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"Halfbreed," born at Port Nelson on Hudson Bay and later raised at Portage la Prairie where "Buffalo meat was our chief article of food" (p. 119). He trained briefly as a miller, but instead became a trader and later a farmer. Sanderson's autobiographical anecdotes provide an important contribution to our understanding of the social history of the western Métis in the late 19th century. Included is a detailed account of his experiences during the 1870 rebellion at Red River.

Joe Sawchuk discusses the effects on Métis and Non-Status Indian organizations of the recent (1982) recognition of the Métis in Canada's Constitution. Sawchuk finds that a government-imposed identity has "subverted a significant political alliance between the Métis and non-status Indians" (p. 144).

The editors provide a brief introduction, and this issue also includes reviews of eight books dealing with the western Métis.

This volume's focus on the western Métis belies their geographic extent and complexity, and it is unfortunate that two of the authors chose to perpetuate the term "mixed blood" and the notion of a blood quantum. Preoccupation with biology or folk biology distracts us from more important issues: the Métis are peoples with histories and cultures. Nevertheless, this collection is essential reading for any student of the Métis past and present.

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Big Bear. By Hugh Dempsey. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 227 pp. \$22.95 Cloth.

With this volume Hugh Dempsey, author of an earlier work on Crowfoot, has made another contribution to native and western Canadian historiography. Big Bear, as he is one of the more intriguing figures of the late fur trade era, has long deserved attention by a scholar of Dempsey's calibre. This work is more, however, than a portrait of an individual life. Dempsey places that life in its rich historical environment through a reconstruction of the era from the days of buffalo plenty, through treaty

time and the subsequent Riel Rebellion and trials. In the course of this effort, he adds, significantly, to the yet shallow pool of knowledge about Plains Cree history and culture.

This latter ethnohistorical contribution is evident in a number of ways. In a discussion of the annual life cycle, a cycle which revolved around a north-south, Saskatchewan River, parkland-plains axis, he demonstrates the permanent mixed plains/woodland character of the ostensibly Plains Cree band. Some members removed their families from the congeniality of the large winter encampment and left their horses behind in a search for prime furs. Others disdained such behavior and the associated woodland diet, characterizing it as unmanly. This trapline activity represented the continuation of a fur trade related economic strategy which pre-dated horse ownership and the use of the plains in which might be thought the classic fashion. Evidently, the woodland root of Plains Cree culture was not an aspect of heritage restricted to quill decoration and tipi construction but a continuing reality of economic and social consequence. The permanency and the implications of this mixed woodland/plains character should be explored by other plains scholars, particularly those interested in the Ojibwa, Assiniboine and Sarcee nations, to measure how widespread this phenomena was and to what extent there can be said to be, on that basis, a distinct far northern plains cultural model.

Additionally, Dempsey is able to place the Plains Cree in their human landscape. His recapitulation of the maze of inter-tribal alliances and hostilities and, in particular, the paramount fact of Cree external relations—the Blackfoot-Cree wars—is an accurate review of what has been established elsewhere. He has, however, added an important element. He notes, illustrated by a confrontation between Big Bear and Gabriel Dumont, the man who would be Louis Riel's general in 1885, that Plains Cree-Métis relations in the 1860s, and 1870s deteriorated as the vast herds of buffalo declined. The Métis, traditional Cree-Assiniboine allies in battles with the Sioux, were now seen to be interlopers poaching Cree resources. Most intriguing is Dempsey's suggestion that the consequence of this may have been the development by the Cree, in this critical pre-treaty period, of a sense of aboriginality which excluded the Métis. Unfortunately, he neither expands on this point nor speculates in later chapters on whether

that Cree disenchantment hindered Cree-Métis cooperation in the treaty making process or in the subsequent rebellion. Here again, however, Dempsey has pointed the way for further work.

Dempsey, of course, does the biographer's task as well. His ethnohistorical insights are combined with the story of Big Bear from young hunter, warrior and chief to reluctant rebel and victim of Canadian "justice." In its outline, it is a well known story. It is told here with considerable depth and detail, indicating not only Dempsey's sure knowledge of western history and sources but also considerable insight facilitated by his understanding of the Cree-Ojibwa spiritual world and his extensive consultations with Big Bear's descendants and band historians. The strengths and weaknesses of the work are related to what Dempsey manages to add from these later sources.

The major strength and the considerable achievement of the work rest on Dempsey's ability to trace the internal history of Big Bear's band and his leadership across the face of this troubled period. The narratives: of Big Bear's refusal to sign the treaty on the grounds that better terms were required, of the desperate years hunting for buffalo south of the line, of his "adhesion" to the unimproved treaty brought about by the demands of the women of the band and of the poverty, starvation and explosive violence at Frog Lake, chart both Big Bear's defense of his principles and, in tandem, the slow deterioration of his chieftainship as his band divided and buckled in the face of the death of the old ways. This reconstruction is doubly beneficial. Uncovering the internal dynamics of band politics provides the path to an understanding of the Cree decision to go to war in 1885 not found in previous histories which have focussed, usually, on Métis politics, with the Cree thrown in as military make-weights only.

Secondly, it deepens the understanding of Big Bear and perhaps of other older leaders who also, on the eve of rebellion, found themselves ignored and isolated. Big Bear was pictured by the Canadians as an incorrigible malcontent and mastermind of resistance and rebellion while he was rejected, increasingly, by his sons and his people as his policy, a campaign for a renegotiated treaty, failed, and he thus could not find a secure future for them. Nevertheless, it was on his head that blame would fall for the ensuing violence. Big Bear emerges from this the classic tragic figure. Dempsey even points out that Big Bear's intransigence over the treaty and over choosing a reserve became

a problem which, along with bad weather, destitution and hunger, brought on the massacre at Frog Lake.

It is in establishing this characterization, in measuring the scale of the man, that Dempsey does put a foot wrong. Perhaps because of the family sources, Big Bear is made to appear large at the expense of others. This is, at times, unfair and illogical. For example, Plains Cree treaty signatories, such as Sweet Grass, are not wise leaders, who, at odds with Big Bear, see a road to the future paved by Canadian promises, but are Christians duped by their priests. What, therefore, is one to make of such non-Christian signatories as Half Blackfoot Chief or, further afield, Crowfoot? As well, all of this is somehow beside the point. In the end the fate of all the people, signatories and non-signatories alike, was the same—dispossession and powerlessness.

Despite the foregoing reservations, Dempsey's book is one of first rate scholarship and is, for the period and the leader studied, unrivalled in its usefulness. The whole period from 1860 to 1890 is in great need of revision. Dempsey has made a fine start.

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The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century. Edited with an introduction by Peter Iverson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. 277 pp. \$21.95 Cloth. \$9.95 Paper.

In 1974 Vine Deloria, Jr. challenged historians to study in greater detail Indian life of the twentieth century. Too much attention had been paid to Indians as supporting actors in the conquest of the continent between the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Custer's Last Stand. Nine years later, in October 1983, Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., in his presidential address to the Western History Association, issued the same challenge, thereby indicating that only a few historians responded with dispatch to Deloria's earlier reproach. Fortunately, in the few years since Prucha's address, many more books on twentieth century Indian themes have reached the public. As this trend continues, Peter Iverson would add another, more subtle though no less important purpose to his latest contribution to American Indian history: to enhance an understanding of Indian history "as a continuing story. Above