

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky

Bakalářská práce

The Struggle of the Blackfoot Nation to Adapt to the
Loss of their Natural Environment and to Canadian
Values

Vypracoval: Jaroslav Drobil

Vedoucí práce: Regina Helal, M. A.

České Budějovice 2016

Prohlášení: „Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím pramenů uvedených v bibliografii. Prohlašuji, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. v platném znění souhlasím se zveřejněním své bakalářské práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejích internetových stránkách, a to se zachováním mého autorského práva k odevzdanému textu této kvalifikační práce. Souhlasím dále s tím, aby toutéž elektronickou cestou byly v souladu s uvedeným ustanovením zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. zveřejněny posudky školitele a oponentů práce i záznam o průběhu a výsledku obhajoby kvalifikační práce. Rovněž souhlasím s porovnáním textu mé kvalifikační práce s databází kvalifikačních prací Theses.cz provozovanou Národním registrem vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací a systémem na odhalování plagiátů.“

Kunžak 10. 4. 2016

.....

Jaroslav Drobil

Poděkování: Poděkování za pomoc, cenné rady a čas strávený nad kontrolou této práce patří paní Regině Helal, M. A., vedoucí práce.

Abstract

This thesis will deal with the Blackfoot nation, including their history, lifestyle and mythology. The main focus will be on the change of their life caused by the destruction of their natural environment. The author will compare their lifestyles before and after the European settlers' invasion of the Prairies. The comparison will focus on the near extinction of the buffalo, their main nutrition source, the loss of their lands, and on the dramatic reduction of their population numbers. The second part will introduce the Blackfoot efforts to revitalize their cultural heritage. These efforts are divided into three parts: revival of the language, repatriation of cultural objects, and protection of historical sites.

Anotace

Tato práce se zabývá národem Blackfoot (v češtině Černonožci), jejich historií, životním stylem a mytologií. Ústředním bodem je změna jejich života způsobená ničením jejich přírodního prostředí. Autor porovná jejich životní styl před a po vpádu evropských osadníků. Porovnání bude zaměřeno na téměř úplné vyhynutí bizonů, kteří sloužili jako hlavní zdroj obživy, dále na ztrátu jejich původní země a také na úbytek populace. Ve druhé části budou představeny snahy Černonožců o znovuoživení jejich kulturního dědictví. Tyto snahy jsou rozděleny do tří částí: obrození jazyka, repatriace kulturních předmětů a ochrana historických oblastí.

Obsah

Introduction	6
--------------------	---

PART ONE: BLACKFOOT ORIGINS

1. Introduction to the Blackfoot nation	7
1.1 The Blackfoot traditional territory	7
1.2 Mythology	9
1.3 Blackfoot tribes.....	9
1.4 Way of life	10
1.4.1 Nomadic life.....	10
1.4.2 The buffalo.....	11
1.4.3 Social life	12
2. Early influences of Europeans	13
2.1 Horses among the Blackfoot.....	14
2.2 Guns.....	15
3. Contact with the settlers.....	16
3.1 First contacts.....	16
3.2 Smallpox.....	17
3.2.1 The aftermath of smallpox	18
3.3 The beginning of fur trade	18
3.3.1 The role of alcohol	19
4. Relationship with the Americans and further developments	19
4.1 First contacts.....	19
4.2 Americans´ further attempts to penetrate into the Blackfoot territory	20
4.3 Christianity	21
5. Living together with the Whites and the treaties	22
5.1 Lame Bull´s Treaty of 1855.....	22
5.2 Massacre on the Marias	23
5.3 Living in Canada and Treaty 7	23
6. Disappearance of the buffalo and its consequences.....	24
6.1 Consequences	24

PART TWO: CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

1. Introduction	26
2. Social and cultural background in the 20 th century	26

3. Schools and repatriation of language	28
3.1 The extermination of Native languages	29
3.2 Rebirth of the language.....	29
4. Repatriation of cultural objects	32
4.1 How the objects were lost.....	32
4.2 Prerequisite for the repatriation	33
4.3 Returning of the objects.....	34
4.4 Results of the repatriation.....	36
5. Repatriation of historical sites.....	37
6. Summary of the repatriation efforts	40
Discussion	41
Conclusion.....	43
Resources	44

Introduction

I chose the topic for my bachelor thesis for several reasons. First of all, I have always been fascinated by history of nations, especially by those who lived in close connection with nature. However, I had never really examined the Aboriginals of North America in detail, until I started with my studies at the university where I became familiar with their history. Unlike Sioux, Cherokee, Cree, and other Aboriginal nations, the Blackfoot are not very well-known, in my opinion, and I must admit that I had never heard about them until I chose their nation as the topic for my bachelor thesis. This fact made me curious about what I was going to find.

In the first part, I will focus on the Blackfoot history, mythology, and lifestyle. In the beginning, the situation before the arrival of the Europeans will be described. Further on, the encounters with the Europeans and their consequences will be analysed. I started my research by reading a few books which gave me quite satisfactory insight into the topic but the most helpful work was the *Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* by John C. Ewers; a prominent American ethnologist who had a warm relationship with the Blackfoot.

In the second part, I deal with the current situation of the Blackfoot. However, I did not mainly focus on their political, economic, and social life. Instead, their efforts to revitalize their cultural heritage will be analysed. These efforts are including revival of the language, repatriation of cultural objects, and protection of historical sites. I did not work with books as much as in the first part; I rather tried to find the information on the official web sites of the Blackfoot schools, institutions, etc.

At the end of the thesis I will try to answer these questions:

- How did the Blackfoot cope with the European invasion on the Plains and how much did they change?
- What is the purpose of the repatriating efforts and how successful they are?

PART ONE: BLACKFOOT ORIGINS

1. Introduction to the Blackfoot nation

The Blackfoot consist of three tribes: Kainai (Blood), Siksika (Northern Blackfoot), and Piikani (who further divide into Apatohsippiikani and Ammskaapiikani) (Gerald T. Conaty, 75). All of these tribes share the same language and culture. The Blackfoot may be called with various names: Niitsitapiiksi means Real People and this term includes all of the indigenous people of North America. Another name is Saokitapiiksi which includes all the people who lived on the Plains (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 11).

This chapter will describe all aspects of Blackfoot lives, including their traditions, traditional land, mythology, structure of the Blackfoot nation, and other.

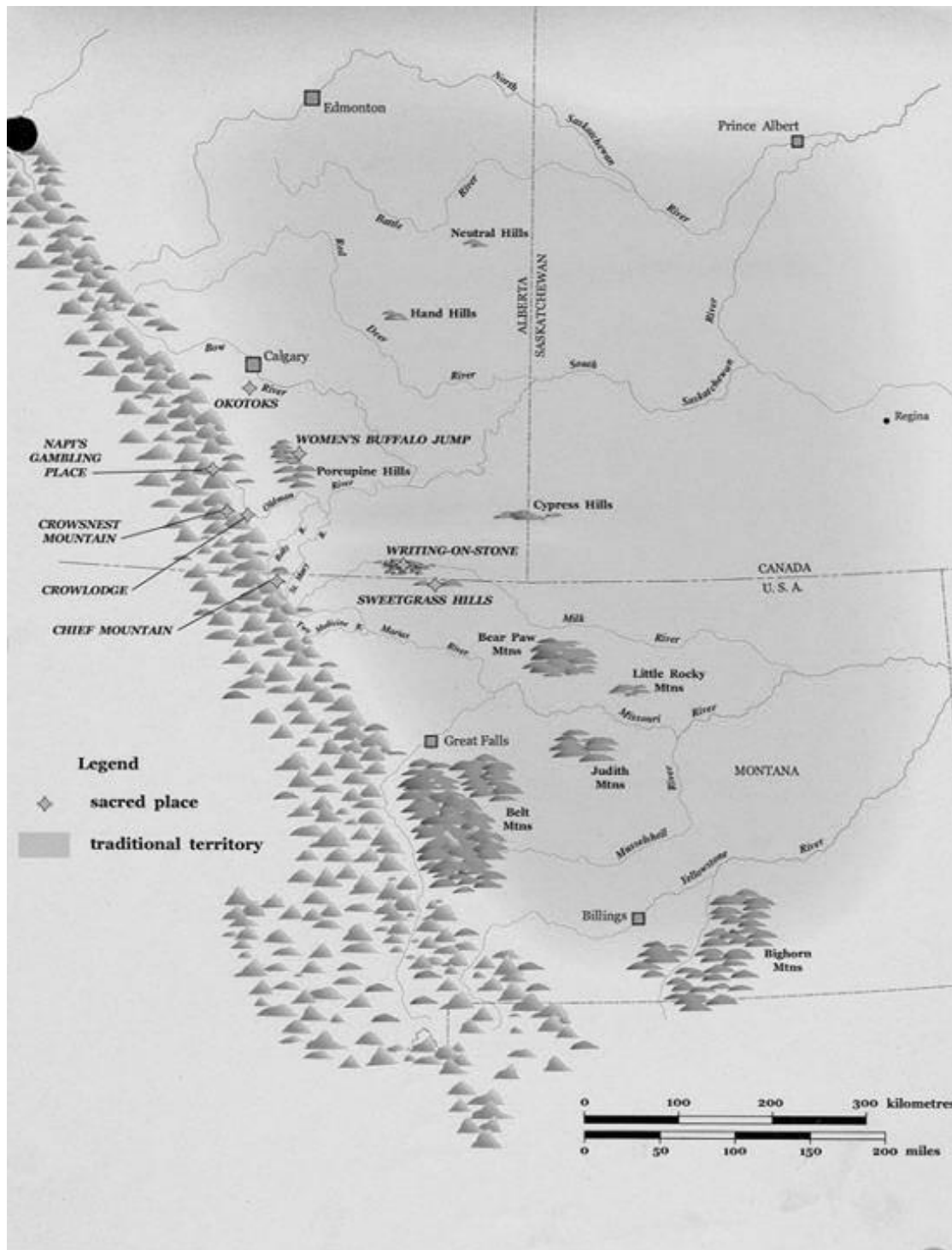
1.1 The Blackfoot traditional territory

The Blackfoot are one of the First Nations who settled in North America thousands of years ago. The First Nations probably came from the eastern parts of Asia in periods called Ice Age. During these periods, sea levels were much lower than nowadays, so it was possible to cross the area between Asia and Alaska afoot. Scientists are not sure when exactly these migrations took place but it was probably more than twelve thousand years ago.

The groups of First Nations spread across the continent, lost contact with each other and each of them developed their own culture. Many tribes, including the Blackfoot, lived nomadic lives but some of them began to live in settlements and started to grow crops.

Firstly, the Blackfoot lived in eastern forests, but later on they moved westward to more open plains. It is not exactly known why they moved there but they might have been forced to do so by other tribes or they wanted to pursue the buffalo. After this migration, their traditional territory stretched between the Rocky Mountains in the west, North Saskatchewan River in the north, the Missouri River in the south, and the Cypress Hills in the east. However, scientists argue about the demarcation of their lands and, furthermore, their territory changed during the past, as they acquired or lost land due to their conflicts with other tribes.

Figure 1: Blackfoot traditional territory



The Blackfoot traditional territory is located on both sides of the Canada-United States border. Today, three of the four tribes (Kainai, Northern Peigan, Siksika) live in Canada. Southern Peigan (Blackfeet) live in the United States.

<http://www.glenbow.org>

1.2 Mythology

A very important part in Blackfoot's lives was played by mythology. In their eyes, all animals, plants, or even things have their own soul and all of these beings are equal.

The Blackfoot creator is called Napi and he is the one who created the world and everything in it (Ewers, John, 1). He told the people how to live, how to kill animals for food, and everything they needed to know for survival.

We cannot compare Napi to gods who appear in today's monotheistic religions. In the stories in which he appears he behaves rudely, plays dirty tricks, and always causes chaos. However, he never acted maliciously. His life taught the Blackfoot how important it is to live in balance. Besides Napi, the most important god is the Sun alongside with Moon, his wife, and Morning Star, their child.

1.3 Blackfoot tribes

As mentioned before, the Blackfoot consist of three tribes: the Kainai (Blood), Siksika (often labelled as the Northern Blackfoot), and Piikani (Piegan). The name Piegan refers to people who wear rags or torn robes. The Blood may have acquired their name because its members painted their faces and robes with red earth but another explanation is that they received this name after they returned from a massacre of a small camp of Kutenai Indians and their bodies were covered with blood. However, Blood is not the name with which the members of this tribe called themselves. They used the name Kainai, which means Many Chiefs. As for the name Blackfoot, to which all of these tribes belong, they acquired it from the neighbouring Cree people who called them "black-footed people" because the bottoms of their moccasins were black (Ewers, John, 5, 6).

These three tribes were politically independent but had the same culture (with a few exceptions), their members intermarried, and their war leaders led war together against common enemies. A long time ago, they were probably one tribe but later on, they separated into these three tribes.

The Blackfoot language is an Algonkian dialect, and it allies them with other Algonkian-speaking tribes of North America: the Cheyennes, Plains Cree, Plains Ojibwas, the Arapahoes, and Gros Ventres.

1.4 Way of life

This part of the chapter will focus on the Blackfoot lifestyle in the days before they met the European settlers. However, they were influenced by the settlers even before they had met them in two ways – when they acquired horses and guns, but these events will be introduced later. The times before these changes may be referred to as “dog days” because the Blackfoot call this era “When we had only dogs for moving camps” (Ewers, John, 1).

Figure 2: A man's shirt



(The Story of the Blackfoot People, 38)

Figure 3: A Kainai tipi



(The Story of the Blackfoot People, 24)

1.4.1 Nomadic life

The Blackfoot were nomads who hunted game and the most important animal was the bison, also called buffalo. Their lives were closely connected with this animal and they always followed the great herds of buffalo on the vast plains. In spring, summer, and fall, buffalo grazed on the rich grasslands in open country but in winter, they migrated to wooded alleys where hills offered protection from the wind (Blackfoot History and Culture, 20).

The Blackfoot spent most of the time of year in their winter camps to which they moved in late October or early November. In summer, they moved from one camp to another, following the buffalo. The nomadic life must have been very difficult as they had to constantly carry all of their possessions, including the tipi, which was the heaviest part of the luggage. However,

it would have been much harder for them without their dogs which were able to drag a load of about seventy-five pounds on wooden travois. The travelling was toilsome, especially for children, women (who sometimes carried part of the luggage as well), and the dogs, and the group was not able to walk too far. They walked about five or six kilometres a day (Ewers, John, 10).

1.4.2 The buffalo

The buffalo provided almost everything the Blackfoot needed, from food to clothing. The meat was eaten by Indians of all ages and at all parts of the year. Choice pieces of meat were given to infants to suck. Toothless old people did the same. The most preferred part of the

Figure 4: Buffalo



(<http://cx.aos.ask.com>)

animal was probably the tongue and ribs but the Blackfoot did not despise even the raw entrails. When the meat was plentiful, strips of flesh were dried in the sun, and stored for later (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 61, 61; Ewers, John, 73).

Tanned buffalo hides were also important because the women made shelter, clothes, and containers from them. The hides had to be processed quickly before they spoiled.

Killing the buffalo was not an easy task. In the dog days, the most effective way was to surround the buffalo herds. The hunters approached the herd from down-wind so that the animals would not catch their scent. In the meantime, women placed travois upright in the earth and the travois formed a semicircular fence. When the fence was ready, two fast-running men approached the herd from up-wind and drove it toward the fence. The men rushed into the fence and killed the animals with arrows or lances. When the animals were dead, the chief counted them and divided the meat equally among the participating families (Ewers, John, 78).

Another way of killing the buffalo were buffalo jumps. The animals were lured towards cliffs and were killed by the fall. In this manner, the hunters were able to kill hundreds of buffalo in a short period of time. Using the buffalo jumps was very complicated and not successful in many cases. Luring the buffalo towards the cliff was accompanied by a ceremony in which the Blackfoot prayed for a

Figure 5: Buffalo Jump



Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta
(<http://www.canada-photos.com>)

successful hunt. They believed that the buffalo jump was successful only if the ceremony was done right (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 59, 60).

In winter, the Blackfoot usually depended on their supplies but sometimes men killed buffalo that bogged down in snowdrifts or fallen into ravines.

1.4.3 Social life

The Blackfoot bands were small – they were extended families with no formal organization other than a chief. The chiefs were usually old men who were respected by the rest of the group. When a group became too big, the members divided into two smaller groups.

The division of men's and women's duties was similar to many other cultures. Men spent most of their time outside their camps, as they were hunting and protecting their territory against other tribes. They had to be dexterous enough to make weapons and ritual items. Women remained in the camp, took care of children, prepared food, and sewed clothes and tipis.

When a child was born, it was taken as a wonderful event. The baby's umbilical cord was cut with an arrowhead and preserved in a beaded container in a shape of snake (for boys) or in a shape of lizard (for girls) (Blackfoot History and Culture, 23). These animals were considered as very strong and the containers were believed to protect the children for the rest of their lives. Boys and girls grew up together until the age of five which had supposedly taught them to respect each other.

Storytelling was an important part of Blackfoot lives. Their stories passed from one generation to another and they had an educational function. Most of the stories were narrated by the elders, which was design to strengthen the connection between generations.

Another integral part of Blackfoot lives were ceremonies and the so-called medicine bundles which were closely connected with them. Medicine (or sacred) bundles were believed to contain supernatural powers which were given to people mostly from animals. The bundles were a collection of sacred items (weapons, garments, pipes, etc.) which were stored together and the Blackfoot took great care of them (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 20, 21).

Each year, all of the Blackfoot clans met together in the summer and organized the great *ako-katssinn* which can be translated as *the time of all people camping together*. The most important ceremony of this meeting was the Sun Dance (O'kaan) which was probably adopted from other Plains tribes in the early 1800s (Blackfoot History and Culture, 27). This ceremony was very complex but the essence of it is that the people make a deal with Sun, give him offerings, and the Sun gives them bountiful life in return.

Besides ceremonies, the Blackfoot performed many social dances during the ako-katssinn, including owl, round, and the snake dance.

2. Early influences of Europeans

Before the Blackfoot made contact with the Europeans, they were influenced by some of their wonders in the first half of 18th century, most importantly by guns and horses.

The first time the Blackfoot (the Piegans, to be precise) saw horses was around 1730. At that time, the Shoshonis, one of the Blackfoot enemy tribes, surprised the Blackfoot with a new powerful “weapon” - big, four footed animals. This new animal gave the Shoshoni great speed and the Piegans stood no chance against them. After the lost battle, the Piegans asked Cree and Assiniboin tribes for help. These Indians introduced another great weapon to the Blackfoot – muskets. Armed with the firearms, the Blackfoot marched into a battle against Shoshonis, who were fortunately without horses at this time, and won a great victory (Ewers, John, 21).

Soon after these events, Piegan hunters encountered a lone mounted enemy in the Shoshoni territory. The rider managed to run away, but the Piegan killed the horse with arrows. They

admired the animal in awe. They thought of horses as of human slaves, just as the dogs were their slaves, so they named the horse *Big Dog* (Ewers, John, 22).

When the Blackfoot became familiar with the white men's wonders, they realized that they will need horses to gain better mobility and the guns which will help them to frighten their enemies. It is not exactly known how Blackfoot acquired horses but they probably bought them from other tribes. In a similar way, they bought guns from Cree and Assiniboin tribes who traded with the English on Hudson Bay or with French traders (Ewers, John, 22).

Apart from guns and horses, the Blackfoot acquired other useful items which helped them in everyday life, such as iron arrowheads, metal knives, and axes.

2.1 Horses among the Blackfoot

It is no exaggeration to say that horses changed Blackfoot lives. Very soon, these animals became an inseparable part of their culture. They took great care of them and became their loyal partners.

Horses were specially trained to help the Blackfoot in buffalo hunting and soon the Blackfoot taught themselves to ride on them with saddles or even without. Not every horse was suitable for this dangerous task. Only the most courageous animals could face the buffalo and these horses were highly valued. Blackfoot children were taught to ride horses at a very young age and they were skilled riders at the age of seven.

Other horses replaced the dogs and they carried luggage. Horses were eight times more effective than dogs, and with this improvement the Blackfoot were able to walk for about 12 miles a day, which is twice the distance of their predecessors. The Blackfoot decorated their horses during the summer encampment and organized parades. They also raced on them and the spectators would bet on the winner (Ewers, John, 159).

Horses made the Blackfoot lives easier but they also brought some negative aspects. First property differences appeared as they could carry more luggage and some Indians were richer than the others, while their ancestors were all equal. Some Indians owned a whole herd of horses while the poor had only one or two animals and they were becoming dependant on their richer tribesmen (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 55, 56).

Figure 6: A horse travois



(The Story of the Blackfoot People, 56)

2.2 Guns

Guns changed the Blackfoot culture as well. Before their acquisition, battles between Indian tribes could last many hours but only a few men died. With firearms, battles became bloodier because almost every shot was deadly or mutilated the warriors seriously.

Blackfoot neighbouring Indian tribes did not possess firearms which meant that they soon became the most powerful and feared enemies. They expanded their territory, and by the end of the 18th century, they became the most powerful tribe of the north-western plains, from the North Saskatchewan River southward to the northern tributaries of the Missouri and from Battle River eastward to the Rockies (Ewers, John, 30).

The muskets were adjusted so they could suit the Blackfoot needs. The barrels were usually shortened so that they could aim with them easier on horsebacks. Trigger guards were larger, so that they could use the guns in winter when they wore mittens (The Story of the Blackfoot People, 69).

Firearms were more powerful than bows in some ways but the majority of hunters still preferred bows and arrows in buffalo hunting because it took too long to reload the guns. Guns lead to property differences in a similar way as horses. Richer Blackfoot owned many firearms while their poor tribesmen possessed the ones with poor quality or none (Ewers, John, 95).

3. Contact with the settlers

This chapter will take a closer look at the first meetings of Blackfoot with the settlers. The settlers had become familiar with many other Native tribes before they met the Blackfoot so we can say that they had an advantage over them because they knew quite a lot about Native lives. The Blackfoot, on the other hand, knew nothing about white man's culture.

First of all, let me briefly describe the circumstances under which the settlers came to the New World and what their intentions were.

Early settlers came to the eastern shores of America because of the rich fish shoals. Fish became scarce in Europe, and fishing in American waters solved this problem. In the 1600s, fishery was replaced by even more profitable economic activity – fur trade. The most important animal was the beaver whose fur was highly priced in Europe but there were many others – buffalo, otter, wolves, etc. Most of the settlers wanted to become wealthy and they used the Indians for this purpose. They bought most of the furs from them and in return, they sold them inferior goods which had almost no price in Europe.

Another factor which played role in discovering the continent was the expansion of Christianity. By 1600, rulers of the Western Europe wanted to expand their powers through Christianity in various parts of the world. In the 1600s, the French king ordered the fur traders to take missionaries to Canada and support them in their religious tasks (A Passion for Identity, 39).

3.1 First contacts

In 1754, the Hudson's Bay Company (an important English trading company which had appropriated a huge area of all lands which were drained by waters flowing into Hudson Bay in 1670) sent Anthony Hendry to find strangers who were known to possess furs of the highest quality. Hendry was accompanied by a group of Cree Indians and they travelled southwestward to Saskatchewan and then westward (Ewers, John, 24).

Hendry received a friendly reception in a large camp of "Archithinue Natives", as he called them (this was also the Cree term for the strangers). He admired their horses and he even accompanied them in a buffalo hunt from which he made this note: "They are so expert that with one or two arrows they will drop a buffalo. As for me I had sufficient employ to manage my horse" (Ewers, John, 25).

Hendry spent a winter among them and on his way back he met another group of Archithinues. He asked their leaders to come to the bay to trade but they were not interested because they had enough buffalo meat and they also feared that they would starve during the long journey to the bay.

These “Archithinues” might have been Blackfoot or more likely Gros Ventres, but these tribes led very similar lives in those days. Hendry’s journey brought no profit for the Hudson’s Bay Company but that was just the beginning of their attempts to penetrate into the Blackfoot territory. The Hudson’s Bay Company sent another trader, Mathew Cocking, to Blackfoot territory in 1772. He encountered five allied tribes in his journey: Gros Ventres, Bloods, Blackfeet, Piegans, and Sarsis. Cocking invited them to come to York Factory, one of the trading posts, but they rejected his offer with the same justification as they gave to Hendry.

Consequently, the Company inferred that it was pointless to invite the Blackfoot to come to their posts after these two failures. However, they wanted to compete successfully with independent traders and that is why they built new forts including Buckingham House which was built on the borders of Blackfoot territory.

3.2 Smallpox

This period, when the Hudson’s Bay Company started to encroach on the Blackfoot territory is also the time when Blackfoot faced the white man’s diseases for the first time.

In 1781, the Piegans sent a scouting party into the Shoshoni territory. The scouts found an enemy camp, attacked it but there were no warriors to fight back. The Piegans searched the camp and found out that most of the Shoshoni were dead and the rest of them dying of an insidious illness which was unknown to them but well known to the European settlers because it was smallpox. They believed a bad spirit had possessed them and killed them. Two days after the discovery of the Shoshoni camp, the disease spread out in a Piegan camp. They did not know that the illness is contagious so they did not put the diseased individuals in isolation. Their medicine men were hopeless as all of their herbs failed. Very soon, half of the people in the camp died and the survivors concluded that the Good Spirit had forsaken them (Ewers, John, 28 -29). In my point of view, they must have been really desperate because the balance of nature, in which they believed, now turned against them and they did not know why.

3.2.1 The aftermath of smallpox

The interesting fact is that despite the losses among the Piegans, the Blackfoot as a whole nation became very strong partly due to the smallpox. The Piegans wanted to negotiate a peace treaty with the Shoshoni because waging a war with so many dead warriors would be fatal. However, they did not know that the Shoshoni had been weakened by the disease even more, and left Bow River Country to the Blackfoot in fear of them. Blackfoot and Shoshoni lived in peace for two or three years but soon after their disputes continued, and the Blackfoot captured many Shoshoni children and women during the warfare in order to regain their numbers lost in the plague. The Blackfoot chased the Shoshoni southward and during this warfare they also defeated Flatheads and Kutenais who stood no chance against them because they lacked firearms. Most members of these three tribes fled behind the Rocky Mountains and by the end of the 18th century the Blackfoot became masters of northwestern plains.

3.3 The beginning of fur trade

The time of expanding their territory was also the time when they established long-term relations with the settlers. In 1779 a group of independent traders in Montreal founded the North West Company and they established successful business relation with the Blood and Blackfoot tribes. However, the Hudson's Bay Company gained favour of the largest Blackfoot tribe, the Piegans, thanks to David Thompson who spent the winter of 1787 amongst them (Ewers, John, 30).

The trading itself was a long ritual. First, the band chief sent a group of young men to announce the arrival who obtained a few small presents from the traders. When these men came back, the main group painted their faces, took their best clothes, and under the leadership of their chief they approached a fort. They entered it unarmed, sat on the floor in order of rank and lit their pipes together with the traders. In the meantime, women pitched a camp near the fort (Ewers, John, 31).

The traders must have been disappointed if they expected to obtain mainly beaver pelts from Blackfoot. These Indians did not focus on hunting beavers and for most of them this animal was sacred. However, they could offer many other products. Apart from fox and wolf pelts, all kinds of buffalo products were sold to the traders. Although it may seem peculiar, the Blackfoot also sold horses to the traders and not the other way around.

Now let us take a look on the wares which the Blackfoot bought. There were only a few things which they preferred – muskets, ammunition, tobacco, and liquor. Regarding tobacco,

they had grown their own for many years but they stopped after they came in contact with the tobacco offered by the traders. Apart from these, most important goods, they also bought all kinds of daily use tools – arrowheads, lance heads, knives, kettles, etc. (Ewers, John, 33).

3.3.1 The role of alcohol

With the help of alcohol, the traders wanted to strengthen their relationships with all Natives and the Blackfoot were no exception. A note written by Duncan M' Gillivray, a clerk from post Fort George, explains this situation very clearly: "The love of rum is their first inducement to industry, they undergo every hardship and fatigue to procure a Skinfull of this delicious beverage, and when a Nation becomes addicted to drinking, it affords a strong presumption that they will soon become excellent hunters" (Ewers, John, 34). We can derive from this note that the settlers did not care about the Natives' lives at all and their only aim was only to get as many pelts and other products as possible. They must have known that the Natives had not been familiar with alcohol before, which meant that it might distort their culture.

Alcohol changed Blackfoot lives just as much as horses and firearms. Before they exchanged goods with the traders they drank all the rum which the traders gave, them and not until they sobered up did they come to the fort. They drank liquor like water, became drunk very fast and many of them became addicted to it. From patient, respectful, and kind people they turned into hot-tempered hoodlums. Men started meaningless skirmishes (which ended even by deaths), beat their women or even worse – sold them to slavery for liquor (Ewers, John, 258).

4. Relationship with the Americans and further developments

4.1 First contacts

The beginning of the Blackfoot relations with the American traders was much fiercer than with the ones from Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company. As soon as they came in contact with them they started to distinguish between their old friends whom they called "The Northern White Men" and the Americans who became known amongst them as "Big Knives".

Blackfoot considered the Americans as enemies immediately after their first contact which occurred when Louis and Clark (travellers who were supposed to explore the western parts of the United States) were coming back from their expedition. They split into two groups in

order to explore the Montana plains further, and Lewis and his men encountered a Piegan band. They joined them and an unfortunate event happened during the night – one of the Indians stole a firearm and a fight followed in which the Indian died. The Piegans ran away immediately after the incident and so did the Americans who were afraid of reinforcements (Ewers, John, 47).

The Americans' attempt to build posts in the vicinity of the Blackfoot territory failed. One of the first posts was built in 1810 by the Missouri Fur Company westward of the Three Forks of the Missouri but the garrison was soon forced to abandon it because more than twenty trappers were killed. Blackfoot territory became known as too dangerous to operate in and the American traders, trappers and explorers started avoiding it, so we can say that Blackfoot succeeded in protecting their territory and therefore won the first phase of their skirmishes with the Americans (Ewers, John, 50).

This period of first contacts with the Americans is also the time when their territory was threatened by enemy tribes. Crow Indians obtained firearms and they further sold them to the Shoshonis and Flatheads. By the summer of 1810 the Flatheads crossed the Rocky Mountains and fought against Piegans who lost the first battle. Furthermore, the Crees and Assiniboins were moving from the east and the Crows sent their warriors northward. This meant that Blackfoot became completely surrounded by enemy tribes and their borders became very unstable. The Americans did not operate in their country in 1810s which meant that Blackfoot could fully concentrate on their disputes with the enemy tribes.

4.2 Americans' further attempts to penetrate into the Blackfoot territory

The Americans' other attempts made by the Missouri Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in the early 1820s failed as well. Many of their trappers died during their expeditions and their horses and bundles of pelts were stolen. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company started to collect furs on the western side of the Rocky Mountains where they sold all kinds of goods to Indian tribes (who were all enemies of Blackfoot) in exchange for furs. This naturally upset the Blackfoot because all of their enemies (including the Americans) benefited from this trade.

The first peace treaty between the Americans and Blackfoot was negotiated by Kenneth McKenzie and Jacob Berger (Ewers, John, 56). In 1831, the first American trading post was

built in the Blackfoot territory – Fort Piegan, in honour of the first Blackfoot tribe which cooperated with the Americans. Since this point on, trading with the Americans started in large.

The main item sold by the Blackfoot was a buffalo robe. With firearms they were able to kill great numbers of the animal and this factor played an important role in the disappearance of buffalo which will be described hereinafter. To give you a notion about the numbers, 9,000 buffalo robes were sold in the winter of 1833 – 1834 (Ewers, John, 64).

Blackfoot considered the trade profitable but they did not realize the drawbacks. They were becoming more and more dependent on people who had nothing in common with them. They rather bought items which they could make on their own and the skills which passed from one generation to another for hundreds of years began to decline. However, the question is if they could have avoided this. They needed firearms to compete successfully with other Indian tribes, and they might have been destroyed by the Americans if they had not started to cooperate with them.

4.3 Christianity

It is quite obvious that the Blackfoot had to come in contact with priests when they started cooperating with the Whites. The Small Robes (one of the Piegan bands) were probably the first ones who discovered Christianity and their chief was the first one who received baptism (in 1841). Later that winter, about 20 other Blackfoot received baptism as well (Ewers, John, 187).

The question is – why would any Indian receive Christianity? According to Ewers, (Ewers, John, 187) the reason was simply practical. Blackfoot considered Christianity as powerful magic, more powerful than theirs and they hoped that adoption of this magic will bring them advantages in many ways. It must be clear to everyone, even to those who do not know much about Christianity, that religious ideas of Indians and Christians are diametrical. The new religion spread very fast and still more Blackfoot received baptism. However, the true principles of Christianity fell flat on them. They considered baptism as a purification of the body, continued in polygamy and hoped that this new “magic” will make them stronger in battles.

5. Living together with the Whites and the treaties

The Americans permeated into the Indians' territories more and more and they tried to negotiate treaties with them. The individual treaties differed but the main essence was to persuade them to preserve peace with other tribes and with the Americans. Although these peace proposals may seem noble-minded (and the Indians probably perceived them as such), their purpose was purely selfish – they wanted to gain more lands, where they could build railroads, telegraph lines, and generally expand their activities.

The problematic aspect of these treaties is that Indians did not fully understand the conditions of the treaties. Some meanings of words were unknown to them which led to misunderstandings and the Americans took advantage of it.

One of first such treaties with Blackfoot was negotiated at Fort Benton on September 21, 1853 (Ewers, John, 210). In a nutshell, the conditions respond to those mentioned above. The Americans made observations of lands where they wanted to build a railway and the Blackfoot territory was no exception. They wanted to secure peace conditions in order to work without complications. Blackfoot chiefs agreed and they were rewarded with many useful gifts.

5.1 Lame Bull's Treaty of 1855

Another, even more important treaty, was a meeting of Blackfoot and four other Indian tribes with the Americans which became known as the Lame Bull's Treaty named by a Piegan chief who first signed the treaty. This treaty was influenced by Indian Affairs' verdict which insisted on changing the Indians' nomadic lifestyle. Indians were supposed to settle down in permanent homes and to start agriculture (Ewers, John, 214).

The treaty included really important matters and influenced further development of Blackfoot. The first point was the same as in the previous treaty – to keep peace. Secondly, borders of the Blackfoot territory were precisely defined and this territory became a common hunting ground for all Indian tribes which extremely handicapped the Blackfoot. Thirdly, Americans could freely move in the Indians' territories. Finally, and most importantly, the treaty mentioned construction of roads, telegraph lines, military posts, schools, etc. In return, the U. S. government promised to pay \$20,000 annually for ten years. Blackfoot chiefs agreed and they were rewarded right after the meeting with many valuable items. Furthermore, Lame Bull agreed with building a mission among the Blackfoot in 1856. Another result of Lame

Bull's Treaty was that an Indian agent started to operate among Blackfoot. The main task of this person was to teach them how to live like "civilized" people, he distributed the annuities among them and generally cared for them in every possible way. In my point of view, the presence of this person was another step toward losing the Blackfoot independence (Ewers, John, 219).

5.2 Massacre on the Marias

The peace did not last long. Blackfoot warriors continued fighting with enemy tribes and the number of fights with the Americans also rose, especially after the discovery of gold in the eastern base of the Rockies because a large number of people crossed the Blackfoot territory in order to get rich. Blackfoot stole their horses, killed the miners, and looted farms. The last straw was the death of Malcolm Clarke, an eminent white trader, who was killed by Blackfoot (Ewers, John, 246).

A military attack was proposed to end the riots. The camp of the band which was believed to kill Clarke was located and attacked in January, 1870. However, the location turned out to be incorrect and 173 innocent Indians were killed. There are two versions of this event. The Indians told that Heavy Runner, the leader of the camp, came to the soldiers with his hands raised (and holding his identification) but he was immediately shot to death. Colonel Baker, the leader of the troops, claimed that he did not know they attacked the wrong camp. Whatever the truth is, Blackfoot became obedient after this terrible event and fought no more battles with the Americans (Ewers, John, 252).

5.3 Living in Canada and Treaty 7

In 1869, the Americans began to cross the national boundary and brought only problems to Blackfoot. Smallpox broke out again and in order to destroy them even more, they sold them poisonous alcohol (Ewers, John, 258).

In order to stop this, North West Mounted Police was recruited and sent to expel the American traders. The Police succeeded and Blackfoot were thankful for their intervention as we can see from chief Crowfoot's speech: "If the police had not come to this country, where would we be now? Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that very few of us would have been left today. The police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter" (Ewers John, 264). This speech was uttered at the meeting with Canadians in 1877 where the only treaty with them was signed – Treaty 7. They agreed to

become loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen and to surrender all their lands. Each tribe obtained its reserve and schools were planned to be built in every reserve.

6. Disappearance of the buffalo and its consequences

Disappearance of the buffalo is a really sad moment in the Blackfoot history because in spite of all the changes they had to undergo since the arrival of the Europeans, they were still proud people but this event humbled them and bereaved them of their primary source of life.

Buffalo began to fade when Blackfoot started to trade robes and killed much more of this animal than they needed. The extermination was also supported by the Americans who killed the buffalo sometimes just for fun and left great herds of the animal rot on the plains.

In Canada, great prairie fires of 1878 expelled large herds south of the national border with Montana and some Blackfoot bands followed the animals. These herds never returned to the Canadian plains (Ewers, John, 278).

Canadian Blackfoot were starving in 1879. They ate dogs, horses, and grass in order to survive and their situation was desperate. When they asked the Canadian government for help they were advised to travel to Montana where small herds still roamed across the plains and many Blackfoot followed these instructions.

In Montana, an Indian agent was slowly convincing the Blackfoot to settle down and to start farming. However, harvests were usually poor and they starved during winters and got epidemics. A sad example of the starvations is the one of 1883 – 1884 in which one fifth of Montana Blackfoot died (Ewers, John, 294).

6.1 Consequences

After the disappearance of the buffalo, Blackfoot lifestyle changed forever. Nomadic way of life had to be replaced for living in one permanent place and hunting for agriculture.

In order to *civilize* them, Blackfoot children were sent to boarding schools where they were supposed to learn White man's abilities. The teachers educated them in Christianity which should have replaced their *heathen* way of thinking. Boarding schools brought many problems. Boys and girls were separated (in contrast with Blackfoot traditional way of raising children) which resulted in mutual incomprehension and disrespect between them.

Furthermore, many teachers bullied the children or even sexually abused them. Many children who became victims of this behaviour became bullies themselves.

As mentioned before, the Blackfoot started to live in one permanent place. As they stopped traveling through their lands, they did not need such vast territory and they started to sell parts of their lands, mainly because they needed the money to survive as their harvests were not very successful.

Generally speaking, the Blackfoot entered the 20th century in quite miserable condition as did the majority of Aboriginals. They hardly procured enough food to feed themselves, their children lost contact with older generations, their traditional lifestyle was lost as well as part of their lands.

PART TWO: CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

1. Introduction

In the second part I will try to acquaint you with the Blackfoot status of the 20th and the 21st century. The key term for the practical part is repatriation, whether it is repatriation of language, cultural items from museums, or lands. Before that, however, I will introduce some other issues which the Blackfoot people face in order to create a brief notion about their situation.

2. Social and cultural background in the 20th century

Blackfoot faced a large number of issues which they had to solve in order to improve the lives of their people. However, it is not only about improving their lives in (what I would call) *practical issues* but about regaining their collective spirit which was almost definitely lost since the disappearance of the buffalo. Many factors played a role in the process of losing their culture. In my opinion, the most important of the factors were the residential schools where children were forced to abandon their beliefs which passed from one generation to another for hundreds or thousands of years. Moreover, the children there were physically and sexually abused. From our, present point of view, this violent way of destroying a whole culture is unacceptable and the Canadian government made an official apology to all former students of Aboriginal residential schools in Canada when Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008 read it out in Parliament. (<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca>). However, I partly understand why the Canadian government wanted to place the Blackfoot children into the schools – Blackfoot became non-independent since the disappearance of the buffalo and they wanted to help them to stay on their own feet by teaching them all the qualities of *white men*. However, the conditions in the schools were inappropriate, and the result was the very opposite of what the government had wanted to achieve. The Blackfoot society became even more dysfunctional.

The residential schools taught the Blackfoot children one thing very well – to be ashamed of their Aboriginal identity. This shame gradually spread to all of the Blackfoot people and led to something which John Bird (a member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana) calls “cultural shame”. His quote about this term nicely shows what the status of Blackfoot was (or may still be in my opinion):

“My definition of shame is that, you know, that your bad, your bad for being an Indian person, your bad for looking like an Indian person, your bad for dressing like an Indian person, your bad for speaking like an Indian person. We have been getting those kind of messages for a long, long time. We’ve getting very negative, destructive messages about ourselves, our culture, our history, our language, and about our spirituality for a long time. Just like if you had a child and gave him those kind of negative messages everyday, eventually that child would believe those messages to be true about himself. And I think, to some extent, that’s what’s happening to Indian people. We have, to a certain extent, come to believe what they tell us about ourselves, and I think the result of that is cultural shame” (Transitions: Death of the Mother Tongue, 10).

Nowadays, Blackfoot have their own schools where children are taught Blackfoot language as well as cultural knowledge. I will focus on this topic hereinafter.

Another problem which is really surprising, at least to me, is that Blackfoot were considered as non-citizens in Canada until the second half of the 20th century. In 1965 they were allowed to vote in federal government for the first time and in 1966 they could buy alcohol like any other Canadian (Gerald T. Conaty, 107). However, alcohol, as you probably know, led to a serious social problem similarly as in other Aboriginal communities. Currently, all the reserves run social services for alcoholism (Blackfoot History and Culture, 30).

Unemployment is another problem the Montana Blackfoot share with other Aboriginal communities. Especially the Blackfeet tribe in Montana face high rates of unemployment. To solve this they formed the Montana Indian Manufacturer’s Network together with six other tribes. However, the unemployment rate in the 1990s was still about 50% (<http://www.encyclopedia.com>). There are some exceptions, however, which show us that the Aboriginals may become successful in the modern society as well. James Gladstone, who grew up on the Blood Reservation in Alberta, became the first Native Canadian who served in the Canadian Parliament (for seventeen years).

Another concern which is controversial is that there is a state border (the 49th parallel) between the tribes. In the U. S. state of Montana there are the Blackfeet, and in Alberta, Canada, there are Siksika, Kainai, and the Northern Piegans (Piikani). The border might cause problems in some cases, for example when the Canadian tribes repatriate historical objects from the United States. The state border showed as a problem for example in 2002 when a

Canadian Kainai Chief Chris Shade could not bring his eagle-feather headdress across the border into the United States where Native Americans have to own a special permission for owning eagle feathers. However, there is no such permission in Canada so Shade had to leave his headdress at home (Blackfoot History and Culture, 38). I think that the governments of both countries should cooperate on improving the law in this subject matter in order to connect the Blackfoot tribes (and not just them; I am sure there are other Native American tribes who share this problem with Blackfoot as well) which are historically linked together. The issue of the state border was commented by chief of the Blackfeet tribe, Earl Old Person: “Today, they’re trying to separate us. But that borderline is nothing. It’s invisible to us”(Blackfoot History and Culture, 39).

3. Schools and repatriation of language

In this chapter I will focus on the comeback of the Blackfoot language and also on schools which are closely connected with the linguistic renaissance because they are the places where the language started to be used once again. In my point of view, language is one of the most important features of a culture. When the language is forgotten, the culture will never be the same.

When I was looking on the official web sites of all the Blackfoot reserves, I felt pleased when I found out that all of them have their own schools now; and not just one in each reserve. There are primary schools, secondary schools, and also universities. This rise of Blackfoot schools means one important thing: the effort which was expended by Canadian and American politicians and authorities at the end of the 19th and during the first half of the 20th century to suppress Aboriginal culture has failed. However, the residential schools almost made it. Nowadays, Blackfoot run their own educational programs and schools in which they can learn without restrictions.

The interesting fact is that schools serve as institutions which help to recreate the culture. The first schools which the Blackfoot experienced were the boarding schools which had the opposite function. Before boarding schools, they knew no such institutions; living together with their family and exploring the nature was their schooling. The foundation of their own schools, based on the “white man’s principles”, shows that they adopted some of our ways and took advantage of them.

3.1 The extermination of Native languages

It is estimated that 5,000 languages were spoken in North America before the Europeans came in 1492. Since then, the number started to decline. By the early 1700's, less than 500 hundred remained in use. The languages were exterminated as well as the tribes which were using them. In the 1990s, only about 200 languages survived and there are predictions that by 2050, only twenty will remain (Transitions: Death of the Mother Tongue, 9, <http://www.yourdictionary.com>).

Blackfoot language was fortunate and in contrast with many other Native languages it has survived. However, the Blackfoot language almost shared the fate of the exterminated languages because the boarding schools were really effective in repression of using the children's native tongues. By 1980 there were only a few people who spoke the language and they were all older than fifty years old (<http://native-americans-online.com>). The culture was on the point of dying at that time and most of the members were making no effort to pass their traditions to the younger generation. This is connected with the "cultural shame" which is mentioned above. The Blackfoot were ashamed of being Natives so it is understandable that they did not want to pass shame on other generations. They were trying to protect them: "We were told: "You'd be better off learning only English, so what happened to us won't happen to you" (<http://native-americans-online.com>).

3.2 Rebirth of the language

The language would have probably faded away if it was not for a few individuals who were not indifferent to the cultural loss. The most important personalities were Darrell Kipp, Dorothy Still Smoking, and Edward Little Plume. In 1987 they founded the Piegan Institute (in Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Montana), dedicated to restoring Blackfoot and other tribal languages. As I mentioned before, there were people who did not want the culture to come back, so many of them were against the activity of the founders of the Piegan Institute. In order to persuade them, Kipp, Still Smoking, and Little Plume made a video about tribal elders' experiences with the language and distributed 2,000 copies among the people of the reserve. The video was successful and persuaded the people to agree with the restoration efforts (<http://native-americans-online.com>).

Figure 7: Darell Kipp



(<http://ak-cache.legacy.net>)

The Piegan Institute is still running and these are the words which we can see at the front page of the website (<http://www.pieganinstitute.org>): “Piegan Institute programs provide an integrated approach that encompasses social, intellectual, and academic, as well as linguistic, dimensions. The focus throughout is on making connections across the various contexts of a learner’s experience – the classroom, the family, the community – and what language means for a learner in each of these contexts. Of all the arts and sciences created by humankind, none equals a language, for only a language in its living entirety can describe a unique and irreplaceable world.” We can clearly see what is the aim of the Piegan Institute is from this text: to learn the language, which is the key for exploring the world, and to educate and integrate people.

The Piegan Institute runs Cut Woods Academy which is a school for 5 – 12 years old children. The aim of the school is to teach the children speak Blackfoot language fluently but also to provide them with general education.

In 1999, Lost Children School was opened in Montana (<http://www.lannan.org>) but I failed to find any current information about it. Nor did I find the official website so I presume it is non-existent now. Another school in Montana is the Heart Butte Public School which is both elementary and high school. Apart from these schools, there is also a university – Blackfeet Community College. The goals of Blackfeet Community College are to provide quality education, prepare the students for useful jobs and of course to strengthen the Aboriginal identity. Blackfoot language is taught there on all levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. There is a wide range of study programs which come under eight divisions (Division of Human Services, Math and Science Division, Division of Nursing, etc.) (<http://bfcc.edu>).

Figure 8: Blackfeet Community College



(<http://d1jrw5jterzxwu.cloudfront.net>)

In Canada the situation has been steadily improving as well. The Government of Canada has provided \$42,750 to support community-based language projects in order to preserve the

Aboriginal languages and thus their whole culture. Minister Moore commented this action: “The Government of Canada is committed to the revitalization and preservation of Aboriginal languages. This commitment is demonstrated through our continued support for the development of materials and resources that are designed to enable the use of Aboriginal languages.” The project involves: recording, documenting, and preserving endangered Aboriginal languages; developing materials to increase Aboriginal language use and proficiency; developing programs for training and certifying Aboriginal language teachers and resource people in the community; developing systems for facilitating communications in Aboriginal languages; promoting traditional approaches to learning, such as language camps, immersion programs etc. and developing mechanisms for digital tools to share information, materials, and other resources among Aboriginal languages groups (<http://www.marketwired.com>, <http://www.fpcc.ca>).

One of such language projects is Blackfoot Language Introduction which can be found on <http://usaylearn.com>. You can learn there step by step the Blackfoot language as well as the interpretation of the most important history events. I think that this website is really useful for those who do not attend school anymore and want to learn the language of their ancestors.

As already mentioned, schools are on every reservation. The Kainai have five schools, Piikani two, and Siksika four. At all of them, Blackfoot language and culture is taught. On the Kainai reserve there is also Red Crow Community College but it is not directly led by Kainai Board of Education: “Red Crow Community College has its own board of directors now and is a separate entity altogether” (<http://kainaied.ca/About.php>). The college was founded in 1986 (<http://www.redcrowcollege.com/node/8>) and the interesting fact is that it is situated in the building which once was St. Mary’s Residential Missionary School. Many of the staff who work there now were forced to attend St. Mary’s. The Kainai Studies, which is one of the programs, is teaching the students Blackfoot language as well as history and culture. The College is not only about teaching the students in the classrooms as we know it from our schools. One of the goals is to teach the students to build relationships with the land and they go out to nature where they spend two hours a day, three days a week (<http://www.aformalacademy.org>). Unfortunately, Red Crow Community College was destroyed by fire in 2015 so the lessons now take place at Saipoyi Community School. The fire also destroyed some of the cultural artifacts which were located in the College (<http://www.cjocfm.com>).

In my point of view, the Blackfoot language is now in a decent condition. Considering the situation during the 1970s when the residential schools were closing down and there were only a few native speakers, huge steps have been made for the rebirth of the language. Children can learn the language and more importantly, use it without being chastised by anyone. However, it is important to realise that this is just the beginning but I believe that the Blackfoot language will survive and it will not share the fate of other Native languages which are presumed to fade away.

4. Repatriation of cultural objects

In this chapter I will focus on the repatriation of cultural objects, whether it is repatriation of sacred bundles (ceremony packs which contain pipes, weapons, special clothes, etc.) or just things of daily use.

Before I became acquainted with this topic I considered repatriation of cultural objects as something simple and without any deeper meaning. I thought that it is only about physical restoration of the objects, and I considered it just as something good because the Blackfoot (or any other Aboriginal people) have the right to own these objects because they belonged to their ancestors. After reading about this issue I realised how delicate and important matter it is, because the repatriation is closely connected with other topics, including the language which I have already dealt with. It was also quite a surprise for me that the main purpose of the repatriation of the ceremony objects is to use them again in the ceremonies (Gerald T. Conaty, 133). I thought that in our modern society, even the Aboriginal People have started to live like *the white people* and that ceremonies became anachronism for them. However, this behaviour is understandable and I am glad that the Blackfoot culture is coming back in its full complexity.

4.1 How the objects were lost

Before describing the repatriation itself, it is important to know the story of disappearance of the objects. It is clear that many objects ended in the settlers' hands during the long period of their relationship with the Native Americans. However, there are some interesting reasons which are not so obvious.

Some of the reasons are connected with the foundation of science and curiosity museums on the eastern shores of North America. Scholars from these institutions were instructed to get as much material belonging to the Natives as possible in order to place it in the museums or to

trade it to similar facilities around the world. The Aboriginal items exhibited in the museums were meant to illustrate the Aboriginal cultures as inferior in comparison with the European culture (Gerald T. Conaty, 154).

The collecting took place mainly in the period from the 1870s to the 1940s. The collectors had no inhibition and took the Native objects even from the graves, sometimes together with the bones (Gerald T. Conaty, 154).

Another step which led to the loss of the cultural objects was surprisingly made by the Blackfoot themselves. They were losing interest in their own culture as they attended the residential schools and they were ashamed of their Aboriginal origin. This fact leads to a question: why would they keep the cultural objects if they no longer wanted to continue in the traditional way of life? Young people started to sell the sacred objects to museums and private collectors and they even stole them from their homes to do so. Selling the sacred objects did not involve only the young ones. Spiritual leaders who became financially destitute or those who started to follow European spiritual practices (Christianity) were selling them as well. When some of the old people realised what the situation is they made a step which they believed would help the future generations. They officially transferred the bundles (the powers which dwell inside the bundles are transferable; the original holder loses the power and the recipient obtains it) to museum personnel in order to protect them for future generations. In this way, they may be transferred again to Blackfoot people (We Are Coming Home, 155). The behaviour of both of those groups is understandable. The first one wanted to get rid of objects which were useless from their perspective and to get some money for it which they really needed. The second one wanted to protect the objects in case the future generations would continue in the traditional lifestyle.

4.2 Prerequisite for the repatriation

Some of the Blackfoot people have realised that they have to do one thing in order to succeed with the repatriation of sacred items. The community must be aware of the proper way of transferring the bundles and also about the owning rights. This knowledge has been lost in the long era of re-education and many Blackfoot people understand the culture differently. They think that sacred bundle is a private property and those whose family members sold the bundles in the past have now the right to own them. However, this is a false understanding. Sacred bundles belong to the whole community and no one has a right to appropriate them (We Are Coming Home, 123). This is completely understandable because the sacred bundles

have been perceived as living beings throughout the Blackfoot history and no one can own any living being.

4.3 Returning of the objects

Retrieving the cultural objects from museums is a very complex operation and it requires much effort from both sides; the Blackfoot and the museum personnel. At the beginning of repatriation efforts, the majority of museum personnel refused to discuss this issue or they simply did not agree with the repatriation. The attitude of museums was that the objects belonged to them, and they cannot be handed over due to their high historical value.

The repatriation efforts started in the 1970s. Before the museums started to permanently return the bundles, they only lent them for a short period of time. An example of such a loan took place in 1974 among the Piikani. The Piikani wanted to perform an O'kaan (the Sun Dance ceremony). They had all prerequisites for performing the ceremony except one (but important) component; the Natoas bundle (Natoas means "Holy Turnip" (<http://ourspace.uregina.ca>)). The bundle was in the Provincial Museum of Alberta (which is now Royal Alberta Museum) and after negotiations with the museum personnel, they managed to get the bundle in exchange for Medicine Pipe Bundle as a guarantee. Thanks to the bundle, the Piikani revived the O'kaan (We Are Coming Home, 119, 121).

In a similar manner, Kainai managed to obtain a Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundle thanks to Dan Weasel Moccasin. He made an agreement with the Glenbow Museum to borrow the bundle. At first, the agreement was that the Weasel Moccasin family would have the bundle at home for less than four months a year. However, the agreement was changed after a year and the bundle stayed at the Moccasin family's house on a long-term loan.

Siksika were the last with repatriating efforts. They started in 1994 which is quite *late* because the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (a very important American law in retrieving Aboriginal culture heritage. I will talk about it hereinafter) passed in 1990. Kainai played quite an important role in repatriating Siksika bundles and with their help, Siksika managed to obtain bundles from the Glenbow Museum (Gerald T. Conaty, 190). Repatriation among Siksika was very successful as can be seen from Herman Yellow Old Woman's description: "The return of these bundles has done miracles for the community. Our children were not learning about the respect, the traditional respect. Now they're learning. They're learning in school. When I was in school, the teachers would say, "Our O'kaan is on the video. We're going to watch the video." That's all we knew about O'kaan. Now they say,

“Go to the O’kaan, the Aako’ka’tssin. Take your children” ” (Gerald T. Conaty, 209). It is evident that returning the sacred objects really helps the Blackfoot communities to stand up once again and it definitely refutes my opinion (which I had mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) that repatriation of cultural objects is only about physical restoration.

The repatriation continued satisfactorily and by 1998, the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai managed to get more than thirty sacred bundles on loan from the Glenbow Museum and the Provincial Museum of Alberta (which is now the Royal Alberta Museum). The bundles were in use and they helped to revive the culture among the communities. Museum personnel were taught about the positive impacts of the repatriation and the relationships with them were improved (We Are Coming Home, 111).

Let us go back to the act which I have already mentioned – the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) which came into force in 1990. This act, moreover, ordered the American museums to return all sacred objects to Native Americans (<https://www.nps.gov>). The Piikani started to negotiate with American museums and they obtained several sacred bundles. Repatriation of cultural objects in the United States also meant cooperating with the Blackfeet Nation of Montana who did not have the same attitude towards repatriation as Allan Pard explains: “We were faced with the dilemma that many Ammskapiikani (Blackfeet) in Browning, Montana, do not fully understand the importance of maintaining and preserving our culture. They had to see that need. They had to look beyond their restrictions, their thinking” (We Are Coming Home, 133).

I do not really understand why the Blackfeet Nation did not really participate in repatriating the cultural objects but it might have been caused by the fact that they are the only tribe in the United States while the three others are in Canada (which means that they can cooperate more easily). I found, however, that the Blackfeet successfully repatriated three headdress bundles in 2007 with the support of the Blood Tribe (<http://anthropology.si.edu>).

Figure 9: A medicine bundle



(<http://nativeamerican.netroots.net>)

Another great step in repatriation was the introduction of First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCOR) which was enacted in 2000 and came into force in 2004 in Canada (<http://www.firstnationsdrum.com>). The aim of this act was to return

ceremonial objects back to the Aboriginal communities in order to use them in ceremonies once again. All of the Blackfoot tribes in Canada participated in the repatriations and in 2000 the Glenbow Museum returned 251 sacred objects to them (<http://www.albertanativenews.com>). Needless to say, this is a great number of cultural objects and it must have been a real victory for the Blackfoot.

Figure 10: A medicine pipe



(<http://annfabricant.blogspot.cz>)

Figure 11: Buffalo horn bonnet



(<https://centerofthewest.org>)

4.4 Results of the repatriation

Repatriation of cultural objects seemingly helps the Blackfoot in revitalizing their culture. Furthermore, the repatriation of cultural objects nicely synergizes with the repatriation of language because the ceremonies are performed in the Blackfoot language. There would be no ceremonies without the language so the ceremonial objects would be useless. Vice versa, the language itself would be useless without the objects. An example of connectedness between these two elements of repatriation is following: At Piikani, Jerry Potts repatriated a bundle from the Canadian Museum of Civilization. When he brought it home, his young nephew became part of the bundle family: “This fellow did not speak much Blackfoot. In fact, he never said a Blackfoot word. But in the summer of 2011, when he got up to dance with the pipe, he prayed in Blackfoot that was more fluent than mine” (Gerald T. Conaty, 176, 177). This event almost makes me believe that the sacred bundles are really living beings and they care for their people as the Blackfoot believe.

In my point of view, repatriation of the cultural objects is another great step in retrieving the Blackfoot culture and it is great to see that both the American and Canadian governments help them in their efforts. It is always difficult to tell if there are some hidden motives in political actions but I hope that both the American and Canadian governments have realised their incorrect behaviour towards Native Americans in the past and that they truly want to help them now.

5. Repatriation of historical sites

The last repatriation I will focus on is repatriation of Blackfoot historical sites. The size of their lands was reduced many times and the sights were destroyed. It is therefore important to protect at least the remaining sites. From Blackfoot point of view, the land (and everything in it; trees, rocks, etc.) is a living being just as animals or sacred bundles. Repatriation of the sites is therefore just as important as repatriation of sacred bundles because all living beings are equal and none of them should be treated with less care.

From my point of view, repatriation of Blackfoot (or any other Aboriginal) lands is not only the tribe's concern. It should be our interest as well because the nature of today's world is dying. Vast areas of rainforests are continuously disappearing, oceans are polluted with petroleum and animal species are dying out. It is therefore important to welcome the Aboriginal efforts of repatriating their sites because we can protect the animal and plant species which are located in these lands.

What are the places which carry some meaning for the Blackfoot? Here is the list of them: burial sites, rock cairns, buffalo jumps and pounds, root and berry picking spots, campsites, trails, etc. (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 6). The example of such an important place is Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park where petroglyphs and pictographs are engraved on sandstone cliffs.

Figure 12: Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park



(<http://magickcanoe.com>)

Another important historical site is Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump near the Rocky Mountains. It is one of the buffalo jumps which enabled the Blackfoot to kill great numbers of buffalo by leading the animals towards the cliff. This particular buffalo jump was in use for nearly 6,000 years. In 1981, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the jump as a World Heritage Site. Nowadays, there is an interpretive centre which was officially opened in 1987. The centre provides information connected with the buffalo jump – who were the people who used the jump and how did they learn to kill the buffalo, lifestyle of the Aboriginals, the spiritual and ceremonial significance of the hunt, etc. (<http://www.history.alberta.ca>).

Figure 13: The interpretative centre at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump



(<https://upload.wikimedia.org>)

As already mentioned, the land itself is considered as a living being by the Blackfoot and the historical sites have special meanings for them. They carry the function of books, encyclopedias, libraries, archives, monuments, historical markers, etc. (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 7). In short, they are sources of knowledge and wisdom. All nations have some methods of recording their history. Our European culture uses books for this purpose but the Aboriginals used the nature itself. For them, the loss of these sites would be the same as destruction of our museums for us.

Many sites were destroyed during the centuries of European settlement. Rocks with petroglyphs and pictographs were used as ordinary building material. Grave robbers

vandalized and looted burial sites and they took the bones as well as the material objects from the graves (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 7).

In order to protect the sites, The Government of Alberta passed the Historical Resources Act in 2000 (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 7). This year must have been really important for the Blackfoot because the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act was enacted in 2000 as well. Thanks to the Historical Resources Act, some of the sites were fenced off and interpretative signs displayed. One of the fenced site is Majorville which is a really amazing place. Archaeologists claim that it is one of the oldest religious monuments in the world – the site has been continuously used for the last 4,500 years. Majorville Medicine Wheel is one of the buffalo calling stones (Blackfoot performed ceremonies at these sites in order to make the buffalo hunts successful). Offerings continue to be left at this site as the link of contemporary people with their ancestors

(<http://www.historicplaces.ca>).

Figure 14: Majorville Medicine Wheel



(<http://www.redicecreations.com>)

Another step for protecting the sites in Alberta is the existence of Blackfoot Elders Committee which cooperates with the Historic Resources Management Branch. This cooperation leads to a better protection of the sites because the Blackfoot Elders advise the government personnel about the best way of treating the historical sites. The aim of this cooperation is also to inform the public because some of the vandals ruin the historical sites unintentionally (rock climbers, graffiti artists) (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 14).

Probably the biggest threat for Blackfoot sites is oil production. The most important sites are protected by the law but some of them are not (Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites, 10). The most recent case of protecting the historical sites from oil production concerns Badger-Two Medicine in Montana (Blackfeet Indian Reservation). In 1981 The Bureau of Land Management began to lease the Badger-Two for oil production without any consultation with the Blackfeet. Since then, Blackfeet as well as many other

societies (including 19 Aboriginal tribes) fought for cancelling the leases for more than thirty years. In 2015 Earl Old Person, Chief of the Blackfeet Nation, wrote a letter to the American President Barack Obama in which he asked him and his Administration for permanent protection of Badger-Two Medicine (<http://badger-twomedicine.org>).

The negotiations were successful and the leases were finally

cancelled in March 2016 (<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com>). It is a real success for the Blackfeet as well for all of the Blackfoot tribes. I find it very satisfying that protection of places like this has priority over the greed of people who run the petroleum industry.

Figure 15: Badger-Two Medicine



(<http://wilderness.org>)

6. Summary of the repatriation efforts

I find all the repatriations which I have just described really arresting due to many reasons. First of all, it seemed that there would be no repatriation ever in the first half of the 20th century. The process of repression the Aboriginal identity was almost successful not to be a few individuals who initiated activities leading to the repatriations. Secondly, the repatriations would not be possible without the turnaround in both the American and Canadian approach towards the Aboriginals.

I consider the repatriation efforts as a great success. The Blackfoot renewed their traditions thanks to them which gave them the courage to stand on their own feet again. If the ancestors who experienced the beginning of the cultural decline had seen the present state of their people, they would surely have been proud on their descendants.

Discussion

When I was finishing this thesis, I realised that it is extremely difficult or even impossible for me to understand all of the Blackfoot issues perfectly for two main reasons: I am not one of them and I have not even talked with any of their members. These reasons might seem ridiculous, but I truly believe that it is crucial to live among them, participate in their rituals or maybe even study their language in order to understand their history, culture, and their way of thinking. However, I am not implying that I have not learnt anything about them. In the following paragraphs, I will try to summarize my findings and answer the questions from the introduction.

- *How did the Blackfoot cope with the European invasion on the Plains and how much did they change?*

As I have already mentioned in the first part of my thesis, the settlers had a great advantage over the Blackfoot. They had known other Aboriginal tribes while the Blackfoot knew nothing about the settlers. The settlers only wanted to use them to get their lands as well as fur and other valuable commodities. The Blackfoot, on the other hand, did not know what to expect from the strangers and when they started to trade with them they considered them as their friends.

The settlers acquainted the Blackfoot with many items of daily use but most importantly with guns and alcohol. All of these items had a big influence on the Blackfoot and they helped them in many ways but it also brought a significant change in their social organization. Different social classes began to emerge as some tribesmen had larger properties. Materialism, completely unknown to them before the arrival of the Europeans, started to play a role in their lives and they were also becoming dependant on the traders. Alcohol, unlike other items introduced by the settlers, did not bring any positives. Many tribesmen became addicted to it and some died because the traders mixed the alcohol with poisonous ingredients.

The most important change in Blackfoot lives was the disappearance of the buffalo. The first reason for the decline of their numbers is that the Blackfoot (as well as other Aboriginals) killed them in large because they exchanged buffalo hides for all kinds of products offered by the traders. The sad fact is that they exchanged the hides for products which they could have made themselves but buying these items was probably more comfortable for them. The whites played an important role in the extermination of the buffalo as well. As they permeated

further into the continent, the buffalo was standing in their way of building the railroads. Moreover, many whites killed the buffalo just for entertainment and they left great herds of the animal rotting on the plains.

For Blackfoot, the buffalo was maybe even more important than petroleum is for us today. It was the central point of their culture. Their main nutrition source was gone and they had to rely mostly on the government rations. However, the rations were usually not sufficient and many people died of malnutrition.

I think that Blackfoot dealt with the changes as best as they could. An example of their defiance is their attitude towards American traders when they did not let them come to their territory for many years. However, the changes were too fast and the Americans and Canadians were in a big advantage and they won in what I would call a cultural war.

- *What is the purpose of the repatriating efforts and how successful they are?*

The main purpose of the repatriation efforts is to revive the Blackfoot culture which had been suppressed by the whites. Residential schools, in which Blackfoot children were forced to abandon their habits, functioned as the main tool of the suppression. The result was that Blackfoot felt ashamed of their own Aboriginal identity.

Since the second half of the 20th century, both the American and Canadian governments re-evaluated their relationship with the Aboriginals and they started to help them in their efforts. These are the most important actions which the Canadian and American governments made in order to help the Blackfoot: enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA). Thanks to these acts, many cultural objects were returned to Aboriginals. Another step forward was the enactment of the Historical Resources Act in 2000 aiming to protect the Aboriginal historical sites.

The repatriation efforts really help the Blackfoot people in regaining their identity. Although I did not focus on their political and economic activities, the repatriating efforts help them to become an independent community. Nowadays, there are Blackfoot schools on every reserve where children are taught their language as well as history and traditions. Most of the cultural objects from museums were brought back to the reserves which enabled the revival of

ceremonies. Furthermore, most of the historical locations are legally protected which is not a victory only for the Blackfoot but for all of us because there are endangered animal and plant species.

Conclusion

I think that Blackfoot are on a good way to preserve their culture for the future generations. Hopefully, there will not be any period in the future in which some minority would be oppressed just because of their ethnicity. There were many periods in the history in which ethnic groups were suppressed but today's Canada, in which three of the four Blackfoot tribes live, supports the Aboriginals. If this state of affairs remains, I believe that the Blackfoot culture will live on forever.

Resources

Literature:

Ewers, John C. *The Blackfeet; raiders on the Northwestern Plains*, ed (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958).

Taras, David & Beverly Jean Rasporich. *A Passion for Identity: Canadian studies for the 21st century*, ed (Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2001).

The story of the Blackfoot People: Niitsitapiisinni, ed (Firefly Books , 2013).

Conaty, Gerald T. *We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*, ed (Edmonton, Canada: AU Press, 2014).

Stout, Mary. *Blackfoot History and Culture*, ed (New York: Gareth Stevens Pub., 2012).

Blood, N. J., & Chambers, C. M. (2010). *Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites*.

Internet sources:

http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/teacher_toolkit/images/pictures/1-Traditional-map_Large.jpg (25. 12. 2015)

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools/> (10. 3. 2016)

<https://courses.washington.edu/linganth/Intro/transitions.pdf> (10. 3. 2016)

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Blackfoot.aspx> (12. 3. 2016)

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/elr/natlang.html> (12. 3. 2016)

<http://native-americans-online.com/native-american-language.html> (15. 3. 2016)

<http://www.pieganinstitute.org> (15. 3. 2016)

<http://www.lannan.org/indigenous-communities/piegan-institute-browning-mt> (16. 3. 2016)

<http://bfcc.edu> (16. 3. 2016)

<http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/government-of-canada-supports-preservation-of-the-blackfoot-language-1336704.htm> (16. 3. 2016)

<http://www.fpcc.ca> (16. 3. 2016)

<http://usaylearn.com> (16. 3. 2016)

<http://kainaied.ca/About.php> (19. 3. 2016)

<http://www.aformalacademy.org/wp/2016/01/04/007-rethinking-higher-education/>
(19. 3.2016)

<http://www.cjocfm.com/news-and-info/lethbridge-news/red-crow-community-college-relocating-to-old-saipoyi-school-in-stand-off> (21. 3. 2016)

<http://ourspace.uregina.ca:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10294/531/IH-AA.020.pdf?sequence=1> (24. 3. 2016)

<https://www.nps.gov/nagpra> (26. 3. 2016)

<http://anthropology.si.edu/repatriation/reports/regional/plains/blackfoot.htm> (26. 3. 2016)

<http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/2009/08/sacred-ceremonial-objects-returned-to-blackfoot-nations> (26. 3. 2016)

<http://www.albertanativenews.com/book-celebrates-the-journey-of-repatriating-sacred-and-cultural-items> (26. 3. 2016)

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=15835&pid=4081&h=Majorville,Circle> (30. 3. 2016)

<http://badger-twomedicine.org> (2. 4. 2016)

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/03/18/sacred-blackfoot-land-saved-blm-cancels-oil-and-gas-lease-badger-two-medicine-region> (3. 4. 2016)

<http://www.history.alberta.ca/headsmashedin/docs/Head-Smashed-In-Information-Guide-2015.pdf> (23. 4. 2016)