Exploring Cree Narrative Memory

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Abstract

The importance of oral history within the field of Indigenous Studies has received a great deal of attention in the last decade. I have deliberately entitled my work *Exploring Cree Narrative Memory* because it is the understanding of myself within a collective memory. The work examines: 1) the dynamics of narrative transmission within Cree culture, and 2) various Cree narratives from the time period of the 1870s to the present. Various elements are demonstrated: the open-ended nature of Cree narrative memory, the importance of *nêhiyawi-itâpasinowin* (worldview) in the interpretation of Cree history, and differences between Cree narrative accounts of various events such as Treaties and *ê-mâyakamikahk* (1885 Resistance) and those found within the work from the mainstream culture.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather John R. McLeod who never had a chance to go to university and my great-grandfather Peter Vandall (*kôkôcîs*) who was my strongest link to Cree narratives.

Table of Contents

Introduction

My work is profoundly grounded in my experiences growing up in a Cree cultural environment. From these experiences, my soul and spirit were immersed in stories that stretched far beyond my own lifetime.

As a young person in the 1970s, I was growing up in the midst of a massive cultural revival which was occurring within Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan. My grandparents Ida and John McLeod, were at the forefront of this movement. *nôhkom*,[1] my grandmother Ida McLeod, was a pioneer in the standardization of Cree and also the in the development of Cree language curriculum. *nimosôm*, my grandfather John McLeod, was the chair of the Treaty Six Centennial Committee and also co-ordinated elder workshops. Both worked for the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, which was in many ways the beginning of the First Nations University of Canada. I owe a great deal to the time that I was with them.

My strongest narrative link to the past is through my father, Jerry McLeod, from the James Smith reserve. He in turn was told many stories from his grandfather Peter Vandall (*kôkôcîs*) from the Sandy Lake reserve. *kôkôcîs* in turn was told many stories from his grandfather *wîhtikôhkan*. These stories from these people, and others, inform me as to who I am, and are the backbone of my identity. These stories explore the various aspects of human existence. The stories form the fabric of my being and give me possibilities for finding my place in the world.

For me, the foundation of this thesis lies in the words of old people. These are the people whose life experiences stretched far past my own lifespan, and reached into memories of those who were before them. They are the memories of my grandparents and great-grandparents. And, of course, they are the words and narratives of all of the other people who have taken the time to share them with me.

Unfortunately, I grew up in a time and place in which Cree was not passed on to children. I am keenly aware of my limitations in the language. I feel that my dissertation would be much more insightful if I was fluent in Cree. In the spirit of the storytellers of old, I would say "*namoya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân*/ I don't know much."

Nonetheless, I would categorize myself as "insider" within the cultural narratives, albeit many of them I have heard and absorbed in English. Cree memory as manifested in the stories will be represented very differently by people whose lives have been influenced by the stories, and whose family have lived through colonialism.

I recently visited Clifford Sanderson from my reserve (2003). Clifford was 70 years old and is one of the most knowledgeable people left on my reserve. Talking with him helped me to realize that the foundation of this thesis is the narratives of Cree-speaking people. He also felt a strong connection to previous storytellers. Clifford told me, "I missed my grandfather by three years. Maybe he saw something ahead, saw me coming, and left things with my uncles"

(Sanderson, 2003 conversation). The grandfather who he was speaking of was *asiniy-kâpaw* (Stonestand).

In many ways this work is a response to colonialism and an attempt to weave a lucid narrative of Cree history, which is culturally grounded. In her book, Smith outlines various Indigenous projects which are essentially ways of retrieving Indigenous memory through the shadows of colonialism. "Storytelling" is one of the projects that she envisions. Smith notes that there is always hope that a "new generation will treasure [stories] and pass the story down further." Within these narratives, "the perspectives of elders" (Smith 1999: 144-145) are passed on.

These narratives are part of resistance to colonialism. One of the projects that she mentions, *celebrating survival,* "celebrates our resistances at an ordinary human level and [together] they affirm our identity as indigenous women and men" (Smith 1999: 145). Two projects, *testimonies* and *remembering,* are also part of decolonizing, with storytelling being at the core: "Indigenous testimonies are a way of talking about an extremely painful event or series of events" (Smith 1999: 144).

The notion of narrative that I am espousing in this dissertation is a hermeneutical one linked with the narrative paradigms of Cree people. There is an important overlap between the notion of narrative and truth as found in hermeneutics, and the way old people talk. From both perspectives, the interpretative location of the listener/ interpreter is essential to the actual

interpretation. Gadamer (1975/1960: 277-306) argues that "prejudice", which he defines as interpretative embeddedness, is essential to understand anything. Our interpretative location makes meaning and understanding possible because nothing can be interpreted in a vacuum. Various interpretative locations will yield different understandings. In the same way, traditional Cree narratives often allow for the interpretation of the listener of the narrative: it is up to him/her to weave the collective narrative into his/ her own lives.

Narrative is the key to understanding as an "operation that unifies into one whole and complete action" (Ricoeur 1984: x). There is a constant play between the life of the individual and the collective memory (which I will define shortly.)

Another key notion is that of the hermeneutical or / interpretative circle. In the west, "circular" notions have tended to be associated with madness and irrationality. However, the notion of "circular" understanding is essential to narrative understanding: there is a constant play between self and collective, between whole and part, which is never completely resolved. In some ways, one can see this as an organic notion of truth: one that is never exhausted and is always growing and unfolding. Ricoeur goes on to speak of the hermeneutical circle as being between "narrative and time" (Ricoeur 1984: 76). Within Cree narrative memory, more and more layers are understood through time; as we get older we can penetrate the potential of the narrative more deeply.

Central to the notion of hermeneutics and the paradigm of Cree narrative memory, is the fact that our knowledge of the world is embedded in concrete situations and makes our understanding of the world possible. This does not mean that we are completely bound to experience, but rather that we can actually reflect upon it. Within hermeneutics this happens through the notion of intersubjective communication: our own interpretations of the world, through dialogue and narrative, are put in a wider context. Within Cree narrative memory, one way that this happens is by comparing our life histories to a larger interpretative context. Narratives, and the teachings from these, can cause our knowledge of the world to grow.

Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw noted:

> Today we have to make our lectures softer, more like telling a story, take another person for an example, tell them, see this man did this and look at the trouble he's in. And maybe this will kind of get through to them. I think this is the only way today. We can store up our stories for the future and pick out the one we think will help the young person most. This is what we were discussing when we went out (IH-431: 8-9).

Cree narrative memory is more than simply storytelling: within the workings of a skilled storyteller, narratives are strung together and fashioned to suit a particular audience. Some details may be downplayed or accentuated depending on what the occasion calls for. As the storyteller weaves his tale, there are elements of *description* and *analysis*: the storyteller describes events and experiences, but also analyzes this experience. The stories are reflected upon and critically examined. Furthermore, they are brought to life by being integrated into the experience of the storyteller and audience.

The understanding of Cree narrative must be grounded in cultural understanding or *nêhiyawi-itâpasiwinowin* (Cree worldview). Central to this worldview is an Indigenous/ Cree connection to the land. Place names are important in this regard, and stories mark the landscape in memory. Another key element is to value Cree protocol: the nature and dynamics of how stories are transmitted. Also, one must take into account Cree spiritual beliefs: without this element, one will never be able to penetrate the deepest reaches of *nêhiyawi-itâpasiwinowin.*

Perhaps at the core of *nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin* are the sacred stories of *wîsahkêcâhk*. *wîsahkêcâhk*, who represents the manifold possibilities of existence, travels through life in such a way that human beings can relate to their own life experience. (S)he does not represent ideals which human beings will never obtain: rather his/her narratives represent pathways of human experience. *wîsahkêcâhk* also symbolizes wandering -- an unsettled state of being, suggesting that *nêhiyâwiwin* is open to reinvention. This element of Cree narrative memory also corresponds to the layering of collective narrative action central to hermeneutics. Cree narrative memory is open-ended and organic.

I have consciously called my dissertation of *Exploring Cree Narrative Memory* with the thought that in the tradition of Cree storytellers, no story is in itself complete; or to use Robert Berkhofer's (1998) lexicon, I do not see my dissertation as the Great Story of *nêhiyawak*. No storyteller or historian can

exhaust the possibilities of any tradition. Thus, I see my work as an exploration of collective memory, rather than as a meta-narrative of some kind.

Cree narratives are part of a larger collective memory. Within the poetry of Louise Halfe's book *Blue Marrow,* we can find many insights regarding memory. She opens her book with the following words: "The walk began before I was a seed/ My mother strung my umbilical cord in my moccasins" (Halfe 1998: 1). The walk is the return home through memory after "her memory went to sleep" (Halfe 1998: 1): the place of storytelling wherein the old people rest. It was also a Cree practice to put the umbilical cord in the ground after the birth of a child; however, in the case of Louise Halfe, the cord stays with her, planted by her feet to help her with her journey. She depicts the collective memory of Cree people as food, essential for the soul: "Grandmothers hold me. I must pass all that I possess, every morsel to my children. These small gifts to see them through life. Raise my fist. Tell the story. Tear down barbed-wire fences" (Halfe 1998: 5). She sees collective memory as a gift and responsibility, an intergenerational process. The stories found in the memory help people find their way out of colonialism. Also, Halfe uses another metaphor for memory: "Oh *Nôhkomak,*/ Your Bundles I carry inside"(Halfe 1998: 6).

She appeals to her grandmothers, almost in the manner of a prayer: "*pê-nihtacowêk, Nôhkomak.*/ Climb down, my Grandmothers *pê-nanâpacihinân.* Come heal us. *Ê-sôhkêpayik. Ki-maskihkêm*[2]./ Your energy so powerful./ *kâ-wi-nanâpacihikoyahk.* We need for our healing (Halfe 1998: 16).

Lewis Coser, drawing upon the work of Maurice Halbwachs, notes that "the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions" (Coser 1992: 24). Maurice Halbwachs, in *On Collective Memory*, notes that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, reorganize, and localize their memories" (Halbwach 1992: 38). Halbwachs adds that individual memory is part of a collective memory because "it is connected with the thoughts that come to use from the social milieu" (Halbwach 1992: 53).

A hermeneutic interplay occurs through time: "We change memories along with other points of view, our principles, and our judgments, when we pass from one group to the other" (Halbwach 1992: 81). This is one of the fundamental insights of hermeneutics, that we need an embeddedness within an interpretative horizon in order to interpret the world: through time our horizon intersects with narrative elements from beyond it, and is constantly reshaped.

Connerton outlines the position of Maurice Halbwachs: "He . . . argued that it is through their membership in a social group -- particularly kinship, religious and class affiliations -- that individuals are able to acquire, to localize and to recall their memories" (Connerton 1989: 36). Connerton adds: "Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localized and memories are localized by a kind of mapping" (Connerton 1989: 37). Individual memories are always placed in a larger context:

> We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us. It is to our social spaces -- those which we occupy, in which we frequently trace our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing -- that we

> must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear. Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group (Connerton 1989: 37).

Part of the process of decolonizing Cree consciousness is for the collective narrative memory to be awakened. Louise Halfe writes: "*Nôhkomak* are waking up, the drum vibrates . . . the mass of dawn" (Halfe 1998: 26). During the Elders workshops which occurred in the 1970s at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, Eli Bear noted the importance of the Cree memory's return:

> We are trying to tell people of what was given to us as an Indian nation. We are trying to wake people up, to have respect for our ceremonies and all the Indian ways of life. Because nowadays we seem to hear the elders from a distance; it is as if they are fading away. These elders knew about these medicines and they die without leaving us the way to make these, or where to get them. All these things we don't know about now. But the elders they tried to tell us about these but we didn't listen very hard to them (Eli Bear IH-439: 8).

It is however important to define colonialism. Part of the process of understanding colonization, at least according to Iain Chambers, is to engage in an "archaeology of powers: the power to name, identify, classify, domesticate and contain that simultaneously doubles as the power to obliterate, silence and negate" (Chambers 1996: 25-26). The Cree landscape has been filled with new memory and new sound. The process of naming, and the bringing of new sound to landscape, also distorts and overpowers the sound that existed before. Cree place names fall to English ones. Conversation changes from Cree to English, and the land loses its echo and power. I once heard Edwin Tootoosis say that "*namoya ê-kistawêtî* "It does not echo". He was referring to the land.

Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* does not precisely define colonialism, nor does he provide a theoretical model to explain it. However, he does provide a succinct description of colonialism based on the "lived" experience of people in Africa, especially Algeria. Frantz Fanon writes:

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance (Fanon 1963: 210).

Taiaiake (Gerald) Alfred in *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors* provides an effective model of colonialism, one he has created in the context of his own community, Kahnawake. His model is interesting because it is nuanced and examines the process from a variety of levels: identity, institutions. and interactions. He articulates the way in which Indigenous people move from a period of independence to a period of domination (colonialism) to a further stage of revitalization:

Figure 8.1 Explanatory Model: Ethno-Nationalism (Native)

	Starting point	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Identity	'Traditional'	Latent	Revival	Complex
Institutions	Traditional	Colonial	Traditional	Syncretic
Interactions	Cooperative	Cooptive	Confrontational	Crisis

(Gerald Alfred 1995: 180).

The 'starting point' is a period wherein the Indigenous group is independent and the relationship with the European power is one of reciprocity. Within this time period, the traditions and religions of the Indigenous people are intact. In Cree history, this period would run roughly to the 1860s which was a time when the Cree people of the prairies were still relatively independent despite the wane of the buffalo.

Phase I, the first phase of "colonialism," can be characterized as the imposition of an alien order, including laws, language and religion, upon the Indigenous people. Within this time period, the Indigenous group has lost much of its independence and has been politically and economically subordinated to the expanding nation state. For the Cree people this could be characterized as consisting of two key factors: 1) the imposition of the *Indian Act*, and 2) the forced location to reserves. This period within Cree history would extend from shortly after the Treaty period to the period of relative inactivity that lasted until the beginning of World War I.

Phase II sees the rebirth of Indigenous people and their attempt to struggle against the alien order which has been imposed. There is an attempt to return to traditional Indigenous political structures. In the backdrop of this revival, there is an attempt to confront the system which is bringing about colonialism. In the case of Cree people, this would be struggle against the *Indian Act,* which is perhaps best exemplified in the life of John Tootoosis and the activities of the League of Indians.

Within the book *John Tootoosis* (Sluman and Goodwill 1984) there are many references to his struggle against governmental policies. For instance, in response to local white people who were impounding Cree horses that left the reserve, John Tootoosis organized a plan wherein the Crees impounded the horses of white people that wandered on to the reserve (Sluman and Goodwill 1984: 110). Tootoosis, also in the 1920s, sought legal advice from a lawyer in North Battleford in order to combat the way in which the Department of Indian Affairs was leasing the land of Poundmaker (Sluman and Goodwill 1984: 142). Furthermore, John went to Ottawa himself to present resolutions which had been passed by the League of Indians and had not been dealt with (Sluman and Goodwill 1984: 166).

The final stage represents the end of the dialectic of colonialism that Alfred outlines. Within this stage, older traditions are merged with contemporary ones in a syncretic manner. On an individual basis identities are complex, with elements of the Indigenous culture being merged with elements from the larger, colonizing society. In my view, two elements are at the centre of this process: language and lifestyle. Alfred's model holds that within this stage there is confrontation between the Indigenous society and the colonizing power. For Alfred's people, this was the Oka crisis of 1990.

In his later book, *Peace, Power and Righteousness,* Alfred tacitly elaborates on his previous model by noting the process of internal colonization: the period in which Indigenous people internalize the oppression and become

complicit with it (Alfred 1999). Other writers (Fanon 1963, Dyck 1991, Adams 1995) have also fully documented this process of internal colonization which I will discuss in Chapter Six.

Keeping with Alfred's model of colonization, the last two phases are periods in which there is some measure of cultural revitalization. Clearly, this cultural revitalization can result in open conflict as in the case of Oka. Also, following Wallace's (1957) model of revitalization movements, we could see how the attempt to revitalize can often lead to confrontation. The Ghost Dance movement is perhaps the prime example of this process. However, the attempt of Indigenous people to revitalize our cultures is more complex in contemporary times in that it does not only occur as a function of colonialism, but also of modernity. As I argue in chapters six and seven, these two processes are not completely congruous despite an obvious partial conceptual overlap.

Alfred writes: "The lesson of the past is that indigenous people have less to fear by moving away from colonialism than by remaining bound by it; in their resistance, they demonstrate an inner strength greater than that of the nations that would dominate them" (Alfred 1999: 33). Alfred articulates his notion of self-conscious traditionalism: "Returning the politics of Native communities to an indigenous basis means nothing less than reclaiming the inherent strength and power of indigenous governance systems, and freeing our collective souls from a divisive and destructive colonized politics" (Alfred 1999: 80).

I describe the process of decolonization as "Coming Home Through Stories." I will also discuss the cultural alienation experienced by Cree-speaking people and also the ways in which narratives form the basis for resisting colonial intrusions. Great changes began for the Cree people in the late nineteenth century after the Riel Rebellion, or *ê-mâyahkamikahk*, "where it went wrong." I will examine the pulling away from this "narrative home" of the Crees in two senses: spiritual and physical. I will examine how the changes brought about after 1885 affected the physical/ spatial relationship the *nêhiyawak* had to their territory, and how this was followed by a change in worldview which occurred through the residential school system.

The diaspora and spiritual exile of *nêhiyawak* is found in the life history of my late grandfather, John R. McLeod. He attended the residential school on Gordon reserve in Saskatchewan. It is through this lived experience that I wish to write about the alienation and uprooting that my people experienced in this century.

I will also document the diaspora story of *pîkahin okosisa* (the Son of *pîkahin*). The narrative could be understood as part of a revitalization movement as outlined in Anthony Wallace's model (1957). I will situate this narrative within a larger historical and social context, comparing it to similar narratives in other Indigenous contexts.

I will examine the way in which *nêhiyawak* attempt to interpret old narratives and practices in a contemporary context. Another component of my

analysis will focus on how modernity has altered and reshaped Cree philosophy and way of life. I will try to show that *nêhiyâwiwin* is alive and vital and not ossified.

There are undoubtedly some *nêhiyawak* that would be against my project. They may say that Cree narratives should exist only in Cree: they would argue against translation and indeed the process of interpreting them with western sources and theories. Some would even argue that such narratives have no place in the context of the Academy.

There is a movement afoot today which seeks to articulate a utopian, "pure" picture of *nêhiyâwiwin*. Part of this involves the attempt to structure "traditional" protocols around the transfer of information/ narratives. While such an approach can of course be useful, it can also contribute to a situation wherein some people appoint themselves as cultural police. Some attempt to promote themselves as the experts, and insist on being consulted at every possible opportunity; there has become a virtual "elder industry" within Indigenous communities. Unfortunately, the knowledge of these old people, especially the ones that are genuine, is given little place, and has almost become a show at times.

Perhaps one of the most dynamic elements of Cree narrative memory is the process through which it can transform the social and political realities for Cree people. The activity of "thinking beyond" the limitations of any age is what

I would call Cree narrative imagination. Thus, Cree narrative can act as a foil which can correct some of the excesses of modernity.

Over the course of writing this thesis, I have done my best to learn more Cree. This has helped me to gain a better understanding of my culture and the historical forces which have shaped my identity. I have tried to learn more about ceremonial life as such experiences inform the writing of this work. Our culture is a living culture, and I have done my best to try to live some of its narratives. The attempt to decolonize our lives is an attempt to come home through stories. However, I do not advocate that we come home to an idealized space. Rather, we "come home" to a new, revitalized space.

Introduction Notes:

1. There is no use of capitalization in the spelling of Cree nouns.
2. While Louise Halfe uses the Standard Roman Orthography in her work, she does not follow the convention of having all words lower case.

Chapter One: Cree Narrative Memory

Cree Narrative Memory

Cree collective memory is anchored in narratives which have passed through families across generations. Over time, these narratives have been enriched through new layers of understanding and new layers of interpretation. *nêhiyâwiwin* is a process that involves the dialectical play between narratives and the way in which people incorporate these narratives into their lives. With Cree narrative, there is an ongoing dynamic interplay between the past and the present: people are constantly weaving traditional narratives into the interpretative horizon of new experiences. In this chapter, I will examine the structures of Cree narrative memory in the context of a cultural memory and of the individual's understanding and interpretation of this memory.

Cree narrative is an attempt to survive collectively through story-telling. The scope of my thesis covers the time from the Euro-Canadian colonization of the Crees to the present, so the theme is timely and important. The attempt to resist the hegemony of the mainstream society is indeed one of the main functions of Cree narrative memory. It is a struggle through time, but it is also an experience which is grounded in political realities.

Perhaps one of the richest sources for understanding the Cree experience of colonization is to examine the lives of individual people and leaders who lived through it. While theoretical considerations flesh out the meaning of various

narratives, any consideration of Cree narrative memory should be grounded in the life experience of Cree people.

One of the most interesting stories in this analysis is perhaps the narratives and life experience of the late John Tootoosis, who struggled against the oppressive measures of the *Indian Act*. John Tootoosis once noted that "[l]anguage is life. Land is power" (John Tootoosis, 1977 Interview). He was aware of the need of a people, of a nation, to hold on to their language as it held the traces of ancient voices.

There is a rich description of John Tootoosis' experience in residential school in the biography entitled *John Tootoosis* (1984). The schools were designed to essentially destroy Indigenous culture: language, religion and any vestige of Indigenous identity. Despite this powerful historical current, John Tootoosis, after coming home from residential schools, struggled to relearn his language. His father made him sit with old people to relearn his language and history.

Thus, one of the ways of understanding Cree narrative memory is to stress the importance of responsibility that many people feel in holding on to the narrative memory of ancestors: such an act is political. Indeed, every time that one speaks a word of Cree, one is resisting the excessive policies of the Canadian government.

There is also a spiritual dimension to the narratives. Ermine argues that Cree narrative memory is "sacred" (*âsotamâkê*- the word for a scared vow in

Cree VIA) because it contains the covenant that the people had with eternity and echoed the teachings of the ancient people before her [e.g. his relative's] time" (Ermine 1998: 12).

Cree narrative memory is storytelling grounded in history, cultural understanding, and personal relationships. The process of storytelling must be conceived of in a way that moves beyond the constraints of the mainstream society's conception. Storytelling is not simply "telling tall tales"; nor is it completely embedded in a particular situation. Rather, Cree narrative memory, which is inherently based on storytelling, is an active process that is dynamically reshaped across time and across generations.

One line of critique against narrative history/ memory is that it is too bound to experience: that there is no critical reflection on the narrative. In other words, people are seen to be simply reciting stories, without placing them in a larger historical context. Allan MeGill (1989: 638) notes that some hold that narrative history is "incapable of the theoretical universality that explanation by laws and theories promises" (ibid: 638): people are not fully able to understand the narratives of others because of a different historical/ cultural position.

However, narrative history is not completely enmeshed in the particular, as it is possible through narrative memory to move beyond one story and engage in an inter-textual dialogue with other narratives (keeping in mind that some of these narratives are not written, but primarily exist in an oral context). Narrative history is a mix of both storytelling (recounting) and explanation: in other words

it is a mix of interpretation and description, or as Allan MeGill writes: "Narrative blends recounting and explanation" (MeGill 1989: 638). The importance of this quotation is that storytelling not only describes but also provides an explanation of events found within the narratives.

Because Cree narrative is not simply description, but is also interpretation (explanation), it tends to be open-ended. There are always new narrative possibilities and new ways of understanding a story. Also, people could always reject the story and choose to ignore Cree narrative memory. While this is indeed true of any culture throughout history, there is a particularly vivid way in which Cree people would bring across this idea. There are stories of old people who would stick a knife in the ground and say: "If what I say angers you, you can use this knife on me"; or there might be a variation on this, such as: "If you do not believe what I say, you can use this knife on me."

There are indeed various ways by which one could understand using the knife within the storytelling tradition of the Crees : I will offer one pathway, one way in which to understand this narrative technique. The first important component of this powerful symbolism is the relationship that the person speaking, the old man, has with those listening to him. The connection would be perhaps kinship, or friendship, but there would be a relationship between the people involved in the process. I think that the second major component in this process is the knife and how it could be used to destroy the relationship that exists between the people. It was meant to convey the notion that the listener

did not have to listen to the words of the old story-teller. Since they were both dwelling in an oral tradition, the refusal of the younger person to listen would amount to the killing of the tradition.

***wâhkotowin* (Kinship) and Narrative Memory**

I can only understand Cree narrative memory through the stories that I have heard and through the relationships which sustain these stories. My whole interest in Cree memory would not have been possible if my father had not raised me, and if I had not had the grandparents that I did. My grandfather, John R. McLeod, devoted his life to the betterment of Indian people's lives through education; my grandmother, Ida McLeod, devoted her life to the revival of the Cree language through the development of a standard orthography as well as the creation of education materials.

Kinship, *wâhkotowin*, is very important within *nêhiyâwiwin*. There are important relationships not only between human beings, but also with the rest of creation. *wîsahkêcâhk*, the Cree trickster, is perhaps the most colourful demonstration of the importance of relationships, and the fluid line between the categories of humans and animals. *wâhkotowin* keeps narrative memory grounded and also embedded within the life stories of individuals. It also grounded the transmission of Cree narrative memory: people tell stories to other people who are part of the stories and who will assume the moral responsibility to remember.

In constructing my sense of the world, I have drawn upon memories and narratives. I remember one particular day very clearly, going to Thunderchild, near North Battleford, Saskatchewan, with *nimosôm* one day. There was a large gathering of Old people, and they were all sitting in a circle; they were smoking a pipe, and they all got up and took turns talking about different things. I remember at my grandfather's funeral the Old people also sat in a circle and smoked the pipe; "Old Jim" (Jim Kâ-Nipitêhtêw) performed that ceremony. I will always remember these things. I will always remember the knowledge held in the words and actions of the Old Ones, and their struggle to maintain their *nêhiyâwiwin* in the face of the onslaught of English culture. During these times, I was also struck by the realization that I was part of a collective memory much larger than myself.

Also, my understanding of Cree narrative memory was nourished by my late great-grandfather, Peter Vandall (*kôkôcîs*), who died when I was fourteen. He was raised by his grandfather, *wîhtikôhkân*, an old hunter from the bush country. I still remember the sound of *kôkôcîs*' voice and the smell of his Copenhagen chewing tobacco. His stories, and the life he put into them, are perhaps my strongest link to the past. He spoke of *nêhiyâwiwin* without the calculated pretension that is sometimes heard today, but rather with a fluidity and humour that could only come from one who saw a great joy in life and was at the same comfortable with who he was.

There were a variety of factors which led me to be close to this old man.

One of the factors was due to the existence of various taboos within Cree culture regarding communication. Within Cree culture, communication between a man and his mother-in-law, and between a woman and her father-in-law, was highly frowned upon. For instance, my grandmother Ida McLeod (née Vandall) would not be allowed to talk to her father-in-law, Abel McLeod. There were only two times when she actually talked to him: one time involved politics; and I do not know the circumstances of their other interaction. There are other stories which emphasize this taboo against speaking to your in-laws, for instance when the wife of a man was in labour: the man went to his mother-in-law's house and had to convey the message to a cat in the room i.e., he had to talk to the cat. The cat was a medium through which the man could communicate to his mother-in-law.

Another reason why I was close to this old man, my great-grandfather *kôkôcîs*, was my resemblance to *wîhtikôhkân* who was his grandfather: my great-grandfather said that I had the same *presence* as his grandfather, including his eyes. Perhaps for *kôkôcîs*, *wîhcikos* (diminutive form of *wîhtikôhkân*) was for him the link to the past that *kôkôcîs* was for me. I was always close to this old man, and I remember the five-dollar bills that he would give me when I would come to visit him in those warm days of spring and summer.

Kinship and Narrative are Based on Reciprocity

Narrative reciprocity is central to oral cultures: there is a moral reason as to why some individuals pass on information to others. Indeed, the flow of information helps to cement social relationships. Angela Cavender Wilson (1998) describes the importance of reciprocity in the transmission of knowledge in oral cultures: ". . . familiarity with the concept of reciprocity breeds a realization of the need to give something back to both the individual and the culture from who and from which one has taken material" (Cavender Wilson 1998: 105).

Indeed, one could conceive of this relationship of reciprocity as an ongoing conversation. Melvin E. Miller also stresses the reciprocal nature of dialogue within the interview process: "Dialogue by means of language is what unites people in relationship. It is the medium through which our differences and intersubjective distance may be resolved" (Miller 1996: 137). Thus, the interview process is not simply an exercise wherein the interviewer "mines" (to use Kvale's 1996 expression) information from the interviewee, but rather where both parties engage in a process of mutual sharing: "each may have his or her life enriched and life's meaning deepened from the mutual exploration of perspective and truth" (Miller 1996: 135). In the case of Cree oral history and tradition, Cree elders are engaged in a dialogue with those listening to them: they offer the listener insights and memories to be passed on.

Regna Darnell, in her discussion on "The Implications of Cree Interactional Etiquette," stresses the intergenerational nature of narrative within its cultural

context. Through the negotiation of the "space between" the Cree elder and the person listening, understanding emerges through time. Consequently there is a manner in which the layers of narratives are unravelled and imbued with more meaning, as various people have more time to reflect upon the potential meaning of the words of the old person:

> Life itself is a cycle, within which individuals grow up listening to their grandfathers, come to be old themselves, teach their own grandchildren, become one of the ancestors ("nimosomipanak," morphologically "the grandfathers who have died"), expect that their teachings will be assimilated by the next generation, providing eventual closure to old teachings and open-ended to new ones (Darnell 1988: 73).

It is not the core of the narratives that change, but rather the individual understanding of these traditions.

"Lived" Experience

An essential element of Cree narrative memory is "lived" experience. Van Manen holds that "lived experience is the breathing of meaning" (Van Manen 1990:36) Through the life experience we are not only able to penetrate ancestral knowledge through the life stories, but also the "lived" experience of individuals.

It is through "lived" stories that a collective memory emerges in a dynamic manner, as discussed previously. The texts in Cruikshank (1990) illustrate the manner in which people live their lives through stories. One of her consultants, Angela Sidney, remarked: "Well, I've tried to live my life right, just like a story" (Cruikshank 1990: 146). Instead of a linear narrative pattern, dotted with dates and places, Cruikshank encountered in her fieldwork a metaphorical, narrative

language. Narratives of a collective memory are seen as a map which can guide people through their life. Cree narratives give us a place in the world and a location to understand reality and experience; stories are guides, and give us possibilities for our journeys through life.

Within the fields of both women's studies and Indigenous studies, there has been much discussion of the role and importance of "lived" experience. The methodological move within these disciplines has done much to challenge some of the tendencies of the mainstream academic community. Central to the notion of "lived" experience is the notion that experience is grounded and emerges from people's experience in the world. Instead of pushing for an objective notion of detachment, the methodology of "lived" experience embraces subjective experience and the concreteness, embedded nature of the way in which human beings dwell in the world.

The intellectual roots of "lived" experience within the fields of study lie in the work of Wilheln Dilthey, although very few people acknowledge Dilthey as the source. The "lived" experience links us to the larger context – collective memories. Bonno Tapper also characterizes the intersubjectivity implicit in Dilthey's work and conception of experience: "Individuals do not exist by themselves, as isolated beings, but in families, communities, in nations, in movements and in periods; finally in humanity itself" (Tapper 1925: 348).The notion of "lived" experience stresses that we are historical beings embedded within the cultural frameworks which allow us to make sense of the world.

Ermarth notes that all historical and social life, according to Dilthey, has a "reference to (or through) personal experience" (Ermarth 1978: 125). He stresses that within Dilthey's schema knowledge of the world is always "concrete" (ibid. 1978: 97). Within "lived" experience methodology, there is a constant play between the whole and the part in the *verstehen* (e.g., the awareness that one has about the world around him/her) that occurs. This operates on at least two levels: 1) the understanding of a "text" (I hold that this could be applied to oral narrative tradition as well), and 2) the way in which individuals relate to their society: the relationship between individual experience and collective memory.

In outlining Dilthey's notion of experience, Jacob Owenby notes:

> Past experiences are not merely juxtaposed in memory. Rather, they are parts of an integrated whole of real relations acquired gradually over time. As present experiences fade into the past they are related to other past experience . . . (Owensby 1988: 502).

Owensby adds that "past experiences which are structurally related to the present experience are drawn into the present, thus creating a temporal whole" (ibid. 1988: 504). Ermarth adds that one of the structures of *Leben* is that it "assimilates new experiences to the acquired coherence of past experience" (Ermarth 1978: 117).

We understand the significance of our experience through time. Van Manen writes: "Various thinkers have noted that lived experience first of all has a temporal structure: it can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as past presence" (van Manen 1990: 36). Over time, more

levels of narratives are understood and woven into the ongoing narrative of one's life.

Life histories give us insight into both cultures and individuals, and stress the importance of subjective experience. Indeed, the approach advocated by lived experience maps well with the narrative approach of this dissertation. The structure of *nêhiyâwiwin* is woven from layers of narrative memory through individual life histories.

I remember the stories of *nicâpan* (Betsy Head, my great grandmother's sister) during a visit I paid to her in the spring of 1998. I sat with her for the whole day, and I listened to her. She told me stories. She told me about my namesake, *nîkân-isi* ("the one who comes first", Thunderbird), who was also known by his everyday name of *mahkîyoc* ("the big one"). That is where we got the name of McLeod from: apparently a Scottish missionary who was handing out names thought that *mahkîyoc* sounded like McLeod. *nîkân-isi* was a Saulteaux who came from the Lake Winnipegosis area (Regnier 1997); however, two of his brothers went further southwest to join Chief Little Pine because they did not want to take Treaty at James Smith (Jerry McLeod, personal communication). Undoubtedly, I understood these narratives differently than she did, but we were bound together through a common collective narrative process.

These stories, and parts of these stories, emerged when I sat with *nicâpan*. She asked me to record the words. I sat in her kitchen; the kitchen

floor had worn patches scattered throughout it, paths lain where she had walked. I thought of those paths as being metaphors of her journey through life. The paths on the floor were like the pathways of memory; they were maps of where she had been. They represented the ways in which she had travelled, the connection with the land for *nêhiyawak.*

I thought about how much information she had. She had lived a rich life, and had always tried to be a good human being. Her life was not merely a series of scratches on paper: her life stories were like an organism, a living thing that linked stories and experience together. She told me about my great-great-great grandfather Bernard Constant who had put his name on Treaty Six (in 1876) as a counsellor of the James Smith band. She told me what life was like when she was younger; the happiness that she remembered still lingered in her words. She had lived a long time, but there was still a lightness to her being, and an ease to her manner. She was very open with her stories, and her age gave her a presence in my eyes, a certain type of authority. Cree narrative memory is a living power that Cree people need in order to know how they are.

Paul John Eakin's work *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999) offers insights into how I could interpret my interactions with some of my relatives. He writes that "narrative is not merely about the self but rather in some profound way a constituent part of self" (Eakin 1999: 101). He argues that the self is constructed through the process of narrative memory. In another passage, Eakin notes: "narrative plays a central, structuring role in the formation

and maintenance of our sense of identity" (ibid. 123). Indeed, it is through the narratives of our families and our communities that we come to know ourselves and our place in the world. Without such narratives, Cree narrative memory would not be possible.

My grandfather, John R. McLeod, told stories about what he knew, and he derived his stories from his experience; furthermore, he told stories in which he, or his ancestors, were participants. Knowledge within this paradigm of knowing comes from what you have seen and what you have internalized. Noel Dyck writes that my grandfather "began telling his listeners that since he had only a grade-three education he could only speak about things that had happened to him, things that he knew about" (Dyck 1992: 136). Dyck called this approach a "traditional Cree genre" (Dyck 1992: 138). Furthermore, one of the fundamentals of this approach is an open-ended process: my grandfather "never said what the point of his stories were; he forced the listeners to discover this for themselves" (Dyck 1992: 138). This is one of the traditional Cree, and generally non-Western, narrative techniques: people have the freedom to decide what they want to make of the narrative; they have the freedom to decide meaning for themselves. Consequently, the paradigm of this process is inherently skewed towards people making up their own minds about what they think about something: they have to decide what they believe to be true, and the listener is given the chance to internalize the stories.

nimosôm ("my grandfather", in reference to John R. McLeod) struggled to find a balance in "lived" narratives between the old ways and the new ways. Noel Dyck, a long time friend of my grandfather, noted that it was the stories of his life, and those which he had heard from his grandmother *kêkêhk-iskwêw* (Hawk Woman, Betsy McLeod, born in 1866, James Smith Land Register) that he drew upon in "his public acts of remembering" (Dyck 1992: 132). This concept of remembering in a public manner is important because it gets to the hermeneutic heart of Cree narrative history. The point of many of these storytellers was that they remembered because they felt that they had a moral duty to remember. The stories were offered as traces of experience, through which the listener had to make sense of their own lives and experiences.

Keith Basso (1996) discusses the dynamic qualities of lived narratives and the importance of context, noting the importance of narrative memory: "remembering often provides a basis for imagining" (Basso 1996: 5). The "space between" old stories and contemporary experiences allows for creative possibilities to emerge. Basso adds: "What is often remembered about a particular place guides and constrains how it will be imagined by delimiting a field of workable possibilities" (Basso 1996: 5). Therefore, for the Apache the process of narrative memory is one of many possibilities and is always being extended:

> These possibilities are then exploited by acts of conjecture and speculation which build upon them and go beyond them to create possibilities of a new and original sort, thus producing a fresh expanded picture of how things might have been (Basso 1996: 5).

Narratives are constantly being reinterpreted and recreated in an organic manner: "[t]hey enrich the common stock on which everyone can draw to muse on past events, interpret their significance, and imagine them now" (Basso 1996: 6). Phillip Deloria comments on the dynamic nature of the Apache stories which Basso documented:

> Apaches, to return to Basso's examples, do not simply live in a static, mythic world. They create new histories about newly created places, revealing the gaps and fissure in any scheme that would sift out temporal distinctions among native histories (Phillip Deloria 2002: 16).

While telling stories, the speaker generally makes a comment about the relevance of the story, or links the story to the people. An example of this practice is Francis Michael Harper in his narration of *mistahi-maskwa. "tâpwê miywasin kâhkiyaw ayisiniwak ê-nôhtê-kiskêyitahk tânisi ê-isiyihkâsoyân"*/ "It is truly good that all of the people here want to know my name" (Harper 1973). He goes on to tell a story of 1885 (*ê-mâyahkamikahk*, "where it went wrong"); but the story-teller will select the details which he thinks are important, editing the past and putting forth a narrative.

Like Francis Michael Harper, Dudley Patterson, a friend of Keith Basso, notes the importance of being connected to a narrative:

> Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well, you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep thinking about it. Then your mind will become smoother and smoother. Then you will see danger before it happens. You will walk a long way and live a long time. You will be wise. People will respect you (Dudley Patterson, cited in Basso 1996: 127).

Narrative memory is a life-source which gives us ideas about how to live our lives. It is a process of living stories and of trying to penetrate new levels of meaning.

Richard Preston, in *Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meanings of Events,* discusses the dynamic relationship that story-tellers have with their audience within a Cree context. Throughout his work, he draws upon the eastern Crees of James Bay, stressing the importance of narrative within that culture: "Narratives have been the basis for understanding Cree experiences" (Preston 1975: 3). Preston stresses that people within the culture express themselves through narratives:

> Cree individuals often do not convey explanation in the form of simple, single facts, preferring instead to converse about events in a narrative form. The context of narration . . . functions to convey to the hearer a whole and precise perception, sometimes almost a visual image, with the appropriate, inherent context (Preston 1975: 10).

The narratives of Cree culture give shape to both individual and collective memory in an ongoing activity where the narrative is determined to a large extent by the relations that people have with one another. Furthermore, there is a certain way of conceiving of space within a narrative form of memory; and there is a need for the rest of the narrative parts to coalesce to form a whole. It takes time for narratives to unfold within the layers of social interaction.

Narrative Stability and the Occasion of Telling

"Lived" experience within a large framework shows the dynamic nature of Cree narrative memory, which could be conceived of as an organism growing and shifting. Nonetheless, like all organisms, Cree narrative memory has a structure within parameters of possibility; and there is a great deal of stability.

The prodigious memory of the late Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, the fact that he could recite the stories of Old people directly, illustrates the stability of oral tradition which developed through time. This "stable core" developed, and the tradition of the treaty coalesced through the discussion of several old men (including the late Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's father and paternal uncle); it would include the following sections of the "The Pipestem and the Making of Treaty Six": [3], [5], [6], [7], [8], [14], and [15] (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998). All of these accounts documenting the Treaty which took place at Fort Pitt in 1876 demonstrate the reliability of the Treaty narrative.

However, listeners/readers must also acknowledge the humility that Old people have within Cree narrative. While there may be versions of oral narratives which are very close to the verbatim versions, Old people hesitate to claim that they know a narrative completely. As mentioned before, a lot of the old people would begin their stories with "*namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamâri*" / "I know not very much."

This simple phrase is important in understanding Cree narrative memory: people did not believe that they had power over the narrative; rather, they believed they were conduits, that there was a balance between individual and tradition. When the play between individual and collective is taken into account, it becomes evident that no understanding can ever be complete, because there is always more interpretations that could exist. Paul Ricoeur's notion of "surplus of meaning" is analogous to the point that I am trying to make here.

An example of the humility found within Cree narrative is Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's discussion of Treaty Six. He wonders whether or not he remembers things well enough:

> â, êwako ôma kâ-wî-tâhkôtamân, matwân cî kwayask nika-kî-isi-tâhkôtên tânis ê-ki-itâcimostawit kâ-kî-oyôhtâwîyan ... (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 106).
>
> Well, this which I am about to discuss, I wonder if I will be able to discuss it with proper faithfulness, just as my father had told me (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw: 107).

Another important point must be made here as well: statements such as the one above also act as "oral footnotes". In written culture, we document where we got ideas through a bibliography; in oral cultures, this process of "footnoting" is done by acknowledging how one came to know a story.

In another example, Walter Lightning discusses his work with various Cree old people in his article "Compassionate Mind: Implications of a Text Written by Elder Louis Sunchild." Throughout his observations, Lightning discusses the importance of humility in terms of collective memory:

> I said to him [Art Rainy Bird from Montana] in Cree, "Grandfather, I don't know how to do these things. I am trying to prepare the protocol but I realize that basically I don't know anything. As a matter of fact, I have no idea what I'm doing. Please, I implore you, have compassion for what I am doing" (Lightning 1992: 216).

Lightning is conscious of the limitations of his knowledge of *nêhiyâwiwin*, and feels humble in the presence of the older man. The Old Man reciprocates by also acknowledging his own limitations and humility. Art Rainy replied:

> Elder Art Raining Bird, for all his stature and knowledge, was a living example of humility. He looked at me and answered with a deep kindness

> of understanding, saying, "It's nothing, my grandson. We don't know anything" (ibid.)

Underlying this conversation is the respect that these men have for the larger collective knowledge of their people: neither one claims to know everything. Humility is one of the primary characteristics of Cree narrative memory, and it acknowledges that the narratives are open-ended: there is no end to the way in which they can be interpreted.

There is another way in which oral traditions can be considered open-ended: different elements of a story can be emphasized during a single performance, which can be characterized as the occasion of telling. In other words, there can never be a "complete" authoritative performance of a narrative because the audience and the demands of the occasion will always vary. Furthermore, a narrative can never be fully exhausted because the dynamics between the teller and the listener will also vary: the story will always be understood in slightly different ways, depending on the experiences of people in the group listening.

Variations in the same story certainly can be attributed to dialectical differences and the function of landscape and other historical contingencies. However, I want to advance the theory that some of the variations within Cree narrative memory, within Cree narratives, can be attributed to variations not necessarily in the story itself, but indeed to the demands of the "occasion of telling."

Four variations of the "Rolling Head/ Flood" cycle of *wîsahkêcâhk* sacred stories (*âtayohkêwin*) demonstrate this interpretation. The four versions that I will examine are: Alanson Skinner, "Plains Ojibway Tales"; Edward Ahenakew, "Cree Trickster Tales" (1929); Ida McLeod, "Creation Story" (1988); and Leonard Bloomfield (storyteller Louis Moosomin) (1934). I include the Saulteaux (Plains Ojibway) stories of Alanson B. Skinner because there are great similarities between Cree and Saulteaux sacred narratives. Indeed, in many bands within Saskatchewan the two languages have been spoken side by side. The chart lists various elements of the story.

Skinner	Ahenakew	McLeod/ Vandall	Bloomfield (Moosomin)
"The Magic Flight" ("Rolling Head")	**"Rolling Head"**	"Rolling Head"	"Rolling Head"
Part of Rolling Head	**"The Flight of Wîsakêcâhk"**	Part of "Rolling Head"	missing
Wolf (younger kin)-nephew "Nanibozhu and the Wolves" "The Death of Wolf"	***Wolf (younger kin)*-brother** "Wîsakêcâhk looks for his younger brother" "Wîsakêcâhk rescues his Brother"	missing	missing
missing	**The Flood**	"The Flood"	"The Flood"
missing	missing	missing	**Commentary on creation stories: Cree vs. Christian**

Figure 1

The argument here is that one of the ways of accounting for variation within the narratives is to identify how the occasion of speaking may have influenced the length of the narrative and the quality of its overall completeness. It is not necessarily the case that when there exist written texts of oral stories that care must be taken in assessments of the narratives. The version that is eventually transcribed does not necessarily represent the totality of the

knowledge that an individual speaker has of the narrative. The occasion of speaking, the demands of the audience, and the time in which the story is communicated alter the way in which the story is presented. Vansina misses this point in his otherwise illuminating analysis of oral tradition.

Alanson Skinner's texts in "Plains Ojibway Tales" were collected primarily on the Long Plains reserve in Manitoba, and one story was from Odanah, Wisconsin. The latter however does not include the *wîsahkêcâhk* cycle that is the focus of my analysis. Skinner lists the people who told the stories from Long Plains reserve: Dauphin Myran, Joe Countois, Piziki, Joe Pasoin, and most of all Ogimáuwinini (*okimâ-ininiw*, trans. "Chief person").

Notable in the collection is that texts are in some instances exceptionally short: often the "stories" that are collected seem to be summaries. Unfortunately, Skinner does not provide any field notes with the narratives, from which we could determine the context within which he edited and translated them.

Also, the stories as he has recorded them do not follow the sequence that is found in other variations. The "Rolling Head/ Flood" cycle is scattered throughout Skinner's collection in fragments. From this we can presume, apart from the fact that many of the narratives are summaries, that the stories would have also been told during shorter sessions: otherwise Skinner would have recorded the cycle in its totality. We can thus ascribe the differences between the Skinner texts and the more complete version of Ahenakew to issues of

transcription and to the seemingly fragmentary way in which these narratives were conveyed.

The Ahenakew version has all of the elements common to the various narratives, with the exception of Louis Moosomin's commentary regarding Christianity in the Bloomfield version. The reason for this is that there is not a "middle man" in the transcription process: Edward Ahenakew is both the storyteller and the person writing the stories down. Furthermore, he has the advantage of being a cultural insider, and of hearing and understanding these narratives in Cree. The occasion of telling then simultaneously informs the occasion of writing.

The McLeod/ Vandall version was published by my late *nôhkom* Ida McLeod in the early 1980s. She lists several people at the start for whom she feels a debt regarding the narratives. One of these people is Edward Ahenakew, who came from Sandy Lake, also her reserve. Also listed are her father, Peter Vandall, and her father-in-law Abel McLeod.

Because of the taboos regarding father-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships, she would not have heard Abel say these narratives in great detail. However, she would have heard her father, Peter Vandall, tell these stories over and over: my father and his siblings have told me that he always told them these stories.

My great-grandfather Peter Vandall was born in 1899 (half a generation after Ahenakew). Because he was raised by his grandparents until he was

fourteen and because he was exceptionally skilled in the Cree language, he would have had a knowledge of "The Rolling Head/ Flood" cycle that would have been equivalent to Ahenakew's. Consequently, I would conclude that the reason why the whole cycle is not included in the book is merely for space reasons (the volume, edited by Ida McLeod, was a series of *wîsakêcâhk* sacred stories). Consequently, while my great-grandfather Peter Vandall knew this story, the occasion of writing, in which his daughter recorded these stories, did not reveal the totality of the story for primarily editing reasons.

Another interesting element in the *occasion* of speaking/ writing of these narratives is that one can analyse the narratives in light of Christian influence. Here I am thinking particularly of the "Rolling Head" narrative. By examining the most complete version of the narrative, that of Edward Ahenakew, the existance of the snake as the lover of *wîsakêcâhk*'s mother is striking. It would seem that the snake may be a Christian influence, especially given the fact that Edward Ahenakew was an Anglican priest. What makes this hypothesis more plausible is that the Skinner text, which was recorded earlier, does not have the Trickster's mother's lover as a snake: rather, the lover is simply in human form.

The counter argument to this, however, is that the Bloomfield version, which was recorded in the 1930s (a few years after the Ahenakew version) also has the lover as a snake; but the decisive counter-evidence however is that in the Bloomfield version the storyteller consciously juxtaposes his version (the Cree version of creation) with the Judeo-Christian creation story: this would seemingly

imply that he was extremely conscious of any Christian influence that may have been operative in the Cree world at the time.

The motif of a snake as a nefarious being is well-grounded within Cree narrative memory. For instance, there are numerous narratives with Thunderbirds fighting snakes over bodies of water -- snakes usually denoting trouble for human beings. Also, there are numerous accounts of the use by Cree people of "snake medicine" which was not considered for good purposes. For instance, there is a story within my family of one of Peter Vandall's uncle's who used this "medicine" for negative purposes, later experiencing repercussions (*pâstâhowin*).

The above example illustrates the importance of the notion of the occasion of speaking determining the way in which a narrative will be told: for instance, which parts of a longer cycle will be told. Given the shift to written language, the notion of the occasion of speaking must be expanded to include the occasion of writing, as found in the versions recorded by my *nôhkom* and also in the version written by Edward Ahenakew. Also, by cross-referencing various narratives, one can determine that the image of the snake within the narratives is not a Christian influence.

The "Power" of the Written World

Rounding out my discussion of Cree narrative memory, I want to explore the key notion of occasion of writing in contrast to occasion of speaking. I want to explore the relationship between written cultures and oral cultures, and to

expose some of the tacit cultural arrogance of some commentators such as Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1963).

Jack Goody and Ian Watt argue throughout their article "The Consequences of Literacy" (1963) that oral cultures are static and homogeneous in comparison to literate cultures: Goody and Watt use the term "homeostatic transmission" (Goody and Watts 1963: 340) to describe oral cultures. This is in contrast to the importance of individual memory and experiences within this process. They argue that people within oral cultures are excessively bound to tradition and cannot critically think about their social space. The consequence of this is that oral cultures tend to be closed and there is often no plurality of interpretation. Goody and Watt write: "In non-literate society every social situation cannot but bring the individual into contact with the group's pattern of thought, feeling and action: the choice is between the cultural tradition or solitude" (Goody and Watt 1963: 336). Within this model of oral tradition, it seems that skepticism and a questioning of social mores would be exceptionally difficult. Consequently, the people existing within an oral culture cannot (according to this argument) make lasting critiques of social discourse. They are, in a sense, bound by the communal discourse of speech and discursive action; they are participants in a culture wherein meaning and discourse are generated by communal activity.

The implication of this is that only written cultures have the capacity for lasting critical and self-reflexive thought. Because people from within written

cultures can think outside of narratives, they, according to Goody, have the ability for philosophy and critical discourse. A hierarchy is thus created or at least implied between written and oral cultures, written cultures within this framework being more advanced than oral cultures.

Goody and Watts hold that oral cultures do not have the capacity to critically reflect on collective memory:

> While scepticism may be present in such society, it takes a personal, non-cumulative form: it does not lead to a deliberate rejection and reinterpretation of social dogma so much as to a semi-automatic readjustment of belief (Goody and Watts 1963: 325).

Within an oral culture, then, according to Goody and Watts, people do not have the capacity to be self-conscious of their surrounding to the extent that they can question the contingency of the social space around them. Any changes that occur of narratives and practices, do not come about because of self-conscious changes, or attempts to bring about change, but rather through the archaeology of collective experience which is gradually shifting through time. Such a position is extremely condescending to oral cultures as it tacitly holds that the position that such cultures are not rational: that they do not have capacity for skeptical thought.

Basso, however, is critical of Goody's stance:

> I am aware that aspects of this essay touch directly on current characterizations of differences between "oral" and "literate" cultures, particularly as those differences have been formulated by Goody (1977), Goody and Watt (1968) . . . In the case of the Western Apache, whose culture is still predominately "oral," some of these formulations simply do not apply and are sharply insulting to boot (Basso 1996: 155).

Throughout the corpus of Jack Goody's writing, there is the underlying notion of an intellectual progression from oral cultures to written cultures. Written cultures are more developed, and have attained different "technologies of the intellect" (Goody 2000: 1). Furthermore, written cultures, have more power to organize politically than oral cultures.

Written culture allows people to develop logic in the sense of *modus tollens* and other Aristotelian conventions. Goody qualifies this by saying: "That does not mean to say that we do not recognize the existence of forms of the syllogism, for example, in oral cultures, or of notions of proof and evidence" (Goody 2000: 2). In another passage he also notes that "[t]his does not mean that analogous, less developed forms of procedure such as opposition, polarity, and contradiction are not present in societies without writing" (ibid. 12). However, these statements still imply a progressive model of historical consciousness which perhaps can be attributed to Goody's latent Marxism.

The existence of logic within a culture has often been taken to imply rationality. Within the western tradition, all thought before Plato has been considered to be pre-rational. It is with the development of Greek thought through Plato, and also the development of logic (as it is commonly understood in the western philosophical tradition) that the west encounters a phase of thought which brings about a questioning of Greek traditional narratives: one can speak of the Greek Enlightenment, analogous to the later Enlightenment in modern Europe.

Certainly, as Goody points out, there is power involved in the development of the written word. Formal logics have developed which would not be possible in a culture transmitting itself in an oral context. Such logical thinking, indeed the foundation of western rationalism, has been used to create hierarchies between European peoples and Indigenous peoples throughout the world. To speak of Indigenous peoples as having a different way of comporting with reality goes without saying. However, Goody's progressive notion of human intellectual development could be tacitly used to justify the various paternalistic policies of, among others, the Canadian government: namely that European cultures are more "civilized" and that Euro-Canadians possess a more developed sense of rationality.

To be fair, Goody's analysis of the power of the the written word offers many important insights in the development of colonialism indirectly. For instance, he points out throughout *The Power of the Written Tradition* that writing allowed people to organize societies on a larger scale (Goody 2000: 1, 25). The centralizing power of these societies enables them to "dominate" those societies that do not possess the written word; also, the written word helps them centralize their military power.

However, oral narrative traditions, because of their lack of centralization/ standardization are more malleable and have the possibility of imagining other states of being than written ones which tend to lend themselves to the development of modern bureaucracies. Furthermore, the development of written

language tends to comport itself with an instrumental rationality which sees the world as a set of entities for the state to manipulate; and a more holistic relationship to the land, and indeed to other human beings, is hampered.

While written language does give human beings certain "technologies of the intellect," it also creates a "forgetfulness of totality" (to loosely paraphrase Martin Heidegger's notion of *Seinvergessenheit*). The central philosophical assumption here is that human society is not necessarily developing into a higher state of consciousness, but in fact loses something for what it seemingly gains. This aspect is missing from Goody's analysis of oral/written cultures, which, while insightful, is nonetheless incomplete.

Written language changes the way in which we communicate, and in turn the way in which we relate to other human beings. For instance, instead of existing in a "face-to-face" society, people are often separated by space and time, which disrupts the more holistic relationship that people had in communication. Also, the link between human society, and the simultaneous rise of science and writing fragments our relationship to our environment. Furthermore, the notion of communication itself is narrowed, entailing in the contemporary context a secular meaning, devoid of spirituality, and the possibility of dreams and other "technologies of the soul" (to put a slight twist on Goody's phrase)[1]: I will elaborate on this aspect of Cree narrative memory in the next chapter.

Contra Goody and Watts, the Trickster allows one to think outside of

narratives, and to critique social practices. There is an old story from Bloomfield where *wîsahkêcâhk* is used as a way of questioning social norms. *kâ-kîsikâw pîhtokâw* (Coming Day) told the story "*wîsahkêcâhk* preaches to the Wolves" (*kâ-kîsikâw pîhtokâw*, in Bloomfield 1930): "*wîsahkêcâhk mistahi kitimâkisiw*" ("*wîsahkêcâhk* was very poor", Bloomfield 1930: 29); he had no money and had to go into debt with the French trader so that he could buy some clothes. In order to pay him back, *wîsahkêcâhk* had to get hides. He got poison, and then he asked his wife to give him some fat:

> Then he put the poison into the fat; and into a small dish he poured the fat. He shaped a great many little lumps of fat and cooled them until they were hard. He took them all, and went out to look for the wolves (Bloomfield 1930: 31).

Then he saw a wolf: "*nistês, âstam*!" (Come here my little brother!). He then told the wolf that he was going to employ him, and the wolf got all of the other wolves together. *wîsahkêcâhk* then began to preach to them and gave them the little pieces of rolled up fat, telling them that they would have eternal life. They all begged him for the gift of life that was found in the little balls of fat. Coming Day said: "Just like a priest was *wîsahkêcâhk*, as he gave religious instruction to the wolves. Presently, as *wîsahkêcâhk* sat there, all the wolves leaped up in the air and fell down, poisoned, and they all died" (Bloomfield 1930: 32). He then had enough hides to pay off his debts. The Trickster thus challenges daily assumptions, and through narrative imagination can imagine a different state of being in the world, satire being the vehicle for this narrative imagination. The narrative tacitly questions the role of both the Church and the

fur trade.

Goody holds that critical insights can be developed within oral cultures: "Members of oral cultures certainly doubt from time to time the validity of their gods, their rituals, their premises" (Goody 2000: 46). However, the role for doubt and for free, creative thought is exceptionally limited in the end, within the rubric of Goody's topography of orality.

Peter Nabakov is more open about the function of doubt and free, creative thinking within orality, particulary within the *wîsahkêcâhk* narrative cited above. He notes that in the passage *wîsahkêcâhk* "enacts a new set of unwelcome cultural actions and values that have been introduced by alien historical actors" (Nabakov 2002: 112). In the context of this narrative, the role of *wîsakêcâhk* is more than that of a mediator between people and animals, but rather that of a mediator between the colonizers and the Cree people. Nabakov adds: "By allowing himself to 'play the part of Europeans, so to speak, he dramatizes the dire consequences of their way of life to any Indian participants in their institutions" (Nabakov 2002: 113). Thus, the Trickster narrative functions as a satire, and allows a "thinking outside" of the limitations of the social situation that the Crees found themselves in during the time of Treaty. It is indeed a reflective act of narrative imagination.

Jack Goody rightly points out that orality within a culture that has writing is very different from orality in a culture that does not:

> As a consequence, a so-called oral tradition that supplements a written tradition cannot be thought of as the same as the oral tradition in a

> society without writing. In the first place, the latter has to bear all of the burden of cultural transmission, whereas in [cultures where there is also writing] the oral tradition was vested with only part of the total body of literary activity . . . (Goody 2000: 23).

This is undoubtedly the case for many Cree people who still rely on orality. There are very few Cree people today who cannot write either English or Cree. To use Goody's term, writing has become a "technology for the intellect," and has become an important tool for contemporary storytellers and others. For instance, one may have heard a story, but one may also consult other versions of the same story.

The way in which many people my age experience Cree narrative memory is profoundly different from the way in which many of our grandparents and parents experienced it. Today, we are in the process of adopting written forms of Cree narratives (both in Cree and English), and use the "technology" of writing to supplement our "hearing" of these narratives. Within Cree narrative memory, there is the story of *mistânaskowêw* which deals with the origin of the syllabic writing system for Cree. When *mistânaskowêw* is taken to the Creator's Sun Dance Lodge, he is told by the Creator that "he will be given syllabics so that the Crees in the future, when the language is threatened, will have something to remember their language" (Dion Tootoosis, personal communication 1998). Syllabics were in this transference compared to "medicine": they were imbued with spiritual power (Dion Tootoosis: personal communication 1998). Consequently, there is within Cree collective knowing a narrative embracing and foretelling the use of a written form of the language.

Conclusion

Cree narrative memory is a "lived" process that stretches far beyond any analysis of it. The stories of *nêhiyâwiwin* are embodied within the lives of people, and they are used by people to make sense of the world around them. Stories are "alive," imbued with spiritual significance, and are constantly unfolding. The stories cannot be put in a box: they have a life of their own, and the best that we can do is catch a snapshot of them. It is for this reason that I have intentionally entitled my dissertation *Exploring Cree Narrative Memory:* there is no final, meta-narrative of *nêhiyawak*, but rather a series of interlinking and interpenetrating narrative strands.

The narrative process is grounded in the notion of *wâhkotowin* -- kinship. The kinship between people within this culture is key to the process. People tell stories to those that they know, those to whom they are related, and those that they trust. The stories are often told repeatedly in order to impress upon the listener the narrative structure as well as moral imperatives, and also in order to remind children or grandchildren of how their lives ultimately relate to these stories. Within this context, people have a moral responsibility to remember. Indeed, one could say that the survival of *nêhiyawak* is dependent on people remembering and retelling the stories.

The telling of the stories, *the occasion of telling*, is itself a central part of Cree narrative memory. The storyteller adjusts his or her narrative depending on

the situation and the audience; the story is like an organism that adapts to the surrounding environment. In many ways, the social situation of the telling is a vessel which holds the sound of the memory.

Not only are the storyteller and the audience linked, but *nêhiyâwiwin* is also linked to the rest of creation. This is the second level of the meaning of *wâhkotowin*. Not only are people related to the each other, but they are also related to other beings. *nêhiyawak* see themselves in the rest of creation: they see themselves in other beings and indeed in the landscape. One could say that there is a general concept of the totality of being within Cree epistemology. A central part of *nêhiyâwiwin* is to be able to tap into this energy that exists in all living things. Cree narrative memory is the vehicle in which this experience and this journey have been recorded and transmitted across generations.

Chapter Two: nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin (Cree worldview)

Dreaming the World

Comprehension of Cree philosophy and worldview is necessary to understand Cree historical experience. Often times, these stories are removed from this context. Winona Stevenson uses the metaphor of "bundle" to describe stories:

> The bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and the story dies. In the process, the teachings and responsibilities deriving from the social relations inherent in student-teacher relations are forgotten (Stevenson 2000: 79).

A bundle is called *nâyahcikan* in Cree, which means "something that you put on your back" / "something that you carry". A bundle is kept as a religious instrument, and is added to and subtracted from as time goes on. There are songs associated with bundles, and the combination of bundles and songs are passed on within families.[1]

There is a strong relationship between the individual and *nêhiyâwiwin* within Cree narrative memory. As well as being about relationships between culture and individuals, and as well as being about a series of relationships between individuals, it is also about the relationship between *nêhiyawak* and the land. Hallowell, writing on the culturally related Ojibway, comments on the interconnection between the human and animal worlds: "It must likewise be noted that interpersonal relations between humans and other than human beings

involve reciprocity and obligations, in the same way that social relations between human persons do" (Hallowell 1976:462).

A dream helper, *pawâkan*, links a person to rest of creation. A *pawâkan* could be any being, from a mosquito to a bear, and imparts to its human counterpart various powers and abilities. In return for these gifts that this being provides a person, the person treats the animal with respect and honours it. For instance, if the person had a bear for a dream helper, there may be certain dietary restrictions placed upon eating bear meat. There may be songs that the person would sing to his *pawâkan* that would honour this being.

Clifford Sanderson told me that his grandfather, *asiniy-kâpaw,* had a bear as his dream helper (Sanderson, 2003 interview). When *asiniy-kâpaw* died, a small bear came out of his chest and walked around. The bear, like the humming bird (*môswa-piyêsis*), was a source of medicine and healing. One of the reasons for this is that these animals consume plants which themselves are medicines.

Clifford Sanderson (2003 interview) also told me a story about how, when one of his grandchildren was sick, he used a bear hide to help him: the baby laid on that hide for weeks and eventually got better.

The story of Andrew Ahenakew, an Anglican priest from Sandy Lake reserve, and his acquisition of Bear medicine (Ahenakew 2000: 62-81) is a telling example. Ahenakew had a dream of a bear who gives him medicine. (The bear figures prominently in the worldview and belief system of the Algonquian

speaking people). The Bear helper remarked:

> I have come to give you my body, for since God made the earth, when He made the animals, we are still as God had made us in the very beginning, we have no sickness in our bodies . . . Thus He [God] has sent me hither that I may give you my body for you to use, for you to make medicine there from my body and to doctor people who are sick (Ahenakew 2000: 65).

Such narratives demonstrate the importance of other beings to the narrative memory of Cree people.

John Cooper, who worked with the James Bay Cree, interviewed various people about the role of dreams in Cree culture:

> The Indians thought dreams told them where and how to find food. The dreams came from Manitu (sic), such as, how to make a successful hunt for caribou, and the people thanked the Manitu (sic) for giving them the dreams (Cooper 1934: 61).

The role of such a dream helper extends the consciousness of people into the rest of the world: indeed the dream helper allows one to mediate with the rest of creation. The dream helper is a form of knowledge, but this form of knowledge has often been dismissed as "folklore" by many in the mainstream society. The point of trying to write from the perspective of Cree narrative memory is to engage the collective memory of Cree people from inside of the culture, with concepts which are indigenous to the culture.

Dreams are a way of knowing in Cree culture. Dreams have been used by many Cree leaders in times of crisis in order to ascertain the best course of action for their people. Indeed, the knowledge obtained through dreams is an extension of the reality that people are usually familiar with. Brightman writes:

> Crees say that many dreams are perceptions of actually occurring events that the dreaming self witnesses or in which it constructively participates. Such dreams are conceived to be as real as the data of waking consciousness (Brightman 1993: 95).

The *pawâkan* allows people to tap into the land around them, which is indeed one of the central features of Indigenous consciousness. Brightman writes: "The *pawâkan* is understood to assist its human dependent by providing 'power' "(Brightman 1993: 87). Brightman notes the important Cree word "*mahmâtawisiwin*" which according to him means "someone uses power" (ibid. 87). Willie Ermine adds to this description that "tapping into the mystery" (Ermine 1995) is a central process of Cree indigenous consciousness and knowing. A person who is especially capable of tapping into this power is called *omitêw.*[3] Clifford Sanderson used this term to refer to his grandfather *asiniy-kâpaw* (Sanderson conversation 2003).

Sarah Whitecalf notes the importance of dream helpers in Cree culture:

> . . . it is true that they used to look like human beings to the people, coming to tell them things, that is what is meant when one says, 'she has a dream spirit', that it looks like a human being to them, coming to teach things, but in their sleep; and it is true that when they would try it, they would indeed be able to do that which they had been taught (Whitecalf 1993: 37).

The persistence of these beliefs has been particularly strong, even in areas where Christianity has had a strong influence. For instance, on the Sandy Lake reserve in north-central Saskatchewan, the influence of the Anglican religion has been long-standing and strong. Since the time of Treaties, many of the band members have adopted both Christianity and farming. However, the

adoption of these beliefs has not meant that the older Cree narrative tools were abandoned, but rather that they integrated with pre-existing beliefs.[2]

As noted above, Willie Ermine defines the concept (1995) of *mahmâtawisiwin* as "tapping into the mystery," which is also important in articulating a Cree concept of land. It also denotes how *nêhiyawak* are able to tap into the powers around them; it denotes fundamentally a way of understanding things -- of articulating a place in the world.

It is interesting that people use the images of modern technology to describe the ways in which Indigenous people dwell in the world. For instance, Norval Morrisseau uses the image of a computer as a metaphor for spiritual power (Morrisseau 1997). He describes the centre of spiritual power as the "House of Invention," and uses the image of a computer to describe this place. In contemporary Cree usage, the term *mamâhtawi-âpacihcikan* is used to describe a computer: literally, "the machine which taps into the mystery of life."

Norval Morrisseau adds to the discussion of the importance of dreams through his concept of the "House of Invention" (Morrriseau 1997: 13) which stands outside of time and space and is accessible through art and dreams. Morriseau describes his paintings: "They don't represent any story at all. They remind the viewer of the same experience that these Indian people, our ancestors, had in the dream world. Reminding the viewer that he too can go there in his dream state" (Morrisseau 1997: 22).[4]

Robert Brightman cites Michel Dumas, who describes a similar power that comes from the land of dreaming:

> People used to sleep in the water. You wouldn't believe it. They make a coffin. In the wintertime, they put them . . . like first freeze-up early bogs . . . About March, about this time of year, they go and take this guy out. They stay there in the water and winter . . . he's dreaming at the bottom of the water. He's dreaming all the animals, they gotta come to him (Brightman 1993: 81).

The world of the "House of Invention" can never be completely described, nor can one person exhaust all of its possibilities. Morrisseau says: "My grandfather told me once that nobody, no matter how hard they tried, could remember all of the legends; otherwise the whole of northwestern Ontario would be covered in pictographs" (Morrisseau 1997: 15). Thus, the artist, like the storyteller, is a contributing participant in the perpetuation of collective memory.

Indigenous Cree Narrative Memory

The way in which *nêhiyawak* have dwelled in the land is the foundation for Cree narrative consciousness: the source of this consciousness comes from dreams and taps into the powers of the spirit world. Indigenous Cree narrative memory is a relational memory between people and the landscape. Spatially, Indigenous people remain attached to an area of land over an extended period of time. This connection is manifested through such things as knowledge of plants, sacred sites, and songs. Indigenous people remain attached to specific pieces of land which manifests itself through songs, ceremonies, and language. Location within a specific landscape gives power to Indigenous consciousness

and reality. Furthermore, the concept of "indigenous" within the context of Cree culture is defined through the practices and rituals of *nêhiyawak* and their relationship to the land.

A long time ago, *nêhiyawak* speculated about the impending transformation of the world which would alter their Indigenous way of being. Charlie Chief remembers his father speaking to another man as they were seated on top of a hill looking at a settler's cabin: "You know something . . . it will not be many years before this land of ours will be fenced and cross-fenced. The trees will be pulled out and the land broken up" (Charlie Chief 1974: 22). Charlie Chief adds:

> The old men looked depressed as they sat there smoking their pipes. They were being deprived of a way of life. In later years I saw what they said would happen. The land was broken up and we had dust storms. Fences were everywhere and the animals left or died off (Charlie Chief 1974: 23).

As noted before, colonialism, aided by technology, allowed Europeans to overtake Indigenous people, and in turn to alienate them from the land.

Perhaps one of the most important elements of being Indigenous is that a specific group dwells in a specific area for a long period of time, the narratives of a people being tied to a specific area. Indeed the collective memory of a people becomes layered through narrative memory, as the memories of older generations engage in a hermeneutical interplay with the narratives and experiences of the present generation.

Places are important to *nêhiyawak* and our identity. Clifford Sanderson spoke of *mânito-sâkahikan* (God's Lake/ Watrous) (Sanderson, 2003 Interview). The place is a sacred place, where people would go to pray; people speak of its healing qualities. There is a stone there which fell from the sky.[5] Grace Sanderson (Clifford's wife) said that people could hear it from all around when it fell from the sky, and came from all over to see it. It was a meteorite which is very flat and with a square shape and lies at the bottom of the water. Clifford used the term *sôhkêmakahk* ("it is powerful") to describe the power of the place (the stone in particular). *nêhiyawak* go there to pray and leave tobacco offering.[6]

Charlie Burns, another old man from James Smith, spoke of the significance of *manito-sâkahikan*:

> We used to go to Watrous and that lake, *manito sâkahikan,* God's Lake, that's where we used to go and get that salt. We used to go and live there for two weeks . We would dry that salt and put it in bags. Then we would put it in a wagon and take it back to James Smith reserve. People used to use that, that was a good medicine at one time (Burns 2003).

I then asked Charlie what they used it for in particular. He responded: "Any thing. You get cuts or any bruises, like eczema and all that. It was good. You wash your face with it" (Burns 2003).[7]

The old man narrator of the book also speaks of the importance of various places for the northern Cree of Saskatchewan:

> During the cold months of the year, when the buffalo seek the shelter of the hills, valleys, and trees of our land, we too choose sheltered places for our camps. *mihkomin-sâkahikan, ayapacinâsa, mikisiwaciya,*

> *kaskiskawânatinwa* - all these places are home to our people and to our relatives. Here we are safe and secure. With our friends and relatives we build pounds for capturing the buffalo (Christensen 2000: 4).

Landscape is an important part of our how we literally ground ourselves and communicate: one of the most important ways in which *nêhiyâwiwin* has been transformed is in the manner people communicate, with each other and with the rest of creation. The key for us to surviving as Indigenous people in our conflict with modernity is found in our cultural strength. Ernest Tootoosis (known as *kâ-miywasihk*), a Cree from Poundmaker reserve, noted:

> It is important again that native people go back to the original way of praying to the creator . . . for thousands of years we survived and the very core of this survival as I understand is our communication system with the creator (Tootoosis 1975, Video).

Deloria also stresses the importance of people maintaining communication with other beings: "The important aspect of Indian tribal religions . . . has been their insistence on developing and maintaining a constant relationship with the spiritual forces that govern the lives of humans" (Deloria 1999: 122).

When people lived off the land, there were ceremonies which linked them to this land. People humbled themselves in the presence of other beings which gave them life. Edward Fox, from the Sweet Grass reserve, spoke of the relationship between food and health that existed a long time ago:

> . . . elders had little sicknesses. People say this was because of the food they ate. The hunters would go out and kill the buffalo, then immediately slit the throat of the animal and drain blood from it. This was what gave a person life. The frozen food we buy today cannot do this. When an animal is killed in the hunt, some life within it is passed on to us, to help us live (Fox 1978).

The food that we eat today is very different from the food that we ate a long time ago; because we get our food from supermarkets, we have lost some of the elements of our ceremonies and our communication system with the rest of creation.

Vine Deloria, Jr. discusses the importance of the land in framing Indigenous consciousness: "Tribal religions are actually complexes of attitudes, beliefs, and practices fine-tuned to harmonize with the lands on which the people live" (Deloria 1994: 70). Asserting that the landscape shapes and moulds the way in which the people understand the world, Deloria adds: "The most notable characteristic of the tribal traditions is the precision and specificity of the traditions when linked to the landscape, a precision lacking in most other religious traditions" (ibid. 122).

Deloria also comments on the importance of Indigenous ceremonies in the transmission of Indigenous culture, in preserving collective identity:

> They help to instill a sense of social cohesion in the people and remind them of the passage of the generations that have brought them to the present. A society that cannot remember its past and honour it is in peril of losing its soul (ibid. 207).

Communication through the Pipestem

My great-great-great grandfather *wîhtikôhkan*, who died in 1914, was from the bush country around Cold Lake, Alberta. He used a bow and arrow to hunt as he refused to use a gun; he had dream helpers, *pawâkanak*, who told him where the game was. In our age of reliance on technology, we have

forgotten many things that this old man knew. My uncle Burton told me that *wîhtikôhhan* was able to talk to animals: he would call out to them and they would come.

There is an interesting story regarding the power of the pipestem that has been passed on in my family. It is a story about the brother of *wîhtikôhân*, *kinôsêw* (*otay-* in Dene, which means *Jackfish*; he was called that because he was always moving around in a fast manner). However, *kinosêw* entered into Treaty Eight in northern Alberta by taking the vow on his pipestem. His brother, *wîhtikôhkân* (my great-great-great grandfather) also had a pipe which was able to tap into the power of the land.

The pipestem is significant for the *nêhiyawak*, Dene, and other Indigenous nations as a way of concluding arrangements; indeed, one could argue that it was a quintessential element of Indigenous religio-political protocol in large parts of Canada. The pipestem was also more than merely a way of sealing political arrangements and treaties: rather, it was a way of making and affirming relationships with the land around people, of honouring the spiritual powers, *âtayohkanak*, who dwelt in the area of the land where the people were making their living.

My dad told me the following story regarding the pipestem and *wihtikôkân*. One time he was visiting my great-grandfather on a windy day. My great-grandfather then told my father the following story:

> One time my grandfather (Peter Vandall/ *kôkôcîs*) was in the house of *wihtikohkân's*. It was an older house, and they were using a grease lamp

> for light. The wind crashed against the house, and moved through the cracks of house and the light of the grease lamp was almost extinguished. The house was rocking, and was moving about vigorously.

My great-grandfather told my father that was the only time he saw *wihtikôhkân* was scared:

> *wîhtikôhkân* was worried, because if he lost his house in the storm, he would be without shelter and in a difficult position. He took his pipestem, and pointed it in various directions and prayed to the various beings, including the wind spirit. He prayed that the wind would stop, and it did (Jerry McLeod, 2000 Interview).

The narrative speaks of the reliance on the *oskiciy* (pipestem) as a way of mediating between the spirit world and the human world: this man's brother (Allen Jacobs 2000) was the brother of *otay* ("Jackfish" in Dene, *kinosêw* in Cree); *kinosêw* used a pipestem during the Treaty Eight process.

wihtikôhkân offered the smoke from the pipe to the wind, and was able to mediate the power of the spirit emanating from the wind. This narrative demonstrates the manner in which the pipestem could be used to mediate with the powers of the landscape around. The power that they were tapping into was the wind; and *wihtikôhkân* was able to calm the winds by pulling out his pipe and praying.

People were thankful to all of the helpers and *âtayohkanak* (spirit beings). Within Cree culture, the fundamental way of communicating was through dreams and *âtayohkanak.* Fine Day, a Cree from Sweet Grass reserve, remarked:

> No man knows all the *âtayohkanak.* But in the beginning they were all shown. Manito himself never comes to a man in a dream. But the *âtayohkanak* are his servants and it is He who tells the *âtayohkanak* which children to visit (Fine Day 1934: 4).

One of the ways of channeling these beings was through bundles acting as channels for eternal remembrance. Fine Day spoke: "The bundle given to you will be spiritually powerful always and its strength will never die, because the animals and the *âtayôhkanak* will always be alive" (Fine Day 1934: 8).

The stories of *mêmêkwêsiwak* show the Cree concept of "dwelling in the land." The information following is derived from a variety of story-tellers who I have heard throughout my lifetime. The *mêmêkwêsiwak* are small beings, roughly two to three feet tall. They are usually close to water, or in some cases are close to pine trees. The pine tree then functions as a gateway to the *mêmêkwêsiwak,* who come to people through dreams and tell them where to go: where the pine tree, or where the location in the water is.

The person who is dreaming then goes to that location, enters the realm of the *mêmêkwêsiwak,* and presents cloth, tobacco and hide as an offering to the *mêmêkwêsiwak.* The *mêmêkwêsiwak* then present the dreamer with medicines that are used to heal. There are stories from my reserve which speak of the *mêmêkwêsiwak* who have sand sculptures of human bodies in their water homes, which they use to fashion medicines from.

In a 1976 interview, two elders from James Smith, Josie Whitehead and his wife, were asked if *mêmêkwêsiwak* ever died. They did not know the answer (Whitehead/ McLeod, 1976 Interview). However, my uncle Burton Vandall told me a story wherein his grandfather, *pâcinîs* Vandall (Patrick Vandall), had found what appears to have been a *mêmêkwêsiw* (corpse) once when he was

surveying in the north. He brought the *mêmêkwêsiw* back to camp, whereupon an old man told him to return the body to where *pâcinîs* had found it. The experience evidently left a deep impression upon him, and he talked about this for the rest of his days.

It is interesting to note that when the forces of colonialism come to exert their full weight people talk about the *mêmêkwêsiwak* retreating from the area (in the same way that the buffalo and *âtayohkanak* retreated). An example of this is the Qu'Appelle River Valley: people speak of the way in which after the flooding of the valley the *mêmêkwêsiwak* who had played their water drums could no longer be heard. Robert Brightman also documents the retreat of *mêmêkwêsiwak* in areas of northern Manitoba (Brightman 1989: 150-151).

Cree narrative discourse not only involves human beings, but also other beings such as *kihci-manito* (God), *âtayohkonak* (spirit beings), and *kimosômipaninâwak* (grandfathers); and I would contend that this is a key component of Indigenous ways of seeing the world. This way of seeing the world is in stark contrast to the ways found in modernity.

In the old days, people knew how to listen to the world: they relied on dreams and intuition for knowledge through spiritual beliefs and practices. *nêhiyâwiwin* involves thanking the creator for the gift of life. Part of Cree narrative memory involves the affirmation that there is a tie to other beings. *kôkôcîs* said:

> êkwa kîsêpâ kâ-waniskâcik, nikî-pêhtawâwak mâna kêhtê-ayak; tâpiskôc ôma piyêsisak kâ-kitocik kîsipêpâ k-âti-sâkâstêk ôma mistahi kâ-

> takahkihtâkosicik, êkosi anima kêhtê-ayak misiwê ê-kî-pêhtâkosicik ê-nikamocik- ahpô owîkimâkaniwâwa ê-naskwahamawâcik- iyikohk ê-kî-miywêyimocik aniki, mîna mistahi ê-kî-miywâsiniyik ita ê-kî-pimâcihocik.
>
> And in the morning, when they arose, I used to hear the elders, just as the singing of the birds sounds beautiful in the morning, at day-break, so it was with the elders who could be heard all over as they sang - they would even sing in response to their wives - they took such pride in themselves, and their journey through life was beautiful (Vandall 1987: 48-49).
>
> Eli Bear echoes this:
>
> And I used to wonder when at the break of day he used to stand outside and chant, and singing to the sun. He used to do this using the four different directions and put words in the song. While he was doing this, I used to wonder why he did this for...but now I see what he was getting at (Eli Bear 1974: 9).

Through prayer and songs the Old people were maintaining a tie to the echoes of eternity. This links one people to the discursive memory, the layering of words, of many people and their connection to the rest of reality.

Cree narrative memory also gives people the capacity to know their place in the world: through various social and spiritual relationships, Cree people are able to map out their place in the world through narratives. Cree Indigenous being must be taken into account in a description of this process: such things as dreams, the belief in spiritual entities and *wîsakêcâhk* lay at the foundation of this process.

In order to understand Cree narrative memory, one must understand Cree philosophy and perspectives: *nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin*. By understanding such beings as the *mêmêkwêsiwak, pawâkanak* and *âtayohkanak*, one can better understand the meaning of the collective experience of the *nêhiyawak*. All too

often, mainstream historians ignore such beings, or dismiss them to the realm of mythology, which takes out a vital component from Cree narrative memory.

nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin grounds the stories within a framework and embeds them with meaning. As I will attempt to demonstrate in later chapters, one cannot understand the Cree experiences of making the transition to farming, of engaging in Treaty, and of the resistance to colonialism without taking into account these elements. Such elements breathe life into the narratives, and allow one to see life through the eyes of *nêhiyawak.*

Chapter Two: Endnotes:

1. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Louise Halfe uses "bundle" as a metaphor for collective memory.
2. See chapter five for a detailed discussion of this.
3. *omitêw*: literally means "a spiritually powerful person." The verb stem *mitêwi-* means to "perform a spiritual ceremony."
4. There is an interesting philosophical question which is raised with the notion that all time and space can be bent to one point. If this is so, if all things in the past and present can be known, then serious questions emerge regarding free will. If our futures can be known, and in a sense are already predetermined, then how can we be free? Similar questions were raised in medieval thought by such scholars as Duns Scotus.
5. There was another stone in Alberta which was considered sacred and was also a meteorite (Dempsey 1984: 37).
6. This is similar to the stone offering left in Alberta: "Offerings were left beside it when the Cree went to seek the buffalo, for they knew that as long as the stone stayed in their grounds, there would be food" (Dempsey 1984: 37).
7. The ground breaking *Atahkakoop* (Christiansen 2000) history of the Sandy Lake band also stresses the importance of the place: "We go to *manitow-sâkahikan* where people have been healed for countless years..." (Christensen 2000).

Chapter Three: Anti-colonial Narrative Memory

Myth and History

Cree narratives are held within oral traditions and social relationships, and provide a counter-point to the narratives of mainstream society. The activity and process of these narratives challenge the hegemony of the discourse of the mainstream society. This discourse has often been bathed in notions of "progress" which have ultimately undermined Cree narrative memory, and has been effectively used as a tool of conquest.

The inclusion of Indigenous Cree narratives, and indeed a memory anchored in Cree worldview and philosophy, is important to the development of what I would call Indigenous narrative perspective. However, such beliefs are often dismissed as "mythology" and pre-historical within the confines of mainstream historiography. Maori scholar Linda Smith notes:

> In order for history to begin there has to be a period of beginning and some criteria for determining when something begins. In terms of history this was often attached to concepts of 'discovery,' the development of literacy, or the development of specific social formation. Everything before that time is designated as prehistorical, belonging to the realm of myths and traditions, 'outside' the domain (Smith 1999: 31).[1]

It must be noted that colonial powers and often mainstream historians and academics have conceived of Indigenous "lived" memory as myth. However, literary does much to collapse the distinction between myth and history (White 1978).

Even amongst historians who are sympathetic to Cree narratives, there is still a bias against Cree spirituality. An example of this can be found in David Meyers' history of the Red Earth Cree:

> Of course, by academic standards, Wihciko's (sic) narrative does not appear to be entirely historical, nor wholly secular. However, it is apparent that in the Cree frame of reference accounts of Wihtiko (sic) encounters and magical happenings are considered historical. As far these people are concerned, these events did occur; they were marvelous and important occurrences and therefore are recalled in the oral history (Meyer 1985: 52).

In fairness to Meyer's analysis, he limits the historicity of the Red Earth narratives to Cree people's perspectives; these narratives are not situated in relation to other historiographical approaches.

The dismissal of Cree ontological concepts as being primitive or mythological, by such Canadian historians as Stanley (1936), Granastein (1998) and Flanagan (2000), is essentially an extension of Enlightenment rationality. The effect of this way of thinking is to create a hierarchy of culture. Cree narrative memory has to be thought of in Cree terms, or it will simply be an extension of colonialism. Consequently, Cree narrative memory will be dismantled and cut up, unrecognizable to the participants.

In *A Forest of Time*, Peter Nabakov notes the challenges that exist when the interpretative culture of Indigenous people collides with the dominant modes of thinking within written culture. In this case, he examines some material that he found in the oral history collection at the University of New Mexico (Nabakov 2002: 29-57). In one interview, there is a conflict between an old Dine man from

the Southwest of the United States, and the person doing the interview. Because of cultural taboos, the Dine man is reticent to share various narratives and believes that he will be spiritually responsible for what occurs after the narratives are spoken.

Nabakov notes:

> For our reluctant Navajo interviewee, there appears to be no strict vision between the time frames of tangible evidence you can touch . . . and that primal realm evoked in the old man's anecdotes about cohabiting mythic entities . . . (Nabakov 2002: 42).

Such a disjunction occurs when people work from radically different perspectives. Nabakov continues:

> . . . parsing the exchange with the old Navajo from Tuba City and setting it in his cultural context should have revealed enough disconnects between non-Indian and Native historical practices and priorities so that we can better appreciate why it has taken so long for outsiders to explore the forms of remembering to be surveyed throughout the rest of this book (ibid. 57).

Important to my project of articulating what constitutes Cree narrative is to establish the various Cree ontological beliefs which in turn inform historical understandings.

There is also the issue of the relationship between myth and history: What is true? What is fiction? What is the relationship between an event and the representation of that event within a historical narrative? It is here that I would like to turn again to insights offered by Hayden White.

Hayden White, perhaps more than any other historian, has drawn comparisons between literature and history. While some have reduced his

historiographical project to being relativistic, many contend that he is searching for metahistory (Vann 1998: 143, Domanska 1998: 174): namely a relationship of the parts to the whole, a historical narrative conversation which is possible across time and indeed cultures. Hayden White himself argues:

> . . . I shall maintain that there can be no proper history without the presupposition of a full-blown metahistory by which to justify those interpretative strategies necessary for the representation of a given segment of the historical strategies (White 1978: 52).

He cautions that a historian must try to use metaphors which suit the material with which he/ she is working with:

> We should ask only that the historian show some tact in the use of his governing metaphors: that he neither overburden them with data nor fail to use them to their limit; that he respect the logic implicit in the mode of discourse he has decided upon (Ibid. 47).

For Hayden White, the mode of discourse is the way in which one tells the narrative of history, and will correspond to the content of the narrative. In order to be most effective, the narrative structure must mirror the context.

For Cree history, the metaphors are found within the collective discourse; they draw upon dreams, other beings, and a world profoundly different from the mainstream society. Hayden White concentrates mostly on the presentation of historical narratives in the West. I want to concentrate my analysis on White's comparison between history and myth, and apply it to a Cree context.

One of the central impulses of Hayden White's philosophy of history is structuralism.[2] He subscribes to the structuralist orientation that there are deep underlying structures in the ways in which people tell stories about the past. He

holds, throughout his writing, that some of these narrative structures are found not only in the discourse of science, but also in various cultural narratives throughout the world, in addition to conventional historical accounts of the past. By showing the similarities in the narrative structures of all of these fields of discourse, Hayden White attempts to deconstruct the boundary between myth and history. Thus, he argues against a positivistic notion of historical truth: rather, truth is manifested in narratives.

The appeal to alternative narrative structures and alternative ways of interpreting events and objects in the world does not mean that one has to abandon the notion of historical truth. The inclusion of Cree narrative interpretative structures does not mean we abandon the truth: rather, it means that we accept a more nuanced understanding of historical truth, a concept which is comfortable with more than one interpretation existing simultaneously. However, White's notion of metahistory allows him to tie the various interpretations together.

In some ways, this is similar to a hermeneutical understanding of truth that there can be more than one interpretation of the same object or event. Nancy Partner in her essay "Hayden White: The Form of Its Contents" explores Hayden White's historiography (Partner 1998). She notes that no interpretative horizon can exhaust the phenomenological possibilities of any event, and that there will be as many interpretations of events as there are interpretative

frameworks. Hayden explains that within each culture and interpretative framework there are many ways in which the same event could be interpreted:

> . . . every narrative discourse consists, not of one single code monolithically utilized, but rather of a complex set of codes, the interweaving of which by the author . . . attests to his talents as master rather than as the servant of the codes available for his use (White 1984: 19).

White thus sees the active role of the individual within his structural, narrative interpretation of history.

Hayden White's collapsing of the distinctions between myth and history is essential if we are to arrive at a truly Cree concept of our collective memory. One cannot superimpose the positivism and interpretative frameworks of the mainstream society uncritically upon Cree historical experience: rather, one must attempt to see Cree narrative memory as being just as valid as interpretations emerging from the mainstream society.

However, it must be remembered that Hayden White is writing within the confines of Western tradition and that his treatment of historical consciousness must be resituated within an Indigenous, Cree context. For instance, Ewa Domanska observed that White "always looks for a reference to human choice in humans themselves" (Domanska 1998: 179). However, Cree narrative memory would differ from this quite substantially, in that often the meanings of events are beyond human actions and are found in spiritual laws such as *pâstâhowin*. Nonetheless, White gives us a framework from which we can advance a Cree notion of narrative memory if Cree spirituality is taken into account.

Challenging Mainstream Historical Hegemony

Indigenous Cree narrative memory is often at odds with the narrative memory of the mainstream culture. The "thinking outside" of narratives occurs within Cree culture, it also occurs as a function of the interaction of Cree narrative memory and western Canadian national memory. By integrating Cree worldviews (*nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin*), and by collapsing a myth/ history distinction, a Cree perspective of history can be reached.

There are many within the Academy who see Cree narrative memory, and indeed other "ethnic" histories, as fragmentation of a larger meta-narrative, namely that of the Canadian nation state. Some may see the attempt of Crees to record narrative memory as superfluous. With the emergence of urbanized populations, the breakdown of traditional kinship structures, and the gradual decline of the language, some may even call my attempts at articulating a Cree narrative history romantic. They may ask: Why not just assume a subordinate position within the rubric of Canadian history? Why not simply write about historical being from that perspective? Why try to articulate a position that attempts to stand outside of it?

Jack Granatstein is perhaps one of the most articulate advocates of such a critique of "ethnic" history:

> . . . Canadian governments .. . . have been throwing money for years into multicultural education, and, in the process, the history of Canada, where it is even taught, has been distorted out of recognition. Guilt, victimhood, redress, and the avoidance of offense- those are the

watchwords that rule today (Granatstein 1998: 38).

Central to his argument is the position that the Canadian state is in fact legitimate, that there should be only one history, and that more than one history actually distorts meaning and takes away from national discourse. Therefore, Granatstein's argument is straightforward enough. Cree narratives, and those like them, should be assumed within a larger interpretative rubric.

Granatstein's assumption points to the connection between power and history; he argues for the absorption of Cree narrative memory within Canadian memory. The parameters of Granatstein's studies are the political borders of the nation state of Canada, and revolve around the various machinations involved in the running of that state. His historical narrative takes a mountain-top approach, stressing only the important political leaders, while at the same time ignoring marginalized groups.

However, like other such memories, Cree narrative memory challenges the dominant narrative structures of the country. For instance, many Cree narratives challenge the legitimacy of the nation state (including the stories of John Tootoosis and those describing the events of 1885: *ê-mâyihkamikahk* "where it went wrong"). Cree narrative memory calls into question, the interpretative privileges of the dominant society, which, including archival sources, are called into question. The emergence of Cree narrative memory within universities opens up new possibilities for interpreting the "lived" experience of Canada.[3] *nêhiyâwiwin* involves a high degree of subjectivity and a stress on individual

interpretation. This approach is similar to looking at a painting and examining it from a variety of perspectives.

The privileging of the mainstream society's interpretation of past events creates a false binary opposition between "historical cultures" and "pre-historical cultures." White notes that traditional narrative historiography "was nothing but the myth of the Western and especially modern, bourgeois, industrial, and imperialistic societies" (White 1984: 11). George Stanley's *Birth of Western Canada* would certainly fall into this category; Thomas Flannigan's (2000) *First Nations? Second Thoughts* extends this attempt of Western historiographical imperialism into the present.

George Stanley's problematic *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (1973/1936) is part of the historiographical imperialism of Canada. The narrative found within the book supports and justifies the Canadian expansion into the west, and supports this process by appealing to social Darwinistic ideas. Stanley's rhetoric throughout the text purports that the British Canadian culture was superior to the Indigenous cultures of the plains, and consequently through this rhetoric attempts to justify the colonialism that ensued.

Stanley creates a dichotomy between the "civilized" culture of the west, and that of the "primitive" Indigenous people: "Both the Manitoba insurrection and the Saskatchewan rebellion were the manifestation in Western Canada of the problem of the frontier, namely the clash between primitive and civilized

peoples" (Stanley 1973/ 1936: vii). The colonial tone of his discourse attempts to justify the subordination of Indigenous people.

Within American historiography, there are certainly parallels. Frederick Jackson Turner told the stories of the Great Plains from the perspective of American expansionism in a similar way to Stanley:

> Turner saw the transformation of the American landscape from wilderness to trading post to farm to boomtown as the central saga of the nation . . . By making Indians the foil for its story of progress, the frontier plot made their conquest seem natural, commonsensical, inevitable (Cronon 1992: 1352).

Part of Stanley's narrative strategy was to dehumanize the Indigenous people who were the brunt of Canadian colonialism. Throughout the text, Stanley portrays the Indigenous people as "being less" than the British/ Canadians: "By character and upbringing the half-breeds, no less than the Indians, were unfitted to compete with the whites in the competitive individualism of white civilization, . . . did not want to be civilized . . ." (Stanley 1973/ 1936: vii).

In another passage, Stanley reiterates the colonial rhetoric of the above statement:

> A primitive people, the half-breeds were bound to give way before the march of a more progressive people. It was the recognition of this fact and the gradual realization of their inability to adjust themselves to the new order that kindled the spark of half-breed resentment which unfortunate circumstances fanned into the flame of insurrection (Stanley 1973/ 1936: 49).

The above quotation also frames the events of 1885, wherein Cree-speaking people resisted colonial intrusions, as an "insurrection." Such a discourse attempts to affirm Canadian/ British political hegemony.

In contrast to Stanley's nationalistic rhetoric, I argue that there are many narratives which can describe historical events. Within this way of examining the past, there is a multi-layered approach to our understanding. The foundational assumption of my position is that one has to be mindful of the cultural background of individuals in the examination of history. For instance, the perspectives offered by George Stanley (1973/1936) in *The Birth of Western Canada* will be very different from those offered by Cree oral history regarding the time of great changes in the late nineteenth century (1870s and 1880s). Also, the perspectives offered by many European writers such as William Cameron in *Blood, Red the Sun* (1950) will be very different from those offered by Cree oral history (Sluman and Goodwill 1984; Francis Michael Harper, 1973 Interview, Stonechild and Waisser 1997).

Much of the historiography of western Canada asserts that society has been moving progressively towards a higher goal, and that hierarchal possibilities for human society are gradually manifesting themselves in advanced forms. One could perhaps articulate this from the Hegelian perspective: *aufhebung*[4] -- there are layers of historical memory and experience which are constantly overpassing each other. The idea that human society in general and Canadian society in particular have developed through successive states of being is indeed a

common one (Stanley 1992, Flanagan 2000). Consequently, I would also argue that embedded in the capitalistic ideology of our time is the belief that Indigenous economic structures must inevitably be absorbed by larger, capitalistic ones.

Particular historicities can extend colonialism and indeed attempt to reinforce it. One of the central tasks of Cree narrative memory is to challenge the dominant discourse of the mainstream society, and to offer alternative readings of historical events and processes: this follows Hayden White's notion that history is both description and interpretation. It also flows from the position that history is not out there waiting to be discovered, but rather events must be interpreted.[5] History is grounded in perspective and interpretative frameworks: an "objective" account of past events is not possible.

The problem of arriving at an "objective" notion of history is demonstrated in Arthur Danto's account of the "Ideal Chronicler":

> He knows whatever happens the moment it happens, even in other minds. He is also to have the gift of instantaneous transcription: everything that happens across the rim of the Past is set down by him, as it happens, the *way* it happens (Danto 1985: 148-149, cited in Roth 1988: 6).

There are theoretical problems with the notion of "Ideal Chronicler." First, it ignores the role of politics in historical interpretation: how can the ideal picture of the past take into account conflicting interests in the events of history? The political perspective of any party will greatly influence the way in which the past is understood and interpreted.

Danto adds another dimension to the critique of the Ideal Chronicler: "The whole truth concerning an event can only be known after, and sometimes only *long* after the event itself has taken place, and this part of the story historians alone can tell" (Danto 1985: 151, cited in Roth 1988: 7). Morever, only through the perspective of time can events be put into the appropriate context, and their full meaning be understood in relation to other events. Meaning, in historical terms, is a function of the interplay of various events, and indeed various interpretative frameworks.

Another problem for the notion of the "Ideal Chronicler" is that "events may be sliced thick or thin" (Roth 1988: 8). Therefore, we tell a story about the words of someone at the Treaty negotiations; but depending on the depth of the historical context in which we situate this event, the meaning of the event could differ significantly.

The perspective of the interpreter (chronicler) is also significant. In his thoughtful piece "Mythhistory, or Truth, Myth, History and Historians," William H. McNeill raises interesting questions about the possible limitations of any history which may be considered parochial. McNeill does acknowledge the importance of narratives that cement group identity: "Shared truths that provide a sanction for common effort have obvious survival value" (McNeill 1986: 3). He does, however, see histories that are focused on any ethnic group as limiting the field of identification that any individual or group may have. In its place, McNeill advocates a more universal human history:

> Instead of enhancing conflicts, as parochial historiography inevitably does, an intelligible world history might be expected to diminish the lethality of group encounters by cultivating a sense of individual identification with the triumphs and tribulations of humanity as a whole. This, indeed, strikes me as the moral duty of the historical profession in our time. We need to develop an ecumenical history, with plenty of room for human diversity in all its complexity (McNeill 1986: 7).

The goal that McNeill espouses is certainly laudable. The greater the narrative dialogue between different groups, surely the more enriched the conversation between various people will be. It has often been said that the more we understand other people, the fewer tensions will exist.

However, McNeill seems tacitly to assume that there is a Hegelian mountain-top view from which we can see all history. If this was the case, then perhaps the all-inclusive narrative that he discusses would be possible. Unfortunately, all human narrative activity is limited, and every narrative has its limitations. No narrative, nor indeed any interpretative framework can capture all of the phenomenological possibilities of life.

Because of this limitation of human discourse, minority groups such as *nêhiyawak* have a vested interest in challenging the discourse of the society that has colonized them. Through the process of challenging this discourse, Indigenous groups can strive to tell their own stories, on our own terms. Essentially, then, one is able to challenge the colonial hegemonic discourse of the mainstream society through this process.

The incorporation of Cree narrative memory, within the history of this country, serves as a counterpoint to the discourse of the dominant society. Essentially, this discourse is anti-colonial and tacitly pushes for a rethinking of the political and social space of the country. Cree narrative memory, as a counterpoint to the narrative hegemony of the mainstream society, rejects the notion of national metanarrative or Great Story. Robert Berkhofer writes that

"multiculturalism challenges the whole idea of a single best or right Great Story, especially if told from an omniscient viewpoint" (Berkhofer 1998: 71).

Cree Narrative Memory: Anti-Colonial Counter-Narrative

To counter the historiographic hegemony of the mainstream society, anti-colonial perspectives must be used. I deliberately used the term anti-colonial because the term post-colonial is highly problematic. Ella Shohat describes the term "post-colonial" as "pastoral" (Shohat 1992: 99); she holds that it is a euphemism, a way of making other academics comfortable with the brutalities of colonialism. The term also has a distancing factor: it has a way of sanitizing the experience of Indigenous people in relation to colonialism. She explains: "The term "post-colonial" carries with it the implication that colonialism is now a matter of the past, undermining colonialism's economic, political, and cultural deformative traces in the present" (Shohat 1992: 105). She suggests that the term "anti-colonial" may be more helpful.

Cree narrative memory challenges the ethnocentric historiography of people such as Granatstein and Stanley, and this necessarily includes countering the narratives which ascribe the foundational value of Canada to the incorporation of Indigenous people within the nation state. The oral memory of *nêhiyawak* counters the official record, and provides a "subaltern" voicing of our collective political discourse: the difference however between Spivak's notion of subaltern, and that found in Cree narrative memory is the record does not have

to be constructed from colonial documents, but rather can be constructed from the living memory of *nêhiyawak.* One of the most important arenas of this counter-memory is that of the Treaties. This counter-memory of the Treaties is both collective and individualistic.

On the whole, Cree narrative memory, existing and dwelling in the oral form, questions the narrative hegemony of the mainstream culture. Winona Stevenson [Wheeler] notes that "to a large degree, the challenges of confronting conventional history by Indigenous oral histories are grounded in anti-colonialist criticism" (Stevenson 2000: 80). Cree narrative imagination points to other possibilities, other ways in which the world could be, and moves beyond the limitations of colonial discourse and practice. Grounding this critique is left to the strength and tenacity of Cree oral traditions in the face of extreme pressure from the mainstream society.

A clear example of Cree narrative memory of Treaties is found in the narratives of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw in *ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmowina/ The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw* (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998). These Cree narratives of the Treaty do two things: 1) they illustrate the importance of *nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin,* and 2) they provide a basis for anti-colonial memory. By understanding the way in which the pipestem was used within Cree political structures, we can appreciate the importance of the vows that were made during the Treaty process. Also, by relying upon Cree narratives of the Treaty, this

provides us a basis for re-examining the narratives that the mainstream society has constructed of this time.

Cree narrative memory is grounded in oral narratives which cannot be found in "official sources" such as public archives and government records. The oral narratives of *nêhiyawak* reveal the concrete, lived narratives which are often very different from those found in the culture of the mainstream society. The use of Cree narrative memory is not simply telling another version of events, but rather challenges colonialism by telling another story. The counter-story then becomes the basis for political action and cultural integrity. The Cree Treaty narratives for instance become a basis from which *nêhiyawak* can argue for their rights and their place in Canada.

Cree narrative memory challenges the moral foundations of this country by showing the differences between the history of the dominant society in stark contrast to the oral history of Cree people. The memory of Cree people challenges the way in which "truth" and "history" have been used to dominate their supposed political and economic conquest. Often the telling of the past has been a contested political battle and has been used by the mainstream society as a tool to extend colonialism. What I want to do in the next chapter is to critically examine Treaty Six of the *nêhiyawak*. I want to show that the memory of *nêhiyawak* in regard to the Treaty is an anti-colonial memory which can play a small part in liberating the collective consciousness of *nêhiyawak*.

Chapter Three: Endnotes

1. Modern roots of a pre-historical/ historical dichotomy lie in Hegel's progressive model of historical understanding.
2. The deep structural patterns of human experience allow for a meaningful comparison across cultures. David Meyer's analysis of Red Earth narratives separates them from other approaches to historical knowing.
3. For instance, the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College was formed in 1970s. Its mandate was to revive the culture and languages of First Nations in Saskatchewan. First Nations University of Canada grew from this institution with a mandate of bicultural education, and is also dedicated to preserving the linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage of First Nations in Saskatchewan.
4. *aufhebung*: The overpassing of one stage into another, referring to historical stages of *Geist* (consciousness). Smith says: ".. the concept of universal assumes that there are fundamental characteristics and values which all human subjectives and societies share" (Smith 1999: 30). She adds to this: "The earliest phase of human development is regarded as primitive, simple and emotional" (Smith 1999: 30).
5. Paul Roth notes: "What needs to be rejected is the picture of the past that is simply there waiting for the historian to come along" (Roth 1988: 5).

Chapter Four: Rethinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of mistahi-maskwa (Big Bear)

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the Treaty as it is understood by *nêhiyawak*. I also want to raise questions of justice surrounding the Treaty itself. In addition, as an extension of the first chapter I want to discuss the way in which Treaty Six, seen through a Cree perspective, radically challenges the version which has been accepted by the mainstream society. The written Treaty diverges substantially from the oral "text" as understood and told by *nêhiyawak*. Recent developments such as the Delgamuukw[1] decision, which acknowledges the importance of Indigenous oral narratives in the examination of land claims, and the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (*RCAP* vol. II: 11, 49), seem to support the use of aboriginal oral history for the interpretation of Treaties. Furthermore, the manner in which many *nêhiyawak,* such as *mistahi-maskwa* (Big Bear), entered into Treaty Six and are represented in Canadian historiography, must be seriously questioned. Given the fact that his people were starving during the time of the Treaty, we have to wonder about the moral foundations of the Treaty, and indeed of the nation of Canada itself.

mistahi-maskwa is perhaps one of the most important political figures to draw upon in a re-assessment of Treaty Six. He was one of the strongest

leaders amongst the Cree, and also was a strong resister of the British attempt to subordinate the Crees. Sharon Venne describes the respect that *mistahi-maskwa* has had within Cree culture:

> Once I went with an Elder to the area known as Sounding Lake, which is in the eastern part of present-day Alberta. The Elder spoke about Big Bear and his ability to lead the people. During one huge gathering of over a thousand, Big Bear was the main Chief of the camp and all of the other Chiefs deferred to him. There was a dispute over a horse, which could have led to violence in the camp, but Big Bear rode among the fighting men and spoke to them. They stopped fighting at the request of Big Bear. He was a kind and fair man, which is the reason he receives such respect from the Cree People to this day (Venne 1997: 181).

The territory of Treaty Six itself covers much of central Saskatchewan and Alberta, which until the 1870s was heavily populated by bison. The bison played a central role in the material culture of the Cree within the territory, and of their close allies, the Saulteaux and Assiniboine. The Saskatchewan River runs through the parklands of this area.

Treaty Six could be conceived of as a political process prescribed by the British within a territory.[2] The process of Treaty Six began on August 18, 1876, when many of the Crees known as the House People and River People gathered at Fort Carlton (*pêhonânihk*). After holding a council, many of the Cree of the House People entered into Treaty with the British. On September 7, the Treaty process continued at Fort Pitt (known as *wâskahikanis*) with many of the River People, some of the Beaver Hills People, and some Dene people from the surrounding area.

The Treaty Six process continued after these initial meetings. In addition to these people, many of the River People, including Lucky Man, Little Pine and Thunderchild, also entered into Treaty Six by adhesion in 1879 at Sounding Lake. *mistahi-maskwa* himself did not enter into Treaty until 1882 at Fort Walsh.[3] There was even one band that did not enter into Treaty Six until 1956: the Saulteaux Band of the North Battleford area.

Treaty Six was part of the numbered Treaties which were concluded throughout Canada beginning in 1871 with the *anihšinâpêk* [Saulteaux] and Swampy Cree of Eastern Canada. The impetus of the Treaties was the need for land for increased settlement by Europeans. There were friendships Treaties with the Mi'kmaq and others in the east which predated the numbered Treaties by at least one hundred years, and later the Robinson Treaties of 1850. However, the numbered Treaties contain much more explicit promises made by the Crown than any previous Treaties.

Another fundamental characteristic of the numbered Treaties, and particularly in the Treaty Six area, was the ability to resist by force the presence of the British Crown. Indeed, it was some men in *mistahi maskwa*'s camp who eventually, because of frustration and hunger, took up arms against the newcomers to the land. It was only after the troubled time, *ê-mâyahkamikahk* ("where it went wrong"/ The Northwest Resistance of 1885), that the Dominion of Canada faced little opposition to its expansion.

At their best, Treaties represent the possibility of a peaceful cohabitation and sharing of resources by two peoples. Given the recent explosion of violence between ethnic groups within nation states throughout the world, peaceful cohabitation within nation states is certainly needed today.[4]

If a peaceful co-existence is to occur, the Cree understanding of the Treaty process must be taken into account. It is impossible to have genuine respect for people, genuine respect for different ways of seeing the world, without taking into account important cultural differences; for instance, in the case of the Cree understanding of Treaty Six, it is imperative to include the oral understanding of the Treaty that exists in Cree culture. For a long time, the mainstream culture has controlled the discourse between Euro-Canadians and Indigenous people; as a result, Treaty Six has been understood primarily as a written document, and the perspective of Cree people has been downplayed.

Sharon Venne noted the importance of trying to understand the Indigenous perspective in the Treaty making process, particularly the authority that Indigenous leaders had "[a]n appreciation of the authority to negotiate treaties on the Indigenous side is essential to understanding the treaty relationship" (Venne 1997: 173). *mistahi-maskwa* for instance derived his authority through the people who followed him and also through his connection to the powers of the land.[5] Furthermore, the Indigenous leaders approached the negotiations through a protocol which grounded the authority of their positions:

> Indigenous Chiefs dealt with the arrival of the non-Indigenous settlers into Indigenous territories in the same manner as they dealt with others

> entering their jurisdiction. There was a protocol to be followed. The Chiefs had requested that all who came into their territory follow this protocol (Venne 1997: 184).

The Treaty process was thus a meeting of cultures which had very different conceptions of political protocol and process.

The notion that a written culture remembers better than an oral culture, discussed in Chapter one, has severe ramifications for the understanding of Treaty Six by exaggerating the importance of the written text itself. For instance, what makes a written text more valuable and reliable than an oral understanding of an event? Could the event simply not have been recorded wrongly in the first place? The existence of the Treaty as a written document does not, in and of itself, ensure that it truly reflects all perspectives of the actual negotiations.

In *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind*, Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders document the way in which written culture began to have a priviledged position in relation to oral cultures.[6] The authors discuss the role of written language in the consolidation of state power:

> Through it, in fact, the State has managed to concentrate, solidify, and expand its power. It is one thing to create civil servants, but an entirely other thing to invest them with power and to coerce the population in that power (Illich and Sanders 1989: 97).

The interpretation of Treaty Six within Canadian culture certainly has been grounded in the use of the written word by the state to justify its power. The modern state of Canada derives its power in many ways from the interpretation of various Treaties. Much of the interpretation and documentation of these

Treaties rests upon the written documents, and not the oral tradition: "The state is governed by the management of texts" (Illich and Sanders 1989: 65-67).

During the Treaty Six Centennial Commemoration meeting in 1975, Julian Moses raised a line of skepticism regarding the written records that we have of the Treaty process:

> There is much written material but it was all done by non-Indians. When reading about the various treaties, all we see from the Indians are X's which may or may not belong to the same person, or even to Indians. Possibly the Indian people who were present at the signings had never held a pen before and did not know how to use one. We have never seen proof that the Indians did sign Treaties (Moses 1975: 8).

Julian Moses was correct in so far as only two headmen signed the Treaty. One signed in syllabics; the other, my grandfather Bernard Constant, signed using the English alphabet (NAC. RG 10. Vol. 1847. File # IT 296/ 157A). The others simply touched the pen of the clerk, who then made their X's on their behalf.

Historical Context of Treaty Six

Treaty Six must be understood in the historical context as the product of a prolonged trading relationship that had existed between the Cree and the British. During this time period, the Cree benefited from the commercial interaction, and indeed expanded both in territory and in prestige; for much of this time they functioned as middlemen and traded the goods that they acquired from the British with other Indigenous groups. Functioning within this capacity, they were able to make a profit. One must remember that by the time of Treaties, the Cree had a long-established relationship with the British throughout the fur trade period from 1670 to 1870s.

Treaty Six occurred at a time of great change in Western Canada. First, the fur trade was on the decline, and consequently the relationship between traders and Indians was changing. Foster (1987: 195) writes: "Beginning in the 1840s and gathering momentum as the years passed were developments that spelled an end to the relationship existing between Indian and trader." Also, during this time period, the profits were lessened and the traditional activities of the Fur Trade shifted. John Milloy (1990: 107) adds to Foster's analysis:

> In the period between 1850 and 1870, though, the depletion of the buffalo herds brought the interests of the Cree and the traders into direct opposition, and a new phase of Cree-European relations, marked by hostility . . .

This is perhaps most evident in the process of Treaty Four to the south of Treaty Six, wherein various chiefs such as *kâ-kišîwê* (Loud Voice), the Gambler, and *pâskwâ* (Pasqua) all raised questions about the transfer of land from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada.

The western numbered Treaties have to be understood within the rubric of the trading patterns which had existed between Indigenous people and the British, as well as within the historical context of the political relationships between the British and the Indigenous people of the continent. A case in point is the consideration of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which made it mandatory for the British to engage in a Treaty process whenever there was an issue of land at stake. In contrast to the American policy of the use of force, the British had a long tradition of negotiating with Indian people in the fields of both economic and political activity.

Ray, Miller and Tough also stress the importance of the fur trade in the long period of interaction between the Cree and the British:

> The Cree and their allies had forged their relations with Whites within the context of the mercantile fur trade, which had been dominated by the

> HBC in its dual capacity as a trading company and representative of the Crown (Ray et al. 2000: 146).

Foster sees the numbered Treaties as opening up a new paradigm for the relations between the British and the Crees (and other groups of the area); he sees it primarily as the end of the "compact" (Foster 1987: 200) which had existed before. Foster considers that the British, instead of continuing a relationship of mutual benefit, were primarily concerned with the issue of title to the land, and that the need for land, the decline of both the buffalo and fur trade, brought about a new historical landscape for the relations between the Crees and the British to play out. Taylor notes that the Treaties, from the perspective of the people of Treaty Six, were a form of compensation for a new form of land use – namely agriculture (Taylor 1987: 40). The oral history of the Treaty Six elders seems to bear this interpretation out (See *Honour Bound* 1997 and various interviews from the *Indian History Film Project*, FSI 1978).

A comparison between the Canadian Treaty process and the American one demonstrates that both governments had similar policy objectives. Jill St. Germain notes the policy goals of the American government:

> These treaties also introduced to the American West the central components of the nation's Indian policy for the next century - the reserve system and the civilization program (St. Germain 1998: 5).

The Canadian government also had similar policy objectives throughout the numbered Treaty process. She also discusses (St. Germain 1998: 1-12) the superiority that Canadians felt in their more peaceful approach (or at least as perceived in the Canadian collective imagination) to Treaty making as opposed to

more violent approaches which emerged south of the border. She adds that this may be challenged, considering that eventually "[a]ll Canadian Indian reserves combined constitute less than one half of the present-day Navajo reserve in Arizona" (St. Germain 1998: 3).

John McDougall, who represented the Crown's interests in discussions leading up to the western Canadian Treaties, was initially welcomed by chiefs *mistawâsis* (Big Child) and *kâ-miystawêsit* (Beardy), who lived within the vicinity of Fort Carlton. However, he did experience firm opposition to the Treaty process in the Fort Pitt area which was occupied by the River People. In the absence of *wîhkasko-kisêyin* (Old Man Sweetgrass, who will be henceforth referred to here as "Sweetgrass"), *mistahi-maskwa* was the strongest chief in the area, and he stated his opposition to the Treaty making process which was just beginning:

> We want none of the Queen's presents: When we set a fox trap we scatter pieces of meat all around but when the fox gets into the trap we knock him on the head. We want no baits. Let your chiefs come like men and talk to us (Morris 1991: 74)

mistahi-maskwa called into question the Treaty process. John McDougall consequently tried to discount *mistahi-maskwa* by calling him an outsider with no authority to speak for the people in the area. Alexander Morris, in his 1880 account of the exchange, writes that *mistahi-maskwa* had "formerly lived at Jack Fish and for years had been regarded as a troublesome fellow" (Morris 1991: 174). Morris, in his narratives, attempts to undermine the legitimacy of *mistahi-maskwa's* leadership. Furthermore, Morris did not understand the complexity of

the ethnicity of the Plains Indians at the time of Treaty signing, in particular the relationship between *nêhiyawak* and Saulteaux. In fact, he described *nêhiyawak* and Saulteaux as being disjointed groups: "Big Bear and his party were a small minority in camp. The Crees said they would have driven them out of camp long ago, but were afraid of their medicines as they are noted conjurers" (Morris 1991: 174).

In her book *The Ojibway of Western Canada,* Laura Peers discussed the ambiguity between "Cree" and "Saulteaux" in the case of *mistahi-maskwa.* While *mistahi-maskwa's* father was Black Powder, a Saulteaux from the east who was drawn by Paul Kane in 1848 at Fort Pitt, *mistahi-maskwa* seems to have clearly identified himself as Cree (Peers 1994). For instance, in a 1885 speech (Dusfrene 1983: 6-7), *mistahi-maskwa* identified himself as chief of *nêhiyawak.*

Much more research needs to be done in regards to the historical relationship between the Cree and Saulteaux. However, it is sufficient to say for immediate purposes that a "Saulteaux" in a camp of "Cree" was by no means an outsider, as Morris suggested, but rather, a person whose culture had fused elements of the two cultures together. In the case of *mistahi-maskwa* the point is not that he was at least part Saulteaux, and consequently, an outsider as Morris suggested, but rather, that he was the leader of a group of people who possessed elements from both cultures (see Sharock 1974).

nimosôm (my grandfather/ John R. McLeod) organized the Treaty Six Centennial Commemorations in 1976. He said:

> It was almost one hundred years ago that our great grandfathers gathered at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt to meet with Commissioners of the Crown in order to negotiate Treaty Number Six. Because of the importance of this and other Treaties to Indian people, both in the past and now in the present, we shall be paying honour to our forefathers and the Treaty which they negotiated for us and for our grandchildren (John R. McLeod 1975b: 1).

My grandfather knew that it was the Treaty, for better or for worse, that was the foundation of our survival as Indians. He added:

> Our elders tell us that the reason our people and our leaders went to Fort Carlton was to work for the survival of Indian people. One hundred years ago, they called upon the Queen to send her representations. One hundred years ago, they met with the commissioners and negotiated a Treaty which allowed the Indian people to survive as Indians, and which allowed us to be here as Indians today and whatever the federal government or anyone else may say, without the efforts of our forefathers at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt, we would not exist as Indians today (John R. McLeod 1975b: 2).

***mistahi-maskwa* and *wihkasko-kisêyin:* Different Approaches to Treaty**

In the fall of 1876, a messenger was sent to *wîhkasko-kisêyin* (Sweetgrass) to tell him of the Treaty talks (Morris 1991: 175); however, *mistahi maskwa* was not informed of the Treaty negotiations. *wîhkasko-kisêyin* said: ". . . God was looking down on us that day, and opened a new world to them [the Indians]" (Morris 1991: 191). It must be kept in mind that not all Cree people were in favour of this new worldview: many, such as *mistahi-maskwa,* were quite skeptical of it.

On Sept 5, 1876, Lt. Governor Alexander Morris arrived at Fort Pitt (*wâskahikanis*) to continue the process of Treaty Six. The people that gathered there were some of the Crees and the Saulteaux known as the River People; in addition, there were some Dene from the nearby area. Unlike the Crees that signed Treaty at Fort Carlton, a great many of the River People were not Christians. Within the area around Fort Pitt, there was a divergence of approaches and interests: some Chiefs like *wîhkasko-kisêyin* (Sweetgrass) had adopted Christianity, whereas other leaders wanted to hold on to the traditional lifestyle, centered around the buffalo. Because of his orientation to change, *wîhkasko-kisêyin* lost many supporters. Fraser notes that "Sweetgrass' influence over the River Cree was exceedingly limited" (Fraser 1966: 4). Because Ray, Tough and Miller did not examine the oral history of the people in their study *Bounty and Benevolence* (2000) they allude to the influence that the church may have had upon *wihkasko-kisêyin*: "Moreover, chiefs like Sweet Grass, a convert to Christianity, were probably influenced by the presence and words of Roman Catholic and Methodist missionaries (Ray, Miller and Tough 2000: 141).

Morris (1991: 191) provides more details about *wîhkasko-kisêyin's* actions and words during the signing: "Placing one hand over my heart and the other hand over his own, he said: May the white man's blood never be spilt on this earth . . . When I hold your hand and touch your heart, let us be one."

In all fairness to *wîhkasko-kisêyin*, there was certainly something laudable about trying to live in peace with the Canadians. The contents of *wîhkasko-*

kisêyin's speech could be interpreted in a number of ways. If "being one" means something analogous to the naive notion of equality, as in the White Paper, then this interpretation must be rejected if we want to survive as Indigenous people. Because *wîhkasko-kisêyin* had converted to Christianity and had adopted an important part of the European world view, and because it was *mistahi- maskwa* who was out on the Plains consulting people, who did *wîhkaso-kisêyin* really represent? What ideas did he represent?

mistahi-maskwa must have felt profoundly betrayed by *wîhkasko-kisêyin*, his one-time fellow warrior (Coming Day 1934: 37), because the latter signed without waiting for him to come and speak:

> I find it difficult to express myself, because some of the bands are not represented. I have come off to speak for the different bands that are out on the plains. It is no small matter that we were to consult about. I expected the Chiefs here would wait until I arrived (Morris 1991: 240).

The Treaty process, from the Indian perspective, seems to have been prearranged with little possibility for real, substantive dialogue. From the outset, leaders such as *mistahi-maskwa*, who were struggling to preserve the old Cree way of life, were marginalized and excluded from the process.

Alex Stick (1974: 2), whose father was present at the original signing of the Treaty at Fort Pitt, provides a portrayal of *wîhkasko-kisêyin*: "He did the business on the sly, he didn't notify any of the Old people." Stick adds: "The old people had a lot to say there, but it was too late as he Sweetgrass had already given his commitment" (ibid. 2). Consequently the government, along with the Christian churches, attempted to subvert the political structures of the

nêhiyawak. *wîhkasko-kisêyin* was recognized by the government to be the spokesmen for the river people; but while he was an important chief of the River people, his influence had been waning because of his adoption of Christianity and his seemingly conciliatory attitude towards whites.

The process of *wîhkasko-kisêyin* becoming more favourable to the terms of the Canadians certainly begins with his adoption of farming and Christianity, Stick recounts that in the year before the "signing" of Treaty Six *wîhkasko-kisêyin* seems to have been influenced by an exchange of funds between him and a representative of the Hudson Bay Company:

> The Store manager had sent him to the east coast . . . someone there gave him money in a big box, it was a large amount of money. He took some of that money and brought it home. The rest he left there with the priests for safekeeping (Stick 1974: 2).

Because he was already under the influence of priests and the ethics of commercial interests, it seems reasonable that he would trust the priests with the money. The subversion of *wîhkasko-kisêyin* was important because it lessened resistance to the new order.

As I have already indicated, the Treaty process was not flexible enough to accommodate the viewpoints and wishes of Indian people. The Treaty was not a true negotiation as the terms had been predetermined. It was only due to the insistence of the Treaty Six chiefs, that the medicine chest was included. In 1876, the *nêhiyawak* did have some bargaining power. However, however, as the starvation years were setting in, the Crees were robbed of this negotiating power and their ability to resist the new order was greatly reduced.

As John L. Tobias (1983: 523) suggests, the numbered Treaty process was far from ideal:

> . . . in 1871 Canada had no plan on how to deal with the Indians and the negotiation of treaties was not at the initiative of the Canadian government, but at the insistence of the Ojibwa Indians of the Northwest Angle and the Saulteaux of the tiny province of Manitoba.

D. J. Hall claims that Tobias' statement "goes too far" (Hall 1987: 322); however, his position is similar to Tobias' in that he stresses Indigenous agency. Far from being passive participants of the Treaty process, Hall argues (ibid. 324) that "the Indian not only forced major changes in the government's plan, such as it was, but raised most of the issues that appeared in subsequent treaties." Indeed, there was a great deal of communication between different Indigenous groups regarding the Treaty process in Canada, and the resistance of *mistahi-maskwa* to Treaty Six had historical precedents in the earlier numbered Treaties. While ignored initially during the Treaty process, *mistahi-maskwa* did leave a very large imprint upon the process.

Others besides *mistahi-maskwa* at the Treaty talks at Fort Pitt were aware that violations would occur. Unfortunately, because of political pressures Indian political organizations have ignored this aspect of the Treaty Six narrative in favour of a weaker position: the "party line" has often been to recite how the Treaties are sacred; but all too often the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa*, his attempt to get a better Treaty and his resistance to the Treaty itself are ignored.

For instance, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has all but ignored *mistahi-maskwa* in their official discussion papers on Treaties in

Saskatchewan. Instead, the "party line" of contemporary Cree polity understanding of the Treaty is grounded in the interpretation of the chiefs at Fort Carlton and also in that of Chief Sweetgrass. A more dynamic and challenging position would be to challenge the way in which the Treaty had been imposed by the Canadian nation state upon Indian people.

Not quite a year after the Treaty negotiations, in a letter to the Minister of the Interior, David Mills (PAM, March 2, 1877), Morris speculated on the effects that the death of *wîhkasko-kisêyin* may have upon the negotiations throughout the area. He noted that "[h]is probable successor will be "The Bear," . . . " (PAM, March 2, 1877). Morris also noted that *mistahi-maskwa* had promised to take Treaty in the proceedings (PAM, March 2, 1877); he contended however that the shift of power from *wîhkasko-kisêyin* to *mistahi-maskwa* would cause some difficulties:

> I fear . . . that the loss of the influence of Sweet Grass will render the task of obtaining the adhesion of the Plains who were not present at Fort Pitt, much more difficult than it otherwise would have been, and will lead to their making new and exaggerated demands (PAM, March 2, 1877).

Consequently, Alexander Morris noted the probability that Chief *mistahi-maskwa* would push for different terms for the Treaty. As a result, there would be challenges for the government as some of the core of the Cree leadership strove to get better terms for the Treaty under the leadership of such people as *mistahi-maskwa*, who took a very different approach toward the government than *wîhkasko-kisêyin*.

mistahi-maskwa represented the segment of Cree society that wanted to hold on to the old Indian way of life by attempting to hunt buffalo and to

preserve various traditional Cree ceremonies. Several Cree elders outline the importance of the buffalo for the Crees. Robert Smallboy, for example, draws the comparison between the buffalo and the Treaty:

> Our grandfathers were smart, concerned about our lands and treaties. Another thing, from long ago, people survived on the buffalo. From the hides of the buffalo he made clothing for himself, moccasins, blankets and the skins were used to make his tipi. For this it seems the white man went after the buffalo, they tried to exterminate them. Our buffalo, the white man said, that this is why we signed treaties. The white man stole the buffalo for his own use and tried to kill them all (Robert Smallboy n.d.: 2).

Indeed as long as there was buffalo, there was still hope for the Crees such as *mistahi-maskwa* who wanted to hold on to the traditional way of life. When the buffalo were no longer as plentiful as they once were, the Cree became increasingly conscious of the fact that they were living at a crossroads of history, and that they would have to adapt to the changing circumstances. Some of the Cree chiefs, such as *mistawâsis* and *âtahkakohp*, were acutely aware of the changes that they were facing, and they were willing to make accommodations in order to survive into the future. Other chiefs, however, such as *mistahi-maskwa* and *minahikosis* (Little Pine), were more inclined to follow the dwindling buffalo herds: indeed as long as the herds existed, the Indians would still have a measure of power in their position because they would not have to take rations and settle on reserves.

Therefore, during the negotiations, the issue of livelihood figured prominently in the minds of the leaders as they contemplated their future and that of their descendants. According to oral tradition, the Chiefs of Treaty Six did not surrender the right to hunt. J. B. Stanley notes: "Livelihood, things like wild game, fowl, fish that you use, will still be yours" (*Honour Bound* 1997: 67). The testimony of several Cree elders bears this out: "The wild game was to remain ours for hunting, trapping and also the fish were to remain ours" (*Honour*

Bound: 61). Elder Morris Lewis notes: "We promise you will not lose everything. For example, hunting, trapping, you will not lose these" (*Honour Bound*: 72).

Indeed, many of the elders have spoken of how their ancestors were assured that their traditional lifestyle would be preserved: "They said we have the rights to do these things. Hunting, fishing and trapping are yours. The Old people say these aren't given away" (Robert Smallboy n.d.: 3). The importance of the animals for the survival of Indian people is stressed: "All the game would remain theirs to live on. That's what they lived on, all the wild game. The Indians didn't give these away, they used them for themselves" (Robert Smallboy n.d.: 1). The Treaty promises regarding hunting point to a desire by Indians to hold on to their traditional way of life. *mistahi-maskwa* was perhaps the most prominent leader who attempted to continue the old way of life based on hunting and the buffalo.

After the initial Treaty discussions the Federal government was anxious to get as many of the Cree bands as possible to enter the Treaties through adhesion. While there were assurances that Indians could continue hunting, there was a growing awareness that the buffalo was in decline. On August 13 and 14, 1878, David Laird, Minister of the Interior, went to Sounding Lake to distribute treaty payments as well as to try to encourage other Indians to enter the Treaty. Laird writes: "I sent a messenger to warn both the Treaty and non-Treaty Indians of the meeting (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771). The messenger met Big Bear and notified him and his band to come to Sounding Lake" (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771). Perhaps in contrast to the initial meeting at Fort Pitt two years earlier, this discussion tried to get as many of the leaders as possible to attend.

The meeting seems to have been well attended by various people. Laird adds:

> On our arrival at Sounding Lake on the 13th August we found some twelve hundred Indians assembled among who was Big Bear, but I learned that he had only brought two or three members of his band with him (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771).

Thus, *mistahi-maskwa* seems to have adopted a strategy of keeping some of his people away from the Treaty tables. He knew that in their state of starvation many of them would be vulnerable to taking the treaty.

mistahi-maskwa tried to get better terms than settling on a reserve. Laird notes: "At one time he wanted to know if the Indians found what was promised in the Treaty was not sufficient for them to live upon, whether they could get more" (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771). It is evident from the perspective of *mistahi-maskwa* that there was no point in entering the Treaty if the Crown did not provide the Indians with a better form of living.

Laird discusses *mistahi-maskwa*'s philosophy of the land:

> At another time he said as the Great Spirit had supplied the Indians with plenty of buffalo for food until the whiteman came, and as that means of support was about to fail them, the Government ought to take the place of the Great Spirit, and provide the Indians with the means of living in some other way (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771).

Thus, *mistahi-maskwa* saw the Government as an alternative food source, as another way of providing for the Indian people as the buffalo failed.

However, Laird did not see any reason to listen to *mistahi-maskwa*'s concerns: "In regard to Big Bear's request I would advise to do nothing for one band within the limits of a Treaty that is not done for all" (NAC, RG 10, vol. 3670 file 10771). *mistahi-maskwa* is portrayed again as only representing a small number of people; therefore his requests are dismissed. R. S. Allen writes: "Unlike many of the other Cree band leaders, Big Bear was not prepared to hurriedly sign treaties which would mean the end of his people's independence, land and birthright" (Allen 1972: 5)

When Chief Thunderchild, who had been a headman with *mistahi-maskwa*, took Treaty at Sounding Lake in 1879 (the next year) he also wondered whether the government would be able to replace what God had given them. Norman Sunchild notes:

> At the time of the Treaty signing, Thunderchild was with Big Bear for three years. Within three years, they tried to starve him to death. The Government would not give him rations. In the third winter, when people were starving to death, forced to the point of eating dogs, he decided to enter into Treaty. He had thought about the Treaty. He was asked if he was the Chief. He answered, yes. He asked the whiteman [who was Dewdney- N.M.]: How are you going to take care of me, are you going to take care of me like the Creator? The whiteman answered that he would use his power in the lands to take care of the Indian people (*Honour Bound* 1977: 76).

Here is the account of Sounding Lake from the perspective of Thunderchild:

> Before I signed the Treaty, I came to talk with Dewdney at Sounding Lake. "Are you O-ke-mow (the Leader)?" I asked him. "Tell me yes or no."
>
> I asked him three times over, and he answered me each time, "Yes. I am O-ke-mow."
>
> Then I said, "If I understand your words, is it that you can do for me as God had done for me?"
>
> And he answered, "No. There is no two-legged man can do so."
>
> "Then why do you want to take that power away from God?"
>
> And he said to me, "What I can do, I will do humbly. You will not starve under me. Before I took the work, I looked at this paper (the Treaty) and I saw that it was just. I show it now before God, believing that it is true. This is Victoria's word."
>
> But I asked him, "What is five dollars a head for this mighty land?" And we talked all that day.
>
> Then he called out to the camp, "Wait, ye people. If I were an Indian, I would have this man for Chief. If you make him your Chief, you can use him well, for he is wise and he is young. Answer me."
>
> And all the camp answered, "He will be our Chief." (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 11).

Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's grandfather, who also took Treaty at *nipiy kâ-pihtikwêw* in 1879, shared a narrative which runs parallel to that of Thunderchild's:

> Behold it! Lo, here as far as you can see, as far as the corners of the earth reach, as many buffalo as your eyes can grasp, the All-Father has given us all these to live upon; you will be able to provide for us to the same extent so long as the world shall exist? (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 111).

In response to the Cree who asked him questions like this, Edgar Dewdney said:

> No human walking on two legs will ever be able to break what I am hereby promising you. I will never pay you for your land, I will forever make continuous payments to you for it (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 111).

The following narrative is important because it demonstrates a consistency within Cree oral tradition. Furthermore, it demonstrates the concept of *tipahamâtowin* within the discourse of the Treaty as remembered by the Crees: the phrase: "*kâkikê ka-pimi-tipahamâtân*" is translated as "I will forever make continuous payments to you for it" (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 111).

The Narrative of the Old Man (Sounding Lake/ *nipiy kâ-pihtikwêw,* Sounding Lake)

During the Treaty discussions at *nipiy kâ-pihtikwêw* in 1879, there was an old man who challenged the motives of the Crown. This narrative of the Old Man provides us with a very powerful conception of the Cree worldview and the efforts of some to hold on to a Cree way of being. I have reconstructed it by drawing upon the testimony of a variety of elders, as it bespeaks the world view and lifestyle that *mistahi-maskwa* was trying to protect.

There was a very old man who got up and spoke. John Buffalo remarked that

> . . . after the commissioner spoke and spelled out his promises, one Old Man in the crowd stood up and denied all that was said. He said that 'it couldn't be possible.' The commissioner would not be able to live up to his promises (Buffalo 1975: 6).

Lazarus Roan's version included more detail:

> A very old man stood up and said ... 'I don't believe what you are saying, does the Queen feel her breasts are big enough, to care for us all, there are many of us people.' The government official thought the old man was insane and suggested that he be taken away from this. It was that the old man was talking nonsense. The official replied to him immediately, 'Yes, she has large breasts, enough so there will never be a shortage.' It is unknown and interesting as to how the old man would have responded to the officials (Roan 1974: 2-3).

Isabel Smallboy, who was alive at the time of Treaty signing, reiterated the metaphor of the above narrative: "She [the Queen] even went to say that her breasts were big, therefore if the people were to go hungry, then she would feed them through her breasts" (Isabel Smallboy n.d.: 4). She adds that the Queen's "tits are very big and you will never eat them all, that's how rich they are" (Isabel Smallboy n.d.: 7). Henry Cardinal confirms this image: "It was also said by the commissioner that in the future when you are making a living and if you are in need or failing the Queen has large breasts" (Cardinal 1975: 14).

James Bull knew the reply of the old man: "You are telling us all this, you will never be able to treat us the way we are treated by Manito. Look at this land with its abundance of food for us, you'll never be able to match that, you will not be able to do this" (Bull, 1973: 3).

By piecing together these different accounts, we can form a coherent narrative. The people were thinking and speaking metaphorically. The Queen functions as an iconic figure who would provide for the Indians as the earth once had. The commissioner was asking for a change in lived paradigm: instead of relying on the earth for support, Indians were told to rely on the Queen. The Old Man doubted that the Queen could keep her promises.

One of the words associated with the use of the pipestem is *asotamâkêwin*. The verb stem *asotamâkê* to means "one makes a promise that cannot be broken." If one did break a promise, then that person would be affected by *pâstâhowin,* which is essentially bad kharma: in other words, the consequences of the act would fall back on the person.

According to Cree understanding, the Treaty Commissioner sealed the deal by smoking the pipe:

> Once it was complete it was to last forever. It was at this time that the pipestem was brought into use, we still have that pipestem. The representative also took the pipe and smoked from it. That is when the representative took the stem in his right hand and raised it towards the sky (Horse 1974a).

Horse (1975: 5) elaborates:

> With the promises the Queen made, they didn't want them to come to an end. The government official mentioned at the time that the terms of the Treaty should never come to an end. These promises were made with the smoking of the pipe. His lips touched the stem of the pipe. This wasn't done ordinarily for no reason. If one put a pipestem to his lips, that was a highly honoured agreement and the government official did that. He smoked the pipestem.

Oaths were taken as the Treaty was sworn in relation to the world around the people:

> Of the many things the government representations promised, he raised his hand in the name of God. The white man would in turn care for the Indians, the children of God. 'As long as his spirit, the sun and the river, as long as these two things are moving, that is how long the promises are good for,' said the government official. Those were the terms of the Queen (Horse 1973: 5).

The Treaties were sealed with references to the sun: "You will always be cared for, all the time, as long as the sun walks is what they promised" (Roan 1974: 2). John Buffalo reiterated this: "As long as the sun walks, as long as the river flows" (Buffalo 1975: 4). Reference here is to Grandfather Sun; the way in which the *nêhiyawak* understood "forever" was essentially a metaphor, drawing upon the land around them and the spirits of the land, in order to make the conceptual construct that was embedded in the Treaty understood by the *nêhiyawak* of the area.

The pipestem (*oskihciy*) serves important functions within Cree culture. : to bind people through agreements, and to link people to spiritual beings. At *nipiy kâ-pitihkwêw*, where Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's grandfather had taken Treaty, there was an old man who stressed the importance of the pipestem in making the pledge of the Treaty: "The people must have something to rely on as testimony, and we who are Crees do have something to rely upon as testimony; that which is called the pipestem, that is all upon which we can rely as testimony" (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 1998: 109).

The pipestem united human beings and spiritual beings in a covenant through an ongoing conversation; humans were engaged in a promise not only with each other, but also with the spiritual beings of the territory. Consistent through the Treaty Six territory was the belief that no "two-legged being" (i.e., human) could break the Treaty.

During the Treaty Six Centennial Commemorations of 1976 that occurred at *pêhonahk* (Fort Carleton, Saskatchewan), the pipestem that was used originally was brought out. Clifford Sanderson (2003 Conversation) described it as being very long (roughly four feet by the gesture of his arms). The pipestem was wrapped up, and songs were sung when the stem was unwrapped inside a *mîhkiwap* (lodge). Outside an eagle floated above the lodge, and circled around while the pipestem was being cared for and honoured.

The narrative of the old man must be interpreted as a metaphor emerging from *nêhiyâwiwin*. Hayden White elaborates on the way in which a metaphor should be read within a cultural context: "The metaphor does not *image* the thing it seeks to characterize, *it gives directions* for finding the set of images that are intended to be associated with the thing. It functions as a symbol, rather than a sign . . ." (White 1978: 91). Within the narrative of the old man, the notion of the Queen as a provider is analogous to the way in which the *nêhiyawak* see the earth as a mother and provider. This interpretation gives us a profound insight into the world that *mistahi-maskwa* and other like-minded chiefs were trying to protect.

mistahi-maskwa's Resistance

There was a concerted effort by many Plains Cree leaders to establish a homeland in the Cypress Hills area. Edgar Dewdney resisted this and suspended rations to those bands which were part of this movement. Throughout this period, many left *mistahi-maskwa*'s band because of impending starvation. Eventually, after years of wandering, *mistahi-maskwa* entered into Treaty in 1882. R.S. Allen describes this event:

> This Chief leader symbolized and embodied the last free spirit of the Plains Indians. His band became a beacon for the disaffected and was joined by families from Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt, Sounding Lake and many other areas (Allen 1972: 9).

He then adds the necessary context: "The capitulation of Big Bear was caused by starvation through the loss of the buffalo, the mainstay of Plains Indian life" (ibid.: 10). It should be noted that when *mistahi-maskwa* took Treaty he had a following of only 247 (Fraser 1966: 8).

Edgar Dewdney outlined some of the promises that he had made regarding *mistahi-maskwa*'s entry into Treaty (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). Dewdney writes that *mistahi-maskwa* would be given certain things "provided that he left for the north and settled on his reserve after the arrival of the carts from Winnipeg" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). Here is a list of some of the things that *mistahi-maskwa* was promised: "six carts

and harness", "two ponies," "fifty pounds of sugar," "twenty-five pounds of tobacco,"shot-guns with ammunition," and "a suit of clothes at once as he has not received his chief's clothing" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). The above letter is interesting because it shows the extent to which the government would go to have *mistahi-maskwa* settle on a reserve which was a considerable distance from other important Cree leaders such as *minahikosis* and *pîhtokahânapiwiyin*. It is also interesting because *mistahi-maskwa* would be supplied with ammunition; there were limitations at that stage regarding the acquisition of firearms by Indian people.

In the time after his adhesion to the Treaty, and before the troubles of 1885, *mistahi-maskwa* continued to try to organize the Indians of the plains. Allen writes: "The frustration and mounting Indian resentment against the whiteman encouraged Big Bear in the spring of 1884 to travel to several reserves and plead for unity" (Allen 1972: 13). In fact, in the summer, in a letter from Indian agent Rae to Dewdney it was noted that "Carlton Indians are so hard up that they sympathize with the movement and I think they should be treated more liberally without delay" (RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A).

W. B. Fraser characterizes *mistahi-maskwa*'s efforts in the following way: "He wanted his working arrangements on better terms than were being offered, something better than complete subjugation of his race" (Fraser 1966: 5). In July of 1884, *mistahi-maskwa* went to Duck Lake to hold a council with other leaders to discuss the situation for Treaty Indians. Agent Rae in a telegram to

the Indian Commissioner noted: "Big Bear left for Duck Lake." (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). Rae then recommended that people in Prince Albert should be advised of *mistahi-maskwa*'s movement. *mistahi-maskwa* was also in close touch with *payipwât* from the south during this period (Letter to Dewdney from Rae, NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A).

In the summer of 1884, there was a larger gathering on the Poundmaker reserve. A sundance was held as well as a meeting of the leaders who were most opposed to the terms of the existing Treaties. During this time, one member of Lucky Man's band assaulted farm instructor Craig. In response to the situation, Vankoughnet wrote to Dewdney on July 24, 1884: "I have to inform you that discretionary power may be allowed the agent in respect to giving moderate supplies of rations to Big Bear's band" (RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). It should also be noted that the restraint that *mistahi-maskwa* exercised among the young men was considerable. *mistahi-maskwa* urged the men not to harm the Northwest Mounted Police that had entered the sundance lodge to apprehend the individual who assaulted Craig.

However, Vankoughnet wrote there had to be limits to the level of support given, otherwise the dire situation that occurred at Cypress Hills in the late 1870s and early 1880s would repeat itself. He warned that there had to be moderation or "we shall have a repetition of the Fort Walsh mismanagement" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A). He also noted that there was the possibility that they might have a camp "of all the idle Indians" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File

309, Part A). One of the differences between the situation at the Cypress Hills and the Battleford area was that in the present instance there were "working Indians," concluding that "if the Department undertakes to feed a camp of idle Indians, it can not expect work from the other Indians" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309, Part A).

In the winter of 1884-1885, the situation of *mistahi-maskwa*'s band was getting quite desperate. They had been forcibly placed by the government near Frog Lake; in this position, the band was isolated from others, but nonetheless it had attracted followers providing hard-core resistance to the Treaty.

However, there were reports that members of the band were trying to adapt to the new circumstances. In a telegram from Rae to Dewdney on January 13, 1885, it was stated: "Big Bear's men at work. Everything satisfactory" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A). Dickens (NWMP at Fort Pitt) echoed this statement (ibid.). However, Dewdney took a cautionary approach to this news: "This does not necessarily mean that they have settled down on a reserve, still it is only by careful and judicious treatment of these Indians that any advancement can be made and they prevented from being a disturbing element in the west" (letter to the Right Hon. Sup. General, (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A).

Nonetheless, Vankoughnet in a letter of February 5, 1885, warned of the possibility that *mistahi-maskwa* and *minahikosis* would move around; he wanted to consult Dewdney "as to the best means of dealing with such Indians as not to

incite or stir up other Indians on the Saskatchewan or elsewhere in the territories to act in riotous disorderly or threatening manner" (RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A). This discourse, which pictured *mistahi-maskwa* as an outsider and a threat, was perpetuated. Vankoughnet added that "an example should be made of Chiefs or Indians" who continue to be troublesome (RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A); however, he noted that "great care must be taken that an efficient force of Police should be present to enforce any arrest that may be made" (RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A).

On February 12, in response to a letter from Vankoughnet, Dewdney echoed this stance: "it has always been my opinion that an example should be made of some of the leading Indians who incite or stir up other Indians to act in a manner threatening the peace of the Territories . . ." (ibid.). He spoke of those Indians who have been a "source of disquietude" (ibid.); thus, there is continuous subordination of the traditional political structures of the Crees within the Treaty Six area. He adds that strong steps would "help rid of us our most troublesome characters" (ibid.).

mistahi-maskwa had spent a great deal of time and effort trying to organize the Chiefs throughout the prairies in an attempt to get the Treaties honoured and even improved. He had led a diplomatic effort by holding meetings throughout the territory of Treaty Six and by consulting widely with other leaders. The efforts of *mistahi-maskwa* were monitored by the government during this time.

While *mistahi-maskwa* enjoyed a great deal of respect from other bands, there were tensions within his own band. One of his younger sons, *âyimisîs* (Imasees), "was angry that his father had been attending meetings with other old men instead of picking out his reserve" (Dempsey 1984: 142). Younger men in *mistahi-maskwa*'s band were disconcerted by the way in which the chief's efforts had failed to bring about any security for the band. Many within his own band wanted more done in order to get them their own reserve so that they would be able to settle down and make a living. Also, after almost a decade of trying to force the Canadian government to change its policies, many in the band were tired of waiting.

Unfortunately, in the spring of 1885, tensions at Frog Lake grew. *kâ-papâmahcahkwêw* (Wandering Spirit), the leader of the *okihcihtâwak,* had many difficulties with the sub-agent, Thomas Quinn. Also, there were many tensions between members of the band and the farm instructor John Delaney, who was "heartily disliked by the Indians" (Dempsey 1984: 117). The tension that festered eventually turned violent, and ten of the white residents of the Frog Lake area were killed on April 2, 1885. *mistahi-maskwa* knew that if there was wide-scale violence, his efforts for a revitalized diplomatic effort to have the Treaty strengthened would undoubtedly fail: "He must have realized that his ten-year struggle to prevent the complete subjugation of his people had been in vain" (Fraser 1966: 1).

The events at Frog Lake in 1885 should not be seen as surprising: after a people have been starved into submission, violence may seem the only answer. The events of 1885 allowed Canada to subordinate the *nêhiyawak*. *mistahi-maskwa* was adamant that he had attempted to prevent bloodshed. He spoke at his trial:

> Your Lordship, I am Big Bear, Chief of the Crees. The North West was mine. It belongs to me and to my tribe. For many, many moons I ruled it well. It was when I was away last winter when the trouble started. The young men and the troublemakers were beyond my control when I returned. They would not listen to my council (Dusfresne 1983: 6).

The events of 1885 were not merely the actions of angry young men, but rather were part of the inner logic of the violation of the Treaty. They were the last registrations of protest against the new order and the loss of freedom for the Crees. From *mistahi maskwa's* perspective, it went wrong *(ê-mâyihkamikahk)* because the violence suspended, at least temporarily, the possibility for a renegotiated Treaty. However, the Canadians could never destroy the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa* because he sought truth, freedom and justice.

It is worthy to note that several Chiefs, including *mistawâsis*, *âtahk-akohp*, Chief Twatt and Chief John Smith, from the Prince Albert area, petitioned for *mistahi-maskwa*'s release:

> We believe that "Big Bear" is the only Indian of those concerned in the rebellion remaining in prison and although we have no sympathy with the heinous crimes laid to his charge, we humbly submit that it would be very gratifying to the Cree nation if her Majesty's Government would extend to this criminal the clemency shown from time to time to the other prisoners, and grant him pardon for the unexpired term of his sentence (NAC RG 10, Volume 3774, File 36846).

There are several interesting points to consider in the letter. The Chiefs try to distance themselves from the events of 1885; they also go out of their way to appear as those "who proved by our actions during the late unfortunate rebellion in the Territories our loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3774, File 36846). The image of the Queen as a mother and provider is reinforced in the above narrative, the Queen being referred to as "our Great Mother" (ibid.).

Also, the letter is symbolically important because it shows that the attempt by *mistahi-maskwa* to negotiate a better Treaty is effectively over. It is the chiefs who pledge loyalty to the Queen who are speaking for him. The dream of *mistahi-maskwa* to renegotiate the Treaty being completely shattered, the letter symbolically marks the collapse of the traditionalist element within the Cree leadership.

Despite the weakened state of *mistahi-maskwa*, Hayter Reed, writing for Dewdney, notes the influence that the Old Cree leader still has:

> I beg to inform you that I believe the Commissioner, who is now absent from Regina, does not entertain an opinion favorable to the release at the present time, of Big Bear, as it is considered that members of his band settling down quietly with other Bands, would become disturbed and disorganized, and would, no doubt, desire to leave their present locations in order to join him (NAC RG 10, Volume 3774, File 36846, Document 96).

Consequently, Reed saw *mistahi-maskwa* as a potential threat to the stability of his band, feeling that members of his Band may join him upon his release. The power of *mistahi-maskwa* was limited given his health. Reed wanted it to be known that if *mistahi-maskwa* was released, it was at the behest of the loyal chiefs: ". . . I beg to suggest that the release should be made prominently to appear as having been obtained through the exertions of his loyal Chiefs, since

that might tend to give them more influence with 'Big Bear'" (NAC RG 10, Volume 3774, File 36846).

mistahi-maskwa was released but became very ill on his way home. Hayter Reed noted in a letter of January 26, 1888, that *mistahi-maskwa* had died on January 17; however he did not know the cause of his death (NAC RG 10, Volume 3576, File 309 A, Document 97). By this time, the core of Cree leadership which had resisted the new order was either in jail or in exile.

Contemporary Realities of Treaty Six

Understanding Treaty Six is important, not merely as an abstract academic exercise, but also to examine the moral foundations of Canada, given that the recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal People suggests: "Treaty promises were part of the foundations of Canada and keeping those promises is a challenge to the honour and legitimacy of Canada" (*RCAP* vol. II: 37).

It was not only in the nineteenth century that doubts were raised about the sincerity of the Crown in the Treaty talks and the subsequent actions of the government: *nimosôm* (my grandfather) asked fundamental questions too about the history of Cree-Canadian relations after the Treaties:

> We have asked ourselves, "What have we gained and have we paid for this since the Treaty was signed? Have we exchanged buffalo for welfare payments? Have we traded our own religion for the white man's churches? Our medicine for his? Indian languages for English? (John R. McLeod 1975b: 2).

The spirit of *mistahi-maskwa* is the attempt of Crees to resist colonization and to try to protect their worldview, culture, and autonomy. *nimosôm* spoke of the choice that faces all Indians today:

> It was not our forefather's intention that we should lose our culture. They saw the white man coming from a long way off. And, in signing the Treaty, they attempted to preserve what they knew to be good, for their children's children. Thanks to their efforts, we, today, have a choice. We may choose to be assimilated into the white society, or we may choose to remain as Indians and seek pride in that identity (John R. McLeod 1975b: 2).

Our ancestors wanted us to survive as Indians, but ultimately it is our choice: true self-government, if it is to help Indians survive as Indians, must preserve the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa*. It is not enough merely to reconstruct the "spirit and intent" of Treaty: the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa*, the attempt to preserve the Cree worldview, must be the guiding principle of self-government.

mistahi-maskwa at his trial said: "I am in chains. Never did I put a chain on any man. In my body, I have a free spirit. When I cross the wide river to the Sand Hills, that free spirit will go with me" (Dusfrene 1983: 7). While *mistahi maskwa* was eventually put in prison, while the buffalo were almost completely annihilated, and while the pain of the residential schools is still very much alive, the subordination of the Cree people has never been complete. It was through the resistance of people such as *mistahi-maskwa*, through the narrative of the old man at *nipiy kâ-pihtikwêw*, that the full story of Treaty Six and the moral foundations of Canada come to light and need to be rethought as we begin a new millennium.

Canada purports to be a land of freedom and democracy. However, the term "democracy" is thrown about too loosely in the public discourse of this country: all too often democracy has proven to be more a facade, or at the very least an unfilled possibility for the Cree people. While Canada sends troops throughout the world on peacekeeping missions, it owes it to itself as a nation, and perhaps also to the rest of the world, to examine its historical foundations. If Treaty Six is rethought and interpreted in the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa*, then the possibilities are truly great. The rethinking of Treaty Six is not only an academic activity: more importantly it is an activity which must be lived and put into practice.

mistahi-maskwa is a Cree icon: he represents the struggle of the *nêhiyawak* to preserve their traditional way of life. He wanted the Treaties to be able to adequately provide for his people, and he was reluctant to give up his old way of life until he was certain that the Treaties would be honoured. *mistahi-maskwa* tried to unite the *nêhiyawak* to have a unified political position that could transform the government's position, and give the *nêhiyawak* better terms of Treaty.

All too often *mistahi-maskwa's* struggle has been ignored by contemporary politicians as he challenged the treaty process. *mistahi-maskwa's* position urges to move beyond the assumption that the Treaties were simply "sacred," but rather points to the way in which the sanctities of Cree political

protocol have been violated in the time that has elapsed since the Treaties were initiated.

Chapter Four: Endnotes

Footnotes:

1. The Delgamuukw' decision of 1997 has signaled a new era for the way in which Indigenous Treaties will be interpreted. The decision noted that equal weight had to be given oral history and to written sources.
2. Since the time of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the British had recognized Indigenous title to their traditional territories in large parts of what is today the United States and Canada. One of the underlying principles is that the British had to engage in negotiations as they expanded their empire into the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. Treaty Six extends this conceptual framework to the geographical space of the treaty as well as the anticipated influx of settlers into the territory of the *nêhiyawak*.
3. *mistahi-maskwa* entered into Treaty Six through adhesion: an adhesion is when a group enters into Treaty after the original signing process.
4. Various inter-ethnic conflicts have exploded since the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. Some examples of this conflict are: Chechnya and the territory of the former Yugoslavia.
5. The Cree verb *mahmâtawisi* describes the process of tapping into the energy of the land. *mistahi-maskwa* was a noted spiritual leader amongst his people and had the ability to communicate with other beings.
6. Literacy was a skill needed by landholders to control their assets.

Chapter Five: Coming Home Through Stories

Dwelling in the Familiar

The memory of *mistahi-maskwa* shows us the importance of the *nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin*, and the connection of *nêhiyawak* to specific places. Within the narratives, we see how *mistahi-maskwa* valued the old way of life and was reluctant to enter into a new way of living.

"To be home" means to dwell within the landscape of the familiar, collective memories the world that *mistahi-maskwa* was struggling to protect; it stands in opposition to being in exile. "Being home" means to be a nation, to have access to land, to be able to raise your own children, and to have political control. It involves having a collective sense of dignity. In a post-colonial situation, in the subversion of the stories by the colonizer, one is able to reassert one's narratives. A collective memory emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally, and includes such things as: relationship to the land, songs, ceremonies, language, and stories.

Language, the nuances of words and sounds as well as the interconnections between concepts, grounds *nêhiyâwiwin*. Stories, the vehicle of a national sense of consciousness, are vibrations of eternal echoes. Stories ground us in foreverness, in the unending expanse of reality and being, through a collective memory which layers historical "lived" experiences. To tell a story is

to link, in the moments of telling, the past to the present and the present to the past.

nicapân Peter Vandall, my great-grandfather, used to tell stories of Big John (his uncle, the son of *wîhtikôhkan*) and the Northwest Resistance of 1885, among other things, as a way of bridging the eternity of the past, the forever expense of the future, with the infinity of the moment. Within *nêhiyâwiwin*, people are constantly weaving their personal narratives with traditional narratives. My family's stories were about surviving and remembering. Part of surviving is through remembrance: when you remember, you know your place in creation.

Keith Basso, in *Wisdom Sits in Places,* uses the example of the Western Apache to discuss the importance of the relationship between narrative and space. While he notes the importance of earlier writers who discussed place names, such as Boas and Sapir, he extends earlier writing by showing that the narrative is an ongoing, organic activity, and speaks of narrative as a "spatial anchor" (Basso 1996: 91). In his view, space is more important than time in understanding the Apache. It is through memory located in the landscape that people are able to situate themselves in the world: ". . . the meaning of landscape and acts of speech are personalized manifestations of a shared perspective on the human condition" (Basso 1996: 73).

Narrative memory, according to Basso, is grounded in the unfolding of reality and situates understanding through an interconnection between space,

memories, and ancestors. Essentially, Apache memory is the building of stories upon one another, and the accumulation of meaning and interpretations. Wisdom in Basso's accounts emerges from this layering process. He writes: "The commemorative place-names, accompanied by their stories, continue to accumulate, each one marking the site of some sad or tragic event from which valuable lessons can be readily drawn and taken fast to heart (Basso 1996: 28).

The stories over a period of time are internalized by the person, and there is a dialectical play between tradition and the present, and between individual and collective memory:

> For the place-maker's main objective is to speak the past into being, to summon it with words and give it dramatic form, to produce experience by forging ancestral worlds in which others can participate and readily lose themselves (ibid.: 33).

Consequently, wisdom, i.e., knowing, emerges from the voices of others and from the layers of memory. Basso notes that the process of narration is like "the ancestors were speaking to you directly, the knowledge the stones contain. Bring this knowledge to bear on your disturbing situation . . ." (ibid.: 91). The wisdom, the culmination of wisdom, then, is "extremely personal" as the past is understood as a function of a person's life experience (ibid.: 32), and as it is used to make sense of life and to live a good life. Narratives are essentially maps which emerge out of a relationship to a specific area.

Exile

Often, when one group becomes dominated by another, the group which is dominated loses some of its narratives and the dominant group attempts to impose its own narratives. To describe the groups at work in this dynamic I will use the term *colonizer* for the group that has power, and the term *colonized* for the group which is dominated. It must be kept in mind that these terms are not absolute as there is a degree of continuum. Also, these terms are by no means static, as many Indigenous groups which were later dominated by Europeans were themselves colonizers in their own right: the *nêhiyawak*, for instance, displaced other groups such as the Blackfoot and Dene in their territorial expansion of the late seventeenth to the first half of the nineteenth century.

However, while it is important to note that the *nêhiyawak* were themselves a colonizing power at one time, the imposition of English rule altered our lives. The imposition of English control over Cree territory, especially after *ê-mâyihkamikahk* (1885), radically altered the ability of *nêhiyawak* to govern ourselves and to perpetuate our stories; the English attempted through a systematic process to alienate *nêhiyawak* from our land, and in turn to alienate us from our collective traditions.

I will argue that the process of alienation occurred in two interrelated ways (and these were also concurrent). First, the English gradually alienated *nêhiyawak* from our land, a process which was accelerated once the fur trade was winding down and also through the Treaty process (which was accompanied

by increased settlement). Second, the English alienated *nêhiyawak* from our stories and languages, and set up coercive legislation in regards to our religious ceremonies. Our religious ceremonies were outlawed in the Indian Act (Section 114), and mandatory attendance to residential schools was imposed.

I define the removal of an Indigenous group, in this case the *nêhiyawak,* from their land as *spatial exile nêhiyawak* were torn from our lands and confined to small areas, and thus alienated from spiritual sites and sacred places. Once *nêhiyawak* were removed from our land and put on reserves, there was a gradual decay of the "spatial anchor" in which *nêhiyawak* had grounded themselves. I call the alienation from one's stories *spiritual exile*: this alienation, the removal from the voices and echoes of the ancestors, is the attempt to destroy collective consciousness. Undoubtedly, spatial exile and spiritual exile are interrelated: both aspects, as I have defined them, emerge from a colonial presence.

In contrast to "being home," exile is the process of being alienated from the collective memory of one's people. Canada has often been the land where people from around the world have come to avoid persecution and oppression in their homelands; it is my contention, however, that Indigenous people within Canada have also been placed into a state of exile within their country.

I will use the term *ideological home* to refer to the interpretative location of a people. An ideological home provides people with an Indigenous location to begin discourse, to tell stories, and to live life on their own terms. In addition an

ideological home provides a layering of generations of stories, and the culmination of story-teller after story-teller in a long chain of transmission. To be home, in an ideological sense, means to dwell in the landscape of the familiar, collective memories, as opposed to being in exile. "Being home" means to be part of a larger group, a collective consciousness; it involves having a personal sense of dignity. Furthermore, an ideological home, housed in collective memory, emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally: an ideological home needs to have a spatial, temporal home as well.

Narrative Maps

nêhiyâwiwin (Creeness) developed organically and will continue to develop should people attempt to keep it and to learn stories. However, some people such as Simon During argue against the organic development of the traditions of colonized people, describing the post-cultural as a state of being where the "'cultural' products are not essentially bound to the life-world that produced them" (During 1989: 36-37). During seems to imply that attempts at recovering stories and a narrative home, essentially attempts to move beyond the domination of the mainstream culture, are bound to fail because they are intertwined with the discourse of the colonizers.

The process of "coming home" through stories could be thought about as the discernment of differences between the dominant discourse of the mainstream society and the Indigenous narratives of places.

Huggan stresses the "transitional nature of post-colonial societies" (Huggan 1989: 127) and the "ongoing process of cultural decolonization" (ibid.: 128). Thus, the process of coming home through stories is a challenging of colonial discourse, and a recovering of Indigenous narratives. To use the image of a map, we could see the process of "coming home" as a new course of motion, a fashioning of an alternative route.

The notion of "coming home" is both a temporal and spatial process. The process involves the traditional homeland of the *nêhiyawak*, and the way in which people try to move beyond the alienation that they experienced from this land through colonialism. It is a spatial process in that all *nêhiyawak* occupy landscapes which they come into contact as they move through territory which we had been prevented from occupying. "Coming home" is a also temporal process in that through time new experiences are layered to older experiences found in collective narratives. While "coming home" is a return to Indigenous memories and narratives, the "home" is changed through a new layer of experiences and new ways of occupying the same space. However, this is experience is grounded in older memories and older narratives which serve as a "map" for people to find their way through life.

Trickster Treaty Stories

It is my contention that spatial exile occurred first, and was followed by spiritual exile. Frizzly Bear, an elder from the *wihcêkin sâkahikan* reserve in

Saskatchewan, described the spatial sense of diaspora as was prophesied by the Old people: "[y]ou won't be able to stop anywhere on your journeys because there will be a steel rope everywhere" (Frizzly Bear 1976). The steel rope would cut the land into different sections with a grid imposed upon the landscape; he thought that the "steel rope . . . is the wire they use for fencing" (Frizzly Bear 1976). Through the process of "fencing" the land, *nêhiyawak* were marginalized; the prophecy that Frizzly Bear made came true, as many Indian people were taken off the land. The first type of exile (spatial) had thus occurred.

However, despite an encroaching colonial presence, there were leaders who resisted the impending exile (in both senses of the word as I have defined it). Some of the strongest leaders of this resistance were *mistahi-maskwa*, *minahikosis* and *payipwât*. There are many stories of resistance to the new colonial order. Here is a story of Indigenous resistance to colonial power that was told to *nimosôm* by an elder in Saskatchewan:

> One of the Queen's representatives had come to negotiate with the Indians. His aides treated him very grandly and even had a chair for him to sit on. A cloth was spread on the ground and several bags of money were placed on it. The representative explained through an interpreter how many bags of money the Queen had sent. [A Chief] was told this and said, 'Tell the Queen's representative to empty the money and fill the bags with dirt. Tell him to take the bags back to England to the Queen. She has paid for that much land' (McLeod 1975a: 6).

The story bespeaks the irony in the encounter of two worldviews. In this story, the chief, *kawâhkatos* (Lean Man), questioned the imposition of the Treaty in the context of his own worldview and his concept of the land. To use Vizenor's terminology, the story bespeaks of a Trickster encounter (Vizenor 1994). The

Trickster Treaty story is about transforming assumptions: *kawâhkatos* understood his life through the stories and the concrete world around him, whereas the Treaty commissioner understood the world (at least the Treaty) within the perspective of a written legal agreement.

Another humorous resistance story exists concerning the Treaties. Unfortunately, the storyteller was not recorded when it was transcribed:

> So I'm going to tell a story about this woman who was kind of spry. She knew five dollars wasn't enough [amount of Treaty annuity- N.M.] So she got this notion to get herself pregnant as she'd get paid in advance. She put a pillow under her skirt; so she walked up the paymaster. When he saw her he said, 'So you're pregnant. Then we'll have to pay you an extra five dollars in advance.' When she received her money she fumbled a dollar bill on to the floor, then she bent down to pick it up. Her string bust, and she had a miscarriage; her pillow fell out. So this was the end of advances on pregnant women. They have to be born before they receive $5.00. This is the little story that I wanted to tell (*Indian Film History Project*, IH-427).

The story is a manifestation of a hermeneutical encounter between the new colonial order and *nêhiyawak*: the story, while humorous, is one of resisting the imposition of Treaty and of the reserve system. Despite having to live on reserves, *nêhiyawak* had the power of passive resistance. Stories such as the ones above, in the spirit of the Trickster, seek to transform the circumstances that the people were living in.

Vizenor's notion of "trickster hermeneutics" is very similar to Bhabba's notion of "space of translation" (Bhabba 1997: 25), the space where different interpretative horizons emerge and play off each other. However, the notion of interpretative horizon is somewhat artificial because it is an abstraction. There is

an arbitrary line created where the space between the older world view and the new world of experience became fragmented, so that a need for a new realm of discourse needs to emerge. There is a need for "discursive space" to mediate these two worlds and sets of knowledge and experience. Bhabba calls such a place "a place of hybridity" (ibid.: 25). The attempt to move beyond the limitations of colonial discourse is indeed the process behind Trickster-Treaty stories.

Bhabba offers many insights into the ways colonized people make attempts to survive changes to their life-worlds. The strength of his position is that he does not see the various cultures as victims, but rather celebrates their ability to recreate themselves in the face of new circumstances. He describes how in the post-colonial situation ". . . [s]uch a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance" (Bhabba 1997: 6). Colonized people do not simply passively accept the condition of a new way of life, but rather seek to reinforce their continuity with the past in the context of the various circumstances of the present. It is a hermeneutical act of trying to bring various levels of experience and understanding together.

Ella Shohat, though, is careful to qualify the term hybridity. She notes:

> As a descriptive catch-all term, "hybridity" per se fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political cooptation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence (Shohat 1992: 110).

Thus, she is arguing for a critical stance towards a widely used term: "hybridity" in itself implies cultural change, but does not specify how that change came about. Sometimes that change could stem from an aggressive act of colonialism, whereas other changes are consciously made in attempt to keep the culture vibrant and organic.

kôkôcîs (my great-grandfather) told stories about "survivance" (Vizenor 1994: 1-44). He would tell stories for hours sometimes. I still remember his presence as it came out through the stories, how his voice sounded, the smell of Copenhagen snuff. Most of all, I remember his laugh.

My great-grandfather grew up on the Sandy Lake reserve (*atâhk-akohp* reserve in North-central Saskatchewan). The community speaks a Plains Cree dialect, and indeed this dialect has become the standard for written Plains Cree through the work of Freda Ahenakew and my late grandmother, Ida McLeod. The community was rich in traditional narratives, but was also heavily influenced early in its history by the Anglican Church.

My uncle, Burton Vandall, once told me a revealing Trickster Treaty story. At treaty payment time, people would borrow children from other families. They would walk up to the paymaster, who was handing out Treaty annuity payments, over and over again; everyone would take turn using the same children. Eventually, the paymaster caught on, and he started to paint a mark on the faces of the children once they got their first and "final" payments.

The narrative utilizes humour to make fun of the situation where the *nêhiyawak* found themselves. While the story is a true account of a Treaty payment, it does satirize the regulation of the daily life of *nêhiyawak,* and it shows the extent to which the British would try to regulate the *nêhiyawak.*

Spatial Exile

As mentioned already, exile involves the removal of Indigenous people from their land. Politically, ideologically and economically, Indigenous groups are often overwhelmed by larger groups (usually nation states). One could call this state of affairs the colonization of Indigenous Being (of Indigenous worldview and life-world): it is the imposition of a new, colonial order and of a new way of making sense of the world. The effects of this diaspora are devastating for Indigenous people, and this condition of alienation exists both in our hearts (ideological exile) and in our physical alienation from the land (physical exile). Exile involves moving away from the familiar into a new set of circumstances.

George Lamming, a man from the West Indies who lived in England, writes of the process of diaspora: "We are made to feel a sense of exile by our inadequacy and our irrelevance of function in a society whose past we can't alter, and whose future is beyond us" (Lamming 1995: 12). To be in exile, at least on one level, is to live a disjointed life, in which the discourse and the physical reality surrounding this discourse have been imposed upon the people thrown into diaspora. Yet, the person in exile has no control over this imposed

national discourse and corresponding material reality. To live in exile, is to have the difficult task of keeping one's dignity, one's story, in the face of the onslaught of a colonial power.

The process of diaspora for *nêhiyawak* began in the 1870s (as outlined in chapter four), when the British Crown extended its influence into western Canada through a Treaty process. The British had entered into a Treaty process with the Indigenous people early on in their occupation of eastern Canada; however, the numbered Treaties in the west made between 1871 and 1876 were more substantial than the earlier friendship Treaties concluded in the east. The numbered Treaties in the west covered large parts of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Many *nêhiyawak*, along with members of other tribal groups, accepted Treaty as they saw it as their best chance for collective survival. The Treaty Six area, of which most of the stories in this paper come from, covers much of central Saskatchewan and Alberta. During the time of negotiation of this Treaty, the buffalo were vanishing and food was becoming scarce. The Treaty promised help for *nêhiyawak* in the form of a transitional economy of agriculture.

In the period after the Treaties, 1878-1885, *nêhiyawak* were starving; and the buffalo, their life blood; had vanished from the land. The diaspora was an alienation and a removal from the land; the Cree world was under siege, and the ability to perpetuate *nêhiyâwiwin* was greatly undermined. The Treaties and the

incursions of Europeans upon the Plains transformed the land: a new, colonial order had been imposed.

New Order Upon the Land

My great-grandfather, *kôkôcîs* (Peter Vandall) himself lived at the cross-roads of great historical and social changes, and he had the good fortune of being able to sit with people who had experienced the changes of the 1870s and 1880s first hand. *kôkôcîs* spoke of how during those times of upheavals the buffalo used to go to Redberry Lake, south of the Sandy Lake reserve, in their thousands in long lines when the ice was thin. The buffalo would then drown in the lake; my great-grandfather used the expression "*ê-mistapâwêhisocik*," which could be translated as "they drowned themselves." The reason that they drowned themselves is that the order of the land had been transformed: instead of being able to roam the land freely, the buffalo, like the Indigenous people, were increasingly confined to smaller and smaller areas. It was as though the whole order of the landscape was radically changing.

A word that I have heard to describe this time of massive change is "*pâstâhowin*," which could be translated as "transgression" or perhaps " when one does something wrong it comes back to them"; "retribution" would be another way to translate *pâstâhowin.* The word was used to refer to the way in which the changes brought about by Europeans had caused the various animals

and spirit beings to retreat into the earth.

Despite the efforts of *nêhiyawak* to resist the colonial presence, the events of 1885 strengthened the colonial grip on *nêhiyâwi-askiy* (Cree territory). Because of frustration with the government and of starvation, events culminated in violence: different armed conflicts, such as at Frenchman's Butte, Cutknife Hill and Batoche, broke out between Indigenous people and Canadians. Edward Ahenakew, a Cree clergyman and for a time political activist, spoke of the "scars [that] remain in our relationship with the white man" (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 71). After the troubles, the Canadians exercised their domination over the new region: they were able to impose the new colonial order, and met with markedly decreased resistance. The Cree word for all of the events of 1885, *ê-mâyihkâmikahk* "where it went wrong", represents the culmination of spatial exile.

Indigenous Adaptation to Change

> My father described the relationship that *kôkôcîs* had with Christianity:
>
> He was born in 1896. At that time, the Old people around him talked about bad medicine a lot. They talked about it a lot although he never did see it himself. He talked about this one man who had helped another man. When he was young, this man told him that he did help this other person using medicine. It was common knowledge that this person died (Jerry McLeod 2000).

The above quotation points to the way in which some *nêhiyawak* adopted Christianity. There is a trend in contemporary Indigenous discourse to create a bi-polar differentiation between colonizer and colonized: within this creation of a

discursive dichotomy, the past is sometimes romanticized. Such a romanticization distorts the experiences of those who lived through these times of change, and present realities as well.

One reason that there was a shift in religion is the fact that there was widespread use of bad medicine during the 1870s and 1880s. People saw how some were using the old plants and rituals to harm other people, out of jealousy or anger. There was a story of Chief *atâhk-akohp* who had an encounter with a strong Swampy Cree medicine. The Swampy Cree medicine man tried to use medicine on *atâhk-akohp*; the chief had in turn to use medicine to defend himself. Edward Ahenakew notes: ". . . .Ah-tah-ka-hoop was high in the secret society of medicine men . . ." (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 97). So *atâhk-akohp* "sang a song and chanted words that the others could not understand" (ibid.: 97); this song then subdued the old man and all of his negative energy fell back on himself. The Cree word to describe this is *pâstâhowin.*

kôkôcîs himself also experienced the effects of bad medicine:

> He was a runner. He was quick on his feet. He used to run five-mile races. One time one of his friends came to the reserve. And his friend came to the reserve . And his friend was bragging to a young man and old man about him [*kôkôcîs*]. He [*kôkôcîs*] didn't feel right about that old man. There was something bothering him and it gave him an eerie feeling . . . He was about half way through the race, and he just fell. And his leg bothered him after that (Jerry McLeod 2000).

There are other stories along this line. For instance, Andrew Ahenakew notes:

> There are some things about Indian custom that are not nice. Medicine Men and Cultural Doctors, were the boss of people. They were taught

> some of the medicine that was nice, but they had some of these bad medicines (Andrew Ahenakew 1976).

He then adds:

> An old man told me once when I was visiting him, 'We were given our Indian custom ever since we've lived, to pass from generation to generation, but these old men are using these things, like medicine and visions, in the wrong way. They should use the medicine right - it was for a good purpose (Andrew Ahenakew 1976).

Thus, Andrew Ahenakew thinks that one of the reasons why the customs are fading is that people are misusing tradition.

There are many narratives which talk about the massive changes occurring for the Cree people after the time of Treaties. There are many narratives of jealousy and of the use of "bad medicine" between Cree people.

Clifford Sanderson (Sanderson 2003) told me about how people were trying to kill his grandfather *asiniy kâpaw* from a distance. People wanted to hurt and kill him because they were jealous of his powers. There was one medicine man from Red Earth who especially wanted to hurt him. One time *asiniy kâpaw* was lying in bed. There were many of his relatives crowded in the room. He told them, "It is coming." He was referring to the medicine of the other medicine man from Red Earth. He told them he had to be extremely careful because if he did not catch it, they could be killed. He eventually pulled birds from his body, with tangled claws and open beaks. Eventually, he got tired of fighting off the attacks, and he died, despite his wife urging him to push on.

Despite the great changes that were occurring, farming allowed some people to make a decent living. My uncle Burton told me that when he was

young, they always had enough to eat. They had plenty of pork, vegetables and other foods. They were never really hungry and were quite self-sufficient thanks to agriculture. Indeed, one could say that at least on some level they had made a successful transition from hunting to agriculture.

In the spirit of Trickster hermeneutics, one of my ancestors, Big John, adopted elements of the colonial presence and transformed them to subvert them. He was a successful farmer on the Sandy Lake reserve in Saskatchewan, and taught my great-grandfather *kôkôcîs* (Peter Vandall) how to farm. In addition to being a successful farmer, and despite the difficulties many Indigenous farmers faced during this transitional time, Big John was also a photographer and even took pictures of white farmers in the area around his reserve. Maria Campbell told me that he had a darkroom in his basement. He had a Bible in Cree syllabics which he read regularly; I have handled this book myself many times. While he adopted a hybridized form of Christianity and adopted elements of modern technology such as the camera, he still was a Cree. In the face of colonial pressure, one can struggle to retain an Indigenous identity through a process of "hybridization" (Bhabba 1995: 35).

In addition to being influenced by his uncle Big John, *kôkôcîs* was heavily influenced by his grandfather, *wîhcikos* [diminutive form of *wîhtikôhkân*]. The way in which *kôkôcîs* negotiated between the world of Christianity and the world of traditional Dene/ Cree hunting beliefs is certainly an example of what Vizenor calls Trickster hermeneutics and what Bhabba calls hybridity. Because

wîhtikôhkân was not a Christian but a multilingual Dene from the Cold Lake area as well as brother of *kinosêw* (an important Dene leader during the Treaty Eight negotiations), and because he played an important role in raising my great-grandfather, I was interested in the way in which this old man influenced my great-grandfather.

I asked my father how *wîhtikôhkân* conceptualized Christianity: "They talked about Indian philosophy which was very synonymous to Christianity . . . the transition for him was not a big issue" (Jerry McLeod 2000). My great-grandfather wove the narratives of Cree/ Dene hunting beliefs with those of Christianity, and tried to find new ways of applying old concepts in light of new situations. While *wîhtikôhkân* used dreams and intuition, Big John, his son, learned to use some of these techniques as well, but only in the new context. My father noted: "He really believed in God. Those Old people who raised him talked to him about God" (Jerry McLeod 2000).

There is the interesting story of how *wîhtikôhkân* would go into the Church. The word that he would say was . . .

> . . . *sah-sîciwisiwak* . . . He was sitting in church and this man was preaching. He used to go there and smoke his pipe and listen. Mostly he went because the minister at the time used to invite him. He tried to solicit him to turn to Christianity. Out of the kindness of his heart he [*wîhcihkos*] used to go to listen and smoke his pipe. He couldn't understand why they would talk about Jesus that they would save human beings yet they killed him. He used to think they were afraid that they killed him and that they would be punished. He used to think these people were afraid (Jerry McLeod 2000).

kôkôcîs was raised by this old hunter who, while curious about Christianity, saw the contradictions in it, as well as how it was used to scare people.

My great-grandfather went to day-school on the reserve for two years. He laughed when he would tell the story of his experience there: "They didn't teach me anything, he would say . . . all they had me do was write on a slate" (McLeod 2000). His education came from the old man *wîhtikôhkân,* who took in his grandson at an early age (my great-grandfather's mother died when he was quite young). The old man raised him until he was fourteen. Then Big John, the son of *wîhtikôhkân,* took charge of my grandfather and taught him about farming. Big John, the photographer, unfortunately died during the influenza outbreak of 1918.

Big John, the son of *wîhtikôhkân,* was important because he represented the transition period when people were moving from hunting to farming. My father remarked: "At the time when people were forced to move on to the reserves he adapted quite rapidly" (Jerry McLeod 2000). My father shared the following narrative with me regarding Big John:

> . . . he used to look at the soil and he could tell by its texture how fluffed up it was, the colour of it was grey-light, it was worked properly. It had to do with circulating the soil once a year. He used to plough his land about six inches deep . . . no deeper than that. He would do this every year so the soil kept circulating. He studied the texture to see how much fiber there was in it. It was almost like he could feel the land (Jerry McLeod 2000).

I asked my father why *kôkôcîs* was a good farmer:

> Big John was a farmer, he had a lot of cattle . . . I always remember my grandfather telling that Big John was a very strict person in terms of discipline . . . even to break a handle of a fork was a very severe situation because at that time fork handles were not easy to come by and the handmade ones were not like the bought ones. Big John set him up with two oxen and he showed him everything he knew about farming (Jerry

McLeod: 2000).

kôkôcîs attempted to study the techniques that Big John used:

> My grandfather really liked farming. He liked working with animals and liked working with the land. He studied and kept a diary every year of his farming. Every year, he studied this diary to find ways to improve it. It was a science for him. He wrote everything in Cree syllabics . . . and it was in his heart to farm (Jerry McLeod, 2000 Interview).

It has to be remembered that even though people began to farm, they were still hunting. My father noted: "They used to go hunting in the fall. He (my great-grandfather) used to go hunting for wild meat and we would live on it in the winter" (Jerry McLeod, 2000 Interview). In fact, in my own childhood, when we lived in the city, we still relied upon wild meat as an important part of our diet.

These men had a profound effect upon *kôkôcîs.* Big John left the earth during the sickness of 1918; the person who had helped bravely negotiate a new narrative space for Cree consciousness through his actions, farming, and photography was gone. Maureen Lux notes that at that time "50,000 Canadians died from influenza" (Lux 1997: 4) and adds: "During the epidemic the Royal Mounted Police (RCMP) were sent to reserves to enforce strict quarantines, preventing Native people from leaving reserves" (ibid.: 10). The sickness had a heavy impact upon the people. Indeed, it was this sickness, my father told me, that caused Edward Ahenakew to want to be a doctor. He saw so many of his people suffer that he wanted to help them. Stan Cuthand confirms: "It was during these hard times with so many funerals that Edward Ahenakew decided to

study medicine and become more useful to his people" (Edward Ahenakew 1995: xii).

Another thing which changed was the way in which people took care of their health. Old Man Keyam, the semi-autobiographical voice of Edward Ahenakew, reflects on the changes that were affecting the Crees in their daily lives. He notes: "Indian dances, they tell me, are a thing of the past, and they have adopted the white man's way of dancing instead. No conjurer visits the sick, but the white man's doctor is called to give his medicine to the ailing" (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 62).

I know that this is not completely true: some families on the Sandy Lake reserve held on to traditional healing techniques well into my lifetime. *kôkôcîs'* paternal aunt, *kwêcic*, was called upon to help the people who were sick; she knew various plant remedies to help people with various illnesses.

My father told me the following story, which *kôkôcîs* had told him. During the time of great sickness (1918-19), there was an old man who had a dream. This dream told him about some medicine that he could use from skunks, which would help the people get better. This old man then told *pâcinîs'* second wife (*pâcinîs* was *kôkôcîs'* father, and the brother of *kwêcic*); this woman, called Sarah Rabbitskin, was from the nearby reserve of Big River. The dream told the old man that the skunk would help them in this time of trouble, and indeed this proved to be quite useful. Many people were saved because of the knowledge that was given to this old man from his dream. My aunt, Barbara McLeod, who

taught at the Big River reserve decades later, noted that there was still knowledge of this skunk medicine there.

Despite the shifts that were occurring in the peoples' lives, they still relied a great deal on older ways of doing things, including traditional medicinal practices. Members of my family have told me that people from all over would come to see *kwêcic* in order to get medicine for a variety of things; I have even heard that people from Montana would come to see her to get plants to help people with various illnesses. She never had children, but did raise him when he was younger after his mother died. *kwêcic* died when I was about seven or eight, at the age of about 110.

There was thus a shift from traditional healing techniques to modern healing techniques. I think that one has to be careful about ascribing causation for the shift from traditional medicine to "modern" healing techniques. I do not think that one can say it was simply the shift to Christianity and farming which brought about the change. Rather I would say that there was always a reliance on herbal remedies for ailments which worked quite effectively. However, gradually people began to go to hospitals more often and the old techniques fell out of use. I think that it would be possible to draw a comparison with the changes which have occurred in the field of education, namely the replacement of old pedagogical techniques with new ones.

Comparisons with Ireland

One can see parallels with what happened to the Crees in the mid-1870s to 1885 to what happened earlier in Ireland in the 1840s. The Irish lost their main source of food, the potato, as the Crees lost the buffalo. As in the Cree situation, there was the belief that market considerations should dictate the supply and flow of food. Cecil Woodham writes in *The Great Hunger*:

> The influence of *laissez faire* on the treatment of Ireland during the famine is impossible to exaggerate. Almost without exception the high officials and politicians responsible for Ireland were fervent believers in non-interference by Government, and the behaviour of the British authorities only becomes explicable when their fanatical belief in private enterprise and their suspicions of any action which might be considered Government intervention are borne in mind (Woodham 1962: 54).

The various peoples in the British Empire were supposed to take care of themselves and to be able to provide for themselves. However, the *laissez faire* policy does not take into account the effects of colonialism; indeed, one of the ironies of the Irish famine was that grain was being shipped while people were starving. In August of 1846, Woodham writes, "[t]he British Government was not prepared to supply food but very ready to call out troops" (Woodham 1962: 117).

Also, starvation was taken to be a state of affairs that could not be prevented. Says Woodham: ". . . and the Poor Inquiry Commission had stated 2,385,000 persons in Ireland were in a state of semi-starvation every year, whether the potato failed or not" (Woodham 1962: 63). Thus, the British government had already assessed the situation and felt that the people of

Ireland would naturally starve, and from this we can see that it would have to be a crisis of truly exceptional proportion before they would act. The statement made here is very similar to government statements regarding the Crees in the critical period of 1876-1885. Also, the depiction of the Irish by the English can be compared. Woodham writes: "English newspapers represented the Irish, not as helpless famine victims, but as cunning and bloodthirsty desperadoes" (Woodham 1962: 105).

When people are hungry, violence should not be seen as a surprising outcome. As for *nêhiyawak* throughout Saskatchewan, the Irish situation was desperate: "To people desperate with hunger the sight of food streaming out of the country was once unbearable, and serious riots took place . . ." (Woodham 1962: 125). In another incident, in September 29, at Dungavan "[a] crowd of starving unemployed entered the town, threatened them not to export grain, and plundered shops" (Woodham 1962: 125).

Also, the Irish people were not told what was happening in their country, and in the west of Ireland there existed a language barrier:

> The people became bewildered. They had taken in very little of what was happening; at this period Irish was spoken in rural districts and English barely understood, while in the west English was not understood at all. No attempt was made to explain the catastrophe to the people; on the contrary, Government officials and relief committee members treated the destitute with impatience and contempt . . . (Woodham 1962: 144).

This is very similar to the way in which the Crown dealt with the Crees in the decisive period between 1874 and 1885, as discussed in Chapter Four. The Crees were portrayed as being responsible for the existing state of affairs.

Some *nêhiyawak* thought that they were indeed responsible for the decline of the buffalo; likewise, some Irish thought that they were responsible for the decline of the potato. For both groups, there was the idea of a spiritual law being violated, and that the life source (buffalo or potato) had not been respected:

> So plentiful were they [potatoes] in pre-Famine years that it often happened that farmers filled them into sacks, took them into the markets at Moate, Athlone or Ballymahon, offered them for sale but nobody could be found to buy, so that on the return journey the farmers often emptied them into the ditch on the roadside for 'they weren't worth the sacks they were in'. Afterwards it was said that the Famine was a just retribution from God for the great waste of food (RBÉ 1069: 142-152, cited in Póirtéir 1999: 221.)

As I have stressed throughout Chapter One, the key to understanding Cree history is through stories. Ron Marken (1999) in his interesting and thoughtful piece "There is Nothing but White Between the Lines: Parallel Colonial Experiences of the Irish and Aboriginal Canadians" examines the parallels between Aboriginals (particularly the Cree) and the Irish in terms of diaspora. Drawing upon *Translations,* by Brian Friel (1980), Marken notes the silence that shrouds collective memory when a group loses both language and land. He remarks of the key character Sarah Johnny Sally that "[s]he, like Ireland, is symbolically doomed to a life of silence" (Marken 1999: 158). With the encroaching English presence, the place names of Ireland were superceded and given names through surveying. Marken notes that he heard similar accounts from *nêhiyawak*; one student recounted the following story:

> Last summer I worked for a survey crew . . . And we camped at Nelson's Crossing . . . In the fall, when I came back home, my grandfather asked me where I was working. He'd never heard of Nelson's Crossing. Just after New Year's, my grandfather died and then I found out that he was born at Nelson's Crossing, only it wasn't called that. It had a Cree name, but the white men - and surveyors like me - rubbed out that name. Part of my grandfather and me disappeared when that happened (Marken 1999: 159).

Naming and stories are important parts of a narrative memory; indeed, it is through narratives and language that people remember.

In the play *Translations*, some of the older characters can no longer find their way home. They are lost in the country because they cannot recognize any of the markers: "Near the end of the play, one of Friel's older characters says that he can no longer find his way home; he is lost and astray in his own countryside" (Marken 1999: 159). The character has lost his bearings: the landscape around him has been made alien, and he has been thrown into exile from the collective memory of his people. In other words, the character is in a state of diaspora, and has been uprooted from the past and collective memory. The character, like many *nêhiyawak*, has been alienated from the land which was once so familiar.

One of the effects of colonization, of being dominated by the Other, is negation of narration, and the emergence of absence through sound. Marken writes: "There has been a great loss and a discontinuity between the lives once lived and the ones lived now. One loses history; one loses memory. The greatest loss is the loss of language" (Marken 1999: 169).

The Irish were also subjected to a residential school system which was created somewhat prior to the potato famine, and which contributed to the loss of their language and connection with the landscape. In 1831, the British started a public education system for Irish children. Michael Coleman notes that while the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland were mostly Irish, they "saw their task as Anglicization" (Coleman 1999: 85). Conscious of protecting their distinctive linguistic identity, "[l]arge numbers of Irish people resisted sending their children to the national schools or withdrew them temporarily or finally to work for the family" (ibid.: 87).

nêhiyawak, like the Irish, went through a process of being colonized by the English. Key components of this process were the decline of language and the loss of land, the two things through which memory emerges and settles. As Marken notes, the loss of this memory creates an absence and a loss of connection to the past.

Exile Story

I would like to share one diaspora story about the troubled times of 1885. *kôkôcîs* (my great-grandfather/ Peter Vandall) told this story at *nôhkom's* (my grandmother's) funeral. It is also recorded in *The Stories of the House People* (Vandall 1987). *kôkôcîs* opens the story:

> aya, ê-kî-âcimostawit ôtê ohci kihci-môhkomâninâhk- nitôtêminânak êkotê itâmowak ôta kâ-mâyahkamikahk- êkwa, êwako awa pêyak nisis aya, kî-pê-takotêw tânitahtw-âskiy aspin ôma otâhk

> It was told to me by a man from the United States - friends of ours had fled there at the time of ê-mâyikamikahk - and this one was my uncle, he had come back a few years ago (Vandall 1987: 65).

It was through the story-telling that his uncle came home from the exile caused by *ê-mâyikamikahk*: he had managed, through the humour of the stories, to preserve his dignity as a *nêhiyaw* person. Furthermore, it is through these stories that the people attempted to find a way home: *kôkôcîs* spent the whole day with this uncle of his, listening to his stories. *kôkôcîs* reported that his uncle said, 'I do not have much to give you, but I will give this story, my nephew.'

The story is about a man who went fishing. This man liked to drink and was sipping whiskey while he was fishing. He needed bait and saw a snake with a frog in its mouth. The man took the frog out of the snake's mouth, but he had pity on the snake: he knew that the snake was as hungry as he was. This man, after taking the frog, gave the snake some whiskey in exchange. The snake, after a while, came back with another frog to trade for a drink (Vandall 1987: 64-69).

This uncle of *kôkôcîs* had fled during the troubled times: he was forced into exile because he had made a stand for his rights and dignity. It was given to *kôkôcîs* and was an important element of his repertoire. The story speaks of being generous and of having pity on those with less power; it talks about the changes which were emerging, and the effort on the part of people engaged in trying to negotiate this emerging space.

Old Man Kiyâm

In *Voices of the Plains Cree,* Edward Ahenakew created the semi-autobiographical character of Old Man Kiyâm to describe the ideological exile which had been imposed upon him and his people. The events of his life weighed him down; seemingly, his attempt to overcome exile and to find his way home seemed to end in failure. He compares himself to the *nêhiyawak* who lived a life of freedom:

> The one brings to its song something of the wide expanse of the sky, the voice of the wind, the sound of waters; the other's song can only be the song of captivity, of the bars that limit freedom, and that pain that is in the heart. So it is with my spirit, which may try to soar, but falls again to the dullness of common things ... (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 72).

Old Man Kiyâm feels imprisoned by time and space after *ê-mâyihkamikahk,* which signaled the end of freedom for Indigenous people in western Canada.

The process of exile involves both physical and spiritual diaspora. It is the move away from the familiar towards a new alien "space." This new space attempts to transform and mutate pre-existing narratives and social structures. It was not only those Old people like Old Man Kiyâm who were imprisoned and forced into diaspora, but also those who went through the residential school system. Stories are told to try and negotiate through the field of experience.

Spiritual Exile: Residential Schools

Spiritual exile was the internalization of being taken off the land. A central manifestation of this occurred through the residential school system,

which was established as a way of "educating" Indigenous people. There were many such schools set up throughout western Canada, and they were operated by various Churches. Children were taken away from their homes and their communities. Instead of being taught by the Old people in the traditional context, children were being taught in an alien environment which stripped them of their dignity; it was a process of cultural genocide and spiritual exile. Once put away in both an spiritual and spatial sense, many children never came "home": instead, they spent their lives ensnared in alcoholism and other destructive behaviours.

In her poignant paper entitled "Disempowerment of First North America Native Peoples and Empowerment through their Writings," Jeanette Armstrong writes:

> Our children for generations, were seized from our communities and homes and placed in indoctrination camps until our language, our religion, our customs, our values, and our societal structures almost disappeared. This was the residential school experience (Armstrong 1998: 239).

The schools also caused a severe disruption in the transmission of language and stories.

In the 1930s, *nimosôm* (my grandfather) went to residential school on Gordon's reserve, which is north of Regina, Saskatchewan. At first, he was happy to go; a friend of his, Edward Burns, even remembered him clapping his hands in anticipation (Regnier 1997: 4). He was anxious to see the world beyond the borders of the reserve; however, his experience of the school was far from what he expected. He came back and told his father, Abel McLeod, what

was going on in the school: the beatings, children going naked at the school, and the hunger. *nimosôm* remembered having pity on a young boy (Regnier 1997: 6); this boy would cry because he was homesick, and *nimosôm* tried his best to take care of him.

The authorities came for *nimosôm* a second time. *nicapân* (my great grandfather/ Abel McLeod) did not want his son to go back, but he was told by the Mounties that they would arrest him if he resisted. *nicâpan* was very active in the political struggle of the Indigenous people of Saskatchewan. An amendment was made to the Indian Act of 1927, which made it illegal for Indians to collect money to fight for the protection of Treaty rights. However, in 1932, he went with John B. Tootoosis and five others from Saskatchewan to Ottawa to fight for Indigenous rights despite the provisions of the Indian Act.

The Mounties knew that *nicapân* was a man of influence in the community, and an arrest would be difficult as the people supported him. However, when he told the Mounties, "Well, you will have to arrest me. I can't let you take my son again," they used force to take *nimosôm*, a boy of twelve, who spent the next three nights in jail cells throughout the province as he was taken back to the school and escaped again.

This experience of residential schools exemplifies the process of spiritual diaspora. Alienation from the land, political pressure, and the use of force were all parts of a larger effort to destroy *nêhiyâwiwin*. The schools solidified the polarization of the entities "*nêhiyâwiwin*" (Creeness) and "Canadian." All things

Cree were taken to be dangerous and not worthy to exist, whereas all things Canadian were exemplified and taken as prototypes. *nêhiyâwiwin* acted as a foil which helped to create a "Canadian" identity. The schools did much to create a sense of physical and spiritual exile.

It is interesting to note how the narrative I gave of *nimosôm* maps on to an old prophecy told by Frizzly Bear in 1976 (but the prophecy is from the late nineteenth century):

> If you don't agree with him (the whiteman - N.M.), he'll get up and point at you with a revolver, but he can't fire. He'll put his gun down and everything will be over. You will agree with him and what he's going to teach you is nothing that is any good for us (Frizzly Bear 1976).

Frizzly Bear prophesized the way in which the representatives of the government would use force to take children from their homes and their communities: the RCMP used force and the threat of firearms to take *nimosôm* away.

These schools were the vehicles of cultural genocide with concerted attempts to destroy language and stories. They implied forced exile, the separation from the security of the culture and the wisdom of the Old people. The survivors of these schools are modern day *okihcihtawa*k (Worthy Men, "warriors"). Instead of fighting in the physical world, they fight against the memories of these schools that linger in the landscapes of their souls.

The residential schools nearly silenced *nêhiyaw* stories forever. In "One Generation from Extinction," Basil Johnston stresses the importance of language and stories, in the context of their fragility: "Therein will be found the essence and the substance of tribal ideas, concepts, insights, attributes, values, beliefs,

theories, notions, sentiments, and accounts of their institutions and rituals and ceremonies" (Johnston 1998: 102). Johnston comments on the effects of spiritual diaspora, the alienation from collective memory: "With language dead and literature demeaned, 'Indian' institutions are beyond understanding and restoration" (ibid.: 103). There are two responses to the state of diaspora: either resignation to this state of affairs, or fighting back.

John Tootoosis reflects on the residential school experience: "They washed away practically everything from our minds, all the things an Indian needed to help himself, to think the way a human person should in order to survive . . . We were defenseless" (Sluman and Goodwill 1984: 106). The process of schooling was designed to destroy *nêhiyawi*-tribal and collective memory, and replace it with new stories.

Tootoosis and Political Revival

John Tootoosis was the grandson of *osâwaw-aski-akohp* (Yellow Mud Blanket), who in turn was the older brother of Chief Poundmaker. John Tootoosis rose to prominence when he became the leader of the League of Indians of Western Canada, after Edward Ahenakew stepped down in the 1920s because of pressure from the Church. He later became the first president of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians in 1958. Throughout his life, he was a passionate defender of Indigenous political rights.

Tootoosis commented on the role of the Church in this domination. The Church was in charge of the schools; it used this opportunity to impose the Christian religion, and attempted to dominate Indians through intimidation: "The Church was supporting the domination. They were doing the brainwashing in those residential schools . . . I went through the mill myself. I saw what was happening and what they were trying to do" (John Tootoosis, 1977 Interview). John Tootoosis saw the 'brainwashing' effects of the schools in the way that the government and the Church were using their power to destroy traditional teachers and the way we understood ourselves in the world.

I remember my dad telling me that John Tootoosis once said that one had to be careful about one's involvement in white religious groups, because there was always the danger of them using their power to dominate Indians politics. The Church has often supported the political domination of Indians.

John Tootoosis often talked about how hard it was to organize people: "Indians weren't organized before. They were so damn dominated by the government" (John Tootoosis, 1977 Interview). People were seemingly unable to make decisions, as they had very little control over their lives. As Indians began to become organized in the twenties and thirties, people started to break the yoke of domination; indeed, one of the central demands of Indian political leaders and organizations was to end the domination of schooling by the Churches. Tootoosis said of the League of Indians organized in the early 1920s:

"The League opposed residential schools, the church wanted to dominate the people and keep the schools" (John Tootoosis, 1977 Interview).

In many ways John Tootoosis was the *mistahi-maskwa* of the twentieth century: he struggled to maintain our identity in a very difficult time, and he led the movement to get back our rights and to assert our dignity as a people. He was able to do this through his stories, his connection to place, and the help of his father. Sluman and Goodwill write:

> John Tootoosis, Sr. would not allow his sons to feel rejected and useless. This perceptive man had encouraged all his children from their earlier years to listen to the Elders in Council and then debate on the various matters that had been under discussion with one another (Sluman and Goodwill 1984: 107).

While there were severe pressures on our culture and on the people at that time, they found ways to preserve their identity and their place in the world. Stories and language led some of the people back to their identities, as it is only through our own stories that we can find true dignity and integrity in the world.

The late Wilfred Tootoosis, the oldest son of John, reflected on his experiences in residential school, and how he was singled out because of his father's activities:

> I had quite an experience in school. I'd get picked on. The nuns and priests spoke against my dad's movement, everywhere, in church, in the classroom. And when somebody did something wrong they ganged up and blamed me for it . . . They could have had my dad shot if they had a chance to (Wilfred Tootoosis 1999: 314).

The children of activists and spiritual leaders were often hit the hardest, and were attacked regularly and singled out in the schools. My father told me that the priests used to call John Tootoosis' children "communists."

There are many stories of John Tootoosis and his struggle to fight for the rights of the Cree people. Here is one story which I recently heard from Pat Cayen (from Muskeg Lake); it concerns Edwin Tootoosis, one of John's sons. The Tootoosis family at one time had only one saddle. John's sons would use the saddle to ride, an activity they enjoyed very much. However, one time there was a man from Cold Lake who was visiting. He had ridden a horse all of the way from Cold Lake to Poundmaker, which is a considerable distance. John had pity on him and gave him the saddle so that his trip would be better because the man from Cold Lake still had to travel to the proximity of Regina. Some time later John was in Cold Lake at a meeting. He was sitting at a table when the man who was given the saddle approached him. He looked at John as though he recognized him. Finally, he did recognize him and started to talk to John. He learned that John did not have very much money to travel back, so he gave John $15, which was a lot of money back then.

That is how people used to be. In the early days of Indian organization, people would help each other. People would stay at each other's houses, and they would feed travelers. They would share what little they had, and would collect money at different social gatherings to help activists attend meetings. The leaders back then had a lot of support because they truly did represent the

people. The ethic of sharing was found in everything My father mentioned once how people would share hay with one another, and share extra things with those who didn't quite have enough.

Coming Home Through Stories

The effects of going to school have to be understood as a radical separation with the past, as a disjunction in the daily experience of the people. People were no longer allowed to acquire language and socialization in the usual way. The economic life of the people had also changed and would in turn affect collective narratives The Crees of the twentieth century became increasingly aware of the limitations that were put upon them, and of the systematic attempts that were made to wipe out their culture. The effect of being in exile and the trauma associated with it are manifested in the stories told, and in the manifestation of these stories placed into political action.

But our fights to survive as a people certainly go beyond the issue of residential schools. Smith Atimoyoo, one of the founders of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, spoke of the "new arrows" that Indian people have at their disposal today (*Proceedings of the Plains Cree Conference* 1979: 23) to fight for our collective existence. Here I borrow the term "wordarrows" from Gerald Vizenor (Vizenor 1978); words are like arrows that can be shot at the narratives of the colonial power. Wordarrows have transformative power and can help Indigenous people come home. Wordarrows can help to establish a

new discursive space. Every time a story is told, every time one word of an Indigenous language is spoken, we are resisting the destruction of our collective memory.

Through stories we are able to find our place in the world. The character of Old Man Kiyâm struggles to find his place in the world through his stories. Edward Ahenakew writes that after failing in the white world, Old Man Kiyâm "reverted to the old Indian way of life, allowed his hair to grow long, and he chose to wander from house to house, reciting old legends, winning a reputation for himself as a story-teller" (Edward Ahenakew 1995: 51). He was trying to make sense of the present from the experiences of the past.

Stories act as the vehicles of cultural transmission by linking one generation to the next. There are many levels to the stories, and many functions to them: they link the past to the present, and allow the possibility of cultural transmission and of coming home in an ideological sense. Our task today is to retrieve tribal narratives and paradigms, and to reaffirm our tribal identities in the face of the overwhelming pressure of diaspora.

As I alluded to earlier, we have to assert our stories and language if we are to survive diaspora. Despite the fact that the original colonizing power, Britain, has been reduced in influence, there is still an attempt to maintain cultural hegemony. . .

> . . . through canonical assumptions about literary activity and through attitudes to post-colonial literatures which identify them as isolated natural offshoots of English literature and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions (Aschcroft, et al. 1993: 7).

Within this context, Cree narratives are still marginalized and kept on the periphery of Canadian consciousness. This marginalization is not only a result of canonical assumptions, but also the foundation for the privileging of European narrative paradigms over Indigenous paradigms. For instance, the use of prophecy within Cree constructions of social reality seems to be at odds with the manner in which the mainstream culture creates meaning and narratives, as all too often there is a tendency in academic discourse to create a binary opposition between myth and history. Even the manner of telling stories in the academic setting can be part of the diaspora of *nêhiyawak*. The stories of academics are taken to be factual because of the utilization of "objective" paradigms of knowing, whereas, aboriginal narratives are often taken to be substandard and subordinate to those of mainstream Canadian society. I want to suggest that the metaphorical discursive pattern of *nêhiyawak* needs to be taken into account to come to a complete phenomenological understanding of the history of Canada. Many *nêhiyâwi*-diaspora stories are told within paradigms which may be antithetical to the narrative paradigms of science.

I would like to share an exile story which has been passed on in my family for one hundred years. It was told to my great-great-grand mother *kêkêhk-iskwêw* (Hawk Woman), then to *nimosôm* (my grandfather), and then to my father Jerry McLeod. I have also heard elements of the story from Clifford Sanderson and Bill Stonestand. All of these people are from the James Smith reserve.

There was a group of people from the *cikâstêpêsin* (Shadow in the Water) reserve. The reserve was named after the first chief, *cikâstêpêsin.* He had a brother-in-law named *pîkahin okosisa.* Both of these names were derived from water, but neither one of them was baptized. There was a large flood on Sugar Island, which is close to Birch Hills, Saskatchewan. Many people died during this flood. There was one woman who climbed up a tree with her baby; she tied a cloth around the tree and moved up the tree to escape the water. The cloth was used to hold her up there. Eventually, the flood went away, and the people left the area. It so happens too that about eleven people from the band had been involved in the troubles at Batoche in 1885. There were too many bad feelings associated with the land there, at Sugar Island, so they left. Some of them went to camp with the people of the James Smith reserve. However, a group also went to the Sturgeon Lake reserve.

The camps were close together. Back then people had pity on each other; they shared more with each other. They had pity on their fellow *nêhiyawak.* That is why the people of *cikâstêpêsin* (Shadow on the Water) stayed there. There was a man who told prophecies of the *cikâstêpêsin* people; his name was *pîkahin-okosisa* ("the son of *pîkahin*": "*pîkahin*" is derived from a verb stem which means "to stir water"). He died about 1897, 12 years after *ê-mâyihkâmikahk* [("where it went wrong"/ The Northwest Resistance). My dad said that they wrapped his body up with cloths. They had a wake for him. Then, one person noticed that *pîkahin-okosisa's* feet were starting to warm up,

and he told the others: his body was warming up on his right side. And the man came back to life.

pîkahin-okosisa spoke of many things. Charlie Burns told me that *pîkahin okosisa* left his body and traveled:

> He said I was flying. He was flying around up there. And he seen this world, *tânisi ê-wî-ispayin* what's going to happen in this world, in the future? It is going to be bad. And he seen . . . at that time there used to be, it was all bush...where Fort La Corne is, it was all bush. He said "You are going to see the day that there something is going to be running around here. Red. And it is going to destroy all the bush." And then he said "They are going to plant something here in this ground. And he talked about the airplanes, flying around. "They'll be sending flying around here that, that makes lots of noise, the motor." (Burns Interview, 2003).

He spoke of great fires in the northern skies; my father told me that there would be a great war. *pîkahin okosisa* said that families would split up more in the future. He spoke of the kind of houses that we would live in; he even foretold that people would fly in the sky. He also spoke of the hardships that people would experience:

> He seen all that. That old man. And then he predicted what's happening . . . been happening eh. He talked about the war eh, the first world war, the second world war, he talked about that, he seen it. And what is going to happen in this reserve of ours . . . He predicted that it is going to be bad: that people are going to fight over again. *ê-wî-nôtinitocik*. That's what he predicted (Burns Interview 2003).

pîkahin-okosisa saw all of these things. My father also told me that *pîkahin okosisa* said, "My people will have good hunting near *mêskanâw*" (a town in Saskatchewan). He lived for a few more days, and then he died for good. Charlie Burns noted:

> He slept on the ground, he wanted to . . . stay in his tipi every night. He wanted to sleep in the green grass all the time. And on the seventh day, he knew that there was a one man that didn't like to go and pitch his tent (e.g. the tent of *pîkahin-okosisa*) to where he wanted to sleep, eh. He got tired of changing his positions for sleeping. This one guy got tired of it and he told him that he wanted too much to be done. And then that old man knew. That night he told his son that. He told his son that one man here "One man here doesn't like me. So I'll be, I'll be gone tonight," he said. " said wait and I'll go away tonight." So he did. He died that night (Burns 2003).

His reserve was "surrendered" in the 1890s, but before the Christmas of 1997 a letter was received stating that the government would recognize the *cikâstêpêsin* (Shadow on the Water) claim. This is the story of *pîkahin-okosisa* as I have heard it and as it has been passed on to me. In a sense, the people will be "coming home" both in an ideological and spiritual sense.

Clifford Sanderson (2003) told me that after *cikâstêpêsin* died, his pipe and medicines were buried with him. Because of the loss of this traditional knowledge, the people were lost. With no medical help, especially in these times of massive changes, many people died.

Throughout native North America, and indeed throughout the world, there are similar stories. The story that I shared about the crashing buffalo is also part of this general narrative pattern. Perhaps, the earliest revitalization narrative is that of Neolin and the Trout (Pflüg 1997: 48-51, 56-58). Another example of a revitalization narrative is the Lakota ghost dance. Furthermore, John S. Galbraith documents the same sort of narrative that developed among the Xhosa in South Africa and in the King movement amongst the Maori in New Zealand (Galbraith 1982: 11). All of these were Indigenous responses to massive change.

By incorporating Indigenous narratives, we can understand the perspective and worldview of the participants. Raymond J. DeMallie, for example, characterizes the ghost dance in the following manner: "The religion was powerful because it nurtured cultural roots that were very much alive - temporarily dormant, perhaps, but not dying" (DeMallie 1982: 393). All of these stories illustrate the resilience of Indigenous cultures in the face of the pressures of diaspora both in an ideological and a spatial sense. Like the concept of hybridity already discussed, these narratives and movements reshaped tradition: "Out of this religion collapse new beliefs, new philosophies, eventually developed that would entail a major intellectual reworking of the epistemological foundations of Lakota culture" (DeMallie 1982: 305).

All the stories point to the vitality of Indigenous people in the face of increased colonial presence. These revitalization movements could be seen as an attempt to "hybridize" the narratives of the colonizer, expressive of changed material circumstances, with Indigenous stories.

The attempt to "come home through stories" is also found in the first wave of contemporary Native American writing, such as Momaday and Silko. Krupat notes:

> My argument thus far is that for all Momaday's and Silko's recognition of the need for tradition to change, in *House Made of Dawn*, *Ceremony*, and the *Ancient Child* these writers nonetheless insist of the possibility of a recuperation of the traditional - where to be sure, the exact nature of the "traditional" remains to be specified. Nonetheless, to live in a 'traditional' manner, within an organic 'Indian' community, is presented as a tentative possibility for Abel and as an imminent reality for Tayo and Set (Krupat 1996: 14).

"Coming home through stories" happens in everyday life and in everyday situations. One day I was sitting in a small-town café with my father and Edwin Tootoosis, close to my reserve. My dad and Edwin were telling old stories in Cree for about two hours. Everyone kept staring at us, as though we didn't belong, as if we had no right to be there. But my dad and Edwin kept telling their stories; they chose to have their dignity through the language and the stories, instead of passively letting someone control them. When we walked out of the cafe and moved on to the streets, everyone in their silent way acknowledged what had happened. The feeling was familiar: the phrase "damned Indians" had been heard all too often. That day, the hope of spring, the breaking of the ice filled the air; the rebirth of possibilities, of the turning of eternity, penetrated the space around us, creating calmness.

As we walked towards our trucks in the half-filled streets, my dad told a story. A long time ago, an old man and his grandson went to town. The boy was about fourteen. They had gone to town to buy groceries. They milled about the store and collected the items that they needed. After they had filled their cart, there was a man by the door. He said to his friend, "Damn lazy Indians." The man then went up to the old man and said, "You are god-damn lazy. Why can't you just stay on the reserve, where you belong?" The taunts continued, but the old man kept calm. After they gathered their groceries, they stood outside their vehicles. The grandson asked, "*nimosôm* (grandfather), why

didn't you say something to that man who was there, who was saying those things to us?" The grandfather answered his grandson with another question:

> "How long were we in the store?"
> "Well, we were there for five minutes."
> "Yes, my grandson. We were in that store for five minutes. We had to deal with that man for five minutes. But he has to deal with himself for the rest of his life."

As I understand this story, the way to survive is not by giving into hate, but by concentrating on positive things, like retrieving stories. One could see this as a form of passive resistance in the spirit of Gandhi.

I will tell one more story. In 1976, *nimosôm* was chosen to be the organizer of the Treaty Six Centennial Commemorations. He traveled around the province and listened to Old people, sometimes taking me along. At the time of the Commemorations at Onion Lake, *nimosôm* (my grandfather) translated for Jim Kâ-Nipitêhtêw, whose father had been Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw's (Mistahi Maskwa's/ Big Bear) head dancer:

> He says, 'There was this body that needed someone.' And he says, 'And I guess that this was the one that was placed in this body.' He says, 'I hope when I leave this body, I will leave it beautiful.' And he says, 'When you see that spruce, when it is just born, and that spruce, as it grows, is beautiful. When the spruce stands up and meets you, it meets you with dignity because he has lived his life the way he was placed here.' He says, 'Everyone of us is beautiful. We should leave our bodies with dignity' (John R. McLeod 1981).

When I was a boy, I was with *nimosôm* at this event; I was around him during the meetings, the Centenary of the Treaty. I think what *nimosôm* was saying, as he translated from Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, was that a human being is like a tree. Like all organisms it grows and matures over time; the tree has a certain

nature which, if followed and nurtured, allows it to grow in the most vibrant manner. If a person, if a *nêhiyaw*, lives a life grounded in his own stories and experiences, then he will be able to live his life in dignity and to greet the day and all the things that happen to him. The process of living, of which at my age I still know very little, is an accumulation of years of experience and growing. However, stories, as among others Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, *nimosôm*, John Tootoosis, Keith Basso (1996) and Julie Cruikshank (1990) have said, ground a person in the world. The stories act as foundations, they are like an anchor allowing the experiences of life to be understood.

I think of *nêhiyâwiwin* (Creeness) as a large collective body. When I was born in 1970, there were so many people who knew so many beautiful things about *nêhiyâwiwin*. As *nêhiyawak*, when we listen and tell our stories, when we listen and hear our language, we have dignity, because we are living our lives as we should. We are living our lives on our own terms; our stories give us voice, hope and a place in the world. To tell stories is to remember. As Indigenous people, we owe it to those still unborn to remember, so that they will have a "home" in the face of diaspora.

In a sense, the process of "coming home" is an exercise in cartography. It is trying to locate the place of understanding and culture. It is not so much a process of returning to some idealized location of interpretation; rather, it is a hermeneutical act, perhaps an act of faith. It is the attempt to link two disparate narrative locations, and to find a place, a place of speaking and of narrating,

wherein the experiences of the present can be understood as a function of the past. At the same time, a culture is a living organism, with many layers and levels, and there will always be manifold interpretations of this culture. I would argue, in a way similar to David Newhouse (2000), that the emerging forms of Aboriginal consciousness, including the Cree ones, will be hybridized forms.

To come home through stories is to anchor ourselves in the world. Many people, including *nimosôm*, John R. McLeod, and the great Cree leader John Tootoosis, fought through the world and tried to make sense of their experiences. They survived the residential school experience and attempted to make sense of the world around them. While being thrown out of their ideological home, they were able, through tremendous efforts, to find their anchor again and to "come home" through stories and narrative memory. Thanks to them we have that anchor today: it is now our time, it is our responsibility to keep the anchor, if Cree narrative memory will survive through other generations.

Again the metaphor of an anchor is helpful in talking about a narrative tradition. If a ship is tied to the anchor it will not rest in one spot forever. The ship will shift around, alternating locations; however, it will stay in the same general area over a period of time. But if the ship is cut off from that anchor, then it will drift beyond the known location. For some time, the experiences will still be familiar; however, once the anchor is cut and the ship moves beyond the familiar, narrative memory is lost forever.

Chapter Six: nêhiyâwiwin (Creeness) and Modernity

The encounter of *nêhiyawak* with modernity must be understood in a series of layers. The historical roots of modernity within European thought must also be understood in the relationship of Cree culture with colonialism, and the way in which colonialism is often taken to be synonymous with modernity, and the temporal rise of science and new technologies. The practices of colonialism itself have forced *nêhiyawak* to reflect on the notions of progress, and also has provided conclusive reasons to rethink a Hegelian progressive model of history.

There is undoubtedly an interesting relationship between the universalistic impulses of modernity and the tribal forces of particularism. Some may see the universalistic tendencies of modernity as a liberating force upon human lives, saying that it affords people the luxury and opportunity to create themselves in possibilities; they may say that the process of modernity points to the contingency of any tradition.

nimosôm used to ask fundamental questions about contemporary life, such as "What have we given up in exchange for the modern life?" and "What stories have we forgotten in order to live in today's world?" *nimosôm* in 1976 wondered about the changes that had occurred over the last one hundred years for the Crees:

> And we have wondered what our ancestors would say to us if they could be with us today. I, myself, often wonder about some of the things I have

> done in my lifetime. I have broken and worked down four hundred acres of land on James Smith. What would a man from 1876 or 1776 or even further back say to me, to all of us, if he were here today? (John R. McLeod 1975b: 2).

My grandfather reflected upon what it meant to be an Indian today, and he thought about the changes that had occurred. He added: "Have we exchanged the buffalo for welfare payments? Have we traded our own religion for the white man's churches? Our medicine for his? Indian languages for English?" (McLeod 1975b: 3).

Old people knew that there would be changes, and they forecast what would happen in the future and were told by *âtayôhkanak* (grandfather and grandmother spirits) of what would happen. Old people would use the phrase "*ê-pâstâhat ayisiniw*" [the transgressing people] as they knew that people were violating the earth and the creation.

Vine Deloria, Jr., expands on this idea:

> A traditional Indian finds himself still experiencing the generalized presence of spiritual forces; at the same time he finds himself bound by the modern technology of communications and transportation which speed his world far beyond its original boundaries (Deloria 1999: 123).

Modernity Defined

Instead of listening to the world and engaging in a discourse of attunement, people in modern times have begun to try to dominate the rest of creation. The Old people spoke about how things would change: for example frogs would have six fingers instead of five -- this has already begun to happen

with pollution. Old people, grounded in ancient tribal knowledge, knew that the price of playing God, of trying to dominate the earth through technology, could be disastrous.

Traditionally, *nêhiyawak* were very humble about their place in creation. Coming Day, a Cree from the Sweet Grass reserve, said: "The people of old were in a piteous state, when they first lived here on earth. The Higher Powers had put them down here with nothing at all" (Coming Day 1934: 3). Jimmy Chief echoed this: "Long, long ago, when people were first put on this land, they were put here with nothing at all. No tools to work or hunt with" (Jimmy Chief 1973: 2). People struggled to live off the land through a disciplined and ceremonially grounded life. Because of the reliance that people had upon the world and other beings in their everyday life, they had to listen to other beings.

Modernity, loosely defined, is the worldview and "lived" social practice which uses science as the benchmark for truth manifested through technology. Instrumental rationality, the dominant philosophy of the technological society, sees the world as a set of entities which people attempt to control. A new communication system, a new discourse, emerges: instead of listening to the world, people try to dominate it. All beings, including Indigenous people, can be subjugated through this rationality.

The Enlightenment project is undoubtedly the beginning of modernity. A new discourse was founded, and as time went on, narrative holes were created with the pre-existing interpretative structure. As Theodor Adorno and Max

Horkheimer argue in *Dialectics of Enlightenment,* there is an ongoing dialectic in the Enlightenment project: on one hand, there is a creation of a narrative, namely science, through which the world is interpreted. One could envision this as a "positive" element. On the other hand, there is the emergence of a "negative" element of Enlightenment rationality. Narrative holes are created between the new dominant narrative and older traditional narratives. Incongruencies result between older ways of explaining and new experiences and ways of explaining.

"Modernity" and "tradition," which are both key elements of the dialectic of Enlightenment, have often been used as binary terms through which modernity itself has been defined. The characteristics that are associated with "traditional" cultures could indeed be associated with Indigenous cultures, including the *nêhiyawak.*

L. E. Shriner notes that an ideal type of both "modernity" and "traditionalism" is not necessarily based on empirical data, but is only a way of organizing the data (Shriner 1975: 247). An "ideal type" is an "artificial construct" (ibid.). The terms, these conceptual frameworks, are there simply to aid in the analysis, and are themselves are not "theories or explanations" (ibid.).

Shriner provides the list of traits of both traditional societies and those that may be called modern societies (attributes for traditional societies come first): 1) "minimal participation by governed"/ "high participation"/ 2) "structurally diffuse roles"/ "structurally differentiated" 3) "culture permeated by

sacred norms"/ "culture highly rationalized or secularized", 4) "relatively small units based on kinship"/ "nation state", and 5) "limited capacity"/ "capacity to meet most internal or external challenges" (Shriner 1975: 249).

Based on these contrasting characteristics, the overall picture that can be constructed from the following list is that traditional cultures are highly static, whereas modern ones are more fluid (especially regarding points three and five). The first point on his list is highly questionable. Oftentimes, people in traditional societies are more clearly represented than in larger societies. In larger, modern democratic societies, the political legitimacy of governments is often questioned. For example, many allegations of voting irregularity have been raised following George W. Bush's victory of 2000. In particular, many commentators have pointed out that many Black Americans were excluded from voting lists. The fourth point denotes the level of political participation and scope of political structure.[1] The fifth point illustrates the notion of organization and also points to the flexibility of the society on the whole.[2]

The confrontation with modernity by Cree people has occurred on many levels: (1) the absorption into a larger political unit (namely the nation state of Canada), (2) the collapse of traditional economies (such as the buffalo economy in the west), (3) the imposition of a new religious order (namely through the imposition of residential schools), (4) the decimation of traditional Cree political structures and leadership, and (5) the shift from traditional medicine to modern medicine. Indeed, many of these points are related to each other.

Harris Cole notes that the fragmentation of the traditional worldview of the Indigenous people in British Columbia was also manifested in geographical terms: "As time went on, and particularly as the modern-state settled around British Columbia, new ways could not be subsumed within the assumptions and values of traditional life-worlds" (Cole 1991: 680). The conceptual holes result when there are large differences between the traditional narratives of Indigenous people and the narratives and experiences that are being imposed upon them from the outside. This process is manifested in concrete actions. Coles notes:

> The argument frequently put, that control of Native life-worlds survived in British Columbia until natives lost the lands is supported by the theoretical contention that a society and its setting cannot be conceptualized separately (Cole 1991: 680).

Coles adds an element of geography to his argument. In other words he gives Habermas' concept a spatial dimension.

The experience of *nêhiyawak* with modernity has at least two layers: there is the way in which modern technologies affect Indigenous cultures, which is not necessarily directly related to colonialism; and also the way in which these technologies have been used by other powers to justify political domination and colonialism. Many writers and thinkers do not make this distinction which causes a great deal of conceptual confusion. Also, because of this distinction, there will be different ways in which Indigenous people will question tradition. First, there will be a voluntary questioning of tradition: people, by drawing upon narratives and experiences from their modern life, may question traditional ways as it is certainly not the case that everything in a tradition must remain the same

forever. Second, there is an involuntary questioning of tradition caused by colonization facilitated by modernity: because of the imposition of a new order brought about by a colonial power, Indigenous people may develop a false sense of consciousness regarding their tradition, and begin to question simply because all of their institutions have been colonized. The difference between traditions and modern reality can be imposed as opposed to freely constructed (as in the first case).

Cree Nationalism

One of the struggles of modernity is for people to situate their identity within a contemporary context, but this goes against the universalistic tendencies of the Enlightenment project. Part of the process of situating identity is through the emergence of nationalism. The modern notion of nation in many ways developed in conjunction with modernism, and was a way of mobilizing large numbers of people to engage in the process of industrialization. Part of this process was also the school system which gave people a standardized set of skills. Another key element was the standardization of language.

In the Cree world, this has been happening for some time. For example, at the First Nations University of Canada, the Plains Cree dialect is the language of instruction in Cree language courses. This often puts those students who come from other dialectial communities at an immediate disadvantage, as they are sometimes penalized for dialectial differences in the way they write down

words. Also, the dictionaries that are used are all in the Plains Cree dialect. Such a process is useful for teaching foundations of the language; however, it remains to be seen whether such efforts can be sustained. One key difference between the standardization of Cree and that of other languages rests in the number of speakers. Cree is the language of a colonized people, and is only sparsely used in the modern political and cultural institutions of the people. In modern nation states, language often becomes the vehicle of government. For the most part, *nêhiyawak* use English in their governmental structures. Indeed, English has becomes a pan-Indian marker. In Ireland, similarly, the Connaught dialect has become standard over and above Munster or Ulster Gaelic, with English being the pan-Irish marker.

There is a growing trend towards tribe-specific nationalism among Aboriginal people throughout Canada, where Crees are the most numerous group with a population stretching from Quebec to British Columbia. At a gathering of Cree people at Opaskwayak Cree First Nation in 1994, attempts were made to create a Cree national organization. There have been similar meetings since that time at various Cree reserves throughout Canada. Also, specific tribal cultural activities have been occurring, including the Cree unity ride which started in 1998. The movement signals the emergence of tribal-specific organizations which will certainly add interesting layers to the political landscape of Aboriginal political organizations.

Despite the long process of subordinating and subverting Aboriginal political and religious structures (Dyck 1991, Pettipas 1994, Sluman and Goodwin 1984), there has been a vibrant revitalization of Aboriginal cultures throughout Canada in recent decades. Since the late 1960s there has been an explosion of Aboriginal culture, with a revival of religious ceremonies, attempts to revive languages, the solidification of political structures at the national and provincial levels, as well as a proliferation of artistic and literary work.

While the rebirth of Aboriginal consciousness through such endeavors has been vital and interesting, I think there remain many unanswered questions about the relationship between pan-Indian political and cultural organizations and tribal-specific ones such as the Cree ones which I mentioned. Certainly, the emergence of a tribe-specific consciousness may add a great deal to the Aboriginal political discourse. However, it is doubtful whether this discourse will seriously compete with well-entrenched political organizations such as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, which are essentially pan-Indian. The strength of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, however, is that within its membership three nations were historically allied with one another: *nêhiyawak*, Saulteaux, and Assiniboine.

Modern Indigenous nationalism within Canada must include pan-Indianism, at least to some extent. The widespread use of English, for instance, has allowed various Indigenous groups to communicate effectively with one another. Also, because of commonalities between various Indigenous groups in

relation to the colonial encounter, there are many similarities between the groups. The general orientation of various Indigenous nationalities could be characterized as "traditional."

Anthony Smith (1998) has characterized two types of nationalism: perennialism, which may be applied to "traditional" societies, while *modernism* would apply to modern states such as Canada. I list the perennial ones paired with the ones of modernity:

> cultural community/ political community
> immemorial/ modern
> rooted/ created
> organic/ mechanical
> seamless/ divided
> quality/ resource
> popular/ elite-construct
> ancestrally-based/ communication based (Anthony Smith 1998: 23).

The list is important because it draws out the potential differences between what one might call Indigenous cultures and the cultures of modern nation states. The perennial cultures would fall under what Habermas calls "traditional life-worlds." However, it does not necessarily follow for instance that the cultural community cannot also be a political community; and one could argue that many modern states are grounded in elements of traditionalism. The notion of "quality" perhaps could be interpreted from the perspective of having a clear concept of the good life (communitarianism), whereas "resource" could apply to economic aspect and mode of production. One could easily point to the power and influence of Christianity, for instance, in the Canadian nation state. Also, there are certainly elites within Indigenous culture which help to hold on to

traditional mores and beliefs. These are simply ideal types; one thing that Smith ignores is the contrast between spirituality and secularization.

This process also occurs within Indigenous groups. As I began to talk to various Old people from my reserve, I became very aware of the contingency of the label "Plains Cree" , of the ambiguous genealogies that permeated my own family tree, as well as of the narrative ironies that emerged when contributing to create a "national" discourse. In addition to the discovery of my own family tree and its little surprises, I became increasingly aware that the situation pertaining to James Smith was very common and that the assertion of a pure, essentialized "Cree" identity (or even a Plains Cree one) was extremely misleading and limiting.

Today, many people simplify their identities in an attempt to "imagine their communities," to use Benedict Anderson's (1991) phrase. Instead of acknowledging multi-layered, ambiguous genealogies, people have simplified their identities to one tribal affiliation. Historically, the Cree, Saulteaux and Assiniboine were allied with each other; and there was a great deal of cultural overlap between them, just as it was natural for people to become multilingual. With the rapid loss of Indigenous languages in Saskatchewan, people have begun to simplify their identities and gravitate towards one tribal group. Some bands have signs as your enter their reserve, "Welcome to Reserve Y, Cree Nation" or "Welcome to Reserve Z, Saulteaux Nation." Such a discourse

simplifies identity to one tribal group, and ignores the other layers of multi-tribal genealogy.

Individual bands and larger tribal groups have essentialized band genealogies and tribal narratives, thereby often justifying historical and political claims. Some bands have been in the process of "purifying" their membership lists in the vain hope of trying to determine who "really belongs on a reserve." The search for such foundational genealogies is ironic, given the fluid nature of bands before the reserve system: it seems as though many Indigenous people in Canada have internalized the ideas that have been imposed upon them by the mainstream society.

While David Mandelbaum's 1940 book is extremely valuable as a resource, his account has the potential to contribute to a Cree "nationalist" discourse. For instance, Mandelbaum's map (Mandelbaum 1994: 13) is quite misleading and oversimplifies the genealogies of the people of the Saskatchewan Plains and ofparts of Alberta. He includes in his map the "range of the Plains Cree as of 1860-1870" as well as "present day (1936) reserves Plains Cree" (Mandelbaum 1994/ 1940: 13). In fairness to his account, Mandelbaum does note the ambiguity of the genealogies to some extent: "Some of the Plains Cree territory, enclosed in the lines of the crosses [the territory mapped out as Plains Cree-N.M.] was shared with bands of Assiniboin[sic], especially in the south" (ibid.: 13). While this statement makes some mention of the ambiguous nature of the territory, it obscures the fact that bands within this territory were hybridized

groups: the *nêhiyâwi-pwâtak* [Assiniboine-Cree] were a fused band of Crees and Assiniboines, whose leader was Chief *payipwât*.

Mandelbaum's map includes one reserve, Carry the Kettle, which is an Assiniboine reserve, but ignores the large Assiniboine presence in the North Battleford area, where he did much of his fieldwork. For instance, Chief Poundmaker's [*pîhtakahanapiwiyin's*] father was Assiniboine. Mandelbaum's map also distorts tribal genealogies by ignoring the Saulteaux presence in this vast region. While my reserve (James Smith), where *nîkân-isi* settled, is not included, the Little Pine reserve, where David Mandelbaum conducted many of his interviews, is included. My father, Jerry McLeod, told me that two of *nîkân-isi's* brother did not want to take Treaty and went further west where they would have joined the more independent River People, who under the leadership of *mistahi-maskwa* and *minahikosis* strove for better terms for Treaty.

To stress further the ambiguous genealogies of the "Plains Cree" individuals, it is important to note that *mistahi-maskwa*, often considered to be a quintessential Cree leader of the River People, was the son of a Saulteaux (Ojibway) leader from Ontario, and consequently there was a strong Saulteaux component among the River People. Also, many of the groups such as the Rabbitskins and Calling River people, who lived in what is today south-eastern Saskatchewan, had elements of their bands who were primarily Saulteaux speaking.

The story of *mistânaskowêw* (Badger Voice) also demonstrates the importance that Saulteaux had in the formation of Cree collective identity. This story is the origin story of the system of syllabics which was in common usage in the second half of the 19th century throughout the area inhabited by Cree-speaking peoples. *mistânaskowêw* left his body and travelled to the Creator's lodge. The Creator gave *mistânaskowêw* the syllabics because in the future Cree-speaking peoples would have a difficult time remembering their language. It was said that the writing would help people remember because it was like medicine.

In several accounts of the story that I have heard, *mistânaskowêw* was a member of the *Mitêwiwin* society, which is a Saulteaux (Ojibway) healing ceremony. Today, that society is all but extinct in the area of the "Plains Cree;" however, the story demonstrates the importance the society had at one time, being seen as a conduit for the emergence of writing amongst the Cree-speaking people.

There is of course the other version on the origin of Cree syllabics: namely that the Methodist missionary James Evans invented them in order to translate the Bible. The syllabic form of writing was used widely by the Anglican Church; and the Bible was translated into Cree in 1861. It is interesting that Abel McLeod (my great-grandfather, the son of *nîkân-isi*) was not a member of the *Mitêwiwin*, but rather a strong Anglican. His mother, Betsy McLeod, *kêkêhk-iskwêw* (the wife of *nîkân-isi*), had a Bible in syllabics. The son of *wîhtikôhkan*, Big John (as I

know him), had a Bible in Cree syllabics. I would argue that the Bible in Cree syllabics solidified the hegemony of the Cree language, and was part of the process of the hegemonizing process of simplifying genealogies.

Patricia Albers discusses how tribal genealogies have been simplified by historians. In a review of the contemporary reprint of Mandelbaum's *The Plains Cree*, she offers a criticism of his "cultural idealism" (Albers 1980: 219). Albers notes: "While Mandelbaum never explicitly states that the Plains Cree are a self-contained group, this view is implied in much of his writing" (ibid.: 218). In contrast to Mandelbaum, who portrays the Plains Cree as a monolithic group which has historical roots in the east, Albers points out the ambiguous nature of tribal genealogies on the northern plains, explaining:

> . . . that the Plains Cree were not a socially exclusive nor a culturally discrete group. Rather they were embedded in a polyethnic system where social relations and cultural institutions cut across tribal *qua* ethnic lines (Albers 1980: 219).

Albers stresses that the picture of the Plains Cree which Mandelbaum presents was not as clearly defined as he proposes.

Albers in another piece, "Changing Patterns of Ethnicity in the Northern Plains, 1780-1870" (Albers 1996), expands on her objective of pointing out the ambiguous genealogies of the Plains Cree, stressing the relationships between the Cree and their Plains allies:

> The historical situation of the Plains Assiniboin [sic], Cree and Ojibwa [Saulteaux- N.M.] did not conform to typical tribal models where territories were divided, claimed, and defended by discrete ethnic groups, nor did it fit descriptions in which political allegiances were defined primarily in exclusive terms (Albers 1996: 91).

Sharrock (1974) also notes the multi-ethnic composition of many bands. It was very common for people in the bands included in Mandelbaum's map (Mandelbaum's 1994: 13) to be multilingual, speaking Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux. Historically, these groups were allied with each other and intermarriage was common.

Several epidemics hit these allied peoples throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In order to face the challenges of these epidemics, such as the smallpox outbreak of 1780-1781 and the whooping cough outbreak of 1819-1820, many bands merged together. A state of diglossia (and indeed triglossia) was common. As noted above the bands were also woven together through extensive intertribal marriage, made easier by the fact that the Crees and the Saulteaux were bound by very close linguistic and narrative similarities. Many prominent "Cree" leaders such as *mistahi-maskwa*, *pîhtakanahapiwiyin* and *payipwât* of mixed heritage. The process of identification as Cree intensified after the establishment of reserves, probably because Cree was the *lingua franca* of the allied Confederation of the Crees, Saulteaux and Assiniboines, as well as an important language of trade and diplomacy.

With the creation of reserves in the 1870s and 1880s, the ability of this large confederacy to interact was greatly reduced. Also, coupled with the implementation of the residential school system, the linguistic diversity of Indigenous people was greatly simplified. English gradually became more widespread; and living a sedentary life on a reserve also had an impact of the

"imagining of Creeness." Like the borders of modern nation states, the reserves created stabilized populations and produced a situation in which Cree, the former *lingua franca,* began to be increasingly favoured as the primary Indigenous language.

Several factors led to the decline of the Saulteaux language on my reserve, James Smith. First, due to the pass system and the administration of Indian Affairs, people were not able to travel to other reserves. Second, Saulteaux ceremonialism such as the Mitêwiwin was no longer a force in the cultural life on the reserve Third, as an extension of the second point, the Anglican Church became the dominant religion on my reserve, the Bible and hymn books in Cree syllabics being used extensively. Consequently, Cree became increasingly the dominant language of religion, and code-switching took place on a wide scale, which eventually had a replacement effect.

There is another example of Cree becoming the dominant language on a reserve. In the Mosquito reserve in Saskatchewan, Cree was not initially dominant: rather, Assiniboine was the dominant language of the community at the time of its establishment. However, at the turn of the century there were three Cree women from the nearby Red Pheasant reserve (largely a Cree-speaking reserve) who married into the band. Because the children of these women learned their first language from their mothers and were numerous, Cree gradually replaced Assiniboine as the Indigenous language of the community; the process continued throughout the twentieth century until by the late 1970s

the reserve was completely Cree-speaking. I have in my possession a certificate from the reserve thanking my grandmother for her work in the establishment of the Cree language program there.

Consequently, examining critically the "nationalistic" discourse of the *nêhiyawak* reveals that there has been a process whereby various ethnic groups who spoke Cree began to identify as *nêhiyawak*. Thus, through the eras of the fur trade and colonialism, a cultural hegemony arose in modern times: the creation of the notion of "Plains Cree" is very similar to the creation of other modern nationalisms.

Individual bands are not nations. It takes more than 2,000 people to form a "national" group. Instead of saying "the James Smith Cree nation" it would be better to say the "James Smith band of the Cree nation." It is also important for contemporary Indigenous people to acknowledge the multi-ethnic connections of their genealogies. The modern paradigm of nationalism has distorted the way in which Indigenous people, including *nêhiyawak*, identify themselves and understand their cultural history. A long time ago, people were multilingual, but at the same time had a strong collective identity. The point is not to deny contemporary Plains Cree identity, but rather to point out that this identity is richly nuanced. We owe it to our multilingual ancestors to acknowledge our roots.

My ancestors were conscious of a collective, Indigenous Cree speaking identity: thus, by my pointing to the contingency of contemporary Cree identity,

I am not trying to deny the authenticity of this identity. My ancestors signed Treaties as part of the Iron Confederacy, which includes Cree, Saulteaux and Assiniboine peoples. Furthermore, many of my ancestors were Métis (Cree or Saulteaux speaking) and were related to Treaty people. Unfortunately, in my lifetime, it has become fashionable to exclude Métis genealogy amongst First Nations people. The search for a "pure" genealogical identity goes on.

Canadian National Homogeneity and the White Paper

The construction of Canadian national identity began in earnest in the nineteenth century. While Canada was a multi-ethnic state, a cultural and political hegemony was constructed on the basis of the English language and the British political structure. While the state has been made to appear "neutral" and "liberal" (in the classical sense of the word), it must be noted that the political and cultural foundations of this country are British. Dressed up in the fabric of universal citizenship, this discourse has often been used to suppress Indigenous people, including Cree nationalism.

Perhaps one of the strongest articulations of the imposition of universal citizenship was the statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, thereafter referred to as the White Paper of 1969. The White Paper of 1969 marked an important turning point in the relations between Indigenous people and the government of Canada. It was a unilateral attempt to impose a new set of procedures governing Indigenous/ Canadian relations. The paper was

founded upon the philosophy of liberalism and had two basic philosophical tenets: 1) to attempt of the part of the mainstream/ nation-state to help those who were farthest behind, and 2) to end the special rights that indigenous people had in favour of universal citizenship. Both tenets ignore the collective claims of Indigenous people: "liberals and their historic doctrine neglect collect entities" (Van Dyke 1982: 21).

The White Paper was a policy which attempted to impose universal citizenship upon Indigenous people. In ways, it can be seen as imposing a nationalistic hegemony:

> . . . the nationalist tendency towards cultural homogeneity and the accompanying tendency to frame every political question in the state's legalistic, bureaucratic form of discourse. This disqualifies culturally distinctive groups from full participation and simultaneously promotes their assimilation (Eriksen 1991: 272).

Dianne Longboat writes of the White Paper:

> In 1969, the federal government issued a probing paper on Indians. The White Paper proposed to end the special status of Indians as individuals and their communities as distinct political entities- this caused the reawakening of political consciousness and the emergence of provincial and territorial Indian political organizations designed to protect the rights of First Nations (Longboat 1999: 24).

Augie Fleras and James Elliot add to this characterization of the White Paper putting it into a larger context:

> Fallout from the American civil rights movement as well as broader movements, as for human and individual rights, was equally important in revising the political agenda. For the architect of the paper (White Paper- N.M.), Pierre Elliot Trudeau, replacing special status with equality was part of a grander vision of a just society in which all citizens regardless of race were similar under the law (Fleras and Elliot 1992: 118).

The White Paper was essentially a policy vehicle designed to destroy collective Indigenous identity, and to absorb Indigenous people into the rubric of the nation state of Canada under the guise of liberalism and toleration.

To be fair, the White Paper must be situated in a larger context, namely the dream of Pierre Elliot Trudeau to create a "Just Society" which would redistribute wealth and resources to the poorest within the society. This would undoubtedly include Indigenous people. The redistribution of this wealth was to be done on the basis of individuals and not collectives.

The White Paper of 1969 clearly violated the spirit of the United Nations *Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*:

> Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right not to be subject to ethnocide and cultural genocide, including the prevention of and redress for:
>
> (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or identities;
>
> (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
>
> (d) Any form of assimilation or integration by other cultures or ways of life imposed on them by legislative, administrative or other measures; (*Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*, article 7).

The White paper certainly fulfills these conditions.

Indigenous people, under the leadership of Harold Cardinal, argued against the White Paper by producing the much discussed Red Paper, and the Canadian government eventually had to withdraw the White Paper.

The White Paper while advocating a program of assimilation of Indigenous people, ironically solidified a new era of Indigenous nationalism.

In the wake of the withdrawal of the White Paper, the federal government began to decentralize large amounts of funding to Indigenous people. Cathy Wheaton writes:

> The FSI (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians- N.M.) grew dramatically at this time in this development due to massive increases in funding. David Ahenakew would increase the budget of the FSI from $70, 000.00 to $1.5 million by 1972. It employed 199 people to run its programs (Wheaton http://www.sifc.edu/Indian%20Studies/IndigenousThought/fall99/cathypaper.htm cites Pitsula 1996: 14).

The point of all of this is that Indian people began to create modern bureaucracies. Once Indigenous people had weathered the storms of overt colonialism and attempts at cultural genocide, their culture was inevitably changed. Cultural changes that occurred in contemporary times that occurred were not the sole product of the mainstream culture's attempt to assimilate, but also must be understood as a function of modernity. Indigenous people, including *nêhiyawak*, were no longer living the way our ancestors did; instead we are living in modern conditions and had to transform all of their institutions to respond to these changes.

Creation of Modern Indigenous Institutions

The central challenge for *nêhiyawak* in the climate of modernity is to create modern institutions which draw upon traditional beliefs in the wake of colonialism. John B. Tootoosis, perhaps the most vigorous champion of Indian

rights in the twentieth century, has noted the way in which the Church tried to cripple Indigenous consciousness:

> The Church discouraged Indians from joining the organization [the League of Indians of Western Canada- N.M.]. The nuns would lecture the Indians. They would tell the children everyday that if they listened to their parents they would go to hell. After many years of this the young children didn't listen to their parents. They were brainwashed. They created a conflict inside every teepee on the reservation. The church cut of the very people [the elders- N.M.] who should have been teaching and preaching and guiding the young people (John Tootoosis, 1977 interview).

Attempts were made by various political organizations to stop these residential schools; one of the key terms of reference for the Allied Bands (later to become the Protective Association for the Indians and their Treaties) north of Regina[3]was indeed to end the schools. The organization sought "to strive for a better Indian education with schools on every reserve in order to bring Indians a better standard of socio-economic development" (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians 1980: VI-26). The League of Indians of Western Canada, an offshoot of F. O. Loft's organization, was also against the schools: "The League opposed residential schools -- the church wanted to dominate the people through the schools" (Tootoosis 1977 interview).

The resistance of various leaders, such as the legendary John Tootoosis, made the creation of modern institutions possible. One of the important aspects of *nêhiyâwiwin* and modernity is indeed the vibrant resistance by which *nêhiyawak* opposed the processes of colonialism. Once *nêhiywak* people had began to get control over their lives, the challenge became how to create new institutions.

Things began to change as Indian people asserted their right to control their own educational institutions. Smith Atimoyoo, the first director of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, stressed the importance of knowing who we are: "It is very important that we, as Indian people, realize that we must *learn to know who we are and what we should be doing*" (School Committee Conference 1969: 4; italics in the original).

Perhaps one of the most interesting developments in recent times is the use of education to preserve culture. Instead of destroying culture (as in the case of residential schools), education today has the capacity to strengthen it. Also, education has the capacity to allow people to think outside of the interpretative framework of modernity.

The Blue Quill residential school was taken over in 1970 by *nêhiyawak*. Once it had been a place of colonization where people were being stripped of their identity; but the school system, once transformed, had the potential to be a place for *nêhiyawak* to implement self-government:

> We have to realize that we must take part in planning and in carrying out those plans if we are ever to regain our proper place in the social life of our country. We can no longer be content to let others do our thinking for us. We, ourselves, must take the action which will remove the discrepancies which have existed in education for Indians in the past (Blue Quills Native Education Council 1970).

The 1972 National Indian Brotherhood position paper stressed the importance of children learning about their past, thus linking history, education and self-government: "Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know

himself or his potential as a human being" (*Indian Control of Indian Education* 1972: 9). To achieve this, there was a need for a new curriculum. It was through the development of a new curriculum that education could be used to revive culture, as opposed to being the tool for assimilation as it had been in the past:

> The present schools system is culturally alien to native students. Where the Indian contribution is not entirely ignored, it is often cast in unfavourable light. School curricula in federal and provincial schools should recognize Indian culture, values, customs, languages and the Indian contribution to Canadian development (*Indian Control of Indian Education* 1972: 2).

Jean Barman, Yvonne Hébert and Don McCaskill observe that the *Indian Control of Indian Education* was founded on two principles: "parental responsibility" and "local responsibility" (Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill 1991: 21).

In Saskatchewan, attempts were made to develop curricula that would help foster the retention of Aboriginal languages. The Cree Language Committee attempted to implement a meaningful curriculum into the schools. Language was stressed because it was seen as a valuable source of cultural preservation: " We also feel that learning of Cree is important for our children. Their ability to appreciate the history and mode of living of their people depends considerably on their knowledge of our language" (SICC 1973: 8). The purpose of Indian control of Indian education was to "ensure the transmission of Indian values, identity and tradition while providing a quality education" (Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill 1991: 2). In many ways this process could be conceived as a post-colonial act:

> Following centuries of domination and the attempted imposition of alien values. Native people are reaffirming the validity of their own cultures; they are redefining political, economic and social priorities within the context of the late twentieth century. Control over education lies at the heart of this process ibid.: 1)

A concrete instance where *nêhiyawak* attempted to get control over our institutions was in 1973 the James Smith Reserve, in east central Saskatchewan. It was called the "louse incident." Children who were bussed into the nearby town of Kinistino for their schooling were wrongfully accused of having lice. The incident was quite painful for the children, and energized the people of James Smith to create their own school. A news report of the time described the "louse incident" as the "final straw that capped a growing disenchantment by both parents and the white man's school" (Northian 1974: 26). The school at Kinistino had been receiving funding from the federal government but as Dyck and McLeod write: "over a period of fifteen years these schools were unable and perhaps even unwilling to meet the needs of the students from James Smith, even though they received large amounts of money in tuition and capital agreements" (Dyck and McLeod 1973: 1).

The creation of a Cree controlled school on the reserve was the first step towards self-government. People acquired concrete control over their lives. By getting control over schools, people were able to try to reverse colonialism and establish Indigenous institutions founded upon Indigenous philosophy. The control of education was the first manifestation of self-government because

education is such a concrete aspect of people's lives. It was the area in which many of the early organizers such as John Tootoosis had struggled to change.

Robert Regnier, a former employee of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, shared the following story with me concerning the "louse incident." The events had reached a climax, and there was a meeting where representatives of Indian Affairs came. Before that meeting, the school committee had got together and created stereotypes of different officials from Indian Affairs; there was "the know it all," for example: The school committee created hypothetical questions that these people would have to answer. For instance, they practiced how they would respond to the question, "You will not be able to do this. How can you take over the school?" The point of the story is that the mainstream institutions and their representatives were still very patronizing to Indigenous people.

Eventually my community acquired control over our school and began to develop programs. Language lessons were created, and some wanted to use land claims research to develop histories. John Tobias commented that the information could be made to be part of a "social studies program" (Tobias 1973: 2).

The move of the James Smith reserve to establish control over their school was the first one in Saskatchewan, although it would prove to be typical of other reserves. A document of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College describes the attempt to write their own curricula; it speaks of the Joint School

system which "up to this time, has in large part been a failure for Indian children" (SICC 1975: 1). The document attributes the failure to a "conflict of values" (ibid.: 1).

Two years after my reserve achieved control over schooling, my grandfather was asked to be the chairperson of the centennial commemorations of Treaty Six. At a meeting in 1975, the minutes read: "Mr. McLeod expresses his happiness every time a new school is opened on a reserve but he wishes to see more of the Indian image projected from these schools" (John R. McLeod 1975: 14). He was a survivor of the residential schools and struggled through that experience, which included the process of trying to rob him of his identity, his self-image, his Cree-ness. *nimosôm* gave his vision:

> We should realize that it is up to us to teach our children their history and make them proud to be Indians. There is a quote which reads: 'The public school is a state institution created by the state for its own preservation.' Every reserve is a state and so should we Indians rely on our own people to preserve our own culture by teaching our children (John R. McLeod 1975b: 14).

By articulating Cree history and culture in the schools, *nêhiyawak* would be able to have self-government because we would know who we are as a people. In a meeting the following month, *nimosôm* stated that "[t]he reserve is also an institution, an Indian institution where children can be taught their Indian history and language and be proud that they are Indians" (McLeod 1976a: 6).

As my father Jeremiah McLeod has often observed, there were innumerable problems in the efforts to put the dream of Indian control of education into practice. Despite the idealism, there were problems regarding

funding. For instance, an audit of the Band stated: "Extremely weak, almost non-existent internal control" (James Smith Band Audit 1973-1974: 4). The report goes on to argue that "[i]t should be obvious that the only logical solution to the problems of James Smith Band is a complete withdrawal of programs" (ibid.: 4).

The problems of actually implementing self-government are many and varied. Over the last thirty years, much of the idealism of the cultural renaissance of the *nêhiyawak* has been lost. One could say that many members of the elite of Indigenous society in Saskatchewan have been co-opted into the mainstream society. Chiefs, instead of sharing their wealth, seem to be more interested in golfing, cellular phones, and casinos. The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College (now known as the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre), for instance, has become a bureaucracy losing much of its spirit and pioneering work. There are no longer any elder workshops. Instead of facilitating the cultural renaissance, many groups seem to be more interested in the money than in the preservation of collective memory.

The relative speed by which Indigenous governments have adopted characteristics of "modern governments" demonstrates that modernity is more than a cultural phenomenon specific to Europeans. It seems rather to be related to a mode of production. A cousin of mine, Elaine Vandall, told me this story. She was interpreting for an assembly of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. The elders spoke at the beginning, but then the bureaucrats began to speak in a different language (they did so in two ways: they spoke English and also used

bureaucratic jargon). Instead of relying on the power of *mosômipanawak* (ancestors), they drew upon the power of flow charts and fiscal breakdowns.

Many leaders no longer share as they once did; give-away ceremonies, which once flourished, are now displaced by an ideology of individualism. Exemption from federal and provincial taxes is often used as a justification for individual greed. It is therefore essential that a critique of Indian political/ ideological structures be undertaken.

By the end of the 1970s, *nêhiyawak* in Saskatchewan were struggling to create their own modern institutions, but at the same time they were in many ways simply replicating the modern institutions of mainstream society. Perhaps what was missing was the philosophy of *nêhiyawak*. Instead, modern bureaucracies were created without substantial attention to older ways of doing things.

At a meeting at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College in 1979, my grandfather, John R. McLeod, questioned the centralization of power within the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. My grandfather, who taught me most of what I know either directly or through my father, said: "It seems to me that this is a one-man organization and this one man is the Chief of this organization" (Co-ordinators Meeting Year 1979: 6). The chief, instead of being accountable to the people, is answerable only to himself. *nimosôm* added: "He decides everything when he likes. As for the other members of the executive, it appears to me that they are just followers and the Chief says, that is what happens and

that is how these deficits occur and we have no say" (Co-ordinators Meeting year 1979: 6).

The challenge of Indigenous modernity is to create modern institutions but at the same time to maintain key elements of traditional Cree philosophy: if this is not done, then modernity seems to be simply a vehicle for assimilation. Instead of using the tools of technology for the development and expansion of Indian institutions, the technology and new modes of production have led to assimilation of Indigenous consciousness.

Noel Dyck's thoughtful study *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (1991) is perhaps one of the most succinct descriptions of the way in which corruption emerged once Indians began to administer programs. In a telling story, Noel Dyck relates a night when he went with his friend Val Nightraveller to visit on Val's reserve at Little Pine. Dyck notes:

> Later that evening as we left the reserve I suggested to him that his father must be very proud of the work that Val, one of the few Indian university graduates in Western Canada, was doing for Indian people through his activities in the provincial Indian association. After several moments of silence Val replied that his father did not agree with the activities of the association: 'He is afraid that I will end up doing in ten years what the missionaries and the Indian agents couldn't do in more than a hundred years' (Dyck 1991: 33).

I find this quotation interesting because it gives an insight into the thoughts of a man who was actively working in the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians at a time when it was receiving more funding. Val Nightraveller, a Cree, was critically

reflecting on the process of how Indian organizations ironically could bring about assimilation in a quick and effective manner.

Howard Adams also articulates the way in which colonialism has been internalized and perpetuated by Aboriginal people themselves:

> Neocolonialism allows a corrupt class of Aboriginals to profit at the expense of the majority. In the end, the state succeeds in crushing the Aboriginal movement for self-determination by dispersing and disorganizing the Native population (Adams 1999: 131).

The creation of modern institutions has the capacity to continue colonialism.

Technology and *nêhiyâwiwin*

Modern technology is undoubtedly one of the most important elements of modernity, and can be both affirming and destructive for Indigenous people. On one hand, it can contribute to the colonization of Indigenous people; perhaps one of the most evident ways this happens is through the dissemination of the English language through mass communication. On the other hand technology, especially digital technology, can help Indigenous people revive their culture through the recording of Old people and the development of educational curriculum.

People historically have always tried to make sense of changes in the world around them, and in turn they try to weave these new realities into their traditional narratives. For instance, my uncle Burton Vandall noted that when he was young, he heard people speak of the radio as *mistokowât kâ-pîkiskwêt* (the box which talks). *nêhiyawak* were extending an old concept of a box, and the

idea of speaking, to a new object within their field of experience. Charlie Burns from my reserve once referred to shaking tents as "old Indian television:" it allowed people to see things from a great distance.[4]

While *nêhiyawak* may be able to absorb the idea of new technologies, the question remains whether we can successfully absorb these technologies into the lifeblood of our culture. Can we absorb new technologies in such a way that we maintain ties to our traditional past, but at the same time navigate successfully through our contemporary circumstances?

Undoubtedly, the Internet and television pose threats to the survival of *nêhiyawiwin* in that they become the means to supplant traditional narrative memory. As mentioned before, instead of listening to tribal elders, children will watch television and be influenced by the mainstream English-speaking culture. However, the Internet and digital technology do have the potential to help liberate Cree consciousness from the grip of colonialism. Cree groups can use digital technology to preserve the words of Old people, and indeed produce materials for various classroom purposes. Through the use of Cree narrative imagination, the constraints of technology and modernity can be eased to some extent, and the positive aspect of modern life can be advanced.

Dean Tipps notes that selective modernization may actually help Indigenous communities:". . . selective modernization may only strengthen traditional institutions and values, and rapid social change in one sphere and may serve to inhibit change in others" (Tipps 1973: 215).Reinhard Bendix also

comments on selective modernization:". . . many attributes of modernization like widespread literacy or modern medicine have appeared, or have been adopted in isolation from the other attributes of modern society" (Bendix 1967: 329).It is very common for instance for many traditional Cree healers to simultaneously use traditional medicines in conjunction with western medicines. The adoption of western medicines does not mean that they have turned their back on traditional practices. Also, when people have sweats, they often use technology such as propane tanks to start the fire. I also recall on time my father used the mathematical formula Pi to calculate the distance that each willow should be placed. I recall no difference in the ceremony. One could argue with force that Indigenous cultures have constantly been adapting to elements of cultural change, so of which one may call modernity. Consequently, there can be positive aspects of technology.

Marshall McLuhan has an interesting stance regarding modern technology. On one hand he sees technology and mass communication as offering a new utopian reality for humanity; at the same time he holds that technology determines human communication and indeed human reality. Arthur Kroker considers McLuhan "the leading exemplar of the perspective of technological humanism" (Kroker 1984: 15); he speaks of him as representing the "'utopian' possibilities of technology" (ibid.).

McLuhan is also known for his notion of the "global village" because he saw the new age of mass electronic communication as bringing people together

throughout the world, and essentially as linking people together. Tacit in his writings is the notion that modernity, as manifested through modern technology and communication, allows for a new cosmopolitanism which links various narratives together. On this score, McLuhan seems to be advocating a new sense of universalism, which essentially eliminates the particular elements of any specific culture. Indeed, the whole notion that "the medium is the message" would seem to undermine Cree self-determination and collective memory. Essentially, the notion of "global village" has the capacity to be equated with hegemony, which in our age would probably be that of the English-speaking American culture (with which the mainstream culture of Canada is closely connected and overlapps).

Unlike McLuhan, Vine Deloria Jr. does not see great outcomes for global communication:

> The world . . . is not a global village so much as a series of nonhomogenous pockets of identity that must eventually come into conflict because they represent different historical arrangements of emotional energy (Deloria 1994: 64).

Consequently, Deloria sees one of the aspects of modernity as being a collision of ideas and of different ways of seeing the world. For Deloria, the modern conversation across cultures is not simply a sharing, but often a continuation of colonialism.

Craig Howe, in his essay "Cyberspace is no Place for Tribalism," also raises skeptical points regarding the creation of technology and the ways in which it interfaces with tribal ways of knowing, amounting to "creating a global village in

cyberspace where connections to particular landscapes are irrelevant" (Howe 1997: 20).

In many ways, the advent of technology in mass communication uproots Cree tribalism. Instead of people being grounded in the narratives of Cree elders, young people today are being bombarded by the English-speaking culture as found in mass communications such as television and modern forms of educational structures where children are exposed to English throughout the day. Also, one of the structures of modernity tends to be a stress on individualism (ironically grounded in the mass English-speaking culture) and a move away from traditional narrative memory.

The Internet is one manifestation of this process. Craig Howe laments the individualism of cyberspace: "In cyberspace ... anonymous individuals reign supreme" (Howe 1998: 23). He thinks that digital technology "would further atomize individuals, isolating them from other individuals and from their surrounding environments" (ibid.:24). Savard describes this as techno-pessimism: "Technology leads to the loss of social fabric" so that "[h]umans are disembodied from society" (Savard 1998: 90). On the whole, Savard stresses the negative elements of technology. One of its key aspects being its alienating factors.

Modern technology also disrupts a sense of space. Arduro Escobar writes:

> Operating at the speed of light these technologies erode the value of the here and now in favour of a communicative elsewhere that has nothing to do with concrete presence and places. Real-time technologies mark the decline of place, territory, and the body in favour of a terminal citizen, the

> global centralization of human activity, and the devaluation of local time (Escobar 1999: 12).

One could see this as a disruption of Indigenous identity.

Gail Valaskaki also notes the negative aspects of communication. One of the elements of her analysis links the growth of the use of the Internet with a shift in power (as cited in Howe 1999: 86). She also thinks that one of the dangerous elements of modern technology is that it introduces new ideas into an area which brings about changes to Indigenous traditions. Technology allows and facilitates alternative ways of seeing the world: "non-Natives introduced pluralism into Inuit society, leading to the disappearance of traditional power structures in favour of European-inspired structures" (as cited in Howe 1998: 86). Pluralism, within this context, could be understood as the emergence of a new discourse, namely that which arises out of the mainstream English-speaking culture as it is disseminated through mass communication. To use the terminology employed before, narrative difference emerges: between traditional Cree narratives and those of the dominant English-speaking society.

Howe points to two of the central problematics of modernity for Indigenous people: the tension between trying to preserve a particular identity, but also the challenge of participating within a larger universal, globalization discourse. As mentioned before, modernity and technology disrupt people's attachment to traditions in the wake of social change. Howe holds that the relationship to specific places on the landscape changes with the advent of

cyberspace: "Identity and land are inseparable within tribalism, yet the locating of identity in particular geographical places is impossible in cyberspace" (Howe 1998: 22). One could interpret this disruption of Indigenous space in terms of both physical and conceptual disruption.

While Howe raises many important points, he is too skeptical regarding the nature of the Internet. There are undoubtedly some redeeming aspects. In many ways, the Internet does duplicate some of the aspects of traditional Cree narrative memory, such as open-endedness. Through the net, people are free to choose their own pathways and create their own links; this duplicates the process of Cree narrative memory wherein listeners to traditional narratives merge their own experiences within these traditional narratives, thereby creating their own discursive pathways.

Another aspect of digital technology is the multitude of ways in which things can be interpreted: There is no one clear answer. Also, narratives on the Internet and with digital technology do not function in a linear fashion; rather, they function in an open-ended manner. Marshall McLuhan writes:

> Purely in media terms, however, the exactly synchronized information flow of an electric circuit can perform many operations at the same instant, which under the conditions of mechanized handicraft of assembly line were necessarily sequential and one at a time (McLuhan 1960: 570).

As mentioned above, this involves the notion of a non-linear process of rationality which in many ways is compatible to Cree narrative memory as discussed in chapter one.

Modernity can enforce Indigenous identity: instead of merely being an extension of colonization, technology can actually reinforce Indigenous identity. In particular, the open-ended nature of Cree narrative memory as balance with the socialization necessary for knowledge to be transmitted between generations.

Such possibilities allow *nêhiyawak* people to record the stories of their Old people, which can then be preserved for future generation. While technology, and perhaps especially television, can certainly erode Indigenous culture, it can also aid in the attempt to preserve Cree culture. Such recordings can be used for teaching purposes in classrooms, bringing the words of Old people to the children. Also, the recording of Old people can be used to reinforce Treaty rights, and in turn be taught to young people.

Cree Narrative Imagination

As noted previously, there are many aspects of modern life which threaten to disrupt traditional Cree narrative memory: shifts in lifestyle (see Chapter Four); absorption into the nation state of Canada (see Chapter Four and Five); changes in educational and teaching structures (Chapter One and this chapter); and of course the transformation of traditional Cree political structures as exposed earlier in this chapter and also in Chapter Four.

One of the central tasks of Cree thinking today is to conceive of ways of "thinking outside" of the rubric of colonialism and of some aspects of modernity.

Many people have attempted to articulate Indigenous models of theory. One avenue would be to conceive of theory as a philosophical activity of reflective consciousness and an activity of thinking outside a state of affairs in the world. Also, one could argue that the project of Cree philosophy to think beyond the colonial barriers is indeed a theoretical activity. Others may say that "theory" is an inherently western idea and cannot be rendered within Indigenous philosophies. While others that there is no need for a discussion of an Indigenous theory or an Indigenous philosophy. It might be said that the laws and mechanics that underpin the patterns are universal, and that there is no need to articulate a culturally specific location of these phenomena, or that it is implied in the language and thoughts of the Cree.

I argue that there is a need for a mix of the above positions so that understanding is possible across cultures and eras. At the same time, I would argue that specific conceptions of human understanding emerge in specific cultures. However, I am not arguing that history is simply a sharing of cultures and ideas through time. Rather, sometimes historical narratives about a group can question and challenge the narratives and colonizing practices of another group. This is certainly the case of Indigenous people.

Cree narrative imagination is a visionary process of imagining another state of affairs. This does not imply one is seeking Utopia, but rather simply a different possibility; one is trying to conceive of a different way in which people might live together. *mistahi maskwa, kâ-kî-itiht* ["the one called"], the late Big

Bear, was certainly an example of this in that he struggled to maintain Cree independence against overwhelming odds. I consider the late John Tootoosis to be another example of a person embodying Cree narrative imagination. He imagined a condition, and sought a possibility, whereby Indian people would not be dominated by the *Indian Act* and by a system that was designed to destroy Cree identity and political institutions.

I also consider in this manner the work of my late *nôhkomipan*, Ida McLeod, who along with Helen Tootoosis founded the *Saskatchewan Indian Language Institute*. Despite the pressures of modern life and mass communication, they struggled to preserve the Cree language. After the death of *nôhkom*, Freda Ahenakew continued the work and has left us a rich legacy of material.

While there are some important differences between the ways in which modernity has been experienced by Indigenous peoples such as the Crees and by European nations, there are nonetheless important similarities. Heidegger offers insights into the way in which modernity has transformed human consciousness. Throughout his writings, Heidegger warned against the dangers of modern technology. He thought that it had the potential completely to overwhelm humanity; initially, technology helped humans, but within this interpretative horizon humans themselves would eventually become tools. In other words, the essence of humanity would be utterly transformed through the instrumental nature of modern technology.

I argue that there is a need for a mix of the above positions and that understanding is possible across cultures and eras. At the same time, I would argue that specific conceptions of human understanding emerge in specific cultures. One of the central tasks of Cree narrative memory is to rethink the limitations of colonialism and the impositions of the mainstream culture. While there are aspects of modernity that can be liberating, much of it can be related to the process of colonialism. As we have seen, the attempt to discern the limitation of modernity, from an Indigenous perspective, has been called "trickster hermeneutics" (Vizenor 1994) by Gerald Vizenor; part of this process is the flourishing of contemporary Aboriginal art and writing, which is in many ways extending old practices to new formats and media.

Part of Cree narrative imagination thus involves the modern Aboriginal art movement, as well as the attempt to revive culture and languages. Adams characterizes the "1970s Aboriginal Renaissance" in this way: "There has been a shift from the old style of arts and crafts to new creative expressions, authentically and materially, without sacrificing the traditional essence" (Adams 1999: 116).

Indigenous narrative memory is now emerging in contemporary forms such as novels, plays and poetry. Perhaps most notable of these was *Half-breed* by Maria Campbell (1973). This book documented the traditions and also the struggles of a contemporary Cree speaking person. The book broke new ground and opened the Canadian public to the possibility of Cree/ Métis narratives. The

process of putting these narratives into a contemporary context is very important for the flourishing of the collective Cree narrative imagination, for it will allow memory to grow and to be alive, and go against ossification.

Another key contribution to contemporary Indigenous narrative memory has been the work of Norval Morrisseau. This *anihšinapêk* artist did a great deal to situate the traditional art of his people within a contemporary context. He moved the images from birch bark to canvas. Through his work, the world was able to see the traditional stories of his people, which placed in a modern context, were able to function in the world of contemporary *anihšinapêk* people.

Other art forms such as the Crow Hop Café, which showcase Indigenous talent in Saskatchewan, are also forums for subversive forms of discourse, and counter-discourse. For instance, Hip Hop as articulated by contemporary Aboriginal youth attests to the ways in which new artistic forms of expression are essential for contemporary Aboriginal people.

I have tried to outline briefly the ways in which Cree culture has been affected by modern life and in which Cree people have struggled to maintain their identities in the face of massive change. Beginning in the early 1970s, when *nêhiyawak* began to acquire control of our own institutions, elders were always conscious of trying to pass on traditional values to a new generation. The late Smith Atimoyoo noted that the elder had in the back of his mind "to have something to pass on so that when his children's time came they would have something meaningful ... something that they would be proud to carry on .

. ." (Atimoyoo 1975). *nimosôm*, himself one of the founders of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, spoke of it as being the place where the finest Indian thinking could occur. However, there remain many challenges to achieving this in our modern climate.

Cree narrative memory continues to develop through time to adapt to new circumstances. Despite these changes, there are many key elements from traditional beliefs which still exist in contemporary times. For instance, personal relationships are still important within Cree culture: at various gatherings, traditional kinship ties are constantly being reaffirmed. Furthermore, the oral tradition of Cree people is still very vibrant, and draws its strength from storytelling protocol, and from the personal relationships that make the transmission possible.

nêhiyawi-itapâsinowin allows us to re-interpret Cree history, but it also serves as a critique of modernity itself. The connection to the land that is expressed in Cree narrative memory serves as a useful counterpoint to the dislocation that modern life generates.

Chapter Six Notes:

1. Thomas Flannigan makes a similar point (Flannigan 2000), but uses it to argue against the existence of Indigenous rights in Canada.
2. Todorov (1982) also points to this: his argument was that the Aztec society was conquered because it was traditional, and could not respond to change.
3. This included the bands of Piapot, Muscowpetung and Pasqua reserves north of Regina.
4. *kosâpacikan* which is the Cree term for shaking tent means to see "far way" (also understood as "telescope). The term is also used for "radar devices."

Conclusion

Cree narrative memory is an attempt to survive colonialism through storytelling. The stories that have been passed on through families across generations, help people ground themselves in the present, while drawing upon the past. These stories form the basis of a "home" - a place of belonging, a place of reflection.

I have thought about my own journey to learn the Cree language. I still have a great deal to learn, and, in many ways, my knowledge of the language is extremely inadequate. However, I also think about the progress that I have made, and the words that I have learned. I still remember my uncle, Burton Vandall, sitting with me as I struggled to say the words correctly. Sometimes I would have to say the words twenty times in order to have the correct pronunciation. He told me that I spoke from the lips, whereas a lot of the sounds come from the throat.

There were times when I wanted to quit, to simply speak English! At least with English, I was fluent. English literature was part of my mindset, my consciousness: it allowed me to function in the world. In many ways, I was more at home in English than in Cree.

Harry Blackbird, an elder from the Meadow Lake area, told a story about a man who was visited by his deceased wife. She told him about the passing of a young boy:

> Upon entering the spirit world he was greeted by an *oskapewis* who led the young man down an easy road to follow. At a certain point, the road forked going in two directions. They first traveled down the road to the right. This road was also easy to follow.
>
> The young people then began to speak in the language of his ancestry – Nehiyawewin (sic). Unfortunately, the young man could not make out what they were saying even though he was of the same nation...Nehiyaw (sic). He even had the two long braids of hair, common trademarks for Nehiyawak who were following the Nehiyawin (sic) way. Confused and feeling lost, the young man was quickly whisked away by the Oskapewis (sic) towards the other.

It was on this road that the young man had lost his language and was not able to communicate with people. However, the hard road was the way in which he sought to speak his language and keep his ties to his culture.

In her novel, *Halfbreed*, Maria Campbell lives in the city, and appears to be lost and in a state of exile. However, it is her relationship with her great-grandmother Cheechum (cihcam, who is also my grandmother) who furnishes her with stories that guide her through her life. Once she spent the whole day with her grandmother, who have her the following advice:

> Now I know that you belong to me. Don't let anyone tell you that anything is impossible, because if you believe honestly in your heart that there's something better for you, then it will all come true. Go out there and find what you want and take it, but always remember who you are and why you want it (*Campbell 1973:86*).

The stories of her grandmother have grounded her, and throughout her life, they provide a map by which she can negotiate her way through life. Through her grandmother's stories, Maria is able to find her way home. She was raised on the stories of *ê-mâyakamikahk"* (The Northwest Rebellion, "*where it went wrong*").

Edward Ahenakew was also a man who lived his life in exile. The effects of reserve life are too severe, and Old Man Kiyam has given up. Old Man Kiyam was the first generation to experience the exile of early reserve life. In order to deal with it, he tried to find a "home" in the white man's world, yet somehow he failed: "in his youth he had tried to fit himself to the new ways; he thought that he would conquer; and he was defeated instead" (Ahenakew 1995: 52). Ahenakew described the conflict between the two different "locations" which Old Man Kiyam tried to straddle. Ahenakew writes: "His own words, his own account of a progressive reserve, had worked Old Kiyam to great excitement, or else it was the remembrance of his own lost days and opportunity" (Ibid: 62). Old Man Kiyam's existential reality was one instant of the historical manifestation of the ontology of "*ê-mayahkamikahk.*" The events of 1885, and the early reserve period, led to the destruction of indigenous freedom, and by extension the destruction of indigenous peoples' place in the new world.

Yet, in his alleged failure, Old Man Kiyam was trying to find his way home through his storytelling. As noted earlier, Ahenakew writes that Old Man Kiyam "reverted to the old Indian way of life, allowed his hair to grow long, and he

chose to wander from house to house, reciting old legends, winning a reputation for himself as a story-teller" (Ahenakew 1995: 51). His words would be an echo of eternity. Jim Ka-Nipitehtew, an elder from Onion Lake, noted: "It's only the elders who have long since gone that speak through them. It's an echo of a wonderful life long ago" (Jim Ka-Nipitehtew 1976). It is the voices and wisdom of the old ones that would guide us.

nêhiyawêwin means "Cree language" at a literal level, however, if we attempt to penetrate the root stems of this word, it really means "Cree sound," the "*–we"* stem denoting sound. This stem is often found at the end of many names: *manitowew* (Almighty Voice), *mistanâskowêw* (Badger Caller), or *ka-kissiwew* (Loud Voice). All of these names hold stories: stories of struggle and of an attempt to hold the Cree culture. *manitowêw* killed a cow in order to feed his family and then struggled to evade authorities. *mistanâskowew* was taught the Cree syllabics by the Creator because he was told that in the future the Cree language would be threatened. *ka-kisiwew* questioned the transfer of land from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada. All of these men tried to preserve Cree culture: their names bore sound, and their lives struggled to preserve the landscape of sound.

One time, when Edwin Tootoosis was visiting my dad, he said to me, while the others were outside working, and he was talking about the land today: "*moy ê-kistawêt".* He was saying that the land "did not echo" anymore, as

though things had changed to the point that the sound of the land was not there.

All of these storytellers have been my link to the past: through them I have learned of narratives of past days; and I have learned narratives about my ancestors and about the places that were important to the Cree people. Names, places and stories ground a people in the world. They give a people a narrative structure to organize their experience, and they also provide a narrative mechanism through which one can link to the past.

The two Elders that I learned the most from in the past two years were Charlie Burns and Beatrice Lavallee. I spent several years working with both of them, recording them. Charlie Burns is still alive, but Beatrice passed away in the fall of 2003; both of them were a real link to the past. Our conversations were in English and Cree, and a deep sense of trust was established. Charlie Burns is from my reserve, James Smith. His father was the late Norman Burns, who was the son of *cohcam,* the first Burns on the reserve. On his mother's side, he is a direct descendant of James Smith, the first chief of our reserve.

In 2000, my friend Darren Okemaysim and I started the Cree Toastmaster's group at Saskatchewan Indian Federated COllege. Our goal was simple: we wanted to create an atmosphere where people who spoke Cree, aspiring speakers as myself, would gather and speak the language. We recorded these sessions and received permission to transcribe them: more work for the future.

The late Beatrice would often come to these meetings. I still see her slight, frail figure, but also her smile and laughter. The goal of our group was to help bring the language to life. We would speak Cree in the halls, tell jokes, tell stories. I learned a lot of words from my friends Bill Cook, John Cook, Darren, Marvin Crier and others. I am also thankful to them for their patience while I struggled with words. We would meet every week, gathering together in a small room at the college. There would be between twelve and twenty people each week, most of them fluent. Many of the students commented that it was good to have the group as it gave them a chance to practice their Cree. Many students, who were new learners, also appreciated the opportunity to hear the language spoken.

If the First Nations University of Canada is to live up to the dreams of those who imagined it, we must do more things like this: create a space where Elders can share their knowledge, fluent speakers can remind each other of unusual words, and aspiring speakers such as myself can absorb the sounds that formed our grandparents, that gave shape to their thoughts and feelings.

In many ways, this thesis has been an attempt "to come home." Linda Smith talks about "claiming" and "returning", [part of] which is the writing of family and collective histories. It is an attempt to articulate Indigenous perspectives of events (e.g. treaty research). She adds: "Indigenous testimonies are a way of talking about an extremely painful event or series of

events" (Smith 1999: 144). These, of course, could include narratives of residential school experience, and stories of Diaspora.

In the spirit of *mistahi-maskwa*, we must struggle to regain our freedom on both the existential and historical level; we must attempt to dream and have vision. Without such dreams and idealism, we will truly be a conquered people. But, with vision, we may offer ourselves, and the rest of the world, solutions to the crisis of the modern age. We will rethink liberalism and democracy on the basis of our collective "lived experience." Also, through our collective narratives, we offer a different philosophy of the earth, which will correct some of the extreme tendencies of instrumental rationality. There is a dialectical irony in that the "savages" and "barbarians" may possess the knowledge and practice necessary for the revitalization of the planet. One of the central tasks of Cree thinking today is to try to conceive of ways of "thinking outside" of colonialism and of some aspects of modernity. Cree narrative imagination is a visionary process of imagining another state of affairs. This does not imply that one is seeking Utopia, but rather simply a different possibility: one is trying to conceive of a different way in which people might live together. *Mistahi maskwa, ka-ki-itiht* ["the one called"], the late Big Bear, was certainly an example of this: he struggled to maintain Cree independence against overwhelming odds. I consider the lat

e John Tootoosis to be another example of Cree narrative imagination. I also consider, in this manner, the work of my late *nohkomipan*, Ida McLeod, who

along with Helen Tootoosis founded the Saskatachewan Indian Language Institute: despite the pressures of modern life and mass communication, they struggled to preserve the Cree language.

I would argue that this is essentially the function of theory: (a) a self-consciousness of practices and social realities, and (b) the attempt to think beyond these constructions. Some of these social realities will be from within the culture itself, while others will be imposed manifestations of colonialism: the challenge is that there is no really clear line between these two elements of social practice. Indeed, as alluded to earlier, the rethinking of traditional ways might be conceived of as assimilation.

Cree culture consists of several influences, and naturally has changed through time. The notion of Cree culture that I am advocating here is open-ended and multi-layered; I use the paradigm of narrative to characterize this process. Cree narrative memory is an ongoing conversation with a constant play between present, past and future. Participants in this conversation have spoken many languages and have had a variety of ways of seeing the world.

Cree narrative memory has many levels and aspects, and conforms to Bahktin's notion of dialogism:

> Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole – there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others (Holquist 1981: 426).

Many of the old Cree story-tellers were aware of the state of heteroglossia within *nêhiyawêwin.* For instance, many Cree story-tellers would speak of the ways in which one could tell *wisakecahk* stories, until one was white in the hair, and even then there would be more stories. There is always an abundance of narratives voices regarding the Trickster, because, in essence, he is only limited by the imagination of those who participate within Cree culture. In regards to the Trickster, there are many voices and many perspectives. Indeed, one could argue that the Trickster himself/herself creates a state of heteroglossia through the questioning of social space.

However, there are certainly limits to the comparisons. While post-modernism seeks to liberate one from "tradition" as a lived practice, it sometimes has the potential to lead to nihilism. It is a critique of negation, the offers nothing to fill the narrative void. But I would argue that while Cree narrative imagination is an exercise to think beyond the limits of colonialism, it is also often grounded in traditional experiences, and in interpretations in light of these experiences. I think that the shift from hunting to agriculture has to be seen in a larger context: it was the attempt of Cree people to transform themselves so that they would be able to lead a healthy and vibrant life; it was their attempt to re-orientate their culture and adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Through stories, we find our place in the world. Stories are the vehicles of cultural transmission, linking one generation to the next. They are the vehicles through which a culture survives and transmits meaning. Stories have

many levels and many functions. They link the past to the present, and allow both readers and writers to negotiate the space of collective liminality, which might be one way to describe exile. The novels allow people to come through stories, to find their place in the world. Our task today is to try to revive tribal knowledge, but as a function of present realities. We must affirm our tribal identities in the face of overwhelming Diaspora and exile.

At the end of her novel, Campbell's ceremony is complete (at least one one level): she has reached a certain threshold in terms of synthesizing the stories of her grandmother into her own life. The process of internalizing stories is the quintessential aspect of Native American discursive traditions which is often lost on Anglo, critics, who chop up the texts into obscure pieces destroy the vitality of the stories. Campbell notes: "The years of searching, loneliness and pain are over for me. Cheechum said, "You'll find yourself, and you'll find brothers and sisters.' I have brothers and sisters, al over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive" (Campbell 1973: 157). Her stories were more important than the physical, and it was through her stories that she created herself in the liminal space of her exile.

We have come a long way since the days of residential schools. My Cree grandparents both attended residential school, my grandfather's experience being decisively lees favourable. The point is that people such as my grandfather experienced a great deal of trauma and had a very difficult time in these schools, which were used as a way of destroying Indigenous cultures.

Now schools are used to help preserve Indigenous culture: the attempt is to reserve the trends of former times.

In Saskatchewan our numbers are rapidly increasing and we are starting to feel our strength. We have to ask ourselves fundamental questions about the nature of the relationship between the Indigenous people and the Academy, and Indigenous people within this structure. We must ask ourselves about the direction in which we are going, and the things that we have to do if we want to survive as Indigenous people.

But maintaining our Indigenous identities will not be an easy process, especially in the context of the Academy. There is the tacit assumption that we are inferior and that our collective being in the world is inferior to the European model. We must constantly struggle to prove ourselves. There is a tacit assumption, which is quite widespread at the present time in Canada, that if one is a minority scholar and one is doing well, then this is due to affirmative action. No matter how good we are, we are often in the position of having to justify ourselves and our people.

As Indigenous people, we are attempting to revive our modes of being. Clearly, the revitalization of Indigenous cultures involves an array of people from political leaders, religious leaders, and educators. The role of the Indigenous thinker is part of the process: I think that it is essential that young Indigenous thinkers such as myself do not become self-absorbed and develop pretensions of

importance. Our activities must be directed towards the liberation of our people and not the gratification of our egos.

Our involvement with post-secondary education can prove to be a perilous task. "Education" is a word thrown around these days without much consideration of what it really means: it can be a trap for assimilation, as manifested in residential schools. There is the possibility of assimilating academically. Indigenous people who graduate students face the temptations of assimilation; there is a sort of ghettoization of our collective minds which occurs. The project of Indigenous people to tell our own stories is supplanted by an effort to tell our stories in the idiom of our conqueror. We must tell our stories in our languages and within our own paradigms.

Epilogue

kotakak kêhtê-ayak ê-mêkwâ-âcimostâkoyahkik ê-itwêcik, "namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân." pêyakwâw nikî-pêhtawâe pêyak kisêyiniw ê-kî-itwêt ôma. ayâ, awa kisêyiniw ê-kî-itahto-piponêt nânitaw têpakohpomitanaw. mitoni ê-wâpistikwânêt, mistahi ê-kî-wâpamât, mistahi ê-kî-pêhtât. ê-kî-kiskisit, tâpiskôc kâ-mâmiskôtahkik, kâ-nikamocik ê-kistawêt.

ayihk, mitoni nikitimâkisin. nama-kîkwây ê-kiskêyihtamân. êkwa mîna, namôya kwayask ê-nêhiyawêyân. piyisk nikîsihtân nikihci-kiskinohamâsowin, aya, namôya mistahi ê-itêyimisoyân. mistahi poko ê-kiskinohamâkosiyân, iskwayikohk ê-pah-pimohtêyân ôma askihk.

aya, ninanâskomâw nohtâwiy kâ-kî-isi-ohpikihit. namôya ê-kî-kiskinohamawit nêhiyawêwin mâka âta ê-kî-kiskinohamawit nêhiyâwiwin. ê-kî-âcimostawit kâ-kî-pê-ispayik ispîhk kâ-mâyahkamikahk, nitâcimostâk mistahi kîkwây omosôma kâ-kî-isi-pê-âcimostâkot wîsta. awa omosôma, nicâpân awa niya, *kôkôcîs* kâ-kî-itiht, kisêyiniw-ohpihâkan awa. omosôma *wîhtikohkân* kâ-kî-itiht kî-pê-ohpikihikow. ostêsa *kinosêw* kî-itâw, wiya êwako kî-okimâhkâniwiw ispîhk ôk ôki iyinito-ayisiyiniwak kâ-kî-wiyihcikêcik ôm ôma ayinânêw-tipahamâtowin. êsa awa *wîhtikohkân* ê-kî-pê-ohtohtêt sâwânohk ohci, kî-pê-kihci-wîkimêw iskwêwa yâkâwiskâwikamâhk ohci.

wîhtikohkân kâ-kî-itiht awa ê-kî-mamâtâwisit. pêyakwâw êsa ê-kî-nitawi-mâcît cîki otênâhk mistahi-sîpiy kâ-isiyihkâtêk pîkiskwêhtamwak cîpaya ê-kî-ayât awa *wîhtikohkân* ita kâ-nohtê-kapêsihk. mwâc ahpô *wîhtikohkân* awa kî-sêkisiw. môsci-ati-sipwêyâmohkâtêw, mitoni ati-takahkîhkwâmiw êkwa kâ-ati-tipiskâyik.

wîhtikohkân osîmisa *kôkôcîs* awa kî-nihtâ-kistikêyiwa êkwa kî-nihtâ-âcimoyiwa êkwa asici mîna kî-nihtâ-âtayôhkêyiwa êsa. mistahi mâna awa ê-kî-kiyôkawâyahk *kôkôcîsîs* kâ-kî-itiht awa. pêyakwâw nikî-itik, "wahwâ, nimôniyâsimis! pihtokwê!" ê-ati-ohcêmit mâna kâ-ati-atatamiskawit, cistêmâw mâna kî-ispakosiw. mistahi kî-wîhkistêw wasakopak. ispîhk mâna kâ-wîhtapimitoyâhk nam-âwiyak ayisiyiniw kâ-ayât, mitoni mâna ê-kî-kakwê-âkayâsîmosit kwayask mâka kî-wawiyêsihtâkosiw osâm mâna ê-kî-pê-nêhiyawihtâkosit mâna.

kôkôcîs mâna kî-itwêw, "êwako, aya, tâpiskôc ôki anohc, namôya tâpiskôc kiskinohamâtowin ôki nêhiyâsisak, mitoni nitawêyihtamwak nêhiyawak kahkiyaw, tâpiskôt otawâsimisa môniyâw-kiskêyihtamowin kit-âyât." ispîhk kâ-ayâyân kihci-kiskinohamâtowikamikohk ê-kî-mâmitonêyihtamân mistahi ôma êwako. tânêhki ôma kâ-ati-kîsihtâhk môniyâw-kiskêyihtamowin êkây kâ-ayâcik nêhiyawêwin? tâpiskôc ôki osk-âyak ê-pê-wêpinâcik kahkiyaw ôki kêhtê-âyak mîna kâ-isi-

ihtakosicik ôki. nêhiyaw-âcimowina ôhi ta-kî-nîkânastâcik êkwa môniyâwi-kiskêyihtamowin ôma patotê ta-kî-astâcik. nêhiyawêwin ôma peyakwan ati-cah-cihcêwêsin mâna, kâ-wîhtamâkoyâhk is îsi kâ-pê-pawâtihcik, kâ-pê-mâwimoscikâtihcik mîna kâ-môsihihcik kimosômipaniwak mîna kôhkomipaniwak.

ispîhk kayâsês nêhiyawak kâ-kî-wiyihcikêcik, ê-kî-mâmitonêyihtahkik ôma ôtê nîkân. kêhtê-âyak kî-itâskonêwak ospwâkan, kî-ânakwâpitamwak ôki ayisiyiniwak mîna ôma âtayôhkêwina.

ispîhk kayâsês nêhiyawak kâ-kî-wiyihcikêcik ê-kî-kiskowêhikêt êsa. kêhtê-âyak kî-kiskêyihtamwak kâ-wî-ispayik ôma. asotamâkêwina mîna tipahamâtowina kî-wîcihikowak ta-pimâtisicik, pêyakwân tâpiskôc ôhi nêhiyaw-âcimowina ê-kî-wîcihikocik ta-pimâtisicik.

nêhiyawêwin ôma pê-cihcêwêsin kinêhiyâwininaw ohci. kâhkiyaw kimosômipaniwak mîna asici kôhkomipaniwak pê-kanawêyihtamwak ôma kipîkiskwêwininaw, kinêhiyâwininaw, asici kinêhiyawêwininaw mîna kî-pê-manâcihêwak kotakak ayisiyiniwak mâna. êkwa mîna ê-kî-pê-mâmitonêyihtahkik mâna ôma ôtê nîkân. ê-kî-pê-ahkamêyimocik mâna ispîhk kâ-kî-pê-ayimahk.

ninanâskomâwak kahkiyaw nimosômipanak mîna asici nôhkomipanak kâ-pê-nakatahkik nawây ita ôma. kî-pê-kistawêhitâkosiwak misiw-îtê, tâpiskôc ê-pê-sêwêpayiki mâna nitoskanak kâ-pêhtamân mâna. ohcitaw wiyawâw ôma ohci kâ-isi-pê-pimâtisiyân mîna mâna kâ-isi-pê-yêhyêyân. kâ-kî-pê-isicik ôma namôya ka-pônihtân isko kîsi-pimâtisiyâni. ôma mâna kâ-masinahikêyân nîsta mâna nikocîn ta-nakatamân apisis.

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Appendix A: Cree glossary

ayimisîs: lit. the little difficult one; Big Bear' son.
ayapacinâsa: Moose Woods
asiniy-kâpaw: Stonestand. Saulteaux man from Nut Lake. Grandfather of Clifford Sanderson.
âtahk-akohp: Starblanket from the House People; not to be confused with the southern Cree leader.
âtayohkan: Spirit Being. Sometimes translated as "grandfather."
cikâstêpêsin: Shadow on the Water; Cree chief.
ê-mâyihkamikahk: where it went wrong, the resistance of 1885
ê-mistapâwêhisocik: they drown themselves.
kaskiskawânatinwa:
kawâhkatos: lit. lean man; Cree Chief from the Treaty Four area.
kâ-miywasihk: The One Made Good. The name of the Late Ernest Tootoosis.
kâ-miystawêsit: Beardy.
kêkêhk-iskwêw: Hawk Woman, Betsy McLeod. The wife of nîkân-isi. She was born around Shoal Lake. She died in 1957.
kwêcic: my grandmother from Sandy Lake reserve; she was a noted medicine woman.
mamâhtawisi-âpacihcikan: Lit. the powerful tool. Computer.
mamâhtawisiwin: tapping into the mystery.
mânito-sâkahikan: God's Lake. A sacred site for both Cree and Saulteaux people. Near what is todayj Watrous.
mêmêkwêsiwak: The little people.
mihkomin-sâkahikan: Redberry Lake.
mîhkiwap: lodge.
mikisiwaciya: Eagle Hills.
minahikosis: Little Pine.
mistahi-maskwa: Big Bear; important Cree leader of the 1870s and 1880s.
mistânaskowêw: Badger Voice.
mistâwasis: Big Child.
môswa-piyêsis: Lit. moose bird. Humming Bird.
nêhiyawak: Cree people
nêhiyawêwin: Cree language
nêhiyawi-pwâtak: Cree-Assiniboine band in southern Saskatchewan.
nêhiyâwiwin: Creeness
nêhiyâwi-itâpasinowin: Cree worldview. Lit. a Cree viewpoint.
nêhiyaw-askiy: Cree territory.
nimosôm: my grandfather
nîkân-isi: lit. the foremost one, Thunderbird. The name of my ancestor: the original McLeod.
nipiy kâ-pitihkwêk: lit. Rumbling water; the term refers to "Sounding Lake."
nôhkom: my grandmother

omitêw: a powerful person.
oskicy: Pipestem.
pawâkan: dream helper.
payipwât: Chief Piapot.
pâstâhowin: transgression; bad karma.
pêhonânihk: lit. The waiting place; Fort Carlton.
pihtakahanapiwiyin: Poundmaker; well-known Cree-Assiboine leader.
pîkahin okosisa: the son of pîkahin. "pîkahin" is derived from the verb stem which means "to stir a liquid."
tipahamâtowin: lit. payment; Cree word for Treaty.
wayâpanas: an alternative name for wîsahkêcâhk.
wâhkotowin: kinship
wîsahkêcâhk: the Cree transformer
wîhtikôhkan: my great-grandfather (Peter Vandall's) grandfather. He was a Dene from the Cold Lake area in Alberta. His brother was *kinôsêw* (fish), *otay* (Jackfish) in Dene. He was one of the major signers of Treaty Eight.
wîhkasko-kisêyin: Old Man Sweetgrass.

Appendix B: Ethics

The *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (from 2000 when this research was undertaken) makes mention of the crucial issues of free and informed consent. Cultural context is taken into account: "Where written consent is culturally unacceptable, or where there are good reasons for not recording consent in writing, the procedure used to seek free and informed consent shall be documented" (2.1.b). The stories were told during times of visiting and it would have been culturally inappropriate to interrupt the storytellers during this time. The narratives recorded in this dissertation came from family members and close friends over a period of many years. These narratives have been passed on in my community, in some cases, for generations. All of the storytellers welcomed being recorded and were aware of the research. For them, it was important that a younger person from their community had taken an interest in the stories and had sought to preserve them in written form. In keeping with Cree protocol regarding the acquisition of stories, I spent many hours visiting with the storytellers/ elders, brought them groceries, drove them places and helped to care for them. Because all of the people who shared their stories were either close relatives or old family friends, there was a deep trust between myself and those involved. My committee approved this process in September 2000 when my proposal was defended.

Neal McLeod's Family Tree
Appendix C