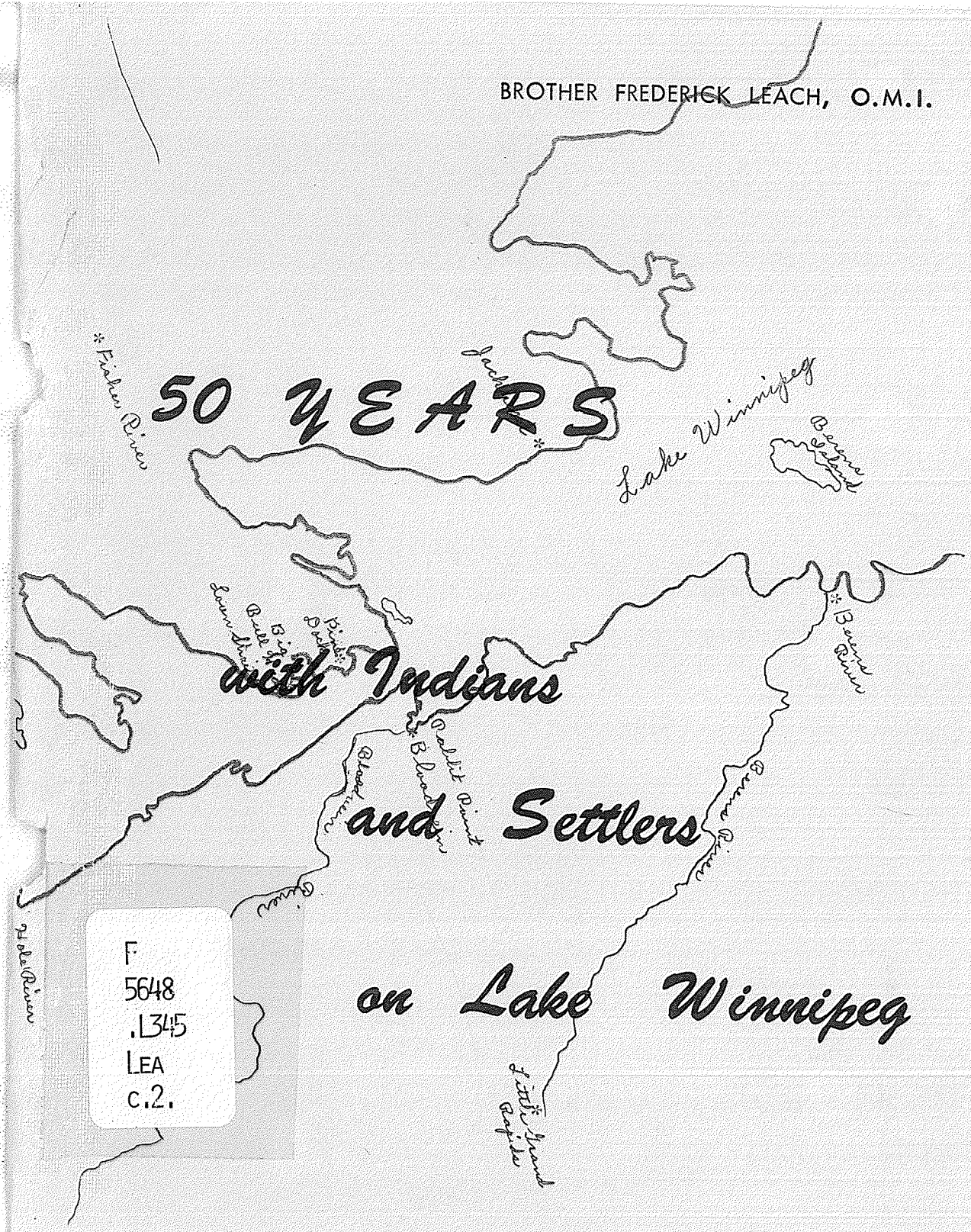
BROTHER FREDERICK LEACH, O.M.I.



50 YEARS

with Indians and Settlers on Lake Winnipeg

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FIRST YEARS IN CANADA

I arrived in Canada from England in June 1911. I was then nineteen years of age. In the Old Country we had heard that Canada was a place where fortunes could easily be made. Somehow or other I never did become a millionaire, in fact a day or two after I arrived here I lost nearly all the money I had brought with me. It happened that at the time of my arrival at Winnipeg there was a "Provincial Fair" which included a circus so I decided to go to it and spend a few pleasant moments. The visit wasn't as nice as I had expected for I had my pocket picked and was left with only very few dollars. I went to the Immigration Hall where newcomers could find employment. I was informed that there were plenty of men needed on farms. I accepted a job at Somerset. The train fare would be one cent a mile and my train would be leaving the following morning. I bought my ticket after which I had but a few cents left; they were spent buying a couple of sandwiches. After buying them I went and sat in the station most of the night and until the time of the departure of the train.

Believe me, I found the work on the farm tough, especially during the harvest when we got up at four in the morning and worked in the fields until dusk. After stooking for such long hours I was more than ready for bed. But at times stooking haunted me even in my sleep and sometimes I would wake up to find myself trying to make stooks out of my pillows or blanket. My boss, Billy Arnold, was good to me but at the end of the harvest season, he, realizing that I was not cut out to be a farmer advised me to try and get a position as teacher in a school. He had heard that there was a shortage of teachers and that the Department of Education was trying to fill vacancies. Billy paid me my wages, fifty dollars for four months' work, after which I left for Winnipeg where, by chance, I came in contact with Mr. Roger Goulet, inspector of schools, who gave me a permit to teach in a school which was to be opened at Vannes, now called Abbeville situated on the Gypsumville line, forty miles north of St. Laurent. During

my year of teaching I made friends with Father Hervé Péran who little by little spoke to me about missionary life. After giving the matter considerable thought I decided to follow his advice or at least give it a trial. This decision I have never regretted.

During my young days at college our "master" of social studies was a Mr. Turner. When teaching us the geography of Canada I remember his mentioning the "inland seas".

It seems hardly possible that half a century has gone by since I first saw Lake Winnipeg. I had been teaching in other schools a couple of years when, in June 1918, Father Philippe Valès and I were named for Berens River, an Indian mission situated on the north-eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg; the Father was to be director of the mission and I was to teach in a school to be built on our arrival.

In those days there were three passenger steamers plying the lake: the "Grand Rapids"; the "Lady of the Lake" and the "Wolverine". A few years later the S.S. Keenora was added. The three first named went out service some years ago and the "Keenora" make her last trip on the lake in 1965.

We embarked on the "Wolverine" at Selkirk. She was loaded with cargo of every description, including cattle. Pulling away from the dock at 7 p.m. we steamed down the Red River for about twenty-five miles before catching our first glimpse of Lake Winnipeg, an expanse of water 300 miles long and varying in width from a mere three miles at The Narrows to seventy-five miles in its northern portion. Several times during the night, blasts of the boat's whistle awoke us. Freight was being unloaded at the various small settlements scattered along the lake shore. About seven in the morning we stopped at Pine Dock to load on quite a few cords of wood, the type of fuel used for the steam engines on the passenger boats in those days. Later on coal was used for a short while. To-day diesel engines are installed on all tugs.

Twenty hours after our departure and about 180 miles north of Selkirk we entered the twisting shoal-infested channel which led us to our destination, the Hudson's Bay dock at Berens. When our freight, including the material for the new school, was unloaded we proceeded on foot to our new home.

The path through the bush was narrow and in the low spots, due to recent rains, there were several inches of water. These pools had to be crossed on a couple of slippery poles. I wasn't used to walking on such primitive "bridges" so after slipping off them a few times my feet were soaking wet. On disembarking from the steamer we had received a welcome from some of the local people but their reception was nothing compared to the hearty, biting greeting we were now receiving from swarms of mosquitoes. After walking for about fifteen minutes we came to a small clearing in the middle of which were the mission buildings comprising a little church, a small log building which was the "presbytery" and nearby another log building which as learned later on, was the first chapel built by Father Joseph Magnan in August 1897. The combined kitchen and "parlor" of our house measured 18' x 16' added to which was a small lean-to which served for a bedroom for Father Valès. My sleeping quarters were in the attic upstairs. It didn't take me long to remember to bend down when a bedroom is in a low attic. A few bumps on my head by hitting the roof rafters soon taught me.

The third member of the mission was Brother Jacques Grall. Before becoming a member of the Oblate Congregation he had served three years with a cavalry brigade in France. He was a strong husky man. A year after my arrival at Berens he got a team of oxen which proved useful for hauling our wood and for doing other odd jobs. One of the team was a little stubborn fellow and on occasions he tried to get rough with the Brother. Once the animal tried to use its horns on the Brother. I was nearby at the time and was amazed when I saw Brother Grall quickly grab the ox by the horns,give them a quick twist and down went the ox, almost flat on the ground. It gave no more trouble after that.

Immediately after our arrival a site was cleared for the new school. The building, measuring 24' x 18', had a classroom on the ground floor and above that, reached by an outside staircase, were three rooms. This was the first Catholic school in Berens River; the Methodists had had one, further up the river for quite a number of years. Their first resident missionary at Berens was the Rev. Langford who arrived in the early nineties. There is one fact I have never been able to find out. Why do the Indians here in their Saulteaux language call Berens River, Pigeon River?

All summer a number of Indians were camped within a few yards of the mission. Mrs. Catherine Patrick, the first Catholic Indian woman here, used to come once or twice a week to do a little laundry for us or to cook some bannock. Bannock, I may add, was the type of bread used in nearly all Indian homes. Make a heavy dough with a mixture of flour, baking powder, lard, a little salt and water; roll the dough out until it is an inch or two thick; prick it with a fork; place it in a moderate oven and cook for about forty-five minutes. There's your bannock. One could not say there was much variety in our meals. During the winter, fish appeared very often on our table or sometimes a piece of moose meat. These were gifts from the Indians. When these items were not available, pork and beans took their place. The chief marketable varieties of fish caught in Lake Winnipeg are whitefish, pickerel, saugers, sturgeon, jackfish, goldeye and tulibee. Of late years goldeyes are getting scarce in the lake as also are sturgeon. Tulibees were used mostly for dog feed. Late in the fall our Indians would set nets in the Berens River area to catch whitefish. They were cleaned and then hung on sticks to dry. There were generally ten fish on a stick. The sticks were then hung up on frames. Perhaps those who have never eaten fish thus prepared may think it could not have been very appetizing; on the contrary it was tasteful and certainly appreciated at mealtime during the winter. After a while one gets used to quite a variety of wild meats. I

personally, prefer moose meat to beef. Muskrat, when caught under the ice or when the waters in the creeks and rivers are still cold, is good eating. Most people like the meat of the beaver but I find it a little too greasy. A friend of mine once gave me a piece of meat which looked and tasted like veal. It was the hind quarter of a young lynx. I once ate some bear meat but I found it a little tough to chew.

Today nearly all the stores in these parts carry food supplies of every description: fresh and canned meats; eggs, potatoes and other vegetables, fresh and canned fruits and plenty of candies. In olden days the only meat stocked was bacon or salt pork. Candy only appeared in the stores during the Christmas season.

On Lake Winnipeg there were two seasons when we were completely isolated: the freeze-up and the break-up. These terms mean the formation of ice on the lake and rivers during the fall and its weakening and gradual disappearance during the spring. In June 1919 the "Wolverine" encountered quite a bit of ice but generally Lake Winnipeg is fairly clear by the end of May.

At the end of October 1918 the "Wolverine" arrived for her last trip of the season. We heard that some of the crew were sick but paid little attention to the fact. Three days later "flu" broke out. Three or four days later all but a handful of the population were abed, Brother Grall and myself included. Two who were lucky to evade the epidemic were Father Valès and Rev. Percy Jones, the Methodist minister. Many a mile did they walk giving spiritual consolation to the sick. In most of the homes there was lack of light nourishment and even milk was scarce. There were no remedies; in any case even if we had had some, I doubt they would have helped much. Daily we heard gun shots which was the manner of indicating that someone had died in a home. By the time conditions had returned to normal thirty-seven had succumbed.

In those days, mail was carried during the winter by dog-trains. Their point of departure was Norway

House, a settlement 150 miles north of Berens River. That settlement was so named because some Norwegians helped to build a Hudson's Bay Post there in 1815 and a few of them settled there. Travelling along the east shore of Lake Winnipeg, it took the mail carriers three or four days to reach our post office. On the first winter trip that generally arrived on the first Thursday of December. Collecting the Berens River mail, they travelled south for another three days until they reached Icelandic River, (now called Riverton) which was the nearest railway terminus. There the toboggans were loaded with all the mail for the north and the men were homeward bound. In a minor way we were connected with the postal service as at that time the Berens River post-office was at our mission.

Both men and dogs had to be in fine physical condition to withstand those long trips, twice a month, often facing blizzards, trudging through snowdrifts often over a foot deep, and, at times, sleeping out in temperatures forty to forty-five degrees below zero.

One of the worst trips ever experienced by those mail carriers was in January 1928. We had been expecting them back on the 20th of that month. A few days previous to that date there had been a blizzard and when the sky cleared the weather turned bitterly cold. Several days passed; no mailmen. When the mail was a week overdue, the Hudson's Bay manager was worried and fearing that some accident had happened sent two other dog-trains to find out the cause of the delay. These trains encountered the mail carriers about twenty miles south of Berens. One of their dogs was dead, probably from frozen lungs. The remaining dogs were worn out. The mailmen themselves were having a very tough time, almost perishing from cold. That day the thermometer had reached fifty-two below zero.

Sleigh dogs cannot always be trusted. In fact there are a few which cannot ever be trusted even by their masters. A few years ago a friend of mine was driving home from his trapping grounds. The leader of his train had what could be called a sulky disposition.

That day this dog did not seem to be doing a fair share of the work of pulling the sleigh. His master gave him a slight flick of the whip. The dog immediately turned on him and, as is sometimes the case when one dog attacks a person, other dogs joined in. Probably the only thing which saved my friend from getting an awful mauling and even perhaps being killed was that the dogs got mixed up in their harness while trying to attack their master. After dodging round the sleigh a few times Olie managed to grab hold of his axe and killed the leader of the train. This quieted the other dogs. From that day my friend no longer drove dogs but he now uses a skidoo when making trips. During the last few years very few dog-trains are to be seen on the lake. More modern means are now available.

A TRIP WITH THE TREATY PARTY

Until 1919 aeroplanes were rarely seen in the north, but in July of that year Berens River saw its first aeroplane when Captain Ross, a war veteran, surprised us by landing near the Hudson's Bay Post.

Obsessed by curiosity, it wasn't long before I was asking a lot of questions about the dials and the use of the flaps and other paraphernalia on the plane. I learned that it was a two-passenger Viking, push propeller type with a cruising speed of about ninety miles per hour. I finally plucked up courage and asked Captain Ross if he would take me for a flight. "Sure," he said, "I'm going to Little Grand Rapids tomorrow morning and you're welcome to come along, but you'll have to find some other means of getting back here as I head for Winnipeg from Little Grand." I knew I would have no difficulty getting back home as the Indian Agent was due to pay Treaty at Little Grand Rapids in a couple of days.

We were airborne early the next morning; our destination was near the Ontario boundary about eighty-five air miles east of Berens. As we flew we saw, fifteen hundred feet below, the glistening waters of the numerous falls and rapids in the river. It wasn't too comfortable in those old-type planes as there was practically no protection from the wind. In about an hour we were flying over Family Lake on the shores of which is the Little Grand Rapids Reserve. Moments later we sighted the tents of the Indians who were all camped around the Hudson's Bay Post. After circling a couple of times we made a perfect landing. As we glided down most of the children ran into their tents,wondering, no doubt, what species of huge bird was landing in their midst. Mr. J.R. Moar, Manager of the Post, and his staff were delighted to meet us and extended a hearty welcome. Captain Ross stayed a couple of hours and then headed south.

It is interesting to note that the Moar family have a record for long service in the Company. The first of

the Moars served nearly fifty years; his son, our host, also served about the same length of time, and Fred, the son of J.R., completed forty-seven years. Fred's career nearly ended in 1926. He was stationed as Clerk at the Deer Lake Post. The lake is quite a size. After it had opened in the spring, Fred, with two companions, was sent by canoe to buy some fur from some Indians who were still on their trapping grounds. During the afternoon of the first day a halt was made on an island, for lunch. Whilst gathering some firewood to boil the kettle, a gust of wind caused the canoe to drift away from the shore. When this was noticed one of Fred's men dived into the water to overtake the canoe which was not too far out on the lake. Unfortunately, the poor fellow must have taken cramps for he disappeared and was drowned. The water was still quite cold as the lake had only been free of ice for a couple of weeks. Just a sufficient quantity of food had been taken ashore for lunch. Fred and his remaining companion were stranded on the island for over two weeks. When found by a search party, both had lost a considerable amount of weight and were barely able to walk.

The Treaty Party was expected at Little Grand Rapids during the evening of the day of my arrival. They were on their way back after paying Treaty at Deer Lake and Pikangikum Reserves. The former Reservation is approximately 100 miles north-east of Little Grand and the latter about the same distance in a south-easterly direction. After supper the news arrived that the canoes bearing Mr. H. Latulippe, the Indian Agent, Doctor Grant, the Medical Attendant, and Miss Latulippe, who was acting as Clerk that year, were near at hand. On their arrival at the Treaty grounds the Indians gave them the usual salute by firing, in the air, volley after volley from their shotguns. The evening was too far advanced to start paying Treaty that day. In any case the Party deserved a little respite after camping out for a number of days and completing several hundreds of miles by canoe.

One of the duties of the Agent (the head of an Indian Agency now has the title of Superintendent), is to

pay, annually, the sum of five dollars to every man, woman and child in his Agency, thus fulfilling one of the clauses written in Treaty No. 5 signed in September 1875.

As each family was paid, the Clerk checked off the names and made the necessary alterations in the books due to deaths, marriages and births which had occurred during the previous twelve months. The doctor was kept busy examining those complaining of various ailments or extracting teeth when requested to do so. Doctor Grant was also interested in anthropology, so apart from his usual work he also carefully examined the features of a number of men. As he examined each man I had to write down the measurements he had made of the man's facial bones or other characteristics. When we had finished he told me he had found hardly a dozen men whose features compared favourably with the typical traits of the primitive Saulteaux Indians.

In 1919 the Department of Indians Affairs were taking a census of all the Indians. The questions asked were similar to those asked at the present time. At Deer Lake and Pikangikum no one was available to act as Census Taker so Miss Latulippe had to do the job. Gathering the information was no sinecure. At this date practically all the Indians retained their Indian nicknames, several had not even a family name. Names such as Stomach, Wolf, Ground Hog, Weasel Eyes, Dog Skin and Moose didn't seem suitable to inscribe in the census book. To overcome the difficulty members of some of the families were given family names and a number of Christian names. I may add here, that in the first list of Treaty Indians at Berens River in 1875 there was only one English name and that was MacDonald.

In those days listing the property of the Indians at Little Grand Rapids was an easy matter. It consisted of a few shacks many of which had no windows of any description. Some of them had holes cut in the logs to let in a little light. Spruce branches took the place of flooring. I could easily understand the lack of decent dwellings at that time, and the same conditions

could apply to other isolated Reserves. The sole means of earning a living, and at that rather a scanty one, was by trapping. This necessitated staying on the trapping grounds during the whole of the trapping season. In other words families left for the bush early in October and did not return until the third week of May. During the summer they camped out in their tents or teepees. Under these conditions the possession of a good house on the Reserve was useless.

When the Treaty payments were finished the annual meeting was held and the needs of the Band were discussed. This took considerable time as the speeches of the Indians were numerous and long.

At noon of the third day we were ready to start for Berens River. The number of rapids between the two Reserves varies between forty and fifty according to the height of the water. Paddling down the river we shot a number of rapids, so we reached the boundary of the Berens River Reserve in two and a half days. Before entering the settlement a small Union Jack was hoisted in the bow of each canoe. Our arrival was announced by the traditional salute of guns.

The payment of Treaty money today is quite different from years ago. These days the Superintendent comes out; pays by cheque which takes but a few hours and then leaves. In the twenties and thirties the Treaty party stayed three or four days. There were baseball games, foot races for all and canoe races for the men. During the evenings there were square dances, or, on some Reserves pow-wows. But in those days the Indians saw their Agent only once or twice a year, whereas now an Official of the Agency visits the Reserves about once a month.

When payments and the meeting were finished at Berens River there were still three other Reservations to visit, and, as these were situated on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, the tug, "Majestic" had been requisitioned for the purpose. This portion of the trip was most enjoyable. No more days or evenings plagued by swarms of mosquitoes; no more portaging, and instead of

sleeping out we now had small but comfortable cabins. It is true that I had been camping out only a couple of nights but the others had been in canoes for nearly three weeks during their round trip to Deer Lake and Pikangikum.

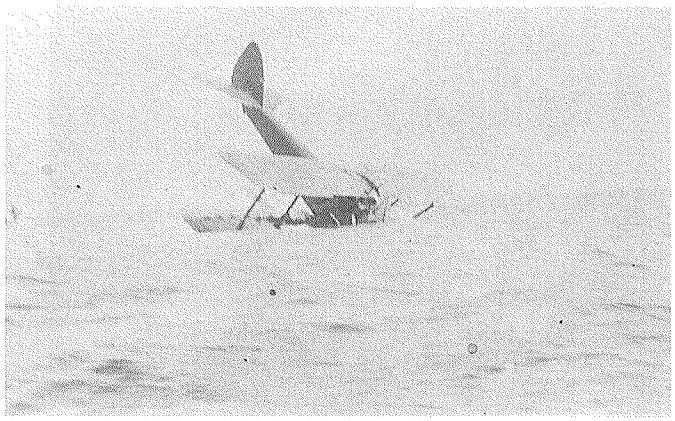
Our first stop was Poplar River, sixty miles north of Berens. For several miles out from the mouth of the river reefs and shoals abound. Cautiously the tug advanced and we hit, lightly, only two reefs.

Two days later we were again on our way. Taking a westerly course we crossed the widest part of the lake until we reached the mouth of the Saskatchewan River which flows hundreds of miles through the Prairie Provinces to empty its waters into Lake Winnipeg. Going upstream a short distance we came to an Indian Reserve on the left bank of the river, and on the opposite shore was a white settlement. We were seventy five miles from Poplar River and had reached Grand Rapids (not to be confused with Little Grand Rapids). Years ago this had been quite a busy spot. Before their coalition there had been several skirmishes between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. In the early fur trade days the river system served as an important transportation route. It was, later, plied by steam-driver river boats carrying passengers and freight from westerly points. A mile or two upstream from the settlement were formidable rapids. Above these, passengers disembarked and the cargo was unloaded. A portage was made to a safe distance below the falls where Lake Steamers awaited passengers and freight destined for Selkirk.

At Grand Rapids I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. McKay, a fine old timer, who possessed a wonderful collection of photos and pictures of wild life. Looking at them one obtained a clear idea of the huge herds of buffalo and caribou roaming the prairies before man wantonly destroyed them with no thought of the future.

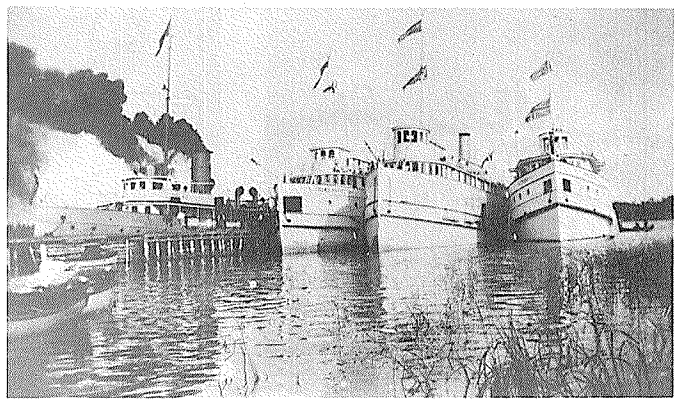
We stayed a couple of days at Grand Rapids. Then bidding good-bye to the people, we once again boarded the "Majestic". Fifteen hours later we reached Mathe

The aeroplanes in the 1920's
(page 10)



Sometimes accidents happen.

When emergencies occur and planes
cannot land, helicopters are used.

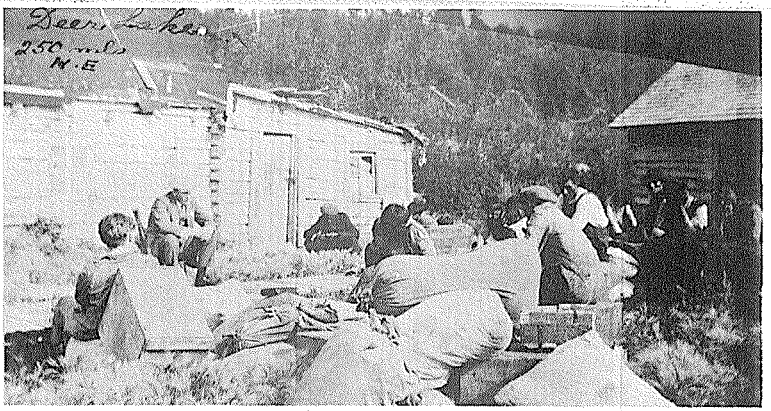


The four Steamers on Lake Winnipeg (1927)
Taken at Berens River, Man.

(page 4)

The last York boat to be used
in freighting on Lake Winnipeg.

(page 33)



Freight brought in by canoe

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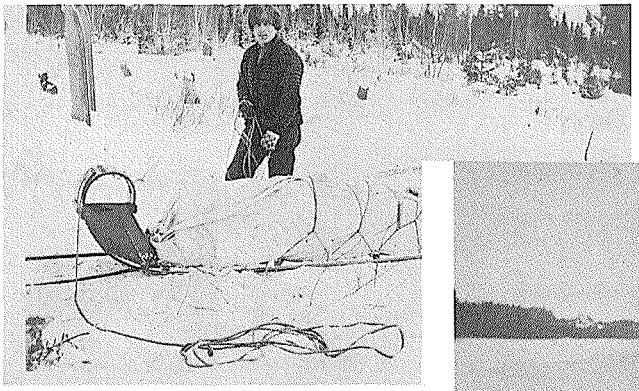


Hauling freight in winter

Unloading freight
in bygone days -
Now a truck is used

Commencement of a canoe freight trip

(page 23)

son Island. During this part of the trip the Lake had by no means been calm. At one period we were chatting near the stern of the boat when a wave broke over and gave us a bath. A few moments later we heard a crash in the galley. An extra heavy roll of the boat had swept pies and plates from the table. You can imagine for yourself the expressions used by the Cook.

Matheson Island is a settlement of whites and Metis. The population was then about sixty; today it is twice that number. We had no work to do that evening for it was the Bloodvein Indians, living twelve miles east of the Island who awaited our arrival. Early the following morning a gas boat took us across to the Reserve. As the Bloodveiners were not numerous we managed to finish our work that evening. This was the last Reserve Mr. Latulippe had to visit that year, so on leaving there he and his friends were homeward bound.

Getting back to Berens River presented no difficulty. It happened that a trader, Helgi Einarson by name, had come to Bloodvein to sell his wares on Treaty Day, and was returning to Berens. As he was alone he was glad when I asked him if I could go along. He had a forty foot schooner rigged with a jib, foresail and mainsail. Leaving Bloodvein we tacked over to Matheson Island and stayed there until a little past midnight when a favourable wind sprang up. Hoisting the sails we headed north. Helgi took charge for a few miles and then asked me to take over; he then fell asleep. I was supposed to guide by the North Star, but as the sky was somewhat cloudy its guidance was not of much use. However, I could make out the shoreline so I made certain to keep far enough from it to avoid the reefs found close in. At dawn we were abreast of Berens Light-house and arrived home shortly after six in the morning.

We read sometimes about the increased population of the world. This certainly applies to our Indian population. When I took the census in 1919, Berens River and Little Grand Rapids numbered 223 Indians on each Reserve. Today each has 650 members in its Bands. Bloodvein then had approximately 100 members, today there are nearly 300.

BLOODVEIN

In 1920, after teaching two years at Berens River, I was asked to go and start a school at Bloodvein. This time my companion was to be Father Joseph de Grandpré who had already had eight years experience in missions around Camperville, near the shores of Lake Manitoba. He was the typical type of a pioneer missionary.

On the day set for our departure, from Berens, we loaded our belongings into our yawl and started off. The wind was light and favourable so we hoisted a small sail and had an easy time for about twenty-five miles, then the wind dropped; the lake became dead calm. Out came our oars and we took turns at rowing. It was hard work; the yawl was heavy and it was one of those really hot days. Around dusk we finally reached the northern portion of Rabbit Point, forty-five miles south of Berens. We decided to camp for the night. We cooked some supper; chatted for a little while and then prepared for a refreshing sleep. We had no tent and spruce branches served as a mattress.

It seemed that we had hardly closed our eyes when we were awakened by vivid flashes of lightning and loud claps of thunder. These were followed by torrents of rain which lasted until about three o'clock in the morning. Needless to say we were soaked to the skin. When the rain quit we left our camping ground and made our way to some high flat rocks. I must admit that bare rocks are not the best type of bed but still feeling weary and sleepy, we stretched out and were soon fast asleep. We awoke a few hours later, ate a light breakfast and started off on the last lap of our journey. We still had fourteen miles to go. Our course was down the Bloodvein Bay which is of considerable size. The Bloodvein River was by no means easy to find. As is the case with several rivers flowing into Lake Winnipeg, for some distance out there were numerous small islands and reefs. Father J. de Grandpré and I were more then glad when we reached the end of our trip. The dwelling we were to occupy had

been bought from an Indian. It resembled in all respects the mission dwelling at Berens except in two ways; as it hadn't been lived in for some time; it took us a little while to fix the frame of the door, some broken windows and a few leaks in the roof. Secondly, when the shingles had been nailed on the roof, whoever did it had used two inch nails which protruded through the attic ceiling so until we had clinched them all we had to be careful not to hit our head against them when we went upstairs to bed. The furniture we possessed was by no means luxurious, consisting of two camp beds, one small table, two kitchen chairs and a stove. It was impossible for me to start teaching immediately as there was no place available which could be used as a classroom. This problem was solved when we added another small room to the house. This addition was used as a classroom on weekdays and for service on Sundays. The progress made by my pupils wasn't very noticeable at first; they were beginners and couldn't speak English, and, in those days I couldn't speak Saulteaux. School material was scarce. Instead of scribblers and pencils the children used slates and slate pencils.

Lack of knowledge of the Saulteaux language once caused me some embarrassment. Shortly after my arrival at Bloodvein I asked one of the members of the Band,who had some knowledge of English, to accompany me on visits to various homes. As we were walking along the path I saw an old lady approaching; turning to my companion I asked him: "How do you say good morning in Saulteaux". "Otchimichin", was his reply. On meeting the old lady I held out my hand and said "otchimichin". You can imagine my surprise, when laughing, she put her arms around my neck and gave me a kiss. My companion roared with laughter. "Otchimichin" doesn't mean "Good morning" but "give me a kiss". It was not long before the parents realized that the "teaching chief" liked their children, so the number of my pupils increased. When this occurred we knew it would be necessary to construct a school. The material, for this purpose, was obtained by my going down to Peguis, a few miles north of Selkirk, and tearing down an old mission

building. The lumber, thus gathered was loaded on the "Wolverine", taken to Matheson Island where it was reloaded on a gas boat and brought to Bloodvein. Father de Grandpré built the school all by himself. My statement that he built it "all by himself" is true. In those days, during the months of September and October all the Bloodvein Indians went to Black Bear Island for the commercial fishing season. Not wishing my pupils to miss school I went with them and taught in a room placed at my disposal. Father de Grandpré was alone at Bloodvein. Even if there had been men available to help him we hadn't the financial means to hire them. Every Saturday Father came over to Black Bear, held services and gave religious instructions on Sunday. Black Bear Island is within a mile of Matheson. There is a lighthouse at the north end and in its south end is a convenient little harbour, big enough and deep enough for fish tugs to enter.

You may wonder why the Department of Indian Affairs hadn't provided funds for the construction of a school. In 1920 the conditions at Bloodvein were the same as those I mentioned at Little Grand Rapids. Most of the families left for the bush during the winter. The Government was willing to provide a limited amount of school material for the pupils but it was left up to us to prove that it was worth while for Ottawa to go to the expense of building a school. We had to get the parents to understand the importance of allowing their children to receive an education. This was no easy matter. Practically none of the married Bloodveiners had ever been to school and they could not understand the advantages of education for their children. Nevertheless that first winter we had a fair success as some of the families remained on the Reserve; the men went, alone, to their trapping grounds. The school built, in 1920, was in use up to 1937 when the Department built a decent one.

On Lake Winnipeg there are many ice houses. During the winter these are filled with ice which is used for packing fish during spring and fall fishing seasons.

One evening, during the winter, I was called over to Black Bear Island to see a sick child. It so happened that men had been filling one of the ice houses on the island but had neglected to put up any warning sign when they had quit for the day. This sign generally consisted of a few spruce branches placed around the area from which ice had been taken. It was quite dark when I had finished attending my little patient so I had intended to spend the night with a friend living just across a small bay. Not having been warned I happened to walk on the spot from where the ice had been taken. A thin skim of ice had formed since dusk. I had made but a few steps on it when I broke through and into the icy water I went. Struggling frantically I managed to make my way to where the ice was strong enough to bear my weight and climbed on it. It was fortunate that the spot where I had taken my cold bath was not too far from the house I had just left so I was able to reach it before my clothes froze hard enough to prevent my walking. I wasn't too pleased that I hadn't been warned by these people about the filling of the ice house. They themselves were quite upset about their forgetfulness for they realized that I could easily have been drowned.

Late in January Father de Grandpré had an attack of hiccups. When these had lasted, continuously, for about thirty hours both of us thought it would be wise for him to go to town and see a doctor. With medical treatment his ailment soon disappeared; however he did not return to Bloodvein but was sent to visit other Reservations, so I was alone for six months. Bloodvein was by no means a lively place. The only music... did I say music? I should have said noise, I heard was the beating of the drums in some of the dwellings of elderly Indians. I missed the Father as there were no white people in Bloodvein, except in the late spring when a trader came in, but the lonesomeness was lessened as I had a group of very nice pupils. Maintaining discipline was no problem. In fact during my fifty years of teaching I never had any trouble in that way. I am not suggesting that all my pupils were angels, for

a number of them were mischievous in a harmless way, as is the case with all children but among the hundreds of children I have taught I never had one with a really spiteful character. I believe all children, especially Indians, are keen observers and soon know if their teacher likes them and takes an interest in their welfare.

I had a fine train of dogs at Bloodvein. Snipe, the leader had been given to me by an old friend of mine, John Doggia. I believe Snipe was the best leader I ever had. He was a one-man dog, in other words, he loved his master but was indifferent to any other person. On trips, just as soon as he caught on to our destination he was best left alone. I didn't need to give him any commands.

During the Easter recess I decided to make a visit to Berens River. In April, during the daytime the snow is often soft, making the hauling of the sleigh hard on the dogs, therefore during that period of the year we used to travel at night. On this occasion I started off at ten o'clock. I had practically no load; just some feed for myself and the dogs. We passed Rabbit Point about midnight. When we had reached a little north of this Point, Snipe knew where he was going so I jumped on the sleigh and went to sleep for about an hour. At Flour Point, some eighteen miles north of Rabbit we took a rest. I gave the dogs, each, a fish; boiled the kettle and had a little lunch. We still had slightly over thirty miles to go, but made good time arriving at Berens a little after eight in the morning. My visit was a short one. In the evening a couple of days later we headed back for home. You will notice that I used the phrases, "we passed", "we took", "we headed back". For a number of years dogs were the only means of making a trip. They were our faithful companions. We took the pains to train them well and above all treated them well. They learned to obey every command and even every inflection of our voice. On more than one occasion we have been caught in blizzards when the visibility was zero. When this happened we let the leader find his way home knowing he would not

fail. This is remarkable when one remembers that rarely are there any trails on Lake Winnipeg. There was one dog who also was a favourite of mine. He had been blind since birth. We named him Tuffy. He was the biggest and strongest dog in our train and was always a hard worker. He was generally hitched near the sleigh. Sometimes I would have a little fun with him. I would ask someone to hold him and then I would go and hide in the bush. When let go he would sniff around a few seconds; find the scent of my footsteps and in no time find my hiding place.

The name Bloodvein was a peculiar one and I was curious to find out its origin. The Indians now call it Miskowisipi which means Red River. An old Bloodveiner told me that his grandfather had told him that many years ago the Saulteaux and Crees had fought a battle, against another tribe, near the river banks, during which a number were killed; from then on for a number of years it was called Miskwi Isipi, Blood River, later changed to Kiskowisipi.

When Treaty No. 5 was signed there were no Indians living near the mouth of the Bloodvein River. They were scattered a short distance along the east shores of Lake Winnipeg in the vicinity of East Dog Head and for a little while were known as the East Dog Head Band. It was not until some years later that they moved to the spot they now occupy. It was not until 1924 or 1925 that they had their own Chief of the Bloodvein Band. He also visited Poplar River, and Little Grand Rapids.

LITTLE GRAND RAPIDS

The houses at Bloodvein are fairly close together. The distance between the first and last is barely two miles. At Little Grand Rapids the houses are quite spread out. If one took a walk from the first to the last dwelling, lightly over five miles would be covered.

There had been a small day school at the north end of the Reserve for a few years but in 1926 the Indians in the southern portion also wanted a school. This favour was granted them by Ottawa, so Father de Grandpré and I were asked to go there. The conditions were to be the same as those at Bloodvein. The Department would supply a limited amount of school material but we had to find some sort of building.

Again an Indian promised to loan us a house which would serve as our home as well as a classroom. But one doesn't move to live in a fairly isolated place without careful preparation. We had to give careful consideration to the necessities we would require. We figured we needed a certain amount of groceries, a minimum quantity of bedding and clothing, some household goods such as pots and pans, etc., and a cook stove and heater. Although we would be helping in the freighting, the cost would come to seven cents a pound. But apart from the above mentioned merchandise we had to get our dogs, five in number, and a toboggan up to the scene of our new activities. There are approximately forty-six falls and rapids between Berens and Little Grand Rapids, necessitating portaging through bush paths or over rocky ridges, and, as at that time there were no outboard engines, one had to paddle all the way, so getting our freight up to Little Grand Rapids was no small task.

Referring back to my diary I am able to give you some idea as to what one of these trips was like at that time.

Three trips had already been made, but I had to come back to Berens to get the rest of our equipment.

This last trip was started on October 21, quite late in the season for freighting. On the first day the two guides and I made only five portages. We had started out a little late in the day, and it was rather slow work as extra care had to be taken, due to the rain and sleet showers which had fallen a few days previous to our start, making the bush and rocks slippery. About six miles from the mouth of the river is a rapid where years ago an Englishman was drowned, hence its name Englishman's Rapids. During the next three days we made twenty-nine portages one of them at Conjuring Falls. In bygone days the Indian "Medicine-men" liked this spot on the river to beat their drums and perform various rites. As time passed, we began to get a little worried. On some of the small river bays a skim of ice was forming. At Flag Portage we had to break some with our paddles. This spot on the river is so named from the fact that the first Indian Agent, Mr. Angus McKay camped there on the day that Queen Victoria was celebrating her Diamond Jubilee. In honour of the event Mr. McKay gave his men a holiday and hoisted a Union Jack up a tree trimmed for the purpose. His men went for a hunt, killed a moose, and thus provided themselves with several good meals. Not too far from Flag Portage is Old Fort Rapids, where in 1816, the Hudson's Bay Company had an outpost for a short time. We also passed the Queen's Chair. From a short distance away this rock formation really looks like a huge chair. The base is formed by a huge square rock and the back by a high thin slab almost touching the base.

On October 25th we faced a head wind. My two guides were used to paddling and didn't seem too tired, but my arms certainly ached so I was very glad when we made rather a short day and decided to camp just above Moose Painted Falls thus named because many, many years ago an Indian painted a picture of a moose on a fairly huge rock. The red colouring used must certainly have been of excellent quality as the outlines were still visible in spite of such a long exposure to weather. When passing it, many an Indian used to throw a piece of tobacco in the river. This was supposed to bring

good luck. Our last day of travel was the easiest, most of it was done through a number of lakes. We had only one long portage to make and this was at Night Owl Falls. Little Grand Rapids was reached in the afternoon of the sixth day. The same trip today could be made by aeroplane in forty minutes.

The first whiteman ever to come down the full length of the Berens River was William Tomison, in 1767, who made his way up the Severn River, from the Hudson Bay, and crossed over to the headwaters of the Berens which he descended to its outlet in Lake Winnipeg.

Once again our living quarters and classroom was a little log cabin. Looking in my diary again I read "Our residence is certainly picturesque (??)". No doubt this was written with my tongue in my cheek, as we say in English, which means the same as "believe or not". Actually, we had to make a little improvement. The door slanted up two or three inches so, that had to be fixed. The two window frames were a little too small, the space between them and the logs had to be chinked. We had the cook stove and heater but we had brought little else; not even chairs. The shack was about seventeen feet square with a small lean-to added. It served all purposes: living quarters, classroom, and chapel on Sundays. Our beds were rough planks but this didn't hinder us from sleeping well, as we both had good blankets made out of rabbit skins. It takes about eighty rabbit skins to make a good-sized blanket. At Little Grand Rapids we saw several children dressed in play suits made out of these skins. It seems a pity that the fur of these animals is no longer put to use. They certainly made good blankets, and the play suits the little tots wore in winter were far better and warmer than the children's clothes bought in the stores today. Our house wasn't too warm. Many a night during the winter everything froze.

I couldn't start teaching immediately as we had no desks. This problem was overcome when we got some men to cut a few logs and then, by means of cross-cut saws,

make some planks out of which we made a table almost as long as the house, the table being used as a substitute for desks. With other planks we made some benches for the children to sit on.

On my first day of teaching I had a few problems. A number of children appeared for class, including two babies in the care of a couple teenagers. But crying babies and teaching didn't mix well so I sent the babies home. All my pupils had Indian nick-names. It is true that some had Christian names but these were rarely used. Little by little I got them to remember their proper names. At first if I said: "Mike, come here", nobody came but when I said "Big Boy, come here", up came a little fellow. Kitchi Kewizance (Big Boy) was the boy's Indian name. In fact, even today he still goes by that name. The following is an extract from my diary: "Our people attend the Sunday Mass very attentively, nearly all of them prefer to squat on the floor instead of sitting on the school bench. Some of the babies are squalling most of the time but we are getting used to that". On one occasion, a fine old man, Charley Dunsford, entered whilst Father de Grandpré was preaching his Sunday sermon. Charley, wishing to show his good manners, went up to Father, shook hands with him at the same time saying: Bon jour, bon jour". Father said "bon jour" also a couple of times whilst shaking hands and then continued his sermon.

A few weeks after our arrival, two young boys, one named Edwin and the other was "Big Boy" (the one I mentioned a few lines back), thought we whitemen should have a nearby toilet instead of having to go a respectable distance in the bush. They cut some small logs;made the outside walls; used poles chinked with moss for the roof and when they had finished, proudly showed us their work. Naturally we praised and thanked them for their thoughtfulness; but there was one disadvantage to this toilet. There was no door.

One of our chores which took up quite a bit of our time was getting fuel wood. Until sufficient snow had fallen, permitting us to use our dogs and sleigh, we

had to haul dry trees out of the bush on our shoulders. We were lucky in being able to find some dry timber. about two hundred yards from our house.

Towards the end of January we had a very cold spell of weather. On January 24, "It was terribly cold outside. Inside was not much better; although we made a couple of fires during the night in the heater, the water in the pail was frozen solid. Tuffy (one of the dogs) must have been very cold, he howled almost all night."

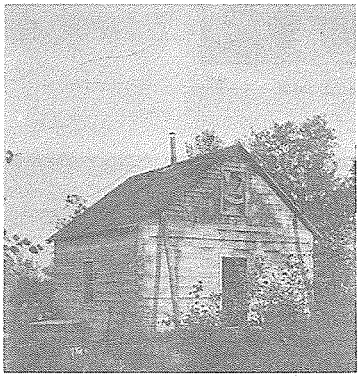
Father de Grandpré was never idle. Apart from giving instructions to those at Little Grand Rapids he visited several other reserves. During that winter from December 6 up to the third week in March he travelled slightly over one thousand miles with his dogs. Apart from making trips to Bloodvein, Jack Head, Fisher River and Berens River he visited Deer Lake and Pikangikum. It was the first time that members of these last named Reserves had ever seen a priest, but they had been visited a few times by the Rev. Stevens, a minister of the Methodist Church. This gentleman spent most of his life among Indians and spoke their language fluently. His home mission was Fisher River. He died a number of years ago whilst on one of his missionary trips.

It must not be thought that on these long trips, during the winter, the missionary just had to sit on the toboggan or sleigh and let his dogs do all the work. It is true that, at times, he might be able to ride short distances but most of the trip he had to run behind and help guide the toboggan through narrow twisting bush paths. Food and bedding for the driver and fish feed for the dogs took up most of the room on the toboggan. Each dog was fed six or seven tulibees at the end of the day's run. Sometimes during long trips they would get an extra fish at midday, so you see that on a six day trip it took nearly 200 fish feed.

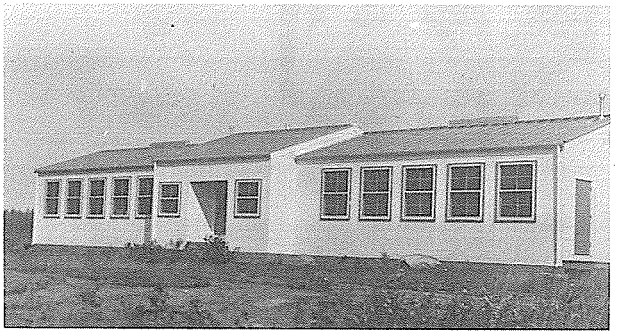
During the winter of 1926-27 a Little Grand Rapids trader had been hauling his supplies with a team of horses. For this purpose he had cut a bush road from

Berens River in 1918
(page 6)

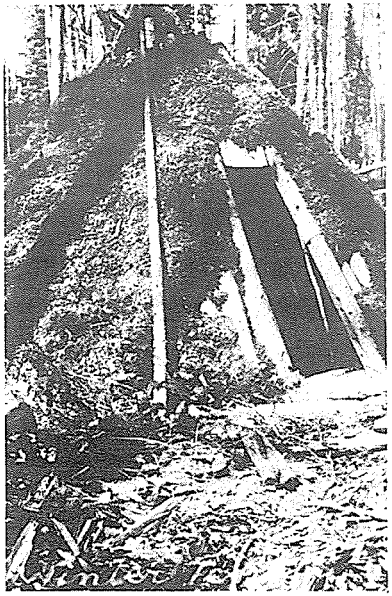
Hudson Bay Co.
Berens River
(page 35)



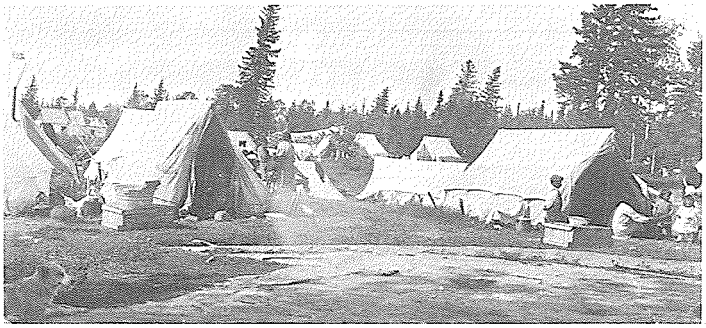
- Bloodvein -
new residence 1921
(pages 16 & 17)



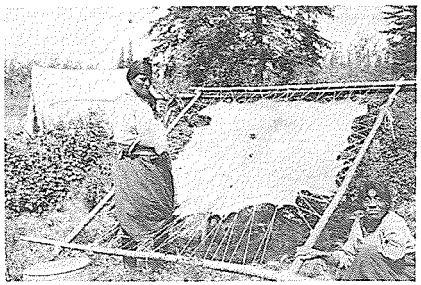
Bloodvein School
(page 55)



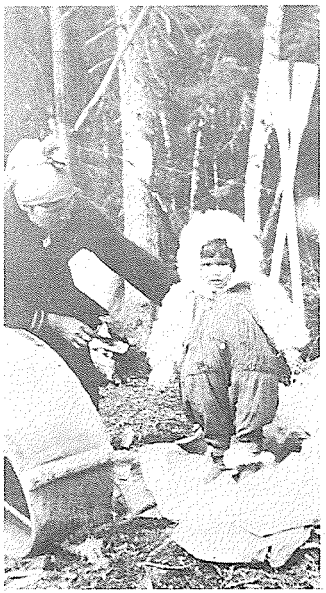
Indian winter camp



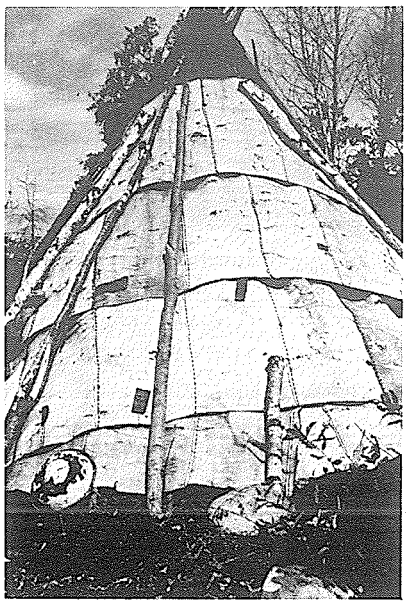
Indian camps at Berens River
(page 13)



Tanning moose hide



A child dressed
in a rabbit skin playsuit
(page 24)



Tent made of birch bark
(page 13)

Bloodvein to Little Grand Rapids. When the horses arrived for the first time there was considerable excitement among the children who had never seen one before. "They look like moose" was the remark made by one little fellow.

Sometimes I feel like smiling a little, when I hear people complaining about the mail service. "It only comes twice a week". "We have to walk two miles to the post office". Little Grand Rapids now has a post office but in those days our nearest one was Berens River so when we wished to send or receive mail we had to make a round trip of just about 250 miles. We went by bush road to Bloodvein, a distance of slightly over seventy miles and then followed the east shore of Lake Winnipeg up to Berens which meant another fifty-five miles.

That winter Father de Grandpré and Mr. Dave Donaldson, the Hudson's Bay clerk, had made their trips for the mail so my turn came during the third week of March. On the 19th of that month I got up at 4.30 a.m., made some bannock; packed up a grub box; rolled up my bedding; filled up a bag of fish for the dogs, then hitched them up and started off. We did fairly well that day and camped, outside, a mile from Big Mud Lake. The following morning we were on the move again at 6.30. From my diary I read "Hit my knee today. Our road was very bad for about four hours. The muskeg is tiring to travel through. The path is cut along the sunny side. We made two fires on the road and reached Bloodvein at 5.10 p.m."

"Monday March 21st. Started off from Bloodvein at 4 a.m. Took a short rest at Rabbit Point which was reached at 7 a.m. Had lunch at Flour Point and Pigeon Point. It was hard going during the day as there was a thaw and the dogs were tired. Reached Berens River at 7.45 p.m. Distance that day 55 miles. My knee still troubles me considerably."

I stayed a couple of days at Berens River and then started back. I didn't make more than twenty miles

that first day as it was thawing and the snow was soft. The following morning we made an early start but about midday there was another thaw. The dogs and I were frequently breaking through drifts. Travelling was not pleasant. South of Flour Point I slipped and gave my knee another twist. I was then having a harder time than the dogs. Riding was almost out of the question. At Berens I had gathered up the mail and had bought a few items so the dogs had a heavy enough load without adding my weight. We managed to reach Bloodvein very late that night. For the next three days the weather continued rather warm. I was beginning to wonder how I was going to be able to get back to Little Grand. On the lake the dogs needed no help from the driver to steer the toboggan but such would not be the case from Bloodvein to home. It was true that I could limp along but, certainly could not do any running or help the dogs with the toboggan in the bush road. I was in luck, however; I learned that Mike, the trader, would be taking another load up to Little Grand Rapids so I hired Harry Hamilton, to take my load and the dogs home and made arrangements to ride with Mike. He had been warned that the trail was none too good and that the load he was taking was far too heavy as the roads were bad due to the recent heavy thaws, but as this was the last trip of the season he wanted to be sure he would have enough supplies for the spring. He didn't listen to the advice given. We left Bloodvein, on March 30th. with eighteen hundred pounds of freight. That first day we made only fourteen miles. We soon realized that those who had told Mike about the roads being bad, had not exaggerated. The next morning we started of at 5.30 a.m. The snow was fast disappearing; in spots the road was bare. On April 1st we decided that we might have better luck if we travelled at night and rested the horses during the day. During the next three days matters didn't improve. The horses were getting worn out. We left the greater part of our load behind, in some camp shacks, not far from Mud Lake. At Little Goose Lake, Sandy, the horse gave up and we had to kill him. It was there that we left the balance of our

freight. A few miles further on Topsy, the mare, could not even pull the empty sleigh. She was unhitched and led the rest of the way. That was the worst day of the whole trip. We had showers of freezing rain and were soon wet to the skin. Luckily my knee had improved a little but I was still lame. Early that same afternoon we saw a dog-train approaching. It was Harry Hamilton. He had reached Little Grand Rapids, with my load. His time taken was only three days. But after a couple of days when we didn't arrive and there was no sign of us he decided to come and see what was causing our delay. He was surprised when he saw us. Mike leading Topsy; no load, and I limping behind. I was, as you can imagine, very glad to get to the end of that trip. During the whole of the journey we had had very little sleep. I got less sleep than Mike. He was the loudest snorer I have ever heard. Poor fellow he was drowned, a few years later, when travelling, on Lake Winnipeg, on weak ice. He was going from Bloodvein to Matheson Island.

The days passed very quickly. There was always plenty to do. Apart from teaching and visiting the sick there was a little cooking to look after. It is true that this occupation didn't take up too much time. Our meals were very simple. Coffee, bannock and perhaps a cereal for breakfast. At dinner and supper pork and beans would often appear with a dessert consisting of rice or jam. The menu did vary at times as the Indians were very good to us. When they got some moose or fish we were not forgotten. Mrs. Moar, the Hudson's Bay manager's wife would sometimes send us down a pie or the Methodist minister's wife a loaf of bread. We were far more fortunate than the Indians. In a number of homes butter and milk were luxuries. Trappers who spent eight months of the year in the bush were satisfied with fifty pounds of flour or even less. People today may think that our mode of living and that of the Indians, in 1926-27, must have been very hard to endure. It wasn't. We were not used to luxuries in those days and did not miss them. We and the Indians were just as happy then as we are today.

In regards to the Little Grand Rapiders there is one great difference between those days and now. There was far more sickness in the families. During the ten months that I was at Little Grand Rapids I made nearly a hundred sick calls. There was not too much I could do for my patients except try to improve the hygiene in the homes. Medical supplies were not too plentiful and, of course, there were no antibiotics. The housing and health conditions had not changed much since my visit in 1919.

Many a time did I have to visit the B... family. Seven, comprising four children, the mother and father and a grandmother, lived in a little shack not larger than 16 by 14. As before, spruce branches took the place of flooring and very little light made its way through the one small window. All the occupants slept on the floor. There was not a stick of furniture. The tin heater sometimes made the little cabin hot like a furnace, otherwise it was freezing cold.

On one occasion when I went there nearly all had the "flu". Cases of this type in those days were frustrating. No means available to evacuate patients; hygiene was then almost unknown and on occasions there was little co-operation from the parents or patient; added to this many preferred Indian remedies to the whiteman's. In the B. case all I could do was to provide a little milk and rice. One Saturday when I again visited them, the parents thought that one of the girls was improving as "she slept most of the night". They were mistaken, she wasn't sleeping, she was unconscious and died a little later on the same day.

Another patient I used to visit was C.D. He was advanced with tuberculosis. One afternoon Fr. Joseph de Grandpré and I went to see him and found the little house empty except for the dying man. His relatives were following an old, old custom which was followed by some Indians. They were leaving him to die in peace to go to the Happy Hunting grounds, while they stood outside wailing at a short distance from the home. It was at this time that I received, from an

Indian, the greatest compliment of my life. A few days after C.D...'s death, his father came to see me. I was smoking my pipe at the time. After he had entered the house and was seated he filled up his pipe and also started to smoke. To my surprise, a few moments later, he took my pipe and gave me his saying: "You looked after my son; you helped him; you saw him often. He is gone. I now take you for my son." I can only suppose that the exchange of pipes was his way of confirming the adoption. The only compliment I can now pay him is to say that he was a true old Indian Gentleman. When I use the term" gentleman" I mean it. He was a man who was courteous and absolutely trustworthy. The old man died some years ago but one of his sons is still alive and when I meet him on my visits to Little Grand Rapids he gives me a real hearty welcome, shaking hands and putting his other hand on my shoulder. When Old Dunsford's son died he was not buried in a coffin but was just wrapped in a blanket. That was the usual custom then. Sometimes after the burial a little tent was erected over the grave. On occasions I have seen a pipe and a little tobacco placed inside the tent. Perhaps the Indians, who were still pagan, thought the dead man would like to smoke in the hereafter.

Another one of my patients was Omimi's wife, I have forgotten her Indian name. She had a bad abscess on her knee. At first she had an Indian doctor and would not accept my help, but after a number of days when the Indian remedies proved of no avail she called for me. I had never, and never have since, seen such a huge abscess. I applied fomentations for a while and then, when it was ready for lancing did so. The quantity of pus which flowed out was sickening. After this successful treatment sick calls were more frequent.

The dancing of the pow-wow is dying out among the Indians of Manitoba but when we were stationed at Little Grand Rapids we heard the beating of the drums quite often. At times it would be the "medicine-man" drumming after he had been called out to give herbs to a patient. This drumming was supposed to increase the

efficacy of his medicine. In the fall when families were leaving for their trapping grounds the Indians would hold a pow-wow for two days. This was the means taken, by the older men, of asking their Manito for a good fur catch. Towards the end of May when all had returned to the Reserve, another long pow-wow would be held to express their thanks.

The drum, home made, was decorated with yards of coloured ribbon and dozens of little pieces of tin which would tinkle during the drumming. Two or three men would take turns beating the drums and singing at the same time. I used the term "singing", actually the word yodelling would be more appropriate. When large groups danced the steps were very simple. The dancers would go round in a circle moving their feet to keep time with the drum. Women formed the inner circle and men an outer circle. On occasions when the group dancing was finished two or three fellows would get up to show their skill. At first the beating of the drums was slow. Gradually the pace increased; faster and faster worked the drummers;faster and faster became the actions of the dancers. Twisting, crouching or jumping and every now and then giving loud whoops. Perhaps these actions and cries reminded some of the real old timers of the stories handed down to them from their ancestors, of the old war songs and dances held between the Saulteaux and the Crees when they went out to do battle against a common enemy.

In spite of little hardships, life at Little Grand Rapids was pleasant and enjoyable. The Indians were easy to get along with; there was no drinking on the Reserve, which is, unfortunately, not the case today. The children were a nice group of youngsters and made fair progress in school. Another factor which made life agreeable was the friendly cooperation of the staff of the Hudson's Bay Company and Mr. and Mrs. John James Everett who were in charge of the United Church Mission. In 1968, at the age of seventy six, Mr.Everett was still working among the Indians at Pikangikum. Even the Indian "medicine men" after a short period, showed

no antipathy. In fact, it was at that time I started to take a keen interest in the roots and herbs used by them for various ailments. We thought that we had a tough job when we hauled our freight, by canoe, from Berens to Little Grand Rapids but that was nothing when compared to the trips which had to be made, with supplies, when the Little Grand Rapids Post was opened in 1865. In those days all the supplies for the store were shipped from York Factory; several hundreds of miles separated these two places.

The end of June arrived. The school was closed for the summer holidays. Arrangements had been made for me to make a trip to England. I had not been back since my arrival here in 1911. On my return from my homeland, which was in August 1927, I learned that due to the shortage of missionaries a resident priest or brother could not be spared for Little Grand Rapids and I was again to be stationed at Berens River. This time I stayed there until 1936, teaching and looking after the sick. Our living quarters were no longer a log cabin. Our house now contained a kitchen, dining room, and a sitting room, on the ground floor, and there were four bedrooms upstairs. The building material for this house was obtained by taking down the old church at Peguis.

Our mail service had also improved. It now started from Berens River. A team of horses was used instead of dogs. The mailman had a sleigh, on the forepart of which was a small caboose just big enough to install a small heater and sufficient room for the mail bags. On the rear of the sleigh a limited quantity of freight could be carried. Father de Grandpré also quit using dogs. He had a small sleigh drawn by a single horse. But it does not matter what type of vehicle is used, there is always a certain amount of danger when making trips on Lake Winnipeg.

During the winter of 1932 Father de Grandpré was returning home after having visited Jack Head and Bloodvein, when he met the mailman also homeward bound. They decided to travel together. Apart from his ordi-

nary load the mailcarrier had three passengers. Ten miles north of Rabbit Point, and quite some distance from shore, a north-west blizzard sprang up. In no time at all the visibility was cut down to almost zero. Added to this the temperature was around twenty-five degrees below zero. A halt was made with the hope that the weather would soon clear up. Such was not the case. Night approached and the storm still raged. As the distance from shore was at least six miles it was too dangerous to try and reach it in such a wind and snowfall. It would be easy to lose the direction. All that night; all the next day and all the second night the blizzard continued. Due to the limited space in the caboose there was no room to sit down. The fuel wood carried by the mailman was soon finished, so, to keep the heater going parts of Father's sleigh were chopped. Finally on the third day the storm abated; the skies cleared and the weary travellers managed to reach Berens River.

During the winter, but more so towards spring, due to contraction and expansion, large cracks form in the ice on Lake Winnipeg. On one occasion our mailman encountered one of these about three miles south of a small settlement. Finding what he thought to be a safe place to cross, he cautiously advanced. The crossing was not as safe as he had thought and his horses fell through the crack. The man was all alone. In spite of every effort made to save the team, they were drowned. In struggling to save them he got soaked almost halfway up his body. He started to walk towards the little settlement; soon his clothes started to freeze. Luckily one of the settlers had noticed his plight and drove out with a dog train thus probably saving the mailman's life.

During the spring of 1929 there was quite a bit of excitement at Berens River. A prospector arrived and showed us samples of rock rich in nickel ore, said to have been found near Poplar River. Many local people and a number of outsiders went and staked claims. I received a present of one which I named "The Goldeye".

When the staking was finished a man was sent to the Mines Branch at Winnipeg, with the necessary fees to register the claims. The man sent, absconded with the money and was never seen again, nor was any nickel ever found in the Poplar River area. The samples of rock shown us had been taken from a mine in Ontario.

During the years I spent at Berens River one of my very good friends was Mr. F.A. Disbrowe. For about twenty-five years he was manager of the Hudson's Bay Store at Berens. After his retirement I often used to go and visit him at his home. Chatting with him was always interesting as he frequently spoke about his younger days. On one of my visits he gave me quite a surprise when he mentioned that he had nearly killed a missionary. "Nearly killed a missionary?" I exclaimed. "How?" - "Well", he said, "shortly after my arrival in Canada I wanted a bit of excitement so I joined the whites against the Metis. We were under General Middleton's command. After a bit of skirmishing we reached Batoche. It was there I saw someone exposing himself to our line of fire and as he was in the enemy's territory I asked if I could take a pot shot; when the O.K. was given I took a shot at the man and down he fell. It was only later that I learned that it was a priest and my shot hit him in the leg."

It was a surprising story and it was only a few years later when reading about some of the events of that period that I learned that Father J. Moulin had been hit in the leg by a bullet, at Batoche.

Mr. Disbrowe was the son of a Canon of the Church of England. When the uprising of the Metis had been settled he obtained work as a clerk in a fish company doing business on Lake Winnipeg. Later on he became one of the first teachers in the Indian School at Poplar River, after which he obtained his position with the Hudson's Bay Company until he retired. For several years he was also Police Magistrate for this area.

INDIAN MEDICINE MEN AND THEIR REMEDIES

In these days the Indian "medicine men" are not nearly as numerous, and do not possess the same power or influence over members of their Reserves as was the case fifty years ago. Since my arrival among the Indians I have known quite a few of the "doctors", and have witnessed the results of threats made against those who displeased them.

A number of years ago a young woman married the son of one of these "medicine men". Her husband died and within a short period after his death she married again. This angered her former father-in-law. During the feast given after this second marriage, at which I was present, he entered. "How is it that you have so soon forgotten my son?" he shouted. "You will not live many moons to enjoy the company of your second mate." This threat so terrified and worried the woman that her health gradually declined. She was examined by a doctor, but nothing organically wrong was found. Within a few months, however, she died, no doubt a victim of her imagination. She believed in the power of the sorcerer's threat.

On another occasion a young man had so angered one of these "magicians" that he too was threatened with a shortened life. A few weeks later he and two companions were shooting the rapids when their canoe was overturned by hitting a submerged log. The young Indian remembering the prediction, surrendered himself to the mercy of the current, making no effort to save himself. His companions, not being so naive, succeeded in bringing him to shore.

Fourteen years ago I happened to be busy doing some chores in the house when an Indian in his sixties entered. He seemed worried so I soon guessed he had something on his mind but didn't know how to broach the subject. "Is there anything I can do for you, John?" I asked. I was somewhat puzzled when he answered:
- "Do you sometimes have headaches?"
- "Not very often", was my reply.

- "Why?"
- "Be careful", John said, "Old D.G. is angry with you and right now is in the bush beating his drum and preparing bad medicine which will do you great harm".
I felt like smiling but didn't want to hurt my friend's feelings. I thanked him for having come to warn me and added that I wasn't in the least frightened of the "bad medicine". Actually, John had shown courage in coming to warn me. He sincerely believed in the power of the "medicine-man", D.G., and feared retaliation should the reason of his visit become known. I knew why D.G. was angry with me. A few days before I had entered his house to visit his son who was sick. Inside the shack was a big pot of home-brew, and the old man showed evidence that he had been sampling it quite frequently. When intoxicated he became quite quarrelsome, so not wishing him to cause any trouble to my patient, I threw the homebrew away.

Some of us may be inclined to laugh at the credulity of the Indians but let us remember that we, too, have our superstitions. On passenger boats plying Lake Winnipeg I never saw a cabin numbered thirteen. Quite a few people will not start on a trip on Friday 13th. I've seen a horseshoe hanging on the front door of a farm house. It was supposed to bring good luck. I knew one Captain, on Lake Winnipeg, who hated to have ordained ministers on his boat; another who detested cats on his boats... On one occasion, a priest, a minister and myself were on a steamer entering the narrow channel leading to the Hudson's Bay Dock. As we were passing and turning round Barrel Rock a sharp gust of wind caused the steamer to be grounded on the tiny island. Immediately we heard the Captain: "Damn those ministers anyway". Then there was the time when Mrs. W... was coming home to Berens from Selkirk and happened to have a black kitten with her. The Captain saw the little animal and told one of the deck hands to throw it overboard. Mrs. W... happened to hear him and managed to hide it during the rest of the trip.

For many years, I was Medical Dispenser on various Reserves. Before the excellent medical services now

available to the Indians, caring for the sick was no easy task. The tiny shacks occupied by large families, malnutrition and complete lack of hygiene, all contributed to the spread of disease. Forty-five years ago when I first started visiting my patients, there was a certain amount of opposition from the Indian "doctors" but after a few years they became friendly, with the result that for many a year now I have been able to gather quite a bit of information about the roots and herbs prescribed by them for various ailments.

In the early thirties I was camping in the bush with an Indian friend when, while cutting up some firewood, my axe slipped and I cut my foot. My companion got some gum blisters found on the outer bark of the balsam tree and applied the gum to the cut. It stopped the bleeding and seemed to act as an antiseptic. Another remedy which was frequently used, and still is used, goes by the name of "wike" (pronounced weekay). Some Indians call it wikanse. Commonly it is called wild ginger. For a headache a man would grind the root, mix it with a little tobacco; smoke it and inhale the fumes. For a sore throat the root would be chewed. For burns the Indians would crush the root, mix it with some lard and apply it as a poultice. For "colds" causing a sore chest, the root was crushed, mixed with hot water, and applied hot as a poultice. For indigestion, the root was boiled and the decoction drunk. It would seem that "wikay" (wikanse) was a cure-all. Diarhoea was, and still is, a frequent ailment among Indians. Before the whiteman's remedy had proved useful, the "medicine man" would boil the root of the wild strawberry, strain the liquor and give it to his patient to drink. During the winter when strawberry plants were impossible to get, a piece of root from the tamarack tree was ground,boiled in some water, and the decoction drunk. It was only natural that the Indian "doctors" had a number of prescriptions for "big colds" (probably tuberculosis). Decoctions were made and given by boiling the inner bark of various trees such as balsam fir, tamarack, mountain ash and, at times, even the leaves of the wormwood plant.

On one occasion, during the spring, I was out on a long trip when I got snowblind. This condition, as most of us know, is quite painful and lasts several days. My companion, William Moose, told me that he had some medicine which would cure it. I told him that I would try it. He got some tiny twigs, which resembled those of a willow; boiled a few; strained the liquid carefully, and put a drop or two in both of my eyes. The treatment smarted a little at first but it certainly was beneficial. In a short while the sharp shooting eye pains, characteristic symptoms of snow blindness, stopped, and I could see surrounding objects more clearly.

For nose bleed I noticed that some Indians use the powder found in a ripe puff ball. A pinch of the powder snuffed up the nostrils seems to allay the bleeding. Various plants and herbs are used for those suffering from rheumatism. The roots of the Mountain Ash were smashed, then boiled and the decoction drunk. Others preferred drinking, three or four times a day, a decoction made by boiling the inner bark of white and black spruce. Sometimes the leaves of the dwarf mint were used. This remedy took quite some time to prepare. First a big stone was well heated over a fire. Dry leaves of the mint plant were mixed in a basin with boiling water. The basin was placed on the heated stone. The patient covering his head would inhale the fumes. If you happened to get constipated when out on your trapping grounds, probably a decoction made by boiling some twigs from the white spruce and tamarack would be suggested as a remedy. Most people get headaches once in a while. Some Indians when they get one take some leaves of the fern plant, place them in boiling water, cover the head with a blanket and inhale the fumes. To stop excessive bleeding from the navel of a newly born baby the dried spores of a certain type of moss were used. Several plants or roots were prescribed for ailments peculiar to women. For pains during menses the twigs of the hazel bush were boiled and the liquid drunk. To facilitate childbirth the inner bark of the birch tree was cut to pieces, boiled, and

the decoction drunk. For wounds, sometimes the Red Osier dogwood was used. Its inner bark was crushed and boiled and the poultice applied.

Professional doctors in clinics or hospitals have the confidence of their patients. Those in their care know a correct diagnosis of the ailment will be made and beneficial remedies will be given. On the other hand, the "medicine man" often had to guess as to the nature of his patient's ailment.

Years ago, I was called out to see a young man who had been treated by an Indian "doctor" who had diagnosed the case as "cramps" in the stomach. Yes, the youth had "stomach cramps" but they were caused by an attack of appendicitis. There was another occasion when I was asked to go and see an old lady. I was rather surprised at her asking me to go as she seldom, if ever, had faith in the whiteman's medicine. When I examined her I was surprised to notice that both her eyes were extremely red and she could hardly distinguish objects in her own shack... Questioning her brought the fact that she had been using Indian eye medicine but "my medicine was too strong. Yes, the medicine she had prepared was too strong. Poor old lady, she became completely blind in a very short while.

I have no doubt that a number of roots and herbs used by the Indians were beneficial, but better success would have been obtained from their use if the "medicine man" had been able to correctly diagnose his patient's illness, and if he had known the proper quantity and strength to administer.

Years ago, before adequate medical services were established on Reserves, medical dispensers sometimes took on volontary night duty. This occurs when a patient was dangerously ill or was the victim of a lengthy sickness. It was during such vigils that one soon realized that endurance to pain is characteristic of most Indians. Patience also is a distinctive mark amongst parents looking after sick children. I have known mothers stay up night after night, even weeks at a time, ever on the alert for the slightest movement or desire of their loved ones.

The case of little Catharine G... is a good example. She was suffering from intestinal tuberculosis and had been suffering for a considerable time. Although only eleven years of age she rarely complained. I used to go and visit her daily, after school hours, or during the evenings. There was, unfortunately, very little I could do for her. In 1929, those seriously ill were not evacuated for hospital treatment. During my visits Catharine always desired a few minutes of prayer. One evening just as I was about to go home she looked at me and said: "Nissaie (my brother) will you stay with us tonight?" How could one refuse such a request? From then on I made arrangements to go on duty from midnight to six in the morning. As I have just mentioned, there was very little I could do for her except see that she had sufficient water or milk to drink or sometimes arrange her pillows for her, but added to this my presence would give the mother a chance to get some sleep which she certainly needed. It was perhaps because Catharine was thinking of her mother that she asked me to stay. This little girl was a wonderful example of self denial. When her pains were acute I wanted to awaken her mother. "Don't, nissaie, mother is tired," she would say. At other times noticing that I, too, was a little sleepy, the little girl would say, "Nipan achina, nissaie" (sleep a little while, my brother). Catharine knew she was going to die but showed absolutely no fear. In fact just before she passed away she kissed her mother good-by and then, smiling weakly, took my hand, Migwetc, kitchi migwetc" (thanks, thanks very much).

Cases of fortitude are not rare among our Indians, when accidents happen. One which impressed me in a striking manner goes back a little over thirty five years ago. One afternoon, during class hours, a man drove up with his dog-train and rushed into the classroom. "Come quickly, teacher," he said, "dogs have nearly killed my boy." I dismissed my pupils; gathered up a few first aid necessities, jumped on the sleigh and off we went to the scene of the accident. On the way we passed some of my school children on their way

home. The driver and I had the hardest time to stop the dogs from attacking the children. Those dogs had tasted blood. They were the ones who had attacked the driver's boy. I certainly was shocked when I saw my patient. He was a boy of nine years. Parts of his scalp were torn off. Shreds of it were hanging down over his ears. Numerous were the bites on neck and shoulders; there were also a few bites on his hands and his parka was torn in places. Rendering first aid took a considerable time. I first cut off the useless bits of the scalp, then washed and bandaged all the wounds. There is no doubt that the little fellow suffered. Occasionally he gave a groan but not once did he really cry or try to stop me when cleaning the wounds hurt. When I had finished my work a small caboose was made. A different train of dogs was hitched up and the trip of one hundred and twenty-five miles was started for the nearest railway terminus. It took three days. The little patient was then put on a train and taken to St. Boniface Hospital where he needed treatment for nearly three months.

The parents of the boy couldn't understand why the dogs had attacked their son. The dogs were used to the children and had never shown any sign of viciousness. At the time the father was going on a short trip, had hitched up the dogs and had then gone into the house to get some things needed, during which he heard the dogs growling and barking. Thinking they were starting to fight amongst themselves he rushed out. He was horrified to see his boy on the ground being attacked by all five dogs. He knew that those dogs could never be trusted again so he shot them that same day.

Another case of endurance to pain comes to my mind. Sturgeon are found in several rivers and in various parts of Lake Winnipeg. A fair number weighing over one hundred pounds have been caught. Apart from the use of nets, large hooks are also used. Some years ago a man came to our house. Deeply embedded under a sinew of the right wrist was one of these hooks. The man had been trying to land a struggling sturgeon. The fish

had been well caught by a hook but its violent efforts to escape caused an adjacent hook to enter the man's wrist. I had rather a delicate task to perform owing to nearby blood vessels. First I sawed off the projecting loop, then carefully cut into the flesh until I could grasp the barb of the hook with small tweezers and was thus able to pull out the remaining portion of the hook. The man must have suffered during the procedure, but he showed no emotion whatsoever.

Nearly all mothers show heroic courage when danger threatens their children. We had an example of this at Berens River in April 1966.

There was a home occupied by a mother and her seven children ranging in age from eleven down to a baby a few months old. The father, at the time, was away in the bush trapping. One day the woman was having a hard time getting the fire to start in her cook stove, because the wood was a little on the green side. She had poured some coal-oil on, but the wood continued to smoulder. Again she poured on coal-oil. Suddenly there was an explosion. Flames shot out of the stove. The woman's clothing caught on fire. When the children saw this they ran out of the house screaming. A man who happened to be passing by ran into the house, took the baby outside, then grabbed the woman, rolled her on the ground in the snow, thus extinguishing the flaming clothes, but the woman believing that another child still remained in the house again rushed into the house which was now blazing. Luckily no child was inside but the mother in doing so received still further burns. She was brought to the local hospital in a terrible condition. Large portions of her skin were hanging down from her arms and body. An emergency message was sent by radio-phone to the nearest doctor of this area. As the ice was not too good for a plane to land, a helicopter was sent. The victim was flown to Winnipeg but died just as she reached the city.

There is very little of interest worth writing about from August 1927 up to the year 1936. I believe the two hardest years during that period were 1928 and

1929. During the winters and springs of those two years there were epidemics of "flu". The type was not as serious as that of 1918, nevertheless several people died as the result of complications. I note from my diary that on many occasions I had over a dozen patients to visit per day. This meant walking at least six miles. Somehow or other there was a shortage of food both for the sick and ourselves. On Friday February 10th 1928 I wrote in my diary: "The cow ran dry, in other words our canned milk is finished. We are out of rice, white sugar and are nearly out of coffee. This may be called signs of spring because we are always short of stuff towards spring and this year it is worse than ever."

NINETEEN THIRTY-SIX

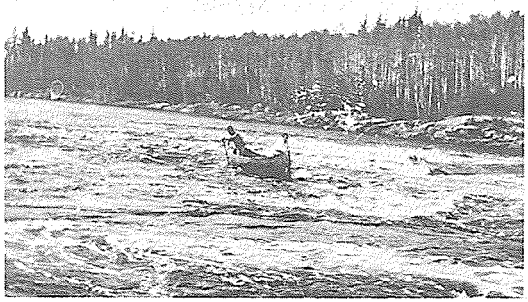
In 1936 it was thought that a small Residential School would be advantageous for the Berens River Reserve. The construction of a building, measuring fifty feet by thirty-five, was started towards the end of May and completed in time for the beginning of the school year. The Oblate Sisters, a religious Congregation in charge of many schools in various parts of Canada, agreed to assume the responsibility of conducting its operation. None of us who gave a hand in the construction will forget the intense heat during some of the days of July. On several occasions the thermometer registered between ninety and ninety-five and on two days it went up to one hundred. It was then that Mr. Swartz, one of the men working on the cement foundations, fainted and suffered a heat stroke. During those hot days, in the afternoon, we would go down into the cellar of the old house, where it was cooler. The time thus lost was made up during the evenings.

In spite of the efforts and pains taken by the good teachers, the residential school was not a success due to the lack of co-operation from the parents of the children. An idea was then put forward, why not use the new building as a nursing station as Berens River was fairly isolated and there was no doctor and no nurses for over a hundred miles. Beds could be installed for those needing intern care. The idea was welcomed by the local people. As hospitals are not in the sphere of work generally undertaken by the Oblate Sisters, the Grey Nuns were asked, and they accepted the task of taking charge of the nursing station and also agreed to provide a teacher for the Day School. It soon became evident that an addition would have to be made to the Nursing Station to meet the demands for in-patient accomodation. This was done in 1942. Today, counting some cribs for babies, there are eighteen beds available in the Berens River Hospital.

There was another event worthy of note which occurred in August 1936. This was the coming of three

visitors: His Excellency, Mgr E. Yelle, archbishop of St. Boniface; his secretary, M. l'abbé A. Boulet; and Mgr Geo. Courchesne, bishop of Rimouski. A number of people had to be confirmed at Berens River. But this was only the beginning of our visitors' trip. After a brief stay at Berens River they continued on to Little Grand Rapids. Three canoes were used for the purpose. The trip up the river on which the portable chapel could be placed for the celebration of Mass. The weather was ideal except for a wind storm encountered on the big lake near the Little Grand Rapids Reserve. The arrival of the Archbishop was a memorable day for the Indians. They had never received the visit of a bishop previous to this date. One elderly pagan had received instructions in the Faith and was to be baptized. He was so nervous that he was permitted to sit down during the greater part of the baptismal ceremony. His nervousness could have been caused by fear arising from the thought "What will the 'medicine-men' think of this." It goes without saying that the visit was a great success. It was a real pleasure to travel with our distinguished guests. They took the unaccustomed hardships with cheerful good nature. During the five and a half days we travelled on the river they slept on spruce branches, (beds and mattresses were too bulky to handle in canoes); they ate in picnic style,trudged through bush and over rocks in the numerous portages and naturally had to sit for hours in the canoes.

As the Oblate Sisters were to take over my duties at Berens River my presence was not needed; but a teacher was needed at Bloodvein so I was informed that later on, that summer, I would be transferred there and that Father Célien Gauthier would be the director of the mission. It was thought advisable that I make a trip ahead of time to find out what we might need. For this trip a yawl, powered by an outboard engine was used. My companion was James McKay, the grandson of Angus McKay, the first Indian Agent. After travelling about three hours we noticed, some distance south, clouds of smoke rising high in the air. Continuing

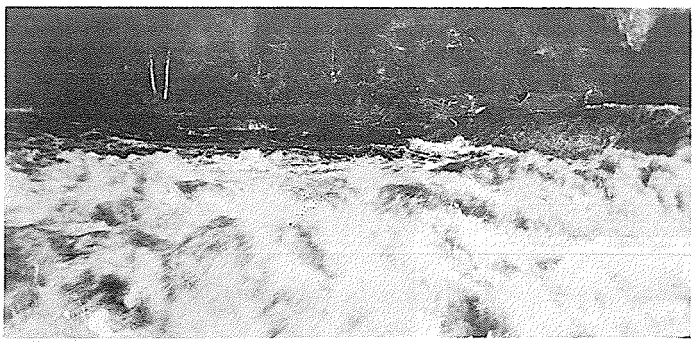


Berens River
Shooting the Rapids
(page 22)

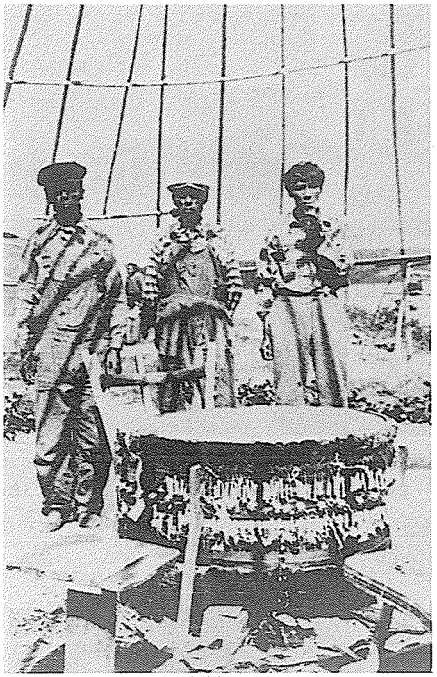
Archbishops E. Yelle & G. Courchesne
on their way to Little Grand Rapids 1936
(page 46)

50 miles from Berens
WHITE BEAVER - one of the
many falls on Berens River

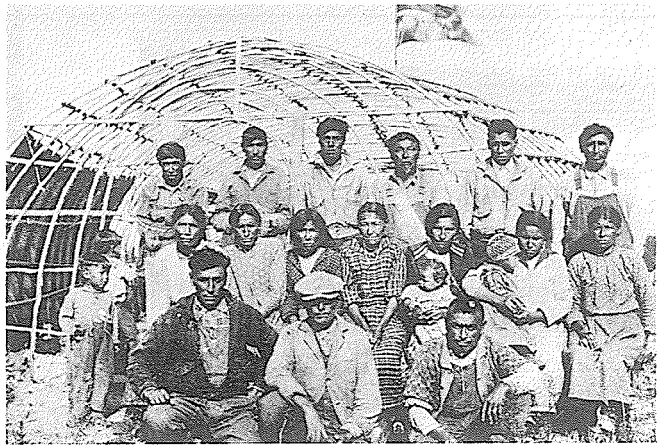
Part of the fire
(p. 47)



Sturgeon Falls
10 miles up Berens River

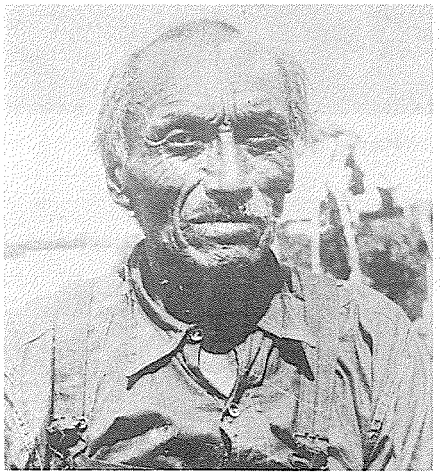


Drum used in pow-wows
(p. 31)



Pow-wow Hall
(p. 31)

Conjuring tent



Joe Duck
"medicine man"
(page 36)

Meeting of Indians
Deer Lake - 1916

on our way we soon knew that a big bush fire was burning around Bloodvein, the very place we were heading for. Ten miles from our destination we encountered a heavy pall of smoke causing us considerable difficulty in finding the mouth of the Bloodvein River. When we landed near the mission the sight which met our eyes was not encouraging. On and around the Reserve the bush was ablaze. Burning fir trees shot flames high into the air. Working with the Bloodveiners were a number of outsiders doing their utmost to prevent the fire from destroying the homes of the Indians and the mission buildings. The heat was terrific and the blinding smoke caused all to have sore throats and smarting eyes. My companion and I could do very little to help but we stayed a few days until, luckily, a favourable wind diminished the hazard, keeping the fire away from the buildings. Actually the bush burned and smouldered for several weeks and a thick smoke hung over the district for a long time. Finally rain fell and extinguished the flames. For miles around, gone were the beautiful fir trees and in their place stood ugly charred stumps. Many fur-bearing animals perished and for several years trapping was poor in the surrounding district.

Writing about the Bloodvein fire reminds me of one which occurred at Berens River in 1940. On Friday morning August 9th. of that year a heavy smoke haze hung over the settlement. All knew what that meant. A bush fire had started. Fire fighters equipped with fire hoses, axes and shovels were dispatched to the scene of the blaze which happened to be seventeen miles up the Berens river. Men toiled in vain to halt its progress. All along the river were thick stands of pine and balsam trees. Any fire starting among them is almost impossible to control. On Monday the 12th., pushed by a violent wind the flames were within a short distance of the settlers' homes. At 2 p.m. the following day the staff of the mission and hospital were warned that the fire could reach these properties at any moment. All were advised to take refuge on Sigurdsons's Island, a distance of about a mile off shore.

Skiffs were made available at the mission dock for the evacuation. The Sisters and Father de Grandpré, who was the director of the mission at that time, had hurriedly gathered a few necessities. When the patients had been made as comfortable as possible in the skiffs all went to the Island. The people of the hospital and the mission were by no means the only ones to take refuge there. Already there were quite a number of families camped in tents, having moved from their homes when the flames threatened. The fire destroyed the mission residence and an outbuilding as well as a number of Indian dwellings. The hospital and the church were spared from the flames.

Father Célien Gauthier and I took up our duties at Bloodvein on August 22nd, 1936. We met with more distress on our arrival. Following the bush fire an epidemic of measles broke out. It didn't take long before almost every child as well as a number of young adults showed the symptoms: red watery eyes; a frequent dry cough and high temperatures followed a little later by the appearance of small dusky red spots. Nine died from complications of the disease. Another factor contributing to the misery of all, was the acute shortage of food supplies.

Years ago epidemics of almost any type of sickness were fare harder on Indians than on whites. One reason which I have already mentioned was malnutrition which was general on most Reserves, a condition which lessen the resistance of the Indian to sickness. Many a time, during the twenties and thirties, I have known my pupils to come to school having had no breakfast or perhaps a meal consisting of dry bannock and a cup of tea, with no milk or sugar. Fortunately, in those days the Department used to send out in the Fall, a small supply of beans, rice, some powdered milk, cocoa and a little sugar. With these items I used to make a midday meal for my pupils. However, the supply rarely lasted for a full school year. The Government also sent out a supply of food for the old people. Every month I had to issue them a monthly "ration". These supplies can in

no way be compared, in value, to the relief cheques sent to those, not receiving pensions, in need of welfare. In olden days the monthly allowance of food consisted of: five pounds of salt pork, five pounds of beans; four pounds of lard; four pounds of rolled oats; one pound of tea; three pounds of sugar and a couple of pounds of rice. In cases of sickness sometimes a little canned milk was added.

Teaching was still one of my occupations but looking after the sick took up quite a bit of my time. Not only had I to visit patients on the Bloodvein Reserve but up to 1955 I received many calls from surrounding white settlements. During the winter, visits to these places were made by dog train. Knowing that I was teaching during the day calls from settlers came after school hours except in cases of real emergencies. I didn't mind making these calls for those who came for me especially if they came with a good cariole, plenty of blankets and splendid dogs. Quite often I would fall asleep soon after we set out and didn't wake up until we reached the settlement where medical help was needed. I admit, however, there were times when one couldn't get much rest due to rough ice conditions causing the cariole to bounce up and down or tip this way and that way. On other occasions we might be travelling in temperatures of more than forty degrees below zero, in that case one got chilled to the bone in spite of being well covered up.

The following extract from my diary will give some idea about my visits to the white settlements.

"December 31st. 1937. Heard there was quite a bit of sickness among the whites so decided to make a round trip. Visited Snake Island (the local name for Matheson Island), found there were some cases of tonsilitis and flu. Stayed the day. Early next morning went to Loon Straits. Carl Monkman had croup also little girl who was badly scalded when she dropped a kettle of hot water. January 2nd. - 24 degrees below zero, strong blizzard from north-west. Stayed at Loon Straits. Next day visited Big Bull Head and Pine Dock. Cases of flu; also had to extract a few teeth. Left for home the next morning; forty-two below zero." In that trip we travelled sixty-six miles.

There is one characteristic common to all those I have visited on Lake Winnipeg: it is their hospitality, not because I came to give medical assistance, but it

is just natural for them to make their visitors feel at home. The following is a typical example. Some years ago I was called out to see a patient at Dauphin River, a distance of about forty miles west of Berens River. The snow was somewhat soft and deep so when we reached a trapper's camp, at MacBeth Point, we decided to give the dogs a rest. The owner of the camp was away but on the door was a note: "Make yourself at home but please close the door when you leave." This invitation was extended to anyone passing by.

As was the case at Berens River, several calls I received made a deep impression on me.

On December 20th. 1945 I was awakened at 2.30 a.m. when a dog train arrived. "Hurry, teacher", said the driver, "you are wanted at Snake Island, someone is badly hurt." The trip was made in almost record time, the driver urging his dogs on at top speed. When he stopped at a house on the Island, I entered. I got a shock. There on a bed was a man lying in a pool of blood. He was dead. I was told he had been in a fight with another man and in the scuffle his opponent had accidentally killed him. It must have been a terrible fight for apart from other marks on his face there was a hole through the face to the jawbone which was broken. The police investigated the case but the person who had committed the manslaughter was let off free.

Another call which made an impression on me happened on January 3rd. 1948. I was called to investigate the death of one of my Indian friends, Gabriel Green. From information I obtained I learned that he had started off from Bloodvein, the previous morning, for Rabbit Point, to sell some furs. Reaching the cabin of his brother-in-law, who was absent at the time, Gabriel must have decided to take a rest. No doubt he made a fire in the heater, then stretched out on a bed and must have fallen asleep. The tin heater must have got overheated causing the paper, with which the shack was lined, to catch fire. Evidently Gabriel had tried to make his escape but was probably overcome by smoke. There was nothing left of the cabin, and all that was

found of Gabriel were his bones. He was without doubt the best trapper in Bloodvein, a married man with five children, and a man who didn't waste his money.

Again looking through my diary I am reminded of a really tragic event which occurred when a doctor was called out to render medical attention to a Bloodvein family who were staying, at the time, with some friends at Rabbit Point.

"Sunday November 30th. 1958. Was awakened at 3.25 a.m. when Doctor Van dan Berg arrived in a helicopter which landed in our baseball field. Was quite surprised as there was a strong south wind blowing with some snow flurries. The doctor had received a message from Rabbit Point stating that Mrs. Jacob Crate and her three-year-old daughter had received severe burns when the house in which they were staying had been destroyed by fire. On landing there, the pilot of the helicopter wanted someone to go and show him the way to the scene of the accident. Charley Young, our neighbour, agreed to go. The helicopter returned to Bloodvein at 5.15 a.m. with the victims; let Charley off and then proceeded southward. Later on during the day we heard that the helicopter had crashed a few miles south of Hole River (fifty miles south of Bloodvein). I stood by our radio-phone most of the day to hear the result of the crash. Early in the evening the news came that all the occupants had been killed: the Doctor; the crew of three; and the two patients."

A couple of days later I heard the cause of the fire at Rabbit Point. Mrs. Crate had taken a can of gasoline in mistake for coal-oil to light the fire in the stove. On applying a lighted match there was an explosion. Mrs. Crate's clothes caught fire. Both her arms were burned to the bone. Carrie, her little daughter, also received third degree burns.

It must have been a terrible shock to the Doctor's wife. She didn't know that he had gone in the helicopter. When he left his house, at Pine Falls, she thought he had gone to the hospital, which was just across the road from the house, to await the arrival of the patients.

Doctor Van den Berg had received his transfer from Pine Falls to Churchill. They had already packed everything and were to have left a couple of days later for their new post.

Every year drownings occur on Lake Winnipeg. There is no doubt some could be prevented if people were more cautious when making trips by boat. Some have the habit of putting TWO outboard engines on the stern of their yawl. They figure that, in doing so, time will be saved on the trip. This may be true, but supposing a strong wind springs up suddenly when they are some distance from shore, and this can easily happen, the weight of two engines plus that of the driver can hinder the boat from rising on the crests of the waves, thus allowing water to break into the boat. This happened to a friend of mine a few years ago. He was drowned. Some people venture out on the lake with an overloaded boat; an extra big wave comes along and swamps the boat. Another cause for drownings is that trips are made on the lake by those who have had a little too much to drink before starting out. This condition could be compared to impaired driving with cars.

Anxiety is always felt when giving artificial respiration to victims of lake accidents. Are our efforts going to be successful or not? I have known cases where artificial respiration has been applied for almost an hour, always with the hope that a sign of life will appear. One hates to give up in such cases. There are times when those nearby have absolutely no idea what to do. They get so excited that they use no common sense at all. There was the case of the man who rushed into our house: "My little boy has fallen into the water." I ran to the spot. There was a four-year-old lying on a rocky ledge three or four feet under water. In their excitement the parents had had no sense or thought of looking at the depth of the water; had they done so they could have pulled the boy out. On another occasion a lad of sixteen must have got cramps when swimming not too far from shore and had sunk under the water. A companion who was dressing after a

swim noticed this and managed to bring his friend, now unconscious, to shore but had placed him on his back and had not started artificial respiration. Luckily we managed to bring the young man around again. I am glad to say that of late years most people on the lake now know how to give first aid in such cases.

In these modern days there are Nursing Stations and small hospitals in a large number of northern Reserves where the sick can be treated and if necessary the patient can be evacuated by plane to city hospitals. Before these services were available we had to treat all the sick in their own homes. To show sympathy for the sick person, his friends would crowd into the dwelling. The presence of so much company could be the reason why, on rare occasions, some of those with some mild ailment tried to exaggerate the extent of the sickness by putting on a good act to impress visiting friends. There was the case of a young lady who was supposed to have frequent fainting fits accompanied with convulsions. On entering her home I found her lying on the floor covered with an old blanket. On examining her, I could find nothing wrong but during the examination I had to be a little careful as at times the young lady would swing her arms rather violently in my direction. Was this an act? Did she just wish to draw attention to herself? I withdrew from her and went to sit on an empty box a few feet away and watched her for a few minutes. I noticed that when her boy friend was near she was absolutely quiet. I got suspicious. Again I went close to her. The arms started swinging again. I grabbed one and gave it rather a hard pinch. That finished the "fainting fits". But what a look she gave me!

It would be boring to read about all that happened during the twenty-nine years I stayed at Bloodvein. It was practically a repetition of work done during previous years. I really enjoyed my work, as teacher, for, as I have already mentioned, I had a fine group of pupils and added to this we were now getting good co-operation from the parents. During the first year, 1936, Father Gauthier used to give me a hand with the housekeeping,

but we lost this job, and with no regret, when Brother Stanislas Heytens, took over the work, when he joined us on September 16,1937. His presence was appreciated. Bloodvein is a Reserve composed of rocky ridges with plenty of loose rocks scattered around. On a dark night one had to be careful, even around our buildings, not to trip over some of the rocks. This situation was gradually improved by Brother Heytens. During much of his spare time he dug out the ones showing above the surface, carting them and other loose ones, by means of a homemade wheelbarrow, down to the river bank. It is no exaggeration to say that he thus disposed of tons of these rocks. In September 1938, the Department finally granted funds for the building of a teacher's residence. We left our log house, which had been in use for eighteen years and moved into our new residence towards the end of November. Twenty years later, in October 1958,a fine two class-room school was started and was in use by January 1959.

In 1962 I reached my fiftieth year of teaching in Canada. By that time, for two years I had been teaching some of the grandchildren of my first Bloodvein pupils who had attended school in 1920.

There are some people who think that Indians have no sense of gratitude. With this I disagree. Many Indians are stoic and therefore repress signs of emotion. Nevertheless, many a person, myself included, have been shown unmistakable signs of appreciation for services we have rendered. Once when I was alone at the mission, I fell sick, in fact I was unconscious from around ten p.m. until between six and seven the following morning. Who sat by my bedside looking after me? The Indians. It was they who made the arrangements for a plane to come and have me evacuated to St. Boniface Hospital. On another occasion I had rather a bad attack of "flu". An Indian who was fishing on the lake heard of this, got someone else to look after his nets and came to Bloodvein with his dog train and drove me to Berens River Hospital. This meant that Walter made a round trip of over one hundred miles. When I wanted to pay

him he absolutely refused to take a cent for his trouble although I tried my best to force him to do so. A few years ago I was spending a few days in Bloodvein on business. I was chatting with someone in the house when I was told that I was wanted in the band hall. I went. On entering I was surprised to see that it was crowded. I had forgotten that it was my birthday (People of my age don't think about their birthdays), but the Indians hadn't. They had made a birthday cake; had bought some cookies and also made a quantity of soft drinks. All present took part in the birthday party.

Some people treat Indians as if they were an inferior class of people. They are not. Treat them as you would any other class of people, don't spoil them, and you will have good trustworthy friends. Father Gauthier left Bloodvein some years ago. The Indians are still inquiring about him. Father de Grandpré spent a number of years at Little Grand Rapids. Many are the Indians asking about him when I go there. If they did not appreciate these good missionaries they would not bother about them.

POLICE MAGISTRATE

In 1947 there was no police magistrate in this area of Manitoba. For this reason I was asked if I could accept the position. I hesitated for quite some time. I did not care for the idea of a missionary brother acting as magistrate. I wrote to Father Philippe Scheffer, who was then our Provincial, asking his opinion. He rather favoured the idea, thinking that perhaps I could be of help to the Indians. With this idea in mind I accepted the position, knowing full well that should it prove a deterrent to missionary work I could easily resign. I held Court for the first time on January 22nd. 1948.

I have sometimes wondered if an Indian with no knowledge of English, who appears before a magistrate who has no knowledge of the Indian dialect, gets perfect justice. The magistrate must rely entirely on the interpreter. I have listened to a number of them in various community meetings and rarely has the exact meaning of a speech been given. This is not too important in some meetings but it is extremely important in Court. Then again some interpreters speak in such a low voice that they can hardly be heard. All who are interested should be able to hear clearly what is being said. Several times I have had to ask the interpreter to speak in a louder voice.

How could I, in my position of magistrate, be of assistance to Indians? Not by being too lenient with them but:

1. Understanding the Saulteaux language, I could make sure the interpreter interpreted correctly and exactly the charge or evidence produced in Court. Unless great care is taken in this respect an interpreter can almost suggest an answer he would like to hear.

2. I could make sure that the defendant clearly understood the charge or evidence against him. Sometimes, myself, I would ask him in his own language: "Do you clearly understand?"

3. Even if the defendant pleaded guilty I would like to hear the facts of the case to find out if there were any extenuating circumstances.

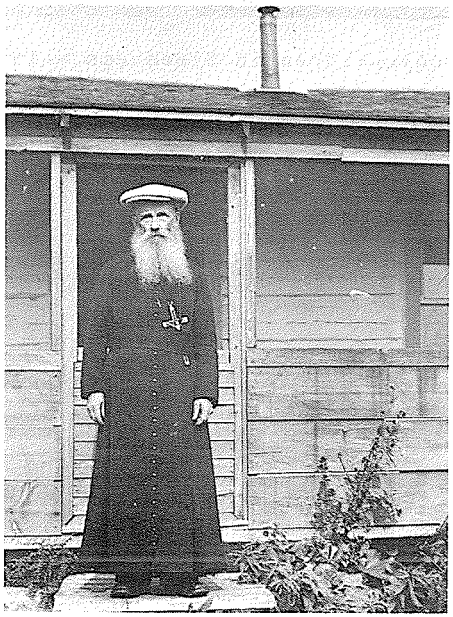
In one case which came up before me, "A" laid a complaint against "B" in which he accused "B" of striking him with his fists. Briefly, the Information reads "B" (on date) at (name of place) did strike "A" with his fists... In this case "B" pleaded guilty. He had struck "A". -"Why did you hit him?" I asked. "Because "A" hit me first," was the reply. Case dismissed. Self defense.

In some cases a decision is a little difficult to reach. There was a case where one woman accused another woman of stealing a moose hide. Both claimed ownership. It was impossible to find out who really was the owner. It seems that the two husbands had gone out moose hunting together but neither wished to get mixed up in this court case. The women's tempers were beginning to flare. The hide was in the Court room so I asked for a sharp knife, cut the hide in two and gave half to each woman. They were quite happy about the decision. Both went out smiling. Some "Court Houses" can be very cold. One January a few years ago, there was a complaint and information out against a man for being intoxicated and causing a little trouble. We flew to Little Grand Rapids in the R.C.M.P. plane MPM but on arriving there found that the man was away fishing, on a lake about thirty miles distant. We flew there; held Court on the ice, in the middle of the lake in a temperature of nearly thirty degrees below zero.

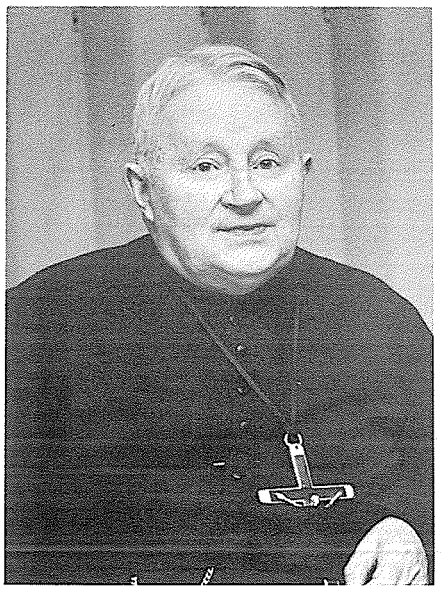
During the twenty-one years that I have been magistrate I can truthfully say that no sign of spite was ever shown against me for the various decisions I had to make. About once a month I go to Little Grand Rapids. On my arrival there are always plenty of smiles and handshakes with the greeting "anin nichi" (hello, my friend). A number of these greetings come from those who have come before me on charges.

Father P. Vales, O.M.I.
Berens River, 1918-1921
(page 4)

Fr. J. de Grandpré, O.M.I.
Bloodvein, 1920
(page 16)



Fr. Célien Gauthier, O.M.I.
at Matheson Island in 1939
(page 48)



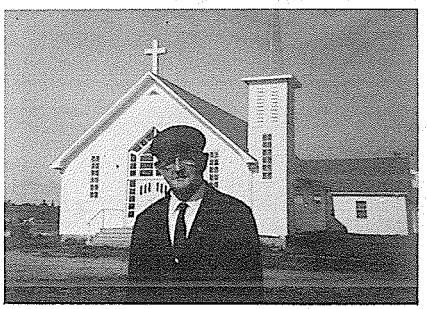
Father J. de Grandpré,
now retired

Bro. F. LEACH, omi

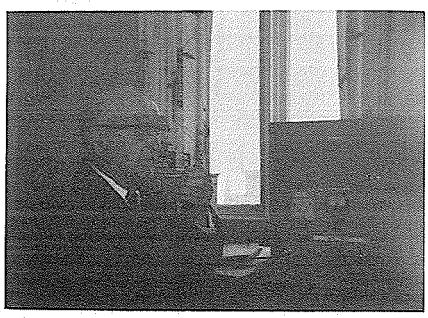
with Fr. R. Bernardin

with schoolchildren in Bloodvein - 1964

before take-off
with Fr. R. Bernardin
Bro. E. Kosa



before Berens River church



talking on two-way radio
Berens River - 1971

It cannot be said that my position as magistrate helps the mission financially. I receive no salary and I keep the court costs to a minimum; very often just the two dollar fee for the police.

There is one question which I think needs looking into regarding Indians or others in the low income bracket. This is the present bail system. It discriminates against the poor whether they are Indians or whites. The result is a form of preventive detention. The poor, I could say, can never raise the bail demanded whereas the rich can afford or procure the amount of bail assessed. On several occasions I have known persons kept in a correctional institute (the word "gaol" is rarely used now) for a fairly long time before their case comes up in Court. If, later, some are declared innocent they would have a very hard time to recover damages for false imprisonment and yet it is possible that during the time they were detained they lost the wages they would have earned by employment. I can understand that if the person awaiting trial is a transient or was dangerous and accused of a very serious crime it would be risky to allow him out without bail but would there be much risk if the person was a local settler and had his family or home nearby, and the violation was not too serious?

DEPUTY JUDGE OF THE JUVENILE COURT

The duties of magistrate also entail that of deputy judge of the juvenile court. When delinquents appear before me I often find it quite a problem as to what decision to make. One cannot judge all delinquents in the same manner. One must ponder on the circumstances which were the cause of the delinquency.

a) Why did the child commit the delinquency?
b) What are the home surroundings like?
c) Was he or she influenced by someone older?
d) In a few cases the child may have stolen groceries because he was hungry. Was there a lack of food in his home?

In a number of cases the parents are much to blame. They exercice no authority on their children, and take very little interest in the welfare of their children. I have known children, including very young ones, to be absent from their homes for three or four days and the parents have shown no concern as to their whereabouts.

The parents of delinquents are always in Court when a child of theirs has to appear. Some time ago, three young boys appeared charged with several break-ins and thefts. Two of the lads showed signs of being ashamed of what they had done. One of the mothers asked if she could speak to her son. She had asked him, in a sad tone why he had done this. In a few moments there were tears in the lad's eyes and the other boy also showed further signs of regret. These two boys I reprimanded. I heard later on that they turned out to be really good lads. The third lad seemed sullen and refused to answer any questions. Actually he was the leader and had been up twice before on similar charges. Arrangements were made to send him to a foster home. If it is the first offence, the delinquent is always let off with a reprimand but if a juvenile has appeared in Court several times, full details of the case will be sent to the Probation Officer who will find a suitable foster home, thus giving the child a chance to become a better Canadian citizen later on. These homes are in

no way like the bygone reformatories but are the homes of people who take a keen interest in the future of young Canadians.

In some cases these children are just kept in these good homes for a year. To my way of thinking this is too short a period. It is impossible for any one to be completely reformed in such a short period, especially when he or she has to get used to a completely new way of life. It takes perhaps a few months before an Indian child can even get used to the different way of life and get somewhat used to the whiteman's customs and then just when he is improving in character he is sent home again, sent back to the same home where he will meet with the same temptations and the same bad examples he had before he was sent away. For this reason I say that a period of one year is not sufficient. We know that some of those who have come back after twelve months have fallen into trouble again. I am not implying that Indian children are worse than white ones but whereas a white delinquent placed in a foster home is used to the way of living he will meet, the Indian child has to take time to adapt himself to it. Actually there is proportionnally far less delinquency among Indians than there is among whites.

It would appear that whereas years ago good law-abiding behaviour was impressed upon the children of the family, today a number of homes are breeding-places for delinquents.

TRANSPORTATION

I believe that it is no exaggeration to say that today, there are no areas in Manitoba which are completely isolated. Almost all settlements or Indian Reserves are equipped with a radio-telephone installed or licensed by the Manitoba Telephone System. Should one desire to send an order to some company or if we feel we would like to have a chat with our friends we can call the operator of the System and in a few moments she puts us through to those with whom we wish to speak. Three years ago I heard someone, in a northern settlement, sending a Christmas message to a friend in England. The telephone service is available all the year round. Added to this convenience, the aeroplane service in the north these days is excellent. Up to fairly recently all trappers used to go to their trap lines by means of dog trains. Now quite a few hire a plane. This may sound extravagant, but it is not. It costs quite a bit to keep a train of dogs in good shape twelve months in the year. It takes hundreds of fish to feed the dogs and to get this fish one has to have a supply of nets and they cost quite a bit. We must also remember that the dogs can only be used for about six months in the year, depending on the snow conditions. By plane a man can get to his trapping grounds in a very short time whereas with dogs it could take him two or three days. Sometimes two or three trappers will hire a plane and thus share the expense.

With all these modern conveniences now available, it is hard for us to realize the hardships settlers and missionaries faced in bygone days when long trips had to be made. I am not referring to the early explorers for we know they travelled hundreds of miles either by canoe, dog train or on foot, but let us consider some of the journeys undertaken during the last few years of the nineteenth century or the first quarter of this century.

The first priest to visit Berens River was Father Dupont. He started out from Fort Alexander on January 7th. 1884 by means of dog train. We know that the

month of January is generally a cold month and that year it was no exception. The average temperature during the 150 miles which lie between Fort Alexandre and Berens was nearly forty degrees below zero. Looking through notes about the various trips made I see "Father Charles Cahill left. Very cold three-day blizzard." "April 3rd 1904. Father Edouard Planet left. Hard time on lake due to thaw." 4th., 5th., 6th. "In spots one foot of overflow on lake. Snow soft. Trudging hard." One must not forget that the word "trudging" means walking wearily and when Father Planet had to do this for three days one can have some idea as to how tired he must have been especially having to "trudge" through soft snow and the overflow of water on the lake.

During the summer months missionaries often used sailboats on the Lake. One such trip ended tragically. Rev. Mr. McLaughlan was a missionary of the Methodist Church at Berens River. One year, in the late nineties towards the end of August, he had to take some Berens River children to the Brandon Residential School. Having a sailboat at his disposition he decided to use it to go to Gimli to catch a train there. All went well until Grindstone Point was reached, a spot about seventy-five miles south of Berens, when suddenly a gust of wind caught the sails unexpectedly, causing the boat to turn so far over on its gunwale as to allow water to enter, filling the boat. The occupants had no chance of escaping. All were drowned.

In 1918, when I first came to Berens River, there was no difficulty in getting here as the "Wolverine" always called in when northbound but on her return trip from the north end of the lake she would sometimes pass right by. Generally, however, the captain would notify us that he would not call at Berens River but would pick up any passengers at Cox's Reef should they wish to go south to Selkirk. But Cox's Reef was ten miles out on the lake straight west of Berens, so it was not easy to get there especially when the lake was rough. Added to this, one never knew at what time of the day or night the "Wolverine" would be passing there. In

1919, Father Jean-Baptiste Beys, who was then our Provincial, and I had to get to Winnipeg at a certain date. The "Wolverine" passed by Berens although the captain had promised to puck us up southbound. Our only means of keeping our appointment was to hire a sailboat; this we did. By sailing to Gimli, one hundred and thirty miles south of Berens we would be able to catch a train for Winnipeg. A favourable wind allowed us to reach Big Bull Head, in about eight hours, then it changed. Most of the night we tacked backwards and forwards. But continuous tacking does not permit one to advance very quickly. By dawn we had not progressed more than ten miles. But luck was with us again; as the sun rose the wind turned in our favour and we managed to reach Gimli. This trip took us nearly two days.

I have already mentioned that for a number of years after my arrival at Bloodvein I used to visit the surrounding settlements. These visits were made not only to see sick patients but also to innoculate children. We made use of our boat for this purpose during the summer months. It was quite a size, having a thirty-foot keel and was driven by a Fairbanks-Morse marine engine. In July 1939 I had to make a trip to all the settlements to see the children. As quite a number of miles would be covered in this trip, Father C. Gauthier advised me to take along a small boat, which could be towed behind in case of need. I started off with Willy Young and Robert Benson as companions. We had visited Rabbit Point, had then headed thirty miles south to Loon Straits after which we crossed to the west side of the Lake, had visited Big Bull Head, Pine Dock and had arrived at Matheson Island. On finishing my medical work there,we had loaded on quite a bit of freight for Bloodvein and then headed for home. The Lake was calm. Robert Benson was in charge of the engine, Willy Young was steering and I was standing in the bow of the boat. We were about five miles from shore when suddenly the engine backfired several times. Flames started in the hull of the boat and spread quickly. Our efforts to extinguish them failed. Hurriedly we got into the lit-

tle skiff we had been towing behind and quickly rowed away. A few moments later there was a loud explosion. The gas tank had exploded. The boat's cabin was blown to bits. The flames had been seen from Matheson Island; soon a boat came and picked us up. We were indeed lucky to have heeded Father Gauthier's advice and taken a boat which actually served as a life boat, otherwise we might have been drowned or blown to bits when the gas tank exploded. We were also lucky that the Lake was calm.

A few years later Sister M.L. Lacroix and Sister Arm. Savoie of Berens River missed the S.S.Keenora, southbound, by a few minutes. One of the settlers of Berens, who had a canoe and an outboard engine told them to jump into his canoe, telling them that he would be able to catch up with the steamer on the lake by taking a short cut out to the lake instead of taking the roundabout channel the Keenora had to take. The Sisters believed him and started off. The canoe never did catch up with the steamer and finally landed at Matheson Island sixty miles south of Berens. Luckily a tug called in at the Island that evening. The captain who was headed for Selkirk took them aboard, thus they were able to arrive on time for the retreat to which they were going.

On another occasion, Sister Savoie had a trip which turned out to be rather nerve-racking. Towards the end of November a little boy and a baby had to be evacuated for medical treatment to St. Boniface Hospital. There had been an early freeze-up so the ice was strong enough for a plane to land at Berens. Sister Savoie was sent with the patients as an escort. The weather was fine so the flight down the Lake was enjoyable; however the ice down south could not have been very strong, for when the plane landed on the Red River near Selkirk its skis broke through and the plane started to slowly sink. The pilot seized the little boy, opened the door of the plane with the child in his arms; quickly closed the door again to prevent the water from entering, and placed the little passenger on top of the

wing. The pilot's cry for help was immediately heard by men on shore. Rushing down the river bank they pushed a nearby skiff on the ice to the plane. Before opening the door of the plane again the pilot warned Sister, "be ready as soon as I open the door." The opening of the door allowed water to rush in but Sister, with the help of the men, got out safely. The baby suffered no ill effects as Sister Savoie had been holding it above the water line, she, however, was soaked halfway up her body. She was taken to a nearby house and given a complete change of clothing, none the worse for her terrifying experience.

It is true that with the modern means of travelling, trips can be made more quickly and in a more comfortable manner, but oldtimers believe that paddling a canoe, driving a dog train or using a sailboat was safer than a plane, or a power-driven boat or a skidoo, or even a bombardier.

Eight years ago Father Robert Bernardin was flying homeward after having visited the Little Grand Rapids Reserve when due to engine trouble the plane made a forced landing fourteen miles from Berens River. The temperature was extremely cold and there was a strong wind blowing. He and the pilot had to camp out and almost froze to death as they were not prepared for such an event. During the summer of 1964 fourteen people were drowned in one small area of Lake Winnipeg. Two small boats were swamped when the outboard engine failed and the other seven lost their lives when a tug overturned in a storm. A few years ago a couple of men were in a bombardier, travelling on the ice, when it went through. As there was a small trap door on top of the bombardier the men managed to escape although one of them had quite a hard time as the vehicle quickly filled with water.

MY FRIENDS THE INDIANS

A number of Indians living in somewhat isolated Reserves still do not understand the necessity of allowing, or encouraging, their children, to receive a good education. We who have lived half a century among them understand their line of thinking although we do not agree with it.

Up to about thirty years ago most of the children on remote Reserves used to go with their parents and spend the greater part of the year on trapping grounds, and thus receive practically no education except that applying to the wild life in the bush. This could be the reason why some of these children, who are now adults and parents of children of school age, show lack of interest in education. Quite a few of them living far from urban areas still show reluctance in obeying the educational regulation which states a child must start school at a certain age and attend classes until a certain age.

I was once speaking to one of my friends about the advantages of allowing his children to attend school regularly. There is a certain amount of truth in his reply. "By learning, will my children have much of a chance getting a good job later on? Why should my children have to stay so long in school when most white men won't hire Indians even if they have been to school? Many white persons do not like us and many of us do not like them."

Although conditions between Indians and whites have improved a little during the last few years, there are still a number of employers who discriminate against Indians. It could be that they have hired some Indians who did not prove a success in positions assigned to them or perhaps have quit their jobs for no legitimate reason, but why judge adversely all Indians because some did not give satisfaction? We hear quite a bit about segregation in the United States and we censure the Americans, yet, in Canada many a white man acts identically towards the Canadian Indian. There is no

denying the fact that a number of whites consider Indians as classless people, at the bottom of the ladder. If an Indian acts coldly towards whites it is because many of us assume an attitude of superiority towards them. Some people state that an Indian will have no difficulty in obtaining work if he is qualified. In a few cases this is true but there are still a number of employers who turn down an applicant for a job just as soon as he notices that the one applying is of Indian descent. Many an Indian is qualified to clerk in a store. How many have you seen employed in large Department stores?

For some years now the Canadian Government has been taking a keener interest in matters concerning our Indian population. Education facilities have greatly increased. In southern Manitoba the number of Indian pupils attending public schools is accelerating considerably. Even in the northern areas some schools on Reserves are operating under the provincial school system. In the first quarter of 1969, to encourage Indians to take more interest, a resolution was passed allowing them to seek election on school boards and to vote in school matters. It is now noticeable that a greater number of them realize that education is an important factor if their children are to succeed later on in life. According to the latest statistics available, there are in Canada over five thousand Indian students in grades from nine and up; and another thousand in universities, or taking courses in teacher's training or other vocational studies. In 1969 there were slightly over one hundred students of Indian descent in the University of Manitoba.

However, I believe that when it comes to the hiring of teachers in elementary schools some improvement could be made, especially when they are sent to isolated Reserves. In a few instances those hired attend a short course which gives them some idea of the difficulties they will encounter in their work, but more often than not teachers are sent to Reserves who have never seen Indian children; teachers who have no idea

of the mentality or frustrations of Indians. This type of teacher has no notion of the problems he or she will have to face. Any teacher who really wishes to succeed amongst Indians must comprehend Indian problems, must use a certain amount of diplomacy when dealing with adults and show that he or she really takes an interest and cares for the pupils. Occasionally they should pay friendly visits to the homes of the parents.

In spite of improvements in education, better housing conditions and excellent medical services, there are certain problems which will have to be faced sooner or later, problems arising not because the native Canadians are Indians but due to the way the majority of them have had to live for many a generation.

Segregate ANY GROUP of people in isolated areas of a country located on specified land areas hardly known by the rest of the population, treat this group as minors, insulate them against the necessity of adjusting themselves to changing conditions, limit their means of earning a scanty livelihood by fishing and trapping for five or six months in the year, and under such conditions I maintain that the result would be the same as now exists on many Indian Reserves in the wilderness of Northern Canada.

During the last twenty-five years the Indian population in Manitoba has increased sixty per-cent and, no doubt, will continue to increase in the future. It is true that there is still sufficient living space on most of the Reserves as the total acreage of Indian Reserves in our province is 522,351 acres but most of it in the northern portion of Manitoba comprises marshland and granite ridges. On these isolated Reserves there never has been much employment available, so it is easy to understand that when membership of a Band increases to the extent that it has done, local employment diminishes for all; we must also remember the cost of living in the north is much higher than near urban locations, due to the cost of freighting merchandise such long distances, quite a large quantity of it being hauled by planes. I have often heard people state that

Indians are a lazy bunch of people. Are these persons judging all by the few they may have met? It is true that some are lazy but can you find any community where there are none who lack ambition? I have known whites anxious to get just a sufficient number of employment stamps so that they could receive governement benefits for several months in the year and thus would not have to work; that certainly shows lack of ambition and a type of laziness.

Due to the increased population and to the lack of local jobs, quite a number of Indians, some with families, are leaving their Reserves and drifting into large cities. At this date there are about ten thousand Indians in Winnipeg alone. Those who have had a fairly good education and have a certain amount of self-confidence have made a success in thus moving and are progressing financially, but the majority have become more impoverished. On Reserves important decisions were made for them; in cities they must rely on their own initiative. Most of them did not realize the problems they would have to face. They found life in cities completely different from life on their Reserve.

An Indian arriving in a city must first look for some lodging and sometimes meets with his first experience of discrimination; some landlords refuse to accept him as a tenant because he is an Indian. Perhaps, also, due to low financial means he has to be contended with a poorly furnished room or a miserable house in the slums where more often than not his neighbours are of dubious character. He tries to get a job. When doing so he may again encounter racial bigotry; added to this he may have difficulty in obtaining employment due to lack of education, lack of friendly advice or because of his being unskilled in many spheres of labour.

Due to the above circumstances a number of Indians moving into cities become failures, get discouraged and gradually drift downward through lack of money, lack of work and lack of self-confidence, resulting in some becoming alcoholics and, at times, landing in jails.

Is there any way of improving the living conditions and coming to the aid of Indians in cities or towns? Personally I believe there is. How many priests or ministers in parishes know the number of Indians in their spiritual care and pay them friendly visits? How many parishes encourage Indians to take an interest in parish activities or have clubs where whites and Indians could meet together? Would it not be possible for spiritual leaders to occasionally give a sermon on the subject, charity towards all, casually mentioning poverty-stricken people, including Indians.

If we wish to help our Indians there should be less talking and more co-operative action.

The following was written by Mr. Gene Telpner of the Winnipeg Tribune and gives a clear idea of the plight of some of the Indians in Winnipeg.

"Desperate Road is one name of the locality I'm talking about, others simply call it The Reservation. Something out of a novel? Not at all. It's the area of Main Street from Higgins to the Centennial Concert Hall which is actually called those names by the unfortunate people who hang around the street nightly and the merchants who do business on Main.

"Even the Concert Hall and the City Hall have failed to shake this stretch out of its doldrums, and in the evening cars actually park just to see the 'action'."

They come to watch fights which take place at frequent intervals along the streets or to observe the flow of humanity, people who have obviously no other place to roam except Main Street.

I spoke to a gentleman very close to the situation who told me: "It's terribly sad that this has become a virtual zoo because the Indians and Metis who are on the street are held by invisible bars. They seek friendship and some form of entertainment, the best they can afford is simply to go out on the street.

As most of us drive back and forth from our comfortable homes, we only glance at the throngs on the street. What looks like excitement is actually a human tragedy being unfolded nightly and you wonder where it's going to end. Said one business man I spoke to this week: "Main Street is going to pieces here; most people avoid walking in this area unless they have to. Sure I feel sorry for the inhabitants of the "Reservation" but what can I do?" Next time you leave the Concert Hall, take a drive and see what we have let happen to our city through man's inhumanity to his fellow man."

* * *

PROGRESS

There is no denying the fact that, especially during the last two or three years, there is considerable improvement in the Manitoban Indian situation.

As previously mentioned Indians are now taking a keener interest in the education of their children. At Berens River, after passing grade eight, today over thirty of the local students are continuing their studies in colleges elsewhere. In 1971 when these arrived home for the summer vacation employment was provided for them and they were paid for a reasonable work they did making material improvements on their Reserve.

One project was named "The Beach Project". At the north end of the Reserve there is a nice sandy beach surrounded by clumps of fine pine trees. Prior to the commencement of the project the beach area was essentially a tangle of shrubs, weeds, deadfalls, and rusty cans. Go there today and you will find a fine clean area of trees; a spotless sand beach and even the water in the little bay is absolutely free of weeds. It is quite possible that later on, perhaps in 1971, little tourist cabins will be built, operated and rented out by members of the Berens River Band. The Band provided funds to make a good road to the site. Walk along the six miles gravelled road we have at Berens

you will not see the least bit of garbage lying around. All has been collected and burnt in the garbage dump. This collection of the garbage was the second project carried out by the students. The third was the cleaning of the two cemeteries. The grass was mowed; the graves cleaned of weeds and the crosses straightened and painted.

Of late years courses have been given on Reserves. Carpentry; mechanics; courses in the proper handling of fish and nets during the commercial fishing seasons; courses in the proper method of fighting bush fires, etc. Every year a number of houses are built on Reserves. Today no outside labour is hired. Local Members of the Band who have taken up carpentry are given the contract and employ members of their Band.

Women have not been neglected. Several courses in cooking, proper housekeeping and sewing have been given. At Berens River a few months ago two expert dieticians were sent out. These ladies gave courses in houses in different localities of the Reserve and the women in nearby homes could attend.

Up to a few years ago members of Reserves were not expected nor allowed to assume responsibility in local financial matters. Today many Chiefs and their Councillors handle their own financial problems with grants provided by the government. A member, named band manager is the book keeper, and enters all transactions in the journal and ledger. The chief and a councillor issue and sign cheques for welfare or other expenditures. Twice a year an auditor comes out to examine the books and if necessary give a little advice.

Taking into consideration the above facts one can see that progress is being made on Indian Reservations, but, as elsewhere, unemployment remains the main problem extremely difficult to solve.

Printed in Winnipeg - August 1971.