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Bakalářská práce

**The History and Cultural Decline of Kainai Nation  
(Blood Tribe)**

**Dějiny a kulturní úpadek národu Kainai (kmene  
Blood)**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis will focus on the history of the Kainai Nation. The thesis examines specific historical events of Kainai and their cultural values and traditions. The first part of this work will focus on theoretical features of Kainai history and culture. In the second part, I will analyse three movies from the *Circle of the Sun* movie trilogy in order to demonstrate the gradual decline of Kainai culture. By taking this twofold, theoretical and practical approach, the main aim of the paper is to compare the historical and present state of the Kanai tribe.

## **Key Words**

Indians, Canada, North America, Blood tribe, Kainai Nation, Blackfoot confederacy, culture, history, residential schools, Sun Dance, cultural decline

# Obsah

1.	Introduction	7
2.	Introduction to Blackfoot Confederacy and Kainai Nation	8
2.1	Blackfoot Confederacy	8
2.2	Kainai Nation	9
3.	The History of the Blackfoot Confederacy	11
3.1	Epidemics	11
3.2	Early economics	12
3.3	Relationships with Whites	13
3.4	Governmental influence and Treaties	14
3.5	Treaty 77	15
3.6	Last buffalos and starvation crisis	15
3.7	Population estimates	16
3.8	Residential schools	17
4.	History of Kainai Nation	19
5.	Customs and religion of Kainai Indians of earlier times	23
5.1	Religion	23
5.2	Position of Kainai Women	24
5.3	Childhood of Kainai	25
5.4	Warfare of Kainai	25
5.5	The Sun Dance	26
6.	Present-Day Kainai Nation	28
6.1	Environmental issues	28
6.2	Economic issues	29
6.3	Social challenges	29
7.	PRACTICAL PART – Analysis of the documentary movie trilogy <i>Circle of the Sun</i>	30
7.1	Directors point of view	30

7.2	Film 1 - Circle of the Sun	31
7.2.1	Sun Dance	31
7.2.2	Differences between generations	33
7.2.3	Life between two worlds	34
7.3	Film 2 – Standing Alone	35
7.3.1	Pete Standing Alone	35
7.3.2	Pete – The Modern Man	36
7.3.3	100 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Treaty 7	37
7.3.4	Modern hunters	38
7.3.5	Design transfer ceremony	38
7.3.6	The Help of Modern Science	39
7.3.7	Comparison with the <i>Circle of the Sun</i> (1960)	40
7.4	Film 3 – Round Up	40
7.5	Summary of the practical part	43
8.	Conclusion	46
	Bibliography	48
	Resumé	53
	Annotation	54

# **1. Introduction**

So little it is known about Indian culture in our Czech society. What is Indian culture like? Do Indian practices still exist? And did it survive? These questions will be answered in this thesis.

Mgr Flajšar PhD, my thesis supervisor, gave me the idea of writing my bachelor thesis on a Kainai Nation, an Indian tribe in Canada. I find the topic of Native American culture, lifestyle and its fate in history very interesting and I plan to continue studying it. Mr Flajšar showed me Collin Low's trilogy of documentary movies about the Kainai nation. It shows well how the Kanai and other Indian tribes live, what their traditions are, and also how these traditions decline.

In this bachelor thesis, I will examine the Kanai Nation also known as the Blood Tribe, and their way of life with the help of Low's documentary trilogy, *Circle of the Sun*. My goal is to explore their culture and present it to potential readers. I want to show the hard life of this unfortunately underexplored people.

My theoretical part will focus on the history of the Kainai Nation, and on their culture and traditions. As a corollary, I will discuss the Blackfoot Confederacy, a union of Amerindian tribes in Canada. The timeframe explored in this section ranges from 16<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many publications focus on this period since it illustrates the core of Indian culture.

The publications I will use are *Pictures Bring Us Messages*, which I will use for the historical and factual part of my thesis. Then, I will cite *My People, The Bloods*, which will be the main source for analysis of Kainai culture and traditions. My secondary sources are *The Inconvenient Indian*, *Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies*, internet articles and reports.

For the practical part of my thesis, I will analyse the movie trilogy *Circle of the Sun*. The method I will use is the contextual movie analysis. Here, I will focus on the history and traditions from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I aim to depict the Indian identity on a particular tribe, the Kainai Nation, to introduce their culture and define the main causes of the cultural decline, and lastly to compare the historical and present condition of this culture. I expect to find that the Kainai culture is degrading and that the Kainai population is getting lower each decade.

## **2. Introduction to Blackfoot Confederacy and Kainai Nation**

This chapter introduces the Kainai Nation as well as the Blackfoot Confederacy. The Blackfoot Confederacy plays a very important role in Kainai's history and culture. The Blackfoot Confederacy is a union of Indian tribes in Canada, made up of the Kainai along with other Canadian Indian tribes.

### **2.1 Blackfoot Confederacy**

The Blackfoot Confederacy, also known as Blackfoot Nation or Siksikaitstapi (in native Blackfoot language), consists of three Indian nations; Piikani, Siksika and the Kainai. Due to the powerful alliance among the nations within the confederacy, as well as ties to nations outwith the confederacy, the Blackfoot nation is one of the most formidable groups of Indigenous people on the Northern Plains. In 2016, 22,490 people claimed Blackfoot ancestry (Demsey, 2010).

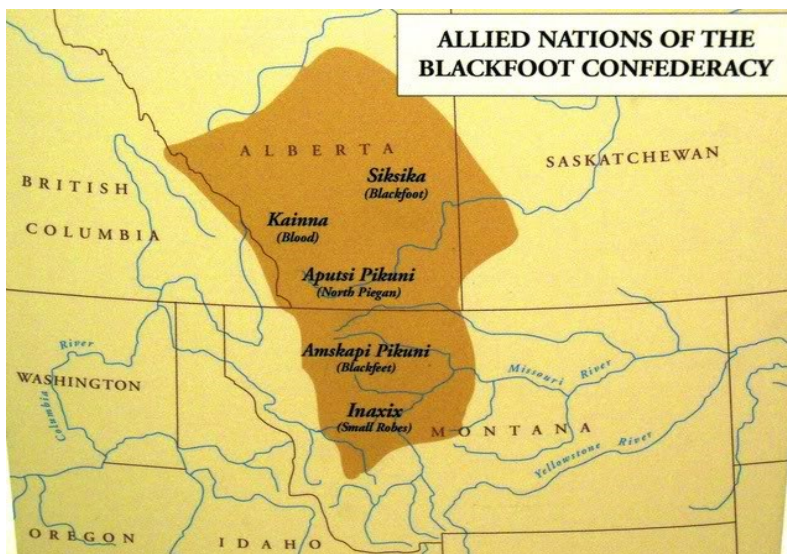


Figure 1 Map of Blackfoot Confederacy<sup>1</sup>

Blackfoot people have developed wide spiritual culture and connection to nature with which they live in harmony. Moreover, these people adopted a modern school system and economy while still preserving their traditions and culture (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://afaithfulattempt.blogspot.com/2019/06/blackfoot-buffalo-hide-designs.html>



## 2.2 Kainai Nation

Kainai Nation, “Kainaiwa” in Blackfoot language, also more often called the Blood tribe, is a tribe of Indigenous people in northern Alberta in Canada. Kainai Indians are also very often referred to as the “Bloods” both by white men and Kainai Indians. The Kainai reserve is situated in the north of Cardston and constitutes a great part of the Blackfoot Confederacy about 1,362 km<sup>2</sup> (Dempsey, 2008).

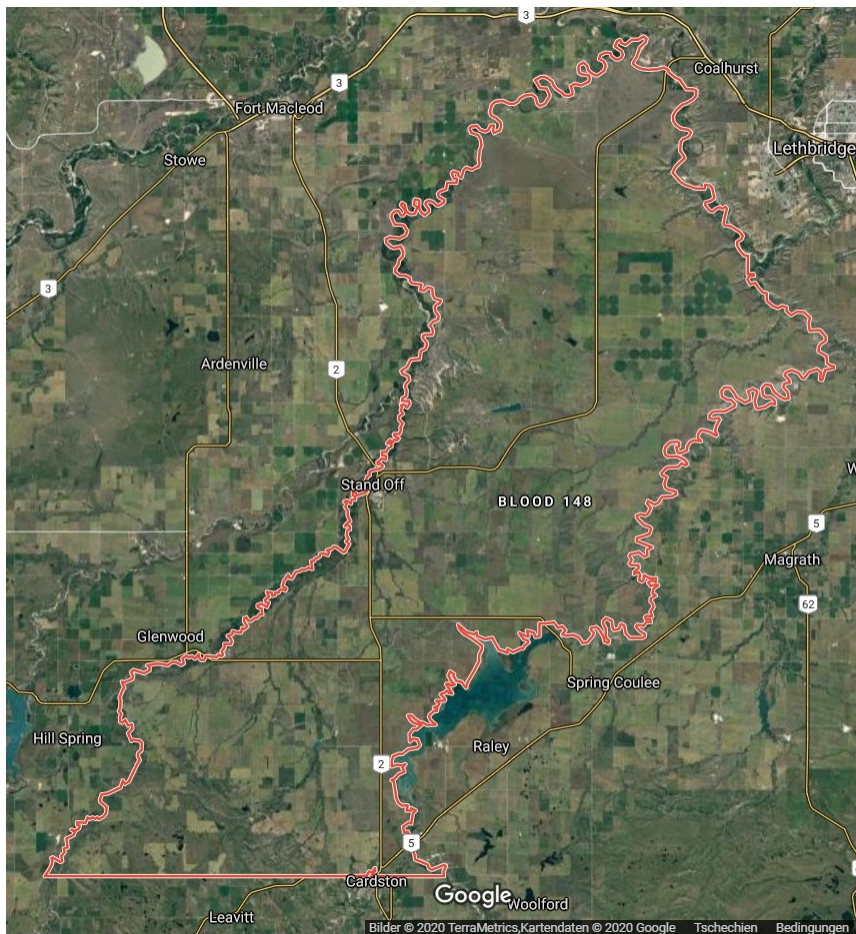


Figure 2: Map of the Blood Tribe<sup>2</sup>

Kainai tribe is a prosperous and well-integrated society having secured economy and environmental concerns. They successfully cooperate with local, provincial and federal governments thanks to which they have ensured housing, protection and other economic or social concerns (Demsey, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Google Maps; Blood 148, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Blood+148,+Alberta,+Kanada/@49.485225,-113.796507,9z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x536ce54bb7e39d6f:0xb9fc286c471d2963!8m2!3d49.4571274!4d-113.1262198?hl=de>

The name “Kainai” stands for “Many Chiefs”. The legend says that one day Blackfoot leaders visited the Kainai tribe to speak with their chief. When they asked, “Who is the chief?”, all the Kainai around them answered: “I am”. For this reason, the Blackfoot called them the tribe of many chiefs (Blood Indian Reserve, 2003).

It is believed, that the name “Blood tribe” was first used for Kainai by first traders. They named them after the red paint they used to wear on their faces (Blood Indian Reserve, 2003) or their traditional blood soup (Blood Tribe Culture and History, s.a.). But the precise origin of the word *Blood* is unknown.

### **3. The History of the Blackfoot Confederacy**

Historical accounts of the Blackfoot confederacy have been recorded mainly by white men. There are not so many writings focused only on the Kainai Nation. But since the Kainai is part of the Blackfoot Confederacy the history of Blackfoot is quite important to understanding the Kainai. Blackfoot confederacy includes Kainai Nation, Siksika Nation and Piikani Nation meaning that this chapter will cover the history of all these tribes as one whole unit. This chapter will focus on historical events which occurred in the period from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In earlier years, before the influence of white incomers, the Blackfoot Confederacy relied on bison-hunting. Bison were essential for food, shelter, clothing, weapons and domestic equipment (Demsey, 2010).

The Blackfoot tribes used to spread their history orally since their language did not have a written form. From generation to generation, they spread their legends and stories about their ancestors' war achievements and ceremonies (Demsey, 2010).

According to *Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies*, the first written records of the history of the Blackfoot nation start in the 1730 (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

#### **3.1 Epidemics**

Blackfoot were many times stroked by series of smallpox epidemics and other diseases which have primarily a European origin (Viola, 1990).

- The first epidemic took place in 1781, and was responsible for the death of over half the Blackfoot population. At that time, the Blackfoot had no idea what the disease was, and knew neither its source nor its cure. This event was a start-up of many deadly epidemic comebacks from which the Blackfoot tribes suffered for a century. It is believed that they caught the disease from European incomers.
- In 1819, one-third of the Blackfoot population died due to a serious “coughing” epidemic.
- Then, in 1837, the Blackfoot nations were struck again by a smallpox epidemic killing about one-third of the population. Despite their previous experience with the disease, they still did not know how to fight it.

- In 1864, another epidemic hit. This time, it was the Scarlet Fever which was responsible for killing about 1,000 people.
- And lastly, in 1869, another smallpox epidemic came and killed 2,000 Blackfeet (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

All these epidemics resulted in a significant decline in the Blackfoot population (see graph in chapter 3.7 Population estimates).

Blackfoot tribes were not the only nation struggling with epidemics. This issue concerned all Indians on the continent. Some authorities claim that these diseases were responsible for the death of 50-90% of America's Indian population (Viola, 1990).

### 3.2 Early economics

In 1730, the first trade of weapons started. The Blackfoot peoples traded weapons such as guns, glass beads, and metal arrowheads.

In 1780, there was founded Buckingham House by **Hudson's Bay Company**<sup>3</sup> which became the first trading centre near the Blackfoot premises (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

Later, in 1784, **The North West Company** was founded, a competing company to the Hudson's Bay Company. Their focus was on weapons such as guns, axes and arrowheads. Thus primitive weapons started to be replaced. Their other focus was on household equipment such as blankets, pots or awls, and luxury items such as tobacco, beads and paints (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

The Blackfoot had several conflicts with the **Missouri Fur Company**<sup>4</sup>. The company sent trappers into the Blackfoot territory for fur. Blackfeet rightfully felt that trading company was stealing from them. Further, relations between the Blackfoot and the Missouri Fur Company were strained by the fact that the company also traded guns with enemies of the Blackfoot Confederacy. As a result, in 1821, the Blackfoot drove the uninvited American trappers away from their territory (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

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<sup>3</sup> "the oldest incorporated joint-stock merchandising company in the English-speaking world" ("Hudson's Bay Company", 2019).

<sup>4</sup> one of the earliest fur trading companies in Canada, established in 1808 in St. Louis, Missouri (Weiser-Alexander, 2020)

In 1863, there was an expansion of liquor consumption. Also, relationships among Blackfoot were starting to worsen. They started to kill one another. In 1866, drunken Piegans killed Head Chief Little Dog and his son because they were “too friendly with whites” (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

### **3.3 Relationships with Whites**

In 1806, the Blackfoot and American white relationships started to break down when one of the Blackfoot was killed by a white man. This tragedy occurred during the expedition of Lewis and Clark<sup>5</sup> when they visited Blackfoot territory.

In 1833, whites started to take an interest in Blackfoot. First, in 1832, the Blackfoot were called to be “the most powerful tribe of Indians on the continent” by George Catlin<sup>6</sup> who was the first painter of Blackfoot people. He also made his Blackfoot population estimates: According to his studies, the Blackfoot had in total approximately 1,650 lodges (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

With the beginning of Gold Rush<sup>7</sup>, illegal miners ventured to the Northern Rockies of Montana, a territory belonging to the Blackfoot reservation, in search of gold. At that time, the miners belonged to the worst and greediest people around. They were highly hated by Indians. Since then, the Blackfoot nation faced many continuous small fights with white people (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

Another thing increasing tensions between Indians and whites was that white hunters were killing a much greater number of buffalos than Indians. This caused the complete extinction of buffalos in Canadian prairies years later, which destroyed an integral part of the Native American economy (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

Relationships between Blackfoot Confederacy and the American Government started to collapse again in 1865 when the government made them sign a treaty which revoked over two thousand square miles from the Blackfoot territory. The government only repaid the Blackfeet about one million dollars. This action resulted in violent confrontations between whites and

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<sup>5</sup> an 1804 expedition sent by President Thomas Jefferson exploring lands on the west from the Missouri River after the Louisiana Purchase (“Lewis and Clark Expedition”, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> 1796 – 1872, an American artist focusing on illustrations of Native Americans (“George Catlin”, 2019)

<sup>7</sup> a massive hunt for gold along North America’s west coast from California to Alaska occurred from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Newell, 2019)

the Blackfoot Confederacy. Among Montanan politicians, there was a fear of unavoidable war. Eventually, the Blackfoot peoples fled from Montana to Alberta (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

After the smallpox epidemic in 1869, there were smaller conflicts and fights between whites and Blackfoot. One of the most memorable ones took place in 1870. Americans sent a war party to arrest murderers who killed an American farmer. It was winter at that time and they had mistaken the murderers' camp for a different one. Tragically, they killed 173 innocent people including women and children. This slaughter is now called **the Baker Massacre**, named after the general leading the party, Major Baker ("Soldiers massacre sleeping camp of Native Americans", 2009).

### **3.4 Governmental influence and Treaties**

In 1855, an important document, the "**Lame Bull Treaty**", was signed, declaring peace between the Blackfoot nations and the American Government and determining reserve boundaries of Blackfoot territory (Blackfeet Tribe, 2017).

In 1859, the first Jesuit mission, St. Peter's, was built in the Blackfoot territory. For the first time, Indians began to take interest in the Christian religion, yet they did not leave behind their own faith. The government intended to erase Indian beliefs with these missionaries and convert them to Christianity. However, though Native Americans accepted Christian prayers and certain customs, they stayed faithful to their way of living.

In 1867, the U.S. Government decided to build a first U.S. Army post on Blackfoot premises called Fort Shaw to control Indians actions (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

In 1871, white ranchers and farmers argued that the land which the Blackfoot Indians possessed was too large. So, in 1873, "U.S. Government moves the southern boundary of Blackfoot country north by 200 miles," (Hungry Wolf, 1989) and released new large space for settlement. The government made this step without consulting it with the Blackfoot first. No compensation had been given to them (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

In 1876, the U.S. and Canadian Government established the **Indian Act** which influenced every Indian in North America. This act established complete control over every Indian tribe, exercised by means of education, health care and economy (Henderson, 2018). The main aim of this act was to assimilate every Native American and form them into "a good Christian citizen" (Brown, Peers, 2006). No Native American had been consulted about this act, nor

was any Indian represented in the government; still, the government restricted and prohibited any Indian right as they deemed appropriate.

### **3.5 Treaty 77**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September in 1877, one of the most important treaties had been made for the Blackfoot at Blackfoot Crossing. The Blackfoot signed the so-called Treaty 77 (also called Treaty 7) which separated Kainai, Siksika, and North Piegians from South Piegians and the U.S. Government. With this new boundary, the three tribes became the Blackfoot Confederacy (Hungry Wolf, 1989). The treaty bounded the nations together – the Blackfoot Confederacy, Tsuu T’ina Nation and Stoney. These three nations signed the treaty together with the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland’s representatives, David Laird<sup>8</sup> and James Farquharson Macleod-C.M.G.<sup>9</sup>, at Blackfoot Crossing in Canada (Tesar, 2018).

For Blackfoot, the treaties made with the U.S. and Canada were sacred. They believed that the rights and territory promised by the treaty would stay solid and unbroken. For them, it was an act of befriending with the government (Brown, Peers, 2006).

For Canada and America, however, the treaties were just a temporary solution. Their point of view was that they “amounted to land surrenders” (Brown, Peers, 2006). For Blackfoot, the land had an emotional and spiritual value whereas for Governments it was viewed only as a chance for future settlement and business. The government never stepped into these treaties intending to leave it that way forever. They always planned to break the treaty again and consult for another purchase of Blackfoot land.

### **3.6 Last buffalos and starvation crisis**

In previous years, there was an attempt to regulate the hunting of buffalos, but it was ignored. This ignorance resulted in: “buffalo virtually disappear from Canadian prairies,” (Hungry Wolf, 1989). The disappearance of buffalos resulted in the first beef rations enforced by the Government.

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<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Governor and Indian Superintendent of the North-West Territories

<sup>9</sup> Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police

Each year, buffalo supplies for winter were getting lower. To make things worse, in 1881, Blackfoot were struck again by a mange epidemic killing half the Piegan horses. Piegans were so forced to raid enemy camps, despite the peace treaties they had entered with them.

“Each year, more Indians depend on a government agency for food, as buffalo disappear.”  
(Hungry Wolf, 1989)

As buffalo supplies were running out, people began to starve. Governmental support in the form of food rations was not enough for most Native Americans, but the Kainai tribe, unlike other tribes, had access to multiple sources of food. They were dependent on the Belly River along which they had their settlement. The river provided them with enough food.

In 1884, the last buffalo was killed by Blackfoot. There were no more buffalos. This was followed by the “Starvation Winter”. It was drastic mainly for South Piegans (who were no longer part of the Blackfoot Confederacy) since during the winter one-fourth to one-sixth of the tribe died (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

With the disappearance of buffalo disappeared also the old Indian way of life. Indians turned to white culture, but their spirit remained (Brown, Peers, 2006).

### 3.7 Population estimates

According to *Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies* (Hungry Wolf, 1989), the first population estimates were conducted in 1809. These estimates were calculated by the number of lodges with 5 to 10 people per one lodge:

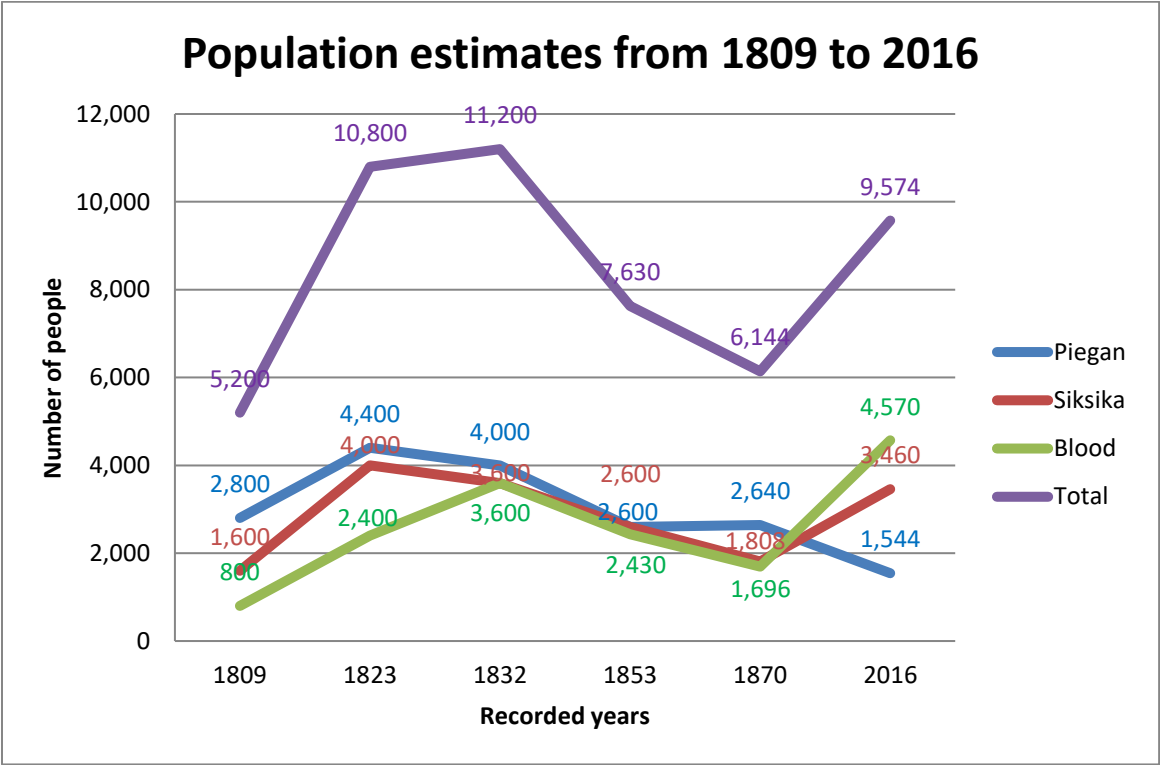
In 1809, the **Piegan** tribe had approximately 350 lodges. **Piegans** had probably 2,800 of locals. The other tribe of the Blackfoot nation, **Siksika**, had on their premises by estimation 200 lodges of which there were about 1,600 people. And lastly, the **Kainai** tribe had a settlement of about 100 lodges of which there were 800 people. In 1823, the number of population doubled (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

In the same year, a next estimate was carried out. The **Siksika** tribe owned approximately 290 lodges of which there were 2,430 persons and 810 warriors; **Bloods** (= the Kanai) had 290 lodges of 2,600 persons and 870 warriors; **Piegans** had the same numbers estimate as **Siksika**. Compared to the last calculations from 1832, the **Siksika** had had 450 lodges, **Bloods** had 450 lodges and **Piegans** 500. This shows that the population lowered almost to a half from the previous estimate in 1832.



Another population estimate was carried out in 1870. It shows that the population of Blackfoot was in decline. Compared to the last estimate from 1853, the **Siksika** tribe lost 64 lodges (in 1853 it had 290 lodges, in 1870 it sank to 226), **Bloods** dropped from 270 to 212 lodges. Only **Piegans** raised the number of their lodges, which increased from 290 to 330 lodges. In total, the Blackfoot nation had 6,144 inhabitants (Hungry Wolf, 1989). The decrease in population was due to the smallpox epidemic in 1869, which killed approximately 2000 people.

With the aforementioned information, I have created a graph showing movement in the Blackfoot population. I have also included a calculation of today’s population to compare the past and present state of the population. Population calculations from 2016 were carried out by Canadian Profile Census in 2016 (StaCan, 2016).



### 3.8 Residential schools

Residential schools are a system of educational institutions for Native American children in North America. They were established near churches. Residential schools attempted to prepare First People children for success in the white economy. In other words, it was a program to assimilate Indigenous children into American and Canadian society. However, according to many Native American authors, such as Thomas King, Mike Mountain Horse

and many others, it was more about converting Indian kids to Christianity and eliminating the Indian “savageness” from their nature.

Indian children were separated from their families for ten months or more and lived in these schools. Indian parents were surprisingly willing to let their children to these institutions. They believed their children would have been given a proper education. But education was not what they had been given (King, 2013).

First residential schools were established after the signing of Treaty 7. Many authors claim that these schools were not about education at all. For example, Pete Standing Alone mentions in a documentary film *Round Up* (2010) that they used to work mainly on schools premises; in farms, gardens, et cetera (Blood, 2010).

Residential schools were highly criticised both by Native Americans and white men. According to the study form the Canadian Encyclopaedia, it is estimated that 6000 children died in Canadian residential schools (Miller, 2020), due to inappropriate living conditions, diseases or severe consequences of physical and emotional abuse in these schools. This resulted in a dis-assimilation from their culture. And as a result, they did not know anything about their culture (CBC, 2016).

Residential schools declined during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the last residential school, the Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, was closed down in 1996, the former students demanded recognition. Due to these attempts, there was established the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in 2007 accompanied by a public apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Miller, 2020).

“The Canadian apology, while heartfelt, was, in many ways, a stingy thing, limited only to the abuse that Native people had endured in the residential school system. There was nothing in the apology about treaty violations. Nothing about the theft of land and resources.” (King, 2013, p. 122)

Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) is the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. It admits the severe consequences and negative effects the residential schools had on Indigenous pupils and established a multi-billion-dollar fund to help former pupils to recover from the damage the residential schools caused (Marshall, 2020).

## **4. History of Kainai Nation**

The Kainai or the Bloods do not have much of their historical records. Historical occasions and important facts were spread mainly orally from one generation to another. For this reason, the records are not very precise.

There are oral accounts from the 1860s and 1870s where Kainai were the target of many killings and slaughters on the Blackfoot territory (Brown, Peers, 2006).

“Kainai people were frequently subjected to brutal and traumatic attacks in which entire families were slaughtered, women were raped, and camps were burnt.” (Brown, Peers, 2006)

A very significant step that Kainai made was when Chief Red Crow created a good and prosperous relationship with Colonel James Macleod<sup>10</sup>, a colonel of the North-West Mounted Police. They aimed to bring the police troops to the Kainai territory and restrict there the whiskey trade and to prevent other violent acts towards Kainais (Mountain Horse, 1979).

In 1877, the Treaty 77 (see chapter 3.5 Treaty 7) was signed. Kainais agreed to this treaty only thanks to the aforementioned Colonel James Macleod. Macleod tried to make a deal and negotiate with the Kainai tribe. It was unusual, but Kainai respected this white-man and also gave him an Indian name – Stamix-oto-kan. The contemporary Blood Head Chief, Red Crow, put all of his trust in him (Mountain Horse, 1979).

“I leave everything to Stamix-oto.kan because he never broke his word and kept all his promises to me. I trust him entirely. For that reason, I agree to the terms offered to us by our Queen Mother.”<sup>11</sup>(Mountain Horse, 1979)

With Treaty 77, Kainai were allotted a reserve with set boundaries. Kainai Indians were provided with feeding support from the government. They were also permitted to hunt freely on the prairies (Peers, Brown, 2006).

In 1883, the Kainai Reserve was established occupying 547.5 square miles becoming the largest Indian reserve. The size of the area remained until this day.

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<sup>10</sup> (1836 – 1894) He was a police officer, judge, commissioner of North-West Mounted police. He successfully earned the trust of Blackfoot and played a major role in negotiations of Treaty 7 (McCullough, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> a quote by Head Chief Red Crow used in *My People the Bloods* by Mountain Horse (1979)

With the signing of Treaty 77 in 1877 Blackfoot struggled with the land they lived in. The land was inappropriate for agriculture and many tribes were settled near foothills of the Rocky Mountains (Peers, Brown, 2006).

As they were settled near St. Mary's and Belly Rivers, Kainais slowly started to give up on their nomadic way of life. For Kainai, it was a critical and very hard change. The arrival of missionaries, Christianity and education were few of many changes Kainai people struggled to adjust to. It was again thanks to Mounted Police Department, led by Colonel Macleod, that Kainai people were able to get used to habits of non-Natives, otherwise, the process could have been much slower (Peers, Brown, 2006).

Since 1894, Kainais developed very efficient industry in pony raising and were good farmers. Even though they mostly relied on government food support which included two rations of meat and flour in a week (Peers, Brown, 2006).

In 1889, there were established first residential schools on the Kainai reserve, Roman Catholic and Protestant ones.

Kainai reached very rough times during and after the First World War. In 1918 and 1919, cruel winters came, and Bloods were stricken by the influenza epidemic resulting in a health crisis, losses of agricultural profits which then caused hunger crisis. All this led to a deceleration of economic development. To make things worse, their stock-raising business collapsed. They had very sufficient cattle industry since 1894, but during the war, white settlers were trespassing Reserve boundaries which resulted in overgrazing. Hundreds of horses died. And in 1918, the Indian cattle industry disappeared. A lot of critics blame the Canadian government since they ignored Kainais' problems. Some believe that it was just another Government attempt to ruin Kainais' economy so that they would be forced to sell some of their lands to the state. Kainai reached extreme poverty. To survive, they sold their crops from their little fields and lived on rations from the tribe's trust fund (Peers, Brown, 2006).

Their traditions were in danger as well as they were constantly reached by missionaries pushing them to give up on their spiritual values and convert to Christianity. More than that, Kainai were continuously forced to sell parts of their reserve.

Not long after the Treaty 77 was signed, the Canadian Government tried to exchange part of the Blood Reserve for money. For decades they tried to persuade the Bloods for a purchase of

their land. But Bloods resisted. In 1917, Government also made a referendum proposing Kainai to leave and sell ninety thousand acres of the Northern area of the Reserve. Government officials then tried to force the Kainai for the second vote. The governmental force would have been successful if it was not for the great Head Chief Shot Both Sides who went to Ottawa with a complaint calling for a full investigation (Brown, Peers, 2006).

A significant Kainai Indian, Pete Standing Alone<sup>12</sup>, said:

“They [Government] hired a lawyer and they went through the ballots and they started taking people that were not twenty-one. If he [Shot Both Sides] had just given up, I wouldn’t be living where I’m living.”<sup>13</sup>(Brown, Peers, 2006)

But the Canadian officials did not give up either. One year later, in 1918, they came up with the ‘Greater Production Effort’ with an attempt to rise crop cultivation for an on-going First World War support (Winegard, 2012). They planned to free the land for farmers and government farms. For that, they demanded 6,000 acres from the Kanai, even though they already had been using 4,880 acres of the Kainai tribe reserve for farming. Kainais were said to make a patriotic gesture by leasing the land. Never the less, the Government established the Soldier Settlement Act<sup>14</sup> which promised Canadian soldiers to give them land after they return from war. This step required to take again more land from the Natives (Smith, 2014).

Kainai tribe started to slowly recover from their economic crisis in the mid-1920s. Their society was mainly dependent on those “wealthier” whose farming was most successful. Kainai had value for the importance of sharing and helping others. Still, their economy could not compete with the economy of the non-Native society.

In 1925, Kainai were described as “undergoing cultural, social, and economic stress caused by pressures from the dominant society to assimilate,” (Brown, Peers, 2006). According to Kainais describing photos by Beatrice Blackwood taken in 1925, the photos “demonstrate cultural loss or ‘vanishing people’,” (Brown, Peers, 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> (1928 – 2018) Blood tribe elder, spiritual leader, community leader and an educator of the Blackfoot way of living (Blood, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> a quote by Pete Standing Alone from 2001 used in *Pictures Bring Us Messages* by Brown and Peers (2006)

<sup>14</sup> 1919, an Amendment to the Indian Act

As time went by, the Kainai economy started to prosper. This garnered attention outside of the reserve. The media had described them as one of the most independent Native communities in Canada (Brown, Peers, 2006).

## **5. Customs and religion of Kainai Indians of earlier times**

As every Amerindian tribe, the Kainai tribe has its own unique traditions and customs. However, these traditions decline each year with every new generation. The number of traditions Indians had had in early days cannot compare to traditions they have persevered until this day. The arrival of whites and the subsequent governmental pressure to assimilate Indians into their culture made greatly affected Indian lifestyle. Furthermore, younger generations lost interest in their roots or traditions. This might be due to the white men's influence, or due to the declining number of those who remember or know about the traditions.

Still, thanks to some biographies of older Kainai members, we can learn about the habits and customs from early days which make this tribe unique.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their lifestyle was very different from the way they live today. Kainai tribe used to be notoriously known as a tribe of fierce and brave warriors. They were a nomadic society which lived in their tepees made from buffalo skin and hunted buffalos. They used natural materials for everything – paints, building, and clothing (Mountain Horse, 1979).

An inevitable part of the Kainai leisure time, if they had any, was gambling. This activity is spread among all Indians in America. Today are Indians notorious for opening casinos. In the early years, they did not need casinos to gamble. They bet on any occasion possible. They were able to lose all their clothes in the bet and then go back home barefoot, even during wintertime (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 26).

Native Americans of every tribe did not have a written law. Indians including Kainai used to be governed mainly by their traditions and customs. Surprisingly, they were able to live in a peaceful and hospitable society even in large numbers (Mountain Horse, 1979).

### **5.1 Religion**

Kainai lived strongly in connection with nature. As any other Indigenous culture, they believed in the afterlife (Demsey, 2008). Just as Christians have their afterlife called heaven, Kainai have a similar hereafter which they call the “Big Sands” (Mountain Horse, 1979). In general, Native Americans are superstitious. They highly value natural elements, animals, and

plants. They believe that all living species have emotions and feelings. They believe that spirits of living beings are still present in lakes, rivers and trees (Mountain Horse, 1979). The tribe had a shaman as their spiritual guide and healer (Demsey, 2008).

“You can pray to God just as well as anybody else can but sometimes you think you go to a priest and with the idea that the priest can be heard quicker than you. It’s the same thing a young man going to an elder with a pipe. What he is doing, he is offering tobacco the Creator and he is going to the elder because it will get there faster”<sup>15</sup>(Low, 1982, 20:14)

Mike Mountain Horse wrote in his book, *My People the Bloods* (1979):

“Hence it is that an Indian has been known to make a long speech of apology to a bear that he had wounded, and to treat with great care and attention a bone of the dead for fear of offending its original owner.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 27)

There are more deities to which the Kainai people pray. The first is **Napi**, the Supreme Being. They refer to him as the creator of the world. But the most popular god among Kainai people is the **Sun**. They believe that the Sun is the provider of life and light. To this deity, they annually perform a special tradition called the Sun Dance (see chapter 5.5 The Sun Dance), the most important cultural event for Kainia and the whole Blackfoot nation (Mountain Horse, 1979).

As it is already mentioned in the history chapter, Kainai has accepted Christianity under force from white-men and perform some of their traditions, such as going to church, celebrating Christmas and Easter. But still, they were either able to preserve their traditions, or adjust Christian customs to fit their lifestyle.

## 5.2 Position of Kainai Women

What was very striking about this tribe was the women’s position in their society. Women had a very rough life full of hardship<sup>16</sup> (Low, 1982, 25:09). They did all the dirty and hard jobs in the family, whereas men were more of, as Mountain Horse said in his book, “gentlemen of leisure” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 26). While men were enjoying their time smoking a pipe and chatting, women had to build a tepee, carry all family’s property when travelling, make clothes, preparing food, and other similar tasks (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 32-33).

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<sup>15</sup> a comment by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

<sup>16</sup> a comment by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)



On the other hand, women were highly respected by the opposite sex. Men were not allowed and would not dare to use rude language in a woman's presence. Intermarriage was forbidden, men could not even dance with relatives of his wife. As Mountain Horse writes in his book:

“A rigidly enforced rule was that each man must do all his courting in public. Thus, he was not subjected to the prolonged osculatory temptations before having the “knot-tied.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 32-33)

### **5.3 Childhood of Kainai**

Kainai kids, like all kids, enjoy fun and games. But their games were more intentional than the average child; they were meant to form children, especially boys, into brave warriors.

One of these games was simply a simulation of Indian raids. The goal was to “steal” as much buffalo meat as possible. It was initiated as training in warfare (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 6-13).

In the early years, every boy was able to shoot with a bow and arrows. They knew how to split a small wand from a 25-yard distance. Since bow and arrow was Indian traditional weapon, naturally, every boy was taught to handle it.

Kainai kids enjoyed many of the traditional games and contests such as shooting sticks, mud fights, archery competitions, hawk hunting, and gopher hunting. Kainai children also made their own toys. Usually were these toys moulded from clay and dried on the sun (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 6-13).

“Do we wonder now that the Indian was a born warrior? From his childhood fighting was inculcated into his young mind. Naturally, he aspired to that position in his tribe which would bring him honour as a great and noble warrior.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 13)

### **5.4 Warfare of Kainai**

Kainai Indians were known to be cruel and strong warriors. They have been raised to become a warrior from an early age. By war trophies and achievements, Kainais would gain social prestige (Demsey, 2008). Raiding and wars were practised not only among other Indians but also with white settlers. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of intense warfare among other tribes in northern Plains. Kainai's main enemies were the Cree, Ktunaxa, Shoshone and Crow nations (Demsey, 2008).

When fighting, an Indian would keep a trophy from his beaten enemy. For whites, this was shocking and a sign of savageness. Scalps were very common among Indians all over the continent (Mountain Horse, 1979).

A young Blood could join war parties for the first time when he reached a mature age and could ride a horse and use weapons. This step to adulthood is accompanied by a ritual conducted by the tribe's elder (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 29).

Wars and raids were practised among Indians pretty commonly. They would travel for days to reach and rob a hostile tribe. They aimed mainly for scalps, rifles and horses. They raided camps in the night. If they successfully stole horses without anyone noticing, fights did not ensue. But when they were forced to fight, the Kainai were brutal and fierce. Those who were unfortunate enough to be captured would experience tough and long suffering before they were eventually killed. Capturers scalped, stripped and burned their captives (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 31-33).

## **5.5 The Sun Dance**

The Sun Dance is the most significant religious First People's celebration in North America, especially in the Northern Plains Indians ("Sun Dance", 2018). As the name says, the tradition of this festival is dedicated to the main Indian deity, the Sun, or as other tribes may call; the Supreme Being (Viola, 1990, p. 25). People from many different tribes gather in one place to perform this significant ritual as one nation. It is a religious festival which lasts four days (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 58, Viola, 1990, p. 25). All tribe's men gather in a camp where they build their tepees. The camp is set up into a circle. In the centre of the circle, the main tepee is built, the Medicine Lodge, where they conduct the most important rituals and ceremonies (Hungry Wolf, 1989). During the festival, they hold a lot of other rituals, ceremonies, prayers and dances (Low, 1960).

According to Mike Mountain Horse (1979), the Sun Dance existed much longer before the Christian advent (Mountain Horse, 1979), but its precise beginning is unknown. Some believe it has been performed for hundreds maybe thousands of years (Low, 1960).

The main conductors and leaders of the Sun Dance is the so-called Horns Society. It was a group of elders who used to decide where the camp would be set up. In other words, they were also called the Medicine pipe holders. Medicine pipes used to be smoked only in

religious occasions and only in the central Medicine Lodge during the Sun Dance. Bloods believed they could smoke the healing effects out of the healing herbs together with the tobacco (Hungry Wolf, 1989). Tobacco is until now a very important crop connected to many spiritual ceremonies. They pray to the tobacco and then place it into the ground as a gift to the Earth and the Sun (Low, 1982).

The Sun Dance is usually accompanied by a number of dances; Weather dance, Owl Dance, Chicken Dance, et cetera. To add up, in earlier days, Kainais used to perform another ritual. It was called the “making of a brave”. It was a self-torturing ritual conducted by men in the name of their severely ill relatives. When a close relative had a severe illness it was a tradition to undergo this ritual to sacrifice their body while undergoing an unbearable pain to make their relatives safe (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 72).

“I will sacrifice my body to you, to be lacerated, at the next Sun Dance ceremonies, trusting my relative will recover from his illness.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 72)

A sharpened arrow was pierced through man’s chest. A rope was fastened with one end to the arrow and the other to the centre pole of the medicine lodge. The man’s ordeal was to tear away the arrow from his chest while dancing to drum music pulling backwards (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 72). This ritual has been outlawed in 1890 (Hungry Wolf, 1989). However, in some tribes in America it is becoming common again (Viola, 1990, p. 25).

## **6. Present-Day Kainai Nation**

As the above chapters demonstrate, Kainai culture is very rich and unique. However, not all of their traditions have been preserved. Because of factors such as the arrival of white men on the continent, Christian interference, residential schools, and many governmental acts, it was difficult for Kainai Nation to maintain their culture.

Compared to other Indian tribes, Kainai people have successfully preserved their spiritual ways and their identity which they hold on to until this day (Demsey, 1956). However, aside from all aforementioned exposures this culture had to deal with, there are more in presence.

Coexistence with white men has a major obstacle for all Indians in the maintenance of their culture. They had to adapt to some of the values of whites and keep up with their ways of life at the same time.

“I think that we live in two separate worlds and it’s important for us to be able to walk in those two worlds in order to be a full person,” said Alison Crop Eared Wolf, a teacher at the Kainai School (Munro, 2016).

According to the *Report on Blood Tribe* (Magzul, 2001), many current negative exposures are troubling the Kainai community such as economic, social and also environmental issues.

### **6.1 Environmental issues**

The issue of climate change is a struggle for the whole world as well as on the Kainai Tribe. Climate change has very negative consequences on the tribal territory which then reflect in adaptive abilities and have a cause on economic, social and political issues.

One of the serious impacts of climate change and rising temperatures is drought. And the drought is both limiting water supplies and increasing the frequency floods when the rain does come. In 2001 and 2005, serious floods damaged many Kainai peoples’ homes and properties (Magzul, 2007).

All these natural disasters have serious impacts on agriculture and water supplies. The farming land is drying up and the number of cattle herds is decreasing. Additionally, Kainai farmers have been struggling with BSE, the mad cow disease (Magzul, 2007).

## **6.2 Economic issues**

The Kainai community faces great poverty and unemployment. In the reserve, there is a lack of business opportunities as well as skill advancement or training opportunities. The Kainai Tribe lacks access to capital and does not have the support to start their own business; therefore, they are dependent on shops from near towns such as Lethbridge, Fort Mcleod or Cardston (Magzul, 2007).

According to the Indian Act, Bands as individuals do not have the right to take loans since the whole territory is held collectively. Moreover, only 10 to 12% of Kainais have occupancy rights to the land (Magzul, 2007). These challenges prevent Kainai Indians from establishing their own business.

To make things worse, due to these aforementioned restrictions, Kainai people are facing a high rate of unemployment and therefore also a great rate of poverty. According to Statistics Canada, in 1996, the unemployment in the Kainai tribe reached 45 % (StaCan, 1996). Since then, the conditions improved; in 2001, the unemployment lowered to 29%, and in 2016 dropped to 22.7%.

## **6.3 Social challenges**

The economic and environmental challenges are accompanied by more issues among people such as alcohol, drugs and violence. The cause is in the inconvenient political and economic situation in the tribe (Magzul, 2007)

According to the documentary movie, *Kainai Reflections* (2016), domestic violence is caused by a lack of parenting skills due to residential school attendance (Munro, 2016).

## **7. PRACTICAL PART – Analysis of the documentary** **movie trilogy *Circle of the Sun***

This part of the thesis will analyse the movie trilogy *Circle of the Sun* by the Canadian filmmaker Colin Low<sup>17</sup>, released by National Film Board of Canada. The main aim is to focus on the development of Kainai traditions up to their present state so that the present state can be compared with its historical form, which was analysed in the theoretical part of this thesis. The trilogy depicts the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Each film has been shot in a different decade; *Circle of the Sun* has been released in 1960, *Standing Alone* in 1982, and *Round Up* in 2010. As a result, the films allow us to observe a cultural development over the span of nearly 50 years.

In this part, I will conduct a contextual analysis, comparing the film and the facts from particular periods. I will look into specific aspects of the culture – in particular, on its development and decline. I expect to find uncertainty in their tribesmen’s values and shortage in preserved traditions as well as a slight disappearance in their spiritual ways.

### **7.1 Directors point of view**

The director and scriptwriter of the documentary, Colin Low, had a personal attachment to the Kainai Nation. He knew some of its members since his childhood. He dedicated a lot of time to this project with help of other members of the tribe such as Jim Whitebull, Chief Shot Both Sides and most importantly, Pete Standing Alone<sup>18</sup>, who became a part of the crew (Low, 1960).

Pete Standing Alone played a very important role in Low’s film. He functioned as a young representative of the tribe and its whole culture.

“It was a splendid, natural delivery and we were delighted with it. Pete’s participation in the film was extensive.” (Low, 1960b)

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<sup>17</sup> film director, producer (24 July 1926 - 24 February 2016), known for animated movies such as *The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1952) and documentaries such as *Corral* (1954). (Leach, 2016)

<sup>18</sup> 1928 – 2018 a Blood tribe elder and a community and spiritual leader (Blood, 2010)

Low has directed two movies from the trilogy; *Circle of the Sun* and *Standing Alone*. He uses long scenes of nature and animals. He depicts its beauty to enlighten its significance it has for the Kainai people. Some scenes from his movies were shot well in advance. For example, the movie *Standing Alone* was released in 1982 but some of its scenes had been recorded already in 1977, on the commemoration of signing the Treaty 7.

The third film, *Round Up*, was directed by Narcisse Blood<sup>19</sup>. He used some of the scenes from Low's movies to compare the presence with the past. Similarly to Low, Blood uses long shots of nature and animals. However, Blood uses more records from interviews with Pete and less of background narratives than Low.

## 7.2 Film 1 - Circle of the Sun

*Circle of the Sun*, released in 1960, is the first part of the trilogy. This short documentary movie is 29 minutes long. Along with the shots of events, there are narrating and descriptions by Stanley Jackson<sup>20</sup>. The role of narrator is then transferred on Pete Standing Alone.

Pete Standing Alone recalls his childhood and narratives from his grandparents. The descriptions of this unique culture sound more credible when narrated by a true Kainai. Standing Alone talks about the importance of nature to Indians. Stories and legends are about animals and even Indian names are taken from nature, e.g. Chief Moon or Eagle Child. Kainai people believe that all living things, such as birds, beasts or reptiles, possess senses and emotions as humans do. Animals and Indians live along each other in harmony (Mountain Horse, 1979).

In the review of this film, Gil Cardinal<sup>21</sup> said it was the first time the aboriginal voice was heard telling its own story (Cardinal, 1960).

### 7.2.1 Sun Dance

This picture focuses on the most important festival among the Kainai Tribe, the notorious Sun Dance (see chapter 5.5 Sun Dance). It was the first time the Sun Dance had been captured in a

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<sup>19</sup> a Blackfoot elder, visionary activist, educator, director of Kainai Studies at Red Crow Community College (Kingsmith, 2015)

<sup>20</sup> 1914 – 1981 was a Canadian director, commentary writer and narrator (“Stanley Jackson”, 2015)

<sup>21</sup> 1950 – 2015 was a Canadian filmmaker focusing his work on the theme of Indigenous people, known for *The Spirit Within* (1990) or *The Foster Child* (1987), (Wise, 2015)

film. Until then, it had been only described in books. The movie shows different dances and rituals connected to this festival.

The movie shows peaceful scenes and family-friendly atmosphere. However, in other tribes, the Sun Dance is more challenging for its participants. As stated in the *Smithsonian Chronicle of North American Indians* (1990): “the participants must abstain from food and water while dancing and blowing a whistle” (Viola, 1990, p. 25-26). Due to extreme weather and exhaustion, some participants even collapse in pain or hunger (Viola, 1990, p. 25-26). In the documentary, there is nothing neither mentioned nor shown about this particular practice.

The director uses long shots of nature and animals to depict its beauty and show its significance which they have for the Kainai spiritual beliefs – that every living thing is sacred.

In the movie, though, there is only a few people. The camps are getting smaller every year. According to *Standing Alone* (1960), that year, there were twenty tepees, but twenty years ago there were fifty. In the past, there used to be hundreds of men from different tribes as well (Low, 1960). This tradition is fading away but, surprisingly, it is still being conducted until this day.

The Sun Dance used to be a very important ritual, but with each generation, it is losing its significance.

“But old way life is dying and most of the Bloods (=Kainai) don’t even go to the camp now. The children don’t know what it’s about and when they grow up they will forget they were once at the camp. They are the dying echo of its people’s history.”<sup>22</sup>(Low, 1960, 2:28)

Next to the dances, the film also shows smaller ceremonies where they pray and sing religious songs. They celebrate nature and all creations of the Sun; the source of life. They also emphasise the importance of a circle.

“The power of the world works in a circle. The sky is round. The stars and earth are round. The seasons form a great circle. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood.”  
(Low, 1960, 16:22)

All these rituals are performed mainly by elders. Some even are not accessible to everyone. Pete admits that he was not permitted to enter one of these rituals. According to Adolf and

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<sup>22</sup> a commentary by Stanley Jackson from *Circle of the Sun* by Low (1960)



Beverly Hungry Wolf (1989), the Horn Society (=the elders) keep some of the holiest ceremonies secret. They perform them inside the Medicine lodge in the centre of the camp (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

Pete says that the older generation thinks it is important to come to the camp because they were raised there and because they know what it means (Low, 1960). Children, on the other hand, usually just sit around and observe the event. Young people also come to the camp, but they do not take part in ceremonies. They are either not invited or they just do not care. Generational differences are visible from the beginning.

Although the last day of the festival is highly attended by other tribes and many people come to witness this event, Kainai Indians believe that in few years the Sun Dance will disappear. Piegans and Stone Tribe do not even have the Sun Dance anymore. There is only one tribe in Canada which conducts the Sun Dance beside the Kainai tribe (Low, 1960).

“The importance of the Sun Dance; it identifies of who we are. That’s so vital. That’s so important because that is who we are”<sup>23</sup>(Munro, 2016, 3:36)

## **7.2.2 Differences between generations**

The movie depicts several differences between young and old generation of Kainai Indians. The main difference is in their choice of activity or tradition. Young boys travel on a road with cars and motorcycles to take part in a rodeo show whereas the old generation, the parents and grandparents, is heading on wagons and horses to conduct the Sun Dance, the most significant event in Blackfoot Confederacy. In other words, they do not stick as a tribe anymore.

The usage of cars and motorcycles is a nice comparison with the past. With the development of technology, young Kainais do not have to rely only on horses and wagons as their only mean of transportation.

Another difference is observed in Kainai’s clothing. In the film, men and boys wear jeans and denim like whites do. Hairstyles were also taken from white culture, particularly boys’ haircut. It is seen that older men have traditionally long hair made in braids. Younger men and boys, on the other hand, have their hair cut short. This change of hairstyles has been

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<sup>23</sup> a quote by Raymond Many Bears (a Blackfoot elder) from “Kainai Reflections” by Munro (2016)

performed since the first residential schools, where Indian children underwent a haircut change as part of their assimilation into the white-men culture (Mountain Horse, 1979).

Some people, especially the older generation, live and work in the reserve. They grow crops and breed cattle and horses. But the younger generation mainly lives and works in cities. Farming in the reserve has been replaced by working in a city or oil industry (Low, 1960). One can say it is part of assimilation into the white culture. However, the main reason why young people leave the reserve and settle in cities is due to the lack of working opportunities in the reserve. Kainai tribe suffers from poverty and unemployment and that is why they try to find employment somewhere else (Magzul, 2007).

The documentary is mainly focused on generational differences. Low himself said that he wanted to depict the modern part of the Kainai community (Low, 1960b). Elders perform their religious ceremonies, and young people, on the other hand, take part in rodeo shows and contests.

Rodeo plays a very important role in young Kainais' leisure until this day, and it predates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have created rodeo shows and contests, such as races or derby, and their own rodeo stars; the greatest rodeo champions in the Kainai tribe (Allison, 2015). They enjoy the participation in all these contests, but some make it mainly for a price of 200 \$. Kainai Indians have a deep connection to horses, especially wild horses. Maybe that is why they enjoy rodeos so much. In a way, it is a part of their heritage (Low, 1960).

### **7.2.3 Life between two worlds**

Being an Indian is like living in two separate worlds – between the old Indian culture and the white modern world. Pete is one of these Indians. He does not belong to the old order of things neither is he entirely at home in the new world. Stuck between these two worlds, he struggles to belong completely in either.

“Our people had one foot in the spirit world and one foot in the real world. We were given these holy ways, but I as an individual have to know what’s right and wrong, and take responsibility for it.”<sup>24</sup>(Munro, 2016, 2:44)

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<sup>24</sup> a comment by Beverly Hungry Wolf, a Blackfoot Educator, author and co-writer of *Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies* (1989)

Pete cares about what white people think about his culture. He wonders what they would think if they saw traditional Kainai dances and ceremonies. Pete Standing Alone admits that some of their traditional dances might seem strange to white people; dances such as Owl Dance, Rabbit Dance, et cetera<sup>25</sup>. (Low, 1960)

Nevertheless, Pete Standing Alone loves the Kainai reserve. It connects him to his past and his ancestry. Although he lived and worked some time in southern America, he hates it there. He has been there to make money (Low, 1960).

### **7.3 Film 2 – Standing Alone**

The second film of the trilogy is *Standing Alone* again by Colin Low and released in 1982, twenty-two years after the first movie. This documentary is 57 minutes, making it the longest of the three movies. The documentary was completed with the help of Blood (=Kainai) Indian Council, Chief Jim Shot Both Sides, and especially with the help of Pete Standing Alone's family.

This part will mainly focus on the differences from the previous film, *Circle of the Sun*. The 22-year time-gap is an important character to define the changes in Kainai Indian culture during the two decades.

This time, the movie is again focused on the life of Pete Standing Alone, the guide from the previous film. Now as an older man, he guides the audience throughout the documentary. He compares his attitude to his indigenous culture with his younger self. As he got older, he learnt to accept his cultural heritage and to appreciate it.

#### **7.3.1 Pete Standing Alone**

This chapter focuses on the role of Pete Standing Alone, his family and the whole tribe. We can perceive obvious changes in his perception of the culture.

Back in 1960, in the first movie, Pete was only a spectator and commentator of what was happening around him. Now, as his attitudes have changed, he takes part in all the traditions he previously only observed. Moreover, he also tries to persuade other young Kainais to take part in these traditions. He sees the future of preserved Kainai identity in children. He likes

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<sup>25</sup> a comment by Pete Standing Alone from "Circle of the Sun" by Low (1960)

the fact that children did not have the same shame in performing these traditions that he did when he was younger (Low, 1982, 30:58).

He decides to spread and teach the Kainai cultural ways so that it does not disappear.

“Twenty-five years ago there were people who could have told me a lot about our history and religion. Colin Last and Ritter Door. But I wasn’t listening then. Now, these people have left this world and something of their knowledge has gone with them.”<sup>26</sup>(Low, 1982)

After Pete had left his position in Blood Council, he decided to live a simple life, breeding horses just like his ancestors did. Though he enjoys it, he does admit that he struggles to earn an income (Low, 1982).

### **7.3.2 Pete – The Modern Man**

Pete Standing Alone is interested in business practices of the white race. He looks into the modern industry and some of the practices which were implemented into to Kainai economy by the Blood (= Kainai) Council, such as housing factory and potato or jewellery business.

Pete is worried about the future of his people. Pete mentions there are two-thirds of Kainai Indians without a job. According to Statistics Canada, in 1996, there was the rate of unemployment over 45%, almost a half of the tribe (Magzul, 2007), (The Statistics Canada does not archive data older than 1991.) This means that the conditions in the Kainai nation improved during the next 10 years.

Pete thinks that the oil industry is a potential source of income for Kainai Indians. He believes it would create jobs for unemployed Kainai and revenue for the community from oil sales. In *Circle of the Sun* (1960), there is shown that the jobs in the oil industry were all done by hand. Now, the same work is being done automatically. And, as it is shown in the movie, the oil boom ended. As a result, the people needed to find new sources of employment.

Kainai Indians are very cautious about profit for their community. The Blood Council plays a very important role in tribe decisions. They have taken over some of the political manners of the white men, such as wearing suits and suitcases for their meetings. In the council, they also solve important issues, such as offences by some of their tribe members, et cetera. Pete was

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<sup>26</sup> a commentary by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

also a member of the council for some time, but later he got fed up with all the politics and left the council.

In the film, we can see the implementation of computers being in tribal administration. They are used to keep better track of businesses. In the past, Kainai were hunters and farmers. They would hunt buffalos, breed horses, and grow their crops. Now, they try to keep up with the developing society and technology.

Despite improving administration and technology, Pete has a rather negative view of the future. It is still harder and harder to keep things in the old way. He believes that in the future, all kids will live in big cities and will never see horses (Low, 1982).

### **7.3.3 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Treaty 7**

The documentary depicts a very significant event; the anniversary of signing Treaty 7 (see chapter 3.5 Treaty 77). Pete plays a very important role in this commemoration. He crafted a handmade saddle in a traditional way for Prince Charles. He gave it to him as a proud member of his tribe. Prince Charles took part in this event as a representative of the British crown. Standing Alone comments on this treaty:

“For as long as the rivers run and the grass grows. Now, only a few years later, we see that the crown would not guarantee the future of native people.”<sup>27</sup>(Low, 1982, 12:12)

By this statement, he points out the Cardston Blockade from 1980 when Kainai would make demonstrations and blockades of businesses to negotiate a land claim of a territory which had been once theirs (CBC, 2018).

Nowadays, it is normal practice for the government to take land from Indian territories, if not whole reservations, in the interest of the state. For instance, in 1967, Innu First people were forced to relocate due to a hydroelectric project which flooded 1,900 square miles of Innu hunting land. Or, in 1971, another aboriginal land of the Cree and Inuit Indians was taken from them on behalf of the James Bay project on La Grande River (King, 2013, p. 96). Unfortunately, there are even more similar cases among Aboriginal nations in North America.

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<sup>27</sup> a commentary by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

### **7.3.4 Modern hunters**

Pete and his son made a bet. Pete claimed that his son Travis and Travis's friend would not be able to hunt a buffalo as their ancestors used to, and the son wanted to prove him wrong.

For the hunt, the boys wore traditional clothes. Tribe elders crafted traditional bows and arrows for them, despite originally intending them to use guns. Buffalo was simulated with haystacks attached to a truck. The boys won the bet.

Pete admires the old hunting ways of his ancestors.

“They were tough people. I think about the difference between the people now and then, and I would have liked to live in those days.”<sup>28</sup>(Low, 1982, 32:08)

To add up, young men from the past did not have to worry about what they would become in the future; they were warriors or hunters. Nowadays, teenagers do not know what profession they want to do in the future (Low, 1982). To make their position worse, Kainai tribe struggles from a high rate of unemployment and poverty due to the lack of working opportunities (Magzul, 2007).

### **7.3.5 Design transfer ceremony**

To fully accept his roots, Pete decides to have a design transfer ceremony performed. Indian tepees have unique patterns and designs painted on them. Usually, they are paintings of animals. Kainais believe that they can attribute the abilities of animals they have painted on their tepees. To completely gain the power from the spirit animal, they first need to conduct a sacred ceremony; the design transfer ceremony (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 32).

“The Indian was a very superstitious person and confirmed believer in things supernatural, such as ghosts, spirits, and dreams, to which latter belief the painting of special designs on tepees is attributed.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 32)

Additionally, Kainai Indians believe that the tepee designs represent experiences of its previous owner. The ceremony is performed as a symbol of respect for the spiritual design and its owner (Hungry Wolf, 1989).

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<sup>28</sup> a commentary by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

The movie offers the audience visual shots of the ceremony as well as the records of the songs and prayers. Pete tries to remember everything - the songs and the procedure of the ceremony – in order to pass the tradition on to the younger generation.

“Afterwards we dance with friends to celebrate. Something I could not imagine doing when I was a young man. I was too shy or too vain. It’s good to see young people take part in our ways without embarrassment.”<sup>29</sup>(Low, 1982, 30:58)

It was a normal practice back then that all the knowledge was spread orally from one generation to another. But interest in Indian origin is disappearing. Just like Pete, the younger generation does not listen, and, without people to remember them, all the history and traditions are being forgotten.

### **7.3.6 The Help of Modern Science**

In one scene, there is a meeting with an archaeologist, Jim Colder, who investigated the excavation sites near the pre-historic stone circle site in southeast Alberta, in the area called Medicine Hat (Quigg, 1986). Pete Standing Alone along with other Kainai tribe members visited Jim Colder’s office to learn something from the research.

According to the studies on the excavations (1986) and to what Colder said (1982), some of the findings were dated 5000 years ago, which makes them older than the Stonehenge or Egyptian Pyramids. This is a very significant finding not only for the Kainai tribe, but also for the whole world. They were able to tell the date of the findings thanks to the spear points found in a rock pile near the stone circles. In the excavation, there were found evidence of three prehistoric occupations. The principal occupation findings came approximately 500 AD (Quigg, 1986).

Together with the spear points, there were also human and animal bones and relics of ancient tools. They have figured that these findings were things sacrificed to the Creator – the Sun (Low, 1982).

Kainai have learned something that they could have never known without the help of modern white men’s science and technology. Science of whites and knowledge of Kainai have given birth to the discovery.

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<sup>29</sup> a commentary by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

### 7.3.7 Comparison with the *Circle of the Sun* (1960)

A short part of this documentary was also dedicated to the Sun Dance. This film compared itself to the previous film from 1960, *Circle of the Sun*. The film used footages from that movie to compare the past and present state of this ritual.

The film crew of *Standing Alone* filmed the Sun Dance as well. This time, the tents and tepees seemed modern, made of modern fabrics and paints. There were cars all around the camp. In the previous film, in 1960, Kainais arrived on wagons and horses. The technological development touched Indians as well. Also, fashion has changed. Boys and girls wore jeans and sweaters typical for the 80s fashion. Pete admitted that he was surprised that this festival had been preserved and is still an inevitable part of the tribe (Low, 1982).

A Blackfoot author, Beverly Hungry Wolf<sup>30</sup>, registered that Native Americans again started to take an interest in the Sun Dance. In the *Kainai Reflections* documentary, she called it: “a big revival of our culture” (Munro, 2016, 4:58).

In the previous movie, Pete only sat in the distance with his peers and watched the event. This time, he takes part in the ritual, songs and dances as well. He recalls his wildlife when he was young. In the movie, he says, he travelled in the United States to make money. Now he does not have this attitude anymore and is glad he is home (Low, 1982).

## 7.4 Film 3 – Round Up

The third and last film from the trilogy is *Round Up* released in 2010, this time directed by Narcisse Blood<sup>31</sup>. This part takes 18 minutes making it the shortest from the trilogy. The movie contains some of the footages from previous films from 1960 and 1982 alike as a means of comparison.

The film starts with a quote by Pete Standing Alone, the guide of this documentary.

“It is our duty and responsibility as Blood Indians to keep our ways going.” (Blood, 2010, 0:21)

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<sup>30</sup> a Blackfoot educator, author and co-writer of *Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies* (1989) (Munro, 2016)

<sup>31</sup> a Blackfoot elder, visionary activist, educator, director of Kainai Studies at Red Crow Community College (Kingsmith, 2015)



In this part, we follow Pete Standing Alone, this time he is an elder, spiritual leader and Kainai community leader. There is a director's introduction to Pete's person and his tribe. He mentions that Kainai Indians lose some of their reserve lands to agricultural cultivation; therefore, must Pete Standing Alone give up on his magnificent herd of wild horses (Blood, 2010, 1:44).

This kind of usage of First People's land has been practised through the whole of America. Here are some examples:

In the 1980s, there was a similar governmental attempt in British Columbia. The government wanted to initiate logging in a territory of Haida Indians. Eventually, and luckily for Haida, the area meant for timber cutting was declared to be a National Park named Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site (King, 2013, p. 250-252).

Unfortunately, not many tribes were as lucky as the Haida tribe. In 1944, the government authorized the so-called Flood Control Act, which initiated the creation of systems of dams along the Missouri River. The part of the project implementation was the flooding of certain areas along the river. Eventually, the government flooded over 155,000 acres of Indian land, which affected 23 Indian reserves. None of the tribes had been consulted about the project (King, 2013 p. 96). Nevertheless, there are more Indian tribes with similar experience, moreover, these governmental practices are tolerated and accepted.

Pete Standing Alone recounts his whole life and his previous attitudes to his own culture. He admits that as a young man he wanted to escape his roots and tried to be like white-men.

“Then days I was an outsider. Looking in, in our spiritual ways. Then days I didn't care whether it survives or not.”<sup>32</sup>(Blood, 2010, 2:31)

But then he claims he could never be one of whites. He could live along with them but he could never be one of them. Accepting his heritage made him a better person (Blood, 2010, 4:20-5:27). He wants to prevent any possible greater decline of their unique culture and, therefore, he visits different schools and lectures about their indigenous heritage.

The reason why their community has lost interest in holding on their spiritual ways, Pete is putting fault on the white-men interference and Christianity. Europeans tried to get away

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<sup>32</sup> a commentary by Pete Standing Alone from “Standing Alone” by Low (1982)

Indians from their spiritual identity because for them it was pagan (Blood, 2010). And an effective way to get rid of “Indianness” they drilled this attitude into children’s minds in residential schools (see chapter 3.8 Residential schools). Pete admits that some Kainai members are Christians, but the majority still prays to their own deity.

According to Mountain Horse (1979), all Indians are very religious. Indians offer their prayers to the Sun for it is the source of all living things in the world. All the existence is possible only due to the Sun.

“It will be noted that the entreaties of an Indian’s prayer are devoted entirely to his earthly existence. He does not seek to have his sins forgiven, neither does he beseech any deity to make of him a righteous person, so that he may be eligible for the abode of the blessed, because the principle is foreign to his belief.” (Mountain Horse, 1979, p. 53)

Indians have always been a great inconvenience to whites, but they had come out with a different solution rather than genocide. Residential schools were a great way how to eliminate, as Pete says, “the Indianness” (King, 2013). In these schools, Native American children have been taught to be afraid or ashamed of their heritage. Drilling Christian beliefs was the main way how to convert Indians into their beliefs.

“Education is generally described in terms of “benefits”. But why, in the name of education, should we have been required to give up everything we had, to give up who we were in order to become something we did not choose to be?” (King, 2013, p. 119)

To reverse this negative impact of residential schools, Pete wants to spread the importance of preserving their cultural identity and spiritual ways. He goes to Indian schools, talks to young people and teaches them about their cultural values.

One of these Indian schools is Red Crow Community College established in 1986. This school provides the so-called Niitsitapi Education Program (NEP) which is a three-year teaching training promoting Kainai knowledge and culture as the main source for student learning. The word “Niitsitapi” stands for “Real People” in the Blackfoot language (Emerson, 2006). Pete Standing Alone has a positive opinion about this establishment because it teaches young people about their identity (Blood, 2010). In comparison, residential schools did not teach anything about Indian culture.

Pete mentions that they used to be forbidden even punished for speaking their mother tongue in residential schools. Pete also says that they did not learn in the schools at all as they had

been told they would. He says they mainly worked in the school garden, farm or they took care of chickens, cows, et cetera (Blood, 2010, 3:20-3:40).

Although Pete mentions it is a very positive step forward that Kainai tribe has their schools run by Kainai members, the condition of these schools is still endangered. Even though they are run by Kainai, the main management goes to the Canadian government. These institutions do not receive enough money and are poorly maintained (Convery, 2014, p. 183).

Another negative aspect mentioned in the movie is social issues, such as alcohol consumption and drugs. One student in the film said:

“It is really hard to see our people doing drugs and drinking, and losing their own identity of being Niitsitapi.” (Blood, 2010, 13:48)

All the exposures and pressure on Indian youth makes them seek salvation in drugs and alcohol (Magzul, 2007). Whether to accept or not the indigenous origin is a hard question for the young generation living in two worlds; the modern white-men world and the old Indian world. Pete Standing Alone, however, sees the solution in their spiritual ways. He admits that drugs are a big problem in their society, and his advice is to turn to Indian spiritual ways (Blood, 2010, 13:58).

## **7.5 Summary of the practical part**

This chapter will analyse the differences in attitudes and cultural level from all three analysed movies.

According to points from all three movies, I can say that the attitude to Kainai values has changed since the first movie in 1960. The interest for Kainai values has increased compared to 60s shown in *Circle of the Sun* (1960). In the tribe, there are still some who see the importance of their own identity and who want to keep their culture going and pass it on. With the establishment of Indian schools and the decline of residential school attendance the Kainai identity and all its traditions and cultural ways stayed preserved until this day, or at least most of them. It is a positive thing for Kainai Indians, who previously believed that none of their traditions would survive and their Indian heritage would disappear.

However, Kainai people have turned to some of the habits and customs of whites, such as living in a house instead of tepees and working in industries. It is all part of developing industry and technology which Indians have adapted to. Additionally, they no longer hunt or

grow their own crops as the only source of sustenance. They drive cars and motorcycles, but horses remain very important to them. Although some of the Kainai have fully converted to Christianity, some have stayed loyal to their own religion, identity and customs.

In Alberta, there have been founded schools which have the Blackfoot way of life and spiritual ways as a part of their educational program (Convery, 2014 p. 183). This helps to revive old Kainai traditions and values, and it helps to restore their faded culture destroyed by residential schools.

Here is a table depicting some of the features from the movies compared with all three analysed movies; *Circle of the Sun*, *Standing Alone* and *Round Up*.

	<i>Circle of the Sun</i> (1960)	<i>Standing Alone</i> (1982)	<i>Round Up</i> (2010)
<b><i>Pete Standing Alone</i></b>	a young outsider	an adult	an elder, community and spiritual leader
<b><i>Attitude towards Kainai culture</i></b>	negative, the belief it will disappear in a few years	determination to preserve it, but still negative	positive; the belief it will live on
<b><i>Appearance of Kainai Indians</i></b>	older men – long hair in braids, traditional dress younger men – short hair, denim	casual, 80s fashion + hairstyles → adaptation on white-men culture	older men - cowboy-looking, cowboy hats, jeans, shirts younger – casual, jeans, sweatshirts
<b><i>Environment</i></b>	open range, natural sights, a camp, no visible interferences into nature	fences and barbed wire, industrial environment, urban area, cities, companies	fences, roads, natural environment, agricultural cultivation, school
<b><i>Shown traditions and rituals in the movie</i></b>	Sun Dance, ritual dances, the last day of the Sun Dance	Sun Dance, the design transfer ceremony, the commemoration of Treaty 7, a buffalo hunt, traditionally handcrafted jewellers, beaded outfit and a	building a hut in a traditional way, religious prayers and songs

		saddle, setting up of a tepee	
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## 8. Conclusion

The Kainai culture has declined throughout the years without a doubt. Not only Kainais but all the other Indian tribes have been limited and interfered by the influence of European settlers. However, to my surprise, the Kainai values and beliefs did not diminish into the level I expected. Despite my expectations, the Kainai nation has preserved their beliefs and their most important traditions until this day. In comparison with other tribes, such as Peigans or Stone tribe (Low, 1960), they are a prosperous society holding on to their heritage, protecting it from its disappearance. Nevertheless, some of their traditions and old ways of life disappeared anyway.

According to my findings, there are a few reasons why the Indian ideas faded away throughout the decades:

Firstly, the main cause of the decline of Indian identity is the implementation of **residential schools**. It was a clever move of the government to eliminate the inconvenient inadaptable race from the continent without killing them (King, 2013). Influence of residential schools devastated the Indian identity of many generations throughout the whole continent. It is the government's fault that today's Native Americans struggle to find their place in the society, both white and Indian. Older generations who have attended residential schools lack the main parenting skills. They have been raised, brought up and educated in residential schools so they did not have any parental model they could adapt in their role of a parent. This absence of parenting experience is now reflected in domestic violence and problem with drugs (Magzul, 2007, Munro, 2016).

Another reason, why the culture declined, is the **youth's lack of interest in their spiritual values**. Young Indians do not care about their Indian identity. Sometimes they feel embarrassed and they distance themselves from the Indian community. But, as it is seen in Pete Standing Alone's example, it is only a matter of time and age to accept their indigenous heritage. Pete Standing Alone also was not interested in the Indian way of living. Eventually, however, he became an elder and a spiritual leader. He learned what he could about the Indian history and culture and started to teach younger generations about the Blackfoot way of life. As a young man, he would have never imagined doing something like that in the future.

Another fault of the cultural decline in the Kainai tribe is their culture itself. Due to the **absence of taking down records** of their spiritual ways, historical events and ideas, their knowledge has died out with elders. This is connected to the second aspect of the cultural decline, the youth's lack of interest in their spiritual values. It was an Indian custom to spread their ideas and values orally from one generation to another. They did not have any chroniclers or writers, let alone a written language. And when the residential schools came and erased the interest for Indian heritage from children's minds, plus they separated young Indians from their families, this custom failed its purpose. Kainai Indians have started to write their biographies and historical surveys in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

And lastly, the reason why not only Kainai Indians but the whole Indian race in North America lost its original lifestyle is due to the **extinction of buffalos**. They fully relied on buffalo for food, clothes and shelter. Buffalo skin was the main material for everyday need and buffalo meat was their main source of important nutrients. Dried buffalo meat made it possible for them to overcome harsh winters. But, as the white race was extensively killing buffalos, it led to an overall extinction of this species. With buffalos died out also Indian nomadic way of life, their main source for material and food and a great part of their identity (Brown, Peers, 2006).

Kainai tribe has lost many of their original customs. They no longer live in tepees nor do they hunt. Developing technology and society has made them give up on their traditions. But despite the negative influence of the modern world, they have been able to preserve their religious beliefs and some rituals connected to it, like the famous Sun Dance. Even though some of the tribe members converted to Christianity, the majority stayed loyal to their religion and deity of the Sun.

In conclusion, the condition of their cultural identity has improved during the last few decades. As the residential schools were closed down, Kainai children started to visit schools run by members of the Kainai tribe, teaching them about the Blackfoot spiritual ways. Children live now at home with their families, instead of in boarding schools. This has helped to revive the interest for their indigenous identity and enculture them in their religion. Even though the governmental support for First people stays rather passive, there is great hope for the survival of the Kainai tribe's identity in the future thanks to their determined spirit.

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## Resumé

Tato práce pojednává o historii a národním úpadku kanadského indiánského kmene Kainai, jinak nazývaného jako kmen Blood (angl. = krev). Kultura tohoto kmene byla několik set let negativně ovlivňována evropskou kulturou a tento vliv se výrazně projevil v jeho upadající kultuře. Existuje několik důvodů, proč nejen kainaiská, ale i kultura všech původních Američanů, zaznamenala redukci ve svých uchovaných tradicích. Internátní školy a vyhnutí buvolů mělo největší vliv na tento úpadek. Nadále za to mohou i jejich samotné tradice, konkrétně absence písemných záznamů, a nedostatek zájmu mladé generace Kainai o zachování své kultury. Avšak navzdory těmto faktorům, kainaiská kultura stále žije a v průběhu dekad posledního století vzrostl zájem o její zachování a její obnovení.

## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Tereza Cahová
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<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2020

<b>Název práce:</b>	Dějiny a kulturní úpadek národu Kainai
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	History and cultural decline of Kainai Nation
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Práce se zabývá dějinami a kulturním úpadkem kanadského indiánského kmene Kainai. Věnuje se kainaiskou historií od 18. století až po současnost. Zahrnuje i historii Blackfootské konfederace, což je společenství tří indiánských kmenů v Kanadě, včetně národu Kainai. Teoretická část zaměřená na historii a kulturu od 18. do začátku 20. století je pak porovnávána s praktickou částí, která se soustředí na současný stav kultury tohoto kmene na základě analýzy dokumentárních filmů.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Indiáni, Kanada, Severní Amerika, Blood kmen, Národ Kainai, Blackfootská konfederace, kultura, historie, internátní školy, Sun Dance, kulturní úpadek
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This thesis focuses on the history and cultural decline of the Canadian Indian tribe, the Kainai Nation. It examines the Kainai history from the 18th century up to the present. It also includes the history of Blackfoot Confederacy, which is a union of Canadian Indian tribes, including the Kainai Nation. The theoretical part focused on history and culture from the 18th to early 20th century is compared with the practical part, which analysis the presence state of Kainai culture, based on film analysis.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Indians, Canada, North America, Blood tribe, Kainai Nation, Blackfoot confederacy, culture, history, residential schools, Sun Dance, cultural decline
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	54 stran (98 712 znaků)
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Aj