Treaty Day for the Willow Cree

Practical Utopians

Agriculture on the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve
The Saskatchewan Archives Board

The Saskatchewan Archives Board was established by provincial statute in 1945. Under The Archives Act (R.S.S. 1978, Chap. A–26) the Board is responsible for appraising, acquiring, preserving and making accessible documentary records in all media, from both official and private sources bearing on all aspects of the history of Saskatchewan, and facilitating the management of the records of government institutions. Two offices are maintained, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, providing public access to a rich collection of archival materials for research and reference. The Archives Board comprises two representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan, one from each of the two universities in the province, and the Legislative Librarian. The Provincial Archivist serves as secretary.

In addition, the Saskatchewan Archives Board has produced several authoritative works over the years on provincial history and a number of other reference booklets and directories to assist historical research in the province. The journal Saskatchewan History first appeared in 1948 and has earned a reputation for excellence, receiving awards in 1962 from the American Association for State and Local History and in 1979 from the Canadian Historical Association.

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Front Cover: Northern Indian woman with children, 1935.
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Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Archives Board

From the time of its legislated formation in 1945, the Saskatchewan Archives Board has been given the responsibility of selecting, acquiring, and preserving documentary material in all media—from both official and private sources—which bear on the history of the province of Saskatchewan. Under the Archives Act, provision was made for both university and government representation on a board operating at arms length from the government of the day. This arms-length relationship has made the Saskatchewan Archives unique among provincial archives in Canada, and has allowed the Archives to document all points of view, removing partisanship, or the perception thereof, from all aspects of the records preservation process. As a result, Saskatchewan possesses one of the best provincial archives collections in Canada.

In honour of the 50th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, excerpts from the “First Report of the Saskatchewan Archives 1945 - 1946” are reprinted below:

Every community must live in part in its past, but if that life is to be dynamic the past must be reinvestigated and rewritten continuously. This cannot be done effectively unless there exists a good reserve of archives which will furnish facts, and by which one can check impressions and prejudices.

The final duty of an archives office is to encourage and stimulate scholarly use of the archives which are preserved and organized. Most of the scholars will in fact be trained at universities. There will always be research workers among the members of university faculties. The school of graduate studies will furnish a steady stream of bright students who are anxious to try their hand at original investigation. Then there are those taking the honour courses in the social sciences who will be encouraged to use original materials for study. While most historical writing emanates from the universities or from university-trained scholars, it is a happy fact that there are always other people who have native ability and a genuine scholarly interest and urge to do productive writing. These bring to their task a vigour and freshness of outlook which are extremely valuable assets. Such people deserve every assistance and guidance possible. An archives office should be for them a centre for information and a source of sustaining inspiration.

The building up of an archives office involves long-term and consistent planning. Similar to the schemes for the conservation of natural resources, the chief beneficiaries of the planning may be the children of the third and fourth generation, who will rise up to call blessed those who thought of them in the hurly-burly of their own generation (12-13).

The father of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, Arthur Silver Morton (1870-1943). Morton founded, and served as the archivist of, the Historical Public Records Office at the University of Saskatchewan, 1937-1943.

(more News and Notes on page 26)
Treaty Day for the Willow Cree

By Stephen Sliwa

In the Canadian Northwest the last few weeks of August 1876 offered signs that autumn was approaching, with a noticeable drop in the evening's temperature and fewer hours of daylight. Throughout the northern boundary of the parklands, an area described by surveyors of the Hudson's Bay Company as "a rolling prairie, with numerous clumps of poplar here and there," leaves had begun to change colour.1 "This is the fertile belt," observed one adventurer who journeyed through this country, "the land of the Saskatchewan, the winter home of the buffalo, the war country of the Cree and Blackfoot, the future home of millions yet unborn."2 Well over 1,000 Plains Cree converged on this portion of the Northwest, gathering on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River near the local Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post, Fort Carlton, prepared not for war but to negotiate treaty with representatives of the Canadian Government.3

Present at the time of the negotiations were Cree bands which anthropologist David Mandelbaum describes as the inhabitants of the northern fringe of the parklands: the House People, River People, and Parkland People. Mentioned in the text of the proceedings were the "Carlton Indians" and "Wood Indians" (House People), "River Indians" (River People), and "Prince Albert and South Branch Indians" (Parkland People).4 One group of Parklands People known as the "Willow Cree" were notably absent. Though camped in the vicinity of Fort Carlton, the three bands which made up the Willow Cree did not participate in the negotiation sessions along with the others. Chiefs Beardy (Kamiyistowesit), Cutnoske (Saswaypew), One Arrow (Kapeyakwasikanum) and their people chose to remain at their encampment near Duck Lake while dialogue among the other Cree leaders and representatives of the Crown was waged between 18 August and 22 August.

The text of the Treaty 6 proceedings and several eye witness accounts condemn the Willow Cree for their decision to bypass the Carlton negotiations. Their absence supposedly "embarrassed" the other bands who had gathered at Carlton and Beardy was labelled as unco-operative by the chief treaty commissioner, Alexander Morris.5 Comments made by those who accompanied the treaty commissioners were also uncomplimentary. Colonel Sam Steele, a member of the North-West Mounted Police who escorted the Queen's representatives to Carlton, referred to Beardy as "the refractory chief."6 John Kerr, one of the Crown's interpreters during the proceedings, expressed similar sentiments, calling Chief Beardy "a

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National Archives of Canada, C-12969.

Sketch of Chief Beardy (Kamiyistowesit) making a speech at a powwow at Fort Carlton, c.1881. Artist unknown.
stumbling block in the negotiations."7

Ironically, the documentary record shows that the Willow Cree were quite anxious to meet with the Crown’s treaty commissioners and through them, establish a kinship-like relationship with “our Mother, the Queen.”8 The latter was accomplished on 28 August when the absentee bands accepted an invitation to meet at a commissioner’s camp east of Carlton. The terms of the relationship were discussed and later that day leaders of the Willow Cree signed an adhesion to Treaty 6.

The Cree chiefs who congregated en masse at Carlton and the leaders of the Willow Cree residing at Duck Lake both resorted to their time-tested strategy of diplomacy to form an alliance with the Crown. Presumably the motive for doing so was also similar. For generations, diplomacy was a means through which the Plains Cree sought to capitalize on opportunities and to cope with change. As J.S. Milloy has demonstrated in his study of the Plains Cree prior to 1870, the Cree had established close relations with a number of Aboriginal plains nations—first with the Blackfoot during the late seventeenth century and later, with the Mandan and Assiniboine peoples—as a means of achieving a defined group self interest.9 Consequently, an alliance with “the Great Queen Mother” was a continuation of this practice and represented to the aboriginal inhabitants of the parklands a wealth of opportunity. In exchange for ceding title to their lands, the bands who signed Treaty 6 could expect to receive assistance from the Crown in constructing a new economy emphasizing agriculture rather than the buffalo hunt. For bands like the Willow Cree, treaty held some promise of resuming a bountiful life in a region that, by 1876, featured a resource-poor ecology.

Mandelbaum’s study of the Plains Cree tells of the Cree’s migration from the boreal forest region bounded by Lake Superior and Hudson’s Bay to the western interior. When the Hudson’s Bay Company and the fur trade headed west, the Cree migrated to maintain their role as intermediary because of the benefits and opportunities provided by this working relationship. Fur trade historians Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman have remarked on the importance of the trade for Aboriginal people, noting that they “took part to meet their basic needs, to satisfy their love of adventure and ceremony, and to gain status [through the redistribution of trade goods to the members of their communities] among their fellows.”10 It was these benefits that drew the Cree to the Northwest, arriving in the region by at least 1690 according to one fur trader’s journal.11

During the 1700s the Cree began their descent from the woodlands to the plains. The nature of their relationship with the European fur traders changed with the construction of fur trade posts in the hinterland after 1760, making their role as “middlemen” redundant. As Ray points out, the Cree were forced now to compete with other aboriginal hunters and trappers to obtain the pelts and provisions that the Europeans desired. Expansion to the plains was a means by which the Cree could indulge in the provision trade, capitalizing on the abundance of large game, especially the buffalo, that inhabited the region.12

By the close of that century the Cree had firmly established their presence on the open prairie. “Under different names,” wrote the explorer David Thompson, who journeyed through the Northwest in 1793 and again in 1800, “the great families of this race occupy a great extent of country.”13 Thompson likely encountered the Cree as he passed through the parklands area lying between the branches of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. It was here that fur trader Duncan McGillivray observed the Cree in 1794, remarking that they were “the most powerful clan in this quarter.”14 An alliance with the Assiniboine who already inhabited this territory perhaps added to the Cree’s predominance. Together they made room for the Cree expansion into this territory, pushing bands of the Gros Ventre nation out of the parklands to the southwest.15 Reports from Carlton House, the local HBC post (referred to later as Fort Carlton), suggest that the Cree and Assiniboine continued to share this portion of the parkland during the early 1800s.16

Large game was a key element of the aboriginal economy on the plains and made for a life of plenty. “Indians who reside in the large plains or prairies, are the most independent and appear to be the most contented and happy people on the face of the earth,” wrote fur trader Daniel Harmon in 1820. “They subsist upon the flesh of the buffaloes, and the skins of the animal they make the greatest part of their clothing...Their tents and beds are also made of skins of the same animal.”17 Mandelbaum’s research, acknowledging the significance of the buffalo resource to the Plains Cree’s subsistence economy, supports Harmon’s observations.

Elders from Beardy’s Band have also stressed the importance of the buffalo to their people; they point out, however, that the band had a mixed economy which included a variety of game, berries and roots.18 Though the buffalo proved to be an expedient means for securing the necessities of life on the plains and provided the Cree with a commodity for barter with Europeans, it was evident that there were other means of subsisting in the region. Mandelbaum’s ethnology gives extensive details about the Cree’s mixed economy and, as well, anthropologist Brian J. Smith has shown that bands inhabiting the parklands resorted to fish as an alternative subsistence resource.19 As Milloy has noted in his research, “clearly, the buffalo country supported more than one manner of living...There was, literally, room for variation, room for human choice, for a variety of survival strategies...”20 Consequently, survival for the Plains Cree rested more on the exploitation of local opportunity—utilizing the resources in a given area to meet the needs of individuals and communities—than it
did on the exploitation of one particular nature-given resource like the buffalo. Indeed, an opportunity-based economy, with its connotations of adaptation and innovation, coincides well with the dynamic character exhibited by the Cree since their arrival in the Northwest.

The scope of the resources used in this opportunity-based economy and the manner in which they were managed further attests to the Cree’s characteristic flexibility. Historians like Ray, Milloy and Irene Spry have described the vast array of flora and fauna that the Cree relied upon during their yearly trek through the varied prairie ecology of parkland and grassland in search of the buffalo.21 Day Walker, a Cree Elder, described to Mandelbaum this migratory cycle of his people as “the yearly round of life;” conceivably, this practice of exploiting several different environmental settings on a seasonal basis aided in the conservation of subsistence resources.22 Attempts at conservation appear to extend even to the much sought after buffalo resource. Fur trader Edwin Denig remarked how during the summer months the Cree at times refrained from hunting the buffalo and subsisted on fish and wild fowl.23

People were also an integral part of the Cree’s opportunity-based economy. The nature of the Cree’s social organization, consisting of loosely organized units or bands that featured a fluid membership, readily absorbed new members into a system of extended kinship.24 The flexibility of these communities allowed for the formation of close relationships, not only among the multi-band organization within their own nation but also with other Aboriginal plains nations, European fur traders and, later, the Metis. While the nature of some kinship ties with outsiders was at times nothing more than metaphorical or figurative, the reciprocal responsibilities and obligations associated with being considered “kin” were far from symbolic.25 J.S. Milloy argues that developing relationships external to the band “contributed to the stability and prosperity of the group,” providing benefits through co-operative ventures such as hunting, trade and military conquest.26 According to Milloy, these relationships were established based upon “internal social need” and were managed through a series of economic and political alliances. These alliances, together with the flora and fauna that the prairie supported, furnished the Cree with the necessary means for becoming the extremely powerful plains nation that the Jesuit missionary Pierre De Smet observed in 1845.27

While it is clear that the Cree established themselves on lands south of the forks of the Saskatchewan Rivers by the 1800s, it is less certain when the Willow Cree began living in this area. Essentially the band’s history prior to 1876 is shrouded in mystery, so much so that the noted American anthropologist Clark Wissler advised David Mandelbaum to discover what he could about “the so called Willow Indians” when conducting field work on the Plains Cree in 1934.28 His research revealed that the “Willow Indians” or “Nipichkupawiyiiuwuk” were closely related to each other, with the majority of band members tracing their bloodlines back to George Sutherland, a former employee of the HBC.29 A genealogy constructed by Mandelbaum shows that Sutherland married three Cree women, Pampikewis, Pasikuis, and Neototosimi, and fathered twenty-three children. Beardy and Cutsnose were noted to have married into this family, while One Arrow was the progeny of Sutherland and his second wife Pasikuis. Mandelbaum, however, neglected to provide any timeline for this genealogy. Without dates it is nearly impossible to establish the age of individual family members, the dates of their marriages, or to verify the genealogical information in other sources.30

Mandelbaum also unearthed information regarding the Willow Cree’s history of habitation on the parklands. Oral historical research that he conducted among band members revealed that “they had always lived near Fr. [sic] Carlton and near the South Saskatchewan.”31 This information is corroborated by the recent testimony of band elders whose description of the migratory boundaries of the Willow Cree included Moose Woods to the south, the South Saskatchewan River to the east, the North Saskatchewan River to the west—particularly the Duck Lake/Fort Carlton area.32 It is likely that an abundance of resources in this location added to its appeal as a site for habitation by the Willow Cree and others. A report by one HBC official in 1815 noted that “the buffalo, moose and red deer...are sufficiently numerous” and could “afford subsistence to a much greater number of inhabitants.”33

By the 1850s there was some indication that these resources, particularly the buffalo, were no longer numerous but, instead, were on the decline. European visitors to the region, such as Captain Palliser and the Earl of Southesk, heard of the depleting resources from various plains Indians who shared with the visitors their concerns about this change in their subsistence economy. “If this continues,” stated one Cree chief to a member of Palliser’s 1857 expedition, “our children cannot live.”34 Southesk’s comments echoed the same sense of alarm when he noted in 1859 that the resource had dwindled to what appeared to be a solitary herd.35 Historians attribute this decline to exploitation of the herds at a rate exceeding the level necessary for a sustained harvest, an outcome related to the introduction of the repeating rifle to the plains region and the influx of Metis and European hunters who wished to capitalize on the escalating market for buffalo hides.36 By 1870 the magnitude of the decline was such that the famed buffalo hunter Peter Erasmus found that “the vast herds that crowded the banks of the Saskatchewan River and crossed over even into the timber country fifteen to twenty miles north of the river were no longer to be found.”37 Erasmus cited a noticeable, incremental
decrease in the buffalo population each year and the severe cumulative effect that this had on the subsistence economies of all plains tribes. Moreover, not only was the mainstay of their economy in a sharp decline but this decline placed a corresponding strain on alternative subsistence strategies.

As Abel Watetch had recounted about his Plains Cree ancestors who were part of Chief Piapot’s band, attempts to pursue an alternative subsistence strategy by hunting other large game in place of the buffalo was only shortlived since these resources were also soon exhausted. According to Watetch, one of the few alternatives left for the bands of plains people who continued to inhabit the region was to treaty with the Crown which was promising assistance in developing an agricultural economy to those who negotiated with it. Yet, as evidenced by the requests made by the Aboriginal leaders who met with emissaries of the Crown, it was the plains nations that led the push for gaining agricultural assistance. Chief Sweet Grass, along with a delegation of several other Cree leaders, sent a message to “His Excellency Governor Archibald, our Great Mother’s representative at Fort Garry, Red River Settlement” in 1871 stating:

Our country is getting ruined of fur-bearing animals, hitherto our sole support, and now we are poor and want help—we want you to pity us. We want cattle, tools, agricultural implements, and assistance in every thing when we come to settle—our country is no longer able to support us.

Later that year Archibald issued a reply “to the Indians of the Saskatchewan,” outlining the Crown’s position with respect to their requests for assistance:

...[Y]ou wish to know whether the Queen wants your part of the country for white people. She does not at this moment but next summer she may want part of it—or at all event she will be able then to tell you whether she wants any and how much... you may be sure that when she does want any of it she will call you together and let you know and send her commissioner to have a talk with you, and will make a treaty with you just as she has done with the Indians of Red River and Manitoba Lake...Your great Mother therefore wishes you to conduct yourselves like good subjects. To obey your magistrates, clergy and teachers. To preserve peace with each other and the white man and to rely upon the Queen to protect you and do you justice.

The Crown’s assurance that they would assist the Indians was reiterated again in 1874 when an emissary of the Canadian government, one James Graham, was dispatched to the parklands to distribute gifts and spread goodwill among the bands of the region. Graham was instructed to tell the Indians that, at this point, the Crown was not ready to treaty with the bands though “it is the view of the Queen and her servants to deal fairly and justly by them as she and they have always done in her territories.” The Crown repeated this entire scenario in 1875 with Reverend George McDougall serving as the Crown’s envoy. McDougall, a familiar face in the Northwest due to his missionary work among the Indians, was well received by the parklands bands who welcomed the news of the Crown’s intention to treaty with them in 1876. Beardy expressed his satisfaction to McDougall, noting: “If I had heard these words spoken by the Queen I could not have believed them with more implicit faith than I do now.” The stage was now set for the parties to meet the following summer.

The text of the negotiations of Treaty 6 shows that Cree leaders wanted to restructure their economy so that it emphasized agriculture rather than the dwindling buffalo resource. On 18 August 1876, chiefs representing the House and Parkland People commenced negotiations with the treaty commissioners who had been dispatched by Ottawa and, within a week, reached a settlement on the terms of the treaty. “The great white Mother,” noted Mistawasis, one of the leading chiefs at the proceedings, “has offered us a way of life when the buffalo are no more.” The offer which Mistawasis spoke in favour of included seeds, farm implements and livestock, all items that were of value to the Cree, involved as they were in an effort to complete an economic transition. This transition was already under...
way among several Cree communities in the region including the Willow Cree who resided near Duck Lake. Members of this band, however, did not sign the Treaty 6 parchment along with the others on 23 August 1876. Instead, treaty day for the Willow Cree would take place five days later.

15 August 1876 marked the beginning of the Willow Cree’s efforts to formally negotiate with the treaty commissioners. Chief Beardy had initiated this exchange, intercepting the procession which included Alexander Morris, William Christie and James McKay—the treaty commissioners for Treaty 6—as it travelled near the band’s encampment at Duck Lake. Guided in part by a vision he had earlier of making treaty with the commissioners “at a hill by the lake,” the chief sought now to convince Morris and his colleagues to visit his people before carrying on to Fort Carlton. Beardy successfully re-routed the commissioners, their entourage of carriages, assorted officials and Mounted Police to the Willow Cree camp where they were warmly received. According to Morris:

...At Beardy’s encampment, the men came to my carriage and holding up their right hand in an invocation to the deity for a blessing on the bright day which had brought the Queen’s messenger to see them and on the messenger and themselves; one of them shook hands with me for the others...

There was, however, a notable change in the overall mood once Beardy proposed that treaty be made with his people according to his recent vision. Morris refused to discuss any treaty terms, perhaps fearing that to treat with this tribe would compromise the scheduled proceedings with the hundreds of Cree who were awaiting his arrival near Fort Carlton. The chief nevertheless received from Morris a promise that the commissioners “would meet the Cree nation wherever they desired” if they would also attend the negotiations at Carlton. These words led the Willow Cree to conclude that they had achieved, in principle, the encounter that they had desired all along, whereby they could negotiate their own exclusive treaty with the commissioners. Under this assumption the band sent a messenger, Splashing Water, to the proceedings at the nearby fort and later agreed to discuss the terms of their new accord with Morris at a site other than Duck Lake. Had the Willow Cree not believed that they had struck a deal with the commissioners then neither the former nor the latter would have occurred since it would have otherwise meant violating Beardy’s vision. Several sources dismiss the importance of Beardy’s vision, assigning the chief a negative, obstructive reputation. Such characterizations of Beardy’s behaviour reveals a lack of understanding of the importance, both specific and general, of Beardy’s vision.

Nearly two weeks passed before the Willow Cree again encountered the treaty commissioners. They had reason to believe that they remained in good standing with the Queen’s representatives, despite having sent only a messenger to the proceedings at Fort Carlton. Indeed, on several occasions during this period, the tribe received a quantity of provisions from the commissioners. The invitation to meet with the commissioners soon followed in the wake of the settlement with various bands at Carlton. On 28 August Chiefs Cutnose, One Arrow and Beardy arrived at the proposed site located off the well travelled path known as the Carlton Trail, midway between Duck Lake and Fort Carlton. Here, under the morning sun, the representatives of the Willow Cree renewed their acquaintance with Commissioners Morris, McKay and Christie.

It is almost certain that some of the Willow Cree were already well acquainted with the men who now sat across from them. By having led the negotiations for Treaties 3, 4 and 5, Alexander Morris may have gained some notoriety among the native people in the region. Undoubtedly James McKay and William Christie were familiar faces. As former employees of the HBC, both McKay, a former guide and interpreter for the outfit, and Christie, the former Chief Factor of Edmonton House, had come into contact with the local Cree population. Six years earlier Christie had transcribed the Carlton Cree’s request to treat with the Canadian government; McKay had guided several expeditions through Willow Cree territory. Whether the chiefs of the Willow Cree found that the presence of former associates made for a more congenial environment for negotiating is unclear. What is certain is that government officials in Ottawa thought they could capitalize on the reputation and influence that these men may have had among members of the various Cree communities, hoping that this would create an atmosphere conducive to taking treaty with the Crown.

Unquestionably, the Willow Cree were eager to discuss with the commissioners the difficult conditions that they faced as a plains community. During their second encounter with the treaty commissioners, members of the Willow Cree expressed their concerns about the declining buffalo population. “I am alarmed when I look at the buffalo,” remarked one of the tribe’s councillors, “it appears to me as if there is only one.” As well, Chief Beardy was noted to have mentioned to Morris that “on account of the buffalo, I am getting anxious.” Beardy had just cause for being anxious. Many members of the tribe had already encountered bouts of starvation over the past three years due to the diminishing herds and the subsequent shortage of food—conditions which led the chief factor of Fort Carlton, Lawrence Clarke, to report that “the Indians are all starving.”

Ironically, Clarke contributed to the hardship that the local Cree were experiencing. His decision to abandon the traditional practice of extending credit to Indian hunters deprived local bands of relief from destitution. Moreover, Clarke deserted the tribes living in the vicinity
of the fort. Feeling that “no reliance can be placed in a profitable provision trade with Indians,” the chief factor turned instead to the Metis who, as the primary suppliers and transporters of pemmican, were also the new beneficiaries of any economic relief provided by the company.  

The prospect of European encroachment without any arrangements for compensation had also troubled the bands living in the vicinity of Fort Carlton. The dramatic transformation of the resource base for the Aboriginal population in this region created, as Irene Spry has shown, a change in the aboriginal view governing access by others to this land. No longer was the plains perceived by aboriginal people as a common area but rather, argues Spry, as private property. As Milloy has suggested, by the 1870s there emerged on the plains “a clear Plains Cree sense of territory...which linked identity with a proprietary relationship to land and resources.”

European encroachment had worried the local aboriginal population for well over a decade. During the mid 1860s a Cree chief at Fort Carlton was noted to have remarked to the adventurers Milton and Cheadle that “we have heard from the Company’s men...that numbers of white men will shortly visit this country and that we must beware of them.” Another Cree chief had expressed similar concerns in 1870 to an emissary of the Canadian government, stating that “men have told them that the white braves were coming to take their lands.” Later, Chief Beardy and some of the Willow Cree were reported to have blocked the Carlton Trail, the main thoroughfare that cut across the parklands, perhaps hoping to control the unregulated flow of Euro-Canadians into their territory by demanding a toll be paid for the right of passage. Indeed, the Cree’s reluctance to allow Dominion surveyors and telegraph construction crews passage through their lands in 1875 was further proof that access to the region had changed.

There is little doubt that the Willow Cree found their situation distressing. A dwindling food supply, feelings of alienation stemming from the HBC decision to sever their ties with neighbouring Cree bands and the threat of European encroachment placed the tribe in an untenable, if not desperate, situation. Under these circumstances it is obvious that a variety of material and non-material needs surfaced in the Willow Cree community. There was a need for tools and implements that were once provided by the flesh and bone of the buffalo, yet there was the need for a spirit of continued co-operation and trust. Perhaps the most pressing need of this community was for good leadership and direction. This need was met by Chief Beardy, who stood before the Queen’s representatives and spoke of the concerns of his people.

Beardy was one of the more vocal tribal leaders during the Willow Cree’s treaty negotiations. He was then forty-eight years of age, had been one of the community’s leaders for several years and, according to one Cree elder, was regarded by his people as “a peace loving, broad minded man with a great deal of foresight.” To have held this position Beardy must have fulfilled the standards of chieftainship that included bravery in battle, possession of spiritual powers and the ability to provide for his people. The first requirement may have been met in his youth, when battles among the Cree and the Blackfoot were commonplace. The chief professed on several occasions to possess spiritual powers, especially visions such as those which dealt with negotiating treaty. It was also evident that Beardy had been a good provider for his people, a skill which enhanced one’s status in the community and was especially significant given the bleak conditions on the plains by the 1870s.

To the chiefs of the Willow Cree the treaty commissioners seemed receptive to their needs and interests. This impression was not unfounded, considering the messages that the Crown, through its emissaries, had communicated to the aboriginal inhabitants of the area. Earlier promises that the Crown would “protect you and do you justice,” along with the distribution of gifts to the Willow Cree and neighbouring bands in 1874 and 1875 implied that the Canadian government was a credible and trustworthy partner who was willing to assume the benevolent duties now abandoned by the HBC. The treaty proceeding itself may have strengthened this perception, given the assurances of the treaty commissioners that Indians must “trust to the generosity of the Queen.” The terms of this generosity became clear to Cree leaders once they had met with the Queen’s representative on 28 August. The chiefs and councillors heard Morris explain “the Queen’s will” which, for the band, amounted to the provision of materials so that they could continue their conversion to an agricultural economy. They had also received assurances from Morris that the Crown would dispense relief to members of the tribe “in a national famine or general sickness.”

It appears that the Willow Cree interpreted the commissioners’ offers of economic assistance and humanitarian aid as an opportunity to unite with the Crown in a relationship not unlike those established by the band in the past, initially with neighbouring bands and later with local HBC officials. Like these earlier unions, the treaty was a means of furnishing the Willow Cree people with a degree of security. In this context, it is apparent how Beardy found the negotiated settlement to “be of use.” Under the terms of Treaty 6 the Willow Cree would, like their brethren who negotiated the initial settlement at Fort Carlton, receive “reserves for farming lands” equivalent to “one square mile for each family of five.” Members of the tribe were entitled to assorted farm implements, tools, ammunition, twine, seeds and, as band members, would have access to a quantity of
livestock and a grindstone.

In addition to material aid, the treaty guaranteed the tribe school instruction, access to a medicine chest in the event of illness, prohibited the use of alcohol on reserves, and affirmed the tribe's "right to pursue their avocation of hunting and fishing." Once the treaty parchment was signed by the leaders of the Willow Creek, the members of the tribe qualified for short term funding for the purchase of provisions as they endeavoured to work the land and received an annuity of five dollars per person. This annuity money, while a form of compensation to the band, may have had an added significance. Some Willow Creek may have viewed their new income as a means of reviving their trading relationship with the HBC, thus regaining access to the goods which the outfit had previously dispensed to native hunters and trappers.

Apart from the promise of material aid and support, the treaty was regarded favourably by the Willow Creek because it appeared to be founded on the principle of reciprocity. This principle was the basis for many Cree relationships since, as it was stated by Beardy, it was felt that "it is in the power of men to help each other." The frequent use of kinship terminology during the negotiations between the two parties, such as "our Mother, the Queen" or referring to the other party as "brother," led chiefs to believe that the commissioners accepted the inherent reciprocal obligations of such kinship terminology which was both the language and substance of inter-group meetings, alliances and treaties. Indeed the treaty appeared to be of mutual benefit. The Willow Cree, through either contact with bands to the south who had already negotiated with the Crown in 1874 or through meeting with agents of the Crown like Graham and McDougall, were as much aware of the commissioners' intentions to usurp Cree territory as the commissioners were aware of the tribe's need for aid and assistance. The band thus seemed willing to modify—though by no means relinquish—their proprietary role over the land in order to receive the help that they required to firmly establish an agricultural economy. What emerges is an implied "joint custody" of the land, with the band in effect "leasing" their territory to the Crown in exchange for material support. This notion is supported by a comment made by Morris that the Willow Cree "...urged them [the "Carlton Indians" or the bands described by Mandelbaum as the House People] not to sell the land, but to lend it for four years."

Steps were taken to formalize the terms of the treaty. Rituals that were ordinarily practised between tribal leaders and the HBC each spring were again evident. Negotiations on 28 August were preceded by the commissioners'

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Plains Cree Grass Dance at Beardy's Reserve, c.1890.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B 980.
delivery of tobacco, a sacred substance in Cree culture, to the Willow Cree encampment. Once the two parties had converged at the proposed treaty site, the gathering was marked by the customary speeches, the “dressing” of the chief and councillors in uniforms similar to those worn by the commissioners and, presumably, a pipe ceremony.

Believing that they had finalized the terms of their own treaty with the Crown, Belamy requested that the chiefs and councillors receive blue rather than red tunics so that the commissioners could readily distinguish the Willow Cree leaders from the chiefs who signed Treaty 6 at Fort Carlton. This of course would be useful when it came time to renegotiate the terms of the treaty to address changes in the band’s socio-economic condition. As historian John Foster suggests, the notion of re-negotiating the terms of the treaty at a later date reveals the nature of the compacts that the Cree had ordinarily struck with representatives of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Their experiences with the company, argues Foster, “constituted an important part of the mental set with which the Indian leaders approached the treaty negotiations.”

Morris, however, refused to furnish Willow Cree leaders with blue tunics, saying that “red is the color that all the Queen’s Chiefs wear,” implying that he felt that Beardy and the other Willow Cree leaders had signed, as late adherents, the same treaty that Cree leaders had negotiated at Fort Carlton. As well, it is doubtful that Morris would have thought that the terms of this treaty were subject to re-negotiation, considering the Crown’s history of extinguishing aboriginal land title in British North America since 1763 by means of non-amendable compacts with aboriginal nations.

Though the nature of the negotiations and the presence of former HBC employees like Commissioners Christie and McKay may have led some aboriginal signatories of Treaty 6 to conclude that their treaty was similar to the annual agreements previously reached between Cree leaders and the HBC, they had in fact entered into what the Dominion government viewed as “permanent arrangements” with the Crown. In the eyes of the Canadian government, the intended purpose of Treaty 6 was to induce “a tranquilizing effect” among the native inhabitants of the Fort Carlton area, bring them “into direct and friendly relations with the government,” and to acquire their territory for future Euro-Canadian settlement by extinguishing aboriginal title to the lands occupied by the Plains and Woodland Cree.

Given the Canadian government’s motives for seeking treaty, it might be argued that the Willow Cree, like the rest of the aboriginal signatories to Treaty 6, were duped. Arriving at such conclusions, however, is to deny the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that the bands like the Willow Cree had experienced in having negotiated a settlement. Treaty Day was, as one Willow Cree councillor stated, “a beautiful day.” The negotiated settlement did address the urgent needs of the band and made some provision for the economic changes that had already begun in earnest. For the moment, the interests of the Willow Cree people had been served.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the people of Beardy-Okenmas First Nation for their assistance during the research phase in the development of this article.

Endnotes

1 Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (hereafter cited as HBCA), Carlton House Search File, Dep. Surveyor Gore to D. Smith, 25 November 1873.
3 Peter Erasmus, Buffalo Days And Nights (Calgary: Glenbow Institute, 1976), 237. Erasmus, an interpreter at the proceedings, counted 250 tents and estimated that each tent had four occupants. This count would differ, however, if one were to use the count established by the Reverend George McDougall in 1875, who counted eight occupants to a tent. See McDougall’s count in National Archives of Canada, Record Group 10 (hereafter cited as NAC, RG10) vol. 3624, File 5152, 23 October 1875.
5 Morris, 176.
6 Samuel Steele, Forty Years in Canada (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1915), 104.
8 Morris, 225.
10 Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson’s Bay Company Before 1763 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 223.
15 Ibid., 27, 62-64.
16 HBCA, B 27/e/1, Carlton House Report on District, 29 May 1815, fo.2.
Abel Watetch, Payapot and His People (Regina: Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society, n.d.), 16.

Ibid., 16.


Morris, 171.

Glenbow Alberta Archives (hereafter cited as GAA), M477, Richard C. Hardisty Papers, No.28-130, Canadian Government, 1871, “To the Indians of the Saskatchewan, 16 October 1871.”


Morris, 174.

Mistawasis, as cited in Erasmus, Buffalo Days And Nights, 247.

NAC, RG10, Vol. 3636, File 6694-1, “Treaty No. 6 Indian Reserves – Carlton Indians, Cree of Saskatchewan,” 10 October 1876; Morris, 204.

Morris, 177, 181, 197.

Ibid., 182.

Ibid., 177.

Col. James Walker, NWMP, made reference to the Willow Cree’s perception that they had negotiated an exclusive compact with the Crown. “When I was making the treaty payments in 1877,” stated Walker in an interview, “the Duck Lake Indians claimed that they had made a separate treaty...” See “Incidents of Indian Events as Related by Colonel Walker,” in The Cree Rebellion of 1884, Battleford Historical Society, 1, no.1 (June 1926) 52.

The Diaries of Edmund Montague Morris: Western Journeys, 1907-1910 (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1985), 76.

Ibid.

see Steele, Forty Years in Canada 103; Grant MacEwan’s, Portraits From The Plains (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1971).


“Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report,” in Sessional Papers, No. 11 (1877), X.


The use of “familiar faces” to entice tribes to negotiate treaty with the Crown is well documented. See Hugh A. Dempsey’s “One Hundred Years of Treaty Seven,” in One Century Later, Ian Getty and D.B. Smith, eds. (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 22; John Leonard Taylor, “Canada’s Northwest policy in the 1870’s,” in The Spirit of The Alberta Indian Treaties, Richard Price, ed. (Toronto, Butterworth and Company, 1979), 29; John Tobias, “The Origins Of The Treaty Rights Movement In Saskatchewan,” in 1883 And After: Native Society in Transition, F. Lawrence Bowman and James Waldram, eds. ( Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), 242. Negotiators for the Crown were also expected to have a good rapport with the chiefs and their bands. Lawrence Clarke, the Chief Factor of the HBC post Fort Carlton, was looked upon with great disdain by the local Cree population and thus explains why, despite his familiarity with the chiefs in the surrounding area, he was not recommended to Ottawa as a possible treaty commissioner. NAC, RG10, Vol. 3624, File 3152, McDougall to Morris, 23 October 1875.

Morris, 227.

Ibid., 226.

GAA, M477, Richard C. Hardisty papers, 80-428: Carlton House 1874, Clarke to Hardisty, 20 March 1874.

Ibid., 34-154: Carlton House 1872, Clarke to Smith, 15 January 1872, passim.

Ibid., 8; Sissons, 126.


Butler, 237.

Prince Albert Historical Society, “Account of Mrs. Margaret Mackenzie,” in The Voice Of The People, (Battleford: Marian Press, 1984), 53. As well, historian Hugh Dempsey noted that the Cree Chief Big Bear “...resented the half-breeds, incursions into Cree lands” which led to conflict between the chief and the Metis

67 NAC, RG10, Vol. 3624, File 5152, “Memorandum: Department of The Interior,” 27 August 1875; Morris, 171-172; Public Archives of Manitoba, Alexander Morris Papers, MG 12, B1, 1039, Clarke to Morris, 10 July 1875.


70 Morris, 176; “Northwest Council Notes,” in *The Regina Leader*, 3 December 1885, 4.


72 Morris, 211.

73 There is strong evidence to suggest that Beardy and other Cree communities in the vicinity of Fort Carlton were attempting to farm the land prior to the arrival of the treaty commissioners in 1876. Morris would remark during the negotiations at Carlton that “I am glad to know that some of you have already begun to build and to plant...” Treaty Commissioner Christie also observed that “...many of these Indians have been cultivating the soil...[and] are anxious to have some agricultural implements and cattle as soon as convenient...” See Morris, 204, and a letter from Christie to Morris, dated 12 October 1876 in NAC, RG10, Vol. 3636, File 6694-1.

74 Morris, 226.

75 Ibid., 352-353.

76 Ibid., 353.

77 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade In The Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 33, 39, 40. Ray suggests that some bands were motivated to treat with the crown because it would offer some leverage to them in their dealings with the HBC. A similar view is expressed in Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 105.


79 Morris, 225-227; Jean Friesen, 47.

80 Morris, 226.

81 Morris, 188-189. The notion that Beardy wanted to “lease” the land is also mentioned in Diane Paulette Payment’s *The Free People -Otipemisiwak: Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Parks Service, Environment Canada, 1990), 150.


83 Morris, 225, 228. Morris notes the pipe ceremony at Fort Carlton (183, 198) as does Sam Steele in *Forty Years in Canada*, 103. Both Steele and Morris note that the same rituals were performed at Fort Pitt during treaty negotiations. It seems likely then that a pipe ceremony was included in the proceedings at McKay’s camp with the Willow Cree. The formalization process and rituals used during the proceedings were nearly identical to the ceremony that the trader Isaac Cowie had witness at HBC posts during trade negotiations with the Indians. See Isaac Cowie’s *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), 274-276.

84 See Walker’s comments in “Incidents of Indian Events as Related By Colonel Walker,” Battleford Historical Society, *The Cree Rebellion of 1884*, 1, no.1 (June 1926), 52.

85 Beardy was noted to have said to Morris: “Perhaps this is not the only time that we shall see each other,” and “I want from my brother [Morris] a suit of clothing in color [sic] resembling the sky so that he may be able when he sees me to know me.” See Morris, 226-227.


87 Morris, 226.

88 One notable exception was the renegotiation of Treaties 1 and 2 in 1875. See Morris, Chapter VII.

89 NAC, RG10, Vol. 3624, File 5152, Provencher to Crozier, 4 September 1875.

90 Ibid., Vol. 3636, File 6694-2, Morris to Laird, 27 March 1877.

91 For example see Dempsey’s, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom*, 76.

92 Morris, 225.
Practical Utopians:
Ed and Will Paynter and the Harmony Industrial Association

by Alex MacDonald

The Paynter families at Hamona. On the left are Will and Lila, with Roy, Clara, Evelyn and Grandma Shelvey. (It may be their son Fred at the lower right corner). On the right side are Ed and Mima, with Peer, Lorne and Grandma Alice Paynter.

One hundred years ago Ed and Will Paynter, inspired by religious and radical writings and horrified by the poverty in their society, drew up a plan for a grand experiment in communal living, a “co-operative refuge in the midst of a competitive world.” They persuaded some others to join them at the founding meeting in Beulah, Manitoba, in June of 1895, selected a site in the Qu'Appelle Valley near the present day towns of Tantallon and Spy Hill, and began work on what was to be one of the first co-operative ventures in Saskatchewan. The colony disbanded in 1900 and its members went on to other accomplishments including, in the case of the Paynter brothers, the writing of a number of utopian books. They were “practical utopians” — although the phrase may seem to be contradictory — because both in their writing and their actions they strove to accommodate their idealism within the constraints of the real and seldom utopian world.

The Paynters moved to Canada from England in 1866 and settled in Owen Sound, Ontario. Mr. Paynter was a barrel-maker from Portsmouth. Will and Ed Paynter were born in Owen Sound, in 1866 and 1868, and in 1879 the family moved to Manitoba, travelling the northern United States to St. Boniface and from there overland to Beulah. Will and Ed helped with the farm, earned extra money

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from other work and attended high school in Brandon. Their deeply religious mother taught them to see the adversities of climate and poverty both as God’s judgement and as a challenge to make them stronger, and gave them a keen appreciation of the beauty and promise of the West. In a letter of 1890 she praised the “delightful climate” and the “lovely weather” in the same paragraph in which she reported on the wet harvest: sheaves which were lying down began growing to the ground and “couldn’t be lifted with a pitch fork.” She said also that the “lack of prosperity for people of Beulah during the past three years has been a blessing.”

The young men were exposed to other influences which helped to shape their utopian ideals. Will became a teacher and taught for forty dollars a month at the Arrow River School about ten miles from Beulah. He married Lila Mable Sheveley of Brandon in 1890. Despite continuing depressed prices for agricultural products, he took a homestead in 1894 on the north side of the Qu’Appelle Valley, and it was this place which became the site of the Hamona Colony.

Ed became a carpenter in Brandon. He also ran the family farm at Beulah (Will's salary as a teacher helping to pay for implements). For about six years, from 1888 to 1894, Ed travelled Manitoba as a “general agent for the Minot Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Co.” He was back in Brandon in 1894 studying to write the teacher's examination. He looked for farm work at ten dollars a month so he could complete his studies but could not get work. 1894, he recalled later, was “a very depressing year in the history of Canada:”

After some 14 years of John A. [Macdonald’s] rule and high [tariffs] all Canada was in chaos and especially the west. I was attending college in Brandon and in the city the soup kitchens were feeding hundreds of people, no work for thousands, poverty galore.

Ed was a member, with his brother Will and his father W.D. Paynter, of the Patrons of Industry. The Patrons originated in the United States and spread to eastern Canada and the midwest as part of the populist agrarian response to the “Gilded Age”. The movement's basic premise was that farmers could improve their own position by organizing to educate themselves and elect “independent farmer legislators” pledged to support Patron principles, which included female suffrage. In 1896 the Patrons, like the American populists who merged with the Democrats, joined a coalition to elect Liberals to Parliament. Will Paynter represented the Shoal Lake County Association at the Provincial Grand Association at Brandon on 24 February 1892. The names of Ed and Will Paynter appear in the local “Patrons of Industry and Grain Growers Minute Books 1892-1910.” In these books are resolutions in favour of government ownership of telegraphs and railways, reflecting the “gas and water Socialism” of the Fabians in the 1890's. There were also important influences from the radical literature of the period, as will be noted below in discussion of the “Constitution” of the association.

The environment in which Will and Ed developed their ideas included currents of utopian dreaming such as the “immigration utopia” and the small experimental or “intentional community.” The former was the representation by governments and land companies that the West was a utopia of abundance for all, waiting to be settled, including in many cases idealizing the West to the point that real settlers would not recognize it. And yet, the essence of the claim that here was a new land offering the potential for building a new society was true, and this hope was often part of the impetus toward the establishment of “intentional communities.” The “intentional community” is a group of people who live in the same place, share the same institutions and are committed to certain common ideals and goals, the third being what tends to distinguish utopian or intentional communities from ordinary towns and cities where ideals and goals can be very diverse.

Across North America in the last decades of the nineteenth century many such communities were established, often for religious reasons or in reaction to the pressures of massive industrialization. In Saskatchewan there were settlements established by land colonization companies whose purposes were primarily economic. Ethnic and ethnic-religious settlements were much more clearly “intentional” in the sense of the definition, though there is a difference between a settlement composed of German Catholics (to choose a prominent example) and a settlement whose chief purpose is to promote German Catholicism. Whatever the shades of “intentionality”, intentional communities in Saskatchewan in these years constitute a substantial list: the Doukhobors at Verigin, the British at Cannington Manor and the Barr Colony, the Finns near Whitewood, the French aristocrats at St. Hubert, the Germans at St. Joseph’s Colony near Balgonie, the Hungarians at Esterhazy, the Icelanders at Thingvalla, the Jewish immigrant farm colonies at Wapella and other places, the Temperance Colonists at Saskatoon, the Welsh at Bangor, and others. This background helps to define the Hamona Colony, which was ethnically and religiously mixed, and whose main practical purpose was the secular goal of co-operation.

In 1894, Ed travelled to Will’s homestead in the Qu’Appelle Valley to help his brother build a log house and break five acres at the top of the hill. The colony was on his mind at this time and he talked to many people about the idea. The founding meeting of the Harmony Industrial Association was held in the Beulah school in June of 1895. Those present gave clause by clause approval to the “Constitution” written by Ed and Will, and instructed the two brothers to find a site for the colony. The meeting named Samuel Sanderson as president, Will Paynter as vice-president, and two men who did not actually join the colony as secretary and treasurer. Ed Paynter did not assume an office, despite his being a prime mover in the venture. In the fall of 1894, when Ed had a long talk with Laurier about economic conditions and talked to many others about co-operation, “everybody seemed interested but none of them had any money to start anything.”
The interest was utopian, the lack of funds was the practical reality, and this theme is woven through the written utopian documents as well as through the history of the Hamona Colony.

IMAGINING UTOPIA: THE PROSPECTUS, CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Much of this fascinating utopian document reflects the contradictions and the tensions involved in making utopia from the materials of the real world. For example, the “Prospectus” describes the site in glowing terms and suggests the abundance of the Garden of Eden or the Golden Age. The inducement of free homesteads for the first thirty forty settlers, however, and the recognition that this would give them financial advantage over those who joined the colony later, is not in harmony with the idea of abundance for all, as it implies relatively less abundance or more scarcity for those who come later. It also reflects competitive rather than co-operative values and a correspondingly “lower” view of human nature.

This is ironic because the idea of a fallen human nature is the basis for the strongly expressed feeling, in Article I, that “the present competitive social system is one of injustice and fraud and directly opposed to the precepts laid down by [“Our Saviour”] for the guidance of mankind in subduing all the forces of nature and the evils springing from selfishness in the human heart.” The idea that selfishness is “in the human heart” is a traditional view of human nature which is actually anti-utopian, because it says that human selfishness is a barrier to the establishment of utopia. Thus, the radicalism is limited, the potential for co-operation qualified, by the assumption about selfish human nature. The implication is extremely important: if human beings are essentially flawed then any community would have to have more rather than fewer laws, rules, structures, and even punishments laid out in advance.

Some of the structure is suggested in Article IV, the most conventionally “utopian” section of the Constitution. The descriptions of the eight departments (Finance, Public Works, Education and Recreation, Manufacture, Agriculture, Distribution, Sanitation, Cuisine) indicate, first, this was to be a colony of some size, a utopian town at least, with streets, alleys, public buildings, and parks. Second, the production of goods and the distribution of goods and services was to be centralized rather than decentralized. Third, the colony would promote health and provide free medical care to all, another utopian idea found in various sources. Fourth, there is responsibility implied for providing not merely entertainment but “elevating entertainment” which would add to moral well-being as well as mental and physical well-being. The picture which emerges here, of a large, physically centralized place with social programs and shared community standards, even for entertainment, is recognizably “utopian.” Although Ed Paynter remarked that he liked News from Nowhere, William Morris’s anarchist utopia, “best of all” (perhaps for its strong emphasis on democratic co-operation or “mutual aid”), the eight departments, the centralization, and features such as a public system of medical care, owe much more to the influence of Edward Bellamy’s famous utopia, Looking Backward: 2000-1887. The strong current of Christian/ethical socialism in Bellamy and in some other writers, was also an important influence.

One of the most fundamental problems for utopias, as for all societies real or imaginary, is how to balance the rights and freedoms of individuals with the needs of the group. The basic structure of the association (members could own up to five shares, yet would have only one vote for officers and directors or at general meetings — a blend of representative and participatory democracy) attempted this balance, but the issue is addressed explicitly in Sections 6 and 7 of Article V, with their provisions that members shall surrender their “natural freedom” in some areas yet the “Association shall in no way interfere” in other areas (social, religious and domestic). Balance between the rights of the individual and society is also reflected in provisions for education. Section 8 provides that children will be instructed “in such lines as they show most aptitude,” an interesting expression of the “organic” idea of education, the
idea that education should grow out of the natural curiosity of children and should not be merely the transfer of information from the teacher. In a colony based upon this document a child might show “most aptitude” in something which provided no economic return to the colony, but the writers seemed to prefer the child’s interests to the colony’s needs.9

Article V attempts to balance the utopian with the practical in the work lives of the colonists. From the perspective of individual colonists it would be desirable to be “guaranteed employment,” but from the colony’s perspective this would be “whenever possible.” Employment would be guaranteed in “that branch of service [an expression which suggests Bellamy’s ‘industrial army’] which he prefers,” but this would be subject to other conditions (Section 1). All members would receive the “same compensation for each day’s labour performed,” yet this equality would be balanced by a clearly hierarchical structure of authority: “all orders of Foremen and Superintendents must at all times be obeyed” (Sections 3, 4). The association would get the benefits from productions, discoveries or inventions, provided that it supported the work of the member (Section 10). Sections 11 and 12 introduce a problem which appears in almost every utopia: how to motivate people to work their best for the common good. Section 11 states that those who do their best would be considered the more “deserving” workers. We know that all workers would be paid at the same rate, so the question of being more or less deserving would have to relate to the “system of preferment” spoken of in Section 12. This system is not described except that it would be one of “special incentives” approved by the board of directors. It seems fair to speculate that perhaps the writers had in mind promotions to “higher” positions within the colony hierarchy or special honours such as awards, medals and the like. Both of these were essential elements of the system devised by Bellamy for his industrial army in Looking Backward, and they are very common elsewhere. The radical alternative to this is Morris’s News from Nowhere, which suggests that the worker has to find pleasure in the work itself, and that the best motivation for hard work is the sheer joy of the work. The Constitution seems to aim for a mixture of these two approaches to the problem of motivating workers in utopia. The same practicality is employed upon the difficult problem of whether to allow potentially disruptive politics in utopia. The Paynters solved the dilemma by providing that “no member shall vote for himself for any office, and for any member to ask another to vote for him shall be evidence sufficient to show that he is unworthy of public trust.”10

Section 22 provides a procedure which establishes the balance of power between individuals and the community, which might be said to be the single most important issue for any community. The essence of the section is that in cases of “failure,” “offence” or “violation” (these are not defined), the individual may be “tried,” found either “innocent” or “guilty,” and if guilty suspended from the association for a period of time. This is consistent with the language of Article I, which uses terms from criminal law to characterize the problems of the society. The penalty of what has elsewhere been called “shunning” can be devastating for members of communities whose identities have been wholly based on their membership in the community. The alternative to this system would require a completely different paradigm in which many problems regarded as “crimes” or “sins” would instead be regarded as disputes or disagreements needing resolution, a model closer to civil law than criminal law, and one more in keeping with an egalitarian and democratic society than a hierarchical structure in which what is right is defined by those at the top of the hierarchy. The language (interestingly inclusive in this instance) hints at this “dispute resolution” or “mediation” model when it provides that “he or she shall thereby subject himself or herself to the penalty of suspension from the Association,” although this would merely be to co-operate with the inevitable.

The ambiguity of the Constitution reflects many of the tensions and contradictions of the day, but the positive ideal is still very clear. The critics of nineteenth century economic individualism offered a very diverse range of models: whether social harmony would be achieved by re-establishment of a benign paternalism or modern feudalism as Ruskin and Carlyle suggested; whether an era of Christian brotherhood would replace the era of survival of the economically fittest as Bellamy suggested in his hierarchical utopia; whether workers and working would replace owners and owning as Marx suggested; whether the new model would be a secular and non-hierarchical or even anarchist society of freely co-operating individuals as Morris suggested — the ideal of a society of harmonious co-operation was the ultimate goal of all these utopian responses. For all the differences of approach and detail, it is this ideal which Ed and Will sought to enshrine in the Harmony Constitution.

GETTING STARTED: 1895-98

It was appropriate that the experiment began at a place named Beulah. Beulah means “married” in Hebrew and is used in Isaiah to represent the future land of delight for Israel.11 The journey took the colonists about twenty miles north and west of Beulah to the confluence of the Assiniboine and Qu’Appelle Rivers, and another twenty miles westward along the Qu’Appelle Valley past the mouth of the Big Cut Arm Creek, where Will’s homestead was. Perhaps those who arrived in summer saw the same thin haze as Senator Douglas did a few years earlier, which gave a “blush tinge” to the hills.12 Or perhaps their way was along a deeply rutted wagon road upon which the “dewy grass lay thick,” as described by Edith Rutherford: “The flowers . . . were red columbia, blue fringe gentian, yellow water lilies, all in the creek. The wild rhubarb stalks we used as sun shades. Wild white morning glories and hoppers covered the shrubs by the side of the road. There were birds singing and wild fruit in abundance.”13 The
colony site is on the gentle north slope above the flat valley floor and the present road, with long views both east and west along the valley. The Prospectus promised “those things freely supplied by the hand of nature which with industry and skill may be made to contribute to . . . comfort and prosperity,” and we can imagine the eagerness of Ed and Will Paynter as they looked upon this pleasant valley after the Beulah meeting.

The zeal of the two young men was reflected in their naming of the colony. Although “Hamona” appears as though it derives from harmony, this, according to Ed Paynter, was not the case. It comes from a passage in Ezekiel which describes how Gog and his multitude, enemies of Israel, would be defeated and buried in The Valley of Hamon-gog in order to cleanse the land. The city of hamonah (meaning “multitude”) was in this valley. It was one of the cities of Refuge.” The colonists dropped the final “h” and the “little village became known as Hamona.” Thus their establishment of this colony was not merely a retreat from competitive society but it was an act of war against the “Gog” of their own day, whose characteristics were not violent aggression but “injustice and fraud.”

It was, however, diplomacy the utopian brothers needed, not war, in order to solve the homestead problem which accounted for the colony’s slow start. There were actually two problems, one of which was that alternate sections of land were reserved for purposes other than settlement. In the fall of 1895, Will Paynter wrote to T. Mayne Daly, Minister of the Interior in Ottawa, asking for permission to homestead odd-numbered sections as well as even numbered sections, because of the way the river valleys run, saying “our homesteads are very badly cut up” as a result.” Daly replied: “I find that the odd-numbered sections in Township 18, Range 31, West of the 1st Meridian, have already been scheduled to Railway Companies for which they have been reserved under agreement. They are, therefore, not available for homesteading purposes, and I much regret that under these circumstances it is out of my power to meet your wishes.”

The second problem was the requirement of the Dominion Lands Act of 1886 that settlers should reside on their own quarters and make certain improvements to them (for example, cultivation and buildings) as their settlement duties. Paynter’s letter of 7 October had asked permission to take advantage of Section 37 of the Act, so that the colonists could live in a village and perform their settlement duties “by cultivation only.” He wrote another letter on 2 November with a fuller explanation:

... Unless we can take advantage of this clause I am afraid we will not be able to start the colony satisfactorily. It is a co-operative Industrial Association which we have organized and we wish to build all our buildings in the Village. If you will give us permission to do this perhaps you would get the Government to give us a company the clear deed of the quarter Section upon which we wish to build our village [sic] NE1/4 of 10, 18, 31 West. One of our members has taken this place [this was Ed Paynter’s quarter] but would take another instead if we could get the deed of this right away. Our reason for asking this is that otherwise we would be putting all Association buildings upon a single member’s homestead, and he would get the deed of the whole place where duties were performed. We do not ask a great deal. We hope you may comply with our request, if so I am sure we will be able to have a thriving village in existence before next Fall. We have built two houses on members homesteads adjacent to the town site this Fall and have stopped operations till we receive reply from you.

I may say that this is no speculation [but] is purely co-operative, and should you secure to us the deed of the site any one who becomes a member of our colony will have free use of same according to his requirements.”

This letter is a fascinating example of both the utopian, who insists the enterprise is not speculative but co-operative, and the practical person, who sees in advance the potential difficulty if a communal project is located on land which is individually owned. The department, however, did not accept Paynter’s argument and this legal problem was not resolved until an amendment to the Act was passed, in June of 1898, to permit co-operative farming. Ed Paynter had urged Clifford Sifton, who became Minister of the Interior after the election of 1896, to take such an amendment forward.” During 1896 and most of 1897 some of the colonists travelled back and forth between Hamona and Beulah, making preparations, and the progress was very slow. Things began to move in the spring of 1897: Ed and Mima Paynter were married at the colony in March, the forty-five head of cattle were brought from Beulah in May, and the first school was established in October.

LIFE AT HAMONA COLONY 1898-1900

It is unfortunate we do not know more about the Hamona colonists. Samuel Sanderson was a Quaker from Elmira, Ontario, where his people had helped find homes for escaped American slaves. Hannah Sanderson was also a Quaker, and the Sandersons at Hamona still used “thee” and “thou.” The Sandersons were a generation older. Their son George was a member of the colony in his own right. They had ten daughters, four of whom married colonists. (Annie m. Bob Greer, Jemima m. Ed paynter, Leah m. Art Parker, Ethel m. Silas Parker. Art and Silas were sons of Edgar Parker, a millwright from Nova Scotia who had been working in Winnipeg for the Canadian Pacific Railway who arrived in 1898 with a washing machine). Perhaps because of Samuel Sanderson’s background and age he was elected the first president (and perhaps his status as prospective father-in-law had something to do with it, too). Robert Greer was an orphan from Mount Forest, Ontario (his family had emigrated from Ireland) who worked in lumber camps, as a cook on railway gangs, and as a carpenter in Oak Lake, Manitoba, where he met Annie Sanderson. They moved to Beulah and lived in the association’s rented farmhouse there; Annie did housework...
and Robert did carpentry, including construction of buildings at Hamona. He became the farm manager at Hamona and vice-president. Colin Shand was a young Englishman who had tried farming but was working in the Hudson's Bay store in Winnipeg in 1895. Signur Anderson (married to Gacobina; three children) was a carpenter and in charge of the cows. John and Maggie Selkirk and their four children remained in the colony until the end in 1900. Various others either did not show up at all (Walter C. Vincent and W.B. Gurney, for example, who had been elected secretary and treasurer at the Beulah meeting), or else stayed only for a while. The latter group included H.G. Sparling who was the first teacher (his work was good but he did not have a North-West Territories teaching certificate); S.J. Bjornsson who worked for twenty-two days in 1899; Reuben Burdett who left by the end of 1898; W.H. Hall, an English candy maker who had done no farm work, and his family ("Soon learned to milk alright. But did not want to go near a horse"); Fred Windeatt, an English Catholic printer and reporter from Manchester who joined in 1898 when he saw a report of the colony, but stayed only until fall; and the Garlick family. Some others (Herb Carter, W.F. Schofield, Fred Teeple) appeared to have been hired workers but not colony members.22

What would the visitor to Hamona Colony have seen? The map included here gives an impression of the site and there are some memories of houses and furnishings:

The houses at the colony were built of logs. Lumber for the floors was bought in Moosomin and was hauled out by a team and wagon. Window frames and doors were sometimes made by the carpenters and some of the furniture too.

In our [the Greers'] home we had a dresser and sideboard that Dad made. Dishes, pots, pans and other necessities were brought in with them. Mattresses were filled with straw and had to be emptied occasionally, the covering washed and then refilled. The house was heated by wood stoves, so cutting wood and sawing it into sticks was a yearly winter job. Coal oil lamps were used but if we ran out of oil, a rag in tallow was used until someone went to town. They had to go all the way to Millwood for flour. Sometimes they took their own wheat to be ground into flour at the mill; other times they bought the flour. It was a long journey in those days with team and wagon and Klen Bligh's was a favourite stopping place for many people.23

Today, some piles of fieldstone indicate building sites but when the colony disbanded the buildings themselves were removed, and Hamona became again, as it was when it was first conceived, a utopia or good place (eutopos) which was no place (ou-topos), the ambiguity intended by Thomas More when he invented the word utopia.

Even when the utopia was someplace its boundaries were somewhat porous. The colony store served the whole vicinity, and the same is true of the Hamona School, organized in the fall of 1897 in Burdett's kitchen and moved into its building at Easter of 1898. Whit Huston noted later that it was a public school and had "no connection with the Co-op Colony except that it had the same name and one or more members of the Colony were also members of the School Board." He meant there was no official connection, of course, but the language illustrates the integration of colony and surrounding community prior to the disbanding of the association. The school building itself was made of concrete and stone. It lasted only until 1914 (when it was condemned) because "the man in charge of the work was changed too often."24 The school was located (all sources agree on this) to the east, upon Ed Paynter's quarter. Edith Rutherford recalls attending this school a few years later and what she describes would probably be very close to what a visitor to Hamona would have seen in 1899, and what the colony children would have experienced:

The school had four high windows on both east and west and two narrow windows on the south. The north side was all blackboard. The stone walls made wide windowsills and a large Webster's Dictionary sat on the west window. The wood heater centre front and the teacher's desk were in front of the heater [sic]. Two rows of desks on each side and three desks were behind the heater. In the cold weather, those near the stove were too warm, while others were too cold. There was a sand box in a corner where we made maps in the sand using water for lakes and rivers, making mountains of sand and using colored pegs of wood for forests...

Noon hour and recess were never long enough. We played pom-pom pull away prisoner's base, ante-i-over, cricket and hopscotch.

We walked to the creek at noon for drinking water. We tried to dip it where there were no minnows. I still remember the warm musky taste of the water.

I remember our woolen stockings drying by the big wood heater, and the smell of tanned leather as buckskin moccasins and pull-over mitts dried by the fire. To open school in the morning, we sang "Maple Leaf Forever" and at closing, we sang hymns from little red hymn books. We enjoyed our school days in Hamona.25

The first trustees of the Hamona School District were Will Paynter, James T. Mulberry (father of Edith Rutherford) and Samuel Sanderson.

The Harmony Industrial Association opposed public individual competition and in favour of a centrally organized co-operative strategy. That this intention was carried out to the very limited extent possible, given the small size of the colony, is clear from one of the most important surviving documents: the "Ledger," which begins in 1897. The accounts are set up as for "departments", including carpentry, store and agriculture, stock and dairy and construction. In fact, these were areas of
NOTES TO THE MAP: "AN IMPRESSION OF HAMONA COLONY"

I prepared this map based on sketches by Roy Paynter (2) and Ernie Paynter, one by Peer Paynter at my request, and one anonymous map in the Spy Hill Museum. Because of inconsistencies and, therefore, uncertainties, this map may not be an "impression" of what the colony may have looked like.

1. "The SE 1/4 of ten was not at any time part of the colony. It was the homestead of Felix Hayden, a half-breed, a good neighbor and a pretty good farmer with land with more loan than was on the colony 1/4 west of it. The store was on the NE 1/4, I think but within a few yards of the center of the section [others have located the store on the NW 1/4]. The stable was on the NW which was mostly hillside with a little land at the top. The Burdett house, afterwards Sanderson and the Selkirk house were on the SW which ran from the foot of the hill to the river and was smooth and clear but mostly heavy gumbo. The SE must have been purchased by Ed Paynter and his sons when they formed the Hamona Farming Co. in 1917. For many years afterwards it and adjoining quarters were the property of the [Saskatchewan Farm Loan] Board." SAB, R-513.1, R. W. Huston to Gilbert Johnson, 16 October 1950.

2. Ed Paynter’s house (a log house) is recalled to be within the historic site (on the NW 1/4) and below the road (on the SW 1/4). It cannot be both places. I have located it in the village grouping but just east of the section mid-line on what became his own property, as this makes most sense. The confusion probably arises because when Ed Paynter returned to Hamona and the colony was in process of dissolution, he “took over the house across the road where Bob Greer had been living” and the Geers “moved back to their house on their homestead.” Ibid., Ed Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 6 August 1951.

3. The well is indicated on only one of the five maps. Roy Paynter remembers it near the store but also that water was hauled from Cut Arm Creek in barrels. Ibid., Ernie Paynter, 30 April 1975.

4. Ernie Paynter locates the stables below the road in the SW 1/4, but this may be an example of what someone’s recollection of “below the road” means, since there are two roads involved. This is probably the reason for some other uncertainties. The old road was relocated in 1919, according to Peer Paynter in a phone call to Alex MacDonald on 26 July 1990. The log stables were built first and were replaced later by larger frame stables, shown farther north on the map. Ibid., Peer Paynter, 27 July 1990.

5. The creamery was used as the store and later as a house when Ed Paynter moved back to Hamona in 1916-17, according to Peer Paynter. The creamery was one of the stone buildings. It had a summer kitchen about twelve by fourteen feet. “The front of the building was frame as was the summer kitchen and the sides and back were masonry. There was also masonry platform in front about five feet wide... the road ran right in front of the building.” Peer Paynter to Alex MacDonald, 23 August 1990. This house is shown in the picture of Mrs. Edwards (no connection to colony). The separator, churn and butcher shop were part of the store/creamery building. SAB, R-513.1, Roy Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 30 April 1975.

6. The Sanderson homestead (lived in by the Burdett’s for a while according to Whit Huston) was a two story log house, shingled, plus a lean to with a sod roof over the kitchen. Peer Paynter to Alex MacDonald, 27 July 1990.

7. This log house (see the photo), which was built for Will Paynter, is about “halfway up the hill North of the store. It was demolished about 1918 and the materials were used to build a pig house.” Peer Paynter to Alex MacDonald, 23 August 1990.

8. Roy Paynter remembered that “some of the bachelor men had beds at one time in the loft of a barn that was at the house Burdett had on Section 4. Later the Edmonds and Shand place.” He does not remember a carpenter or blacksmith shop, nor a common dining hall. SAB, R-513.1, Roy Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 30 April 1975.

9. Presumably these were the carpentry and blacksmith shops identified in the "Ledger" but not recalled by Roy Paynter. The hen house was perhaps part of the stables.

10. The school opened in 1889. It was twenty by twenty-six feet, cost six hundred dollars, and was to be financed over twenty years at seven percent, the first payment due on 21 April 1899. Spy Hill Museum, Hamona School District #451, “Cash Expenditures.”
work managed by individuals rather than the extensive central departments implied by the Constitution. There is no minute book for meetings of stockholders. Years later Ed Paynter recalled:

The various [superintendents] and executive met every Saturday night or oftener if necessary to lay out the work for the following week and place the workers where best suited.

A meeting of all the members was held once every month or oftener [sic] if necessary. Men and women were placed in an equal footing and their remuneration...per hour of labor was of course the same. The [superintendent] kept the time of each member working under him and made returns to the Secretary at the end of every week.

He also refers to the “unanimous vote” by which the colonists decided to drop the four percent interest on credit balances in the association, because this was an “unbrotherly custom absolutely forbidden by the laws of the Bible.”

It seems clear that the formal decision-making process of the colony was not extensive and that much in those two years would have been done on an informal and ad hoc basis. As well, given the difficult conditions of pioneering, such energies as the colonists had for governing and decision-making would have been directed first toward essentials, such as the operation of the school, in which others besides colony members were involved.

In a similarly practical way, much of the members’ day to day work was devoted to the primary agricultural activities of grain farming and cattle raising. There was also trade. Lumber was shipped to Hamona from the Ruskin Colony in British Columbia, along with Fraser River salmon and fresh fruit. These had been exchanged for a load of flour ground from wheat grown on the rented farm at Beulah. Whit Huston recalled this or a similar occasion:

I recall driving one Saturday morning in a wagon to Moosomin in time for breakfast at the Queen’s and then after Ed had transacted business for the colony here and there and we got the car spotted and had our dinner, with the assistance of a man Ed picked up at the Hotel we unloaded and piled a car of mixed lumber from the Ruskin Colony. Hamona sent them flour etc. in exchange. I remember we finished the work before supper time and then loaded a rack of lumber and drove two-thirds of the way home before camping in a bluff for the night.

There was also commerce with other farmers. Thomas Barnard, who farmed just to the north, owed $17.67, an example of the colony’s trade with the surrounding community. (Barnard came with the Greers and Sandersons in 1897 and took a homestead two miles from the colony. Once he broke his thumb and Mrs. Lila Paynter bandaged it for him.) The members sold grain, butter and meat, and did carpentry work outside the colony. The butter was sold by McNaughton’s in Moosomin as “Hamona Butter.”

Another source of income was the production of lime. Felix Hayden, a former Hudson’s Bay freighter who lived on the quarter immediately below Ed Paynter’s, showed them how to manufacture lime, which was used to produce plaster, cement, fertilizer, quicklime and whitewash, by burning limestone slabs found in the area. “Most of the lime was sold to Thomas Grayson of Moosomin for cash. In 1898 alone they produced 1,221 bushels of lime which was teamed some thirty miles south to Moosomin and sold for [27.5 cents] per bushel. Later they got 60 [cents] a bushel. Some 22 shipments were made between May 7th and September 27th for the total value of $335.82.” The lime was known as “lump lime or Hot lime. One hazard was to encounter a rain storm which would start the lime slacking and burn spots in the plank boxes.”

Long afterward, Peer Paynter recalled this aspect of the colony’s life:

When we first lived at Hamona our nearest town was Moosomin and they used to gather lime stones from the Qu’Appelle hills and burn it in kilns in the ravine above where the cairn now stands. What they didn’t sell from the kiln they hauled to Moosomin where they traded it for groceries, etc, from the store...

Many of the log houses in the area were lathed with willows nailed onto logs on an angle and plastered with lime plaster from the old lime kilns. I remember in later years playing in the old lime kilns where the clay sides had been burned in beautiful reds and browns. They made real good mud cakes.

Another picturesque description is given by Arthur Kelly:

Much lime was burned in those days. A hole was dug at the hill top along the valley rim about ten or twelve feet deep. A grate was made at an entrance at the bottom so that a fire could be made and fed with wood. Limestone was then gathered on the prairie & the hole or pit was then filled to the top. A good supply of cord wood mostly green would be placed and the fire was lit and kept going for 3 days and nights steady. To test if the lime was burnt efficiently a long iron rod was put down from the top and if it would go through the fire was allowed to die out. The kilned lime was very good and was in great demand when at that time cement was unobtainable. It was quite a sight to see the flames at the top of a kiln at night which had the colours of a rainbow.

The colony’s lime trade was supervised by Will Paynter until the limited supply of limestone in the area was exhausted.

The internal economy of the colony was designed to foster the co-operative values of the Constitution. The Harmony Industrial Association issued its own money, called “scrip,” to emphasize both its difference from the surrounding individualist economy and its own positive program. Scrip was issued in denominations of one dollar and five dollars, and was used for all internal transactions. Cash was provided when possible to members.
travelling outside the colony but the scrip was accepted in the vicinity and later redeemed by the association. Members could also issue cheques to other members by asking the secretary-treasurer to make a book transfer from one member’s account to the other’s.  

The “time accounts” for 1898 and 1899 are a puzzle which needs to be explained. One problem with the record is that the names in the time account for 1899 do not fully correspond with the names on the colony register for that year. More problematic is the record of hours worked and money paid. If the differing rates of pay and credits are based upon dependents, as Ernie Paynter has suggested, the dollars and cents recorded in the ledger must not be correct. For example, in 1899 Will Paynter (with three children) received $232.88, consisting of a daily rate of .61 for 300.5 days plus a daily credit of .165; Colin Shand (with no children) received $227.08, consisting of a daily rate of .45 for 293 days plus a daily dividend of .325. Thus, it appears that Colin Shand, with no dependents and working fewer days, received almost the same as Will Paynter. The higher daily credit perhaps was based upon the amount invested, which would reflect the practical cooperative mixture of capitalist economics (profit based on owned shares) and socialist principle (rewards based on labour) in the Constitution. It is also notable that no women are listed in 1898; the women listed in 1899 (Leah Sanderson and Annie Greer) received very small amounts, suggesting that housework (if this was the work done) may not have been regarded as part of the colony’s work in an “official” way. This does not agree with the recollection of Ed Paynter about women’s remuneration, quoted above.

Hard work and plenty of it was clearly the dominant feature of the lives of the colonists in these years. Perhaps this was why Ed Paynter’s health broke down early in 1899 so that he had to go to British Columbia to recover. However, life at the colony had its lighter moments too. Recreations of the colonists included hiking and rambling in the vicinity, going fishing and berry-picking, or exploring. Another was visiting: “they were hospitable and entertained many strangers. There was much driving to and fro in those homestead days.”

Harry J. Perrin of Spy Hill recollected there was:

...always a warm welcome for anyone and amusements for the younger people and visitors from outside always had a wonderful time any time you called. The toboggan slide beside the school was one big attraction during the winter. It ran full time. The school used it in the day and the adults in the evening and any house you went to there was a very warm welcome when the hill got too steep to climb.

In addition to tobogganing there were sleigh rides and summer sports in season. The first sports day in the district was held at the colony and there were picnics and concerts. The school was used for entertainments such as dances, card parties and sing-songs, although the only musical instruments in the colony were mouth organs. Apparently Ed Paynter (before he left) conducted singing, and the singing included hymns. There was also Bible study. The school was a meeting hall and a forum for Sunday afternoon debates about “topics of interest,” which appeared to have been religious and political issues. Despite strongly differing religious views “various members took turns conducting religious services.”

THE END OF THE HARMONY INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION

The various reasons for the ending of the association and the colony in 1900 fall into two categories, one being the lack of economic viability. Harry J. Perrin comments on this:

I will draw your attention to the position of the site chosen from a farming point-of-view [he had commented earlier on the beauty of the site]. About the only point in its favor was that it was well sheltered from the north and fuel was close at hand. Against that all fees had to be drawn distances. Water drawn from the creek. Any work on the lands were at distances with loss of time coming and going. All produce had to be hauled chiefly to Moosomin and roads were such that the teams had to travel in pairs, so that one team could help the other when stuck in the mud. It was common when drawing freight from Millwood to double on each wagon drawing one wagon up, then go back and draw No 2 wagon past No 1 and repeat the motion. You can see the cost of freighting those kind of roads made. Or rather the lack of roads. The nearest doctor was Moosomin which made medical treatment very expensive. So you see after the railroad missed the site it began to look like an impossible proposition.

After noting the depressed agricultural prices of those years, Perrin says “I think I have told you enough that you can draw your own conclusions why the Association wound up its affairs.” On the positive side Perrin mentions the chief source of revenue which was the grain produced on the three quarters of rented land at Beulah (members owned ten quarter section homesteads near Hamona but most of this land was not broken), the trade in cattle, pigs, poultry and butter, the lime trade, and the colony store which serviced others in the area and “thrive.” That the colony was an economic success was certainly the opinion of Whit Huston, who recollected that “the Ass’n always paid its accounts and was well regarded by the people with whom it did business. The members had a higher standard of living than have many farm people in these days.” The 1899 balance sheet suggests the colony was economically viable. Despite these positive notes, Perrin’s conclusion that the fundamental problem was lack of economic viability would not be surprising to anyone familiar with the plight of agricultural communities facing high transportation costs in a low price environment.
The other category has to do not with economics but with some kind of dispute within the community. Perrin said he heard some of the chief members contend it [the disbanding] was caused by “outside influence,” an intriguing suggestion not elaborated. He also alludes to a “mild dissension” which crept in, an idea given more strength and substance by recollections of Ed Paynter:

...there was plenty of discussion from Christian philosophy to rank atheism. I think their ideas were largely responsible for the fact that in 1900 there was not even a majority favourably impressed regarding the revival of the Charter..."

Some years earlier Paynter had acknowledged that the lack of a rail line was “important” in the decision to disband and that there were “several influences at work.” He clearly portrays, however, a political-religious split:

...during the last two years of operation, a number of members were admitted who professed or advocated socialist, or what now would be called communist doctrines. They wished to abolish family life, and individual homes, and all live in one large apartment building with a public dining room under the management of the married ladies of the community, several to take turns of management. The advocacy of this plan caused a sharp division in the ranks of the members, especially as some of those of the extreme left wing even advocated free love as part of their plans, and all of these parties were staunch advocates of Atheism."

Perhaps the most extreme example of the dissension theory is a comment written in the 1930s to historian Florence Barker. “About the Harmony colony,” the writer advises, “John Selkirk who was one of the victims would be able to give you full particulars, and R. Greer.”45 This could modify the usual view of the amicable ending of the colony. A “victim” in this situation could be a colonist whose views were not adopted, or it could be a colonist who had to move because others owned the land, which was the case for both Greer and Selkirk. This was also true for the Andersons, however, and this remains a puzzle for now.

Whit Huston suggested the presence of a third group in the community who belonged to neither the religious nor atheistic camps:

I know nothing about a left wing group. Do not think any of them were left wing in the sense in which the term is now used. But some of the members had very pronounced religious opinions which they were fond of proclaiming, others were just as vocal concerning their non- or anti-religious views. Then there were others who did not interfere with anyone’s religion but believed in freedom in non-essential matters. To be good peaceable co-operators was with them the important thing.46

In another letter Huston says it is easier to run a co-op farm now [1949] than half a century ago, because today “people are more inclined to say ‘In essentials unity in non-essentials liberty.’ The implication, clearly, is that at Hamona there were strong personalities and strong opinions about matters not considered essential by everyone. Yet Huston immediately adds, as if not to give an exaggerated impression, “the Hamona people were a good bunch, friendly and agreeable.”47

Thus, it appears that there were economic reasons for the ending of the experiment, perhaps not that the colony had been an economic failure in its short life but that it did not promise the future economic success the colonists hoped for. Perhaps Perrin was correct in suggesting that, just as at Cannington Manor, the decision to locate the railroad elsewhere was the critical factor. And yet, successful farming was occurring not only adjacent to rail lines and it is at least arguable that the many economic advantages of the communal situation could have more than balanced what was predictable as a temporary transportation problem, for if individual farmers could survive until the rail system developed surely a colony of co-operators could survive. Given this, it seems necessary to take the ideological dissension theory more seriously. The study of intentional communities makes abundantly clear that the “glue” which holds long-surviving communities together is not economics, not ideology in a political sense, but shared belief in a transcendent reality which insists upon unity as an essential value. The Hutterites exemplify this. Whether the end of Hamona had to do with economic prospects, communalism, or some combination of these (and other) reasons, it is clear that the required commitment to some transcendent values was not there amongst enough members to keep the colony going. In the spring of 1900 Ed Paynter returned to Hamona and was informed “that it was the intention to abandon the Charter and wind up the affairs of the Colony...” A two-thirds vote was needed to renew the Charter and this was not forthcoming. In Paynter’s words: “I don’t suppose any two of the members of the organization would agree as to the reason of the decision to disband as there were several influences at work.” A “valuating committee” priced all the colony’s assets and members were allowed to purchase these up to the value of their credits; this included most houses and buildings. Despite this practical reality which eventually overcame the utopian impulse, the end occurred “without any difficulty and without any legal action” and the former members remained in “friendly relations.”48

THE INFLUENCE OF HAMONA

Since nothing remains today at the site but an historical marker any achievement claimed for Hamona must be based upon its influence. Here Ed Paynter’s comment, “that five years at Hamona Colony was as beneficial to the adult members as five years at university,” is relevant. He recognized that these five years were a profound formative influence upon the members, who
would have been different people without them. Even though the great task they set for themselves was not achieved it was this experience which confirmed their adherence to the ideals of co-operation and harmony, and this was especially true for the utopian brothers who had originally conceived and organized the colony.

It will require a separate study to do justice to the busy lives of the Paynters after 1900. Ed ran unsuccessfully for Parliament as an independent in 1908. He worked in a number of capacities in the grain trade, from farmer to elevator operator, to chair of the Hail Insurance Commission, to member of the Grain Growers, in which capacity he campaigned for the vote for women. He operated the Ruskin House Hotel in Tantallon, was provincial secretary of the Direct Legislation League, and was director and president of Saskatchewan Co-operative Creameries. He was also a director and president of Merchants Consolidated of Winnipeg, a system for co-operative buying by merchants to “eliminate unnecessary costs.” Like his brother he was involved with the Hamona School District for many years. His interest in monetary reform led to his being western Canada secretary of the British Banking Reform League, and in 1932 he was appointed to the Saskatchewan Provincial Banking Commission. He published a utopian pamphlet on money and progress in 1921, which sold thousands of copies in several editions until the final edition of 1932, entitled _The Trumpet Call of Canadian Money and Progress_. This included a description of the scrip system used at Hamona, which Paynter proposed should be writ large for the nation to get people back to work, and asked readers to sign and send in the “Oath of Service” on the back page, to the League’s headquarters at Tantallon. Will Paynter’s language is less metaphorical than his brother’s, but his vision of a utopian future is no less earnest and enthusiastic in its blending of religion, politics and economics. For both brothers the Hamona experience was a touchstone and a constant theme, and this was transmitted in all their many involvements and through their utopian writings. The province honoured them in 1955 by naming Paynter Island on Keller Lake in northern Saskatchewan after them.

The idea of co-operation was also reflected in the lives of other colonists. One source credits Samuel Sanderson with the idea of Municipal Hail Insurance. Robert Greer was a municipal councillor and member of United Grain Growers, adjuster for Municipal Hail and president of the Spy Hill Telephone Company, all of these being embryonic forms of the large co-operatives and crown corporations of today. Annie Greer, although she had nine children and little time for other activities, was a member of the Women’s Grain Growers and other organizations. “She was a marvellous seamstress...and often did sewing for a neighbour who could not do it for herself. In time of sickness she was always ready to lend a hand.” Colin Shand, in co-operation with another farmer, was the first in Saskatchewan to harvest grain with a combine, a “Holt Combined Harvester and Thresher” imported from California, an event commemorated on the historical marker at the Hamona site.

**CONCLUSION**

There is a Paynter family story, related by Ed Paynter to his son Peer around 1920, about events which occurred in 1901 or 1902, just after the ending of the colony:

> It seems that a man stayed with the Paynters for a little while during the haying season while looking for land to homestead. People in those days depended on hay cut around sloughs on wild land to
winter their stock. Father and Uncle Will had cut and stacked their winter supply at the site where they cut it so as to haul it home in the winter when they weren’t so busy. The homesteader went into Moosomin and registered on the quarter section where the hay was stacked. Then claimed the hay and tried to sell it to them. When they refused to pay for it and were in the process of hauling it home he swore out a warrant for the arrest of both Father and Uncle Will. Father at this time was down at Beulah, Manitoba for a while and when he returned to Hamona found that the N.W.M.P. had arrested Uncle Will and taken him to Regina leaving the women to look after the stock. Father went at once to Moosomin by horseback and got a lawyer and soon had Uncle Will released. They never did arrest Father.

An interesting sideline to this story is that while Uncle Will was in jail in Regina he was put to work feeding pigs. It turned out later that the pigs belonged to the jailer and the North-West Territories government was paying for the feed. The jailer was convicted of fraud and served some time as a result.  

The story suggests that legal-commercial relations and moral relations are not necessarily the same, precisely the point which led to the criticism of a competitive society in Article I of the Constitution of the Harmony Industrial Association. The radical contrast between what is and what ought to be was accommodated by the Paynter brothers with an even stronger insistence upon the ideal. Their later careers, and those of other colonists, make clear that they did not, despite the apparent failure of Hamona, give up on their ideal of a co-operative society. Yet their lives after Hamona also make clear that they remained practical about finding ways to achieve their ideals in the real world. One of the best ways is with humour, and Will Paynter demonstrated this some years later in a debate about whether a new Hamona School should be built in the valley or up on the plains. He suggested, to resolve the matter, that they’d “better have one on wheels.” Perhaps this impractical suggestion was practical after all, because of its humour, and perhaps impractical utopian dreams are really practical and useful in the same way. We cannot follow them as road maps but they do suggest the direction in which we should be heading.

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Members of the Paynter family have been generous with suggestions and in lending documents. In particular I thank Jean Thue (granddaughter of Will and Lila Paynter), Audrey Paynter (widow of Ernie Paynter), and the late Peer Paynter (son of Ed and Mima Paynter). A number of residents of the Tantallon and Spy Hill district have been helpful in making suggestions or sharing papers: Bella and Maurice Kelly; Margaret and Bill Kingdon; Linda Olson of the Spy Hill Museum; Lilian Clark; Elaine Clarke; and Pearl Jameison of the Jameison Museum in Moosomin. Permission to quote from unpublished materials in the Saskatchewan Archives is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks to Donald Richan and Tim Novak of the Saskatchewan Archives; Tim Prince of the Legislative Library; Larry McDonald, Marion Lake and Elizabeth Magee of the University of Regina Library; and Don Hall of Audio Visual Services at the University of Regina for help with photographs. Professor Emeritus Clint White of Campion College first drew my attention to the colony. His comments have been helpful, as have the comments of other colleagues: Brian Dalsin, Stephen Kenny, Ken Leyton-Brown and Marcia McGovern. I am very grateful to Christine Cluff for her care in typing and re-typing the manuscript. And thanks to students in Humanities 260, “Utopian Literature, Thought and Experiment,” for valuable suggestions.

Endnotes


2 Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Paynter Family Papers, R-513.1. Alice Paynter to Phebe [Doyle] McLaurin, 23 November 1890. The Paynter Family Papers include family obituary notices, letters from Ed Paynter to various people in later years, and letters by others such as Whit Huston, the second teacher in the colony.

3 Ibid., Ed Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 6 August 1957.

4 For more information on the Patrons of Industry, see Earl G. Drake, Regina The Queen City (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Ltd., 1955), 92-98. See also the Spy Hill Museum (SHM), MS #75-106-1, “Patrons of Industry and Grain Growers minute books 1892-1910.”

5 The “immigration utopia” is part of the settlement story described in Norman Fergus Black’s History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West (Regina: Northwest Historical Company, 1913) and in

*SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 6 August 1957.* The "Prospectus, Constitution and Bylaws" have not been printed in this document. The complete text is available at the Saskatchewan Archives. This document is not to be confused with the "Charter" of the Harmony Industrial Association which was apparently granted by the North-West Territories government at Regina in 1895. I have not yet located this document. In 1939 Ed Paynter, not having a copy of what had been written in 1895, reconstructed in a letter the preamble to the "Charter" of the "Harmony Co-operative Association." The Charter was apparently secured from the NWT Government at Regina shortly after the Beulah meeting: "We, the undersigned, being charter members of the H.C.A., firmly believing in the principles of brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ, do hereby bind ourselves together to provide homes for our members and to insure all, together with their families, against want and the fear of want, and to that end the hereby pool all our assets and energies and will be governed in all our work and actions as provided in our charter and this constitution." (Ibid., Harry J. Perrin, 13 July 1939). What is interesting is that the negative and critical tone of the Constitution article, which speaks of "injustice" and "fraud" is here a positive statement about brotherhood. Is this evidence of the mellower perspective of age, or were the two documents different in this way?

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (New York: Signet 1960 [1888]). The famous Industrial Association is described in Chapter XVI and a form of medicare based on the guaranteed annual income in Chapter XI. *Looking Backward* was also influential later, in the 1930s, upon some of those who founded the CCF; see S. E. Lipset, *Agrarian Society: An Americanタイプ* (California Press, 1971 [1950]), 100. Other influences mentioned by Paynter were the first volume of *Millennial Dawn* by C.T. Russell (*Studies of the Scriptures 1852-1916*); Blachford's *Merry England* (1883-95, Wilfred Meynell, ed.) and *God and My Neighbour*; and John Ruskin's works. He subscribed to a paper called "The Age of Reason" published somewhere in Kansas but did not like its tone, and later "got in contact with a colony in Georgia who were publishing a paper they called "The Social Gospel" 1898-1911, Commonwealth, Georgia," which he liked "much better." (SAB, R-513.1, letter to Lewis Thomas, 3 February 1951)

That the child's curiosity should be the basis of education is associated with the Romantic idea that the child is closer to the natural, closer to the divine, and therefore better suited than adults to the disruptions by years of "civilization," to make educational choices. Elevated expressions of this view are to be found in Wordsworth ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," for example). In a more ordinary way, it informed the educational theory of many writers such as Rousseau, Froebel (who coined the organic term "kindergarten"), Dickens (in *Hard Times*), Bellamy (who allowed free choice on aptitudes, in a way Smith to the contrary), but also with limitations), and Morris (for whom education was entirely motivated by curiosity).

Whether a man of principles should become involved in politics, because he might do no good and in the process corrupt himself, is one of the main questions in Book One of More's *Utopia*. More's ambiguous answer recognizes the inherent difficulty of balancing the practical life with idealistic motivations. *Utopia*, Robert M. Adams, ed. (New York: Norton, 1992 [1516]), 19-28. Plato had earlier discussed the same problem in *The Republic*. Bellamy recognizes it by prohibiting members of the Industrial Army from voting or holding political office, as long as they stay in the Army, 132-33. Morris substitutes local "notes" for the previous elaborate political system and the former Parliament Buildings have become a dung market. *News from Nowhere*, James Redmond, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970 [1890]), 20, 34.

*Ibid., 62-4.*

*Galbraith, "Douglas of Tantallon," in *Saskatchewan Folklore (Summer 1984)*, 14-16.


*Ezek. 39:11-16.*

*SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Lewis H. Thomas, 3 February 1951.*

*Ibid., Will Paynter to T. Mayne Daly, 7 October 1895.*

*Ibid., T. Mayne Daly to Will Paynter, 23 October 1895.*

*Ibid., Will Paynter to T. Mayne Daly, 2 November 1895.*

*Ibid., Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior, to Will Paynter, 27 November 1895.*

*61 Victoria, Chapter 31, An Act Further to Amend the Dominion Lands Act, assented to on 21 June 1898, 130. SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Harry J. Perrin, 31 July 1899.*


More information about the colonists, and especially about the ideas and motives of the relatively permanent members, would be one of the best reasons for a longer study, should such material (for example, detailed recollections by Robert or Annie Greer, John or Maggie Selkirk, or others) become available. This information is from several sources, primarily thanks to the work of Gilbert Johnstone in soliciting or collecting it. Whit Huston to Harry J. Perrin, 4 September 1941; Whit Huston to Gilbert Johnstone, 16 October 1950. Extracts from papers prepared for a public speaking competition arranged by R.W. Huston. Ernie Paynter's "The Harmony Industrial Association" includes some details about the temporary members.


*SAB, R-513.1, Whit Huston to Gilbert Johnstone, 4 November 1949.*

*The Spy Hill Story*, 347-51.

*SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Harry J. Perrin, 13 July 1939.*

The Ruskin colony was located at the mouth of the Stave River in the lower Fraser Valley. It was named after John Ruskin, the British art critic and social reformer who had also influenced the Paynters, and called itself the "Canadian Co-operative Society." It established a school, small store and communally owned sawmill. "However, the venture, believed to have been started in 1896, was short-lived. The hot dry summer of 1898 reduced the flow of the Stave River to the point where logs could no longer be floated to the mill. The following year, the co-op's assets were turned over to E. H. Heaps the company which had supplied most of the machinery. It has been suggested there may have been a Heaps family at Hamona at one time although the source of this suggestion is not known. Jessica Smith, "Hamona colony founded on beliefs in cooperation," in *Co-operative Consumer (Saskatoon: 23 January 1981)*, 7; and Jameison Museum, Moosomin, Sask., Jessica Smith to Florence Barker, 23 January 1981.

*SAB, R-513.1, Whit Huston to Harry J. Perrin, 4 September 1941.*


*SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Ernie Paynter, 6 August 1957.*


*Ibid., Roy Paynter to Autumn Downey, 24 March 1975.*

*The Spy Hill Story*.

*Arthur Kelly, "The Qu'Appelle Valley," family manuscript courtesy of Margaret Kingston, 4.*

*SAB, R-513.1, Ed Paynter to Harry J. Perrin, 13 July 1939.*

*Ibid., Whit Huston to Harry J. Perrin, 4 September 1941.*
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The Saskatchewan Archives Board is pleased to acknowledge a generous bequest from the estate of Dr. Evelyn Eager to assist in the publication of its journal Saskatchewan History. Under the terms of Dr. Eager's will, the gift is made "to support and assist" the journal. A trust fund has been established by the Archives Board from which the interest income can be accessed annually for this purpose.

Evelyn Eager (1919-1991) served as Assistant Provincial Archivist for Saskatchewan from 1950 to 1961. Over that time, she was the business manager of Saskatchewan History, 1950-1958, and editor of the journal, 1958-1960. Although she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science from the University of Saskatchewan, her graduate work was done at the University of Toronto. She earned her Ph.D in 1938 and joined the Political Science faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, in 1961. In 1965 she was appointed a professor at Lakehead University.

The late Dr. Eager's interest in and generosity towards Saskatchewan History, demonstrated through this continuing financial support, are greatly appreciated. Her trust fund has already had a positive impact on the operations of the journal.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS PROJECT

The Saskatchewan Archives Board has taken a significant step into the world of electronic records by establishing a project to research and recommend strategy, policy and procedures for records management and archival acquisition or control of electronic records.

The use of electronic records in government is increasing rapidly. They exist in many forms: databases, word processors, accounting packages, and so on. They are created on everything from standalone Personal Computers (PCs) to Local Area Networks (LANs) to interdepartmental, interrelational databases. The purpose of the project is to ensure that these records receive the same consideration and treatment that the Saskatchewan Archives has always insisted upon for paper-based records. Without this, large amounts of our province's history may be lost.
“Difficult to Make Hay”: Early Attempts at Agriculture on the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve

By Joan Champ

On 11 February 1889, Woodland Cree Indians of the southern boreal forest region signed an adhesion to Treaty 6 at the north end of Montreal Lake, at present-day Molanosa, Saskatchewan. Concerned that the depletion of fur-bearing animals in their territory (due to a variety of environmental factors such as climate and disease, as well as overtrapping and overhunting) would prevent them from making a living, these Indians entered into treaty with the Canadian government. Many of the provisions of Treaty 6 were not, however, designed for forest-dwelling Indians. This treaty stipulated that, as part of the benefits, payments, and reserve lands to be given to the Indians, aid should be provided for beginning farmers in the form of agricultural implements, livestock, and instruction. These provisions hardly recognized the reality of the Woodland Cree’s environment and lifestyle, yet they were initially applied at the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve.

The original Treaty 6 was signed at Forts Carlton and Pitt in the 1876 when the Plains Cree were suffering from the loss of the bison and the pressures of increasing agricultural settlement. The Canadian government had acquired Rupert’s Land from the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1870 and had begun to open the way for the agricultural development of the Northwest. As part of this process, the government negotiated a series of treaties with the Indians of the western interior between 1871 and 1877 in order to extinguish aboriginal title to the land.

Plains Indian leaders such as Sweet Grass, alarmed by the rapidly dwindling bison resource, asked the government for reserve lands and agricultural tools and instruction that would help them stave off starvation. Commissioner Alexander Morris outlined some of the unique requests made by these Cree leaders:

They asked for an ox and a cow for each family; an increase in the agricultural implements; provisions for the poor, unfortunate, blind and lame; to be provided with missionaries and school teachers; the exclusion of fires on the whole of Saskatchewan; a further increase in agricultural implements as the band advanced in civilization; freedom to cut timber on Crown lands; liberty to change the site of the reserves before the survey; free passage over Government bridges or scows; other animals, a horse, harness and wagon, and cooking stove for each chief; a free supply of medicines; a hand mill to each band; and lastly, that in case of war they should not be liable to serve.

The protection of subsistence rights, such as hunting and fishing on the lands given up by the Indians was included in the treaty, however, these rights were subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by her Government of the Dominion of Canada, and saving and excepting such tracts as may from time to time be required or taken up for settlement, mining, lumbering or other purposes by her said Government of the Dominion of Canada, or by

Joan Champ is the editor of this journal, an historian, and the archival coordinator at the Diefenbaker Centre in Saskatoon. This article is based upon research she conducted as part of an historical and cultural study of the Prince Albert Model Forest region, which includes the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve.

Postcard of Montreal Lake, Saskatchewan, n.d.
any subjects thereof, duly authorized therefore, by
the said Government.3

Technical aid for hunting and fishing in the form of
ammunition and twine was also provided for in Treaty 6.
Initially, the Indian Department, overwhelmed by spi-
ralling expenditures, was reluctant to enter into treaty
with northern natives. The original boundaries of
Treaty 6, however, did extend into the woodlands north
of the Saskatchewan River (to approximately Township
59 which intersects the south end of Montreal Lake).
About ninety Woodland Cree lived within these bound-
aries—sixty in the vicinity of Montreal Lake, twenty at
Red Deer [Waskesiu] Lake, and ten at Trout [Crean]
Lake—and yet prior to 1889 they did not receive treaty
benefits.4 Through their communication networks, par-
cularly with the Sturgeon Lake Band, the northern
Indians were well aware of the fact that Treaty 6 had
been signed at Fort Carlton in 1876, and that southern
bands were receiving annual treaty payments and other
assistance as a result. Some of these Woodland Cree
claimed that they had travelled to Fort Carlton in
attempts to join into the treaty during the late 1870s
and early 1880s, but were ignored.5

John Sinclair, an Anglican missionary at Stanley Mis-
sion, supported this assertion in a letter to D.H. Mac-
dowall, Member of Parliament for the Saskatchewan
Electoral District. He stated that the Indians from the
Montreal Lake and Lac la Ronge regions “presented
themselves at Carlton during the time Treaty was being
made with those Indians and asked to be paid but they
were told that their part of the country was not fit for
agricultural purposes and therefore could not get any-
thing.”6 They presented themselves again the next year
when the annual treaty payments were being made at
Sturgeon Lake, but were again refused. After that, these
Indians, believing that they were not included in the
treaty, did not make any further attempts to get paid
“until the Timber Limits were being surveyed in the part
of the country they claimed, and on their complaining
to the surveyor, they were told that they were and had
been living inside ceded territory since 1876.”7

It not until 1888 that the Department of Indian
Affairs agreed to make a treaty with these northern
Indians through the signing of an adhesion to Treaty 6.
The department, however, wrongly assumed that the
Indians in question, mistakenly referred to as “the
Green Lake Indians,” lived in the area north of the
northern boundary of Treaty 6. The extent of the terri-

tory to be covered by the adhesion was estimated at
11,066 square miles. As relatively few Indians lived in
this area, Edgar Dewdney, commissioner of Indian
affairs for the North-West Territories, was anxious that
the upcoming treaty adhesion “should be kept quiet in
order that outside Indians might not be attached to the
District.”8

The government's earlier reluctance to extend assis-
tance to Indians living beyond the original treaty
boundaries was apparently overcome by a desire to gain
access to timber resources. The Dominion Lands Act of
1872 provided for the leasing of timber berths to be
leased to individual operators within designated timber
districts.9 By the 1880s, major timber harvesting opera-
tions were underway in the region north of Prince
Albert. The Indian Department's goal in securing the
adhesion was, stated a department official, “…in order
that the Govt. [sic] might legally dispose of the timber
in that section, permits to cut which have in some cases
already been issued…”10

The adhesion to Treaty 6, signed in 1889, signalled a
new direction in the federal government's Indian policy.
Previously, treaties were signed chiefly to open the way
for agricultural settlement. The encroachment of white
economic activity into the boreal forest and other north-
ern regions motivated the government to take steps to
reach new agreements with natives. After the turn of
the century, Treaties 8 through 11 were signed to estab-
lish Canadian title to resource-rich lands in northern
regions of the country.11

The Montreal Lake region, located seventy kilome-
tres north of Prince Albert, is situated on a watershed
divide between two major fur trading areas. The Fort
Churchill trading hinterland included the Churchill
River system and the lands lying north of Montreal
Lake. The York Factory hinterland included the
Saskatchewan River system and lands lying south of
Montreal Lake. There is archaeological evidence of
small groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers in the
region in precontact times, however there were few per-
manent residents in the area until about one hundred
and fifty years ago.12

Significant human occupation of the Montreal Lake
region began with the arrival of the Rocky or Woods
Cree from Grand Rapids at the northwest end of Lake
Winnipeg in the mid-nineteenth century. According to
oral tradition, James Bird, his wife, two sons and a
nephew followed on old fur trade route that took them
northwestward along the Churchill River to Stanley
Mission, across Lac la Ronge, and south towards Mon-
treal Lake.13

The depletion of fur and game resources in many
parts of the boreal forest contributed to the movement
of Indians into the area. In 1830 the Hudson's Bay
Company ordered the abandonment of its post at Lac la
Ronge “in order to nurse the country” after years of
overtrapping and overhunting.14 To survive, the Wood-
land Cree moved into the Montreal Lake region located
near a watershed divide where fur and game animals
were still relatively abundant.

Prior to 1889, these Indians did not live year-round
at one place. Rather, they followed a seasonal pattern
of movement that took them to camping spots at Can-
dle Lake, Bittern Lake, Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake,
Trout (Crean) Lake, and the north and south ends of
Montreal Lake. Trapping areas were often organized by
This present-day map shows the Montreal Lake region, with Prince Albert National Park to the west and Candle Lake Provincial Park to the southeast. The Montreal Lake Indian Reserve (106) is wrapped around the southern tip of the lake. Indian Reserve 218 belongs to the Lac la Ronge Band. Indian Reserve 106 below the national park is the farming reserve created in 1897 for the Montreal Lake and Lac la Ronge bands.

individual, extended families who established themselves at the various lakes. These families were not isolated from one another, however; elders of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation describe a system of social organization whereby families often worked side-by-side, sharing the resources. The Reverend John A. Mackay, an Anglican missionary in charge of Stanley Mission, wrote in his journal in 1873 that there were six families at Candle Lake, living mainly by fishing, hunting and cultivating potatoes. There were three families that lived at Montreal Lake for any length of time prior to the creation of the reserve. These were the William Henderson family, the Thomas Bell family and several families related to James Bird.

Bird and his family had initially camped at Montreal Lake. The abundance of fish and game around Red Deer Lake, however, led him and a small group to take up residence in the first Narrows area of that lake. The Narrows soon became a main meeting place for the Cree Indians of the region. These Indians consisted of two groups that eventually became the Montreal Lake Band and the Sturgeon Lake Band, whose trapping territory was to the south of the Narrows. The Sturgeon Lake Band, which signed Treaty 6 in 1876, maintained its links with the Montreal Lake Band well into the twentieth century.

Lieutenant Colonel A.G. Irvine and Roger Goulet were the commissioners appointed by the government to negotiate the terms of the adhesion to Treaty 6 with these Indians. The commissioners were accompanied by a Mr. McNeill, clerk for the Department of Indian Affairs, and Archdeacon John A. Mackay who acted as the interpreter. Chief William Charles of the Montreal Lake Band, and James Roberts, chief of the Lac la Ronge Band, were present, as were the band councillors and other band members. On that day, a total of ninety-nine Indians belonging to the Montreal Lake Band were paid $1,248.00 ($12.00 for each band member; $22.00 for the four councillors; and $32.00 for the chief). Subsequently, the Montreal Lake Band members received annual annuity payments every fall ($5.00 for each member; $15.00 for each headman; and $25.00 for the chief).

At the time of the treaty negotiations, members of the Montreal Lake Band were undecided about where they wanted their reserve. A.E. Forget, Assistant Indian Commissioner for the North-West Territories, reported in the fall of 1889:

For some time there had existed considerable differences of opinion among the members of the Band as to the location of the Reserve. Some wanted it at [Red] Deer [Waskesiu] Lake, and others at the North End of Montreal Lake, and others again at the South
End. Previous to my arrival a final determination had been arrived at and they with unanimous consent asked that it be set at the South End of Montreal Lake.\textsuperscript{23}

Elders of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation explain that while many people wanted the reserve to be situated at the Waskesiun Narrows, Chief William Charles selected Montreal Lake because it was the largest lake and therefore, it felt, it could best support the band. A vote was held, and the majority of the band members supported their chief's choice.\textsuperscript{24}

Forget stated that the chosen location at the south end of the lake included “a fair proportion of very good soil, especially well-adapted for the raising of vegetables.” While the site was thickly wooded, there was some low land between two rivers (the Red Deer [Waskesiu] River and the Bittern River) where hay “although not of the best quality,” was growing. According to the terms of Treaty 6, the size of the reserve was based upon one square mile (or 640 acres) per family of five. Forget set aside a one-square-mile block of land along the lakeshore, about a mile above the Indians’ village between two small creeks, for a public landing place.\textsuperscript{25} Montreal Lake Reserve was surveyed “en bloc” by A.T. Ponton in 1890 at the south end of the lake along due north, south, east, west lines to conform with the Dominion Lands survey system.\textsuperscript{26}

Knowing that they were living in territory already ceded to the government in Treaty 6, the Indians asked, during the course of the 1889 negotiations, that they be paid arrears of annuities from 1876, the date the original treaty had been signed.\textsuperscript{27} The Department of Indian Affairs refused, stating that “...as the country covered by the Treaty now submitted...was not ceded at the date of Treaty No. Six, but that the Indians have remained in possession of the same up to the date of this Treaty, they have no claim to arrears of annuity....”\textsuperscript{28}

The Indians pressed their claim to arrears at the fall annuity payments. In September 1889, Forget reported that, during his visit to Montreal Lake, he learned that the Indians had appealed to Archdeacon Mackay and Hillyard Mitchell, M.L.A., for assistance. Forget outlined the grounds for the arrears claim:

1) The Indians claim that a great portion of the territory ceded under Treaty Six was as much their country as the additional tract surrendered last winter;

2) That as a matter of fact, the greatest number of Indians composing the Montreal Lake Band were long before the date of Treaty Six, and never ceased to be, actual residents of...places situated within the original limits of Treaty Six;

3) That their very Reserve is within the limits of the said Treaty;

4) That assuming they had no claim, as stated above, to any further portion of the Territory surrendered by Treaty Six, the setting apart of the Provisional district of Saskatchewan, by Order in Council of 8th May 1882, including the new ceded tract, constituted an act of possession by the Government, which should entitle them to arrears at least from the date of said Order in Council;

5) [The claim] is enhanced by the fact that the said act received the sanction of Parliament inasmuch as the new ceded territory was included in the Electoral District of Saskatchewan for the representation to the House of Commons and in the Electoral District of Prince Albert for representation in the North-West Territories.\textsuperscript{29}

Forget went on to suggest that it might be advisable to secure a “formal relinquishment” of the claim to arrears “before it takes the form of a grievance.” He proposed that a final settlement of the claim could be readily obtained, “judging from the amenable nature of these Indians,” in exchange for an increase in the band’s supply of ammunition and twine.\textsuperscript{30}

On 15 April 1891, D.H. Macdowall wrote to Edgar Dewdney, now the Minister of the Interior, asking that the Indians’ request for arrears be granted. “The reason why I am particularly interested in this matter,” Macdowall wrote, “is because if their claims have any justice in them, it will make them discontented and discontent is spread very rapidly in a district like this...I believe that the fires in the Northern forests were set simply on account of the discontent of the Northern Indians, before Col. Irvine came to a Treaty with them.”\textsuperscript{31}

In 1891, the Department of Indian Affairs began to investigate the validity of the Montreal Lake Indian Band’s claim to arrears of annuity. That summer Hayter Reed wrote to the Superintendent General in Ottawa noting that the claim “seems to hinge upon the question of residence within the limit of Treaty No. Six as originally defined.” If the maps were correct, Reed advised, “it would appear that the South half of Montreal Lake lies within the Territory ceded in 1876.” Even if the maps were incorrect, “it would not alter the fact that Red Deer Lake, Bittern Lake, Trout Lake, and Candle Lake in all probability lie within the Territory ceded in 1876, and these lakes are more properly the homes of the band than Montreal Lake...”\textsuperscript{32} Reed went on to list the other grounds for the Indians’ claim to arrears, including the creation of the Provisional District of Saskatchewan in 1882 and the inclusion of the territory in the Electoral District of Prince Albert.

In a memorandum to Dewdney dated 13 August 1891, L. Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, stated:

While the title of these Indians to receive arrears from the date of Treaty No. 6 up to the date of session...1889 rests upon very questionable premises, the undersigned considers that they have an equitable claim to be paid annuity from the date at which the country embraced in the (1889) Treaty was included in the provisional District of Saskatchewan and the electoral District of Prince Albert...It would appear,
therefore, to be the easiest way to solve the difficulty...to allow payment of arrears from the date of the Order in Council, namely, the 8th of May, 1882, which constituted their section of country part of the provisional District of Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{35}

Vankoughnet went on to suggest that the Indians would be “mollified” by the settlement of this claim, but that a formal document absolving the government of any further liability on account of arrears of annuity should be signed by the chief and councillors.

Vankoughnet’s recommendation—that arrears be paid only from 1882 and not 1876 as the Indians wanted—was not accepted by Canada’s Minister of Justice. The Justice Department advised Vankoughnet that: “...if these Indians occupied in the Indian manner lands forming part of the territory ceded by Treaty No. 6, they should have been admitted to the treaty and should now be paid arrears of annuity from that date.”\textsuperscript{36} The minister did not think that the creation of the Provisional District of Saskatchewan in 1882 had any bearing on the question. “This did not constitute an ouster of the Indians and of themselves they afford us no ground for a claim to the payment of arrears.”\textsuperscript{37}

Reed was asked to supply the Indian Department with an estimate of the Indian claimants in February 1892. He reported that at the Montreal Lake Reserve there were approximately ninety-three Indians—forty-three adults and fifty children (averaging six years of age in 1888)—eligible to receive arrears payments. The total amount payable, over a twelve year period, was $4,080.00\textsuperscript{38} The first arrears of annuity payment of $500.00 was made to the Montreal Lake Band in the fall of 1892. By 1895, when Reed was deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, the department began to consider the possibility of applying the unpaid arrears to the purchase of livestock or the building of houses “for the purpose” Reed suggested, “of starting them at farming. The money as it is now being paid is virtually being thrown away...”\textsuperscript{39} The Montreal Lake Indians were spending their treaty money at the local fur trading posts, usually on provisions and supplies for their trapping and hunting excursions. Reed’s comment is a reflection of the Indian Department’s belief that agriculture was the only worthwhile occupation for Indians—even northern Indians—in the West.\textsuperscript{40}

Traditionally, Indians residing within the boreal forest lived off the land. Fish, moose, deer, caribou, rabbits and ducks were the main part of their diet. Oversupplies of meat were dried and pounded with wild berries to make pemmican. Meat was supplemented with potatoes and other root vegetables that they grew in their gardens, rosehips, and a variety of wild berries, including blueberries, saskatoons, and cranberries. These local food sources provided for all the nutritional needs of these people. Sydney A. Keighley, recalling his days as a Hudson’s Bay Company employee at Montreal Lake in the early 1920s, notes that he often saw the Indians picking and eating the roots of underwater plants; they did not, according to Keighley, use any green, leafy plants or mushrooms found in the area.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1873, Rev. J.A. Mackay, travelling throughout the area, observed several families along his route, including some at Candle Lake, with little potato plots.
"They cultivate their potatoes with a stick being destitute of a hoe or any other utensil for the purpose," Mackay wrote in his journal. William Henderson had been cultivating a small patch of potatoes "with uninterrupted success" at the south end of Montreal Lake for seven years prior to the creation of the reserve.45 While the Woodland Cree had some experience with potato gardening, during the treaty adhesion negotiations, the band leaders expressed concern about the impracticality of the Treaty 6 agricultural provisions. Chief James Roberts of the Lac la Ronge Band pointed out that "...some things offered to them by the Government such as cattle...would be no use to them and they would like to get something else instead." Chief Roberts requested that in lieu of a horse and wagon, he would like to receive a tent, a stove and four sets of dog harness. Chief William Charles also said that he "...would not like to receive any cattle just yet as they have no means of looking after them at present."44 Nevertheless, by 1890 farming implements and livestock were sent by the department to these forest-dwelling Indians.

On his visit to Montreal Lake in the fall of 1889, Forget reported that the band had now decided that it wanted livestock, including cattle, oxen and pigs.41 Twenty bushels of seed potatoes had been sent in the spring, but this turned out not to be enough. During the course of a meeting with Chief William Charles and the band councillors, Forget was asked for a resident farming instructor. Forget wrote in his report that, despite the location of the reserve in the boreal forest, this request was reasonable:

I am aware that there cannot be much farming done on that reserve for many years to come nor do I think it would be a wise policy to endeavour forcing upon them a change in their present mode of living. Hunting and fishing must of necessity for many years, remain their principal means of living; but the cultivation of vegetables may profitably be encouraged. And as the Chief and his Councillors and also a few others are anxious to settle permanently with their families on the reserve, I think every encouragement should be given them...Most of them probably never saw a horse nor a cow and none certainly know how to handle them.46

Forget recommended that, once an instructor had taught both the Montreal Lake and Lac la Ronge bands all they needed to get started, it was unlikely that his services would be required longer than one year.47

By the fall of 1890, the bands' request for a farming instructor had not been granted.46 James J. Campbell, paying agent for the Indian Department, reported that "...no amount of argument would induce them to see that they are not entitled to, nor require the help of one... They say that without instruction...the gifts given [eleven head of livestock] will be comparatively useless...." Campbell felt that the agricultural efforts at Montreal Lake had been, for the most part, quite successful:

[Of the livestock sent in the spring]...not one was found to be in bad order. This is most creditable to the Indians, since none of them had any previous acquaintance with the care of stock, while the long drive to Montreal Lake and the swarm of flies during the summer greatly increased their difficulties...The wooded nature of the country and the want of familiarity with the use of scythes render it difficult to make hay...Potatoes, as usual, were a splendid sample, and enough had been done with the other seed to show that vegetables can be made a grand success. The few bushels of barley had been sown too thickly, and seemed slow to ripen....49

In April 1891, the government hired Edward Stanley as the farming instructor for the Montreal Lake Band (in the spring and summer), and Lac la Ronge Band (in the fall and winter); his wife was appointed school teacher at the reserves. In the fall, Campbell travelled to Montreal Lake to make treaty payments. He reported that Stanley "had faithfully devoted his time to the instruction of the Indians." Stanley took Campbell on a tour of the reserve. Campbell made several interesting observations about the band's agricultural activities as a result of this tour:

The Reserve is so completely covered with wood and brush, that clearings can only be made on a small scale, very gradually and by expending considerable labour. The most promising spots have been selected for gardening, and are at a considerable distance apart...There are nine in number, and the staple crop in every case is potatoes, with some turnips, carrots and onions...

The cattle were in first rate order, but from their two cows they have only one heifer born last year, and one calf this year, (steer). The Chief, who was discontented with his mare last year seems quite reconciled to her now, and insisted on taking me out to see a foal...born on the Sunday when I was there.

Hay is cut with much difficulty on partially submerged hummocky swamp land, and has to be carried out on poles. There was enough cut to supply the requirements of their own stock and of any freighters who may visit the Reserve.

The pigs had been killed, the reason given that scarcity of fish [for pig feed], prevented keeping them penned, and when allowed to run they managed to burrow their way under the fencing into the gardens and destroy them.50

Stanley and his wife left the Montreal Lake Reserve in the fall of 1891 to spend the winter with the Lac la Ronge Band. They did not return to Montreal Lake. In 1894 Chief William Charles reported to the paying agent, W. Sibbald, that he was having trouble getting his men to look after the cattle in the winter—they were away hunting. The chief stated that he "feared a repetition of the casualties of the winter of 1892-93."51

In 1895, the Montreal Lake Band encountered more problems caring for its livestock. Early that year, its hay supply was destroyed "through carelessness," and For-
get authorized the transfer of the band’s cattle to a ranch owned by Angus McLeod of Prince Albert until the next summer’s hay supply was sufficient to support the animals. Later, McLeod advised against returning the cattle to the reserve. Not only would they not be properly looked after, McLeod felt, but the care of the livestock would keep the Indians from devoting their time to hunting, fishing and trapping. In May, Chief William Charles requested the return of all the cattle with the exception of one ox, which he believed was too weak to be of any use. The Department of Indian Affairs agreed, on the condition that there be a penalty for failing to properly care for the animals during the previous winter. The penalty involved the deduction of the cost of looking after the cattle from the entire band’s annuity payments that fall.

By 1900 the experiment in stock-raising at the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve ended. Horses, however, became a common feature on the reserve as it evolved into a major freighting depot between Prince Albert, Lac la Ronge and other northern destinations.

Despite the problems that they had encountered—or perhaps because of them—the Montreal Lake and Lac la Ronge bands actively lobbied the Department of Indian Affairs for farming lands near Sturgeon Lake that could be made a part of their reserves. In September 1894, Indian Agent W. Sibbald reported:

Both Bands are still willing to give up a share of their present Reserves in exchange for these lands, and the older men say that this farming land is for the rising generation to fall back upon when the hunt will no longer provide a living for them, which is a state they all believe is fast approaching.

The Little Red River Reserve (106A) was surveyed in the spring of 1897 by A.T. Ponton (the same man who surveyed the Montreal Lake Reserve) for joint use of the Lac la Ronge and Montreal Lake bands so that they could engage in stock-raising and agriculture. It covered fifty-six and a half square miles. A farmer who had cattle in the vicinity, J. Lestock Reid, wrote to his Member of Parliament, T.O. Davis, to protest the creation of this new reserve. “...[I]n the name of all that is holy,” exclaimed Reid, “why bring the wood Indian from their hunting grounds where they are making a living to try and make farmers of them and starvation [sic]...[T]hese wood hunters will never make a living not even an attempt to farm.”

Reid’s concern, although probably less than altruistic, seems not to have been misplaced. By 1911, Indian Agent Thomas Borthwick reported that the new reserve was not a success. “Those who have attempted to farm on the new reserve did so without any apparent enthusiasm in interest in their work, and accomplished nothing,” he wrote. Borthwick also noted that band members on the farming reserve were brought into constant contact with liquor through the employees of lumber companies that travelled through the region. “[T]he ease with which intoxicants are obtained at the new reserve has caused some respectable families to return from there to Montreal Lake.”

The primary economic activities of Montreal Lake Cree continued to be hunting, fishing and trapping. When the Indians negotiated Treaty 6 in 1876, they asked that the government preserve their hunting and fishing rights. Ray asserts that this demand was not merely a concern for legal guarantees. “They wanted the government to protect wildlife,” he writes, “against the unbridled slaughter by white miners, loggers, settlers, and trappers that was beginning to take place along the frontiers of white settlement...in the western parkland belt.” Unfortunately, a dilemma later arose between the need to protect wildlife while at the same time preserving native hunting and fishing rights. Game laws, introduced in the 1890s, often caused hardships for Indians across Canada, and the Montreal Lake Indian Band was no exception.

In the fall of 1891 the Indians reported to Campbell, the paying agent, that during the past summer the fisheries inspector regularly visited Montreal Lake and prevented them from getting enough fish to supply their needs. Some families had gone off to Red Deer Lake where fish were in greater abundance. The chief asked for rations, stating that “if their fishing were to be interfered with the Government would have to feed them regularly, or they would die.” Campbell explained to them that “fishing in the spawning season and throwing offal in the water were driving the fish away, and not the landing of the boats.” He told them that they would have to wait until after the spawning season to catch their winter’s supply of fish. In 1894, the Montreal Lake Indian Band requested exclusive fishing rights to Bittern Lake immediately to the south, however, this request was denied by the federal department of fisheries.

By the 1890s, the reduction of game had forced the Woodland Cree to rely on rabbits as well as fish as alternative food sources. Chief William Charles, who by 1894 was in poor health and unable to use his legs, asked Sibbald for more snaring wire. Rabbits, the chief reported, were plentiful, “and for some time last winter were the main source of food.”

The Montreal Lake Indians struggled throughout the 1890s. Angus McLeod reported to the Indian Commissioner of the North West Territories on 12 February 1895 that “…the Indians there are really in a more destitute state than they were ten years ago.” Game was fast disappearing; the Fishing Inspector prohibited them from catching whitefish in the fall for their winter supply as was their custom; “and as far as farming or stock-raising is concerned it is impossible to do it there.” An Indian Affairs official in Ottawa commented, in response to McLeod’s letter, that “with the reports we get as to the quantity of game and fish in the North, the Department cannot understand Indians
being short of provisions."

In 1897, Rev. Thomas Clarke, who was acting as an instructor on the Montreal Lake Reserve, reported that the rabbit population had died out owing to disease. The disappearance of rabbits affected the lynx and fox populations. Clarke reported that these species were also very scarce. "I am informed," he wrote, "that the Hudson's Bay Co. purchased over a thousand lynx skins @ $2.50 each last winter, this season the Company has not obtained two hundred at $1.75 each. This will only give you an adequate idea of the scarcity of furs, and the low price paid for them." He suggested that the department issue rations to the band next winter, as the Indians relied chiefly on rabbits, lynx and foxes for food and clothing.

Despite attempts to introduce agriculture on the Montreal Lake Reserve in the 1890s, the Indians living there continued in their struggle for subsistence based primarily on trapping, hunting and fishing up until about 1930. In subsequent years, the creation of Prince Albert National Park (in 1927) as well as the introduction of more wildlife conservation regulations, wage labour opportunities and social welfare programs led to a decline in these traditional activities. By the turn of the century, the government's attempt to impose a shift to agriculture had failed even on southern prairie reserves. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that its ill-advised farm policy failed on a reserve nestled in the woodlands north of the Saskatchewan River.

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Endnotes

1 The Montreal Lake Indian Reserve (106) was originally called the William Charles Reserve after Chief William Charles, the Montreal Lake Band's first chief who presided from 1889 until his death in 1920. It became more commonly known as the Montreal Lake Reserve after the death of William Charles.


3 "The Treaties at Forts Carlton and Pitt, Number Six, signed 28 August and 9 September 1876," in Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories including the Negotiations on which they were based, reprint of 1880 edition (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991), 35-67.

4 National Archives of Canada (NAC), Department of Indian Affairs Records (DIA), RG10, Black Series, Vol. 3601, file 1754, Col. A.G. Irvine to Edgar Dewdney, Indian Commissioner, North West Territories, 22 January 1889. List of Indians who promised to meet Col. Irvine at the north end of Montreal Lake in February 1889 is attached.

5 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, "Notes taken by Mr. McNeill of the Indian Department, at the Treaty made at the North end of Montreal Lake on the 11th February 1889."


7 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, "Report of a Committee of the Honorable Privy Council (PC) #2554, 29 November 1888; ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754, unidentified Indian Affairs official to Hayter Reed, 5 December 1888.

8 Dominion Lands Act, 1872, in Documenting Canada; A History of Modern Canada in Documents, Dave De Brou and Bill Waiser, eds. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 36-67.

9 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754, unidentified Indian Affairs official to Hayter Reed, 5 December 1888.


11 Prince Albert Model Forest Cultural/Historical Study, Chapter Two, "Precontact/Archaeological History of the Prince Albert Model Forest" (Saskatoon: SENTAR Consultants Ltd., March 1995). Archaeological studies have determined that no permanent settlement existed in the region in the period from first European contact to 1800s.

12 Interview with James Settee, Elder, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, 22 November 1993.

13 Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), B239/4/1, 284.

14 Interview with James Settee, Elder, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, 22 November 1993.

15 Interview with Amos Nayhowtow, A. Bird, and other Montreal Lake Cree Nation elders, 10 February 1993, conducted by SENTAR Consultants Ltd.


17 NAC, DIA, RG10, Black Series, Vol. 3601, file 1754, Report of A.F. Forget, Assistant Indian Commissioner, NWT, on his visit to Montreal Lake, fall 1889; ibid., Hayter Reed to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, [date illegible, 1891?].

18 Interview with James Settee, November 22, 1993. There are two separate burial grounds at the Narrows. According to Settee, one was for the Montreal Lake Indians who were baptized in the Anglican Church and the other was for the Sturgeon Lake Indians who were not. See also Bill Waiser, Saskatchewan's Playground; A History of Prince Albert National Park (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989), 6.

19 The Indian Department found the communication link between the Sturgeon Lake Band and the Montreal Lake Band particularly irritating. In the fall of 1891, J. Campbell, the paying agent, wrote to Hayter Reed, the Indian Commissioner in Regina, that there was little doubt that the Montreal Lake Band's "comparative proximity to the Sturgeon Lake Band, and intercourse, more especially with its Chief, William Twatt, tends to excite them to make all sorts of demands..." NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, J. Campbell to H. Reed, 1 October 1891.


21 The band councillors for the Montreal Lake Band were Benjamin Bird, Moses Bird, Isaac Bird, and Patrick Bird. NAC, DIA, RG10, Black Series, Vol. 3815, file 56622, "Notes taken by Mr. McNeill of the Indian Department at the Treaty made at the North end of Montreal Lake, 11 February 1889."

22 Ibid. The band also received provisions: twenty-three sacks of flour, 736 pounds of bacon, fifty pounds of tea, and forty-six pounds of tobacco. Chief William Charles and the councillors were each measured for triennial clothing (pinafores, trousers, boots, and hats similar to the "captain's" and "lieutenant's" outfits once given by the Hudson's Bay Company), which they received in the fall of 1889.

23 Ibid., R. Sinclair to the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, 9 April 1889.

24 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754, "Report of A.F. Forget on his visit to}
Montreal Lake, fall 1889."
26 Interview with Amos Narowtow, A. Bird, and other elders of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation, 10 February 1995, conducted by SEN- TAR Consultants Ltd.
28 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, A.M. Burgess, Department of the Interior, to Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General, Indian Affairs, 4 March 1890.
29 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, R. Sinclair to Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, 9 April 1889.
30 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, Memorandum from the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to Privy Council, 13 April 1889.
31 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754, "Report of A.E. Forget on his visit to Montreal Lake, fall 1889."
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., Vol. 3854, file 79,196, Macdonell to Dewdney, 15 April 1891.
34 Ibid., RG10, Vol. 3601, file 1754, Reed to Superintendent General, 29 July 1891.
36 Ibid., Deputy Minister of Justice to Vankoughnet, 13 November 1891.
37 Ibid, ibid.
38 Ibid., Re, Vankoughnet, 11 March 1892.
39 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, Reed to Forget, 16 March 1893.
40 In 1904, T. Eastwood Jackson, Indian agent responsible for the band was asked what amount of arrears still remained to be paid. Jackson responded that only four individuals had outstanding payments due to them: William Henderson's widow (one arrear for 1881-1887, inclusive); Bessie McKenzie (one arrear for 1887); George James Ross (one arrear for 1886-87); and Moses Bird ("paid in 1898 3 arrears when apparently 4 were due"). Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, T. Eastwood Jackson to Secretary, Indian Affairs, 16 July 1904.
44 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, "Notes taken by Mr. McNeil of the Indian Department, at the Treaty made at the North end of Montreal Lake on the 11th February 1889."
45 The band specified: one bull, two cows, one oxen, two sows, and one boar. Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754, "Report of A.E. Forget on his visit to Montreal Lake, fall 1889."
46 Ibid.
47 Even in southern areas, the treaty provisions for teaching farmers was interpreted by the government as a short-term offer, not applying to future generations. Peggy Brzinski, Knots in a String: An Introduction to Native Studies in Canada, 2nd ed. (Saskatoon: University Extension Press, University of Saskatchewan, 1993), 169.
48 In 1890 the Department of Indian Affairs had cut back its budget for agricultural instruction on reserves due to problems it had encountered in implementing the farm policy for western Indians. For more information, see Sarah Carter, Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990).
49 NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3601, file 1754, Reed to Superintendent General, 18 October 1890.
50 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, J. Campbell to Reed, 1 October 1891.
51 Ibid., Vol. 3815, file 56622, W. Sibbald to Indian Commissioner, 29 September 1894.
53 Ibid., 10. The Department of Indian Affairs wanted to penalize only the individuals responsible for the cattle, but the band refused to single out any of its members. Therefore all were penalized.
54 Cattle were raised again on the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve during the 1940s. The Indian Agent moved them to the Little Red River Reserve, however, because young people at Montreal Lake were "abusing" the animals. Interview with Amos Naytowhow, A. Bird, and other elders of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation, 10 February 1995.
56 Ibid., Vol. 3602, file 1754 Pt. E, J. Leestock Reid to T.O. Davis, M.P., [no date].
60 NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, J. Campbell to Reed, 1 October 1891. Fishing was indeed better at Red Deer Waskesiu] Lake. A 1987 study of fish in Montreal Lake shows that low levels of whitefish in this lake may be due to high cyst infestation, an abnormally high population in the lake that competes with whitefish for the same food resources, and, most significantly, the nature of the lake itself. Montreal Lake is quite shallow (mean depth, 2.2 m.; maximum depth, 8.5 m.), and this factor combined with its extremely productive environment due to the security of its banks means that "the waters are well-mixed and no thermal stratification develops." As whitefish is a cooler water species, the temperature regime for its survival in Montreal Lake is probably borderline." J.J. Merkowsky and W.W. Sawchyn, Biological Survey of Montreal Lake, 1987, Fisheries Technical Report 88-4 (Regina: Saskatchewan Parks, Recreation and Culture, Fisheries Branch, December 1988), 70, 72, 81.
61 NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, J. Campbell to Reed, 1 October 1891.
63 NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3815, file 56622, W. Sibbald to Indian Commissioner, Regina, 29 September 1894.
64 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 56622, Angus McLeod, Prince Albert, to Indian Commissioner, Regina, 12 February 1895.
65 Ibid., Vol. 3601, file 1754 1/2, Acting Deputy Superintendent, Indian Affairs, Ottawa, to A.E. Forget, Assistant Indian Commissioner, Regina, 20 February 1895.
66 Lynx prey mainly on rabbit, an animal species subject to cyclical population fluctuations.
67 NAC, DIA, RG10, Vol. 3602, file 1754 Pt. E, Thomas Clarke to [unknown], 22 February 1897. While this number seems quite high, the account books from the Hudson's Bay Company's Montreal Lake post indicate that in May 1895 a shipment was packed that included 441 lynx pelts. HRCA, B.317/d/1, Inventory, May 31st 1895.
68 Clarke also protested the use of strychnine by white and half-breed trappers in the district bordering on the reserve. During the negotiations for Treaty 6, the Indians had asked to government for a law banning the use of poisons for hunting and trapping purposes because of the devastating impact of this practice on game populations. Section ten of the Unorganized Territories' Game Preservation Act, introduced by the federal government in 1894, prohibited the use of poison or poisonous substances for the killing of beasts or birds covered by the Act, yet some white hunters at Little Trout Lake were using baits laced with strychnine. There are three or four families of Indians, members of this Band, in the immediate vicinity of the Lake, who rely upon hunting to obtain a living, and as they have to eat the meat of the animals they kill, they are very much opposed to the use of poison." The Indian Department subsequently requested that the North West Mounted Police check the use of strychnine. This practice, however, persisted well into the twentieth century. Recalling his days in Montreal Lake in the early 1920s, Sydney A. Keighley writes: "All white trappers in those days used strychnine in their traps at times." Ibid.; The Unorganized Territories' Game Preservation Act, 1894, quoted in Documenting Canada; De Brou and Waiser, eds., 163-4; Keighley, Trader, Tripper, Trapper, 67-9.
69 See Carter, Lost Harvests.
Family at the John Smith Reserve, 17 August 1942. The photographer, historian A.S. Morton, wrote on the back of this photo: “This is the Chief’s house and therefore better than the others.”

Introduction

By J.R. Miller, Professor of History, University of Saskatchewan

Following the making of the numbered treaties and the collapse of the bison economy in the 1870s, the Plains peoples found themselves facing a painful adjustment. The combination of the disappearance of the buffalo and the imminent arrival of large numbers of Euro-Canadian settlers who would farm the land forced them to find a substitute for their traditional hunting-gathering-fishing economies. For a large number of them, including many of the Plains Cree groups who adhered to Treaty 6 and later found themselves on reserves in what Ottawa referred to as the Duck Lake Indian Agency, the strategy for adjustment involved learning to grow and harvest crops, supplying the non-native local market with handicrafts and gathered foodstuffs, and providing seasonal labour to Euro-Canadians who operated farms nearby.
The extracts that follow, selected from the records of the Duck Lake Agency recently acquired by the Saskatchewan Archives Board (Indian Agency Office Records, E19), illustrate many of the points that historians have been uncovering only during recent decades. The excerpts come from three quite distinctive periods in the history of the prairie west. Those from 1903-05 arise during a time of heavy immigration and settlement, and are set against a background of rapid expansion by Euro-Canadians of the farming economy. These selections show reserve farmers’ difficulty in acquiring labour-saving equipment in an effort to adjust to agricultural development. As Indians governed by the Dominion of Canada they found themselves hampered in purchasing sufficient equipment, in part, no doubt, because they could not pledge reserve land as collateral for loans at the bank.

Excerpts from the Depression decade reveal how heavily hardship weighed on reserve residents in a time of meagre crop yields and severe climates. That some families were so concerned about their inability to look after their children that they wanted to send them away to residential schools where they would at least be better looked after in a material sense is telling. From this era, too, come reports from the Agent that remind us that economic survival in a difficult time was something that required the combined efforts of women and men. The women of the Agency gathered seneca root and berries for sale to non-natives; men fished and hired themselves out as seasonal labourers. Everyone stayed out of the woods in the fall when the Euro-Canadians were hunting—perhaps the most ironclad rule for survival of them all.

The other generalization about Indian Affairs administration that is supported by the extracts that follow is that Ottawa always wanted its representatives in the field to spend as little as possible upon the residents of the reserves. Whether it was the Agent reporting in 1903 that he had managed to reduce the amount of food he was supplying, or his successor forty-four years later telling sub-officials to scrutinize carefully all applicants for relief, the common thread running throughout was the parsimony of the federal government in its treatment of Indians on western reserves. The terrible irony of this frighteningly consistent penny-pinching by Ottawa is that it more than anything else accounts for the fact that the reserves remained places of economic want and desolation throughout the period from the Laurier Boom before World War One to the Great Depression to the hardships caused by rapid population increase on the reserves in the 1940s and beyond.

In the extracts from documents in the records of the Duck Lake Agency readers can get a partial, intermittent, and tightly focused insight into the challenges and problems reserve residents faced as they struggled to adjust to a new way of life in the twentieth century.

Letter to David Laird, Indian Commissioner, Winnipeg, from W.E. Jones, Indian Agent, Duck Lake, 23 September 1903.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that under separate cover I am sending (in duplicate) copies of my Estimates for the Fiscal year 1904-05.

I have considerably reduced the quantity of Provisions asked for, in the matter of Flour it may be said we are self-sustaining.

The few Implements asked for including the Thresher for John Smiths Indians is to advance the Indians in the cultivation of their Farms on the Reserves, so as to enable them to acquire more property about them, they loose [sic] heart when they are kept down too poor, but with proper help in Implements it encourages them to do more....

I hope the whole Estimates will meet your approval. I have the honour to be Sir Your obedient Servant

No. 96, Okemasis Band (Attached to Estimates for 1904-1905)

This Band in 1902 had in a crop of 100 acres and raised 1260 bush of wheat and over 200 bush of oats, this year they had in over 600 acres of wheat which is all Harvested and is a very promising crop, they have no binder, but have a small share in one belonging to Beardy’s people, this works very unsatisfactory, causes ill feeling and the Binder is not enough as too many have a share in it in Beardy’s Band so that the Okemasis people have to wait until the very last causing a loss in grain from being over ripe when Harvested a great deal of grain shelling out, they should have a binder of their own but are not able to buy one, it would be a great help to them and would encourage them in the raising of more grain.

No. 95, One Arrows & No. 100 James Smiths (Attached to Estimates for 1904-1905)

I have asked for 2 [...] Plows 2 Mowers and 2 Rakes for Ex Pupils of these two Bands, they are young men who will do well if assistance is
given to them, they have no means to purchase these implements and should be assisted.

No. 99, John Smith’s Band (Attached to Estimates for 1904-1905)

This Band last year had in 361 acres and raised 4210 bush wheat 3888 of oats and 564 of barley, this year they have in 292 acres, and have a large area ready for next season, I have asked for a 12 Horse Power Separator [sic] for this Band as they have the last 2 or 3 years had to pay outsiders to get their threshing done and have had some difficulty in getting work done, the paying for this threshing is quite a drain on this Band and they feel it very much.


Report for July 1932 (dated 1 August 1932):

Farming. Work on the land has been progressing very favourably. On James Smith’s Reserve the Indians have been working in groups approximately 650 acres have been ploughed to date. On Beardy’s I figure about 80 acres of breaking and 325 of summerfallowing. On One Arrow’s, 40 breaking and 160 summerfallowing. The grain crops are heavy and tall but on the whole a bit late, the same applies to crops generally in this district.

Other Occupations. As usual July has been the month for roaming by the Indians. Sports, Picnics and Fairs in many of the towns and villages. The Indians flock to these places and are very slow in returning home. A number were out digging Seneca [sic] roots and picking wild fruit which they sell to get some pocket money to go to sports and picnics. No work, labour has been done by Indians for outsiders, the latter are not engaging help as in the past.

Report for June 1933 (dated 12 July 1933):

General Conditions. There is no hardships on any of the reserves of this Agency. Work outside the reserves is very scarce. The Indians are careful with what little money they get and buy only necessary articles of clothing and food.

Education Schools. On John Smith’s and James Smith’s reserves a number of Indians expressed the desire to send their children to the Residential Schools at Onion Lake, Gordons and File Hills. I enquired why they did not continue sending them to Day Schools on the reserve. In most cases the reply was: We are poor (hard-up) and cannot clothe our children properly, during the winter months, some said they had a hard time providing sufficient food for their families.

Report for November 1933 (dated 9 December 1933):

Occupation of Indians. Most of the men are at home on the reserves attending to their stock and hauling hay and wood. Several of them are selling fire-wood to outsiders for which there is a good demand. The big game hunting season being open to the white people, the Indians are remaining at home as they are afraid to go out hunting while the white men are doing so. Many Indians are preparing to leave for their hunt as soon as the white men leave the woods.

Report for February 1934 (dated 21 March 1934):

Occupations of Indians. Note: At the time of writing, Relief-Food supplies were purchased by Mr. W. Murison, Inspector of Indian Agencies, these will supplement the Indians small amounts on hand and carry them over till the end of April. It will also give their horses a much needed rest before seeding operations begin.

On all other reserves the Indians are selling Hay, Wood, Small Poplar Logs and Willow Fence Pickets, to outsiders, who pay them in merchandise, ie Flour, Pork, Lard, etc., also some cash. During the past month or two our Indians have received more petty cash than in the past, from outside Farmers, due to the raise in the price of Hogs.

A new source of revenue has been opened to Indians this winter, there is now a demand for Red Squirrel pelts and thousands of these have been killed, the Indians using 22 calibre rifles and short cartridges. On James Smith’s Reserve there is a Forest Reserve (Spruce and Jack Pine) about five thousand pelts have already been stretched, dried and sold, the price paid ranging from 8 cents to 13 cents per pelt.

Report for May 1934 (dated 7 June 1934):

General Conditions. Improving. Some of the Indians have found a few days work outside the reserves, they are being paid in kind, food and clothing, very little cash. On the whole, ways and manners are changing it is no longer a bold demand of (cash for my labour) Our Indians as well as many outsiders are now accepting (for their labour, the other man’s produce) There
are no real hardships on any of the reserves. With the proceeds of the rat [muskrat] hunt many have purchased new clothes. This was quite noticeable on all reserves when I made the Annuity Payments.

Report for August 1934 (dated 7 September 1934):

Occupations of Indians. All the working men have been busy haying and harvesting. The older people and women go out picking wild fruit, Blueberries, High and Low Bush Cranberries, these they sell at 7 and 6 cents a pound to outsiders. They also go to the Saskatchewan River and angle for gold-eyes which they consume themselves. On these fishing trips the working men often go and by doing so lose considerable time from their work.

General Conditions. With the exception of Moose Woods Reserve conditions are fair on all reserves, the Indians are contented, they have sufficient food and clothing and are getting along nicely.

On Moose Woods conditions are not good, there will be no surplus hay to sell, no crop again this year, no surplus wood on the reserve which they can sell, cattle prices are very low and there is no work outside the reserve which they can do the crops in the neighborhood being very light no harvesters are needed. This Band numbering 77 persons will have to be given relief this winter, in the form of clothing and food.

Report for October 1934 (dated 17 November 1934):

Other Occupations. Most of the men were kept busy during the month harvesting, stacking hay, working summerfallow and doing fall plowing. Farmer E.S. Jones of James Smith’s who took charge of this reserve on June 24th has been very active and has had good response from his Indians with the work mentioned above. The 20 horses purchased from Band Funds and given to the Indians has been a big factor in Mr. Jones achieving these good results...

Farmer Reeves of Kinistino has been busy, helping the Indians to put in their crops using his own horses and working for and with them. These Indians were very much handicapped in the spring and early summer through the lack of horse power, after seeding a number of them left the reserve to try and earn horses by working, a few ponies were brought back which were used at haying. Farmer Reeves mowed some of the hay for them.

Farmer Moore of One Arrows has not had a successful summer. His Indians also are not too well equipped with horse power. The summer was very dry and it was most difficult to break new land, summerfalling was tough to do and some of the Indians were absent from the reserve when they should have been at home working. I do not wish to convey the idea that Farmer Moore is to be blamed for this, but I think more could have been done with closer supervision and tact...

Report for November 1934 (dated 12 December 1934):

Other Occupations. Very few, if any, Indians are away working for outsiders. A number went out hunting big game for food but most of them are back home as they fear being in the bush when the white men (many amateurs) are out hunting and for sport. The Indians will go out when the open season closes and will both hunt and trap. Owing to the fact that it is legal to kill Cow Moose this year they will not find so many carcasses left in the bush as was done in the past. Some say that the white trappers are shooting big game for bait leaving the carcasses where they fall then surrounding them with traps and snares and in some cases poison is used. The Indians will not touch carcasses when traps or snares are found nearby.

Report for December 1934 (dated 10 January 1935):

Other Occupations. Those who remained at home have been attending to their stock and sell an odd load of fire-wood in the neighboring towns and villages or to neighbors outside the reserve. Those who were out hunting and trapping returned for Xmas. They all brought home some meat, but the fur catch was not very large, one reason for this is that there are large numbers of outsiders (white men) trapping and the area of the Indian trapping grounds is becoming smaller and smaller.


Prosecutions. On January 22nd, 1935, at Prince Albert, on Information and Complaint of Mr. J.M. Brown, Field Officer, Department of Natural Resources, Province of Saskatchewan, John Smith Jr., No. 64 John Smith’s Band, this Agency, appeared before Mr. J.E. Lussier, Police Magistrate on a charge that he, John Smith, on or about the 17th day of October 1934, at the Fort-a-la-Corne Game Preserve, did unlawfully hunt...contrary to the provisions of the Game
Act of the Province of Saskatchewan, RSS 1930 and amendments. Corporal E.J. Desrosiers, R.C.M.P. prosecuted, Mr. J.G. Diefenbaker, Barrister of Prince Albert appeared for the defence.

On suggestion of Corporal Desrosiers the charge was changed to read:- Did unlawfully carry fire-arms to wit; a rifle, on the Fort-a-la-Corne Game Preserve contrary to the provisions of Section 69-1 of the Game Act, being chapter 208 RSS 1930 and amendments. Very little evidence was given, John Smith said he was with his wife and other picking wild fruit, berries, and had his rifle to protect them from Bears. Mr. Diefenbaker who defended Smith, argued that Indians could hunt on unoccupied crown lands and that the Forest Reserve came into this category.

Magistrate Lussier reserved his decision which he gave in writing a few days ago, finding John Smith "Guilty" and imposing the minimum fine....

Report for March 1935 (dated 11 April 1935):

**Health:** We have had considerable sickness on the reserves during the month. On John Smith's and James Smith's Reserves several cases of Measels [sic] (Mild form) broke out in different homes. These homes were not quarantined but visiting was strictly forbidden. John Smith's and Fort-a-la-Corne North Day Schools were closed for a few days. The worst is now over, no new cases being reported.... At the Duck Lake Residential School there were several cases of Chicken-Pox, no visitors were allowed for two weeks, all cases cleaned up nicely and things are normal again....

Report for May 1935 (dated June 19 1935):

**General Conditions.** Improving, members of all Bands have sufficient food, but some are not too well clothed. There is no suffering on any of the reserves of this Agency.

On the 28th I paid One Arrows Band their Annuity money, Beardy's on the 29th and John Smith's on the 31st. The payments were made quietly and quickly the Indians being cheerful and lining up at the pay table in perfect order leaving for their homes immediately. I regret to have to report that on the night of the 31st after I had left John Smith's Reserve a dance was held at the home of Edward Bear on reserve where some of the young members of the Band having procured liquor, became noisy and rough. Chief Robert Bear admonished two of them and told them he would report them when one of the two, Daniel Smith (a nephew to the Chief) hit him two or three blows on the face cutting him badly, the Chief was immediately taken to Prince Albert where he was placed in Hospital and eight stitches had to be put to close the wounds. I was informed the next day and immediately phoned the R.C.M.P. Police at Prince Albert asking them to investigate at once and prosecute the offenders. A charge of doing Grievous Bodily Harm was laid against Daniel Smith. Other Indians are also being charged with being intoxicated.

Report for July 1935 (dated 12 August 1935):

**Other Occupations.** A few have found work with outsiders clearing brush land for breaking, several were out digging senega root this root is now becoming scarce for the Indians as the land is being ploughed under and white settlers object to the Indians going into their pasture fences to dig.

Report for February 1936:

**Other Occupations.** Owing to sickness on the reserves, and a very severe cold winter, few Indians were out trapping. A number are selling firewood to outside farmers, and in neighboring towns and villages where the demand is steady. Hauling of wood has been hard on horses. On James Smith's reserve a number are working at railway ties for a local sub contractor.

**General Conditions.** There has been no suffering from want of food on the reserves, a few of the poorer class of Indian beginning to complain of hard times, this I think is due to the long cold spell of weather, much sickness, and to hearing and listening to outsiders. Some of our old Indians talk of leaving the reserves withdrawing from Treaty, and applying for old age pensions. I inform all those who mention this matter to me that those who were Treaty Indians at the time of the passing of the Old Age Pension Act, are debarred for all time. The cause of this talk is that our old Indians are not receiving sufficient rations, and in these cases the husband and wife receive, one only standard ration allowance, viz; 15 lbs. bacon, or 22 lbs. beef, 25 lbs. flour, and 1 lb. tea per month. This could be increased next winter to One standard allowance for each adult. However we must continue to let it be known that children who earn should support their parents.
Report for August 1936 (dated 11 September 1936):

Other Occupations: Digging senega roots which are small in size owing to the dry weather, and picking wild fruit, blue berries which are also very small, not much larger than buck shot, have occupied the older people, and children who are on holidays. Very little fish were taken from the Saskatchewan Rivers. Those who angle claim the water is too low. One Indian at Fort a la Corne who uses a short net says he did not get half the amount this year compared with other years. The water in the South Saskatchewan is very low. Ferry scows have difficulty in crossing, and in many places the people drive their horses, wagons, mowers, and binders across the water.


Letter from N.J. McLeod, Indian Agent, Duck Lake Agency, to all Farming Instructors and Overseers, 30 December 1947. (Letter enclosed in journal.)

You will receive shortly a shipment of Bacon from Canada Packers Limited, Saskatoon, Sask. This shipment is for the purpose of supplying your destitute rationers [sic] with bacon during the cold winter months in lieu [sic] of Fresh meat.

The quantities going forward to you will assist in alleviating [sic] any relief amongst needy families in addition to your regular ration list. When you receive the shipment kindly acknowledge receipt of same to this office immediately.

Following receipt of the shipment study your ration list very carefully, bearing in mind that the supplies you now have on hand plus this shipment will be required to cover your destitute ration up to and including the month of April 1948. When you have assured yourself that you have protected your old and crippled Indians also sick, etc., then figure what overages, if any you will have on hand as at April 30th, next. this overage to include tea, flour, bacon, soap, only. should you find that the overage will permit of alleviating [sic] relief amongst needy Indians please proceed as follows:

Discuss with the Indian, requesting assistance, the reason why he is unable to make a living, size up in your own mind his income including family allowances and then if you decide that relief is necessary have the Indian perform some useful work, either at Department buildings or on his own farm in exchange for the value of the amount of rations issued....

Please bear in mind that you are not to give out relief in wholesale quantities and each recipient [sic] is only to receive a months [sic] supply at one time on the basis as destitute rationers. I would suggest that before issuing any amount in excess of one months [sic] supply that you forward a report to this office outlining the Indian who you find cannot make sufficient from his own resources to carry through and on receiving approval from here then proceed to issue as above mentioned....

I will be visiting all reserves during the coming month and kindly discuss this matter with me at that time.

N.J. McLeod
Indian Agent
The Ada and Dick Bird Collection

In 1991, Ada Bird donated over five thousand photographs, 180 reels of film and textual material to the Saskatchewan Archives Board. This significant documentary collection has now been catalogued, and is available to the public for study and research purposes at the Regina office. The Ada and Dick Bird Collection (SAB accession number R91-317) represents the life and achievements of one of Saskatchewan’s best known film makers and photographers, the award-winning naturalist Dick Bird. Along with his wife Ada, Bird produced nature films and conducted lecture tours throughout North America and around the world, focusing on wildlife habitat and conservancy.

Born in England in 1892, Bird arrived in Saskatchewan in 1921 after acquiring extensive documentary experience in the United States, China, Japan, Korea, and Latin America. Throughout the 1920s, he was mainly known for his educational and industrial films made for the Saskatchewan government, the Wheat Pool, and the Anti-Tuberculosis League, to name a few. By the late 1930s, Bird turned his attention increasingly to natural history, filming and photographing the flora, fauna and scenery of Saskatchewan. During the 1950s, he produced films for Walt Disney’s Wildlife Series.

Throughout his life, Dick Bird received many honours. He was an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society and a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London. In 1950 he was the second Canadian (after Yousuf Karsh) to become a Fellow of the Photographic Society of America. In that year he was also made the first Life Member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. In 1979 Bird was honoured as Saskatchewan’s Pioneer Cinematographer at the International Film Festival in Yorkton. He died on 17 September 1986.

The photographs shown here, featuring wildlife, news events, and travel subjects, reveal Bird’s documentary eye and his need to creatively record the world around him.

Tim Novak, Archivist
Historical Photographs Section

Ada and Dick Bird filming in the Rockies in the 1950s.
Dick Bird and "Camera Trailers" at Avonlea, Sask.

China 1920.

Young Swainson's hawks.

Demonstration in Market Square prior to the Regina Riot, June 1935.
Book Reviews

The Face Pullers: Photographing Native Canadians, 1871-1939


The collection of 192 black and white historical photographs provides a fascinating and tantalizing glimpse of Canadian Plains Indians during the years from 1871 to 1939. It also gives an indication of the ways in which photographers, all of whom were White, perceived the Indians during this period.

Brock Silversides, Chief Audio-Visual Archivist at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, first sketches the history of photography on the Canadian prairies: the technology, the relationship between photographers and their subjects, and the careers of some of the most notable photographers. His purpose is to pull together—mainly from archives in Saskatchewan and Alberta—"some of the most interesting images of First Nations people," with attention to quality and representativeness (1).

The photographs are divided into four chapters illustrating Silversides' contention that the prevailing ideas about Indians held by Whites over the years influenced how the photographers approached and presented their subjects. The chapters, though roughly in chronological order, overlap each other in time and style.

In "First Contact" we find some of the earliest photos taken of prairie Indians. Silversides states that this period "appears to have been the only true documentary period," and that, even though the technology required a great deal of preparation before the actual exposure was made, the photos are the most candid and least contrived of all (15). It is unfortunate, then, that the very first photo portrays a group of Piegan Indians, one of whom is wearing a feather duster that some photographers apparently carried around to make the Indians look more "authentic." More of the same appears in the famous photo "Big Bear Trading at Fort Pitt" in the same chapter (26).

The photos in the chapter "A Dying Race" preserve for posterity the disappearing Indians as White society perceived them. Some are portraits of famous individuals such as Piapot, Crowfoot and Charcoal. Others in this section are obviously staged, including photographs by Frederick Steele of three different men wearing the same jacket (74, 75, 77).

Photos taken after the signing of the treaties and reserve settlement comprise the chapter called "Transition." These portray the assimilation process at work: Indians donning White's clothing, attending school, driving cars, and taking on other trappings of "civilized" society. The people generally look uncomfortable and even miserable.

The last chapter, "Inventing the Legend," contains photographs from 1905 to 1939. They depict the "noble savage" image which, apparently, everyone admired and wished to resurrect. The photo of twenty or more Stoney Indian "Chiefs" in full regalia outside the Banff Springs Hotel is one which suggests that Indians as well as Whites subscribed to the romantic ideal.

These photographs of our ancestors evoke strong emotions in contemporary prairie Indians. Emotions range from indignation and a sympathetic humiliation, to sorrow, pity, and anger (26, 31, 90, 102, 84). At times, however, emotions rise with pride in the beauty and dignity of the people (79, 95, 111). Sometimes one can almost see the Indians' indomitable sense of humor showing through, but overall this is an unsmiling lot.

Silversides' fourteen-page "Introduction," the short introductions to each chapter, and the brief photo captions comprise the only text in the book. One might wish for more interpretation of the images, drawn from historical research. As well, the variety of typefaces combined with quotation marks in the captions confuses the reader; it is difficult to discern which is the original caption and which is Silversides' contribution.
Further, his “Supplementary Information” on reserves in Saskatchewan and Alberta is neither complete nor helpful, and could, perhaps, have been replaced with a map showing the First Nations locations.

The quality of the photographs is excellent, enabling one to closely study this rich collection of images: to rudely gaze on Big Bear’s troubled visage as he sits in chains; to hastily avert one’s eyes from the White priest’s hand resting on the young man’s thigh in a proprietary manner; to try to fathom the beautiful faces of three young, healthy Cree women in ribbon dresses and shawls; and to blink back tears at the rows and rows of small, unhappy children posed with their teachers, priests and nuns. The colonial experience of our people is strongly illustrated in this book, with pain and suffering that words alone cannot describe.

Silversides achieves what he set out to do. *The Face Pullers* is a valuable collection of photographs, bringing one face to face with important aspects of western Canadian history usually hidden from view.

Miriam McNab
*Native Studies Department*
*University of Saskatchewan*

... ... ...

**The Last Buffalo Hunter**


The *Last Buffalo Hunter* is both a unique historical document and an exciting tale of adventure in the old Northwest. First published in 1940 by Thomas Nelson and Sons, it was a staple in Saskatchewan school libraries during the 1940s and 1950s. Fifth House Publishers reissued it last year in an attractive paperback edition.

It tells the story of Norbert Welsh who was born at Red River in 1845 into the last generation of buffalo hunters. As a young man, he joined the brigades of families who made their living by hunting buffalo and trading with the Indians, exchanging flour, tea and alcohol for furs. Welsh and his family followed the buffalo and his Indian customers west, wintering over at Round Plain on the South Saskatchewan River near Dundurn. As the great herds waned, Welsh gradually settled down, first at Four-Mile Coulee in the Cypress Hills and later at Lebret. After the buffalo had gone and the Indians were confined to reserves, he continued to trade while trying his hand at carting, farming and ranching. During the autumn following his eighty-sixth birthday, he told the story of his working life to Mary Weekes, a Regina writer.

Welsh’s story is filled with deeds of resourcefulness, endurance and daring. He swims a horse across the icy Saskatchewan River; he kills and butchers ten buffalo in a howling blizzard; he outwits Blackfoot warriors. The descriptions of the songs, dances, customs and cuisine of the trading society of the plains and of his encounters with other important men of the time—traders Joe Mackay and Charles Trottier, Red River merchant A.G.B. Bannatyne, Chiefs Poundmaker, One Arrow, White Cap, and Starblanket—are fresh and vivid. His voice, as transmitted by Weekes, is good-humoured and optimistic in the face of adversity.

A note of bitterness enters the story at the time of the events of 1885. Early in the story, Welsh tells us that he lost everything in the Rebellion. He is disdainful of Riel (“I thought Riel was fine looking, but I also thought that he had more education than brains.” [155]), but his resentment is directed toward Gabriel Dumont. In 1884 Welsh staked a claim to a section of land at Round Plain, where he had wintered for many years and where his uncle, Charles Trottier, was a leader. Welsh opposed Dumont’s plan “to bring Riel here to start a rebellion.” (145) Later, under Dumont’s orders, his neighbors at Round Plain confiscated his trading stock and took him prisoner. More than forty years after these events, Welsh remained indignant.

Welsh’s story exemplifies the rifts torn in the mixed-blood communities by the events of 1885. These rifts were exacerbated by the racism which emerged in the society around them as white Canadians and Europeans began to settle the prairies. Especially after the defeat of 1885, “Metis” and “half-breed” became terms of derision, and many preferred to avoid having these labels pinned on them. Welsh’s great granddaughter, Christine Welsh, grew up unaware of her Metis heritage. Her discovery of *The Last Buffalo Hunter* inspired her to search for the truth about her family’s past. Assisted by the work of historians such as Sylvia van Kirk, she pieced together the stories of some of Norbert’s ancestors in the fur trade, documenting her journey in the film, *Women in the Shadows* (National Film Board of Canada, 1991).

Many stories remain untold. Evidence of the women and children with whom he shared his life is sparse in Norbert Welsh’s story. He acknowledges that his wife, Cecilia Boyer, was his working partner during his years of hunting and trading across the plains. He offers a few tantalizing glimpses of her activities, digressing passionately, for example, on the subject of her cooking of “des boulettes, la poutine dans le sac, at de croxegnols.” (109-110) He assisted at the birth of their first child because “My old mother had instructed me how to deliver a baby. She knew that out on the plains women suffered and gave birth to children without any resistance.” (35-6) His children themselves are rarely mentioned. His great granddaughter’s film reveals that at least five of them died in childhood.

The status of *The Last Buffalo Hunter* as a historical document is ambiguous. At the time of its first publica-
tion, readers hotly debated the accuracy of Welsh’s claims about such matters as the prices he received for his furs and whether Buffalo Bill Cody ever hunted bison in Canada. (His son responded that although his father was not educated, “all who knew him wondered at his marvellous memory.”) For readers discovering this story a century after most of it took place, its value lies less in the accuracy of the details than in the fact that it preserves for future generations Welsh’s memories of a life that straddled a formative period in the development of the prairie west. As one contemporary observer suggested, we owe a debt of gratitude to Mary Weekes for her work as “an archivist of the dying past.”

How faithfully Weekes performed this task we cannot be certain. She recorded her sessions with Welsh, but neither the recordings nor a verbatim transcript of them have survived. The most convincing evidence of the essential veracity of the story is the authenticity of its tone. The spare and direct prose retains the vigor of speech and evokes the poignant combination of self-glorification, disappointment and resignation peculiar to an old man’s reminiscences. A version published in Maclean’s magazine in 1933, which is very similar to the book, was credited to “Norbert Welsh as told to Mary Weekes.” If The Last Buffalo Hunter is indeed the work of an archivist of oral history, the Maclean’s credit is more appropriate than the current one.

The publishers have replaced the original Foreword by Sir Frederick Haultain with an Introduction by Dr. William Waier, but the text of the 1940 edition has been precisely reproduced in the 1994 edition, including Weekes’ sometimes misleading explanatory footnotes. It is unfortunate that Fifth House did not include a map. Over the past hundred and fifty years, the geography of the prairies has been transformed as completely as its social and economic relations. A map would have clarified the relationship between such landmarks as Big Stone Lake, Father Lacombe’s Mission Station, Devil’s Lake, Round Plain, and the forks of the Red Deer and Saskatchewan Rivers.

Elizabeth Kalmakoff
Saskatchewan Archives Board
University of Regina

Views from Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West.


This book is an attempt to create a new framework for viewing the history of the Anglo-Canadian West. It is a very fair and balanced attempt at integrating aboriginal views with colonist writings. Without colonial nostalgia, the author unravels the role of the North-West Mounted Police and of the colonial elites in attempts to violate treaty rights and impose on the First Nations and Metis a social order based on brute force and terror.

The North-West Mounted Police Force at Fort Battleford is the enduring symbol of a colonizer. Hildebrandt’s broad portrayal of the material, social and economic life at the Fort reveals the context of the colonial order—its decorous and orderly life as well as its reliance on military force to oppress the aboriginal people.

His treatment of the aboriginal people at the Fort, at the battle of Cut Knife Hill during the 1885 Resistance, and at the subsequent trials is refreshing, balanced and perceptive. In his narrative, the author avoids nostalgia for the colonized culture and mourning for the passing of what the colonizer deliberately attempted to destroy. He begins an explanation of colonial thought that informs the Anglocentric civilizing mission of the aboriginal society without valorizing the mission or lamenting the passing of the traditional society. Even in the unfolding post-colonial era, this book is an exceptional attempt that should be read for its method as well as its facts.

James Youngblood Henderson
Native Law Centre
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Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada.


In 1884 several Cree chiefs gathered at the Beardy’s and Okemasis Reserve near Duck Lake to discuss their grievances concerning the Crown’s apparent failure to fully meet its treaty obligations. The local
Indian Agent prepared a list of the chiefs' complaints for his superiors in Regina, outlining eighteen points of contention. Among these points was a lack of confidence in the Canadian government, with the chiefs feeling that they had been deceived by "sweet promises" and had not received what they felt they were entitled to through treaty (225). One hundred and ten years later, chiefs gathered in Toronto echo similar sentiments, leaving us wondering whether there is anything else, apart from a legacy of deception, which characterizes the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadians. We might consider searching for answers in the collection of articles assembled by University of Saskatchewan historian J.R. Miller entitled, *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*.

Professor Miller's intention in assembling these twenty-five articles into a single volume is twofold. First, as Miller suggests in the book's abstract (i), he wants to use the various articles to emphasize the basic premise of his earlier study published in 1989, the much-acclaimed *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. Miller also wants to provide readers with a sample of the scholarship that has been generated over the past sixty years on the topic of Indian-White relations to highlight "the shifts of attitudes of the people who have studies native peoples." (xvii) By marshalling this impressive array of scholarship, Miller has clearly achieved what he set out to do.

Using an approach reminiscent of that used in the writing of *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, Miller has arranged the various articles in *Sweet Promises* so that readers are able to trace the development of relations between Aboriginal and Europeans from first contact in the Eastern Woodlands region (sections "New France", "Colonial Atlantic Canada", "Military Alliance"), to their meeting in the Canadian Northwest (sections "The Emerging Relationship in Western Canada", "Treaties and Reserves", "The Northwest Rebellion" and "The Policy of the Bible and the Plough"), to their encounters along the Pacific coastline ("Relations on the Pacific"). This is a sound approach, allowing readers the opportunity to compare and contrast the relationships that were established between the two cultures, throughout different regions, during different eras. Yet Miller's reason for creating this book was not so that we could dwell so much on the comparisons. As mentioned earlier, Miller wants to reinforce the themes which directed his earlier study on Indian-White relations: that is, how self interest, directed by commercial, social or military considerations, influenced the nature and extent of the relationships that were formed; and, that Aboriginal peoples had an active role in the formation of relationships with the European newcomers. It would be difficult, however, to cite one specific article as an example, since nearly all the works that appear in this book are a reflection of these themes.

The articles contained in this book allow the reader to evaluate the costs and the benefits stemming from the various relationships that were formed between Natives and non-Natives. Over and over again, the reader is struck by the conclusion that the Aboriginal peoples bore a disproportionate amount of the costs after contact with Europeans. For example, L.F.S. Upton's account of the history of limited contact between a reclusive Beothuk population, which once inhabited Newfoundland, and the Europeans who ventured to the island, shows that there were severe consequences for Natives who refrained from building relationships with Whites.

Upton's article asks us to consider whether amicable relations with whites was the key to security for Aboriginal peoples living in a post-contact world (84-85). Readers should hold off answering this question until they have had a chance to digest the disturbing evidence presented in sections six, seven and nine. Through the various selections presented in these sections, Miller draws to the reader's attention the deteriorating state of Aboriginal-Euro-Canadian relations in the Canadian Northwest throughout the late 1800s. Two articles are especially noteworthy: John Tobias' study detailing the efforts of the Canadian government to subjugate the Plains Cree nations by limiting the distribution of food rations and, later, through a heavy-handed policy of arrest and detention of Cree leaders; and an article by Sarah Carter that examines the Indian reserve agricultural policies implemented by the Department of Indian Affairs near the end of the nineteenth century. These articles demonstrate that the Canadian government, by neglecting to fulfil their obligations as outlined in the treaties, had indeed made sweet promises.

*Sweet Promises* ends on a reflective note, with Professor Miller asking readers to consider whether Canadians continue to make empty or "sweet" promises to Aboriginal peoples (468). Recent comments by Aboriginal political leaders indicate that they believe Canadians still do. It is difficult not to arrive at a similar conclusion after reading this book; the majority of the articles reveal how Canadians and their European ancestors often receded from their commitments with Indigenous peoples once these relationships seemed irrelevant to the needs and interests of colonial and Canadian governments.

*Sweet Promises* makes interesting reading and will undoubtedly be welcomed by those who want to explore the relationship between Natives and non-Natives. Students and researchers alike will find Miller's book to be of value, given how it offers a panoramic view of the contact and post-contact experiences from a number of vantage points. Undoubtedly, all readers will appreciate the variety and the complexity of the twenty-five works selected by Miller, for, it sum, they are a testament to the variety and complexity of the relationships that have existed between the two peoples since the time of first contact.

Stephen Sliwa
Ottawa, Ontario
The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) has been operating hosted motorcoach tours to points of heritage interest both within Saskatchewan and occasionally to points beyond since 1982. This year is no exception, as once again SHFS is offering a choice of three, fully escorted, all inclusive, worry free, heritage motorcoach packages to the general public.

June 10 and 11 will see us departing from Saskatoon on our Healing Waters and A Night in Iceland tour. No doubt one of the highlights of this tour will be the evening spent in Wynyard as the Vatnabyggd Icelandic Club provides us with a glimpse of Icelandic culture and cuisine. In addition, this tour will stop at the numerous heritage sites in Watrous and Little Manitou Lake, Touchwood Hills Provincial Park, Nokomis, Hanley, and points in between.

Time Travel - Historic to Prehistoric departs Regina on July 15, returning on the 17th. This is a very extensive tour. A few of our activities will be meeting up with the reenactment of the Boundary Commission Trail Ride, learning about coal mines in the Grasslands National Park, viewing “Scotty,” the now famous T-Rex, and seeing the Great Sand Hills as we visit the communities of Assiniboia, Val Marie, Shaunavon, Eastend, Maple Creek, Leader, Sceptre, Eatonia, Riverhurst, and Moose Jaw.

The third SHFS tour of the year is Our Northwest Parkland Calls Us. This tour runs from August 5 to 7. It leaves Saskatoon with stops in Shell Lake, Glaslyn, Meadow Lake, Pierceland, Steele Narrows, St. Walburg, and The Battlefords. Our visit to the history-packed northwest area of Saskatchewan will take us through some of the province’s beautifully lush boreal forest parkland. SHFS tours of the northern areas of the province are always popular, so be sure to book early.

Past SHFS summer motorcoach tours have been widely acclaimed for the insightful experiences they provide along with a pleasurable trip. Some comments from 1994 tour participants include:

“Very informative, educational, enjoyable, a great group of people to travel with. Very scenic drive.”

“This was a great opportunity to learn more about our province, in a relaxed and enjoyable way.”

“Well planned, interesting, enjoyable. We were well looked after.”

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