HIGHLIGHTS:

- General recollections of traditional lifestyle.

Fine Day was sick and I went over to spend the day with Coming Day who had been Bloomfield's chief informant. The old man is blind. He is living in a tent camped near the chief's place. He wears a shirt, trousers, vest. On the vest a Catholic religious medal is pinned. He put on florally beaded moccasins in the afternoon, had plain moccasins on in the morning. He has a characteristic gesture of rubbing his hands, passing them over his face, and blowing his nose between his fingers. This last he does often. He wears earrings of brass rings.

The chief I was under at the time of the treaty was wihkaskc-kice-in, "Old Man Sweet Grass." My father, napate-ki-jik, "Half Shy," was related to Sweet Grass. His mother was was Sweet Grass's sister. He was the only chief of the Cipiwiyiniwuk who were not very many in number. But he was also the headman of all the Cree bands -- Prairie, House, Wood
people and the Stonies too. Every tribe had a headman but when they all gathered, Sweet Grass was above them all.

The reason why he was the highest chief was because he was so brave. When everybody else would take to shelter in a battle, he would get up and charge. When the enemy were entrenched in a pit, he would go up and clean them out. There was no other headman as brave as he.

Before Sweet Grass there was a chief of the River people called nenihkata-no, "Gasping For Air." Whenever he went into a Hudson's Bay store they would give him clothing, whiskey, tobacco, and powder. The tobacco and powder he would distribute to his people. He also distributed knives and paint which he got from the Hudson's Bay Company. Other chiefs would get the same things to give out but not in such great quantities. Sweet Grass was a chief while nenihkata-no was still living but he [Sweet Grass] did not have a great deal of power until nenihkata-no died. He was his son-in-law and he took his place. Yes, Iron Crow was a chief of the Cipiwiyiniwuk but he was not as great as Sweet Grass. Nobody was.

When Sweet Grass would arrive at a Hudson's Bay post, he would collect furs from his people, pile them on a horse and present them to the factor.

If Sweet Grass heard that one of his people couldn't make a living he would send for them and give them whatever they need. That is why his people liked him so. When they came in loaded with meat he would go right to the tipi of a poor man who didn't have a horse to chase buffalo and would throw the meat off there. He was kind to the poor and that helped him become a great chief.

Sometimes a good hunter was elevated to be a headman because he could get goods from the Hudson's Bay Company. They would not be brave in war, necessarily, and when there was war the other headmen would get a brave man to lead them. These other headmen would be called into council to get supplies.

Some of the ukimau who were good hunters but not great warriors were:

Napate-kijik -- Half Sky
Man-tokihiu -- Manito Eagle
(illegible) -- Going to Kill Game
(illegible) -- Strong Lifter

This last man got his name from lifting two Blackfeet by the hair in a battle.

The last two were Sahawiyiniwuk who came from the north but stayed on the prairie to fight. Their fathers were Cipiwiyiniwuk who lived north of the river. Manito Eagle
married "Gasping's" daughter and became a headman.

The ogihtcitau are the brave men under the ukimau. The kihtco-ckinigiu are under the ogihtcitau. After the kihtco-ckinigiu do brave deeds which are seen by the ukimau, they are called ogihtcitau.

Sometimes the kihtco-ckinigiu, in trying to get the name ogihtcitau, invites the ogihtcitau and the ukimau into his tipi. He tells his wife to prepare food. He gives a feast and gives away his moccasins, leggings and other things. He also invites poor people in. If two men are fighting, the ogihtcitau and kihtco-ckinigiu must go and stop them. They give them gifts and stop the quarrel.

When the kihtco-ckinigiu gives gifts to the poor, they sing his praises and he gets a big name. The ogihtcitau and ukimau do the same. The ukimau gives most because he is rich.

The poor people borrow the horses from the ukimau or from the ukimau's sons. When they bring back the meat and hides, they give some to the ukimau as payment. Then the ukimau's wife and daughter prepare the hides and hire women to help them. The ogihtcitau and ukimau and kihtco-ckinigiu never eat alone. They always invite people to eat with them.

They do not necessarily have more horses than anyone else, but they do keep the fast ones. When they go on a raid they steal the very best horses. When they come back they give them to their relatives who breed colts.

Should an ogihtcitau give all his horses away, he will buy a fast one from some young fellow. The ogihtcitau always has good clothes and the young fellow would rather have fine clothes than a fast horse so the deal is made.

The ogihtcitau are not afraid to give their horses away because they know that they can always get more in raids. The ogihtcitau gets wealthy in this way. Suppose he comes back from a raid with horses. He will give some to his uncle, father-in-law, mother-in-law, to his mother and father. But when he needs clothes he goes to his father and says, "Father, I need a coat." "All right, son, take this horse and get one." If he wants to chase buffalo he goes to his uncle and gets the horse. He uses the horses he gave away as though they were his own. (Note how greatly property among the Cree is a relationship affair.)

If an ogihtcitau gives all his horses away, his father-in-law thinks, "Well, he has given all his horses away and has none for himself. If he wants my horse for anything I'll let him have it. He can get plenty more anyway."

Usually the father-in-law or father of the ogihtcitau would take care of his horses and would tie them up in camp at night. If the father-in-law or relatives are away, the ogihtcitau
takes care of the horses himself. If a man gives a mare to his relatives and the mare has a colt they raise it and try it out. If it is a good fast-running colt they will give it to their son-in-law. They don't care how they handle horses for they always can get plenty more.

If a man does brave deeds he becomes an ogihtcitau even if he does not take horses. Deeds count more than horses. It is not for stealing horses that they are called ogihtcitau but for being brave. They may be brave in hunt (killing bear) as well as in war.

An ogihtcitau wears a feather in his hair. The soft lower feathers are scraped off. Red paint is rubbed over the feather. If he takes men alive he puts feather on other side. He also cuts his hair short on the crown so that it stands up. The kili cut their hair short just a little bit in front.

The reason why they give all their things away is that they might be killed the next time and then who is going to have the horses? They don't know when they are going to die and so they give away all their goods.

The ogihtcitau did not have a dance of their own. But where a certain song was sung they would all get up -- it was their sing. They would be the headmen at a dance.

There were four dance tipis:
Sicigwausuk - Rattlers
Mustusicimuwiu - Buffalo Dance
Mistahatiuucimuwiu - Big Dog
Fwatcimpwiu - Sioux Dance

The ogihtcitau from the Cipiwiyuiuwuk and the Paskwawiyuiuwuk made the Rattler tipi.

The East people had the Big Dog dance. These dancers wore feathers all over their heads. They carried little sticks decorated with beadwork and strung with bugle rattles. At the butt there were eagle feathers. This stick was supposed to be a dog's tail.

The Prairie people had the Buffalo Dance and the Big Dog Dance.

The House people had the Kiciuuuk -- Cold Dance.

The West people had the Prairie Chicken Dance -- Piheucimuwiu. The Wood people had this too.

At these dance tipis, the astaskopicona -- back rests -- were reserved for the ogihtcitau only.

Historical

When we first were paid treaty, we didn't stay on the Reserve. We followed the buffalo south and went as far as the Crow
Agency and even farther but we didn't find the herds and it was dangerous so we came back. Then the government killed cattle and gave us beef. They gave us tea, flour, tobacco, just to make us stay on the Reserve. But at first we didn't like the steer meat -- it tasted like manure to us.

When we settled down on the Reserve, the farm instructor came and gave us bacon, tea and other rations. We hauled logs and he taught us how to make houses. They weren't very good but we lived in them anyway. The men who worked harder got more rations. Every able-bodied man got a yoke of oxen and a cow. The old men only got a cow. Then they gave us garden seed and seed wheat. The instructor showed us how to sow the wheat by hand and we each put in two or three acres. The next year they brought a bull and bred it to the cows and we raised calves. Everybody learned how to farm and that is how we made a living.

When we had raised our own steers, we turned in the Agency oxen. For food, we would cut hay with a scythe. We would all help each other to put up hay. We also cut our wheat and oats with a scythe. Four years later a mowing machine was brought to cut hay. Then a kind of a binder came.

In the late fall, after the wheat was cut, we would pick out a level piece of ground and flood it so that there was smooth ice. Then we would spread the wheat on the ice and beat it with a stick. That is how we used to thresh. Then we would fill pans with wheat and hold them up and pour the wheat out.

That is how we cleaned it. Then we would sack it and take it to the mill in town. All the flour was turned into the Agency in a common fund. We all got flour rations, one pound for two days for every person. Those who did not plant wheat had to chop wood or winter cattle to pay for their rations.

Of course we couldn't make our living by farming only. We trapped muskrats, coyotes, and fox. We traded the furs in the store. We would chop cordwood and take it to town. The soldiers and the Agency would give us store orders for our wood. The townspeople gave us cash, about $2.50 a cord. We stored berries to last us all winter. We hunted gophers, muskrats, badgers, prairie chickens, rabbits, and ducks for food.

But farming was the chief source of our livelihood. We liked all the new foods except the beef and we soon got used to that. But we didn't like the reserve life because we didn't get enough from the Agency. When the buffalo were on the prairies we had plenty to eat all the time.

I used to run the binder and thresher. I would run the machinery and cut for all the farms and the others would bunch for me. We all helped each other. Then the threshing machine came in run by steam. Two white men ran it and they showed me how to feed the separator. I was afraid of it at first but I soon learned how and did it all the time. This outfit threshed
for seven reserves and I went along with it from reserve to reserve, sometimes it took all winter before we finished. That is why my finger is crippled -- I caught it in the separator.

I raised many cattle in twenty years on the reserve. But I began to get sick and soon all my cattle were gone. I got sore eyes from working on the thresher and I became blind. The government knew that I got blind because I worked and has taken care of me ever since.

In the reserve days Sweet Grass's son was chief. Sweet Grass was killed an hour after he took treaty here. Six years later his son apici-yiuic, Small Man, took his father's place and then he was called Sweet Grass. He didn't take the chieftainship until he was married. He married a very old lady.

Long ago when a chief died his son took his name. I had my father's name long ago. My grandfather gave me the name "Coming Day." All my family were of the River people.

Small Man was picked by the Agent to be chief. He was brave in the rebellion but that is not why he became chief. Sweet Grass's father was not a chief. Long ago when a chief died his son took his place if he was brave. If the son was not brave he did not succeed his father.

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