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University of Alberta

To the Centre of the Circle: Pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne

by

Maire Kathleen Anderson-McLean

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

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Abstract

Conscious renegotiation of incorporation, adaptation, synthesis, and appropriation constitutes the discourse of both syncretic anthropology and mindful missionisation and inculturation, yet such creolising may lead to the denial of separate identities for the missionised and to the deconstruction of their cultural perspectives. In this paper, the issues embedded in this discourse are illustrated in the stories of Native pilgrims and are shown to be issues of concern and debate to theologians and anthropologists who study religion and cultural contact. Images of *Man'tou Sâkahikan* as an historic aboriginal gathering ground and contemporary pilgrimage site express the marginality of many aboriginal peoples both in Canadian society and as Catholic pilgrims. The site is a focus for the forging of cultural perspectives as related by the participants, expressed by symbols and rituals, and as understood by the anthropologist. Perceptions and understandings of the space shift as perspectives about identity develop through time. As the locus of an annual Roman Catholic pilgrimage for over one hundred years, Lac Ste-Anne has become a focus for the merging cultures, diverging perspectives, and emerging identities that characterize contemporary Native-Catholic relations.

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Chapter One: Walking in Balance

This is a narrative history about balance, harmony, and order. It is about centres and margins, priests and pilgrims, about tradition and innovation, and about how individuals and institutions create themselves in the refracted images of a past redefined and rewritten. Here is the story of pilgrims on a path around the sacred circle and of Aboriginal communities as they seek healing through the medicine wheel and the holy waters of Christian baptism. More than that, it is the story of the Catholic Church as it follows the same progressions – in each case, the movements are sometimes sure and sometimes tentative, two steps forward and one step back. This complex and often turbulent whole is held together by faith and trust and a certainty that at the centre, and above, below, to the right, to the left, behind, and ahead, Creator is with his children on their journey.

My search has been for evidence of meaningful syntheses between Catholic theology and that of Turtle Island. While in previous fieldwork I had observed the inclusion of Aboriginal sacred objects and actions in Catholic liturgy, and the use of Catholic sacra and practices in Aboriginal ceremonials, I was concerned to determine whether this meeting of spiritualities went deeper than exterior formalities.

The Project Emerges

Initially I had thought to approach the project by researching a number of Native communities throughout the province of Alberta and pulling together the various perceptions of the nature of Native Catholicism through the medium of the

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pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne. When this widespread fieldwork became impossible due to internal issues in several of the targeted parishes and missions, I amended my plan to focus on the pilgrimage itself while meeting and working with available communities. I also planned to interview members of the 'unavailable' communities while at the pilgrimage. I determined that my research questions regarding the possibility of and potential for a syncretism of Catholic and Traditional Spiritual theologies – and thus the emergence of a new Native Catholic rite within the universal church – would benefit from a greater cohesion and tighter focus with this approach.

With the Oblate-sponsored and managed pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne identified as the centre of my research circle I next looked to the event's component populations (those who work at or for, or attend the pilgrimage), and determined that they would fall into a limited number of generalised categories: pilgrims, priests, lay workers, healers, tourists and/or sightseers. Questions quickly followed:

- Where do these people come from?
- Why is Lac Ste-Anne the centre?
- Who are the people (what are the pilgrimage demographics)?
- How do they get here?
- Why do they come?
- What aspects of this specific event encourage continuity of attendance?
- Who are the gate-keepers?
- Who are the authority figures (and who wields the power)?
- How are the activities determined (outside of prayer times and masses)?

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- Why is there such an emphasis on healing?
- What is the sub-text beneath the obvious actions, rituals, social activities?

While posing only the beginnings of research topic development, taken in the context of what I already knew about Native Catholic practice, these questions were enough to provoke serious consideration of the means to undertake an examination of what could be the conscious crafting of a truly synthesised rite. I believed that the process was underway and that a Native Catholic rite was emerging, in which not only more easily observed attributes such as rituals, language, and sacra were blended or fully adopted, but where beliefs from both the indigenous and Oblate missionary communities were integrated and incarnated as something new and powerful. Determining the existence of that incarnation would take more research time and more care but, I believed, it would be productive of much greater understanding of the project of a Native Catholicism within the Catholic Church.

During research for my Honours Thesis, I had been attending regularly the Sunday 11:30 a.m. 'Indian' mass at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples (SHCFP) in Edmonton: the liturgical art and environment, and syncretised aspects of the mass were my thesis focus. The summer following completion of my undergraduate work, I continued to participate in the parish life and the masses, both because I had enjoyed my experiences with the people so much and as a break from the formality of St. Joseph's Basilica, my home parish (and as a periodic escape from my responsibilities as a lay worker there). The thesis research had given me approximately a year in which I could observe the growing influence of the SHCFP parish in the Native Catholic community. I had participated fully in the parish life,

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working on the parish finance committee, providing contacts and enlarging their corporate donations network, helping with fund-raisers, cooking and serving at parish feasts and was, I thought, reasonably well accepted by and integrated into the community. There were some psychological obstacles to overcome, two of the major ones being that though Aboriginal I had never lived on a reserve (or had any relatives or even ancestors that had) and I was going into a doctoral programme at the University of Alberta. In addition, though I lived in an area only 15 minutes distant by car, it shared only one commonality with the church's Boyle-McCauley location: they are two of the city's oldest neighbourhoods. Despite those discrepancies, I was determined to proceed and was confident that I could continue to expand my contacts network through SHCFP. In addition, I felt comfortable that by journeying along with the parish as they prepared for the pilgrimage in July I would lay the groundwork that could narrow and further direct my questions, as well as providing some answers.

Setting a Goal

Thus, I had set, in admittedly informal fashion, a research topic for myself: I would excavate the history, geography, populations, and legends that are the Lac Se-Anne Pilgrimage story, reaching out to the elders in hosting communities, the Oblate missionary priests, and the pilgrims themselves for assistance in my task. I would interview pilgrims, traditionalists, neo-traditionalists, Native Catholics, priests, and on-lookers, building from their stories a meta-narrative that I could investigate in a

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(loosely) scientific manner and analyse within the contexts of anthropological theories and Catholic theological teachings.

I also decided to film the pilgrimage's activities in part so that I would have a record to return to but even more important to me was having something concrete (in the form of a CD-Rom or VHS tape of the pilgrimage) to give the priests, parishes and missions that have been so helpful. (As we will discover later, this decision led to some fruitful diversions along my research path and opened me to deeper involvement in the pilgrimage structure and planning process.) To augment this future 'film' production, I took innumerable photographs, from slides to prints to digital clips, acquiring in the process a vast film library that includes an amazing number of delightful photos of grinning gap-toothed kids and their *kohkoms* (grannies).

Using interviews, literature searches, film, and photos, I intended to extrapolate an answer to what became an increasingly driving question: was there truly a Native Catholic rite emerging within the umbrella structure of the Catholic Church in Canada. Was it, as I thought, similar to what the Vatican had eventually recognised in Zaïre, or was this richly textured liturgical feast doomed to the fate of other Christian/indigenous syncretic traditions like those of the Philippines and South Asia, ignored or tolerated at best and in the worst case, persecuted or outlawed. The final, definitive response to this question could be found only in future deliberations of the Vatican councils, but knowing this, I nonetheless believed the project important enough to merit serious documentation, questioning, and analysis.

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Building a Framework

In developing a research methodology and throughout my fieldwork, my greatest concern has been that I might inadvertently and gratuitously problematise the difficulties inherent in conducting research on a global religious institution in the context of a specific, localised phenomenon. Some of these difficulties are inherent in the nature of the anthropological focus; others have, no doubt, arisen due to my choice of research topic. Thus, I have found the reflections of Thomas Csordas (1997, 1999, 2002), discussing similar issues encountered during his work with Catholic Charismatics, to be encouraging and illuminating:

> It ... need not be said that a claim to comprehensiveness with respect either to diversity or to history in a religious phenomenon of the magnitude of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is eminently futile. There is no disguising the tension between my effort to understand the movement and the need to fall back on more familiar exemplars.... Methodologically, this tension reflects the struggle of anthropology to move from community-based studies to an understanding of global social and cultural processes. There is another tension inherent in my attempt to spin out the relationship between ritual performance and everyday practice as functions of language, charisma, and creativity. This stems from the methodological difficulty of observing everyday practice in a society such as ours where, in contrast to the anthropologist's traditional 'village' research

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locale, workplaces are dispersed and households are relatively inaccessible to the outsider. (Csordas 1997: xvii)

In addition to the difficulties outlined so succinctly above, my fieldwork (and as a natural progression, my thesis and theorising), raises the problem of presenting in a reasonable and understandable manner two divergent philosophies not only of religion/spirituality, but of entire worldviews, and of somehow developing the data into a semblance of 'scholarly' methodology while maintaining the essence and flavours of a setting as far from academia as is imaginable. In any work involving traditional spirituality there is one major conflict with research that collects, documents, analyses, records, and disseminates data. I call it the 'winter stories syndrome', because so many of the stories that provide background to traditional rites and ceremonies can only be told during the 'hibernating time'. Reasons underlying this prohibition have to do with the nature of indigenous myth that blends the supernatural world of Creator and Trickster and this beautiful natural world we see. The telling of the tales allows us to become part of the supernatural and is very dangerous in that it has the potential to offend the creatures of this world and therefore alerts their 'animal masters' that proscriptions are being ignored by the two-legged persons.

Summer is the usual fieldwork season for academic research; the prohibition against telling or even talking about these stories – keys to the spiritual worlds of Aboriginal peoples – except during periods of animal hibernation certainly has the potential to be a significant roadblock. Pilgrims return to their home places after the July pilgrimage and by winter (and the time for storytelling) may be working their

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trap lines or employed in other parts of the country. I was fortunate to encounter teachers and mentors within the Aboriginal community who were willing to talk to me during the 'hibernating times' about questions that summer research identified. I became particularly sensitive to this necessity following an incident that occurred during my first year of Cree language studies. It was during summer session and the day was very hot and humid; we had just come into the classroom from outside where we often went to work, and one of the Cree students asked our instructor a question about a legend involving Bear and Thunderbird. Our teacher started to tell the tale, with apparent reluctance and the comment that she really should not be telling the story in summer. Moments into the telling there was a bolt of lightening, an enormous clap of thunder, hail pounded down, and the electricity went off. The lights came on just a minute or so later to reveal our instructor crouched under her desk with her arms over her head, praying fervently. Now, every time I am tempted to push for answers at an inappropriate time I think of Marge and the Thunderbirds, and refrain from asking.

From that experience and others like it, I learned to follow the seasons and the directions around the medicine wheel (always moving sun-wise), and to be more patient. This is not to say that I avoided tangential thinking or that my work was always focussed and directed but only that I have learned, in some measure, to appreciate wisdom where I find it and accept that inexplicable occurrences are part of everyday life.

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Following a Path

Every project requires organisation, a path to follow, and a framework within which one operates and determines tasks and directions. Chief John Snow of the Morley Nakoda once said to me that he thought my work was like building a sweat lodge for the first time: you have seen the elders work together, you might have assisted as a builder, but you have never before undertaken such a complex or important ceremony on your own (personal communication 2001). To put the analogy in its most simplistic context, in building a sweat lodge you have to select the framing branches with care and choose, and then pray with, the grandfather rocks that will be at the centre of the lodge. In constructing a plan for my research I had to consider many variables (the branches, rocks, coverings) and develop a methodology to use (taking into account what I had been taught through word and observation, and learning to use the knowledge effectively) for my work. I knew that the project would take a number of years because of the nature of the event I had focussed on: I had slightly less than one week per summer of actual pilgrimage time to conduct interviews, observe rituals, film the camp and activities, take photographs, and record text. This was the only time in each year when most of the pilgrims came together to celebrate their faith in this particular manner. Obviously, I would need to do a great deal of back-grounding and associated research outside of the event period.

For most First Nations peoples language and cultural identity are inextricably linked (see Wolfart and Ahenakew 1993), so in order to prepare myself for working

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in Aboriginal communities, I undertook to learn the Cree language[1]. I reasoned that even if I could not converse fluently or even accurately at times, I could at least pick up the nuances of meaning embedded in language. For me this was probably the most difficult task I set myself: I am not a gifted linguist and I found that I had to formulate my thoughts in French before I could organise them from English to Cree or Cree to English. A couple of classmates from northern Alberta reserves – whose Cree was so different from the Plains Cree we were learning as to be almost a separate language, and who liberally interspersed their conversations with *métchif*, the Franco-Cree creolised language – told me they thought English grammar made problems for Cree-speakers, and French worked better with Cree language structures. Be that as it may, I studied Cree for two years, with two wonderful teachers to whom I am most grateful for their patience and friendship: Marge Memnook and Emily Hunter. While I am not fluent nor even a good Cree speaker, I am told that I have a very good accent, though this compliment from Cree people is usually followed by the tongue in cheek remark 'for a Mohawk', and I do understand Plains Cree reasonably well. My efforts to learn have been appreciated by the Elders I have met, had coffee with, and interviewed over the past years. The Crees good-naturedly laugh at my stumbling around for vocabulary and proper grammar structures, while those from other Nations cheerfully complain about how I wasted my time with Cree and should learn Nakoda, or Siksikà, or Ojibwa. It is, however, quite obvious that

---

[1] Cree-speakers are the dominant Aboriginal group in central to Northern Alberta and indeed from Alberta east through Québec; Cree was also the only First Nations language being offered at the University at that time.

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they are all pleased with me for trying to use one of their languages and see it as a sign of my respect for them and their ways.

During this same period I started with archival research in collections around the province. The Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) became a second home: the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMIs) had very recently given their entire collection of documents, letters, books, manuscripts, liturgical art of all descriptions and kinds, histories of missions, journals, and whatever else they had had to the PAA. The first time I requested a specific folio and discovered that the Archives staff had not had the time or resources to catalogue any of the material, I knew this part of the search would take magnitudes of time longer than I had anticipated. The materials were, however, a treasure trove of information about the early days of 'Indian' missions and the lives of missionaries and Aboriginal peoples; the collection also provided insights into the formal nature of the Oblate order and interactions with the (then) Dominion government. On three or four occasions, while I was doing some volunteer work with David Goa, Curator of Folk Life, at the Province Museum of Alberta, we descended to the depths of the sub-basement and delved into the artefacts of the Oblate collection. Mr Goa pulled out materials to which I would otherwise never have had access: from oddities like a homily scrawled across a flattened tin can to the writings and paintings of Fr. Roger Vandersteene (whose life and influence are documented in Earle H. Waugh's *Dissonant Worlds: Roger Vandersteene among the Cree*). This was important because Vandersteene's vision of a spirituality uniting Cree tradition and Catholicism and his encouragement and

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promotion of the expression of these ideas, though still controversial, were precursors to what I see in the field today.

The Bruce Peel Collection at Rutherford Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Alberta, was immensely valuable and deeply appreciated for its order and structure as well as the helpfulness of its staff. I found papers that filled gaps left by other sources, and read rare journals, diaries, and biographies of people who laid the foundations for the work I was undertaking. And, of course, I spent hours pouring over microfiche and aged newspapers for scraps of data on the pilgrimage, indigenous issues in Alberta, practices of the Catholic Church in the Americas, and anything about the Missionary Oblates. Libraries at the Universities of Alberta and Calgary; St. Joseph's College Library; Newman Theological College Library; the libraries at the Glenbow Museum and Archives; and newspaper archives including those of *The Western Catholic Reporter*, *The Prairie Messenger* (both Catholic papers), and *Windspeaker*, *Sweetgrass*, *Sage*, *Raven's Eye*, and *Buffalo Spirit* (the Aboriginal newspapers of Western Canada) all provided me with reams of materials to sift through, and I did. I also read everything I could find on Aboriginal peoples and Catholicism, on pilgrimage, on syncretism, and Catholic inculturation practice – to the point where the staff at Rutherford Library would phone me if they saw or heard of something they thought might be relevant. Armed with an enormous body of literature, several years' worth of field notes, audio tapes, video tapes, and photographs, it was time to begin the process of sorting and organising the data and analysing my own records.

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Prior to providing a consideration of comparative/theoretical discussions and of my study's contribution to the corpus of literature and knowledge regarding First Nations people and the Catholic Church, I wish to point to the following personal influences on my present perspectives regarding the issue of Native Catholic mythos and praxis.

- Firstly, I have no doubt that being both Aboriginal and Catholic has shaped the entirety of my work: I am both insider-outside and as an anthropologist-researcher, an outsider-inside. Given this peculiar duality I can make no claim to total objectivity, but I doubt that absolute objectivity is an attainable goal – nor do I believe that it is necessarily a desirable one in the human sciences.
- Secondly, were I not Native Catholic I would not have obtained the same results nor had the same experiences. A Native non-Catholic, a non-Native Catholic, or a non-Native, non-Catholic researcher each would have discovered another world at Lac Ste-Anne, and each one of those would differ from my experience. As an individual I have a unique set of relationships with other participating individuals and groups. As one of The People, I have a different set of relationships with other pilgrims than would, for example, a non-Native Baptist, Anglican, or Pentecostalist (or agnostic, for that matter). This same premise applies equally to a Native non-Catholic.
- Thirdly, because I am not only a practicing Catholic but also a lay teacher of the Catholic faith, I have perhaps a greater awareness of the history, subjectivities, dogmatic issues, subtle nuances of difference between various

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Orders, and a grasp of the sub-textual meanings embedded in the church's pronouncements, encyclicals, and coda. In this sense, I am privileged (and burdened) by an emic perspective.

- Fourthly, as an Aboriginal person I see through an insider's eyes; I feel that same respect for the elders, share the same sense of community and continuity, and believe in the indivisibility of the natural and supernatural worlds. I experience time and history as cyclical patterns rather than linear ones, and accept the oral histories as the true history of the People.
- Lastly and with conscious effort, as a researcher I distance myself from the data even as I understand that I have affected it as it has affected me. I recognise that as an anthropologist, I am a story-teller who seeks to share the knowledge I have been given so that others may appreciate the richness and fullness of the exotic nature of our own country and its people and that, as a Native Catholic anthropologist and pilgrim, my senses are tuned to a profoundly experiential way of knowing.

The most difficult aspect of the fieldwork, literature search, and writing process leading to a documented account of my work has been maintaining the consistent and conscious attempt to examine data from both emic and etic perspectives. Whatever degree of success I have achieved in my position as an 'insider-outside' is for the reader to determine, and that decision will, of course, be yet another personal view based on individual life stories, ethnicity, spiritual direction, and individual idiosyncrasies.

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Setting the Scene...

Within my dual role I tried to emphasise the aspect of detached observer over that of participating pilgrim, a task that became increasing difficult as the years spent within the Aboriginal community increased. In 1996 I was so completely an observer that I felt remote from the actions and events: very much an outsider looking in. From 1997 to 2002 I was both participator-pilgrim and observer-anthropologist, then in 1999 a chain of events changed the nature and intensity of my involvement completely.

Since the days of my second pilgrimage I had helped out as a lay minister of the Eucharist whenever I was needed, but I otherwise managed to avoid any roles other than those set by my own intentions of researching, interviewing, and recording data. However, with a couple of cameras slung around my neck and a tape recorder at the ready, I was rapidly becoming a conspicuous sight at the pilgrimage. By July 1999, many pilgrims recognised me and knew I was a student rather than a reporter or journalist: talking to me would not get them fifteen minutes of fame on television. They also knew that we would share tea or coffee and something to eat if they wanted it while we talked about their pilgrimage experiences, their home communities, their families, and/or whatever else was important to them that day. They knew that I respected their privacy and would maintain any confidentiality they requested.

On Sunday afternoon, the second day of the 1999 pilgrimage, and about twenty minutes before the start of mass, two of the fellows my husband and I had joked back and forth with – sharing stories, questions, and coffee over the years –

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approached me insisting I work with them as an usher. Tony, a member of the Alexander Band, and Dave, from Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, had always been very interested in my research, offering numerous suggestions about directions I might pursue, many definitely tongue-in-cheek and some quite outrageous. As with their previous 'invitations', I declined saying I needed freedom to film the mass and interview people. This time they were determined that I would help them no matter what reasons to the contrary I might provide. They graciously gave permission for me to continue my role as a Eucharistic minister and, when I tried to escape their well-meaning intentions in order to continue photographing and taping the services, Dave set the hook by promising, without any attempt to conceal his smirk, that I could film from the front of the shrine as much as I wanted if I were helping. Obviously that had great appeal, and so, grudgingly, I added the role of usher to my others. Unexpectedly, giving in to their demands proved to be one of the best things I could have done, despite my concerns that it would have a negative impact on my 'impartial observer' status – non-existent though that probably was. As a result of my reluctant agreement to be a pilgrim worker I have been invited deeper into the community, becoming increasingly involved in other Native Catholic activities, committees, and conferences.

An immediate and completely unanticipated consequence of my changed status was the radical change in visual perspective: standing at the side of the altar facing outward into the congregation rather than inward with them, I now saw the processions, people and the shrine itself from a completely different angle. I experienced such a significant shift in perspective that it prompted a need to rethink

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my preliminary analyses of the sub-texts of pilgrimage performance and consider in much greater depth questions about the role of participant-observation itself. But other aspects of my changed status and new responsibilities also contributed to the shift in understanding. Now I found myself spending all my 'free' time – the time formerly available for eating and sleeping – with the Native people who have worked as behind-the-scenes organisers for years: people becoming increasingly responsible for the continuation, maintenance, and facilitation of the pilgrimage. People recognised me; leaders who had not already questioned me about my activities started to do so. As so often happens, one conversation led to another. Questions became thoughtful and more directed, often with some subtle intent: it grew clear that they were considering me for some additional role. What I failed to grasp initially was that these gate-keepers were assessing my spiritual, moral, and ethical beliefs and my commitment to the pilgrimage and the people. They asked to meet my husband, and continued gently to probe belief systems, responses, and reactions. After prayers and a period of reflective silence we were both asked to work as healers during the Sobriety Pledge after the Tuesday night mass. My reluctant response to the spirit's push has brought many changes in my life, not the least of which is an altered understanding of my place in Native community, not only at the pilgrimage but through all the times and spaces of my life.

As a result of my friends' meddling ways, I was directed along a path I might never have followed to a place I would have said was unlikely if not impossible: doing 'medicine work' in Aboriginal community. My first experience was exhausting, overwhelming, shattering, and humbling; subsequent experiences

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continue that pattern. Like so many other changes in my life lately, it started at the pilgrimage, this time on that very cold, very wet Tuesday night at the Sobriety Pledge. In Chapter Eight I discuss the question of charismatic healing in Aboriginal community, and for Catholic Charismatics generally (for which information I owe a particular debt to the works of Thomas Csordas [1997, 1999, 2002]). At this point field methods and theory are so completely intertwined that it is impossible to state which precedes the other, or which holds a dominant position at any given time.

Seeking the Directions

Respecting this interconnection, we now turn to the theoretical perspectives that have shaped my methodology and begin with the recognition that there are two very different positions at play throughout this study. These are created by the variables between the orderly linearity of western Cartesian logic and the equally orderly but circular, almost spherical logics of Turtle Island and those differences that have been exacerbated over time through repetition and record-keeping. On the one hand, the theology of the Catholic Church has been documented and re-documented for close to two thousand years, probably beginning with the compilations of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and moving through a violent, often bloody history to the present day, where theologians still discuss and debate the meanings and intent of the ancient texts. On the other hand, while Aboriginal spiritual traditions are rooted in a memorised past that stretches back through distant millennia they have been documented only very recently as texts and then only as marginal entries in the diaries of the early missionaries, explorers, and

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traders – a period of approximately 150 to 200 years in Western Canada. The indigenous way of keeping the past alive is to learn the stories of one's people through ceremonies, songs, prayers, trances, and repetitious experiences until they are so committed to memory that they become indivisible from one's own life. In addition, graphic representations such as basket patterns, tipi decoration, and clothing design also may document eloquently a Nation's history. I have relied heavily on the histories of the elders and a few early documents to provide background on traditional beliefs.

Having made this point I must also acknowledge the many works in the body of literature upon which I have relied in co-ordinating my data and framing the expression of my thoughts about my data. Some of these lie within the field of Catholic theology (mainstream and otherwise), others are purely anthropological in nature, others have grown from religious studies, native studies, or gender studies, and yet others are derived from the work of those intrepid souls who are attempting to synthesise two or more of these areas.

Victor and Edith Turner's book (1978) on the place of image and pilgrimage in Christian, and most particularly Catholic, culture and society helped me to contextualise the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage in its own unique cultural setting, and inspired me to look again at the notions of communitas and of pilgrimage as a staged ritual. The parts of their work most useful to me were the sections on the great Mexican pilgrimages: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Las Remedios (both in Mexico City), La Pacificadora (or Our Lady of Zapopan) in the suburbs of Guadalajara, until 1541 a shrine to Teopintzintl; Our Lady of Ocotlán, one of the most important Marian

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shrines in the Americas, and the result of what has been described by Hugo Nutini (in Turner and Turner 1978: 59) as 'guided syncretism' through the conscious and explicit encouragement of equating "many elements of Catholicism with elements of the indigenous religion." (Ibid: 60). The point of these and other Marian shrines in Mexico is that:

- firstly, each one has a foundation narrative recalling a legendary history of local people interacting with a beautiful, fair woman who appears to miraculously resolve a current problem;
- secondly, this is carefully paralleled with earlier myths;
- thirdly, the syncretised story-belief in which Catholic elements are fused with indigenous elements is fully developed to serve the Church and pilgrimage.

"Compromises were made: theology changed, and syncretism saved the communitas of the pilgrimage." (Ibid: 62) But even within the syncretised Catholicism of Mexico we find contested images and symbols. In Mexico City itself, the Virgin of Guadalupe and Las Remedios (Our Lady of the Remedies) vie for the attention of pilgrims. This 'rivalry' has, according to the Turners, strong political overtones that take on a kind of "mystical nationalism" (Ibid: 64); as Christian pilgrimages both sites date back to the period immediately following contact in the early to mid 16th century. Despite the rivalries these events are productive of a profound communitas and were described by one author as "the only possible classless society" (Ibid: 102) in Mexico.

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'Classlessness' is a component in the concepts of liminality and communitas, themselves keys in pilgrimage theory and analysis; because these are generally well-known ideas, I provide only a précis of their meanings (Turner 1969: 106, 131-132):

- Liminality is characterised by properties such as transition, homogeneity, equality, anonymity, absence of rank or status, sacredness, unselfishness, and humility.
- Communitas is a relationship between individuals as opposed to relationships defined by roles or statuses, and may be defined as spontaneous or existential, as normative, or as ideological. The first definition is self-explanatory and the third utopian; it is the second idea of normative communitas that we find in pilgrimage, where as Turner says, "under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources and the necessity for social control among the members of the group in pursuance of these goals the existential communitas is organized into a perduring social system". (Ibid: 132)

At Lac Ste-Anne, the evidence of 'classlessness' is less compelling: Canadian society as a whole is less class-conscious than Mexican society. Most of the pilgrims here are Aboriginal and while some may hold strong views on the relative superiority of one nation over another, most generally view themselves as part of the same 'class' (American Indians) so that relative homogeneity of population plays a strong role – the idea of "all my relations". The Oblate priests live with the people in their communities and are part of the family: appreciated for their individual merits, respected as priests, teased and loved as friends. I cannot argue for true 'classlessness' at Lac Ste-Anne, because I find it difficult to posit or accept the

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notion of absolutes in human life. However, there is still strong evidence of normative communitas throughout the term of the event, in the camp, in the daily social interactions, in the blended liturgies and spiritual practices.

On the subject of Aboriginal spirituality and its exegesis by non-Native scholars, Ronald L. Grimes, Professor of Religion and Culture at Wilfred Laurier University, writes of an experience he had:

> After a lecture in Montreal by a non-Native professor, a First Nations woman from Manitoba rose and spoke with considerable passion: *Much of what you say,* she declared, *is probably true, but suppose you were a Jew and you had just heard your spirituality or your history presented to you by the grandchild of a Nazi. How would you feel?* (Grimes 1996: 433)

Grimes does not report on the professor's response, but perhaps the question alone is sufficient to provoke hard thinking around these issues. Though his essay was written primarily as a critique of how cyberspace has dissolved so many of the inhibitions and impositions we formerly observed regarding what one might call the 'need to know' about the details of Native spirituality, it prompted me to think about the ethics of revealing certain 'sacred secrets' to which I have been granted access. Grimes, possibly because of his early fieldwork on ritual practices and religious festivals in New Mexico, has long been concerned with the inter-relationship of colonialism and religion, a concern that I share in doing research with indigenous communities. The issue raised by Grimes regarding the use of sacred knowledge collected and documented under colonial conditions resonates in my field work and

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subsequent recording and reporting of the data. He rightly remarks, stealing and disseminating sacred secrets would not pass any university ethics board today, so how can we in conscience perform the sacrilege of making such material available for public consumption (even if the public is limited to the academy). We are so often overly focused on the concept of disinterested knowledge that we may forget the object of our study is the subject of someone else's spiritual life. The moral, ethical, and political aspects of doing research into religious practices are potential minefields.

Syncretised religion and blended spiritualities have even more political overtones, as discussed in a volume edited by Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart. *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* is a collection of writings based on the contentious terminology and contested reality of syncretic religious beliefs. In defining 'anti-syncretism' as the "antagonism to religious synthesis shown by agents concerned with the defence of religious boundaries" (Shaw and Stewart 1994: 7), they lay a foundation for critiquing the denial and suppression of syncretic processes, one that has been most helpful in ordering arguments for and against blending indigenous elements and Catholic elements to create a unified whole. In the course of their "Introduction" to the text, Stewart and Shaw remark that generally they reserve "use of the term syncretism for describing interactions in the sphere of religion" (Ibid: 10), but note (and to me, this is a critical point in the discussion of Aboriginal spirituality): "Where religious observance is inseparable from other social practices, we lose the ability to differentiate syncretism from other sorts of cultural bricolage and hybridization." (Ibid: 10). In addition, it is

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a fact that what today may appear as an important religious phenomena may later become merely a cultural one or the reverse may be true. David Mosse's work, both "Catholic saints and the Hindu village pantheon in rural Tamil Nadu, India" (1994) and "The politics of religious synthesis: Roman Catholicism and Hindu village society in Tamil Nadu, India" (1996), on the synthesis of Catholicism and Hinduism in rural India provides a case in point. In the 1800s, the Catholic Church – or at any rate the Jesuit missionaries in the area – accepted the display in the churches of Hindu gods metamorphosed as Catholic saints but retaining their former hierarchy of greater and lesser importance in the pantheon, by which means the existing social relations with respect to religion, caste, and status were maintained. We know that much of this practice was still evident during Mosse's fieldwork, because he advises us that

> [v]illage Catholics implicitly employ a ... set of hierarchical oppositions not only conceptually to isolate the superior Catholic divine from the 'contamination of power', but also to incorporate forms of Hindu divinity as complementary but inferior powers, potentially dangerous but subordinate to the saints (and ultimately to Christ). Catholics order their pantheon in a way which admits both continued interaction with Hindu deities and the reality of shared social life with Hindus, and thus avoids demonizing the gods of their neighbours. (Mosse 1994: 315-316)

My initial impression when I read Mosse was that these villages were demonstrating and adopting a remarkably sane and commonsense attitude in the presence of what

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could have been – and probably was – a horrendously traumatic period of dominance through religious practice. As I spent more time with Aboriginal people and had greater opportunities to observe the 'how' and 'where' of syncretism in practice, I came to realise that the expediency exhibited by the Jesuit missionaries in this example of syncretism was minimal when compared to the cleverness of their flocks when it came to maintaining the important aspects of their traditional religious life. I was able to understand this because I saw the same process going on around me as I moved through Native community. It is a healing kind of mutability that permits both parties to the syncretic equation to operate with dignity and integrity – an elegant solution to a complex problem.

In February of 1999 Thomas Csordas's paper "Ritual healing and the politics of identity in contemporary Navajo society" was published in *American Ethnologist*. When I read the article in April I had no inkling that the points Csordas made would be so evocative of my own experiences later that same year. The article in question discusses the different healing traditions within Navajo society and the "transformation of individual experience with respect to dignity and self-worth as a Navajo" (Csordas 1999: 3) and explores the relationship between Navajo identity and ritual healing in considerable depth. Csordas also looks to the relationship between individual healing and conceptualisation of social relationships. Specific disastrous events on the reserve (a hanta virus epidemic and a devastating drought) affected the community generally and specific individuals more particularly, raising issues of cleanliness, stewardship, the maintenance of correctly ordered relationships between the natural and supernatural worlds and between clans, and the observance of

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sanctions against specific behaviours. The "drought apparitions" (Ibid: 8) provide a culturally acceptable religious explanation for why the Navajo were undergoing such hardships, similar to the kinds of stories told around the campfires at Lac Ste-Anne about appearances of the 'white lady' or the holy woman dressed in white skins who is at times identified as Ste-Anne and other times as White Buffalo Calf Woman.[2]

The practice of forging personal and national identity through the crafting of specific healing practices, co-ordinating culturally sensitised explications of historic and contemporary events, and synthesising rituals from world religion and indigenous traditions produces, both in Csordas' Navajo examples and my own field work experiences, a profound sense of belonging to a unique tradition and great pride in that belonging. The connection between ritual healing and the individual and the community is strong. As Csordas says, "[e]xamining the experience of individual patients in ritual healing calls attention to the little-addressed need to specify a theoretical connection between personal and collective identity." (Csordas 1999: 13) It is precisely this connection that is drawn upon and clarified when the chiefs and elders speak about community healing occurring as a result of instances of individual healing at the pilgrimage. Much ritual healing (in both the Navajo setting and the multiple communities of the pilgrimage) has a spiritual/religious component that is, or has previously been, identified by the person seeking healing. In this sense it would appear that ritualised healing in Native community settings has elements in

[2] For discussions of these apparitions and pilgrims' explanations for them, see Chapters Five, Eight, and Nine.

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common with charismatic healing in Christian churches, including among Catholic Charismatics, an aspect on which Csordas has focussed.

In addition to owing much to this research data (both First Nations and Catholic) and its explication, I also have been strongly influenced by the 'thick description' of Clifford Geertz in the way I 'do ethnography', the way I talk about what I do, the stories I tell and the manner of the telling. Geertz's explanation of the difference between the project of doing ethnography and the process of manufacturing a thick description of what has been done, seen, heard, tasted, smelled, felt, and experienced is complex and highly textured, as indeed we might expect given the subject. What the discussion reduces to is the assertion that doing thick description is an elaborate intellectual effort to produce as evocative an image of the events described as is possible through the single medium of language. Culture is an "acted document" (Geertz 1973: 10), a public performance, most definitely of this world even as it is symbolic in nature, and it is this particular duality of culture that poses the most difficult and complex propositions and from which the most interesting and challenging research data evolves.

Geertz's model of writing culture is one that travels well with the descriptive and interpretive ethnography of pilgrimage, or indeed of any aspect of religion and/or spiritual expression. I believe this to be particularly true when, as in the case of Aboriginal spiritualities, one reasonably cannot expect to separate culture and religious practice. In part because of the aspect of anthropology I have chosen as my focus, in part because of the people I work with, and also because I have a predilection for the minutiae of daily life, I have affinity for Geertz's style of thick

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description. In addition, I admire the manner in which Geertz writes culture, finding his work a wonder and a joy to read, and have attempted to emulate the flow he achieves in explicating my own research and imprinting my own style of writing. As he says, "The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others ... have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said." (Ibid: 30)

Expanding the 'Consultable Record'

The goal and focus of my fieldwork, interviews, archival searches, discussions, and readings has been to accumulate data sufficient to provide significant new insights into Native Catholicism in order to increase the understanding of how, from an anthropological perspective, a new rite develops in the Catholic Church. I have used the annual event of the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage as a lens through which I might examine a number of dimensions of Aboriginal Catholicism.

We begin with theories about religion, ceremonies, rites, rituals, and pilgrimage and proceed to an examination of some of the Catholic Church's own discourse regarding the project of inculturation. Thus, in Chapter Two I examine the relationships between anthropology and theory, theology and theory, anthropology and theology, the question of experience-based traditional knowledge, and the process by which these might all play out together. In considering these matters, the theoretical frameworks of Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Ronald Grimes, and Thomas Csordas have, as noted in more depth above, been particularly useful. There

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are many others whose ideas have influenced mine, whose work has shaped my approach to field research, to writing, and to wrestling with the problems of what to tell, what to emphasise, what to leave for another day.

Jean DeBernardi's detailed research into Chinese syncretic religions (1999, 2001) and the meaning of time and space in Chinese popular religions (1992) provided a useful structure upon which to try out my own ideas about the same topics in First Nations communities. The thoughtful documentation of the life and times of Fr. Roger Vandersteene OMI (Earle Waugh, 1999) affirmed my conviction that a truly syncretic process was underway and that the potential for emergence of a unique Native Catholic rite was both real and immediate. Achiel Peelman's discussions (1995, 1997) of Christ's incarnation in Aboriginal communities furthered my belief both in the importance of my project and its 'do-ability'. Christopher Vecsey's history of Native Catholics in the United States (particularly the volumes, *The Paths of Kateri's Kin* [1997] and *Where the Two Roads Meet* [1999]) is an insightful, detailed look at the relationships between First Nations peoples and the Catholic Church. His findings corroborated what I initially believed and eventually found to be true, that Aboriginal peoples have not lost their national identities in the flood of missionisation and evangelisation over the past five hundred or so years, but have synthesised what is useful to them and are in the process of forging a new, powerful identity as Native Catholics.

On the topic of syncretism, the volume edited by Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, provided useful perspectives on syncretic practices in very different settings, thus

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allowing and encouraging me to analyse the pilgrimage and the concept of a synthesised Native/Catholic rite through varying filters. Because syncretism was one of, if not the most, critical concepts in my study, I approached the topic from several perspectives. The work of theologians Anscar Chupungco (1989, 1992) and Robert Schreiter (1985, 1994), both of whom have written extensively on inculturation in the Catholic church, provided the 'other' perspective; Virgil Elizondo's theological perspectives on pilgrimage phenomena, popular religion and identity, and culturally based religious symbols (1977, 1986, 1996) in many ways supported an anthropological view of these dynamic issues. While anthropology's 'syncretism' and theology's 'inculturation' bear the weight of years of differing connotations and disagreement, both terms are used to stand for very similar processes though viewed through different filters and approached in different manners. Observance of Aboriginal Catholic masses over a period of approximately ten years has convinced me that the two ideas are growing closer together and that much of the disagreement now is more semantic than processual. I see less discrepancy between the reportage of the two approaches than in the writing of twenty years ago. In *Anthropology and Theology: Gods, Icons, and God-Talk* (Adams and Salamone 2000) an attempt has been made to align the often opposing positions of the two disciplines. The articles by Mark Taylor ("'Spirit' in the Researching of Cultural Worlds" 2000) and Stephen Glazier ("Anthropology and Theology: The Legacy of a Link" 2000) were particularly helpful in assisting my development of an anthropological/theological framework against which to measure, structure, and articulate my reflections on field observations. In addition to grounding my work in anthropological and theological

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theories and methodologies, these studies have provided a context and historical link for my field research.

Chapter Three provides a history of the pilgrimage site that begins with prehistoric considerations, moves through the period of initial contact between Aboriginal peoples and Oblate priests, and touches on local oral histories and narratives. I was concerned to make clear for the reader the very different perceptions of time in First Nations' life and the 'present-ness' of all time as it exists in a circular dimension. This is critical to understanding the importance of the pilgrimage as a ritual of renewal, and the actual period of the pilgrimage as a portion of the path around the sacred circle. At the same time there was a need to situate the pilgrimage historically and to identify and maintain its context within the greater boundaries of society, so that the enormous contributions of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate could be documented clearly and precisely. Thus Chapter Three is concerned with the Aboriginal/French history of the pilgrimage, the events that have shaped it into the form it has today, and potential futures that might be realised.

With Chapter Four I shift my focus to the concept of sacred landscapes and the sacredness of Lac Ste-Anne to First Nations peoples and to Catholics. Aboriginal philosophies regarding the sacred nature of land and indigenous acceptance of interacting natural and supernatural worlds are explored, as are more recent scientific theses regarding the living and sentient nature of the earth. Following this exploration of 'holy ground' in its many connotations, we move to an interpretative description of the pilgrimage in Chapter Five, Kohkom's House.

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This is the pilgrimage in all its physical manifestation: my intent here is to provide as complete as possible a pilgrimage experience for the armchair traveller. We meet *kohkom* (grandmother) symbolised as Ste-Anne and embodied in a cast of thoroughly delightful elderly ladies – Cree, Dene, Nakoda, Dogrib, Ojibwa, Kainai, Iroquois, Siksikà, and Métis. Here we initiate the process of learning from the elders about values, past hurts, and present partnerships, and then examine the collision of two spiritual worlds that are now working, through these women and other elders, to develop ways of living together in mutual respect and harmony. We look out over the grounds and campsite, explore the shrine, contemplate statuary, follow the Stations of the Cross, and visit the 'Mall'. We stop to contemplate the Catholic mass because the celebration of the Eucharist is central to the pilgrimage and so the mass is the major organising principle of the week-long festivities. This is *Ayamihâwin* (the mass, or literally 'special prayers'), and the subject of Chapter Six. The rich textures of a progression of culturally sensitised masses enliven the discussion and serve to highlight the uniqueness of each participating community and, together with the taste of the spiritual philosophies of Turtle Island in Chapter Seven, they lead us to the next topic of discussion – syncretism – as contained in Chapter Eight, Spirit's Fires. We are now deeply immersed in Native Catholicism as it is playing out today, and move to a consideration of the Catholic Church's project of inculturation and my perceptions as a Native Catholic anthropologist of the synthesised nature of the pilgrimage and its syncretic masses. In part because of this process of intercultural, inter-religious blending, healing and wholeness have become a major focus of the pilgrimage and of Catholic-Aboriginal relations. We examine in Chapter Nine a

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sample selection of pilgrim's stories about healing in its many aspects and incarnations. The roles of the lake, of the media, of medicine plants, of charismatic priests, medicine people, and healing ceremonies are documented and analysed here in Holy Waters, Healing Powers.

Chapter Ten is the completion of the circle – for this present time. I retrace the path we have followed: where we have been, what we have seen, review the Oblate Apology to the First Nations Peoples of Canada, and then look at pilgrims' visions of the future pilgrimage. I speak briefly of aspects of my research that, for a variety of reasons, could not be or were not included in this manuscript, reflect on future directions for research on Native Catholicism, and pause to give thanks to all those who have contributed so generously of their time, their stories, and their talents to help me in my quest.

This has been a journey of the mind and of the spirit. It is as much about schisms and maturation within the Catholic Church as it is about divisions and developments in the largest Aboriginal pilgrimage in North America. There are no clear alignments or factions; there are many possible futures and as many pasts as there are people to remember them. There is, however, one thing that is clear: every July the People will gather at a sacred lake in north-western Alberta and they will, with the mentoring, assistance, and spiritual direction of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, worship in forms that are uniquely Native and Catholic, celebrating a pilgrimage that has truly become Aboriginal in tradition and identity.

Creator draws the People to this lake to honour Ste-Anne and, by so doing to honour the continuity of family and community, of tribal and national identity, of the

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land and water and sky and all living creatures. It is also a time to give honour and respect to the elders who hold the keys to memory and history. These elders are the vessels in which the history of the People lives and is passed forward to succeeding generations, and because of them and their teaching places like Lac Ste-Anne still have profound spiritual meaning in a world that is more and more secular.

> In the midst of growing secularism and modernity, technology and electronics, mobility and rapid travel, space exploration and information super-highways, people are seeking the stable and unchanging rootedness of sacred earth. The faster humanity moves, the more it needs to be grounded. It seems that pilgrimage sites are responding to this deep anthropological need of the human soul to be connected to mother earth. Furthermore, the more knowledge, science and information we have, the greater the quest of the soul for ultimate meaning; the more psychological analysis and psychotherapy we undergo, the greater the quest of the soul for penance and purification; the more medical science accomplishes, the greater the search for miracles; and the more families break apart while churches become more rule-orientated, the greater the quest for an unconditional human community. (Elizondo 1996: vii)

As a pilgrim I have shared the path, the communitas, and the identification; as an anthropologist I have observed, recorded, and analysed the process. As a Catholic and as a Native I have ministered to other pilgrims through Church sacraments and through traditional healing methods and others similarly have

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ministered to me. I have followed the words of the elders, both Aboriginal and Oblate, and I trust that I have learned from them and that I may pass this learning on to others through these words. I have been concerned always to create a sense of pilgrimage throughout the body of this narrative and to balance Aboriginal ways of knowing with the academic emphasis on empiricism, theoretical models, and objectivity. And now our journey around the circle begins.

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Chapter Two: Questing Spirits

The following discussion is a journey into what have become academically controversial, divisive, and even adversarial territories; however the research demands the questions, requires the delving into covert reasons and meanings behind patterned behaviours. I do not believe it possible to discuss the theoretical frameworks of ritual and pilgrimage contextually without also examining the underlying theological intentions of the Catholic Church in the project of inculturation and promotion of culturally sensitised activities such as the contemporary Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage. I am convinced that without a discussion of the relationships between anthropological theories, theological dogma and kerygma, and the fragile frameworks woven from a combination of myth and practice it is impossible to attempt an understanding of events such as the pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne. And so I submit my reflections on and analysis of subjects those wiser than I have often left fallow. In the following section I explicate those theoretical works I have found to be most pertinent to my discussion in greater or lesser detail, according to their relationship with the topic. As for the 'theoretical' frameworks of Turtle Island philosophy, these are so deeply embedded in the oral histories and memories of the people as to be impossible to separate from life's experiences. However, in a search for theories upon which to tailor my field data, I did ask some elders about how these môniyâs notions fit with traditional Native beliefs. Emily Hunter (Cree), Martin Eaglechild (Kainai), John Snow (Nakoda), Gabriel M. (Métis), Laurence F. (Cree-Ojibwa), Frank L. (Cree), Rod Alexis (Nakoda), and Annie K.

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(Iroquois-Cree) all were able to undertake a reasonably informed theoretical discourse on a variety of topics, so I questioned them individually about the potential of organising a sort of 'theory of Native spirituality' for the purposes of comparison with Catholic theological and anthropological theoretical frameworks. Their responses differed only by degree: the common thread was agreement that to develop such a formal structure would be forcing a set of false assumptions on the People's spiritual traditions. For the most part, those times when I did ask an elder about the utility – or possibility – of applying, for example, abstracted concepts from one legend (or one tribal group) to another, the only response was a sly grin accompanied by some variation of the remark I heard countless times: "Mohawk Girl, you don't learn life from books, only from living – even a Mohawk must know this!" (personal communications: 1996-2004)[3] Consequently no theoretical discussion to represent the views of the people of Turtle Island is included in this work, but Chapter Seven: Trickster meets Christ provides some background into indigenous theologies and spiritualities by following the manner in which the elders teach them: as parables and stories of life lived in the ways of the sacred circle, the sacred tree, and the longhouse.

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[3] I acquired the nickname 'Mohawk Girl' during my first year of Cree studies at the University of Alberta. The other students were either Cree (as was the instructor) or Métis (Cree-French). Initially it was a derogatory way to differentiate me from the others while still grudgingly acknowledging my Indian status. It later became just another name, the same way one of the other women was called 'Stick Girl' because she was so slender and tall (and part French, whom the Cree call 'wood stick people'. Because I always have to explain my provenance and heritage when being introduced to the elders, 'Mohawk' is frequently the part to which they relate, and what they often call me.

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Anthropology, Theology, and Theory

For decades scholars have debated the many topics embedded in the notion of religion: issues such as missionisation, colonialism, assimilation, morals and ethics, theological beliefs and bureaucratic regulations, the 'great' and 'little' faiths, world religions and popular religions, liturgies, symbols, myth, practices, charisms, spiritualities, and the apparently infinite number of permutations possible as ideas and gods collide. Among those (perhaps) lesser known thinkers, I find Mark Taylor's (2000:35-45) redefinition of theology to be generally satisfactory in an anthropological sense (which is indeed the use for which he intends it). Taylor, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Princeton, provides a concise definition of theology as "discourse (*-logos*) about whatever in cultural beliefs and practices is taken as mystery or sacral presence of some sort (*theos-*)." (2000:36) Such fundamentally anthropological relativism permits a broad range of discursive methods curtailed only by a proviso that the focus be on the articulation of or a commentary on whatever is deemed mysterious or sacred within a particular society. Taylor, as others have done in increasing numbers, rightly points out that Western anthropologists have previously neglected to apply the same close study and analysis to established Christian denominations as they have to tribal beliefs or to Western 'exotic' cults. Though Taylor is suggesting strongly that the time has arrived for an insistence on these kinds of studies, he clearly is aware that there are impediments to the undertaking, not only from the concerned 'establishment' but also as a by-product of the researcher's own biases and blind spots. Many, perhaps most,

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members of mainstream conservative Christian churches take umbrage at seeing themselves as the objects of anthropological studies – as though they were adherents and proponents of what they consider pagan, heretical, and/or primitive beliefs.

Yet without this kind of research there is a gap of significant proportion in the body of understanding: our diffidence may reflect a pervasive underlying social suspicion that our own culturally accepted spiritual practices are somehow less worthy of study, inferior, less interesting, even boring, when compared to those rituals exoticised by the distances of time, space, and familiarity. How is it possible that the analysis of regular Sunday morning worship at a local church of any denomination can possibly embody interest, drama, or appeal to equal those of strange practices in far-away places? Surely, mortuary practices in the Sepik basin of New Guinea, initiation rites among the Ndembu, or the solemn, ritual consumption of the flesh or ashes of enemies or even of ancestors as practiced by numerous peoples worldwide, including my own Iroquoian and Celtic forebears, are more worthy of scholarly examination than the ritual theophagy of one's local Christian church. The premise that the known – or more correctly the assumed to be known – is as strange, rare, and exotic as anything the unknown can offer is one of the main threads of my thesis, and one to which I return time and again.

Chapter One introduced us to the theoretical perspectives of anthropologists Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Ronald Grimes, and Thomas Csordas. Each has contributed in particular ways to the contextualisation of religious practice and thus has provided me with frameworks for the research and analysis of pilgrimage in the unique socio-cultural setting of Lac Ste-Anne and for the anthropological situation of

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a Native Catholic rite. Turner's seminal work on pilgrimage, liminality, and communitas, particularly in the context of indigenous Catholic ritual practices throughout the Americas, while perhaps not directly applicable to the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage, offers images of syncretised Catholic beliefs and practices and attendant performative rituals. As noted earlier, Clifford Geertz has influenced my thinking on and writing of ethnography. The colours, sounds, smells, and overall richness of texture inherent in Native Catholicism are best served by equally dense prose: thick description at its most tactile. Healing is at the heart of the pilgrimage and is a key theme in both Aboriginal and Catholic praxis where ideas of reconciliation and healing are intertwined, thus Thomas Csordas' research into both Navajo healing practices and Charismatic Catholicism (1997, 1999, 2002) helped me to grasp these aspects of both pilgrimage and general practice in ways both more detached and more intimately involved. Ronald Grimes' concerns regarding the ethics of documenting and revealing sacred intellectual property provided invaluable ethical and moral guidelines supporting my difficult decision to 'forget' the details of certain stories, ceremonials, and rituals shared with me. I mention only briefly these scholars, whose ideas have profoundly impacted my ways of knowing and of doing anthropology. They, with others aforementioned and in chapters to follow have, through their work and their analyses, provided me with the tools and the foundation for this journey with The People, inward to the spirit and outward to a sacred place.

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Inner Journeys, Outer Journeys

> In the middle of the journey of our life
>
> I came to my senses in a dark forest
>
> for I had lost the straight path. (Alighieri, trans. H.R. Huse 1954)

Dante's *Divine Comedy*[4] begins with these lines that evoke the experience of anomie and the search for meaning and wholeness. The theme of human life as a pilgrimage is a classical one; one that, as Paul J. Philibert notes, is a transition from dependency to autonomy: "Every age has had the problem of bringing people to accept a creative responsibility for their own well-being and their mutual responsibility for community." (Philibert 1996:80) He examines a variety of sources, from the Gospels (Matt.8:22; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; John 21:19, 22) to the Neo-platonists and Origen, Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, and even the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (originating with the Second Vatican Council), using these as a framework for his discussion on pilgrimage as both journey inward and journey outward. The goal of the journey inward is to "seek intimacy with God through contemplation and mystical surrender" (Philibert 1996:82), while the journey outward takes the pilgrim "beyond the protective sphere of their originating culture, [bringing them] into a surprising awareness of different ways of being human" (Ibid 86). Through these twinned journeys, the pilgrim becomes increasingly conscious of himself and others as spiritual beings approaching the divine mystery through myriad paths.

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[4] The *Divine Comedy* is considered by many scholars to be seminal pilgrimage literature.

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Pilgrimage in this view is a developmental journey, both physical and spiritual, a transition, a universal pattern of experience through which people seek to attain a greater sense of clarity or completion in their lives, to refresh their spiritual nature, or perhaps to achieve some goal or fulfil some vow or promise. Indeed, it is in the nature of humans to journey, travel, and migrate; to question their lives and surroundings, to seek answers, comfort, peace, and belonging. Pilgrimage is a vision quest in which the pilgrim looks both within and without, seeking a deeper relationship with the supernatural Mystery and with the Spirit within herself. Pilgrimages frequently involve significant travel away from the known and the mundane, away from daily responsibilities but also from the (often unappreciated) privileges of the secular life such as relative safety, comfort, regular meals, family, friends, and the security of things accustomed.

In some measure it is because of these aspects that pilgrimage has been a subject of scholarly study: a quest to understand the quest. Previously the province of historical academicians and theologians, in the last twenty-five to thirty years, pilgrimage has become a topic of increasing fascination for anthropologists as they seek to understand this aspect of human behaviour. Victor Turner's theories of liminality and communitas building on Arnold Van Gennep's concept of *rites de passage* (1960), and their application to pilgrimages (particularly Christian pilgrimages), are well known; however like others in recent years, I have come to question the actual utility and validity of Turnerian analysis as applied to this particular quest for meaning. The experience of pilgrimage is simultaneously too protracted and too truncated to rest comfortably within the elegant confines of the

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classic model of rites de passage. Further, while a sense of separation from the secular world may exist for some, there is insufficient evidence to support the Turnerian notion of *communitas* in this case. My own research does point to increased cohesiveness and even communitas among individual members of specific groups (e.g. *cursillistas*), but not to all pilgrims, or even all Native pilgrims, as a single body. Political activism and wide diversities of ages, socio-economic standing, tribal affiliations, and education are all factors that affect the potential for a blanket sense of belonging. In Canada it seems that many Aboriginal people are more concerned to establish their identity as Cree, Ojibwa, Siksikà, Innu, Dene, or Métis than they are to embrace a more generic Pan-Indian notion of 'Nativeness'. One of the critical roles of the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage is in its aspect as crafter of identity: first as a Native Catholic person, then as a (e.g.) Cree Catholic, and perhaps even as a Samson Cree Catholic. However, these conceptualisations of National/tribal identity do not affect the landscape of the pilgrimage: this is sacred space to all of The People.

While people travel far from their home places to be part of the pilgrimage, parish and missionary priests report that attendance at local masses is less assiduous: a reality apparently in keeping with most of the modern world. In the volume *Concilium: Pilgrimage*, Virgil Elizondo (1996:ix) suggests that the location of pilgrimage sites "away from the recognized centres of organized religion and from the control of their authorities" may perhaps be "attributed to God's sense of humour which keeps legitimate authority – whether ecclesial or academic – from taking itself so seriously that it confuses itself with God." Talking about the increase in the

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number of people undertaking pilgrimages, even as church attendance numbers decrease, he suggests the possibility that humans respond to the sensory experience of pilgrimage as fulfilment of the need to reach beyond the limits of ordinary or natural experience to the mystery of the supernatural and spiritual.

> There is no church mandate which prescribes pilgrimages, yet the number of people going on pilgrimages continues to increase, while attendance at church-mandated services continues to decline. The sense of pilgrimage seems to respond to a profound need of the human being to go beyond the limits of ordinary experience into the mysterious realm of the beyond, and pilgrimage sites seem to have the force of a geographical biological-spiritual magnet attracting the pilgrims into the realm of its life-giving mystery. (Ibid)

Parish, deanery, diocesan, and archdiocesan statistics continue to indicate a decline in the number of regularly practicing Catholics, and according to Statistics Canada between 1991 and 2001 there was a 2.5% drop in the numbers of those professing to be Catholic.[5] The figures may reflect the differences between surveys: the government census derives its figures from self-identification by participating individuals while the Roman Catholic Church's localised numbers are more subjective, and often based on the number of collection envelopes or families reported per parish. Moreover, while Catholics may not attend regularly at Sunday masses, they may still regard themselves as Catholic. In a survey conducted by

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[5] Census 2001 lists 12,936,905 Canadians self-identified as Catholics out of a population of 29,639,035. The 1991 census figures were 12,335,300 with a total population of 26,994,000.

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Reginald Bibby, Research Chair of Sociology, University of Lethbridge, and reported by CBC News Online: "most lapsed Catholics have not lost touch with their religious roots. They often return for rites of passage, such as weddings and baptisms, and say they are open to more involvement."[6] My own information is anecdotal: I have to agree with Elizondo and a variety of church officials that, in general, attendance at mass is decreasing among the North American population, but that this does not appear to be the case in culturally sensitised and syncretised church settings, such as Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples or at the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage masses. It would seem that there are a number of factors contributing to regular attendance at Catholic religious services, and that a critical positive factor is the active presence of a pastor sufficiently flexible to recognise the socio-cultural needs of his flock and sufficiently concerned and knowledgeable to respond to these.

In contrast to Sunday masses, the changes wrought by pilgrimage are uncontained and uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) "privileged earth places" (Ibid viii) and therefore enrich ordinary lives through the breaking of limitations. The sites themselves may be, or have the potential to become, privileged loci of the ultimate and most intimate encounters with self, life, the cosmos, and God.

Paul Post, writing in the same volume of *Concilium*, differs strongly in his views on the intention and construction of modern pilgrimage. Rather than focussing on pilgrimage as direct encounter with the dynamic forces of uncontained

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[6] CBC News Online, October 2, 2003
www.cbc.ca/news/background/Catholicism/churchattendance/html.

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spirituality, Post stipulates that pilgrimage can be identified as a series of what he calls 'contrast-experiences' (1996:4) that can be ordered into three clusters or sets:

- ritual, the journey, the essence of being a pilgrim
- meetings and relationships
- the past

Post contends that the experience of pilgrimage is not only about encounters with differing landscapes and people, but is also bound up in discoveries relating to the pilgrim's relationships with nature, with others, with self through the body, and with the personal past as it is bounded by and embedded in an historical past. He goes on to suggest that there is a certain aspect of 'museum culture' to the traditional Christian pilgrimage as it is experienced today, such that certain pilgrimages have the potential to be a "cultural, ritual framework for the diverse individual presentations of a range of contrasting experiences." (Ibid: 5) Despite the apparent differences in theoretical perspective, the positions of both Elizondo and Post embrace the spirit of the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage with its strong cultural formalism and history as one of Creator's special places. Both Elizondo's emphasis on mysticism and the privileged status of pilgrimage sites and Post's rational and pragmatic assertions regarding an integrated personal and historical past are undoubtedly explicatory of the nature of other pilgrimages as well, where history and geography (both sacred and secular) play an important role in developing and shaping the forms of devotions, actions, and interests of pilgrims.

Indeed we see these attributes of pilgrimage embodied at Catholic pilgrimage sites worldwide: from Rome, Assisi, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Lourdes,

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Fatima, Santiago de Compostela, Lisieux, Turin, Knock, and Medjugorge to lesser known sites such as Glastonbury's shrine to St Joseph of Arimathea, Our Lady of Czestochowa in Poland, Ste-Anne de Beaupré (Québec), Lac Ste-Anne, and the vast numbers of smaller localised sites where one might find a small grotto, cross, or cairn dedicated to a beloved saint. Pilgrimage travel is big business, may incorporate secular tours into the itinerary, and can be as grand or simple as the pilgrim desires.

Though the actual experiences of the pilgrim differ as widely as the geographic locations and cultural attitudes of the shrines, most researchers agree that pilgrimages generally share a number of common motifs that speak to the universal longings of the human spirit. A few of the most commonly shared patterns include:

- some difficulty of access
- a sense of 'presence'
- walking in the steps of others
- wearing special, identifying clothing
- rituals involving water and/or fire
- the rituals of leaving something behind at the site, and/or
- taking something home from the site
- circumambulation
- ritual cleansing prior to entering the holy place
- communal prayer, singing and chanting

While the individual reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage are as varied as the pilgrims and the sites to which they travel, commonalities exist here just as they do in the general shared characteristics of pilgrimages noted above. In their study of

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pilgrimage and pilgrims, common reasons cited by psychologists Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift (1996: 42-62) include some or all of the following:

- a need or desire to see the physical location of a particular event (e.g., the site of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego in México)
- a desire to draw close to 'something' sacred, perhaps with the hope of returning spiritually renewed
- the impulse to seek pardon or forgiveness for actions or omissions
- a desire to give thanks for healing, successes, victories, good health, a new baby, family fortunes, etc.
- curiosity and desire for a shared experience: to see why others go and perhaps capture some of the feelings they appear to enjoy
- to leave behind normal routines for a period, providing time and space for transformation, increased perspective about one's life
- to reclaim lost, abandoned or forgotten parts of oneself, thus achieving a kind of home-coming of the individual
- to honour a vow made (often as the result of a prayer fulfilled)
- to prepare for death, perhaps to win merit for the afterlife
- to answer an inner call
- to connect in some way the past, present, and future. Pilgrims often say they see God and the saintliness of their fellow travellers in the people they meet.
- to express one's love of God

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All of these reasons have been offered to me by pilgrims at Lac Ste-Anne as explanation as to why they undertake the journey. The concepts of shared beliefs, shared histories, and the penance/healing paradigm also play into the quest.

The Clift and Clift study supplies numerous secular reasons – generally in accord with the rationale outlined by Post (above) – wherein the concept of pilgrimage seems to fall within the realm of tourism or vacation:

- a desire to feel privileged and/or at one with the privileged because attendance demonstrates that one has the economic means to journey to remote locations
- a desire to add variety and cachet to a vacation trip (for example, taking a side trip to Lourdes while in France)
- to admire something or someplace beautiful and renowned
- to inspire patriotism and love of country and/or reinforce sense of righteousness of actions (visitors to 'Ground Zero' at the site of the former World Trade Centre in New York City might fall under this category, though they may also make this pilgrimage for more spiritual reasons)

Of these, some variant of the third and fourth reasons may be part of the Lac Ste-Anne rationale, but neither holds the stated and overt importance to pilgrims as do the strictly religious points noted. In the course of this chapter and throughout my text, I will continue to explicate and expand upon these ideas using examples from my own fieldwork but also referring to other anthropological, theological, and psychological studies of pilgrimages around the world. Theories derived from these

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studies will be examined and tested against field data, and both scholarly literature and experiential histories will be included for consideration.

Embodying the Spirit

The experience of pilgrimage is one felt not only in the spirit but also in the body. Movement, prostration, kneeling, or genuflection, praying with beads or a rosary are all bodily experiences. Ritual movements are important in Roman Catholic ceremonial and in Native rites. In the case of Lac Ste-Anne, when pilgrims wade into the lake or submerse themselves in the cold water, they are aware in a profound sense of the connection between their spirits and their bodies. When they join hands in song and prayer, swaying in time to the music, they bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary life. The drums, the burning sweetgrass, and the order of the mass soothe and provide the comforts of well-established ritual action grounded in belief.

Pilgrimage is the ritual journey embodied: the act of journeying has symbolic meaning for those participating, for those who act out the pilgrimage; those who, though they use differing symbolic and actual languages and actions do, as Robert A. Johnson writes, "consciously and deliberately articulate correct ritual as symbolic behaviour, consciously performed." (Johnson in Clift and Clift 1996:15) David Power, noted theologian and author, agrees with this concept of deliberate actions specifically performed to express symbolic or mythic behaviours and beliefs:

> In the body and through the body, human persons find and express themselves in relation to environment, to other persons, to

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> society, and to history. In and through the body they have the initial experiences associated with the sacred, experiences formulated interpretatively in some bodily ritual.... The initial appropriation of relations to self and to others is in bodily reaction, gesture, and disposition. (Power 1984: 84)

Embodiment of the sacred is experienced in a variety of ways and is often understood as being simultaneously highly personal and absolutely universal. Pilgrims' narratives about their sacred journeys quite frequently are framed as journeys of restoration. Many personal stories involve sub-textual explications of how balance, harmony, and order are restored and act to relieve the internal and community conflicts and that temporal and spatial distance from the difficulties of everyday life at home, lived in the company of others seeking a more whole and holy life, affect a healing and purification of their own. Through the experience of renewed wholeness (or holiness), pilgrims reshape the patterns of their lives. The physical separation from mundane life and hence from many extraneous daily activities creates a particular focus on the sacrality of the pilgrimage site and the period of the pilgrimage. Masses, each with their own distinctive character imparted by the hosting community, are the loci for greater focus even as the historic mythos of the lake itself engenders a particular sense of the continuity of ritual praxis among pilgrims. This sense of the sacredness of individual or particular places and specific intervals of time is noted in the introduction to an edited volume on Chinese pilgrimages, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*:

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> Throughout history and across cultures, human beings have given shape and pattern to natural space and passing time. Certain intervals acquire special meaning and become demarcated from the everyday; calendars articulate and reinforce such patterns. Similarly, some places are thought to stand out from their surroundings and become associated with special experiences and part of any ordered geography. In any religion, some places and times are viewed as particularly favourable for establishing contact with supernatural powers, and we find people in most cultures making journeys to such places for this purpose. Conceived somewhat differently in each case, these pilgrimages, as we may term them, reflect central ideas about time, space, and sacred power and are a fruitful point of entry into the study of the religious culture of a people. (Naquin and Yü 1992:1)

Following a thread similar to that expressed by Naquin and Yü, Steven Sangren agrees in part with Victor Turner's position that transcendence of local social structure is an important element of pilgrimage. Sangren asserts that

> [p]ilgrimage is thus a ritual process that both constructs or produces society and is premised on an alienated representation of the nature of society's (and, not incidentally, individuals') own productive power – alienated because the producer or 'subject' misrecognizes its own role as such. ...the productive power attributed to divinities to act (that is, by performing miracles) on

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> behalf of individuals and collectivities belongs in reality to individuals and social groups (who constitute themselves in part by engaging in ritual). (1993:564-565).

Moreover, in his work on the *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage, Sangren asserts that devout Taiwanese "construct their sense of self in the process of engaging divinity" (Ibid, 568). The construction or affirmation of identity and development of new 'traditions' is, I suspect, at work in all pilgrimage gatherings, no matter their location, focus, or the pilgrims' ethnicities. In my own experience, one of the critical endeavours of the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage is the crafting of identity and affiliation through the use of clothing, religious banners and regalia, and tribally specific ritual practices. If we consider this information in conjunction with Sangren's experiences on Taiwan and those of Naquin and Yü on the Chinese mainland, and accept the premise that the specified 'pilgrimage work' undertaken as more or less standard, we might speculate also that Post's assurance of a cultural, ritual framework is another foundational aspect for studying the phenomenon of pilgrimage.

Like anthropologists John Eade and Michael Sallnow, I have found that the physical reality of the pilgrimage centre is as much about division as it is about cohesion, and that in the process of constructing individual and communal images of self, pilgrims align themselves with like-minded folks against those whose perceptions of the shape and meanings of the pilgrimage differ from their own. As Eade and Sallnow state in their co-authored introduction to *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, "... it is necessary to develop a view of pilgrimage not merely as a field of social relations but also as a *realm of competing*

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discourses" (1991:5) In my experience it is precisely those 'competing discourses' that facilitate the growth and dynamic nature of ongoing pilgrimage, and because of this I find it impossible to agree with Turner that the fundamental motivation for undertaking a pilgrimage is the achievement of communitas. In the case of Lac Ste-Anne, I would say that the reasons are as varied as the pilgrims and that the nearest intention to a common goal is a focus on healing, wholeness, and unity and balance within the self, with Creator and with all creation. I suspect that many people today undertake pilgrimage as a journey of self-discovery and as a means of delving more deeply into their individual and communal cosmologies whether or not they consciously accept the existence of any higher power(s). For the observer it may appear that the one journeying is doing so in spite of her/his lost or non-existent belief, and it is entirely possible that in some, perhaps even many, cases this is true. However, it also may be an innate human need to explain a mostly incomprehensible universe within a more personal and therefore more manageable framework which finds its expression as, among other possibilities, a journey of faith. A similar impulse was expressed by scientist and science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke recently: "...I still think that all religions were invented by the Devil to hide God from mankind – and that faith is the ability to believe what you know isn't true." (Clarke 2004:14) Not all of us would agree with Clarke's definition of faith, but most would accept that faith is the ability to accept as truth any number of intangibles.

Individual perceptions of God, faith, religion, spirituality, and belief are variables both in the comprehension of ritual meaning and in the pilgrimage

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equation, with each participant adding depth to the textures of ritual and ceremony, to the layered mysteries of multiple discourses, and to a unique understanding of the relationship between the supernatural and the natural worlds. This variety of purpose is more in line with the perspective that "a pilgrimage shrine, while apparently emanating an intrinsic religious significance of its own, at the same time provides a ritual space for the expression of a diversity of perceptions and meanings which the pilgrims themselves bring to the shrine and impose upon it." (Eade and Sallnow 1991:10) Diversity lends textural wealth and elegance to pilgrimage interactions, however the conflicting desires to prove intra- and extra-community cohesion and a perceived need to present a united front to both the non-participating segments of society and to the media recording the events create stress and confusion. Crafting identity is one of the ongoing processes of the pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne, and while the shared identity of *Native Catholic* holds a central importance, other notions of being, for example, a Cree Catholic or a Traditionalist Catholic or a Dogrib Catholic shred the edges of the whole cloth making a more intriguing, complex garment. Embodiment of shared identity is manifested in ritual actions expressive of a culturally contextualised spirituality. The nature of pilgrimage as performative ritual permits full articulation of both identity and spirituality, and nowhere is this more evident than during the culturally amended, carefully constructed ritual performances of the mass. (An explication of the mass is the topic of Chapter Six.)

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The Quest for Inculturation

If the pilgrim's core activity can be stipulated as a personal quest for transcendence and immanence, and the anthropologist's quest is to document and analyse, thus coming to an understanding of the relationships between the various actors and actions in the fields of pilgrimage, then we might reasonably say that the most fundamental issue for theologians is a the question of emphasis of these aspects, and more specifically, "how much... should be placed on the dynamic of faith entering into the process, and how much emphasis should be given to the dynamics of culture already in place?" (Schreiter 1994:15). Inculturation is, Robert Schreiter says, a necessary risk because the inculturation of faith and the identification with culture are "two moments in the ...process" (Ibid: 23). Anscar Chupungco, Professor of Liturgical History and Liturgical Adaptation at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome and a Consultor to the Congregation for Divine Worship, responded to the Church's articulated need for scholarly discussion on adaptation of the Roman Catholic liturgy to differing world cultures and traditions (1989 and 1992). In his examination of tradition and progress, Fr. Chupungco considers the potential future shapes of the Eucharistic celebration, sacramental celebrations, and the liturgical year. Catholic theologians argued during the Vatican II Council (1965) that changes should be made for pastoral purposes and not for "archaeological reasons" (Chupungco 1989:6).

The Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium advocated adherence to the classically shaped liturgy, but during Council a sufficient number of members expressed concerns about the possible use of obsolete models, and urged a greater

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openness to local cultures and traditions with a strong pastoral orientation. Vatican II restored the classic Roman liturgy with its attendant cultural characteristics of simplicity, practicality, and sobriety, consciously distancing the liturgy from the ornate, intentionally intricate, and exclusionist attitudes that had developed since the Protestant schism. Missionisation was (once more) a major concern of the Church, and though the need for greater flexibility was recognized, liturgical reform remained an unfinished project ultimately left to the local churches. What this has meant in practical terms is that priests and people have been in many ways free to design, or not, a liturgy culturally appropriate to their community setting while remaining, through the sacraments, part of the universal church. Indigenous responses to this opportunity have been as various as the missionised, colonized peoples who form the local churches.

Such responses are the subject – and the objective – of James Treat's (1996) edited volume that pulls together many Native Christian perspectives particular to and respectful of the differences among aboriginal culture groups, giving voice to people who hold a wide variety of religious beliefs. Treat's interest generally appears to be concerned with what Chief John Snow calls 'Indian Ecumenism', thus *Native and Christian* (1996) is a collection of essays by native writers "that focus on the problem of native Christian identity and that attempt to grapple with this problem in a serious and substantive manner, whether doing so on theological, political, communal, or personal terms." (1996:2) *Around the Sacred Fire* (Treat, 2003) is concerned with intertribal activism and is based on a history of the Indian

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Ecumenical Conference which was so influential in both the United States and Canada during the 1960s and 70s.[7]

Patrick Twohy (1983) collected the visions, remembrances, and stories of one such group, the Plateau peoples[8], over a ten-year period. His "effort to speak for the truth" (Twohy 1983:11) provides a vision of a unique Native and Catholic spirituality that is distinctly syncretic. Written in the form of an epic poem, it adopts the rhythms and cadences of Native American oratory while the text itself encompasses aboriginal understandings of the Holy Mystery, creation, the (indigenous) meanings of (Catholic) sacraments and liturgies, and a culturally based catechism. In addition, it is a social commentary on the long and sometimes conflicted relationship of The People and the Church.

Achiel Peelman, OMI has written extensively about the Native Catholic experience in Canada. His book, *Christ is a Native American*, addresses the conceptualization of a truly Amerindian Christian church in Canada, situating its ecclesiological origins in John Paul II's 1984 visit to the Shrine of the Canadian Martyrs in Midland, Ontario. At that time the Pope stated "...Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself Indian" (in Peelman 1995: 13), a statement that as Peelman notes, was taken by many Aboriginal people as encouragement to continue

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[7] It is this same IEC to which I was invited in 2000 by friends from Hobbema and Morley. Chief John Snow sought to respond to a new generation of Native activists through, among other projects, a continuance of the conference.

[8] What is particularly interesting to me, as an Aboriginal person and an anthropologist, is that the people of this part of the Plateau actually learned about Christianity and especially Catholicism through the efforts of Iroquoian traders and travellers who preceded the Jesuit missionaries into the area. The stories told by people who shared values and history with the Plateau peoples paved the way for an easier and greater acceptance of the priests when they did arrive.

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and maintain, or to begin if necessary, the project of Native Catholicism. Several of the elders I spoke to – particularly those at SHCFP and in leadership positions at the pilgrimage – while not quoting directly, pointed out to me that the Pope recognised and approved of the synthesis of traditional spiritual practices with Catholicism (personal communications 1998-2003).

Peelman's work provides insights into the history and activities that have underscored the emergence of an integrated theology and Christology as it developed as dialogue between The People and Catholic Christianity. "The cultural renaissance of Canada's First Nations, their fragile economic and social conditions, and the extraordinary survival of their traditional spirituality" (Peelman 1997:8) are critical, interwoven aspects of Aboriginal identity. This article on contextual theology continues with the assertion that Native American peoples generally describe themselves as spiritual people; Native Christians often exhibit a cosmic Christology with God's spirit expressed in all creation. And as Peelman notes, this kind of thinking is very much congruent with that of early Christians, such as Paul, Justin, Irenaeus, and Maximus Confessor (Ibid:11). In an earlier paper Peelman with co-author Jean-Guy Goulet undertook an examination of actual nature of the Catholic Church in Aboriginal community and of The People's responses to this clerically-based hierarchically structured notion of religion and spirituality. This was published in *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin No. 53* in 1983. The authors discuss theological concepts such as religious dualism and demonstrate the breadth and depth of political, economic, and social discrepancies among Canada's Aboriginal population, issues involving the politics of both Church and State. They close the

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document with a parable that illustrates the difficult road travelled as one attempts an honest dialogue about the realities of religious and cultural collision:

> In the old days, the aboriginal people of Canada paddled their birchbark canoes to Heaven. Then the experts of the "Heavenward Co. Ltd." came from the south with big boats, with fast and strong outboard motors... These nice ships now stay at anchor in the harbour: one ship has no captain, the other has no engineers, the training programme for the pilots has failed somehow. And the aboriginal people kept sitting and waiting... Until one day an old passenger said: "I think I could still make a birchbark canoe". And another: "We're still strong enough to paddle. It will be kind of slow, sometimes pretty stormy too, but if you like to come with us, you're welcome..." Are we ready to embark?[9] (Peelman and Goulet 1983: 35)

The fact is that, as these Oblate missionary priests[10] clearly indicate, only by the exercise of complete honesty regarding the often innocent and/or inadvertent damage done to The People by the Church and its proselytisers through the imposition of religious dominance and by a sincere desire to work together for social justice and new beginnings founded in "a new reading and a new practice of the Gospel" (Ibid: 34) will it be possible to nurture a spiritually and culturally dynamic Native Catholic reality. As we see, though their individual approaches differ widely,

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[9] This passage was adapted by Peelman and Goulet from R. Fumoleau OMI, "Missionary among the Dene" which appeared in Kerygma 15 (1981), no. 37, pp. 160-161.

[10] Dr. Goulet was an OMI prior to resuming secular life.

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all of these theologians are concerned to study, analyze, and discuss syncretism[11] in its context as the politicisation of religious process. In later chapters I consider these processes and projects: Chapter Seven: Trickster meets Christ, addresses the interactions of Catholic and Native theology and spirituality and Chapter Eight discusses in detail the question of syncretism and its potential strengths, weaknesses, and probable inevitability in our present world circumstance.

Having laid, in the foregoing, a brief foundational frame on which to set out data and analyses, I will turn our attention to the matter of time – historical time, mythical time, and time out of memory. We will look at the place known now as Lac Ste-Anne in the context of its palaeo-geology, geomorphology, and archaeology, then turn to its oral and written histories as a further means of contextualising this project.

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[11] Also variously referred to as inculturation, vernacularisation, creolisation, hybridisation, or localisation. Each has a slightly different meaning (or use) depending on who is using the term about whom.

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Chapter Three: Numinous Time

> What is life?
> It is the flash of a firefly in the night.
> It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime.
> It is the shadow which runs across the grass
> And loses itself in the sunset. (Crowfoot, Blackfoot Nation)[12]

The differences between indigenous and 'Western' ways of conceptualising and internalising time have been constructed and deconstructed, documented and discussed at length (see Deloria 1992; Peat 1994; Thomas 1994; Treat 2003): I do not propose to challenge or add to this body of received knowledge. Most scholars would agree with the general statement that both time and space are constructed through a discursive burden built from widely differing worldviews. The stories of the elders – both Aboriginal pilgrims and Oblate missionary priests; the written histories and geographies of the Lac Ste-Anne area; the archaeological record on the one hand and the oral histories on the other: all these reveal ways of seeing, ways of knowing that are so diverse one wonders that they coexist at all. It is not so much a conflict of content[13] as it is conflicting modes of thinking, speaking, seeing, understanding, and reflecting. Or, as Marie-Françoise Guédon of the University of Ottawa notes, "While most Canadians think of the world as an ocean of the profane, with churches, synagogues or temples providing occasional islands of holiness, most

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[12] Http://www:sunsinger.org/related/native.php. (pp 2-3). Printed 2003/01/22.

[13] However, in some instances it is precisely the conflict of the concrete that creates the problem: as Wilfred Peltier, an Odawa elder working at Carleton University says, "the European notions of land ownership 'have made it very difficult for our way of life to exist. They've taken away all our spirituality.'" Bob Harvey of the *Ottawa Citizen* in *The Edmonton Journal*, Saturday, September 7th, 1996: G4.

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of Canada's native peoples see the whole world as sacred." (in Harvey 1996:G4) In the gap between Turtle Island and multicultural Canada it is understandable if the only links between the two appear as painstakingly constructed, perhaps artificial congruencies or the products of individual charisma. The fragile bridge across cognitive space has, at times, the dimensions of the country's glacial chasms and mountain canyons.

Kayâses.... (a long time ago)

In prehistoric times the enormous glacial lake, Agassiz, covered the entire region encompassing Lac Ste-Anne and its neighbours, and the area's complex geological history produced a landscape displaying significant glacial wear.[14] Although much of the composition is sandstone, due to the tumbling actions of ice, water, and scree it is difficult to identify individual layers of the thoroughly mixed lithic materials. The rich conglomeration produced by these actions provided ample materials for stone tools of varying types. The lithics located and identified through the Archaeological Survey of Alberta include cores, flakes, bifacial tools, cobble spalls, projectile point bases, retouched flakes, scrapers, split pebbles, spall flakes, and unifaces.[15] The stone tools are manufactured from a variety of different materials: chert, quartzite, chalcedony, and even siltstone cobbles.

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[14] For a full discussion of the early geological formation of the area, see E. C. Pielou, 1991)

[15] I examined archaeological site records for the entire land area of the current pilgrimage site and Alexis First Nation reserve lands. The sites are identified by Borden numbers with the following site numbers showing evidence of pre-historic

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During the last Ice Age, Lac Ste-Anne was situated within the ice-free corridor that may have facilitated the peopling of North and South America.[16]

> The distinctive undulating topography of the area has resulted from erosion and deposits of sand and gravel from melting [retreating] glaciers. Where glacial lakes have lapped around moraine deposits, the bounder clay swells have remained as upstanding islands within the area of sand and silt, giving rise to gently rolling topography. (Geological Survey of Alberta in Archives Committee, LSA 1959:5)

These higher areas are heavy clay soils; lower areas – often wetlands, muskeg, ponds or lakes – hold the lighter, more fertile soils. This geomorphologic fact played a key role in the evolutionary development of the area surrounding Lac Ste-Anne, determining the kinds and abundance of plant and animal life and therefore, eventually, the suitability of the land for humans. Archaeological evidence from the shores and heights immediately surrounding the lakebed indicates archaic aboriginal campsites as well as cooking hearths and tool production or maintenance areas. Some fossil bone fragments have been found in sandstone outcroppings in the

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use: FkPo-2, FkPo-3, FkPo-14, FkPo-12, FkPo-13, FkPo-9, FkPo-8, FkPo-7, FkPo-6, FkPo-5, FkPp-1, FkPp-2, FkPp-3, FkPp-4, FkPp-5, and FkPp-6.

[16] The 'land bridge' theory postulates migration from Northern Asia across the Bering Straits to North America's arctic coast. Other, equally plausible theories of population migration, include the coastal theories propounded in the works of, among others, Knut R. Fladmark of Simon Fraser University, BC, and Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan of the University of Alberta.

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general area, but these are very small remnants and difficult to identify accurately, though it is generally believed that at least some are dinosaurian.[17]

Coal seams lying just below ground surface and gravel pits throughout the area are worked even today; in the early part of the 20th century sandstone was quarried for building construction in Edmonton. The 1927 *Report of the Geological Survey of Alberta* even mentions the occurrence of placer gold in the McLeod, Saskatchewan, and Pembina rivers (Ibid:6), though later surveys do not. There is no dispute, however, that the land was rich in wildlife and wild fruits and that the lake was an excellent whitefish fishery.

Oral histories still shared today tell us that Native peoples have met at Man'tou Sâkahikan since time out of memory. The elders tell us that the tribes gathered in the sacred time and at this sacred place to make offerings to Creator, asking for personal and community healing, for restoration of hunting lands, for reconciliation between families, friends and, perhaps, enemies. They built the sun-dance lodge and followed the ancient traditions of purification, prayer, sacrifice, and celebration. It was an opportunity to rest in the warmth of summer, to visit with friends, enjoy respite from tribal conflicts, gather the abundant berries and healing plants, and catch fish in the clear lake waters.

[17] Most of the groups of dinosaurs evolved during the Jurassic period from 190 to 136 million years ago; the last dinosaurs disappeared at the end of the Cretaceous period 65 million years ago. The discovery of the bone fragments simply indicates that the area has a long geological history. It is also one of the most northerly discoveries to date, although palæontological records are revised continuously with new discoveries.

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Records from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) identify the area's close connection with the buffalo hunts and the fur trade. The Woods Cree had moved into the area over a long period of time, pre-dating, travelling with, and following the trade routes of the 'Company'. The moose was originally their staple food and, like the buffalo for the people of the plains[18], provided meat, hides, gut for bowstrings and snowshoes, and back sinews for thread. In addition, moose hair was used for decorative work on clothes, moccasins, and household articles. The Cree were hunters and fishers, trappers, and foragers of edible plants, roots, and wild vegetables and fruits. Vegetable foods were relatively scarce, but included varieties of wild berries, nuts, wild rice, and tubers such as prairie turnips. People travelled to the areas where berries flourished (as they still do today), picking large quantities for drying and making into pemmican. Prior to the fur trade, they made their own tools of stone and bone; later steel and iron implements were a prized commodity.

Kikanôhk... (at the holy place)

In the interstitial time between the hard science of geological records and the popular histories of the 'conquest of the west' with the arrival of the fur trade exists a period of unknowing. Our knowledge is based, for the most part, on our particular cultural myth – the facts about Lac Ste-Anne and its history in the time between times is as ephemeral as the grey mist above the water of the lake. Oral histories among the Aboriginal populations offer multi-layered tales of the 'White Lady', of

[18] This would have included the Cree people as they settled to the west and south away from the good moose 'pastures' of their original homelands.

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voices singing in the mist, indelible footprints on the rocks, and powerful visions of past, future, and alternate times. Over many generations the origins of Man'tou Sâkahikan as a sacred gathering site have assumed a kind of mythic status. One aspect of the legend is the story of the Alexis and Paul Bands. The essence of the story remains consistent throughout its variations; this version was told by Francis Alexis:

> Our great, great grandfather was a young man. He had a dream about a lake. It had life in abundance. There were a lot of berries and a lot of animals. But there was something about this lake that bothered him about this dream, and he went to the old people and the old people said you have to go out and search for the dream and find it.
>
> At that time I guess, our people were scared. They did not want to be kept like the old black people who were made slaves. There were not too many of our people left and there were a lot of little kids around that were orphans. Their parents were either killed or they died in some massacre. After many years of fighting there were not too many men.
>
> I guess it was at this time, our grandfather had a dream and the old people told him to take the orphans. So he gathered a whole bunch of orphans together and he searched for the lake. He went to a lake north of here, went around it, but it wasn't the lake he saw in his dream. So he went looking south. I guess they looked for three years.

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They camped at Lake Isle, which wasn't it. While they were camped there, he went looking and he came upon Wabamun. He went around it; it wasn't the lake that he dreamt about.

So on his way back, he came here and camped. Early in the morning, they say just before sunrise, a morning star came up and my grandfather heard singing. He got up and listened and said this is one of our songs. Our people used to sing that song a long time ago. He listened, and as soon as he got his things ready, he started heading that way. As he got closer, the song kept getting louder and louder. Pretty soon he came by the shore of this lake. The singing was coming from the lake. He got some logs together and he went to the rock island where the singing was coming from. There was singing but when he looked around, there was nobody. There was just a bunch of rocks.

Our grandfather looked around and something clicked. "I seen this place before," he said. "This is the lake I saw in my dream. This is where our people will have life." He named it "Wakamne" meaning a holy lake. I guess he pulled out his pipe, they said, and he prayed. After he prayed, he came back and put his raft on the shore and he looked towards the rock. The singing was starting to go faint and he saw a lady walking on the water. She had a hide coat; it was not tan, but it was white. It had shells on and porcupine stuff decorations on it and she had a bundle. It was a lady walking on the water. The woman spirit that represents Mother Earth like a mother

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> provides for us everything we need. Not only for us but also the animals and the birds, all the living things. Our people still sing songs about it at sun dance.
>
> The singing disappeared after that. While he was walking around, he saw a whole bunch of berries. He looked at the ground and he saw that the land can produce a lot of strawberries. Also, there was an abundance of animals – ducks, beavers, and fish. Everything they needed to depend on was there. He went back and got his people. (F. Alexis in Simon 1995: 8-9)

This story is told most often by the Nakoda (Stoney)[19] people who live on the Alexis reserve across the lake and adjoining the present pilgrimage grounds[20], though local Crees are familiar with and apparently accept this history. The description of the woman parallels that in an experience a Lakota friend[21] shared with me: an experience from his youth. He and some friends were camping at the lakeshore: some of their families were attending the Christian pilgrimage and some others had come for the annual summer gathering at the lake. Very early, as the morning star was rising, the young men emerged from their sweat lodge and went for a swim in the lake. My friend was just floating in the water when he saw "a woman in white carrying something and walking on the water not far [away]" from them. His friends

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[19] The Nakoda are a Siouian-speaking people; cousins to the Dakota and Lakota peoples.
[20] Rod Alexis of Alexis First Nation confirmed this story again for me, during pilgrimage planning meetings in April, 2001 (Personal communication).
[21] CP. (Personal communication, February 1998).
pilgrimage planning

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also saw the woman; all were uneasy and swam to shore. When they reached land and looked back over the lake, the woman had almost disappeared, "kind of fading" said my friend. He does not remember any voices or singing from the lake or the island. Another friend[22] assures me that she has heard the rocks sing, not at Lac Ste-Anne, but at a spirit lake near her home place in the north. A handful of the eldest elders attending the pilgrimage have told me we no longer hear the singing because the sacred places are being profaned by human ignorance and misuse.[23] But young children sometimes say they hear beautiful voices beyond the rocks and around the lake. Perhaps like so many other matters of the spirit it is an innocent acceptance of the logically impossible that opens eyes, ears, and heart to the numinous.

Many other pilgrim stories reinforce the special nature of the lake and its surroundings. I was told by a group of Cree young people from Nelson House, Manitoba, that they had seen the footprints of Jesus on the rocky island out in the lake. The footprints "never dried,"[24] a fact that they confirmed (and reported) repeatedly during numerous visits to the rocks over the days of the pilgrimage. One of the younger members of this group told me the footprints were "from Jesus when he was a baby", and she thought he came to visit his *kohkom*[25]. The paradox of 'everlasting' wet prints that must simultaneously be over 2,000 years old and yet made within the last five minutes posed no logical problem to the children. They

[22] Nora M (personal communication, March 1997).
[23] Chief John Snow of the Morley Nakoda Reserve told me this too, in relation not only to Lac Ste-Anne but to other sacred sites throughout Turtle Island. (Personal communication, July 2000.)
[24] CH et al (personal communication, July 1998).
[25] BM (personal communication, July 1998). Kohkom means 'grandmother' in Cree (Y dialect).

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accepted the prints as existing within eternal time, just as they can accept without question the Trickster stories their own *kohkoms* tell, or the ritual and liturgy of the mass as it creates sacred time through a combination of symbol and belief.

The story told by the Nakoda people elaborates the holy nature of the lake and at the same time rationalizes their presence at Man'tou Sâkahikan in what was, and is, a predominantly Cree area. The story about the woman dressed in white, also of Siouian origin, is an affirmation of a synthesis between Mother Earth, White Buffalo Calf Woman, and various important Christian female figures.[26] The Cree children's stories suggest that while the events recounted in the first two are inexplicable, they are not isolated either in their occurrence or in their cultural acceptance.

Through the medium of such stories, the lake is established as a landscape that exists in sacred time: a multi-dimensional, spiralling chronology where inexplicable things are rendered not only commonplace but expected. In cultural practice, this crafting of a specific aura is typical of the mythopoetics surrounding pilgrimage sites. The most 'powerful' sites place the greatest emphasis on the spiritual powers of specific places and on the efficacy of these sites in conferring spiritual and (it is often believed) material and political powers on the pilgrim

[26] Depending on the teller and the tradition, White Buffalo Calf Woman has been compared to the Virgin Mary (who may also figure as Mother Earth), Ste-Anne (as in this instance), and St. Veronica. At Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton, for example, it is White Buffalo Calf Woman who is depicted wiping Christ's face with a skin, not St. Veronica offering her veil.

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travellers to these shrines.[27] While I discuss this in detail (below in the chapter, *Sacred Landscape*,) any discourse on time in a Native context necessarily includes the relationship of time and space simply because these concepts are not believed to be isolated one from the other. Thus it is important to understand that the renaming of the lake by missionaries was also an attempt to amend and enculturate its previous history as a traditional spiritual gathering place. Early explorers often referred to the lake as God's Lake or Devil's Lake, or even as Manitou (Spirit) Lake.

David Thompson's 1801 map[28] shows the location of 'Lake Manitou', retaining part of the name given it by the Cree people, Man'tou Sâkahikan.

> To the Indians there was something mysterious about this lake. Perhaps it was because it could change suddenly from a pleasant sheet of peaceful water to a stormy sea with angry crested waves. Perhaps it was because of the mist that would often rise and float in soft, grey folds over the surface of the water and then be gone. (Archives Committee LSA 1959:11)

In any event it appears that the lake was regarded as a place of transition and transformation from the beginnings of human habitation in the area. After the amalgamation of the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1821 and the accompanying downsizing of personnel, more Métis took up trapping for a livelihood and began to live in small settlements near good fisheries such as

[27] Sax (1991) and Turner (1975), among others, have clearly identified and discussed this phenomenon.

[28] The 1800 and 1801 explorations were under the direction of first Duncan McGillivray and then James Hughes and the map was drawn by Thompson then, according to Hopwood's note (1971:215).

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Man'tou Sâkahikan, so that by 1840 there was a settlement of several families on the west end of the lake. (Ibid: 12)

Les bons pères...

Missionary priests were intrepid explorers and fervent in their desire to bring Catholic Christianity to the peoples of the west. The first priests into the area delivered encouraging reports to Bishop Provencher at St-Boniface, resulting in the journeys of Fr. Thibault to the west, including Fort Edmonton, and what would become the Lac Ste-Anne mission and the St. Albert mission. The first mission, it was decided, should be at Fort Pitt[29] (Frog Lake) and in 1843 Fr. Thibault travelled west with the HBC factor, who was returning to Fort Edmonton. At Fort Pitt, Fr. Thibault was encouraged and pleased to see a large encampment of "about a hundred lodges of Crees and Assiniboines, who came from different directions to trade" (Archives Committee LSA: 13). His pleasure was short-lived. A large, well-armed Blackfoot war party attacked the encampment, stealing the horses and killing and scalping a number of Crees and Assiniboines. The priest was an intrepid explorer who had already faced many hardships and decided he would, despite the attacks, spend the winter rather than returning to St-Boniface. Leaving directions for the construction of a small house with his young assistant (and handyman), he left for Fort Edmonton and then on to Man'tou Sâkahikan where the Métis settlers urged him to stay with them. Arguing that their settlement was some distance from

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[29] Fr. Thibault felt that Fort Pitt was the central point of his various journeys in the west.

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Blackfoot raiding parties and that there was lots of wood for building and for fires as well as excellent and abundant whitefish, and demonstrating the religious faithfulness of their community, they persuaded Fr. Thibault to build a mission there.[30] He disapproved of the name, Devil's Lake, then in use by both the Hudson's Bay factors and the Métis (the Cree continued to call the lake Man'tou Sâkahikan) and renamed it Lac Ste-Anne for his patroness Ste-Anne. As a result of Fr. Thibault's untiring travels and devoted work with the Métis people in Alberta and Saskatchewan, he was dubbed 'the Apostle of the Saskatchewan Valley' (Ibid: 15).

Fr. Albert Lacombe, probably the most famous of the missionary priests in the Edmonton/St. Albert/Lac Ste-Anne area, arrived, reluctantly, in 1852. He had wanted to wait until he could enter the Oblates of Mary Immaculate but, in obedience to his bishop, travelled to the mission at Ste-Anne to take up his duties there prior to his admittance to the order. A year later, Bishop Provencher sent Fr. Remas, OMI, to instruct Fr. Lacombe and be his novice master. Fr. Lacombe was part Saulteaux and initially used a Cree interpreter. However, he quickly became frustrated and decided he would learn Cree[31] so he could communicate directly with his flock. The settlement was highly regarded as the source for many of the fine furs traded out of Fort Edmonton and as a particularly good example the kind of self-sufficiency in agriculture and fishing that the government advocated for Aboriginal

[30]Initially, Fr. Thibault had planned to establish the first mission headquarters at Frog Lake River (very near to the site of the 1885 massacre), but after over wintering there in 1842-43, he reconsidered.

[31] An unusual decision at that time, but it is now more or less standard practice for Oblate missionaries to learn the language(s) of the people they minister to. Fr. Lacombe was a leader in many ways.

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people. In addition, the industry of the two Métis villages at Lac Ste-Anne was sufficient to provide significant quantities of food for the exploration and trading parties that passed through the area. Fr. Lacombe's dog team was much envied, and visitors praised the beauty, harmony, and order of the mission, as well as the fine table set by the priests' staff and the mission's generosity in provisioning visitors for their journeys.

Despite the apparently bucolic nature of the settlement in 1861, Fr. Lacombe decided to move the mission to a high point of land overlooking the Sturgeon River, which Bishop Taché (a friend of Fr. Lacombe's as well as his superior) decided to name St. Albert in honour of Fr. Lacombe's patron saint. Some of Lac Ste-Anne's Métis moved with Fr. Lacombe to establish farms of their own at the new mission. At the same time, Ste-Anne's population was increased by the addition of Iroquois Métis families who moved into the area from Jasper and Tête Jaune Cache. These families were descendants of the Iroquois guides and trappers who led the North West Company's expeditions west. Many still live in this area around Lac Ste-Anne and Calahoo, although they now speak Cree and English rather than Iroquois and French (Anderson-McLean field notes 1997). The Iroquoian Métis were devout Catholics and to this day remain staunch supporters of both the Lac Ste-Anne mission and pilgrimage.

Le pèlerinage au lac...

In 1887 St. Albert's parish priest Fr. Jean-Marie Lestanc, having returned to his mission from leave taken in his native France, persuaded Bishop Grandin that the

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church at Lac Ste-Anne, the "cradle of the Catholic Church in the Canadian North-West" (Western Catholic Reporter June 28th, 1961) should be rebuilt.[32] On June 6th, 1889 forty pilgrims left St. Albert (about 60 km away), travelling by horseback, in buggies, wagons, and on foot, "singing and praying as they journeyed to the shrine". (Ibid) They were joined by approximately (depending on the source) thirty to one hundred others. In the same 1961 article, the anonymous pilgrimage director wrote, "The 'Moccasin Telegraph' spread word of the wonder! For the second pilgrimage in the following year, four hundred Métis and Indians flocked to the feet of the powerful Mother of Mary". (Ibid) The crowd continued to grow year after year, and by 1896 (Drouin 1973:54) the pilgrimage had assumed much the same five-day pattern it follows today.[33]

On July 25th and 26th of 1889, over four hundred pilgrims journeyed to the lake to pray to Ste-Anne[34]. Pilgrim numbers increased annually, and in five years (Drouin 1973:54) the pilgrimage had become a five-day event, with people staying at the site for the entire period. From its earliest days many of the Oblate missionaries were aware of the pilgrimage's dual nature. The priests realised and accepted that in addition to its religious significance the pilgrimage fulfilled a necessary social role,

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[32] While praying at the shrine of Ste-Anne d'Auray in Brittany, Fr. Lestanc heard the voice of Ste-Anne, "Why do you want to abandon my Western Canada sanctuary; what have you done in your missionary field?" (Drouin 1973: 52). Prompted by this inspiration, Fr. Lestanc promised both to build a shrine to Ste-Anne, and to renew dedication to her devotions.

[33] The format has changed periodically though, according to accounts in various newspaper articles over the years. The pilgrimage seems to have reverted to a three day period for some time, later becoming four days, and presently Saturday afternoon through to the following Thursday morning.

[34] July 26th is the Feast of Ste-Anne.

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providing focus and locus for an annual gathering. This ancient tradition of gathering at a central, sacred place during an appointed time in many instances had been lost with the disappearance of the buffalo herds[35] from the area and (the priests believed) regained with the advent of the pilgrimage. The hunt gatherings had previously been accompanied by "festive activities and ... religious dedication" (Drouin, 1973:53) which the pilgrimage festivities and masses replaced. There is no doubt that one of the 'replaced' activities would have been the sundance.[36] The beginnings of the Christian pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne coincided with the Ghost Dances[37] (the major dances were 1870 and 1890), a period of millenarian fervour and revival of more traditional values. It has also been suggested that economic pressures due to the food shortage caused by the destruction of the previously 'endless' numbers of buffalo provided a strong impetus for the Ghost Dances. Shared physical and philosophical reasons behind the dances may have contributed to the increased spiritual devotions directed towards the lake during the late 1800s.

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[35] According to historical records, including Drouin and Milloy (1988), the last buffalo hunt occurred in this area by 1880.

[36] In 1996 a Nakoda elder from the Alexis Reserve told me that the last sun-dance was held in the Lac Ste-Anne/Alexis Reserve area around 1993 or 1994. While I have no documentation to support this statement (sundances, unlike Powwows, are not advertised events) I do have reason to believe the elder.

[37] The history of the Ghost Dances, the Ghost Dance religion itself, and their impact on Native America has been addressed in a number of readily available sources. *Wovoka*, the 1890 prophet, called the dance the "Friendship Dance of the Indian race" (Hittman 1990:63) and gave the "Great Revelation" (Ibid:64) to the people that, providing they adhered strictly to the teachings he gave in his revelation, their reward was eternal youth in heaven. The Ghost Dance Religion/Great Revelation is a syncretism of Native beliefs and Christianity: a distinctly Indian form of Christian belief. Probably the 1890 dance would have had more impact on the people of Canada's northern plains.

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Nôhtêhkatewin... (the terrible hunger)

The tales of starvation and hardship around the turn of the century are well-documented in literature and film. The story of the Cree chief, Big Bear, and his people is from this same period and is now well-known and accepted as historical fact. LG, an elder from Kelly Lake, BC[38] told me the story of 'St. Paul':

> This young Cree fella, they called him 'St. Paul', like a nickname, well he starved to death. [This was probably in the 1880s, because it was LG's grandmother who told him the story. She had been a young girl when it happened; LG was probably in his mid 70s when he told me.] They buried Paul over there [gestures toward the cemetery at the mission church]. About three days later, a hand comes out from the dirt of the grave and on the palm there's writing, 'Paul is starving'. The priests all gathered around the grave and they prayed and prayed. After they prayed for hours all through the night, by morning the hand was getting thinner [transparent], and it kind of went away, like disappeared, you know.

LG did not comment on what this might mean except to say that the lake is a "real holy place" and that "things happen here, people don't understand it all".

Though there is a connection to other accounts asserting the special, almost mystical, character of the lake, LG's story is an anomaly. By 1880 the buffalo herds had disappeared from the Cree hunting territories; hunger was a constant among the people. The story of 'St. Paul' may be a more personal account of one such case, or

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[38] LG (personal communication, July 1998).

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it may refer to spiritual hunger (a theme frequently articulated by Cree Catholics). Unfortunately, the holder of this story does not know more than the little he told me; the reasons behind a young man's nickname and the cause of his death are unknown though the mystery of the strange events following his burial remains as part of the Lac Ste-Anne legend.

Les pèlerins...

The stories of the pilgrimage encompass tales of hardships: the starvation stories, the difficulty in travelling to the lake, and harsh conditions met by the pilgrims. The stories also tell of great devotion and piety, of joy in the journey, and camaraderie among the pilgrims. From the period when a trip from Edmonton to Lac Ste-Anne was two full days by fast dog team or a good saddle horse to the days of the special trains, travellers to the lake have talked about their journeys almost as often as they have recounted their experiences during the pilgrimage.

An article in the Edmonton Journal on Wednesday, July 26th, 1905 entitled "Indians Making Ste. Anne Trek" notes that

> ...Edmonton district Indians now make their annual pilgrimage to the Lac Ste-Anne shrine by train, bus, and automobile. Several hundred Indians passed through Edmonton Tuesday, on their way from reserves at Wabamun, Stony Plain, Hobbema and Winterburn to celebrate the feast of St. Anne.

And Oblate history reports:

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> Grâce au zèle et au dévouement du bon Père Lebré, o.m.i., l'âge d'or des pèlerinages commença en 1924. 'Plus de deux milles Indiens et Métis, quelques-uns venant de près de trois cents milles en voitures, campent en route, puis sur le terrain du pèlerinage. On y voit le soir plus de trois cents feux autour desquels la famille boit de thé et mange le saucisson. Vu féerique qui se continue de nos jours, lorsque les pèlerins viennent surtout en autos, en camions et en autobus.' (Tetreault 1960:25)

Elders (during the public sharing referred to as 'A Time to Think' that is broadcast between masses, and over tea at campfires) have told stories about how they used to come by train to the pilgrimage, walking about a mile from the stop to the lake with their bedding, food, and clothing. Many have expressed regret that this is no longer possible, because the nature and duration of the physical journey provided a community time to prepare mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for the pilgrimage. The first train to Lac Ste-Anne was in 1918, when Fr. P. Beaudry managed to have a special CNR train assigned. "'There were about fifteen hundred pilgrims on that occasion', he commented. Confessions were heard in Cree, Chipewyan, Blackfoot, French, English, Polish, and German, far into the night." (Western Catholic Reporter, July 5th, 1961 p.4) The trains were further organised by Fr. Pierre LeBré in 1924, to depart St. Paul, Mundare, and Legal. Special cars were assigned at Morinville, St. Albert, and Edmonton where all the cars joined together to become a single pilgrimage train. (Ibid)

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Nitawe ayamihâwin... (journey to the holy prayers place)

An excerpt from the memoir of a former Canadian Northern Railway employee, Jim Shannon, (in *Spirit and Trails of Lac Ste-Anne* 1982: 228) describes the Lac Ste-Anne line.

> [It] started out of Edmonton west for one and one half mile to Edmonton Junction, then turning north to St. Albert on the Morinville branch line again swinging west at the Trelle junction at St. Albert to Villeneuve – Callahoo – Bilby – Onoway and Peace River Junction which was the first townsite of Onoway, which was about one mile west of the present town and just west of the No. 43 highway, the wye was on Mr. Joe Lehman's farm and from there it went to Alberta Beach – Lac Ste-Anne – Darwell – Lake Isle – water tank – Magnolia and Entwhistle – which was called Darsen Junction; from there the line went on to Vancouver B.C.

This circuitous route allowed people to take the train from a relatively convenient stop, but that was only a small part of the train's popularity. The people travelled with their parish priests who led prayers and singing while on the train, and then marched with their parish communities while they carried banners and flags indicative of devotions to the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin, and Ste-Anne. The journeys were thus sacralised in time, focussed on the spiritual movement of the pilgrims even as their physical bodies moved toward their goal. The essence of these travels is, in some small way, approximated today by the journeys of those who come from significant distances over several days, travelling by chartered buses, in communities with their mission priest, and camping along the way.

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Emily Hunter[39], now retired from the University of Alberta's School of Native Studies, told me about how her father and mother had travelled annually to the pilgrimage. Her father had come by train as a boy at residential school in St. Paul, Alberta; Mrs. Hunter was unsure as to how they got to the train, but remembered her father saying that it had been 'like a picnic' for the boys. Later, after her parents married and had children, the whole family came to the pilgrimage; she did not recall whether it was usually by train, or if they came by horse and buggy and camped on the way.

The Edmonton Journal (July 1905) reported that "[m]ore than 4,000 Indians from Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan are expected to gather at the shrine Wednesday. On Thursday, other residents in the district, including women from St. Joachim[40] parish, will celebrate the feast." This separation of events according to 'racial' origin was also recorded by the Père Directeur of Lac Ste-Anne, though he notes that 'les Blancs' attended on the Sunday prior to the Native pilgrimage:

> Chaque été, il y a deux pèlerinages officiels au Lac Ste-Anne: celui des Indiens a lieu le mercredi le plus près de la fête de la grande Thaumaturge, celui des Blancs a lieu le dimanche précèdent. Avec la vie moderne, les Blancs ont, hélas, diminue en nombre… les Indiens

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[39] I was assisting Mrs. Hunter in an oral history project she had begun with elders in the Saddle Lake community. While we worked, she told me stories about her mother and father and stories they had told her about their parents. (Personal communications, May-June, 1997)

[40] L'église St-Joachim is now the hub of the Francophone parish in Edmonton, situated in the Oliver district near Grandin School. St-Joachim was Ste-Anne's husband, the Virgin Mary's father, and so grandfather (mosôm) of Jesus.

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> sont toujours nombreux, entre 4 et 5,000. Ils y viennent jusque du Montana au sud, de l'Ile-a-la-Crosse au nord.
>
> Si les autobus et les camions ont remplace beaucoup de chevaux, le village de tentes se dresse encore comme par enchantement, la vielle du pèlerinage. (Archives Provinciales O.M.I. Accession No. 71.220/4214: Septembre 1960:26)

This apartheid pilgrimage structure continued with Natives and Whites attending on different days, in accordance with the general custom of social segregation in Alberta, until 1971 – though by 1936 when the special pilgrimage trains were discontinued, the pilgrimage had become an overwhelmingly Native event.

Inculturation and evolution...

By 1982, eleven years after the pilgrimage was desegregated, some traditional Native spiritual rituals were being incorporated in the services.[41] This was not necessarily taken as a positive move on the part of the Church. While most Aboriginal pilgrims and virtually all non-Natives supported the move to include these rituals, many pilgrims were unhappy with the changes (Turcotte 1986:7), and today there are still those that are. One of the strongest criticisms seems to have been the lack of communication and explanation between the priests and the local population. This was, of course, the main issue with most of the changes that were initiated as a result of the Vatican II Council. There was generally an abysmal lack of communication about the changing role of the laity in the Catholic Church, the

[41] Almost twenty years after the Second Vatican Council that initiated the changes.

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switch to vernacular language, the reasons behind amended liturgies, even the change in the placement of the altar, and the new focus on a resurrected rather than a crucified Christ. The changes were arbitrary in the view of many Catholics, and any potential for lay understanding was left to the local priest (who, no doubt, was often as confused as his parishioners).

Widening use of Native ritual and symbolism has increased the popular and media interest in the pilgrimage over the past decade: this event is good press. Stories, photographs, and video coverage by CBC, CTV, and ITV television networks has tended to focus on the 'traditional' (by which they mean 'Indian') aspects of the event, often downplaying or even disregarding the more than 150 year old tradition of Roman Catholicism in Native communities, and the implications this history holds for the future of the pilgrimage and indeed for the emergence of a Native Catholic Church with its own rites within Catholic liturgy.[42]

In 1999 the Archdiocese of Edmonton officially formalised a Native Pastoral Regional Council (NPRC), part of whose function is input into the performed rituals and symbolic understandings central to the pilgrimage. In July of 2000 the planning and administration of the pilgrimage was handed over to the First Nations peoples through a new (interim) Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Planning Committee (LSAPC), initially appointed by the Oblates. The handover period was expected to take approximately two years with the Oblates continuing to work in partnership with the people. The Oblates, who will always be the directors of the pilgrimage and ensure its Catholicity, will manage all of the liturgical and sacramental rites and activities.

[42] This issue is discussed in Chapter Eight: Spirit's Fires.

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Increasingly, secular activities will become the responsibility of the pilgrims themselves.

The permanent organising board comprised of elected members and a senate of elders will manage these pilgrimage activities as well as investigating the possibilities for other uses of the pilgrimage grounds throughout the year. Proposals have already been brought forward suggesting that the grounds be used for healing ceremonies as well as the provision of facilities and programmes for Native youth. The first meetings to begin the long process of change took place in January 2001 at Enoch Reserve outside of Edmonton. At that time the invitees agreed upon a blueprint for future action. This interim committee identified a number of focus areas:

- Mission/Vision/Principles
- Communication
- Youth
- Elders
- Programming
- Site Improvements
- Securing the Future

Each of these areas entails a number of related ideas that were the product of intense sharing. Ideas relating to the formation and facilitation of the pilgrimage partnership, programming, the physical venue, and potential roles within the partnership are discussed in Chapter Five.

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In April 2001, a follow-up meeting was held at the Grey Nuns' Conference Centre in Edmonton to continue this work. I was privileged to be invited to participate in this two-day 'think tank'. It was an intense experience: emotionally charged, fascinating, and sometimes quite uncomfortable, with representatives from the pilgrimage communities and a number of Oblate priests present. The disparities between attendees in education, management skills, economics, and religious focus were almost immediately obvious, as were tribal rivalries and the tension between Métis interests and those of Treaty Indians. At times it seemed that the old Blackfoot – Cree wars were going to be overshadowed by new battles between the traditionally Roman Catholic north and the Native Catholic south. However, thanks to the use of Talking Circles, the ideal of consensual agreement, and the skills of and respect for the moderators, Fr. Camille Piché and Charles Snow, agreement was achieved on many contentious issues. The pilgrimage will continue as Ste-Anne's cradle for her children, and the people will continue to meet at 'Grandma's' house[43] as they have done for over a century. (Chapter Ten elaborates the activities and results of this meeting, and future plans for further development of concepts and continuing work to resolve issues arising from the first two meetings.)

[43] The decision to declare the shrine and grounds a National Historic/Heritage Site has now been made. My understanding is that negotiations are still ongoing to have the area named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in recognition of its longstanding connection with indigenous spiritual practices.

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Chapter Four: Sacred Landscape

> The earth is a living thing.
> The mountains speak.
> The trees sing.
> Lakes can think.
> Pebbles have a soul.
> Rocks have power. (Lame Deer, Lakota Nation)[44]

One western image of culture that I have found particularly helpful in field research, in teaching, and in daily life is that articulated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

> It is significant that 'culture' is sometimes described as a *map*; it is the analogy which occurs to an outsider who has to find his way around a foreign landscape and who compensates for his lack of practical mastery, the prerogative of the native, by the use of a model of all possible routes. The gulf between this potential, abstract space, devoid of landmarks or any privileged centre – like genealogies, in which the ego is as unreal as the starting-point of any Cartesian space – and the practical space of journeys actually made, or rather of journeys actually being made, can be seen from the difficulty we have in recognising familiar routes on a map or town-plan until we are able to bring together the axes of the field of potentialities and the 'system of axes linked unalterably to our bodies, and carried about with us wherever we go', as Poincaré puts it, which structures

[44] Http://www.sunsinger.org/related/native/php. (p 1). Printed 2003/01/22.

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practical space into right and left, up and down, in front and behind.

(Bourdieu 1997:2)

For me the concept of culture as a space ripe with potentialities in which landmarks and centre are 'unknown' in any intellectual consciousness and yet embodied in the sojourner has both elegance and purity. The notion of embodied potentialities that cannot be defined as specifically place or space, centre or margin, but rather invoke all of these constructs, leads me directly to an exploration of sacred landscapes – not only in the narrowed sense of pilgrimage to a holy lake or specific plot of land, but in the richer, more deeply textured vision of Native cultural perspectives and teachings about the sacred, interrelated harmonies of the visible and invisible realms.

Dreaming the Earth

Across space and time, people have been and continue to be drawn to particular places, many of which have no obvious outstanding qualities rendering them beautiful, exciting, compelling, or even worthy of special notice. But there is *something* that draws humans to such places and that something is most often described in terms of abstract energy, power, healing, and unusual occurrences – of sacredness. The difficulty inherent in researching such phenomena is, of course, that 'sacredness' cannot be construed objectively and as a subjective concept exists within theological, philosophical, and religious frameworks deriving their own credibility and authenticity from the belief structures of the individual. Such cognitive structures imbue places, times, objects, or persons with the numinous, the notion that we call 'sacredness'.

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Inability to 'prove' veracity, and the admittedly circuitous route toward definitions and hypotheses surrounding the sacred, positions the concept far beyond the acceptable boundaries of any standardised western scientific procedure, however this subjective reasoning in concert with cultural acceptance and ritual practice produces a logic of experience that guides, balances, comforts, organises, and completes the lives of many of the world's peoples. Acceptance of the improvable (faith or belief) is not confined to 'traditional' or rural or indigenous cultures, but exists within and may be essential to both world and local religions. As Douglas Davies says in his discussion of Christian sacred places,

> ...there is always the underlying belief that sacred places are places of power. Standing out from other spots, they focus the piety and faith, power and merit, of Christian saints of the past, and trigger a faithful response in living Christians. In this way sacred places afford a concrete expression of the idea of the Communion of Saints, the view that all believers of all ages and places, and whether dead or alive, share together in the life of God. (Davies 1994:47)

So we return – in the company of all those who, throughout time, have followed a similar journey – to the muddy shores of an ordinary Alberta lake where the Thunder Beings roar in the mountains to the west and the summer sun rises red in the east. In the previous chapter I discussed the lake and pilgrimage as being a time beyond space where history folds and stretches with through the medium of a different cultural context. In this chapter I will examine how a mundane 'space' has

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become a place out of time, how a 'place' might be differentiated from 'space', and will explore further the human legacy of a sacred world.

What constitutes a sacred landscape? To paraphrase Douglas Davies, it is not only revelation or hierophany (a manifestation of the holy), association with a miracle or martyr, or an apparition of some holy figure that renders a place 'sacred'. The numinous qualities of natural phenomena (for example, mountains and rivers) are part of human history and exist as markers on the map of culture and spirituality (Davies 1994:4). Do certain geographic areas or geomorphologic features embody sanctity, spirituality, a sense of otherness, or is it the belief in the embodiment that is the key criterion? When pilgrims journey to a shrine, what is it that draws them to that place? When New Age theologians talk about 'power vectors' and 'harmonic convergences', are they articulating indigenous sacred beliefs even while (from an Aboriginal perspective) they appropriate, distort and rename these beliefs? Can the concept of sacred power extend to encompass buildings, statues, and other material human constructions? If any one of these ideas or any combination of them is 'true', do all humans – at least on some level – share this belief in an earthly sacrality? These are the questions that, if answered – or indeed if answerable – may bring us closer to an understanding of indigenous concepts of the sacred and about the nature of sacred place. The project of entering, without cultural bias or preconceptions, into another's conception of the holy can be one of great complexity and convolution, entailing a suspension of personal beliefs and biases combined with the acceptance that indigenous 'religions' and indigenous 'science' are as viable, real, and logical as any other cognitive framework. Each of us will encounter a greater or lesser degree

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of difficulty in suspending our dearly held perceptions, but for anyone with a Hellenistic philosophical background (i.e. a 'westernised' view of the world) the greatest difficulties centre on the notions of 'truth', 'reality', 'objectivity', and 'logic'. The challenge, in order to accommodate our deeply embedded acculturation to and obsession with what we regard as scientific evidence, seems to lie in overcoming a culturally essentialised need to demonstrate scientific proof for any assertion about the personality or consciousness or power or 'special-ness' of specific geomorphic features, plots of land or bodies of water. There is a considerable body of history documenting places that are considered sacred, documentation that spans millennia and crosses every spatial boundary we might draw upon the earth. (See, for example: Basso 1996; Bopp et al 1984; DeMallie 1984; Grobsmith 1981; B. Harvey 1996; G. Harvey 1997; *Holy Bible*; Naquin and Yü 1992; Parent 1998; Pennick 1996; Pomedli 1996; Sahlins 1985; Sangren 1993; Sax 1991; Snow 1977; Treaty 7 Elders et al).

En-spirited Ecology

Belief in the sacrality of the earth and its geomorphic components resonates throughout human history, societies, cultures, philosophies, and religions, but western science turned away from the concept with Aristotle and is only just, perhaps, returning to re-examine, re-think, and re-evaluate its own modes and methods. One such hypothesis, initially advanced for public consumption in 1979,

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was formulated by James Lovelock.[45] It provides the model of a strong symbiotic eco-relationship between a living earth and all of its inhabitants. In Greek mythology, □□ *(Ge)* was a female deity, a woman whose body extended from the earth itself: the mother of all life. Over time, □□ became the word for Earth, from which we derive the sciences of geology (studying the earth), geography (writing the earth), and geometry (measuring the earth). The *Gaia Hypothesis*, the name given Lovelock's theories, has in rather modified form become the basis for an eco-theology popular among Neo-pagans, New Agers, and Goddess-worshippers.

When the earth is perceived as a living – and in the more esoteric adaptations of Lovelock's original hypothesis, a sentient – organism, drawing conclusions about the intrinsic consciousness, inherent power, and personality of 'place' appears to be a logical continuation of the hypothesis. Acceptance of this theoretical model is

[45] *Gaia a way of knowing: Political Implications of the New Biology*, published in 1979, was the culmination of Lovelock's research from the 1960s forward. Working with a team of other scientists and funded initially by NASA, his original task was to determine whether there was life on Mars. He and colleague Dian Hitchcock were frustrated by the parochial parameters set for determining 'life forms'; in Lovelock's own words,

> It seemed as if the experiments had all been designed to seek the sort of life each investigator was familiar with in his own laboratory. They were seeking Earth-type life on a planet not in the least like the Earth. To Dian and me, it seemed that we were guests on an expedition to seek camels on the Greenland icecap or of one to gather the fish that swam among the sand dunes of the Sahara. (Lovelock 1979:85)

Lovelock and Hitchcock set out to devise new and more general scientific methods for detecting the presence of life in whatever form it might appear. The method they settled on involved analysis of atmospheric gases, and (in greatly truncated form) Lovelock's theory of a living earth evolved from their assessments of the impossibility of maintaining Earth's complex atmosphere without a control agent. Lovelock and Hitchcock decided that it must be the Earth itself that managed the atmosphere, manipulating and adjusting it as necessary. The Earth was, in fact, life embodied.

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foundational to the various branches of eco-theology, eco-feminism, and feminist theology, and forms part of the framework for some divisions of eco-anthropology and feminist anthropology. A number of scholars from a variety of academic disciplines[46] have produced thoughtful and insightful studies of alternative spiritual logos and praxis. A small sampling includes Elizabeth Dodd's "The *Mamas* and the Papas: goddess worship, the Kogi Indians and ecofeminism"; Vivianne Crowley's *Phoenix from the Flame: living as a Pagan in the 21st Century*; Graham Harvey's (1997) *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*; and all of Roy Rappaport's writing (but especially *Pigs for the Ancestors*; *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*; and *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*). In addition to the above authors and works, both Melissa Raphael's *Theology and Embodiment: the post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality*; and Fiona Bowie's essay, "Trespassing on sacred domains. A feminist anthropological approach to theology and religious studies" provide valuable insights into feminist theologies and their connection to eco-theologies.

With the possible exception of Roy Rappaport, whose writing provides no indication as to whether he did or did not read Lovelock[47], each of these scholars has, at a minimum, read and referenced Lovelock's hypothesis of a living earth. Others have challenged his ideas through both minor and relatively major adjustments: the reception ranges from dismissive to whole-hearted acceptance. Increasingly,

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[46] Scholars from Women's' Studies, Feminist Studies, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Theology, and blends and crossovers of these disciplines are perhaps most notable.

[47] It seems quite probable that he had some awareness of the theory: it received wide publicity due to its controversial nature.

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however, the conceptual frame of a living earth becomes embedded in popular belief. In Lovelock's words,

> ...such a being was more than an anthropomorphic personification or a strongly projected archetype. The Goddess was manifesting herself in her fullest, most essential form: the Earth. The scientist's Gaia resonated with Pagan intimations about the nature of deity and seemed to suggest appropriate means of building relationships.... If Gaia is revealed as a single living entity, then perhaps her planetary body has more than metaphorical circulatory, reproductive and other systems.[48] (Harvey 1997:146)

Through this broadly 'scientific' hypothesis, philosophically the earth is seen as the physical macrocosm of the human body's microcosm.

Ideas about the spiritual energy and life force of the physical earth lie deep within the European heritage.

> Traditional teachings inform us that the earth is not a dead body, but is infused with a spirit that is its life and soul. It is a world where the material is a reflection of the spirit, and where the spirit reveals itself in the material. Celtic tradition and beliefs are expressed spiritually through the land: the landscape is filled with places where spirit is present. Every time we experience it, this presence

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[48] This corresponds loosely with the Native American view of the earth's flowing water being the Mother's blood, and specific geographical markers being associated with Mother Earth's anatomy (though these correlations differ between Aboriginal cultures).

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encourages us to make an imaginative act that personifies the place to us. Then we perceive its qualities as a personality. This is the *anima loci*, the place-soul. When this is acknowledged and honoured, ensouled places come into being. Our actions enshrine the anima loci, bringing the unseen into physical presence. The anima loci is the essential personality of a location. ...it is viewed as a presence or being that exists beyond the everyday realms of human cognizance, perhaps possessing its own consciousness or personality. ...the presence is really perceived as a feeling or atmosphere which is expressed as a totality. (Pennick 1996:13)

British scholar Nigel Pennick writes on spirit landscapes in Celtic traditions and on how such ancient traditions are maintained (albeit in modified forms) even into today. Celtic spiritual traditions had a profound impact on the organisational development and liturgical design of the early Catholic Church in Western Europe. The legacy of the Druids still influences Europe and North America, often in the subtle complexities of ancient religious festivities. It is reasonably common knowledge that the dates for Christmas and Easter in the Christian calendar were chosen consciously to coincide with the Roman Saturnalia at the winter solstice and the fertility feast of Eostre in early spring. Fewer are aware of other (Celtic) survivals: *Samháin*, *Cétshamháin* (or *Beltane*), *Imbolc*, *Lammas*, and the solstice celebrations. In contemporary society the old feasts have acquired different names and sometimes different foci: they have been overlaid with a veneer of Christianity or else ritually – and secularly – cleansed of their ancient spiritual meanings. Even

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though we dilute the form and twist the framework, we are still celebrating, often quite unaware, the intent of these old festivals. Thus today Samháin, reduced to one day and no longer considered sacred, is known popularly as Halloween.[49] All Souls' Day (November 1st) in the Christian churches is a remembrance of all those who have died – a relic perhaps of the Celtic belief that during Samháin the boundaries between the living and the dead are broached. It was a dangerous period when ghosts of the dead roamed the land of the living, demons danced in the wind, and sensible folk stayed inside around the fire. In Latin America All Souls' Day becomes the Day of the Dead and exists as a remnant of a very early Catholic practice via the European legacy of the Celts, but is also a survival of ancient indigenous practices. Mardi Gras (immediately preceding the period of fasting, abstinence, and prayer known as Lent) is still recognised to a greater or lesser degree in Catholic communities, though it is most often celebrated in Hispanic and Latin countries. It survives as a shadowy image of Imbolc, the festival to mark the coming of spring and the beginning of the lambing season among the horticultural and pastoral Celtic tribes.

May Day supplanted Beltane, the fertility rites for the beginning of the planting cycle, and now even May Day festivities are vanishing[50] leaving Mothers'

[49] In the Catholic calendar, this is still remembered as All Saints' Day – the memorial of children who have died.

[50] The garlanding of a 'goddess' figure with flowers and subsequent parade through the local community by a ceremonial cohort of young virgins survives in a Catholic custom involving the Virgin Mary, floral tributes, and parades by school girls carrying a suitably decorated statue of the Virgin. While this is more common in Hispanic and Latin countries, elsewhere the practice really depends on the approval and encouragement of the local bishop. In 2002, I was told by a teacher in the

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Day or Mothering Sunday as pallid reminders of older rites. In 1955 Pope Pius XII proclaimed May 1st the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, at least in part to contain the 'goddess garlands' and accompanying festivities that had easily synthesised the old ways of honouring the goddess and devotion to Mary, Mother of Christ. Lammas (harvest celebrations) was the ritual feast recognising the gathering of the harvest at the height of summer's bounty. Today Thanksgiving is the festivity closest to its origins in intention, but it too has been carefully cleansed of the old 'pagan' fertility rites by shifting the recognition time from the fecundity of late summer to a 'dead' time of year. All of these festivals were tied to the fertility of the sacred land, and the people, plants, and animals that lived in intense and immediate symbiosis with it: even Samháin, now usually considered a commemoration of death, involved the symbolic union of the tribal god with the nature goddess (the Earth Mother).

Sacralising 'place'...

Even today anthropomorphic renderings of geomorphic features abound throughout world and popular religious teachings. In the religious beliefs of Hinduism, standing stones with a phallic likeness (lingams) are sacred symbols of Krishna and often the locus of pilgrimages and festivals. The *Nanda Devi* pilgrimage of Uttarkhand in the mountainous region of northern India is a women's pilgrimage focusing on the journey to and circumambulation of particular landmarks in the pilgrim's natal landscape (thus also ensuring the practical goal of otherwise

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Separate School system that some schools in Calgary were still celebrating Our Lady's May Day parade within the last five years.

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unlikely visits to the woman's birth family). Pilgrims sing traditional songs and tell stories that celebrate fertility and sexuality while they visit prescribed bodies of water and standing stones. The *hajj* to Mecca and the required circumambulation of the *Ka'ba* – the stone, brought by the Archangel Michael to Abraham, that was to be the altar on which Ishmael[51] would be sacrificed – are both geographically mandated by the location of the *Ka'ba.* Japanese Shinto religious practice is directed toward sacred places. *Kami* (spirits) "reside in unusual natural features such as mountains or strange rocks, in ordinary objects such as boulders or houses, and in shrines found in houses and nightclubs, offices and golf courses" (Bowen 1998:194). The pilgrimage known as 'circling Shikoku' in Shingon Buddhist practice follows the form of circumambulation, in this case of the holy island of Shikoku. The journey becomes one of self-discovery; it is optional, an individual undertaking in a group-oriented society. Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage thus provides a strong contrast to the Islamic hajj which is a pillar of the religion itself and mandated as a collective act focussed on an earthly object given directly from heaven.

In early Christian pilgrimage the object was to travel to the Holy Land with intent to follow the roads believed taken by Jesus and his disciples. Over a period of centuries, shrines to an ever increasing variety of Christian martyrs and saints became popular sites.[52] In the last 150 to 200 years the majority of pilgrimage sites

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[51] In Judaic and Christian tradition God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, in Islamic tradition the son to be sacrificed was Ishmael.

[52] See Chapter Two: Questing Spirits for a discussion of Christian pilgrimage and pilgrimage theories.

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have been those areas of claimed or presumed Marian apparitions.[53] There have been hundreds of such apparitions but only a select few have been approved as pilgrimage sites; some of the most popularly attended contemporary sites (Medjugorge, for example) are greeted with, at best, ambivalence by the Church and are often a source of contention and contestation between, on the one side, the people and local clergy and, on the other, Vatican officials who withhold acceptance and approval. As has been the case throughout the history of the Christian church, appropriation of sites, customs, and critical and calendrical rites was normative practice; in consequence, many shrines and pilgrimage sites have long pre-contact, pre-Christian missionisation histories, when the 'places' were known by older names, were dedicated to older gods, and people gathered in worship for (at least overtly) different reasons.

Mother Earth and Father Sky

Aboriginal languages, spiritualities, and cultural orders reflect ancient beliefs about the notion of particular landscapes or land forms possessing "consciousness or personality" (Pomedli 1996:7) and about the life energy existing within what western philosophy and cognition regards as inanimate objects.

> ...[A]ny place could become holy, or is already holy: rocks, mountains, hills, rivers and valleys, medicine wheels, burial grounds,

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[53] Our Lady Queen of Ireland (in Cnoc Mhuire, Country Mayo), La Virgena Morena (Guadalupe), La Virgena de las Remedios, Fatima, Ocatlan, Lourdes, Pontmain, Pellevoisin, Beaurain, Banneux, and Medjugorge are some of the more well-known – though not necessarily uncontested – sites of Marian apparitions.

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> medicine and sweat lodges, and shaking tents. For the Ojibwa, the presence of Manido, the Great Spirit, already evident in the cosmos, becomes manifest in the places and spaces that animals and peoples inhabit. These places are the prairies or hills, halls, gyms, or arenas. Any part of nature, any animal or any edifice is a proper space for Manido to enter and pervade. (Ibid)

Siouian speakers (in Alberta the Nakoda nations) refer to *Wakan* or variants[54] meaning the 'Great Mystery', which is manifest in all that is; Iroquoian groups call the mystery *Orenda* (*Ohanto* is another variation) and Algonquian peoples call on *Man'tou* or *Manido*. While each of these words has been translated as 'spirit' or more often 'Great Spirit', the indigenous (non-Christianised) sense of each is more akin to the use of *logos* or word in the Greek translations of Genesis. The terms all refer to an unnameable, indescribable mystery: a holy, powerful energy, literally the breath of life that is simultaneously sanctified and sanctifying.

The Navajo[55] Blessingway ceremony is a partial re-enactment of cosmogonic beliefs, in which the gods (the Holy people) built the first *hogan* (house) facing east, with each of the four cardinal directions pointing to one of the four sacred mountains of the Navajo. The Holy People live in specific places and those places are sacred land: much like Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime, mythic events repeated in

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[54] For example, the Nakoda (Stoney) word *Wakamne* refers to the same profound mystery and holiness inherent in all that the Creator has made.

[55] The Navajo (Diné or Dineh) people of the American Southwest are closely related to the Dene people in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

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religious ceremonials are also located in mundane reality. As Eric Hirsch says in his "Introduction" to the volume *The Anthropology of Landscape*,

> There is a relationship here between an ordinary, workaday life and an ideal, imagined existence, vaguely connected to, but still separate from, that of the everyday. We can consider the first as 'foregrounded' in order to suggest the concrete actuality of everyday social life ('the way we now are'). The second we can consider as a 'background', in order to suggest the perceived potentiality thrown into relief by our foregrounded existence ('the way we might be'). (Hirsch 1995:3)

In view of these other cultural realities and of the theoretical arguments for the multiple temporalities of specific landscapes, the next question to consider is one regarding possible application of these concepts to Christian pilgrimage and particularly to the Native Catholic pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne.

From numerous examples – the ones cited earlier in this chapter and many others – we know that pilgrims believe that shrines, grottos, and landmarks identified in their religious traditions are holy and it may also be true that the surrounding area is included in the supernatural landscape. It might appear reasonable, therefore, to generalise that it is the inherent holiness of a place that generates the building of the shrine rather than the shrine that imparts sanctity to the location. While this appears to be the case in Christian pilgrimages, oral history, written history, and contemporary practices clearly indicate that, for many indigenous peoples, there is neither cause for nor benefit in human constructions in sacred places. Creator has

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blessed most particularly Lac Ste-Anne; according to an oral tradition that predates the pilgrimage and continues into the 21st century, this is a holy and powerful healing place where a spirit woman periodically appears when the need and/or belief are especially great. Through the inculturation projects of the Catholic Church the lake has become a pilgrimage site dedicated to Ste-Anne, grandmother of the Christian Jesus, and mother of the Virgin Mary: a source of holy, healing water.

Our Grandmother...

The pilgrimage to the water and landscape of Lac Ste-Anne, whether in its concrete materiality or its abstract – and perhaps foreign – 'field of potentiality', is our starting point. Many questions flow from reflections on the idea of sacred space, and though the 'reason' or 'logic' of a place may not have acquired a clearly cognitive structure for us, we nonetheless embody our tentative recognitions, abstractions, and sensations regarding the numinous as part of our ever-expanding 'system of axes'. "In a vague way people sometimes talk about places having a special 'atmosphere' or power that enables them to express their faith and hope in a way that makes sense to them." (Davies 1994:47) Thus, the idea of the sacred – of sacred places, sacred times, sacred beings – incorporates and incarnates personal and community significance of phenomena that enshrine and focus critical spiritual and religious beliefs.

Aboriginal people attest to the nature of the landscape of Lac Ste-Anne as one in which inexplicable events occur almost as a matter of course. The crutches and canes on the wall of the shrine are testaments to 'miraculous' events of perhaps a

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more physical nature.[56] It is not the blessing of the lake by archbishop, bishop, or priest that has made the water holy; native people have taken the water (and medicinal plants) from Lac Ste-Anne to their home places for countless generations. Yet despite the lengthy histories – oral and written – no one is able to identify a particular quality of the water that might account, in an acceptably scientific manner, for its healing properties. Cree and Nakoda elders have given several different accounts of the water and the venue healing people, however none of the stories are offered as explication of a phenomenon but rather are given as the experience of the believers. People are healed by being at Lac Ste-Anne and they experience healing by drinking or being anointed with the lake water, therefore it is clear that Creator has given this place a favoured status. In response to the question 'why here?' the answer is inevitably that this is a holy place[57]. St. Anne loves this place; she has been seen walking or drifting on the water. Small footprints are visible on the large rock in the lake.[58] Jesus, her grandson, loves his grandmother and she is, of course, very special to him, so he has made her place a special one. The people believe these things and their belief is as material as any other reality in their lives. Scientific proof does not appear to constitute an issue for Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal

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[56] See Chapter Nine: Holy Waters, Healing Powers for a discussion of healing at pilgrimage sites with specific reference to Lac Ste-Anne.
[57] Other holy places that I know about within Alberta include the Cordillera, particularly between the town site of Banff and the U.S. border; Kootenay (*kutenai*) Plains; the place now called Livingstone Falls; and the headwaters of the Milk, Old Man, Bow, Saskatchewan and Athabasca Rivers.
[58] As noted in the previous chapter, some pilgrims believe that these are the Child Jesus' prints rather than Kohkom's, but I have never heard anyone express disbelief or scepticism that they are in fact footprints and not some other kind of marking.

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pilgrims with whom I have spoken: faith is both cause and effect. Proof lies in the (in this instance) visual evidence of Creator's love and pity for his children.

This is our Holy Ground

> The secular and holy weave in and out of each other, hinting now at the mundane, now at sacred ritual, but converging in the end. Just as knowing does not involve the pre-eminence of the conceptual, for 'knowing how' is a priority and ground for 'knowing what', so the genesis and rootedness of prayer is in commonplace experiences which contain a richness expanding to the beyond. In its encompassing sweep, prayer attests to the unity of all of creation and harbors an abiding and eschatological yearning to be part of that whole. (Pomedli 1995:105)

Michael Pomedli was writing about Iroquoian prayer traditions, but the same holds true for the Algonquian, Athapaskan, and Siouian peoples who constitute the largest groups at the pilgrimage. Stories teach us about the importance of family ties, respect for the elders, prayer to the Creator, respect for all persons – two legged, four legged, and winged – and for the natural world and the world we do not see. Stories teach us how to pray properly with respect and how to accept and internalise the experiences brought by prayer. The histories told by the elders – through the medium of their voices, drumming, dancing, song, and prayer – 'create the world anew' (in the words of a Catholic hymn, *Ashes*) as a special landscape that exists, has

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always existed, and will continue to exist: holy ground blessed and loved by the Creator of all things.

For the Native peoples of North America, the land has traditionally been understood to be life-supporting: a mutually nurturing relationship exists between the people who live on and with the land and the land which sustains them. The people belong to a particular part of the land rather than owning the land, and care for the land in exchange for its bounty. Because of this symbiosis, the earth is frequently referred to as 'Our Mother'. While cosmologies and cultural explanations differ from nation to nation, belief in the sacred nurturing qualities of the land is cross-cultural and pandemic. This belief carries with it responsibilities, not for stewardship or domination as in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but rather responsibility to recognise, celebrate, and ensure the continuance[59] of the mother's bounty through practical and ritual behaviours. Congruence between mythos, logos, and praxis is a hallmark of traditional Aboriginal philosophy and is expressed in a number of ways. Among the Rotinoshonni (or Haudenosahnnee) people of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Longhouse Religion uses the metaphor of the Sacred Tree to define proper conduct among the people and to explicate moral, ethical, and social roles and obligations. Teaching stories define and regulate seasonal activities with respect to the earth and all persons living in, on, and above her.

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[59] In large measure it has been these principles and behaviours that have led to the romantic ideal of Native people as natural ecologists and champions of Mother Earth. However any Aboriginal people I know personally or have interviewed in the course of my research regard ecological practices as straightforward logic – only a fool fouls his own home – rather than a moral or ethical superiority.

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On the prairie the medicine wheel is in many ways analogous to the longhouse, providing the teachings that ground the people in the space Creator has chosen for them.[60] The peoples of the Plains tell of a Sacred Tree that is simultaneously the metaphorical centre of the world and the centre of the medicine wheel. For this reason the Sundance Lodge, which signifies the known and unknown universes, has as its centre pole a tree selected by the chosen Holy Woman[61] and designated as the 'tree of life' – the Sacred Tree. The land used for the Sundance is especially sacred and is set aside for this ritual use alone. The buffalo skull altar in the lodge demonstrated, among its other attributes, the tangible social recognition of the spiritual debt owed by the people to the source of their food, clothing, and housing.

Among horticulturalist nations spiritual debt and social recognition are played out in time-honoured rituals for the planting, tending and harvesting of crops. Iroquoian garden lore stipulates that to ensure a successful harvest and food for the winter, the Three Sacred Sisters – corn, beans, and squash – must be planted together and in the precise manner given to the people by Creator. Special ritual songs are sung to the seeds at planting, others for the young plants, yet others during harvest.

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[60] For this reason both the medicine wheel and the longhouse could be deemed to be somewhat analogous to Christian Bible.

[61] The 'Holy Woman' was chosen for her purity in word and deed, and for her spirituality. Often, though as in all things in life choice depended on the local ways, she might be a married woman known for her virtue and kindness to others. She was specially blessed by Creator in this mission to choose the tree; the elders who identified her may have dreamed a vision of her, perhaps even in her earliest childhood, and watched her carefully during her adult life. To be the Holy Woman was not only a great honour but a great responsibility: the choice of the tree of life for the centre of the lodge is not undertaken lightly. (This information comes from teachings I have received from the elders from 1995 to 2003.)

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The Sisters are celebrated together and eaten together in memory of the three spirit sisters (who they, in fact, embody) who would never be parted from one another.[62] The gardens, soil, seeds, and plants are sacred to Creator, a construction frequently found among indigenous horticulturalists around the world. In North America, Hopi farmers in the south-western United States also sing to their corn crop to encourage its health and growth, and the ritual life of the peoples of the Five Civilised Tribes[63] in the south-east includes songs and dances for the proper planting and harvesting of crops[64].

Even the powwow, often maligned for overt commercialism and 'traditions' invented to attract tourists, has its origins in the spiritual life of the people, as do the Drum Dance arena and the drums themselves.

> According to accounts of the drum's origin, Manido tells Tailfeather Woman: "Do you see the sky, how it is round.... Go, then, and tell your people to make a circle on the ground, just like the round

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[62] My uncle, my mother's brother, told me about the Sacred Sisters when I was a very little girl staying with him on his farm. This is an elaborate story that, in addition to explaining the crops, is also a metaphor for the importance of family and the intense feelings of love, connection, and responsibility existing between siblings in traditional matrilineal society.

[63] The Five Civilized Tribes, who were so-named because each was organised under a constitution and maintained a stable, orderly society, are the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole.

[64] My father, Teddy Ross Anderson, was Choctaw (though like many others of that Nation, in order to hold land the family had claimed to be a Scots-Spanish mix for at least two generations), and when I was little he would tell me stories that his grandmother had told him. His great-grandparents and other members of his family had been 'removed' during the 1838-1839 Federal Indian Removal Policy known as *nunna daul tsuny* or the Trail of Tears. The 1838-1839 removals were one result of a bill passed by the U.S. government in 1830 that called for the removal of all Indian peoples to locations west of the Mississippi River.

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sky. Call that holy ground. Go there, and with a big drum in the centre, sing and dance and pray to me and speak my works." (Pomedli 1996:11)[65]

Clifford Geertz says "... place is, if anything, more critical for those who are apt to imagine that all places are alike than those who, listening to forests or experiencing stones, know better." (Geertz 1996:262) My fieldwork with aboriginal peoples leads me to propose that place is in fact *more* critical to those who 'listen to forests' or 'experience stories'. The forests, or the animate, inspirited stones, or a particular lake, or a certain mountain range, or a hoodoo, a gully, or low rise in the prairie landscapes have unique meanings to those whose cultural and spiritual traditions and predilections have taught them the special living nature of the earth. Throughout North America areas with indigenous names identify and commemorate the meaning of the place to the people who named it. *Amisk*, *Mistatim*, *Okotoks*, *Kootenay Plains*, *Kananaskis*, *Wabasca*, *Kinikinik*, *Kîkino*, *Kehewin*, *Wetaskiwin*, *Meanook*, *Athabasca*, *Wabamun*, and *Tawatinaw* provide a very small local sample of Aboriginal place names that describe a characteristic, an event or experience, or a story that defines that place in community memory. This list does not touch on the vast numbers of place names that have been translated (often poorly) into English or French.

The concept of 'place' as capturing the essence of some part of human experience is embedded in Native American languages and therefore in the cultural and spiritual experience of the peoples. Joseph Epes Brown writes,

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[65] Chapter Seven: Trickster meets Christ articulates traditional spiritual culture.

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> North American [Native] experiences of place are infused with mythic themes. These express events of sacred time, which are as real now as at any other time. They are experienced through landmarks in each peoples' immediate natural environment. Events of animal beings, for example, which are communicated through oral traditions of myths or folklore, serve to grace, sanctify, explain, and interpret each detail of the land. Further, each being of nature, every particular form of the land, is experienced as the locus of qualitatively differentiated spirit beings, whose individual and collective presence sanctifies and gives meaning to the land in all its details and contours. Thus it also gives meaning to the lives of people who cannot conceive of themselves apart from the land. (J. Brown 1995:51)

With a similar understanding of place Robin Ridington, in talking about why and how he decided to study anthropology, tells the story of a summer spent with friends in the northern Peace Country of British Columbia. His friends were homesteaders:

> The land on which they built their cabin was in traditional hunting and trapping territory of the Athapaskan-speaking Beaver Indians. According to the government of Canada, the land my friends had chosen belonged to the Crown. According to the Indians, *Native*

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people belonged to the land[66] because they knew it in ways the government could not even imagine. (Ridington 1990:5)

In the foothills and prairies of southern Alberta, Blackfoot cosmogony tells the story of *Nâpi* (Old Man) who was one of two sons of First Man and First Woman. Through a series of supernatural events he found himself on the other side of the ocean with his brother. *Nâpi* was not happy; he became lonely and told his brother to stay in that place across the water while he, *Nâpi*, went home to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The place where the maps show the origin of the Old Man River was *Nâpi's* favourite campsite and to the Blackfoot people the land on which they live and to which they belong is the Old Man's body.

Mother Earth and Father Sky are honoured in Native Catholic mass celebrations as well: at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, for example, the 'great Amen' of the Eucharistic liturgy is sung (or sometimes drummed) by facing each of the four sacred directions and then reverencing Mother Earth and Father Sky by touching the earth/floor, and raising hands to the sky/ceiling. I participated in similar rituals during mass with Jicarillo Apaches at a Franciscan Mission Centre in Scottsdale, AZ. The culturally linked differences only emphasised the ceremonial and liturgical similarities, expressing as they did local traditions and reflecting natural and supernatural local geographic markers.

During pilgrimage mass celebrations at Lac Ste-Anne, the uniquely blended ceremonial designs of the mass celebrations are produced by each individual community with the assistance and liturgical guidance of the local priest. During the

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[66] My emphasis.

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years of my fieldwork it has become increasingly evident that indigenous traditions, even if not overtly incorporated, are at a minimum basic to most of the liturgical activity. Embodied indigenisation has neither diffused nor deflected the Catholicity of the event however, and this fact is foundational to my claim for 'Native Catholicism' as a grounded and intentional spiritual, cultural, and emotional reality, awaiting only the physical recognition of the Church to become whole. In the following chapters I will continue to examine this claim and the evidence for it in detail; to understand the concept of sacred landscapes and holy ground in 'Indian Country' it is necessary for us first to be aware of the importance of experiential, embodied knowledge to Aboriginal peoples and secondly, to divest ourselves of the dichotomies we create between everyday life and 'religion', or between our own bodies and the (spiritual and physical) world.

> ...[U]nderstanding of [indigenous peoples'] thought depends on my willingness to take what they tell me seriously and personally (learning *from* them rather than merely *about* them) and my ability to find a symbolic framework that will encompass their experience, my own, and yours as well. There is no qualitative difference between the symbolic transformation involved in bridging the gap between my experience and yours and the transformation involved in bridging the gap between mine and theirs. We are all humans enclosed in the ultimate solitude of our subjectivities, but as humans we all share the common capacity for giving each other experiences through the interaction that symbols make possible. (Ridington 1990:53)

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Thus, when the elders tell the oral histories of migration to this lake[67], now called Ste-Anne, and when they tell how the holiness of the place beloved by *Kohkom* and Creator (who in one manifestation is her grandson, Jesus) drew and draws the people here for healing, they are sharing the experience of both the people and the place, not as a chronology but as a synchronicity. Whether the 'white lady' of the lake adopts the visible persona of White Buffalo Calf Woman with her medicine bundle, the spirit of Mother Earth, or Ste-Anne is of no real importance. The substance of the vision is its reality to the believer[68] – in this case the vision is proof of the atemporal existence of the holy woman in white buckskins decorated with thousands of beautiful shells, a woman who carries something precious and sacred in her arms and who brings peace and harmony to those who experience her reality. Pilgrims to the lake experience visions as substantial truths, not only as beliefs: the dreams or visions are one with the lake and its landscape.

Creator pity us; Lord bless your people

Man'tou Sâkahikan[69] (now commonly called Lac Ste-Anne) has been a Catholic pilgrimage site for over one hundred years and, according to oral tradition, a

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[67] See Chapter Three: Numinous Time for the details of this history.

[68] On the CBC programme *IDEAS*, Chief Johnson Sewaypaham said

> Most Native people will tell you that they have dreams or visions of certain places, and this is one of the places where a lot of Native people have visions or have been inspired. By visions I mean very powerful dreams; that's what we rely on. We go by the visions, the dreams that we have…. (Sinclair and Marantz 1995:3).

[69] Man'tou Sâkahikan translates from Cree as "Lake of the Spirit"; its literal meaning is "spirit lake-dwelling."

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First Nations holy gathering ground for at least several hundreds.[70] The lake is located 100 km or approximately one hour's drive west and slightly north of the city of Edmonton in north central Alberta. It is a relatively large shallow lake that occupies much of the area south of Highway 43 and north of Secondary Highway 633 between the towns of Alberta Beach on the east and Darwell on the west. Farms, bush, marshy areas, summer villages, vacation areas, and the reserve lands of Alexis First Nation (Indian Reserve 133) surround the lake.

The lake and its geographic location are peripheral to social activity for most of the year; even in the aspect of vacation site and home to summer cottages they remain marginal, gaining importance only through the difference and distance from the city. People at the pilgrimage, many having travelled for days – or even weeks[71] – to meet and pray at this lake, experience a sense of 'awayness'. People vacationing in their cottages on the lakeshore in summer villages share this sense. Common to both groups is the awareness that they are removed from their homes, daily routines and work, that their obligations are held at a distance, and that they have journeyed to a different and, for some, a sacred space.

It is, in a practical sense, quite remarkable that the pilgrimage grounds, shrine, and this part of the lake have retained any sense of remoteness from the secular world. In part homage to the dedication of the pilgrimage team and

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[70] The Archaeological Survey of Alberta records provide evidence of camps and stone tool production, as noted in Chapter Three.

[71] And, for some, it may be months of journeying, as a pamphlet on the pilgrimage notes, "[s]till, every year there are groups who make the journey on foot, some walking hundreds of miles. One such group from Saskatchewan travelled for three months to get there, camping and praying along the way" (Christero Communications, no date).

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volunteers and to the pilgrims themselves, the sense of distance enhances the sacredness of the site.

Physical details[72], however descriptive of a concrete reality, fail to convey the essence of the shrine and are secondary in every way to the experiences of the pilgrims within. The shrine is possessed of a truly unique nature – at once interior, enveloping, and enclosing and at the same time exterior, imposing, and overwhelming – yet there is a profound sense of peace, power, and rightness within the space, occupied or not. This is far more than the residual aroma of sweetgrass in the wood, the quiet gentleness of the Resurrection crucifix, arms wide to embrace the world, or the soft murmurs of elders praying for their families and their communities. More than any of the physical attributes, even beyond the ephemeral aspects of its physicality, the shrine envelopes the small humans gathered in its vast space even as it invokes a sense of awe. It is as though the wood has absorbed the prayers, despair, confessions, reconciliations, pledges, love, faith, and hope of pilgrims over the years. The cave-like shelter and the people are engaged somehow in a powerful expression of mutual experience and shared spiritual discourse.

But the physical surroundings are real and as often miserable as they may be comforting and calming. The wooden benches are hard and sometimes over generous with splinters, and kneeling on the gravel that constitutes the 'floor' is painful; there are no walls, no shelter from the cold or the wind. Pilgrims at the perimeters of the shrine are likely to be wet when it rains, and very hot when the sun shines. Larger and larger numbers remain outside on the berms that surround the

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[72] For details about the shrine and site, see Chapter Five: Kohkom's House.

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shrine, sitting in the grass (or mud, as the case may be) because the space inside is not adequate to seat everyone who comes. The shrine holds about 3,000 or more people and perhaps as many as 5,000 if they gather in the isles, but with the increased numbers of pilgrims – more every year – there will never be enough space.

Some elders, too weak or disabled to make the long trek from their camps to the shrine three times a day, stay beside their camp fires and participate in the masses via the loudspeakers. These loudspeakers cause contention because they do interrupt quiet meditation and prayer times, and sometimes those who feel called to sing hymns between masses and services are well-intentioned but quite a-musical. At the LSAPC meetings in April 2001, some attendees complained, emphatically, that many of the singers are tone-deaf and raucous-voiced and suggested eliminating the loudspeakers completely. Though a number of people supported the suggestion that the speakers not be used except for reminders about mass times and in emergencies, most felt it is important to continue to use them, particularly for the elders.[73]

Despite disagreements, discomfort and minor irritants, the shrine at Lac Ste-Anne embodies great spiritual power and authority for those who come to spend time there. As Eric Hirsch says, "[L]andscape has a submerged presence and significance... used to refer to the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings" (Hirsch 1995:1). The pilgrimage at and to Lac Ste-Anne embodies this relationship between the ordinary and daily and the imagined and

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[73] And, as someone else pointed out, the singers (though some of us may find their songs or voices aesthetically unpleasant) are offering their gift to the Lord. There was a lot of friendly bantering about this, in particular about how the Lord probably would prefer hearing voices lifted in tune, but in the end, everything stays as it was.

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ideal, existing in the interstices between past and present; Native and 'White'; and traditional spiritual beliefs and Catholicism, bridging what Hirsch refers to as the 'foreground' and 'background' of social life (Ibid: 3). In anthropological terms, we might say that the pilgrimage and its location exist as both actuality and potentiality. To Native peoples it is and has been, a holy place, and the healing waters have been a key to its importance and attraction. Keith Basso has documented the special nature of certain places and spaces as expressed by the Western Apache:

> Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it (Dudley Patterson in Basso 1996:70).

Part of the power of the shrine resides in the communal belief in the healing power of the water of the lake and of the efficacy of simply being at the lake.[74] However another aspect, one that I see as being of equal importance in developing the locus of power, is the people themselves: their journeys, privations, prayers, and community endow the place with human strength situated in trust in the divine. Pilgrims believe and trust with all their hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits that God is present in the shrine and that Jesus and Ste-Anne travel with them, caring for them personally – they give themselves, their families, and their communities over completely to a supernatural care that to them is grounded in material physicality. It is the presence

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[74] For pilgrim's tales of healing, see Chapter Nine.

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of Creator and their profound belief in his healing grace and pity for his children that heals. Individuals, families, communities, bands, tribes, and nations come together in this search for harmony, balance, peace, and wholeness. The faithful believe and are healed.

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Chapter Five: Kohkom's House

Pilgrimages in the early Christian period were major undertakings requiring both effort and courage on the part of their participants, but they were also festive occasions marked by gaiety, feasting, and music.[75] Wide variations in the socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and political status of the many pilgrims and their expectations contributed to a richly textured tapestry of shared experience and renewal. In these areas, contemporary Catholic pilgrimage is not really very different. In the case of Lac Ste-Anne, it is true that many people struggle to make the journey, which can be both a physical and economic hardship, yet they come every year and express gratitude and joy both in their travel and their destination. While there are no *jongleurs* or dancers in rich silks to accompany the pilgrims, and though most people today are more discreet than Chaucer's Wife of Bath, there is still music, story-telling, and colour aplenty in today's setting.

The festive air starts at the entrance 'gate' (actually the driveway leading to the present day Lac Ste-Anne mission church). Past the parking area on the right, up a slight hill towards the lake and the grounds, stands a creamy white stone statue of Ste-Anne, embellished with a light-bulb halo and offerings of red plastic roses. From here the lake is visible ahead and slightly to the left; directly ahead is the enormous, purpose-built pilgrim church that seats over 3,000 people[76]. Flags whip

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[75] Turner and Turner (1978) and Verseput (1994) include discussions of the logistics, character, and subtleties of early pilgrimage in their work.

[76] The seating figures vary drastically: I have chosen 3,000 because it is the minimum number ever given but some sources claim up to 7,000. Certainly there have been close to that many at masses, but on those occasions there were people in

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around on high poles, as they have since the earliest days of this pilgrimage (Drouin, 1973:54), adding to the sense of carnival.

At Kohkom's House

As previously mentioned, the modern-day pilgrimage lasts from Saturday afternoon through Thursday morning[77] and, like the centuries-old tradition of pre-contact summer meetings, it brings together families, friends, and hereditary enemies. The emphasis on the healing properties of the lake is joined by acts of piety and devotions to Kohkom Ste-Anne[78]. The natural congruence of Ste-Anne's

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the aisles and sitting and standing for perhaps a depth of 60 or more feet from the open 'walls' of the shrine church.

[77] As often as possible the pilgrimage encompasses the Feast of Ste-Anne on July 26th.

[78] *Lives of the Saints* (1999:309) has this to say about Ste-Anne:

> Sts. Joachim and Ann, both of the tribe of Judah of the royal house of David are venerated by the Church as the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary who was probably their only child. The other Mary mentioned in the Gospels as the sister of the Mother of God was, it is believed, her cousin, for this was a customary way of designating relatives in the East.
>
> St. Ann has been honored from early Christian times. Churches were dedicated to her honor, and the Fathers, especially of the Eastern Churches, loved to speak of her sanctity and privileges. She is often represented as teaching her little daughter to read the Scriptures.
>
> St. Joachim has been honored since time immemorial in the Churches of the East, and since the 6th century public devotion to him has been observed in all countries. However, as in the case of St. Ann, the Gospel tells us nothing about his life.
>
> Tradition, grounded on very old testimonies, informs us that Sts. Joachim and Ann in their old age came from Galilee to settle in Jerusalem, and there the Blessed Mother of God was born and reared; there also they died and were buried. A church was built during the 4th century, possibly by St. Helena [mother of the Emperor Constantine who declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire], on the site of the home of Sts. Joachim and Ann in Jerusalem.

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place in Christ's earthly family with Native kinship and family patterns reinforces the power of devotions to her and the act of pilgrimage to her shrine.

> The reality of St. Anne as being the grandmother of Jesus… we [the Roman Catholic community at large] prayed to her because she was the mother of Mary. The First Nations people went one step further because in their culture the grandmother means so much. The grandmother is the most important member of the whole family, she is the one that raises the grandchildren and has the greatest influence on the grandchildren, even more so than the mother. She is respected and she is mourned the longest, and that special affection for the grandmother is something that, in a sense, is transferred to St. Anne. The connection being made has to do with the love and affection they have for their own grandmother. They related to St. Anne as the grandmother of Jesus. (Fr. Jacques Johnson, OMI, quoted in Simon, 1995:14)

In most aboriginal languages 'grandmother' (and 'grandfather') are titles of the utmost respect, accorded not only to one's own parents' parents, but by extension to the wise elders in the extended family and the community. In popular parlance, we might say that Ste-Anne is the 'grandmother of all grandmothers', or using a different terminology we might describe her role as that of meta-elder, one who is symbolic of all that is kind, wise, good, mentoring, loving, comforting, and instructing – the traditional attributes and roles of the elder in indigenous cultures.

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Because of this, I see Ste-Anne as a metonym for the entire panoply of characteristics the pilgrimage has, over more than a century, come to embody to those who journey here. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of Ste-Anne to this pilgrimage or to the pilgrims at the lake. She is the intercessor for all those who suffer maladies of the body, mind, and spirit; she asks Jesus, her grandson, to have pity on and heal her mortal grandchildren. Just as she taught her daughter, Mary, to show compassion and gentleness to all persons, and to always obey Creator's will, so too does she show her little grandchildren the path to peace, harmony, and healing. Adults kneel, weeping and praying, in front of her statue, asking her assistance in mending families, mending lives. It is common to see an elder with his or her grandchildren grouped around Ste-Anne praying together, talking to Kohkom and through her to Creator, and burning sweetgrass to carry their whispered thanks and petitions to heaven.

Ste-Anne seen in this way as a grandmotherly figure, a kindly, loving elder, is more approachable, more accessible than Creator or even than Mary, the Mother of God. Because a grandmother has lived much longer, thus acquiring great experience and wisdom as well as increasingly honed spiritual values and connections, she is an invaluable bringer of spiritual values. It is possible that in future years Ste-Anne's role will merge more fully with that of White Buffalo Calf Woman: certainly as Jesus' grandmother, one could argue that she brought the Sacred Pipe's equivalent to the people who eventually would become known as Christians. In some Native Catholic rituals (notably those identified in the masses on Lakota reservations in the Dakotas) the concepts 'Jesus', 'crucifix', and 'Sacred Pipe' are identified as

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symbolically interchangeable (see Steinmetz 1990; Steltenkamp 1982; Stolzman 1992); the communities in question were all originally Jesuit missions. As Christopher Vecsey notes (1999:341), "It will not be simple to achieve agreement within the Church or within American Indian communities regarding these questions." The issue, apparently, is one of balance. The question, however, is more complex as would be any potential solutions: is the balance to be between diverse ritual elements, differing 'tribal' traditions, Indian and Catholic traditions or some other, yet undefined, elements. Would the desired balance (when found) affect only praxis or would it become embedded and embodied in the mythos of the Church? As Vecsey says, these are not simple questions nor are there simple answers.

While other missionary communities and Indian parishes enculturate Aboriginal traditions and rituals into the mass (presenting the host to the four sacred directions, to Mother Earth and Father Sky; drumming and chanting prayers; burning sweetgrass and other sacred herbs[79]) only the Lakota Jesuit missions have, to my knowledge, taken the concept of the sacred pipe as being identical to the incarnation of Christ. I asked Fr. Jim Holland, OMI, whether he thought there was a possibility of similar myth and ritual being incorporated into local liturgies: his response was that if it ever were to happen, he expected it would be far in the future. His opinions confirm my own, though our bases for forming these may differ. For the missionaries – grass-roots priests working with the people – such as Fr. Jim, there are the structures and strictures of working in a hierarchy. As an involved Catholic

[79] These are practices at Sacred Heart Church of the First People and at other Oblate missions throughout western Canada, just as they are at the LSA pilgrimage.

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layperson, I know that there has been no approval for a Native Catholic rite given by the Vatican. My current understanding is that the Catholic Bishops have presented proposals regularly to the Holy See regarding the formalisation of a Native Catholic rite. I have heard, during private conversations, individual priests and bishops state their support for the concept, but the question remains whether they would support a formalised and separate ritual when faced with the reality. A deeper consideration of the issues of cultural and spiritual integration as well as those of liturgical synthesis appears in Chapter Eight. Here I am concerned to examine the framework that facilitates integration of ideas and ideals, cultural standards and popular culture, youth and age, Native and Catholic.

At Ste-Anne's Shrine

The Roman Catholic Mission of Lac Ste-Anne is located on the southern shore of the lake, surrounded by grassy pilgrimage grounds that are bordered to the west and south by alfalfa fields. These fields become the campground during the annual pilgrimage in July. It is a beautiful setting: the land slopes down from the little white mission church past the enormous open-air shrine church, meeting the healing lake water at a small timber structure the design of which closely resembles a tree and brush built sun-dance lodge.

The pilgrim's church reaches skyward; the broad wings of its roof dropping to the earth enfold the humans within. Its space is vast yet cosy, awe-inspiring yet comforting – a refuge from wind, hot sun, and rain, and from the anger, inadequacies and hurts of the outside world. The design is simple, bearing a striking resemblance

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to the ubiquitous blue tarps that shelter pilgrim camps: a sharply pitched shingled roof supported by wooden posts and beams. The only solid wall curves behind the altar and provides space for religious art, tables supporting hundreds of votive candles, and the material signs and wonders of miracles in the form of discarded crutches and canes. Plain, rough wooden benches fan out row upon row up the slope of the gravelled earth.

Varnished wooden walls and altar furnishings glow in the light of candles, and lavish banks of floral bedding flats cover the sides of the altar steps. Chairs, stools, candle holders and the altar itself are carved in natural, flowing themes and reflect the same glowing amber as the walls. The altar cloth is a Pendleton 'Indian' blanket. A large carved and painted cross in the form of a Native 'Christ Resurrected'[80] is suspended by cables from the roof above the simple altar.

The large cross and its companion smaller one that is carried by the cross-bearer in processions have been the subject of much discussion and debate since their installation in the early 1990s. Some elderly Aboriginal conservative Catholics were outraged and confused by the changes. Daisy Flamond was quoted by Andrea Marantz (CBC 1994:8) as saying:

> It's really not like it used to be. For instance, last year I walk into the church to go say my beads, like I always did when I first come in, I go into the church to say my beads for my good luck trip, and I come in there and what was hanging there? An Indian god.

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[80] An innovation not seen as frequently as the more usual 'Christ Crucified' image, though this is changing.

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Daisy goes on to say:

> Well, I think God is everything, but I don't think that's right for them to do that, because as far as my concern goes, the Indian had no religion long ago – they had their own religion, like their sun dance and all these things, that was their way, not Catholic religion, they were never Catholic. ...[W]hat I wouldn't like is to have the drums in church and have that Indian god – I'll call it that – and that's terrible. They got a big one and then they got a little one. That's crazy! They don't have the right statues in the church now. (Sinclair and Marantz 1994:8-9)

Today Daisy would find even more changes, more signs of 'Indian-ness' and less (judging from her comments) 'Catholic-ness'. Perhaps by now she might find it easier to adapt and change, but perhaps not. Her concerns are voiced more rarely now: in part due to the paradox of increased awareness of residential schools abuses; in part to the revival of pride in heritage and culture that has begun to really take hold among Aboriginal peoples; and in part due to greater public understanding of notions of comparative religion acquired for the most part through television programming. In those communities served by Oblate missionaries, I believe that another factor in the acceptance is the missionary priests who both preach and practice the doctrine of Christ's incarnation in community. Thus, most of the elders I have talked to over the last six or seven years have felt comfortable with the differences and find 'the Indian god' quite acceptable, understanding the incarnation

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of Christ as an Indian no less likely than the 'old' tradition of a blue-eyed, blond Jew with a wispy beard and soulful expression.

In my view (based on what I have seen occur in a number of parishes over the years) the changes at Lac Ste-Anne have been quite gradual and peaceful, if inexorable. As an example, at my parish in Calgary, we came to Sunday mass one morning to find the statue of the Virgin moved out of the church proper into a separate room. I had been at mass on Friday morning and no change had been made at that time. Then within two weeks, the tabernacle was moved from its position behind the altar to a location slightly off-centre from Mary's former pedestal on the same level as the pews and directly in front of them. This had apparently necessitated considerable reinforcement of the floor in that area due to the weight of the marble tabernacle and its stand. On the following Sunday, the tabernacle had been joined by a glass display case holding large jars containing the sacramental oils. In the weeks following there was at least one significant change every week to the shape or organisation of liturgical furnishings or sacra, with absolutely no explanation for the reasons behind the differences other than that it was "in keeping with recommendations post-Vatican II" (Personal communication, Fr. G. Coupal, 2002).

For all that the changes to the pilgrimage rituals and sacra have been significant over the time line of an elderly pilgrim's lifetime, when one considers the radical upheaval to existing Catholic traditions since 1965 any changes have been organic, flowing, and gradual to the point where the overlapping traditions are becoming a visual manifestation of the Church's own evolution. In all, I believe that

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most pilgrims (Aboriginal or otherwise) feel quite comfortable with the integration of Catholic and Native symbols and rituals; perhaps some want more and others would be happy with less, but the reality of integration is no longer problematic for them.

Today, below that 'Indian god' that so disturbed Daisy Flamond, the altar rests on a large wooden platform that provides room for the sanctuary, a small sacristy, musicians and their various instruments, archbishops, bishops, priests, and deacons, and lay ministers. The original, ornately carved, and very traditional oak altar from the former pilgrim church sits about six feet from the back wall providing a sort of screen for a small sacristy and storage area, and supports the tabernacle on the outward facing side. A delicately painted, approximately life-sized statue of Ste-Anne with the Virgin Mary as a little girl, the two flanked by kneeling angels, is centred above the tabernacle.

Brightly coloured fabric banners depicting pilgrims in the lake and exhorting everyone to share the good news decorate the wall, in conjunction with a large picture of St-Eugene de Mazenod,[81] a rather smaller one of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha,[82] and a brightly painted copy of the *tilma* of Our Lady of Guadalupe.[83]

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[81] Founder of the Missionaries Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

[82] Kateri was a young Mohawk/Ojibwa girl, whose piety and devotion to Jesus were remarkable in the face of her community's opposition. Born in 1656 in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon (now Auriesville, NY), she was stricken with smallpox during an epidemic; the disease crippled and disfigured her, but her faith never faltered. On her death at an early age she was miraculously cleared of all disfigurement and the aroma of roses was strong over her grave despite the verified putrefaction of her corpse. Beatification in 1980 by Pope John Paul II placed 'The Lily of the Mohawks', presented as a model of Christian and Native spirituality, on the long road to canonization. She is expected to become the first Canadian Aboriginal saint.

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Small shrines dot the front of the church to the right and left of the altar platform. Discarded crutches and walking sticks fill an entire section of the wall; masses of flowering plants decorate the steps of the platform and the platform itself. Small booklets of the hymns most commonly sung during the pilgrimage are available for fifty cents at the southwest 'entrance'. Payment for *Hymns of a Pilgrim* is on the honour system and the money, like all money collected at the pilgrimage, is for the continuation of the event and the betterment of the facilities. The booklet's hymns are printed in either Cree or English, though hosting communities sometimes distribute printed copies of hymns in other languages or, more commonly, choose to use the hymns in their liturgies without concern for print materials. Depending on the hymn, the music may be five tone or (more familiar to Euro-Canadian ears) octavian.

Camping...

The area around the shrine is well tended, clipped lawns intersected by concrete pathways. There is a priests' residence to the southwest of the shrine with an office building adjacent to the residence. West and south, past these relatively permanent buildings, the grounds open up to alfalfa fields – or more properly, by only a day into the pilgrimage, the remains of alfalfa fields. For this one week every year in late July, the lush fields of alfalfa and sweet clover metamorphose into an

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Understandably, devotion to Blessed Kateri is strong in the Native Catholic community.

[83] In 1999 I was told by pilgrims who had been present that this tilma, an exact copy of the one in the basilica in Mexico City, was a gift a few years earlier from Pedro, the Guatemalan.

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enormous campground, transformed within days to a sea of blue plastic tarpaulins dotted with white canvas tipis. The entire site is packed tight with every form of temporary housing imaginable, from traditional tipis to plastic sheeting slung over roughly cut wooden poles, small tents to makeshift campers; they nestle against huge motor homes, fifth-wheel trailers, and more modest tent trailers. Families dry meat, fish, lake plants, and laundry on racks and lines strung across camps. The rich aromas of wood-smoke, sweetgrass, and sage mingle with the more mundane but equally rich smells of bacon, bannock, fried onions, and roasting or stewing wild meats permeate the air while the sounds of drumming, gospel music, and children playing compete with the ever-present broadcasts from the shrine itself. Between regular mass times, the air fills with the sounds of guided meditations, inspirational talks and stories, hymns sung by various groups, or recorded religious music. The calls to mass and the continual reminders of upcoming events booming from the public address system urge the faithful to prayer, to the lake, to ensure that their elders have access to masses, and remind us of water shortages and the pervasive problems with inadequate plumbing.

Arranged strategically throughout the grounds toilet facilities and water faucets attract some campers to locate nearby; others situate themselves at a distance, preferring to walk further in return for a little more space and air. Campsites near the lake among the trees are particularly choice in terms of providing shelter from wind and blistering sun, but in a wet year the lake and trees are a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Like most other regulars, we have a favourite location for our tent and are surrounded by many of the same neighbours, year after year.

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Though there is no real estate for sale here, the cry is still 'Location! Location! Location!' but the variables determining desirability are strictly a matter of personal preference, having nothing to do with economics or social status. Along the tracks that soon become roads, pilgrimage volunteers set up empty oil barrels for garbage collection; entrepreneurs sell the same tipi poles again and again; the firewood hawker makes his rounds in an old truck decorated by a plastic deer and painted murals, calling his wares on a bull-horn; and eager children run around selling bannock fresh-baked by their mothers, grannies, and aunties (a practice discouraged by the authorities, but appreciated greatly by those who have no time to make their own). The General Store sells a variety of necessities, from frozen meat (mostly bacon and ground beef) through onions and potatoes, to bread and pastries, milk, pop, film, tobacco, tent pegs, rope, pots, tea and coffee and, what is perhaps the single most important of all commodities when camping, duct tape. Small booths around the grounds offer ice cream, sno-cones, and cold drinks; some also sell buffalo burgers, hamburgers, fries, and coffee.

Charter buses park away from the camp area after disgorging weary passengers laden with food, blankets, sleeping bags, yet more tents, the odd dog, and children of all ages. Transport buses for the disabled and private buses and vans from seniors' residences take their passengers to a reserved area very near to the priest's housing and then move off to park. Throughout the enormous area, spaces between camps fill rapidly until there are 12 to 15 thousand people occupying this instant city.

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The aura of the pilgrimage grounds – the physical space occupied by the shrine and pilgrims – sets it apart from that of the land immediately adjacent to it. The sense of difference has much to do with the use to which the land is put. The pilgrimage area is devoted to spiritual life, if only for the week, whereas the Dakus[84] camp area is distinctly commercial with its 'midway', flea market stalls full of junk and clutter that entice the more naïve or more desperate into buying, the 'authentic Indian' crafts, all sorts of cheap baubles, loud music and fast food. And rumour has it, after dark and in secluded corners during the day, drug dealing and prostitution. I know members of one family just two houses down from the Dakus place, staunch Métis Catholics who attend the pilgrimage and participate in organising the Métis mass. They tell me they are appalled by the noise of and the activities at the midway area and have complained to the RCMP and members of the village councils, to no avail. I know they have also urged the Oblates to press for changes, but the fact remains that all of these activities are taking place on privately-owned land and no matter how annoying or distressing this may be, no laws are broken.

The 'Mall'

A ram-shackle, informal collection of booths, sprung like mushrooms in the field adjacent to the entry to the pilgrimage grounds, is a highly profitable market for

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[84] Dakus is the family name of the people who own the property adjacent, and who manage a commercial campground, renting out space to small-scale vendors for the flea market and other businesses.

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savvy entrepreneurs[85], many of whom spend a significant part of their year acquiring the goods they will sell to pilgrims. The 'shops' occupy tents, trailers, and booths made of blue plastic tarps and poles; a plywood burger shack flaunts peeling bubble-gum pink paint. A wide array of services is available: haircuts, piercing of various body parts, and tattooing. Food vendors sell everything from bannock, buffalo burgers and dry meat to 'fresh BC fruit', vegetables, ice cream, and, of course, Coca-Cola. Used clothing booths and places to buy any second-hand household item imaginable abound.

A short walk toward the lake, down the gravel road on the other side of this 'market' leads to an even bigger and considerably more sophisticated shopping area.[86] Pilgrimage T-shirts can be printed while you wait. Flags, fashion jeans, yet more tarps, dream-catchers in designer colours, cassette tapes of Gospel and country singers or groups, barbecue grills, lace tablecloths from China, incense from India, mirrors from Mexico, Guatemalan textiles, blankets, tools to repair home or car, car and truck parts, old tires... it seems that almost any commodity can be found here.

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[85] A number of people with booths at the market told me that this was their only, or at least their primary, source of income and that they did 'well'. In July 1999 Wayne, one of the volunteer workers, told me about a friend of his who ran a mid-sized flea market booth. The friend reputedly cleared a profit of just over $58,000 during the 1998 pilgrimage and "he's doin' better so far this year. I'm gonna do same thing, [it's] easy money, good money." (Personal communication, 1999) I have no way of verifying the amount he quoted: in one sense it seems quite unbelievable, but the markets do generate large revenues and attract huge crowds, so such sums may be possible over 6 or seven days. Perhaps more to the point, transactions are in cash and the used items sold are often scavenged – even from the pilgrimage grounds – contributing to a significant profit margin, particularly since it is unlikely that any taxes are paid or income declared.

[86] This may be the area in which the aforementioned volunteer planned to develop his business. He was unclear as to which 'market' his friend's shop was in.

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As one would expect, there are many religious items for sale. In addition to the pictures of Jesus, Mary, and various saints, there are crucifixes, crosses, statues, scapulars, and rosaries; themed key rings, pens, paper weights, and bumper stickers. Pamphlets and tracts outlining and extolling the virtues and practices of a number of Catholic organisations are available for free. Strangely (to me at least), included in the plethora of religious articles I found tiny amulets for a variety of Hindu gods among the crosses, images of the Buddha beside statues of the Virgin, and information pamphlets produced by Baha'i, Mormon, Pentecostal, and Evangelical congregations as well as the United Church of Canada.

More recently the 'Mall' or 'Bazaar' has included a kind of midway with a number of rides, trampolines, kids' 'ball-rooms', 'sumo-wrestling', and the other appurtenances of a travelling carnival. In 2001, there was still no formalised gambling but the possibility remains a concern to the vast majority of pilgrims and all of the organisers of the pilgrimage.

Planning...

During formation meetings of the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Committee[87] (LSAPC) in 2000 and 2001, elders, community leaders, and pilgrim delegates expressed grave concerns about the lure of these many booths, particularly for young people. One real concern is the increased violence, access to alcohol and drugs as a

[87] In 1995 the Missionary Oblates set up a volunteer management board to make decisions about and see to the running of the pilgrimage. The LSAPC is a formalisation of this earlier framework and an increase in responsibility and authority for the Aboriginal people who form the committee. There is additional information on the committee and future processes in the conclusion (Chapter Ten).

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result of the proximity of the 'Mall'. While troubles on the pilgrimage grounds themselves are generally confined to lost children, wandering elderly elders, and occasional sudden medical emergencies, the activities in the private markets are often less benign. Drinking, gambling, drugs, prostitution, violent fights, and rapes have all been reported by pilgrims and noted with frustration and anger by RCMP officers and tribal police (Anderson-McLean 1996-2001). In 2001 the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Committee initiated changes intended to ameliorate potential problems through the provision of additional and more open services for pilgrims on the grounds. There was a conscious decision to start with small changes, both to avoid pilgrim alienation and to facilitate greater successes for the programme.

One of these changes was to make the gift and religious articles area of the 'pilgrim's store' more accessible and appealing[88]. Instead of standing along a boardwalk jostling other pilgrims to peer over a counter past the volunteer workers to dim shelves, boxes, and piles of goods beyond, prospective buyers could browse through the merchandise, making choices easier and more pleasant. There was also a wider selection of goods, so that in addition to the holy pictures, rosaries, wall crucifixes and crosses, religious medals and so on, there were books on spiritual topics. Books for sale included bibles, missals, and catechisms, but also encompassed topics ranging from the lives of popular saints to the contemporary

[88] There will be more changes as time goes by – many are focussed on intentions to hold the interest of the young people while serving the needs of the elders. Discussion on the future of the pilgrimage grounds and potential changes to the pilgrimage format are touched on briefly later. This dissertation does not in any way mark the end of my work with Native Catholic people or the Oblate fathers; I will learn more as I become increasingly involved with the people.

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issues confronting teens (and advice on how to manage the conflicts arising from peer pressure and Church teaching) and one or two volumes on culturally sensitive liturgies. There were also wall hangings, items designed to appeal to youth and children (*WWJD*[89] jewellery, t-shirts with religious slogans, contemporary renditions of religious pictures, neon-bright colours, glow-in-the-dark crosses and rosaries, and coloured, scented votive candles). Among items specifically for smaller children were chaplets made of large brightly coloured wooden beads, 'Precious Moments' crosses, children's Bible story books, colouring books depicting Biblical scenes, and children's prayer books and catechisms.

Activities and interest centres for youth are a continuing concern for the organisers of the pilgrimage, parents, and elders. The Pilgrimage Youth Ministry is active, highly regarded, and very much appreciated by everyone, but the draw of the midway, music, drugs, and unsupervised space is strong. Youth is a continuing focus for the LSAPC which is presently considering a wider range of activities to keep young people on the grounds and centred on, if not the pilgrimage itself, at least healthier and more spiritually and culturally appropriate activities than many of those available at 'the Mall'.

One suggestion under serious consideration is extending activities at the site to encompass at least mid-April through mid-October and eventually to use the area year-round for youth camps, cultural camps, learning circles and other spiritual and cultural events for the benefit of the community at large. For now, the changes to the

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[89] *WWJD* is the acronym for 'What Would Jesus Do?' Items ranging from T-shirts to jewellery, pens, posters, notepads, key chains, and pins bear this logo and are for sale, not only at the Pilgrimage Store but at Christian shops all over North America.

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Pilgrim's Store and the focus on youth and elder interactions provide a fresh dynamic to the activities at the site. Because many of the elders spend almost all of their waking hours in the shrine it is the hope and anticipation of organisers that the new programmes will draw more youth to join the elders in prayer and reflection, and encourage them to learn about their culture, language and history.

Experiencing...

Pilgrims experience a range of differences according to the time spent at the shrine site, style of accommodation, method of travel and distance of the journey, whether it is a first pilgrimage or the habit of a lifetime. While those who make day trips from the comfort of their homes undeniably treasure their time at the mass and in prayer, stories from the fields indicate that living outdoors for the duration of the pilgrimage appears to enhance and magnify the entire healing experience for most participants.

There are many shades of difference encountered as an encamped pilgrim as opposed the 'tourist' nature of visiting for a day or part of a day. I experienced the differences first hand, having spent my first pilgrimage commuting on my bicycle from the Summer Village of Alberta Beach while staying at a friend's family cottage but have camped on the grounds for all subsequent pilgrimages. Conducting field interviews, one of the questions I asked was whether my informants have experienced any difference between camping and commuting or visiting. For many this was a peculiar and even foolish question: they had never considered anything but camping on site. Of those who have, for one reason or another, had to commute,

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each responded in favour of camping on the site and participating fully in all available masses, special services, and pilgrimage events as a means of enhancing the sense of community and providing a heightened spiritual experience. It appears that being not only exposed to, but living with and within the intensity of a natural setting, with the heat and dust, the wind, rain, mud, electrical storms – and once that I remember, snow – opens the pilgrim to a greater understanding and acceptance of the pilgrimage experience by bringing the individual into the spirit of the place and of small Christian community.

Lac Ste-Anne is in many ways as much 'Grandma's House' as it is the 'Water-house of the Spirit' (Spirit Lake). When people talk about how they experience the lake, they express feelings of comfort, well-being, security, balance, peace and harmony; of being healed, feeling better, not being lonely, not upset or stressed, being relaxed, and freed from worry. Certainly it is true that people generally appear to be happy, filled with peace and a quiet kind of joy. There are, quite naturally, the usual intra-family squabbles, the kids making too much noise, running around, not wanting to attend mass (*'not again, Kohkom!'*) – really a matter of wanting to spend time with the other kids, to experience the freedom of roaming without cares over a large area, making new friends and enjoying renewals of old friendships too.

There are inevitably grumblings about the facilities, (every year more toilets are installed, and every year there are complaints about how few there are and how dirty they are – complaints expressed by people who are not willing to help with the building or cleaning tasks), and about the insufficient number of showers; there are rumbles about the people who work (volunteer, actually) in the general store and

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about the food that is or is not available, as well as about the costs of items. Or else the grumbling is about the fact that food and other items are for sale on the pilgrimage grounds (this is the faction I think of as the anti-money-lenders, who conveniently forget that many of the pilgrims are dropped off by large transport buses with no way to travel into town for food or other urgent necessities). There are also the people who complain about 'commercialisation' of the pilgrimage, referring to the flea markets, sales booths, concessions, and mini-midway on properties adjacent to the pilgrimage grounds. Somehow, even though these are all on private properties not owned by the Oblates, the priests are supposed to 'do something' to prevent the activity. Like any very large gathering there are people who feel an obligation to complain about something: insufficient security or the 'overbearing' presence of the RCMP and Tribal Police; inadequate transportation for elders to get to mass versus complaints over the golf carts, wagons, and buggies stirring up dust or mud; the decreasing numbers of priests or the 'dominance' the clergy holds over the pilgrimage framework; and, always, the weather no matter what it may be.

But overall there are fewer complaints than compliments, and pleasure in the simple abundance of the place and of its many gifts is the norm. Most people seem happy to be at the lake, at the pilgrimage, with loved ones; seeing friends and family for perhaps the only time over the course of the year.

Travelling...

I am always in awe of the distances people travel and the diversity and versatility of the modes used. While a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is far more

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costly and the distance to travel is far greater, for most of the people who come to Lac Ste-Anne this pilgrimage stretches meagre finances to their limit. It is not uncommon for a man to leave his family for a day or two, or even parts of several days, to seek temporary jobs in the city with a view to making money for the return trip. Other men may bring their families, set up camp, attend Sunday morning mass and leave for work, returning to collect the family on the following weekend.

Journeys to the Holy Land are both expensive and tiring, but neither as onerous nor as time-consuming as the travel undertaken by pilgrims who walk, canoe, bicycle, ride horseback, or even drive the family truck from places like Rae-Edzo, Pelican Narrows, Chatteh, Nelson House, Churchill, or Northern Ontario. Many coming from the north have to include travel by bush-plane or charter in their plans, but they still travel significant distances by land and water to reach the nearest landing strip, and equally great distances by road after their flights. For these pilgrims the journey takes on an aura sharing similarities with early Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. The travel itself is a major part of the pilgrimage mystique and much of the body of pilgrimage myth is situated in travelling tales told and retold over campfires and again at home. Through personal and community stories recounted through years of repeat visits a kind of pilgrimage cosmogony has been developed, a creation story detailing the textures and layers of a peoples' faith history, one of hardships and joys, disasters and miracles, of the broken healed and the lost found, and of sacred space regained and reclaimed.

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Gathering...

Today Lac Ste-Anne is home to a Roman Catholic shrine with a history flowing forward from the mid-19th century. Questions about the establishment of the shrine and associated pilgrimage and the possible expedience of appropriating others' sacred places and rituals, while impossible to avoid are difficult to answer with any certainty. Many people – Christian, Native, New Age, and various combinations of these – have suggested that the place itself is a locus of enormous spiritual power: it possesses a spiritual energy that draws people to this lake. I tend to fall between the two camps, and suggest that no doubt there has been the usual opportunistic appropriation of a cultural utility by colonisers, but that in this particular case the 'utility' is something more than simply a useful geographic location upon which to impose a new religion. There is a strong sense of the numinous here, and neither the shrine nor indeed the pilgrimage is the most significant contributor. A sense of well-aged holiness, of great mystery, hovers like curls of wood smoke. My Nakoda and Lakota friends tell me to accept this as a manifestation of *Wakan Tanka*: there is a reason why we are here, but the knowledge belongs to the Great Mysterious, not to humans.

The anthropological and historical explanations behind sites like Lac-Ste-Anne's shrine are perhaps easier for the western mind to accept.

> ...[D]uring the period of growth and establishment of a religion, local sacred places belonging to earlier and indigenous religious traditions, can be either swept away by missionaries and zealous converts, or else be thrown into an inferior position under the

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> dominance of a sacred place located well beyond local experience....
> The new sacred sites which supersede local 'pagan' temples [or landscapes] are validated and endued with power by the local historical links they have with the central sites of the history or mythological history of the religions concerned. (Davies 1994:6)

Unfortunately such logical and rational exegeses provide no insights into why people believed in the sacrality of the site in the first place: only local oral histories and enduring myths offer glimpses into the mysteries. From the stories the Elders have told me during my years of fieldwork, I drew together a short descriptive narrative to encapsulate the visions, beliefs, and spiritual structures they have expressed to me. This is a composite of many fragments; I am grateful to those who shared their life experiences and memories with me during formal interviews, around campfires at the pilgrimage, over coffee or tea in venues ranging from university campuses in Edmonton and Calgary to the Morley reserve, from Hobbema to Alexis, from traditional tribal gatherings to coffee after mass at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples.

The Elders speak.

A sacred place...

holy woman comes

walking over water,

and rocks sing.

Here a Sun Dance place,

Thirst Dance Lodge of our grandfathers.

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Sacred woman in white deer's skin comes

a medicine bundle in her arms.

Here is a place of medicine

a place of healing.

Our grandfathers knew these things,

they call to us:

see sacred woman

hear singing rocks

see little people

first here.

Holy woman knows

this sacred place

even mônîyâwak[90] *feel the mystery.*

Strong medicine place

healing plants

healing water.

Mystery speaks.

Power:

power for visions

visions like dreams

dream your vision

visions are power

---

[90] 'White people' in Cree.

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power to heal

healing power

Creator's power.

Creator heals us.[91]

The Order of the Days

At the centre of the lake's healing power is the mass[92]. Each mass has its own particular cultural ambience according to the hosting nation or parish. Every day, while the basic organisation is almost identical, is possessed of its own specific characteristics according to the weather, those in attendance, and a myriad of potentialities for change and fluctuation in mundane events. While the basic forms and rituals of the mass remain unchanged, there is infinite variety in performance and symbolic display. Each celebrant and congregation brings a unique personality and sets of expectations to the celebration of the mass, and places a distinctive stamp on both the ritual and non-ritual activities that precede and follow the actual services. Just as the masses and the days provide a spectrum of experiences, so too each year has its own overtones. It is not uncommon for people to talk with fondness of a particular pilgrimage: clusters of circumstance influence both experience and perception of experience. For example, I recall vividly a particular afternoon when the sun was exceptionally hot and the air unusually clear. My image is of perhaps eight or nine priests, all in cassocks, baseball caps, and sandals, playing catch and

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[91] I wrote this over a period of time. It is based on occurrences at the lake and on stories told me by pilgrims. (Anderson-McLean 1999-2002)
[92] See Chapter Six for a discussion of the mass.

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baseball with children and teens while parents and grandparents laughed, clapped, and urged them all on. It was a happy time, a kind of quintessential moment in high summer. This recollection leaves me with a strong attachment to the pilgrimage that took place in the year of celebration of the canonization of St-Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Oblates. Other strong memories include the year of the tornado when it rained so hard that water actually cascaded down the gravel in the shrine; a hot, clear summer morning at the lakeshore spent talking to a young man who rode his Tennessee Walker over from the reserve to see the Mohawk woman and stayed to go to mass; driving back late at night in 2000 from Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples where we had gone for the mass and feast celebrating the fifth anniversary of Fr. Jim's ordination, moving from dark starry skies to a smoky red sky lit by campfires and torches – something I could never have seen had I been on the grounds in the midst of it all. After my first pilgrimage when I commuted from Alberta Beach, I have made it a practice to stay on site for the entire period, but the leaving and then returning made that night (and that pilgrimage) special.

The contemporary format of the pilgrimage is from Saturday afternoon through Thursday morning and in the tradition of pre-contact summer meetings, it brings together families, friends, and hereditary enemies[93]. The emphasis on the

[93] For example in July 1998 our campsite was, as always, surrounded by Saturday night. What was unusual was that the people in the surrounding camps seemed wary of one another and preferred to talk through me rather than directly to the others. There were Dunne-za, Cree, Blackfoot, Lakota, and Ojibwa families in the tents pitched around us, and all were using the Mohawk-Choctaw anthropologist and her white-guy husband as go-betweens. Over shared coffee, bacon and bannock the next morning the tension started to dissipate, and within a short period friendly, if pointed,

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healing properties of the lake is joined by acts of piety and devotions to Kohkom Ste-Anne. The natural congruence of Ste-Anne's place in Christ's earthly family with Native kinship and family patterns reinforces the power of devotions to her and the act of pilgrimage to her shrine.

The first mass of the day is scheduled for 10 a.m., but the pilgrim's day starts much earlier: for those whose observances include traditional rituals it may start before sunrise with prayers of thanks and honour to Creator for a new day. For others the day begins over the coals of last night's fire, coaxing it to flames in anticipation of hot water for washing, boiling water for coffee and new coals over which to cook the breakfast bacon and bannock. Some have been up long enough to have made loaf after loaf of fresh bannock and rallied their children to rush among the campers carrying baskets and boxes of aromatic bread to tempt late risers for a dollar a large piece. Others stand in weary lines for drinking water, showers, or the toilets. The calls from the wood truck as it winds around and through the camp meld with the calls of mothers for errant children. About an hour before mass is due to start, the golf carts and transport trailers arrive to take the elderly and infirm to the shrine. By 9:30, there is a steady movement of people out of the camps and toward the shrine and the lake. At the vestry tipi just a short distance from the shrine church, people from the hosting community are gathering for the entry procession.

Sometime around 10 the procession, heralded by the gathering hymn, winds its way toward the shrine and approximately an hour and a half later most of its

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joking was the norm (much of it directed at matrilineal societies whose women talk a lot – meaning me).

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members return to the tipi to the accompaniment of a recessional hymn or drumming. This entire pattern repeats itself again in mid-afternoon and again each evening, except for Saturday (the first day of the pilgrimage) and Thursday (the last day). On Saturday the first mass is a 3 p.m. with another starting at 7 or 7:30. There is a strong undercurrent of anticipation on Saturday as pilgrims await the arrival of friends and family, and look forward to the week. Thursday's aura is much more subdued, slightly sad as the pilgrimage draws to a close on this final day; morning mass is earlier, at 8:30 or 9 a.m., to allow travellers to begin their long journeys in timely fashion. Chapter Six examines the order, framework, and theology of the mass; documents differences encountered in 'Native' masses as opposed to a standard Anglo-Canadian mass; discusses the formality of the ritual and potentials for increased vernacularisation in rites and sacra; and, finally, offers observations from an analysis of the content and structure of the mass which provides us with some data on the meanings embedded in contemporary Native Catholic practices.

Sponsoring...

From 1995 to 2001, the number of sponsored masses over the duration of the pilgrimage doubled from eight to 16[94]. Several factors have influenced this increase: first, Fr. Jim Holland was ordained in 1995 at Lac Ste-Anne and has been the pastor at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples since then. Sacred Heart has sponsored a mass every year except 1999 and has continued to take an active role in the pilgrimage ceremonials. Secondly, the Métis Nations, the Cursillo Community, and

[94] These figures are extrapolated from posters that include lists of the host groups.

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the Youth Ministry host masses, each with their own special essence. Thirdly, more First Nations communities and tribal affiliations are participating in the pilgrimage and are taking leadership roles in sponsoring services. Fourthly, other groups such as the Filipino Communities, northern archdioceses, and parishes other than Sacred Heart are starting to take the initiative as hosts.

The responsibilities of a sponsoring or hosting group are significant, and made more so by the nature of the masses as remote in time and space from any home place. It is up to the sponsor to organise and provide the music, the readers, lay ministers of the Eucharist, the procession, and any special touches they wish to incorporate. Pilgrimage volunteers fill the positions as ushers and augment the Eucharistic ministry if required. The readings from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospels are determined according to the church calendar and day of the year, but a homily must be prepared. Lac Ste-Anne is one of the very few places that a lay person (usually a chief or elder) might deliver a homily. These may be (by mônîyâwak standards) exceedingly long, winding, and difficult to follow; to complicate matters, sermons by lay people are usually given in the language of the host group. In some cases, for example with Dene or Chipewyan speakers, this means that only a handful of people actually understand what is being said. Nonetheless, people generally sit quietly and respectfully throughout the talk. The mix of languages and the attention paid to speakers of 'foreign tongues' adds to what Fr. Fred Groleau calls 'the Pentecost experience' of the pilgrimage.

The mass processions are exaggerated in size and duration to symbolise the pilgrimage journey. All the processions originate at the vestry tipi near the statue of

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Ste-Anne just across from the mission church, and then wind their way slowly to the shrine. There is often drum accompaniment and singing or chanting in the indigenous language of the host Nation, and the processions include many more people than would normally be the case. There is a distinct air of celebration: these are performative rituals designed to emphasise both the faith and the cultural identity of the sponsoring Nation.

First Nations traditional dress adds to the festive atmosphere. Men may wear colourful ribbon shirts, Métis sashes, embroidered or beaded hide vests, and/or beaded moccasins. Pilgrims from the northern areas often wear beaded hide jackets or shirts in addition to moccasins. Women from the Métis settlements might wear their traditional costume: a fitted blouse often embellished with ribbons or embroidery and a long printed skirt. Feathers may be braided into the hair, and beaded jewellery is quite common. Older women often wear a headscarf over their hair, and the older men and women frequently wear low cut rubber boots over their moccasins, so that only the quilled, tufted, or beaded cuffs are visible. The various Nations take obvious pride in wearing as many elements of their traditional clothing and accessories as they can, particularly for the Mass they are hosting. Masses are celebrated in the languages of the pilgrims: most often Cree, Dogrib, Blackfoot, Chipewyan/Dene, Ojibwa, and Nakoda, as well as English, and I was present at one Dogrib mass celebrated in Latin. The priest was very elderly and, I gathered, had been with the community for most of his life prior to his retirement several years earlier. What one of the young people told me was that their masses were always in Latin 'before', from which I understood that the switch to vernacular masses had

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happened within this young man's memory, and following the old priest's retirement.

Below I have listed the host nations from 1995 to 2001 omitting the duplications that occur over the years. Some communities regularly sponsor a mass and others may have done so only once or twice, but everyone is involved.

- Stoneys (Nakoda First Nations)
- Chipewyan
- Dogrib
- Cree
- Blackfoot
- Ojibwa
- Cursillo
- Enoch Community
- Métis Association (now Métis Nation of Alberta)
- Grouard, Gift Lake, Whitefish, Peavine Communities (joint)
- Sacred Heart Parish & Waleston Parish (joint)
- Hobbema Community
- Oblate Candidates
- Dene First Nations
- Le Pas Diocese
- Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples
- Blackfoot Federation

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- Hobbema Four Nations (joint)
- Little Red River & Tall Cree First Nations (joint)
- Pilgrimage Youth Ministry
- Luke 15 & Talithacum Houses (joint) – Vancouver
- Filipino Communities
- Ste-Anne Parish & Stoney Nations
- Cree Nations of Grouard-McLennan
- St. Paul Diocese

The names of some groups have changed over time, and there are undeniably overlapping jurisdictions, but the competition for sponsorship grows keener by the year as people increasingly desire to instil something of their own cultural heritage into the pilgrimage. In that such identity markers occur within the context of the mass, I now turn to an outline of the stipulated form of the mass within which a variety of syncretic actions occur.[95]

Working Together

By world standards, Lac Ste-Anne may not produce impressive numbers (as a comparison, over 15,000 people visit Our Lady of Guadalupe every day), but this is the largest pilgrimage in Canada[96] and most of the pilgrims are Native.[97] Pilgrims come from all over Canada, with the greatest numbers from Alberta, Saskatchewan,

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[95] Note again that the actual form of the mass is the topic of Chapter Six, and is discussed in much greater detail there.
[96] In 1999, more than 40,000 pilgrims made the journey (Copley, 1999:3).
[97] The Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage is the largest Native gathering in North America (Fr. Fred Groleau during homily, July 1999).

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Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories, but every year the numbers of Native peoples from British Columbia and the Yukon increase. Many other pilgrims travel from the United States, and Central and Latin America. In 1999, there was a special presentation by a Guatemalan pilgrim named Pedro. He, with his wife Guadalupe and their interpreter Christine, acted out the story of Juan Diego and the Virgin of Guadalupe for a large crowd. He has done this "all over the world, even Rome in front of five thousand clerics, priests, and the Pope"[98] and, if the First Nations peoples at Lac Ste-Anne are indicative of the reaction to his message, he has done this for audiences of deeply caring, believing people.

In recent years the gathering has attracted both European and Asian visitors, some as pilgrims though others come to observe the displays of traditional finery and culture.[99] Such pilgrims may make the journey to Lac Ste-Anne to be cured of diseases, but more and more they come to petition the saint and join in praying to Creator for healing in their families, in their communities, and in their lives. Much of the focus of the contemporary pilgrimage, both from a lay perspective and that of the missionaries, is on healing lives and on the restoration of balance and harmony. A detailed discussion of the healing aspects, beliefs, and rituals appears in Chapter Nine: Holy Waters, Healing Powers.

Understandings of healing, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation are embedded in Catholic teachings about the intention and meaning of the mass; the

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[98] Christine, their interpreter, assured the audience. (Anderson-McLean, July 1999.)

[99] In July 1999, a school bus stopped a short distance from our campsite and unloaded about 45 Japanese tourists. Their interpreter told me that they had been bussed out from Edmonton for the day to attend mass and "see the Indians" (Personal communication, July 1999).

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celebration of the Eucharist is the central activity of the pilgrimage with all other rituals crafted around the three masses on each day. Discussions and explications of various pilgrimage activities appear elsewhere in this document. The mass is sufficiently important to both pilgrims and to understanding the pilgrimage that I have devoted the following chapter first to an explanation of the Catholic mass in what, for simplicity's sake, I have termed its 'generic' format, and second to a more textured description of ways the mass is celebrated by different sponsoring Nations or groups.

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Chapter Six: *Ayamihâwin*

This chapter is devoted entirely to the central ritual of the Catholic faith, the Eucharist – or as it is more often referred to by the laity, the mass. Because of its core position in the pilgrimage, and because of the many variants and syntheses observed at Lac Ste-Anne, I have outlined the 'order of the mass' as it appears in missals and hymnals. Once the groundwork of framing the overall ritual is completed, I develop word pictures of a number of different forms the mass has followed over the years during the course of the pilgrimage.

The mass ritual is a joyful one of gifting and communion with God and one's fellow worshippers. The concept of the gift has been thoroughly documented in anthropological literature, most particularly in Marcel Mauss' well known explication of the theory and methodology of gifting. Marshall Sahlins (in Bell 1997:114) analysed Aztec sacrifice as a way in which the offering was sacralised to render it as divine as the god to whom it was offered. Julian Pitt-Rivers' analysis of the bull-fight in rural Spain stipulates it as ritual sacrifice, saying that:

> "After the purification of the sacrifice of the Lamb the sacrifice of the bull restores to grace the mores of everyday life, releasing the faithful from an excess of sanctity, a too literal subjection to the Beatitudes, which renders the practical conduct of daily affairs somewhat difficult...

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> … after the sacrifice of the Mass, which might be seen as the '*fiesta mansa*' (the docile festival), the celebration of the ideal of Christian conduct, there follows the '*fiesta brava*', as the corrida is called, to restore the worldly order, a counter-rite to the first, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, to Corpus Christi or to some other festival of the Church or to the patron-saint of the community" (1993:12).

Pitt-Rivers notes the economic ties between the Church and the *corrida* (bullfight) in that bull rings were and sometimes still are constructed and/or owned by religious organisations, with the fiesta seen as a source of income and of food for the poor (Ibid:13), adding that:

> "In a number of popular fiestas the bull's meat is eaten by the members of the community sometimes in a collective feast, sometimes to take home and cook (Medinaceli, Soria)" (Ibid.).

In Aboriginal societies gift exchange has almost as many forms as there are First Nations. For example, Elmer Ghostkeeper was taught the concept of spirit gifting as a young boy in his home community and later based his master's thesis on the cultural understanding and intention of this form of gifting in Cree communities (Ghostkeeper 1996). Offering a piece of bannock in return for the life of a duck to feed the family is in principle the same gift practice I was taught by my mother's brother when we left a pinch of tobacco with each seed we planted in the spring. In each case the intention of the giving is a prayer that the gift will be received by Creator so that humans will receive in turn the gift of food provided by Creator. Whether the 'gift' is left for the use (on behalf of Creator) by the Algonquin Animal

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Master, the Iroquoian Sacred Sisters, or Quetzlcoatl of the Aztecs, it has the same intention and focus: an offering of thanks and supplication for continued bounty.

In each Catholic mass the gift exchange between humans and god occurs during the part of the mass referred to as the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* – the period of the mass that is the absolute centre of this most centralising ritual. The gifts of humans to God consist of money as metaphor for human work, to be used by the church for God's work on earth, and the presentation of wheat, in the form of communion wafers or *hosts*, and wine as the gifts of the earth. In each case the gifts are sanctified through prayer and transmuted, becoming gifts from God to humans. The latter two items are, as discussed shortly, believed to be fundamentally changed by the invocation of specific prayers. Belief in the transubstantiation of small dry flour and water wafers and sacramental wine into the body and blood of Christ is the heart of Catholic faith. We are told that this action is based on the events of the last supper Jesus Christ shared with his disciplines at the Feast of Passover, and both its ritual formula and the dogma of its intent are derived directly from the Gospels of Matthew (26:26-30), Mark (14:22-25), Luke (22:19, 20) and John (6:53-59). The following statements, ascribed to Jesus during this last meal with his followers, form the basis of the Eucharistic Prayer – the central prayer of the Catholic mass:

> "In all truth I tell you,
>
> if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man
>
> and drink his blood,
>
> you have no life in you.
>
> Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood

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has eternal life,

and I shall raise that person up on the last day.

For my flesh is real food

and my blood is real drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood

lives in me

and I live in that person.

As the living Father sent me

and I draw life from the Father,

so whoever eats me will also draw life from me.

This is the bread which has come down from heaven;

it is not like the bread our ancestors ate;

They are dead,

but anyone who eats this bread will live forever."

This is what he taught at Capernaum in the synagogue. (John 6:53-59)

Couched in the metaphoric language of the Gospels, the canonical meaning (according to the explanation given by the *New Jerusalem Bible* and paraphrased here) is this: Jesus, the *Logos* – God's Word – is the 'true bread' and is also the sacrificial victim whose body and blood are offered for the life of the world (i.e. for the peoples of the world). Use of the words 'body' and 'flesh' are deliberate references to the concept of *Incarnation* or embodiment of the god in human form. Thus the Eucharist and incarnation are linked inextricably: the Word is real food for this world and for the salvation of the world. The phrase "whoever eats me will also

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draw life from me" identifies the same relationship between the human communicant and Jesus as exists between Jesus and the Father: that the life communicated to Jesus the Son by God the Father passes directly to the believer through the Eucharist. By eating God's body and drinking God's blood, human communicants become one with God. The Eucharist commemorates the sacrifice of God for humans, and through the consumption of this sacrificial gift humans become mystically joined with God. Thus, not only is theophagy celebrated in the Eucharist – the centrepiece of Catholic ritual – we might say it is a defining characteristic of Catholicism.

The assertion of transubstantiation is confirmed in teaching materials provided to people making the journey (or pilgrimage) to study the Catholic faith:

> Catholics believe that when Jesus said, 'This is my body...This is my blood' he meant exactly what he said. For Jews, *body* meant the person, and *blood* was the source of life identifiable with the person. So Jesus was saying over the bread and cup, 'This is myself,' and we believe that the consecrated bread and wine truly become the very person of Jesus. (Kaler and Lukefahr 1992:C4, 3)

The essay continues,

> Since the twelfth century, the Church has used the word *transubstantiation* to describe the change from the 'substance' of the *bread* to the 'substance' of the *flesh* of Christ. ...The 'appearances', the outer aspects like taste, colour, and weight of the bread remain just as they were before the consecration, but the deep realities have been changed into the body and blood of the living Christ.

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> When we receive Holy Communion, then, we receive the whole Person of Christ, as he is at the present moment, that is, as risen Lord, with his glorified body and soul, and his full divinity. (Ibid)

This description of the ideology and intention of the Eucharistic meal is exemplary of what anthropologists refer to as 'embodiment'; the participant in the communion rite consumes the god in all his perfect glory, thus becoming, albeit briefly, one with god. In theory and ideally, the communicant extends her Eucharistic experience to encompass her secular life, emulating the life of Christ, so that sharing in the sacred meal is a life-changing event leading to greater fulfilment and increased (and increasing) participation in Christian community. The communicant has taken into his own body the sacred body of God and so has become one with Christ.

Having prepared ourselves by considering the theology of the Eucharist, we now turn to a description of the mass in generic form, followed by reflections on the synthesised – or syncretic – masses of the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage.

Order of the Mass

This is a simple outline of the order of the mass followed in every Catholic church throughout the world. There are permissible variations within each Rite, but these take the form of minor changes to word or action and have no effect or affect on the ritual framework.

1. Introductory Rites

    a. Entrance or Gathering Song

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b. Greeting

c. Penitential Rite

d. Gloria

2. Liturgy of the Word

   a. First Reading

   b. Responsorial Psalm

   c. Second Reading

   d. Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)

   e. Homily

   f. Profession of Faith (Creed)

   g. General Intercessions (Prayers of the Faithful)

3. Liturgy of the Eucharist

   a. Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts

   b. Collection

   c. Procession with the Gifts

   d. Invitation to Prayer

   e. Prayer over the gifts (Preparation of the gifts)

   3.1 Eucharistic Prayer

      a. Preface dialogue

      b. Sanctus

      c. Memorial Acclamation

      d. Great Amen

4. Communion Rite

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a. Lord's Prayer

b. Sign of Peace

c. Breaking of Bread

d. Agnus Dei

e. Communion

f. Silent Prayer following Communion

g. Prayer after Communion

5. Concluding Rite

a. Greeting

b. Blessing

c. Dismissal

d. Recessional

Each of the above noted segments is accompanied by actions – either by the priest, or the people gathered, or all of them together – and each of the actions is ritualised. Despite the nature of the ritual actions associated with Catholic mass, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) has stated that liturgy should not be viewed as a performance. At this point, the theologian and the anthropologist diverge in their perceptions of the mass: in the words of Roy Rappaport, "Unless there is a performance there is no ritual." (Rappaport 1999: 37) Victor Turner was interested in ritual as performance for most of his research career and devoted much of his later research to this notion (see Turner 1969, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1979). More recently, Richard Schechner produced a dense and richly textured volume

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entirely devoted to the concept of performance ritual as exemplified in various religious and secular settings (Schechner 1993).

Certainly much of First Nations traditional spirituality is performance ritual, indeed both Sergei Kan (1991, 1999) and Ann Fienup-Riordan (1990) have analysed the ways in which this particular attribute melds and blends with (in these instances Russian Orthodox) Christianity. To an anthropologist, the Catholic mass, and other normative Catholic actions, is similarly performance-oriented in nature: ritual actions such as (for example) blessing oneself with the sign of the cross, using holy water in blessings, saying the rosary, or praying the Stations of the Cross. Consequently the matter of ritual as performance is, for me, a critical juncture between the overlapping structures of mythos and praxis in Catholicism generally, but especially in regard to Native Catholicism.

Turtle Island Catholics

Performing the rituals of exchange, of gifting, and of sacrifice have long been important in the spiritual life of the People. They were, in fact, so very important that they were seen as serious threats to the orderly assimilation of the First Nations into the visions that first colonial, then dominion, and finally federal, governments had for desirable mainstream society. Thus it came to be that for many years in Canada, the potlatch, the give-away dances, the Sun Dance, the Thirst Dance, the Rain Dance, and countless other rituals of Aboriginal life were outlawed by the federal government, with the co-operation and policing actions of the churches.

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As a result, these traditional liturgical actions were almost lost to memory; even personal ceremonial acts such as sweats and vision quests were dying, parts of a banned way of life. In the painful years since the Ghost Dances at Wounded Knee (and more rapidly since the massacre at the same site) these rituals have been revived; in some cases changes have been made to accommodate the realities of contemporary life and increasingly urban environments, but all are once more vibrant rituals celebrated by the People across North America.

While a contemporary potlatch no longer involves the great coppers of high status clans, modern gifts are gathered in large numbers to be given away in the same spirit as were the coppers, cedar capes, and elaborately carved weapons and dishes in the pre-contact ceremonies. At Plains give-away dances, the objects with which to gift participants are no longer horses, bison robes, or wives, but microwaves, toasters, blankets, and pots and pans from Wal-Mart.

The point to be gained from these examples is that both in the past and today, the gifts possessed value beyond the obviously economic. It is the ritual of the gifting that matters most: a combination of formal obligation and ceremonial thanksgiving for both giver and receiver. The same combination of obligation and thanks is present in the celebration of the Catholic mass: these are qualities that create greater bonds, develop stronger relationships. These rituals speak to people, not only about themselves, but also about acting in and for their world. Ideas of service, not only as a sacred moment in a hectic week, but also as actions, ministry, and change are relevant here.

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What differentiates a mass at Lac Ste-Anne from one being celebrated at the same time in for example, Edmonton's St. Joseph's Basilica, Old St. Mary's in San Francisco, Notre Dame de Montréal, St. Willebrod in Manchester, or any other Catholic church anywhere in the world is not simply language, nor is it language combined with the hide vestments, nor is it burning sweetgrass, or even a combination of these. The differences (and there are differences in many other parts of the world that act on and react with parts of the mass) lie in intention, in perception, in cosmology and cosmogony, in colonial relationships and pre-contact relationships, in the rise of Pan-Indianism and in Aboriginal balkanisation, and in graves at Wounded Knee. These and other factors are described and examined in Chapter Seven: Trickster Meets Christ and Chapter Eight: Spirit's Fires, but here we are concerned with the outward appearances and inward meanings of the Native Catholic synthesised masses of the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage.

Mother Earth, Father Sky

Not every priest celebrating the mass at Lac Ste-Anne wears beaded hide vestments, though many do. Not every mass is heralded by the beat of large ceremonial drums, though many are. Not every homily is given in an indigenous language, though this is increasingly common. Sacred herbs send sweet smoke to Creator, and chiefs from the south wear their massive eagle-feather bonnets. Each mass is unique and special in its own right, so the following is a recounting of one mass, one time, and should not be considered 'typical' of pilgrimage masses: 'typical' does not apply here.

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The day is already hot; the sun has been high in the sky for hours though it is only 10 am. At the vestry tipi people are gathering for the 10 o'clock mass, while hundreds of others make their leisurely way to the shrine church. The morning chorale is underway: the sound of the big drum and men's voices chanting is the bass line, children's happy squeals are the sopranos, while kohkoms provide counterpoint, and mothers sing a descant urging families toward the shrine. Pilgrims move to their favourite places among the sea of wooden benches as at the altar and around the sacristy lay people make preparations. The music ministers – two guitars, an accordion, a keyboard, and about a dozen singers – rustle busily, setting up the instruments and disagreeing about what music has been selected. There is an air of expectation in the shrine and it is only 10:15.

Back at the vestry tipi, a cheerful priest with a braided ponytail and dark sunglasses sweats inside a heavy moose-hide chasuble and moccasins as he organises the procession – again. The cross-bearer has gone looking for one of the elders who has stopped to visit with friends; the lectors are looking at the readings for the day – one wants to switch, but the other is determined to maintain things as they are. Children and young people in brilliantly coloured ribbon shirts wait impatiently for the adults, and then it is time.

The cross-bearer raises the heavy carved and painted wooden cross; the drum beats steadily as the men begin an honour chant.[100] The large group of people moves

[100] I know from personal experience that the cross is very heavy because I was cross-bearer at the Cursillo-sponsored mass in 2001. The crucifix has been carved with an image of a Native Christ and then painted; it is beautiful and unusual.

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in stately procession to the beat of the drum, the drum they say is the heartbeat of the Christ. The sacred drum is very large and requires four ceremonialists to play it, one seated at each direction; this particular drum is situated outside the shrine, but I have been at masses where the drum was placed in the sanctuary near the altar. The men chant as they beat the drum in amazingly choreographed rhythm; later they tell me that they have played together for years, since they were young apprentices and now they are all grandfathers.

When the procession reaches the central aisle of the church, the musicians begin the gathering song and the people join in as the drumbeat softly fades. The rich smoky sweetness of burning sweetgrass rises through the air: an acolyte walking behind the cross carries the braided grass incense in a birch bark basket with a fireproof container inside it. Both acolytes in this instance are chiefs of the Blackfoot Confederacy and are dressed ceremonially with magnificent eagle-feather bonnet, heavily embroidered white deerskin vests, gauntlets and high-top moccasins. The procession is a sort of honour guard composed of elders – who periodically stop to greet friends in the congregation – dressed for the most part quite formally, the girls and young women of the Sarsi traditional dance troupe (splendid in white doeskin dresses, mink braid embellishments, and lavishly embroidered moccasins and ornaments), and concelebrating priests. Fr. Wes, a short, slender fair-skinned Polish Oblate with spiky blond-brown hair, is the mission priest at Standoff in the Kainai Nation; he is the principal celebrant for this morning's mass. Fr. Wes is dwarfed by his acolytes who are both over six feet tall and large men – in their

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ceremonial bonnets they easily top seven feet – yet there is no question that he is both respected and loved in his community.

Each individual stops and genuflects in front of the altar before moving to his or her position in the sanctuary: Fr. Wes with the chiefs to either side and slightly behind him; the dancers and most of the elders to the left (from the congregation's perspective) to the benches placed there; and anyone who is joining the musicians to sing heads to the right side of the altar and the area reserved for the music ministry. The order of the mass progresses, but there are differences throughout. Two young dancers accompany each of the elders as they come forward to the lectern to proclaim the readings from the Old and New Testaments. This is a ritual action acknowledging and celebrating the role of elders in the community, their wisdom that is passed on to younger people through traditional teachings, and the respect in which everyone holds them – and their words. It also synthesises the reading of scripture with the oral traditions of The People. The homilist is Chief Chris Shade of the Kainai who, though relatively young, is respected as a Catholic lay teacher, a political leader, a strong traditionalist, and an extremely astute businessman. His topic moves back and forth between references to the day's Gospel reading and daily concerns common to the assembly, just as his language moves between Siksikà and English. Chief Shade is a fine orator and apparently a popular one: the congregation listens closely to his words, even though there are many of us who understand only half – or less in some cases – of what he says. This is quite common in fact. When the chiefs or elders give the homily it is more often than not in their own language or in a mixture so that significant numbers of people understand only parts of the

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peroration. Unlike other masses I have participated in where perhaps the homilist has an unfamiliar accent or difficulty with English, the pilgrims at Lac Ste-Anne are respectful of different languages and traditions. Not to suggest that they sit in enthralled silence because there is as much rustling, twitching, munching of candy, and wiggling as in any other gathering, but the only time I heard anyone complain about not understanding the language was after a Dogrib mass. The chief's homily was easily an hour and a half long and delivered entirely in Dogrib, so that approximately one hundred people in an assembly of over 3,000 understood him.

Following recitation of the creed in English, the prayers of the faithful are offered by another elder accompanied by two young dancers. These intercessions are in English and Siksikà and relate closely to community concerns: there are prayers for special needs within the host group; prayers for the continuation and growth of the Oblate missions; supplications to Creator, Ste-Anne, and Jesus Christ for the pilgrimage and all pilgrims; prayers for those who suffer with addictions, domestic violence and unemployment; and the usual prayers for the Pope, the Catholic Church, and all those in need.

Priests and acolytes prepare the altar and we, the ushers, pass long handled cloth baskets along the rows of benches, collecting the mass offering that will help fund the continuation of the pilgrimage. A procession of elders from Treaty 7 (the Blackfoot Confederacy), together with their honour guard of young dancers, brings up the gifts of bread and wine. An usher carrying a basket with the cash collection follows them, leaving the basket in front of the altar. Following the prayer over the gifts, the central part of the mass begins with the Eucharistic prayer, and again there

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is a significant syncretic moment at the close of the memorial acclamation. The celebrant holds the host high, and says, "Through him, with him, in him; in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen" and at the precise moment the drum beat starts, the people sing Amen as they turn to each of the sacred directions starting in the east and moving sun-wise around the circle. The Great Amen is sung four times at the point of each direction, once "to the Father", once "to the Son", once "to the Holy Spirit", and once unspoken for the Triune Person of God. In this action Christ is the Eucharist and the Mystery, the centre of the sacred circle, and the essence of Creation itself that joins all creatures together in the circle of family. It is important to note that the ceremony is completed four times, once in each direction and that accommodation is made for the Trinitarian nature of Christianity to incorporate it fully into the sacred mystery of the medicine wheel.

The communion rite continues with few modifications (I have, however, seen bannock blessed and broken for use at communion) but much devotion and prayer. I am, as usual, an 'extraordinary minister of the Eucharist' and can assert from personal experience that a large percentage of the assembly receives the sacrament and that of those who do not, most come forward for a blessing by the priests. The prayers, final blessing and dismissal of the assembled church conclude the ritual, and the recessional actions follow the same form as the entry procession, but in reverse, so that as the closing hymn concludes the drummers take up the heartbeat and the cross, incense, elders, dancers, and priests leave the church to return to the vestry tipi.

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The language of the mass and of the hymns may be Cree or Siksikà, Dene or Dogrib, Saulteaux or Ojibwa, English or French but the rituals always move in a dance from Catholic to traditional and into a seamless blending of the two. It is often difficult to remember, after a week at the pilgrimage, what is 'standard Catholic' and what is Native Catholic. I find that the rich textures of Turtle Island hover in the air at masses for Sundays afterward, shimmering like the setting sun through the smoke of a thousand campfires. It seems appropriate now to spend some time considering the theology and spirituality of The People.

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Chapter Seven: Trickster meets Christ

From the corners of creation to the centre where we stand,
Let all things be blessed and holy, all is fashioned by your hand;
Brother Wind and Sister Water, Mother Earth and Father Sky
Sacred plants, and sacred creatures, sacred people of the land.

In the East, the place of dawning, there is beauty in the morn,
Here the seeker finds new visions as each sacred day is born;
All who honour life around them, all who honour life within,
They shall shine with light and glory when the morning breaks again.

In the South, the place of growing, there is wisdom in the earth,
Both the painful song of dying and the joyful song of birth;
As the earth gives up her lifeblood so her children's hearts may beat
We give back to her our reverence, holy ground beneath our feet.

In the West, the place of seeing, there is born a vision new,
Of the Servant of the servants, who proclaimed a gospel true;
Let the creatures of creation echo back creation's prayer,
Let the Spirit now breathe through us and restore the sacred here.

In the North, the place of wisdom, there is holy darkness deep,
Here the silent song of myst'ry may awake you from your sleep;
Here the music still and holy sounds beneath the snow and night,
In the ones who wait with patience for the coming of the light.

From the corners of creation to the centre where we stand,
Let all things be blessed and holy, all is fashioned by your hand;
Brother Wind and Sister Water, Mother Earth and Father Sky,
Sacred plants, and sacred creatures, sacred people of the land.[101]

This Catholic hymn, written by a non-Native and beloved of Native congregations across Turtle Island, emphasises a key value of traditional society: the

[101] These are the words to a hymn called *Song at the Centre* which I heard for the first time at a Franciscan mission outside of Scottsdale, AZ, during a Jicarillo Apache mass. I know that it was written by Marty Haugen as part of a Stewardship/Environmental series (possibly developed as a mass), but have no further reference to it, nor can I locate a copyright date anywhere. I have yet to find it included in a hymnal, though I would assume that it must be – or have been – at some time.

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inclusivity of creation, a whole existing in harmony, beauty, and order, a life that is process-oriented and community focussed. My intention with this chapter is to discuss both Aboriginal theologies and Catholic theology, elucidate the present discourse between the two, and consider future potential depths and breadths of interaction. In addition to theories documented by the written word, I have included the traditional conceptualisations of Creator, creation, and a cast of characters existing beyond time and space, as taught to me by elders and mentors throughout *Turtle Island.* However, some of these explanations may be truncated and some of the teachings I have received are not my story to share (and so, following Greaves 1994 and Grimes 1996, I respect my teachers and say nothing). This exception to the more usual academic transparency is a condition when working with Aboriginal peoples: both moral and ethical necessity according to the guidelines for dealing with others' intellectual property[102] and in acknowledgement of my respect for and gratitude to those elders who shared with me the sometimes secret governing beliefs, knowledge, and wisdom of The People.

Turtle Island

Anthropologists who look to research and write about the religions of Aboriginal people in North America encounter any number of problems, not the least of which is the difficulty of access to ceremonials exacerbated by the gentle obstruction of the numerous gate-keepers who cheerfully deny any knowledge of

[102] For a full discussion of Aboriginal peoples' intellectual property rights and anthropological research, see *Intellectual Property Rights for Indigenous Peoples: A Sourcebook*, edited by Tom Greaves (1994).

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ritual activities. One other major problem has to do with acculturation and will be discussed later in this chapter. The problems of access and dilution were addressed by Verne Dusenberry in the late 1950s and early 1960s:

> A study of North American Indian religion, especially that type of religion as practiced in the latter half of the twentieth century, presents many problems. One recalls immediately the long years of association with the dominant white culture and the subsequent disintegration of the native religion; one looks for evidences of diffusion or of syncretism. Certain aspects of Indian religion manifest these factors – in some instances so strong that one can suspect that very little of the original belief is left. More discouraging, however, is the fact that so many Indians seem to be living in a religious wasteland – the values of the past are gone; the Christian missions stand empty, sometimes deserted and abandoned, or else are struggling along with but a miniscule percentage of Indians in attendance at their services. Why, then, has religion which has always been a vital core in the life of mankind everywhere been so lost or weakened with the American Indian?
>
> Before one can begin to answer that question, he has to examine, if only briefly, the attitude of the Christian conqueror with whom the Indian has been in contact for three hundred and fifty years. Unfortunately for the Indian the basic assumption of the Christian has mitigated against him. With the idea that his was the

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> only religion, the colonist intolerantly and harshly chose every weapon at his command to eliminate Indian religion and to superimpose his own.... (Dusenberry 1998 (1962): 18.)

Verne Dusenberry's research is now over forty years old. Much of his fieldwork was completed almost sixty years ago, and while the recent re-issue of his published thesis was updated to some extent, the actual data remains as he observed and recorded it some half-century ago. For purposes of comparison to the contemporary situation and issues involved in Christianity and 'Native religious persistence' as it has been termed by anthropologists and Native Studies scholars alike, the material provides insights into the historical realities of maintaining traditional spiritual life while recognising the effects of Christianity and the 'push-pull' nature of the relationship between the two.

Dusenberry's perceptions of continuing traditionalism and of synthesised practices incorporating both traditional spirituality and Christianity offer us the vision of a dismal landscape completely lacking in the dynamic strategies and ceremonies I have found today. This may be history, or it may be geography, or perhaps the major influences were ethnic: different Aboriginal groups and different missionising forces. In any case, though I see a much brighter picture locally, many of the issues raised by Dusenberry still apply today. Numerous Christian sects still react negatively to the concept of Native philosophies; indeed Denny Auger, a Cree elder from Demarais-Wabasca, told me that he has been accused of devil-worship and of consorting with demons by certain radical fundamentalist Christian groups in his community. Unfortunately, Denny's case is hardly isolated; elders who live and

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teach their traditional philosophies are far too often the targets of ignorance and bigotry. One of the many illogical aspects to this prejudice is that the perpetrators are most often members of those groups that speak in tongues, believe in faith-healing and spontaneous cures through prayer and the laying on of hands, and often assert significant distrust of both the older Christian traditions and the western medical establishment. In other words, they share elements of belief that, when located in the Native community, is renamed demon-worship.

I spoke very briefly with the pastor of an Alliance Church in southern Saskatchewan about this troubling incongruity. His congregation included members from neighbouring reserves and from the town, and he admitted there was some tension regarding traditional spirituality. He could offer no explanation but said that his congregation was hosting a small conference on Native spirituality that weekend[103]; the organisers (who included an Aboriginal pastor from Regina, SK) hoped that education, dialogue, and greater transparency might yield at least tolerance and forbearance if not real understanding of the other's positions and beliefs. In travelling around the prairie and parklands of western Canada I have found an increasing number of these kinds of activities, often almost impromptu in nature, but sometimes organised to the point of advising sister churches about dates, times, and a basic outline for discussion. There seems to be some increased desire for cross-cultural understanding on the part of the non-aboriginal religious community. I am unconvinced as yet that these well-meaning people necessarily

[103] I was unable to attend due to previously scheduled surgery, but I understand that there were a reasonable number of people participating.

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recognise (or would accept if they did) that many of the rituals they regard as merely cultural window dressing are deeply religious to the practitioners. I can only hope, with the leaders of and participants in these grass-roots groups, that it is not too little, too late.

So much of Canada's indigenous heritage has been lost, deliberately destroyed, ridiculed and abased that one cannot disagree with the elders who refuse to share the old ways with anyone outside their own tribal affiliation. I have been fortunate that so many have shared with me and agreed to let me tell, at least in part, their stories. Some of my oldest and best-known stories come from my uncle, who was concerned that I learn at least some of my Mohawk heritage[104]. Joe was militant about being Indian long before AIM: as a young man he enlisted in the (then) Royal Canadian Army at the outset of World War II, but refused to be labelled a British subject. Invoking the terms of the *Great Peace of Montreal*, he insisted on Mohawk nationhood and, no doubt due to the situation, he was finally, grudgingly, enrolled without being termed British (though not as Mohawk). This kind of pride, and the Mohawk beliefs he taught me about correct behaviours, stewardship, respect, land use, plants and other medicines, and sacred rituals perhaps are peripheral to my research but have shaped me to be who I am, and thus influence the ways in which I do research, ask questions, assimilate information. While there are vast cultural differences between the western Plains peoples (even

[104] I am most grateful for his teaching and though at the time, like most small children and young teens, I wanted to do almost anything but memorise ancient histories I had been taught respect for my elders and so I sat quietly and absorbed what I was told. Joe's teaching is doubly precious because my father would only rarely tell the Choctaw stories of his youth.

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those who are relatively recent transplants, like the Cree) and the Iroquoian peoples of the eastern Woodlands, there are nonetheless more similarities between these two than exist between white and Aboriginal.

All my Relations

To understand some of these differences one needs a framework of the philosophical (or religious, or spiritual) differences between two peoples who treat these matters very differently. As Robert Staffason, Executive Director of the American Indian Institute has said,

> ...Native American spirituality is not easily defined [but] it has several defining characteristics:
>
> - Recognition of the interconnectedness of all Creation, and the responsibility of human beings to use their intelligence in protecting that interconnectedness. That applies particularly to the live-giving elements: water, air, and soil.
> - A belief that all life is equal, and that the presence of the life spark implies a degree of spirituality whether in humans, animals or plants. In their view the species of animals and birds, as well as forests and other plant life, have as much 'right' to existence as human beings, and should not be damaged or destroyed. That does not mean that they cannot be used but that use has limitations.

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- Their primary concern is with the long-term welfare of life rather than with short-term expediency or comfort. They consider all issues and actions in relationship to their long-term effect on all life, not just human life.
- Their spirituality is undergirded by thankfulness to the Creator. Prayer, ceremonies, meditation and fasting are an important part of their lives. But they ask for nothing. They give thanks: for all forms of life and for all the elements that make life possible, and they are concerned with the continuation of that life and the ingredients upon which it depends. (Staffason, 2004: 1)

Environmentalism or the consciousness of our part in local ecologies is a relatively new concern in western societies, but traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) has long formed the basis for a properly lived, respectful, and balanced life in indigenous communities. A simple summary[105] of the contrasts between two environmental perspectives also provides insights into the differences in spiritual philosophies between the Aboriginal peoples of North America and those who colonised, missionised, and industrialised Turtle Island.

For example, among the Cree (originally nomadic hunter-gather bands from the north eastern woodlands and areas around Hudson Bay and James Bay), attitudes about the earth and its inhabitants are structured according to ethical norms, so that:

[105] This summary is adapted from a table (source unknown) attributed to "Environmental Philosophy of the Chisasibi Cree People of James Bay" by Fikret Berkes, 1988. No publisher is noted.

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- Animal relations parallel social relations
- Self-identity is intimately connected with nature
- Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is empirical knowledge based on nature's cycles, and is holistic
- People hold humanistic perceptions of animals (often to the point of being fully anthropomorphic)
- Environment values are based on moral and spiritual attitude toward nature
- Restraint in controlling and exploitative behaviour and abilities is inherent in the environmental attitude
- Animals hold multidimensional roles in culture and society; they have intrinsic values such that the human right to obtain food does not diminish the animal's right to exist

In addition to being fundamentally indigenous values about Mother Earth and all of Creator's children (all our relations), these are also the attributes generally ascribed to what is referred to by the churches as 'Christian Stewardship'. This renders the typical Western attitudes toward the natural world paradoxical, in that these perceptions follow a far different form from what we might reasonably expect:

- Relations with animals differ from social ones
- Humans are perceived as "natural aliens" and masters of nature
- Environment knowledge is empirical in a reductionist, mechanistic, analytical sense
- There is a distinct perception of limits to animals' capacities
- Nature can be exploited because it is devoid of spirit

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- Economic incentives to ignore or avoid any restraints that might be imposed on exploitation of the environment
- Animals have only instrumental value inasmuch as they provide benefit to humans.

All of these points express moral, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual attitudes shared by the indigenous peoples of North America. One must always consider that in Aboriginal life there is no division between governance and religion, between education and spirituality, between understanding and believing, between the natural and supernatural worlds. In the beliefs of Turtle Island, humans are only one kind of the persons Creator made, only one sentient and spiritual life form among many others, not masters or designers of the worlds. All things are holy and all things sing of holiness, from the water to the rocks to the tiny deer mouse or the butterfly, eagle, a tree or a small girl. This is expressed in many ways, often as part of the oral histories of The People. To explain how every part of creation has singular importance and unique qualities even though we may not understand or even recognise these qualities in each other, the Crees tell a story[106] about the time before time when:

> All the animals were 'white' (meaning undifferentiated colours and textures) and they all spoke the same language, living in

[106] This is how the story was told to me. Over time I heard variations on the theme, but this was one of the first, and was told to me by my friend, mentor, and Cree language teacher, Emily Hunter (personal communication 1997). One similar version of the parable is documented in *Sacred Stories of the Sweetgrass Cree*, a collection by Leonard Bloomfield published in 1930 and based on research conducted in the early 1920s.

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peace and harmony. Everyone was happy with this state of affairs and life proceeded quite comfortably until one morning Trickster appeared with skin baskets filled with lovely paints and other fancy things. Wîsâkecâk himself (Trickster, and in this legend, in the guise of Bluejay), no longer without colour, was now a beautiful blue with lovely grey, black and white trim, and each of his glistening feathers could be clearly seen and appreciated by all. "Am I not magnificent?" he said to all the other animals. "Wouldn't you like to be beautiful too?" This idea of individual differences was difficult for our relations and many turned away from Trickster and his baskets. Trickster continued with his teasing ways poking at each of his friends to pick a lovely colour, but they ignored him, being accustomed to his foolish tricks.

But then, slowly, over many days and weeks, one by one, the animals crept to Trickster's baskets and changed their coats. Misinâpeminôs (Bobcat) chose lovely soft stripes and spots in tawny creams and golds with delicate black ear-tips and sparkling greeny-gold eyes. Wâ-wâ! He was gorgeous! Little sister Mouse (âpakosis), modest as always, selected a gentle grey-brown with bright little black eyes, and a fresh white belly and feet; wâposos (Rabbit), liking to be unusual, decided to change his colours with the seasons and so did some of his friends. Mighty Buffalo (paskwâwimostos) was slow to chose, and so there were few colours

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left over, but he was handsome in his brown coat with massive curly black shoulders and head, and happy that his children would be born orange and change colour as they grew up. Môswa (Moose), who as always was stuffing himself with food out in the maskek (muskeg or swampy land) where he lived, was very late and all that was left was a dull brown colour though he did find some impressively large antlers left behind in another of Trickster's baskets – but there were none for his wife, who still today has no antlers.

All the animals thought it was wonderful that they had chosen such exquisite, distinctive, different colours and styles for themselves, and they all ran around to their friends looking for admiration and approval. But, oh no! Mouse could not understand what mâskwa (Bear) said to her; Moose ignored Rabbit when he spoke; mîstacakan (Coyote) wrinkled his nose at his friend Skunk and paid no attention to what sikâk was saying about his beautiful black and white fur. Mâmaskâc! What had happened? The animals were all different now, and no one could understand anyone else. They became angry with one another, and scuffles started. Mîstacakan thought about how tasty âpakosis looked and after all, she no longer spoke sense to him, so perhaps it would be alright to eat her for supper…

Creator heard the squabbling and came to see what the problem might be. Trickster cleverly flew away and hid, but forgot

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to take the evidence of his mischief and left the empty paint pots behind. Everyone started to cry when they saw Creator because they knew that they had done something that would change their lives and their children's lives forever. "O, my little ones, why do you listen to Trickster? He causes mischief wherever he goes, and now you are lost to one another's wisdom: each kind is alone. Now you will hunt one another, and nâpewak (Men) will hunt you all." Creator was sad and he was angry, but he had pity for them and so he gave wîsâkecâk a loud harsh cry and appointed him the watchman for the others. He told our relations they could keep their beautiful fur and feathers but that they would never understand one another again. And so this is what happened then, and this is why we don't understand and care for one another as Creator meant us to do. Ekôski mâka (that's about all I have to say now).

When the elders tell some variation of this story to children (or anthropologists), they are teaching the values of community and harmony, the dangers of thinking one is superior to others, and of ignoring or disregarding the unique spirit and character of each living creature even though we are all a community. It is not important (or even desirable) to stand out from your fellows; what is important is that you take the time to be considerate of them, listen to them, live in peace with them, and not upset the balance of life. This remains one of the most fundamental traditional values in indigenous community. Because there is no sense of separation between secular life and sacred life (or the morals, ethics, or

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standards of the two), the oral histories of the People tell not only how life was but also how it should be lived today – not only how the sacred exists but also the paths of the mundane world. Time is before us, behind us, above and beneath us, to the right and to the left. Time is and time is not. This is a difficult philosophical concept for those who grew to adulthood in the world of linear time and Cartesian logic, and the failure to grasp it accounts for many misconceptions about Native peoples and social responsibility.

Creator's Laws

For the People of Turtle Island, no matter what their Nation or tribe, wisdom is gained through living. No one learns in a vacuum: one reason the elders so often tell me not to worry about my books or about writing things down. This is not to say that respect and appreciation of education is absent or low: indeed, many elders expend a great deal of effort and time encouraging young people to gain university degrees and go on to post-graduate work. It is simply that they do not believe that this is the same as or equivalent to wisdom learned by living or the knowledge of the heart. *Môniyâwak* education cannot feed a family in the bush, start a fire on a cold night, or comfort the heart of the bereaved. Intuitive and experiential knowledge and the spiritual understanding that comes from living according to Creator's laws can do these things.

Perhaps one of the ways to explain this is to quote a small part of the philosophies of the Iroquoian peoples, *Kaienerekowa*, often translated into English as the *Great Law of Peace* – an unfortunate choice of words implying rules, rigid

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concepts of right and wrong, and some form of policing and judiciary agency. A better way to say this would be something expressing balance, community, and harmony: Mohawk nationalist and author Taiaike Alfred suggests the *Great Warmth* or *Great Harmony* as better ways to express the intent of the laws (Alfred 1999). In the matter of righteousness or correct behaviour, *Kaienerekowa* states:

> You shall be a good person, and, you shall be kind to all of the people, not differentiating among them, the people who are wealthy, and the poor ones, and the good natured ones, and the evil ones who sin readily; all of them you shall treat kindly, and you shall not differentiate among them. As to your own fireside, never consider only yourself, you must always remember them, the old people, and the younger people, and the children, and those still in the earth, yet unborn, and always you will take into account everyone's well-being, that of the on-going families, so that they may continue to survive, your grandchildren. (quoted in Alfred 1999:97)

These words outline an expected behaviour that I believe to be the most enduring quality of traditional life: caring kindness toward all and consideration for and awareness of others.[107] The concepts are, as Alfred remarks regularly throughout his various writings, a common bond across Native America despite the hundreds of

[107] Like the story about Trickster's paint pots, this belief shares certain specific elements with Christian traditions. These are discussed below.

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languages, vastly differing social customs, and complex variations of spiritual beliefs: a bond that manifests in as many different ways as there are nations.

The governing system of the Iroquoian Confederation was more organised than, for example, the 'legal' structures of the peoples of the Plains: a basic difference between horticultural nation-states (with relatively large, relatively sedentary populations), and nomadic hunters (comprising smaller, highly mobile groups) whose rhythms followed the movement of herd animals such as bison. The peoples of the Northwest coast, with rich food sources close at hand, developed the potlatch system to maintain equilibrium and harmony along with a more structured, hierarchical method of governance than any of the more mobile peoples. Despite the differences, all are seen by the others to be relatives, similar and connected. Elsewhere I have touched on the Cree-Blackfoot wars and the wariness of Plains people toward Mohawks but, in the end we are all relations. In loss one may find strength and The People have lost much, often including their deepest beliefs; but in these days there is a revival of traditionalism and an increased interest and desire to create and practice a kind of Christianity that acknowledges Native identity and presence.

Native American spirituality, we have come to believe, is grounded in a kind of ecological theology that makes Aboriginal peoples natural stewards of the environment: an extension of the myth of the 'noble savage'. This perspective has been encouraged and even actively promoted by various New Age groups (though certainly not all of them) who wish to appropriate what is convenient and fits within their own highly personalised philosophies of the spiritual world. It has also been

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popular with some tour groups who encourage Europeans, most particularly German and Scandinavian tourists, to participate in 'real Indian camps' and dress in ornate faked skin garments with brightly coloured feathers in their hair. At least one popular (in the Aboriginal community) CBC television series originated in this fascination with Indian life: *The Rez* provided some truly memorable episodes based on the theme of German tourists looking for the 'real thing' on a reserve. What appealed most to the Aboriginal people I know who watched it was that it captured the finely honed sense of irony that underlies much of what on the surface is almost slapstick humour – the producers and director understood Ojibwa and Cree humour very well and used their knowledge to great advantage.

Humour and the ability to laugh at oneself and one's problems are endemic: the stories about Trickster in his various personae, the stories that explain allegorically many aspects of Native American spirituality. Because it is the grand ceremonials such as the Sun Dance, Rain Dance, and Potlatch that are most familiar to non-Native people generally, indigenous humour is not a widely appreciated quality and is rarely understood, yet most Canadians have probably heard a Trickster story or at least a part of one. And the English name for the Canada Jay, *Whiskey Jack*, is a direct derivative of the Cree name for the sacred clown and culture hero, *wîsâkecâk*. Among the Plains Ojibwa, Trickster is known as *windigokan*, and dancers, whose behaviour is opposite or backward to that which is appropriate, dress in burlap or skin rags and wear masks when they dance in the sacred ceremonies, including the Sun Dance. The *windigokan* dreamers are still present in some communities as a Secret Society whose members possess special gifts of healing

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(personal communications; also noted with variations in Hirschfelder and Molin 2001:332). *Nâpi* (Old Man) is another name for the Trickster, who according to the oldest theologies is part sun, part god, and part man.

It is said that *nâpi* created the World[108], and while this is a Plains story it is close in content (different animals and slightly different intentions underlying the tale) to the Earthdiver stories of the Eastern peoples. I have been told this story many times (but quote a documented version here):

> At one time the sun came out of his lodge at dawn to pace across an empty sky. Below him was an empty earth. There were no mountains, nor hills, nor prairies, but only a great water. Across the endless surface of this water Old Man and the animals floated about on a raft looking for land, but as far as they could see in any direction was emptiness – a sea of water below, a sea of air above. Search as they might they could not find even the smallest island.
>
> At last Old Man said to the loon, "Dive down as far as you can. See if you can find some mud and I will make some land." So the loon dived into the water but could find no mud. Then the muskrat tried, and the otter, but the water was too deep and they could find no mud. Then the beaver slid off the raft and was gone for a long time. He was gone so long that the animals on the raft thought that

[108] My understanding of the theology underlying the *nâpi*/Trickster persona is that he is actually another aspect of Creator – a more human side that makes bad jokes, is rude, tricks people, and yet is caring, helpful and loving. Creator is responsible for the existence of Trickster: sometimes the two appear as separate beings, at others they are combined.

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they would never see him again. But at last Old Man saw him floating on the surface of the water too exhausted to climb back on the raft. Old Man lifted him up, unconscious, from the water and there, clutched in his paw, was a little ball of mud.

Old Man took the mud and he made the earth. He piled up great heaps of mud and said, "You will be the Backbone." And so he made the mountains. He made Chief Mountain and the Crow's Nest, the Three Sisters and Devil's Peak and all the other peaks that are part of the Great Backbone, and he made the level prairie. He created the land which stretches from the Athabasca River in the north to the Missouri in the south, from the Great Divide on the west far out to the eastern prairies.

At first the world was bleak and bare, high walls of grey rock and wastes of desert sand. But Old Man covered them with grass, and with flowers and trees. He put birds in the sky and animals on the land. He made Man and taught him to live with the aid of the flowers and animals.

All these beautiful and kindly things are attributed to Old Man, but there are other stories about him too, stories that show him as mean and vicious, a mere buffoon and simpleton, foolish enough to be tricked by the very creatures he made. In other words he was just a creature, a name on which to hang the stories of the country. (A. Brown 2000 [1954]: 1-2)

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'Just a creature' says Annora Brown, who collected the stories as part of her "book of gossip of the flowers of the west" (Ibid: vii) but, like the *kachinas* of the southwest Pueblo peoples, nâpi is regarded as a supernormal, conjuring creature possessing supernatural powers; a being about whom stories are still told (and believed) by the peoples of the Plains.

Renewing the World

Nâpi created the fine garden in which the peoples of the Blackfoot confederacy live, a vast prairie rolling to foothills and then on to become the sacred mountains of the Nakoda nation. The sun shimmers above the land in summer and in winter, when the sundogs accompany *pîsim* across the sky. The seasons can be harsh, sometimes with no real rain and little snow for years, and so the people must observe certain ceremonies to ensure the continuance of life. One of these rituals is a dance that renews the world of The People. The Sun Dance (also called the sun-gazing dance or thirst dance) was and, once more, is becoming widespread across the whole of the North American prairies. The origins of the dance differ according to regional and tribal traditions; the one most people are familiar with is the Lakota (Dakota, Nakoda) version and it is, in my experience, the form adopted generally by the Plains Cree. In this tradition the Sun Dance is stipulated as a renewal ceremony, one of the Seven Sacred Rites given by White Buffalo Calf Woman in a vision. The time that a dance is to be held varies a little according to latitude but is now around the time when the chokecherries are starting to ripen: this far north it is not often held around the summer solstice. In fact, I have been told by Nakoda elders that the Sun-

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gazing Dance that was held at what is now a farmer's field immediately adjoining both the Alexis Reserve and the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage grounds was usually just days before the pilgrimage started[109]. The last dance in that particular location was about three years before I started my fieldwork in the area, so I have only the memories of others to go by.[110] I was told that just a day or so before the actual dancing was to begin an unknown *mônîyâs* farmer showed up with a bulldozer, demolished the newly refurbished lodge, knocked over and broke the Sacred Tree into splinters, and left it all as a pile of rubble. Stan, an elder, said to me, "My heart cried because our People lost everything that day. Would this man have done the same to the wooden church?" (Personal communication 1997) I hope that the farmer's actions were born of ignorance, not malice, but I suspect that like so many people he simply did not view the lodge as a sacred place. This is a cultural difference that transcends culture and enters the realm of the spirit; the lodge is on holy ground, a sacred and powerful place. The structure is built with formal ritual, with prayers and supplications to *kîsîmân'tou* (the Good Spirit) and all the people involved have undergone ritual purification in the sweat lodges and through smudging, fasting, and abstinence.

Perhaps Sun Dances today differ slightly in form from the original dances, but I have not located any documentation to prove or disprove the legitimacy of one dance form over another. There are many descriptions of the ritual with the first written accounts appearing in the early 1800s (Hirschfelder and Molin 2001:290),

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[109] It would have been sometime around the third week in July by this account.
[110] I have also heard that the Sun Dance is still held in the area in a four-year cycle, but can neither confirm nor deny the statement at this time.

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though tradition tells us that the ritual existed on the southern plains (in the United States) for a significant period prior to the arrival of the first white explorers and traders in the west. It was the availability of horses that encouraged development of the ritual to the north and west: people could travel and so could ideas and spiritual icons and actions.

The meaning of the ceremony and the reasons for its existence are, for the most part, common across the different nations[111] who naturally have their own names and traditional cosmogonies for these rites. In analysing the archival materials on the Sun Dance, I have located a number of discrepancies, many of which are reasonably traced to ignorance and prejudices on the part of the writer and, in fairness, are related to the social and cultural attitudes of the period. One account, published in *Alberta Folklore Quarterly* (which ceased publication in 1946), asserts that the purpose of the dances was sun worship in which young warriors called upon the 'Sun God' to favour them in battle. The author makes reference to an 'Idol Pole' (by which he means the Sacred Tree in the centre of the lodge) and talks about the role of 'conjurors' (medicine people and elders). Richard Hardisty was, by his own account, a young boy when he observed what he has termed the last Sun Dance held

[111] According to Hirschfelder and Molin, some variant of the Sun-gazing Dance has been practiced by the Arapaho, Arikara, Assiniboine, Blackfeet [and Blackfoot], Cheyenne, Comanche, Crow, Eastern Dakota, Gros Ventre (Atsina), Hidatsa, Kiowa, Lakota, Mandan, Ponca, Plains Cree, Plains Ojibwa, Sarsi, Shoshone, and Ute. (2001:289) I have read a number of accounts of dances held by the Atsina, Hidatsa, Kiowa and Lakota, (as well as some Plains Cree references) and I was told by an elder (a Jicarillo Apache) in Scottsdale AZ that his grandfather had said their people had a similar ritual at one time (personal communication 1998), so it is possible that the rite was practiced by even greater numbers of nations than this particular list indicates and across a wider geographic area.

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at Fort Edmonton. Given that Hardisty was deceased at the time of publication of his article and considering the references he makes to the peace gathering that ended the wars between the Siksikà Confederacy and Cree at *wetaskatwinatinac* or Peace Hills (now called Wetaskiwin), it seems probable that he was talking about the late 1870s or early 1880s. At the dance Hardisty witnessed, 48 young men qualified as warriors through the ceremonials of piercing and dancing. He notes that at the end of each day's dance there was feasting and drinking – he mentions strong teas boiled with blackstrap molasses, 'tobaccos', and saskatoon berries – as well as drumming, singing, and dancing, particularly of the Wood Partridge dance, the Prairie Chicken dance, Medicine Rattlers dance, and the Kit Fox dance, in specially erected dance lodges (Hardisty 1946: 59-60).

Hardisty's assertion that the ceremonial was a form of sun worship is refuted by most scholars in Native Studies and Aboriginal history. As Margot Liberty points out, the Sun Dance was not (with very few exceptions) even particularly sun-oriented, but was for most of the People an earth-renewal ceremony and a prayer for fertility (Liberty 1995: 152), a statement confirmed by the oral histories of the elders. Other nations attached the dance to the proper transferral of medicine bundles, or to the rites of a particular secret society, or even as prayers for revenge against enemies and vengeance for relatives killed in raiding wars. Performance and sacra were standardised across participating groups, even if the interpretations and intentions were not. The common factors were the single purpose lodge constructed especially for the dance each year and built around a central pole (normally made from a tree chosen by a holy woman) and the ritual dancing by young men guided in their

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actions by experienced older ones. In all cases, although there was much visiting, dancing, drumming and feasting[112], the Sun Dance was a solemn religious rite that forged and renewed community identity, affirmed the belief system and worldview, and demonstrated and rewarded those most sought after personal characteristics: courage, endurance, generosity, fidelity, and wisdom (Ibid: 153). Oral records suggested that the flesh piercing (as noted by Hardisty, above) was an Oglala (Lakota) custom: however, it is true that the People of the Canadian plains learned of the dance from the Oglalas and therefore adopted flesh piercing as part of their ritual. My understanding from elders and priest-organisers is that this practice is rare today, although it does still occur at secret and protected Sun Dance sites, mostly in Southern Alberta, Montana and the Dakotas.

In mid-June 2003, my husband and I were invited to participate in a Rain Dance (another variant name) held at a site on the Keeseekoose Reserve in Saskatchewan. Rather than flesh sacrifice there were give-aways by those petitioning for favours. As the supplicants danced (after lengthy prayers while holding the gifts to be distributed), elders gave items to people seated inside the parameter of the lodge while dancers behind the brush 'walls' blew eagle bone whistles, the drummers maintained a steady dance beat, and the priest and elders

[112] This is Hardisty's account, but a number of elders have told me that the dancers were prohibited from any involvement in the festivities until such time as their role in the dance was fulfilled. While the dance continued they were allowed only to sleep briefly at night and given a little water to drink, but could not eat. Written descriptions of sun dances (see Michael Hull 2000; Elizabeth Grobsmith 1981; Manny Twofeathers 1994; Koozma Tarasoff 1980; Clyde Holler 1995; Alice Kehoe 1963; David Mandlebaum 1979 [1940]; Katherine Pettipas 1994) support what the Cree, Kainai, Siksikà, and Nakoda elders have said.

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sang. At regular intervals we all stood and danced while gazing at the Thunder Nest on top of the pole, looking almost directly into the sun. This went on from about 8 am until sunset around 10 pm, with breaks for ritual meals served inside the lodge. I had brought bison meat (tongues would have been best, but the roasts made excellent stew) and others had brought elk and beef. The meat was flavoured with onions and mixed herbs and cooked in pots of water on large fires around the camp. When it was time for the ritual foods, the stew was ladled into large bowls and brought into the lodge. Servers dipped a portion into each of our personal bowls, and others brought pieces of bannock so we could wipe our bowls clean. After the stew we were served a special drink or soup made from Saskatoon berries mixed with local bush cranberries and some unspecified medicine ingredients. The cold tart soup, drunk from a communal ladle offered by servers, was shared by everyone present. Because the entire ritual was in a combination of Ojibwa and Saulteaux there were whole sections of discourse that I missed; my stumbling Cree was close enough for me to understand only a few segments. Leonard, the Rain Dance priest, tried to explain and to have other elders help in the explanation, because he was eager that I understand the actions and meaning of the ceremony. However, neither he nor any of the others could find words in English that would satisfactorily correspond to what they wished to express nor would they any of the Cree words I suggested. Their reasons for not speaking Cree were ambiguous, since some spoke with me in Cree about secular issues outside the sacred lodge. I have included this description because I have not yet attended a sun dance and the Saulteaux rain dance ritual

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appears to be similar in many ways to the sun or thirst dances, according to what my Nakoda, Kainai, and Siksikà consultants have told me.

There is no challenge in locating similarities between sharing ritual food and drink at a renewal dance and the celebration of the Eucharist that culminates in a communal ritual meal: partaking of some form of religious feast is spiritual praxis around the world. At this point, with the available data, it has been impossible to make any assertions about whether the practice of ritual feasting at Aboriginal renewal dances existed pre-contact, but there is no reason to suppose otherwise. There are certainly parallels between the spiritual intentions that frame the traditional Rain, Sun-gazing, or Thirst Dances and those of the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage. These might be taken as an indication that The People, as they embraced the newcomers' religion, also kept the most essential aspects of the old and melded them into a satisfactory singularity. To further clarify this process, one must recall that the Plains peoples were denied the dance by government order both in Canada (1876) and the United States (1883), and that in particularly repressive cases this denial was reinforced by withholding treaty rations (beef tongues in particular because they were substituted for the sacred buffalo tongues) that would have been reserved for the dances. [113] Thus the sacred feasts that traditionally had been part of the ritual patterns became impossible to continue. Dancing became an offence punishable under law, and was described by white missionaries and Indian Agents as degrading, primitive, gruesome, and evil. Some communities tried to carry on by substituting

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[113] In both cases however, missionaries and Indian Agents invoked laws both before they were applicable to the ceremonies and for many years after they had been revoked.

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another name for the same ritual (such as the Cheyenne 'Willow Dance'). Others changed the time of the dance to coincide with acceptable activities (for example Hirschfelder and Molin 2001 note a record of the Montana Blackfeet holding their dance on the Fourth of July); and some groups held public powwows and hidden sun dances at the same time, in an early attempt to use tourism for their benefit. Officially eradicated by the 1880s in reality the Sun-gazing Dance survived church and state persecutions, albeit in more localised forms thanks to the rigidly imposed restrictions on movement after the implementation of the reserves system.[114]

Katherine Pettipas provides a detailed historical account of Canadian government repression of Native religious rituals in her book, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (1994). She discusses the roles played by the churches and government agents in this repression: the whole point of the Indian Act of 1876 was to accelerate assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into mainstream Canadian society. This has been noted by many contemporary writers and even today is a point of contention between Aboriginal peoples, churches, and the government. As Hank Zyp writes:

> The official Canadian government policy has been to root out any traces of native spirituality. The reserve system and the notorious

[114] There is evidence that the government of the Republic of South Africa modelled their design for *apartheid* policies, particularly the requirements for pass-books (*Population Regulations Act* 1950) and the Bantu homelands created by the *Bantu Authorities Act* (1951) on the Canadian Indian Reserve system. (For further information on this subject, see York 1990 (especially 228-261) and http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-71-703-4124/conflict_war/apartheid/clip8.

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> residential school system were devised to assimilate the aboriginal people into the Western European mode of thinking.
>
> Harold Cardinal called this colonial arrogance a form of 'cultural genocide'. Father Rene Fumoleau has said that it was believed that by now [the late 1990s] the native problem would be solved and the First Nations people would either be integrated or dead.
>
> Nothing of the sort happened, and after the closure of the residential schools a revived interest in native spirituality occurred which saw young native leaders travelling across the continent to seek out elders who could instruct them in the traditional ways. (Zyp 1996: no page number)

To perhaps clarify Zyp's comments, Fr. Fumoleau was not condoning the principle of assimilation. On the contrary, he has spent most of his adult life as a missionary among the Dene and Dogrib people of the far north, celebrating their lives and cultures in his writing (see especially *As Long as this Land Shall Last* 1973, and *Here I Sit* 1999).

On my travels through Indian Country asking many questions, I have been fortunate to meet some of these leaders Zyp talks about, many of them now greying, well-educated chiefs and advisors. At Morley, Alberta in late July 2001 I met Herb, now a lawyer and activist for his people – at that time he was legal counsel for the Assembly of First Nations. Herb is Gits'kan and a chief; his wife is Haida. Their eldest son will one day be an hereditary chief in Haida'Gwaii because the office is

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inherited through his mother's clan. Herb had travelled to the first Indian Ecumenical Conference in the 1970s as a young man seeking to discover traditional ways. He was, as was I decades later, fortunate to be accepted and mentored by Chief John Snow of the Morley Nakoda Nation. Herb told me he learned more from Chief John than he could even have guessed at the time, but that various teachings come to him when he needs them and that one of Snow's greatest gifts to him was learning the patience to seek out and recognise people from whom he would learn more.

One of the things Herb and others of these young men have learned is to be cautious when politicians come bearing gifts. Many Native leaders today assert that the current push toward Aboriginal self-government is another attempt to complete the assimilation begun shortly after the colonisers arrived.[115] It is not self-governance that is the issue, but rather the frameworks, restrictions, and trade-offs the federal government proposes that are problematic.[116] Most Aboriginal elders and leaders want to see restitution and recognition as part of the package, and seek to develop truly indigenous systems that respect not only the differences between Euro-Canadian concepts of government, justice, law, education, and religion and those of native Peoples, but also the unique differences of each cultural identity across Turtle Island. In other words, while Indian Affairs and the federal government see only

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[115] Ovide Mercredi, Elijah Harper, Joe Norton, and Phil Fontaine have all publicly stated their concerns regarding the kind of 'self-government' proposed by the federal government.

[116] There are so many controversies and problems with the formulation of self-government that, like the residential schools scandals, except where it touches on the immediate considerations of Native Christianity, I have left it for consideration as a possible future project.

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'Indians', people who are sensitive to Aboriginal life recognise that what works for the Dene will not work for the Saulteaux. The government, and most whites, tend to regard all Aboriginals as one ethnicity with tribal subsets whose only real division is whether they live on reserves or in urban ghettos. There is a good reason why The People generally prefer the use of 'nation' over the coloniser's concept of 'tribe'. Some, like the Rotinoshonni, have always claimed nationhood and signed no treaty with the Dominion of Canada, dealing directly as equals with the British monarchy; others, like the Kainai (who live on the largest reservation in Alberta) have more recently embraced the idea of an indigenous nation. Nationhood for these People is the autonomy to manage themselves and their resources in ways congruent with the community worldview; it defines and maintains identity in the same way that calling oneself Canadian, Italian, or German does. Further to this, in Turtle Island nationhood implies a conscious re-integration of the sacred and the profane, revitalising an ancient way of life and ensuring its continuance in the 21st century. It is the elders, both men and women, who will mentor the People, reach consensus, and by so doing, will shape the *red road* to national integrity for the People; it is not the government of Canada with its legislations and regulations.

The term red road is verbal shorthand in Indian Country for the Aboriginal way: it encompasses identity, personal style, community norms, relationships within and without the reservation, the accepted traditional (and neo-traditional) ways of teaching, commerce, family, governance, and religious beliefs and observations. These are not survivals, but rather a framework for conducting one's life that is, ideally, in harmony with all of one's world. It relies in large measure on a creative

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synchronicity. Or, as John Epes Brown notes about the Aboriginal peoples of North America,

> Most surviving groups ... have shown through history a remarkable ability for coping with change and cultural deprivation by adapting and borrowing from the non-Indian world with pragmatic yet cautious selectivity, making it possible not just to survive but to retain at least core elements of ancient and well-tried religions and traditional ways of being. The 'new' religious movements of revitalization or reformulation, in response to deprivation and continuing pressures for acculturation, should therefore be understood in terms of a continuity of traditional elements rather than as innovations related to the peoples' own religious and cultural history. The impact of Christianity and the special meaning of 'conversion' to the American Indian should also be understood in this larger context. (J. Brown 1995: 2)

This brings us to a discussion of Catholic Christianity and later, to the adaptation and conscious syntheses between Native and Catholic theologies that have produced ritual events like the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage, parishes like Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, and paved the way for a female anthropologist to be invited as an honoured guest in the sacred circle of the Rain Dance lodge and at other traditional ceremonials.

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The Wooden-stick Boat Religion[117]

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (2004) is designed as a source and guidebook for adults working with young people; I have found that it is both well-informed and more 'user-friendly' than many of the texts written with adults in mind and so have used it as a reference for this particular section on Catholicism. In a section on liturgical rites and traditions within the church, a sidebar provides some information on various traditions:

> Did you know that not all Catholics are Roman Catholic? The word Roman designates a particular Catholic Church, but there are other Catholic Churches with their own unique traditions: American Ruthenian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Chaldean, Ethiopian, Eparchy Krizevic, Greek, Hungarian, Italo-Albanian, Maronite, Melkite Greek, Rumanian Greek, Slovak, Syriac, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, and Ukrainian Greek. Most of the non-Roman Catholic Churches reflect the culture of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and so they are called the Eastern Catholic Churches. The liturgical traditions of the Eastern Catholic Churches are different from the Roman Catholic (Latin) liturgical tradition. Like Roman Catholics, Catholics from

[117] I worked with Emily Hunter of the School of Native Studies on her project to preserve what the elders now call 'High Cree' – the old ceremonial language that almost no one understands now. Emily and I both enjoyed determining the etymology of various words, and because Catholicism came with the men who travelled in wooden boats and wore women's black dresses, it became in the old way 'the wooden-stick boat religion', just as one of the ancient terms for white men (and still for Québécois) translates as 'wooden-stick boat people'.

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> those Churches acknowledge the Pope as the head of the universal Church. (Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth 2004:105)

The above does not include either the Orthodox Churches of the Eastern rite, nor does it mention the inculturated rites that are emerging in Africa, Asia, the Philippines and the Americas. Additionally there is no mention of the ages-old practice of adapting and incorporating cultural icons into Catholic traditions.

While not a subject most of us would give much thought to, the reality is that the early history of Christianity reveals an often tumultuous and even acrimonious story of adjustment, adaptation, and merging with local religions and cultures. It is a fact that without inculturation there would be no Christian churches. Traditional Judaism and the new Christian sect had a syncretic relationship from the beginning of Christ's ministry. The Biblical Jesus was born to devout Jewish parents who observed the proscriptions and prescriptions mandated by their faith. Later deviations from Judaism were part of the emergence of the new religion that followed the teachings of a young, charismatic rabbi, but that always drew its character from its origins. When the disciples went out to the Gentiles to spread Jesus' teachings, more vernacularisation found its way into the local churches as they undertook deliberate adjustments to what they had learned with the specific intention to provide culturally congruent concepts for peoples in other lands.

> The situations of the communities of Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, James, the pastoral epistles, the Book of Revelation are sufficiently distinct to demand often very different renderings of the common narrative, the common following of Christ, the common

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> confession of Christ in different – often very different – cultural and historical situations of the first century of Christianity.
>
> Indeed that early New Testament period is the surest analogue to our own situation. Catholic Christianity can no longer afford to be Eurocentric any more than early Christianity could afford to be purely Judaic if it would reach all the Gentiles in ways that they could understand and appropriate the common faith in their own cultural forms. (Tracy 1989: 29)

With the incorporation of indigenous symbols, practices, and sacred objects as part of the liturgies, and the explication of Catholic concepts in Aboriginal terms, we witness the continuation of a process dating back millennia. Furthermore this is not a finite process, but rather one that evolves steadily over time as the People become increasingly confident of their identity as Native Catholics. The best local illustration of this evolution is Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, Alberta. Since I first attended mass at SHCFP in 1995 through to my most recent attendance in 2003, there have been significant changes to the interior of the church and more importantly to the liturgy. The following practices and others like them are all critical aspects of the growth of the Indian church:

- asking an elder offer the blessings and pray for the people and the priest,
- public recognition and blessing of those who seek healing of alcoholism and drug abuse,
- regular sharing of communal meals after masses,

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- symbolically understood and outwardly stated presence of the sacred circle as church and as family,
- increased grassroots leadership.

The Catholic Church is by its own definition universal and inclusive; the sacred circle is also inclusive of everyone.

Many aspects of Christian theology presented no difficulty for The People when they first encountered its missionaries. One of the common beliefs of Native peoples is that the Creator who created such beautiful diversity in nature – among trees, flowers, people, rocks, animals, languages – would certainly accept diversity in religious matters, and would listen to everyone's prayers. This facilitated an exchange that has resulted in the incorporation by each of concepts, sacra, dogma and ritual that were originally the province of the other. Both traditions are rich in texture, colourful in aspect, and venerable in age, however Native traditions are much, much older. The distinctive nature and distinguishing characteristics of Native American traditional philosophies have led some theologians to speak of this cluster of spiritualities as a sixth world religion. Perhaps more to the point is that these traditions are not lost in history, but remain part of the examined life of many peoples:

> ...American Indian religions represent pre-eminent examples of primal religious traditions that have been present in the Americas for some thirty to sixty thousand years. Fundamental elements common to the primal nature of those traditions not only survive into the present among Indian cultures of the Americas, but in many cases

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> are currently being re-examined and reaffirmed by the people with increasing and remarkable vigor.
>
> ... out of this heritage of primal qualities there has developed, through time and in accord with the great geographical diversity of the Americas, a rich plurality of highly differentiated types of religious traditions, making it impossible to define or describe American Indian religions in generalities.
>
> ... ever-increasing contacts since the fifteenth century with representatives of diverse civilizations and cultures of Europe and Euro-Americans led to a vast spectrum of change within and across indigenous Indian cultures. Under this impact certain tribal groups and even linguistic families became extinct, while others became acculturated to varying degrees into the dominant societies. (J. Brown 1995: 1-2)

Those who did not become extinct have remained to adapt the cultural and religious imports to suit their needs, and so we have annual events like the Lac Ste-Anne pilgrimage drawing people together.

Part of the power, and therefore the draw, of the shrine is belief in the healing power of the lake's water, but another aspect of this power lies within the people themselves. More than believing that God is with them, they know it with their hearts, minds, spirits, and bodies: the pilgrims are faith embodied. Most have endured and survived traumas throughout their lives: loss of parents, children, siblings; loss of language and culture; loss of pride in their lives and their people.

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But even though mythos, logos, and praxis have undergone significant paradigm shifts since the incursion of the ghost men in stick canoes, the people have not lost faith in Creator.

Ghost Men and The People

I remember most vividly the people. The services, music, prayers, long days, bonfire-lit nights, flickering candles, the wind, cold lake water, the smells of cooking, of sweetgrass and sage, of lake weeds and mud, of thousands of people crowded together – these are indelibly inscribed in memory: filed away to be re-run like never-ending digital disks, but the people are more vibrant, more dynamic than any of the other mental images. There was Gil who came from Pelican Rapids, a dark, handsome, smiling man in his fifties who told me about his first pilgrimage. He and some other boys came with one of the *moshoms* (grandfathers); they were all orphans or deserted children. They walked part of the way and sometimes got rides in the backs of pick-ups, sometimes they took a bus for as far as they could afford. He said they stayed here at the lake for two or maybe three weeks, praying with the old man, attending the masses (not as many in those days, he remarked with a chuckle). *Moshom* also taught them about the medicine plants, which local indigenous foods were good, and how to catch these southern fishes. They prayed "in the Catholic way and in our way" and felt no difference between the two, he said, though the elders' way was closer to the land and lake, and to little boys' spirits.

Florence, from Meander River, told me stories about her brother – now a recovering alcoholic after participating in the Sobriety Pledge – and about her

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mother, now deceased, who had attended so faithfully with her many children. Florence was afraid of what might be lurking in the water to bite her and wore my sandals more often during the week than I did. She had an apparently infallible ability to locate me and appropriate my Tevas (rubber canoeing sandals), looking around with a giggle and glowing black eyes. One morning she brought with her two young nieces and a plastic bag of bannock slit and smeared with saskatoon berry jam. The four of us sat in the weak sunlight of a cold, wet July morning, warming our hands around coffee cups, munching our breakfast, and arguing about whose turn it was for the sandals. I look for her every year but saw her only that one summer and so I wonder what happened to her and where she is now.

I met Rick one day at a picnic table near the shrine. I was buried in making my notes when he walked over and sat down, a mug of strong tea in each hand. He pushed one in front of me, introduced himself and said he was from a Métis settlement to the north-east. After we talked for an hour or so, he told me a story about two white women who were stolen from their families and taken to Big Bear's camp. The women were part of a group that was on the way to join Louis Riel's party. Perhaps the rest made it, but these women stayed on with Big Bear's people and had Indian babies. His grandmother was one of those children and grew up with stories of both Big Bear and Riel which she passed on to her children and grandchildren.

Chelsea, Bonnie, Deborah, Monica, Jules, Andrew, and Stan adopted me the same hot dusty afternoon that they arrived on the bus that almost ran over our tent. As soon as their camps were set up they raced over to tell me the bus driver was

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really sorry and too embarrassed to talk to me, so all of us went to comfort the poor man. The kids ranged in age from not quite seven to 'almost twelve', and were all from Nelson House or nearby, and they seemed to feel that their bus driver's miscalculation had made them responsible for me. Responsibility in this case meant checking on whatever I might be eating or drinking (they were all competent tasters); helping out by clearing the cookie tin, the juice jug, and eating all the bacon and sausages. Responsibility also appeared to mean they had to be sure I was awake before the sun and that I shared in their campfire late into the night. In the evenings they brought wildflowers and wild stories of their heroic actions throughout the day while I went to mass and talked to adults. They came rushing to get me when they found Jesus' baby footprints on a big rock in the lake. I took pictures of them all, and we took pictures of me with them. Chelsea's grandma (who raised her and one of the other children, both orphaned soon after their birth) gave up trying to keep them away from my camp and "made up for them kids botherin' ", by bringing us fresh bannock. We all shed some tears when it was time for them to board the bus and leave for home.

My pilgrimage experiences and fieldwork indicate that pilgrim's narratives about their sacred journeys are often framed as journeys of restoration. Many of the personal stories involve sub-textual explications of how balance, harmony, and order as well as distance from the difficulties of everyday life relieve the internal and community conflicts and affect a healing and purification of their own, providing the reassurance of 'Indian-ness' even though Christian. Though, like syncretism, the idea of Pan-Indianism is anathema to purists in anthropology and theology (not to

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mention a number of scholars of Native history), the fact of it is far more a concern of those same anthropologists, theologians, and scholars of Native historic cultures than it is to the Native people themselves. As Sheldon Meek, the artist whose exquisite Stations of the Cross adorn Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, said to me during an interview early in 1996, "I'm half Ojibwa, half Irish, I got my Indian name from a Blackfoot elder, and I live with Crees and mostly follow their customs – I'm an Indian." (Personal communications, 1996)

Describing the synthesis of cultures, ethnicities, and spiritualities in the form of a partially explanatory story – a parable of sorts – is typical of Indian Country. One of the most skilled contemporary writers of such tales, Drew Hayden Taylor, Ojibwa/white writer and comic, has attained the status of 21st century Pan-Indian culture hero. Taylor describes himself as a "Pink Man" since he is, he says, half red and half white. He has fair skin, blue eyes, and light brown hair: people do not merely assume that he is white, they simply refuse to believe that he is Indian and so to conclude the "Introduction" in his first book, *Funny, You Don't Look Like One*, he writes:

> For as you read this, a new Nation is born. This is a declaration of independence. My declaration of independence.
>
> I've spent too many years explaining who and what I am repeatedly, so as of this moment, I officially secede from both races. I plan to start my own separate nation. Because I am half Ojibway, and half Caucasian, we will be called the Occasions. And of course, since

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I'm founding the new nation, I will be a Special Occasion. (D. H. Taylor 1996:14)

This is one individual's way of talking about what is a significant issue for so many First Nation's people: being a blend of two (or more) cultures, ways of life, ethnicities, and spiritualities. In the next chapter, I look at these disparities in terms of culture and religion and at the ways the Native peoples of western Canada have come to resolve, at least in some measure, a reality that still poses both theoretical and practical problems for the Catholic Church.

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Chapter Eight: Spirit's Fires

Currently the Vatican has not approved liturgical variations accommodating Native American cultures, but a strong populist movement calling for, and currently practicing, syncretic rituals is evident across North America. The design of physical structures seems less regulated than liturgical practice, so that the architecture of Native Catholic churches is beginning to reflect the nuances of an emerging rite. We see circular buildings, observance of the importance of the four directions and medicine wheel, the use of Aboriginal symbols in design and decoration, emphasis on Native cultural events and involvement of the laity in patterning not only rituals but also the Church's role in the community. Exotic and appealing as these sensory differences may be – and however tempting one might find it to regard them as proof of otherness – we are cautioned to remember the words of Nicolas Thomas: "[c]ultural differences must...be acknowledged and interpreted, but should not occasion a kind of writing in which tribal people inhabit a domain completely separate from our own." (N. Thomas 1991:8)

The complex processes of cultural contact – and most particularly of religious contact – borrowing and blending, sifting and synthesising, are political acts of simultaneous globalisation and balkanisation, of inclusion and exclusion. They serve to create or remove boundaries, to encompass or exaggerate differences, and to blur or clarify the edges of conflicting ideologies. In one popular albeit cynical perception, these processes are deliberately engineered as multifunctional tools for

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marketing new and revised notions of culture and religion to people who (apparently mistakenly) thought they knew who they were and what they believed. While this position acknowledges the power of both culture and religion in society and seeks to appropriate and rearticulate established 'traditional' values as a means of influencing social behaviours, it disregards totally the potentially enormous human appeal of synthesised products and processes.

If, however, we accept the validity of Nicolas Thomas's comment, we are recognising first the need to 'acknowledge and interpret' the post-modern cultural predicament without essentialising and/or exoticising the peoples and practices we write about and second, granting those same rights of acknowledgement and interpretation to our own exotic cultural realities. Tribal or urban, technologically simple or complex, human societies adopt and adapt ideas, stories, goods, practices, myths, and any number of other consumables through culture contact and cultural exchange: a process we call *syncretism*. Throughout this work, I take syncretism to be the process of socio-cultural synthesis and attendant relations of politics, power, and agency (see Stewart and Shaw 1994:6-7).

Syncretism can be viewed as the means by which we, to paraphrase Ulf Hannerz, accumulate and organise our experiences, initiating and developing a perspective that enables us to generalise responses to new experiences and demands, and creating a personal paradigm for continuing mythos and praxis (see Hannerz 1992:67).

Syncretism also refers to the synthesis of different ideological forms, in this case of religious formulations and conceptualisations about spirituality, ethics,

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morality, and relationships with the natural and supernatural worlds. While the term itself has been misused in derogatory senses to attach implications of potential inferiority, impurity, inauthenticity, or error to synthesised belief systems, there is neither etymological nor factual support for these notions. It is, however, this attachment to the idea of absence of authenticity in the presence of syncretism that has caused scholars in both religion and anthropology to search for other terms, and so we have a lexicon of synonyms and pseudo-synonyms for a perfectly useful, straightforward word. While anthropologists have become more open to the idea of fluidity (and thus syncretism) in religion and culture, many theologians and experts in religious studies and history are reluctant to recognise synthesised spiritual systems as valid – the difference lies, I expect, between a pragmatic acceptance of the visual, aural, oral, and experiential evidence on the one hand and (possibly) concerns over misplaced faith and beliefs on the other. Without stipulating either as a 'correct' path, I have chosen to tread the razor's edge throughout this thesis: following the early Roman Catholic usage and the lead of Erasmus of Rotterdam, I use 'synthesis' simply to denote the mingling of religious ideas and actions that may or may not frame an emerging unity of spiritual thought. The concept is one of reconciliation and tolerance between equals and not, as it later became for both Catholics and Protestants, a "betrayal of principles at the expense of truth" (van der Veer 1998:485).

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The Church, The State, The People

The project of inculturation, as old as Christianity, has been promoted with varying degrees of enthusiasm by clergy and missionaries as an evangelising method and as an adjunct to colonisation of indigenous peoples around the world. Within the Catholic church (which inherited the concept, if not the acceptance, of syncretism as part of the church's origins), the practice of religious inculturation has been variously coloured by the national allegiances and cultural biases of the clerics involved, so that colonised peoples influenced by French Catholics have developed a very different synthesis than, for example, those who were evangelised by Spanish Catholics. The march of history in the home countries profoundly influenced the style and framework of inculturation adapted by missionary priests, determining whether a sense of the people's original mythologies and practices survived or whether in fact inculturation was a gloss for assimilation or even for annihilation. An obvious additional influence to the emerging form of Christian practice has been the presence or absence of parallel notions between the pre-existing traditions and those more recently introduced. By now, the 21st century as I write this, we in North America are dealing with what is at least a fourth or fifth iteration of the 'new' religion imported here by European missionaries from the 16th century forward. Despite a kind of acceptance of this reality, most members of the Catholic and, in my experience most Christian, clergy profess horror and repugnance at the idea of *syncretism* between Christian beliefs and those of other religious persuasions, even while they are equally outspoken in favour of *inculturation* in the same contexts.

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It is no surprise that these iterations have developed in response to changing times, mores, politics (religious and secular), and socio-economics. What is, perhaps, surprising is the manner of development, the niceties of language used to describe the process itself, and the diversity of attitudes regarding the process existent in historical records, present day theologies, ethnicities, bureaucracies, missionaries, religious directors, priests, lay ministries, the 'dominant' force, and the 'subjugated' body. *Inculturation* "refers to encounters whose outcome is a convergence that does not replace either of the cultures from which it arose. Both parties to the inculturation exchange undergo internal transformation, but neither loses its autonomous identity." (Angrosino 1994: 825). Angrosino notes that the Synod of Bishops actually produced a working paper that identified the Catholic Church as being "in a stage of welcoming in a profound way those elements that she encounters in every culture, to assimilate them and integrate them into Christianity, and to root the Christian way in different cultures" (Ibid). This kind of welcoming has appeared true insofar as 'elements' of other cultures are integrated into vernacularised liturgical ritual (though mostly of the art and environment variety), but is notably absent when inculturation would require the church to adjust for and accept fundamental changes to non-ritual praxis (e.g., a married clergy, female priests, more lay involvement in institutional direction with more authority, more contemporary attitudes and teachings regarding birth control – and sexuality in general. There should be no doubt that the Vatican has emphasised one single aspect of culture in its contemporary inculturation plans: that of ritual, yet this too is subject to discipline and revision, as in the case of Brazil where certain liturgies were banned

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for being overly incarnational. Indeed this is one of the reasons that liberation theology has been so poorly received within the church hierarchy: it, like deeply incarnated liturgy, goes too far from the standard Roman teachings, into the ethos of the 'other' in its efforts to reach the indigenous and the poor.

The Canadian Catholic Bishops have expressed support for the development of a syncretic theology:

> The Church appreciates this development of a Native Catholic spirituality and a Native expression of Catholicism. This spirituality is characterised by an innate harmony with all of creation and all peoples, by the importance it attaches to individual and community healing, and by the conviction of a need for greater justice. All of these traits of Native spirituality are present in a particular way in the Church because of the contributions of Native Peoples by their presence and their spirituality. The Native spiritual voice is now finding greater resonance in the broader Christian and social worlds. Native Christianity today is marked by the development of a theology that comes from Native prayer, culture, and experience.
>
> ...We are aware that many ceremonies and traditions of the Native Peoples may have been misunderstood and too easily pushed aside. The Sacred Pipe, the Vision Quest, the Fast, and the Sweat Lodge are gifts that your ancestors passed on to you as ways of relating to the Creator and to each other – practices understood in the light of the Good News of Christ.... We encourage all priests, brothers and

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sisters who work with you to help you develop ways of expressing Native spirituality within the Catholic Church (1995:24-25)

All of this notwithstanding, inculturation remains the term most favoured by the Roman Catholic bureaucracy when identifying a form of sensitivity to those cultural differences that may be, it is believed, productive of misunderstandings concerning the meanings of the sacraments, rituals, sacra, and liturgy of the church. While the term itself is more widely used today than it was even when I first began my research, I am not entirely convinced that the majority of parish priests or workers fully understand or truly accept the idea of inculturation as a necessary and valid process of contemporary faith formation and community worship, despite almost forty years of theoretical support for the notion, and over twenty years of active marketing of inculturation by the Holy See. Most, however, make a claim for some form of inculturation within their parishes. Certainly the requirement for cultural sensitivity and thoughtful integration is found in many communities (those most common in Canada being Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Filipino, South Asian, Polish, Romanian, Italian, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, and the vast urban 'reservations' of our major cities), and not only at Native missions. However, in the Americas, as in Australia, New Zealand and the continent of Africa, it has been indigenous religious beliefs that, frequently with government approval and support, have been suppressed, denied, ridiculed, attacked, persecuted and prosecuted. In an enormous effort to rectify centuries of oppression, the Church now teaches its seminarians to respect the cultures of others: however, just exactly how they are to implement the principles is often problematic, not as easily taught, and too frequently

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left to the individual's own resources. In 1996-97, I was approached by Fr. Jean Papin of Newman Theological College who asked me to prepare and deliver seminars on inculturation to his students in pastoral outreach. It was a mixed group that included ordained clergy, seminarians, and lay ministers and liturgists: while the information and suggestions for practical adaptations and applications were well-received by all the participants, it appeared that there were some serious reservations as to actual implementation in the parish or mission setting.

Though the terms inculturation and syncretism share surficial similarities of purpose, there is a vast perceptual difference between the two words – they are actually worlds apart. Perhaps one of the most alarming aspects of syncretism to the Catholic Church (and other Christian churches) is its connotation of and association with resistance to social dominance.

Syncretism is, in the vernacular, a two-way street where the road is shared equally. *Inculturation* is a highway intersection where 'yield' signs proliferate and non-compliance can result in fines, incarceration or death. In this analogy, the Catholic Church as highway traffic has the right-of-way and does not often chose to yield to newcomers. *Appropriation* is a widely used term heard and overheard in conversations at many, if not most, gatherings of Native people, in anthropological writing and discussion, a potential nemesis of missionary priests who have adopted the customs of the people they live with and minister to, and a significant issue for all who respect the realities, culture, and traditions of others and wish to see them "preserved". One elderly *kohkom* with whom I spoke compared the idea of appropriation to 'how the white ladies can food'. She waited patiently while I

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struggled with her analogy and finally, having pity, reminded me that the Indian way was to gather or hunt for what you needed for yourself and to meet the short-term needs of your extended family, and to dry some for the future, thus relying on the bounty of Creator to provide for your needs. In her view, the mônîyâs (and now younger Indians) show disrespect to Creator and his pity (love) for his people when they store up so much food in such a greedy way, hence the reference to white ladies' canning. Her worldview clearly states that taking things not necessary to your present well-being and storing them up for a perceived needy future is against Creator and against traditional Native values. Thus appropriation is seen as lack of confidence in one's own traditions and abilities as well as lack of faith in God – a position that bodes ill for those who follow its path. Other elders have expressed similar views and have shared their knowledge generously, trusting that the Great Mysterious will always provide for all of us, spiritually and materially.

This kind of openness has caught me up a few times during my research. On one occasion an elder who had been teaching me said she liked my sweater very much, that it was pretty and her favourite colour. She indicated that she would certainly enjoy owning such a sweater and was sad that she could not afford one. This was my cue to offer her my sweater in the understanding that she needed it more than I and that Creator would undoubtedly provide me with another warm layer. In fact, she was already wearing two sweaters over her dress and had her coat across her lap, while I had a t-shirt under my sweater and it was cold. However she had managed to get the message of trust in the divine through my thick, part-mônîyâs head, and she was a lovely sparkly-eyed granny, so I took my sweater off and gave it

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to her. Beaming, Nellie added my sweater over her already bulky collection and said sweetly, "You girls now don't look after your things – to have so many sweaters you just give one to an old lady – *wâ-wâ*!" Stunned, I watched as she modelled the sweater for a grinning group of elders, then removing it with the ceremony of a Vegas stripper she presented it to me with a smirk, "You are cold and shivering, Mohawk Girl. Here, take this nice warm Cree sweater!" Nellie hugged me and the rest of the group giggled and nodded their approval. To this day Nellie's version of appropriation colours my imagination and I cannot see or hear the word without thinking of that 'Cree' sweater.

Nellie would certainly recognise the essence of *assimilation*, if not the word itself. She was at a residential school as a child and young girl, learning to be a domestic servant in a world she would never inhabit. She was taught in French (a language she had never heard before arriving at the school) and punished severely for speaking Cree though it, with a little English, was the only language she knew. The nuns and priests spoke no English at her school and if any understood the children's language, it was a well-kept secret. The religious who ran the school were acting under a government directive to assimilate Aboriginal children into white Canadian society, and with the goal of Christianising the children (the directive of the mission-Church in Canada). In fairness as to language, they were probably from France or Belgium (or perhaps, though less likely at that time, Québécois).

Letters in the Provincial Archives of Alberta to the missionary priests, signed by Duncan Campbell Scott (then Commissioner of Education and a well-known poet whose work eulogised the ethnic beauty and simplicity of the noble savages he

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strove so busily to cleanse of their differences) urge the educators to focus on 'useful' skills such as farming, housework, and trades to mould these young people into productive members of a soon to be homogenous nation. In fact, the (then) Dominion Government and the churches were partners in promoting and facilitating the assimilation and acculturation of Canada's first peoples.[118] For people like Nellie this meant pain, confusion, sorrow, and alienation; in later years, for many survivors of residential schools it also meant complete a-socialisation. Lost to their own families and communities, lost even to themselves, these assimilated, acculturated victims of colonial experiment roamed the country's inner cities and slums. The lucky ones like Nellie, and others I have met, somehow held onto enough of their spiritual traditional culture to go home and take up more normal, if still damaged, lives. For some it has meant a complete rejection of the churches, whether Catholic,

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[118] Perhaps one of the greatest differences between the churches and the government is that the churches continue to both apologise and attempt to rectify past wrongs and achieve reconciliation. For example, the CCCB's Episcopal Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples *Pastoral Message to the Native Peoples of Canada* stated:

> We recognize in each spiritual tradition there is a mixture of shadow and light. However, we wish to reaffirm that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in aboriginal traditions. Moreover the Church encourages all its members to recognise, preserve and promote the spiritual, moral and cultural values found within your traditions and to work together with you in a spirit of prudent and charitable dialogue and collaboration.
>
> We remember as well, with profound regret, those dimensions of Catholic mission history that were too closely identified with the European forces of expansion and assimilation, and so contributed to your suffering. Many times in this final decade of the 20th century, the pastors of the Church have spoken about this concern. While we remain grateful to those who have come before us – especially those many bishops, priests, religious and lay workers who gave their lives in loving service – we also recognize the faults, failings and singulness within the Church that have blocked access to the freedom that the Gospel brings (1999:2).

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Anglican, or United, and a return to their traditional values; others found comfort in Christianity and held to it as their 'tradition'; others yet have developed variations of synthesised Native Christianity. In an article for *The Canadian Catholic Review*, Achiel Peelman OMI, discussed his understandings of First Nations persons' visions of Christ. He makes reference to the "violent consequences of many years of forced acculturation" (1997:9) and notes that this history has led many Native Canadians to return to, or re-examine their relationship with, their ancestral spirituality – a spirituality that is a way of life rather than a neatly packaged religion and that, my research suggests, is a key to healing the broken and violated communities throughout the country. Speaking to the gathering at Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré in 1984, Pope John Paul II said:

> Your encounter with the Gospel has not only enriched you, it has enriched the Church. We are well aware that this has not been without difficulties and, occasionally, blunders. However, and you are experiencing this today, the Gospel does not destroy what is best in you. On the contrary, it enriches as it were from within the spiritual qualities and gifts that are distinctive to your cultures. In addition your Amerindian and Inuit traditions permit the development of new ways of expressing the message of salvation and they help us to better understand to what point Jesus is the Saviour and how universal his salvation.[119]

[119] This is quoted from *Rediscovering, Recognizing and Celebrating the Spiritual Heritage of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples*, CCCB, 1999: 1.

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Aboriginal activists have been presenting this view since the Wounded Knee Ghost Dances of 1870, and they continue to emphasise the need for recognition of and respect for the differences in conceptualisation processes between Native and Westernised peoples.

> … [w]e must recall that for tribal people symbolism is not the communicative image of Westerners, but the expression of a reality that Westerners often refuse to acknowledge. [The] conception of land as holding the bodies of the tribe in a basic sense pervaded tribal religions across the country. It testified in a stronger sense to the underlying unity of the Indian conception of the universe as a life system in which everything had its part. (Deloria 1992:173)

Hearts Burning with Fire

In both Christian and Native beliefs fire, like water, is often stipulated as metaphoric of cleansing, particularly of spiritual or emotional cleansing and purification. In the teachings of the medicine wheel fire is at the north of the circle: the gifts of the north include the gift of memory – discrimination, understanding, and synthesis. It is in the north of the wheel that we learn the detachment necessary to see past, present, and future as a unified whole. Our goal is the freedom to let go, even of those things we have learned on our journey, so that we can make the journey to the centre and experience ourselves as infinitesimal yet infinitely sacred parts of the process of creation.

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In the Christian context spiritual fire is deemed to provide one's soul with the same kind of tensile strength and flexibility as the forge's fire does hardened steel. It is a metaphor used over the centuries in Christian literature; in the same literature and deriving from Biblical writing, fire is also one critical symbol of the Holy Spirit. The tongues of flame reported above the heads of the disciples at the first Pentecost were the fires of the Holy Spirit, God's gift of empathy with the other:

> When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.
>
> Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely,' they said, 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?' (Acts II: 1-9)

These events are also foreshadowed by an oblique reference in the Gospel according to Mark:

> Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be

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> associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover. (Mark XVI: 16-18)

Catholics interpret these passages as texts rich with hidden meaning and symbolic actions rather than, as do many fundamentalist groups, accepting the story literally. Baptist snake-handlers in the United States and Pentecostalists speaking in tongues while possessed by the Holy Spirit are but two well-documented examples of true literal acceptance. [120] In the case of the Pentecost, the Catholic interpretation of the fire is as a call to evangelism, to social outreach, and as a sign of the burning and unquenchable love for Creator and all Creation. The flames of Pentecost are also the fires of knowledge, given to be shared. In the Native tradition, the North's call to detachment, certitude, and balance begins in the fires of love, and ends "in quiet moments on the silent shores of the sacred lake, and cannot be told". (Bopp et al 1984: 68)

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[120] In 1999 I accompanied a friend to her church for a Friday night service. She had been asking me to go with her for some time, but had not ever really explained what to expect. The service started around 7 p.m. and was still going strong when I left, completely exhausted, around 3 a.m. There was preaching by the pastor and a number of lay people (mostly men) with continuous exhortations for the congregation to let the Spirit touch them. It was initially an enjoyable evening with a lot of very charismatic singing and body action, but as more and more people were 'possessed', I found it increasingly disturbing and tiring. I was, at that time, less exposed to charismatic renewal movements and that may have been the cause of at least some of my distress, but there was something about the evening that was as frightening as it was exhilarating.

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Fire and Water

The role of water in Native culture and spirituality, in Christian spiritual tradition, and at the pilgrimage is discussed in Chapter Nine: Holy Waters, Healing Powers. Water is indeed a focal point in all of these; but fire (manifested as flame, as sun, as light, and understood symbolically as illumination, leadership, clarity, communication, service, and love, but also anger, fear, and destruction), is similarly integrated in both symbolic and material aspects, into the wholeness of true healing. Fire and water work together to complete and enhance the power of Spirit. Prayer is, of course, the action of communication with Spirit, so burning sweetgrass is a form of communicating with Creator, a holy act. It is also purifying, because the sacred nature of the sweetgrass cleanses and heals the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. The smoke from the smudge is, in addition to being a form of water, a form of fire – as are the sweat lodges of purification and preparation. A sweat is held to cleanse and make whole. It is a ritual of purification, dense with meaning and complexities. The form is governed by ages-old traditions, and beliefs about the sweat (the propriety of its form, the authority of the individual hosting the ritual, the people who participate and their reasons for so doing – even the age and nature of the stones used[121]) influence both reputation and efficacy.

One intention of the sweat is to cleanse and heal. In this regard it has been proposed as a culturally appropriate form of reconciliation in Aboriginal communities, with the idea that a substitution or addition of the sweat for the

[121] There are 'grandfather rocks' that are essential to the sweat, although the source, identification, and acquisition of these is knowledge I have not yet been given (and as a woman, I may never acquire).

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reconciliation service might be one way of encouraging more of the Native Catholic community to participate more regularly in this rite. It is true, as my parish priest said to me just prior to Easter, "...reconciliation is always the hardest sacrament to sell. I guess we need a better 'marketing strategy'...."[122] so perhaps providing an alternate ritual would make no difference. Nonetheless, both personal experience and field research support the concept of at least offering both the standard forms of reconciliation and the sweat lodge ceremony as part of a culturally sensitive Aboriginal Catholicism.

The road to a culturally sensitive rite that is not merely a convenient cover for actions appropriating other peoples' traditions or blurring lines of belief beyond recognition or meaning is fraught with difficulties. This is a problem even within the Native community, and becomes a greater difficulty when the object is to blend two (or more) traditions.

> At the present time, there are few individuals involved in religious revivals who are examining their own motivations and actions as ritualists and participants. At the present time, the complete individuality of the various Sun Dance leaders has concentrated upon ritual performance and ego gratification. The underpinnings of the theological and philosophical bases still remain largely unexamined and unanalyzed (Medicine 1995:182-183).

Speaking of the Sun Dance ceremonial complex as practiced in contemporary Sioux life, Medicine says,

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[122] Personal communication, Fr. Rainerio Sarce, April 2004.

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> ...it appears as a mechanism for mediation of individual identity and absorption into the larger society. It also heralds a means of intensifying and guaranteeing cultural continuity in face of perceived repression, reaction to social 'problems' engendered by living within dual societies, and as a access to enhanced ethnic identity. More saliently, it may be seen as a rejection or coercion to religious systems which have long been dissonant with native beliefs. In the heightened return to Native religious beliefs, the Christian faiths who are ministering to the Sioux altered their ritual to include Native elements. Thus we see the Catholics utilizing a pipe as a sacred symbol in the Mass (Steinmetz, 1990). The Episcopal Church has also used Lakota symbols in the design of altar cloths and priestly vestments. This may be an overt attempt to retain Native adherents. It also indicates an awareness of increased Native religious concerns on the part of the proselytized people. One has not assessed the role of Native clergy in this attempt to mediate between Native ritual and Christianity. (Medicine 1995: 170-171)

From these remarks one might gather that Dr. Medicine is not an advocate of a synthesised or mediated Native Catholic rite;[123] other elders have spoken just as clearly against the inclusion of any Native elements into what they perceive to be

[123] I have not been present at any masses at the Rosebud or Pinewood Lakota mission churches, so I cannot comment from direct experience. I do know, however, that these are the missions where the previously discussed incarnation of the Sacred Pipe as Christ is ritual praxis.

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their own tradition of Christian worship. Lisa Phillips Valentine (1992) documented her research into this area along age cohort lines in an Ojibwa community;[124] I have noted elsewhere journalists' articles indicating similar opposition at Lac Ste-Anne. One must remember that my field work has been strictly with Aboriginal peoples who are, and have been historically, ministered to by the OMIs. Medicine's experiences would refer to Jesuit missionisation and Valentine's to the Anglican (Anglo-Catholic) framework for inculturation. Contrary to their conclusions, my research findings indicate that most elders like the blending and that many would like to see more recognition of traditional beliefs embedded in the Catholic rituals (see Chapter Ten for a more complete discussion of this topic).

One of the greatest practical problems to successful framing these kinds of rituals is locating and encouraging knowledgeable elders who are willing to share their understandings and their stories with their own young people and with the priests. This is a difficulty not only because many of the oldest and wisest elders are gone, but also because their way of teaching requires a lot of time and effort from both teacher and student. What the elders can provide is experiential learning, but of a nature that requires openness to the natural and the supernatural, to the material and the mysterious; it requires acceptance of time and space as simplistic conceptualisations best left behind, and of the complex layers of a life that shifts effortlessly over the whole. The teaching is for, to and about the whole person: no one reaches the centre by focussing on one dimension, no matter how powerful. No one reaches the centre without following the sacred path; no one reaches the centre

[124] Valentine's fieldwork was in an Anglican community in Ontario.

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without completely sublimating his or her self; no one reaches the centre without Creator. I suspect that certain of the important Christian mystics would recognise this kind of spiritual teaching: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Hildegard von Bingen, Blessed Julian of Norwich, St. John of the Cross, and many of the earlier deacons of the fledgling church. It is a kind of teaching easily misunderstood, easily appropriated and easily decontextualised in today's perhaps overly pragmatic world.

History, Liturgy, and Syncretism

In any anthropological discussion of syncretism in connection with Catholic liturgy, it is wise to remember that syncretism has been in effect since at least the fourth century in Mediterranean basin communities served by bishops like Cyril, Theodore, John Chrysotom, and Ambrose. They responded to the cultural expressions of very different peoples by accepting demonstrations of ethnicity as expressions of the human spirit. Because we have loaded the concept of syncretism with more or less undesirable connotations, we have a strong tendency to ignore the fact of inculturation as a tradition as old as Christianity itself. Writing on liturgy as symbolic action in post-Vatican II Catholicism, Joseph Gelineau comments that in some cases the underlying mental framework of older days remains under a thin skin of new rites, while in others the structure is based on prescribed rites established by the reform but enhanced by the creative action of a living liturgy, leading to a grafting of the old church and the new. (Gelineau 1983: 10)

> Liturgical orthopraxis attempts to unite and hold in balance in the act of celebration the various aspects of liturgy...: structuring

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> anthropological figures, basic constituent elements, officially prescribed rites, the 'play' of operational model, colourful styles and meaningful execution.
>
> But those who are in charge of the liturgy have limited power over the way it is celebrated. Symbols cannot be manipulated as if every rite ought to produce specific effects. In the order of symbol – a locus of creativeness and true history – the actual effects are for the most part unpredictable and unverifiable. The task of the past-liturgymaker is first to present the signs with forceful and ample dignity, and then to remove obstacles that may impede understanding of their sense and prevent the believer from freely situating himself with respect to them. (Gelineau 1983: 18)

In this statement, reminiscent of Roy Rappaport's (1999:24) discussion regarding encoding ritual actions, Gelineau makes a powerful argument for exercising great care in the process of syncretising ritual because he stresses the centrality of liturgical tradition and its mythic core. While his essay emphasises the human need for renewal in keeping with social change, he is careful to remind his readers that liturgical practices and actions are tied to the origins of the Church: as he says, the cultural contextualisation of the celebration of the mass is a balancing act that requires consummate skill, attention, and facility.

Mary Collins, scholar of Catholic liturgy, is far less optimistic about the potential for a more creatively cultural ritual:

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> Any assertion that creativity is a central value for the Roman liturgy requires us to go beyond the terms on which the Roman Catholic Church currently understands its own liturgical tradition. The text of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy provides little overt support for the element of novelty which is at the heart of the theoretical analyses of creativity in the twentieth century. The conciliar document indeed authorised a series of transforming interventions relative to the liturgy: renewing, restoring, reinstating, returning, correcting, emending, altering, adapting, doing away with, setting aside, suppressing, even introducing and producing. But the very authorising of such interventions confirmed not simply the fact of a well-established tradition of public worship but also the responsibility of institutional authority to guard it. Not surprisingly, the official pronouncement on novelty was caution against it: there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church is at stake, any new form which might be adopted is expected to meet the criterion of growing organically from forms already existing (SC 23). (Collins 1983: 19)

One key issue in arguments for inculturation or syncretism within Catholic liturgical rites is the question of whether amendment serves the good of the Church. The Canadian Catholic bishops (and priests working in Native parishes and missions) have argued that recognition of Aboriginal culture, tradition, and spirituality with the Church serves the interests of both the Church and the people, in

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other words it is precisely 'the good of the Church' that is at stake. Not only Native parishes seek change, and not only ethnic communities. Young people want a liturgy that speaks to them in their language, one that recognises their unique culture and that is sufficiently flexible to change as they change. Those in their middle years call for a liturgy that will revive their excitement and enthusiasm: one that speaks to their evolving spirituality. Women want a greater role and recognition. Some Catholics would prefer to return to the old Roman rite that pre-dates Vatican II, with the altar against the rear wall of the church, the priest with his back to them, and Latin restored as the language of the mass. Strangely, these recidivists have been generally more successful in gaining approvals than those that seek amendments that will encourage people to participate fully and joyfully through interaction within their cultural frameworks. The majority of people argue for revitalisation of faith expression, but the wheels of bureaucracy grind more slowly than the mills of the gods. Collins reflects the frustrations of people, priests, bishops, and theologians in her discussion of the distinctions made between certain of the African churches and virtually all other non-western ethnicities.

> *Notitiae*[125] ... reflects a positive Roman attitude towards the introduction of the unprecedented in the liturgical forms of the young churches of Africa and the minority churches of Asia. The welcome of the novel into the liturgical assemblies clearly aims to affirm the human spirit manifested in the cultural ethos of non-western peoples. Yet the very ambivalence of official Roman

[125] The official publication of the Congregation for Divine Worship.

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> response to the post-conciliar impetus towards liturgical creativity invites further reflection. Is novelty tolerable, permissible, desirable? For some but not all churches in the Roman rite? What are adequate criteria for making a positive or negative judgment on the creative impulses of local churches? Where is individualism at work? Where the effort to overcome human diminishment through celebration of the reign of God? (Collins 1983: 20-21)

It is twenty years now since Mary Collins wrote this essay questioning the Vatican's passivity and inertia in encouraging, promoting, sponsoring, facilitating, and accepting liturgical creativity in the local church, despite the official 'party line' of encouragement. It is forty years since the second Vatican Council approved sweeping changes that would have, in my opinion, energised, revitalised, and renewed Catholicism throughout the world – had John XXIII lived to implement at least some of the reforms. And what of the Church today? Syncretism is still a concept that many members of the clergy avoid, disavow, and denigrate. Some see the practice of inculturation as a negative action, diluting the quality and meaning of liturgy. Others regard the idea as too much work, more fuss and stress and explanation than they care to impose on themselves or their parishioners. There are those who regard the prospect of developing vital, localised, inculturated liturgies as exciting challenges to be met with the laity. It is into this last category that many of the Oblate missionary priests I have met, worked with, and come to know as friends fall. It is this last concept that concerns us in the discussion of Native Catholicism,

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of Lac Ste-Anne, and of the Native Catholic masses at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton.

Herman Schmidt, in *Concilium: Liturgy and Cultural Religious Traditions*, comments on Clifford Geertz's description of religion as a cultural system in which all aspects of human life are interrelated in a meaningful way, saying:

> Perhaps Geertz's description of a religious system applies less easily to Christianity or to other religions with missionary traditions than to religions which appear more readily to be native to a given people. With missionary religions, the first proclamation is in many ways opposed to existing cultural traditions. What can happen is that the 'official' religious expression is not adequate or easily accessible to many people, so that they continue to inhabit other forms or seek to merge the old and the new. A contrast between official liturgies and other forms of religious expression may not be an ideal, but it is a fact of history and of present reality which needs examination. (Schmidt 1977:1)

He goes on to consider a pattern of development and adaptation drawn from the earliest Christian rituals as the differentiation from Judaism progressed. Schmidt states that such processes can and should continue to provide a framework for much of the work of inculturation in Church liturgies today, offering two main characteristics of this patterning:

(a) an existing religious expression is supplemented by an extraneous element which often tries to replace it;

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(b) from the meeting of these forms there results either a merging of forms, or the coexistence of contrasting and at times diverging forms. (Ibid)

As one studies the present condition of Catholic liturgies, the applicability of this sequence to modern day syncretic mass celebrations is unquestionable. Realistically, the post-Vatican II church resembles increasingly the early days of Christian community whereby ethnic differences in form (though not contextual meaning) are tools which draw people to what might otherwise be an uncomfortably distant worship form.

> Indeed that early New Testament period is the surest analogue to our own situation. Catholic Christianity can no longer afford to be Eurocentric anymore than early Christianity could afford to be purely Judaic if it would reach all the Gentiles in a way that they could understand and appropriate the common faith in their own cultural forms. (Tracy 1989: 29)

The question of culturally sensitive ritual and liturgy has been the topic of a number of articles in journals specialising in ritual studies and theology because of increased awareness of and interest in the relationship between cultural synthesis and theological praxis. For many of these scholars the appropriation and application of anthropological theory and principles generally constitute linguistic and symbolic references so that the works of Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner and Claude Lévi-Strauss have received particular attention. As Nathan Mitchell noted in a Pentecost issue of *Liturgy Digest*:

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Over the past several decades, confidence in the stability of ... a 'religious attitude' – exemplified in Eliade's data from 'primitive' cultures and persisting still – has been extended to include data from the social sciences. It has thus become commonplace to read, especially in the works of academic liturgists, frequent references to the work of noted anthropologists like Mary Douglas ('natural symbols'), Claude Lévi-Strauss (structuralist interpretation of myth and symbol), Victor Turner (ritual structure and anti-structure, liminality and *communitas*), and Clifford Geertz (whose 'thick description' of a cockfight in Bali has become an ethnographic classic). It is assumed by many liturgists that such borrowed anthropological data are both explicative and predictive, that they 'prove' the existence of broad 'cross-cultural' patterns which influence the shape of ritual actions in every people, place and time.

But are such assumptions valid? To what degree do Mary Douglas's discussions of pollution and taboo illumine the meanings of ritual rules in the Jewish temple or the Christian *ecclesia*? Does Victor Turner's analysis of Ndembu ritual really describe some *universal* 'ritual process?' Can *any* anthropologist's ethnographies provide accurate categories with which to construct or critique Christian rites? What prompts liturgists to seek confirmation of their theories and methods in the work of social scientists? (Mitchell 1995: 3-4)

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Mitchell's points are well-taken and deserve close consideration, both for the questions he poses regarding the concept of universal norms, and those dealing with the validity of some kind of ethnographic liturgy. I have serious doubts about the existence of broad ranges of cross-cultural patterns, and need only cite the cultural and 'religious' differences between James Bay Cree and Kainai peoples as representative examples. Certainly similarities are found universally – we are all humans, so the idea of shared needs, desires, and values is not surprising – but these are not sufficiently specific that they could be identified as cross-cultural linkages or universal patterns. There is also the danger of appropriating portions of theories or theses that appear to provide useful formats for one's arguments. As I researched numbers of essays, manuscripts, and news articles on inculturation, vernacularisation, and creolisation, it appeared to me that liturgists and theologians looking to anthropology for confirmation and contextualisation of their theories and concepts must tread both cautiously and conservatively or they might place themselves in jeopardy with Vatican authorities. One such example is that of Sri Lankan Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, an Oblate theologian who was excommunicated in January of 1997.[126] While his excommunication was a shock to the Catholic community, it should not have been completely unexpected. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has on many occasions expressed grave concerns over the relativism of Asian Catholicity.[127] He

[126] Fr. Balasuriya's excommunication was revoked by the Vatican in 1998.
[127] Cardinal Ratzinger signed the January 4th, 1997 declaration saying that Fr. "Balasuriya's positions of Mary, original sin, Christ's redemptive role and papal

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has been trying to force an 'encounter' between the Indian bishops and their priests for a number of years,[128] and stands solidly against liberation theology in the South American church.[129] What, in fact, the church militant in Asia has been promoting is a radical kind of Christianity not seen in the traditional forms of Christology or Mariology – a concern put forth by the Jesuit fathers in South Asia for some considerable period of time. David Mosse's (1994) article on Hinduism and Catholic saints in a small village addresses this conflict through the anthropological perspective: a perspective that has doubtless fuelled the fires of the Cardinal's wrath (anthropology being a popular course of study among Jesuit priests and brothers).

Fr. Fred Groleau, who was pastor at the Lac Ste-Anne mission for some years and has served as the pilgrimage director, is well aware of conflicting beliefs – not only among parishioners and pilgrims, but within the church itself. He recognises that some members of the Nakoda Alexis Band (whose reserve lands border the pilgrimage grounds) "regard Christianity as a white man's religion and disavowed it… and some practicing Catholics condemn native religious traditions as witchcraft". (Chambers 1996: A1) Fr. Fred has also commented (to me as well as to members of the press) that a number of the Métis and non-Native parishioners of Ste-Anne are against the Aboriginal flavour of the masses and pilgrimage. Like many of his fellow Oblates, Fr. Fred aligns himself with a more ecumenical group following Pope John Paul's teaching that all religions can be regarded as manifestations of

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infallibility had taken him outside the communion of the church" (Thavis 1997 no page number).

[128] See Shorter 1996.

[129] The Cardinal is the Grand Inquisitor of Rome and as such is concerned to examine closely and critically any and all doctrines presented as Roman Catholic.

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Christ if common bonds are found. Cardinal Ratzinger, despite his defence of the papacy and role in framing positions adopting by the Pope, apparently has concerns about what he deems to be radical liberalism in the Church. Ratzinger has:

- declared the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church over other Christian churches;
- excluded liberal theologians;
- excluded progressive priests and those in favour of the ordination of women.

Because of these and other similar actions, he has been accused by colleagues of 'symbolic violence' against those he believes to be 'too radical'.[130]

Abbot Marcel Rooney, head of the Benedictine Confederation, expressed concerns that apparent changes to liturgy in response to cultural needs have really been moving "the furniture all over the place the last 30 years, but ... haven't moved hearts very deeply." (Howard 1998: 5) He went on to cite the Rite Zaïrois, which after an intense discourse between Zaïrean liturgists and the Vatican regarding the invocation of the ancestors in the local religious ceremonies and the desire to incorporate a similar aspect into the Catholic mass, now begins with a joyful Litany of the Saints, to which people dance. It took an enormous effort to convince the Vatican's Congregation of Divine Worship that such an invocation was not paganism because as baptised Christians the Zaïrean Catholics regarded their ancestors as the communion of saints. Rooney's comment on the successful integration was, "... [H]ere's an inculturation, and it's more Roman than the present [Latin] rite since the

[130] www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries

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ancient Roman rite had a Litany of Saints."[131] (Ibid) The Congregation for Divine Worship has been less accommodating in South America, refusing to acknowledge the variety of inculturated liturgies that have grown from years of liberation theology (also condemned by the Congregation). Despite years of effort on the part of the Canadian Bishops there is still no approval for a fully inculturated Native Rite. In the same article, Jesuit Father Keith Pecklers, also a liturgist from Rome, is quoted as saying, "Our challenge as liturgists then, is to seek out that relationship between liturgy and popular devotion in a way that makes sense, grounded in the tradition of the church, but at the same time open the door to the colour, drama and cultural richness that such devotions offer." (Ibid) Given the confusion that seems to exist within the source of approvals itself, it is no wonder that the ordinary lay person simply has no idea what shape an appropriately synthesised liturgy might take.

In 1985, Pope John Paul's message to the people of Canada on the relationship between faith and culture was more flexible and considerate of ethnic differences than later actions of his Cardinals and Bishops have demonstrated. Fr. Wilf Murchland, then President of Newman Theological College in Edmonton, commented that the Pope had clearly expressed his concern that there should not be attempts on the part of the church to impose faith on a pluralistic society, but rather the focus should be as a service to culture by increasing society's respect for human dignity. The pope's main message at that time was that "faith must offer its service

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[131] Rooney refers to the ancient rite's inclusion of the Litany of the Saints as a regular part of the ordinary mass. This is not the case in the contemporary church where, in my experience, the Litany of the Saints is chanted only during special masses such as Easter vigil or the ordination of priests.

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to culture, even if sometimes that service is refused" and quoted St. John Chrysotom: "God does not ask us to succeed, but to work." (Argan 1985: no page number)

To further demonstrate the paradox between mythos and praxis, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that

> The mystery celebrated in the liturgy is one, but the forms of its celebration are different. The mystery of Christ is so unfathomably rich that it cannot be exhausted by its expression in any single liturgical tradition. The history of the blossoming and development of these rites witnesses to a remarkable complementarity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2000: nos.1200-1201)
>
> It is fitting that liturgical celebration tends to express itself in the culture of the people where the church finds itself, though without being submissive to it. (Ibid: no. 1207)

The reason behind these objectives is to facilitate full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy; the Gospel is situated, incarnate, in local culture. The reality falls far short of this ideal. It is easier to stipulate and promote such ideals than it is to live them and most liturgists and scholars will agree that there is still a long road ahead before praxis is fully congruent with mythos. Nonetheless Aboriginal leaders remain both determined and optimistic, citing the synchronicity of the two theologies: Cree elder Darrell Greyeyes promotes the compatibility of native spirituality and Catholicism saying, "The Catholic faith and the spiritual part of the traditional way are very similar, theologically." (Jelinski, 2001:1)

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David Power addresses the question of inculturation by looking at the potential for cultural models to be developed as the framework of not only the liturgy, but also the entire Biblical history and the ideal of living the Gospels:

> Among many peoples and cultures evangelized from Europe, it is time to recognize the matrix of their own culture in the telling of the Christ story, the celebration of rites, the use of symbols, and the composition of prayers. Though there has been some adaptation, as with the rite approved for Zaïre, the stage of creativity where the culture is truly matrix has scarcely begun. The insistence is still that the Roman mass is the matrix and all cultural adaptation has to be done within it. Some inroads are made on this, as with the model of village gathering or the commemoration of the ancestors introduced into the 'Rite Zaïrois'.
>
> The cultural matrix is still not respected when nothing more is done than to adopt images from a people's story or use their musical forms and bodily ritual. The process of contextualization that allows for remembrance and ritual expression from within the culture is more complex and without some experimentation can hardly even be understood. (Power 1993:339)

Much of what passes as inculturated liturgy or contextualised worship is simply what Powers argues against: merely adaptations of imagery, music or movement into the pre-existing forms. However, in Edmonton, it is possible to experience Catholic ritual embedded in Aboriginal culture by attending the 'Native' mass at Sacred Heart

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Church of the First Peoples. Here one finds the mass solidly located in an indigenous life way, with greeting, healing, drumming, celebrating, feasting, and thanking Creator as critical components of the service. The overt symbols are Native expressions of deeply held beliefs, of Catholic faith not just accepted but incarnated. For this discussion the important single point about Sacred Heart and its people is the manner in which the following Aboriginal concepts are woven throughout every action and every word, so that the eagle is as at home in this old brick church as is the cross[132].

- the sacred circle (the unique identity of the Native people, wholeness, harmony, unity, interdependency of community, family, inclusiveness, and consensus);
- the drum (which implies inclusion of the singers as an organic whole) as the heartbeat of Christ; the four directions;
- our Mother, Earth (who sustains and nourishes us with her God-given abundance and beauty);
- the use of sweetgrass as incense (sometimes with cedar, sage, and tobacco) to carry our prayers to God and purify our bodies, spirits, minds, and emotions)

Some have argued that this is a particularly pernicious form of appropriation, but an early meeting of the Traditional Elders Circle[133] clearly stated that they do not believe such spiritual ceremonials to be erroneous in theology or intent:

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[132] The Native mass at SHCFP is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, Ayamihâwin.

[133] In 1980, when the resolution of which this is a very small part, was declared, the signatories were: Austin Two Moons (Northern Cheyenne Nation), Larry Anderson

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> We concern ourselves only with those people who use spiritual ceremonies with non-Indian people for profit. There are many things to be shared with the Four Colours of humanity in our common destiny as one with our Mother the Earth. It is this sharing that must be considered with great care by the Elders and the medicine people who carry the Sacred Trust, so no harm may come to people through ignorance and misuse of these powerful forces. (www.thespiritualsanctuary.org/ Native/Native.html:2)

Liberation Theology and Practical Syncretism

While Liberation theology no longer holds media interest as it did two decades ago, it is still very much part of the Catholic church – a part that constitutes a thorn in the side of those who would prefer that church and state are rigorously separated, that priests stay in their churches and not be advocates in the field for the

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(Navajo Nation), Thomas Banyacya (Hopi Independent Nation), Frank Cardinal Sr. (Sucker Creek Cree, AB), Phillip Deer (Muskogee Nation), Walter Denny (Chippewa-Cree Nation), Chief Fools Crow (Lakota Nation), Peter O'Chiese (Entrance, AB – no nation given), Izador Thorn (Washington – no nation given); Tadadaho (Haudenassaunee), Tom Yellowtail (Wyola, MT – no nation given). The elders gave the American Indian Movement (AIM) and certain others the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of Native traditions. Those people were later named specifically in an AIM resolution of 1984. (www.thespiritualsanctuary.org/ Native/Native.html).

I met one of these elders at a Rain Dance on the Keeseekoose Reserve (SK); he now goes by the name 'California Bob' and, like many of the AIM activists I have spoken to over the years, is careful about sharing philosophies. Because I was there at the invitation of the Rain Dance Priest, C-B was willing to talk to me about issues of appropriation. Unlike many of the traditionalist elders, he is very much against any kind of inclusion of western ways or white folks into Native ceremonials. (Personal communications, 2003)

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poor or activists for human rights, and who would avoid at almost any cost the 'contamination' of Catholic liturgy and theology with ecumenism or contextualisation. Proponents have another view of the possibilities:

> Liberation theology in Latin America; the dialogue with the great religious traditions in Asia; inculturation of Christian faith in villages in Africa; ecumenical discussions between first world churches; the confrontation of Christianity with a technological, modernised society; the cry of women for equal opportunity in world and Church – each of these points to creativity and ferment present in Christian churches throughout the globe. Each movement contains positive possibilities for growth, a growth that is often painful. This growth continually calls into question the unity of the Church. As the Church moves into new dialogues and new contexts, how does it remain one, holy, catholic, and apostolic? In particular, two of the traditional four notes or marks of the Church come into question, namely oneness and catholicity. Oneness indicates unity, not uniformity, and catholicity points to the adaptability or openness of the Church to new contexts. How does one understand, imagine, and live these two marks in such a way that they are mutually illuminating and increase together, so that the more catholic or universal the Church becomes, so much richer will be the unity? (Schineller 1989: 98)

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Here Peter Schineller poses the major conundrum in any potential relationship between the Catholic Church and syncretic, contextualised, or interstitial[134] religious activity. How indeed to continue under the guise of universality when refusing to practice a process that is both creative and adapted to particular circumstances and contexts? How to release the controls established over almost two millennia in order to grow in unity with other cultural and spiritual traditions? Liturgical and theological acceptance of the idea of inculturation, and even of syncretism, was greater during the decade immediately following the Second Vatican Council than it has been since.

> A working definition of inculturation is 'the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation' (*Arrupe*, 1978 quoted in Schineller 1989: 98-99)...
>
> Put briefly, inculturation takes seriously the *who*, the *where*, the *with whom* and *for whom* one does theology and one builds church. In fact the local community ideally should become the maker of theology, a theology that is in dialogue with the larger Church, but

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[134] I owe this perspective and the term 'interstitial religions' to Dr. Earle Waugh, Professor Emeritus, Religious Studies, University of Alberta: "Interstitial religion … suggests that encountering the 'other' is a religious task that primarily functions in process, but which gives the conviction that what one encounters very powerfully *actually and truly is*" (Waugh 1996:297).

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> one that speaks with God's word for that particular situation. (Ibid: 99)
>
> [B]y fostering catholicity through the process of inculturation – as recent Roman teaching has done – there is the danger of the breakdown of unity. Yet, as we will see, this need not be the case. In fact, the opposite should be true, namely that the process of inculturation is the only possible way to full catholicity. (Ibid: 100)

Schineller argues for unity through complementarily in the true sense of bringing to fullness or completion, so that

> what is lacking in the whole is supplied by mutuality through the richness of the individuals... To be complementary means to see oneself as part of a larger whole, yet also truly oneself, aware of one's particular gifts as well as limitations. (Ibid: 101)

He goes on to note that complementarity rules out the potentials for enforced uniformity or pluralism, and serves to remind the Church that it is a pilgrim church, not full, not whole, but on the road; the words, "pilgrim church on earth" come directly from the order of the mass. Schineller's image of what the Church should be, must become, to be truly viable in the contemporary world, is strikingly similar in many aspects to the ideals taught by Native elders through the medium of the sacred circle. The differences are in the examples used; as one would expect they are culturally contextualised, thus for Schineller complementarity is demonstrated by:

- a jazz ensemble in which individual creativity and improvisation melds into a rich unity of sound and purpose

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- a rainbow whose colours, resulting from the refraction of sunlight, together become white light
- the diversity of nature's species, sounds, colours, fragrances that become one world when seen from space
- the four gospels – each creative but insufficient alone to portray the story of Christianity's beginnings, taken together still "only begin to glimpse the fullness of Christ" (Ibid: 102)
- the communion of saints, each one's life and contributions so different, yet each pointing to a way of following Christ

Examples the elders use to show the unity of creation and interdependence of all living creatures include:

- an assertion that at one time early in the world, all creatures were the same colour and texture, and all understood one another's language – and that this could once again be possible (an assertion of the value of unity and consensus over division and individualism)
- the gathering of ancestors that demonstrates and shows us the way to harmony and balance in the world (and in Cree lore also form the Aurora Borealis)
- respect for all persons whether winged, four-legged, two-legged, finned, or without legs
- the teachings of the four sacred directions, the lessons we learn from them, and the way they show us life's journey

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Schineller continues by outlining essential strategies that must exist and be fully developed at local and central Church levels (Ibid: 103-104) if true contextualisation is to occur. Each concept is both goal and process and each is part of a spiritual pilgrimage undertaken as a community.

- *Cummunio*: in communion with God and with different forms of culture
- *Companion*: in the root meaning of 'with bread' – to break and share bread together. A reminder that all churches must move together on the journey with the Eucharistic bread as the sign of strength and unity.
- *Commissioned*: the churches today are sent forth in mission together.
- *Collaborative*: all members of the Church must work together; each has special gifts and responsibilities to share.
- *Conversion*: moving closer to Jesus Christ moves all members closer to one another
- *Continuity*: (literally, being held together) – the links through time and space that bind the Church and churches together
- *Communication*: mutual dialogue and communication among local churches and with the central authority

To develop such a church is certainly an undertaking that, if approached seriously and with vigour, will still take at least most of the next millennium to implement worldwide.

Fr. Boka Di Mpasi Londi, in talking about the Catholic Church in Africa, makes points applicable equally to issues within the Church in North American Aboriginal societies. Looking at what he calls "the radical break between liturgy and

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life" (Londi 1980: 54) he elaborates the difficulty inherent in the systematised separation of spirituality, worship, and attendant rituals from 'normal' life in the Christian system which makes the period in attendance at a church negligible in terms of the rest of daily life. Not only is the time diminished to a point of inconsequentiality, but the place of worship is small and closed when viewed in the larger context of the world where one actually lives and sees the works of God Creator only hinted at in the building itself. Liturgy is also separated culturally from life: gestures, words, and general attitude are not congruent with indigenous societies. Some are merely meaningless, but others may be offensive or insulting. In addition, many of the most important aspects of indigenous cultures are completely absent in liturgical actions, so that we see enclosed spaces closing out the natural world, and ignorance of the importance of place and ancestors. What is required is a shift that recognises attributes of indigenous spirituality, where

- people are conceptualised as whole beings whose physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects must be nourished and kept in balance, and where those who are not in harmony with the environment are seen as in need to healing to achieve reconciliation and restoration; and where
- social understanding of the environment perceives the individual and the community, and the community and the cosmos as fully interdependent and indivisible, with no perceptual differences between seen and unseen realities – no division between the sacred and the profane.

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The Second Vatican Council stated unequivocally that "the liturgical renewal was to be based on 'full, conscious and active participation'" (Ibid 55) referring to actual and complete inculturation of Catholic worship practice. The conciliar document, *Constitution of the Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, uses words such as 'restoration', 'renewal', 'participation', and 'progress' emphasising the rights of all people to their inalienable traditional values. The real problem is that the winds of change initiated by the Concilium have been more like summer zephyrs, having very little practical effect in most instances.

This minimalism is demonstrated in an analysis of the relationship between image and theology by Fr. Crispino Valenziano in the same issue of *Concilium*. Valenziano exercises a western bias that is more concerned with the 'realities' of image, and in the "typification of spirituality, in the catechetical mystagogy, in pastoral neo-praxicism, in the pneumatics of theology" (Valenziano 1980: 96). Clearly these are concepts that only an academic focussed on a semiotic study of theological imagery would find comprehensible: this is not the language of the average lay person, religious, or parish priest, nor does it respect the realities of cultural difference. It would seem that Fr. Valenziano has no difficulty disregarding the variety of 'realities' experienced by the world's peoples, nor that for most of those people there is no division of the spiritual and the mundane. He has also made the (erroneous) assumption that all people regard imagery, symbols, and myths in the same context and categories as do classically educated Italian priests.

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Syncretism as Charismatic Renewal

The *Pastoral Letter* issued by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in June 2003 was concerned with the Charismatic Renewal movement in Canadian Catholic churches. The movement was an outgrowth of changing times in the late 60s, and resulted in (as did so many products of that period) an increased spiritual vitality and renewal. The Letter reviews the history of Charismatic Catholicism, examining the difference between personal experience and teaching – whether it be a skill, knowledge transfer, or belief. What is most germane in the Letter and in the Charismatic movement, for the purpose of this discussion, is that the Native Catholic Church (while not claiming any kinship with Charismatic Renewal) has strong Charismatic attributes and tendencies that actually derive from Aboriginal spiritual and cultural traditions. Key aspects of Charismatic worship are the emphases on experiential knowledge, praise and thanksgiving, an evangelisation focussed on salvific love, remembrance that gifts (*charisms*) are given by God so that the recipient might work for the benefit of others (gratuitous service), and the healing ministry. Charismatic Renewal defines healing as overcoming any obstacle to a full awareness of God's presence; as such healing is not truly an end but rather a process facilitating clarity and wholeness of mind and body, in much the same way that healing in Native community is a restoration of balance, harmony, and wholeness. The Theology Commission of the CCCB is most concerned with appropriate leadership for healing services and the forms of healing, but it is necessary to note that these same aspects are fully present in Native Catholic spirituality, with the exception (in my experience) of evangelisation, which is not a concept that fits with

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Aboriginal cultural values. Healing is given great emphasis (see Chapter Nine for a full discussion), and gifts of the spirit are celebrated and prized as they have always been in traditional life. Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, revered throughout Native North America, is often invoked in Native Christian healing because of the miraculous healing of her smallpox scars just minutes after her death in 1680. Her charism, during her very short life, was one of prayer, service to children and the elderly, and endurance no matter the vicissitudes of life; her appeal lies, in part, with the close association Aboriginal people feel to her life and struggles. Kateri, half Algonquin, half Mohawk, is in many ways a symbol of people caught in the history others have built for them. The universality of her appeal for First Nations peoples is expressed in a poem called *In her Footsteps*, by Sr. Kateri Mitchell, SSA[135]:

Kateri Tekakwitha

Noble Turtle, Mother Earth

Gathers Her People

East, South, West and North

Mohawk Algonquin Lily

Filled with love

Grateful woman

We honour you

Sister Turtle Clan

Strong, kind and true

[135] From the Tekakwitha Conference National Home Page, http://www.tekconf.org/patroness.html (Printed 2003/03/25 pp2-3).

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Faithful woman

We honour you

Tekakwitha

Hope filled with dignity

Joyful woman

We honour you

Woodland Cross of Life

Fasting and prayer

Mystical woman

We honour you

Precious Flower

Virgin, fair and free

Holy woman

We honour you

Friend with compassion

Helper and healer

Lover of peoples

We honour you

Gift of Nations

Gentle and forgiving

Loyal witness

We thank you

Our Sunshine

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Vision, bright and keen

Open, generous

We thank you

Creator centered

Creation filled

Air, sky, water

We thank you

Celebrate our gathering

Clans, tribes, nations

Justice, harmony

We thank you

Family united

Body, blood, life

Serving, sharing

We thank you

In your sacred journey

Blessed Kateri

We honour you

We thank you

The imagery and the style of Sr. Kateri's poem are distinctly those of the Haudenosahnnee (Rotinoshonni) of the Eastern Woodlands, yet they place Blessed Kateri squarely in a Christian, as well as an Iroquoian, context. Allusions to the gospels and the stories about women important in the life of the Biblical Jesus blend

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seamlessly with the clan mother's Noble Turtle, and the sacred journey of pilgrimage is also a quest to experience the qualities of the four directions. Mitchell has been an advocate of Native Catholic syncretism for many years, calling for education to open the barriers that prejudice and ignorance create. She believes, as do I, that native spirituality is a gift to the church and deserves to be accepted as such. Members of the Aboriginal Catholic Community (and the Kateri Tekakwitha Conference) share this belief as noted in a *Prairie Messenger* article (Konrad 2000:1-2) about the Annual Manitoba Aboriginal Catholic Conference. Participants talked about the informal setting, tenting, sharing, and expressions of culture. As at the Indian Ecumenical Conference I attended in 2001, the Sacred Fire was lit and burned for the duration of the conference, a powerful symbol of God's presence. Smudging, sweat lodges, a powwow, and teaching by members of different communities were followed by sharing. And again, the drums beat the final *Amen* in the four directions for the prayers of all the peoples of the earth: the drums that are the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the heartbeat of Jesus Christ.

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Chapter Nine: Holy Waters, Healing Powers

Water is, and has been for millennia, associated symbolically with life and with health. We all know that most of the earth's surface is covered by water. According to currently accepted theories of evolution all life originated in water, and science tells us that the physical composition of the adult human body is 60 and 75 percent water.[136] We know that we require water to maintain not only health, but also life itself. In both physical and symbolic associations, water is connected closely with concepts of healing and revitalisation. Symbolically water is metaphoric of renewal, refreshment, regeneration, revival, healing, and cleansing: a flood of piety, an overflowing of emotion, a wellspring of spirit. Water is associated with many world pilgrimage sites[137] and, in many spiritual and religious philosophies, is deemed to be closely connected to the mysterious, the divine, and to miraculous events. In Jungian psychology, dream images of water are often symbolic of the revitalisation that flows from the unconscious. In Christian theology, the water of baptism washes away sin, effectively creating a new being, and in Native philosophy water is the life blood of mother earth and one of the four powers of Creation.

With these strong associations in mind, it is understandable that images of water, thirst, and spiritual refreshment are prevalent in the discourse in and about Lac

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[136] See http://edugreen.teri.res.in/explore/water/watintro/htm

[137] The Ganges River in India, Hagar's Well at Mecca, Mother Cabrini's Shrine in Denver, Shikoku in Japan, Rio Zahuapan and the spring devoted to Nuestra Señora de Ocotlala in Mexico, and Our Lady of Guadalupe (whose name derives from the Arabic, *Uadi al-lub*, meaning 'black gravel river') are a few examples.

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Ste-Anne, and that the lake in its metaphorical and mythical personae is the true focus of the pilgrimage for those who journey here, superseding the physicality of the shrine and all its attendant rituals. Belief in and stories about the healing power of the water, the medicinal lake plants and the spirit of the place are part of the mythos of both pilgrimage and place. At Lac Ste-Anne, the water is named by the pilgrims in a number of ways, synthesised here from my field notes:

Water.

water of spirit

water of baptism

holy water

healing water.

water to wine

wine into blood

blood like water.

Water:

life.

Water:

healer.

Water:

reconciler.

Water:

salvation.

Water:

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resurrection.

Water:

eternal life.[138]

Water nourishes, cleanses and refreshes us. Water is the metaphor for God's healing grace, for salvation, for blessing, for life itself. Water is precious, water is sought after, cared for. Water is the sign of our Father, of our redemption. Water is the blood of our Mother Earth. Water is life. We nourish our bodies with water. We refresh ourselves in its soothing depths. We bless ourselves with water as we enter the church, with this gesture asking for God's blessing, for spiritual nourishment and healing.

Man'tou Sâkahikan

Lac Ste-Anne was holy before it was Catholic, holy perhaps before anyone came to it. Certainly it was holy when The People first started to gather in peace at its shore: people from many tribes, people who travelled far to pray to the Creator/Father/Mystery through the sacrifice of the Sun Dance and the rituals that accompany it. It was a place of fasting, feasting, and of gathering food for hard times in the coming winter; it was a place of abundance, blessed by the generative power of the Creator. It was, as it is today, a haven, a holy place, a gathering ground, and a place of power wherein occur wondrous, awesome, and miraculous events.

Oral histories of the lake tell us that in the days of the ancestors, long before the missionaries came, The People met at *Man'tou Sâkahikan* to build the arbour

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[138] Anderson-McLean: 1996-2003.

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lodge for the Sun Dance and undertake the ancient traditions of purification, prayer, sacrifice and supplication. The tribes gathered in the sacred time and at this sacred place to make offerings to Creator, to sacrifice and give thanks for the bounty of their world. Sweat lodges, fasting, dancing, smudging, drumming, feasting, listening to the words of the elders, hunting, fishing, gathering berries and medicinal plants and roots, briefly at peace with hereditary enemies – this was summer at the lake before the missionaries came. The tribes (Cree, Siksikà, Kainai, Nakoda, Tsuu T'ina, Pikani, Dunne-za, Dene) met there in peace, even during the Cree-Blackfoot Wars (approximately 1790 to 1870)[139]. It was a pilgrimage then: a sacred journey that acknowledged the spiritual power of a place to heal damaged hearts, bodies, minds, spirits and communities. And it is still a sacred quest, a pilgrimage to a time and space of healing, with Aboriginal people from all over North America making the sometimes long and often difficult journey to this place that is sacred to Native traditionalists, Roman Catholics, and Native Catholics alike.

People come to this sacred place for respite from the world at large; they also come to honour and petition Creator, Our Lady, Jesus, *Kohkom* Ste-Anne, the Grandmothers and Grandfathers, Mother Earth and Father Sky. For many pilgrims this may be the only time during the year that they see friends and family who have moved away from the community so there is always an air of anticipation and celebration among campers and new arrivals. During the relatively brief period that I have participated in the pilgrimage, I have observed a significant increase in the numbers of indigenous peoples from places like Nunavut and Alaska, Siberia,

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[139] For a history of the wars, see John S. Milloy's *The Plains Cree*.

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Australia and New Zealand, South and South-east Asia, the Philippines and, of course, the Americas. The numbers from Central and South America[140] are particularly significant and quite astounding when the political and economic difficulties and distances are considered. All of these pilgrims are deeply spiritual people[141] who make the arduous journey in solidarity with their North American 'relations' to honour Creator, the ancestors, and to worship at an ancient sacred site.

Increasing numbers of pilgrims come from Europe[142] and Asia[143] to participate. For some, like the busload of Japanese travellers taking a day away from Klondike Days and West Edmonton Mall, this pilgrimage is yet another tourist attraction and its main drawing cards are the tipis, the drumming, the dancing, and the impressive regalia worn by many Native pilgrims. Folks who follow the New Age movement come to the lake because they believe it to be an energy vector and therefore part of the world's harmonic convergence.[144] Catholic theologian and author Virgil Elizondo supports the notion of shrines as energy foci: "... pilgrimage sites seem to have the force of a geographical biological-spiritual magnet attracting the pilgrims into the realm of its life-giving mystery." (Elizondo 1996:ix) My

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[140]I have spoken to pilgrims from Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina during the summers of 1996 to 2002.

[141] Who are, as far as I can determine, usually indigenous Catholics most often with exceptionally strong devotions to Our Lady and Ste-Anne.

[142] Poland, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, and Norway are most prominent.

[143] Devotion to St. Anne is strong, particularly among Chinese and Taiwanese Christians.

[144] Self-professed New Age pilgrims told me this in 1996; this belief (though stated in different terminology) was reiterated by Chief John Snow of Nakoda Morley Band in 2001, and other elders both from Morley and Alexis First Nations have told me this over the years. 'This land holds Creator's power' is closer to what they say, but the meaning is similar if not identical.

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experience is that pilgrims would, in general, agree with the idea of the lake being an extremely powerful source of positive energy – were they to express themselves in that way. But when asked directly the majority say simply that they come for the waters, for the masses and prayers in their languages, to be with their relations celebrating Creator's power and expressing their devotion to St. Anne, seeking healing in the lake through faith and piety. They come because they, and their ancestors before them, have always journeyed in the height of summer to this sacred place. Chief Seattle once said of the draw for his people of certain places:

> Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. Even the rocks, which seem to be dumb and dead as they swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people. And the very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than to yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. (Seattle 2003:3)[145]

Waters of Life

At the lake it is water whose sympathetic touch the people crave, water that laps their bare feet, cools the summer heat, and heals during the long northern winters. Water is the primary symbol of life for the simple and practical reason that

[145] Http://www.sunsinger.org/related/native.php

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without water there is no life as humans understand it. It seems to follow logically that water, in the form of lake, river, pond, or well is often a critical aspect of the physical setting for a pilgrimage shrine. One autumn, a number of years ago, my husband and I camped outside a village in Nova Scotia called Monastery (just across the causeway from Cape Breton), in the fields belonging to the nearby abbey. When one of the brothers stopped to talk during his walk along the path leading to a small spring, we asked him if the water was fit to drink. With a twinkle he said, "Ah yes, and many say the water is holy, too". Following the pathway above the meadow, we discovered that the way to the well spring was marked by the Stations of the Cross, and that the spring was dedicated to Ste-Anne. A few years before that, on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, I had visited a tiny pool reputed from early Celtic times to possess healing powers,[146] particularly for joint and muscle problems. The innkeeper had recommended it highly, saying her mother's arthritis was held in check and even lessened by regular bathing at the pond (and she reminded me that a small offering for the 'lady of the water' would be appropriate if I chose to go). I added my small bundle to the gifts of petition and thanks surrounding the miniscule pond: tiny bouquets of fading flowers, bits of ribbon and yarn tied to heather bushes, pieces of fruit, a loaf of bread, even a small plastic truck – perhaps merely forgotten, but perhaps a child's offering. It was as peaceful and spiritual a sanctuary as any of the great Norman cathedrals to the south, but with a more intimate, human scale that gave a sense of belonging, of being part of the earth itself. During the summer of

[146] The pool is at the base of a waterfall called Skorrybeck. It is mentioned in Pennick 1996:64, indicating that it was not only my landlady's mum and a few other locals who found relief in its water.

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2003 I found the same comfort and serenity in an aspen grove on a hillock in central Saskatchewan where the trees were festooned with rainbows of ribbons and cloth streamers, offerings in anticipation of a successful Rain Dance.

The life-giving nature of water renders it singularly appropriate as the practical and mythical source of beliefs and stories surrounding such sites. Offerings to the old gods of water features figure prominently in Celtic legends: Legend tells us that the mythic sword *Excalibur* was taken (with the permission of the Lady of the Lake) from and, after fulfilling the Arthurian prophecy, was returned again to the sacred waters of the Isle of Glass, the holy land of Avalon. Sacrifices to holy lakes were often considered essential to the well-being of the land, resulting today in notable archaeological discoveries of Iron Age weapons, armour, and treasures[147]. Nigel Pennick notes that a Mr. O'Connor, as recorded in an Ordnance Survey Letter around 1820, observed that on Garland Sunday local folk around Loughharrow not only rode their horses into the lake to protect them from "incidental ills during the year and throw spancels and halters into it which they leave there ... they are also accustomed to throw butter into it that their cows may be sufficiently productive." (Pennick, 1996:64-65) At Dowloch, in Scotland, as late as 1845 people threw food and clothing into the water in thanksgiving for cures affected there (Ibid). Victor and Edith Turner noted seeing bits of cloth and even baby clothes tied to bushes on the way to and around the shrine at *Cnoc Mhuire,*[148] Ireland, where women petition the

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[147] Such sites include the Thames River (near Battersea in England), Lakes Geneva and Neuchâtel in Switzerland, and the lake at Toulouse, France.
[148] In English called Knock, where there is a very active year-round Catholic pilgrimage.

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Virgin for solutions to fertility problems. (Turner and Turner 1975:111-115) As I saw at the pool in the rolling hills of Skye, it is not uncommon even today in Celtic areas to see remnants of cloth or ribbons tied to the branches of bushes and trees surrounding small pools or springs, physical indicators of petitions to 'the lady' of the waters. The literature on European sacred water sources indicates people from the most ancient times drinking and/or immersing themselves in 'holy water' from these sources in the search for cures from all manner of afflictions: dementia, epilepsy, skin conditions, arthritis and rheumatism, fevers of all sorts, 'female complaints', and paralysis or withering of limbs.

There are distinct parallels to be drawn between the ritual activities (and the practice of attaching ribbons and bits of cloth to trees and bushes) at the European sites and those at Lac Ste-Anne – in both cases the practices predate the Christian tradition that now overlays ancient customs. Colourful pennants and ribbons dot the campground and extend to the trees at the lake shore. During the pilgrimage to the lake, immersion in and consumption of the waters are essential goals of Native pilgrims. There are fewer non-Natives willing to fully immerse themselves or to drink the muddy water. Citing reasons such as probable pollution, potential diseases, the mucky bottom, and the chilly water temperature, those willing to talk to me have asserted their belief that dipping one's hand in and crossing oneself – possibly while standing knee-deep in the lake (for the more daring) – appears quite adequate. As not a few elders have commented during my fieldwork, fewer non-Natives seem to be healed at the lake: perhaps complete and lengthy immersion *is* required.

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Tears mingle with the water as pilgrims pray: standing or kneeling for hours and becoming, in one sense, part of the lake itself and thus part of the wholeness or holiness it represents. This ceremonial is a critical part of the pilgrimage: as prayer, as homage to the Creator, as a cry for solace, as an act of healing and a call for the restoration of harmony in the body and the world. Balances – of power, resources, time, and energy – are integral to Native spiritual beliefs; prayers are sung, rituals performed, ceremonials called: all for the restoration and maintenance of harmony in creation. In the traditional philosophies of First Nations peoples the water of the earth is sacred because it, with the vault of the sky, formed part of the pre-existent Void.[149]

Water is one of Creator's blessings or gifts to the world. Water is associated with the West[150] and so with the unknown, introspection, prayers, dreams, and meditation. Because the Thunder Beings live in the West, it is also the direction of power – the power to see, to know, to protect, to defend, and *to heal* (Bopp 1985:53-54). Nothing lives without water, just as all creatures die if they 'lose' their blood. Though some living creatures have greater requirements than others, water is life to all persons whether they are two legged, four legged, winged, or finned. For traditionalists, the holy waters of *Man'tou Sâkahikan* are a metaphor standing for

[149] In this aspect the Aboriginal myth resonates powerfully with Judeo-Christian creation mythology: "Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters" (Gen. I:1,2) For a discussion of the parallels and differences between Christian theological and Aboriginal spiritual traditions see Chapter Seven.

[150] On the Medicine Wheel or Sacred Circle, each of the four cardinal directions has multiple meanings and multiple gifts.

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Mother Earth's blood; for many Native Catholics this water is also symbolically the blood of the Lamb, of Jesus whose blood cleanses them of their sins.

Water is, with fire, rock, and wind, one of the sacred powers of Creation pre-existent when Creator made our human reality from the Void that was the time before time. These creative powers appear in all the teachings as elements existing simultaneously in the natural and supernatural worlds. These elements are represented in the healing ceremony of the sweat lodge, often regarded as a metaphor for creation itself.[151] The medicine wheel teaches us the power of the four elements, respected equally for the gift of life. Starting with the East and progressing clockwise around the wheel, the elements are Earth/Rock, Air/Wind, Water, and Fire. In the teaching of the peoples of the Plains, Water corresponds (on the medicine wheel) to the colour Black/Blue,[152] to the direction West, and to the Physical aspect of our humanity. It also implies growth and our human potential. It is the direction of power, the unknown, challenge, prayer, and meditation.

While we have no written records of how the lake's water might have figured in pre-Christian celebrations and rituals at the lake, the fact that it was a Thirst (or Sun) Dance site may indicate the water's significance. (I say 'may' rather than 'does' because association with water features is not a necessary characteristic of known Thirst Dance sites.) This is a powerful place, and belief in the ancient sacred powers of the lady in white permeates the land and water, integrated – sometimes fitfully -

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[151] Teachings received from the elders.

[152] The reason for this particular ambiguity of colour is that many Plains Cree traditionalists have an aversion to black, regarding it as indicative of 'bad medicine', so they use blue in the west. The Siksikà, Tsuu T'ina, Nakoda, Pikani and Kainai do not appear to feel the same way, so they use black.

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with Catholic tradition in the intercession of the saints. The Church's theology holds that through the intercessions of Ste-Anne, Grandmother of Jesus (and thus in Christian tradition the grandmother of all people), the lake's water is possessed of exceptional powers to heal maladies of the body and mind; traditionalists know that these waters have always been healing and sacred. Such sanctification by the Church of a place already considered holy is a critical factor in the richly textured layers of meaning surrounding pilgrimage sites in general, whether it is regarded as expropriation or expediency. The clearly Roman Catholic belief in saintly intercession may overlay but does not diminish older beliefs in the innate powers of the spirit of water and the ancestors. For Native Catholics the Roman Catholic 'community of the saints' integrates seamlessly with the community of ancestors who are always watching out for us, warning us of danger, encouraging us to do what is right. Within this belief structure Kohkom Ste-Anne is one more ancestor, and through this shared heritage she unites two faith communities – thus no dichotomies exist for those holding both beliefs simultaneously. It is a characteristic of the people of Turtle Island that they respect the beliefs of others and practice tolerance toward those beliefs. I was reminded by a Saulteaux Rain Dance Priest/elder in 2003, we all honour the same Creator, though each in our own way and none of us is fit to judge what is right or wrong for others.

For Native Traditionalists, Roman Catholics, and Native Catholics, Lac Ste-Anne's waters are the vehicle for healing grace. For Native peoples certain plants that grow around the lake and on its muddy bottom also contain healing power: plants known by the local tribal peoples as medicines for hundreds of years before

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the blessing of the water by priests. Such plants can be seen drying on racks throughout the pilgrimage campground; some varieties are destined to become teas, others are mixed with fats and oils for unguents. One Dunne-za elder (Mrs. G.) from north-eastern British Columbia gave me a lecture on the efficacy of plants and why traditional medicine, in her community's experience, is no longer as effective as it once was.

> Rat root is good for your heart, and if you grind it to powder and drink a bit in water it will help if you can't pee. There are lots of good herbs here but people aren't careful anymore about what they do with them and they don't teach their kids right. I think this is why some things don't work so good no more. There's no respect. (Personal communication, July 1998.)

Healers from different parts of the country may choose different plants or take only certain parts of a plant, or the same plant may be used for healing different maladies, but everyone agrees that these lakeshore 'weeds' are a necessary part of the medicine person's pharmacopoeia. Throughout the days of pilgrimage, people scoop water into milk jugs, pop bottles, covered buckets and any other receptacle that will contain it for carrying back to camp and then home when they leave. The faithful drink the water, bathe wounds and afflicted areas of the body in it, and rub it on arthritic joints. Once home, people continue to use the water throughout the year for cleansing and healing the spirit and the body.

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Healing and the media

Reading the newspaper articles and watching the television coverage, I have often wondered about the differences in the way journalists report on the pilgrimage, particularly when compared to the experiences expressed by pilgrims. It seems to me that the major journalistic interests are: (1) the sheer numbers of Native people in attendance and (2) the presence of the healing of physical ailments. The tendency has been (though this is changing)[153] that Catholic and Aboriginal newspapers (i.e. the *Western Catholic Reporter*, the *Prairie Messenger*, and *Windspeaker*) report instances of both physical and spiritual healing, whereas the secular papers such as the *Edmonton Journal* focus on the absence of evidence of physical healing.

Whether it is the legacy of poor Thomas or modern scepticism, they never seem to find their 'proof'. Yet during my years of research on and participation in the pilgrimage, almost all the people I have talked to have shared a personal story related to some form of healing, either for themselves or a close family member. I suspect there are a number of reasons for this difference between the journalists' reports and my research. One factor may be that I am accepted as a pilgrim, an Aboriginal, and a volunteer; part of that package is that I am also known as 'the Mohawk woman who tells our story' (or, in academic terms, the anthropologist). Pilgrims are more inclined to share their tales with another pilgrim. It is also true that there are many people who prefer to not advertise the gift of grace they are given

[153] See Argan 1982; Caldwell 1992; Gilmour 1997; Gold 1998; Gonzalez 1992; Hoang 1999.

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by Creator;[154] perhaps that is part of the charism, to offer silent thanks and grateful prayer, to be humble before the Creator and the ancestors.

In other cases, there is a strong cultural and spiritual differentiation between journalists and pilgrims in what actually constitutes healing. Many of the news reporters and journalists are seeking stories that will provide a good headline, preferably one with a good 'photo-op', something dramatic and clear-cut: an instant recovery of sight or hearing, the sudden ability to rise from a wheelchair and walk, canes and walkers discarded at the lakeshore. While one does hear these kinds of stories, people now usually (but not always) say these miracles mostly occurred 'in the old days' and attribute this to today's world of lesser faith than that of previous generations. Frank Ward, a Cree elder from Saddle Lake Reserve, maintained that faith is not as strong among the people as it was when he was a young boy. "The belief was so strong back then that miracles really did happen...." But now "everything is upside down. People are changed... there's alcoholism now and everything." (Meili: 1987:1) Elders who used to travel as small children with their parents have shared stories from their past of people whose mobility was suddenly restored. One elder from Saddle Lake told me about his grandma, who had been blind for many years. She was a devout woman and prayed for Ste-Anne's help all the time – and, apparently, she also prayed to her own grandmother, who had been a

[154] My view is supported by the Oblate priests who pastor the Native communities. Fr. Camille Piché, Fr. Jacques Johnson, Fr. Jim Holland, Fr. Gilles Gauthier, Fr. Camillo and Fr. Fred Groleau have all said, in their various ways, that the people simply do not talk about these things, and most particularly not to strangers. Fr. Paul-Antoine Hudon was quoted as saying "native people do not normally speak about the healings they receive. 'They'll leave their crutches and go home and thank God'." (Argan 1982:8)

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well-known medicine person, for help. Whichever of these good saints intervened for her or perhaps due to her own acts of grace, one year after she had walked with her grandchildren the entire distance to the pilgrimage, her sight was restored. The gentleman who told me this story thought perhaps she had had cataracts, but he was a small boy then and not sure what his granny's medical problem had been. In any case, he said that after that pilgrimage, she could see well enough to take up her beloved beading again, and to catch her grandchildren when they were naughty.

> Many people, like Joe Iron, 73, of Canoe Lake, Sask[atchewan], believe the lake is a place of miracles. He tells the story of a boy who was able to walk after his mother prayed for him at the edge of the lake. Some talk of a priest who walked across the water to care for a dying man. (Dolphin 1987:7)

I was also told about this priest[155] who, it seems, was considered a saint by the people to whom he ministered. I heard other stories about how he appeared in a dream to several of the old people on one reserve in the north and told them to encourage the young people to go to the pilgrimage with them – that it was important for their community. [156] The story says that each elder dreamed the same dream on

[155] The two ladies who told me were from the far north; we had quite a bit of trouble understanding one another, but one of the young people tried translating for us. He had heard the story all of his life and may have added his own embellishments. He referred to the priest as 'father' or 'this saint they tell about'. (Personal communications, 1998.)

[156] This is very much like the story told by the Nakoda at Alexis Reserve explaining their presence in 'Cree country'. While I was intrigued by the similarity to the 'origin' story of the Nakoda of Alexis First Nation that explains their presence so far from the rest of their people, no one else seemed particularly interested and it would have been unforgivably rude to press for an answer.

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the same night and that very shortly after they had word that the priest had died on the night of the dreaming.

Every year the numbers of people making the long, arduous journey from northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut increase; communities empty for as much as three or four weeks while the inhabitants travel south to honour Kohkom Ste-Anne, seeking peace, order, and healing for their lives, families, and communities. For these pilgrims, the healing grace of the lake is a reality, one not quite parallel to that of the journalists and film crews who travel here to record the Native experiences and stories for sceptical consumers. We are all barraged with media stories about the world around us and about the lives and activities of other people. Consequently, at this time in human history there are few people in the developed and developing worlds who have not been exposed, either through print, radio, or television, to the power of media-crafted 'realities'. I suppose there are some who accept the stories as factual and objective, but there always remain (for me) the questions of whose facts, whose objectives, and whose stories we are given. Each television network has a slightly – or profoundly – different slant on the 'news', usually focussing on one or two aspects of an event or story rather than exposing their consumers to the perhaps uncomfortable reality of multi-dimensional questions with little hope of concrete answers. Thus, I find, both in the journals and the newscasts, that the big stories of the pilgrimage centre around the numbers in attendance (with accounts varying by up to 10,000 – to me a

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significant variation – that is, after all, the size of a small city)[157] and whether or not miracles are in evidence that particular year. Since I doubt that little short of the muddy water turning into vintage Dom Perignon at the Bishop's blessing would qualify for some reporters, there are rarely media miracles at the lake with the probably obvious exceptions of those reported in Native and Catholic publications. Pilgrims seem to accept the stories of miracles past or present and trust their senses and emotions to relay the news of signs and wonders: consequently it appears that for the pilgrims there is far more happening than what the journalist's eye might see or recorder capture.

Revival

In observing and questioning pilgrims and priests at the pilgrimage, I have found that pilgrims frame their narratives about their sacred journeys with striking consistency as journeys of restoration and renewal; priests contextualise both healing and the pilgrimage in the same way. Many of the personal stories involve sub-textual explications of the importance of balance, order, and harmony, noting that the rhythmic structures of the pilgrimage and camp life – as well as distance from the stresses and problems of daily life – relieve internal and community conflicts. Usually inferred and often articulated is the belief that restructuring one's life to conform to the natural cycles that in the 'old times' defined life in Native

[157] Comparing clippings and notes made over the period of my pilgrimage participation, it appears that the RCMP at the pilgrimage site, the *Western Catholic Reporter*, *Windspeaker*, and CBC and CTV television reporters seem to set the numbers in attendance higher than does the *Edmonton Journal*.

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communities is what is needed to effect a more permanent healing and purification of both individuals and groups. Personal experiences in Native communities from British Columbia to Québec and from north of the 60th parallel south into México, suggest that this revival is underway. As one may reasonably expect, it takes different forms adapted to the people, their environment, and the distance travelled from the 'Red Road', but the healing is beginning.

In a 1992 article in *Windspeaker*, a Native-oriented newspaper, Linda Caldwell mentions fourteen individuals whom she interviewed who routinely make the pilgrimage specifically to obtain healing of illness and disabilities. Some of the verbatim comments follow.

> Emily has arthritis in her knees and walking in the lake water makes her feel better, she said.
>
> "[Maggie] didn't want to bring her wheelchair," said Delphine of her mother. "She wanted to bring her cane. She said she would walk through the water."
>
> Verna ... made her second pilgrimage this year with her brother, daughter and grandchildren. The water helps her get better, she said, and she takes home the lake plants to boil and use as medicine.
>
> Bertha, who spends much of her time in a wheelchair, said the waters help her. "If you believe in it – really believe in it – you have a really good feeling," she said.

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> And yes, added Sophie, the waters do help people heal, "for those who believe in it". (Caldwell 1992:11)

The same year, in the *Western Catholic Reporter*, a front-page article (Gonzalez 1992:1) detailed the story of a 75 year-old woman from Nelson House Reserve. She had had extremely painful arthritis in her arms and legs for a number of years.

> On the advice of a friend she came to the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage last year to try the waters. A few weeks later the pain was almost totally gone, the woman said through an interpreter. "I got healed".

Other pilgrim stories included that of a 52 year-old woman at the pilgrimage with her husband and four daughters.

> "The first time I came for healing and for more faith", she said. This year she came back to thank ""Jesus' grandma" for curing her tuberculosis and renewing her faith. (Ibid)

Quoting Fr. Jacques Johnson, Gonzalez continues,

> "There is a spiritual attraction that brings them here," said Johnson[158], adding he had met a man in his 90s who had visions of Christ and St. Anne while camping on the shores of the lake. "I know for sure this is a holy place," the man told Johnson. (Ibid)

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[158] Fr. Jacques Johnson OMI, who, at that time was both the Oblate Provincial Superior and the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Director.

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One of the more dramatic healing stories appeared in the *Western Catholic Reporter* (Argan 1982:8) concerning an elderly woman from Montana who had been brought to the pilgrimage in the early 1920s. She was at that time, totally blind. Her niece told the story:

> She bathed in the lake, took water home and administered it daily. In a couple of weeks... Mrs. McGillis began to see light and eventually her eyesight was totally restored. She died at 90 without ever again having to wear eyeglasses.

Florence, from Meander River, told me about her mother who had been ill for several years with 'heart troubles'. Her mother had attended the pilgrimage every year since a few weeks after her birth when her kohkom brought the baby to be baptised. Florence's mom had never missed a year, not matter what was going on in her life or in the world, and 'a little heart trouble' would not stop her. She was sick and tired during the pilgrimage, but someone carried her to every mass and back again to her camp. She prayed for her family and asked Ste-Anne to look after them because she was too tired now. The elderly lady became very ill on the way home from the 1982 pilgrimage and the family took her into the hospital at Peace River, where they were told she had a seriously enlarged heart. She died within a week of leaving Lac Ste-Anne, but even family members who formerly avoided the pilgrimage now attend. This is attributed by the family and community to healing through the power of the water, the lady's prayers, and the intercession of Kohkom Ste-Anne.

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One *Dene* elder from north of Chatteh told me the story of how when he was waiting to go to confession one afternoon, the old priest who used to be at their mission came and sat by him on the bench in the sun. The old priest, who had been dead for over twenty years, heard the man's confession and then sat companionably smoking his pipe before he just faded away against the trees. The elder (Mr. D.) made no attempt to rationalise his experience, it simply was. He and the priest had been friends for many years; the priest had been devoted to Ste-Anne and to his flock. It was natural and understandable that this priest would come to the pilgrimage with his old community and hear his old friend's confession.

It is, perhaps, for this very reason that the major focus of the contemporary pilgrimage to Lac Ste-Anne, according to both missionary priests and laity alike, is not so much on physical healing of disabilities and disease as it is on healing the spirits of those afflicted. As noted by Frank Dolphin of the *Western Catholic Reporter*, Fr. Jacques Johnson "insists that the most important cures at Lac Ste. Anne are not physical but a spiritual rebirth of many who come to pray." (Dolphin 1987:7) Fr Jacques is not alone in this belief. Fr Camille Piché, Fr Gilles Gauthier, Fr Gary Laboucane, and Fr Fred Groleau have each expressed the same position with respect to healing at the lake. Minds, bodies, and psyches are soothed, restored and healed but, for many community leaders, priests, and elders the true healing is in the restored harmony and cohesion, and new or renewed willingness to address the addiction problems that beset so many reserves and settlements. Most agree that the real power of the lake lies not in instant repair, though many do report an immediate sense of peace and comfort after entering the lake for prayer. The true healing takes

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place on many levels over a period of days, weeks, months, and years. People return throughout their lives to reaffirm their beliefs, to pledge themselves to Creator's path, to pray to Kohkom Ste-Anne to purify their bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits.

When chiefs and elders stand before the congregations to speak, whether it is to give the homily for mass or to address the community following the service, they inevitably tell of the suffering experienced in their communities through alcohol and drug abuse, breakdown of family life, the loss of culture, language and history, and the resultant loss of self-esteem, self-worth, and therefore of responsibility and the power to change. There is no blame attached: these are statements of fact albeit expressed emotionally, often through tears. The intention is to focus attention on the spiritual and material gains in band life as more and more people make the pilgrimage, take the Sobriety Pledge and honour it, make the commitments to preserving or regaining their cultural traditions and languages and nourishing their indigenous philosophies of culture and spirituality through learning circles involving everyone from the youngest to the oldest. For many speakers, the simple fact of communicating their experiences in their own language – even with the knowledge that many, if not most, of their audience may not understand the words[159] – is a

[159] The pilgrimage has truly become, as Fr Fred Groleau noted, a Pentecost moment with people speaking in many tongues capturing the spirit of what is said. At any given mass the pilgrims congregated will include, aside from Francophones and Anglophones, people whose first or only language is that of the Cree, Nakoda, Siksikà, Dene, Dunne-za, Inuktitut, Innu, Dogrib, Ojibwa, Saulteaux, Kainai, Rotinoshonni, or Métchif. In the last number of years Spanish, Polish, German, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Malay pilgrims attend in increasing numbers. It appears inevitable that this 'little Pentecost' will only grow over time.

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healing of enormous proportions. Perhaps one of the miracles of the lake is that the assembly sits, respectfully listening, absorbing the meaning, if not the exact language, of the message and taking from it whatever of personal significance they wish.

"We are Children, Children of the Light..."[160]

In addition to the masses detailed in Chapter Five, there are special services every evening during the pilgrimage. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evenings, pilgrims gather at the shrine to participate in the Candlelight Processions: circling the grounds following the Stations of the Cross while praying the rosary, moving down to the lake, and culminating in a return to the shrine for further prayers and a blessing. Circumambulation of a sacred area is a typical pilgrimage action that serves to link individuals into a more cohesive group and also links the people to the site. In this case, the nature of the processions as an act of Catholic devotion enacted within the ritual form of the sacred circle of Native spiritual philosophy produces an even greater sense of solidarity among the participants, affirming them as Native Catholics. The flickering light from hundreds of candles circles the large open area between the shrine and the lake; from a distance the firelight appears to be an enormous bonfire. All ages participate in these 'mini pilgrimages': elders in wheelchairs; teens, looking slightly embarrassed but still there; tired folks using canes or walkers; equally tired parents pushing strollers or carrying small children. The old, young, middle-aged – healthy or not in mind and body – all follow the

[160] This is from the first line of one of the pilgrimage hymns.

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circling path carrying their tiny candles, singing (mostly Cree) hymns, and praying the rosary in their various languages.

The candlelight masses and processions[161] have assumed more specifically overt intentions in recent years, with a focus on health issues within the Native community. For example, in 1998 the Monday night candlelight service and procession was dedicated to AIDS victims and their families and in 1999 the dedication was for those suffering from diabetes. That procession, by popular report, attracted one of the largest crowds ever gathered for a single pilgrimage event. Every year, the Tuesday night special service is the Sobriety Pledge, first introduced by Fr. Lacombe in 1853. This is can be an emotional and life-changing event, faithfully attended by those with substance abuse problems and their families. Because such problems are so wide-spread, the Sobriety Pledge has become more than merely an element of pilgrimage ritual life: it has taken on the role of drawing the desolate and desperate back into the Sacred Circle of life and Creator's family.

On Eagle's Wings – the Sobriety Pledge

Roman Catholic theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is, among other attributions, the symbol for harmony and beauty in the world. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, taught to children as part of their preparation for confirmation, are courage, knowledge, understanding, reverence, wonder and awe, right judgement, and

[161] The Candlelight Processions and the Blessing of the Lake are undoubtedly the two most filmed and photographed events of the pilgrimage. Each is important, indeed critical, in the evolution of a truly Native Catholicism though not for the stunning timed exposures of flame-lit faces or the fabulous beaded buckskin robes of the Bishop.

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wisdom. As people mature spiritually, they more completely embody the fruits of the Holy Spirit: faith, self-control, modesty, goodness, charity, joy, chastity, kindness, gentleness, generosity, patience, and peace.

In Native philosophy people must be in balance and harmony in order to be one with the beauty of the world, thus children are taught respect for all life, wonder and awe at Creator's greatness and gifts to the People, kindness, gentleness, generosity and charity, patience, self-control, chastity and modesty. They gain understanding and knowledge through watching and listening to their elders.

In both cases these are the ideal attributes of a good life lived with spiritual, mental, physical and emotional awareness and health. These concepts are synthesised in Native Catholicism: the reverence for all life integrated with the regenerative and re-creative powers of the Holy Spirit (*Kîsîmân'tou*). The flapping wings of the Thunderbirds bring rain, wind and powerful storms that stir the spirit and initiate change. The soaring Eagle – often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit – lifts us on his wings, providing us with an altered spiritual perspective and understanding that allows us to restore balance to our world and maintain our personal harmony.

As we have seen and read, healing is a focus of the pilgrimage experience: healing ourselves, our societies, and our world. Of the various healing ceremonies held throughout the pilgrimage, the Sobriety Pledge is the most formalised. The service takes place following the Blessing of the Lake and evening mass on Tuesday, starting around 9:00 p.m. I had attended as an observer having, over the years, become very aware of the depth of meaning and impact this service has for people

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here. In more than six years of research I heard, firsthand, countless stories of the healing that occurs at this ceremony. In my first year of pilgrimage research, a woman from Meander River (to the northwest) told me about her brother, who had made the pledge eight years earlier, and "hasn't had nothin' since then." [162] (Personal communication: 1996) Others have talked about their hard journey back from drug abuse, drinking, and/or prostitution, attributing their success to the pledges made to Creator and Kohkom and the prayers of their families, priests, and communities. I knew from these stories that the Pledge ceremony was, to the people involved and to their families, a sign of the Great Mystery, an event crowded with miracles. However, it remained a part of the pilgrimage from which I felt remote: an aspect that disturbed me and caused an odd sense of anxiety. The ritual, introduced over 100 years ago by Fr. Lacombe, invites the serious participation of many pilgrims and, though with significant misgivings and concern, I became one of them. Despite feeling inadequate to the task, during the 1999 pilgrimage I took my place as a Pledge healer. An account of that evening follows.

In the hour or so between the end of evening mass and the beginning of the Pledge Ceremony, some people stay in the shrine church for silent prayer, though others go out to get coffee, have a smoke, chat with friends, or go down to the lake. This year it was both cold and wet: there had been a small funnel cloud spotted across the lake during the Blessing of the Lake, and the weather had changed rapidly. Sudden shifts in the weather are common though, and it is often quite cold and wet

[162] Florence meant that her brother had been able to abstain from a virtually life-long habit of alcohol, and that she (and he) attributed this to his annual participation in the Sobriety Pledge.

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by late evening so most folks go back to their camps for sweatshirts and jackets, trickling back to the shrine in response to announcements or through ingrained habit. Healers at the 'Pledge' come from a variety of backgrounds: most are priests, elders, or recognised Native healers; a few, like my husband and me, are people chosen after observation and assessment as having a gift to heal.[163] Like most of the activities that are adjunct to the actual masses, the form is loose and the atmosphere is casual, comfortable, and welcoming.

The setting and format of the ceremony are simple. The shrine is partially lit and by the time of the service it is usually getting dark. The priest-director leads everyone in prayers. The healers are ranged in front of the altar facing the people, standing or sitting according to their preference or physical ability (many are elderly and/or disabled). This year the group includes a Lakota deacon from the Dakotas now working in Montana; some medicine people representing Cree, Dogrib, and Dene; a number of priests; Métis healers; the Mohawk woman (me) and her mônîyâs (white-guy) husband. Even though I had observed the ritual over a number of years, sitting quietly on a bench and praying for the participants, I was completely unprepared for the maelstrom of emotion it unleashed not only in me but apparently in other active participants. Without any apparent inhibitions, people share the stories of their addictions with a complete stranger. There is no glossing – the stories are harsh, violent, and bitter. The words are simple and graphic. I heard stories of addiction and abuse ranging from alcohol and gambling to heroin, cocaine, and sex.

[163] The ability to lead others to healing is seen to be a gift of the Creator, flowing through the Spirit or Breath of Life.

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Emaciated mainliners and hard-faced hookers told tales no more wrenching than those of kids of twelve or grannies of 80. The need for comfort, for acceptance, and for support was overwhelming: exhausting both physically and emotionally. To be the recipient of such a magnitude of trust and faith is to become utterly humbled and to lose the borders of one's own self, or in more theological terms, to be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and then to pour these out on others immediately and continuously. The pledges and prayers are to Creator, but the healer is the channel through which the pain and suffering – and the hope – flows. Words can only go so far: gripping hands, painfully tight hugs, even rocking like small children help to acknowledge shared pain. The physical contact with another human combined with profound trust in divine help seems to start the healing. I estimate that I alone listened deeply to the agonies of twenty-five to thirty people between the ages of thirteen and seventy-six that one night, hearing their stories, murmuring prayers, soothing, holding, crying together. There were 18 to 20 healers at the Pledge that night and it is probable that each one worked with at least as many people as I. It was long after midnight before we left the shrine, tired and cold.

I learned that, like other gifts, using one's healing grace has both positive and negative aspects for the healer. Participating this way in a charismatic healing ceremony is the most intense activity I have ever undertaken: it depletes every spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical resource and yet contained with the exhaustion is a luminosity, a warmth – a sense that what you have done is what you were meant to do. A couple of weeks after that Sobriety Pledge at Lac Ste-Anne, I was on the Nakoda reserve at Morley in southern Alberta for the Indian Ecumenical

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Conference hosted by Chief John Snow. On the morning of the second day Val, a woman with whom I had been talking for some time, asked me to tell the elder she had come to see that even though he was absent she had received the healing. I knew she was referring to Chief John who is a very gentle, spiritual man, a holy man of his people, and so I was not surprised that he could heal her pain from a distance. Later in the day, when I gave him her gifts and told him what she said, he put his hand on my head and said, "You were with her, my daughter. What did this woman mean; what does the Spirit tell you? What does your helper say? Listen to your vision." (Personal communication, 2000).

We sat at the Sacred Fire of the Conference, breathing in the scents of sweet grass and tobacco smoke and I shared with him the events of the Sobriety Pledge. He listened carefully and after a long, thoughtful pause said quietly that to deny such gifts is to deny Creator and our own potential. He also said that to be a healer is to follow a hard road, but it is a gift given to only a few. Chief John taught me that the burden of the gift is that when requested, the healing can never be denied; like all of Creator's gifts to his children the gift to heal is not a possession for one person, but is to be shared with any who ask.

Purification, Prayer, and Healing

Since that time, following the teaching of my mentor, I keep my small medicine bag with me, gathering healing medicine plants like sweet grass which is used for its cleansing and healing powers. This tale from Turtle Island explicates the importance of sweet grass to First Nations' peoples:

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> Sweet grass once lived in the sky. It came to earth through a hole in the blue lining of the Sun Chief's lodge – a hole that we call the North Star – through which shines the light of the fire in the Sun Chief's lodge. The hole was made when an Indian maiden (could she have known Eve?) pulled up the sacred turnip which Sun had forbidden her to touch.
>
> Morning Star had seen this maiden first in the Blackfoot camp on the prairie and had loved her so that he took her to the sky to live with him. She was very happy there until she was tempted (by a serpent in the form of a pelican) to pull the forbidden plant. Through the hole she saw her home again far down against the prairie. Sun, at the same time angry and pitying, sent her back to her people and with her she brought the sacred turnip, the sweet grass and a digging stick painted red. When the grass had grown and the prairie was well covered with it, Sun sent another messenger to the people telling them many things. He sent them the songs and ceremonies of the Sun Dance. He told them how to purify themselves outwardly by the use of the sweet grass incense and inwardly by nibbling the sacred turnip. (A. Brown 2000:150-151)

Within the rich diversity of Native traditions lie a number of rituals for purification and healing of the mind, spirit, emotions, and body. In the media-biased global village the lines between traditions are often blurred, so that generally we might speak more accurately of pan-Native traditions. Nonetheless we should

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always keep in mind that adopting and amending the customs and ideas of others to suit oneself and one's ecological niche is not a contemporary invention, but rather an old and honourable custom facilitated in the Americas by ancient trade routes and innate human curiosity.

As Olive Dickason succinctly states "...local conditions and subsistence bases ensured that the peoples spread across Canada led different lives with distinctive cultural frameworks at various levels of complexity, yet they all practised severe self-discipline to stand alone against an uncertain world, along with the acquisition of as much personal power as possible." (Dickason 1997:59) She points to the 'grease trails' of the Pacific Region along which oolachon oil was traded from the coast to the interior of what is now British Columbia; to copper, obsidian, amber, conch and dentalium shell, silicas, and galena artefacts all found far from any possible source of origin. "In eastern Canada, trade dates back to at least 4000 BC." (Ibid: 58) Increasing archaeological evidence exists in the form of iron blades, ceramic pots, and wheeled toys – to name but a few items – to suggest pre-historic trans-Pacific trade between Asia and North America.

With widespread exchange of goods and, one reasonably speculates, spouses, slaves or servants, the exchange of philosophies would seem to follow logically. If, as some archaeologists have suggested, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southern Alberta was indeed a trade centre connected with Cahokian[164] (the great centre of the

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[164] The urban centre Cahokia, located in what is now Illinois, "had the largest and densest population north of Rio Grande and was bigger than contemporaneous London, England, covering as it did 13 square kilometres of Mississippi River

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Mississippian mound-building culture that flourished from Wisconsin to Georgia between CE 500 – 1500) networks, it would not only be dried maize, tobacco, pemmican and bison hides that were exchanged along the routes. The Cahokian peoples had a complex metaphysical life that included elaborate mortuary practices, and probably would have distributed many of their spiritual beliefs, traditions, and practices along with their abundant trade goods. The mounds they built for their dead and the tobacco they grew for sacred rituals may have piqued the interest and imagination of their trading partners, and the migration of ancestral Siouian Assiniboine peoples known today as Stoney, formerly farmers on the fringes of the Mississippian culture, north and west brought with it associated cultural ideas and activities.

The sweat lodge[165] ceremony and smudging are the two most common rites in use on the northern Canadian plains, although proper completion of a vision quest is, once again, becoming more common. In the synthesis of traditional spirituality and Catholicism, the sweat lodge ritual has been compared by some Native Catholic elders to the Rite of Reconciliation[166] and the smudge to holy water. There are many ritualistic, mythic, and symbolic reasons why these comparisons may be valid. Dr. Frank Henderson, noted Catholic liturgist and author, has initiated inquiries into the praxis of liturgical synthesis and adaptation in a number of aboriginal communities. His findings corroborate my research (see Henderson 1986):

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bottom lands. With the exception of writing, it had all the characteristics of a city-state". (Dickason 1997:29)

[165] The individual lodges undeniably resemble (very small) sacred mounds.

[166] This concept was presented to the 1997 Synod of Bishops for America, in Rome, by Chief Harry Lafond of Meskeg Lake, SK as part of his intervention to the Synod.

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- widespread use of sweetgrass for incensing and purification;
- periodic use of bannock instead of wafers for communion;
- having the offering brought up by native dancers who approach the priest four times (once for each sacred direction), presenting the bread, wine, and water to him at the fourth time;
- presentation of the host to the four directions;
- praying the Great Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer by turning to each direction and singing;
- drumming the Great Amen and turning to the sacred directions;
- emphasis of the sacred circle for worship.

Vatican approval for the substitution of the sweat lodge for reconciliation or for other suggestions such as the ordination of elders and married Native men to the Catholic priesthood has not been achieved, but the Canadian Catholic Bishops (and particularly the northern Bishops) continue to advance their support for a Native rite that incorporates these kinds of important changes.

Sacred Medicines, Healing Smoke

Smoke rising from burning medicine plants (tobacco, cedar or juniper, sweetgrass, and sage) is called the smudge. The smudge is understood to both ritually and physically cleanse and heal believers; because of this it is used in some Native Catholic communities as analogous to holy water.[167] Prayers rise with the

[167] At Sacred Heart Church of the First People in Edmonton, for example, people smudge on their way into and out of the church for mass. In addition, the celebrant

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smoke, lifting away negative energy, feelings and emotions to balance energy and heal the mind, body, and spirit. Using the smudge stimulates increased beta-endorphin production (*KiiskeeNtum* 2000:1) thus encouraging a natural physical healing in addition to the mental and emotional healing experienced through the comfort of known, respected, and loved rituals. As explained by elders at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples during regularly occurring cultural awareness sessions and by Chief John Snow of the Nakoda at the Indian Ecumenical Conference in 2001, smudging is a ritual action intended to remind the believer that any activity following the smudge is to be undertaken in a spirit of good intent. I have been reminded to smudge in the spirit of purity of purpose, with respect for Mother Earth and all that she provides, and with humility in the search for the sacred.

Since my childhood, I have been taught that each of the sacred medicines carries a particular meaning and is affiliated with specific aspects of spirituality, morality, and ethical behaviour as well as possessing unique healing properties. Sage, symbolising woman's life-giving powers, provides wisdom, clarity of purpose, and strength. Cedar (or juniper) is purifying and attracts positive energy, thus restoring balance. Among the many different medicine teas brewed and consumed by indigenous peoples, cedar tea, high in Vitamin C, was taken during those months when vegetables and fruits were unavailable or scarce. The smoke rising from burning sweetgrass carries prayers to the Creator, the Grandfathers, and the Spirit

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and lay ministers are smudged in an act of purification of sins and a healing for any pain, disagreement, or problem within their families and the greater community. Smudging has its own ministry, comprised of those who understand the traditional protocol and are trained for it by elders.

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World and ritually cleanses the one(s) who smudges with it. Sweetgrass is an important medicine plant to Aboriginal peoples in the places where it grows and its power is recognised across a more extensive area of North America.[168] The ritual of smudging with sweetgrass smoke follows a distinct pattern of cleansing the eyes, mouth, ears, heart, and feet. By cleansing each of these areas the smoke removes negative feelings and emotions and leaves an internal sacred space into which purity, joy, respect for all life, harmony, truth, compassion, gentleness, love, and true healing can enter. When stepped on sweetgrass bends rather than breaking off: in this way, sweetgrass teaches us that injustices and hurts should be answered with kindness, a lesson similar to those of the New Testament regarding forgiveness, hence the frequent use of sweetgrass smudges instead of holy water at the pilgrimage masses. Sweetgrass, like the other sacred medicines, should be gathered not purchased, and as a general cultural rule, women on their moon neither touch nor gather sacred medicines (other than women's sage).

According to an article entitled "The Smudging Ceremony" in KiiskeeNtum, tobacco lifts the barrier between this Earth World and the Spirit World, and is therefore sacred to all people of Turtle Island. When tobacco is offered at the time a request is made, the individual who accepts the gift has made a sacred promise through his or her acceptance. As I have been told, the offering and acceptance of tobacco is a promise not only between the humans involved, but is also a commitment to Creator and the Grandfathers and one that must be honoured.

[168] Sweetgrass grows well in areas throughout Alberta and is frequently and regularly used in cleansing rituals.

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Tobacco is carried for use in thanking and honouring Creator for his many gifts. One should leave a little tobacco whenever taking some other gift Creator has given – in gathering the other sacred medicines for example, or in taking stones, birch bark, herbs, food plants, or in thanks for the sunrise, sunset, good weather, rain when needed. My mother's brother always followed the custom of our ancestors, the horticultural peoples of the Eastern Woodlands, and so he tucked a tiny pinch of tobacco into the ground with each bean, squash or corn seed – thanks to Creator for the Sacred Sisters – just as our people have done for centuries. Mrs. C., an Iroquoian elder from Rivière-que-Barre northeast of Edmonton, had claimed me as a 'cousin' after one mass at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, so I felt comfortable questioning her more directly than I otherwise would. One day I asked her about whether her community also offered tobacco to Creator when they were planting, and she said not any more, because they did things more like Crees now; she hastened to add that of course her family was still Rotinoshonni at heart, but out of politeness for being in another's home place they followed the Cree customs of their neighbours.

Sam, a Nakoda friend, gifted me with a sacred substance I had never before encountered. He had taken me to a place in the high country above Morley in the southern foothills where I could gather 'women's sage' and came back for me an hour or so later with a shelf-type fungus about the size of my palm. He explained how I should shave off small slivers with my knife and put the slivers with the contents of my medicine bag. Sam told me that the fungus grows on diamond

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willow in the foothills of the Rockies and is prized highly for its ability to ward off bad medicine and negative energy.

Both sage and cedar can be burned as smudge or made into tea; to my knowledge sweetgrass is used strictly as a smudge medicine, and tobacco tea is an insect repellent, not a consumable drink. I could find no information on whether the diamond willow fungus might, in former times, have been made into a medicinal drink or ritually consumed like peyote buttons, but it is sufficiently rare that few of the people I have asked are even aware of it as a sacred 'herb'. Still, whenever I smell its delicate meadow scent I think of hot summer afternoons with the Morley Nakoda in the mountains, for whom the Front Ranges are the shining, sacred mountains.[169]

I have seen people smudging at the pilgrimage camps before they go to mass. Ritual cleansing prior to the invocation of the Eucharistic Prayer (see Chapter Six) is accomplished by moving smoke from the altar smudge over and around the bodies of participants. The sacred smoke rises and perfumes the air, purifying it. The smoke from the smudge and the water from the lake are intertwined at Lac Ste-Anne: people pray while they kneel in the water and they pray as they wash in the smoke.

This chapter started with a discussion of the symbolic healing properties of water and has moved through a discussion of healing rituals, actions, beliefs, hands, and herbs. The laying on of hands and anointing of the sick in body or mind are ancient activities that sooth, refresh, and heal the afflicted. This discussion has

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[169] For a discussion of the sacred nature of the Front Ranges of the Rocky Mountains, see *These Mountains are our Sacred Places*, by Chief John Snow (1977)..

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considered the forms of these acts and contextualised the frame within which they are conducted. The previous chapter identified possible ways to develop the framework and examined the congruence and incongruence encountered in this fluid mix of Native traditional philosophy and Roman Catholic theology by considering inculturation, syncretism, and charismatic behaviours. Now we continue on the path toward the completion of our present journey by reviewing the history of the pilgrimage as detailed in this document and then by looking ahead to consider its potential in years yet to come.

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Chapter Ten: Pilgrim and Anthropologist

This present journey is ending but the trail to Lac Ste-Anne continues through time and space, and around the sacred circle, nourishing the spirits, hearts, minds and bodies of pilgrims. My intention throughout has been to share the flavours, sights, sounds, aromas, and textures of the pilgrimage experience at the lake and shrine dedicated to *kohkom* Ste-Anne. I have attempted to capture in words alone the spirit of a place that has been considered holy for a very long time and, by so doing, hope to provide my audience with some sense of its essence. Lac Ste-Anne is, for me, metonymic of Native Catholicism, and it appears that many pilgrims share this sense (though they would use different words to express their feelings). Certain elements endemic to Native life-ways have become over time symbolic of the pilgrimage and what it means to the People, and these elements also have become symbols of Native Catholic practice in the western provinces of Canada. In a sense, each of the preceding chapters represents one or two of these elements as seen by an Aboriginal person:

- timelessness;
- the holy nature of land itself;
- sacred fire;
- the healing properties of water;
- special prayers recited time and again;
- the community of and with ancestors;
- the intimacy and continuity of community through time and space; and

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- the significance of being Indian.

Continuity of action and practice is critical, so that the ritual of attendance, of years of making the pilgrimage, is prized in the communities and as part of the life stories of individual pilgrims. People recount with pride how their grandmothers brought them here when they were small, and now as grandparents themselves they bring their little ones. Whole communities gather together to make the pilgrimage, hiring a bus and camping together. Sometimes, so I am told, they even pitch their tents to order them in the same patterns as at their home place – neighbour beside neighbour and with a central gathering place for all. Everyone has a fire, and everyone goes to the lake, at least to wade in the water and most often to immerse fully (not once but many times) and to gather plants and fill jugs with water to take home.

Thinking of this and the profound sense of belonging and community I now share with so many pilgrims, and consequently with so many different groups of people from all over the country, I remember how bereft I felt on my first visit – I did not feel part of the activities or of the community of pilgrims. I had no fire, I had to leave before all the evening's events were over because I was riding my bicycle the seven or so kilometres back to the village of Alberta Beach on what was either a slippery mud track or a dusty rutted narrow road, always in the dark. I missed so much that year that periodically I am amazed at my return to Lac Ste-Anne. At that time I still visualised the pilgrimage as the subject of no more than a few pages indicating how the different communities come together: hence my dissertation proposal to do research in a number of communities pulling the resulting stories

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together through their involvement in the pilgrimage. My plan was to do fieldwork in a number of different communities throughout Alberta: in the far north, in the Rockies, to the south, and east to the Sakatchewan border. I had hoped to somehow divide my time among an (as yet unspecified) number of reservations and then use the pilgrimage experience as an encompassing metaphor for the relationships between Roman Catholicism and Indian spirituality. After conversations and visits with contacts at Saddle Lake, Ermineskin, Kainai, Morley, and Tsuu T'ina, and in combination with internal problems in other areas that either delayed indefinitely or rendered impossible permissions, I recognised that I would have to change my framework. Despite the rather sketchy nature of my initial pilgrimage experience, the interviews I had had and the observations I had made looked promising. Perhaps, as Nora said to me, it was Trickster playing; or maybe Gill was right and this was the path I was meant to follow: in any case, the pilgrimage became the locus and focus of my work.

Looking back...

We began, as is usual in this form of document, with a chapter to identify what was to come, one that would set the themes, theses, and tone of the writing that followed. I am reminded in this of two opposite opinions regarding the path we follow as humans: one contends that if we have our goal firmly in sight, we need not see the steps along the way; the other holds to the belief that if we prepare the path carefully and with deliberate respect, it will guide us to our goal. I have regarded my research and its outcomes as processual and while the goal has been to explain and

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clarify, to develop a comprehensive discourse for discussion, and to illuminate events not accessible to all, through the medium of thick description following the direction of Clifford Geertz (1973), the process of working, playing, celebrating, laughing, crying, singing, grieving, praying, and travelling with the People on this path toward a renewed sense of identity, peace, and inner power is, at least, equally important. Without that full mind/emotions/body/spirit involvement I would not have been able to access the communities as I have, nor tell the pilgrimage story with the same density or texture.

Chapter One: Walking in Balance outlined the journey from the first emergence of this project, set a specific goal, and constructed a theoretical and methodological framework upon which to build the full story. From the first steps outlining the journey, we moved to a section of the circle that deals with some specific theoretical issues embedded in pilgrimage, identified as Chapter Two: Questing Spirits. This drew heavily on the experiences, thoughts, and writings of others about religion in general, about ritual healing, and about pilgrimages and why they are so much part of human life. It examined the intentions of the Catholic Church in its on-going project of inculturation particularly as this relates to the promotion of culturally sensitised actions to develop integrated Native Catholic liturgical practices. There is little in this chapter about the way the People regard such issues, because theory – the isolated, detached application of preconceived ideas to testing and developing proposals of action, behaviours, or purposes – is not something the elders teach. We will come later to a discussion of indigenous ways and world views.

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In Chapter Three: Numinous Time while we began to examine the differences in perception between the Western, Cartesian-directed world, and the Aboriginal time-space continuum of Mother Earth, there was a concern to consider the geological, prehistoric, and historic stories of a place that is regarded as holy. The sacred nature of places existing across time, the spiritual essence of all things, and the importance of dreams and visions are recorded in oral histories about Lac Ste-Anne, and one of the most prevalent Nakoda beliefs was noted in detail. The post-contact history of the area is the story of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMIs) and their life with The People, and it is very much the story of both the lake and the pilgrimage. The future of the pilgrimage is also considered here, but briefly, because the plans for shaping both ritual and site are more properly part of this conclusion and appear below.

At this point our journey led to a discussion on the sacrality of land in Aboriginal thought and belief, to how this is (perhaps) exploited by segments of the population for their own purposes, and to how it has fed into the notion of the 'noble savage'. Chapter Four provided information on theories about the earth (such as the Gaia Hypothesis) that have encouraged non-Natives to adopt and adapt what we might consider a more traditionalist view of the world in which we live.

Here we examined place and space, the differences and similarities between the two, and how cultural perspectives alter what we might prefer to think of as objective fact. We looked at the impact this particular site has had on the populations who have visited, made it their home, travelled to it, fought over it, come to share it, and now make pilgrimages to it. The potential of certain morphological

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features to be seen as essential, embedding and embodying specific cultural attributes are part of this consideration, as are indigenous beliefs about the interrelatedness of the visible mundane world and the invisible sacred one.

At Kohkom's House (Chapter Five) we paused to refresh ourselves and join in the festivities that typify a pilgrimage at the lake. We were drawn from the road past the mission church to the shrine and the lake beyond. We smelled sweetgrass, wood smoke, baking bannock, frying bacon, a whiff of horses, the spicy heat of dusty earth and the wet richness of water and water plants; we heard gospel songs, hymns, chants, drumming, prayers, mothers calling children to supper, the public address system calling pilgrims to gather at the shrine, the snap of heavy plastic tarps in the wind. We could see thousands of people who came from across Canada, from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, South America, Asia, and Europe to be here at this time and place, joining together. However, on our walk through the camping areas we saw only a few who are not of The People, yet there were ten, twelve, fifteen thousand or more people living here for a week and sleeping in tents, tipis, or under tarps. Some are in campers or tent trailers, and there are a few travel trailers with the occasional RV or fifth-wheel trailer. We followed the Stations of the Cross, paused at the *pieta* of the Blessed Virgin embracing her Son, and gazed at the Sun Dance Lodge simulacrum built out over the water. We touched the smooth ivory curves of the statue of Ste-Anne, the rough planks of the benches, the silky amber columns and wall of the shrine; felt the coolness of water, the heat of sun; were buffeted by the wind, and embraced by the night. We are home.

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Chapter Six focussed on the ritual of the mass as the centre of the pilgrimage circle. We examined the church's Roman heritage and those influences on contemporary liturgy; we looked closely at some of the renewals and reforms of Vatican II as they affect this project, and reflected on the intentions and interpretations of the Church in the celebration of the mass. We paused to consider the practical inculturation of the mass, and the synthesised praxis of masses at Lac Ste-Anne. Traditional conceptualisations, theological guidelines, and liturgical practices all formed part of the discussion.

We then turned our focus to the stories of the People that tell about how this world came to be as it is today and that provide a moral and ethical code of behaviours. Trickster meets Christ, Chapter Seven, recounts the stories of how indigenous populations met their new neighbours, how those neighbours' values differed, how this caused dissension, pain, loss of identity, loss of esteem, and death for many of the People, and how today there are partnerships forming to restore "peace, power, and righteousness" (Alfred 1999:i) to the People and to the country. Some of the background is from written materials, but much of it comes from pilgrims who have shared with me their stories and histories and from elders who have taught me those things they believed I was ready to learn.

Chapter Eight: Spirit's Fires follows closely on the previous topics of Catholicism and Aboriginal Traditionalism because it is about what happens when one set of beliefs – one people's cultural, spiritual, economic, and political script – collides with another's. This is a story of conflict and congruence, of resistance and persistence, of inclusion and exclusion. We looked carefully at the dogma and

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directives of the Catholic Church and of its perceptions about the complex relationship between religion and spirituality; and we also looked in the places where Christian ideals fell by the wayside and were overcome by the objectives of colonialism and imperialism. Notions of acculturation and assimilation are embedded here, but so are ideas of syncretism (though within the Catholic Church the process most often goes by the name of inculturation). We considered the importance of naming processes and the processual affect as a result of naming. Here we found the words of people who have given careful thought to what forms a renewed universal Catholic Church might have, and the words of people who believe that by developing a solid framework of understanding about different theologies the Catholic Church can perhaps ameliorate at least some of its past errors in judgement with respect to Aboriginal peoples.

Having considered deeply the question of an integrated Native Catholicism (from a more theoretical perspective), we felt ready to test the waters of practice and find out how this synthesis of Native and Catholic works. Our next stop Chapter Nine: Holy Waters, Healing Powers examined the association of water with world pilgrimage sites, indigenous beliefs about water, and the metaphysical healing aspects of the holy waters of Lac Ste-Anne. It articulated other curative, restorative powers that play roles in Aboriginal life and at the pilgrimage: sacred medicines and special herbs. The healing effected by the waters is tangible action and simultaneously intangible faith. We considered physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing, looking briefly at the role of Cursillo in Native communities, and at the roles of Aboriginal spiritual traditions such as vision quests and dreams in the life

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of the Catholic Church and its Oblate missionaries, and very lightly touch the concepts of charismatic healing within the Church and the community.

And now, with Chapter Ten (Pilgrim and Anthropologist) we have taken the final steps in our present journey, arriving a place where we look back to where we have been and forward to where we might travel. Time envelopes us – as history, immediacy, potentiality: time is around us, above, below, to the right, to the left, in front, behind, with us, of us. To effect reconciliation and closure we will look at the new partnership of Native peoples and the OMIs at Lac Ste-Anne, first by reviewing the 'Apology' from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to The People, and then by examining the formation, framework, mission, and potential of the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Committee as a commitment from both the People and the OMIs to Ste-Anne, Creator, *Cêsu* (Jesus) and to the lake called Man'tou Sâkahikan. The Oblate Apology is a lengthy document to quote in full, but I believe that this is essential to a clear understanding of what the future of the pilgrimage may be and the potentials of the site as envisioned by Native communities and Oblate missionaries. The apology was extended "on behalf of the 1200 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate living and ministering in Canada" (Crosby 1992: 262) on July 24th, 1991 at Lac Ste-Anne, following the homily during the mass celebrated by Fr. Douglas Crosby OMI, who was at that time the President of the Oblate Conference of Canada. It reads as follows:

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An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Canada wish, after one hundred and fifty years of being with, and ministering to, the Native peoples of Canada, to offer an apology for certain aspects of that presence and ministry.

A number of historical circumstances make this moment in history more opportune for this.

First, there is a symbolic reason. Next year, 1992, marks the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Europeans on the shores of America. As large scale celebrations are being prepared to mark this occasion, the Oblates of Canada wish, through this apology, to show solidarity with many Native people in Canada whose history has been adversely affected by this event. Anthropological and sociological insights of the late 20th century have shown how deep, unchallenged, and damaging was the native cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious superiority complex of Christian Europe when its people met and interrelated with the aboriginal peoples of North America.

As well, recent criticisms of Indian residential schools and the exposure of incidents of physical and sexual abuse within these schools call for such an apology.

Given this history, Native peoples and other groups alike are realizing that a certain healing needs to take place before a new and

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more truly cooperative phase of history can occur. This healing cannot happen, however, until some very complex, long-standing, and deep historical issues have been addressed.

It is in this context, and with a renewed pledge to be in solidarity with Native peoples in a common struggle for justice, that we, the Oblates of Canada, offer this apology:

We apologize for the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious imperialism that was part of the mentality with which the peoples of Europe first met the Aboriginal peoples and which consistently has lurked behind the way the Native peoples of Canada have been treated by civil governments and by the churches. We were, naively, part of this mentality and were, in fact, often a key player in its implementation. We recognize that this mentality has, from the beginning, and ever since, continually threatened the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions of the Native peoples.

We recognize that many of the problems that beset Native communities today – high unemployment, alcoholism, family breakdown, domestic violence, spiralling suicide rates, lack of healthy self-esteem – are not so much the result of personal failure as they are the result of centuries of systematic imperialism. Any people stripped of its traditions as well as of its pride falls victim to precisely these social ills. For the part that we played, however inadvertent and naïve that participation may have been, in the setting up and maintaining of

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a system that stripped others not only of their lands but also of the cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions, we sincerely apologize.

Beyond this regret for having been part of a system which, because of its historical privilege and assumed superiority did damage to the Native peoples of Canada, we wish to apologize more specifically for the following:

In sympathy with recent criticisms of Native residential schools, we wish to apologize for the part we played in the setting up and maintaining of those schools. We apologize for the existence of the schools themselves, recognizing that the biggest abuse was not what happened in the schools, but that the schools themselves happened, that the primal bond inherent within families was violated as a matter of policy, that children were usurped from their natural communities, and that, implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design. For this we sincerely apologize.

We wish to apologize in a very particular way for the instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in those schools. We reiterate that the bigger issue of abuse was the existence of the schools themselves but we wish to publicly acknowledge that there

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were instances of individual physical and sexual abuse. Far from attempting to defend or rationalize these cases of abuse in any way, we wish to state publicly that we acknowledge that they were inexcusable, intolerable, and a betrayal of trust in one of its most serious forms. We deeply, and very specifically, apologize to every victim of such abuse and we seek help in searching for the means to bring about healing.

Finally, we wish to apologize as well for our past dismissal of many of the riches of Native religious traditions. We broke some of your peace pipes and we considered some of your sacred practices as pagan and superstitious. This, too, had its origins in the colonial mentality, our European superiority complex which was grounded in a particular view of history. We apologize for this blindness and disrespect.

One qualification, however, is in order. As we publicly acknowledge a certain blindness in our past, we wish, too, to publicly point to some of the salient reasons for this. We do this, not as a way of subtly excusing ourselves nor of rationalizing in any way so as to denigrate this apology, but as a way of more fully exposing the reasons for our past blindness and, especially, as a way of honouring, despite their mistakes, those many men and women, Native and white alike, who gave their lives and their very blood in a dedication that was most sincere and heroic.

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Hindsight makes for 20-20 vision and judging the past from the insights of the present is an exact and often cruel science. When Christopher Columbus set sail for the Americas, with the blessing of the Christian Church, Western civilization lacked the insights it needed to appreciate what Columbus met on the shores of America. The cultural, linguistic, and ethical traditions of Europe were caught up in the naïve belief that they were inherently superior to those found in other parts of the world. Without excusing this superiority complex, it is necessary to name it. Sincerity alone does not set people above their place in history. Thousands of persons operated out of this mentality and gave their lives in dedication to an ideal that, while sincere in its intent, was, at one point, naively linked to a certain cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic superiority complex. These men and women sincerely believed that their vocations and actions were serving both God and the best interests of the Native peoples to whom they were ministering. History has, partially, rendered a cruel judgement on their efforts, showing how, despite much sincerity and genuine dedication, their actions were sometimes naïve and disrespectful in that they violated the sacred and cherished traditions of others. Hence, even as we apologize for some of the effects of their actions, we want at the same time to affirm their sincerity, the goodness of their intent, and the goodness, in many cases, of their actions.

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Recognizing that within every sincere apology there is implicit the promise of conversion to a new way of acting, we, the Oblates of Canada, wish to pledge ourselves to a renewed relationship with Native peoples which, while very much in line with the sincerity and intent of our past relationship, seek to move beyond past mistakes to a new level of respect and mutuality. Hence:

We renew the commitment we made 150 years ago to work with and for Native peoples. In the spirit of our founder, Blessed [now Saint] Eugene de Mazenod, and the many dedicated missionaries who have served in native communities during these 150 years, we again pledge to Native peoples our service. We ask help in more judiciously discerning what forms that service might take today.

More specifically, we pledge ourselves to the following:

* We want to support an effective process of disclosure vis-à-vis residential schools. We offer to collaborate in any way we can so that the full story of the Indian residential schools may be written, that their positive and negative features may be recognized, and that an effective healing process might take place.
* We want to proclaim as inviolable the natural rights of Indian families, parents and children, so that never again will Indian communities and Indian parents see their children forcibly removed from them by other authorities.

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* We want to denounce imperialism in all its forms and, concomitantly, pledge ourselves to work with Native peoples in their efforts to recover their lands, their languages, their sacred traditions, and their rightful pride.
* We want, as Oblates, to meet with Native peoples and together help forge a template for a renewed covenant of solidarity. Despite past mistakes and many present tensions, the Oblates have felt all along as if the Native peoples and we belonged to the same family. As members of the same family, it is imperative that we come again to that deep trust and solidarity that constitutes family. We recognize that the road beyond past hurt may be long and steep but we pledge ourselves anew to journey with Native peoples on that road. (Crosby 1992:259-262)

It is this document and the subsequent amendments to the mythos and praxis of their ministry to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada made by the Oblates that facilitated the emergence of a new and vital partnership: the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Committee. It will take years, probably decades, for the People to realise fully their roles as full partners. The elders who have been such a key component of the pilgrimage management team are very aware of the problems posed by time pressure, and of concerns regarding the heavy financial burdens borne by the Oblates resulting from the residential schools scandals and subsequent lawsuits.

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Pilgrims' Visions

However, these are a People of vision – the Aboriginal people of Canada have often been referred to by priests and missionaries as a 'pilgrim people' because of their faith in Creator and in the renewal received through prayerful journeying to sacred places. Thus, it seemed very natural to call upon a vision to assist the pilgrimage in its time of trial. On January 15th, 2000, there was a gathering at Enoch Reserve near Edmonton. At the express invitation of the Missionary Oblates and those lay people who have worked with them on the pilgrimage, people from many communities met to discuss their visions for the future directions of the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage. The intention of the meeting was to articulate the OMI's concerns about their ministry as a whole, and to review specifically the existing patterns of ministry to both Native communities and the pilgrimage while developing a mission or vision and principles that expressed clearly and concisely the spiritual purpose and meaning of the pilgrimage. The Oblates expressed the following core concerns:

- there are no young men training for the priesthood;
- the potential (and probable) lack of continuity in the level of mission and ministry. They called on the aboriginal community for help in this, which included the pilgrimage, so that it would not end as their members become too old or infirm and unable to carry on with this work.

Both of these concerns are sincere and valid. The youngest Oblates in western Canada are in their mid to late fifties and there are few of them. Many of the priests I interviewed at the pilgrimage were beyond normal retirement age yet they were still

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working with parishes and missions. Fr. Camille Piché has commented on the reduced numbers of priests:

> When I came to the Northwest Territories as a young missionary there were 105 Oblates serving in all those different little missions and communities and, if you go there now? There are four – that is how dramatic the change is. (Piché 2001)

The expressed ideal is always stated as a need to recruit more Aboriginal men to the priesthood, but the rule of celibacy for the Catholic priesthood is a major deterrent in a culture that believes no one is fully adult until they become a parent[170]. In fact, this is becoming an increasingly significant problem for the Catholic Church worldwide, but the argument for a married priesthood (or at least for marriage as an option for priests) is an old one, ongoing, and not likely to be soon resolved.

There were numerous points raised at that January meeting, and after electing an interim leadership committee, the participants agreed to return to their communities seeking discussion and deliberation on key issues; future meetings were set to define a vision and framework, set goals, and outline the levels of administration and governance required.

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[170] However, it is my understanding that the bishops of the Northern Catholic Dioceses have proposed the notion of ordination of Native men to the priesthood during visits to Rome and that they await a response from the Vatican (Personal communication post-defence, Peelman 2004).

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Getting from Here to There

The first Lac Ste-Anne Conference was called for April 2001 in Edmonton at the Grey Nuns Centre. I received a phone call at my home in Calgary asking if I would participate as an Aboriginal anthropologist and as a pilgrim. Over a two-day period, about fifty to seventy-five people (the numbers fluctuated almost hourly) met as a community of concerned pilgrims, aware that a tradition now over one hundred years old was in jeopardy. The leaders (Oblate priests and First Nations laity) had prepared a packed agenda designed both to provide and to solicit as much information as possible in the time available. The meetings were chaired jointly by Charles Snow of Saddle Lake and Fr. Camille Piché of Grandin Province; there were presentations by Fr. Jacques Johnson, Fr. Gilles Gauthier, Fr. Fred Groleau, Greg Bounds (the Business Manager for the Oblates of Grandin Province), Martin Eaglechild of the Blood Reserve, Esther Blondin, MP, and by representatives from Lac Ste-Anne Mission and from the Township of Lac Ste-Anne. These presentations provided substantive background information for the membership to work with when we broke into small focus groups to discuss specifically assigned topics identified as concerns.

Critical concepts agreed upon included the blended, synthesised character of the pilgrimage as a bricolage of Catholic, Native, and European traditions, with further agreement that the Native elements of the pilgrimage and within the masses must not only be maintained but also must be expanded upon and formalised. Participants expressed their desire that more Aboriginal traditions be integrated and that Aboriginal rituals be accorded respect equivalent to European Catholic

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traditions: the Oblate priests who were present appeared to agree.[171] The entire assembled conference affirmed and asserted the centrality of the mass to Native Catholic spiritual expression generally and to the pilgrimage experience particularly, and re-affirmed the sacred nature of the pilgrimage grounds and the lake.

The pilgrimage leadership will face continuing challenges in years to come, and there is a great need to involve young people in the decision-making process so that they will have the same sense of ownership of the event as their parents and grandparents presently possess. In fact over the last four or five years there has been significantly more youth programming within the planned pilgrimage activities but unquestionably there are distinct areas that require attention, notably the whole issue of youth leadership (and the training required for young people to assume leadership) and the matter of training young people in traditional spiritual and cultural matters. This latter challenge is one for the elders and will, when acted upon, provide multiple benefits: as the communities learn more of their own history and culture, the elders will resume their traditional role as vessels and disseminators of knowledge and wisdom, and young people will learn through observations and experience the appropriate behaviours, ceremonials, and rituals following the ways of their ancestors.

A number of the smaller groups brought forward a concern that the histories and spiritualities of all constituents of the pilgrimage be researched and recorded in text and on tape. Large numbers present also requested increased programming in

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[171] There was no disagreement (that I heard at the time, or heard about later) regarding this particular point.

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the areas of family-oriented faith enrichment and Bible study, but at the same time said that there should be formalised pipe ceremonies, a sacred fire, and an elders' tipi.

Anyone who has searched for current details on programming at Lac Ste-Anne, a calendar of activities for the next pilgrimage, or listings of events from former pilgrimages is aware of the need for improved communications. The assembly agreed that, in addition to routine but essential 'housekeeping' improvements to the site,[172] the most critical necessities are increased public awareness through development of an interactive website, electronic newsletter, and widely distributed brochures. The last point, regarded as essential, concerned fiscal transparency and accountability: these are particularly sensitive issues in Indian Country due to widely publicised, and widespread, mismanagement of funds at band, tribal, and national assembly levels.

By the end of the weekend, after long sessions and intensive sharing circles, the consensus was that in order to secure the future of the pilgrimage, everyone (i.e. all bands, tribal and other organisations, Métis Councils, etc.) must be involved in the ongoing process of developing Lac Ste-Anne as a Native Catholic pilgrimage site operating under the spiritual direction of the OMIs. The project is one of identifying and producing a Native Catholicism that creates powerful ties across generations and across Nations. This is an enormous undertaking fraught with

[172] Handicapped access, emergency health service, multi-lingual gift-shop workers and security personnel, dust control, expanded hygiene facilities and increased maintenance for them, and the development of designated areas for buses, trailers, and large recreation vehicles separate from the tenting area are specific concerns.

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difficulties due to the wide variations in Aboriginal cultures and the concomitant forms of Native Catholicism. The proposed implementation of a tri-partite governing body for the pilgrimage – comprising an administrative arm, an elected Board of Governors, and an appointed Senate of Elders – may smooth the transition from strict Church control and management, but it will still be an arduous process requiring time and patience to bring the ambitious project to full fruition.

Looking Forward

Subsequent to the conference, I learned that one of the reasons I was invited to participate was the organisers' appreciation of my role as anthropologist. This is truly ironic in that for the most part the perception of anthropologists in Aboriginal communities parallels a *Far Side* cartoon from years ago, in which the stereotypical 'cannibal' is seen running into the village yelling, "Anthropologists! Anthropologists!" while his fellow villagers hide the VCR. In other words, it has not been a vocation that generated much respect on the rez. On the other hand, perhaps I should not have been surprised: everyone has been helpful and interested in what I was doing even if they thought it was odd. In any event, the committee had decided that it could be useful to have the input and services of an Aboriginal-Catholic-pilgrim-anthropologist, and so I was invited to participate. Working with other 'delegates' in talking circles and collecting information on what people felt was most important for the pilgrimage in terms of changes to be made and those which should not be made, I found that the one thing everyone agreed upon was the absolute necessity for recording the stories, memories, and teachings of the elders.

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I rather expect that my invitation to the 2001 assembly was yet another baited hook: I had already been talking to elders and leaders in different Aboriginal communities about recording the wisdom of the elders in the form of CD-ROMs or DVDs for dissemination to First Nations education facilities and community groups. I look forward to some kind of winter programming at the pilgrimage site so that we can gather for story-telling sessions in the hibernating months. In addition, I have several years' worth of film footage and hundreds of still photographs of the pilgrimage and the people. I had planned from my second year at the pilgrimage to produce a visual record for the Oblates and the participating parishes; I may also extend that to making a public offering of the film in partnership with the Lac Ste-Anne Committee, with any profits used toward funding pilgrimage programmes. I am considering seeking publication of (in addition to an appropriate revision of this document) a large-format pictorial study of Lac Ste-Anne style Native Catholicism, and at one point early in my research I had talked to Fr. Jim Holland about the possibility of producing a documentary on Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples. I believe that the time is right for this kind of work, and look forward to a continued close association with the wonderful people I have worked with in the course of my research.

I am particularly interested in traditional history and the personal memories of the elders – perhaps because I associate these things with my own childhood, learning from my mother's brother. Since the Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Conference, I have talked many times with elders in other parts of the western provinces, and have determined that my next logical step will be to begin recording their tales. It

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will be a long-term project and one not easily completed, but its completion is essential to the continuation of the circle. As Clifford Geertz said, and as I have noted earlier, "The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is … to make available to us answers that others … have given…." (Geertz 1973:30) Recording the histories of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada will provide all of us with an enriched sense of our heritage as a country with multiple dimensions in cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religious perspectives. Native Catholicism is in its early stages of growth. Saving the oral histories so that they can be passed on (through a variety of media) to future generations will further the maturation process by strengthening pride in Aboriginal heritage. It will assist young people to define themselves according to their traditions, and it will articulate the role that the Oblate missionaries, through their work the Catholic Church, have played and continue to play in helping the People regain, preserve, maintain, and promote their indigenous identities.

Ekôsi mâka, n'totemtik.

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Addendum I: Map of Pilgrimage Site

July 24 to 29, 1999

"I will never forget you my People..." *Isaiah 49*

Our Vision is that:

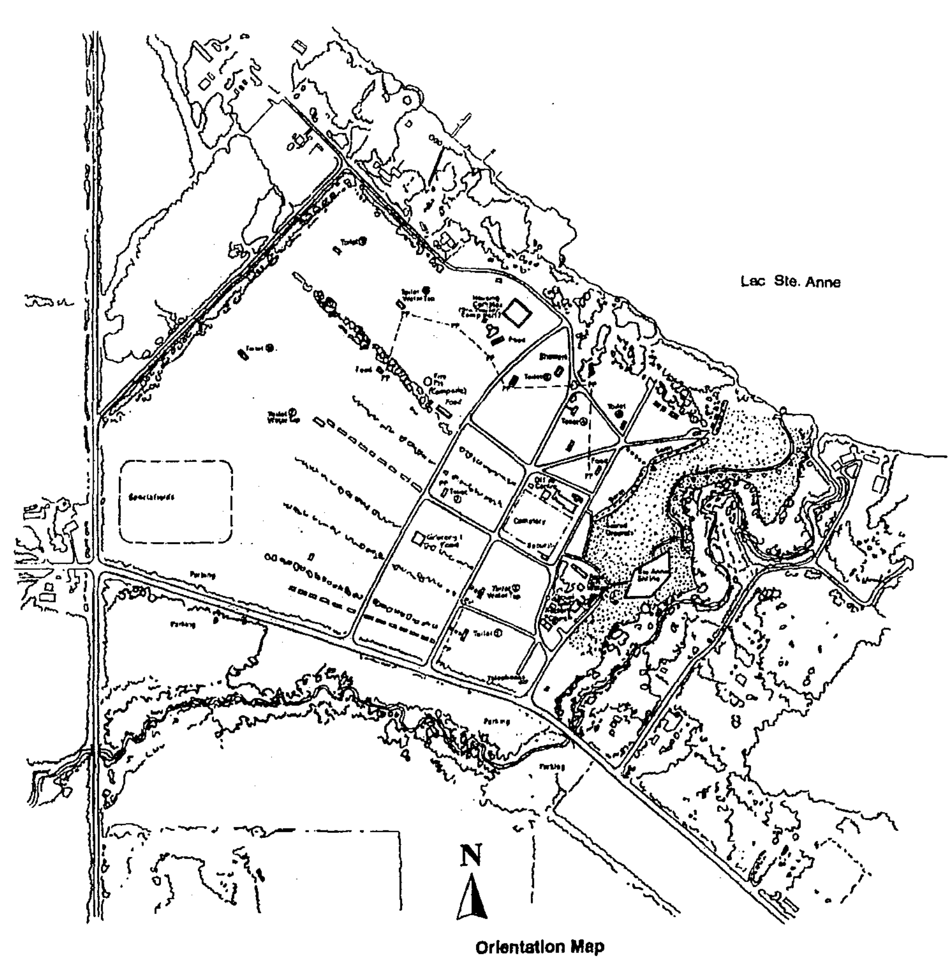
- We the pilgrims, continue to celebrate this God given event, deeply rooted in Native and Catholic tradition.

Our Mission is:

- To preserve, enhance and facilitate the spiritual nature of the pilgrimage.
- To foster greater involvement of aboriginal peoples in directing, organizing and operating the pilgrimage.
- To provide an environment where aboriginal peoples can express their faith through their native culture and traditions.
- To promote growth and healing in all stages of life.

Legend

- Gravel Roads
- Grass Roads
- Paved Roads
- Native Vegetation
- Buildings / Structures
- PP Power Poles
- Sacred Grounds



Orientation Map

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Addendum II: Consultants from the Field 1995-2004.

My deepest gratitude goes to the following people who gave me their time, consideration, and often friendship despite what was surely, to some of them, a lot of foolish or even impertinent questions. There are many others who contributed to my understanding of the story of Lac Ste-Anne and its pilgrimage and to my view of the development of Native Catholicism; so to those who requested anonymity, I extend my sincere thanks for your kindness and helpfulness throughout my field research. May you always walk in balance.

Name	Location of Interview, or Home Place
Rick	Unspecified northeastern Alberta Métis Settlement
Charles Snow	Saddle Lake, AB
David Goa	Edmonton, AB
Chief John Snow	Morley, AB
Gil	Pelican Rapids, MB
Florence	Meander River, AB
Nellie	Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Fr. Rainerio Sarce	Swan Lake, MB
Tony	Alexander, AB
Dave	Edmonton, AB
Esther Blondin, MP	Edmonton, AB
Mrs. C.	Edmonton, AB (SHCFP)
Cecil Nepoose	Edmonton, AB
Rod Alexis	Alexis First Nation, AB

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C P	Edmonton, AB
Nora M.	Rae-Edzo, NWT
Emily Hunter	Edmonton, AB
Frank	Alexis First Nation, AB
L G	Kelly Lake, BC
Mrs. G	Kelly Lake, BC
Fr. Camillo	Kikino, AB and Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Bishop Peter Sutton	Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Sheldon Meek	Edmonton, AB
Greg Bounds	Edmonton, AB and Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Fr. Giles Gauthier	Lac Ste-Anne, AB and Edmonton AB
Sam A.	Alexis First Nation, AB, Morley, AB, and Calgary, AB
Frank L.	Lac Ste-Anne, AB, Kikino, AB, Edmonton, AB
Fr. Jim Holland	Edmonton, AB and Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Fr. Camille Piché	Edmonton, AB and Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Wayne	Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Fr. Martin	Nelson House, MB
Andrew	Nelson House, MB
Deborah	Nelson House, MB
David	'northern BC'
Fr. Greg Coupal	Calgary, AB
Fr. Michael McCaffery	Edmonton, AB (1988 ff)
Denny Auger	Demarais-Wabasca, AB

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Fr. Gary Laboucane	Lac Ste-Anne, AB and Edmonton, AB
Fr. Fred Groleau	Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Chelsea	Nelson House, MB
Bonnie	Nelson House, MB
Stan	Nelson House, MB
Fr. Jacques Johnson	Lac Ste-Anne, AB; Edmonton, AB; Kikino, AB
Monica	Nelson House, MB
Jules	Nelson House, MB
Herb	Vancouver, BC
Martin Eaglechild	Kainai First Nation, AB
Florence L.	Lac Ste-Anne, AB; Edmonton, AB; Kikino, AB
Leonard W.	Keeseekoose Indian Reserve, SK
Richard L.	Hobbema, AB
Tony S.	Morley, AB
Gabriel M.	Lac Ste-Anne, AB
Laurence F.	SHCFP, Edmonton, AB
Annie K.	'up north'
Val	Vancouver, BC
Lyndale	Haida-Gwaii, BC

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Addendum III: Glossary

The following terms are Cree except where noted as other First Nations' languages. The spellings I follow are those that were taught to me by Emily Hunter, my Cree language and culture instructor at the University of Alberta; speakers and students of Cree will be aware that there are five different dialects and that 'English' spellings vary according to the dialect. In addition, as more research is done into the etymology and development of the language spellings are adjusted to reflect original meanings and pronunciation.

FIRST NATIONS	*ENGLISH*
âpakosis	mouse
ayamihâwin	the mass – literally, special prayers
cêsu	Jesus
ekôsi mâka	well, that's it (or all)
hogan, hokan	house (Diné or Navajo)
kachinas	effigies of the gods (Zuñi, Hopi)
kaienerekowa (Iroquoian)	great harmony or great rule of peace
kichi	great
kîsi	good
kohkom	grandma
mâmaskâc	'fascinating!; unbelievable!'
maskek	muskeg, swampy ground
mâskwa	bear

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man'tou, manitou, manido	spirit
misinâpeminôs	bobcat
mîstacakan	coyote
mônîya, mônîyâs, mônîyâwak	white man/men
mosôm, moshom	grandfather
môswa	moose
nâpi	old man
nôhtêhkatewin	the time of terrible hunger, famine
n'totemtik	my friends
orenda, ohanto	great mystery (Iroquoian)
paskwâwimostos	buffalo or bison
pîsim	sun
sâkahigan	lake
sikâk	skunk
wakan tanka	great mystery (Lakota)
wakamne	holy lake, place where water is holy (Nakoda)
wâposos	rabbit
wâ-wâ	expression of amazement
wetaskatwinatinac	the hills where they make peace (Peace Hills)
wikan	house, home
windigokan	trickster (Ojibwa)
wîsâkecâk	trickster

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Addendum IV: List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

The following abbreviations and acronyms appear in the body of this document. These are used solely for the convenience of the reader in avoiding repetition of unwieldy titles and names.

Abbreviation	**Name**
OMI	Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
CCCB	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Vatican II	The Second Vatican Council
NRPC	Native Regional Pastoral Council
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
PAA	Provincial Archives of Alberta
PMA	Provincial Museum of Alberta
SHCFP	Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples
LSA	Lac Ste-Anne
LSAPC	Lac Ste-Anne Pilgrimage Committee
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CTV	Canadian Television network
ITV	Independent Television network

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