

## ***The Survival and Sustainability of the Blackfoot Nation and Culture***

By James Craven/Blackfoot Name: Omahkohkiaayo i'poyi

Professor of Economics and Geography, Clark College, Vancouver Washington

Presented at the 16th Congress of the IUAES, Kunming, China July 26-31

## ***The Past [is] Alive in the Present [and] Shaping the Future***

“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.” (George Orwell).

When we speak of the survival and sustainability of Blackfoot “Culture”, we are speaking of more than the survival and sustainability of the Blackfoot Nation and people who are the primary creators, definers, carriers, learners, transmitters and expanded reproducers of that nation and culture. We are also speaking about the survival and sustainability of the potential energy and influences—even on other cultures—embodied in and transmitted by that culture. And since all culture is dynamic and never static, we are also speaking of the survival and sustainability of all that it takes for Blackfoot culture to grow, adapt to new challenges and new conditions, and, to continually challenge itself and its own traditions and sacred practices and assumptions, some of which are functional and worth keeping, and some dysfunctional and not worth keeping. That means that the survival and sustainability of what is left of the Blackfoot nation and culture, as with other Indigenous nations, nationalities and cultures also on the brink of total extinction, means dealing not only with conditions, practices, forces and interests nominally “endogenous” or internal to the Blackfoot nation and culture that may threaten it, but also it means dealing with those forces and interests, historical and present-day, that are nominally “exogenous” or external to the Blackfoot nation and culture, that have threatened, and still threaten to this day, its survival and sustainability.[1]

As with any individual, so it is with any nation, that history is never really past and dead; it lives within, constrains and shapes, the present and thus also the future. This does not mean that individuals or whole nations cannot transcend the constraints of history, but they ignore them, or engage in historical revisionism, at their own peril. To understand and deal with the past, and the extent to which it is embodied in and thus constraining, the present and future, it is imperative that an honest examination and accounting, with no equivocation, and without fear or favor to anyone, of that past—and present shaped by that past—be done. Otherwise it is like someone going to see a physician or lawyer for help but not being honest and forthright about what practices in the past led them in the present to be in crisis and thus to need and seek help. That is partly, but only partly what George Orwell meant (he was also talking about historical revisionism as a tool of control in the present) when he noted:

Historically, and it has been thoroughly documented in the present, Blackfoot and other

Indigenous nations and their cultures in the Americas have been regarded by non-Indigenous settlers and the governments they have developed as existential threats. What that means is that the mere existence, even without any alleged aggressive acts or intentions on the part of those Indigenous nations and cultures, simply their mere existence, was regarded as a threat to the systems, values, interests, ambitions, power and control of those non-Indigenous nations and their governments. Why? It is recorded in their own internal documents and discussions; it is all very dialectical.

As the “Tao Te Ching” of Lao Tzu puts it:

We know beauty because there is ugly.  
We know good because there is evil.  
Being and not being,  
having and not having,  
create each other.

Difficult and easy,  
long and short,  
high and low,  
define each other,  
just as before and after follow each other... [2]

It is very clear from the internal documents of the U.S. and Canadian Governments, as well as from the internal documents, diaries and memoirs of the missionaries and “Indian Agents”, that the core and defining values, institutions, practices, priorities, relationships and other dimensions of the culture of the Blackfoot, with many aspects in common with the cultures of other Indigenous nations, were not simply regarded and dismissed as “inferior” or backward; rather, they were first and foremost regarded as direct challenges (without any evangelical intentions by Indigenous peoples to do so) to the core values, practices, relations, theologies and institutions—cultures—of capitalism and those of the settlers. Just as some capitalist nations have regarded the mere existence of socialism and socialist values as an existential threat, without any alleged overt or covert acts of aggression by socialist social formations like China, so Indigenous cultures and systems, with definite communalist and non-capitalist practices and values, were regarded as existential threats and banned. Even many Indigenous prayers, with communalist values, were seen as a threat to cultures—and interests—built on capitalism. Here are but two of many examples from the archives of the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. that show the real nature and intentions of their policies.

For example, in many traditional societies, there is the sacred practice of “Potlatch” or “Give Aways” (Blackfoot) in which prized personal possessions are given away; they are not, by the way forms of “gambling” or “lotteries”. These ceremonies are designed to teach: the transient nature of all material possessions; not to become a slave to personal possessions; community spirit; compassion and that happiness of others is more important than individualistic and selfish

desires and possessions. These traditional values are decidedly not consistent with market-based economies that are commonly based upon—often celebrated in elements of their social capital—greed, selfishness, ultra-individualism, competition, materialism, acquisitiveness, competition, narcissism and the logic of profits-for-power-and-power-for-profits. That the conflicting core values, relationships and institutions of traditional Indigenous societies were in direct conflict with—and seen not co-exist with—those of market-based societies was seen early on in U.S. and Canadian histories. For example:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Office of Indian Affairs-Washington  
Supplement to Circular No. 1665 February 14, 1923  
Indian Dancing

To Superintendents:

At a conference in October, 1922, of the missionaries of the several religious denominations represented in the Sioux country, the following recommendations were adopted and have been courteously submitted to this office:

1. That the Indian form of gambling[sic] and lottery[sic] known as the "ituranpi" (translated "Give Away") be prohibited.
2. That the Indian dances be limited to one in each month in the daylight hours of one day in the midweek, and at one center in each district; the months of March and April, June, July, and August be excepted.
3. That none take part in the dances or be present who are under 50 years of age.
4. That a careful propaganda be undertaken to educate public opinion against the dance and to provide a healthy substitute.
5. That there be close cooperation between the Government employees and the missionaries in those matters which affect the moral welfare of Indians.

...After a conscientious study of the dance situation in his jurisdiction, the efforts of every superintendent must persistently encourage and emphasize the Indian's attention to these political, useful, thrifty, and orderly activities that are indispensable to his well-being and that underlie the preservation of his race in the midst of complex and highly competitive conditions. The instinct of individual enterprise and devotion to the posterity and elevation of family life should in some way be made paramount in every Indian household to the exclusion of idleness, waste of time at frequent gatherings of whatever nature, and the neglect of physical resources upon which depend food, clothings[sic], shelter, and the very beginnings of progress." [3]

"It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by

habitating[sic] so closely in these schools, and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is geared towards the FINAL SOLUTION OF OUR INDIAN PROBLEM." [4]

And it is more than irony that the term "Final Solution of 'our' the Indian Problem" in the DIA memo of D.C. Scott is the exactly language used by the Nazis as in "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem". The Alberta Sterilization Act of 1928 [5], and the Eugenics Laws of 27 states of the U.S. were specifically cited by the German Nazis as the direct "inspirations" for their own 1933 Race Hygiene Law and 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws." [6] According to John Toland, biographer of Adolf Hitler:

Hitler's concept of concentration camps as well as the practicality of genocide owed much, so he claimed, to his studies of English and United States history. He admired the camps for Boer prisoners in South Africa And for the Indians in the Wild West; and often praised to his inner circle the efficiency of America's extermination-by starvation and uneven combat-of the 'Red Savages' who could not be tamed by captivity. [7]

And from an internal document of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs:

"Set the blood-quantum at one-quarter, hold to it as a rigid definition of Indians, let intermarriage proceed, and eventually Indians will be defined out of existence. When that happens, the federal government will finally be freed from its persistent Indian problem." [8]

Why are these ugly aspects of U.S. and Canadian history [9] introduced into this paper on the survival and sustainability of Blackfoot culture? Partly because they are legacies that remain within both Canadian and Blackfoot societies that have not yet been fully admitted, analyzed or repaired. And partly because some of the same forces and interests, both internal and external to the Blackfoot nation, that have destroyed traditional Blackfoot culture, brought it to the edge of extinction, and prevented its renewal and sustainability, are still alive, well, non-transparent and non-accountable to this very day. And it is perhaps true irony, that the most radical and advanced thinkers among Indigenous activists today, both in the U.S. and in Canada, are known as "Traditionalists". And they argue, as modern-day sciences are increasingly confirming, that the Indigenous traditions, practices, science, and epistemology to which they wish to return, are not simply some mythical communalist and "primitive" past of some 200 years ago, but were and are, far in advance of where many crises-ridden non-Indigenous societies, paradigms, practices and systems are today. Among Blackfoot traditionalists, they argue that many dominant non-Indigenous cultures and their core defining notions, are threats not only to the very existence and survival of Blackfoot and other Indigenous peoples, but also to the very non-Indigenous societies and peoples pushing these notions themselves.

### ***Blackfoot Culture and Indigenous Science: Vision***

Although there are many definitions of culture, all include language as absolutely central to the origination, learning, expression, adaptation, transmission and preservation of culture. In the

language of Blackfoot or properly speaking “Niitsitapi” two words are employed: 1) “niitsitapia ‘ pii nin” and 2) “yaapiistotsimat” The first means to live in accordance with “Niitsitapi” Ways and the second means to be forced to live in accordance with White or non-Niitsitapi ways. These two words reflect profound differences between Eurocentric versus Indigenous languages, paradigms, epistemologies and even notions of what is “science”. The theoretical physicist F. David Peat who lived for a while among Blackfoot noted:

“English, and for that matter French, German, Italian and the other European languages are noun-oriented. They are employed to divide the world into physical objects (nouns) and thinking into separate concepts (again nouns). Many Native American languages do not work this way. They are verb-based. Thus, when in English we speak of “medicine” we automatically seek a referent, a substance, an object, something tangible, and something that can be conceptualized. But suppose we begin with something verbal, with activity, process, a movement of harmony and balance. Medicine could then be felt in the beating of the heart, sensed as a movement around the sacred circle, the wind blowing through the leaves of the tress, the growing of green plants, and the astronomical alignments of the medicine wheel.” [10]

From his study of Blackfoot Culture, with particular reference to the Sun Dance[11], Professor Peat came to some remarkable conclusions confirmed by other observers. He found for example, in the rituals, allegories, symbolism and values embodied in Blackfoot culture, not only evidence of very advanced “science” and scientific methods, but indeed “science” far in advance of where the Newtonian-based “science” and epistemology of Eurocentric cultures, increasingly under siege, are today. He found for example, concrete notions of key principles and concepts that today make up the versions of Quantum Mechanics “discovered” only in the early 20th century: Superpositionality; Wave/particle duality; Entanglement; Bose-Einstein condensates and mass-energy equivalence, Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle and the four basic laws of Thermodynamics.[12]

Eurocentric “science”, reflected in the Eurocentric [13] languages and cultures, has been based upon (and under siege from Complexity or Chaos Theory and Dialectical-Historical Materialism for) its reliance on notions of: stasis; partial and general equilibria; linear and unidirectional causality; ultimate independent and dependent variables; ultra-reductionism; Morphostatic systems; a-contextualism and a-historicism; ultra-individualism; Newtonian clock-like or machine-like order[s]; the whole or macro being seen as nothing more than the sum of its parts or micro units; notions of culture and science themselves as a nouns or stocks of accumulated things rather than as processes; and hidden rhetorical and ideological intentions. All of these constructs and approaches of Newtonian-based “science” were, and are increasingly being put into question not only by Quantum Mechanics, Complexity or Chaos Theory, classical Taoism and more sophisticated versions of Dialectical-Historical Materialism, but, according to Peat and others, were anticipated long ago and embodied in Indigenous science and epistemology.

Why do I mention subjects like “Blackfoot Physics” and principles, practices and epistemological approaches of Indigenous science in this paper? Because one question that may be posed here is a simple compound question: “Who cares, or should care--and why--about the imperative for

survival and sustainability of Blackfoot and other Indigenous cultures?” This goes a way to help to answer that question. Survival of the Blackfoot and other Indigenous nations and cultures is an imperative for non-Indigenous peoples and cultures beyond the notion of “diversity is interesting and fun to watch”, or, in terms of the overworked metaphor of “The Canary in the Mine” (“Today it is us, tomorrow it is you”). It is increasingly evident in all the sciences, that often what is thought to be “new” is not true, and often what is true is not new. By any definition of culture, the Nazis sought to develop and did develop what they called “Nazi Culture”; but that is one form or type of culture, among others, that most decent people would not want to see survive and be sustained as it would mean, by definition, the destruction of other peoples and cultures.

When we speak of Blackfoot Culture, as we speak of the Blackfoot Nation, we are not speaking of a fixed quantity or accumulated “stock” (as a noun typical of Eurocentric definitions of “culture”) of values, beliefs, symbols, language, arts, people, symbols, institutions, socioeconomic and politico-legal relationships, taboos, sacred constructs, traditions, artifacts, learned behaviors, rituals, myths etc. Culture, in Blackfoot and generally indigenous terms refers, rather, to dynamic processes. In Blackfoot terms, culture does not refer only to that which is created, learned, transmitted by and related to the concerns of humankind. In Blackfoot and Indigenous terms, culture also includes that of which humankind is an integral part whether created, recognized, seen, appropriated or even deemed “useful” by humankind.

In most Indigenous languages, as in Blackfoot, there is no word for “science”[14], yet it is very clear that many Indigenous societies, Blackfoot included, were doing, no matter what culturally loaded definition of “science” is employed, real and very sophisticated science and scientific method. And when we speak of Indigenous science, as with culture, again we are not speaking of a noun of some accumulated body or “stock” of tools, techniques, methods for discovering the essences of and laws governing phenomena that make up an objective reality independent of our perceptions of that reality. We are not speaking of processes for merely discerning the salient or essential aspects of an objective reality outside of ourselves, but of processes that take into account our own roles in that reality, including, how our own perceptions, measurements and transformations of that reality become incorporated into and thus affect it. This is in line with some of the most recent discoveries in Quantum Mechanics, Chaos Theory and Dialectical-Historical Materialism and is not some kind of mysticism or metaphysics. Indigenous science does not seek to discover the essences and laws governing phenomena in order to simply get around, reverse or conquer them, but to work in accordance with them.



Copyright 1991 by First Nations Development Institute (Reprinted Under Fair Use Doctrine)

In Blackfoot culture, as in most Indigenous cultures, the number four is not merely a quantity or cardinal magnitude, without quality or force as in many Eurocentric cultures (four of what?); it has its own power, symbolism and force giving it quality in addition to quantity. The number four stands for: the four principle directions of the compass (North, South, East and West); the four principle colors of the human family (Black White Red and Yellow); the four forms of balance that all humans must seek to survive and prosper (Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual); the four basic elements of Nature (Wind, Fire, Earth and Water). In this model, there are four basic dimensions of development and sustainability that illustrate the dialectical unity of the macro and the micro levels of existence: control of assets and kinship (macro) and personal efficacy and spirituality (micro).

Blackfoot and Indigenous cultures (as do Chaos Theory and Dialectical-Historical Materialism) see systems and/as: totalities; wholes greater or lesser than the sums of their parts; continually in motion; as morphogenetic not morphostatic systems; driven by both external or exogenous, and internal or endogenous, shocks and processes on the verge of perpetual disequilibria. The more Eurocentric, Newtonian-based and clock-like or thermostat-like models, see only aggregates that are the sums of their parts, driven by external or exogenous shocks, and restored to, and moving between, punctuated equilibrium states by endogenous self-equilibrating processes. Needless to say, the present realities of the global economy as well as those realities of many national economies confirm the Blackfoot and Indigenous paradigms while refuting the classical or neoclassical paradigms. The existence of positive feedback loops (feedback effects that move a system in the same direction it was already moving instead of negative

feedback loops that tend to reverse the direction of movement of a system) produce second-derivative (acceleration) and even third-derivative (differential acceleration or “jerks”) effects on phenomena and systems and lead to the process of “negation of the negation” or quantitative changes producing qualitative leaps.

F. David Peat and others like Jack Weatherford in his trilogies [15] note that aspects of clashes of and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations and civilizations were related to clashes between fundamentally opposing paradigms and whole epistemologies. Not simply in terms of the morphostatic paradigm and systems of Newtonian clockwork and self-equilibrating systems of Eurocentric science versus the morphogenetic, self-negating, dialectical and chaotic systems of Indigenous science, Chaos Theory and Dialectical-Historical materialism, but in terms of fundamental values and views of the fundamental nature and roles of science itself.

## Two Major Types of Cybernetic Systems

### STABLE, EQUILIBRIATING SYSTEM

Morphostatic, structurally stable

E.G.: Thermostat-controlled mechanical system



System internally dynamic, but stable structure maintained and governed by *negative* feedback loops

### UNSTABLE, DIS-EQUILIBRIUM SYSTEM

Morphogenetic, evolving new structure

E.G.: Living, biological systems, human societies



System internally dynamic and structurally dynamic governed by *positive* feedback loops, which amplify small changes into unpredictably large changes which can alter the whole system

(Source Henderson, Hazel, <http://www.hazelhenderson.com/visual.html>; reprinted under Fair Use Doctrine)

### **Hope, Trust and “Social Capital”**

The notions of hope and trust are central in the Blackfoot/Indigenous model of survival and sustainability above. It is only recently that “mainstream” or “Neoclassical” theory in Economics has even paid any attention at all to the notion of “social capital” [16] (institutions that foster hope, trust, social cohesion and cooperation that cause/allow people to save, invest, sacrifice in the present for the future and for future generations and generally buy into the system and engage in “Political and Civic Participation”). Even now, the attention paid to social capital (with the focus on “capital” as also in human “capital”, with the construct of “capital” seen as the decisive dimension or force

in productivity and “progress” being central) is on the level of reciprocity among individuals, not because of any assumed fundamental social nature or obligations of individuals to the collective, but in terms of the central Neoclassical construct of “methodological individualism”. Sociologists like Putnam’s notion of “social capital” as institutions of reciprocity, is that “you do for me and I do for you and we both gain individually as maximizing and atomistic individuals as we “appear” to be cooperating, and thus violating central assumptions of the Neoclassical paradigm, but actually, we remain atomistic and maximizing competitors—an attempt to rescue the Neoclassical paradigm from contradictions inherent in the central construct of “methodological individualism” [17]

In Blackfoot culture, there is no notion of even the possibility of individuals within a collective being individually well off while within a sick and deteriorating collective. In traditional Blackfoot societies, the Chiefs ate last not first, no one ate unless all could eat, no one had shelter unless all had shelter and so on. Personal efficacy was intimately tied in with social efficacy. Lying was punished with death because a liar was seen as a threat to the whole collective not only as a potential collaborator with enemies, but as someone who would undermine social cohesion, cooperation and trust, and thus essential national security within and of the collective. Adultery was punished with loss of the nose for the woman and loss of the left braid of hair for the man. Banishment was seen as a punishment far worse than death because it meant loss of association for life with the community and one’s relations.[18]

Attempts have been made to rebuild some of the essential dimensions of the overall traditional culture and values of the Blackfoot Nation, outside of the Indian Act and DIA Tribal Councils, in the Blackfoot Constitution which is being circulated, vetted, and altered with various submissions as it is being ratified at grass-roots levels.[19] This is not only being done outside of the Indian Act and DIA Tribal Councils but in direct challenge to them. Allegations and actual findings of serious corruption on the part of the Indian Act Tribal Councils, in every part of Blackfoot Country and in Indian Country in general, have undermined any confidence in them. Further, there are issues in international law as to how any nation can summarily declare another nation, that meets all the tests under international law to be considered a nation, as “sui generis” (of a special type) or as a “dependent nation”, and even declare who may or may not be considered members of that nation, as was and is being done by the governments of both the U.S. and Canada with respect to First Nations. Once any group of people meets the basic tests under international law qualifying them as a nation, then also under international law, that group has a fundamental right not to be exterminated or assimilated into another nation without the democratically-expressed consent of the peoples being assimilated, and, that group constituting a nation, has also fundamental rights associated with its survival: independence, self-determination, sovereignty, its own form of government and socioeconomic and politico-legal system. In fact, under the Vienna Convention on Treaties, which both the U.S. and Canadian Governments recognize as “the definitive international law on treaties”, since treaties are covenants between nations not individuals, then when treaties are signed, even if later broken over and over, as in the case of Treaty 7, which many Blackfoot contend, and have

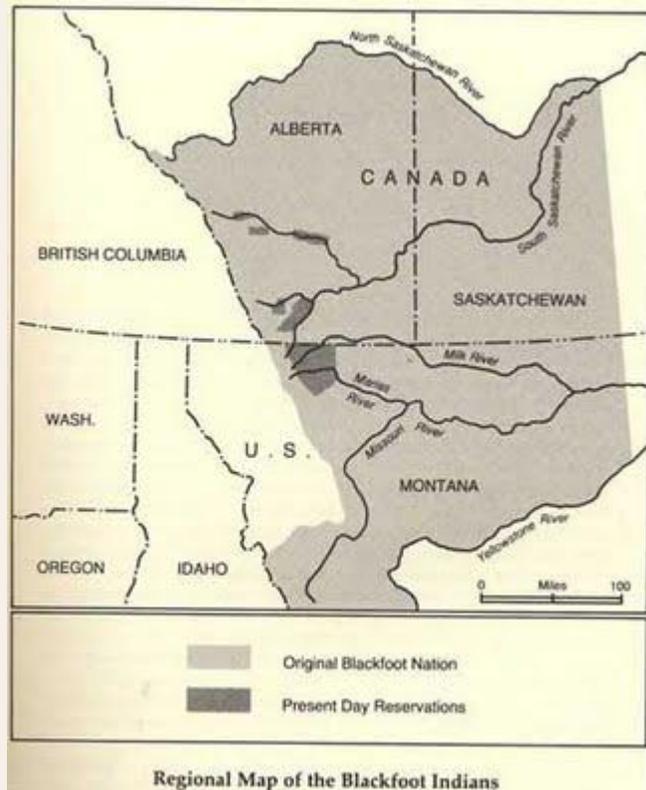
documentation to prove, was never signed or ratified by Blackfoot Chiefs in the first place, then each side is not only tacitly, but explicitly, recognizing: the other treating partner as a sovereign nation; as a co-equal; and its system of government, as having the sovereignty, authority and standing among its people to sign the treaty and hold a population to its terms into the future.

### ***“Control” of “Assets”***

Central to the survival and sustainability of the Blackfoot Nation and culture is preservation of and control over what is left of the traditional Blackfoot land base. By “control” of the land, Blackfoot and most Indigenous people do not mean ownership, commoditization and “control” in the capitalist or Eurocentric sense, rather in the sense of stewardship to protect its viability and sustainability for future generations. The U.S. and Canadian governments have been caught in contradictions in their own capitalist property rights and values that have undermined both. Under capitalist law, land may be legally acquired and held in five basic ways: 1) sale (but no one can legally sell or keep stolen property even if bought innocently); 2) bequest (but no one can legally inherit stolen property even if innocently); 3) gift (but no one can give or accept stolen property even if innocently) 4) Just War (but the war must meet all the tests under international law of a Just War—must be in self-defense); 5) Discovery (but no one can “discover” lands with Indigenous peoples already on them). Thus, both the U.S. and Canadian governments know very well, that in their own terms, not Blackfoot or Indigenous terms alone, but in their own terms, and under the very same property rights they assert to defend their own private property, much of the historical acquisitions and losses of traditional Indigenous lands represented pure theft in addition to pure genocide. It is not enough to say that Indigenous nations had not concept of “private ownership” and commoditization of land and thus the lands were not stolen, the fact is that in terms of the existing international law at the time, law developed since the times of the Spanish Conquistadores in the 15th and 16th centuries, law that they invoked to legitimate their own properties, Indigenous lands were stolen and thus could not be sold, gifted, bequeathed or justified under laws of discovery or just war. That is why the present U.S. and Canadian governments are trying to define some Indian nations out of existence with blood-quantum criteria for Tribal recognition and membership and/or getting Indian Act Tribal Councils installed and maintained by those governments to sign bills of sale to legitimize past thefts and genocidal acquisitions of Indigenous lands. The map below illustrates the historical land base of the Blackfoot relative to what is recognized as Blackfoot lands today (some 2.6 million acres in both the U.S. and Canada contiguously) In fact, the Lame Bull Treaty or Treaty of Fort Benton of October 1855, one of the more problematic of the treaties signed by both the U.S. and Canadian governments, explicitly recognized the existence of a sovereign Blackfoot Nation made up of some various Bands or Tribes stretching over an area covering parts of Montana and the U.S. and Alberta in Canada contiguously. [20]

The infamous Indian Residential School systems of Canada and the Indian Boarding Schools of the U.S. for which no real accounting or full apologies and restitutions have ever been made, were as much about breaking the connections of the Indigenous

Nations with their land bases and traditional ways, by creating pools of unskilled and semi-skilled wage workers dependent upon sale of their labor power for survival, as with also breaking their connections with, and in turn undermining, their cultures, languages, spirituality and other dimensions of the Indigenous nations.[21]



The map above shows the historical land base of the original Blackfoot Nation versus those lands recognized as Blackfoot Reserves today (some 2.6 million acres). If the claim is made that there is no more Blackfoot Nation, then when and under what conditions and authority did it cease to exist? If treaties still exist, and they do, and if each treating partner in signing a treaty both tacitly and explicitly recognizes the co-equal status, nationhood, sovereignty and system of government of the other, then when, and under what authority, did the traditional system of government of the Blackfoot cease to exist in lieu of the present Indian Act and DIA system of nominally elected but in reality appointed, DIA Tribal Councils? Are the governments of the U.S. and Canada admitting to genocide? What if the government of say Poland arrogated to presume to dictate criteria of who may or may not be considered a "real" American or Canadian? Or, perhaps another and more apt analogy, and the one actually used in Indian Country, might be the present-day Indian Act Tribal Councils, often riddled with corruption [22], being seen as having the standing and legitimacy under international law as say the Vichy Government installed by Nazi occupying France [23] or perhaps the standing and legitimacy of the government of the last Emperor Pu Yi installed by the Japanese Imperialists in China in an entity they created and what they named

“Manchuko”[24].

Further, the issue of loss of Blackfoot lands is not merely a matter of losses of critical resources for the survival and sustainability of the Blackfoot Nation. The connection to the land, in every possible way, is central to Blackfoot culture. As F. David Peat puts it:

“Connection to the landscape is one of the most powerful things within an Indigenous society which explains the pain and anger The People experience when they see the land around them exploited and destroyed. The Native people I have spoken to refer to the land as their mother, and the Blackfoot say that to walk on the land is to walk on your own flesh. The memory of this landscape transcends anything we have in the West, for its trees, rocks, animals, and plants are all imbued with energies, powers and spirits. The whole of the land is alive and each person is related to it. The land sustains and, in turn, the ceremonies and sacrifices of The People aid in its renewal...I have heard many Native people say they have ‘a map in their head’. This map, I believe, is the relationship of the land to The People. Moreover, it transcends any mere geographical representation, for in it are enfolded the songs, ceremonies and histories of a people.”[25]

The incentives to privatize, commoditize and expropriate what are left of Blackfoot lands have never been greater. Among the last sources of pristine fresh water are on what are now Blackfoot lands which are also rich in oil, ammonite, wind energy, grazing lands, uranium, timber, geothermal energy and other critical resources. This leads to the U.S. and Canadian Governments, along with private developers, finding the paths of least resistance and cheapest ways of acquiring access to and control over those resources, often with a few Tribal insiders selling out the resource bases and with disastrous consequences on the people of the various Reserves. This also undermines confidence in dealing with or forming partnerships with the U.S. and Canadian Governments on the part of Blackfoot and other Indigenous Nations because much of the corruption is seen as at least being tolerated by and beneficial to those governments and private interests that they clearly represent and protect[26] Indigenous activists can go on any Reserve or Reservation, even those of Nations and Tribes of which they are not members, and in ten minutes or less, they can find out, via the “Moccasin Telegraph Service” who is dealing drugs, who are doing illegal gambling, who are involved in prostitution, who are the aristocrats putting their relations and friends on the payrolls, and any and all other forms of corruption, They argue that RCMP and the FBI, charged with investigating and prosecuting such crimes on the Reserves and Reservations, could easily do the same and yet time after time, even when tipped off by Elders sick of corruption, do not. Why? Because corrupt Indians often sell-out cheap plus they are easier to control and manipulate as once anyone does any form of corruption, they are vulnerable to exposure and therefore also control.

### ***Education and Human Capital***

When I first began to study Economics in the 1960s, the major textbooks equated economic growth with development and saw “physical capital” as central in the overall

equations of factors critical to growth and development (the term sustainability was not even used) That view of growth and development, with physical capital as the key, of course conveniently also assigns a critical role to the capitalist who owns and/or controls that physical capital. Then came the 1970s, and someone got the bright idea that no matter how sophisticated the physical capital employed in economic growth and development, someone had to fix the machines, know when and where and how to use them and not use them, so along came the concept of “human capital” or knowledge, skill, experience, and presumably work ethic to be able to use the physical capital effectively; the textbooks got trendy and began to incorporate human capital as a key factor in economic growth no longer seen as synonymous with economic development, a much broader process. And only recently has the notion that workers and the population at large also in need of hope, trust, social cohesion, belief in the system to cause them to plan and f=work for the future that the notion of social capital beginning to show up in the textbooks.

Anyone who has been on the Reservations and Reserves of the Blackfoot, or on those of any Indigenous nations, has seen the tragedy of what passes for “education” and educational facilities.” The lack of infrastructure, qualified and motivated teachers, up-to-date curricula, advanced methods in pedagogy, internet access and library resources, mentors and many other resources critical to effective education and human capital formation are well known and have existed for a long time. But the problems for Indigenous education go far beyond what can be fixed with updating physical facilities and bringing in new technologies. They have to do with fundamental definitions of and approaches to what is real education, Indigenous or otherwise. There are scholars like Dr. Roland Chrisjohn of the Oneida Nation who have given serious thought to Indigenous education and how the Indian Residential School systems of Canada and the U.S. not only decimated Indigenous communities, but also never represented real and effective education or models for education even for non-Indigenous children.[27]

Blackfoot language is being taught on all of the Reserves of the Blackfoot; but language is never sterile or value-free and it will always beg the questions of by whom, for whom, and for what purposes, are the language and also are traditional aspects of Blackfoot culture being taught. Many of the programs into which Blackfoot and other Indigenous children are channeled, by their own choices or by advisors, have to do with alcohol and substance abuse counseling or programs in “Native Studies” (often taught and using scholarship of by non-Indigenous academics that are virtually useless except for getting some kind of management job in the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. or the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada).

The survival and sustainability of the Blackfoot and other Indigenous nations will require what other non-Indigenous nations will require in terms of educated—not just schooled which is not necessarily the same thing—workforce and leadership: real quality education that addresses the likely challenges and imperatives of survival and sustainability in the twenty-first century but, with due respect to the fact that that what is new may well not be true, and what is true may not be new.

## **Conclusion**

Blackfoot, like other Indigenous nations on the verge of extinction, are the proverbial and overworked “Canary in the Mine.” And as Albert Einstein once defined insanity as doing the same things over and over, in the same ways, with the same people and yet expecting different results. So it is, that Indigenous Peoples cannot continue, adopt or even allow, the very same forces, values, paradigms, institutions, paternalism, and whole socio-economic politico-legal systems (modes of production) that brought them to the verge of extinction, and that even threaten the non-Indigenous peoples who promote them as “civilization”, as well threatening the whole planet itself, to take them all the way to extinction as has happened to so many nations that no longer exist. For those who are not Indigenous and thus believe that the fate of Indigenous nations is of no concern however regrettable, perhaps give some thought to the fact that any society that tolerates and promotes the extinction of any national minority or nation within its borders is one that is capable of tolerating and promoting the extinction or any other group; and is not either sustainable or the kind of society or system worth preserving especially in today’s world with the means of mass destruction that exist today.[28]

Blackfoot, like other Indigenous nations, are intimately bound up with Canada and indeed the world like it or not. The question, however, remains on what basis and with what consequences—for Canada as well as Indigenous nations—the present relations and institutions, that have brought Indigenous nations to the brink of extinction, could, should or would continue. Samir Amin notes:

“Now the world capitalist system, cannot be reduced, even in abstraction, to the capitalist mode of production, and still less can it be analyzed as a mere juxtaposition of countries or sectors governed by the capitalist mode of production with others governed by precapitalist modes of production (the dualism thesis). Apart from a few ‘ethnographical reserves’, such as that of the Orinoco Indians, all contemporary societies are integrated into a world system. Not a single concrete socioeconomic formation of our time can be understood except as part of this world system... ..Relations between the formations of the ‘developed’ or advanced world (the center) and those of the ‘underdeveloped’ world (the periphery) are affected by transfers of value, and these constitute the problem of accumulation on a world scale. Whenever the capitalist mode of production enters into relations with precapitalist modes of production, and subjects these to itself, transfers of value take place from the precapitalist to capitalist formations as a result of the mechanisms of ‘primitive accumulation’. These mechanisms do not belong only to the prehistory of capitalism; they are contemporary as well. It is these forms of primitive accumulation, modified but persistent, to the advantage of the center, that form the domain of the theory of accumulation on a world scale.” [29]

In Blackfoot language “Ni Kso Ko Wa” means “We are all related” or “All my Relations”. So as we are all related as human beings, and indeed all human cultures share some common denominators, so are our fates, as individuals and whole cultures, interrelated. We are the proverbial “Canary in the Mine”.

### **Footnotes**

[1] Here the terms “exogenous” or external and “endogenous or “internal” are used nominally or in non-Indigenous terms as Blackfoot and other Indigenous groups see culture not only in terms of all that is created by humankind but also all that humankind is an integral part of and thus have different notions of what is external or internal to a given culture.

[2] Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, translation by Dale, Ralph Verse 2 “Relativity”, p. 5 Barnes and Noble Books, N.Y. 2002

[3] Long Standing Bear Chief, “Ni Kso Ko Wa: Blackfoot Traditions and Spirituality” pp. 8-9, Spirit Talk Press, Browning, Montana, 1992

[4] Department of Indian Affairs, Superintendent D.C. Scott to B.C. Indian Agent-General Major D. McKay, DIA Archives, RG-10 series, April 12, 1910 (emphasis added)

[5] The 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, to which Canada became a signatory in 1953 and to which the U.S. still remains not a full signatory because of the Hatch, Helms and Lugar “Sovereignty Amendment of 1988, in Article II defines a five-part test, any one of which, not all required to constitute genocide: a) Killing members of the group; b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) Deliberately inflicting upon a group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) Imposing measures designed to prevent births within the group; e) Forcibly transferring children of one group to another group.

[6] Black, Edwin, “War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race” Thunder’s Mouth Press N.Y. 2003; Alberta Sterilization Victims Also Used as Guinea Pigs Revelation Comes as 40 victims win \$4M settlement; Marina Jimenez National Post 10/28/98

[7] Toland, John, “Adolf Hitler”, Vol II, p. 802, Doubleday and Co. N.Y. 1976

[8] Limerick, Patricia Nelson, “The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of American West” WW. Norton and Co. N.Y. 1987 p. 338

[9] Poole, James “Hitler and His Secret Partners”, Pocket Books, NY 1997; “Having been a devoted reader of Karl May's books on the American West as a youth, Hitler frequently referred to the Russians as 'Redskins'. He saw a parallel between his effort to conquer and colonize land in Russia with the conquest of the American West by the white man and the subjugation of the Indians or 'Redskins'. 'I don't see why', he said, 'a German who eats a piece of bread should torment himself with the idea that the soil that produces this bread has been won by the sword. When we eat from Canada, we don't think about the despoiled Indians.' (James Pool, Ibid, pp. 254-255)

[10] Peat, F. David, “Blackfoot Physics” Weiser Books, Boston, MA. 2005, p. 128 see:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=rmxB4bau74QC&pg=PA24&lpg=PA24&dq=Corruption,+Blackfoot&source=bl&ots=ybsfW5JaRC&sig=iwdMWIIQ1UMiSB9gnVgTTgZ-r08&hl=en&ei=yEROSsymHITAsQPGq9mqDQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=9](http://books.google.com/books?id=rmxB4bau74QC&pg=PA24&lpg=PA24&dq=Corruption,+Blackfoot&source=bl&ots=ybsfW5JaRC&sig=iwdMWIIQ1UMiSB9gnVgTTgZ-r08&hl=en&ei=yEROSsymHITAsQPGq9mqDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9)

[11]

<http://www.utexas.edu/courses/wilson/ant304/projects/projects98/krochenskip/krochenskip.html>

[12] Gribbin, John "In Search of Schroedinger's Cat: Quantum Physics and Reality", Bantam Books, N.Y. 1984

[13] By "Eurocentric" I mean in the sense used by Thomas Kuhn in his amazingly ignorant and arrogant statement: "But only the civilizations that descended from Hellenic Greece possessed more than the most rudimentary science" in Kuhn, Thomas, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", U of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962, pp. 167-68

[14] Cajete, Gregory, "Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence", Clear Light Publishers, Santa Fe, 2000, p 2

[15] Peat, F. David op. cit. pp 38-44. See also Weatherford Jack, "Indian Givers: How The Indians of the Americas Transformed The World" Fawcett Columbine, N.Y. 1988; "Native Roots: How The Indians Enriched America" Fawcett Columbine, N.Y.1991; "Savages and Civilization" Fawcett Columbine, N.Y. 1994 These authors among others demonstrate very advanced achievements in engineering, mathematics, cosmology and astronomy, medicine, architecture, law and constitutions, democracy and government, agriculture, resource management and sustainability and in many areas now being recognized that could only have been achieved with very advanced notions and techniques of science and scientific method.

[16] Craven, James/Omahkohkiaayo I'poyi "The Evolving Concept of Social Capital, Markets, Market-Based Processes and Socialist Construction" paper delivered September 1-2, 2004 at The International Symposium for the Reform of Property Rights and Enterprise Development in Transitional Countries at Tsinghua University. See also Putnam, Robert D, "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community", Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 2000

[17] The notion that the whole or macro is nothing more than the sum of its parts. Individuals are said to be atomistic units assumed to be: rational, self-interested, competitive, informed, constrained and maximizers of utility—and that which yields—it and minimizers of pain and risk. There is no notion of a collective that acts as a collective or that is greater—or possibly lesser—than the sum of its parts. The model consists of a body of postulates about supposed "human nature", irrespective of class, gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, from which deductions are made, hypotheses are formed and predictions made about human behavior under assumed conditions and constraints (hypothetico-deductivism).

[18] One of the most sacred of the Blackfoot Prayers (Nii-tsi-ta-piaa-tsi-mo-yii-kaan) sums up the traditional Blackfoot values considered most important (spelled out phonetically not in

accordance with Franz-Russell conventions.)

Ayo A'pis-to-too-ki (Creator)

Iss-Po-Mo-Kin-Naan (Help us)

Nah-Kay-Iss-Tsi-Sin-Naan (To listen)

Nah-Kai-Kim-Mo-Tsi-Sin-Naan (To be kind to one another)

Nah-Kay-ii-Ka'-Ki-Maa-Sin-Naan (To try hard)

Nah-Koh-Ko-Ka-Mo'-Toh-Sin-Naan (To be honest)

Nah-Ka-Wa-To-Yii-Tak-Sin-Naan (To be Spiritual)

Ooh-To-Kin-Naan, A'Pis-To-Too-Ki (Hear us, Creator)

Kim-Mis Ko-Ko-Siksi (Have pity on your children)

li-Ksi-Kim-Ma-Tap-Si-Ya (They are in need)

Kaa-Mo-Taa-Ni (Grant us safety)

Nii-Sta-Wa-Tsi-Maani (Help us to raise our families)

Naa-Piio'Siini (So that they may live long lives)

[19] See "Draft Constitution of the Blackfoot Nation" and "Paper on the Blackfoot Nation" "Blackfoot Indictment...", at the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota, Documents on Native American Genocide <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/histories/victims/nativeAmerican/index.html> and Helton, Taiawagi "Nation Building in Indian Country: The Blackfoot Constitutional Review" Paper Delivered at the Fifth Annual Tribal Law and Governance Conference, University of Kansas School of Law, October 2002 at <http://wwwthesixthstate.blogspot.com/2007/11/nation-building-in-indian-country.html>

[20] For the actual text of the Treaty see <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/treaties/blackfeet.htm>

[21] Chrisjohn, Roland et al "An Historic Non Apology, Completely and Utterly Not Accepted" Department of Native Studies, Fredericton, NB <http://www.nativestudies.org/index1.html> "An apology has at least three characteristics (some people will say there are more, some will list more specific traits... this doesn't matter for present purposes). The absence of any of these three characteristics immediately disqualifies a statement as an apology: a sincere expression of remorse for the behavior, the promise never to repeat the behavior, and the undertaking to undo, as far as possible, the damage done by the behavior."

[22] See <http://www.wole.org/corruption.htm>; <http://lakeconews.com/content/view/7220/764/>

[23] The term "Vichy Indians" has been used by scholars like Ward Churchill and others to denote BIA and DIA Tribal Councils (not an indictment of every one serving on them) as essentially like the puppet Vichy Government installed in France by occupying German Nazis. <http://legendofpineridge.blogspot.com/2009/03/ward-churchill-denigrates-indians-he.html> and <http://aradicalblackfoot.blogspot.com/2006/01/abramoff-and-vichy-indians.html> and <http://www.touristclick.com/news/united%20states/means-delegation.html>

[24] See Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi “From Emperor to Citizen: The Autobiography of Pu Yi The Last Emperor of China” Oxford University Press, N.Y. 1987

[25] Peat, F. David, op cit pp 85-86

[26]

[http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:sBZag7ZxPvQJ:hrebsstaff.ednet.ns.ca/mckaysc/DIRT/Mi'kmaq/A%2520SEASON%2520OF%2520DEATHS.doc+Corruption,+Tribal+Councils,+Canada&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us;](http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:sBZag7ZxPvQJ:hrebsstaff.ednet.ns.ca/mckaysc/DIRT/Mi'kmaq/A%2520SEASON%2520OF%2520DEATHS.doc+Corruption,+Tribal+Councils,+Canada&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)

[http://www.marxmail.org/archives/July99/clinton\\_visits\\_the\\_indian\\_reserv.htm](http://www.marxmail.org/archives/July99/clinton_visits_the_indian_reserv.htm)

<http://www.leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/files/6.pdf>

[27] Chrisjohn, Roland “You Have to be Carefully Taught: Special Needs and First Nations Education”; “Genocide and Indian Residential Schooling: The Past is Present”; Retaining Indigenous Students in Post Secondary Programs: What Means For Whose Ends?” see <http://www.nativestudies.org/works.html> see also <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIER.html>

[28] A note here that the comments of this paper are directed only to the situation of Blackfoot and other Indigenous Nations in the Americas. No equivalence is intended or suggested between the situations, realities of or governmental policies vis-à-vis, national minorities, in other places like China; and the same with respect to First Nations in the Americas. The history of China relative to the histories of the nations of the Americas with Indigenous populations is very different. Various Indigenous groups, once meeting the tests of international law for being considered separate nations became integrated national minorities within a larger and contiguous nation of China long ago and since Liberation in 1949, the statuses and survival of the Indigenous minorities by the Government of China have been protected and assured far more than in the cases of the U.S. and Canada, and far more than if each national group had had its own traditional government along with its own land base, culture, language, common economic life, polity, history and criteria for membership of the group (the essential elements of a nation in international law) In the case of the Americas, not only were there treaties recognizing First Nations as Nations, although asserted to be “sui generis” or of a special type, or, as in the case of the U.S. and the Supreme court decisions of Marshall as “dependent nations”, the policies of the governments of the Americas were genocidal in intent and effect; Indigenous nations were never assimilated into the broader fabrics and governments of the nations of the Americas and were left isolated in many cases, not all, on their traditional lands thus retaining their status and realities as Indigenous nations. This became especially true when past Treaties were recognized and invoked ad hoc when in the interests of the colonizing governments of the Americas, and in doing so, they both tacitly and explicitly recognized the continued existence of Indigenous nations as nations. Since the rights of all nations under international law are equal, dependent upon law and facts on the ground and not on the size or perceived power of a nation, or, indeed if that group has been recognized as a nation, especially by colonizing forces intent on its extermination, then it follows that the Blackfoot Nation and other Indigenous nations that still meet the tests of international law to constitute nations remain so, with the rights under international law of all nations regardless of who does or does not

recognize them as such. The so-called Republic of China or Taiwan is currently only recognized by 23 nation states including the Vatican, as the supposed “legitimate government” of all of China whereas up until the 1970s, the reality and legitimacy of the People’s Republic of China as the sole and legitimate government of all of China was denied except by a handful of nations yet the objective reality of and international law supporting, the PRC as the sole and legitimate representative of the whole nation of China was never in question by any honest and thinking person or government. There were 51 founding members of the UN and now 192 members with many nations recognized as nations and becoming nation states well after the formation of the UN.

[29] Amin, Samir, “Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment, Vols I and II, Monthly Review Press, N.Y. 1974, pp2-3