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CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI



These people, painted by Norval Morrisseau, are involved with Land, Life, James Bay, the Mackenzie Pipeline, History and the Future of Canada's Indians.

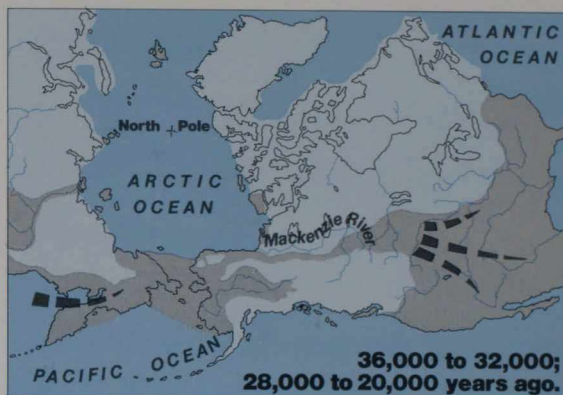
The Time Before History

CANADA'S first settlers arrived some twenty-five thousand years before the white man. They came over a land mass a thousand miles wide, now covered by the Bering Sea—a rolling, treeless plain with unnumbered small lakes, occasional hills, thick grasses and plentiful game.

They cannot properly be called Mongolian nor Asian (any more than they are logically called Indian), since they lived eons before there were places or peoples with those names. They were members of the same, widely dispersed race as the highly intelligent cave painters of Europe who are now called Cro-Magnon.

They moved slowly off the land mass and onto North America, following mammoths, caribou, saber-toothed cats, horses and bison through Alaska, down the Mackenzie River Valley and along the east slope of the Rockies. The passage took hundreds of years. The upper part of North America—all the land above the Chesapeake and Delaware bays except for the Mackenzie River Valley—was covered by two sheets of ice, sometimes a mile thick. The valley was walled by ice, and the walls in some places were only twenty-five miles apart. Some immigrants followed big game south, and their descendants would eventually build palaces in Mexico, pueblos in New Mexico, hogans and long houses in the eastern forests of North America and monolithic walls in Peru. Some stayed in the valley for generations, hundreds of years, perhaps thousands.

Around 18,000 BC the glaciers covered the corridor too. There would be no human beings on the northern half of the continent for eight



A view from the top: Ice locked up moisture so that the floor of the Bering Sea became a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska.

thousand years, until after 10,000 BC, when the weather turned warmer and wetter and the ice melted into lakes and bays and an inland sea.

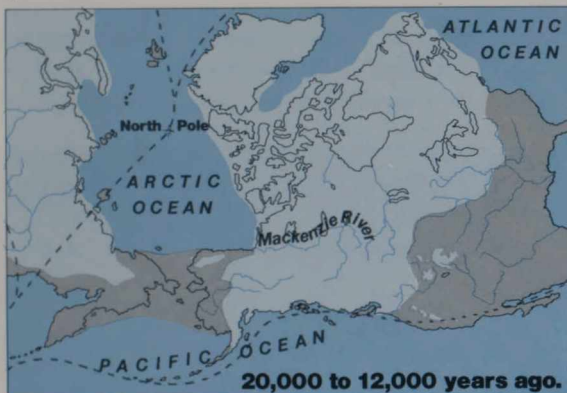
By 9000 BC big game hunters were above the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia; and by 4000 BC there were foragers, fishermen and hunters of small animals from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. The big game was gone, perhaps hunted to extinction.

As the ice melted, a second migration occurred. The new Indians came by boat from Asia some fifteen thousand years or more after the first immigrants. By then the land mass west of the Alaskan coast was covered with water. Some probably stayed in the north where their descendants would become the Inuit or Eskimo.

NORVAL MORRISSEAU is a successful artist. To say that—to emphasize his success—is to confuse a point. By an Indian standard, success is not measured by money, publicity or widespread acclaim. Morrisseau was raised by his grandparents, Potan and Vernique Nankonagos, on the Sandy Point reserve. Even after his first successes, he continued to live the life of a nomad, often sleeping in vacant boxcars with his friends. More recently he has returned to Sandy Point and traditional ways. His paintings—semiabstractions—have elements of traditional Ojibwa religious beliefs and Catholic traditions. His cover painting first appeared on the November 1976 issue of *The Canadian Forum*. Here is Morrisseau's explanation of its meaning:

It's divided into two parts: the world of the white man represented by a government or corporation white man and a construction or miner white man. The Indian figure is the older generation of today and his ancestors are behind him looking backwards to the treaties they made with the white man. He speaks about the old ways. The baby looks aggressive. He represents the younger generation, the militant who speaks about what he wants and his words cross the lines between the white and Indian. His fist is clenched. The animals are protesting the change in their environment; they are an important part of the land, water and the Indian's life. The centre part of the painting is where I illustrate the land and its ownership.

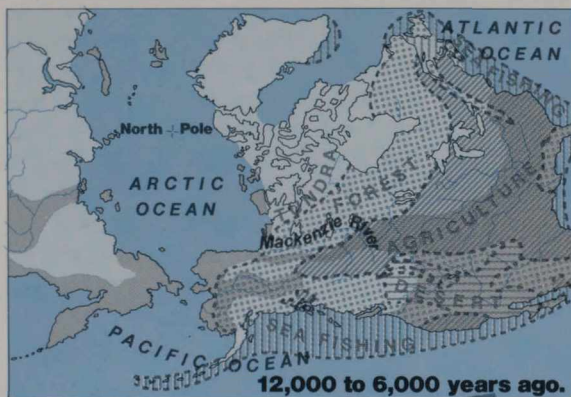
Others went south, probably down the coast, to the Pacific Northwest. Their children and culture would remain unique. Their eyes would seem slanted; for unlike the majority of other Indians, many of the Northwest settlers would have the Mongolian fold, and their tools—semicircular knives of ground slate and toggle-headed harpoons—would be similar to those used by their



Later, glaciers closed off the Mackenzie Valley. The dotted lines indicate the plates in the earth's crust.

putative cousins in the Arctic north.

The white man came last. The first recorded confrontation occurred in northern Newfoundland around 1000 AD, when a band of Vikings met some natives, whom they derisively called Skraelings. At first the two groups traded red cloth for furs; three weeks later they fought. Modern history had begun.



As the ice receded, the land bridge closed and prehistoric Americans developed a variety of life styles.

The Way Things Were

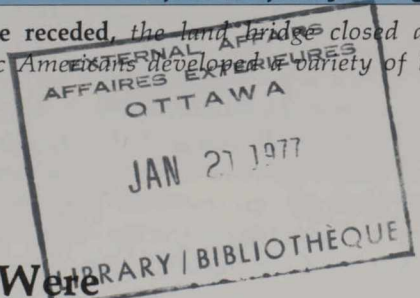
THE COLONIAL FRENCH got along well with the Indians. Most of the Colonial English did not. When the first colonists arrived, there were perhaps 200,000 Indians in what is now Canada. The French had two agreed-upon goals: They wished to make money by trading in furs and to convert the natives to Christianity. In 1666 Colbert wrote to Talon, the *intendant* of New France: "Nothing would contribute more [to strengthen the colony] than to endeavour to civilize the Algonquins, the Hurons and other Indians who have embraced Christianity and to induce them to come and settle in common with the French, to live with them and raise their children according to our manners and customs."

To the south, New England's colonists hoped to profit from cultivating the land and regarded all nonwhite peoples as descendants of Ham, condemned to eternal subjugation. Charles I's charters ordered his colonists to "collect troops and wage war on the barbarians and pursue them even beyond the limits of their province and if God shall grant it, to vanquish and captivate them, and the captive put to death." One of the early results of this policy was the flight of the Abenakis from New England to New France in the 1670s.

Even the benevolent association of the French and the Indians had its disasters. The Hurons accepted French missionaries and were New France's first trading allies, acting as middlemen between the French and fur-trapping tribes. Between 1615 and 1650, their population shrank from thirty thousand to two thousand, the rest destroyed by war with their trading rivals, the Iroquois, and by famine and European diseases.

The Indians proved essential military allies, and by 1763, when the English took over New France, the official British attitude toward Indians had softened. King George III recognized that Indians had rights, and the concepts of land acquisition by treaties and the setting aside of reserves were established.

After the American Revolution, the British colonies in the north continued to acquire land by treaty, and by 1836 some two dozen land alienation treaties had been concluded in Ontario. The prevailing white attitude became paternal (or perhaps avuncular); Indians should be guided, watched over, disciplined and made to improve themselves. They should be persuaded to settle down and become farmers. The Reverend James Coleman, a Canadian missionary, offered a formula for conversion in 1847:



"It has passed into a proverb that a fisher seldom thrives, a shooter never, and that a huntsman dies a jovial beggar. How then is it to be expected that the Indian, who can have no motive to a settled and laborious agricultural life, but the persuasions of the Missionary and Superintendent, will, in favourable situations for success, relinquished his former employment of hunting and fishing, for those which are less profitable to him, and attended with, to him, much greater fatigue. It is necessary the Indian youth should be prevented from becoming hunters or fishers, and this can be done by locating his village where there are no facilities for either."

The Indians, understandably, were not enchanted. Sitting Bull, who led his people north to Canada to escape the United States Cavalry, rejected the concept outright. He told a fur trader, Charles Larpenteur, "I don't want to have anything to do with people who make one carry water on the shoulders and haul manure. . . . The whites may get me at last, but I will have a good time till then. You are fools to make yourselves slaves to a piece of fat bacon, some hardtack and a little sugar and coffee."

In 1850, the Province of Canada (now Quebec and Ontario) began to negotiate treaties with various Indian groups. That year the Robinson Superior and Huron treaties were signed with Ojibwa bands on the north shore of Superior and the north shore of Lake Huron.

Treaties followed with the Chippewa, Swampy Cree and others in southern Manitoba. In each, the Indians promised "not to molest" white settlers and the government promised to set aside a "reserve," provide services and make cash payments. Treaty I (the first after confederation), signed August 3, 1871, gives the substance of such bargains: a reserve of 160 acres of land per family of five, plus an additional twenty-five square miles and a promise that a school would be maintained and liquor traffic controlled in each reserve. Each family received \$3 a year, each chief \$25. Each chief and headman got a suit of clothes every three years. The basic annuity was raised to \$5 in 1875.

As the years went by and new treaties were signed, the annuities tended to grow less (if only because of the decreasing value of the dollar), and land concessions smaller.

In recent years the government has greatly expanded its view of the extent of the aboriginal rights of native people. Two results have been the James Bay agreement, protecting native interests in face of the development of huge hydroelectric facilities in northern Quebec, and the Berger Commission Inquiry on the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

The Way Things Are

IT IS SAID, with a misleading air of precision, that there are now over 283,000 Indians in Canada, some 80,000 more than when the white man first came. It is also said that this growth has been recent, that the Indian population declined until

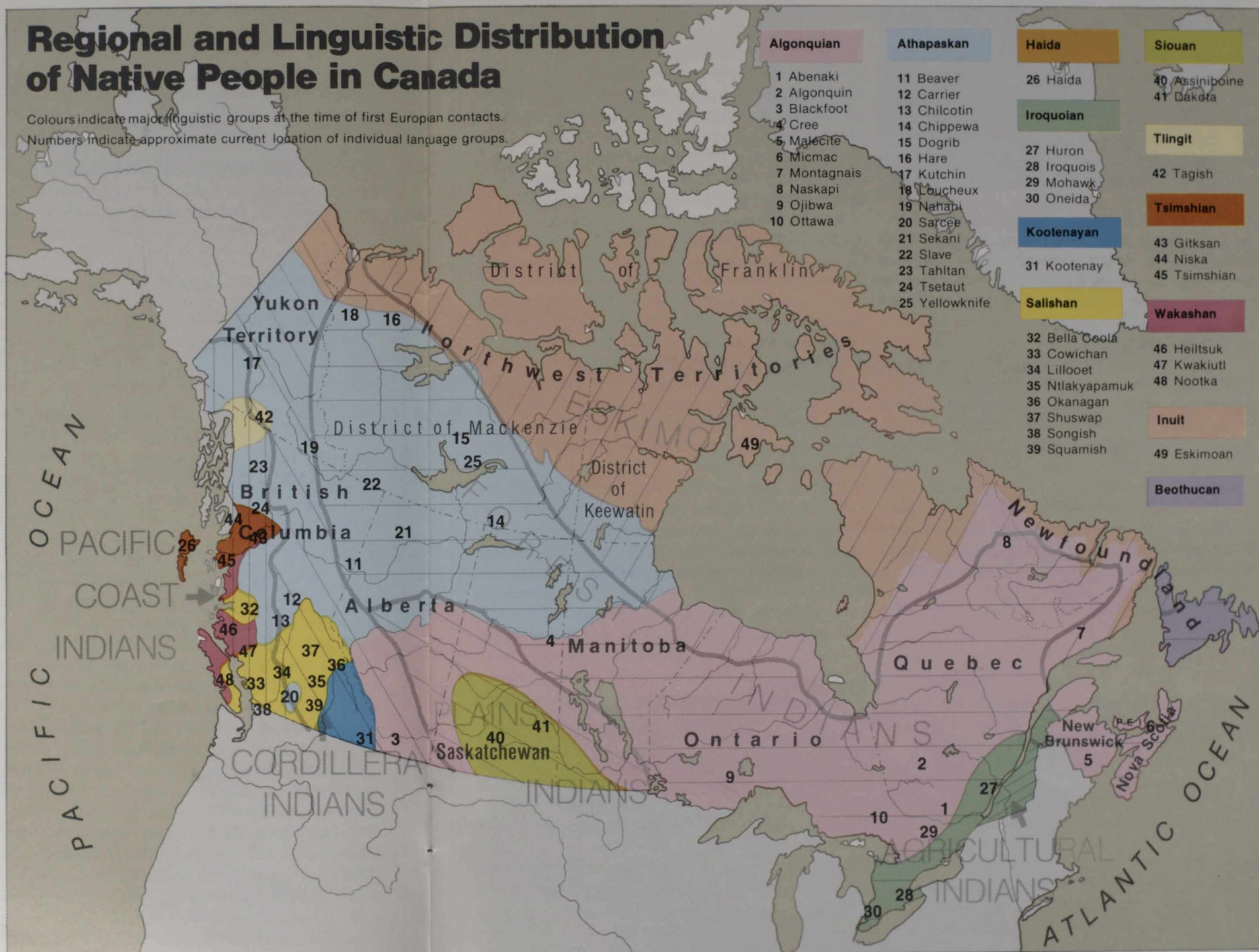
the end of the last century (there were 108,547 Indians counted in 1881) and that it has grown at an accelerating rate since. In truth, past and present statistics are both incomparable and unreliable. There may be as many as a million Indians now, depending on how one defines an Indian. To understand the confusion, it is necessary first to understand a variety of definitions.

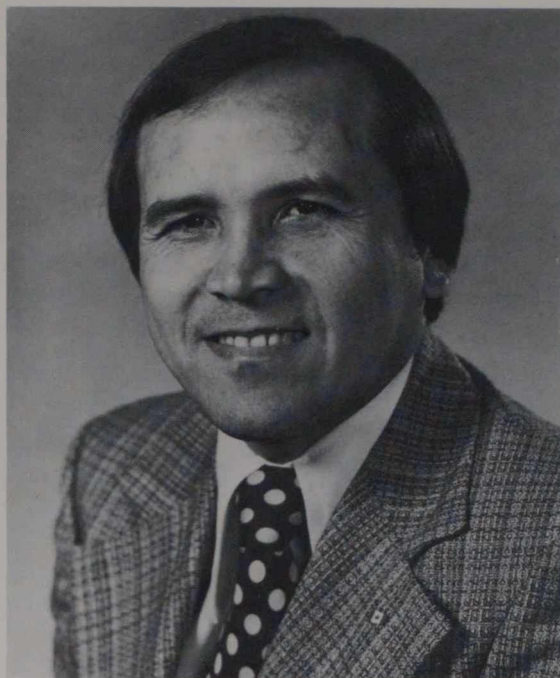
REGISTERED OR STATUS INDIANS: There are 283,000 listed on the Indian Register. Their communities (along with those of the Eskimos or Inuit) are

supervised by the federal government. Some belong to bands which made treaties with the white man, surrendered land and received reserves, bounties and small annuities. These bands have 2,274 reserves, and over 100,000 Indians live on them; half of them live in Ontario. The largest single reserve, the Six Nations near Brantford, has a population of 8,200. Some 35,000 treaty Indians are also registered Indians whose ancestors did not sign treaties in Quebec, the Maritimes, parts of the Northwest Territory and most of British Columbia.

Regional and Linguistic Distribution of Native People in Canada

Colours indicate major linguistic groups at the time of first European contacts. Numbers indicate approximate current location of individual language groups.





Leonard Marchand is the first full-blooded Indian to serve in a Canadian federal cabinet. He has responsibility for small business in the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Mr. Marchand, quiet spoken and able, was born in Vernon, BC, in 1933 and first attended Kamloops Indian Residential School. In time he earned a degree in agriculture from the University of British Columbia and a master's degree in forestry from the University of Idaho. He was the first full-blooded Indian elected to Parliament (from Kamloops-Cariboo) and has served as parliamentary secretary to several ministers.

NONREGISTERED INDIANS: These Indians are often as fully Indian as the registered, but they lack formal status. Either they and their ancestors never had it, or they lost it by renunciation, by voting in a federal election before 1960, or, in the case of women, by marrying a white man or a nonstatus Indian.

MÉTIS: Métis were, originally, the French-Indian descendants of the trappers, traders and farmers of the Red River Valley. Between 1870 and 1875 the government issued them land script, good for 240 acres, and offered them the choice of being registered or nonregistered. In 1940 the government withdrew recognition of the Métis. Today a Métis can be considered anyone who is of part-Indian ancestry. Their estimated number, reflecting the imprecise definition, varies from 60,000 to 600,000.

Thirty per cent of the registered Indians and a great many nonregistered Indians and Métis live in urban areas. The urban Indians often live in unofficial ghettos in cities such as Winnipeg, Toronto and Edmonton. These people are often conspicuously poor, often unemployed and often suffering from alcoholism. Many die young, most frequently from illnesses caused by poor nutrition and exposure to cold and damp. Respiratory diseases are the leading killer.

Mortality statistics are misleading at first brush. In 1970 the average life span for Indians was thirty-four years, for whites seventy-two; but the figures suggest something which is not so: that most Indians die in their thirties. Because a very great number die in their first two years of life, the mortality rate then is eight times that for white babies. Those Indians who survive the first two years have an average life span of about fifty-one years, and those who live past thirty-five have about the same life expectancy as whites of the same age.

Other statistics associated with poverty are also confusing unless they, too, are carefully analyzed. They are, however, appalling even when fully understood. Three-fifths of status Indians are on welfare. Eighteen per cent of status Indian children are officially deserted or abandoned. In

Indians Organized

The National Indian Brotherhood represents some 283,000 status or treaty Indians. It was conceived in 1968 at a meeting of Indian and Métis representatives from eight provinces. The two groups eventually organized separately—the NIB taking formal shape in 1970. It has thirteen provincial and territorial affiliates. Its address is: 102 Bank Street, 1st Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5N4.

The Native Council of Canada represents the nonstatus Indians and Métis. The total number of the two groups is estimated to be as high as

750,000. The NCC was established in 1971, and it has eleven member organizations. Its address is: Suite 200, 77 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5L6.

The Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples was formed as the Indian Eskimo Association of Canada in 1958. It changed its name in 1973 and has about five thousand members, all nonnative people. It is primarily a fund-raising organization.

1965 thirty-two per cent of Indian births were illegitimate.

The illegitimate birth figures are, perhaps, the most misleading. Since 1957 the government has refused to acknowledge tribal rite marriages as legal; any child born of such a marriage is automatically illegitimate. Much more important, however, are the economic factors that influence statistical illegitimacy. Many Indian couples choose to remain legally unmarried because to marry would deprive them of income. An unmarried woman with three children gets three times the allotment she would get if she were married but separated. Further, a status Indian woman who marries a nonstatus Indian or a white man automatically loses her rights as a status Indian.

The average white person's income is around five times as great as the average Indian's. Again the use of an average is confusing; income varies greatly among Indian bands. In recent years some Indian bands have had cash incomes as low as an average of \$55 a year, and some have averages over \$4,000. The range remains today, though the respective levels have changed with inflation. The hard fact is that eighty per cent of Indian families are probably living in poverty by North

American income standards. Indian employment is heavily concentrated in the least-skilled and lowest-paid jobs—only three per cent are in professional or managerial occupations.

Twenty-eight per cent of male and twenty-five per cent of female prison inmates are Indian.

There are, nevertheless, signs that the Indian's lot is improving both through their own efforts and with the help of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The National Indian Brotherhood, for example, has been encouraging Indian involvement in and control of Indian education for several years through workshops, papers and negotiations with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs will spend approximately \$459 million on various projects including education (\$183 million), community affairs (\$188.8 million), economic development (\$34 million) and native claims. In education, the emphasis is on Indian content and bilingual (Indian and French or English) training. Other projects include assistance for native local governments, an Indian branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Saskatchewan and on-and-off-reserve housing programs.

Hearings on a Northern Pipeline

THE MACKENZIE VALLEY of the Northwest Territories may be the site of a pipeline for natural gas. The government, recognizing the possible impact on the lives of native people, committed itself to finding "lasting solutions of cultural,

Rick Hardy, president of the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories (right) met with Mr. Justice Berger (left) and the commission on November 20. He encouraged pipeline construction and suggested that "only a minimal number of years" should elapse between claim settlements and construction of a pipeline. "We as Métis people object strenuously to the ideal view taken of native people and [their] . . . attachment to the land. . . . We submit that life on the land is tough. So tough that the majority of native people have left such life. . . . This is not to say that in moving away from the trapping and hunting life that Métis people are wiping away that aspect of their cultural heritage but we are also taking on and receptive to other ways of making a living."





The Mackenzie Valley: Alfred Bernard (left), Smoking pit (right).

omy and on the environment. (The hearings were broadcast daily in seven native languages.)

Below are excerpts from the testimony of one of the more militant spokesmen for the NWT Indians, Frank T'Seleie, former chief of the Fort Good Hope Band.

"I believe you are an honest man. I believe you are a just man, Mr. Berger, and that you do not intend to be a part of a plot to trick us or fool us or play games with us. . . . Let me tell you, Mr. Berger, and let me tell your nation, that this is Dene land and we the Dene people intend to de-

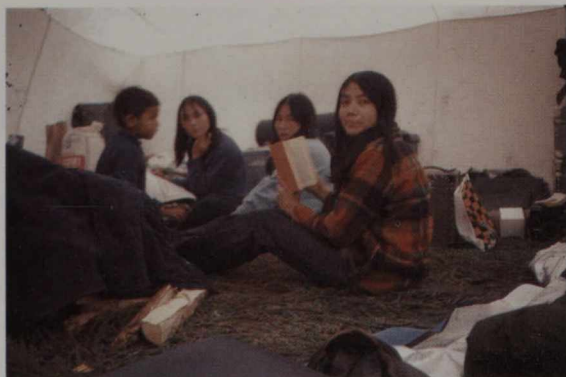
At the annual meeting of the Indian Ecumenical Council on the Stoney Indian Reserve at Morley, Alberta, North American Indians perform dances after a day of studying Indian spiritual beliefs.



cide what happens on our land. Different people from outside have asked me whether or not I felt we could really stop the pipeline. My answer is yes, we can. . . . Mr. Berger, there will be no pipeline. There will be no pipeline because we have our plans for our land. There will be no pipeline because we no longer intend to allow our land and our future to be taken away from us so that we are destroyed to make someone rich. There will be no pipeline because we, the Dene people are awakening to see the truth of the system of genocide that has been imposed on us and we will not go back to sleep. There will be no pipeline, Mr. Berger, because we the Dene people will force your own nation to realize that you would lose too much if you ever allowed these plans to proceed. It is your concern about your future, as well as our concern about ours, that will stop the pipeline. For our part, Mr. Berger, we are making our own plans for the Dene nation."

The commission must reconcile native rights with Canada's energy needs. According to estimates, present Canadian gas production will meet Canadian requirements and commitments to US consumers for six to eight years. The best alternate energy sources are in the far Canadian north where proven gas reserves total 3 to 4 trillion cubic feet in the Mackenzie Delta/Beaufort Sea area and 10 to 15 trillion cubic feet in the High Arctic Islands. The potential recoverable reserves are estimated at around 50 to 100 trillion cubic feet in each area.

It will take four to five years to construct a natural gas pipeline and longer to develop alternate methods of transport such as railroad or ice-breaking tankers. If northern gas is to be available by 1983, the decision on the method of transporting gas must be made soon. The final Berger commission report is expected next spring, and the National Energy Board is preparing a report on the pipeline proposals in terms of public convenience and necessity. The final decision will be made by the Cabinet.



The Far Away Tribes in the Woods

The Crees of James Bay live almost as their ancestors did thousands of years ago in a wilderness in northern Quebec as large as western Europe. They spend the summers in waterside settlements. In the fall, winter and spring they live in small camps deep in the forest, hunting and trapping beaver, bear, caribou, rabbits and wild fowl. The beaver is the prize; it furnishes fur as well as food, and the James Bay pelts are the finest in the world.

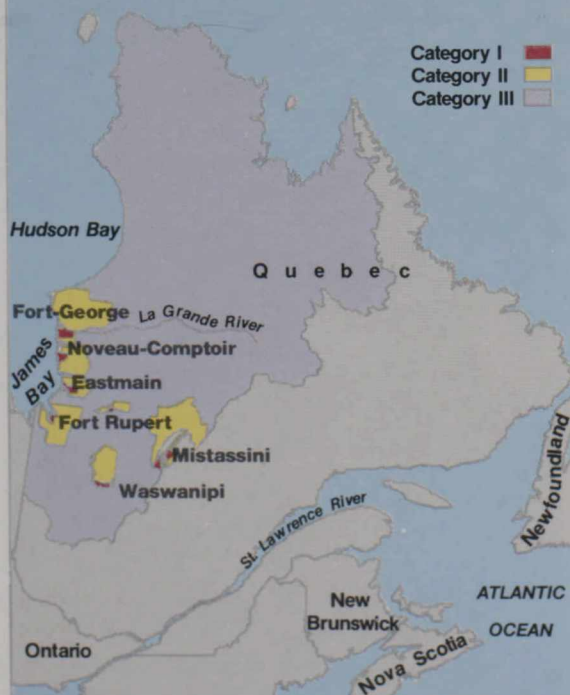
Each family head may have his own hunting area covering perhaps twelve hundred miles. His family and, sometimes, another family or two move to their camp. First they live in tents. Then they cut around two hundred of the best trees from as far as a quarter mile away. The lodge is square and squat, without windows—windows let in cold air. There is little light in a northern winter and the brightest of the sun's rays will come from above, through a hole in the roof. The insides of the logs are trimmed to present flat, white surfaces angled toward the roof hole to re-

flect the light. Moss is gathered for insulation, and a new floor of spruce boughs is laid twice a week.

Everyone works on construction. Children gather the moss, women lay the floor, and men cut the trees, often now with a gasoline-powered saw.

As many as four families may live in the lodge, each with its own corner. Each hunter feeds his own family, but there is an easy, informal sharing. When snow falls, the lodge merges into the landscape, protected from the thirty-below temperatures outside by four feet of snow.

Final agreement with the James Bay Crees and Inuit, November 1975.



The Crees and the Inuit will have control of the 5,408 square miles in Category I. The Province of Quebec will have the right to make limited use of some land for public purposes, but when such use interferes with use by the native peoples, the native people must be compensated with other land.

Mining or industrial development may take place on the 60,130 square miles of Category II lands, but native people retain exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights. Native people are entitled to replacement or compensation for lands taken for development.

All people will have access to Category III, which includes the bulk of the vast territory. Native people will be entitled to hunt, fish, trap and cut wood for specific needs without payment of stumpage dues. (For more on the agreement, please turn the page)

The James Bay Agreement

IN 1973 the federal government recognized the "traditional use and occupancy of land" as well as rights under treaty and the Indian Act as a basis for native land claims. Since 1970 the federal government has provided approximately \$7 million in loans and contributions to native groups for research into treaties and rights relating to "specific" claims. In addition more than \$11 million have been provided for the development and negotiation of "comprehensive" claims proposals—claims based on traditional use and occupancy.

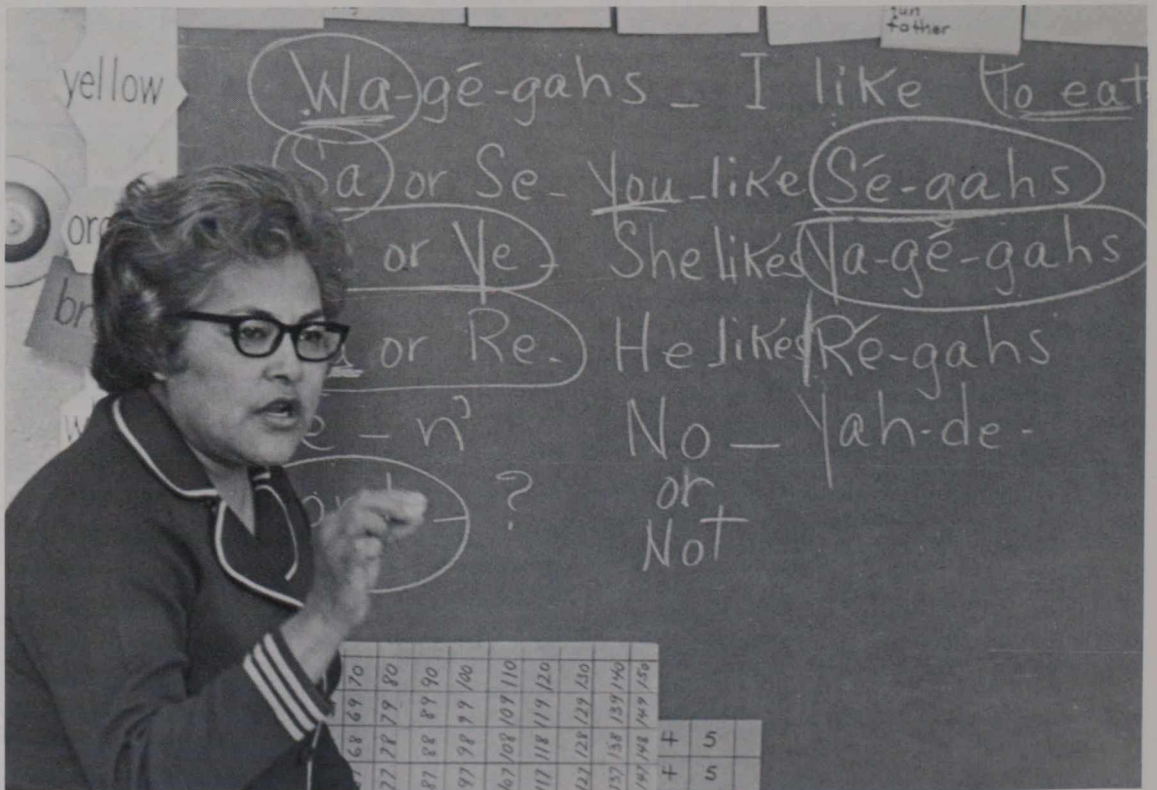
The first comprehensive claims agreement was signed with the native people of James Bay in November 1975. The principals were: (1) the Grand Council of the Crees, representing individual bands at Fort George, Old Factory, Eastmain, Rupert House, Waswanipi, Mistassini, Nemaska and Great Whale River and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association representing fifteen Inuit (Eskimo) communities; (2) the government of Quebec, the James Bay Energy Corporation, the James Bay Development Corporation, Hydro-

Quebec; and (3) the Government of Canada.

The native people agreed to stop litigation and permit the development of the hydro-electric power complex in the valley of the La Grande River, the first phase of the gigantic James Bay project. The federal and provincial governments and the other signatories agreed to pay a total of \$225 million to the native peoples over the next twenty years. The native people were also given permanent guarantees of exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights in certain lands, a considerable degree of self-government, a voice in all decisions affecting the environment and an opportunity to participate as investors and paid workers in future developments in the territory.

The affected area includes the entire part of Quebec above the fifty-fifth parallel and the area south of that line which was transferred from the Northwest Territories to Quebec by statute in 1912. Some twenty thousand people live in the vast area, including some six thousand Crees and some four thousand Inuit.

A languages teacher at Ohsweken, Ontario, uses both English and Mohawk dialect. There are bilingual programs in 174 federal and 34 provincial schools. Some 210 federal and 155 provincial schools have programs which emphasize Indian culture.



An Indian Plan on a Larger Subject

In July 1975, Indian and Métis leaders in the Northwest Territories issued a statement of rights which demanded their people be recognized as a nation. This fall they presented a formal demand for political jurisdiction over their traditional lands. There are about eleven thousand people of Indian ancestry in the Mackenzie Valley.

The original statement passed by the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories said, in part, "Our struggle is for recognition of the Dene nation by the Government and the people of Canada and the people and governments of the world." (*Dene*, pronounced Den-nay, means "the people" in the language of the four major

tribes in the area.) In presenting the formal proposal, Georges Erasmus, president of the brotherhood, said the Indians of the north wished to function politically as "a nation within Canada. . . . as a government roughly equivalent in status to the provincial level." He said that the brotherhood was in no way "challenging the legitimate jurisdiction of the federal government." He stated that the proposed agreement would restore Indian rights lost in earlier treaties. "We are calling for a radical change in the relationship between aboriginal people and the people of Canada," he said. "Furthermore, we do not see why our rights to self-determination cannot be met within the Canadian Confederation."

A Short Life in the City

Playwright George Ryga is of Ukranian descent and grew up on a prairie farm. His abiding interest is in the "stunted strong," the "natives," people who are exploited directly and indirectly, deliberately and unintentionally by the organized invaders. He is most particularly interested in the Indians of Canada. His plays, to use an inadequate word, are experimental: mélanges of sound, music, songs, dialogue and set speeches. His greatest achievement so far, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, is the story of an Indian girl, arrested in Vancouver for prostitution; her boyfriend, Jamie Paul; a police court magistrate and a four-year-old child that the magistrate once saw alone and lost in the Cariboo.

The child is perhaps Rita's, or perhaps the child she and Jamie Paul never had, or Rita as she once was, or all Indians in their acceptance of nature and their inability to adjust to urban rules and contrivances.

The play has an almost mystic air; time is not in sequence, and the end—Jamie Paul's death when hit by a train, Rita Joe's in a rape—is clearly implied from the beginning. Rita's confusion grows as the case against her grows clear:

I was going home, trying to find the highway . . . I knew those two were cops the moment I saw them . . . I told them to go f . . . fly a kite. They got sore then and started pushing me around. . . . They stuffed five dollar bills in my pockets when they had me in the car . . . I ask you mister, when are they gonna charge cops like that with contributing to delinquency. . . .

Jamie—why am I here? . . . is it . . . because people are talkin about me and all them men . . . Is that why? I never wanted to cut cordwood for a living . . . Never once I thought . . . it'd be like this. . . .

The magistrate—white society trying to judge—is perhaps Rita's greatest scourge. His speeches are interrupted by Rita's answers and comments, but he might as well speak his piece all at once:

Now it's your word against this (the folder of Rita's arrest papers) you need references . . . people who know you . . . who will come to court to substantiate what you say today. This is the process of legal argument. . . .

What are we going to do about you, Rita Joe? This is the seventh charge against you in one year. . . . Laws are not made to be violated in this way. . . . Why did you steal?

Don't blame the police, Rita Joe! The obstacles to your life are here, in your thoughts (touches his temples), . . . possibly even in your culture. . . .

You can't go now. You've broken a law for which you will have to pay a fine or go to prison. . . .

Rita Joe . . . it is against the law to solicit men on the street. You have to wash. . . . You can't walk around in old clothes and running shoes made of canvas. . . . You have to have some money in your pockets and an address where you live. You should fix your hair . . . perhaps even change your name. And try to tame that accent that sounds like you have a mouthful of sawdust. . . . There is no peace in being extraordinary!

The Land of Perpetual Plenty



waters, and the mountains shut out the cold air from the east.

The richest and the most highly developed Indian foragers lived for thousands of years on the upper Pacific coast, in a land of perpetual plenty—a lush strip seldom a hundred miles wide, stretching south from Alaska between the ocean and the coastal mountains. The Japan Current warms the ocean

During the Indian's golden age—from perhaps 1000 BC to 1900 AD—the sea had whale, porpoise, seal, sea lion, sea otter, herring, smelt, huge halibut and huge sturgeon. A half dozen geoduck clams scooped from the tidal mud fed a large family. The eulachon, or candlefish, dried and threaded with a string, burned like a candle. The rivers were filled with spawning salmon seven times a year. The rain forest offered deer, moose, bear and fowl; and the mountains, goats and sheep.



The harsh reality of twentieth century industry has impinged on the traditional life of the Grassy Narrows Ojibwas of northwest Ontario. Fish in the mercury-polluted English-Wabigoon river system were once essential to their diet and their guide jobs. Several now have the early symptoms of Minamata disease (mercury poisoning). The incurable, irreversible disease destroys the central nervous system. The polluter, Dryden Paper Company, has stopped using mercury, and unpolluted fish are being trucked into the reserve; but it could take seventy to one hundred years for the river to cleanse itself.





Jack James' Kwakiutl mask has a graphite finish, copper brows and shredded cedar-bark hair. It represents a tso:noq'wa—a giant, habitually sleepy, mythological wild woman, whose mouth is rounded to utter her characteristic "hooo hooo" cry. This tso:noq'wa was banished unfairly from her tribe. To get revenge, she invented the black fly and, from the spirit world, blew the black flies down to pester the people.

Spruce, pine and cedar grew up to 200 feet, and the magnificent Douglas fir, up to 250; and there was wood for all uses. The yellow and red cedar was long lasting but soft enough to be cut easily with stone and bone tools. The bark could be pounded into fibre for weaving.

The bands made canoes, some sixty feet long, hollowing cedar logs by fire and adzes and stretching them into shape after filling them with hot water to soften the wood. They had handsome, rectangular houses sixty feet long, fifty feet wide, made of logs split into planks, grooved or notched and joined without pegs. The roofs were of interlocking split and hollowed logs. The Nootka and Coast Salish had apartment houses, perhaps fifty feet wide and several hundred feet long, on ocean beaches above the high tide line.



The northwestern Indians—the Salish, Nootka and Kwakiutl on and around Vancouver Island; the Bella Coola of the village of that name; the Tsimshian of the Skeena and Nass rivers; and the Haida of the Queen Charlotte

Islands—did not ride horses, and they did not wear mocassins on one end and feathers on the other. If they conformed to a stereotype, it was the stereotype of the orient. A Haida in a conical hat of woven cedar bark fibres or in a Chilkat blanket, a fringed robe of mountain goat wool and bark fibre bearing the animal crest of its owner, would seem almost Chinese.



A Tsimshian chief's wooden ceremonial hat: The bear head has inlaid abalone eyes, and each green painted basketry ring represents a potlatch given by the chief.

They lived in a well-defined social layer; the principal chief was the custodian of the community's wealth, and he directed the ceremonial and economic life of the community. Status was maintained by potlatches, gigantic give-away feasts which marked significant events—puberty, marriages, deaths, new houses. In the fifteenth century the potlatch was simply a gregarious expression of pride. The rich man did what was expected, and what was expected was that he give a great big walloping public party.



On the great day the other social leaders arrived, often from hundreds of miles away, richly dressed and decorated—their garments of intricately designed blankets and robes of otter or bearskin, their jewelry of dentalium shells. They came in ceremonial canoes with high, carved and painted prows

and sterns. They were greeted by the lesser members of the host's family. The host was the most splendidly dressed of all. On his head might have been a complicated carved hat, a fantasy erected on a basic cone—a carved face with abalone shell eyes—and, above that, cylinders of woven spruce roots, each cylinder representing a past potlatch he'd given. The feasting went on for three or four days; smoked salmon was accompanied by seal fat dip; fowl and fresh water fish were roasted on sticks; tables were covered with venison and bear haunches, fresh berries and berries preserved in rancid candlefish oil, octopus and halibut boiled in wooden boxes, rotted salmon roe and halibut heads. The celebration ended with the gift giving—blankets of mountain goat wool and bark, in natural white or dyed black or yellow in geometric patterns; robes of sea otter pelts, of marten fur and bearskin, of mink and deerskin. The gifts were given according to the rank of the recipient.



Edward Curtis recorded the life of North American Indians on film at the beginning of the twentieth century: A Kwakiutl wedding party arrives in a canoe with a carved and painted eagle figurehead.

After the arrival of the white man the fixed hierarchy was shaken, and potlatches became sharply competitive as the newly rich tried to wiggle their way up the social scale. Finally the most ambitious began to destroy valuable blankets before the eyes of their guests, and the final throes of conspicuous consumption came when

the giver of potlatches clubbed slaves to death and used the bodies as rollers to beach a visiting chief's canoe.

The white man eventually outlawed the potlatch. Modern revivals evoke some of the dances and ceremonies but little of the old splendor.

The Return of the Mohawks

Some sixty-nine years ago most of the working men of the Caughnawaga Reserve were killed when a bridge collapsed into the St. Lawrence. The Mohawks, then as now, were high steel construction workers, and they were building the longest cantilever bridge in the world. In August 1907 inspectors found that some beams were twisting out of alignment, and work was stopped for a couple of weeks. It began again, and on August 29 thirty-six Mohawks were tying new beams into place from the "traveller"—the extended work platform—when the whole structure



gave way. They were all killed. Their sons grew older and took up the craft. Those sons and their grandsons have worked on most of the great buildings of New York City. One, Harold McComber, described the dangers of the job for a National Film Board documentary film called High Steel:

Each man on the raising gang has his own job to do. But the teamwork has got to be good with all that steel flying around. We call this shaking out iron—placing it where we'll connect it later. The bell man signals the derrick man twenty-five floors below. With only the bell signals to go by, he's got to move that steel around as pretty as you please. It's like landing a plane in a heavy fog. A good-sized beam can weigh up to eight tons, but it's got to hit the deck like a feather. Your life could depend on it. . . . Placing the corner columns isn't easy—you're the farthest from the derrick with a sheer drop on two sides but it's one of the first things you do before you start connecting. . . . I fell off one job in Baie Comeau, Quebec. It was about the month of October and it was very misty. A little before eight o'clock I went up on the top of this oval-

shaped tank. I went out on the catwalk, took a few steps and I slipped. There were these little cone-head rivets on the top of the tank and I tried to grab them but I couldn't stop myself from rolling. I saw this pipe coming straight out toward me and I was about one foot shy of grabbing it. That's all I remember. Woke up in the hospital sixteen hours later. I had only fallen

about thirty-five feet, they said. Spent two months in that hospital. Still got a piece of silver in my shoulder and it bothers me sometimes. . . . Iron is my job. I just go ahead and do my work as best as I can, as fast as I can. That's iron work. You just got to get that piece of iron hooked up, take the choker off, and let them get another piece.

Sun Dance

A few tribes of the prairies still celebrate the Sun Dance: the Bloods of Alberta, the Blackfoot at Gleichen, the Cree of Poorman's Reserve in Saskatchewan.

The dance is performed in the summer at traditional places and is centred around special lodges built anew each year. The dance begins when a priest wrapped in a blanket stands beside a bleached buffalo skull and calls out to the powers of the world. The Fire Tender lights a blaze, and pipes of carved catlinite are passed among the priests who make smoke offerings to the Above, the Below and the Four Quarters of the Earth. Musicians in the shadows begin to drum and chant, honouring the setting sun: "The Sun is the cause of all life. It causes the grasses and trees to grow and the animals to grow which feed upon the grasses and causes man to live who feeds upon the animals." The drumming and chanting continue through the night. On the second day a lodge of cottonwood poles is erected and the forked centre pole hung with streamers of brightly coloured cotton cloth. First women followed by men circle four times in single file around the recumbent pole. The principal priest offers cloth and tobacco, placing them in a hole at the pole's base. "Oh Tree of Life, we ask that You reside gracefully over our camp. We have promised to plant You in a new place and to honour You with presents. These I have here and I put them in this earthen hole beside You. May You stand firmly in your new home."

Suddenly the men and boys heave on attached ropes and swing the pole up, setting it in the hole. Dirt is tamped into place and the pole made firm with wood wedges. The other poles are set in place around the Tree, and the circular Sun

Dance Lodge is ready. The dancing begins that night, accompanied by chanting, the wail of whistles and the beat of drums. The dancers focus their gazes on a red thunderbird, which is carved in the middle of the centre pole. The music and dancing go on for two days.

Pete Standing Alone, of the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy, described the present circumstances of the dance for a National Film Board documentary:

In the old days the Indians thought everything alive was sacred, and this was part of the Indian religion. They still keep bundles of animal skins. They call them Beaver bundles and Sacred Pipe bundles. Sometimes, in a teepee, they open one of those bundles, and there's a religious ceremony. Nobody knows how old the bundles are. They burn sweet grass to make incense, and they pray. They sing songs like hymns. This year old man Calling Last opened his bundle. He's about 85 years old. Only the people he invited had the right to be there in that teepee. I don't know much about this ceremony but I do know they have many songs—a badger song, a wolf song, an eagle song. They realize these creatures are creations of Natoosi (the sun), Apistoki (creator), Sapaitapia (source of life). These creatures are sacred to them.

The young people don't have much to do with the old ways. They come to the Sun Dance, but they don't take part in the ceremonies. Some come just to please their parents. For the young people it's more like a holiday than anything else. If Calling Last heard me talking about these mysteries he'd say, "Pete Standing Alone—what does he know about it?"





The Walpole Island Band Council's two-thousand-acre farm, once leased to nonnatives, is now farmed by natives, with assistance from the INA's Indian Economic Development Fund. The fund provides loans, grants and loan guarantees to a variety of Indian-owned or operated ventures including shopping centres, golf courses, resorts and a karate school.

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