

Kainai Chieftainship

One of the most unique societies in the history of Indian relations with the white man is the Kainai Chieftainship of the Blood tribe in southern Alberta. The society is one of the most exclusive in Canada, and is limited to forty men who have been made honorary chiefs of the Blood tribe in recognition of their direct or indirect support of Blood ideals. Thus it is one of the highest honorariums which can be bestowed to a person in Canada, for not only are the members few, but selection is based on a specific contribution to the Blood tribe as well as on the fame of the individual. Members of the Society are expected to assist the youth of the Blood tribe by donating scholarships, school equipment and so on, as well as promoting sports and cultural activities amongst the tribe as a whole.

The Kainai Chieftainship (Kainai, pronounced "kay-naw", is a Blackfoot term for "Blood Indian") was formed in 1919 by the Head Chief, Shot-Both-Sides, father of the present Chief, who became disturbed when he noticed that other tribes were awarding honorary chieftainships to anyone of importance visiting reserves or nearby cities, thereby lessening the honor to the point where a chieftainship was expected. Shot-Both-Sides wished to restore the status of the title and to make membership active rather than passive.

The first member of the Society was the Duke of Windsor, who was inducted into the society in 1919. He was named after the most famous of the Blood Chiefs, Mekaisto, meaning Red Crow. Since then, other dignitaries have been awarded chieftainships and given names of other great Blood leaders.

The executive is headed by N. R. Crump (Eagle Ribs), retired president of the C.P.R., while other officers include Alexander Johnston (Rainy Chief) as vice



Prince Charles in the paint and headdress of a Kainai Chief.

president and range specialist, and Dr. Hugh Dempsey (Flying Chief), an historian and secretary-treasurer. A quick look at some of the other members of the society is almost like looking at a Canadian Who's Who, members such as the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker, the Rt. Hon. Roland Michener, Premier Peter Lougheed of Alberta, Senator E. C. Manning, the former Minister of Justice, the Hon. E. D. Fulton, Pierre Berton, the Hon. Joey Smallwood of Newfoundland to name but a few. Three former Commissioners, L. H. Nicholson, G. B. McLelland and W. L. Higgitt, and the