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THE WESTERN WOODS CREE

THE Cree, an important and well-known branch of the great Algonquian family, are geographically and linguistically closely related to the Ojibway, or Chippewa. In no sense are they a tribe: the vast extent of the territory over which they are scattered precludes any such conception of them.

On the basis of habitat they are generally designated as Plains Cree and Woods, or Swamp, Cree. Bands of the former division roamed the prairies of Manitoba (Manitú-wapau, supernatural strait), Saskatchewan (Kusiská-tsiwán, swift current), and eastern Alberta, where they are now sedentary on numerous small reserves. Their movement into the open country in pursuit of buffalo was westward up the Saskatchewan, which flows into Lake Winnipeg.

The Woods Cree, Swamp Cree, or Maskegon (*muskék,* swamp), are found in this western region north of the prairies and Lake Winnipeg and south of Peace river, Athabasca lake, and Churchill river; and from Loon river, a southerly affluent of Peace river, on the west to the shore of Hudson bay at the mouth of Nelson and Churchill rivers. In Alberta they are usually called Bush Cree. It was the advance guard of the western Woods Cree that expelled the former Athapascan inhabitants of the country south of Athabasca lake, only to be forced in turn southward to the Saskatchewan, and still later to take up their residence in the disputed territory on amicable terms with their former enemies. The eastern Woods Cree extend from Lake Winnipeg to Lakes Mistassini and Nitchequon in the Province of Quebec, a territory which may be described as including all the country that drains into James bay and the southern part of Hudson bay.

The word Cree is a contraction of Kristenaux (Knisteneaux, et cetera), the French spelling of Kenísteniwuk, which is the native name of a local division now unknown. That this original form is a Cree term is proved by the inclusion of the element *niwuk,* which is a contraction of *iyíniwuk,* people, the usual termination of Cree group-names.

The Cree have been in friendly contact with the white race since the early years of the seventeenth century, and the intimacy of this relation may be judged from the fact that no other Indian language of northern America has proved so prolific a source of Anglicized terms as have Cree and certain closely allied Algonquian dialects of New

England and eastern Canada.

Their nomadic habits and dispersal over a vast territory, some parts of which were seldom visited by white men, made an estimate of population difficult. Alexander Henry, the younger, a careful and judicious observer, wrote concerning the Plains Cree, but expressly making an exception of the Woods Cree:

More than one family seldom inhabit the same tent.... Small-pox some years ago[1] made great havoc among these people, destroying entire camps; but they are again increasing very fast. To find the exact number of men would be difficult, as they are dispersed over a vast extent of country, and often mix with Assiniboines and other natives with whom they are at peace. As nearly as I could ascertain, they have about 300 tents, which may furnish 900 men capable of bearing arms. It must, however, be observed that in this calculation I do not include those Crees who live N. of Beaver river.[2]

The neighbors of the western Cree were Athapascans on the north and northwest, Blackfeet on the west, and Assiniboin on the south. With the Assiniboin they were closely associated from the time of the separation of that tribe from the parent Sioux prior to the opening of the country by exploration in the early years of the seventeenth century; nevertheless, there were rather frequent drunken brawls, with consequent murders, between the two tribes in the boisterous era of the fur-trade. They joined forces in pushing the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegan southwestward out of the plains bordering Saskatchewan river, and up to the termination of intertribal warfare remained constant enemies of these other Algonquians. The Cree inheritance of the historic Sioux hostility toward the Chippewa was not lessened by the friendly reception they accorded the renegade Assiniboin, for whom the Sioux entertained bitter hatred mixed with professed contempt. The Woods Cree had little, if any, part in this warfare with the Blackfeet and the Sioux; their operations were limited to dispossessing the Athapascans of their territory between the Saskatchewan and Athabasca lake. Peace

1 This may refer to the epidemic of 1781-1782, which originated on the upper Missouri and swept northward to Great Slave lake.

2 Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, 1897, 512-516.

river, according to Henry, received its name from the circumstance that the Cree and the Beavers settled their hostilities at Peace point.

The pages of the journals of the fur-traders and explorers contain numerous references to Cree warfare. Says Alexander Mackenzie:

Formerly they struck terror into all the other tribes whom they met; but now they have lost the respect that was paid them; as those whom they formerly considered as barbarians are now their allies, and consequently become better acquainted with them, and have acquired the use of firearms. The former are still proud without power, and affect to consider the others as their inferiors: those consequently are extremely jealous of them, and, depending upon their own superiority in numbers, will not submit tamely to their insults; so that the consequences often prove fatal, and the Knisteneaux are thereby decreasing both in power and number.[3]

According to Franklin:

Their character has been still more debased by the passion for spirituous liquors, so assiduously fostered among them... They are no longer the warriors who drove before them the inhabitants of the Saskatchawan, and Missinippi [Churchill]. The Cumberland House Crees, in particular, have been long disused to war. Betwixt them and their ancient enemies, the Slave nations [Blackfeet, not the Athapascan tribe called Slaves], lie the expansive plains of the Saskatchawan, inhabited by the powerful Asseeneepoytuck [Assiniboin], or Stone Indians, who having whilst yet a small tribe entered the country under the patronage of the Crees, now render back the protection they received.[4]

Alexander Henry, who constantly complains of the dishonesty, drunkenness, and laziness of the Cree, says further:

The Crees have always been the aggressors in their disturbances with the Slaves [Blackfeet], and no sooner is a crime committed than they fly below, or to the strong wood [French, bois fort] along Beaver river, which makes the others suppose we are concerned in secreting them....

They are fully as much addicted to spirituous liquors as are the Saulteurs [Chippewa], but generally have no means of obtaining it.

3 Mackenzie, I, CXIII.

4 Franklin, I, 108.

Those only who frequent the strong wood country can purchase liquor and tobacco. Those who inhabit the plains are a useless set of lazy fellows - a nuisance both to us and to their neighbors, and much addicted to horse stealing. They are generally found in large camps winter and summer, idle throughout the year. Buffalo is their only object. Although passionately fond of liquor and tobacco, still they will not resort to the woods where they could procure furs to purchase those articles. In winter they take to the bow and arrows; firearms are scarce among them, and they use but little ammunition. If they procure a gun, it is instantly exchanged with an Assiniboine for a horse. ...

The Crees had eight horses stolen during the night, within 30 paces of their tents. They dare not pursue the thieves, whom they suppose to be only six men, while they are 18 men, all well armed; this is a proof of their cowardice. ...

A Cree ... confirmed the news of the Assiniboines and Crees assembling at the Eagle hills for war. ...

Met two Indian families going to camp at Terre Blanche for some time, to join a smoking-match to be given by a Cree. They will then go to war upon the Snares [the Shuswap, a Salishan tribe], on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, about due W. These are defenseless Indians, who know not the use of firearms, have only bows and arrows, and are scattered in small camps of three or four tents – an easy prey to the Crees. But their country is so nearly destitute of animals that the Crees suffer from famine when they go to war upon those people, and are frequently obliged to return before they can fall upon them. ...

Three Crees from the Moose hills arrived. I could not but reflect upon their imprudence in coming when the Slaves are here; it cannot be called bravery, for it is well known that Crees are the most arrant cowards in the plains, afraid of their own shadows. They depend on us for protection, and it gives us a great deal of trouble to keep both parties quiet. The Blackfeet are as foolhardy as the Crees. Two of them appeared last fall on the S. side, and called out to be crossed over, while there was a Cree camp of 80 tents, all drinking, who, on observing the Blackfeet, had flown to arms and declared they would murder them. My neighbor and myself crossed over to them, and with the utmost difficulty prevailed upon them to return to their friends, telling them the Crees were determined to kill them if they crossed. They appeared perfectly unconcerned, and said they did not care, as they would have

the satisfaction of dying at the white people's fort. However, we insisted upon their going back, which they did with great reluctance.[5]

When the Cree came upon the northern plains, the lack of horses was so acutely felt that successful warriors had difficulty in limiting the size of their raiding parties. About ten was the desired number. Planning an expedition, a leader would notify two or three of his friends as to the time of departure and the rendezvous, and bid them inform certain other men but keep the project secret from all others. The start was always made at night after the camp was asleep. Sometimes the proposed expedition became generally known, and so many men presented themselves at the rendezvous that the party was unwieldy and difficult to conceal from the enemy.

Notable feats in running off horses were sometimes performed single-handed. The following narrative concerns an historical personage, and may be accepted as substantially true.

In their war with the Rapids People [Atsina] the Cree captured a promising boy, and a man whose child of the same age had recently died begged the captor: "Oh, my friend, that looks like my own child! Give him to me!" So he received the little captive and brought him back to the Cree country. When the people, as usual, flocked out of the camp to greet the returning warriors, a widow who had recently lost a boy ran up and exclaimed: "Oh, that is like my lost son! Give him to me, and I will rear him like my own child." So the boy was given to her. He became generally known as Páusti-kuwínis ["rapid-on small," that is, Little Atsina].

As he grew older, he remained very small. When he was a youth he said one day: " Mother, we are very poor. Others have horses, I have none. I am going to steal some from the Blackfeet. Make moccasins, and I will make a rope." He started at night alone, because he had no friends. Mostly he slept and remained hidden by day and travelled at night, walking and running alternately.

Just at dawn one morning he went to the top of a hillock to select a place of concealment, and saw below him a narrow valley and on the other side a small clump of bushes. He thought that would be a good place. The morning was foggy. As he stood there, he happened to look

5 Coues, 512–513,540, 557-558, 588, 593, 596.

around and saw a large herd of grazing horses. He knew then that he was close to a camp and in danger, but no other concealment than the little thicket was in sight. He went forward, and just as he was about to creep in he saw projecting above the rising ground before him the tips of tipi-poles. Quickly he crept into the bushes. He was scarcely concealed when a man approached. It seemed that he must be discovered. He notched an arrow and crouched there, pointing it at the approaching man. The Blackfoot passed with a few feet of him, but did not see him. When he had passed, the boy turned cautiously and released the arrow. It struck the Blackfoot in the back, and he fell without uttering a cry. The boy hurriedly crept out, scalped him, took his gun and clothing. and ran to the herd of horses. He caught a fine bay stallion by its trailing rope, mounted, and drove off the entire herd. His horse was a good one, and he made speed; and the Blackfeet, left with only a few stray animals, were unable to overtake him. Three times that day he looked back and saw his pursuers in the distance.

It was early the next morning when he arrived home with three hundred horses. No such feat had ever been known. To his foster-mother he gave five animals, and told her to go about the camp and send in all the poor people who had no horses, or only one or two, but none who had as many as three. Among them he distributed all the remaining animals except his stallion.

That very morning an old man had left the camp. When he returned in the afternoon and heard what had happened, his friends laughed at his misfortune. Nevertheless he went to the youth, thinking that there might be a horse or two remaining. "Grandson," he said, " I am sorry I was not here this morning to receive one of your horses." The boy answered: "Well, grandfather, here, take this, my best horse. And here is something else for you." He gave the old man the scalp, which he had stuffed with sweetgrass, not having had time to stretch it properly on a hoop. The old man was filled with joy. He broke the string with which the scalp was tied like a bag, and seeing its contents he exclaimed: "Grandson, you have no name! But I will give you a name. Hereafter you shall be Wikasku-kíyesin ["sweetgrass old-man"], and all shall know you by that name. And more I say. You are a chief, a great chief. Nobody has ever done what you have done, and from this time you shall be our chief" With that he went about the camp, leading the stallion and swinging the scalp, calling out the name of

Wikasku-kíyesin and the declaration that henceforth he should be the head-chief. And so it was. The former chief made no objection, for there was no denying the fact that the youth could not be surpassed.[6]

On the prairies the buffalo, in wooded country the moose, was the most important source of flesh food. Buffalo were most commonly captured by enticing a herd into an enclosure and there shooting them down with arrows. Franklin thus describes a pound observed near Carlton House, a post established by Samuel Hearne a short distance above the mouth of the North Saskatchewan, where the route branched off northward for Beaver river and Isle á la Crosse:

The buffalo pound was a fenced circular space of about a hundred yards in diameter; the entrance was banked up with snow, to a sufficient height to prevent the retreat of the animals that once have entered. For about a mile on each side of the road leading to the pound, stakes were driven into the ground at nearly equal distances of about twenty yards; these were intended to represent men, and to deter the animals from attempting to break out on either side. Within fifty or sixty yards from the pound, branches of trees were placed between these stakes to screen the Indians, who lie down behind them to await the approach of the buffalo. The principal dexterity in this species of chase is shewn by the horsemen, who have to manœuvre round the herd in the plains so as to urge them to enter the roadway, which is about a quarter of a mile broad. When this has been accomplished, they raise loud shouts, and, pressing close upon the animals, so terrify them that they rush heedlessly forward towards the snare. When they have advanced as far as the men who are lying in ambush, they also rise, and increase the consternation by violent shouting and firing guns. The affrighted beasts have no alternative, run directly to the pound, where they are quickly despatched, either with an arrow or gun. There was a tree in the centre of the pound, on which the Indians had hung strips of buffalo flesh and pieces of cloth as tributary or grateful offerings to the Great Master of Life; and we were told that they occasionally place a man in the tree to sing to the presiding spirit as the buf-

6 Sweetgrass was one of the signers of a treaty with the Canadian Government. He is said to have died a few years prior to 1879 at an advanced age. The narrative therefore refers to a year in the first quarter of the century.

faloes are advancing, who must keep his station until the whole that have entered are killed.[7]

Native accounts of the method of starting a herd into the pound differ from Franklin's observation. The night before a proposed drive certain men gathered in a tipi and prepared a quantity of stewed service-berries. When the feast was ready, they summoned the man who was to call the buffalo. They treated him with the greatest consideration, giving him the seat of honor, ceremoniously extending a filled pipe, and feeding him berries and other choice foods. After all had eaten and smoked, three or four old men began to sing the buffalo songs, and with intervals of rest and smoking this continued through the night. Buffalo-stones, *mustúsasiníy,* which are stones or fossil casts of a shape suggesting the animal, were exposed like sacred altar objects during the proceedings.

Early in the morning the caller, wearing a buffalo disguise, went toward the herd reported by the scouts, and coming in sight of the animals he mounted a knoll and uttered a high-pitched cry, " *Hu* …. !" Hearing this sound, the buffalo looked up and started toward him, soon breaking into a gallop. Before they approached too close, and in order to turn them before they came upon the scent of his tracks, he ran unseen to another knoll and repeated the call. In this manner he brought the herd into the wide opening of the wings leading to the pound, then ran along the outside of one wing, and from behind the corral repeated his call. It seems to have been believed that the animals were angered by the cry and endeavored to catch the man. Probably horsemen were employed in conjunction with the caller. As the buffalo dashed along the runway, if any tried to break through the lines, men in hiding behind the stones and brush stood up and waved blankets. Once in the pound, the animals started milling in the direction of the course of the sun, and the hunters brought them down with arrows.

The Cree also copied a method of the wolf pack, and drove buffalo down a peninsula and out on smooth ice, where the creatures either fell and broke their legs or were helpless to defend themselves by making quick charges.

7 Franklin, I, 175-176.

The buffalo chase by mounted hunters was strictly controlled by the soldiers' society. At the great summer encampments individual hunting was forbidden, because it would have driven the animals from the vicinity, and one who violated this rule was punished in the usual manner by having clothing and tipi slashed into shreds.

Moose were, and are, hunted by tracking, by pursuit in deep snow with dogs, by ambush, and by calling with a birch-bark trumpet. Hearne says:

The kidneys of both moose and buffalo are usually eat raw by the Southern Indians [Cree]; for no sooner is one of those beasts killed, than the hunter rips up its belly, thrusts in his arm, snatches out the kidneys, and eats them warm, before the animal is quite dead. They also at times put their mouths to the wound the ball has made, and suck the blood; which they say quenches thirst, and is very nourishing.[8]

Woodland caribou and "jumping" deer were of some importance to the Woods Cree, and elk were plentiful in park regions. Beaver and waterfowl, especially geese, were esteemed. Fish, particularly maskinonge, whitefish, lake trout, and wall-eyed pike-perch (locally called doré), are still of great importance. Of these the whitefish is most highly regarded, although the maskinonge is called the "genuine fish." Unlike the Chipewyan, the Cree did not fish under ice. In winter they employed a rawhide dip-net at the base of small waterfalls, and in summer a willow-bark gill-net in lakes. At a narrow stream connecting two lakes they would stand on a platform and spear passing fish in the flare of birch-bark flambeaux. Great quantities of fish were preserved in a frozen state. Spearing fish was an employment for men, but nets were generally attended by women.

Meat was preserved by drying, pounding on a rawhide with a stone, adding, melted fat and sometimes dried service-berries, and storing in flat rawhide bags. So typical was this process that the Cree name, *pímikán,* was Anglicized into "pemmican."

Under the urge of necessity the Cree, like other northern Indians, sometimes resorted to cannibalism.

It is the general opinion of the Southern Indians, that when any of their tribe has been driven to the necessity of eating human flesh,

8 Hearne, 308.

they become so fond of it, that no person is safe in their company. And though it is well known they are never guilty of making this horrid repast but when driven to it by necessity, yet those who have made it are not only shunned, but so universally detested by all who know them, that no Indians will tent with them, and they are frequently murdered slyly. I have seen several of those poor wretches.[9]

Vegetal products, especially berries, are abundant. Of prime importance are service-berries, or saskatoon, which are dried in large quantities. Resembling dried currants in appearance, but quite devoid of flavor, they are soaked and boiled, usually with the addition of fat or meat. Blueberries and otter-berries, both species of *Vaccinium,* are usually eaten fresh, but sometimes are boiled and dried in shallow dishes or on sheets of bark. They are not easily preserved by this process. Two kinds of cranberries, also members of the *Vaccinium* family, are stored in birch-bark containers and kept throughout the winter. A boiled mixture of cranberries and shredded fish or roe is a favorite dish. A modern practice is the sweetening of the boiled berries with commercial sugar. Choke-cherries crushed on a flat stone with a round one, dried in small lumps, stored, and cooked with meat, afford, with their slight astringency, a refreshing appetizer. The crushed pits are doubtless a healthful forage food. Cattail-roots, tule root-stalks, and bast of the aspen and the jack-pine, are important on the score of adding variety to a rather limited diet.

Cree dwellings were of the kind common to the Plains Indians. Alexander Henry thus describes them:

Their tents, like those of all other tribes of the plains, are of dressed leather, erected with poles, generally 17 in number, of which two are tied together about three feet from the top. These being erected and set apart at the base, the others are placed against them in a slanting position, meeting at the top, so that they all form nearly a circle, which is then covered with the leather. This consists of 10 to 15 dressed skins of the buffalo, moose, or red deer [elk], well sewed to ether and nicely cut to fit the conical figure of the poles, with an opening above, to let

9 Hearne, 85-86. An Iroquois hunter attached to Sir John Franklin's expedition murdered and ate another member of the party and was in turn killed by Doctor Richardson.

out smoke and admit the light. From this opening down to the door the two edges of the tent are brought close together and well secured with wooden pegs about six inches long, leaving for the door an oval aperture about two feet wide and three feet high, below which the edges are secured with similar pegs. This small entrance does well enough for the natives, who are brought up to it from infancy, but a European is puzzled to get through, as a piece of hide stretched upon a frame of the same shape as the door, but somewhat larger, hangs outside, and must be raised by hand to pass. These tents are spacious, measuring 20 feet in diameter. The fire is always made in the center, around which they generally place a range of stones to prevent the ashes from scattering and keep the fire compact. New tents are perfectly white; some of them are painted with red and black figures. These devices are generally derived from their dreams, being some sea-monster or other hideous animal, whose description has been handed down from their ancestors. A large camp of such tents, pitched regularly on a level plain, has a fine effect at a distance, especially when numerous bands of horses are seen feeding in all directions.[10]

With the substitution of canvas for skin, this description remains good today.

Cree tipis are pitched with the back toward the prevailing wind. The head of the family sits and sleeps ninety degrees to the left of the door as one enters; but when he has visitors he assigns this place to the principal guest, at whose right he seats himself. Other men sit at the left of the guest of honor, and women on the opposite side of the tipi.

On the lower Saskatchewan Franklin saw a party of waterfowl hunters encamped in "a very large tent. Its length was about forty feet, its breadth eighteen, and its covering was moose deer leather, with apertures for the escape of smoke from the fires which are placed at each end; a ledge of wood was placed on the ground on both sides the whole length of the tent, within which were the sleeping places, arranged probably according to families; and the drums and other instruments of enchantment were piled up in the centre. Amongst the Indians there were a great many half-breeds."[11]

10 Coues, 513-514.

11 Franklin, I, 75.

The sweat-house is a dome-shape frame of willow shoots covered with cloth (formerly skins), and steam is generated by means of heated stones. Its use is a pseudo-religious rite.

The physical characteristics and dress of the Cree have been described at length by various early observers. Mackenzie notes that they are of "moderate stature, well proportioned, and of great activity,"[12] and proceeds to draw such a picture of feminine beauty that there remains little wonder, if the half were true, that European employes of the fur-trade companies generally selected Cree wives. A melancholy decadence must have ensued, if the Woods Cree of Alberta are a fair example of the entire group, for few Indians are so wretchedly filthy and unkempt.

The men in general tattoo their bodies and arms very much. The women confine this ornamentation to the chin, having three perpendicular lines from the middle of the chin to the lip, and one or more running on each side, nearly parallel with the corner of the mouth. Their dress consists of leather; that of the men is a pair of leggings, reaching up to the hip, and fastened to the breech-clout girth. The clout itself is generally a few inches of woolen stuff; when this cannot be procured, they use a piece of dressed leather about nine inches broad and four feet long, whose ends are drawn through the girth and hang down before and behind about a foot. They are not so particular and decent in this part of their dress as the Saulteurs [Chippewa]. The shirt is of soft dressed leather, either cabbrie [antelope] or young red deer [elk], close about the neck and hanging, to the middle of the thigh; the sleeves are of the same, loose and the arms to the elbows, but thence to the wrist sewed tight. The cap is commonly a piece of leather, or skin with the hair on, shaped to fit the head, and tied under the chin; the top is usually decorated with feathers or other ornament. Shoes are made of buffalo hide dressed in the hair, and mittens of the same. Over the whole a buffalo robe is thrown, which serves as covering day and night. Such is their common dress; but on particular

12 Henry uses almost the same words in describing the Assiniboin: "They are generally of moderate stature, rather slender, and very active." Sentences almost identically phrased are of such frequent occurrence in the journals of the period that one must believe them to have been derived in part from one another or from a common source, perhaps Umfreville.

occasions they appear to greater advantage, having their cap, shirt, leggings, and shoes perfectly clean and white, trimmed with porcupine-quills and other ingenious work of their women, who are supposed to be the most skillful hands in the country at decorations of this kind. Their dress consists of the same materials as the men's. Their leggings do not reach above the knee, and are gathered below that joint; their shoes always lack decoration. The shift or body-garment reaches down to the calf, where it is generally fringed and trimmed with quill-work; the upper part is fastened over the shoulders by strips of leather; a flap or cape hangs down about a foot before and behind, and is ornamented with quill-work and fringe. This covering is quite loose, but tied around the waist with a belt of stiff parchment, fastened on the side, where also some ornaments are suspended. The sleeves are detached from the body-garment; from the wrist to the elbow they are sewed, but thence to the shoulder they are open underneath and drawn up to the neck, where they are fastened across the breast and back. Their ornaments are two or three coils of brass wire twisted around the rim of each ear, in which incisions are made for that purpose; blue beads, brass rings, quill-work, and fringe occasionally answer. Vermillion is much used by the women to paint the face. Their hair is generally parted on the crown, and fastened behind each ear in large knots, from which are suspended bunches of blue beads, or other ingenious work of their own. The men adjust their hair in various forms; some have it parted on top and tied in a tail on each side, while others make one long queue which hangs down behind, and around which is twisted a strip of otter skin or dressed buffalo entrails. This tail is frequently increased in thickness and length by adding false hair, but others allow it to flow naturally. Combs are seldom used by the men, and they never smear the hair with grease, but red earth is sometimes put upon it. White earth daubed over the hair generally denotes mourning. The young men sometimes have a bunch of hair on the crown, about the size of a small teacup, and nearly in the shape of that vessel upside down, to which they fasten various ornaments of feathers, quill-work, ermine tails, etc. Red and white earth and charcoal are much used in their toilets; with the former they usually daub their robes and other garments, some red and others white. The women comb their hair and use grease on it.[13]

13 Coues, 514-515.

To this may be added that in cold weather women wore an outer garment, similar to the dress described but of skins tanned "in the hair"; and some had undershirts of the skins of small animals. When the Cree reached the plains, their women adopted winter shirts of calf-skin in the hair, as well as robes of buffalo-skins; but men preferred not to be encumbered with coats. The Woods Cree, however, adopted the Chipewyan coat, but without the pointed skirt. A hooded winter coat is now made of a Hudson's Bay blanket.

Robes of hare-skins are made by a process of netting, not weaving. An entire skin is cut into a continuous strip, an end of which is tied to a spindle. While the rope is held in the left hand a short distance from the spindle, the latter is twirled on the thigh. The twisted portion is then wound on the spindle, and the process is continued. The rope is either allowed to dry on the spindle or is wound into a large ball. The purpose of the twisting is to produce a rounded material that yields a robe furry on both sides.

Franklin's surgeon, Dr. John Richardson, observed that tattooing was very general.

The lines on the face are formed by dexterously running an awl under the cuticle, and then drawing a cord, dipped in charcoal and water, through the canal thus formed. The punctures on the body are formed by needles of various sizes set in a frame. A number of hawk bells attached to this frame serve by their voice to cover the suppressed groans of the sufferer, and, probably for the same reason, the process is accompanied with singing. An indelible stain is produced by rubbing a little finely-powdered willow-charcoal into the punctures. A half-breed, whose arm I amputated, declared, that tattooing was not only the most painful operation of the two, but rendered infinitely more difficult to bear by its tediousness, having lasted in his case three days.[14]

An informant of the present writer saw in his youth numerous men with chests tattooed in the same design, a pair of vertical lines on each half of the thorax, with sloping cross-lines. This was a good-luck symbol. A certain man had on each side of his chest a tattooed hand, in commemoration of a fight with the Blackfeet, in which an enemy actually laid hold of him but nevertheless was killed. Some men had

14 Franklin, I, 111-112.

themselves ornamented with figures representing their dream-animals. The process observed by this informant consisted of rubbing moistened gunpowder on the punctured skin.

Cree handicraft employs wood, vegetal and animal fibre, bone, horn, antler, skin, and stone.

Arrows were service-berry shoots triply feathered and either self-pointed or tipped with stone. A laminated mineral called *wapikán,* found where stream erosion had exposed it and said to resemble mica, was oxidized by fire, and the resultant powder, mixed with water, furnished the cement for feathering arrows and securing sinew wrappings. Willow and birch were the materials for Cree bows, which were simply-curved and were reinforced along the back by a layer of sinew applied with glue and sinew wrapping. The quiver was the entire skin of any animal of suitable size, such as beaver, otter, or fox.

Axes and knives were of stone, awls and fish-hooks were slender, pointed bones. The gaff-hook for dragging beaver from nets or their huts was a pointed tine of antler lashed to a wooden handle. The hide-flesher is a bone from the lower fore-leg of a moose, and has a beveled and notched cutting edge and a thong hand-loop attached at the upper end. The hair-scraper, also a moose leg-bone, has leather wrappings at the ends for hand-holds, is sharpened along one edge, and is used in the manner of a draw-knife.

Household vessels for water, berry-picking, and cooking are made of birch-bark. The sewing material is spruce-roots, and the adhesive for calking joints and small knot-holes is gum of the same tree. Such vessels are fashioned from single sheets of bark, which are so cut that there are two vertical seams at each end and none at the bottom. The water-pail is approximately square at the bottom, and the sides rise to a round, slightly restricted opening. Berry-pails, in which boiling is (or was) accomplished by means of hot stones, are oblong at the bottom and have elliptical, restricted mouths. Spoons are made of enlarged roots and fresh-water shells, and bowls of knurls.

The drum was a thin and rather narrow band of wood bent into a circle and covered with rawhide shrunk on. It was double-headed, shallow, and as much as three feet in diameter. The rawhide rattle contained a few pebbles or shot, and was provided with a wooden handle.

Fire was kindled by means of a wooden drill.

The cordage most generally used is still babiche, or shaganappy, which is a long, thin strip of rawhide. It is employed wherever a strong, tough fibre is required, and particularly for the mesh of snowshoes and formerly for dip-nets.

For transportation the Woods Cree had birch-bark canoes, wooden sleds drawn by dogs or by women, and snowshoes. The Prairie Cree of course acquired horses and employed the travois.

Doctor Richardson observed that the Cree obtained a scarlet dye from the roots of bedstraw (*Galium tinctorium* and *G. boreale*). "The roots, after being carefully washed are boiled gently in a clean copper kettle, and a quantity of the juice of the moose-berry [*Viburnum edule*], strawberry, cranberry, or arctic raspberry, is added together with a few red tufts of pistils of the larch. The porcupine quills are plunged into the liquor before it becomes quite cold, and are soon tinged of a beautiful scarlet."[15] Black, he adds, was made from elderbark and a little "bog-iron-ore" dried and pounded, and there were several yellows, the best from a root, others from lichens.

For amusement the Cree had guessing contests, dice play, and athletic games.

Pakésiwin,[16] the hand-game, and *tipáskunamátuwin* ("act of dividing a pack of rods and extending them") were played in the same manner as their Chipewyan counterparts.

Maskukásiyuk ("bear-claws") was a dice play in which eight bear-claws were used, and *tsakáqewin* ("act of throwing down sticks") was a similar game for women, in which there were four flat sticks six to eight inches long and an inch or more wide. Three were marked respectively with one, two, and three transverse black lines, and the fourth with a cross.

Titipinítuwan was both a small hoop of entwined willows wound

15 Franklin, I, 138.

16 The word is said to refer to the singing of the contestants with folded arms. The affix *win* indicates a verb form. This suggests Doctor Richardson's *"puckesann,"* of which he says: *"Puckesann* is played with stones of a species of *Prunus* which, from this circumstance, they call *puckesann-meena* [*mína*,berries]. The difficulty lies in guessing the number of stones which are tossed out of a small wooden dish." The names appear to be identical, though the games referred to are different.

with bark, and the contest in which it was employed. The hoop was rolled swiftly from two opponents, who ran after it and rapidly discharged arrows. The one who first "killed" it won a point, and ten points decided the trifling wager at stake.

Tsikáqewin ("act of implanting a javelin") was a contest between two men, each of whom had two sharpened shafts about five feet long. One cast a fifth javelin so that it pierced the turf, and each in turn endeavored to place his missiles upright as close as possible to this target.

Lacrosse, as Richardson observed, was played with a racket having a handle two feet long and a shallow, bag-like head. The modern Cree of the Alberta forests seem to know nothing of the game, but it was of sufficient importance to the Cree of a former generation to give a name to Isle á la Crosse.

The only social unit among the Cree, besides the family, is the local band. In spite of their past association with the Chippewa, they lack the exogamic, totemic clans with patrilineal descent that their congeners have. Indeed, those not in immediate contact with the Chippewa are totally ignorant of the very existence of such a system.

Each local band and each larger division had its chief, a man who had proved himself courageous and resourceful in war and sagacious in counsel. Usually the chief indicated his choice of a successor before death, and when too old for further useful service he resigned his place. In matters of general policy his mandate prevailed. Brawls ceased at his command, and noisy crowds were dispersed with a word. When grass became scarce or the camp-site defiled, or when the buffalo had moved to a distance, his order to move was sufficient.

Large camps were policed by the Unimihítuwuk, a fraternity corresponding to the Soldiers of the Plains Indians. A recalcitrant youth was punished by having his clothing cut to pieces; but if he took the chastisement in good spirit, laughing and joking, they showed their appreciation of his sportsmanship by calling him to their lodge, where, after a dance, each of them gave him a garment, and he departed with more than he had lost. A man who forced a woman without pay was deprived of a horse or other property, which was given to her. The Unimihítuwuk had a long lodge, with two or three fires, pitched in the centre of the summer camp, where they spent most of their time with much singing and dancing.

Men who had performed any one of certain valorous deeds were

called Okétsitáu.[17] Such feats were the killing or scalping of an enemy, capturing a gun or a horse, and laying hold of an enemy or striking him with a weapon held in the hand. Such men were greatly esteemed, and at all ceremonies and public gatherings occupied positions of honor. On such occasions they frequently gave away valuable possessions, after reciting their warlike accomplishments, in order to demonstrate their greatness and their superiority to the pettiness of ordinary men. So characteristic of the Okétsitáu was this custom, that the term is now applied to the sun in reference to his beneficence. The Okétsitáu still function in this manner, but how the title has been acquired by men who never made war is uncertain .[18]

Since there are no clans, blood relationship is the only restriction upon mating, and even this does not always prevail, for a man is permitted to marry the daughter of his father's sister or of his mother's brother. To such an extent was this a favored match that maternal uncle and father-in-law are designated by a single term, as also are paternal aunt and mother-in-law. Similarly, paternal uncle and stepfather are identical, and maternal aunt and stepmother, because of the former prevalence of the custom of marrying one's deceased wife's sister and one's brother's widow.

Negotiations for marriage originated with either of the families concerned. A girl's father might visit the parents of a certain youth and propose marriage. If they acquiesced, she was sent without dowry to their tipi, and they gave her parents whatever articles of value they could afford. Though the transaction was regarded as a sale, the price to be paid was not discussed; for it was a matter of pride on the part of the purchasers to make the sum as great as possible. When families of standing were concerned, the girl's father received horses and provided a new tipi for the couple. The following tale was related as an example

17 Skinner, Political Organization, Cults, and Ceremonies of the Plains-Ojibway and Plains-Cree Indians, *Anthropological Papers American Museum of Natural History,* Vol. XI, Part VI, gives the same explanation of the Okétsitáu, but infers that they alone constituted the "soldiers' society." The Woods Cree do not appear to be well informed on the subject, possibly because of their remoteness from the focus of distribution of the cult.

18 Lack of capable interpreters blocked many lines of inquiry in the field work among the Cree.

of a match negotiated by a girl's father desirous of obtaining a promising son-in-law.

A youth lived with his grandmother. He asked, "Grandmother, how is it so many have horses and we have none?"

"Oh, my, grandson, those people have men in the tipi! We are only two. 'Your father and mother are gone."

"Well, I think when I grow up I will steal some Blackfoot horses."

She begged him not to think of it, for men were killed in that way. Nevertheless it was not long that he started out alone.

He returned with two fine horses, and when the chief saw them he sent for the youth. He offered a large pipe, but the boy knew nothing about smoking. So he touched the pipe and said: "That is enough. I do not smoke."

Said the chief: "I would like one of your horses. I will give you five of mine, and a new tipi, and my daughter who sits there. Do not answer at once. Consider what your answer shall be."

So the youth departed without replying. His grandmother in quired what the chief had wanted, and he told her, adding: "I like my horses. I do not want to sell them."

But she urged him to do so, because she was old and he must soon have a woman to work for him; and when he agreed, she led one of the horses to the chief's tipi and called, "Here is your horse!" He hurried out, exclaiming: "*Hai, hai, hai!* Thanks! You are old. You have no home except with your grandson. We will pitch a new tipi here close to mine, and you shall live with my son-in-law; for my daughter is young and does not know everything about working for a husband. You shall teach her."

So the old woman returned, and the youth asked, "Where are the five horses?"

She replied: "Oh, we are going to have a big time! The new tipi will be pitched close to the tipi of the chief, and we will move our things into it."

Soon they saw a man leave the chief's tipi and go about the camp getting a new pole here and another there, until he had the requisite number. Before long a new tipi was erected, and the girl came and said to him, "Come home!" So the youth and his grandmother went to the new tipi, where they found the promised five horses.

A marriage proposal could also originate with the youth's family.

A man returning from war with horses or a scalp might send his father to negotiate with the father of a certain girl, or his mother to talk with her mother. The following narrative was related to an informant by an old man who died a few years ago.

When I was a little boy I lived alone with my old mother. My father was dead. We were very poor. Other boys had small horses of their own, and looked down on me, so that I had no companions. One day I found another boy like myself, very poor. He lived with an old woman, a distant relative. We became companions, and every day we were together. For several years this continued.

My sister's husband "threw her away," and gave her a horse, which however after a short time he took back. I said to my chum, "I think I will take that horse from my brother-in-law." He advised me not to try it, because that man had been to war with the Black-feet and would kill me. So I agreed not to do it, and said, "Let us go then to the Blackfeet and steal some of their horses." We talked it over and agreed to try it. We obtained some rawhide and made two ropes. My chum had a gun, but I had only a small Hudson's Bay knife. One day we started southward.

After a long way we came in the darkness to another Cree camp. Somebody was walking up and down. We thought it was a guard set against enemies, but found it was another boy, poor like ourselves. After talking together we invited him to join us, and we three went on southward. A time came when we had no food. It was foggy. We saw a lone buffalo, and I urged my friend to kill it, but he refused: "No, I think we are close to the Blackfeet. Always I feel as if somebody were striking me." But after a time he gave in and shot the buffalo. We butchered it, carried the meat and the stomach to a clump of willows where there was water, and cleaned the stomach for a water-bag when fleeing from the Blackfeet. We ate, washed the remainder of the meat, and left our new friend to pack it, while we two went on. My friend was ahead. Suddenly he pushed me down. He pointed to one side. The fog was drifting, and after a time it opened again and we saw many tipis.

"What shall we do?" just then the boy with the meat came up, and we decided to hide in a clump of willows just ahead. We got into them unseen and lay there all day. We could see the Blackfeet riding about here and there, but nobody discovered us. That night we found some

horses and quietly drove them off. After going a short distance 1 feared I was losing my companions, so I stopped and howled like a coyote. Right beside me I heard my chum say, "That must be our friend!" I called, and they came. We drove the horses slowly forward, and after a time caught three and rode, driving the others ahead. So we returned safely with thirteen horses.

We three became constant friends. I was the chief. After three or four years we were young men.

One day the youngest member of our band was riding about. and happening to go to the place where the women got water he observed a pretty girl, one he had never before seen. He said nothing, but watched her and saw that she went into one of a group of three tipis belonging to a small band recently arrived at the main camp. In those days we camped in a large circle for protection from the Black-feet. He came to us and sat without speaking or laughing. We asked what was wrong, and he answered, "I want to marry." We inquired who the girl was, and he told us. So I said to my other friend, "Well, what will you do?"

"I will give a horse!"

"And I will do the same," I promised. So we two got on our horses and led three others to the three tipis. In the middle one we saw a girl.

The old man in the tipi said: "Well, my boys, it appears that you have come to buy something. You come with five horses."

"Yes, we want to buy your daughter. Our friend saw her at the water. He was riding a brown horse."

The man asked his daughter if she had noticed such a young, man, and she admitted it. The youth, she said, had not addressed her, had merely gazed at her. The man went out, observed the three horses, came in, and said: "It is well! You offer all the girl is worth. You may have her."

So we went back, and that same day they were married.

If a man coveted a married woman sufficiently to pay a horse, a gun, or other article of like value, he would talk it over with her, and if she acquiesced he gave her the promised gift, which she brought to her husband. If he accepted it, by this act he took the other for *okúsaka* ("his comrade").[19] Whenever the latter desired the woman's company,

19 *Ni-kusák,* my comrade. The word is the equivalent of Lakota Sioux

he notified the husband, who absented himself for the night. Presents of lesser value were given at intervals, and if the husband at any time especially needed some certain thing he despatched his wife to his comrade, who was bound to provide it if he had or could in any way procure it. Such an arrangement was made only when the woman was pleased with her proposed secondary husband.

When a man learned that his unmarried daughter was cohabiting with a man, he said nothing immediately, but if the relationship continued indefinitely he would become angry and declare: "If you are going to keep this up, you will have to leave my tipi, or your lover will have to marry you. Go and talk to him, and see if he will pay for you." He himself would not make overtures to the man.

Mother-in-law and son-in-law never address each other directly, but speak when necessary through the daughter and wife; and if the two chance to be in the same tipi together, they sit with bowed head or averted face. An instance is cited of a woman and her son-in-law left alone for a moment, when a birch-bark dish hanging in the tipi fell into the fire. Both simultaneously reached for it, and both recoiled. Both reached again, and again drew back; and so until it was too late to save the dish. Neither was willing to lay hand to it at the same time as the other. No explanation of the taboo is offered, though Doctor Richardson records as hearsay that "a woman's speaking to her son-in-law is a sure indication of her having conceived a criminal affection for him."[20] Mackenzie says that "when a young man marries, he immediately goes to live with the father and mother of his wife, who treat him, nevertheless, as a perfect stranger, till after the birth of his first child: he then attaches himself more to them than to his own parents; and his wife no longer gives him any other denomination than that of the father of her child."[21] This phenomenon of tecnonymy is of rather common occurrence among Indians, and has heretofore been particularly noted as a Haida custom.

An adulterous wife was either "thrown away," perhaps with the loss of her nose, or flogged and retained. Sometimes after long separa-

kóla.

20 Franklin, I, 109.

21 Mackenzie, I, CXLVII.

tion a couple reconciled their differences and remarried. Combat with deadly weapons over women were not rare, especially in the times of the fur-traders, whose ambassador was "fire water." Mackenzie had a low and undoubtedly just opinion of Cree connubial fidelity.

It does not appear, that chastity is considered by them as a virtue; or that fidelity is believed to be essential to the happiness of wedded life. Though it sometimes happens that the infidelity of a wife is punished by the husband with the loss of her hair, nose, and perhaps life; such severity proceeds from its having been practised without his permission: for a temporary interchange of wives is not uncommon: and the offer of their persons is considered as a necessary part of the hospitality due to strangers.[22] When a man loses his wife, it is considered as a duty to marry her sister, if she has one; or he may, if he pleases, have them both at the same time.

A woman about to become a mother is attended by two or three women experienced in such affairs. A pole with its base resting on the ground near the door is lashed at its other end to one of the tipi-poles at such a height that she can conveniently rest her arms on it while kneeling, and in this position she endures the labor pains and delivers the infant, the others from time to time pressing her sides and administering hot decoctions of various herbs. The navel cord is held in the tightly clasped hand and cut off a handbreadth from the infant; but if the midwife has a small hand she adds the thickness of her thumb. To cut closer would, in Cree opinion, result in the death of the child. After bathing it they lay it on a bed of dried bog-moss *(Sphagnum)* on a piece of cloth (formerly tanned skin), tuck in the bottom, fold over the sides, and lace the edges tightly together with a thong passing through looped eyelets. In this "moss-bag" the infant will spend practically

22 I, CXLVI. Compare the similar passage in Henry's journal, Coues, 515-516: "Chastity does not seem to be a virtue among the Crees, who make frequently temporary exchanges of wives among themselves. But clandestine amours, if discovered by the husband, are often attended with serious consequences to the woman, who is punished by loss of her nose, and sometimes even by death. Polygamy is very common; the first wife is considered as mistress of the tent, and rules the others, frequently with a rod of iron, obliging them to perform all the drudgery." This is in part an adaptation of Mackenzie, or both authors derived their phraseology from a common source.

every hour of its existence until it is old enough to creep. It is carried on the mother's back by means of a tumpline passing across her forehead. The moss is renewed several times daily, and in any Cree camp quantities of the freshly gathered material may be seen drying on poles or on the ground. The placenta is wrapped in the skin on which the infant was received, and the packet is suspended in a tree. For a few days the mother receives only soft food, such as soup of dried berries. The sloughed stump of the umbilical cord is carefully preserved for a long time, wrapped in a bit of skin and tied at the side of the moss-bag.

Cree women, according to Mackenzie, "are sometimes known to destroy their female children, to save them from the miseries which they themselves have suffered. They also have a ready way, by the use of certain simples, of procuring abortions, which they sometimes practise, from their hatred of the father, or to save themselves the trouble which children occasion."[23]

When a child is eight days old, the father invites to his tipi a number of old people. He himself sits at the right hand of the row, with his wife and the baby at his right, and at his left the man who is to bestow a name. He fills a large pipe and lays it before the godfather, and from time to time drops a bit of sweetgrass on a small incense fire. After the sponsor has smoked, the host places the infant in his arms and requests him to give it a name. The old man regards the child thoughtfully, considering an appropriate and lucky name. When he has decided, he begins a long speech, addressing the child and wishing it all manner of good luck, phrasing his words appropriately to the sex of the infant, and ends by saying, "I will name you thus and so." Then he passes it to the man at his left, who more briefly expresses similar sentiments, caresses the child, and repeats the name. Thus the child is passed from hand to hand, always to the left, and each man, and then each woman in turn, receives it, blesses it, and repeats the name. Finally it is returned to the mother, the host lights the pipe, and food is served.

Typical names for boys are Kapipúnapit ("sit all winter"), Kamisponípatáu ("runs when it snows"), Kamusqapítukeu ("like bear comes in"), Pisímopíwiyin ("sun sit down person"). Feminine names are

23 I, CXLVIII.

Wápistan ("marten"), Mawinéhikis ("tries to excel"), Ísqesís ("woman small"), Kakísimus ("pray"). Cree names are not ancestral, but either are invented or selected at random by the sponsors. Seasonal circumstances sometimes play a part in determining the name.

There is no puberty ceremony for girls. Formerly a menstruating girl was isolated four days in the brush with a single companion, either another girl in the same condition or an old woman. The heads, but not the internal organs, of all animals were taboo. She collected fuel, which her mother carried to the camp and distributed among the tipis, sewed moccasins, and in other ways endeavored to be constantly engaged in useful occupations.

The Woods Cree disposed of their dead in trees, on scaffolds, and under piles of logs; the Plains bands on scaffolds or, according to Mackenzie, in graves lined with branches. A corpse was arrayed in the finest clothing, the face was blackened, and a lock of hair was removed. Tightly wrapped with skins and rope, the body was lashed in a tree, or on an elevated platform, or under a quantity of logs, and covered with a rawhide. The head was directed northward. Packets of food and tobacco are still deposited at Cree graves. In case of necessity tobacco or tea may be "borrowed" from such places without offense, but it must be repaid at the first opportunity. A dead man's possessions were distributed among the people, but dogs and horses were not slain and the tipi was neither burned nor abandoned. Even today, however, a night is not permitted to intervene between a funeral and removal to a new campsite. The shorn lock of hair, wrapped in skin or cloth with a bit of tobacco, is exposed on a post at the rear of the tipi; it is preserved for an indefinite period, and in time by the addition of new packets this family memento of the departed becomes a sizable bundle. Adult mourners cut their hair, wear old clothing, and refrain from washing the face. Formerly they pierced the thighs and arms with knives, blackened the face, and avoided the use of leggings. The period of mourning continues about a year. Relatives of the dead sometimes visit the place of burial, clear the ground, and sit down to smoke with the departed, addressing him as if he were actually present.

Franklin says that the Cree call the hoot-owl *"cheepai-peethees,* or death bird, and never fail to whistle when they hear its note. If it does not reply to the whistle by its hootings, the speedy death of the

inquirer is augured."[24]

The religious beliefs of the Cree centre about the conception of *mánitu*.[25] *Mánitu* is not a being, but a power possessed by numerous supernaturals, of whom Thunder is the most powerful and therefore most supplicated. It was an ancient custom to prepare a short post with the top carved in the likeness of a head, dress it like a man, and set it up outside the camp or beside a trail. Whenever anyone passed, he made an offering, such as a bit of tobacco, and addressed it as *manitú-hakán* ("supernatural kind-of"). Such offerings are always of little or no value, and those who now make them frequently laugh while so engaged. Sir John Franklin mentions these effigies:

Kepoochikawn ... is represented sometimes by rude images of the human figure, but more commonly merely by tying the tops of a few willow bushes together. When the women had completed the preparations [for a sweat], the hunter made his appearance, perfectly naked, carrying in his hand an image of Kepoochikawn, rudely carved, and about two feet long. [After describing the sweat-bath, he continues:] Several Indians, who lay on the outside of the sweating-house as spectators, seemed to regard the proceedings with very little awe, and were extremely free in the remarks and jokes they passed upon the condition of the sweaters, and even of Kepoochikawn himself. One of them made a remark, that the shawl would have been much better bestowed upon himself than upon Kepoochikawn, but the same fellow afterward stripped and joined in the ceremony. Kepoochikawn was formerly held in high veneration by the Indians, and is still looked upon with some respect. It is merely a high willow bush, having its tops bound into a bunch. Many offerings of value such as handsome dresses, hatchets, and kettles, used to be made to it, but of late its votaries have been less liberal.[26]

The term Kítsi-mánitu ("great supernatural"), occurring in lit-

24 Franklin, I, 121.

25 Younger members of the Woods Cree say *méntu*.

26 Franklin, I, 119, 160. Informants of the present writer were unable to identify the name Kepoochikawn in this connection, but explained that one who does not answer when spoken to is so designated. It thus appears to be an excellent appellation for a wooden god.

erature as Gitchie Manitou, is the Cree equivalent of Lakota Sioux Waká^{n}-ta^{n}ka. Such expressions are sometimes ascribed to missionary influence. "Great supernatural," as an expression, is quite conceivably of uninfluenced native origin; but as a conception of a supreme being, a "Great Spirit," it is entirely alien to Indian thought. It appears probable that these terms were in actual use and were adopted by missionaries as convenient translations of "God."

Before serving an assembled company of guests, a man raises a dish of food and says, *"Mánitu,* I wish to give this food to [for example] my father." He then turns toward the direction in which his father's body was buried (or exposed), and says: "Here, my father, is food. Take it. May I have good luck." In the same way he then turns in other directions and offers the food to other deceased relatives. Finally he gives the dish to his guests and then helps himself. Every bit must be eaten, and everybody must partake.

Mánitu is the power that enables shamans to exorcise disease. It is acquired by going apart to spend several days in solitude, when, if the seeker dreams, he is supposedly transported to a distant place by the supernatural that appears in the dream and there kept for instruction. After his return from a successful vigil, it remains for a man to prove to the people that he has *mánitu,* that he is *manitú-kasíu* ("supernatural like"), a shaman. He makes the frame of a small hut *(kospaátsikan)* with eight willows. As the diameter is not greater than three feet, the poles are so closely spaced that it seems impossible for a man to pass between them. The frame is covered with cloth (formerly skins), and the shaman directs his assistants to wind a long rope about him, pinioning his arms to his sides and trussing up his knees. In this condition they set him on the ground just outside the enclosure and draw an edge of the cover over him. While the people stand at a little distance and sing his dream-songs (which apparently he has taught to some of them), the shaman is supposedly projected by magic into the hut, and in a short time the rope is flung out through the top. Then the singing ceases, and from within come all manner of sounds, as if birds and beasts of various kinds were talking. After this demonstration of his power, someone outside requires communication with a distant friend. The shaman audibly despatches his spirit to that place, and almost at once a voice, supposedly that of the distant person, is heard in the hut, and the one outside questions him and is answered. Again, one may

speak to the shaman about a sick relative, inquiring what will be the outcome of the illness, and the shaman answers, for example, that he will be better in a few days. All this is done only at night and without artificial light. Sometimes the hut is erected within a large tipi. If the séance occurs in a log house, all lights are extinguished, and if the moon is shining the windows are draped.

A patient is never treated except inside the hut in company with the shaman. Spirit creatures of all kinds are thought to present themselves, though invisible, and address the patient. The shaman himself is not supposed to utter a word, but in fact he not only speaks but utters sounds in imitation of various animals. When a spirit voice is heard, the spectators ask, "Who are you?" And the voice replies, "I am Bear," or "I am Loon," or "I am Stone." The shaman receives a goodly fee, preferably a horse.

The shamanistic cult is more prominent among the Cree than in most of the western tribes, yet they lack the shamanistic fraternity of the Chippewa and other central Algonquians. Doctor Richardson says:

Every Cree fears the medical or conjuring powers of his neighbour: but at the same time exalts his own attainments to the skies. " I am God-like,"[27] is a common expression amongst them, and they prove their divinityship by eating live coals, and by various tricks of a similar nature. A medicine bag is an indispensable part of a hunter's equipments.[28]

The use of the sweat-house is of a religious character. The lodge is a frame of numerous willows, in the usual hemispherical form, covered with blankets. The man in charge, that is, whoever is moved to "give a sweat," prepares the hut, heats stones, and places them in the pit by means of a split pole. Just as the sun sets he engages another man to enter, and hands him two fresh willow sticks and a filled pipe, which has been lying on the top of the lodge. The frame is then partially covered, and the man inside utters a prayer to Piyesíu (thunder), beseeching health, long life, good luck in hunting, and to Asiníy (stone, that is, the heated stories), begging it to "speak to Thunder." The other

27 That is, "I am a shaman *(manitú-kasíu,* supernatural like)."

28 Franklin, I, 98. The "eating" of live coals was a function of the Wabano cult of the Plains Cree, and did not pertain to the more northerly bands.

passes a large ember on a forked stick down through the opening left in the top, and the devotee inside raises the pipe south, north, east, west, giving smoke to Thunder. Then the others go in, a helper places the rest of the covering, and the men inside remove their clothing and toss it out through the opening in the top, which the helper then closes. Another prayer is offered, and water is thrown on the stones. The man in charge gives one of the willow batons to any one of his companions, the prayer-maker keeps the other, and all sing while these two strike the water-vessel rhythmically. There are four songs, and after each song water is poured on the stones. After about fifteen minutes the blankets are thrown aside, and the men are discovered sitting naked, with bunches of freshly cut hay modestly disposed. They proceed to rub their bodies with the hay, then creep out and sit about with blankets across their thighs and the torso bare. After drying during a brief period of jovial conversation, they resume their clothing.

The principal religious ceremony of the Cree is the Sun dance, Nipá-qe-simó ("kill drink dance"), the name alluding to the taboo of water. It is initiated by a man who during the autumn or winter has promised to do so, hoping that thus he will bring about the recovery of a seriously ill member of his family. Having made such a vow, he calls four principal men into *wiwatáhukan,* a long tipi made of three ordinary structures. He fills three pipes and passes them around to the left. The first man lights the pipe, moves it in four circles, and holds it upward, offering smoke to *mánitu.* He then moves it again in four circles and extends it eastward, offering smoke to Sun. Then with four circular motions he raises it to the south for Thunder, to the west for Wind, and to the north also for Wind.

Each of the other three then does the same, and then all together address *mánitu,* begging help for the sick person. Inside the door are hanging several strips of print cloth or strouding, which the sponsor, *kanipá-qe-simóni-ket* ("he kill drink dance make"), will offer to Sun in the coming ceremony. In allusion to their purpose they are called *wipenásuwina* ("throw-away objects"). The sponsor and three other men (not the four who smoke and pray) take drums and beat them while the sponsor with the assistance of the other four sings two or three songs. He then gives his drum to the first of the four, who leads in like fashion, and the remaining three follow suit in turn.

All this is repeated in mid-winter, at which time at least one man

vows that he will dance without drinking and eating; and from the sponsor he receives one of the pieces of cloth, which he will keep until the time of the ceremony as a visible symbol of his pledge. At this time also a messenger is sent with a twist of tobacco, which the sponsor, at the time of his vow, has carefully wrapped in a good piece of deerskin. The messenger visits the camps in the surrounding territory, presents the tobacco to the leading men, and, while they cut off a bit and smoke it, tells them what has occurred, that such and such a man is going to give the Sun dance. Having travelled a reasonable distance from home, he entrusts the remaining tobacco in its wrapping to another messenger, who carries it on to more distant camps.

The tobacco packet, *wapikínikun* ("white wrapped"),[29] is delivered to the chief of a camp, who at once summons all the local men to his tipi. He fills a pipe with his own tobacco, passes it about, makes incense of sweetgrass, holds the packet in the smoke, opens it deliberately, cuts off enough tobacco to fill another pipe, passes this one around, and then bids the messenger deliver his news. The deerskin wrapping and the thong are finally returned to the sponsor, who then knows that his message has been transmitted to all the people.

In early spring, before vegetation has started to grow, the long tipi is erected for the third time, and the ceremonial smoke is repeated. Again at least one man promises to dance, and each who takes the vow receives a strip of cloth. On each occasion when the long tipi is erected, the sponsor and the four men who smoke and pray fast until noon. On this third occasion the sponsor announces that the dance will occur when Hopaskuwá-pisím ("molting moon"), the July moon, is full, and he names the place where the lodge will be built. He wraps another twist of tobacco in the deerskin, and, as before, sends the message among the camps.

When the July moon is nearing the full, the people move by easy stages toward the appointed place, and shortly before the designated time a young man is sent among them to name the actual day. They

29 The term was so translated by an intelligent informant. But the second element is strikingly similar to *kinikinik,* the Algonquian name of a mixture of tobacco and various barks and leaves, especially the bark of *Cornus stolonifera* and the leaves of bearberry. Note, however, that the invitational packet contains a twist of commercial tobacco, and not the mixture known as kinikinik.

begin to arrive two or three days ahead of time. The long tipi is now set up for the fourth time, and besides the four who smoke and pray, other principal men are invited to be present. From now until the ceremony begins the sponsor, when not engaged in outdoor rites, must remain in *wiwatáhukan,* where hang all the cloth offerings which the dancers have had in their custody. Some of the oldest men sleep in the long tipi.

Next morning the sponsor rises before the sun and calls four old men by name. He fills a pipe and gives it to the one at his left, who with the usual circular motions extends it successively to the zenith and the cardinal directions. They smoke, and then the four start out with a gun or two in search of a suitable tree, an aspen with a tall, straight stem and without large branches below a place where it has two crotches. Having found such a tree, one of them fires his gun into the top of it (or having no gun he calls to one of his fellows to do so). Hearing the shot, the other three rush up, and any who has a gun fires into the tree as if it were an enemy. They sit down then about the aspen, one at each cardinal point, and each kindles an incense fire in front of him at the base of the tree. The leader fills a pipe, offers it to the five points, and hands it to the man at his left, and it is passed four times about the tree before it is smoked out. They tie a willow withe about the trunk, and return to camp, each bearing an aspen shoot with leafy tip. They do not enter the camp directly, but in the manner of scouts creep carefully around it under cover, approaching from the south. Outside the camp-circle some young men have already deposited a pile of green aspen boughs. As the scouts approach, all the men rush out of the camp and kick the pile to pieces, and each one takes a bough. They form a circle, and between them and the camp the sponsor takes his place. The scouts give him their branches and the pipe, and their leader reports: "Now, that tree is waiting for you. It has good health and long life for you."

The sponsor accepts the boughs, and with them returns to *wiwatáhukan.* The sun is now rising. He has four pipes, one of which he fills and gives to one of the old men, asking him to help by procuring the timbers for the sun-lodge. In the same manner he requests another to dig the holes for the posts, a third to dig a hole for the tree, a fourth to be the public announcer. These duties having been assigned, the men depart. Most of the male population immediately saddle their

horses, procure their guns and such drums as are available, gallop to *wiwatáhukan,* surround it, and start to sing, riding about it in a circle. While they are so engaged, the sponsor, accompanied by a few old men, goes out to the selected tree, and the horsemen follow, the four scouts and some other principal men remaining at the site of the sun-lodge. Those who have been assigned to the task of digging the holes are busy with helpers selected by themselves. The sponsor and his companions fill a pipe and smoke while the horsemen surround the tree. After smoking and praying, he stands up and sings while shaking a rawhide rattle, asking *mánitu* for success in building the lodge. The horsemen who have drums beat them, and all join in the song, and at its conclusion guns are fired into the top of the tree, and all shout as if killing an enemy. Immediately two young men with axes attack the tree from opposite sides, felling it toward the south. As it falls, all rush upon it (the men having dismounted and tied up their horses), each person trying to get a handful of the leaves. This is symbolical of scalping an enemy. They attach ropes to the top, and with the other ends fastened to their saddle-horns drag it to the camp, carrying the boughs in their hands, singing on the way. After depositing it with the butt over the hole, the horsemen take their women in front and ride several times about the camp, outside the circle, singing and shouting.

Meantime the man assigned to this work is in the bush with his helpers, cutting the timbers for the lodge. The horsemen now ride to the woods, still shouting and singing, and drag the timbers to the centre of the camp, the women still in the saddles and the men behind them. Everybody lends a hand at placing the timbers. The tree, which becomes the central post, is erected first by means of ropes and poles, and when it falls into the hole there is much shouting but no shooting. Women are busy stripping willow-bark and lashing the eaves-timbers to the circle of posts, and the long rafters to the eaves. The lower part of the roof and the northerly wall are covered with canvas (formerly skins), the southerly wall is open. The lodge is finished about mid-afternoon. It is of the same type as the sun-lodge of the Plains Indians. From the forks of the central post sloping rafters radiate to eaves-timbers connecting the forked tops of a circular series of wall-posts. The cloth offerings are tied to the central post, and in the crotch is fastened a bundle of aspen brush, representing the nest of Thunder, who is conceived as a great bird. Anyone who especially desires good luck may

tie an offering to the post, and sometimes even a gun is thus "thrown away." These offerings remain in place after the dance. The sponsor's seat is at the north side, opposite the entrance. At his right and his left is a barrier of leafy aspen, slightly higher than the head of a sitting man. A fire burns midway between the sponsor and the tree, and another between the tree and the entrance.

The long tipi has not been struck. The sponsor takes his place in the sun-lodge and bids his herald call the dancers, indicating them by name. The male dancers take their place inside the brush fence at the sponsor's right hand, the females similarly at his left, and the spectators, arrayed in their best garments, congregate at the south side of the lodge. Many group themselves outside. The sponsor now begins a season of constant praying and frequent burning of sweetgrass. Another incense fire burns in front of the drummer, whose place is on the side of the women dancers. Near the sponsor are four singers with rattles. At his right and left, in front of the brush fences, are old men in a row, to see that no mistakes occur. Another singer with a rattle stands close to the tree.

The sponsor starts a song, shaking his rattle, and the others assist. No drums are used at this particular time. With the beginning of the song the dancers rise and dance in their places, men in one row, women in another. Each has a whistle, the wing-bone of an eagle or other large bird. The sponsor and the singers wear no shirts, but the dancers have donned their best garments and their faces are striped with red. The second song is started by one of the singers, and then each of the others leads in turn. Thereafter anyone in the crowd who has a dream name may start a song. All songs except that of the sponsor are accompanied by drums. Between the songs the dancers sit, and while dancing they look straight ahead at the tree. The performance continues until dark, is resumed at sunrise, and ends the following mid-afternoon. Should any dancer fall unconscious, his relatives bring presents to the sponsor, and "life returns." From beginning to end the dancers and the sponsor neither eat nor drink.

Relatives of the dancers necessarily "give to the sun-lodge" property of much value, such as horses, guns, and clothing. This is either piled in the lodge, or, in the case of horses, which are tethered outside, is represented by small sticks. All this is distributed among visitors by a man who first recounts his own generosity in previous Sun dances

and his warlike feats. The Woods Cree did not mutilate their breasts in the ceremony.

The Prairie-chicken dance, Pihiyéu-símowin ("prairie-chicken dance-they"), is more distinctively Cree than the widespread Sun dance. In allusion to the bird whose mating dance it imitates, the earlier name of the ceremony was Tsimistawíkteu-símowin ("leg-covered-with-hair dance-they").

It is sponsored by a man who has made a pledge to Okétsitáu (here an epithet of the beneficent sun) in hope of thus combatting sickness or other bad luck. For the purpose of making known his intention he invites a number of old men, and after the usual preliminary smoke and the recital of his vow, they agree upon a certain time during the next summer.

The sponsor proceeds to accumulate quantities of cloth, and when, a few days before the appointed time, the summer encampment has been formed, the ceremonial smoke is repeated.

Early in the morning young men procure poles for the elliptical dance-house, which consists of two tripods connected by a long ridge-pole against which are leaned the tips of rafters with their butts on the ground. One end of the ridge-pole terminates in a mass of foliage and extends considerably beyond the rear tripod. The frame is covered with canvas from several ordinary tipis. The structure is finished about noon. In the centre is planted an aspen four or five inches in diameter, its tip rising well above the roof, and its length festooned with the cloth offerings of the sponsor. At its base is a small stone.

The sponsor, accompanied by two or three assistants, now enters with a drum, and sings a song, after which an assistant goes out to call by name all men of importance. After these have entered, others follow, women and children coming last. The sponsor sits beside an upright aspen stake at one end of the lodge, opposite the doorway, and behind him are the principal men, sitting in a row. At their right and left, along the sides of the lodge, are younger men, and women and children are grouped on both sides of the entrance. Midway between the central tree and one side of the lodge is an aspen stake thrust into the ground and surrounded by four men with drums. Other similar stakes may be implanted here and there.

When all have assembled, the sponsor fills three or four pipes and passes them in succession to the man at the right end of the row of

important personages, requesting him and his fellows to pray in his behalf to mánitu, Sun, and the Winds. They smoke and pray, extending the pipe toward the tree and the stone, and when they have finished, steaming vessels of dog-flesh and venison are brought in. Should the sponsor have been unable to provide the necessary dog-flesh, his venison is eaten and some other man ostentatiously announces that he is going to give a dog to the dance-house, thereby winning favorable comment.

The feast ends about the middle of the afternoon, when the drummers strike their instruments and some of the men dance in the space between the tree and the rear of the lodge, imitating in action and utterance the courting dance of a flock of prairie-chickens. Occasionally there is a special song without drums, and women dance; but such participation as they have with the men is casual and apart. The sponsor dances more than anyone else.

The aspen stakes heretofore mentioned are about thirty inches long, and are decorated with feathers, beads, and strips of colored cloth. On the reserve at Lac les Isles there are three such devices owned by certain men. They are pointed at the base, and are used for transferring the dog-flesh from pots to platters. They and the drums are reserved for use in the Prairie-chicken dance. In the ceremony the stakes are thrust into the turf, and when the dancing begins any man may take up one of them and dance with it, holding it vertically before him. At the conclusion of the song, he returns it to its place, and another uses it during the next song. This is supposed to impart good luck.

Dancing continues all night and until sunset the following day. This, or some similar ceremony, is referred to by Mackenzie:

There are also stated periods, such as the spring and autumn, when they engage in very long and solemn ceremonies. On these occasions dogs are offered as sacrifices, and those which are very fat, and milk-white, are preferred. They also make large offerings of their property, whatever it may be. The scene of these ceremonies is in an open enclosure on the bank of a river or lake, and in the most conspicuous situation, in order that such as are passing along or travelling may be induced to make their offerings. On these occasions, if any of the tribe, or even a stranger, should be passing by, and be in real want of anything that is displayed as an offering, he has a right to take it, so that he replaces it with some article he can spare, though it be of far inferior value; but to

take or touch any thing wantonly is considered as a sacrilegious act, and highly insulting to the great Master of Life [Kítsimánitu], to use their own expression, who is the sacred object of their devotion.[30]

In the autumn there used to be a round dance called Wasúkamisímowin ("in-circle dance-they"). A long lodge was pitched, so large that three tipi-covers and three fires were required. Men danced with a shuffling step, one behind another, around the entire lodge, and women followed them in the same manner. This dance was "promised" in the expectation of aiding the recovery of a sick person.

When victorious warriors returned, the people gathered in the open for the dance called Ekamatsiwísimok, standing in two opposing lines with the scalp-takers grouped at one end and the other end open. Each scalp was borne aloft on the tip of a short pole in the hands of some female relative of the successful warrior. The war-songs were sung by the entire company, and men, as they felt inclined, danced in their places. From time to time a woman danced with a sidewise, shuffling movement, proceeding along one line to the scalpers, whom she embraced and kissed, and then along the other side back to her place. As in other dances, the movement was always in the direction of the course of the sun.

"The Western Woods Cree"
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The North American Indian: Volume 18
by Edwards S. Curtis
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30 Mackenzie, I, CL-CLI.