

Summary of: An Historical/Cultural/Natural Resource Study of the Prince Albert Model Forest Region; Goode, P. of Sentar Consultants; 1995; Prince Albert Model Forest Assoc. Inc., Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. 232 p.

PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FOREST - A CULTURAL AND NATURAL HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a multi-disciplinary study of the Prince Albert Model Forest and the people of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation who inhabit the area. The story is told in a series of chapters, taking the reader from early, precontact times, through the fur trade and settlement period, to the late 20th century. The history of the area and its inhabitants is the heart of the study, although the history is presented from a variety of perspectives: archaeology, geography, anthropology, ecology, and land and resource use.

The report is based upon information collected from an extensive review of the literature and the archival record for the Prince Albert Model Forest area and the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve. However, the story does not rely solely on these written sources. Oral histories provide an additional and valuable source of information. As permanent human habitation of the Model Forest area dates back only to the mid-1800s, the information gained from the oral histories is fresh and relatively undistorted with time.

This study represents work completed for the Prince Albert Model Forest Association Inc. and the Montreal Lake Cree Nation during the 1993-94 and 1994-95 fiscal years. Readers of a previously submitted report (1993/94) will note the addition of new material, an expanded time frame, and substantial editing of some chapters.

PRECONTACT/ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FOREST

CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the precontact history of the Prince Albert Model Forest area. The information and evidence presented here are based on archaeological and geological research. It does not attempt to address the religious or spiritual accounts of human origins in the New World and in the forest of central Saskatchewan as little tangible evidence remains for these aspects of early human history.

People have been living in the forest of central Saskatchewan for a long time. In the Prince Albert Model Forest area alone, there are as many as 84 archaeological sites that are from precontact time (Appendix 2.B). Precontact time refers to the time before Europeans arrived in the forest, about 300 years ago.

Until recent geological time, central Saskatchewan was under glacial ice of the Pleistocene Epoch or Ice Age. The ice retreated from the area about 12,000 years ago and it is believed that people only arrived in the New World just before 11,300 B.P. (before present).

Compared with southern Saskatchewan, the archaeology of northern Saskatchewan is poorly understood. The primary reason for this is that agricultural cultivation has exposed many sites in the south. The south also has an extensive road system and people have been out and about looking for sites and artifacts in places that were difficult to get to before roadways. The dust bowl of the 1930s exposed hundreds of sites which were picked clean of arrow heads, other projectile points, stone tools and pottery by people who collected these artifacts as a hobby. The sites of northern Saskatchewan have been spared this fate but, as a result, much fewer sites have been discovered. Known sites are usually on lake shores and near roads; in other words, places that are easy to get to. There is undoubtedly a wealth of archaeological information buried safely in the north in places that are less accessible.

Knowledge is also limited by the nature of archaeological data and the character of the forest soils. Archaeologists only ever get to see a small aspect of ancient human activity. Evidence is usually the remains of durable material items (artifacts), the remains of structures and other modifications to the ground surface (features), and the remains of what they ate (usually bones). The precontact people of the forest were hunters and gatherers and they moved around according to the seasons to hunt, trap, fish and gather plant foods at the optimal time of the year. The people did not have, need or want many material things. Travelling only by foot and canoe would make gathering personal possessions an inefficient practice. As a result, they left little behind for archaeologists to find. What is found are stone tools, the chips of stone left over from making stone tools, camp fires and the stones broken in them, pieces of pottery and the bones of the animals they butchered and ate. To complicate studies in the forest, the acidity of the soil quickly decomposes all organic materials buried there, so archaeologists rarely find the remains of ancient meals in the forest.

Conclusions reached about the precontact people of the forest of central Saskatchewan are based on the stone tools, pottery fragments and features such as camp fires. These things say little about the non-material aspects of life such as language, religion, humour, play, politics, conflict and many other activities and behaviours which require and leave behind no material objects. This represents only a small portion of the human experience to study directly. The evidence does suggest where people lived, when they lived there (provided materials that allow some type of aging, such as radio-carbon assays, are available), what type of tools they used, perhaps what they ate and what season of the year it was and perhaps what type of shelter they lived in.

Ethnoarchaeology uses knowledge of living cultures to help understand extinct ones. By studying modern hunting and gathering peoples, observing their behaviours and their material remains, and making broad generalizations about people who we know only through archaeological study, conclusions regarding ancient cultures are suggested. Perplexing this opportunity to learn is the rapid disappearance of people who live or have a reminiscence or retained oral history of traditional life styles. For this reason, the study of oral history has become integral to the study of archaeology.

A HISTORY OF THE PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FOREST REGION SINCE 1850

CHAPTER THREE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the story of the Prince Albert Model Forest area and the people who make it their home. Research for this chapter began as an examination of human interaction within the Prince Albert Model Forest for the post-contact period (approx. 1850 for this area and study). It has evolved, however, into a history of the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve (106). There are two reasons for this evolution. First, of the two communities situated within the boundaries of the Prince Albert Model Forest - the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve and the townsite of Prince Albert National Park - only the latter has received attention from historians. Bill Waiser's popular book, *Saskatchewan's Playground* (1989) is the scholarly culmination of efforts by Friends of Prince Albert National Park to ensure that the history of the park is well documented and interpreted. To date, however, no history has been written about Montreal Lake.

Secondly, the documentary sources studied for this work all point to Montreal Lake as the heart of the Prince Albert Model Forest. While Prince Albert National Park was created externally and imposed on the region, the settlement at Montreal Lake emerged organically as the chosen home of the region's Aboriginal peoples, the Woodland Cree.

The sources consulted for this work include correspondence and reports relating to the creation and administration of the Montreal Lake Reserve by Department of Indian Affairs officials (National Archives of Canada), the daily journals and account books kept by the Hudson's Bay Company's post managers at Montreal Lake (Hudson's Bay

Company Archives), and records of various Saskatchewan government departments concerned with northern affairs such as the Department of Natural Resources (Saskatchewan Archives Board). Obviously, these sources only provide the perspective of "white" outsiders in the community. An attempt has been made, therefore, to balance this perspective with accounts provided by members of the Montreal Lake community during oral interviews.

As is the case with most historical community studies, this examination of the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve will attempt to answer several questions. What motivated the individuals and families to live together in this community in the first place? What features of the land, of the environment, of technology, of economics, and of social thought bring these people together or divide them? What networks link them to the outside world?

The term "community" has been defined as "a group of people living together in some identifiable territory and sharing a set of interests embracing their lifeways." (footnote 1). The Cree hunters, trappers and fishermen that make up the community of Montreal Lake fit this definition, however the territorial range that they traditionally lived in and utilized was once quite vast. It covered all of the present-day Prince Albert Model Forest and extended beyond its boundaries. Within this range, several small, family based bands established base camps on the larger lakes, hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering resources in specifically delimited areas associated with the family units.

Economic, political, social, and environmental changes in the region over the last one hundred years have resulted in the shrinking of the Cree's former land base and in the people's nucleation into a permanent settlement. The Montreal Lake Cree are not, however, simply passive victims of economic exploitation or the encroachment of political institutions. The survival of their community and of their way of life represents a dynamic adaptation to externally imposed forces.

Not surprisingly, all of the changes that occurred in the community of Montreal Lake are inextricably associated with the issue of the ownership and use of the land and its resources. The Aboriginal peoples traditionally used the land for subsistence hunting and fishing. Native land use patterns were somewhat altered by the signing of the adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1889, but basically life went on for these Woodland Cree much as it always had until the introduction of federal and provincial programs and institutions to the region beginning in 1927.

The fur trade, which began in the mid-seventeenth century, had exploited the fur resources of the land, leading to the depletion of these resources. Shrinking animal populations motivated the Cree of the Prince Albert Model Forest region to sign an adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1889 and settle on the William Charles (Montreal Lake) Reserve (106). (footnote 2). The federal government signed this adhesion to gain timber rights in the territory (see below). The administration of treaty rights, including the annual payment of annuities, stimulated the coalescence of the Cree in the community, especially during the summer months. Fur trading companies, including the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), set up posts near the Montreal Lake Reserve shortly after its creation in order to gain easy access both to furs and to cash sales generated by treaty annuity payments, further reinforcing the stability and permanency of the settlement.

The creation of Prince Albert National Park on March 24, 1927 was the turning point for major cultural change within the Montreal Lake community. Regulations for wildlife conservation within the park meant that the Montreal Lake Indians were denied access to a large portion of their traditional hunting, trapping and fishing territory. A vast array of government-administered programs followed the creation of the park. Federal and provincial regulations throughout the 1930s and 1940s enforced compulsory school attendance and introduced social welfare programs, health programs and other services. These measures led to greater dependence on the part of the Montreal Lake Indians and again reinforced sedentization. In addition, wildlife conservation programs, including the creation of fur blocks in the 1940s, resulted in spatial

restrictions. Fire suppression programs and road construction projects introduced wage labour and alternative work patterns to the community; as well, the latter ended the relative geographic isolation of Montreal Lake at the end of the 1930s and led to influx of a sizeable white transient population. The influx of white trappers into the region during the 1930s had a significant impact on the Montreal Lake community. In outlining each of these changes, this report will attempt to assess the general adaptiveness of the people of Montreal Lake.

An appendix (3.A) to this chapter is devoted to a discussion of treaties (and specifically Treaty 6), the Indian Act and government policies which have influenced Native peoples generally. As will be shown, the role of government in the affairs of the local people of the Model Forest has influenced the history of the region in numerous ways.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FOREST - AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER FOUR: INTRODUCTION

The Prince Albert Model Forest is situated within the Mid-Boreal Upland Ecoregion of the Boreal Plains Ecozone (Padbury & Acton 1994) (footnote 1). In a regional context, this ecoregion is a diverse landscape of vegetation and wildlife communities.

Trembling aspen is the dominant deciduous species and is most abundant toward the southern edge of the ecoregion. Moving northward, coniferous trees become more dominant and include jackpine, black spruce and white spruce. The forest is characterized by a mosaic of communities; a mosaic that was, historically, strongly influenced by natural fires.

Wildlife populations are diverse and include ungulates (mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, elk, woodland caribou), and a variety of large and small carnivores and furbearers (e.g. wolf, lynx, red fox, beaver, muskrat, snowshoe hare, and black bear).

This report describes the natural history changes which have taken place in the Model Forest from the mid-1800s to the late 20th century (footnote 2). The starting date was selected as it represents the first recorded occupation of the area by people in any great numbers. Prior to that time, the region was used for hunting and trapping, but contained few permanent residents, either Native or non-Native (footnote 3). Additionally, the recorded history of the region, in terms of natural history, is very limited until the latter part of the 19th century.

The report is based upon a review of existing literature, Saskatchewan Archive Board records, Department of the Interior reports, interviews with provincial biologists, and interviews with residents of the Prince Albert Model Forest and area.

The report concentrates on changes to the natural environment, particularly changes to the vegetation, wildlife, and fisheries components of the ecosystem. It begins with some basic assumptions which are necessary given the lack of detailed data for the period before the mid-1800s. Subsequent sections of this chapter outline the major events which produced changes; and as will be seen, these events are related to human interference or development. The changes to the ecosystem are discussed in terms of these events.

RECREATION AND TOURISM IN THE PRINCE ALBERT MODEL FORST

CHAPTER FIVE: INTRODUCTION

Recreational activity within the Prince Albert Model Forest region began in the 1920s. During the past seventy years, recreation and tourism facilities have developed throughout the area and include a national park, provincial park, and numerous provincial and private recreation and cottage areas.

This report provides an overview of the major recreation and tourism developments

within the Prince Albert Model Forest and the surrounding region (Figure 5.1.1). The Model Forest boundaries include a portion of Prince Albert National Park, and recreation/tourism facilities at McPhee Lake, Heritage Lake, and picnic sites along Highway 2. Nearby, however, are Candle Lake Provincial Park, as well as Anglin and Emma Lakes with their cottages and recreation facilities. Additionally, Highway 2, which connects Prince Albert to La Ronge, bisects the Model Forest. This highway provides the primary ground access to Lac La Ronge Provincial Park, the Churchill River, and the many outfitting and recreation facilities and businesses which operate in northern Saskatchewan. Highway 120 connects the Prince Albert area to Narrow Hills Provincial Park, formerly Nipawin Provincial Park.

The report includes an historical overview of recreation development in the region, particularly the growth of Prince Albert National Park and Candle Lake Provincial Park. Recreational and tourism facilities are described, as are major recreational activities. Of most importance to the future management and use of the forest is the discussion on recreational and tourism trends, particularly the growth in ecotourism and the increase in wildlife-related recreation.

CULTURAL VALUES IN THE MODEL FOREST

CHAPTER SIX: INTRODUCTION

Several groups of people with varying degrees of their livelihood invested in the forest ecosystem live in or use lands within the Prince Albert Model Forest. Each group brings to the forest divergent values and philosophies about its use and what is important to its sustainability. In addition to the values associated with the economic and recreational potentials of the area, individuals comprising these groups carry with them underlying values and beliefs associated with their social and cultural heritage.

In the Model forest context, four groups that use the forest have been identified who may 'value' the forest ecosystem differently. These First Nations people, other forest residents, recreation and tourist visitors, and commuters employed within the forest but living elsewhere.

This chapter examines these four groups and how they each value the forest - for its resources and for the experiences it provides. A literature review provides some background to the discussion, followed by a more detailed description of the four groups and the framework within which they are described.