

INDIAN RECORD

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OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1969

Manitoba Indians make giant step

by Paul Pihichyn

(Winnipeg Free Press)

WINNIPEG — Manitoba Indians are now able to set up and operate their own province-wide community development service following the signing of an agreement in Winnipeg October 1 by Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien and David Courchene, president of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood.

The program will be administered by Art Carriere who will serve as program director for the development scheme. He began working with MIB Aug. 1.

The agreement in effect gives the brotherhood authority to organize and administer a community development services program for 23,000 Indians living on 36 reserves in provinces.

A fund of \$380,000 has been made available by the federal government for the first year of operation. This is to cover salaries and other administrative costs.

The agreement was signed following a luncheon at the Fort Garry Hotel, organized by the Community Welfare Planning Council.

In his address to the luncheon, Mr. Chretien called the agreement "a giant step forward."

He said it would lead to a greater understanding of the value of community development and the process of people learning to help themselves.

"This agreement brings the Indian people into closer touch with each other and the world around them," he said.

He added it marks the end of societies victimizing the Indian people and the start of a new concept of life for native Canadians. This will be brought about because they are now able to shape their own lives and therefore have some control over their destiny.

Turning to the government's recently announced statement on Indian policy, he said, it was made up of a number of proposals which

discussed with the parties concerned before legislative action was taken.

Later Mr. Courchene said he was encouraged by Mr. Chretien's comment on the new policy. He said there was a feeling of caution immediately after the policy was announced.

Mr. Chretien said the present Indian Act is wrong "because it discriminates against people on the basis of race and sets them apart."

"He said it denies Indians the right to handle their own affairs as other Canadians do."

(See p. 5: GIANT STEP)

Quebec Indians have right to vote

QUEBEC — Legislation giving Quebec's 25,000 reserve Indians the right in provincial elections was given third reading in the National Assembly here last spring.

Bill 7, introduced by Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand before the Easter recess, was pushed through second and third reading in less than half an hour.

It was the first item of legislation passed since the Assembly adjourned March 28.

The bill does not extend the vote to some 3,000 Indians and Eskimos living in northern Quebec above James Bay.

\$1,500 gift

WINNIPEG — On the occasion of the signing, October 1, of the agreement between the Indian Affairs Branch and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Winnipeg donated \$1,500 to assist the Brotherhood in operational expenses which are non recoverable from federal or provincial grants.

The presentation was made to Mr. David Courchene by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. N. J. Chartrand, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, who also chaired the luncheon as president of the Greater Winnipeg Community Welfare Planning Council.

THE WEST WAS HIS PARISH . . .

St. Albert today is still crowned by the cross. In the photo above we see the present (third) church on the right. The smaller building next to it houses the original log church which now serves as a museum. A bronze Father Lacombe blesses the West which he loved in life.



(See story, pp. 8-12)

Editorial Comment:

'Comic strip' Indian should be banished

by Tony Eberts
(Vancouver Province)

Recently an internationally-syndicated comic strip depicted an Indian chief concerned about his teen-aged granddaughter's choice of go-go dancing over traditional Indian dances.

The chief appeared as a squat little man — colored red, of course — wearing buckskin pants, a feathered headdress, beads and face-paint. "Crazy granddaughter make-um chief almost blow-um feathers with crazy dancing," says this comic figure in the first panel.

Ethnic jokes show prejudice

A teepee and a mockery of a totem pole stand in the background; the funny red chief says "ugh" and winds up doing a rain dance and gets wet.

Droll humor? What would have happened if an Uncle Remus-type Negro caricature saying "who dat dere" or "feet don't fail me now" had been used instead of the red man?

The answer is obvious, and so is the inference to be drawn from the lack of protest over the tasteless comic strip: in North America it is still acceptable to mock and satirize the Indian.

Almost any ethnic jokes are risky today, unless they are told by a member of the nationality or race involved.

Yet the Indian is fair game. There he stands, in funny papers read by millions, with his big hooked nose, his feathers and his bright red skin. Perhaps it is only a witless attempt at humor, but it betrays a frightening depth of thoughtlessness and contempt.

It's becoming old hat to speak of the injustices done to North American Indians by the white man, terrible as those injustices were. Robbed, murdered and exploited into living on the white man's left-handed charity, the Indian today is mocked and discriminated against on one

side, exhorted into catching up with European-style economics and culture on the other.

Shell of self-depreciation

Acceptance of this off-hand, contemptuous approach to Indian affairs is so general that it is often adopted by the Indians themselves — if only in a superficial, joking way. Talk to a group of B.C. Indians and you soon detect that some have put up a shell of self-depreciation to ward off white scorn.

Certainly there are problems of lacking ambition, plain laziness, self-made squalor and alcoholism in our Indian communities — sometimes the exact conditions that exist in Vancouver's Skidroad because there, too, the people are treated by society with charity and contempt.

Mix domination, hand-outs and prejudice together, apply them heavily to a people primitive by white standards, and the current "Indian problem" is an inevitable result. That's what was done, that's what has happened. Where do we go from here?

Indian Act — Land disputes

For Canada, much of the answer depends on the new Indian Act to be drafted in the next year. Officials of the Indian Affairs Department are now winding up a national series of consultations with Indian band representatives.

Each of the nation's 558 bands has had a chance to express its views of what the new legislation should be like; more consulting will be done next year when the act is in first draft form.

Conferences held in the more remote areas such as northern B.C. contrast sharply with those staged in the Okanagan and the Lower Mainland, though on some points—

more autonomy at band council level, for example — all Indians agree.

But the Indian of the north, whose land is not only commercially valueless but almost worthless to him as well, has little in common with the Indian whose land fronts on Okanagan Lake.

At the Kelowna regional hearings, the longest discussions concerned land — developing it, selling it and acquiring more of it. Delegates on the whole were articulate and businesslike, well aware of the potential of reserves in the rich southern interior valleys.

Instead of talking about legislation simply to help stay alive as the northern Indians did, the Kelowna representatives spoke of getting enough government red tape slashed so they could speed into the two-car, country club set.

While many delegates at the Prince George conference sought improvements in medical services and stressed the need for greater freedom in fishing and hunting for food, their Kelowna counterparts urged Ottawa to set up a commercial development fund and demanded the right to use their holdings as collateral in raising their own business loans.

With all their sophistication, however, southern Interior Indians responded with shock and anger to confirmation of their worst fear: That they don't own their land — the Crown does.

"If the Queen owns my land, she'd better hustle out here," said one delegate sarcastically. "Her fences need fixing."

Most Indians want to be given title to their reserve land, or at least have the terms of the federal trusteeship spelled out.

In B.C., too, a monumental three-way dispute seems to be shaping up as the Indians press their claims on most of the province's territory. No treaties have been signed nor have the Indians been defeated in a war, the band chiefs say over and over again.

The land is therefore still the Indians', they insist, and they'll either get it back — or be handsomely compensated for its loss.

Plain indifference by the public seems to be the biggest social barrier against the Indians.

Federal authorities — including Indian Affairs Minister Chretien — are telling the Indians to go after the provincial government with their land claims; provincial officials tell them they must deal through the Indian Affairs Department.

Build first tourist camp

Indian labor was chiefly responsible for the construction of the first tourist camp opened recently at Island Lake, Manitoba.

George Brotherstone, who operates a store in the settlement, contracted local Indians for the construction of the camp — known as Island Lake Lodge — complete with modern facilities.

Indian men from nearby Garden Hill were selected by Mr. Brother-

stone and local band chief Charles Knott to become instructed in a Guides Course at God's Lake. The course was made possible through the assistance of the Manitoba Branch of the Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial government.

Island Lake and Island Lake River, approximately 260 miles northeast of Winnipeg, are well known for their pickerel, jackfish and lake and speckled trout.

INDIAN RECORD

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Open letter to Pierre Berton

Oblate Indian & Eskimo Council,
238 Argyle Ave., Ottawa 4, Ont.
August 20th, 1969.

Dear Sir:

I was not able to catch all of the 5 shows on your recent expose of the Indians' problems. The ones I did see filled me with apprehension.

Any Indian who deludes himself that you are helping him rise out of misery is, indeed, going to have a rude awakening. In the place of the Christian teaching of brotherly love, respect of authority and respect for the rights of others, all of which are basic to self-respect, you are preaching, and I use the word advisedly, hate, disrespect and violence. This is neither progress nor improvement. You are using the Indian, exploiting him and demoralizing him, in a more insidious and despicable way than any Church has ever been accused of doing.

I feel very strongly about the biased manner in which you present the Indian problem to the Canadian public. Your interview technique, complete with loaded questions, gripe baiting and cock-fight sensation, is hardly conducive to creating a climate of mutual trust, either between the Indian and white man, or between Indian and Indian; nor will it promote constructive thinking and action in the future.

Examples: It is as possible that the wood piling was the result of some other circumstance, as that it was, according to the memory of your guest, a punishment for speaking his own language. It is extremely dangerous to judge when only one side is known.

Second: your endorsement of the young lady's unreasoned prejudice against white people because "they get everything handed to them," including their education, can hardly be classified as objective reporting.

Third: The exhibition of gamecock fighting, where you pit brother against brother, baiting first Mr. Wutonee and then Chief Delisle, contributed nothing to your stature as an interviewer or referee.

Allowing you the benefit of every doubt, I will assume your misguided sincerity and inform you that where change was needed, it has been, is being and will be made. There are white Canadians, men and women, priests and laymen who are trusted by the Indians because they have shared their lives with them and have proven they are brothers. They have been aware of the problems for years and for years have worked to better the condition of the Indians and to right the wrongs that have been done. Indians all across Canada acknowledge and appreciate this. It is a great injustice to present the Indians to Canada as disgruntled, ungrateful and irrational, and to disregard as non-existent the constructive and valuable work of many hundreds of white Canadians in schools, hospitals, social centers, friendship centers all across the country, on and off the reserves.

Let me caution you that your bag of fractured logic, half truths and outrageous generalizations if used as has been demonstrated by yourself and other sensation seeking communications people, will promote discord, unrest, mistrust and hatred. This may be excellent for the headline-makers and other parasites who thrive on sensation, misfortune and violence, but it will set the cause of the Indian and Canada back 100 years.

Whether this causes you amusement or concern, I feel it is necessary that another view should be expressed and considered.

Yours truly,

(Rev.) J. E. Y. Levaque, OMI,
Director.

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The new policy

True equality presupposes that the Indian people have the right to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada.

The government believes that the framework within which individual Indians and bands could achieve full participation requires:

1. that the legislative and constitutional bases of discrimination be removed;

2. that there be positive recognition by everyone of the unique contribution of Indian culture to Canadian life;

3. that services come through the same channels and from the same government agencies for all Canadians;

4. that those who are furthest behind be helped most;

5. that lawful obligations be recognized;

6. that control of Indian lands be transferred to the Indian people.

The Government would be prepared to take the following steps to create this framework:

1. Propose to Parliament that the Indian Act be repealed and take such legislative steps as may be necessary to enable Indians to control Indian lands and to acquire title to them.

2. Propose to the governments of the provinces that they take over the same responsibility for Indians that they have for other citizens in their provinces. The take-over would be accompanied by the transfer to the provinces of federal funds normally provided for Indian programs, augmented as may be necessary.

3. Make substantial funds available for Indian economic development as an interim measure.

4. Wind up that part of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which deals with Indian Affairs. The residual responsibilities of the Federal Government for programs in the field of Indian affairs would be transferred to other appropriate federal departments.

In addition, the Government will appoint a Commissioner to consult with the Indians and to study and recommend acceptable procedures for the adjudication of claims.

The new policy looks to a better future for all Indian people wherever they may be. The measures for implementation are straightforward. They require discussion, consultation and negotiation with the Indian people — individuals, bands and associations — and with provincial governments.

Success will depend upon the co-operation and assistance of the Indians and the provinces. The Government seeks this co-operation and will respond when it is offered.

(The Indian News)



FAREWELL PARTY: Mr. R. F. Davy, Director of The Indian Affairs Branch, Education Services, since 1952, has been honored at a dinner held Sept. 17th in Ottawa, sponsored by Indianescom, the four Churches involved in the education of Indians and NAPAIR (National Association of Principals and Administrators of Indian Residences). Mr. Davy was presented with four Eskimo carvings.

On the same occasion, Mr. Paul Deziel, of the same Service, was presented with a painting by Gerald Tailfeathers, of Cardston.

Guests included: Lt.-Col. and Mrs. H. M. Jones, Bishop Jules Leguerrier of Moosonee, Ont., Canon Jones of the Anglican Church, Miss Kelly of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. E. E. M. Joblin of the United Church and Mr. Dave Lawson, NAPAIR president.

Father Y. Levaque, Director of Indianescom, spokesman for the four Churches and NAPAIR, gave the keynote address.

Photo by Jon Joosten

To handle own business

by MIKE McGARRY
(Winnipeg Tribune)

WINNIPEG — Manitoba's Indians are going through the final stages of taking over the federal-provincial \$1,000,000 community development program for many of the province's Indians and Metis.

Already approved by both federal and provincial cabinets, the take-over will mean 70 per cent of Manitoba's Indians and Metis living on 19 reserves will be serviced by community development under authority of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is a Canadian concept started 10 years ago in this province and now practised across the nation as a sort of middleman organization between the poor and underdeveloped people on the one hand and the myriad of government and privately-run agencies on the other.

A community development worker is expected to rouse a community to make its own demands and then to try and help them achieve their goals.

The MIB asked Ottawa to hand over the program in March, because, as MIB President Dave Courchene said:

"In many instances, government-employed community development workers find themselves directly at odds with the government departments with whom they must work. The antagonism created in the process has discredited the program and does not enhance the opportunities for Indian people to seek support in achieving their own goals."

Net result of the conflict, said Mr. Courchene, is that the federal In-

dian affairs branch "curtailed" its own and provincial cost-shared programs on the Prairies.

Preparing to take over the \$1,000,000 program, shared about equally by federal and provincial funds, the MIB has hired Art Carriere, 37, who holds a master's degree in sociology.

"The Indian people want to take over community development because they are not happy with the way it has been working until now," says Mr. Carriere.

"They want more say in their own affairs and they see the community development worker as a tool to help them achieve these ends."

The MIB community development program will service Indians and Metis living mainly on reserves south of Churchill. About 17 field workers will be hired, some of them the present government-employed workers.

He said the program will work in co-operation with the Manitoba Metis Federation.

"And workers will be Indians, Metis or whites — we believe in no segregation."

When the MIB takeover goes into effect, the community development workers will not longer be civil servants but will work with Indian and Metis councils through Mr. Carriere.

While Mr. Carriere is in charge of the program's operations, the final say in how it is run will come from the directors of the MIB itself.

"The MIB is a political arm but community development won't get into politics and all this jazz. It will be completely different — community development won't identify with marches and all this."

Native constables

More than 20 special Indian police constables from Manitoba reserve communities attended training sessions at Royal Canadian Mounted Police headquarters in Winnipeg September 22-26 in a program designed to prepare Indian people to assist in local law enforcement.

Twelve constables were trained when the program was introduced last year. They participated in the current training sessions to assist their contemporaries as well as benefit from refresher training. RCMP field commanders reported that this special training, with follow-up guidance by their regular personnel, has produced "confident and useful assistance in law enforcement on the reserves."

The Manitoba Region of Indian Affairs Branch which spearheaded the program, hope to place the newly-appointed special constables in large community police detachments for on-the-job observation for an additional week after completion of their training course.

Special constables from Norway House, The Pas, Peguis, Fort Alexander, Nelson House, Island Lake, God's Lake, Roseau River, Brokenhead, Cross Lake, Mathias Colomb, Lake Manitoba, Jackhead, Oxford House and Poplar River bands will be taking the week-long course.

The training ranges from basics of what a peace officer's role is to specific details of Liquor Control, Highway Traffic and Indian Acts, and the Criminal Code.

★ ★ ★

WINNIPEG — A special course for police, Federal and Provincial correctional officers, and other government personnel who come in direct contact with Indian and Metis people, has been held during the week of September 7, at Wendigo Lodge at Lac du Bonnet.

Purpose of the special training seminar was to familiarize participants with the special problems involved in correcting, disciplining and re-orienting offenders with varying ethnic backgrounds. In many cases, this process is made even more difficult because the correction or law officers and the offenders do not speak the same language.

Discussions during the six-day course provided a better understanding of problems of people of native origin. The course will allow the officers to discuss the problems of working with native people in law enforcement, correction and rehabilitation.

Idea for the course came out of sessions of the working committee on Indians and the Law out of the Manitoba Region, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Giant step

(Concluded from p. 1)

The government's new Indian Lands' Act will remove some discriminatory stigma by return control of Indian lands to Indian people, he said.

In an interview following his speech, the minister repeated earlier statements that the government's Indian affairs department would be abolished but indicated it may take longer than the five years suggested sometime ago.

He said provincial governments must step in and take a bigger share of the responsibility in transforming the Indian people into self-governing units, especially in fields where they are already connected. He gave education and social development as examples.

Mr. Courchene told the luncheon the agreement was a giant step toward better understanding and greater equality of opportunity for Indian people.

He said he was optimistic about the future and a new awareness of Indian-provincial relationships was developing.

Leonard S. Marchand (L — Kamloops-Cariboo) the first Indian to be elected to Parliament said the agreement was a historic step in the development of Indian relations.

Mr. Marchand is travelling with Mr. Chretien on his Western tour which includes stops in Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Walter Hlady, western regional chief of the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State said community development originated in Churchill, Man. 10 years ago. The federal government later looked into the field of community development.

Study set by Rotary

Winnipeg Rotary Club is one of 38 clubs in Rotary district 555 which will appoint a committee to study the problems of Indian and Metis people.

Charles Hazen, Rotary district governor, said that more than 2,200 Rotarians from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario will take part in the study.

Each club will appoint a committee to "investigate and learn about our native people and their problems in becoming full members in Canadian society."

"Rotary has no intention of meddling or offering white sympathy, but rather would listen and learn about Canada's native people."

Chrétien clarifies new policy

From BEN TIERNEY
Winnipeg Tribune

OTTAWA — The way Jean Chretien sees it, a lot of people have been telling it like it ain't.

So, on October 3, he set about telling it like it is.

Flying into Regina on the second leg of a Western Canadian tour, the minister of Indian affairs and northern development ticked off a list of what he regards as distortions of the government's recent Indian policy proposals.

And beside that list, he set down what he believes to be the facts.

Not Final

First, he reiterated what he has said countless times before, inside and outside the House of Commons: that the statement on Indian policy made public in June is NOT a final policy, to be implemented regardless of what anyone else says.

Rather, he said, it is a statement containing proposals that are to be discussed with the Indian people, provincial governments and the public at large before implementation.

Secondly, he said the statement does NOT propose abolition of Indian reserves, or that control of reserves should be transferred to provincial governments.

Rather, he said, it proposes to give Indians control over their land, allowing them to do what they want with it, while at the same time providing some "protection" against land-grabbers.

Thirdly, he said, the statement does NOT propose that the federal government "abandon" the Indians, leaving them to the care of the provincial governments.

Instead, he said, it proposes that services now available to other citizens through their provincial governments should also be available to Indians, and that the federal government should financially assist provincial governments in providing those services to Indians.

At the same time, remaining services to Indians now provided through the federal Indian affairs branch should be allocated to other federal departments, thus allowing the Indian affairs branch to be phased out.

Fourthly, the statement does NOT suggest that Indian treaties should be scrapped.

Instead, it proposes that a still-to-be-appointed "commissioner of Indian claims," together with the Indians, review the treaties "to determine the best way of adjudicating claims arising from them."

Virtues of Culture

Finally, the statement does NOT advocate assimilation of the Indian people, or a weakening of their culture.

Rather, he said, the statement

recognized "that all Canadians should acknowledge the virtues, strength and richness of Indian culture and languages," and suggested that the government should develop programs in co-operation with the Indian people "to enrich their cultural heritage and their sense of identity."

Obviously irritated by what he regards as misinterpretations of the government's position, Mr. Chretien said he wanted to see "a vigorous debate" develop around the policy proposals, and that he was prepared to wait until spokesmen for the Indian people had time to consider alternative proposals of their own.

But, he said, "I am not very enthusiastic about a debate based on badly written headlines and misinterpretations about the proposals."

Mr. Chretien made his speech to the Saskatchewan Women's Liberal Federation — a few hours before flying into Alberta, which in recent weeks has been emerging as the stronghold of opposition to the new policy proposals.

Alberta Refusal

It is in Alberta that Indians have been told by their leaders, principally Harold Cardinal of the Indian Association of Alberta, not to meet with Mr. Chretien, and to keep federal representatives off the Indian reserves.

In addition, a paper highly critical of the proposals has just been made public in Alberta by Dr. Leslie Green of the University of Alberta. It was drawn up by Professor Green at the request of a constitutional commission set up by Alberta Premier Harry Strom.

The Alberta government has not gone on record as being for or against the federal proposals, but negotiations between Alberta and the federal government concerning Indian education in the province were recently suspended to give the Indians of the province time to clarify what they want.

To have voice

WINNIPEG — The federal government told the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce there will be no implementation of the proposed new Indian policy without full and complete consultation with the Indian people, all across Canada.

To enable the Indians to effectively canvas and present their views, the government plans to make finances and other resources available to Indian organizations during negotiations.

NDP stand on Indian policy

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's government has a "strong and clear" position on Indian policy, says NDP leader Allan Rock.

He said during a speech in

Road work in northern Manitoba

WINNIPEG — Manitoba's Minister of Transportation, Douglas Young, says the province will spend \$10 million on road work in northern Manitoba this year.

Young said the money will be used to improve roads in the northern part of the province, which is one of the poorest in Canada. He said the money will be used to improve roads in the northern part of the province, which is one of the poorest in Canada.

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Summer work for U students

OTTAWA — Many university students will be able to get summer jobs through a new program called "Summer Work for U Students."

The program, which is run by the federal government, will provide students with a variety of jobs during the summer months. The jobs will be in a wide range of fields, including education, health care, and social services.

The program is designed to help students gain work experience and earn money to help pay for their education. It is also intended to provide a way for students to give back to their communities.

Rock said the government's position on Indian policy is "strong and clear." He said the government is committed to the goal of self-government for Indian bands.

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Native leads attract tourists

By GUY BAKER

WATERLOO, ONTARIO — A group of Native Americans is attracting tourists to a small town in Ontario. The group, known as the "Native Americans of Waterloo," has been in the area for several years.

The group has been successful in attracting tourists to the area. They have set up a camp in the woods and have been selling their goods and services to visitors.

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The Catholic Women's League

Christian involvement with Indians

First of three articles

by Irene Hewitt

Approaching a member of our local Catholic Women's League executive, I asked, "Who would be the best person to contact concerning the League's Welfare work among the Indians?" I was directed to a former Social Welfare Convener. Since she asked me not to identify her, I'll simply call her Noreen Blayne.

Now I knew that for many years the League had been collecting used clothing for Indian relief. I knew also that several members were "on call" at the hospital. They'd take Indian patients to the dentist, go shopping with or for them, and perform other services as required. What I really wanted was specific instances of League help. Noreen, indeed, was the one to assist me.

I was particularly impressed with an account of the League's work with the "Lambarre" family.

Mr. Lambarre, believing he had permanent employment in our town, had moved his family from a northern Indian village. He found living quarters a few miles out of town. (By some quirk of geography this location was outside of the jurisdiction of either town or provincial welfare agencies.) Unfortunately the job was only temporary; he was forced to accept work "in the bush" leaving Mrs. Lambarre and the six children (aged 2 to 14) behind.

"Oh, those poor Lambarre children!", Noreen exclaimed. "Can you imagine how the older ones felt when they came home from school a week after their father left? There was their mother lying unconscious on the floor; she was in a diabetic coma!

"Technically this family was beyond the jurisdiction of our local Welfare agencies, but the case workers were wonderful. They gave so much of their own time, after hours and on week-ends. On learning the family was Catholic, they contacted the League.

"Three of us (League members) went to see the family — the mother had been hospitalized. The eldest, a girl of fourteen, was at home looking after the younger ones. We cleaned up the house and gathered all the clothes needing washing and mending. When we sorted these, we found most of them beyond repairing. Margaret contacted members having children the same age as the Lambarres and managed to replace the discards.

"We got together a hamper of groceries. On the recommendation of one of the case workers we took

over only one day's requirements at a time. Every day one of us dropped in to give Mary Lambarre a hand — actually she managed very well.

"We visited Mrs. Lambarre in the hospital. How relieved she was to learn that her family was being looked after! Then the doctors found out Mrs. Lambarre had a heart condition, one that could not be attended to locally. When she learned that she would have to be hospitalized in the city she suggested that her mother be brought in from the northern settlement where she lived.

"Grandmother soon had everything well in hand. And then, just when we thought everything was under control, she took sick and had to be hospitalized.

"Mr. Lambarre was able to find work locally. Living on the reserve where he had been raised and married, Mr. Lambarre had proven himself a good provider; there had never been trouble of any sort. But living in a white, urban community presents difficulties to Indians who have known only the close-knit relationship of reserve life. Even before he left for work in "the bush", Mr. Lambarre had been thrown into association with those unfortunate Indians in our midst who live on Welfare and find solace in alcohol. Drinking became a real problem; the family suffered; Mr. Lambarre's job was threatened. When Kate (a case-worker) made him face up to his drunkenness, he agreed to join A.A.'s."

"Isn't it wonderful?' I later said to Kate. 'He's been sober for a whole week.'

"Just wait until pay-day, Noreen,' Kate cautioned. After supper she and I went to see how the family was doing. And just as Kate had feared, Mr. Lambarre wasn't home. The eldest son was gone, too. Then about eight o'clock we heard Mr. Lambarre in the yard. And Glory Be! the man was cold sober! The family had been almost out of firewood. Mr. Lambarre had met his son after work and the two of them had been out in the bush cutting wood.

"And Mr. Lambarre continued to stay clear of liquor. Now he earns enough to support the family. The grandmother has been fine since she was released from the hospital. She makes her home with the family. With her mother's help Mrs. Lambarre (she was hospitalized two months) is able to look after her family."

And now I ask you — would this

story have had this happy ending if those dedicated League members and welfare workers had shied away from the degree of involvement required to help this family?

★ ★ ★

Close to Christmas one year Noreen had been collecting winter clothing and footwear for an isolated Indian family the League helps clothe. On her own she added a few extras — a pack of cards, some children's books and toys, several bags of candy. The mother wrote: "Your parcel was the answer to our prayers. I thought my children would not be getting anything this Christmas. I prayed to God that there might be something for them. Your parcel showed them that God does answer prayers."

★ ★ ★

At Christmas the local Welfare Department used to furnish the League with the names and ages of needy Indian and Metis children in a village some fifty miles from here. Each member was given the name of one child; an effort was made to match the age of the child with one in the member's family. My eight-year-old son was delighted to help select and wrap a gift for an Indian boy the same age as himself. One of the Fathers, Noreen and two other League members called at the home delivering the parcels. (The round-trip was a hundred miles.) The women were so delighted to have us visit in their homes. What a welcome we got! Later many of the children sent "thank-you" letters.

★ ★ ★

One recent development pleased Noreen greatly. A welfare worker told her, "It's not good for the Indians to be always on the receiving end; handouts are demoralizing. I think they should pay for the things they get, even if it's only a nickel or a dime for a jacket and a quarter for a coat. I know of one Indian woman on the reserve who's quite capable of running a sort of rummage-sale depot. She could keep a record of the clothing received and sold, and turn the proceeds back to the League, if that's O.K. with the League."

The League thought the idea an excellent one, but they didn't want the proceeds returned to them. Unanimous approval was given Noreen's suggestion, "Let the proceeds be used for knitting needles and wool, and have someone teach the women how to knit."

So now the League's clothing parcels help the Indians twice-over.

(To be continued)

FATHER LACOMBE, OMI***The West was his parish***

by **SOPHIE J. GALKA**
in **Our Family**

(With permission of the publishers)

The little dark-eyed lad seated by the hearth in his habitant home listened with rapt attention to the stories of voyageurs' adventures in the Far West. Little did he know that some day his experiences would eclipse even the wildest tales to which he now listened so eagerly and that he would be hailed as a great humanitarian and spokesman of the people of these plains. Nor did he dream that he would find himself equally at home and at ease in the smoky Indian tents of the prairies and the high courts of Europe. Even before his death in 1916 he was to become a legendary figure.

This little French-Canadian boy with a trace of Indian blood was none other than Albert Lacombe born in St. Sulpice, Quebec on February 28, 1827. The "little Indian," as he was affectionately called by Father Viau, the parish priest, dreamed of one day following the footsteps of his voyageur great uncle. Follow him to the West he did. He became known as "the black-robe voyageur."

Great Uncle Joseph Lacombe spoke of his voyageur days, of the hardships and the excitement. Albert noted that these men working in the hinterland had no mass or sacraments to ease their lot and his desire to serve in that special capacity flowered and grew. Because the Lacombes were not well-to-do, Father Viau undertook the cost of his education.

During the years at the seminary his prompt obedience and ambition were noted by his superiors and he was selected to act as secretary to the Bishop while pursuing his theological studies. It was while on pastoral visits with his bishop that he decided that the dull routine life of a parish priest was definitely not for him. He longed for a life of adventure and liberty and in 1848, when a missionary from Pembina, on the Red River, arrived at the Bishop's Palace, Albert Lacombe drank in his stories about the Metis (half-breeds), the buffalo hunts and the struggle of a handful of missionaries to keep alive that spark of faith in those who professed it. Albert's plans crystallized. He would become a missionary in the West country.

In 1849, a few short months after his ordination, he started on his westward journey from Lachine, the point of embarkation for voyageurs

leaving in brigades of canoes for the west and service with the fur trading company.

After crossing Lake Ontario he travelled alternately by boat and stage coach from Buffalo to Dubuque. This being his first time away from the gentle environs of home and seminary he was unprepared for the hostility toward his faith and nationality with which he met and the jeers of those who called his cassock his petticoats.

At Pembina

Once in Dubuque he was assigned by Bishop Loras to the mission of Pembina. He set out again travelling up the Mississippi where the only signs of life were Indian encampments.

Finally, he arrived at the little settlement of St. Paul which had only a short time before been known by the colorful name of Pig's Eye. The chapel added a note of stability to the colony. The priest's house, however, was bare and crude. Invited to spend the night with the pastor he looked around for a bed. Seeing none he asked where he was to sleep. His host, Father Ravoux, pointed to a box in the corner.

"That box has blankets inside. Just open it up."

"But that is a coffin," young Father Lacombe protested, recoiling at the thought of spending the night in it.

"Yes," Father Ravoux admitted in a matter of fact tone. "A Metis died in the woods the other day and I helped to make the coffin. It was too short and I had to make another. I kept this one. It was more comfortable than sleeping on the floor."

For a month Father Lacombe waited for the party which was to take him to Pembina. Eventually, the day arrived when the long line of ox carts loaded to capacity started out on its journey. The hideous creaking of the ungreased wheels of the clumsy wooden vehicles was music to his ears. After an exhausting trip over roads which were nothing more than muddy ruts, the ox cart train finally reached its destination.

His were nomadic people and the priest travelled with his flock to their hunting grounds. While the men hunted and the women prepared pemican, the staple food of the prairie, from the dried buffalo

meat, Father Lacombe taught the children their catechism. No day passed but that Mass was celebrated in his tent in the morning and the prayers recited in the evening with the assembled congregation. These unspoiled people, warm-hearted, child-like, and devout were enjoying their Golden Age.

Father Lacombe returned from the hunt sun-browned and glowing with health, his soutane smoke-stained and frayed. Yet, though he loved this exciting life he felt something lacking. He needed, he decided, the support of a religious order. Having once reached this decision he joined the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) whose missionaries were already at work in the West.

The need for priests in the mission field was so great that Father Lacombe was persuaded to postpone his novitiate for a few years. Though keenly disappointed he set out for Fort Edmonton, a Hudson's Bay Company trading post some eight hundred miles west of Red River, the most westerly settlement in Canada.

A gruelling trip

The trip was an arduous and gruelling one, particularly for the bright-shirted voyageurs. The swiftly gliding canoes had been replaced by the heavy York boats. Father Lacombe's heart ached at the hard lot of the boatmen who worked from early morning till late night hauling the heavy boats against the strong current of the Saskatchewan River. Where was the glamor and excitement those boyhood stories had led him to expect?

The voyageurs were warmed by the priest's concern for them. On one occasion when he found one of the men ill and feverish he appealed to the Chief Factor of Fort Edmonton who was travelling with the group to relieve the man of his duties. Astonished at the missionary's interference in company affairs he answered gruffly that any man who was not dead after three days of illness was not sick at all. He was to be reminded of those words, for when sometime later he came to the priest with a painful boil on his hand, Father Lacombe observed that since three days had passed and he was not yet dead he could not really be suffering.

*Les SS. Grises de Montréal
Archives générales*



St. Albert as Father Lacombe knew it in 1869.

"Had I not been his friend and a priest I believe he would have struck me... I had to touch that man of Iron."

Father and brother

In this priest the Indians and Metis found a man to champion their cause. They were to read literal meaning into the title of Father but they would regard him also as brother.

The prairie which stretched as far as the eye could see and beyond was governed solely by the Hudson's Bay Company. Since the missionaries were not involved in the fur trade they were welcomed to the territory. The company officials, however, made it plain that they would not tolerate any interference with their policies. The missionaries did not dare to discuss the ethics of the fur trade or the treatment of the Indian (though this, Father Lacombe observed, was generally kind). Since they had no financial means they depended on the good will of the Company particularly in the field of transportation. As Father Lacombe later said, "If we had not had the hospitality of the Hudson's Bay Company, we could not have for a long time begun or carried out the establishment of the young Church of the North West."

Shortly after his arrival in the West Father Lacombe selected a location several miles from the fort as a site for the settlement which was to be called St. Albert. The Metis who were abandoning their nomadic existence for a more sedentary life formed the nucleus of his colony. Here he built the first bridge in the West. To the Metis, young and old alike, who had never before seen one it was a marvel. In childlike ex-

citement they crossed and recrossed it till the novelty wore off.

The H.B.C. (some wit waggishly suggested the initials stood for Here Before Christ) viewed this as a threat to its sovereignty. Civilization would destroy the fur trade and undermine its control in the territory. Therefore, the Governor of the Company, seeing the bridge while on tour of the territory, ordered it destroyed. The Chief Factor of Fort Edmonton conveniently forgot the order after the Governor left and the bridge continued to serve the community and its inhabitants.

In the meantime, Father Lacombe continued with his "first." Fortune sent an American prospector who helped set up the machinery for a flour mill. A school, the first to be opened in the territory, held classes for both the English and Metis. At this time, also, Father Lacombe brought out to St. Albert the Grey Nuns who operated a school, hospital, and home for the aged. The settlement began to flourish.

The West lured adventurers, big game hunters, and scientific expeditions to its wide expanses untouched and unsullied by civilization. Not a few of these found their way to Father Lacombe's door. Two such visitors were the English travellers Lord Milton and W. B. Chedle. Not only were they warmed by the missionary's wit and generosity, they were also impressed with the obvious prosperity of the well run little community. Certainly his organizing ability and qualities were recognized by all.

Feeling that he had accomplished all that was necessary to set the colony on its feet, he requested permission to go out to work among the Indians. His mission field

stretched across the prairies and included many tribes.

Packing his equipment — his snowshoes, axe, and his provisions into his cariole which was pulled by four dogs, Father Lacombe with his faithful Metis guide, Alexis, set off on his mission to the Crees.

It was while he was at the Cree camp that he received an urgent call from the warlike Blackfeet. A severe epidemic of scarlet fever was exacting a heavy toll of lives. In desperation they sent for the Blackrobe medicine man of whom they had heard so much in the hope that he would come to their aid. In spite of the warnings of and pleas of the friendly Crees, Father Lacombe sped to the hapless Blackfoot camp. The sight which met his eyes wrung his heart. Sick and dying Indians lay in every tent he visited. Pitifully they cried for help clinging to his cassock. Day and night the missionary worked tending the sick and comforting the dying till at last, exhausted, he himself fell ill. Tossing on his bed of buffalo skins he tried to pray, thinking that now he, too, would die.

Man of the Good Heart

By his selfless devotion he so won the hearts of this fierce Indian tribe that they named him the Man of the Good Heart.

It was inevitable that the missionary would be caught in the crossfire of warring tribes as he travelled among "his" Indians. Any grievance, real or imagined, was enough to trigger an attack. When one winter night the Crees swooped down on the unsuspecting Blackfoot camp, Father Lacombe, sleeping in the chief's tent, was jarred awake by the sound of gunfire. Hastily he slipped on his surplice and stole and hurried to give aid to the wounded. As the first light of the dawn spread its pale rays over the snow Father Lacombe, in an attempt to stop the senseless slaughter, crawled to the top of the little hill. Waving his white flag with a red cross he called to the Crees to cease their firing. A bullet glancing off the ground struck his head and shoulder and he fell to the ground. A wail arose in the Blackfoot camp. Their beloved Man of Prayer was dead. To their amazement they saw the priest rise to his feet. He had suffered only a scratch but shock had been so great that it had dropped him. The Crees, fearing that they had killed the priest, withdrew in confusion.

Perhaps, his closest brush with death, however came before Christmas in 1867. With Alexis he set off for the Indian camps. This was to be a special Christmas, for Father Lacombe had devised a house-tent made of buffalo skins and had obtained a small camp-stove heater. Midnight Mass would not be marred

(Continued on p. 10)

as so many other services had been by the smoke from the campfire which circled half way up the tent making it impossible to stand erect without choking. On one occasion the smoke had been so thick that he had to celebrate Mass on his knees.

No more buffalo

After two days of difficult and bone-tiring tracking through deep unbroken snow they came upon the camp of a small band of Crees in a miserable and half-starved state. The buffalo which had once been so numerous had dwindled in number and their fall hunt had not been successful. To stave off starvation they had eaten their dogs and their horses. They now sat listlessly around their fire awaiting the inevitable, their children too weak to cry.

The priest handed his meagre supply of food to the starving Crees. With provisions-pack now empty the entire party moved on the next morning. Game was scarce and a blinding blizzard complicated an already dangerous situation. Though Alexis was able to bag an occasional partridge or rabbit, it was not enough to feed the whole group. So desperate did their plight become that to stay alive they boiled pieces of their moccasins and their buckskin bags to make a "broth."

For seventeen days they wandered starved state. Death seemed imminent across the prairies in a semiment. Just when all hope faded they stumbled into a Blackfoot camp and the sympathetic and welcoming arms of Indians who gladly and generously shared the contents of their kettles.

This harrowing experience changed Father Lacombe's outlook. Till then he had repeatedly said in

his sermons to the Indians that those who did not want to work should not eat. "I have changed my ideas," he said, "and I have taken a resolution to share my last mouthful with anyone who is hungry. After experiencing such hardships from hunger, how clearly one understands these words of the Father of the Poor: 'I was hungry and you gave me not to eat'."

Sandwiched between his work among the Indians Father Lacombe, with the help of the school-master, Brother Scollen, prepared a speller, a hymn book, a book of instruction, and a new testament in Cree. He also prepared a catechism and prayer book in the Saulteaux language and compiled a Cree-French dictionary.

Perhaps one of the best known achievements was the "Catholic ladder." Finding it difficult to teach the truths of the faith to the Blackfeet he began to illustrate the stories of the Bible with charcoal drawings on Buffalo skin stretched between two poles. Through the drawings were crude they proved an effective teaching aid and the Indians learned quickly. As the months passed he perfected his ladder and drew his pictures to show the story of Christianity on a long roll of paper. Soon other missionaries were using "the ladder." So impressed was Pope Pius IX when he was shown it that he had copies made for missionaries in other parts of the world.

His years of service had made him a familiar and much loved figure. He could be seen riding horseback to Indian encampments or running through the snow beside his dog sled, his black soutane tucked high above his deerskin trousers. His love for "his Indians" as he called them was so intense that he gladly shared their life, their food, and their dan-

gers. He gave to them everything he had and anything he could scrounge from others. He endured the smoke-filled drafty tents, the cold and the vermin without complaint. Often when accepting their hospitality he forced himself to eat, out of hand or served on bark plates, food which nauseated him, for fear of hurting their feelings. He smoked the calumet with them around the campfire. At night he slept in their tents on buffalo robes in the Indian fashion — with feet to the fire. He taught them, and baptized them. He tended their sick, buried their dead, and acted as peacemaker.

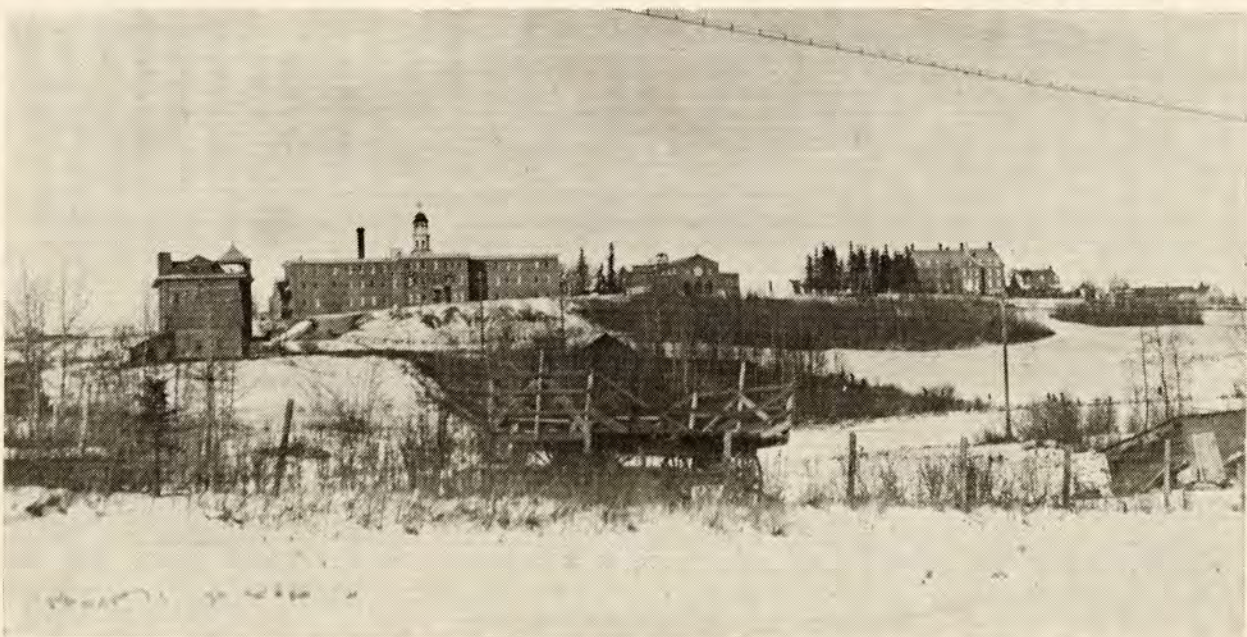
Begs for diocese

His ministry among the Indians was halted abruptly when Bishop Grandin assigned to him the onerous task of begging funds so desperately needed by the newly formed and extremely poor little prairie diocese of St. Albert. It was a mission Father Lacombe heartily disliked but which he did well because it was required of him. After his fund raising tour in Quebec he expected to return to his Indians. Instead he was sent to Europe to represent the ailing Bishop at the General Chapter of their Congregation. His fame had travelled before him and everywhere people were anxious to see the missionary.

Return to Canada did not mean resumption of his work among the Indians. He was, instead, assigned to St. Mary's parish in Winnipeg. In the ensuing years he made several trips to Quebec and Massachusetts in an effort to bring French Canadian settlers to the newly-formed province of Manitoba.

All the while he yearned to work once more among the natives of the plains. In his notebook he wrote,

(Continued . . . ➔)



St. Albert today is still crowned by the cross. In the photo above we see the present (third) church in the centre.

Father Lacombe

"Please, God, send me back to my missions. I long for them." As if in answer to his prayers, Bishop Grandin requested that he be returned to the diocese of St. Albert. "If I cannot obtain Father Lacombe," he wrote, "our missions of the West are finished."

Returns "home"

It was with mingling emotions of joy and distress that Father Lacombe viewed the plains which he had so regretfully left almost ten years earlier. Where once buffalo had grazed, farms sprouted and towns mushroomed. The Indians who once had roamed the plains as lords of all they surveyed were now confined to their reserves, no longer hunting their meat but accepting handouts from the Indian agent. What little right and dignity they had left, even their very existence, seemed threatened by encroaching civilization in the form of the railway whose shining steel bands inched closer with every passing day. Helpless to stop what they could not understand they tore up the tracks at night and terrorized the workmen. Father Lacombe feared that the tense situation would erupt into a full scale war if the rails crossed into the reserve. Already several hundred warriors eager for battle were assembled to act at a moment's notice. In haste he rode to the Blackfoot camp. Because the Indians trusted the priest they listened to his advice and accepted his assurances that the government would compensate them for the land which the railways would take. Bloodshed was averted and the building of the railway continued.

To show its gratitude the Canadian Pacific Railway granted him a lifetime pass. During a luncheon in C.P.R. President George Stephan's private car, Mr. Stephan "resigned" and Father Lacombe was made president of the Railway for one hour.

Shortly after this, in 1885, he again used his influence to prevent the western tribes from joining the Metis in the North West Rebellion. By keeping in close contact with the Blackfeet during the uprising he was able to prevent any false rumors from stirring up the young braves who were anxious for the fray. They believed that the rebel Metis would drive out the whites. Once that was done, they reasoned, the buffalo would return and they would once more be lords of the plains and enjoy the "good life." When news reached Father Lacombe that the young warriors of the northern tribes were restive, he immediately departed for the north in order to pacify them.

After the rebellion it was he who pleaded for the release of the imprisoned Indians and Metis.

Realizing that the young Indians



Father Lacombe, at the conclusion of his long and colorful career.

would have to adapt to a rapidly changing world he sought to establish industrial schools where they could be taught skills and trades. He was considering ways of financing the venture, when he was struck with a happy thought. The federal government was responsible for the welfare of the Indians and should therefore, provide the schools. He was able to convince the authorities that it was not only a worthy project but a necessary one.

Creates Metis Utopia

With deep concern he watched the Metis who in the pre-settlement days had been a child-like, generous, and devout people sink into a life of squalor and moral degradation. With the ardour of a young Crusader he set out to redeem them before it was too late. He decided to build a settlement far from the influence of the white man and his liquor where they would be taught to farm and instructed in some elementary trade. To effect his plan he requested from the federal government a grant of land sufficient to establish his Metis Utopia. Because a warm friendship existed between him and the vice-regal representatives in Canada, Lord and Lady Aberdeen, whose guest he had been on trips to the East, he was able to win their support for his plan. Likewise, the Prime Minister, Sir MacKenzie Bowell, was moved by his impassioned plea. "Your plan is an act of Christianity for you; for us it would be

an act of patriotism."

It remained only for Bishop Grandin, who had doubts about the venture, to give his permission and the settlement of St. Paul des Metis was begun. Once again Father Lacombe picked up his beggar's staff.

While attending the golden jubilee of his old friend Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, James J. Hill, one of the builders of the CPR, slipped a cheque for \$5,000 into his hand. But apart from his friends, among whom were Lord Strathcona and Sir Thomas Shaughnessy of the railroad, he met with little sympathy for his project. More heartbreaking still was the fact that many Metis were leaving the settlement and drifting back to the slums of the cities and their former lives.

Father Lacombe was beginning to feel the weight of his years. In 1898 when the Minister of the Interior requested that he go with the Commission which was to draw up treaties with the northern tribes to urge them to settle peaceably he declined. He was too old, he told them, to travel hundreds of miles in little boats. The Minister who had said in the House of Commons "... there is no man in the northwest looked upon by the Indians with the same reverence and affection as Father Lacombe" insisted. Not only was the trip not too hard, it seemed to restore his health and vigour. In the wilderness, on the banks of the Little Slave River, he celebrated his golden jubilee of priesthood.



Some of the 23 Indian children who participated in the week-long religious education program.



Mass was said in the little log church to close the catechetical program. Children sang old hymns in their ancient dialect.

Teaching catechism in northern Alberta

by Sister Barbara Hoffart, FCSP

During the past two years, two of our sisters have been flying into a small Indian settlement in northern Alberta on a unique catechetical mission. They have been teaching religion to 23 children at Sandy Lake, a small community of 13 Indian families.

Since the airplane trip of 25 miles from our school in Desmarais is expensive, we have had to limit our visits to four or five a year.

Although the children are all baptized Catholics, they know very little about their faith. Early this year we decided that our religious education program would be more effective if we could spend a full week during the summer living in the village. We could live comfortably in the little log Church, which the Indians constructed themselves, so we acquired sleeping bags and portable propane stove.

Travel by Wagon

Three of us would go; Sister Philippe Ephrem, Sister Agnes Luck and I. Two would teach classes and Sister Agnes, who played the guitar, would help with the music. When we made a list of the supplies and equipment we would need we found that it would be impossible to go by airplane. We then decided to travel by wagon — the transportation of the poor.

We were fortunate in having Thomas Auger of Sandy Lake volunteer to be our teamster. Besides the wagon, he brought a saddle horse that each of us would take turns riding.

On July 1st our little band began

the 25-mile trip. To say that the roads were bad would be a gross understatement because there are no roads to Sandy Lake. But Thomas knew the way very well. It was always amazing to us that in this wilderness he could select the exact two trees between which to lead the wagon. As we jogged over the bumps and holes we thought of our pioneer Sisters of Providence who had only this means of transportation for so many years.

Horses Trapped

After a long day of travelling, at what seemed like a snail's pace, we came to a creek about 15 feet wide. Thomas hesitated to drive the team across the "bridge" which was constructed of small logs and branches. After he thought it over for a while, he decided he would risk the crossing if we would remove some of the luggage from the wagon. The horses started across but the logs separated and trapped them in mid-stream. It took almost an hour to get the horses out, the wagon across and our equipment and supplies to the other side.

Even though we were only five miles from Sandy Lake, it was already dark, so we camped for the night. We arrived at the Indian settlement early the next morning. It had taken us almost ten hours to travel the 25 miles.

We had good news as soon as we arrived. Mr. Alvin Herschberger, a teacher at Sandy Lake, and his wife were on a trip and had left a message offering us their house for the week. The mice in the Church would

have to wait for our company until another time.

Sandy Lake is so compact in population and area that within 15 minutes all the children had been notified that we were there. They were on hand promptly to help us get settled.

Week-Long Program

The children from preschool age to the eighth grade were with us every day and even at night. Since the weather was good we had outdoor song-fests in the evenings. Sister Agnes lead the group, assisted by two Indians who played the guitar and violin.

Since there would be no Mass on Sunday we planned a Bible Vigil and Sister Philippe delivered the homily. All the children and several of their parents attended.

To close our week, Rev. J. Vantroys came to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist and almost all of the adults and children gathered with us in the little log Church. We had helped the children learn some of their old hymns in Cree, their ancient dialect, and they sang beautifully during the Mass.

Since these children have very little foundation in their religion, we find that their progress is somewhat slower than other catechetical students. We all wish it were possible to spend weeks or months in this very special work but our full-time teaching positions are our first concerns. We have all decided, however, that we will be using more of our "free" time for return visits to Sandy Lake.

A Missioner Asks:***Has Christianity failed?***

by EDWARD M. RED OWL, O.S.B.

in *The Tribal Spokesman*
(Sacramento, California)

Rev. Edward M. Red Owl, a Benedictine of Blue Cloud Abbey, is also a member of the Sioux Nation. Besides studying theology at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, he teaches classes in Indian culture at St. Cloud Reformatory.

The Christian evangelization of the American Indian tribes began and progressed to the degree that contact with Euro-American settlers increased on the frontiers of America. The Christian Churches very soon in their American history sent missionaries to the Indian tribes.

After years of persistent and steady toil the Spanish Jesuits and Franciscans reaped scores of conversions in the southwest. The same pattern of results would be experienced by the French missionaries in the northeastern parts of the American continent and by English speaking Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the midwest.

Missionaries Friar Junipero Serra, Père Isaac Jogues, Père Pierre-Jean DeSmet, Bishop Hare, Bishop Marty, Dr. Williamson, Dr. Riggs and Reverend Pond became renown in their Churches for missionary labors among the American Indian tribes.

In the midwest missiological activity had begun by the 1850's. Half a century later mission chapels and schools, as well as a native clergy in the Protestant Churches, had been well established. Conversions were not easily made. However, the missionaries were persistent until the era of thorough Christianization had occurred among the tribes. The conversion of the American Indian tribes was specified by a number of significant and extraneous circumstances which would produce later unexpected results.

Era of sorrow

The Christianization of the midwest tribes began with the last of the Indian wars and the establishment of the reservations. The Dakota (Sioux) Nation suddenly found that its way of life had come to an end, and this lot was to be the fate or was already the fate of other Indian nations by the time the twentieth century had dawned.

The tribes found themselves humiliated by military defeat and loss of territory, and very soon their political structures and economic autonomy, which had taken centuries to construct, would also break down at the instigation of the conqueror.

While greatly weakened, their cultural and religious life continued to live, but only until the advent of a thorough Christianization. Confined to reservations and bordered by white settlers and the military forces of the United States, the Indians began a new era which would have its full share of tragedy and sorrow.

The missionary was seen and understood by the Indians to be a spiritual man, a person without greed for land, gold or money. In addition Presbyterian missionaries had ministered to the condemned and imprisoned Indian warriors at Fort Snelling after the Minnesota Uprising. This deed was not to be forgotten. Neither would the deeds of other missionaries be forgotten. Missionaries like the Episcopalian Bishop Hare, who thundered condemnation of the unjust treatment of Indians, were esteemed. It was the missionaries too who clothed, fed and consoled the Indians after their defeat, and this service was often given without monetary remuneration.

Native culture ignored

From the point of view of the missionary, conversion of the Indian was not always held to be his sole task. The Euro-American missionary knew only one cultural tradition, and for him, understandably, it was the best one, despite its many inherent drawbacks and fallacies. He knew little or nothing about the American Indian cultural way of life and he did not take the time to determine its essence.

Had he studied this tradition he would have found a wealth of political complexity, a developed theological system and moral code, integral social relationships and a well structured economic life. He saw his task as simplistic and twofold: to convert the Indian to Christianity and to convert the Indian to western civilization, destroying the centuries-old American Indian way of life. He would succeed in the first objective, but fail in the second.

Accordingly, the Bible as well as hymnals and manuals of religious instructions were soon translated into the Indian languages. His moral

admonitions were often confused and identified with western conventionalities. The missionary was also ignorant of the deeply religious significance of the Sun Dance, the Sacred Pipe and the purification rites of the sweat bath. These authentic expressions of religious worship, which were supported by theological insight, were branded as "pagan" and evil in origin. He failed to realize that his own Christian observances and festivities originated from pre-Christian sources in Europe. Some missionaries condemned dancing and smoking which, in effect, cut the core of Indian religious expression. Rather than make adaptations of Christianity to indigenous Indian religious expression, the missionaries made substitutions of a distinctly western Christianity thoroughly rooted in a western cultural tradition.

Moral values upheld

Previous to their Christianization, the Indians had built and maintained a structure of moral norms and values. In this instance the missionary seemed totally oblivious and substituted his own westernized moral code. Although his principles were universal, they were specified by western custom and tradition. The old Indian couple, advanced in age, had lived in a stage of monogamous marriage all their life, and when the missionary came, they had to be "properly married" in Church in order to attain a salutary goal in life. Instances of this type are multiple, and the effects were often uncalled for. Definite kinship ties and relationships were often regulated by Indian moral law, and yet the missionary thought of kinship only in terms of a western context.

The missionaries very soon allied themselves with the government in pursuing the ideal of civilizing and Americanizing the American Indian.

Church and State were in mutual agreement that the school would serve as the best agent to fulfill this end. The boarding school was thus established as a civilizing agent. Henceforth, Indian parents were required to send their children miles away to these schools, where, in the beginning, the first order of

the day was to cut their braids, remove their native dress, and dress them in uniform. In these schools English was the only language allowed and children were often whipped for speaking their native tongue. Euro-European values and ideals alone were tolerated and endorsed. In the mission schools church attendance and religious instruction were mandatory.

New culture evolves

On the reservations, meanwhile, Christianity soon came to be pervasive. Gradually a new type of culture evolved on the reservations. Despite the horrendous consequences of the Dawes-Allotment Act of 1887, whereby the Indian people lost over five million acres of land to the greedy cattle, lumber, and farmer barons, the Indian people survived, living from the game and products of the land, their garden plots, their livestock, and government rations. The Christian Churches were included by the Indians into their way of life on the reservations, and the Church was most always the center of social life and activity. In addition, the Protestant Churches succeeded very early in achieving a native clergy who, despite lack of intensive education or training in the ministry, were committed to their work. The Catholic Church did have a number of native lay catechists who taught the tenets of the faith to the people. These factors were instrumental in establishing a settled reservation culture.

The steady rhythm of reservation life, what some anthropologists of the time felt impelled to call the ideal communitarian life, began to lose ground in the face of new developments in the world at large.

The Second World War specially was a contributing cause inasmuch a greater contact of Indians with the outside world occurred. The last three decades in particular occasioned increasingly greater contact of the Indian with American society, its economy, and urban complexities. Previously the concerted goal of assimilation and acculturation for Indians into American society had been pursued by the government and the school. This emphasis found not a few Indians leaving the reservations for the cities, some attaining success; others finding rejection and failure.

This trend toward the outside world understandably brought an end to many of the institutions of reservation life and structure. Older ties of kinship were not strongly felt anymore. Disillusionment and frustration became commonplace when the Indian was no longer able to fully live the traditional Indian way of life and could not enter the American mainstream way of life.

Christianity too, which had enjoyed such prestige in the Indian

communities, lost its position and influence. Indians became indifferent or resorted to simply ignoring the Churches. Previously, Christianity had liberated the Indian from his traditional and pre-Christian moral obligations, and the contemporary and technological world had likewise succeeded in liberating the Indian from Christian moral obligations.

The Church ceased to be the center of social activity in the Indian community with the advent of secularity. Sunday Church attendance began to diminish drastically. A crisis of serious dimension developed for the Churches among the American Indians. The root-issue of unrest finds its source in cultural identification, especially among the younger Indians who compose the increasingly greater majority of contemporary American Indians. Their lot is the harvest of bitter grapes sown generations before by the government and misdirected missionaries.

The ideal of civilizing the Indian and making his assimilatively one with American society was never totally realized due to the subtle resistance of the Indians who had the wisdom to recognize by experience that their cultural alienation would mean psychological suicide for the American Indian people. It is of course generally agreed that varying degrees of acculturation did become realized among the Indian people.

Opposite poles

American Indians logically came to a point where they felt torn between two seemingly opposed ideological and cultural poles: the Euro-American way of life (whose middle-class rejected and rebuffed him) and the traditional American Indian way of life (which, however spiritual, is nevertheless materially and politically impoverished). Within the past decade, a movement began which took cognizance of the pervasive influence of Indian culture on Indian life. Its vital aspects, especially those pertaining to a clarification of Indian identity, are being restudied and revitalized. This rejuvenation finds a clear voice among the now prevalent and articulate young Indian intelligentsia and militants.

This growing awareness has just begun to awaken among the greater mass of American Indians not only on the reservations but, especially, in the cities and towns of America where Indians generally live a very impoverished life.

At times this movement takes the form of a reaction against a society and a state which historically worked toward denying them their cultural heritage. This reaction is also being directed toward the Churches, inasmuch as the Churches

failed to take greater cognizance of their cultural life in the past. They feel that it was unjust to have imposed a westernized form of Christianity upon them, when in their pre-Christian era they possessed a real cultic and theological life. Many Indians are returning to these earlier cultic expressions and manifest a desire to relearn this type of religious expression.

Significantly, it would not be difficult to incorporate these religious expressions into Christian practice.

The reaction of American Indians to the past need not be a bad or undesirable thing. There is a deeper issue at stake, the core of which spells out the desire for self-determination and self-realization, whether in the spheres of social life, economic life, political life, or religious life. This movement at present does not give any indications of ceasing nor does it give the impression of being a passing fad since the issues pertain to life situations.

Rejection of Christianity

It would certainly be a wholesale tragedy to witness a complete indifference or rejection of the Christian Churches by the American Indians. This attitude seems very much on the increase though. It would therefore be most appropriate and even necessary for the Churches to determine the constituents elements of this new Indian movement, and to wholeheartedly become identified and involved with it.

Not only is there a need to make adaptations of Christianity to specific Indian cultic expressions, but there is also need for the Churches to support and endorse the current Indian movement as it pertains to all spheres of Indian life. There is also need for the authoritative Church Boards who direct missionary activity in the field to acquaint themselves better with the goals and ideals of the Indian clergy and the Indian communities, so that their goals do not conflict with those of the Indians, which has repeatedly been the case resulting in frustrated Indian clergymen who resign and disgusted Indian communities who reject the Church. American Indians must have greater voice in the legislative directives of their Churches.

Too long their Churches have been a non-Indian institution and for too long American Indians have been the option of only "pray, pay, and obey" in the Churches.

In the American Catholic Church there is currently considerable discussion about a married diaconate. Certainly to have an Indian and married diaconate would be a step in the correct direction. These Indian men would experientially know their people and would be able to take appropriate measures toward building up the Churches. ■

Fr. Virgil Bonatti, OMI

Italian missionary

by Bob Lowery

THOMPSON, Man. — "Cree is a beautiful language, so very logical. I'd place it just a little below Greek," says a scholarly Italian who has a home in northern Manitoba.

The commentator is Father Virgil Bonatti, OMI, a Catholic priest who has spent 15 years in the north.

"None of them has been against my will," he says. "I'm 100 per cent satisfied. I'm not giving up a thing."

One wonders at the last remark when one reads between the lines of his modest comment and tries to gain a picture of just what he has left behind in Italy.

His father was for five years swimming and diving champion of his country. One of his relatives was among the earliest pilots to fly the Atlantic. Still another member of his family, Walter Bonatti, is world-renowned for his daring mountaineering exploits on Mont Blanc, Lavalredo Mountain in the Italian Polomite range and the Himalayas. Several Italian peaks bear his name.

Yet another Bonatti, Vittorio, has won fame with an artist's brush. His works hang in museums in Rome, Paris and other European cities. The reticent priest admits a portrait of himself is in one of these museums.

Adventurers

"We're a family of adventurers. I'm one of them but not the kind that gets written about in newspapers." This may have been true up to now, yet all his modesty cannot hide the quality of this rugged yet sensitive, highly intelligent, completely charming Italian.

Returning to the Cree language, the 39-year-old priest says, "It's a gold mine." Once, in an article for an Italian newspaper, he used his appreciation of the Cree tongue to emphasize the high intelligence of the people who speak it.

Most of Father Bonatti's years in Canada have been spent in Indian communities. He has spent five years at Island Lake, a year at Cross Lake and three at Pelican Narrows in Saskatchewan. It was there that he got his grounding in the Cree language.

Human Terms

Later he served the Indian communities of Moose Lake, Cedar Lake and Easterville.

Here he had had the chance to understand in human terms what it means when communities like these are uprooted because they stand in

the path of progress. He served the people in this area when they had to be moved from their homes to make way for the Grand Rapids power project.

The priest says Moose Lake was relatively simple because it just meant moving the people further up the hillside they were living on.

Expropriation is a different thing in these northern communities, the priest feels, than in the south. He believes things go wrong because hydro and government officials don't take the time to reason things out with the people affected by their plans.

In his experience, these people are very reasonable but one may have to spend up to a month with them talking things out. It takes quite a bit of time for people living with such completely different values to grasp what the other person is thinking and trying to accomplish, the priest says.

Today Father Bonatti serves the people of Gillam, Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei. This gives him responsibility for the needs of two older communities and a thriving new one.

"There is quite a change going on up here in the north" he says. "Just a few years ago we were going around with dog teams where today modern communities like Thompson and Gillam have sprung up.

"When you have covered 500 miles a year by dog team," he continues, "you can understand how 100 per cent we are for progress."

High Hopes

The priest has high hopes and concerns for both types of communities.

"We have some wonderful people coming to the north these days and many are deciding to make it their home."

There are still many who come just looking for fast money, he admits. To those who will stay and make it their home this remarkable Italian transplant promises endless adventure in developing this country and perhaps creating a new level of human society.

He feels the time has come for the Indian community, in which he feels more at home than even on his beloved Italian soil, to decide the course it will take.

Poverty

He appreciates the poverty that must be overcome, the struggle that lies ahead to make communities economically sound. He understands



Old chapel at Cumberland House, Saskatchewan

ties that bind young Indians to their families and keep them from venturing beyond their traditional society.

Education given to the students in these communities needs to be rethought and made relevant to experience and needs of the people. If the priest had his way he'd get about "50 good men" to study that material being taught. Much of it, he feels, just doesn't get across.

"It seems to me, people are trying to avoid coming to grips with the need in these schools instead of solving it. We go on putting millions of dollars into it but we have to face that a curriculum contrived in Winnipeg just does not fit here."

The priest also said that "the paradise we promise through education just doesn't work out. In the end there are no jobs for those who do complete the course."

The future of the Indian communities lies in what the Indians themselves decide to do, he feels. Talk of red power signifies a rising desire of Indians to be responsible for their own future, he says. This he respects, but feels that the Indians themselves must face their need to develop great leadership to master the job that faces them.

And of the job facing Virgil Bonatti, he simply says, "My calling is to be an adventurer in human relations." He expects to spend the rest of his days in northern Manitoba working about 18 hours a day.

Every six years he returns to Italy for a three-month visit. After two months he is restless to be back in northern Manitoba. Positions have been offered him in Winnipeg and Toronto, but they have no appeal.

"For a man like me, the job is to go on meeting the needs of people. It's hard work but you can't stop doing it."

One leaves Father Bonatti with the feeling that one has been talking to the best of Italy and northern Manitoba — and perhaps one of the greatest adventurers of them all.

(Winnipeg Free Press)

REV. FATHER OSCAR CHAGNON, OMI

On August 26, 1969, at St. Boniface hospital, Rev. Oscar Chagnon, OMI, aged 91, of Sandy Bay, Man., passed away. Father Chagnon was born in Varennes, P.Q. and joined the Oblates in 1897. He was ordained a priest in Ottawa in 1905. He was vice-principal of Camperville Indian Residential School from 1906 to 1908, and of Sandy Bay from 1908 to 1912, at which time he became principal until 1942, when he retired due to ill health.

Hundreds of Indians, and twenty-five priests, Brothers and Sisters, Indian Affairs Branch representatives and school teachers attended the funeral, August 29, at the Sandy Bay Reserve church. Burial was at

Sandy Bay; the hearse was drawn by a team of horses to recall his long missionary career.

One of the missionary priests, Fr. Romeo Beaulieu, OMI, paid him the following tribute: "Deep is the sorrow of the Indians of Sandy Bay Reserve. Regardless of race, nationality or faith, all who have known Father Chagnon, they realized it was the greatest thing to have him as a leader in religion, education and sports as well as an inspiration in their social life.

"May Father Chagnon keep on looking over us from heaven, and may his grave always remind us that he was an INDIAN through his dedication, love and sacrifice." R.I.P.

Canada richer for native culture

To be an Indian is to be a man, with all a man's needs and abilities. To be an Indian is also to be different. It is to speak different languages, draw different pictures, and tell different tales and to rely on a set of values developed in a different world.

Canada is richer for its Indian component, although there have been times when diversity seemed of little value to many Canadians.

But to be a Canadian Indian today

is to be someone different in another way. It is to be someone apart — apart in law, apart in the provision of government services and, too often, apart in social contacts.

To be an Indian is to lack power — the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own condition.

Not always, but too often, to be an Indian is to be without — without a job, a good house, or running water; without knowledge, training or technical skill and, above all, without those feelings of dignity and self-confidence that a man must have if he is to walk with his head held high.

All these conditions of the Indians are the product of history and have nothing to do with their abilities and capacities. Indian relations with other Canadians began with special treatment by government and society, and special treatment has been the rule since Europeans first settled in Canada. Special treatment has made of the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart.

Obviously, the course of history must be changed.

To be an Indian must be to be free — free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians.

(The Indian News)

Fishermen meet

WINNIPEG — Several recommendations were made to the Provincial Government on conservation and re-stocking of fish at the first Indian fishermen's conference held recently at Island Lake.

The meeting was attended by delegates from Oxford House, God's Narrows, Red Sucker Lake, Garden Hill and St. Theresa Point.

Recommendations were also made regarding the effects of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation on the industry and the need for some form of fisherman's organization.

The conference, which proved quite fruitful, should be held more often according to the feelings of delegates. Entire proceedings were conducted in Cree and Saukteaux.

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Deadline for Dec. '69 issue of the Indian Record is Monday, November 3.