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Emblems of Identity: An Introduction
to the Painting of Indian Portraits in Canada

Lisa Gaye Henderson

A Thesis

in

The Department of Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1991

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ABSTRACT**Emblems of Identity: An Introduction to the
Painting of Indian Portraits in Canada**

Lisa Henderson

The painting of Indian portraits is examined as a cultural phenomenon and historical theme in Canadian art. From the time of first contact Indians were represented by European artists, but in colonial Canada representation often took the form of portaiture, because the first professional artists were usually portraitists and native leaders were initially accorded the honours of statesmen. Later, individual Indians came to be viewed as symbolic representatives of abstract human qualities and of Canada, itself. The late nineteenth century belief that Indians were members of a vanishing race and the accompanying popularization of ethnographic study encouraged artists to make Indian portraits in large numbers. Many of these artists lived in Western Canada in the early twentieth century. Their paintings and working methodologies are identified and compared to trace an inheritance of layered, stereotypical imagery and thought about the Indian in Euro-Canadian society. The process of making the portraits, what they represented and how they were perceived after they were made all suggest that they are emblematic of the identity of those people who painted and appreciated the portraits, not the ones they purport to represent.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
List of Illustrations in Appendix I.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I	
The Image of the Indian and the Portrait.....	5
Chapter II	
Early Portraits: Statesmen, Symbol, Specimen.....	16
Chapter III	
The Ethnographic Imperative: Indian as Artifact.....	41
Chapter IV	
Indian Portrait Painting in Western Canada.....	59
Chapter V - Conclusion	
Reading the Portrait Image and the Process.....	84
Endnotes.....	95
Bibliography	
Archival Material.....	102
Selected Bibliography.....	104
Appendix I - Illustrations.....	111

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 - *Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row* by John Verelst, c.1710, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig. 2 - *Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row* by John Verelst, c. 1710, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig. 3 - *Etow Oh Koam* by John Verelst, c. 1710, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig. 4 - *Saga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow* by John Verelst, c. 1710, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig. 5 - *John of Canatoharie, Oneida Chief from Brantford* by N.C. Bealls, 18th Century, Watercolour, Priv. Coll.
- Fig. 6 - *Portrait of Joseph Brant* by William von moll Berczy, c.1800, oil on canvas, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
- Fig. 7 - *Le Dernier des Hurons* by Antoine Plamondon, 1838, oil on canvas, Priv. Coll.
- Fig. 8 - *Self-Portrait* by Zacharie Vincent, undated (early 19th Century), oil on canvas, Montreal: Chateau de Ramezay Museum.
- Fig. 9 - *Self-Portrait with Son* by Zacharie Vincent, c. 1845, oil on canvas, Quebec: Musée du Quebec.
- Fig.10 - *Josephte Ourné* by Joseph Légaré, c. 1844, oil on canvas, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
- Fig.11 - *Mah-Min* by Paul Kane, c. 1856, oil on canvas, Montreal: Musée des Beaux Arts.
- Fig.12 - *Cunnawa-bum* by Paul Kane, c. 1850's, oil on canvas, Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum.
- Fig.13 - *Shooting the Rapids* by Frances Ann Hopkins, c. 1879, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig.14 - *Indians preparing Birch Bark Map for Professor Hind* by William Hind, 1861-62, Toronto: Metropolitan Central Library.
- Fig.15 - *Ta-na-ze-pa (A Sioux Dandy)* by Frederick Verner, 1862, oil on canvas, Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.
- Fig.16 - *Dowanea (Singer)* by J.E. Whitney, c. 1862, photograph, Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

- Fig.17 - *Giving Rations to the Blackfoot Indians, NWT* by William Brymner, 1886, oil on canvas.
- Fig.18 - *Blackfoot Chief* by William Brymner, c.1906, oil on canvas, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada.
- Fig.19 - *Pimotat (The Walker)* by Edmund Morris, 1910, pastel on paper, Regina: Saskatchewan Legislative Building.
- Fig.20 - *Susette, Kootenay Indian* by Langdon Kihn, 1922, crayon and pencil on paper, Glenbow-Alberta Institute.
- Fig.21 - *Weasel Tail* by Winold Reiss, 1940, pastel on board, Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Fig.22 - *Many TailFeathers* by Langdon Kihn, 1926, mixed media, Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.
- Fig.23 - *Chief Peguis (Jacob Berens)* by Marion Nelson Hooker, 1909, oil on canvas, Winnipeg: Manitoba Legislative Building.
- Fig.24 - *Chief Shot-Both-Sides (Blood Indian)* by James Henderson, 1920's, oil on canvas, Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.
- Fig.25 - *Pemimotat* by James Henderson, 1915, oil on canvas, Saskatoon: Nutana Collegiate.
- Fig.26 - *Portrait of Indian Squaw and Papoose* by James Henderson, 1930, oil on canvas, Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.
- Fig.27 - *Poundmaker* by Henry Metzger, undated, oil on canvas.
- Fig.28 - *Chief Shot-Both-Sides* by Mildred Valley Thornton, undated, oil on canvas.
- Fig.29 - *Mrs. Siamelot (Squamish Chief)* by Mildred Valley Thornton, undated, oil on canvas.
- Fig.30 - *Pemota (The Walker)* by Nicholas de Grandmaison, c. 1930, pastel, Montreal: Bank of Montreal.
- Fig.31 - *Shot-Both-Sides* by Nicolas de Grandmaison, 1949, pastel on paper, Montreal: Bank of Montreal.
- Fig.32 - *Indian Head* by Gerald Tailfeathers, c. 1937, charcoal, Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

INTRODUCTION

While in search of information on early Saskatchewan artists a few years ago I noticed that many of them had painted portraits of Indians. This led me to wonder why so many artists had chosen to represent native people and why the format of portraiture had been employed for this purpose. Further investigations in this area turned up the names of a variety of artists who had been invariably described as "Indian Portrait Painters". This was intriguing; at what point had this become a term used to designate the work of these artists and what were the implications of the term and the portraits?

This study has been constructed to explore and dissect the process of Indian portrait painting in Canada through an examination of artists making Indian portraits, their purposes and their working methodologies, and an investigation of some of the messages conveyed by the portraits, themselves, at different points in history. In other words, it attempts to study the painting of Indian portraits as a cultural phenomenon within Canadian art history.

Several areas of personal interest have defined the parameters of this project, and the text which follows has been created with the knowledge that the study and its focii have been shaped by my own biases and interests. I wished to document and define the work of artists who have been largely overlooked by Canadian art historians. For this reason, I have concentrated a great deal more on biographies

of artists that are not well-known than I would have under normal circumstances in order to situate their practices. Where the work of more familiar artists is touched upon, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I have concentrated on looking at their work from the angle of what it contributed to the definition of Indian portrait painting. My interests in re-appraising history using the perspectives of feminism and social history have also been served in this study and are apparent in the text.

Examining the cultural representation of Indians and other colonized peoples is a recent branch of scholarship.¹ Much of the literature only dates from the 1970's. Hugh Honour's The New Golden Land (1975) and Robert Berkhofer's The White Man's Indian (1977) have been invaluable aids for my understanding of iconography in general. More specifically, François-Marc Gagnon's Ces Hommes dits Sauvages (1984) and Deborah Doxtator's catalogue essay for the exhibition Fluffs and Feathers (1988) have provided me with greater insight into the historical production of Canadian iconography. While monographs on Canadian artists who concentrated on representing the Indian exist,² there has been little or no attempt to link these artists in any way which defines their practice as unique or different from that of other artists, nor has there been a study of Indian portrait making, as such.

Chapter I introduces the historical image of the Indian as created by the European imagination and also looks at portraiture as a colonial practice. The purpose is to explain how the image of the Indian became conflated with and contained in the portrait image. Chapter II looks at the earliest painted portraits of Canadian Indians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the ideologies that supported their production. Originally made to signify native political power, they gradually became a way of expressing a growing Euro-Canadian political power. Often the people portrayed were not as individually important as the messages their codified images presented to the artist making them and the public viewing them. A new imperative for making Indian portraits was realized in the nineteenth century represented by the work of Paul Kane. Chapter III outlines how the history of science and art conspired to create a need for artists who specialized in Indian portrait painting. Especially for those living in close contact with the remnants of traditional native society in the early twentieth century, the reasons for taking up the mission were multi-layered. Chapter IV examines the careers and the paintings of a group of Western Canadian artists working at this time whose work shows how civic duty, colonial status, racial prejudice and scientific consciousness led artists to focus on Indian portrait painting. In Chapter V, I attempt to provide a synthesis of and justification for the material presented in the preceding chapters, by looking at the portraits as both

images and historically produced objects. I also examine the reasons that suggest that the identity they project is more emblematic of the culture that produced them, than it is of the culture they purport to represent.

CHAPTER I

THE IMAGE OF THE INDIAN AND THE PORTRAIT

The White man's theories of where the Indian came from are a hodgepodge of speculations...This presumption reflects the inborn arrogance of the White Man, who believes that he is the first symphonic art work of God, and that if other races were created, it was afterthought - or that the Creator was weary or having a nightmare.

- Red Cloud in his memoirs (1971)³

The image of the Indian is a timeless stereotype which has derived from a complex of social, philosophical and visual attitudes developed and held by Europeans over the period of their contact with the aboriginal inhabitants of North America. New facets of the image have been revealed with the passage of time, but its essential dimensions were struck with the onset of sustained interaction between the two cultural groups. One of these facets is the painted Indian portrait which has its origins in both the philosophical perception of the Indian and the social conditions under which art was historically practiced in Canada. This chapter examines the dimensions of the Indian stereotype and how it came to be realized in painted portraits.

Most writers agree that the image or concept of the Indian in its broadest terms is one who is opposed to civilization, in the sense that civilization is equated with Western European culture. Depending on the viewpoint of the individual this opposition to civilization could be positive or negative, but it always places the native person in the position of the "other". In the context of both art and

literature these negative and positive poles are often defined by the terms "savage" and "primitive". A study of the image of the Indian in Canadian literature explains this:

Writers who depict the Indians as savage associate him with values opposed to white control, orthodox Christianity, and ordered landscapes. The author who finds an alternative in red culture associates white culture with rational order, monotheistic religion, and technological supremacy: yet rather than identifying the Indian in terms of animistic irrationality, pagan superstition and nomadic disorder, the primitivist writer finds vital spontaneity, natural religion, and harmony between the red man and the natural landscape.⁴

Artists and writers have continually seen the Indian from these perspectives. Long before the natives dwelling in Canada were described or delineated as "Indian", a European stereotype had been created by Spanish impressions of the natives of South America. The visual and literary image of naked men and women adorned with feathers and living in a state that opposed almost every conception of civilization was firmly entrenched in the European imagination by the end of the sixteenth century. Forced to come to terms with the existence of an unexplained and unknown group of human beings, Christian European artists and writers comprehended the nakedness and paganism of America's aboriginal inhabitants as emblematic of known "others" who had exhibited similar characteristics. These known "others" were the non-Christian wildmen of European folklore and the Greeks and Romans of antiquity.⁵ Parallels such as these helped to explain the existence of these people and provided

a visual framework for the imagination. In maps and book illustrations of the sixteenth century, the native inhabitants of North and South America invariably appear as exotic replicas of antique statuary or as men dressed in animal skins. Few artists were actually exposed to the Indian in his natural surroundings and even the most ethnographic illustrations conform to the visual conventions of the period.

Ambivalence about the level of humanity aboriginal Americans represented and discussions about the bad or good qualities of their cultures were the dominant concerns of Europeans until well into the eighteenth century. By that time the Indian had become an allegorical symbol in both art and literature, representing the continent of America, itself, or inherent human qualities. A naked woman or man with feathers and coppery skin symbolized America in painted cosmographical schemes as often as Europa represented Europe. This same figure could incarnate evil or symbolize lost innocence in traditional scenes of Hell or Paradise.⁶

Other aspects of this kind of generic symbolism in relation to gender differences have been addressed by F.M. Gagnon in his study of Champlain's imagery of Indians.⁷ The male Indian's lack of body hair and his almost universal interest in elaborate coiffures and the use of cosmetic decorations signified vanity, leisure and femininity to European observers. The fact that men were often more visually different than women gave an inverse impression of traditional notions of masculinity. Their proficiency as

hunters only added to this initial impression of indolence and vanity because to seventeenth century Europeans, hunting was an activity that was associated with the aristocracy. Females, then, took on the persona of providers and workers, members of a lower class. Champlain, like other European chroniclers, believed that male Indians did very little work and that the females seemed to do everything. His perceptions were translated into his illustrations of Indians, where men were represented with the accoutrements of war or the hunt and women were shown as workers or providers. These gender and class distinctions help to explain why most of the imagery relating to the Indian centers around the male.

From the onset of contact, the philosophical space that Europeans had established to accept the existence of the native inhabitants of North America was in the historical past. Whether the Indian represented positive or negative human qualities or whether their cultural dynamics could be constructed as a reflection of Renaissance or later European societies, their status as a human group was perceived as pre-Christian. This meant that it was difficult for Europeans not actually living with them to accept their contemporary reality. The initial need to Christianize and define hierarchies in native societies was part of an overall attempt by Europeans to synchronize their understanding of pre-Christian societies with what they actually saw. First contact presented them with figures out of their historical past; prolonged contact presented them

with individuals who had to be dealt with in terms of the situations created.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, native co-operation was essential to the viability of European enterprises in North America. Whatever philosophical notions were held by Europeans about the nature of native existence were tempered by the tacit knowledge that alliances with native people constituted European survival. Greater proximity to them as time went on enabled Europeans to make gradual distinctions between various tribes and lifestyles. Realizing that native co-operation was essential for the successful practice of the fur trade and the establishment of viable settlements, Europeans developed a certain amount of respect for native power formations and relations.⁸ Individuals of significance to European factions in their struggles for commercial and military dominance were accorded the status of national leaders in the eighteenth century. It is at this point that painted portraits and written character studies became a new form of imaging the Indian, and the generic, symbolic language of description, developed over two centuries of contact, was overlaid on to individual personalities.

Interest in the Indian statesman was short-lived, however. By 1800, European reliance on native assistance in military campaigns was no longer essential for success. The European's lack of need for native co-operation in their endeavours after the War of 1812 stems from their greater concern with settlement and nation building. During the

nineteenth century the existence of native people came to be viewed as an obstacle in the road of progress, and coercion rather than co-operation characterized the European stance in their relations with the natives. Confining native people to reserves and depriving them of ways to continue their traditional lifestyles was perceived as a seemingly civilized way to eradicate the problem. Treaties, which acknowledged the sovereign rights of various native groups to the land, were often made only to take the land from them. The deference shown to native leaders by white leaders was a ritual designed to achieve the peaceful acquisition of land needed for railroads and settlers.

The social status and public image of Indians changed drastically over the course of the nineteenth century and is reflected in legislation.⁹ The passage of the Indian Act in 1876 was a final legal declaration that these people had no existence as citizens, only as wards of Canadian society. As such, they were officially designated as passive participants in the public process. And, indeed, once all the treaties were signed and the land was in the possession of Euro-Canadians, it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to become active participants. The entire thrust of legislation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was aimed at the assimilation of native populations into the much larger Euro-Canadian one. The choice of those who could not accept this was the loss of their cultural status through poverty, disease and population attrition caused by imposed confinement.

These political and social changes which affected the native population occurred at precisely the same time as indigenous Euro-Canadian societies began to flourish in various areas of Canada. Artists and writers who drew upon their experiences as Canadians to create works of art began working at a time when the Indian was no longer perceived as an active participant in the affairs of the country. They were historical figures whose way of life belonged to the past, and the preferred imagery re-inforced this belief. Interest in the Indian as an image for art depended upon the time and the place where the artist developed and the degree of assimilation that the Indian had undergone in that time and place.

Portraiture, as such, was a prominent genre of painting in all colonial societies, because it was often the only way an artist could acquire patronage and make a name for him or herself as a professional in societies that had little time for the fruits of high culture. This is true for all areas of Canada where artists first began to flourish, with the possible exception of Quebec, where there was a considerable market for religious paintings. Nevertheless, the earliest oil paintings of a secular nature in Canadian art history are often portraits.

Portraiture has a long pedigree in the history of art and it is the genre of painting which shows the closest link between patron and artist. Most portraits are specifically commissioned to record an individual's likeness for posterity, often by the individual portrayed, but sometimes

by others in deference to the importance of the individual. The participation of the sitter in the enterprise is predicated on the idea that the artist will endeavour to create an image which agrees with the sitter's self-image. The only time when this is not necessarily part of the transaction is when the sitter is acting as a model for a portrait that is meant to represent an abstract idea, as in the case of certain Dutch images of the seventeenth century, like Frans Hals' *Jolly Toper*. In this kind of instance, the artist has freer creative reign because he/she is not restricted to pleasing the model.

In colonial Canadian society there were few opportunities for artists to make speculative paintings, and most portraits are of this era were traditionally produced, commissioned by individual patrons or official representative bodies to commemorate a person's likeness. Indian portraits, for obvious cultural reasons, differ in one specific way. They were seldom, if ever, commissioned by the sitter. Portraits are a Western European conception and the oil painting is specifically aligned with European artistic practice. No unassimilated native person would see a need or have a desire to have their portrait painted, nor would he/she have the wherewithall to commission one. All native portraits painted in Canada during the period under discussion were either commissioned by official agencies or made speculatively by the artist for the open market. Like the *Jolly Toper*, they are as much about abstract ideas as they are about the individuals they portray. The only

exceptions to this are the Indian portraits made by native artists working in Western European art styles.

Portraits, are, of course, only one way that Indians were represented in Canadian art. Throughout the exploration period they appear in topographic and cartographic art as symbols of North America and examples of the exotic flora and fauna of the New World. In early Quebec art they sometimes appear in religious paintings as noble savages tamed by Christianity or evil menaces resisting the beneficent good of Christian martyrs.¹⁰ The somewhat violent history of the early missionaries in their relations with the native people produced a specific mythology in Quebec which did not surface to any great degree in other areas of the country. Related forms of representation do appear in American art and literature, where the history of Indian-White relations is also marked by numerous violent incidents from colonial times to the late nineteenth century.

In this study the term generic depiction is used to differentiate between portrait making and all other ways of representing Indians. Generic depictions of Indians occur in illustrative material produced by amateur and professional artists working in Canada from the earliest times to the present. Arthur Heming, C.W. Jeffries, John Innes and Adam Sherriff Scott are some of the artists most noted for this type of work in Canadian art history and any general study of the representation of native people would naturally include the work of these men. However, they made few portraits of Indians due to their concern with

history-telling through visual images, so their work has little place here. Pierre Arthur Guindon, a Quebec priest, also focused his attention on portrayals of Indians, but his representations visualize Indian legend and myth and his work does not fall within the scope defined here. There are other lesser known Canadian artists whose main focus was Western history and whose reputations have so far been limited primarily to Alberta and Saskatchewan who have not been included because their work often involved historic re-creation in the manner of American artists, Frederick Remington and Charles Russell, and falls into the category of "Western" art. This term has a more defined currency in American art than Canadian art and deserves an examination on its own; however the negative implications of this categorization are generally understood and it is a parallel which can be drawn with the careers of certain Canadian artists.¹¹ Whether the representation of the Indian is generic or individualized, most traditional depictions were produced as historical or ethnographic documents or as a form of symbolic language.

Given that portraiture was the earliest professional endeavour for artists in Canada, it is not surprising that the portrait became an increasingly common means of representing the Indian in colonial societies. As a form of representation it encouraged stereotypical ideas, because recognizable individuals were portrayed as emblematic of pre-conceived notions. Conceptions taken directly out of European cultural ideas were overlaid on to cultures which

were totally alien to them. While these conceptions were necessary to comprehend native societal structures and express them figuratively and literally, they also proposed a limited definition of what it meant to be Indian. The format of the portrait, commonly viewed as an icon of ancestor worship in European society, set the image of the Indian in the historical past and provided a template through which other ideas could find their expression at different times and in different places.

CHAPTER II

EARLY PORTRAITS: STATESMAN, SYMBOL, SPECIMEN

A selection of Indian portraits from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and brief descriptions of the circumstances of their production indicates how the image of the Indian came to be contained in the portrait format. During the period that native groups were politically important to European powers in North America, the prevailing image of the individual Indian was maintained as statesman/king/ally. Portraits were intermittent means of expressing these cultural concepts. Paradoxically, at the point where Euro-Canadian history determined a different political role for the Indian, the painted portrait becomes more prominent as a form of representation, but it conflates new concepts with old ones. Some of the reasons for this include: the rise of the professional artist in areas of the country outside the early established settlements and the accompanying introduction of portraiture to these areas, the interest shown by the government of Canada in land owned by different native populations, the declining social status of the native people as citizens, the introduction of new technologies of imaging and new scientific ways of thinking about the Indian. All of these events conspired to affect the production of Indian portraits and their increasing numbers.

Very likely, the first portraits of the ancestors of Canadian Indians are the ones made in England in 1710 during the visit of four Iroquois kings or "sachems" who

represented the Five Nations. These individuals were valuable allies for the English in their struggle to gain power in the colonies and the sachems were received there in the manner of visiting European dignitaries. Because it was common practice in eighteenth century British society to have noblemen sit for portraits, the Iroquois sachems were painted as a matter of course. Undoubtedly, their appearance as exotic foreigners heightened their appeal, because they were the subject of considerable literary adulation and journalistic coverage and sat for several portraits during the course of their visit. The only painted examples now remaining are those in the possession of the Public Archives of Canada. The four portraits were painted by a minor Dutch-born English portrait artist, John Verelst. These portraits were commissioned by Queen Anne for her royal residence and versions of them were subsequently engraved by various other artists. The portraits are of considerable importance in the formation of the iconography of the Indian in eighteenth century America, because the engravings were widely disseminated in the colonies.¹²

The portraits represent *Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row* of the Wolf clan (Fig.1), considered the most influential of the four, *Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row* of the Wolf Clan, a Mohawk (Fig.2), and two other Mohawk chiefs: *Etow Oh Koam* of the Turtle Clan (Fig.3), and *Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow* of the Bear Clan, grandfather of Joseph Brant (Fig. 4). Bruce Robertson has concluded in his iconographical study of the

portraits that they are one of the first attempts by a European artist to paint Indians as "human individuals".¹³ The facial features of each of the sachems and their individual body tatoos have been carefully recorded for posterity, in the same way that the physical likenesses of thousands of European noblemen were recorded in the eighteenth century.

The format of the portraits is the one usually associated with the portrayal of eighteenth century noblemen:

...which shows the full-length figure of the officer or nobleman (generally synonymous, a fact we tend to forget) standing slightly at an angle. Behind him on one side, generally his right, is a large tree or rock outcropping. At his feet, on the same side, is an object emblematic of his profession or success, such as a piece of armour. On the other side, to his left, the canvas opens suddenly into far space. In this open space a small scene, generally a battle, takes place, representing the occasion that prompted the portrait, or the occupation of the sitter... Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row's higher status (portrayed by his emblems of statecraft and larger heraldic emblem) is also revealed by the traditional semaphore of class and rank: costume. The other Indians are in more native costume, but he is in black: the emperor is above ethnicity.¹⁴

Iconographically, the portraits conform to these conventions. Since the realm of these noblemen is wild nature and their heraldic signs are wild animals, substitutions have been made for the more "civilized" settings of European portraits. It is important to note, as well, that none of the costumes worn in the portraits are purely ethnic. They represent a plurality of ethnicities related to the symbols that signified Indian in the

eighteenth century: classical drapery of antiquity, Indian artifacts and contemporary British costume. The emperor (Fig.1) is more singularly ethnic in the sense that he is signified as more "civilized" or of higher status by being shown in almost completely European attire.

These portraits had little influence in European circles of art,¹⁵ however the engraved images of them were popular in the colonies where the men came from. Slightly altered copies of these depictions were made by artists living in North America throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁶ A watercolour portrait made by N.C. Bealls (Fig.5), an artist living in Quebec in the latter part of the century, indicates just how much currency these images had in North America as prototypical portraits. Without the benefit of artistic communities and picture galleries, colonial artists were heavily reliant on book illustrations featuring engraved copies of paintings for artistic exemplars.

Native leaders continued to play an important role, both militarily and politically, for European powers fighting for territorial rights in North America throughout the eighteenth century. The names of leaders like Tecumseh and Pontiac were as well known as those of the British and French generals. One of the last native leaders to be of major significance as an ally of the British was Joseph Brant, the grandson of one of the four kings. Like his forefathers, he was taken to Britain and treated like visiting royalty. His portrait was painted by George Romney

in the English style, but he was also portrayed by an artist living in Canada some years later. William von moll Berczy's (1749-1813) early nineteenth century portrait of *Joseph Brant* (Fig.6) is indicative of the artist's training in the sophisticated Neo-Classical style, but it is also a physical likeness of a man Berczy saw socially and knew as a personal acquaintance.¹⁷

What is most striking about Berczy's portrait of Brant is its iconographic similarity to the prototypes established by Verelst a century before. Like his grandfather, Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow (Fig.4), Brant is portrayed standing in a landscape, his horn pipe strapped diagonally across his chest, holding a rifle. Instead of being shown with his clan totem animal at his feet (a pagan symbol, inappropriate for a Christian Indian), Brant is shown wearing his totem bag on his pipe, and his dog is placed beside him. The dog could suggest his loyalty as an ally to the British, in addition to its suggestion of the Chief's hunter role. Like his grandfather, Brant is swathed in a cloak. Berczy has eschewed the country gentleman pose in favour of one that approximates a statue of a Roman orator. Apart from stylistic changes in artistic taste the portrait replicates the symbolism of the earlier portrait. I don't think it would be too speculative to suggest that Brant may have owned a print of his grandfather's portrait and expressed a wish to have himself portrayed in a similar manner. Whether the portrait was commissioned by Brant or the British

military establishment, it is not outside the realm of possibility.

Joseph Brant was the perfect "White Man's Indian"¹⁸ in the eyes of the British at the end of the eighteenth century because he sided with them in their battles, encouraged Christian conversion and accepted treaties which moved his people out of the way of British settlement. He was also one of the last native leaders to be accorded the status of statesman by Europeans and to be portrayed as such in art. In the nineteenth century the making of Indian portraits became less of an homage to individuals of military and political significance than a means of expressing certain ideological positions about native people in general. The statesman/nobleman portrait became a way of framing the Indian as a representative symbol of "otherness". This was especially true in Canada's earliest colonial societies where it was necessary and convenient to view natives as inhabitants of the romantic past.

Antoine Plamondon (1804-95), Quebec's first society portraitist, is known to have painted at least one Indian portrait prior to 1850. The portrait represents Zacharie Vincent, the so-called last pure-blooded Indian of Lorette, and indicates that the artist may have been drawn to his subject as a type, rather than an individual. *The Last of the Hurons* {Fig.7} was painted in 1838 and won a medal from the Literary & Historical Society of Quebec. Soon after that, it was presented to Lord Durham, Canada's governor general. The portrait emphasizes the nobility and

spirituality of the subject while it de-emphasizes any kind of active statesman-like qualities. Zacharie is shown in torso view, standing in a landscape, costumed in contemporary native dress. Plamondon depicts him in a contemplative mood, arms crossed and eyes staring out into the far distance. There is little that marks him as exotic in White eyes except for his facial features, which seems to be the primary goal of the painting, as underlined by its title.

It is interesting to contrast the Plamondon portrait with some of Vincent's portrayals of himself. Zacharie Vincent, inspired both by Plamondon's example and by his own celebrity took up painting. He painted himself as a warrior/statesman {Fig.8} and also cast his son and himself in that role in another painting of 1845 {Fig.9}. It has been pointed out that this contradicts the romantic notion conveyed by Plamondon's painting: "Si le "dernier des Hurons" avait un fils, il n'était peut-être pas, après tout, le dernier de sa race..."¹⁹ While Zacharie Vincent, as an individual, may have been appropriated for use as a symbol in Plamondon's portrait, his own portrayals of himself undermine that symbolic overlay by exchanging it for another one derived from the same Euro-Canadian culture. He de-romanticizes his ethnicity, and shows himself staring straight out at the viewer in all the paraphernalia of Indian manhood. It is an irony of history that the native community has had to adopt and assimilate before their voices could be heard in defence of their own cultures which

were almost eradicated in the process. Vincent's paintings are testimony to this.

Joseph Légaré(1795-1855), one of Quebec's earliest professional painters of the nineteenth century, also portrayed Indians as representative types.²⁰ Self-trained, through his collection of European art, and fiercely nationalistic, he was one of the first Canadian-born artists to portray Indians in the context of Quebec history. Having been exposed to the integrational process for almost two hundred years, many Indians in Quebec no longer dressed or acted as they had at the time of contact, but Légaré portrayed them as they had been in the romantic past. They often appear in imaginative poetic and historical vignettes of Quebec's past.

His one known portrait of an Indian is *Josephte Ourné* (Fig.10), who was the daughter of a chief. It has been suggested that Légaré painted this portrait in 1844 because he was inspired by the success of Plamondon, his one-time pupil, with Zacharie Vincent's portrait.²¹ During Légaré's lifetime the portrait was identified as *Indian Woman* and it was in his private collection at the time of his death.²² This suggests that Josephte Ourné, herself, never owned the painting and could not have commissioned it. While the portrait head may have been painted from life, it seems that the main purpose behind the painting was to create an image of an exotic type. Whatever its purpose, it is probably the first time that a native Canadian woman was depicted in formal portraiture.

The highly decorative nature of the costume, the fanciful backdrop and attributes given the sitter indicate that, unlike Légaré's other society portraits, this was an exercise in romantic allegory. Adhering to the stereotype created in Champlain's time of woman as provisioner, Ourné is shown carrying dead animals. These attributes not only symbolize her gender, but remind us of that the native way of life was based on hunting wild animals. As in many of Légaré's generic depictions of Indians, we are presented with visual reminders of their perceived uncivilized behaviour.²³ This type of portrayal frames the Indian as an exotic remnant of Quebec's romantic history, one whose way of life is no longer viable in the present.

Indian portraits are not common representations of native people in Quebec history. The few portraits that were made, aside from the allegorical fantasies of Plamondon and Légaré, were generally official statesman portraits. Théophile Hamel did one of three chiefs who were part of a visiting delegation to the government in 1838,²⁴ and Cornelius Krieghoff was moved to do the same when a delegation of three Chippewa chiefs came to Montreal in 1849.²⁵ The vast majority of representations of native people were anecdotal or repertorial in nature. Krieghoff, for example, who devoted almost one-third of his prolific output to the representation of native people, exhibited little interest in individual portrayal.²⁶ Not surprisingly, as an artist specializing in genre portrayals, he probably had little interest in portraits of any kind. This holds

true for other, more amateur artists who did not depend upon portraiture as a source of income.

Throughout the nineteenth century, imperialist powers were exerting pressures on the indigenous inhabitants of many countries that they colonized by virtue of their superior technologies and ethnocentric political and religious values. In Canada, these pressures took the form of the expansion of White settlements into Western Canada after 1850. During the second half of the nineteenth century treaties were signed with native populations to provide a thoroughfare for the railroad and to gain control of the land for White settlement. It was the contact situation all over again, but with different groups of participants and a changed balance of power.

In North America, the inhabitants of the Great Plains, the North and the Northwest presented a new form of mysterious persona to outsiders, different from the now-familiar tribes of the Eastern Woodlands. They, like the land, had to be mapped and identified to satisfy European curiosity. However, the attitudes surrounding this activity had changed somewhat from the time of initial contact with native Americans. These people no longer had to be placed in the European philosophical and pictorial hierarchy, but they did have to be distinguished for scientific reasons and for posterity. At this point, there was no question of them being needed for European viability in North America, and the general assumption was that they were members of disappearing races.

It was obvious from the time of substantial contact with native inhabitants of the Great Plains, for example, that their nomadic and war-like cultures could not be accommodated in the growth of Euro-Canadian society. However attractive and colourful their appearance and way of life made them to romantic white observers, the myth of the Plains Indians' imminent demise was an integral component in the genesis of their visual and literary image. In the United States this eulogizing began in the early years of the nineteenth century with the push of American settlement in the West and the execution of severe political and military measures to confine them. In Canada, where settlement did not become an issue of great importance until the building of the railroad, the fascination with the Plains Indian came correspondingly later and was significantly affected by events below the border. Actual circumstances in Canadian history would not pre-dispose observers here to focus on the Indians as war-like adversaries, but the desire that they should disappear was equally as strong.

The sciences of the comparative studies of the races and cultures of man had their beginnings in the nineteenth century and ethnographic portraiture became a preoccupation of Euro-American artists with the push westward of "civilization" in the nineteenth century. In addition to being a symbol for a way of life, the Indian also became a specimen for scientific observation and speculation. As these sciences developed over the course of the century, so

did the scrutiny of individuals as exemplars of their race. Relatively "uncivilized" native populations were particularly appealing to those who wished to study and observe people in their natural habitat. The search for authenticity brought with it a new stereotype which overlaid the earlier ones already in place and encouraged the production of Indian portraits.

Many of the artists who portrayed the Indian in the nineteenth century were romantic adventurers who saw themselves as explorers and expedition historians. Before the technical advances in photography which would allow the photographer to make uncomplicated field shots in the late nineteenth century, an expedition artist was an important member of any scientific excursion. Photographic attention to detail was an expected attribute of artistic records of expeditions, but like the photographer, the artist had the creative option to choose what he wished to portray. An artist also had much greater freedom and historical license to manipulate the image for presentation to a chosen audience. The primary purpose of exploration in the nineteenth century was to gather data for use in commercial exploitation of the land. While artists may have often had less mundane aims in their portrayals of the native inhabitants of that land, it is important to remember that they were always attached to these kinds of missions.

Portraying the lifeways of people whose presence and use of the land was incompatible with the mission's aim and the future use of that land by Whites was not conducive to scientific "objectivity".

In the United States there were a whole group of these artist-historians who represented the Indians to the Whites in the early part of the nineteenth century. Charles Bird King, Alfred Jacob Miller, Karl Bodmer and George Catlin are some of the more well known Indian portraitists of the period. George Catlin, in particular, became widely known in both North America and Europe for creating the image of the Plains Indian. His gallery of portraits, his roadshow and the published chronicle of his adventures in Indian country made him a sensation in the 1840's.²⁷ Catlin's achievement and rather short-lived success had a direct influence on the career of Paul Kane (1810-71), an artist whose name is synonymous with the representation of the Indian in Canadian history. Part of this stems from the fact that the term "Indian", itself, became synonymous with the Plains tribes in the nineteenth century,²⁸ and part of it derives from the fact that Kane was the first Canadian artist to paint extensive records of Plains Indians.

Kane's encounter with Catlin and his Indian Portrait Gallery in Europe inspired him to attempt a similar undertaking in the Canadian West. As Ann Davis has pointed out in a comparative study of the two artists' work, there were many parallels in thought and differences in circumstance between them:

...each of these artists thought of himself as an historian, a scientist out to document the features and customs of a dying people, this self-appointed task meant something different to each man. For Catlin, documentation was an end in itself; for Kane it was a means to a different end, the subject for his art. Part of the reason for this obviously had to do with the nationalities of the two men. Catlin originally formulated his purposes in an atmosphere of contagious nostalgic concern about the disappearance of the Indians and equally contagious excitement about western exploration. In Canada both the pragmatic and the sentimental reasons for elucidating Indian culture were far less pressing: at the same time Kane's exposure to European influences was far greater.²⁹

Kane, in a series of travels from 1845 to 1849, was the first resident Canadian artist to make a systematic study of Indian life in the vast unsettled territories of the West controlled by the Hudson Bay Company. Much of the work made during his travels was in the form of watercolour and oil sketches which recorded what he saw. They included portraits, landscapes, genre scenes and artifact studies. Upon his return to Toronto, he set about making a finished gallery of one hundred oil paintings based on his field sketches, and he subsequently published his travel diaries as Wanderings of an Artist in 1859. Like Catlin, Kane applied to the government for patronage of his project, and like the American, he was largely unsuccessful in his search for government support. Both artists received the majority of their support from private patrons, although they did have official nods from their respective governments and actively sought public notoriety with their efforts.

In the manner of other early Canadian artists, Kane had gained his status as a professional artist by making

portraits, the kind of artwork that was in the most demand in colonial centers. Although he knew there was no market for portraits amongst the native people, he might have surmised that official governmental bodies had a certain interest in the indigenous population and might be persuaded to collect his work. A precedent had been set with a few previous works (Plamondon, Hamel) and the example of Catlin was ever before him. Kane's apparent focus on making portraits of Indians, then, was based both on the usual vocational expertise of professional nineteenth century artists enlivened by a spirit of scientific enquiry and adventure. Kane made paintings which presented the Indian in his natural habitat, but almost half of his finished paintings were portraits. All of the paintings attempt to present a culture that is untouched by European incursions, despite the fact that Kane's very presence among them meant that they were no longer living in that manner. They are often constructed to evoke the romantic notions that Europeans had about the lives of native people through the use of dramatic narrative and composition.

Kane was free to be creative with subject matter that few of his contemporaries in Upper Canada had experienced first-hand, and his portraits of Indians are often based as much on imagination as they are on the specific likeness of an individual. Several writers have pointed out that the portraits are frequently based on a variety of sketches which were refined and amalgamated to produce an effective final rendering.³⁰ One frequently cited example is the

portrait of *Mah-Min*, an Assiniboine chief (Fig.11) in which the sitter is shown wearing accessories that are not associated with his tribe. In another example, the portrait of *Cunnawa-bum* (Fig.12), Kane Europeanized the features of a mixed-blood woman and emulated the pose of a society lady holding a fan. As in Joseph Légaré's portrait of *Josephte Ourné*, scientific veracity is subsumed in the interests of depicting Indian women as exotic subjects. Posing and embellishing the subject is, of course, traditional in portraiture, and its employment in Indian portraits is not unusual. It is what these embellishments are meant to convey that is most interesting. Just as in the earliest portraits of Canadian Indians, Paul Kane combined a likeness with a stereotype that his intended viewers could appreciate and relate to.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, there was very little public Canadian interest in or awareness of the West as a site for potential settlement in Canada. Paul Kane's portrayals of native life, his colourful portraits of individuals and his travelogue helped to create a cultural interest in the West as a place with wide open spaces and few White people.³¹ It also set a precedent for artistic portrayal of the region and its inhabitants in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Western Canada was viewed as a place of exotic sights and romantic adventure, where nature's noblemen roamed free, hunted buffalo and remained unsullied by cultural contamination. This was not a totally realistic view, even in Kane's time. The artist's intention

to preserve all he had seen on his travels for posterity may have been a little premature in terms of Canadian events, but it was not long before native life did undergo drastic changes.

Kane may be the signature artist of Canadian Indian life in the nineteenth century, because he portrayed Western Indians, received a good deal of publicity for his efforts and left behind him a significant legacy in this vein, but he was only one of many artists who used the native people and their lifestyles as subject matter for their art. In the context of this study, what is unique about Paul Kane is that he was the first Canadian to make painted Indian portraits in great numbers with the intention of creating ethnographic records. This type of activity was important for its contribution to the definition of the image of the Plains Indians in Euro-Canadian society. Although Kane may have been singular amongst his peers, the idea of painting portraits did eventually become a stock method of ethnographic portrayal in Canada.

Other artists who portrayed native life prior to the time that the railroad produced irrevocable changes in Western Canada were not so intent on building a career based on this type of work. Artists like Frances Ann Hopkins (1838-1919) and William Hind (1833-1889) frequently portrayed aspects of native life which did not necessarily hide the effect of cultural intrusion upon aboriginal existence.³² In other words, they sometimes represented the Indian in a less romantically stereotypical way, and, at the

same time, give us greater insight into native life as it was actually lived in the mid-nineteenth century. English Victorian painting was often sentimental, but it was also materialistic and employed observed fact as means of making the narrative more real. Hopkin's Metis voyageurs (Fig.13) and Hind's native scouts (Fig.14) depict contemporary events and lifestyles. These artists were interested in documentation as an end in itself and their intended audience was much less defined than Kane's. They were neither ethnographers, nor were they aspiring society artists in Canada.

One artist who was determined to make a name for himself, as Kane had done, using this specific genre was Frederick Verner (1836-1928). Verner was a society artist who was a great admirer of Kane's achievement. For many years he specialized in painting Indian encampments and buffalo herds which echoed both Kane's romanticization of Indians and the landscape fascination of professional artists working in late nineteenth century Canada. Believed to have only seen the kinds of things that he painted in his youth in the 1870's,³³ Verner always depicted the West and Indian life as virtually unaffected by Euro-Canadian culture. He painted buffalo even after they had been virtually hunted out of existence and Indians at a time when their traditional existence was anything but untroubled, but he showed no indication of this in his work. Verner was also interested in portraiture as a means of representing the Indian.

It is known that one of his early portraits, from the 1860's was based directly on a photograph. *Ta-na-ze-pa* (*A Sioux Dandy*) (Fig.15) is almost an exact replica of a photograph taken by J.C. Whitney of a Sioux named Dowanea (Fig.16).³⁴ Based on this example, it is difficult to determine whether the artist actually saw any of the natives he painted. His interest was not in ethnography, but in emulating Kane's artistic achievement. Kane had managed to sell twelve of his Indian portraits to the Ontario government and this may also be the reason that Verner executed a set of twelve portraits for them in 1875. These were intended as a record of the signatories of a treaty which was contracted in Winnipeg in that year. Since there is no record of Verner actually going to Winnipeg, these portraits were probably based on photographs. As Russell Harper tells us, these portraits, unlike Kane's do not depict their subjects as "noble and proud savages", but portray the Indian chiefs as "shy and timid aborigines hiding in their own world, gazing out at the new strange ways engulfing them".³⁵ Verner was a photographer and perhaps his experience had an affect on his approach to verisimilitude in painted portraits. Or it may be that this type of portrayal, as perceived by Harper is as much a fiction as the one propounded by Kane.

Photography did have a decided influence on portraiture and painting in general in the last half of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Photographers often utilized the conventions of the history of painting in composing photographs and artists

used photographs as preparatory sketches for their paintings, often trying to rival the simulation effects that photography was able to achieve. Photographic studio portraiture lacked the colour, durability and status of painted portraits, but it had its own obvious advantages. One of those advantages was reproducibility. Certain kinds of images gained a currency through mass dispersion and were made for purposes other than those associated with paintings. Photographs of individual Indians, for example, were made as tools for scientific accuracy in anthropological studies, but were also made as records of individuals and as tourist souvenir items.³⁷

The history of Indian portrait photographs is closely related to the history of painted Indian portraits. It is alluded to in this particular context because the use of Indian portrait photographs as souvenir items on postcards and in albums assisted in popularizing the painted portrait as a desired consumer item. Indian portraits were not only useful as likenesses of important individuals and as ethnographic documents, but as symbols of the "otherness" of Canada. In that sense, they became the equivalent of a landscape painting of Niagara Falls or the Rocky Mountains. The portrait was the perfect format for that kind of message, since it could present the Indian as colourful and exotic while rendering them non-threatening and static. After 1886, when the trans-Canada railroad was completed, this was an especially useful tool for those interested in attracting settlers and tourists to new areas.

Just as the land was shown in promotional material as bountiful and beautiful, so the Indians were shown as historical and benign. This stereotype helped to emphasize the peaceful and civil nature of Indian-White relations in a part of Canada open for settlement.

The fact that Euro-Canadians chose to eradicate a culture through legislation while Euro-Americans tended to choose a more brutally direct route is also reflected in the art of this period. Unlike American art and literature, there are comparatively few generic depictions of Indians as brutal savages. The noble and wise chieftain or the native as part of the landscape are the main stereotypes that reflect the Euro-Canadian experience. Although "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" was a popular attraction when it visited Canada in the late nineteenth century, it could never have been initiated by a Canadian. The kind of overt violence which it re-enacted characterized Indian-White relations in the United States and did not reflect the general Canadian experience.

Once they were able to see it for themselves, Canadian artists exhibited very little interest in portraying contemporary native life in Western Canada in the late nineteenth century. It was, after all, far from picturesque. What was visually appealing was traditional native dress and traditional ceremony and lifestyle. By the late nineteenth century these could only be observed in circumstances controlled by Indian agents and administrators, because under ordinary circumstances and in everyday life these

cultural manifestations were suppressed and frowned upon.³⁸ To be an Indian in front of a White audience holding those expectations was all right, but to be an Indian when those expectations were not there was almost impossible.

For the most part, photographers and artists portraying Indians at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century had to expend great effort to locate models that would fit into the stereotypical images they desired to find. This fact alone accounts for the paucity of native portrayals in Eastern and Central Canada in this period and the rarity of those portrayals even when artists from this area of the country had their attention turned to Western Canada.

William Brymner (1855-1925) was one of many artists who were attracted by the CPR's offer of free passes to the region to paint Western Canadian sights and one of the few who turned his attention to the Indian. It was very difficult in the early days of reserve life for visitors to obtain permission to stay on reserves, so Brymner's access to the native people was not commonplace in the period that he visited the West.³⁹ He stayed on the Blackfoot reserve near Gleichen, Alberta in 1886 and then again for short periods in 1892 and 1893. His first visit was shortly after the Riel rebellion, and while he was on the Blackfoot reserve, he witnessed the burial of Poundmaker which he recorded in sketches. He also made a painting entitled *Giving Rations to the Blackfeet Indians, NWT* {Fig.17}. It is an oddity because it is one of the few oil paintings that

depict contemporary reserve life. It was bought by CPR executive, Sir George Stephens, and may have appealed to him because it represented the power and control the White population had over natives living on reserves. Although it could be called a genre portrayal, along the lines of genre scenes that appealed to the Victorian middle-class of Canada, its subject matter could not have been calculated to appeal to this type of patron judging from the remarks of a critic who reviewed it in the 1880's:

Mr. Brymner has succeeded in investing his Indians, ugly and dirty specimens of humanity though they are, with a certain picturesque interest, while the whole shows a fine grasp of the subject. The white man (the rationer) must have been taken unawares, so easy and unconstrained is his attitude and so intent is he upon the right measurement of flour to receive which, one of the Indians holds open his bag, while another with a solemnly stoical, yet closely observant face, leans lightly against the barrier, watching the process, and a pretty little squaw with a shamelessly artificial complexion stands near ready to produce her ration ticket.⁴⁰

Brymner also made a series of ten Indian portraits, based on sketches from his trips. These may have been intended as documents for the CPR, but no record of this has been found. One of the finished portraits of a *Blackfoot Chief*, now in the Canadian Archives {Fig.18} suggests that Brymner might have intended his sketches as simply colourful subject matter for later exercises in speculative genre portrayals. Brymner might have painted this portrait as late as 1906, the year it was first exhibited, and the lack of a specific title suggests that the artist's interest was not in documenting an individual for any official purpose. The

portrait depicts a seated half-length figure, turned slightly and looking off into the distance. The figure emerges out of a dark background emphasizing the painterly treatment of the costume and face. Despite its standard format as a portrayal which emphasizes atmosphere, the headdress and costume almost overwhelm the slightly animated face of the anonymous sitter. Its appeal is in its exoticism and surface treatment, probably as the artist intended.

Other artists of the same era, whether they had seen Indians or not, used them as a kind of set piece of Canadian subject matter. This is in line with the use of the Indian portrait as a type of tourist souvenir or as a sample of the artist's talent in rendering symbolic images of Canada. William Blair Bruce (1860-1906) who had made a trip to the Six Nations Reserve and seen his subject first hand appears to have made use of the Indian portrait device for this purpose, occasionally.⁴¹

The main uses and format of the Indian portrait were defined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially, the portrait was a way of representing a significant political leader. This prescribed that the subject of the portrait should be male and noble and that the making of it was a civic duty. Eventually, the portrait became a way of representing a race through the medium of an individual. The making of it became a way of communicating ideas about what it was to be Canadian and later, a way of communicating ideas about what it was to be Indian.

The newer ideas were often conflated with the old to produce an image and a way of making which combined purposes and ideologies.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE: INDIAN AS ARTIFACT

The ethnographic imperative became a very important motive for Indian portrait making in the twentieth century and precedents had already been established which made them a standard format for ethnographic recording. The needs of science and art were attuned when portraits could function as sources of information about a race, records of significant, but vanquished individuals and as a means for an artist to gain commissions from official bodies. At the same time the artist could exhibit his/her sense of social purpose and individual creativity. Within this context, what had seemed like a premature project in Paul Kane's time became a mission which many artists of a new generation took up with a sense of urgency that was scientifically and socially validated. Many of this generation came to be known as Indian portrait artists.

One of these artists was Edmund Morris (1871-1913). A prominent Toronto artist with European training, known for his organizational work with the Canadian Art Club, Morris worked extensively as an Indian portraitist. He was one of the first of a new generation to concentrate on this activity as an ethnological specialist, and his career provides a prototype for Western Canadian artists of his generation. Between 1906 and 1911 Morris spent a considerable portion of his time travelling in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta sketching elders of remaining tribes in fulfillment of a variety of

government commissions. These commissions highlighted a certain degree of official interest in the making of Indian portraits which could not have failed to stimulate the efforts of other Indian portrait artists in the post World War I period.

Morris' Indian portraiture also marks a significant stylistic and methodological advance in approach from that of his immediate predecessors. Many of his portraits are in pastels, finished from on-the-spot sketching. Pastel is a sketching medium which allows the artist to capture nuances of colour and shading while drawing the model from life, and it was perfectly suited to the kind of work the artist undertook. Not as exacting a medium as watercolour, pastel was the preferred material for portraitists and field sketchers who had a limited amount of time to record a likeness in colour. In this sense Morris' portraits have a repertorial accuracy which differentiates them immediately from the carefully finished oil portraits created by Paul Kane, Verner and Brymner. An example of this kind of work would be *Pimotat* {Fig.19}, painted in 1910. Morris was often working on what would be the finished work of art in front of his subject, emulating the immediacy of photography. Although Morris was a photographer and made use of his many field photographs for study purposes, the colours of what he was portraying were reliant on actual observation.

Morris considered himself an artist-historian in the tradition of Paul Kane and some of his American predecessors, but his commissions took him in search of

specific individuals, not representative types. It is this insistence on documenting individuals that distinguishes his work from the romantic artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the individuals that he chose to portray still fit in with the expectations of his audience and his own perceptions. He was constantly in search of those Indians of pure blood who represented the kind of Indian who had existed before contact with white civilization. Morris sought historical types of individuals, and the vast majority of his portrayals are of male tribal elders in warrior costume.

His mission derived partly from the kinds of commissions he was given. Although his father, Alexander Morris, had been the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba and had been personally involved with the treaty signings of the 1870's, Edmund had had little personal experience of or contact with the aboriginal people until he was an adult working on these commissions. Prior to his work in the field he had made some Indian portraits in accordance with the general interest of the time. They numbered in with his portraits of habitants and peasants as popular pictorial subjects that an artist would make on speculation. It has been suggested that these early portraits were almost certainly made from photographs.⁴² Morris, a frequent sketching companion of William Brymner in Quebec in the late 1890's, was very likely familiar with his friend's interest in this work, as well. These early portraits did serve to attract the attention of the Department of Indian Affairs,

then headed by poet, Duncan Campbell Scott. As a result Morris was commissioned by the Ontario government to witness the signing of the 1906 James Bay treaty and record the Ojibway signees.

The Ontario government was exhibiting a great deal of interest in obtaining Indian portraits in the period between 1906 and 1909. Not only did they commission Morris to go to Western Canada in 1907 and record the Plains Indians who had signed previous treaties, but they also acquired, through donation, the Paul Kane Indian portrait gallery originally painted for just such a purpose.⁴³ Heightened awareness of the urgency of the task on the part of the Ontario government allowed Edmund Morris to fulfill a mission that Paul Kane had so desperately wanted sponsored some fifty years earlier. An extensive record of nineteenth century Plains Indians only became a necessity in the twentieth century after treaties and reservation life had diminished their power and numbers. Between 1906 and 1909 the government bought sixty of Morris' portraits. Most of these, along with Kane's work ended up in the Royal Ontario Museum's ethnological department, supplemented by the artifact collections of the two artists.

Morris became very enthusiastic about his commissions and zealously searched out aging treaty signees and their descendants. He saw this as a task in which there was little time to lose. The help of government officials, mission priests, local oldtimers and chiefs was enlisted for Morris' field trips which occurred every summer between 1907 and

1911. Much of this time was spent in Saskatchewan and Alberta where the tribes resided that had signed treaties in the 1870's and 80's. Spending many months at a time living with and also corresponding with the native people and their "guardians", Morris developed an understanding of their problems in dealing with the effects of "civilization". Like many artists who spent time with the native people, he was shown a measure of respect and acceptance by being given an Indian name. Running Rabbit, a senior Blackfoot chief in Alberta and a personal friend of Morris, gave him the name Kyaiyii (Bear Robe).⁴⁴ This name alluded to one of Running Rabbit's ancestors and it became part of Morris' persona on his western sojourns.

Morris' success as a government-commissioned portraitist and his sense of missionary zeal prompted him to propose portrait commission schemes to the fledgling legislatures of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1909. The propositions were intended to commemorate and honour important local native personalities. In one of Morris' communications with Premier Walter Scott of Saskatchewan he stated:

One point I wish to lay great stress on in connection with the work I propose doing for your government. The importance of losing no time as the last of the fighting Indians will soon be gone and then it will be impossible to get true records of the old type of those who held the land before the coming of the whites.⁴⁵

His persuasive arguments won him assignments. The Alberta Legislature commissioned five portraits, delivered in 1910, and the Saskatchewan Legislature commissioned fifteen

portraits, the last of them delivered in 1911. During the period that he was fulfilling these commissions, he amassed a sizable personal collection of portraits, photographs and artifacts and involved himself personally in Indian affairs.

Edmund Morris' premature death in 1913 cut short his artistic career, nevertheless his work in Indian portraiture is significant. It marks the first time since the invention of the camera that a prominent Canadian painter turned his attention to Indian portraiture as a means of compiling an ethnographical record. Photographs and paintings of Indians were being made throughout the nineteenth century for historical, ethnological and cultural reasons, but few artists since Kane had made any prolonged effort at documentation. Morris also used photography extensively in his work, but not as so many of his contemporaries did, as a kind of starting point for an imaginative picture. He wished to make accurate ethnological portraits which recorded the features of individuals for posterity. His efforts also made this kind of Indian portrait into a form of obligation for official institutions which were also in the process of commissioning portraits of important white people in positions of power. Morris was probably the only artist in the early twentieth century living in central Canada with such a devoted interest in Indian portraiture, but he was not the only artist practising it. The commonplace of portrait photography and the success of landscape painting as the national school of painting caused the decline of portraiture as a focus for professional artists and critics

in central Canada. The speciality of Indian portraiture was even less popular because there appeared to be no need for it, locally. The art societies of the large urban centres were not interested in genres of painting that smacked of colonialism and there were few Indians who appeared exotic or untamed in an urbanized environment.

However, circumstances in the newer provinces and territories of Canadian confederation differed because the luxuries of urban life were the privilege of only a few. Many of the people living there were only first or second generation settlers and evidence of life before their arrival was still visible. Portraiture, in particular, was a viable and interesting genre of painting, as it was a practical need in a place with little time or interest in sophisticated urban art. So, both portraiture and Indian imagery were important components of the cultural landscape of Western Canada after they had ceased to be so in Eastern Canada. Artists living in large urban areas were seldom attracted to this kind of endeavour.

At the same time, the ethnographical imperative was becoming much stronger since Euro-Canadians were now living in closer contact with the whole variety of native cultures aboriginal to Canada. Ethnological knowledge about tribal differences was broadening and defining the image of the Indian in different ways. The Nootka, Kwakwaka'wakw, Gitskan, Haida and other Northwest Coast tribes were particularly fascinating because they offered an alternative view of native culture to the exotica of the Plains Indian

stereotype which had been forged in the nineteenth century. Their monumental art, sedentary lifestyle and elaborate social structures contrasted with the perception of native lifestyle that Plains Indians offered. They could not be viewed as befeathered noblemen roaming free in nature, and their Asian-like physiognomies set them apart physically from the tribes across the Rocky Mountains.

Following the lead of the American anthropologist, Franz Boas, who had originally drawn scientific attention to the uniqueness of the NorthWest Coast cultures in the late nineteenth century, Canadian scientific leaders began to focus attention on the cultural differences between Canada's various native populations. Marius Barbeau, Canada's foremost authority on the Northwest Coast natives in the early twentieth century, for example, popularized the poly-genetic theory; a theory which furthered interest in native racial groups and eroded the simplistic stereotype of the Indian. In a 1931 article written with the specific purpose of encouraging artists to paint the native cultures, he outlined his beliefs:

The assumption has long been current that our natives form a racial unit apart from the rest of mankind. The very name "Redskins" and "American Indians" crystallize that popular notion. But a few ethnologists are busy disproving the theory of American insularity. They are tracing up native migrations through Alaska to Siberia and are finding out how races still represented in other parts of the world have expanded into the "new World" at various times in the past.⁴⁶

In addition, Diamond Jenness, the government anthropologist from 1913 to 1947, published his classic Indians of Canada in 1933 which identified very clearly the different cultural

groups or nations that make up the Canadian native population. These kinds of public pronouncements by respected scientists counteracted the popular image or notion of Indian as a single visual stereotype and often focused attention on the current plight of native populations.

Detailed scientific studies were conducted precisely at the time when the acculturation process initiated by the Canadian government in the nineteenth century was having its greatest effect. Many of the last native people to live in a traditional manner were aged and dying and the younger generations were growing up in a much different world. This recognition of transition often was equated with the idea of a dying race. Barbeau, Jenness and other close observers of the native people shared and promulgated this view. Documentation of the dying race phenomenon had a certain urgency and legitimacy, but no one ever seemed to question the assumptions that the idea was based on. The theme of Diamond Jenness' sympathetic book is underlined by the notion that the cultures of Canadian Indians belong to the past. Barbeau's ethnological interest in natives and his writings were based on a similar assumption, that traditional culture would expire with the last generation to live unfettered.⁴⁷ Thus, even the most empathetic of observers consigned native culture and the individuals who represented it to the past.⁴⁸

These kinds of pronouncements, which were being made all over North America, inspired interested artists to

incorporate ethnography as part of their creative project. Immigrants, in particular, were drawn to this kind of work for many of the reasons already enumerated, but also because the sight of Indians represented America in such a visual way. Although Winold Reiss (1886-1953) and W. Langdon Kihn (1898-1957) were American artists who specialized in making Indian portraits in the 1920's and 30's, there are linkages between their practises and those of Canadian artists of the period.⁴⁹ Not only were many of their subjects the same as the ones that attracted Canadian artists in the Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. areas, but their work sometimes had a direct impact on Canadian artists painting Indians and provides interesting parallels.

Like many German-born artists of his generation, Winold Reiss was fascinated by the idea of portraying Indians.⁵⁰ He emigrated to New York in 1913 with that specific purpose in mind, but it was not until 1919 when he made a trip to Montana's Glacier National Park, that he was able to satisfy his desire. On this first trip he took one of his New York students, Langdon Kihn, with him and both he and Kihn were so entranced with what they saw that both of them began what was to eventually become a life-long pursuit. Not surprisingly, there is a good deal of stylistic similarity between their portrayals. Both artists worked in a way that combined literal realism with strong decorative patterning and used pastel and tempera as their primary media. Their portraits have a clean, modern look reminiscent of commercial design of the thirties and forties.

Reiss was also a prominent, New York-based architectural designer and illustrator, but his major interest was human physiognomy. During the twenties he travelled extensively and focused his work on a variety of American ethnic portrayals, notably Mexican Indians and African Americans. It was not until 1927 when he returned to Browning, Montana and obtained a commission from the Great Northern Railway to paint the Blackfoot Indians that he began to conceive of this activity as a mission. From that time, until the advent of the second World War, he returned every summer to paint Indians. In 1934 he set up an art school at St. Mary's Lake in Glacier National Park which attracted students from the Eastern seaboard and native models and students from the surrounding area. It was here, in 1935, that a Blood Indian from Alberta, Gerald Tailfeathers, began art lessons at the age of ten. He was with members of his family who were obtaining employment as models during their summer travels. Tailfeather's art, which is discussed later on, was greatly influenced by the example of Winold Reiss.

Reiss was a very prolific artist, amassing hundreds of portraits over the years, and becoming a well-known figure amongst the Blackfeet of Northern Montana. His interest in the people was such that he employed his son to obtain the personal histories of many of his more prominent models and to maintain a constant search for new ones. The Blackfeet of Montana dubbed him Beaver Child, because he was such an obsessive worker. During the 1940's Reiss lobbied

strenuously for support to realize his dream of creating a museum to document the Indian culture. He had even gone so far as to draw up plans for a building which he called "The Monument to the American Indian" and planned an itinerary which would allow him to document the Indians of the entire Western United States. He maintained a personal collection for the proposed museum, but he was unsuccessful in his efforts and his work remained in the possession of his family at his death. This kind of dedication had its parallel in the work of Mildred Valley Thornton in Canada who was doing much the same thing at the same time.

Langdon Kihn's career took a decisively different course from Reiss' early on, despite their similar interests, styles and close association. Based in New York, Kihn's showings of his 1919 portraits there in 1922 garnered a lot of press coverage. The CPR and the National Museum of Canada exhibited a particular interest in his portraits of Plains Indians. In 1922 the CPR commissioned him to travel to Western Canadian Indian reservations and make portraits for promotional material. During this trip, he stopped at the Stoney Indian reserve outside Morley, Alberta and also spent time amongst the Kootenay and Nootka Indians in B.C. He showcased the works he completed on this trip in New York in 1923 which gained him more work in Canada. In 1924 the National Museum of Canada and the CNR sponsored his joint expedition with Marius Barbeau, the museum's ethnologist, to document the North West Coast native tribes. Barbeau had already used Kihn's earlier portraits (e.g. {Fig.20})to

illustrate his 1923 publication, Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies.

Barbeau was employed by the National Museum of Man from 1911 to 1948 and made numerous trips to the West Coast himself in the twenties and thirties. His special interest was in the natives of the Northwest coast, but he collected folklore and artifacts from many of Canada's ethnic traditions. He was attracted to Kihn's work because it combined ethnographic accuracy with considerable aesthetic merit. Barbeau, who wrote frequently on art, was probably instrumental in obtaining studio space for Kihn in the National Museum and arranging several showings of his work in Canadian locations in 1925. Some of Kihn's portraits even managed to end up in the Canadian section of the New English Art Club's Wembley exhibit of that year. The Southam Brothers publishing firm was enthusiastic enough about his work to purchase over thirty of his portraits and donate them to various Canadian galleries. The Barbeau-Kihn collaboration was mutually beneficial, because Kihn's success enabled Barbeau to successfully persuade some Eastern Canadian artists to turn their attention to Northwest native culture.⁵¹

Langdon Kihn's direct involvement in Canadian art essentially ended in 1925. In 1926 he obtained a commission from the Great Northern Railway to paint in Montana at the Blackfoot reservation, but his interests led him in other directions for the next few years, primarily outside the United States. The National Geographic Society in Washington

hired Kihn to document the native tribes of North America in oil paintings in 1935 and this prestigious commission occupied him for many years. The project was conducted with the assistance of the Smithsonian's chief ethnologist, Matthew W. Stirling, who was Barbeau's counterpart in the United States. The completed paintings illustrated a number of articles that were published by Stirling in the National Geographic Society's magazine and one hundred and three of them were used as illustrations in the Society's monumental Indians of North America of 1955.

Kihn was clearly more successful than Reiss in his efforts to create a lasting memorial to the American Indian because he achieved official recognition. Undoubtedly, his early collaboration with respected scientists like Barbeau set him on a different course from his mentor, whose work and enthusiasm was at a similar level. A parallel which occurs in both Reiss' and Kihn's work and sets them apart somewhat from many of their counterparts in Canada during the same period was their willingness to portray a broad spectrum of native individuals. While both men believed that they were depicting a vanishing race and many of their models were of the older generation, their concern with capturing physiognomy was overriding. People of all ages and types were used as models, and they were not averse to portraying their subjects in their ordinary dress. (See: {Fig.21}) If anything, Kihn's portraits tend to be more iconic than those of Reiss because he employed the convention of the profile portrait much more frequently

(See: {Fig.20}). The profile portrait has a long history relating to the convention of portraying nobility and, indeed, often appeared on the medals that Indians had traditionally worn as symbols of their status in white society. But the profile was also used in a completely different context by anthropological photographers in their case studies of racial variety.⁵² Both artists tended to use the costumes of the individuals they portrayed as the aesthetic content of their portraits while attempting, simultaneously, to render an objective likeness of an individual's face. This is apparent in Reiss' portrait of Weasel Tail {Fig.21} and Kihn's portrait of *Many Tailfeathers* {Fig.22} which provide contrasts with the methodology of almost all of the Canadian artists concerned with native portrayals, with the possible exception of Morris and Nicholas de Grandmaison. The styles of Reiss and Kihn reflect their other occupations as design illustrators in urban America.

Of course, in the United States there was a good deal more ethnographical effort being expended by artists, photographers and scientists during the early twentieth century than there was in Canada. Barbeau's initiative with Kihn, which led to attempts to interest other artists he knew to turn their attention to the native cultures of Canada, was singular in its relation to the production of native portraits on a large scale. However, Barbeau's idea of relating Indian art and contemporary art did prompt a joint curatorial effort between Eric Brown of the National

Gallery of Canada and Barbeau which came to fruition in the winter of 1927-28. The planned exhibition, "West Coast Indian Art: Native and Modern" was designed to combine artifacts collected by the National Museum of Man with representations of the culture that had produced them by a chosen group of prominent Canadian artists. For this purpose the curators encouraged artists such as A.Y. Jackson, Edwin Holgate, Pegi Nicol, Anne Savage and Florence Wyle to sketch in the Upper Skeena region of B.C. during 1926 and 1927 and assisted them with passes on the CPR. Oddly enough, it never seems to have occurred to the organizers that artists living in the region may have already turned their attention to these subjects.

"West Coast Indian Art: Native and Modern" was the first time in Canadian history that a major exhibition presented the art of different cultures in a traditional fine art setting. It highlighted Barbeau's belief that the art of the North West Coast natives was "one of the most valuable of Canada's artistic productions" at a time when that was not a commonly held perception.⁵³ In this respect, the exhibition was in the forefront of a number of European and American exhibitions which placed the art of primitive and modern cultures together. The exhibition was also important because it introduced the art of Emily Carr to the central Canadian art establishment and to its accompanying critical recognition.

When the exhibition was in its planning stages the extent of Carr's artistic achievement was unknown to the

curators. Marius Barbeau had been in contact with Carr since 1926, but had never seen her work. He suggested to Eric Brown that it could be worthwhile seeking Carr out on his cross-country tour in 1927, because her paintings dealt with the subject of the forthcoming show. Once the two men became aware of the quality of Carr's work and her representation of Indian villages and artifacts, they made her work the centerpiece of the exhibition. Despite Carr's later personal success, the exhibition was not particularly well-received in the nation's capital. Native artifacts were difficult to accept as anything but curiosities by a public untrained to see them as art.

The show did re-kindle Carr's desire to paint and to experiment. The paintings which had been exhibited in the 1927 show were ones Carr had completed years earlier and she had virtually quit painting since 1913. Emily Carr's paintings of the late twenties and thirties were often based on her experiences of West Coast native art, but they were not as documentary as her earlier works. Her later achievement was exceptional because she, unlike so many others, was aesthetically inspired by the native approach to art-making and spirituality. Although her reputation is inevitably linked with the representation of Northwest coast native life, Emily Carr only exhibited a true interest in ethnography in her early career, an interest that was typical of the time and the place. She was never really interested in the representation of native people in the portrait format.

Many of Carr's peers were, however, intrigued with the idea of the Indian portrait. Morris, and later, Reiss and Kihn specialized in this genre as a means of collecting information about Indians for posterity. This ethnographical imperative was informed by the interests of scientists, like Barbeau and Jenness, who shared the pervasive Euro-American belief that native cultures were in their death throes. As scientific knowledge about and interest in natives became more popularized, the form of examination represented by collections of Indian portraits became a mission shared by a number of Western Canadian artists.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN PORTRAIT PAINTING IN WESTERN CANADA

One reason Indian portraiture attracted so many adherents in Western Canada was that to most of the people living there the sights of the land were still new. In addition, the traditional Indian way of life was not invisible, even if it was confined by the reserve system. Although many of the activities associated with traditional native life were being circumscribed and expunged by the Euro-Canadian population, there were occasions and circumstances when it was allowed to surface. This was usually in the context of exhibitions and fairs when the native presence provided colourful entertainment and a reminder to the white inhabitants of their achievements in "civilizing" their chosen land. The employment of traditional native society as a kind of spectacle managed by those in authority attracted scientists, tourists and, naturally, artists. Indians were now not only a symbol of country, but of a specific region or locality.

The vast majority of professional artists living in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia prior to 1950 were, at one point or another, drawn to representing the Indian because native people were a significant visual component of their environment.⁵⁴ To the immigrant, especially, they offered a visual stimulus which could not be ignored, no matter what style of art they were accustomed to practising. Artists brought their knowledge of how to make art with them from their place of origin and the

variety of styles they employed was as various as their backgrounds. As the careers of many of the artists who specialized in Indian portraiture have remained substantially undocumented and the circumstances surrounding the practice of Indian portrait painting in this region are scarcely known, this chapter is devoted to sketching an outline of both the artists' careers and the kinds of portraits they produced. Some attempt has already been made to set them into a historical context, and further attempts will be made in the final chapter.

Lacking a critical audience in the first few decades of the twentieth century, most of the artists considered as "professional" continued to paint in the way they had been trained in during their youth. Those artists with turn-of-the-century art training who settled in areas of Canada with very small art communities set the trend for a new generation of artists. Without the audience and the opportunity to learn new trends, and with a different set of environmental circumstances from the urban-centred artist, their art practices were adapted to local conditions.

In the earliest years of settlement, most artists were either amateurs or self-trained and female artists were usually members of the upper class who had received training in the arts as part of their general education as ladies of accomplishment. They frequently were the only people, as women married to successful men, who had the leisure time to pursue art as an avocation and often instigated and encouraged interest in the arts in the community. Emily Carr

was one of the few women who was able to overcome the barriers which prevented professionalism.⁵⁵ Because they were predominantly amateurs, the work of many female artists has never been considered important and has remained undocumented and unconsidered and unknown. Those making Indian portraits are particularly invisible in the historical record.

Margaret MacLure (c.1870-1939) is one example of the kind of talented amateur who painted Indian portraits, but whose work and career is now very difficult to reconstruct.⁵⁶ Born in Scotland, she came to Victoria at the age of seventeen and married Samuel MacLure, a prominent B.C. architect. Although her social position and wealth did not allow her to pursue painting as a professional career opportunity, an option that then was being followed by other contemporaries of hers in Victoria such as Emily Carr and Theresa Wylde, she, too, enjoyed a reputation in her circle as an artist who was interested in representing native people.

Like many amateurs, MacLure devoted herself to watercolour painting and seldom attempted oils. Her main interest in Indians as subject matter was probably in line with many others who then lived in British Columbia. They were exotic and picturesque sights who were then close at hand. Between 1890 and the 1920's she had natives come and pose for her in her studio and sometimes travelled to nearby reserves. Her husband's social position probably assisted in smoothing over the difficulties of reserve visits. Like him,

she also spoke a little Chinook which was helpful in obtaining native co-operation.

One of the most interesting things about MacLure's career, for the purposes of this discussion, was that she was commissioned by the British Columbia government to assist in the creation of a presentation volume of local Indian lore to be given to the visiting Prince of Wales in 1900. This text was written by Martha Douglas Harris, the daughter of Sir James Douglas, and illustrated with views and portraits of Cowichan Indian life in watercolour. It indicates that there was then a great deal of official interest in the local natives and that MacLure's work was well-thought of enough to be included in such a prestigious record. Although MacLure was said to have specialized in portraits, few examples of her works have been described and they appear to have been in the category of generic depiction rather than individualized portrayals.

Marion Nelson Hooker (1866-1946) is a rare example of a professional female artist practising in Western Canada in the early twentieth century. She was born in Richmond, Virginia, but she grew up in St. Catherine's, Ont. After training with a local artist, she joined the Buffalo Art Students League and the New York Art Students League studying for some time with George Bridgman and his students. In 1902 she went to Europe with the Bridgman students and later studied china painting with Franz Bischoff in Chicago. By 1905 she was an elected member of the OSA and was an experienced art teacher. Her marriage to

a Selkirk, Man. lumber dealer in Chicago in 1907 led her to spend the next twenty-eight years in Manitoba. In those days the art community in Manitoba was very small and almost non-existent in Selkirk, but as Manitoba's main chronicler of art history has stated:

It is fortunate that Marion Hooker did not allow her new way of life to terminate her career or reduce her work to copies of earlier subjects. Her paintings of the landscape and people of the Selkirk region are among the first rank of those done in Manitoba at the time.⁵⁷

Although Hooker painted a variety of subjects in these early years, she was noted for her portraits. In 1909 she painted *Chief Peguis* (Jacob Berens) (Fig.23), who was then a guest in her home. Berens was a well-known native leader whose exploits as a youth had gained him notoriety. In 1861 he had made a run from Norway House, Man. to St. Paul, Minn. carrying beaver skins from various tribes intended as a tribute for the then visiting Prince of Wales. Her portrait of this venerable old gentleman is both a true likeness and an attempt to express a psychological insight into the past. Berens is portrayed in the ceremonial regalia of a chief of the time, which included medals prominently displayed on a great coat. She does not attempt to use any other traditional symbols of Indianess,⁵⁸ but relies on the man's appearance to tell his story. The portrait was so well-liked in its time that the Selkirk art club donated it to the Manitoba legislature, where it still hangs.

There is some reason to believe that her success with this particular portrait sparked her interest in portraying Indians, even if she was not aware of the work of Edmund

Morris. Late in her life, when she had again taken up residence in St. Catherine's, Ont. after the death of her husband in 1935, her reputation was based on her Indian portraits. The local newspaper compared her achievement to that of Paul Kane's when it reviewed her recently completed portrait of *Chief Little Bear* (George Green) of the Mohawks in 1941. Apparently, she saw fit to portray him in full tribal regalia because he was "one of the most complete likenesses of his race as it once was".⁵⁹ The portrait, sponsored by the local Women's Literary Society, was made to hang in the Council house at Ohsweken reserve, near St. Catherine's, joining portraits of Joseph Brant and other prominent Mohawks. This indicates that by the 1940's Hooker had largely devoted herself to the same kind of effort that other artists of the twenties and thirties were expending.

James Henderson (1871-1951) is perhaps the most well-known Indian portraitist from Western Canada in the twentieth century. He was born in Scotland and served an apprenticeship as a lithographer in Glasgow while attending night classes at the Glasgow School of Art. In 1909 he and his wife emigrated from London to Winnipeg and for a short time he obtained commercial work there, but decided to settle in Regina in 1910. He became a member of Regina's small artistic circle and soon obtained a reputation as a portrait painter. In 1915, he left Regina and moved to the nearby town of Fort Qu'Appelle, giving up commercial work for the life of an artist. Fascinated by both the landscape and the inhabitants of the reserves around this historic

area, he began developing a reputation as an Indian portraitist.

Never one to become actively involved in organizations, his career was furthered by his association with influential friends, notably, Norman Mackenzie, a prominent Saskatchewan art collector. Mackenzie was on the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery. Appreciative of any local artist who showed talent, he recommended Henderson's work to both Eric Brown of the National Gallery and Walter P. Murray, president of the University of Saskatchewan, who was then forming the University's art collection. The outcome of all this was that Henderson, unlike many other Indian portrait artists, received national recognition. Some of his paintings were included in the Wembley exhibits of Canadian art in 1924 and 1925. The National Gallery purchased his portrait of *Shot-Both-Sides*, a Blood Indian chief in Alberta, as a result of this exposure in 1928. In addition, Walter Murray commissioned a set of twelve Indian portraits for the University of Saskatchewan's collection, a project Henderson worked on between 1924 and 1930.⁶⁰ These involvements and commissions raised the profile of the artist and supplemented his already thriving private patronage.

Little has been written about the details of Henderson's career, but his most active years were in the nineteen twenties and thirties.⁶¹ The Local Council of Women sponsored three solo exhibitions of his work in 1923, 1926 and 1936. Newspaper articles frequently allude to him

showing paintings in the yearly agricultural exhibitions in Regina and some of his paintings were also included in National Gallery-sponsored exhibitions in 1924, 1925 and 1930. Henderson did not generally seek out exhibition opportunities, but his works were shown on a small scale when he travelled and visited various areas of the country. Ill health, old age and a tendency to shy away from the limelight gave him a lower profile in the 1940's. The last major exhibition of his work during his lifetime was at the Regina Exhibition in 1950. This was a two-man show which included the Indian portraits of another artist, Henry Metzger. After his death in 1951 there was a major memorial exhibition in Regina and a retrospective was organized by Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon in 1969.

Although recognized frequently as a major artist of Saskatchewan's pioneer years, there is still no real data to substantiate the extent of his Indian portraiture. While 110 paintings were gathered for the 1969 exhibition (half of which were Indian portraits), his work has never been catalogued. In a career that spanned some thirty-five years, one can assume that the finished oeuvre is much larger. It is known that he painted for many private collectors and his works are scattered across this country and the United States. He seems to have painted several variations of certain favourite subjects. There are, for example, several known renditions of *Chief Shot-Both-Sides*, the painting purchased by the National Gallery.⁶²

Like other artists who made it a life's work, Henderson's portrayal of native people was based on the belief that native society was in the process of change and the need to record a type of old-time Indian was pressing. He told a reporter in Victoria in 1923 that "There are no more braves being made among the Indians."⁶³ He noted that this made them much less picturesque because there was a marked difference between the grandfather and the grandchildren. Not surprisingly, the Sioux Indians around Fort Qu'Appelle referred to Henderson as "the man who paints old men", because old men were his preferred portrait models.

Initially, Henderson found his subjects in the local area, many of whom were Sioux Indians who had fled the United States after the massacre of 1862. He apparently overcame their suspicion of his desire to use them as models by showing his interest in their way of life and indicating his willingness to pay for modelling services.⁶⁴ This was a common denominator amongst all the artists who chose the Indian as their subject. Eventually his reputation attracted models to his studio. During the nineteen twenties, with the University's commission to consider, he travelled to reservations in Saskatchewan and Alberta to seek out subjects that would represent different tribes. In 1926 he was given a travel itinerary designed to expose him to a range of different tribes by Regina's Superintendent of Indian Affairs.⁶⁵

Although Henderson sketched from live models in the field, he usually worked as a studio portraitist. It is evident that he was not so interested in recording the features of any particular individual as he was in obtaining the likeness of an aesthetically suitable type.⁶⁶ His *Chief Shot-Both-Sides* (Fig.24) and *Pemimotat* (Fig.25) have a lot in common generically. He often took photographs of his subjects and used them as study resources for his paintings. A large number of his portraits have generic titles which would further indicate that racial characteristics were of greater interest to him than individual personalities. *Indian Squaw and Papoose* (Fig.26) is one example of a kind of genre portrayal he used several times. Henderson most probably sought out models that conformed to his pre-conceived ideas about the native people, and through which he could project romantic fantasies.

James Henderson also collected Indian artifacts and clothing which he seems to have maintained in his studio as draping material for his models. This is in spite of the fact that his portraits generally seemed to be much less about the exotic dress of his subjects than they were about conveying a psychological insight, e.g. *Pemimotat* (Fig.25). A contemplative, melancholy expression on carefully delineated faces combined with a pose that emphasized through body language an impression of pride or stoicism was typical.

Although renowned as an Indian portraitist, Henderson never seems to have had any intention of systematically

creating a record of Plains tribes like several other Indian portrait artists. His portraits were made to be sold to art collectors and emphasized aesthetic qualities and mood, not ethnography. He saw Indians, as many other immigrant artists did, as a feature of his environment which could be interpreted freely. He never saw himself as a historian or scientist, nor did his paintings appeal strictly on that level. At the opening of his 1936 solo exhibition in Regina, a Saskatchewan cabinet minister commented:

Many artists have painted Indians, but Mr. Henderson has interpreted for us the Indian character as warrior, patriot, philosopher, strong virile men, representative of a once great race and heir of a continent.⁶⁷

There is no doubt that this widely-felt nostalgia for the contemporary Indian's perceived lost nobility of spirit prompted his representation of the Indians as dignified, elderly philosopher types.

Henderson's contemporary, Father Henry Metzger (1876-1949), is another artist whose Indian portraits were eagerly sought by private collectors and whose works still appear in art sales catalogues. He was born in the Alsace region of France and trained as a professional artist at the same time as he trained for the priesthood. His studies included time with Martin Feuerstein in Munich, stints at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and at the Academie Julien. Prior to his ordination in 1901, he also travelled and sketched in Italy, Egypt and Palestine. Metzger left France in 1909 to become a parish priest in Saskatchewan and became associated with St. Peter's colony at Kronau, a village outside Regina until his

death in 1949. Because his main vocation was the priesthood, Father Metzger painted as a sideline during his time in Saskatchewan. He seems not to have taken part in organized art exhibits or sales in major centres, but he was frequently employed in making paintings for church decoration in various Saskatchewan locations. He was especially in demand as a decorator for Ruthenian (Ukrainian) churches whose congregations desired paintings as the only embellishment for their churches. Sometime in the early nineteen twenties Metzger expanded his subject matter to include the local landscape and the portrayal of natives. Whatever notoriety he gained in later life derived solely from his portraits of Indians, although these portraits are seldom held by public institutions.

As a priest, he probably had a greater degree of contact with native people than the ordinary citizen. According to a report on his activities written in 1940, Father Metzger was a frequent visitor at reservations in Qu'Appelle Valley. Many of the named subjects in the article are the same ones that James Henderson was then painting.⁶⁸ Metzger was an outdoorsman and travelled extensively by car through western Canadian and American national parks. At one point he painted mural panels for the Indian Store in Banff, Alberta, so he must have had a reputation of sorts amongst those interested in that kind of subject matter during the twenties and thirties. Certainly, Metzger's studio was a popular spot for visitors to the area of Kronau. Kronau was a station on the CPR line and Father Metzger's recreation of

the Lourdes Grotto at St. Peter's must have been one of the local sights. In a 1945 letter to a patron he mentioned the constant flow of visitors to his home in the summer and his pleasure in providing paintings to people.

Metzger was aware of and sensitive to the impression his Indian portraits made. He apparently painted hundreds of portraits, but like Henderson, there is little evidence to document the extent of his artistic practice and activities. He seems to have collected artifacts and exhibited an interest in gathering historical facts about the native people. In the above-mentioned letter, he discusses his work and interests:

I have taken notice of what you told me about the variety of subjects. I have found out that certain types appeal more than others and consequently have painted them more often - Nato is one of them. Americans are especially fond of his portrait, because he was one of the survivors of the Sioux who fled into Canada after the Custer Massacre. I painted most of the chiefs who had some kind of historical background, or are prominent in their respective tribes. The real interesting types are fewer every year. Scenes of Indian life have to be imaginative compositions because you come seldom upon a scene worthwhile painting, without some changes.⁶⁹

Metzger also shared Henderson's romantic attitude toward his subject. There is, as yet, no evidence which links them while alive, but it is hard to believe that they were not familiar with each other's work. Stylistically, their work has little in common. Metzger's French academic training led him to produce carefully finished, Neo-Classical Indian portraits similar to his religious paintings. Although the paintings were probably based on field sketches, in addition to illustrations or photographs,

they were all crafted in the studio. Equal attention was paid to costume and facial features as can be seen in Metzger's portrayal of *Poundmaker* (Fig.27). The atmospheric penumbra which often shrouds Henderson's figures and highlights the face for psychological effect is not present and makes Metzger's portraits appear much more clinical.

It is interesting to compare his style of portrayal with Henderson's, because it appears anachronistic next to the more painterly Romantic style adopted by British artists in the nineteenth century. Like Henderson, Metzger's work was done in relative isolation, but he was not as well-known and his work would have certainly been viewed as "old-fashioned" by a group of critical peers. He must have obtained a certain amount of notoriety after an article on his work appeared in Saturday Night magazine in 1940.⁷⁰ Following his death in 1949, some of his paintings were circulated around Saskatchewan in a variety of exhibition venues, including the joint exhibition with Henderson paintings held in Regina. These paintings were and still are privately owned. It seems that most of his legacy is now in the hands of private collectors, because they were primarily made as tourist souvenirs.

Mildred V. ley Thornton (1890-1967) is another artist who gained a reputation as an Indian portraitist while she was working in Saskatchewan in the twenties and thirties. Her work presents a contrast in approach and style to that of Metzger and Henderson and has more in common with the work of Edmund Morris, Kihn and Reiss. Born in Dresden, Ont.

as Mildred Stinson, Thornton received her early training as an artist at Olivet College, Michigan and also studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1913 she moved to Regina, Sask. to teach school and married a local baker, J.H. Thornton, in 1915. Some time during or after World War I she studied at the Ontario College of Art with J.W. Beatty and became a devotee of what was then referred to as the "Canadian School of Art". She sketched and painted outdoors and used the bright pure colours popularized by the Group of Seven. In 1926 her twin sons were born in Toronto and she returned to Regina shortly after. By 1930 she was having what were described as annual exhibitions of her landscapes and portraits in Regina. It was around this time that Thornton developed a keen interest in portraying Indians.

Whether this mission was generated by her literary interests (she was also a poet and writer), her strong Canadian nationalism, or the example of other local artists is not clear. At this time there was some talk in Saskatchewan government circles about hiring an artist to record Indian life, and since a cabinet minister mentioned this intention at the opening of one of her annual exhibitions, she may have been inspired by the lure of government support.⁷¹ In 1942 Thornton told a Regina reporter that she had begun painting the Indians in earnest at the time of the World Grain Show in Regina in 1933.⁷² At that time, it was commonplace for Indians to set up camp at exhibitions and Thornton operated a temporary studio on the exhibition grounds with a captive group of models. She

always made a point of sketching her models from life and attempted to complete her portraits on the spot. In 1934 the Depression forced the family to move to Vancouver and Thornton kept up her interest in recording native life by making portraits of NorthWest Coast Indians. Throughout the 1930's and the 1940's she travelled extensively in Western Canada, as she systematically sought out subjects for what was becoming an ethnographic mission. Along the way she actively collected artifacts and recorded Indian legends and lore.

By 1947, Thornton had over one hundred and fifty paintings of Indians and had become somewhat of an expert on native cultures. She made a cross-country tour that year as Canadian Club speaker and gave illustrated lectures on her favourite subject. During these events she frequently dressed in a buckskin costume to add authenticity and colour to her talks. Her enthusiasm about these activities is embodied in the name that she was given by a Cree woman in 1942, Owas-ka-ta-eskean (Putting your most ability for us Indians). The habit or ploy of dressing up like an Indian was typical amongst those who were sympathetic to native culture. Paul Kane, for example, had done the same thing when he was trying to popularize his work. Although Thornton exhibited frequently and often sold her landscape paintings, she seems to have determined early on that her Indian paintings were valuable records and should remain as an intact collection. None of them were sold during her lifetime. Her speaking tours and her job as an art critic

for the Vancouver Sun during the forties and fifties allowed her to continue her vocation. In her old age, Thornton lobbied in various ways to have her collection of over 300 paintings maintained by some kind of governmental institution; unfortunately her efforts were not successful and the collection was dispersed after her death in 1967.

Thornton, of course, was not alone in her interest in the NorthWest Coast Indians and her work is often mentioned in connection with Emily Carr.⁷³ Both women were unconventional and outspoken, wrote award-winning books on Indian lore and worked in "avant-garde" styles. Like Carr, Thornton was an avid collector of Indian artifacts and made sketches of village scenes. Thornton was said to be an admirer of Emily Carr's paintings, too. But, unlike Carr, she was interested primarily in people and ethnographical recording. Thornton's art style was essentially formed in the nineteen twenties and, after that time, she was no longer interested in evolving new art forms. Her chosen subject matter, moreover, did not lend itself to a great deal of stylistic experimentation. Painting portraits on the spot, without the use of sketches or photographs, was already a significant challenge when the models were not professional.

Thornton's paintings represent a departure from the mainstream of Indian portraiture. Aiming for an accurate and fresh portrayal she described her approach:

When I was painting an Indian wearing elaborate costume, I concentrated on the face, making hasty indications of colour and design in the clothing which I could finish later. Rarely did I ever touch the face again, and then only at my peril. There is absolutely no substitute for working directly from the subject in portraiture.

Compared to the work of artists like Henderson and Metzger, Thornton's portraits seem to boldly proclaim their style as much as they do a likeness. Examples of this would be her portrait of *Chief Shot-Both-Sides* (Fig.28) and *Mrs. Siamelot* (Fig.29).

In addition to style, the subjects of Thornton's printings differ from those chosen by many other artists in a significant way. Despite the fact that she was instinctively drawn to tribal elders as more representative of the "true" Indian, she included in her collection a large proportion of female subjects. Whether these were tribal matriarchs (Fig.29), or wives and daughters of important male chiefs, Thornton made records of women who went unrecorded by other artists. Perhaps it was the sheer fact of her gender that drew her to portraying native women, but more likely it had something to do with her sustained contact with native people. Many artists of this era who portrayed natives were essentially outsiders with specific aims defined by pre-conceived notions. Thornton, of course, was not immune to the power of strongly held stereotypes, but she spent a considerable time with her subjects in order to gather legends, histories and information she could report and write about. Because of her sex, many of her initial contacts with native people would naturally be made and maintained through female tribal members. Her

involvement with women's groups and her membership in the Native Sisterhood of British Columbia reinforce this speculation.

Like her other colleagues, Thornton was attracted to models who displayed the "authenticity" of the "real" Indian. She seldom portrayed young people and in her genre scenes she strove to reconstruct ceremonial Indian life. Her choice of female subjects notwithstanding, the vast majority of her portraits represent tribal elders in traditional regalia. Being a collector and admirer of Indian artifacts, she would have had ample sketching material to dress up her models in the studio if they did not present the appropriate image in the field. Although some costume details in her portraits may be concocted, for the most part, her portraits are representations of individuals, not types. In that sense, they were the ethnographic records that she wanted them to be.

One other artist whose name is synonymous with Indian portraiture on the Prairies prior to 1950 is Nicholas de Grandmaison (1892-1978). Grandmaison was a member of the Russian military class who had been displaced by the 1919 revolution and exiled in England. While there, he obtained some professional art training at the St. John's Wood School of Art, as he was an avid amateur portraitist. In 1923, Grandmaison emigrated to Canada, ending up in Winnipeg, where he obtained employment at Brigden's as a layout artist. During the twenties he developed a reputation as a portraitist amongst the citizens of Winnipeg and eventually

gained enough commissions to make a living. In 1930, attempting to find subjects of general interest which would appeal to residents of depression-era Winnipeg, he made a trip to northern Manitoba. His portraits of the trappers, Metis and Indians that he found there gave him a small niche in the tiny art market that remained. From that point on he became determined to specialize in this kind of work.

During the thirties, forties and fifties Grandmaison made hundreds of portraits of Plains Indians. He seems to have supported himself throughout this time as a commissioned portrait artist selling his Indian portraits as a sideline. Nevertheless, the painting of Indians was an obsession, and during the thirties he relocated to Calgary, Alberta to be closer to the subjects he found the most appealing. Throughout this period he lived a semi-nomadic life, visiting reserves and temporarily taking up residence in whatever prairie city he offered him the promise of commissions. He also became a well-known figure to many of Alberta's native people, because he used certain models over and over again and became friends with them.

Due to the erratic nature of his working environment, he chose to make his portraits in pastels and the vast majority of his Indian portraits are in this medium. In this sense, his work can be compared to that of Edmund Morris, Langdon Kihn and Winold Reiss whose work he was undoubtedly aware of. Grandmaison's portrait of *The Walker (Pemotat)* {Fig.30}, for example, has more in common with Morris's {Fig.19} than with Henderson's version of him {Fig.25}.

Despite this, in 1932 Grandmaison, too, received a commission from the University of Saskatchewan for a set of Indian portraits. The University was attempting to continue the effort which had begun with the commissioning of James Henderson in the twenties. This was probably the only time that Grandmaison obtained a commission from an institution for Indian portraits. Most of his work was bought by private collectors and Grandmaison did not solicit exhibition venues in acknowledged art centers. Over the years he amassed a personal collection of his own work which he refused to sell, apparently with the idea of creating a legacy. As his collection grew, he began to develop an interest in gathering information about the subjects that he had been painting and even expanded his range of subjects by travelling to reserves in the Southern United States.

However, Grandmaison's efforts were never systematic and it is unclear whether his motives for gathering a collection were ethnographically inspired or related to the building of his own reputation. His primary interest in native people arose from his attraction to them as romantic types, and it is probably in this way that his portraits should be viewed. Most of his subjects were elderly males, because he was only interested in those Indians who physically displayed the characteristics of their race. He connected Indian physiognomies with their traditional way of life and wanted to show the nobility and history of that life through his sitters. It has been suggested that Grandmaison projected his own history as a deposed

aristocrat onto his perception of native people whom he believed to be in the same position.⁷⁵ Grandmaison's portraits are true likenesses of individuals, but he had few compunctions about adding braids or changing the hair colour of his models. He often gave them items of clothing to wear or changed what he didn't like, so that it would conform to what his vision of the sitter was. His models were paid for their services and probably admired the image of them that the artist was able to conjure up. After all, they were not buying the portraits, themselves.

More than any other artist of this era who made Indian portraits, Grandmaison's portraits focus on the individual faces of his sitters. A typical example is *Chief Shot-Both-Sides* (Fig.31). The faces in his portraits are given a much more controlled treatment than any details of hair or costume, and the eyes of the models often confront those of the viewers. The facial expressions are either imperious or ingenuous, and the format of the portraits is almost invariably one showing only the head and shoulders in the manner of a bust. The vast majority of his models were members of the Blood, Piegan and Sarcee tribes of Alberta, because these people had not yet intermingled with other races and retained some remnants of ceremonial life. This kind of model, was the one most sought after by many artists of the period, they also appealed most directly to those who bought the portraits.

Grandmaison was probably the last artist to depict those tribal members who had been born in the nineteenth

century. He strongly felt that he was creating a legacy; a legacy, which perhaps had more to do with his artistic talent than the people he portrayed. His portraits are now collected by institutions that document Indian life and one of the largest single collections is owned by the Bank of Montreal. It is an ironic twist of fate that a legacy which the artist believed represented his artistic talent should end up in institutions which use and display the portraits as ethnographic documents.

Because the artists enumerated in this last section were working at a time when native people were being assimilated into Euro-Canadian culture, it is worthwhile looking at the career of one native artist who worked in a similar vein. By the beginning of the twentieth century there were many native artists who had adopted White ideas about art-making, and consequently, White ideas about portraying the Indian, just as Zacharie Vincent had in the nineteenth century.

Gerald Tailfeathers (1925-75) was a Blood Indian who was born on a reserve in Alberta. In 1935 he had travelled to Montana with members of his band who had been invited to Winold Reiss' Glacier Mountain Park art school as models. Showing precocious talent as an artist at the age of ten, he was given free art instruction at the school and began making portraits styled after those of his instructor, Winold Reiss. Compare his *Indian Head* c. 1937 (F , 32) with {Fig.21}. Throughout the rest of the nineteen thirties he concentrated on making portraits of people he knew and met

at the art school. In 1939, at the age of fourteen, he had the first exhibition of his portraits at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

The portraits were exhibited under the name of Gerald Feathers, because the people who were encouraging him as an artist suggested that he de-Indianize his name.⁷⁶ It was not until the late nineteen fifties that he again used his legal name on his artwork. This small incident is significant because it indicates just how much discrimination there was at that time in connection with real-life signs of Indianess. Despite the fact that his subject matter was Indians, his artwork was difficult to accept in the White world unless he separated himself from his heritage and erased his identity. In 1941 Tailfeathers received a scholarship to attend the Banff Summer School of Fine Arts and the next year he enrolled in art courses at the Provincial Institute of Technology in Calgary. For much of the time in the forties and fifties he lived in the city of Calgary attempting to make a living as an artist. Finding the adjustment to city life extremely difficult, he eventually returned to his reserve. There, he started a business and did his artwork on the side.

As a mature artist, Tailfeathers stopped making portraits of Indians and began specializing in re-creating scenes that reflected his heritage and the historical past of his people.⁷⁷ During the fifties he began to use motifs in his art that were associated with traditional Indian designs and experimented with a variety of painting styles.

No doubt, he was encouraged by the revival of traditional Indian art that was taking place in Canada in the fifties and sixties. At that point, native artists using traditional motifs and reviving traditional crafts were receiving critical encouragement from the White arts community. Tailfeather's career is illustrative of the changes that were taking place both in White and native society from the thirties to the fifties. When he began painting as a child he was perceived to be a member of a vanishing race, but by 1960 he and his work were part of a vibrant and re-vitalized culture. Native people had managed to free themselves from many of the restrictions imposed by White society on their cultures during the preceding century and assimilation was no longer considered a pre-requisite to survival by Whites or Indians.

Of course, by this time, portraiture, as a painting genre had ceased to be of interest to a younger generation of artists who were engaging with the challenges of modernism and issues of place that no longer included remnants of the older way of life. One of those remnants was the idea that native people were members of a vanishing race. Since it was obvious that this was not true, there seemed little necessity for the mission of making Indian portraits, a cultural phenomenon which had come to signify that very idea.

CHAPTER V

READING THE PORTRAIT IMAGE AND THE PROCESS

With the recent questioning of colonial styles of representation, with the expansion of literacy and ethnographic consciousness, new possibilities for reading (and thus writing) cultural descriptions are emerging.⁷⁸

The information presented in the preceding chapters draws one to the conclusion that Indian portrait painting is closely connected to events in both Euro-Canadian and native history. It began when White artists considered native leaders as individual statesmen with a high social status and continued throughout the period when natives lost that status in White society. The impetus for portrayal of individual natives was spurred on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by the complementary ideologies of a rising Canadian nationalism and the belief that native culture and society was in decline. By the mid-twentieth century, the obvious fact of native survival and new definitions of Canadianism made the painting of Indian portraits an anachronism.⁷⁹

The social status of the Indian was not the only reason for the genesis or demise of Indian portrait painting. The role of art and artists in different regions and at different times also affected the production of portraits. Until the intervention of modernism, portrait painting was often the first significant genre of painting to occur in colonial settlements across Canada. This was because it provided the professional artist with a type of secure patronage. Once artmaking was established in a community,

portrait painting became only one of several ways that an artist could publicize his/her professionalism and ceased to be a necessary forte. In the twentieth century, the portrait's documentary function was overtaken by photography and artists, themselves, engaged with modernism, became less and less concerned with replicating observed reality. Portraiture, as a genre of painting, lost its relevancy to artists and patrons alike as the century wore on.

Indian portraiture survived and flourished long after the demand for painted portraits had subsided, because it was made for so many different purposes. The earliest portraits of Indians were commissioned by official governmental bodies to commemorate the sitter's important status in the community. The reasons these portraits were created differ little from the reasons portraits of any other important members of the community were made. However, from the early nineteenth century on, portraits of Indians were also made which had no other purpose than to display the talent of the artist in depicting an exotic subject. Légaré's *Josephté Ourné* (Fig.10) and William Brymner's *Blackfoot Chief* (Fig.18) are examples of this kind of portrait treatment. Portraits of other members of the Canadian community were hardly ever made for such a purpose, nor were they consciously made as ethnographic records.

Portraits made speculatively as symbols of a social reality or as documents of scientific information differ from society portraits, where the sitter commissions the work and has a certain degree of input into the finished

product. Indian portraits were made by White artists for the White community. This allowed the artist to be more creative than he/she would have been in an ordinary portrait transaction. The artist could manipulate the image produced to conform to the expectations of an audience which did not include the sitter. In that sense, portraits of Indians suggest a lack of power on the part of the model, because native people had no control over what image was devised out of their likeness. This power was transferred to the artist, who did not have to consider the wishes of the sitter in his/her portrayal. For the artist, painting portraits of Indians provided a creative outlet which was not available to him/her in the ordinary portrait transaction.

This analysis would seem to suggest that the native model was used by the artist and received little from the transaction. However, it should be remembered that native people saw no intrinsic value in the portrait as an object. That value was culturally defined by Whites. Native recompense came in the concrete form of modelling fees and in the more ephemeral symbolism of the act of portrayal. The fact that a Euro-Canadian artist wished to portray an Indian could have been viewed by him as a ceremonial form of White society's recognition of his importance and individual significance. The symbolism conveyed by the profile heads of rulers on traditional treaty medals, which many of the native leaders had been given in exchange for their cooperation, would not necessarily have been taken for granted.⁸⁰ The portrait head may have been construed as a

sign of significant power in Euro-Canadian society. One could conjecture that native self-interest may have been served by having themselves perceived in certain ways by outsiders.⁸¹

What kind of image of Indians do the portraits project to Euro-Canadian society within the context of history? The earliest portraits present us with images of noblemen of nature (e.g. *The Four Kings* {Figs.1, 2, 3, 4}) where the trappings of power and signs of race are as much a focus of the artist as an individual likeness is. Whether the figure is full-length (*Joseph Brant* {Fig.6}) or half-length (*Le Dernier des Hurons* {Fig.7}) or simply a bust (*Mah-min* {Fig.11}), it is often placed in a setting which connotes untamed nature. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century portrayals, the subjects are much less animated and the depiction is limited to a bust or a head with little suggestion of a setting (*Pemimotat* {Figs.19, 25, 30}) or weaponry. The change in the general format of the portraits corresponds with the changing social perception of the native people over the course of the nineteenth century. In the early years, native people were still perceived as being actively involved in nation-building and as being significant components of the Canadian landscape. By the end of the nineteenth century most native people were confined to very small areas of Canada's land mass and were understood to have no role to play in nation-building. One generation's visual truth was not another's.

Another overall impression that can be construed from looking at the images is that in the early nineteenth century Indians of importance were much younger than they were in the later nineteenth century (See above images) and, as in white society, all the most important people throughout this time were men. It has been already pointed out that the subjects of Indian portraits were overwhelmingly male. The vigorous men that are featured in many of the nineteenth century portraits, when Indians were still perceived as noblemen of nature, are replaced by aging patriarchs in the twentieth century, when Indians were perceived as relics of another time.

Female Indians, when portrayed, invariably appear as symbolic madonnas {Figs.20, 26} or matriarchs {Fig.29}, more rarely as coquettes {Fig.12}. For the most part, perceptions of their place in native society were so different from that of white society that artists seem to have had difficulty placing them in the same pictorial hierarchy reserved for their male subjects. Portrayals of beautiful young Indian maidens are rare, because it was generally unacceptable for a white man to publicly perceive a native woman in that way. Social attitudes also precluded the representation of them as noble leaders, representative of their race.

The most obvious general observation that could be made regarding the images of the Indian enumerated in this study is that they appear to portray members of a society that remained untouched by Euro-Canadian cultural influences. The vast majority of images depict people with distinct racial

characteristics wearing traditional costumes. In their search for "authentic Indians" Euro-Canadian artists neglected "real Indians" who commonly dressed in European clothing and who, more than occasionally, bore the scars of contact with the diseases of the White race and the signs of their mixed racial heritage on their faces.

While the general image portrayed by the artists is governed by stereotypical views of Indians, portraits, especially those made in the early twentieth century, were made to record individual likenesses of important chiefs and treaty signees and artists went to a great deal of trouble to see these models personally. A comparison of the likenesses of *Shot-both-Sides* by Henderson, Thornton and Grandmaison (Figs. 25, 29, 32) and the likenesses of *Pemimotat* by Morris, Henderson and Grandmaison (Figs. 20, 26, 31) show just how much stylistic handling and artistic focus can affect the documentary value of paintings. These paintings are all portraits of the same individuals, but they present very different images of them.

Portraits of all kinds are made to record the likenesses of individuals and most conform to certain cultural stereotypes;⁸² Indian portraits are not peculiar in this regard. It could be said, however, that the documentary value of many of the Indian portraits is even more questionable because the stereotypes represented are ones that have been formulated by one culture to apply to another. Portraits of Indians are more clearly works of imagination and creativity than portraits of members of

White society whose audience has certain expectations about documentary accuracy regarding themselves. We can assume that the people in them dressed and looked as they are portrayed. The value of the Indian portraits as documents lies more in what they tell us about the belief systems of Euro-Canadian society than what they tell us about native life. Their focus on ethnographic accuracy tends to detract from understanding the sitter as a fully human subject.

Be that as it may, many of the artists discussed in the preceding chapters were interested in creating public records and the fact that several of them sought commissions or patronage from institutions that specialized in these collections would re-inforce the traditional portrait impetus. However, what the artists were documenting was often their society's ideas about native people and the reason that public institutions enshrined these images was that they reflected Euro-Canadian society's ideas about native people. Indian portraits were meant to portray Indians as public figures, scientific specimens and, above all, as recognizable symbols of their chosen country.⁸³

If the images were symbols, so were the portraits, themselves, as historical objects. Portraits were frequently collected by official institutions in Canada because this activity echoed the art-collecting practices of Europe. There, ancestor portraits were frequently displayed in the homes of the nobility and the palaces of the monarchs. As such, they were a visible sign of hereditary power and ancestral roots. The hanging of Indian portraits in

venerable Canadian institutions could be seen to reflect this form of ancestor worship. Seeing the Indian enshrined in the guise of an ancestor icon could help to assuage the conscience of those who had wrested control of the land from its original inhabitants. The present governors of the country could be then viewed as rightful inheritors of the land. The idea of the vanishing Indian, which was so popular in the years of mass settlement, fits nicely into this overall design, since it also served to justify the appropriation of land.

It is ironic, for example, that Morris' portraits of prominent elderly natives were hung in the halls of legislative buildings, when the people they represented had absolutely no say in how they were governed. None of these people ever voted or participated in the formation of the provincial legislatures that honoured them in this way. Their actual physical presence in these buildings would not have been tolerated and they certainly would never have had a position of power in the legislative bodies. Nevertheless their portraits were hung in the same hallowed halls that sheltered the portraits of prominent political figures.⁸⁴

Looking at the portraits as physical objects from another angle, there is the issue of their intended use as scientific documents which has affected their present placement. Many of the portraits, the ones not destined for private collectors, were accumulated by artists such as Thornton, Reiss and Grandmaison as a kind of artifact collection. These artists and others intended that their

work should remain together in a body, not necessarily because it represented their life's work as an artist, but because the collection represented a body of research and documentation. Since many of these portraits are now in collections which specialize in history and artifact display, like the Glenbow Museum and the Royal Ontario Museum they are still presented and perceived in that way. What this means is that Indian portraits could almost be perceived, not only as documents, but as artifacts of the cultures they purport to represent owing to the context they are presented in.⁸⁵

The history of native art-making or artifact production has traditionally been segregated from histories of Canadian art, although efforts have recently been made to integrate them.⁸⁶ Because representations of native people are often presented and viewed as artifacts of those cultures, they, too, are often deleted from or given short shrift in histories of Canadian art. If it wasn't for their subject matter many of the works discussed here would be viewed as aesthetic objects on the basis of style and technique and would be presented in art contexts and discussed in art histories to a much greater degree than they are now. The benign scholarly neglect these works have suffered is not due solely to their subject matter.

Some of the artists making the portraits and the portraits, themselves, have tended to be undocumented and unassessed, because of the origin of the artist and the seemingly innocuous subjects they portrayed. Western Canadian artists,

especially, have traditionally suffered exclusion from histories of Canadian art because they have remained unstudied.⁸⁷ Having said that, the working methodologies and artistic interests of Indian portrait artists often isolated them from their colleagues and peers and prevented them from becoming better known, even in their own communities.

Most histories of Canadian art have been written with the specific thesis of defining Canada's artistic maturity from colony through nationhood.⁸⁸ In this scenario Europeans come to Canada, encounter many obstacles and eventually establish a new society, just as artists arrive with their cultural baggage from Europe, shed it and eventually come to terms with the fact that they are living in and describing a new environment. From this point of view the existence of native people often appears as an obstacle in the path of progress. Historians writing about Canadian art history tend to view artists representing Indians as immigrant colonists, people who have not yet come to terms with their environment. The information in this study points to the fact that many of these artists were, indeed, immigrants, but that the practice of Indian portrait painting has not been confined to the long ago past in all areas of Canada and that it is a strong theme in Canadian painting. The representation of the Indian in all its forms is not an historical oddity. It is as much a part of Canadian painting as the theme of the landscape. Both subjects deserve investigation for their symbolic meanings and the repercussions they have had for Canadian art history.

The revelation that Indian portrait painting was a significant artistic practice in Canada can only be arrived at by using a thematic approach to the study of Canadian art history. The representation of native people in Canadian art is not limited to portraiture, nor is Indian portraiture limited to painting. There are other themes in the same area which require exploration and investigations of them could lead to new and different conclusions from the ones I have reached. A more in-depth study of some of the artists and the images introduced in this thesis is also needed before they can be properly situated in Canadian art history.

Primarily, this study has been concerned with examining the "face value" of Indian portraiture and the artists who created it. It has looked at the images as texts to be read and as objects to be considered, and at the artists, as individuals, and as part of an entire cultural process. Where the images were made, how they were made and what they were destined for are all components of that cultural process. This methodology has enabled me to see the portraits as emblems of identity. The identity they signify is not so much native, as it is White. Painting Indian portraits was one way that Euro-Canadian artists came to terms with the Canadian environment and identified themselves in relation to it.

¹I am using the term Indian in this study because it more accurately describes the image of the native people invented by Europeans and, because, it was the only term used to designate them during the period that this study covers.

²Some familiar examples are: J. Russell Harper, Paul Kane's Frontier (Including Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America by Paul Kane) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971); J. Russell Harper, Krieghoff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); John Porter and John Trudel, Joseph Légaré 1795-1855 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1978); Joan Murray, The Last Buffalo (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1984).

³Quoted in Annette Rosenstiel, Red and White: Indian Views of the White Man (New York: Universe Books, 1983), 178.

⁴Leslie Monkman, A Native Heritage: images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 5.

⁵These ways of thinking about native people are discussed in Hugh Honour, The European Vision of America (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975).

⁶Ibid.

⁷François-Marc Gagnon, Ces Hommes dits Sauvages (Montreal: Editions Libre Expression, 1984), 70-71.

⁸See J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) and Bruce Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1985) for revised versions of the standard account of European and native power relations.

⁹Boyce Richardson, "The Indian Ordeal: A Century of Decline," The Beaver 67:1 (February/March 1987): 30-33.

¹⁰Two examples are *La France apportent la foi aux Hurons de la Nouvelle France*, c.1670, oil/canvas, Quebec: Monastère des Ursulines and *Le Martyre des Pères Lalément et Brébeuf* by Joseph Legare, early 19th Century, oil/canvas.

¹¹This term automatically dismisses the work of the artist from serious critical consideration except within the confines of that genre. As a consequence the work of an artist may not be considered within the context of general trends and currents in a historical survey. This applies to both histories of American and Canadian art.

¹²John G. Garratt and Bruce Robertson, The Four Indian Kings (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985), 13.

¹³Ibid., 142.

¹⁴Ibid., 143.

¹⁵Verelst was a minor European artist and the paintings were secluded in the royal residences for a long time.

¹⁶Ibid., Robertson produces numerous examples in his study, many of which employ the ethnographic inaccuracy of the turned up moccasin flaps first depicted by Verelst.

¹⁷J. Russell Harper, Painting in Canada: a History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 62.

¹⁸Robert F. Berkhofer, The White man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Knopf, 1978) uses this term to describe natives perceived by white people as conforming to their expectations and desires.

¹⁹François-Marc Gagnon and Yves Lacasse, "Antoine Plamondon: Le Dernier des Hurons (1838)," The Journal of Canadian Art History 12:1 (1989): 77.

²⁰A good discussion of Légaré's use of Indians as symbols appears in François-Marc Gagnon, "Joseph Légaré et les Indiens," Journal of Canadian Art History 5:1 (1980):39-46.

²¹Gagnon and Lacasse, "Antoine Plamondon," 74.

²²John Porter and Jean Trudel, The Works of Joseph Légaré 1795-1855 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1978), 75-76.

²³Gagnon, "Joseph Légaré," 44.

²⁴Théophile Hamel, *Three Indian Chiefs Leading a delegation in Quebec*, c.1838

²⁵Cornelius Krieghoff - Examples are *Eclipse*, c.1849, oil on canvas and *Little Pine Chief*, n.d., watercolour.

²⁶J. Russell Harper, Krieghoff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 44. The figure is taken from Harper's estimate.

²⁷See William H. Truettner, The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975) and Ann Davis, A Distant Harmony (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1982) for discussions of Catlin's career.

²⁸Fraser J. Pakes, "Seeing with Stereotypic Eye: The Visual Image of the Plains Indians," Native Studies Review 1:2 (1985): 1-17 explains this phenomenon.

²⁹Ann Davis, A Distant Harmony (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1982), 66.

³⁰Some of these writers are: Ibid., J.R. Harper, Paul Kane's Frontier (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) and Heather Dawkins, "Paul Kane and the Eye of Power: Racism in Canadian Art History," Vanguard 15:4 (Sept. 1986): 24-27.

³¹J.R. Harper, Paul Kane's Frontier, 29.

³²For explanations see: J. Russell Harper, William G.R. Hind 1833-1889 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976) and Janet E. Clark and Robert Stacey, Frances Ann Hopkins 1838-1919: Canadian Scenery (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990)

³³Joan Murray, The Last Buffalo (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1984): 53-54.

³⁴Andrew Oko, Portraits of the Indians (Calgary: Glenbow - Alberta Art Gallery, 1974): 1.

³⁵J.R. Harper, Painting in Canada: a History, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977): 125.

³⁶Ann Thomas, Fact and Fiction: Canadian Painting and Photography 1860-1900 (Montreal: McCord Museum, 1979). The catalogue deals with the relationships between photography and painting using Canadian examples and has an entire section devoted to the subject of portraiture.

³⁷A useful source on Indian portrait photographs is Paula Richardson Fleming and Janet Luskey, The North American Indian in Early Photographs (New York: Dorset Press, 1986)

³⁸Richardson, "The Indian Ordeal," 35.

³⁹Janet Braide, William Brymner 1855-1925 (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1979): 33.

⁴⁰Quoted in Ibid., 33-34.

⁴¹Joan Murray, William Blair Bruce 1859-1906 (Oshawa, Ont.: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1975) contains a photograph of Bruce's 1906 Paris exhibition in which an unidentified Indian portrait is clearly displayed.

⁴²Geoffrey Simmins & Michael Parke-Taylor, Edmund Morris: "Kyaivyii" 1871-1913 (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1984), 16-17.

⁴³Jean S. McGill, Edmund Morris Frontier Artist (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984), 106.

⁴⁴Ibid., 85.

⁴⁵Quoted in Simmins & Parke-Taylor, Edmund Morris: "Kyaivyii", 47.

⁴⁶Marius Barbeau, "Indians of the Prairies and Rockies: A Theme for Modern Painters," University of Toronto Quarterly 1 (January 1932): 201.

⁴⁷Barbeau, "Canada's Early Races Disappearing," Calgary Herald (6 January 1934) n.p.

⁴⁸In addition to above see: Phillip H. Godsell, "Canada's Vanishing Stoney Indians," Canadian Geographic Journal (October, 1934): 179-188 as another example.

⁴⁹Like many of the artists discussed in the next chapter, whose work has never been the subject of scholarly investigation, their careers and paintings have only recently been evaluated. See: Gregory J. Edwards and Grant T. Edwards, "Langdon Kihn: Indian Portrait Artist," The Beaver 315:3 (Winter 1984/85): 4-11 and Margaret Guralnick, Portraits of Native Americans by W. Langdon Kihn, 1920-37 (Middletown, Ct.: Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, 1983). For Reiss see: John Hemingway, "An Immigrant Artist captured the faces of the New World," Smithsonian 20:8 (November, 1989): 172-183 and J.C. Stewart, To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1989).

⁵⁰See for example: Michael Scholz-Hansel, "Indianer im deutschen Südwesten," Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg (G.F.R.) 23 (1986):128-144 in which the author describes the effect of Buffalo Bill's travelling show on south German artists' work.

⁵¹Barbeau, "Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies: A Theme for Modern Painters," 197-206.

⁵²Melissa Banta & Curtis M. Hinsley, From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography and the Power of Imagery (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum Press, 1986). One section of this exhibition catalogue, "Nineteenth Century Visions of the Exotic: Travel and Expeditionary Photography" (38-47) explores the kind of imaging that was standard for scientific photography of people.

⁵³Barbeau quoted in Maria Tippett, Emily Carr: A Biography (Markham, Ont.:Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1982), 140.

⁵⁴The selection of artists used in this portion of the study includes only those who developed reputations as Indian portrait painters. There were many other artists who made them. In Saskatchewan the list could include: Gus Kenderdine, Berthold von Imhoff, Richard Lindermere, Hilda Stewart and many others. The same would hold true for Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

⁵⁵See Maria Tippett, Emily Carr: A Biography (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1982) for a good account of the social situation of the time and its effect on female artists.

⁵⁶Although Maclure is mentioned as an Indian portraitist in more than one source, details about her career and work have been taken from a single article by Eileen Learoyd, "Sam Maclure Built Homes, Margaret Painted Indians," Victoria Daily Colonist (15 May 1977): 4.

⁵⁷Virginia Berry, Vistas of Promise: Manitoba 1874-1919 (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1987), 59.

⁵⁸Deborah Doxtator, Fluffs and Feathers: A Resource Guide (Brantford, Ont.: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1988): 10-14 discusses this concept. In this context, I mean that Chief Peguis is not immediately recognizable as stereotypically Indian.

⁵⁹"Notable Painting: Marion Nelson Hooker's Work to be Exhibited," Selkirk Weekly Record 27 February 1941, 1 quoting a recently published article in the St. Catherine's Standard.

⁶⁰Henderson to Murray, Murray to Henderson, 1924-1930, Gen. correspondence file, J.E. Murray Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, U of S, Saskatoon, Sask.

⁶¹His exhibition activities have been reconstructed from the following articles: "Afternoon in the Couee [sic]," By Qu'Appelle Artist Held Outstanding in Canadian Art," Regina Leader, 29 March 1930; "Artist Interprets Tragedy of Red Men," Victoria Daily Colonist, 7 April 1923; "Henderson's Paintings to be Displayed," Regina Leader, 17 October 1936; "Henderson work Takes New Form," Regina Leader, 4 November 1926 and an untitled arts column from the Bloor Gazette (Toronto), 12 September 1925.

⁶²The one illustrated in this thesis {Fig.25}, for example, is owned by the Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

⁶³Quoted in "Brush of James Henderson of Fort Qu'Appelle Catches Features of Generation of Red Men Rapidly Passing Away - Alberta Indians among Subjects," Edmonton Journal 31 March 1923, n.p.

⁶⁴Grace E. Russell, "James Henderson, Artist of Fort Qu'Appelle," Western Producer (12 June 1958): 19.

⁶⁵Henderson to Murray, Letters dated May 9 - July 30, 1926, Gen. Corr. file, U of S Archives.

⁶⁶Calgary, Glenbow Alberta Museum, Artist files (Henderson, James) Copy of letter from G.H. Gooderham (Blackfoot Indian Agent, Gleichen, Alta.) to W. Graham (Saskatchewan's Superintendent of Indian Affairs) 13 June 1934. Responding to the request for more information about Henderson's portrait of Spring Chief, Gooderham says: "To say that it is a portrait of any particular Blackfoot would be an exaggeration [sic]. I don't think Mr. Henderson intended it as a portrait but rather as a study. It is a composite picture in my opinion. Mr. Henderson had four good types of Blackfoot sit for him. In this picture we note the mouth of one, the nose of another and jaw of a third but "the spirit" of the fourth predominates, and as this Indian was undoubtedly the strongest and finest character of lot, it is only right that we assume that it is his portrait."

⁶⁷Dr. E.W. Stapleford quoted in "Valley Made Famous by Henderson," Regina Leader Post (21 October 1936) n.p.

⁶⁸Lucy Van Gogh, "Father Metzger: Painter of Canadian Indians," Saturday Night (14 December 1940): n.p.

⁶⁹Calgary, Alta., Glenbow Alberta Museum, Artist File (Henry Metzger), Copy of letter from Metzger to A.C. Newton (16 April 1945).

⁷⁰Lucy van Gogh, "Father Metzger".

⁷¹"Government Considers Making Annual Appropriation to further Saskatchewan Art," Regina Leader Post (undated c. 1930).

⁷²M.V. Thornton, "Artist tells Story of Indian Braves," Regina Leader Post (29 July 1942): np

⁷³Reg Ashwell, "A Tribute to a Lady who painted Indians," Vancouver Sun (8 April 1971: 3A-6 and Roberta Pazdro, "Mildred Valley Thornton (1890-1967): Painter of the Native People," Canadian Women's Studies 1:3 (Spring, 1979): 103-104 both make the comparison.

⁷⁴Thornton quoted in Pazdro, "Mildred Valley Thornton" 103.

⁷⁵Hugh Dempsey, History in their Blood: the Indian Portraits of Nicholas de Grandmaison (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1982): 19.

⁷⁶Hugh Dempsey, Tailfeathers Indian Artist (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1970): 20.

⁷⁷Ibid., 17.

⁷⁸James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," Representations 1:2 (Spring, 1983): 141.

⁷⁹Julie Schimmel, Stark Museum of Western Art: The Western Collection (Orange, Tex.: Stark Museum of Art, 1978): 25. In the author's discussion of American Indian portraiture from the nineteenth to twentieth century she touches on the issue of their relevance to the situation at hand.

⁸⁰I am indebted to Jean Belisle, my supervisor, for pointing out the significance of the treaty medal in relation to Indian portraits.

⁸¹Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens, 5. The author points out that it is mistakenly ethnocentric to assume that native people were passive in any of their relationships with Euro-Canadians.

⁸²E.H. Gombrich, "The Mask and the Face; the perception of physiognomic likeness in life and art," in Art, Perception and Reality by E. H. Gombrich and others (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972. 13-16. In his discussion of how we perceive likeness, Gombrich points out that we are often first confronted with the "mask" or cultural stereotype that enables us to categorize or distinguish individuals before we notice the finer details of representation.

⁸³Doxtator, Fluffs and Feathers enumerates the ways that the signs of Indianess, including the Indian head, were applied to all manner of souvenir items.

⁸⁴A point of interest in this regard is the fact that Morris's portraits of Indians in the Saskatchewan Legislative building are segregated physically from the portraits of other Saskatchewan dignitaries i.e., they are situated in a separate hall.

⁸⁵The issue of the context of native art is discussed in James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," Art in America 73:4 (April 1985): 165-176 & 215 and Deborah Doxtator, "The Home of Indian Culture and Other Stories in the Museum," Muse VI:3 (Fall/October, 1988): 26-31.

⁸⁶See Joan Vastokas, "Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources," Journal of Canadian Studies 21:4 (Winter 1986/87): 5-36.

⁸⁷See: Harper, Painting in Canada: a History and Dennis Reid, A Concise History of Painting in Canada, 2nd ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988)

⁸⁸Ibid.

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APPENDIX I -- ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

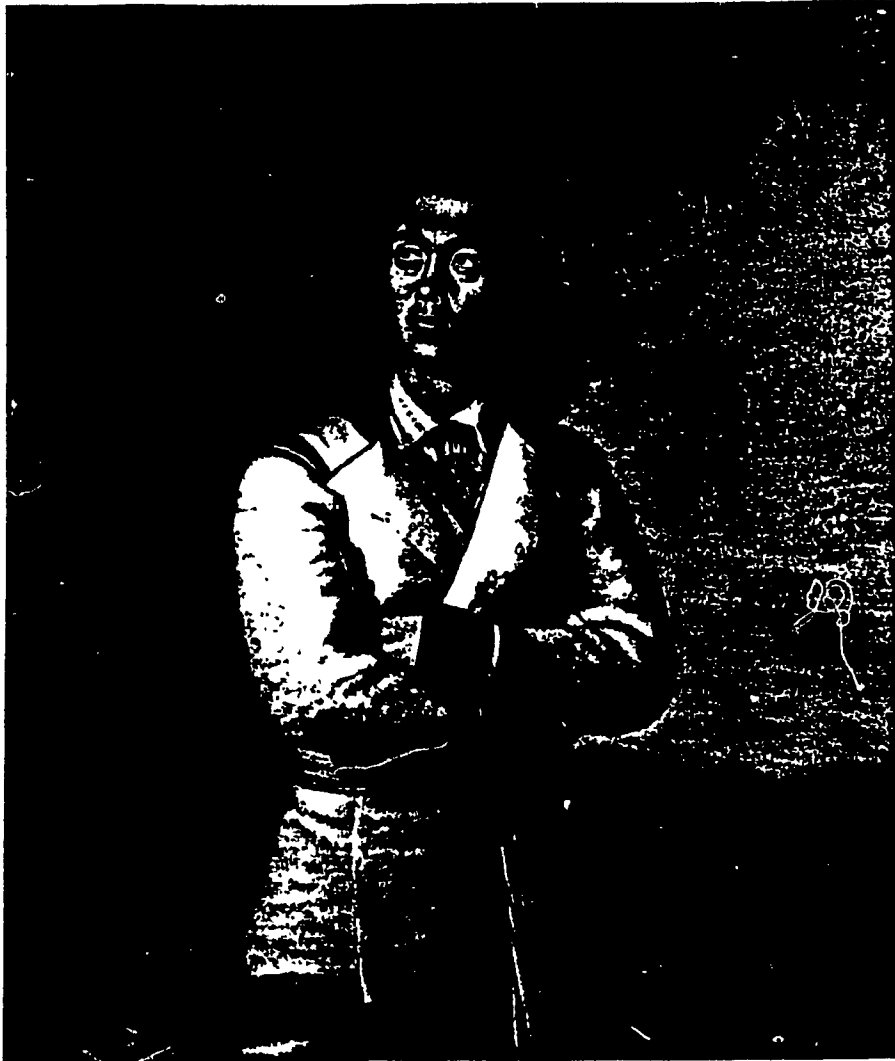


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



COURTESY ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Fig. 12

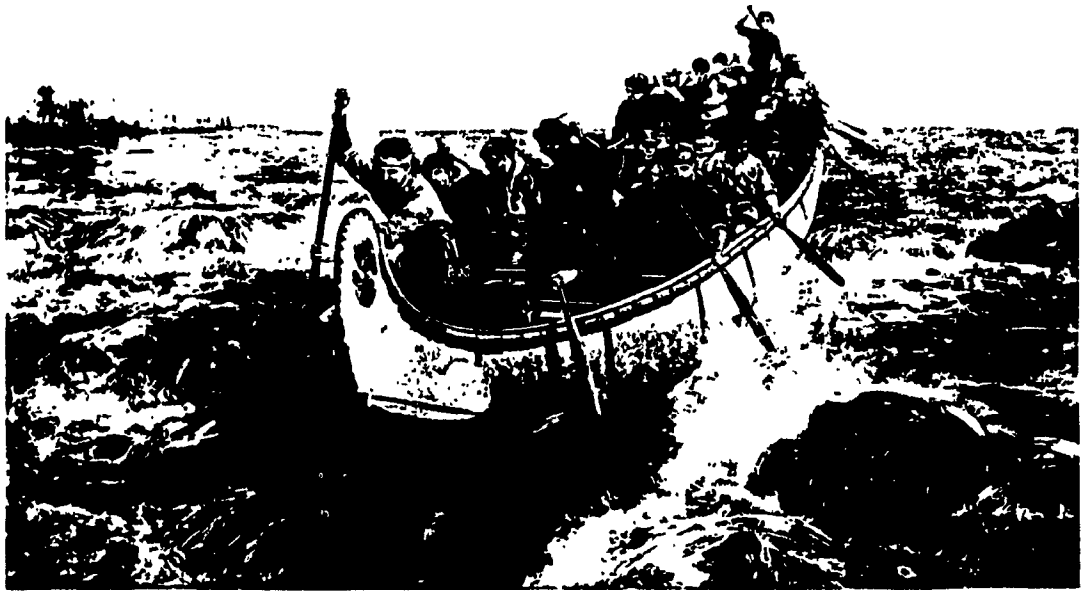


Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



*Suzette, Assineta Indian. Crayon and pencil on cream paper
(40.2 cm x 17.4 cm; 19" x 7")*

Fig. 20



Weasel Tail

Fig. 21



Fig. 22

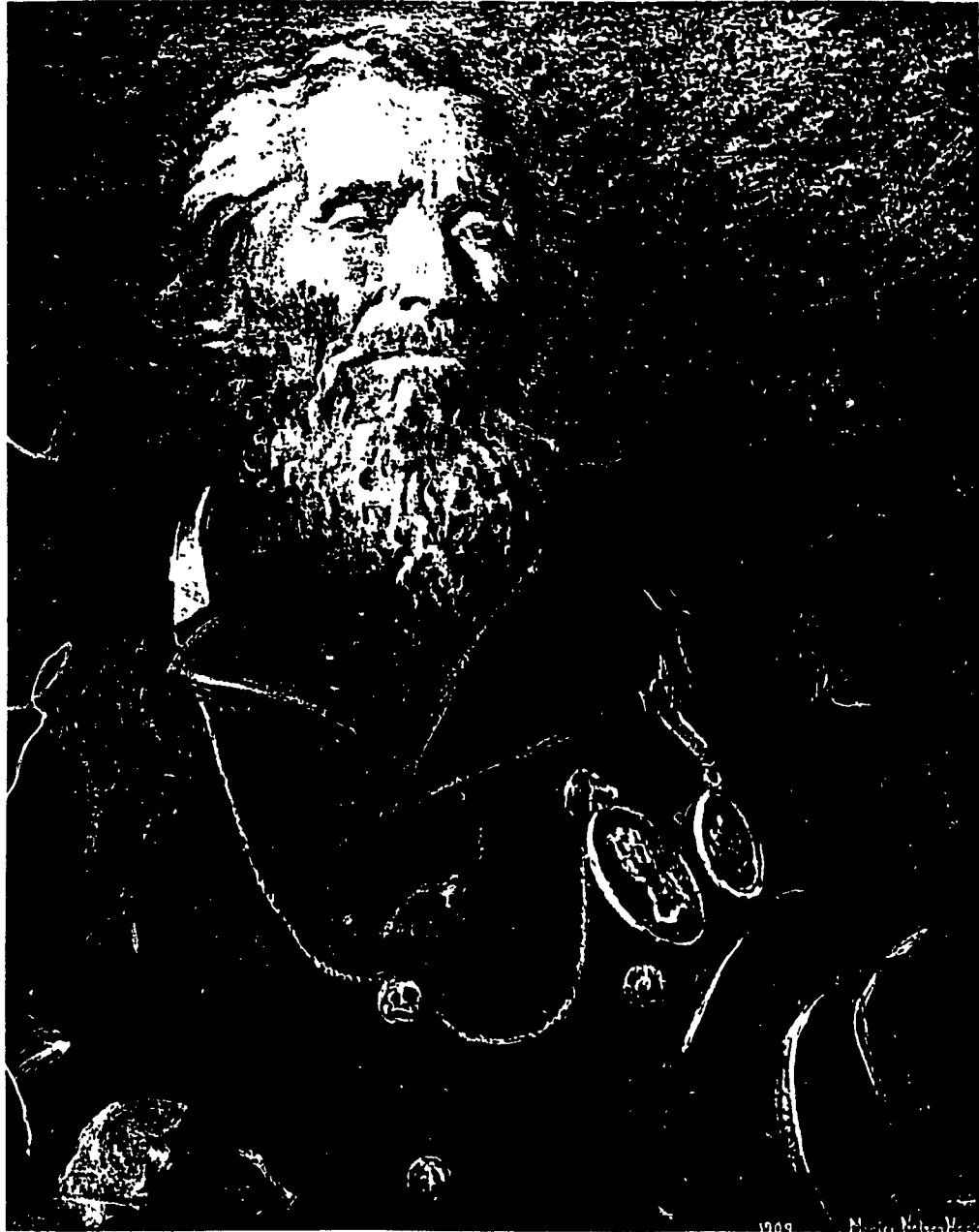


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32