

The 18th and 19th Century Cree Landscape  
of West Central Saskatchewan:  
Implications for Archaeology

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and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Archaeology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

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## ABSTRACT

The eighteenth and nineteenth century Crees of west central Saskatchewan are the focus of this thesis. This research has involved obtaining information relating to the cultural landscape of these Crees for the period encompassed by the study. An examination of one aspect of this cultural landscape, the named landscape, has been the primary aim of this research.

Information regarding the named landscape of these Crees was obtained from relevant historic documents and ethnographic research. A number of historic documents have been consulted in this study. In particular, much use has been made of the journal accounts of Hudson's Bay Company traders who travelled to the study region in the mid 1700s. Ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken with elders from several of the study region's Cree communities who provided information on the traditional named landscape.

The relationship that existed historically between the Crees of west central Saskatchewan and their landscape is the subject of this thesis. How this information relates to archaeological interpretations in the study region has also been considered. Guiding this research has been an approach which considers the cultural landscape as representing a socially construed space. An examination of named localities from the study area indicates that the named landscape of the region's Crees did not significantly change over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This suggests that the relationship of these Crees to their landscape, how they conceptualized, structured and organized this environment, also remained largely unchanged throughout this period.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis examines the historic relationship between the Crees of west central Saskatchewan and their landscape. The research that I have undertaken has been orientated towards a study of Cree place names from west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta with the aim of using this information to provide insight into some aspects of Cree spatial organization in this region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This study is based on information obtained from ethnographic fieldwork and historic documents. Fieldwork was conducted with elders of the Sweetgrass, Poundmaker and Onion Lake reserves who provided information on Cree place names in the study area. As well, historical documents from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been examined for references to named Cree localities. In this regard, extensive use has been made of journal accounts left by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) inland travellers who visited the region in the mid and late 1700s. How this information relates to archaeological interpretations in the study region is also discussed.

The Plains Cree societies of nineteenth century west central Saskatchewan and their predecessors, the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree, are the focus of this study. These Crees, like other Cree groups, "occupied a well structured named



landscape...one whose locations were variably imbued with meaning and significance, and which called forth varying emotional responses” (Meyer 2001:7). For the Plains Cree of the Battleford area these locations figured prominently in cultural life. As Sweetgrass elder Augustine Paskimen (personal communication, May 2002) remarked:

I learnt from my grandparents. They taught me by storytelling. Every part of this area was referred to in Cree terms. The lakes, creeks, rivers and hills had Cree names. My grandparents and others in their age group talked about these areas when they told stories.

Locations were important to aboriginal peoples for many reasons: some were places where notable events had occurred, some marked camp sites or hunting areas, and some were spiritual in nature (Correll 1976:176). Almost always such locations were associated with recognizable geographic landforms. Traditionally, the Cree related to these places through storytelling. This oral history was a record of human involvement, in all its complexity, with the landscape. This created a social landscape, one that functioned as a repository for much cultural knowledge. Learning about this landscape was the primary means by which the individual came to understand self, culture, and the world (Tilley 1996:173).

Places of cultural significance had names which set them apart from the rest of the environment and made explicit their inclusion in the social realm. As Tilley (1994:18) explains, place names “transform the sheerly physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced.” Place names used by the Plains Cree are descriptive and commonly take two general forms: those that describe events or activities, for example: *nôtinito-sîpiy* ‘the river where they fight one another’ (Wolvengrey 2001:146,208) - Battle River; and those that describe features or conditions

inherent in the geographic forms they name, for instance: *sâkicawâsihk* ‘at the place where the rivers come together’ - the confluence of the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers (Wolvengrey 2001:199). A great many of these names are verbal constructions which are introduced by the grammatical preverb *kâ-*, and are used like nouns (Wolvengrey 2001:xxxviii). Another feature of the Cree language is the locative ending which denotes location or place and takes the usual form of *-ihk*, or *-inâhk* (Wolvengrey 2001:xxxv-xxxvi). The locative ending is a common element in Cree place names, such as: *misisâkwacâhkatinâhk* ‘at horsefly hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:xxxv,28,105), and its presence in the language reflects the cultural emphasis on place that characterizes the traditional Cree world view.

## **1.2 Theoretical Approach**

The named landscape, described above, is the subject of this thesis. A number of concepts have guided this research, the most significant being that of cultural landscape. The cultural landscape, of which the named landscape is part, represents the socialized environment in its entirety, in which people act out their daily lives. A cultural landscape, as David and Lourandos (1999:107) note, is a reflection, “of people’s relationships with their surroundings, of their social and physical environments as perceived and cultural constructions.” In this respect, cultural landscape shares many similarities with world-view. The cultural landscape is a spatial construct, though one bound with meaning and belief, that reflects the unique ways in which individual cultures organize and conceptualize their environments. As Hallowell (1977:131) states:

In addition to the psychophysical and psychophysiological conditions of human space perception, we know that variations occur, between one culture and another, with respect to the selective emphasis given to the spatial relations and attributes of things, the degree of refinement that occurs in the concepts employed, and the reference points that are selected for spatial orientation.

This concept draws upon the assumption that space forms part of the social dynamic. As Simonsen (1996:502) notes, "The basic idea is that the spatial forms an integrated part of social practices and/or social processes - and that such practices and processes are all situated in space (and time) and all inherently involve a spatial dimension." Space, therefore, is produced socially. To understand space as a social product requires an examination of how concepts of space have influenced the nature of scientific inquiry. These concepts are discussed in greater detail in Appendix A.

### **1.3 The Landscape Approach in Archaeology**

The development of approaches in archaeology incorporating a view of space as social construct have paralleled those in other social science disciplines. In particular, Tilley (1994:7-11) notes the similar manner in which concepts of social space have recently influenced theoretical perspectives in both archaeology and cultural geography. In these disciplines this development has formed part of the critique directed against the materialism that has characterized the so called 'new' archaeology and 'new' geography. As Tilley (1994:7) explains:

As a component of the retheorization of human geography from the 1970s onwards and in archaeology during the 1980s the usefulness of a 'scientific' conception of space abstracted from human affairs has systematically been called into question....

As Tilley's comments suggest, the argument for a more humanized conception of space occurred somewhat later in archaeology than it did in cultural geography. A reluctance by many archaeologists to part with processual approaches (especially true in North American archaeology) has been largely responsible for this (Bender 1999:632). This has meant that the application of a concept of socially produced space within archaeology has been based, to a great extent, on ideas borrowed from cultural geography.

In archaeology approaches grounded in an understanding of space as a social construct have been included within a broader category of approaches usually termed 'landscape archaeology'. As Fisher and Thurston (1999:630) note, the landscape approach in archaeology includes, "a wide variety of approaches that share certain key elements but lack a unifying metaphor." Feinman (1999:685) identifies three elements that are common to most landscape studies in archaeology. These include:

1. A dedicated effort to examine the physical environment, often using a diverse suite of natural science techniques, but with explicit social scientific questions guiding the research;
2. The recognition that human-environment interactions are historically contingent, dynamic and accretionary, shaped by distinct cultural perceptions and past human actions;
3. The realization that human environments are in themselves partly products or constructions of a dynamic interaction with human behaviour.

Overall these approaches represent, as Feinman (1999:685) further states, "a theoretical response and challenge to the catastrophic and environmental deterministic thinking that has endured in the archaeological literature for at least a century."

Landscape studies are by no means new to archaeology, however, until quite

recently these studies have been without a theoretical framework. In this regard Stoddart and Zubrow (1999:686) note:

There are coherent, long standing traditions of landscape study by archaeologists/anthropologists on both sides of the Atlantic, even if not always explicitly defined in these terms. Many prominent traits of these early traditions have been picked up and developed by more theoretical approaches.

In Britain, beginning in the 1920s, archaeologists began to study prehistory within the context of its geographical environment (Trigger 1989:249). These studies focussed on the relationship between culture and ecology (Trigger 1989:249) and produced a school of landscape studies in Britain that is still active (Stoddart and Zubrow 1999:686). In America, large-scale survey projects undertaken in the 1950s served as the impetus for the ecological tradition that dominated North American archaeology from the 1960s to the 1980s (Stoddart and Zubrow 1999:686). Landscape reconstruction (often seen in terms of settlement-pattern analysis) was a primary objective of such studies (Trigger 1989:279-286).

The current emphasis in the social sciences on space and its relationship to social practice (see Appendix A) has resulted in new and increasing attention being given to landscape studies in archaeology. At present a coherent landscape approach has yet to be defined in archaeology and, in part, the divergent evolution of landscape studies in American and British archaeology has been responsible for this (Fisher and Thurston 1999:630). In general, American landscape studies have retained the strong scientific methodology that characterizes processual approaches in archaeology; whereas, in Britain, more theoretical approaches have been employed (Bender 1999:632).

British landscape approaches have made the greatest use of recent social theory regarding the concept of a socially produced space. Moreover, the application of this concept has been most fully developed in those approaches grounded in a phenomenological perspective (see Bender 1993; Tilley 1994). Such an approach is particularly well-suited to the study of small-scale, non-Western or 'traditional' societies as it focusses attention on the perspective of the individual inside of culture. In this way meaning and its creation are made available for study. This is achieved through the medium of place, as Tilley (1994:14) explains:

The key concern in this approach is the manner in which places *constitute* space as centres of human meaning, their singularity being manifested and expressed in the day-to-day experiences and consciousness of people within particular lifeworlds.

Place, therefore, is the central concept in this approach and the cultural landscape as a socially produced space derives its significance largely from places. As Tilley (1994:15) states, "Geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence."

Considerable effort has been directed by archaeologists working in this approach to collecting ethnographic information concerning the relationship that exists in 'traditional' societies between people and their physical environment (see Tilley 1994). These ethnoarchaeological studies have shown that in 'traditional' societies a direct relationship exists between the cultural landscape and land use (David and Lourandos 1999; Stewart et al. 2004). In this regard Stewart et al. (2004:184) note:

In parts of the world still occupied by people who identify with traditions of hunting and gathering, sites exist within a context of oral histories and traditions that relate activities to place, present generations of people to

their predecessors, and people to other beings.

Furthermore, Tilley (1994:24) also comments:

A number of ethnographies of small-scale societies..., of both hunter-gatherers and subsistence cultivators, indicate that rather than simply providing a backdrop for human action the natural landscape is a cognized form redolent with place names, associations and memories that serve to humanize and enculture landscape, linking together topographical features, trees, rocks, rivers, birds and animals with patterns of human intentionality.

Therefore, in so called 'traditional' societies the cultural landscape provides an important context in which archaeological sites can be interpreted in meaningful ways.

People living in prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies are thought to have related to their physical environments in ways similar to those living in present day 'traditional' societies. The world view expressed in ethnographic studies of 'traditional' societies, therefore, provides a means by which meaning can be obtained from archaeological sites that relate to prehistoric hunter-gatherer peoples. This is especially true when such archaeological sites can be linked to an extant oral history. However, even in cases where no direct link with a traditional oral history exists, archaeological sites interpreted in the context of such a world view can provide meaning. As Stewart et al. (1994:206) explain:

By describing the types of material forms in a landscape, archaeologist may be able to identify cultural traditions or conventions that provide a context for features-structures, artifacts, and the locations of camps. This context conveys meaning, if not specific meanings.

#### **1.4 Research Approach and Objectives**

The approach taken in this study is historical. To this end, I have collected

information on named locations that were part of the cultural landscape of aboriginal peoples who occupied the study area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - a period beginning in the mid 1750s and ending in the 1880s when these people were settled on reserves. The Cree societies of the region have been chosen as the focus of my research for three reasons. In the eighteenth century the Crees of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta participated as middlemen in a system of trade that, until the 1750s, was dominated by the HBC. These Crees facilitated the movement of goods between the Bay posts of York Factory and Fort Churchill and the plains bison hunters of the western interior. Beginning in the 1750s, in response to the establishment of French posts on the Saskatchewan, the Company began sending men inland to report on the trade (Ray 1974:89). Invariably, most of these men travelled inland with Cree middlemen who were returning from the Bay to their own lands in the Interior. The journals kept by these HBC employees describe the lands that were familiar to the Crees with whom they travelled. As Russell (1991:92) has noted, "Almost all the observations concern western Cree groups living in the parkland/plains area of Saskatchewan and eastern Alberta." Therefore, more information is available regarding the Crees of this time than for other groups, such as the Nakota or Gros Ventre, of whom little is known. Furthermore, many of these journeys were made to - or passed through - the study area.

A second consideration is that throughout the period covered by this study the Cree societies of central Saskatchewan underwent significant cultural and economic changes (see Meyer and Russell 2002). The effects that these changes might have had on the relationship of the Crees to their landscape can be examined. This in turn may



provide information concerning the nature of this relationship.

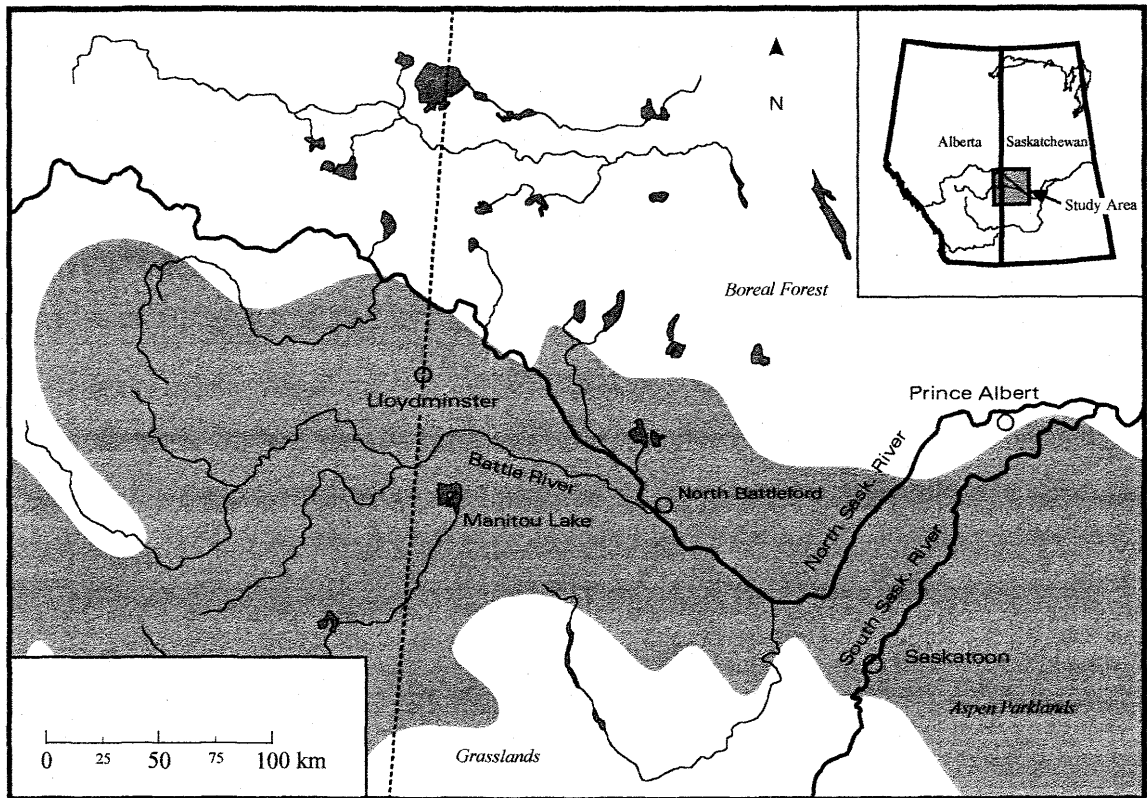
Finally, the fieldwork that I have done has been with elders of three Plains Cree communities in the study area. The data obtained from this fieldwork compared with that gathered from historic sources, I believe, provide enough information to draw some basic conclusions regarding the relationship between the Crees and their landscape in the study area over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In proceeding with this research I have separated the analysis of the data into two time periods. The first period begins in the mid 1750s with the first recorded references to named localities in the study area and ends in the winter of 1781-82. This date is significant as it marks the occurrence of a major smallpox epidemic that had a profound impact on the aboriginal societies of central Saskatchewan (Fenn 2001). Before the winter of 1781-82 two Cree groups are known to have occupied the study area: the Pegogamaw and the Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree; however, after this date these peoples ceased to exist as sociopolitical units (Meyer and Russell 2002:3). In the three decades that followed the epidemic, new Cree societies formed in the region. These became the Plains Cree who by the 1840s were the dominant group in the area. The second period considered by this study, therefore, begins after the epidemic and ends in the 1880s when the Crees of the region took up residence on a number of reserves in the area. This approach allows the data from each period to be viewed in the context of its social background, for the first period outlined above this is represented by the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree while for the second period this is represented by the Plains Cree bands of the region.

The primary objective of this study has been to gather information on named localities from the two periods outlined above. This has been achieved with recourse to both elder consultation and historic documents. These two sets of data have then been compared to each other. This information provides for a basic understanding of the traditional cultural landscape of the region's Crees. It has then been possible to show how knowledge of this cultural landscape may enhance an understanding of the region's protohistoric and prehistoric archaeological records.

### 1.5 Study Area

The study area includes a large section of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta (Figure 1.1). Most of this area lies within the aspen parklands, however, the extreme southern and northern portions are located in the Moist Mixed Grassland ecoregion and the Boreal Transition ecoregion respectively (Acton et al. 1998). The parklands are a zone of transition between the warm, dry grassland to the south and the cooler, moister boreal forest to the north. This ecoregion can be divided into eastern, central, and western sections (Johnson et al. 1995:17). The study area is located in the western portion of the parkland which is represented by aspen groves scattered amid fescue grasslands. Grove composition is dominated by trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) mixed with willows and balsam-black poplar (*Populus balsamifera*). Aspens favour well-drained, moist, loamy soils and aspen groves are typically found in moist depressions or elevated areas, particularly on north facing slopes (Johnson et al. 1995:35). Western parkland grasses include plains rough fescue (*Festuca hallii*), needle-



**Figure 1.1:** Map showing the study region.

and-thread (*Stipa comata*), western porcupine grass (*Stipa curtisetata*), and timber oat grass (*Danthonia intermedia*) (Johnson et al. 1995:17).

Historically, the parkland was less extensive than it is now. It is thought that the grazing activities of bison acted to limit the growth of trees in areas that, at the present time, are aspen parkland; moreover, prairie fires that were frequent events in the historic period would have also contributed to this situation (Campbell et al. 1994). However, it is worth noting that aspens are among the first trees to colonize areas that have been burned by fire (Johnson et al. 1995:35) and may be particularly suited to these kinds of soils. In any event, by the turn of the last century the aspen parkland was expanding in

the study area as was noted in 1904 by Dominion Land Surveyor J. Lestock Reid who remarked:

I noticed more particularly this season a marked encroachment of scrub, willow and poplar on the prairie country, owing no doubt to the absence of prairie fires (Sessional Papers 1905:208).

The parklands also seem to have served as wintering grounds for bison (Morgan 1980). This was likely due, in part, to the greater shelter to be found in the region for these animals during this season. However, another view (Malainey and Sherriff 1996) considers that the bison generally passed the winter on the northern margin of the grasslands and did not enter the parklands unless forced to by severe weather.

Poundmaker elder Alexander Tootosis mentioned that in the latter part of the nineteenth century the Plains Cree of the Battleford area maintained their winter camps in the extreme southwestern portion of the Eagle Hills near the present day towns of Wilkie and Unity, Saskatchewan (personal communication, August 2003). At present this area, located southwest of the Battlefords, is within the southern limit of the parkland; however, as discussed, the Cree camps historically would have been located within the northern edge of the grasslands. This would tend to support the idea that bison were wintering in the northern grasslands and adjacent parklands and that the Plains Cree were placing their camps near the herds. Furthermore, the winter movements of the region's eighteenth century Cree do not appear to have differed greatly from those of the Plains Cree of the nineteenth century. As Russell (1991:98) notes, the eighteenth century Cree, "were wintering, as long as possible, on the grasslands and only entered the edge of the forest, while remaining within the wintering range of the bison, to prepare for the trip to

the Bay.”

Despite the maintenance of winter camps in the grasslands it is clear that the parklands have been the focus of Cree activities throughout the period covered by this study. As Russell (1991:218) states, “The Plains Cree only utilized the open grasslands seasonally while using the parkland, or its outliers, as a home base. They have done so since the HBC men wintered with them in the middle 1700s.” This remained true as long as bison were plentiful. The decline and withdrawal of the herds towards the southwest in the late 1800s forced the Cree to follow them into southern Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northern Plains states. However, these were unusual circumstances (Milloy 1988:104-111).

Travelling north through the study area, boreal forest environments become increasingly common once the North Saskatchewan River is crossed (Figure 1.1). This transitional environment is characterized by an assortment of deciduous and coniferous trees and related shrubs, flowering plants and understory growth. The forest was little used by the Plains Cree of the Battleford area apart from occasional visits by individual hunters (Fine Day 1973:47). However, the seasonal movements of Cree groups in the region during the eighteenth century regularly brought them into the southern edge of this environmental zone.

The topography of the study region - like other areas of the province - has been shaped by glacial processes (Simpson 1999:86-87) (Figure 1.2). Landforms created by moraine and glacial lake deposits characterize the region. However, unlike areas immediately to the east and south, where glacial lake deposits are widespread, the study

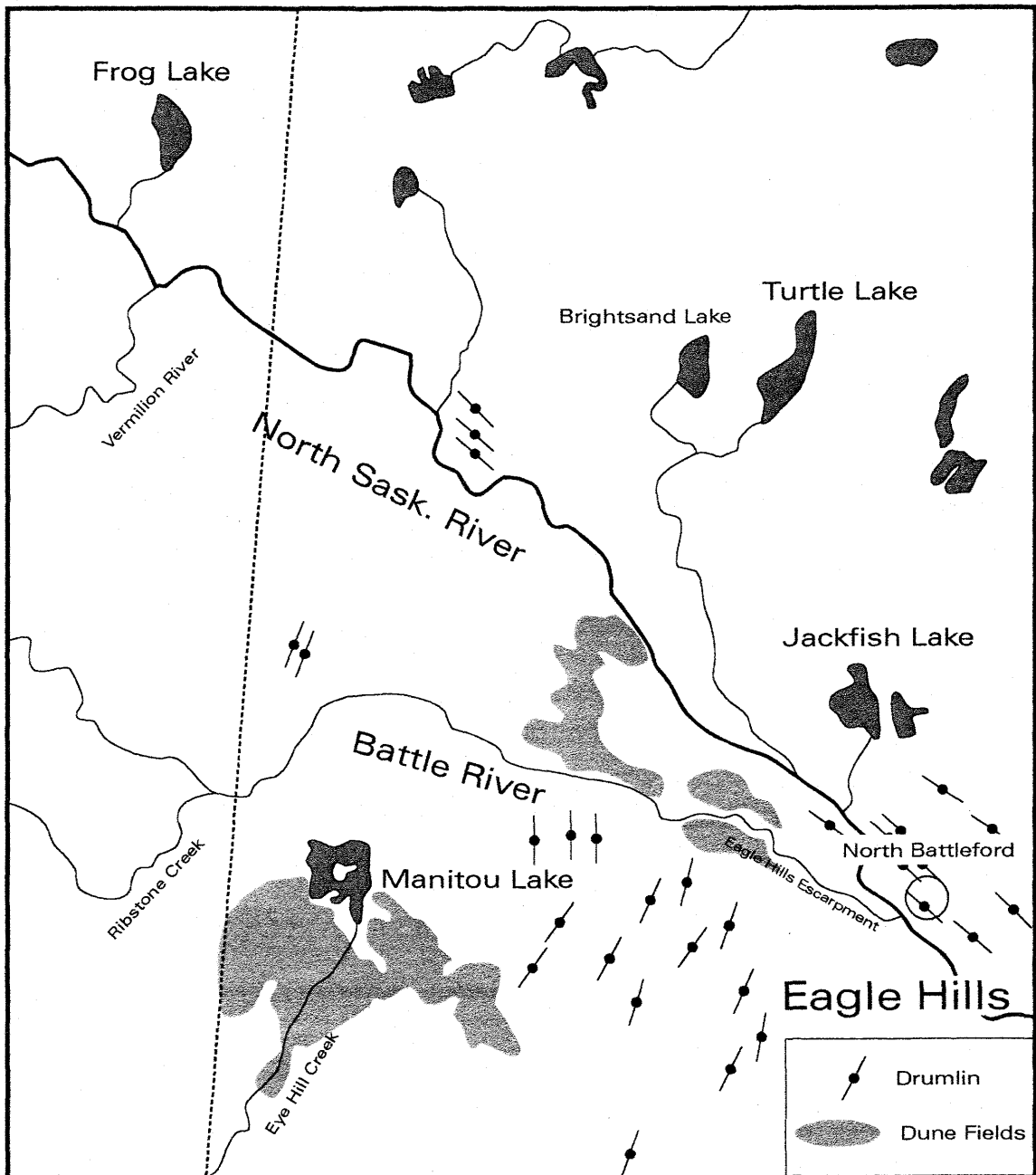


Figure 1.2: Map showing the topography of the study region. Map adapted from the Atlas of Saskatchewan (1999).

area is dominated by moraine landscapes. These landforms were produced when till (an unsorted mixture of varied materials ranging from clay to boulders) was deposited by

advancing, retreating or stagnant glacial ice (Oberlander and Muller 1987:493-495). This left the undulating to hummocky relief that is common across the region. Several groups of drumlins form localized areas of elevated, rough terrain in the region. Drumlins are elongated, streamlined hills made up of till and other glacial deposits. These landforms occur together in groups with the long axis of each feature following the direction of ice flow (Oberlander and Muller 1987:503). The most extensive drumlin field is located near Battleford southwest of the Little Pine, Poundmaker, and Sweetgrass reserves (Simpson 1999:87). A large glacial erratic, close to the town of Rockhaven near the southern terminus of one of the region's drumlins, is called *mistasiniy* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) 'big stone' (Wolvengrey 2001:285). Another group of drumlins exists north of the town of Lone Rock and a third is found south of the town of Paradise Hill. According to Onion Lake elder John Canepotato (personal communication, June 2004) the latter area was traditionally known as *wâwâskêsiw waciy* 'elk hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:228,238).

In the southwest portion of the study area is a vast region of aeolian sand deposits (Thorpe 1999:136). This region extends from the town of Unity west and north to Manitou Lake and the Alberta border and beyond. Here, remnant deltaic deposits (from deltas which formed along the margins of the glacial lakes that developed at the base of the Laurentide ice sheet as it withdrew northeastward during the last glacial period) have been shaped into dunes by the wind. These dunes were then stabilized by plant growth (de Boer and Martz 1999:89). The Manitou Sand Hills, located south of Manitou Lake, are part of this formation. Other similar, though less extensive, dune formations are

found along the Battle River on the Little Pine, Poundmaker and Sweetgrass reserves and east of the town of Maidstone.

One range of low hills is located in the east central portion of the study area; these are the Eagle Hills. The Eagle Hills escarpment is part of the Missouri Coteau (de Boer and Martz 1999:89) which rises abruptly from the surrounding countryside 20 km west of the Battlefords. From there, the hills run south and east towards the town of Biggar, keeping generally parallel with the North Saskatchewan River. Historically, these hills were very important to the Cree and other aboriginal peoples of the area. On September 6, 1772 Matthew Cocking, a HBC employee, travelling with a group of Crees commented:

Leaving the river on one hand, came to some high land named Mikisew Wache or Eagle hills where we pitched: Poplar & Birch about 4 feet diameter in places; but mostly very small: plenty of moose & Waskesew at times, but at present scarce: Several ponds well stored with Ducks and some Geese. N. B. - The Natives here all took tent-poles to carry with them (Cocking 1908:105).

Economically this area was noted for its abundant supply of game and as a source of wood. It continued to be an important hunting ground for the Cree throughout the nineteenth century. In 1934, when talking to anthropologist David Mandelbaum on the Sweetgrass Reserve, Fine Day - a noted warrior and shaman - remarked, "We used to hunt Moose and Elk and Lynx in these hills. There was a lot of game here in the Old Days and we killed a lot for food and clothing" (Fine Day 1973:47). Apart from their historic economic significance, the Eagle Hills contain a number of important sacred places that figure prominently in the traditional beliefs of the Crees of this region. Two such locations are *sôskwaciwânihk* (Judy Bear, personal communication, October 2001)



'at sliding hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:211) and *nakîwacîhk* (Judy Bear, personal communication, October 2001) 'at hill's end' (Wolvengrey 2001:120) - Drumming Hill. Both are located on the Sweetgrass Reserve. Thus, the Eagle Hills have been a major feature of the cultural landscape of the region's Cree peoples since at least the eighteenth century and have been the focus of the spiritual and economic life of these Crees throughout this period, so much so that the area was chosen by Plains Cree and Nakota leaders in the late nineteenth century as the preferred location of their reserves.

Another significant feature of the physical landscape are the two major rivers that cross the region: the North Saskatchewan River and its tributary the Battle River. During the eighteenth century - and, to a lesser degree in the nineteenth century - the North Saskatchewan River was the principal waterway used by Cree and Nakota traders on their annual journeys to and from the Bay. Moreover, a number of 'ingathering centres' used by the region's Crees in the eighteenth century were also located on this river (Meyer and Russell 2000:13-15). The ingatherings were important social and religious events that took place in the spring, and occasionally fall, when all members of a regional band gathered to renew social ties (Meyer and Thistle 1995; Meyer and Hutton 1998:95). The Battle River was less important as a water route; it is much smaller than the North Saskatchewan and in places shallow, especially in late summer and fall, making it impractical for extensive canoe travel; however, it was used as a source of fish by Crees of the Poundmaker Reserve (Mandelbaum 1979:72). Two small creeks, Eye Hill Creek and Ribstone Creek, are associated with the Battle River. Eye Hill Creek flows into Manitou Lake (once connected to the Battle River) from Sounding Lake, while Ribstone

Creek joins the Battle River 20 km west of Manitou Lake. These creeks rise to the southwest, far into the grasslands.

Finally, there are several large lakes in the study area, most of which are found north of the North Saskatchewan River. These include Brightsand Lake, Turtle Lake and Jackfish Lake. One large saline lake - Manitou Lake - is located in the west central portion of the study area. In the latter part of the nineteenth century it was described by Dominion Land Surveyor, J. F. Garden:

This lake is very picturesque, and in its main part has an average breadth, from east to west, of from 6 to 7 miles, extending north and south about 9 miles. Including the long narrow inlets, it stretches from the south-east to the north-west, about 18 miles. The banks vary in height from 80 to 130 feet, and are in many places thickly wooded. Several high islands were observed in the lake. The water is saline, but good water is found in the adjoining sloughs (Sessional Papers 1884:83).

Manitou Lake is a prominent feature of the physical landscape of the region. The lake also has a prominent place in the cultural landscape of aboriginal peoples living in the area and there is evidence that, historically, the lake was a locality important to the Cree, Nakota, Saulteaux and Blackfoot peoples of this region.

## **1.6 First Nation Reserves of the Study Area**

The Eagle Hills area west of the Battlefords has been and remains a focal point for the Cree and Nakota peoples of this region (Figure 1.3). Cree reserves located here include Little Pine and Lucky Man, Poundmaker, Sweetgrass and Red Pheasant. Nakota reserves include Mosquito, Grizzly Bear's Head and Lean Man. Little Pine, Poundmaker, and Sweetgrass are more or less contiguous reserves located along the

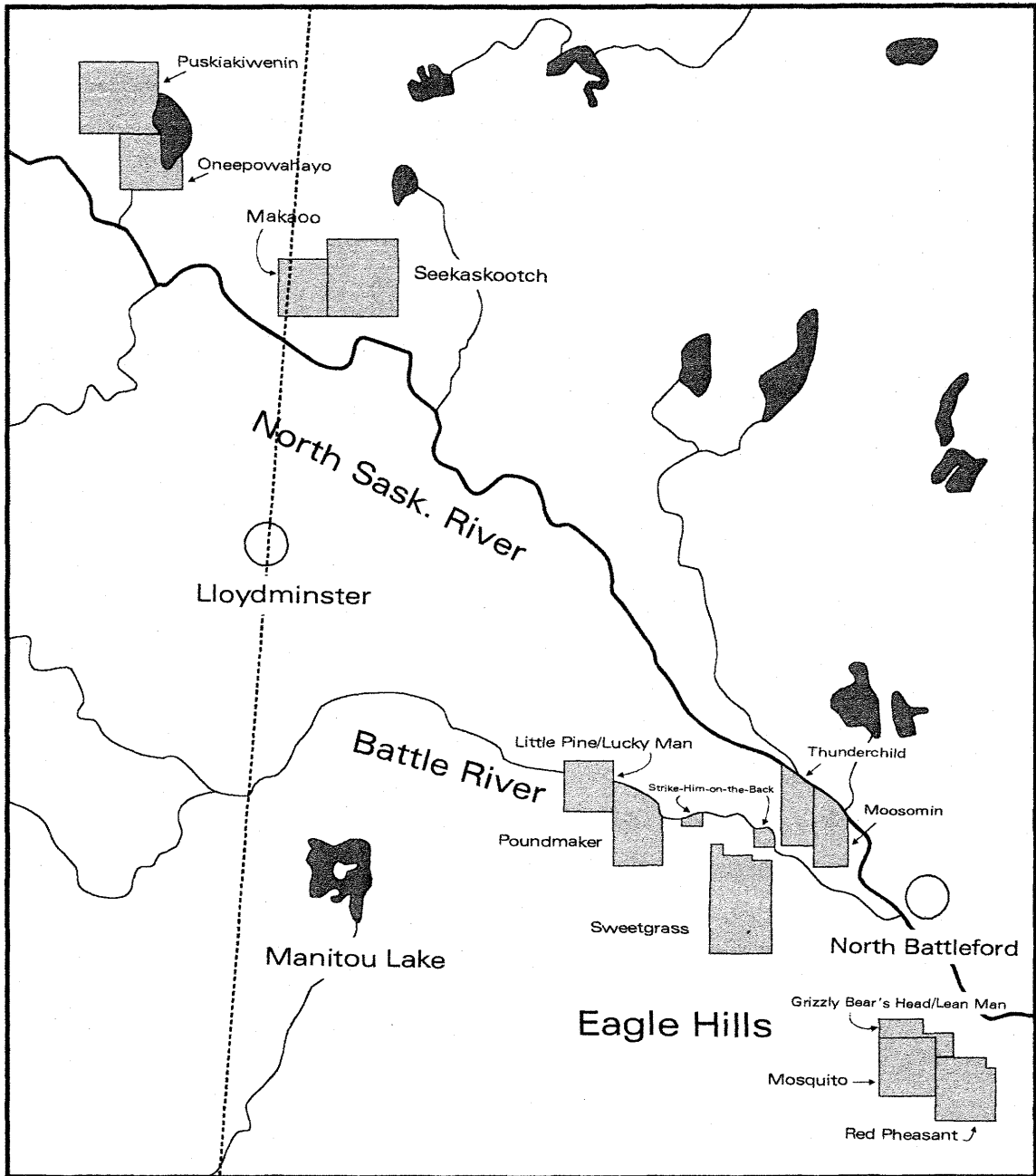


Figure 1.3: Map showing the locations of early reserves in the study region.

southern bank of the Battle River 30-50 km west of the Battlefords. Red Pheasant and the Nakota reserves are found farther to the southeast, about 30 km south of Battleford.

The residents of these reserves are predominantly of Plains Cree ancestry; however, in the 1800s a few Saulteaux or Plains Ojibwa individuals married into their bands (Sessional Papers 1914:131). Historically, there was also a close relationship between these Crees and their Nakota neighbours leading to much intermarriage and cultural exchange between the two peoples. In this regard, the relationship that existed historically among the Plains Cree, Nakota, and Saulteaux of the area was similar to that noted elsewhere on the Northern Plains during the period; that is, these peoples were allies, camped together, cooperated in the bison hunt, shared the same enemies, and pursued common political goals (Sharrock 1974:112-113). In addition, a small number of Metis and Europeans have also entered these bands through marriage.

The people of each reserve represent a band and are descended from the followers of prominent Plains Cree and Nakota chiefs who settled the reserves during the late 1870s and early 1880s following the signing of Treaty Number Six. The reserves bear the names of these chiefs. On some reserves the members of two or more bands have amalgamated to form a single band, as happened between the followers of Little Pine and Lucky Man (Sessional Papers 1885:85). Since the establishment of these settlements there has been considerable intermarriage and movement of people between reserves.

A second area of Cree settlement in the region lies north of the North Saskatchewan River in the northwestern portion of the study area (Figure 1.3). Like the Eagle Hills this region also appears to have been a focus for Cree groups in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today the Onion Lake and Frog Lake reserves are located here. Culturally, these people are Plains Cree; however, apparently there has

been significant contact and intermarriage between them and Woodland Crees to the north (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). Although this area has been considered in this study my research has been orientated primarily towards the Crees of the Battleford reserves.

Of the remaining reserves in the study area, it should be noted that the Plains Cree reserve of Thunderchild and the Cree-Saulteaux reserve of Moosomin were originally located near the other Battleford area reserves in the Eagle Hills and were re-located to their present sites in the early part of the twentieth century (Sessional Papers 1911:118). Furthermore, the people of Saulteaux Reserve are mainly Saulteaux (Sessional Papers 1877:lix) who moved into Saskatchewan from southern Manitoba in the late 1700s and early 1800s (Ray 1974:101-104). Saulteaux people had also occupied other areas in the region. In 1914 Indian Agent J. A. Rowland remarked:

There are also a number of Saulteaux, reckoning themselves as belonging to this agency, who live at Stinking lake, 75 miles northeast from here [Battleford]; and at Manitou lake, 75 miles southwest from here, but at neither of these points are there reserves. They simply squat on the land, and, hunt in those vicinities (Sessional Papers 1914:128).

These Saulteaux, especially those living at Manitou Lake, were renowned for their horses, as Rowland also noted:

These people are possessed of quite a large number of horses, of good quality. They take excellent care of them and are keenly alive as to their value and the benefit to be derived from improving the breed (Sessional Papers 1914:128).

Manitou Lake horses were, “known among the Indians, far and wide, as very superior animals, especially the Appaloosa and pinto ponies” (Kasokeo 1981:1). The Manitou Lake Saulteaux occupied a village located south of the lake along Eye Hill Creek, near

the (now abandoned) town of Yonker. Some of their family names were: Opwam, French Eater, Whitford, Gopher, Night Traveller, Strawberry, and Moccasin (James and Philip Favel, personal communication, June 2002). In the early part of the twentieth century the people at Manitou Lake removed to the various Battleford area reserves, while others went to Rocky Mountain House in Alberta (James and Philip Favel, personal communication, June 2002).

### 1.7 Fieldwork

A major part of this study has involved consultation with elders from the Sweetgrass and Poundmaker reserves located west of the Battlefords. The more easterly of the two reserves is *wihkasko-kisêyin* (Wolvengrey 2001:557) or Sweetgrass (I.R. 113, 113A, and 113B). The main portion of the reserve, Sweetgrass Indian Reserve Number 113, is located along Highway Number 40 which bisects the southern part of the reserve. Today, most of the settlement on the reserve is found along the highway; however, the early villages at Sweetgrass were located closer to the Battle River in the north. The Eagle Hills Escarpment, crossing the northern section of the reserve from east to west, is quite dramatic. This section of the escarpment is known locally as the Sweetgrass Hills (Alexander Tootosis, personal communication, August 2003). Historically, it was called *nakiwâcîhk* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002) 'at hill's end' (Wolvengrey 2001:557). Below the escarpment lies the Battle River Valley. Drumming Creek, *manito kâmatwêhikêt* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) 'Manitou, who is heard hammering at a distance' (Wolvengrey 2001:87,386), cuts its

way through the escarpment from the southwest on its way to join the Battle River. In low lying areas below the escarpment are several natural springs. One of these springs is known as *kâwâsakahkopak* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). This word has not been translated.

Two small separated areas are also included as part of the reserve. The first of these, Sweetgrass Indian Reserve Number 113A, is located north of the eastern boundary of the main reserve while the second, Sweetgrass Indian Reserve 113B, is found to the northwest of the main reserve. Both areas are located along the southern bank of the Battle River. The first area, Sweetgrass Indian Reserve Number 113A, was the location of the original 'Strike-him-on-the-back' settlement. In the early 1930s this community was abandoned and a new village was settled farther to the south in the area of the main reserve; this village, in turn, was abandoned in the 1960s when it was moved to its present location (Tomas Opwam, Augustine Paskemin, Ed Frank, personal communication, May 2000).

The people of the Sweetgrass reserve are largely descended from the followers of two late nineteenth century Plains Cree leaders. The first to settle in the area was *wâwikanihk-kâ-otâmahwât* or Strike-him-on-the-back (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002). Strike-him-on-the-back signed Treaty Number Six on August 28, 1876 with the Willow Crees near Duck Lake (Sessional papers 1877:lviii, lxxi). Strike-him-on-the-back's reserve seems to have been surveyed in September of 1879 by Dominion Land Surveyor George Simpson (Sessional Papers 1880:52). In 1879, it was noted that there were 143 members of this band living on the banks of the

Battle River some fifteen miles from Battleford; however, two years later only sixty members remained (Sessional Papers 1882:124). During the spring and early summer of 1881 a major exodus occurred from the Battleford reserves that left them largely depopulated (Sessional Papers 1882:xiv). Most of these people had gone south to the Cypress Hills region in search of the buffalo herds. Strike-him-on-the-back himself did not join in this venture, as, at this time, he was already a very elderly man, but many members of his band apparently did. However, it seems that his brothers, and probably other members of his close family, remained with him on the reserve (Sessional Papers 1882:124). By 1884 those who had gone south had returned to their reserves in the Battleford District (Sessional Papers 1884:101) and Strike-him-on-the-back's band had grown to include 189 persons (Sessional Papers 1884:122-123).

The second group to settle on the reserve were the followers of *apisciyinís* (Philip Favel, personal communication, June 2002) 'dwarf' (Wolvengrey 2001:7) or Young Sweetgrass. Young Sweetgrass was the son of the prominent chief *wihkasko-kisêyin* (Philip Favel, personal communication, June 2002) 'Old-man-sweetgrass' (Wolvengrey 2001:557) who died shortly after signing Treaty Number Six at Fort Pitt in 1876. Following his death Sweetgrass' band began to disintegrate and in 1882 Young Sweetgrass left his father's band at Onion Lake and came south, with a few members of his family, to live with Strike-him-on-the-back's people (Philip Favel, personal communication, June 2002). In 1884 he replaced Strike-him-on-the-back as chief of their combined bands (Sessional Papers 1885:84).

During the late spring and early summer of 2002 I had the opportunity to meet



with elders of this reserve for the purpose of gathering information used in this thesis. Three meetings with Sweetgrass elders were held in the boardroom of the Sweetgrass health clinic between April and June of that year. The elders who participated in these meetings were Augustine Paskimen, Philip and James Favel, Donald Martel, Bernadette Fineday and Doreen Adams. Sweetgrass resident Judy Bear of the Battlefords Tribal Council was instrumental in organizing meetings and graciously acted as interpreter. Ms. Bear has a background in Cree language education and has worked as a member of an editing council on a recently published Cree-English dictionary. In this thesis Ms. Bear's transcriptions of terms recorded during the meetings with Sweetgrass elders have been used. Ms. Bear and I were also able to interview elder Augustine Paskimen at his home.

During the summer of 2003, while working on Poundmaker Reserve, I had the opportunity to interview elder Alexander Tootosis of the Poundmaker Band. The Poundmaker Reserve (I.R. 114) is situated next to Sweetgrass to the west, with about 8 km separating their eastern and western borders. The reserve is known as *kiskihkomânihk* (Alexander Tootosis, personal communication, August 2003) 'at Cut Knife' (Wolvengrey 2001:74) and takes its name from a nineteenth century Sarcee chief called *kiskihkomân* 'cut off knife' (Wolvengrey 2001:74) who was killed by the Cree while on a raid in the area in the 1840s. A noted landmark on the reserve, *asawâpiwin* (Alexander Tootosis, personal communication, August 2003) 'look-out' (Wolvengrey 2001:8), is associated with this event. A 1902 Sessional Paper entry describes the area and location, which in this instance is referred to as Spy Hill:

The Eagle Hills, which, here rise to a height of about four hundred feet, cross the reserve at a distance of a mile from the river [Battle River] and

parallel with it. The highest point is the Spy Hill, famous in Indian legend. The hills are here intersected by the Cutknife Creek and several deep lateral ravines (Sessional Papers 1902:121).

The Eagle Hills Escarpment runs north-south through the middle of the reserve until it reaches the Battle River where it again turns and runs to the west. This portion of the escarpment is known as the *mahihkan waciy* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, August 2003) 'wolf hills' (Wolvengrey 2001:84,228). Cut Knife Creek follows the base of the escarpment north to where it joins the Battle River which forms the northern boundary of the reserve.

The followers of *pîhtokahânapiwîyîn* (also *pîhtokwahânapiwîyîn*) 'one who sits at the pound' (Wolvengrey 2001:492), or Chief Poundmaker, settled this reserve sometime in the late 1870s or early 1880s, the reserve being surveyed, it seems, in 1880 or 1881 (Sessional Papers 1881:124). In 1882 the band numbered 164 members (Sessional Papers 1883:201). Originally Poundmaker had been a member of Chief Red Pheasant's band attending and signing Treaty Number Six as one of Red Pheasant's councillors (Sessional Papers 1877:lxix). As a recognized and highly regarded negotiator, especially in the conflicts between the Blackfoot and the Cree (Jefferson 1929:103), he attracted many followers and was able to establish his own band. Poundmaker, himself, was part Nakota as were most of his followers. Today, however, the reserve is culturally Plains Cree (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, August 2003).

I conducted one interview with elder John Canepotato of the Onion Lake Reserve in June of 2004. Onion Lake resident Leo Paul helped arrange this interview and also provided information for the study. The Onion Lake reserves are located about 60 km

north of Lloydminster. In the late 1800s a number of Plains Cree chiefs settled with their followers on reserves in this area and at nearby Frog Lake. These included Big Bear, Sweetgrass, Seekaskootch, Makao, Puskiakiwenin, Onepowahayo, and Keeheewin. In 1882 these Crees numbered approximately 483 individuals (Sessional Papers 1883:202).

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have introduced several concepts that have guided the research approach taken in this study: cultural landscape and social space being the most important of these concepts. Furthermore, the landscape approach in archaeology has been explained. Additionally, the study area has been defined and described. Finally, I have provided a brief overview of the Plains Cree communities where fieldwork was conducted over the course of this project.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CREE GROUPS OF WEST CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

#### 2.1 Introduction

Until quite recently the prevailing view among historians and anthropologists held that the Cree were late arrivals to the grasslands and forests of what is now the province of Saskatchewan. The Cree, it was generally believed, had expanded westward - beginning sometime in the late 1600s - from an original home located in northwestern Ontario or eastern Manitoba. As Russell (1991:1) explains:

This view sees the movement as resulting from a chain of circumstances: a dependency on European trade goods leading to a depletion of local furs which in turn motivated the invasion of new territories in the search for new fur sources. This invasion succeeded because of the almost exclusive access to guns which allowed the Cree and their Assiniboin allies to overcome their western neighbours and invade as far as present-day Alberta and the Northwest Territories by the late 1700s.

This version of Cree history has been reiterated, with little variation, in the major works of scholarship that have appeared on the subject, including, most notably, David Mandelbaum's (1979) classic study of the Plains Cree and Arthur Ray's (1974) treatise on aboriginal participation in the fur trade.

Focussing on Mandelbaum's work Russell (1991) critically re-examined this interpretation of Cree history. In an exhaustive review of historic sources, Russell failed to find any evidence for an eighteenth century Cree invasion. This idea, as Russell was to

show, had been based on a few ambiguous statements made in 1801 by Alexander Mackenzie (see Russell 1991:28-46). Mackenzie's comments were taken by later writers as fact and the notion of a Cree migration became entrenched in the scholarly literature. Another contributing factor identified by Russell was the path taken by early European exploration. As he states:

As explorers moved into the western hinterland from the Great Lakes and from Hudson Bay, they continued to meet Cree groups. Consequently, it was erroneously assumed that since early data placed the Cree to the east while later data placed them in the west, that the Cree themselves had migrated. However, what was reflected was the expansion westwards of European knowledge of the Cree (Russell 1991:213).

Russell's arguments strongly presuppose a greater time depth for Cree residence in what is now western Canada. While it is evident - given their linguistic affiliation with eastern Algonquian peoples - that the Western Cree had at some point in their history moved from the east, exactly when this occurred remains unclear although undoubtedly it took place in the late pre-contact period. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Cree were occupants of Canada's western interior some three or four hundred years before their once reputed eighteenth century migration. An archaeologically defined culture known as the Selkirk Composite, is thought to have been produced by ancestral Cree peoples (Meyer 1987; Meyer and Russell 2000:1-3). Selkirk materials are found in a wide area throughout the boreal forest of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and include characteristic pottery vessels, small side-notched projectile points, ground stone axe and adze blades and bone tools such as barbed harpoon heads and awls (Meyer 1999:33). Associated radiocarbon and thermoluminescence dates for these materials range from approximately A.D. 1350 to the late 1600s. Terminal dates for the Selkirk Composite, therefore,

coincide closely with the arrival of European traders in central Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who, as Russell (1991) clearly demonstrates, found Cree peoples well established in these regions and living in a number of distinct societies. From the written observations of these men a general picture of the Western Cree during this period has emerged.

Historic records from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are a useful, if somewhat limited, source of information regarding the Western Cree, their societies and way of life. It must be stressed, also, that most of these documents were written by European traders and therefore contain their biases. Furthermore, business-minded traders often had little interest in matters which had no direct bearing on the trade (Russell 1991:9) and left few detailed observations of the aboriginal peoples they encountered. Moreover, the Cree and Nakota most frequently represented in these accounts were themselves deeply involved in the trade as middlemen. As Meyer and Russell (2000:9) have commented, the seasonal movements of these individuals likely were not typical of those taken by the other members of their societies. However, these limitations aside, Meyer and Russell argue that with careful study relevant information is obtainable from these historic documents.

Russell (1991:47) identifies three groups of historic documents relevant to a discussion of the eighteenth century Western Cree. The first are the records of the French, who in the 1730s began building posts in southern Manitoba. Later, in the early 1750s, French traders were to reach - and establish themselves on - the Saskatchewan River (Ray 1974:52-53). These posts were occupied until the late 1750s after which time

the French were forced to leave the western interior following their defeat in the Seven Years War. While French documents indicate that Crees were living in the western interior throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries most of this information consists of vague second-hand references (Russell 1991:61). Compounding this problem is the fact that the French, despite their more than twenty year stay in the region, left few records of their activities in the west (Russell 1991:55).

In contrast are the documents of Hudson's Bay Company traders. Hudson's Bay Company employees were required to keep detailed records of the many aspects of their operations, which were then sent each year to the Company's head office in London (Russell 1991:55). This practice has resulted in a numerous and varied collection of documents available for study, and it is these documents that have contributed the most to an understanding of the eighteenth century Western Cree.

Records kept at York Factory in the 1700s make it clear that the majority of the trade during this period was with Cree and Nakota peoples living to the southwest of Hudson Bay (Ray 1974:61). Until the 1750s the Company made few attempts to explore these lands and the traders were only able to acquire a very limited knowledge of the geography and population of the interior through information collected from the peoples trading at the Bay (Russell 1991:63). Before the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 the Western Cree and their Nakota allies had participated in a trade network that was centred on the Lake Nipigon region of northwest Ontario where they exchanged furs with aboriginal middlemen for French goods brought from the east (Ray 1974:12-13). The appearance of posts on Hudson Bay, however, created a new trading

environment and shifted the focus of the trade north to those posts, most notably York Factory and Fort Churchill, which had direct access to the great rivers of the interior. These waterways, the Saskatchewan and the Churchill river systems, connected the Bay with vast areas of western Canada east of the Rocky Mountains and were vital avenues of transportation in the movement of goods. The realignment of trade created opportunities for the Cree and Nakota peoples who occupied the lower portions of these waterways. Their strategic position, between traders and fur producing regions of the far western interior, allowed the Cree and Nakota a substantial degree of control over the exchange of goods between the two areas. By the late 1750s and early 1760s they had become firmly established as middlemen in a network of trade whose principal centre was York Factory (Ray 1974:13,61). An annual pattern of trade developed that culminated each year during the highpoint of summer when flotillas of Cree and Nakota canoes arrived at the Bay posts carrying furs gathered inland.

The records of the Bay posts represent a second source of information on the peoples of the interior since Cree groups are mentioned frequently in these documents. However, as the traders had little grasp of the inland geography, it is not possible to identify where the lands of these Crees were located (Russell 1991:62). This changed in the mid 1700s when the Company began sending men inland to winter with groups of Crees and Nakota. These journeys were made between the years 1754 and 1774 by individuals who were dispatched from York Factory to the interior, with the tasks of reporting on the nature of the inland trade and establishing amicable relations with the plains bison hunters so that these peoples might be encouraged to trade at the Bay posts.



There is some question as to how successful this policy proved, however, the accounts left by these men, though of greater or lesser quality, represent the earliest direct observations of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta. Moreover, as the HBC men often travelled with Cree middlemen, their journals - which represent a third group of historic documents relating to the Western Cree - are a valuable source of information regarding the Crees of the western interior of Canada in the middle and latter years of the eighteenth century.

Eighteenth century HBC traders were aware of several Cree groups or societies, known to them by name, that occupied the boreal forest and aspen parklands of what are now central and northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The degree to which these peoples differed culturally from one another is unclear. Commenting on one of these groups, the Pegogamaw, Meyer and Russell (2000:16) note:

The fact that the HBC traders identified the Pegogamaw as a separate Cree group indicates that they had some sociopolitical or cultural elements that distinguished them from other Crees in this region.

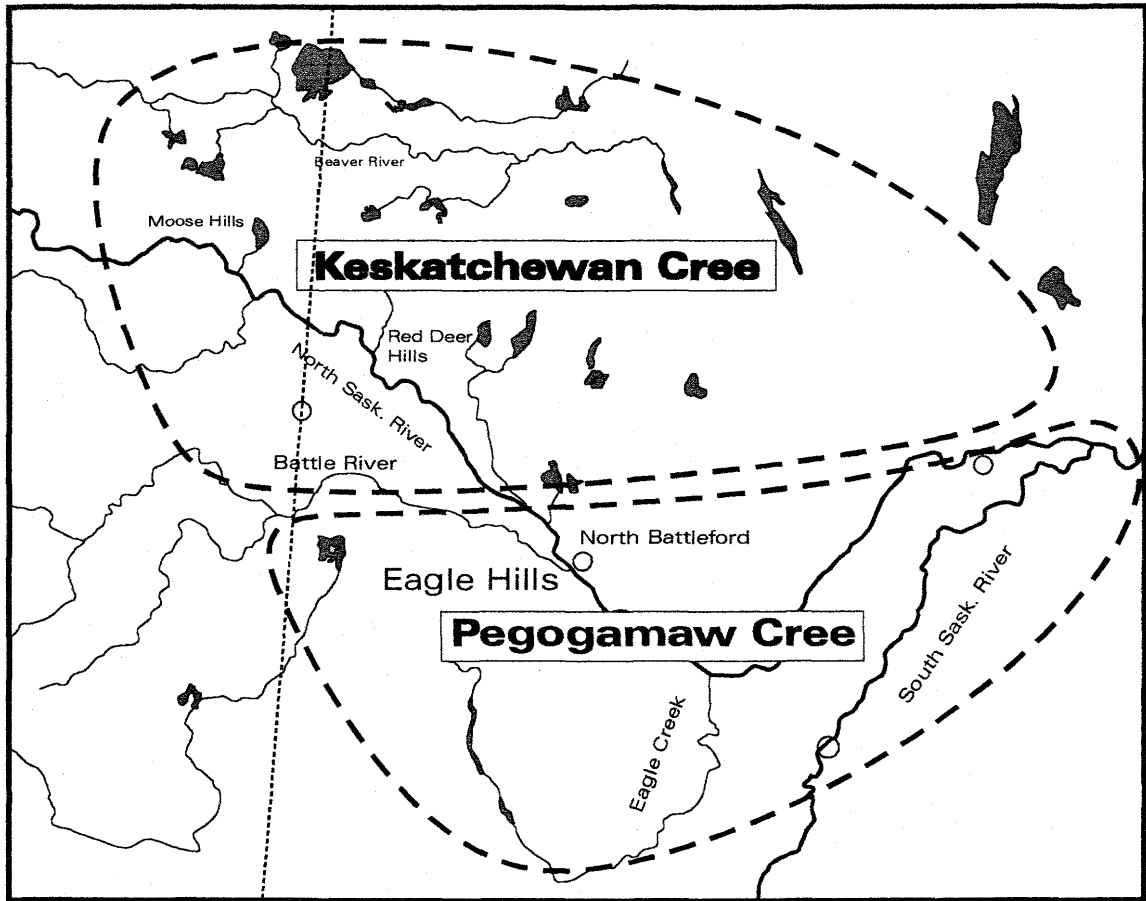
This argues that the various named Cree groups of the interior represented distinct societies or nations, each occupying separate territories and possessing unique sociopolitical and cultural traits. Two of these groups, identified in the HBC records as the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree, occupied territories in what is now central and west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta (Russell 1982; Russell 1991:141-152).

## **2.2 The Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree**

As stated, two Cree groups were living in portions of what is now west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta in the eighteenth century (Figure 2.1). These peoples, known as the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree, are first mentioned as distinct groups in the York Factory journals of the year 1751 when their combined flotilla of twenty-six canoes appeared at the post (Russell 1991:143). The traders observed that they were closely affiliated peoples who often arrived together at the Bay and seemed to originate from the same general area (Russell 1991:148). In fact, the traders often used the terms Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan interchangeably. Given the location of their respective homelands and their close relationship, Russell (1991:148) has commented:

This...might possibly reflect an over-riding similarity between the two groups which served to differentiate them from other Cree. Thus, it is possible these were “y” or Plains Cree dialect speakers who were being distinguished from “n” speakers to the east and “th” speakers to the north.

However, differences between the two groups were also evident. It was noted that each group took a different route on their annual journey to the Bay. The Keskatchewan used the “Upper Track” which left the Saskatchewan River at Cumberland Lake and gave them the option of proceeding either to Fort Churchill or to York Factory, while the Pegogamaw paddled the “Middle Track” to Cedar and Moose Lakes and then on to York Factory (Russell 1991:142). Furthermore, each group sought separate wintering grounds upon their return to the interior. Of the traders taken inland from York Factory in the 1700s it seems that the majority went in the company of either the Pegogamaw or Keskatchewan Cree. As a result, more information is available for these Crees than exists for other inland peoples of the period. Both the Pegogamaw and the Keskatchewan are no longer mentioned in the records of the traders following the catastrophic smallpox



**Figure 2.1:** Map showing the approximate locations of named 18th century Cree groups in the study region. Map adapted from Meyer and Russell (2000).

epidemic that reached central Saskatchewan in the winter of 1781-82. However, while these peoples no longer existed as sociopolitical entities, Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree that survived the epidemic took part in the formation of new Cree societies in the region (Meyer and Russell 2000:18).

### *2.2.1 The Keskatchewan Cree*

The Keskatchewan Cree actively traded at York Factory during the middle of the

eighteenth century. As Russell (1991:149) observes, the Keskatchewan and Pegogamaw were responsible for a large portion of the trade in inland furs at York Factory each year, the two groups accounting for as much as 35% of the total inland traffic at the posts in some years. That a certain portion of their society was deeply committed to the trade is clear, and, like the Pegogamaw, these individuals were facilitating the movement of furs and goods between the Bay posts and the peoples of the interior plains.

To the traders at the Bay the term Keskatchewan was used in three different contexts and this has led to some confusion regarding properly identifying these Crees in the HBC records (Russell 1991:147). At one level the name Keskatchewan was often applied by traders to the Western Cree collectively. At another, it was used to identify a single group of these Crees. And finally, the term was used for those Crees, namely the Keskatchewan proper and the Pegogamaw, whose lands were located west of the forks of the Saskatchewan River. Added to this difficulty is the fact that no mention is made of the Keskatchewan by inland travellers in their accounts of the interior (Russell 1991:148). As Russell (1991:149-151) argues, the group whom the traders at the Bay referred to as the Keskatchewan were known locally as the Beaver Cree. In this regard, Russell (1991:151) comments:

The two groups were found within the same general area: from the Thickwood Hills west to the Beaver Hills and from the upper Beaver River to south of the North Saskatchewan River. These coincidences are sufficiently strong as to suggest that the two groups were in fact one. It seems probable that the term "Keskatchewan" was bestowed by English at the Bay on a group who were known locally as the Beaver Cree.

The Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree are mentioned frequently by the HBC traders who journeyed in the lands of west central Saskatchewan and eastern Alberta in the mid

1700s and on at least two occasions it seems, a Company employee travelled inland with groups of these Crees. The extent of the territory occupied by the Keskatchewan is not known with precision. From the accounts of the inland travellers, however, it has been possible to surmise the location of their core lands. In terms of their relationship to the Pegogamaw, it is clear that the Keskatchewan were the more westerly group and were living - according to Russell (1991:148) - farther up-river along the North Saskatchewan west of the Eagle Hills. Travelling south of the Thickwood Hills in 1772, the HBC trader Matthew Cocking noted, "There are large Hills beyond those where the Beaver Indians reside" (1908:218). As Cocking's comments suggest, the Keskatchewan Cree were located somewhere west of the Thickwood Hills of west central Saskatchewan, which likely marked the eastern limit of their lands. Other evidence suggests that the Keskatchewan often travelled as far west as central Alberta. On September 4, 1772 Cocking recorded a large camp (fifty tents) of mostly Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree at the mouth of Eagle Creek in western Saskatchewan (Russell 1991:107). Several days later these Crees parted company with Cocking's group and went west "towards Manito-Sakihagan & Assine-Wache" (Cocking 1908:105). Cocking's "Manito-Sakihagan" is a rendering of the Cree words *manitou sâkahikan* 'god lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:87,198) or Manitou Lake which is located near the Alberta border in west central Saskatchewan. His term "Assine-Wache" or *asiniy wacyi* 'stone hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:9,228) has been considered as a possible reference to the Rocky Mountains (but see Belyea 2000:335-336). In this regard, it is worth noting that nearly twenty years earlier Anthony Henday, who spent the winter of 1754-55 south of present day Edmonton in central Alberta, noted

the presence of many small Cree camps in the area. Henday did not identify these Crees but, in all likelihood, they were Keskatchewan (Russell 1991:148). Therefore, central or east central Alberta may be regarded as the western extent of the lands of these Crees.

The Keskatchewan Cree were associated with, and took their name from, the North Saskatchewan/Saskatchewan River, called in Cree, *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy* 'swift-flowing river' (Wolvengrey 2001:64). Inland travellers consistently referred to these people as the 'Beaver Indians' which indicates a familiarity on the part on these Crees with the Beaver River to the north. In fact, the inland records make it clear that both rivers were important to these Crees, though it seems that the North Saskatchewan was used more extensively by those individuals who made the annual trip to the Bay (Russell 1991:149). This likely explains the use of the term Keskatchewan by the traders at the Bay for these Crees. In any event, as Russell (1991:151) notes, the Keskatchewan Cree were living in an area "from the upper Beaver River to south of the North Saskatchewan River" and this would appear to have represented the northern and southern boundaries of their lands.

A more detailed picture of the seasonal movements of the Keskatchewan Cree is found in the accounts of the Hudson's Bay Company trader William Pink who accompanied a group of apparently Keskatchewan Cree on two successive trips to eastern Alberta in the years 1767-68 and 1768-69 (HBCA B.239/a/58; HBCA B.239/a/61). On both occasions, returning inland from York Factory late in the summer, Pink's group left the Saskatchewan River near the Forks and travelled west to the same general area of eastern Alberta. An analysis of named geographic features in Pink's two

journals (see Chapter Three) suggests that this region, centred on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border near the present day Onion Lake reserves, represented a focal point for the activities of these Crees. From here, these Crees typically moved to the southwest, crossing the North Saskatchewan River to spend the winter on the grasslands of east central Alberta returning back to the focal area at the end of winter.

### 2.2.2 *The Pegogamaw Cree*

The Pegogamaw, like their Keskatchewan neighbours to the west, were actively involved in the HBC trade and appear to have been the foremost Cree group interacting commercially with the peoples of the interior plains (Meyer and Russell 2000:3).

Because the Pegogamaw had such well established trading contacts with plains bison hunters, HBC employees sent inland frequently travelled with groups of these Crees. Such travellers included both Anthony Henday and Matthew Cocking whose journals have contributed greatly to an understanding of these Crees. As a result, much more is known about the Pegogamaw than other eighteenth century Cree peoples such as the Keskatchewan.

The Pegogamaw take their name from the Cree toponym *pikâkamâw sîpiy* or 'turbid, muddy river' (Pentland 1981:269-270) which was one of several terms that historically was applied to the South Saskatchewan River. Given their identification with this river it is likely that the South Saskatchewan was important to these Crees, as Meyer and Russell (2000:7) note:

It seems...that at some point in their history these people were closely associated with at least the downstream portion of that river. This would

have been that section of the river extending from the confluence south to the present day Saskatoon area.

Therefore, as Russell (1991:144) comments, this area, “centred between the Branches of the Saskatchewan River, west of the Forks” would appear to have represented the core lands of the Pegogamaw Cree. Inland travellers also witnessed that groups of Pegogamaw were regularly wintering on the grasslands south and west of the Eagle Hills. During the winter of 1772-73 Matthew Cocking stayed with a group of Pegogamaw camped southeast of the Eagle Hills near present day Biggar, Saskatchewan (Cocking 1908; Russell 1991:144). Similarly, three years earlier, in the winter of 1769-70, William Pink spent the season camped with a group of presumably Pegogamaw Cree and Blackfoot on the plains somewhere southwest of Manitou Lake (HBCA B.239/a/63). The observations of these HBC traders suggest that the lands of the Pegogamaw may have extended southwest from the Forks to the Eagle Hills area and from there west to the present Alberta-Saskatchewan border. However, it is noteworthy that in both instances the Cree seem to have travelled to these areas for the purpose of meeting plains groups and that a major activity at the winter camps, as Pink’s 1769-70 journal makes clear (HBCA B.239/a/63), was trapping for furs. Since these Crees were middlemen who obtained most of the furs they brought to the Bay each year from plains groups such as the Blackfoot (Ray 1974:90), it is possible that their presence here may have been motivated largely by commercial enterprise. Without a better understanding of the Pegogamaw apart from those individuals involved in the trade, their relationship to these areas will remain unclear. Nonetheless, it is evident that the Eagle Hills area was important to the Pegogamaw. In April of 1770 Pink recorded a gathering of Crees at the



mouth of the Battle River which included 114 tents representing, according to Russell (1991:104), between 900 and 1100 people. The number of individual Pegogamaw middlemen, even if their families are considered as accompanying them, would surely not have approached anywhere near this number, and such a large gathering presumably would have represented a sizeable percentage of the entire Pegogamaw population - estimated by Meyer and Russell (2000:9) as 1000 or more persons. Therefore, it seems that the Cree occupation of the Eagle Hills went beyond trade alone and that large social units were involved. Moreover, an examination of named geographic features found in the Pink and Cocking journals reveals that in each case a similar area is described: from the Eagle Hills west to the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. This suggests that an area centred on the Eagle Hills and extending east and west along the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers, was a focal point for one group of Pegogamaw Cree.

### *2.2.3 Sociopolitical Organization*

How the Keskatchewan and Pegogamaw Cree were organized socially is not well understood. As Meyer and Russell (2000:16) note, "There is so little information on this topic that we are left with little option but to attempt some informed surmises."

Compared with the Plains Cree of the nineteenth century it is clear that these Crees possessed some cultural traits associated with northern boreal forest peoples. It may be, therefore, that the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan were organized in a manner typical of southern boreal forest Algonquian peoples, that is, a social organization characterized by the regional band. This social entity comprised all the people living in a distinctive

geographic region and usually numbered between 100 and 300 individuals (Meyer and Hutton 1998:94). For much of the year the members of a regional band lived in a number of extended family units, called local bands (Helm 1965:375). These were small, 20-40 person, groups that during the winter would camp together. The observations of inland travellers show that the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan were wintering in a similar fashion: camped in numerous small scattered groups analogous to those described for boreal forest peoples (Meyer and Russell 2000:18).

An organizational feature of boreal forest Algonquian peoples was the annual aggregation or ingathering. Commenting on the regional band, Meyer (2001:6) notes:

This was a group with a dense network of kin ties and whose members gathered together at least once, and perhaps twice, a year. This ingathering generally occurred in the spring and or the autumn, or both.

Ingathering centres were located along the major rivers and were chosen for their central location within the territories of each regional band (Meyer and Thistle 1995). These locations had to be near reliable and abundant sources of food in order to sustain such a large gathering of people over many days and, in this regard, spring spawning fish and migrating waterfowl supplied the necessary subsistence resources (Meyer 2001:10).

Ingatherings were important events in the lives of boreal forest peoples. As Meyer (2001:10) comments:

These ingatherings are believed to have been crucial to the normal, long term functioning of these societies. These people lived in small social groups for much of the year, and in considerable isolation throughout the winter. At the ingatherings, social ties were renewed, major religious ceremonies were celebrated and, historically, important economic activities occurred - including debt arrangements with the traders.

In essence, ingathering sites were “the geographical and spiritual centres of the worlds of

the members of these regional bands” (Meyer 2001:9).

It is clear that ingathering events were an important part of the social life of eighteenth century Western Cree peoples such as the Keskatchewan and the Pegogamaw. Several of the ingathering centres used by these Crees have been identified (Meyer and Russell 2000:13-15). One of these centres, located on the Saskatchewan River 22 km downstream from the Forks, was traditionally known to the Cree as *pêhonânis* “the little waiting place”. To the west on the South Saskatchewan River near the present day Muskoday Reserve another ingathering centre is known to have existed; traditionally the Cree referred to this area as *maskotew* “the plains or grasslands”. Two unnamed sites existed on the North Saskatchewan River: one at the mouth of Eagle Creek and another at the confluence of the Battle River. Finally, the existence of - as yet unidentified - ingathering centres between Eagle Creek and the Muskoday Reserve are conjectured (Meyer and Russell 2000:15). The ingathering centres were well known to the traders. As Meyer and Thistle (1995) have observed, the traders often built their posts at or near such locations to take advantage of the commercial opportunities afforded by the large annual or bi-annual gatherings and it is probable that most, if not all, of the posts built on the Saskatchewan River and its tributaries in the eighteenth century were located in close proximity to these sites.

Although boreal forest cultural traits have been noted among the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree, the Pegogamaw were not boreal forest people. As Meyer and Russell (2000:18) have remarked:

It is quite clear that the Pegogamaw were not boreal forest people. Indeed, there seems to have been relatively little use made of that portion

of the boreal forest immediately on the north. Although part of their year was spent in the aspen parklands, a considerable amount of time was also spent on the grasslands.

Meyer and Russell (2000:18) also note that the seasonal round of the Pegogamaw closely resembled that of the nineteenth century Plains Cree:

They [the Pegogamaw] evidently spent much of the year at the grassland/parkland interface, among the bison herds, only returning to the northern parklands or the forest edge in late winter and remaining there through the spring ingathering period. Following the latter gathering, they appear to have moved back to the grassland edge for the summer.

Therefore, it is conceivable that the Pegogamaw - and perhaps the Keskatchewan as well - may have lived in bands similar to those of the Plains Cree (Meyer and Russell 2000:16). The Plains Cree of the nineteenth century were organized into flexible band structures that were divided into a number of sub-bands each led by a chief (Mandelbaum 1979:9-12,105-106). Evidence suggests that the Pegogamaw were organized in a like manner as Meyer and Russell (2000:16) have recognized at least two subgroups among the Pegogamaw: an eastern subgroup living in the region of the lower South Saskatchewan River, and a western subgroup occupying lands around the lower Battle River area. It will be recalled that the ingathering witnessed by William Pink at the mouth of the Battle River in 1770 was attended by 1000 or more persons. This aggregation would have been far larger than those typical at boreal forest ingathering sites (Meyer and Russell 2000:18) and seems more in the range of the nineteenth century Plains Cree camps.

Although the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan were familiar with both the parklands and grasslands, it appears that they were not fully plains peoples in the sense

that they had not adopted the more usual hallmarks of the plains lifestyle such as the bison pound. At a winter camp in 1772, Matthew Cocking noted the general lack of skill shown by the Cree in managing a pound. As he states, "Natives can make nothing of the pound, so are obliged to kill the Buffalo with the Gun, & Bow and Arrow" (Cocking 1908:109). In a following entry he remarks, "We are not so expert at pounding as the Archithinue Natives" (Cocking 1908:110). It is evident the Cree at this time had not acquired the expertise with the pound that the Plains Cree of the nineteenth century would possess. Moreover, their difficulty in operating the bison pound contrasts sharply with the ease with which the "Archithinue" (the Blackfoot or Gros Ventre) utilized the device. However, their inability to work a pound may simply indicate a preference for other hunting methods. Fine Day (1973:5) noted that buffalo could be successfully hunted without resorting to the pound or even horses to chase them. His comments regarding the Saulteaux of the nineteenth century illustrate this point:

There is a big difference between these People [Plains Cree of the River People Band] and the Soto - even in the way they hunt. The Soto were good hunters. In the Summer and Winter they would surround the Buffalo on foot. The Buffalo would smell those to the Windward and run away to be shot by those on the other side. Then they would wheel and run back to be shot again. We here did not use this way of hunting at all.

As the above passage shows, the bison pound was not necessarily a pre-requisite for living successfully in the plains environment.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In the eighteenth century two Cree groups were living in the lands of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta. These were the Pegogamaw and

Keskatchewan Cree. The Pegogamaw occupied a territory centred on the lower North and South Saskatchewan Rivers while the Keskatchewan were living farther west along the North Saskatchewan and Beaver Rivers.

In the mid 1700s the HBC sent men inland to winter with groups of these Crees. Their accounts indicate that the Keskatchewan and Pegogamaw were annually moving between the parklands and the northern edge of the grasslands where they typically wintered. Aspects of the sociopolitical organization of these Crees are not well understood. However, it is apparent that they possessed cultural traits reminiscent of both boreal forest and plains peoples.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NAMED LANDSCAPE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the named landscape of the eighteenth century Crees of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta. Information regarding this named landscape has been obtained from the accounts of HBC employees sent inland over a twenty-year period from 1754 to 1773. On these journeys HBC traders were introduced to the lands of the western interior and often noted the names of localities which figured prominently in the cultural landscape of the Crees with whom they travelled. These names, though not numerous, provide a basic understanding of the Cree cultural landscape. Journal accounts describe seven trips made to the study area by HBC traders in the mid 1700s. These include the journals of Anthony Henday 1754-55; Joseph Smith 1763-64; William Pink 1766-67, 1767-68, 1768-69, 1769-70 and Matthew Cocking 1772-73.

#### **3.2 The Hudson's Bay Company Inland Travellers**

From the 1730s onward the volume of goods and furs exchanged annually at York Factory steadily diminished until the 1750s when trading activities at the post reached their lowest recorded levels (Ray 1974:53). French forts constructed in central

Manitoba during the 1730s and 1740s were drawing off a substantial portion of the trade that had once gone to centres like York Factory. As well, the early 1750s saw the establishment of French posts on the Saskatchewan River. These posts commanded the main avenue of transportation between York Factory and its most productive trading areas in the Saskatchewan River Valley. The French presence contributed greatly to the declining trade at the Bay. The success of French traders was due primarily to their close proximity to the parklands and grasslands, areas where the vast majority of the tradeable furs were procured in the mid 1700s. Trading with the French was an attractive option for inland peoples as it allowed them access to European goods without the commitment of a lengthy annual trip to the Bay, a journey filled with risks and hardships (Ray 1974:91). Concerned by these developments, HBC officials began sending men inland with the hope that they would provide information on the disposition of French traders, persuade inland peoples to trade at the Bay posts, and gain some firsthand knowledge of the inland geography (Russell 1991:91). The first of these journeys, that of Anthony Henday in 1754-55, established a pattern of inland exploration that would continue for more than twenty years.

Many of the journeys made by HBC inland travellers brought them to west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta. In general, most of these journeys were similar in nature. The traders dispatched on these trips typically departed from York Factory in the middle of summer, usually sometime in early July, with a group of Cree or Nakota middlemen returning inland. The group travelled well-established routes through the rivers and lakes of central Manitoba and then followed the Saskatchewan River



upstream to where it passed close to the southern grasslands. Often this was in the vicinity of the Forks as was the case with the groups William Pink travelled with in 1767-68 and 1768-69 (HBCA B.239/a/58; HBCA B.239/a/61). Leaving the river, the traders accompanied the Cree inland to spend the winter on the grasslands to the southwest. By spring the group had moved back north to ingathering centres located on the North or South Saskatchewan Rivers to build canoes and prepare for the return trip to the Bay.

### *3.2.1 The Journals*

The journal accounts that describe these journeys provide valuable information on the distribution and seasonal movements of the western Cree before their societies were affected by the rivalry that developed between the HBC and the North West Company after 1774 and the disastrous smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 (Russell 1991:91-92). They also offer some insight into the character of the cultural landscape of these Crees in the form of the named localities they record. However, as Russell (1991:92) points out, the journals are limited in respect to the amounts and types of information they contain. To begin with, the HBC inland travellers arrived in the interior late in the summer and then left for the Bay the following spring. As a result, the activities of the Cree during the summer months were not recorded. Again, as noted, the traders travelled with groups of Crees who were actively involved in the trade and these individuals likely comprised only a small element of their respective societies. As Russell (1991:92) remarks, “the way of life reflected in the journals was not necessarily applicable to all inland Cree.” Moreover, Russell (1991:92) notes further that “each journal records only the movements of part of

a specific band, in a specific area, in a specific year” (Russell 1991:92). And finally, the journals themselves are often of poor quality and this has led to problems in reconstructing the exact routes taken. However, these problems notwithstanding, this discussion will now turn to an analysis of extant journals that have a bearing on the area encompassed by this study. Here, details concerning the named localities that appear in these documents will be examined in the context of what they reveal about the cultural landscape systems of the Crees who lived in this area during this time. The first, and most problematic, of the journals to be scrutinized is that of Anthony Henday.

### *3.2.2 Anthony Henday: 1754-55*

Four versions of the Henday journal are known to exist. Henday’s original journal has not survived and each of the four existing manuscripts are copies, penned as early as 1755 and as late as 1782 (Williams 1978). It is not known which of the four manuscripts, if any, represents, or is closest to the original version of the diary Henday kept on his travels. Furthermore, each version has its own characteristics and there are numerous inconsistencies between them. This has led many to suspect that the manuscripts have been heavily edited (see Belyea 2000:19-21) or, at worst, are forgeries (Russell 1991:93). Consequently, the scholarly merit of the Henday journal remains questionable. Taken at face value, however, Henday’s journal does offer the first written account of the lands and peoples of west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta and this fact alone gives the journal special significance. Nevertheless, Henday’s account contains remarkably little information about the named landscape of the Cree -

or, for that matter any other group - whose lands he visited. Those few localities Henday does record, which, given the standard interpretation of his route, can reasonably be assumed to have been located within the study area, will now be examined.

Henday departed from York Factory in late July of 1754 with instructions to make detailed observations on the character of the inland trade. However, the primary task given to him was to meet with inland peoples and if possible persuade them to trade at the Bay posts. The group that Henday travelled with seems to have been Pegogamaw Cree (Russell 1974:89) and it is commonly accepted that Henday was guided through central Saskatchewan far into Alberta where he passed the winter of 1754-55 among the Crees who were living in numerous small camps in the present day Edmonton area. As Russell (1991:96) has remarked, the presence of these winter camps indicates that considerable numbers of Crees were living in central Alberta at this early date. In the spring Henday's group moved to an ingathering site thought to have been located on the North Saskatchewan River (Russell 1991:95) where the group built their canoes and on April 28 set out for the Bay. On the return trip the company encountered several large groups of Blackfoot with whom they engaged in brisk trading; however, the Cree and Nakota later traded most of the prime furs they had obtained to the French at Fort St. Louis and Fort Paskoyac on the Saskatchewan River leaving Henday, on his return to York Factory, with little to show for his efforts (Ray 1974:90-91).

Henday obviously took the imperatives placed upon him by the Company very seriously and his journal is replete with descriptions pertaining to the business activities of his companions, of which he was a keen observer. However, less clear is Henday's

account of the route he travelled during his year inland. The details left by Henday regarding the places he visited are, at best, ambiguous and the few named localities he records do not easily correspond with those noted by other HBC employees who later travelled in many of the same areas. In fact, after the initial stage of his journey, it is not possible to arrive at any precise conclusions about Henday's exact whereabouts from a reading of his journal. This ambiguity has led Belyea (2000) to undertake a critical re-examination of the four existing texts of the Henday journal. Belyea's critique casts some doubt on the standard interpretation of Henday's route of travel and focuses on the records Henday kept of the distances his party travelled each day - distances that Belyea believes were overestimated. Therefore, whether Henday reached central Alberta or not is unclear, although it is almost certain that - at the least - he came as far west as west central Saskatchewan or adjacent eastern Alberta.

On July 27, 1754, thirty-two days out from York Factory, Henday's party abandoned their canoes on the Carrot River near the modern Red Earth Reserve (Russell 1991:94-95) and headed inland. On August 13 they reached the plains of central Saskatchewan as Henday's journal entry for that day makes clear. He notes, "we are now come to Muscuty plains" (Belyea 2000:69). Henday's "Muscuty" is simply a rendering of the Cree word *maskotêw* 'prairie or plain' (Wolvengrey 2001:90). This seems to have been the most common term used in the eighteenth century to refer to the parklands and grasslands of central Saskatchewan. Present day Muskoday reserve near Prince Albert bears this name and, as noted, the area was a common departure point for groups of Cree and Nakota traders returning upriver from the Bay whose destination was

the grasslands of west central Saskatchewan and the lands beyond. However, Henday's party most likely passed to the south of the Muskoday area.

Henday's next reference to a geographic feature named in Cree comes on August 20, when he states, "we Came to a Large River, Called Wapesu Copeto Seepie" (Belyea 2000:72). Burpee, who edited the 1907 publication of Henday's journal, considers this to be the North Saskatchewan River (Belyea 2000:334). Four days later, on August 24, Henday's company was again near a large river, where he states, "Came to ye side of a Large River, Sackown by name" (Belyea 2000:75). The historian Arthur Morton believed this to have been the Elbow of the North Saskatchewan (Belyea 2000:259) while Burpee (Belyea 2000:334) identifies this river as the South Saskatchewan. There is no clear meaning for the name Henday applies to this river that in another version of the journal is called the "Sechonby" River. Morton (Belyea 2000:259) considers this name to be a rendering of the Ojibway word "seequong" or spring, that in Cree, a closely related Algonquian language, is *sikwan*- (Wolvengrey 2001:545).

Henday's company then travelled to the northwest, following, it seems, the North Saskatchewan River. On September 5 and 6 they met with groups of "Mirthco" or "Mekesue" Indians (Belyea 2000:81-82). These "Eagle" or "Bloody" Indians (the two names for this group may have resulted from confusion between "TH" and "Y" dialects of Cree [see Russell 1991:184]) were a Nakota people thought to have lived in the Eagle Hills area (Russell 1991:183) where Henday is believed to have been. From the Eagle Hills the group moved west, arriving on September 16 at what Henday identified as a large creek or small river that in the manuscript texts is referred to variously as

“Chacutena Subee”, “Cunekan Creek”, or “Chacutenow River” (Belyea 2000:88-90). Henday’s “Chacutenow River” was located eight days travel west of the Eagle Hills, a journey that would have brought the group to the present day Alberta-Saskatchewan border, or perhaps somewhat farther west into Alberta. This has led Burpee to suggest that Henday was at Sounding Creek in eastern Alberta while Morton considers Henday to have reached the Battle River north of Manitou Lake, given that Henday’s entry for the previous day mentions passing by a large lake (Belyea 2000:267). However, while the geographic location of this lake fits the details of Henday’s journal quite well it is worth noting that Manitou Lake is named in the accounts of both William Pink and Matthew Cocking who later travelled to this region which makes Henday’s failure to note the feature by name difficult to understand. Henday’s term “Chacutenow” appears to be a rendering of the Cree word *cahkatinaŋ* “steep pointed hill” (Wolvengrey 2001:28). Interestingly, prominent hills figured highly in the cultural landscape of the Plains Cree who occupied the area in the nineteenth century (see Chapter Five). In fact, these localities are the most characteristic feature of this cultural landscape. All of these localities share similar traits: they are elevated prominences of land that offer good views of the surrounding countryside for many miles. Moreover, the term *cahkatinaŋ* was not infrequently applied to these hills. For instance, in the study region there is *misisâkwacâhkatinaŋhk* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘at horsefly hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:28,105) and *mistikôsiw câhkatinaŋw* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘frenchman hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:28,107). Therefore, Henday’s observation suggests that hills of this nature may also have been

important to the eighteenth century Cree of the region.

The remainder of Henday's journal provides little more information that is relevant to the study area as the group travelled farther west leaving the region. In the final analysis few conclusions can be drawn from Henday's account regarding the eighteenth century cultural landscape of the study area as the contents of the journal are simply too ambiguous and over-generalized. However, the accounts of other HBC inland travellers who journeyed to the region in the two decades after Henday are somewhat more informative and in the journals kept by these men there appear for the first time references to clearly identifiable geographic landforms in the study area.

### *3.2.3 Joseph Smith: 1763-64 and William Pink: 1766-67, 1767-68, 1768-69*

In 1763-64 Joseph Smith was taken inland to the Eagle Hills, or somewhere east or south of this area (Russell 1991:98). However, Smith was not a skilled writer and his journal is not easily understandable. Consequently, his exact route cannot be known and there is almost no useable information that can be drawn from his observations of the area.

William Pink made four successive trips to the study area between the years 1766 and 1770, and his journal for each of these expeditions is available. Pink, like Smith, was barely literate, and his journals make difficult reading. Nevertheless, the quality of his note taking does improve somewhat over the course of his travels and his last journal, describing a trip to the plains southwest of Manitou Lake in 1769-70, is perhaps the most detailed from the era. Pink's first trip inland in 1766-67 presumably brought him to the

grasslands of west central Saskatchewan (Russell 1991:99); however, the record Pink kept of this journey is of very poor quality. In fact, the only locality Pink named comes from his entry of April 3, 1767 which states:

The Indians are now all Gone for Barch Rine for Bilding of thare Canews thare is none within Three or Four Days Journey of this River and that is a Way to the Southwarde whare thare is a Larg Hammock or Ridge of Burch Wood Called By those people wos qui wae okie chie (HBCA B.239/a/56).

Pink was at a spring canoe building site north of the Birch Hills in central Saskatchewan as his term “wos qui wae okie chie” or *waskway wacy* ‘birch hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:228,230) indicates.

Pink’s next two trips inland were made to eastern Alberta and on each of these journeys his route brought him through the northern-most portion of the study area. There is a noticeable improvement in the quality of the journals Pink made on these trips and geographic features are often named. Pink set out from York Factory for his second trip on June 3, 1767 little more than a week after he had returned from his travels of the previous year. Russell (1991:100) provides a summary of the route followed by Pink’s group:

In 1767-68, he abandoned his canoes at Fort St. Louis and with 15 tents he travelled along the north shore of the North Saskatchewan to either the Shell or Sturgeon rivers which had been hunted out of beaver. Smaller camps joined the group and when they moved west past Jackfish River towards Turtle Lake, the group contained 36 tents. Pink’s group continued to move northwest to tributaries of the Beaver River while smaller groups moved south towards the North Saskatchewan River. They finally reached the Moose Lake area, some 80 km west of the Saskatchewan border....

Here, where beaver were plentiful, they laid up a cache of tobacco and ammunition for the spring. Pink and his group then moved south, on



29 December, across the North Saskatchewan to trap wolves and foxes and hunt bison. By the end of February, they had moved back across the river to Moose Hill, near the future site of Fort George, three days south of their autumn cache, and began to move downriver to the canoe-building site which they reached on 18 April 1768.

On September 8, Pink recorded his first named locality since leaving the Saskatchewan River at Fort St. Louis. His journal entry for the day states:

this Day we pitched by the Side of a Large Leake Called  
Mis,ca,nock,Cock,kagan that Ronés a way to the South warde in to Smal  
River that Ronés in to the Maine River (HBCA B.239/a/58)

Pink is at Turtle Lake located 100 km northwest of present day Battleford, Saskatchewan. His term “Mis,ca,nock,Cock,kagan” represents the Cree words *miskinâhkw*- ‘turtle’ and *sâkahikan* ‘lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:584,419). Unlike other names for geographic features used by the Cree of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this one appears somewhat atypical. As discussed in Chapter One, Cree place names are based on very practical considerations. Geographic features are named descriptively for traits that they possess and animal names are common elements in these descriptions. Turtle Lake seems to conform quite well to this system: it is a geographic feature named for an animal; however, while other named geographic features incorporate animals that are local to the region, turtles are not found in the study area. The two species of turtles that are native to Saskatchewan, the Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) and Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), are found only in the extreme southeastern corner of the province. Clearly, in this instance, the relationship between geographic feature (the lake) and its significance within the cultural landscape system goes beyond an association to a recognizable element of the physical landscape.

Among the Saulteaux of southern Manitoba and other eastern boreal forest peoples the turtle is an important figure in religion and ceremony (Hallowell 1971:46). It may be that the turtle also played an important role in the religious practices of the eighteenth century Crees of the region and that the lake in some way was connected to these beliefs. This may also indicate that the spiritual outlook of these people (Keskatchewan or Pegogamaw Cree) was similar to that of Algonquian peoples to the east. However, with such limited information available it is difficult to do more than make surmises in this regard.

On October 19, Pink's group reached the "a Misk o Cepee" (HBCA B.239/a/58) or *amisko-sîpiy* 'beaver river' (Wolvengrey 2001:5) which he mentions several times over the next month as his group followed the river west. He mentions a "Mous,wa,Che Ce pee" (HBCA B.239/a/58) likely *môswaciy sîpiy* 'moose hill river' (Wolvengrey 2001:117,208,228) on the 27th of October which could be the small creek that runs north out of Moose Lake into the Beaver River. Finally, after spending the winter on the grasslands of east central Alberta Pink's group returned to the northeast arriving at "Mous,wa,Chee" or *môswa waciy* 'moose hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:117,228). On February 26, 1768 he records:

we are Now Tenting by a very Noated plas of this Contrey it is called Mous,wa,Chee, it is a high Hill Coavred with woods Neare the Maine River Noated for Mous Deare and Mortnes (HBCA B.239/a/58)

Moose Hill is located near present day Elk Point in eastern Alberta (Russell 1991:100).

That Pink refers to it as a "noted place" is a clear indication that the locality was regarded with special significance by the Crees who occupied the area. Although Pink's group

moved to an ingathering site farther down the North Saskatchewan to build their canoes, other groups apparently were gathering at Moose Hill. On April 11 word reached Pink that another HBC winterer "Edward Ludit" was camped near the location with a group of Nakota (HBCA B.239/a/58) who were building canoes there. This would suggest that Moose Hill was a Cree ingathering centre similar to other such localities found downstream. It would also appear that the locality was used by both Cree and Nakota middlemen as a canoe building site.

This finishes the inventory of named localities found in Pink's 1767-68 journal. The trip ends with Pink arriving at York Factory at the end of June. True to form, he spends a few days at the post and then immediately returns inland, setting out on July 4, 1768. Travelling with, it seems, the group of Crees that he accompanied the previous year, Pink again is taken to the same general area of eastern Alberta. As Russell (1991:101) states:

Again the canoes were abandoned on the north shore of the Saskatchewan at Fort St. Louis and the group moved to the Prince Albert area then continued west keeping south of their trail of the year before. By the end of September, they were crossing Red Deer (Monnery) River, Frog Lake River, and Moosehills Creek....

Pink and six tents left the others and crossed the North Saskatchewan to the southwest in open but quite hilly country. Here, towards the end of October, the Indians broke up into groups of two or three tents and began to hunt wolves. They continued to move southwest....

By December the snow was too deep to catch wolves and they began to move north to a hill of birch to make sleds and snowshoes, having sent three women to pick up a cache made on 19 November. Now began the general movement eastward, parallel to, but south of, the North Saskatchewan. In mid-February they were trapping martens in wooded country. After continuing their movement east, they recrossed the North

Saskatchewan. Several days later they were at the spot selected for building their canoes near the mouth of Moosehills Creek with a source of birch several days north.

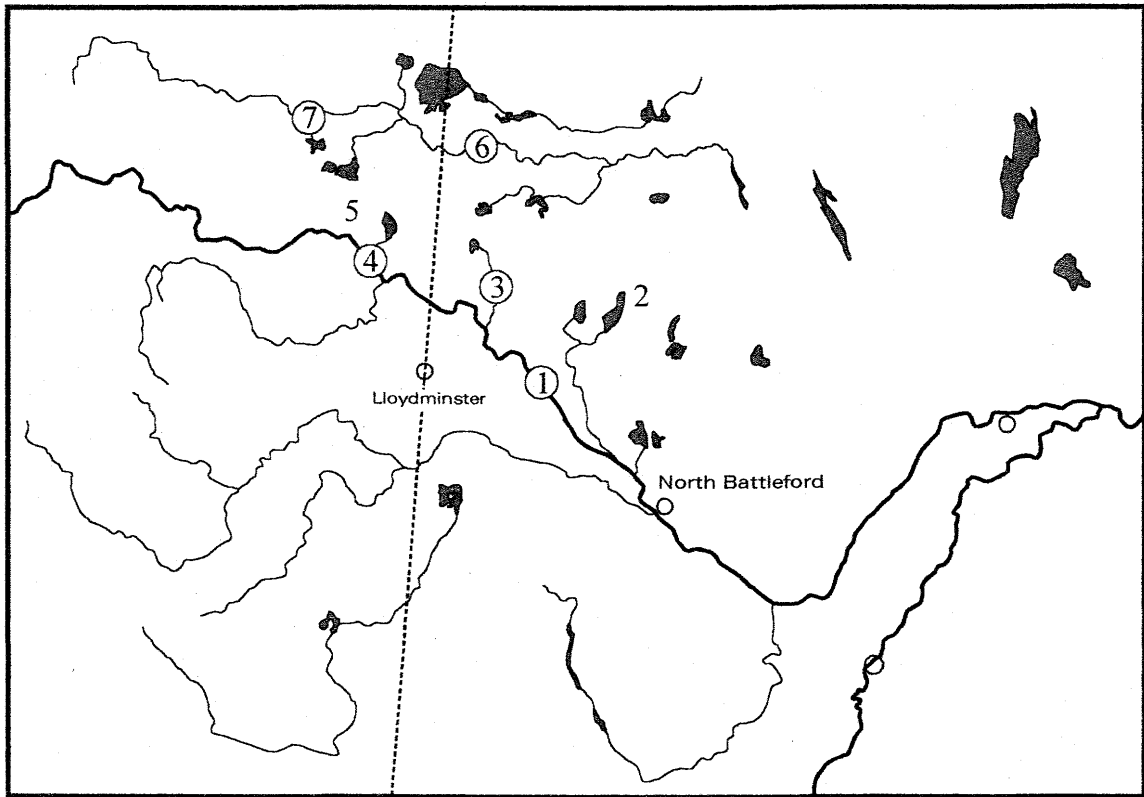
On the 1768-69 journey Pink's group followed the North Saskatchewan westward, crossing the small creeks that run into the river from the north. Three of these creeks are named by Pink, the first appearing in his journal entry for September 17, where he notes, "Crossed the River Called Waw, wase, kish, Shew, waw, Chee, o, Cepee Roning in to the maine one" (HBCA B.239/a/61). Russell (1991:101) identifies this as the Monnery River that joins the North Saskatchewan west of the present day town of Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan. The term that Pink provides for this feature is a close rendering of the Cree *wâwâskêsiw-waciy-o-sîpiy* 'elk hill river' (Wolvengrey 2001:208,228,238). This river receives its name from the nearby Elk Hills or *wâwâskêsiw waciy* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) 'elk hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:228,238).

Later in September his group crossed another small river farther west, and Pink records, "This Day we Crossed a Small River O theake eu Sock ha Can Ceepe" (HBCA B.239/a/61 30 September 1768). This is likely the small creek that drains into the North Saskatchewan River from Frog Lake. The term Pink records for this feature is in the "TH" or Woods Cree dialect. In the "Y" or Plains Cree dialect this term would be represented by the word *ayîk* 'frog' (Wolvengrey 2001:18). Therefore Pink's "O theake eu Sock ha Can Ceepe" would be rendered as *ayîki-sâkahikan sîpiy* in the Plains Cree dialect, with the meaning 'frog lake river' (Wolvengrey 2001:18,198,208).

The last recognizable geographic feature that Pink describes in the area, apart

from the North Saskatchewan River, comes in his entry for October 1, when he states, "Crossed a Small river Called Mouswa Chee o Ceepe" (HBCA B.239/a/61). As previously noted, Pink recorded a Moose Hill River in his 1767-68 journal. However, that river flowed into the Beaver River, probably from Moose Lake, while the river described above was only one day's journey beyond Frog Lake. Evidently, Pink's references do not represent the same feature. As Pink's group would now be close to Moose Hill, also visited the previous year, this must be a small creek running south from the hill into the North Saskatchewan River.

Pink's journals describing two successive trips to eastern Alberta have no parallels in the HBC literature. What is notable is that on each journey he travels to the same area with, apparently, the same group of Crees. Pink's accounts, therefore, provide a unique look at the named landscape of one group of Crees living in the study area in the eighteenth century. The named geographic features that Pink records on both trips, upon leaving the Saskatchewan River at Fort St. Louis, are represented in Figure 3.1. Looking at the distribution of these localities, one immediately sees that they are all located in the same area of western Saskatchewan and eastern Alberta. That the Crees Pink travelled with provided him with the names of geographic features from a specific area says something important about the relationship between these individuals and the region described. Obviously, this region was especially significant to these Crees. Furthermore, they do not appear to have regarded the lands to the east or west of this area with the same significance. Travelling inland from the Prince Albert area in 1767 Pink does not record a named locality until his group reaches Turtle Lake in western Saskatchewan.



**Figure 3.1:** Map showing the locations of identifiable named localities recorded by William Pink in 1767-68 and 1768-69. 1: North Saskatchewan River, 2: Turtle Lake, 3: Elk Hill River, 4: Frog Lake River, 5: Moose Hill and Moose Hill River, 6: Beaver River, 7: Moose Hill River.

Moreover, on his journey the following year, the first named locality that he mentions is the Elk Hill River located only 50 km to the west of Turtle Lake. It is noteworthy that on each of his travels to this region of western Saskatchewan from the Prince Albert area, a distance of about 200 km, Pink notes crossing many small rivers as his group moves west; nonetheless, he does not name any of them. However, once his group arrives in the Turtle Lake area named geographic features begin appearing in his journals as the group proceeds west to the country surrounding the Moose Hill locality in eastern Alberta. On

the 1767-68 trip Pink's company passed through the northern portion of this area along the Beaver River which they followed west for some distance before the company eventually split up. Pink's group then travelled to the south and east, crossed the North Saskatchewan River, and moved into open country beyond where they remained for the winter. As Pink points out, this detour to the northwest was prompted by a desire on the part of the Cree to undertake a raid against the Dene and that normally they did not travel so far inland (HBCA B.239/a/58 13 November 1767). In 1768-69 upon arriving in the Moose Hill area Pink's group at once moves to the southwest and crosses the North Saskatchewan River. Again they spend the winter in the open country to the southwest. However, on these journeys west and southwest of the Moose Hill area Pink fails to make mention of any locality by name.

There can be little doubt that the named localities found in the two Pink journals define a specific area, from Turtle Lake in the east to Moose Hill in the west, that was a focus for the activities of the Crees with whom he travelled. Moreover, as these were likely Keskatchewan Cree, it seems that this area was associated with one group or band of these people. While this was not the entire territory of these Crees - they were regularly wintering in the lands to the southwest - it would appear to have represented their core lands. Here were located places that were of preeminent importance to this group both economically and spiritually. Furthermore, it is clear that many, if not all, of the named geographic features recorded by Pink remained part of the cultural landscape of local Crees into the nineteenth century and that the region, as well, continued to be a focus for the Plains Cree who occupied the region during this time. However, this will be

discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

#### *3.2.4 William Pink: 1769-70 and Matthew Cocking: 1772-73*

In June of 1769, after a brief stay at York Factory, Pink departed on his final trip to the interior. He had now spent the better part of three years living inland among the Cree. On this trip Pink travelled to west central Saskatchewan and passed the winter of 1769-70 with a group of Blackfoot on the plains southwest of Manitou Lake. The account Pink left of this journey is perhaps the most useful, and certainly the most detailed, of his journals. Pink's journal includes the following observations: he comments on the daily operation of a Blackfoot bison pound; he provides a description of the Blackfoot method of snaring wolves; and finally, he records the group composition at a spring ingathering located near the mouth of the Battle River. In particular, Pink's observations of the Blackfoot reveal a great deal about the nature of the involvement of plains bison hunters in the fur trade economy and the relationship of these groups with the Cree. More to the point, however, the journal offers the first references to known geographic features in this region.

In 1769-70 Pink followed the well-established route to the Upper Saskatchewan River. Here, on July 31 at the ruins of Fort St. Louis the group met their waiting families and proceeded on foot towards the southwest, arriving at the Minichinas Hills northeast of Saskatoon on August 21 (Russell 1991:102). From here Pink's group moved west, crossed the South Saskatchewan River on rafts, and continued on into the open country between present day Rosthern and Hague (Russell 1991:102). By September 24 they



were near the Eagle Hills west of Battleford. Pink's group then travelled farther west to Manitou Lake, encountering small camps of Nakota as they went. Finding few buffalo in the area, and in desperate need of provisions, they moved to the south end of the lake where the buffalo were reported to be plentiful. At this point the party separated and began trapping foxes and wolves. Pink remained in the area throughout November and December, then on January 1, 1770 his party met a company of Blackfoot intent on going to a pound six days travel away. Pink's group joined the Blackfoot and travelled with them to the pound. At this place they stayed pounding buffalo and trapping for the rest of the winter. On February 11 Pink and his Cree companions began the journey back to the ingathering centres on the North Saskatchewan River. The Battle River was crossed on February 19 and the ingathering site reached on March 26. Though Pink provides no details as to the exact location of this site, Meyer and Russell (2000:12) consider it to have been at, or near, the mouth of the Battle River. Over the next couple of weeks Pink made detailed observations on the number of groups arriving at the site, eventually recording the presence of 114 tents.

The geographic features named by Pink during his 1769-70 trip are restricted to a relatively small area of western Saskatchewan. The first of these appears in his journal entry for September 24, where he states:

This Day we put up By the Side of a Hill Called Micke Cue wachee heare  
the Contrey is Covered with wood Except for out to the South warde a  
Noated Plase for Red Deare and Mouse and some Bofflow (HBCA  
B.239/a/63)

Pink's "Micke Cue wachee" is clearly a rendering of the Cree words *mikisiw waciy* 'eagle hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:103,228). The Eagle Hills located west of present day Battleford

are the dominant geographic feature of this region and Pink's reference is the first time that they are mentioned in the historic literature.

Pink's next mention of a named geographic feature comes in his entry for October 22 in which he remarks, "put up by a Large Leake Called Mennato Cock hagan" (HBCA B.239/a/63). This is *manitow sâkahikan* 'manitou lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:87,198) which is located near the Alberta border 90 km west of present day North Battleford. Here too, Pink's journal marks the first occurrence of this important locality in the historic literature.

On February 19 Pink's journal entry notes that, "this Day we Crossed a River Called a Notin o to Cepee Sish" (HBCA B.239/a/63). This is clearly a reference to the Battle River called in Cree *nôtinito-sîpiy* 'the river where they fight one another' (Wolvengrey 2001:146,208) although here Pink uses the diminutive form *sîpîsis* 'creek' (Wolvengrey 2001:208) to refer to this waterway which indicates that he is likely crossing a tributary of this river. During the nineteenth century, lands along the Battle River west of the Eagle Hills saw frequent fighting and raiding between the Cree and members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The name has been attributed to this conflict. However, in 1770, when Pink made his trip to the area, the Blackfoot and the Cree were still allies and hostilities had not yet broken out between them. Therefore, it seems that the area was the scene of even earlier conflicts. In the eighteenth century the Snake often raided as far north as the Eagle Hills (Russell 1991:195). These "Snake Indians" were a southern group whose identity is not clear. However, at this time they were the enemy of both the Cree and the Blackfoot. It is not known if the name Pink records for the river

relates to this earlier conflict; however, it is likely that the region had long been the boundary that separated the Cree living in the parklands from the plains bison hunters to the south, many of whom were their enemies.

Although Pink does not provide a name for the spring ingathering site he visited at the mouth of the Battle River in 1770, there can be little doubt, given the large number of individuals who attended the event over a period of several weeks, that this locality was a major element of the cultural landscape of the local Crees. As Russell (1991:104) comments:

The canoe-building sites clearly served as spring aggregation camps even for Indians not going to trade. By the time Pink reached their site, his group consisted of about 70 tents and over the next week he tells of others joining them: the leader Wapinesiw with 20 tents who had been on a raid to the south against the Snakes; the Assiniboine leader Canepickopoet with a HBC man and 18 tents; and the Cree leader Wenastacy with six tents. This camp of some 114 tents would represent between 900 and 1100 people.

Three years after Pink's journey to west central Saskatchewan another HBC employee, Matthew Cocking, travelled to the area. Dissatisfied with the largely incoherent and unintelligible accounts of earlier inland travellers, Company officials at York Factory then chose Cocking, who was both literate and a skilled observer, to undertake a journey inland in the hope of obtaining a clearer report on the trade situation in the interior (Meyer and Russell 2000:12). Cocking left York Factory on June 27, 1772. Meyer and Russell (2000:12-13) have provided a summary of the route he followed during his year inland:

In early August, 1772 Cocking's party arrived at abandoned Ft. des Prairies [Ft. St. Louis], in the eastern edge of Pegogamaw home range, and they immediately headed overland to the southwest. This group of

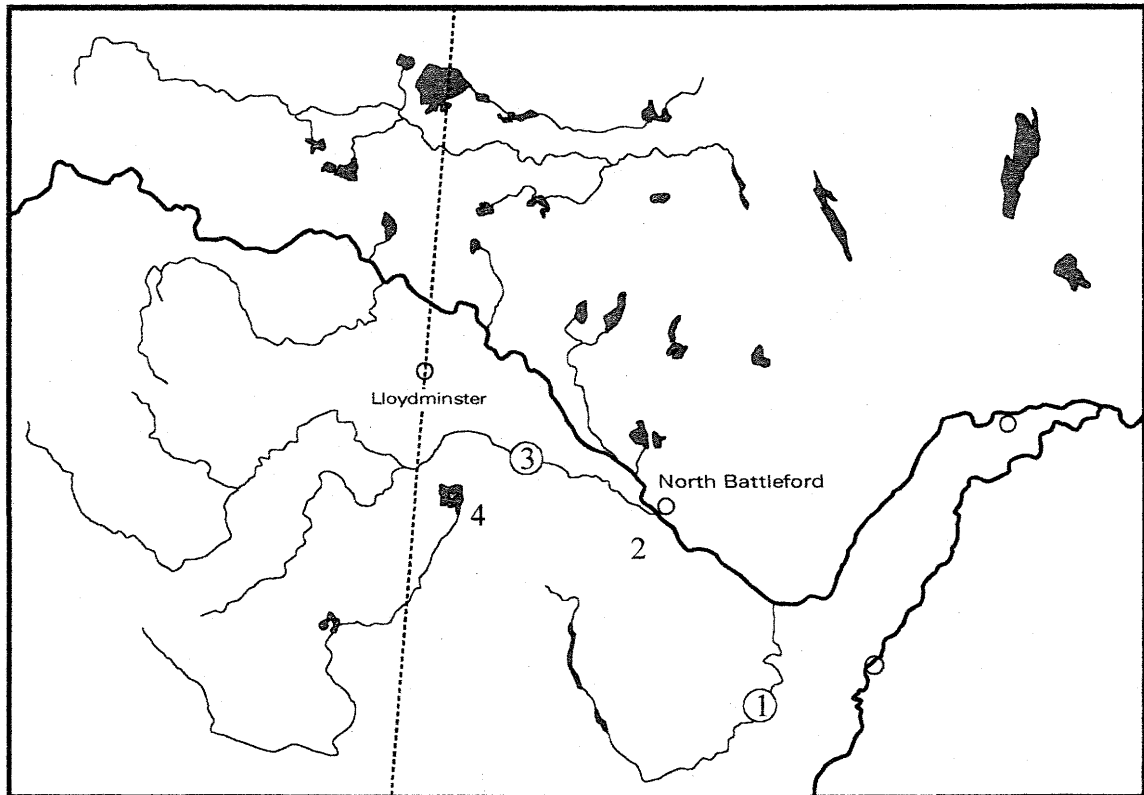
seven tents, about 50 people, appears to have followed an established travel route which led through the Birch Hills area and across the South Saskatchewan River to the mouth of Eagle Creek on the North Saskatchewan River. Here they met a group of 50 tents and would have formed a unit of at least 400 persons. This was in early September and this group appears to have constituted a fall ingathering. This large group then moved west into the Eagle Hills, but did not remain together and, by mid October, Cocking's camp unit consisted of only ten tents. By this time they had moved south to the Bear Hills, well into the open grasslands. This, apparently, was where they intended to spend the winter, but with the failure of their bison pound, in mid December they began a move to the north. They crossed the North Saskatchewan River and through the remainder of the winter worked their way northeast along the fringe of the Thickwood Hills (Russell 1991:107). Eventually they crossed the North Saskatchewan River again and travelled northeast to a bison pound in the vicinity of Red Deer Hill, where they arrived at the end of March. Shortly after they moved a few kilometres to an ingathering location on the South Saskatchewan River, evidently in the Muskoday Reserve area, or somewhat to the south.

Cocking's journey from the rendezvous on the Saskatchewan River to the Eagle Hills covered the same ground that Pink had travelled on his 1769-70 trip (Russell 1991:102). Therefore, the accounts of the two men should agree on the details of the named landscape they encountered in this region. In fact, this is the case. Cocking notes both the Eagle Hills and Manitou Lake, localities also mentioned by Pink. He does not record the Battle River as his group did not travel west of the Eagle Hills and his journal contains several references to one geographic feature not found in Pink's account. This is *mikisiw sîpîsis* 'eagle creek' (Wolvengrey 2001:103,208) first mentioned in his journal entry for September 4, 1772 where he states, "put up at a shallow Creek named Mikisew or little Eagle Creek: There we met with many Natives" (Cocking 1908:105). As Meyer and Russell noted, this was the location of a fall ingathering event.

It is clear that the named localities recorded by Pink and Cocking describe a

similar area of west central Saskatchewan (Figure 3.2). From the Eagle Hills this area extended westward almost to the present day Alberta-Saskatchewan border and possibly southeastward to Eagle Creek. Evidently, the localities mentioned by the two men in their journals were the most notable features of this landscape. Furthermore, it appears that this area represented the core lands of a local Cree group whose ingathering centre was located at the mouth of the Battle River. Meyer and Russell (2000:16) identify this group as a western sub-band of the Pegogamaw. They also note that other ingathering centres on the North Saskatchewan River, such as the one at the mouth of Eagle Creek visited by Cocking in 1772, were probably used by different Pegogamaw subgroups. Therefore, the area around Eagle Creek may well have been occupied by a group of Crees who were separate from those living in the Eagle Hills and the lands to the west.

The Crees that Pink and Cocking travelled with to the Eagle Hills area, like those earlier described by Pink in eastern Alberta, were wintering on the grasslands to the south and southwest of their core lands in the parklands. While wintering on the plains Pink and Cocking do not mention a single named geographic feature and it is only upon their return to the parklands in the spring that named localities again appear in their journals (Pink's journals from eastern Alberta, it will be recalled, reflected a similar occurrence). Therefore, the area represented by the named localities in Pink and Cocking's journals would not have included the entire territory of these Crees; however, clearly this area was regarded with especial emphasis and was a focal point for the activities of this group. Finally, as Chapter Five discusses, this area continued to be a focus for local Crees in the nineteenth century.



**Figure 3.2:** Map showing the locations of identifiable named localities recorded by William Pink in 1769-70 and Matthew Cocking in 1772-73. 1: Eagle Creek, 2: Eagle Hills, 3: Battle River, 4: Manitou Lake.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Accounts describing seven trips made to west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta by HBC traders in the mid 1700s are available for study. Several conclusions can be drawn from this material regarding the spatial organization of the Crees who occupied this region in the eighteenth century. To begin with, the Crees of the region were orientated towards two areas, one centred on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border near the present day Onion Lake Reserves and the other centred on the Eagle Hills

west of present day Battleford, Saskatchewan. Each area represented the core lands of a local Cree group. Secondly, the region's major rivers figured prominently in the cultural landscape of these Crees. All named localities recorded by HBC traders are located in close proximity to either the North Saskatchewan or Battle River. Lakes and prominent hills were the most characteristic features of this cultural landscape. Finally, although these Crees were wintering on the northern grasslands their core lands were to the north in the parklands and forest edge.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NINETEENTH CENTURY CREE GROUPS OF WEST CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

#### 4.1 Introduction

By the early decades of the nineteenth century the social composition of west central Saskatchewan had changed significantly. The named Cree groups known to the traders in the mid 1700s were gone and in their place a new people, the Plains Cree, had emerged. By the 1840s, therefore, the Plains Cree had become the dominant group occupying the parklands and northern grasslands of present day Saskatchewan replacing, in these areas, the Nakota who had been decimated by the 1838 smallpox epidemic (see Ray 1974:182-184). In addition, a small number of Saulteaux or Plains Ojibwa moved into the region in the late 1700s and intermarried with local Crees. The Cree societies that took form in central Saskatchewan after 1782 were influenced, to a degree, by the culture of these newcomers especially in the area of religious practice (Meyer and Russell 2002:17).

While it is certain that the predecessors of the Plains Cree were, in large part, those groups such as the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree who had occupied the parklands in the eighteenth century, the social transformations that led to the development of the Plains Cree are not well understood. Several authors (Mandelbaum 1979; Milloy 1988; Ray 1974) have identified economic factors as the root cause of this



cultural change. Others (Meyer and Russell 2002) have drawn attention to the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 and the profound impact that this event had on the Cree societies of central Saskatchewan. At any rate, during the latter decades of the eighteenth century the Crees of central Saskatchewan increasingly became associated with a plains lifestyle characterized by cultural traits that included horse ownership, the use of the tipi and travois, and religious ceremonies such as the Sun Dance.

#### **4.2 The 1781-82 Smallpox Epidemic**

During the winter of 1781-82 a major epidemic of smallpox arrived in central Saskatchewan. The magnitude of this epidemic in terms of its impact on aboriginal societies in the region cannot be overstated:

This epidemic was disastrous and, typically, whole wintering groups succumbed to the disease. While actual mortality rates cannot be known, the fur traders who witnessed this epidemic variously estimated that up to 98% of the population had been lost (Meyer and Russell 2000:1).

Mitchell Oman, a Hudson's Bay Company trader, observed the epidemic firsthand while in the Eagle Hills and his account was later recorded by David Thompson:

we proceeded about 150 miles up the River to the Eagle Hills, where we saw the first camp and some of the people sitting on the beach to cool themselves, when we came to them, to our surprise they had marks of the small pox, were weak and just recovering...none of us had the least idea of the desolation this dreadful disease had done, until we went up the bank to the camp and looked into the tents, in many of which they were all dead....Those that remained had pitched their tents about 200 yards from them and were too weak to move away entirely, which they soon intended to do; they were in such a state of despair and despondence that they could hardly converse with us, a few of them had gained strength to hunt which kept them alive. From what we could learn, three fifths had died under this disease (Glover 1962:235-236).

The severity of this epidemic is clearly seen in Oman's description. Fenn (2000:273) considers that between 50 and 75 % of the aboriginal population of central Saskatchewan perished from the disease. Furthermore, the disease took a greater toll on certain demographic groups. In the months following the epidemic, traders at Cumberland House and Hudson House (the two HBC posts then in operation in central Saskatchewan) noted that those who had recovered were mostly women and children while few adult males had survived (Meyer and Russell 2000:10-11). Obviously, such a catastrophic loss of life would have a dramatic and far reaching impact on existing social systems.

Meyer and Russell (2000) have examined the effects of the 1781-82 epidemic on the Crees living in the Saskatchewan River valley of central Saskatchewan. As they note:

Following the 1781-82 epidemic, the traders ceased to refer to named groups such as the Basquia, Pegogamaw and Cowinitou Indians. Almost certainly, this was because these sociopolitical entities no longer existed. Clearly, the Crees of central Saskatchewan were now forced to begin a slow process of rebuilding functioning social and biological units (Meyer and Russell 2000:11).

While many individual members of these groups undoubtedly had survived the epidemic it appears that their numbers were not sufficiently large enough to maintain the former social units. The depopulation of the Saskatchewan River valley had other consequences. In the aftermath of the epidemic a great many Swampy Crees from the east and Saulteaux from the southeast moved into the region (Ray 1974:101-102). In the lower Saskatchewan River valley these immigrants would form the majority of the population. To the west, in the area of the Forks and adjacent North and South Saskatchewan river valleys, eastern Crees and Ojibwas settled in fewer numbers. This indicates that here the

surviving population of local Crees (the Pegogamaw) was possibly somewhat greater than in the neighbouring lands downstream (Meyer and Russell 2000:12). Regardless, it is clear that after 1782 eastern peoples influenced considerably the culture of the entire region. As Meyer and Russell (2000:17) note, "While most of these people moved into the lower Saskatchewan River region, their cultural impact extended west through the Forks region." The Saulteaux seem to have penetrated farthest west and by the middle years of the nineteenth century small numbers of Saulteaux were living as far west as central Alberta.

Almost no information is available for the period following the epidemic in west central Saskatchewan. Oman's description of the stricken camp he visited in the Eagle Hills strongly suggests that the aboriginal population of the region was impacted by the epidemic to a degree comparable with that noted in central Saskatchewan. Moreover, the region's social make-up appears to have been similarly affected. As in the Saskatchewan River valley, regional pre-epidemic sociopolitical units, such as the Pegogamaw and Keskatchewan Cree, do not remain after 1782. Furthermore, it is clear that immigrants from the east - mainly Saulteaux - arrived in the region in the decades following the epidemic. In the nineteenth century several Saulteaux or mixed Saulteaux-Cree bands occupied the region. During this period Saulteaux peoples lived primarily at three locations: Jackfish Lake, Witchehan Lake and Manitou Lake. The Saulteaux appear to have immigrated to west central Saskatchewan in fewer numbers than in areas to the east; nevertheless, the impact of Saulteaux culture in the region was appreciable. A Cree burial from eastern Alberta, thought to date to the early 1800s, illustrates this point. The

burial contained an individual interred with articles that suggest he was a member of the Midewiwin society (Baldwin 1978:66-67). This religious institution was brought to the area by the Saulteaux who passed it on to the local Crees. The Cree regarded the Saulteaux as especially powerful healers and medicine men and in religious and spiritual matters their eminence was generally acknowledged (Mandelbaum 1979:164-165; Leo Paul, personal communication, May 2004). Given such sentiments, the impact of Saulteaux culture on that of the local Crees is easily understood.

### **4.3 The Plains Cree**

The four decades following the 1781-82 epidemic were a period of social revival for the Crees of central Saskatchewan and during this time new Cree societies developed in the region. This period, from 1782 to 1821, also saw the establishment of numerous inland trading posts by both the Hudson's Bay Company and the newly formed Northwest Company (Ray 1974:125-126). The construction of inland posts significantly altered the economic activities of the Crees living in central Saskatchewan:

many of the Western Cree bands had operated as middlemen in the fur trade prior to 1763 and were accustomed to acquiring most of their pelts through barter with other tribes. When the Montreal traders and the Hudson's Bay Company men moved into the interior beginning in 1763, these Indian middlemen were bypassed as the Europeans established direct contact with the trapping bands. To obtain the European goods which they had become dependent upon, the Cree were forced to take their own furs, or they had to find another commodity which could be exchanged at the posts....Not surprisingly, therefore, when the growing size of the fur trade network generated a large demand for provisions, many of the bands which formerly had exploited the bison resource of the parklands only on a seasonal basis moved into the latter region where they could serve as provisioners for the trading companies (Ray 1974:102).

The buffalo herds of the parklands and plains now became the primary source of food for the expanding network of inland posts (Ray 1974:126) and many Crees, Woodland Nakota, and a small number of Saulteaux became involved in the provisions trade at this time. As Albers (1996:97) notes:

In order to maintain economic viability in the region's changing markets, many of the groups located in parkland environments moved onto the prairies, where they adopted the use of horses and engaged in a competitive production of food provisions and hides for European markets.

In short order these groups acquired many of the cultural traits associated with northern plains peoples. Those Crees who pursued a plains lifestyle became known collectively as the Plains Cree. As discussed, the decimation of the Nakota by the 1838 smallpox epidemic was a key factor which led to the emergence of the Plains Cree as the dominant group in the region. In this regard Ray (1974:183-184) notes:

the movements of the Cree after 1821 closely paralleled those of the Assiniboine [Nakota] in much the same fashion as they had in earlier years. As the latter tribe abandoned most of the Saskatchewan region, the Cree replaced them as the principal inhabitants.

During this period the relationship between the Cree, Nakota and Saulteaux was marked by varying degrees of alliance, coresidence, intermarriage, and ethnic fusion or merger (Sharrock 1974; Albers 1996). Over time these relationships became increasingly complex. Furthermore, regional variations existed in these trends. In areas south and west of the Touchwood Hills, such as the Qu'Appelle region, a process of ethnic merger involving the Cree and Nakota existed (Albers 1996:99-103). Moreover, in the early part of the nineteenth century many Saulteaux moved to this area where they became "widely incorporated into the Cree-Assiniboin body politic" (Albers 1996:105). By the 1840s the

Saulteaux were the dominant group in the Qu'Appelle region.

In areas located west of the confluence of the Battle River a somewhat different relationship existed between the Cree and Nakota. Here, as Albers (1996:103) notes:

trade and military alliances connecting the Assiniboin and Cree reached back many generations. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, the merger pattern between these two populations was much more amorphous and loosely woven than in regions farther east. Intermarriage and coresidency were reported, but generally not in the same degree. Here a polyethnic alliance formation existed, but the social networks that supported it appear to have been less dense and by extension less compelling than those evolving in the eastern and central portions of the Assiniboin's and Cree's territorial range.

By the 1850s, however, coresidence, intermarriage, and cooperation between the Cree and Nakota of the region had become increasingly commonplace and some of the earlier distinctiveness of each group was lost (Albers 1996:113).

#### *4.3.1 Sociopolitical Organization*

Mandelbaum (1979:105) described the Plains Cree bands as "loose, shifting units usually named for the territory they occupied." Band membership among the Plains Cree was not rigidly fixed and individuals were, more or less, free to leave one band and join another. Ties of kinship usually provided the necessary connections that made band transfer possible (Mandelbaum 1979:105). This adaptive, flexible system of social organization appears to have operated to ease intergroup tensions and as a response to the dynamic social and political forces in which the Plains Cree were immersed in the nineteenth century (Milloy 1988:75). However, while no rigorous controls were placed on band membership, "every band had a stable nucleus composed of the close relatives of

the chief, who would not ordinarily leave his group” (Mandelbaum 1979:105).

Most Plains Cree bands had several chiefs, although one paramount leader was usually recognized. As Mandelbaum (1979:108) explains:

A band might have several chiefs, each of whom had his own following. One of them would be recognized as outranking the others because of seniority in age or, more important, because of his outstanding superiority.

Status was directly related to prestige and a man’s war record as well as liberality were important factors in acquiring the requisite prestige needed for the social advancement that might eventually lead to a chieftainship (Mandelbaum 1979:108).

As with other Northern Plains peoples, the horse and buffalo were the mainstays of the Plains Cree economy (see Mandelbaum 1979:51-66). The seasonal movements of the buffalo prescribed those of the Plains Cree themselves. In the summer months the bands sought the bison herds on the grasslands and then, in the fall, the Cree would return to their winter camps located in the northern edge of the grasslands and adjacent parklands (Mandelbaum 1979:52). The method used to hunt bison differed according to the season. In the fall and early winter the pound was the primary means by which bison were taken, while in the summer large communal hunts occurred and the animals were pursued on horseback (Mandelbaum 1979:55).

The horse provided mobility but was also a source of wealth (Mandelbaum 1979:62). Raiding was undertaken primarily to obtain horses and thereby acquire the wealth and prestige that owning several good horses guaranteed. By comparison, the Plains Cree possessed fewer horses than those groups located to the south and west of them such as the Blackfoot (Mandelbaum 1979:61-62). In large part, strained relations

with both the Gros Ventre and the Mandan-Hidatsa villagers kept the Cree from participating in southern horse-trading markets (Milloy 1988:51). However, other factors such as the severe winters characteristic of central and southern Saskatchewan may also have limited the number of animals among the Cree (Ray 1974:159).

#### 4.3.2 *The Plains Cree of West Central Saskatchewan*

At the time Treaty Number Six was signed in 1876 the Plains Cree of west central Saskatchewan formed a single band known as the River People (Mandelbaum 1979:10-11) or *sîpiywiyniwak* (Wolvengrey 2001:482). In general, these Crees occupied the lands between the Battle and North Saskatchewan rivers as far west as the present day Alberta-Saskatchewan border (Mandelbaum 1979:11). To the east of them lived the House People (Mandelbaum 1979:11) or *wâskahikaniwiyniwak* (Wolvengrey 2001:482) whose lands were located north and southwest of Fort Carlton. The western neighbours of the River People were the Beaver Hills People (Mandelbaum 1979:11) or *amiskowacîwiyniwak* (Wolvengrey 2001:590). This Plains Cree band occupied the present day Edmonton area of central Alberta and was also known as the Upstream People (Mandelbaum 1979:11) or *natimîwiyniwak* (Wolvengrey 2001:590). It is reasonable to assume that the Beaver Hills People Band is closely related to the eighteenth century Keskatchewan-Beaver Cree (see Russell 1991:150-151). However, there simply is not enough evidence to support or refute such a conclusion.

Today, the Crees of the River People Band occupy reserves located in the Eagle Hills west of Battleford, at Onion Lake and at Frog Lake (see Section 1.5). Two



additional reserves, those of Thunderchild and Moosomin, are located north of the Battlefords; however, originally these reserves were situated near the other Battleford area reserves (Sessional Papers 1911:118). At the time the reserves were settled in the late 1870s and early 1880s the band was composed of the followers of more than a dozen chiefs. The most prominent leaders during this period were *mistahi-maskwa* 'big bear' (Wolvengrey 2001:286) and *wihkasko-kisêyin* 'old-man-sweetgrass' (Wolvengrey 2001:557). While several of these chiefs took up residence in the Battleford area, the majority settled at Onion Lake and Frog Lake. Those chiefs to occupy reserves at Onion Lake and nearby Frog Lake included: Big Bear, Sweet Grass, Seekaskooch, Makao, Puskiakwenin, Unipouheos, and Keehewin - among others. The chiefs of the River People Band who settled at Battleford were Little Pine, Thunderchild, Young Sweetgrass, and several minor chiefs. The remaining Battleford area Crees seem to have had closer ties with the House People Band to the east and likely represent a western division of that people. These included the followers of Red Pheasant, Poundmaker and possibly Strike-him-on-the-back.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter the social transformations that led to the emergence of the Plains Cree in the nineteenth century have been examined. A critical event in this development was the 1781-82 smallpox epidemic which had a devastating effect on the Crees of central Saskatchewan. Following the epidemic, changing economic conditions seem to have caused a great many of the Crees who occupied this area to adopt a fully plains

lifestyle. Finally, the sociopolitical organization of the Plains Cree has been briefly outlined.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NINETEENTH CENTURY NAMED LANDSCAPE

#### 5.1 Introduction

Traditionally, the Plains Cree of west central Saskatchewan were deeply immersed in a cultural landscape in which named geographic localities figured prominently. As sociospatial entities these locations were meaningfully construed and encapsulated important cultural themes. It is clear that much social and religious practice was orientated toward these localities; however, this cultural landscape is an aspect of the traditional culture which is largely missing from studies of the Plains Cree. Therefore, by studying these places we come closer to understanding the contexts in which social and spiritual activities occurred and thereby gain a greater insight into the world view of the nineteenth century Plains Cree.

The eighteenth century named landscape of the study region's Crees is known, almost entirely, from the few observations left by Hudson's Bay Company employees who travelled to the area in the mid 1700s. On the other hand, considerably more information is available regarding the nineteenth century named landscape of these Crees and this information is of a more varied nature. In part, there exists a greater number of historic documents that relate to this period; although, on the Plains Cree reserves of the region the traditional culture remains a part of many people's everyday lives and this is

especially true for the older generation. Elders from these communities are able to provide a great deal of information about the traditional cultural landscape of their forbearers, including its most notable features. This ethnographic record is valuable as it represents an emic perspective from within the culture.

The main purpose of this chapter is to identify those localities in the study region that were incorporated into the cultural landscape of the nineteenth century Plains Cree and this has been accomplished through the use of both historic and ethnographic data. How information of this kind may contribute to an understanding of the region's prehistoric archaeological record is also discussed.

## **5.2 Nineteenth Century Historic Documents**

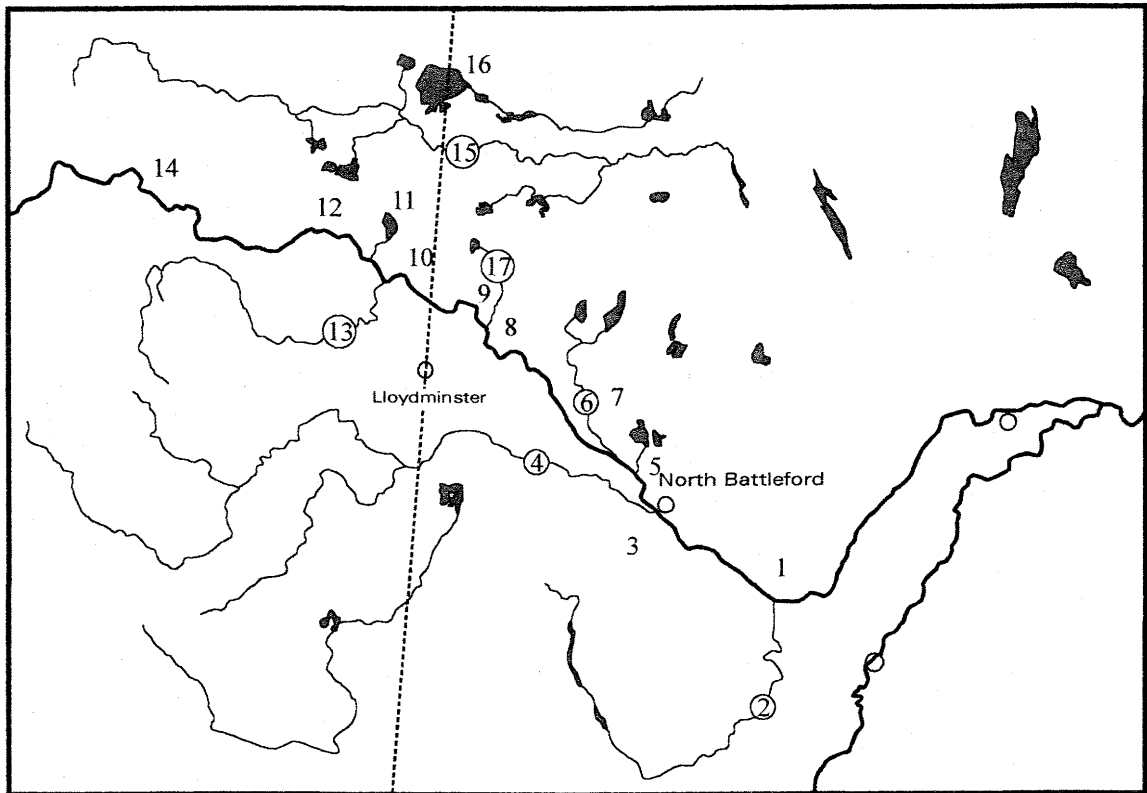
Though a great number of documents dating to the nineteenth century are available for study, much of this literature exists as unpublished archival material. Perhaps the most useful of these writings are the post records kept by the traders who operated in the region throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In such documents references to named localities are not uncommon. Even so, surprisingly little information about these locations - apart from their names - was ever recorded. One document of this type, the published transcripts of Alexander Henry the Younger's Fort Vermilion journal, will be examined here. Furthermore, a second published document, the record of the Palliser Expedition, will also be examined.

### *5.2.1 Alexander Henry the Younger: 1808-1810*

The portion of Henry's journal considered here covers a period from the autumn of 1808 to the spring of 1810. During this time Henry was in charge of the North West Company's operation at Fort Vermilion (the HBC post at the same location was known as Paint Creek House) opposite the mouth of Vermilion Creek in present day eastern Alberta (Losey 1999:416). This was the same area visited by William Pink on his two trips to the region some forty years earlier. Late in the summer of 1808 Henry completed the final stage of his journey to Fort Vermilion. On his way up the North Saskatchewan River, Henry recorded the names of prominent geographic features located in close proximity to the river. These, along with other identifiable named localities from the Fort Vermilion journal, are represented in Figure 5.1. At the Elbow of the North Saskatchewan River, Henry noted the presence of the "Red Berry Hills" some 3 leagues, or approximately 12 km, to the north of the river (Gough 1988-1992:358). Later, on September 8, while in the present day Battleford area, he mentions the "Sand Hills" together with the "Eagle Hills" and Eagle Creek which he calls the "Rivière de le Montagne" (Gough 1988-1992:359). Two days later his group passed the "Rivière aux Brochet" or Jackfish Creek and "Turtle Creek" (Gough 1988-1992:363). The Red Deer Hills, located south of the present day town of Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan, were noted by Henry on September 12, as his entry for that day states:

At sunset we camped at the beginning of the Red Deer Hills, which had been in sight since the Morning. Those hills stand upon the North side of the River, and appear of the same nature, as the Eagle Hills but not so extensive, but I believe more elevated (Gough 1988-1992:364).

Finally, on the last day of his journey, September 13, Henry recorded the following localities:



**Figure 5.1:** Map showing the locations of identifiable named localities from the Fort Vermilion journal. 1: Red Berry Hills, 2: Eagle Creek, 3: Eagle Hills, 4: Battle River, 5: Jackfish Creek, 6: Turtle Creek, 7: Horse Hill, 8: Red Deer Hills, 9: Frenchman Butte, 10: Two Hills, 11: Frog Lake, 12: Moose Hills, 13: Vermilion River, 14: Egg Lake, 15: Beaver River, 16: Cold Lake, 17: Red Deer River.

We soon after crossed the Red Deer River and directed our Course, within until we came to the Buttes des Saulteaux, where we fell upon the Indian Road which we followed. At 12 O'Clock we stopped at Plante's River to refresh our horses, and soon after proceeded on a well beaten Track, among small Plains and Hummocks of Poplar and Willow. At the Two Gross Buttes, we again made a halt for about an hour, on leaving them we soon came in sight of the River, and proceeding along the Banks. At Sunset arrived in sight of our Establishment of Fort Vermilion (Gough 1988-1992:365).

Henry's "Buttes des Saulteaux" is undoubtedly Frenchman Butte, called in Cree *mistikôsiw cahkatinaw* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002)

'frenchman hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:28,107). This prominent hill is located a few kilometres north of the North Saskatchewan River near the present day town of the same name and is the most identifiable landform in the region. Moreover, the Carlton Trail, Henry's "Indian Road", passes very close to this location. The "Plante's River" mentioned by Henry has not been identified; however, his "Two Gross Buttes" is likely the locality known as Two Hills. This landform is located north of the North Saskatchewan River west of the present day Onion Lake Reserve and, in Cree, is called *nîswayak ispatinak* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) 'two hills' (Wolvengrey 2001:40,144).

During his stay at Fort Vermilion, Henry kept detailed entries that recorded the daily activities at the post. These entries often contain references to Crees arriving from the surrounding area. For example, on December 7, 1809 he states, "Red Eagle and another Cree arrived with their Furs and paid their debts. They came from Egg Lake and bring a good hunt" (Gough 1988-1992:420). Two locations frequently mentioned in the Henry journal are Frog Lake and Egg Lake. These remained important centres for the Crees of the region throughout the nineteenth century and it is notable that at the time of the treaty signing in 1876 a Cree band was associated with each area. One of these groups, the River People Band, had reserves located at Frog Lake and nearby Onion Lake as well as at Battleford while the second group was settled at Egg Lake and Saddle Lake which are northeast of present day Edmonton. This latter group was a part of the *amiskowaciwiyniwak* or Beaver Hills Band of central Alberta.

The Fort Vermilion Crees appear to have maintained their bison pounds in the

vicinity of Horse Hill (Gough 1988-1992:426). Like many other named localities important to the Plains Cree this is a prominent hill and the dominant geographic landform in the area it occupies. Horse Hill is located southeast of the present day town of Mervin, Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it would seem that the Fort Vermilion Crees cooperated politically with the Cree and Nakota living southeast of them in the Eagle Hills as Henry's entry for May 4, 1810 indicates:

The remainder of the tribe of the Gens du Bois Fort and all the other different tribes of Assineboines and Crees below are to assemble at the Eagle Hills on purpose to form a great War Party, to go upon the Gens du Corbeau. All of our Crees are joining them and crossing over the Saskatchewoine below to assemble at the appointed place (Gough 1988-1992:442).

Another noteworthy locality mentioned in the Henry journal are the Moose Hills which were north of the post about 2 leagues or 8 km (Gough 1988-1992:404). This location, it will be recalled, was also identified by William Pink forty years earlier. In fact, a review of the named localities recorded by Pink on his journeys through the region in 1767-68 and 1768-69 (see Chapter Three) reveals that all the named localities noted by Pink are also mentioned in the Fort Vermilion journal. Henry's journal, therefore, demonstrates that at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century the Crees who occupied the lands surrounding Fort Vermilion were well established in the region and orientated toward certain important localities - localities that would remain focal points for the activities of these Crees through to the reserve period. Furthermore, it would appear that the named landscape of the Crees living in this region changed very little in the forty years that separated the observations of Pink and Henry. During this time, as discussed, the Crees of the region experienced significant social change as a result of the



1781-82 smallpox epidemic; however, the relationship of these Crees to their landscape seems to have been largely unaffected by this.

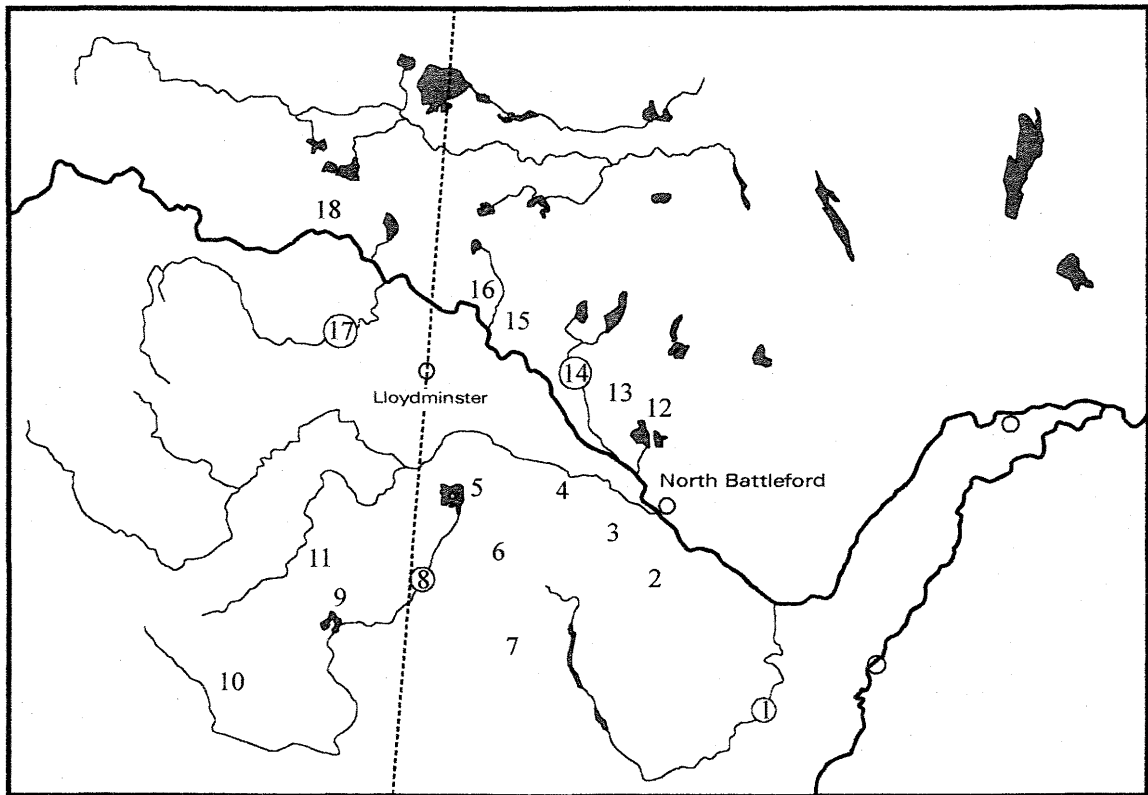
### *5.2.2 The Palliser Expedition: 1857-1860*

Between 1857 and 1860 a scientific expedition, led by Captain John Palliser, travelled across much of what is now central Saskatchewan and Alberta (Spry 1968). The members of Palliser's group collected information on a variety of subjects of general interest to the British government of the day and took careful notes describing the geography, geology, natural resources, flora and fauna of this region. Members of the expedition made two excursions to the study region recording prominent geographic landforms, often using their Cree names (Figure 5.2). These accounts provide an excellent record of the region's mid nineteenth century named landscape, or, at the very least, of its most notable features.

During the autumn of 1857, members of Palliser's group led by Doctor Hector left Fort Carlton for Edmonton. By the middle of December the group had arrived at Jackfish Lake north of present day Battleford, Saskatchewan. On December 18, while travelling northwest of Battleford, Hector (Spry 1968:192) made the following statement:

Keeping pretty high on one of the ridges to the west, in about three hours we came in sight of a high round hill at a great distance to the south-west. It is said to be the Broken Knife Hill, and lies between Battle River and the Saskatchewan. Right ahead of us to the west we had the Horse Knoll about 16 miles distant.

The "Broken Knife Hill" mentioned by Hector is the locality that Poundmaker elder



**Figure 5.2:** Map showing the locations of identifiable named localities recorded by the Palliser Expedition. 1: Eagle Creek, 2: Stoney Lake, 3: Eagle Hills, 4: Cut Knife Hill, 5: Manitou Lake, 6: Wichquatinow Valley, 7: Ear Hills, 8: Eye Hill Creek, 9: Eye Hills, 10: Neutral Hills, 11: Nose Hill, 12: Jackfish Lake, 13: Horse Hill, 14: Turtle River, 15: Red Deer Hills, 16: Frenchman Butte, 17: Vermilion River, 18: Moose Creek.

Alexander Tootoosis has identified as *asawâpiwin* (personal communication, September 2003) or ‘look-out’ (Wolvengrey 2001:8). This locality is also known as Cut Knife Hill and takes this name from an 1840s incident involving a noted Sarcee chief. Hector was slightly in error concerning the location of Cut Knife Hill, in fact, it is found a few kilometres south of the Battle River on the present day Poundmaker Reserve. Hector’s “Horse Knoll” or Horse Hill is the same locality which Alexander Henry the Younger noted in 1810. Of particular interest in Hector’s observation is the degree of visibility he

notes for the two localities.

As the group continued to move to the northwest, following the North Saskatchewan River, they passed the Turtle River and then English Creek before arriving at the Red Deer Hills (Spry 1968:193). The next day, on December 20, Hector (Spry 1968:194) provided a description of Red Deer Hill:

Making for this we soon came to the Saskatchewan River, which here runs through a very deep valley with a high range like the Couteau des Prairies bounding it to the west. Red Deer Hill is evidently a detached portion of this high level which has been cut off by the river.

From this location he also observed Frenchman Butte to the north:

On the opposite side of the river outliers are to be seen of what must be again a higher level than that of the top of Red Deer Hill; and high conical hills, the principal of which is the Frenchman's Knoll (Spry 1968:194).

Hector's group then spent several days at Fort Pitt and on December 24, started for Edmonton. West of Fort Pitt, Hector made note of the Vermilion River. The Vermilion River, also called the "Paint River" by Hector, is *oyaman sipîsis* in Cree (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) or 'coloured paint river' (Wolvengrey 2001:162,208). It is named for the ochre deposits that are found along its banks. This ochre was traditionally used by the Cree for paint. At the end of December, 1857 Hector's group arrived at Fort Edmonton.

In March of 1858 the group departed from Edmonton for the return trip to Fort Carlton. Travelling down the North Saskatchewan River towards the mouth of the Vermilion River, which they reached on March 21, Hector's group passed "Dog Rump Creek" and "Moose Creek" (Spry 1968:224). Moose Creek originates in the Moose Hills located north of the river near present day Elk Point, Alberta and is the same locality

recorded by William Pink on his journey through the area in 1768. The location of Dog Rump Creek remains uncertain. From here the group returned to Fort Carlton by way of Jackfish Lake.

Doctor Hector's group recorded named geographic features in an area of the study region located primarily along the North Saskatchewan River. As this was also the region described by Henry the Younger in the Fort Vermilion journal a comparison of the two documents should prove insightful. A comparison of the Fort Vermilion journal and the notes of the Palliser Expedition shows a remarkable degree of similarity in the named landscape described in each account. Named geographic features appearing in both accounts include Jackfish Lake, the Sand Hills, Horse Hill, the Turtle River, the Red Deer Hills, Frenchman Butte, the Vermilion River, Dog Rump Creek and Moose Creek. With the exception of the Sand Hills and Dog Rump Creek the identities of these locations are known. It is significant, therefore, that Doctor Hector recorded many of the same localities noted by Henry fifty years earlier at Fort Vermilion. Clearly, this is because these locations had remained part of the cultural landscape of both the region's Crees and the region's fur traders. Furthermore, three of these localities, namely the Turtle River, the Red Deer Hills and Moose Creek were also recorded by the HBC trader William Pink. This demonstrates that European traders and explorers, who visited this region over a ninety year period from the late 1760s to the late 1850s, encountered a similar named landscape.

Following the Edmonton excursion, Doctor Hector again departed from Fort Carlton and travelled west to the Eagle Hills where he was joined by Captain Palliser. On

route to the Eagle Hills Hector's group arrived first at Eagle Creek where he made the following statement:

we came to Eagle Hill Creek, which takes its rise from one of the many Manito Lakes at the base of the Eagle Hills, and flows, at first eastward and then northward to the Saskatchewan (Spry 1968:232).

This is probably a reference to Manitou Lake, located to the west near the present day border between Saskatchewan and Alberta, which Hector mistakenly believed was the source of the creek. From here, they continued west to the "Micashoe Watchee" (Spry 1968:233) or *mikisiw wacy* 'eagle hills' (Wolvengrey 2001:103,396). Here, the group passed Lizard Lake. Then, Hector made note of a prominent hill called the Bear's Head (Spry 1968:233). Interestingly, this locality was not mentioned by any of the Cree elders that I spoke to. Given that one of the Nakota reserves in the region bears this name it is likely that this locality was part of the Nakota named landscape. On June 20, Palliser joined the group which then proceeded westward. The following day they were at Stoney Lake (Spry 1968:234). Palliser gives the Cree name of Stoney Lake as "Mih-chet Assini Sahkiahgun" or 'many stone lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:8,101,198). At present, this lake - located southeast of the Red Pheasant reserve - is referred to as *asinîskâwi sâkahikan* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) or 'pebble lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:9,198) and takes its name from the numerous smooth pebbles found on its shore. Palliser's group then travelled west to the Unity area where, on June 23, he observed a group of low hills to the south, "known to the Crees as the Olowakiatinahk or Ear Hills" (Spry 1968:236). Next, the group turned to the northwest and passed into what Palliser termed "the Grand Coulee" - a large defile in the landscape running

northwest from Unity towards Manitou Lake (Spry 1968:238). This feature he called variously the “Wichquatinow” or “Wich-que-tin-ach” Valley (Spry 1968:237). Continuing westward the group reached Eye Hill Creek on July 3, which he refers to as “Ambush Creek” giving its Cree name as “Kanipa Kisiskoototohk” or ‘the place where we were surprised while sleeping’ (Spry 1968:241). However, Sweetgrass elders identified this locality as *oskîsikowacihk sîpîsis* (personal communication, June 2002) ‘at eye hill creek’ (Wolvengrey 2001:158,208). Furthermore, Palliser noted the presence in the area of “a range of hills, called the High Hills” (Spry 1968:242), likely a mistaken reference to a group of hills known as the Eye Hills. This geographic feature would appear to be the hills near Sounding Lake, which is the source of Eye Hill Creek. On July 5, Palliser remarked that the Neutral Hills were visible to the south (Spry 1968:242). Nose Hill and Nose Hill Creek are mentioned the next day as the group passed near Ribstone Creek. Following this, Palliser’s group travelled farther to the west, leaving the study region.

Several of the named geographic features recorded by the Palliser Expedition in the portion of the study region located south of the Battle River also appear in the accounts of HBC traders who travelled to the area in the 1770s. These trips, made by William Pink in 1769-70 and Matthew Cocking in 1772-73, were discussed in Chapter Three. While in the area, Pink and Cocking noted the following natural features by their Cree names: The Eagle Hills, Manitou Lake, the Battle River, and Eagle Creek. In 1858, Palliser’s group also recorded these features. Here too, in the southern portion of the study region, the Europeans who visited the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries observed and recorded many of the same named localities.

### **5.3 The Traditional Named Landscape**

It is clear that many, if not all, of the place names recorded by Europeans who visited the study area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent Cree toponyms. Early accounts typically provide a rendering of the Cree term for a given locality while later accounts simply use the English equivalent. For example, the English term Eagle Hills is used in place of the Cree term *mikisiw waciy*. To the Cree, these localities were imbued with meaning and significance and constituted fundamental elements of the cultural landscape. Such places were conspicuous, both in a physical sense and in a cultural sense, and it is not surprising that European travellers noted many of these localities.

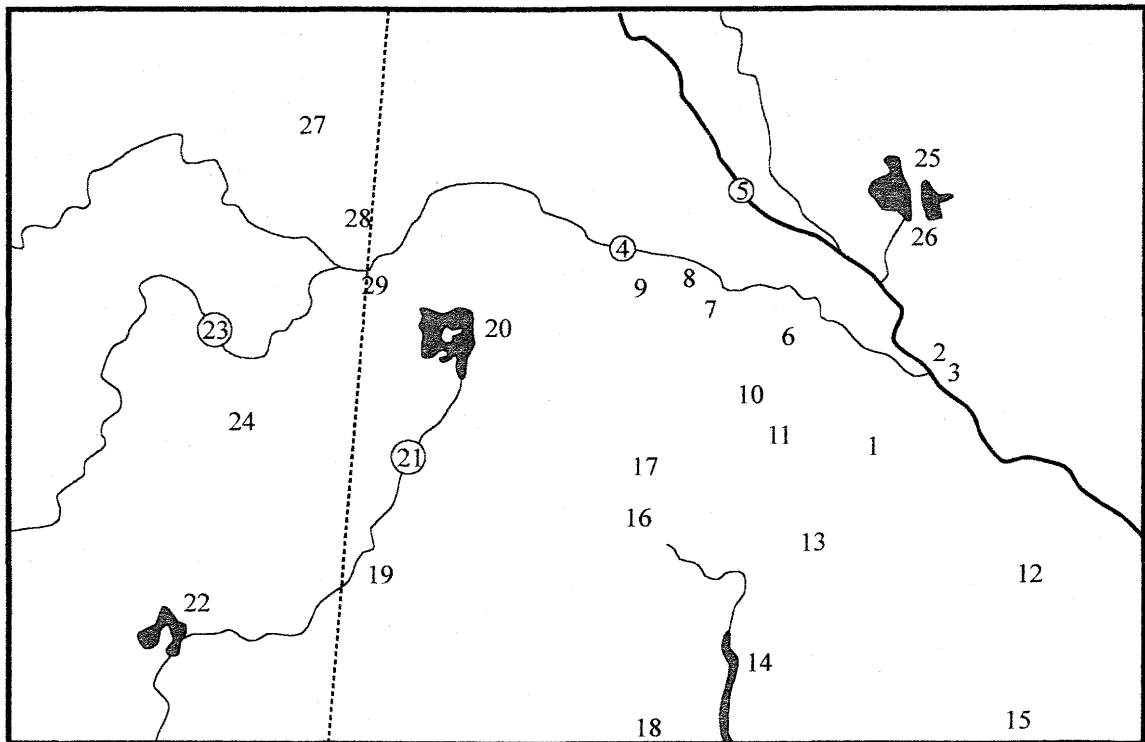
Despite this, the accounts left by European traders and explorers, many of whom only briefly visited the study region, are limited in terms of the information they provide regarding this cultural landscape. Nevertheless, I believe that the information contained in these accounts is sufficient that the following observations can be made about the Cree cultural landscape. As discussed, it can be shown that many of the named localities described in these accounts remained part of the cultural landscape throughout the period encompassed by this study. This suggests that the manner in which the Cree related to this landscape, structured and organized it culturally, also remained largely unchanged. If this relationship had changed in a significant way it might be expected that, over time, some localities would become less important and eventually would no longer be included

in the cultural landscape while other localities, formerly not part of the cultural landscape, would increase in importance. Moreover, even if many of the same localities were retained, it is likely that the ways in which the Cree related to these places would have changed dramatically. Almost certainly, a change in name would reflect these new associations. Therefore, the named landscape described in earlier historic accounts of the study region would be much different than the one described in latter accounts; however, this is not the case and there is little evidence to indicate that the named landscape of the area changed, to any great degree, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Essentially, the eighteenth and nineteenth century historic accounts describe the same named landscape.

Therefore, at the time the reserves were settled in the late 1870s and early 1880s the Crees of west central Saskatchewan were interacting with a named landscape that had changed little since the mid 1700s. The reserve system separated these Crees from many areas they had formerly occupied. However, knowledge of this named landscape remained part of their traditional culture. At present, elders from Cree communities in the region are able to provide a considerable amount of information regarding this cultural landscape (Figure 5.3 and 5.4).

Beginning in the east central portion of the study region there are the *mikisiw waciy* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘eagle hills’ (Wolvengrey 2001:103,228). As noted, this range of low hills was important to the Cree historically as a place where abundant game could be found. The Eagle Hills are, perhaps, the study region’s most identifiable geographic feature. Furthermore, the many

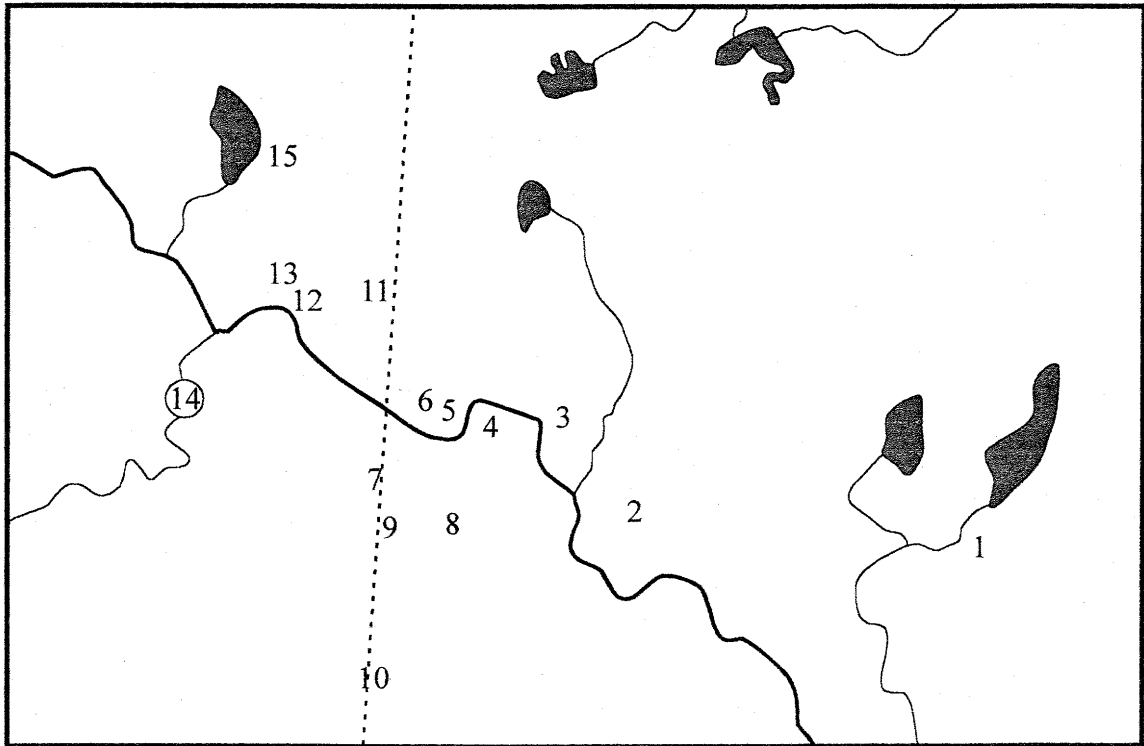




**Figure 5.3:** Map showing the locations of traditional named localities in the southern portion of the study area. 1: *mikisiw waciy*, 2: *sâkicawâsihk*, 3: *mîkwanak kâ-asapicik*, 4: *nôtinito sîpiy*, 5: *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy*, 6: (corresponds to localities on the Sweetgrass Reserve) *nakî waciy*, *sôskwaciwânihk*, *manito kâmatwehiket*, *kâwâsakahkopak*, *kawaskacamôs kasik*, 7: (corresponds to localities on the Poundmaker Reserve) *mahihkan waciy*, *asawâpiwin waciy*, *kîskihkomân sîpîsis*, 8: *wâskitoy waciy*, 9: *mahihkan mêyiwîw waciy*, 10: *misisâhkwak cahkatinaw*, 11: *mistasiniy*, 12: *asinîskâwi sâkahikan*, 13: *kâmihcisâkewepayik*, 14: *pâstêwi sâkahikan*, 15: *kâ-kîkwahânatinak*, 16: *iskwewak kâmesicîhîcîk*, 17: *kinêpik-wâta sâkahikan*, 18: *yiniwak kâkîmiskâcîk*, 19: *wâkâyôs kôsâsiskosîhk*, 20: *manitow sâkahikan*, 21: *oskîsikowacîhk sîpîsis*, 22: *nîpiy-kâpitîhkwek*, 23: *asiniy kospîkekanisîhk sîpîsis*, 24: *misi miskiwan waciy*, 25: *câscawewiyâsihk*, 26: *kâkaskewetahtakwacâhk*, 27: *niyânân nipacikâso*, 28: *ayahciyiniw sîpîsis*, 29: Many Sweet Lodges.

references to the Eagle Hills in the historic accounts make it clear that the locality was a prominent part of the cultural landscape.

The area surrounding the confluence of the Battle River is known as *sâkicawâsihk*



**Figure 5.4:** Map showing the locations of traditional named localities in the northern portion of the study area. **1:** *pâkwahtitew sîpîsis*, **2:** *wâwâskêsiw wacyi*, **3:** *mistikôsiw cahkatinaw*, **4:** *kâ-wâkitihk*, **5:** *napakiwâskahikan*, **6:** *kâ-cawâscêsihk*, **7:** *kâmsak ispatinaw* and *misi-âpîhkêsis ispatinaw*, **8:** *manitôhkân sâkahikan*, **9:** *pakâsimo sâkahikan*, **10:** *pimicâskwêyâsihk*, **11:** (corresponds to localities on the Onion Lake Reserve) *wîhcêkaskosiy sâkahikan*, *kinokamâsihk*, Pipestone Creek, **12:** *otônapiy sâkahikan*, **13:** *nîswayak ispatinak*, **14:** *oýaman sîpiy*, **15:** *âyîki sâkahikan*.

(Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘at the mouth of the river’

(Wolvengrey 2001:199). This term is used to describe a number of places where rivers

meet, for example, Ile à la Crosse Saskatchewan is called *sâkitawâhk* (Wolvengrey

2001:199). As discussed, the confluence of the Battle River appears to have been the site

of an eighteenth century ingathering centre. Located very close to the mouth of the river

is King Hill which Sweetgrass elder Augustine Paskimen (personal communication, May

2002) has identified as *mîkwanak kâ-asapicik* 'feathers, which are together in a pile' (Wolvengrey 2001:7,54,112). Mr. Paskimen noted that the Plains Cree would make pilgrimages to this area and would go and place eagle feathers there. Obviously, King Hill was an important religious site for the Plains Cree, and given its close proximity to the river's confluence, it is quite possible that this locality was also associated with the eighteenth century gatherings.

The Battle River, discussed in Chapter Three, is *nôtinito sîpiy* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) while the term for the North Saskatchewan River is *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) 'swift-flowing river' (Wolvengrey 2001:64,208).

West of the Battleford area, on the present day Sweetgrass Reserve, a number of localities are known. Historically, this area was known as *nakîwâcîhk* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002) 'at hill's end' (Wolvengrey 2001:120). This term, *nakîwaciy*, is the name given to Drumming Hill (Judy Bear, personal communication, October 2001) which is part of the Eagle Hills Escarpment that crosses the northern part of the reserve. Another prominent hill *sôskwaciwânihk* (Judy Bear, personal communication, October 2001) 'at sliding hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:211) is also located on the reserve. Drumming Creek, which meanders through the reserve from the southwest to the northeast on its way to join the Battle River, is called *manito kâmatwehiket* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) 'manitou, who is heard hammering at a distance' (Wolvengrey 2001:54,87,91). Below the Eagle Hills Escarpment, Drumming Creek passes through a low lying area which contains several

natural springs, one of which is referred to as *kâwâsakahkopak* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). Finally, Bushy lake, located between the Sweetgrass and Poundmaker reserves, is known as *kawaskacamôs kasik* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). These two terms, *kâwâsakahkopak* and *kawaskacamôs kasik*, have not been translated.

On Poundmaker Reserve, the hills forming the Eagle Hills Escarpment are called the *mahihkan wacyi* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘wolf hills’ (Wolvengrey 2001:84,228). One of these, Cut Knife Hill, is referred to as *asawâpiwin wacyi* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘look-out hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:8,228). The creek which runs north along the base of the Escarpment to join the Battle River is *kîskihkomân sîpîsis* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘broken knife creek’ (Wolvengrey 2001:74,208). Another hill, located west of the reserve, is *mahihkan mêyiwîw wacyi* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘wolf dung hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:84,228). On the adjoining Little Pine Reserve is Blue Hill, which in Cree is called *wâskitoy wacyi* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘flank hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:228,237).

South of the Sweetgrass and Poundmaker Reserves near the town of Rockhaven, Saskatchewan is *misisâhkwak cahkatinaw* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘horsefly hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:28,105). This locality is also known as “Big Climb Hill” (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003). The large glacial erratic located south of Rockhaven, a few kilometres

from the village of Cloan, Saskatchewan, is known as *mistasiniy* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) ‘big stone’ (Wolvengrey 2001:107).

In the Eagle Hills southwest of the present day Red Pheasant Reserves is *asinîskâwi sâkahikan* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘smooth pebble lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:9,198). Another locality in this area is *kâmihcisâkewepayik* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). The full meaning of this name has not been translated; however, it does contain a form of the Cree word *sâkêwêpayiw* ‘s/he comes into view’ (Wolvengrey 2001:199). This hill is located east of Wilkie, Saskatchewan and was the scene of a skirmish between the Cree and the Blackfoot. To the south, the area around Tramping Lake is referred to as *pâstêwi sâkahikan* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) ‘dry lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:176,198). Near Biggar, Saskatchewan is the locality called *kâ-kîkwahânatînak* or *okîskîkwahânatînâhk* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002; Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002). Although this term has not been translated, it likely contains a form of the Plains Cree word *kîskatinâw* ‘short, jagged, mountainous hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:73). Sweetgrass elder Augustine Paskimen noted that, in the past, this was a place where the Cree often camped.

The area around the town of Unity, Saskatchewan is known as *iskwewak kâmescihîcik* ‘where the women were killed’ after nearby Killsquaw Lake (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, May 2002). At this locality, in the nineteenth century, a Blackfoot war party surprised and killed a great many Cree women. Another lake, located north of Unity, is *kinêpik-wâta sâkahikan* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal

communication, September 2003) 'snake holes lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:61,198,237).

The area located south of Unity is called *yiniwak kâkîmiskâcik* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). This term has not been translated.

The area west of Unity, near the town of Macklin, Saskatchewan, is known as *wâkâyôs kôsâsiskosihk* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). The first element in this name, the word *wâkâyôs*, means 'bear' in Plains Cree (Wolvengrey 2001:233). The second element, the word *kôsâsiskosihk*, has not been translated. The story associated with this locality relates the following episode:

Once, some women were picking berries. Along came a bear and the women and the bear startled each other. The bear quickly ran away from the women who were shouting and making a great deal of noise. As he did so, the bear hit his snout on a tree (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002).

The large saline lake located to the north is *manitow sâkahikan* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) 'god lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:87,198). Poundmaker elder Alexander Tootoosis noted that Manitou Lake is regarded as the place where the Cree first received horses (personal communication, September 2003). Running into Manitou Lake from the south is *oskîsikowacihk sîpîsis* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) 'at eye hill creek' (Wolvengrey 2001:158,208). The source of Eye Hill Creek is Sounding Lake which is located south of Manitou Lake in east central Alberta. In Cree, Sounding Lake is called *nîpiy-kâpitihkwek* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002) 'the water which makes a noise' (Wolvengrey 2001:54,135,186). West of Manitou Lake is Ribstone Creek, known in Cree as *asiniy kospikekanisihk sîpîsis* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June

2002) 'at stone rib creek' (Wolvengrey 2001:9,208,511). Also located in this area is *misi miskiwan wacy* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) 'big nose hill' (Wolvengrey 104,106,228).

Several other localities were identified by Sweetgrass elders; however, the exact locations of these places were not known. These include the following localities: *mikiwahp kâcimatêw* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002) 'the lodge which stands upright' (Wolvengrey 2001:30,54,112); *kisêyiniw kâsâsakitcihk* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, May 2002) 'at the old man who lies on his back' (Wolvengrey 2001:54,64,201); and *pakamisîs* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002). This last term has not been translated.

North of Battleford, the area around Jackfish Lake is known as *câscawewiyâsihk* or *cascaweyasihk* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication, May 2002; Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002). This term refers to the narrow strait of land that separates Jackfish and Murray lakes and may contain a form of the Cree word *cawâscês* 'narrows' (Wolvengrey 2001:454). The term *kâkaskewetahtakwacâhk* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2003) is also used for this area. This term contains a form of the word *kaskêwêw* 's/he crosses over a portage, s/he goes across land' (Wolvengrey 2001:51) with the word *wacy* 'hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:228) also possibly represented.

In the area of Turtleford, Saskatchewan there is *pâkwahtitew sîpîsis* or *pakwacih tew sîpîsis* (Augustine Paskimen, personal communication May 2002; Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June 2002). This term has not been

translated; however, it does contain the word *sîpîsis* ‘creek’ (Wolvengrey 2001:208). Farther west, near the town of Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan are the *wâwâskêsiw waciy* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘elk hills’ (Wolvengrey 2001:228,238). Northwest of Paradise Hill, near the village of Frenchman Butte, is *mistikôsiw cahkatinaw* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘frenchman hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:28,107). In the traditional beliefs of local Crees, this locality is connected with the Bear Spirit (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). The area surrounding Frenchman Butte is also referred to as *kâ-wâkitihk* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘at the place which is curving’ (Wolvengrey 2001:xxxvi,54,233) after the great bend in the North Saskatchewan River which is located in this region. Historically, Fort Pitt was called *napakiwâskahikan* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, May 2002) ‘flat house’ (Wolvengrey 2001:123,237). As well, this area was also known as *kâ-cawâscêsihk* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘at the place which is in a small ravine’ (Wolvengrey 2001:29,54).

West of Paradise Hill, on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, is a locality known as Jumbo Hill or *kâmsak ispatinaw* “Big Hill” (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). The western portion of this large hill is called *misi-âpihkêsis ispatinaw* (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004) ‘big spider hill’ (Wolvengrey 2001:6,40,104). To the southwest, near the village of Greenstreet, Saskatchewan, is Greenstreet Lake, called in Cree *manitôhkân sâkahikan* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘idol lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:87,198). Close to Greenstreet Lake there is a “contrary



hill” (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). Another such hill, connected with the Wihtiko Spirit, is located to the northwest between the North Saskatchewan River and Tulliby Lake, Alberta (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). These hills are associated with rituals involving contrary or opposite behaviour. Sandy Beach is known as *pakâsimo sâkahikan* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘swimming lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:198,556).

The area to the south, around the city of Lloydminster, is referred to as *pimicâskwêyâsihk* which denotes a group of trees set in a long straight line (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003). This name likely refers to the city itself and was not part of the traditional named landscape. Southwest of Lloydminster, in the direction of Paradise Valley, Alberta, is a hill known as *niyânan nipacikâso* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘five killed’ (Wolvengrey 2001:140,416) which marks the place where five Blackfoot were killed by the Cree in the 1800s. The small, seasonal creek which runs through this area to join the Battle River in the southeast is called *ayahciyiniw sîpîsis* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘blackfoot creek’ (Wolvengrey 2001:15,208). In addition, Fine Day (1973:5) noted that he was born at a place called “Many Sweat Lodges” which was located “on the Battle River near the Alberta line.”

On the Onion Lake Reserve there are two large lakes. The most northerly of these is *wîhcêkaskosiy sâkahikan* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) ‘onion lake’ (Wolvengrey 2001:198,243). The second lake, located in the southwestern corner of the reserve, is *kinokamâsihk* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, June

2002) 'at long lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:431). Pipestone Creek is located in the western part of the reserve (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004). West of the reserve is *otónapiy sâkahikan* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) 'tullibee lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:161,198). Also located in this area is *nîswayak ispatinak* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) 'two hills' (Wolvengrey 2001:40,144). This locality is associated with the Buffalo Spirit (Leo Paul, personal communication, April 2004). Farther west is *oyaman sîpiy* (John Canepotato, personal communication, June 2004) 'vermillion river' (Wolvengrey 2001:162,208) and *ayîki sâkahikan* (Sweetgrass elders, personal communication, May 2002) 'frog lake' (Wolvengrey 2001:198).

The information obtained from Cree elders provides a greatly enhanced understanding of the extent and nature of the traditional named landscape. Furthermore, this information confirms that, in the study area, certain localities (the Eagle Hills, the Battle River, Manitou Lake, the Elk Hills, and Frenchman Butte, among others) have persisted in traditional systems of spatial organization among the region's Crees from the mid 1700s right to the present day. Again, this indicates a substantial degree of conservatism, over time, in this cultural landscape.

Cree named localities that appear in this thesis are summarized in Table 5.1. These localities are grouped into categories according to the types of geographic landforms they represent. An additional category for those localities that relate to specific events has also been included.

| Hills                           | Rivers and Creeks                     | Lakes                          | Events                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>asawâpiwin waciy</i>         | <i>amisko-sîpiy</i>                   | <i>asinîskâwi sâkahikan</i>    | <i>iskwewak kâmesihîcik</i>  |
| <i>kâ-kîkwahâmatinâk</i>        | <i>asinîy kospikekanisihk sîpîsis</i> | <i>ayîki sâkahikan</i>         | <i>niyânan nipacikâso</i>    |
| <i>kâmihcisâkewepayik</i>       | <i>ayahciyiniw sîpîsis</i>            | <i>kawaskacamôs kasik</i>      | <i>wâkâyôs kôsâsiskosihk</i> |
| <i>kâmsak ispatinaw</i>         | <i>ayîki-sâkahikan sîpiy</i>          | <i>kinêpik-wâta sâkahikan</i>  |                              |
| <i>mahihkan mêyiwîw waciy</i>   | <i>kâ-wâkitihk</i>                    | <i>kinokamâsihk</i>            |                              |
| <i>mahihkan waciy</i>           | <i>kisiskâciwani-sîpiy</i>            | <i>manitow sâkahikan</i>       |                              |
| <i>mikisiw waciy</i>            | <i>kîskihkomân sîpîsis</i>            | <i>manitôhkân sâkahikan</i>    |                              |
| <i>misi-apihkêsis ispatinaw</i> | <i>manito kâmatwêhikêt</i>            | <i>miskinâhk sâkahikan</i>     | Other                        |
| <i>misi miskiwan waciy</i>      | <i>mikisiw sîpîsis</i>                | <i>nîpiy-kâpitihkwek</i>       |                              |
| <i>misisâkwacâhkatînâhk</i>     | <i>môswaciy sîpiy</i>                 | <i>otônapiy sâkahikan</i>      | <i>câscawewiyâsihk</i>       |
| <i>mistikosiw câhkatînâw</i>    | <i>nôtinito-sîpiy</i>                 | <i>pakâsimo sâkahikan</i>      | <i>kâ-cawâscêsihk</i>        |
| <i>mîkwanak kâ-asapicik</i>     | <i>oskîsikowacihk sîpîsis</i>         | <i>pâstêwi sâkahikan</i>       | <i>kâwâsakahkopak</i>        |
| <i>môswa waciy</i>              | <i>oyaman sîpîsis</i>                 | <i>wîhcêkaskosiy sâkahikan</i> | <i>mistasiniy</i>            |
| <i>nakîwacîhk</i>               | <i>pâkwahtitew sîpîsis</i>            |                                | <i>napakiwâskahikan</i>      |
| <i>nîswayak ispatinâk</i>       | <i>pîkâkamâw sîpiy</i>                |                                |                              |
| <i>sôskwaciwânihk</i>           | <i>sâkicawâsihk</i>                   |                                |                              |
| <i>waskway waciy</i>            | <i>wâwâskêsiw-waciy-o-sîpiy</i>       |                                |                              |
| <i>wâskitoy waciy</i>           |                                       |                                |                              |
| <i>wâwâskêsiw waciy</i>         |                                       |                                |                              |

**Table 5.1:** Table showing summary of Cree named localities located in the study area.

#### 5.4 The Traditional Cultural Landscape and the Archaeological Record

As discussed in Chapter One (see section 1.3), in “traditional” societies the cultural landscape provides an important context in which archaeological sites can be interpreted in a meaningful way. The information in this chapter represents one example

of a traditional cultural landscape - that of the Crees of west central Saskatchewan. The focus of this study has been to identify localities that were part of this cultural landscape. From this information it is possible to note which features of the natural environment were given the most emphasis within the cultural landscape of these Crees.

The named localities identified in this study - with few exceptions - can be classified into one of two general categories (see Table 5.1). The first includes water features such as lakes, rivers and creeks. The second category is represented by prominent hills or groups of hills. As emphasized elements of the cultural landscape it can be assumed that a great deal of activity was orientated towards these localities. In turn, these various activities would create a structured archaeological record. Therefore, it would be expected that the emphasis accorded these localities would be reflected in the archaeological record. For example, a greater number of sites may be associated with these localities.

How these localities were operationalized within the cultural landscape can offer insight into questions of land use that are relevant to archaeological interpretations in the study region. Obviously, such information relates directly to the late precontact and protohistoric occupation of the region. However, it is likely that some of these relationships are of considerable age. A detailed study of these relationships has largely been beyond the scope of the research undertaken in this thesis. Moreover, much of this information is of a sacred nature and therefore has not been included in this thesis out of consideration for the traditional beliefs of Cree elders who participated in this study. Nevertheless, some basic observations can be made in this regard.

The importance of the study region's major rivers to the economic and social activities of the Crees who occupied west central Saskatchewan and adjacent eastern Alberta in the eighteenth century has been noted. These waterways, most notably the North Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers, were important avenues of transportation and also the location of the spring and fall ingathering events. Therefore, it is easy to understand their significance in terms of the cultural landscape of these Crees and it is noteworthy that the named localities recorded in the study region by eighteenth century HBC traders are all found in close proximity to these two rivers.

Furthermore, it is clear that prominent hills were highly significant to the Plains Cree who occupied the study region in the nineteenth century. In fact, prominent named hills are arguably the single most numerous and characteristic feature of the cultural landscape of these Crees. These localities share a number of properties in common. Most notably, they are very conspicuous within the landscape and often are visible from the surrounding countryside at distances of several dozen or more kilometres (for example see the comments regarding Horse Hill and Cut Knife Hill in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2). Conversely, these hills offer commanding views of the surrounding countryside and are always the highest point of land in the area they occupy. Moreover, they were traditionally invested by the Cree with considerable spiritual significance. For example, it has been noted that several of these geographic features in the study area are associated with particular spirit beings.

On a more mundane level, however, these localities had several functions. From the summits of these hills one could mark the movements of enemies or game in the lands

below. In the study region the name of one of these hills clearly reflects this function: this is Cut Knife Hill which in Cree is called *asawâpiwin waciy* (Alexander Tootoosis, personal communication, September 2003) or 'look-out hill' (Wolvengrey 2001:8,228). Additionally, and most importantly, there can be little doubt that prominent hills of this type were regarded by the Cree as paramount reference points within the physical environment; and, at a regional level, these were likely the most important landmarks used by the Cree to orientate themselves in relation to the rest of the landscape. A close association, therefore, would be expected to exist between these features and patterns of historic or even precontact movement within the study region. In this regard it is interesting to note that between the four most notable named hills in the study region a direct line of sight can be traced from one locality to another in succession: from Cut Knife Hill to Horse Hill to Frenchman Butte to Jumbo Hill. It is reasonable to conclude that relationships of this kind would have acted to shape the manner in which people moved through the landscape. For example, the historic Carlton Trail passes very close to both Horse Hill and Frenchman Butte.

These conclusions, though of a basic nature, illustrate important relationships that existed between people and the landscape. As noted, such relationships provide a context in which archaeological sites can be interpreted. Information of this kind is of value in the formulation of archaeological research strategies in the study region. Clearly, the more that is known about the traditional cultural landscape the better will be the archaeological interpretations based on this information. In particular, more information regarding the types of activities associated with named localities in the study region will

greatly enhance these interpretations.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Nineteenth century historic accounts from the study region demonstrate that many of the named localities recognized by European traders who travelled to the area in the mid 1700s remained part of the cultural landscape of the Crees in the next century. This argues that the relationship of the region's Cree peoples to the landscape changed little over this period. Information provided by elders from several of the region's Cree communities, regarding the traditional cultural landscape, further supports this conclusion. At the same time, the traditional knowledge of elders adds a depth of information concerning this cultural landscape not found in the historic literature. Finally, traditional relationships between the Crees of west central Saskatchewan and their cultural landscape define patterns of land use that have a direct bearing on historic and protohistoric archaeological interpretations.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Summary

The traditional cultural landscape of west central Saskatchewan's Crees has been the subject of this study. More specifically, in the thesis I have examined one aspect of this cultural landscape - the named landscape. A major part of the research has involved identifying localities which were part of the cultural landscape of these Crees in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This has been done by recourse to both historic documents and the traditional knowledge of Cree elders.

My research has been guided by an approach which views the cultural landscape as representing a socially rendered space. Important to this concept, in terms of the study, is the relationship that existed historically between the Cree and their landscape. This relationship took form in the many ways in which the Cree traditionally structured, organized and conceptualized this socialized environment.

Central to this system of spatial organization were relationships to places. As elements of the cultural landscape these localities were named and invested with a great deal of cultural information, functioning on many levels both mundane and spiritual. My purpose in studying these localities has been to use this information to draw some basic conclusions regarding the nature of the relationship of the region's Crees to their



landscape over the period encompassed by this study. I have also endeavoured to show how this information can be related to archaeological interpretations in this region.

Information on the eighteenth century named landscape was obtained from the journal accounts of HBC traders who travelled to the region in the 1700s. These accounts make it clear that the Cree were well established in the region at this time and orientated towards certain areas. The information that these accounts contain regarding the named landscape of these Crees is at best rudimentary; nevertheless, the HBC traders appear to have typically noted only those localities that figured most prominently in the cultural landscape of the Crees with whom they travelled. As such their descriptions provide an understanding of the basic form and extent of this cultural landscape.

From historic documents of the nineteenth century, there emerges a reasonably detailed picture of the named landscape as it existed through to the immediate pre-reserve period. Supplementing this information is the knowledge that Cree elders have supplied regarding the traditional landscape. This provides a degree of detail not found in the historic documents.

## **6.2 Conclusions**

As discussed in Chapter Five, it is clear that the named landscape of the study region's Crees changed little over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. During this same period these Crees underwent significant social and economic transformations (see Chapter Four); however, it would appear that their relationship to the landscape remained largely unaffected by these occurrences. Underlying this

relationship was a system of spatial organization. The information presented in this thesis strongly suggests that from the mid 1700s to the late 1800s the manner in which the Crees of the study region conceptualized and structured their cultural landscape did not change in any significant way.

A second conclusion supported by this information concerns the distribution of named localities within the study region. In Chapter Three it was noted that the named localities recorded by eighteenth century HBC traders define two specific geographic areas. One of these (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.1) was centred on the present day Onion Lake Reserve in the northwestern portion of the study region while the other extended westward from the Eagle Hills to the present day Alberta-Saskatchewan border (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.2). An examination of nineteenth century named localities from the study region shows that they also define two areas which are similar to those of the eighteenth century (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.1 and 5.2). The same two areas are also represented in the named landscape provided by twenty-first century elders of the Sweetgrass, Poundmaker and Onion Lake reserves (see Chapter 5, Figures 5.3 and 5.4), and correspond closely with the two main areas of Cree reserve settlement in the study region (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.3). This suggests that each of these areas has been a focus for the economic and spiritual activities of a local Cree group since the mid 1700s.

The stability, over time, noted in the relationship that existed traditionally between the Crees of the study region and their landscape has important implications for archaeological interpretations in this region. It is likely that many of the features of this relationship are characteristic of aboriginal lifeways that have changed little since the

protohistoric or even prehistoric period. Therefore, as discussed more fully in Chapter Five, a knowledge of this cultural landscape provides a meaningful context in which archaeological research questions relating to the protohistoric and prehistoric periods can be framed.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **CONCEPTS OF SPACE IN SCIENCE**

#### **A.1 Introduction**

Two concepts of space have shaped the nature of scientific inquiry: these are, space as material environment or absolute space and space as social construct or social space. These two concepts are examined below.

#### **A.2 Space and Material Environment**

Analytical science uses space as a medium that makes the study of the physical environment possible. Theoretical physics has yet to fully explain how this space is defined; however, two conceptualizations, summarized by Sack (1980:326-328), are generally considered. Absolute space is the first of these approaches. In this conceptualization space and environment exist as independent categories, space being an abstraction that manifests as a set of laws or spatial relationships. These spatial relationships, also known as the Euclidean or geometric laws, remain constant at any point in space and are unaffected by mass or energy. A second type of space is also recognized by physics. Relative space is non-Euclidean in form and is characterized by an active and reflexive relationship between space, matter and energy. To put this another way, while space affects matter and energy it is also affected by these forces which give it a contextual or relative quality.

Most scientific investigation takes place within a framework of absolute or Euclidean space and the reasons for this are straightforward. Space that is defined

geometrically provides, as Sack (1980:327) comments, “a means of describing, identifying and individuating substances.” This is achieved as a result of the specific manner in which absolute space is conceptualized. To begin with, space is separated from environment and defined as a collection of spatial relationships; then space and environment are conceptually recombined (Sack 1980:327). As a result, the properties of space, the geometric relationships, are extended to the physical environment and the objects located in it which become quantifiable and accessible to scientific analysis. Furthermore, space is subsumed within environment and only at an operational level is the distinctiveness of the two concepts evident. In this way the laws of geometry come to be regarded as a natural attribute or condition of the physical environment when in fact these spatial relationships are the product of scientific convention.

This view of space is the dominant conceptualization in Western science where traditionally the emphasis has been on the study of objective phenomena. The early historical development and formalization of the physical sciences are, in large part, responsible for this focus in contemporary science. In this context the methodologies of those sciences that examine the physical environment have deeply influenced how science is practised. Typically, this has meant that science is pursued with the kind of objective empiricism that is characteristic of these disciplines. The result is that it has come to be expected that all phenomena are explainable when subjected to this type of analysis. Moreover, it is assumed that explanatory laws, which exist in the physical sciences, are also to be found in other branches of science.

This approach has been widely applied in the social sciences. Here, as in physics,

space has most commonly been equated with material environment. The social sciences, as Sack notes, have received “the same space from physics and this space, as a system, is to be linked, in the same way as in physics, to the subject matter” (1980:328). The separation of space from subject matter also occurs and each are regarded as independent categories. The subject matter of social science is, of course, social phenomena while material environment includes the physical environment provided by nature and the built environments that are the product of human activities (Simonsen 1996:495). A majority of the studies pursued in such a setting have stressed the importance of material environment in shaping social practice. As Simonsen notes, in this respect, “the material environment is the beginning and end of analysis, and social processes are relegated to a subordinate role” (1996:495). Other approaches, however, have considered the material environment to act as a backdrop or location for social action and have downplayed its significance in relation to social phenomena (Murphy 1991:23).

In the social sciences the study domain includes both objective and subjective phenomena (Sack 1980:328). This represents the major point of departure between the physical sciences, which study objective phenomena exclusively, and the social science disciplines. In the social sciences the objective phenomena of human material culture - the things which people make and use - are studied; however, the primary focus in these disciplines is on understanding the social aspects of human behaviour of which material culture is but one part. The behaviours that make up social practice are themselves the product of subjective processes of thought which are largely determined by culture.

A situation has resulted whereby in the social sciences subjective phenomena have

been studied using methodologies borrowed directly from the physical sciences. The basic problems inherent in such an approach, in a science that is subjective, are obvious. As Sack notes, "The difficulty is that subjective phenomena, unlike objective phenomena, may not be directly locatable in physical space" (1980:328). A great deal of debate has taken place in the social sciences with regard to this problem of subject matter as social theorists have sought to define how social science is to be practised, what form it is to take, and even if it is a science at all.

For the most part the study of the subjective has been approached indirectly and this has allowed the social sciences to get around the problem while still working within the parameters of an objective science (Simonsen 1996:497). As Sack (1980:328) explains:

This first order of difficulty has been overcome (or put aside) by the assumption that the subjective has objective manifestations in space and these 'will be' (from the strict behaviourist view) or 'will stand for' (from a realist view) the spatial properties of the subjective. This means that the spatial properties of the subjective are indirect, as when we map religious adherence by using church attendance.

Many of the statements that social scientists make about the subjective phenomena that they study are based upon this sort of analysis; however, increasingly, the value of this materialist approach has been critically examined. In this regard Simonsen (1996:497) comments:

It is meaningless to search for, or to try to theorize, social relations to the material environment or interactions between man/woman and matter - social relations and interactions are performed by human beings and take place between human beings.

In an effort to distance social science from the environmental determinism that

characterizes much of this research social theorists have looked for another methodology better suited to the study of subjective phenomena. This debate has taken the form of a re-examination of space and its relationship to social practice. Turning to ideas taken from philosophy a new awareness of space as forming part of social process has developed. Currently, the material environment is seen as constituting merely one element of the sociospatial dynamic and it has been accepted that the material environment cannot exist within social theory independently and unmediated (Simonsen 1996:497).

### **A.3 Social Space**

The search for alternative methodologies in the social sciences has led to an array of new approaches; however, in general these approaches share several features in common. Fotiadis and Watson's comments regarding symbolic and structural archaeology encapsulate these themes:

Symbolic and structural archaeologists are very much concerned with the recursive or interactive quality of culture - the interplay between and among people, their symbol systems, and each other; the daily and moment-by-moment creation of systems of meaning (1990:614).

Evident in such approaches is the shift in emphasis from environment to the viewpoint of the individual inside of culture (Fotiadis and Watson 1990:615). Space as material environment has been abandoned and in this context ceases to be seen as something existing outside of the social realm. In this manner, space becomes a quality of the individual's experience of the world and an element of the social dynamic. Space, therefore, is socially produced. Simonsen (1996:503-506) identifies two areas of thought

that have influenced the development of this concept within the social sciences. These are the writings of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, and the Phenomenological Movement in philosophy.

Lefebvre argues that studies of space must consider “the generative process of space” and that the focus of such studies be directed “from ‘things in space’ to the actual ‘production of space’” (Simonsen 1996:503). This concept is basic to an understanding of space as a socially constructed phenomenon.

A socially produced space, like other social phenomena, can only come into being through the experiences and practices of people in the contexts of their day-to-day lives. Therefore, the starting point in any examination of socially construed space is the perspective of the individual as part of a social system. An awareness of space allows human beings to interact not only with the physical environment but with others of their kind in meaningful ways as part of a society. To facilitate this the individual must be able to perceive space, orientate him/herself in space, and use spatial concepts abstractly (Hallowell 1977:131). These skills are acquired in infancy and become more sophisticated as the individual develops to adulthood. A progression from, at a basic level, the ability to identify and categorize objects and to recognize simple relationships between them, to the ability to move through the environment between points, or wayfinding, to a knowledge of complex spatial relationships characterizes this development (Golledge and Timmermans 1990:70). Spatial awareness is rooted in human consciousness and considerations of space as part of the social dynamic are grounded in specific understandings of human consciousness and perception. The



theoretical perspective that social theory has looked to in this regard has been the Phenomenological approach in philosophy.

Phenomenology and the closely related Existentialism are perhaps the most important developments in twentieth century philosophy. Edmund Husserl whose writings laid the groundwork for Phenomenology described the approach as a science of “Transcendental Subjectivity” (1962[1913]:5). Husserl’s Phenomenology is an objective examination of human consciousness. The aim of Phenomenology is an understanding of consciousness, as Husserl states, “from the standpoint of everyday life, from the world as it confronts us, from consciousness as it presents itself in psychological experience” (1962[1913]:39). Under consideration here is that, and only that, which is available or knowable to consciousness and this includes the phenomena gathered by the senses or generated in the mind, what Husserl referred to as “essences”. Excluded from this discussion are all theories both scientific and metaphysical. For Husserl all acts of consciousness are directly related to the individual’s experience of the world, this world being, “the totality of objects that can be known through experience (*Erfahrung*), known in terms of orderly theoretical thought on the basis of direct present (*aktueller*) experience” (1962[1913]:46). The “natural standpoint,” the vantage point from which human consciousness opens upon the world, makes this possible (1962[1913]:91). As Husserl explains:

In this way, when consciously awake, I find myself at all times, and without my ever being able to change this, set in relation to a world which, through its constant changes, remains one and ever the same. It is continually “present” for me, and I myself am a member of it (1962[1913]:93).

#### **A.4 Conclusion**

Phenomenology, and the various approaches that have been inspired by it, have had a profound influence on the development of recent social theory. The emphasis on the individual within culture inherent in these approaches has, as Murphy (1991:22) remarks, “focused attention on local context as the realm within which people experience, interpret, and incrementally reconstitute social structures.” Accordingly, the concepts of locale, region and especially place have become important elements of study.

Socially produced space, as Tilley (1994:15) explains, “derives its meaning from particular places.” Furthermore, as Tilley continues, “without places there can be no space, and the former have primary ontological significance as centres of bodily activity, human significance and emotional attachment.” Socially produced space, then, exists as interrelationships of place and has little meaning apart from these interrelationships. This fact makes place a primary subject of study in any consideration of socially produced space or cultural landscape. Moreover, most studies of place have typically focussed on its representation in the physical environment. Tilley’s (1994:25) definition of landscape illustrates this approach. He states, “By ‘landscape’ I want...to refer to the physical and usual form of the earth as an environment and as a setting in which locales occur and in dialectical relations to which meanings are created, reproduced and transformed.” In terms of this thesis, I have used this definition to provide a framework in which named localities can be studied as representations of place.