

***JAMES WILLARD
SCHULTZ***



***MY LIFE
AS AN INDIAN***

James Willard Schultz

My Life as an Indian

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Eric Baylor

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[My Life as an Indian](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

At the heart of *My Life as an Indian* lies the tension between an outsider's desire to belong and a community's enduring lifeways under pressure, where kinship, land, and season test the newcomer's resolve, where marriage and obligation refashion identity, and where the pulse of camp, hunt, travel, and survival moves in counterpoint to the accelerating forces of change on the northern plains, so that the story becomes not only a record of encounter but a study in humility, attention, and reciprocity, inviting readers to witness a world learning, adapting, and holding fast amid the measured advance of history.

James Willard Schultz's *My Life as an Indian* is a memoir of the American West, first published in 1907, set principally in the Blackfeet homeland of what is now Montana during the late nineteenth century. Written in the plain, direct prose of a participant-observer, it blends frontier narrative with ethnographic detail, presenting an intimate portrait of daily life, travel, and community obligations. Its historical moment—when bison herds were vanishing and colonial pressures were intensifying—anchors the book in a crucial era of transition, while its literary mode situates it alongside classic first-person accounts of place, people, and encounter.

Without rehearsing its later turns, the book begins with a young American's journey west and his gradual entry into Blackfeet society, first as a guest and then as kin through marriage. Schultz tells the story in the first person, attentive to practical skills, family bonds, and the meanings of

hospitality. The style is vivid but unadorned, the tone respectful and curious, and the pacing episodic, following the movement of camps, hunts, and visits. The reading experience is immersive and observational, inviting the reader to inhabit seasons and routines rather than to chase a single plot-driven arc.

Central themes gather quietly but persistently: belonging earned through conduct, not claimed by assertion; the ethics of witnessing another people's lifeways; the interplay of courage, caution, and communal responsibility; and the hard knowledge brought by environmental and political upheaval. The book attends to kinship as a social fabric that confers identity and duty. It engages questions of cultural translation—how words, gestures, and stories carry meaning across difference—and it traces the costs of change without reducing people to symbols. Through these concerns, the memoir asks what it means to live well with others and to honor a place in common.

Schultz's craft relies on scene-making and closely observed detail: the sounds of camp at dusk, the texture of winter travel, the tacit rules of sharing, the practical art of reading weather and land. He renders landscapes as lived spaces, not backdrops, and portrays community life through routines as much as through danger or ceremony. Episodes of risk, humor, and domestic quiet sit side by side, yielding a textured portrait that resists romantic flattening. Throughout, he strives to translate concepts without pretending to exhaust them, acknowledging that explanation can clarify and yet still leave a remainder of experience that belongs to those who live it.

For contemporary readers, the book matters both as a historical document and as a prompt to read critically across perspectives. It offers a rare, sustained account of Blackfeet

daily life during a pivotal era, yet it also bears the limitations of its time and its author's position, including period terminology and framing choices that require context. Engaging it alongside Indigenous scholarship and community narratives can deepen understanding, but even on its own, the memoir unsettles stereotypes, foregrounds agency, and emphasizes everyday ethics over frontier myth, making it a valuable companion in ongoing conversations about representation, land, and historical memory.

Approached with curiosity and care, *My Life as an Indian* becomes a study in attention: to neighbors, to landscapes, to obligations that outlast convenience. It invites readers to slow down and inhabit a world organized by seasons and relationships rather than by headlines and haste, reminding us that histories are carried in families and camps as surely as in archives. In a time still wrestling with how to live justly on shared ground, Schultz's account—observant, modest, and rooted in particulars—offers both testimony and challenge, asking how openness, respect, and mutual learning might guide encounters across difference today.

Synopsis

[Table of Contents](#)

My Life as an Indian, published in 1907, is James Willard Schultz's memoir of years spent living among the Blackfeet on the northern plains of what is now Montana and Alberta. Arriving as a young man during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, he seeks first to describe the land's open distances, the river bottoms, and the looming front of the Rocky Mountains that shaped camp movements and daily routine. The book sets out to record how he entered a community as an outsider, observed its customs with care, and committed himself to a sustained, intimate life within it.

He recounts early months of apprenticeship within lodges, learning the Blackfeet language, etiquette, and storytelling rhythms that ordered public talk and private counsel. Trusted families bring him into the orbit of camp leaders and hunters, and he earns standing by respecting gift exchange, hospitality, and rules of restraint. Seasonal cycles shape the structure: summer for travel and large gatherings, autumn for meat-drying and trade, winter for close-quartered endurance, spring for repair and ceremony. Over time the outsider's curiosity becomes practiced knowledge, and he is given a personal name, a sign of belonging that marks his gradual passage into community life.

At the center of the memoir is his courtship and marriage to a Blackfeet woman, the relationship through which domestic life becomes the measure of cultural understanding. Schultz details the obligations that link two households, the labor shared in a lodge, and the subtleties

of respect between in-laws. He learns the meanings of property, generosity, and responsibility as they apply to horses, clothing, and food stores. Scenes of travel with his wife's kin, visits to distant camps, and everyday cooperation make the narrative an intimate record of family ties, while also registering delicate boundaries that persist between adopted and native identities.

The book's most vivid sequences portray buffalo hunts, horse care, and the disciplined logistics of moving large camps across grassland and coulees. Schultz tracks how scouts read sign, how leaders weigh risk, and how hunts sustain communal wealth. He also observes raiding and defense against enemy tribes, addressing courage and restraint without romanticizing violence. Interwoven are descriptions of spiritual practices, including major communal rites and private devotions, where medicine objects, vows, and healing specialists guide conduct. The emphasis falls on the way belief structures everyday action, binding individuals to one another and to the land through ritual obligation and memory.

As the years pass, outside pressures grow. He depicts the whiskey trade's damage, the presence of traders and soldiers, and the tightening reach of agencies and regulations. The decline of the buffalo forces abrupt changes in subsistence and movement, and hunger shadows the camps. Schultz records debates about accommodation and refusal, highlighting the dignity and frustration of leaders negotiating rations, travel permits, and promised provisions. His own role shifts with circumstance: interpreter, guide, and sometimes mediator, yet always a listener. The narrative refuses easy resolution, tracing how a people recalibrate traditions under accelerating constraint while sustaining mutual aid and ceremony.

Throughout, the memoir balances action with reflection. Schultz's vantage is neither detached nor fully assimilated; he honors obligations to kin while acknowledging his position as a newcomer shaped by another world. He is attentive to women's expertise, men's responsibilities, and children's instruction, and he stresses the patience required to learn without presuming authority. The tone grows elegiac as elders recount earlier journeys and as favorite camps are revisited under new rules. Yet the book remains grounded in practical detail, using meals, journeys, exchanges, and quiet counsel to show how a moral community persists during upheaval and measures change without surrender.

My Life as an Indian endures as a sustained firsthand portrait of Blackfeet life at a turning point, written by a long-term resident who took part in household and camp routines. Its value lies in patient observation of custom and character, while its limits reflect the era and the author's background. As a narrative of cross-cultural marriage and adaptation, it invites readers to consider care, reciprocity, and self-restraint as the basis of social order. Without claiming final answers, Schultz's account preserves voices, places, and practices confronted by colonial expansion, leaving a record that continues to inform historical understanding and ethical reflection.

Historical Context

[Table of Contents](#)

My Life as an Indian, published in 1907 by James Willard Schultz (1859–1947), recounts his years living among the Pikuni (Piegan) band of the Blackfoot Confederacy in the Montana Territory during the late 1870s and 1880s. Schultz, a young trader and guide from the East, settled along the Rocky Mountain Front near the Marias, Two Medicine, and Sun rivers. His narrative unfolds amid frontier institutions—fur-trade posts, U.S. Army garrisons, and the federal Indian Agency—that structured life on the northern plains. The book’s setting precedes Montana statehood in 1889 and captures a society negotiating U.S. expansion, market forces, and administrative control.

The Blackfoot Confederacy—Siksika, Kainai (Blood), and Piikani/Piegan—traditionally ranged across the northern plains of present-day Montana and Alberta. Their 19th-century economy centered on bison hunting and intertribal trade, with Euro-American exchange funneled through posts such as Fort Benton on the Missouri. The illicit whisky trade of the 1860s–early 1870s destabilized the region until the North-West Mounted Police established order north of the border in 1874. In the United States, the 1855 Lane Bull Treaty recognized Blackfoot territories and inaugurated an agency system. Schultz’s experiences unfold within this cross-border world, where imperial boundaries met longstanding Indigenous alliances and rivalries.

After the Civil War, U.S. Indian policy increasingly concentrated Native nations onto reservations under the Office of Indian Affairs. For the Blackfeet, successive

agreements culminated in the 1888–1889 Sweetgrass Hills Agreement, which greatly reduced their land base and helped define the present Blackfeet Reservation. The agency headquarters moved during the period, eventually centering near what became Browning. Rations, annuities, and regulated hunting shaped subsistence, while licensed traders mediated access to manufactured goods. Schultz’s memoir situates domestic life, travel, and work within these institutions, depicting how agency rules, permits, and seasonal issue schedules intersected with longstanding camp movements and kin obligations.

Bison underpinned Blackfeet prosperity and mobility, yet commercial hide hunting, railroad-enabled markets, and ecological pressures drove a rapid collapse in the late 1870s–early 1880s. By 1883, the great herds on the northern plains were effectively gone. The resulting crisis produced severe food shortages; among the Blackfeet, the 1883–1884 “Starvation Winter” became notorious for hunger and mortality when promised rations and game proved insufficient. Schultz’s chronology straddles this transition, documenting everyday practices rooted in the buffalo economy and the adaptations that followed. Federal policy responses—beef issues, work programs, and tighter regulation—reframed economic life, even as families sought continuity in ritual and reciprocity.

Regional violence shaped the backdrop to Schultz’s residency. On January 23, 1870, the U.S. Army’s attack on Heavy Runner’s camp on the Marias River—known as the Marias or Baker Massacre—killed more than a hundred Blackfeet, straining relations and intensifying reliance on agency protection and diplomacy. Posts such as Fort Shaw (established 1867) projected military authority on the Sun River corridor, while scouts and interpreters mediated

contact. The international boundary limited movement but did not erase ties among Blackfoot peoples in Canada and the United States. Schultz writes within a landscape where caution, negotiation, and memory of recent conflict informed travel and settlement.

Assimilation programs expanded during the years Schultz describes. The federal government established Courts of Indian Offenses in 1883 and promoted Indian police, while many agencies enforced bans on ceremonies and gatherings deemed “heathen.” Mission schools grew on the Blackfeet Reservation; the Jesuit-founded Holy Family Mission opened near present-day Browning in 1886, joining earlier Catholic efforts in the region. Nationwide, the Dawes Act of 1887 advanced allotment of tribal lands, a policy later implemented on the Blackfeet Reservation in the early twentieth century. These institutions formed part of daily governance that Schultz observed, shaping education, marriage, travel permissions, and public ritual.

Railroad expansion accelerated settlement pressures. James J. Hill’s Great Northern Railway located a transcontinental route over Marias Pass in 1889 and completed its line to the Pacific by 1893, spurring towns and markets along the Hi-Line. The company later promoted the adjacent mountains as a tourist destination. In 1895, the United States obtained the Blackfeet “Ceded Strip” along the east slope of the Rockies; much of that landscape became Glacier National Park in 1910 after lobbying by conservationists including George Bird Grinnell, whom Schultz guided. The book’s mountain settings thus anticipate a transformation from Indigenous homeland to regulated park and tourist icon.

Published in 1907 to a Progressive Era readership fascinated by the “frontier,” Schultz’s memoir joins

ethnographic reportage with personal experience. He wrote for national magazines and collaborated with observers such as Grinnell, helping to document Blackfeet language, kinship, and seasonal lifeways for non-Native audiences. Without revealing plot turns, the book contrasts camp autonomy and buffalo-time abundance with ration queues, permits, and wage work, registering the pressures of policy, commerce, and railroads. Its close attention to place and protocol offers a contemporaneous critique of the disruptions of expansion, while preserving a detailed record of Blackfeet resilience during a pivotal transformation.

My Life as an Indian

Main Table of Contents

Fort Benton
The Ruse of a Savage Lover
The Tragedy of the Marias
A War Trip for Horses
Days with the Game
The Story of the Crow Woman
A White Buffalo
A Winter on the Marias
I have a Lodge of My Own
The Killing of a Bear
The Kutenai's Story
The Great Race
The Snake Woman
The Snake Woman's Quest
I Return to My People
The Story of Rising Wolf
A Friendly Visit from the Crows
A Raid by the Crows
Nat-ah'-ki's Wedding
The Attack on the Hunters
Never-laughs Goes East
The War Trip of Queer Person
The Piegans Move In
A Wolverine's Medicine
Little Deer's End
The Ways of the Northland
The Story of Ancient Sleeper
Diana's Marriage
A Game of Fate

Trade, Hunt, and War Party

Nat-ah'-ki's Ride

Curbing the Wanderers

Crees and Red Rivers

The Last Op the Buffalo

The "Winter of Death"

The "Black Robe's" Help

Later Years

Editorial Note

In this account of his long residence with the Blackfeet, Mr. Schultz has given us a remarkable story. It is an animated and vivid picture of Indian life. The scene is on the plains in the old days, in the picturesque period when the tribe lived in a primitive way, subsisting on the buffalo and at war with hostile neighbours. It is a true history and not romance, yet abounds in romantic incident. In its absolute truthfulness lies its value.

The book has extraordinary interest as a human document. It is a study of human nature in red. The author has penetrated the veil of racial indifference and misunderstanding and has got close to the heart of the people about whom he writes. Such an intimate revelation of the domestic life of the Indians has never before been written. The sympathetic in sight everywhere evident is everywhere convincing. We feel that the men and the women portrayed are men and women of actual living existence. And while in the lodges on the Marias the elemental passions have fuller and franker sway, we recognise in the Blackfoot as here revealed a creature of common humanity like our own. His are the same loves and hates and hopes and fears. The motives which move him are those which move us. The Indian is the white man without the veneer of civilisation.

The chapters of this volume were published serially in "Forest and Stream" under the title "In the Lodges of the Blackfeet" and over the pseudonym W. B. Anderson. The title page now bears the author's real name. Not only is the story a true one, but many of the characters still live, though to-day under conditions as different as though

centuries had intervened. FATHER PRANDO died in the year 1906.

GEO. BIRD GRINNELL.

Principal Characters

NAT-AH'-KI —A Blackfoot Indian girl who becomes the wife of the AUTHOR; a cheerful and sweet-tempered woman about whom the interest of the story centres. The book's finest character.

THE CROW WOMAN —An Arickaree captured long ago by the Crows and later taken from them by the Bloods.

MRS. BERRY —A Mandan woman, wife of an old time Indian trader, mother of BERRY and friend of the CROW WOMAN ; learned in the ancient lore of her tribe.

DIANA —An orphan Indian girl, educated by ASHTON; a noble and brilliant woman, who meets a tragic death.

THE AUTHOR —At the age of twenty goes west to Montana Territory in search of wild life and adventure, and finds both with the Piegan Blackfeet; he marries into the tribe and lives with them for many years; goes with them on the hunt, and on the warpath; joins in their religious ceremonies; and as a squawman lives the Indian life.

BERRY —A mixed-blood Indian trader, born on the upper Missouri River; speaks half a dozen Indian languages, and is very much at home in Indian camps; an adept at all the tricks of the Indian trade.

SORREL HORSE —White man, trapper, and Indian trader; has an Indian family.

ASHTON —A young white man from the East who carries about with him a secret sorrow but finds peace at last.

FATHER PRANDO —A devoted Jesuit Priest whose life is given to mission work among the Indians. The Blackfeet's friend, comforter, and helper during the terrible Famine Year.

RISING WOLF —Early Hudson Bay man, typical trapper, trader, and interpreter of the romantic days of the early fur-trading period.

HEAVY BREAST —A Blackfoot partisan, leader of war parties, the possessor of a medicine pipe.

WOLVERINE —A Blackfoot, brother-in-law of SORREL HORSE, whom the AUTHOR helped to steal his wife.

Chapter I.

Fort Benton

[Table of Contents](#)

Wide, brown plains, distant, slender, flat-topped buttes; still more distant giant mountains, blue-sided, sharp-peaked, snow-capped; odour of sage and smoke of camp fire; thunder of ten thousand buffalo hoofs over the hard, dry ground; long-drawn, melancholy howl of wolves breaking the silence of night, how I loved you all!

I am in the sere and yellow leaf, dried and shrivelled, about to fall and become one with my millions of predecessors. Here I sit, by the fireplace in winter, and out on the veranda when the days are warm, unable to do anything except live over in memory the stirring years I passed upon the frontier. My thoughts are always of those days; days before the accursed railroads and the hordes of settlers they brought swept us all, Indians and frontiersmen and buffalo, from the face of the earth, so to speak.

The love of wild life and adventure was born in me, yet I must have inherited it from some remote ancestor, for all my near ones were staid, devout people. How I hated the amenities and conventions of society; from my earliest youth I was happy only when out in the great forest which lay to the north of my home, far beyond the sound of church and school bell, and the whistling locomotives. My visits to those grand old woods were necessarily brief, only during summer and winter vacations. But a day came when I could go where and when I chose, and one warm April morning

long ago I left St. Louis on a Missouri River steam boat, bound for the Far West.

The Far West! Land of my dreams and aspirations[1q],! I had read and re-read Lewis and Clark's "Journal," Catlin's "Eight Years," "The Oregon Trail," Fremont's expeditions; at last I was to see some of the land and the tribes of which they told. The sturdy flat-bottom, shallow-draft, stern-wheel boat was tied to the shore every evening at dusk, resuming her way at day light in the morning, so I saw every foot of the Missouri's shores, 2,600 miles, which lay between the Mississippi and our destination, Fort Benton[1], at the head of navigation. I saw the beautiful groves and rolling green slopes of the lower river, the weird "bad lands "above them, and the picturesque cliffs and walls of sandstone, carved into all sorts of fantastic shapes and form by wind and storm, which are the features of the upper portion of the navigable part of the river. Also I saw various tribes of Indians encamped upon the banks of the stream, and I saw more game than I had thought ever existed. Great herds of buffalo swimming the river often impeded the progress of the boat. Numberless elk and deer inhabited the groves and slopes of the valley. On the open bottoms grazed bands of antelope, and there were bighorn on nearly every butte and cliff of the upper river. We saw many grizzly bears, and wolves, and coyotes; and in the evenings, when all was still aboard, the beavers played and splashed along side the boat. What seemed to me most remarkable of all, was the vast number of buffalo we passed. All through Dakota, and through Montana clear to Fort Benton, they were daily in evidence on the hills, in the bottoms, swimming the river. Hundreds and hundreds of them, drowned, swollen, in all stages of decomposition, lay on the shallow bars where the current had cast them, or drifted by us down the stream. I

believe that the treacherous river, its quicksands, and its unevenly frozen surface in winter, played as great havoc with the herds as did the Indian tribes living along its course. We passed many and many a luckless animal, sometimes a dozen or more in a place, standing under some steep bluff which they had vainly endeavoured to climb, and there they were, slowly but surely sinking down, down into the tenacious black mud or sands, until finally the turbid water would flow smoothly on over their lifeless forms. One would naturally think that animals crossing a stream and finding themselves under a high cut bank would turn out again into the stream and swim down until they found a good landing place; but this is just what the buffalo, in many cases, did not do. Having once determined to go to a certain place, they made a bee-line for it; and, as in the case of those we saw dead and dying under the cut banks, it seemed as if they chose to die rather than to make a detour in order to reach their destination.

After we entered the buffalo country there were many places which I passed with regret; I wanted to stop off and explore them. But the captain of the boat would say: "Don't get impatient; you must keep on to Fort Benton; that's the place for you, for there you'll meet traders and trappers from all over the Northwest, men you can rely upon and travel with, and be reasonably safe. Good God, boy, suppose I should set you ashore here? Why, in all likelihood you wouldn't keep your scalp two days. These here breaks and groves shelter many a prowlin' war party. Oh, of course, you don't see 'em, but they're here all the same."

Foolish "tenderfoot," innocent "pilgrim" that I was, I could not bring myself to believe that I, I who thought so much of the Indians, would live with them, would learn their ways, would be a friend to them, could possibly receive any harm

at their hands. But one day, somewhere between the Round Butte and the mouth of the Musselshell River, we came upon a ghastly sight. On a shelving, sandy slope of shore, by a still smouldering fire of which their half-burned skiff formed a part, lay the remains of three white men. I say remains advisedly, for they had been scalped and literally cut to pieces, their heads crushed and frightfully battered, hands and feet severed and thrown promiscuously about. We stopped and buried them, and it is needless to say that I did not again ask to be set ashore.

Ours was the first boat to arrive at Fort Benton that spring. Long before we came in sight of the place the inhabitants had seen the smoke of our craft and made preparations to receive us. When we turned the bend and neared the levee, cannon boomed, flags waved, and the entire population assembled on the shore to greet us. Foremost in the throng were the two traders who had sometime before bought out the American Fur Company[2], fort and all. They wore suits of blue broadcloth, their long-tailed, high-collared coats bright with brass buttons; they wore white shirts and stocks, and black cravats; their long hair, neatly combed, hung down to their shoulders. Beside them were their skilled employees—clerks, tailor, carpenter—and they wore suits of black fustian, also brass-buttoned, and their hair was likewise long, and they wore parfleche-soled moccasins, gay with intricate and flowery designs of cut beads. Behind these prominent personages the group was most picturesque; here were the French employees, mostly Creoles from St. Louis and the lower Mississippi, men who had passed their lives in the employ of the American Fur Company, and had cordelled many a boat up the vast distances of the winding Missouri. These men wore the black fustian capotes, or hooded coats, fustian or buckskin

trousers held in place by a bright-hued sash. Then there were bull-whackers, and mule-skinners, and independent traders and trappers, most of them attired in suits of plain or fringed and beaded buckskin, and nearly all of them had knives and Colt's powder and ball six-shooters stuck in their belts; and their headgear, especially that of the traders and trappers, was home made, being generally the skin of a kit fox roughly sewn in circular form, head in front and tail hanging down behind. Back of the whites were a number of Indians, men and youths from a near by camp, and women married to the resident and visiting whites. I had already learned from what I had seen of the various tribes on our way up the river, that the everyday Indian of the plains is not the gorgeously attired, eagle plume bedecked creature various prints and written descriptions had led me to believe he was. Of course, all of them possessed such fancy attire, but it was worn only on state occasions. Those I now saw wore blanket or cow (buffalo) leather leggings, plain or beaded moccasins, calico shirts, and either blanket or cow-leather toga. Most of them were bareheaded, their hair neatly braided, and their faces were painted with reddish-brown ochre or Chinese vermilion. Some carried a bow and quiver of arrows; some had flint-lock fukes, a few the more modern cap-lock rifle. The women wore dresses of calico; a few "wives" of the traders and clerks and skilled labourers even wore silk, and gold chains and watches, and all had the inevitable gorgeously hued and fringed shawl thrown over their shoulders.

At one glance the eye could take in the whole town, as it was at that time. There was the great rectangular adobe fort, with bastions mounting cannon at each corner. A short distance above it were a few cabins, built of logs or adobe. Back of these, scattered out in the long, wide flat-bottom,

was camp after camp of trader and trapper, string after string of canvas-covered freighters' wagons, and down at the lower end of the flat were several hundred lodges of Piegans[3]. All this motley crowd had been assembling for days and weeks, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the steamboats. The supply of provisions and things brought up by the boats the previous year had fallen far short of the demand. There was no tobacco to be had at any price. Keno Bill, who ran a saloon and gambling house, was the only one who had any liquor, and that was alcohol diluted with water, four to one. He sold it for a dollar a drink. There was no flour, no sugar, no bacon in the town, but that did not matter, for there was plenty of buffalo and antelope meat. What all craved, Indians and whites, was the fragrant weed and the flowing bowl. And here it was, a whole steamboat load, together with a certain amount of groceries; no wonder cannon boomed and flags waved, and the population cheered when the boat hove in sight.

I went ashore and put up at the Overland Hotel, which was a fair-sized log cabin with a number of log-walled additions. For dinner we had boiled buffalo boss ribs, bacon and beans, "yeast powder" biscuit, coffee with sugar, molasses, and stewed dried apples. The regular guests scarcely touched the meat, but the quantities of bread, syrup, and dried apples they stowed away was surprising.

That was a day to me, a pilgrim fresh from the East, from the "States," as these frontiersmen called it, full of interest. After dinner I went back to the boat to see about my luggage. There was a gray-bearded, long-haired old trapper standing on the shore looking absently out over the water. His buckskin trousers were so bagged at the knees that he seemed to be in the attitude of one about to jump out into the stream. To him approached a fellow passenger, a hair-

52 A name used in this period for the January 1870 attack (often called the Marias Massacre) by U.S. Army troops under Major Eugene Baker on a Piegan (Blackfeet) band on the Marias River in Montana Territory; casualty estimates vary, with historians citing anywhere from dozens to several hundred killed.

53 Whoop-Up was the informal name of a fortified American whisky trading post on the Canadian side of the U.S.-Canada border in what is now southern Alberta, established by American traders around 1870 to sell alcohol to Indigenous peoples and often cited as one cause for the creation of a Canadian police force for the Northwest.

54 The Hudson's Bay Company is a British chartered fur-trading company founded in 1670 that operated a long-standing trading monopoly over large parts of what became Canada (Rupert's Land) and continued commercial trade in the region into the 19th century.

55 A geographic area associated with the Teton Range of the Rocky Mountains; in 19th-century frontier accounts it refers to valleys around the Tetons on the present-day Idaho-Wyoming-Montana frontier.

56 A U.S. railroad company that built westward from the Missouri River (Omaha) in the 1860s; it was a principal builder of the First Transcontinental Railroad completed in 1869 and provided rail connections to many western towns.

57 A Native American people of the northern Plains, also known by names such as A'aninin or Atsina, traditionally

living in parts of present-day Montana and adjoining regions.

58 The Marias River is a tributary of the Missouri River in northwestern Montana; in the 19th century it formed local bottoms and travel routes used by Indigenous people, traders, and freighters in that region.

59 Fort Macleod refers to a North-West Mounted Police post founded in the 1870s and the town that grew up around it in what is now southern Alberta, Canada; it served as a regional policing and trading center in the late 19th century.

60 'Black Robes' was a common term used by many Indigenous peoples for Catholic priests (especially Jesuit missionaries), based on the black cassocks they wore; in 19th-century contexts it denotes Christian clergy rather than a literal garment alone.

61 Great Slave Lake is a large freshwater lake in the Northwest Territories of Canada, one of the largest lakes in North America and located several hundred kilometres north of the Alberta border.

62 The "hide the bone game" refers to a traditional Plains Indian gambling/hand-game (also called the handgame or moccasin game) in which tokens or bones are concealed and teams sing, beat time, and guess their location; rules and names vary between tribes and locales.

63 Berkshires are a breed of domestic pig originating in England; in 19th-century North America 'thoroughbred

Berkshires' refers to imported or carefully bred Berkshire hogs prized for meat quality.

64 The adjective 'strychnined' indicates the wolf had been poisoned with strychnine, a highly toxic alkaloid historically used as a predator control or pesticide and known to cause violent convulsions before death.

65 'Cold Maker' here is a personified name for severe winter weather or a winter spirit in Plains Indian usage or the narrator's phrasing, used to mean the blinding snow and intense cold of a blizzard.

66 'Great Father' is a 19th-century diplomatic term used by U.S. (and sometimes British/Canadian) officials and by Indigenous negotiators to refer to the nation's chief executive (commonly the U.S. President) in treaty or governmental language.

67 'Marias' refers to the Marias River region and likely alludes to the Marias Massacre (January 1870), when U.S. troops attacked a Piegan camp on the Marias River, killing a large number of people including noncombatants; dates and casualty figures vary by source.

68 John J. Healy was a real frontier figure: a trader, long-time sheriff in the Fort Benton area, and publisher of the Fort Benton Record, active in the northern Plains trade and law enforcement in the late 19th century.

69 Fort Conrad was a frontier trading post or settlement on the upper Missouri River region during the late 19th century,

serving as a local hub for river traffic and trade in what was then Montana territory; precise site details vary in historical sources.

70 The "Diamond R." outfit refers to a private transportation and freight company (partners Steele and Broadwater are named) that operated on the Missouri River in the late 1800s, hauling goods between steamboat landings and inland destinations.

71 Red Cloud is the name of the steamboat on which the narrator and companions embarked at Fort Benton; river steamboats were a primary means of long-distance travel and cargo movement on the Missouri River in that era.

72 The phrase "halfbreed rebellion of 1885" refers to the 1885 North-West Rebellion (also called the North-West Resistance) in western Canada, led by Louis Riel and involving Métis (referred to then as 'halfbreeds') and some Indigenous groups; the event and its terminology are the subject of varied historical interpretations.

73 A mid-19th-century lever-action repeating rifle (designed by Benjamin T. Henry) known for its tubular magazine and rapid fire; it saw use in the 1860s–1870s by soldiers, scouts, and frontiersmen during and after the American Civil War.

74 A term used by many Indigenous peoples in North America to refer to Catholic priests (especially Jesuits), derived from the black clerical robes they wore; common in 18th–19th century frontier accounts.