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INTERVIEWER: DR. D.G. MANDELBAUM
INTERPRETER: SOLOMON
TRANSCRIBER: JOANNE GREENWOOD
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes various ceremonies.
We happened to come up to iwe sigau's camp just as his wife and daughter-in-law were moving the tipi over a few feet to a fresh piece of ground. Three poles were laid on the ground and lashed together. The women raised them and spread them into a tripod. Then the poles were laid in one of the forks in a counterclockwise direction. Later five were laid in another fork, also in the same direction. Joe Standing Horn told me that the poles must be laid in just the same place every time, the thong with which the tripod was lashed being down in the middle. When all the poles were in position it was brought around half the poles. Then the old lady sharpened a three-foot peg and pounded it into the ground several times to make sockets for the tipi poles. Then the cover was lifted up by the ear poles. At the tip of the ears were the two horse tails previously noted. Then the old woman tied thongs between the door poles at a height of five feet and seven feet. Supported by these, the young boy climbed up and laced the flap together from the top down. These lacing pegs are eighteen inches and are peeled except for a ring of bark in the middle.

The left flap has two holes, the right one just one hole, thus: (see original for diagram). The peg is put in this order, 2-3-1. Then the old lady entered and shoved the poles out until the cover was taut.

Then the household effects were moved into the new place. The only new item I noticed was a medicine bundle hanging from the back rest.

As I was watching this process old iwe sigau, who was sitting by watching his wife work, talked a little about a pipe stem bundle owned by Peter Poundmaker which had been the property of his grandfather, the original chief Poundmaker.

He said that the bundle had descended through four successive generations. It had to be kept outside the tipi and its owner could not listen to any gossip or malicious talk. The Pipe Stem Dance is not held any longer because no one living knows the songs. Once he saw four such bundles together at a dance. Among the Blackfeet a man changes his name when he gets such a bundle, but this is not true of the Cree.

This particular bundle was once owned by Josie Cuthand's father. Before he died he gave it to young chief Poundmaker because Josie was not worthy of having it. Now Peter Poundmaker owns it. Only old Muskwa has the power to unwrap it. You must leave some tobacco in it if you do unwrap it.

Solomon took me to see a bundle that had belonged to his father. He said that he took it over to his cousin's place (where we saw it) because there were too many children around his camp and they might disturb it. It contains a shirt of some kind that was put on as armor before a battle. It is called wiskwe-pita-gau, "Fighting Guide." It was hanging on the back wall of a shack encased in a fringed canvas cover. Solomon said that he might transfer it to me.

Informant: Pones (no meaning)

This informant is the best I have struck so far. He is eager to tell me all he can of the religion. When we drove up to his camp he was working in his garden. He is sixty-six years old (he says), wears braids and has a deep scar over his left nostril. He was dressed in trousers, moccasins, vest, wore his shirt outside of his trousers. The interpreter is a man about forty, irresponsible yet well-versed in the old lore. Several informants expressed the desire to have him as an interpreter.

The informant has no Cree name, the one he goes by is the Cree diminutive form of Paul, the name given him at baptism by Father Lacombe.

His chief at the time of treaty was wihgas-kakico-iu, Sweet Grass Old Man. He was the band chief and took treaty first of all. He was a great traveller and chief of many Indians. His

people were pas-kwawiyiniwuk, Prairie people, who travelled all about this bluff.

The River people lived not along the river (Sask.) but along the wawiskeciuci-pi, "Elk River" (Red Deer River). The House people lived about Carlton and Sandy Lake. The Beaver Hills people lived north of Edmonton. Sweet Grass was also chief of the River people. His father was a chief but he was not as great as Sweet Grass was. I have never heard of as great a chief as he was before him. His people were scattered in the bush and on the prairie. He was killed accidentally by his best friend down near the Red Deer River. He was too great a man to be buried on the prairie and so he was brought back to Frog Lake and buried there where his grave still is. That was sixty years ago. After him mistahimaskwah was chief but he had only about half of Sweet Grass's power and authority.

Sweet Grass was something like King George -- he had many chiefs under him. Some of them were:

Pihau-kamihgosit - Red Pheasant
Kiwahigosis - Little Pine

Wa-wikauhke-ta-nketti - "Strike Him on the Back." He died when he was very old.
Muse-min - Mooseberry
Picausua-sis - Thunder Child - other name napitigo "Roundy." (Pones gave this name first but retracted it because it was not a fitting name whereby to record a chief.)
Opihtigwahade-pi-win - Poundmaker. This was his wife's father. He said that, "The old lady would kill me if she ever heard me say the name." The taboo against mentioning the name of the dead is very strong among these people.
Mistahiwaskwa - Big Bear, was another chief under Sweet Grass.
Sakimecpwat - "Mosquito Sioux," a Stony chief was yet another.

Kocihkoei-wa-yanu - "Having Weasel Skins" (Ermine Skins).
Atuhkeko-p - "Star Blanket," of the House people was another.
Apisi-nis - "Small Man," was a chief of the River People under Sweet Grass.

He did not know the names of any chiefs before Sweet Grass.

The ogihtcitau were only dancers. They were men who are afraid of nothing -- not afraid to lost everything -- they gave all they had to others. Not many got that name.

Pones then turned to dances saying, "The manitou gave us a religion and the most important thing in it is the Sundance. It never should be four days and nights -- only two. Next to the Sundance the most important thing is the pi-htwakamik -- Smoking Tipi. In it there is no dancing, only smoking and singing."

The wasaga-me-cimawikamik, "Round Dancing Tipi." It is not made very often, usually in the spring and fall. It is done in fulfillment of a vow. If your child or relative is sick you

think about it hard. At the time you are thinking you say to the manitou, "If you spare me the child I'll replace it with a Round Dance." You may choose any dance that happens to fall into your head, there is no premeditated choice of any dance. If a person is very sick you choose a harder dance. The Sundance is hardest of all.

In this Round Dancing Tipi the young men put up a large long tipi made of two tipis joined together. The old men sit around the walls at one side, the women on the other. (See diagram) In the centre are two fires. Dancing is clockwise in single file, men together and women after. There are four drums which are beaten for one song by four men and passed on to the next four men who are seated. These pass them on until the men who are the servers and attendants get them. Then they are passed

back to the first four again, the giver of the dance and the three most distinguished old men. The dance lasts until the attendants have beaten the drums four times. It is just the old men who sing. The dance usually lasts from seven o'clock to one. Berries are eaten.

After a song is over the young men go outside and come in again when another song is started. The women, however, sit in the tipi between dances. The old men can dance whenever they like. This dance is not made very often.

Horse Dance

This is not a very hard dance to give but few can do it. On these two reserves, Poundmaker and Little Pine can make it. Night Traveller was taught how to do it by his father. William Sap was given the power in a dream.

I myself couldn't give the dance. But if I had vowed it, I would give the necessary staff to Night Traveller and ask him to make a Horse Dance. I would send two cloths, sweetgrass and berries to him and he would always be willing to do it. He would not get anything for himself. The food is provided by the women. All those who come to the dance give whatever they can spare. The grub is entirely up to the women.

The horses are painted with white clay and red paint in the shape of a hand. Their manes and tails are tied up and they are decorated with the very finest trappings. Bells are tied to their manes and tails. Their riders too dress in their ceremonial clothes.

A tipi is erected and covered with two tipi covers. They extend out on each side of the doorway since the flap in front is not pegged together. Everybody wants their covers to be used. In front of this tipi is a pole on which offering cloths are hung.

Before the dance, the host goes into the bush, tells God what he has promised, cuts down a sapling, and puts it into the ground where the dance is going to be. God gave us this pole

on purpose so that he'll see us dancing. After the dance is over, this tree is never touched. They are very particular about that. If it falls, it falls of its own weight.

Inside the tipi the host and some old men sit. They have two attendants to light their pipes and to serve the dancers in general. These two must be good, kind men who have nothing to

be ashamed of. There are two drums inside, these are beaten and the six men inside the tipi sing.

The horsemen come up and ride round and round the pole. Suddenly they dismount and dance for a short while in front of the tipi, holding their horses. Then they remount and ride off. This dance lasts about half a day.

For every dance and during every ceremony pipes are offered. We got from God the stone pipe and a certain kind of wood. The old men offer a pipe before the dance and ask good for everybody. Also a sweetgrass smudge is lighted. Four old men will get one ceremonial pipe each. The offering of pipes goes on all through the dance whenever one of the old men gets a respite from singing. The attendants fill the pipe and pass it to the old man. The attendant gets a live coal on a split stick and the old man puffs on it. He first points straight up then to where the sun is at noon, then where the sun sets, then north, then where the sun rises. The same directions are pointed down -- five points up and five points down. Every time the pipe is pointed something is said. (The sun at noon is to the south.)

Pipe Stem Bundles

The pipe stem is called oskitci. This is a Soto word. The stem is made of wood and decorated very elaborately with quillwork and feathers and beads so that you can see only a little bit of wood where the mouthpiece is and where the stem fits into the bowl. The covers too are highly ornamented.

The way these bundles were transferred was this. If I held myself to be a worthy man I would think about the bundle and want it. They were usually passed on to close relatives of the owners. Some old men would be talking together when the owner of the bundle was present and they would say that I am a man deserving by my deeds and character to own the bundle. Someone who had been present at that conversation would come around and tell the story to me. Then I would send five or ten good horses to the owner and he would know why and would give the bundle to me.

A man who owned such a bundle lived to be very old. If a stranger came into camp and saw such a bundle hanging outside the tipi, he would know what kind of a man lived inside the tipi. He would go in and be hospitably served until he left that camp.

If two men quarrelled and it was apparent that blood would soon be shed, the relatives of the men would run and get the bundle and unwrap it. The fighting would immediately stop. If a man was very mad and was going to kill, all you have to do is give him the bundle and he would have to quit.

The bundle would be carried into a battle. Sometimes the Cree would unwrap it and hold it up. The Blackfeet would recognize what it was by the decoration and they would quit fighting. They might get their bundle and unwrap it. The chiefs would shake hands and that would be all.

At a big encampment there would be several for a Pipe Stem Dance. They would be brought into a big tipi. A very nice robe or decorated spread of some kind would be laid down and two forked sticks with one across would be set up. The bundles would be leaned against this cross bar. These bundles would rest behind the fire which was in the centre. Nobody could cross (in front?) of them nor sit behind them. Singers sit on each side of the pipe stem and the dancers are near the door. As they dance, they raise their hands toward the bundles.

They were not unwrapped there. The dance is given where there is a big encampment and everybody comes together and all are well. So it is with the bundles, they too meet again and celebrate. The stems are not asked for anything save that they may meet again the next year.

The owner of the stem would have no special name but he had to be a brave and kind man.

Vision Quests

When a boy or a girl is very small they may go out to fast. They go to the bush with five or six or ten cloths and a pipe and tobacco. They are naked except for a breechclout. They make a shelter by bending over boughs and twigs just large enough for them to crawl into. At their head they put a buffalo skull or a large rock. For two days and two nights they don't eat or drink. Once in a while they light a pipe. (Daubed with white clay?)

Not everyone does it, only a few. I went out three times. Twice I stayed for two days and nights, the last time for six and a half days. I was nine when I first went and fourteen the second time. The last time was after the Rebellion.

The first vision came and told me to come back again in the same season next year. (9-14?) It told me to stay six days

the last time. I did it then so that my children and grandchildren might grow up well.

The vision never fails to come. Those children now could get one very easily in these times and get to know something if only they would go out. They are plastered with white clay,

hair and all. They just lay there, do not look at sun or walk around.

The vision is always in the shape of a person. If it is the Thunder Bird it changes to a person before it appears. There is no specialization of power. It was given to me to heal. My son fell unconscious in the church one day. They carried him here to my camp and called me. I ran up and first I talked to God and said that I would give a Sundance if my son got better. Then I blew all over his chest and pretty soon he woke and got well.

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