

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR
SASKATCHEWAN ABORIGINAL VETERANS, 1945-1960

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Thesis Abstract

It has been accepted in the historical discourse that a direct link existed between the participation of Aboriginal people in the Second World War and a new political consciousness of Aboriginal people in Canada generally, and Saskatchewan specifically, immediately after the war. This conclusion has been based on the fact that as soldiers, Aboriginal veterans had gained much experience. They had traveled to various parts of the world, had been treated as equals while fighting alongside non-Aboriginal soldiers and had been celebrated as liberators of Europe. On the return to Canada, they found that the situation of Aboriginal people had not changed. Unwilling to accept the substandard treatment for themselves and their people, it is argued, that the Aboriginal veterans became the focal point for Aboriginal rights' movement. There is in fact no evidence to support the notion that the Aboriginal veterans had a direct role in igniting Aboriginal peoples' political consciousness immediately after the war. In the first five years after the war, Aboriginal veterans were more concerned with readjusting to civilian life. They were young men who possessed few adult civilian life experiences and virtually no political experience. The emphasis on Aboriginal veterans as the political leaders after the war ignores the efforts of the existing leaders who had been involved in politics for many years. Although Aboriginal veterans did not directly influence the political climate, their existence as a group was crucial to the shifting attitude of the Canadian public toward Aboriginal people. The portrayal of Aboriginal veterans by the news media as "progressive Indians" due to their contributions to the war effort, impressed upon Canadians the need for change in the relationship between the Canadian government and Aboriginal people. By the 1950s, as the more socially, economically and to a certain extent, geographically mobile the veterans became the more socially and politically active they became. It is the contention of this research that the impact of their war experience is discernible in two ways. First, immediately after the war, the presence of Aboriginal veterans led to Canadian's re-evaluation of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadian government. Second, in the post-war era, Aboriginal veterans became active agents of social and political change. In sum, Aboriginal veterans became, first passive catalysts and, later, engines for social and political change.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Before they enlisted in the Second World War, status Indians were wards of the Canadian government and the Metis were a marginalized people in Canadian society. As soldiers during the war, they were celebrated as liberators of Europe. In the post-war years, Indian and Metis veterans were crucial to the changing social and political climate in Canada. At this time, Aboriginal people increased their standard of living considerably and Aboriginal leaders made gains in the Aboriginal rights movement. The role of the Aboriginal veterans in the changing Canadian attitudes is complex but can be described as occurring in two phases. In the first phase, between 1945 and 1950, the veterans were passive participants in the social and political change in Canada. During the second phase, from 1950 to 1960, the veterans became active agents in social and political activities. Even though the Aboriginal veterans had a tremendous impact on the post-war environment, scholars have not studied this phenomenon in any great depth.

The majority of the writings about Aboriginal veterans has concentrated on the treatment of Aboriginal veterans and their families by the Canadian government, reasons for and the methods of Aboriginal enlistment in the war, or profiles of individual Aboriginal soldiers. Some authors have claimed that the political activity of Aboriginal groups immediately after the Second World War was due to the Aboriginal involvement in the war effort. However, there is no substantial evidence to support this claim. A result of the writings about Aboriginal veterans is that the question of what their role was in the post-war years has not been sufficiently addressed.

Literature Review

The need for research on the impact of the Second World War Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans is evidenced by the scarcity of the subject in existing literature relating to Aboriginal veterans. The literature in Canada about Aboriginal veterans is mainly from reports, commissioned by either Aboriginal veterans or by governments, and from popular histories. Scholarly research on this topic, though it has grown lately, is still sparse. Much of this literature has been classified by Michael Stevenson as superficial and “limited in scope and focus on the heroism and bravery” of a small number of veterans.¹ To date, there has been no attempt to provide a general history of Aboriginal veterans in the immediate post-war era between 1945 and 1960.

The majority of writings about Aboriginal veterans has focused on the issue of unequal distribution of veterans’ benefits between non-Indian and Indian veterans. As a result, the literature highlights the victimization of the veterans in the post-war period. Although these studies clearly demonstrate that the government treated Indian veterans inequitably and recommend that the Canadian government redress these inequities, a negative consequence of the concentration of studies on this subject has been to create the perception of Indian veterans as victims. This one-dimensional view of Indian veterans grossly misrepresents, underestimates and undervalues their role and place in Indian society.

The first information about Indian veterans appeared in 1979 with the release of two reports, one by the Native Law Centre at the University of Saskatchewan and the other by Alastair Sweeny. The latter was commissioned by the Saskatchewan Indian Veterans’ Association (SIVA). Both reports investigated

¹ Michael D. Stevenson, “The Mobilisation of Native Canadians During the Second World War,” *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* 9 (1996): 206.

the issue of the unequal distribution of veterans' benefits to Indian veterans associated with the *Veterans' Land Act* (VLA).² Sweeny's report utilized Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) records to analyze the repercussions of the decision to delegate the administration of VLA for Indian veterans to DIA from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He states that Indian veterans in the Second World War were entitled to the same benefits as non-Indian veterans, though "special provisions" were applied to reserve lands, in which veterans were eligible for the \$2,320.00 grant but not the \$6,000.00 loan that was offered to non-Indians. Even though Indian veterans protested, the DIA officials argued that their policy regarding Indian veterans was not discriminatory because Indian veterans could purchase land off the reserve without enfranchisement and, as such, were eligible for the same \$6,000 loan as non-Indian veterans were. In addition, the bureaucrats justified the disparity of loan entitlement between Indian veterans settling on reserves and those settling off reserve by noting it was "balanced against the more favourable conditions under which the Indian veterans settled on the reserve," and referring to the "privilege" of not having accrued a debt and the right to non-payment of tax.³ Sweeny concludes that the VLA benefits were superior to the benefits offered to Indian veterans of the First World War. Unlike the benefits offered to Indian veterans of the First World War, the requirements of the VLA allowed Indian veterans of the Second World War to be eligible to purchase land off-reserve and not have to enfranchise.⁴

The Native Law Centre's report provides a summary of the veterans' benefits, offers a legal interpretation of the legislation and notes that it is difficult to

² Alistar Sweeny, "Government Policy and Saskatchewan Indian Veterans: A Brief History of the Canadian Government's Treatment of Indian Veterans of World Two" (Ottawa: Tyler, Wright and Daniel Ltd. 1979); Native Law Centre, "Indian Veterans' Rights" (Saskatoon: U of Saskatchewan, 1979) The Native Law Centre's report also investigated the inequity of the administration benefits for Indian veterans from the *Soldiers Settlement Act* after the First World War.

³ Sweeny 55.

⁴ Sweeny 68. Indians who enfranchised relinquished their status as Indians under the *Indian Act* and were no longer considered as wards of the government but citizens of Canada. Although there was a policy of forced enfranchise earlier in the century, this policy was not in effect during the war.

determine how the benefits were actually distributed after the war as many of the administrative procedures and day to day considerations are not documented or available to the public. The authors conducted their legal analysis of the provisions of the VLA “to determine what benefits Indian veterans could apply for under their provisions; to ascertain what considerations the authorities were statutorily required to take into account before approving an application; and finally to consider whether the legislation was discriminatory in nature.”⁵ The reports by the Native Law Centre and Sweeny do not address what impact the war had on the veterans. They examine legislation and the records of Indian Affairs to ascertain the enlistment patterns, land surrenders, conscription and veterans’ benefits in the Second World War. These documents illuminate the attitudes of the government bureaucrats during and after the war toward Indian veterans.

In 1995, after almost fifteen years of lobbying by Indian veterans, the first of two major government reports on Indian veterans was released. The Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples was formed to investigate the veterans’ grievances. The Committee was mandated to examine the treatment of Aboriginal veterans, both status Indians and Metis, upon their return to Canada after the First and Second World Wars and the Korean Conflict.⁶ The Senate Standing Committee traveled to several cities and heard from representatives from the Department of Indian Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), national and provincial Aboriginal political organizations, and national and provincial Aboriginal veterans organizations as well as over 100 Aboriginal veterans. The Committee identified two major complaints made by the Aboriginal veterans regarding the VLA. Their first complaint was that they were made to believe that in order to qualify for VLA benefits they had to settle on the reserve. Second, the veterans noted that the lack of

⁵ Native Law Centre 2.

⁶ Canada, “The Aboriginal Soldier After The Wars: Report of the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples” (The Senate of Canada, Ottawa, 1995). Hereafter cited as SSC.

communication of both the DIA and DVA with Indian veterans resulted in many veterans not being made aware of the benefits to which they were entitled. Nearly two years later the *Report of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* was released which supported the recommendations made by the Senate Committee.⁷ Both reports strongly urge that the Canadian government recognize both its mistreatment of Aboriginal veterans and the contribution of Aboriginal veterans to Canada's war efforts. Of equal significance, the recommendations address publicly the prolonged lobbying efforts of Aboriginal veterans seeking redress of their grievances with the government.

Though the Senate Committee and the RCAP provide excellent overviews of the various pieces of legislation, and testimonials from veterans, they do not provide a history of the veterans in Saskatchewan specifically, nor in Canada generally. The reports focus on the consequences of the government's mistreatment of Aboriginal veterans and not the role of the veterans in the post-war years. In their presentation, the veterans were expected to give their opinions about the treatment they received from the government. Aboriginal veterans were not expected, indeed this was not the place or time, to discuss how the war and the post-war experience impacted them. In examining the inequities of the veterans' benefits, the SSC and the RCAP continued in pursuit of the objectives and aims set by previous reports on Indian veterans.

Several published popular histories have concentrated on the individual heroics of a few Indian veterans. Fred Gaffen's book *Forgotten Soldiers* is a collection of brief profiles of individual Aboriginal soldiers in the First, Second and Korean wars; short descriptions of homefront activities; and a cursory comparison between Aboriginal soldiers from the United States, Australia and New Zealand.⁸

⁷ Canada, *Looking Forward, Looking Back: Report of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1* (Ottawa: Communication Group, 1996) 590. Herein cited as RCAP.

⁸ Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1985) 71-72.

He provides a condensed discussion of veterans' benefits and claims that DIA dealt with the reserve lands in a way that benefited Indians.⁹ Janice Summerby in her booklet *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields*, and Carrielynn Lamouche in "The Face of Service: Alberta Metis in the Second World War," like Gaffen, provide compilations of individual Aboriginal veterans' profiles.¹⁰ Lamouche's work is one of the few works devoted to Metis veterans. In her article, Lamouche briefly describes the war experience of seven Alberta Metis soldiers. Gaffen, Summerby and Lamouche are content to simply extol the accomplishment of Aboriginal veterans rather than attempt to assess how the war and post-war experiences impacted Aboriginal veterans.

The Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association and the Gabriel Dumont Institute have gathered and presented the stories of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans.¹¹ Since the objective of these works is to present the voices of Aboriginal veterans, no author attempts to explicitly draw from these stories specific conclusions as is expected in academic works. Second only to a conversation with the veterans, these works are the best source to ascertain the war experiences of Aboriginal veterans. To date, no other provincial Aboriginal veterans' organization has produced similar works.

Janet Davison's M. A. thesis, James Dempsey's article, Michael Stevenson's article, and Robert Sheffield's M. A. thesis are the only academic works to examine Indians and the Second World War.¹² Davison's thesis provides a

⁹ Gaffen 71.

¹⁰ Janice Summerby, "Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields" (Department of Veterans Affairs, Ottawa, 1993); Carrielynn Lamouche, "The Face of Service: Alberta Metis in the Second World War," in *For King and Country: Alberta in the Second World War*, ed. Ken Tingley (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1995) 33-38.

¹¹ Gabriel Dumont Institute of Metis Studies and Applied Research Inc., *Remembrances: Metis Veterans*, (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1997); Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, *We Were There*. (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations, 1989).

¹² Janet Davison, "We Shall Remember: Canada's Indians and World War Two" (M. A., Trent University, 1992); James Dempsey, "Alberta's Indians and the Second World War," in *For King and*

history of Indian participation in World War II, and discusses Indian veterans in post-war years: the influence of Indian veterans on the Indian political organizations, the lack of recognition for Indian veterans by historians and the poor treatment of Indian veterans by the government. Davison states that she was motivated to write this history because Indian children have not had the chance to read about Indian peoples' contribution to the war effort. "Native children," Davison writes, "have a right to know about and to be proud of their people's part in all of Canada's history and especially the wars."¹³ Unfortunately, her attempt to place Aboriginal veterans' war experiences in history is seriously compromised by her unabashed biases. Though she claims to combine documentary sources with oral sources, she only interviewed six Second World War veterans. All the veterans are from Ontario: three from Curve Lake reserve and the other three from Walpole Island reserve. None of her interviews provide new information about veterans; rather they support her well researched documentary sources.

Dempsey's article summarizes the various contributions of Canadian Indians to the war effort. Whereas Davison argues that the Canadian government did not recognize Indian participation in the Second World War, Dempsey argues that the Canadian government not only recognized Indian participation but that the government's recognition was the main factor that led to Indian people's betterment in post-war Canada. After the war a movement began within the Canadian government "towards re-evaluating the status of Indians."¹⁴ The government, according to Dempsey "acknowledged that the war had helped bring natives into

Country: Alberta in the Second World War ed. Ken Tingley (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1995) 39-52; Stevenson 205-226; Robert Sheffield's "...In the Same Manner as other People": Government Policy and the Military Service of Canada's First Nations People, 1939-1945" (M. A. University of Victoria, 1995); Stevenson 205-226. Dempsey has recently published *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I*. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1999) based on his Thesis research. The book is significant as it is the first book to examine Canadian Indians in twentieth-century war efforts. The book focuses on Indians and the First World War, which is beyond the scope of this research.

¹³ Davison 2.

their own, by broadening the outlook on life for Indians who had served overseas, as well as on the home front.” Dempsey further states that Indian participation in the war was interpreted by the government to mean that Indians were at the stage “to understand and get to know the white man’s ways better through education.”¹⁵

Dempsey provides an adequate description of Aboriginal peoples’ war experiences. However, his discussion of Aboriginal people in the reconstruction period is weak. He accepts a statement made by the Minister of Mines and Resources in a 1946 *Indian Missionary Record* piece that the post-war years would be bright for Indians. Dempsey concludes that

The postwar future looked bright for Canada’s Indians; with most other Canadians, they avoided the expected postwar unemployment problem. Higher prices for Indian products and high employment raised the native standard of living noticeably. Life on reserves was finally put into the hands of the band councils, a step forward in the desired native movement toward self-determination.¹⁶

Yet, Dempsey does not supply any evidence to support this conclusion. Dempsey opens the door to the question of the impact of the war and post-war years on Aboriginal veterans, however, he does not provide enough evidence to support his claims.

Sheffield’s thesis is concerned with the recruitment policy of the armed forces of Indians during the Second World War. Racial barriers, limited education and strict adherence to health standards restricted Indians from serving in the navy or the air force.¹⁷ These restrictions influenced recruitment policies for Indian soldiers. As a result, Sheffield argues that the recruitment policy and organization “played a key role in a process that channeled the vast majority of Native recruits into ground combat or close support roles, and scattered them across the many units.”¹⁸

Sheffield admits that his study does not “link post-war federal Native policy to the

¹⁴ Dempsey 49.

¹⁵ Dempsey 49.

¹⁶ Dempsey 50.

¹⁷ Sheffield 20.

experiences of the war years.”¹⁹ However, he recommends that “an examination of the social, political and economic implications of a major conflict for indigenous people, focusing on the experiences of a particular community or nation” would be a worthwhile and logical progression from his study.²⁰

Michael Stevenson’s article examines the Canadian government’s war policy of mobilizing Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people’s protest against that policy. He examines the records of the Dominion Department of Labour and the Department of Indian Affairs, and demonstrates that “a more negative picture of both the government handling of Native mobilisation and the response of Natives to National Resources Mobilisation Act (NRMA) regulations” existed.²¹ In 1940, the Canadian government enacted the NRMA. This Act called for all adult males to register in a national registry. Males were called to undergo compulsory medical examination and, if deemed fit, were ordered to take military training.²² Indians were not exempted from the Act. Stevenson provides several examples of Indian protests against the NRMA. The protests ranged in intensity from simple refusal to register to riots on the Kahnawake reserve in Quebec.²³ The NRMA was by and large ineffectively applied to Native people. This is due to the fact that a ranking official in Ottawa “allowed Cabinet-endorsed mobilisation directives to be altered, diluted and ignored by regional mobilisation administrators.”²⁴ That is, instead of a being applied evenly, the Act was implemented unevenly throughout the country. Stevenson concludes that the application of NRMA had positive ramifications for Indians in the postwar years. First, the recruitment strategies of the NRMA “proved to be an important cause in the fundamental reorientation of government policy towards

¹⁸ Sheffield 20.

¹⁹ Sheffield 3.

²⁰ Sheffield 115.

²¹ Stevenson 206.

²² Stevenson 207.

²³ Stevenson 220.

²⁴ Stevenson 225.

natives in the postwar era.” In addition, the “strident opposition [by Indians] to compulsory mobilisation was the primary catalyst in the formation of national organisations dedicated to addressing the chronic problems that faced Natives.”²⁵

There has not yet been a general historical study carried out in Canada on Indian veterans. In the United States, Alison Bernstein and Jere’ Bishop Franco have provided the only major historical texts written about Indians in the Second World War.²⁶ Bernstein’s study looks at Indian participation in the war, and at Indians and Indian policies in the immediate post war era. Bernstein delineates two arguments in her book. First, she argues that Indian participation in the war was used by the American Congress to promote integration of American Indians. Immediately following the war Congress began to assert “that the time had come for Indians to take their rightful place in American society as full-fledged citizens.”²⁷ This attitude in Congress promoted the ideology of termination. Termination, according to Bernstein, redirected the American government’s “effort away from tribal development and towards tribal assimilation. It called for the termination of all federal responsibilities for tribes, and it became the centerpiece of federal policy for the next two decades.”²⁸ Second, Bernstein argues that due to their war experience, American Indian veterans became politically active. The war led American Indians to come into direct and unprecedented contact with the American mainstream. The result of this contact was that “Indians had begun to see the ways in which white society controlled their lives either through discriminatory legislation or the paternalism of the Indian Bureau.”²⁹ Bernstein’s was the first major work to examine Native American veterans during and after the war. Her post-war

²⁵ Stevenson 226.

²⁶ Alison Bernstein, *American Indians and World War Two: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman, : University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Jere’ Bishop Franco, *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II* (Denton, TX: University of Northern Texas Press, 1999).

²⁷ Bernstein 159.

²⁸ Bernstein 159.

²⁹ Bernstein 171.

examination is concerned with the political implications for Native American communities due to Indian participation in the war.

Another book about American Indians in the Second World War entitled "*Crossing the Pond*": *The Native American Effort in World War II*, has just recently been written by Jere' Bishop Franco. Franco examines seven different aspects of American Indians and the Second World War. She examines the relationship between the American Indian Federation, an Indian political organization, and Fascists in Nazis Germany in the years proceeding United States' entry into the War; the registration of Indians for military service; the employment patterns of Indians during the war; the government's attempts to acquire tribal resources; how stereotypes of Indians played an important role in the military; the letters of Indian soldiers that were published in a Sante Fe Indian newspaper; and how the war experience of Indians led to a post-war civil rights movement. Franco's book sheds considerable light on the wartime and post-war experiences of American Indians. Franco contends that her book, along with Lawrence Hauptman's book on American Indians in the Civil war, Thomas Britten's on American Indians in First World War, Tom Holm's on American Indians in the Vietnam War and Bernstein's book on American in the Second World War, are studies that view Indian participation in war differently than mainstream history.³⁰ She states that these works are not interested in "Native American servicemen and women simply as another useful component in military strategy," but instead they have "related the uniqueness of the American Indian role in America's wars . . ." Further she asserts that "'Native American and Wartime' can no longer be solely claimed as a prerogative of Western History, and it does not solely subsist within the *policy-viewpoints-*

³⁰ Franco xv. Lawrence Hampton, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* (New York: Free Press Enterprise, 1995); Thomas Britten, *American Indians in World War I: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Tom Holm, *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native Americans of the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

warfare triad. It has moved beyond regionalism and prior classification to achieve national and even international implications.”³¹

In Canada, James Dempsey’s study about Indian soldiers in the First World War is the only text on Aboriginal veterans’ participation in Canada’s war effort.³² There has been no substantial work that considers Aboriginal veterans in the post-war era, although many Canadian historians have alluded to them in their work.³³ These writers state that the participation of Aboriginal veterans during the war led immediately to positive changes for Aboriginal people after the war. They assume a link existed between the political activities immediately after the war and Aboriginal veterans’ participation in the war. Dickason, in her monumental work, exemplifies the assumptions made by these writers. She states that when Aboriginal veterans

returned to civilian life, the restrictions and inequities of their lot on reserves became so glaringly evident that veterans’ organizations and church groups mounted a campaign that resulted in the establishment of a Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Indian Act and which held hearings from 1946 to 1948.³⁴

However, none of the authors attempts any in-depth analysis of Aboriginal veterans’ role in the shifting attitudes of either the Canadian government or the public towards

³¹ Franco xv-xvi.

³² James Dempsey, *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War II* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center, 1999). His book is based on his M. A. thesis entitled “Indians of the Prairie Provinces in World War I,” (University of Alberta, 1987). Though the book is significant as it is the first book to examine Canadian Indians in twentieth-century war efforts, there is no new information from what he presented in his thesis. He contends that Indians enlisted in the war because of the continued existence of a warrior ethic. His argument, however, does not stand up, primarily because Dempsey does not clearly articulate what exactly he means by warrior. The book, focuses on Indians and the First World War which is beyond the scope of this research.

³³ Summerby 172-209; John Tobias, “Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: an Outline History of Canada’s Indian Policy” *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 2 (1976): 24; E. Brian Titley *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 1986) 101; J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 220-221; Olive Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992) 328-329; James Pitsula, “The CCF Government and the Formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians,” *Prairie Forum* 9 no. 2 (1994) 131-151.

³⁴ Dickason 329.

Aboriginal people. Further, they do not demonstrate the link between Aboriginal veterans and the integration movement of the 1950s.

Though the literature surveyed discusses aspects of the Aboriginal veterans' history in the post-war years, the works mainly deal with Aboriginal participation in the war or the consequences of Indian veterans not receiving benefits after the war. Very few authors have considered Metis veterans; no academics have investigated Metis and their involvement in the war. Only one historian has interviewed Canadian Aboriginal veterans, and none have examined how their war and post-war experiences impacted on them. Further, the question of what the impact of the Second World War and its aftermath on Aboriginal veterans was has never been raised. Sheffield states that "there are simply too few historians examining the post-1900 experience of the Native people in this country, and those that do, have neglected the period of the Second World War."³⁵ The same applies to research on Aboriginal veterans in the post-war years.

This study explores the post-war experiences of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans - Indian and Metis - between 1945 to 1960. The research for this includes evidence from both oral and documentary sources. Post-war Saskatchewan provides an excellent setting for a case study to examine such a question because of its high rate of Aboriginal participation in the Second World War, the highly politicized atmosphere in the province, and the existence of both Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans' Association (SFNVA) and National Aboriginal Veterans' Association, Saskatchewan chapter (NAVA) as sources for interviewees. The specific sources, the interviews and archival materials, utilized in this study have not been used in other scholarly research on Aboriginal veterans. The implication of using a combination of these sources is that a unique and a more in-depth examination of Aboriginal veterans' experiences can be achieved.

³⁵ Sheffield 14.

Twenty-five Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans, from all over Saskatchewan, have been interviewed for this study. This large number of interviews allows more credible generalizations about Aboriginal veterans to be made. The oral sources do not simply support the written sources, but divulge new insights into the history of Aboriginal veterans.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Second World War Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans on Saskatchewan Aboriginal society in the post-war period. It is the contention here that the impact of their war experience is discernable in two ways. First, immediately after the war, the presence of Aboriginal veterans led to the re-evaluation of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Canadian government. Second, in the post-war era, Aboriginal veterans became active agents of social and political change. In sum, Aboriginal veterans became, first passive catalysts and, later, engines for social and political change.

CHAPTER TWO

“I’m On Home Ground Now. I’m Safe”: Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans In The Immediate Post-War Years, 1945-1946

Introduction

In 1945, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans from World War Two returned to a rapidly changing world. The economy was improving dramatically as expanding industries encouraged unprecedented consumerism. In addition, new social values reflected an optimism for the elimination of the social inequality epitomized by Nazi Germany. The new social consciousness culminated with the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In Canada, the post-war years saw the federal government begin to investigate Indian policy reforms. In Saskatchewan, the post-war years ushered in a new optimism epitomized by a new provincial government. In 1944, the people of Saskatchewan elected the first socialist government in North America, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The CCF, elected on the slogan “humanity first,” began examining the possibility of implementing an Aboriginal policy.

The change of economic, social and political environment in Canada immediately after the war added to the excitement brought on by the ending of hostilities. Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans’ participation in the immediate post-war changes was minimal.

It has been accepted in the historical literature that a direct link existed between the participation of Aboriginal people in the Second World War and the emergence of a new political consciousness among Aboriginal people. The accepted inference is that Indian political organizations that came into existence in Canada generally, and in Saskatchewan specifically, during and after the war were due to the

returning Aboriginal veterans. For example, Davision states that “during or immediately after the war there was a tremendous upsurge in Indian political activity, resulting in the formation of many new or reorganized associations. The years 1940-1949 saw 14 new Indian organizations recorded; of these 5 were in Saskatchewan alone.”¹ The claim that the Indian leaderships emerged after the war ignores their efforts to advance Aboriginal rights prior to the war. Upon closer consideration, it is evident that very few of these organizations owe their formation to returning Aboriginal veterans. Rather, Aboriginal veterans had no direct influence in the creation of the new Indian organizations in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans’ social and political activism between 1945 and 1960 was in a transitional phase. Aboriginal veterans between 1945 and 1950 can be characterized as being passive participants in the social and political changes. Passive participation means that the veterans did not guide the changes that occurred, but were a powerful image of the “progressive Indian” portrayed by the media. The image of the “Indian warrior” popular before and during the war was transformed into “progressive Indians” after the war. Although in the immediate post-war years, Aboriginal veterans concentrated their efforts on readjusting to civilian life, the symbol of them as “progressive Indians” brought public awareness about Indian rights, which in turn helped to shift the public’s attitude about Indians. The existing Indian leadership took advantage of the shifting attitudes to build support for their agenda of Indian rights, which they had been pursuing for a number of years. As a result, even though the veterans were passive in the social and political arena, their existence as a group was crucial in the social and political change of Aboriginal people in Canada in the immediate post-war years.

¹ Janet Davision, “We Shall Remember: Canada’s Indians and World War Two.” (M. A. Thesis, Trent University, 1992) 176.

Aboriginal Participation In The War

Although Aboriginal people enlisted in the Second World War in great numbers, the actual number is difficult to ascertain. Unofficial estimates place the number of Indian recruits as high as 6,000.² Another estimate is that 12,000 Aboriginal people fought in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean Conflict.³ The exact number of Metis veterans is not known because the Canadian Active Service did not list the ethnic background of enlistees.⁴ This makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to track the number of Metis, Inuit and non-status Indian people who enlisted in the war.⁵ The Department of Indian Affairs did record the number of status Indians who enlisted. The figures of the Department, however, are far from reliable.⁶ This unreliability is in part due to the inconsistent method of record keeping by Indian agents from the various agencies. Some agents were diligent in maintaining records of Indian enlistees, while others were quite lax.⁷ The number of Indian enlistees recorded by the Indian Agents for Crooked Lake agency is an example of this unreliability. According to the Department records there were fifty enlistees from Crooked Lake agency.⁸ According to a local history at least

² Michael D. Stevenson, "The Mobilisation of Native Canadian During the Second World War" *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* 9 (1996): 206.

³ Canada, *Looking Forward, Looking Back: Report of The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1* (Ottawa: Communication Group, 1996) 556. Herein cited as RCAP

⁴ Carrielyn Lamouche, "The Face of Service: Alberta Metis in the Second World War" in *For King and Country: Alberta in Second World War* ed. Ken Tingley. (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1995) 33.

⁵ As a means of determining the number of Metis people who enlisted in World War Two, Frank Tomkins, the president of the Saskatchewan chapter of the National Aboriginal Veterans' Association (NAVA), has requested the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) to add the question "Did you or your relative fight in World War Two?" in the upcoming Metis enumeration. As of yet, the MNS has not committed itself to asking such a question.

⁶ R. Scott Sheffield, "Of Pure European Descent and of the White Race: Recruitment Policy and Aboriginal Canadians, 1939-1945" *Canadian Military History* 5, no 1 (1996): 9.

⁷ Rob Innes, "Indian Veterans: Honouring the Experience" Report for Chief Poundmaker Historical Centre Archival Research Project (Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan, 1997) 24.

⁸ National Archives of Canada. (NA) Record of the Department of Indian Affairs (R. G. 10) vol. 6764, file 4536, pt 2.

TABLE ONE

Saskatchewan Indian Enlistment According to the
Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Missionary Record⁹

Agency	Indian Affairs	Indian Missionary Record
Battleford	33	42
Crooked Lakes	54	45
Duck Lake	49	46
Touchwood	30	33
File Hills	55	49
Onion Lake	8	9
Qu'Appelle	38	36
Pelly	46	50
Carlton	79	76
Total	392	386

TABLE TWO

Number of Indian Enlistments From
Crooked Lake Agency¹⁰

Reserve	Number of enlistees
Cowessess	50
Sakimay	5
Ochapowace	10
Kahkewistahaw	5
Total	70

⁹ The Indian Affairs' figures were released on 28 May, 1945. The *Indian Missionary Record* figures were displayed in the March 1944 issue.

¹⁰ *Whitewood History* 12; George Acoose. Personal interview, Sakimay reserve, 10 Jan. 1999.

seventy men enlisted, fifty of whom originated from one of the four reserves in the agency.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Department's records are important because they provide the baseline number of Indian recruits as 3,090 status Indians who enlisted in the Second World War.¹² In Saskatchewan, the Department records show 443 status Indian recruits, twenty-two of whom were women.¹³ The number of Indians killed or wounded from Saskatchewan and Canada is said to have been twenty-seven, and 213 respectively.¹⁴ Fred Gaffen, however, states that there were over 220 Indians killed in the Second World War.¹⁵ The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states that if "casualty rates among Metis and non-Status Indian were comparable [to status Indians], Aboriginal deaths during the Second World War would have reached 500."¹⁶ Granted that it is impossible to determine the exact number of Aboriginal enlistees, a rough estimate may be achieved by using Indian Affairs records, local histories, Aboriginal veterans' testimony and the assumption that the Metis had a similar number of enlistees as Indians. Based on these sources there were, conservatively speaking, about 1000 Saskatchewan Aboriginal enlistees, over 900 of whom returned after the war.

Reasons for Aboriginal enlistment in the war service vary. Davison asserts that the main reason for enlisting was economic. She states that "considering the poverty on reserve and the initially slow recovery of the economy from the depression years, service pay was very attractive."¹⁷ Also soldiers' wives were eligible for Dependents' Allowance. A wife would be eligible to collect a "possible

¹¹ *Whitewood History* n.a. n.p n.d. located at the Broadview Museum, Broadview, SK, 12

¹² Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report, 1945.

¹³ Alastair Sweeney, "Government Policy and Saskatchewan Indian Veterans: A Brief History of Canadian Government's Treatment of Indian Veterans of the Two World War" (Ottawa: Tyler, Wright & Daniel Ltd., 1979) 51.

¹⁴ Sweeny 51.

¹⁵ Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985)

¹⁶ RCAP 570.

¹⁷ Davison 128.

total of \$55.00 and up to \$ 79.00 or more” a month.¹⁸ Davison states that “Indian men were reminded of this special benefit by both Recruiting officers and the Indian Agents assisting them.”¹⁹ Dempsey argues that the Indians’ “sense of loyalty to the King of England was a strong inducement to participate in the war effort.”²⁰ These were no doubt factors in the decision to enlist, but Aboriginal veterans, like non-Aboriginal veterans, had many different reasons for enlisting.

It has been suggested that all Indians on active services were volunteers. For example, Patricia Deiter in her biography of Chief Walter Deiter states that the “treaty negotiations included an oral provision that all Treaty Indians were exempt from conscription into foreign wars, therefore all Indian soldiers joined the effort as volunteers.”²¹ There were treaty Indians who were drafted and did not volunteer. In 1940, the government introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) which called for Canadians over sixteen years of age to put their names in a national register. The medical information in the national register was used to determine the eligibility of each potential recruit. According to Stevenson, if “a registrant was medically fit, a Registrar issued an order for military training requiring the recruit to report to a designated Army Reception Depot for mandatory NRMA duty.”²² A three member board would meet on a regular basis to assess whether applicants military training should be postponed. Although all NRMA men had to take military training, the choice to go overseas was voluntary. Once in the army, however, many recruits felt intense pressure to volunteer.²³ Stevenson thoroughly details the Indian opposition to this legislation. In January 1945, the Canadian government determined

¹⁸ Davison 128.

¹⁹ Davison 128

²⁰ James Dempsey, “Alberta’s Indians and the Second World War,” in *For King and Country: Alberta in the Second World War*, ed. Ken Tingley (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1995) 39.

²¹ Patricia Deiter, “A Biography of Chief Walter P. Deiter” (M. A. Thesis, University of Regina, 1997) 56.

²² Stevenson 207.

²³ Innes 25.

that only Indians from Treaties 3, 6, 8, 10 were exempt from the NRMA.²⁴ Of course Indians already in the military through the NRMA had to stay in service. In addition, considering the Indian opposition to conscription, there is rarely any mention in the historical literature of Indian deserters. For example, George Acoose states that two Indians from his reserve deserted the military.²⁵ Therefore, even though the majority of Indians volunteered for the army, the notion that all Indians did so is a myth. This myth has been easily accepted as it fits with the image of Indians as warriors.

Aboriginal Veterans Return Home

Though the returning Aboriginal veterans had learned combat skills, these skills were not transferable to civilian employment. The types of jobs the veterans held when they returned from the war reflected their level of work experience prior to the war. Many veterans returned not only to the same jobs they had had prior to the war, but also to the same living conditions. For a number of reasons many veterans soon decided to leave their communities. Some found life at home slow and uneventful, some were unable to find work and saw better opportunities elsewhere, and some felt that being an Aboriginal veteran alienated them from other community members. Whereas prior to the war, Aboriginal people did not travel far from their home communities, after the war, veterans were more apt to travel. What becomes apparent is that Aboriginal veterans in the early post-war years were not involved in the public sphere, such as politics, in the Aboriginal communities.

Prior to the war, Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan mainly made their living as seasonal unskilled labour. The types of work available varied between the

²⁴Stevenson 224.

north and the south. In the north, employment of Aboriginal people tended to be logging, cutting firewood, trapping, and hunting. In some communities, such as Cumberland House, farming was also a means of subsistence. For the veterans in the south, farm work, hunting, fishing and relief work were the important sources of income in the 1930s. Before the war, then, whether they lived in the north or south Aboriginal people earned their livelihood by unskilled labour-intensive occupations. In addition, due to the non-motorized transportation and high cost of travel, Aboriginal people seldom traveled more than thirty or forty miles from their homes in search of work.

The jubilation and high expectations for better times heralded by the end of the war turned to frustration and disappointment for returning Aboriginal veterans. Upon their arrival home the veterans saw little improvement in the living conditions of Aboriginal people. The modernization occurring in Canadian society after the war was not as quick to happen in Aboriginal communities. This returning veteran recalled relatively modest improvements to his family's standard of living: "There was no change. There was only, ah you know, they had a little better living 'cause we went overseas and they got money, eh, to live on, eh. You know, they built houses to the best of their ability and they bought furniture and they were well dressed, you know, at least that's what I saw, you know. The kids were going to school were well dressed."²⁶

There were at least three reasons why Aboriginal veterans did not benefit from the post-war economy. First, Aboriginal veterans lacked work experience. Second, which is related to their lack of experience, was the racism that Aboriginal people still encountered which prevented them from gaining access to new employment sectors. Finally, many Aboriginal veterans did not actively attempt to enter the work force as they concentrated on readjusting to civilian life. As a part of

²⁵ George Acoose, personal interview, Sakimay reserve, 10 Jan. 1999.

readjusting to civilian life, many veterans chose to travel extensively throughout North America and not to secure permanent employment .

After the veterans were discharged from the service their income fell dramatically. As the war industries decreased production, the difficulty of obtaining employment increased for all veterans, including Aboriginal veterans. In addition, any new industries created in the post-war years were located in the urban areas far from many Aboriginal communities. Few job opportunities, combined with the lack of work experience, meant Aboriginal veterans' choices in employment were limited to low paying unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. The description of finding employment after the war provided by a veteran from Crooked Lake area is typical among Aboriginal veterans: "Well, there was no jobs really to speak of. But I was fortunate enough to be able to work with my uncle who was digging wells. So it was in February 1955 that we dug our last well and we had no more wells to dig. No more employment of any type."²⁷

The lack of work experience prevented many Aboriginal veterans from participating in the growing economy of post-war Canada. Benjamin Henry, a veteran originally from Fish Creek, Saskatchewan, explains that after the war "there was no money, just like before the war. I went on unemployment insurance after the war for a year and a half. I got \$12.00 for a week or so."²⁸ Many veterans found difficulty in gaining entry into the job market because of their lack of work experience. Henry states that veterans "were held back because you didn't have no experience." Aboriginal veterans were given training in many aspects of combat, but, as this veteran explains,

. . . my wife's brother . . . he was in Regina Rifles and he got wounded on D-Day on the 6th of June 1944. But when he come back he was no good for nothing cause his leg and he had no skills, eh. Same as me. Just worked out wherever he could get a job, part time roofing you

²⁶ An anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998

²⁷ Robert Stevenson, personal interview, Cowessess Reserve, 10 Nov. 1998.

²⁸ Ben Henry, personal interview, Prince Albert, 12 Jan. 1999

know, whatever, helping carpenters, working on farms, and you name it. And that's the way we were. Wherever we went, we tried to get a job - it didn't matter what the hell type of job, we took it, you know, not much money but we had to make a living.²⁹

Although Aboriginal men were noted for their abilities as soldiers, they were unable, for the most part, to transfer their military experience to permanent civilian employment immediately after the war. This veteran states, "you used to get odd jobs; you couldn't get a damn job you know, we were not qualified for nothing. How to soldier that's all."³⁰

Racism was also a factor that prevented or impeded Aboriginal veterans' entrance into the mainstream economy immediately after the war. Few Aboriginal veterans experienced racism while serving in war. In the service, Aboriginal veterans were "treated the same as everybody. There was no different treatment. Brothers in arms, they call it. We protected each other, we looked after each other over there."³¹ In the military, Aboriginal men experienced little racism. One veteran stated that the only time he was singled out as an Indian was from a Metis sergeant.

One time a sergeant made a remark there I don't know, if he was kidding or not, for he, himself was a Metis, but he said that while we were vacating a building. And the night before my brother and I and a few of us that were in that room and had a little party, eh? We hid our beer bottles under a hole in the wall and the floor, we put our beer bottles underneath there and we cleaned up. And we were on parade and the Sargeant Major said, "the two McLeods and Ross fall out" he said. So we fell out. And he said, "Go up there and clean up that mess you made last night". He just picked the three of us. A Metis and two Indians, eh? With other people involved but he didn't ... And he said, "there are only three Indians in the whole damn Canadian Army and I've got them all." (inaud) that remark. And he himself is a Metis.³²

That Aboriginal veterans had gained valuable experience in working with non-Aboriginal people led many Aboriginal veterans to believe they would be able to enjoy the benefits of post-war Canadian society. After the war, however, many

²⁹ An anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998

³⁰ An anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998

³¹ Nathan Settee, personal interview, Cumberland House, 26 Aug. 1998.

³² Gilbert Mcleod, personal interview, Regina, 17 Aug.

Aboriginal veterans found that the negative attitudes that local Euro-Canadians held about Aboriginal people had not changed since before the war. For many Aboriginal veterans it was as if their contribution to the war effort was meaningless to the non-Aboriginal population. The racism they experienced was an exclusion from employment in the nearest town: “. . . as long as you’re on the reserve the nearest town won’t have anything to do with you. They just regard you as nothing. And that’s how we were treated. We were just another Indian. If my father did not have a farm I would have nothing to do. That’s another thing, discrimination in jobs. When we were discharged they told us that we would get first choice of any job at all. But that was impossible, I mean you go out and I’ve been rejected so many times . . .”³³

Many veterans did not try to enter the local economy but instead decided they had to leave their communities. In the Little Red River area all veterans except for one remained in the community. According to Isiah Halkett, the veteran who remained, the other veterans “needed to find something that they could not find at home.”³⁴ Prior to the war Aboriginal people may have traveled as far as thirty to forty miles to find work. One veteran, for example, explained that a person who traveled to Regina from Lebret was considered rich since most people only traveled by horse and buggy.³⁵ Many Aboriginal people traveled from farm to farm in search of work by illegally hopping freight trains.³⁶ During the war Aboriginal veterans traveled thousands of miles throughout Canada, North America, Europe and Asia and became accustomed to traveling great distances. As a result, traveling afar for work or for adventure was familiar to Aboriginal veterans in the post-war period. In addition, the greater access to motorized transportation and the lower cost of traveling after 1945 meant that leaving their communities was a more realistic option than it

³³ 1998McLeod interview.

³⁴ Isiah Halkett, Little Red River reserve, 19 Mar. 1999.

³⁵ An anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu’Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998

had been prior to the war. For example, Gabriel Dorian, a veteran from Cumberland House, went to work at logging camps in Ontario because there “were no logs here in them days. You had to go out someplace else to make a living.”³⁷

Veterans decided to leave their communities for many reasons other than the lack of employment opportunities and the frustration with the living conditions. For one thing there was the lack of excitement in veterans’ home communities. A typical pattern for returning veterans is explained by this Metis veteran from Glen Mary:

Living conditions in Glen Mary were the same. Came home - stayed home helped dad on the farm. Things were starting to look up when we got back but things didn’t look up for a couple of years after we got back. I worked on the farm. Ended up at Prince George for two years. I went there for logging. Lots of northern Saskatchewan boys went there. After B.C., came home for 2-3 weeks. That’s it - can’t stay, gotta go. I had the, I don’t know, that wandering feeling. I couldn’t stay home.³⁸

Another veteran recalls that he was seventeen in 1943 when he enlisted in the War and was not quite twenty-one when he was discharged in 1946. He speaks of the awesome fright he experienced in active combat. His fear was beyond belief. Of his return to Saskatchewan he said, “I didn’t believe I was home until I got to see my folks. I said to myself, ‘I’m on home ground now. I’m safe.’”³⁹ Nevertheless, he asks, “as a young person, how do you regain the kind of excitement that you get when you’re in a war? You can’t. Your life is pretty much downhill after that.”⁴⁰ He soon left home for almost two years and toured across North America with the Wilf Carter band.

Another reason that led Aboriginal veterans to leave their communities was the tension that existed between some community members and the veterans. Veterans’ benefits, for example, were a cause of resentment by community members

³⁶ Edwin Pelletier, personal interview, Cowessess Reserve, 10 Jan. 1999.

³⁷ Gabriel Dorian, personal interview, Cumberland House, 25 August, 1998

³⁸ Charlie Umperville, personal interview, Prince Albert, 12 Jan. 1999.

³⁹ Claude Adams, personal interview, Prince Albert, 11 Jan. 1999.

against veterans. Indian veterans were eligible to acquire lands on reserves through the Veterans' Lands Act (VLA).⁴¹ Gordon Ahenakew describes the reaction from some people on his reserve when he was granted lands through the VLA: "They really didn't understand 'cause I got land uh. I got my 35 acres and they didn't have anything. They were jealous of that. They would say, 'Why should you get it.' They didn't know. They would say, 'Ah hell, why should you get land.' They just didn't understand."⁴² On another reserve, a veteran was given land through the VLA but eventually gave up his farm because his neighbour continually allowed his animals to graze on the veteran's crops.⁴³ Lands the veterans had received through the VLA and subsequently abandoned because of community pressure reverted back to the band without compensation given to the veterans.

In addition, some veterans who stayed in their communities experienced some difficulty integrating back into life of the community. One veteran tells how living in isolation from other community members helped him "fit" into the community:

There was no problem fitting in. But my family lived out in the bush. We were hermits and that's where we lived out in the bush all the time. So like we called it the mountain and it was all solid bush in one area. My family had already lived that way down there but we had a house out in the prairie too but they lived away back in the bush and that's where I lived too for quite a while before anything else happened.⁴⁴

Whether physically or mentally, many veterans felt isolated from other community members, and this led many to leave their communities.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Adams interview.

⁴¹ The Veterans Lands Act was administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and was established to help returning soldiers to readjust to civilian life. Veterans had to meet certain criteria to be eligible for up to a quarter section of land, a grant of up to \$2,320 plus a loan up to \$6,000. Indian veterans, because they were subject to the *Indian Act*, could own lands only on reserve and were not eligible for the \$ 6,000 loan. See Sweeny; Native Law Centre, "Indian Veterans' Rights" (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1979). A discussion of the VLA will follow later in the chapter.

⁴² Ahenakew interview.

⁴³ Pelletier interview.

⁴⁴ Anderson interview.

⁴⁵ Anderson interview.

Once they returned home, many veterans felt a bitterness not felt prior to the war. Some veterans were angered about the oppression they were forced to endure as Aboriginal people in Canada. Even though Indian veterans fought to eliminate oppression in Europe, some felt a sense of alienation from their reserves in Canada. There was much animosity directed towards the veterans in their home communities which has not been recorded in the secondary literature. Gordon Ahenakew states he experienced jealousy from band members: "I was given some land, but the reserve people were very jealous. The people were very jealous of us veterans. Since that time I have had the impression that the reserve people did not want me, they resented me, still today it had not changed. The conditions then and now have not improved."⁴⁶ In addition, Indian veterans were still subjected to the *Indian Act* and to the discretionary powers of the Indian agent. As a result, their frustration towards the government was compounded: "Sometimes . . . especially at that age when I came back. I was bitter against the Indian agent, the *Indian Act*, the government. . . . it's almost you know funny how a freedom loving people . . . we were closed in here, simply closed in."⁴⁷ For other veterans the amount of death and destruction they saw in the war made them cynical and bitter. "I came home very bitter. I had religious training. I was going to become a minister but I came home bitter. I felt I could make my mark in the entertainment field."⁴⁸ It seems probable that their acrimony also contributed to the veterans' alienation from other community members. Some veterans used alcohol to assuage their bitterness and pain, others simply left their communities.

With the difficulty of finding gainful employment, many veterans simply returned to the same type of work they had had prior to war. The increase in fur prices was an incentive for returning veterans in the Cumberland House area to

⁴⁶ Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, *We Were There* (Saskatoon: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 1989)13.

⁴⁷ Ahenakew interview.

resume trapping. While the men were in the war, Aboriginal women replaced them as trappers. The increase in fur prices meant that Aboriginal women, unlike women in the war industry, were not immediately sent home after the war. One veteran describes the trapping at that time as not only being lucrative but also open to both genders:

Muskrat trapping was good. Muskrats were five/six dollars apiece and most of the . . . and even the girls got fifteen hundred muskrats at five dollars a piece, eh? Some of them got two thousand muskrats. They were so goddamn rich after they finished trapping like they just throw their equipment, tents away - the hell with it. They come back they had too much money. Oh, the crazy nut. That's the time we came back.⁴⁹

Jobs such as farming, construction, and logging also provided some work for returning veterans. Even then, few veterans were fortunate to obtain permanent jobs. As one veteran explains: "There was a little bit of construction jobs and mostly logging. Logging was kind of a big thing. My brothers went into logging and then of course they were working on the railroad. One guy got a permanent job on the railroad. He stayed there for about four years and then I don't know what happened."⁵⁰

It has been claimed that the military experience taught Aboriginal veterans a new work ethic that they used in the postwar years.⁵¹ The implication is that Aboriginal veterans' highly valued military performance was due to the strict military training they received and to their close contact with Euro-Canadians. Dempsey, writing about Alberta Indians, states that as a result of their military experience, "the government acknowledged that the war had helped bring natives into their own, by broadening the outlook on life for Indians who had served overseas, as well as on the homefront. The government further believed that this change [in the

⁴⁸ Adams interview.

⁴⁹ Charles Fosseneuve, personal interview, Cumberland House, 24 Aug. 1998

⁵⁰ Frank Tomkins, personal interview, Saskatoon, 16 Oct. 1998.

⁵¹ Dempsey 49.

Aboriginal veteran] indicated a willingness to understand and to get to know the white man's ways better through education."⁵²

There are two main problems with this position. First, it does not recognize that the Canadian public's attitude toward Aboriginal people, especially Indians, changed after the war. This notion will be expanded on later in this chapter. Second, and more importantly, although there can be little doubt that the military experience had an impact on Aboriginal veterans, this position does not acknowledge the work ethic Aboriginal people possessed prior to the war. Many Aboriginal veterans themselves accept the notion that the military experience contributed to their work ethic. Indeed most would agree with Nathan Settee, who states that the army taught him "not to be lazy."⁵³ This sentiment is indicative of a veteran's modesty. Before the war, Settee worked in the bush as a fisherman, trapper, and logger. Working in the bush requires patience, resolve and physical and mental strength to endure long hours in harsh conditions. Clearly the type of work Aboriginal people were involved in prior to the war required discipline, independence and a strong work ethic.

Some veterans, while not discounting their military experience, dismiss the idea that the military instilled in them a new attitude toward working: "[w]ell, I guess this was a continuation for me because [before the war] I had to get up in the morning to feed the horses, feed the cows, milk the cows. So our time was set. These things had to be done at a certain time. I guess it was at the beginning of my discipline, just the army took over and compounding it, I guess."⁵⁴ Another veteran, thankful for what he learned in the army, stresses that any success he had after the war was not due to his army experience but to hard work:

You had to work hard at it because we never had an education per se and we had to work hard at what we did and that's how we got by, you

⁵² Dempsey 49.

⁵³ Settee interview.

⁵⁴ Stevenson interview.

know. It takes a lot of hard work to get where we're at. I mean, a person has to work to make it. You can't sit back and wait for somebody to bring something to you and say "There it is, it's all done." It's not, I don't care who you are, everybody has to do something and put a great deal of effort into it.⁵⁵

The discipline that Aboriginal veterans took with them to the military undoubtedly helped them to become adept soldiers.

Generally speaking, veterans' employment choices were very limited. Low paying, labour-intensive jobs were the only ones available to most veterans. This was a time when veterans knew that there was little chance of obtaining a job and that the government offered little help. As a result, the veterans took whatever jobs they could find. As Gordon Ahenakew states about his job of digging up roads with an axe, "I had no choice. I had to do that to survive. I got married. I had to put some food on the table."⁵⁶

The lack of employment in the private sector forced some Metis veterans into social services rehabilitation schemes. To understand the context in which the rehabilitation of the Metis was grounded, it is important to recall the philosophical ideas espoused by the CCF government. Though the CCF was billed as the first socialist government in North America, in reality it had relinquished most of its ties to the socialist ideology in return for election victory. When the party was elected it completely deserted the rest of its socialism in favour of a reformist platform.⁵⁷ As Dobbin states, the CCF was "a party supported by socialists, but never socialist" itself.⁵⁸ The party did not provide a class analysis of Canadian society nor attempt to challenge the market economy within Saskatchewan. In fact, according to Barron, the CCF's philosophy was actually meant to strengthen the economy "by curbing

⁵⁵ Anderson interview.

⁵⁶ Ahenakew interview.

⁵⁷ Barron labels this liberal reformist or populist. L. Barron *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 1997) 48. Dobbin calls it social reformism, Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris: Metis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Vancouver, New Star Books, 1981) 166.

vested interests that prevented small businesses from being competitive.”⁵⁹ Yet many members of the CCF, especially Douglas, also embraced the Social Gospel doctrine of Christian Humanitarianism. This doctrine held that adherents should strive to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth, uphold the value of cooperation, oppose competition and reject the notion of survival of the fittest.⁶⁰

In 1944, the CCF government decided to continue the Green Lake Metis farm colony ‘experiment’ and expand it to southern Saskatchewan.⁶¹ The Metis farm colony experiment was seen as the cornerstone of the rehabilitation of the Metis. Along with the farm colonies, the Metis rehabilitation program also included the development of co-operative programs and educational initiatives, such as new schools for Metis children. The goal of the CCF’s Metis rehabilitation policy was to assimilate the Metis to the culture of the dominant society.⁶² The dominant society’s cultural belief, according to Dobbin, was firmly rooted in values and beliefs of the farming middle class and not of socialism.⁶³ The central Metis farm in southern Saskatchewan was located at Lebret in the Fort Qu’Appelle area. There were eight Metis veterans among the ten families who worked on the Lebret farm. The veterans were in need of jobs and thought the Metis farms offered stable permanent employment. This veteran explains why he went to work on the farm:

Well, there was no jobs in the winter and you know there was no unemployment insurance, you know, we never had that. So there was an opportunity I thought I’d go and try it, you know. But it was no damn good. Oh, that was about in the forties - late forties. I went up there for six months and we worked for seventy five dollars a month, ten hours a day, and they give us an old house there. Well, it was a house, outside toilet, we had to haul our own water, you know, cut our own wood, everything. And they had a white guy running it. We raised the chickens and we had to buy our damn eggs, we raised the pork and we

⁵⁸ Dobbin 166.

⁵⁹ Dobbin 166.

⁶⁰ F. L. Barron, “The CCF and the Development of Metis Colonies” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10, 2 (1990):

⁶¹ Barron 250.

⁶² Rob Innes, “‘Experiment with the Metis’: Metis Rehabilitation and the Media, 1945-1955” *Saskatchewan History* (Forthcoming): 1.

⁶³ Dobbin 166.

butchered it and we had to buy the damn pork, we milked the cows and separated the cream and everything and we had to buy the cream. And then by the time you finished you got about thirty five bucks out of the seventy five dollars - we got seventy five dollars a month, you know. And they took half - over half away again. They had a deal with the storekeeper in Lebret, Mr. McLennon, you know we go charge up, eh. You get that cheque, he'd take that cheque. You'd get a dollar maybe and that was it, yeah. Well, what the hell, you work like a damn slave you know, breaking land. You're on that damn clay track all day you know dusty, and breaking, and burning brush and you had to milk cows. Sunday morning you'd milk ten, twelve cows had to milk, you know. Who knows where the damn money went. Then we had some prize bulls we'd take them up to Yorkton and they'd be sold and we don't know where the hell the money went . . . It went to the government, eh.⁶⁴

That the Metis had no input into how the farms operated led directly to the farmers' failure. Many of the Metis left the farm because of the deplorable working conditions. Yet some worked on the farm for as long as they could, but when "they were too old they kicked them off the farm and put them on welfare. Now that don't make sense to me, does it?"⁶⁵ The farms failed to integrate Metis into the mainstream and left many dependent on welfare. Though the government promoted its policy objectives through the co-ops, the Metis viewed the co-ops differently than the government. The Metis knew how to make the farms succeed: "See what the government could have done is give us the farm and make a co-op out of it."⁶⁶ Instead of allowing the Metis to run the co-op operations, the government's paternalistic attitude prevented it from entrusting that responsibility to the Metis.

In historical accounts Aboriginal veterans' readjustment to civilian life has uniformly been described as a positive experience for the veterans and their communities. Davison, for example states that "Indian veterans were welcomed back wholeheartedly to their communities. Receptions and feasts were organized to honour the returning men, as well as the older First World War veterans. They were

⁶⁴ Anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998.

⁶⁵ Anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998.

⁶⁶ Anonymous veteran, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 Dec. 1998. The comment is interesting because, even though the government touted the farms as co-operatives, evidently the Metis did not view them as such.

given an opportunity to recount their experiences, the close calls they had survived, and the places they had seen.”⁶⁷ Davison’s unsubstantiated statement portrays a romanticized idea reminiscent of Indian warrior societies of the nineteenth century. This criticism is not to suggest that no Aboriginal community honoured its returning veterans with feasts, dances and memorials, but Davison’s depiction obscures the diversity of experience. In effect, Davison overgeneralizes Aboriginal veterans’ return home based on stereotypical images.

In Saskatchewan, different communities reacted differently to their returning veterans. In Cumberland House, where over fifty men enlisted, the community celebrated by building a hall in honour of the veterans.⁶⁸ Another veteran states that his reserve “welcomed us back with open arms. They were glad to have us back, and that sort of stuff.”⁶⁹ Conversely, on Cowessess reserve, where almost fifty people enlisted, there were no celebrations for the returning veterans.⁷⁰ Howard Anderson, the present Grand Chief of the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans’ Association (SFNVA) states that celebrations for returning veterans on his reserve were lacking: “. . . one thing they were talking about at the Band the other day. They were asking if something has ever been done for Gordons’ [Reserve] veterans. I said, ‘no nothing was ever done.’ I says, ‘we just come home, we done our thing and that was it.’”⁷¹ These examples of Aboriginal veterans’ return home challenge preconceived ideas held about Aboriginal people. The difference in responses by community members was normally expected in most communities, but Aboriginal communities are not portrayed as being diverse communities: all community members and all communities are portrayed in a facile manner. A comprehensive study to explain why communities and community members reacted differently to

⁶⁷ Davison 172.

⁶⁸ Solomon Goulet, personal interview, Cumberland House, 25 Aug. 1998.

⁶⁹ Mcleod interview.

⁷⁰ George Redwood, personal interview, Cowessess reserve, 10 Nov. 1998.

⁷¹ Anderson interview.

their returning veterans would facilitate further understanding of twentieth-century Aboriginal communities. What is known from surviving veterans is that community reaction was a contributing factor in Aboriginal veterans' decision to stay or leave their communities.

For most Aboriginal veterans readjustment did not include becoming involved in political activity. It appears that Aboriginal veterans' efforts to readjust to civilian life were confined to the private and not the political sphere.

Veterans As Symbol Of Progress

Goodwill and Sluman, in their biography *John Tootoosis*, state that Indian veterans

had enjoyed equality in the various branches of the armed forces; they were far more worldly, sophisticated and outspoken than they would ever have been without the military experience. They would add new impetus and drive into the Indian and Metis organizations.⁷²

Their statement suggests that the military provided Aboriginal veterans with new experiences and that the veterans were able to transfer those experiences into immediate social and political activism. Aboriginal veterans, however, for the most part were initially concerned with personal adjustment rather than community needs. Contrary to the conventional view, Aboriginal veterans' role in Indian and Metis organizations immediately after the war was minimal. However, the presence of Indian veterans in the newspaper reports did add indirect support to a new era in the Indian rights' movement.

The media coverage of Indian participation in the war transformed the popular image of Indians and helped Canadians to develop an attitude of acceptance towards them. In Canada, prior to the war, the newspapers infrequently carried

⁷² Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, *John Tootoosis* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1992) 185.

stories about Indians. When an article did appear, it most often depicted the image of Indians as nineteenth rather than twentieth-century people. A series of newspaper articles in the 1930s were in this vein. In 1934, for example, an article reported that Saskatchewan Indians, unlike other people of the Depression, required little government relief. The report stated that since “Indians subsist on hunting, trapping and fishing and live under canvas tents the year round, no calls for aid from the federal government were made.”⁷³ Another article in 1935, reminded readers of the 1875 Battle of Little Bighorn between the Lakota and American cavalry. The article told the readers that killing of General Custer by the Lakota was accidental and therefore was sympathetic towards Indians. However, the article was typical of newspaper reports that focussed on the images of nineteenth-century Indians while ignoring the concerns and reality Indians of twentieth century.⁷⁴ A 1937 article detailed how the ancient “Indian Rain Dance” at the Pasqua reserve was recorded in a movie.⁷⁵ An article in the *Dalhousie Review*, written by the last living signatory of Treaty 6, described the Treaty signing. This article reiterated the previous century’s stereotype that “by nature many of the redmen were treacherous.”⁷⁶ All these articles preserved the images of the nineteenth-century Indian. During the 1930s only one article appeared in the *Regina Leader-Post* that described Indians as belonging in a twentieth-century context.⁷⁷

Because of the Indians’ participation in the war, their image, as portrayed in newspapers, changed during the course of the war. Whereas the print media of the 1930s portrayed Indians as nineteenth-century caricatures, the same media in the 1940s informed Canadians about Indians’ contributions to a twentieth-

⁷³ “Indians Need Little Relief: Murison Back After Inspection of All Indian agencies” *Regina Leader-Post* 14 August 1934: 1.

⁷⁴ “Indians say Massacre Mistake” *Regina Leader-Post* 25 June 1935: 1.

⁷⁵ “Indian Rain Dance Gets Spot in History as Reginans Film Big Annual Celebration” *Regina Leader-Post* 8 June 1937: 1.

⁷⁶ John Andrew Kerr, “The Indian Treaties of 1876” *Dalhousie Review* 17 (1937): 191.

century war. Though the media still focused on stereotypical images of Indians, these images were now seen as beneficial to the war effort and therefore worthy of praise. For example, in 1941, an article in the *Dalhousie Review* discussed the sacrifices Indians from across the country had made to the war effort, both on the homefront and at the front lines.⁷⁸ The article highlighted the difference in the media's treatment of Indians before and during the war. In the 1937 *Dalhousie Review* article, Poundmaker was described as troublesome and unreliable, and Big Bear was considered a savage and a "no good Indian."⁷⁹ The 1941 *Dalhousie Review* article described these men's abilities in a more positive light. The author stated that the "Cree Indians of the Mistawasis band of Carlton Agency, whose fathers fought the whites when Big Bear and Poundmaker hit the war-trail, have already sent many of their sons overseas . . ."⁸⁰ The pre-war images of Indians in the newspapers continued after the war. Traits that were despised and feared prior to the war, however, became something to be admired after the war. "Red riders of the plains, the restless blood of buffalo-hunting fathers still stirring in their veins, were quick to take up Hitler's challenge. Hardly had war-drums sounded ere a big green truck, bristling with flags and draped with patriotic bunting, was driven at reckless speed by a dusky driver into Saskatoon. From nearby reserves tumbled a score of brawny braves, whooping defiance at Hitler and seeking the nearest recruiting office."⁸¹ In other articles, Indians were applauded for enlisting in the war and for their good disposition:

It is not with a fanfare of drums that the Indians go to the recruiting posts. They are diffident, shy, reticent to a degree, but they get there. They may be seen "over there" with the first contingent; they may be seen on the way over there; at the training camps in Canada, grand boys doing a good job, and taking it all as another day, but to them always a

⁷⁷ "Seek Indian Section at Sanitarium: Indians also protest Method for Appealing in Fund Disputes" *Regina Leader-Post* 5 August, 1937: 5.

⁷⁸ Peter Gosell, "Our 'First Canadians' Do Their Bit" *The Dalhousie Review* 21, 3 (1941): 287-292

⁷⁹ Kerr 191-194.

⁸⁰ Gosell 288-289.

⁸¹ Gosell 289.

great day . . . [Their work] is one of a constant flow of effort, and an effort, say the authorities that well merits approbation from all the people of Saskatchewan.⁸²

As a result of the Indian contribution to the war effort and the newspapers' coverage, the Canadian public attitude towards Indian people began to shift in this period. Nonetheless, this new attitude towards Indians was still animated by nineteenth-century images.

Ronald Haycock characterizes the image of Indians portrayed in popular magazines between 1930 and 1960 as being influenced by social humanitarianism.⁸³ He states that at the same time the magazine writers became more aware of the Indians' improvised social position, writers "were more interested in the facets of [the Indians'] life, culture, art and well-being. These had hithertofore hardly attracted attention. Canadians read that the Indian could still play an active and, indeed, an honourable role in society, even though he had to suffer a depression and fight in another war to prove it."⁸⁴ Because Haycock lumps the pre-war period and the post-war period together, he fails to detect the difference of the image of Indians in media before and after the war. He states for example, "that writers also wanted society to be efficient. This efficiency meant reform and Indian Affairs was a prime place to do this. Canadians were acutely aware of their complicity in the disintegration of the Indian culture. Many were beginning to explore the native with a whole new conviction as they shed many of the old concepts in the new."⁸⁵ The changes in the attitude of the media and of the Canadian public clearly occurred after the war.

⁸² "Red Men's Sons Share in Fight of Native Land" *Regina Leader-Post* 6 Sept. 1941: 16.

⁸³ Ronald Haycock, *The Image of the Indian: The Canadian Indian as a Subject and a Concept in a Sampling of the Popular National Magazines read in Canada, 1900-1970* (Waterloo, ON: Waterloo Lutheran University Monograph Series no. 1, 1971) 28.

⁸⁴ Haycock 28.

⁸⁵ Haycock 28.

After the war, the newspapers made Canadians aware of Indians' substandard living conditions.⁸⁶ Canadians recognized that the treatment of Indians disconcertingly resembled the treatment of minorities in Nazi Germany. J. R. Miller has noted,

[a]fter all, in the midst of a war against institutionalized racism and barbarity, it was impossible not to notice that the bases of Canadian Indian policy lay in assumptions about the moral and economic inferiority of particular racial groupings. The horrors of war seriously discomfited Canadians when, on rare occasions, they looked at the way in which they treated the Aboriginal peoples of their country.⁸⁷

According to Meijer Drees, newspapers had published opinion polls that “heralded that 85% of Canadians surveyed believed Canadian Indians had come into their own, and had equal rights to their non-Indian fellow citizens.”⁸⁸ This figure may be suspect, but Canadians wanted change. As Meijer Drees concludes, rather “than see Indian peoples become or remain State-dependent, citizens wanted government to press for ‘improvement’ of Indian peoples by giving them work.”⁸⁹ The media advanced the idea that Indians had “progressed” to a stage where they were ready to be treated as equals. The Indian veterans in the Canadian public’s mind came to epitomize the “progressive Indian.”

Indian participation in the war effort was one of the major justifications used by the media to expound the position that Indians should be treated equally to other Canadians. An article in *Saturday Night* magazine in 1946 plainly employed this line of reasoning. The author argued against the notion that Indians were backward and used the Indian performance in the war to support his argument. He stated: “Enough of them performed useful services on wartime production lines,

⁸⁶ “A task for the White man” *Regina Leader-Post* 23 Mar 1946: 11; “Indians treated Cruelly Charged” *Regina Leader-Post* 10 Nov. 1947: 3; “More Initiative Indians’ need” *Regina Leader-Post* 1 Sept. 1948: 3; “Self-help for the Indians” *Regina Leader-Post* 7 Dec. 1948: 11.

⁸⁷ J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heaven: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 324.

⁸⁸ Laurie Meijer Drees, “A History of The Indian Association of Alberta” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Calgary, 1997) 194-195.

⁸⁹ Meijer Drees 195.

enough of them served with distinction in the forces to prove that they can work as well and endure the discipline to as great an extent as their white brothers.”⁹⁰

Another article in the *Regina Leader-Post* in 1947 cited a newsletter that had been recently published by the Royal Bank of Canada, which stated that the Indian population had increased some 11.7 percent in ten years.⁹¹ This fact was used to illustrate to readers that Indians should not be considered a vanishing race anymore. The article went on to say that Indians of Canada were entitled to the same privileges as other Canadian citizens “not for any sentimental reasons - but on the grounds of justice and merit.” The author said of Indians: “In times of emergency, they have often shown their value to the community. Indian veterans both in the First and in the Second World Wars, the Canadian Indian proved himself a loyal citizen and a good soldier.”⁹² A year later, an article described the File Hills farming success of ten Indian veterans from Peepeekisis reserve. The Indian veterans were said to “all have demonstrated their ability to make a success of their farms.”⁹³ This article implicitly linked the veterans’ military experience to their successes in farming and described these men as an example of the Indian veterans becoming progressive. Being represented as “progressive” made the Indians deserving of rights equal to other Canadians. In the patriotic context of post-war Canada, it was much easier for Canadians to accept Indian veterans and Indian people as equals than it had been prior to the war. The media had a role in creating that new acceptance.

Indians Veterans And The Creation Of USI

The creation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI) is an example of Aboriginal veterans indirectly affecting the social and political environment of Saskatchewan. According to James Pitsula, the creation of the Union of

⁹⁰ J. C. Dent “New Deal for Indians Is Planned By M. P.” *Saturday Night* Mar. 1946.

⁹¹ Leslie Bishop “Restoring Indian Freedom” *Regina Leader-Post* 2 Aug. 1947.

⁹² Bishop *Regina Leader-Post* 2 Aug. 1947.

Saskatchewan Indians (USI) was due to “the increased political activism of Indian people caused by their participation in World War II and the support given the Indian cause by the Saskatchewan CCF government.”⁹⁴ Barron and Meijer Drees both disagree with Pitsula about the contribution of Indian veterans to the political activism of Indians in the post-war years. Barron, in his study of the CCF government’s Native policies from 1943 to 1961, states that the problem with Pitsula’s interpretation “is that it attributes the [creation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians in 1947] to short-term political activism in the Indian community during the postwar period and, by implication, gives equal weight to the importance of non-Natives.”⁹⁵ According to Barron, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that Saskatchewan Indians have consistently striven to organize politically since the 1880s. The formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians was in fact an example of the Douglas government “simply graft[ing] their own political agenda onto a pre-existing Indian movement.”⁹⁶ In her history of the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA), Meijer Drees asserts that, “[c]ontrary to the assertions of Pitsula and others,” the Second World War was not the most significant factor leading to political activism of Indians. In Alberta, the “Indian political movements were products of strong regional and specific community interests, and less national or pan-Indian in origin.”⁹⁷ Whereas Pitsula concludes that the post-war political consciousness among Saskatchewan Indian people was the direct result of the Second World War Indian veterans, Barron and Meijer Drees maintain that the political consciousness of Indians predated WW II.

If Barron’s and Meijer Drees’ arguments are accepted, the questions which follow are, “How did the war and its aftermath impact, if any, the political

⁹³ “Indian Veterans Capable Farmers” *Regina Leader-Post* 30 Sept. 1947: 2.

⁹⁴ James, Pitsula, “The CCF Government and the Formation of The Union of Saskatchewan Indians” *Prairie Forum* 19, no. 2 (1994): 131.

⁹⁵ Barron *Walking in Indian Moccasins* . . . 78.

⁹⁶ Barron *Walking in Indian Moccasins* . . . 79.

consciousness of Aboriginal veterans?” and “Did the veterans have an impact on the political climate of Saskatchewan?” Davison’s answer to this question is to link the creation of the USI to a “new confidence of Indian leaders” which was due “to the events of the war years.”⁹⁸ However, a review of how the Union of Saskatchewan Indians was created shows Davison’s assertion does not give the Indian leadership enough credit for their efforts. The creation of the USI was a continuation of the efforts by the established Indian political leaders to have their concerns addressed by the federal government. In these early post-war years, Indian veterans were passive participants in the changes occurring socially and politically, but as a symbol of the progressive Indian, they helped to legitimize the new organization and Indian rights in the Canadian public’s eye.

There is no evidence to support the claim that the Indian veterans’ Second World War experiences raised the political consciousness of the Indian people of Saskatchewan or that the veterans assumed leadership roles immediately after the war. In Saskatchewan, the leadership roles between 1945 and 1960 were not filled by Second World War veterans but by men such as Harry Ball, Joe Dreaver, John Gambler, John Henry, Dan Kennedy, John Tootoosis, and Abel Watetch, all of whom had been political leaders before and during the war. Though these men held widely divergent political opinions, ranging from John Tootoosis’s Indian nationalism to Dan Kennedy’s integrationism, all were prominent figures in Saskatchewan Indian political organizations. None of these men had enlisted in the Second World War, but it is significant to note that a number of these men were First World War veterans.

Of the five Indian political organizations noted by Davison that were formed in Saskatchewan between 1940 and 1949, only three existed at the end of war. These organizations, the Association of Saskatchewan Indians (ASI), the

⁹⁷ Meijer Drees 37.

Protection Association for Indians and Their Treaties (PAIT) and the Saskatchewan chapter of the North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB), had a long history of political activism.⁹⁹ Joseph Dreaver led ASI, John Gambler led PAIT and John Tootoosis led the Saskatchewan chapter of the NAIB. These leaders were experienced political men and had been able to garner a substantial following. Though some returning Indian veterans attended political meetings, they had no significant leadership role in any of these organizations.

In 1946, meetings were held that eventually led to the creation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI). On 4 January, 1946, a meeting was held in Regina with representatives from ASI and PAIT in which it was decided that the two organizations collaborate and fight for Indian rights. Another meeting to include the NAIB was scheduled for Duck Lake. That meeting, however, failed to create the desired unity. Therefore another meeting was scheduled in Saskatoon at the Barry Hotel on February 23 and 24, 1946 where delegates voted in favour of establishing the Union of Saskatchewan Indians.¹⁰⁰ John Tootoosis was elected president, John Gambler First vice-president, Ernest Goforth Second vice-president and Gladys Dreaver Secretary-Treasurer.¹⁰¹

In reporting the first meeting at Regina, the *Regina Leader-Post* indicated that "khaki uniforms were worn by a half dozen of the delegates. They had seen

⁹⁸ Davison 181.

⁹⁹ The ASI was the youngest of the three organizations but included men who had considerable political experience. Dan Kennedy was the chief organizer while its executive included Dreaver as President, and Hector and Eleanor Brass as vice-president and secretary-treasurer. PAIT was first established in 1923 and was known as the Allied Bands which consisted of the Piapot, Muscowpetung and Pasqua bands. The first leaders were Ben Pasqua and Andrew Gordon. In the 1930s, the Allied Bands changed its name to the Protection Association for Indians and Their Treaties and by the mid 1940s was being led by Chief John Gambler of Pasqua Reserve. John Tootoosis first became involved in politics when he heard Fred Loft, a veteran of the First World War and the founder of the League of Indians of Canada, speak at the League's annual meeting at Thunderchild Reserve in 1920. He became an organizer and by 1934 president of the League of Indians in Western Canada. With the demise of the League in 1942, Tootoosis attended a NAIB annual meeting in Ottawa and in 1943 formed the Saskatchewan branch of the organization. For a more detailed description of Saskatchewan Indian political organizations see Opekokew 28-36.

¹⁰⁰ Pitsula, 138-142

service in the Second Great War.”¹⁰² Pitsula uses this information to declare that the “[w]ar veterans were very much in evidence [in organizing the USI], underscoring the linkage between Indians’ political action and their wartime experiences.”¹⁰³ The image of the Indian veterans returning from the war to lead Indian political organizations fits nicely with the poetic image of the victorious warrior on the battlefield continuing the fight for freedom at home. However, to link Indian post-war political activities to Indian veterans’ wartime experience without any substantiation is not justified. Though the newspaper article does list David Bird, William Stonechild and Gerald Bird, all of File Hills reserve, as among the delegates, there is no indication in the article that any veterans emerged as leaders or even spoke at the meeting.

The newspaper report of the Saskatoon meeting alludes to “one or two servicemen still in uniform.” However, placed in the full context of the paragraph from which it appears, this phrase is clearly used to appeal to the imagination of its primarily non-Native readers and does not indicate an emerging leadership from the ranks of Indian veterans.

The delegates represented every tribe and every phase of Indian life in the Province. Chiefs were there in the traditional blue uniforms, wearing the massive medals bestowed on their forebears by Queen Victoria at the time of the treaty; there were one or two servicemen still in uniform, and several wearing veterans’ discharge [sic] buttons; others showed little if any difference in costume or mannerism from the average man on the street, and all evinced an intense interest in the proceedings. Those who spoke English would put many a white orator to shame, as far as eloquence is concerned.¹⁰⁴

This paragraph provides dichotomous images contrasting the traditional Indians with the progressive Indians. The chiefs with the medals from Queen Victoria contrast with the Second World War veterans who are wearing veterans’ discharge buttons; Indian “costumes” and mannerisms contrast with those who dress and act like the

¹⁰¹ “Saskatchewan Indians Form New Organization” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 25 Feb. 1946: 10

¹⁰² *Regina Leader-Post*, 5 Jan. 1946.

¹⁰³ Pitsula 138

“average man on the street;” and those who spoke Indian languages contrast with those who spoke English. The use of the veterans by the newspapers to describe the meetings of the formation of the USI was simply a means of creating a representation of the progressive Indian acceptable to their readership. No members of the new executive were Second World War veterans, except for Gladys Dreaver. Dreaver, however, was not described as a veteran in the article, but rather as “the daughter of Chief Joseph Dreaver of Leask, who is a student at a local business college.”¹⁰⁵

The Queen Victoria Treaty Protective Association (QVTPA) was the fifth Indian organization in operation in Saskatchewan during the 1940s.¹⁰⁶ The creation of the QVTPA, as with the other Saskatchewan organizations, was not due to the returning Indian veterans. The QVTPA was organized on the Poundmaker reserve and opposed John Tootoosis as spokesperson for Saskatchewan Indians and the USI as the organization representing Saskatchewan Indians.¹⁰⁷ The QVTPA opposition was due to Tootoosis’s and the USI’s support of non-denominational education presented at the Special Joint Parliamentary Senate and House of Commons Committee investigating possible revisions to the *Indian Act* and elsewhere. The majority of the QVTPA members were reported to be Roman Catholics and strongly influenced by the clergy. In addition, the QVTPA were opposed to alcohol on

¹⁰⁴ *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* 25 February 1946: 10

¹⁰⁵ *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* 25 February 1946: 10

¹⁰⁶ The QVTPA was formed in 1947, Don Whiteside *Historical Development of Aboriginal Political Associations in Canada: Documentation* (Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood, 1973) 32. There are, however, reports that the QVTPA was founded in the 1930s, although this does not seem likely.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Favel, president of the QVTPA, sent a letter, dated 2 May 1947, to the Special Joint Committee investigating the Indian Act, to outline his organization’s reasons for opposing the USI. Favel told the Joint Committee that the QVTPA “was formed because we did not like the briefs made by the Union of Saskatchewan Indians and because we don’t like the Union as it was formed by the CCF...We would like to sit in the meeting with the Union of Saskatchewan Indians [and the Joint Committee] because we do not want John Tootoosis (Poundmaker res.) to represent our reserve in any way.” Canada. Parliament, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider the Indian Act, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 19 Thursday, 8 May, 1947 934 [hereafter cited as Joint Committee].

reserves and to the franchise, and were very critical of what they perceived as the USI's lack of commitment to treaty rights.¹⁰⁸

Milloy's assertion that the Indian political activists in the immediate post-war years were "a cadre of war veterans from the First and then the Second World War who were warriors and brought the discipline and determination of that service home for the service of their communities" is false for Saskatchewan and may be questionable for the rest of Canada.¹⁰⁹ Upon closer inspection, it is clear that Second World War Indian veterans did not have an active role in Saskatchewan Indian organizations immediately after the war. The men in leadership roles prior to the formation of the USI continued in these roles after the creation of the USI. Meijer Drees states that the Indian Association of Alberta "arose out of a long-standing tradition of Indian leadership and politics which found room for re-expression on the prairies in the Depression era."¹¹⁰ The same trend occurred in Saskatchewan with the creation of the USI. In addition, the creation of the USI, and not the returning Indian veterans, led to the formation of the QVTPA. The veterans were, for the most part, politically inexperienced young men. They had just returned from war and were attempting to readjust to civilian life. Many had been teenagers when they enlisted, and were in their early twenties upon their return home. Because of their young age, they had had more battle experiences in Europe than adult experiences in Canada. The veterans, who did have issues they wanted the existing leadership to address, attended the meetings not to assume the leadership roles from the existing leaders, but more likely to begin their political apprenticeships.

¹⁰⁸ Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins...* 104.

¹⁰⁹ John Milloy, "'A Partnership of Races' - Indian and White, Cross-Cultural Relations and Criminal Justice in Manitoba, 1670-1949" Prepared for the Public Inquiry Into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People (Winnipeg, 1990) 85.

¹¹⁰ Meijer Drees 282.

Conclusion

As a group, the Second World War Aboriginal veterans were politically passive immediately after the war. They spent the first five years after 1945 readjusting to civilian life. They made decisions not based on community needs but on their individual needs to integrate back into society. For many veterans, that meant leaving their home communities to rid themselves of the wandering or unsettling feelings they still carried with them from the war. Yet, their exploits in the war and their living conditions after the war were well reported in the newspapers. These post-war news reports portrayed Aboriginal people in a more sympathetic light than the romanticized or negative image that characterized the pre-war news reports of Aboriginal people. Meanwhile, the attitudes of Canadians towards Aboriginal people changed in the post-war years. This change made it more conducive for Indians to form a well publicized new political organization. Indian veterans' attendance at meetings that led to the formation made for good photographs for the newspapers which facilitated the public's approval of the organization. The photographs belie the fact that Indian veterans had a limited influence in the formation of USI. Unfortunately, the lack of Metis political activities during this period prohibits comparisons between Indian and Metis. Aboriginal veterans' passive role in politics would continue for the rest of this decade, as their concerns were not satisfactorily addressed by either the Aboriginal leadership or Canadian politicians.

CHAPTER THREE

“These Indians Might Provide The Vanguard:” The Joint Committee Hearings, The CCF And Saskatchewan Indian Veterans, 1946-1950

Introduction

Document analysis related to Indian veterans, the USI and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) clearly demonstrates the limited role and impact the veterans had on the political and social environment in the immediate post-war years. In addition, Indian veterans' role in the USI's presentation to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons into possible revisions to the *Indian Act* and their dealings with the provincial CCF government are illustrative of their lack of political power. The discussion of veterans' issues at the Joint Committee was complex. The Saskatchewan Indian leadership considered issues affecting Indian veterans to be important. It was clear to them that Indian veterans did not have equal access to veterans' benefits as non-Indian veterans. The Indian leadership, however, was unable for the most part to reconcile the problem of advocating for the veterans' individual rights while protecting the collective rights of the other band members. Though some Indian veterans desired to form an Indian veterans' organization, they were unable to persuade the CCF to provide political assistance. The CCF was willing only to support the USI and not another Indian organization. Both these examples show that the Indian veterans were unable to garner political support from Indian and non-Indian politicians and from the Indian veterans themselves.

This analysis, unfortunately, does not include Metis veterans, as from 1946, only months after the formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI), the Saskatchewan Metis Society (SMS), for all intents and purposes ceased to be a

functioning organization.¹ The Metis were not invited to take part in the Joint Committee and the CCF did not play the same kind role with the SMS as they did with USI. In addition, Indian veterans' activities, unlike those of Metis veterans, can be traced more easily because both the federal and provincial governments kept records on them.

The Joint Committee Hearing Into The *Indian Act*

The proceedings of the 1947 Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons into possible revisions to the *Indian Act* demonstrate the limited influence Indian veterans had with the USI.² There was a drive in Canada, during and after the war, for new legislation for Indians that would "improve their lot and thereby increase their value to Canada."³ Meijer Dress states that near the end of the war the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) had called for the formation of a Royal Commission to investigate Indian grievances. The IAA sent a document to the government stating that the "Royal Commission should have among its members, Indians; and should be empowered to visit all Indian reserves, and all bands of non-Treaty Indians . . . Particularly, Indians themselves should be encouraged to testify freely and without fear of reprisal."⁴ According to newspaper accounts, John Tootoosis went to a 1944 Indian convention in Ottawa also with the hopes "to discuss the establishment of something like a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the Indians, and to see what steps can be taken in the post-war world to

¹F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 1997) 44-45.

² Canada. Parliament, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider the Indian Act, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 19 Thursday, 8 May, 1947 934 [hereafter cited as Joint Committee].

³J. C. Dent, "New Deal for Indians Is Planned By M. P." *Saturday Night* March 1947

⁴Laurie Meijer Drees "A History of The Indian Association of Alberta" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Calgary, 1997) 182-183.

further their advancement.”⁵ At a 1946 meeting in Regina with the CCF government, “the last real attempt to breathe life” into the Saskatchewan Metis Society, the Society “called for a Royal Commission into the deplorable conditions experienced by the Metis.”⁶ At their 4 January 1946 meeting in Regina, the first meeting towards organizing the USI, Saskatchewan Indians also called for a Royal Commission.⁷ Rumours circulated that premier Douglas had contemplated the idea of establishing a Royal Commission to investigate Native affairs in Saskatchewan.⁸ Nevertheless, the CCF government publicly advocated for a federal inquiry into Indian affairs. A CCF MLA introduced a motion in the Legislature calling for a Royal Commission with Indian representation.⁹ As a result of the agitation by Aboriginal people and newspaper editorials calling for Indian equality, the pressure was on the government to respond. As Meijer Drees states, “Human rights, a full economic role for Indians in the workforce, and a desire to improve Indian community life, all these factors motivated Indian reformers at this time. It was recognized that Canadian government and society had a responsibility to better the state of Indian communities . . . At public meetings, average citizens and professionals alike deplored the social dependency of Indian communities and called for measures to alleviate the situation.”¹⁰ The public’s interest in Indian Affairs “focused on the racist legislation and policies that treated Indians as ‘uncivilized’.”¹¹

In 1946, as a result of pressure from the Canadian public to address the poor living conditions of Canadian Indians, the Special Joint Parliamentary Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Revision of the *Indian Act* was formed.

⁵ “Indian Convention Planned At Ottawa” *Indian Missionary Record* 12 June 1944; 16.

⁶ Barron 43-44.

⁷ Barron 73.

⁸ Barron 185.

⁹ Barron 85.

¹⁰ Meijer Drees 172.

¹¹ Ian V. B. Johnson, *Helping Indians to Help Themselves: A Committee to Investigate Itself, The 1951 Indian Act Consultation Process* (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1984) 15.

Barron notes that the commissioning of the Joint Committee “reflected the fact, unlike during the Depression and War years when public attention was focused on global issues, the postwar era had ushered in a new social conscience increasingly fixed on the domestic scene, especially the plight of Indians.”¹² The Joint Committee was to consider

1. Treaty Rights
2. Band Members
3. Liability of Indians to pay taxes.
4. Enfranchisement of Indians, both voluntary and involuntary.
5. Eligibility of Indians to vote at Dominion elections.
6. The encroachment of white persons on Indian reserves.
7. The operation of Indian Day and residential schools.
8. And any other matter or thing pertaining to the social and economic status of Indians and their advancement, which in the opinion of such a committee, should be incorporated in the revised Act.¹³

At first only non-Indians, such as government and church officials, presented briefs to the committee. However, a year later, after much debate, Indian groups from across the country were asked to present briefs for possible changes to the *Indian Act* to the committee in Ottawa.

Of the seventy-six items in the Saskatchewan Indians’ report to the Joint Committee, only one related to veterans’ issues. That veterans’ issues were mentioned only once in the Saskatchewan Indians’ report suggest that veterans were not a priority and that they had little political clout. During their oral testimony to the Joint Committee, the three Saskatchewan representatives spoke about veterans and issues related to veterans. John Tootoosis, Joseph Dreaver, and John Gambler were in the difficult position of advocating for the individual rights of Indian veterans while at the same time protecting the collective rights of treaty Indians in general. Overall, it is clear that the individual rights of the veterans were secondary to the collective rights of Indian people.

¹² Barron 87.

¹³ Johnson 16.

An example of this dilemma of protecting collective and individual rights simultaneously at the Committee hearings occurred when Chief Gambler raised his concerns about Indian veterans. Gambler opposed the whole issue of giving Indian veterans title to reserve lands as fulfillment of the requirements of the *Veterans' Lands Act* (VLA). Gambler stated that his Indian agent had attempted to persuade him to sign over title for a portion of reserve land to returning Indian soldiers. He told the committee that “[a]ccording to the Indian agents they want us to surrender an allotment to these soldiers, but we are afraid that that is the beginning of the subdivision of a reserve.”¹⁴ There were regulations in the *Indian Act* that stipulated that Indian veterans could only receive the \$2320.00 grant from the VLA after they had received title to the land from the band. Gambler’s Indian agent had attempted to persuade him, as the Chief of his reserve, to sign over title to a portion of reserve land to a veteran. Gambler flatly refused.

There were several reasons for his decision. The first was the threat of alcohol coming onto his otherwise dry reserve. Veterans, unlike other status Indians, could legally buy liquor. Therefore they could bring alcohol onto the reserves. By preventing Indian veterans from owning a portion of the reserve, Gambler hoped to keep his reserve free of alcohol. He saw that giving title to a veteran could have negative ramifications for reserve residents. Gambler explained:

Since he has had Canadian citizenship conferred on him, which is automatically given to him for the services he has rendered for the country, that soldier would have the right to bring liquor on that reserve. What would there be to prevent him from bringing liquor in there? Today because the soldier thinks as he does[,] he goes and has his drink. When he gets back to the reserve, or wherever he may be, he is penalized for breaking the law because he drinks. That is the question that must be answered. What is to prevent the evil of liquor spreading into the reserves?¹⁵

¹⁴ John Gambler, Joint Committee 1019

¹⁵ John Gambler, Joint Committee 1021

Gambler's attempt to protect the reserve's right to ban alcohol from the community was an effort to prevent the collective rights of the band members from being supplanted by the individual rights of the veterans.

A second reason was Gambler's opposition to the possibility of Indian veterans as status Indians losing their rights of communal ownership of the land. He told the committee that "I want to protect that Indian soldier's status as a treaty Indian."¹⁶ It was evident to Gambler that since veterans had the right to drink alcohol and to vote, they had "Canadian citizenship conferred" on them. Gambler wanted to protect the veterans and their descendants against the negative aspects of that citizenship. For example, Gambler questioned whether the children of veterans would have treaty rights as other Indians. Gambler was fearful that since the veterans had been given title to a portion of the reserve, the treaty rights would no longer apply to the veterans or their descendants.¹⁷

An example of the complexity of veterans' issues is highlighted by Dreaver's views about the veterans which seemed to contradict Gambler's. Dreaver was more concerned about the infringement of Indian veterans' individual rights. He raised his concern about how the VLA was administered to Indian veterans. He questioned why it was that they were not eligible for the \$6,000.00 loan, as non-Indian veterans were. Not being eligible for the loan, according to Dreaver, meant Indian veterans lost a chance to gain much needed extra capital. This loss of potential capital placed the Indian veterans at a disadvantage competitively against non-Indian veterans as well as other farmers.¹⁸ Dreaver mentioned a specific case in which a veteran from north of Prince Albert was not eligible for the same benefits as the local non-Indian veteran. Dreaver explained, "[w]e are pleased to have the grant. We need it, but we do not think it is sufficient to rehabilitate an Indian veteran. Where

¹⁶ John Gambler, Joint Committee 1020

¹⁷ John Gambler, Joint Committee 1019

¹⁸ Joseph Dreaver, Joint Committee 1039

the Indian veteran requires a full line of machinery in order to compete with the ordinary farmer in whatever district he may be, he needs more than \$2320.”¹⁹

Veterans' issues impacted on the political sensibilities of the Ottawa policy makers. The Joint Committee provided Indian groups, for the first time, the chance to present their grievances about Indian administration in a public forum. Unfortunately, many of the commissioners to whom the Indian delegates presented their grievances also developed and implemented Indian policy, and therefore became defensive about any criticism from the Indians. For example Douglas Harkness, a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament from Calgary North, was quick to defend Veterans Affairs policy. Harkness, asked the Saskatchewan delegation, “So far as you are concerned, do you know of any other specific cases, or any specific cases, particularly in so far as the War Services Gratuities (WSG) are concerned?” Harkness's question was an attempt to have the section on Indian veterans in the Saskatchewan brief removed as it implied that Indian veterans were somehow mistreated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, it appears that Harkness's comment was meant to create confusion between the WSG and the VLA among the Saskatchewan delegation and the rest of the Committee members. In response to Harkness's question Tootoosis stated that, “The purpose in having it in the brief is, there are a lot of our returned men who have not got that grant because we opposed the allotting of land to our men in many of the reserves in Saskatchewan. We want to have that abolished.”²⁰ Harkness told Tootoosis that this had nothing to do with the War Service Gratuities but with the Veterans Lands Act. He then repeated the question, and, after receiving what he believed to be an unacceptable answer, he told the Committee why he was interested in this particular issue:

¹⁹ Joseph Dreaver, Joint Committee 1039

²⁰ Douglas Harkness, Joint Committee 1039

Having been a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee which met during the last two sessions, I made it particularly my business in that committee to see that the Indians were placed in as favourable a position as any other veteran, and if there are any cases in which the Indians have been discriminated against I should like to know of them and have them corrected. If there are none, I suggest that should not be in the brief because it is a reflection on the Veterans Affairs administration which is an unfair reflection.²¹

Harkness also defended VA's policy against charges raised by Dreaver and Gambler. In response to Dreaver, Harkness stated that Indian veterans were not discriminated against because non-Indian veterans who settled on provincial lands received the same. When asked for further clarification from another committee member, Harkness answered emphatically, "I merely want to make it clear to you there is no discrimination against the Indian."²² Harkness then gave his undivided attention to Gambler's decision not to surrender reserve land. Harkness stated that Gambler's fear that the band would lose reserve land was unfounded, as "the land of the reserve would still remain land of the reserve." However, Harkness told Gambler that giving title to a portion of reserve land to the Indian veteran "was really for his [the veteran's] protection, to protect that grant of \$2320 and keep it in his name or that of his heirs. It would not become common property of the reserve." Whereas Gambler viewed the transferring of reserve land from common property to private property as being detrimental to Indians, Harkness viewed it as being advantageous to Indian veterans. Harkness declared that "that particular advantage was given to the veteran because he fought for the country and should be preserved to him..." In the end, Harkness passed his paternalistic judgment on Gambler's position. He told Gambler that "personally I think that you and your band made a very unwise decision -- that is my personal opinion - because I think you cut out

²¹ Douglas Harkness, Joint Committee 1039

²² Douglas Harkness, Joint Committee 1040

your own veterans from getting the advantage of that grant through a misapprehension on your part that you would lose the land.”²³

Interestingly, when Gambler attempted to explain his position, Harkness interrupted him and skewed the issue. Harkness proclaimed that the problem with the VLA was not due to the policy itself but due to the fact that the Indians did not properly understand the policy. He recommended that Indians be made to know “what the exact situation is.” This comment led to a lengthy discussion between Harkness and Mr. Hoey, Director of Indian Affairs, Mr. P. B. Ostrander, Inspector of Indian Affairs and a Major Patrick, Commissioner for the Indian Affairs in British Columbia, on how exactly the Indians were provided with information about the VLA.

The conversation that followed not only lacked the voice of Indian veterans in the political process, but also showed how the politicians attempted to exclude the voice of the Indian leadership. At first, Harkness implied that Indian Affairs had not fulfilled its obligation to the Indians. Hoey assured the Committee that Indian Affairs was not in any way negligent in its responsibility. The department, in Hoey’s view, had endeavoured to do everything possible to ensure that Indians understood the VLA. Hoey stated he hired Major Patrick to disseminate the pertinent facts to the Indians about veterans’ benefits. Hoey, in an attempt to deflect any doubt from the departmental officials in Ottawa to the departmental representatives in the field and thereby deflect the blame away from policy development to policy implementation, then insinuated that the possible blame lay with the Indian agents and Inspector Ostrander, the Indian agents’ immediate superior.

By the time the Committee called Major Patrick to explain veterans’ benefits, the discussion had been sidetracked and left the Saskatchewan delegation

²³ Douglas Harkness, Joint Committee 1040

excluded and forgotten. Patrick outlined the basic features of the Act to the Joint Committee and then described his meeting with the Indians at Fort Qu'Appelle. That meeting ended with the Indians not being entirely convinced that surrendering land title to veterans was beneficial for the band as a whole. When asked by a Committee member why the Indians had this opinion, Patrick answered, "because there seemed to be a certain amount of fear on the part of the Indians that we were going to take land away from them. Any Indian knows you cannot remove an acre of land from an Indian reserve without a surrender approval by the whole band and the Governor General in Council. If he does not, he should."²⁴ Many Indians, especially on the prairies, were well aware of the fact they had lost ownership of reserve lands as a part of the Greater Production scheme and the *Soldier Settlement Act* during the First World War.²⁵

That there was some confusion by Indian veterans is not surprising. The explanation provided about veterans' benefits by Major Patrick was itself confusing. According to a newspaper report, Patrick visited the Qu'Appelle Agency on 3 September, 1946. Present at this meeting were Ostrander, Indian Agent Mr. Booth, Doctor A. B. Simes, ten chiefs and councilors and over twenty veterans.²⁶ At the meeting, Patrick told the veterans that "Indian veterans were treated the same way as the white veterans in respect to gratuities and re-establishment credits." As far as the VLA was concerned, however, Indian veterans were not treated the same. The different treatment the Indian veterans received was conveyed to the veterans as being advantageous to them. The Indian veterans could "receive the sum of up to \$6000.00, without any loss of Treaty rights" if they settled off their reserve. It is

²⁴ Major Patrick, Joint Committee 1043

²⁵ J. L. Taylor, "Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years 1918-1939" (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1984).

²⁶ "Veterans Affairs: Major G. Patrick Holds Meetings on Indian Veterans Affairs" *Indian Missionary Record*, September, 1946: 4.

clear that the government preferred that the Indian veterans settled on their reserve, as Patrick told them:

[T]he Indian veteran settling on a reservation does not need any security nor is his land mortgaged. The sums of \$1120 for land plus \$1200 for livestock are given absolutely free. There is no borrowing of money, and no interest to be paid. It is clear, therefore, that it is to the advantage of the Indian to accept this gift of \$2320. For the white veteran the amount over \$2330 is a loan which has to be paid back to the Government . . . This sum of \$2320 is in most provinces of Canada quite enough. As the Indian veteran had land and has help given by the Indian Affairs Branch and the use of community machinery, the Indian veteran is placed in a very advantageous position. He incurs no debt whatsoever and no one can take his land away.²⁷

On one hand, Patrick tells the veterans they are treated the same as non-Indian veterans; on the other hand he tells them that they have advantages because they are Indian. The advice Patrick provided the veterans was not in the best interest of the Indian veterans. It appears, rather, he hoped that Indian veterans who planned to apply for the VLA would stay on their reserve and thereby receive the grant only and not be eligible for the loan.

At this point in the Committee proceedings, Committee members began to ask Major Patrick to clarify certain aspects of the Act, further deflecting the Committee from delving into the Saskatchewan delegation's concerns. Finally, the Chairman asked the Committee members to deal with the matter raised by the Saskatchewan delegation. Harkness then proposed that "the Indian Affairs branch take measures to alleviate this apparent misapprehension which exists among the Indians on certain reserves."²⁸ There were a few short exchanges between Committee members in which the Chairman made it clear that members should make their points within five minutes. Harkness then proceeded to ask the Saskatchewan Indians a question about education. The Committee members, content in their assumption that a lack of communication on the part of the Indian agents in the field

²⁷ "Veterans Affairs: Major G. Patrick Holds Meetings on Indian Veterans Affairs" *Indian Missionary Record*, September, 1946: 4.

²⁸ Douglas Harkness, Joint Committee 1044

and not the policies created in Ottawa was the cause of the Indian complaints about Indian veterans' benefits, signaled they had concluded their discussion on Indian veterans' benefits.

Instead of answering Harkness's question about education, John Tootosis made it known that he was not prepared to be excluded from any discussion concerning Indian veterans or Indian people in general. Tootosis announced to the Committee "I want to say a few words about the veterans too because we are not going to be here again and it is very important to us."²⁹ As far as Tootosis was concerned, the problem was not only poor communication. He also believed that the problem was that the veterans' benefits did not benefit Indian veterans or Indian people as a whole. Indian veterans were given the opportunity, through the VLA, to own land as a reward for their service in the army. He believed that, since the land the Indian veterans were eligible to own was reserve land already owned by Indians collectively, Indian veterans were not really obtaining a benefit.

When these people went to war they expected to have the same freedom when they came back as they had before they went, the same freedom as that for which they fought. As it is, gentlemen, they went and helped you fight your war, now why do you not as gentlemen help them to get the freedom that they are supposed to have now that the war is over? Why allot the soldier a piece of land? He owned that land before he went to war through common ownership with the rest of the band. ...I want to tell you this: we Indians strongly oppose having our reserves subdivided, we want them to stay as a whole."³⁰

The idea that the Canadian government would use the willingness of Indians to enlist in the armed forces for the war effort, then ignore them after the war, affronted Tootosis.³¹ He stated to the Joint Committee that "I would like to submit this to the committee, let them abolish this allotment matter regarding Indian veterans. Here is what they get for sacrificing their lives for us, for fighting for the freedom which we

²⁹ John Tootosis, Joint Committee 1045

³⁰ John Tootosis, Joint Committee 1046

³¹ John Tootosis, Joint Committee 1046

still possess. The Indians were gentlemen to fight for the white men, so don't hand them land which they owned before they left to go to the war."³²

Further, Tootoosis saw the government using veterans' benefits as a means of taking land away from Indian people and integrating Indians into mainstream Canadian society. If Indians could hold onto their lands, then they would have a chance of surviving as a people:

Let us see what happens. Suppose a veteran who gets land this way is married and has five children. He dies. I asked Mr. Allen who came to one of our meetings there this question: Mr. Allen, you say that I will be allowed a quarter section, if I die can my children get the same land? He answered, no, that the land will have to be divided up to your children, divided into five. It will be the same with returned men, he will have just a piece of land which has been allotted to him and that is all his children will own. This piece of land which has been allotted to him.³³

Tootoosis made it perfectly clear to the Committee that the Canadian government did not have the right to decide how reserve lands were to be dealt with. Only Indians could decide what to do with Indian land. The Veterans' Land Act seemed to place the decision-making power regarding reserve lands into the government's hand. This was viewed as a direct threat to Indian autonomy. "I firmly believe that this land of ours which is actually our personal property and which we have not surrendered to the Crown that we are the people who should decide whether we should allot it to any person or not."³⁴ After Tootoosis had finished, Harkness demanded an answer to the question he had posed on education. The discussion on veterans' issues had thus been abruptly ended.

Davison's statement that the testimony given by Indian leaders at the Joint Committee revealed their concern "over the blatant inequality of services to the Indian as opposed to the non-Native veterans" clearly does not take into account the complexity of the situation.³⁵ Saskatchewan Indian leadership did raise their

³² John Tootoosis, Joint Committee 1046

³³ John Tootoosis, Joint Committee 1046

³⁴ John Tootoosis, Joint Committee 1046

³⁵ Davison 180.

concerns about veterans' issues but were unable to reconcile the veterans' individual rights with band members' collective rights. Veterans' issues represented a minor portion in the Indian leaders' presentation at the Committee hearings. More pressing issues such as education, housing, social welfare and economic prospects, which constituted the majority of the presentation, were less divisive and a matter of cultural and social survival among Indian people. In addition, Indian veterans' issues proved to be problematic for the federal bureaucrats. Joint Committee members, resistant to any criticism from Indians, deflected the shortcomings of veterans' policies to the Indian agents in the field. The Committee's recommendations, not surprisingly, did not deal with the issues raised by the Indian leadership but only with political and administrative matters.³⁶ As a result, the Indian leadership's critique of the veterans' issue did not achieve any effective results for Indian veterans. Although Indian veterans were important in the effort to legitimize the USI, they were not politically strong enough individually or as a group in the early post-war years to influence the USI's policy direction.

Indian Veterans And The CCF, 1946-1950

An examination of the relationship between Indian veterans and the CCF further illustrates the veterans' passive role in the early post-war political scene. The CCF played a crucial part in the formation of the USI and in the USI presentation at the Joint Committee Hearings. There were a group of veterans who wanted the CCF to play a similar role in addressing Indian veterans' concerns. The CCF resisted such a role because they feared if the Indian veterans organized they might compromise the strength and therefore the usefulness of the USI. In response to the administration of the VLA, the CCF preferred to take the role of advocate on behalf

³⁶ Morris Zaslow *The Northward Expansion of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988)

of individual Indian veterans and bands with the federal government. The Indian veterans could not change their relationship with the CCF because they were not able to rally sufficient support amongst themselves.

On March 12, 1946, only two weeks after the meeting in Saskatoon that created the USI, Ernest Goforth, the newly elected second vice-president of the USI, wrote to Morris Shumiatcher, the legal counsel for the CCF, regarding the possibility of arranging a conference with Premier Douglas and Indian veterans to discuss the veterans' problems. Goforth, as a First World War veteran and therefore a person who understood the difficulties facing returning soldiers, emerged as an early but temporary leader of issues concerning veterans. Goforth did not explicitly state in the letter what he meant by veterans' problems. However, judging by the tone of the letter, access to veterans' benefits may have been one of the concerns of the Indian veterans. At any rate, Goforth must have hoped that the CCF would play a similar role in organizing the Indian veterans as it had in creating the USI. In the letter, Goforth asked Shumiatcher if it would be a good idea to start a petition and begin organizing the Indian veterans.³⁷

Shumiatcher replied that he did not think organizing the veterans was a good idea. He told Goforth that he would take the matter up with the Premier and the Minister of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, John Sturdy. Shumiatcher wrote to Goforth, "In the meantime, I do not think it necessary to circulate a petition; the letter received from yourself personally is adequate for the purpose for which any such petition might be designed. One voice is deemed to be as important as many voices to this government."³⁸ Shumiatcher's advice to Goforth plainly shows his opposition to the idea of the Indian veterans organizing, at least organizing without the provincial government and USI. Shumiatcher, for whatever reason, was also

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³⁷ Saskatchewan Archives Board. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, Indian Veterans, letter from Goforth to Shumiatcher, March 12, 1946

resistant to the idea that the government should be presented with a petition from the Indian veterans.

Shumiatcher then sent a memo to Sturdy informing him of Goforth's request.³⁹ In his reply to Shumiatcher, Sturdy agreed to call a meeting to discuss the Indian veterans' problems. However, there still was no explicit statement about what the Indian veterans' problems were. Sturdy also suggested that the two of them should meet prior to any conference with the Indian veterans to discuss possible strategies. He told Shumiatcher there is "just the possibility that these young Indians might provide the vanguard for an attack on Indian problems generally."⁴⁰ It is not clear if Sturdy thought of this as potentially positive for the government, the Indians, or both. Nevertheless, because of the potential of "these young Indians" Sturdy wanted to be certain that he and Shumiatcher approached veterans' concerns in the same manner. Shumiatcher suggested a date for the conference and stressed that it should be made clear that the conference was for Indian veterans and that only one Indian representative from each reserve should attend.⁴¹ He provided a list of seventeen people he felt should be invited to the conference. Among the seventeen were Ernest Goforth, John Tootoosis, John Gambler, Gladys Dreaver, (the USI executive), Joe Dreaver, Stanley McKay, Henry John, and Allan Ahenakew. All had attended the inaugural USI meeting in Saskatoon where Shumiatcher would have met them. None of the recommended attendees were Second World War veterans except for Gladys Dreaver. It appears that Shumiatcher was manipulating the meeting to ensure the attendance of people with whom he was familiar and to show the government's confidence in the USI's leadership. Shumiatcher's arrangements neglected the fact that the veterans may have wanted to invite someone on their

³⁸ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Goforth, 20 Mar. 1946

³⁹ Douglas Papers, Memo from Shumiatcher to Sturdy, 20 Mar. 1946

⁴⁰ Douglas Papers, Memo from Sturdy to Shumiatcher, 3 Apr. 1946

⁴¹ Douglas Papers, Memo from Shumiatcher to Sturdy, 15 Apr. 1946

behalf. It is important to note that Shumiatcher took control of organizing the meeting for Goforth.

Shumiatcher may have viewed the veterans' organization as a threat to the newly formed Union of Saskatchewan Indians. The possibility of the veterans mobilizing politically dictated the degree to which Shumiatcher would be involved. The fragility of the USI was a recurrent concern for the CCF. In the late 1950s, for example, the franchise issue threatened to tear the organization apart, a prospect the CCF did not welcome. According to Barron, the USI was "an important component of the CCF's Indian policy because, without it, the government lacked a potential partner capable of representing Indian opinion and legitimizing government reforms."⁴² Though the USI was definitely an Indian-controlled organization, the provincial government had invested time and energy in helping the Saskatchewan Indians unite. The provincial government wanted to curtail any possible or perceived threat to the USI. This Shumiatcher achieved in 1946 by first simply dissuading Goforth from organizing the veterans and taking measures to co-opt the veterans into the USI. Though Shumiatcher may have seen the veterans as a potentially political force, the absence of any record of the planned meeting on veterans' issues suggests that the veterans' issues were not a top priority of the provincial government.

Although there is no record that shows the veterans' reaction to the events leading up to the planned meeting in 1946, there is evidence to suggest that the veterans were not pleased with the outcome. In 1948, two years later, George T. Webster of Regina, presumably a lawyer as he acted as their representative, wrote to Premier Douglas on behalf of the File Hills Indian veterans and requested a meeting between the Premier and Indian veterans who had applied, or were considering application, for benefits under the *Veterans' Land Act*. Webster stated that "I believe that these veterans feel they have no organization to speak for them and through

⁴² Barron 134.

which they can air their grievances. I gather that they think rightly or wrongly, that they are too much under the discrimination of the Indian Agent.”⁴³ Douglas wrote back and told Webster that Shumiatcher would arrange a meeting between the veterans, Sturdy and Shumiatcher.⁴⁴ The meeting, arranged for 14 May 1948 in Regina, was attended by nine people, five of whom were veterans. George Webster and a Mr. McLelland attended the meeting at the request of the veterans, while Major J. F. McKay, from the Department of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, and Shumiatcher were there to represent the provincial government. The veterans in attendance were Jim Tuckanow, Ernest Goforth, Jack Walker, William Creely, and J. F. Stonechild.

The May 14th meeting is documented in an undated memo Shumiatcher sent to McKay.⁴⁵ The veterans’ problems under discussion appear to have been related to the application of the VLA. However, this is not explicitly confirmed in Shumiatcher’s memo. Shumiatcher only makes one reference to an individual veteran’s problem that had been investigated by McKay. According to another letter in the file, McKay had made an inquiry to the Department of Indian Affairs about Jack Walker’s veteran’s pension. Apparently, Walker had been eligible for the war veteran’s allowance but had not received it. McKay investigated Walker’s claim and found that indeed was the case. Walker had had a physical examination in the fall of 1947, but the results were not forwarded to the proper authorities, and consequently Walker was without his allowance during the winter. The federal government began to send Walker his allowance in July, 1948. McKay made it known to Hoey that many Indian veterans felt they were being treated differently because they were Indians. In his letter to Hoey, McKay stated that “[t]here is a feeling amongst the Indians that because they are Indians their complaints are not taken seriously as they

⁴³ Douglas Papers, Letter from Webster to Douglas, 18 Mar. 1948.

⁴⁴ Douglas Papers, Letter from Douglas to Webster, 22 Mar. 1948.

might be and it is instances like this that give some grounds for such beliefs and make the work of your department more difficult.”⁴⁶

In his memo to McKay, Shumiatcher noted Jim Tuckanow’s attempt to join the local Canadian Legion at Balcarres. Tuckanow told the two government officials that the Legion had refused to allow him to join. He wrote to the Provincial Secretary of the Canadian Legion, Len Chase, and stated what had happened to him. Chase simply advised Tuckanow to join another branch. Tuckanow then applied to join the Melville branch and again was refused. He was informed at the Melville branch to join the branch closest to where he lived, which was the Balcarres branch. Tuckanow stated that it appeared to him that both branches did not want to accept Indian veterans. Tuckanow’s solution called for the establishment of an Indian veterans’ organization in Saskatchewan that would meet the needs of Indian veterans and be a place where they would not be subjected to discrimination by non-Indian veterans. Major McKay’s solution, however, was that the Indian veterans should join branches that welcomed them and that he would look into the matter of discrimination. Shumiatcher’s solution was more akin to Tuckanow’s suggestion. Shumiatcher proposed that the Indian veterans should have their own meeting place without non-Indian veterans. Shumiatcher’s plan differed from Tuckanow’s in that the lawyer believed it would be a good idea if the veterans supported and joined the Union of Saskatchewan Indians because the Union “represented all of the Indians, whether they were veterans or not.”⁴⁷ Further, Shumiatcher expressed a conditional condemnation of the Legion deeming it unworthy of veterans’ support: “If the Canadian Legion discriminated against Indian veterans and refused them membership it [is] my view that they do not deserve the support of Indian or other veterans, since

⁴⁵ Douglas Papers, Memo from Premier’s Office to McKay. The memo is on a written on foolscap. The top of the paper is ripped; therefore no date is shown.

⁴⁶ Douglas Papers, Letter from McKay to Hoey, 8 Sept. 1948.

⁴⁷ Douglas Papers, Letter from McKay to Hoey, 8 Sept. 1948.

such discrimination could not be justified . . .⁴⁸ Because there are no documents in the file pursuant to Shumiatcher's memo to McKay, there is no record to determine if the veterans viewed the May 14th meeting as a success or what solution, if any, was implemented. This meeting shows that the veterans' concerns, in and since 1946, had not been addressed. In addition, this meeting demonstrates that Shumiatcher did not simply wish to silence Indian veterans, as it may have appeared in 1946. He was, in fact, a willing advocate for Indian veterans, especially at the political cost of the federal government.

In contrast to the veterans' lack of involvement in the planning of and attendance at the 1946 meeting, the veterans were involved in the 1948 meeting from the onset. At the later meeting, Webster was joined by McLelland, also at the request of the veterans. The veterans asked that a non-Native third party be present at the meeting, either to represent them or be an objective observer in place of Goforth, who was the Second vice-president of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians. What Webster's and McLelland's roles were at the meeting was not made clear by Shumiatcher. Shumiatcher did not record anything the two men contributed to the meeting. Whether or not the two men spoke at length is unknown. The veterans may have requested third party representation to prevent Shumiatcher from assuming control of this subsequent meeting. The veterans felt it necessary to call the meeting and control it in order to ensure that their concerns were sufficiently dealt with. The request by the veterans for a third party may also indicate that the veterans believed that their skills in political matters were eclipsed by Shumiatcher's. That Shumiatcher was the first person to earn a Doctorate in law from the University of Toronto attests to his legal skill and knowledge of the political system.⁴⁹ Since the veterans' agenda did not necessarily coincide with the provincial government's agenda, the veterans may have wanted to ensure that Shumiatcher did not neutralize

⁴⁸ Douglas Papers, Letter from McKay to Hoey, 8 Sept. 1948.

their efforts. Nonetheless, it appears that Shumiatcher did just that. In the end, the veterans did not organize and so he was assured that a new Indian veterans' organization would not compete with the USI. The record shows no separate Indian veterans' association was formed in the 1940s.

The 1948 meeting illustrates the lack of political influence held by the Indian veterans as they were unable to persuade the provincial government to address their grievances. In addition, there is no evidence that the concerns of these veterans were representative of Indian veterans in general. For example, Gilbert Macleod, a veteran from File Hills, stated that although he knew all the veterans in attendance at this meeting, he was not present nor had he been aware of any meeting: "I wasn't there. The only meeting we had with Schumiatcher was over a band member. Like my father was brought in from some place else to be a member of the Peepeekisis band and a bunch of other industrial school graduates at that time were brought in. And that was what they were fighting about. They wanted to kick us out. That's the only meeting I remember having with Schumiatcher. As for veterans, I wasn't there."⁵⁰ Macleod's account is significant as he was the president of the Lorlie branch of the Royal Canadian Legion when the veterans approached Schumiatcher.⁵¹ That he was not aware of any meeting between the veterans and Schumiatcher indicates that these particular veterans may not have been representative of a larger Indian veterans' movement.

Some bands believed that the VLA was applied in a way that was detrimental to Indian veterans, while other bands felt that the administration of the VLA was benefiting the veterans to the detriment of the rest of the band membership.

⁴⁹ Barron 221, note 74.

⁵⁰ Gilbert Mcleod, personal interview, Regina, 17 August, 1998.

⁵¹ When Mcleod was president of the Legion the majority of members were Indians, but, as he states, "it didn't last very long because the people, like I say were mostly Indian veterans, eh. And their experience with the Legion or any other Legion they couldn't... being ignored they were not even looked at. So they would say "what good is the Legion to us." So they quit attending

Petitions and letters were sent to Douglas variously demanding redress either for the veterans or for the bands. Some bands began to advocate on the behalf of veterans. At the same time others protested the way veterans' benefits infringed on their lives. Noteworthy is the fact that there was no uniform reaction to the Indian veterans among Saskatchewan Bands or individual Indians. The CCF entered the fray in the role as advocate either for Indian veterans or the bands against the federal government.

On behalf of Saskatchewan Indians, the CCF began to demand answers about the administration of VLA from the federal government. In response, the Department of Indian Affairs sent letters to Premier Douglas and to their representatives in Saskatchewan outlining the government's position on administering the VLA to Indian veterans. On 4 May 1948, for example, a letter was sent by the Director of the Indian Affairs Branch to J. P. B. Ostrander, Regional Supervisor of Indian agents in Saskatchewan. In the letter, the Director stated that he had enclosed a copy of a petition from the members of the Pasqua Band in the Qu'Appelle Agency regarding the provisions of the VLA. The Director outlined the band members' grievances, some of which included,

- (a) The question of the administration of these Veterans Land Act grants by the Minister of Natural Resources.
- (b) The provision of funds from the grant for the purchase of the occupational rights of another Indian to land within a Indian reserve.
- (c) Providing loans from band funds for additional assistance to Indian veterans.⁵²

The band had inquired about the possibility of Indian veterans themselves negotiating their own loans or grants. The Director told Ostrander to inform the band members that this was not allowed under provisions of the VLA. The band members were worried that the Act allowed individual Indians to purchase occupational rights from another Indian, in effect subdividing and alienating lands from the reserve. The

meetings and that sort of stuff and I'd be sitting there by myself with nobody else, so it just fizzled, fizzled that's all."

Department flatly denied the possibility that reserve lands would lose their reserve status due to the VLA. For Saskatchewan Indians, the possibility of reserve land falling into private ownership was the most contentious aspect of the Act and had formed a crucial component of the Saskatchewan Indians' presentation to the Joint Committee in 1947. In addition, the Pasqua band was under the impression that veterans could obtain assistance from band funds without consent of the Band. The Director reported that VLA did not grant the veterans access to band band funds without the consent of the band.⁵³

Shumiatcher, acting on behalf of band members, sent letters to the federal government in matters concerning the treatment of Indian veterans. He sent a letter, dated 10 May 1948, to Dr. H. L. Keenleyside, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, which stated that he had been asked to "state that the Indians are desirous that their veterans be granted the assistance to which they are entitled under the Veterans Lands Act this spring without the necessity of entitlements."⁵⁴ He wrote the letter on behalf of the Key and Pasqua Reserves specifically, but also on behalf of numerous other reserves which had been in contact with him over the VLA. Shumiatcher, who two years earlier had made sure that Indian veterans did not organize themselves, advocated in the veterans' interest when so directed by the bands. Clearly, the CCF viewed part of its relationship with Saskatchewan Indians as being their advocate to the federal government. Barron states that the "province was also determined to play the role of honest broker, informally mediating between the Indian community and the federal government and, where possible, initiating minor reforms within the purview of provincial jurisdiction."⁵⁵

⁵² Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, Indian Veterans, letter from Director of Indian Affairs Branch to J. P. B. Ostrander, Regional Supervisor of Indian Agents, 4 May 1948.

⁵³ Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, Indian Veterans, letter from Director of Indian Affairs Branch to J. P. B. Ostrander, Regional Supervisor of Indian Agents, 4 May 1948.

⁵⁴ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Keenleyside, 10 May 1948.

⁵⁵ Barron 85.

Shumiatcher detailed two main points of contention that Saskatchewan Indians had with the VLA. First, the Indians were against the idea that reserve land would “be taken out from the lands held in common by the Band and placed at the disposal of the veteran alone.”⁵⁶ Second, the Indians were troubled by the fact that the provisions of the VLA were being implemented without waiting for the recommendations of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee had heard from Indian representatives on many issues, including those issues affecting Indian veterans. By stating to the federal government that “no change should be made in the Act without consultation with the recognized organizations representing the Indians of Canada,” Shumiatcher made known the Saskatchewan Indians’ views of the government’s decision not to wait for the Joint Committee’s recommendations.⁵⁷

The Indian Affairs Branch responded to the first concern raised in Shumiatcher’s letter in the established manner by asserting that the land that was given to the veterans remained reserve land.⁵⁸ Indian Affairs claimed that the provision for allocating specific land on reserves to individual Indians was contained in Section 21 of *Indian Act* and had been in existence for many years. Section 21 stated that “No Indian shall be deemed to be lawfully in possession of any land in a reserve, unless he has been or is located for the same by the band, or council of the band, with the approval of the Superintendent General.”⁵⁹ According to the The letter stated that,

Section 35A of the Veterans Lands Act which contains the conditions under which Veterans Lands Act grants are made to Indian veterans on Indian Reserve was authorized by Order in Council P. C. 2122, dated 13 April, 1945 and subsection (2) was added to Section 35A by Bill 233, passed by the House of Commons on 11 December, 1945. These two conditions preceded the organization of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to examine and consider the

⁵⁶ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Keenleyside, 10 May 1948.

⁵⁷ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Keenleyside, 10 May 1948.

⁵⁸ Douglas Papers, Letter from Department of Mines and Resources to Shumiatcher, 2 June 1948.

⁵⁹ Sharon Helen Venne, *Indian Acts and Amendments 1868-1975, An Indexed Collection* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 1981) 250.

Indian Act and before which the recognized organizations representing the Indians of Canada submitted briefs and made representations.⁶⁰

The points made by Indian Affairs seemed to have satisfied Shumiatcher, as he told Chief Gambler that "I have the pleasure of enclosing herewith the letter dated June 2, 1948, addressed to me by the Department of Mines and Resources. I trust that you will find it possible to give consideration to the points raised by him in his communication."⁶¹ Although it is not clear why, this response from Indian Affairs appears to have had an impact on Indian agitation about veterans' benefits, as there is no evidence that the Indian leadership continued to seek satisfaction on the issue of the Canadian government's mistreatment of Indian veterans.

While the CCF advocated on behalf of the veterans and bands, it also received petitions from band councils critical of Indian veterans obtaining reserve lands. In a letter dated 20 February 1948, Red Pheasant Chief, George Nicotine, told Shumiatcher that there were three veterans on that reserve who were attempting to obtain lands without consulting the Band council by asking band members to sign forms. As far as Nicotine could tell, "the forms were for the veterans to be granted that \$2320.00, and that the veterans be allotted some portion of land by the Band."⁶² Nicotine listed eleven grievances against the veterans. For instance, one of the veterans' forms specified that he would be allotted two square miles of land. This alarmed the Band Council as the population of the Reserve was 350, while the reserve land was only six square miles in total. Other grievances lodged by the Chief included complaints that many of the members had not even seen the forms that had been signed; and finally that the Indian agent had told the veterans that they could obtain land with the signatures of Band members without holding a Band meeting. Nicotine especially took exception to the fact that the Indian agent informed the

⁶⁰ Douglas Papers, Letter from Department of Mines and Resources to Shumiatcher, 2 June 1948.

⁶¹ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Chief John Gambler, Pasqua Reserve, 11 June 1948.

⁶² Douglas Papers, Letter from Chief George Nicotine, Red Pheasant Reserve to Shumiatcher, 20 Feb. 1948.

veterans that a band meeting was not required for transferring land from communal property to individual property. He told Shumiatcher that he was “afraid someone will canvass the reserve to fill forms for sale of land on the reserve.”⁶³ He wanted Shumiatcher to clarify and to notify Indian Affairs of the mishandling of the situation, “I wish you take careful consideration and if you think it is not proper for the Agent to advise persons to canvass the reserve filing [sic] forms please communicate with the proper authorities to have the forms signed throw [sic] a band meeting . . .”⁶⁴ Shumiatcher responded stating that “I doubt very much the land will be allotted to these veterans without a meeting and approval of the Band Council.”⁶⁵ No evidence has been uncovered that indicates how or if the situation was settled.

Conclusion

In the early post-war years, the CCF shaped the parameters of the relationship it had with the Indian veterans. The CCF, in its relationship with the USI, also attempted to direct and contain Indian political organization and activity. The USI, however, had enough political leverage not only to resist the CCF’s imposition, but also to affect the CCF. The Indian veterans possessed no such leverage in their dealings with the CCF. Since Indian veterans were not involved in politics in great number, it was easy for the CCF to ignore the veterans’ collective concerns. Yet, the CCF did not hesitate to advocate on behalf of individual Indian veterans in an attempt to discredit the federal government’s Indian policy.

The veterans were not in a politically strong position because they were fragmented as a group. Yet politicians, both Indian and non-Indian, used Indian

⁶³ Douglas Papers, Letter from Chief George Nicotine, Red Pheasant Reserve to Shumiatcher, 20 Feb. 1948.

⁶⁴ Douglas Papers, Letter from Chief George Nicotine, Red Pheasant Reserve to Shumiatcher, 20 Feb. 1948.

⁶⁵ Douglas Papers, Letter from Shumiatcher to Chief Nicotine, 8 Mar. 1948.

veterans' issues for their political maneuvering. The unequal treatment of the Indian veterans by the federal government added to the litany of grievances against the federal government. Further, the provincial government was willing to advocate on behalf of Indian veterans, thereby strengthening its criticism of the federal government's Indian policy. None of these political maneuverings, however, provided concrete solutions to the Indian veterans.

The limited political role and impact of the veterans in early post-war years are highlighted by the lack of influence they had in the formation of the USI, in the presentation of a brief to the Joint Committee, and in their interaction with the CCF. The veterans did not form a separate political organization. They did not belong to the Legion in large numbers, even when their numbers were greater than those of non-Indians. In addition, the divisiveness that veterans' issues caused within Indian communities hindered the effectiveness of the Indian leaders' efforts to lobby for veterans and weakened the veterans' political position with the provincial government.

It is fair to say that between 1945 and 1960, Aboriginal veterans in their social and political activism were in a transitional phase. The period discussed here, between 1945 and 1950, was characterized by the Indian veterans being the subject of discussion. Indian veterans' exploits in the war had been well documented in the media. The media attention of the veterans coincided with Indian peoples' own aspirations for Indian rights. The Indian veterans were not actively involved in the political fight for Indian rights, but their presence was important because they represented the symbol of the "progressive Indian" which was impressed upon the Canadian public's consciousness by the media. As a result, Indian rights issues became widely known. Only later did Indian and Metis veterans become active agents and fueled the engines of social change. Indeed, it would not be until the late 1950s that the veterans became leaders in an integration movement that saw

Aboriginal people become more involved in the mainstream society. However, in this early post-war period, the veterans were passive participants

CHAPTER FOUR

“I Had To Get Out Of The Dome:” Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans Become Agents Of Social-Political Change, 1950-1960

Introduction

To date, there has been very little historical attention given to Saskatchewan Aboriginal peoples' experiences during the 1950s. Barron and Pitsula, for example, examine the relationship between the CCF and Indian and Metis people in regard to the CCF development of an Aboriginal policy in Saskatchewan. Dobbin concentrates on Metis political development only in the 1960s because in the “fifteen years until the early 1960s, nowhere did the Metis establish viable [political] organizations.”¹ Consequently, he does not include a discussion of the Metis in the 1950s. A discussion of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans' social, economic and political experience during the middle decade of the twentieth century will elucidate the circumstances of Saskatchewan Aboriginal people in general.

By the 1950s, Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans' lifestyles changed, propelling them from passive participants to active agents in the social-political environment. In the 1950s, Canadians experienced the benefits of the post-war economic boom. Many Aboriginal people also wanted to experience the same benefits. Instead of being passive participants, Aboriginal veterans became crucial actors in the new social and political awareness that developed. By the end of this decade, Aboriginal veterans who had undertaken their political apprenticeships upon being discharged from the service were ready to step in as the new generation of political leaders.

¹ Murray Dobbin “The Metis in Western Canada Since 1945,” in *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945*, ed. A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984) 184,

The new leadership role of Aboriginal veterans was a part of a process that began with their war and immediate post-war experiences, and continued with their maturation into confident men. After years of being unsettled and trying to readjust to civilian life, Aboriginal veterans began to establish themselves and become integral members of their communities. Many veterans accepted and lived up to their expected responsibilities, such as working hard and providing for their families. Of course, this is not to say that all veterans suddenly became well rounded, contributing members of society. Some veterans continued to lead destructive and unproductive lives.² As a group, however, a pattern does emerge among the veterans during this decade. Many filled leadership roles in the public sphere, yet many more filled leadership roles in the private sphere. They were unafraid to do what was necessary to secure the best possible opportunities for their families. For some that meant leaving their home communities; for others it meant enduring long and hard hours working on a farm or a trapline. As Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans became more socially, economically, and, to a certain extent, geographically mobile, they became more socially and politically active.

Aboriginal Veterans' Economic Mobility

During Prime Minister St. Laurent's leadership, Canada experienced an economic boom. Canada enjoyed high employment, and high birth and high immigration rates. Canada's population in 1948 was 12,823, 000; by 1957 it had risen to 16,110,000 and had gained 1.5 million immigrants and 4.1 million births.³ In this period, many Canadians migrated to the city from rural areas. In 1941, there were 4.9 million people living in rural areas in Canada compared to 6.5 million

² George Nabess, personal interview. Cumberland House, 27 August, 1998.

³ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 137.

people living in urban areas. By 1956, the number of urban dwellers was 10.6 million compared to 5.3 million people living in rural areas. According to Bothwell, Drummond and English, advantages to city living included modern conveniences such as electricity, plumbing, job and educational opportunities.⁴ The number of jobs that were created in the urban setting was so great that it sustained the influx of people.

During this time Aboriginal people also experienced an increase in population. The population of Saskatchewan Indians between 1944 and 1959 increased dramatically (see table 3). In 1944, the percentage increase from 1939 was 8.9%. In 1949, the population increase was 12.3%. By 1954, Saskatchewan's Indian population had the largest percentage change among the three prairie provinces, increasing by 13.9%. Between 1954 and 1959, the percentage change was an astonishing 22.3% (see table 4). The increase in the Indian population during the 1950s mirrored the trend in the non-Indian population. The population increase combined with the low social and economic conditions influenced many Aboriginal people, including veterans, to search for better opportunities. For many that meant leaving their home communities for urban centres.

Although the number of Metis people who migrated to the city is unknown, figures for Indian urban migrants were kept by the Saskatchewan regional office of the Indian Affairs Branch. These figures show the level of Indian migration (see table 3). The migration may be indicative of Aboriginal veterans taking part in the economic benefits available to them in the urban area. The number of migrants seems to correspond to the Aboriginal veterans' migration pattern after the war. Immediately after the war many veterans left their communities to travel. By the end of the 1940s they returned to their communities, but then in the 1950s many veterans again left their communities.

⁴ Bothwell, Drummond, and English 137.

In 1941, according to Census of Canada, the population of Indians in Saskatchewan was 13,219; the number of people who left the reserve communities that year was 197 representing 1.5% of the population. There is no indication if this number includes those who enlisted in the war. In the following three years, the numbers, though decreasing somewhat, did not change significantly. In 1945, there was a dramatic increase in the number of Indian people leaving the reserves: 404 representing 2.9% of the total population. For the remainder of the decade the migration figures decreased but were still greater than the 1941 level. These migration figures support the assertion that large numbers of Indian veterans left their communities immediately after returning from the war. By 1949, the emigration slowed down. But in 1950, the figures again increased substantially. The reserve population had increased to 16,696, while the number of emigrants was 559, representing 3.6% of the population. Though the number of people leaving the reserves in 1951 and 1952 dropped below the 1945 mark, the numbers between 1953 and 1957 were greater than in 1945. Between 1941 and 1957, 6,276 people had left their reserve communities, while the total population of on-reserve Indians in 1957 was 20,831. Although the numbers for the Metis migration do not exist, it is highly probable that they followed the same migration patterns as Indians. They had a similar pattern of enlistment as Indians. The migration of the Metis from their home communities immediately after the war was also similar to Indians. It can be assumed that the Metis followed the same pattern of migration of Indians during the 1950s. There is little doubt that Aboriginal people took part in the same migration patterns as other Canadians.

Aboriginal veterans were among those who moved to the city in search of better opportunities in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As they had done whatever was necessary to win the war, the veterans now did whatever was necessary to support their families. When the veterans returned to their home communities at the

TABLE THREENumber Of Indians Leaving Reserves By Year, Saskatchewan, 1941-1957⁵

Year	Population	Population Plus Births Minus Deaths	Exodus	Per Cent of Population who Left
1941	12,783	13,219	197	1.5%
1942	13,022	13,386	125	1.0
1943	13,261	13,690	190	1.4
1944	13,500	13,901	162	1.2
1945	13,739	14,382	404	2.9
1946	13,978	14,516	106	.08
1947	14,410	15,043	201	1.4
1948	14,842	15,632	358	2.4
1949	15,274	16,017	311	2.0
1950	15,706	16,696	559	3.6
1951	16,137	17,074	370	2.3
1952	16,704	17,531	260	1.6
1953	17,271	18,309	471	2.7
1954	17,838	19,042	637	3.6
1955	18,405	19,479	506	2.7
1956	18,973	20,235	695	3.7
1957	19,540	20,831	<u>724</u>	3.7
1958	20,107	na	na	na
1959	22,934	na	na	na

Total Exodus 1941/58 6,276

TABLE FOURIndian Population And Percentage Change by Five Year Period,
Prairie Provinces, 1939-1959

Sask.		Alberta		Manitoba		
Year	Number	Percentage Change in Past 5 Years	Number	Percentage Change in Past 5 Years	Number	Percentage Change in Past 5 Years
1939	13,467	%	11,717	%	14,389	%
1944	14,667	8.9	11,932	1.8	15,747	9.4
1949	16,468	12.3	13,805	15.7	17,389	10.4
1954	18,750	13.9	15,715	13.8	19,684	13.2
1959	22,934	22.3	na	na	na	na

⁵ Both tables are reproduced from the Saskatchewan Government's presentation to the Joint House Committee, 1960 1074

end of the 1940s to settle down, they faced a desperate lack of employment in their home communities. Though veterans were able to farm and hunt in the south, and trap and log in the north, this was either seasonal employment or simply did not provide enough to support a family. Donald Angus, from Thunderchild Reserve left his reserve in the late 1940s. He had hoped to farm on his reserve, but since he received only a portion of the land to which he was entitled under the *Veterans' Lands Act* (VLA), he was unable to earn an adequate farming income to support his family. According to Green, there was no work on his reserve. Angus left his reserve with his wife, Louisa Okanee, and their five children and moved to Alberta where he found construction work in Red Deer and Vegreville.⁶

The lack of employment in their communities was not, however, the only reason veterans decided to leave. The persistent resentment towards veterans on some reserves precipitated a decision to relocate to the city. Edwin Pelletier, for example, a veteran from Cowessess Reserve, left his reserve in 1954 due to ill feeling directed towards him and his family. He was granted a farm through the VLA. Unfortunately, he found it difficult to live on the reserve as some reserve residents continually harassed him. They adversely affected his farm production by letting their animals eat his crops. Although the farm was clearly marked, these people ignored Pelletier's boundaries. As a result, Pelletier was unable to earn enough money to support his family. In addition, Pelletier was simply fed up with having to deal with the constant harassment of his neighbours. Pelletier suspects that there were some reserve residents who did not appreciate veterans being granted veterans' benefits, in his case farm land. He moved to Regina and became a bartender at a Royal Canadian Legion. He later returned to his reserve and became a band councillor in the 1970s and 1980s. He was appointed to the Federation of

⁶ Pamela Sexsmith Green "He Risked his life to Fight for our Freedom," *Windspeaker*, November, 1999: 36

Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) Senate and was instrumental, along with Hubert Gunn, a Korean war veteran, in laying the ground work for his reserve's land claim under Treaty Land Entitlement.⁷

It is important to note that Section 21 of the *Indian Act* did make provisions for Indian land ownership on reserve. Section 21 of the *Indian Act* outlined that Indians could not obtain land on reserve without the permission of the band. It also allowed for compensation to Indians whose lands were dispossessed. According to this section "no Indian shall be dispossessed of any land on which he has improvements, without receiving compensation for such improvements at a valuation approved by the Superintendent General, from the Indian who obtain the land, or from the funds of the band, as is determined by the Superintendent General."⁸ There is very little information about whether the Indian veterans received compensation for their lands. Pelletier states, however, he did not receive any compensation for his land.⁹

Other veterans moved to the city because of tragedies. James Lavelley, a Metis veteran from Marivale, was granted land on the north side of Crooked Lake through the VLA. He settled on his land with his wife, Stella, and their young children and farmed with modest success for a number of years. While Lavelley was out farming one day a fire destroyed their house. Stella managed with great difficulty to go back into the house and bring the children to safety. The experience, however, traumatized her and she had nightmares. According to Lavelley, this incident persuaded them to quit the farm, a decision he did not regret:

Just over night we made up our minds that we were going to leave. We had a little car, packed up the kids and we left in the morning. The only thing we had was our kids and twenty bucks. We went to Regina. Found a job right away. We had hard times the first year. We found a place to stay, a little one bedroom house. At that time there was a lot of

⁷ Edwin Pelletier, personal interview, Cowessess Reserve, 10 January, 1999.

⁸ Sharon Helen Venne, *Indian Acts and Amendments 1868-1975, An Indexed Collection* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 1981) 250.

⁹ Pelletier interview.

work. You didn't have to look for work, work looked for you. That time there was so much work in Regina. If someone wanted to work, there was no problem to find work.¹⁰

When James Lavalley first arrived in Regina he found various jobs:

I was drywalling, I was working the construction first for six years. Then I worked for the city for six months, I guess. I didn't like it. I was on night shift all the time, midnight shift. They wouldn't change you. So I quit there and I went cement finishing. 'Cause as I say there was a lot of work. I still have hard time, this is as far as I can lift my arm, I got pins in me [this was when doing cement] cement finishing, yeah. I was off work for two and a half years. In and out of the hospital. But after that I went to school, went back to school. Came out and went to apply for a job at the university. Maintenance mechanic. I worked there until I was sixty-five.¹¹

For some the employment that had been in their home communities was no longer available. As this veteran explains: "Well there was no jobs to speak of. But I was fortunate enough to be able to work with my uncle who was digging wells. So it was in February 1955 that we dug our last well and we had no more wells to dig. No more employment of any type. There was no such thing as welfare in them days. So I got to say that we were starved off the reserve and we were starved right out of Canada. That's when we went to the States."¹²

Many Second World War Aboriginal veterans enlisted in the Korean Conflict in the early 1950s. Some joined the army because it was a job that they knew they could do well, while others needed a job and felt the army could provide a way to earn a decent living. Isiah Halkett rejoined the army in 1952 to fight in Korea. Instead of Korea, he was shipped to Europe as a part of the military police and was stationed in Denmark, Russia and Germany.¹³ He spent two years in the army. Before enlisting again, Halkett had been farming on his reserve and worked as a park warden. By the time he decided to join the army to fight in Korea, his income had dropped considerably due mainly to poor farm land and disputes with his

¹⁰ James Lavelley, personal interview, Regina, 17 August, 1998.

¹¹ Lavalley interview

¹² Robert Stevenson, personal interview, Cowessess Reserve, 10 November, 1998.

¹³ Isiah Halkett, personal interview, Little Red River, 10 March, 1999.

band over his VLA land entitlements. Although he understood the band's position about the land - that the land he received from VLA was already reserve land - he nevertheless lost his farmland to the band.¹⁴

A Metis from Lebret rejoined the army with his cousin in 1950. They applied even though they both had been released from the army after the Second World War for medical reasons. To their surprise they were accepted and trained to become paratroopers. He was in the army this time for thirty-eight months.¹⁵ He was in the same unit as Tommy Prince, the Ojibway from Manitoba who also fought in the Second World War and is Canada's most decorated Non-commissioned officer.¹⁶ He describes Prince as "a great soldier. Brave man. He had no fear. You know, there's not very many people like that."¹⁷ Prior to enlisting, he had worked in various manual labour jobs. He had worked at the Lebret Metis farm, worked construction and chopped wood for townspeople. As he states, "you worked at anything you could in them days. It was tough to find permanent work, boy." There were many Metis veterans in Lebret who had a difficult time finding employment, "they couldn't get a job. I don't know what it was." He added, however, that the employers in Lebret and Qu'Appelle "didn't like Native people at that time." When the war in Korea broke he decided, "what the hell, may's well join." When he returned from Korea, he found the situation in Canada had not changed. Jobs were hard to find and the attitude of people in his town towards Aboriginal people was still racist. He states that "when I got back it was the same damn thing. I come back to Lebret: there was no future down there so I had to go out. I worked in Regina. Come back to stay after a week. It was rough for the veterans, really, really tough."¹⁸ It became evident to him that the Metis did not have

¹⁴ Halkett interview.

¹⁵ Anonymous, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 December, 1998.

¹⁶ Mackenzie Porter, "Warrior," *Maclean's*. September, 1952.

¹⁷ Anonymous, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 December, 1998.

¹⁸ Anonymous, personal interview, Fort Qu'Appelle, 17 December, 1998

much of a future in Lebret, “there was nothing there for us. No jobs. No respect. I had to get out of the dome. I had to get into the mainstream.”¹⁹ He felt that the racism and lack of jobs in Fort Qu’Appelle were barriers that impeded his chances to enjoy the standard of living that non-Aboriginal veterans were able to attain. He saw this standard of living as the mainstream, but more importantly, it represented the goal of providing comfort and security for his family. He left for Regina and found a job with Saskatchewan Power. He worked there until he retired.

For some veterans leaving their communities for southern urban cities was not the only option for finding employment. In 1939, Samson Pelletier enlisted in the war. He was the first person to do so from Cowessess Reserve. Before he was shipped out, he visited the reserve. Many of the Indian and Metis people in the area went to the church to shake his hand and wish him well.²⁰ Pelletier returned to Canada in 1945, after being wounded in Italy. His hair had turned grey and he had to walk with the use of a cane. He was thirty-five but looked sixty-five.²¹ Pelletier’s wounds were severe enough that the doctors gave him six months to live. When he returned to Canada, he was no longer a status Indian. Although there was no official Indian policy that required status Indians to enfranchise to enlist in the war, there was an dramatic increase in enfranchisement after 1942 (See Table Five).²² There is confusion whether he lost his status when he enlisted or whether the Indian agent told Pelletier upon his return that in order for Pelletier’s wife to receive the veterans’ pension once he died, he would have to leave the reserve. At any rate, Pelletier moved to Bangor, a small town north of Cowessess. His injuries were not as life-threatening as the doctors had thought. Due to his poor health, he was unable to work for four or five years. Pelletier still had the desire to provide for his family.

¹⁹ Anonymous, personal interview, Fort Qu’Appelle, 17 December, 1998.

²⁰ Lavalley interview.

²¹ Muriel Innes, personal interview, Saskatoon, 10 February, 2000.

TABLE FIVE
NUMBER OF ENFRANCHISEMENT
BETWEEN 1939 AND 1950²³

Year	Enfranchises	Year	Enfranchises
1939	99	1944	268
1940	105	1945	314
1941	60	1946	169
1942	109	1947	379
1943	99	1948	447

Though he was not strong enough to be a labourer as he was accustomed, his service in the war gave him experience leading a unit of workers. Prior to the war he traveled on the rails to farms in order to earn money. Traveling was not new to him. In 1950, he left the southern community to become the foreman of a fish plant in La Ronge. Pelletier's experience in the army and his ability to speak Cree no doubt helped him obtain that job. He worked there several years. In 1968, due to his deteriorating health caused by his army wounds, Pelletier died at the age of fifty-eight in St. Boniface, Manitoba.²⁴

Although migrating to the city was an option that many Aboriginal veterans chose, not all moved to the urban areas to seek better opportunities. Some were fortunate to secure employment in their home communities. Many northern veterans, for example, found jobs with northern resource industries. Both government and private corporations looked to veterans as valuable employees. Jim Brady, the Metis social activist from Alberta, for example, was persuaded to work for the CCF government in northern Saskatchewan. Brady had enlisted in 1943 and

²² Many veterans claim that they did not voluntarily enfranchise, see Canada. *The Aboriginal Soldier After the Wars: Report of the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples* (The Senate of Canada, Ottawa, 1995) 22-24.

²³ Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports 1939 -1948.

spent eleven months in combat.²⁵ Malcolm Norris, another Metis activist from Alberta who had been working with the Saskatchewan government, contacted Brady in late 1940s to work in Saskatchewan. Brady was sent to Cumberland House to help establish a number of cooperative projects, such as a lumber and a fish plant, and worked as a conservation officer. Cumberland House had numerous veterans who took well to Brady's ideas. After the CCF cutbacks, Brady for a time used his own money to fund the cooperative programs. When his money ran out, Brady had to leave to find gainful employment elsewhere. The people of Cumberland House understood Brady's reasons for his departure, but they were sad to see him leave and appreciated his hard work "to help the people."²⁶

Resource companies also hired many veterans for various jobs.

Veterans, for example, who had experience in driving trucks in the army were able to find employment with companies hauling lumber.²⁷ Another veteran talked about joining Noranda Explorations: "They wanted me to travel all over the north. Mapping rock and everything. Formations of rocks that is what we were doing. Geology work. To find out what kind of minerals they could expect in these formation. So that's what my job was. They were ready to fly me to Ontario every winter and come back in the summertime. And it was good money in those days. I loved it. My wife didn't."²⁸ Veterans worked with the Department of Natural Resources as fire fighters. Nathan Settee worked for years as a fire fighter, where he made "pretty good money."²⁹

Some northern veterans were able to create their own opportunities by developing their own businesses. Frank Tomkins, one of five brothers who enlisted

²⁴ Innes interview.

²⁵ Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris Metis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981) 138.

²⁶ Solomon Goulet, personal interview, Cumberland House, 25 August, 1998.

²⁷ Charlie Umperville, personal interview, Prince Albert, 12 January, 1999.

²⁸ Anonymous, personal interview, Cumberland House, 24 August, 1998

²⁹ Nathan Settee, personal interview, Cumberland House, 26 August, 1998.

in the Second World War, came home from the war and did various jobs. "I went into mostly logging, logging in the wintertime. In the summertime, I either worked on the railroad or I did commercial fishing. Then in 1951, I started my own mink ranching business in Alberta."³⁰ Another veteran who obtained a job at a slaughter house in Prince Albert but had trouble killing animals found a job at the post office.³¹ He later started his own trucking company in the early 1950s.³²

In the 1950s, many Indian and Metis veterans established economic security for themselves. They moved to the city to work in permanent, relatively well-paying jobs. This contrasted with the temporary, low-paying jobs that were available, if at all, in their communities. Other veterans were able to obtain jobs in their communities, whether with the band or with the government agencies, such as Indian Affairs and DNR. Many of the jobs that the veterans obtained were with non-Aboriginal employers. This was a new trend, as prior to the war many Aboriginal people had not worked with non-Aboriginal people and fewer non-Aboriginal people had worked with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal veterans' war experience had accustomed them to working side by side with non-Aboriginal people. In addition, the traveling they did during and after the war made Aboriginal veterans more willing to travel to different areas to find stable employment. With their gainful employment, the veterans acquired a new social status within their communities.

Aboriginal Veterans' Social Mobility

As Aboriginal veterans' economic status changed in the 1950s, their social status also changed. This new status was in part due to the responsibilities the veterans assumed. Veterans operated their own businesses, where they were in

³⁰ Frank Tomkins, personal interview, Saskatoon, 16 October, 1998.

³¹ "A Warrior's Story: Ben Henry," *New Breed Magazine* November, 1998: 8.

³² Ben Henry, personal interview, Prince Albert, 12 January, 1999.

charge of employees, responsible for financial matters, and placed in problem solving situations. Veterans were also increasingly emerging in management jobs within government and business. Obtaining and maintaining a permanent job, regardless of the level of the position, also raised the social position of veterans. These jobs endowed the veterans with a salary and a level of prestige not readily available to Aboriginal people prior to the war.

Frank Tomkins, like many other veterans, changed his career and assumed more responsibility. His mink business, though successful, lasted only one season. His father, the Metis activist Pete Tomkins, encouraged his son to relocate from Alberta to Saskatchewan to work as a smoke jumper.³³ His father had moved to Saskatchewan with Jim Brady. Initially, Frank Tomkins was unsure of the proposed venture, “I didn’t even know what the hell smoke jumping was. I didn’t have a clue.” In time, he decided he would try this new job, “so I sold everything I had from my first year of my mink business and moved to Saskatchewan.”³⁴ His life experiences were of great benefit to him as a smoke jumper. Tomkins explains that “everything that I learned with my father and fire fighting as a youngster and then my stint in the army and all the other experience I had really helped in my position as a smoke jumper because we had to be a sort of jack-of-all-trades there.”³⁵ He became the foreman of the smoker jumpers in charge of six men assigned to protect all of northern Saskatchewan against forest fires. CBC Television detailed the smoke jumpers and Tomkins’ role as a foreman in a 1964 documentary entitled “Diary of a Smoke Jumper.”³⁶ In 1967, Premier Thatcher’s Liberal government suspended the smoke jumpers program indefinitely. Tomkins suspects that the Thatcher

³³ Smoke jumpers were fire fighters. They parachuted into a fire area where they battled the fire before more reinforcements could reach on the ground. They are considered to be efficient in containing fires and financially. Saskatchewan was the only Canadian province to employ smoke jumpers. Though Thatcher suspended the smoke jumpers indefinitely in 1967, they are still used extensively in the United States and Russia. Tomkins interview.

³⁴ Tomkins interview.

³⁵ Tomkins interview.

government did not want a Native person in charge of the smoke jumpers.³⁷ The experience Tomkins gained leading the smoke jumpers served him well. He went on to work for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and later with the Metis Society of Saskatchewan. He is the former president of the Saskatchewan chapter of the National Aboriginal Veterans' Association.

Similarly, another northern veteran was persuaded to change careers. The RCMP had been anxious to hire someone from a northern community and they decided that this particular veteran's experience in the war, in the community and in the northern bush made him an ideal person for the job. The RCMP sent a man from the detachment to convince the veteran to work for them. The veteran explains how he had been enjoying working for an exploration company, traveling all over the north. He had no plans to change jobs, "then a corporal [from the RCMP] came in one day and asked me if I wanted to work for them. 'Well, by golly,' I said, 'I don't know.' I said, 'I already got a job every fall.' 'But this one,' he said, 'will be a year round job for a lifetime, if you want to.'"³⁸ Permanent year round employment was too good to resist, especially since his wife did not like the thought of him traveling to Ontario with the exploration company. He accepted a post with the RCMP and was sent to Regina to train. Because of his army training, he did not have to be trained in fire arms and other military aspects of police work. He was sent back to Cumberland House as a constable. His ties to the community and his ability to speak Cree made him a valuable member of the detachment. He spent the rest of his working career with the RCMP, retiring in 1976 after twenty-three years.

Another example of a veteran's career changes is the experience of Claude Adams, a Metis veteran from Macdowell, Saskatchewan. He traveled

³⁶ *Dairy of a Smoke Jumper* CBC Television, 1964.

³⁷ Tomkins' association with Metis activists such as his father, Brady and Malcolm Norris may have motivated the Thatcher government to replace him. For a discussion of the relations between Thatcher and the Metis see James Pitsula "The Thatcher Government in Saskatchewan and the Revival of Metis Nationalism, 1964-1971" *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, no. 3-4 (1997): 213-236.

throughout North America with Wilf Carter's county band. Following that he returned to northern Saskatchewan to work for a number of years as a forestry technician. He then attended the University of Regina and earned a diploma in social work. He went on to work for various government agencies, such as Public Health, Corrections, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). When he was with the DNR, he was in charge of fire fighters. He used his army experience in the way he commanded his men. "I organized them as if it were a military operation. And I explained things to the men so the men understood, without yelling. I think if you speak to a man in a sensible way he will react. I know how I feel when someone yells at me."³⁹ When he worked for Corrections, he was in charge of a group of inmates who were given the duty of planting trees in northern Saskatchewan. In the mid 1950s, Adams worked as a recreation therapist with Jean Cuthand at the Prince Albert Friendship Centre in a public health program for mentally challenged people.

Some veterans were able to obtain jobs with the Department of Indian Affairs. Working for Indian Affairs offered permanent employment and an excellent wage. It also allowed many Indian men the opportunity for the first time to leave manual labour jobs. According to Gordon Ahenakew, quite a few veterans became Indian agents. In fact, Ahenakew states the position of Indian agent was "pretty much the only job opened" for veterans to work among non-Aboriginal people in the reserve setting.⁴⁰ Joe Ewalk, from Ocean Man Reserve, fought with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles during D-Day and witnessed the murder of forty-five unarmed members of his platoon by the SS after they had surrendered.⁴¹ He was a prisoner of war for over a year and weighed less than ninety pounds at the end of the war.⁴² By

³⁸ Anonymous, personal interview, Cumberland House, 24 August, 1998.

³⁹ Claude Adams, personal interview, Prince Albert, 11 January, 1999.

⁴⁰ Gordon Ahenakew, personal interview, Sandy Lake, 5 April, 1998.

⁴¹ The man who ordered the murders and who was the head of the SS Youth, Kurt Meyer, was captured by Jack McGillivray, a Metis from Cumberland House. See *Remembrances: Metis Veterans* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1997) 84-87.

⁴² "Memories of a Canadian soldier of D-Day," *Grenfell Times*, November 1998.

the 1950s, he obtained a job with Indian Affairs, which he had for many years. He worked his way up to become a regional representative. He enjoyed the work as it allowed him to earn a decent living and not have to move from his home to the city.⁴³ At the same time, his job enabled him travel throughout Saskatchewan.

Gilbert Mcleod had a successful farm before he joined Indian Affairs. According to newspaper reports in 1948, Mcleod “threshed over 1,000 bushels of wheat and 1,000 bushels of oates. [The following years] despite the fact that a great deal of land is in summerfallow he more than tripled his yield.”⁴⁴ Although Mcleod enjoyed his years with Indian Affairs, he did face some challenges. Mcleod outlines his duties and the difficulties of his job: “I developed business plans with individual Indians. I laid down where the money was coming from and their obligations to the repayment program. But most of the guys . . . ah, to be an Indian, to deal with another Indian is the hardest thing that could ever happen. They just say, “who the heck are you? You’re just another Indian. Who do you think you are?” So I had more problems with Indian people than I did with any members of Indian Affairs.”⁴⁵

Others were also able to obtain employment in their home communities and were thereby able to improve their economic position without moving to urban centres. Howard Anderson, of Gordon’s Reserve, farmed for a few years after he returned from the war. In 1954, Anderson was hired to work at the residential school on the reserve. He became the chief engineer of the school. He coached the school hockey team and traveled extensively to compete. They went as far as Ontario, where they won a championship game. In fact, says Anderson, “we darn near went to New York with the team. The Ed Sullivan Show wanted us.”⁴⁶ The principal, however, would not allow the team to travel to New York. Today,

⁴³ Joe Ewalk, personal interview, Ocean Man reserve, 9 January, 1999.

⁴⁴ “Indian Veterans capable farmers,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 30 September, 1948: 2.

⁴⁵ Gilbert Mcleod, personal interview, Regina, 17 August, 1998.

⁴⁶ Howard Anderson, personal interview, Saskatoon, 22 October, 1998.

Anderson is the Grand Chief of the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans' Association.

Though many veterans lost their lands that they were granted through the VLA, a relatively small number of Indian veterans became successful farmers.⁴⁷ George Acoose, from Sakimay Reserve, for example, farmed the land he received from the VLA for most of his life.⁴⁸ Newspapers continually reported the stories of successful farms operated by Indian veterans.⁴⁹ Eleanor Brass, an Indian journalist from Peepeekesis Reserve, reported that veterans on her reserve who were able to farm were quite successful. She explained in a 1958 newspaper article that the "veterans are now farming on their allotted lands, equipped with tractors, etc., financed through the VLA grants . . . [they] are doing as well as can be expected under the prevailing conditions. Practically all the farming is now done by machine power."⁵⁰ One of the measurements of a successful farm operation during this time was the amount of machinery a farmer used. The veterans who were able to obtain farm machinery through the VLA were considered successful.

Max Lussier, a Metis veteran, first went to Germany in 1942 and returned to Canada immediately after the war ended in 1945. Lussier returned to work at the same pulp mill where he had worked prior to joining the army. A few years later, Lussier obtained a job at a hospital as a janitor during the days and continued to work at the pulp mill at night. It was at this time that Lussier dealt with his alcoholism. Unlike many veterans who did not drink until they enlisted in the army, Lussier drank before he went into the service. After the war his drinking

⁴⁷ See Senate Committee Hearing . See Appendix H for complete list of Saskatchewan Indian veterans and the amount of benefits they received from the VLA.

⁴⁸ George Acoose, personal interview, Sakimay Reserve, 10 January, 1999.

⁴⁹ "Indian Community Farm," *Regina Leader-Post*, 2 December, 1947: 5; "Indian Veterans capable farmers," *Regina Leader-Post*, 30 September, 1948: 2; "Indians Prospering cattle deals, are good Farmers," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 3 September, 1949: 18; "Kamsack Indians show Progress in Farming," *Regina Leader-Post*, 9 August, 1955: 2.

⁵⁰ Eleanor Brass, "File Hills Indian Colony (Peepeekesis Reserve).," *Native Voice*, January 1959: 10.

increased considerably. By the 1950s, he knew he had to become sober and he placed himself in a treatment centre. He explains his experience in the treatment centre: “once you went through the program you know how to help yourself. Also in the program, you learn how to help people. So you have more to offer somebody who is just coming off the street.”⁵¹ His experience led him to become the administrator of a alcohol treatment program at the hospital in Prince Albert where he once worked as a janitor.

The social mobility of Aboriginal veterans was of course related to economic mobility. As the veterans became more stable economically, they gained social status. This is not to say that Aboriginal veterans only gained social status by improving their economic outlook. Many veterans, especially in the north, maintained high social status because they were renowned hunters.⁵² Never before were so many Aboriginal people able to improve their economic position. The new economic position lead to an improved social status. This social status lead many veterans to become involved in political activities.

Aboriginal Veterans' Political Influence

By the mid to late 1950s, as the veterans gained social standing and maturity in their communities, they became more vocal in their political views. As more Aboriginal people moved to the city, the veterans became involved with issues facing urban Aboriginal people. In addition, veterans were rising within the political organization of the USI, later known as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI). Their involvement in these events reflected the veterans' social and economic, and to a lesser degree, their geographical mobility. This mobility, in turn, meant that the veterans wielded political influence. Unlike the immediate post-war years when

⁵¹ Max Lussier, personal interview, Prince Albert, 11 January, 1999.

veterans were young and politically immature, by this period the veterans had gained valuable political and life experience to reinforce their experience gained in war. This experience enabled Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans to become agents of social and political change in Saskatchewan.

A controversial government policy which affected some Indian veterans who resided on reserves sparked them to voice their displeasure with the government. In June 1956, debate arose in the House of Commons about a policy that allowed reserve Indians to legally remove other Indians from the reserve. Douglas Harkness, the Progressive Conservative Indian Affairs critic, told the House of Commons that if ten or more Indians signed a petition that another member of the reserve was not an Indian under the *Indian Act*, that person could then be expelled from the reserve. Such a policy, charged Harkness, "encouraged enmity and division among the reserve Indians."⁵³ The minister in charge of Indian Affairs, J. W. Pickersgill, replied by stating that "I can not find anywhere that suggests any Indian can be expelled." Pickersgill went on to clarify that *Indian Act* always had a provision that allowed reserve residents to protest the right of a person living on their reserve. If it could be proven that the accused people were illegally living on the reserve, they would be asked to leave. This decision could be appealed to the court. Nevertheless, Harkness again raised the issue in the House of Commons six months later. This time he outlined a case where some 118 Indians from the Hobbema reserve in Alberta were being expelled because it was argued by some reserve residents that the ancestor of these people had taken scrip after the Riel Resistance in 1885. Since individual band members were eligible for money derived from oil, Harkness told the House of Commons that he felt the provision of the *Indian Act* "was an invitation to greed and revenge."⁵⁴ Pickersgill responded by stating that his

⁵² This assertion, though not substantiated by aggregate data, is supported from anecdotal data.

⁵³ "Pickersgill denies expelling Indians," *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 June, 1956: 5.

⁵⁴ "Indian explosion said to invite greed," *Regina Leader-Post* 22 January, 1957: 11.

department would not take action but hoped that affected Indians would appeal to the courts. Pickersgill also stated that his department had completed its own investigation and had concluded that these individuals were not legally status Indians. This issue also caused much concern for some Saskatchewan Indian veterans.

In 1956, in Melville, at a conference of over twenty bands from Treaty 4, the issue of expelling Indians from reserves was raised by Indian veterans. Many of the delegates at this conference were reported to be “of a younger age having served in the last war.”⁵⁵ At the conference Noel Pinay, representing veterans in attendance, questioned band membership. Pinay, from Peepeekesis Reserve, who had been wounded in Germany during the war, faced the possibility of having to leave the reserve and his home. He stated that this issue had affected the reserve for a number of years. He hoped a positive solution could be reached for the benefit of everyone on his reserve. He told the gathering that the issue had been prolonged for too long and had negatively affected his people economically and socially. In defense of the band members who were to be expelled he noted that in most cases they had been resident for over fifty years. According to Pinay, the main objectors claimed to be descendants of the original band members and were trying to deprive certain members of the band “who have worked hard and earnestly to improve their living status under hardship, one of the privileges which they have right to by the treaty.”⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is no written record of how this situation was resolved.

That Pinay voiced his concerns at this conference is significant. This issue affected Indian reserve residents nationally as well as locally in Saskatchewan. At earlier Indian political conferences veterans were present but maintained a low profile. Although they were photographed and mentioned in newspaper reports, they

⁵⁵ “Indian Chiefs, Government Officials Hold Conference,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 19 September, 1956: 27.

did not address the conferences on issues that affected them. In fact, there is little evidence that the veterans at the end of the war were politically aware of the issues. By the mid-1950s, veterans were not only aware of the political issues, they were expressing their thoughts of them. Immediately after the war, newspapers did not report the veterans' views, but by the mid-1950s that had changed because veterans were publicly stating their opinions. In the mid-1940s, newspaper reports principally noted the veterans' physical appearance. Conversely, by the mid-1950s, newspapers went beyond the superficial physical appearance and noted the veterans' ability to carry themselves in a political environment. As one reporter stated at the 1956 Melville conference, the veterans "proved to be keen conversationalists and appeared to be well acquainted with what the Dominion government is trying to do to help them."⁵⁷ Whether the veterans understood that the government was trying to help them was not made clear. The main point is that veterans were being recognized for publicly putting forth their views.

With the increase of the Aboriginal population, discussion in the newspapers surrounding Aboriginal peoples' changing lifestyle increased. In most cases the situation was referred to as the "Indian problem" or "Metis problem." There were two branches to this discussion. The first was Aboriginal peoples' living conditions in their home communities. The second was their living condition in their relocation to the cities. Veterans became a significant voice in this discussion. Although living conditions in the Aboriginal communities were given some attention, so too was the willingness of Aboriginal people to become "more modern" as defined by the Euro-Canadian mainstream. A report released in 1953 by anthropologist Vic Valentine, for example, explained that the Metis in northern Saskatchewan were "making the transition from old or traditional modes and customs to modern living

⁵⁶ "Indian Chiefs, Government Officials Hold Conference," *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 19 September, 1956: 27.

conditions.”⁵⁸ The report stated that though this transition was “gradual and sometimes painful” for the Metis, it was nevertheless still apparent. The author of the report measured by physical appearance this willingness of the northern Metis to adopt the idea of modern living. Valentine stated for example, that in Cumberland House, the Metis transformation “was illustrated by their dress, types of homes, dependence on stores for canned goods, butter and margarine, and in a number of other ways.” The implication was that veterans were potential catalysts for this transition as “Cumberland House boasted 32 ex-servicemen [who] evinced a very strong desire to full control of economic and social change occurring in the community.”⁵⁹

Much attention, however was focused on the deplorable living conditions in Indian and Metis communities in the mid to late 1950s, and on the need for the government to do something.⁶⁰ The dominant theme at this time was the slogan “help the Indians to help themselves.” In 1955, for example, Mrs. M. L. Mead, a social worker with the Indian Affairs Branch, explained that the “Indians are going through a period of transition, and are faced with the necessity of adopting a new way of living if they are to survive as an independent people. They need assistance, acceptance and friendliness from the non-Indian population if they are to

⁵⁷ “Indian Chiefs, Government Officials Hold Conference,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 19 September, 1956: 27.

⁵⁸ “Northern Metis Responding to Modern Economic Life,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 27 August, 1953: 7.

⁵⁹ “Northern Metis Responding to Modern Economic Life,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 27 August, 1953: 7.

⁶⁰ For example see: “Metis survey plans Announced,” *Prince Albert Herald*, 25 October, 1951: 15; “Lot of Indians told by Journal,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 17 September, 1955: 4; “Indian Problem Debated in House,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 3 July, 1956: 11; “Regina Indians answer criticism of their race; urge education, mixing,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 29 September, 1956: 13; “Superintendent hits Indian segregation,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 6 November, 1956: 2; “Visit to Reservation Proposed,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 31 October, 1957: 3; “Indian Reservations said to Becoming Overcrowded,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 1 November, 1957; “Study of Indian Problems urged,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 12 March, 1957: 8; “With Money, Metis Living Like White Man; Like Indian Without,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 30 October, 1958:25; “Indian Problems must be Settled, Says Premier,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 24 October, 1959: 2; “Indian Integration,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 August, 1959:13.

make a success of their future. They are intelligent and capable of making the change if given help.”⁶¹

There arose a need for organizations to assist Indian and Metis people with adjusting to city living. In the early 1950s, urban Aboriginal organizations were being formed throughout Canada. By 1951, for example the Toronto Indian Club was formed and by 1958 their seventh annual banquet attended by 240 people, was reported in a national Aboriginal newspaper.⁶² In Regina, The Canadian Native Society of Regina (NSB) was formed by the mid fifties. According to a person known as O-sow-is-keesic, it was found that “due to the influx of Indians and Metis from reservations and rural communities many problems arise which are often difficult to cope with. Therefore an organization was formed composed of people of Indian descent . . .”⁶³ Aboriginal veterans who had migrated to the urban areas became integral members of these new urban organizations.

The Chairman of NSB was Walter Balhead, an Indian veteran. The strategy employed by Balhead and NSB to ease Aboriginal people’s transition to the city, was to form alliances with other social agencies and groups. In October 1957, for example, Balhead met in Regina with representatives of the New Canadian and Citizenship Council, YMCA, Saskatchewan Government Insurance, social workers, and several Indian Agents. At the meeting Balhead stressed the “poor living conditions on reservations, the need for better education facilities, more guidance preparation for the move to urban centres and more racial understanding.”⁶⁴

Also at the meeting was Moses Lavallee, a Metis veteran from Crooked Lake. He outlined some of the obstacles the Metis faced at that time.⁶⁵ The problem

⁶¹ “Indians in Saskatchewan Changing way of life,” *Regina leader-Post*, 15 October, 1955: 5.

⁶² “Seventh Annual Banquet: Toronto Indian Club,” *The Native Voice*, November 1958.

⁶³ “Regina Conference Planned,” *The Native Voice*, September, 1958: 3.

⁶⁴ “Visit To Reservation Proposed: Needs of Indian population discussed at meeting,” *Regina Leader-Post* 31 October, 1957: 3.

⁶⁵ “Visit To Reservation Proposed: Needs of Indian population discussed at meeting,” *Regina Leader-Post* 31 October, 1957: 3.

according to Lavallee “was the same if not worse for the Metis” compared to the Indians. He said it had taken him three years to work up enough interest for a school at Crooked Lake, where fifty children were not being educated. The Metis could not attend Indian schools and since they were not tax payers were not allowed to attend provincial schools. The new Metis school at Crooked Lake that Lavallee agitated for meant that Metis children in that area had the opportunity for the first time to attend school. Lavallee was also involved with a co-operative project at Crooked Lake which built new homes. Lavallee stated that the lack of education was of great concern among the Metis in his community. “Where I come from,” Lavallee stated at the meeting, “the majority of people can’t read or write. They haven’t the education to get out and talk to the whiteman.”⁶⁶

A year later, the Native Brotherhood Society of Regina promoted a conference, sponsored by the Regina Welfare Council. The infancy of both the Native Brotherhood Society of Regina and the Regina Welfare Council probably led to their alliance as a newspaper report included a plea for donations for both these organizations. The conference was to focus on education, medical services, counseling, employment, housing and recreation. Two nights were allotted for cultural activities, such as stories, dances and music. Balhead, who was still the chairman of the NSB, was also pushing for a house-to-house survey to ascertain the Aboriginal population of Regina, estimated to be 500. The conference also acted to promote the services offered by The Society.⁶⁷

One veteran who had a great impact on Indian social and political environment during the mid to late 1950s was Walter Deiter from Peepeekesis reserve. Deiter moved to Saskatoon in the early 1950s with his wife, Inez. They were determined to make a good living for themselves and their family. When they

⁶⁶ “Visit To Reservation Proposed: Needs of Indian population discussed at meeting,” *Regina Leader-Post* 31 October, 1957: 3.

⁶⁷ “Regina Conference Planned,” *The Native Voice* September, 1953: 3.

arrived there he found few other Indians living in the city, making their transition to city living more difficult. Deiter was able to find employment as a truck driver. Alcohol, however, threatened to destroy the Deiter family until he joined Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in 1956.⁶⁸

Once he quit drinking, Deiter became politically conscious. He became, for example, aware of the liberation movements throughout the colonial world. According to Delia Opekokew, “during the late fifties, there was a lot of news on the radio on the new self-determination movement in the Third World countries and how the new United Nations was endeavouring to recognize those aspirations of those people taking control over their lives. He thought that was the path of Indian people.”⁶⁹

In 1958, Deiter entered Indian politics. He ran against John Tootoosis for the presidency of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI). According to his biographer, although he lost to Tootoosis, Deiter’s participation in the election process “inspired his interest in Indian politics.”⁷⁰ Also in 1958, Deiter and his wife started the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre in Saskatoon. A year later, Deiter moved to Regina where he was employed as the Director of the Regina Indian and Metis Friendship Centre. By 1963, Deiter had been in the Regina area for over ten years and had become well established in the Indian social-political scene. He worked with Balhead at the Regina Indian and Metis Friendship Centre. He believed the Centre was crucial for Aboriginal people coming to the city. His commitment to the Centre was echoed when he stated “I stand pledge [sic] to help any Indian get on his feet and take his place in the city of Regina.”⁷¹ In 1965, Deiter was hired by the Department of Indian Affairs. He would use his experience he garnered from the

⁶⁸ Patricia Deiter, “Biography of Walter Deiter” (M. A. Thesis: University of Regina, 1997) 57

⁶⁹ Deiter 58.

⁷⁰ Deiter 58.

⁷¹ “Indian Community values centre in city: Learning leadership and outreach,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 26 November 1963:

Friendship Centres and from Indian Affairs to successfully run for president of the FSI in 1966.⁷² In 1968, Deiter, along with Omer Peters, an Indian veteran from Ontario, was among the founders of the National Indian Brotherhood.⁷³

While Deiter achieved a prominent role in Saskatchewan Indian politics without serving a political apprenticeship, other veterans did. These apprenticeships began to pay dividends in provincial politics by the mid-1950s with a new generation of Indian political leaders. By the time the provincial conferences of the USI were held, veterans were well placed to have an active role in policy formation. In the 1958 conference, for example, there were at least five veterans in attendance, all in key positions on various sub-committees.⁷⁴

One of those in attendance was David Knight, also a veteran. Knight was elected as councilor of James Smith Band in 1947 and remained a councilor until 1954. From 1954 to 1959 and from 1959 to 1963 Knight was elected Chief of his band.⁷⁵ He became involved in the provincial Indian political scene by the late 1950s. In 1958, he was elected vice-president of the newly renamed USI, Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI). In October of that year, he chaired the second annual meeting of the provincial executive of the FSI. The main discussion at this gathering centred on the recommendations to be incorporated into the brief the FSI was to send to a new Joint Senate and House of Commons hearing convening in 1960.⁷⁶ Knight joined Tootosis and William Wuttunee as the FSI representatives at the Joint Committee hearing in Ottawa. At the hearing, Wuttunee was the main spokesman. Tootosis, unlike his appearance at the 1947 Joint Committee hearing

⁷² Christa Nicholat, "Continuity and Change Among the Leadership of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 1946-1998" (Native Studies 404 research paper, University of Saskatchewan, 1998) 15.

⁷³ Janet Davison, "We Shall Remember: Canadian Indians and World War II" (M. A. Thesis, Trent University, 1992) 77. Davison incorrectly states, however, that Deiter helped form the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and was its first president.

⁷⁴ "Indian problems must be settled, says Premier," *Regina Leader-Post*, 24, October 1959: 2

⁷⁵ Nicholat 12-14

⁷⁶ "Indians Commence Conference," *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 October, 1959: 5.

where he was the chief spokesperson, spoke only on one occasion at the 1960 hearing. This may have reflected his declining authority within the FSI. Knight as the young and upcoming leader spoke a number times and appeared ready to take over from Tootoosis as the leader of FSI.⁷⁷ In 1961, Knight succeeded as the president of the FSI.⁷⁸

Another veteran who benefited from the political apprenticeship and rose within the Indian political ranks to become president of FSI was Wilfred Bellegarde. Bellegarde first came into contact with Indian politics at the provincial level at the Saskatoon meeting of 1946 that led to the formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians. That meeting sparked an interest in politics as he began to work at the band level. He was elected chief of his band, Little Black Bear, in 1949. By the mid 1950s, he had become more involved in provincial Indian politics. In 1964, he replaced Albert Bellegarde as President of FSI.⁷⁹

According to Doug Cuthand, the war experience of these new leaders meant they were not prepared to accept the oppressive conditions of Indians. In addition, the new leaders were more willing than previous leaders to confront the government. Cuthand states, for example, that these “leaders spoke fluent English, knew how the system worked and were not afraid to confront the government to achieve their ends.”⁸⁰ Nicholat, in her study of the leaders of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, disagrees with Cuthand’s assessment of Knight and Bellegarde. She states that the personality of Knight and Bellegarde “do not fit the aggressive confrontation image proposed by Cuthand. Cuthand proposes that all of the war veteran leaders of the FSI in the 1960s were more vocal and aggressive than

⁷⁷ Canada. Parliament, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 12, 16 and 17 June, 1960.

⁷⁸ Nicholat 12.

⁷⁹ Nicholat 13.

⁸⁰ Doug Cuthand, “Generational Change in Indian Government Evident,” *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 28 October, 1994: A5.

previous leaders. This is not the case however, with Knight and Bellegarde.”⁸¹ Nicholat contends that both of these men’s leadership styles resembles that of Tootoosis, whom she characterizes as a “traditional leader.”

Nicholat’s assertion seems to be legitimate. When these men undertook their political apprenticeship upon returning from the war, Tootoosis was the leader of the USI/FSI and would have had an influence on them. It is also important to note that according to Nicholat there is little information available about Knight’s and Bellegarde’s terms in office. Nicholat speculates that “one reason for this could be that no major policies were implemented during this period.”⁸² The lack of policy implementation by these two calls into question Cuthand’s claims about these leaders. Although Knight’s and Bellegarde’s leadership style and their effectiveness may not have reflected those of later leaders, such as the more confrontational Walter Deiter and David Ahenakew, they embodied the new influence veterans wielded over the socio-political climate in Aboriginal communities.

Conclusion

Contrary to Dobbins analysis, recent research demonstrates that the 1950s was not a “decade of political stagnation” for Aboriginal people.⁸³ Rather, this was a decade of social and political change for Indian and Metis people. During the 1950s, Aboriginal veterans became a force within their Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan. As the veterans obtained permanent and relatively well-paying employment, their economic stature rose. This employment contrasted with the seasonal low-paying jobs available to most Aboriginal people prior to and immediately after the war. Their new status facilitated the veterans’ social and

⁸¹ Nicholat 14.

⁸² Nicholat 14.

⁸³ Dobbin *One-A-Half-Men*. . . 183.

political elevation. As they matured they assumed greater responsibilities for themselves, their families and their communities. In effect, their level of responsibility as civilians was comparable to the level of responsibility they had while in the army. At the beginning of the decade, veterans were, generally speaking, still unsettled, but by the end of the decade they were in positions of influence. The more socially and economically mobile, they were, the more socially and politically active they became.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The years between 1945 and 1960 were a transitional period for Second World War Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans who changed from being passive participants immediately after the war to being active agents of social and political change in the 1950s. Veterans spent the first five years after the war readjusting to civilian life, and consequently their political activities were minimal. They made decisions based not on community needs but on their individual needs to integrate back into society. As a result, shortly after they had returned, many veterans decided to leave their home communities. Among the factors that contributed to the decision to leave their communities after the war were: the lack of employment, a sense of alienation from community members, the need to rid themselves of wandering or unsettled feelings, and the search for excitement and adventure. The decision in the post-war years to leave their communities was made easier because the veterans were newly accustomed to traveling, and motorized transportation was less expensive and more accessible than it had been before the war.

While the veterans were readjusting to post-army life, the Canadian public's attitude towards Aboriginal people was changing. Newspaper coverage of Aboriginal people influenced these changing attitudes. Prior to the war, the newspapers' portrayal of Aboriginal people conformed to the image of Indians popular in the nineteenth-century. During the war, the media documented the exploits of Aboriginal soldiers, and, though the media-generated image of the Indian was positive, it still conformed to the nineteenth-century Euro-Canadian perception of the Indian warrior. After the war, the newspapers gave coverage to Indian and Metis living conditions. The post-war news reports sympathetically portrayed

Aboriginal people as contemporary people, and were in contrast to the romanticized or negative image that had previously characterized news reports. Editorials praised the efforts of the veterans during the war and questioned the federal government's mistreatment of Indian people. The editorials asked the rhetorical question of how a country that fought to end oppression in Europe could continue to oppress a segment of its own population. Indian veterans were presented to the public as an example of the progressive Indian. These editorials called for reform to the government's way of dealing with Indian people, and the government began to feel the pressure from the Canadian public to reform policy affecting Indians.

The atmosphere created by this pressure was conducive for Indians to advance their views on Aboriginal and Treaty rights. The creation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians and the subsequent formation of the Special Joint Committee investigating proposed changes to the *Indian Act* (1946-148) resulted from changes in attitudes towards Indians. The creation of USI and the Special Joint Committee provided a forum for the Indian leaders to air their opinions for the first time at a national level. This is not to say that the Aboriginal political movement began at the end of the Second World War. Saskatchewan Indian and Metis people had organized politically as early as the 1880s. Nevertheless, in the immediate post-war years, Aboriginal leaders were presented with and took advantage of the new opportunities which they believed benefited their cause.

Indian veterans were not at first actively involved in the political fight for Indian rights, but their presence was important because they represented the "progressive Indian", a symbol the media impressed upon the Canadian public's consciousness. Some Indian veterans did attend meetings that lead to the formation of the USI. Photographs of the Indian veterans at these meetings belie the fact that they had a limited influence in the formation of USI. There is no evidence that

suggests the veterans assumed a leadership role at the meetings or that they even spoke.

The limited political role and impact of the veterans in early post-war years is highlighted also by the lack of influence they had in policy formation of the USI and in their interaction with the provincial CCF government. At their presentation to the Special Joint Committee, the USI's leaders were in the difficult position of advocating for the individual rights of Indian veterans while at the same time protecting the collective rights of treaty Indians in general. That the Indian leaders spent comparatively little time discussing veterans' issues in favour of issues such as education, social welfare and housing shows that collective rights took precedence over veterans' individual rights. In addition, the divisiveness that veterans' issues caused within Indian communities hindered the effectiveness of the Indian leaders' efforts to lobby for veterans and weakened the veterans' political position with the provincial government. Yet politicians, both Indian and non-Indian, used Indian veterans' issues to aid their political maneuvering. The unjust treatment of the Indian veterans by the federal government added to the litany of grievances Indian leaders brought against it. The CCF willingly advocated on behalf of Indian veterans, thereby strengthening its criticism of the federal government's Indian policy. None of these political maneuverings, however, provided concrete solutions to the Indian veterans' plight.

The veterans were not in a politically strong position. They were fragmented as a group, they did not form a separate political organization, and they did not belong to the Royal Canadian Legion in large numbers. Aboriginal veterans, for a short time, were the majority of members at one Legion Branch, but eventually they perceived that their concerns were not being addressed and they refused to attend meetings. A few veterans attempted to start their own veterans' association, but were urged by the CCF to join with the USI, despite veterans' issues not being a

priority of the USI. It is difficult to ascertain whether the veterans heeded the advice from the CCF. What is known is that no separate Indian veterans' organization was formed in the 1940s. Also, it is difficult to say how much support an Indian veterans' association would have garnered from Indian veterans in the late 1940s. Most Aboriginal veterans concentrated their efforts on individual needs rather than social-political concerns. As a result, up to 1950 Aboriginal veterans' role within Aboriginal communities was passive in that they were not actively involved in changing Aboriginal society. Nevertheless, their presence was crucial to the changing attitude in Canadian society and helped Aboriginal leaders gain an audience for their views.

During the 1950s, Aboriginal veterans became a social and political force within Aboriginal societies in Saskatchewan. The more socially and economically mobile they were, the more socially and politically active they became. By 1950, many veterans had returned to their home communities to settle down and raise families. While the 1950s brought the creation of many new jobs and subsequent prosperity to non-Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal communities, for the most part, did not share the experience. Many veterans again left their communities, this time in search of a better future for them and their families. Some were fortunate to find employment in or near their communities as farmers, Indian Agents, game wardens, or RCMP officers. Others were able to start their own small businesses.

As the veterans obtained permanent and relatively well-paying employment, their economic status improved. This employment contrasted with the seasonal low-paying jobs available to most Aboriginal people prior to and immediately after the war. Their new status facilitated the veterans' social and political advancement. As they matured they assumed greater responsibilities for themselves, for their families and for their communities. In effect, their level of

responsibility as civilians was comparable to the level of responsibility they had had while in the army.

By the mid to late 1950s, as the veterans gained social standing in their communities, they became influential social and political advocates. As more Aboriginal people moved to the city, the veterans became involved in new urban Aboriginal organizations such as the Canadian Native Society of Regina and Indian and Metis friendship centres. These organizations helped Aboriginal people make the transition to urban life and represented them in issues affecting them. In addition, veterans were rising within the political organization of the USI/FSI. Their involvement in these social and political developments reflected the veterans' social and economic, and to a lesser degree, their geographical mobility. This mobility, in turn, meant that the veterans wielded political influence. Unlike the immediate post-war years when veterans were young and politically immature, this period saw the veterans gain valuable political and life experience to reinforce their experience gained in war. Thus, Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans became agents of social and political change in Saskatchewan.

The post-war experiences of Second World War Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans are somewhat more complex than previously assumed. Some authors, such as Pitsula and Davison, have asserted that the political activities that occurred immediately after the war, such as the creation of political organizations like the USI and the formation of the Special Joint Committee, were due to the return of the Aboriginal veterans. As soldiers they traveled all over the world, were given much training and responsibilities, were exposed to non-Aboriginal people, and were liberators of Europe. These authors argue that when they returned home, the veterans, sparked by their war experiences, became leaders of an Aboriginal political movement that demanded redress for unequal treatment of Aboriginal people. So goes the previously dominant interpretation.

This view of Aboriginal veterans' post-war experiences is clearly incorrect. Though the veterans' presence did contribute to the political activities after the war, the veterans did not take an active role in these activities. Suggesting the veterans had an active role ignores the role of the existing leadership. Many of the Aboriginal men in leadership roles after the war were experienced political men who had gained much support in the Aboriginal community. The veterans who were interested in politics did not take over as leaders. Rather, the veterans assumed the role of apprentices to the experienced leaders. Later in the 1950s, the veterans took on the leadership roles that writers have mistakenly assumed they acquired immediately upon their return from the war.

Aboriginal people have been, by and large, absent from the history of post-war Canada. One reason for their absence is the lack of documented sources for historians to access. In addition, the events of the Second World War and the 1960s have overshadowed the importance of this period to Aboriginal history. By focusing on Second World War Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans this study has addressed the lack of sources. There are few archival documents on Aboriginal veterans. What sources do exist refer only to Indian and not Metis veterans. These sources, for the most part, were written by federal, provincial or Indian government officials and do not contain the views of the veterans themselves. The oral testimony of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans was crucial to gain a better understanding of the veterans' post-war experiences and help to fill the gaps that archival data leave. The information presented by the Aboriginal veterans is significant because it does not simply confirm the archival data but brings forth new data. When the last of the veterans die, this information will become more difficult to access.

This study set out to examine the role and impact of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans in the post-war years from 1945 to 1960. It has determined that

this period was one of transition for the veterans. In the early part of the period, they were passive agents of social and political change, and then, later in the period, they became active agents. This has shed some light on the experiences of Aboriginal veterans and how they influenced the social and political environment of Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan. In addition, this study has focused on a period in Aboriginal history often overlooked or dismissed as unimportant.

The history of Aboriginal people in the military is far from exhausted. Further research is recommended on Aboriginal veterans to put Aboriginal history into the context of the early twentieth century. Possible research topics that could be examined are numerous. Why did communities and community members react differently to returning veterans? Another topic could be a comparison between First and Second World War Aboriginal veterans' experiences. A researcher could seek to determine if the post-war impact of the First World War Aboriginal veterans was similar to that of Second World War Aboriginal veterans. More research should be done to ascertain the experiences of Aboriginal people in the 1930s and how this affected Aboriginal enlistment in the Second World War. Finally, research questions should be developed that address the wartime experiences of Aboriginal people, both at the front and on the homefront. These are examples of studies that would facilitate further understanding of early twentieth-century Aboriginal communities.

APPENDIX A

Methodology

During my research on Saskatchewan Aboriginal Second World War veterans in the post-war years, I found that the conventional historical approach to interpret events was inadequate. The pool of documentation on Aboriginal veterans is small and lacks, for the most part, the veterans' perceptions. The Tommy Douglas Papers and the records of the Special Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee Examining changes to the Indian Act, 1946-47, newspapers articles and government records were crucial sources of data on Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans. The Tommy Douglas Papers, for example, contain an important and until now unexplored file entitled "Indian Veterans." The Minutes of the Special Joint Committee include the presentation of the Saskatchewan delegation who in their two days of oral testimony to the committee discussed several issues important to Saskatchewan Indians. However, the amount of time spent on veterans' issues, in comparison with other issues, was very small. These two files provide new insight into the political role of Indian veterans in post-war Saskatchewan. However, they still leave a gaping hole in the history of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans. These documents deal only with Indian veterans; the Metis are nowhere to be found. The lack of documented accounts of Aboriginal veterans' views of their post-war experiences required a supplement to document analysis as a means of gathering data.

At this time, researching the documentation that concerns Aboriginal veterans, though not fruitless, does not access the most valuable and yet impermanent source of information: the Aboriginal veterans themselves. I realized that to gather data about the experiences of Aboriginal veterans in the war and post-war period requires interviewing. Once I decided that oral testimony would be a

crucial aspect of my data collecting, there were important issues with which I had to become familiar. I had to discern the difference between oral history and oral tradition, and how the veterans' interviews I was conducting fit with these definitions. I had to weigh the historians' criticism of oral historical methodology against oral historians' and other scholars' responsive development of methods to verify and interpret oral data.

Oral History And Oral Tradition

There has emerged recently a debate about the conceptualization of the terms oral tradition and oral history. Some scholars have maintained a rigid distinction between oral tradition and oral history, while others have been receptive to the notion that the two concepts are in a fluid relationship. Oral tradition and oral history are related but not the same, according to many scholars who employ oral evidence.¹ Vansina distinguishes oral tradition as “oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least one generation old,”² and oral history as “reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants.”³ Henige states that even though the terms oral history and oral tradition have been used interchangeably they are quite different. He defines oral history as “the study of the recent past by means of life histories or personal recollections, where informants speak about their own experiences” and defines oral tradition as something that is “widely practiced or understood in a society and it must have been handed down for at least a few generations.”⁴ Though von Gernet states that there are no universally accepted

¹ David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (Essex, England: Longman Group, 1982); Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

² Vansina *Oral Tradition as History* 3.

³ Vansina *Oral Tradition as History* 12.

⁴ Henige 2.

definitions for oral history and oral tradition, his definitions nevertheless correspond with those of Vansina and Henige.⁵ von Gernet states that some scholars do not make a distinction between oral tradition and oral history. These scholars point to the fact that “a single oral narrative may include traditions, eyewitness accounts, hearsay, and other forms of evidence, and that narrators may conflate various pasts or a past with a present.”⁶ While van Gernet concedes that, for some narrators fusing of past with the present may occur, he concludes that the argument offered against any distinction is not convincing. van Gernet states, “I believe the critics offer insufficient grounds for rejecting a widely accepted distinction. Classifications need not always be empirically tenable in order to serve as heuristic devices in scholarly research. Besides, most people do, in fact, distinguish between those events which they, themselves, witnessed or experienced and those which their ancestors told them happened in a more distant past.”⁷ Besides the semantic use of the terms “universally accepted” and “widely accepted,” the quote is significant. First, van Gernet is vague about what he means by “most people.” Judging from the title and topic of his report, it may be assumed von Gernet is talking about Aboriginal people although he does not explicitly state that as a certainty. Second, no matter whom he is referring to, he simply expects the reader to accept his belief as fact without any corroborative evidence.

As van Gernet demonstrates, both Vansina and Henige’s definitions have been accepted by those who use oral evidence. Many scholars in their writings may only refer to one of either oral tradition or oral history, but the definition they use is influenced by Vansina and Henige. For example, Miller, though he defines oral tradition as “a narrative describing, or purporting to describe, eras before the

⁵ A. van Gernet, “Oral Narratives and Aboriginal Pasts: An Interdisciplinary Review of the Literatures on Oral Traditions and Oral Histories Volume One: A report submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development” (<http://www.inac.gc.ca/pubs/oral/index.html>, 1996): 18.

⁶ van Gernet 8.

time of the person who relates it," acknowledges that it is slightly different than the conventional definition of oral tradition which he cites as belonging to Vansina.⁸ McMahon defines oral history as "interviews/conversations designed to record the memorable experiences of people."⁹ Some scholars of oral history/tradition are quiet when it comes to defining what it is they are doing. In two recent anthologies of methodologies for oral research only one author defines oral history/tradition.¹⁰ Brown provides a definition for oral history and oral tradition with the following explanation, "Oral history is defined as historical information that is obtained through interviews with persons who have led significant lives. Oral tradition (African American) dates back to storytelling in ancient times. Some of these stories were gathered and recorded by using interviewing techniques and classified as oral histories."¹¹ This definition does veer away from that of Vansina and Henige, but it retains the distinction between history and tradition while acknowledging the confusion that exists about the two definitions. The authors in the two anthologies have implicitly accepted the dichotomous definition of oral history/traditions.

Emergent in the literature is a perspective shared by authors who deem the distinction between oral history and oral tradition as false and misleading. Cruikshank states that there are two meanings for oral tradition that have been used by scholars. One of the meanings is based on Vansina and refers "to a body of material retained from the past and known to elders." The second meaning of oral tradition refers to "a process by which information has been handed down to the

⁷ van Gernet 8.

⁸ Joseph C. Miller, "Introduction: Listening for the African Past," in *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*, ed. Joseph Miller (Kent, England: Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980) 2 and 52, fn. 1.

⁹ Eva McMahon, *Elite Oral History Discourse: A Study of Cooperation and Coherence* (Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama Press, 1989) xiv.

¹⁰ Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lucy Rogers, eds. *Interactive Oral History Interviewing* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994); Kim Marie Vaz, ed. *Oral Narrative Research With Black Women* (Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

present.”¹² Though Vasina’s definition is important, it tends to promote a static view of orally transmitted narratives. That is, his definition emphasizes that oral narratives are “body of stories to be recorded and stored away ... passed on in the form of complete narratives.”¹³ Cruikshank acknowledges the difficulty scholars have in finding a suitable definition for oral tradition; however, she disagrees with any definition that relegates oral tradition to formal texts. Cruikshank states that oral tradition is “a living, vital part of life, and not simply information from a long time ago.” She concurs with Sahlin’s statement that “[k]nowledge of the past is not the dead and dying survivals of a past oral culture handed down through narrow conduits from generations to generations.” To this, Cruikshank adds that oral tradition “is related to the critical intelligence and active deployment of knowledge.”¹⁴

In her article on Dakota oral history, Cavender-Wilson also finds that the dichotomous definitions of oral history/tradition problematic.¹⁵ Whereas Henige makes a clear distinction between oral history, as a recollection or memory from the speakers’ experience, and oral tradition, as information handed down through the generations, Cavender-Wilson defines oral history as being contained within oral tradition not as a separate entity. For Cavender-Wilson, oral tradition, “refers to the way in which information is passed on rather than the length of time something has been told. Personal experiences, pieces of information, events, incidents, etc., can become a part of the oral tradition at the moment it happens or the moment it is told, as long as the person adopting the memory is part of an oral tradition.”¹⁶ Further,

¹¹ Georgia W. Brown, “Oral History: Louisiana Black Women’s Memoirs” in *Oral Narrative Research With Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, 1997) 83.

¹² Julie Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy: Oral Tradition and Oral History,” Draft Discussion Paper prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, (1993) 2.

¹³ Cruikshank *Claiming Legitimacy* 2.

¹⁴ Cruikshank *Claiming Legitimacy* 9.

¹⁵ Angela Cavender-Wilson, “Grandmother to Granddaughter: Generations of Oral History in a Dakota Family,” in *Native and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. D. A. Mihesuah, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1998) 29.

¹⁶ Cavender-Wilson 29.

Cavender-Wilson points out the oral tradition form “is based on the assumption that the ability to remember is an acquired skill - one that may be acutely developed or neglected.”¹⁷ As a Dakota person, Cavender-Wilson defines oral history and oral tradition within her own cultural understandings. This may explain why her definitions of oral history and tradition do not compartmentalize or contrast each other. Her definitions allow for a distinction, yet also allow for overlap. Cavender-Wilson points out that there are cultures that incorporate aspects of oral tradition in oral historical narrative. This corresponds with Cruikshank’s findings in her recorded life stories of three Yukon Elders: “I was interested in hearing women talk about events chronicled in written documents and records and tried to steer our conversations in that direction. Although the older women responded patiently to my line of inquiry for a while, they quite firmly shifted the emphasis to ‘more important’ accounts they wanted me to record - particularly events central to traditional narrative. Gradually, I came to see oral tradition not as ‘evidence’ about the past but as a window on ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed.”¹⁸

In interviewing Aboriginal veterans it was beneficial to acknowledge that the distinction between oral history and oral tradition does become blurred for some informants. Similar to the participants in Cruikshank’s study, the veterans may also emphasize events that fit the traditional narrative. The following account by Adam Cuthand demonstrates the narrative fluid attributions to oral history and oral tradition.

The other one is the time the veterans talked about the time they were sunk in the mid-Atlantic. There were a lot of natives there. As the ship was sunk the whitemen were scared and frightened but the natives were not scared. The whitemen were praying, crying for their mothers. The natives were going up with some white people, finally, they got to the top. While they were waiting up there, the natives heard a voice singing and this same person (Great Spirit) told them, “*Sing with me*”. This voice was singing the Grass Dance. So, the natives sang with him, the

¹⁷ Cavender-Wilson 29.

¹⁸ Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990) 14.

whitemen tried but couldn't. They sang the Grass Dance and learned it. This same person that inspired them told them "*I am going to end this sinking ship. You are going to be rescued, as soon as the ship gets down here, the ship will sink, but sing again*", and they sang. That man that was on that ship is still in Hobbema. They still sing that song.¹⁹

Cruikshank's and Cavender-Wilson's conception of oral history allows for flexibility in attributing the veterans' narrative interviews to the cultural conceptions of oral tradition. The oral history of the Aboriginal veterans' war and post-war experiences becomes a part of the oral tradition once they tell it.

Arguments For And Against Oral History

In their discussion about the apparent end of ethnohistory in the United States, Meyers and Klein list the three major sources available to historians of the more recent Indian past as government records, classic ethnographies and interviews. "Taken together," these authors state, "these resources have enormously broadened the possibilities for research and understanding" as they allow historians to delve deeper into Native American history.²⁰ Winona Stevenson asserts that some historians have started to seriously consider the benefits of employing oral histories. Stevenson goes on to state that most historians "[e]ven the most open-minded, however, still grapple with the questions or doubts concerning the nature and quality of oral history."²¹ The use of oral history within the discipline of history has not received much support. In the hierarchy of available and reliable sources, traditional historians, historians who only use written sources, consider oral sources to be least

¹⁹ Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, 37.

²⁰ Melissa Meyer and Kerwin Lee Klein, "Native American Studies and The End of Ethnohistory," in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 195.

²¹ Winona Stevenson, "Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories. Part I: The Othering of Indigenous History," *Saskatchewan History* 50, no. 2 (1998): 24.

reliable, while the written sources are considered very reliable.²² Prins describes many historians' evaluation of written sources vis-à-vis oral sources: "[W]hen official, written sources are available, they are to be preferred. Where they are not, one has to put up with second best, filling one's bucket further away from the pure source of official text. Oral data are, in these terms, without doubt, second best or worse, so their role is to facilitate second best histories about communities with poor sources."²³ Once established as authorities, professional historians supplanted oral sources with written sources, and oral history quickly lost its standing as a means of transmitting history. Littlejohn states in her oral history of the Frog Lake Massacre that the disrepute of oral history had a negative impact on Indians. Professional historians have their own theories to perpetuate and "since Indian fortunes were viewed only with regard to white fortunes, the Indian oral tradition soon was regarded as unsubstantive by white historians. Why not? The oral tradition did not support their theories."²⁴ The lack of the oral historical method from mainstream history has therefore reflected the absence of Aboriginal perspectives in mainstream history.

Historians consider written sources superior to oral sources because they contain three qualities not found within oral sources. A written document gives the historian a static form with which to work. Historians can see exactly what is on the page and know that it will not change. Therefore, the document can easily be tested in a variety of ways, such as comparison with other written documents. Second, written documents are fixed in time, allowing historians precision in determining chronology; a crucial consideration in the discipline of history. The final quality

²² Traditional historians use the Rankean approach to history. Stevenson explains that "Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) is credited for the development of what we now refer to in the discipline as the "traditional paradigm" or "Rankean history" because it established prescribed methodical conventions." Stevenson 27 n. 2.

²³ Gwyn Prins, "Oral History," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writings*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1991) 115.

found in written sources allows for multiple sources. The growth in literacy rate increased the opportunity to find corroborating evidence.²⁵ However, Littlejohn argues that oral tradition is as valid a source as written documents because all histories are subjective. Therefore, it does not matter “whether the report is passed from hand to hand or from mouth to mouth, the representation of the historical event is altered by the cultural, social, and economic filter of the person transmitting the information.”²⁶

Many historians take the stance, however, that the oral sources cannot advance knowledge because of the impermanence of the spoken word, and people’s limited capacity to remember.²⁷ Cultures based in the oral tradition cannot adapt to change and, therefore, the information contained within them is easily forgotten. Prins cites Goody, a strong opponent of oral historical method, who was concerned that oral sources, as historical data, suffered from what he calls structural amnesia. In Goody’s view oral traditions are limited by the selective input that forms people’s memory. He states that once writing became widespread, written sources became superior to oral because they enabled the unlimited creation of knowledge: “No longer did the problem of memory storage dominate man’s intellectual life. The human mind was free to study static text rather than be limited by participation in dynamic utterances.”²⁸ Goody ignores the fact that written history is constantly revised and changed as new theories are developed.²⁹ Ethnohistories are said to last no more than ten to fifteen years before they need reinterpretation.³⁰ Further, Pirenne noted forty years ago that written documents can be as unreliable as oral sources are

²⁴ Catherine Littlejohn “The Indian Oral Tradition: A Model for Teaching” (M. ed. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1975) 28.

²⁵ Prins 119.

²⁶ Littlejohn 9.

²⁷ Prins 124.

²⁸ Prins 124.

²⁹ Littlejohn 27.

³⁰ Cruikshank, *Claiming Legitimacy* 11.

claimed to be: "Written documents of all the sources of history are at once the most valuable and the most fallacious."³¹

Although history has not been friendly to oral history, some historians have recognized its significance and difference from documents. Richard White, in a recent article, describes the tension between history and Native American Studies in the United States stemming from narration, evidence and multiple ways of organizing the pasts.³² He notes that oral history has a different objective than history, "[I]ike written history, they exist to make the world understandable, but unlike written history they are their own source. They do not have to confront intractable material artifacts and need to be understood according to their own rules and context. They cannot be conflated with written evidence, but the two can perhaps be used in a complementary manner that allows us to see how different societies organize a common past."³³ These issues are not confined to Aboriginal history. As White stresses, "It is precisely because they occur in many histories that the struggle of historians of Native American people to deal with them in often exaggerated forms should be of interest to scholars."³⁴

European and American historians have utilized oral history to a greater extent than Canadian historians.³⁵ Fancher states that this lack of oral history in Canada is because "Canadian historians tend to assume that everything within the memory of the living is sufficiently documented on paper and sociologists [believe] that the past is irrelevant to the present studies . . . The spoken memory then becomes the special concern of anthropologists and folklorists, removed from the realm of

³¹ Henri Pirenne, "What are Historians Trying to Do?", in *The Philosophy of History in Our Times*, ed. Hans Meyerhoff (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., Ltd., 1959) 90.

³² Richard White "Using the Past: History and Native American Studies," in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 215-243.

³³ White 228.

³⁴ White 228.

³⁵ Diana Fancher, "Oral History: The Research Reality," *Canadian Oral History Association Journal* 10 (1990): 5.

“science” and relegated to the world of tradition, that is, art and craft.”³⁶ That science has influenced the criticism of informant reliability is supported by van Gernet, who states that the “debate about the reliability and validity of oral tradition mirrors the tension between positivistic historical objectivism on the one hand, and an anti-historical relativism on the other.”³⁷ The lack of respect for oral testimony has relegated oral history to the fringes in the discipline of history. However, historians and other scholars who work with oral data have put forth arguments which, while acknowledging the weaknesses of oral sources, demonstrate its validity as a tool for the reconstruction of history.

Most oral historians agree that the reliability of informants cannot be assumed simply because they consent to give an interview. Henige states that the oral historian must be critical about the capacities of informants to recall events. Oral historians must be aware that informants may distort, exaggerate, or embellish accounts because it is difficult for anyone to recall their past objectively. If the oral historians are not critical about the data informants provide, then no historical reconstruction can truly be attempted. Henige adds this warning to prospective oral historians. If upon critical analysis it is determined that the informant has not distorted the testimony, the oral historian “must realize, that even their best will to remember - and to remember accurately - begs the question of their ability to do this in a way that will appeal to the historian’s own sense of historical significance.”³⁸

Clark’s study of desegregation at the University of Alabama provides an example of informants changing their stories to serve their own purposes and serves to caution researchers to critically assess what informants say in a interview. Clark’s statement that “all historical preservation is governed by the prospect of future remembrance” underlines his reasons for questioning why an informant might

³⁶ Fancher 5.

³⁷ van Gernet 73.

³⁸ Henige 67.

change his/her story.³⁹ Clark adapts K. Burke's concept of the epitomizing image, an analytical tool which examines change in a narrative. Most people want to be remembered in a positive way, be it as a good father, good mother, good teacher or good president. However, the distinction between what is considered good and what is considered bad may be hard to find or may change in time. For example, actions decided upon by persons in the past may be judged unconscionable if the same actions were taken today. Decisions that are in the unconscionable category today "are best forgotten in the interest of future remembrance" by those who made those decisions.⁴⁰ People's memory of the episode may change slightly to justify the action decided upon so that their actions will be viewed in a positive way. The degree to which the memory of the episode changes is not of great significance, though the change is probably subtle so as not to be easily detected. What is significant is "that the change becomes the fulcrum upon which the new image hinges."⁴¹ What occurs, according to Clark, is that the person is attempting to come to terms with the past and thereby find a past that he or she can accept. In doing so the person requires that the discussion of the past is not simply a process of rediscovery but also a process of redemption. The images restored or created by memory are not easily challenged.

Like all lores, it is sustained by a powerful image, a representation that establishes the truth of a story through exemplification. It has the power of illustration, of converting abstract discussions of good and evil into concrete visualizations...[and] like all pictures, are a matter of perception, they cannot be converted readily in an interview unless one is prepared to say, "you're a liar" or "you have faulty memory." They possess the persuasive force of the eyewitness. To deny the truth of the example requires an unpleasant *ad hominem*, a willingness to attack the narrator's competence or motive. The image as anecdote comes into being out of someone's memory and is buttressed by the authority of its creator, usually someone in position to know or observe. It is the refrain of the Vietnam veteran, "I was there, I ought to know." Absent concrete

³⁹ E. Cupepper, Clark, "Reconstructing History: The Epitomizing Image," in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, eds. Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994) 19.

⁴⁰ Clark 21.

⁴¹ Clark 21.

counterproof, only a skeptic qua cynic would question the authenticity of such accounts. Put another way, these accounts are sustained by the gullible side of human nature, the side that knows not to believe the newspapers, but does anyhow.⁴²

The concept of the epitomizing image could relate to the oral history provided by Aboriginal veterans. The image of Indian veterans as victims, due to the inequitable distribution of veterans' benefits, may at some point prove to be an example of epitomizing image. However, this is unlikely the case as there are many documented sources of Indian veterans' protesting the unfair distribution of veterans' benefits. The importance of this concept rests in its use as a tool to explain inconsistent or contradictory information provided by informants. This concept offers a possible explanation but cannot by itself draw out the inconsistencies. The naive and uncritical researcher could further entrench the epitomizing image and, as Clark puts it, "confound historical reconstruction."⁴³

Verifying Oral Historical Data

Oral historians have addressed the criticism of informants' reliability. Thompson states that oral historians must scrutinize oral evidence for reliability in the same manner as archival evidence. That is, they must adhere to the general rules of historical inquiry, which are "to look for internal consistency, to seek confirmation in other sources, and to be aware of potential bias."⁴⁴ Thompson prescribes three precautions to verify the validity of the oral evidence. First, each interview should be evaluated for internal consistency. To determine the reliability of an informant, the researcher must look at the interview as a whole. The researcher should be alert to any tendency of the informant to mythologize or generalize. Further, the researcher in detecting inconsistencies in the data should look for evidence of the informant

⁴² Clark 25.

⁴³ Clark 25.

providing contradictory details or avoiding certain topics in order to suppress inconsistencies. Discrepancies in the data do not necessarily nullify the interview's usefulness. Thompson states: "It is very common to find a conflict between the general values which are believed true of the past and the more precise record of day-to-day life; but this contradiction can be in itself highly revealing, for it may represent one of the dynamics of social change - and a perception which is, in fact, rarely possible through any other source than oral evidence."⁴⁵

The second procedure to evaluate the reliability of the data provided by an informant is to cross-check it with other sources. Interviews that are conducted among members of a homogenous group can be cross-checked with each other. In addition, Thompson quotes Vansina that the data can be compared to written documents: "[a]ny evidence, written or oral, which goes back to one source should be regarded on probation; corroboration for it must be sought."⁴⁶ Therefore, cross-checking oral evidence with newspapers, government documents, or any other written material does not display lack of confidence in oral testimony, but is rather one method of verification. It is important to note that the conflict that occurs between the oral and the written sources does not suggest that one is more reliable than the other. The discrepancy between the two may simply highlight two different perspectives of the event, or it may provide a completely different interpretation. Thompson elaborates, "Very often, indeed, while oral evidence which can be directly confirmed proves to be of merely illustrative value, it is fresh but unconfirmed evidence which points the way towards a new interpretation. Indeed, much oral evidence, springing from direct personal experience... is valuable precisely because it could come from no other source. It is inherently unique."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Thompson 92.

⁴⁵ Thompson 210.

⁴⁶ J. Vansina, as cited in Thompson 211.

⁴⁷ Thompson 211.

The third step that researchers should take to determine the reliability of the data is to place it in the wider context. By acquainting oneself with all available sources, the oral historian should be in the position to sense the reliability of unconfirmable data. However, as Thompson points out, by applying “special techniques” the researcher may be able to demonstrate the reliability of the data. Thompson explains that the special techniques that may be employed are: a linguist in identifying an informant’s modification of his or hers vocabulary; a folklorist in distinguishing between aspects of a story that have not been altered with aspects that have been recently added and; a critic in providing literary analysis to the narrative to determine the difference between the formal structure of the story with the actual facts and the symbolic messages of the story. Further, the interviews can be tested as an aggregate, using quantitative means to evaluate the data to determine the consistency with other sources of data. Quantitative analysis provides a measurement that allows the researcher to know how far the data can be trusted on other points.⁴⁸

Whereas Thompson discussed the reliability and validity of oral sources, Li discusses additional concerns to be addressed when using oral history as a research methodology. Li identifies three potential obstacles to making logical inferences with oral sources. The first obstacle is judging the reliability and validity of the subjective testimonies of the informants. Second is the problem of categorizing distinctive stories, and the third is the difficult task of drawing some sort of generalizations from such individualistic experiences.⁴⁹ In addressing the first obstacle, Li defines the truthfulness of a story as “whether or not the story reports what actually happened or, more generally, whether the story corresponds to an empirical reality.”⁵⁰ In order for the truthfulness of the story to be accepted it must be verified by another source. The secondary sources such as news reports or official

⁴⁸ Thompson 211-212.

⁴⁹ Peter Li, “Constructing Immigrants’ Work Worlds from Oral Testimonies,” *Canadian Oral History Association Journal* 9 (1989): 9-12.

records are usually used for verification of oral testimonies. Of course, as Li notes, the reliability of these secondary sources is at times questionable. Li outlines five ways that truthfulness can be interpreted in a story:

- 1) What the respondent describes is fabricated;
- 2) What the respondent describes is what the respondents would like to believe to have happened;
- 3) What the respondent describes is what the respondent perceives has happened;
- 4) What the respondent describes is also described in recorded sources, and
- 5) What the respondent describes is exactly what happened.⁵¹

These categories do not negate the experiences of the respondents by deeming them invalid; they point out that “each level of interpretation corresponds to a different reality.”⁵²

Li explains that data obtained from the oral historical method are composed mainly of an individual’s selection of past experiences based upon what is believed to be worth remembering and retelling. In order to improve the memory of an informant, Li suggests asking a number of selective questions on a particular theme, thereby setting a systemic approach to retrieving the maximum desired data in the interview and facilitating the process of interpretation. Further, Li found in his interviews with elderly Chinese immigrant workers that their memories did not provide a simple chronology of events. As a result he did not use their narratives to construct a historical sequence of events but as descriptions of various periods. Li provides the example of asking a respondent what year he first came to Canada and what year he went back to China to get married, to frame the period on which to focus the interview. The next obstacle is the problem of categorizing the distinctive stories related by the informants.

⁵⁰ Li 10.

⁵¹ Li 10.

⁵² Li 10.

The third obstacle to drawing generalizations from individual experiences challenged Li when he found that the data he extracted from informants did not match the official immigration records. Interestingly, upon further investigation he found that the oral testimony was indeed the correct information. In this case an informant stated that he had immigrated to Canada in 1936. However, according to Canadian Immigration records no Chinese people came into Canada between 1923 and 1947 because of the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1923*. The informant, as Li relates, “was able to come into Canada in the era of certificate with which he could claim to be native-born in Canada. The case alerted us to look into other means of circumventing the law when it was virtually impossible to immigrate legally.”⁵³

For the most part, existing documentation has reflected the standpoint of the dominant culture and has acted as vindication of the wisdom of the powers that be while ignoring other perspectives, like the Chinese immigrants in the early twentieth century Canada. Oral history can be used to provide an alternative to the established histories. Oral history, according to Thompson, in contrast to traditional history “makes a much fairer trial possible: witnesses can now also be called from the under-classes, the unprivileged, and the defeated. It provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account.”⁵⁴ Goulet, for example, in his oral history of the impact of hydroelectric development on the residents of Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan, found that oral history allows for new facts, interpretations, and concepts to be introduced. According to Goulet, even though “three major historical works had been done about the community, over half of the historical facts presented in [this] narrative had not been recorded before.”⁵⁵

Similarly, McBane, who utilizes oral history to describe the experience of the Irish

⁵³ Peter Li, “The Use of Oral History in Studying Elderly Chinese-Canadians,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17, 1 (1985): 72.

⁵⁴ Thompson 5.

famine survivors who had immigrated to Canada in the nineteenth century, demonstrates that their experiences have not been satisfactorily explained by Canadian historians. As McBane states, “[t]he experience of the conquered and dispossessed in history tend to be poorly documented by historians. Canadian historical scholarship is better at documenting the experience of the conquerors.”⁵⁶ Cavender-Wilson adds that the role of “historians should be to examine as many perspectives of the past as possible - not to become the validators or verifiers of stories, but instead to put forth as many perspectives as possible.”⁵⁷

Thompson claims that utilizing oral history allows for new perspectives to come forward and acknowledges that “reality is complex and many sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”⁵⁸ Cruikshank’s statement supports the view of oral history’s potential to challenge the status quo of mainstream history: “If we accept that oral tradition refers to the ways in which people use the traditional dimension of culture to talk about the past and present, we can see that its contribution comes not through alternative “facts” or even alternative interpretation of those ‘facts’ but through contesting some of the conventional premises of mainstream historical writing.”⁵⁹

Oral Historical Methodology

There are many different kinds of methods employed by oral historians. Scholars who are active in oral history agree that the interview is the best method to

⁵⁵ Keith Goulet, “Oral History as an Authentic and Credible Research Base for Curriculum: The Cree of Sandy Bay and Hydroelectric Power Development 1927-67, An Example,” M. Ed. Thesis, University of Regina, 1986, ii.

⁵⁶ Michael McBane, “Irish Famine Stories in the Ottawa Valley,” *Oral History Forum* 16-17 (1996-1997): 12.

⁵⁷ Cavender-Wilson 35.

⁵⁸ Thompson 5.

truly understand the feelings, attitudes and perceptions of the informants. Green-Powell states that the “advantage of the interview as a research tool is that it is possible for the researcher to talk directly with his or her subjects and investigate their thinking first hand.”⁶⁰ The benefits of interviews, according to St. Onge, is that they “indicate how useful oral history can be as a tool for understanding the evolving social structure of a community.”⁶¹ Fancher states that the interview process had a positive effect on her informants, elderly residents of a particular neighborhood in Toronto, because it “reinforced their place in society as that which belongs to “elders” - keepers of wisdom based on past experience.”⁶² However, she states further that “present day social scientists can be the keepers of past experience of everyday life, something that cannot be as effectively reconstituted in any other way.”⁶³ Fancher’s comments raise interesting issues. First, “Do the ‘keepers of wisdom’ need the social scientist to reinforce their place in society?” Second, “Can scholars ethically or morally assume the role of ‘keepers of past experience?’”

Approaches to oral history vary considerably. For example, in their discussion of the European approach to life histories, Bertaux and Kohli made a conscious decision not to focus on methodological aspects or rigid standards because “[g]iven the variation in basic theoretical orientations and substantive issues, the general feeling among researchers is that no standard procedures will be devised in the near future.”⁶⁴ Thompson, in stating that there is no one way to interview, says, “there are many different styles of interviewing, ranging from the friendly, informal, conversational approach to the more formal, controlled style of questioning, and

⁵⁹ Cruikshank, *Claiming Legitimacy* 13.

⁶⁰ Patricia Green-Powell, “Methodological Considerations in Field Research,” in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousands Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, 1997) 198.

⁶¹ Nicole St Onge, “Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Oral History of a Metis Community,” *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*, 7 (1984): 2.

⁶² Fancher 8.

⁶³ Fancher 8.

good interviewers eventually develop a variation of the method which, for them, brings the best results, and suits their personality.”⁶⁵ In contrast, Turner stresses a more rigid approach. She prefers that informants be given standardized questions in order to provide a means to contrast and compare answers.⁶⁶ The interview schedule should be carefully phrased in order to encourage more than simple yes-no answers. Answers that are more descriptively narrative are preferred because, as Turner states, the “more descriptive the answer, the more data to interpret and analyze.”⁶⁷ In order to ensure meaningful data, Henige discourages allowing informants to dictate what type of data the interview will generate. The oral historian should control the flow of the interview as Henige states: “By allowing an interviewee to control the direction of the interview as well as kinds of data he provides by means of apparently aimless reminiscing, the historians concedes that rambling is a virtue.”⁶⁸

However, to follow Henige’s suggestion would prove problematic in an Aboriginal cultural context. Some Aboriginal informants do not respond well to the standard question and answer interview. These respondents provide answers that are more like stories. These stories may contain the answers to numerous questions. These types of interviews, however, take longer than one that is designed more rigidly. Interviewers can either decide to accept the advice of Henige and assume control of the interview or they can be flexible and allow the informant to take control of the interview. Though the first suggestion may expedite the interview process, it may not be the best way to acquire the most information in the least obtrusive way. If, however, the informant is allowed to speak in the manner to which he/she is

⁶⁴ Daniel Bertaux and M. Kohli, “The life Story Approach: A Continental View,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 218.

⁶⁵ Thompson 165.

⁶⁶ Diane Turner, “Reconstructing the History of Musicians’ Protective Union Local 274 Through Oral Narrative Method,” in *Oral Narrative Research With Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997) 181.

⁶⁷ Turner 181.

⁶⁸ Henige 109.

accustomed, such as storytelling or conversational style, it will be less obtrusive and the researcher will probably gain more information.

Further, when interviewing Aboriginal people, researchers should note that many may not be accustomed to the barrage of questions typical of an interview schedule. It becomes incumbent upon the interviewer to be patient and allow them the leeway to complete their answers, especially if the answers are in a story. Most elders prefer to tell their stories without interruption. In interviewing three Yukon Elders, Cruikshank came to the realization that it was best not to interrupt Elders' storytelling: "None of the women appreciated being interrupted, and usually they interpreted any request for clarification as a sign of flagging attention. Once I started using a tape recorder, I discovered that most intrusions were unnecessary because my questions would be clarified when I transcribed the tape."⁶⁹ This awareness was instructive when conducting interviews with Aboriginal veterans, as many responded in a similar fashion.

Murray Dobbin provides an example of how not to conduct an interview with an Elder. In his 1977 interview with John Tootoosis, Dobbin continually interrupts, asks extremely leading questions and insists on talking more than listening. The frustration in Tootoosis's voice is noticeable. At one point, after Dobbin interrupted yet again, Tootoosis rebuked Dobbin, "Wait a second! I'm not finished!"⁷⁰ The purpose of interviews are to listen to what the informants have to say.

In the preface to their book of oral history of Indians in Minnesota, Cash and Hoover were clear that the interviewers should allow interviewees to say what was important to them. The interviewer, according to Cash and Hoover, "was to avoid becoming too rigid, and thereby unnecessarily restricting the flow of information concerning subjects that might not be of primary interest to him but that

⁶⁹ Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like* 19.

could prove vital to someone else. Above all, he was not to “lead” the informant by injecting too much of himself into the finished product. Whether researchers succeeded must ultimately be decided by the researcher.”⁷¹

Oral history is more than just recording oral testimonies. David Frank states that there are two separate steps to oral history: “one the collection of the rough raw material of history; and second, the presentation of analysis of this documentary material in a form in which it can be assimilated into our general knowledge of history.”⁷² To present the analysis the oral historian can use the data as support for documentary sources. According to Thompson, oral history can be constructed as single life-story narratives, as a collection of stories or as cross-analysis. An oral historian employs the life-story narrative when the data collected from an informant is very rich. This way of constructing oral history can be used to “convey the history of a whole class or community, or become a thread around which to reconstruct a highly complex series of events.” The collection of stories is a combination of many single narratives that better reveals “broader historical interpretation, by grouping them - as a whole or fragmented - around common themes.” In the third form, cross-analysis, the oral data is used to construct an argument. The presentation of the cross-analysis form is somewhat different than the previous two forms of oral histories. The logic of the argument takes precedence over the life-story narrative and therefore affects the actual structure of the presentation. Thompson suggests that this “will normally require much briefer quotations, with evidence from one interview compared with that from another. Usually - even with the help of footnotes - only a bare context for each quotation can be provided. Argument and cross-analysis are clearly essential for any systematic development of the

⁷⁰ Murray Dobbin, interview with John Tootoosis, Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1977.

⁷¹ Joseph H. Cash and Herbert T. Hoover, *To Be An Indian: An Oral History* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Board, 1971) xxi-xxii.

⁷² David Frank, “George MacEachern: An Autobiography,” *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*, 7 (1984): 14.

interpretation of history.”⁷³ When the procedure of interpreting the data is under way, oral historians will begin to realize that no matter how familiar they are with the culture of the interview group, they will not share the same interpretation of the past. At this time in the research process, when oral historians begin asking questions of the data instead of the informants, they should remind themselves, Thompson states, that they are not reproducing their evidence but interpreting it.⁷⁴

The use of oral historical methodologies greatly enhances the possibility that Aboriginal perspectives, including specifically Aboriginal veterans’ perspectives, will be brought to the fore. Oral history also allows actors who had active roles in historical events to play a similar role in the creation of history. Combined with traditional historical methodologies, interviews yield a broader understanding of historical events hitherto relegated to obscurity. Oral historians’ persuasive arguments for the legitimacy of the oral historical methodology within the academy strengthens not only Aboriginal history but also disciplines, such as Native Studies, which employ oral history.

The Veterans

The interviews of the veterans occurred between 5 April, 1998 and 10 March, 1999. There were twenty-five veterans interviewed, of whom eleven were Indians and fourteen were Metis veterans. In addition, a daughter of an Indian veteran was interviewed. All the veterans were men. None of the women I contacted agreed to be interviewed. There are two reasons, I believe, why women did not agree to an interview. First, they may have preferred to be interviewed by a woman. Many seemed hesitant when they heard my voice. The second reason why did not want to be interviewed seemed to be because they felt their contribution to the

⁷³ Thompson 204-205.

war effort was not significant. I say this because one woman told me she did not do much. All she did, she said, was to drive a truck in Canada, not in Europe.

The interviews took place throughout Saskatchewan. I traveled to Sandy Lake Reserve, Regina, Cumberland House, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Fort Qu'Appelle, Cowessess Reserve, Sakimay Reserve, North Battleford, Ocean Man Reserve and Little Red River Reserve to interview the veterans. Veterans were selected through word of mouth. I contacted several people who were able to introduce me to veterans. For example, I contacted Clifford Carriere, a teacher at Cumberland House, and told him about my planned research. When I arrived at Cumberland House, he introduced me to George Nabess, a veteran. George Nabess drove me around and introduced me to most of the surviving veterans in Cumberland House. I also contacted Susan Gunn, a daughter of a Korea war veteran from Cowessess Reserve. She introduced me to veterans from Cowessess, Sakimay, Ocean Man, and Cote Reserves. I contacted the Grand Chief of Saskatchewan Indian Veterans' Association, Howard Anderson, and the President of the Saskatchewan Chapter of the National Aboriginal Veterans' Association, Frank Tomkins, who both agreed to be interviewed.

Veterans were interviewed only after they signed an informed consent. (Appendix B). The interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed. The transcripts of the interview were then sent back to the veterans to check for accuracy. If a veteran wished to make changes to the transcript, he signed the "Request To Make Changes To Interview Transcription" form (Appendix B). If the veteran was satisfied with the interview, he signed a "Confirmation of Satisfaction" document (Appendix B). The veteran had the right to anonymity. The veterans' names are used in the thesis only if their permission was attained through the "Request to Waive Anonymity" (Appendix B). The taped interview will be handed over to a public

⁷⁴ Henige 67.

audio archive if the veteran signed the "Permission to Donate Interview" form (Appendix B). If the permission was not granted, the tape will be stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home for a period of five years, after which time they will be destroyed.

The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule employed supplied a framework for the kind of information to be gained. The veterans' responses determined how strictly the interview schedule was followed. For example, if a veteran preferred to provide specific answers to specific questions, then the interview schedule was strictly observed. But if a veteran preferred to answer questions by telling a story, then the interview schedule was followed less strictly. Many of the veterans, for example, responded to the first question "Why did you enlist?," by telling twenty to forty-five minutes stories. These stories contained information on questions not even thought of, but nonetheless were invaluable in understanding the veterans' experiences. This information would have been lost if a more rigid approach had been adopted. The main concern was to ensure that veterans supplied the information in a manner most comfortable to them. At the same time, the researcher had to be aware of the information being sought while attending closely to the information offered. When veterans provided stories as answers, it was incumbent upon the interviewer to follow closely what was being said and monitor how these responses corresponded to the interview schedule. The temptation to direct the interview or to interrupt veterans proved to be somewhat difficult, especially in the beginning. However, the benefit of this method was that it allowed veterans to choose the way to give information and highlighted the veterans' perception of significant events and details.

The interview schedule consisted of forty-nine questions in four sections. (See Appendix F). The first section asked questions about the veterans' background. The section asked about their war experiences. The third section asked questions dealing with their post-war experiences, and the last section asked questions concerning veterans' benefits. These questions changed focus over the duration of the interview process. The last section of questions, for example, was nearly dropped altogether midway through the interview process. This was not because veterans' benefits were deemed unimportant. The veterans who felt the issue of veterans' benefits concerned them talked about it when I asked questions about their post-war experiences. As a result, there was no need to actually ask specific questions about veterans' benefits. Veterans who did not mention benefits when talking about their post-war experiences had nothing to say about benefits when asked. In addition, many of the veterans said little about their war experience. I let them decide how much they would say on that subject.

The aim of the interview schedule was to ascertain the veterans' post-war experiences. Specifically, I wanted to know how, if at all, the veterans' experiences between 1945 and 1960 had changed. For example, did the veterans have an immediate impact on Aboriginal society when they returned home? If they did, how did this impact manifest itself? If no, did they ever have an impact on Aboriginal society during this period? If yes, how?

Assessment Of The Interview Process

The interviews lasted from as little as twenty minutes to five hours. In most cases the veterans were receptive to the interview process. The average time spent with the veterans was three hours. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to conduct more interviews with veterans. Additional interviews with the veterans I

did interview would have been well worth the time and effort. Most veterans had more information and were more than willing to share it. Due to the nature of the research, particularly the expense of travel and limitation of time on the interviewer, further interviews were difficult to arrange. I cannot help but feel that I have done the veterans a disservice by not being able to conduct follow up interviews.

The interview process offered a continual learning environment. I learned technical aspects of tape recorders. There were many problems associated with ensuring the tape recorder was indeed on. I found that sound-activated tape recorders were not conducive to interviewing Elders. There were many times the interviewees paused to contemplate their next statement. During the pause the tape recorder shut off. This meant that when I went to listen to the interview later, many of the veterans' sentences were cut off.

The tape also had problems picking up everything the veterans said. Some veterans talked in low voices and were recorded by tape recorder simply as mumbling. The challenge for me was to try to maneuver the tape recorder close enough to the veteran without being overly invasive. Sometimes I did not meet that challenge. The low voices of the veterans recorded on the tape were difficult to transcribe. Sending the transcripts to the veterans hopefully clarified the mistaken transcription.

Approaching the veterans for an interview proved to be problematic. Much has been written and will be written on the ethics of researching Aboriginal people.⁷⁵ An important aspect of this is respecting the people and their cultures. One of the things I had always heard was that when approaching Elders tobacco should be offered. In accordance, I planned to approach the veterans with tobacco. I presented the first veteran with tobacco and he said to me "Good, good. You're

⁷⁵ For example see Canada. "Research Reports: Ethical Guidelines" In *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. [CD ROM] (Ottawa: Libraxus Inc., 1997).

doing it the Indian way.” I presented the second veteran with tobacco and he said, “No thanks, I don’t smoke.” Later in the interview process, I was accompanied to some interviews by a woman who insisted we take an offering of tobacco for the veterans. I told her it had been my experience that many of the veterans had not accepted the tobacco. She replied that her father had told her that it was the Indian way to offer tobacco. When we presented the first veteran with the tobacco, he said, “I don’t touch the stuff.” We put the tobacco back in our pockets.

The issue of presenting tobacco to the veterans was more complicated than I expected. There were many contradictions. Some of the veterans who accepted the tobacco were not “traditionalist” by any means. In fact, some considered Aboriginal traditional culture as “not being our ways.” Yet, they accepted the tobacco in “the Indian way.” They would smoke the tobacco, not in a pipe, but as a cigarette with a beer. I know that I had to present something to the veterans for agreeing to be interviewed by me. I therefore presented the veterans with a small gift consisting of some tea, chocolates, and wool socks. This seemed to be a solution that satisfied all the veterans I interviewed.

Contribution Of Research

This study provides several benefits to Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and in Canada, to the Aboriginal community in general and to the academy. This study will provide the first academic account of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans. A history of Aboriginal veterans will be of importance to the Aboriginal community in at least two ways. The research could be used by either the Indian and Metis veterans in their appeal to the government for support. It acknowledges not only the war effort of Aboriginal veterans but also their contribution to the Aboriginal community. The thesis adds to the sparse historical

literature on Aboriginal veterans in Saskatchewan and in Canada. Concentrating on Aboriginal veterans between 1945 and 1960, the thesis expands the understanding of Aboriginal peoples' lives in the post-war period. In addition, by interviewing Aboriginal veterans, this study reinforces the benefits of oral sources in historical reconstruction. As Gebhard states in the study of Polish veterans who immigrated to Canada after the Second World War, "only by utilizing oral history . . . can we arrive at a clearer picture of this important chapter of Canadian history."⁷⁶

The result, this thesis, will be made accessible to both the Saskatchewan Metis and Indian veterans' associations. In addition, the taped interviews will be handed over to an Aboriginal organization committed to the preservation of an audio archive. However, it must be stressed that the information contained in the interviews is considered to be the property of the interviewees. As such the interviewees were given the right to refuse to allow public use of their interviews. The interviewees were given a suitable length of time to make a such a decision. To ensure the researcher's accountability, the interviewees were given the opportunity to check the transcripts of the interviews and were able to delete, add or clarify information as they saw fit. The presidents of the Aboriginal veterans' organizations will be given the opportunity to read the final draft of the thesis.

⁷⁶ Krzysztof M. Gebhard "Polish Veterans as Farm Labourers in Canada, 1956-49," *Canadian Oral History Association Journal* 9 (1989): 13.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMED CONSENT

Rob Innes,
Department of Native Studies
University of Saskatchewan
104 McLean Hall
106 Wiggins Road
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5E6
(306) 966-6210

The purpose of this study is to discover how the Second World War experiences of Aboriginal (both Indian and Metis) veterans in Saskatchewan affected them in the post-war years. Specifically, the study will address four main questions:

1. What were the experiences of Aboriginal veterans during the Second World War?
2. What were the major social issues that Aboriginal veterans faced upon their arrival back in Saskatchewan?
3. How were the veterans affected by the distribution of veterans' benefits?
4. Did the war and/or post-war experiences of the veterans lead to involvement in Aboriginal political organizations? Did the veterans become politicized as Aboriginal people?

The findings of the study will be incorporated into a Master's thesis and will fulfill part of the requirements for a Master's of Arts degree in Native Studies from the University of Saskatchewan. In addition, there is the possibility the thesis, or portions of it, may be published. It is therefore crucial that you are aware of both the possible benefits and potential risks of the research.

Although not guaranteed, this study may provide several benefits to Aboriginal veterans in Saskatchewan. This study will produce the first academic account of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans. It will acknowledge the contribution of Saskatchewan Aboriginal veterans not only to the war effort but to Aboriginal communities in general. The final document will also add to the sparse historical literature on Aboriginal veterans in Saskatchewan and Canada.

You are being requested to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences as an Aboriginal veteran. The interview will be recorded on audio tape as it is the best way to record exactly what you say. However, if you prefer not to be tape recorded then I will write notes during the interview.

I will take precautions to protect your anonymity. For example, I will use codes to represent your name on the audio tapes and the transcripts. I will keep these tapes and in a locked cupboard during the writing of the thesis. In addition, I will not use your name but will use only the information gathered in the interview for the thesis, and any subsequent articles, reports or books. Your name will only be used with your permission. Further, the interview, only with your permission, will be donated to a public audio archive. If you do not provide your written permission, the taped interview will not be donated to a public archive. However, the University of Saskatchewan requires that it be securely stored for five years. After five years the tape will be destroyed.

Though minimal, there are some risks to you in participating in the interview. You will be asked to share information about yourself that the audio tapes and the transcriptions of the interview may reveal your identify to the listener and reader.

You are under no obligation to participate and you may withdraw from the interview process at any time. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your access to any government programs. In the event that you choose to withdraw, the data you provided will not be used in the study.

I will transcribe the taped interview and mail the transcribed version of the interview to you. You will then be invited to review the transcript and change, delete or add to any portion of the interview that you feel is necessary.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information regarding your participation in this research study and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors or university from their legal and professional responsibilities. If new information about the study arises that may have an effect on your decision to continue to participate in the study, you will be advised as soon as possible.

If there are any questions about the study, you may telephone me at (306) 966-6210, or you may also call my supervisor Dr. Laurie Barron, Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan. His telephone number is (306) 966-6216.

Thank you,

Rob Innes

Participant's Consent Form

I, _____, have read and
(Please print your name)

understood the guidelines on the Participant's Consent Form. With these conditions, I hereby agree to participate in Rob Innes' study titled, "The Socio-Political Influence of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans During the Post-Second World War Reconstruction Period." I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Participant's Consent Form.

Date: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone number: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

REQUEST TO MAKES CHANGES TO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

I, _____, have read the transcribed version of my interview and wish to make some changes. I have sent back only the pages where the changes are needed. You (the researcher) will note the highlighted areas that need to be changed.

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____.

CONFIRMATION OF SATISFACTION WITH THE DOCUMENT

I, _____, have participated in the study entitled "The Socio-Political Influence of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans During the Post-Second World War Reconstruction Period" being conducted by Rob Innes. I have reviewed the transcript of the interview and I am satisfied that the document has correctly recorded my thoughts and views in the way I intended.

I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE DOCUMENT IS A TRUE REPRESENTATION OF MY THOUGHTS AND VIEWS.

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

REQUEST TO WAIVE ANONYMITY

I, _____, have participated in the study entitled "The Socio-Political Influence of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans During the Post-Second World War Reconstruction Period" being conducted by Rob Innes. I have reviewed the transcript of my interview with Rob Innes. I wish to have my name recorded in the study and am therefore requesting the use of my real name in the final thesis document.

I HEREBY REQUEST THAT MY RIGHT TO ANONYMITY BE WAIVED AND THAT MY REAL NAME BE USED IN THE THESIS DOCUMENT AND ANY SUBSEQUENT WRITTEN REPORTS, ARTICLES OR BOOKS.

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

PERMISSION TO DONATE INTERVIEW

I, _____, have participated in the study entitled "The Socio-Political Influence of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans During the Post-Second World War Reconstruction Period" conducted by Rob Innes. I agree to allow Rob Innes to donate the audio taped interview to a public audio archive.

I HEREBY AGREE TO HAVE MY AUDIO TAPED INTERVIEW DONATED TO A PUBLIC AUDIO ARCHIVE.

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

-

Date: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

First, I want to get some background information.

1. Why did you enlist in the war?
2. Where did you enlist?
3. How old were when you enlisted?
4. Were there others from the reserve who enlisted with you?
5. Which outfit were you in?
6. Where did you train?
7. Were you shipped overseas? [If no, go to # 10.]
8. If yes, when?
9. How long were you overseas?
10. What was your rank? [If yes to # 7, go to question # 13.]
11. Where were you stationed in Canada?
12. What were your responsibilities?

Now I would like you to talk about your war experience.

1. What are some of the things you remember about the war?
2. [If overseas] Can you tell me about some of the things you remember about Europe? About Europeans?
3. Did you ever hear about the National Resources Mobilisation Act (NRMA)?
4. If no, go to next question. If yes, what were your thoughts about it?
5. What was it like when you first came back to Canada? [Or if no to #7]What was it like when the war ended?
6. When were you discharged from active service?

Now I would like you to talk about your experience after the war.

1. How did the people on the reserve (community) treat you?
2. How did the non-Native people in the area act towards the Indian veterans?
3. Was there work available for you on the reserves after the war?
4. Did you have to you leave the reserve to find work? [If no, go to question # 24.]
5. What was that like?
6. Where were some of the places you worked?
7. [If no to #22] How did you manage?
8. Do you think your army experience helped you in finding work? How?
9. Do you think the war had an effect on you? If yes, How?
10. [If no, go to next question.] How did you deal with the change?
11. Did you have much interaction with other Indian/Metis veterans?
12. [If no go to the next question.] If yes, what was the nature of the interactions?
13. Did you belong to the Legion?

Now I would like to ask you about veterans' benefits.

1. When did you first hear about veterans' benefits?
2. Did you apply for veterans' benefits? If no, why not?
3. Were there benefits that you could have had, but weren't told about them until later?
4. [If no go to next question.] If yes, when did you hear about the benefits and who told you?

5. Did you have trouble getting veterans' benefits?
6. If yes, did the band help you in getting your benefits?
7. Did the Indian Agent help?
8. Was the Legion any help?

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