This day I rode out north with Agent Davis through the Sandy Lake Reserve and on to Big River Reserve. We stopped for lunch at Farm Instructor Borch's place at Sandy Lake. There I saw a collection of beadwork that he had from Poorman's Reserve at Touchwood. Most of the pieces were of the geometric type -- some were floral in design. There was one fine baby case done on caribou hide which he had had made to order. The baby cases (whose decoration seems to be straight floral) are usually of velvet. (Incidentally Mrs. Melvin had a pillow in beadwork which she had from File Hills. The design was the purest kind of double curve motif I have yet seen.)

The people at the Big River Reserve are practically all saka-wiyiuiwuk, Wood or Bush Cree. It was the first time I had seen Wood Cree and I did not get to stay with them very long. They do not stay put on the reserve very much being north (about Stony Lake) much of the year trapping. At the present (July-August) most of them are right on the reserve cutting hay, which they have in great quantity and which they sell. They all were living in tents.

These women do beadwork and birchbark work. The men trap and
hunt moose.

Informant: Old Man

The interpreter, Settee, is an old man, halfbreed, who does some of the preaching. He speaks Cree well and might have been quite a source of information in himself. The informant and another man were in Settee's house when we came in. They spoke to Borch about hay cutting. They had no teams to cut with and they wanted permission to get horses on time payments, the hay money realized to pay for the horses later. Borch said no and suggested that they get someone with a team to help them and in return to give the team owner a share of the hay. Settee asked if he could help cut hay and lay in a supply for his stock. Borch assented readily.

This old man's chief at the treaty (1874) was ce-ciwihau "Rattler." The next chief was keuemuteyo "Moon Bill" after whom the reserve was named. All of the band are Wood Cree who lived around Stony Lake. They never hunted buffalo because there was too much game in the bush to bother. They did get wood buffalo, solitary groups that came into the bush.

Their hunting grounds were about Winter Lake, Bittern Lake, and Stony Lake. Long before Rattler was there, the Stonies lived around that lake and from them it got its name.

The informant's father and Rattler came from nutagan -- Upstream. According to Settee, from somewhere between the Barren Lands and York Factory, perhaps near Deer Lake. When they came to Stony Lake there were already a lot of Stonies there.

Rattler was the first chief there. He was a good hunter and that's how he was appointed as chief. Before him there was a chief piecuwutamc "Thunder Breath," who was born and died near Pelican Lake. He became chief because he was a guide for one of the Hudson's Bay commissions. Another chief of the Wood Cree was kohpwe-awah, "Raising the Dust," who lived about Meadow Lake.

The chiefs were appointed for the whole band. They got their tobacco and tea free from the Company. In the summer when there was not much hunting the chief might go up to the Hudson's Bay Company and ask for supplies for the people and would get it. The Indians would hunt for the Company for furs and get clothing in exchange. The Hudson's Bay Company would always grub stake the Indians.

NOTE: At the present time it seems that the same is true. The Indians run up an account of several hundred dollars during the summer and are able to clear it up in just two months of trapping. Now however, since white men, impelled by the depression, are trapping also, the Indian catch is not as large.
The people south of them including Sandy Lake, were House people. To the north were Chipewayiu, otcipwayaulwuk. To the north of these were askimou, Eskimo. To the east were Omuskegowuk -- Swampies. The language of these people is different from that of the Wood Cree and Plains Cree, which also differ. To the west were atcinuspi-gasuk, "Dog Ribs."

Settee's wife is a treaty woman from Lac La Ronge. She makes birchbark baskets well and in one corner of the room was a box of her materials -- a piece of birchbark, rolls of split spruce root colored with store dyes for sewing. She brought out two simple oblong baskets that she had recently made. They were sewn with uncolored root by piercing holes in the bark with an awl and then drawing the thread through. The basket or rather the box was out of one single piece of bark and gummed with pine gum at each corner. I bought one box which was made to hold milk. She brought down an old berry box that her mother had made and which she refused to sell. It was very similar to those described by Skinner for the Eastern Cree. She made patterns for both the oblong and the "pyramid" boxes out of paper.

On our way out of the reserve, we stopped off at the camp of a man (supposed to be from Pelican Lake) who had a birchbark canoe. He took us to where he had it in the bush. It was about ten feet long, had side laths at two-inch spaces, was fastened at the gunwales with tacks but sewn with root at the bow and stem. Near the place where he kept the canoe I noticed a pile of sand (like a burial mound) on which the canoe had evidently been made and also a pit, perhaps for heating the stones.

In this man's tent his squaw was busily making cylindrical brick boxes when we came in. He showed us a drum of the usual flat variety. The stove pipe was made of lard pails inserted one into the other. The usual tripod and meat drying racks were all about the camp. Drying on the tent pole were two little hoops of twig, probably for the boxes she was making.

I intended coming back to the Big River Agency the next day to spend more time among the Wood Cree, but upon hearing of the Battleford Fair, proceeded there.