Sports day is an annual affair at every reserve and every man, woman and child on the reserve attends. The sight is as nearly like the old circle encampment as is well possible at the present time. It is the occasion for horse racing, foot racing, tug-of-war, wrestling, gambling, and dances of all kinds.

The sports grounds at Crooked Lake are across the lake from the Agency. There is a quarter-mile racetrack and around it were the tents and tipis in a great ovoid circle. There were four flags dividing off the sectors of the circle and delimiting the grounds of each band. The Cowises people were in the southwest, the Sakome in the southeast, the Octapowes on the northeast, and the Kakiwistahau in the northwest.

When I arrived at the grounds nothing had started. I saw some Sakome people putting up a tipi. First three poles are lashed together and then the others are placed around this; the cover is hauled up and staked to the ground and then the pegs for the longitudinal slit are inserted. Both poles and cover are
carried about from place to place.

About three o'clock some horse races and sulky races were run off. But a great rainstorm came up and halted all activities. After the storm, at nightfall, dances on two rough wooden platforms (coated with mud) were started. The music at one was a fiddle and an accordion, at the other a fiddle and a guitar. The dances were square dances of various kinds, one being called by Leo Deloram.

At this time I witnessed a performance of the Clown Dance, Wetigohkanuk, by a group of Soto men from Sakome. There were ten dancers all attired in ragged old skin or burlap shirts, and trousers with rope wrapped about their legs. They all wore burlap masks with long tubular noses attached, with openings for eyes and mouth. Their masks completely covered the head and some were painted with blue or red lines. They carried bone whistles in their mouths.

One of them carried a staff adorned with hawk bills, rope, and a string of deer hoofs. He was the leader. Another was equipped with a bow and arrow. All had tin cans or cow bells attached to their belts in back.

One called saputcixkau "Crazy (?)" was similarly attired except that he had a cow hide over his back and had a bow and arrow. He followed about 10 yards behind the others and mimicked their actions; when they danced, he did a little step all by himself.

The group started from the Sakome side and went completely around the camp circle. They would stop at almost every tent and tipi. The owner of the tent would offer a gift of some kind, a loaf of bread, a piece of bacon, a slab of meat, a bag of sugar to a man on horseback(?). He would put the gift on the fire tripod in front of the tent. The dancer with the bow would then proceed to stab the gift carrying a green twig in front of him as ambush. All the other dancers crouch down and follow his movements. He creeps up to the gift and after several feints, shoots it with the arms. As soon as he shoots, he and all the other dancers give vent to groans and fall back or dash away as if terribly frightened. Then the leader comes up and they gather about him and dance around him for a few minutes with plodding steps, blowing on the whistles. At the end of the dance, they all groan and go into the next tipi. The gifts are collected by two old men who follow.

When the circle has been completed, they gather in front of the tipi they started from. Each is given one gift and beginning with the leader, each throws his gift into the hole at the top of the tipi which has been enlarged by the removal of some of the pin pegs. They feint at throwing three times, each feint accompanied by groans from the dancers and shouts of merriment from the spectators. (A large crowd follows the dancers around and gets a huge kick out of the performance.) After three feints they throw their gift in and quickly duck into the tipi.
I asked permission to enter the tipi with them and was given it. Inside the men who had been on horseback distributed the gifts. Each gift was thrown at a dancer, sometimes with one or two feints, each accompanied by groans from the others. During this time the dancers were taking off their dance clothes. (One of them was a boy of about six.) Then the headman lit a candle and they talked between themselves. One young man interpreted, saying that they wanted to know what my purpose was in being with the Indians. I made my regulation speech. Then one began a spiel about the tipi cover, saying that it was an inspirational dream device, of religious significance, and when it was old it was not thrown away, but was carefully folded and put away in some secret place. I didn't quite get the point of this, but I gathered that I wasn't particularly welcome and so I made a speech about not wanting to hold up the ceremony, and left.

NOTE: Several things here are significant. First, the tipi cover speech may have been allegorical, meaning "The covering now wants to be put away, and we want to put it away in secret."

Also, it is interesting to observe how, in talking of matters of religious content, Sundance, Tipi Paintings, etc., they always want to, and can, equate their practices with those of the Christian churches, as in the Sundance, the fasting was doing penance, the kitce manito the same as the Godhead.