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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Description of gift-giving.
I arrived at this Agency when the Agent was off on a trip. The
Farm Instructor, Mr. Melvin, extended his hospitality to me.

This Agency is one of the largest both in population and spread
of reserve. There are 2700 Indians under the Agent and he
travelled in the north country by canoe for six weeks to pay
treaty. Two new reserves have been added just this year to the
Agency. The office is located on the Mistawasis Reserve. The
Muskeg Lake Reserve (Petakwakey) is 20 miles south. The others
-- Sturgeon Lake, Lac La Ray -- Montreal Lake -- Red Earth --
Ottakachoop -- are in the north.

The three reserves of Prairie Cree are Mistawasis, Petakwakey,
Ottakachoop -- all of which were evidently "House people,"
Waskahigauuisuk.

Informant: kakiceniupimuxteu "Walks Like An Old Man" or
napetcos - (no meaning known) Peter Dreever

This man is the chief of the Mistawasis Reserve. He is the grandson of Mistawasis; speaks English fairly well. He is about 75, and a bit deaf. He is not an especially good informant since, as he said, "When I was young I was eager to learn the ways of the white people and did not take much notice of my own people." Moreover his favorite topic is the fine goods they used to get from the Hudson's Bay Company and how he has been a straight man. Every question he answers leads back to these topics. As do most of the other old men here, he has a mustache, short hair, wears pants, shirt, shoes.

The chief of our people, waskahigauinisuk, long before the treaty was Mistawasis. He was part French and maybe part Assiniboine. At any rate he was related to an Assiniboine woman as half-brother because his mother had an Assiniboine husband besides the halfbreed father of Mistawasis.

Mistawasis's territory extended from Ft. Pitt to Green Lake to The Pas. His people were called House people (Waskahigau, settlement, group of houses) because they lived near Carleton or at least met there. They themselves however lived in tipis which were always clean, more healthful than the houses we now have.

Mistawasis was a great help for the Hudson's Bay Co. In those days the Co. was the boss of the country for they controlled the goods. The Indian headmen "kitciyinu" helped them keep order and were duly rewarded. Mistawasis was such an H.B. Co. man. Before him there must have been some chiefs but I do not know their names. Mistawasis's sister's son used to be an ogihtcitau ukimau.

In those days we ate meat only and were very healthy. There was little flour. The Hudson's Bay Co. would give a sack of flour to the headmen on Christmas which they would use with berries to make soup. But when the government made peace between the Indian tribes, there was no peace for the buffalo. Also the white men used to poison thousands with strychnine for the sake of their hides and so there was soon no buffalo left.

I was Mistawasis's first grandchild and I lived as much in his tipi as I did in my own. I was very much spoiled; they gave me anything I wanted. Mistawasis always said that I should be chief. But when he died and the band voted for his successor, my mother's brother, Mistawasis's son and I got the same number of votes. But since he was the older, I said that he should be chief. When he died, I became ukimaxkau.

The people here where this reserve is were called Kinepigo wiyiuiwuk -- Snake Plain people. The Paskuxkupau wiyiuiwuk lived at the end of the bush and now are Beardy's at Duck Lake Reserve. At Witchigau and Pelican Lake they are mixed Cree and

Soto.

Mistawasis was always on the prairie -- atakakop was more in the bush, Saka-wasgahigan wiyuiwuk.

There was also Cipiwasgahgau wiyiviwuk (near Battleford) and Paskawasgahigau wiyuiwuk (Mistawasis people). Some of Mistawasis people made their living from fish. The "House people" took their names from the place where they usually wintered.

The old chief showed me a picture of Mistawasis, atakakop, kakiwistahau and cauwizes, taken evidently when they went to Regina or Winnipeg. He also showed me the medal that Mistawasis had received from Lieut. Governor Morris at the treaty signing. It was a two-inch silver or nickel disc with a relief of Queen Victoria and a relief of an Indian and official clasping hands. The old chief said that then Morris had told the Indians that as long as the sun and waters rose the Queen will help you and you will not be forced into any white man's war.

I showed him a picture of a horse and travois from Paget's book. He said that it could not be Wood Cree because the poles stuck out too far forward. The Wood Cree travel in single file while the Prairie Cree travelled side by side so that they could talk to each other.

When I asked him if he had any old artifacts, he replied that he had had a fine old quilled fire bag but that he had given it away. It happened in this wise. Several years ago, a man from the Six Nations came and called a meeting of the band chiefs so that they might all speak in one mind. At that meeting near Eagle Hills I met an opwisimu chief who presented me with a horse when we all were exchanging gifts. Years later this Assiniboine chief was on his way to a Sundance at one of the Sioux Reserves. Quite by accident he lost his way -- that is, the men who were to meet him halfway missed him. He camped with me and I gave him the fire bag.

In the old days there would be great gatherings of two or three hundred tipis. Then there would be much giving of gifts. There were men called oskapeusuk who were chosen to hand the gifts over. There usually were 4 of them, sometimes only 2. The dancing would start in the morning and last until sunset. While it was going on I might take this quilt to the oskapeus and tell him to give it to a certain man, or just tell him to give it away. He would put a willow branch on it as a reminder and later would present it to the recipients.

At this point Thomas Muchehau (see next informant) came in and did most of the talking from here on.

This was not the regular give-away dance. That lasted for four days. It was called maxtahituwin. It was not every person who gave the dance. At the start they would gather a number of men alone in a tipi. They would have the bladder of an animal full

of grease. This grease was obtained by boiling the cut-up bones of moose and other animals. The bladder was put on a pan and the giver of the dance started to dance with it. After a while he makes a move as though to give it to somebody. The one he moves toward jumps up, takes the bladder, and says something like this, "I am catching hold of long life," or "I'll have good luck to see the following year," or "I've got a lot of buffalo or moose," "I've got fur of all kinds." He dances with it for a while and then it is similarly passed to the next man. Thus it goes completely around the tipi. When all have had it, the oskapeus divides the grease among all the men present.

Next they take a pipe with a long stem. First they hold it upward and pray, then to the east, then to the south, then to the west, then finally it is pointed downward. (I asked why not to the north also -- "Nobody there I guess!") Then all scatter to their homes.

After this a man may go to his tipi and take an old torn coat. He will fetch it to another man's tipi and say, "Here, I am giving you a new coat." Then the two of them get up and dance, facing each other. Someone in the tipi beats a drum and sings. But no woman could beat the drum.

When this is over, they separate, but soon the other man goes and gives a gift in return. The women and children do it too and soon you can see two little kids dancing opposite each other. At times, some of the people would think that others were hungry. They would take a bag of meat and go up to someone and sing, "Where did I get the bag I've got on my back?"

It often happened that when it was all over a man would have none of his original possessions. But if anyone got something for nothing he is laughed at and people would say that he is stingy. The dance took place usually in the fall or spring. It lasted from two to four nights. The people would sleep during the day and dance all night.

All manner of possessions were given away, even horses and tipi covers. The man who would get the tipi cover would depend on the design just as did the old owner. (Note: The ability to transfer power of vision revelation.) However, wives were not exchanged. I have heard of wife exchange but never saw it.

At this dance a yard of print or some cloth would be hung up as a gift offering to manito called "wepinaconah" -- Retribution Offering. It was given so that the thunder or some other spirit would not get angry. Passers-by might take these offerings freely. The man who gave the dance was called omaxtahitowiuxkeu, "Man that makes Give Away Dance." He gave it to get a blessing.

At these dances the rich might become poor(?). Wealth is counted in buffalo hides and horses.

Horses were obtained by raiding the Blackfeet although there was another way. It was called wituskiwin or temporary peace. I saw one. A party of Cree went up to otoc-gwanixk, "Elbow," near Calgary. They went out to make peace. My father was on the expedition and he came back with one horse and said that the Blackfeet were coming to make peace. They had taken the horses in exchange for some clothes.

When they got back to camp they appointed a Crier -- ogihtcitau -- to announce the coming of the Blackfeet. He also asked the people to keep the young men from doing any harm. In those days the camp circle extended for over half a mile.

Some days later the Blackfeet rode up singing and beating drums. Those who had been in the advance party would come forward and each of them would take one Blackfoot into their [his] dwelling for the night. In the morning all the Blackfeet would go to the centre of the camp and dance there. This dance was the ogihtcitaucimau. The advance men then gave presents to the Blackfeet and received gifts in return. After this exchange of gifts the Blackfeet rode off escorted by the brave and respected men, onapihgaco wiyuiiwuk, so that they might be protected from the young fellows.

The ayahtciyuiiwuk would attack the Hudson's Bay posts and sometimes set fire to them by shooting arrows with lighted touchwood attached.

Mistawasis was always on the prairie but ataxkakop was in the bush; his people were the Sakawaskahigau wiyuiiwuk. The Paskawasgahigau wiyuiiwuk were Mistawasis's people. The Cipiwasgahigau wiyuiiwuk lived near Battleford. All took their names from the place where they wintered.

The Chief's house is government built structure of the usual sawed timber, plastered with mud and whitewashed on the inside. On this reserve there are a number of sod-roofed buildings, mostly barns. Again I have seen no tipis and but few tents.

The room I sat in contained a table, three beds, a number of pictures on the wall, a sewing machine. Slung between two ropes which were fastened at the angle of two walls was a cradle made of blankets and quilts. The chief, who is 78, begat a child by his fourth wife a year ago. I later noticed that the child was laced up in an ornamented bag and taken out where the women went off to pick berries.

The chief has a mustache, short hair, wore trousers, shirt, shoes. On the walls of the house were a number of religious prints.

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