

Saskatchewan's Playground

A HISTORY OF PRINCE ALBERT NATIONAL PARK



Bill Waiser

Saskatchewan's Playground is the fascinating story of Prince Albert National Park — one of more than 30 natural areas that have been set aside by the Canadian government since 1885. Far from being the result of lofty ideals, the park was a political reward to the citizens of Prince Albert for providing Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King with a safe seat in 1926, and thereby allowing him to continue governing the country. In fact, the government overrode the objections of its own bureaucracy to see that the people of Prince Albert secured a national park in the area and with the boundaries that they wanted.

Because of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the park, residents of central Saskatchewan quickly began to regard it as their own summer playground. The visitors who returned season after season to camp at Waskesiu, the park's only townsite, developed a strong sense of community and came to identify their interests and requirements with those of the park. At the same time, the park acquired an international reputation in the 1930s as a wilderness refuge, in particular as the home of Canada's beleaguered beaver, thanks to the writings of the park's most famous resident, Grey Owl. Stirred by his conservation message, thousands of readers throughout the world wrote him at the only address they knew: Beaver Lodge, Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan.

These differing views of the park's purpose have been the subject of ongoing debate since World War Two. From a national perspective, Prince Albert National Park is a unique example of the diverse transitional zone between the prairie grasslands and the northern boreal forest. At the local level, the park continues to serve its historic function as a regional playground for mostly Saskatchewan residents.

Author Bill Waiser brings to life this fascinating story of the park and the many people responsible for its creation and growth. The book will intrigue anyone who is interested in Canadian history, the timely message of conservation, and politics. Saskatchewan's Playground is also an excellent pictorial record with over 125 archival photographs featured throughout the book.

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Saskatchewan's Playground



Map of Saskatchewan and its counties, as of 1991.



Elizabeth Pease at the entrance to Waskesiu campground (I. & E. Pease)

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P R E F A C E

This book realizes an ambition that *Friends of Prince Albert National Park* has long held. *Friends* is an organization that counts among its membership many people who can speak of long-standing connections with Waskesiu and the Park. Until now those of us who have a special interest in the Park have gained our knowledge of its history by listening to tales told by old-timers. Sadly, 60 years after the founding of the Park, such story-tellers are becoming fewer in number with each passing year. Thanks to the encouragement of the late Eva Pease, who recorded some interviews that were left to *Friends*, and to a publishing fund that was created on her death, *Friends* took on the project of preserving these memories, and revealing some archival secrets as well, by sponsoring this pictorial history of the Park.

Prince Albert National Park is not just another national park. It has its own story to tell, filled with human conflicts, contradictions and romantic visions. The Park has had a special connection with the people of central Saskatchewan that sets it apart and gives it distinctiveness, at least, in the minds and hearts of these people. There is something in *Saskatchewan's Playground* for everyone from the old timers to those who are visiting the Park for the first time. We are delighted with Bill Waiser's scholarship and narrative style. There are no dull moments in this story.

Ken Norman, PRESIDENT

Friends of Prince Albert National Park

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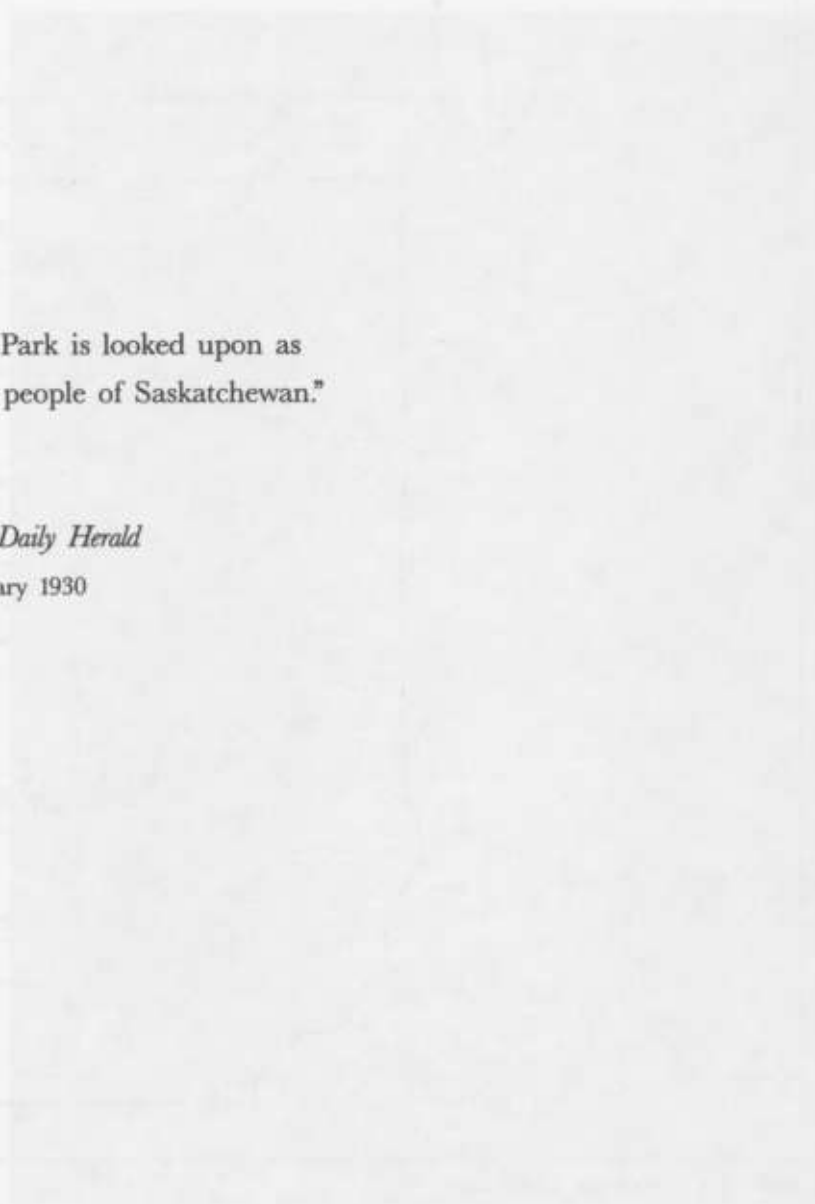
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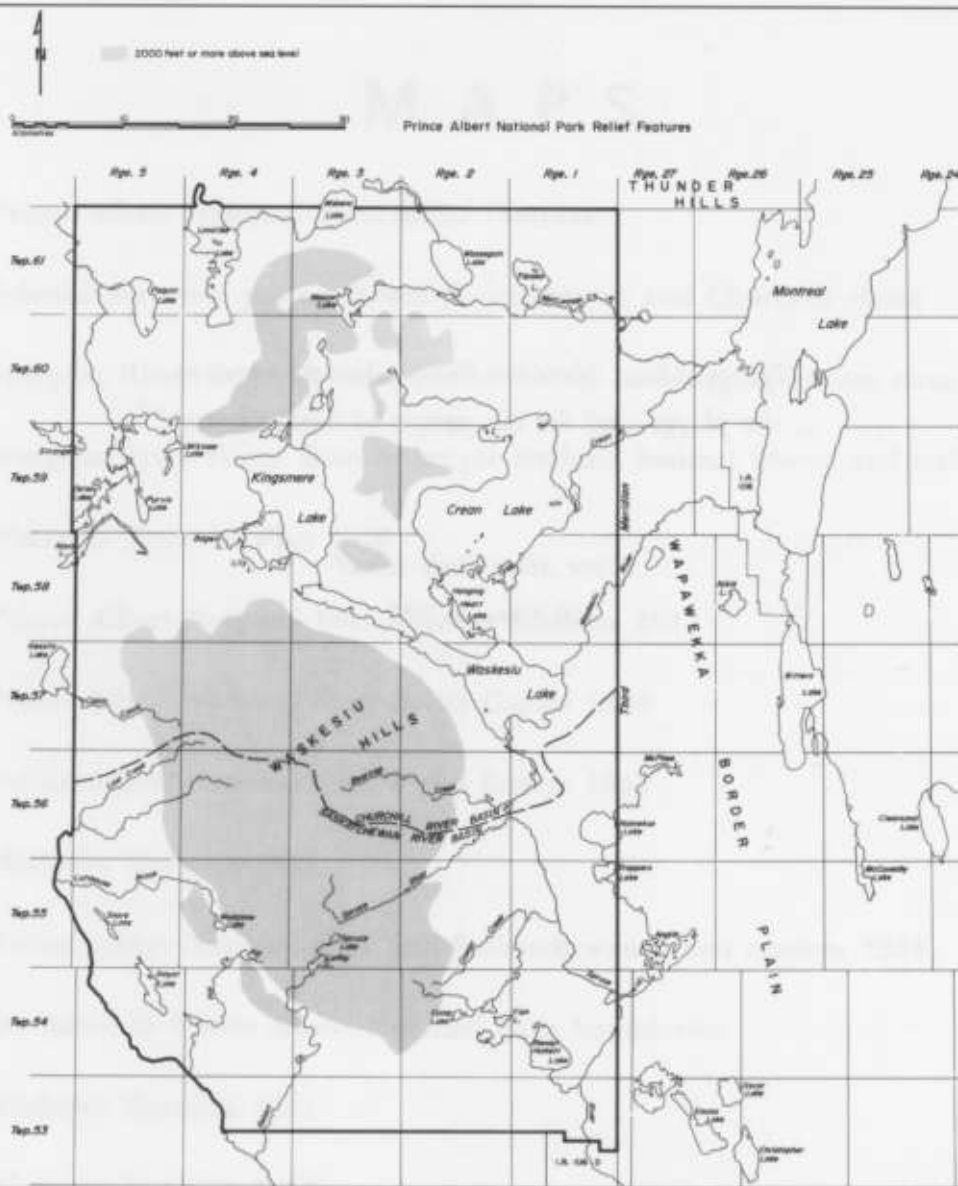
"Prince Albert National Park is looked upon as
... the playground for the people of Saskatchewan."

Prince Albert Daily Herald

20 February 1930



View of the park from the north-west corner of the park, looking north.



Prince Albert National Park Relief Features

C H A P T E R O N E

JAMES BIRD'S VISION

James Bird lay alone on a platform among the trees waiting for Pawakan to speak to him.¹ Finally, after he had fasted and concentrated for several hours, the powerful spirit told him in a dream about his new home and how to get there. Bird immediately got ready to leave Grand Rapids at the northwest end of Lake Winnipeg, and taking his wife, two sons and a nephew set off northwestward along the old fur trade route. Along the Churchill River he lost his way, and so he had another dream which directed him across Lac la Ronge and then south. On nearing Montreal Lake and seeing the Thunder Hills, Bird knew that he had reached the land of his vision. He slept peacefully that night, but the next morning the squawking of the waterfowl on the lake was so loud that Bird decided to call it *môniyâhkâso* (Montreal), because the noise reminded him of white men.

According to oral tradition,² this is how the Rocky or Woods Cree Indians came to settle the region now comprised in part by Prince Albert National Park in the mid-19th century. Mankind, however, has frequented the area roughly in the geographic center of present-day Saskatchewan over the past 4000 to 5000 years. Archaeological surveys undertaken in the park in the early 1970s suggest that small groups of nomadic hunting-fishing-gathering societies visited the region depending on the season and the availability of resources. In the first Narrows area of Lake Waskesiu, for example, archaeological excavations have shown that the site was not only a popular camping spot but that the beach also served as a quarry for the production of quartzite tools. Other evidence of prehistoric activity has been unearthed at test pits on Sandy Lake, Mud Creek and along the Waskesiu River.³

The early peoples who wandered through the park area found a diverse subsistence base, a consequence of the unique history of the region's environment. Some 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, the last main glaciation of the Pleistocene era slowly retreated northeastward and exposed the landscape that the ice had sculpted both in its advance and retreat. In advancing, the glaciers gouged out the basins that now hold Waskesiu, Crean and Kingsmere lakes, and piled up material on the pre-existing Waskesiu uplands. When the ice sheet subsequently



Some of the oldest trees in Saskatchewan are found in the park (credit: PANP).



When the last main glaciation of the Pleistocene era slowly retreated northeastward, glacial till in the form of moraines was deposited in a thick mantle in the park area (credit: EANP).

began to retreat and disintegrate, glacial till, in the form of moraines, was deposited in a thick mantle on and around the central Waskesiu Hills and resulted in hummocky terrain. Continued melting created low outwash plains along the southern and northern edges of the park area, while two spillways (now occupied by the Sturgeon River and the narrow portion of Lake Waskesiu and part of the Spruce River) drained glacial meltwater southwards. Eventually, the Waskesiu Hills came to form the main divide in the park, with waters in the south feeding the North Saskatchewan River drainage system, those in the north the Churchill. With the exception of the central uplands, the park area is a subdued landscape, characterized by low relief and numerous water bodies. There are over 1500 lakes alone, including Crean, one of the largest lakes in Canada's national parks.

Besides straddling two drainage systems, Prince Albert National Park sits on the northern edge of the transitional zone between the southern prairies and northern boreal forests of western Canada. The park consequently features a "patchwork" mixture of vegetation, which has no better representation in any other national park. In the extreme southern portions (latitude $53^{\circ} 35'$), the land consists of gently rolling terrain, alternating between trembling aspen and balsam poplar groves and relatively open, wet grassland meadows. The remainder of the park is clothed by mixed-wood forest, with deciduous trees (aspen, balsam poplar, white birch) dominant in the south, coniferous (jack pine, white spruce, black spruce, larch, balsam fir) in the north ($54^{\circ} 20'$). Throughout this 80 kilometer distance, the understory varies from grasses, shrubs and flowering plants to mosses, fungi and lichens. The southwest corner of the park is particularly significant for harboring one of the few remaining areas of undisturbed fescue grasslands in North America.

The region's diverse terrain and vegetation supports a correspondingly wide assortment of wildlife. Because the park occupies a transitional zone, many animals, such as the woodland caribou, bison and badger, are found at the southern or northern limit of their known ranges in Saskatchewan. Five large ungulates are all found within the relatively small park area: elk, moose, white-tailed deer, woodland caribou and bison. In fact, Prince Albert is the only southern boreal plains park that has a woodland caribou population, and only one of two national parks to serve as home to a free-roaming bison herd. Fur-bearing animals include the black bear, beaver, wolf, coyote, lynx, red

fox, fisher, mink, muskrat and river otter. One of the prime timber wolf denning areas in Saskatchewan is located in the central part of the park. The bird life is equally varied because of overlapping ranges and the region's proximity to the major north-south flyway; close to 230 different species have been sighted in the park. The most notable summer resident is the white pelican, which maintains the second largest nesting colony in Canada on Lavallée Lake along the northern boundary. The many lakes, rivers and streams of the park region are also rich in game fish, including walleye, northern pike, lake trout and whitefish.

At the time of white European penetration of North America (c. 1500), the park region was probably thinly populated by small, wandering bands of Woodland Cree. To the north in the wooded-tundra region lived the Chipewyan, while the Assiniboine occupied the parkland-grassland region to the south. Although the Cree had a wide variety of resources to draw upon in the boreal forest, they did not live year-round in one place but followed a seasonal pattern of movement. In the late spring, they gathered at favorite camping spots along lakes, such as the Waskesiu Narrows, and fished, hunted large game animals, and collected berries and roots throughout the summer. After the fall migration of waterfowl, they broke into smaller hunting groups and departed on foot for their winter territories. At first, they would hunt hares and larger game animals, especially moose, put up winter provisions, and trap. But with the onset of cold weather, activity became severely restricted until the early spring when trapping and hunting — in particular of the woodland caribou — would resume. Following breakup, they would rendezvous once again on the large lakes of the region.⁴

This flexibility enabled the Cree to take advantage of the coming of the European fur trade to western Canada. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the English-controlled Hudson's Bay Company established posts along the shores of Hudson and James bays and encouraged the inland Indians to come and trade with them. The French countered by pushing the Montreal-based fur trade northwest beyond the Great Lakes, across present-day southern Manitoba to the North Saskatchewan River by the 1750s. The Cree and Assiniboine, in response, quickly moved to take advantage of their location to assume the middleman's position and, using the firearms now available from the English and French, expanded their trapping and trading areas

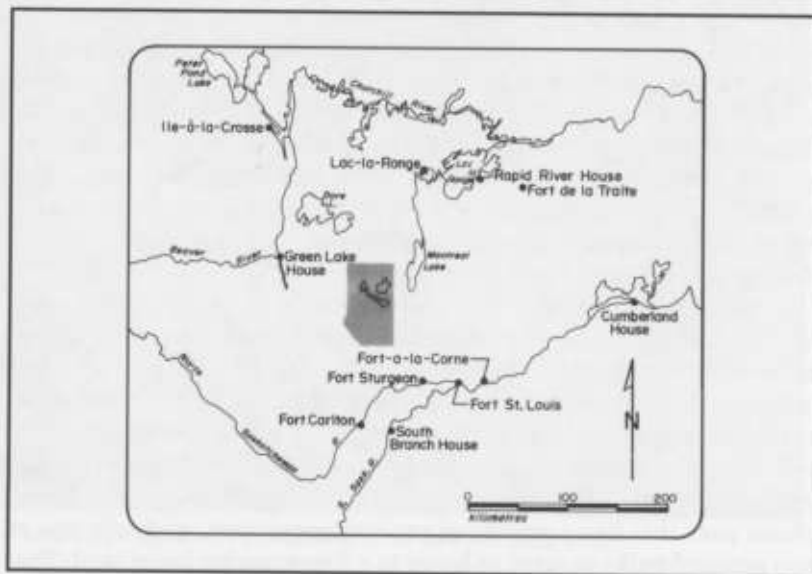
westerly into territory normally occupied by other tribes. This bold attempt by the Cree and Assiniboiné to control the fur trade hinterland led to considerable warfare, particularly along the northern Cree-Chipewyan boundary. In most of these encounters the Chipewyan lost, and it was not until they themselves secured guns that an uneasy peace prevailed.⁵ Sometime in the early 1700s, however, it is reported that a large Chipewyan raiding party defeated a group of Cree along a series of three small lakes adjoining Waskesiu and Crean lakes. Determined to send a message to the Cree, the Chipewyan carved out the hearts of their slain foes and suspended them from the trees that bordered what thereafter became known as the Hanging Heart Lakes.⁶

By the 1730s, the Cree between the North Saskatchewan and Churchill rivers were carrying on a lucrative trade with the English at York Factory and the French to the southeast. This dominant position in the western Canadian fur trade, however, was altered dramatically by the fall of New France in 1759-1760 and the restoration of the Montreal-based fur trade under the dynamic leadership of the North West Company. Backed by British capital and goods and with an experienced French-Canadian labor force, the Montreal peddlers decided to take the fur trade directly to the trapping Indians. Over the next few decades they extended their operations to the far northwest and the Pacific coast. The Hudson's Bay Company, which had operated from bayside posts for over a century, had little alternative if it was to meet this challenge but to move inland as well. Ruthless competition, accompanied by a proliferation of posts — some 600 were constructed between 1774 and 1821⁷ — became the order of the day as rival traders attempted to gain the upper hand. In the process, the lucrative role of the Indian middleman was undermined and the Cree had to turn to trapping furs or providing country provisions for the many posts and canoe brigades going in and out of the interior.⁸

Curiously, despite the high population of fur-bearing animals that the region sustained, neither company established a post within the boundaries of Prince Albert National Park. This by-passing of the region was essentially a result of geography. Sandwiched between the North Saskatchewan and Churchill rivers, the park area was relatively isolated from the two major corridors that the North West Company was using to push the fur trade deeper and deeper inland. This failure did not mean, however, that the region was untouched by the fur trade, for it soon found itself within the sphere of several new posts along

the North Saskatchewan and Churchill.

In 1776, as the North West Company began its rapid march across western Canada to the Pacific, Peter Pond established Sturgeon Fort (alternately known as Fort Pond and Fort La Prairie) near the junction of the Sturgeon and North Saskatchewan rivers, about three miles west of present-day Prince Albert. The site was ideal in that the post was able to tap the resources of both the parkland and the mixed-wood boreal forest. Over the next quarter century a succession of competing posts was established near the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan rivers. At first, these posts concentrated on securing the furs of the region, and violence was not uncommon. In 1777, for example, Indians from the upper Sturgeon River valley (the western boundary of the park) sought to put an end to their mistreatment and killed three traders. But as the fur trade advanced farther inland, particularly after Pond's highly rewarding trip into the Athabasca country in 1778, the procurement of food for the distant posts and the annual canoe brigades assumed greater importance. The Saskatchewan posts thereupon became a kind of pantry for the western Canadian fur trade as local Indians were encouraged to bring in country provisions for trade



Selected fur trade posts between Saskatchewan and Churchill rivers



The Montreal River was used by the Montreal Lake Indians to travel to Stanley Mission (credit: NAC PA169859)

items.⁹ It is not unlikely that large migratory game animals from along the southern boundary of Prince Albert National Park found their way into voyageur stomachs.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a series of rival posts was also established along the Churchill River corridor. These centers, such as those at Lac la Ronge or Ile-a-la-Crosse, were responsible for carrying on a local fur trade as well as for securing country provisions for the brigades going in and coming out from the Athabasca country. And like their counterparts near the forks of the Saskatchewan, these posts probably drew the northern part of the park region into the fur trade. Indians from the Lac la Ronge region could have visited the area to trap furs or secure fish, waterfowl and game animals. It is also quite possible that traders themselves passed through the present-day park area while traveling between posts on the two major rivers. In January 1776, Norwester Alexander Henry the elder walked overland through the boreal forest from Beaver Lake, north of Cumberland, to Sturgeon Fort. Two decades later, David Thompson traveled between the Churchill and Saskatchewan rivers via Green Lake, just west of the park.¹⁰



Montreal Lake Indians en route to Stanley Mission (credit: PANP 03-14)

In 1821, the intense fur trade rivalry was brought to an end with the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. Economy, consolidation and rationalization replaced the chaotic, almost ruinous, practices of the past half century. The decades of commercial warfare, however, had taken their toll. In many parts of the parkland and adjacent boreal forest, the numbers of high quality furs and large migratory game animals, such as elk and buffalo, had been severely depleted. The once profitable Lac la Ronge post, for example, was abandoned in 1830 because of the poor fur returns. Some woodland Indians, therefore, moved to different areas where the fur and game resources were more favorable. Others chose to live in the same territory year-round, trying to exist on the fish and smaller game of the boreal forest. They also continued to trap to secure the trade goods that had now become a necessity and food items to supplement their diet. Indeed, following the closure of the Lac la Ronge post, the Indians of the region were in such desperate shape that the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to open a post at Stanley Mission.¹¹

When James Bird ("Crooked Finger" or "Che We Che Chap" in Cree) brought his family to the Montreal Lake area in the mid-19th century, he found a region that had been relatively untouched by the



The First Narrows area of Lake Waskesiu, September 1927. The Hudson's Bay Company post was located on the south side of the Narrows (left), while free trader Jimmy Stevenson's store was near the Cree village on the north side. (credit: NAC PA164493)

fur trade. He was soon followed by other Cree from the Lac la Ronge area, and the Montreal Lake settlement gradually grew. It was also only a matter of time before the Indians began to penetrate the park area by ascending the MacLennan, Crean, Waskesiu and Bittern rivers. Here, they found a land teeming with game and fish, so much so that Bird and a small group took up residence in the first Narrows area of Lake Waskesiu. Today he lies buried in a long-forgotten cemetery atop a sandy bluff on the north side of the Narrows.¹²

The Cree developed an intimate knowledge of the land and its resources, including one animal that was new to them. Stalking what he believed to be a moose in the Shady Lake area, Bird shot his first elk. Never having seen the animal before, he hurried home to the Narrows in morbid fear that something dreadful was going to happen. When to his relief he learned that it was an elk, he named the huge lake on which he lived, "Waskesiu" or "Red Deer," in recognition of the event. The Cree also developed their own legends about the region. They believed that the waters of Crean (Big Trout) Lake were inhabited by an enormous trout that would destroy the nets of those who attempted



The Montreal Lake Indian Reserve was established along the south-west shore of Montreal Lake in 1889 (credit: SAB R-B512)

to secure fish by this means. They were also convinced that King Island along the southern shore of Lake Waskesiu was haunted by strange creatures — little people without noses or "Misipisiw" — and they refused to spend a night on the island because of the mysterious hollow sound that came from underneath it. Then, there was the powerful spirit, "Wisahkēcāhk," the trickster-transformer, who lay in wait near a huge boulder in the Waskesiu River seeking to upset the canoe of the unsuspecting traveler. Whenever on the river, the Indians would leave an offering on "Old Man Rock" to guarantee safe passage.¹³

During their first few decades in the area, the Cree took their furs to the nearest Hudson's Bay Company post at Stanley Mission on the Churchill River or traded with runners who were sent into the region. In the early 1880s, however, two free traders, James Stevenson (known by the Cree as "Na kes Ta Quan") of the Prince Albert-based Stobbart and Company and his assistant, a Mr. Goldhawke ("Ka Pa Qua Cha Wew"), set up a store on the crest of a small sandy ridge on the north side of the Waskesiu Narrows near the Cree village. The Narrows location provided the traders with instant customers as well as a commanding position on the lake, and the business flourished.

In 1886, the Hudson's Bay Company became alarmed about Stevenson's activity and the amount of trade that he was siphoning away; the independent trader operated another post at the northern end of Montreal Lake in addition to the one on Red Deer (Waskesiu). Company officials decided to challenge Stevenson on his own ground, and in December 1886 Charles Garson was dispatched from Green Lake to establish a temporary post on the south side of the Narrows, just across from Stevenson's store. The outpost's first year of operation was a miserable one. Garson followed the Indian trapping parties from camp to camp, only to find that they were reluctant to trade because of the higher prices that Stevenson was offering. The Company was determined to maintain a presence in the area, however, and kept the Red Deer post in operation until the early 1890s.¹⁴

What with the Indian village and competing fur trade posts, the 1880s were the heyday of the Narrows area, and it seemed that the site was destined to become a permanent settlement. According to the 1888 *McPhillips' Directory*, 16 men were reported living at Red Deer — Indians, mixed bloods and whites.¹⁵ When their wives and families are accounted for, there may have been as many as 50 people living there.

Two important events, however, limited the region's future growth. On 11 February 1889, a bitterly cold day, the Montreal Lake and Lac la Ronge bands under the respective leadership of William Charles and James Roberts¹⁶ signed an adhesion to Treaty Number Six (1876) at Molanosa (*Montreal Lake, Northern Saskatchewan*) on the northeast shore of Montreal Lake. Concerned that their rights in the region be formally acknowledged and protected in the face of increasing white settlement, the Cree willingly entered into an agreement with the Crown. They could not, however, agree on the location of the reserve: some wanted it at the Waskesiu Narrows, others at Montreal Lake. Given the nature of the season, the matter was left in abeyance until later that September when surveyor A.W. Ponton arrived. A vote was then taken among the Cree that decided the issue in favor of Montreal Lake, and Ponton immediately began laying out the reserve (Number 106) along the southeastern shore.¹⁷

Further incentive to settle in the Montreal Lake area was provided when the Hudson's Bay Company adopted a new route for supplying the posts of the Cumberland district of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Anxious to take advantage of the arrival of the railway at



Hudson's Bay Company Montreal Lake depot, c. 1900 (credit: Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba 1987/363-M-42)

Prince Albert, the Company in 1890 sent a small load of provisions overland by cart to Montreal Lake and then by inland boat to Rapid River. The results of this experiment were promising, and the following season the Company shipped all of the district's supplies north from Prince Albert and established a large depot on the southwest shore of Montreal Lake.¹⁸ This new post made the one at Red Deer (Waskesiu) expendable, and it was closed in 1893 in favor of a smaller outpost at Poplar Creek on the northeast shore of Kingsmere, which served the northeast portion of the park area. The returns remained poor, however, thanks to the competition from independent traders and the declining fur stocks of the region, and it too was abandoned around 1896.¹⁹

A large portion of the new HBC supply route went through Prince Albert National Park. Entering the present-day southeast corner from Prince Albert, the freight trail followed the Spruce River northward and then skirted around the west side of Shady Lake before turning northeast for Montreal Lake. The blazing of this trail effectively undermined the future of the Narrows; in fact, a new settlement soon began to take shape on Mud Creek, between Shady and Waskesiu lakes, where



Hudson's Bay Company Manager's family, Montreal Lake post, 1908 (credit: NAC PA44540)

the trail veered northeastward for Montreal Lake. At the same time, if it had not been for the people and the competing posts at the Narrows, the new trail might have by-passed the park area entirely in favor of a more direct route to Montreal Lake.

Although the establishment of the Montreal Lake reserve and a new freight trail through the region tended to focus activity in the Montreal Lake area, the Cree still considered the park as part of their hunting, fishing and trapping grounds, and continued to frequent the area. Many of the Indians, meanwhile, who had voted in favor of a reserve in the Narrows area declined to take up residence at Montreal Lake despite repeated coaxings, and continued to live at small settlements along the shores of the larger lakes. Moses Bird, a descendant of James Bird, for example, lived at the west end of Waskesiu, the north end of Kingsmere, the north and south side of Pease Narrows and finally, Clare Lake. His brother Samuel lived at various points around Crean, including the large island.²⁰ Nor was the region forgotten by fur traders. In 1901 Revillon Frères, a French fur company, opened a district office in Prince Albert and over the next three years established a number of posts in northern Saskatchewan in direct competition with the Hudson's Bay Company. One of these new posts was located on



Eighty-nine-year-old Allan Nichols lived with his maternal grandfather, Moses Bird, at the north end of Kingsmere Lake near Poplar Creek in the 1900s (credit: M. Syrotek, June 1988)



St. Joseph's Anglican Mission, Montreal Lake Indian Reserve, 1926 (credit: NAC PA 20073)

a point on the north side of the Waskesiu Narrows. It did not last long and was abandoned by Revillon Frères in favor of serving the area from its Montreal Lake post.²¹

By the beginning of the 20th century, the region that would eventually constitute Prince Albert National Park was still a little known area. Although people had frequented the region for several millennia, it was not until the mid-19th century that the Woodland Cree settled there. It was also an area that had escaped the worst years of the fur trade. Lying between the two major transportation corridors, the North Saskatchewan and the Churchill, the resources of the region had not been as severely depleted as they had in other parts of the parkland and boreal forest. The Cree who occupied the region consequently found a relatively untouched, pristine wilderness, rich in game and other resources. It is a period fondly remembered today by Cree elders as the happiest years of their lives.²² The park area did not, however, become the main area of Cree settlement; because of the establishment of the reserve at Montreal Lake, Indian activity tended to be focused there.

This isolation of the park region was soon to be disturbed. To the south, tens of thousands of immigrants were pouring into the region and taking up homesteads or peopling the cities. In particular, the great agricultural promise of the parkland — the so-called “fertile belt” — was finally being realized and settlement edged steadily northward. The resources of the boreal forest took on new meaning as urban centers along the northern edge of the parkland saw a wonderful opportunity to prosper by supplying the needs of the settlement boom. The park region was about to enter a new phase of development, a phase that threatened to change the face of the area dramatically.



The Dominion Forestry Service cabin at Primeau's Landing, Lake Waskesiu, 1926 (credit: I. Merrell)

C H A P T E R T W O

PRINCE ALBERT AND
THE NEW NORTHWEST

Prince Albert's story has been called "a tragedy."¹ Founded in 1866 near the forks of the North and South Saskatchewan rivers by Presbyterian missionary James Nisbet, the settlement named in honor of Queen Victoria's late consort seemed destined for greatness. By 1874 it was already a thriving agricultural community, some 300 strong, of mostly Scottish settlers. Seven years later, its population had increased tenfold and it appeared well on its way to becoming the prairie's leading urban center. Although nearby Battleford had been recently designated the new capital of the North-West Territories (neither Regina nor Saskatoon existed at the time), Prince Albert was confident that the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway would tip the scales in its favor. But the railroad never arrived. In one of the most controversial decisions in western Canadian history, the proposed route along the North Saskatchewan River was abandoned in the spring of 1881 in favor of sending the mainline across the southern prairies. The once great hopes of Prince Albert were never realized; instead, the city that at one time expected to surpass Winnipeg was reduced overnight to an economic backwater.

The rerouting of the CPR caused Prince Albert to languish for a decade. Although still an important distribution and service center, it found itself 200 miles north, and not at the heart, of the western settlement frontier. Without a rail link, it could only watch helplessly as development passed it by and its population slipped to 1000. In 1891, however, the arrival of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway from Regina lifted Prince Albert out of its economic doldrums. The line provided a much-needed outlet for the region's agricultural produce, rekindling some of the earlier expectations for the city. It also prompted local entrepreneurs to take advantage of Prince Albert's proximity to the boreal forest by diversifying the city's economic base. The tapping of this northern region had been going on for several years on a relatively small scale. The prospect of supplying southern markets, particularly in the United States, however, sharply increased the level and extent of this usage. If Prince Albert could not be at the center of

western agricultural development, it could at least become the base from which northern resources were exploited and shipped to southern communities.

Fishing received an immediate boost from the coming of the railway. By 1893 so many fishermen were vying for the whitefish, trout, pickerel and pike of the northern lakes that the federal department of Fisheries posted a Fisheries Overseer at Prince Albert, who took steps to limit by permit the number of fishermen and to ensure that fishing regulations were being observed by the appointment of fishery officers or guardians. The government was concerned that the northern lakes could not support a commercial fishery as well as continue to meet the needs of the local Indian population. It therefore tried to strike a balance between the conflicting interests: it repeatedly refused to license large commercial operations, while at the same time denying a request from the Montreal Lake band to secure exclusive fishing rights to one of the lakes in the region.²

A significant portion of the Prince Albert fishery was centered on the large lakes in or near present-day Prince Albert National Park. In fact, Crean and Kingsmere were known at the time as Big Trout and Little Trout lakes, respectively. The men who fished these lakes were



Fish from the park lakes was freighted by sleigh to Prince Albert in the 1890s (credit: SAB R-B165)

mostly from Prince Albert; only a handful were local residents. They operated on the basis of an annual domestic permit that limited them to the use of one gill-net on one particular lake for a fixed season (December to March). Usually working in teams of three, they would stretch a five-inch mesh net under the ice to a maximum length of 300 yards. The next day, starting at dawn, their catch was hauled in, immediately gutted, and packed frozen in small knock-down wooden crates ready for freighting by sleigh to Prince Albert.

By the turn of the century, the lakes of the park region were being heavily worked. In 1898, for example, more than one-third of a million pounds of fish were caught in Montreal, Red Deer (Waskesiu), Big and Little Trout (Crean and Kingsmere), and Pelican (Lavallée) lakes; 15 tons were taken in one 15-day period!³ The 100 or more fishermen toiling on these lakes were paid an on-ice price of two-and-a-half cents per pound for dressed whitefish and one-and-a-half for trout. This was all the market could afford. Because of high freight rates, the large commercial buyers in Prince Albert made little profit on the fish export business and temporarily gave up on it in 1901. For the next few years, fishing of the northern lakes was limited to supplying the local market. A few local firms did nonetheless come to dominate the northern fishery by amassing a number of domestic licenses under their control.⁴

Lumbering also experienced phenomenal growth during this period, quickly emerging as Prince Albert's leading industry. Situated on the southern edge of the boreal forest, with its virgin stands of white spruce that measured three feet across and 100 feet in height, local lumber companies were in an ideal position to harvest this resource. And they did so with a brutal efficiency that is truly numbing. Whereas a mere 8000 logs had been cut during the winter of 1878-1879, this figure climbed to 3.6 million board feet (1'x1'x1') in 1900. Four years later, when production topped 15 million board feet, Prince Albert mills accounted for 16% of western Canadian lumber production.⁵ What fuelled this indiscriminate assault on the northern forest was a settlement boom that swept across the prairies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It appeared that the great designs for western Canada were finally being realized. Lumber companies responded to the seemingly limitless demand by increasing their production as rapidly as possible. They would sweep into a region, cut the best trees, and then move on farther north. There was no thought about the possible long-term

consequences — clean up and clear out was the undisputed philosophy of the day. All the federal department of Interior was prepared to do was establish a forestry branch office in Prince Albert and try to limit the worst practices of the industry.



The Prince Albert Lumber Company's mill in Prince Albert (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

The two major players in the Prince Albert-based lumber trade were the Saskatchewan Lumber Company and the Prince Albert Lumber Company. Between them, they leased the majority of the timber berths that the federal government had set aside north of Prince Albert. The Saskatchewan Lumber Company (later the Big River Lumber Company) was an entirely local concern. It was owned and operated by Cowan, Sanderson and Moore of Prince Albert, and had initially dominated the industry. It was soon surpassed, however, by the activities of the American-controlled Prince Albert Lumber Company. Together these two companies, along with others, pushed the timber frontier steadily northward, so that by 1906 it reached the southern boundary of the park area. Six years later, the Prince Albert Lumber Company was reported to have a virtual stranglehold on the area; it employed 2200 men in 14 camps (nine of which were located in the park area), and harvested an estimated 50 million board feet.⁶



The interior of a lumber camp dining hall (credit: SAB RA4616)

Because of the intensive fishing and lumbering activity in the park area, the crude trail that the Hudson's Bay Company had pushed through the region to Montreal Lake developed into a major winter freight route by the mid-1890s. It was used for provisioning northern posts and communities beyond Montreal Lake, for supplying the various lumber camps in the district, and for hauling fish southward to Prince Albert. Freighters therefore traveled in steady numbers — sometimes caravans — from Prince Albert through the park region to Montreal Lake, resting at a series of overnight stopping places established at roughly 20 mile intervals along the way.⁷

One of the largest of these stopping places was "The Forks." Located on Mud Creek at the north end of Shady Lake where the Montreal Lake trail was joined by a western lateral to Big River (the present-day 57 Trail), it handled a considerable volume of freight going east-west as well as north-south. It had also assumed the Waskesiu Narrows' role as a kind of local headquarters for fishermen, trappers and traders working in the area. The Forks was consequently a sizeable settlement, consisting of the two-room log cabin, bunkhouse and stables normally associated with a stopping place, as well as a number of crudely built log shanties and sheds. There was even a small graveyard surrounded by a picket fence. It never acquired any permanency, however, because the site was occupied only during the winter months of the year, when fishing and logging were underway and the freight sleighs were running. In fact, during the summer the trail was largely impassable because of the prevalence of muskeg and deadfalls.⁸

There was a good possibility in the early 20th century that the Montreal Lake trail might become a colonization road for the region. As the lands along the North Saskatchewan were taken up, Canadian interest turned to the north as an area of potential development. There was a widespread belief that the limits of the settlement frontier existed only in men's imagination — anything seemed possible, as the country enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic growth. In response to this growing interest in the resources of the Northwest, the Canadian Senate decided in 1907 to examine the issue by means of a special committee of inquiry. Headed by Thomas Osborne Davis, a Prince Albert merchant who had represented the District of Saskatchewan in the House of Commons from 1896 to 1904 before being called to the Senate, the committee heard from a number of northern residents who declared that the region's agricultural prospects were

unrivaled. And what was not suitable for farming could be used for mining or forestry.⁹



The cover of Frank Crean's highly laudatory report on the region north of Prince Albert (credit: University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections).

As a direct consequence of the Senate committee's hearings, the department of the Interior sent Frank Crean, a civil engineer, on a two-year investigation (1908-1909) of the settlement potential of the lands lying between Prince Albert and the Churchill River and between Montreal Lake and the Athabasca River. This was the first specific survey of the north's agricultural potential,¹⁰ and Crean did not disappoint his political masters. Indeed, he seemed to be imbued with the same enthusiasm that had animated the Senate committee hearings. Crean examined the Prince Albert National Park area, which he termed the Montreal Lake section, in the summer of 1908. Although the land was generally swampy or heavily timbered, he reported that the area around Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake was suitable for farming largely on the strength of a first-class garden that he found being cultivated by a white man just east of the Narrows. "The land is good and I see no difficulty in its development," he observed in his published report, *The New Northwest*. "I fancy this country might profitably be surveyed and opened

for settlement."¹¹ Crean was equally impressed with the agricultural potential of the Pelican Lake (Lavallée) region in the present-day northwest corner of the park. Here, he came across the Métis Louis Lavallée and his family. Originally from the Cypress Hills district, Lavallée had moved north into the region sometime before the 1885 North-West Rebellion, and he secured a living from trapping, fishing and hunting, especially moose. At the time of Crean's visit, he was a trader for Revillon Frères and made regular trips to Montreal Lake. He also cultivated a garden but had no cattle despite the presence of rich hay meadows.¹²

Crean's favorable assessment of the region suggested that Prince Albert might realize its earlier ambitions after all and become the center of a thriving mixed-farming region. This prospect did not sit well with some of Prince Albert's leading businessmen, who believed that the area was best suited for lumbering, not settlement.¹³ The same conclusion was reached by the surveyors who followed in Crean's wake. Both William Christie and Arthur Saint Cyr, who had been sent into the park area in 1909 and 1910 to lay out major base lines such as the third meridian, found little land of agricultural value.¹⁴ Faced with these contradictory findings, the department of the Interior was forced to sponsor another reconnaissance of the region in 1912, this time under C.H. Morse of the University of Toronto School of Forestry.

Morse's task was quite straightforward. He was to determine whether the district lying between the third meridian on the east and the Big River line of the Canadian Northern Railway on the west and between townships 50 and 51 on the south and 56 and 57 on the north should be withheld from settlement and placed instead in a forest reserve. Part of this area fell within the current boundaries of the Prince Albert National Park. Morse went about his assignment in business-like fashion, carefully noting the region's drainage, topography, soil composition, climate and vegetation, including the amount and type of merchantable timber. At season's end, he recommended that only the land east of the Sturgeon River should be set aside as a federal forest reserve. He found the tract to be characterized by rolling, heavily timbered, gravelly or sandy soils, and therefore poorly suited for agriculture, as evidenced by the relative lack of settlement. He also noted that the area contained the divide between the North Saskatchewan and Churchill watersheds and consequently should be protected. Morse's findings and recommendations were relayed to the deputy minister of the Interior



Louis Lavalée, a Métis from the Cypress Hills district, settled in the northwest corner of the park area in the late 19th century (credit: PANP)



Portaging between Kingsmere and Clare Lakes (credit: NAC PA49797)

in April 1913, and the Sturgeon River Forest Reserve was provisionally set aside until it could be formally established by an act of Parliament the following May.¹⁵ In the meantime, the department sought a second opinion and instructed Assistant Forester L. Stevenson of the Prince Albert office to undertake a soil survey of the new reserve during the summer of 1914. Stevenson's findings corroborated those of Morse. In fact, he was quite damning in his assessment of the region's agricultural potential. "It would be very unfortunate," he warned, "if this area were opened for settlement, as nothing but hardship and poverty followed by starvation awaits those people so constituted as to desire to settle in lands that have a better use in forestry."¹⁶



Poling up the Montreal River, 1926 (credit: NAC PA20108)

The new 729 square-mile Sturgeon River Forest Reserve stretched from the Sturgeon River valley on the west to the third meridian on the east and from the line between townships 57 and 58 (taking in most of Red Deer Lake) on the north and a slightly irregular line between townships 52 and 53 (that excluded all possible agricultural lands) on the south. Established under the provisions of the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act (1911), it was one of several reserves, 15 in Saskatchewan alone, that the federal government had set aside across

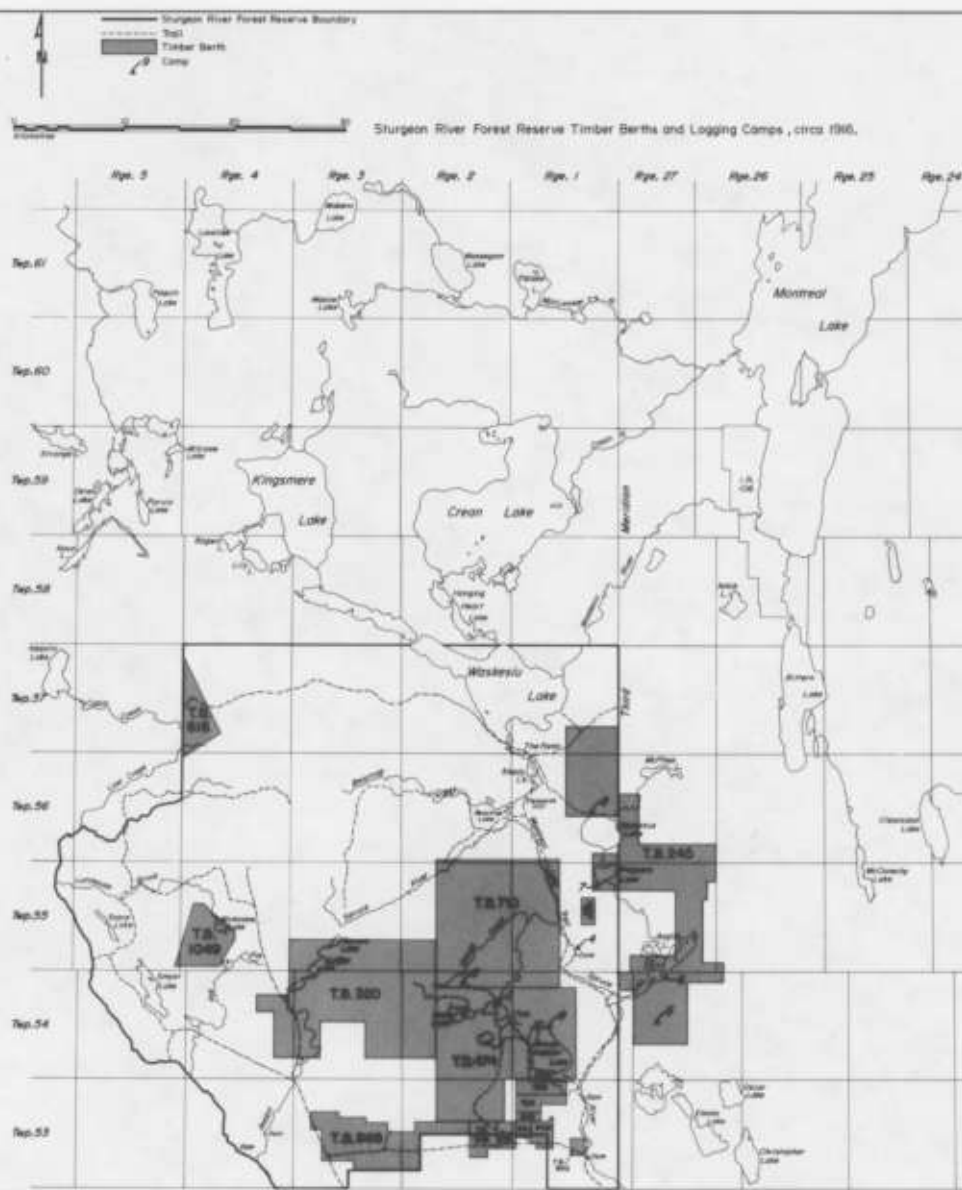
western Canada. Ottawa had become concerned that valuable timber and water resources were being squandered and should be protected through the application of modern scientific methods for the economic benefit of future generations. Settlement was therefore strictly forbidden on the reserves. People living around the perimeter, however, could apply for a permit to use the land for grazing, haying, mining or timber purposes. The fees for these privileges were low. Cattle, for example, could graze at five cents per head per month, while hay could be cut at 10 cents per ton. There were also provisions for the recreational use of reserves in specially designated resort areas, where summer lots were available for an annual fee of \$5.¹⁷

When the Sturgeon River Forest Reserve was established, there were 14 timber berths within its boundaries. All but one were controlled by the Prince Albert Lumber Company. These berths, representing one-quarter of the reserve's area, were not affected by the district's new status, and logging continued unabated. In fact, the Prince Albert Lumber Company acted as if the region was now its own special preserve. Over the next four logging seasons (1914-15 to 1917-18), in response to the rising wartime demand, the annual cut in the reserve doubled from approximately 25 to 50 million board feet. Most of these logs were secured from four large timber berths, three of which were located to the north and west of Sandy (Halkett) Lake, the other surrounding Anglin Lake and part of Namekus on the edge of the reserve's eastern boundary.¹⁸

The Prince Albert Lumber Company's reserve operations were a carefully orchestrated affair. Late each fall, roughly 150 to 200 men would gather at one of the nine camps scattered through the timber berths.¹⁹ Trees would be felled in a pre-selected area and skidded through the bush to loading areas. The logs would then be hauled by horses (later coal-driven donkey engines) in huge sleds to landing stations along the Spruce River, where they would be held until spring and floated downriver to the mill at Prince Albert. To ensure that the otherwise sluggish Spruce would move the logs, the company had cleared all the trees along the riverbank, and by 1914 had built a series of dams near the landing camps along the river: Red River Crossing, McKenzie Creek and Shoal Lake (upper and lower dam). But as the volume of logs increased — 520,000 were hauled in 1917-18 — it took steps to increase spring water levels by damming Beartrap Lake, thereby preventing it from flowing northward into Lake Waskesiu, and constructing



The creation of the Sturgeon River Forest Reserve had no impact on the activities of the Prince Albert Lumber Company (credit NAC PA 12869)



Sturgeon River Forest Reserve timber berths and logging camps, circa 1916.



Stream-driven "donkey" engines were able to haul larger loads than horse teams (Credit: SAB R-A1621[3])

a canal southward between the lake and the Spruce River. This diversion of Beartrap Lake demonstrated the high handed manner in which the Prince Albert Lumber Company operated. Not only did the lake fall outside its timber berths, but the tinkering with the Churchill watershed went against one of the purposes behind the creation of the reserve.

On 7 October 1918, the Prince Albert Lumber Company closed its Prince Albert mill. Two years earlier, it had relinquished its timber berths along the southern boundary of the reserve in order to concentrate on larger berths to the north. It soon discovered, however, that the costs associated in cutting these distant berths were prohibitive. The company decided to suspend operations in Prince Albert in favor of establishing a smaller mill in the reserve at some future date. Then, disaster struck. A fire, fed by the brush of old logging slashes, swept through the reserve in the late spring of 1919 and burned a large part of the forest south of Lake Waskesiu. The blaze was heard as far away as Montreal Lake and left the region covered in ash. Estimates of the damage varied: government cruisers reported that 50% of the timber had been fire killed, whereas company representatives put the figure at 90-100%. Although forestry officials were anxious that the remaining



The landing camp at McKenzie Creek (SAB R-B 10305)

good timber be culled as soon as possible, the Prince Albert Lumber Company decided that the time had come to relocate its operations. It instructed the forestry branch to cancel its remaining timber berths and do what it pleased with the thousands of logs that had been left behind in the bush or along the river.²⁰ That left one timber berth in the reserve northwest of Amyot Lake, which the Big River Lumber Company continued to work until it too was cancelled in November 1921.

In retrospect, the 1919 fire was a blessing. Since 1914, the district forestry office in Prince Albert had gradually established a presence in the reserve by means of a network of ranger cabins, wooden lookout towers, patrol trails and a 45-mile telephone line. But as long as logging activity operated on such an intensive scale, it did not have effective control over the reserve, even though two of the original patrol cabins were located near the Prince Albert Lumber Company landing camps at Red River Crossing and McKenzie Creek. The 1919 fire was a case in point; in fact, it had been preceded by an almost equally disastrous one in 1915 along the eastern boundary. Thus, when the Prince Albert Lumber Company abandoned its timber berths, the forestry service was able to manage the region as had been originally intended. Over

the next three years, the number of ranger cabins and lookout towers was doubled, while the patrol trails and telephone line were extended and upgraded in an effort to cover the entire reserve. In keeping with its status as reserve headquarters, Meridian, in the southeast corner along the main trail, also received a number of improvements: an office, blacksmith shop, boathouse, pumphouse, implement shed and barn.

The cancellation of the timber permits did not mean that logging activities on the reserve ceased completely. In the 1920s smaller lumber concerns were granted access to the reserve's timber stand. A few occupied the former camps of the Prince Albert Lumber Company, or worked its old berths. In 1925, for example, the Red River Lumber and Construction Company of Shellbrook erected a mill at a former company site on the Elk Trail.²¹ Farmers in outlying communities such as Alingly, Northside, Paddockwood and Foxdale also secured cordwood, building logs, roof poles and fence posts from within the reserve. Unlike earlier lumbering operations, all of these activities, whether for commercial or personal use, were carefully regulated by permit or timber sale and restricted to areas where government rangers had decided that such cutting would improve forest growth and insure the reproduction of more valuable species.

Beginning in 1918, the reserve also came to be used by local farmers for grazing purposes. Before then, only a few haying permits were taken out: two in 1914-15 for three tons. But as ranching began to develop in the district south of the park following the departure of the logging companies, local ranchers began to pasture cattle and horses on the meadow lands along the southwest side. The north end of Amyot Lake was a particularly popular spot for grazing and haying and was used for a number of years. Most of these ranches were relatively small operations. In October 1919, however, 400 head of cattle were being grazed near Rabbit Cabin under a single permit to F.C. Flower.²²

When the reserve was set aside in 1914, it was also automatically designated a game preserve under provincial legislation. Trappers living in the district were forced to relocate, usually to the north, while provincial game guardians regularly patrolled the region. Following the First World War, fixed trapping and hunting seasons were introduced, and several individuals secured permits to erect cabins in conjunction with their trapping lines. These cabins, sometimes no more than dugouts in the side of a hill, were scattered throughout the reserve area and were used for varying amounts of time and then abandoned. One



George Neiss and Bud Temple working trap line in present park area (credit: PANP 041-08 [G. Neiss])

of the more famous trappers in the reserve was Halvor Lee of Alingly, who in 1927 held permits for two cabins along the eastern boundary of the reserve near Anglin Lake.²³ Another was James Clare, who lived with his family on the southern shore of Red Deer (Waskesiu) in an area that henceforth became known as Clare Beach. Clare was something of a soldier of fortune. The son of a Hudson's Bay Company chief factor, he was raised and educated in Winnipeg and seemed headed for a promising legal career. In 1884, however, he volunteered for the Nile Expedition to rescue "Chinese" Gordon at Khartoum but fell ill and was left behind. Thereafter, he fought in the North-West Rebellion, followed by brief stints in the North-West Mounted Police, the United States Army and the United States Navy, which included a tour of the Far East. He then came to Prince Albert and entered the fur trade business in the Montreal Lake-Lac la Ronge area, first as an independent trader and then with the Hudson's Bay Company. Throughout this period, Clare traveled extensively throughout the present park area and operated The Forks stopping place for a couple of years. By the mid-1920s he made the park area his home, and besides the cabin on Waskesiu, he had at least one other on Mikisew Lake.²⁴

The other significant development in the reserve in the 1920s was

the growing importance of the big beach area along the southeast shore of Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake. A long-time aboriginal camping spot, this part of the lake had been tied into the Montreal Lake trail by means of a short lateral. A simple landing area was developed and a winter freight trail ran across the ice up through the Hanging Heart Lakes to Big Trout (Crean) and then west to Little Trout (Kingsmere). Although Red Deer Landing handled a considerable amount of freight, particularly as the fishing industry expanded, it initially remained in the shadow of The Forks. By 1915, however, the stopping place was in trouble. With the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway at Big River in 1912, Prince Albert had lost its hold over the commercial fishery of the northern lakes and more and more of the annual catch was being shipped south from Big River.²⁵ Then in 1914, perhaps in response to the creation of the forest reserve, a new Prince Albert-Montreal Lake freight trail was located east of the third meridian. This new road crippled The Forks, taking away an estimated 90% of its freighting business during its first winter of operation.²⁶ Any local freight, meanwhile, was usually destined for the northern lakes and could be just as easily handled by Red Deer, or Primeau's Landing as it was alternately called. The Forks consequently fell into disuse, and the abandoned buildings were burned by forestry officials in the fall of 1916. Red Deer Landing, on the other hand, remained the major access point to the northern lakes and continued to survive on its own.

By the mid-1920s, the southern shore of Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake was dotted with a number of cabins and stables.²⁷ A few belonged to trappers; most were probably occupied by fishermen. One such individual was George Pease. Settling at Primeau's Landing in the early 1920s with his wife Elizabeth and their five children, he built a house called "Shadirest" on the main beach and a small cottage on the narrows (Pease Point) on Little Trout (Kingsmere) Lake. During the summer, Pease operated a livery service on Red Deer (Waskesiu), building and repairing boats, as well as doing some freighting. In the winter, he and his son Alex worked for Waite Fisheries of Big River. The lakes of the present-day park region were heavily fished during this period, particularly since commercial licenses had finally been issued and there was no catch limit. In 1921, for example, 69 men netted 407,300 pounds of fish, two-thirds of which was whitefish, on Red Deer (Waskesiu), Big Trout and Little Trout lakes. The annual catch as well as the size



The Pease family at Shadirest: left to right, Eva, George, Alex, Isabelle, Elizabeth, Barbara (credit: Friends of the Park [Eva Pease])

COMMERCIAL FISHING — 1926

	Waskesiu (Red Deer)	Kingsmere (Big Trout)	Crean (Little Trout)	3 lake Total
Total Catch (in pounds)	189,100	135,200	48,300	372,600
Whitefish (in pounds)	134,600	69,700	23,600	227,900
Trout (in pounds)		35,800	18,200	44,000
Men Fishing	40	26	11	77

Source: NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada
V. 1772, f. PA296, pt. 1.

of the labor force on these three lakes fluctuated over the next few years. The production was nonetheless staggering: over two million pounds of fish were hauled to Big River between 1921 and 1926.²⁸ In order to insure that this intensive fishing activity did not lead to hardship for the Montreal Lake Indians, they were given exclusive fishing rights to Bittern Lake.²⁹

In 1924, a summer cottage subdivision was established in the reserve. It is not clear whether forestry officials were responding to pressure from Prince Albert; more likely, the new resort was part of a general attempt by the department of the Interior in the 1920s to encourage the recreational use of western forest reserves and thereby garner public support for their continued existence.³⁰ As for the site, there was really only one possibility. Red Deer (Waskesiu) was the only major lake that fell within the reserve's boundaries and Primeau's Landing was the only area on the lake that could be reached by road. Besides, it just happened to be one of the prettiest spots in the area. But there was a drawback: the area immediately up from the beach was covered with muskeg and future expansion would be a problem. The subdivision, surveyed by Dominion Lands Surveyor Eric Coursier, was laid

out in a strip immediately north of the landing and consisted of 39 lots in four blocks. Each lot was 100 by 150 feet and was within 30 feet of the shoreline. Two years later, another block of nine lots was staked south of the original subdivision.³¹ This new set of lots might have been intended as a business block, for it included Pease's boat livery. The forestry service did its part too, improving and maintaining the road into the resort.

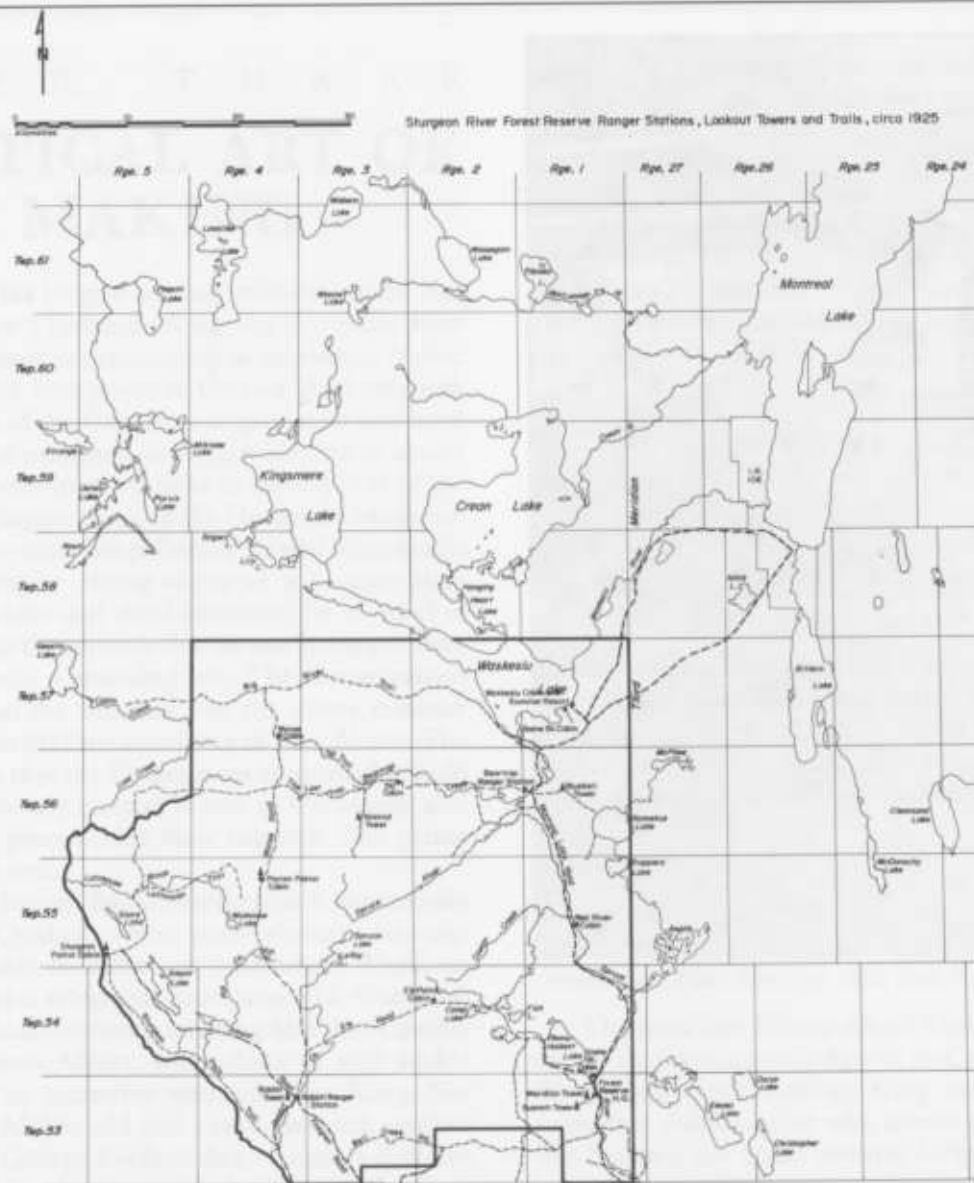
The response to the opening of the subdivision was far from encouraging. Of the 11 lot permits that had been issued to mostly Prince Albert businessmen and professionals,³² seven had lapsed by August 1927. Of the remaining four, only two had buildings on them: Pease's Shadirest and a summer cottage erected by Dr. Wilfred C. Bliss of Prince Albert. The only other structures were a dominion forestry service patrol cabin and warehouse, a game guardian's cabin, and a small wharf belonging to the forestry service. The nearest store was located several miles away in South Bay.

It was a shaky start, but it is doubtful whether much more was possible. The old Montreal Lake road through the reserve was notoriously bad, particularly the section near Delworth Hill, and it took a full day to travel from Prince Albert by car. Recreation, moreover, was just one of the activities carried on within the forest reserve. Although conservation principles underlay the creation of the reserve, the various resources were there to be harvested, albeit wisely. The subdivision was, in a sense, a frill that the forestry service could not afford to promote or develop in any meaningful way. For the fiscal period 1924-28, the average annual revenue from the reserve amounted to just over \$1,000, while the average annual expenditure exceeded \$16,000.³³

The Sturgeon River Forest Reserve, however, did have the potential to become something more. The forest was finally beginning to recover from the twin ravages of the Prince Albert Lumber Company and the 1919 fire. The area, meanwhile, had had a three decade relationship with Prince Albert. The Montreal Lake route, together with exploitive activities such as lumbering, had brought the region within Prince Albert's sphere of influence. Indeed, if not based in Prince Albert, many of the activities in the area were at least regulated from the city. The present-day Prince Albert National Park area came to be regarded as Prince Albert's hinterland. And as the area was brought under the watchful eye of the forestry service in the 1920s, word of its beauty



The first dock at Waskesiu built by the Dominion Forestry Service (credit: I. Merrill)



Sturgeon River Forest Reserve ranger stations, lookout towers and trails, circa 1925.



The Game Guardian's cabin at Primeau's Landing (credit: I. Merrell)

began to spread. That's what brought four Prince Albert school teachers — Myrtle Strangways, Kate Bradshaw, Marion Peterson and Blanche Mitchell, the so-called "swamp angels" — to Primeau's Landing for the summer of 1927.³⁴ And it would bring more. All that was needed was better access, some promotion, a few facilities and above all, status as a national park.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICAL ART OF PARK MAKING

He would become Canada's longest serving prime minister. But in October 1925, William Lyon Mackenzie King was in trouble. Four years earlier, after only a two-year apprenticeship as opposition leader, King had led the Liberals back into power in Ottawa. And although his first few years at the helm of the Canadian ship of state had been anything but inspiring, he had managed to remain in office as leader of Canada's first minority government, thanks to the support of the Progressive party, the second largest group in the House of Commons. In the fall of 1925, however, the otherwise politically shrewd King totally misjudged the situation. Despite strong signs of a Conservative recovery, particularly in Ontario and the Maritimes, he decided to call a general election and reap the rewards that he was confident were his to be had. The results were a stunning jolt. The Conservatives not only won more seats than the Liberals, but the prime minister was also personally defeated in his Ontario riding of York North. The one consolation for King was that the Progressives continued to hold the balance of power in the newly elected House of Commons and that the Liberals could still govern with their support. The prime minister, however, needed a seat.

In the aftermath of the election fiasco, Mackenzie King initially leaned towards running in Quebec, where party strength was undisputed and he could probably hold the seat indefinitely. Then, on 11 January 1926, he received a telegram from James G. Gardiner, the new Liberal premier of Saskatchewan, advising him that Charles McDonald, the MP for Prince Albert, was willing to step aside.¹ The Prince Albert seat was an attractive alternative for King. Not only was it a safe riding — McDonald had easily defeated another future prime minister, John George Diefenbaker — but its distance from Ottawa meant that the by-election would be a strictly local affair. In keeping with his obsession with national unity, King also believed that it was important to maintain and strengthen Liberal support in the region and thereby provide a western counterbalance to his

Quebec power base.² Equally important was the fact that former Liberal prime minister and King's mentor, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, had won election in the district of Saskatchewan (which included Prince Albert) in 1896 at a time when it was possible to contest two constituencies at the same time. Although Laurier immediately resigned the Saskatchewan seat to represent Quebec East, King was not one to question destiny and he probably saw himself following in the steps of his great predecessor. He made his decision known on 14 January 1926, and the next day McDonald resigned his seat and a by-election was called for one month later.



Central Avenue, Prince Albert, late 1920s (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

The man that Prince Albert Liberals pinned their hopes on was one of the most curious figures in Canadian political history. At 51, the plump, short, balding King came across as a genial though somewhat dull bachelor who always remembered to say his prayers. But beneath the bland exterior lurked a wily and at times devious leader who, unlike other ambitious men of his generation, decided to make politics his career. He prided himself on being one of the leading North American experts on industrial relations, one of the new challenges of modern Canada. Yet when it came to action, he

had one foot firmly rooted in the 19th century and would budge only if political gains were to be made. And although his party was repeatedly returned at the polls, King was never loved by Canadians. In fact, he was more at home with his books, his dog and his dead mother's spirit. These quirks did not matter — probably were not even known — to the Prince Albert Liberal riding association. What they wanted was a member of parliament who had enough clout to provide them with the things that they believed had been unjustly denied too many times in the past. Who better than a prime minister, clinging to power by a slim majority, in search of a safe seat?

On Thursday, 28 January 1926, King left Ottawa on a westbound train for his nomination meeting in Prince Albert. It was a trip heavy with meaning for the prime minister. "I truly believe, dear mother is near me and guiding me," he wrote in his diary that day. "Oh may she guide me on this mission on which I now start — off to Prince Albert to be again elected for parliament and to begin a new period in our history."³ The members of the Liberal riding association executive felt much the same way. When the train pulled in three days later they boarded King's car and, after the normal round of introductions, T.C. Davis, the local member of the Saskatchewan Legislature, presented their demands. The shopping list contained the usual items such as better railway connections and more road construction. Somewhat unique, however, was the request that a national park be established north of the city.⁴

Prince Albert first tried to secure a national park in June 1921, when the local Board of Trade wrote J.B. Harkin, the commissioner of national parks, about the possible creation of a buffalo reserve in the Pine Forest Reserve to the southwest; hobbled by a post-war debt in excess of \$4 million, the city had cast an envious glance at the popular Buffalo National Park in Wainwright, Alberta, and decided that it too would try to get involved in the lucrative Canadian tourist industry.⁵ An investigation of the reserve's suitability for a buffalo park, however, was not favorable, and the matter was dropped.

The Board of Trade did not raise the issue again until 1925 when a new set of circumstances came into play. This time, in response to the opening of the summer cottage subdivision on Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake, it now thought in terms of a national park north of the city; the area had been linked to Prince Albert by the Montreal Lake road for three decades, and any tourist traffic to Red Deer (Waskesiu) would



Prime Minister Mackenzie King (on right) during one of his infrequent visits to his Prince Albert constituency (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

have to pass through the city. There were also personal interests involved. Four members of the board's executive held permits for summer lots,⁶ and they probably believed — and rightly so — that the area would only receive the needed improvements, in particular a good road, once it had achieved national park status. Finally, unlike the earlier attempt to secure a park, the board now had a strong spokesperson for the city's interests in Tommy Davis. The son of former Liberal MP and Senator T.O. Davis, the younger Davis had good political connections and, more important, knew how to use them. He had also been involved in civic politics, first as an alderman and then as mayor, and was determined to use his new provincial cabinet post as minister of labor and industry to promote Prince Albert as the gateway to the resource-rich North. It also did not hurt that Davis' law partner and president of the local Liberal riding association, Harold Fraser, also held one of the first cottage lots at Primeau's Landing.⁷

Shortly after the Saskatchewan provincial election in June 1925, Davis made arrangements for a Prince Albert delegation to speak to Jimmy Gardiner, the provincial minister of highways, about their idea for a park. Gardiner, in turn, instructed his deputy minister, Thomas

Molloy, to write to the commissioner of national parks to find out how a national park was established, what costs the branch would assume, and whether the province could expect any help if it decided to go ahead on its own.⁹ Harkin responded with a brief explanation of the rationale behind the various national parks in existence. "You will realize that National Parks so far adopted have set standards," he advised, "and any proposed National Park should reach these standards of quality." He also warned that government departments were extremely strapped for funds and that "any new park scheme would therefore have to be considered very carefully and be of a very exceptional character to receive endorsement at present." Not to discourage Molloy completely, however, Harkin said that he would be glad to receive a proposal and would give it "my serious consideration."

Despite Harkin's assurances, Molloy believed that the Prince Albert scheme was doomed. "After having read your communication," he acknowledged to the commissioner, "I doubt very much whether the district we have in mind could qualify as a national park."¹⁰ The Board of Trade believed otherwise. Having been advised by Davis of Harkin's position, it struck a special national park committee to put together a formal proposal. At the first meeting on 28 November 1925, it was decided that the park should consist of a "tract of land 42 miles each side of Red Deer Lake."¹¹ The board had also not given up on its idea of a buffalo reserve and decided to write to the park at Wainwright for advice.

It is not clear from his diary whether Mackenzie King actually promised a national park the morning he met with the executive of the riding association in his railway car. He never mentioned the proposal later that day at his nomination meeting. There seemed to be an informal understanding, however, that the park had the prime minister's blessing and that he would do what he could.¹² In the interim, the more immediate concern was to get King elected, and with Davis and his colleagues' help he easily routed an independent candidate in the 15 February by-election. King was elated. At a Laurier House dinner party held in honor of his fellow Saskatchewan Liberal members one week later, he spoke of McDonald's resignation "standing for the significance of sacrifice and the vision beyond" and of what his own victory "would mean in the light of history, of the place being given Saskatchewan in Dominion affairs."¹³

This was exactly the kind of sentiment that Davis hoped to take



J.B. "Burrby" Harkin, national parks commissioner, believed that the Lac La Ronge-Churchill River area would be a more scenic location for a national park. (credit: NAC PA121371)



King campaigning during the 1926 general election during which he defeated another future prime minister in his Prince Albert riding — John Diefenbaker (credit: NAG PA138867)

advantage of when he journeyed to Ottawa in mid-April to call in King's debts. He was not to be disappointed. The prime minister had apparently given the park matter more thought since the by-election and decided that its local benefits would enhance his popularity and guarantee continued political support.¹⁴ He had also taken a liking to Davis, especially for his help in Prince Albert, and thereafter regularly consulted him about constituency matters.¹⁵ When the Saskatchewan cabinet minister consequently raised the park in a private meeting, King replied that he was "very much taken with the idea," and made arrangements for a dinner meeting at his home that same night with Charles Stewart, the minister responsible for national parks.¹⁶ This was followed by separate meetings with the deputy minister of the Interior and the commissioner of national parks, in which the proposal was discussed in greater detail.

Harkin, true to his earlier pledge, was receptive to Davis' scheme, observing "that if a scenic and recreational area of National Park standards can be found in Saskatchewan a National Park should be established there."¹⁷ In fact, in response to growing criticism that the lion's share of the branch's annual appropriation was being spent on the

mountain parks,¹⁸ he was anxious to extend the national park system east of Alberta and have at least one national park in each province. At the same time, Harkin wanted to insure that the area being proposed was suitable and explained to Davis's that the proper thing to do was to send a parks officer to the region to make an independent evaluation. Roy Gibson, the assistant deputy minister of the Interior, was even less tolerant than Harkin of political interference in parks branch matters. When Harkin wanted to send King a copy of the proposed park area that Davis had provided, Gibson bluntly told him to "forget it for the present."¹⁹

Unbeknownst to department of Interior officials, the question of whether to create a park north of Prince Albert had been taken out of the bureaucracy's hands completely. At a cabinet meeting on 12 May 1926, King announced his desire to establish a national park in Saskatchewan. "If I can bring this about and I will," he confided to his diary, "that will be a fine achievement for Saskatchewan and particularly Prince Albert, a fine memorial for years to come."²⁰ Official notification of the prime minister's action was sent to Davis 10 days later. When the news was relayed to Prince Albert, an exuberant Board of Trade made immediate plans to meet with federal officials, and arranged an excursion to Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake.²¹

Faced with a *fait accompli*, Gibson instructed Harkin on 12 June 1926 to assemble all existing resource information on the region north of Prince Albert. Four days later the parks commissioner reported back that after consulting various government departments and branches, the general consensus was that "this is a comparatively flat country, with very little scenic attractiveness ... which would justify the creation of a national park."²² He was not, however, prepared to dismiss the idea entirely, noting that several of the larger lakes in the area had recreational potential and that game animals were plentiful. But before any final decision could be reached, Harkin repeated his earlier suggestion that someone from the parks branch visit the region.

This official was never sent. In fact, the establishment of a park was thrown into doubt when the King government, facing a vote of censure in the Commons over a scandal in the Customs and Excise Department, resigned on 28 June 1926. Conservative leader Arthur Meighen was called upon to form a new government. As King's bitter rival and a former minister of the Interior, he had no qualms about killing the Prince Albert park proposal. Meighen's ministry — ironically

the 13th — lasted only three days, however, before it was defeated in the House. In the ensuing general election on 14 September 1926, the Liberals finally secured their elusive majority. King, for his part, won a lopsided victory in Prince Albert, defeating John Diefenbaker, who would not win the riding until 1953.

Following the election, a worried Tommy Davis wrote the prime minister to find out whether the park would go ahead; the only thing Davis had heard during the summer was that planning had been halted by Meighen. "This park will be a wonderful asset to the Province of Saskatchewan," he reminded King, "and you will be doing the greatest good to the people of your constituency by seeing that this work goes on."²³ Work on the park had, in fact, resumed, but not at a pace or along the lines that pleased Davis. In mid-October he was advised by the deputy minister of the Interior that an aerial survey of the region was not contemplated until the following summer, and everything else, including the definition of the park's boundaries, would be held in abeyance.²⁴ He then received a copy of a departmental memorandum that suggested the Lac La Ronge-Churchill River area would be a more scenic location for a national park.²⁵ Davis was shocked. In a stiffly worded letter on 10 November 1926, he informed the minister of the Interior that King had promised a national park outside of Prince Albert and that a location farther north "would be of absolutely no use to the people of the Province of Saskatchewan as it would be inaccessible to the majority of the people."²⁶ He also pointed out that most prairie residents vacationed in the mountains or in the United States and that a national park in Saskatchewan would not only keep them at home but get them interested in the north country. He therefore called upon Stewart to get on with the park as speedily as possible: set aside the area, build an all-weather road and construct some buildings. As far as Davis was concerned, the continuing delays were totally unjustifiable.

This sense of frustration was echoed in a sarcastic report prepared by the Prince Albert Board of Trade national park committee. Convinced that the merits of the proposal were irrefutable, it argued that the park area had "the right proportions of everything" to satisfy even "some real highly developed park expert" and that it had been "left ... at our back door step ... to help ourselves."²⁷ The committee also noted that the initial investment would be more than repaid by the attention that the park would focus on the North and its resources. "We will have connected Saskatchewan with the whole world," it boldly predicted. "It

must be obvious to any thinking man that the rapid completion of this project is a necessity."²⁸

Davis' letter, along with the Board of Trade report, was forwarded by Stewart to his deputy, apparently with the order to come up with a set of tentative park boundaries. This clearly contradicted Harkin's position that the area in question had to be examined first. "A national park in the true sense of the term is something created by nature," he reflected in one of his memoranda on the Prince Albert proposal, "it cannot be artificially created by simply establishing boundaries."²⁹ The minister, however, was not interested in philosophy; he wanted to please his leader and get the Prince Albert people off his back. A reluctant parks commissioner consequently had to work with what information was at hand.



Minister of Interior Charles Stewart overrode the objections of his own departmental staff to see that Prince Albert got its national park (credit: NAC PA 41398)

From the time that the department of the Interior first began to consider the Prince Albert proposal, four suggestions for the park area had been put forward. Charles Dunning, the former Saskatchewan premier and minister of railways and canals in the King cabinet, wanted a 3000-square-mile area set aside that included all the lakes in central

Saskatchewan. Dr. E.R. Trippe, a Prince Albert hotel owner and sportsman who had a hunting lodge on Red Deer (Waskesiu) Lake,³⁰ suggested that the park be made up of the Sturgeon Forest Reserve and the three large lakes to the north — Red Deer, Big Trout and Little Trout.³¹ Ironically, even Davis and the Prince Albert Board of Trade disagreed over the park area; although both wanted all the large lakes in the area incorporated, including Montreal and Bittern, the Board of Trade wanted all of the forest reserve taken over, Davis only the northern half.³²

Harkin was opposed to all of these alternatives on the grounds that they were far too big for administration and development purposes. He was also concerned that the withdrawal of hunting and trapping privileges over too large an area might lead to hardship, particularly for the Indians of the Montreal Lake Reserve, and that the absorption of the forestry reserve might alienate the forestry branch. He consequently recommended in late December 1926 that the new park be restricted to the three large lakes on the northern edge of the reserve. This area, according to Harkin, could be developed with relatively little expense. Its small size also eased his concerns about not examining the region beforehand.³³

Harkin's proposed boundaries ran into immediate opposition. The forestry branch was upset that the new park would cut out its major east-west patrol trail between Beartrap and Moose cabins, as well as limit the reserve to "practically nothing but burned over country" from the 1919 fire.³⁴ The park's Prince Albert promoters, on the other hand, believed that they were being shortchanged and that the proposed park area was a mockery of what was possible.³⁵ Other neighboring communities, in the meantime, began to put forward their own proposals. Cameron McIntosh, Liberal MP for North Battleford, wanted the park's western boundary to fall within his constituency, while the Rosthern Board of Trade argued that a park north of Prince Albert would prove inconvenient to the southern part of the province and that the Pine Forest Reserve — coincidentally near Rosthern — would be "the most logical location."³⁶

The national parks branch was tired of the whole affair by this point and wanted to see Harkin's recommended boundaries officially adopted without further delay. In fact, there was good reason to move on the matter. Under the terms of the 1911 Forest Reserves and National Parks Act, forest reserves could be turned into national parks

or national parks created in particular areas simply by cabinet order. A new national parks bill had recently been tabled, however, which stipulated that any new national park would now have to be established by act of Parliament. In early February 1927, the parks branch urged that the new park be declared by order-in-council as soon as possible or else its merits could end up being debated on the floor of the Commons. The minister of the Interior, however, steadfastly refused to have the necessary papers drawn up until he had a chance to confer with Prince Albert.³⁷ This did not take place until mid-March when both Tommy Davis and Charles McDonald came to Ottawa to discuss the park again with federal officials. Stewart saw to it that their views were heeded. Within a matter of days, Harkin was forced to submit a revised set of boundaries that greatly exceeded those he had recommended. The name "Prince Albert National Park" was also adopted at this time, again against Harkin's wishes. The parks commissioner had advised "that exception may be taken to it by other towns and cities in Saskatchewan on the grounds that the Department is creating a park for the town of Prince Albert and not a national park or a park to serve the provincial needs ... I think it would be preferable to call it the Saskatchewan National Park or even to give it the name of some of the local lakes or important topographical features included within the area."³⁸ Like Harkin's other suggestions, this was ignored.

On 24 March 1927, Prince Albert National Park was formally established by order-in-council. The 1,377-square-mile park area was composed of all the Sturgeon River Forest Reserve, two tiers of townships to the north, and the land around Bittern and Montreal lakes (excluding the Montreal Lake reserve). This area roughly coincided with the Prince Albert Board of Trade proposal. And perhaps to satisfy Dunning, a large block of land east of Montreal Lake was temporarily set aside until its suitability for park purposes could be determined.³⁹ Politics had won the day. Curiously though, Mackenzie King, the pivotal figure in the creation of the park, made no specific mention of it in his diary that day; he wrote that he was "very, very tired" and went home to bed early⁴⁰ — perhaps park making was exhausting work.

Four days after the passage of the order-in-council, Davis wrote King that the executive of the Prince Albert riding association expected to be consulted about the new park's first superintendent, advice he repeated six weeks later. In fact, Charles McDonald wanted Dr. E.R. Trippe for the position.⁴¹ The national parks branch, however, already



Following the creation of the park, T.C. Davis told King, "The Park is going to be a grand thing for Prince Albert; but, the benefits to be derived therefrom are going to be one of greater benefit to the Province as a whole than to Prince Albert alone. It is going to preserve in perpetuity a great playground for the people of Saskatchewan: a playground which is totally different than the prairie area of our province and I think that you will see a wonderful development in connection with this park in the years that are to come. Above all else, it is directing the attention of the public towards our vast North land which is lying dormant and undeveloped." (credit: NAC PA88438)

had their candidate. Outmaneuvered too many times in the past by the Prince Albert people, Harkin had decided to appoint one of his own officers while he still had the opportunity, and he recommended James A. Wood, assistant superintendent at Banff National Park, while the deliberations over the new park's boundaries were underway.⁴² He then summoned Wood to Ottawa in early May for consultations, thereby effectively settling the question. The position, however, could not be completely divorced from politics. The minister of the Interior wanted the new superintendent to receive the prime minister's blessing.⁴³ Wood consequently visited King at his summer home in the Gatineaus on 11 June 1927 and was treated to a brisk walk through the local countryside, perhaps to see what kind of mettle he was made of. That night, King recorded in his diary: "He is a fine looking and splendid type of young man. I took to him at once ... Odd as it is, I seem to have specialized in Parks this year. The PA Park 1400 square miles (secured for the people) this park at Kingsmere ... and getting the centre of Ottawa into a Park — for all 3 of which future generations will bless me."⁴⁴ Wood was put through a similar evaluation one week later in Prince Albert. At King's request, he was also advised by Davis as to what local individuals and businesses were to enjoy park patronage.⁴⁵

With the park established and Wood in place, a Prince Albert National Park citizens' committee began making plans for an official opening. It was already mid-June, so it was decided to schedule the event the following summer when a new park road and facilities at Primeau's Landing would be in place. In the ensuing months, six subcommittees in the areas of finance, publicity, transportation, accommodation, catering and entertainment swung into action. The Board of Trade, in cooperation with the local Liberal riding association, was determined to guarantee that nothing spoiled their day in the national spotlight, and tried to make it a community celebration of the park and their prime minister. They also regularly called upon Superintendent Wood for his assistance and even named him an ex-officio member of the board.⁴⁶

Mackenzie King decided to combine the park opening with a few weeks of political activity on the prairies, particularly in his home riding. The morning of the opening ceremonies, Friday, 10 August 1928, he was consequently asleep in his private railway car in Rosthern, where he had laid the cornerstone of a new post office and spoke late into the night the day before.⁴⁷ He had another long day ahead of him.



The selection of James Wood as the new park's first superintendent was made before Prince Albert could put forward its own candidate. (credit: I. Merrill)

He reached Prince Albert by mid-morning and, getting into a waiting car at the Station with Superintendent Wood and Minister of the Interior Stewart, headed off for Lake Waskesiu, some 70 miles away, under Royal Canadian Mounted Police escort. The party had a quick lunch under canvas at the park gates at the southern boundary and then resumed their northward drive over a winding, dusty road. By the time the prime minister arrived at the lake around 2:30 p.m., the afternoon's regatta and water sports competition were well underway before an estimated crowd of 3000 people basking in the warmth of a perfect summer day.



"Much has been written on the purpose of the State and of the boundaries between the domains which properly belong to the community and the individual. For my own part I doubt if we shall ever improve on the conception which had expression in the political philosophy of Aristotle — that the aim of the State was the highest good of the community. In opening today the Prince Albert National Park may we ... dedicate it to the glory of the Creator whose bounty it mirrors in forest, lake and stream, and to the highest good of the Canadian people for all time to come." (credit: E. Millard)

The formal proceedings commenced at 3:30 p.m. on a large, elevated platform, decorated with spruce boughs and draped with Union Jacks, which faced the lake. An honor guard of boy scouts stood nearby while reporters from across the country sat at a press table. In addition to King, Stewart and Wood, the official party consisted of Harold

Fraser, chairman of the citizens' committee and master of ceremonies, Tommy Davis, now Saskatchewan attorney general, Mayor Branion of Prince Albert and a number of Saskatchewan Liberal Members of Parliament and the Saskatchewan Legislature. The speeches were brief. Observing that "dreams sometimes do come true,"⁴⁰ Davis recounted the events leading up to the creation of the park and the role that it was expected to play in drawing attention to the North. Stewart then outlined what was planned for the park and as he spoke, three planes from the local forestry patrol base swept down and saluted the gathering. The prime minister's address, prepared by his private secretary, Norman Rogers, dwelt largely on the value of national parks to a nation's well-being. "In the building of Canadian national life and in the moulding of our national character," he remarked, "it is of the utmost importance that we should cultivate an appreciation of all that is beautiful in our physical environment. In a young country so amply endowed with material resources there is always a danger that we may turn to the gods of the market place and sacrifice the beautiful on the altar of utility ... It is indeed cause for deep satisfaction that Canada in her youth has learned the wisdom of conservation."⁴¹ King was then

called upon to present Canadian Humane Society awards to Vern Johnson of Big River and his lead sled dog, Prince, who had rescued a sick woman during a blizzard.

At the conclusion of the speeches, King walked down to a huge arch that had been erected on the beach and with a large key, unlocked two wooden gates that opened up onto Lake Waskesiu. "The sun was shining in across the lake, pretty children were lying on the other side," he noted in his diary. "It was a great & beautiful surprise, like walking into a golden land of promise."⁴² A forest ranger then climbed a tall spruce along the shore and by solemnly trimming the boughs in a unique fashion, created a lobstick — an Indian symbol denoting that the chief was on his home ground. This ended the opening ceremonies, and King went for a quick spin around the lake in a motorboat with Cy March of Prince Albert, followed by a refreshing swim.



"The sun was shining in across the lake, pretty children were lying on the other side," King noted in his diary. "It was a great & beautiful surprise, like walking into a golden land of promise." (credit: PANP 082-24 [E. Wieberg])



King was driven over a rough trail to the site of his new cottage at Prospect Point (credit: L. Ridley)

The citizens' committee, however, was not finished expressing its gratitude to the prime minister for his help in securing the park. Towards sunset, King was taken to a nearby height of land overlooking the lake and presented with a cottage by James Sanderson, a personal friend and long-time Prince Albert resident. The cabin, made of oiled spruce



Following the opening ceremonies, Prime Minister King (right) went for a swim in Lake Waskesiu (credit: PANP 082-10 [Marion Peterson])

logs and chinked with green moss, had been something of a construction nightmare because of its location. But with the financial support of Prince Albert and neighboring communities, who provided the furnishings for the rooms, it was completed on time. King was visibly moved by the gift and, according to his diary entry, made an emotional reply: "[I] referred to all the loved ones who are associated with Home — Heaven & Earth, meeting when the sun was setting & being a little nearer to all from where I was speaking, referred to the good fortune which had brought me to P.A."⁵¹ Stewart was not so lucky. Sitting on the railing of the freshly varnished verandah, the minister of the Interior was stuck fast and had to be rescued by the superintendent's wife.

That evening in his new home, King dined and visited with several of the people who had helped with the day's festivities. Several hundred people, meanwhile, attended an open air dance or paddled leisurely around floating bonfires on the lakes. They then retired to their cars under a spectacular display of northern lights. King slept fitfully and was up for an early morning swim before heading back to Prince Albert and then on to Ottawa. The day's events were still vivid in his mind two days later, however, when he wrote Jack Sanderson, a member of the citizens' committee and one of the people largely responsible for the cabin. "To be presented by friends with so beautiful a home in the constituency," he confided, "is a token of friendship much greater than any for which I was prepared, and which I feel is far beyond anything I have ever deserved ... I can only hope that as the years pass, I may become more worthy of so great a tribute of regard and trust and that I may have the pleasure of welcoming very often to the fireside of the little cottage, yourself and other friends in Prince Albert to whom I shall always be indebted for a gift so replete with happy memorable associations."⁵²

Mackenzie King never fulfilled this pledge. In fact, he never spent another night in his cabin at Waskesiu. In keeping with the spirit with which it was given, the prime minister instructed park officials to place the cottage at the disposal of distinguished guests. In many instances, the tenants were prominent local Liberals who regularly booked holidays at the cabin through Tommy Davis.⁵³ This arrangement suited King perfectly and on those few rare occasions when he returned to the park, he stayed with someone else. True to his parsimonious nature, the prime minister also never concerned himself with the cottage's upkeep, even



Funds for the King cottage were raised in Prince Albert and neighboring communities (credit: L. Ridley)

when its deteriorating condition was brought to his attention.³⁴ This situation was particularly distressing to Davis and Sanderson who already had to absorb most of the construction costs when many people in Prince Albert failed to come through with their promised donations. A proposed maintenance fund suffered a similar fate, and Sanderson looked after most of the repair work himself. King, at least, did the honorable thing during an overnight visit to the park in July 1941 and promised Sanderson the cottage would be left to him.³⁵

Mackenzie King's failure to maintain a close association with Prince Albert National Park, let alone use his cottage, suggests that the creation of the park was largely a political reward. The prime minister needed a safe seat and struck a deal with leading Liberals in Prince Albert, many of whom were also on the local Board of Trade. Once the park had been established, King believed he had fulfilled his side of the bargain — nothing more was required. In fact, he was quite content to let the local riding association look after constituency matters and he eventually lost the seat in 1945. As for the citizens' committee, they were probably not overly upset that King was an infrequent visitor to the park. Granted, they appreciated his efforts and said so with the gift of the cabin. The most important thing, however, was

that the city not only secured a national park but had done so in the area and with the boundaries that it wanted. Despite Harkin's concern about the name, it really was Prince Albert's park. It was now up to the national parks branch to demonstrate that the setting aside of the region was justified, as well as to ensure that King's fine words during the opening ceremonies did not come to have a hollow ring.



The ceremonial gateway at Lake Waskesiu (credit: SAB R-A 9877 [1])

CHAPTER FOUR

GETTING STARTED

Prince Albert National Park was part of a new generation of Canadian national parks. Up to then, most national parks had been established in the Rocky Mountains by a federal government which, in cooperation with the major railway companies, wanted to cash in on the tourist potential of the region. In the early 20th century, however, the coming of the automobile revolutionized North American travel habits. Holidays by car, or "auto-tourism" as it was called at the time, became fashionable, as a steadily growing number of motorists, anxious to take advantage of their new independence, clamored for new and better roads.¹ This development profoundly influenced the thinking of J.B. ("Bunny") Harkin, the former parliamentary journalist and political secretary who assumed the new position of dominion parks commissioner in 1911. Harkin believed that parks performed a valuable, recuperative role as places where man could escape from the strains of modern life and engage in soothing, outdoor activity. The establishment of a truly national system of new parks, accessible by highway, would now mean that more Canadians, not simply the well-heeled elite who patronized the mountain parks, could enjoy these so-called "national playgrounds." Drawing upon his Ottawa experience, Harkin also realized that if he could demonstrate the importance of the national parks system to the Canadian tourist industry, his department would be assured of adequate government funding. The best way to attract more visitors was to build better park roads. Automobile parks consequently came to displace the railway parks of the late 19th century.²

Prince Albert National Park was well-suited to being one of the new autosparks. Not only had the park region been linked to Prince Albert by a crude road for several decades, but it also owed its creation to an ambitious local Board of Trade that hoped to profit from the tourist traffic that would be generated. The setting aside of the park in March 1927, however, was only the first step. It had to be developed. National park authorities, including Harkin, were not preservationists who believed that a park should be set aside forever untouched in its wilderness state. Rather, a park was like any other natural resource and existed to be utilized for its scenery and for recreation.³ The



Many of the waterways in the southern portion of the park had to be cleared of logs — a legacy of the Prince Albert Lumber Company (and PA164341)

reserved area would only become a park, then, through the provision of tourist facilities — something that the Prince Albert Board of Trade was equally anxious to see developed.

In mid-August 1927, Commissioner Harkin made his first visit to Canada's newest national park, along with T.C. Davis, Superintendent Wood and J.C. Campbell, director of publicity for national parks. He probably had mixed feelings about the trip because he did not like the way in which the park had been established nor did he believe, on the basis of information he had on hand at the time, that the region really qualified for national park status. Harkin was greatly impressed, however, by what he saw, and in an interview with the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, described the park as "a wonderful gateway to the Great North."⁴ He also reached some interesting conclusions about the park's potential. "There is no doubt in my mind," he reported to the deputy minister of the Interior upon his return to Ottawa, "that the main development to be expected in this park will take the form of summer colonies along the shores of Waskesiu Lake ... This, and the other lakes to the north and west can provide summer residence sites I believe, for the whole of the Province of Saskatchewan."⁵

Before any plans were finalized though, J.M. Wardle, national parks chief engineer, and William Cromarty, chief of town planning and architecture, were dispatched to the park in late September 1927 to assess the situation with Superintendent Wood. After a thorough examination of the southeast shore of Lake Waskesiu (Red Deer), between the Waskesiu River on the east and the First Narrows on the west, they recommended that Primeau's Landing — the same site that the forestry branch had selected for its summer cottage subdivision in 1925 — become the focus of activity in the new park. This did not mean, however, that they accepted the existing layout. To ensure that the "Big Beach" area was enjoyed by as many visitors as possible, they recommended that this part of the shoreline "be reserved for a public beach and campground and that no residences should be allowed along the area, or any ground leased."⁶ The existing four rows of lots would have to be abandoned in favor of a new summer cottage site at Prospect Point, a height of land immediately to the west. Wardle and Cromarty also noted that there were several other suitable building sites towards the Narrows and advised that any park planning should take these areas into account.

This assessment of the future course of development within the park determined the road system that was eventually adopted. Following the establishment of the park in the spring of 1927, it was initially decided, on the recommendation of the Prince Albert Board of Trade, that the national parks branch undertake to build an all-weather highway from the southeast corner of the park to Lake Waskesiu (Red Deer) and then on to Montreal Lake; this route would roughly follow that of the old Montreal Lake freight trail and hook up with a new highway that the province proposed to build from Prince Albert to the park's southern boundary. Once parks officials had a chance to go over the region, however, they began to question the necessity of extending the new highway beyond Waskesiu. Since development was expected to spread westward along the southern shore, it made more sense in the immediate future to build a secondary road west from the main highway towards the Narrows. Besides, as Superintendent Wood pointed out to the parks engineering branch, if anyone wanted to reach the northern lakes during the summer they could easily do so by boat. The parks branch therefore decided to postpone the Montreal Lake portion of the new highway in favor of making a contour survey along the old Big River or 57 Trail towards the Narrows.⁷ This decision effectively



Loading gravel for the park highway (credit: NAC PA 164349)

guaranteed that future park development would be concentrated at Primeau's Landing; it would literally be the end of the road.

With the location of the road and townsite determined, Wood embarked on a one-man campaign to interest people throughout the province in the new park. At first, Wood himself did not know what to expect when he was appointed superintendent. His travels through Saskatchewan had been limited to the southern prairies, and he probably doubted that any other place in Canada would match the scenery of Banff, where he had been posted since 1919. The Quebec-born Wood, however, had been a canoeist ever since he could lift a paddle and he was immediately won over by the lake and forest setting of the new park. "I am convinced that the Northern section of the park will develop into something really worthwhile," he wrote in an enthusiastic letter to Harkin after he assumed his duties.⁸ At the same time, Wood knew that Canadians had to be shaken out of their image of Saskatchewan as one large wheatfield — the same prejudice that he once held. "Scenery was here in plenty," he later observed. "My job was to make it known to the world and accessible."⁹ When not personally supervising the work in the park or busy corresponding with or meeting various officials, Wood toured the province lecturing to crowded town halls. On



One of the new park's first promotional pictures taken by W.J. Oliver at Kingsmere Lake, June 1928 (credit: NAC PA800302)

24 April 1928, for example, his address on "Canada's National Parks and Tourist Traffic" attracted 500 people in Melville. All of these talks were tailored to automobile enthusiasts and were illustrated by moving pictures, as well as a series of photographs which national parks photographer Bill Oliver had taken in the new park in late August 1927.

Wood was also a regular speaker at Board of Trade meetings in Prince Albert. Concerned that tourist traffic to the park be adequately served, he encouraged local businessmen at an October 1927 gathering to become familiar with the park and try to cater to the visitors. There were great profits to be made; according to Wood, Prince Albert would be to the new park, as Banff was to Rocky Mountains Park. "How is it that business men there," he queried, "after a summer season of three months are able to spend their winters in Honolulu, California or Southern France?"¹⁰ Wood quickly learned, however, that Prince Albert business people not only shared his enthusiasm, but also expected an equal, if not dominant, voice in park affairs. To further this end, a Saskatchewan Provincial National Park Association was formed in Prince Albert in September 1929 to lobby the federal government to develop the park as rapidly and intensively as possible. The

Prince Albert Daily Herald supported this position. "To those few who will express alarm that the modernization of the park will destroy its charm," it said in defending a proposal to provide running water and electric lights at Waskesiu, "we offer the consolation that virtually the northern half of Saskatchewan still remains in its wild state and that they are free to roam and rough it as they will in this vast area."¹¹

There were a number of other issues, besides the extent and nature of park development, that required attention during these first few years. When Prince Albert National Park had been established, a large area of some 1800 square miles had been set aside for possible future inclusion. Wood personally examined this land in the summer of 1927 — first by airplane and then by car and canoe — and recommended that it be released. Except for the Candle Lake district, he found the area generally lacking in any outstanding scenic or recreational value. He also discovered that there was considerable local interest in the region for agricultural and lumbering purposes and a general resentment that reservation of the area was hampering development. Before the department of the Interior moved on the matter, however, it sought T.C. Davis' opinion. And it was only after receiving his approval that the area was released on 18 October 1928.¹²

Further boundary adjustments were made the following year. During his first few months on the job, Wood not only examined the reserved area to the east, but with Jimmy Clare as his guide explored the region lying north of the park. He came to the conclusion that the park's southern and northern boundaries were poorly chosen. "It is quite apparent," he reported to Harkin in a lengthy memorandum, "that areas have been included which should not have been and areas which should have been included have been left out." What particularly bothered Wood was the fact that the southern portion of the park "cannot be considered beautiful by any stretch of the imagination," while the area beyond the park's northern boundary contained "some of the finest lakes ... many very fine canoe routes ... excellent fishing ... also the nesting grounds of pelicans, cormorants and every species of duck."¹³ Wood's memo eventually led to the northward extension of the park by two tiers of townships (60 and 61) on 6 February 1929, bringing the total area to 1869 square miles. The department of the Interior refused, however, to release any lands along the existing southern boundary because of the opposition of the Prince Albert Board of Trade; it was worried that if the distance between Prince Albert and the southern boundary was



Getting to the park was an adventure in itself (credit: G. Curless)

increased from its current 36 miles, tourists who would otherwise be interested in visiting the park might be discouraged from making the drive. Wood, who was just as interested in generating tourist traffic, came to accept this argument. In fact, by 1930, he was an ardent defender of the southern portion of the park. Not only had the vegetation finally recovered from the 1919 fire, but the area also provided refuge for a steadily growing elk population.¹⁴

Another issue related to the question of boundaries was the presence of the Montreal Lake Indian Reserve on the eastern edge of the park. Wood was worried that these Indians had become accustomed to hunting, trapping and fishing in the park area and that if they were allowed to remain on the reserve, there would be problems in trying to enforce park regulations. Within his first few weeks on the job, he advised Harkin that the Indians should be moved and the reserve incorporated into the park.¹⁵ The department of Indian Affairs was equally concerned about the impact of the new park on the livelihood of the local Indian population; without access to the region's game and fish, they faced possible hardship. In late June 1927, the local Indian agent warned the Montreal Lake Indians that they might be required to relocate. In the meantime, Indian Affairs officials tried to reach some kind of compromise with their national parks counterparts. At first, they asked that the Indians be allowed to hunt and trap within the park within certain prescribed periods. Harkin, in response, pointed out that the park was also a wildlife sanctuary. They then suggested that the Indians be given exclusive access to the whitefish in Bittern and Big Trout (Crean) lakes in alternate years. This too was turned down.¹⁶

It soon became evident that the only possible solution, apart from revising the park's eastern boundary, was to move the Montreal Lake Indians. "The majority of the inhabitants of such settlements," Harkin wrote Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, in putting forward the proposal, "endeavour to co-operate and make every effort to comply with the regulations but there are always the odd ones with Bolshevistic tendencies who are a constant source of trouble."¹⁷ Even here though, the two sides could not agree. In February 1928, Harkin suggested that those Montreal Lake Indians who wished to farm could take up residence on the nearby Little Red River Reserve (IO6A), while those who wanted to continue to pursue their traditional lifestyle could be relocated to a possible new reserve on the shores of Candle Lake. Scott was willing to consider this

proposal, but on the condition that 12 sections of park land along the southern boundary be added to the little Red River Reserve. Harkin countered with his own deal: the area in question would be surrendered if the Montreal Lake Reserve was turned over to the park. Scott could not, however, guarantee that the Montreal Lake Indians would move — nor was he prepared to force them to do so — and the whole matter was dropped.¹⁸

While the parks boundaries were being adjusted, the Geographic Board of Canada conducted a wholesale review of the names of the major geographical features of the park. Some of the lakes at the time of the park's creation were known by two names; in most cases, this was a consequence of surveyors renaming features as they worked their way through a region. In April 1910, for example, surveyor Arthur St. Cyr suggested that Pelican Lake be changed to Lavallée in honor of local resident Louis Lavallée, Big Trout to Crean after explorer J.P. Crean, and Red Deer to Beale after Crean's assistant. St. Cyr later suggested that the Cree name, Waskesiu, was preferable to Beale.¹⁹ Other features were renamed shortly after the park came into existence. In the fall of 1927, Little Trout was changed to Kingsmere, the name of Prime Minister King's summer retreat near Ottawa, while the island along the southeast shore of Lake Waskesiu became known as Mackenzie King Island. All of these new names received the official endorsement of the Geographic Board. At the same time, it was concerned that a number of lakes had names that were far too common or mundane and called on Superintendent Wood to provide a list of all the major lakes in the park, their location and the origin of their names if known.

Wood was thoroughly opposed to any changes "as the names we have are either supported by some legend or some episode which has occurred in the vicinity of the body of water named." He warned Harkin "these names will be used no matter what the decision of the Geographical Board may be."²⁰ He was powerless, however, to stop the process, and in March 1929 the names of several lakes were formally changed: Cross to Ajaawan, Spruce to Bagwa, Drunken to Hidden, Mud to Amiskowan, and Deadhorse to Halfmoon. Wood was only successful in having the Heart Lakes renamed Hanging Hearts in recognition of the battle legend. Following the expansion of the park to the north in February 1929, this process was repeated: Clear Sand was changed to Wabeno, Clearwater to Wassegam, Burntwood to Tibiska,

and Lake of Bays to Wasaw. It was ironic that Cree names were acceptable for many of the park's lakes but the Montreal Lake Reserve was an unwanted presence on the eastern boundary.

Another problem at the time of the creation of the park was the removal of local hunters, trappers and fishermen. Those active within the former Sturgeon River Forest Reserve had their permits of occupation cancelled, while those living around Crean or Kingsmere lakes were personally advised by the new park wardens that they would have to move from the area. Further evictions were necessary when the park was enlarged in 1929. Louis Lavallée, however, was not called upon to move until 1934 when he reluctantly agreed to relocate in exchange for financial compensation.

Similar arrangements were reached with individuals who occupied cabins along the southern shore of Lake Waskesiu. Wood could easily have had these structures removed; they were not only outside the proposed residential area but violated the park regulation that stipulated that no private building could be located within 100 feet of the lake shoreline. He believed, however, that the forestry permits entitled these people to certain proprietary rights and tried to be as accommodating as possible. The aging Jimmy Clare, now an indigent, continued to occupy his cabin at Clare Beach for \$1 a year until his March 1937 death, when the building was razed. George Pease, meanwhile, accepted a lot in the new business subdivision in exchange for demolishing "Shadirest;" this deal was undoubtedly helped by the fact that Pease was granted the exclusive right to net whitefish in the park for local summer consumption.

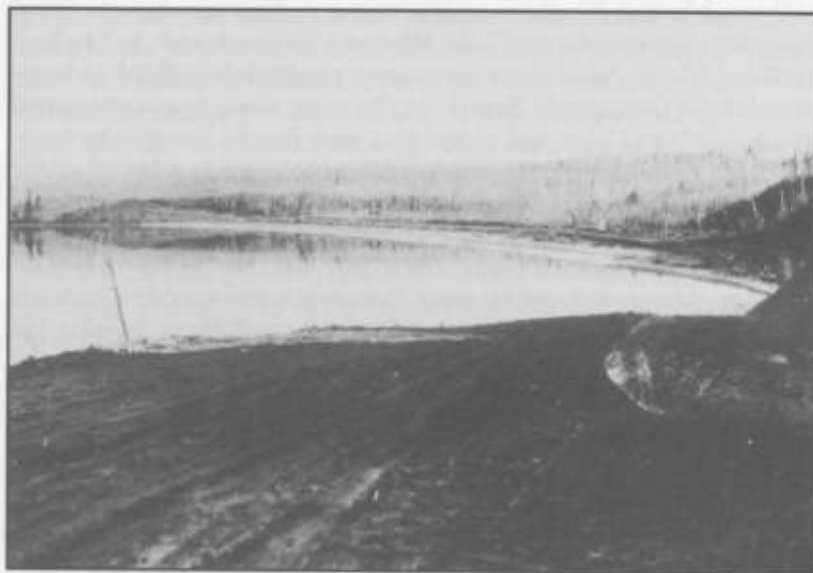
Wood had considerably more difficulty in reaching an arrangement with Dr. E.R. Trippe and C.M. Smith. Dr. Trippe, a former dentist and Prince Albert hotel proprietor who had played a role in the creation of the park, owned a crude hunting lodge along the southern shore of Waskesiu on a beach that bears his name today. Smith, a Prince Albert grocer, had erected two structures within the new park boundaries: a log cottage on Kingsmere and a general store with living quarters in South Bay on Lake Waskesiu, southwest of the townsite. In January 1928, both men were advised by ministerial letter that they could continue to occupy their lots on Waskesiu if they upgraded their buildings; Smith, at the same time, would have to give up his dwelling on Kingsmere. When neither did anything to bring their cabins in line with park regulations over the next four years, they were asked to pick



Alex Pease in front of the Pease's new cottage in the Waskesiu business subdivision (credit: Friends of the Park [E. Pease])

a lot in a new subdivision that was soon to be opened. This too was ignored, and in January 1936 an exasperated Wood ordered the destruction of Smith's cabin which by now had been abandoned. Trippe was left alone. He had not only demanded compensation before relocating but had also taken his case to Mackenzie King and the commissioner of national parks. "I discovered the park and its possibilities," he boasted to Harkin. "I claim to be the Godfather of the park."²¹ Since it might have proven embarrassing to force Trippe to move, he and his wife were allowed to occupy the cabin until their deaths.

When not caught up in boundary revisions, name changes or the rights of pre-park residents, Wood was busy overseeing the construction of various park facilities. In May 1928, contracts were awarded to two Prince Albert and one North Battleford firm to build sections of the new 34-mile highway between the southern boundary and Waskesiu. Dominion Parks Engineer Philip Shaw tried to make the route as scenic as possible. The road consequently contained a number of deliberate curves and hills, such as Corkscrew Hill, Windy Point, and Hairpin Hill; in fact, the one long, level, straight section was sarcastically dubbed "Shaw's holiday" because it was built during the en-



The new park highway, here shown skirting Sandy Lake, was built with as many curves as possible (credit: NAC PA164348)

gineer's absence.²² Driving the new highway was an adventure in itself, and some of the sharper turns had to be straightened in subsequent years. Other sections were virtually impassable during the spring, causing traffic to switch over to the old freight trail. When Wood inquired about the condition of the road prior to making a trip from Prince Albert in mid-April 1930, he was advised to "carry food, shovels and axes."²³

Progress was also made at Waskesiu. Having been advised that there would probably be a large number of Prince Albert people anxious to take up summer cottage lots, Wood had surveyor C.M. Walker of the engineering division lay out the Prospect Point subdivision in mid-October 1927. In the meantime, he had to fend off a number of requests for special lots. Two school teachers wanted to retire to King Island, while T.C. Davis first asked for a cottage site near the Hanging Heart Lakes and then tried to secure the use of one of the islands on Crean. To ensure that he could get there easily by boat, Davis also suggested that the Waskesiu River be dammed and a channel opened up along the Heart Lakes portage; the department of Public Works later estimated that such an undertaking would cost \$40,000.²⁴

Thirty-eight lots at Prospect Point, or the "villa" as it was popularly known, were thrown open for entry on 14 June 1928. Each applicant was required to erect a cottage with a minimum value of \$1,000 within a year. Before construction could commence, however, the plans and specifications had to be approved by the parks branch. Upon the satisfactory completion of the structure, the lot holder was issued a standard 42-year lease with the option of renewal. The seasonal rental fee was \$10 for the period from 1 April to 30 October; for the balance of the year, the structure could not be occupied.

At first, there was substantial interest in the lots; the subdivision offered an unrivalled view of the lake and it was not every day that someone had the chance to live next door to the prime minister. Most applicants were soon discouraged, however, by the high costs of construction, particularly when they could occupy the cottage for only a few months each summer. Building progressed slowly. Although three cottages were erected in 1929 (lot 3, E.C. Osbourne; lot 4, E. deWolf, lot 14, A.C. March), seven other applications had to be cancelled.²⁵ The mixed success of the subdivision, together with the constant demands from people for a place where they could erect smaller, cheaper cottages, prompted Wood to suggest to Harkin in July 1930 that "we

subdivide all areas fronted by a sand beach" along the southern shore of Waskesiu. Ottawa officials were extremely reluctant though to create any new subdivisions outside the main townsite and would agree only to the construction of five miles of new road westward from the main highway towards the Narrows.²⁶



The opening day archway was subsequently used for the entrance to the Waskesiu campground (credit: L. Ridley)

For those who found Prospect Point too expensive, a public campground, capable of accommodating 150 cars, had been underbrushed and cleared at Big Beach for the 1928 summer season. It proved far too small, however, for the number of campers that visited the park, and over the next few years the area was gradually enlarged with the ultimate aim of handling 700 cars. This work was plagued by a large patch of muskeg just back from the beach. Indeed, future Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was well within the truth when he later referred to Waskesiu as "that mosquito park offered to Prince Albert as a reward for the election of Mackenzie King."²⁷ In an effort to drain the swamp, Wood regularly sent teams of newly hired men into the area with instructions to clear everything except large trees. In the meantime, park authorities were forced to choose an alternate site for the



A system of notice rails marked off lots in the Waskesiu campground (credit: G. Curless)

business subdivision. Originally to be located next to the campground, it was laid out in two rows in the summer of 1929 on a slightly elevated bench of land to the west. Even here though, six of the 25 lots were on wet ground, and Wood had his doubts whether they should be occupied. When the new highway was constructed through the area, however, the swamp began to dry up to such an extent that Wood proposed that eight additional lots (Block 2) be added to the east end of the business subdivision. He was concerned that although the subdivision offered a wonderful view of the lake, it was too far from the main beach and campground.²⁰ Initial interest in the business subdivision, as in Prospect Point, was quite strong. Several months, and in a few instances a year, however, elapsed between the time that the lot was applied for and the building sketches were submitted or between the approval of the building plans and the taking out of a building permit. Several lots remained vacant. By 1930, only four structures had been erected: a temporary Royal Canadian Mounted Police canvas barracks (lot 21, block 1), an Imperial Oil gas station (lots 5 & 6, block 1), Spear Millar's Lakeview Hotel (lot 9, block 1), and E.G. Madden's Waskesiu Lodge dance hall (lot 11, block 1).²⁹

When Superintendent Wood took up his duties, he moved into



The main campground registration office, Waskesiu, early 1930s (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

the former game guardian's cabin at Primeau's Landing and used it as a combination administrative headquarters/residence. Despite the crowded conditions this arrangement was tolerable, for he was constantly on the move at the beginning and spent as much time in Prince Albert as he did in the park. As the new townsite began to take shape at Waskesiu, however, a number of government structures popped up. In 1928, a frame boathouse and storehouse were erected on the government reserve, a parcel of land that had been set aside between the business subdivision and campground. Two years later, an impressive stone administration building was added, as well as an oil and gasoline storage shed. Wood also secured new lodgings when a superintendent's cottage was constructed in the Prospect Point subdivision in 1929.

Despite the provision of these facilities, communication with Prince Albert was a problem; there was no telephone service between the park and the city, and messages had to be sent via Big River through the department of National Defense radio station which had been erected at the east end of the business subdivision in 1928. Nor were the new government buildings at Waskesiu occupied year-round. The park was considered strictly a summer tourist attraction. Each October, administrative and maintenance operations would shut down, and the



The first RCMP barracks at Waskesiu was a simple canvas tent (credit: L. Ridley)



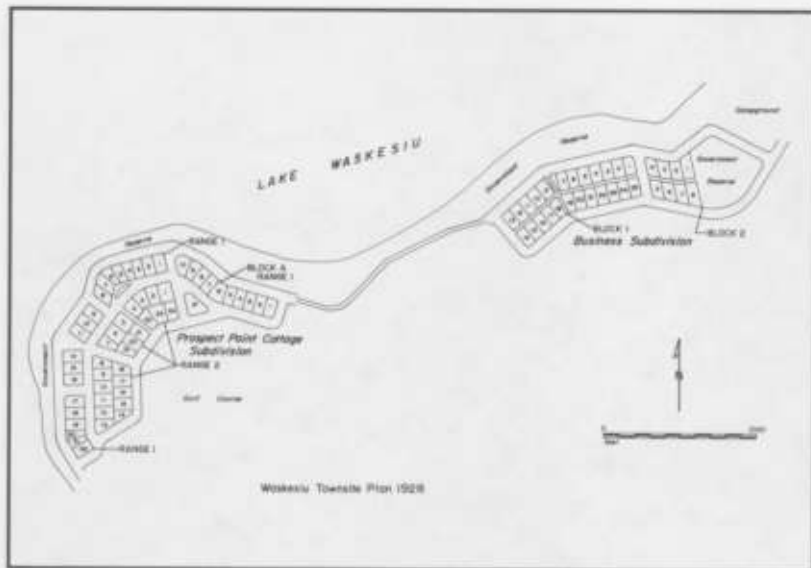
The park administration building was erected on a height of land just east of the business subdivision (credit: NAC C131618)



The Imperial Oil Gas station was one of the first structures to be erected in the new business subdivision (credit: NAC C131555)



The Waskesiu Lodge dance hall in the new business subdivision fronted onto Lake Waskesiu. The Lakeview Inn is located to the left (credit: NAC C131554)



Waskesiu Townsite Plan 1928

staff and equipment moved to Prince Albert until the following April.³⁰ This annual migration to and from the park was carried on until the 1960s. And in the long run, it served to strengthen the already strong identity between the park and the city.

Recreational facilities were not overlooked during these early years. In fact, a concerted effort was made in 1930 to see that the park began to live up to its billing as "Saskatchewan's playground." At the Waskesiu campground, a caretaker's cabin and three open-air kitchen shelters were constructed; a system of drainage ditches was also installed as part of a constant battle to keep the area dry, particularly as it was enlarged. Just back from the beach, a tennis court, softball diamond and children's playground were laid out. A nine-hole golf course behind Prospect Point was also surveyed; it was probably no coincidence that Commissioner Harkin was an avid golfer.

The most ambitious recreational project at Waskesiu that summer was the construction of a 370-foot breakwater in front of the business subdivision. Public works officials initially turned down the proposal when it was put forward in January 1930. Knowing how much the breakwater would mean to boating enthusiasts and the townsites in general, however, Wood raised the matter with the prime minister's

office during his annual winter trip to Ottawa. His strategy worked. In early April 1930, two gangs of men started hauling logs out of the bush near the Narrows for the breakwater's cribbing. Work continued steadily through the summer — laborers earned 30 cents per day plus board — and the project was completed just before freeze-up.³¹

Outside of Waskesiu, campgrounds with kitchen shelters were established along the shores of Crean, Kingsmere and Sandy lakes. Sandy was proving such a popular stopping spot on the way to Waskesiu that park authorities briefly toyed with the idea of establishing a residential subdivision there. In order to provide easier access to the northern lakes, two light railway systems, each approximately 1600 feet in length, were laid down: one across the Hanging Heart Lakes portage between Waskesiu and Crean and the other around the Kingsmere rapids. These systems saved people from unloading, portaging, and reloading their boats. Deadheads, rocks and bush were also cleared from the Kingsmere River in an attempt to provide a clear channel. All of these 1930 improvements, both at Waskesiu and elsewhere, had been suggested by the Saskatchewan Provincial National Park Association in a letter to C.A. Dunning, a member of the King cabinet and a former Saskatchewan premier, the previous fall.³²

The development of park facilities was accompanied by a steady increase in attendance figures. In 1927, with planning just underway, 500 people visited the new park. The following summer, this figure increased tenfold — in large part a consequence of Wood's promotion efforts. What was particularly noteworthy about this number is that visitors still had to travel over the old Montreal Lake freight trail because the new highway was under construction. By 1930, word of the park had spread beyond Saskatchewan. Of the 10,131 and 17,164 people that registered in 1929 and 1930 respectively, many were from other parts of Canada and the United States. Harkin was pleasantly surprised, having assumed that Prince Albert could not expect to receive very much American tourist traffic. In fact, he seemed to have forgotten completely his earlier doubts about the park when he wrote the deputy minister of the Interior in October 1929: "It is quite clear that Saskatchewan as a whole is thoroughly behind Prince Albert Park. There is a tremendous provincial pride in it and an enthusiasm which I have never found elsewhere in relation to national parks."³³ The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* echoed these sentiments. In an editorial calling for a larger annual park appropriation, it predicted, "The area will not be long a



Boat travel to Kingsmere was facilitated by a light railway (credit: NAC PA58812)

mecca for twenty or thirty thousand persons annually, but ... a potential playground for 200,000.⁵⁴

By 1930, the basic layout of Prince Albert National Park was in place. Conscious of the way the automobile was revolutionizing travel, national park authorities wanted to make the new park easily accessible by car. They also concluded that Lake Waskesiu, with its large number of white, sandy beaches, would be the focus of activity in the park and the logical place for a townsite. Over the next four years, the national parks branch concentrated its energies on the construction of an all-weather highway through the park, as well as on the provision and enhancement of recreation and accommodation facilities along the southern shore of Lake Waskesiu. This work was not done in isolation, but was guided by the wishes of the people of Prince Albert. A pattern of development was also established whereby the term "Waskesiu" became synonymous with the park. Prince Albert National Park, however, was much more than Waskesiu. It embraced close to 2,000 square miles of transitional boreal forest. This was the particular responsibility of the warden service.



Campgrounds with kitchen shelters were built along the shores of Waskesiu and other park lakes (credit: L. Ridley)

CHAPTER FIVE GUARDIANS OF THE WILD

Park wardens are the national parks' equivalent of the Mountie. In fact, next to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the national park warden service is one of the more recognized symbols of authority in Canada. And it certainly earned this reputation. Established in 1909 to enforce national park fire and game regulations, the warden service quickly outgrew its original functions and became closely identified with the general welfare of the park and the visiting public. The wardens' constant patrols at all times of the year under all kinds of conditions made them one of the most visual and vital aspects of the national parks service. There was little that they did not do during the early years of their existence. This was particularly true in Prince Albert National Park. While work was underway on the new highway and the townsite at Waskesiu, these men brought the outlying areas under national park protection through the establishment of an efficient district system. Without them, Saskatchewan's playground would have been little more than a glorified summer resort.

Following the creation of Prince Albert National Park, the national parks branch had to devise a patrol system appropriate to the needs of the park, and then staff it with suitable men. The first part was relatively straightforward. Because one half of the new park had been carved from the former Sturgeon River Forest Reserve, there was a network of trails, cabins, fireguards and telephone lines already in place in the southern portion of the park. And since the system had worked for the forestry service, there was no reason that it could not work for the new park — the requirements were basically the same. Besides, it was estimated that the buildings alone were worth an estimated \$20,000.¹ Superintendent Wood therefore gladly assumed control of the reserve's facilities and equipment. All he needed to do was to improve the network where necessary and extend it northward and eastward to take in those regions beyond the boundaries of the former reserve.

Prince Albert National Park was also fortunate in the caliber of the men who were first appointed to the warden service. In August and September 1927, just before the start of the fall hunting season,



Prince Albert's first five wardens outside the Forestry Cabin at Lake Waskesiu. Left to right: Harry Merrell, Charlie Walrod, Harry Genge, Bill Anderson and George Davies (credit: PANP 353-1)

Wood hired George Davies, Harry Merrell, William Anderson, Charlie Walrod and Harry Genge. They were joined shortly thereafter by temporary wardens Les Holden (1928), Emmett Millard (1930), William Schermerhorn (1931) and George Moberly (1931). Several of these men — Davies, Merrell, Anderson and Holden — had worked for the dominion forestry service and were retained by Wood when the reserve was taken over. Some were also First World War veterans. Davies, for example, had served in France, India, and South Africa, and it was probably because of his extensive military experience that Wood named him acting chief warden in December 1927, a position that was made permanent in April 1929. A few were probably political appointees; it is highly likely that the local Liberal riding association put forward its own list of candidates.²

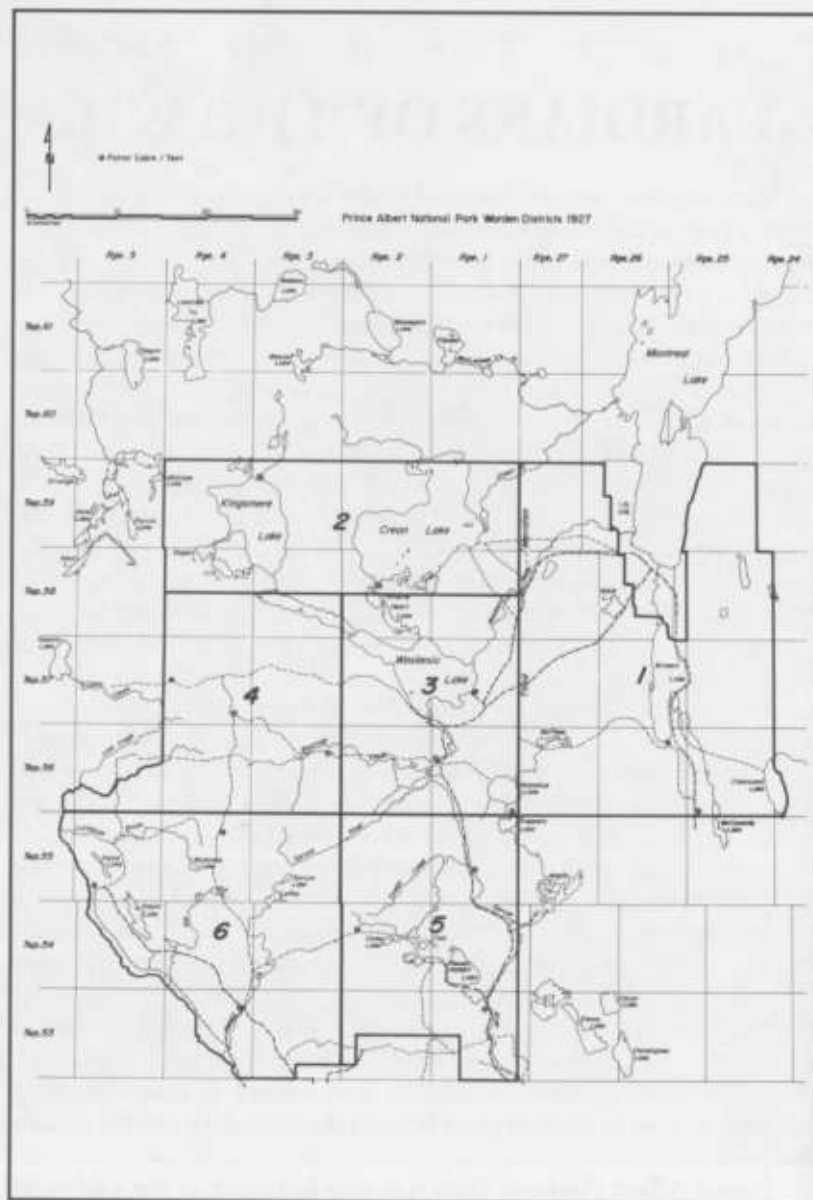
The first wardens' most important qualification for the job was that they were all local men who had grown up or settled in the region. This was not a time when a high school or university graduation and specialization in biology, forestry or related fields counted for much. These qualifications would become important later. What was needed at the beginning were physically fit individuals who were not afraid

of hard work, knew the land and its seasonal rhythms, and could handle an axe, horse, dogs and a gun. Walrod was a former rancher from the Valbrand area. Both Holden and Millard used to fish and trap in the park area. Davies and Merrell had been farmers in the Alingly and Paddockwood districts respectively. Genge had been a farmer, logger and trapper.

The new Prince Albert National Park wardens assumed their duties at a time when Commissioner Harkin was grumbling about the quality of the overall warden service. "In recent years," he wrote Wood in October 1928, "the impression has been growing with me that our wardens are not only not doing as much work as wardens did in the earlier days but that some of them at least are failing to realize just what their responsibilities and duties are." He continued: "the wardens, without exception, should play the game by the Department and give it the very best that is in them."³ Wood passed these concerns along to his new wardens, noting that "the efficient performance of your duties is essential, and a full explanation will be required from any Warden who is dilatory in the performance of his duties."⁴ Park authorities, however, did not have to worry about the new Prince Albert wardens malingering; if anything, they were overworked. In devising a patrol system for the park in the summer of 1927, Wood had drawn up six large districts, each to be assigned to a particular warden. Since only five wardens had been appointed that fall, however, they were constantly on the move trying to cover as much territory as possible. And when not patrolling, they could often be found opening up new trails or improving old ones, blazing the park's boundaries or stringing new telephone lines, using trees for poles wherever possible.

Following the northward extension of the park's boundaries in 1929, the districts were slightly revised. Waskesiu was now designated a summer district, while the earlier, unrealistic grouping of Crean and Kingsmere lakes in one district was ended. The number of districts, however, remained the same, and in a few cases some were enlarged. The warden service also underwent something of a shake-up when Genge and Merrell resigned in 1929 to pursue other interests. One of their replacements, a former inspector of Dominion lands, lasted only a few months before he was dismissed — Wood was afraid that he would get lost if he put him in charge of a district.⁵

Because of these adjustments, the warden system at Prince Albert National Park did not get properly established until the early 1930s.



Prince Albert National Park Warden Districts 1927

By that time, there were four permanent (Davies, Anderson, Walrod and Mark Mellin) and four temporary wardens (Holden, Millard, Schermerhorn and Moberly). This number meant that all districts, including Waskesiu, could be manned, while Davies could attend to his supervisory duties full time. Up to then, he had been expected to patrol a district as well; in early November 1927, for example, he blazed the northern park boundary to Montreal Lake. A system of district headquarters cabins,⁶ patrol cabins and stables was also in place by this date, most being refurbished or built by the wardens themselves. Complementing these facilities were over 267 miles of groomed trail and 129 miles of telephone line.



Park warden headquarters at Meridian (credit: G. Curliiss)

Davies' base of operations was the former forestry headquarters at Meridian. This site was probably chosen over Waskesiu because of the buildings that were already there. It was also on the main road near the park entrance and gave an immediate impression to visitors, whether intentional or not, that the park was under the watchful eye of the warden service. As chief warden, Davies was essentially responsible for all operations outside the Waskesiu townsite. It was his job to determine the location of any new trails, telephone lines or warden

stations and patrol cabins, as well as assign the wardens any special tasks. He was also to ensure that all government buildings and equipment were in good order and that the wardens were performing the duties expected of them. To keep abreast of all developments, he visited each district at least once a month, traveling by car or boat in summer and horse or dog team in winter; in November 1930 alone, he covered 970 miles. During park fires, Davies was expected to take charge. When someone appeared in court for violating park regulations, he was to be present as the park's representative. He was also required to check all warden reports and served as a go-between between the superintendent and his men. It was a demanding position, but one that the tough though fair-minded Davies fulfilled for close to three decades.

Each district had its own unique features; no two were the same. Davies, in consultation with Superintendent Wood, consequently tried to take into account a warden's background and expertise in assigning districts. Former rancher Charlie Walrod, for example, was a natural for the Rabbit district, while Les Holden, whom Wood regarded as one of the best water men in northern Saskatchewan, worked on the large lakes. The duties of each warden in the various districts, however, were basically the same. They were required to possess a thorough knowledge of park regulations, especially in the areas of fire, fish and game, and do all that they could to see that these were enforced. "Ceaseless vigilance is necessary," Wood exhorted at the start of the 1928 hunting season, "and this can only be obtained by constant patrol."⁷ The wardens were also expected to be as familiar as possible with their districts and to see that all trails, telephone lines, buildings, equipment and campgrounds were properly maintained; in short, they had to be men of broad, practical ability. They were also diplomats who were there to inform and assist visitors during the summer. Finally, they were observers and recorders who reported monthly on a wide range of environmental and biological conditions, such as fish populations and spring break-up dates for the distant northern lakes.

In the performance of these duties, wardens were expected to work six days per week for 10 hours a day during the summer, nine hours a day in spring and fall, and eight hours a day in winter. In addition, they were considered on call at all times. Starting wardens earned between \$1200 and \$1500 per annum. Acting wardens or laborers, as they were known, earned the princely sum of 35 cents per hour. Both Holden and Millard toiled as laborers for more than five years before securing



Acting warden Bill Schermerhorn and Isabelle Pease at the Lavallée Lake patrol cabin
(credit: PANP 050-56 [E. Pease])

promotion in 1936, while Bill Schermerhorn, who was considered too old for permanent appointment, spent his entire park career at this level.

Every day, each warden was required to call Meridian and report to Supervising Warden Davies. If he was about to leave on a patrol, he told Davies what route he would be following and when he expected to return. These patrols ranged from a day to a week or more in length and were carried out by freight canoe, foot, showshoe, horseback or dog team depending on the season. By the 1950s, trucks, motorboats and snowmobiles were being increasingly used, while the dog sled had been phased out in favor of the horse and toboggan. Former warden Cliff Millard recalls receiving a retired chuckwagon horse while stationed at Boundary during the 1950s; whenever he started out on patrol, it was all he could do to hold the reins and keep the toboggan on the trail.⁸ The winter patrols were probably the most difficult because of the cold temperatures, deep snow and chilling winds that swept across the frozen lakes; at day's end, it was necessary to tend first to the dogs or horses. Patrolling the northern lakes by boat during the summer could be just as arduous, however, as wardens were often soaking wet because of rain or spray.

During the warden's absence on patrol, his place was assumed by his wife, if he was married. These women, the so-called "silent partners," played a vital role in the efficient operation of the district and helped their husbands in whatever way they could, whether it be answering the telephone or assisting visitors. This work was performed on top of their normal homemaking and child-rearing duties, which were demanding tasks in themselves because of the somewhat isolated conditions under which the families lived. Many women also had the added responsibility of educating their children when it was too far or too inconvenient to send them to school. In 1939 Emmett and Signe Millard, for example, wanted to build a school at their own expense at Rabbit Cabin for their four children but were denied permission. All told, it was an extremely isolated existence, compounded by the fact that wardens were not allowed to leave their districts unless otherwise instructed, and then only one day a month to secure supplies and mail. The park came first. Many made their own entertainment, however, and despite the hardships, look back upon these years with fond memories.

When a job requiring assistance needed to be done, the wardens



The garden at the Crean Lake warden's cabin (credit: L. Ridley)



Prince Albert National Park Warden Districts, 1935

sometimes secured the services of a temporary laborer. In some cases, they were helped by the town warden who acted in a relief capacity once summer was over. More often than not, however, the wardens in neighboring districts would work together to cut firewood, haul hay, repair bridges or upgrade buildings. They also tried to be as resourceful as possible, given the limited manpower and time. In 1956, wardens Shorty Harrison and Cliff Millard surveyed a new trail from Waskesiu to Crean by starting at opposite ends and alternately firing a gun and marking the trees in the direction of the sound of each shot.¹⁰

The warden service underwent a major reorganization in 1936. Despite the best efforts of the wardens, the districts were far too large for patrol purposes; if the Waskesiu summer district was counted, each man was responsible for approximately 267 square miles of territory. "It is rather noticeable how inadequate our force is for the amount of work that should be done," Wood complained to the commissioner. "As a matter of fact, the maintaining of continuous patrols becomes a hopeless proposition."¹¹ The number of districts was consequently increased from seven to ten — all the new ones being established in the south where illegal hunting was proving difficult to control. Davies also enjoyed the luxury of a few extra men for the first time, thanks to the addition of six new permanent wardens, including the return of Harry Genge.¹² Once again, Superintendent Wood showed a preference for men who had practical, firsthand knowledge of the park region. New appointee Roy Hubel, for example, had been a farmer in the Foxdale area, held a forest reserve trapping permit near Moose cabin, served as a provincial game guardian for seven years and finally, worked as a boatman on Lake Waskesiu in the early 1930s. Returned soldiers also continued to be looked upon favorably; both Cliff Pocock and Fred Russell had served in the First World War.

The fact that park wardens were mostly local men who had once been farmers, loggers, trappers or laborers did not mean that they were any less professional. Indeed, since 1929, they received regular instruction at park-sponsored warden schools or "annual refreshers" held in the spring at Waskesiu or the superintendent's office in Prince Albert. At first, these two to three-day conferences covered topics which were essential to the performance of the wardens' day-to-day duties: firefighting, trail and telephone construction and maintenance, equipment operation, game protection, report preparation, the merits of

horses versus dogs, and general conduct. By the early 1940s, classes on resource management techniques were added.

This increasingly specialized training did not affect the way in which the wardens were regarded. They still continued to be seen as the park's labor force outside the townsites. Whenever something unusual or special was required, they were called upon. They collected mammal specimens — the skull and the skin — for the National Museum of Canada. They stuffed bugs into small boxes for a department of Agriculture forest insect survey. And they provided visual weather reports, twice daily during the summer of 1942, for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan air observer school in Prince Albert. They also had their share of excitement. In January 1928, Merrell and Genge, the "two Harrys" as they were called, had the grisly chore of trying to locate four people who had drowned on Lake Waskesiu during a fierce storm the previous fall — a night Isabella Merrell still recalls to this day because of the spray from the breakers washing over her cabin roof!¹³ "The tent and equipment of the party that were missing last fall have been found near the mouth of the river, also the canoe full of ice," Davies reported to Wood. "It appears as if they were coming back over the lake when the canoe capsized or something else happened ... Merrell & Genge are going to chop the ice out carefully to see if there are any holes in it."¹⁴ The bodies were not found until the spring.

When the national parks warden service was created in 1909, it was specifically designed to provide fire and game protection. Both these duties figured prominently during the first few decades of the park's existence. In fact, within less than two weeks of the appointment of the first park wardens, a fire broke out near the southwestern end of Lake Waskesiu. Superintendent Wood must have felt somewhat chagrined, for he had earlier advised Harkin that fire would not be as serious a problem in the park as it had been in the mountains. His new wardens, however, now faced a blaze that was proving difficult to contain because of shifting winds. The prevalence of sloughs in the area, combined with rain on the third day, finally enabled them to bring it under control.¹⁵

The September 1927 conflagration was an omen of things to come. Fires were a constant problem in the park, with some years being worse than others. In 1930, eight fires destroyed over 5,000 acres in the park — one-third of all acreage burned in national parks that year. Six years later, 25,000 acres were lost to fire; one airplane patrol counted 65

distinct blazes on one day in July. Both 1941 and 1942 were particularly bad years when the park virtually burned from south to north: 50,000 acres the first year and over 80,000 the next.



Fires were a constant problem in the park during the 1930s and 1940s; 65 distinct blazes were counted by an airplane patrol on one day in July 1936 (credit: Friends of the Park [A. Anderson])

Wardens could do little to prevent fires other than ensure that park regulations were carefully observed and enforced. Otherwise, they concentrated their efforts on the early detection and suppression of fires. When the fire hazard was at its worst, the wardens were on constant patrol in their districts. To supplement these efforts, four fire lookout towers (Bluebell, Rabbit, Meridian, Boundary) in the park were also manned for three weeks in May and September of each year. Through an agreement between the departments of Interior and Defense, additional protection was provided by the Royal Canadian Air Force which flew over the park area during June and August, but only when the fire hazard was high. These flights not only reported fires but sometimes also prevented them from getting out of hand. In June 1935, a routine patrol spotted a small blaze on the west side of Sandy Lake and brought men and equipment to the scene before it spread.¹⁶ Generally though, fires in the park proved extremely destructive during the first two

decades, and Wood continually pleaded for more lookout towers and air surveillance throughout the fire season.

Another serious problem was that of game protection. National parks were also game sanctuaries; it was illegal to collect or kill wildlife or carry an unsealed gun or any other weapon within park boundaries. When Prince Albert National Park was established, it was assumed that the greatest number of game violations could be expected in the Bittern Lake district. The Montreal Lake Indians had hunted and trapped in the area for decades, and now that much of their reserve was surrounded by the new park, trouble was a foregone conclusion. Most of the poaching occurred, however, on the western side of the park where elk were plentiful and where it was easy to slip into the park at any one of a number of points along the boundary. Nor was hunting season the worst time of year. People could shoot game elsewhere during that period and tended to respect the park's boundaries. During the winter and spring it was a different story. Many local settlers regarded the park as their private hunting and trapping reserve, maintained at government expense, where they could help themselves whenever they wanted. "Conditions in Prince Albert Park are a little different from other Parks," Wood explained to Ottawa officials. "Those areas contiguous to the south boundary and the west boundary are practically completely settled and very few of the settlers recognize the game laws. During the winter months, if they require meat, they have no hesitation in going out and shooting."¹⁷

Given the potential danger involved, the wardens often teamed up with a temporary assistant or one another during the poaching period — even if it meant concentrating their efforts in one district at the expense of another. They also tried to vary their patrol patterns to make them as unpredictable as possible and would cover parts of one another's districts. One warden, Cliff Pocock, who stumbled across a line of snares in his district, set up a box camera and trip line and photographed the poachers in the act. Despite their best efforts though, poaching continued, partly because it was common knowledge among the settlers that acting wardens or laborers had no authority to make arrests.¹⁸ At Wood's repeated urging, Commissioner Harkin finally arranged to have these men appointed supernumerary constables by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was not until the number of districts was increased and the warden staff nearly doubled that the park began to achieve some control over poaching activities. The province also lent a

hand in the early 1940s by agreeing to have game guardians from towns bordering the park named honorary park wardens with the authority to enforce game laws within park boundaries.

One of the park wardens who was obsessed with catching poachers was Harry Genge. In fact, he made the first arrest for shooting an animal within the park on 19 November 1927, when a Birch Hills resident was caught with an elk carcass and subsequently fined \$5. Unlike other wardens who usually caught poachers by chance encounter, Genge went after them with a vengeance. One of his favorite tricks was to make it known that he was leaving his district for a week and then sneak back a few days later.¹⁹ These tactics nearly cost Genge his life. In May 1939, he stalked Doug Clare, James Clare Jr. and J. Ballantine, who were poaching beaver in his district, for several days. He finally arrested them about 15 miles from Waskesiu and was bringing them back when he was attacked with sticks, brutally beaten and then left. Genge could have pulled his service revolver to defend himself but declined to do so because he knew the three men. Bleeding from his head, both eyes swollen closed and his left arm numb, he somehow made it to Clare Beach where he secured help. The two Clare boys and Ballantine were quickly captured and sentenced to five years and 18 months respectively after a two-day trial in Waskesiu. As for Genge, he was back at work in his district within a week. In the words of a former warden, Harry was one tough bugger.²⁰

The attack on Genge was the only incident of its kind in the park's history. Most poachers when surprised by wardens would make a mad dash on foot or by car for the park's boundaries, leaving behind their weapons and the animal. In fact, a warden had a greater chance of being hurt during the performance of his daily tasks. There was always the possibility that he could fall from a tree or pole when repairing a telephone line or fall through soft ice with his horse during patrols in the early fall or spring. Or he could simply become sick — a potentially life-threatening situation if the illness was serious and the warden was on his own.

Such was the case of Warden R.F. Arnold. Hired in May 1940, Arnold was a new breed of warden that the national parks branch was trying to attract to the service; he not only had some university training, but also had some expertise in the area of forest insects. Superintendent Herbert Knight, Wood's successor, however, was determined to see that Arnold received no special treatment and assigned him to Crean



Park wardens on the steps of the Administration building circa 1937. Front row (left to right): George Davies, Bill Anderson, Emmett Millard, Fred Russell(?), Back row: Harry Genge, Fred Carter, Roy Hubel, Les Holden, Shorty Harrison, Cliff Pocock. (credit: PANP [R. Hubel])



Warden Art Howard preparing to head off for Crean with Anahareo and a visiting professor and his wife on 31 August 1936. Howard drowned the next day (credit: L. Ridley)

(District No. 2), one of the most challenging districts in the park given the unpredictability of the large lake and the wet, low-lying land to the north. Although he lacked many of the practical skills common to the other wardens, Arnold survived his first summer without incident. On 19 October 1940, he was not heard from and was later discovered gravely ill on his cabin floor by Warden Roy Hubel from the neighboring district. Removed to Waskesiu by stretcher and canoe, Arnold was operated on for acute appendicitis the following morning in Prince Albert and remained on unpaid sick leave until the following July. Thereafter, he could perform only light duties and was assigned various clerical jobs at Waskesiu and the Prince Albert office until he was released in 1945.²¹

Arnold's brush with death probably caused the park wardens to wonder whether the service was jinxed, because three other men had died accidentally over the previous four years. On 1 September 1936 Art Howard, the warden at Crean, went for a late afternoon swim with Anahareo, the common-law wife of Grey Owl, caretaker of park animals, at a beach not far from his cabin. While paddling back across the lake with her, Howard lost his balance and fell overboard, causing the canoe to capsize. After several attempts to climb on top of the sinking canoe, the pair decided to swim to shore. Howard quickly tired, however, and became disoriented and started thrashing around in the water. Anahareo tried to push him towards shore, but could not keep him above water and eventually had to head for shore alone. She then ran along the beach, swam across a channel to the cabin and phoned Meridian to report the incident. Superintendent Wood, together with Warden Les Holden and two other boats of volunteers, including Howard's father who happened to be camping at Waskesiu, arrived at Crean an hour and a half later and were taken by Annahareo to the spot where Howard had disappeared. The boats immediately started to drag for the body and located it around sundown in about seven feet of water. Howard had served as a temporary warden briefly in 1930 and had just rejoined the service at the time of his drowning.²²

The other two deaths occurred at Boundary two years later. In the early evening of 7 July 1938, Wood received word that a visitor to Boundary cabin had discovered two men — apparently Warden Fred Carter and his assistant George Panter — at the bottom of the well. After notifying the RCMP, Wood called for a plane from Prince Albert and then flew to the site with Dr. Beattie Martin, a good friend and

coroner who had a cottage in the Prospect Point subdivision. The men reached Boundary towards sunset and took immediate steps to bring up the bodies before it became too dark. While Wood and the pilot got a rope ready, Martin decided to test the well for gas and threw in a lit piece of paper. This caused a terrific explosion that severely burned Martin's left hand and to a lesser extent, his arms and face. Wood tended to the doctor as best he could and then waited for more help to arrive. It was not until early next morning, by the first light of dawn, that the two bodies were finally removed from their temporary tomb. There still remained the problem, however, of getting Martin to Prince Albert for medical treatment. Flying conditions were extremely poor that morning, and the pilot had to turn back twice because of the low ceiling. On the third attempt, they managed to get as far south as near Rabbit Lake where Martin was transferred to a park delivery truck for the rest of the trip to Prince Albert.

Over the next few days, Wood pieced together what happened at Boundary on the basis of Carter's diary and the evidence at the scene. On 4 July Carter had arranged with Panter to help him clean out the well. After pumping out several feet of water by hand, they decided that it would be far easier to set up a firefighting pump on a platform down in the well. The unit evidently stopped working after only a short period, and when Carter went to see what was wrong, he lost consciousness. Panter then went down himself and was apparently trying to lift Carter when he too was overcome by the gas. Wood, for his part, could not fathom how Carter could make such a mistake. Not only was he one of the best men in the new lot of wardens that the park had hired in 1936, but he had previously worked as a mechanic for seven years. The tragedy hit hard. Panter was a young lad of 18, while Carter left a wife and two young sons — one only 10 days old.²³

Park wardens were also subject to a considerable amount of stress. Being responsible for a district was not an easy burden, particularly during the winter months when the administrative and maintenance offices at Waskesiu were closed down and they were on their own, if they did not have a family, for long periods of time. The demands of the job took their toll. Some tried to cope by turning to the bottle. Others simply snapped. In August 1949 a recently appointed warden handed in his resignation and then proceeded to get drunk in the Waskesiu campground and verbally abuse the visitors.

Then there was the case of the anonymous letter-writer. In late



Bittern Creek patrol cabin and fire lookout tower. Park wardens were subject to a considerable amount of stress, particularly because of the isolation during the winter months (credit: PANP 050-160)

1938 the ever popular Jimmy Wood was replaced by Herbert Knight, the superintendent of Waterton National Park. Knight, a former rancher and First World War veteran, practiced a completely different style of leadership and tended to be rather stiff, at times frustrating, in his dealings with the park staff. He also took over at a time when park funding was reduced because of the demands of the Second World War, and a number of adjustments had to be made. These changes, combined with Knight's officious manner, unfortunately led to a certain degree of criticism and resentment. One warden decided to take matters into his own hands and sent the following note to Ottawa on 1 August 1942:

Sorry but we can't stand *Knight & Atkinson* [PANP resident engineer] any longer They must be removed at once No poor man can keep his job Men willing to work but not treated like dogs Every Park building go to ground unless we get action at once Remember nice fire in Park already this year More to follow unless these 2 empty headed English men removed at once AND WE DON'T MEAN MABY [sic] WORKING MEN²⁴

Although Knight privately dismissed the threat to start fires as "the outpourings of a crank,"²⁵ he bristled at the thought of insubordination and had the letter sent to the local RCMP detachment.

The police investigation failed to turn up any suspects, and the case was about to be dropped when a second letter was sent in mid-November:

We see the empty headed Knight is still on duty
Remember we demand he be let go
We will not stand for no empty *headed englishmen*
We mean this and no joke
Our last notice
Everyone even tourist just hate him

Men of Good Sense²⁶

This time, the police were able to trace the letter to a member of the park warden staff. The warden steadfastly claimed his innocence, thereby forcing a reluctant parks service, at Knight's insistence, to suspend him for threatening to start fires and to take the matter to trial in Prince Albert in June 1943. The charges were dropped, however, when the warden resigned during the preliminary hearing. In assessing the affair, Ottawa authorities simply concluded that he was "bushed" after many years in the backwoods.²⁷

The park warden's actions cannot be countenanced; they were unacceptable for a person in his position. What should not be overlooked, however, is that he was motivated in part by a love for the park — a feeling that was shared by other members of the warden service. While Waskesiu tended to be in the limelight from the beginning of the park's creation, the wardens were out in the districts ensuring that the park's boundaries were honored and that the wilderness was protected. It was a demanding task, characterized by fatigue, isolation, mental stress and adversity. But the wardens soldiered on, whatever the circumstances. They saw it as their duty, and a noble one at that. It is no exaggeration to suggest that they were the eyes and the ears of the park and that through their tireless efforts, Prince Albert National Park lived up to its name.



Swimming party at Lake Waskesiu, circa 1930 (credit: L. Ridley)

C H A P T E R S I X

THE PARK TAKES SHAPE

The Great Depression could have crippled Prince Albert National Park. The national parks' share of the federal budget was already small¹ and with the onset of the Depression, the annual parks grant was expected to be severely reduced. This posed a particularly serious threat to Prince Albert National Park. The park had made great strides since its establishment in 1927, but facilities and services were still in a formative stage; much more needed to be done. It now faced the potential situation in which simple maintenance of existing facilities, let alone further development of the park, would prove difficult. This problem never materialized. Beginning in the winter of 1930-31 and continuing until mid-decade, the park became the temporary home of hundreds of unemployed men who performed the kind of work that would otherwise have been impossible during this period. Indeed, these men were largely responsible for much of the development during these difficult years and in the process, ensured that the great plans for Saskatchewan's playground were not dashed.

When the Canadian economy began to falter in early 1930, no one knew how long the ensuing depression would last nor to what depths the downswing would reach. But as the ranks of the unemployed continued to swell in number, it was clear that something needed to be done. Conservative leader R.B. Bennett promised as much during the July 1930 federal election and after sweeping the Mackenzie King Liberals from office, his new government immediately introduced an Unemployment Relief Act to aid those out of work. Under the terms of the act, federal funds were to be divided among the provinces to help them finance "work-for-relief" projects.

Saskatchewan proposed to use part of its share of federal relief funds to establish provincial work camps in Prince Albert National Park. Not only would such camps provide temporary work for a large number of men over the winter months, but they would also get the unemployed out of the cities and thereby ease the strain on already overburdened municipal relief agencies. Park authorities, for their part, were receptive to the plan. There was a considerable amount of clearing and brushing that had to be done along the main highway and the park's

boundaries, work that would have normally been carried out over a number of years as resources dictated. The prospect of several hundred men being placed at the park's disposal raised the possibility of getting a considerable portion of this work done at no cost, except for supervision.

In a scene reminiscent of the logging days at the turn of the century, several dozen men began to congregate in Prince Albert in November 1930. Most were from the surrounding communities, while a few had been sent north in small groups from southern towns and villages. All had been attracted by the promise of earning a maximum of \$100 for two months work. After local authorities were convinced that the men were destitute, they were transported north to one of five camps in the park: two along the boundary (western and southeastern), two along the main highway near Namekus and Long lakes, and one at Waskesiu. At the two boundary tent camps the men cut, cleared and burned a strip 25 feet wide along the park boundary. Similar work was performed by the three camps inside the park: the two highway camps cleared a 160-foot road allowance along both sides of the main road (now Highway 263), while the Waskesiu camp concentrated its efforts on enlarging the campground by filling in the muskeg.²

On 12 December 1930 Superintendent Wood reported that the five camps, numbering 175 men, were up to full strength.³ Since these men were to be replaced by a second group two months later, it is quite possible that upwards of 350 men found work in the park that winter. As for the camps, they were a general success. Seventy-seven miles of boundary were cleared. Even the men were happy. "It was just like home," said one fellow, "and the food was splendid."⁴ In fact, many wanted to stay on and were disturbed by the thought of going home to no job.

The Bennett government's 1930 relief program was strictly a temporary measure designed to help unemployed Canadians weather the economic storm that was expected to dissipate the following year. By the spring of 1931, however, it was estimated that 400,000 Canadians were now out of work, and the number was climbing. A new Unemployment and Farm Relief Act was hurriedly passed by the Conservative administration to deal with the growing crisis. Unlike the act of the previous year though, several hundred thousand dollars were specifically earmarked for relief work in Canada's national parks.⁵

For the second consecutive winter Prince Albert National Park



Much of the early relief work in the park was devoted to general clearing along the main highway and boundaries (credit: NAC C131607)

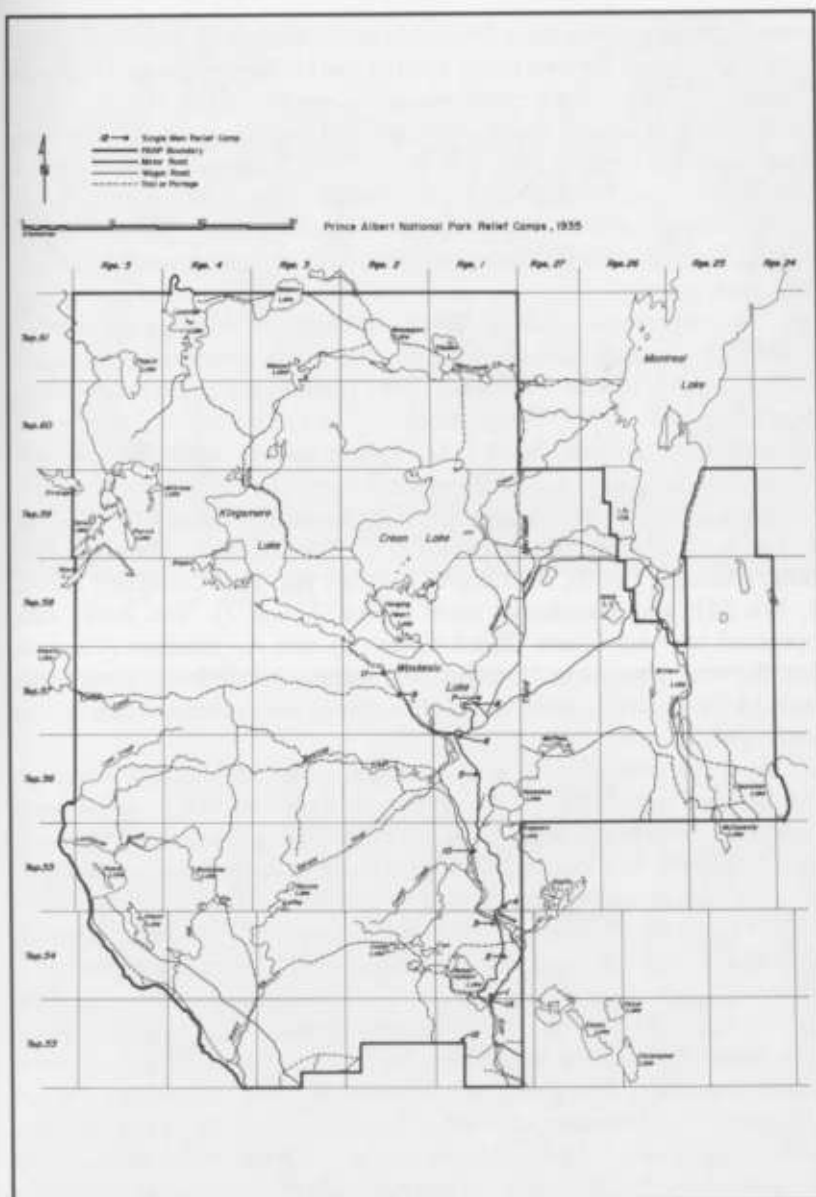
became the temporary home for several hundred single, homeless unemployed men. And although the program was now under the exclusive control of the national parks branch, the nature of the work did not change. Anxious to employ as many men as possible, the federal government insisted that park projects be restricted to those that required large amounts of labor, but little in the way of equipment and materials. The men therefore continued to work on the park boundaries, the main highway, the townsite campground, and a new 13-mile secondary road across the southern boundary between Rabbit and Meridian cabins (now Highway 240). The only changes from the year before were in the areas of accommodation and clothing. Boundary crews working along the northern perimeter were now housed in cabooses that were pulled along by a caterpillar tractor, while a number of more permanent wooden structures were erected at the camp at Waskesiu. In the interests of ensuring that the men were properly prepared for work outside, a clothing depot was also established in the basement of the Prince Albert park office.⁶

Although the 1931-32 park relief program ran smoothly, Wood was evidently glad to see it come to an end. He found that his summers

were busy enough and that the coordination of the various relief projects during the winter — time usually devoted to planning — absorbed vast amounts of energy. Thus, when he was advised in October 1932 that he would be operating camps once again, he accepted the news with a spirit of resignation. "Although I am not keener on them than you are," he confided to his counterpart at Riding Mountain National Park, "it is something that has to be done in view of the amount of unemployment in Saskatchewan cities."⁷ The simple truth of the matter, however, was that without the work camps, any new development and most maintenance work in Prince Albert National Park would probably have come to a standstill. As the Canadian economy continued to decline through 1932 and into 1933, the annual park appropriation dropped to under \$40,000, a decline of almost 75% since 1930-31. At the same time, the Bennett government made available more and more funds for national park relief work. For the nine-month period from April 1933 to January 1934, for example, more than \$1 million was provided for this purpose. Almost one-quarter of this amount was turned over to Prince Albert; only Riding Mountain received a larger share.⁸

Although Wood did not like to operate relief camps, he quickly learned that they were his best hope if he wanted to get anything accomplished during these difficult years. He could not have asked for a larger workforce. As the southern part of Saskatchewan was reduced to a desert, more and more communities sent their unemployed north to the park. They arrived weekly in groups from 10 to 40, so that by early December 1932 their number totalled 700. By the new year, they surpassed 1,000.⁹ They came out of desperation. It certainly was not the pay — a mere \$5 per month including room and board.

To accommodate the men, a number of new camps were established along the main highway and the southwest shore of Lake Waskesiu. Most consisted of fairly substantial log buildings erected by the men themselves shortly after their arrival; in a few cases, former logging structures were moved, refurbished and occupied. The location of the camps made them relatively accessible, particularly since the highway was to be kept open over the winter. Wood wanted to avoid the hassle of the previous year when the northern boundary camps had to be supplied by airplane twice a week.¹⁰ If any work needed to be done in the outlying districts, small temporary tent camps would be established there.



Prince Albert National Park Relief Camps, 1935



In keeping with its central place in the park, the townsite received a second camp, bringing the total number of men stationed at Waskesiu to 200. Two camps were also located at McKenzie Creek, just north of Meridian: a field headquarters (Camp 1A) and a large work camp (Camp 1) that featured a log barn, stores, dining hall, bunkhouse, hospital and office. Responsibility for the camps was shared between Superintendent Wood and National Parks Engineer Phillip Shaw. Wood looked after administrative matters such as expenditures and payroll, while Shaw acted as a kind of field general from his base at McKenzie Creek and coordinated the day-to-day operations at the various camps. It was a large operation; besides the men on relief, there was a support staff of close to 150, including cookies, teamsters and foremen.¹¹ Park officials were determined to see that everything ran smoothly. When Wood was warned by the Canadian Legion that communists were attempting to win over ex-servicemen in the camps, he replied: "a close watch is being kept on communists and agitators. If their activities become too pronounced, they will be sent to one of the eight or ten men camps in the outlying districts. These small camps will be forty or fifty miles from any of the larger camps and I am of the opinion that an agitator or communist at any of these outlying points can talk to his heart's content without doing very much harm."¹²

Over the period from November 1932 to March 1934, the unemployed provided 290,296 man-days of relief work in Prince Albert National Park.¹³ Continuing the work of their predecessors, they brushed and cleared a number of major trails, removed some of the more dangerous curves in the main highway, constructed a few miles of the Narrows Road, and completed the Rabbit-Meridian highway. Big River also wanted the relief workers to build a new road between the town and Lake Waskesiu and petitioned the parks branch in August 1933. The proposal was turned down, however, on the grounds that it would prove an extremely costly project — 28 miles at \$3500 per mile — and that the residents of the area would be served by the new road along the southern boundary of the park.¹⁴

The majority of relief work during this period was focused on the townsite. Wood believed that the park would never enjoy great popularity until a full range of recreational facilities had been developed. He decided to use the relief workers to do the kind of work at Waskesiu that probably would have been delayed or abandoned under the circumstances. They installed a new series of drainage ditches in the camp-

ground, hauled more than 350 cubic yards of rock for the breakwater, built a new wharf for tour boats, erected two bathhouses along the beach, laid the foundation for four tennis courts, groomed the first nine holes of the golf course and started clearing and grubbing the second nine. The men also worked on a number of new structures. They built a new registration building and combination museum/community hall in the campground, as well as dug the foundations, cut the timber and hauled the materials for a golf course club house, staff quarters building and park garage.

This construction activity in the townsite by relief gangs complemented that which had been carried on in the business subdivision in the early 1930s. In 1931, two stores (Ivor Frigstad's Arcade Store, Block 2, Lot 2; A & B Drug, Block 2, Lot 4) and another dance hall ("The Terrace Gardens," Block 1, Lot 7) were erected, while the Lakeview Hotel (Block 1, Lots 8 and 9) was enlarged. The following year saw the addition of five more buildings: Doc Sissons' Red Deer Chalet (Block 1, Lot 4); E.F. Fournier's Pleasant Inn (Block 2, Lot 5); Pease's Fish Shop (Block 2, Lot 8); the Empire Lumber and Fuel Company (Block 1, Lot 24); and Umphrey's store (Block 2, Lot 7). Two livery lots, operated by Axel Olson (Block S, Lot 2) and A. Johnson (Block S, Lot 3), were also opened behind the business subdivision. One structure (A & B Drug, later the Coffee Shop) was rebuilt when it was destroyed by fire.

By 1933, construction activity had slowed considerably, although not because people believed that the townsite did not have business potential. Wood's office received a stream of inquiries about opening such businesses as a beauty salon, beer parlor, pool hall, bakery, theater, taxidermy shop and a dairy. In fact, one individual arrived at the Prince Albert office on 17 February 1932 to wait to apply for a business lot that was to become available nine days later.¹⁵ Few people, however, were willing to make a financial commitment because of the depressed conditions, and only one new building was erected in the business subdivision in 1933 (Dairy Bar, Block 2, Lot 3) and 1934 (Texaco Service Station, Block 1, Lot 25). The construction work undertaken by the relief men was therefore important, not only in terms of the facilities and structures that were built, but also in the sense that it maintained a momentum that otherwise would have been absent. Because of the changes that had been brought about under the relief program, Wood finally recommended to Ottawa on 1 February 1934 that "Waskesiu"



The Pleasant Inn (credit: PANP 158-B [D. Morrison])



Ivor Frigstad's Arcade Store was completed in 1931 (NAC C131558)

be officially adopted as the name of the townsite; the name was unanimously approved by the Prince Albert Board of Trade.¹⁶

Ironically, all of this work almost came to naught. Four years earlier, the federal government had relinquished control over Saskatchewan's natural resources. The two governments could not agree, however, on the level of compensation that should be paid to the province for the years that Ottawa had administered the resources — Saskatchewan wanted \$250 million — and the Dysart Commission was eventually established to arbitrate the claims dispute. During the hearings on 27 February 1934, J. Stewart, chief counsel for the Dominion government, announced that if the Saskatchewan government insisted upon compensation for the lands that had been set aside to make up Prince Albert National Park, Ottawa would dismantle the park and turn the lands back to the province.¹⁷ The provincial counsel turned down the offer, and the issue was not raised again. The Saskatchewan position did not escape without comment though. In a highly critical editorial, the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* described the claim as “rather peculiar to say the least,” particularly when the park was a “pronounced benefit to the province at no cost to the province.”¹⁸

Although Prince Albert shuddered at the thought of losing its national park, it was not completely satisfied with what had been accomplished to date. The Board of Trade was generally dismayed with the pace of development and urged that a great deal more should be done. In 1933, for example, it sent Ottawa a list of 30 recommendations for “the proper development and improvement” of the park — suggestions that included a heated swimming pool, bridle paths and hiking trails, more roads, an animal park, bear pits near the campsite, dams and canals, sidewalks and street lighting, fish stocking, and a bandstand.¹⁹ Frustrated by these demands, Wood explained to the commissioner that most of the park's annual budget was already being spent on recreational facilities and that Prince Albert would soon measure up to any national park.²⁰ At the same time, he realized that these concerns would not go away and tried to be as compliant as possible.

There was one issue that was a concern both to the park administration and the Board of Trade, namely, accommodation. By the end of December 1932, only eight cottages had been built in the Prospect Point subdivision;²¹ the building restrictions continued to be a deterrent. The Waskesiu campground, on the other hand, was severely overtaxed.



The Lakeview Inn, Wisconsin (credit: PANP 050-207)



The Waskesiu waterfront, July 1932 (credit: G. Curtis)

At one point in July 1931, there were 3800 people under canvas trying to share the 480 camping lots. Wood described the scene in a letter to Harkin later that fall: "tents were jammed so closely together that at times it was almost impossible to get between them. No order was maintained. As a matter of fact no attempt was made to confine the tents to specified areas as it would have been quite impossible to do so."²²

The Board of Trade's solution to the problem was to set aside an area in the townsite where cheaper cottages could be erected. Ottawa was cool to the idea. A number of people had already been allowed to erect tent houses, or "shack tents" as they were popularly known, in a designated area of the main campground. These were knock-down structures with sectional wooden floors and walls that were hinged or bolted together, and a canvas-covered frame roof. Plans were also going forward for an auto bungalow camp (a row of small cabins with parking spaces) at the northeastern end of the campground; this development was designed to ease the strain on the campground by catering to people who visited the park for a relatively brief period. Wood, however, came under intense local pressure and in January 1931 he recommended that Ottawa send an official to investigate the situation.



The Waskesiu campground registration office (credit: Friends of the Park [I. & E. Pease])

The departmental response was that the creation of any new subdivision was unjustified given the lack of interest shown in the Prospect Point area; in fact, there were to be no new subdivisions in any national park for the time being. Undeterred, the Board of Trade, in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Provincial National Park Association, took the matter directly to the minister of the Interior, Thomas Murphy, as well as Mackenzie King, now leader of the Opposition. The tactics paid off. On 3 April 1931, Commissioner Harkin asked Wood to recommend a suitable site along the southwest shore of Waskesiu for a new subdivision and indicate the number of lots that should be provided. Wood investigated the possible sites that summer and in mid-September suggested that there were three suitable beaches: Paignton, Torbay and Clare. There the matter rested for the time being.²³

In 1932, the accommodation situation was little better. The campground had been enlarged by almost 200 lots by relief gangs. J.W. McDiarmid of Prince Albert had just been awarded a new auto bungalow concession (Waskesiu Bungalow Cabins). But the campground still remained congested; in the words of one Alberta visitor, "the lots were just big enough for a tent and a car and some elbow space."²⁴

Nor had anything been done about the new subdivision, except for the decision that it should be located at Clare Beach because the Narrows road had only reached that far. The Board of Trade, however, had come up with a new scheme. It now proposed to the minister of the Interior that the national parks branch build several rows of small, cheap cottages, for rent or purchase, along the lakeshore. This plan would not only "provide relief work for a considerable number of people," but would also "make for a more permanent summer resort at Waskesiu."²⁵ The parks branch turned down the proposal for two reasons. It was already experiencing difficulty encouraging people to build at Prospect Point. It also did not want to go into competition with private enterprise and was worried that the new park hotels and auto camp could be hurt by such a venture.²⁶

The Board of Trade "cheap cottage" proposal temporarily diverted attention away from the question of opening a new residential subdivision in the park. By the fall of 1933, however, the issue took on new urgency. Attendance had dropped by almost 30% from the previous year, and members of the Board of Trade were now arguing that the park building regulations were causing people to erect cottages elsewhere.²⁷ The national parks branch consequently decided to go ahead with the proposed Clare Beach subdivision and in May 1934 25 lots were thrown open for entry. Late that August, an additional 24 lots at Prospect Point, which had been surveyed in 1928 but never made available, were also posted. There was to be no change though in the existing building restrictions; they were to apply to the new lots. Superintendent Wood remained adamant on this point. Any modifications, he explained to the commissioner, "would create a very dangerous precedent, and I am quite certain that within a very short time, requests would be received from residents of other Parks for the same consideration." He continued: "This policy has ensured the construction of ... buildings in keeping with their surroundings, and I think it would be a great mistake to change it in any way, shape or form."²⁸ The creation of the Clare Beach subdivision was thus a non-solution; the Board of Trade may have secured its new subdivision, but cheaper cottages were still not permitted.

Relief work, in the meantime, continued to change the face of the park. In fact, the summer and fall of 1934 was an extremely productive period — in large part a consequence of a new federal program. In June 1934 the Bennett government, in a bald-faced attempt to



"The [campground] lots were just big enough for a tent and a car and some elbow space." (credit: L. Ridley)

emulate the success of American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal activities, introduced the Public Works Construction Act. The legislation was designed to facilitate economic recovery through the undertaking of various public works projects, while at the same time providing employment for men on relief.²⁹ As in the case of earlier federal relief legislation, the national parks branch received a share of the funds. And although the overall amount that the Bennett government committed to the new program was relatively small, Prince Albert National Park found itself with 50% more money than its 1930-31 allotment — the last year before the park appropriation was drastically reduced in response to the Depression.

The increased funding meant that relief workers did more than perform the customary mundane tasks such as clearing brush, grooming trails, sawing firewood or cutting and packing ice. Determined to silence the almost constant Board of Trade criticism of the park's recreational facilities, Wood redoubled his efforts in this area. The men erected eight new kitchen shelters and two refrigerator houses in the campground, built a band shell, laid out four additional tennis courts, a new recreation field and children's playground, and finished the first nine holes of the golf course and continued work on the greens and fairways of



Many of the skilled tradesmen who made up the ranks of the relief gangs left their mark on the park as evidenced by the Golf Course Clubhouse (credit: L. Ridley)



The Staff Quarters building, 1938, now used as the park information center (credit: NAC CI31584)



The entrance gate at the southern end of the park (credit: NAC PA58804)

the second nine. Outside the townsite, they constructed kitchen shelters at the Heart Lakes portage, at Paignton Beach along the southwest shore of Lake Waskesiu, and at Crean and Kingsmere lakes.

A large park garage, a golf clubhouse and a park staff quarters were also erected at Waskesiu under the Public Works Construction Act. All three structures had been slated for construction. Thanks to the funding provided through the act, however, they were more substantial buildings than had been originally planned. Many relief workers, moreover, got to put to use their skills as carpenters or stonemasons. The beautiful golf course clubhouse is a case in point. Designed by the national parks architectural division, the horizontal log structure with its stone trim and steep hip roof is a classic example of the "Tudor Rustic" style which characterized national parks buildings in western Canada during this period.

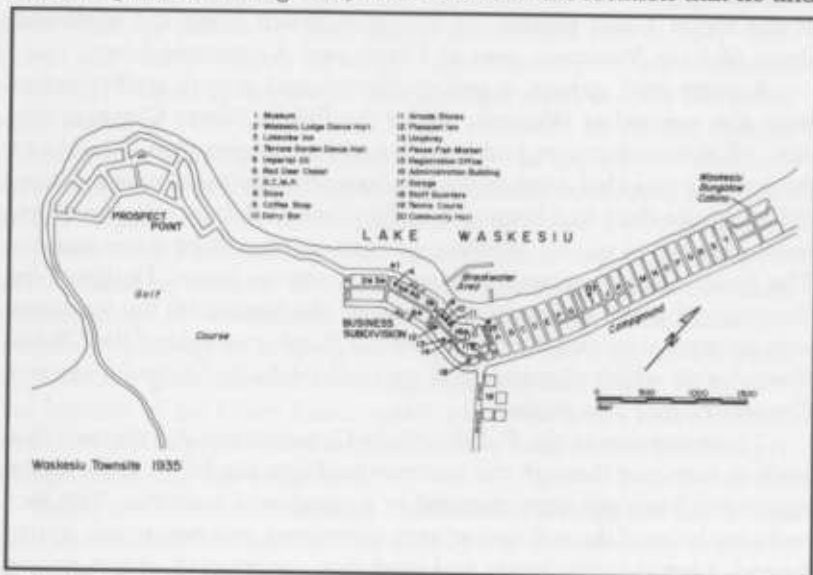
The extension of the Public Works Construction Act allowed this work to continue through the summer and into the fall of 1935. Once again, relief workers were engaged in a number of activities. The second nine holes of the golf course were completed, two new tennis courts started, a small caddy house and workshop constructed, storm sewers installed and sidewalks extended in the townsite, and the campground

was filled and graveled. The year was particularly noteworthy for the undertaking of three major projects. Although the road to the First Narrows on Lake Waskesiu had been surveyed in the fall of 1927, less than half of the 10-mile distance had been constructed by 1933. As long as Waskesiu remained the focus of park development, park officials were content to see the road proceed in fits and starts. But with the opening of the Clare Beach subdivision in 1934 and the prospect of other subdivisions along the southwest shore of the lake, it was decided to complete the road, and by the end of 1935 relief gangs had graded and graveled the better part of it. Like the main park highway, the Narrows road was constructed with scenery in mind and was deliberately kept within 200 yards of the lakeshore.

The two other major 1935 projects — a new museum and an addition to the breakwater — were carried out at the townsite. Originally, the museum was to be part of the community hall that had been erected in the campground in 1933. Before this building had been completed, however, the minister of the Interior complained about the location, arguing that the museum deserved a more imposing site than to be stuck on low lying ground among tents and shack tents. J.M. Wardle, national parks chief engineer, tried to defend the location that he and



The Community Hall was enlarged in 1935 (credit: PANP 050-08)



Waskesiu Townsite 1935

local parks officials had selected on the grounds that the structure was intended to serve the visiting public and that it was therefore the most logical location. The minister remained unconvinced, and when the Public Works Construction Act was introduced, it was decided to build a new museum on a height of land in front of the business subdivision. This plan did not sit well with Wood; he not only objected to the proposed site, but argued that there were a number of other buildings that should be built first. The parks branch, however, had apparently already promised the Prince Albert Board of Trade that it would build a new museum — it is quite likely that the board had complained to the minister about the original site — and the project went ahead during the summer of 1935 over Wood's objections.³⁰

The other major project at Waskesiu was the creation of an enclosed bay by means of a slightly angled 200-foot extension to the existing breakwater and the construction of a 150-foot spur wharf out from shore. First proposed by Wood in the spring of 1934, the project was designed to create a sheltered area for boats and had the support of the Board of Trade, which had proposed a similar scheme. The national parks engineering department was lukewarm to the idea, fearing that such an enclosed area would quickly fill in. These concerns were ignored



Twilight campfire along the Freight Trail.

Photo: Brad Muir



Grasslands beside Sturgeon River.

Photo: R. Dutcher



Storm over Kingsmere.

Photo: S. Carr



Washesiu River.

Photo: Merv Syroteuk



Winter sunset on Wäskesiu.

Photo: Mike Jones



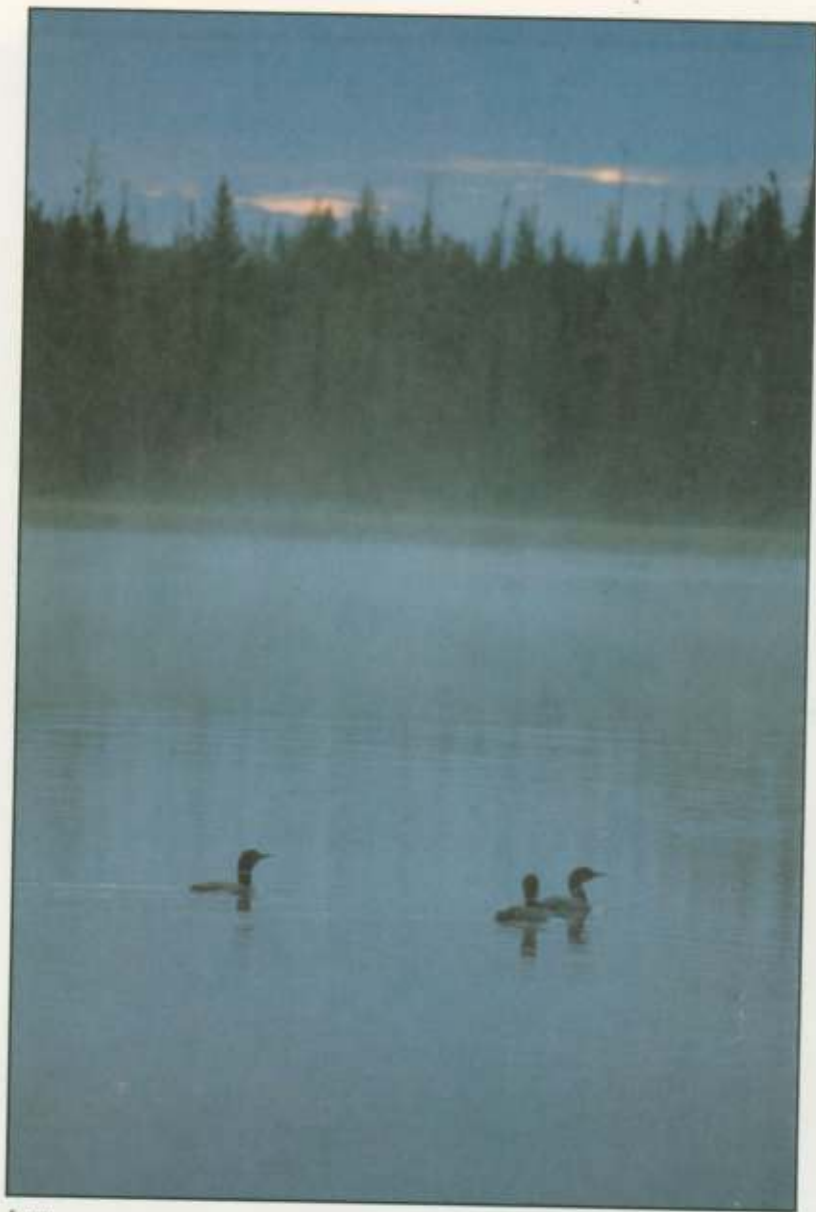
Island at dawn, Crean Lake.

Photo: D. Wilkes



Canoeing on Shady Lake.

Photo: Brad Muir.



Loons.

Photo: Merv Syroteuk



A Nature Hike.

Photo: A. Landry



Repairs and improvements to the breakwater had no sooner been completed when it was damaged by a severe wind storm in October 1935 (credit: NAC PA119642)

though, and construction got underway in April 1935 as a relief measure. It was not an easy project. It also proved to be a bad idea. No sooner had the extension been completed when it was battered by a severe storm on 19 October 1935 that damaged more than half of it. The engineering department's prediction also came true. By July 1937 Wood was complaining that the water in the bay was so shallow and so choked with weeds "that it is practically impossible to get a boat away from the shore wharf."³¹ The Public Works Department attempted to solve the problem by dredging 15,000 cubic yards of sand from the area during a three-month period during the summer of 1938, while placing a dam on the Waskesiu River to raise the water level of the lake. The situation did not improve, and three years later a worried Superintendent Knight warned the department about "the possibility of the harbour becoming landlocked within a very short time to motor launches."³²

In the early fall of 1935, the relief camps in Prince Albert and all other national parks were shut down; funds for the program had run out, and it was unlikely that the camps would be reopened. The Mackenzie King Liberals had returned to office in the October 1935 federal election, and in a move to distance themselves from the disasters

of the Bennett years they struck a commission to investigate whether relief camps should continue to operate. In early December 1935, however, the men at the department of National Defense relief camp at Dundurn went on strike. T.C. Davis, now provincial attorney-general in the Patterson government, was called upon to help put an end to it. Still haunted by memories of the Regina Riot six months earlier, Davis was anxious to defuse the situation peacefully. He also knew through his continuing association with the Prince Albert Board of Trade and Superintendent Wood that there was enough work in Prince Albert National Park to employ several hundred men. At a dominion-provincial conference in Ottawa later that month, he consequently discussed the idea of transferring the striking men to the park with the federal ministers of Interior, Labor and National Defense. He then laid the plan before the men, asking for volunteers. Eventually some 407 men were relocated to the park in the new year.³³

Although Prince Albert was the only national park to operate relief camps during the winter and spring of 1936, Superintendent Wood was not caught ill-prepared. He had grown quite accustomed to having a relief force at the park's disposal and despite indications that the days of the camps were over, he had submitted a list of relief projects to Ottawa in November 1935; he reasoned that the park camps would have to be opened sooner or later, given the fact that much of Saskatchewan was still in the grip of the Depression.³⁴ Wood therefore lost no time in getting the Dundurn men busy cutting logs and cordwood, constructing bridges, plowing fire guards, draining and leveling the campground, working on the townsite sewer system and building an addition to the Community Hall. To accommodate future workers, the men also started work on a permanent, 100-man camp at Waskesiu composed of an office and first aid room, a cook house, a laundry and bath house, a recreational hall, a dining hall and two bunkhouses. Finally, they were involved in two new major, road-building projects. The men did some preliminary work on the Waskesiu-Montreal Lake road which had finally received federal and provincial approval. They also helped survey and clear the right-of-way for a new seven-and-a-half-mile road around the eastern end of Lake Waskesiu from the townsite across the Waskesiu River to the Heart Lakes portage. This road had been discussed over the past few years as part of a larger plan to encircle Lake Waskesiu with a scenic highway³⁵ and was well underway by the time the Dundurn men were dispersed at the end of May 1936.

The construction of the Heart Lakes road undoubtedly pleased the Prince Albert Board of Trade. In fact, it had seen many of its recommendations for the development of the park realized over the past few years. It was still unhappy though with the cottage situation. Although it had succeeded in securing a new subdivision at Clare Beach, cheaper cottages could not be built there, and only two people — Myrtle Strangways (1934, Lot 22) and Blanche Mitchell (1935, Lot 23) — had taken out lots. The Board of Trade consequently decided to push once again for the easing of building restrictions, but this time with the help of Tommy Davis. Employing the same strategy that had led to the creation of the park ten years earlier, Davis wrote the minister of the Interior in February 1936 and requested that a new subdivision be immediately set aside in the townsite where individuals could build cheaper cottages comparable to those which already existed in the auto bungalow camp. "The granting of this facility," he argued, "will make for much greater use of the park by those individuals who haven't the means to build cottages in compliance with existing regulations."³⁶

The national parks branch remained opposed to the idea. In an internal memorandum on the topic, Commissioner Harkin observed that the building regulations were proving satisfactory in all other national parks and that conditions at Prince Albert did not warrant special treatment. "If any cheaper type of cottage were allowed," he warned, "the character of the park area would be no better than that of areas where no Park Regulations are in effect and the whole advantage of development under National Parks supervision would be lost."³⁷ The Prince Albert situation was different though, in that it was the prime minister's riding. And so instead of siding with his own officials and turning down the proposal, Thomas Crerar, the minister of the Interior, left the matter in abeyance until he personally visited the park that summer. There he was greatly impressed by the arguments of a local delegation and upon his return to Ottawa, wanted to know whether the parks branch could state with any certainty whether a respectable cottage could not be erected for \$500. The parks people must have felt somewhat betrayed. But they dug in their heels and convinced the minister that, before a final decision was made, a building permit be issued to any individual who would try to erect a cottage for under \$1000 that would be a credit to the park.³⁸

Over the summer of 1937, no one took up the branch's challenge. It was not necessary. Parks officials were evidently under considerable

ministerial pressure to come up with a solution and in October 1937, they proposed the creation of a small bungalow camp where individuals could build cheaper cottages but the area would be developed as a unit by the park. Before the plan was finalized, moreover, Superintendent Wood was asked to meet with the Prince Albert Board of Trade and other interested bodies to see whether the scheme met with their approval. It did. Even Wood liked the idea, provided the parks branch used the opportunity to remove all shack tents from the main campground within three years. "Personally I would be glad to see them done away with," he wrote the parks controller. "A camping ground with numerous tent-houses is far from being attractive."³⁹ Ottawa was not foolish enough to resolve one contentious issue only to create another. Besides, it was assumed that people occupying shack tents would probably opt for a small cottage. Wood's suggestion was therefore ignored. The Board of Trade, however, did not completely get its way. Whereas the board wanted two areas in the park set aside for cheaper cottages, park officials wanted to see first whether the scheme was viable and were willing to establish only one 22-lot unit.⁴⁰ Still it was quite a victory. Not only did the parks branch retreat on the issue of building regulations, but the new Lakeview subdivision, as it was officially named, was located in 1938 on four existing blocks of the main campground (Blocks Q, R, S, T) — an area that had originally been set aside for the general public, not the select few.

By 1938, Prince Albert National Park had undergone quite a metamorphosis — new roads, new subdivisions, new buildings and new recreational facilities. In fact, the same year that the Lakeview subdivision opened, a new auto bungalow camp, Hillcrest Cabins, was established at the west end of the business subdivision, while the RCMP barracks were razed in favor of a new structure on a higher, drier piece of land behind the business subdivision. There were further changes in 1939, when the lands, parks and forests branch of the new department of Mines and Resources launched the National Forestry Program. Young men, aged 18 to 25, were employed for five months in Canada's national parks under the guise of a training program in forestry conservation. In reality, however, the parks branch missed the days of the relief worker and tended to look upon these men as a cheap labor force.⁴¹

Prince Albert operated two National Forestry Program camps that summer, unit 13 at Waskesiu and 14 at the Narrows. And although the young men did receive instruction in forestry management and



The RCMP building on the site now occupied by the Hawwood Inn (credit: NAC C131559)

physical education, they picked up where the relief gangs had left off. They landscaped the new Lakeview subdivision and parts of the townsite, dug a 700-foot drainage ditch near the golf course, constructed fireguards, did selective cutting and thinning along the Narrows road, planted trees in the main campground, built picnic tables, shelters and toilets, graveled roads, and erected a gateway at the south entrance. The men also destroyed vestiges of the park's history. They closed the old logging canal on Beartrap Lake, thereby returning the water flow to its natural course. They also demolished several of the relief camp buildings and cleaned up the sites.⁴²

The various activities of the National Forestry Program were essentially finishing touches. The credit for the major changes in the park during the 1930s belongs to hundreds of single, homeless, unemployed relief workers. These are the unknown men of Prince Albert's past. There is no list of their names. There are no plaques commemorating their deeds. Even the location of their camps are vague memories. Their legacy lives on though in a number of park structures and facilities — be it the museum, the Narrows road or the golf course. For Prince Albert National Park, these were not “ten lost years.”



Grey Owl with beaver at Ajawaan (credit: Glenbow NA-4868-214)

C H A P T E R S E V E N

ARCHIE

"Although I am but eighteen years old I feel imprisoned in this country of noise, and mechanisation, the life which I feel I was made for has so far been confined to dreams, but I intend to make these dreams a reality for I am not content to remain a mere cog in the wheels of civilisation."¹ This letter was received by Prince Albert National Park in July 1954. Austen Cale of Yorkshire England had just finished reading Grey Owl's *Tales of an Empty Cabin* and was anxious to share his thoughts about the book's message, as well as thank the author. Grey Owl had been dead, however, for 16 years, and Cale's letter would have little significance if not for the fact that it was one of several hundred that the park received in the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, the superintendent had penned in the corner, "Send usual reply." That Grey Owl should continue to enjoy such a following after his death — to the point where his name today has become synonymous with Prince Albert National Park — is rather ironic. At the time of his 1938 death, the lands, parks and forests branch decided to downplay his seven-year association with the park. Stung by the controversy over his true identity as an Englishman, it did not want to do anything to help generate a Grey Owl legend and was convinced that the man's activities in the park would quickly be forgotten.

Grey Owl first came to the attention of the national parks branch in 1930 when J.C. Campbell, the director of publicity, was alerted to the existence of an Indian at Cabano, Quebec, who had abandoned his livelihood as a trapper and was now lecturing about wildlife conservation with the help of two pet beavers. Taking along a film crew, Campbell immediately recognized that the tricks of the beaver, Jelly Roll and Rawhide, the female and male respectively, had immense publicity potential. He was also impressed with Grey Owl. Not only was the story of his background and conversion to conservation fascinating in itself, but he was also an accomplished writer who had produced a number of articles and had just had the first of his four books, *Men of the Last Frontier*, accepted for publication.

Campbell proposed to Parks Commissioner J.B. Harkin that Grey Owl be installed in one of Canada's national parks, where hopefully



Grey Owl was an expert canoeist and was able to travel from Beaver Lodge to Waskesiu in a day (credit: PANP)

the pursuit of his conservation and literary activities would result in favorable publicity. Harkin liked the idea. He was always interested in promoting park tourism. He also believed that the protection of Canada's fur-bearing animals was long overdue. Over the past few decades, special efforts had been taken to save buffalo, musk-ox and antelope — why not beaver, Canada's national emblem?² Harkin pursued the matter with the minister of the Interior and in the spring of 1931, the scheme of trying to re-establish a beaver colony under Grey Owl's supervision in a park setting was formally approved.

Grey Owl's appointment was highly unusual, given the poor state of the Canadian economy in the early 1930s. Government departments normally retrenched during depressed periods and seldom embarked on any new programs or ventures. The employment of Grey Owl was therefore a testimony to his skills as a spokesman for conservation and wildlife protection. He had convinced the parks branch that he was worth the gamble. His hiring also demonstrated the great faith that Campbell placed in him; the publicity director believed that he had found a wonderful vehicle by which to promote Canada's national parks and the values for which they stood.

What was even more remarkable about Grey Owl's appointment was that he was not the man the national parks people believed him to be.³ It was generally thought that he was born in northern Mexico to a Scottish father and Apache mother and that he had grown up in northern Ontario under the guidance of the Ojibway Indians. In reality, Grey Owl was an Englishman. Born Archibald Stansfeld Belaney on 18 September 1888 in Hastings, England, he had been raised by two maiden aunts and his maternal grandmother. During his childhood, Archie was fascinated with the natural world and spent long hours collecting and observing animals. He had also read voraciously about North American Indians and the so-called "Wild West" and was forever dreaming about living the life of an Indian himself.

In March 1906, Archie sailed for Canada and after a brief stint as a clerk in Toronto, he headed for the Temagami district of north-eastern Ontario near the Ontario/Quebec border. Over the next few years, he divided his time between Temagami and Biscotasing to the west, working alternately as a guide, mail carrier, forest ranger and trapper. He also immersed himself in the ways of the local Ojibway Indians and tried to be as much like them as possible, including in his appearance. In 1915, Archie joined the Canadian Expeditionary

Force and saw action in France as a sniper before being invalided back to Canada. He returned to Bisco more than ever determined to realize his childhood dream and in 1920, took the name Grey Owl or "Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin" (He-who-walks-by-night). From that point forward until his death, his true identity remained a closely guarded secret.

Although Grey Owl was a white man playing the part of an Indian, his commitment to the preservation of the beaver and wildlife conservation in general was genuine. In 1925, he had sought fresh trapping ground in central Quebec near Abitibi, but still found it difficult to earn a decent living; decades of indiscriminate overhunting had severely depleted the fur resources of the region. He was also being badgered by Anahareo (Gertrude Bernard), his Iroquois common-law wife from the Ottawa Valley, to abandon what she regarded as a loathsome profession. What turned the hardened trapper into a committed conservationist, however, was the discovery of two orphaned beaver kits near one of his traps in the spring of 1928. Taking the animals, named McGinnis and McGinty, into his and Anahareo's care, Grey Owl formed such a close attachment to them that he decided "to go off the beaver hunt for good."⁴ In its place, he turned his hand



Grey Owl feeding a beaver kit. These kinds of photographs helped cultivate his image as a spokesperson for wildlife conservation (credit: NAC PA147582)

to writing about life on the frontier, and resolved to save the threatened beaver. With this in mind, Grey Owl and Anahareo relocated to Cabano, Quebec, where they started a beaver colony — this time with Jelly Roll and Rawhide. Here, Grey Owl not only began to enjoy success as a writer, but also made his debut as a lecturer. Thus, by the time that he came to the attention of the parks branch, Archie Belaney's transition was complete; he had become an Indian crusader on behalf of his beloved "beaver people."

Grey Owl's initial posting was at Riding Mountain National Park in west-central Manitoba. This region had once been an integral part of the western Canadian fur trade and hence a logical site for the beaver re-introduction program. Equally important was the fact that the park was only two years old, and Ottawa was probably concerned about generating tourism. Within a few months of his arrival at the park, however, Grey Owl was complaining that the water levels were too low for the project, and the search began for an alternative site. In late August 1931, Grey Owl was sent to nearby Prince Albert National Park to see whether conditions there were more suitable for raising beaver. He found exactly what he needed at Ajawaan, a small secluded lake north of Kingsmere. The transfer did not take place, however, until two months later; Commissioner Harkin wanted to ascertain whether one of the mountain parks would be better, while special preparation had to be made for the arrival of the beaver at Prince Albert. It was not until late in October 1931, Halloween evening, that Grey Owl, Anahareo and the two beaver moved into their new cabin, christened Beaver Lodge, on the west shore of Ajawaan Lake.⁵

Superintendent Wood probably wondered what he was getting the park into. He liked the idea of trying to bring back the beaver and tried to be as helpful as possible during Grey Owl's visit in August. It was not until after the transfer had been approved, however, that Campbell provided "a kind of inside line on handling Grey Owl."⁶ It turned out that Prince Albert's new "caretaker of park animals" had a moody, arrogant side, as well as a weakness for booze. In fact, James Smart, the superintendent at Riding Mountain, was happy to be rid of him. "Archie is a little too much in evidence by being too close to the main townsite and really too accessible for tourists," he told Campbell after Grey Owl's departure. "If he was a man of a little different temperament it would be quite satisfactory to have him near the public as the show the beaver put up is certainly worth seeing,"⁷ Campbell

concurred. "[H]e is not the easiest man in the world to handle," he replied to Smart's letter, "and the further he is from civilization the better for all concerned."⁸ Campbell still entertained high hopes, however, for what Grey Owl could do for Canada's national parks. "There is no doubt he [has] the greatest publicity value of anything we have ever done," he wrote Wood.⁹ This angle appealed to Wood; his park was just four years old, and he was open to any scheme that promised to make Prince Albert National Park a more widely known name. He did all that he could to ensure the success of the beaver project — beginning with the erection of a cabin on Ajawaan to Grey Owl's specifications. At the same time, he took some consolation in the fact that Beaver Lodge was not too close to the townsite.¹⁰



Beaver Lodge had been built as close to the water's edge as possible and as anticipated, Jelly Roll and Rawhide constructed part of their lodge over a plunge hole in the cabin's floor. (credit: Glenbow Museum NA-3680-6)

By the spring of 1932, it appeared that the transfer of Grey Owl to Prince Albert National Park had been the right move. Beaver Lodge had been deliberately built as close to the water's edge as possible and as anticipated, Jelly Roll and Rawhide had constructed part of their lodge over a plunge hole in the cabin's floor. This phenomenon had

great publicity value in itself — an unexpected bonus, however, was the fact that Anahareo, or Pony as she was nicknamed, was pregnant. The parks branch was thus presented with the prospect of a human family sharing the same quarters with a beaver family. Ottawa officials could not have asked for a better promotional gimmick.

The visit of departmental photographer Bill Oliver to secure some pictures of the beaver in their new setting, however, was nearly jeopardized by Grey Owl's own antics. In late May, Wood complained to Campbell that "Grey Owl is again away on a bender ... I have unsuccessfully attempted to locate him and send him back to the Park, as I did on two former occasions. This time, however, he has hidden himself so completely that I cannot find him. Last night Mrs. Grey Owl went to look for him, leaving the beaver without any care."¹¹ Although Campbell expressed regret at the news, he counselled Wood, "It is simply a case of doing the best we can as I am anxious for Oliver to get all the pictures possible during the coming summer."¹² Wood probably agreed with this detached assessment of the situation. Yet he also genuinely cared for Archie — the name by which he was known to most people in the park — and he tried to help him in whatever way he could. Grey Owl, for his part, appreciated Wood's support and looked upon him as one of his few, close friends.

Bill Oliver got his new pictures at Ajawaan that July; in fact, according to Wood, he was "well pleased with his shots ... Jelly Roll had a number of new stunts and acted wonderfully during the period."¹³ But all was not well at Beaver Lodge. Although a healthy girl, Shirley Dawn, arrived in August 1932, the relationship between Grey Owl and Anahareo — his fourth wife — began to founder. The bright, attractive Anahareo was bored at Ajawaan, particularly with Archie writing all the time, and was anxious to strike out on her own. Eventually the child was taken to Prince Albert to be raised by the Herbert Winters family, while Anahareo left for several months at a time to go prospecting in northern Saskatchewan.

The departure of Anahareo caused Grey Owl to focus most of his energies on writing and by the spring of 1934, he had completed not one, but two manuscripts. In the autobiographical *Pilgrims of the Wild* — generally acknowledged as his best work — he described his conversion from trapper to conservationist and how he came to work for the national parks service. *Sajo and the Beaver People*, on the other hand, was a children's story which dealt with the adventures of two young



Anahareo and Shirley Dawn, circa 1936. The bright, attractive Anahareo was bored at Ajawaan, and often went prospecting for months at a time (credit: Provincial Archives of Ontario S14625)



Archie and Shirley Dawn share an intimate moment. With the break-up of her parents, the girl was raised by the Herbert Winters family in Prince Albert (credit: Provincial Archives of Ontario SI4620)

Indians and their pet beaver. When both books appeared the following year, they were widely acclaimed as two of the finest works on Canada's wilderness heritage and the need for conservation.

This intense writing activity was not without its costs. Grey Owl was alone for long periods of time at Ajawaan and suffered from periodic bouts of depression, particularly since he did much of his work at night. "Can't go on with this frustrated, dried out, saintly, unfulfilled, static vegetating life," he recorded in his notebook. "Beaver Lodge is truly a refuge but is at times a cell."¹⁴ Grey Owl tried to cope by turning to the bottle and often went on drinking sprees in Prince Albert. In early May 1935, he went to have his picture taken for one of his new books and could not be located until towards the end of the month. This kind of behavior perplexed J.C. Campbell. "With regard to our mutual friend," he wrote Wood, "I am at a loss to know how to really make him see what an awful fool he is making of himself ... there was never a man in my experience of publicity who succeeded in getting such speedy recognition as he has but of course he can lose it just as fast as he got it if he doesn't pull himself up and stop going on such wild escapades. I was hopeful that as he became more successful that he would appreciate the fact and settle down. I am very much inclined to think that too much wilderness has as bad effect as too many white lights."¹⁵ Neither Campbell nor Wood, however, were ready to give up on him and instead tried to prevent his public image from being tarnished. Little did they realize that Grey Owl was already engaged in a similar kind of deception.

The beaver project on Ajawaan, in the meantime, was proving an unparalleled success. As more and more people read one of Grey Owl's books or magazine articles or saw one of the national park films of the beaver at play, they flocked to Beaver Lodge in increasing numbers. By 1935, the park received a steady stream of letters from people who planned to include a trip to the beaver sanctuary as part of their summer holidays and wanted to know how to reach the site. At Ajawaan, Grey Owl was the perfect host.¹⁶ Greeting incoming canoes whenever possible, he would doff his hat, slightly bow and help the guests ashore — most were initially struck by his blue eyes and command of the English language. Grey Owl would then call the beaver and put them through a series of stunts or simply pet and talk to them. If the guests were lucky, they might also see one of the beaver waddle up to the cabin with a stick in its mouth, enter through a specially constructed half-

door, and add it to the lodge which took up nearly one-third of the inside. Visitors had to be careful though. The ill-tempered Jelly Roll was not fond of women and would sometimes make threatening noises. She was also known to bite. Warden Les Holden was one of her victims. In March 1933, he was sent to feed the beaver during Grey Owl's absence and was bitten twice on the leg when he fell in his snowshoes.



Jelly Roll and Rawhide entered Beaver Lodge through a specially constructed half-door (credit: PANP)

In retrospect, the arrangement at Ajawaan would probably make modern-day biologists and wildlife conservationists shudder. It was something akin to a sideshow with Grey Owl as the animal tamer. He not only shared his quarters with them (he had to use flytox by the gallon in the cabin) but also fed them. A typical monthly order from the National Fruit Company in Prince Albert consisted of one box of Neilsen chocolate bars, five boxes of apples, 40 loaves of whole wheat bread, 10 pounds of peanuts and 50 pounds of rice. The beavers were treated like children and could be just as fussy. Jelly Roll reached the point where she would not eat peanuts unless they were shelled and then wanted them peeled!¹⁷ Grey Owl's work at Ajawaan, however, had symbolic significance. By raising and living with the beaver, he was trying to demonstrate what he meant in *Pilgrims of the Wild* when he said

that "these persecuted creatures" should no longer be regarded "as lawful prey, but as co-dwellers in this wilderness ... we all, men and beast, were comrades-in-arms."¹⁸ In Grey Owl's hands, these overgrown members of the rat family had become warm and cuddly creatures. As for the park authorities, they had no qualms about the beaver project and were quite willing to finance it, including the flying in of crates of apples during the winter, despite the constraints of the Depression. Wood said as much in April 1934 when Archie was transferred from the park to head office's payroll. "[He] is everything that could be desired," he told the secretary of the civil service commission, "and I am certain that it would be extremely difficult to obtain anyone else who could perform the work that he had undertaken."¹⁹



Grey Owl & publisher Lovat Dickson during the first British tour (credit: Provincial Archives of Ontario S14252)

In the fall of 1935, British publisher Lovat Dickson arranged for Grey Owl to do a lecture tour in England essentially to promote his new books. This idea undoubtedly made Superintendent Wood uneasy, for he had decided that the best way to keep Archie under control was to confine him to the park.²⁰ Grey Owl was worried too; he was apprehensive about lecturing and began to work on his delivery several months in advance. He had nothing to worry about. Dressed in a bright-

ly beaded buckskin suit and a head-dress of eagle feathers, and with the trademark stern countenance that he had perfected over the years, the "modern Hiawatha," as he was dubbed, enthralled a quarter of a million Britons over a four-month period. His name and equally important his message — the need for conservation — filled the English newspapers, and he became an overnight sensation.

Grey Owl's return to the park in the spring of 1936 should have been a happy occasion — a triumphant homecoming. He had found the lecturing pace grueling, however, and was near collapse. He was also probably relieved that no one, apart from his aunts, had recognized him, even in his home town Hastings, and he had begun to drink heavily by the time he returned to Prince Albert. Wood dismissed Grey Owl's condition as an unfortunate consequence of the lecture tour and placed him under a doctor's care. "My opinion," he told Campbell, "is that he had sufficient white life experience to last him some time."²¹ Commissioner Harkin, on the other hand, was not amused. In a firmly worded letter, he pointed out to Grey Owl that his conduct was unbecoming to a government employee and that it reflected poorly on the department. He also reminded him that he was now a respected authority in the field of conservation matters, thanks in part to his association with national parks, and that it was absolutely imperative that he do nothing to jeopardize this position. "I want you to feel that a great trust has been placed in you," he concluded, "and it is sincerely hoped that you will not betray this confidence."²²

By August 1936, Grey Owl had rebounded. He has been warmly received at a large Cree gathering at Fort Carlton in commemoration of the diamond jubilee of the signing of Treaty Six. He was close to completing his fourth and probably most famous book, *Tales of an Empty Cabin*. And he had the largest number of beaver to date living at Aja-waan that summer. "Though much remains to be accomplished that I must learn, of myself," he confided to Wood in a long letter describing the strain that he had found himself under, "I feel more than ever prepared and eager to carry on with this work I have, rather rashly perhaps, undertaken, and as my responsibilities increase, so will I rise to meet them."²³ Despite such assurances, Wood had begun to wonder whether Grey Owl was becoming a liability. He had noticed a perceptible change in Archie's manner since he had returned from England. He had become quite haughty and demanding — in short, a distasteful character, not the gentle, magnanimous figure in his books.²⁴



Grey Owl was photographed in Ottawa by Yousuf Karsh after his first British tour (credit: Y. Karsh)

This imperious tone only exacerbated Grey Owl's already poor relations with other members of the park staff. The wardens, almost to the man, had little use for him. They were greatly perturbed that Archie's drinking escapades were overlooked by the department and found it particularly galling when they had to retrieve him from Prince Albert. They also resented his tendency to treat them as lackeys, whether it be securing supplies for the beaver or doing work around Ajawaan. One warden, Charlie Walrod, became so incensed at Grey Owl's refusal to help transfer some lumber for Beaver Lodge across the Kingsmere portage that he threatened to shoot him.²⁵ Wardens stationed at Crean or Kingsmere during this period felt the same way. In fact, the disdain for the man was so strong that many wardens who joined the service after his death and had never known him personally continued to describe him as that "bastard Grey Owl" or "Hoot Owl."

There is considerable speculation as to whether any of the park personnel knew that he was really a white man masquerading as an Indian. Certainly Wood was fooled and tended to attribute his weakness for alcohol to his race. Chief Warden George Davies, on the other hand, claimed to have known that Grey Owl was not legitimate because of his ability to play the piano, particularly First World War ditties, when he was drunk.²⁶ It seems puzzling, however, that Davies would not have exposed him given the feelings that the service harbored towards him. The other curious thing about Grey Owl's tenure at the park was that he was virtually a nonentity in Prince Albert. During the summer of 1936, an estimated 600 people made the trek to Ajawaan, while fan mail arrived by the bundle and had to be stored in a tent pitched behind Beaver Lodge.²⁷ In nearby Prince Albert though, little was known of the man and even less of his work. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Superintendent Wood tried to restrict his movements outside the park and regularly turned down speaking requests. Whenever Archie did visit town, moreover, he deliberately kept a low profile and would often hide out with the local bootleggers. Above all, to many in Prince Albert he was "just another Indian."

In August 1937, Grey Owl embarked on his second British tour, accompanied by his new wife Yvonne Perrier or Silver Moon who he had married the previous December in Ottawa. Once again, he was a resounding success. At the same time that he was mesmerizing British audiences, however, the national parks department was debating whether or not to retain his services. In early October 1937, Superintendent

Wood was asked by Ottawa for his assessment of the situation. Unlike his earlier tendency to play down Archie's shortcomings, Wood was quite forthright. He reported that Grey Owl's activities as caretaker of park animals "can be done by any intelligent person quite as efficiently"²⁸ — particularly one that stayed out of trouble. He also warned that his publicity value was being eroded by his marked change in character. Still, Wood was hesitant to go as far as to recommend that Archie should be dismissed. Instead, he argued that the basic problem was that Grey Owl was "too much of a free agent" and that it was "necessary to place him in a position, whereby he could be held responsible by the Department for all his actions and statements."

National Parks Publicity Director J.C. Campbell had said much the same thing about Grey Owl's independence of spirit six years earlier at the time of his transfer to Prince Albert.²⁹ This time it proved to be his undoing. Ottawa had hired Grey Owl as an advertising medium for the national parks branch and the cause of forest and wildlife conservation. Parks officials now believed, however, that he had turned the tables on them; he was using the park for his purposes. Superintendent Wood was consequently advised by Ottawa that Grey Owl "should be considered as separated from the Department" — effective 1 September 1937, the day he had left for England — "in view of his irregular attendance on duty at the Park."³⁰

Grey Owl's dismissal was short-lived. In January 1938, he returned to North America and immediately launched into another lecture tour. While in Toronto, he announced that he was anxious to return to Prince Albert and resume his duties there. This public statement, together with the fact that Grey Owl was drawing large audiences wherever he spoke, prompted Ottawa to reconsider its decision. Asked for his views on the matter once again, Wood repeated his earlier assertion that Grey Owl's work with the beaver was nothing special; Billy Clare, the man that the park had hired in Archie's absence to care for the animals, had been doing a fine job. Wood also realized, however, that Grey Owl had become a celebrity over the past few months, and desperately wanted him back. In fact, he was a bargain. "[T]he publicity which we obtain for this Park and for the Parks Branch as a whole, from the fact that Grey Owl is located in one of the Parks during the summer months, and is recognized as a Park employee," he advised Ottawa, "is of much greater value than what is actually spent in employing him."³¹

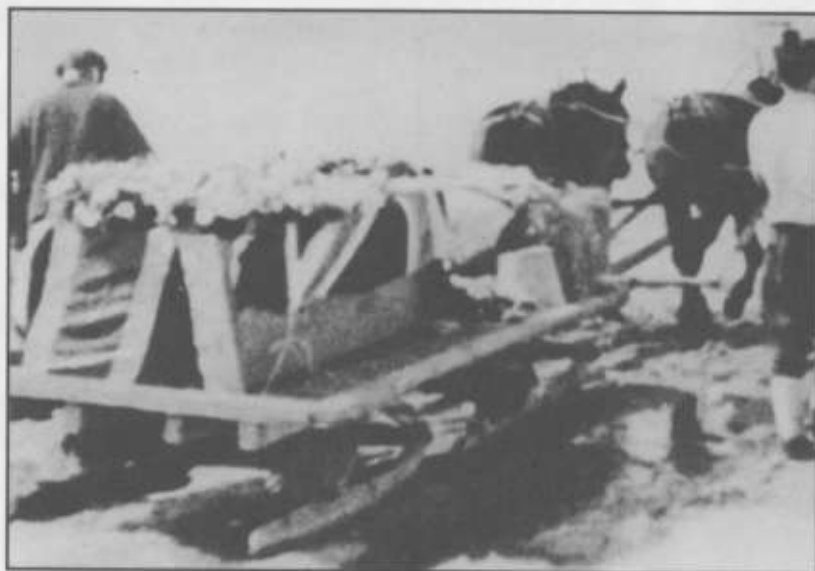


Grey Owl observing construction of the beaver house against north wall of Beaver Lodge (credit: Provincial Archives of Ontario SI4246)

Grey Owl gave his last lecture at Regina's Metropolitan Church on 29 March 1938 and was back at Ajawaan on 4 April — the same day Parks Controller Fred Williamson wrote Wood that Archie was to be reinstated. Within a week, however, Grey Owl was complaining of a numbness in his legs and was taken to hospital in Prince Albert. At first, it seemed to be a simple case of fatigue. He then developed a temperature, slipped into a coma and died of a mild case of pneumonia at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, 13 April, a few months shy of his 50th birthday.

The same day that Grey Owl died, the North Bay *Nugget* broke the news about his true identity. Within days, the story was being described as the hoax of the century. The parks branch was clearly embarrassed by the revelation, especially when it had promoted Archie and his work with the beaver. It was also probably greatly relieved. Ottawa had reinstated Grey Owl at the end of his North American lecture tour only because of the adverse publicity that his dismissal would likely have caused. His death was, in a sense, convenient. And park authorities readily agreed to the request in his will that he be buried between two trees atop a small knoll behind Beaver Lodge — two trees that had been spared by the beaver only because their bases had been wrapped in galvanized iron.

The parks branch's problem with Grey Owl did not come to an end with his Good Friday burial. It now faced an equally difficult question as to what to do about the beaver project at Ajawaan. For Parks Controller Williamson, the solution was straightforward; within two weeks of Grey Owl's death, he advised Wood that the department was considering discontinuing the feeding and care of the tame beaver in order to encourage them to return to their wild state. "In the case of Grey Owl there was a decided advertising value to the Park," he reasoned, "but with his passing it would seem that the beaver feature might be allowed to quietly fade out of existence."³² Wood, in response, warned headquarters that any rash action could backfire. He reported that the park had received a number of letters inquiring about the fate of Jelly Roll and Rawhide and recommended that someone should be posted at Ajawaan over the summer. "The tourists take a great interest in the two tame beaver, and with the added publicity on account of Grey Owl's death," he told Williamson, "I am quite sure that many people who visit Waskesiu this summer will be planning on a trip to Ajawaan."³³ Wood also informed Ottawa that Grey Owl's widow, Silver



Grey Owl's body is transported by sled over the melting spring ice for burial at Beaver Lodge (credit: PANP 048-78)

Moon, could complicate matters even more; she had requested permission to take up residence at Beaver Lodge to carry on her late husband's work.

After further departmental discussion and a number of letters between Ottawa and the park, Wood was instructed in mid-May 1938 that Silver Moon should be quietly advised that she would not be allowed to live at Ajawaan. She must be made to "understand that it would be no place for a lady and that looking after the two or three beaver would not mean a continuation of Grey Owl's nature study and conservation work."³⁴ In a softening of Ottawa's previous stand, he was also given permission to keep Billy Clare at Beaver Lodge for the summer months. Wood welcomed both these decisions. He still strongly believed, however, that it would be a serious mistake to allow the beaver colony to lapse — particularly given the continuing interest in Grey Owl's work — and suggested that it be retained as a tourist attraction for publicity purposes.³⁵ Ottawa was thoroughly opposed to this idea. It had no intention of keeping a man at Ajawaan after the fall freeze-up; in fact, it was still committed to encouraging the beaver to revert to their wild state. It was also quite adamant that no public statements

be made about what was happening at Beaver Lodge. The departmental position was neatly summed up by Fred Williamson in one sentence in June 1938: "It is expected in due time that the matter will become a dead issue."³⁶

By the following summer, Rawhide had disappeared — it is rumored that he was killed for his pelt — and Jelly Roll was to be seen only occasionally. As people continued to visit Grey Owl's cabin, however, the parks branch reviewed its position. "I would like to know whether there is much interest in this place," Williamson queried the new park superintendent, Herbert Knight. "Do you think there would be a chance there for a real Indian if he were [sic] selected carefully?"³⁷ Knight, who did not share his predecessor's assessment of Aja-waan's tourist potential, was brutally frank.³⁸ He told the department that the maintenance of Beaver Lodge as a kind of memorial museum "in order to satisfy sentimentalists" would be too expensive a proposition. He also observed that Ottawa could end up with another Grey Owl on its hands if it hired an Indian to carry on his work. What was most disturbing was the idea that wild animals be trained for publicity purposes; as far as Knight was concerned, this went against "the original intention of National Parks."

Williamson heartily agreed with this assessment. In a 16 August 1939 memorandum to the director of the lands, parks and forests branch, he noted that while Belaney "was of great value in creating public interest in wildlife protection and incidentally the National Parks ... when it comes ... to almost canonizing Grey Owl ... I think it is time for the proponents to regain their sense of proportion. I would not recommend perpetuating Grey Owl's memory in the Park beyond keeping his grave in decent condition."³⁹ This position was unanimously approved by the branch. The issue, however, did not go away. In August 1939, parks authorities received a letter from an Indian Affairs official asking whether one of the two Indian youths from the Qu' Appelle Residential School at Lebreton, Saskatchewan, who had been taking a warden apprenticeship course in the park over the past two summers, could be trained to carry on "the Grey Owl legend." This request caused the branch to review the matter briefly once more with the same result. Yet what was interesting about these deliberations was how Ottawa viewed its relationship with Grey Owl. It was as if Beaver Lodge, Jelly Roll and Rawhide had been fictional creations. "Grey Owl was a genius and a showman," observed James Smart, the former

superintendent at Riding Mountain and now assistant to the director, "and it was not anything he actually did on [sic] the Park which created the interest of the public: his writings and lecturing throughout the country were responsible for this."⁴⁰

Grey Owl's connection with Prince Albert National Park was not forgotten though. Following the Second World War, as his books were translated into several different languages, thousands of young readers throughout the world were captivated by his stories. Many decided to write him at the only address they knew: Beaver Lodge, Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan. The park simply responded with a short note, providing the year of Grey Owl's death as well as a list of his books; it did nothing to encourage interest in the man — not even mention him in the park's promotional literature. By the mid-1960s, however, as North Americans became more concerned about protecting the environment in general and wilderness areas in particular, Grey Owl's conservation message acquired renewed meaning and importance. A trip to Beaver Lodge became for many people a kind of pilgrimage, while Grey Owl and his work were accepted as one of the major interpretive themes for the park. This outcome had been predicted by a parks branch employee shortly after Archie's death. "Quite possibly the genius of Grey Owl may prove of lasting significance," he wrote. "Time alone will tell."⁴¹ It has.



Children playing on Waukegan Beach, August 1948 (credit: NAC PA169069)

CHAPTER EIGHT

PLAYGROUND FOR THE PRAIRIES

National Parks Commissioner Bunny Harkin's concept of national parks as sanctuaries where man could rediscover his "play instinct" was realized at Prince Albert National Park. During the first few decades of the park's existence, Waskesiu became the temporary summer home for thousands of people from mostly central Saskatchewan. What brought these visitors back to the park year after year was not simply the region's scenic beauty. Although the forest and lake setting was undoubtedly an attraction, people were also drawn to Waskesiu because it offered a relatively inexpensive holiday: a stay in the campground was within reach of the average wage earner. The park also operated a broad, fulfilled recreation program that was noted for its high participation levels and low costs; visitors of all ages found something to do. It is little wonder, then, that Prince Albert acquired a reputation as *the family park*.

Following the creation of Prince Albert National Park, Ottawa immediately set about publicizing the newest addition to the national park system. This was something of a challenge. Up to then, all but one of the national parks in western Canada were found in or near the mountains and were easily promoted on the basis of their outstanding beauty. Prince Albert, on the other hand, was located on the northern edge of the prairie parkland in a province known for being the granary of the Dominion — not the home of breathtaking landscapes. Ottawa officials reasoned, however, that they could sell the new park on the basis of its lake and woodland features and its recent past as the former domain of the Indian and the fur trader. Superintendent Wood agreed with this assessment. His first letters to Ottawa after assuming his duties were filled with glowing passages about the possibilities of the park lakes for recreational canoeing. Following the northward extension of the park boundaries, moreover, Wood proposed a general development scheme for the park which set aside the area north of Crean and Kingsmere lakes as a wilderness camping zone.¹

The first promotional pamphlet for the park, prepared by Mabel



Portage site on Kingsmere Lake, early 1930s (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

B. Williams in 1928, portrayed Prince Albert as "a natural paradise for the camper, fisherman and canoeist."² It described the hundreds of "crystal lakes," the "primeval forest," and the "unfished stocks" of trout, pickerel and pike. It also outlined in considerable detail the various canoe trips that were possible in the park and the rejuvenative powers that these outings offered. "To paddle for days by these uninhabited shores ... to make camp beside some clear flowing stream, to sleep under the stars," Williams' text read, "what holiday can be so sanative and medicinal! After a few days a man relaxes. The mental habits of the modern competitive life slip off like a garment. The ancient rhythms of trees and water ... evoke some peculiarly potent magic for the restoration of health and happiness." In conjunction with this promotion of Prince Albert as a kind of canoeists paradise, the national parks publicity and information department regularly supplied national newspapers and magazines with articles and photographs about interesting park features, as well as produced a series of moving pictures such as "Prairieland to Fairyland." It also arranged to have signs advertising the park erected along all the main highways into the province; this was a compromise, for Superintendent Wood initially wanted a total of 59 signs placed throughout Canada and parts of the northern United States.³ Ottawa officials and Wood were after the same quarry though: American tourists and their dollars.

Despite these various publicity efforts, the majority of the first visitors to the park came from central Saskatchewan. Only a few hundred came from the southern part of the province, and even fewer from other parts of Canada and the United States. Part of the problem was the park's location; it was several hundred miles away from major urban centers. Unlike the mountain parks which were served by the railways, it was also relatively difficult to reach. There were no direct highways from the neighboring provinces or the international boundary to the park. Visitors therefore largely came from within a 150-mile radius — mostly Prince Albert and, to a lesser extent, Saskatoon.

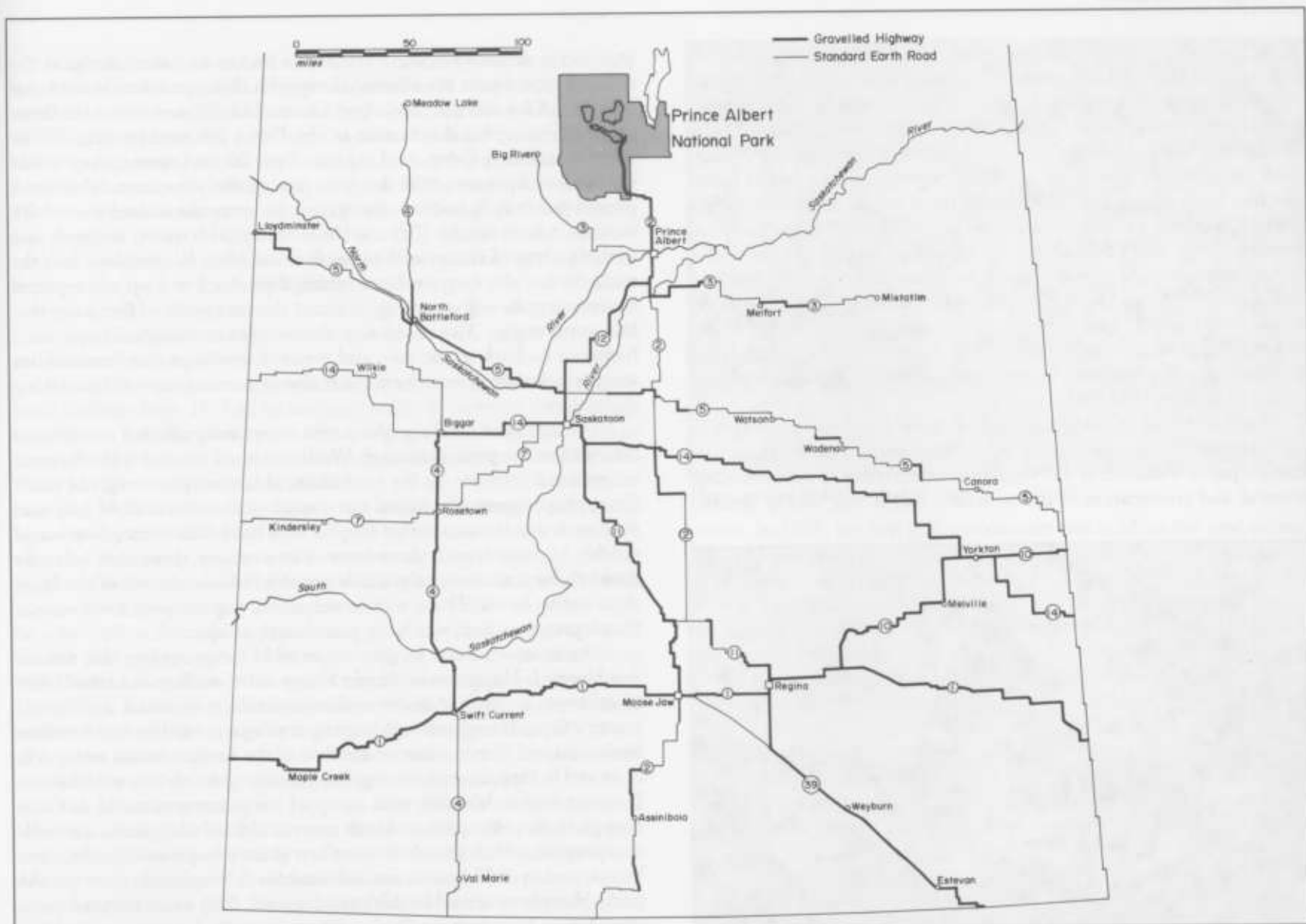
The fact that Prince Albert National Park served essentially a local clientele had a profound impact on park development. Ottawa had anticipated that canoe tripping on the park's many lakes and rivers would be the major recreational activity and that the townsite would serve as a starting point and supply base. Most visitors to the park, however, were families who were quite content to spend their vacation in and around Waskesiu. They also stayed for relatively long periods; it was



The Waskesiu shack tent community. (credit: SAB R-B2422(3))

quite common for the husband to travel to and from the park on weekends, while his wife and children stayed behind. Most of these families could not afford to build a cottage in the Prospect Point subdivision or stay at one of the local hotels or the auto bungalow camp.⁴ At the same time, they wanted something more comfortable than a simple tent, particularly when they planned to stay for several weeks. Many therefore opted for a shack tent, and it was not long before their number mushroomed to more than 400.

Shack tents were attractive for a number of reasons. The 15-foot-square, collapsible, wood-and-canvas structures generally cost only a few hundred dollars to construct and furnish; in fact, there was an unwritten challenge in the campground to see who could build the better shack tent for less money. Shack tents could also remain on the same spot in the campground for the summer on the basis of a seasonal camping permit. This privilege cost a mere \$2 per month in 1935 — roughly the equivalent of the daily rate at the hotels and auto bungalow camp. By 1937, the shack tent camping fee had doubled, but it was still an incredible bargain. Shack tents were also popular because they were perfectly suited to the conditions at Waskesiu. Because of the relatively short summer season and the prohibition against staying in the park



Prince Albert National Park and Saskatchewan urban centers, 1935.

during the winter, it made little sense to expend large sums of money on a more substantial cottage when a shack tent would do. Families were there to enjoy a holiday. It really did not matter if the structures were draughty or unsteady or that the furniture was crude and simple. All they wanted was a cheap place to stay for the season. Finally, shack tents led to a sense of community. Segregated on a row of blocks that had been specifically set aside for them in the campground, the shack tents essentially comprised a small town within the larger campsite. People came to know one another as neighbors on a first-name basis, particularly since they were allowed to occupy the same lot summer after summer. This feeling was reinforced by the open-air kitchens where people congregated to cook meals, heat water, play games or simply sit around and talk. Indeed, these camp shelters were the social, some would say gossip, centers of the campground and brought old and new visitors together.

Shack tents were subject to special rules. Unlike the cottages in the Prospect Point subdivision, shack tents could not be rented by another party. Violation of this regulation could result in the immediate removal and confiscation of the structure, but it was widely ignored

and rarely enforced.⁵ Shack tents also had to be taken down in the fall and stored over the winter, along with their contents, in a special compound for this purpose. Axel Olson, Doc Sissons and Alex Pease originally provided this service in the 1930s, followed by Bert Thors- teinson and then Eldon McLachlan. Each fall and spring, they would hire crews of men to take down or put up the structures. This work proved particularly hectic in the spring, for everyone wanted their shack tent up in time for the Victoria Day holiday. The result, at times, was nothing short of chaos, and many families often labored late into the night on the May long weekend getting their shack tent up and repaired if necessary, as well as trying to locate the odd piece of furniture that had gone astray. The mood was always upbeat though. People were happy to be back at the lake and renew friendships that in many instances had started over a cup of coffee or meal at one of the cooking shelters.⁶

The existence of a large shack tent community affected recreational activities in the park. Although Waskesiu could boast a wide range of recreational facilities by the mid-1930s, this was not enough in itself. Since people generally stayed for several weeks, if not all of July and August, it was important that they be kept busy. Otherwise, they would quickly become bored; there were only so many times that a family could go for a swim or take a ride around the lake on one of the large sight-seeing boats. There was consequently a great need for a recreational program that was both varied and unique.

The man who was largely responsible for providing this service was Henry J. Houghton or simply Harry as he was known to thousands of visitors to the park. A former salesman for Scott National, a wholesale grocery firm, Houghton had been operating a small bus line between Saskatoon and Prince Albert at the time of the park's creation and quickly moved to capitalize on the event by extending the service to Waskesiu. He soon found, however, that many of his passengers could not find enough to do at the park and took it upon himself to organize a recreation program. Harry's volunteer efforts greatly impressed Superintendent Wood, and in 1933 he was named summer recreation director for the park. Houghton served in this capacity until 1940 when he went overseas. Upon his return to Prince Albert in 1946, he was promoted to supervisor of campgrounds and recreation for all of Canada's national parks — a position he held until 1951 — but still made Waskesiu his home base.⁷



Shack tents afforded long-term park visitors a relatively inexpensive holiday (credit: L. Ridley)

Houghton's task was not an easy one. Even though much of the early development of the park had been concerned with the provision of recreational facilities at Waskesiu at the urging of the Prince Albert Board of Trade, Houghton was told from the outset by Superintendent Wood not to expect any government funding for his program. Many of the families who came to Waskesiu during the 1920s, moreover, could not afford to spend much money on recreation. Although park attendance had dropped off by almost a third between 1931 and 1933, the park remained a popular destination for many local people during the Depression because it offered a cheap holiday — a tenting spot in the Waskesiu campground cost \$1 per month in 1934. Houghton therefore had to devise a program that entertained and involved as many people as possible at little or no cost.⁹

Houghton's greatest assets were his boundless enthusiasm and seemingly limitless drive. He had an uncanny ability to motivate people to get involved; in fact, the park's recreation program would not have been as successful if it had not been for the many individuals and families who freely lent their support and assistance. At the same time, Harry led by example. He himself lived in a shack tent with his wife and children and was thereby considered by the campers to be one of their own. He was also constantly on the move — when not supervising or taking part in activities, he could be found walking around the townsite with a megaphone announcing the day's activities and times. On rainy days, he would often drive through the campground with a large truck and, like the pied piper, coax children to come along down to the community hall. "Never before have I met such a man," wrote an appreciative visitor from South Africa after a six-week stay at Waskesiu. "His duties seemed endless and well executed. He is the person who puts this park above all others. I was amazed at the constant stream of people at his door at all hours and I never saw anyone go away unhappy."¹⁰

The summer recreation program that Houghton developed at Waskesiu during the mid-1930s was noted for its variety and uniqueness. When Houghton officially assumed his duties, the Waskesiu Sports Association, a group of local businessmen, had been sponsoring an annual regatta since 1931. Under Houghton's leadership, the event was divided into several swimming and boating race days, and several provincial championships were secured for the occasion. A number of other tournaments or competitions were also introduced, while businesses in Prince Albert and Saskatoon were canvassed to donate trophies and



Playing cards at the Community Hall (credit: NAC PA117087)

prizes. In 1933, the first golf tournament was held on the new course; this eventually evolved into the now well-known "Lobstick" tournament following the completion of the second nine holes in 1936. Tennis also proved a popular tournament event; in 1934, 173 people competed in the open events, while the novice competition drew 59 entries. The championship games were originally held on the single court in front of the business subdivision. It was quickly discovered, however, that the competitor facing the lake was at a disadvantage because of the glare. Play was consequently confined to the block of new courts that had been laid out by the relief gangs. The surface of these courts was a special clay-and-sand mixture that had been concocted by Houghton. In keeping with the period's fascination with endurance competition, a bicycle marathon from Prince Albert to Waskesiu was also held each August.¹¹

There were also a number of tournaments in which the emphasis was not so much on competition as on participation: bridge and horseshoe pitch for the adults, softball and ping pong for the children and adolescents. Houghton, in fact, made a special effort to see that holidaying families, especially the children, were kept busy. Through the week, people of all ages received swimming and diving instruction



Instructor Peter Trim supervises a swimming class at Waskesiu, circa 1945 (credit: NAC PA164520)



An evening singsong for teenagers at Waskesiu, 1948 (credit: NAC PA169871)

at the main beach or breakwater from Houghton's assistant, Leonard "Pluke" Fournier. By summer's end, hundreds of campers would have taken their tests and proudly received their Red Cross awards. Each Saturday, Houghton would take boys and girls on a day-long boat excursion across Waskesiu or up to Crean or Kingsmere. All that such outings cost was a quarter for the boat ride, a bag lunch, and a lemon and some sugar for the lemonade. There were also weekend hikes to some local point of interest and sometimes an overnight sleepover for older boys or girls. One year, Houghton took a group of teenage girls on a walk over the muskeg-filled trail to Montreal Lake. For the younger children, organized games and events were held on a regular basis at the Waskesiu campground playground.¹¹

The evenings were equally busy. There were weekly film nights, as well as organized weiner and marshmallow roasts for different ages along the beach. A public singsong or concert was also held each Sunday at the community hall. The piano that provided the accompaniment — a square Steinway grand — was the first to be brought to Prince Albert.¹² The undisputed highlight of the season, however, was the annual pageant. In early July, children would be assigned a part and would then spend the next few weeks practicing their roles and preparing their costumes. The day of the production usually coincided with a sports day followed by the pageant itself. Historical themes tended to dominate, and campers were entertained by the likes of Leif Erikson, Jacques Cartier and Montcalm and Wolfe. In 1937 the children even performed a water fantasy entitled "Siren of the Nile."

There were also a number of other activities for park visitors that complemented those of the summer recreation program. By the early 1930s, several boat liveries had been established near the breakwater. These businesses, operated by Alex Pease, Doc Sissons, Len Hunter and Norm Cherry, collectively had more than 100 boats for rent or hire. Canoes and rowboats were available for \$1.50 per day and \$8 per week in 1936, while a motor boat cost \$8 per day — more if a driver was required.¹³ Some of the boat liveries also provided regular excursion or special charter trips around the lake in large passenger ships, the *Nanette* (Pease), the *Shamrock* (Sissons), and *Queen* (Hunter), as well as offered guided trips for small parties in freighter canoes to Crean and Kingsmere. Most boating activity, however, was confined to rowboats on Waskesiu, and many evenings the breakwater was the busiest place in the park.¹⁴



Harry Houghton organized the annual Waskesiu pageant (credit: G. Curtiss)



Children spent several weeks preparing their costumes and practicing their roles for the annual pageant (credit: G. Curtiss)



The day-long boat excursions cost a quarter, a bag lunch, and a lemon and some sugar for the lemonade (credit: NAC)

Fishing was also a favorite pastime of park visitors. Initially, the national parks branch believed that the large park lakes had been commercially fished out in the early 1920s and arranged for Professor Donald S. Rawson of the University of Saskatchewan to survey the lakes and devise a program of conservation and regeneration. While Dr. Rawson struggled with a variety of fish culture schemes, including the unsuccessful introduction of black bass into Waskesiu, fishing enthusiasts had no trouble securing their daily limit of 50 pounds of lake trout or 20 pounds of northern pike or pickerel. It soon reached the point where so many fish were being caught that both the park superintendent and the Prince Albert Board of Trade called on Ottawa to amend the fishing regulations before the lakes were exhausted. Seasonal limits were introduced in 1935 — 250 pounds for lake trout and 150 pounds for pike and pickerel — but the daily allowance remained the same. Park officials were reluctant to discourage fishing — one of the main drawing cards of the park — and even agreed to a fishing derby in 1937.¹⁵

For those visitors who grew tired of water activities, there was a riding stable on the outskirts of the townsite that had saddle horses for



Local airline companies offered sight-seeing tours to park visitors (credit: L. Ridley)

adults and shetland ponies for children. Or they could listen to their favorite tunes played by the eight-piece orchestra at the Terrace Gardens dance hall. Nor were amusements limited to land or water. In 1929, an airbase was established by the national parks branch just west of Waskesiu at South Bay. Although the facility was essentially used for local patrol purposes and as a stopover for northern traffic, a number of local firms took advantage of the location to offer sight-seeing tours to park visitors. At first, interested parties and individuals had to travel out to the air base where they were ferried out by rowboat to a waiting seaplane. By 1933, however, companies such as Brooks Construction and Transportation Company of Prince Albert and McNeil Airways of Big River had taken their business directly to the townsite and were landing and taking off near the breakwater.³⁶

Parks visitors also had the chance to see the once numerous denizens of the prairies — the buffalo. When the Prince Albert Board of Trade first requested that a national park be located in the area, it thought in terms of a buffalo ranch. The board never gave up on this idea, even after Prince Albert National Park had been established, and in December 1933 it convinced the national parks branch to establish a 40-acre buffalo paddock in the southern part of the park at the junction

of the Prince Albert-Waskesiu highway and the Rabbit-Meridian road. Although the enclosure was completed and ready for occupation by March 1934, it was not until two years later that five buffalo, including one bull, arrived from nearby Elk Island National Park.³⁷ The herd grew rapidly and had to be culled frequently, the meat and hides being sent to the Montreal Lake Reserve. New stock was also regularly brought in. The animals proved a popular attraction, and visitors traveling to or from Waskesiu usually stopped at the paddock for a break.

An even greater attraction were the bears at the townsite dump. Every day in the late afternoon, a small caravan of cars and trucks would follow the park garbage truck as it headed out to the nuisance grounds. Here, campers would park in a specifically designated area and sit for hours watching the bears go through that day's refuse. Sometimes a man would stay behind to tend to the dump furnace, and it was just as much fun to watch him keep the bears away with a pitchfork.

Taken together, these activities transformed Prince Albert National Park into a northern summer playground. It was an oasis in a wilderness setting where families of modest means could forget about the outside world and enjoy a few carefree weeks — it was as if the Depression and the deteriorating world situation did not exist. Most of the activities, moreover, took place in and around Waskesiu and thereby strengthened the tendency among the public to regard the townsite as the park. Above all, the activities helped foster a common sense of identity among the campers, in particular the members of the shack-tent community. They were in a sense one large family and came to regard their interests and those of the park as one and the same thing. When, for example, Ottawa announced in early 1938 that the Lund wildlife exhibit, which had been leased for the park museum, would not be retained, a petition was circulated among the park visitors and the decision overturned.

The national parks branch, for its part, was fully supportive of the summer recreation program at Prince Albert National Park. The activities, particularly the tournaments, were an ideal way to make the park more widely known. The holiday resort image could also help win back some of the attendance that had been lost during the worst years of the Depression, as well as entice prairie residents who were otherwise unfamiliar with the boreal forest to come north for their vacation. The publicity and information department increasingly emphasized



Tenting in August 1937 (credit: NAC PA58802)

Prince Albert's image as a kind of playground for the prairies. Pamphlets and other promotional material devoted considerable space to the park's recreational facilities, while any special features, such as a CBC radio broadcast from the park in August 1938, portrayed the park as a family place where there was something for everybody.¹⁸ Superintendent Wood, in the meantime, used his contacts with the Liberal provincial government to have the department of education print and mail out 5000 copies of the 1936 summer recreation program.¹⁹ Even Commissioner Harkin got caught up in the Waskesiu spirit after a visit to the park and suggested that a replica Hudson's Bay Company post be built at the townsite.

Prince Albert National Park

Attendance

1928	5,018
1929	10,131
1930	17,164
1931	29,537
1932	27,007
1933	19,126
1934	21,108
1935	21,292
1936	25,327
1937	28,846
1938	29,727
1939	27,367 (12,014 campers)

Source: national parks branch annual reports

By 1937, park attendance had recovered to such an extent that there was enough business for two daily bus runs from Prince Albert.²⁰ Park authorities, as well as the Prince Albert Board of Trade, were not happy, however, with the small number of American tourists that the park was attracting. Whereas other western national parks secured a substantial portion of their revenue from this source, only 665 (2.3 per cent) of the 28,846 visitors during the 1937 season were from the United States. Superintendent Wood was sent to the northern United States in the spring of 1938 in an effort to advertise the park. Harry Houghton,



A street cabinet advertisement in Saskatoon (credit: PANP)

in his new capacity as supervisor of campgrounds and recreation, did the same thing for several consecutive winters in the late 1940s. The Prince Albert Board of Trade, in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Tourist Bureau, on the other hand, rented a number of street cabinet advertisements in western cities, placing particular emphasis on the Alberta market.²¹ Despite these efforts, Prince Albert remained a "provincial" park. By 1950, 92% of the park visitors were drawn from Saskatchewan.

Prince Albert National Park's failure to attract American tourists was of little concern to the visitors who returned year after year. They loved the park the way it was; as far as they were concerned, it was the perfect place for an affordable, family-oriented summer holiday. This feeling was captured by a local reporter during a 1938 tour of the townsite with Harry Houghton. Wanting to know what it was that made the park so appealing, she interviewed a number of campers at random. One man routed from his hammock described Prince Albert as "the best damn playground between the Great Lakes and the Rockies."²² Another person observed, "Nowhere have I found such happiness, peace and goodwill." Perhaps the reporter herself best captured the soul of Waskesiu when she later wrote of "the healing influence of lake and forest felt by every visitor ... of the part played by every month of summer in making over those who fall under the spell of the great northern playground in Saskatchewan."



A section of the park highway along Lake Waskesiu, 1945 (credit: NAC PA164524)

C H A P T E R N I N E

GROWING PAINS

By 1939, Prince Albert National Park had undergone a remarkable transformation during its brief twelve-year existence. Far from losing ground during the Depression, it continued to take shape during the 1930s and appeared poised to take its place alongside the older, more established national parks of western Canada. In fact, by the end of the decade, there was a widespread belief among visitors and staff alike that the future held great promise for the park. The outbreak of the Second World War, however, set back these hopes, and except for the work performed by a few hundred alternate service workers, park development effectively came to a standstill. The post-war period was equally difficult for the park but for entirely opposite reasons. With attendance now reaching unprecedented heights, the park had to try to keep pace with the demand for more services and facilities, particularly in the area of accommodation. It eventually reached the point where the Waskesiu campground was overcrowded and most of the available lots occupied by seasonal visitors.

Herbert Knight's assumption of the superintendency at Prince Albert National Park in April 1939 represented a major turning point for both the park and the man. Since its establishment in 1927, Prince Albert had only one superintendent — the affable Jimmy Wood who had looked upon the park as something like a child. Knight's 21-year career in the national parks service, meanwhile, had been restricted to Waterton in southern Alberta, and he was anxious to try his hand at running a different park. Knight had barely been on the job for a few months, however, when Canada entered the Second World War. Any plans that he may have had for his new posting had to be shelved; instead, Prince Albert and its counterparts faced a period of consolidation and retrenchment.

Knight accepted this turn of events in full stride. Born and raised in Great Britain at the height of the imperial revival and having served in the Great War, he was grimly determined to do whatever he could in his capacity as park superintendent to help win the war. This sense of duty was reinforced in early September 1939 when he was advised by park headquarters to take "any steps now considered necessary" to

prevent sabotage.¹ Knight responded by dismissing all park employees who were not Canadian citizens. Nine months later, when Ottawa raised the possibility of establishing an internment camp in the park, Knight suggested that one of the old relief camps would probably prove suitable, but that the surrounding trees would have to be levelled "in order to obtain a clear vision of the whole camp area."²

Prince Albert National Park eventually became the home of approximately 200 internees, but it was not the kind of set-up that Knight had envisioned. In the fall of 1940, T.C. Davis, now associate deputy minister of National War Services in the Mackenzie King government, met with the representatives of various pacifist groups to decide what could be done by conscientious objectors in lieu of military training. The pacifists proposed the creation of some kind of special work program on government land under civilian supervision. Fully aware of how a similar program for single, unemployed men in the 1930s had greatly benefitted several national parks, in particular Prince Albert, Davis warmed to the idea and set about working out the details. It was not until June 1941, however, that a formal agreement was finally reached between the departments of National War Services and Mines and Resources. Pacifists, or alternate service workers as they were officially called, would be required to work the equivalent of four months basic military training in one of five national parks. In exchange for their labor, they would be paid 50 cents per day, as well as receive meals, lodging and medical care.³

Given Davis' long association with Prince Albert National Park, it was no surprise that the park was included in the program. In fact, during the early planning stages, Prince Albert had been informed by Ottawa that it would probably serve as a camp site and that it should draw up a tentative work program for about 150 men. By early May 1941, however, close to 700 conscientious objectors had registered in Saskatchewan — more than all the other western provinces combined.⁴ The surplus men consequently had to be assigned to one of the other program sites: Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, or Kananaskis.

Most of the pacifists ordered to report to Prince Albert, beginning in mid-June 1941, were single, Mennonite young men (20-25 years) from the villages and farming districts of central Saskatchewan. Upon their arrival at Waskesiu, they were immediately dispatched to one of four 50-men temporary tent camps in the southern part of the park: Camp No. 1 at the Narrows junction; No. 2 at Sandy; No. 3 at Rabbit;



Most of the pacifists ordered to report to the park were single, Mennonite young men from the villages and farming districts of central Saskatchewan (credit: NAC C131635)

and No. 4 at Boundary. It had been much easier from an administrative and operational point of view if former relief structures along the main highway had been utilized and the men transported to their job sites. Superintendent Knight was more concerned, however, in keeping the camps as isolated as possible from the townsites, as well as from one another. The Rabbit and Boundary camps, for example, were 60 and 90 miles away from Waskesiu by road.⁵

Knight's worries proved to be unfounded. Far from posing a security threat, the men were noted for their "exceptionally good behavior" — when not singing hymns during their idle hours, they could usually be found pitching horseshoes. Fourteen of the men, in the meantime, volunteered to join the active army following the August visit of a recruiting officer; this was a remarkable figure given that only one other man came forward from the four other program sites combined. Knight, for his part, believed that this number would have been higher if it had not been for the influence of the leaders of the Mennonite Church. He warned the district recruiting officer that "if the elders are permitted to visit the camps throughout the week and stay overnight to hold religious services, there is very little hope of the young men responding

to our way of thinking, namely, to bear arms for the country."⁷

In the interests of improving fire and game protection, as well as travel, in the southern portion of the park, a large part of the alternate service work program during the summer of 1941 was devoted to clearing, upgrading or widening some 60 miles of trail. In particular, camps No. 1 and No. 4 worked their way west and east respectively along 57 Trail, while No. 2 and No. 3 did the same along Elk Trail. More could probably have been accomplished if the men had had access to road machinery. Only No. 1 enjoyed this luxury; the other camps had to make do with hand tools. The workers also provided much-needed help in a number of other areas. As of June 1941, physically fit men of military age (18-45) were prohibited from working in the government service. The pacifists were therefore called upon to perform routine maintenance work — be it grooming the golf course, maintaining the Waskesiu campground, building new warden patrol cabins or stringing telephone line. Thus, by the time that the camps were closed on 15 November 1941, the alternative service workers had contributed over 24,000 man-hours to park projects.⁸

The department of Mines and Resources was extremely pleased with the results of the program. Not only were the men productive, but at 50 cents per day, they were a bargain. In January 1942, R.A. Gibson, director of the lands, forests and parks branch, consequently proposed that 800 men be employed on a continuing basis in the national parks throughout the year. He justified the request on a number of grounds, noting in particular that "the nature of the work, the surroundings and the environment" would give the men "a greater appreciation of what Canadian citizenship means" and "quite probably change their whole outlook." Besides, as Gibson observed, "these men must be used for some good purpose."⁹ Superintendent Knight was equally anxious to secure another batch of pacifists for Prince Albert. Just as his predecessor had come to use relief workers in the 1930s to build major park facilities, Knight now looked upon the conscientious objectors as an invaluable labor source.

What Knight had in mind was the construction of a new breakwater at Waskesiu; the existing one was badly in need of repair, but had received only minor attention over the past few years. He consequently suggested to Ottawa in December 1941 — just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor — that a new breakwater be undertaken as an alternate service project as soon as possible. Approval was quickly secured and



Most of the alternate service work in the park during the summer of 1941 was devoted to clearing, upgrading or widening existing trails (credit: NAC C131651)



Alternate Service Workers placing rock in the new breakwater's cribbing, summer 1942 (credit: NAC C131588)

by early February 1942, two 25-man camps had been established in the park. The camp near the Hanging Heart Lakes was responsible for securing timber, while the other at Waskesiu was to haul stone to the site, as well as install the cribbing. The men who initially worked on the breakwater were alternate service workers who had not yet completed their four-month term of service by the time that the park camps had closed the previous fall. The project ran into difficulty in mid-March, however, when several of the workers' replacements failed to report as instructed. Fortunately the weather remained cold so that by the time the camps were brought up to strength again, the men were still able to complete the cribbing before the spring break-up. Work continued without interruption over the summer. Not only was the 461-foot breakwater finished, but at the special request of Knight, the camp at Waskesiu was kept open until early October to allow the men to repair the shore wharf and the boardwalk in the campground.¹⁰

Superintendent Knight expected even greater things from the alternate service workers the following summer. He was to be disappointed. As the overseas situation worsened, conscientious objectors were called up for the duration of the war and made the responsibility of the department of Labor. Unlike a decade earlier when the national parks service had almost exclusive access to relief workers, other government departments and businesses now wanted to use these men. The national parks' share was reduced, as many pacifists were channeled into agriculture and industry.¹¹ Prince Albert National Park had to make do with less than 50 men during the summer of 1943. Given his limited funds, Knight had little choice but to put the men to work on fire trails once again. Still, it was important work. If it had not been for the pacifist laborers, little would have been accomplished in the park during the war. Even Knight who regarded the men as spineless slackers probably regretted the closure of the park camps for the last time in September 1943.

The remainder of the war saw little development in Prince Albert National Park; the park simply made do with the limited funds and personnel at its disposal. The park did, however, make an indirect contribution to the war effort during the winter of 1944-45 when it was selected by the department of National Defense as a test site for military equipment under extremely cold conditions. This decision concerned parks officials in Ottawa who were worried about possible harm to the park and its wildlife — a position shared by Superintendent Knight.

The department of Mines and Resources agreed to the operation, code named "Project Eskimo," with considerable reluctance and tried to be as unaccommodating as possible. In the end, local parks officials were reduced to helpless observers. Waskesiu was immediately designated command headquarters, and all the available buildings occupied. The bulk of the operation, meanwhile, took place along the eastern boundary of the park and involved the movement of several hundred men and vehicles to and from Montreal Lake. On two occasions, 24 pound shells and three-inch mortars were fired at targets near the park boundary; a mock battle also took place along the southern shore of Montreal Lake.¹² One can only wonder what trouble might have erupted if the alternate service camps were still in operation at that time.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the lands, parks and forests branch believed it would play an important psychological, as well as economic, role in Canadian post-war life. Not only would the wilderness setting of national parks help heal the national soul, but it was also seen as one of the major drawing cards of Canada's tourism industry.¹³ From a strictly practical view there was also the expectation that delayed development projects would finally go ahead and new ones be undertaken. In short, it was seen to be the beginning of a new era in national park history.

Superintendent Herbert Knight was not to be part of this new period. In 1947, the 62-year-old Knight retired because of ill health and was replaced by one of Prince Albert's own sons, Berthold Irwin MacFarlane Strong. "BIM," as he was known to everyone, probably rivaled the park's first superintendent in terms of popularity. A former bank clerk, Strong had joined the Prince Albert National Park staff in 1933 as an assistant storeskeeper, but was soon placed in charge of the park accounts and office staff; it was also one of his unwritten duties to retrieve Grey Owl from the clutches of Prince Albert's bootleggers. Strong served five years with the Canadian army during the war and then briefly as assistant superintendent at Banff under Jimmy Wood before taking over at Prince Albert. He would eventually become chief of the national parks branch of the department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in 1957. As superintendent, Strong was rarely away from the park and tried to see that problems received immediate attention. He was often observed walking around the townsite, dictating notes to an assistant. He was also a no-nonsense administrator but was noted for his fairness, at times generosity, with the park staff.¹⁴



Superintendent B.I.M. Strong was one of the park's most popular superintendents (credit: G.E. Verrall)

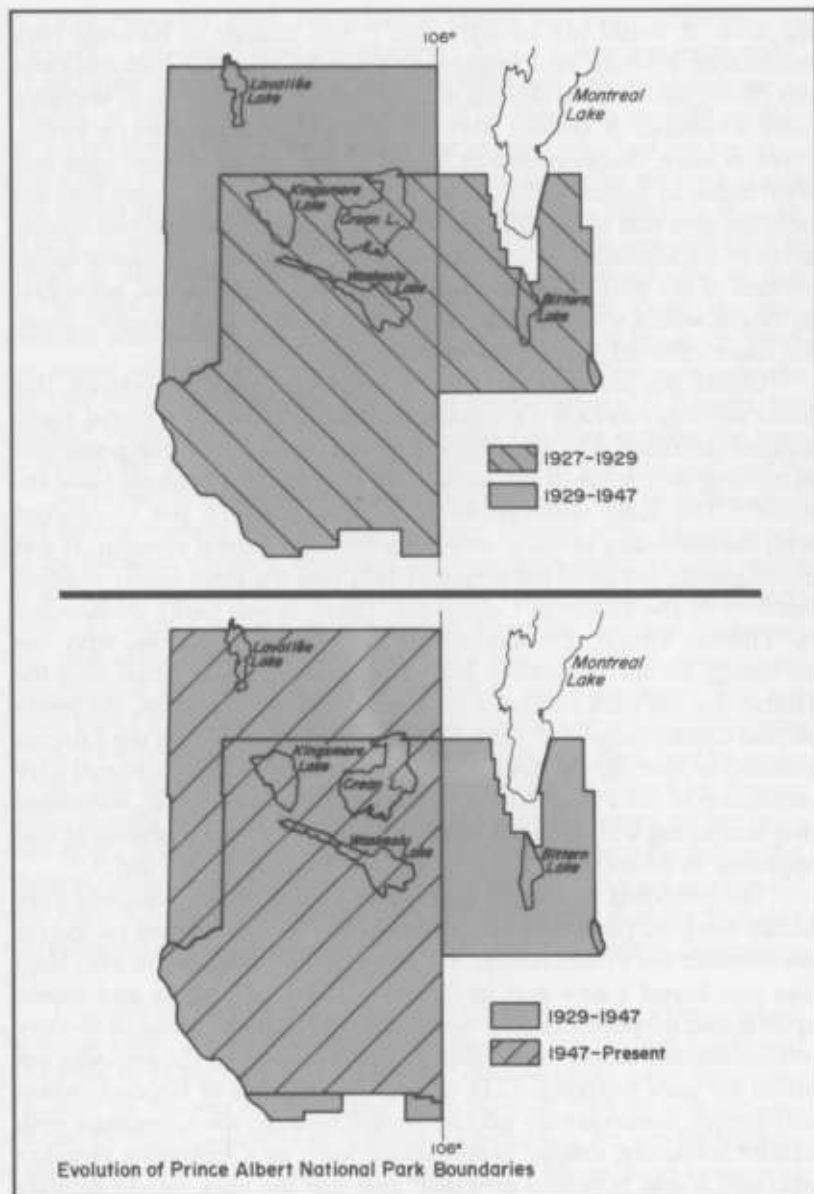
Prince Albert National Park's boundaries were also altered in 1947. In fact, the size of the park had been an on-again off-again issue for almost two decades, ever since the collapse of negotiations between the departments of Interior and Indian Affairs on the issue of removing the Montreal Lake Reserve from the eastern boundary. Parks Commissioner Harkin, together with former Superintendent Wood, had decided that if they could do nothing about the presence of the Montreal Lake Indians on the edge of the park then they would try to change the eastern park boundary instead. In December 1929, Harkin recommended to his superiors that all of the land east of the third meridian of longitude — some 340 square miles — be withdrawn from Prince Albert National Park. He argued the area was chiefly muskeg and hence of little value, and that the enforcement of park regulations was made more difficult because of the proximity of the reserve.¹⁵ The proposed reduction in park size was never acted upon, however, probably because of the adverse effect it might create in Prime Minister King's riding.

The issue was raised again in 1932. "I cannot see how we will ever be able to make any use of this area," Wood told Harkin in a lengthy letter on the subject. "There are no lakes of outstanding value, the ground is very low and muskegy and, even if a road was built through

the area, it would not be attractive."¹⁶ Any change to national park boundaries, however, now required an amendment to the National Parks Act (1930), and Ottawa officials decided to hold the question in abeyance until a number of various park issues could be addressed by Parliament at once. Superintendent Wood would not be discouraged and tried again in January 1937. This time though, he suggested that not only the area east of the third meridian be dropped but also two smaller areas in the southeast (11 square miles) and southwest (26 square miles) corners of the park. The removal of these additional areas, according to Wood, would straighten the southern boundary and therefore make for more efficient game protection.¹⁷

Unlike the previous two tries to amend the park boundaries, this latest attempt received a sympathetic hearing; in fact, national parks officials discussed with their Saskatchewan counterparts the possibility of turning over some of the withdrawn land to the Montreal Lake Indians.¹⁸ The King administration decided, however, not to proceed with the boundary revision until after the next federal election. It was consequently not until the spring of 1941 that the issue finally reached the floor of the House of Commons. There, it was badly mishandled by Thomas Crerar, the minister of Mines and Resources, who was no match for the aggressive John Diefenbaker. After reminding the House that the park had been the prime minister's creation, the newly elected Conservative MP from Saskatchewan charged that the Liberals planned to open up the area in question to logging. The national park committee of the Prince Albert Board of Trade, meanwhile, was afraid that tampering with the park boundaries would create a precedent and appealed to Mackenzie King to kill the legislation. He did.¹⁹

The proposed boundary changes to Prince Albert National Park finally received parliamentary approval in 1947. King was no longer the member for Prince Albert. He had lost the riding in the 1945 election and found a new seat in Ontario. The lands, parks and forests branch had prepared its case well and could point to a recent forestry reconnaissance survey which backed up its claim that the area was not suited for park purposes. C.D. Howe, the minister of Reconstruction and Supply, consequently piloted the bill through the Commons with relative impunity, despite protestations from an Opposition member who said it was "a vicious proposal" and that the park should actually be increased in size as far north as the Churchill River.²⁰ Ironically, local officials were not kept informed of the status of the withdrawn area.



Evolution of Prince Albert National Park boundaries

In 1949, Warden Les Holden caught three Indians with an elk in the former southeast corner of the park and turned them over to the province for prosecution. The case was set to go to trial when it was learned that the area had been added to the Little Red River Indian Reserve.



Waskesiu business district, Lakeview Drive, 1948 (credit: NAC PA169068).

Besides a new superintendent and new boundaries, Prince Albert National Park received a number of improvements in the immediate post-war period. The telephone system was upgraded so that more than one long-distance call could be made at one time. A control dam was placed on the Waskesiu River in order to divert water through a canal into Crean Lake and thereby raise its level. And the worst curves in the main highway were removed and the road hard-surfaced. Superintendent Strong also suggested in 1950 that two new roads be built up along the eastern and western side of Kingsmere and Crean respectively to meet somewhere south of Wassegam Lake. At the very least, he thought there should be a highway built around Lake Waskesiu.²¹

In keeping with the townsite's central place in the park, the majority of the new construction work continued to take place at Waskesiu. In 1949, four new blocks were surveyed in the area immediately south



The Waskesiu roller skating rink in the early 1950s (credit: NAC PA164522)

of the original business subdivision. Blocks four and five were opened for tenders the following year. Initial interest was lukewarm; tenders were received for only three businesses — a service station, a movie theater, and a photography studio. By the end of the 1950s, however, most of the available lots had been occupied, and more than two dozen licensed business establishments were in operation. The townsite was also spruced up. Concrete sidewalks were laid along Waskesiu, Kingsmere and Montreal drives, while plans were under way to install a new sewage system. Two recreational features were added in 1950: a lawn bowling green next to the tennis courts, and a roller skating rink on Montreal Drive.

There was also considerable expansion of government facilities. A much-needed maintenance compound was created by leveling a hill at the back of the townsite and using the earth to fill in the surrounding muskeg. In the mid-1950s, a number of semi-detached staff residences were erected along Montreal Drive. Finally, more work was done along the waterfront. The original 1930 breakwater had become virtually useless, particularly along the section that had been added by the relief workers; portions had settled or broken away with each successive bad storm. Beginning in 1948 and continuing over the next



A lawn bowling green was built next to the tennis courts in the post-war period (credit: NAC PA164521)

five years, the structure was demolished and rebuilt as a short recreation pier. The alternate service worker breakwater, on the other hand, received a facelift. It was extended by 200 feet and sheathed entirely in concrete.²²

These changes aside, most development activity in the park during this period concerned visitor accommodation, a direct consequence of the explosion in park attendance. By the end of the 1930s, tourist traffic had recovered to its pre-Depression high and averaged 30,000 visitors per year. The war, however, caused attendance to plummet once again, and by 1943 slightly less than 10,000 people visited the park. Attendance did not bounce back until 1946, and then it took off. Canadians found themselves with more money, more cars and more leisure time, and they flocked to national parks in unprecedented numbers. By 1949, attendance at Prince Albert exceeded 50,000 and then increased by almost 50% the following year. It steadily grew by leaps and bounds through the 1950s, peaking at 136,529 in 1958. The average daily townsite population that season was 5200 people — more than the total park attendance for 1928.

The dramatic rise in visitation resulted in a steady increase in the park's accommodation facilities. The Hillcrest and Waskesiu bungalow

camps were advised in the fall of 1945 that they could expand their cabin facilities to be ready for the expected increase in automobile traffic. Anxious to offer the public the opportunity to get away from the townsite and enjoy some of the outlying areas, the parks branch also called for tenders for new 10-cabin concessions at Sandy Lake, Namekus Lake and the Waskesiu Narrows.²³ The response was anything but encouraging — only two bids were received and both were for the Narrows location. Since one of the applicants, William Davis, already had an interest in the Hillcrest Cabins, the concession was awarded to George Will of Melfort, a former air force group captain and Waskesiu businessman during the 1930s.

Another new auto bungalow camp was established in 1948. Seeking to relieve the growing congestion in Waskesiu, Superintendent Strong had selected a site just north of the townsite along the Heart Lakes Road. The sole application from J.E. Mitchell of Prince Albert was immediately approved, and it was hoped that construction of what would become known as the Kapasiwin Bungalows would get under way that fall. Development was temporarily delayed, however, by the problem of what to do with the graves of the four people who had drowned in Lake Waskesiu in the fall of 1928. The burial site was in the middle of the concession along the proposed road allowance. After the legal parameters had been examined by Ottawa, the bodies were removed and reinterred at Christopher Lake.²⁴

Two new summer cottage subdivisions were also opened in the townsite during this period — a seemingly questionable move given the difficulty the park had had during the war years trying to interest people in building summer homes in the Prospect Point or Clare Beach subdivisions. The minimum \$1000 building restrictions for these lots, however, continued to be a deterrent for many prospective cottagers. The Clare Beach subdivision, moreover, was saddled with the added disadvantage of being nine miles from the townsite — everyone wanted to live at Waskesiu. In fact, in the fall of 1941, park authorities finally concluded that the opening of the subdivision had been a mistake and stopped advertising lots in the area.²⁵

The provision of additional space for moderately priced cottages was another matter entirely. Within a year of the opening of the Lakeview 1 subdivision in 1938, all but one of the lots had been developed. And as the war drew to a close, local officials believed that the demand for cheaper bungalow space would intensify again. Five

blocks in the public campground (L, M, N, O, P) were converted into cottage lots (Lakeview 2) and opened for entry in the spring of 1946. Once again, there was a great demand for the lots, so much so that Strong had to find an additional site for cheaper cottages. He eventually settled on a site to the north of the Waskesiu Bungalow Cabins and had the land cleared in the fall of 1948. The region was quite swampy though and it was not until late 1951 that the lots in Lakeview 3 were finally advertised.

In the interim, new regulations had been adopted. Whereas lots in Lakeview 1 and 2 had been made available on a first-come first-served basis and had resulted in long lineups several days in advance, the new lots were to be disposed of by tender with an upset price (or minimum tender) prevailing for each site. The size of the lots themselves, as well as the minimum size of the cottages, were also increased at the urging of F.A. Helme, the Conservative MP for Prince Albert. In September 1949, Helme had met with park authorities in Ottawa and convinced them that they should not "put on the same restrictions as we did on the other blocks"²⁶ The new summer homes that were erected in Lakeview 3 in the early 1950s were therefore more substan-



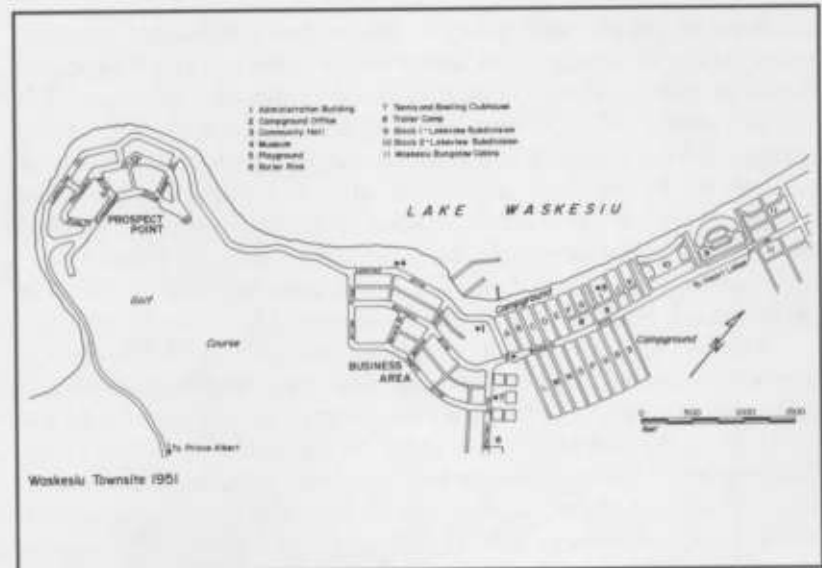
By the end of the Second World War, a strong sense of community had developed in the Waskesiu shack tent area (credit: NAC: C131560)

tial structures with water and sewage facilities comparable to those at Prospect Point. In 1954, for example, cottages in either subdivision had to be worth a minimum \$4000 in value, a far cry from what had been initially sought in the late 1930s.

The other significant development at Waskesiu following the war was the growing congestion in the public campground. As park attendance climbed in the late 1940s, 80 new lots were added to the campground. This was followed in 1953 by the commencement of work on a 72-lot trailer area on the east side of Waskesiu Drive. It was intended to replace the existing trailer area beside the Community Hall, thereby freeing space for camping lots. What was completely unanticipated, however, was the phenomenal expansion in the number of shack tents. By the summer of 1950, there were 412 shack tents in the Waskesiu campground. This figure represented a 25 percent increase from the previous year. A small number had also popped up in the public campground at the Narrows, a development that had never been formally authorized by Ottawa. In fact, National Parks Controller James Smart did not even like their name, let alone their use, and had instructed Superintendent Strong to employ a more dignified term such as "cabins" or "house tent" when referring to them.²⁷

Ottawa soon had a more serious problem to deal with. In early July 1950, R.D. Kerr, secretary of the new Prince Albert National Park Shack Tent Owners' Association, presented Strong with a 274-name petition requesting that shack tents be allowed to remain on their campground lots year-round. The petition noted that the existing storage facilities could not handle the steadily growing volume of shack tents, that the structures and their contents were often damaged during their removal from the campground, and that the owners would take better care of them if they could be left standing year-round.²⁸

This was not the first time the question of leaving shack tents on the campground had been raised. The issue had come up every few years, the last time being 1944, but had never been pursued to any degree. The sharp rise in their numbers, together with the problem of dismantling, storing and erecting them all each year, however, forced the shack tenters to take concerted action. They formed themselves into an association, drew up and circulated the petition, and solicited the support of both the Prince Albert and Saskatoon boards of trade. They also had an unlikely ally in Superintendent Strong. Whereas his predecessors, Wood and Knight, would have been happy to rid the



Waskesiu Townsite 1951

park of the structures, Strong believed that the Waskesiu shack tents were "an institution" in the park and that the owners had "a legitimate complaint." He suggested to Ottawa that shack tents be converted into what he called "portable cabins" with permanent walls and roof and skid foundations for towing.²⁹

The national parks branch's initial reaction to the petition was to say no. Controller James Smart was worried on two counts: that the public campground would be taken over by permanent cabins and that allowing the owners to occupy the same lots year-round might give them a pre-emptory right to the property. In fact, as far as Smart was concerned, the growth of shack tents at Waskesiu was nothing short of a "threat to legitimate housing development."³⁰ A month later, however, the parks branch had softened its stand, most likely a result of political pressure.³¹ It still refused to allow shack tents to remain in the campground year-round. But at the same time, it proposed the creation of a separate "tourist camp" where private families could erect small inexpensive cottages.³²

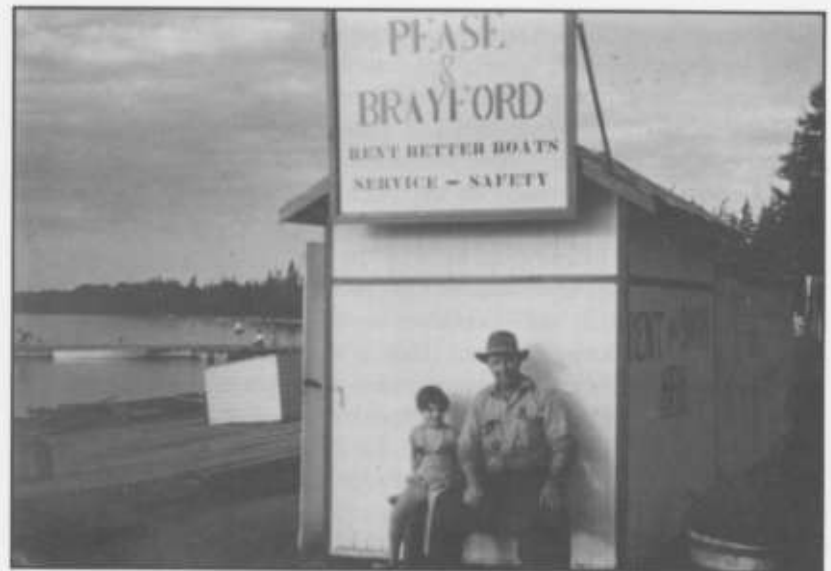
This portable cabin scheme seemed to please all concerned parties and over the next year, the details were worked out. Blocks R and S of the campground were set aside for the erection of small (14'x 20')

single-storey cabins to be based on one of five government approved plans. These structures could be left on the same site year-round, but had to be built on skids so that they could be moved if necessary. The lots themselves (40'x50') were to be awarded on a draw system and occupied on the basis of a \$20 seasonal camping permit. No individual was allowed to hold both a portable cabin and shack tent lot. In an attempt to reduce the number of shack tents, preference was given to existing shack tent owners in the awarding of portable cabin lots — their names were drawn first. The parks branch was also willing to permit shack tents to be converted into portable cabins.³³

The first draw for portable cabin lots was made on 28 March 1951. The scheme proved an immediate success — there were more applicants than available lots — and within three years, a further five new blocks (T, U, V, W, X) had to be added along the east side of Waskesiu Drive. The portable cabin development had no effect, however, on the number of shack tents. As families moved from the shack tent area into portable cabins, their places were simply taken up by others. What this meant by the summer of 1956 is that the number of spaces specifically set aside for tenters in the Waskesiu campground dropped to a mere 58 lots. Shack tents and portables, in the meantime, occupied 616 lots or more than two-thirds of the available campground space.³⁴ It appeared that the weekend camper might have to be placed on the endangered species list.

B.I.M. Strong's successor, J.D.B. MacFarlane, suggested that a possible solution might be the development of the Narrows campground to include portable cabins, various services and businesses. This idea struck J.R.B. Coleman, the new parks director, as heresy. "The idea of allotting space in the new area [Narrows campground] is simply out of the question," he bluntly told MacFarlane. "We do not propose to commence a second townsite in this Park at the Narrows and if we allow one store or one residence in this area, then the pressure will be applied for more. Let us stop it now."³⁵ Coleman had no desire to recreate the problems of the Waskesiu campground at the Narrows but wanted the existing shack tents in the area, what he described as eyesores, to be phased out.

The question of what to do about the Waskesiu campground could not be handled so easily, or so brusquely for that matter, and it was decided to convene a meeting at the deputy minister level in early 1956. This conference resulted in a number of proposed changes: that shack



Alex Pease in front of the Pease and Brayford boat rental office, 21 October 1948 (credit: Friends of the Park [I & E. Pease])

tent lots not be reserved for the same party year after year but allotted on a first-come first-served basis; that shack tents be excluded from the lakeside of Waskesiu Drive; and that shack tent permits be issued for a period of only three weeks and not the entire camping season. Before the new policy was implemented, however, Parks Director James A. Hutchinson was warned during a visit to Saskatoon on 30 June 1956 that "the suggested changes in the shack tent arrangement are impractical and could only result in wide scale trouble if implemented."³⁶ The new Prince Albert superintendent, Harry Dempster, concurred. Asked to study the "camping problem" at Waskesiu over the summer of 1956, Dempster prepared a comprehensive, thoughtful 13-page memorandum in which he repeatedly advised against any action against the shack tents.³⁷ "It seems to me that the shack tent problem is one that we are stuck with," he observed in a lengthy preliminary letter on the topic, "and the main thing to be done is to make up our minds that they will be with us at the Waskesiu Townsite campground and how best to control them with the least amount of trouble to ourselves and to the occupants."³⁸ What Dempster had in mind was placing a limit on the number of shack tent lots, as well as warning the owners



The new portable cabin area in the Waskesiu campground. Unlike shack tents, the structures could be left on the same site year round (credit: PANP 050-281)

that the structures should not be rented. Beyond that, he believed that the best alternative was to find a new location for tenters north of Lakeview 3 subdivision and thereby spread activity over a larger area.

The threat of an emotional, acrimonious public battle over the Waskesiu shack tents caused parks officials in Ottawa to reconsider their position. It is more than likely that they cursed their predecessors for allowing shack tents to be erected in the park in the first place. The issue, however, was representative of a larger problem that Prince Albert National Park faced at the end of the 1950s. Although Waskesiu had always figured largely in park development, it had never dominated it to the extent that it did in the post-war years. The large influx of visitors during this period placed a severe strain on accommodation facilities and ultimately led to conditions in Waskesiu that were at odds with the values normally associated with a national park. This tension between the townsite and the park at large would have to be resolved in the 1960s and 1970s.

C H A P T E R T E N

TO PROTECT & MANAGE

In the preface to his last book, *Tales of an Empty Cabin*, Grey Owl spoke passionately of the need for a new attitude towards nature. "Man should enter the woods, not with any conquistador obsession or mighty hunter complex," he wrote, "but rather with awe, and not a little of the veneration of one who steps within the portals of some vast and ancient edifice of wondrous architecture."¹ This passage, in fact Grey Owl's writing on conservation in general, is often described as being ahead of its time. What is particularly ironic, though, is that the history of wildlife conservation in Prince Albert National Park is not one in which the animal population was allowed to find its own equilibrium. Although national parks such as Prince Albert were promoted as important reserves for Canada's declining wildlife, the park attempted to manage its wildlife through predator-control activities and even periodic slaughters of protected species. It was not until the 1960s that Grey Owl's message was finally observed in the place where he had done much of his writing.

During the discussions leading up to the creation of Prince Albert National Park, little mention was made of the wildlife of the region. The Prince Albert citizens pushing for the park were more concerned that any economic spin-offs from the park be captured by the city and that the three large lakes of the district be included for future cottage development. The fact that the park fell within the transitional zone between the boreal forest and prairie parkland and hence supported a rich and varied animal population was purely accidental. This did not mean, however, that the park environment was of minor importance. National Parks Commissioner J.B. Harkin was a tireless advocate for wildlife preservation and believed that national parks were as important as game preserves as they were national playgrounds. Indeed, from Harkin's perspective, national parks were becoming one of the few remaining places where Canadians could still observe wildlife in its natural state.²

The major responsibility for wildlife management in Prince Albert National Park fell to the warden service. It was a logical assignment since the wardens were in almost constant daily contact with the animal



A moose feeding in one of the many park ponds (credit: PANP)

life of the park. Besides, it was one of their required duties to acquaint themselves with the numbers and habits of the various mammals that frequented their districts. At the end of each month, wardens would submit a report on wildlife conditions in their areas, noting all unusual or interesting sightings.³ They were also occasionally enlisted by Hoyes Lloyd, supervisor of the national parks' wildlife division, to provide specific information on particular species or habitat conditions.

On the basis of the wardens' monthly wildlife reports, the superintendent drew up an annual estimate of the number of different animal species found within the park's boundaries. These figures were questionable in that they were based on the wardens' chance encounters with animals during the performance of their duties. In 1939, for example, it was reported that the park lynx population, which had numbered 125 in 1935, had plummeted to a mere two.⁴ Much more reliable were the assessments of population trends. Wardens who had spent a number of years in one district were quick to notice when the population of a particular species was rising or declining or the range was changing. Once again though, these reports were largely impressionistic and not based on the controlled and scientific collection of data.

Some wardens turned stray animals into pets, a particular talent

of "Shorty" Harrison. During the summer of 1939, Harrison served as surrogate mother for an orphaned mule deer fawn, christened Harry. He soon had the animal accompanying him on his boat patrols around Kingsmere Lake, posing for pictures with tourists and even chewing tobacco. The deer eventually wandered off during the winter, and his skull, horns and bell (to ward off predators) were found several months later. Harrison next created a stir in February 1940 when he came across a female wolf caught in a snare and hitched the animal up next to his dog team to help pull his sled. The experiment proved a surprising success and for the remainder of the winter, Harrison used the wolf on his patrols. It was not the same as having Harry, his pet deer, around though, and when Harrison found a caribou near death mired in the mud of Bagwa Creek in 1941, he decided to bring it back to the warden station. He lashed the animal to the door of an old cabin to get it across Kingsmere Lake and, upon reaching home, covered it with blankets, fed it a shot of rum and nursed it through the night. When the caribou charged him the next morning, Harrison wisely let the ungrateful animal go.⁵

Although the chance to see wildlife at close hand was one of the drawing cards of national parks, wardens were under strict instructions to ensure that animals were not harassed in any way and that birds and their eggs were not handled or disturbed. Special measures were sometimes necessary. When the park's boundaries were extended northward in 1929 to include Lavallée Lake, one of the largest nesting colonies of white pelicans and double-crested cormorants in Canada fell under park jurisdiction. At first, the national parks service did not worry about the safety of the colonies; Lavallée was relatively inaccessible, and only a handful of visitors ever ventured that far north. In fact, it was not until 1938 that it was learned how many birds actually inhabited the three islands of the lake when a holidaying school teacher made three separate counts over a month-long period. He reported that there were approximately 1000 pelicans and 400 cormorants and almost as many young.⁶ The following summer, a Dutch scientist, Dr. W.G.N. Van der Sleen, visited Lavallée to photograph the birds and was so astonished by the size of the colonies that he suggested that campers not be allowed to visit the area during the nesting season.⁷ Superintendent Knight agreed with this recommendation, and beginning in 1940 access to the region was carefully regulated.



Pelican in flight (credit: M. Syroteuk)

There were also some times when park visitors had to be protected from animals, particularly those that had become a menace. In most cases, the offending culprits were bears who had wandered into the townsites or had decided to sample the cuisine at one of the campgrounds. The national parks branch fully realized that it was "interfering with nature to some extent in the development of park areas" and that bear problems might arise, especially with the thousands of people visiting the park each year. Wardens had the authority to destroy any animal if necessary, but at the same time they were encouraged to do whatever they could to avoid such action. "It is your duty to see that these animals do not become a nuisance," Harkin advised Superintendent Wood in October 1931, "and that they are not shot needlessly, because they are an attraction."⁸

The national parks branch was not so open-minded about other large predators, such as wolves, coyotes, wolverines or cougars. It considered these creatures to be basically "bad" because they killed the animals — deer, moose, elk and caribou — that the park was trying to protect and that visitors wanted to see.⁹ Thus, from the time that Prince Albert National Park was established, there was an open season on these predators. Whereas a full account had to be submitted to Ot-

tawa if any park animal had to be killed, such reports were unnecessary for wolves or coyotes. All that headquarters required was an annual statement of the number of predatory animals seen and killed by the warden service.¹¹

The first park wardens at Prince Albert National Park found predator control to be a frustrating, if not hopeless, task. In November 1928, the national parks branch officially prohibited the use of traps; park wardens were henceforth expected to kill predators with a gun. The Prince Albert wardens found it practically impossible, however, to get within shooting range of the animals — no predators were killed during the winter of 1928-29¹² — and Superintendent Wood began demanding that the ban of traps be lifted. This request elicited a somewhat contradictory response from Ottawa. "It is the desire to make the Park true preserves for all wild things," Deputy Parks Commissioner Fred Williamson lectured Wood. "There is also the question to keep in mind that if the predators that are natural enemies, let us say, of deer, are killed, something must be done with the increasing deer population."¹³ The shooting of predators, however, was not to stop. At the end of his letter, Williamson reminded Wood that the wardens were "to keep Park predators under proper control" and that he expected a report on the predator kill at the end of the fiscal year.

Superintendent Wood raised the trap issue again in December 1932. He told Commissioner Harkin that the number of wolves and coyotes in the park was on the rise and that these predators were feasting on the larger game animals. Wood was also worried that the predators knew that they were safe within the confines of the park; it was serving as a sanctuary for animals that were not really welcome.¹⁴ Despite Wood's anxiety, the parks branch still refused to sanction the use of traps. It did, however, issue a policy statement on predator control in late 1933. This document not only listed the animals that "should be shot on sight" but also included those species of birds which were to be destroyed as well: goshawk, Cooper's hawk, great horned owl, crow and magpie.¹⁵ In acknowledging receipt of these new instructions, Wood told Harkin, "I am hoping that better results will be obtained from now on. All wardens have been supplied with the ammunition required by them."¹⁶

By the winter of 1934-35, the problem of predator control had become more than an internal park issue. Officials in the Saskatchewan department of natural resources believed the park served as a

breeding ground for the wolves of northern Saskatchewan, and they asked Superintendent Wood to take part in a cooperative campaign to exterminate the animals. From the provincial department's perspective, it was useless to take any action on its own unless similar steps were taken inside the park.¹⁷ The Saskatchewan Fish and Game League was also worried about the wolf situation in the park and told Commissioner Harkin that if something was not immediately done about "this plague ... our big game in this province will be completely eliminated within the next three years."¹⁸ Even the Prince Albert Board of Trade got involved and on 13 February 1935 passed a resolution calling on the federal government to rid the park of the timber wolf.¹⁹

These complaints made little impression on the national parks branch. According to the most recent wildlife reports for Prince Albert National Park, it appeared that the wolf situation was being exaggerated: only a handful had been seen by wardens over the last 13 months. Harkin therefore continued to preach the virtues of the departmental policy of "limited" control over predators. Saskatchewan officials remained unconverted, however, and in December 1935, Tommy Davis, attorney-general for the province, suggested that private individuals be allowed to hunt wolves in the park. This proposal was flatly rejected by Harkin. In the first place, he saw it as a threat to the integrity of the park, in that predator control was a park responsibility. He was also convinced that the removal of predators was the worst thing that could happen to the big game population of the park. He told the deputy minister of the Interior, "Nature's process of eliminating the weaklings and surplus beyond the carrying capacity of the area concerned is difficult to improve upon."²⁰

Harkin's stance did nothing to lessen the local pressure on Superintendent Wood to eliminate wolves from the park. It was widely believed that many of the wolves in northern Saskatchewan used Prince Albert National Park for denning purposes — a perception that the park was not particularly proud of. Wood was also of the opinion that visitors were interested in seeing only "Bambi-like" creatures and not animals sharp in tooth and claw. He pleaded with Ottawa in February 1937 for permission to adopt a more aggressive policy against the wolf menace — including the use of poison. "I believe that, if the present 'do nothing' policy is continued, it may result in decreased tourist attendance due to the fear of predatory animals," he reported. "Any

policy of action, even though not successful perhaps in ridding the wolves to any extent, if publicized, so as to convince people that some action is being taken, might be well worth the trouble.²¹ Like Woods' earlier requests, this was turned down. In August 1938, however, the parks branch sent an official — not a biologist — to investigate statements by T.H. Hall, a member of the Saskatchewan Legislature, that wolves were more numerous in the park than ever before. The findings appeared to exonerate the parks branch; the wardens reported that the wolf situation was not as bad as it was being portrayed and that game animals were on the increase. It was decided nonetheless that it would be best if the wildlife conditions in the park were studied by a scientist.²²

Before this survey was undertaken, the national parks branch was hammered away at, from both within and without, for more decisive action against wolves. In January 1939, Superintendent Wood advised Ottawa that the wolf population had reached such levels that new methods of control, besides shooting, were needed. The problem was regarded as so acute that a special spring offensive was organized by Chief Park Warden George Davies to find and destroy wolf dens and their occupants. The department of national resources in Saskatchewan, in the meantime, attributed the scarcity of game in northern Saskatchewan to the growing range of the timber wolf and pointed an accusing finger at the park as the source of this scourge.²³ Faced with this continued pressure and with Harkin now retired, the parks branch finally relented and granted Prince Albert National Park special permission to use snares in areas where wolves were believed to be abundant. Their use, however, was not only to be kept secret but also carefully monitored. Ottawa was to receive monthly reports on the number and location of snares, as well as the number of wolves caught.

Predator snaring began in Prince Albert National Park in the winter of 1939-40. And although a faunal study of the park during the summer of 1940 by Parks Branch Naturalist J. Dewey Soper found the wolf situation to be not severe, the operations were allowed to continue through the decade. Snaring was approved by the parks branch because it enabled the wardens to take a few more wolves each winter than had been possible by shooting. It also had the advantage of not leading to the outright extermination of predators.²⁴ This was of special concern to Superintendent Wood's successor, Herbert Knight. Drawing upon his two-decade experience at Waterton National Park, Knight



Wolf pelts at Waskesiu (credit: PANP [A. Olson])

recognized the crucial role that predators played in the park ecosystem, particularly in keeping game populations within manageable limits, and regarded calls for the complete eradication of the wolf as plain stupidity. At the same time, he wanted a scientific study of wolf predation in the park so that he could be ready to answer any criticism of park policy.²⁵

This timber wolf investigation was not undertaken until 1947 when Chief Mammalogist A.W.F. Banfield of the newly formed Canadian Wildlife Service made two separate visits to the park. Over the past few years, warden diaries had indicated that the steadily growing big game population had been accompanied by a larger concentration of wolves in the park. And Superintendent B.I.M. Strong was anxious to launch a pre-emptive strike by stepping up control activity. Banfield made a preliminary study of the wolf situation in January 1947 and then returned in November to carry out experiments with chemical guns²⁶ — long cylinders baited with tainted hide, which, when triggered by the animal, fired a lethal dose of cyanide into the victim's mouth. These "coyote getters" were used judiciously at first, but within two years were the mainstay of the wardens' arsenal against predators. This was reflected in the dramatic increase in the number of wolves

taken during this period; one warden recalls that the wolf pelts were stacked like cordwood in a Waskesiu warehouse.²⁷

The killing of predators in Prince Albert National Park finally came to an end in the mid-1950s. The national parks branch, in consultation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, began to question whether wolf control was desirable or beneficial from a biological point of view, particularly when so little was known about the ecological role of large predators. On 7 November 1952, Parks Director James Smart consequently instructed Strong that Prince Albert National Park was to revert to the former policy of shooting predators but that there was to be "no concerted drive against wolves."²⁸ In keeping with this decision, wardens were also required to provide the Canadian Wildlife Service with a detailed report of any wolf death. Shortly thereafter, the killing of wolves and other predators was banned completely, thereby bringing to an end a nearly three-decade-long war against the very animal that is used as the symbol of the park today. Unfortunately, the significance of this change in policy was marred by an accident on Lake Waskesiu in February 1954. Asked by Ottawa to provide two good wolf specimens, the chief warden laced a deer carcass with strychnine and unintentionally wiped out a pack of 12 wolves in one night — the three largest weighing 115, 97 and 89 pounds.²⁹ In retrospect, it was a blessing that Superintendent Wood's earlier request to use poison was turned down.

Wildlife control in Prince Albert National Park was not restricted to predators. The park also engaged in a beaver reduction program in the mid-1950s. At the time of the park's creation, this action would have been inconceivable; the region's beaver population was quite low because of the years of heavy trapping, and surplus animals had to be shipped in from other parts of the province in 1928.³⁰ In fact, Grey Owl and his entourage were adopted by the park in the fall of 1931 because of Superintendent Wood's desire to bring back the beaver. By the following spring, however, Wood told Ottawa that he had underestimated the beaver population of the park and that "it would appear that we have a lot more beaver than we thought."³¹ This "lot more beaver" translated into about 500 animals in 1935.

Grey Owl is often credited with the turnaround in the park beaver population. After all, he was Canada's leading crusader on behalf of the animal and stirred the imaginations of Depression-weary Canadians with his beaver project at Ajawaan. He also patrolled the surrounding



In February 1954, a wolf pack was accidentally poisoned on Lake Waskesiu (credit: PANP)

territory and did not think twice about killing a mink if it posed a threat to the beaver kits.³² The simple truth of the matter though is that the beaver would have recovered in Prince Albert National Park without Grey Owl's presence. Since the park served as a game preserve, the prolific animal was free to multiply with little disruption, except from the odd poacher. The land with its dense stands of aspen and numerous creeks, ponds and lakes, moreover, made for ideal beaver country. It was only a matter of time before colonies were re-established throughout the park.

The large beaver population ultimately led to grief for the park. Although the animals' damming activities played an important role in water conservation and firefighting, they also caused extensive flooding, played havoc with road construction, closed rivers to navigation and prevented fish from spawning — in short, they became a nuisance. Dr. Banfield of the park wildlife branch gave particular attention to the problem during a two-week examination of park wildlife conditions in August 1946 and recommended that beaver be live-trapped and their dams dynamited; "beavers are so common in the park," he reported, "that the removal of several colonies will in no way affect the status of the animal as a whole."³³



By the 1940s, beaver had become a nuisance in the park (credit: PANP)

The live-trapping of beaver in Prince Albert National Park began in earnest in August 1947, and over the next few years several hundred were turned over to the Saskatchewan department of natural resources for distribution or shipped to other national parks in western or northern Canada. A few were even airlifted to zoos in Europe. The animals, however, were reproducing faster than they could be removed. The national parks branch, in consultation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, consequently gave Prince Albert authority in 1952 to trap beaver. Given the park's role as a wildlife sanctuary, as well as Grey Owl's association with the park, this decision would appear unthinkable. Parks authorities were desperate though; live transplants were not only expensive and time-consuming but they also made little impression on a beaver population that seemed out of control. Indeed, National Parks Controller James Smart had observed during the debate over what to do about wolves that "this Bureau has had far more trouble handling excessive populations of animals than it ever had in protecting these animals when they were scarce."³⁴

During April 1952, 98 beaver pelts were taken along the rivers leading into the southwest side of Lake Waskesiu. The number would have been higher if the fur had not gone beyond its prime.³⁵ Trapping was also carried on in the spring of 1953 and 1954 and averaged slightly more than 200 animals each year. The whole complexion of the reduction project changed, however, when an aerial survey of the park in October 1954 by Canadian Wildlife Service Mammologist J.S. Tèner estimated the beaver population to be a staggering 15,000. Any doubts about the wisdom of the program were quickly forgotten and a new target figure of 10,000 beaver was set.³⁶ The parks branch also enlisted the aid of the department of Indian Affairs and arranged for 92 men from the nearby Montreal Lake Reserve to do the trapping — just what the park had always tried to avoid.

The battle against the beaver was launched in April 1955. Strategically placed throughout the park and working in teams of varying sizes under the supervision of the wardens, the Indians trapped 2111 beaver,³⁷ and destroyed whatever lodges and dams they came across. It was gruesome business, especially since the carcasses of the animals were left to rot at the base camps. Most of the beaver were taken from the southwest corner of the park; for example, a team of eight men working the area immediately north of Amyot Lake turned in 361 pelts. In general, though, all trapping stations enjoyed good



A beaver lodge on Mud Creek. In an attempt to reduce their numbers, beaver were trapped in the park in the early 1950s (credit: PANP).

success. Not even Lake Ajawaan was spared. Here a five-man team trapped 43 beaver, many of which were undoubtedly the progeny of Jelly Roll and Rawhide. Letters written to Grey Owl during this period were placed in the same file as the beaver control program. While park personnel discussed the results of the latest trapping operations, people like little Ginny Smith wrote that her class enjoyed milk and crackers each time her teacher read a chapter from *Sajo and the Beaver People*.³⁹

The trapping resumed in the fall of 1955 with the aim "to kill as many beaver as possible."⁴⁰ By the time that the last of the Indian trappers were removed from the park on 20 December 1955, however, only 287 pelts had been harvested. Part of the problem was that a series of heavy snowstorms had severely restricted travel. The trappers also found that the beaver were not as plentiful as had been reported and that active lodges were widely scattered and sparsely populated. The proposed trapping operations for the spring of 1956 were consequently suspended. Instead, the Canadian Wildlife Service conducted a series of summer-long investigations of the park beaver population and its habitat. The wardens, for their part, resumed live-trapping but on a limited scale; animals were only removed from places where they were

proving a particular nuisance. Otherwise, the beaver population was kept in check by environmental factors and natural predators such as otter.

Another "protected" park animal that faced execution at the hands of park personnel was the elk. This action, when compared to the killing of wolves or beaver, was the most controversial and questionable wildlife control program undertaken by the park; it still rankles people today. The elk was one of the so-called "desirable" animals that the park wanted to see flourish, and by the 1950s, herds of 50 or more elk were a common sight in the southern part of the park. To get the elk to this level, however, had proven a particularly difficult task for the warden service. Not only were their numbers reduced by poachers and predators, but because the southern park boundary was located along the northern edge of the prairie parkland — park boundaries were rarely based on ecological considerations — the animals would wander out of the sanctuary of the park in search of forage and fall victim to local hunters. The elk population was therefore under considerable pressure. When, for example, Ottawa asked the park in March 1943 whether elk could be used to feed indigent Indians and alternate service workers, Superintendent Herb Knight reported that there were no surplus animals.⁴¹

The tendency of the elk to range outside the park increased in the 1950s. When the park boundaries were reduced in 1947, the elk lost a natural grazing area in the southwest corner. The movement of the animals within the park was further restricted in the mid-1950s when the spring burning program was discontinued. Up to then, each spring when snow was still on the ground, wardens in the southern districts would burn the brush encroaching on open area — usually by throwing matches from horseback.⁴² The end of the burning program meant that the area available to elk for grazing purposes in the park gradually became smaller.

Outside the park, the elk would often feed on the crops of local farmers. This damage was generally accepted with a certain degree of resignation. In 1959, however, the fall was unusually wet and crops were left standing in the field over the winter. The temptation proved too much for the park elk and they simply helped themselves. The affected farmers, in turn, were afraid that they would have nothing left to harvest in the spring, especially since elk hunting season had closed. The secretary of the Shellbrook rural municipality, N.L. Horley,



105 elk were shot in the park during the winter of 1959-60 (credit: D. McArthur)

wrote to John Diefenbaker, the Conservative Member of Parliament for the area since 1953 and prime minister as of 1957, about the matter. Horley briefly explained the nature of the problem, observing that "it is unfair that these farmers should stand this loss and that they should be compensated."⁴² He also asked that steps be taken "to prevent the same thing happening in the future" and wondered whether a wire fence along the southern boundary might be the answer.

The Horley letter received immediate attention. On 14 December 1959, the executive assistant to the prime minister told his counterpart at Northern Affairs and Natural Resources that a "somewhat exercised" Diefenbaker wanted the matter "dealt with promptly and effectively."⁴³ That same day, senior bureaucrats with the national parks branch decided that compensation would create a dangerous precedent — the prime minister was not interested in this solution anyway⁴⁴ — and that the best way to stop elk depredation outside the park was to reduce the herd. Prince Albert Superintendent Herb Ashley was telephoned and instructed to organize the wardens; they were going hunting. Arrangements, meanwhile, were made with the local Indian Affairs office for the deposition of the meat and hides. Finally, to counter any possible suggestion that the plan was politically motivated, a press release

was issued stating that, "This program is intended to reduce the herds to the carrying capacity of the feed areas within that section of the park."⁴⁵

The shooting of elk by park wardens commenced on the morning of 16 December 1959 — less than 48 hours after the prime minister had demanded action. Unlike the trapping of park beaver which had been politely labeled a reduction program, there was no attempt to disguise what was taking place; it was described by everyone involved as a slaughter. And slaughter it was. There was no limit on the number of elk to be shot, and all animals were considered expendable.⁴⁶

Three days after the killing had started, Horley wrote Superintendent Ashley and asked that it be stopped. The residents of the area, including farmers, did not believe that reducing the herd was a solution to the problem, "for as long as there are elk in the Park ... you will have to kill them all to stop the damage completely."⁴⁷ They were also concerned about the possible long-term impact of the slaughter on the hunting conditions in the district. Federal officials remained convinced, however, that "the only right course" was to proceed with the shooting of elk and the failure to do so would lead only to "a good deal more recrimination at a future date."⁴⁸ Ashley was therefore instructed to continue with the slaughter.

By the time the shooting had stopped, on 6 March 1960, the toll was 105 elk, including 25 yearlings. Ninety per cent of the 60 adult females were pregnant. Local farm residents who had been issued a special provincial permit to hunt elk over the winter took a further 100 animals. When these figures are combined with the 210 animals shot during the regular fall hunting season in the district, a total of 415 elk were destroyed.⁴⁹

It was apparently not enough, for on 26 April 1960, B.I.M. Strong, now chief of the national parks service, told the Prince Albert National Park superintendent that the program would be continued the following winter. The results from this second organized elk hunt sharply contrasted with those of the previous year. Although it lasted more than three months, only 22 animals were shot; according to the official report, "elk were very scattered and wild," and "large herds were not encountered."⁵⁰ During the regular 1960 fall hunting season in the area, meanwhile, just 28 animals were taken, including a mere three around Big River. For the park wardens involved, it was a numbing experience, particularly when they were not consulted, but orders were orders.

Perhaps the best description of the affair was made by a participant at a future wardens' conference. After wondering when the elk would recover, he observed, "it now appears to have been a monumental blunder ... by someone completely ignorant of any idea of conservation concepts."⁵¹

By 1960, the lessons of wildlife management in Prince Albert National Park had been learned at considerable cost. Park officials were not simply satisfied to protect animals; they believed that some species were better than others and that all wildlife had to be managed even if it meant killing the very animals that the park had pledged to protect. These experiences were not peculiar to Prince Albert National Park nor the national parks branch. Canadians in general regarded predators as bad and saw direct human management of the environment as a good thing. It was not realized until after the Second World War and the development of ecological principles that all wildlife should be saved, that all animals occupied an important niche in the ecosystem, and that not enough was known about their habits and environment. In the process Canadian national parks management, in the words of an American official, moved from "an urban to a wilderness concept of the preservation of wildlife."⁵² Visitors were discouraged from feeding park animals as if they were household pets and encouraged to seek out wildlife in its natural surroundings — to take only pictures and leave only footprints.



The red fox of the park have been the subject of a major scientific study in recent years (credit: B. Muir)



The park sign in the southeast corner of the park. The distance from Prince Albert to the park's boundary was 36 miles (credit: SAB R-A10820[1])

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NEW DIRECTIONS

In the early 1960s, American folk singer Bob Dylan captured the spirit of a generation with his hit song, "The Times They Are A-Changin'." It was a decade when traditional values and assumptions were questioned, if not openly challenged. Some would argue that the world has never been right since. These same winds of change blew over Prince Albert National Park. The administrative system and facilities that had proven satisfactory for the 1920s and 1930s needed updating or replacement, particularly in light of the developments that had taken place since the end of the Second World War. Parks officials in Ottawa, meanwhile, wanted to divest Prince Albert of its regional image and were worried that the Waskesiu seasonal campground had become the exclusive domain of a select group of local families at the expense of Canadians in general. The 1960s and 1970s were to be turbulent years for Prince Albert National Park when park tradition clashed headlong with new ideas and policies. Most changes were welcomed and adopted, a few fiercely opposed and fought at length. For all concerned, the very purpose and nature of the park was at issue.

In 1957, a new planning section was created within the national parks branch. This move was part of a general trend within the Canadian federal civil service towards greater professionalism and specialization. It was also a recognition of the increasingly important role which planning had assumed in the operation of the national parks system. The new planning section set about reviewing the key features of all existing national parks and by late 1959, had drawn up a report on planning considerations for Prince Albert National Park.

This confidential document, prepared by Chief Planner Lloyd Brooks, was a scathing indictment of the park. It argued that Prince Albert National Park's principal use as a kind of regional holiday resort was not in keeping with its status as a national park. It also warned that the number of short-term visitors to the park, and hence the demand for camping spaces, would sharply increase over the next few years, particularly with the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway. The report's most damning remarks, however, were reserved for the private structures in the townsite:

The present spectacle which confronts the visitor is not a pleasant one, where the key areas in the developed portion of the park are dominated by semi-permanent occupancies. It can be expected as the proportion of touring recreationists grows so will the indignation against the present type of development grow. For it is most obvious this is a misuse of a national park, a misuse at the expense of the more legitimate short-stay visitor whose tax dollars, have made possible through subsidization, the present favored position of the shack tenter, portable cabin owner and summer home owner at Waskesiu.¹

Brooks' solution to this "problem" was two-fold. He called for an all-encompassing redevelopment of the townsite to provide more, cheaper accommodation and day-use facilities, as well as the establishment of a number of other recreational centers around the lake, all interconnected by a scenic road system.

Following the internal review and approval of these planning considerations in May 1960, the planning section started work on an overall development plan for Prince Albert National Park. In the meantime, the national parks branch decided to proceed with two projects which



The Waskesiu waterfront was severely congested by the early 1960s (credit SAB R-B5107(4))



The construction of the new marina on Lake Waskesiu was the first time in the park's history that a major facility was not located at the townsite (credit: PANP)

had acquired an urgency. Given the size of the three main park lakes and the popularity of fishing, adequate boating facilities on Waskesiu were essential. For years, however, docking stalls at Waskesiu had been taxed to the limit, while the constant traffic to and from the breakwater interfered with other uses of the main beach area. The planning section consequently began to search for a suitable location for a new marina and eventually settled upon a bay west of the entrance to the Waskesiu River and about three miles from the townsite. Not only did the site offer ample space, but it also would mark the first time in the park's history that a major facility was not located at Waskesiu. Construction of the first stage of the half-a-million-dollar marina — some 200 berths — started in late 1963 and was carried out in part as a federal winter works project. When the marina was opened the following summer, berthing facilities at the main dock were discontinued; only the cruise boats, the *Shamrock* and *Queen*, were allowed to tie up there.

Another pressing problem was the existing tent and trailer facilities in the main Waskesiu campground. Until Ottawa decided what to do about the shack tent and portable cabin situation, additional camping space had to be provided or hundreds of potential new park visitors

might have to be turned away. The simple answer would have been to enlarge the existing campground facilities; to do so though would only have added to the congestion in the townsite that the planning section was determined to rectify. Instead, it pushed for the development of a major new campground north of the Kapasiwin Bungalows in the same general area as the new marina. This site was criticized, however, for being too far away from the townsite, in particular the business district, and an alternative location northeast of the Waskesiu Bungalow Cabins (Manvilles) was chosen.² The first 100 sites in the new Beaver Glen campground were cleared at the same time that the new marina was under construction and were ready for use at the start of the 1964 season. The tent sites in the old campground were thereafter used on an overflow basis and then phased out as Beaver Glen was expanded.

The creation of Beaver Glen campground effectively killed an earlier, local scheme to build an access road to Crean Lake and build a semi-serviced campground along the southwest shore. The planning section argued that Beaver Glen would be able to accommodate campers for several years to come and that Crean was already accessible by boat via the Heart Lakes. It also believed that the long talked-about circle drive around Lake Waskesiu should take priority; such a road would relieve the pressure on the townsite by opening up new day-use recreation areas, as well as improving access to the Kingsmere Lake area.³ Like other park roads proposed over the years, this one too was never fully realized. At first, the Heart Lakes road was extended along the north shore of Waskesiu as far west as the Kingsmere River. It was never linked with the Narrows road, however, because of the costs and questionable aesthetic value.

Of even greater importance to the park was the spring 1966 announcement by the Saskatchewan government that it planned to re-route over the next three years Highway No. 2 north of Prince Albert. This new road was designed to shorten the travel time to La Ronge and thereby facilitate exploitation of the resources of northern Saskatchewan. It had major repercussions for the park. Whereas all through traffic previously had to pass through Waskesiu, the new highway missed the park completely; it now came within only eight miles of the townsite. This meant that park businesses lost potential revenue. The new highway also prompted parks officials to abandon that portion of the old No. 2 which ran northeast from Waskesiu in favor of

a new road eastward from the townsite. The completion of this access road in the summer of 1969 resulted in a reorientation of park traffic. Most visitors now avoided the traditional way of reaching Waskesiu through the southeastern portion of the park in favor of the new route. In the process, the old highway was spared the heavy flow of traffic and became more than ever the scenic parkway it remains today. At the same time, the new access road tended to intensify the focus of park visitors on Waskesiu townsite.

There were also changes during this period in how Prince Albert National Park was physically administered. Since the creation of the park, all staff, except the wardens, would pack up each October and relocate to Prince Albert for the winter. This seasonal migration made sense in the beginning, particularly when facilities were so little developed at Waskesiu. Once buildings and services were in place, however, this constant moving back and forth became an annoyance. In the late 1950s, it finally became necessary for the park engineer to live at Waskesiu throughout the year. This was followed in the early 1960s by the gradual centralization of garage and maintenance facilities at the townsite. The next logical step was for the office staff to work at Waskesiu over the winter months — a development made possible in 1967 with the construction of a new administration building on a height of land at the east end of the business district. For the first time in four decades, then, the superintendent did not head south in the fall but was able to carry out his duties from the park on a year-round basis.⁴

The closing of the park's Prince Albert offices led to severe staff housing problems at Waskesiu. Finding suitable living quarters in the townsite had always been a headache for park employees. During the early years, many were forced to spend the summer in an old cabin, tent or shack tent, while others, such as the storeskeeper or campground caretaker, simply curled up in a corner of their offices.⁵ Apart from the building of several duplexes along Montreal Drive in the mid-1950s, little was done to alleviate the staff housing shortage as long as the park's administrative and maintenance operations were shut down each fall. But with the opening of the new administration building and year-round maintenance facilities, the accommodation problem reached near crisis proportions. Several new residences had to be built, and over the next few years, a staff neighborhood area came into existence south of the business district.



The new administration building enabled the park superintendent and office staff to work at Waskesiu year-round (credit: PANP)

The warden district system also came under scrutiny during this period and was ultimately abandoned in the early 1970s in favor of the consolidation of the service at Waskesiu. This change was based on the growing belief within the national and historic parks branch that the district system had become obsolete and that the service should reflect the changing role of park wardens. In the early days of the park, a warden had to live in his assigned district where he would perform a variety of wide-ranging duties; he generally lived by the credo, "whenever in trouble or in doubt, just call the warden service out." Since the Second World War, however, improved transportation and communication made it feasible for a warden to reside in the townsite and travel out to his district on a daily basis. The high costs of maintaining a family dwelling in an isolated location were no longer necessary. Many of the wardens' maintenance and public service functions, moreover, had been assumed by other groups in the expanding national parks bureaucracy. And in the place of these former duties, wardens were expected to prepare detailed inventories and specialized studies to be used in the development of management plans for the park's natural resources.⁶

In 1965, the number of warden districts in Prince Albert National Park was reduced from nine to seven to take advantage of various improvements over the past three decades. Then, in the late 1960s, the park was divided into three management districts — north, south, and central — each with a warden area manager. Further consolidation followed shortly thereafter with the majority of the warden staff living at the townsite. The transition was not easy. Some of the older wardens argued that the service was “a way of life rather than a job” and that a warden could not develop a gut feeling for his district with “an eight to five attitude.”⁷ They also believed they had an honorable tradition to maintain and uphold and were at times amused by the way in which younger, more technically trained recruits went about their field work. Warden relations generally remained amicable, however, and the movement towards long-term natural resource planning was delayed only by a lack of facilities and equipment. Over time, a kind of compromise was also reached between the old and new warden systems. Warden managers with specific responsibilities (backcountry areas, high use and resource management) were appointed, while summer districts (Crean, Kingsmere) and year-round stations (Sturgeon Crossing, South End) were created.⁸

Another significant development at Prince Albert National Park during the 1960s was the introduction of a park interpretation program. With the growing public interest in conservation matters, the national parks service concluded that it could not only expect greater attendance but that more of the visiting public would also want to learn about and experience the different park environments. It was also considered no longer adequate simply to allow visitors to wander on their own; special provision had to be made to educate them about national park values. Hence the national parks interpretive service was born.

The beginnings of the interpretive service at Prince Albert National Park were extremely modest. Only one seasonal park naturalist, Robert Gray, was hired for July and August 1966. They were probably two of the busiest months of his life though. Gray selected and developed the first park nature trail at Mud Creek and held the first of many hundred guided walks since on 19 July. He also established a naturalist's office in the townsite museum and when not busy putting together displays, was constantly answering visitor queries about the park or identifying specimens. Whenever possible, he would also steal away to investigate potential areas for trail development or interpretive displays. Gray considered it “a ridiculous situation” to have “only one



The Boundary Bog nature trail (credit: PANP)

developed nature trail in a park the size of Prince Albert.”⁹

These various interpretive activities were expanded upon and refined over subsequent summers. By 1970, two additional nature trails — at the Narrows campground and the Waskesiu River — had been laid out, while another, Boundary Bog, was in the planning stages. There were also two outdoor theaters for evening programs: one at Beaver Glen, the other at the Narrows. The interpretive staff, meanwhile, now numbered six, including a permanent park naturalist, Ron Dutcher. This larger staff enabled the interpretive service to offer two to three activities each day, as well as to have someone in attendance at the museum nature center on a regular basis.¹⁰ The materials and resources for this kind of work also grew steadily. Today, thanks largely to the energy and dedication of the park naturalists, the interpretive program has become an integral part of the visitor's experience at Prince Albert National Park — in much the same way that Harry Houghton's recreation activities entertained an earlier generation of park visitors.

The most controversial development at Prince Albert National Park during the 1960s was the attempt by the national parks branch to do away with shack tents and portable cabins. The monopolization of the Waskesiu campground by these quasi-permanent structures had been



By the early 1970s, the interpretation program had become an integral part of the visitor's experience at the park (credit: PANP)

a festering problem since the mid-1950s, but Ottawa had balked at taking any decisive action. Then, in July 1959, Gordon Robertson, deputy minister of the department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, visited Prince Albert National Park, as well as Riding Mountain National Park, where a similar problem had arisen, to assess the situation first-hand. Robertson was personally impressed with the Waskesiu shack tent and portable cabin community and observed in a subsequent report that "they look thoroughly respectable and undoubtedly are providing a great many people with a cheap and healthful holiday."¹¹ He questioned, however, whether individuals should be allowed to benefit from what appeared to be semi-proprietary rights in a national park and suggested that the structures be strictly regulated. Robertson also observed that "the shack tent-portable cabin question is one to which a good deal of attention should be devoted so that we can work out a suitable policy." He called on the new national park planning section to study the problem and recommend a course of action.

Ready by the end of the year, this report left little doubt as to where the planning section stood on the matter. In fact, the document put into words the sense of frustration that the national parks branch had



Erecting shack tents in the Waskesiu campground in the early 1960s (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

felt about the issue for the past few years. On the opening page, it described the situation as "a case of special privilege and fancied right . . . unjust to other citizens and taxpayers. Private cottages, portable cabins, shack tents or semi-permanent occupation of a campsite must be regarded as restrictive to the general public and a contradiction of national park purpose."¹² The report then went on to argue that the structures, although important in the early years of park development, not only dominated the Waskesiu campground at the expense of the growing number of short-term visitors, but also interfered with the orderly development of the park by occupying areas which were considered better suited for public day-use facilities. In short, these structures had no place in a national park — "The settled pattern must be undone."¹³

Like Deputy Minister Robertson, however, the planning section realized that shack tents and to a lesser extent, portable cabins, were an entrenched tradition at Waskesiu — an undeniable part of Prince Albert National Park's history — and that any new program of redevelopment required "enlisting the understanding and cooperation of the present occupants."¹⁴ The report therefore recommended that the elimination of shack tents and portable cabins should proceed in

stages over a five-year period with as little disruption as possible. It also advised that alternative forms of accommodation, attractive to local long-term visitors and yet still in line with national park purposes, should be in place before any redevelopment got under way. The ultimate aim was to turn the Waskesiu townsite into a visitor services center.

The shack tent/portable cabin report was delivered to Robertson in February 1960 and approved in principle three months later by Alvin Hamilton, minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources in the Diefenbaker government.¹⁵ J.R.B. Coleman, national parks director, then ordered the planning department to work up a preliminary redevelopment plan for the Waskesiu townsite.¹⁶ In the meantime, he urged that construction start immediately on 105 low rental cabins at Waskesiu that in turn would allow the department to establish day-use facilities in the area now occupied by shack tents between the main beach and Waskesiu Drive. "The time has arrived," according to Coleman, "to provide facilities for all park visitors which are more in line with today's and tomorrow's needs and demands, and more in accordance with national park purposes."¹⁷ Hamilton's successor, Walter Dinsdale, however, was in no hurry to proceed with these changes, particularly since they involved the prime minister's constituency, but chose to wait until he had had a chance to visit the park during the summer of 1961. There, he was clearly made aware of the sensitivity of the issue, for it was subsequently decided that local individuals and groups should be advised and consulted about the long-term development plans for the park.¹⁸

The question of private residences in a national park setting soon spread beyond the boundaries of Prince Albert National Park. Residential areas for regular park visitors had been allowed to take root in a number of other national parks; Banff and Jasper, for example, had become just like any other small town. Following the Second World War, however, the wisdom of this policy began to be questioned. In August 1956, Northern Affairs Minister Jean Lesage warned Parliament that "parks are preserved for the people of Canada as a whole for very special purposes, not for the inhabitants of one area."¹⁹ This sentiment was shared by the Diefenbaker administration which prohibited the establishment of any new lots or residential subdivisions in national parks as of July 1959. Dinsdale, in fact, was moving toward a wholesale review of national parks and their role in meeting the growing recreational needs of Canadians around the time that the Conservatives were



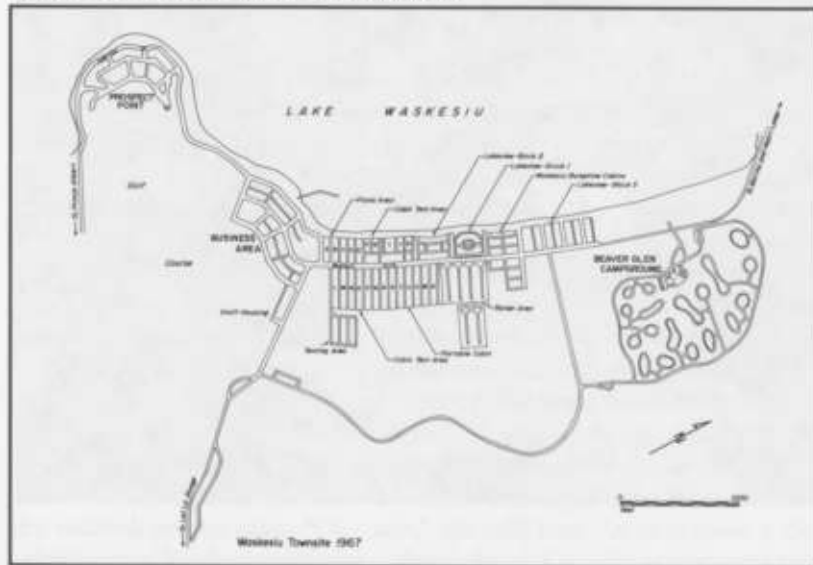
Shack tents in storage for the winter (credit: PANP 050-21)

bounced from office.²⁰ The matter was taken up though by his successor, Arthur Laing. The new Liberal minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources was disturbed by the fact that park lease holders paid ridiculously low rents yet made high profits when the property changed hands. He also believed that it was improper that individuals who were fortunate enough to live near a national park should enjoy special privileges.²¹ The Pearson government proposed that private residential occupation of national parks be gradually eliminated; only those individuals who worked for the park or provided an essential service would be allowed to stay. "National park land is public land," Laing told the House of Commons in introducing the new policy. "It must be used in a way that clearly contributes to public enjoyment and service, not for the private benefit and convenience of individuals."²²

The minister's stand was favorably received across the country, in particular by wildlife groups and park organizations which were worried about the disappearance of Canada's wilderness heritage. Perhaps his staunchest supporter was the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. In a strongly worded editorial entitled, "Render to Canada ..." the newspaper noted that "the parks belong to all Canadians, here now and yet to come ... No individual should be allowed to stake claims in them for their

private enjoyment or their private profit. Mr. Laing should have the support of every Canadian in reclaiming this vital heritage.²³ Residents and business people in western parks, on the other hand, mounted a determined campaign to derail the program with the aid of their parliamentary representatives. Laing refused to back down in the face of this criticism, however, and in an August 1965 letter to all holders of residential leases in western parks, repeated his department's objective to acquire gradually all existing private summer homes.²⁴

It was against this background that the redevelopment plans for Waskesiu were finally completed in 1967. Given the flak that the department had taken over the past two years, parks officials knew that the proposed changes, especially the decision to do away with shack tents, portable cabins and cottages, were certain to generate controversy. They were worried nonetheless that park attendance would more than double over the next 15 years — as it had already between 1950 and 1965 — and that the strain on the Waskesiu campground would get only worse until steps were taken to provide new facilities. They were also confident that any protest could be kept to a minimum if the proposed changes were carefully explained to those affected; it was all a simple matter of how the issue was handled.²⁵



Waskesiu Townsite 1967

The Waskesiu redevelopment plan was formally presented by Alex Reeve, national parks assistant director, at a public meeting in the townsite theater on 12 August 1967. Reading from a prepared text, Reeve first outlined how park use had changed over the past decade: more people were visiting but for shorter periods of time. He then went on to argue that new facilities were required in areas that were currently being used for other purposes. The first of these targeted areas was the rows of shack tents on the lakeshore side of Waskesiu Drive. To free up this part of the Waskesiu campground for new day-use facilities, Reeve announced that only those shack tenters or their spouses who held a valid camping permit at the end of the 1967 camping season would be allowed to occupy a campground lot in subsequent years provided they continually renewed their camping permit each spring. Those shack tenters who failed to keep their camping permit in good standing or decided to sell or otherwise dispose of their shack tent would no longer be eligible for a lot. This attrition scheme would lead to the eventual relocation and consolidation of the remaining shack tents to the east side of Waskesiu Drive on blocks L to Q and thereby enable the park to go ahead with the redevelopment of the immediate lakefront area.

As this work neared completion, a similar policy would then be applied to portable cabin owners, effective 30 September 1970. In the long run, it was expected that these structures, like shack tents, would gradually disappear from the Waskesiu campground and be replaced by new trailer sites and additional campground facilities. Curiously, the idea of building rows of cheap rental cabins — something that the planners had earlier deemed essential to townsite redevelopment — was shelved until it could be proved that there was a definite need for such accommodation. As for the more substantial cottages in the Prospect Point and Lakeview subdivisions, they were to be acquired by the government in the distant future upon the expiration of the leases.

The initial reaction to the Waskesiu redevelopment plan was one of shock and dismay. Many shack tenters feared that they were about to be summarily evicted and over the next few days, Prince Albert National Park Superintendent John Malfair was kept busy explaining to permit holders that they would not be forced to give up their privilege of occupying a campground lot. Despite his assurances, the mood quickly turned to anger. Many of the shack tent and portable cabin owners had been patronizing the park for decades — in a few cases, generations



Big Beach at Lake Waskesiu in the early 1960s (credit: Prince Albert Historical Museum)

— and had come to regard themselves as the backbone of Waskesiu. They had seen the park evolve from its simple beginnings, had invested considerable time and energy in building and maintaining their summer homes, and had deep-felt memories of their holidays at Saskatchewan's "poor man's paradise." Going to Waskesiu each summer had become part of the natural rhythm of their lives. The shack tenters and portable cabin owners were therefore outraged by the suggestion that their long and intimate association with the park no longer mattered and was in fact, detrimental. They were also upset by the apparent inequality of the scheme: cottage owners would not only be left alone for several years but also receive financial compensation.

The Waskesiu Tent Cabin and Portable Cabin Association lost little time in organizing a campaign to stop the redevelopment plan. It lobbied Saskatchewan members of parliament and the provincial legislature for assistance. It flooded the park superintendent with written objections to the plan. And it drew up a petition that argued that shack tents and portable cabins were entirely in keeping with Prime Minister Mackenzie King's 1928 dedication of Prince Albert National Park to "the average man." As far as the association was concerned, "we [should] be permitted to continue as we have done in the past and that additional space, as and when necessary, be developed elsewhere in the 1500-odd square miles of park property to accommodate future day and week-campers in increasing numbers."²⁶ The thought of eliminating shack tents to make space for expensive trailers and motor homes seemed a contradiction.

The petition was formally presented to Arthur Laing on 17 November 1967 by Association President Mrs. Mary Jackson. As she left for Ottawa armed with hundreds of signatures, her departure was depicted in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* as a kind of David-and-Goliath encounter. Laing, for his part, refused to be drawn into a fight and simply reiterated his ministry's determination to proceed with the redevelopment plan. The stalemate continued until the following summer when the young, promising Jean Chrétien took over the portfolio in the new Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau. Seizing upon Laing's departure and Trudeau's emphasis on participatory democracy, Mrs. Jackson immediately wrote to Chrétien and urged him to reconsider the redevelopment plan. "Our aim," she told him, "is to achieve a development of Waskesiu townsite ... that is for all Canadians and equitable to the pioneers of the Park and their successors."²⁷ She also com-

plained that the association was especially upset with the former minister's repeated refusal to discuss the matter and called on Chrétien to visit Waskesiu; after all, it was "Prime Minister Trudeau's wish that Cabinet Ministers of his Government ... learn first hand the problems that face local groups."

Any hope that Chrétien might be persuaded to rescind the attrition policy for shack tents and portable cabins was quickly dashed. In the months following his appointment, he made it quite clear that private use of public lands was at odds with the purpose of national parks and that he was intent on pursuing the new policy thrust of his predecessor. "We are trying to improve the park experience of all our visitors," he wrote former Prime Minister Diefenbaker in October 1968 about the plans for Waskesiu, "and at the same time plan for much greater use of the park lands of the future."²⁸

By January 1970, however, Chrétien's attempt to revise national park leasing regulations was being successfully challenged in the courts.²⁹ He began to have second thoughts about implementing the second phase of the Waskesiu plan — the portable cabin provisions. This change of heart made National and Historic Parks Director John Nicol, apoplectic. In a heated memo to Chrétien's senior assistant deputy minister Nicol argued that after answering "almost 150 Ministers' letters as well as telegrams and petitions on the topic ... the portable cabin owners appear to have finally accepted our point of view. If we are to back down now, we will undoubtedly cause more of a furor than when the 1967 announcement was made."³⁰ He also warned that failure to proceed with the portable cabin policy would provoke a storm of protest from shack tent owners. Since 1967, the number of shack tents had dropped from 375 to 305, and it would not be fair to these former park residents to discontinue the policy. A number of portable cabin owners, moreover, had already sold their structures on the assumption that their days in the park were numbered. For Nicol, then, this was no time to have doubts.

Chrétien's waffling, however, resulted in a compromise. In an apparent attempt to try to alleviate local concerns, he finally accepted Mrs. Jackson's invitation and met with the Tent Cabin and Portable Cabin Association in Prince Albert in February 1970.³¹ The association used the occasion to present Chrétien with a lengthy brief that essentially argued that despite national parks' forecast of a tourist boom, Prince Albert remained a "regional" national park serving a regular

group of local visitors. Chrétien, in response, told Mrs. Jackson that the policy would remain unchanged. "The purpose of the redevelopment plan of 1967," he reminded her, "was to make all land in the National Park available to visitors rather than have any park land alienated for a select group of people."³² He also took issue with her suggestion that his department was forcing residents out of the park and stressed that park redevelopment would take place over several years as visitation increased. He did, nonetheless, concede that the new policy might leave portable cabin owners at a disadvantage because they had made a greater investment in their structures than shack tenters. He consequently promised that his ministry would take "another look at the situation."

This review of the Waskesiu redevelopment plan led to a number of changes. During the summer of 1970, the department decided to delay the implementation of the portable cabin restrictions — originally to take place 30 September 1970 — for another year; this one year's grace was designed to defuse some of the ill feelings over the policy. In order to mitigate the potential financial loss to portable cabin owners, the department also agreed to purchase at market value any structure that became available after the policy went into effect. Otherwise, the same regulations that had applied to shack tents since 1967 were to be in force. Finally, in an effort to forestall any future charge that portable cabin owners had received preferential treatment, the department decided in January 1971 that shack tents could be left standing on-site year-round, as well as serviced with electricity at the owner's expense.³³ With these changes, the metamorphosis was complete; structures that were initially intended to serve as temporary lodging now took on all the trappings of a permanent cabin, albeit on a smaller scale.

These various concessions were intended by the department to be a kind of olive branch; henceforth, it expected to be able to proceed with the phasing out of shack tents and portable cabins with little protest.³⁴ The strategy quickly came undone, however, with the spring 1971 release of the Prince Albert National Park Provisional Master Plan. Based on the assumption that there were already a number of purely recreational areas in existence in Saskatchewan, the management scheme suggested that Prince Albert National Park's future was as a "national wildland park."³⁵ The three major park biomes — boreal forest, aspen parkland and southern grasslands — would be set aside for wilderness hiking, canoeing and camping, while roads and activity centers would



An aerial view of the Waskesiu shack tent area, June 1970 (credit: PANP)

be located to facilitate access to these areas.

Although the plan did not make any specific references to the redevelopment of Waskesiu, it inadvertently helped the cause of the Tent Cabin and Portable Cabin Association. Since 1967, the association had been complaining that the park was under attack by Ottawa bureaucrats who had no understanding of the park's uniqueness. The Provisional Master Plan now appeared to be further evidence of this insensitivity, particularly the proposal that motor boats be banned from Kingsmere Lake. The association had also been clamoring for a chance to voice its opposition to the attrition policy at some kind of public forum. This was now finally made possible thanks to the two days of public hearings on the Provisional Master Plan that were scheduled for late June in Regina and Prince Albert. Whether Ottawa realized it or not, it had just shot itself in the foot.

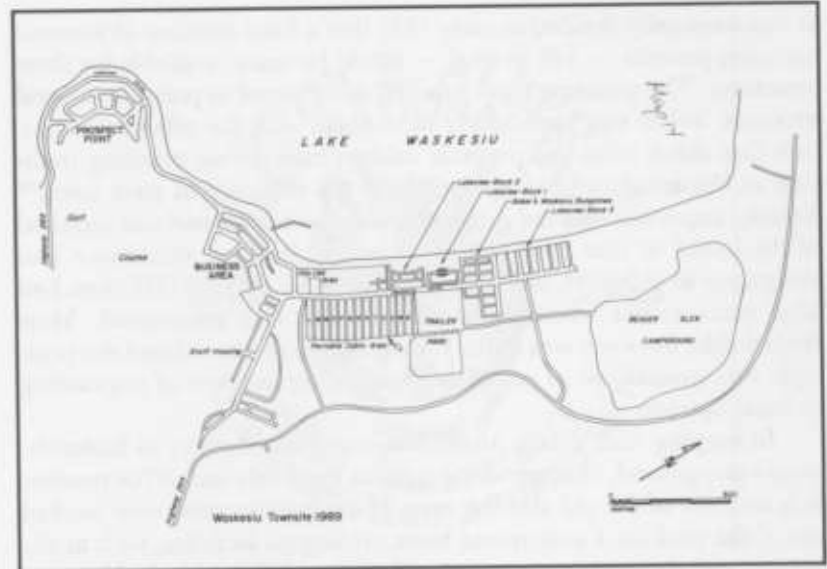
Saskatchewan political leaders were the first to castigate the Provisional Master Plan. "It is a place for the people ... not a playground for bureaucrats in Ottawa," a sanctimonious John Diefenbaker observed a few days after the plan was unveiled. "These people are trying to tell us out here in the west what we want."³⁶ Saskatchewan Deputy Premier Davey Steuart said much the same thing, calling the proposals

"another example of their stupidity and lack of concern for what people really want in this area."³⁷

This tone was carried over into the public hearings. The plan did have its supporters, but these individuals and organizations, such as the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, were dismissed by critics of the plan as "tree huggers" who did not appreciate Prince Albert's importance as a family park. Some briefs argued that the proposed plan did not take into account the regional nature of the park, a fact confirmed by Ottawa's own statistic that 86% of all visitors to the park were from Saskatchewan. Other briefs complained that the plan catered to a small minority of wilderness enthusiasts and was prejudiced against those who used their leisure time to pursue other, more sedate, activities. The Tent Cabin and Portable Cabin Association ridiculed the idea that only 5.2 square miles of the total 1496-square-mile park area were to be reserved for intensive use; it seemed that the plan was another step in an attempt to take the park away from the people. As one woman sarcastically observed, Ottawa was spending \$5 million "to make a wilderness area into a wilderness area."³⁸

The federal government's response to the public hearings on the Prince Albert National Park Provisional Master Plan was not announced until four years later. Although this delay allowed the shack tent and portable cabin policy to remain in force, it was probably not deliberate. Park planners not only had to rethink the Prince Albert National Park proposals in light of the public reaction, but were also busy preparing management plans for a number of other parks at this time. The uncertainty as to what might be the outcome of the hearings, however, did not help the strained relations between long-time park residents and park officials. Nor did the government response once it became public in the spring of 1975. Parks Canada had decided that new low-rental accommodation would be developed as shack tents and portable cabins disappeared.³⁹

The battle was far from over. Still smarting from the reception of the Provisional Master Plan, Parks Canada pledged that there would be further public consultation regarding the future development of Waskesiu. This process started in June 1975, and the long-expected showdown between the two sides occurred two months later during an August meeting in the former Terrace Gardens dance hall in Waskesiu. Park officials knew beforehand that the meeting might not



Waskesiu Townsite 1989

be a friendly one. But little did they expect that the meeting hall would be packed to capacity and that those who were unable to get in would be lined up outside anxiously waiting for their chance to speak to the planning team. The meeting was intended to initiate public discussion on a wide range of planning issues affecting Waskesiu. From the outset, however, the speakers made it clear that the attrition policy was the major issue and refused to discuss anything else. "We get the impression ... these hearings are just a sham," said Mrs. Jackson. "Are you really going to listen this time or once again just go through the motions?" Another cabin owner suggested that the attrition program "amounts to public harassment of the people who built the park." This feeling was echoed by another speaker who warned, "If there have been decisions made ... which affect our livelihood and they aren't what we want they will ... be changed."⁴⁰ One parks planner who had been on the job for six weeks probably wondered whether things could get any worse.

This meeting caused Parks Canada to forsake its attrition program for shack tents and portable cabins. Over the following months, the park superintendent, the executive of the Tent Cabin Association and park planners met on a regular basis to devise an "alternative concept."

It was eventually decided in early 1977 that a fixed number of seasonal camping permits — 448 in total — would be made available for these structures. The planning team justified this reversal in policy on several grounds. What was particularly noteworthy was the official recognition that shack tents and portable cabins “have a long-standing tradition in Waskesiu and are acceptable to the majority of park users.”⁴¹ Equally important was the admission that “no ‘higher use’ was required of the lands” at that time. This was largely because attendance had not grown as expected; fewer people visited the park in 1976 than had nine years earlier when the attrition policy was announced. Most remarkable, however, was Parks Canada’s willingness to bend the principle that private use of park land was wrong in favor of responding to local opinion.

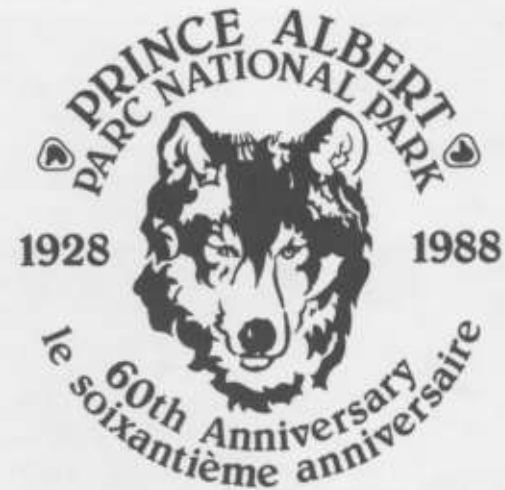
In keeping with Prince Albert National Park’s history as Saskatchewan’s playground, changes at the park in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a mixture of the old and the new. The administration now worked out of the park on a year-round basis, while new facilities, such as the marina and Beaver Glen campground, replaced those that had become outdated or inadequate. The district system also came to an end, as the park warden service was consolidated at Waskesiu. And an interpretive service, which quickly became an indispensable part of park operations, got under way. The attempt by Ottawa, however, to phase out private residences was vehemently resisted and eventually defeated; shack tents, portable cabins and cottages were accepted as a natural part of the Waskesiu landscape. The dispute over what the park should be had its costs though. For some, a sense of bitterness and suspicion continues to this day. In the long run, moreover, the cancellation of the attrition program created a new problem. Although shack tents, portable cabins and cottages were spared, the limit placed on their numbers, combined with their location, meant that their value skyrocketed. They are no longer simply a privileged use of park land, but also an expensive one.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WOLF COUNTRY

Following the 1971 release of the Prince Albert National Park Provisional Master Plan, the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* observed, "The PANP — which originated [with] and was promoted by Prince Albert citizens — is often looked at as 'our' park. If we want it to remain 'our' park then we must be willing to say what we think regarding the proposed master plan ... National parks are for the people. It is time for the people to state what they want."¹ In this one editorial, the *Herald* nicely captured the history of Prince Albert National Park. Far from being the result of any lofty ideals, the park was a political reward — a 1500-square-mile thank you — to the citizens of Prince Albert for providing Prime Minister Mackenzie King with a safe seat and thereby allowing him to continue to govern the country. It was also something that the local Board of Trade had dearly wanted for years. Anxious to lift the city out of its economic doldrums following the First World War, Prince Albert civic leaders and businessmen wanted to cash in on the tourist traffic generated by a national park, as well as the federal dollars that would accompany it. It was a perfect example of what one author has described as "parks for profit."²

Because of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the park, it was only natural that the people of the region regarded it as their own — theirs to do with as they saw fit. They expected to be consulted about park development and regularly drew up their own list of projects, many of which were acted upon during the early years. They tended to measure the park's success in terms of attendance; it was believed that as the number of park visitors grew, Prince Albert would prosper. The local population also looked upon the park as its own summer playground and holidayed there for several weeks, if not the entire summer. With many of the same visitors returning season after season, a strong sense of community developed, especially among the shack tenters, and they came to identify their interests and desires with those of the park; to them, there was no distinction. And it was for this reason that the 1967 attrition policy and 1971 Provisional Master Plan were regarded as gross interference by a distant bureaucracy which, in the words of a long-time park resident, "did not appreciate the needs



or wishes of the people who use the park the most."³

Prince Albert National Park was never intended, however, to exist solely for the economic and recreational benefit of the people of central Saskatchewan. Prime Minister King said as much in his 1928 opening speech. After acknowledging the local origin of the park idea, he told his audience that "this new link in the splendid system of national parks" was intended to serve "a higher purpose" as "the best possible evidence ... that the foundations of our country are rooted in things that endure beyond the life of brick and mortar."⁴ These words have never been more significant than they are today. With more and more people living in urban centers and resource exploitation proceeding at an unprecedented pace, Canada's national parks have become one of the few remaining areas where the country's natural heritage remains largely unimpaired. They can no longer be simply seen as sources of tourist revenue, but rather as preserves which "protect the natural wilderness and beauty that characterizes our psyche as a nation."⁵

The release of the 1971 Prince Albert National Park Provisional Master Plan was a bold, though clumsily handled, attempt to recognize this new reality about the significance of Canada's national parks. And despite the fact that many of the controversial features of the plan were subsequently revised or withdrawn, the basic thrust of the document



There are over 1500 lakes in the park, including Crean, one of the largest lakes in Canada's national parks (credit: PANP)

remains valid for the Canadian Parks Service. Prince Albert National Park is a representative example of the ecologically diverse transitional zone between the prairie parkland and boreal forest. Preservation, not recreation, should therefore take precedence. Indeed, according to federal parks authorities, the time has come to stop thinking of the park in strictly regional terms and acknowledge that it is a national — some would argue, international — asset to be maintained and protected for future generations. This image is reflected in the title, "Wolf Country," for the park interpretation services newsletter.

Prince Albert National Park is ideally suited to be a wilderness park because of the way in which it was developed. Since most of the recreation and accommodation facilities were built at Waskesiu, there has been little human impact on the outlying areas. Contemporary visitors to the park have the chance to experience and enjoy — be it by foot, canoe or ski — a relatively unspoiled natural setting. By day, they can tramp among the oldest spruce in the province along the Treebeard trail; at night, they can howl for wolves or bugle for elk. Biologists and other specialists, meanwhile, are conducting pioneering scientific work, such as Dr. David Henry's study of the red fox,⁶



With the exception of the central Waskesiu Hills, the park area is a subdued landscape characterized by low relief and numerous water bodies (credit: PANP)

based on the park's natural ecosystem. An unprecedented step has also been taken to guarantee that these opportunities continue to last for decades. In 1988, the 60th anniversary of the park's official opening, Edwin and Margery Wilder, an American couple, bequeathed several hundred thousand dollars to preserve the Grey Owl wilderness area in the park. This gift represents the largest private donation ever made to a national park.

Prince Albert National Park's future as a wilderness region, however, faces a number of long-term challenges. The park has become an island surrounded by areas based on different land uses. Large animal species that migrate in and out of the park's sanctuary, such as wolf, caribou, elk and buffalo,⁷ are therefore difficult to protect. There is also the problem of management of the overall park environment. By preventing natural processes, especially fires, from affecting the park, the ecological system will become increasingly simplified and monotonous. Disturbances every now and then are necessary to the diversity that characterizes the region. The park environment is also suffering from the earlier emphasis on recreation. Dams constructed to raise water levels, for example, have caused severe shoreline erosion and sedimenta-

tion along the larger lakes and thereby affected wildlife habitat areas. The dramatic decline in fish spawning appears to be one unfortunate result.

This desire to emphasize the wilderness experience of Prince Albert National Park also contradicts the history of the park. Because development and visitation were concentrated at Waskesiu from the park's beginning, the townsite took on an existence of its own. In fact, Waskesiu became *the* park for most visitors and still is regarded that way today. In an attempt to make the townsite a fundamental part of the visitor's national park experience, the Canadian parks service has argued that Waskesiu should now become a heritage community which facilitates public access to the park's natural environment, while at the same time complements the natural surroundings. At root here are the principles that the townsite serves the park, not vice versa, and that the natural heritage values of the park should govern Waskesiu management and development. Many local business people and visitors contend, however, that the townsite constitutes but a small amount of the total park area and that outdoor enthusiasts are only five minutes away from the wilderness. There is also continuing pressure to promote tourism by establishing facilities at Waskesiu which may have no place in a national

park setting but are in keeping with the park's traditional role as a northern playground. Finally, the sensitive question of the private and privileged use of public park lands will have to be confronted again when cottage leases come up for renewal. These issues have no easy answers, but as evidenced by recent park planning documents, there is a general consensus that the purpose of the community should be related to the park's heritage resources.

The most immediate challenge for Prince Albert National Park will be trying to reconcile the differing views of what the park is and should be. From a national perspective, Prince Albert is part of a system of special places, not the exclusive domain of a particular region. At the local level, however, Prince Albert is not like any other national park and never was. In fact, it continues to be a destination park. A 1985 visitor survey revealed that 88% of all park visitors were from Saskatchewan — 50% from the Prince Albert/Saskatoon district alone — while 70% gave their major park destination as the townsite.⁸ Thus, the idea of "our" park still holds true to a large degree.

The Canadian parks service will have to come to terms with this regional park aspect or the turmoil which characterized federal parks policies and initiatives in the late 1960s and early 1970s will continue. In fact, some kind of common understanding now appears essential to guarantee that part of our heritage, and with it, part of our identity, continues to be preserved. For years, Prince Albert National Park depended on political connections — whether it be Mackenzie King, Tommy Davis or John Diefenbaker — to secure a healthy share of federal dollars. In the last decade, however, funding has not kept up with the growing demands on the park's services and facilities, particularly since it has become a winter wonderland as well as a summer playground. Prince Albert National Park may be a special place but like other national parks, it is not special enough to rank high on the federal government's list of priorities. Perhaps the time has come to take direction from the park's creator, Mackenzie King. In musing about possible future threats to the park in his opening speech, he observed, "Should that time ever come ... I believe that these national parks will have become recognized as such a precious element in our common inheritance that there will be a body of opinion in this country strong enough to withstand every assault on these citadels of nature. We build today not merely for the present and immediate future but, I trust, for eternity as well."⁹



Downtown Waskesiu today (credit: K. Strunge)

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Saskatchewan's Playground is largely based on the voluminous records of the National Parks Service held in Ottawa (government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada), Winnipeg (Winnipeg Federal Records Center) and Waskesiu (Prince Albert National Park Administration Building Library). These records contain a wealth of information — at times unusual or mundane — on a wide range of topics. Equally useful were the National Parks Service annual department reports, the House of Commons debates, articles from the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, interviews made by the author, and a collection of material (mostly photographs and interviews) secured by Jackie Keesey on behalf of Friends of Prince Albert National Park.

A number of in-house histories of the park were also consulted; of particular note are Donna Bruce, "History of Prince Albert National Park" (n.d.), and James Shortt, "A Survey of the Human History of Prince Albert National Park, 1887-1945" (Parks Canada, Manuscript Report Series 239, 1977). These items are part of a wide assortment of historical resource materials — interviews and letters, films, photographs, maps, and government studies — available in the park library. The most important secondary sources were: Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto 1978); Sid Marty, *A Grand and Fabulous Notion: The First Century of Canada's Parks* (Toronto 1984); L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1987).

For detailed bibliographical information, the reader should consult the endnotes.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE: JAMES BIRD'S VISION

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7. R.C. Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1. From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto 1987), plate 62.
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9. A.S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1973), 318-324.
10. *Ibid.*, 313-314; 452-453.
11. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 204; 220-224; Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 704.
12. There are two cemeteries on the north side of the Waskesiu Narrows: one for Christian or local Indians (eight graves including James Bird) and one for so-called heathen Indians (seven graves) who came up from Sturgeon Lake to trap in the region and died there. Apparently, an old woman (Duncan Bird's mother) was buried alive at the Narrows because she believed that she was about to be possessed by the windigo (wihitkow), a spirit that feeds on human beings. James Settee interview, 13 May 1988.
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15. Joseph Bird, John Boyer, Samuel Bird Sr., William Henderson, Samuel Bird Jr., Joseph Laliberte, George Bird, Baptiste Merasy, Benjamin Bird, John Nelson, Patrick Bird, J. Saunders, Thomas Bell, Charles Garson, Paul Bear, James Stevenson.
16. Chief William Charles' councillors were Benjamin Bird, Isaac Bird, Patrick Bird and Moses Bird. Amos Charles, Joseph Charles, Alias Roberts and John Cook served as councillors for Chief James Roberts.
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18. "HBC Post at Red Deer Lake, Saskatchewan."
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24. Abrams, *Prince Albert*, 20; 124.
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27. The cabin at The Forks was built by D. McCauley of Alingly and subsequently occupied by Low Anderson of Alingly, P. Gunville of Prince Albert, Joe Campbell, James Clare and finally, James Morgan. NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 1729, f. PA16-2, J.R. Clare to District Inspector of Forest Reserves, 24 December 1916; E.H. Roberts to District Inspector of Forest Reserves, 7 March 1917; M.H. Montgomery to District Inspector of Forest Reserves, 3 May 1917.
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48. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 3 April 1928.
49. D.T. Tabulenas, *A Narrative Human History of Riding Mountain National Park and Area: Prehistory to 1880*, Parks Canada, Microfiche Report Series No. 102, 1983, 197.
50. NAC, Government Archives Division, Forestry, vol. 476, Forest Reserves Ledger, Sturgeon

CHAPTER TWO: PRINCE ALBERT AND THE NEW NORTHWEST

River Forest Reserve.

32. As of 3 August 1927, the following permits had been issued:

Block 1, Lot 7	D.P. Miller (physician)
Block 1, Lot 8 (lapsed)	H.J. Fraser (lawyer)
Block 1, Lot 9 (lapsed)	W.P. Ralls (dominion tax assessor)
Block 2, Lot 1	W.C. Bliss (physician)
Block 2, Lot 2 (lapsed)	S.B. MacMillan (physician)
Block 2, Lot 3 (lapsed)	A.J. Wilkinson (businessman)
Block 2, Lot 4 (lapsed)	E.J. Shortridge (businessman)
Block 2, Lot 5 (lapsed)	C. Musk (wholesaler)
Block 2, Lot 6 (lapsed)	M. Musk (wholesaler)
Block E, Lot 2	G.A. Pease
Block E, Lot 4	M.A. Strangways (teacher)

Ibid., Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 1, v. 2, J.B. Harkin to J.A. Wood, 3 August 1927.
33. *Ibid.*, Forestry, vol. 459, f. 48387 v. 1, "Sturgeon National Forest, Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1924-28."
34. C. Eamer, "Times spent at Lake Waskesiu," *Western People*, 3 November 1983, 6.

CHAPTER THREE: THE POLITICAL ART OF PARK MAKING

1. National Archives of Canada [NAC] Manuscript Division, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, Diaries, 11 January 1926.
2. *Ibid.*, 15 January 1926.
3. *Ibid.*, 28 January 1926.
4. *Ibid.*, 1 February 1926.
5. G.W.P. Abrams, *Prince Albert: The First Century 1866-1966* (Saskatoon 1966), 245; NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, W.W. Cory to J.B. Harkin, 30 November 1926 (copy of Prince Albert Board of Trade national park committee report).
6. Dr. S.M. McMillan, agriculture and immigration committee; Mark Musk, transportation and industries/retailers committees; C.S. Musk, retailers committee; Dr. D.P. Miller, entertainment and membership committee.
7. Fraser shared the same office building with Dr. D.P. Miller, another lot holder at Waskesiu.
8. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, T.W. Molloy to J.B. Harkin, 20 August 1925.
9. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to T.W. Molloy, 4 September 1925.
10. *Ibid.*, T.W. Molloy to J.B. Harkin, 10 September 1925.
11. Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB], SB-11, Prince Albert Board of Trade Papers, SB-11, minutes, 28 November 1925.
12. Davis would later claim that King publicly promised a park. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1962, f. U2-1, T.C. Davis to C. Stewart, 10 November 1926.
13. King Diaries, 22 February 1926. McDonald was appointed by King to the Senate in 1935 but died before he was able to assume his seat.
14. For a discussion of the relationship between parks and politics, see L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1987), 72.
15. Davis would later be brought to Ottawa by King to serve as Deputy Minister of the Department of National War Services, before embarking on a diplomatic career that included the Canadian ambassadorship to China, West Germany and then Japan.
16. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1962, f. U2-1, T.C. Davis to J.B. Harkin, 15 May 1926; King Diaries, 20 April 1926.
17. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, J.B. Harkin to W.W. Cory, 1 May 1926.

18. See, for example, House of Commons, *Debates*, 14 June 1923, 3942.
19. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, 27 April 1926, notation on file cover.
20. King Diaries, 12 May 1926.
21. Prince Albert Board of Trade, minutes, 26 May 1926.
22. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, J.B. Harkin to R.A. Gibson, 19 June 1926.
23. King Papers, v. 130, 110823, T.C. Davis to W.L.M. King, 29 September 1926.
24. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1962, f. U2-1, W.W. Cory to T.C. Davis, 19 October 1926.
25. *Ibid.*, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 1, v. 1, memorandum to file, J.B. Harkin, n.d.
26. *Ibid.*, vol. 1962, f. U2-1, T.C. Davis to C. Stewart, 10 November 1926.
27. *Ibid.*, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, W.W. Cory to J.B. Harkin, 30 November 1926, (copy of Prince Albert Board of Trade national park committee report).
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, memorandum to file, J.B. Harkin, n.d.
30. NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 39, Forestry, vol. 476, Forest Reserves Ledger, Sturgeon River Forest Reserve. Trippe secured a permit in 1925 to erect a cabin along the south shore in the area known today as Trippe's Beach.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. 459, f. 47778, E.R. Trippe to T.C. Davis, 9 April 1926.
32. *Ibid.*, Parks Canada, vol. 1726, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 1, W.W. Cory to J.B. Harkin, 30 November 1926, (copy of Prince Albert Board of Trade national park committee report); vol. 1962, f. U2-1, T.C. Davis to C. Stewart, 10 November 1926.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 1726, PA2, pt. 1, vol. 1, J.B. Harkin to W. W. Cory, 21 December 1926.
34. *Ibid.*, Forestry Service memorandum to J.B. Harkin, 24 January 1927.
35. *Ibid.*, W.W. Cory to T.W. Molloy, 3 February 1927.
36. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to R.A. Gibson, 18 May 1927; C.M. Holz to W.L.M. King, 10 January 1927.
37. *Ibid.*, J.M. Wardle to J.B. Harkin, 10 February 1927; J.M. Wardle to W.W. Cory, 16 February 1927.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 2, J.B. Harkin to W.W. Cory, 18 March 1927.
39. NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 2, Privy Council Office, PC 524, 24 March 1927.
40. King Diaries, 24 March 1927.
41. King Papers, vol. 167, 121011, T.C. Davis to W.L.M. King, 28 April 1927; 121019-121022, T.C. Davis to W.L.M. King, 11 June 1927.
42. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, PA2, pt. 2, vol. 2, W.W. Cory to J.B. Harkin, 16 March 1927.
43. King Papers, vol. 167, 121017, W.W. Cory to W.L.M. King, 1 June 1927.
44. King Diaries, 11 June 1927.
45. King Papers, vol. 167, 121015, W.L.M. King to T.C. Davis, 11 June 1927.
46. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 18, f. PA109, John P. Curror to J.A. Wood, 9 February 1928; John P. Curror to J.A. Wood, 21 February 1928.
47. This account of the events of 10-11 August 1928 is based upon the following sources: King Diaries, 10-11 August 1928; "Bright Sun Shines on Scene Beside Waters of Fair Lake Waskesiu," *Saskatoon Phoenix*, 11 August 1928; "Many Visitors to New National Park," *Montreal Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 29 August 1928; "Despite the Dust and Varnish," *Regina Leader-Post*, 3 May 1954.
48. "Many Visitors to New National Park."
49. *Prince Albert National Park* [PANP], Historical Files, W.L.M. King, "Opening of Prince Albert National Park," 10 August 1928.
50. King Diaries, 10 August 1928.
51. *Ibid.*

52. PANP, Historical Files, W.L.M. King to J.W. Sanderson, 13 August 1928.
53. King Papers, vol. 193, 136951, W.L.M. King to T.C. Davis, 26 July 1929.
54. *Ibid.*, vol. 233, 162151-162152, T.C. Davis to King, 22 June 1932.
55. King Diaries, 6 July 1941.

CHAPTER FOUR: GETTING STARTED

1. Between 1920 and 1930, the number of car, truck and motorcycle registrations in Canada tripled: 408,000 to 1,235,000. See J.H. Thompson; A. Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto 1985), 87-88.
2. L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1987), 61-64; 79-81; J. Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto 1978), 78-80; L. Alderson; J. Marsh, "J.B. Harkin, National Parks and Roads," *Park News*, XV, 2, summer 1979, 9-16.
3. R.C. Brown, "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Park Policy in Canada, 1887-1914" in J.G. Nelson, ed., *Canadian Parks in Perspective* (Montreal 1969), 46-62; Bella, *Parks for Profit*, 56-58.
4. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 22 August 1927.
5. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG84, Parks Canada, vol. 1733, f. PA 19, pt. 3, vol. 1, J.B. Harkin to W.W. Cory, 29 August 1927.
6. *Ibid.*, J.M. Wardle to J.B. Harkin, 8 October 1927.
7. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.M. Wardle, 24 August 1927.
8. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 2 July 1927.
9. *Regina Leader-Post*, n.d.
10. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 14 October 1927.
11. *Ibid.*, 8 May 1930.
12. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 1, vol. 2, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 18 January 1928; f. PA2, pt. 3, vol. 3, R.A. Gibson to W.W. Cory, 15 August 1928; T.C. Davis to R.A. Gibson, 20 August 1928.
13. *Ibid.*, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 1, vol. 2, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, n.d.
14. *Ibid.*, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 3, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 5 May 1930.
15. *Ibid.*, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 2, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 2 July 1927.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, f. PA300, J.D. McLean to J.B. Harkin, 15 July 1927; J.B. Harkin to J.D. McLean, 21 July 1927; W.M. Graham to J.A. Wood, 21 July 1927; J.A. Wood to W.M. Graham, 23 July 1927; vol. 1772, f. PA296, vol. 1, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 22 August 1927.
17. *Ibid.*, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 1, vol. 2, J.B. Harkin to D.C. Scott, 8 February 1928.
18. *Ibid.*, D.C. Scott to J.B. Harkin, 2 August 1928; J.B. Harkin to D.C. Scott, 28 November 1928; D.C. Scott to J.B. Harkin, 12 December 1928; J.B. Harkin to D.C. Scott, 27 December 1928.
19. Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB] GR 15, Department of Interior, Surveyors' Reports, 1457, A. St. Cyr to A.H. Whitchener, 13 April 1930.
20. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 4 August 1928.
21. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, v. 1729, f. P16-4, E.R. Trippe to J.B. Harkin, 12 February 1932; J.B. Harkin to H.R.L. Henry, 9 June 1934.
22. I. Merrill interview, 12 January 1987.
23. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFRC], Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 16, f. PA36-2, J. Atkinson to J.A. Wood, 14 April 1930.
24. *Ibid.*, Box 2, f. PA19, T.C. Davis to J.A. Wood, 25 August 1927.
25. *Ibid.*, W84-85/496, Box 2, f. PA21, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 6 September 1929.
26. *Ibid.*, 22 July 1930; 29 October 1930. Wood suggested subdivisions at Sunset Beach, Clare Beach, Scarborough Beach, Paignton Beach and the Narrows.
27. *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 19 August 1949.
28. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1733, f. PA19, pt. 3, vol. 1, J.A.

- Wood to J.M. Wardle, 3 November 1927; WFRC, W84-85/496, Box 2, f. PA21, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 27 June 1928; W84-85/407, Box 2, f. PA19, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 26 October 1928; 16 May 1930.
29. *Ibid.*, vol. 203, f. PA3-4, W.D.C. [?] to J.B. Harkin, 5 January 1933.
30. The park's winter administrative office was located at the corner of 12th Street and 4th Avenue East in Prince Albert, while maintenance operations were based in a small garage on the southside of 10th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues.
31. WFRC, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA36-3, F.G. Goodspeed to J.A. Wood, 20 February 1930; J.A. Wood to F.C. Goodspeed, 25 February 1930; J.H. Atkinson to J.A. Wood, 10 March 1930; J.A. Wood to F.G. Goodspeed, 2 April 1930.
32. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1767, f. PA155, vol. 1, J.P. Curror to C.A. Dunning, 15 November 1929.
33. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to W.W. Cory, 8 October 1929.
34. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 5 September 1929.

CHAPTER FIVE: GUARDIANS OF THE WILD

1. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 2, D.R. Cameron to J.B. Harkin, 22 March 1927.
2. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 29 September 1932.
3. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to J.A. Wood, 11 October 1928.
4. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood memorandum, 15 October 1928.
5. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 24 September 1930.
6. The various district headquarters cabins were on average approximately 25 to 30 miles apart.
7. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood memorandum, 11 October 1928.
8. Cliff Millard interview, 15 October 1987.
9. For a discussion of the role that women played in the warden service, see A. Dixon, *Silent Partners: Wives of National Park Wardens* (Pincher Creek 1985).
10. Cliff Millard interview, 15 October 1987.
11. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 13 November 1935.
12. In addition to Genge, the other new wardens were Fred Carter, Roy Hubel, Art Howard, Fred Russell and Cliff Pocock.
13. I. Merrell interview, 11 January 1988.
14. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFRC], Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 16, f. PA55-55, G. Davies to J.A. Wood, 18 January 1928.
15. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 2 July 1927, NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 20, f. PA185, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 12 September 1927.
16. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA181, pt. 2; f. PA181(2), J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 18 June 1935.
17. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 28 May 1929; 13 May 1936.
18. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 28 October 1931; J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 19 February 1933.
19. *Ibid.*, H. Genge to J.A. Wood, 7 October 1927.
20. *Ibid.*, H. Knight to J. Smart, 31 May 1939; *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 9 June 1939; R. Davies interview, 6 August 1987.
21. PANP, Historical Files, R.F. Arnold, f. PA174-10.
22. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 3 September 1936; RCMP report, 2 September 1936; *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 2 September 1936.
23. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 9 July 1938.

24. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1768, f. PA 19, pt. 1, anonymous letter, 1 August 1942.
25. *Ibid.*, H. Knight to J. Smart, 21 August 1942.
26. *Ibid.*, anonymous letter, n.d.
27. *Ibid.*, J. Smart to R. Gibson, 20 June 1943.

CHAPTER SIX: THE PARK TAKES SHAPE

1. In 1914, the federal government spent .5% of its total budget on national parks; between 1914 and 1947, this amount averaged .28%. L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1987), 79.
2. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 12 December 1930; 17 January 1931.
3. *Ibid.*, 12 December 1930.
4. *Ibid.*, 21 January 1931.
5. The source of this idea is not clear. Commissioner Harkin undoubtedly pushed for it and could point to the Saskatchewan example. During a July 1931 House of Commons debate, J.S. Woodsworth, the Labor member for Winnipeg North Centre, suggested that men on relief do work in national parks. House of Commons *Debates*, 3 July 1931, 3368.
6. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 25 November 1931; 14 December 1931, 30 December 1931.
7. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J. Smart, 25 October 1932.
8. Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior*, 1933-34, pt. III, "National Parks of Canada," 84.
9. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 5 December 1932; 21 December 1932.
10. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1931.
11. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 22, f. PA336, J. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 13 December 1932.
12. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to A. Ross, 25 December 1932.
13. Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior*, 1932-33, part III, "National Parks of Canada," 68; 1933-34, part III, "National Parks of Canada," 84.
14. *Ibid.*, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 13 November 1933.
15. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFRCC], Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA21, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 26 February 1932.
16. *Ibid.*, f. PA19, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 1 February 1934; J.P. Curror to J.A. Wood, 2 March 1934.
17. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 27 February 1934.
18. *Ibid.*, 1 March 1934.
19. PANP, Historical Files, "Recommendations of the Prince Albert Board of Trade with respect to the Prince Albert National Park," 1933.
20. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 20 June 1934.
21. Lot 1, Mrs. H.H. Luke, 1931
Lot 2, C.F. Little, 1932
Lot 3, E.C. Osborne, 1929
Lot 4, E. de Wolf, 1929
Lot 14, A.C. March, 1929
Lot 16, W.L. Mackenzie King, 1928
Lot 18, H.H. Luke, 1930
Lot 22, W.E. Knowles, 1932
NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 203, f. PA3-4, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 5 January 1933.
22. *Ibid.*, Government Archives Division, RG 39, Forestry, vol. 587, f. PA36, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 15 October 1921.
23. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA21, J.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 3

- March 1931; J.B. Harkin to J.A. Wood, 2 April 1931; J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 14 September 1931; NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1733, f. PA19, pt. 2, vol. 1, F.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 21 January 1931; W.L.M. King to T. Murphy, 28 March 1931; J.B. Harkin to R.A. Gibson, 9 April 1931.
24. *University of Alberta Archives* [UAA], Karl Clark Papers, K. Clark to ?, 16 November 1932.
25. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1734, f. PA21, pt. 3, vol. 2, J.P. Curror to T.G. Murphy, 20 April 1932.
26. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to H.H. Rowatt, 12 May 1932.
27. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 13 December 1933.
28. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA21, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 3 May 1934.
29. J. Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State 1914-1941* (Toronto 1983), 119-120.
30. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 18, f. PA56-6, J.M. Wardle to J.B. Harkin, 11 September 1933; J.A. Wood to J.M. Wardle, 13 December 1934.
31. *Ibid.*, Box 15, f. PA36-3, J.A. Wood to F.G. Goodspeed, 26 July 1937.
32. *Ibid.*, H. Knight to Controller, 11 June 1941.
33. PANP, Historical Files, T.C. Davis to T.A. Crerar, 18 December 1935; L. Brown, "Unemployment Relief Camps in Saskatchewan 1933-36," *Saskatchewan History*, XXIII, Autumn 1970, 101-102; Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior*, 1936-37, part III, "National Parks Bureau."
34. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 21 October 1935.
35. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.M. Stevenson, 25 September 1935.
36. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 203, f. PA3-4, T.C. Davis to T.A. Crerar, 13 February 1936.
37. *Ibid.*, vol. 1744, f. PA25, J.B. Harkin to J.M. Wardle, 20 March 1936.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 203, f. PA3-4, J.M. Wardle to F.H. Williamson, 9 November 1936; F.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 18 January 1937.
39. *Ibid.*, vol. 1744, f. PA25, J.A. Wood to Controller, 18 November 1937.
40. *Ibid.*, F.H. Williamson to R.A. Gibson, 22 February 1938; Although the Lakeview subdivision was opened in 1938, national parks building regulations were not formally amended to allow for cheaper bungalow cabins until 26 January 1939 (P.C. 188).
41. Bella, *Parks for Profit*, 93-94.
42. P. Bogard interview, 11 January 1988.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ARCHIE

1. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, A. Cale to Grey Owl, n.d.
2. J. Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto 1978), 79-80; 119; 221.
3. The material on Archie Belaney's life and activities up until the time he joined the national parks service is based on G. Hutchinson, *Grey Owl: The Incredible Story of Archie Belaney 1888-1938* (Hastings 1985), 7-26.
4. Grey Owl, *Pilgrims of the Wild* (New York 1935), 54.
5. PANP, Historical Files, J.B. Harkin to J. Smart, 11 September 1931; J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 2 November 1931.
6. *Ibid.*, J.C. Campbell to J. Smart, 24 September 1931.
7. *Ibid.*, J. Smart to J.C. Campbell, 2 November 1931.
8. *Ibid.*, J.C. Campbell to J. Smart, 7 November 1931.
9. *Ibid.*, J.C. Campbell to J.A. Wood, 7 November 1931.
10. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 20 October 1931.
11. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 28 May 1932.
12. *Ibid.*, J.C. Campbell to J.A. Wood, 7 June 1932.
13. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 25 July 1932.

14. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Manuscript Division, A.S. Belaney papers, vol. 1, Grey Owl Notebook 'B', 1936.
15. PANP, Historical Files, J.C. Campbell to J.A. Wood, 7 May 1935.
16. Frances Martin interview, 9 December 1987.
17. Stanley Winters interview, 11 January 1988.
18. Grey Owl, *Pilgrims of the Wild*, 49-50.
19. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to W. Foran, 17 April 1934.
20. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 26 January 1933; J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 18 June 1935.
21. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.C. Campbell, 9 April 1936.
22. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to Grey Owl, 24 June 1936.
23. *Ibid.*, Grey Owl to J.A. Wood, 21 August 1936.
24. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to F.H. Williamson, 19 October 1937.
25. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to Grey Owl, 5 August 1932; C. Walrod personal file.
26. Ron Davies interview, 6 August 1987.
27. Stanley Winters interview, 11 January 1988.
28. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to F.H. Williamson, 19 October 1937.
29. "I am hoping to have a chance to talk to him sometime soon and I will try to impress upon him that when you are in the Government Service you haven't a mind of your own." *Ibid.*, J.C. Campbell to J.A. Wood, 7 November 1931.
30. *Ibid.*, F.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 1 November 1937.
31. *Ibid.*, 21 March 1938.
32. *Ibid.*, 25 April 1938.
33. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to F.H. Williamson, 11 May 1938.
34. *Ibid.*, F.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 11 May 1938.
35. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to F.H. Williamson, 26 May 1938.
36. *Ibid.*, F.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 4 June 1938.
37. NAC, Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 172, f. PA301, F.H. Williamson to H. Knight, 14 July 1939.
38. PANP, Historical Files, H. Knight to F.H. Williamson, 22 July 1939.
39. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1770, f. PA272NC, pt. 2, 18 August 1939.
40. *Ibid.*, vol. 177, f. PA177-222, pt. 2, J. Smart to F.H. Williamson, 22 September 1939.
41. *Ibid.*, vol. 1770, f. PA272NC, pt. 2, W.D. Taylor to H. Lloyd, 10 August 1939.

CHAPTER EIGHT: PLAYGROUND FOR THE PRAIRIES

1. Wood proposed that the area of the park south of the north shore of Lake Waskesiu (Zone 1) be reserved for heavy recreational use; that the area between the north shore of Lake Waskesiu and the north shores of Crean and Kingsmere (Zone 2) be designated for motor boat use; and that the area north of Crean and Kingsmere (Zone 3) be set aside for wilderness camping. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 3, vol. 3, C. Stewart to W.L.M. King, 24 September 1929.
2. M.B. Williams, *Prince Albert National Park* (Ottawa 1928), 6; 10-11.
3. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, R.G. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 9 November 1937.
4. In 1936 there were three furnished cottages available for rent in the Prospect Point sub-division. The following rates were charged at the local hotels and auto bungalow camp:

Lakeview Inn	Single \$2.00 per day
	Double \$3.00
Pleasant Inn	Single \$2.00
	Double \$3.00

Red Deer Chalet	Single \$1.75		
	Double \$2.75		
Waskesiu Lodge	Double \$2.00		
Manville auto bungalow camp			
	day	week	month
12'x 12'	\$2.50		
12'x 16'	3.00	\$18.00	\$65.00
14'x 22'	3.50	21.00	75.00
14'x 24'	4.00	24.00	85.00

Tents, cots and mattresses could also be rented from local stores and hotels. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 8, J.A. Wood to Secretary, Saskatchewan Motor Club, 13 July 1936.

5. In August 1932, the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* carried a warning from the parks department that shack tents could not be rented. The practice continued though.
6. Stanley Winters interview, 11 January 1988.
7. This material is based on a series of interviews with Houghton by Howard and Elva Nixon, n.d.
8. *Ibid.*
9. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 6, M. Meadows to Director of National Parks, 30 August 1948.
10. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.P. Curror, 16 January 1935; 8 January 1936.
11. Houghton interviews.
12. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to Child and Gower Piano Co., 29 June 1938.
13. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 8, J.A. Wood to P.E. Slough, 20 July 1936.
14. DC. Brayford interview, 6 May 1988.
15. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1772, f. PA296, pt. 1, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 23 July 1927; D.S. Rawson to J.A. Wood, 5 November 1929; vol. 202, f. PA3-1-1, memorandum, 13 April 1934; memorandum, 20 October 1934; memorandum, 18 April 1935.
16. See *ibid.*, vol. 17, f. PA6.
17. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, f. PA 207, pt. 2.
18. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to R.J.C. Stead, 4 May 1938.
19. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 8, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 27 May 1936.
20. The bus left from Prince Albert for Waskesiu at 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. daily. The regular return fare was \$4.50; there was a special weekend return fare of \$3.15.
21. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 4; PA109, pt. 6; PA109, pt. 7.
22. *Ibid.*, vol. 18, PA109, pt. 3.

CHAPTER NINE: GROWING PAINS

1. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, F.H.H. Williamson to H. Knight, 1 September 1939.
2. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 178, f. PA165, H. Knight to Controller, 3 July 1940.
3. T.P. Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto 1988), 233.
4. Man. 225; Sask. 692; Alta. 180; B.C. 121. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 110, f. U165-2.
5. PANP, Historical Files, H. Knight to Controller, 6 March 1941.

6. *Ibid.*, G. Tunstall, "Alternate Service Work Camps Summer Operations 1941," 16 December 1941.
7. *Ibid.*, H. Knight to A.S. Redford, 9 September 1941.
8. *Ibid.*, Tunstall, "Alternative Service Work Camp Summer Operations 1941," 16 December 1941.
9. NAC, Parks Canada, vol. III, f. U165-2, pt. 4, R.A. Gibson to L.R. LaFleche, 2 January 1942.
10. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFRCC], Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA165-2, H. Knight to Controller, 28 January 1942; 16 March 1942; 19 October 1942.
11. L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1988), 94-96.
12. PANP, Historical Files, J. Smart to H. Knight, 13 December 1944; H. Knight to J. Smart, 9 January 1945.
13. See NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. III, f. U165-2, pt. 4, R.A. Gibson to L.R. LaFleche, 2 January 1942.
14. D.C. Brayford interview, 6 May 1988; G.E. Verrall interview, 9 May 1988.
15. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 3, J.B. Harkin to W.W. Cory, 18 December 1929. This area had never been part of the Sturgeon River Forest Reserve.
16. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 13 August 1932.
17. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1727, f. PA2, pt. 1, vol. 3, J.A. Wood to Controller, 23 January 1937.
18. *Ibid.*, T.A. Crerar to W.F. Kerr, 24 August 1939.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. 1728, f. PA2, pt. 2, vol. 4, J.P. Curro to W.L.M. King, 29 April 1941.
20. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947, 5139.
21. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 19, f. PA60, B.I.M. Strong to Controller, 13 October 1950.
22. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1750, f. PA45, pt. 2, R. Fortier to Controller, 11 May 1951.
23. The Narrows site was considered as early as July 1930. See *Ibid.*, vol. 1731, f. PA16-112-1, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 25 August 1931.
24. *Ibid.*, vol. 1732, f. PA16-112-4, R.A. Gibson to G.E.B. Sinclair, 11 September 1948.
25. *Ibid.*, vol. 1744, f. PA24, H. Knight to Controller, 5 November 1941.
26. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 15, f. PA21, J. Smart to B.I.M. Strong, 30 September 1949.
27. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1751, f. PA36-1, pt. 1, J. Smart to B.I.M. Strong, 25 July 1950; 14 February 1952; vol. 19, f. PA109, pt. 9, J. Smart to B.I.M. Strong, 9 April 1948.
28. *Ibid.*, vol. 1751, f. PA36-1, vol. 1, PANP Shack Tent Owners' Association to B.I.M. Strong, 30 June 1950.
29. *Ibid.*, B.I.M. Strong to J. Smart, 25 July 1950.
30. *Ibid.*, J. Smart to R. Gibson, 8 August 1950.
31. *Ibid.*, J. Smart to B.I.M. Strong, 1 December 1950.
32. *Ibid.*, 5 September 1950.
33. *Ibid.*, "Conditions Governing Portable Cabin Lots on Campgrounds at Waskesiu," 1 March 1952.
34. Camping facilities 1956:

Shack Tents	411 lots
Portable Cabins	203
Trailer	84
Tents	58
Picnic Area	48
Total	804

- Ibid.*, v. 1750, f. PA36, pt. 4, G.H.L. Dempster, "Report on Control of Camping Facilities, Prince Albert National Park," 7 November 1956, 4.
35. *Ibid.*, J.R.B. Coleman to J.D.B. MacFarlane, 15 July 1953.
36. WFRCC, Parks Canada, W84-85/407, Box 16, f. PA36-2, "Matters Taken up with Director Hutchison in Saskatoon on June 30th, 1956," 1.
37. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1750, f. PA36, pt. 4, G.H.L. Dempster to J.R.B. Coleman, 21 August 1956.

CHAPTER TEN: TO PROTECT AND MANAGE

1. Grey Owl, *Tales of an Empty Cabin* (Toronto 1937), vii-viii.
2. J. Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto 1978), 87.
3. These monthly reports were superseded by wildlife observation cards on which individual sightings and the circumstances were recorded.
4. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG 84, Parks Canada, vol. 3, f. PA300, pt. 3, "Estimate of the Number of Wild Animals in Prince Albert National Park on March 31, 1935"; "Game Population, April 1939."
5. *Ibid.*, vol. 18, f. PA109, pt. 3, H. Knight to Controller, 8 March 1940. The wolf was destroyed on Ottawa's orders.
6. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, f. PA300, pt. 6, "Observations of Bird Life at Lavalée Lake, Saskatchewan," 1938.
7. *Ibid.*, f. PA300, pt. 7, "Report about a visit to the Pelican rookeries Lavalée Lake in Prince Albert National Park," 25 June 1939.
8. *Ibid.*, F.H.H. Williamson to H. Knight, 1 May 1940.
9. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, f. PA300, J.B. Harkin to J.A. Wood, 31 October 1931.
10. For an excellent examination of the ideas behind predator control, particularly in the United States, see T.R. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton 1988).
11. Parks Canada, vol. 3, f. PA300, pt. 2, "Policy Governing Predatory Animal Control in National Parks of Canada," 1933.
12. Number of predatory animals killed in PANP

winter 1928-29	0
1929-30	no data
1930-31	1 wolf; 1 coyote
1931-32	5 coyotes
1932-33	12 coyotes
1933-34	4 coyotes
- Source: *Ibid.*, f. PA300.
13. *Ibid.*, f. PA300, pt. 2, F.H.H. Williamson to J.A. Wood, 20 February 1931.
14. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 10 December 1932.
15. *Ibid.*, "Policy Governing Predatory Animal Control in National Parks of Canada," 1933.
16. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 22 January 1934.
17. *Ibid.*, f. PA300, pt. 3, G.C. MacDonald to J.A. Wood, 14 December 1934.
18. *Ibid.*, W.G. Ross to J.B. Harkin, 2 February 1935.
19. *Ibid.*, "Resolution by the Prince Albert Board of Trade," 13 February 1935.
20. *Ibid.*, J.B. Harkin to J.M. Wardle, 2 January 1936.
21. *Ibid.*, J.A. Wood to Controller, 26 February 1937.
22. *Ibid.*, W.D. Taylor to F.H.H. Williamson, 9 August 1938.
23. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, f. PA300, pt. 6, J.A. Wood to Controller, 20 January 1939; f. PA300, pt. 7, G. Davies to All Wardens, 17 April 1939.
24. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, J. Smart to H. Knight, 26 May 1942.
25. *Ibid.*, H. Knight to J. Smart, 3 June 1942.
26. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1770, f. PA266, pt. 1, Assistant Controller to B.I.M. Strong, 5 November 1947; vol. 4, f. PA300, A.W.F. Banfield to H.F.

- Lewis, 15 February 1949.
27. Cliff Millard interview, 15 October 1987.
 28. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1770, f. PA266, pt. 2, J. Smart to B.I.M. Strong.
 29. *Ibid.*, J.D.B. MacFarlane to J.R.B. Coleman, 17 February 1954.
 30. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, f. PA300, J.B. Harkin to J.A. Wood, 22 May 1928.
 31. PANP, Historical Files, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 7 May 1932.
 32. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 3, f. PA300, pt. 2, J.A. Wood to J.B. Harkin, 3 April 1933.
 33. PANP, Historical Files, A.W.F. Banfield, "Report on the Wildlife Conditions in Prince Albert National Park, 1946."
 34. *Ibid.*, f. PA174-20, J. Smart to H. Knight, 26 May 1942.
 35. *Ibid.*, f. PA61, B.I.M. Strong to J. Smart, 10 June 1952.
 36. *Ibid.*, f. PA272, J.D.B. MacFarlane to J.R.B. Coleman, 18 October 1955.
 37. The number of beaver taken during the spring 1955 reduction program is based on a map in *ibid.*, f. PA272.
 38. *Ibid.*, G. Smith to Grey Owl, 1 February 1954.
 39. *Ibid.*, J.S. Tener, "Beaver Trapping, Prince Albert National Park," 19 May 1955.
 40. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 3, f. PA299, J. Smart to H. Knight, 10 March 1943.
 41. Cliff Millard interview, 15 October 1987.
 42. NAC, Government Archives Division, Parks Canada, vol. 1770, f. PA234, pt. 2, N.L. Horley to J.G. Diefenbaker, 10 December 1959.
 43. *Ibid.*, G.T. Guest to R. Faibish, 14 December 1959; R. Faibish to R.G. Robertson, 14 December 1959.
 44. *Ibid.*, R.G. Robertson to G.T. Guest, 15 December 1959.
 45. *Ibid.*, G.H.W. Ashley to B.I.M. Strong, 15 December 1959.
 46. *Ibid.*, B.I.M. Strong to file, 15 December 1959.
 47. *Ibid.*, vol. 1768, f. PA299, pt. 3, N.L. Horley to G.H.W. Ashley, 19 December 1959.
 48. *Ibid.*, B.I.M. Strong to G.H.W. Ashley, 2 February 1960.
 49. *Ibid.*, "Elk Reduction Programme, Final Report," 30 March 1960; vol. 1770, f. PA234, pt. 2, O. Erickson to B.I.M. Strong, 14 January 1961.
 50. *Ibid.*, vol. 1768, f. PA229, pt. 3, "Elk Reduction Slaughter 1960-61," 16 February 1961.
 51. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFR], Parks Canada, W84-85/496, Box 12, Wardens' Conferences, A. Corrigan, 1966.
 52. Quoted in Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife*, 80.
 - 23 June 1966.
 7. Prince Albert National Park [PANP], Historical Files, "A Report on the Role of the Warden Service 1967"; C. Millard telephone interview, 2 October 1988; A. Corrigan telephone interview, 5 October 1988.
 8. P. Galbraith telephone interview, 7 October 1988.
 9. R.C. Gray, "Report of Seasonal Park Naturalist, PANP, Saskatchewan," Summer 1966.
 10. In 1970, the following attendance figures were reported for the different activities: interpretive centre, 12,200; hikes, 2100; evening program, 5900.
 11. NAC, Parks Canada, vol. 1749, f. PA28, pt. 2, R.G. Robertson to J.R.B. Coleman, 11 August 1959.
 12. L. Brooks; J.C. Jackson; H.K. Eidsvik, *Shack Tents and Portable Cabins Proposed Program for Riding Mountain and Prince Albert National Parks*, Report No. 1, National Parks Branch, 1959, 1.
 13. *Ibid.*, 5.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. NAC, Parks Canada, vol. 1749, f. PA28, pt. 3, J.R.B. Coleman to R.G. Robertson, 21 December 1960.
 16. This preliminary plan (H.K. Eidsvik, *Waskesiu Visitor Services Area - A Preliminary Plan*, Report No.17, National Parks Branch, May 1961) called for the elimination of all private residences in the park, including those in Prospect Point and Lakeview (1 to 3), in favor of a variety of rental structures.
 17. NAC, Parks Canada, vol. 1749, f. PA28, pt. 3, J.R.B. Coleman to R.G. Robertson, 21 December 1960.
 18. *Ibid.*, 29 September 1961.
 19. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 2 August 1956, 6884.
 20. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1953, 1614-1622.
 21. L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1988), 114-15.
 22. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 18 September 1964.
 23. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 2 August 1965, 6.
 24. WFR, Parks Canada, W84-85/496, Box 2, form letter from A. Laing, 25 August 1965.
 25. NAC, Parks Canada, vol. 1750, f. PA28, pt. 5, A.J. Reeve to J.H. Gordon, 12 July 1967.
 26. *Ibid.*, vol. 1753, f. PA36-1, "Petition Regarding the Proposed Waskesiu Redevelopment Plan Prince Albert National Park," 2 September 1967.
 27. WFR, Parks Canada, W84-85/496, Box 2, M. Jackson to J. Chrétien, 15 July 1968.
 28. *Ibid.*, J. Chrétien to J.G. Diefenbaker, 30 October 1968.
 29. Bella, *Parks for Profit*, 117-18.
 30. WFR, Parks Canada, W84-85/405, Box 17, J.I. Nicol to J.H. Gordon, 17 February 1970.
 31. This was not the first time that there had been a face-to-face meeting between park officials and Prince Albert citizens over park residences. On 15 December 1933, the Prince Albert Board of Trade reviewed the issue with J.M. Wardle, supervisor of western parks. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 16 December 1933.
 32. WFR, Parks Canada, W84-85/405, Box 17, J. Chrétien to M. Jackson, 13 May 1970.
 33. In 1960, a shack tent with a fixed roof first appeared in the campground; this violation was overlooked and by the end of the decade, many shack tents were being removed from the campground and stored over the winter as whole units.
 34. WFR, Parks Canada, W84-85/405, Box 18, J. Rae to D. Clark, 22 January 1971; J.I. Nicol to R.P. Malis, 9 February 1971.
 35. *Prince Albert National Park Provisional Master Plan* (Ottawa 1971), 11.
 36. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 May 1971.
 37. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 5 May 1971.
 38. *Ibid.*, 2 July 1971, 3.
 39. *Decisions Resulting from the Public Hearing on the Provisional Master Plan for Prince Albert National Park* (Ottawa 1975), 4.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: NEW DIRECTIONS

1. *Planning Considerations - Prince Albert National Park*, Report No. 7, Planning Section, National Parks Branch, 15 December 1959, 2-3.
2. National Archives of Canada [NAC], Government Archives Division, RG84, Parks Canada, vol. 1749, f. PA28, pt. 3, J.R.B. Coleman to R.G. Robertson, 29 September 1961. Parks Controller James Smart had first suggested in 1946 that any new major campground be located outside the townsites.
3. *Ibid.*
4. In June 1967, Prince Albert Superintendent John Malfair advised the department of Public Works that he would no longer be requiring the use of the old Land Titles building in Prince Albert.
5. In 1934, a small colony of parks employees' families were reportedly living at Sandy Lake.
6. Winnipeg Federal Records Centre [WFR], Parks Canada, W84-85/496, Box 12, S.F. Kun, "The Changing Role of the Warden Service," April 1967; J.R. Malfair to B.I.M. Strong,

40. Quoted in *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 18 August 1975.
41. *Waskesiu Visitor Services Plan, Prince Albert National Park* (Winnipeg, March 1977), 133.

CHAPTER TWELVE: WOLF COUNTRY

1. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 30 April 1971, 4.
2. L. Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal 1988).
3. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 2 July 1971, 3.
4. *Prince Albert National Park* [PANP], Historical Files, W.L.M. King, "Opening of Prince Albert National Park," 10 August 1928.
5. *Our Parks - Vision for the 21st Century. Report of the Minister of Environment's Task Force on Park Establishment* (Waterloo 1987), 5.
6. D. Henry, *The Red Fox* (Washington 1987).
7. In 1969, a herd of buffalo were released northeast of the park and subsequently established themselves in the Sturgeon River area.
8. I.B.I. Group, *Prince Albert National Park Visitor Survey* (Winnipeg 1985).
9. PANP, Historical Files, W.L.M. King, "Opening of Prince Albert National Park," 10 August 1928.

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