

# Pasquatinow and the Red Earth Cree

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**ABSTRACT.** Pasquatinow, located on the western edge of the Cumberland Marshes, is mentioned repeatedly in historical documents dating from 1772 through to 1916. By the mid-1800s it is evident that Pasquatinow was within the territory of the Red Earth Cree. Information provided by Red Earth elders indicates that they maintained the place name Paskwatinaw well into the 1900s, and that the area was highly regarded as a productive hunting and trapping locale. Indeed, Hudson's Bay Company journals provide evidence that muskrat trapping in the Pasquatinow area was very important in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the late 1930s, the provincial government began to impose some restrictions on hunting and trapping in the Cumberland Marshes, as did the Hudson's Bay Company in a large area which it leased. As a result the Red Earth people were less able to use the Pasquatinow locality regularly, and by the 1940s they had lost the use of this part of their traditional lands.

**SOMMAIRE.** Pasquatinow, située sur la bordure occidentale des marais du Cumberland, se trouve fréquemment mentionnée dans les documents historiques allant de 1772 à 1916. Vers 1850 il était évident que cette localité faisait partie du territoire des Cris de la Terre Rouge. Les renseignements fournis par les anciens indiquent que les Cris conservèrent ce nom de lieu jusque dans les années 1900, et que cette région était fort appréciée pour ses ressources de chasse et de trappage; en fait, les journaux de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson démontrent que le piégeage des rats musqués dans cette région était considérable dans les années 1920 et 1930.

A la fin des années 1930 le gouvernement provincial commença à imposer des restrictions sur la chasse et le trappage dans les marais du Cumberland, à l'instar de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson dans la vaste région qu'elle louait à bail. En conséquence les Cris de la Terre Rouge perdirent l'usage régulier de Pasquatinow, si bien que dans les années 1940 ils se trouvèrent dépourvus d'accès à cette partie de leurs territoires traditionnels.

## Introduction

The Cree word "Pasquatinow" is a rendering of *paskwatinaw* "bald/bare hill" which appears on Sir John Franklin's (1970) end map as the name of a location on the north valley rim of the Saskatchewan River, opposite the head of the Sipanok Channel (Figure 1). In a paper published in 1992, Meyer et al. have argued that in early historic and in pre-European times Pasquatinow was one of several spring ingathering centres positioned every 80-100 km along the length of the Saskatchewan River. The latter paper discussed Pasquatinow only on the basis of information available from historical records and from a brief archaeological examination of the location. As a result, one of the reviewers of the 1992 paper recommended that Cree elders in the region should be consulted for information about Pasquatinow.<sup>1</sup> This recommendation has been acted on and, to a degree, the present article presents the results of recent inquiries of elders, although the analysis of additional historical materials is also included.

The following article considers Pasquatinow in terms of the social geography of the Cree occupants of this region. As discussed by Margaret Conkey (1984: 263, 265), social geography<sup>2</sup> refers, in part, to the manner in which people distribute themselves throughout their lands. It also includes consideration of the network of communications which the members of each social group maintain throughout the year, and knowledge of where other social units are and why they are at those locations (Conkey 1984: 265). Indeed, Conkey (1987: 165) sees social geography as a concept which makes the connection

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1 When Meyer first began to research Pasquatinow in the late 1980s, he did not immediately recall that it was within the territory which, historically, had been occupied by trapping and hunting groups of the Red Earth Cree. At that time he was planning to become involved in archaeological work at Cumberland House. Therefore, he asked Virginia McKay, community historian/archaeologist at Cumberland House, to enquire about Pasquatinow of the elders there. An individual she contacted indicated that he had not heard of Pasquatinow but, anyway, we should ask people at Red Earth as it was in their territory! Of course, Meyer (1985: 12) had only to consult his own work to confirm that this was indeed the case.

2 Conkey has expanded on the concept of social geography, based on a passing reference to it by Lewis Binford (1972: 291).

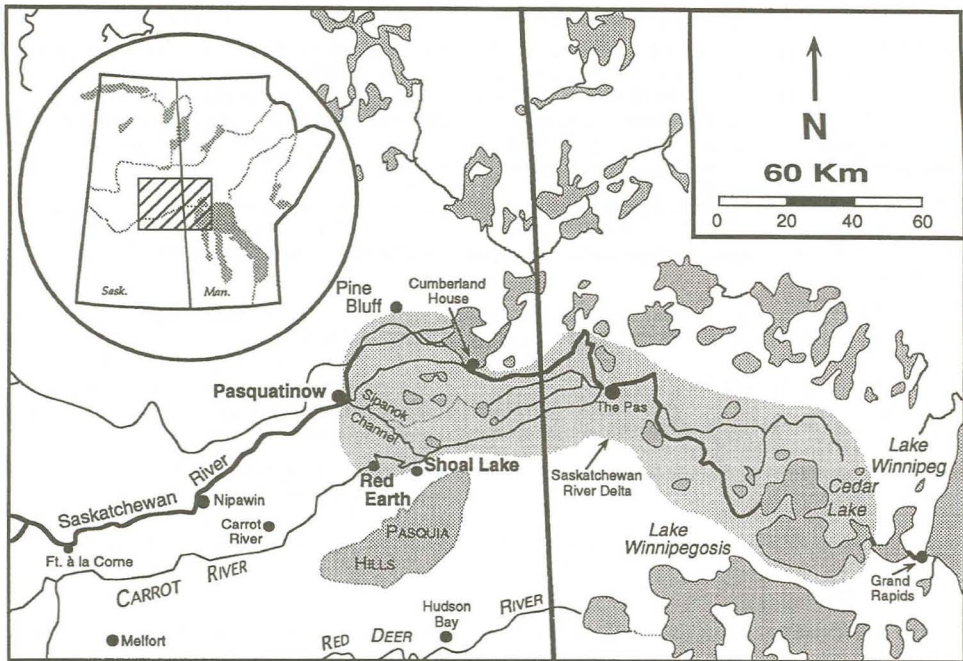


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Pasquinow, Red Earth and Shoal Lake in east-central Saskatchewan (modified from a base map prepared by Terry Gibson of Western Heritage Services Inc.).

between social groups and their landscape. This concept is particularly applicable to hunter-gatherers, since such peoples move through their lands with the seasons, and the composition of their social groups changes from time to time in the course of this annual round.

Hunter-gatherers generally do not attempt to manipulate or change their environment; as Hayden (1993: 152) has noted, they "are passive participants in their ecosystems." While they may not attempt to modify their environment, hunter-gatherers do structure it culturally (Conkey 1984: 266-68). In part, they organize their landscape by naming places, and their lands consist of a myriad of named locations. Such locations have certain meanings (feelings) attached to them, some being important from an economic point of view, some from a spiritual point of view, some from both (Correll 1976: 176). A very important part of the structure is the routes of travel which connect these locations. Since travel is frequent and necessary in the lives of hunter-gatherers, it is these routes (on land or water) that are crucial (Ingold 1987: 149-53). In short, the landscape is structured in the mind and becomes a cultural construct.

The social geography of the study region will be considered according to a particular model of southern boreal forest Algonquian social organization. This model is based on well-established ideas published by ethnographers such as Edward Rogers (1965, 1969) and Eleanor Leacock (1969). More recently, Meyer and Thistle (1995: 407-9) have outlined this model in some detail, considering the social organization of these Algonquians to have been characterized by regional bands. The regional band was composed of all of those people who occupied a defined geographical area, such as a particular drainage basin (Meyer and Thistle 1995: 407-9). This social unit usually consisted of 200-300 people, although groups as small as 75 are known historically, and was often named, usually according to the most prominent river or lake in the region. Many of the members of a regional band were close kin, as Helm (1968: 121) has observed: "Within the regional band there is kin-connectedness in the form of a network of primary affinal and consanguineal ties between members." But, she also notes that "neither kinship nor a single specific



resource is the focus of total group identity *per se*" (1968: 121); rather, it is the geographic region occupied.

For much of the year (especially through the winter), these people lived in smaller, scattered social units; but once or twice a year all of the members of the regional band gathered at some traditional location. The importance of these periodic aggregations to the social and cultural well-being of the people involved, and the very perpetuation of the social unit, cannot be overstated (see also Rogers and Black 1976: 30). As Meyer and Thistle (1995: 407) have noted:

These aggregations are not simple gatherings of large numbers of people; rather, they are complex events with social, spiritual, political and economic aspects and functions [but see Conkey 1985: 303, 315]. They are the means by which a sense of community, of cultural oneness, is maintained.

In the Saskatchewan River valley, historically, the aggregation, or "ingathering" (Nicks 1980: 44, 62-64) generally occurred in the spring.

Through much of the year, the members of a regional band lived in smaller social units such as the "local band" (Helm 1965: 375; Morantz 1986; Feit 1991). The local band was composed of between fifteen and thirty persons, generally focussed on an older couple and their married offspring. In any case, each member of the local band could trace a direct blood tie (parent/offspring, siblings) or marriage tie to at least one other member.

This study, therefore, has its foundation in earlier work by individuals such as Helm, Rogers and Leacock on the socioterritorial organization of boreal forest Algonquians and Athapaskans. However, it expands on their work through the introduction of the concept of "social geography" and a focus on the significance of ingatherings.

While the Crees of the region under consideration here have been involved with a market system throughout their recorded history, it has been argued that through to about 1840 this involvement was discretionary as far as individuals were concerned and that these peoples lived lives which were far from dominated by this trade (Thistle 1986). Indeed, it is apparent that they opted in and out of the trade at will, much as Woodburn (1988:51-53) has described for contemporary African hunter-gatherers. In the later 1800s, with the growing organization of the fur trade and increased missionary activity, these people slowly lost their independence. In short, this article also touches on changes in power relations during the last half of the 1800s into the early twentieth century. In pursuing the relationship between the Red Earth Crees and their traditional lands, we observe that these Crees were increasingly alienated from the Pasquatinow area by the end of the 1930s. This alienation can be viewed in the context of a larger genre of historical and anthropological studies which consider the incorporation of northern aboriginals into the Canadian state system (e.g., Dickason 1992; Ray 1990; Tough 1990, 1996). In particular, Patricia McCormack (1993: 100) has described an "internal kind of neo-colonization" which has occurred in northern Canada.

### Geographical Overview

The Saskatchewan River is about 470 km in length, from the confluence of its two upper branches in central Saskatchewan to its mouth at Grand Rapids on Lake Winnipeg (Figure 1). The lower 310 km of the Saskatchewan River valley is dominated by the so-called "Saskatchewan River Delta." The delta is a huge area of marshes and shallow lakes where the only higher land is on the levees which border active (e.g. Carrot River) and abandoned stream channels (Smith et al. 1989). The head of the Sipanok Channel marks the western edge of this delta, which extends roughly north-south from that point. On its west side, the delta is bordered by an expanse of fairly level terrain, the former bed of a northern lobe of Glacial Lake Agassiz. Historically this region was poorly drained since water was ponded between the successive, parallel strandlines of the former glacial lake. Therefore, muskegs and bogs dominated this region.

The south side of the delta is bordered by the foot of the Pasquia Hills. Here, a narrow strip of fairly flat land lies between the delta edge and the first rise of hills. The Carrot River enters this southern part of the delta from the west and trends east, roughly parallel to the foot of the hills. The hills rise some 552 m above the delta to an elevation of 835 m, the second highest point in the province of Saskatchewan.

All of this region is within the southern part of the boreal forest, within which a number of subunits have been recognized. The delta is a part of the Manitoba Lowlands region and is characterized by a number of tree and other plant species which are unusual to the Saskatchewan forests (Harris et al. 1983: 26-29). These include American elm, white ash and Manitoba maple, all of which reach their northern limits here. The forest bordering the west and south sides of the delta is part of the mixedwood forest section, a typical, rich boreal forest (Kabzems et al. 1976).

The marshes and shallow lakes of the Manitoba lowlands support large numbers of muskrats and beavers, as well as waterfowl in season. Fish populations are substantial, although limited by the shallowness of the lakes, and moose productivity is considered to be the highest in the province (Dirschl et al. 1967: 188). In the adjacent mixedwood forest, muskrat, waterfowl and fish numbers can be expected to have been lower; however, this is productive beaver and moose habitat, and some elk are also present.

### **Pasquatinow Described**

Meyer and Terry Gibson located Pasquatinow in 1989 and examined it more closely in 1990 (Meyer et al. 1992). Subsequently, Meyer and companions have visited Pasquatinow in 1991 and 1992, and again in 1995 and 1996. Situated across the river from the head of the Sipanok Channel, Pasquatinow occupies a well-elevated valley rim along the southern edge of an extensive area of stabilized sand dunes. Occupying the north side of the Saskatchewan River, the valley rim here rises some 23 m (75 Fort) above the river and this is the first "high" land on the west side of the Saskatchewan River delta. Along the valley rim at Pasquatinow there are presently two sizeable meadows, and it is likely that these grassy areas were much larger when this place was regularly occupied. The area bordering the rim is fairly level, but to the north, within 200 m, the terrain becomes undulating since it is dominated by stabilized sand dunes. This latter area is an open jack pine forest.

Along the valley top there is an open, eroding "cutbank" about a metre in height. For about 200 m along this eroding edge there is a steady scatter of lithic debitage, fire-cracked rock, occasional stone tools, and animal bones. In several locations there are the remains of former hearths, indicated by pieces of fire-cracked rock, burned bone fragments and ash eroding out of the edge. Beyond this central 200 m stretch in which archaeological remains are common, there is a broader scatter of materials, especially fire-cracked rock, for about a kilometer along the valley summit.

Pasquatinow would have had several attractions as a spring gathering place. It is a suitable camping place since it is well elevated and this, plus the sandy substratum, would have kept it relatively dry during the spring melt and runoff. Also, it is south facing and therefore would have received the maximum warmth of the sun in the spring. Importantly, it was at the intersection of travel routes. One route led southwest and south along the Sipanok Channel and Kennedy Creek to the Red Earth area, while another led north over a portage to the Torch River. Of course, east-west travel occurred along the Saskatchewan River.

### **Use of the Name Pasquatinow**

The earliest historical attestation of the name *Pasquatinow* occurs in the 1772 writings of Matthew Cocking (Meyer et al. 1992: 205) as "Pusquatinow." Meyer et al. (1992) have discussed several subsequent occurrences of this place name in the historical documents,



through to Otto Klotz's reference to "Pasquatinas" in 1884 (Meyer et al. 1992: 205-6). Since the preparation of the latter article, three additional occurrences of this toponym have come to Meyer's attention,<sup>3</sup> two of which by a colleague, Dale Russell. One of the latter is found in a daily journal entry made by the Hudson's Bay Company post manager at Cumberland House on 11 February 1807. In this entry (HBCA 1807: fol. 12) he refers to two individuals who, ten days previously, had gone to "Pis cow tin now chuk." The hand writing involved is very poor, so that it is not certain whether the "chuk" element is correct; it could even be a scrawled rendering of the English word "hill." The second occurrence noted by Russell dates to 1880, at which time Jean D'Artigue, a decommissioned North West Mounted Police officer, boated with companions from Prince Albert to Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River. En route, they stopped at Fort à la Corne (Figure 1) where they were hosted by the post manager, George Goodfellow. Goodfellow provided them with a detailed description of the route which they should follow to Grand Rapids, part of which included a reference to Pasquatinow:

Below Birch Islands you will find the Tobin Rapids which you will easily run. Farther down, on the left bank, you will see Paskatinow [sic] Hill where you can take dinner (D'Artigue 1882: 156).

The third reference is found on one of the maps prepared for a Department of Public Works report by C.E. Voligny (1916) on the results of a large-scale, multi-year survey and mapping project of the North Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Rivers.<sup>4</sup> Designed to provide information for engineering projects proposed for the improvement of navigation on this river system, the field surveys extended from 1911 to 1915. One of the maps contains the toponym "Pasquetines" which is placed on the north side of the river, across from the mouth of the Sipanok Channel (Figure 2). This large-scale map provides the most precise location for Pasquatinow of any of the available materials, and this is also the last known published attestation of the place name. It is interesting that Voligny, like Klotz, presents this place name in the diminutive, as "Pasquetines," evidently a rendering of *paskwatinâs* 'little bald hill.' Also, since Voligny's spelling differs from that of Klotz (Pasquatinas) it is apparent that Voligny did not simply copy the name from Klotz's earlier reports; rather, Voligny must have obtained the place name from a local person. Since both Klotz and Voligny recorded this place name in the diminutive, it appears that this form was in common use in this region in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The historical documents, therefore, extending from the late 1700s through to the early 1900s, provide abundant evidence that Pasquatinow (or Paskwatinis) was a place name well known to the Cree occupants of this section of the Saskatchewan River valley. Since the territory occupied by the Red Earth Crees included Pasquatinow, it is to be expected that these Crees knew Pasquatinow and used this toponym. Unfortunately, in the course of his work with Red Earth elders in the early 1970s, Meyer never happened to elicit the place name Pasquatinow.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, Meyer has attempted to obtain information about Pasquatinow from Red Earth elders. In October of 1994, he travelled to Red Earth to show some of his 1970s

3 A likely additional reference to Pasquatinow was made by William Tomison on 9 August 1798 when travelling up the Saskatchewan River: "at 7 p.m. put up two miles above the High Bank" (Johnson 1967: 140).

4 This source was pointed out to Meyer by Dr. Norman D. Smith, geologist, University of Illinois at Chicago.

5 Meyer (1985: 5) lived at Red Earth, conducting field work (mainly interviews with elders) for a year and two months in total, beginning with a nine-month stay, 1 December 1970 to 31 August 1971, and shorter stints in the summers of 1972 and 1975.

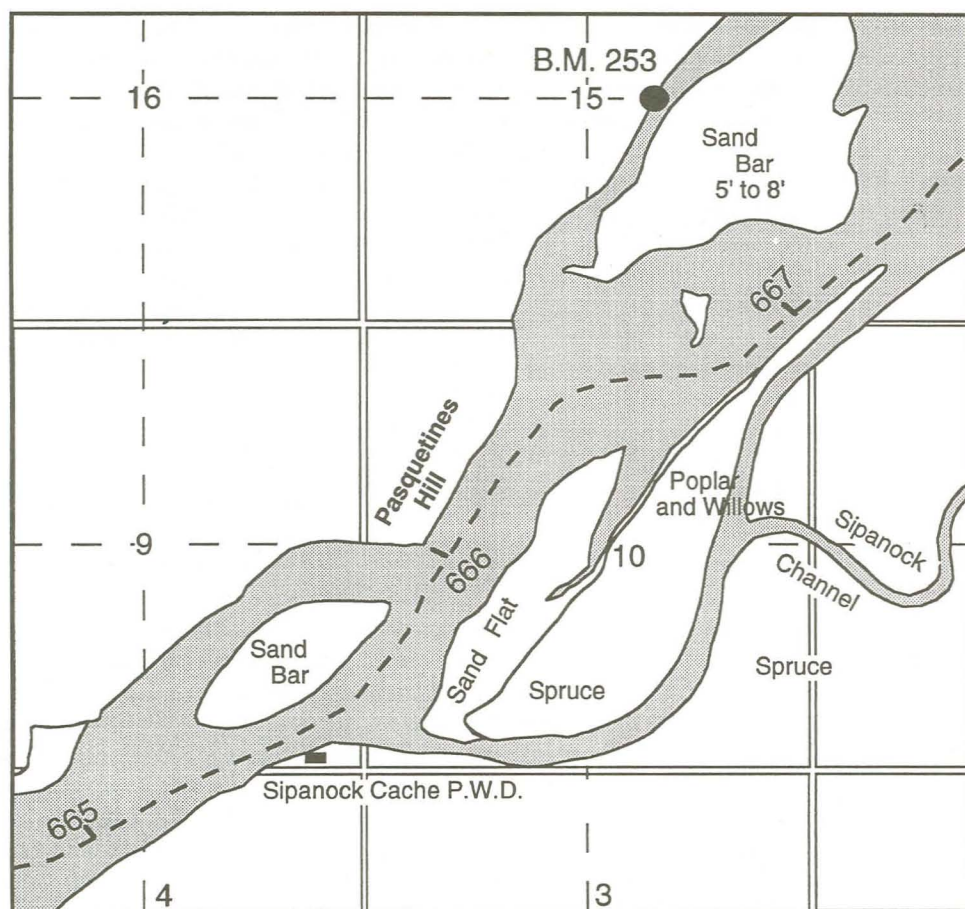


Figure 2. Portion of Voligny (1916) map showing the location of Pasquatinow (Pasquetines). (Reoriented and redrawn from Voligny map; depth soundings on river omitted.)

photographic slides to the elders. While there, he took the opportunity to talk about Pasquatinow with one of the elders, Abel Head (aged 73). Mr. Head had assisted Meyer as an interpreter on numerous occasions in the early and mid-1970s. Unfortunately, he did not know (or had forgotten) the place name Pasquatinow; however, he was interested in knowing its location and then volunteered information on the nature of major gatherings on the Saskatchewan River, especially that at Fort à la Corne.

Following this, in November of 1993, Meyer contacted the second author, Hutton. Hutton lived at Red Earth for much of the first half of the 1900s and he recalled that, at that time, the place name Pasquatinow was in regular use by the Red Earth people. Subsequently, in February of 1995 Meyer was asked to travel to Red Earth to meet with a committee of elders who were assisting with the development of a school curriculum based on community history. The elders present were Abel Head and his brother Barnabus, as well as Alice Head, Clara Head, Clara Nawakayas and Harriet Nawakayas. In the course of the "meeting" Meyer raised the topic of Pasquatinow. Surprisingly, the name was not familiar to any of those present. Following the meeting, Meyer questioned Abel Head about any other elderly persons who could be asked about Pasquatinow. He suggested Godfrey Daniels (aged 77), whom we then went to speak with. Again, the place name was not recognized; however, in the course of the conversation (in Cree) between Mr. Head and Mr. Daniels, Meyer noted that the name Pasquatinow was transformed to *pask-watinâhk*. The '-âhk' is a locative, a grammatical device indicating a particular location; it



appears, therefore, that subconsciously these individuals did know the name — and that the Red Earth people sometimes employed the form “paskwatinahk.”

In the summer of 1996, Meyer and a colleague, Terry Gibson, made an impromptu visit to Red Earth while Gibson was engaged in archaeological investigations in the region. We contacted Abel and Rebecca Head, and we then visited two other elders, John and Stella McKay (aged 75 and 71). Again, Meyer asked about Pasquatinow and was gratified to learn that this latter couple did, indeed, know of it, although they had never been there. Indeed, Stella McKay volunteered the name of another location on the Saskatchewan River, this one several kilometres to the east of Pasquatinow. Meyer also asked about the form “paskwatinas,” but this was not familiar to Mr. and Mrs. McKay.

In short, the memories of the second author and discussions with a number of Red Earth elders provide evidence that, while the place name Pasquatinow (or Paskwatinahk) is now known only to a few Red Earth elders, it is clear that this toponym was in common use in the early decades of this century.

### **Pasquatinow and Regional Social Geography, Pre-1782**

Meyer and Thistle (1995) have proposed that prior to the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82, Pasquatinow was one of six ingathering centres positioned along the Saskatchewan River (see also, Meyer et al. 1992: 217-20). They have also argued (1995: 426) that each of these was maintained by a distinct regional band. As such, Pasquatinow would have been the social and spiritual centre of a regional band whose territory straddled the western edge of the Saskatchewan River delta. If Pasquatinow was such a centre, then the members of this band would have gathered at Pasquatinow during the spring. Unfortunately, there is little documentary evidence to support this conjecture, although on 13 May 1777 two men whom Matthew Cocking noted as having come from Pasquatinow arrived at Cumberland House, thus indicating use of Pasquatinow in the spring (Rich and Johnson 1951: 146). A brief note by Cocking the following day is also noteworthy: “One Canoe of Indians arrived (part of the same Tribe mentioned Yesterday) they brought nothing.” (Rich and Johnson 1951: 147) This reference to “Tribe” is significant. In this region, the term “tribe” was employed by Samuel Hearne and Matthew Cocking to refer to large subgroupings of the Cree population, presumably regional bands (Meyer and Thistle 1995: 426). In short, Cocking seems to be referring to a regional band upstream from Cumberland House, apparently on the western side of the Saskatchewan River delta.

In the summer, it is possible that these people maintained a pattern which Matthew Cocking (Rich and Johnson 1951: 150) alluded to in a 25 May 1777 journal entry: “Twenty Canoes also arrived from up the River Saskachiwan who generally reside in the Lakes in the Summer.” In other words, the peoples along the west side of the delta moved somewhat farther east for the summer, to spend this season among the marshes and shallow lakes of the western part of the delta. This area would have provided a plentiful food supply including fish, waterfowl, beavers and moose. The marshes would also have been a source of plant foods, including the roots of water parsnips, bulrushes and cattails, and the fruit of berry bushes growing on the higher terrain of the levees. Cocking’s reference to “Twenty Canoes” is also noteworthy. This number of canoes would have carried between 40 and 50 people (Russell 1991: 125-28), who could have composed a substantial portion of a regional band which occupied the area on the western side of the Delta.

The population of the Saskatchewan River valley was decimated by the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82. Indeed, at one point William Tomison, the post manager at Cumberland House, believed that all of the “U’Basquia Indians” (the regional band centred on Opaskweyaw-The Pas) had died (Rich and Johnson 1952: 238). However, some members of other bands were saved at Cumberland House and some family groups who had remained isolated in their wintering grounds appeared in the spring, unaware that a

disastrous epidemic had occurred (Rich and Johnson 1952: 250, Thistle 1986: 63). That the remnant of the original population was small is reflected by the statement of post master William Tomison at Cumberland House, in 1801: "Cheag one of the best Indians belonging to this place died last summer he was the only real Cumberland House Indian that survived the Small Pox in 1781" (Thistle 1986: 71). By this, presumably, Tomison meant that Cheag was an adult at the time of the epidemic, since several local children did survive the smallpox.

Therefore, although the historical information is limited, some general ideas about the social geography prior to 1782 can be determined. It appears that a regional band was present, the members of which spent the summers within the western edge of the delta and the winters outside of the delta. There is evidence of use of Pasquatinow in the spring, and this may have consisted of an ingathering of all of the members of the regional band.

### Social Geography of the Western Delta Region, ca. 1819-1870

Following the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 the lower Saskatchewan River valley was largely repopulated by immigrants from elsewhere (Thistle 1986: 64, 69-71). These were predominantly Swampy Crees from the east and Ojibwa (Saulteaux) from the southeast and south. By 1819, almost forty years after the epidemic, it is clear that there was a Cree community along the western edge of the Saskatchewan River delta. Evidence in this regard is available through the records of Captain John Franklin's expedition. In the winter of 1819-20 a portion of Franklin's party wintered at Cumberland House and in March of 1820, Lieutenant Robert Hood, one of the members of that expedition, travelled southwest of Cumberland House to the Red Earth region (Houston 1974: 43-68). Although he was not entirely successful in his attempts to pinpoint the locations that he was at, it is clear that he visited three camps in the Red Earth Creek region. There seems to have been only one tent at each camp, but it is evident that a substantial number of people were present. One of the men was employed by the Hudson's Bay Company at Cumberland House as a hunter (i.e., to kill as many moose as possible for the use of the post staff) (Houston 1974: 47). The remainder of the families were evidently enjoying the plenty of their wintering grounds. In short, the Red Earth region was an important wintering area for those families who occupied the southwestern edge of the Saskatchewan River delta.

While Robert Hood provided a glimpse of life in the Red Earth region in 1819, he only named two individuals, the Warrior and Long Legs. Neither of these appear in the genealogies which Meyer gathered in this region in the 1970s, despite the fact that a number of individuals included were born in the early 1800s.<sup>6</sup> However, subsequent genealogical work with the Fort à la Corne Crees by Alexander Deetz (personal communication, 24 August 1997) has led to the identification of Long Legs as a member of that band.<sup>7</sup> Supporting evidence in this regard is contained in a Fort à la Corne account book. In this document, it is recorded that "Kak,quan,nap,pew" or "Long Legs" "died Jany 1867" (HBCA 1864-67: fol. 53). This is important since, as is discussed in a subsequent section, the occupants of the Red Earth region in the mid-1800s are known to have been

6 Indeed, the genealogies contain the names of some individuals who were almost certainly born in the mid and late 1700s (albeit not in the western delta area), such as Kiseyinis' grandfather, Paspaskiw, and his father-in-law, Seweyotam (Meyer 1985: 47-48).

7 As well, Deetz has indicated (personal communication, 24 August 1997) that "Kak,quan,nap,pew" was alternatively known as *kinôkât*, which also translates as long legs. Long Legs was the father of Chekastay-paysin who was chief of the short-lived Chekastaypaysin Reserve which bordered the South Saskatchewan river, a few kilometres south of present-day Muskoday reserve.



the most easterly members of the Fort à la Corne band. Long Legs' presence here in 1819, therefore, provides evidence of significant time depth for the utilization of this region by Fort à la Corne Crees. Two other individuals, Kiseyinis and Kisemoswakapow, are also noted in this general region in the early 1800s, in this case by a Hudson's Bay Company account referring to the winter of 1827-28 (Thistle 1986: 85). Both of these men have been identified in the Red Earth-Shoal Lake genealogies (Meyer 1985: 40). To be mentioned in the Hudson's Bay Company accounts they must have been at least in their late teens in 1827 and so would have been born in the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that Kiseyinis and Kisemoswakapow lived the remainder of their lives in this region, evidence of a considerable degree of stability in the local population through the nineteenth century.

It is not until about 1860 that the oral history accounts and genealogies provided by Red Earth elders in the 1970s (supported by a small amount of documentary evidence) become sufficiently detailed to allow an outline of the regional social geography. As Meyer (1985: 40-62) has indicated, around this time there were six local bands present in this region. Those in the Shoal Lake area were led by a man named "Okakeek," and by two brothers, Osawask and Kisemoswakapow. At Red Earth and farther west were local bands led by Kiseyinis, Cecim and "Pootikat."

The locations of important base camps used by four of these local bands have been provided by regional elders. That of Osawask was at Shoal Lake, that of Kisemoswakapow on the Man River near its mouth, that of Kiseyinis at Red Earth, and that of Cecim on the Papikwan River (Meyer 1985:43) (Figure 3). These locations were on or near the flat terrain at the foot of the Pasquia Hills, a particularly good zone for moose hunting in the winter, since in December and January these animals migrate down from the hills in order to escape the deeper snow there (Meyer 1985: 180). These appear, therefore, to have been the locations at which the mid-winter months were spent. In this, we see maintained the same pattern that Hood observed forty years before. This difficult time of the year had to be spent at carefully chosen locations where moose, beaver and other game would be plentiful.

These "base camps" are clearly synonymous with the "home base," described by Rogers and Black (1976: 23) for the Weagamow Ojibwa of northwestern Ontario, as "a habitation site or area ... up to a mile or so in extent (or possibly more), within which camps were occupied each year for a period of time that in total generally exceeded the time spent at any other single site; where occasionally cabins were built (but more typically moss-covered conical lodges) and gardens might be located."

Meyer has argued that, in the mid-1800s, the Crees of this region were not members of the same regional band. Rather, the strong kinship connections of the local bands led by Kiseyinis, Cecim and Pootikat to the Fort à la Corne Crees is evidence that they were members of that regional band (Meyer 1985:85). It is likely that these Red Earth/Papikwan River Crees travelled annually to spring ingatherings at Fort à la Corne, and it would also have been possible to engage in trade there. The timing and the nature of the ingatherings at Fort à la Corne are detailed in the writings of the Reverend Henry Budd (e.g. Meyer 1991: 109-10).

In contrast, the local bands led by Okakeek, Osawask and Kisemoswakapow had strong kin connections to members of The Pas regional band, and have been identified as

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8 It is not surprising, therefore, that Kiseyinis was very elderly when Rev. John Hines attempted to convert him in 1888 or 1889, and that he died in about 1890 (Meyer 1985: 99-101).

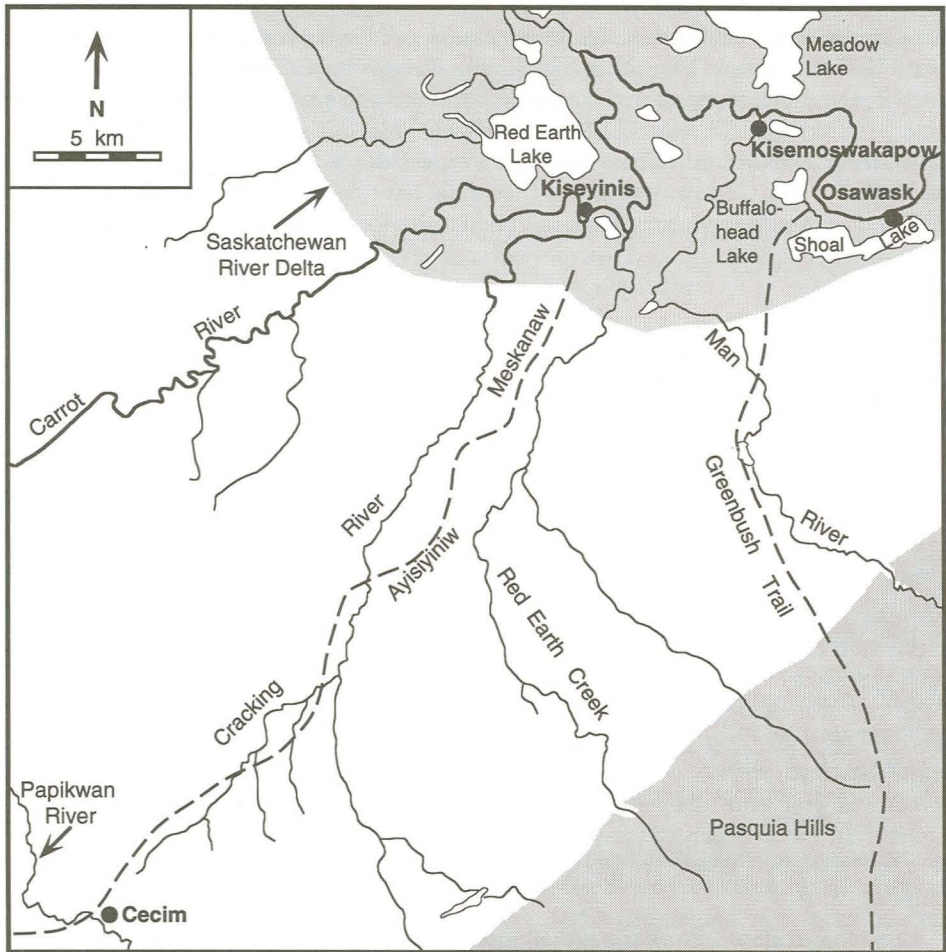


Figure 3. Map showing the locations of base camps maintained by Cecim, Kiseyinis, Kisemoswakapow and Osawask, c. 1860. The routes of two trails, Ayisiyiniw Meskanaw and Greenbush, are delineated approximately.

members of that group (Meyer 1985: 62). These occupants of the Shoal Lake region are believed to have spent time at The Pas in the spring and/or summer. There is also cultural evidence supporting this membership in two different regional bands, as the Shoal Lake people speak an "n" dialect of Cree like the people of The Pas, whereas the Red Earth people speak a "y" dialect of Cree, as do the members of the Fort à la Corne band. The strong Plains Cree cultural elements characteristic of the latter group were expressed not only in their dialect, but also in the maintenance of numbers of horses, mainly as pack animals.

While the occupants of the southern part of the delta are considered to have been members of two regional bands, therefore, their social separation should not be overstated. Indeed, the Hudson's Bay Company documents indicate that Kiseyinis and Kisemoswakapow, apparently members of different regional bands, wintered together in 1827-28 (Thistle 1986: 85).

A new regional band also took form in the Cumberland House region following the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82. This band was composed of remnants of the original population, together with a substantial number of immigrants (Thistle 1986: 69-71; Meyer and Thistle 1995: 425). The Hudson's Bay Company records of the early and mid-1880s make numerous references to some of these people utilizing the area to the west and



northwest of Cumberland House. In other words, some members of this new regional band occupied an area which straddled the northwestern side of the delta.

In this period, therefore, the social geography of the western delta can be outlined broadly, although not in detail. Crees representing portions of three regional bands were present: those on the northwestern part of the delta were oriented to Cumberland House, those on the southwest oriented to Fort à la Corne and those on the south oriented to The Pas. These peoples joined the other members of their particular regional band at spring and/or autumn ingatherings at Fort à la Corne, The Pas or Cumberland House. Portions of the spring and summer also were spent in the vicinity of those centres. With regard to those peoples on the south and southwest sides of the delta, winters were spent in hunting/trapping camps strung out, east-west, along the foot of the Pasquia Hills. Each of these was the focus of a particular local band. Unfortunately, there is no information on the relationship of the regional population to Pasquatinow during this period.

### Social Geography of the Western Delta Region, Late 1800s

It is quite clear that, about 1870, a remarkable decision which was to have far-reaching social ramifications was taken by Kiseyinis and other leading band members in this region. This was to hold the annual ingathering in the Red Earth/Shoal Lake region. This is evidenced by the observations of the Hudson's Bay Company trader Reginald Beatty, who attended a spring ingathering in the latter area in the early 1870s, focussed on a Goose Dance ceremony (Meyer 1991: 110-11). Beatty noted that both Red Earth and Shoal Lake people took part in this gathering (MMC USL n.d.: fol. 1-3). Meyer (1985: 82) has considered that this reflects the development of a new regional band which consisted of both the Red Earth and the Shoal Lake peoples. This new social entity is especially reflected in the considerable number of marriages that were contracted between these peoples. As Meyer (1984: 8) has noted, of the twenty-seven marriages contracted by the 1870-1900 generation, ten involved Red Earth and Shoal Lake individuals. As well, it is undoubtedly significant that "three of Kiseyinis' grandchildren married two offspring and a grandchild of Oswask" (Meyer 1985: 142). Apparently, these two leading figures were in favour of closer social relationships.

In Meyer's earlier writing (1985: 138) he proposed that one of the reasons for this development was that these Crees "retreated" south into this (then) remote area because of increasing Euro-Canadian influence on the Saskatchewan River. In this way they hoped to maintain a degree of cultural and economic independence (Meyer 1985: 140-41). Composed of about 140 persons, this group was large enough to form a distinct and reasonably self-sufficient society (Meyer 1985: 141-42). In short, these peoples had taken up full-time residence in a region which previously had been their wintering ground.

Again, for this period there is no direct historical reference to the use of Pasquatinow and its vicinity by these Crees. However, in the late summer of 1870 the Reverend Henry Budd and assistants travelled up the Saskatchewan River from Devon Mission (The Pas) to Nepowewin Mission (Fort à la Corne). On 1 September, a few kilometres downstream of Pasquatinow, they stopped for the night when a heavy thunderstorm passed over:

We heard some one coming ashore where our Canoe lay, & it proved to be some 5 or 6 men (Indians) from the Pas Mountain. ... They came up to our fire all drenched through, and were glad for the nice fire we had. They would not leave our fire the whole night, which gave me the opportunity for speaking to them on the all important subjects; but alas! they seemed to listen with much indifference: ... The old man of the party has often come down to Devon [The Pas], and our Indians have always tried to persuade him to leave off his heathen practices, but to no purpose it would seem. They kept still while we were having our evening prayers (Pettipas 1974: 38-39).

Although "Pas Mountain Indians" included the people of both the Shoal Lake and the Red

Earth areas, it appears that these were Red Earth men. As Meyer (1985: 97) has noted in a previous discussion of this passage, "he [Budd] knew the Shoal Lake elders very well and in his journals he normally referred to them by name (especially Osawask). The fact that he omits this information in this case suggests that these were Red Earth men." In short, these were most likely Red Earth individuals who were in the northern part of their territory.

Around 1870, therefore, a new regional band had come into existence in this region. While some details of the social geography of this band remain uncertain, information provided by elders and by some documentary sources indicates that these Crees occupied a well-structured cultural landscape. Of course, all the streams and lakes, as well as the wintering camps strung out along the foot of the Pasquia Hills were named. For example, that of Kisemoswakapow was named *kâsowaskay kânosihk* (untranslated) (Meyer 1985: 42) and that of Kiseyinis was *mihkwaskîwahkâhk* "Red Earth Locality" (Meyer 1985: 9). The spring (sometimes autumn) ingathering came to be held at Mihkwaskîwahkâhk, and this became the social and spritual centre of this community.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, structuring of the environment was also enhanced by the network of travel routes that were present. Travel routes within the delta were along the waterways, and especially prominent was the Kennedy Creek route which led north from Red Earth to the Sipanok Channel and thence to the Saskatchewan and Torch Rivers. Outside of the delta there was an important series of trails, including one which followed the north side of the Carrot River, trending southwest and then west to Nipawin and Fort à la Corne. Very prominent was the *ayisîyiniw meskanaw* "Indian Trail" which led southwest towards the parklands (Figure 3). Where this trail crossed the *pepîkwan sîpiy* "Flute River" (Papikwan River) was the winter base camp of Cecim, and farther to the southwest, near the present-day town of Arborfield, it also crossed a prominent landform and camping place known as *wâpôds waciy* "rabbit hill." A third trail, which became known as the Greenbush Trail in the twentieth century, led south from Shoal Lake over the Pasquia Hills and into the Red Deer River valley (Figure 3). There were less prominent trails, as well, such as a trail which led south from Red Earth over the Pasquia Hills to the Nut Lake area (DLSF SAB 1901: 6).<sup>10</sup> In short, the social geography of the Crees of the western delta was organized in relationship to these travel routes, and the named locations to which they led.

### Red Earth Crees and Pasquatinow, Early 1900s

While the people of Red Earth and Shoal Lake adhered to Treaty No. 5 in 1876 (Meyer 1985: 72), the establishment in the 1880s and 1890s of reserves, Hudson's Bay Company stores, and Anglican churches at Red Earth and Shoal Lake led to only gradual change in the social geography. However, it is apparent that mid-winter was more likely to be spent in log cabins or wooden wigwams (*mitikîwahp*) at the reserve centres than at the former winter base camps (Meyer 1985: 83-85). By the early 1900s two separate reserve communities had developed, one at Shoal Lake and the other at Red Earth. However, intermarriage continued to be frequent (Meyer 1985: 109) and social ties continued to be close.

In Meyer's work with Red Earth elders in the 1970s, they made it clear that in the early decades of this century Red Earth people customarily hunted and trapped in the whole of the region which extended from the slopes of the Pasquia Hills north to the Torch River

9 It should be noted, also, that the Cree language is rich in terminology relating to a plethora of landforms such as narrows in lakes and rivers, peninsulas and points of land, etc. These, too, contribute to the cultural structuring of the environment.

10 Dale Russell noted this reference in the course of historical research in 1996.



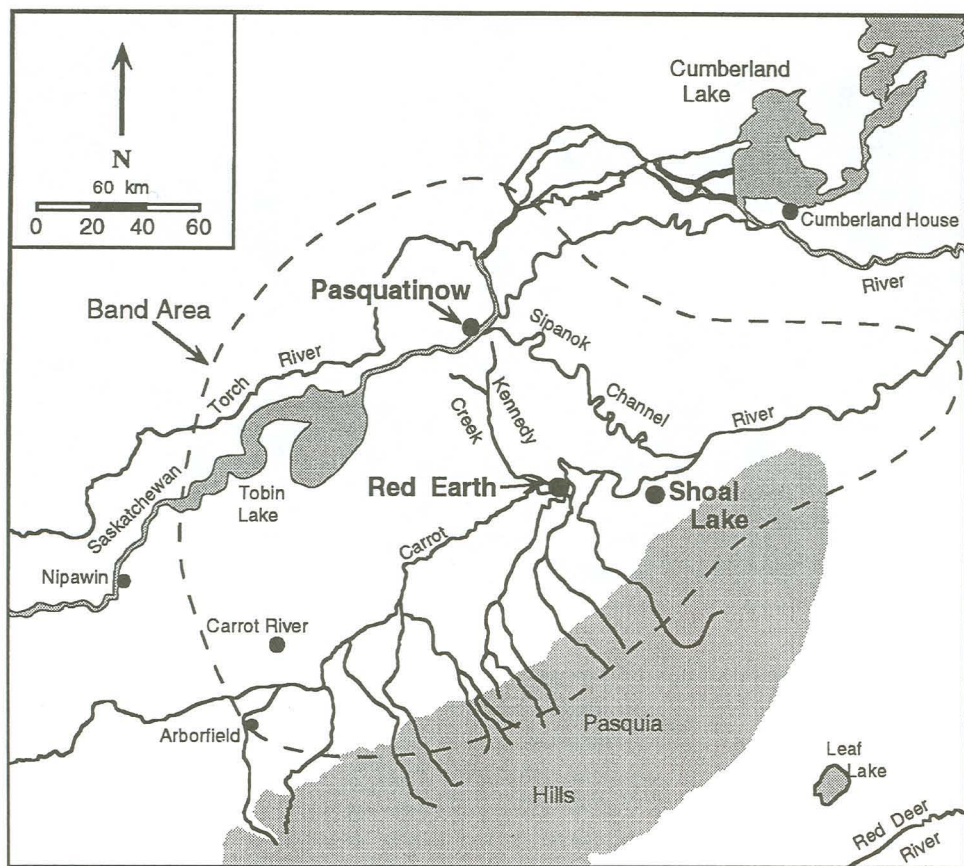


Figure 4. Map showing the area occupied by the Red Earth and Shoal Lake Crees in the late 1800s.

valley (Figure 4). One of the elders with whom Meyer consulted extensively was Silas Head (Figure 5). He not only had trapped and hunted in the Torch River area, but one winter he went even farther north and joined a Pine Bluff group for the season (Meyer 1985: 143). Similarly, Joel Whitehead told of his activities and his father's in this region. With the decline of beaver numbers in the 1930s, he and his father (Josiah) had executed a huge circle around the perimeter of Red Earth territory, attempting to find any signs of beaver. Part of the circle included the lower Torch River valley — but neither there nor elsewhere did they find any beavers.

While Meyer did not ask Red Earth elders about Pasquatinow in the course of his 1970s work, recent discussion with John and Stella McKay, two Red Earth elders, has provided information on the use of Pasquatinow and environs by Red Earth people in the early decades of the twentieth century. Meyer's notes taken during a 30 August 1996 conversation read as follows:

Both John and his wife knew of Pasquatinow, although they had never been there themselves. John said that people would go there for the spring trapping season. There were plenty of muskrats there every year. They would go up there in March with dogteams, taking their supplies, traps and canoes on the sleighs. They would trap there through to the first part of May when they would return to Red Earth by canoe. They would come back by way of Kennedy Creek [see Figure 4] or, if it was too shallow, they would follow the Sipanok all the way to the Carrot River and then take the Carrot River back to Red Earth.

The men who used to go up there were George Head [Figure 6], Joel Whitehead, Josiah



Figure 5. Lazarus Nawakayas, Silas Head and Ole McKay with muskrats and trapping tools, c. 1945. Photographer unknown.

Whitehead, Noah McKay, Geordie McKay, Alfred Head, Amos Nawakayas, Samuel Nawakayas and Isaiah Badger. I asked John whether people liked to go there and he said, oh yes, it was their favourite hunting place; moose hunting was good there.

These accounts can be supplemented by information from documents in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. The Hudson's Bay Company store at Red Earth was known as Pas Mountain Post and it was in operation from 1885 through to 1934. Unfortunately, only four Pas Mountain Post journals, kept between 1929 and 1934, have survived. These journals, however, make it clear that the region around the mouth of the Torch River was the focus of a major spring muskrat "hunt" by the people of Red Earth. Indeed, at times this hunt appears to have extended north into the Pine Bluff region, as the post manager noted on 13 March 1930: "Noah McKay got home from Pine Bluff where he was trapping, brought about 30 rats back with him" (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 33).<sup>11</sup> The importance of this spring muskrat trapping in the Pasquatinow area was especially evidenced in the spring of 1931 when the post manager decided to travel north to observe the "hunt" in progress and bring as many skins as possible back. Presumably, he also wanted to check whether free traders were operating in the area. He departed from Red Earth on 25 April: "Left in the morning for Sask. River but only got as far as the portage<sup>12</sup> & turned back, having met the Red Earth hunters coming home" (HBCA 1930/31: fol. 56). The considerable size of the expeditions to this region is reflected in several journal entries for the spring of 1932. For instance, on 27 February: "About a sore [score?] of indians [sic] left to-day for the Torch River district" (HBCA 1931/32: fol. 45). Following this, on 11 April: "About 14 men all left for the Sask. River in order to trap" (HBCA 1931/32: fol. 54). Again that year, the post manager travelled north to the muskrat trapping grounds, leaving on 26 April and coming back on 31 April: "Returned from a successful trip, brought back over 700 Rats with me" (HBCA 1931/32: fol. 57).

11 In the early 1920s, Noah McKay's sister, Rebecca, had married Horace McGillivray of Pine Bluff.

12 The portage referred to here is probably that which connected the Sipanok Channel with the head of Kennedy Creek. This portage was over a mile long.





Figure 6. Late winter muskrat trapping: George Head with his grandson Aborham Head. Photograph taken by David Meyer, 26 March 1971.

In 1929, the Hudson's Bay Company journals also indicate use of the Pasquatinow region in the early winter. On 14 November it is noted, "Some of the young fellows back from Torch River with a few ermine" (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 20); also, the next day: "Torch River bunch pulled out again early this morning." (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 20); and on 10 December: "Benj McKay and the crowd from Torch River arrived but with little fur" (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 22).

The second author, Hutton, can confirm the information provided both by Red Earth elders and by the archival documents. He lived at Red Earth much of the time from 1912 through to the early 1960s and learned to speak Cree there as a child. His father, William, operated the Hudson's Bay Company store (Pas Mountain Post) at Red Earth from 1912 to 1929 (Meyer 1985: 95), following which the family lived in The Pas for a time. The Hudson's Bay Company closed Pas Mountain Post in 1934 and the Huttons then returned to Red Earth to set up a private store. In the springs of 1936 and 1937 they outfitted several Red Earth men to trap muskrats in the Pasquatinow area. One of the leading individuals involved in this activity was the chief, Isaiah Badger. At this time, people from Pine Bluff and Cumberland House also trapped muskrats in the Pasquatinow area.

Hutton recalls that the Red Earth people were always eager to travel to the Pasquatinow area, and it is apparent that this was a highly regarded locale. Unfortunately, due to the drought of the mid-1930s, the muskrat population declined precipitously; and following 1937 the provincial government terminated muskrat trapping in the Saskatchewan River delta. This ended the spring expeditions of Red Earth people to the Pasquatinow area.

## Discussion

As has been proposed, prior to the 1782 smallpox epidemic Pasquatinow was likely the ingathering centre of a regional band. As such, the whole west side of the delta, extending from the foot of the Pasquia Hills north to the Pine Bluff area, could have composed a single regional band territory, with Pasquatinow at its midpoint. Throughout this region there would be ready north-south travel. This is evidenced by a considerable degree of visiting between the Red Earth and Pine Bluff peoples in more recent times. For instance, on 14 December 1929 the manager of Pas Mountain post wrote, "Two men visiting today

from Pine Bluff" (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 23) Similarly, on 17 March 1932 the manager wrote: "Joe McAuley Jr. [of Pine Bluff] is here from Torch River" (HBCA 1931/32: fol. 50) and, on 26 February 1930, "Noah [McKay] left for Pine Bluff this morning" (HBCA 1929/30: fol. 31). Also, on 17 August 1933, it is noted: "George McGillivray, Marshall McGillivray and Peter Head left for Pine Bluff Indian Reserve" (HBCA 1933/34: fol. 12). While the first two were Pine Bluff men, Peter Head was a member of the Shoal Lake band.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, following the decimation of the population in the 1781-82 smallpox epidemic, the reconstituted population of the western side of the Saskatchewan River delta appears to have been composed of local bands affiliated with not one but two regional bands. Those in the north, on the west side of Cumberland Lake, are believed to have been members of the Cumberland Lake regional band. Those on the south, in the Red Earth/Papikwan River region, were quite clearly members of the Fort à la Corne band. Given the social geography of this period, therefore, Pasquatinow would not have been central to any regional band. We would not expect, therefore, that it functioned as an ingathering centre.

In the Shoal Lake region, there was also a group of local bands which were affiliated with The Pas regional band. Around 1870, the peoples of the Shoal Lake region and of the Red Earth-Papikwan River region made the decision to jointly take part in ingatherings focussed on the Goose Dance. This, together with a good deal of intermarriage, is considered to mark the development of a new regional band.

The members of the Red Earth/Shoal Lake regional band of the late 1800s utilized a territory which extended south and southeast from the Torch River through to Shoal Lake (Figure 4). Obviously, this regional band territory was centred on Red Earth, with Pasquatinow in the northern sector of the regional band territory. However, the strong identification of the Pasquatinow region as part of Red Earth territory in the early decades of the 1900s is notable given that the pre-reserve wintering camps were well to the south (at least 35 km as the crow flies), along the foot of the Pasquia Hills, and the reserves that were eventually established were at Red Earth and (temporarily) on the Papikwan River. Hunting and trapping expeditions north to the Torch River were regular occurrences, and the positive attitude of the Red Earth people to the Pasquatinow area is recalled by the second author, and has also been noted by John McKay. All of this may be taken as reflecting the maintenance of a long established pattern: the western edge of the delta as far north as the Torch River had been utilized by members of this band since the reconstitution of the population in the early 1800s.

John McKay,<sup>14</sup> when interviewed in late August 1996, noted that developments in the twentieth century eventually alienated the Red Earth people from the Pasquatinow area. In particular, he noted that in 1936 the Hudson's Bay Company established a fur lease which included a large area of marshes bordering the south side of the Old Channel of the Saskatchewan River (HBCA 1936: fol. 53, 1939: fol. 8 & 9). This lease was maintained through to 1960, and according to Kew (1960: 34):

13 The puzzling aspect of this situation of regular Pine Bluff-Red Earth interaction is that it led to very few intermarriages, and certainly not the integration of these Crees to form a single regional band (Meyer 1985: 146). It is possible that the presence of a major trading post, Cumberland House, 40 km to the southeast of Pine Bluff was an important factor in the development and maintenance of a regional band centred on Cumberland Lake. Certainly, the Hudson's Bay Company accounts of the early and mid-1800s describe spring ingatherings (rendezvous) at or near Cumberland House (Meyer and Thistle 1995: 425). In short, the peoples of the Pine Bluff area were a part of the Cumberland Lake regional band; and it appears they saw no advantage to becoming part of the Pas Mountain regional band.

14 John McKay died in April 1997.



Under the Company's management, strict control of trapping and conservation measures were achieved. The White lease manager and an assistant assessed the muskrat population annually and set quotas for each small zone into which the area was sub-divided.

The western border of the leased area was near the Sipanok Channel and so it made it more difficult for the Red Earth people to use this part of their traditional lands.

John McKay also noted that a person named Bill Morgan took up residence on the north side of the Saskatchewan River in the Pasquatinow area. In this regard, the second author recalls that Morgan was one of two Euro-Canadian trappers who occupied this area in the late 1930s and into the 1940s. These individuals, of course, had usurped a portion of the Red Earth trapping and hunting grounds. As well, increasing provincial government intervention, such as halting muskrat trapping in 1937, also had an effect. Eventually, it was almost impossible for the Red Earth people to use the Pasquatinow area. According to Mr. McKay this involved not only loss of trapping grounds, but also loss of access to the fish resources of the Saskatchewan River, especially sturgeon. Mr. McKay expressed some bitterness in this regard, and this certainly reflects the high value placed on this area by the Red Earth Crees through the early decades of the twentieth century.

### Summary

Pasquatinow is located on the north side of the Saskatchewan River, across from the head of the Sipanok Channel. Prior to the 1781-82 smallpox epidemic, Pasquatinow is believed to have been the spring ingathering centre for a regional band that occupied a territory straddling the west side of the Saskatchewan River delta. This territory would have extended from at least Pine Bluff on the north to Red Earth on the south. It appears that the members of this band moved east into the lakes and marshes of the delta for the summer, having spent the winter outside the delta.

Following the epidemic it seems that Pasquatinow ceased to function as an ingathering centre; rather, in the early and mid-1800s the reconstituted population of the western delta area consisted of Crees affiliated with two regional bands, one oriented to Cumberland House and the other to Fort à la Corne. The population appears to have gradually increased through the 1800s, and by the 1870s the Red Earth-Shoal Lake regional band took form. Despite the growing Euro-Canadian hegemony of the late 1800s, it is clear that traditional cultural values and economic attitudes continued to exert a significant influence on their relationship to, and use of, their lands. To a considerable extent, therefore, the social groupings of these Crees conformed to those recognized elsewhere among northern Algonquians. Local bands were present as well as the regional band, and the crucially important annual ingatherings continued.

Information regarding social geography in the late 1800s and early 1900s is quite detailed. Consultations with elders and various documentary sources indicate that the area straddling the west side of the delta was an integral part of Red Earth band territory, as far north as the Torch River. The Pasquatinow area was highly regarded as a moose hunting area and, in particular, major muskrat hunts took place in this locality in the spring and (occasionally) in the fall/early winter. Government policies and actions during and following the 1930s, and the arrival of some Euro-Canadian trappers led to the alienation of the Red Earth people from the Pasquatinow region. As a result, Pasquatinow lost its significance in the lives of these Crees and it is now remembered by only a handful of Red Earth elders.

### Note

Meyer especially appreciates the willingness of the Red Earth elders to accommodate his ongoing, if intermittent, historical and cultural research related to their community. Indeed, we wish to dedicate this paper to Elder John McKay who not only knew of Pasquatinow but was able to convey a sense of its past significance to the people of

Red Earth. Upon Mr. McKay's death in the spring of 1997, the unique and irreplaceable nature of his contribution became starkly apparent.

We are particularly grateful to Dale Russell of Western Heritage Services Inc., Saskatoon, for his generous assistance in guiding us to appropriate historical sources and for pointing out two additional references to Pasquatinow. His critical comments on a draft of this article have proved very useful, as have several related discussions. As well, Terry Gibson, also of Western Heritage Services Inc., very kindly transported Meyer to Red Earth in the summer of 1996. Ms. Anne Morton, Hudson's Bay Company archivist, has been very helpful, especially in identifying references to the fur lease which the Hudson's Bay Company once maintained in the Cumberland House region. With regard to the latter fur lease, Dr. William Brennan, University of Regina, graciously provided references to pertinent documents in the Archives of Saskatchewan. Meyer must also acknowledge discussion and communication with Dr. Norman D. Smith, University of Illinois, regarding the geomorphological history of the Pasquatinow Pine Bluff region.

Information provided by Jean Okimasis and Arok Wolvengrey, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, has been important to correctly rendering the name "Pasquatinow" in contemporary Cree orthography. As well, Meyer much appreciates communication with Alexander Deetz regarding Long Legs and his descendants. Meyer must also acknowledge the use of the facilities at Wanuskewin Heritage Park research laboratory while preparing this paper. In particular, the computer graphics capability of that facility has been of great assistance.

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