35 mm Colour Slides:
Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature
by Paul C. Thistle

for “Anthropology at the Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature”
museology course paper, 1980
Within the green plant the energy of sunlight is changed to food, nourishing the plant and its fruits. The plant in turn becomes food for many animals. Man, the Hunter, subsists by eating the bounty of all these plants and animals. Man uses and enjoys the fruits and animals that make up his diet. He also makes the objects he uses to hunt and make his living out of the materials that he finds in nature. He spins fibers from plant materials and skin of animals. He makes objects out of these raw materials, and thereby extends his control over the natural environment. Man the Hunter is a hunter gatherer. He does not till the soil or raise crops in the way that farmers do. He finds the food he needs and the animals he eats. He is a gatherer. He uses the resources that are available to him.
MAN
THE
HERDER

But over much of the original grasslands, grazing animals still crop native grasses, and the herdsman, rancher or cowboy perpetuates the age long cycle: sunlight, green leaves and grass, sheep and cattle, food and clothing for man.
the distant past—replaced the wild grasses. Bread—how simple a word—how important a food! Here and elsewhere, in many times and places, Man found a rich black soil beneath the prairie sod and grain farming became an economic resource of great importance to a growing nation.
Grasses also nourish the soil. Soon domesticated grasses—cereal grains developed by other men in the distant past—replaced the wild grasses. Bread—how simple a word—how important a food! Here and elsewhere, in many times and places, man found a rich black soil beneath the prairie sod and grain farming became an economic resource of great importance to a growing nation.
The Chipewyan and their Predecessors

The autumal transitional forest of northern Manitoba has been the home of a variety of peoples over the last 8000 years. The earliest were the Paleo-Indian peoples, makers of the distinctive projectile points found at several sites in the region. They were succeeded by early arctic peoples of whom little remains and then, about 1800 years ago, the Chipewyan moved into the area from further west. All of these peoples depended upon a fish and caribou economy, a situation which imposed definite limitations on the extent of cultural evolution. The kinds and numbers of tool types show only minimal change and what we see in the archaeological record is a simple, successful cultural adaptation which persists over several thousand years.
Artifacts removed for research and conservation
Burial practices during earlier periods have not yet been determined but they probably did not differ greatly from those of later times.
BURIAL MOUNDS AND THEIR CONTENTS

Redacted in 2018 to avoid affront to Indigenous sensitivities. Original image available for research from the author.
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BISON DRIVES

The bison was the key species for early humans, and their behavior created the perfect conditions for successful hunting. By selecting specific terrain, the men would drive the herd into enclosures or narrow passes where they could be easily killed with spears or other weapons. The unexpectedly strong bison would often stampede, increasing the chances of a successful kill.

When the Assiniboin people observed a bison herd, they sometimes delayed the kill to create a grassfire. A man would light a bison tail and nudge the herd into a line of fire. As the fire approached, they charged, creating a panic that further educated the herd. Prince appeared to have an uncanny ability to know where the herds would move, allowing them to execute their plans successfully.
Nudity shown in appropriate context in the new Boreal Forest Gallery mini diorama, photographed by the author in 1981.
"Look on the rising sun—there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away:
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day."

The 18th Century Indians on the Manitoba Grasslands might have found in these words of their contemporary, William Blake, an expression of some of their own beliefs. Coming from the dark forests, the Assiniboines emerged onto the open expanse of the Grasslands—a wide world of sun and sky and storm, and the vast sea of grass. Like the settlers who came later, the Indians were struck by these aspects of their new environment. We see a response to the Grassland in many parts of Assiniboine life, including religion; in respect for the Sun’s power, prayers to avert thunder, and in simple acts of thanksgiving for life and food.
The Tornit and the Thule Eskimos

Early Eskimo Occupation of Manitoba
The food chain from plants to herbivore to carnivore involves a progressive decrease in the number of individuals and in the total amount of living material. As shown on this pyramid, the decrease can be as much as 10 to 1 at each stage of the food chain. The loss in weight arises from the breakdown of food for energy, heat loss, wasted food, excreta and non-predatory deaths. This demonstrates that very large numbers of minute plants and animals are required to produce small numbers of larger, more complex animals.
AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR SOME

Modern farm and urban use of poisonous chemicals to protect crops and ourselves from insects has created a situation harmful to some wildlife species, with the large birds of prey being the first to show the effects of cumulative poisoning—pairs failing to lay eggs, infertile eggs, or thin egg shells which collapse during incubation.

Swainson’s Hawk

Although feeding primarily on field mice, this hawk devours large numbers of grasshoppers. The nodding and insects, after eating treated vegetation, may contain harmful chemicals such as chlorinated hydrocarbons.

Short-eared Owl

This hawk of the prairies also consumes a wide variety of prey: mice, grasshoppers, and small birds.