made eight Sun Dances, the last in 1936 when he was 89. He came to epitomize the strength of the Sun Dance religion and its power in giving the Plains Indians a continued sense of their identity in a hostile white world. Fine Day defended the Sun Dance religion throughout his life, risking fines and imprisonment for the ceremony that was at the core of his being.

In 1915, Fine Day was one of the leaders in a Sun Dance on Little Pine's reserve. He was charged with and convicted for taking part in the ceremony off his own reserve, an offence under the 1914 amendment to the Indian Act. The exasperation of the Indian Affairs officials with Fine Day and their inability to tame him is reflected in Indian Agent J.A. Rowland's July 20 report to headquarters on the Sun Dance at Little Pine (SDF 1915b).

Rowland said that he arrived on the reserve on June 12 and spent the next two days ordering Indians to leave if they were not members of the band.

"As the prospects were not looking any too good," Rowland telephoned Battleford for police assistance to patrol the dance, which started June 15.

> On the morning of the 16th when we were about . . . to visit the dance, a number of Indians, mostly from Sweet Grass reserve and headed by Fineday drove past us and went on to the sun dance.

Rowland, reluctant to attempt to stop the ceremony because he had had "considerable trouble for about a month with the Indians," finally issued summons to 12 of the dancers and "secured six convictions." The agent told headquarters that he had had to hire a lawyer because he was "fighting a losing battle," the Indians having hired "a first class lawyer to defend them." But he exulted that one of those against whom the conviction stood was "Fineday of Sweet Grass who was the ring-leader and the cause of all the trouble."

Rowland said Fine Day had consulted a lawyer about attending a Sun Dance off his own reserve but had been badly advised because the lawyer wasn't up to date on the 1914 Indian Act amendment making such action an offence.

It was not the first time Fine Day had confronted an agent. In 1907 he and Chief Thunderchild, refused permission to hold a Sun Dance by Indian Agent J.P.G. Day, had gone over the agent's head to the Indian Commissioner's office in Winnipeg (SDF 1907f). The letter to the Indian Commissioner said the two leaders had been present when Treaty 6 was signed and they "did not hear them stopping us the privilege of using our ceremonies or ways of rejoicing. Our country is free and we are only going to dance for four days." Taken to task by the commissioner's office for not exercising more control over the two Crees, Day said he had turned down their request for the Sun Dance "distinctly and

emphatically" and had warned Fine Day and Thunderchild that if they persisted he would have them arrested (SDF 1907h).

Interviewed in 1923 by Rev. Edward Ahenakew, Thunderchild referred to another Sun Dance which Fine Day had attempted to hold, repeating the same claim to freedom of religion that he and Fine Day had made to the Indian Commissioner's office in 1907 (1973:69):

> Today, the dance is forbidden; those who have made their vows cannot fulfill them, and it is heart-rending. *Ka-mi-yo-ki-si-kwew* (Fine Day) is one who is not permitted to make the Sun Dance that he vowed, and the shock has stunned his wife, as though she had been shot . . . Can things go well in a land where freedom of worship is a lie, a hollow boast?

Fine Day epitomizes in his life experience, stages set out by Wallace's (1956) revitalization theory. First, Fine Day experienced personal stress with the breakdown of his traditional lifestyle and the attacks on his culture by missionaries and officials. And, the record suggests that he was motivated to revitalize that culture and maintain its integrity, by turning to the Sun Dance as its central integrating element.

INDICATIONS OF REVITALIZATION

In Chapter 1, we saw that stages 2, 3 and 4 of Wallace's (1956) revitalization process were of most relevance here. Stage 2 focusses on the period of increased individual stress when normative values are being distorted, traditional beliefs are breaking down or are under attack, and when individuals are cut adrift from the traditions that once gave cohesiveness and strength to their culture.

This fate befell the Plains Indians with the disappearance of the buffalo, the arrival of Euro-Canadians in force and the imposition of government

control. The assault that had been launched decades earlier with the increasing activities of missionaries of all denominations, the early influx of settlement, and the waves of devastating diseases, intensified at an accelerating pace after the treaties were signed and the Plains Indians were shunted onto their small and isolated reserves.

Wallace's third staged is termed "the period of cultural distortion." It is arguable that while Plains Indians were being subjected to increasing, almost intolerable personal stress from the tumult that surrounded their lives and their society, their culture, too, was under increasing pressure. There are clear indications in the narrative of Indian Agents and Indian Affairs officials of this taking place. Children were coerced to attend industrial and residential schools to be indoctrinated in Euro-Canadian and (especially) Christian values and precepts; cultural institutions like the Sun Dance came under early and sustained attack, and reserves became the battleground for feuding between traditional and Christian factions.

Charles Fine Day, like his fellow Crees, must have suffered greatly from personal stress because of the deterioration that had taken place in the social and physical environment. Fine Day overcame that stress by serving as a leader in ensuring the survival of the traditional religion and the Sun Dance. Although his name appears infrequently in the official record, it seems obvious from Ahenakew (1973) and from newspaper accounts, including the eulogy accorded him when he died, that Fine Day was a highly respected and charismatic leader who was looked up to among the Crees for his defence of traditional values.

Wetton's eulogy in the *Star-Phoenix* included the description Fine Day gave David Mandelbaum in 1935 of his standing as a warrior:

> Among the chiefs I was called in to eat before some of the greatest of them and no chief could go between me and the fire, but would have to go around me. I was the head one in the Rattlers Tipi until the white men came and put an end to it all.

Other Plains leaders also played leading roles in ensuring the survival of the Sun Dance including the Blood Chief Red Crow, who confronted Indian Agent James Wilson over the right of the Bloods to stage the ceremony; the Cree chief Payepot, who countenanced continuing the self-torture element of the Sun Dance after it had been formally banned by the Canadian government; the Cree Chief Star Blanket, deposed as chief for his dancing leadership; and the Cree chief Thunderchild whose eloquent defence of the Sun Dance and its deep importance for the Plains Indians was recorded by Ahenakew (1973).

The evidence of ongoing community revitalization between 1880 and 1914 emerges from the officials' narrative, or may be inferred from their complaints and that of missionaries about the continued strong attachment of the Plains Indians to their traditional religion. They repeatedly asserted that it was only the "old people" who wanted the Sun Dance to continue. Their claim seems plausible at first but rings hollow when it is repeated decade after decade and when the Sun Dance remained an attraction for the ex-pupils of the Indian industrial schools, despite all the efforts of the missionaries and the likes of Indian Affairs official W.M. Graham to wash their red souls white.

Make no mistake: in this period the Christian church and Christian state alike exerted great pressure on their so-called "pagan" wards; and throughout this period, Indian Agents and the Indian Department considered

those wards to be inferior in intellect, indolent, foolhardy and childlike. They seemed hardly the people to confront successfully the combined power of the missionaries and the Indian Agents. And yet they did. That they were able to thwart the goals of their Euro-Canadian adversaries and ensure the survival of the Sun Dance has to be counted a victory for their beliefs and for the renewed strength they found in traditional culture.

Striking portraits of Plains Indians and of Indian Agents and Department officials emerge from the narrative. Indian Agents and Indian Department officials come in to focus as querulous and adversarial, but unable or unwilling to wield effective control over the Plains Indians. The Plains Indians, on the other hand, demonstrate a sense of purpose and a moral strength even when the evidence is filtered through the complaints of the Indian Agents, and emerge as people who early on grasped the essentials of what was needed to maintain their identity and traditions and effectively used or adopted Euro-Canadian methods to do so, including resort to Euro-Canadian legal help when it was called for.

Why did the Indian Department officials continue to rely on "moral suasion" rather than the coercive power they undoubtedly could have called forth? The answer may in part have resulted from the Department's internal weaknesses, as well as a healthy respect for the moral strength of the Plains Indians.The Department's historians (Titley 1986: Surtees 1988) suggest that for all the bombast and bravado that pervade the official narrative, this was a bureaucratic backwater that attracted few men of real ability, and, more importantly, few men of vision. As Surtees (1988:93) observes, "The Indian Department was not considered a very significant part of the public service."

Competent and ambitious administrators looked to other departments with more political and constituency clout, like Interior and Agriculture, as places to fashion their careers.

As late as 1939 the Department had only 1,000 employees for the whole of Canada, a small number of bureaucrats even by the standards of small government that existed before the Second World War. Surtees (1988:93) argues that by the 1920s and 1930s the Department's zeal for the civilization and assimilation of the Plains Indians was fading; the goal became maintaining the status quo. The [illegible] to suppress the Sun Dance and drag the Plains Indians as fast as possible to civilized status as Christian agriculturalists had waned, even though senior officials like Duncan Campbell Scott paid lip service to the old aims of the Department.

Surtees also suggests a second factor that pushed the Indian Affairs Department into equivocal decision-making. This second factor was, he says:

> . . . the stubborn determination of Indians to resist government policy. At first this tended to be simply a reflex action opposed to new circumstances and new laws in favor of traditions . . . Resentment of government interference in practices such as the Sun Dance and potlatch was common, as was the tampering with traditional systems of government and attempts at enforced enfranchisement.

This supports the argument that the Plains Indians, following their initial demoralization as a culture, rebounded and revitalized their society through ceremonies like the Sun Dance.

Surtees' "stubborn determination . . . to resist" resonates with Dempsey's argument that Euro-Canadian control forced male Indians who had once looked to warfare as a major or prime occupation to turn to traditional religion to assert their rejection of alien values. "Religion became the

main avenue left for the males to follow to retain their dignity and find relief from the dull and oppressive reserve life" (1988:5).

The Sun Dance revitalized the Plains culture in a time of trial and deprivation because the values it embraced and celebrated (Wallace 1966) were those values needed by a society facing extinction from an alien force. Recall what Wallace (1966:26) said:

> Among the Plains Indians . . . the annual Sun Dance was an occasion on which the values of physical endurance and fortitude under pain were publicly celebrated . . . Whatever else was intended by this ritual, it served as a dramatic reminder of the respect accorded to men who were able to carry on in spite of pain, hunger, thirst and fatigue.

REVITALIZATION IN THE DISCOURSE

Bruner (1986) argues that ethnographies are prisoners of the time in which they are written. His "old story," the narrative which was dominant in the past, assumed that the Plains Indians were disorganized, their culture was eroding and that in the future they would be assimilated into the broader society. Bruner's "new story," emerged only following the Second World War, and embraces resistance and resurgence by the "other." But he suggests that even though one narrative is dominant the other is being voiced, even if not heard or heeded. While the dominant narrative spoke of assimilation, as it does in the official narrative analysed in this study, another spoke of resistance and revitalization.

The dominant narrative from 1880 to 1914 speaks bluntly of assimilation and civilization. It is the theme of the official narrative that sets forth the words and deeds of Indian Agents and the Indian Affairs Department.

And it is the narrative that was embraced by historians and anthropologists until recent years.

The resistance narrative of the Plains Indians was voiced, however. We hear it in the gaps and margins of the dominant narrative; in complaints by Indian Agents about their inability to completely dominate the "wards" of the Canadian government. It exists in the complaints about Plains Indians hiring Euro-Canadian lawyers to plead their case. It emerges when we hear of Plains Indians removing their children from the industrial schools to attend Sun Dances (Kennedy 1970). It even emerges in the evidence in Austin McKitrick's (1921) description of young Indian children, after they had watched a Sun Dance, imitating the dances of the ceremony.

For some five decades the Indian Department attempted to suppress the Sun Dance and destroy the culture of the Plains Indians. It was unable to muster the moral and physical forces to achieve that goal against the obstinate refusal of the Plains Indians to completely relinquish their traditions for those of Euro-Canadian society. The Sun Dance survived as a metaphor for Indianness in a white world

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1896c	Forget to McNeill. Letter, May 30. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896d	F.H. Paget to NWMP commissioner, Regina. Letter, May 30. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896e	Paget (for Forget) to W.S. Grant. Letter, June 1. 3825 (60,511-1)
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1896g	A. McNeill to Forget. Letter, June 7. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896h	A. McNeill to Forget. Letter, June 12. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896i	A. McDonald to Forget. Letter, June 15. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896j	A.E. Forget to Hayter Reed. Report, September 21. 3825 (60,511-1)
1896k	F.H. Paget for A.E. Foget to George Mann. Letter, June 10. 3825 (60,511-1)
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1898i	Wheatley to Forget. Report, August 24. 3825 (60,511-1)
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1900f James Wilson to David Laird. Update report, December 17. 3825 (60,511-1)

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1903d David Laird to J.D. McLean. Report, June 15. Vol. 3825, File 60,511-1
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1906b J.D. McLean to Levi Thomson. Letter, April 5. 3825 (60,511-2)
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1917d Superintendent T.A. Wroughton, RNWMP, to commissioner, RNWMP. Report, June 12. 3826 (60,511-4, part 1)
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1923d G.H. Gooderham to W.M. Graham. Report, July 25. 3827 (60,511-4B)

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1923g Inspector W. Lindsay, RCMP, to commissioner, RCMP. Memorandum, May 17 3827 (60,511-4B)

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