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Stanley Mission: Becoming Anglican But Remaining Cree

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This paper examines the Anglican conversion process at Stanley Mission by placing the adoption of Christian practices within a framework that allows for both historical agency and continuity of Cree cultural identity. In addition to applying a functionalist perspective to analyze the incorporation of Christian elements, the author also situates the conversion experience within the context of an ongoing process of creative adaptation. By examining the ways in which the Cree incorporated certain elements of Christianity in a manner that was consistent with their existing cultural framework, we can avoid a hydraulic view of Indian identity which might suggest the Cree endured a form of cultural loss because of a partial or wholesale cultural exchange that took place in the adoption of Christian practices. In this way, it can be seen that the Cree from around Stanley Mission enthusiastically embraced various aspects of the Anglican faith as a means of cultural adaptation while retaining a sense of continuity with their Cree cultural identity.

Cet exposé examine le processus de conversion à l'anglicanisme à Stanley Mission en plaçant l'adoption des pratiques chrétiennes dans un cadre qui permet l'agence historique et la continuité de l'identité culturelle des Cris. En plus d'appliquer une perspective de fonctionnalisme pour analyser l'incorporation des éléments chrétiens, l'auteur situe aussi l'expérience de la conversion dans le contexte d'un processus suivi d'adaptation créative. En examinant les manières dont les Cris ont incorporé certains éléments de la chrétienté d'une façon qui correspond à leur cadre culturel actuel, nous pouvons éviter un point de vue de déplacement culturel de l'identité indienne qui peut suggérer que les Cris aient enduré une forme de perte culturelle du fait d'un échange culturel partiel ou global qui s'est produit dans l'adoption des pratiques chrétiennes. De cette manière, nous pouvons voir que les Cris dans les alentours de Stanley Mission ont embrassé avec enthousiasme divers aspects de la foi anglicane comme un moyen d'adaptation culturelle tout en maintenant un sens de continuité avec leur identité culturelle crie.

When we evaluate the body of literature on Protestant mission history in Canada, some noticeable deficits within the discourse become immediately apparent. In general, the historiography of Indian-missionary relations has seldom included a framework which offers any insight from an Aboriginal perspective. The earlier literature focuses almost exclusively on the analysis of various historical conditions which had an impact upon the missionary's experiences, effectiveness and attitude within these encounters. Later studies have come to recognize this bias and sought to correct the way that Indian peoples have been portrayed as passive victims of directed cultural change within the context of Indian-missionary relationships. However, in spite of later attempts within the discourse to acknowledge Native agency, there has been a tendency to suggest either implicitly or explicitly that the identities of Aboriginal peoples have become continually displaced in favour of Euro-Canadian values and ideals. This simple displacement of Indian identity perpetuates a subtle privileging of Western values through an implied hierarchical positioning of Western cultural systems over those of Aboriginal peoples'. Consequently, whether Aboriginal people exercised agency or whether directed cultural change is suggested, the assumption remains that Aboriginal peoples' cultures have become displaced by European ones, implicitly suggestive of European cultural superiority.

A recent study by Howard Harrod on the ways that Native American religions have provided the means of becoming and remaining a people offers an alternative and certainly less ethnocentric framework within which we might view Indian-missionary relations. He argues that where Indian societies assimilated new religious elements, either from other Indian peoples or from Christianity, these newly appropriated elements of tradition were linked to an older core which helped to maintain a sense of identity with an older tradition and was often the more predominant reality.[1] Harrod maintains that what otherwise may be viewed from the outside as an example of traumatic and externally induced social change may, from the inside of these societies, simply be experienced as a sense of continuity in the form of expansion of tradition rather than rupture.[2]

The case study of the development of the Lac la Ronge-Stanley Mission presented in this paper is undertaken within such a framework. In the case of the northern Cree who inhabited the area around the station, it will be argued that Christian conversion was not only actively and willingly embraced according to pragmatic considerations, but, further, that

the incorporation of elements of Christian tradition were part of a historical and ongoing process of cultural transformation and expansion which continued to reflect a distinctively Cree identity.[3] Within this analytical framework, the northern Cree Indians of Stanley Mission emerge as active participants in their own history rather than helpless or passive victims of an agenda of imposed change.[4] Furthermore, rather than interpreting Christian conversion or partial conversion in terms of an acculturative process toward European ideals and worldview, this examination challenges the accepted notion of a hydraulic view of Aboriginal identity.

A brief review of some of the relevant Indian-missionary literature indicates that Stanley Mission has already been the subject of a 1974 case study undertaken by Norma Goosen. However, this earlier work has little to say about the roles played by the Aboriginal peoples involved. Goosen's primary focus is on evaluating the development of interdependency between trader and missionary as a means of assessing mission success.[5] This particular mode of inquiry, searching out the interplay between fur trade society and missionary enterprise, represents one of the earlier and most popular models for the study of Indian missions in Canada. Owing to the historical significance of the fur trade in Canada, the propensity for placing mission studies within this larger context is not necessarily without merit. In terms of placing their analysis within the broader context of fur trade structures, historians such as John Foster, Frits Pannokoek, Frank Peake and Arthur N. Thompson have all authored works in the area of Protestant mission history which are notable in this regard.[6]

In addition to this large body of work which assesses mission history against the backdrop of the fur trade, there is an equally voluminous collection which focuses on various aspects of the roles and perspectives of the missionaries themselves.[7] A review of the more comprehensive bodies of work written from an Anglican context reveal a heavy bias toward missionary and Church perspectives. These are generally of a chronological nature, describing the expansionary process of mission work in Canada and Rupert's Land. As narratives, these works mostly tend toward sweeping accounts of Church or missionary activity within a congratulatory framework.[8]

Efforts to address the lack of Aboriginal perspectives have also resulted in significant additions to the literature base. A definitive and well

known work which includes an attempt to provide insight from an Aboriginal perspective is John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime.*[9] Extremely broad in scope, this study includes both Catholic and Protestant mission development since the 16th century. Grant has undertaken an enormous endeavour, and while he has tried to rectify some of the noted bias within mission history, it is not until the end of his narrative that he offers any direct insight into an Aboriginal perspective. Consequently, we are not actually provided with any particular case studies or specific examples of mission histories that reflect these perspectives. Nevertheless, in his conclusion, Grant insists that where syncretic movements have been interpreted as rejections of Christianity, they may in fact be better understood as attempts to appropriate Christianity on terms consonant with Aboriginal modes of thought and relative to their needs.[10] Thus, from this standpoint, Grant's work implies not just agency, but also the exercise of creative adaptation.

On the other hand, in a somewhat contradictory manner, Grant also expresses possible intimation of regret toward the particular way Christianity was interpreted. He suggests that the religious syncretism which became so evident within many Indian-missionary encounters, may have turned out more *positive* if the message of Christianity had not been delivered within an agenda of cultural genocide. He concludes that "acceptance pointed to possibilities that in other circumstances might have been capable of realization."[11] The assumption implied here is that rather than a syncretic adaptation, Christianity might have been appropriated on a level even more on par with European ideals had the circumstances been more positive.

Similar views are expressed in James Axtell's significant essay, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions."[12] Axtell proposes a functionalist framework in which various responses to the missions are viewed in terms of what either conversion or resistance to conversion did to or for the social and cultural continuity of the Indian people in question. While this approach privileges an Indian perspective so commonly lacking in the literature, there remains some concern for the implicit suggestion of understanding conversion or partial conversion in terms of degrees of identity displacement. For example, in the case of the praying towns of New England, Axtell credits the preservation of ethnic identity primarily to the fact of continued occupation of familiar land as well as to the racism which prevented Indians from being accepted as European

cultural equals.[13] Certainly there is an element of validity to these observations; however, in spite of his emphasis upon "social and cultural continuity," Axtell goes on to remind us of the fact that because the pre-Columbian Indian is not the only genuine Indian, we should therefore not lament the cultural loss experienced in the process of "construct[ing] a more satisfying culture."[14] So, while articulating the ability of Aboriginal people to courageously accommodate to forces of change brought about by contact, Axtell simultaneously privileges Western cultural frameworks by essentially claiming that the only way to survive was to willingly undergo a certain amount of loss of Aboriginal culture in the adoption of a European one. Such an assumption either ignores Aboriginal peoples' history of adapting to radically new influences before contact while maintaining their own sense of cultural continuity, or it subtly implies that it was only after contact with European peoples that the culture of Aboriginal peoples could no longer withstand the onslaught of changes.

Clarence Bolt's analysis of Tsimshian-missionary encounters of the West Coast clearly reflects a similar message. While acknowledging that Tsimshian people acted of their own accord in choosing a complete conversion to Christianity, Bolt is also explicit in stating that Tsimshian desire to participate more fully in the socio-economic sector of Euro-Canadian society meant that they were willing to make a complete wholesale adoption of Western cultural identity.[15] Such analysis tends not only to impose Western authority on the history of Aboriginal peoples, but simultaneously places the values and standard of Western cultures in a position of hierarchical superiority to that of Aboriginal cultures.

In contrast, John S. Long and Jennifer Brown stand out as two scholars who have attempted to not only consider Indian motives and perspectives in the adoption of Christian beliefs, but also write from within a framework of cultural continuity.[16] In fact, Brown suggests that thinking of the appropriation of Christian elements in terms of degrees of acculturation tends to impose a unidirectional analysis on an otherwise complex and dynamic situation. Both Brown and Long examine the ways in which the Cree people around both Hudson and James Bay received essential stimuli from their intercultural encounters while also indicating the ways in which the continuity of their own Cree identity remained at the centre of their actions.[17] Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that within the analysis of both scholars the ability of the Cree to accommodate radical new influences is recognized, the full significance of these findings

as they apply to the historiography of Aboriginal peoples may not be immediately apparent. Brown's analysis in this regard may be somewhat obscured not only because the particular religious movement under consideration in her study was in itself a temporary phenomenon, but also because of the accompanying short duration of time within which it took place. Problematic to Long's argument in this regard is the way that he has placed an overriding focus upon the idea of active agency within the historical record. In both his introduction and conclusion, Long specifically directs attention toward the idea of active participation. Consequently, Long's argument, like Brown's, may have become either obscured by or subsumed within the framework of historical agency. The impact on Indian-mission historiography, then, may be without due regard for these authors' recognition that, in spite of an overwhelming adoption of Christian ideals, the Cree of Hudson and James Bay in the nineteenth century can be seen as examples of Aboriginal people who have clearly shown the ability to adapt to new circumstances and influences without losing a sense of continuity with their own cultural identities.

Using an analytical framework similar to Brown and Long, Kerry Abel's *Drum Song: Glimpses of Dene History* provides an instructive chapter on Dene adaptation of Christianity.[18] Abel's analysis of the Indian-missionary relationship clearly shows how the Dene were able to incorporate various aspects of Christianity while still maintaining a sense of cultural distinctiveness. Although there was a predominately Catholic presence among the Dene, Abel also includes relevant commentary on the nature of Christian Missionary Society (CMS) influence. Of additional interest to the present work is mention of encounters between some of the Dene people of whom Abel writes and the northern Cree from Stanley Mission.

As addressed earlier, one of the goals of this essay is to have an impact upon the historiography of Indian mission studies in a manner which not only promotes active agency but also provides an example of the dynamic nature of northern Cree culture in adapting to new influences while retaining their own sense of cultural continuity. It is with this framework in mind that we now turn to a reassessment of the Anglican conversion process at Stanley Mission.

Although a CMS missionary did not arrive at Lac la Ronge until 1850, the official beginnings of the Lac la Ronge Mission date back to at least 1842 when, as noted by Paynton in his history of the Anglican dio-

cese within Saskatchewan, "a chief from Lac la Ronge named Heche Hookemow visited the mission of Henry Budd to make inquiries about the Christian faith."[19] The teachings that Hookemow took back to the Indians of La Ronge initiated more inquiries and requests for Christian instruction and resulted in the dispatch in 1845 of an Indian convert by the name of James Beardy to the area in order to share what he had learned of the Christian religion. Owing to the apparent enthusiasm and eagerness of the Cree at La Ronge to hear the Christian message, the Reverend James Hunter, having recently taken official charge of Budd's station at The Pas, sent Native catechist James Settee to provide further instruction.[20]

Arriving in June of 1846, Settee quickly set about instructing children and holding daily prayer sessions as well as two separate services on Sundays. Apart from evangelizing, he spent considerable time constructing a suitable school house and living quarters.[21] The response of the Indians in the area was so great that Hunter reported having been asked within a short period of time to visit the newly established station so that he might confer the rite of Baptism upon several anxious candidates. On 1 July 1847, he baptized a total of 107 persons (48 adults and 59 children).[22] The actions and behaviour which Hunter observed during his visit also prompted him to make the claim "that all the Indians at Lac la Ronge have embraced the Christian religion and that there is not one heathen among them."[23]

By 1850, these impressive statistical returns had impressed CMS officials sufficiently enough to answer both Settee's and Hunter's calls for an ordained Minister to be sent to the area. On 5 July of that year, the Reverend and Mrs. Robert Hunt set out from Hunter's station at The Pas on the last portion of their journey to the La Ronge mission station.[24] After having taken some time to evaluate the suitability of the location, Hunt relocated the mission some time in the earlier part of 1853. Hoping to take advantage of better agricultural prospects as well as more strategic access to other bands of both Cree and Chipewyan peoples, the site for the station was moved from the Lac la Ronge area to a location approximately fifty miles east along the banks of what had formerly been known as the English River. Later named Stanley in honour of his wife's home in England, Hunt's tenure over the mission lasted a period of about twelve years.[25]

The high rate of conversion statistics within these early beginnings

hold the potential for misinterpretation. Certainly these numbers would have influenced some of the rather congratulatory Church histories which have been noted above. However, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the motives and stimuli that gave rise to such impressive conversion statistics, it is necessary to first contextualize the circumstances leading up to the missionization process.

As an outpost of Ile-à-la-Crosse, the headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) within the English River District,[26] Lac la Ronge was within the heart of the prime fur bearing region of the northern trade network. Prior to 1821, the rivalry between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company was very intense.[27] One of the outcomes of such fierce competition was a serious depletion of the fur bearing population. These resource poor conditions subsequently created a situation of scarcity which in turn had a direct impact upon the ability of Indians in the area to acquire food and provisions for themselves and their families. As noted by Goosen, records indicate that Indians were in fact starving not only because of their inability to purchase ammunition, but also because their available food supply had been very much depleted due to over hunting in the area.[28]

Further indication of the hardships that developed in the post-amalgamation years is demonstrated by the strategy of the HBC to improve the situation within impoverished areas such as the English River District. As a means of addressing the situation of depleted fur resources in the region, the company introduced a quota system which effectively reduced fur quota limits by half. In addition, beaver conservation measures were undertaken with the hunting of summer beaver being entirely restricted.[29] Of course, along with these economic hardships and widespread deprivation, one of the effects of a HBC monopoly was a significant reduction in the bargaining power of the Cree at the trading posts. If HBC conservation measures were any indication, these economic difficulties do not appear to have abated to any significant degree by the time of James Settee's arrival at Lac la Ronge in 1846 for the Company did not find it prudent to again encourage the summer hunting of beaver even under restricted quotas until after the arrival of Robert Hunt in 1850.[30] Even if the economic situation had improved by this time, the record suggests that disease continued to remain a contributing factor to the sense of social instability.

In an attempt to track some of the paths of diffusion for various dis-

ease epidemics within the interior of Canada, Arthur Ray makes specific references to epidemics which spread to the English River district between 1830 and 1850. Specifically, he has traced influenza epidemics into the region in 1835, 1837 and 1846, although he suggests the latter may have in fact been an epidemic of the measles (indeed, Ray's suspicions are confirmed by the reports of James Settee who arrived in 1846).[31] Ray also notes that not only was there a heavy toll associated with some of these epidemics in terms of lives lost, there were additional cumulative effects that wreaked havoc for the affected population. In fact, he stresses that these effects are probably underestimated by scholars because of the paucity of studies on the impact of disease and epidemics.[32] Ray does not specify the exact nature of the effects under discussion but he implies that the repercussions would have been extremely wide reaching. The implication is that any sense of cultural stability would have been greatly affected.

The appearance of disease in the general area is also noted in Martha McCarthy's study of the Oblate Missions to the Dene (who were not-too-distant neighbours to the Cree of the La Ronge area). McCarthy indicates that epidemics were introduced via the boat brigades into the area and were subsequently spread to the posts and other camps.[33] Further, she claims that the Dene were well aware of the correlation between transport and disease. It was noted, for example, that "when those at Fort Chipewyan heard of the Montreal cholera epidemic in 1833, they asked for large advances so that they could go back to their lands and remain away from the fort until the following year in hopes of avoiding this sickness."[34] Awareness of this same correlation between transport and disease has also been noted in the La Ronge area. During his tenure at that post in the early 1820's, trader George Nelson related a discussion with a Cree Indian about certain elements of Cree beliefs and practices. The Indian described how the spirit called "Sickness" had appeared to him in earlier years to forewarn him that a general sickness was about to take place amongst them and that they should get out of the way of the travelling waters. He added that the spirit had recently told him that he was coming again later that same summer.[35]

Clearly, the Cree who inhabited the Lac La Ronge area had been recent victims of some ongoing epidemics of disease which would have greatly affected social and cultural stability. Ray's assessment is corroborated by Settee's report of a measles epidemic which appeared right at

the same time as his arrival in 1846 and subsequently claimed many lives around the station. From the first death in August 1846 to another four in the middle of November, at which time he noted that the measles appeared to be abating, the death toll had risen to fifty-six people.[36] That number of deaths over such a short period of time would surely have placed any existing community sense of social well being under tremendous duress.

Thus, given both the ongoing state of destitution and the occurrence of what was probably yet another devastating experience of population decimation, the overwhelming conversion statistics reported at Lac la Ronge may be viewed as one of the ways in which the Cree responded to their situation of crisis. In other words, in seeking out solutions to their threatened social order, the Cree incorporated various Christian elements as an adaptive mechanism because of the disruption in their lives. Concurrently, it is important to recognize that in spite of the glowing reports of the enthusiasm and willing nature of the Cree in accepting Christian teachings and principles, it should not be assumed that the appearance of a Catechist or Missionary necessarily signalled a sudden and immediate adoption of Christian ideas. Such a view would be entirely simplistic and tend to support the assumptions of the replacement and acculturative model of Indian-missionary relations. In this case, the incorporation of Christian elements as a form of cultural transformation and adaptation cannot properly be viewed in terms of either a static or an all-or-nothing process.

The rationale for a dynamic perspective is particularly relevant to the case of the Lac la Ronge Cree because the practice of adopting Christian principles dates back well before the arrival of any missionary in the area. This component of the conversion experience at Stanley is significant to the overall process. It is evident, for example, that there had been some earlier instruction in and adoption of Cree syllabics which meant that some prior appropriation of the Christian religion had taken place. And while the syllabic system was designed so as to facilitate the spread of the Gospel, it is also evident that this unique form of communication was appropriated on terms that were undeniably Cree in expression. The phonetic syllabic characters were first introduced to the Cree at Norway House by Methodist minister Reverend James Evans. Apparently, the invention was quickly carried to distant camps and created a considerable sense of excitement among the Indians to whom it was introduced.[37]

Furthermore, according to Grant, "many Crees visited Norway House from localities as distant as Churchill, Lac la Ronge, and Berens River, and we are told that their chief purpose was to learn syllabics."[38]

The fascination with syllabics appears to have had particular relevance to the spiritual customs and beliefs of the northern Cree. It is quite likely that the widespread appeal of the syllabic characters was closely linked to the acquisition of active forms of power. According to both Harrod and Long, access to sources of power was central to the Cree belief system, especially as an important part of religious ritual.[39] Given that existing forms of available power within Cree religious systems in many areas of Rupert's Land had been greatly weakened in the period under discussion, it is entirely reasonable that a new form of communication which provided direct access to the words of a superior being would have caused much excitement.

In addition, Long makes a compelling argument for the correlation, assumed by the James Bay Cree, between the HBC record books and the associative power of the written word. The extensive use of secular books and letters by the wealthy Hudson's Bay Company was closely associated with power in that regular use of ledgers to record the taking of debt always accompanied the advancement of supplies for winter.[40] There is convincing evidence by which it may be purported that the Cree of Lac la Ronge also carried the same views.

It has already been noted that there were Cree from La Ronge who were among those who travelled to Norway House to receive instruction in syllabics. Besides the knowledge brought back from Norway House, however, HBC trader Samuel McKenzie also provided some ongoing Christian teaching in which the syllabic scheme played a role. According to Hunt, McKenzie's father Roderick had earlier taken one of the area's prominent Cree medicine men to Norway House to learn more of the Christian religion. After returning and teaching the Indians what he had learned, additional instruction was provided by Samuel McKenzie, who assisted them with learning to read and write in the syllabic characters. In addition, McKenzie himself also taught them hymns which they sang in Cree.[41] Consequently, with McKenzie not only controlling the dispersal of material goods but also becoming involved in the transmission of Christianity through the syllabic scheme, it is highly probable that, like the James Bay Cree and other areas, the La Ronge Cree would have indeed made the correlation between the source of power through the writ-

ten word and the use of ledger books in the dispersal of material goods. Accordingly, owing to the importance of access to tangible forms of power that would aid in confronting the contingencies of everyday life,[42] it is clear that the spread of the Christian gospel in the form of Cree syllabics was actively adopted by the Cree of La Ronge not because it was deemed superior in any way to their own beliefs, but because it fit with their belief framework and could be adapted as such.

Ironically, it was Hunt's heavy reliance on the use of syllabics throughout his tenure at La Ronge and then Stanley that ensured the Christian gospel would in fact remain available to the Cree in a manner consistent with their existing belief system. By March 1856, Hunt had become completely convinced of the advantages of syllabics in getting the Christian message out to the Indians who were often at a vast distance from the mission site. He felt strongly that

> they ought to have the means of carrying with them some other means of grace than the little their own experience and the traditional knowledge they have attained enable them to enjoy. They cannot be expected to make much progress in divine knowledge and holy practice till they have more of the S.S. [*sic*] and some portions of the Prayer Book in the Syllabic characters: my feelings deepen on this point continually: and the more extensive survey I take of the work to be done before every tribe and language of this country receives the knowledge of the Lord, the more strongly does the conviction settle itself upon my mind.[43]

Although Hunt had made some improvements to the scheme that he felt to be better phonetic representations of English, there remained some inadequacies, namely problems with words containing certain vowel sounds.[44]

Given that even the new system remained somewhat flawed, one can only speculate as to the degree of accuracy and adequacy of the old system in representing some sort of doctrinal consistency, a principle which was a central tenet of the Protestant faith. In fact, illustrating the importance of understanding the Bible, Usher explains that "to the spiritual life of an Evangelical, the Bible, particularly the New Testaments and the Acts of the Apostles, was central. ... Missionaries demanded close atten-

tion to the study of the Scriptures.[45] It is not surprising, then, that the use of this system, which had been less than adequate even prior to the improvements, could not replicate the Gospel in its pure and unadulterated form. Hunt made accommodated use of syllabics to better meet his goal of spreading the Gospel, but clearly, he was not able to present it in a form which accurately reflected some of the central principles of the Christian faith. In this way, adoption of syllabics was another aspect of the Indian-missionary relationship at Stanley that allowed the Indians to familiarize themselves with the teachings of a foreign religion from an indigenous standpoint. Given the less than perfect translation capabilities of the syllabic system, the Christian message had been necessarily altered which effectively allowed the Cree to approach it in a manner more consistent with their own terms.

Another important element of the Christian tradition which became an integral part of the syllabic scheme and had important correlations with the Cree belief system was singing. Christian hymns made available through the syllabic system had already become an important component of McKenzie's initial introduction to Christianity. There is frequent reference to the manner in which hymns continued to remain instrumental in the formal missionization period as well. However, the enthusiasm shown by the Cree in their adoption of Christian hymns can not be placed in the same context as a group of otherwise illiterate people whose initial approach to the adoption of Christianity may have also consisted of a similar memorization of the basic Creed, the Lord's Prayer and some standard hymns. The adoption of Christian hymns in this case has to be seen as an addition to the existing Native religious system rather than an incorporation of a religious framework where there was none before. When viewed from this perspective, the particular eagerness shown for this form of expression has to be considered in relation to the significance of song within Cree culture itself. Both the act of singing and also the origination of the songs themselves were of central importance to the Cree religious belief system.

In George Nelson's account of the communication process with other-than-human helpers (i.e. those from whom power could be obtained), he relates the role of songs as the medium by which the powers of these spirit helpers are accessed. He explains that these helpers first make themselves known to certain people through their appearance in dreams within which they are said to appear a minimum of four times. Nelson then

states that it is after these helpers

> have made themselves completely known to their votaries, they communicate their power &c,&c,&c and teach their *songs* which tho' [*sic*] in their dreams, are so indelibly imprinted in their memories, that they are never forgotten. For every one of these spirits, Genii, demons, phantasies,[*sic*] or whatever you may please to term them, have each their *Song*, which they communicate to their votaries, as well as explain also their power [emphasis in the original].[46]

This account conveys an indigenous rationale to explain the Cree's special reverence for certain types of songs, as well as the love of singing which has often been attributed to them. Long, for example, notes that "the Cree sang at feasts, at *wiihtikow*-killing [*sic*] celebrations, when seeking success in hunting, and in love songs and lullabies."[47] Thus, when it came to songs which had recently been made available in the form of the written word through syllabics, the eagerness on the part of the Cree to acquire these tangible sources of power is not surprising. This perspective can help to explain some of the dynamics behind the large demand for hymns that resulted in the printing of several hundred copies of Christian hymns into syllabic form at Norway House in the winter of 1840-41.[48]

The fondness for hymns is overwhelmingly evident in the CMS records for the early missionization period at La Ronge; it is strikingly apparent that the singing of hymns was to become a highly significant aspect within the overall adoption of Christian teachings. A notable example is that recorded in Settee's journal during his first year at the mission. In December of 1846, on a return trip to the mission, Settee recalled meeting with a band of 14 Indians whom he had also encountered during the initial trip to Ile à la Crosse. During the day spent with them, he noted that he "taught them the Lord's Prayer and two hymns."[49] It is telling, then, that despite the shortness of time that was available for him to impart Christian knowledge, there remained a considerable focus upon teaching hymns.

Another incident in the spring of 1847 also serves to indicate the degree to which the learning and singing of hymns held practical significance in accordance with the Cree's own belief system. According to

Settee's journal, one of the French priests from the mission at Ile à la Crosse, Father Tache, had recently visited the Fort at La Ronge on his way to and from Deer's Lake. Settee's reports for Sunday 12 March stated that "very few of the Indians came to prayers [because] they went to hear Mr. Tache's discourse." About a week later, even though Tache had already departed, Settee again noted that some of the Indians did not attend evening prayers; it was only after the fact that he found out it was because they had gone to the Fort to learn "the French Hymns."[50] In spite of the different religious doctrines between the Catholic and Protestant faiths, it appears that the Cree were not specifically concerned with such differences because their interest in learning hymns was guided by their own internal belief system.

Without doubt, it was the centrality of the songs to core traditions which ensured that they would become a particularly essential feature of Christian worship. Within Hunter's 1849 Annual Report for Lac la Ronge, he made note of the numerous hymns which had become part of the service at the station, writing that "the adults can repeat the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the Cree language, and also a *great number of Hymns* in Indian" (emphasis mine).[51]

Having gained some insight into the ways that songs held certain spiritual significance to the Cree, it is possible to see past some of the immediate assumptions that may otherwise be generated in such a report. While there may be nothing untrue about the information given, on the surface it tends to suggest that the Cree were simply engaged in a wholesale replacement of Christian principles. Instead, in a manner similar to the introduction of the written word in the form of Cree syllabics, it is now apparent that the prevalent focus on singing hymns became yet another means by which Christian elements were incorporated into Cree belief and tradition, expanding, rather than replacing it.

Christian adherence in the form of appropriating hymns and reading in syllabics, then, was clearly not due to their introduction by either Settee or Hunt. Because of the way that each was perceived to have direct connections to tangible sources of power, both activities held promise for addressing the difficult situations faced by the Cree during this period. As such, attempts to engage in them were not dependent upon missionary inducement. However, the missionary period itself provided other types of material benefits which were not immediately tied to a spiritual component of the mission relationship but were widely taken advantage

of by the Cree (and visiting Chipewyans) and subsequently provided additional incentives for Christian conversion.

The material benefits provided to the Cree also provided some immediate and practical assistance which would have also been a welcome feature of the missionary's presence during this time period. These various types of more worldly inducements were definitely an integral part of Hunt's tenure at Stanley, the particulars of which are well covered by Goosen. First, there were obvious benefits in the type of wage labour that Hunt provided through his hiring of servants and workmen to assist with the secular needs of the station. Second, the relatively extensive medical knowledge which Hunt brought to the mission proved invaluable at times. Finally, and perhaps most significant, was Hunt's penchant for distributing gifts and needy material goods.[52] Indicative of considerable accommodation on the part of Hunt in his evangelical efforts, it is this aspect of the relationship between Indian and missionary which merits a more in-depth examination.

One aspect which must be kept in mind in terms of the distribution of material goods is that in keeping with the Indian protocol of symbolic gift-giving that had become a routine part of the fur trade exchange, Hunt quickly adopted the practice as a means of enticing new people to the station. Explaining the process in his journal for the benefit of the CMS committee, he noted that in addition to the individual gifts, "we also gave the whole party various things, as is our custom, when they come to remain any time, and show themselves attentive at least, if not desirous of instruction."[53] However, to help sustain an acceptable level of provisions for the mission itself, Hunt also supplied extra ammunition, twine, utensils and other related goods with the expectation that before going to the HBC Fort the Indians would agree to first sell to the station the meat of any animals they had killed. The news of the apparent generosity at Hunt's station was notable enough to make its way to more distant camps of Indians; he noted that in May 1853, a band of Chipewyans, having heard that he gave away a great deal, travelled to Lac la Ronge to see what he was doing.[54]

Within a few months of the spring visit in question, Hunt noted that he received a letter from the Chipewyans informing that less than half of them had been baptized by the Roman Catholic priests and that a good number of them wished to be baptized by a Protestant minister.[55] As it was Hunt's desire to secure a Protestant presence in the more northerly

districts with the hope of bringing the Gospel to the Chipewyans and other bands of more distant Cree,[56] the premise of the letter instilled within him a sense of urgency in acting on its requests. However, the timing of the letter's arrival suggests that the requests may have had more to do with the favourable reports of those Chipewyans who had since returned from their spring visits to Stanley than with a sudden and overwhelming desire to be baptized by a Protestant minister. Indication for such is suggested in Hunt's description of an earlier visit which took place in June of that same year. In his journal entry for 6 June 1853, Hunt mentioned that "The party of Chipewyans mentioned last month, are here again, not having set off as yet to their own lands. Ahnahtwa,ahyahse (... the Little Beaver) made another attempt to beguile me into giving him some more presents, asking me for more messages for his countrymen."[57] Given the association of the Christian message with the attainment of highly prized material goods, it is quite probable that the requests for baptism in the letter were in fact inspired by the group of returnees who had confirmed Hunt's generosity.

Despite the liberality for which Hunt had become known, he soon discovered that material motivations did not guarantee him the purchase of a sincere convert nor the ability to impose upon the Indians, any conditions to which they were not in full agreement. It was within only a few months of the Chipewyans' noted spring visits that Hunt began to speak disparagingly of the their apparent lack of sincerity. He stated that "a considerable number of them have visited us here but have left upon us a painful impression of their insincerity in professing to be 'anxious to hear the word of God.' "[58] Hunt related a specific example where, after a period of instruction and probation, he baptized an individual who initially had not been a promising candidate. It was not long after, however, that according to Hunt, "he turned his back upon all his obligations and acted as if neither God nor man had any claims upon him."[59] Similar descriptions that convey an alleged breech of duty abounded within Hunt's journal, and both Chipewyan and Cree people alike were chastised for their behaviour in terms of not living up to certain obligations related to various aspects of mission development.

What is especially revealing in Hunt's description is the expectation of reciprocal obligations on the part of individuals upon whom he bestowed material goods. Although he articulated some of the details of an apparent agreement with one of the individuals referred to above, it is

nevertheless impossible to know for sure to what the Indians felt they were agreeing. Equally uncertain is whether or not Hunt's expectations were typically articulated as a pre-condition to the acceptance of gifts and other highly valued essentials at the actual time of their giving. What remains irrefutable in the matter is that, despite the considerable inducements in the form of material goods which motivated the Indians to either visit, spend time at the station, assist with building or provisioning needs, or simply show a willingness to be taught and accepting of the Christian message, they continued to exercise considerable control over decisions to which conversion to Christianity (or their association with it) would continue to have an impact upon their lives.

The role that material incentives played in Christian conversion is writ large in the body of mission literature. In the case of the James Bay Cree, for example, Long addresses the issue but essentially dismisses the role of material goods in this particular situation. He purports that "in the case of the James Bay Cree, after more than a century and a half of contact with traders, the missionary's goods were likely a bonus rather than a prime motivator."[60] However, given the depletion of resources noted in the English River district during this time as well as other hardships that resulted from sickness and disease, Long's argument is not well-founded in this regard.

Grant, on the other hand, acknowledges the significance of the issue by suggesting that we adopt a healthy dose of mistrust for any cynicism that we may feel toward the whole matter.[61] To help us understand situations where access to material goods appear to be one of the prime motivations for conversion to Christianity, Grant attempts to apply an Aboriginal perspective to the situation. He writes:

> Indians were not in the habit of making the sharp distinctions between spiritual and material benefits that seem self-evident to Europeans. Success in hunting was not a reward for pleasing the spirits but something that inevitably followed when one lived in harmony with them and thereby maintained the equilibrium of nature. ... Sincere converts did not attempt to purchase success by adopting a religion acceptable to Europeans. Their expectation, rather, was that success would attend persons with the spiritual discernment necessary for traffic with the eternal order. Since Christianity was the religion of Euro-

peans, European success implied that there must be something of worth in Christianity.[62]

While Grant has indeed applied a degree of Aboriginal perspective concerning the appropriation of Christian elements in accordance with existing beliefs, his analysis also tends to impart a somewhat romantic outlook, one which immediately brings to mind the image of the "noble savage" living in harmony with nature. Conversely, a much different image appears in Long's assessment of the Cree motivation behind the appropriation of Christian power. He argues that "power in the abstract was of no importance; it was needed to obtain food and confront the contingencies of everyday life." Further, he states that "the Cree were pragmatic; they would only modify their 'traditional' (existing) beliefs if they became convinced that other-than-human Christian helpers could provide tangible aid."[63]

So, while it is entirely possible that the Indians may have indeed felt that the attainment of ongoing success was directly linked to the spiritual discernment with which Christianity would imbue them, their pragmatic outlook meant that they were also acutely aware of any tangible connections that would help to meet their needs in the present. In other words, given the immediate need which was evident, and the material inducements which were offered and thereby would have met some of that need, it is only reasonable that they would have accepted such incentives. To suggest that rewards of a material nature would not have been one of the reasons that Indian peoples agreed to Christian conversion is to be guilty of ascribing to them only romantic or noble standards of perfection.

What really remains at issue in the whole process is the question of whether conversion which has primarily resulted from material incentives produced a sincere convert. Certainly Christian principles discouraged any reverence toward the acquisition of material goods. Protestant theology at this time was heavily focused on the industrious work ethic of Victorian England. If a person attained a certain degree of wealth, it was seen as a reward for a good work ethic.

Based on the nature of Hunt's accusations that the Indians at Stanley readily accepted gifts and provisions and then chose not to meet their obligations in return, there is some suggestion of a larger concern over their insincerity insofar as such behaviour may be equated with immoral standards or values. However, it will be remembered that we do not know

whether the Indians at Stanley or other mission sites would have interpreted this situation in the same way because it is not clear what sort of message was conveyed to them at the time during which material goods were dispersed. In addition, based on Hunt's propensity for giving customary gifts as well as additional things if attentiveness or desire for Christian instruction was shown, it may not have been readily apparent as to when the issue of material goods necessitated obligations that went beyond the acceptance of the Christian message. This explanation is certainly plausible when viewed in terms of Aboriginal concepts of reciprocity which could have been the guiding principle during those occasions when gifts were considered an even exchange for being a willing pupil of the Christian message.[64] Where specific arrangements were negotiated, understood, and still not carried out, it may very well be that the Indians at Stanley were merely resisting the imposition of Western values and morals, which, during the missionization period in question, were an inherent part of evangelical theory. Perhaps, then, we also need to consider what conversion was expected to bring about in terms of changed behaviour and cultural beliefs.

The evidence supports the contention that both the Cree of Stanley Mission and the Chipewyans who visited there not only exercised agency in the appropriation of Christianity, but that they also did so in a way that maintained their cultural integrity in the process. The notion that Christianity was adopted under circumstances of imposed change, then, does not hold true in this situation. However, the reality remains that, upon the arrival of the missionary, the circumstances surrounding the exposure to Christianity drastically changed. Rather than seeking out the Christian message as they chose, it was brought to them. Of course, immediate access to the Christian religion appeared to be a welcome aspect of the missionary's arrival, but it also meant considerable change to the nature of the encounter. While the Indians had formerly appropriated those elements of Christianity which they perceived to be the most advantageous, they clearly did so on terms which accorded with their existing beliefs. The differences which become apparent after the missionary arrival is that the manner in which the Christian message was now imparted did not always allow them to incorporate its tenets according to their own interpretations. Therefore the process of interaction with the Christian message became a process which may have necessitated some measures of resistance to the elements of cultural genocide that were an inherent

part of the missionary's expression of the Christian message.

To be sure, cultural genocide is not the interpretation the missionaries would have placed on their activities. Nevertheless, these individuals were products of their time and underlying their attitudes of evangelical zeal was the notion that their own protestant, Victorian England symbolized the highest stage of civilization and that they had the moral duty to assist Aboriginal peoples to attain the same.[65] These attitudes culminated in a specific theory of evangelism which imbued within the missionary the assumption that the cultural and belief systems of Aboriginal peoples remained inferior to the more superior ones of the West.

Although Usher argues that there was "little hint of imperial domination in the attitudes behind the Native Church Policy of the CMS," she also concedes that "under the aegis of Henry Venn, the CMS became strongly committed to the dual role of evangelizing and civilizing the heathen."[66] Accordingly, then, even the sympathies toward Native traditions and the goal of Henry Venn in "placing Christianity in the natives' own setting and presenting it to them as part of their own way of life"[67] could not overcome the ethnocentric and paternal attitudes embedded within the Church Missionary Society's evangelical theory.

An important part of this general civilizing program was an emphasis on orderly settlement and agricultural pursuits. It was in accordance with these ideals that, at least initially, Hunt attempted to operate. In a report which summarized his goals for moving the station from La Ronge to Stanley, it was the potential suitability of the soil for future agricultural production that was one of the most important reasons for the choice of site. Yet Hunt was less than confident in his ability to alter the existing economic order. Speaking of the Indians' absence from the station during the summer, at a time when he was greatly in need of assistance to get things in order, Hunt wrote that:

> not one of the Indians whom I had engaged for that purpose made his appearance, this being about the pleasantest [*sic*] season of their hunt viz. for musk rats, for the H.H.Bay Co. [*sic*] and for ducks for themselves, both which are killed at the same time and places. It is more than I now expect to induce Indians to live upon fish, while at work for us, at cropping time, when they can exult and luxuriate in shooting and eating ducks, that are just arrived after seven or eight months absence, and of

> which he can produce plenty for himself and family by going to a little distance from the station, and earn much more, by selling a few supernumeraries to his minister, than he can by working for him, but when we have got over our first difficulties, we shall have more power to attract them by means of agricultural production.[68]

Within Hunt's observations, it is evident that despite his realization that he could do little to immediately influence any degree of change in the Indians' subsistence activities, he expressed the hope of doing so in the future.

However, resumption of summer trading just shortly after Hunt's arrival, even with reduced beaver quotas, ensured that the Indians would continue their former patterns of summer hunting for the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company, in itself a critical aspect of Indian-missionary relations at Stanley, was certainly not going to provide any opportunities for a more permanent settlement there. Much to Hunt's displeasure, they also continued with their ongoing system of extending debt, thereby keeping the Indians honour-bound to their obligations.[69] Looking after its own interests, the HBC also felt obligated to warn the Cree that should their children remain at school and not accompany them to their hunting grounds, they would be sure to lose the art of hunting.[70] This suggestion had sufficient impact upon the Cree that they subsequently surmised that any concerted efforts on the part of Hunt to keep the children at the mission was somehow related to a desire on his part to profit in some way from the ongoing attendance of the children at school. Discouraged by diminished attendance that year, Hunt described the situation in a letter to the CMS, blaming the scarcity of provisions as well as the influence of the HBC for the reduced numbers of children at school.[71]

The migratory lifestyle associated with ongoing involvement in the fur trade also made it difficult to induce any sort of building which would have suited Hunt's long term goals of establishing a settled and more permanent community. Nevertheless, in general, Hunt did not offer much insight into this particular subject until he felt compelled to reply to two discouraging letters from the CMS committee, both of which contained instructions for him to cease the building of his church. The Society indicated that it was not only over budget, but that committee members were not convinced about his degree of certainty over the permanency of the

new location.[72] So, in an apparent bid to convince the society of the intended permanency of the new location, Hunt informed them of the Indians' intentions to build there as well as the progress of some who had already started. After having broached the subject to the people during a morning worship service, Hunt wrote that "several declared their intention of preparing to build houses for themselves immediately, in the present locality. Some had delayed to do this before because they had been asked to help at the Society's buildings, and some would still delay for the same reason. Jacob Bird, the chief, began immediately, a house that should be a brother to the Church."[73]

Determining the degree of influence that Hunt may have had in this regard is difficult to ascertain. Certainly accommodations would have been made in the interests of pleasing the local missionary, particularly if such benefits were readily apparent. However, as alluded to earlier, Hunt's attempts at agricultural production proved to be a far more difficult undertaking at Stanley. In addition to the existing subsistence patterns that the Cree were uninterested in abandoning, there were problems related to a short growing season as well as the incompatibility of certain crops. By 1860, it was evident that Hunt was clearly exasperated over the possibilities of any future agricultural success. Goosen quotes his feelings on the matter from a March 1860 journal entry stating the following:

> we must begin to put the spade into the ground as soon as it is a little dry after the melting of the snow; at this time we must hurry on, that we may not that we may not [*sic*]be left far behind the short-lived summer; here we can scarsely [*sic*] say we have a Spring and Autumn distinct from the Summer; far from snow, 6 or 7 months old we suddenly pass through a little flood to a sunny and hot season, soon succeeded by heavy and prolonged thunderstorms, and almost immediately after we must hurry everything off the ground and bury it in cellars lined with hay or ruches and, trench and ridge our ground if we wish to be ready to advance with the next summer.[74]

Thus, the dual components of the civilizing program which Hunt tried to bring to fruition at Stanley were not successfully realized. In addition to the difficulties associated with geography and climate, it is apparent that these particular practices were not yet highly valued by the

Cree who were the primary inhabitants of the area. Furthermore, it is probable that the Cree were well aware of the degree of importance that the missionary attached to these values and practices as part of his larger agenda at Stanley. An incident involving one of the prominent members of the station is instructive in this regard.

During the summer of 1853, the residents of the mission and several more who were gathered there were waiting in anxious anticipation of Bishop Anderson's arrival. Their impatience growing steadily as the expected time of arrival passed, many became agitated and wanted an answer from Hunt as to why the Bishop was not showing up. When Hunt implored them to continue to exercise patience, a growing sense of animosity erupted in displays of bad feelings. As recorded by Hunt, he was definitely displeased with their reactions, which he described as

> giving way to childish petulance: Abraham Roberts had knocked down a part of his house, pulled up his turnips, given away his growing potatoes, and was gone, for good as he gave out [*sic*], taking with him his family and his son in law, and was shortly followed by other of his relations: others left in bad humour; illustrative of Indian character.[75]

Although Hunt acknowledged that some of the Indians were impatient because of the need to leave to go hunting, it is difficult to ascertain what else may have provoked the Indians to such anger. However, what is immediately striking about this incident (besides the humorous image it evokes) is that the targets of Abraham Robert's fury were those things which symbolized the European standards of civilization, namely the house which represented a more settled lifestyle, and the turnips and potatoes which indicated participation in agricultural pursuits.

Notwithstanding the powerlessness of Hunt to successfully implement such standards at Stanley, many of the problems he experienced there were similar to conditions which prevailed at many other northern mission sites. The nature of these conditions, as expressed above, meant that certain accommodations to the Indians' way of life would have to be met. Commenting on the complexities of these situations, Grant states that "for the most part, missionaries soon recognized that they could do little to change economic realities beyond encouraging co-operative efforts for community betterment."[76] However, even this would be a diffi-

cult endeavour to attain, at least at Stanley Mission, where such hopes for co-operative effort was not always easily realized.

It is evident within this facet of the mission experience that, much to Hunt's displeasure, the Indians continued to retain a good deal of autonomy in terms of the decisions they made regarding any arrangements of assistance as well as to what extent such assistance would be carried out. Hunt's reports contained numerous references to a lack of co-operation on the part of the Indians in this regard. In December 1853, for example, Hunt argued with two of the Indians at the station over their attitude toward forwarding the work of the mission. He chastised them for not taking advantage of their natural talents by going out to procure some meat for the residents. Quoting his response to a challenge by one of them to go and kill some meat himself, Hunt wrote that "The Indians seem to think that it is a small and easy matter to build a Church, clothe and feed and teach their children and to support the expensive station, all for the sole benefit of the Indian, who are nevertheless paid for all the help they give and all the food they supply."[77]

A similar situation is described in February 1857, when Hunt lamented that one of his residents who had volunteered to hunt a little meat had instead sold it to the HBC Fort as partial payment against his debt. Apparently having paid him some food in advance for his offer to help provision the station, Hunt related that, "I have not been able to get a single lb. of meat, either for the work people or for my own dear family. ... I am disappointed that our poor Indians should do so little for us."[78] In spite of the frequency with which he voiced such frustrations, there were, nevertheless, times when Hunt also praised the Indians for their efforts.

For instance, it seems that the start of construction for a new church at Stanley imbued the Indians with much enthusiasm. An entry for 20 September 1854 stated, "We took advantage of the promise of a dozen strong and willing Indians to commence putting up the largest part of the Frame work [*sic*] of the Church. They all work very heartily including Jacob Bird and others who necessarily complained because I could give them no flour."[79]

Although it is not readily apparent as to the differences between those conditions that would have motivated the Indians to lend a hand and those which did not, what is unmistakable in all of the above examples is that Hunt was unable to impose any sort of control over whether or not the Indians would assist or support the ongoing work of the station in any

capacity. The dynamics of the mission experience at Stanley suggest instead that Hunt was in fact more at the mercy of the Indians' considerations. This is not to say, however, that Hunt did not have any significant impact on how Christianity was perceived or practiced. Grant points out that "on some matters indeed, the missionaries could not compromise. Christianity as they understood it required extensive changes in moral if not in economic behaviour."[80] The record indicates that there were indeed many Christian marriages and, in addition, some polygamous relationships were also discontinued. Hunt's authority as minister also allowed him a good measure of control over access to the means of grace in the form of attendance at communion services.[81] Although he attempted to use his power in this capacity to enforce adherence to strict moral standards, there was, as might be expected, a certain amount of resistance to his methods. One such example is reflected in the circumstances surrounding the denial of three people to the Lord's Supper during the holiday season. In spite of having received notice from Hunt that they were to be refused admittance to the upcoming communion service at Christmas time, three people, at least two of whom were helpers from the fishery at La Ronge, elected to disregard his admonition and showed up anyway.[82]

The outcome of other situations of a similar nature suggests that a more subtle form of resistance may also have been employed. An illustration of a very subtle form of passive resistance is discernible in the context of various rumours that circulated at the station and which carried suggestions of Hunt's own involvement in immoral activities. Hunt related the particulars of one set of rumours which he found out about after chastising one individual for alleged misconduct involving another woman at the station. After having impressed upon Hunt his innocence in a most solemn way, the individual in question, upon hearing that Hunt believed him, immediately turned to Hunt and informed him that when he had first heard that "his minister had been guilty of the same wickedness with the same woman, he [too] did not believe it.[83]

Similar rumours circulated again just a little later in that same year. This time they arose over a remark by Hunt that in order to protect the servant girls from harassment by two of the men at the station, he would move their tents closer to his own house. The response by one of the men then came that Hunt "was about to have three wives." This supposedly jocular remark, Hunt stated, "was repeated till some who were ignorant

of its origin had put a bad instruction upon it ... and it got mixed up with the [earlier] report."[84]

The issue of Hunt's guilt in consideration of such breeches of conduct is difficult to assess with any degree of certainty. Given the close quarters within which the station community worked and lived, and also that Hunt's wife was mostly at his side, it is unlikely that he would have risked such potentially damaging behaviour. Nevertheless, had this been the case, the Indians at the station were subsequently not going to let him issue hypocritical judgements and then allow him to remain free of remonstration himself. On the other hand, if it were not true, it may very well be the case that the new Christian adherents who frequented or stayed at the station did not necessarily appreciate or welcome Hunt's imposition of the Victorian standards of moral conduct that accompanied his Christian instruction.

Hunt also faced resistance to his attempts to suppress any lingering "superstitious beliefs," or the ongoing practice of any inappropriate forms of Indian medicine. It was in this context that sometime during the summer of 1853, Hunt had a long discussion with Abraham Roberts, the former medicine man, and Jacob Bird, the chief, concerning the phenomenon of thunder and lightning. Hunt noted both his surprise and disapproval at their belief in the story of the Thunderbird and related also that his own explanation seemed somewhat distasteful to Abraham, who did not appreciate having his level of influence diminished in any way. He added that "even yet, Abraham occasionally interferes with my attempts to benefit sick persons by persuading them to try his medicines; but he does not attempt any superstitious applications of them."[85]

Given Abraham's former status as a medicine man and the inherently spiritual significance of Cree medical practice,[86] it is highly unlikely that he that he continued with many of his medical applications in a setting completely devoid of Cree spiritual beliefs or customs. Brown argues that the Indians were skilled at impression management and were capable of maintaining a belief system while concealing and modifying its manifestations to appear more congruous with White ideas of acceptable religious observance.[87] There is every indication that her argument could also be applied to the circumstances of Abraham's medical ministrations as well as others at Stanley who had knowledge in this area.

Even as late as 1861, after more than a decade and a half of active missionization, Hunt was still writing of certain troubling circumstances

related to "superstitious beliefs." He recounted, for example, the story of the death of an old Indian man who was apparently strangled at his own request owing to his fearful expectation that he was turning into a cannibal. Such fears were related to a greatly embedded belief system known as the Windigo complex, a much studied phenomenon within both Cree and Ojibwa cultures.[88] The same report also made mention of another individual who had recently come to him again after having returned to "his old heathen practices."[89] Both the ongoing practice of Indian medicine and the continuing beliefs in long standing traditions are clear indications that, for the most part, adaptations of Christianity that had taken place need to be seen as rational additions and modifications to existing beliefs rather than replacements.

In spite of the Indians' tenacious attachment to core traditions, Hunt managed to attain some impressive conversion statistics,[90] and certainly left an indelible mark on the mission at Stanley. One of the greatest measures of success attributed to Hunt during his tenure at Stanley was the completion of the Holy Trinity Church. Recognized today as the oldest surviving building in Saskatchewan, restoration and preservation work on the building began in the summer of 1981. In July of the same year, it was also officially recognized as an historic site of national importance. According to official proclamation, this recognition was an important part of "commemorating the church's role in the development of the West."[91]

If it can be said that the church played a role in the development of the West, it cannot be said that such development necessarily symbolized the replacement of Aboriginal values with those of European origin. Despite certain outward appearances such as impressive statistical returns and the like, it is evident that the primarily Cree Christian community around the La-Ronge-Stanley Mission area incorporated many elements of Christianity that have been seen as compatible and even comparable with traditional Cree cultural practices and beliefs. Rather than the successful manifestation of directed cultural change on the part of Hunt and accompanying CMS influences, the adoption of Christian beliefs at Stanley Mission may more accurately reflect the actions of a group of Indian people who, with pragmatic motivations, made successful adaptations to assist them in dealing with some of the social, economic and cultural disruptions they were facing.

Given the overall weakened state of the cultural and social systems

of the northern Cree and Chipewyan peoples, the people sought out solutions within a religious framework just as they had always been accustomed.[92] While it cannot be said that such an approach represents a single overriding response to the difficulties faced by the Cree, some elements of Christianity definitely appeared to offer practical applications for such purposes. The Indians of this area actively appropriated those elements which, according to their existing belief system, were especially promising in this regard. While an agenda of imposed change for some areas of life accompanied the arrival of the missionary, the unique economic system of the north, as well as resistance from the Cree and Chipewyan peoples involved, assured that not only would a system of imposed change be unachievable, but accommodation to the Indian way of life would also be the order of the day.

Applying this type of framework to the historiography of Indian-missionary relations allows us to interpret the impact of intercultural encounters after the time of contact without privileging Western values according to the Eurocentric paradigm of cultural replacement. In other words, we can evaluate the circumstances of early Indian-missionary encounters without automatically assuming that any adoption of European practices somehow reduced the level of Aboriginal identity. Instead, these encounters, as indicated by the Stanley Mission Cree, may often be instructive in showing how resourceful and adaptive Aboriginal people have been in their efforts to survive as a distinct people in spite of various forms of directed cultural change.

Specifically, the Stanley Mission experience highlights how Aboriginal peoples have, as part of the strength of their traditions, the ability to continually adapt and change as their circumstances demand without losing their sense of cultural integrity. The cultural identities of Aboriginal people are not lost somewhere in the pre-contact past. They have maintained a continuity with their own sense of selves as distinct groups of people. For many thousands of years, the adoption of elements of other peoples' culture has continued to be an important part of their traditions. Therefore, the adoption of European principles or beliefs should not, in itself, signal a sudden or wholesale change as to who they are as peoples. The experiences of these older generations of Aboriginal peoples should be instructive in this regard. As such, these are important lessons for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike.

Notes

[1] Howard Harrod, *Becoming and Remaining a People: Native American Religions on the Northern Plains* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), xix.

[2] Ibid., 29.

[3] As neighbours to the northern Cree in this area, Dene people (Chipewyan will be utilized here for the sake of historical continuity) are also frequently involved within the activities and development of Stanley Mission. References to Chipewyan people occur frequently in the records of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) journals from Stanley Mission and so there are also specific references to their involvement in relevant sections of this paper.

[4] There appears to be considerable variation within the literature regarding the concept of "agency." For the purposes of this paper, this term indicates active participation within the historical record from the perspective of the Aboriginal peoples involved. Thus, the implication in this regard is that the Cree around Stanley Mission were not simply passive victims of directed cultural change.

[5] Norma J. Goosen, "The Relationship of the Church Missionary Society and the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land, 1821-1860 with a case study of Stanley Mission under the direction of Rev. Robert Hunt" (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1974).

[6] See John Foster, "The Anglican Clergy in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1826" (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1966); Frits Pannokoek, "Protestant Agricultural Missions in the Canadian West to 1870" (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1970); Frits Pannokoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area, 1818-1870" (PhD dissertation, Queens University, 1973); Frank Peake "From the Red River to the Arctic: Essays on Anglican Missionary Expansion into the Nineteenth Century" *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 31 (2) (1989): 1-171; Frank Peake, "Fur Traders and Missionaries: Some Reflections on the Attitudes of the Hudson's Bay Company Towards Missionary Work Among the Indians" *Western Journal of Anthropology* III (1) (1972): 72-93; Arthur N. Thompson, "The Expansion of the Church of England in Rupert's Land from 1820-1839 under the HBC and the CMS" (PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1962).

[7] See, for example, John Archer, "The Anglican Church and the Indian in the Northwest" *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 28 (1) (1986): 19-30; Kenneth Coates, "Send Only Those Who Rise a Peg: Anglican Clergy in the Yukon, 1858-1932" *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 28 (1) (1986): 3-18; Ian Getty, "The Failure of the

Native Church Policy of the CMS in the North-West" in *Religion and Society in the Prairie West,* ed. Richard Allen, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, U of R, 1974): 19-34; Brenda Hough, "Prelates and Pioneers: The Anglican Church in Rupert's Land and English Mission Policy c.1840" *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 33 (1) (1991): 51-63.

[8] See, for example, Bishop Philip Carrington, *The Anglican Church in Canada: A History* (Toronto: Collins, 1963); T. C. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies: A History of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land and its Dioceses from 1820-1950* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962); W. F. Paynton, *A Historical Sketch of the Diocese of Saskatchewan of the Anglican Church of Canada, 100 Years 1874-1974* (s.i.:s.n.,1974).

[9] John Webster Grant, *The Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounters Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

[10] Ibid, 263.

[11] Grant, 263.

[12] James Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions" *Ethnohistory* 29 (1) (1982): 35-41.

[13] Ibid., 37.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Clarence R. Bolt, "The Conversion of the Port Simpson Tsimshian: Indian Control or Missionary Manipulation?" *BC Studies,* (57) (Spring 1983): 38-56.

[16] Jennifer S.H. Brown, "The Track to Heaven: The Hudson Bay Cree Religious Movement of 1842-1843" in *Papers of the Thirteenth Algonquian Conference,* edited by William Cowan. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982): 53-63; John S. Long, "Manitu, Power, Books and Wiihtikow: Some Factors in the Adoption of Christianity by Nineteenth Century Western James Bay Cree" *Native Studies Review* 3 (1) (1987):1-29; John S. Long, "The Cree Prophets: Oral and Documentary Accounts" *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society, 31* (1) (April, 1989): 3-13.

[17] Brown, "Track to Heaven,"; Long, "Manitu, Power, Books and Wiihtikow,"

[18] Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

[19] Paynton, 10.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Public Archives of Canada, Church Missionary Society Records (hereafter CMS), A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge," August 1847.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.
[24] CMS, A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge," August 1850.
[25] Paynton, 12.
[26] Goosen, 97.
[27] For a useful discussion on some of the dynamics of the rivalry, see Robert Longpre, *Ile a la Crosse, 1776-1976* (Ile a la Crosse Bi-Centennial Committee: Ile a la Crosse Local Community Authority).
[28] Goosen, 35.
[29] Ibid., 82.
[30] Ibid., 107.
[31] Arthur J. Ray, "Diffusion of Diseases in the Western Interior of Canada, 1830-1850" *Geographical Review* 66 (2)(1976): 139-157.
[32] Ibid, 139.
[33] Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 1995), 120-121.
[34] Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B39/a/29 fo. 62, Journal of Fort Chipewyan, 10 April 1833, as cited in McCarthy, 121.
[35] George Nelson, *The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823,* eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 50.
[36] CMS, A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge", August 1847, Extracts from James Settee's Journal.
[37] Brown, 58.
[38] Grant, 114.
[39] Harrod, 26; Long, 9.
[40] Long, 8.
[41] CMS, A89, Robert Hunt to Major Hector Straith, CMS Committee, 25 July, 1850.
[42] Long, 10.
[43] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Journal December 1855-1856, March 1856.
[44] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal January-July, 1855, July, 1855.
[45] Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society" *Histoire Sociale - Social History* (7) (1971): 37.
[46] Nelson, 51.
[47] Long, 7.
[48] Brown, 58.
[49] CMS, A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge", August 1847, Extracts from James Setee's Journal.
[50] CMS, A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge", July 1848, Extracts from James Setee's Journal.
[51] CMS, A91, James Hunter "Annual Report Lac la Ronge" August 1849.

[52] Goosen, 125-130.
[53] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Journal January-June 1853, May 1853, as cited in Goosen, 126.
[54] Ibid.
[55] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Letter to CMS Committee, July 1853.
[56] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Report June-December 1853. In this report, Hunt summarized various reasons for relocating to Stanley, one of which was the better access to other bands of Indians, including the northern Chipewyans.
[57] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Journal June-December 1853, 6 June, 1853.
[58] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Report June-December 1853.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Long, 11.
[61] Grant, 245.
[62] Ibid., 245-246.
[63] Long, 10.
[64] Abel, *Drum Songs,* 125,126. Abel discusses the principle of reciprocity and social obligations as they may have applied to the situation with the Dene. However, the indications are that most Aboriginal groups shared similar concepts related to obligations of reciprocity within inter-cultural encounters.
[65] Usher, 32-35.
[66] Ibid., 41, 45.
[67] Ibid., 43.
[68] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Journal July-December 1853.
[69] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal, 31 December, 1860.
[70] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal, Jan.-July, 1857, 10 January, 1857.
[71] CMS, A89, Robert Hunt Letter to CMS Committee, 5 August, 1857.
[72] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt, Journal July-December 1854, September. Hunt quoted the letters at length, both of which affected him deeply.
[73] Ibid.
[74] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal, March 1860, p. 17, as cited in Goosen, 115.
[75] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal, July-December 1853, July, 1853.
[76] Grant, 110.
[77] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal December 1853-June 1854, December 1853.
[78] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal January-July 1857, 7-14 February 1857.
[79] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal July-December 1854, 20 September 1854.
[80] Grant, 110.
[81] See, for example, CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal April 1852, Hunt refuses admittance to a married woman alleged to have committed adultery. See

also CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal July-December, 1853, July, 1853, Hunt suspends another man for the same reason. The same man was again refused admittance in February of 1854, see CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal December 1853-June 1854, February, 1854.

[82] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal December 1860-1861, December. 1860.

[83] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal December. 1853-June 1854, February, 1854.

[84] Ibid, April 1854.

[85] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal July-December 1853, July 1853.

[86] See, for example, Nelson, 55. Nelson refers to the source of knowledge concerning the use and locations of medicinal ingredients. He notes that sometimes they are given to people in dreams; others, which are held in a mountain abode, and only certain worthy people will be admitted and instructed as to the proper ceremonies, songs and sacrifices required for their use.

[87] Brown, 55.

[88] For an interesting discussion on the origins and beliefs surrounding the Windigo complex, see Nelson, 85-94.

[89] CMS, A90, Robert Hunt Journal December 1860-1861, January 1861.

[90] One of the last legible accounts of statistical returns during Hunt's tenure at Stanley was for the year 1858. In this report, he records the number of baptized at 327. This total included the baptism of 68 Chipewyans that same year.

[91] "Oldest Church in the west to be recognized as historic site," *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 7 July 1981, p.3.

[92] Grant, 118.

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