

Living With Strangers

The Nineteenth-Century Sioux
and the Canadian-American Borderlands

by

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**LIVING WITH STRANGERS
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SIOUX AND THE
CANADIAN-AMERICAN BORDERLANDS**

BY

DAVID G. McCrady

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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ABSTRACT

The nineteenth-century Sioux are best conceptualized as a borderlands people. They made tremendous tactical use of their proximity to different groups of Europeans. Sioux in the Upper Mississippi Valley supported French traders during the early eighteenth century, but quickly accepted British ones after the British conquest of New France in 1763. To protect this trade and to prevent the encroachment of American traders onto Sioux lands, their young men fought alongside the British during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. At the conclusion of the latter war, some Sioux groups travelled to St Louis to sign treaties of peace with the United States government, while others, who wished to remain trading partners of the British, were regular, if often unwelcome, visitors to the British colony on the Red River of the North. Dakotas who travelled to the Red River Settlement often came into conflict over buffalo with the Métis. Yet peaces were sometimes made which laid the foundation for Sioux-Métis trade. Dakotas, Yanktonais and Lakotas all profited from their trade in buffalo products and contraband arms and ammunition with the Métis from the north. Dakotas from Minnesota used the boundary as a shield against the United States Army after the Dakota Conflict of 1862. As members of the borderlands community, Dakota and Yanktonai leaders petitioned Indian agents and other government officials in both Canada and the United States for goods and land. When Sitting Bull and other Lakota leaders took their followers north to Canada

following the Great Sioux War of 1876/77, their pathway was already in place and well travelled. Throughout the history of their interaction with incoming national powers, the Sioux used their position in the borderlands as a tool to improve their lives.

Historical problems, when defined by modern political boundaries in North America, limit the kinds of questions and approaches we bring to the study of aboriginal history, while a borderlands perspective offers new vistas and new conclusions. Borderlands people like the Sioux used the Canada-United States boundary for their own purposes. For that reason, studying these experiences offers fresh perspectives on the ways in which aboriginal peoples responded to settler societies.

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Preface

The story of Sitting Bull's sojourn in Canada unfolded before me as I sat on the floor of the Macpherson Library at the University of Victoria reading the annual reports of the Canadian Department of the Interior, the ministry charged in the 1870s with the administration of Indian affairs. I was surprised. I was reasonably well versed in Western Canadian history, yet I had no knowledge of these events. How could I be unaware that Sitting Bull, arguably one of the most famous American Indians to have ever lived, spent four years in what would later become southern Saskatchewan? I began to understand that, as an *American* Indian, Sitting Bull had no place in *Canadian* history. Moreover, I started to realize that the boundary separating Canada and the United States had had a profound impact on the way historians--still generally of European origin and male--had thought and written about aboriginal history. Stories like that of Sitting Bull and the Sioux had not been told very well.

When this project began, several years later, at the University of Manitoba, I set myself the task of trying to write the history of those Sioux who ventured into the area on both sides of the 49th parallel during the nineteenth century. I would write about the Dakotas, or Eastern Sioux, who left Minnesota after the warfare of 1862 and went to to Rupert's Land, and the Lakotas, or Western Sioux, who entered the North-West Territories (as Rupert's Land came to be known after it came under Canadian control) in the 1870s, having defeated Custer at

the Little Bighorn. But foremost I wanted to learn how the Sioux--not just in wartime, but in peacetime as well--had come to understand the boundary and to use it for their own purposes.

I discovered while I researched and wrote that the boundary, and how it had partitioned academics, had created several problems which I now faced. Would readers steeped in the history of one country know as much about the other? Someone interested in Western American history knows about Lewis and Clark, the Bozemen Trail and the Black Hills gold rush. But would that person know about Gabriel Dumont, the Honorable James McKay or the Northwest Rebellion? Someone interested in Western Canadian history could explain the significance of the Canadian Pacific Railway; could he or she do the same for the American Frontier? How would such a divided audience receive this work? My research touched on some well known episodes in the history of the American and Canadian Wests--the Dakota Conflict of 1862, the March West of the North-West Mounted Police in 1874, the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Sioux War of 1876/77--and certainly some well known personages are here--Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, Louis Riel, Sitting Bull and George Armstrong Custer. And yet, there are some remarkable lacunae in the background literature. There seemed to be so much that I needed to know to complete my work, yet where was it? Much has been written, for example, about the Métis and the Red River Resistance, but very little about the Métis who lived on the plains away from Red River, and almost nothing on Métis communities in the United States. It was

difficult, also, to find good maps in the published literature which gave equal weight to places on both sides of the boundary. In the end, by putting together material from a number of sources on both sides of the border, I hope I have said something new and significant about about Sioux history.

Who are the Sioux? Even Sioux nomenclature is problematic. The synonymy for the Sioux in the forthcoming Plains volume of the *Handbook of North American Indians* will be an extraordinary document. In brief, although the nineteenth-century Sioux considered themselves a single people, they did not live in a single political entity. People lived in bands which, in turn, were parts of larger entities, of which there were at least thirteen in the nineteenth century. The Mdewakantons, Wahpekutes, Sissetons and Wahpetons (using English forms) called themselves the Dakotas (*Dak'óta*), and are also collectively known as the Santees, or Eastern Sioux. The Yanktons and Yanktonais are collectively the Yankton or Middle Sioux, although they, too, call themselves Dakotas. The Oglalas, Brulés, Minneconjous, Two Kettles, Sans Arcs, Blackfeet and Hunkpapas (again, using English forms) call themselves Lakotas (*Lak'óta*), and are collectively known as the Tetons or Western Sioux.¹

Betraying the fact that I am Canadian and that the Canada-

¹ See Raymond J. DeMallie, "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories: Cultural and Historical Background of the Ogden B. Read Collection," Glenn E. Markoe, ed., *Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection* (Burlington, 1986), pp. 20-21 and Douglas R. Parks and DeMallie, "Sioux, Assiniboine, and Stoney Dialects: A Classification," *Anthropological Linguistics* 34, 1-4 (1992), pp. 233-255.

U.S. boundary has shaped my intellectual toolshed, I use Canadian spellings for the names of aboriginal groups. Unless quoting documents that use American forms, I refer to the Blackfoot and Ojibwas, not the Blackfeet and Chippewas. In keeping with Axtell's dictum,² plural forms of aboriginal group names conform to the rules of standard English--except in the case of *Blackfoot* which, for reasons known to no-one, is the usual singular and plural form in Canada.

I have not made corrections to any of the documents that I quote. The spelling, grammar, punctuation and errors appearing in quotations are in the original, and so I do not use *sic*. Any errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, interpretation or fact in the rest of the text are my own, and not those of anyone who has read the manuscript or offered comments and advice.

Financial support for this research was provided by the University of Manitoba, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program. I would like to thank them all.

A number of people offered insight, inspiration and support. First of all, I must thank Jennifer Brown, who supervised my graduate studies and this dissertation. Let me also extend my gratitude to Ken Coates, Francis Carroll, David Reed Miller, Maureen Matthews and Michael Gourlie. I reserve a special thank-you for Ray DeMallie, who gave me a home for a year at the

² James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York, 1985), p. xi.

American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University, granted me access to his huge collection of archival photocopies and microfilm, and made me feel completely welcome. Without his help, this dissertation could not have been written. Garth Clarke, Gerhard Ens, Molly Clark, Brian Hubner, and Thelma Poirier all pointed me to important sources. The staffs at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the National Archives of Canada, the Montana State Historical Society Archives, and especially the Glenbow Archives have been encouraging and helpful. I wish to thank my family, Eileen and Carolyn McCrady, and above all, my partner, Susan Gray, who supported me through it all, gave me clarity and made everything possible.

Living with Strangers

**Partitioning Sioux History:
An Introduction**

The Sioux are generally conceived of as "American" Indians. The feather-bonnetted, tipi-dwelling, horse-riding, buffalo-hunting Sioux warrior is, for many people around the world, the image of the American Indian. By the 1870s, most Sioux had entered into treaty relationships with the American government--northern Lakota bands under Sitting Bull and other leaders being major exceptions. In so doing, they became "American" Indians in the eyes of the American and Canadian governments, and in the eyes of subsequent scholars. This designation has determined, in many ways, how the history of Sioux peoples has been written. In the United States, the history of the nineteenth-century Sioux has been largely the history of their opposition to American encroachment onto their lands. Sioux opposition to the reduction of their reservations in Minnesota produced the Dakota Conflict of 1862. Their opposition to army posts constructed to protect American travellers on the Bozeman trail to the Montana goldfields culminated in Red Cloud's War in the 1860s, and opposition to gold miners in the Black Hills and to railroads in the Yellowstone Valley led to the Great Sioux War of 1876/77. The Ghost Dancers were massacred at Wounded Knee in 1890, thus putting an end to any further Sioux resistance. By the end of the century, the Sioux had been exiled to reservations.

The writing of Sioux history will profit if we recognize the Sioux not as "American" Indians but as a people of the

borderlands. Great Britain and the United States agreed in 1818 that the 49th parallel would serve as the boundary between their respective territories from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. This boundary--drawn on European maps but not demarcated on the ground--went unrecognized by the Sioux and other native peoples of the Northern Plains for much of the century. Yet the people of the western interior were well aware of differences between the American, British and Canadian traders who ventured into the area, and they noted differences in the range and quality of goods that the traders offered. The Sioux preferred the British, and to prevent the encroachment of American traders into the *pays d'en haut*, their young men fought alongside the British during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. At the conclusion of the latter war, some Sioux groups travelled to St Louis to sign treaties of peace with the United States government, while others wished to remain trading partners of the British.¹ They were regular, if usually unwelcome, visitors to the British colony on the Red River of the North. The movement of Sioux peoples to the northwest, and into the Anglo-American borderlands, became more pronounced as the century progressed. After the Dakota Conflict of the 1860s, many Dakota groups fled to the borderlands, visiting settlements both

¹ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln, 1984), pp. 92-93. Russell Reid and Clell G. Gannon edited the journal of an American expedition that made twelve treaties with the Missouri River Sioux in 1825 in "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 4, 1 (October 1929), pp. 5-56.

in Rupert's Land (the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company, now much of Western Canada) and Dakota Territory, and establishing close ties to Yanktonai groups. By the end of the decade, Dakotas, Yanktonais and Yanktons who had entered the area from farther down the Missouri River were moving into the Milk River country, where they were joined by Northern Lakota bands that had recently taken possession from the Crows of the country to the south, between the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.² By the mid-nineteenth century, the Sioux of the borderlands were readily identifiable groups. They were Dakotas under leaders such as Standing Buffalo and White Cap, Yanktonais under Medicine Bear and Black Catfish, Yanktons under Struck by the Ree, and Northern Lakotas, especially Hunkpapas, under leaders like Black Moon, Four Horns and Sitting Bull. They inhabited the plains, badlands and river valleys from the Qu'Appelle River in the north to the Yellowstone River in the south. Fort Peck, run by the American firm of Durfee and Peck, was a favoured trading post, although even as early as the 1860s Lakotas and Yanktonais travelled north in hopes of trading at the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Qu'Appelle. When Sitting Bull and other Lakota leaders took their followers north to Canada following the Great Sioux War of 1876/77, their pathway was already in place and well travelled.

The Sioux exploited the boundary tactically. The decision

² Raymond J. DeMallie, "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories: Cultural and Historical Background of the Ogden B. Read Collection," Glenn E. Markoe, ed., *Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection* (Burlington, Vt., 1986).

of some to move to British territory in the 1860s and 1870s was predicated on the knowledge that Americans troops would not follow them across the boundary, which they conceived of as a "mysterious trail."³ Sioux leaders petitioned representatives of both the Canadian and American governments for land, testing which government would grant them the better treatment. And the Sioux took advantage of trading opportunities that were made possible by their location in the borderlands: Métis traders supplied the Sioux with goods that were contraband in the United States, such as firearms and ammunition, because they were close enough to the border to evade American authorities if they were pursued.⁴

There is a voluminous literature, both popular and academic, on the Sioux. Some topics have, of course, received more attention than others. The story of the Great Sioux War of

³ University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections, Walter S. Campbell Collection, box 104, Robert P. Higheagle, "How Sitting Bull Was Made a Chief," p. 40 and see Nebraska State Historical Society, Ely S. Ricker Collection, MS 8, series 2, microfilm reel 1, William Garnett Interview, 15 January 1907, Tablet 2.

⁴ Indigenous peoples throughout the colonial world were acutely aware that they could take advantage of the existence of separate colonial economies and economic policies either by selling goods in whichever market offered the better prices, or by trading in contraband goods. Métis-Sioux trade shared characteristics of this kind of borderlands trade. For examples of contraband trade across colonial territorial boundaries, see John Davison Collins, "The Clandestine Movement of Groundnuts across the Niger-Nigeria Boundary," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 2 (1976), pp. 259-278; A.I. Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984* (London and Lagos, 1985) and A.I. Asiwaju, "Problem Solving along African Borders: The Nigeria-Benin Case since 1889," *Across Boundaries: Transborder Interaction in Comparative Perspective*, Oscar J. Martínez, ed. (El Paso, 1986), pp. 173-174.

1876/77 and of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer's defeat at the battle of the Little Bighorn, for example, have become entrenched in the mythology and historiography of the American West. The interpretation and analysis of each event, but most notably the Custer fight, have become cottage industries.⁵ The best recent ethnohistorical material attempts to give voice to Sioux perspectives. Raymond DeMallie, in particular, has been instrumental in publishing manuscripts written or dictated by Sioux people, and in demonstrating their value for the ethnohistorical method.⁶

However, the history of Sioux peoples in the Anglo-American borderlands has been largely overlooked due to the national perspectives of historians. Much of the research on the Dakota

⁵ Excellent recent works include John S. Gray, *Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed* (Lincoln, 1991); Jerome A. Greene, *Yellowstone Command: Colonel Nelson A. Miles and the Great Sioux War, 1876-1877* (Lincoln, 1991); Paul L. Hedren, ed., *The Great Sioux War, 1876-77* (Helena, 1991); Paul Andrew Hutton, ed., *The Custer Reader* (Lincoln, 1992); Richard Allan Fox, Jr., *Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: The Little Big Horn Reexamined* (Norman, 1993); and Jerome A. Greene, ed., *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux War, 1876-1877* (Norman, 1994).

⁶ See, for example, DeMallie's editions of the Black Elk and Walker materials: *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln, 1984); James R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (with Elaine A. Jahner) (Lincoln, 1980); Walker, *Lakota Society* (Lincoln, 1982); a further volume of Walker materials is published as *Lakota Myth*, Elaine A. Jahner, ed. (Lincoln, 1983). Douglas Parks and DeMallie discuss the forthcoming fourth volume of Walker material, manuscripts written by George Sword, in "Plains Indian Native Literatures," *Boundary* 19, 3 (1992), pp. 105-147. DeMallie discusses of the place of Lakota texts in ethnohistory in "'These Have No Ears': Narrative and the Ethnohistorical Method," *Ethnohistory* 40, 4 (Fall 1993), pp. 515-538.

Conflict focusses on the war itself, and not on the activities of those Sioux who fled to the plains during its aftermath. The career of the elder Standing Buffalo gives ample evidence of this: Canadian historians have been interested only in Standing Buffalo's interviews with Canadian government officials, while Americans have looked only at his talks with American authorities.⁷ Gary Clayton Anderson's biography of the Mdewakanton leader, Little Crow, included a chapter on his people's flight to Rupert's Land in the 1860s--but went no further.⁸ Anderson's account of Dakota-European relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley also ends in 1862, and mentions the northward migration of Dakota peoples even more briefly.⁹ Although Peter Douglas Elias's study of the Dakotas in Canada, the only book-length study of this topic, begins with the archaeological record of Dakota peoples in what is now Canada, his discussion of modern Canadian Sioux communities begins with their departure from the United States following the warfare of 1862, where his American counterparts' works generally end.¹⁰

The writing of Dakota cultural history is also affected by

⁷ For representative works, see DeMallie for Standing Buffalo's actions south of the border, and Peter Elias for those north of it. DeMallie, "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories"; Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest: Lessons for Survival* (Winnipeg, 1988).

⁸ *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (St Paul, 1986), chap. 9.

⁹ *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, p. 278.

¹⁰ *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest*, chap. 2.

the boundary. When Alice Kehoe conducted fieldwork in Wahpeton Dakota communities in Northern Saskatchewan in the 1960s, she was surprised to discover them practicing a modified form of the Ghost Dance. American historians had assumed that the Ghost Dance came to an end at the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, when many participants were killed: they had not paid any attention to Canada, and so had overlooked the Canadian history of this religious movement.¹¹

The lack of attention to the northern borderlands has had a tremendous impact on our perceptions of the Lakotas in the mid to late 1800s. When Joseph Manzione reviewed published accounts of the aftermath of the battle at the Little Bighorn, he concluded that the Lakotas apparently "disappeared as soon as the dust had settled from the clear Montana air."¹² The Lakotas had not, of course, simply vanished. Most went to the American Indian agencies along the Missouri River, but others sought refuge in Canada. In doing so, they disappeared from the pages of American history. In American history books, the Great Sioux War ended when the army sent in additional troops to crush the last native resistance. Rarely is more than a paragraph given to those Lakotas who sought survival north of the border; they are no longer subjects for American history. Canadian historians pick up the history of the Lakotas in 1876--only after they have

¹¹ Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (New York, 1989).

¹² Manzione, *"I Am Looking to the North for My Life": Sitting Bull, 1876-1881* (Salt Lake City, 1991), p. ix.

become subjects of Canadian history. The result has been the creation of two separate histories--the first ending at the forty-ninth parallel, where the second one begins.

Historians who have examined the flight of Lakota people to Canada have tried to make it relevant to an existing debate or tradition within either Canadian or American history. For John Peter Turner, who published an official history of the North-West Mounted Police in 1950 and who was the first historian in Canada to take serious note of the Lakotas, the Sioux contributed to the heroic story--much mythologized--of the early years of the force. The Lakotas who participated in the battle at the Little Bighorn were "a horde of savages" and "red devils": those who fled to Canada were "a regular mob" and "a horde of lawless people" who repeatedly threatened trouble. Turner conceded that the Lakota were never a real threat or problem of any sort during their sojourn in Canada. Nevertheless, he needed a foil against which the NWMP could be tested. There was something in Turner, also, of the popular debate over the merits of Canadian and American Indian policies. Of course, Turner supported Canadian policy. In his treatment, "Sitting Bull had proven himself more or less amenable to Canadian jurisdiction, thanks to tactful handling by Superintendent [James Morrow] Walsh and others." Luckily, "the wildest and most dreaded Indians of the North American plains had bowed down willingly, almost abjectly, to the humane firmness of

the North-West Mounted Police."¹³

To Paul Sharp, the first American to discuss the Lakota exodus, the Battle of the Little Bighorn was a minor event. The events that followed it, including the migration to Canada, were far more significant as they "precipitated a crisis in the recently acquired territories of the Dominion, . . . [and] threw a chill over Canadian-American relations."¹⁴ His emphasis on the international complications produced by the Lakotas' migration was a significant departure from Turner and a major contribution to the literature, but in other respects his treatment was similar. Like Turner, Sharp accepted as fact the superiority of Canadian Indian policy, writing in 1955, "Against a background of violence and hatred south of the forty-ninth parallel, the Canadian government conceived and executed an orderly, well-planned, and honorable policy."¹⁵ He portrayed the encounter between warlike Lakota and humane police as a delicate situation deftly handled by the Canadians. "Superintendent Walsh," he wrote, "faced a crucial assignment. With a handful of men he must police warriors who had defied entire American armies. . . .

¹³ Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893* (Ottawa, 1950), vol. 1, pp. vii, 295, 303, 304, 393, 458, 510. A good summary of the literature on Canadian and American Indian policy is found in Hana Samek, *The Blackfoot Confederacy, 1880-1920: A Comparative Study of Canadian and U.S. Indian Policy* (Albuquerque, 1987), pp. 1-15.

¹⁴ Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885* (Minneapolis, 1955), p. 247.

¹⁵ Paul F. Sharp, "Three Frontiers: Some Comparative Studies of Canadian, American, and Australian Settlement," *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (1955), p. 373.

Mistakes at this point could touch off an Indian war destroying everything the police had accomplished during their three years on the plains. Fortunately, Major Walsh possessed unusual skill in Indian negotiations."¹⁶ All the stereotypical characters who inhabited the pages of Turner's *North-West Mounted Police* can be found in Sharp's *Whoop-Up Country*.

Since the 1950s, the history of the Lakota experience in Canada has become marginalized, a footnote in Western history with little significance to any questions of interest to most historians. The first major study of the North-West Mounted Police since Turner, for example, discussed the Lakotas in a mere four paragraphs.¹⁷ American accounts of the Lakota exodus to Canada typically present these events within the narrow context of Lakota-American relations, and especially in discussions about the aftermath of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In such accounts, the experiences of the Lakotas in Canada is reduced to a few paragraphs, or even a single sentence.¹⁸ One reason is that the subject does not "fit" into American history. Most work

¹⁶ Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁷ R.C. Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 30-32.

¹⁸ See, for example, John W. Bailey, *Pacifying the Plains: General Alfred Terry and the Decline of the Sioux, 1866-1890* (Westport, 1979), pp. 166, 172-173, 187, 189; Robert M. Utley's *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 19-20 and *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque, 1984), pp. 187-189; Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865-1903* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 98, 172-173, 180; Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West (Norman, 1991), pp. 104, 108.

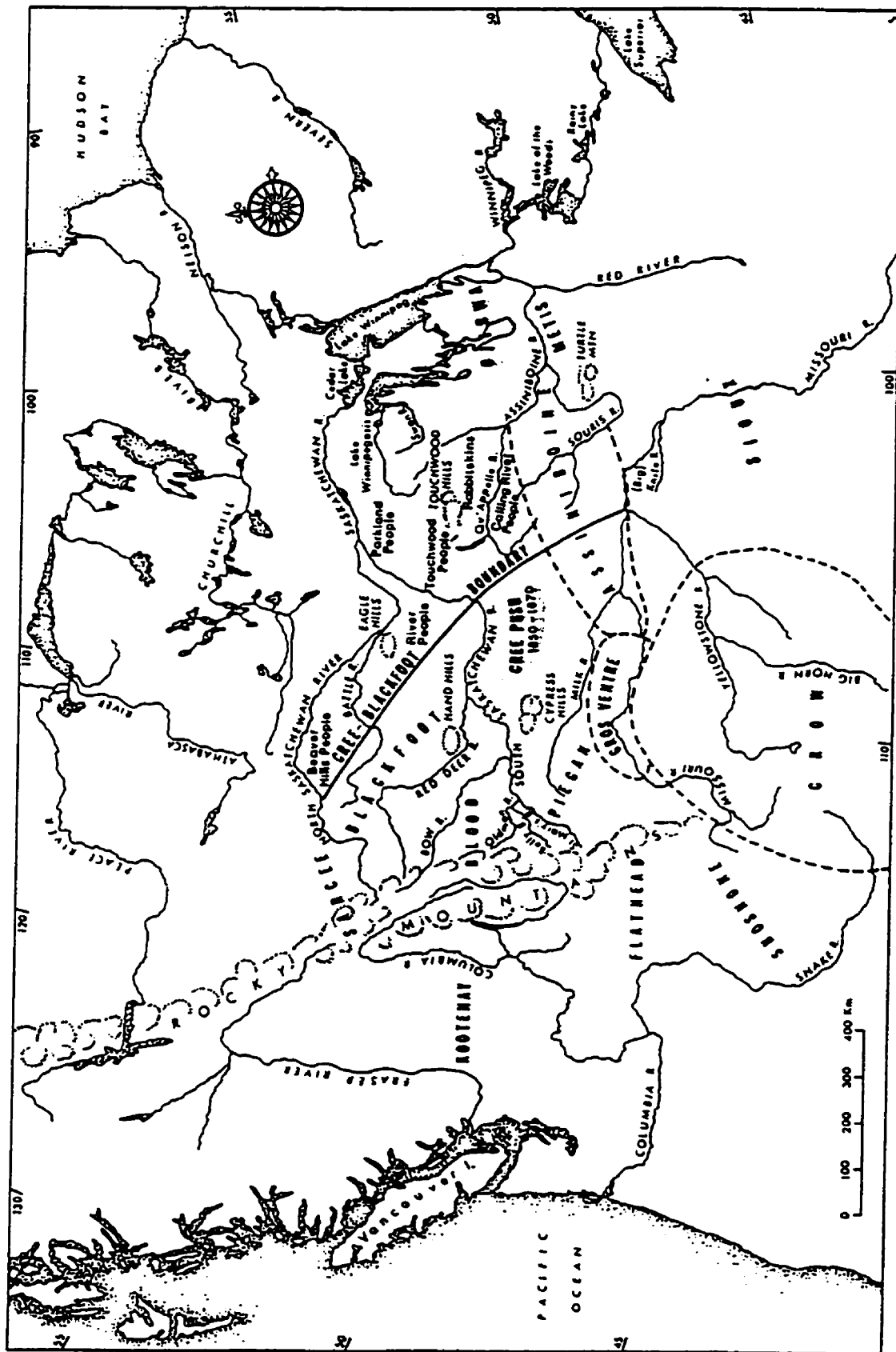
since the 1970s has--following Sharp's lead--presented it as an episode in diplomatic history, thus marginalizing it as a part of strictly Canadian or American history.¹⁹ More recently, Robert M. Utley's biography of Sitting Bull examined the years the Hunkpapa leader spent in Canada more fully than any other and went beyond other studies in its attempt to transcend the national perspectives endemic in both American and Canadian history. Yet Sitting Bull was presented as an American Indian who took his people into the Grandmother's Land (that is, the land of Queen Victoria) after 1876, and not as the leader of a borderlands people who had had extensive contacts with communities on both sides of the boundary long before the events on the Little Bighorn.²⁰

Historical problems, when defined by modern political boundaries in North America, limit the kinds of questions and approaches we bring to the study of aboriginal history. Boundary populations and their history remain marginal to the concerns of Western American and Western Canadian historiography. And yet, a borderlands paradigm offers new vistas and result in significant

¹⁹ See Gary Pennanen, "Sitting Bull: Indian Without a Country," *Canadian Historical Review* 51, 2 (June 1970), pp. 123-140; Christopher Joyner, "The Hegira of Sitting Bull To Canada: Diplomatic Realpolitik, 1876-1881," *Journal of the West* 13, 2 (April 1974), pp. 6-18; and George Stanley, "Displaced Red Men: The Sioux in Canada," Ian A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, eds., *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7* (Vancouver, 1978). This theme is also discussed in Manzione's, "I Am Looking to the North for My Life".

²⁰ Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York, 1993).

new conclusions. Borderlands people, unlike those living in areas deep within the territorial limits of a newcomer state, interacted with two different settler societies. They were confronted by--among many things--two different sets of government policies vis-à-vis Western lands and Western Indians, two distinct groups of missionaries sent from different eastern cities, and two different experiences with European forms of law enforcement. Studying borderlands experiences offers fresh perspectives on the ways in which aboriginal peoples responded to settler societies. In some ways, aboriginal peoples tended to ignore the boundary. They moved repeatedly back and forth across the border, continuing to hunt and trap and gather foods, just as they had always done. But they also began to use the boundary for their own purposes. Sometimes, entire bands presented themselves to government agents in both countries for rations and presents; occasionally individuals signed treaties in both countries. The nineteenth-century Sioux used the boundary both as a shield against oppressive policies and as a gateway to new opportunities. Certainly the study of these transboundary populations offers fresh insights into the way aboriginal peoples responded to the imposition of European institutions and settlement.



Map 1 Aboriginal Territories on the Northern Plains, ca. 1850

Source: John S. Milloy, The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870 (Winnipeg, 1988), p. x.

**From Contested Ground
to Borderlands, 1752-1862**

In the roughly half century between the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1752 and the close of the War of 1812, Sioux lands were contested by empires, both old and new. At first, France and Great Britain and then Great Britain and the emerging United States struggled for paramountcy in the *pays d'en haut*.

For the Sioux, these years were times of change, and of opportunity. Sioux territory was already a borderland in which Sioux actively pursued their own goals, and chose allies from among the newcomers on the basis of what best served Sioux interests. The Eastern Sioux traded and sometimes fought with the French before the Seven Years War, sending their leaders to Québec and Montréal to meet and discuss trade and military issues with Onontio (the Great Lakes Native title for the governors of Canada).¹ At war's end, France relinquished Canada to the British and ceded Louisiana to the Spanish (lest it, too, fall into Britain's hands). British traders soon approached the Sioux and established trade ties.

The Anglo-Sioux alliance proved durable. Even after Sioux territory fell to the Americans at the conclusion of the War of

¹ A useful account of Sioux-French relations during the final years of the French regime is Kenneth P. Baily, ed. and trans., *Journal of Joseph Marin: French Colonial Explorer and Military Commander in the Wisconsin Country, August 7, 1753-June 20, 1754* (Los Angeles, 1975). Marin's journal is owned by the Henry E. Huntington Library and was first published (in French) in R.P. Ant. Champagne, ed., "Journal de Marin, Fils, 1753-1754," *Rapport des Archives du Québec* 41 (1963), pp. 235-308.

1812, Sioux traders hoped to continue trading with the British. As the Americans did not permit British subjects to trade with Indians on American soil, the Sioux travelled to the Red River Settlement in Rupert's Land, where they entreated the Hudson's Bay Company as early as 1817 to renew trade ties. In the process, the Sioux entered the new Anglo-American borderlands and added the boundary itself to the list of tools useful in achieving their own ends.

The British government knew very little of the western interior when it acquired Canada from the French at the close of the Seven Years War in 1763. Jonathan Carver was part of an unofficial expedition organized in 1766 by Robert Rogers, the commander at Michilimackinac, to gain knowledge of these new lands and to promote trade with the Indians. The expedition members travelled separately to the *pays d'en haut*, but were to have rendezvoused during the winter. Carver missed the appointment and wintered instead with a band of Dakotas on the Minnesota River. In the spring of 1767 he invited Dakotas from both the river and plains bands (probably Upper Santees or Yanktonais) to visit the British at Michilimackinac. The Dakotas were interested, but preferred that the British come to them. At a council held on 1 May 1767, the Dakotas informed Carver that they "wish[e]d I would encourage the English to come among them and trade and settle near them and insisted upon my returning

again to their country and bring fire arms & tobacco."²

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Sioux had incorporated the Montréal-based North West Company into their trade network. Fur traders writing in the 1790s and early 1800s recorded that Dakotas visited Canadian traders on the Minnesota and Des Moines rivers with whom they exchanged peltries for guns, kettles, pipes, bows and other items. These eastern Sioux then attended the annual Sioux trade fair held between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers at which they exchanged iron goods for horses and leather goods with the Yanktonais and Lakotas. Finally, the Lakotas traded some iron goods to the Arikaras for horses, mules, corn, beans and native tobacco.³ The British presence in the region troubled the governor-general of Louisiana, who complained to the Spanish secretary of state that the Sioux, Ojibwas and

² John Parker, ed., *The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents, 1766-1770* (St Paul, 1976), introduction, pp. 117-118 (quotation). See also Carver's *Travels through the Interior Parts of North-America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, 1778).

³ Annie Heloise Abel, "Trudeau's Description of the Upper Missouri," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 8, 1-2 (June-September 1921), pp. 176-177; Annie Heloise Abel, *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, Rose Abel Wright, trans. (Norman, 1939), pp. 121-123; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (New York, 1959), vol. 6, pp. 45, 89; Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *Exploratory Travels through the Western Territories of North America: Comprising a Voyage from St. Louis, on the Mississippi, to the Source of that River, and a Journey through the Interior of Louisiana, and the North-Eastern Provinces of New Spain, Performed in the Years 1805, 1806, 1807, by Order of the Government of the United States* (Denver, 1889), pp. 127-131, 134-137. See Donald Jackson, ed., *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike with Letters and Related Documents* (Norman, 1966), vol. 1, *passim* for numerous references to British traders.

Assiniboines were partial to the English and hostile to Spanish traders on the Upper Missouri River.⁴

It was their trade with the British that the Sioux hoped to protect when their men fought beside Great Britain during the War of 1812.⁵ A few Sioux had also fought for the British during the American Revolution.⁶ The basis of Anglo-Dakota relations was not war but economics, a fact made clear by Mdewakanton leader

⁴ A.P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (St Louis, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 385-395, Carondelet to Alcudia, New Orleans, 8 January 1796.

⁵ The involvement of Sioux peoples in the War of 1812 can be gleaned from a number of collections of primary documents: see William Wood, ed. *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812*, 3 vols. (Toronto, 1920); Joseph Gruesel, ed., "Copies of Papers on File in the Dominion Archives at Ottawa, Canada, Pertaining to the Relations of the British Government with the United States during the Period of the War of 1812," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections* 15 (1890; rpt. ed. 1909), pp. 1-744; Joseph Gruesel, ed., "Copies of Papers on File in the Dominion Archives at Ottawa, Canada, Pertaining to the Relations of the British Government with the United States during and subsequent to the Period of the War of 1812," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections* 16 (1890; rpt. ed. 1910), pp. 1-775; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., "Dickson and Grignon Papers," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 11 (1888), pp. 271-315; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., "The Bulger Papers," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 13 (1895), pp. 10-153; Lyman C. Draper, ed., "Lawe and Grignon Papers, 1794-1821," *Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 10 (1888), pp. 90-141; and Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. 14, *The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814* (Washington, 1949).

⁶ See Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., "Papers from the Canadian Archives--1778-1783," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 11 (1888), pp. 144-147 and Jean Baptiste Perrault, "Narrative of the Travels and Adventures of a Merchant Voyageur in the Savage Territories of Northern America Leaving Montreal the 28th of May 1783 (to 1820)," John Sharpless Fox, ed., *Historical Collections and Researches Made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society* 37 (1909-1910), pp. 544-545.

Wabasha in the spring of 1812, before war had been declared, when he noted that the Dakotas "live by our English Traders who have always assisted us, [and we] have always found our English Father the protector of our women and children."⁷

At the war's end, the British informed their native allies that, due to American objections, British traders would be withdrawn from American territory. The Dakotas were horrified: during a council held on Drummond Island in June 1816, the Mdewakanton leader Little Crow told the British that this would seal the fate of the Indians.⁸ At a council held at the end of the month, Wabasha complained that the Americans threatened to build forts on Sioux lands and revealed that the Americans had told him that the British had abandoned the Indians during the peace negotiations.⁹ The Dakotas were furious at having been abandoned at the peace talks.

While the end of British trade in the Old Northwest prompted some Dakota groups to sign peace treaties with the United States, others travelled to the Red River Settlement to open negotiations with British officials there. During the winter of 1816/17, two

⁷ Wood, ed., *Select British Documents*, vol. 1, p. 425, speech of Wabasha.

⁸ Gruesel, ed, "Copies of Papers on File in the Dominion Archives," pp. 468-469, Robert McDouall to Sir, Drummond Island, 19 June 1816.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 479-487, "Indian Council" 29 June 1816; William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeek, Lake of the Woods, &c., Performed in the Year 1823* (Minneapolis, 1959), p. 400. Keating's account of Little Crow's speech is significantly more hostile in tone than the one reprinted in Gruesel.

Ojibwa women arrived at Pembina from the Sioux country to invite the Ojibwas to make peace. Learning of the peaceful overture, Robert Dickson, a trader who had facilitated Sioux support for the British during the war, sent a message to the Sioux, asking them to visit him at Red River.¹⁰ Twenty-two Sioux men arrived in the summer of 1817 and held discussions at Fort Douglas which resulted in a short-lived peace between the Sioux and Ojibwas.¹¹

Relations among the Sioux, Ojibwas and the Hudson's Bay Company were volatile. The company made efforts to trade with the Sioux, arguing that trade promoted peace between the Sioux and Ojibwa and, thus, helped protect the Red River Settlement. The Ojibwas, however, were furious at the company for trading goods and ammunition to their enemies. Parties of Sissetons and Yanktonais visited Fort Douglas in 1817, 1819, 1820 and 1821 to trade and to negotiate peace agreements with the Ojibwas, yet hostilities did not subside. The Sioux killed three Ojibwas during an incident in 1817, and the Ojibwas stole the Sioux horses in 1819. In August 1821, a confrontation between a party of fifty Ojibwa warriors and the Sioux delegation at Fort Douglas

¹⁰ Information about Dickson can be found in Ernest Alexander Cruikshank, "Robert Dickson, the Indian Trader," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* 12 (1892), pp. 133-153 and in Louis Arthur Tohill, "Robert Dickson, British Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 3, 1 (October 1928), pp. 5-49; 3, 2 (January 1929), pp. 83-128; 3, 3 (April 1929), pp. 182-203.

¹¹ Edwin James, ed., *A Narrative of Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner (U.S. Interpreter at the Saut de Ste. Marie) During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (New York, 1830), pp. 223-226.

nearly ended in a battle. A Métis shot one of the Sioux delegation and wounded another while the Sioux were in the settlement and, in retaliation, the Sioux killed a family of Ojibwas near Pembina while on their way home. In the aftermath of these disturbances, the HBC abandoned the Sioux trade.¹²

The Sioux attempted to renew trade ties with the Hudson's Bay Company after its merger with the North West Company in 1821, but the company was reluctant: the Ojibwas were adamantly opposed, and the HBC, acting in its own interest, sided with them. When a party of Sioux was seen near Pembina in September 1822, one colony official recorded the change in the HBC's attitude towards them. "We are kept in a constant state of alarm by reports concerning those Scoux [Sioux]," he wrote. "[T]hey were seen only two days ago near Pembina, & I greatly fear they will yet do some serious mischief to the Colony Settlement. . . . I know very well that mischief will follow, if we do not purchase their good will by presents; and this will displease Pegowis [Peguis, the noted Red River Ojibwa leader] & his people, who are already much discontented and greatly inclined to be saucy."¹³

¹² Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780-1870* (Winnipeg, 1994), pp. 94, 124; Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State with Some Account of the Native Races and Its General History, to the Present Day* (London, 1856), pp. 55-56; John West, *The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony, British North America; And Frequent Excursions among the North-West American Indians, in the Years 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823* (Wakefield and New York, 1966), pp. 70-71.

¹³ National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Andrew Bulger Papers, MG19 E5, vol. 2, pp. 322-323, anon. to Sir, Ft Douglas, 10 September 1822.

Violent incidents often marked Sioux visits to the Red River Settlement after 1821. To prevent a group of Sioux under Wa'ánatan from coming to the settlement in May 1822, a group of HBC traders (accompanied by missionary John West) went and met them at the company's post at Pembina, just south of the newly declared boundary. Three Assiniboines had come also "to smoke the calumet" with the Sioux. That night, Wa'ánatan shot one of the Assiniboines in retaliation for the theft of one of his horses by an Assiniboine about a year before, and the Sioux hastily departed.¹⁴ A visit to Fort Garry from the Sisseton leader Burnt Earth and thirty-five of his men in 1834 nearly resulted in a battle with the Ojibwas. The visit proceeded cordially until the arrival of a large party of Ojibwas who had lost relatives in a Sioux attack a year or two before. Upon the departure of the Sioux, a small number of the Ojibwas set out on the Assiniboine River in hopes of intercepting them. Accounts of the incident disagree. According to Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in North America, the Ojibwas were determined to attack the Sioux; retired fur trader Alexander Ross, however, later argued that the Ojibwas had no hostile intent and that they had only entered the river to have a "parting peep" at the Sioux. The Ojibwas, he wrote, believed it was the whites who intended to attack the Sioux.¹⁵ While the documentary evidence leaves this matter unresolved, it is clear

¹⁴ West, *The Substance of a Journal*, pp. 82-84.

¹⁵ Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 162-165.

that incidents such as this made the Sioux more cautious. When Wa'ánatan returned to the settlement in 1836, he brought a much larger contingent, some 250 men. Probably as a result of Ojibwa opposition, Wa'ánatan had concluded that his people would not be able to trade at Red River: Thomas Simpson (George's cousin) noted that his delegation came to ask the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a post in their country.¹⁶

Relations between the Sioux and the Red River Métis during the nineteenth century alternated between war and peace. As Alexander Ross commented, "Every year, in fact, treaties of peace are made between the half-breeds and the Indians, and every year they are as regularly broken."¹⁷ While Sioux leaders such as Burnt Earth were eager to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company and courted peace with the Métis, others opposed Métis hunts on Sioux lands. John McLean, a Hudson's Bay Company trader, noted in his memoirs that

The Indians of the plain [undoubtedly the Sioux] view the encroachment of the strange race [the Métis] on their hunting grounds, with feelings of jealousy and enmity. They are, accordingly, continually on the alert; they attack detached parties and stragglers; they also set fire to the prairies about the time the "brulés" set out for the hunt,

¹⁶ Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 158-162, 162-165; G.P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843* (Toronto, 1938), pp. 249-250, Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, Red River, 28 November 1836.

¹⁷ Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, p. 324.

and by this means drive the game beyond their reach. "Owing to this circumstance," concluded McLean, the Métis "returned with empty carts" following the hunts of 1844 and 1845.¹⁸

Internecine conflict between Sioux and Métis groups continued throughout the 1840s and 1850s. During the summer hunt of 1840, Métis hunters under Jean-Baptiste Wilkie, Sr, travelled south to the Missouri River, where a party of twelve Sioux killed Louison Vallé when he was separated from the camp. In response, the Métis pursued the Sioux and killed eight. In July the Métis were near the American Fur Company's Fort Union on the Missouri River, and some forty went to the fort to trade. The camp moved west, where it encountered Burnt Earth's Sioux. Burnt Earth and his band visited the Métis camp and discussed the Vallé affair and the eight Sioux who had been killed. Burnt Earth accused the Métis of wanton cruelty--eight Sioux had been killed in retaliation for only one Métis death. The Métis made a small collection and gave it to Burnt Earth. To all outward appearances, the Sioux and Métis parted good friends--although the Métis kept a strict watch day and night.

The peace did not last long, however. The Métis were returning home and had reached the Sheyenne River by late July. Some forty or fifty Ojibwas, "attached as camp-followers to the expedition," and one Métis, Parisien, went off to attack a small

¹⁸ W.S. Wallace, *John McLean's Notes of a Twenty-Five Year's Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (Toronto, 1932), p. 377.

Sioux camp. A fight ensued in which seven Sioux and three Ojibwas were killed and three Sioux and four Ojibwas were wounded. The Ojibwas then retreated to the Métis camp. The following day, 300 Sioux, "armed cap-a-pie," arrived at the Métis camp and challenged the Ojibwas to come and fight. The Ojibwas refused, and with the Métis, "acting as mediators between them, a sort of peace was patched up, and the Sioux returned [to their camp]--we may be sure, far from well pleased."¹⁹ In August 1845, when a group of Sioux visited Fort Garry, an Ojibwa whose brother had been killed by the Sioux in 1844 fired a shot at one of the Sioux, killing him. The ball also passed through the body of an Ojibwa, who also died, and grazed a white man. The Ojibwa was tried for murder and hanged in September 1845.²⁰ The following year, a party of Métis hunters who were travelling west beyond Turtle Mountain encountered a group of Sioux who had come to negotiate peace. While negotiations proceeded, the body of a Métis was brought into camp. The death was attributed to the Sioux and a fight occurred three days later in which eight Sioux were killed.²¹

Of all the engagements between the Sioux and the Métis, the

¹⁹ Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 258-259, 264-272.

²⁰ Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 330-332; see also Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again* (Toronto, 1925), p. 49 and, for a commentary on the event, Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada*, pp. 157-158.

²¹ Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, pp. 54-55.

most famous is the Battle of the Grand Coteau. The engagement took place in the summer of 1851 somewhere west of the headwaters of the Sheyenne River. Its exact location is no longer known. In June 1851, Métis hunters from Red River and the White Horse Plains (an area just west of Fort Garry) rendezvoused at Pembina and then headed west (although they continued to operate independently). After encountering small groups of Sioux, the White Horse Plains party stumbled upon a large Sioux camp at the Grand Coteau in mid-July. The Sioux attacked the Métis on the 13th and 14th, and then withdrew. The identity of these Sioux is open to debate. Historians W.L. Morton and George Woodcock have both written that they were Lakotas, but this identification appears to be guesswork.²² It is possible that these Sioux were Yanktonais. In his description of the Sioux (written in 1855 and 1856 at Fort Union), fur trader Edwin Denig referred to conflict between the Sioux and the mixed-blood hunters from Red River only when he discussed the Yanktonais.²³ The engagement was a victory for the Métis, who lost only one man. It is less clear how many Sioux were killed. Father Albert Lacombe, who accompanied the Red River party, recorded eighteen Sioux deaths: Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, an artist who sojourned at Fort Union between

²² Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau, July 13 and 14, 1851," *Manitoba Scientific and Historical Society Papers*, series 3, no. 16 (1961), pp. 37-49 and Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and His Lost World* (Edmonton, 1975), pp. 55-62.

²³ Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arikaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows*, John C. Ewers, ed. (Norman, 1961), pp. 30-31.

September 1851 and April 1852, was told by some Métis (and later reported the account in his diary) that the Sioux had lost eighty men.²⁴

Reflecting on the warfare between the Métis and the Sioux, Denig noted, "It appears that the Half Breeds get the better of the Sioux. At least they are not afraid to continue their annual excursions into their country, and [they] are known to be as good if not better warriors than the Indians."²⁵ In the history of the Métis, the engagement at the Grand Coteau has come to symbolize the superiority of Metis arms over the Sioux: after this battle, the Métis were the "masters of the plains wherever they might choose to march."²⁶ But this is the stuff of myth. In reality, Métis-Sioux conflicts continued. In 1854, Father Georges-Antoine Belcourt informed the American Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the Sioux had raided St Joseph each year between 1852 and 1854 while the Métis were away on the hunt. Americans were killed in both 1851 and 1852 and some thirty horses were stolen in 1854.²⁷ Apparently the Sioux called for peace, and Belcourt, acting in concert with a number of Sioux mixed-bloods (Rainville, Lafrenière, Larocque and others) whose sympathies lay with the "Métis sauteux [Ojibwas]," successfully

²⁴ Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau," pp. 47-49.

²⁵ Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, p. 31.

²⁶ Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau," p. 49.

²⁷ Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin and Harold Hickerson, *The Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa* (New York, 1974), p. 165.

mediated negotiations in 1854; this peace was broken in the summer of 1855, however, when Métis and Ojibwa hunters were attacked by an assembly of Sioux belonging to three "nations."²⁸ In the autumn of 1857 Cree guides on the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition demanded that the company be increased before travelling along certain parts of the Assiniboine River. Yanktonais had been stealing horses from Métis hunters coming in from the plains, and had been crossing the boundary and raiding the Crees and Ojibwas.²⁹ Small Hudson's Bay Company trading posts were not immune to the threat of Sioux attack. In July 1858, H.L. Hime, the photographer and assistant surveyor to the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition, passed by the HBC post near the Little Souris River. The post was operated in the winter, but abandoned in the summer "on account of the Sioux who then come here." Hime remarked in his diary that two of the huts had recently been burned.³⁰ Métis hunts, especially those

²⁸ L.-A. Prud'Homme, "Monsieur Georges-Antoine Belcourt, Missionnaire à la Rivière Rouge," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd ser., vol. 14 (1920), section 1, p. 63. Prud'Homme did not identify the "trois nations siousses." This essay was published in English by Vernice M. Aldrich as "Father George Antoine Belcourt, Red River Missionary," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 2, 1 (October 1927).

²⁹ Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858* (New York, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 143-144 and vol. 2, pp. 153-154. Both the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expeditions were funded by the Canadian government to learn about the Northwest.

³⁰ Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), Records of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition, P5404, file 9, Diary of H.L. Hime, 29 April 1858 to 30 November 1858, entry for

emanating from Pembina and St Joseph, inevitably infringed upon Sioux lands; given the location of the herds, the Métis had little choice about where to hunt, so, despite continued Sioux opposition and retaliation, the Métis attempted to make peace with the Sioux. In the summer of 1859, for example, one Father Mestre went on the annual hunting expedition from Pembina and St Joseph and, according to Alexandre-Antonin Taché, the Roman Catholic Bishop of St Boniface, was instrumental in concluding a peace treaty.³¹

Scholars can say little about the actual negotiations for peace that transpired between Métis (and English mixed-bloods) and Sioux peoples during the nineteenth century, as the documentary evidence is so limited. The most detailed record of Sioux-Métis peace negotiations dates from the winter of 1844/45. The Sioux had killed several Métis during an aborted peace conference in 1844, and subsequent Métis retaliation resulted in the deaths of at least eight Sioux (four Sissetons and four Yanktonais). In November 1844, Burnt Earth of the Sissetons and several other leaders sent a letter to the Métis of the White Horse Plains, in which they regretted the state of affairs and asked for four cartloads of goods to serve as compensation for the four dead Sissetons. Cuthbert Grant, the leader of the White Horse Plains community, replied for the Métis in December, saying

1 July 1858. This is a copy; the original diary is in the York Pioneer and Historical Society, Toronto.

³¹ Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (East Ardsley and New York, 1969), p. 117.

that the Métis wanted peace, but that they refused to pay the compensation as the deaths were the fault of the Sioux and the demand was unjust. The Sioux held council over this message for three days before deciding that it was a peaceful overture. They replied in February 1845 that the Sioux who had lost relatives in the recent conflict wished to adopt the Métis who had done the killings. Creating these kin ties brought peace to the two groups and lessened the prospect of future warfare. Peace was restored and Burnt Earth's and Grant's followers hunted together in the summer of 1845 and a party from Burnt Earth's group paid a friendly visit to Fort Garry.³²

The nineteenth century was marked by periods of war punctuated by local truces among various groups of Sioux and Métis. Peace was never universal, but was sometimes achieved by "covering the dead" and by the creation of "fictive" kinship relations. None of these local truces lasted; however, conflict--and subsequent peace negotiations--between Sioux and Métis apparently existed right up to--and after--the Dakota Conflict of 1862. As late as September 1861, a group of Métis under William Hallet had a rendezvous with the Yanktonais under Medicine Bear. According to the newspaper in Red River, "The

³² Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 324-332. Burnt Earth's delegation was different from the group that visited Fort Garry in August 1845 and was involved in conflict with the Saukteaux, one of whom killed a Sioux and was subsequently hanged. For biographies of Cuthbert Grant, see Margaret Complin, "The Warden of the Plains," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 9, 2 (August 1934), pp. 73-82 and Margaret Arnett MacLeod, "Cuthbert Grant of Grantown," *Canadian Historical Review* 21, 1 (March 1940), pp. 25-39. MacLeod's is the better article.

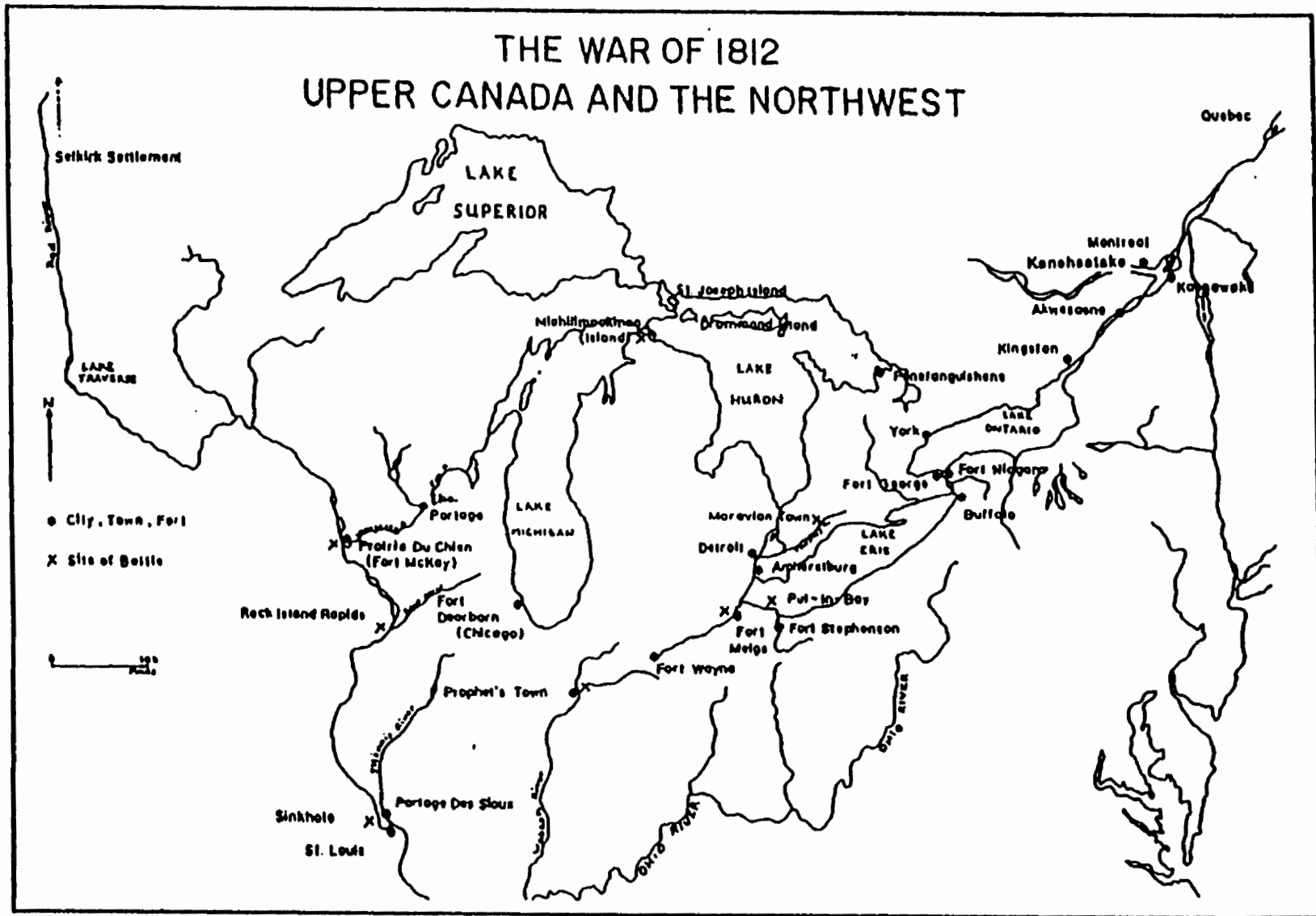
holding of a peace Conference with Mettonaka (The Medicine Bear) a Sioux chief, was one of their first performances. . . . There was plenty of smoke and palaver, and many were the pledges of amity exchanged."³³

Richard White has argued that the *pays d'en haut* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a world characterized by shifting political alliances and fluid social structures. The arrival of Europeans added new sets of players, but did not immediately change the rules of this world. Indians and newcomers were caught up in a process of evaluation, misinterpretation and accommodation which led ultimately to the creation a new society, what White called the "middle ground"-- "the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages."³⁴ It was on the middle ground that the Sioux became expert in promoting their own goals by taking advantage of opportunities offered by different groups of newcomers--the French, British and Americans.

In the nineteenth century, Sioux often travelled from their villages on the Minnesota River to the Red River Settlement in Rupert's Land in efforts to preserve their trading relationship with the British. The basis was laid in these years for a Sioux presence in the Anglo-American borderlands from Minnesota onto the Plains.

³³ "The Fall Hunt," *The Nor'-Wester*, 15 November 1861, p. 2, c. 5.

³⁴ *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991), pp. x, xiv.



Map 2 The War of 1812: Upper Canada and the Northwest

Source: Robert S. Allen, His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815 (Toronto, 1993), p. 125.

**The Dakota Conflict of 1862 and the
Migration to the Plains Borderlands**

In the wake of the Dakota Conflict, Dakota people moved up the Minnesota River and onto the plains beyond. This exodus has often been presented as if the refugees either fled to the Dakota Territory, or to Rupert's Land. In reality, Dakotas fled to the borderlands and then moved back and forth between American and British territory. The boundary was not marked on the ground until 1873/74, but Dakota peoples were very much aware of its existence, and they took advantage of the opportunities it offered during the 1860s. Dakota leaders from Minnesota sought sanctuary from Hudson's Bay Company officials at Upper Fort Garry, while at the same time, they discussed peace with American army officers. When American troops approached their camps, they fled across the border, using it as a shield, and throughout this period, they traded with the Red River Métis for arms and ammunition. By the end of the 1860s, the Dakotas had constructed a host of relationships with their borderlands neighbours. Many formed close ties to the Yanktonais and remained with them on Sioux lands. Others negotiated with the Ojibwas for access to Ojibwa lands. Most continued to trade with the Métis. These new relationships were pivotal to the success of the Dakotas in the borderlands.

The movement of Dakota people across the boundary into Rupert's Land in 1862 was prompted, undoubtedly, by their need for supplies. They were at war, and they needed firearms to

fight the Americans as well as to hunt. The Hudson's Bay Company was a source of such munitions, and so several Dakota leaders and their followers travelled to the Red River Settlement in late 1862 and early 1863 to renew their ties to the British, represented by HBC officials, which they hoped to do by focussing on past Anglo-Dakota relations--relations forged during the War of 1812. Less visible in the sources is the fact that the Dakotas also aimed to open negotiations with the Métis. From both the British and the Métis the Dakotas hoped to receive arms and allies.

On 10 December 1862, Father Alexis André wrote from his mission at Pembina that the Dakotas at St Joseph, a Métis settlement on the Pembina River, would soon be joined by some six hundred others from Devil's Lake, and that the combined assembly intended visiting Fort Garry to get munitions. The sources do not identify the leaders of this delegation, but it is likely that the Sisseton leader Standing Buffalo was among them.¹ According to John Christian Schultz, a prominent member of the "Canadian Party" at Red River, the Dakotas had sent a peace pipe to Alexander Grant Dallas and then a message saying they wanted to come to trade. Dallas, the Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land, and Father Alexandre-Antonin Taché, the bishop of St Boniface, replied that they wanted nothing to do with them, but on 27 December, over one hundred Dakotas arrived at St Norbert, a

¹ Gary Clayton Anderson says, without providing a source, that this delegation was made up of Standing Buffalo's people. See *Little Crow*, p. 171.

village just south of Fort Garry. There, they were met by nearly eight hundred Métis and by Dallas, William Mactavish (the Governor of Assiniboia) and Taché. The Dakotas announced that they had come to renew the friendship that existed between their forefathers and the Hudson's Bay Company. The following day, they attended a mass at which both Taché and Dallas asked them not to go to Fort Garry. They proceeded to Fort Garry anyway, arriving later that day.²

Eighty men and six women from the Dakota delegation arrived at Fort Garry on 28 December and met Hudson's Bay Company officials in the courtroom. Governor Mactavish and Joseph Hargrave, Mactavish's secretary, noted that they had come to ascertain the feelings towards them by the Indians and half-breeds of the English territory: Schultz wrote that they claimed to have "taken no part in the late massacre, but had merely come in to make peace with the Hudson Bay[']s company and with the halfbreeds." The local newspaper reported that the Dakotas spent three or four days around the fort "eating, drinking, making peace and making merry and then left." They departed on 31 December 1862. No peace between them and the Métis was secured, for, according to Schultz, the Métis from the White Horse Plains

² Orin G. Libby, "Fort Abercrombie, 1857-1877," *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* 2, pt. 2 (1908), pp. 25-26, Schultz to Colonel Peteler (CO Ft Abercrombie), Red River Settlement, 2 January 1862 [1863]; Louis Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," *North Dakota History* 37, 4 (Fall 1970), pp. 297-299.

threatened to attack the Dakotas in retaliation for past deaths.³ However, no trouble occurred.

In May 1863 at Pembina, the Mdewakanton leader Little Crow, a grandson of the Little Crow who fought for the British during the War of 1812, announced his intention of visiting the Red River Settlement: "his ostensible object," wrote the local newspaper, was "to show the Governor some writings which he has had since the war of 1812."⁴ He and a group of eighty others arrived at Fort Garry on 29 May and had two meetings with the "Company's big folks" the next day.⁵ The first meeting was held in the courtroom where Little Crow told the British authorities of his people's desire to be at peace with the "English." To demonstrate the truthfulness of this claim, his people produced, and "ostentatiously displayed," medals bearing the likeness of King George III. Little Crow asserted that at the time of the war, the British had promised that "whenever they [the Sioux]

³ Anderson, *Little Crow*, p. 171; Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal, 1871), p. 266; Libby, "Fort Abercrombie," pp. 25-26; "Sioux at Fort Garry," *The Nor'-Wester*, 24 January 1863, p. 3, c. 3. A less authoritative account of the Dakotas's visit to Ft Garry is also found in the writings of W.B. Cheadle. See Walter Butler Cheadle, *Cheadle's Journal of Trip Across Canada 1862-1863* (Ottawa, 1931), p. 121 and the Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land: Being the Narrative of an Expedition from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Undertaken with the View of Exploring a Route across the Continent to British Columbia through British Territory, by One of the Northern Passes in the Rocky Mountains* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 163-164.

⁴ "News from St. Joseph," *The Nor'-Wester*, 9 February 1863, p. 3, c. 3.

⁵ "Visit from the Sioux," *The Nor'-Wester*, 2 June 1863, p. 2, c. 4.

should get into trouble with the Americans they had only to come and the folds of the red flag of the north would wrap them round, and preserve them from their enemies." He and his people "had come to claim the fulfilment of this promise."⁶ During the second conference, which was held in a private room at Fort Garry, the Dakotas indicated that they wanted ammunition, which Dallas refused, and provisions. They also asked Dallas to write to General Henry Hastings Sibley of the United States Army, telling him that they desired peace, and asking that he release Dakotas taken prisoner during the war. Dallas acceded to writing the letter.⁷

Standing Buffalo returned to the Red River Settlement in August 1864 with his fellow leaders, Turning Thunder, Wa'ánatan the younger and the Leaf. Their aim was to "to induce the H.B. Company to open a trade with them, so that they might have a market for their furs, &c., and obtain in return some things which they were in need of, and could not now get, owing to their war with the Americans." Governor Mactavish met them at Portage la Prairie and told them not to come to Fort Garry, but they ignored him, arriving in several groups beginning on 27 August. They had a conference with Mactavish at Upper Fort Garry on 30 August at which they said they had sixteen British medals and

⁶ Hargrave, *Red River*, p. 291.

⁷ United States, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1862* (Washington, 1863) (hereafter CIA, ARCIA), p. 336, Dallas to General Sibley, Ft Garry, 3 June 1863. All references to the ARCIA are to the microfiche edition. See also Anderson, *Little Crow*, pp. 174-175.

spoke of their desire for assistance.⁸

That the Dakotas wished to be allowed to remain on British territory was common knowledge in the Red River Settlement. The newspaper reported that the Sioux had spoken--on various occasions when they had been in the Settlement--"of their ancient right to this country, [and] of their desire to get part of it again."⁹

The Hudson's Bay Company was reluctant to trade with the Sioux, but independent Métis traders were willing to open negotiations. The Métis had been in a precarious situation. As the buffalo herds contracted to the south during the 1840s and 1850s, Métis hunters had been forced to follow them. This brought them onto Sioux lands, engendering conflict. Moreover, the American government hoped to prevent British subjects, and especially Métis, from hunting south of the boundary. To circumvent opposition from both the Sioux and the Americans, some Métis elected to trade, rather than hunt, south of the border. The difficulty lay in supplying goods that the Indians wanted: American traders could supply goods via Missouri River steamboats to Fort Benton much more cheaply than could Métis traders, who had to rely on overland transportation from Fort Garry or St Paul. The only products that Métis could sell profitably to Indians on American territory were those that American traders

⁸ "Another Sioux Visit," *The Nor'-Wester*, 1 September 1864, p. 3, c. 1-2.

⁹ "Arrival of the Sioux," *The Nor'-Wester*, 3 December 1864, p. 2, c. 4-5.

were prevented (at least in law) from selling: alcohol and munitions.

Sioux and Métis came together to make peace in the aftermath of the Dakota Conflict, just as some groups had in previous years. For the Métis, the purpose of these negotiations was to gain access to the hunt on Sioux lands and to engage in trade. It is clear that the Métis initiated some of these meetings, but there is little documentary information on specific councils, beyond reference to their existence. In a dictation made in 1903, the Métis leader Gabriel Dumont briefly discussed peace negotiations with the Dakotas held at Devil's Lake in late 1862 and at which he was almost killed. "I was going to make peace in a Sioux camp," Dumont said, "and just as I was leaving the tent where I was staying, bending down through the narrow opening that was closed by a hanging skin, a Sioux hit me over the head with his rifle as he pulled the trigger. I was lucky the shot missed but I was left with a bruise. The other Sioux kicked and beat him with sticks. He had dishonoured them and was driven from camp."¹⁰ According to John Andrew Kerr, a Canadian who later lived with Dumont's group of Métis and Indians, Gabriel's father (Isidore) and uncle (Jean) were the leaders in these peace negotiations.¹¹ A peace council mentioned by Norbert Welsh in an

¹⁰ Gabriel Dumont, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, Michael Barnholden, trans. (Vancouver, 1993), pp. 34-35; and see Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont*, pp. 75-76.

¹¹ Kerr, "Gabriel Dumont: A Personal Memory," *Dalhousie Review* 15, 1 (April 1935), p. 53.

interview made in 1931 may have been the same one discussed by Dumont. Welsh did not attend the meeting: Baptiste La Bombarbe, who had served as the interpreter, told Welsh of the event. According to Welsh, the Métis buffalo hunters and Sioux concluded a peace treaty on the plains south-west of the Pembina Hills, "on English territory." Nine Sioux chiefs, including White Cap, Red Dog and Mapachong, attended, and agreed with the Métis not to fight or to attack each other.¹² The plains south-west of the Pembina Hills are in American, not British, territory, however, and the meeting was in the general vicinity of Devil's Lake, although perhaps at some distance. White Cap, who entered Rupert's Land in late 1862, could have attended a meeting somewhere near Devil's Lake in 1862 while he was en route.¹³ Although not placed at this meeting by Welsh, Standing Buffalo, who arrived at Fort Garry on 27 December 1862, had probably come from this council.

Dakota leaders were equally eager to initiate peaceful relations with the Métis, undoubtedly because they hoped to trade with them. In early May 1863, a party of Métis hunters visiting Fort Abercrombie from the Buffalo River (an eastern tributary of the Red River in Minnesota) reported that eight Sioux had come to their camp, smoked the peace pipe and said that they wanted to

¹² Mary Weekes, *The Last Buffalo Hunter* (Toronto, 1945), pp. 273-274.

¹³ Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest*, pp. 20-21.

live in peace with the mixed-bloods.¹⁴ Little Crow met members of the Métis community of St Joseph on his arrival in April 1863, while en route to Fort Garry.¹⁵ Apparently these negotiations were successful, for five Upper Sioux representatives, including Standing Buffalo, visited St Joseph in early August 1863 to reconfirm the peace that existed between the Sioux and the Red River Métis. The Sioux were concerned that the reported deaths of two of General Henry Sibley's mixed-blood scouts during the recent engagements between Sibley and the Sioux would jeopardize the peace. Father Alexis André assisted at the council between the Sioux and Métis, at which peaceful relations were reaffirmed.¹⁶

From the Métis the Sioux hoped to obtain trade goods, especially arms and ammunition. As the Hudson's Bay Company had refused to trade with them, the Sioux courted peace with independent Métis traders, who usually purchased their outfits from the Hudson's Bay Company. Of course, many Métis, and English-speaking mixed-bloods, worked for the company. For that reason, the Sioux also courted mixed-blood traders who worked for

¹⁴ *St. Cloud Democrat*, 20 May 1863, reprinted in Libby, "Fort Abercrombie, 1857-1877," pp. 29-30.

¹⁵ Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," p. 299; and see Anderson, *Little Crow*, p. 174.

¹⁶ Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," pp. 302-304; and see Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865*, vol. 2: Official Reports and Correspondence (St Paul, 1893), pp. 309-310: H.H. Sibley to John Pope, St Paul, 16 September 1863. Sibley had engaged the Sioux at Big Mound on 24 July, Dead Buffalo Lake on 26 July and Stony Lake on 28 July.

the company, the most prominent example being their attempts to cultivate a relationship with the family of William McKay.

William McKay was a member of a large mixed-blood family. His father, John Richards McKay, and grandfather, John, many of his brothers and most of his sons worked--at one time or another--for the HBC. In June 1864, William, then in charge at Fort Ellice, took a party of nine, which included his nine-year-old son, George, on a hunting trip to the plains, as provisions at the post were low. Some fifty miles from Fort Union, they were approached by a large group of Dakotas. One came up to them and asked--in English--who they were, and William replied that they were English. After a brief conversation among themselves, the Dakotas led McKay and his party to their camp, the leader of which was Little Six. That night, the Dakotas assembled for a private council. After the men had all smoked and many had spoken, Little Six sent a messenger to fetch William and George. Little Six informed William that they had decided not to kill the mixed-bloods and, instead, to make a treaty of peace with them. William and George were given food, after which William and Little Six spoke at length. Little Six proposed that he and William exchange sons for a period of several years so that each might understand the ways of the other. George was frightened and refused, and Little Six did not press the issue. The council ended successfully, and for the next few days, the mixed-bloods traded with the Dakotas. In exchange for tobacco, red calico, red flannel, beads and "trinkets," they received buffalo robes

and dressed leather.¹⁷

McKay was undoubtedly an eager participant in these negotiations. Although the British government professed neutrality during the Dakota Conflict and the Hudson's Bay Company made no effort to trade with the Dakotas, policy was not administered evenly at different posts. McKay was eager to facilitate peace with Little Six because it was good for his own business, even if this trade would receive no official approval. When the Dakotas discovered an Assiniboine camp nearby and decided to attack it, McKay suggested that the two groups make peace.¹⁸ He was in favour of peace between the Dakotas and Assiniboines for the same reason that he opted for peace between the Dakotas and his own men: this was good for business.

The successful peace treaty made by William McKay and Little Six prompted other Sioux leaders to visit Fort Ellice. Standing Buffalo and 160 lodges of his followers arrived at the post in the spring of 1865 to renew their ties with McKay. Standing Buffalo presented him with "a beautifully ornamented pipe of peace and invited us [the traders] to smoke in his lodge."¹⁹

¹⁷ George McKay, *Fighting Parson* (Kelowna, B.C., 1968), pp. 19-28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-39.

¹⁹ Glenbow Archives (hereafter GA), Traill Family Fonds, M1241, box 1, file 2, W.E. Traill to Mother [Catherine Parr Traill], Ft Ellice, 22 July 1865 and W.E. Traill to Kate [sister], Ft Ellice, 17 August 1865. A brief account of this meeting is found in PAM, Zachary M. Hamilton Papers, MG9 A50, box 2, file 113, microfilm reel M107, Zachary M. Hamilton, "Indians of Saskatchewan," n.d., pp. 38-39.

Thereafter, Dakota visitors traded regularly at Fort Ellice, and occasionally received work doing odd jobs.²⁰ According to William Edward Traill, a trader at the post and William McKay's son-in-law, the Dakotas gave McKay the name "Wahan" ("Bear Skin") and considered him "the best friend that they had."²¹

William McKay's experiences probably were not unique. Sioux leaders undoubtedly attempted to contact other mixed-blood employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. Our knowledge of such contacts is limited by the documentary record, which is all but silent on such matters: George McKay's memoir of his father's encounter with Little Six is exceptional. Other Sioux were apparently confident that the HBC would, in the end, supply them with trade goods. A Métis named Antoine Frenier reported to the Indian agent at Fort Benton in February 1864 that some 150 lodges of Assiniboines, apparently from near Fort Union, had made peace with Dakotas, Yanktonais and a few Lakotas in the autumn of 1863. In the spring, according to Frenier, the Sioux, and their new Assiniboine allies, would attempt to obtain ammunition from trading posts in the United States. If they failed, they would

²⁰ PAM, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), Fort Ellice Journals, B.63/a/10, 1 July 1868-19 September 1869, microfilm reel 1M52; B.63/a/11, 1 June 1871-24 May 1872, microfilm reel 1M1003; B.63/a/12, 1 November 1875-30 June 1876, 11 November 1876-9 December 1876, microfilm reel 1M1003.

²¹ GA, Traill Family Fonds, M1241, box 3, file 20, W.E. Traill, "Lo the Poor Indian," n.d. Traill was married to McKay's daughter Harriet.

go north, to the HBC posts in Rupert's Land.²²

Sources indicate that a significant amount of trade between the Sioux and Métis was conducted in the months following the Dakota Conflict. According to White Crane and his party of Yanktonais, the Dakotas under White Lodge and Little Crow had been supplied with ammunition during the winter of 1862/63 by Red River Métis, who said they would join the Dakotas in upcoming raids. A Métis from Devil's Lake named Hancot arrived at the Dakota camp at Painted Wood Creek, an eastern tributary of the Missouri River which enters it roughly opposite the mouth of Big Knife River, while White Crane was there and counselled against giving up Americans captured during the war in Minnesota; the Yankton and Yanktonai leaders, Struck by the Ree and the younger Wa'ánatan, concurred.²³ In November 1863, Indians informed the commanding officer at Fort Sully that the Sans Arcs had moved from Devil's Lake to Painted Wood on account of the scarcity of buffalo at Devil's Lake and that a number of whites or mixed-bloods from Rupert's Land were trading powder, lead, tobacco and other goods to the hostile Sioux. The Yanktonai, White Crane, arrived at Fort Sully on 1 December and confirmed this report.²⁴

²² CIA, *ARCIA, 1864*, pp. 446-447, Gad. E. Upson to Dole, Ft Benton, 19 February 1864.

²³ Mildred Throne, ed., "Iowa Troops in Dakota Territory, 1861-1864: Based on the Diaries and Letters of Henry J. Wieneke," *Iowa Journal of History* 57, 2 (April 1959), pp. 137, 139-141.

²⁴ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), *Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, RG393, Ft Sully, Letters Sent (hereafter LS), vol. 19, pp. 24-25, no. 8, Bartlett to Pell, Ft Sully, 2 December 1863.*

During the winter of 1863/64, Métis hunters and traders led by Jean-Baptiste Wilkie, Sr, camped at Wood End on the Souris River where they intended to trade with the Sioux who had also camped along the river. Father Alexis André, now acting in the capacity of peace negotiator for the American government, went to this camp in December and had a meeting with the Sioux, who were not conciliatory.²⁵

A number of Métis traders frequented the area around Fort Berthold. Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, who arrived at Fort Berthold in June 1864 on a peace mission to the Sioux on behalf of the American government, encountered Métis hunters at the post almost daily. The Métis were on their summer hunt and came to Fort Berthold to trade. De Smet reported that they were also trading ammunition to the Sioux. "Powder and lead, I fear--and I speak here without positive proof--may be, and will be, plentifully supplied by the half-breeds of the northwest. The temptation is surely great, as I was assured that the Indians exchanged willingly a horse for one hundred balls and powder."²⁶ Frederic F. Girard, the trader at Fort Berthold, wrote to De Smet that three British Métis had accompanied Crow's Breast (a Hidatsa leader) to the Yanktonai and Dakota camps on Heart River to

²⁵ Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," pp. 306-309. Norbert Welsh wintered on the south side of the Souris River the following winter, intending to trade with the Dakotas, but found that they were away on the Missouri. He traded only with a small Dakota camp of two lodges. Weekes, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, pp. 66-69.

²⁶ CIA, *ARCIA, 1864*, pp. 423-424, De Smet to Dole, on board the *Yellow Stone*, 15 July 1864. Quotation at p. 423.

invite them to come to the Métis camp to trade. Girard was certain that they were trading ammunition.²⁷ De Smet, commenting on Girard's letter, reported that "These half-breeds form large and great camps, consisting from four hundred to a thousand wagons and carts. They are on the most friendly terms with the Sioux, who respect their flag, (British,) wherever they meet them. It is supposed, on reliable authority, that they trade guns and ammunition to these enemies of the country."²⁸

In August 1864 the brother of Big Head, a Yanktonai, arrived at Fort Berthold from the Yanktonai camp at the head of Little Knife River with news that the Yanktonais had received seven kegs of powder and balls from a party of British Métis, who had then invited the Yanktonais to go north to trade with them near the British line. General Alfred Sully, who had arrived at Fort Berthold in late August in the course of an expedition to round up hostile Sioux on the Dakota plains, departed in September for the Souris River; encountering no recent signs of Indians, he was convinced that the Yanktonais had, in fact, crossed into British territory.²⁹ That winter, Colonel Charles Dimon reported from Fort Rice that the Sioux at Fort Berthold under Medicine

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 425, F.F. Girard to De Smet, enclosed in De Smet to Dole, 23 August 1864.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 427, De Smet to W.P. Dole, Washington, 23 September 1864.

²⁹ United States, War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1 (Washington, 1893), pp. 150-151, Sully to AAG, Ft Berthold, 29 August 1864.

Bear and Struck by the Ree had rejected all peaceful overtures and were said to have been encouraged by presents and munitions "by certain parties, said to be from the Red River of the North."

Scouts at Fort Rice reported in January 1865:

Half-breed traders from the British lines came into the hostile camp below Berthold with ten sleigh loads of goods. They rode into camp with the British flag at their head and said: "This flag will not be put down for anybody, only for God Almighty. Those who join us will not get hurt. Those who join the Americans will get hurt. We will return the last of the month with more powder, ball and arms, and some Santees, and will take Fort Berthold and then Fort Rice." Then they gave a feast and presented the Indians with five kegs of powder and some sacks of bullets and traded more. At the feast the Man That Strikes the Ree said: "As long as I live I shall never shake hands with the whites." Medicine Bear said: "I am the man to make war with the Americans; kill all you can, I will say nothing against you.["]³⁰

Métis-Sioux trade continued in the years after active Sioux-American hostilities ended on the Dakota plains, much to the annoyance of American army officers. Colonel Philippe Régis de Trobriand, in command at Fort Stevenson, knew that Red River Métis traded whiskey and munitions with impunity to various Lakotas and Cheyennes in the vicinity of Fort Buford on the Knife

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 1 (1896), pp. 636-638, Dimon to TenBroeck, Ft Rice, 24 January 1865.

River during the winter of 1866/67, and he expected them to do the same the following winter.³¹ During the summer of 1867, Lieutenant Colonel E.S. Otis reported that Métis were selling ammunition to Sioux intent on attacking the Hidatsas near Fort Berthold, and Lieutenant Colonel E.M. Bartlett, at Fort Sully, offered to destroy Red River traders who, he argued, needed "an example even more than the hostile Sioux."³² Troops from Fort Buford raided Métis camps during 1868,³³ but the traders returned the following winter and simply established their posts in different areas. In the autumn of 1869, Major General W.S. Hancock visited the Souris River, where he saw the remains of huts that had been used by Métis traders during the previous winter.³⁴

At no time, however, were all Métis at peace with the Sioux. Various camps could be pragmatic and sometimes cooperated with the American army; indeed, Métis were often the army's major source of information on Sioux movements. In July 1863, a Métis

³¹ Lucile M. Kane, ed. and trans., *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Philippe Régis de Trobriand* (St Paul, 1951), p. 122, and see also pp. 138-139, 148.

³² NARA, RG393, Ft Abercrombie Letters Received (hereafter LR) 1867, Otis to Crossman, 17 July 1867; *ibid.*, Ft Sully, LS, vol. 20, pp. 99-100, no. 1867-101, Stanley to Campbell, 1 June 1867.

³³ Kane, *Military Life in Dakota*, pp. 122 n. 71, 224-225.

³⁴ United States, Secretary of War, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, House Executive Document 1, pt. 2, 41st Congress, 2d Session, vol. 2, pt. 1, serial 1412, "Report of Major General Hancock," St Paul, 20 October 1869, pp. 56-67 (hereafter SW, ARSW). Hancock identified the Métis' customers as Dakotas, but noted that their leader was "Setting Bull."

camp under Charles Grant and Jean-Baptiste Wilkie, Sr, provided General Sibley with information and three guides, while a camp under Edward Harmon gave news of recent Sioux movements to Captain James Fisk's party of immigrants to the Montana gold fields.³⁵ Métis served as guides, scouts, interpreters and mail carriers. Those who cooperated with the American army might suffer retribution from the Sioux. For example, Joseph Demerais, the son of the interpreter at Fort Abercrombie, was murdered at Bear's Den Hillock (near the Sheyenne River) by Dakotas, supposedly of Little Crow's band, in May 1867.³⁶

Nevertheless, the value that the Sioux placed on peaceful relations with the Métis is demonstrated by their actions toward those Métis who carried mail for the American army. In the autumn of 1867, De Trobriand, at Fort Stevenson, learned from two of the men who carried the mail between Fort Totten and Fort Stevenson that the Hunkpapas intended to kill anyone who carried mail for the Americans, be they European, mixed-blood or

³⁵ Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," pp. 299-300; United States, *Expedition of Captain Fisk to the Rocky Mountains: Letter from the Secretary of War, A Resolution of the House of February 26, Transmitting Report of Captain Fisk of His Late Expedition to the Rocky Mountains and Idaho*, 38th Congress, 1st session, House Executive Document 45, vol. 9, serial 1189 (Washington, 1864), pp. 7-8; William H. Clandening, "Across the Plains in 1863-1865: Being the Journal Kept by William H. Clandening of Walkertin, Upper Canada, now Ontario, Canada," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 2, 4 (July 1928), p. 256.

³⁶ NARA, RG393, Ft Abercrombie, LS, vol. 3 (1866-1867), pp. 65-66, no. 63 [sic, no. 64], Hall to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Abercrombie, 18 May 1867; *ibid.*, Ft Wadsworth (Sisseton) LR, Hall to Hayman, Ft Abercrombie, 17 June 1867; *ibid.*, Ft Abercrombie LR 1867 no. 115 H and W, Hayman to CO Ft Thompson, Ft Wadsworth, 29 June 1867.

Indian.³⁷ De Trobriand became convinced, however, that the Hunkpapas spared the lives of mail carriers if they were mixed-bloods from Red River. He was a francophile, and perhaps this coloured his perceptions. However, there is reason to believe that he was correct. On at least three separate occasions during the following months, mail carriers who either were Métis or mistaken for being Métis were released unharmed, but with a warning to stop working for the Americans. In November 1867 John George Brown (an Irishman) and another white man were captured by Lakotas and Two Dog's Yanktonais between Fort Buford and Fort Stevenson. They either pretended to be, or were mistaken for Red River mixed-bloods. While the Yanktonais wanted to kill them, the Lakota leader "spoke at length and eloquently, it seems, in favor of the captives, and in the end his opinion carried." The whites were disarmed and set free with a warning not to carry the mail for the Americans.³⁸ The following month, Gardepie (a Red River Métis) and three men were captured by White Cloud's followers. Gardepie and his men were set free, as the Indians said they knew Gardepie, and also told not to carry mail for the Americans.³⁹ In May 1868, Sitting Bull's Hunkpapas captured and killed Charles MacDonald, Joe Hamelin (both Red River mixed-

³⁷ Kane, *Military Life in Dakota*, pp. 138-139. The mail carriers were given this warning by a party of mixed-blood traders who, in turn, had been told this by Medicine Bear's Yanktonais.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171; Dana Wright, "The Fort Totten-Fort Stevenson Trail, 1867-1872," *North Dakota History* 20, 2 (April 1953), p. 73.

³⁹ Kane, *Military Life in Dakota*, pp. 192-193.

bloods) and a soldier near Strawberry Lake. A few days later, John George Brown and Joe Martin (a Red River mixed-blood) left Fort Stevenson to meet the couriers from Fort Totten half-way and were captured near Middle Strawberry Lake, near Dog Den Butte, by Sitting Bull's Hunkpapas and stripped of their weapons, equipment, clothing and horses. When questioned, they said they were mixed-bloods from Red River going to St Joseph to hunt. Sitting Bull explained that he would not have allowed the two men from Red River (Charles MacDonald and Joe Hamelin) to be killed, but the young men killed them before they found out who they were. Not knowing that Brown and Martin were couriers, he let them go.⁴⁰ Lakotas opposed to the American presence in the region were apparently unwilling to kill Red River mixed-bloods, since they were the source of some of their munitions.

American army officers claimed that Métis and British traders not only supplied Sioux with arms and ammunition, but that they encouraged further hostilities in an effort to protect their trade. In September 1863 Sully's scouts reported that while most of the Sioux had fled towards the Missouri River after the Battle at Whitestone Hill on the third of the month, some had gone north to British territory where they had friends among the Métis. Sibley believed that the Métis would inform the Sioux of any changes in American troop strength.⁴¹ In January 1864 Sibley

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-290.

⁴¹ United States, *The War of the Rebellion*, series 1, vol. 22, part 1 (1888), pp. 555-561, Sully to Meline, camp at mouth of Little Cheyenne River, 11 September 1863; Board of Commissioners,

accused Métis who arrived at Fort Abercrombie of deterring the Sioux from surrendering in order to secure their trade (even though these same Métis had supplied him with information regarding Sioux movements).⁴² Sibley was encouraged in this belief by Major Joseph R. Brown who, along with Father Alexis André, had agreed to serve as a peace commissioner for the United States government. Brown had found it almost impossible to find any Sioux to speak to: Sibley's expedition in the summer of 1863 had caused the "hostiles" and many of the "friendly" Sioux to scatter far from Fort Abercrombie. Those he did find were unwilling to surrender, and he blamed this on the Red River Métis who, he believed, protected their trade with the Sioux by filling them with a fear of the punishments they would receive if they surrendered.⁴³ Echoing Sibley's reports, Sully accused British Métis of securing the Sioux trade by keeping the Sioux informed of troop movements and of informing them that American troops could not cross the boundary.⁴⁴

In June 1865, Sully invited the Lakotas, Yanktonais and Santees to come to Fort Rice to discuss peace. After a poorly attended council on 16 July, Sully speculated that the Métis had

Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, vol. 2, pp. 308-309, Sibley to Meline, St Paul, 12 September 1863.

⁴² United States, *War of the Rebellion*, series 1, vol. 34, pt 2, (1891), pp. 152-156, Sibley to Pope, St Paul, 25 January 1864.

⁴³ Pfaller, "The Peace Mission of 1863-1864," pp. 307-308.

⁴⁴ United States, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1 (1893), pp. 150-151, Sully to AAG, Ft Berthold, 29 August 1864.

told the Sioux that it was a trap.⁴⁵ Thinking that no more hostiles would come to Fort Rice, Sully left for Devil's Lake in late July, where he encountered a Red River Métis camp and had it searched for contraband; none was found. The Métis swore that they did not sell ammunition to the Sioux, and they told Sully of recent Sioux movements. A second Métis camp was found at Devil's Lake; they were Americans. Sully reported that he believed the information about Sioux movements given by the Métis; however, he still accused them of passing information about troop movements to the Sioux. To Sully, and he was probably correct, the small size of the second Métis camp was proof that these people were on good terms with the Sioux, for such a small camp could not have defended itself against a hostile force.⁴⁶

Some American officials believed the British government was responsible for the actions of the Métis, either by actively participating in this trade (through the HBC) or by refusing to do anything to stop it: Major-General John Pope, Sibley's and Sully's superior, publicly accused the British of complicity,⁴⁷ while Newton Edmunds, the governor of Dakota Territory, wondered

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 2 (1896), pp. 1090-1091, Sully to Pope, Ft Rice, 17 July 1865; *ibid.*, pp. 1109-1110, Sully to AAG Department of the Northwest, Camp No. 22, 20 July 1865.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1145-1147, Sully to AAG Department of the Northwest, Camp No. 30, Devil's Lake, 31 July 1865; *ibid.*, pp. 1172-1174, Sully to AAG Department of the Northwest, Camp No. 37, Ft Berthold, 8 August 1865.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1 (1893), pp. 131-133, Pope to [Halleck], Milwaukee, 6 October 1864; *ibid.*, pp. 133-140, Pope to Halleck, Milwaukee, 3 November 1864; *ibid.*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 2 (1896), pp. 565-568, Pope to Grant, St Louis, 23 May 1865.

whether the Canadian government could be held responsible.⁴⁸

Such claims need to be evaluated critically. Nevertheless, some claims about Métis trading activities were probably true.

Although there is no evidence that Métis traders openly fomented war, it is likely that they did little to encourage peace. If conflict ceased on the American plains, the trade in arms and ammunition would be reduced considerably.

When the first Dakotas arrived in Rupert's Land in the last weeks of 1862, they not only entered lands claimed by a different colonial government, but lands occupied and effectively controlled by different aboriginal peoples. Dakota leaders responded quickly by opening discussions with the Ojibwas to allow them rights of temporary access to Ojibwa land. In May 1863, for example, Little Crow and his camp arrived at Pembina and spoke of going to Fort Garry. While in Pembina, he opened negotiations with the Red Lake, Lake of the Woods and Pembina Ojibwas.⁴⁹ However, the Dakota Conflict also produced refugees who travelled to Red River and wished to remain there permanently. Many leaders, therefore, sought to gain rights of residency from the local aboriginal people: that peace was achieved is demonstrated by the fact that the Dakota peoples were able to continue to live in these areas. The Mdewakanton leader H'damani noted, for instance, that he and his three sons had

⁴⁸ CIA, ARCIA, 1865, p. 195, Edmunds to Dole, Executive Office, Yankton, Dakota Territory, 15 May 1865.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Little Crow*, p. 174.

arrived at Turtle Mountain during late 1862: he gave the local Ojibwas four horses and five sacred pipes, and, in exchange, "The chief warrior of the Ojibeway gave the Turtle Mountain to me and my people."⁵⁰ Standing Buffalo, whose people had moved onto the plains between the Qu'Appelle and Missouri rivers while most Dakota refugees remained in the parklands, was initially less successful. The Americans at Fort Wadsworth received word from him in August 1864 that his young men were being killed by Plains Crees, Assiniboines and Blackfeet--all of whom had made war on his people.⁵¹ News from Fort Garry, reported an American army officer in 1866, said that the Dakotas in Rupert's Land had attempted during 1865 to forge peace treaties with the Blackfeet and Assiniboines, but that the Assiniboines had refused and that the negotiations ended in trouble.⁵² No leader is named in connection with this news, but Standing Buffalo and the younger

⁵⁰ NAC, Archives of the North-West Boundary Commission, 1872-1876, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 8, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5324, pp. 79-80, Aahdamane [H'damani] to Cameron, Turtle Mountain, 26 January 1874, enclosed in George Arthur Hill to Cameron, Turtle Mountain, 26 January 1874. An inexact copy of this document is in NAC, Records Relating to Indian Affairs, RG10, vol. 3607, file 2988, microfilm reel C-10105.

⁵¹ NARA, RG393, Ft Abercrombie, LS, vol. 2 (1863-1866), pp. 92-93, no. 90, Adams to Olin, Ft Abercrombie, 12 August 1864. See also the account of Sioux/Cree conflict in Charles Alston Messiter, *Sport and Adventures among the North-American Indians* (London: R.H. Porter, 1890), pp. 12-14, 32-36. Messiter's work has a certain ring of unreliability. Cheadle makes no reference to the incidents described by Messiter, although Messiter was still with Cheadle's party at the time. See Cheadle, *Cheadle's Journal of Trip Across Canada* and Milton and Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land*.

⁵² United States, ARCIA, 1866, p. 162, Corse to Sherburn, St Paul, 11 January 1866.

Wa'ánatan are mentioned elsewhere in the same letter. It is certain, however, that Standing Buffalo was later able to negotiate a successful peace agreement with the Plains Crees. Thomas McKay, one of the sons of William McKay of Fort Ellice, told Z.M. Hamilton, the director of the Saskatchewan Historical Society, in the 1940s that he accompanied his father to a great meeting between the Dakotas and Crees at Moose Mountain at which a treaty of peace was concluded. Hamilton did not know the date of this meeting (Thomas did not tell Hamilton the year, and Hamilton apparently never found it out), but it was likely in the mid-1860s.⁵³

That Standing Buffalo's people remained on British territory indicates that peace was achieved with neighbouring groups; but it was localized and temporary. Walter Traill recorded in his memoirs that Standing Buffalo's people arrived at Fort Ellice from Wood Mountain to trade in July 1868, and that they had had a fight with the local Ojibwas. The next morning the Dakotas were seen "in hasty retreat for the distant plains."⁵⁴ The post journal does not mention any altercation, but states, "Great excitement was caused by some of the men fancying they saw Sioux

⁵³ Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), Saskatchewan Historical Society Papers, file 204 "Siouan Indians," Hamilton to Angus McKay, [Regina], 12 July 1943.

⁵⁴ Mae Atwood, ed., *In Rupert's Land: Memoirs of Walter Traill* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 120-121. William Edward Traill, the son-in-law of William McKay, was Walter's brother.

about[.]"⁵⁵

Although difficult to document, conflict between the Dakotas and Ojibwas continued after the Dakotas negotiated their entry into Rupert's Land: the newspaper in Red River reported early in 1864, for example, that one Dakota had been killed by an Ojibwa and that more trouble was expected.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy, however, that much of this conflict was with Ojibwas from Red Lake in Minnesota, not Ojibwas or Crees living in Rupert's Land.⁵⁷ The Red River Ojibwas appear to have desired peace with the Dakotas, perhaps because a number of Dakota men had married Ojibwa women. When Ojibwas from Red Lake attacked a Dakota camp on Lake Manitoba, the Dakotas, Métis and Red River Ojibwas met in council at Fort Garry, "smoked the pipe of peace; and once again

⁵⁵ PAM, HBCA, B.63/a/10, Fort Ellice Journal, 1 July 1868-19 September 1869, microfilm reel 1M52, entry for 20 July 1868.

⁵⁶ "The Sioux Invasion," *The Nor'-Wester*, 18 January 1864, p. 2, c. 3-4 and "The Sioux," *The Nor'-Wester*, 5 February 1864, p. 2, c. 3.

⁵⁷ For a discussion that, in contrast, attributes almost all Ojibwa-Dakota conflict to the Red River Ojibwas, see Peter Lorenz Neufeld's "Picheito, Manitoba's Last Saulteaux-Cree War Chief," *Indian Record* 48, 2 (April 1985), pp. 19-20.

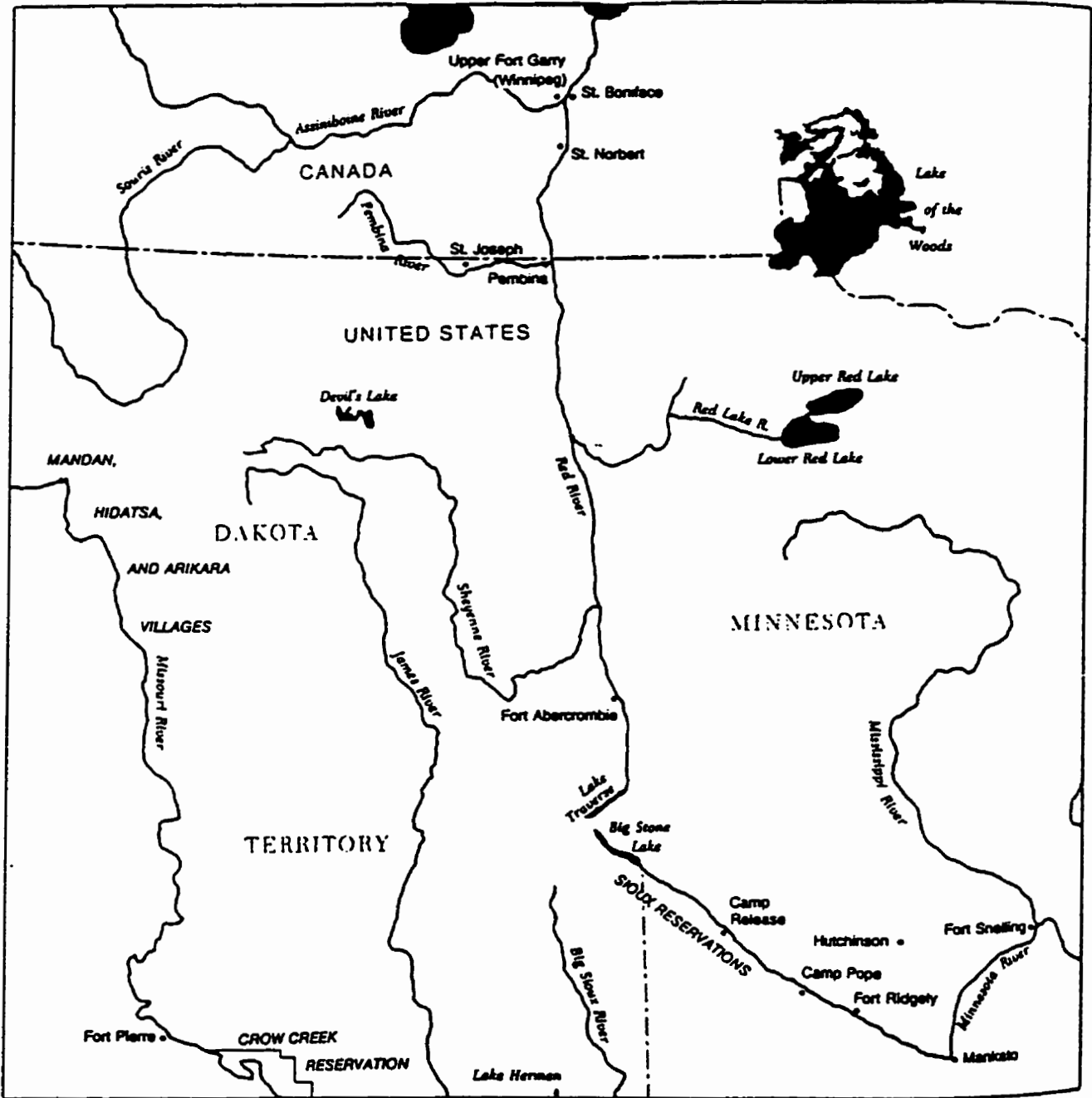
patched up all grievances."⁵⁸ Ojibwas, perhaps from Red Lake, killed a number of Standing Buffalo's followers camped near Fort Garry and forced the rest to flee in August 1866, a day after Standing Buffalo had concluded a peace treaty with them and the Crees at the fort. The Métis considered this an unfriendly act on the part of the Ojibwas and, in retaliation, François Desmarais, who was married or in some other way connected to the Dakotas, killed an Ojibwa man in the Hudson's Bay Company store.⁵⁹

In sum, Dakota people migrated from Minnesota to the plains of present-day Manitoba and North Dakota during the 1860s and firmly established themselves in the borderlands. The process required delicate negotiations with a host of others--Americans, British, Métis and other aboriginal peoples. But by taking advantage of the peace agreements they obtained from other aboriginal groups, and of linguistic and cultural ties to the Yanktonais, they generally gained peaceful access to new lands on both sides of the Anglo-American boundary. The Sioux had taken advantage of the boundary, fleeing across it upon the approach of American troops, and trading with the Métis. But, they had not become "Canadian" Indians. They remained in the borderlands,

⁵⁸ "Fighting between the Sioux and Chippewas," *The Nor'-Wester*, 10 May 1864, p. 2, c. 3. The Dakotas subsequently fortified this camp and two others. The remains of these fortifications are still visible. See Manitoba, Historic Resources Branch, *The Dakota Fortified Camps of the Portage Plain* (Winnipeg, 1990).

⁵⁹ Atwood, ed., *In Rupert's Land*, pp. 44-45. Elias identifies these as Ojibwas from Red Lake; see his *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest*, pp. 27-29.

travelling from one side to the other and committing themselves to neither the British-Canadian nor to the American regime, for a decade longer, before finally settling on reservations.



Map 3 Theatre of the Dakota Conflict, 1862

Source: Gary Clayton Anderson, Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux (St Paul, 1986), p. 170.

The Migration of the Sioux to the Milk River Country

The migration of Dakota peoples into the borderlands continued throughout the 1860s. By the end of the decade, other Sioux groups were likewise shifting territory. Some were migrating up the Missouri River to its junction with the Yellowstone and, beyond that, the Milk River. Other Dakota groups occupied the country south of Milk River.¹ Several bands of Upper Yanktonais, originally from the area around Fort Rice, migrated up the Missouri to the area surrounding Fort Buford. According to Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Morrow at Fort Buford, the Yanktonais were interlopers, but having established themselves north of the Missouri and above the post, they had to be treated as permanent residents.² They were joined in the area by Santees and Yanktons from the southern part of Dakota Territory.³ The Santees, Yanktonais and Yanktons were joined by northern bands of Lakotas who were, during the same years, moving from the area southwest of the Missouri towards the lower Yellowstone country, and from

¹ James E. Potter, "The Missouri River Journal of Leonard W. Gilchrist, 1866," *Nebraska History* 58, 3 (Fall 1977), pp. 267-300, entry for 23 June 1866.

² NARA, RG393, Ft Buford Document File, Lt Colonel Henry A. Morrow, Ft Buford, 14 June 1870.

³ Raymond DeMallie identifies these Sioux as the Cuthead band of Upper Yanktonais under Medicine Bear, Thunder Bull, and His Road to Travel; the C'an'óna band of Upper Yanktonais under Shoots the Tiger, Afraid of Bear, Catches the Enemy, and Heart; the Takini band of Upper Yanktonais under Calumet Man, Afraid of Bull, Long Fox, Eagle Dog and Standing Bellow; and a band of Sissetons under Brave Bear and Your Relation to the Earth. See DeMallie's "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories," p. 28.

it to the mouth of Milk River.

There was much communication and cooperation among the various groups. The Santees, Yanktonais and Yanktons frequently camped and travelled together, and the Lakotas often crossed the Missouri River and hunted with them. The Santees and Upper Yanktonais also formed ties to Red Stone's Lower Assiniboines, those whose agency later would be at Wolf Point. Fellows D. Pease, the American agent to the Crows, reported that many Santees, Cutheads, Yanktonais and other Sioux were married to Assiniboines, and the Assiniboines usually divided their annuities with them.⁴ Several Dakota groups established themselves north of the 49th parallel by mid-decade, although they too remained in contact with Sioux on American territory. Little Crow's Mdewakantons and Little Six's and Medicine Bottle's Mdewakantons and Wahpetons camped from Sturgeon Creek to the White Horse Plains and farther west to Poplar Point and Portage la Prairie. H'damani's followers lived at Turtle Mountain. Tahampegda's and White Eagle's Wahpetons camped on the Assiniboine River. White Cap's people lived peacefully with the Assiniboines (people who had extensive ties to Red Stone's Assiniboines) at Moose Mountain before moving his people to the northwest as far as the North Saskatchewan River by the end of the decade. Mahpiyahdinape moved directly to the neighbourhood

⁴ NARA, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG75, Letters Received by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1871-V2, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 408-411, Pease to Viall, Ft Parker, n.d., enclosed in Viall to Parker, Helena, 24 December 1870.

of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Ellice after the Sioux were attacked by General Alfred Sully's troops at Killdeer Mountain in July 1865.⁵ There was a great deal of intercourse between camps, and some groups, notably that of Standing Buffalo, had yet to settle on either side of the boundary. Standing Buffalo's and White Cap's people were invariably mixed with Yanktonais and Yanktons. Indeed, commentators in Canada often misidentified these leaders and their followers as "Yanktons."⁶

The migration of various Sioux into the Milk River country has been all but ignored by American and Canadian historians, Raymond DeMallie's extended essay on the Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories being the only study on the topic.⁷ Moreover, historians of both countries have overlooked the transboundary dimension of these events. Studies of the Sioux in Canada, for example, mention only in passing that leaders like Standing Buffalo remained in the borderlands and crossed and recrossed the Canada-United States boundary many times, and give the impression that those Dakotas who entered Rupert's Land after the Dakota Conflict never returned to American soil. Such was not the case. Sioux leaders negotiated with governments on both side of the boundary to discover which would accord them better

⁵ Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest*, pp. 26-27.

⁶ PAM, HBCA, Isaac Cowie Papers, E.86/59, Draft Memorandum, Isaac Cowie to Donald A. Smith, Elbow of the South Branch, South Saskatchewan River, 16 December 1873; GA, Edward Barnett Fonds, M3875, S.J. Clarke Diary, entry for 18 March 1879.

⁷ "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories."

treatment, and Sioux who traded with Americans at Fort Peck also tried to open a trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. Sioux also continued to trade with Métis, whose wintering camps in the Cypress Hills and at Wood Mountain gave them easy access to Sioux camps in the borderlands. The Lakotas had frequently ventured north of the boundary before 1876; in fact, leaders like Sitting Bull began trading with the Métis at Wood Mountain at least as early as the winter of 1870/71.

Santee and Yanktonai leaders asked for a treaty with the American government on several occasions during the late 1860s and early 1870s. In September 1869 leaders of the Cuthead and C'an'óna bands of Upper Yanktonais including Medicine Bear, Thundering Bull, Shoots the Tiger and Afraid of Bear, and a few Sissetons, petitioned the American government to make a treaty of peace and friendship with them. In return for annuities, a reservation and farming instruction, the leaders promised on behalf of their followers to be at peace with the Americans and with aboriginal groups friendly to the United States.⁸

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Morrow, who received the Yanktonais' and Sissetons' petition at Fort Buford, reported that these and other bands which had no treaty relations with the American government were sources of many recruits to the hostile camps under Sitting Bull, Black Moon, Four Horns and others. He was fully in favour of the Indians' request. Morrow opined that the Yanktonais and

⁸ NARA, RG393, Ft Buford, LS 1869, no. 144, petition, Ft Buford, 7 September 1869 enclosed in Morrow to Greene, Ft Buford, 8 September 1869.

Sissetons joined the hostile Lakotas because they were poor and tempted by plunder; he reasoned that if the Americans gave annuities to these Indians, they would be less likely to join the hostiles, whose leaders would, as a result, lose influence.⁹ A week later, the leaders of the Takini band of Upper Yanktonais-- Calumet Man, Afraid of Bull, Long Fox, Eagle Dog and Standing Bellow--arrived at Fort Buford and signed a similar petition.¹⁰

A camp of some 260 lodges of Santees, Yanktonais and some Lakotas arrived in the vicinity of Fort Browning in late April 1871. The Milk River agent, A.J. Simmons, noted that these Sioux were hostile to the Americans and to other Indians and at peace only with the Assiniboines. Learning from the Assiniboines that the Sioux planned to attack the agency, Simmons sent them an invitation to come for a council. He, along with Red Stone and Little Bull of the Assiniboines, met Standing Buffalo and others in the Sioux camp on 4 May. After a feast and smoke, by courtesy of Simmons, Standing Buffalo explained the reason for his people's presence in the Milk River country:

Their country below [farther down the Missouri River] was burnt and dead, the game was all gone, they couldn't live in it; they had now come here, they liked this country, here

⁹ *Ibid.*, Morrow to Greene, Ft Buford, 8 September 1869. This position was shared by A.J. Simmons, the Milk River Indian Agent. See NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1871-V165, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 938-940, Simmons to Viall, Milk River Agency, 20 September 1871.

¹⁰ DeMallie, "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories," p. 28.

they could make plenty of robes and make plenty of meat. Their country was wherever the buffalo ranged. here was plenty of buffalo, it was their country . . . and they had come to live in it.

Standing Buffalo repeated the Indians' request to be at peace with the Americans and to receive annuities. In reply, Simmons said that the Americans also wanted peace, and offered to give them the same supplies as were given to the Assiniboines. The Indians moved closer to the agency the next day, and Standing Buffalo paid a visit to Simmons.

The Santees and Yanktonais departed on 6 April, the same day that Struck by the Ree and a group of Yankton warriors arrived for a meeting with Simmons. Simmons, who believed his meetings with Standing Buffalo were complete successes, was less sanguine about the Yanktons, whom he described as "renegades from various bands composing a camp of about the worst Indians I ever saw."¹¹ When Standing Buffalo and Struck by the Ree demanded subsistence and presents as the price of peace in late May, Simmons's superior, J.A. Viall, relented, giving them some goods in the hopes of keeping some control over them.¹²

¹¹ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1871-V78, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 635-652, Simmons to Parker, Ft Browning, 12 May 1871. Another account of these events is found in *ibid.*, no. 1871-W533, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 1106-1119, Quinton to Sanborne, Ft Shaw, 19 May 1871. See also NARA, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG94, Letters Received, file 2019 AGO 1871, microcopy M666, roll 16, frames 510-511, Viall to Parker, Helena, 20 May 1871.

¹² NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, file 1871-V52-V97, microcopy M234, roll 491, frame 603, Viall to Parker,

American officials were well aware that Standing Buffalo's Sissetons and Struck by the Ree's Yanktons and Yanktonais were in close communication with Lakotas under Black Moon, Four Horns and Sitting Bull, leaders who were opposed to American encroachment on Sioux lands. Viall, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Montana, reported in August 1871 that Sitting Bull's followers occupied the country along the proposed route of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and that they intended to oppose the survey and construction of the road. As these people had had no intercourse with the American government, Viall asked permission of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to visit them.¹³ Viall sent Simmons to Fort Peck in the autumn of 1871 to meet with Black Moon, Iron Dog, Long Dog, Little Wound, Sitting Eagle and Bear's Rib. Sitting Bull and others had visited Fort Peck in September and October and were not present when Simmons arrived.

Simmons arrived at the post on 4 November and was joined by some two hundred lodges of Lakotas on 14 November. Over the course of fifteen interviews, Simmons informed the Lakota leaders that he was a messenger from President Ulysses S. Grant, who wanted to live in peace and wished to learn the Lakotas' disposition. Black Moon stated emphatically that the Lakotas also wanted peace, but that to have peace the Americans had to

telegram, Helena, 18 May 1871; *ibid.*, no. 1871-V80, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 657-659, Viall to Parker, Helena, 21 May 1871.

¹³ *Ibid.*, file 1871-V139-V197, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 871-875, Viall to CIA, Helena, 21 August 1871.

stop construction on the railroad, which would destroy the game, keep American soldiers and settlers out of Sioux lands, and abandon Fort Buford and the trading post on the Musselshell River. Others spoke; their main concern was the railroad. Simmons refused each demand, saying that the railroad would be built regardless of Sioux opinion, that this land was not Sioux land--but Crow and Gros Ventre land--and that Fort Buford and the trading post on the Musselshell were outside the area used by the Sioux. Simmons closed by urging the leaders to consider his words "and make up their minds whether they would make peace and live, or continue hostilities and die like the wolves." In summarizing the response Black Moon delivered on the first day of talks, Simmons wrote:

[Black Moon] Said in their way this country belonged to them, they had fought for it and driven the Crows and Gros Ventres back. The whites settled in and drove them out of their country below; they were compelled to come here where they could get some game. They crossed the Yellowstone six years ago [c. 1867]. They had fought for the country they occupied, and it would be difficult to restrain their people from fighting again. Pledged his best efforts for peace: would labor with his people. . . . The rail-road would fill the country with whites and whites' houses: their game would be destroyed. Made a strong appeal for provisions to be furnished them, as a basis for peace and in consideration for their giving up their country to the rail-road.

Ultimately, Black Moon and Simmons agreed (according to Simmons) that the Lakotas would send no war parties against the Americans pending peace negotiations, that Simmons would send Black Moon's statement to the president and ask that the Sioux be given provisions, and that Black Moon would counsel his people for peace. Simmons was convinced that Black Moon's desire for peace was genuine, and so he gave him some provisions to distribute among the people.¹⁴

In the summer of 1872, the American government sent a larger commission led by Assistant Secretary of the Interior Benjamin R. Cowen to Fort Peck to meet with Lakota leaders and to persuade them to travel to Washington and meet the president. The commissioners, Cowen, N.J. Turney and J.W. Wham, arrived at Fort Peck in late July, and had a council with the Indians in late August. Few Lakotas were present, and none of the important Lakota leaders (Sitting Bull, Black Moon and others) were there, although Sitting Bull sent his brother-in-law. Instead, the Americans found mainly Medicine Bear's Yanktonais. The Indians

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1872-V222, microcopy M234, roll 492, frames 636-663, Simmons to Viall, Ft Browning, 5 December 1871 enclosed in Viall to F.A. Walker (CIA), Helena, 23 December 1871. Simmons's report was subsequently republished in *Appropriations for Sioux Indians*, 42d Congress, 2d session, House Executive Document 102, vol. 8, serial 1511 (Washington, 1872) and *Teton-Sioux Indians: Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, Relative to the Condition, Location, &c., of the Teton-Sioux*, 42d Congress, 3d session, House Executive Document 96, vol. 8, serial 1566 (Washington, 1873). Black Moon's remarks were substantially the same as those he made in June 1868 to Father Pierre-Jean De Smet during the latter's peace envoy to the Lakotas. See Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, eds., *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873* (New York, 1969), vol. 3, pp. 916-917.

were concerned about the railroad and the site for an agency, but the commissioners refused to discuss the matter until they had visited the president in Washington. At first, the Indians were opposed to going, but eventually they relented and a number of Yanktonais leaders, including Medicine Bear, Afraid of Bear, Black Catfish and others, made the trip.¹⁵

The American government had hoped that the Cowen Commission would be a first step toward ending Lakota opposition to the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which the Lakotas argued would lead to the destruction of their hunting grounds. However, few non-agency Lakotas had attended talks with either Simmons in June 1872 or with Cowen, Turney and Wham in July. During this very time, some three hundred lodges of Lakotas and Yanktonais had crossed the boundary and gone to the North-West Territories, as that area became known after Rupert's Land was transferred to Canadian sovereignty in 1870.

We know very little about this group. Its leader was Little Knife, an older man closely associated with the non-reservation Hunkpapas under Four Horns, Black Moon and Sitting Bull, and later described by John F. Finerty, the "war correspondent" of the *Chicago Times*, as "a man for whom high regard was felt by white and red men alike, because he was truthful, honorable, and,

¹⁵ *Teton-Sioux Indians*, pp. 4-8, "Report of Hon. B.R. Cowen, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Hon. N.J. Turney, and Mr. J.W. Wham, commissioners to visit the Teton-Sioux at or near Fort Peck, Montana," Washington, 15 October 1872. This report was also published in CIA, *ARCIA*, 1872, pp. 456-460.

for a savage, humane even to his enemies."¹⁶

In the early summer of 1872, Little Knife's delegation sent tobacco to Isaac Cowie, the trader in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Qu'Appelle, saying that they wished to visit him and make Fort Qu'Appelle their trading post. Cowie replied that the Hudson's Bay Company could not encourage them to come into the Crees' and Ojibwas' country and that it would be dangerous for them to come, but the Lakotas and Yanktonais were not deterred and sent a Métis with the message that they were coming anyway and that they would not hold the company responsible for any attack made against them. Cowie asked the Ojibwa headmen Pussung, O'Soup and Chekuk to allow the delegation to visit, but they said they would not be able to control their young men. They already resented the presence of the Sissetons and Wahpetons under White Cap and Standing Buffalo who had recently begun hunting in the Qu'Appelle district and trading at Fort Qu'Appelle, and they did not wish to share their hunting grounds with even greater numbers of Sioux.¹⁷

Preparing for the inevitable visit, Cowie asked Alick Fisher, a Métis from the Qu'Appelle Valley, to enlist a force of Métis to escort and guard the Sioux delegation. The Métis joined the Sioux a day's travel from the fort, escorted them to it,

¹⁶ Finerty, *War-Path and Bivouac, or The Conquest of the Sioux* (Norman, 1961), pp. 273-280.

¹⁷ Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers: A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company During 1867-1874 on the Great Buffalo Plains with Historical and Biographical Notes and Comments* (Toronto, 1913), pp. 445-448.

guarded them while they were there and, finally, escorted them from the fort upon their departure. The Saulteaux were warned not to approach the fort.

When they arrived at Fort Qu'Appelle, the emissaries cited their long-standing alliance with the British against the Americans, and produced a medal bearing the likeness of King George III given to one of their ancestors during the War of 1812. One spokesman said they wanted to live on British territory and be "good British Indians." They wanted also to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Cowie once again told them that the Hudson's Bay Company could not encourage them to usurp the Crees' and Ojibwas' country. If this was not sufficient to discourage them, he told them that because the Company did not have sufficient supplies to provide for the Crees and Métis who had been coming into the country in increasing numbers, it could hardly supply the Sioux as well. Cowie counselled them to make peace with the Americans, whose traders could provide goods on the Missouri more cheaply than the British traders could. Nevertheless, the Sioux boasted that, if the Métis did not go against them, they could soon subdue the Crees and Ojibwas.

Evidently the Saskatchewan Métis were prepared to aid the Lakotas. According to Edward McKay, a brother of William McKay of Fort Ellice and a former Hudson's Bay Company trader who was then farming on Battle Creek in the Cypress Hills, "There is understood to be an alliance defensive and offensive between the

Te Tones [Tetons] and the Metis. The Crees and Salteaux are highly displeased with the Metis and Sioux for hunting on their grounds, And only allow them, because they are affraid of them and unable to drive them off."¹⁸ The Sioux who met with Cowie told him,

They would never become friendly with the Americans, and they were bound to find safety on the north side of the boundary line. They were highly pleased with our kindness in trying to prevent any trouble with the Saulteaux, though they felt themselves quite able to defend themselves, and they thanked us for our friendly talk and entertainment; but they could not take our refusal as final.¹⁹

After their meeting at Fort Qu'Appelle, the Sioux proceeded down the Qu'Appelle River to Fort Ellice, near the junction of the Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine rivers. Their intention was to continue down the Assiniboine to Fort Garry, where they hoped to meet with Adams George Archibald, the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories. They met two groups of Canadians while camped in the vicinity of Fort Ellice. Sandford Fleming, the chief engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway sent west to examine possible railway routes, encountered a group of some sixty to eighty individuals at Rat Creek, some ten miles west of Portage la Prairie, in early August and had a short talk

¹⁸ PAM, Lieutenant-Governor Collection, MG12 B1, no. 164, microfilm reel M134, Breland to Morris, White Horse Plains, 18 May 1873.

¹⁹ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 448.

with them. "They had come from Fort Ellice," wrote his secretary, George Grant, "had recently travelled the long road from Missouri, and were now on their way to Governor Archibald to ask permission to live under the British flag, and that small reserves or allotments of land should be allowed them, as they were determined to live no longer under the rule of 'the long knives.'" The surveyors, however, had little time to talk. The Sioux "would have liked a long *pow wow*, but we had time only for hasty greetings and a few kindly words with them."²⁰ About a week later, Colonel Patrick Robertson-Ross, the Canadian adjutant-general who toured the territories in 1872, encountered two separate groups from Little Knife's band near Fort Ellice. Although he described them as "bold and wild-looking fellows," he found them "perfectly friendly in their manner."²¹

Archibald McDonald, the chief factor in charge of the HBC's Swan River District, which included both Fort Qu'Appelle and Fort Ellice, met with Lieutenant Governor Archibald on 7 June about the Lakotas and Yanktonais at Fort Ellice, saying that there were

²⁰ George M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sandford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto, 1873), pp. 87-88 and NAC, George M. Grant Papers, MG29 D38, vol. 8, Diary 1872, entry for 4 August 1872. John Macoun, the expedition's botanist, recorded the event in his memoirs, but lifted the passage from Grant's *Ocean to Ocean*. See his *Autobiography of John Macoun, M.A.: Canadian Explorer and Naturalist, Assistant Director and Naturalist to the Geological Survey of Canada, 1831-1920* (Ottawa, 1922), pp. 58-59.

²¹ NAC, Patrick Robertson-Ross Papers, MG29 E39, file 3, *Report of Colonel Robertson-Ross, Adjt.-General of Militia, on the Northwest Provinces and Territories of the Dominion* (Ottawa, 1872), pp. 25-26.

three hundred lodges of them at or near the fort and that they were determined to visit Fort Garry. However, Governor Archibald said the Sioux must not be allowed to come into the Settlement; the arrival of these "half-starved savages" would be very undesirable. Instead, the Indian Commissioner, Wemyss M. Simpson, would visit them at Qu'Appelle Lakes. Archibald added that if the Sioux were given land on British soil, it would only encourage more to come from the United States. They would all expect provisions, and they might simply take them if they were not freely given. He concluded, however, that "this [refusal] must be done in a way not to irritate them, or we might, in our efforts to escape depredations here, be surely transferring the scene of trouble to the Upper instead of the Lower waters of the Assiniboine."²²

Archibald's decision not even to meet with Little Knife's delegation was precipitated in part by a mistake about the identity of these visitors. He was aware that the "Minnesota Sioux" or "Santees," those Dakotas who came north after the Minnesota Uprising of 1862/63, were distinct from the "Missouri Sioux," the Lakotas, Yanktons and Yanktonais. However, Archibald and his correspondents, like most outsiders then and since, referred to all Dakota peoples as "Sioux," thus creating the possibility that one group of Sioux would be confused with

²² NAC, RG10, vol. 3596, file 1275, microfilm reel C-10103, Archibald to McKay, Ft Garry, 8 June 1872; and PAM, A.G. Archibald Papers, MG12 A1, Dispatch Book No. 3, no. 73, microfilm reel M3, Archibald to the Secretary of State for the Provinces, Ft Garry, 8 June 1872.

another. Archibald mistook the Lakotas and Yanktonais for Dakotas.²³

William McKay, the chief trader at Fort Ellice, had informed Archibald in May of 1872 that Standing Buffalo's Sissetons, who had been trading at Fort Ellice since 1865, would probably visit Red River that summer, as they were anxious to obtain a reserve in British territory.²⁴ Archibald told McKay to ask the Dakotas not to come to Fort Garry, and he instructed Indian Commissioner Simpson to visit the Sioux at Fort Ellice to settle the reserve question.²⁵ McKay told the Dakotas to wait for the commissioner, and this seemed acceptable to them.²⁶ When McDonald informed Archibald in June that the "Sioux" at Fort Ellice wished to pay him a visit, he assumed that these were Standing Buffalo's people, and so, once again, told them not to come and to wait for Simpson.

²³ Lord Dufferin, the Canadian governor general, offered a different explanation for Archibald's refusal to meet the Lakotas and Yanktonais. Writing the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley, Dufferin explained that when the delegation had arrived and Indian Commissioner Simpson was absent, Adams Archibald "considered it was not proper for him to receive them, and consequently said 'not at home.'" See NAC, John Wodehouse Papers, MG27 I A4, microfilm reel A-315, Dufferin to Kimberley, Ottawa, 2 May 1873.

²⁴ NAC, RG10, vol. 3596, file 1275, microfilm reel C-10103, McKay to Archibald, Ft Ellice, 25 May 1872.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Henri Bouthillier to William McKay, Ft Garry, 6 June 1872; PAM, MG12 A1, no. 679, microfilm reel M3, [Bouthillier] to Simpson, Ft Garry, 8 June 1872 (draft).

²⁶ PAM, MG12 A1, no. 681, microfilm reel M3, William McKay to Archibald, Ft Ellice, 24 June 1872.

Despite Archibald's confusion, James McKay, the President of the Executive Council of Manitoba, recognized that the "Sioux" in question were not Dakotas, but "Missouri Sioux." A former Hudson's Bay Company trader, McKay spoke Dakota fluently and frequently spoke on behalf of the Dakotas before the Manitoba government.²⁷ Without any apparent instructions from Archibald, he decided to send a Métis named George Racette, Jr, also known as Shaman Racette, with a message for the Lakotas and Yanktonais, who were still camped on Beaver Creek near Fort Ellice. Racette was directed to give the Sioux some tobacco, to show them that the "English" (meaning Canadian) authorities wished to maintain friendly relations with them. "The Governor," went the message, "is very sorry he did not see you--he thought you were only the Sioux from the Portage [Portage la Prairie]. You should have stopped and explained to the proper parties where you had come from, and what Tribe you represented."²⁸ The mission was unsuccessful. Racette reported that the Sioux were upset over Archibald's refusal to meet with them. Racette was also angry. McKay had promised to supply him with presents worth 12 pounds sterling to give to the Sioux. Upon his arrival at Fort Ellice,

²⁷ N. Jaye Goossen, "'A Wearer of Moccasins': The Honourable James McKay of Deer Lodge," *The Beaver* 309, 2 (Autumn 1978), pp. 44-53. James was not related to Chief Trader William McKay of Fort Ellice.

²⁸ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 266, microfilm reel M134, [James McKay] to Nap-cho-kah, Mah-too-yankee, Me-nah-che-kan and their Braves, Deer Lodge, 26 August 1872. McKay mistakenly believed Archibald had thought these Sioux were from Portage la Prairie, when Archibald had actually thought they were from Fort Ellice.

however, Archibald McDonald only gave him presents worth six pounds, saying that there was no money from the government to pay for the expenditure. The scantiness of the gifts served to anger the Sioux even more. In the end, Racette gave them his own supplies in the hopes that McDonald would reimburse him. McDonald refused.²⁹ Meanwhile, the Lakota and Yanktonai delegation spent the winter of 1872/73 camped in the vicinity of Fort Ellice.

Adams Archibald left office in December 1872 and was replaced as Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories by Alexander Morris. While Archibald had refused to meet the Sioux encamped near Fort Ellice, Morris readily agreed to see a delegation. Eighteen Sioux arrived, including White Cap and the son of Standing Buffalo, who had been killed in June, and Morris met them with Indian Commissioner Wemyss Simpson and James McKay, who acted as interpreter. White Cap said he had come to testify to their friendship for the English and asked to be given a grant of land to settle on in the spring. Morris, who did not know that the Canadian government had already agreed to provide reserve land to the Dakotas then living in the Canadian Northwest, said their request would be passed on to the government. Simpson distributed some presents and the Dakotas went away well satisfied.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 266, microfilm reel M134, Affidavit of George Racette, Lac Qu'Appelle, 5 mai 1873.

³⁰ PAM, MG12 A1, Dispatch Book No. 3, no. 123, microfilm reel M3, Morris to the Secretary of State for the Provinces, Ft Garry,

The Canadian government grudgingly accepted the presence of Dakota peoples--refugees of the Dakota Conflict of 1862/63--in the Northwest and was prepared to grant them meagre parcels of land. If only unofficially, they had become "Canadian" Indians in the eyes of the Canadian government. Lakotas, Yanktons and Yanktonais, however, were regarded strictly as "American" Indians who were to be given nothing. The government's refusal to meet members of the multi-group delegation then at Fort Ellice produced dissatisfaction, news of which quickly escalated into disturbing rumours after it had reached Manitoba. One report indicated that Little Knife had sent tobacco to the "Canadian" Dakotas asking them to join the Lakotas in making war against the Americans, and saying that the "British government" would do nothing for them.³¹ Isaac Cowie received information at Fort Qu'Appelle from a Métis trader named Antoine Gladue that a large band of Lakotas was collecting at Frenchman's Creek (a tributary of Milk River) and that Little Knife was said to be favour of launching a raid against the settlements in Manitoba. Sitting Bull, so the reports went, favoured peace and would not agree to a raid, but Cowie's information indicated that Little Knife was supported by the majority. Some reports indicated that the

16 December 1872. The Canadian government quickly informed Morris that it would grant 80 acres of land to each Dakota family: see PAM, MG12 B1, no. 50, microfilm reel M134, Howe to Morris, Ottawa, 8 January 1873; see Elias's *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest* for an extended treatment of this topic.

³¹ NAC, RG10, vol. 3611, file 3679, microfilm reel C-10106, Morris to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Garry, 13 July 1874.

Lakotas would do nothing until they had seen a government representative; another said they planned to commence hostilities immediately. The latest letters from Father Jean-Marie Lestanc of the Qu'Appelle Mission contained no recent or, in Cowie's estimation, reliable information. Uncertain of the outcome, Cowie advised Archibald McDonald at Fort Ellice "to prepare to send off Mrs. McDonald and the bairns at the packet time."³²

Rumours of the hostile intent of the Lakotas and Yanktonais prompted alarm among the white communities near Fort Ellice. Settlers in Palestine (now Gladstone, Manitoba) petitioned the Manitoba government in March 1873, to send troops at once. They had heard that the Sioux were aggrieved "by the state of matters in the province consequent on the transference of this country to Canada," and that they were concentrating along the Missouri River in preparation for a raid to be launched in the early spring. Palestine, they said, lay on the route from the Northwest.³³

Unaware that Adams Archibald had mistaken the Lakota and Yanktonai delegation for a group of Dakotas from Portage la Prairie, McDonald could not understand the governor's instructions--made before he left office in December--not to give

³² PAM, HBCA, Cowie Papers, E.86/59, Extracts from a letter from Isaac Cowie to Archibald McDonald, Ft Qu'Appelle, 29 January 1873.

³³ NAC, RG10, vol. 3600, file 1567, microfilm reel C-10104, Petition, Martin L. West, Rev. John McNabb and 52 Others to Morris, Palestine, 4 March 1873.

the Sioux any aid and to wait until the Indian commissioner arrived. Writing to his superior, Donald Smith, McDonald argued "It is very easy for a person in his [Archibald's] position at Fort Garry to give orders not to give anything to a lot of wild and starving savages--who have come hundreds of miles to see him,--but I would like to see him carrying out his orders--The Indians could never have gone back with out some assistance in provisions and ammunition." McDonald gave the Lakotas provisions and ammunition in February, 1873, to enable them to start back for the Missouri.³⁴

Alexander Morris, the new lieutenant governor, knew almost nothing of the winter's events until March 1873, when James McKay informed him "that a party of American Sioux headed by 'Little Knife' left here last Fall in a very dissatisfied spirit, and made sundry threats." Morris decided at once to send two trusted emissaries to gather information. John Norquay, an English mixed-blood, was sent to Palestine to ascertain if the threats were serious and, in case the reports proved correct, make arrangements to form two companies of mounted "half breeds of both races." Pascal Breland, a Métis member of both the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and the North-West Council (the governing body of the North-West Territories), was dispatched to the plains to meet the Lakotas. Morris also suggested to the

³⁴ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 128, microfilm reel M134, "Extract of a letter from Arch^d M^cDonald, Esquire, Chief Trader, addressed to D.A. Smith, C.C. dated 11 Februry 1873, from Fort Ellice," enclosed in Smith to Morris, Ft Garry, 6 March 1873.

government in Ottawa that communications be opened with the American authorities as the Lakotas and Yanktonais were from the Missouri in United States Territory.³⁵

In Palestine, Norquay attended a public meeting called on 14 March 1873 at which he learned that the village had received information about the Sioux from HBC trader Thomas McKay (one of William McKay's sons) who had come in some time before from Fort Ellice. McKay reported that the Sioux who had wintered at Fort Ellice intended making a spring raid on the province and that their "quiet deportment" was being replaced by a "more arrogant tone." Norquay made his own inquiries about the Sioux, "and found out that a considerable amount of uneasiness prevails among them and that they are holding Councils very frequently and some have been heard to say that in the spring they would do whatever they pleased as they expected large numbers of themselves in from the plains." While in Palestine, Norquay was shown two letters sent by traders to their friends at Portage la Prairie. One had written from the Red Ochre Hills to a Mr Whiteway that "Ooosoop or Back Fat [the Ojibwa headman O'Soup] states the Sioux are going in to the Settlement and I hear it is for no good." Abraham Spence wrote his mother from the Qu'Appelle Lakes that "The Sioux are gathering at Wood Mountain and are going down to the Settlement but I dont know what is their intention." A man

³⁵ PAM, Ketcheson Collection, MG12 B2, no. 24, microfilm reel M140, Morris to Secretary of State for the Provinces, Ft Garry, 11 March 1873; MG12 B1, Letterbook "G," no. 1, microfilm reel M138, Morris to Macdonald, cypher telegram [Ft Garry], 10 March 1873.

from High Bluff, one Mr "Pocha" (perhaps Poitras), told Norquay that the Dakotas at that place had said that many more "Sioux" were expected in the spring.³⁶

Morris received permission from Ottawa in early March to send Breland to the plains to meet with the Sioux representatives who had visited the province the previous fall and winter.³⁷ Breland was instructed "to say all he could to reassure the minds of the Sioux in that vicinity, and having obtained all the information possible as to the actual position of affairs to return and, if he found any cause for alarm[,] to send a trusty courier in advance to report to the authorities here."³⁸ He was also told "to say to all the People of the North West that she [Queen Victoria] regards them with love and kindness."³⁹

Breland arrived at Fort Qu'Appelle in early April 1873, but was unable to gather any new information about the Lakotas' and Yanktonais' movements. He spoke to a number of HBC men at the post, including Isaac Cowie.⁴⁰ They strongly believed that the

³⁶ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 139, microfilm reel M134, Norquay to Morris, Winnipeg, 17 March 1873. A copy can be found in NAC, RG10, vol. 3600, file 1567, microfilm reel C-10104.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Letterbook "G," no. 5, microfilm reel M138, Morris to Breland, telegram, Ft Garry, 13 March 1873.

³⁸ NAC, Records of the Department of the Secretary of State, RG6, series C1, vol. 31, Norquay to Macdonald, Ft Garry, 28 March 1873.

³⁹ PAM, MG12 B2, no. 25, microfilm reel M140, Morris to Breland, 22 mars 1873.

⁴⁰ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 456.

Sioux would go to Manitoba in the early spring or summer, and he gave "every credence to this view." From these discussions, Breland concluded,

Whether they will actually levy war is only slightly doubtful, but they are very certain to levy a heavy "black mail" on the inhabitants of any place they may appear at. I consider Fort Ellice to be in great danger and the arms and ammunition stored there in the hands of the Sioux would not only furnish them with the means, but also embolden them and incite them to use these means, for waging war on Manitoba.⁴¹

The traders at Fort Ellice, however, were beginning to doubt that any attack would be made against them. The Hudson's Bay Company's latest news from the Indians of the plains, wrote McDonald, was that both Little Knife and Sitting Bull had been poisoned by American traders operating in the Cypress Hills.⁴² The Sioux, so the rumour went, had subsequently attacked the American posts and killed all the traders. Later reports showed that neither Little Knife nor Sitting Bull were dead; nor had

⁴¹ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 161, microfilm reel M134, Breland to Judge McKeagney, Lac Qu'Appelle, 9 April 1873. A copy is found in NAC, RG10, vol. 3602, file 1831 1/2, microfilm reel C-10104.

⁴² Information about American traders operating in the North-West Territories can be found in NAC, Records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG18, series A1, vol. 1, file 63-74, "Memorandum of information given by M^r Johnston. April 20th 1874," enclosed in Morris to Minister of Interior, Ft Garry, 25 April 1874.

any American traders been killed.⁴³

Morris was temporarily absent from Manitoba while these events were transpiring, and Judge James McKeagney served as the acting lieutenant governor. Concerned by the reports of Breland and McDonald and the impact they would have on immigration to Manitoba, McKeagney decided to suppress them. He revealed their contents to Colonel Osborne Smith, in command of the troops in Military District No. 10, and William Thornton Urquhart, the clerk of the North-West Council, but did not lay this correspondence before the council of the North-West Territories. Anything approaching a panic, he wrote, had been avoided.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Pascal Breland continued his journey to Wood Mountain where reports indicated Little Knife was now camped. Arriving on 19 April, he found the Yanktonais encamped with a group of Métis from Wood Mountain under the leadership of Pierre Berger. The Lakotas had departed. Breland called a meeting for 23 April, which was attended by the Yanktonai leaders Struck by the Ree, Two Dogs, Ehannaienke, Napitchota, Matoienke, Pananikoupi, and by two Dakota chiefs, Wakiendota and White Cap.

⁴³ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 189, microfilm reel M134, McDonald to McKeagney, Ft Ellice, 16 April 1873 (a copy is found in NAC, RG10, vol. 3602, file 1848 1/2) and *ibid.*, no. 165, microfilm reel M134, "Memorandum of a Conversation with Mr Edmund [Edward] McKay, formerly of the Hudson Bay Company's service, and a man said, on good authority, to be thoroughly reliable and respectable--Fort Garry May 19th 1873," enclosed in Urquhart to McKeagney, Ft Garry, 19 May 1873.

⁴⁴ NAC, RG10, vol. 3603, file 1979, microfilm reel C-10104, McKeagney to Macdonald, Ft Garry, 1 May 1873; PAM, MG12 B1, Letterbook "G," no. 24, microfilm reel M138, McKeagney to Macdonald, telegram, Ft Garry, 1 May 1873.

Joseph Mitchel and Jacques Hamelin, both Métis, served as interpreters, and Father Lestanc attended at Breland's invitation. Breland shook the leaders' hands and then, following his instructions, told them that the Queen regarded all the inhabitants of the North-West with "love and kindness." The Yanktonais, he reported,

received this message of Peace with transports of joy and gratitude. By the mouth of their speakers, they on their side recalled to mind their old friendship for the English, and as evidence of their friendship, they showed some old medals with the arms of England, medals which their grandfathers had bequeathed to them and which they preserved as life tokens. They saluted the English Flag, & thanked the Queen for sending them such kind words. The Sioux loudly declared that they had never injured the English, and wished always to live at peace with them.

They asked that the Queen take pity on "her Sioux children," and especially upon the Dakotas living at Portage la Prairie who had requested a reserve in Canada, and finally that they be allowed to visit the governor at Red River. In response to Breland's questions about the invasion of Manitoba, they said the rumours should not be believed. Little Knife had spoken only for himself. In fact, the rest of the camp was ashamed of his actions. "That which all the Sioux wished," wrote Breland, "was

peace with everyone, and above all with the English."⁴⁵ Breland returned to Manitoba confident that hostilities would not erupt with the Sioux.

Having accepted the presence of the Dakotas--if not the Lakotas and Yanktonais--in the Canadian Northwest, the Canadian government was prepared to offer each family of five 80 acres of land in Manitoba on which to settle and farm. The followers of Standing Buffalo and White Cap, however, had maintained a buffalo-hunting economy on the western plains on both sides of the Canada-United States boundary and did not want to relocate to the Manitoba sites proposed by the Canadian government as their reserve. A series of discussions followed between Dakota leaders and Canadian officials during which the Sioux cited their historic ties to British territory to bolster their requests for a reserve in the North-West Territories.

A deputation of Dakotas, including the younger Standing Buffalo, visited Morris at Winnipeg in July 1873. After an older man presented a George the Third medal for Morris to inspect, several men spoke, "the great object of the visit being to ascertain from the Governor where the reserve which is to be given to them outside the Province will be situated and to find

⁴⁵ Breland's official report, in French, is in PAM, MG12 B1, no. 162, microfilm reel M134, "Montagne de Bois," [10 May 1873]. An English translation is found in PAM, MG12 B2, no. 27, microfilm reel M140, "Copy of Honb^{le} M^r Breland's Report," 12 May 1873. I have quoted from the English translation.

out whether it is likely to suit the purpose."⁴⁶ The Sioux did not receive a satisfactory answer.

The Canadian government sent Alexander Morris, David Laird (the Minister of the Interior) and W.J. Christie (a retired HBC chief factor) to the Qu'Appelle Valley in the autumn of 1874 to negotiate a treaty (Treaty Four) with the Crees and Ojibwas. This move prompted concern among the Standing Buffalo and White Cap bands as it was unknown how the treaty might affect their status. On 16 September 1874, the day after the negotiations concluded, Morris and Laird met with "a party of Sioux from the Woody Mountains" led by White Cap, the younger Standing Buffalo and the Crow. White Cap had heard that the country was being sold and wanted advice on how to live. He had lived on British territory for 12 years, and "wishe[d] to remain under protection of the English." The younger Standing Buffalo explained that he, like his father before him, was not afraid to travel anywhere in the country as he was at peace with the Crees and the whites: he, like his father, would die "in the English Country." Morris could not promise them any land on the plains, and hoped, instead, that they would visit the site on the Assiniboine River that the Canadian government was prepared to grant as a reserve to the Dakotas of Portage la Prairie. The Dakotas did not favour this site for there was no room for horses and no buffalo to

⁴⁶ "Lo's Oration," *Daily British Colonist*, 31 July 1873, p. 3, c. 3. It is unclear to whom "Lo" refers.

hunt, and the meeting ended without a satisfactory conclusion.⁴⁷

The next year, White Cap, the younger Standing Buffalo and other leaders met W.J. Christie and M.G. Dickieson at Fort Qu'Appelle, after the Canadians had taken the adhesion of some Ojibwas and Assiniboines to Treaty Four. The Sioux, wrote the two commissioners,

assure us of their friendly feeling towards the subjects of the Queen, and as they had been now 13 years on this territory they wished to be left as they were, and have the privilege of hunting with the half-breeds of the Qu'Appelle Lakes. They did not wish to settle on the reserve set apart for the other Sioux at the Little Saskatchewan, saying that they did not like the place. They wished that some decision should be come to regarding them.⁴⁸

Christie could promise nothing; Morris had not expected that Christie would meet the Dakotas, and had not given him any instructions.⁴⁹ Informed of Christie's meeting with White Cap

⁴⁷ NAC, RG10, vol. 3613, file 4049 1/2, microfilm reel C-10107, Interview between Morris, the Minister of the Interior and a party of Sioux from Wood Mountain, 16 September 1874, enclosed in Morris to the Secretary of State, Ft Garry, 3 October 1874. A copy of Morris's letter is in PAM, MG12 B1, Letterbook J, no. 199; a copy of the minutes of the interview in PAM, MG12 B1, no. 847. W. Osborne Smith made the minutes.

⁴⁸ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 1102, microfilm reel M136, Christie and Dickieson to the Minister of the Interior, Winnipeg, 7 October 1875.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 1101, microfilm reel M136, "Notes of an Interview with the Sioux Indians Chief 'White Cap' and others, delegates from 53 Tents of Sioux Camped near the Hudson's Bay Company's Post at Lakes Q'appelle [sic] 10th September 1875," enclosed in Christie to Morris, Winnipeg, 7 October 1875.

and Standing Buffalo, Morris wrote to the two leaders to tell them to select lands for a reserve--but not lands close to the boundary, which might attract more Sioux from the United States.⁵⁰

In the fall of 1876, Dickieson found White Cap and the younger Standing Buffalo at Fort Qu'Appelle when he returned there to make treaty payments. White Cap had not yet chosen lands for a reserve, but the younger Standing Buffalo had selected lands in the Qu'Appelle Valley.⁵¹ The Canadian government did not understand that the White Cap and Standing Buffalo groups were separate bands, and so it agreed in the spring of 1877 to a single grant land in the Qu'Appelle Valley for both groups, although the formal allotment and surveying of the reserve did not occur for several years. White Cap's followers moved northward in 1878 and were granted a reserve on the South Saskatchewan River the following year.⁵²

In the aftermath of the Dakota Conflict, Dakota leaders had developed trade ties with Métis from British territory. Such

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Letterbook "J," no. 295, microfilm reel M138, Morris to White Cap and Standing Buffalo, Ft Garry, 9 October 1875. A copy of this letter, dated 11 October, is found in NAC, RG10, vol. 3625, file 5494.

⁵¹ Canada, House of Commons, "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June, 1876," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1877), vol. 7, p. xxxvi, Dickieson to Minister of the Interior, Winnipeg, 7 October 1876; SAB, David Laird Papers, R-1170, file 2, Letterbook, folios 8-11d, Laird to Morris, Livingstone, Swan River, 25 November 1876.

⁵² See Elias, *The Dakotas of the Canadian Northwest*, pp. 147-185 for a fuller discussion of this topic.

trading relationships were replicated farther west as Sioux peoples migrated to the Milk River country in northern Montana. Trade established by Dakotas and Yanktonais in the 1860s continued in the 1870s; increasingly, Métis traders also encountered Lakotas.

Winter counts made by Jaw (a Sans Arc/Hunkpapa) and an unidentified Hunkpapa individual indicate that Métis traded with Lakotas during the winter of 1870/71.⁵³ Other documentary sources confirm the date of this event and elaborate on the details. Father Lestanc of the Qu'Appelle Mission reported that Sitting Bull had gone to Wood Mountain in the autumn of 1870 where he traded with Antoine Ouellette (frequently known as Irretty), an independent Métis trader who purchased his goods in St Paul, and Joseph McKay, one of William McKay's brothers who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. According to Lestanc, McKay gave Sitting Bull gifts in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company. Sitting Bull invited the traders to come to his camp on Milk River, and McKay sent Baptiste Bourassa and Shaman Racette, who traded for the company and on his own account.⁵⁴ Lestanc

⁵³ James H. Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* 173, Anthropological Papers no. 61 (1960), p. 393 (the Jaw and Jaw Variant counts); Stanley Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History, 1850-1891: The Ghost Dance--The Prairie Sioux, A Miscellany* (Norman, 1934), p. 350 (an unidentified Hunkpapa count).

⁵⁴ Archives de l'archevêché, Saint-Boniface (hereafter AASB), Fonds Taché, T8570-T8573, Lestanc à Taché, Montagne de Bois, 21 mars 1871. Information about Ouellette's trading operations can be found in Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 433 and SAB, Saskatoon, *Wood Mountain Historic Park* (pamphlet), S-F453.2, p. 2.

mentioned no trouble in his report on this trading expedition. However, McKay told Isaac Cowie at Fort Qu'Appelle a decidedly different story. McKay informed Cowie that "a party of his men, under Baptiste Bourassa, when on their way to trade at Milk River with a camp of Sioux, who had sent for them, had been robbed of their whole trading outfit and arms by other Sioux under Sitting Bull."⁵⁵ Because the Hudson's Bay Company did not condone trading with American Sioux, McKay undoubtedly offered this explanation to cover his trade.

Father Lestanc learned more about Sioux-Métis trade from visiting a Métis wintering camp on Porcupine Creek during the winter of 1870/71. En route, he and his guide had become lost, but were found by some Sioux (probably Dakotas) who gave them food and directed them to the village. At the village, Lestanc found abundant liquor destined for the Indian trade.⁵⁶

American authorities were also aware of these clandestine trading activities. Indian Agent A.J. Simmons remarked that the Dakotas, Yanktonais and Lakotas he met at Fort Browning in the spring of 1871 "keep constantly on hand a large supply of am[m]unition which they can always procure from the Half-breeds of the British possessions."⁵⁷ Lieutenant William Quinton, in

⁵⁵ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 422.

⁵⁶ AASB, Fonds Taché, T8570-T8573, Lestanc à Taché, Montagne de Bois, 21 mars 1871 and Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), Joseph-Jean-Marie Lestanc papiers personnel, 71.220, boîte 170, item 6873, "Souvenirs 1860-1880," 1910.

⁵⁷ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1871-V78, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 635-652, Simmons to Parker, Ft

command of the military escort at Fort Browning during Simmons's talks with the Sioux, added, "A constant traffic is kept up between the half-breeds from British Territory and all the Indians of the North West. The half-breeds supply them with powder, lead and an unlimited supply of rum, in exchange for robes and peltries."⁵⁸ Reports from Fort Buford indicated that Hunkpapas and other Sioux wintering on the Yellowstone were trading with the Métis for ammunition and liquor.⁵⁹ White Bull, Sitting Bull's nephew, also recalled during two interviews with Walter Campbell, his uncle's biographer, that three Métis traded at Sitting Bull's camp, possibly at the mouth of the Powder River, in the winter of 1870/71, or perhaps the winter of 1869/70. They arrived in a one-horse sleigh bringing groceries, breech-loading guns and powder.⁶⁰

As in the 1860s, trade was made possible by the annual renewal of peace between the Sioux and Métis. Sitting Bull

Browning, 12 May 1871. A copy is located in NARA, RG94, LR, file 2019 AGO 1871, microcopy M666, roll 16, frames 513-525. See also RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1872-V222, microcopy M234, roll 492, frames 636-663, Simmons to Viall, Ft Browning, 5 December 1871 in Viall to Walker, Helena, 23 December 1871.

⁵⁸ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1871-W533, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 1106-1119, Quinton to Sanborne, Ft Shaw, 19 May 1871.

⁵⁹ DeMallie, "The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories," p. 30.

⁶⁰ University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, box 105, notebook 8, White Bull Interview, pp. 29-31 and notebook 28, White Bull Interview, pp. 7-8. Possibly due to translation and transcription problems, the location of Sitting Bull's camp is not clear in the text; it may have been on the Missouri River, at the mouth of Frenchman's Creek (also known as White Mud River).

returned to the north in the autumn of 1872 to negotiate with the Métis camped on Frenchman's Creek to trade for ammunition and other goods. After an absence of nearly a month, Sitting Bull returned with a promise that the Métis would come to trade at the Hunkpapa camp at the head of the Dry Fork. They arrived about two months later, bringing five sleighloads of whisky, but not the desired trade goods. Tensions in the camp mounted as people got drunk, and the Métis departed.⁶¹ Relations between the Lakotas and Métis endured, however, despite this disturbance. In the spring of 1873, when the Yanktonais at Fort Peck tried, on behalf of the American traders, to encourage Sitting Bull to trade at the post, Sitting Bull refused, noting his "treaty" with the Métis.⁶² Lakotas returned to Canada on a large scale the following winter. Isaac Cowie recorded in December 1873 that eight hundred lodges of Lakotas were then in the Cypress Hills.⁶³ This represented an aggregate of several thousand individuals--an extraordinary number for a winter camp. They were lured to the area, no doubt, by the game, timber and shelter found in the Hills, but also by the proximity of Métis traders.

American officials were aware of the trade and determined to

⁶¹ Joe DeBarthe, *Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard*, Edgar I. Stewart, ed. (Norman, 1958), pp. 48-49.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 49-54.

⁶³ PAM, HBCA, Isaac Cowie Papers, E.86/59, Draft Memorandum, Cowie to Donald A. Smith, Elbow of the South Branch, South Saskatchewan River, 16 December 1873. Cowie incorporated this note into his published memoirs: see his *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 483.

oppose it. American traders completely supported their government's use of troops against illegal trade, as this eliminated their competition. For example, Abel Farwell, an American trader who operated an illegal trading post near the Sweet Grass Hills in Canadian territory, alerted American authorities in the winter of 1871/72 that John Kerler, an independent Canadian trader, and a party of Métis were trading illegally near Frenchman's Creek on American territory.⁶⁴ J.A. Viall, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Montana, informed General John Gibbon that "The Oncpapa and Teton Sioux under chief 'Sitting Bull' receive supplies of ammunition from this source and are encouraged by these outlaws to make war upon the Government of the United States and its citizens and particularly to oppose the construction of the North Pacific Rail Road." He asked that military force be used to seize the traders' goods and suppress the trade.⁶⁵ As a result, two companies from Fort Browning under Captain H.B. Freeman arrived at the camp of some sixty Métis and twenty Dakota families early on the morning of 2

⁶⁴ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, file V139-V197, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 995-999, Simmons to Viall, Ft Benton, 15 October 1871; CIA, ARCIA, 1872, pp. 658-659, Viall to Walker, Helena, 25 September 1872; pp. 660-662, Simmons to Viall, Milk River Agency, 1 September 1872; Walter Hildebrandt and Brian Hubner, *The Cypress Hills: The Land and Its People* (Saskatoon, 1994), p. 60.

⁶⁵ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, file V139-V197, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 993-994, Viall to Gibbon, Ft Shaw, 18 October 1871. An incomplete copy of this letter is in PAM, MG12 A1, no. 697. Montana Superintendency, file V200-W1045, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 1165-1168, Sams to Freeman, Ft Shaw, 19 October 1871. A copy is in PAM, MG12 A1, no. 697.

November and captured two trading outfits and one trader, John Kerler--the other, a Métis named François, being absent. The troops confiscated those trade goods, consisting of blankets, ammunition, alcohol, and other items, for which they had transportation. Nine buildings and the remaining goods were burned.⁶⁶ The Métis claimed that their village was on British territory, but to no avail.⁶⁷

In May 1874, trading outfits belonging to several Métis, including Antoine Ouellette, and to Jean-Louis Légaré, a Canadian from Québec, were confiscated on Frenchman's Creek by American officials led by Charles D. Hard, the sheriff of Fort Benton, and Fred N. O'Donnell, a clerk at Fort Peck. Légaré was arrested for trading with the Sioux on American territory and held for three hours, after which he and his party were released. Hard and O'Donnell "did then distribute among the Sioux Indians present all the Tobacco[,] Sugar and matches which he had in his outfit and did take away all the rest of his [Légaré's] goods and Furs to Fort Peck."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, file 1871-V200-W1045, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 1031-1035, Freeman to Gibbon, Ft Browning, 6 November 1871, frames 1036-1038, Simmons to Viall, Ft Browning, 6 November 1871, frame 1039, Gibbon to Viall, Ft Shaw, 12 November 1871 and frames 1027-1030, Viall to Clum, Helena, 16 November 1871.

⁶⁷ PAM, MG12 A1, no. 697, microfilm reel M3, Freeman to AAAG, Ft Shaw, 27 November 1871; Freeman to Bonson, Ft Shaw, 22 April 1872, "Enclosures to 5th Endorsement"; *ibid.*, Dispatch Book No. 3, no. 6, microfilm reel M3, Archibald to Secretary of State for the Provinces, Ft Garry, 12 January 1872.

⁶⁸ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 772, microfilm reel M135, Affidavit of Jean Louis Légaré, 16 June 1874; *ibid.*, no. 824 and three

Légaré had been involved in the Métis-Sioux trade for four years. He arrived at Wood Mountain in the fall of 1870 to work for Antoine Ouellette. That winter, he traded at Little Woody Mountain, south of Talle de Saules--possibly with Sioux, but this is unknown--while Ouellette traded at Wood Mountain with Sitting Bull. Although he soon became an independent trader, he still worked alongside Ouellette.⁶⁹ Even after he was arrested in May 1874, he remained near the Sioux for at least another month. Légaré was near enough to report on their movements to the British contingent of the North American Boundary Commission in early June.⁷⁰

Those involved in the Sioux trade resented the actions of the Americans and tried to gain the support of the Canadian government in their dispute. Kerler, Légaré and Ouellette all claimed that their camps were located on Canadian territory and, therefore, that the Americans had acted illegally. Alexandre Marion, who had been trading ammunition to the Sioux in Légaré's and Ouellette's camp shortly before the arrival of Hard and

enclosures, microfilm reel M135, are the follow-up correspondence with American authorities; NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1874-A554, microcopy M234, roll 498, frames 145-152, Hard to Alderson, Ft Peck, 16 May 1874 in Alderson to Smith, Ft Peck, 1 June 1874.

⁶⁹ Diane Payment and Brian Hubner, "Jean-Louis Légaré," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (forthcoming); L'Abbé Clovis Rondeau, *La Montagne de Bois (Willow-Bunch, Sask.): Histoire de la Saskatchewan Méridionale*, Rév. P. Alexis, ed., (Québec, 1923), p. 46; AASB, Fonds Taché, T8570-T8573, Lestanc à Taché, Montagne de Bois, 21 mars 1871.

⁷⁰ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 760, microfilm reel M135, Légaré and François Ouellette, Memorandum, 6 June 1874.

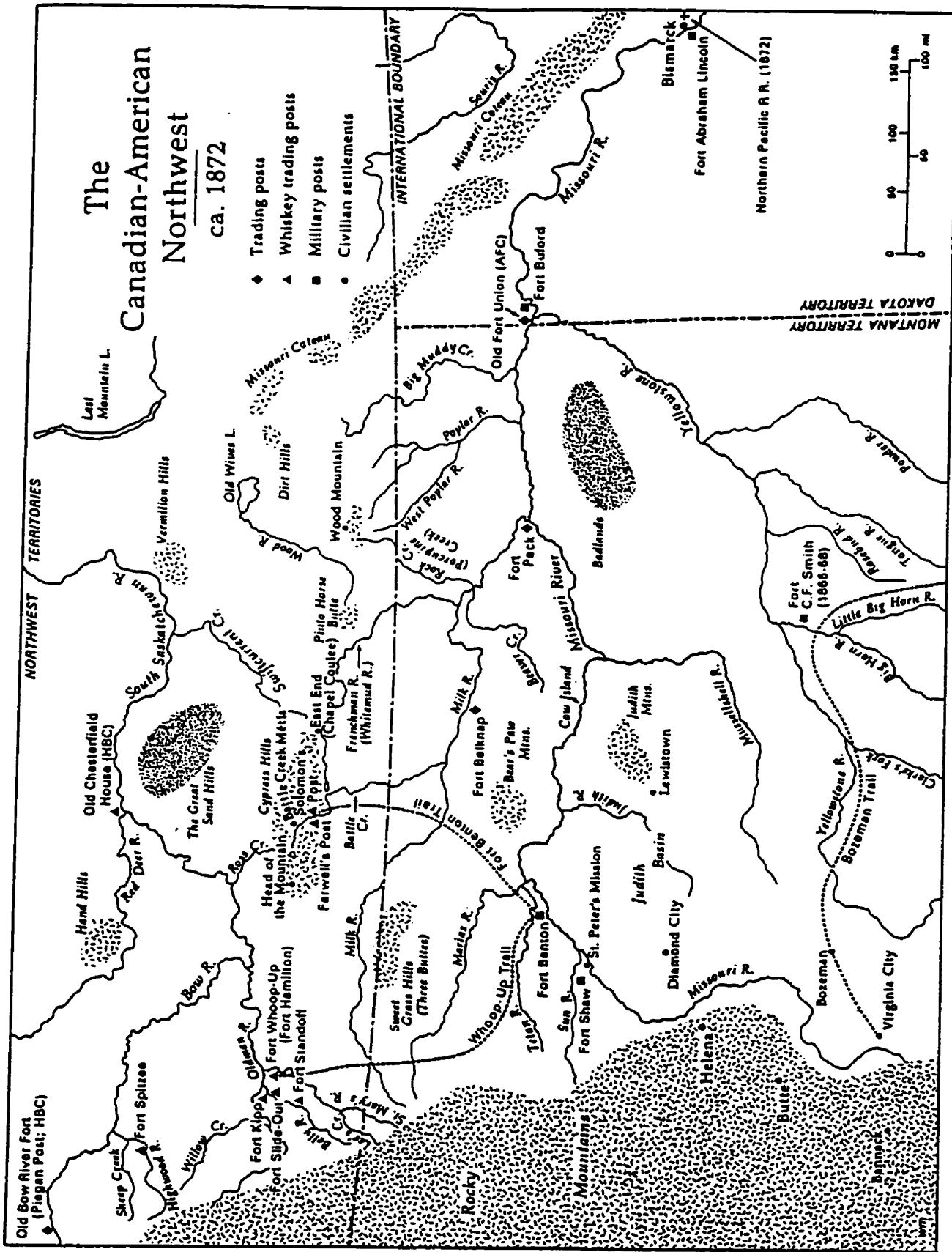
O'Donnell, argued that the Americans' position--that the Métis were operating on American territory--was only a pretext for plundering the Métis of their goods. He accused Hard and O'Donnell of being "freebooters."⁷¹ These attempts to counter the Americans' actions were unsuccessful, and the Americans were able, in large measure, to curb Métis-Sioux trade in the borderlands. Viall did not find this outcome completely satisfactory. The suppression of the whisky trade on American soil had only prompted traders--American, Canadian and Métis--to move their operations to the "Whoop-Up Country," an area well north of the boundary, where, Viall complained, they could sell liquor to the Indians beyond the reach of American authorities.⁷²

According to Standing Buffalo and the other Sioux who spoke to Indian Agent A.J. Simmons in May 1871, the arrival of Americans and the depletion of game on the lower reaches of the Missouri River had forced the Sioux to move higher up the river. By the middle of the 1870s, they were firmly entrenched in their new homes in the Milk River country. There, in the borderlands, they had obtained provisions and expressions of a desire for peace from the Americans and promises of reserves from the Canadian government. From Métis traders, who had founded their communities in the Cypress Hills and at Wood Mountain at the end

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, no. 751, microfilm reel M135, Cameron to Morris, Dufferin, 30 May 1874.

⁷² NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, file 1871-V52-V97, microcopy M234, roll 491, frames 561-565, Viall to Parker, Helena, 14 April 1871.

of the 1860s, they received arms and ammunition which, in part, helped them expel the Crows and Gros Ventres from the lands they now occupied. Yet, if Canadians were slow to enter the country north of the boundary, Americans, to the south, were not. They threatened to build a railroad through the region, destroying the game and claiming the territory of this emerging borderlands community.



Map 5 The Canadian-American Northwest, ca. 1872

Source: Walter Hildebrandt and Brian Hubner, The Cypress Hills: The Land and Its People (Saskatoon, 1994), p. 11.

**The Sioux, the Surveyors and
the North-West Mounted Police,
1872-1874**

Between 1872 and 1874, the boundary between Canadian and American territory on the Northern Plains was finally surveyed and demarcated on the ground. British and American teams surveyed the frontier from the Northwest Angle of the Lake of the Woods to the Red River over the winter of 1872/73, while the often swampy ground was frozen. The border running from the Red River to Wood Mountain was surveyed during the summer and early autumn of 1873 and the remainder from Wood Mountain to the Rockies in the summer and early autumn of 1874. The boundary commissioners were joined in the field in 1874 by the North-West Mounted Police, which had been established by the Canadian government in 1873 to administer justice in the newly-acquired North-West Territories. The force made its historic "March West" in the summer of 1874 over the trail cleared by the boundary commission the year before.

The British and American boundary commissions and the North-West Mounted Police were new intrusions on the Northern Plains, and it is apparent that aboriginal peoples, including the Sioux, did not understand, at first, what they represented. The Sioux were familiar with railroad surveys: surveyors working for the Northern Pacific Railroad, along with their military escorts, had entered the valley of the Yellowstone River in the autumn of 1871. Black Moon had made it clear to Indian Agent A.J. Simmons, during their meetings at Fort Peck in November 1871, that his people were opposed to the railroad because it would destroy the

game. In the spring of 1872, Spotted Eagle of the Sans Arcs informed Colonel David S. Stanley at the Cheyenne River Agency that the Lakotas had not given their consent to the surveyors and that they would fight them. In mid-August, a group of Lakotas and Cheyennes skirmished with troops under the command of Major Eugene M. Baker. A few days later, Hunkpapas skirmished with Stanley's command.¹ The Lakotas and other Sioux in the borderlands were distrustful of the boundary commission. However, they soon realized that the "stone heaps" left behind by the surveyors represented a territorial divide to correspond to the social one between the Americans to the south and the British and Canadians to the north. The marking of the boundary was a development they supported.

Although the Canadians were unsure how the Sioux would respond to the presence of the boundary surveyors and the North-West Mounted Police, Alexander Morris, the new lieutenant governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, anticipated difficulties. Writing in mid-December 1872 to his liaison in Ottawa, the Secretary of State for the Provinces, he observed, "There is a movement of some kind among the Indian Tribes in the North West Territories and the American States. I believe it to be in part created by the Boundary Commission. They do not understand it and think the two nations are uniting against

¹ See Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, pp. 106-111.

them."² While Morris did not specifically mention the Sioux in this dispatch, he was well aware of Lakota hostility to railroad surveys in the United States.

Morris was not the only official who was concerned about the Sioux. Donald R. Cameron, the British Boundary Commissioner, received reports from hunters and traders in early 1873 that the Lakotas were committed to resisting the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad through their lands because its construction would destroy the buffalo herds. In addition, the traders were convinced that the United States Commission on the boundary survey would be obstructed as soon as it arrived in Lakota territory. One "old hunter" remarked that, in the event of an attack, the Lakotas would not be able to distinguish between the British and American portions of the commission, although most of Cameron's informants believed the British Commission would not be molested.³

Cameron wanted to avoid difficulties between his men and the Lakotas. To encourage better relations with the Sioux and to

² PAM, MG12 B1, no. 1983, microfilm reel M138, Morris to the Secretary of State, Ft Garry, 13 December 1872. A nearly identical copy of this document is located in PAM, MG12 A1, Dispatch Book No. 3, no. 122, microfilm reel M3. Morris's letter was published in Canada, House of Commons, "Annual Report on Indian Affairs, for the Year Ending 30th June, 1872," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1873), vol. 5, pp. 12-13.

³ NAC, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 9, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5324, pp. 242-245, Cameron to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dufferin, 27 February 1873. This view was accepted by the Colonial Office. See NAC, MG27 I A4, microfilm reel A-315, Kimberley (the Secretary of State for the Colonies) to Dufferin, 22 May 1873.

obtain intelligence about their intentions, he established a trading post at Turtle Mountain in the winter of 1873/74 for the benefit of the Mdewakanton and Wahpeton Dakotas who had lived in the area since 1862 and whose leader was H'damani.⁴ He also suggested to the Canadian government that H'damani's people be granted a reserve at Oak Lake, a request the Dakotas had asked him to make to the British authorities on their behalf.⁵ Cameron knew that these people were Dakotas, but he hoped that by treating them well, they would send favourable reports about the British Commission to the Lakotas and Yanktonais living farther west.

Encounters between British survey teams and the Sioux in 1873 were rare and, contrary to the predictions and fears of Britons and Canadians, passed without incident. Sioux, probably Dakotas met at Wood End in early August, were "very friendly" and allowed Captain Samuel Anderson, the chief astronomer of the British commission, to take a photograph of them and their camp.⁶

⁴ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 715, microfilm reel M135, D.R. Cameron to Morris, Dufferin, 23 April 1874. A copy of Cameron's letter (without its enclosures) is in NAC, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 12, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5325, pp. 176-179; PAM, MG12 B1, no. 751, microfilm reel M135, George Arthur Hill to Cameron, Turtle Mountain, 18 May 1874.

⁵ NAC, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 8, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5324, pp. 165-167, Cameron to the Governor General, Ottawa, 29 November 1873.

⁶ Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Western Americana Collection, Samuel Anderson Papers, WA MSS S-1292, Anderson to My Dearest Mamma, camp on the plains, 270 miles west of Pembina, 10 August 1873 and see John E. Parsons, *West on the 49th Parallel: Red River to the Rockies, 1872-1876* (New York, 1963), pp. 73-74.

Others, most certainly Yanktonais or Lakotas, camped on Frenchman's Creek, exchanged visits with the commission, which they met late in the season. While exploring the creek one day, several commission members had sighted the camp and entered it out of curiosity. They were ignored for a few minutes, then half a dozen young men came out to greet them. The surveyors could not speak Sioux, but one of the young men was able to ask if they were "King George's men." The surveyors responded positively, after which there was much hand-shaking and the leader of the camp invited them into his lodge. One of the surveyors, L.F. Hewgill, wrote, "Here we were treated with the utmost courtesy and hospitality, buffalo tongues were cooked for, and eaten by us, with an especial relish. . . . Of course the proverbial pipe was passed around after which we shook hands with our friends and returned to camp, meeting on our way numerous Indians who had evidently been paying our camp a visit from the number of articles they were carrying back with them. (we had a large stock of presents for the Indians.)" Later that day, the camp leader and a number of his young men rode over to see the leader of the surveying party. On their departure, they were given provisions and some clothing.⁷

Captain Anderson had another friendly encounter with a group of Sioux in October 1873, soon after that year's field operations

⁷ PAM, Records of the North American Boundary Commission, MG1 B23-5, Hewgill, *In the Days of Pioneering: Crossing the Plains in the Early 70's. The Prairie Black with Buffalo* (n.p., 1894), p. 3.

had come to a close. He had gone out on a reconnaissance to locate the Métis village at Wood Mountain which the British commission hoped to use as a base camp the following year. After some futile searching, he happened upon a party of Sioux who had just come from the settlement and who directed him to it.⁸ Were it not for the "happy accident" of meeting these people, he later wrote, "this site would not have been discovered that season, for it lay 25 miles north of the boundary-line, concealed among the ravines on the reverse or north side of the plateau."⁹

The 1874 season began much more ominously, with renewed reports of Sioux dissatisfaction. Alexander Morris had an interview on 26 May with a trader named Whiteford, a cousin of James McKay, who told him that three Lakota leaders had had a meeting with a Métis named Poitras at Wood Mountain. According to Poitras, the Lakotas "had summoned the Metis to consult and ask their opinion as to stopping the Boundary survey as they believed that the Americans 'had got the English with them to form a rampart for them against the Sioux'." The Métis of Wood Mountain refused to interfere, saying this was a matter for the

⁸ PAM, MG1 B23-1, Report of Capt. D.R. Cameron, vol. 29, Samuel Anderson, "Report of Operations during the Summer Season of 1874 and Winter 1874-75," 30 April 1875, folios 90-99d.

⁹ Anderson, "The North-American Boundary from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 46 (1876), p. 244 and see Albany Featherstonhaugh, "Narrative of the Operations of the British North American Boundary Commission 1872-76" *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers* n.s. 23 (1876), p. 40. Wallace Stegner notes that the Métis village was located on the future site of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. See Stegner, "History Comes to the Plains," *American Heritage* 8, 4 (June 1957), p. 110.

government, but the Lakotas were said to be crossing the Missouri River in large numbers--supposedly as many as fifteen hundred lodges--so that they would be ready to stop the survey if their leaders decided that they should do so. Whiteford felt that there would be no trouble if the purpose of the boundary survey was clearly explained to the aboriginal people, "as the Indians would prefer to have the boundary between the two countries clearly defined."¹⁰

Alarmed by such a menacing report, if only hearsay, Morris decided to canvass the opinion of other people who traded on the plains. On 28 May he interviewed William Gosselin, a Métis scout who had worked for the British boundary commission in 1873. Gosselin said none of the scouts from 1873 would accompany the party in 1874 because they anticipated trouble from the native people, and from the Lakotas in particular. "They are very hostile to the Americans," he said, "& did not understand the object of the Survey."¹¹ Joseph Tanner, a half-Ojibwa trader also known as "Kissoway," said he feared the Americans' military escort might provoke hostility from the Lakotas, and he corroborated Whiteford's report that some of the Lakotas had asked the Métis to join them in stopping the survey. However, he

¹⁰ NAC, RG10, vol. 3610, file 3499, microfilm reel C-10106, Morris to Minister of the Interior, Ft Garry, 27 May 1874. A copy of this document is in PAM, MG12 B2, no. 114, microfilm reel M141. See also PAM, MG12 B1, no. 745, microfilm reel M135, [Morris], memorandum, 26 May 1874.

¹¹ PAM, MG12 B2, no. 116, microfilm reel M141, Morris to Dorion, Ft Garry, 29 May 1874.

felt that there would be no trouble if the British force accompanied the Americans and if it explained the purpose of the survey to the Lakotas. Tanner was aware that the newly-established North-West Mounted Police were also scheduled to enter the plains that summer. He informed Morris that many aboriginal people had heard of the police, but that they did not fully understand who they were. Clearly, some confused the police with the Americans' military escort. According to Tanner, "The Indians had been told that a party of soldiers had gone & scattered through the country, & that the object was for the Americans to take away their country against their will."¹²

Jean-Louis Légaré, who had just returned from trading with the Sioux and whose camp had been raided by American officials, reported that some two hundred and fifty Sioux lodges were on Frenchman's Creek and that they had told an American trader who carried English and American goods that they would not allow the survey to be conducted in their lands. Although an American, the trader had not been harmed.¹³ A note of optimism was sounded by Michael Klyne, who had lived on Frenchman's Creek since 1867. He

¹² NAC, RG10, vol. 3610, file 3528, microfilm reel C-10106, "Memorandum of Statement Made to the Lieut. Governor of the North-West Territories, by Joseph Tanner, otherwise known as 'Kissoway' a Sauteaux trader from the South Branch of the Saskatchewan--May 30th 1874." A copy is in PAM, MG12 B1, no. 750. Details of Tanner's trading operations are found in RG10, vol. 3610, file 3528, microfilm reel C-10106, Morris to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Garry, 6 June 1874. A copy is in PAM, Ketcheson Collection, MG12 B2, no. 119.

¹³ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 760, microfilm reel M135, Jean-Louis Légaré and François Ouillette, Memorandum, 6 June 1874. The relationship between Antoine and François Ouellette is unclear.

told Morris that the British surveyors would have no difficulties with the Lakotas because "The Sioux respect the English."

However, he warned that there might be some trouble between the Lakotas and the Americans, as the Lakotas "steal from or kill Americans when they have a chance."¹⁴

Donald Cameron heard similar warnings. Charles Grant of Point Michel on the Pembina River reported, "Indians have assembled one hundred miles west of Wood Mountain Settlement to stop the Boundary survey until [the] government has declared a satisfactory policy[.]"¹⁵ And Alexandre Marion, a Métis from the Pembina area who had been in Légaré's camp when it was raided, told Cameron that numerous Lakotas were collecting at Wood Mountain to meet him. However, George Arthur Hill, in charge of the boundary commission's trading post at Turtle Mountain, had heard that aboriginal people had planned to attack the American commission and then the British, but that the Lakotas had objected, "expressing a desire not to interrupt the friendliness which has hitherto prevailed between the British and Indians."¹⁶ Although Samuel Anderson, in charge of the British expedition at Wood Mountain, had reported no hostile action on the part of the

¹⁴ NAC, RG10, vol. 3610, file 3529-2, microfilm reel C-10106, "Substance of the information given by Michael Klyne Jun^r to the Lieut. Governor, June 6th 1874," enclosed in Morris to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Garry, 6 June 1874.

¹⁵ PAM, MG12 B2, Telegram Book No. 2, no. 32, microfilm reel M141, Cameron to Morris, Dufferin, 22 June 1874.

¹⁶ PAM, MG12 B1, no. 751, microfilm reel M135, Cameron to Morris, Dufferin, 30 May 1874.

Lakotas, Cameron instructed him in June not to retaliate if the Lakotas made any attempt to obstruct the survey operations, but simply to collect any of his party who might be detached and to withdraw.¹⁷

The North-West Mounted Police arrived at the border settlement of Dufferin in June, 1874, in the midst of these rumours concerning the Sioux. The force's fears regarding Sioux intentions were augmented in early July, when reports arrived of the murder by a party of Sioux of a Métis family at nearby St Joseph, in Dakota Territory. To prevent any of the murderers from fleeing to Canada, Commissioner George Arthur French deployed the force along the boundary, but no Sioux were found. More telling than this bravado was the fact that French returned to Winnipeg in mid-July to consult with Morris and two Métis about changing the force's route from Dufferin to the Bow River. The hope was to "pass through a favorable country and avoid much of the Indian country, evading the Sioux altogether."¹⁸

Reports of tension between the American boundary surveyors and the Sioux were more common in 1874 than in the previous year. When Captain W.J. Twining, the chief astronomer and surveyor of the American commission, arrived at Fort N.J. Turney on Frenchman's Creek in the first week of July, he learned that a

¹⁷ NAC, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 8, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5324, pp. 179-182, Cameron to Alexander McKenzie, Dufferin, 24 June 1874.

¹⁸ PAM, MG12 B2, no. 122, microfilm reel M141, Morris to McKenzie, Ft Garry, [16] July 1874.

party of Yanktonais from Fort Peck had stolen nine of the traders' eleven horses the day before. The Yanktonais did not challenge Twining's military escort, but on 17 July, when his men were camped between Wood Mountain and the Cypress Hills, a party of Yanktonais chased a mail carrier nearly into his camp.¹⁹ Americans interpreted subsequent visits by small groups of Yanktonais as potentially hostile encounters. Writing of a visit from Deer Tail and twenty-five others west of the Cypress Hills on 25 July, Dr Valentine T. McGillicuddy implied that only recent reinforcements to his camp's numbers spared it from molestation.²⁰

During the 1874 season, the British component of the boundary survey encountered numerous groups of Sioux people, mostly Dakotas, but also some Yanktonais and Lakotas. Reports of trouble between the Sioux and the British surveyors exist, but they are difficult to corroborate and provide only the most superficial information about the Sioux participants. For example, Henri Julien, a journalist travelling west with the North-West Mounted Police, reported in late July that a party of Sioux had visited the British commission's depot near the

¹⁹ United States, Department of State, *Reports upon the Survey of the Boundary between the Territory of the United States and the Possessions of Great Britain from the Lake of the Woods to the Summit of the Rocky Mountains, Authorized by an Act of Congress Approved March 19, 1872* (Washington, 1878), pp. 280-283, 339.

²⁰ Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Western Americana Collection, Valentine McGillicuddy Northwest Boundary Survey Diary, WA MSS S-242, entry for 25 July 1874. See also Parsons, *West on the 49th Parallel*, p. 109.

junction of North and South Antler creeks and had "levied black mail in the way of crackers, pork and other eatables."²¹

Julien's language obscures much about this encounter: had the Sioux actually "levied black mail" (and, if so, how) or was this interpretation based on his stereotypes about Indians? Whatever happened, this episode was evidently not significant. Donald Cameron did not mention the incident in his year-end reports, and a policeman whose party travelled through the area at about the same time noted in his memoirs that reports of hostile Sioux being in the area proved to be false.²²

A few other incidents occurred. Policeman James Finlayson recorded in his diary that "Indians" raided a British boundary commission camp on Frenchman's Creek in late August and "went off with Three thousand dollars worth of stuff." Julien also noted the event, and identified the Indians as Sioux.²³ Lieutenant Francis V. Greene, an assistant astronomer with the American boundary commission, recorded that a band of Yanktonais pillaged the British depot on the East Fork of Milk River, also in late August. According to his account, a chief and his son approached the depot and asked for food, whereupon the Britons forced them to leave. The following day, the two returned with their band of

²¹ PAA, Henri Julien Papers, 69.98, "Six Months in the Wilds of the North-west," p. 8.

²² Jean D'Artigue, *Six Years in the Canadian North-West*, L.C. Corbett and Rev. S. Smith, trans. (Toronto, 1882), pp. 49-50.

²³ NAC, James Finlayson Papers, MG29 E58, Diary, June-November 1874, entry for 31 August; PAA, Julien Papers, p. 13.

about 100 people, "tied up the two Englishmen, divided the supplies at the depot into two parts, took one part and went off!"²⁴ Samuel Anderson of the British commission also recorded the incident, noting that, in addition to taking half the provisions stored at the depot, the Sioux "broke open a box of candles and lit 26 of them and danced all night for the edification [edification?] of the unfortunate depot keeper."²⁵ To Finlayson, Greene, Anderson and Julien, the Sioux participants in these events were untrustworthy savages; their accounts are silent on how the Sioux viewed these events.

In 1874, as in 1873, however, the majority of encounters between the Sioux and the British surveyors were peaceful, even cordial. In mid-July, for example, the mail carrier from the British boundary commission visited a Sioux camp west of St Joseph, where he "dined with the Sioux and was even welcomed by them."²⁶ That same month, in the badlands south of Wood Mountain, Albany Featherstonhaugh met Sioux and Assiniboines "who asked numerous questions about the objects of the expedition, and appeared relieved to hear that no idea of a railway lay at the

²⁴ Greene, "Down the Missouri by Mackinaw Boat: Journal of Lieut. Francis Vinton Greene, September, 1874," reprinted in Parsons, *West on the 49th Parallel*, pp. 169-170.

²⁵ Yale University, Samuel Anderson Papers, Anderson to My Dearest Mother, camp at eastern base of Rocky Mountains, 23 August 1874.

²⁶ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Dakota Superintendency, no. 1874-W1216, microcopy M234, roll 253, frames 628-629, Maj. J.E. Yard to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Pembina, 24 July 1874.

bottom of it." They knew of the railroad surveys in the United States, and perhaps knew that Little Knife's band had encountered Sandford Fleming's Canadian Pacific Railway survey party in the North-West Territories in 1872. They were pleased when told that the object of the commission was to mark the boundary between American and Canadian territory. Indeed, he noted, "it is said that they were rather disappointed that a wall or continuous bank was not set up across the plains, a thing which they had been led to expect."²⁷

The most sustained contacts with the Sioux were had by Valentine Francis Rowe, a member of the Royal Engineers. Rowe had spent the winter of 1873/74 learning all the Sioux he could, and when he met various Sioux peoples in the early part of the 1874 season, they were delighted to meet a white man who could say a few words "that they could recognise." Rowe did not claim fluency. Unfortunately, Rowe was thrown from his horse on 11 June 1874 near the commission's camp at Wood End, hitting the ground on the left side of his head and face and fracturing the base of his skull. His condition was so serious that a tent was erected over him where he fell, and he remained there for nearly six weeks. In mid-July, he was finally strong enough to be moved to Wood Mountain, where he remained for several weeks.²⁸ During

²⁷ Featherstonhaugh, "Narrative," p. 43.

²⁸ NAC, MG16 F.O.302, vol. 13, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5325, pp. 214-216, Burgess to Cameron, Dufferin, 13 October 1874, enclosed in Cameron to Deputy Adjutant General, Royal Engineers, Dufferin, 18 October 1874; Featherstonhaugh, "Narrative," p. 42.

his recovery, he was the object of great concern to the various Sioux people who visited the area.

His first visitors were a Dakota family headed by a man named The Elk. The Elk spoke to Rowe about buffalo, hunting and the rattlesnakes found along the Missouri River; The Elk's wife was pleased by Rowe's gifts of a few needles, buttons and thimbles. The Elk and his family departed, however, on the approach of a large band of Yanktonais--that of Struck by the Ree and Two Dogs, the same band which had met Breland at Wood Mountain the previous year. The Yanktonais had just had a fight near the Cypress Hills with some Blackfoot, who had been obtaining alcohol from American traders and stealing horses from the Métis. The Yanktonais had joined the Métis and successfully repelled the Blackfoot.²⁹ British surveyors working farther west where the boundary crossed Milk River encountered the Métis camp involved in this fight.³⁰ The Yanktonais pitched their camp about three hundred yards from Rowe's tent and the leaders "would not allow the very noisy ones of the party to come near me reserving the 'sick English Chief' for their own visiting. . . ." Some of the young men who had been involved in the fight with the Blackfoot came to look in on Rowe, but the leaders sent them away

²⁹ The circumstances surrounding this fight are found in PAM, George Arthur French Papers, MG6 A3, Diary, North West Mounted Police Expedition, 8 July-7 November 1874, entry for 12 August.

³⁰ PAM, MG1 B23-4, "Extracts from Notebook of John E. Edwards, R.E. (with the British North America Boundary Commission surveying the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, 1874)," entry for 17 July 1874.

so as not to disturb him.

Rowe was visited by the Yanktonais leaders nearly every day, but his most involved conversations were with Two Dogs. Two Dogs wished to impress on Rowe the impact Europeans had had on the Sioux peoples. Before the Europeans arrived the Sioux were powerful and had lived on the buffalo; while they were glad to accept trade goods from the traders, the Americans now came from all directions and took Sioux land: the Sioux

slept and when we woke up there were roads, roads everywhere--the Buffalo was driven back to these Plains and the Dacotahs hunt today only between the swift river and the muddy river. (Saskatchewan & Missouri) Where now is our Land? our earth our water, our trees? it was all ours--I look, but where can our children pitch their tipis?

Two Dogs complained that the American government had promised much to the Sioux, but had delivered nothing. He was pleased, however, to see the British.

The Great Mystery has spoken--my heart is not bad, my heart is glad to see the English, the English are good, but the Big Knife is bad, they kill our children. The Big Knife & the Dacotah fight: the children of the Great Good Mother have good hearts & are friendly to the Dacotah and the Dacotahs' hearts are good toward the English[.]

He explained, as Struck by the Ree and other Yanktonai leaders had explained to Pascal Breland in 1873, that the Sioux had never fought against the British. Asked how he and his people could

distinguish between the British and the Americans, Two Dogs explained that the American's soldiers killed not only men but women and children, while "The English comes in the midst of our people all by himself--alone--he does not bring warriors or many guns, he comes alone & he walks here, there, among our people, he does not fear the Dacotah People." Two Dogs expressed the peace that existed between the Sioux and the British in spiritual terms, saying "The Great Spirit takes care of the English, we do not touch him!"³¹

Commissioner Cameron was delighted by Rowe's friendly rapport with the Yanktonais, as he had hoped his staff would do all they could to encourage good relations with the Sioux. Rowe returned to Britain in October 1874 to receive further medical care, and Cameron noted that the members of the commission took leave of him with great regret.³² Cameron was equally pleased by Two Dogs, to whom he gave a paper noting that he was the "Executive Chief of the Ihuktawanah [Yanktonai] of which Padinapap [Pananiapapi, or Struck by the Ree] is head" and commenting on the friendly disposition he had shown the members of the British commission.³³

³¹ NAC, Valentine Francis Rowe Papers, MG29 C24, memoir, pp. 5-8.

³² NAC, MG16 F.O. 302, vol. 13, Letterbook, microfilm reel B-5325, pp. 212-214, Cameron to Deputy Adjutant General, Dufferin, 18 October 1874.

³³ NAC, RG10, vol. 3596, file 1319, microfilm reel C-10103, J.A. Markle to the Indian Commissioner, Birtle, 4 May 1891. Two Dogs showed Markle this piece of paper at this time.

Leaving Manitoba, the North-West Mounted Police did not encounter any native people at all until they arrived in the neighbourhood of Wood Mountain in August. There they encountered fifty lodges of Struck by the Ree's and Two Dogs's Yanktonais who were returning from a buffalo hunt farther west.³⁴ On 12 August, a Yanktonai scout entered the police camp on Old Wives Creek, telling the police of his people's recent fight with the Blackfoot. French gave him some tobacco and invited his camp to a "pow-wow" the next day.³⁵ The scout and his party arrived for a formal visit at ten o'clock the following morning. According to policeman John H. McIllrie, the council began poorly. "It was not at all an interesting affair," he wrote. "There were no big Chiefs, and the speakers were poor and our interpreter was poor. We sat and looked at each other for about half an hour and smoked, when one of the braves got up and shook hands all round, saying how-how or something like it." The "brave" then asked why the police were coming through "their country." McIllrie complained in his diary that the question was "a beastly piece of cheek as they are Sioux that have been driven out of the States"

³⁴ GA, Frederick Augustus Bagley Fonds, M44, entry for 12 August 1874; Denny, *The Riders of the Plains: A Reminiscence of the Early and Exciting Days in the North West* (Calgary, 1905), p. 35. Denny's posthumously published *The Law Marches West* (London, 1939), p. 28, identifies these people as Assiniboines; this mistake was made by Denny's editor, W.B. Cameron.

³⁵ GA, Bagley Fonds, entry for 12 August 1874; PAM, MG6 A3, Diary, North West Mounted Police Expedition, 8 July-7 November 1874, entry for 12 August 1874. French's diary was published in Canada, "Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, 1874," *Sessional Papers*, Appendix "A."

and not Indians from Canada.³⁶ Commissioner French, however, calmly replied that "the White Mother had heard that the American outlaws had killed some of her red children [at the Cypress Hills Massacre in 1873], and that she had sent me, with these braves to capture the men who did it." French then "impressed upon them the fact that we did not want their land. . . ."³⁷ The Yanktonais listened approvingly to French's speech, and then, according to McIllrie, two or three made speeches in which they "professed great love and esteem" for the police.³⁸ To cement peaceful relations, French gave the Yanktonais generous presents of tobacco, powder, balls, flints and steels, cloth and flour.³⁹

The police and the Yanktonais remained camped on Old Wives Creek for several days, the police to establish a cripple camp, the Sioux, no doubt, to learn more about these newcomers. A number of the policemen visited the Yanktonai camp and, as the police were poorly equipped, did some trading. F.A. Bagley, for example, reported that he "Got a couple of pairs of buffalo hide

³⁶ British Columbia Archives and Records Service (hereafter BCARS), John H. McIllrie Diaries and Notebooks, Add.Mss 1434, microfilm reel A-530, volume 1, Diary 1874, 1876-1877, entry for 13 August 1874.

³⁷ PAM, MG6 A3, Diary, entry for 13 August 1874.

³⁸ BCARS, McIllrie Diary, entry for 13 August 1874.

³⁹ GA, Bagley Fonds, Diary, entry for 13 August 1874; BCARS, McIllrie, 13 August 1874; NAC, MG29 E58, Diary, June-November 1874, entry for 13 August 1874; GA, Joseph J. Carscadden Fonds, M6608, entry for 12 August 1874 [this entry is misdated and should read 13 August].

soled mocassins from the Sioux."⁴⁰ Likewise, the Yanktonais went to trade at the police camp, prompting McIllrie to comment that "They are a nasty begging lot and will sell anything they have got."⁴¹ On the evening of 14 August, several Yanktonais around the police camp performed a dance, saying that "the Blackfoot would be crying at night": the singer had been in the recent fight and had killed a Blackfoot.⁴² Surgeon J.G. Kittson visited the Yanktonais' camp and, having been given permission by its leader, presumably Struck by the Ree, but perhaps Two Dogs, and its "Pa-ge-we-chas-ta," gave everyone a physical examination. Kittson eagerly doled out his medicines, but found the Yanktonais had little interest in them.⁴³ The Yanktonais were joined by a small group of Dakotas under Raising Bull (a son of the elder Standing Buffalo) on 17 August, after which the combined Sioux camp departed.⁴⁴

Following the departure of the Yanktonais and Dakotas, the police encountered no more Sioux until early September, when they reached a point west of the Cypress Hills. During the evening of 4 September, seven Sioux approached the police camp with loaded

⁴⁰ GA, Bagley Fonds, Diary, entry for 14 August 1874.

⁴¹ BCARS, McIllrie Diary, entry for 15 August 1874.

⁴² PAM, MG6 A3, Diary, entry for 14 August 1874.

⁴³ North-West Mounted Police, *A Chronicle of the Canadian West: North-West Mounted Police Report for 1875* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1975), pp. 22-23.

⁴⁴ BCARS, McIllrie Diary, entry for 17 August 1874; NAC, MG29 E58, Diary, June-November 1874, entry for 17 August; PAA, Julien Papers, p. 13.

guns. The police extended a skirmish line, but a Sioux who could speak French came forward unarmed and explained that they had been with some Métis when the police advance guard had passed and, seeing no carts, had thought they were Blackfoot. The police gave them tea, buffalo meat, biscuits and ammunition, which pleased them.⁴⁵ After the meal, they performed a dance for the police.⁴⁶

The arrival on the plains of the boundary commission and the North-West Mounted Police offered the Lakotas and Yanktonais new information about Europeans and generally improved Anglo-Sioux relations. When Santees had travelled to Rupert's Land in 1862, they did so knowing that American troops would not follow them across the boundary. The Western Sioux had no such prior experience. Thus in 1872, just as Morris had suspected, they did not understand the purpose of the boundary survey that the British and Americans were then beginning. Many, like the Sioux encountered by Featherstonhaugh in 1874, must have feared that the surveys were preparatory to a railway. Moreover, the Sioux may have likened the arrival of the Canadian police force to the arrival of American troops on Sioux lands farther south in the 1850s. Leaders such as Two Dogs--just as much as Black Moon and Four Horns--were concerned about the impact of new railways and dissillusioned by American encroachment on Sioux lands.

⁴⁵ PAM, MG6 A3, Diary, entry for 4 September 1874.

⁴⁶ GA, Carscadden Fonds, M6608, Diary, 1874, entry for 4 September 1874.

It was these concerns which prompted the curiosity such leaders showed the North American Boundary Commission and the North-West Mounted Police. Encounters between the Sioux and the surveyors and the police not only allayed the fears of the Sioux and thereby reduced the threat of conflict, but, more importantly, gave the Sioux an opportunity to voice their grievances against the Americans. The Sioux expressed their support for the boundary survey and clearly wished to establish peaceful relations with the British, whom they viewed as potential allies. Given the limited intrusion on the plains by Britons and Canadians in the 1870s, it is not surprising that the Sioux saw them as less threatening than the Americans. For this reason, they were willing to adopt them as friends, instead of viewing them as foes.

The Great Sioux War, 1876-1877

The historiography of the American West usually presents the Great Sioux War of 1876/77 as the final chapter in the conflict between Lakotas and Americans over land in the Black Hills. The fact that, as a result of this conflict, some northern Lakota bands fled to Canada is of peripheral concern; since the Sioux were "American" Indians, the lens of Lakota-American relations is the only one trained upon these events. Similarly, histories of the Lakotas in Canada usually leave the impression that it was only after the Battle of the Little Bighorn that Lakota bands began crossing the border. In fact, however, Lakotas, along with Yanktonais and Santees from the Milk River country, were in contact with aboriginal peoples and Métis traders in the Cypress Hills/Wood Mountain region throughout the conflict. A different picture emerges, if the Lakotas are seen as a people of the borderlands. In the aftermath of the Custer fight, the Lakotas strove to renew and strengthen their ties both to the Yanktonais at Fort Peck and to representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Qu'Appelle. Once in Canada, the Sioux willingly manipulated their identity, telling Canadian officials that they were "British," and that they had been so since their peoples' involvement in the War of 1812.

In the spring of 1876 the Lakotas called a council to be held at the western end of the Cypress Hills, and to which they invited native peoples from throughout the northern plains. A mixed-blood trader who had passed by Wood Mountain in the spring

claimed that Sitting Bull had sent messengers with tobacco to the Métis at Wood Mountain to tell them "That the Sioux were likely to come into the Mountains [meaning the Cypress Hills], that they wished to be at peace with the Half Breeds, when they came in, but that if it was to be otherwise, the Sioux would fight to the death." The Métis made no reply as most were out on the plains.¹

In May, several aboriginal leaders asked North-West Mounted Police Assistant Commissioner A.G. Irvine at Fort Walsh to attend the meeting, which he believed would be a sun dance where "the different tribes pledge friendship to one another." Many groups who had never met before would be at the meeting; the Indians invited Irvine and the NWMP because they feared violence might break out. Irvine said he would try to attend; if he could not, he would send someone.² L.N.F. Crozier, the officer in command at Fort Walsh, reported that he had "had a number of Pow Wows with Indian Chiefs, who come every day to tell some news about the Sioux or get advice." He wrote in mid-June that there were "all sorts of rumours of hostile Sioux, from the American side, Crossing over here . . . in one instance a Saulteux chief came to inform me, that he had received information that a large party were already on this side, and that they had informed the Crees, that they did not wish to do any harm to any Indian or half-breed, that they intended to attack the Fort, and Kill all the

¹ PAM, MG12 B2, no. 178, microfilm reel M141, Morris to Secretary of State, Ft Garry, 6 June 1876.

² NAC, RG18, A1, vol. 11, file 209-76, Irvine to Richardson, Ft Walsh, 21 June 1876.

soldiers, and take all the ammunition and provisions." Many Indians and mixed-bloods believed the report and left the vicinity of Fort Walsh for the Qu'Appelle Valley.³

On the American side of the boundary, Fort Peck Indian Agent Thomas J. Mitchell noted the departure of many of his agency's Indians in late May. He believed they had left to go hunting, most heading north of Milk River and near the Canadian border.⁴ One camp of some 140 lodges of Yanktonais, probably from Medicine Bear's or Afraid of Bear's bands, split away from the hunting parties, however, and travelled to Fort Walsh, arriving in mid-June. Once at Fort Walsh, they belatedly celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday by firing a "feu de joie" at noon, having races in the afternoon, and having a bonfire and lantern slides in the evening. Crozier gave a feast to those at the post in the evening, and "some of them danced all night in honor of the Great Mother." They departed on the morning of 19 June to join the "general gathering" taking place nearby.⁵

The documentary record says little of substance about the meeting. A Canadian source, undoubtedly a policeman, reported that the meeting was attended by some three thousand lodges of Peigans, Blackfoot, Bloods and Assiniboines from Canada, besides

³ *Ibid.*, Crozier to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 19 June 1876.

⁴ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 277, frame 338, Mitchell to Smith, Bismarck, 19 July 1876 and roll 278, frames 515-518, Mitchell to Smith, Ft Peck, 29 July 1876.

⁵ NAC, RG18, A1, vol. 11, file 209-76, Crozier to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 19 June 1876.

Gros Ventres, Crows and Lakotas from the United States.⁶ John S. Wood, of the Blackfeet Agency in Montana, added that Dakota, Yanktonai, Ojibwa, Cree and Mandan representatives also attended.⁷ As Lakota-American hostilities were then in full swing (the battle on the Little Bighorn River took place on 25 June), the Lakotas had called the meeting to garner aboriginal support for a Lakota migration into Canada, if it became necessary. According to Agent Wood, who obtained his information from Little Plume, many of the Sioux, but especially the Santees and Yanktonais, were willing to use force if the Canadians tried to prevent their entry. The aboriginal peoples of the area were unsympathetic: the Blackfoot, Bloods and Peigans under Little Plume withdrew from the council declaring, said Wood, that "the Sioux were their enemies, and that they would fight them if ever they came to this country [Canada], and that the whites were their friends, and they would help them whip the Sioux."⁸

The Lakotas may have also used the occasion to discuss their treaty relations with the Americans. It is clear that the Cree leaders who negotiated Treaty Six at Fort Pitt and Carlton House in August and September 1876 were aware of the provisions granted

⁶ "Life in the Nor'-West," *The Globe*, 24 July 1876, p. 4, c. 3. This report was telegraphed on 27 June.

⁷ CIA, ARCIA, 1876, p. 86, Wood to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Blackfeet Agency, 25 August 1876.

⁸ *Ibid.* An account of the council written by Robert Vaughn was based on Wood's report. See Vaughn's *Then and Now; or, Thirty-Six Years in the Rockies: Personal Reminiscences of Some of the First Pioneers of the State of Montana* (Minneapolis, 1900), p. 300.

to Sioux in the United States. When the Canadian minister of the Interior informed Morris in 1877 that the government was not happy with the emergency aid provision included in Treaty Six, Morris replied that "Our Canadian Indians" were fully aware of events in the United States, and pointed out, "It was the knowledge that similar terms had been previously granted to the American ~~Sioux~~ Indians, that led to the demands of the Crees for food and clothing, carpenters and blacksmiths &c" during the negotiations for the treaty.⁹

Irvine and eleven men left Fort Walsh on 22 June to attend the meeting, but they arrived too late. They found only one thousand lodges, one hundred of which were from Sitting Bull's band. They distributed some rations and tobacco before departing.¹⁰ To Irvine, the encounter had been a complete success. Arriving at Fort Macleod on the evening of 27 June, Irvine sat in the room of fellow policeman, Richard Nevitt, "and talked until daylight this morning. He told me," wrote Nevitt, "the same things over two or three times and altogether was a little tiresome but I behaved politely and sat him out."¹¹

The Blackfoot peoples under Crowfoot and other "British"

⁹ PAM, MG12 B2, no. 251, microfilm reel M141, Morris to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Garry, 27 March 1877. This is Morris's draft; the sent copy would have spoken only of "American Indians."

¹⁰ "Life in the Nor'-West," *The Globe*, 24 July 1876, p. 4, c. 3.

¹¹ GA, Richard Barrington Nevitt Fonds, M893, box 2, file 9, Barrie to Lizzie, Ft Macleod, 21 June 1876. This letter was written over several days, but 21 June appears on the first page.

leaders did not attend the Cypress Hills Council, but they were contacted by the Lakotas. The Methodist missionary to the Blackfoot, Reverend John McDougall, informed Morris that Sioux messengers had sent tobacco to the Blackfoot with an invitation "to join them in war against the Whites, and if not against all, against the Americans."¹² When the Blackfoot declined the Sioux proposal, the Sioux threatened continued warfare between the Blackfoot and the Sioux. The Blackfoot leaders were debating this latest message when North-West Mounted Policeman Cecil Denny arrived in Crowfoot's camp on the Red Deer River in July. Denny assured Crowfoot that the police would support the Blackfoot in the event of a Sioux attack, while Crowfoot noted that his people could send two thousand warriors against the Sioux.¹³ Whether the Sioux actually proposed attacking the Blackfoot, or only hoped to gain access to Blackfoot lands, is unclear from the European documentary record.

While Sioux representatives were venturing north of the

¹² PAM, MG12 B2, Morris to Secretary of State for the Provinces, Ft Garry, 11 July 1876. These events are also reported in "The Indian War," *Globe*, 29 July 1876.

¹³ Canada, House of Commons, "Report of the Secretary of State of Canada, for the Year Ended 31st December, 1876," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1877), pp. 21-20, From the Report of Sub-Inspector C.E. Denny, July 1876, in White to Scott, 30 December 1876. A copy of Denny's report was also sent to American authorities: see NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 278, frames 611-620, Irvine to the Secretary of State, Ft Benton, 5 August 1876 and NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1876, box 18, no. 1876-2641, W. Hunter (Acting Secretary of State) to James D. Cameron (Secretary of War), Washington, 2 September 1876. Denny's report was reprinted, with small editorial changes, in his *The Riders of the Plains*, pp. 98-100 and in his posthumous *The Law Marches West*, pp. 98-100.

Canada-United States boundary in the spring and early summer of 1876, Métis traders were travelling south of it. That spring, the post interpreter at the Cheyenne River Agency reported that a party of Red River Métis had been camped for over a month north of Bear Butte in the Black Hills and that they had been conducting an extensive trade in ammunition with the Lakotas.¹⁴ It is not certain that any Métis were at the fight on the Little Bighorn in June: He Dog, an Oglala, told Western history enthusiast Walter Camp that "In my camp there was a Canadian half breed who spoke very good English as well as Sioux."¹⁵ However, when Camp asked if any Europeans or mixed-bloods were with Sitting Bull on 25 June, One Bull, one of Sitting Bull's nephews, said that he had "Never heard of any."¹⁶

The Lakota-Métis arms trade may have had a significant impact on the course of the Sioux War; it is impossible, however, to determine whether artifacts recovered from battle sites (bullets, cartridges, etc.) came from American or Canadian sources because the Métis from Wood Mountain and the Cypress

¹⁴ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1872-1876, box 16, no. 1876-1142, Ruhlen to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Cheyenne River Agency, 19 April 1876.

¹⁵ "Interview with He Dog, July 13, 1910; William Berger, Interpreter" in Kenneth Hammer, ed., *Custer in '76: Walter Camp's Notes on the Custer Fight* (Provo, 1976), pp. 205-208.

¹⁶ Indiana University, Lilly Library, Walter Mason Camp Papers, box 5, folder 1, field notes, envelope 41, One Bull Interview, Standing Rock, 1912, p. 346.

Hills traded the same kinds of ammunition as American traders.¹⁷ A single Enfield bullet (FS1781) was recovered during an archaeological survey of the Custer site conducted in the mid-1980s: although of British manufacture, it could easily have come from an American source.¹⁸

The Lakotas scattered after the fight on the Little Bighorn. Many northern bands--those of Sitting Bull and others--moved around eastern Montana, eventually arriving in the neighbourhood of Fort Peck. This was not by chance: the Yanktonais and Santees at Fort Peck were the same people with whom these Northern Lakotas had been associated since the 1860s. Fort Peck and its environs were also close to Wood Mountain and the Métis traders with whom the Fort Peck Sioux had traded for the previous decade. The Lakotas were unable to remain among the Yanktonais and, over the course of the autumn, migrated into British territory.

The first indication that Lakotas would cross into Canada came in August, when two Crees reported to Crozier that a Sioux camp was on Frenchman's Creek in Canadian territory. Crozier sent Sub-Inspector W.D. Antrobus to find the camp, but he

¹⁷ For a discussion of firearms and ammunition commonly found at Métis sites in Canada, see Maurice F.V. Doll, Robert S. Kidd and John P. Day, *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site: A Late Nineteenth Century Settlement in the Parkland of Central Alberta*, Provincial Museum of Alberta Human History Occasional Paper No. 4 (Edmonton, 1988), pp. 215-223.

¹⁸ Douglas D. Scott, Richard A. Fox, Jr., Melissa A. Connor and Dick Harmon, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman, 1989), p. 181. A photograph of this item appears on p. 157, fig. 51, j.

returned four days later without success. Crozier then received information about the Lakotas from a Métis named Gabriel Solomon. Solomon had met a Métis named Laframboise at Old Wives Lake, north of Wood Mountain, who had just come from Sitting Bull's camp: there he had attended a council during which Sitting Bull had said that

he found himself surrounded [by American troops]--in his own words--"like an island in the middle of the sea;" there were only two ways of escape--one to the country of the Great Mother, the other to the Spaniards. . . . Sitting Bull was undecided whether he would go to the Spanish country (meaning, I suppose, Mexico) or to Canada. Sitting Bull calls a council every day to talk about which way they will go. In a speech at the council, the other day, he said: "We can go nowhere without seeing the head of an American. Our land is small, it is like an island. We have two ways to go--to the land of the Great Mother, or to the land of the Spaniards."

Solomon had also met a scout from Sitting Bull's camp in the Qu'Appelle Valley who said he had come to learn what the "English" had to say about Sitting Bull. The scout did not talk to any Canadians, as Solomon turned him back. Crozier reported--undoubtedly on the basis of statements from Solomon not included in the latter's affidavit--that the Lakotas had told the Métis not to winter at Wood Mountain or along Milk River, as they intended going to those places. Crozier did not know who these

Sioux were in particular, or even if the rumour was true.¹⁹

The decision to winter at Wood Mountain was not made by chance. It is likely the Lakotas hoped to meet and trade with the Métis at Wood Mountain rather than avoid them--Crozier's information to the contrary. Long Dog, a Hunkpapa, and twenty-three families and Inkipaduta, a Wahpekute, and five lodges crossed the Missouri at Wolf Point on 6 September and remained several days before departing for the north, saying they were going to Wood Mountain. Agent Thomas Mitchell spoke to Long Dog and Inkipaduta on 11 September at the crossing of Porcupine Creek on the road between Fort Peck and Wolf Point. They spoke freely, telling him that in their haste to get away from the soldiers they had abandoned their lodges, travois, and other possessions, and that they were going to Wood Mountain to gather supplies and equipment for the winter.²⁰ Mitchell did not say that the Sioux would trade with the Métis, but this was probably the case. George Boyd, a scout at Fort Peck, informed Walter B. Jordan, a trader at Fort Buford, in early October that Sitting Bull was planning to send a delegation to Fort Peck to trade. "They want ammunition," reported Boyd, "and if they do not get it, it will

¹⁹ Canada, "Report of the Secretary of State, 1877," *Sessional Papers*, pp. 25-26, Solomon, affidavit, Ft Walsh, 18 August 1876 and pp. 26-27, Crozier to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 18 August 1876.

²⁰ NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, Relating to Military Operations and Administration, 1863-1885, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 373-375, Mitchell to Smith, Wolf Point, 14 September 1876. Another copy is in NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 139-141.

be bad. They will go to Wood Mountain to trade and get it from the half-breeds."²¹ Colonel John Gibbon, the commanding officer of the District of Montana, informed Inspector James Morrow Walsh of the North-West Mounted Police in November "that half breeds are building posts in the Woody Mountains, north of the line, and have invited these hostile Indians there, to trade for ammunition."²²

The Lakotas were also eager to renew trade ties to the Hudson's Bay Company. When Canadian treaty commissioner M.G. Dickieson visited Fort Qu'Appelle in September 1876 to make payments under Treaty Four, he met, in addition to White Cap and the younger Standing Buffalo, "a delegation of Sioux from the United States." They had made a peace with Little Black Bear's Crees during the Cypress Hills Council in June and had now come to discuss matters with the Canadians:

They represented that they found it difficult to live on the American side and wished to come to ours, where they heard the means of subsistence could be obtained. (They had on a previous occasion had a "talk" with Mr. [W.J.] McLean of the Hudson's Bay Company and wanted to procure from him repeating rifles and ammunition.)

²¹ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 209-211, Boyd to Jordan, Ft Peck, 8 October 1876 in Hazen to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Buford, 11 October 1876. See also NARA, RG393, Ft Buford Document File (1873-1877), Little to Jourdan [Jordan], Ft Buford, 8 October 1876.

²² NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1876, box 19, no. 1876-3370, Gibbon to Walsh, Ft Shaw, 2 November 1876.

Dickieson did not comment on their request for arms, but assured them that traders on Canadian territory would provide them with subsistence items in trade.²³

Equally important to Lakota leaders was maintaining their ties to the Yanktonais and other Sioux then living peacefully near Fort Peck. In mid-September, Agent Mitchell learned from his interpreter, Joseph Lambert, whom he had sent to the Yanktonai and Assiniboine camps, that Sitting Bull had sent messengers to both telling them that he wished to be friendly with all neighbouring tribes, and that he would give a gift of one hundred horses to each tribe that became friendly with him and admitted him to their camps on friendly terms. Both the Yanktonais and Assiniboines rejected his offer and sent word back through his messengers that he was the enemy of their friends, the whites, and that they wanted nothing to do with him.²⁴ Such remarks were likely made for Mitchell's benefit. One hundred and nineteen lodges of Hunkpapas, the followers of Iron Dog, Hawk, Crow, Little Knife, Long Dog and Iron Buck Elk Horn, arrived at Fort Peck on 30 October and sought refuge in the Yanktonai camps north of the Missouri River. Iron Dog and Crow went to the post

²³ Canada, "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 1876," *Sessional Papers*, vol. 7, p. xxxvi, Dickieson to Minister of the Interior, Winnipeg, 7 October 1876. William J. McLean was the trader in charge of Fort Qu'Appelle. His papers, in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (E.218), do not mention the incident.

²⁴ NARA, RG75, Montana Superintendency, no. 1876-M1015, microcopy M234, roll 505, frames 532-534, Mitchell to CIA, Ft Peck, 18 September 1876. A copy is located in NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 243-244.

and gave Mitchell four government horses and one mule that had been captured during engagements with U.S. troops. Messengers from Wolf Point then told the Hunkpapas that troops were approaching and, upon hearing this, they all fled. (Colonel W.B. Hazen arrived on 1 November.) Mitchell believed that the Yanktonais and Assiniboines refused to cooperate with the Hunkpapas; however, the Yanktonais gave Mitchell ten more horses after the Hunkpapas had left, suggesting that there was communication between the camps.²⁵ Lieutenant R.H. Day, left at Fort Peck with a detachment after Hazen departed on 4 November, soon realized that the Yanktonais were disposed to harbour and give aid and comfort to the Lakotas, despite their expressions of friendship for the Americans.²⁶

Sitting Bull was not among those who arrived in the vicinity of Fort Peck in October. He did send word to Mitchell, however, that he wanted peace and to be allowed to trade for ammunition; if Mitchell did not permit this, he would go north to Canada, where, he claimed, he had been promised he could trade for "plenty."²⁷ It is tempting to think that this statement was the

²⁵ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 521-523, Mitchell to Smith, Ft Peck, 11 November 1876, frames 525-526, Mitchell to Smith, Ft Peck, 13 November 1876, frames 551-552, Mitchell to Smith, Ft Peck, 11 November 1876; NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LS 1876-1877, box 1, unregistered, Hazen to Miles, Ft Peck, 2 November 1876.

²⁶ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1876, box 19, no. 1876-3652, Day to Hazen, Ft Peck, 19 November 1876.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 1876-3370, Mitchell to Gibbon, Ft Peck, 25 October 1876; *ibid.*, District of Montana, LS 1870-1879, p. 107, no. 1876-49, Gibbon to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of

result of Dickieson's off-hand assurances made to Sioux delegates at Fort Qu'Appelle in September.

Lakotas began crossing into Canada as early as October 1876. James Walsh arrived at Fort Benton on 21 October with the news that Sitting Bull had sent Long Wolf and Red Hand to Fort Walsh some two weeks before to arrange an interview with him. Walsh had declined the request but said that if Sitting Bull or any of his people came across the line, they would be treated the same as any other peaceable people, so long as they behaved themselves. Little Knife's camp, noted Walsh, was on Canadian soil by the end of the month.²⁸ Day reported in early November that Long Dog and Iron Dog had remained near Fort Peck after Hazen's troops had left and that Hunkpapas under The Man Who Kills the Enemy had asked him about terms of surrender, but the followers of Iron Dog, Long Dog, Little Knife, White Guts, Crow, Hawk and, perhaps, Inkpaduta were then hunting near Wood Mountain.²⁹

Once in Canada, the Lakotas quickly approached the traders. A scouting party of twelve, led by Little Knife and Crow, arrived at Jean-Louis Légaré's trading post at Wood Mountain on 17

Dakota, telegram, Ft Shaw, 2 November 1876.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Department of Dakota, LR 1876, box 19, no. 1876-3952, Ilges to Gibbon, Ft Benton, 22 October 1876.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Ft Buford Document File 1873-1877, Day to Hazen, Ft Peck, 9 November 1876 and Day to Hazen, Ft Peck, 23 November 1876.

November 1876.³⁰ Saying they had heard he had a store, and that they were in need, they proposed that Légaré give them tobacco, sugar and tea, and that they would come to him to trade their furs when they were ready to trade. A speaker, not identified but apparently Crow, explained that they had heard that "the Great Mother (the Queen) was good for her children. That they came across to sleep quiet in Canada." Légaré gave them what they asked for, as this was the "Indian fashion." Seventy lodges came and camped close to Légaré's store the next day. When he traded with them, they generally ordered dry goods--cotton and print cloth, tea and sugar. Légaré noted that the Sioux "used to talk to the scale to be solid and Strong, to get more by that in

³⁰ While this was not the first meeting between Lakotas and Canadian or Métis traders after the fight on the Little Bighorn, it is the earliest account of such a meeting. Légaré stated in 1888 that this meeting occurred in December, but he told Camp in 1910 that it was in November. F.C. Wade, the defence counsel in a suit brought by Légaré against the U.S. government in 1888, accepted the December date. It seems to have been in November, as Fréchette told Day that he left for Wood Mountain on 29 November to meet certain Sioux who had crossed the boundary in early November (Day had sent news of these Sioux to Walsh, who then dispatched Fréchette); Légaré also told Colonel W.R. Wagner at Fort Buford that the first Sioux had arrived in November. See NAC, Jean-Louis Légaré Papers, MG10 A3, microfilm reel M-1978, Deposition of Légaré, Regina, 17 August 1888; Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Walter M. Camp Papers, Mss 57, box 1, folder 14, Légaré to Camp, Willow Bunch, 22 October 1910; Wade, "The Surrender of Sitting Bull: Jean Louis Legaré's Story," *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature* 24, 4 (February 1905), pp. 335-344; NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Dakota Superintendency, no. 1877-W647, microcopy M234, roll 262, frames 631-635, Day to Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Buford, 7 June 1877 (another copy is in NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 282, frames 154-158); and NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1877, no. 1877-2178, Wagner to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Buford, 12 May 1877.

it."³¹

Lakotas who were still on American territory were also looking for traders. By mid-November, Iron Dog had summoned the Yanktonais from Fort Peck to join him at the head of Porcupine Creek, where he and others had gone to trade with the Métis for ammunition.³² The Yanktonai leaders Medicine Bear and Black Tiger met Agent Mitchell at Wolf Point on 6 December with the news that they had met Sitting Bull, Black Moon, Four Horns, Red Horn, The Man that Wants the Breast and a prominent Sans Arc leader (not named in the source), and their followers, at a crossing on Milk River between Wolf Point and Fort Peck. They told Mitchell that Sitting Bull and his followers were out of ammunition and spirits, but that they were on their way to British territory "to procure a supply of the former which in itself, Sitting Bull says, will produce the latter."³³ Two Minneconjous who had left Crazy Horse's camp on Tongue River and gone into the Cheyenne River Agency in late December reported that Sitting Bull and sixty lodges were heading north when they had seen them some forty miles from Fort Peck, and that they had

³¹ Brigham Young University, Camp Papers, Légaré to Camp, Willow Bunch, 22 October 1910. Légaré wrote in this letter that he did not believe the Sioux had ever seen white people before as "they had no idea how to buy or sell." Apparently he thought it better to conceal his own trade with the Sioux during the 1870s.

³² NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 517-520, Day to Hazen, Ft Peck, 25 November 1876.

³³ *Ibid.*, Department of Dakota, LR 1876, box 19, no. 1876-3868, Mitchell to Hazen, Wolf Point, 6 December 1876.

undoubtedly crossed the boundary since.³⁴ Hearing that Sitting Bull was so close, U.S. Army Lieutenant Frank D. Baldwin, who had arrived at Fort Peck on 6 December, took his command to find him. Sitting Bull intended to go to British territory--and the two Minneconjous assumed he had done so--but seems to have changed his mind and doubled back. Baldwin encountered Sitting Bull's camp near the head of Red Water Creek on 18 December and a skirmish resulted.³⁵

While they were in the vicinity of Fort Peck, Sitting Bull's people were in contact with the Yanktonais. Baldwin had noted, while preparing to go after Sitting Bull, that the Fort Peck Yanktonais were "affording aid and assistance to [the] Hostiles in many ways."³⁶ Items found in Sitting Bull's camp after the engagement on 18 December--sugar, coffee, tobacco, tea and other articles--convinced Baldwin that the Sioux had either drawn these things from Mitchell, or been trading with the Yanktonais.³⁷

³⁴ *Ibid.*, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 568-571, Wood to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Cheyenne River Agency, 28 December 1876. A copy is located in NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 730-734.

³⁵ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 279, frames 622-625, Mitchell to Smith, Wolf Point, 9 December 1876 and frames 766-768, Miles to Terry, telegram, Tongue River Cantonment, 20 December 1876.

³⁶ Henry E. Huntington Library, Frank D. Baldwin Papers, Diary, entry for 11 December 1876. A copy of this diary is located in the Montana Historical Society Archives as Small Collection 382.

³⁷ University of Colorado Archives, Historical Collections, William Carey Brown Papers, box 21, folder 27, transcript, Baldwin to Miles, Camp on Cedar Creek, 19 December 1876.

Having heard from Lieutenant Day at Fort Peck in November that Sioux camps were moving northward, James Walsh sent Sub-Inspector Edmund Fréchette, six policemen and two scouts from Fort Walsh to Wood Mountain to investigate. Arriving at Légaré's trading post in early December, Fréchette counted fifty-seven lodges, the followers of Iron Dog, Long Dog, Little Knife and Lodge Pole. Walsh arrived at Wood Mountain on 21 December and found that Black Moon and a further fifty-two lodges had arrived on 19 December. Walsh had a council that evening with Black Moon, Little Knife, Iron Dog, Long Dog, The Man that Crawls, White Guts, The Drag, Inkpaduta and the "Canadian" Dakota leader White Eagle, who had assembled the Lakota leaders.³⁸ "Do you know that you are in the Queen's country?" Walsh asked.

Their answer was that they did[.] I [Walsh] asked What have you come for? They replied that they had been driven from their homes by the Americans and had come to look for peace. They had been told by their Grand Fathers that they would find peace in the land of the British. Their Brothers the Santees had found it years ago and they had followed them. They had not slept sound for years and were anxious to find a place where they could lie down and feel safe. They were

³⁸ White Eagle (Wambdiska), originally from Mazomani's Wahpeton village in Minnesota, entered Rupert's Land in the winter of 1862/63. His people settled first on the Souris River and at Oak Lake, but had moved to the Assiniboine River by 1865/66. He and his band had occupied the region around Wood Mountain for several years before 1876, but eventually returned to Manitoba. Their descendants live today on the Oak River reserve. See Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest*, pp. 20-21 and passim.

tired of living in such a disturbed state.

Walsh "Explained the laws of the country to them as has been our custom in Explaining to other Indians and further told them they would have to obey them as the Santees and other Indians do. The several Chiefs then made speeches in which they implored the Queen to have pity on them & that they would obey her laws." A second meeting was held the following day, at which the Lakotas asked permission to purchase ammunition to be used for hunting.³⁹ Walsh, although concerned that ammunition might be sent south to Sioux who were still in conflict with American troops, relented. In his official report, Walsh mentioned having instructed Légaré, whom he met on his return to Fort Walsh, to trade only two and a half rounds of fixed ammunition to each family, thus ensuring that little if any surplus would be sent south. However, Joseph Langer, a Métis trader from Wood Mountain who attended the council, informed Lieutenant Day at Fort Peck that Walsh had "told all these people that he would give them two traders at Woody Mountain and would let them have from twenty to thirty rounds of loose ammunition per man for hunting purposes, . . ."⁴⁰

³⁹ NAC, RG10, vol. 3646, file 8044, microfilm reel C-10113, Walsh to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 31 December 1876 and NAC, Cora Mowat Walsh Papers, MG29 C45, anon. to Cora, Brockville, 21 May 1890. The NAC has attributed this letter to A.R. Macdonnell, a junior officer of the NWMP, while Fraser J. Pakes (in his *Sitting Bull in Canada, 1877-81*, English Westerners' Society Brand Book 20, 1-2 [October 1977-January 1978]) attributes it to Macleod and Utley (in *The Lance and the Shield*) to Walsh.

⁴⁰ NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 704-706, Day to Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Peck, 10 February 1877. Langer also told Day of a discussion between Walsh and Inkpaduta, which Walsh also

Walsh returned to the vicinity on 3 March 1877, arriving at Medicine Bear's camp of Yanktonais on Frenchman's Creek (and very close to the boundary) just as Four Horns arrived with 57 lodges of Hunkpapas. At Walsh's request, Medicine Bear called a council at which he addressed the Lakotas and then the Yanktonais. "I put the same questions [to Four Horns that] I did to Black Moon," wrote Walsh:

Do you know that you are now in the Queen's country? Their answer was that they did. I asked What have you come for? They replied that they had been driven from their several homes by the Americans and had come to look for peace. They had been told by their fathers that they would find peace in the land of the British. They had not slept sound for years and were anxious to find a place where they could lie down and feel safe.

The Lakota leaders stressed their historic ties to the British in their efforts to convince Walsh of their right to remain on the Canadian side of the boundary.

They claim that the Sioux are British Indians, that 65 years ago was the first their father's knew of being under the Americans. Their fathers were told at that time by a chief of their British father (it was a father they say they had at that time) that if they did not wish to live under the Americans they could move northward, & there they would again find the land of the British. Why the White Father

did not note in his official report.

gave them and their country to the Americans they could not tell.

From childhood they were instructed by their fathers that properly they were children of the British. They were living with strangers but their home was to the North. That in their tribes can be seen the medals of their White Father given to their fathers for fighting the Americans & although the British gave them & their country to the Americans they never made peace with them. That they always intend[ed] moving to the country of their fathers.

Walsh was surprised to see the Yanktonais on Canadian territory and asked Medicine Bear why he and his people had come: Medicine Bear said that his people had become dissatisfied because the Americans had refused to supply them with ammunition. Before leaving Fort Peck, Medicine Bear and his band had "held a Council & decided to leave the Americans for Ever. The camps divided into small parties & started north to meet again on the British side of the line. That he was now waiting for them & on their arrival a council would be held & a final decision made what they should do." Walsh suspected that they would return to the Fort Peck Agency. Four Horns had not decided whether to remain with the Yanktonais on Frenchman's Creek or to join Black Moon at Wood Mountain.⁴¹

Northern Lakota bands spread out along the borderlands, but

⁴¹ NAC, RG10, vol. 3646, file 8044, microfilm reel C-10113, Walsh to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 15 March 1877.

within reach of Métis traders, over the winter of 1876/77. A Métis, Pierre Charbonneau, reported in mid-January, 1877, that Long Dog's camp was on Cart Creek, about thirty miles south of the boundary. Information from Métis and Indians at Fort Peck suggested that they were still there in February, and that they were supplied with plenty of ball and powder by traders from Canada.⁴² George Boyd believed that several runners had passed by Fort Peck that winter carrying word to Sitting Bull and the other Indians of the ammunition trade in the north. Sitting Bull's camp was on the move. Boyd did not know where it was going, but suspected that Crazy Horse's camp would strike north to Milk River and then go up either Frenchman's Creek or Rocky Creek to get to the Métis at "Mountain De Baugh" (Montagne de Bois, or Wood Mountain) to trade ammunition.⁴³

Ammunition from the north did make its way through Lakota camps on American territory. Eagle Shield and Swelled Face, Minneconjous who had left Crazy Horse's camp on Tongue River on separate occasions and surrendered at the Cheyenne River Agency in February, both reported that Sitting Bull, or runners from his camp, had arrived at Crazy Horse's camp with ammunition received from Métis traders on Frenchman's Creek. "Sitting Bull," said

⁴² NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 704-706, Day to Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Peck, 10 February 1877; *ibid.*, District of the Yellowstone, LS 1876-1877, box 1, unregistered, Boyd to Baldwin, Ft Peck, 7 February 1877.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, District of the Yellowstone, LR 1876-1877, box 1, unregistered, Boyd to Miles, Ft Peck, 19 February 1877.

Eagle Shield,

brought plenty of ammunition with him which he got from the Red River Half-breeds. I got some of the Cartridges and also some tobacco and I saw others get some the same. They were needle cartridges. I got about thirty. Others got more than I did. . . . I understood fifty boxes [of ammunition] were brought in. . . . The trade was mostly in ammunition, tobacco and blankets.⁴⁴

Swelled Face added that Sitting Bull planned to go north again to trade with the Métis, and to meet Black Moon, No Neck and White Eagle, whom he had sent to Canada to get ammunition and to get the Red River Métis to join them.⁴⁵

Sitting Bull did make his way northward over the next few months. His followers had left those of Crazy Horse south of the Yellowstone River in February 1877 and, in early April, met in council on Beaver Creek with the Fort Peck Yanktonais. Black Tiger, a Yanktonai leader who was present at the council, told

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 667-671, Wood to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Cheyenne River Agency, 16 February 1877. Another copy, and related documents, is in RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 280, frames 164-171.

⁴⁵ NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 673-681, Wood to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Cheyenne River Agency, 21 February 1877. Another copy, with related documents, is in RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 280, frames 130-137. See also NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 727-730, Clark to Bourke, Camp Robinson, 3 March 1877. Another copy is in RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 280, frames 218-222.

Day that Sitting Bull said he was going to go to Fort Garry where he would wait to learn what happened to the Indians. If the United States disarmed and dismounted the Indians, Sitting Bull said he would not return. Sitting Bull had sent word to Iron Dog and Four Horns, then at Wood Mountain, to meet him in council at Little Wild Horse Lake.⁴⁶ John Culbertson, who had been camped with some Métis at the junction of Frenchman's Creek and Milk River, reported to Day that Sitting Bull's camp arrived in the vicinity of the Métis camp on 16 April, crossed Milk River on 23 April, and planned to leave for the north to join Four Horns's camp on 27 April.⁴⁷ Medicine Bear's band joined Sitting Bull near Milk River and travelled north with them. One hundred and thirty-five lodges--followers of Sitting Bull, Bear's Cap, No Neck and Spotted Eagle--crossed into Canada on 30 April and moved up Frenchman's Creek where they rendezvoused with camps led by Four Horns and Struck by the Ree.⁴⁸

Learning that Sitting Bull had crossed the border and had made camp at Pinto Horse Butte, Walsh set out to meet him, which he did in mid-May. During Walsh's council with Sitting Bull, the Sioux "claim[ed] that their grandfathers were English, and that

⁴⁶ NARA, RG393, "Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, microcopy M1495, roll 4, frames 964-967, Day to Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Peck, 14 April 1877.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, frames 1016-1017, Day to Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Peck, 2 May 1877.

⁴⁸ NARA, RG75, Dakota Superintendency, no. 1877-W647, microcopy M234, roll 262, frames 631-635, Day to the Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Buford, 7 June 1877. Another copy is in RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 282, frames 154-158.

they had been raised on the fruit of English soil." Walsh warned Sitting Bull that the Sioux would not be allowed to continue the war against the Americans from the Canadian side, and Sitting Bull replied that "he had buried his arms on the American side of the line before crossing to the country of the White Mother." Walsh was not convinced of Sitting Bull's sincerity and told Assistant Commissioner Irvine that Sitting Bull was "of a revengeful disposition, and that if he could get the necessary support he would recross the line and make war on the Americans."⁴⁹ Upon his return to Fort Walsh, Walsh told fellow policeman John McIllrie that he "saw Sitting Bull, but says he hardly knows what to make of him."⁵⁰

It is difficult to determine how many Lakotas fled to Canada in the months following the fight on the Little Bighorn. Contemporary commentators were apt to exaggerate. Canada's governor general, the Earl of Dufferin, reported to the British

⁴⁹ Canada, "Report of the Secretary of State, 1877," *Sessional Papers*, p. 33, Irvine to Scott, Ft Benton, 23 May 1877. In addition to Irvine's official report, other accounts of Walsh's meeting with Sitting Bull can be found in NARA, RG75, Dakota Superintendency, no. 1877-W647, microcopy M234, roll 262, frames 631-635, Day to the Post Adjutant Ft Buford, Ft Buford, 7 June 1877; NAC, Cora Mowat Walsh Papers, MG29 C45, anon. to Cora, Brockville, 21 May 1890; GA, Southern Alberta Research Project Fonds, M4561, box 2, file 10, "Transcript of Tape Recording made by Gabriel (Gabe) Leveillie at Maple Creek Detachment, February 14, 1957. Interview by Inspector T.E. Mudiman, O/C Swift Current Sub-Division"; and SAB, Saskatchewan Historical Society Papers, file 205, Siouan Indians, General Archibald Macdonell, "How Sitting Bull Came to Canada: Recollections of an Old Royal Mounted Police Officer," n.d.

⁵⁰ BCARS, McIllrie Diary, entries for 30 April and 8, 10 and 15 May 1877.

colonial secretary on 1 June 1877 that there were ten thousand Sioux in British territory, although he later reduced that figure to eight thousand.⁵¹ The American consul in Winnipeg, James Wickes Taylor, informed the State Department that, although he believed there were some five thousand Sioux in Canada, some parties recently returned from the plains estimated that there were as many as nine thousand.⁵² The documentary record is imprecise, but indicates that the number of Lakota refugees was closer to three thousand. James Walsh of the NWMP counted 109 lodges in Little Knife's and Black Moon's combined camp when he met them for the first time in December 1876, and fifty-seven lodges in Four Horns's camp when he met that leader in March 1877. According to Assistant Commissioner Irvine, Sitting Bull brought 135 lodges to Canada. The records of the NWMP are less clear about how many followers of Little Hawk and Big Road (the "Crazy Horse Band") arrived over the winter of 1877/78. An American scout, John Howard, noted in January 1878 that 205 lodges of Oglalas, Minneconjous and Sans Arcs had crossed the Missouri River heading north. This figure accords well with

⁵¹ C.W. De Kiewiet and F.H. Underhill, eds., *Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence, 1874-1878* (Toronto, 1955), p. 353, Dufferin to Carnarvon, Ottawa, 1 June 1877 and p. 361, Dufferin to Carnarvon, Ottawa, 27 July 1877.

⁵² NARA, General Records of the Department of State, RG59, Consular Dispatches, Winnipeg, file T-24 10-9-5, microcopy T24, roll 5, vol. 5, Taylor to Seward, Winnipeg, 24 July 1877. A copy is in NAC, Records of the Office of the Governor General, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians of the United States who have taken refuge in Canadian Territory*, p. 38, microfilm reel T-1386, frame 39.

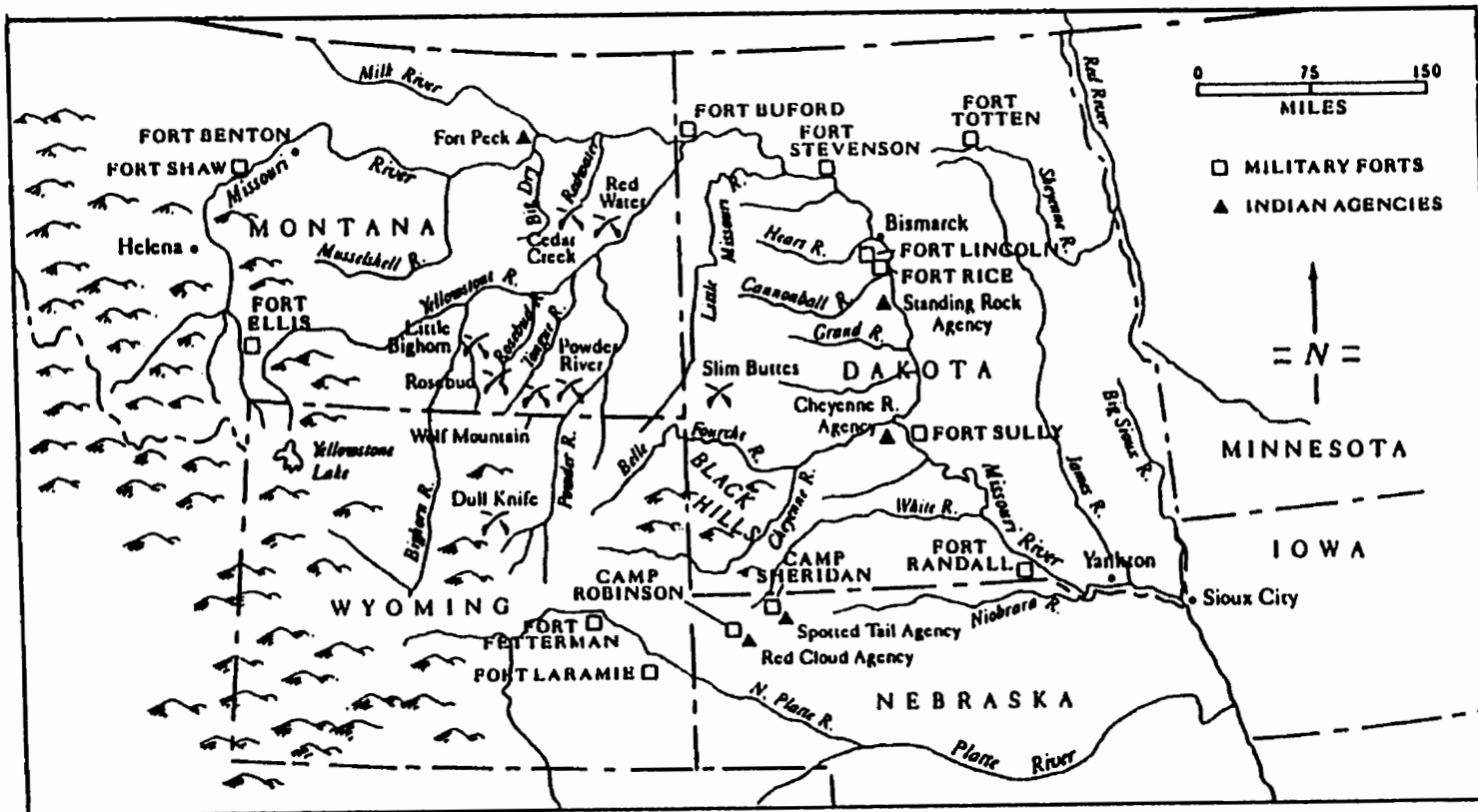
estimates of the size of the Crazy Horse band in Canada.⁵³ These records give a total of 506 lodges: at six people per lodge, the population could be estimated at 3036 people. This figure compares well to population counts made by American military officials when the Sioux who had surrendered at Fort Buford and Fort Keogh were shipped to Fort Yates on the Standing Rock Reservation in 1881. These records indicate that 1149 at Fort Buford and 1620 people at Fort Keogh were placed on steamers to be shipped to Fort Yates on 26 May and 12 June respectively. Another 59 people left Fort Keogh on an overland journey to Fort Yates on 14 June. Finally, Sitting Bull's following numbered 185 people.⁵⁴ These records provide a total of 3013 people, a number very close to the estimated 3036 who arrived in Canada.

Northern Lakota bands during the Great Sioux War depended on renewing trade and friendships they had established with other borderland communities, notably the Métis from British territory, and the Yanktonais at Fort Peck with whom they had been associated in the past. The Lakotas' flight across the boundary

⁵³ NAC, RG10, vol. 3646, file 8044, microfilm reel C-10113, Walsh to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 31 December 1876 and vol. 3646, file 8044, microfilm reel C-10113, Walsh to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 15 March 1877; Canada, "Report of the Secretary of State, 1877," *Sessional Papers*, Appendix "E," p. 33, Irvine to Scott, Ft Benton, 23 May 1877; NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 3, Howard to Miles, Ft Keogh, 10 January 1878.

⁵⁴ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 290, frames 123-124, Brotherton to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Buford, 26 May 1881, frame 241, Ilges to Breck, telegram, Ft Keogh, 12 June 1881, frames 237-238, Ilges to Breck, telegram, Ft Keogh, 15 June 1881, and frame 418, Gilbert to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Yates, 2 August 1881.

in the wake of the conflict of 1876 was grounded in a larger pattern of borderlands interactions over a longer period.



Map 7 The Great Sioux War, 1876/77

Source: Robert M. Utley, The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull (New York, 1993), p. 113.

**The Lakotas and Métis at
Wood Mountain, 1876-1881**

Lakota-Métis trade and other connections have gone largely unrecognized in Lakota historiography, especially after the Lakotas' flight to Canada in 1876. The history of the Lakota people in Canada emphasizes encounters with the North-West Mounted Police and the United States Army, and concludes when Lakotas surrendered at American military posts. Yet the Métis at Wood Mountain were ubiquitous in the fabric of Lakota relationships with others. They were the traders in the Sioux camps, and the employees of the Canadian and American traders at Wood Mountain. They were scouts and interpreters for both the Canadian police and the U.S. army. When important events occurred at Fort Walsh or the Wood Mountain Post, it was the Métis who served as facilitators and interpreters.

Métis were present when Abbot Martin Marty arrived at Sitting Bull's camp near Pinto Horse Butte on 26 May 1877. Marty was the Benedictine missionary at the Standing Rock Reservation in the United States and had gone to the Sioux camp intent on convincing the Hunkpapa leader to return to the United States. With him were two American mixed-bloods, the interpreter from the Poplar River Agency, William Halsey, and a scout working for Colonel Nelson A. Miles, John Howard. Upon their arrival, Sitting Bull sent six Sioux messengers, including his nephew, One Bull, for the police at Fort Walsh. Accompanying the Sioux from

Wood Mountain was a Métis trader named Guy Morriseau.¹ Marty wrote of his visit in glowing terms, noting that he had been "received there with great ceremony"² and that his tent had been crowded with visitors during his stay. The young men had come, laughed, told stories and sang, while the women had "made him welcome."³ The Sioux, however, were suspicious. Police surgeon Richard Nevitt noted that Sitting Bull had asked the police what to do with the three Americans, noting that "if he was on the American side he would know very well--which meant that their scalps would adorn some lodge pole."⁴ A council was held on 2 June 1877, attended by Assistant Commissioner A.G. Irvine, Inspector James Walsh, and a number of policemen, Marty, and several Lakota leaders, among them Sitting Bull, Pretty Bear, Bear's Cap, The Eagle Sitting Down, Spotted Eagle, Sweet Bird and The Minneconjou. Motioning to Walsh, Sitting Bull said, "You told me if any one came into camp 'Let me know.' Some Americans came. I did let you know."⁵ Always the astute politician,

¹ GA, Barnett Fonds, M3875, Clarke Diary, entry for 9 October 1876 [misdated; actually late May 1877]. Clarke's diary reads "Morroveau," an apparent misspelling.

² Marquette University Archives, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records, Abbot Martin Marty Correspondence, Marty to Very rev. dear Father, Fort Peck, Montana, 9 June 1877.

³ Marty, "Abbot Martin Visits Sitting Bull," *Annals of the Catholic Indian Missions of America* 2, 1 (January 1878), pp. 7-10.

⁴ GA, Nevitt Fonds, M893, box 2, file 12, Barrie to Lizzie, Ft Macleod, 11 June 1877.

⁵ Canada, "Report of the Secretary of State, 1877," *Sessional Papers*, Appendix "E," pp. 37-41, "Council held June 2nd 1877, at the Teton or Sitting Bull's Camp"

Sitting Bull wanted the police to understand that he had heeded their directive to obey the law and had spared the lives of the Americans. However, he also told Father Jean Baptiste Marie Genin whom he met in the autumn of 1877 near the Cypress Hills that it was the intervention of Métis traders that had convinced him to spare the lives of Marty and Howard. He had suspected Marty of being a "disguised Yankee" who had come to tell lies. His young men had wanted to kill Marty and Howard, whom Miles did, in fact, describe as a "scout and spy", and it had been Antoine Ouellette and André Larivée who had saved the two men's lives.⁶ Antoine Ouellette had been trading with the Sioux since the early 1870s, while Larivée, an interpreter at the Wood Mountain Post, lived in the Lakota camp with his two Sioux wives.⁷ Both men had ties to the Lakota camps and had influence.

The participation of Ouellette and Larivée as facilitators was also evident when the NWMP were attempting to set up the Sitting Bull, or Terry, Commission at Fort Walsh in October 1877. Before the commission met, Walsh had sent one of the force's

⁶ Linda W. Slaughter, "Leaves from Northwestern History," *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota*, vol. 1 (Bismarck, 1906), pt. 1, pp. 277-281; NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1877, box 22, no. 1877-2590, Miles to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Buford, 19 June 1877.

⁷ Ouellette spent the summer of 1877 working as a guide for an English couple who were in the NWT on a hunting trip; troublesome news about Sitting Bull's Sioux hastened his return to the Cypress Hills where his family lived. See Algernon Heber Percy, *Journal of Two Excursions in the British North West Territory of North America by Algernon Heber Percy and Mrs. Heber Percy, 1877 & 1878* (Market Drayton, Shropshire, 1879), p. 8. Information on Larivée is found in Rondeau, *La Montagne de Bois*, p. 90.

interpreters at Wood Mountain, Joseph "Caillou" Morin, to the Hunkpapa camp to convince Sitting Bull to meet General Alfred H. Terry, the commanding officer of the Department of Dakota (an administrative unit of the American army) who was coming north on behalf of the American government to meet the Lakota leaders and convince them to return to the United States; although of Sioux descent, Morin was unsuccessful after five attempts. Walsh then sent Louis Leveillé, who had accompanied him as interpreter during his very first meeting with Sitting Bull, but he also failed. Walsh then went to meet Sitting Bull himself, taking with him Antoine Ouellette and André Larivée. According to Genin, it was these two Métis who were responsible for convincing Sitting Bull to meet Terry.⁸ Reflecting the Eurocentric bias typical of the time, Walsh's own account of his attempts to convince Sitting Bull to meet Terry makes no reference to Métis participation; nor does that of Walsh's superior, NWMP Commissioner James F. Macleod.⁹

⁸ Slaughter, "Leaves from Northwestern History," pp. 280-281. Information on Morin is found in NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Allen to Vankoughnet, Ft Walsh, 12 December 1880 and RG18, B3, vol. 2185, no pagination, microfilm reel T-6269, Irvine to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Walsh, 8 December 1880. Information on Leveillé is found in GA, Southern Alberta Research Project Fonds, M4561, box 2, file 10, Gabriel Leveillé, statement, Maple Creek, 27 October 1956 and "Transcript of Tape Recording made by Gabriel (Gabe) Leveillie at Maple Creek Detachment, February 14, 1957. Interview by Inspector T.E. Mudiman, O/C Swift Current Sub-Division."

⁹ Walsh to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 12 October 1877 and Walsh to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 16 October 1877 reprinted in "Sitting Bull: The United States Commission Arrive at Fort Walsh," *New York Herald*, 22 October 1877, p. 5, c. 1-4; p. 10, c. 1-3; GA, James Farquharson Macleod Family Fonds, M776, box 1, file 12, Macleod to Mary

That the Métis were important to the Lakotas is evident in the actions of the Lakotas themselves. The night after the Martyr council concluded, Sitting Bull told Assistant Commission A.G. Irvine in a private talk that he had robbed a trading post on the Missouri River some years before, and that he had made restitution to the trader, a Métis, by way of horses and gold dust. The Métis was now in his camp and was demanding more horses. Sitting Bull was now too poor to give him more, but was willing to do so when he was better off. Irvine told Sitting Bull, "the trader I knew to be a good man and if he [Sitting Bull] could do anything towards paying him something in return for what they [the Sioux] had stolen, I would be glad, but not to let it trouble him."¹⁰ But the affair did trouble Sitting Bull, who clearly wanted to remain on friendly terms with the Métis.

During the summer of 1878, Sitting Bull made clear his desire to promote friendly relations with the Métis. The Hunkpapas held their sun dance that summer near the Métis village at Wood Mountain. During the dance, Grey Eagle, White Cow Walking, White Bird and Good Crow stole some one hundred horses

[Macleod], Ft Walsh, 12 October 1877. A photocopy of this letter is the sole item in *ibid.*, M781. Another copy is found in PAM, James Farquharson Macleod Papers, MG6 A5.

¹⁰ SAB, Saskatchewan Historical Society Papers, file 204, Siouan Indians, extract, Irvine to Sister, Ft Macleod, 18 June 1877; and see Indiana University, Camp Papers, box 5, folder 13, field notes, envelope 67, letter by E. Dalrymple Clark, *Regina Leader*, 17 March 1885, pp. 416-417. Sub-Inspector Edmund Dalrymple Clark, one of the policemen present, also wrote of the Martyr council in "In the North West with Sitting Bull," *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review* 5 (July-December 1880), pp. 66-73.

belonging to the Métis. According to Louis Goulet, a Métis who was then carrying the mail between Wood Mountain and Fort Walsh for the NWMP, the owners, led by Joseph Poitras (known also as Beucasque or Bocase), went to the Sioux camp to reclaim the horses, but were rebuffed; the horse-raiders offered to keep the best horses and give back the rest. The Métis then made a complaint to the NWMP. Walsh, "Caillou" Morin and a number of policemen went to the Sioux camp and threatened the Sioux with expulsion from Canada. Sitting Bull was eager to cooperate. According to Goulet, Sitting Bull told the assembled Sioux,

Our only protection . . . is in Canada where the Americans can't come after us as they'd like to. Right now, our only allies are the Métis, who are also our relatives through their Indian mothers. If we get them on our backs, we'll be caught in a cross-fire with the Americans on one side and the Métis on the other, not to mention the Red Coats [NWMP].¹¹

Sitting Bull sent his *akicita* (the camp police) after the thieves--who included his brother-in-law, Grey Eagle--and forced them to return the horses.

As not all the missing animals could be found, the Hunkpapa

¹¹ Guillaume Charette, *L'Espace de Louis Goulet* (Winnipeg, 1976), pp. 103, 105-107. This work has been translated into English as *Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of a Prairie Métis*, Ray Ellenwood, trans. (Winnipeg, 1980). Goulet (or Charette) incorrectly dated this event to 1879.

leaders were forced to make up the deficit.¹² White Cow Walking, White Bird and Good Crow were punished by being stripped naked and tied up night and day for about a week. After they were released, the three were invited to a feast and were given gifts of leggings, otter robes, new moccasins with porcupine quillwork and necklaces. Grey Eagle, who was not punished because he was Sitting Bull's brother-in-law and because his two sisters (Sitting Bull's wives) were crying, did not get anything. "[It] Was a good lesson for [the] whole tribe," concluded Morris Bob-Tailed Bull, one of the *akicita* involved in the affair: "no more laws [were] broken."¹³ Two weeks later, Sitting Bull and Long Dog with a large camp visited Walsh at the Wood Mountain Post and demanded to know why Walsh had threatened to expell them: a scuffle broke out which almost ended in bloodshed, but Morin, Goulet and two other Métis pushed between Walsh and the two Sioux leaders to help prevent a fight.¹⁴

The Sioux leaders valued the friendship of the Métis because the latter remained important trading partners. American officials, who did not have first-hand information in their possession, were certain that this trade was largely in ammunition that would be used against American troops. Colonel

¹² University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, box 105, notebook 11, Old Bull Interview, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Morris Bob-Tailed Bull Interview, pp. 24-27.

¹⁴ Charette, *L'Espace de Louis Goulet*, pp. 107-110. A summary of this incident, based on Charette's original manuscript but varying from it, is found in Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police*, vol. 1, pp. 459-461.

Miles wrote in September 1877, for instance, that he had received several trustworthy reports that the Lakotas had received large amounts of ammunition since taking refuge in British territory. One such report had said that the Métis brought a train of some eighty Red River carts to Sitting Bull's camp in mid-August and traded Henry and Winchester ammunition in exchange for American horses, mules, robes and other articles.¹⁵ Father Genin, who arrived at Wood Mountain on 10 August 1877, noted, however, that the Sioux had not received their ammunition, of which they had a great amount, through trade. Although the Sioux often hunted with the Métis, to the best of Genin's knowledge, the Métis had not furnished them with any cartridges. Instead, the Sioux had become proficient at refilling spent cartridges.¹⁶

Métis traders and their families were in the area of Beaver Creek when Miles's scouts and troops engaged Sioux hunting parties on 17 July 1879. Convinced that the Métis were selling arms and ammunition to the Sioux, Miles began arresting the Métis he encountered. The Métis, he wrote,

were in close communication with the hostile Sioux under Sitting Bull, and it was reported to me that they were supplying those Indians with ammunition. I, therefore, determined to break up the traffic, and to that end sent out bodies of troops, surrounded their camps, and gathered them

¹⁵ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1877, box 23, no. 1877-4043, Miles to Terry, camp near mouth of Squaw Creek, on the Missouri River, 24 September 1877.

¹⁶ Slaughter, "Leaves from Northwestern History," p. 274.

together on one field to the number of over a thousand people, together with their eight hundred carts, herds of horses, tents and other property before mentioned. These were all sent out of the country after being kept for some time, thus breaking up one of the means of supply to the camp of Sitting Bull.¹⁷

More important to the Sioux than Métis cartridges, however, was securing a supply of food. Miles was much closer to the truth when he reported on 31 July 1879 that the Sioux travelled south of the boundary to hunt and steal stock which they took to their camp and eventually traded to the Métis.¹⁸ Buffalo herds north of the boundary became increasingly scarce, and by the autumn of 1878 had completely failed. The food crisis had deepened considerably by 1879, and the Lakotas' trade with the Métis had turned to subsistence items. Major George Gibson had reported from Fort Keogh in January that the Sioux were starving and often had had to trade ponies to the Métis for meat, and W.L. Lincoln of the Fort Belknap Indian Agency complained in his year-end report that Lakotas were responsible for stealing hundreds of horses from the Yellowstone and elsewhere which ended up either in the Hunkpapa camp or were traded to the Métis.¹⁹

¹⁷ Miles, *Personal Recollections and Observations of General Nelson A. Miles* (Lincoln, 1992), p. 310.

¹⁸ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 286, frames 317-319, Miles to Ruggles, camp on Rock Creek, 31 July 1879.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, roll 285, frames 441-450, Sheridan to Townsend, telegram, Chicago, 2 February 1879; CIA, ARCIA, 1879, pp. 98-100,

The Lakotas relied on the Métis for food when the hunt was unsuccessful or insufficient, and the Métis were willing to fill this need. However, Sioux-Métis relations were sometimes uneasy: the Sioux got meat from the Métis when they needed it, but they preferred to obtain their own food supplies. For this reason, they did not want to share the hunt with the Métis. John F. Finerty of the *Chicago Times* noted, while visiting the Sioux camp at the Wood Mountain Post in late July 1879, that the Métis were distrustful of the Sioux, and with some reason. During a council between the Sioux and Walsh held while Finerty was present, the followers of Hunkpapa leader Bad Soup threatened to cut up the tents of any Métis who went hunting and, in so doing, interfered with the Sioux hunt.²⁰

Nor were all Métis eager to aid or trade with the Sioux. Among them was Louis Riel, the leader of the Red River Resistance of 1869/70 who had gone into exile after the end of his provisional government and had gone to live in the eastern United States. He arrived on the Missouri River in Montana in the autumn of 1879 and was welcomed into the local Métis community.²¹ His actions over the next several years indicate that he strove to induce the Sioux to surrender to American military

Lincoln to CIA, Ft Belknap Agency, 1 August 1879.

²⁰ Finerty, *War-Path and Bivouac*, pp. 280, 290-291. The interpreter during the council was André Larivée.

²¹ PAM, Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers (hereafter Riel Papers), MG3 D2, box 2, file 13, Louis Riel à Julie Riel [his mother], [Montana], 15 septembre 1879.

authorities.

It is not clear whether Riel crossed into Canada upon his arrival in Montana and visited the Métis settlement at Wood Mountain. James Walsh believed that he had, and that it was the intention of most of the Métis of the Wood Mountain district to winter at the Big Bend of Milk River, where Riel was planned to be.²² It is possible that Riel intended to contact Sitting Bull. Such a meeting may have occurred at Wood Mountain, or south of the boundary, but, as historian George Woodcock has argued, Riel had no ties to the Plains Indians at this time and if any Métis messenger went to Wood Mountain, it was probably Gabriel Dumont.²³

By mid-October 1879, Riel was travelling with a Métis camp on Beaver Creek. If not in communication with the Sioux, he certainly was aware of them. Thomas O'Hanlon, a merchant from Fort Belknap who was then transporting a herd of seven hundred cattle to the Poplar River Agency, formerly the Fort Peck Agency, wrote to Riel asking him for information about the Sioux, thus suggesting that Riel had intelligence about them, even if he had not met any himself; and, at the end of the month, Gabriel Hamelin wrote from Wood Mountain to tell Riel of the second visit of Abbot Martin Marty that month.²⁴

²² PAM, James Morrow Walsh Papers, MG6 A1, microfilm reel M705, pp. 552-590, Walsh, handwritten notes on Riel, n.d.

²³ Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont*, p. 84.

²⁴ PAM, Riel Papers, MG3 D2, box 2, file 13, Riel à Julie Riel, Ft Belknap, 13 octobre 1879; *ibid.*, MG3 D1, no. 376, microfilm

Many aboriginal peoples and Métis did cross the border from Canada and spent the winter of 1879/80 along Milk River. According to Jean L'Heureux, a Canadian who lived with Crowfoot's Blackfoot band, Riel attempted to foment dissatisfaction among these Indians towards the Canadian government. The Métis, he wrote, told "all sorts of falsehood to the Indians, viz:--'That the presence of the Mounted Police Force in their country was the cause of the Buffalo desertion, that the Canadian Government was to take no more care of them, [and] that their Indian Treaty stipulations were not to be fulfilled. . . ." ²⁵ Writing to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald in the wake of the North-West Rebellion of 1885, L'Heureux related that Riel and four of his councillors had had a long visit with him in Crowfoot's camp in the winter of 1879/80, during which they had propounded a plan to capture the Wood Mountain Post, Fort Walsh, Battleford (the capital of the North-West Territories) and, with the aid of the Blackfoot, Fort Macleod. After this, Riel was to proclaim a provisional government and argue the aboriginal peoples' case before the Canadian government at Ottawa. A general peace between the tribes was to be enforced, and "'Sitting Bull' and all American hostile Indians were to be invited to join, with

reel M162, O'Hanlon to Riel, Milk River Crossing, 19 October 1879; MG3 D1, no. 377, microfilm reel M162, Hamelin to Riel, Wood Mountain, 31 October 1879.

²⁵ NAC, RG10, vol. 3771, file 34527, microfilm reel C-10135, L'Heureux to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 29 September 1880.

promises of plunder and horses."²⁶

L'Heureux's story was undoubtedly embellished, if not apocryphal. The reports from Father Joseph Hugonnard, the missionary in charge of the Qu'Appelle Mission during that winter, made no mention of such plots. He wrote from Wood Mountain in the spring of 1880 simply that Riel had had frequent councils with the Métis.²⁷ A letter to Riel from none other than Jean L'Heureux--undated but undoubtedly written in the winter of 1879/80--noted that the Blackfoot had many "robes faites," suggesting that Riel was more interested in trade than in political agitation.²⁸

Although Riel may have made provocative speeches, he was much more concerned with improving the condition of the Montana Métis and of the Métis families from Canadian territory who had been forced south to hunt than he was with inciting hostility against the Canadian government. Many of these Métis were related through marriage to the Gros Ventres and Upper Assiniboines of the Fort Belknap Reservation, on which they were

²⁶ NAC, John A. Macdonald Papers, MG26 A, vol. 110, pp. 44894-44899, reel C-1525, L'Heureux to Macdonald, Ft Macleod, 1 November 1886. A similar account, supposedly in Crowfoot's words, appears in John Maclean, *Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada* (Toronto, 1896), pp. 380-381. Maclean did not provide a source. An even more terse reference to Crowfoot's involvement in this affair appeared in "Points for Mr. Amyot," *Toronto Mail*, 2 March 1886, p. 4, c. 2.

²⁷ AASB, Fonds Taché, T23446-T23449, Hugonnard à Taché, Montagne de Bois, 6 mars 1880.

²⁸ PAM, Riel Papers, MG3 D1, no. 436, microfilm reel M162, L'Heureux à Riel, no place, no date.

then squatting.²⁹ By cultivating these relationships, Riel hoped to persuade the Fort Belknap Indians to allow Canadian Indians and the Métis to hunt in the area. Commissioner James Macleod learned of Riel's activities from a NWMP mail-carrier, and also that the proposed agreement did not include the Sioux.³⁰ The Gros Ventres and Assiniboines were hostile to the Lakotas and would have rejected any attempt by Riel to include the Sioux in this accord. Consequently, Riel was not concerned for the Sioux.

Although James Walsh reported that Sitting Bull camped near the Wood Mountain Post throughout the winter of 1879/80,³¹ the Hunkpapa leader did also travel to the Sioux camps on Milk River and met Louis Riel in late January. Crozier learned from Edward Lambert, who had just returned to Fort Walsh from a trading expedition among the Sioux, that Riel had offered to intercede on Sitting Bull's behalf with the American government. "Keep the peace and do not get yourselves between two fires until Spring at any rate," Riel had supposedly told Sitting Bull. "If you want then to go back and live in peace with the Americans I will see

²⁹ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 287, frames 190-191, Black to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Assiniboine, 26 November 1879.

³⁰ NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Macleod to Dennis, Ft Walsh, 1 December 1879. A copy is located in NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 320, file 2001, pt. 4b, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 5-7. Macleod says the mail-carrier's name was Levallier. This may have been Louis Leveillé.

³¹ PAM, MG6 A1, microfilm reel M705, pp. 333-342, Walsh, Draft Account of Sitting Bull, 1879-1881 [1881].

the President and arrange everything for you."³²

No documentary record exists of Sitting Bull's reply to Riel's offer. It is possible that Sitting Bull told Riel that he would prefer to communicate with the Americans through Walsh--and not Riel--for after his meeting with Sitting Bull, Riel went to Fort Assiniboine and gave Lieutenant Colonel Henry Moore Black a memorandum blaming the unwillingness of the Lakotas to surrender on the "the underworking influence of the Canadian Mounted Police."³³ Riel received word in April 1880 from a man at Wood Mountain who had spoken to Sitting Bull regarding the latter's intentions. Sitting Bull had said that he was going to go to "Canada" to find out from the Canadian government if the Lakotas

³² NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Crozier to Dennis, Ft Walsh, 22 February 1880. A copy is located in NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3c, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 93-94. See also NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2233, folios 52d-54d, microfilm reel T-6573, frames 512-514, Crozier to Commissioner, Ft Walsh, 24 March 1880 and *ibid.*, folios 61-64, microfilm reel T-6573, frames 520-523, Crozier to Lt Governor, Ft Walsh, 29 March 1880. Edward Lambert worked as an interpreter at Fort Walsh until the end of July 1879. At that time, trader Frederick Cadd wrote that the Sioux had great confidence in him. Not surprisingly, Lambert became a trader after leaving police employ. See NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, L&TR, box 5, Cadd to [Miles], Poplar River, 20 July 1879.

³³ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1880, box 33, no. 1880-612, Black to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Assiniboine, 10 February 1880; PAM, Riel Papers, MG3 D1, no. 565, microfilm reel M163, Riel, "About the Titons" [Montana, February 1880]. Black does not identify Riel's memorandum in his letter. However, I am certain "About the Titons" was the memorandum Riel gave to Black, as the first endorsement attached to Black's letter (written by the commanding officer of the district, Colonel Thomas T. Ruger) parrots what Riel wrote in that piece.

would be allowed to remain on "English" territory.³⁴ Sitting Bull, Spotted Eagle and several other leaders did meet Walsh at Wood Mountain in May. At that time, Sitting Bull told Walsh to tell the Queen and the American president that he was ready to make peace with the Americans, and that he wanted to go to Ottawa to meet the White Mother's daughter (one of Queen Victoria's daughters, Princess Louise, was married to the Marquess of Lorne, the Canadian governor general) and then go and to meet the president.³⁵

When Riel spoke to Black in February, he intimated that the Lakota leaders were discussing peace and might send a deputation to the post. No deputation arrived, but Riel returned to Fort Assiniboine on 18 March 1880 and informed Black that the Métis had endeavored to convince the Sioux to return to the United States. Riel explained that Bull Dog and Red Elk, representing fifty-seven lodges of Brulés, had asked him to intercede on their behalf to find out what terms the Americans would grant the Sioux if they surrendered. Riel pleaded for American leniency, arguing against de horsing and disarming the Sioux, and claiming that "The moral effect" of such a policy "would enivitably be to bring in all the Titons and Sitting Bull himself in the course of a few

³⁴ PAM, Riel Papers, MG3 D1, no. 384, microfilm reel M162, Ochoupe à Riel, Montagne de bois, 16 avril 1880. The author's name is unclear in the original; it is given as Odroupe in finding aid.

³⁵ NAC, RG10, vol. 3691, file 13893, microfilm reel C-10121, Walsh to the Commissioner, Wood Mountain, 19 May 1880 and *ibid.*, Walsh to the Minister of the Interior, Brockville, 11 September 1880.

weeks."³⁶

Contemporary Canadian commentators believed Riel was already planning his second "rebellion" when he returned to the West in 1879. In his biography of Riel, political scientist Thomas Flanagan seems to subscribe to this interpretation. In his account, Riel left Pembina in mid-August 1879 and arrived in the vicinity of Wood Mountain in mid-September: there, he intended to meet Sitting Bull, but it is unclear whether he did. Riel's hope was to form a confederation of Métis and Indians and to use Montana as a base to invade Western Canada and establish a Native republic. Sitting Bull went to see Riel on Milk River in January 1880, but the meeting produced no results: without the aid of the Sioux, Riel's plans could not succeed. Riel thanked Black in the spring of 1880 for his kindness in allowing the Métis to remain on the reservation and appeared willing to try to persuade the Sioux to surrender, but Flanagan claims this was "disingenuous"--Riel was trying to get the Sioux into the Americans' good books, while simultaneously hoping to use them in his invasion of Western Canada. With the collapse of his Native confederacy, Riel turned to other issues.

³⁶ NARA, RG94, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 287, frames 350-352, Black to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Assiniboine, 19 March 1880 and enclosures: frames 355-358, Riel to Colonel [Black], Ft Assiniboine, 16 March 1880; frames 360-363, Riel to Black, Ft Assiniboine, 18 March 1880 and Riel to Black, Ft Assiniboine, 18 March 1880. The quotation is from Riel's second letter of 18 March. A copy of Riel's letter of 16 March is located in his papers at PAM, Riel Papers, MG3 D1, no. 383, microfilm reel M162. See also NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1880, box 36, no. 1880-3300, Black to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Assiniboine, 6 September 1880.

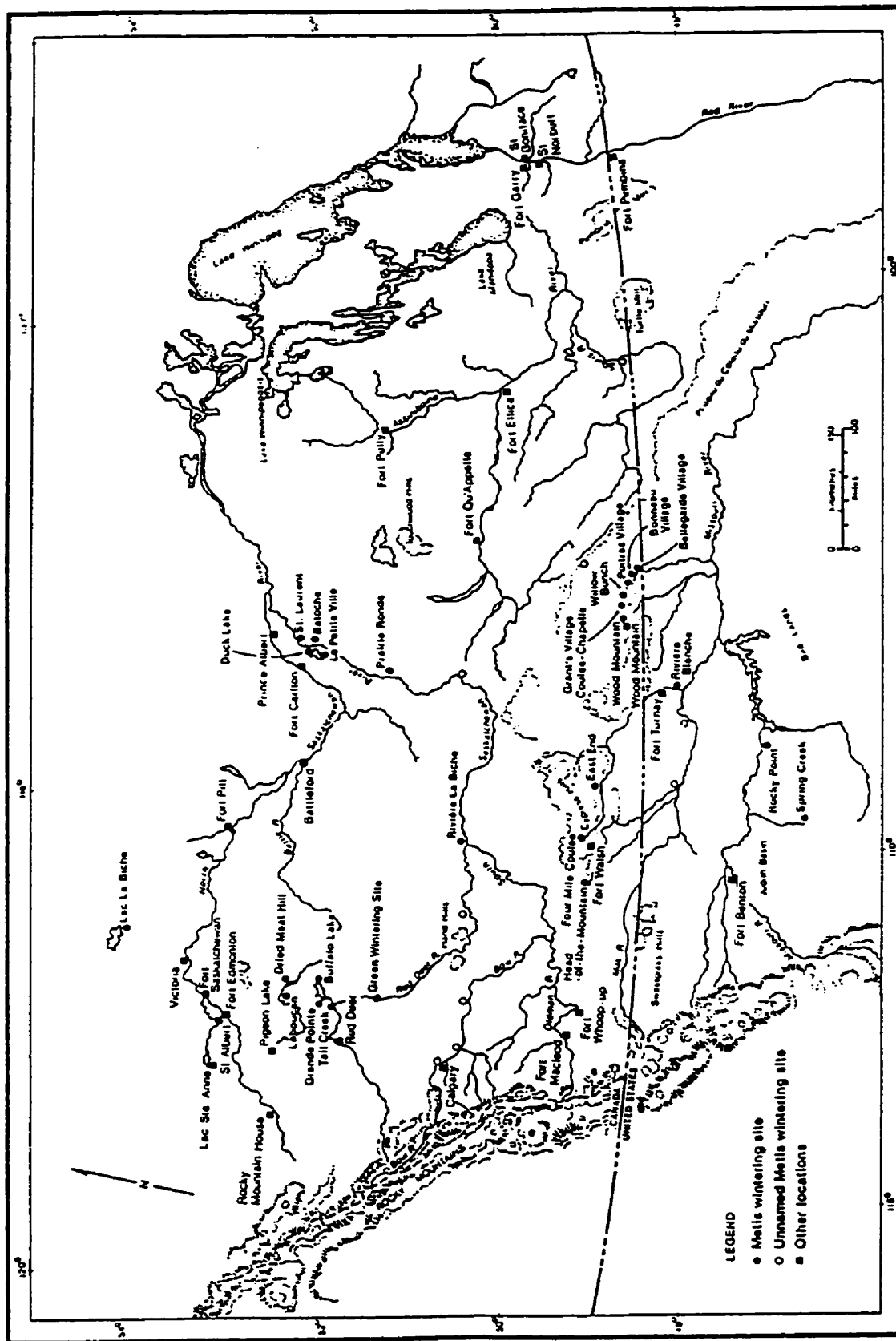
During this entire period, however, Riel was instead trying to look after the interests of the Métis people in Montana with whom he lived. They were squatters on an American Indian reservation: Riel's discussions with Black were an attempt to allow the Métis to remain on the reservation during the winter. His conversations with aboriginal leaders were attempts to gain their permission to allow the Métis to remain on their lands. Riel may have made other more inflammatory, anti-Canadian speeches, but these appear to have been of more concern to Canadian officials than to him. Finally, Riel was not attempting to incite the Lakotas to join him in any hostile action in Canada. The Lakotas were competitors for the same resources as the Métis for whom Riel acted as spokesman. Riel's discussions with Black indicated that he was attempting to induce the Sioux to surrender: such an outcome would have removed the Sioux from the area and freed resources for the Métis and their Gros Ventre and Assiniboine kin. Riel purposefully excluded the Sioux from the agreement (reported by Macleod) that he hoped to make with the American Indians. Riel's later actions--his attempts to secure land grants for the Métis from Miles in August 1880,³⁷ and his marriage in 1881 to a Montana Métisse--indicate that he had thrown his lot in with this community. This was not a "fall-back" position adopted by Riel when his attempts at a Native confederacy failed: it was what these years were all about for

³⁷ Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Halifax, 1983), pp. 101-111.

Riel. When Riel accepted the invitation of the Saskatchewan Métis to come to Canada in June 1884, he said that he hoped to return to the United States by September.³⁸ He did not intend remaining long, and there is no reason to doubt his word.

The Métis served as facilitators, interpreters and traders during the Lakotas' sojourn in Canada. Significantly, Métis trade, both before and after the Lakotas entered Canada, depended on the presence of the boundary. When they traded arms, ammunition or alcohol to Sioux on American territory, they relied on their boundary-crossing options to protect themselves from prosecution. This did not change once the Lakotas were also on the Canadian side of the border. Now, the Métis purchased stolen horses from the Sioux on Canadian territory, knowing that the boundary still protected them from American prosecution. One must not, of course, overgeneralize about the Métis community. Those living in the Cypress Hills and at Wood Mountain had different economic pursuits and outlooks from those living at Red River or in Montana, as the example of Louis Riel shows. But overall, an examination of Métis-Sioux relations shows that both took advantage of their position in the borderlands to develop an amicable, mutually beneficial trading relationship.

³⁸ George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto, 1960), p. 297.



Map 8 Métis Settlements in the Borderlands, 1880s

Source: Maurice F.V. Doll, Robert S. Kidd and John P. Day, The Buffalo Lake Metis Site: A Late Nineteenth Century Settlement in the Parkland of Central Alberta (Edmonton, 1988), p. 259.

**The Failure of Peace in Canada,
1878-1881**

As they moved northwestward towards the 49th parallel during the decade before the Great Sioux War, northern Lakota groups were encroaching on the lands of other aboriginal groups--Gros Ventres, Assiniboines and Crows--and their position was not completely secure. After 1876 and their flight to Canada, their position was made even more precarious by the failure of the buffalo herds on the northern plains. To gain access to the hunt, the Lakotas had little choice but to seek peace with their neighbours on both sides of the border.

The Lakotas were successful in gaining peace with native peoples living mainly in Canada before 1878/79, but not with those living in the United States. The food crisis, beginning in the autumn of 1878, forced Lakota hunters back into the United States, where they came into increasing conflict with "American" Indians, and with "Canadian" Indians who were also forced south to hunt. In the end, opposition from other aboriginal peoples was the main factor forcing the Lakotas out of both Canada and the borderlands.¹

Many aboriginal leaders on the Canadian plains protested the arrival of the Lakotas; however, very little violence occurred before the food crisis in the autumn of 1878. The absence of violence can be attributed to the diplomatic efforts of Lakota

¹ Manzione, in *"I Am Looking to the North for My Life"*, p. 5, credits the Canadian government's "rather barbaric policy of starving the Sioux" in forcing the Lakotas to surrender.

leaders. Following their arrival in Canada, Lakota leaders like Sitting Bull had various meetings with the leaders of non-Lakota groups who spent most, but not all, of their time on Canadian territory: the Blackfoot, Crees, and others. It is exceptionally difficult to document these meetings specifically. Officers of the North-West Mounted Police or the United States Army often reported rumours of meetings and usually did not provide an exact chronology; but since none of these writers attended them, they could say nothing of what was discussed. Interviews given by participants to white academics years later provide a little information on the topics discussed, but these accounts are invariably undated. As a result, it is difficult to link the various nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts or to know for certain if two accounts, which seem to refer to a single meeting, actually do. As a result, this summary of Sioux diplomacy is tentative at best.

The purpose of peace negotiations was to gain access to land and--more importantly--the buffalo hunt. Once in Canada in the spring of 1877, Sitting Bull quickly approached the Métis, but no details of these discussions have survived. Speaking to a scholar many years after the fact, one Lakota simply stated that peace pacts between the Sioux and Métis had been arranged in the past and one was easily made.² Sitting Bull then approached an Assiniboine camp in the Cypress Hills/Wood Mountain area. His overture was smoothed by an Assiniboine living in the Hunkpapa

² Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, pp. 236-238.

camp, a man who had been captured as a child in 1857. Sitting Bull had adopted him as a brother some time before 1870 and named him "Jumping Bull," after his father. Jumping Bull claimed that his relatives, including a cousin named Big Darkness, lived in the Assiniboine camp the Hunkpapas encountered in Canada. Taking advantage of these kin ties, Jumping Bull introduced Sitting Bull to his relatives and "all went smoothly." To cement the new relationship, the Lakota leader gave the Assiniboines many horses.³

Crowfoot led his people on a hunt nearly to the Cypress Hills in the spring of 1877. Learning of Crowfoot's whereabouts, Sitting Bull sent him tobacco, but Crowfoot refused to smoke it until he knew more of Sitting Bull's intentions. That summer, Sitting Bull and a peace mission approached Crowfoot's camp, located in the Sand Hills north of the Cypress Hills. High Eagle, a relative of Crowfoot, was present at the meeting and remembered that Crowfoot and Sitting Bull shook hands and exchanged tobacco. After they had smoked, Crowfoot agreed to speak to Sitting Bull. They had a long conversation, which was followed by a dance. The Hunkpapas departed later that day. The two camps continued to hunt before Crowfoot's people returned to

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 269-270, 334. See also Dan Kennedy, *Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief*, James R. Stevens, ed. (Toronto, 1972), pp. 76-78, which discusses another early encounter between Hunkpapas and Assiniboines--this one in the winter of 1876/77.

the west.⁴

Sitting Bull met Crowfoot, Good Eagle and other Blackfoot leaders in the Sand Hills after the Terry Commission had ended in October. Sitting Bull's nephew, One Bull, told Walter Campbell that the Blackfoot leaders had alluded to the Black Hills gold rush and implied that the Sioux had given the Americans permission to travel to the gold fields. The Blackfoot seemed suspicious that the Lakotas were unable to protect their lands from whites. Nevertheless, the Lakotas and Blackfoot made peace.⁵ James F. Macleod, the commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, heard of the meeting from Crowfoot. "'Crow Foot,' the leading chief of the Blackfoot," wrote Macleod, "told me that he had been visited by 'Sitting Bull,' who told him he wished for peace. 'Crow Foot' replied that he wanted peace; that he was glad to meet him on a friendly visit, but that he did not wish to camp near him, or that their people should mix much together in the hunt, and it was better for them to keep apart."⁶

⁴ Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Halifax, 1988), pp. 91-92; SAB, Saskatchewan Historical Society Papers, file 204, Siouan Indians, John Peter Turner to Hamilton, Ottawa, 12 August 1944; Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police*, vol. 1, p. 400.

⁵ University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, box 104, "Statement by Henry Oscar One Bull in Sioux and in English Regarding Sitting Bull's Life from the Custer Fight until His Surrender, 1876-1881" and box 5, notebook 4, Old Bull and One Bull Interview, no. 3, pp. 26-28.

⁶ Canada, House of Commons, "Report of the Secretary of State of Canada for the Year Ended 31st December, 1878," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1879), Appendix "D," North-West Mounted Police, Extract from Commissioner's Report, 1877, pp. 21-22.

Crowfoot did not want his people to come into collision with the Sioux over food.

Relations between the Lakotas and the Blackfoot peoples were peaceful, but tense. Crowfoot was still in the Sand Hills in the spring of 1878; the Bloods under Red Crow and Hind Bull were nearby; and the Lakotas were camped in the eastern part of the Sand Hills and southward to the boundary. Sitting Bull sent tobacco to the Bloods in May 1878, but this only angered the Blood warriors. When Crowfoot arrived at the Blood camp, he and the Blood leader Medicine Calf managed to prevent the warriors from leaving camp and attacking the Lakotas.⁷

It appears that Sitting Bull sent messages to the Peigans at the same time. In November, the Peigan leader White Calf told Lieutenant Colonel John R. Brooke at Fort Shaw that he had received entreaties from Sitting Bull, but that he had declined them.⁸ White Calf's band encountered Sioux from Canada in the Bear Paw Mountains in the fall of 1878. The two groups agreed to camp near each other and not to allow horse stealing. When the camps broke up in the spring of 1879, however, the Sioux stole thirty horses from the Peigans and headed toward the boundary; the Peigans pursued and a battle ensued in which one Peigan and six Sioux were killed. This breached the armistice between the

⁷ Dempsey, *Crowfoot*, pp. 108-109 and Dempsey, *Red Crow: Warrior Chief* (Saskatoon, 1995), pp. 120-121.

⁸ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 29, no. 1878-5688, Brooke to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Shaw, 22 November 1878.

Sioux and the Peigans that had lasted since 1876.⁹ However, hostilities were not universal. A large Blackfoot camp arrived at Fort Macleod in the spring of 1879, having come from the Bow River where Sitting Bull had talked to them and had a dance. Sitting Bull, remarked North-West Mounted Policeman Simon John Clarke, "is trying to Make friendship with them . . ." ¹⁰

The meetings between the Lakotas and Blackfoot in the spring of 1878 gave rise in the Canadian and American presses to sketchy and usually sensationalist stories of a pan-Indian confederacy across the Northern Plains. The *New York Times* reported in February 1878 that the Sioux had had a council with the Sarcees-- an Athapascan people allied to the Blackfoot, Peigans and Bloods-- in the Cypress Hills, during which they had broached the idea of "form[ing] an alliance with all the Northern tribes to kill off the whites, before the latter became too numerous." The Sarcees gave this information to the Blackfoot, who then sent a messenger to discuss the matter with the Gros Ventres and Peigans.¹¹ A month later, a report in the *Manitoba Free Press*, subsequently reprinted in the *New York Times* and the *St Paul Pioneer Press*, stated that the Sioux had used the meetings in the Sand Hills to attempt to forge a confederacy among themselves, the Blackfoot

⁹ CIA, ARCIA, 1879, p. 89, John Young to CIA, Blackfeet Agency, 28 July 1879.

¹⁰ GA, Barnett Fonds, M3875, S.J. Clarke, Diary, entry for 4 March 1879.

¹¹ "Sitting Bull's Sioux Plotting," *New-York Times*, 9 February 1878, p. 1, c. 5.

and the Crees. "When the leaves come out," there was to be a great gathering of Indians in the Sand Hills from which Sitting Bull intended to attack Fort Walsh and Fort Macleod.¹²

Rumours of the Sioux confederacy were unfounded. Two Blackfoot told Hudson's Bay Company trader John Bunn in the spring of 1878 that they had been in Sitting Bull's camp on the Bow River, and that Sitting Bull "professes good will to Crees Blackfeet in fact to everybody."¹³ NWMP Commissioner Macleod concluded that councils held with other aboriginal leaders were intended to secure peace, not forge hostile alliances. Canadian Indians, he wrote, "have visited and mixed with the Sioux, and the Sioux with them, and I have no reason to think those visits have meant anything more than a desire to make peace with one another, as they had been enemies for years before."¹⁴ Eventually, even the *New York Times* had to admit that there had been no indications so far that Sitting Bull had formed an Indian alliance, "or even of any hostile purposes on Sitting Bull's part."¹⁵

¹² NARS, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 284, frame 451, newspaper clipping, *St Paul Pioneer Press*, from the *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 20 March 1878, enclosed in Taylor to Seward, St Paul, 21 March 1878; "Sitting Bull Preparing for War," *New-York Times*, 21 March 1878, p. 1, c. 7.

¹³ GA, Richard C. Hardisty Fonds, M477, box 6, file 173, item 1042, microfilm reel 2, Bunn to Hardisty, Calgary, 8 April 1878.

¹⁴ Canada, "Report of the Secretary of State, 1878," *Sessional Papers*, Appendix "D," North-West Mounted Police, Extract from Commissioner's Report, 1877, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ "The Indian Frontier Movements," *The New-York Times*, 29 April 1878, p. 4, c. 4-5.

Sitting Bull and Crowfoot met for the last time in the summer of 1880. Lakota and Blackfoot camps were hunting north of the Missouri River, on American territory, and to ensure that conflict would not erupt between hunting parties, Sitting Bull invited Crowfoot's band to visit. Morris Bob-Tailed Bull, a Hunkpapa, related to Walter Campbell that Sitting Bull had told Crowfoot that their two peoples were now friends, and that there would be no more war or horse-stealing. Their children could sleep soundly and be healthy. Crowfoot had stood and said the same. Sitting Bull announced that he had named his eight-year-old son Crowfoot after the Blackfoot leader.¹⁶ Sitting Bull's actions were probably an attempt to create a fictive kinship tie between his son and Crowfoot, much like the celebrated bond that existed between the Blackfoot and his adopted Cree son, Poundmaker. High Eagle, a Blackfoot participant, told the story to Blackfeet Indian Agent G.H. Gooderham in nearly identical words.¹⁷ Yet, a few days later a Lakota war party raided the Blackfoot camp and stole a number of horses. Crowfoot denounced Sitting Bull and said that the Sioux were now his enemies.¹⁸

The Lakotas were competitors for the dwindling herds of

¹⁶ University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, box 105, notebook 11, Morris Bob-Tailed Bull Interview, pp. 30-31. Bob-Tailed Bull did not say that the naming took place at this meeting. Children were often given names during the sun dance: see Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, pp. 180, 192.

¹⁷ Gooderham to Campbell, Norman, 6 September 1930 quoted in Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, pp. 236-238.

¹⁸ Dempsey, *Crowfoot*, p. 123.

buffalo not only with the Blackfoot, but with the Crees. The non-treaty Crees under Big Bear, who exploited the same herds in the Cypress Hills/Wood Mountain region, responded to the situation by initiating peaceful contact with the Sioux. If the Crees and Sioux were at peace, they could spend their time hunting instead of fighting one another. In July 1878, Big Bear explained during an interview at Fort Walsh to Frederick White, the Comptroller of the North-West Mounted Police, that he and his followers--some eight hundred lodges--had all camped near the mouth of the Red Deer River to allow the buffalo to pass north. So that the Crees could hunt without fear of Lakota attack, Big Bear had then attempted to arrange for the Sioux and his band of Crees to hold their annual medicine lodges together. Concerned that Canadian officials were suspicious of his motives, Big Bear later changed his mind and decided that only he and one headman would represent his band at the Lakota Sun Dance.¹⁹ Big Bear passed along the same information to Commissioner Macleod, who noted that Sitting Bull was also expected to be one of the guests at the gathering. Macleod sent his confidential scout, Andie Larivière, to the Sun Dance with instructions to report every few days to Assistant Commissioner Irvine.²⁰

Big Bear probably also attended the Sioux Sun Dance in 1879.

¹⁹ "Sitting Bull and His Comrades," *New-York Times*, 4 August 1878, p. 2, c. 3. This article was reprinted from the *Ottawa Free Press*, 1 August 1878.

²⁰ NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2230, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 76-79, Macleod to Scott, Ft Macleod, 9 July 1878.

In July, Inspector L.N.F. Crozier was informed at Fort Walsh by a brother of the Cree leader Big Sky that Big Bear and seventy Cree lodges had visited Sitting Bull's camp, then located south of the boundary. According to Big Sky's brother, Big Bear complained to the Sioux that "The people on the other side of the Line [the Canadians] only give us a handful when they give anything to us, I am afraid myself and people will starve[.]" When Big Bear had finished, a Lakota spokesman agreed that, to ensure the survival of everyone, the Sioux would share the hunt with the Crees. Crozier was disinclined to believe the story, but, after questioning Big Sky's brother more closely, was uncertain.²¹ Eventually, he did conclude that the story was false. It was, he wrote in his year-end report, "an instance of the many stories one hears, and of the difficulty in believing even those upon whom you might imagine reliance could be placed."²² Certainly, rumours of meetings between Big Bear and Sitting Bull did spread through the North-West Territories and were believed by settlers: Lovisa McDougall, the wife of missionary John McDougall, wrote her brother of the proposed alliance between Sitting Bull and Big Bear, and opined, "Big bear is the worst Indian among the

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2232, pp. 547-549, microfilm reel T-6573, frames 124-126, Crozier to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 18 July 1879 and pp. 554-556, frames 131-133, Crozier to Walsh, Ft Walsh, 20 July 1879.

²² Canada, House of Commons, "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June, 1879," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1880), Part III, North-West Mounted Police Force, p. 18, Crozier to Macleod, Ft Walsh, 29 December 1879.

Canadian Indians."²³ No evidence exists that Big Bear and Sitting Bull met in the summer of 1879; however, such a meeting may have occurred. The Sioux did hold a sun dance in early July--precisely the time when non-Sioux visitors might choose to meet the Sioux.²⁴

Relations between the Lakotas and the aboriginal peoples of the Canadian plains became strained once the buffalo failed in Canada in the autumn of 1878. The disappearance of the bison forced aboriginal peoples who lived in close proximity to the international boundary--and even more northern groups--to travel south to hunt on American territory. Thousands of northern Indians migrated to the last of the herds in the United States. Eventually the increasing number of hunting parties bound for the United States attracted the attention of government officials. Edgar Dewdney, the Indian Commissioner for the North-West Territories, estimated that somewhere between seven and eight thousand Crees, Assiniboines, Bloods, Blackfoot and Peigans left for the United States in 1879.²⁵ That large numbers were

²³ PAA, Lovisa McDougall, 71.365, item 4, [Lovisa Jane Amey] to My Dear Brother, Battleford, 7 July 1879. This letter has been published in Elizabeth M. McCrum, ed., *Letters of Lovisa McDougall, 1878-1887*, Occasional Paper No. 1 (Edmonton, 1978), pp. 20-22.

²⁴ Frederick Cadd, who operated a trading post at Wood Mountain for William Emery & Co., noted, for example, that a number of agency Yanktonais from Many Horns' and Struck by the Ree's bands attended this Sun Dance: Cadd did not, however, mention Crees. See NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, L&TR, box 5, Cadd to [Miles], Poplar River, 20 July 1879.

²⁵ Canada, House of Commons, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December, 1880," *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1881), p. 81, Dewdney to SGIA, Ottawa, 31

involved in this migration was also indicated by Norman T. Macleod, the agent for Treaty Seven, who reported that "only the old and helpless" remained behind in the Blackfoot camp near Fort Macleod.²⁶ W.L. Lincoln, the American Indian agent at Fort Belknap, estimated that between three and five thousand "British" Indians were in the neighbourhood of the Bear Paws and Little Rockies alone.²⁷ Jean L'Heureux reported to Dewdney that the close proximity of Assiniboines, Gros Ventres, Crees, Saulteaux, Métis and Lakotas in the Milk River country and competition for the same food source resulted in a revival of "tribal animosities of old and ancient feuds" during the winter of 1879/80.²⁸ L'Heureux noted that the Sioux had stolen some three hundred horses from the Blackfoot and Crees and that some one hundred and sixty horses were taken from the Sioux: Blackfoot had killed eight Sioux and Crees had killed four.²⁹

Aboriginal peoples in Canada were certain that it was the presence of the Lakotas along the boundary that had prevented the herds from returning to Canada during their annual migration. Crowfoot implored Dewdney and Macleod in the summer of 1879 to

December 1880.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97, Macleod to Dewdney, Ft Macleod, 29 December 1880.

²⁷ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 287, frames 81-84, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 6 October 1879. A copy is in NAC, RG10, vol. 3691, file 13893.

²⁸ NAC, RG10, vol. 3771, file 34527, microfilm reel C-10135, L'Heureux to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 24 September 1880.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, L'Heureux to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 29 September 1880.

"drive away the Sioux, and make a hole so that the Buffalo can come in. . . ." Dewdney concluded that it was "the same story from one end of the Country to the other; the Sioux are preventing the Buffalo from crossing the line."³⁰ Tension among Blackfoot, Cree and Lakota hunting parties, especially those hunting in the Milk River country, became endemic.

American Blackfeet Agent John Young reported that the Sioux stole many horses from the Peigans during the winter of 1879/80. The Peigans had pursued the raiders, resulting in the deaths of six Peigans and one Sioux. Warfare, Young concluded, consisted of cyclical raiding and retaliation.³¹ The records are filled with fragmentary accounts of such encounters. An unidentified party of Sioux fought with an unidentified group of Peigans in the Bear Paw Mountains in January 1880.³² In the spring of 1880, Black Elk, one of Big Road's Oglala followers, spotted Blackfoot scouts near Poplar River. He alerted his camp and the people fled: they could hear the Blackfoot firing into their abandoned tipis.³³ Some 160 lodges of Peigans (under Double Runner and Bull in the Middle), Bloods (under Running Rabbitt and Wolf

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3696, file 15266, microfilm reel C-10122, Dewdney to Dennis, Ft Macleod, 22 July 1879. This information was also included in Dewdney's year-end report: see Canada, "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 1879," *Sessional Papers*, pp. 78-79, Dewdney to SGIA, Ottawa, 2 January 1880.

³¹ CIA, ARCIA, 1880, p. 106, Young to CIA, Blackfeet Agency, 6 August 1880.

³² GA, Barnett Fonds, M3875, Clarke Diary, entry for 31 January 1880.

³³ DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather*, pp. 210-211.

Collar) and a few Blackfoot and Gros Ventres were camped near Fort Maginnis in the autumn of 1880 when a party of Sioux stole forty horses from the Bloods; the Bloods pursued the Sioux, killing one.³⁴ A mixed Blood/Blackfoot camp south of the Missouri River was raided by some of Sitting Bull's Sioux after the first snow of 1880. The pursuit party exchanged shots with the Sioux, but were unable to recapture any horses and no one was killed.³⁵ Blackfoot raided Sitting Bull's camp (then at the mouth of Frenchman's Creek) on two successive nights in late October; a day after the second attack, a hunter named Scarlet Plume was ambushed and killed by Blackfoot. That night, three Blackfoot crept into camp but were detected. They escaped after a pursuit.³⁶ Major Guido Ilges of the U.S. Army reported from Fort Benton that over two hundred Blackfoot lodges camped on the

³⁴ NARA, RG393, Ft Maginnis, LS, vol. 7, p. 9, no. 1880-31, Parker to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Maginnis, 26 September 1880 and *ibid.*, p. 13, no. 1880-44, Parker to Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, 6 October 1880.

³⁵ Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt and Other Blackfoot Stories: Three Hundred Years of Blackfoot History* (Saskatoon, 1994), pp. 210-233.

³⁶ E.H. Allison, "Surrender of Sitting Bull," Doane Robinson, ed., *South Dakota Historical Collections* 6 (1912), pp. 242-247. (Allison's original manuscript is located in the Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, MS 1755. It was published as *The Surrender of Sitting Bull, Being a Full and Complete History of the Negotiations Conducted by Scout Allison Which Resulted in the Surrender of Sitting Bull and His Entire Band of Hostile Sioux in 1881*. . . [Dayton, Ohio, 1891] and reprinted in the *South Dakota Historical Collections* 6 [1912], pp. 233-270.) See also NARA, RG94, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 288, frames 472-482, Brotherton to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Buford, 7 November 1880 and University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, box 105, notebook 11, Morris Bob-Tailed Bull Interview, pp. 28-29.

Missouri River were at war with the Sioux.³⁷ Two Crows (a Hunkpapa scout working for Colonel Nelson A. Miles) reported in December that Hunkpapas had had an engagement with Bloods near the Little Rockies and that one Hunkpapa had been killed.³⁸ Over the winter of 1880/81, some three hundred horses were stolen from Crowfoot's Blackfoot and Big Bear's Cree camps, and some twenty Blackfoot and Crees and eight Sioux were killed.³⁹

Lakota relations with the Crees were equally strained. Sioux raiding parties stole thirty-nine horses from the Ojibwas at the farm run by the Department of Indian Affairs on Maple Creek, some thirty miles northeast of Fort Walsh, and an unreported number from the Crees at Fort Walsh during the autumn of 1880. According to Canadian Indian Agent Edwin Allen, such raids made the Crees afraid to settle on a reserve for fear that the Sioux would come and steal all their horses.⁴⁰ An American scout, William Everette, reported to Miles that the Crees had sent a letter to Sitting Bull, who was then on American territory, telling him not to return to Canada unless he wanted a

³⁷ NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 6, Lang to Davidson, telegram, Ft Keogh, 12 November 1880.

³⁸ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 289, frames 104-109, Whistler to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Keogh, 16 December 1880.

³⁹ Dempsey, *Crowfoot*, pp. 124-125.

⁴⁰ NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Allen to Vankoughnet, Ft Walsh, 12 December 1880.

fight.⁴¹ Crees retaliated on the night of 17/18 April 1881, when a party stole a number of horses from the Sioux at the Wood Mountain Post. The next day, a Sioux woman saw one of the Crees in the bushes behind the post. The Sioux searched for him, but could not find him: he managed to get to the post and was admitted. Sitting Bull demanded that the Cree be handed over: Crozier refused, creating tension between the Sioux and the police.⁴² A Cree camp on Beaver Creek had a fight with the Sioux in June, in which one person on each side had been killed.⁴³

The Lakotas often returned to American territory to hunt following their arrival in Canada. Such hunts were carefully planned: to protect the women and children, camps were pitched on the Canadian side of the boundary while only the hunters travelled south, rarely more than an easy day's ride. If the camps were located on the American side of the border, they were placed close enough to it that they could be moved quickly to

⁴¹ NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 6, Everette to Miles, Wolf Point, 15 October 1880.

⁴² NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Crozier to Irvine, Wood Mountain, 19 April 1881; a fanciful account of this incident is in SAB, Saskatchewan Historical Society Papers, file 205, Siouan Indians, Macdonell, "How Sitting Bull Came to Canada." Both policeman Cecil Denny (*The Riders of the Plains*, p. 125 and *The Law Marches West*, pp. 148-149) and historian John Peter Turner (*The North-West Mounted Police*, vol. 1, pp. 568-570) incorrectly state that the man was a Blood.

⁴³ University of Vermont, Ogden B. Read, Camp Poplar River Letterbooks, Letters Sent, pp. 59-61, Read to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, 13 June 1881.

Canadian territory.⁴⁴ As the herds diminished and then failed, this strategy became unworkable. James Morrow Walsh of the NWMP reported from Wood Mountain in October 1878 that the scarcity of food had caused the Lakotas to talk of wintering across the border on Porcupine Creek or at the mouth of Frenchman's Creek. "The women of the camp I believe," Walsh wrote, "are urging the men to cross and save their children from starving."⁴⁵ Sitting Bull explained to Walsh during a council at the Wood Mountain Post on 23 March 1879 that

I am and most of my people are at present camped on the South side of the line, but my camp is close to the line, we have been forced to this move to get food for our children, while our horses were strong we hunted from the North side of the line, but when they became poor and could not make the long journey to Buffalo, we were obliged to move our camp, but I will not remain South of the line one day longer than I can help for I wish to be as far away from the Americans as I can get and live.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 27, no. 1878-1486, Snyder to Williams, Ft Peck, 16 February 1878; *ibid.*, District of Montana, LS 1870-1879, pp. 160-161, no. 1878-138, Gibbon to Terry, telegram, Ft Shaw, 22 February 1878; and *ibid.*, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 27, no. 1878-1486, Williams to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Belknap, 23 February 1878.

⁴⁵ PAM, MG6 A1, pp. 293-294, [Walsh to Commanding Officer Ft Walsh] Wood Mountain Post, 27 October 1878. This material is repeated in NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 77-81, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 668-672, Irvine to White, Ft Walsh, 10 November 1878.

⁴⁶ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 318, file 2001, pt. 3b, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 124-136, Walsh to Assistant Commissioner, Wood

The Lakotas attempted to negotiate peace with those groups who controlled the lands where buffalo could still be found. The Gros Ventres and Upper Assiniboines of Fort Belknap and the Crows were long-standing enemies of the Sioux, and they remained unrelenting in their hostility to Sioux hunts south of the boundary.

American military authorities learned in July 1877 that Sitting Bull had sent two emissaries to talk with Big Beaver, the chief soldier of White Eagle's Gros Ventre band. After meeting with the principal men of the Gros Ventres at their camp at the mouth of the Marias River on the morning of 18 July, Major Guido Ilges concluded that some Gros Ventres would join the Sioux if the American government did not provide more rations and annuity goods to them.⁴⁷ Scout John Howard reported to Miles in September that the Gros Ventres had gone up the forks of Milk River to meet the Sioux and to talk over their grievances against the American government. The Lakotas also wanted to come to an agreement with the Gros Ventres to reduce horse-stealing. The

Mountain, 25 March 1879. This information was later sent to the British Colonial Office: Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Original Correspondence, Canada, C.O.42/757, no. 133, Deputy Minister of the Interior to the Governor General's Secretary, Ottawa, 8 May 1879.

⁴⁷ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1877-W771, microcopy M234, roll 508, frames 870-880, Ilges to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Benton, 19 July 1877; *ibid.*, no. 1877-W770, microcopy M234, roll 508, frames 861-869, Ilges to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Benton, 24 July 1877; NARA, RG393, District of Montana, LS 1870-1879, p. 125, no. 1877-47, Gibbon to Drum, telegram, Ft Shaw, 26 July 1877.

mission was a failure: the Lakota delegates were received coldly and the Gros Ventres gave no definite answer.⁴⁸

Ilges reported from Fort Benton that Sitting Bull had sent tobacco to all the neighbouring tribes at the end of March 1878, inviting them to a council to be held in early May: as of mid-April, sixty lodges of Assiniboines and nearly all the Gros Ventres had crossed the boundary to attend this meeting.⁴⁹ Ilges made a tour of inspection in May, and failed to find any Gros Ventres or Assiniboines. He learned from "Milk river people" better acquainted with them than he, that most of the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines had gone to the Cypress Hills to attend the meeting.⁵⁰ Ilges was certain that the meeting would be preparatory to an invasion of American territory, but such a scenario was unlikely. The Lakotas were much more concerned to secure access to the hunt in Gros Ventre and Assiniboine territory than to attack U.S. troops.

By the winter of 1878/79, the Lakotas had turned their attention increasingly towards the Upper Assiniboines, those

⁴⁸ NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 3, Howard to Miles, Ft Benton, 27 September 1877 and District of Montana, LS 1870-1879, pp. 160-161, no. 1878-138, Gibbon to Terry, telegram, Ft Shaw, 22 February 1878.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 27, no. 1878-2272, Ilges to Brooke, Ft Benton, 13 April 1878. Copies are in RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1878-W34, microcopy M234, reel 515, frames 478-479 and RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, reel 285, frames 129-133.

⁵⁰ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 285, frames 125-128, Ilges to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Benton, 8 May 1878.

Assiniboines who lived further up the Missouri River and whose agency was at Fort Belknap. Indian Agent W.L. Lincoln reported in December 1878 that the Sioux had made peaceful overtures to the Assiniboines at the agency. So far, these had been without success, but Lincoln was concerned that the Assiniboines might, in the end, become more friendly and familiar with the Sioux.⁵¹ Lincoln was also concerned that the disposition of the Fort Belknap Assiniboines might be swayed by Assiniboines from Canadian territory, who were then encamped with those from the American agency and who, he feared, were on friendly terms with the Lakotas.⁵²

Lakota attempts to establish peaceful relations with the Gros Ventres and Upper Assiniboines were not successful, and strife between members of these groups was common. A party of Assiniboines surprised a group of Sioux south of the Cypress Hills on about 10 October 1878, killing eight.⁵³ A group of Assiniboines or Gros Ventres stole fifty-nine horses from a Sioux camp forty-five miles from the NWMP's East End Post in January

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, frames 423-425, Lincoln to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ft Belknap, 26 December 1878.

⁵² *Ibid.*, frames 433-435, Lincoln to Brooke, Ft Belknap, 4 January 1879. These visits were, in fact, routine: Assiniboines from Canadian territory often visited those at Fort Belknap, "with whom they intermarry and are nearly all related." See NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, p. 313, microfilm reel T-6572, frame 890, Irvine to Dennis, Ft Walsh, 15 March 1879.

⁵³ "News from the Plains," *Saskatchewan Herald*, 18 November 1878.

1879.⁵⁴ Assiniboines attacked a party of six Sioux on Milk River in February, killing five of them and stealing a number of horses. This prompted a retaliatory raid by the Sioux on the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines: by mid-May, four Gros Ventres and two Assiniboines had been killed and a number of horses stolen.⁵⁵ Sioux raids apparently achieved their aim: the Gros Ventres, Assiniboines and Crows came into Fort Belknap in June, having been frightened away from the hunt by the Sioux.⁵⁶ Still, Sioux camps were subject to devastating retaliatory raids. Assiniboines under Little Mountain attacked a camp of fifteen Sioux a few miles south of the boundary on 14 March 1881, killing twelve and wounding the other three, one of whom later died. Crozier concluded that the Sioux began to realize that they would be safer if they returned to the United States and surrendered.⁵⁷

Of all their diplomatic efforts with the aboriginal peoples

⁵⁴ NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 200-201, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 786-787, Irvine to the Minister of the Interior, Ft Walsh, 11 January 1879.

⁵⁵ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 286, frames 16-18, Lincoln to Sir [CIA], Ft Belknap, 6 March 1879 and frames 68-69, Lincoln to CIA, Ft Belknap, 19 May 1879.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, frames 104-106, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 16 June 1879; Montana Historical Society (hereafter MHS), Thomas J. Bogy Diary, microfilm reel 292, entries for 10, 21 June 1879; CIA, ARCIA, 1880, p. 114, Lincoln to CIA, Ft Belknap Agency, Montana, 11 August 1880.

⁵⁷ NAC, RG10, vol. 3691, file 13893, microfilm reel C-10121, Crozier to the Commissioner, Wood Mountain, 28 March 1881. This appears to be the same attack related to Indian Agent William Graham by a Moose Mountain Assiniboine years later. See Graham, *Treaty Days: Reflections of an Indian Commissioner* (Calgary, 1991), p. 23.

of the Missouri River, the Lakotas were most concerned that peace be achieved with their long-standing enemies, the Crows. In November 1878, Walsh reported the return to Wood Mountain of six Nez Percés who had left the Oglala camp, apparently in September, to visit the Crows in the United States. The Oglalas had been wary of the mission, having told the six that "if they crossed the line they could never return to the Ogallala camp."⁵⁸ Yet, the endeavor was seemingly a success. The Nez Percés reported that "they were kindly treated by both the 'Crows' and the 'Gros Ventres' whom they also visited, and that the 'Crows' asked them to return to the Teton camp as messengers of Peace, . . ."⁵⁹ The Crows were willing to send a peace delegation to the Lakota camp, as were the Gros Ventres, but they were not willing to make peace with the Yanktons. Sitting Bull heard of these events from the Oglalas and wanted to be involved. Discussions were held in the Sioux camps in December to determine what to do. At the first council, held on about 16 December, the Nez Percé leader, White Bird, reported that the Crows visited by the Nez Percés had asked if Sitting Bull had made peace with all the Indians north of the boundary, if the buffalo were numerous, and if guns and ammunition were sold to Indians in Canada. The Nez Percés

⁵⁸ PAM, MG6 A1, microfilm reel M705, pp. 288-290, Walsh to Commanding Officer Ft Walsh, Wood Mountain Post, 8 October 1878.

⁵⁹ NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 77-81, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 668-672, Irvine to White, Ft Walsh, 10 November 1878. A copy is in RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 125-126, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 125-126.

delegates answered all three questions in the affirmative. The Crows then told the Nez Percés that the Americans talked of taking away their guns and horses, and that if this were true, the Crows would move into Canadian territory. Those present at the council then debated how safe the Lakotas and Nez Percés were in Canada and decided to hold a council of all the headmen to discuss the issue.

At a second council, held two days later, the headmen decided that the Sioux would not be strong enough if the Canadians permitted the Americans to send their troops across the boundary, whereas peace with the Crows would give them the ability to face the Canadians and Americans. A delegation was selected to visit the Crows to make the peace.⁶⁰ Walsh learned in January 1879, however, that Sitting Bull's and White Bird's messengers were unable to make peace with the Crows. The Crows had stolen a number of horses from Sitting Bull's camp, which was then on Frenchman's Creek and two and a half miles inside American territory, and the Lakotas were planning a retaliatory raid.⁶¹

The Lakotas' failure to secure peace with the Crows in the winter of 1878/79 signalled the beginning of a new round of raids

⁶⁰ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 127-128, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 127-128, Walsh to the Commanding Officer Ft Walsh, Wood Mountain, 30 December 1878. A copy is in PAM, MG6 A1, pp. 309-312.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 129-130, Walsh to the Assistant Commissioner, Wood Mountain, 25 January 1879.

between the two groups. On one occasion that winter, Crows stole fifty-nine horses from the Sioux at a place thirty miles north of the boundary.⁶² On another, Crows attacked an Oglala camp on Frenchman's Creek, killing several Sioux.⁶³ In January 1879, a party of thirteen Lakotas stole fifty horses from the Crow camp on the Bighorn River in retaliation for thefts committed by Crows. The Crows pursued the fleeing Sioux and, after an all-day battle, killed the Lakotas' horses and mortally wounded a boy.⁶⁴ A party of Sioux hunters was attacked by Crows some fifteen miles south of the boundary in mid-February 1879: one Lakota, Hairy Bear, was killed and then hacked into pieces, three others were wounded and nineteen horses were stolen.⁶⁵ The Sans Arc leader Spotted Eagle, accompanied by some fifty Lakotas, nineteen Santees and five Métis, crossed the boundary to hunt and recover

⁶² NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 413-414, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 984-985, Irvine to Dennis, Ft Walsh, 25 May 1879.

⁶³ DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather*, pp. 205-207. The original text reads Muddy Creek, which probably refers to White Mud River--an alternate name for Frenchman's Creek.

⁶⁴ University of Oklahoma, Campbell Collection, Moses Old Bull to Campbell, Bull Head, 21 January 1932 and Moses Old Bull Pictorial Autobiography, drawings 10 and 12. The autobiography has been published: see Ray Miles and John R. Lovett, "The Pictorial Autobiography of Moses Old Bull," *American Indian Art Magazine* 19, 3 (Summer 1994), pp. 48-57.

⁶⁵ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, p. 132, microfilm reel T-1386, frame 132, Gordon Rolph, memorandum, "Ouelette's Coulee," Cypress Hills, 14 February 1879. This appears to be the same attack mentioned by American Indian Agent W.L. Lincoln in his monthly report for February 1879. See NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 286, frames 16-18, Lincoln to Sir [CIA], Ft Belknap, 6 March 1879.

Hairy Bear's body.⁶⁶

The war with the Crows went very badly for the Lakotas during the winter of 1878/79. According to Frederick Cadd, who traded with the Sioux that winter, more than thirty Sioux were killed, although some may have been killed by Assiniboines or Gros Ventres, while not one Crow had died. Sitting Bull was very disappointed at not having been able to make a peace with the Crows; Cadd noted that Sitting Bull "had set his heart on it."⁶⁷

Lakota-Crow raiding continued in 1879. This was a better year for the Sioux, who were, at least at times, successful in driving the Crows from hunting grounds on the lower Milk River. "The Crows," reported Agent Lincoln in June, "are badly demoralized and desire to get back across the Mo. River."⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Crow raids against the Lakotas were equally vigorous. Walsh told Miles in July, during their meetings at Miles's camp just south of the border, that the Crows were responsible for twice as many thefts north of the boundary as the Sioux were south of it.⁶⁹ The fact that Crow raiding was a tremendous concern to the Lakotas is underscored by the fact that

⁶⁶ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, p. 135, microfilm reel T-1386, frame 135, Antrobus to Irvine, Ft Walsh, 24 February 1879.

⁶⁷ NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, L&TR, box 5, Cadd to [Miles], Poplar River, 20 July 1879.

⁶⁸ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 286, frames 104-106, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 16 June 1879.

⁶⁹ NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 1, microfilm reel C-10114, Walsh to CO Ft Walsh, Wood Mountain, 25 July 1879.

three winter counts and their variants made by Lakotas who lived in Canada during this period (the Swift Dog/High Dog, Jaw/Jaw Variant and Walter Campbell's unattributed Hunkpapa counts) employed glyphs representing deaths at the hands of Crows to mark the years between 1878 and 1880.⁷⁰

Largely in response to Walsh's reports in early 1879 about the Lakotas' attempts to negotiate peace with the Crows, the Canadian government instructed NWMP Assistant Commissioner Irvine to tell the Lakota leaders that they and their followers were not to cross the boundary. Replying to this message during a visit to Fort Walsh in May 1879, Spotted Eagle remarked that the difficulties were the fault of the Americans, who, he charged, had encouraged the Crows to make raids against the Sioux. Spotted Eagle was insistent that the police "keep the Boundary Line good and strong." The Crows wanted only to fight, and so he had turned away from them, but if the Canadians did not prevent the Crows from crossing the border, "there will be fighting."⁷¹

⁷⁰ See the High Dog count for the years 1877/78 and 1878/79 and the Jaw and Jaw Variant count for 1878/79 published in James H. Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts as a Source of Plains History," p. 397; the unattributed Hunkpapa count for 1879 published in Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, p. 351; and the Swift Dog count for the years 1877, 1878 and 1879 published in Alexis A. Praus, *The Sioux, 1798-1922: A Dakota Winter Count*, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bulletin 44 (Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 1962). Ascribing Julian dates to events depicted in winter counts is difficult because Lakota years do not correspond exactly to Julian years, and because different counts sometimes place the same events in different years. My reading of these counts is that One Star (or Lone Star) was killed in 1878, Bear Lice (or Little Bear) in 1879 and Brings Arrow in 1880.

⁷¹ NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 385-386, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 958-959, Statement of Spotted Eagle, Ft Walsh, May

In making these charges against the American government, Spotted Eagle was echoing claims made earlier by Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull had told Walsh in early 1879 that his desire in opening negotiations with the Crows had been to make his people strong enough to repel an attack from the Americans, if the latter chose to attack them. It was then that the Americans had sent the Crows to steal his horses. "The Americans have beat me," Sitting Bull said. "There is no man in the American country that wears trowsers that is not a rascal. I said I would not commence war first. I have been waiting for them to attack me. They have done it."⁷² He told Walsh during a council at the Wood Mountain Post in March that he had not sent his young men to fight the Crows, but rather to form a defensive alliance with them: he did not blame the Crows, but the Americans.⁷³ Sitting Bull repeated this charge in June when he was interviewed by *Chicago Tribune* reporter Stanley Huntley, explaining to Huntley that he had tried to make peace with the Crows, but that the Americans had sent them to steal his horses. Long Dog, speaking after Sitting Bull, added that the Crows killed Sioux hunters and that the Americans had sent the Crows to fight his people.

1879.

⁷² NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 129-130, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 129-130, Walsh to the Assistant Commissioner, Wood Mountain, 25 January 1879.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. 318, file 2001, pt. 3b, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 124-136, Walsh to Assistant Commissioner, Wood Mountain, 25 March 1879.

Huntley disagreed, saying that he did not think this was so, to which Long Dog said, "I think you lie. But we are not afraid of the Crows, and we do not want any war with your people."⁷⁴

The Lakotas' charges against the American government were essentially correct, as Crows were, in fact, working as scouts for the United States Army. The Lakotas responded to this situation by directing their raids towards these scouts. Raids were made against Crazy Head's band near Fort Keogh on several occasions in February 1880, and against the Crow scouts at Fort Custer in March.⁷⁵

When food became scarce in Canada and Lakotas returned to the United States to hunt, individuals and family groups took the opportunity to surrender themselves to American military authorities. Yet, this view, commonly mapped out in studies of the Lakota experience in Canada, skips over complex Lakota-Yanktonais relationships.⁷⁶ When Lakota people returned to the

⁷⁴ "[Sitting Bull] Interviewed," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 July 1879, p. 1, c. 2-7; p. 2, c. 1-2.

⁷⁵ SW, ARSW, House Executive Document 1, pt. 2, 46th Congress, 3d Session, vol. 2, serial 1952, "Report of Brigadier-General Terry," 4 October 1880, pp. 58-67 and "Report of Col. N.A. Miles," 21 September 1880, pp. 74-76; NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 287, frames 290-291, CO Ft Custer to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Custer, 24 March 1880, frames 305-308, Davidson to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Custer, 2 April 1880, frames 314-315, Miles to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, O'Fallon Creek Station, 2 April 1880; Francis Haines, ed., "Letters of an Army Captain on the Sioux Campaign of 1879-1880," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 39, 1 (January 1948), pp. 39-64.

⁷⁶ Recent examples are Manzione's *I Am Looking to the North for My Life*, chap. 7, pp. 140-149 and Utley's *The Lance and the*

United States, they did not simply surrender; they chose instead to join the Yanktonais at the Poplar River Agency, formerly the Fort Peck Agency, with whom they had been in contact since the late 1860s and developed numerous kin ties. In fact, the existence of such ties created controversy in 1881 when American military authorities arrested "peaceful" Yanktonais along with "hostile" Lakotas upon the latter's return to the United States. A heated exchange between Poplar River Agent N.S. Porter and Major D.H. Brotherton erupted in April when troops arrested a number of agency Indians found in a camp led by the war leader Gall on the Big Muddy and took them to Fort Buford. Many were married to hostiles, but had not taken part in any hostilities, and Porter wanted them released. Porter had tried to separate the "hostiles" from the agency Indians when they were all at Poplar River, but this had proved impossible for they all claimed to be agency Indians.⁷⁷

The Yanktonais' actions indicated not only that they

Shield, chaps. 17 and 18, pp. 211-233. Both books carefully document the surrender of various individuals and groups to American authorities without making any detailed mention of their ties to the Poplar River Yanktonais.

⁷⁷ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 290, frames 37-38, Porter to Brotherton, Poplar Creek, 1 April 1881, frames 39-40, Porter to Brotherton, Poplar Creek, 5 April 1881, frames 41-42, Brotherton to Porter, Ft Buford, 5 April 1881, frames 43-46, Porter to Trowbridge, Poplar Creek, 6 April 1881. Porter's position was supported Captain Read, who was in command of the troops stationed at the agency: see University of Vermont, Ogden B. Read, Camp Poplar River Letterbooks, LS, pp. 48-50, Read to CO Ft Buford, 5 April 1881. Porter had discussed the marital relations between the hostiles and Yanktonais in his annual report for 1880: see CIA, ARCIA, 1880, p. 113, Porter to CIA, Ft Peck Agency, Poplar River, Montana, 12 August 1880.

considered the Lakotas to be kinspeople, but that they were eager to have the Lakotas remain with them. Scout E.H. Allison complained in December 1880, for example, that many Lakotas had returned to the United States fully determined to surrender, but they were met at Poplar River by Yanktonais who gave them food and persuaded them to remain there.⁷⁸ Moreover, the Yanktonais were willing to share goods at the agency with the Lakotas. After Porter refused to give ration tickets to Lakotas who met him in council at the agency in August 1880, Yanktonai leader Black Horn, whose wife was Hunkpapa, told them that the agent lied and that he could give them ration tickets if he wanted. Shortly after this, Black Horn arrived at the agency with about one hundred mounted and armed men and demanded provisions, and was "partially successful."⁷⁹ In November 1880, Black Horn again sent messengers to the Lakotas, telling them not to believe the Americans' threat of military action against them and that they could go to the agency and get supplies from the Yanktonais.⁸⁰

Ties between the Lakotas and the Yanktonais had existed

⁷⁸ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 289, frames 150-153, Brotherton to Terry, telegram, Ft Buford, 25 December 1880.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, frame 521, Statement of Joseph Culbertson, Ft Peck Agency, 9 February 1881. It seems ironic that this information came from Culbertson, a scout at Camp Poplar River, as Black Horn was his father-in-law. For information on Black Horn, see NARA, RG393, Camp Poplar River, LS 1880-1886, pp. 11-12, Read to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Poplar River, 8 November 1880.

⁸⁰ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 289, frames 517-518, Statement of Phillip Alvarez, Ft Peck Agency, 9 February 1881.

throughout the Lakotas' sojourn in Canada. Struck by the Ree's Yanktons and Yanktonais were present at Fort Walsh in October 1877 when General Alfred Terry travelled to the post to meet with Sitting Bull and other Lakota leaders and to convince them to return to the United States: Struck by the Ree and a member of his band named Nine spoke during the council.⁸¹ Terry conceded upon his return to St Paul in November that the Yanktonais of Fort Peck were indeed "in close contact with the hostile Sioux, who are encamped just across the frontier."⁸² Some two hundred lodges of Yanktonais arrived at Sitting Bull's camp on Frenchman's Creek in January 1878 to join the Lakotas on their hunt,⁸³ and about one hundred lodges of Cutheads and Yanktons, probably belonging to Thunder Bull's band, were camped near Wood Mountain in August 1878, probably on their way to attend a Sun Dance then being organized by the Oglalas.⁸⁴ Hunkpapas and

⁸¹ United States, *Report of the Commission Appointed by Direction of the President of the United States, Under Instructions of the Honorables the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Interior, to Meet the Sioux Indian Chief, Sitting Bull, with a View to Avert Hostile Incursions into the Territory of the United States from the Dominion of Canada* (Washington, 1877), pp. 8-9. Nine was identified as a member of Struck by the Ree's band by Pascal Breland and Valentine Rowe: see PAM, MG12 B1, no. 162, reel M134, "Montagne de Bois," 10 May 1873 and NAC, Rowe Papers, MG29 C24.

⁸² ARSW 1877, House Executive Document 1, pt. 2, 45th Congress, 2d Session, vol. 2 (serial 1794), "Report of Brigadier-General Terry," 12 November 1877, pp. 481-520.

⁸³ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 284, frames 241-243, Buell to the Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Yellowstone, Ft Custer, 2 February 1878.

⁸⁴ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 119-120, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 119-120, Irvine to Scott, Ft Macleod [actually Ft Walsh], 14 July

Oglalas were in frequent communication with the Black Catfish's Yanktonais and the Wolf Point Assiniboines during the winter of 1878/79. Walsh reported from Wood Mountain that "parties are arriving almost daily from the above two places [Poplar Creek and Wolf Point], with flour corn potatoes &c which are either given by the Yanktons and Assiniboines to hostiles or exchanged with them for skins robes &c[.]"⁸⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel George P. Buell reported from Fort Custer, based on reports from scouts Fleury and Cross, that the Yanktonais were trading ammunition obtained from American traders to the hostile Sioux, and Scouts Cyprian Matt and Murray Nicholson informed Lieutenant A.M. Henry at Fort Benton that the hostile Sioux had been "running with" the Yanktonais all winter.⁸⁶

The Yanktonais not only harboured and supplied the Lakotas, but they fought the latter's enemies. The Yanktonais had their own reasons for fighting the Gros Ventres, Upper Assiniboines and Crows--they, like the Lakotas, were encroaching on the territories of these people--but these actions complemented those

1878 and p. 121, microfilm reel T-1386, frame 121, Irvine to Scott, Ft Macleod, 11 August 1878.

⁸⁵ PAM, MG6 A1, microfilm reel M705, pp. 293-294, [Walsh to Commanding Officer Ft Walsh], Wood Mountain Post, 27 October 1878. This information is repeated in NAC, RG18, B3, vol. 2232, pp. 77-81, microfilm reel T-6572, frames 668-672, Irvine to White, Ft Walsh, 10 November 1878.

⁸⁶ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 285, frames 509-512, Buell to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Ft Custer, 16 February 1879 and frames 573-576, Henry to the Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Benton, 12 March 1879.

of the Lakotas. In early January 1878 four Yanktonais from the Man that Owns the Horn's camp at the Poplar River Agency enlisted the aid of a group of Métis to make peace with the Gros Ventres and Upper Assiniboines of the Fort Belknap Agency. The attempt failed, and the following night the Yanktonais stole eleven horses and refused to give them up. Raiding between the Fort Belknap Indians and the Yanktonais was soon widespread. White Dog and Medicine Stone, both Assiniboines, stole twenty-three horses from the Man that Owns the Horn's camp in March in retaliation for the eleven stolen by the Yanktonais.⁸⁷ White Dog brought ten of these horses to Fort Belknap and claimed to have killed two Yanktonais.⁸⁸ In February, Yanktonais belonging to Many Horn's band stole twelve horses from a Gros Ventre camp and eleven from Little Chief's Assiniboines. Many Horns refused to return the horses when scouts from Fort Belknap arrived at his camp on the Big Bend of Milk River.⁸⁹

On 26 June 1878, the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines fought a battle near Fort Belknap with the Yanktonais from Black Catfish's band. Agents W.L. Lincoln (of Fort Belknap) and Wellington Bird (of Poplar River) had quite different interpretations of its

⁸⁷ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1879-L37, microcopy M234, roll 514, frames 374-382, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 21 January 1879.

⁸⁸ MHSA, Bogy Diary, microfilm reel 292, entry for 17 March 1878.

⁸⁹ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 27, no. 1878-1486, Williams to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of Montana, Ft Belknap, 23 February 1878.

causes. To Lincoln, the Yanktonais--with some "hostile" Lakotas--were behaving badly and had provoked the fight: to Bird, the Yanktonai leaders were opposed to hostilities and the fight had been caused by the threatening behaviour of White Dog of the Assiniboines.⁹⁰ The Yanktonais stole twenty-one horses from the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines near Fort Belknap on the night of 2 October: the next night they stole twenty more. This was followed later that month by a retaliatory raid led by White Dog and others, during which the Assiniboines stole thirty-five horses.⁹¹ In April 1879, engagements between the Yanktonais, Gros Ventres and Assiniboines resulted in the deaths of two Gros Ventres and two Assiniboines.⁹² A clash in February 1880 resulted in the death of at least one Assiniboine and one Yanktonais.⁹³

⁹⁰ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1878-L491, microcopy M234, roll 511, frames 130-139, Lincoln to CIA, Ft Belknap, 26 June 1878; *ibid.*, no. 1878-B1152, microcopy M234, roll 509, frames 395-402, Bird to CIA, Poplar River, 6 August 1878. Two Assiniboines involved in the fight travelled to Fort Walsh and informed the NWMP of the incident. See NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 120-121, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 120-121, "Substance of a Report of Two Milk River Assiniboines, in Re. A Fight Between the Assiniboines, Gros Ventres and Yanktons, Given to Lieut.-Colonel Irvine, 14th July, 1878."

⁹¹ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1879-L37, microcopy M234, roll 514, frames 374-382, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 21 January 1879.

⁹² MHSA, Bogy Diary, microfilm reel 292, entry for 24 April 1879; NARA, RG393, Ft Keogh Document File 1878-1879, Gilson to Hathaway, Ft Belknap, 30 April 1879.

⁹³ MHSA, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, and Poplar River Agency Journal, Small Collection 251, entries for 20 and 21 February 1880.

Yanktonais were also in conflict with the Crows, Blackfoot and Crees. In the spring of 1879, Yanktonais belonging to the bands of Black Catfish, Black Tiger and one or two others were stealing horses from the Crows, although Joseph Culbertson, a scout at the Poplar River Agency, believed they had been stolen from Americans.⁹⁴ A year later, in June 1880, a combined Yanktonai and Lakota camp on Red Water Creek destroyed a party of twelve Crow horse-raiders.⁹⁵ During the summer of 1880, James Walsh noted in a newspaper interview that the Blackfoot and the Yanktonais came into frequent conflict. A few Blackfoot had been killed by Yanktonais, and some Crees whose murders had been blamed on Lakotas had probably been killed by Yanktonais.⁹⁶ Joseph Culbertson reported in October of that year that the Milk River country above Poplar River was full of war parties and that the Blackfoot had killed three Yanktonais.⁹⁷ Captain Ogden B. Read, in command at Camp Poplar River, reported that one Blackfoot, possibly from a combined Blackfoot/Cree camp under Crowfoot and Big Bear then at Black Butte, had been killed by the Yanktonais six miles below Poplar River in early June, 1881.

⁹⁴ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 286, frames 29-34, Kislisbury to Terry, Bismarck, 6 May 1879 and frames 117-121, Bird to Miles, Poplar River, 6 June 1879.

⁹⁵ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1880, box 35, no. 1880-2477, Ewers to Post Adjutant Ft Keogh, Ft Keogh, 2 July 1880.

⁹⁶ GA, James Morrow Walsh Papers, M8065, box 2, file 11, Scrapbook, "Arrival of Major Walsh," *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 30 July 1880.

⁹⁷ NARA, RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 6, Culbertson to Miles, Poplar River, 30 October 1880.

Read noted that the Crees and Yanktonais were also at war, but that the Crees under Little Pine had expressed a desire to visit the Yanktonais before winter, thus holding out the possibility of peace.⁹⁸

Lakota groups who ventured into the United States hoped to remain in the borderlands. They believed they had every right to remain in the area, as it had been their home before their flight to Canada. Their leaders repeated this theme many times during discussions with American military officials.

Spotted Eagle and Rain in the Face arrived in the vicinity of Fort Keogh in October 1880. Miles sent Captain E.L. Huggins to escort these people to the post. During several conversations, Spotted Eagle told Huggins "the woes of the indians; their poverty; the injustice of the whites; the indians had never harmed the whites except in self defence; all they asked for was to be left alone[.]" Rain in the Face told him that the Indians were always treated poorly by the Americans and asked if his people, the Hunkpapas, would be given the same terms of surrender as Spotted Eagle's Sans Arcs. Huggins assured him that they would, that no exceptions would be made, as Miles always kept his promises. To this Rain in the Face replied, "Gen. Miles promised [Nez Percé Chief] Joseph that if he would surrender he and his people would be taken to Idaho near the old

⁹⁸ University of Vermont, Ogden B. Read, Camp Poplar River Letterbooks, Letters Sent, pp. 59-61, Read to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, 13 June 1881 and Telegrams, p. 44, Read to Breck, 16 June 1881.

home but they were taken to the sickliest place in the Indian Territory. They are dying there yet." Rain in the Face wanted his people to be allowed to return to their homes in this part of the country--and not be shipped off to some sickly place.⁹⁹

Captain Read reported the arrival of Gall and twenty-three lodges at the Poplar River Agency in late November 1880. Gall, he wrote, "is [as] impudent as usual; says he will answer no questions; the country belongs to him, and he will go and do as he pleases, and neither he nor Sitting Bull has any idea of surrendering." Read had no orders to remove the hostiles and admitted that they could do whatever they wanted except draw rations. A constant communication was kept up between the Lakotas and the Yanktonais, prompting Read to complain that "Many of the Agency Indians are as bad as any of the hostile."¹⁰⁰ Gall was less strident at a second council held on 1 December. He explained to Read that he knew the entire country and that he liked this area best as there were plenty of buffalo and wood. If allowed to remain, he would surrender his arms and ponies and go or send for Sitting Bull and the rest of the Lakotas. Neither he nor Sitting Bull would go to Fort Buford or Fort Keogh. Read

⁹⁹ Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, Eli L. Huggins, "Surrender of Rain in the Face, the Reported Slayer of Gen. Custer," MS 2107.

¹⁰⁰ NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 288, frames 574-576, Read to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, telegram, Camp Poplar River, 26 November 1880. See RG393, District of the Yellowstone, LR, box 6, Whistler to CO District of the Yellowstone, telegram, Ft Keogh, 27 November 1880, which provides Joseph Culbertson's account of Read's conversations with Gall.

believed granting Gall permission to remain at the Poplar River Agency would insure the surrender of all the Lakotas. Otherwise, they would not surrender and, instead, would receive what they needed from the Yanktonais during the winter.¹⁰¹

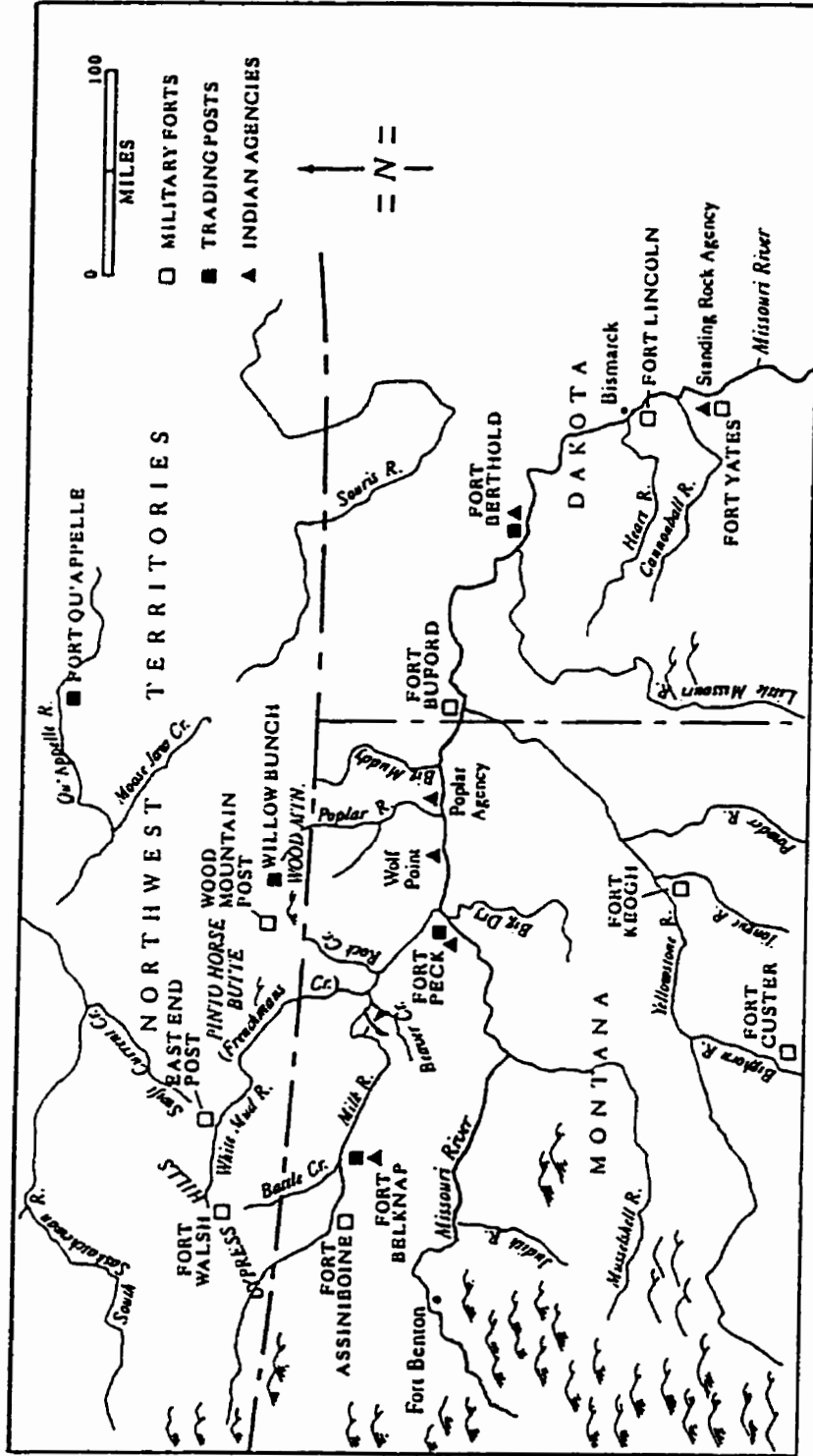
During a council held at Fort Keogh in April 1881, Big Road, Hump, Rain in the Face, Bull Dog, Spotted Eagle and Horse Road made it clear to Lieutenant Colonel J.N.G. Whistler that they did not wish to be moved to the agencies on the lower Missouri River. Hump explained, "the great Spirit raised us in the Country. . . . The agencies down below have no business with us. . . ." Spotted Eagle stated definitively, "God raised me in this Country and this land is mine," while Rain in the Face argued, "we all came back here and want to raise our children here and we don't want to go away from this Country." After they had been transported downriver to Fort Yates, Big Road, Rain in the Face, Bull Dog, Spotted Eagle and others addressed a letter to American President James Garfield, telling him that they wanted nothing to do with the streams around Fort Yates and that they wanted to see him to discuss their future.¹⁰²

Except for those few who succeeded in remaining in the

¹⁰¹ University of Vermont, Ogden B. Read, Camp Poplar River Letterbooks, Telegrams, pp. 9-10, Read to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Yellowstone, Poplar River, 1 December 1880.

¹⁰² NARA, RG94, LR, file 4163 AGO 1876, microcopy M666, roll 290, frames 87-90, Whistler to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, Ft Keogh, 26 April 1881 and frames 389-390, Shrimp, Rain in the Face, Spotted Eagle, Bull Dog, Big Road, Little Hawk, Two Eagles, Iron Thunder, Horn Cloud and Buffalo Runner to the Great Father, Ft Yates, 15 July 1881.

Poplar River Yanktonai community, the Lakotas who returned to the United States were removed from the borderlands by the end of the 1880s. When confronted with food shortages, the Lakotas responded by formulating their own strategy--gaining access to the hunt by making peace with the aboriginal peoples of the borderlands. This strategy failed, and with its failure came their removal from the region.



Map 9 The Lakota Sojourn in Canada, 1876/81

Source: Robert M. Utley, The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull (New York, 1993), p. 187.

**The Northern Borderlands:
An Overview**

A great deal of the historiography of the United States and Canada has focussed on nation building. The frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner served to explain the presumed distinctive character of the American people and American democracy; likewise, the staples thesis of Harold Innis explained the very existence of the Canadian state.¹ As Bruce Trigger has noted, most historians have viewed aboriginal history as an adjunct to European colonial history.² The history of the colonial and early national periods of the United States and Canada has provided a framework onto which the histories of aboriginal peoples have been grafted.

More recently, and especially with the rise of ethnohistory as a methodology for understanding the history of native peoples, historians have shown a genuine interest in the study of aboriginal history in its own right; however, the nationalist perspectives of historians remain largely unchanged. Borderlands people, living on the interface between two societies, political jurisdictions or economic regimes, have found that their history has been written in very one-sided ways. Historically speaking,

¹ Turner, *History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays* (Albuquerque, 1993) and Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1956).

² Trigger, "Indian and White History: Two Worlds or One?" Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun, eds., *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies* (Albany, 1984).

they have been marginalized, just as academics have often marginalized individuals who lived on the borders of ethnic or racial categories.³ In reality, borderlands groups, like individuals living on cultural borders, are given more options--not fewer--by their position on the "edge."

The history of the borderlands Sioux is but one chapter within a larger volume of aboriginal history in border areas.⁴ In 1818, when Great Britain and the United States agreed on the 49th parallel as the border between their respective territorial possessions on the Northern Plains, they ignored or overlooked the fact that their new boundary ran through territories occupied by many aboriginal societies, cutting them in two. Suddenly lands used by the Blackfoot, Assiniboines and Ojibwas, among

³ See James Clifton's *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies on North American Frontiers* (Chicago, 1989).

⁴ The behaviour of aboriginal peoples in the Canadian-American borderlands has numerous parallels. Indigenous peoples throughout the colonial world made tactical use of European colonial boundaries. In Africa, for example, indigenous peoples crossed colonial boundaries to evade taxes or labour conscription (especially when it was military conscription), or to find employment in neighbouring colonies whose economies were stronger. For an introduction to boundary studies in Africa, see M.C. Musambachime, "Protest Migrations in Mweru-Luapula 1900-1940," *African Studies* 47, 1 (1988), pp. 19-34; Dennis D. Cordell and Joel W. Gregory, "Labour Reservoirs and Population: French Colonial Strategies in Kougoudou, Upper Volta, 1914 to 1939," *Journal of African History* 23, 2 (1982), pp. 205-224; David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast During the Second World War," *Journal of African History* 23, 1 (1982), pp. 83-95; Myron J. Echenberg, "Les Migrations militaires en Afrique occidentale française, 1900-1945," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14, 3 (1980), pp. 429-450; and A.I. Asiwaju, "Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta Before 1945," *Journal of African History* 17, 4 (1976), 577-594.

others, were split between the jurisdictions of two colonial governments, despite the countless economic, political and kinship linkages that spanned the border.

Historians in the field of native-white relations often write of "Canadian" and "American" Indians as if national boundaries have been as meaningful to aboriginal peoples as they have been to European newcomers.⁵ In doing so, they have continued a tradition established more than a century ago by the Indian agents on the Northern Plains. Canadian Indian department officials wrote in the 1870s and 1880s of the North and South Peigans, not in an effort to recognize divisions acknowledged by the Peigans, but to distinguish Peigans who lived in Canada from those who lived in the United States. For the same reasons, they and their American counterparts spoke of North and South Assiniboines. Assiniboines from Moose Mountain and Wood Mountain in Canada had extensive ties with those at Wolf Point in the United States, but to Canadian and American officials, they were simply "British" Indians. Aboriginal peoples had significant ties with populations on the other side of the border: the Canadian "Blackfoot," for example, had more in common with American "Blackfeet" than with any other aboriginal group in Canada. These transboundary ties have gone largely unrecognized in the literature.

⁵ It is a testament to the process of partition that the very names by which aboriginal peoples of the Northern Plains are known vary on both sides of the border. The Blackfoot, Peigans (usually) and Ojibwas of Canada are the Blackfeet, Pieigans and Chippewas of the United States.

A full history of the partition of aboriginal groups in the region has not been written, but a cursory examination of the documentary record suffices to show that all borderlands people, not only the Sioux, had a complex relationship to the line the Europeans had drawn. Like the Sioux, aboriginal peoples from across the Northern Plains did not hesitate to cross the boundary if they believed advantages could be had in doing so. All groups freely crossed the border when hunting. American general William T. Sherman, for example, noted correctly, "The British Indians always follow the buffalo, ignorant of the Boundary line."⁶ Moreover, it was not just the Sioux who engaged in clandestine trading. When they were refused arms and ammunition pursuant to presidential order in the 1870s, Blackfoot peoples from Montana "at once proceeded to the Trading Posts in the Dominion of Canada, where they obtained all the ammunition they desired without question."⁷

Transboundary migration was readily apparent during treaty making. When aboriginal land was sold in one country, its owners, even those who resided in the other country, expected their share of the proceeds. In the decades following the negotiation of American treaties, Indians from British territory repeatedly presented themselves to American Indian agents for

⁶ NARA, RG393, Department of Dakota, LR 1878, box 28, no. 1878-4165, Sherman to Hayt, telegram, Washington, 6 August 1878.

⁷ NAC, RG7, G21, vol. 319, file 2001, pt. 3d, *Papers relating to the Sioux Indians*, pp. 30-31, microfilm reel T-1386, frames 31-32, Evarts to Plunkett, Washington, 31 July 1877.

rations and annuities.

Nowhere was the presence of "British" Indians at American Indian agencies noted more frequently than among the Blackfoot. Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully of the U.S. Army advised the American commissioner of Indian affairs in the 1870s that these people claimed land stretching from the Saskatchewan River to a point "some miles south of the city of Helena" in Montana Territory. "Being a wild, uncivilized set," he contended, "they of course do not take into consideration any treaties we have with Great Britain in regard to our boundary line, but look upon the whole of the country both north and south of the line as theirs."⁸

This comment was echoed a year later by the American agent to the Blackfoot, who noted that his charges crossed and recrossed the boundary between Canada and the United States, and yet stopped short of encroaching upon the lands of other Indians. "They seem . . . to be governed by imaginary boundary-lines," he wrote, but "express themselves as perfectly willing to remain in what they consider their own country."⁹ Many Blackfoot who had retreated north of the border after experiencing trouble with various American fur traders returned to American territory during the winter of 1855/56 after hearing news of the Blackfeet Treaty negotiated that year. They were "greatly pleased when

⁸ CIA, ARCIA, 1870, p. 190, Sully to Parker, Helena, 20 September 1870.

⁹ CIA, ARCIA, 1871, p. 428, Armitage to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Teton Valley, 1 September 1871.

informed that they were to receive a portion of the benefits resulting from the late treaty."¹⁰ Afterwards, they returned to British territory. When they and many of the Bloods missed the treaty payments in 1858 their agent explained that this was because they were "so far north"--undoubtedly in British territory--that they were unable to attend.¹¹ The agent set out to pay annuities in June 1862, but found few Indians at Fort Benton: "nearly all were off to the north on their hunting grounds."¹²

American officials grew increasingly concerned about the presence of "foreigners" at American treaty payments. In September 1864, the Blackfeet agent recorded that the Indians had arrived for the annual payments and remarked that the Bloods "live mostly on the other side of the line in the British possessions . . . and it is questionable whether they can properly be called subjects of the United States."¹³ The Blackfoot, he continued, "live entirely in the British possessions and never come this way except to trade, get their annuities, or commit some depredation, . . . were it not that the [Blackfeet] treaty expires next year, [I] would recommend that

¹⁰ CIA, *ARCIA*, 1856, p. 76, Hatch to Cumming, 12 July 1856.

¹¹ CIA, *ARCIA*, 1858, p. 78, Vaughan to Robinson, Ft Benton, 10 September 1858.

¹² CIA, *ARCIA*, 1862, p. 179, Reed to Jayne, Blackfeet Agency, 1 October 1862.

¹³ CIA, *ARCIA*, 1864, p. 300, Upson to Dole, Ft Benton, 28 September 1864.

their next annuity be paid them in powder and ball from the mouth of a six-pounder, but as it is, I recommend that when the present treaty expires they be turned over to the tender mercies of the British crown, whose subjects they undoubtedly are."¹⁴ When the United States proposed a new treaty with the Blackfoot peoples in 1865 and most of the Blackfoot and many of the Bloods were absent from the negotiations, T.F. Meagher, the acting Governor of Montana Territory and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, questioned whether the United States was obligated to treat with "Indian tribes who voluntarily abandon their lands, seeking shelter and protection in a foreign country. . . ." ¹⁵

Many Blackfoot peoples did, in fact, take treaty in both countries.¹⁶ Of the forty-three Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan and Sarcee leaders who signed Treaty Seven in Canada in 1877, seven had taken treaty with the Americans in 1855. Other individuals who attended the Blackfeet Treaty in the United States later ended up in British territory, but did not attend the negotiations for the Canadian treaty. One signatory of the American treaty entered Treaty Seven by adhesion three months

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ CIA, *ARCIA, 1866*, p. 196, Meagher to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Virginia City, 14 December 1865.

¹⁶ Both American and Canadian treaties were commemorated in a Blackfoot winter count made, probably, by Teddy Yellow Fly for James Willard Schultz in February 1929. See University of British Columbia, Special Collections and University Archives Division, Frederick W. Howay Fonds, AX10 14, box 26, folder 6, Blackfoot Calendar.

after negotiations ended.¹⁷ Another fled the United States after involvement in the murder of twelve Americans in 1865 and lived the last eight years of his life in British territory. He was shot and killed by an American trader at the confluence of the Oldman and Belly rivers during the winter of 1873/74, only three years before Treaty Seven was concluded.¹⁸

The Blood leader Medicine Calf, who was present at the negotiations for the Blackfeet Treaty in 1855, used provisions of this American treaty as the basis for negotiations at Treaty Seven. "I hope and expect to get plenty," he began:

¹⁷ The seven were Low Horn, Bad Head, Bull Backfat, Heavy Shield, Medicine Calf, Running Rabbit, and White Eagle. The eighth individual was Three Bulls. See Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 368-375; and Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, pp. 737-740. Broken Arm (Maskepetoon) signed the Blackfeet Treaty as a witness. He is a perfect example of a borderlands person. Although Cree, he was the influential leader of an Assiniboine band. His band wintered at Wood Mountain in British territory, but traded regularly at Fort Union in the United States and went to Washington as part of a native delegation in 1831. He was well-known to the missionaries of the north, being baptised by the Wesleyan Methodist Thomas Woolsey and befriending the missionary John McDougall. Broken Arm died in 1869 trying to promote peace between the Crees and the Blackfoot, the victim of a Blackfoot bullet. Hugh A. Dempsey, "Maskepetoon," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1976), vol. 9, pp. 537-538; John C. Ewers, "Ethnological Report on the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation, Montana, and the Little Shell Band of Indians," David Agee Horr, ed., *Chippewa Indians*, vol. 6 (New York, 1974), pp. 54-56, 70; John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg, 1988), pp. 111-116.

¹⁸ This individual was Calf Shirt: see Hugh A. Dempsey, "The Amazing Death of Calf Shirt," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 3, 1 (January 1953), p. 65. HBC traders noted that many Blackfoot left the United States in 1865 following this violent confrontation with the Americans: see McGill University, McLennan Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, W.B. Cheadle Papers, manuscript number 657, item 67, Brazeau to Cheadle, Rocky Mountain House, 1 January 1866.

we think we will not get so much as the Indians receive from the Americans on the other side; they get large presents of flour, sugar, tea, and blankets. The Americans gave at first large bags of flour, sugar, and many blankets; the next year it was only half the quantity, and the following years it grew less and less, and now they give only a handful of flour. We want to get fifty dollars for the Chiefs and thirty dollars each for all the others, men, women, and children, and we want the same every year for the future.¹⁹

Clearly, he wanted the Canadian treaty to have long-term benefits that the American one lacked.

Like the Blackfoot peoples, Assiniboines who resided for most of the year in British territory took advantage of treaties in the United States. In 1862, Upper Missouri agent Samuel Latta noted that the Assiniboines were "a good and well-disposed people, and try to keep their treaty obligations." However, due to their general fear of Lakota attacks, they had quitted lands to the south of the Missouri River, and spent "a portion of their time in the British country."²⁰ Two years later, agent M. Wilkinson arrived at Fort Union with goods for the Assiniboines. He met a band of Assiniboines who had been absent from the post for several years and who told him that they owned "immense

¹⁹ Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians*, p. 270.

²⁰ CIA, ARCIA, 1862, p. 195, Latta to Dole, Yancton, Dakota Territory, 27 August 1862.

tracts of land" and that white men "must not walk through it." After receiving gifts from Wilkinson, this group of "American" Indians left for their hunting grounds in Rupert's Land.²¹

When Canadian treaties were signed, "American" Indians, not unexpectedly, turned up at treaty payments in Canada. This was simply the reverse of the trend which began when only American treaties existed. John Young, the Blackfeet agent in the United States, noted that prior to the signing of the Canadian Treaty Seven "the Indians from north of the line made use of their family relationship to gravitate towards the agency that issued food and rations, thus swelling the number on the agency roll and drawing from its supplies."²² Once Treaty Seven had been signed in Canada, the movement of native peoples was reversed: Young reported that between fifteen hundred and two thousand Indians had moved north to receive annuities in Canada.²³

Likewise, Assiniboines from American territory moved north to receive the benefits of Canadian treaties. Alexander Culbertson, an interpreter at Fort Belknap, complained to Special Indian Agent William H. Fanton that Pheasant Belly, a headman who was "for years known as a beneficiary of Milk River Agency at Forts Browning and Belknap M.T." had gone north in the summer of

²¹ CIA, ARCIA, 1864, p. 263, Wilkinson to Edmunds, 31 August 1864.

²² CIA, ARCIA, 1883, p. 96, Young to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Blackfeet Agency, 6 August 1883.

²³ CIA, ARCIA, 1882, p. 100, Young to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Blackfeet Agency, 11 August 1882.

1875 and had been "induced to become a beneficiary of the Canadian Government and sign some articles of allegiance." Long Lodge, a headman from another band, had also gone north that summer, but had refused to make an adhesion to a Canadian treaty. Culbertson noted that American officials responded by refusing assistance to the members of both bands at the Fort Belknap Agency during the winter of 1875/76.²⁴ Agent W.L. Lincoln of Fort Belknap in the United States summed up that some Assiniboines "go north and take their money, thus becoming British Indians," and noted, "there are always some of my Indians at Wolf Point [in the Fort Peck Agency] and Cypress [Hills, in Canada], and probably as many from those places here."²⁵

The Canadian government, unwilling to spend more on annuities than was absolutely necessary, rejected the claims of "foreign" Indians. When a group of Ojibwas told Commissioner Alexander Morris at the negotiations for Treaty Three in 1873 that they expected their American relatives to be included in the Canadian treaty, he replied that it was only for "*bona fide British Indians*." But, wanting to avoid troubles with the Indians, he allowed that any "who should *within two years* be found *resident* on British soil would be recognized."²⁶ In 1876,

²⁴ NARA, RG75, LRCIA, Montana Superintendency, no. 1876-F108, microcopy M234, roll 504, frames 797-802, Statement of Alex Culbertson, enclosed in Fanton to CIA, Ft Belknap, 1 April 1876.

²⁵ CIA, ARCIA, 1881, pp. 117-118, Lincoln to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ft Belknap, 20 August 1881.

²⁶ Canada, Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, *Sessional Papers* (Ottawa, 1875), p. 17, Morris to Secretary of

James Morrow Walsh of the North-West Mounted Police told a group of Assiniboines who had congregated in the Cypress Hills, including Long Lodge, that to receive their annuities they would have to prove to his satisfaction that they were "British Indians." The leaders advised Walsh that the non-treaty Assiniboines who were arriving were "really British Indians" who had been obliged to cross into American territory because of declining buffalo herds in Canada. They assured him that these Indians "had been living as much on this side of the line as the other, and were surely as much entitled to all the provisions of the treaty as the Indians who are living further North."²⁷ Walsh refused to pay the followers of Little Chief and Shell, and struck from the pay-sheets Indians who received annuities in both countries. Long Lodge, whom Walsh considered a "good man and very friendly to the Whites" found his band weakened on account of objections that many of his followers were American Indians.²⁸ Canadian Indian Agent Allan MacDonald refused to take the adhesion of a number of Assiniboines at Fort Qu'Appelle in the fall of 1877, because Piapot, Ocean Man and Pheasant Rump could not assure him that they "belonged to our country." "Unless

State for the Provinces, Ft Garry, 14 October 1873. Emphasis in original. The discussion upon which Morris based this letter is reported in "Indian Treaty: Closing Proceedings," *Manitoban*, 18 October 1873.

²⁷ NAC, RG10, vol. 3637, file 7088, Walsh to Minister of the Interior, Ft Walsh, 12 September 1876.

²⁸ Canada, "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 1877," *Sessional Papers*, vol. 8, Special Appendix B, Walsh, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

great caution is exercised," he concluded, "we will find Indians in a few years drawing annuities from both Governments."²⁹

By 1882 the Canadian government was taking steps to stop aboriginal peoples from crossing the boundary. By withholding rations from native people who refused to go to their assigned reserves farther north, the government hoped to "starve them out" of border areas, especially near Fort Walsh.³⁰ Indians were "not [to] be permitted to think that they can go to any Post and receive a similar Ration to those Indians who belong there."³¹ The policy had disastrous effects on native health. Agent Allan MacDonald reported from Fort Walsh in 1882 that "The Indians look very bad, I know they are not getting enough flour but I like to punish them a little, I will have to increase their rations, but not much."³² Yet, native peoples responded to the curtailment of rations not by giving up and going to the reserves, but by crossing "the line in strong armed parties" to get what food they

²⁹ NAC, RG10, vol. 3656, file 9092, McDonald to the Lt Governor of the NWT, Livingstone, NWT, 20 October 1877. The Canadian government did, however, later recognize Piapot, Ocean Man and Pheasant Rump as "Canadian" leaders; interestingly, Sitting Bull implied that Pheasant Rump was from American territory when he likened himself to Pheasant Rump. "The Santee Sioux and 'Pheasant Rump' the Assiniboine," he stated in the spring of 1881, "have received Reservations in this Country and I am going to try for one also." *Ibid.*, vol. 3691, file 13893, microfilm reel C-10121, Crozier to Irvine, Wood Mountain, 1 May 1881.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3744, file 29506-2, Irvine to White, Ft Walsh, 20 May 1882.

³¹ *Ibid.*, file 29506-1, extract of letter of Galt to Wadsworth, 13 July 1881.

³² *Ibid.*, file 29506-3, McDonald to [Dewdney], Ft Walsh, 11 November 1882.

could in the United States.³³

As far as the American government was concerned, the presence of so many "British" Indians only served to deprive "American" Indians of their food supply. The government gave instructions to the army to drive "Canadian" Indians back into Canada. The U.S. Army began encountering hunting parties of aboriginal peoples from Canada in 1878, and just as soon began sending them back north. Soldiers from Fort Belknap warned them that they would be sent to prison for two years and have their horses and carts confiscated if they returned to American soil.³⁴ Such threats had little effect at first. Agent Lincoln noted that the Indians "pay but little attention to my representations thinking that we, the American Soldiers, are afraid of them."³⁵

In truth, American policy was lenient towards "British" Indians, who were viewed as the subjects of a foreign power. Frederick White, comptroller of the NWMP, reported that "Dominion Indians have raided across the Border, and meeting with no effective punishment or loss when confronted or turned back by American troops, have had apparently, in their own view, no risk to run in their incursions beyond temporary delays when

³³ *Ibid.*, McIllrie to Indian Commissioner, Ft Calgary, 2 December 1882; and see also *ibid.*, vol. 3744, file 29506-2, McIllrie to Indian Commissioner, Ft Walsh, [rec'd DIA] 30 July 1882.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3687, file 13607, Patrice Breland to Chèr Docteur, Cypress Hills, 24 November 1878.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3691, file 13893, Lincoln to Hayt, Ft Belknap, 6 October 1879.

discovered, as, when arrested and put across the boundary, they often return soon after the backs of the troops are turned."³⁶

By 1881, the Americans had become increasingly aware of the depredations committed by the northern Indians and were "determined to deal with them severely."³⁷ Yet, American policy had no "teeth" and remained unsuccessful. Cecil Denny, an ex-policeman turned Canadian Indian agent, noted that a large party of troops from Fort Assiniboine had come across two hundred and fifty lodges of Crees and tried to intimidate them into leaving: "The soldiers placed their guns in position and ordered the camp to leave, but the Indians paid no attention to them, and the troops had to return to Assiniboine without having made the Indians move."³⁸ At the same time as Denny was relating this incident to his superiors, it was rumoured that two Indians caught horse-stealing had been hanged by Montana ranchers.³⁹ This action, more forceful than any the army was prepared to take, had the desired effect. Denny noted that the Indians, fearing similar actions on the part of other American settlers,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3740, file 28748-1, White to Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, 9 June 1883.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 3744, file 29506-1, Allen to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 4 May 1881.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Denny to Indian Commissioner, Ft Walsh, 16 November 1881.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Denny to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 1 November 1881. Montana stockmen had been petitioning the Departmental Military Commander since May to remove Canadian Indians from the U.S. See *ibid.*, Allen to Dewdney, Ft Walsh, 4 May 1881. Denied satisfaction through this channel, stockmen took the law into their own hands in November.

"seem afraid to go across the lines."⁴⁰

By the middle of 1882, the American government decided to pursue a more vigorous policy. That summer four companies of troops from Fort Assiniboine were detailed to patrol the boundary along Milk River.⁴¹ A party of Métis and Indians was captured that summer and their horses, rifles, ammunition-- "nearly all they possessed"--were taken from them.⁴² Although bison were reported to be plentiful on the American side of the line as late as October 1882, the Indians were afraid to cross over as "the American Troops are watching them closely to try and catch them."⁴³ The possibility of capture now had greater meaning. No longer were Indians simply to be taken to the Canadian border and set free; now possessions were confiscated, and the Indians were deposited at the border with only four or five days rations.⁴⁴ By the force of arms, American authorities succeeded in preventing most aboriginal peoples from crossing the border.

Historian Paul F. Sharp realized in the early 1950s that, given the recent origin of the western boundary between the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Denny to [Dewdney], Ft Walsh, 9 November 1881.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, file 29506-2, McIllrie to Indian Commissioner, Ft Walsh, 27 June 1882.

⁴² *Ibid.*, file 29506-3, McIllrie to Indian Commissioner, Ft Calgary, 2 December 1882.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Peter Hourie to McDonald, Ft Walsh, 13 October 1882.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol 3740, file 28748-1, Paul to Bates, Ft Assiniboine, 3 May 1883 and Adams to Bates, Ft Assiniboine, 30 May 1883.

United States and Canada, it often meant very little to the residents of the Northern Plains, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. Sharp advocated that scholars employ regional rather than national approaches to the history of the Northern Plains, yet few transboundary studies have been undertaken in the years since.⁴⁵ Like the Spanish Borderlands in the days of their pioneering historian, Herbert Eugene Bolton, the Canada-United States borderlands have been seen as a fringe area in the history of the Canadian and American Wests, and consequently have been largely ignored.⁴⁶ As late as 1992, Donald Worster pointed out the scant attention paid to this region. "We have no real school of northern borderlands history," he wrote. There was "no Herbert Bolton or John Francis Bannon for these parts."⁴⁷

The absence of a borderlands paradigm in Sioux historiography means that significant aspects of Sioux history receive little attention. The nineteenth-century Sioux are, in fact, best conceptualized as a borderlands people. This characterization tells something about where they lived, but something also about who they were. They made tremendous

⁴⁵ Sharp, "The Northern Great Plains: A Study in Canadian-American Regionalism," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39, 1 (June 1952), pp. 61-76.

⁴⁶ John W. Caughey, "Historians of the West," *The American West* 1, 1 (1964), p. 79.

⁴⁷ *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York, 1992), p. 226. This point is also made in Peter Morris's "'Neighbor Ground' Along the 'Medicine Line': The Canadian-American Plains as Borderland," paper presented at the Thirty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Western History Association, Denver, 13 October 1995.

tactical use of their proximity to different groups of Europeans. They were pragmatic, switching their support from one group to another, always with Sioux needs in mind. Sioux in the Upper Mississippi Valley supported French traders during the early eighteenth century, but quickly accepted British ones after the British conquest of New France in 1763. While they fought alongside British troops during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, they then made peace with the Americans. By 1800, the Sioux had developed a trade network that gave them access to British, American and Spanish goods. Dakotas from Minnesota and Lakotas from Montana used the boundary as a shield against the United States Army during times of conflict, while Dakotas, Yanktonais and Lakotas profited from their trade in buffalo products and contraband arms and ammunition with the Métis from the north. As members of the borderlands community, Dakota and Yanktonai leaders petitioned Indian agents and other government officials in both Canada and the United States for goods and land. Throughout the history of their interaction with incoming national powers, the Sioux used their position in the borderlands as a tool to improve their lives.

Most of the Lakotas who fled to Canada following the Great Sioux War had surrendered to American authorities by 1881, thus bringing to a dramatic close the story of their exodus across the boundary. Their removal from the region to reservations lower down the Missouri River, coupled with the attempts in the early 1880s of the American and Canadian governments to halt the

movement of aboriginal peoples across the boundary, disrupted the relationship among the various Sioux living in the borderlands. Yet such change did not put an end to transboundary migrations by Sioux peoples during the nineteenth century. In December 1883, nineteen Sisseton families from the Poplar River Agency--members of the elder Standing Buffalo's band who had not followed his son to Canada--arrived in Canada to visit relatives on the Standing Buffalo and Birdtail Creek reserves. Concluding that they had come from the Missouri, Indian Agent Allan MacDonald told those on the Standing Buffalo reserve that they would not be allowed to remain, and informed the younger Standing Buffalo that his people must not give the strangers any aid.⁴⁸

In September 1886 another twenty-two Sisseton and Yanktonai families from Poplar River arrived in Canada in the company of some "Canadian" Dakotas to visit relatives. The police were instructed to prevent them from entering Canada, but were unsuccessful, as the Sioux scattered on the police's approach.⁴⁹ Their chief spokesman, Matowaste, informed a representative of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs that they and many others had been badly treated by the American officials; that the rations given to them were far below their proper weight;

⁴⁸ NAC, RG10, vol. 3652, file 8589, pt. 2, microfilm reel C-10114, Macdonald to the Indian Commissioner, Indian Head, 28 December 1883.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3766, file 32957, microfilm reel C-10135, Reed to SGIA, Regina, 9 September 1886, Vankoughnet to Macdonald, Ottawa, 21 September 1886, vol. 3599, file 1564, pt. A, microfilm reel C-10104, Vankoughnet to Reed, Ottawa, 28 September 1886.

that they did not receive bacon, tea or ammunition; that their agents were changed so frequently that they were never there long enough to understand anything about the Sioux; that the Sioux had been allowed to break small pieces of land with their own horses, but that they had not been allowed to crop the same land twice--they had been removed and their land given to others. Those questioned said they wished to settle down on a reserve near their relatives in Canada and to live by farming.⁵⁰

These recent arrivals had lived in the borderlands for years, often at the Poplar River Agency in the United States, but also--unnoticed by Canadian officials--with the Sioux on Canadian territory. Many had relatives among White Cap's followers on the Moose Woods Reserve, while others had close family ties to the Dakotas on the Oak River Reserve. Among the arrivals of 1886 was Two Dogs, the man who had met Pascal Breland at Wood Mountain in 1873 and had spent so much time with Valentine Rowe during the latter's convalescence at Wood Mountain in 1874. Two Dogs, the uncle of Tasinawakanbdi of the Oak River band, had crossed the boundary in 1878 and had gone to live with White Cap's people.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3599, file 1564, pt. A, microfilm reel C-10104, Burman to Reed, Virden, Manitoba, 20 September 1886, Reed to SGIA, Regina, 24 September 1886 (Reed's letter is also found in vol. 3766, file 32957, microfilm reel C-10135) and Markle to the Indian Commissioner, Birtle, 18 November 1886.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3599, file 1564, pt. a, microfilm reel C-10104, Burman, "Sioux from Poplar River, U.S., at Oak River," [24 September 1886] and vol. 3596, file 1319, microfilm reel C-10103, Markle, "Census of Wandering Sioux Now Camped North of Oak Lake Station, Manitoba," enclosed in Markle to the Indian Commissioner, Birtle, 4 May 1891.

After coming to the notice of the Canadian officials in 1886, the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs attempted to persuade them to return to their reservation in the United States, but most remained and quietly joined the Dakotas at Oak River.⁵² Contact between Dakotas living on reserves in Canada and Dakotas and Yanktonais on American reservations was a fact that Canadian officials could do little to alter.⁵³

The Sioux have had a complicated relationship with the Canadian-American boundary. Long expert in promoting their own goals by taking advantage of opportunities offered by different groups of Europeans, the Sioux added the boundary itself to the list of tools useful in achieving these ends. Canadian and American government policy regarding the common border evolved over the course of the nineteenth century. Neither government patrolled or monitored the boundary for much of the century; by its end, however, they had all but closed it. Yet the Sioux, by virtue of the opportunities offered by the boundary, now resided on both sides of it, and maintained transboundary ties throughout this period. Their diplomacy had significance for the

⁵² See *Ibid.*, vol. 3596, file 1319, microfilm reel C-10103, [Reed to Markle], 11 May 1891, vol. 3858, file 81670, Reed to DSGIA, Regina, 15 August 1891, and the related material in these two files.

⁵³ Illustrative of the intermingling of Yanktonais and Dakotas on Canadian reserves is the fact that the Yankton-Yanktonai dialect is the predominant Sioux dialect on the Standing Buffalo Reserve, and is also spoken on the Moose Woods and Wahpeton reserves. See Douglas R. Parks and Raymond J. DeMallie, "Sioux, Assiniboine, and Stoney Dialects: A Classification," *Anthropological Linguistics* 34, 1-4 (1992), pp. 233-255.

relationships among aboriginal peoples along the entire length of the western Canadian-American boundary, and invites comparisons with boundary situations involving indigenous peoples throughout the world. A borderlands perspective shifts the historical lens towards the Sioux and, in so doing, offers clearer insights into Canadian and American history.

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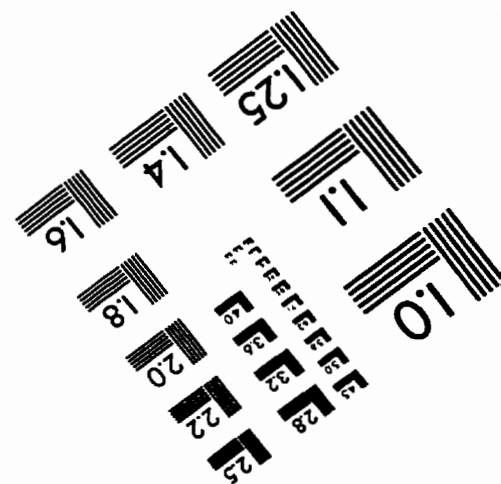
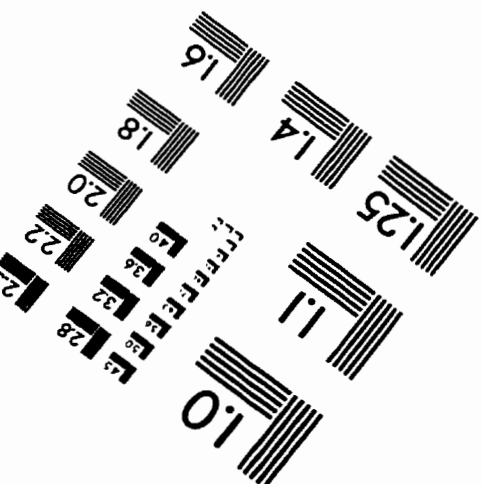
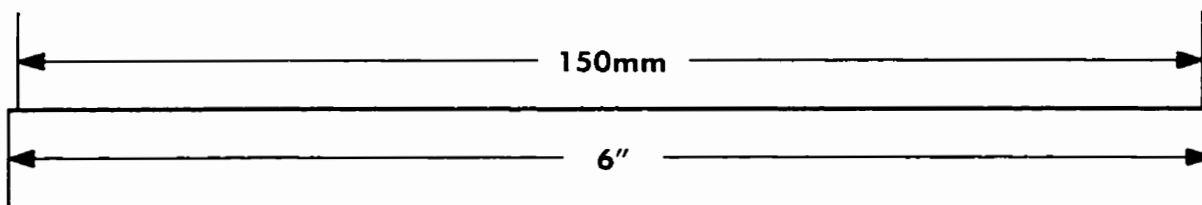
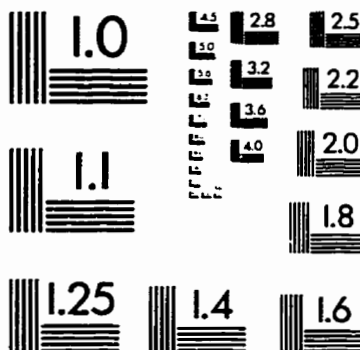
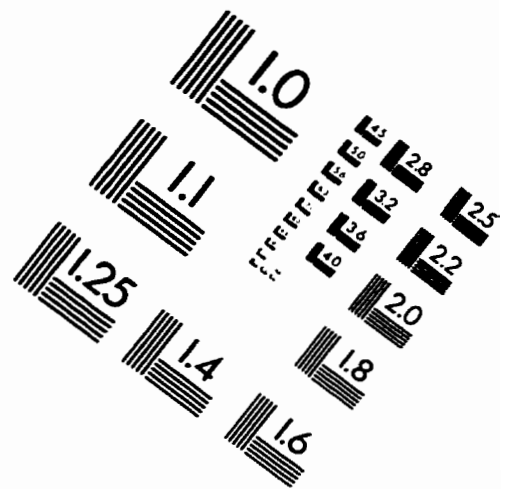
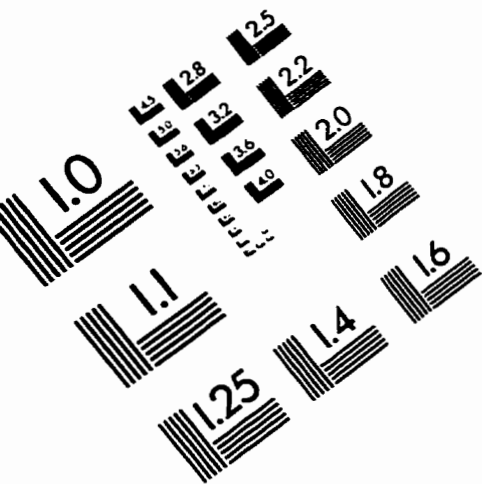
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