HIGHLIGHTS:

- Describes various methods of signalling.
- Describes various healing practices.

I brought a book to Fine Day that had beautiful illustrated plates of common weeds. I asked him to give me the Cree names of the plants he recognised but to my surprise he could only identify very few. I found later that most of the weeds were introduced into Canada. Those he did identify were:


Plate 5. Does not know name but saw it in Rocky Mts.(?) Wild Mustard. Brassica Sinapistrum Boisc. Introduced from Europe.

Plate 20. Manito-wickatak -- Manito Carrot. This is the poisonous plant I told you about. Spotted Cowbone -- poisonous to stock. Cicuta Maculata L. Native.

Plate 27. Kacimina -- Burrs.

Ma-cipagwa -- Leaf -- Burrs used after immersion in stagnant water to get the stem off of the skin. Lesser Burdock Arctium Lappa L. Introduced.

Plate 29. Canada Thistle. I see them all over the fields but I do not know their name.


The book is "Farm Weeds of Canada" -- James Fletcher -- published in Ottawa by the government. Note that with the possible exception of Plate 5, all those Fine Day recognized tally as accurately identified.

Signalling:

In my day we signalled by flashing mirrors in the sun. This was not done in the old days. Should a scout who is on foot sight the enemy without them seeing him, he will come back to camp and announce his coming and his news by howling like a wolf, 'heau,' when he is a little way off.

When scouts go out and do not return on time, we make a fire (if it is not windy), throw green leaves on it, and the smoke rises high in the air. If the scouts see it they make a smoke too and thus we know where they are and they are able to find us. If they do not make a fire we conclude that they have been killed.

When sentries are posted they arrange a set of whistles as signals. If one whistles in this way (sharp intake of breath with pursed lips -- kissing sound), the other will reply this way (regular exhaling whistle with pursed lips). If the enemy comes along they will hear the first signal and imitate it -- then we know they are around. We never whistled with fingers in mouth. I don't know of any way of signalling by riding horses.

When camp is moved and we expect a band of our friends to come along we make a guide to let them know where we are. We drive a stake into the ground pointing in the direction we take. Brush is tied to the end of the stake. The shoulder blade of a buffalo is put under the stake and on it is inscribed a picture of the name of the chief -- Deer, or Bear, etc. If there are many buffalo where we are going, buffalo chips are placed around the stake. If a fight has taken place we will draw a picture of a wounded man on the shoulder blade and sprinkle blood around. That will serve as a warning.

I knew an old Soto who could foretell the future by heating an
animal shoulder blade and reading the cracks. He did this in my grandfather's tipi. His name was ncot. I never saw any Cree do this.

The Cree did tell the future by looking into water. On a raid, the men would all carry little cups. Once on a raid the leader filled his cup half full of water. Then he talked to manito. Then the men built a big fire. The leader pulled his blanket over his head and grasped the blanket with both hands on either side so as to shade his eyes. He intently peered at the water -- gazing from different angles continually. He is in a kneeling position. He asks, "Does the fire shine brightly on the water?" The men answer, "Yes." When the fire dies down a little he tells them to build it up again. Finally he says, "Tomorrow the enemy will discover you while you are hunting buffalo. That is when I am afraid the enemy will get you." All the men heard what he said but they were very hungry. The next day the leader took a gun, put in just a little powder, rammed the ball in tight so that the shot would not make a loud report. He and two others stalked the buffalo.

It so happened that some Blackfeet were stalking the same herd. The Cree shot first. Two Blackfeet, hearing them, called out, "Who are you?" The Cree heard the Blackfoot language and began to shoot. The leader was wounded in the thigh and both sides retreated. It turned out that there was quite a bunch of Blackfeet, but the two groups were afraid of each other and did not attack. They only shouted taunts at each other to come ahead first.

I never saw water scrying except in war but it may have been done for the hunt too. This was done by the River people and was called wapimunipi, "Mirror Water." It sometimes didn't turn out as the scryer predicted, but pretty often it did.

Kuca-pahtcigan -- "Looking at Something".

Conjurer's Booth. It was put up pretty nearly every night by the River people when they were afraid that the enemy was near.

Sometimes a man could know what was going to happen by going into the Sweat House. While singing in there he would get a vision.

Pihtwauiku-mik -- Smoking Tipi.

This is still done at Little Pine. Not made here because no one knows how to do it. There Muskwa puts it up. It is made in a wewahtaho-gan "Slanted Pole Tipi."

Muskwa lays four poles down in this manner (see diagram), although I don't know just in what order the poles are laid. Some old lady says, "I am going to tie you, poles. May the one who promised to make the ceremony be well and I hope that the next one who makes this tipi is well too." Then some man lashes the poles loosely with saganapi and they are raised up. The other poles are laid on and a cover hoisted over.
Inside this tipi the men and women sit around. Near the fire there are two young men, ockinigiu, who are naked except for a breechclout. They tend to the pipes and though the fire gets very hot and sometimes blisters their skin, they must not move away. First the servers pass out the food and all eat. After the eating is finished, the four principal old men stand up.

There is a round place dug up in the centre. This is deeper for every time the host has given the Smoking Tipi. Thus if he has given it twice it will be about two inches below the ground level (see diagram), if it is the first time it will be only an inch deep. Cloths are hung around the tipi and some are placed in front of the four principals in a peaked fashion. Just inside the excavated circle there are four sticks driven in flush with the ground. These are called "Pipe Stem Cleaners," saispwaganahhtigwah. The four old men are called niganupiha-ganuk, "Sitting in Front" (?) or "Leaders." The young men who sit close to the fire and do not move are called kotinamagoteikopwagans, "Taking the Pipe for the Other." These are only young men 1 and 2 of the diagram, 3 and 4 have no special name. Next to young man 2 there is a pipe rack. Racks are called "Pipes on it Lean," kaco-cihikiko-opwaganuk.

The host takes the four pipes and holding them in a bunch, smokes them over the sweetgrass. First he holds the stems over the fire and then, changing hands, rotates the pipes clockwise to present the bowls over the smudge. He does this four times and then leans the pipes on the rack. At the bowl of each pipe there is a peg stuck in the ground to keep it from tipping over. (y.m. -- young man  o.m. -- old man)

Y.m 1 takes pipe 1 from rack, rotating it once clockwise as he does so. He slowly hands it to y.m. 2 who takes it and leans it against his rack. After a little while the oskapeus, "Server" comes up and y.m. 2 hands the pipe to him. The server rotates it once and goes over and hands it to o.m. 1. Then y.m. 1 takes pipe 2 and gives it to y.m. 2. The oskapeus comes up in the same way and gives the pipe 2 to o.m. 2.

Then the host and o.m. 1 get up and sit beside y.m. 1. O.m. 2 goes and sits next to y.m. 2. Y.m. 3 and 4 are told by the host to move up closer to the fire.

Then the server takes a coal from the fire with a stick whose end is split twice (see original for diagram) called "Pipe Lighter," sas-kaispwaganagun. He puts coal on pipe 1 -- o.m. 1 takes four puffs. He does the same to pipe 2.

Then o.m. 1 holds up his pipe and talks. He holds it to the east, south, west, and north. O.m. 2 watches o.m. 1 and follows all his motions. Then they puff at the pipes. When they are going well, o.m. 1 takes his pipe and reverses it. He holds the stem close to the ground near the "Pipe Stem Cleaners." He points the mouthpiece between his fingers to the stick. Then, still holding the pipe in that position, he passes it along the line of the excavation.
Syllabic Writing:

Mestanuskuwe-u -- "Badger Call" once died and then became alive again. While he was dead he was given the characters of the syllabic and was told that out of them he would write Cree. He was of the saka-wiyinwuk. Strike-Him-On-the-Back learned how to write syllabic from Badger Call. He made a feast and announced that he would teach it to anybody who wanted to learn it without pay. That is how I learned it. The missionaries got the writing from Badger Call who taught it to them. When Badger Call was given the characters he was told, "They will change the writing and will believe that the writing belongs to them. But only those who know Cree will be able to read it." So it is no one can read the writing unless he knows Cree and so the writing does not belong to the whites.

This Badger Call was a very famous doctor. Once there was a girl sick in the hills near Sandy Lake. None of the medicine men around here could cure her. Finally they sent for mestanuskuwe-u who lived way up north. He came down on snowshoes with his son and daughter. They camped once before they got here. A young fellow from up north was stuck on Badger Call's daughter and he put on his snowshoes and followed them.

Badger Call doctored the sick girl. First he blew on her. He told them to stick two short arrows into his side when he began sucking at the girl. They did, one on each side above the hip bone. As he sucked I saw the arrows bobbing up and down. He sucked the sickness out of the girl -- half a bowlful of foul smelling yellow stuff. When he was done he pulled the arrows out, rubbed his hands over the wounds, and there was no mark. He said, "The girl is pretty sick and I will have to come back again." Then he set off for home again on his snowshoes.

The young men followed them back. When Badger Call made camp and fell asleep, the young fellow crept up and hit him on the head with an axe. He killed Badger Call. Then he sat by the fire talking to the girl and thinking that he had her at last. Suddenly the girl picked up the axe and struck him. She killed him. Then she went back to the camp and told us. We went out and buried the bodies.

I have seen piles of rocks where a man was buried. When we saw such a grave we would all throw more rocks on it. I did it because the others did. I don't know why they did so.

I am going to tell you about some doctoring that I have seen. It sure was wonderful.

We took treaty twice at Fort Qu'Appelle. The third year we went to Cypress Hills to get treaty. It was about June. My mother's brother was a doctor. I saw him doctoring many times
and when he would sing, I'd sing with him. The day before we
got to Cypress Hills my uncle came in and said to my father,
"At the place where we are going they will offer me a
cream-colored horse and I can do something for them. Soon
after a buckskin-colored horse will be offered to me but I
can't do anything there."

We got ready and went on. Some walked -- some rode. We sat
down to have a rest -- we started off again. Before sundown we
came over a hill and saw three tipis. One belonged to
piepecimi, "Striped Dancer." Another was his son-in-law's,
kopiecisoiiwayanu, "Bird Skin Blanket," and there was an old
widow's.

Kopiecisoiiwayanu was very sick and had been left behind by the
rest of his band. As we came up, kopiecisoiiwayanu's mother came
out crying. She was leading a cream-colored horse. We all
knew at once that my uncle could help the sick man.

He took the horse and tied it. There were five tipis of us.
My uncle -- oca-gatuiweu, "Walking Over a Hill," called us all
together to go in and sing with him. I sat close to him with a
rattle. I still have that very same rattle. Another fellow
had a drum that oca-gatuiweu always kept wrapped up.
Oca-gatuiweu had two of them marked with a big bird with clawed
lightning radiating from it. One was green and one was white.

He sang one song. We beat the drums. He tied up his hair into
a knot in back. He had an eagle bone whistle. He shove it
right through his hand. It comes out right through his palm
and sticks there. He does it again and again, hand over hand.
Then he takes his rattle and shakes it. He swallows the eagle
bone. We can hear it drop into his mouth. We still beat the
drums. He gets on his knees and blows on the sick man -- makes
a loud blowing -- whistling sound. The sun goes down. He
takes the pipe and points it. He lays it down and says, "There
is something in the sick man that will kill him, some other
person's doings. I am pretty sure I can take it out." We
hurry up and take the drums. He takes the rattle and blows
again. He gets up and walks around for a while. Then they
light the pipes and smoke around. This is done twice. He
picks me out to hold the thing he is going to take out. "It
will burn you when you hold it." It is getting dark.

Oca-gatuiweu's wife is sitting by the door. She knows what is
going to happen and has taken off her moccasins and placed them
in front of her husband.

All at once he drops his rattle and sucks at the sick man's
temple. The thing was lodged in the back of the neck but he
sucked it out through the temple. As soon as he got it he
slapped his hand to his mouth and starts to reel backwards.
His wife grabs her moccasins and hits him on the back with
them. He straightens up and grabs the thing from off his
tongue and holds it between his cupped palms. He shakes it and
then gives it to me. I take it. It feels as though it is
burning me. I shake all over. I feel it move between my fingers. I blow on it and soon it cools. I give it to my cousin. It burns him and he blows just as I did. We look at it later. It has a dragonfly's head with the wings folded back over the body.

Now oca-gatuiweu says, "My son-in-law, never call yourself manito. It was a close call -- you almost died. A year ago last summer a fellow got mad at you when you were gambling. He sent you this sickness and you have ailed since then. This time you were going to die. But now you are going to get well." The sick man, who could not move a muscle before, said, "I can move my head now. I'll eat tomorrow." That night his wife raised him and he sat up.

The thing he took out of the sick man we put with the rattle. They told me to give it to my grandfather. I did and he lifted up the robe he sat on and dropped it on the ground and covered it with the robe again. When we moved camp, my grandfather looked at it. The wings had fallen off. He dropped it into the fire. It exploded and knocked him senseless. My uncle was called in and blew on him. He was all right. When we moved away the sick man was riding a horse already. Just about dark we got to the big camp and heard the drums.

In the morning we saw a man coming up to us carrying a blanket and a gun and leading a buckskin-colored horse. They were coming for my uncle. I didn't hear what he said to them but my grandfather told me later. "I take pity on you but I can't do anything for you. I saw it in a dream." So he didn't go.

In those days I was a very foolish boy and when doctoring was going on I would peek in. There was doctoring going on almost every night.

After my uncle said that he couldn't doctor this sick young man, they got an old woman to do it. I peeked in through a hole in the tipi. She was naked except for a breechclout. Her arms and legs were painted with horizontal lines. She made a big fire in the tipi. I watched her pick out of the fire something that looked like a portion of a gun barrel. It was red hot. All of a sudden -- zzt -- it disappeared. She kept on rattling and soon reached around to her back and she had it again. One side was cool and she dropped it into a cup of water -- zzt -- the water steamed. She picked up a gun screw from the fire and did just the same thing, dropping it into another cup of water.

Her husband was beating the drum. She blew all over the young man. She took the two pieces of metal out. They disappeared. Then she stood away from the sick man and sucked. The young man had to be held down so powerful was her sucking.

As she was going around, just out of devilment, I threw a stick through the hole and hit her. She paid no attention, just kept
going around. Finally she said, "The blanket and gun and horse -- you give them to someone else. I can do nothing more for the young man. Now some boys are very foolish. There is one standing outside now. He is so and so's son." She named my mother. I heard this, got scared, and ran away. How did she know who I was?

All doctors stripped naked. (Note that it is never complete nudity.) Some had a bone sucking tube, others had an iron tube. Some would take a live coal, smash it to bits, take one of the pieces and swallow it. Then they kneel beside the sick person, hold one hand behind his back. They blow, and soon have the coal in their hand (as if blown through the body) cooled off. If there is blood or yellow stuff on it they say, "You'll get well."

One man who did this didn't cure very many. He had spoiled his power by trying it too many times when he was young. The first time I saw him, he fixed a bent gun. He would rip the barrel down with his thumb, file a screw, and then smooth the barrel together again with an upward stroke. But the gun was only good for a little while and then went bad again.

This man once taught me how to swallow fire but I got scared when I felt the heat in my mouth and I closed my eyes. I often am asked to doctor but I am scared to do it among the people but I do it to my children. I did it to John last year and he felt better. As the doctors lift their heads they hit themselves with the rattle, on side or shoulder.

Once I saw old Chicken's father, mitce-wais, sitting down rubbing his foot. I called, "What's the matter, old man, have you cut your foot?" "O, just a little," he answered. I came up and saw that he had been chopping wood with a broad axe. His moccasin had a big gash in it. There was blood all around. But when he finished rubbing his foot I saw that there was only a little mark.

Some doctors pass their hands over the sick person and hold him for a while. They lay their hands on him and feel where the sickness is and point it out. When they locate the spot, they take a buffalo horn, put some sweetgrass in it, put an ember on and clap it over the place. It sucks out the matter and has to be taken off sideways. You can see a yellow stuff in the horn after it is taken off. I saw two old women use this method. Most of the doctors are men, only a few old women are nipickeu -- Doctor. (Nipic-kewin -- doctoring.)

I have never heard of wihtigo entering body -- that only happens further north.

One summer night Traveller's sister became crazy. She was a young woman. She took off her clothes and ran away from camp. The women couldn't get her. The men went out, wrapped her in a blanket and brought her home. They sent for a Soto doctor. He came with three other Sotos. They had a water drum which they beat with a crooked stick (I have a drum like that at
Touchwood). The Cree had this type of drum from the Sotos. Long ago the Cree used to go a long way to buy their medicines and learn how to doctor from the Soto.

The four Sotos killed a dog, burned the hair off, ate it. They beat the drums and sang. As soon as they sang, they knew why the woman was crazy. They fixed some medicine for her. Before long she was all right. A few days later she still was a little crazy. They cut her head in three or four places and poured medicine in the cuts. They gave her some medicine to drink. They boiled sweetgrass and she spilled the water over herself. They also gave her a medicine to wear around her neck, made of a thimble bound with red cloth, the medicine is in the thimble.

Sickness is often caused by someone getting mad at a person or wishing him harm in some way. He sends a pi-tcitci-tcigan to make the person sick and kill him. If the doctor succeeds in exhorting the pi-tcitci-tcigan the one who sent it gets sick. He makes a kucapahtcigan to see what ails him. His pawagun tells him that his evil has returned to him. If he cannot take it out he dies. This is still done but very few do it.

Another crazy man that I remember sat quietly and didn't talk foolishly. But he would take a tipi peg and pretend that he was pinning something to the ground. His brother sent for Soto doctors. Four came with a water drum, had a dog feast and found that a Cree pi-tcitci-tcigan had been sent to him. They had medicine to kill it and he got well. These were the only two crazy people I know although I heard of others.

Even before my father's day, the Cree went to the Soto for medicine. I lived with the Soto and learned from them. I have seen Crees load a horse with blankets and furs and go to buy medicine from the Soto.

I never heard of the Soto migrating from the east. They used to come on the prairie with dogs. In my days the Sotos came to get horses from the Cree. The Sotos got most of their horses because the Cree would marry their women and give them horses as gifts. I did that myself. The Cree liked the Soto women because they were very good-looking. They were lighter in color than the Cree women because they lived in the north. The Cree in turn got horses from the Stonies who liked the Cree women.

Pikuhkwe-sigan -- Vein Cutter (see specimen.)

Used to let out bad blood. For pains in the upper part of the body, the arm is tied above the elbow so that the veins swell out. The cutter is held over the vein and flicked with the finger. Some use a stick to hit the cutter but this is no good as it cuts right through the vein. The vein is cut at the elbow. For back sickness the outer vein is cut -- for chest pains the inner vein. Before my hands shook I used to tie the cutter to a little stick and do it to myself. Just a little
blood is let -- enough to let the bad blood out and some air in. To stop the bleeding just double up the arm. For ailments of the abdomen let blood out at the vein over the ankle.

The blood is caught in a cup. If a person is sick the blood is (?) and turns to matter.

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