

Oak Lake Sioux Band



Wanbdi iyotanke (Sitting Eagle) George Chatkana's brother. Buried at Deloraine, Manitoba.

Oak Lake Sioux Band, Pipestone, Manitoba

This is a brief overview of the history and cultural background of the Oak Lake Sioux Reserve, located four miles north of Pipestone. Many individuals and agencies working together contributed to this collection of information.

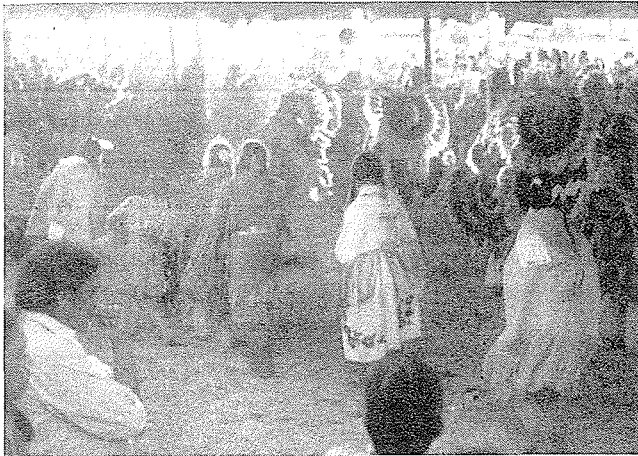
The reserve is along the east side of Highway No. 83 and the Pipestone Creek runs along the south and cuts across the eastern portion. Oak Lake Reserve is named after the lake which is located nearby.

The Sioux people know it as "Canupawak pa" which means Pipe River. The Sioux people found a

scalp and a pipe along the creek when they first moved there. That was how the town of Pipestone and the creek got its name.

When the Sioux first moved into this area, they settled close to a farmer by the name of W. R. Guthrie. They drifted back and forth from the Guthrie's farm and Oak Lake. They stayed here because fish, game and wild fruits were plentiful.

Around 1874-5, after years of drifting, the Sioux people were granted a reserve by Lieutenant Governor Morris of Manitoba. The reserve was one square mile in size. It was situated on the southwest side of Oak Lake. The Sioux people were dissatisfied with



Oak Lake's Annual Pow-Wow is held each summer.

this reserve. A new location was recommended, based on 80 (eighty) acres per family of five. The Chief at this time was He-Ohde. An agreement to relocate was reached in 1877 and the reserve was relocated to its present site. The Indian agent at this time was Mr. Tanner. The person that surveyed the reserve was lazy and incompetent. He was supposed to go from point A to point B and back from point B to point A in one day, but he only walked two miles so the size of the reserve today is two by two miles.

The reason for the agreement of relocation, was to keep the Sioux in one place. They had a famous buffalo hunting ground near the present McKinnon farm, where the river forms a large point. The buffalo would be driven in there and easily slaughtered. To make it easier for the people the present reserve was selected, halfway from the first location to the McKinnon farm.

The first inhabitants were all Wahpekuta Sioux. Some of the names are; Icimane, Wombdi Eyo Dakah, Kechimane, Jessie Wakpa, Wamneoneohko, Tatunka-Chooweyksay, Charlie Eagle, John Crow, Sam Eagle, Inkpaduta, and He-akde.

Economic Development:

In the beginning the band showed little or no improvement over the former years. They preferred rather to hunt, fish, trap and do odd jobs for surrounding settlers, than to improve their own reserve. But as years passed, things started to improve. Hay was cut and sold to settlers, two thirds of the population were occupied with farming. The other third devoted their time to hunting and trapping. A little cattle industry was started, but a shortage of pasture, and feed, and prairie fires which happened frequently, proved too difficult to continue.

Grain farming, however, was still carried on but not on a large scale. Over a period of time things didn't change too much economically which was due to the fact that Indian Affairs still controlled every-

thing on the reserve. As the years progressed though, Oak Lake improved and progressed to where it could meet anyone on equal grounds. In the early '70's things really started to pick up with more people getting educated and with the help of the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, they were able to negotiate on equal terms with the government.

Some of the job creation projects are: Canada Works, F.L.I.P., L.E.A.P., S.S. E.P. and a library which was recently started. Oak Lake also has in the planning stages a store and a laundromat, which will benefit the band. The band also plants potatoes every year and sells them at reduced cost to the people on the reserve.

The economy of a people is a detrement factor in its existence and well being. For native people, it is far too simple to state that their traditional economics have been altered or in some instance destroyed — such as with the buffalo. Changes in the economic base have a profound effect on all aspects of life. The economy in this case refers to the wealth on our reserve whether to business ventures or to services.

Education:

Long ago, education to the native person was everything around him . . . the earth, water, animals, birds and plants. In order for him to survive, he had to understand nature. The native child got his education from his parents. It was not as it is today. It was passed down from the elders, through stories, legends, and folklore. The first school was built in 1951 when Mr. Kenneth Eastman was chief. It was built by the Presbyterians, but the Chief called all his people together and told them that both Catholic and Presbyterian children would go to school there. Later on, having a new Chief on the reserve, a Catholic teacher was hired. However, the people started having problems so the school was closed down and the children sent to Virden school. This was the start of integration between Indian and non-Indian schools. Today the school is being used for the Band Office.

Language:

The Indian people on the Oak Lake Reserve have kept their native language to some degree. It is entirely different from any of the other languages, such as Cree and Ojibway. The Dakota alphabet has ten vowels and twenty-four consonants. Many of the letters have very harsh sounds. The language is exactly reverse to the English language. For instance "Open the door" becomes in Dakota "Door open". The young generation of the Sioux learn English easily and speak it without a trace of accent.

Religion:

For native people the Great Spirit guides us in our daily life. In this context it involves the pipe, different dances and respect for nature and fellow broth-

ers. Before the arrival of the European missionaries, the Indian people worshipped one God. Through personal communications and sacred ceremonies with the use of the Pipe and Sweet Grass, the Indian people worshipped God. All ceremonial rights, sacred songs and prayers were celebrated for this one God known as Wakan Tanka. The well-intentioned missionaries made attempts to discourage the religious beliefs of the Indian people, not realizing that these beliefs and culture were a way of life. No form of life, be it a plant, animal, bird or fish was taken without thanksgiving and prayer. This was lost with the introduction of the European religious teachings. A Presbyterian preacher from the United States, with his wife Ihawastewin came in 1910 and he and his followers built a church. By 1919 no one was going to church and the religion faded. The church was sold to a farmer Mr. Van Loo, about two miles north of the reserve. It is still there today. Later Rev. Richardson came. A second church was built in the 60's. The other church which was established was the Roman Catholic with the first priest coming by name of



First Catholic Church built in 1934.



Second church built in 1960's still in use.

Father Hoganer in 1904, followed by Father Etienne in 1910. The Catholic people had their first church built in 1934 and a banquet followed the official opening. That church is closed today but both denominations carry on, the Presbyterians in their church and the Catholics use the culture building.

Indian Religion:

Some native people still have visions or dances because they believe a famine is coming. These people will have a rain dance because this is the power of Wakan Tanka. It is through this person that Wakan Tanka is producing rain. All these things we've not written because Wakan Tanka made the Indian strong and could remember things and keep them in their heads. Whatever they were told, they remembered. They all remembered the teachings of their God and when they responded, it was in good faith. If they failed to respond to the wishes of their God it wouldn't work, or something happened to the family. Therefore, medicine men would help each other. They would get together and have a Wacipi. Here they would pray to the Creator with the medicine that was given. Many of the teachings of the Wakan Tanka have been lost. Indian people believe that these teachings are with the spirits of the dead, therefore there is a dance called the Ghost Dance. The Indian people believe that Wakan Tanka made a place for all Indian people and we will all be with each other when we die.

The pipe is something that we value very much and it's like a part of us. Most ceremonies include the pipe. There are medicine men who many of us do not know about. They are afraid of what people might say or do to them if it become known.

The younger generation will never understand because their beliefs are lost and they don't know where they belong. Many Indian people have given up the old way of life.

Social functions:

It is told that "Many many years ago a young man (Sioux) had a dream. In the dream he was dressed with bells around his ankles, native costume, a full head dress and he saw himself dancing the grass dance and he heard the "song". When he wakened he did the dance and the song. That's how the first Pow Wow came about. Then there was feasting and dancing." Today the people have their dances. There used to be a dance they did before going to war. This was called "zoo-yah-ah-yah-wah-chee-po." Many of the songs that are sung were obtained through dreams. Many have words in them. Some of the different songs are: the victory song, flag song, ceremonial song and round dance songs.

Games they play are much like everyone else's but their mocassin game is popular today. At the time

of writing this, Oak Lake team is to compete in Brandon in February in 1981, at the Keystone centre in the mocassin tournament.

Today the reserve has built an outside rink where hockey and other winter games are held. There is also a mini park where people go to relax. There is also built, a new Pow-Wow (bowery) for their annual pow-wow. There are other activities such as: baseball, bingo, modern dances, card games and volleyball. There is a Ladies Group that provides activities for the older people. There are sewing groups, arts and crafts, fall suppers and sometimes an evening of pow-wow. A new cultural building has been built. A Dakota-Ojibway Tribal Police barracks and residence with detention rooms were built in 1977, giving the reserve its own native Policing program. There is also a native Alcohol Program on the Reserve. These programs enable the reserve to have many services offered to their people.

Comments from Sioux at Oak Lake Band, Pipestone, Manitoba

Long time ago it seems that everything was so hard, but life is good and everything is so cheap. We used to hunt gophers and get one cent a tail. But if you earn \$5.00 to \$10.00 that is a lot of money. You could buy lots of things.

Most everyone is farming and helping each other to complete their harvesting. They used to keep their grain or wheat in one building by dividing the grain house. They put shelves inside the grain houses, whereas today that grain house is still up at Frank Eastman's house. The whole reserve owns that grain house. That time nobody said that that grain house "is mine".

Life was good and everyone gets along. They visit each other all the time. Nowadays, you can't do that. Every way you turn there is a drunk around. A lot of people don't get along these days like they did then. People are jealous of each other. This is why I said, life was good a long time ago.

Money never used to be so important. Today you can't live without money. You've got to have it in order to survive. You can't even go anywhere if you don't have a car. People also can't walk a distance these days. Where, a long time ago, the men would walk to town to get the groceries and sometimes even carry a hundred pound bag of flour home on their back.

Indian people didn't die of cancer or any diseases. Now there is all kind of diseases that float around. The people hunted their own food and what not. These days, even the animals get a needle or shots that spoil the meat. All the vegetables which are available today are mixed with all kinds of different



This is an Indian and his outfit in the spring of 1922. He was hunting for wolf dens to get the bounty.

liquid. Long ago, the Indian people didn't eat most of the food which is available today. If the Indians had kept their way of life and food, they would have been healthy.

When a new baby is born today, the white people stick a needle into them right away, and say that was to prevent any disease, which is not true. That child is full of all kinds of medicine before he grows up. It only makes the child weak.

About cars, not everyone has a car, just odd ones. We used to get to places by buggy and horse. It didn't cost money to go where we wanted to. For distance, it took us days, but we still got there at no cost. Nowadays it costs so much to go anywhere. People are competing to have nice cars. Long ago, people did not compete to have a nice horse or wagon.

Indian people today tend to live like the whites. You pay so much money on everything on the house. In our day the log house was so much warmer than these houses today. And we didn't pay for lights or anything. The men cut wood enough to last through the winter. In the summer we make fire outside to cook.

Women don't wear pants. Women are women. Men are men. Nowadays, you can't tell between a man and a woman, from a distance.

I forget what year it was, but one time a horse disease came and all the horses died on our reserve. But some of the people were able to soon have a team of horses again. That was a sad year for us because we saw our horses dying and we can't do anything to help them.

Once we lived in Virden, just east of the town. The farmer who owns the land was nice and my husband worked for him. Some families from Sioux Valley used to live there in tents too. Today you can't even hunt or trespass to an unknown land or a farmer. You will have to go to court and get a fine. This is all I can tell you today. I'm getting tired.

More comments from other people on our reserve: The men used to hunt by two's or more. If one



Winona.

of them killed an animal they all shared. Nobody sells a part of the meat to the other. The people helped one another all the time.

If a family got lard, flour, potatoes, sugar and meat, that would last them for a long time. That was a good meal long ago.

When the Indians fled to Canada from the United States, they were given gold. And the gold was too heavy to carry. They would take turns carrying it. If it was too heavy, finally they would bury some here and some there along the way. And they say they did bury some of the gold around Deloraine area.

Winona is a name often given to the first-born daughter in a family

The name Chaski is also a name often given to the family's first-born son.

Washta, a word often heard, means "good".

Often we hear of the word "Chief" used long ago. It was just a word used as an important man, as the white man uses it today too.

Chaski, Charlie — Cheyenne Chief

Born in 1867, Charlie Chaski was always the same age as Canada. In ceremonial dress with the eagle feather head-dress of the Cheyenne chief, he was a colourful figure.

In 1927 Charlie decided to celebrate Canada's Diamond Jubilee at Reston rather than Brandon. He and others from Pipestone Reservation marched in the parade on Reston Fair Grounds. They also contributed a pow-wow tent.

The day was dull, but the parade was not. The Berrys hanged "the strangler", complete with tan shoes! The grounds were packed with people. Charlie did not make contact with the girl and her camera, but he did find her father.

Jim Busby was a friend of the Indians. Charlie worked along with him. Jim found many ways to help — useable tires and buying hay. His wife bought

willow baskets, saskatoons, cranberries, as others did, but always offered rest for tired feet, refreshment, and conversation, useable clothing.

Once Jim brought an Indian father to wife Emma. His two teenage daughters were going to school — few words, many gestures, "You sew — same size, you." Hands showed where bodies were fuller. So Emma made two complete wardrobes for girls she never saw. Fit? "All fine! Good!"

Charlie Chaski, however, was special. Jim occasionally took him home for dinner, once with Christmas company. His manners would delight an Emily Post.

We doubt Charlie was born on the Canadian side of the border. He told Jim he had watched the massacre of Custer's forces at the junction of the Big and Little Horn, June 24, in 1876 . . . a nine-year old on his pinto pony, silhouetted on the ridge west of the Little Big Horn.

Charlie and his wife Winona had a family in Pipestone Reservation. Winona sometimes rode in the back of his buggy, seated on robes on the floor. A beautiful woman, she obviously had a health problem. She did not live long.

People move and get out of touch. Charlie remains a memorable person.

Charlie Chaski was Jim Chaske's father.

Starr, John

John Starr was born on Oak Lake Reserve in 1907, the son of Jim and Agnes Run Earth.

Mr. and Mrs. Run Earth were born in the United States and came to Canada from Fort Yates, North Dakota, in 1896. There were two children, a son and a daughter.

John enjoys very good health now and does not look like a man of seventy-three.

He had a happy childhood, respected his parents, who brought him up to be well behaved.

As a small child there were favorite games like: see-saw, swing and the merry-go-round, made from a wagon wheel. Later on they did enjoy trapping, hunting and fishing.

There were always special events on the Reserve, such as the Pow-Wows, mocassin games and ball games. The dances were popular. They held rain dances, sun dances, buffalo dances, regular round dances, grass dances and chicken dances.

John says his favorite food has always been duck, fish, wild goose and rabbit.

As a young boy, he went to Qu'Appelle Industrial school at Labret in Saskatchewan. He does not recall any bad times, as he was away at school.

In answer to the question "How did you live, John?" he replied "I lived good and happy."



George Chatkana (Lefthand) born 1872. His Indian name Womnuyomihanko. Passed away May, 1950.

Sutherland, Mrs. Mary (Chatkana)

Mrs. Sutherland is eighty-two years old. She is the daughter of George Chatkana and Lucy (Wambidiska) Chatkana. Her grandmother was Annie Chatkana.

Mrs. Sutherland was born on the Oak Lake Sioux Reserve. She lived all her life here and in 1914 married Mr. Alex Sutherland.

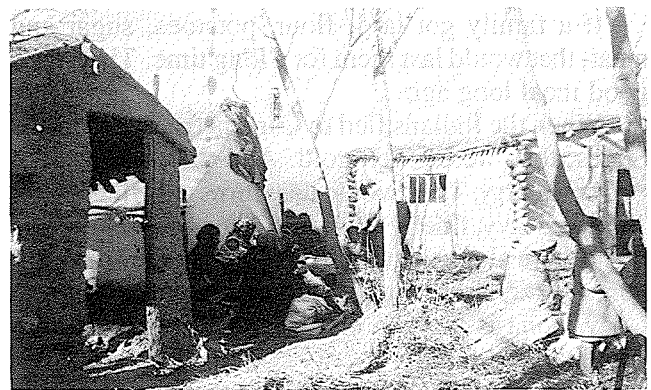
Mr. and Mrs. George Chatkana had eight children ; a baby girl passed away at birth; George Jr. passed away, April 1968, Mary (Sutherland); Emma (Sandy); Annie (Brown) passed away on July 10, 1980; Lucy (Demas); Alice (Demas); and Norman Chatkana, passed away.

In 1914 Mary Chatkana married Alex Sutherland. This couple had six children: Mabel (Hi Eagle) passed away July, 1980; a baby boy passed away at seven months; Robert passed away, September 15, 1942; Edith Sutherland; Katherine Sutherland passed away, August 1975; and a baby girl who passed away at two years of age.

Mary played with other children when young. They had their dolls, which were made of rags. They played house with small cups and saucers. She never went to school. In the summer time they lived in a



These three pictures were taken together in one day. Mrs. Wambdeska and Putinhen are putting up a feast for Mrs. Mary Sutherland's mother, Lucy Chatkana, Sr., (Ihamaniwin) who passed away January, 1949. Taken down by the creek where she used to live.



teepee and quite often moved around from place to place to hunt. In winter time the family lived in a log house, down along the river.

When she was young and if she were not playing, her mother taught her how to sew. At a very young age her mother taught her everything that a woman would do, to make rug mats, willow baskets and to tan the leather by hand.

Some of the favorite foods she remembers as a young person were deer meat, wild animal meat, like rabbit, muskrat and beaver.

She does not recall bad times, as she says in the old days everything was cheap. The men hunted through the summer time for food to last them through the winter time. And the women did their work raising the children. All worked hard, but never had bad times.

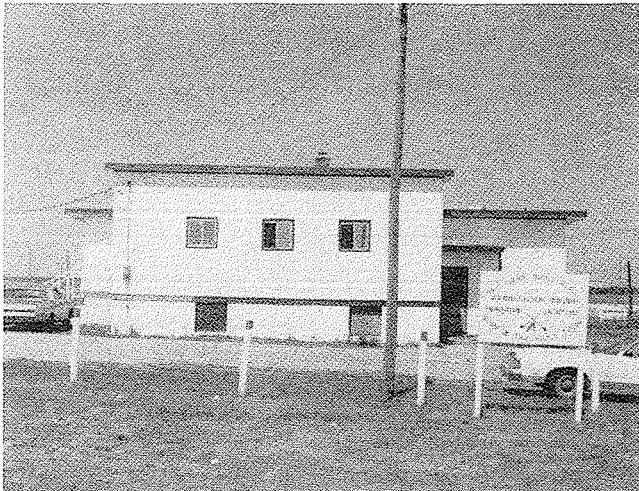
Most of the people moved from their teepees back into houses for the winter every year until the Indian Agency came along and gave houses to the people. Some of the old houses are still up today.

Special events meant birthdays, Pow-wows and honor of one's death. In those days when a person celebrated any special occasion, they did it in full respect. There was always a lot of food and they gave away valuable things, like giving a horse or cattle or anything that was hard to have in those days.

Our first Chief was Ken Eastman Sr. One day an Indian agent came along and he and the men of the reserve selected the chief. In those days the men got together to decide what to do. No women attended meetings then. He was selected to help the people on the reserve. Nowadays the women are involved in everything that is going on. That wasn't the way in the old days.



John Crow passed away at age 102.



First school built in 1951, now the band office.



The new cultural building built in 1977.